

**THE ST. JOSEPH FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCANS**

**ST. MARGARET OF CORTONA REGION
"ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARI"**

THE FRANCISCAN SPIRIT NEWSLETTER

December 2022

**Next Meeting: December 3rd at 10:00 am at
Neumann Hall (behind the Old Church)**

Blessed Mary Frances Schervier – December 18th

Born in 1819, Blessed Mary Frances Schervier was a descendant of a distinguished family in the old imperial city of Aachen or Aix-la-Chapelle. While she was perhaps not prominent in the eyes of the world, she enjoyed the distinction of extraordinary supernatural privileges from the very days of her youth. Her desire to enter a religious order was thwarted by the early death of her mother in 1832, when Frances was only 13 years old. She was obliged to remain at home and attend to the household, though she did not let these circumstances prevent her from caring in a very special way for the poor and the sick.

So lavish was her liberality that one of the old servants once remarked, "One of these days the child will have dragged everything out of the house." Later she was an active member of several benevolent societies of women and also of what was known as St John's soup kitchen, a charitable enterprise organized to feed the needy.

Blessed Mary Frances Schervier joined the Third Order of St Francis in 1844. Henceforth she and four other young women resolved to lead a community life. They found a dwelling at the old city gate of St James and took possession of their first religious abode on the eve of the feast of St Francis in 1845. Prayer and works of mercy were their principal occupation.

The first foundation of the Sisters of the Poor of St Francis in the United States was made in 1858. Twice Mother Frances came to the US, the first time in 1863 and the second time in 1868. During her first sojourn in this country, she joined her sisters in ministering to wounded soldiers of the Civil War and to the sick, the homeless, and the orphaned. The second time, while visiting the various institutions conducted by her sisters, Blessed Mary Frances Schervier also lent a helping hand in caring for the sick, the aged, and the poor.

"The poverty of St Francis and his love for the poor of Christ superseded everything else in the eyes of the foundress. On one occasion she wrote to her sisters: "The impress of poverty and penance should mark even our chapels and churches and be their distinctive feature."



Blessed Mary Frances Schervier

HAPPY ADVENT!

Birthdays:

- Victoria Wharton (11th)

Prayer Intentions:

- Maggie & Her Family
- Lynn & Her Family
- Marge Butta
- The refugees & others affected by the Ukraine – Russian conflict
- Diane & Wil & their family
- Joseph Sampson in Ghana

December Meeting: Meet 9:00 am at St. John's for mass & then meeting in Neumann Hall. We will discuss the entire book of "Aim High"

"Praise the Lord, and call upon his name; tell the story of his doings for all the nations to hear; greet him with song and psalm, recount his acts of miracle. Triumph in that holy name; let every heart that longs for the Lord rejoice." (Psalm 105:1-3)

From “The General Constitutions of The SFO” – Article 22-2

“The fraternities should engage themselves through courageous initiatives, consistent with their Franciscan vocation and with the directives of the Church, in the field of human development and justice. They should take clear positions whenever human dignity is attacked by any form of oppression or indifference. They should offer their fraternal service to the victims of injustice.”

Minister’s Message By Rick Erdlen

It’s an obvious choice that the American Thanksgiving Day comes after the harvest season. There’s no better time to thank the Lord for all His blessings. We identify as a Eucharistic people. Our worship liturgy is centered on “Thanksgiving”. We gather often in humble gratitude to remember and recognize the blessings bestowed by our Creator. It is a happy circumstance, then, that our fraternity celebrates in gratitude at the threshold of the Advent season. It is natural to be grateful for our faith, family, health, and prosperity. Further, this is the time to dwell in amazed thankfulness that the Divine was made manifest in humanity. Our understanding of the world, our place in the world, and our place in time revolves around this event in history. We can be grateful for the Franciscan understanding that the Anointed One did not appear on earth as an insurance policy for our mistakes. Rather, Franciscan orthodoxy understands that the Creator’s plan always was to send the Anointed One as an exemplar of love. The Good News clarified that the Kingdom of God is at-hand, meaning that we already abide in Him as He abides in us. Human life becomes, then, a relentless effort to expand the circle of people in whom we recognize Christ. No small task! A similar effort may be required to detach from anything that is not God and might distract us from His call to love all His creatures, great and small. So, I wish everyone a grand Thanksgiving, leading to an Advent of penance-yes- but also one of grateful anticipation of the Incarnated Christ. He is guaranteed to be just our size, just what we need, and just on-time. Prosit!

What Grief Can Teach Us by Paula D’Arcy

The “small piece”—the blow and suffering of unwanted loss and change—was a darkness to which I brought many emotional habits and patterns: anger, a feeling of being jinxed or doomed, and a longing to escape this path on which I found myself. I know today that grief did not create these patterns; it only illuminated them. They were already there. Still, it felt as if grief were the only cause of my confusion and unhappiness. It was difficult to accept that if the soul is to mature, it must go through the darkness and beyond it. But it must. The “large picture” is only revealed by the dark’s hidden and sustaining light. Recognizing which habits and patterns kept me lost in a loop of reactivity was crucial. The old patterns were lifeless and offered only suffering. But the darkness was alive and offered a reappraisal of everything I had formerly concluded about life and its meaning.

FRANCISCAN TEACHINGS

Quotes of St. Francis

“The only thing ever achieved in life without effort is failure.”

“Pure holy simplicity confounds all the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of the flesh.”

“Every day He humbles Himself just as He did when from His heavenly throne into the Virgin’s womb; every day He comes to us and lets us see Him in lowliness, when He descends from the bosom of the Father into the hands of the priest at the alter.”

“Blessed is the servant who esteems himself no better when he is praised and exalted by people than when he is considered worthless, simