

## THE FLOWERS OF SAINT FRANCIS



### THE POPE ST. JOHN XXIII FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY SECULAR FRANCISCANS DAVIDSONVILLE, MARYLAND



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### Our MINISTER'S MUSINGS

by *Ron Van Nest, OFS, Minister*

**M**y term of office as Minister ends with the October Fraternity meeting. Please plan on attending that meeting and participate in the election.

**G**od has truly blessed us!

**W**e came from a bulletin announcement over ten years ago, asking if anyone would like to start a Franciscan Fraternity at Holy Family, to come to a meeting one night that week. We are now one of the most growing Fraternities in the Region!

**I** look ahead to praying on the sidelines as the next Council takes us forward with new ideas and fresh enthusiasm. I look forward to a growing **YouFra** fraternity and an active engagement with other churches in the area.

**E**ach one of you has inspired my faith development in a unique way. I am truly grateful to everyone.

**P**eace and all good to you.

**Ron**

# TRANSITUS – TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2023

## FRANCISCAN FEATURE



Six months before the day of his death, he was staying in Siena for treatment of his eye disease. But then all the rest of his body started to show signs of serious illness. His stomach had been destroyed, and his liver was failing. He was vomiting a lot of blood, so much that he seemed close to death. On hearing of this in a place far away, brother Elias rushed to his side. At his arrival the holy father had recovered so much that they left that area and went together to Le Celle near Cortona. After reaching the place he *stayed for a while*, but then the swelling began in his abdomen, his legs, and his feet. His stomach became so weak that he could hardly eat any food at all. At that point, he asked brother Elias to have him carried to Assisi. The good son did what the kind father commanded and, when everything was ready, led him to the place he longed for. *The city rejoiced at the arrival of the blessed father and all the people with one voice praised God,*

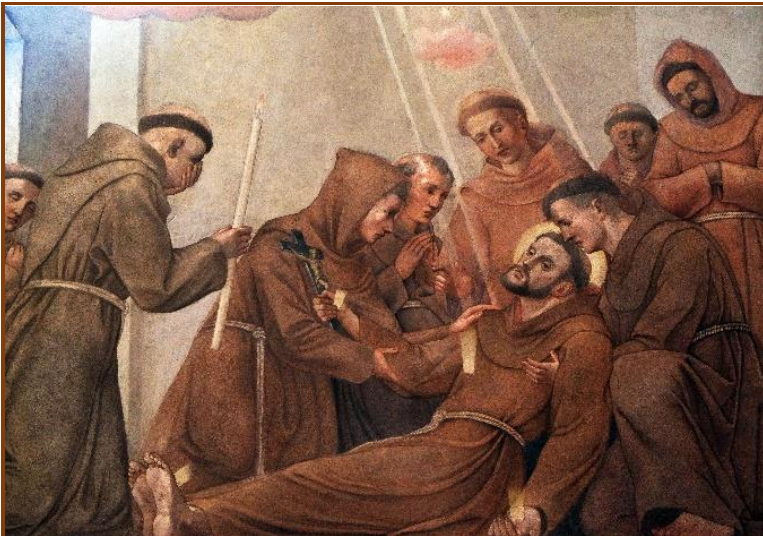
since *the whole multitude of the people* hoped that *the holy one of God* would die close to them, and this was the reason for such great rejoicing.

As his illness grew worse, he lost all bodily strength, and deprived of all his powers, he could not even move...Not one of his members remained without great pain and suffering; his bodily warmth gradually diminished, and each day he drew closer to his end. The doctors were amazed and the brothers were astonished that the spirit could live in flesh so dead, since with *his flesh all consumed* only skin *clung to his bones*...When brother Elias sat down on his left side with the other brothers around him, the blessed father crossed his arms and *placed his right hand on Elias' head*. He had lost the sight and use of his bodily eyes, so he asked: "Over whom am I holding my right hand?" "Over brother Elias," they replied. "And this is what I wish to do," he said, "I bless you, my son, *in all and through all*, and just as the most High has increased my brothers and sons in your hands, so too, upon you and in you, I bless them all. May the king of all *bless you in heaven and on earth*. I bless you as I can, and more than I can, and what I cannot do may the One who can do all things do in you. *May God remember your work and labors, and may a place be reserved for you among the rewards of the just*. May you receive every blessing you desire and may your every worthy request be fulfilled."

Good-bye, all my sons. Live *in the fear of God* and remain in Him always, for a great *test* will come upon you and tribulation is drawing near! Happy are those *who will persevere* in what they have begun: many will be separated from them by the scandals that are to come. But now I am hurrying to the Lord *and I am confident that I am going to my God whom I have served in my spirit*."

He was staying then in the palace of the bishop of Assisi, and he asked the brothers to carry him quickly to the place of **Saint Mary of the Portiuncula**. For he wanted to give back his soul to God in that place where, as noted above, he first came to know perfectly *the way of truth*.

(Francis of Assisi Early Documents – The Saint – Vol 1: "The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano"  
(excerpts from The Second Book, pp 274-277)



Twenty years had now passed since his conversion, and his time was ending just as it has been shown to him by God's will. For, once the blessed father and brother Elias were staying at Foligno, and one night while they were sleeping, a priest of venerable appearance and great age dressed in white clothing appeared to brother Elias. "Get up, brother," he said, "and tell brother Francis that eighteen years have passed since he renounced the world and clung to Christ. He will remain in this life only two more years; then *he will go the way of all flesh when the Lord*

*calls him to Himself.*" So it came to pass that, at the established time, the *word of the Lord* spoken long before now, *was fulfilled.*

After he had rested a few days in that place he so longed for, knowing *the time* of his death *was close at hand*, he called to him two brothers, his special sons, and told them to sing *The Praises of the Lord* with a loud voice and joyful spirit, rejoicing at his approaching death, or rather at the life that was so near. He himself, as best he could break into that psalm of David: "*With a loud voice I cried to the Lord; with a loud voice I beseeched the Lord.*"

There was a brother there whom the holy man loved with great affection. Seeing what was happening and realizing the saint was nearing the end, he grew very concerned about all the brothers and said: "Oh, kind father, your sons will now be *without a father*, and will be deprived *of the true light* of their eyes! Remember the orphans you are leaving behind; forgive all their faults, and gladden them all, whether present or absent, with your holy blessing." The holy man answered: "See, my son, I am being called by God. I forgive all my brothers, present and absent, all their faults and offenses, and I absolve them insofar as I am able. When you give them this message, bless them all for me."

Then he ordered the book of the Gospels to be brought in. He asked that the Gospel according to John be read to him, starting with the passage that begins: *Six days before the Passover*, Jesus, knowing that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father. This was the very gospel his minister had planned to read, even before he was told to do so; that was the passage that met his eye as he first opened the book, although he had the complete Bible from which to read the gospel. Then he told them to cover him with sackcloth and to sprinkle him with ashes, as he was soon to become *dust and ashes*.

Many brothers *gathered* there, for whom *he was* both father and *leader*. They stood there reverently, all awaiting his blessed *departure* and happy *end*. And then that most holy soul was released from the flesh, and as it was absorbed into the abyss of light, his body *fell asleep in the Lord*.

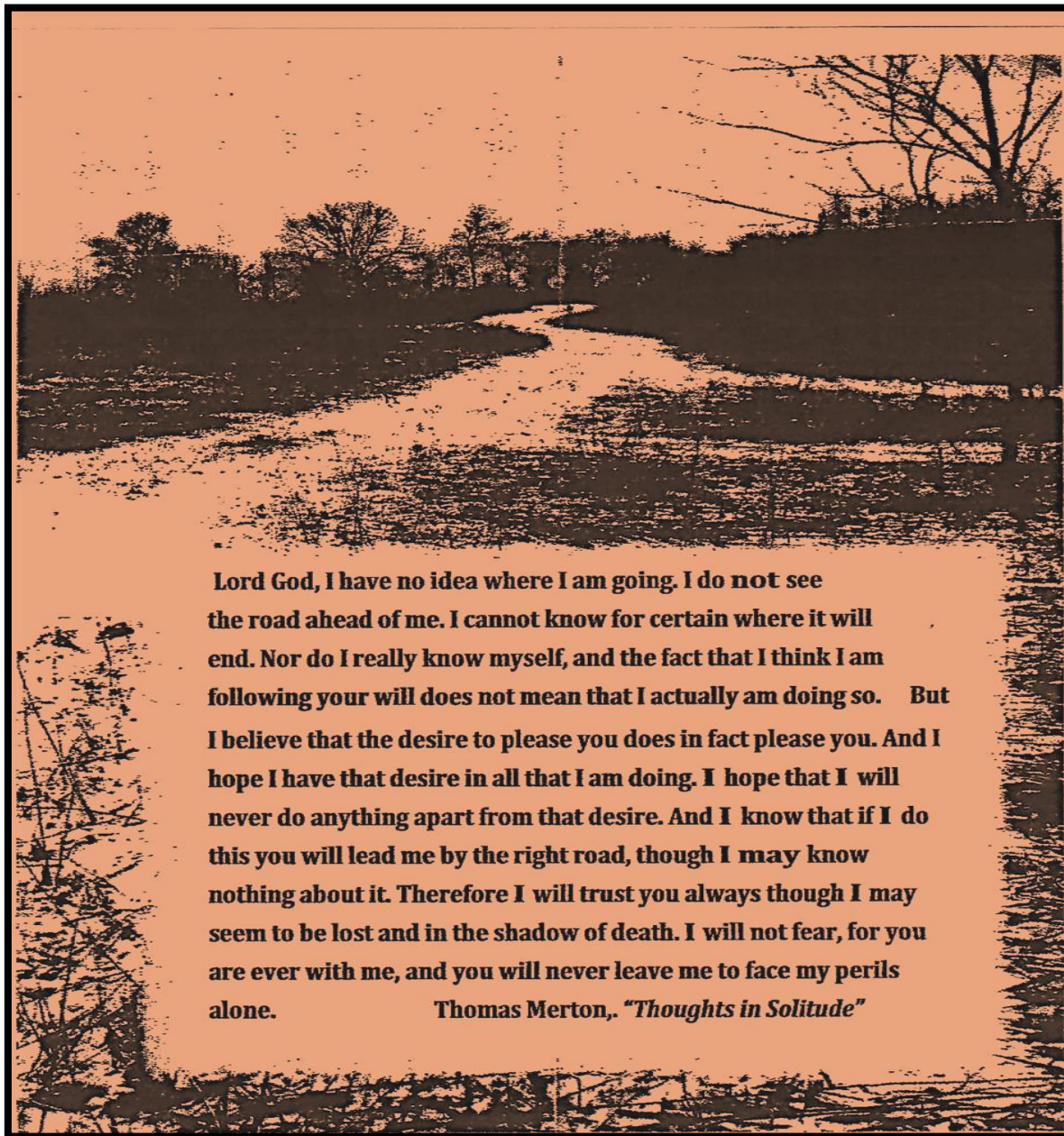
One of his brothers and followers, a man of some fame, whose name I will conceal for how since he does not wish to glory in such fame while still *living in the flesh*, saw the soul of the most holy father *rise straight to heaven over many waters*. It was *like a star* but as big as the moon, with *the brilliance of the sun*, and *carried up upon a small white cloud*.

(Francis of Assisi Early Documents – The Saint – Vol 1: "The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano"  
(excerpts from The Second Book, pp 277-278)

**SEEDS OF FAITH** – by *Nina Teti, OFS*



**E**very day is the road most traveled! In March of this year, I had a detour. I fell and fractured my arthritic shoulder. Hospitals, Physicians, Rehab, Caregivers and Therapy. It was the Words of Encouragement and Prayers from Family, Friends and Franciscan Brothers and Sisters, like yourselves, **SEEDS OF FAITH**, that kept me focused in the moment. Four months later, with the Grace of God, I have begun to regain my strength. Thomas Merton was gifted with the gift of spiritual writings, who personally struggled daily to overcome many detours in life. The Reflection below helped me meet that challenge.





### CARING FOR CREATION – by *Chris Gordon, OFS*

**F**or several days, I had seen this vulture, standing by the side of the road near the entrance to Riva Area Park. One day, I finally got out of the car to check on her and got within about 4 feet of this vulture, before she hopped away, not attempting to fly at all. Something was definitely amiss!

**I** thought about reporting the beautiful bird to the park service or wondered what else I could do. When I returned a few hours later for another walk with our Golden Retrievers, Maddie and Sophie, I could not find her anywhere and

was thinking all is well.

**T**he next day, as I came to the park to take the girls for their morning walk, there she was, on the side of the road! After passing the bird, I went about 50 feet, and stopped, and I thought, “**we had a connection, this was not just any bird.**” Went back and picked her up. She was still warm.

**D**on’t know what else I could’ve done differently, that would have made a difference! I carefully placed her in the underbrush, away from the side of the road. The cycle of life continues. I know that intellectually, yet I am still sad!

**T**he next day she was gone. Was she just stunned and recovered? More recently the same thing happened with a large woodpecker who did recover. Why are these birds put on my path I’ll never know. God knows.

**N**ow, I realize it was an honor to be able to hold her, to feel her still warm body, and carry her to a safe place and give her back to the forest! **Amen.**



### FRANCISCAN CROWN ROSARY – by *David Littleton, OFS*

**I** like watching baseball on television. I also believe it is a “waste of time” and St. Francis would not approve, because my time could be better spent! It occurred to me, thanks to Our Lady of the Rosary, that I could make rosaries while watching baseball on television!

**T**here is an organization called **Our Lady’s Rosary Makers** in Louisville, Kentucky ([www.olrm.org](http://www.olrm.org)). OLRM provides low-cost materials and resources at minimum cost if you promise to give them away! There are organizations that you can mail your completed rosaries to be distributed among people in need and third world countries!

**P**ope Francis said “each time we pray the rosary, we are taking a step toward the great destination of our life – heaven!” We all know there are five mysteries of the Rosary, but some people do not know there are seven mysteries of the Franciscan Crown Rosary. So, you have my permission to “waste your time” watching baseball, if you are making rosaries!

**D**avid has been making rosaries for 10 to 15 years and has a special devotion to our Blessed Mother.

## OUR FRATERNITY FRANCISCAN RETREAT

by *Ann Marie Pessagno, OFS, Vice Minister*



A retreat day sponsored by the **Pope Saint John XXIII Secular Franciscan Fraternity** was held on Saturday March 4, 2023 in Unity Hall at Holy Family Church. The day opened with an opportunity for Adoration, Rosary and Confession, followed by a Eucharistic Celebration in Holy Family Church. Immediately following the Mass, Our Franciscan Sister, Joyce (Penny) Jones received the Sacrament of Baptism. It was indeed a very joyous occasion for her, our Franciscan Family, and her loved ones!



The planning team wanted to focus the morning session on encouraging and inviting our youth to learn more about Secular Franciscans. We spent several weeks, in preparation, personally reaching out to youth members through religious education classes, confirmation sessions, church bulletins, youth group memberships, networking with local catholic schools and through word of mouth. Approximately twelve youth attended the retreat day along with thirty adult fraternity members and guests. Our featured morning speaker was **Denis Castillo, OFS Regional Youth Director** and **Lucio Perez, OFS Youth Co-Chair**. They gave dynamic presentations on why we need our youth and how to engage them to get involved. It is a slow and deliberate process! We must be examples for them by showing them, through our lives, why our faith is important! A breakout session followed with the youth and the other adult fraternity members and guests. Take away thoughts were – the youth want to see us excited about our faith and truly living it every day, and they want us to dialogue honestly to their feedback and incorporate their ideas as appropriate!

A lunch was served, and conversations and networking continued. A reflection time followed lunch in the church with singing, Adoration, scripture reading and time for quiet reflection. It was a great way to renew and refresh ourselves in the middle of the day!



The afternoon session was primarily for the Secular Franciscans and was focused on “*How to Live Our Franciscan Values*”. **Brother Michael Meza, OFM, Cap** spoke to us on how to continue to radically change and to be in a state of constant conversion always through commitment to living Gospel values **Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel!** We must keep our eyes focused on the cross and the life of Jesus as He illuminates our paths to lift-up the Kingdom of God as St. Francis of Assisi showed us by his life! **W**e ended our day with the following prayer:

*Lord, give me the wisdom to always hear your Words in the whisper of the wind and to receive your peace in prayer. Give us courage to have time for your Word and the ability to reflect....*

Brother Michael Meza 2019



## FORMATION FORUM

by *Jeanne Catrow, OFS, Formation Director*

The presence of the Holy Spirit is abundant at St. John XXIII fraternity.

On May 13, 2023, Patricia Sullivan and Joyce (Penny) Jones were professed as Secular Franciscans. **Father Patrick Monahan, OFM Cap** was the principal celebrant for this **Rite of Profession**, and the ceremony was followed by a reception where the community shared in the joy and beauty of this day with our sisters, Pat and Penny. It was a holy reminder for all of us!



“**Y**ou have stripped off your old behavior with your old self, and you have put on a new self, which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its creator;” Col 3:9-10.

In addition, there are four new candidates to our fraternity. Michael O’Rourke, Barbara Henry, and Elizabeth Brownlee celebrated the **Rite of Admission** on June 7, and Shawn Dickey celebrated the **Rite of Admission** on July 5. These candidates will continue their Formation and discernment in our Fraternity for the next 2 years. They are a true gift to our community!



In September, our fraternity is welcoming 6 new aspirants who will begin an orientation period of 3 months to determine their call to the Franciscan way of life. Please keep these blessed men and women in your prayers as they follow the call of the Holy Spirit in their lives!



### Other News:

The Candidates continue their apostolate to the Riva Recovery House by providing a dinner on the second Monday of each month. They provide dinner and dessert to 16 men, and it has been well received by the people there. Many thanks to the candidates who faithfully serve this community. Anyone may join them – contact Jeanne Catrow for information.



For several months, Formation sessions have been led by professed members from our fraternity. It is truly a blessing to have them share their spirituality and Franciscan journey with our candidates and inquirers. Thank you!

The Formation Team is comprised of Joe O’Dea, Penny Jones, Pat Sullivan, Mary Rohde, and Jeanne Catrow. Please contact any of these members with suggestions/concerns/questions about Initial Formation and Ongoing Formation.

**Be at peace!**

## WHAT PROFESSON MEANS TO ME – by *Penny Jones, OFS*



**M**y name is Penny Jones. I am a parishioner at Holy Family Catholic Church in Davidsonville, MD, and while visiting one weekend the Parish’s Annual Ministry Fair, I stopped at the Franciscan exhibition table to learn about them, but unfortunately found it was closed.

**A** few days later, I observed Ron Van Nest, OFS, Minister of the Pope St. John XXIII Secular Franciscan Fraternity at Holy Family, speaking at a discussion that had gathered after church, about the Franciscans. After hearing him speak, I felt called to ask him more about Franciscans, as I have had an unquenchable desire to understand not only the Catholic Faith, but especially the people who built the faith and why!

**W**hen I asked Ron if I could find out more about the Franciscans and what is involved in becoming a Franciscan, he explained that becoming a secular Franciscan is a serious ongoing commitment, and not just another “club of sorts”! After reflecting on it, I attended a Franciscan meeting at Holy Family, and was surprised to see that they were having a ceremony to admit others to the Fraternity. That just piqued my interest, while all along prompting me towards becoming more and more interested in the Franciscans, and as a result, I entered their 3-year Formation Program. That was in 2020!

**T**hen COVID came, and it was decided that Formation classes would be conducted by zoom. My Formation partner, Pat Sullivan, and I, made the journey together to become secular Franciscans by zooming our way through to Profession. It was as though the Holy Spirit was moving us right along, and I felt the Holy Spirit calling me to keep going and learning what the Franciscans were all about and studying about St. Francis.

**I**nterestingly, Pat and I spent some time talking on her porch one afternoon, and we knew then that this was what we wanted! It was not just a “coincidence” that the two of us made this journey together, nor that we were the only two studying at the time! We already had the Franciscan spirit moving within us, so the rest was easy.

**W**e had our profession on May 13, 2023, and I have seen the growth in myself and the Fraternity.



## THE TAU CEREMONY – by *Barbara Henry, Candidate*

**T**he Tau ceremony is a simple occasion in which inquirers to the Secular Franciscan Organization are formally welcomed as candidates to continue their studies in formation.

**T**he meaning of this ceremony reflects my dedication to living the Franciscan way. In the presence of the fraternity, I profess that I am committing myself to living the Rule of the Order by serving God and His people in my daily life through prayer and action.

**A**s I gaze upon the Tau around my neck, I am reminded of St. Francis of Assisi’s lifelong fidelity to the crucified Christ; his pledge to serve the least, the vulnerable, the forgotten; to treat all creatures as brothers and sisters of Christ. I am reminded daily to turn to Our Lord and trust in His faith so that the seeds of peace, forgiveness, and charity I long for may bloom in the garden of our daily lives!





## Professional Anniversaries

Jeanne Catrow  
John Cobis  
Kathy Brady  
Kathy Duffy  
Judy Hool  
Sandy Horvath  
David Littleton  
John Treichel  
Ron Van Nest  
Marie Waleryszak

May 8, 1979  
June 12, 2005  
September 17, 2016  
September 17, 2016  
September 17, 2016  
September 17, 2016  
September 17, 2016  
September 17, 2016  
September 17, 2016  
September 17, 2016



Laura Benso  
Sarita Palmer  
Mary Rohde  
Chris Gordon  
Ann Marie Pessagno  
Nina Teti  
Eugene (Duke) Jones  
Joe O’Dea  
Theresa Tucker  
Penny (Joyce) Jones  
Patricia Sullivan

November 17, 2018  
November 17, 2018  
November 17, 2018  
February 1, 2020  
February 1, 2020  
February 1, 2020  
February 26, 2022  
February 26, 2022  
February 26, 2022  
May 13, 2023  
May 13, 2023

## PRAYER INTENTIONS

Let us remember, in our prayers, all the intentions and needs of our Pope St. John XXIII Fraternity brothers and sisters. Let us especially remember to pray for the following loved ones in our lives God has summoned Home to be with Him and all those in Heaven.



John Cobis, OFS, one of the pioneers who worked to get this fraternity started, went into the gentle hands of Sister Death during the early morning hours of July 21, 2023. He was a model Catholic man – Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist, Knight of Columbus, Member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Member of the Order of Secular Franciscans. In seeking justice for all he was also a Delegate member of the State Legislature of Vermont. In his earlier years he was a career Senior Petty Officer in the Navy and retired as a Chief Hospital Corpsman.

## BIRTHDAY WISHES

Chris Gordon	September 14
Sarita Palmer	September 14
Mary Rodhe	September 14
Laura Benso	September 16
Shawn Dickey	September 20
Peggy Carr	September 26
Michael O'Rourke	September 26



Kathy Duffy	October 26
Marie Waleryszak	November 1
Judy Hool	November 2
Elizabeth Brownlee	November 3
Jeanne Catrow	November 7
Ron Van Nest	November 7

### ✔ SAVE THE DATE(S) ✔

<b>Wednesday, September 13, 2023</b>	<b>Orientation for Aspirants</b>	<b>7 PM</b>
<b>Tuesday, October 3, 2023</b>	<b>TRANSITUS</b> Franciscan Monastery, 1400 Quincy Street, NE, Washington, D.C.	<b>7 PM</b>
<b>Wednesday, October 4, 2023</b>	<b>Fraternity Election</b> Plan to attend. You cannot vote by zoom.	<b>7 PM</b>
<b>Wednesday, October 11, 2023</b>	<b>Feast of Pope St. John XXIII</b>	

### Treasury Tidbits – July 2023 - by *Judy Hool, OFS, Treasurer*

Balance Brought Forward From 2022:	\$ 6,540.30
January through July Deposits:	\$ 6,075.00
Deposit Credits	\$12,615.30
January through July Withdrawals	\$ 4,360.40
<b>July Ending Balance:</b>	<b>\$ 8,254.90</b>



Thank you for your generous donations. Our Fraternity will carefully and prayerfully manage the charitable contributions to serve our community.

### Pax et bonum!

**Attention:** If you are interested in learning more about Secular Franciscans and our Franciscan ministry of living out the Gospel in our daily secular lives, or attending any of our monthly Secular Franciscan Fraternity meetings to learn more about us here at Holy Family Catholic Church, please contact our **Minister**, Ron Van Nest, OFS ([ronvannest.ofs@gmail.com](mailto:ronvannest.ofs@gmail.com)) or our **Vice Minister**, Ann Marie Pessagno, OFS ([ampessagno@yahoo.com](mailto:ampessagno@yahoo.com)). All are welcome!

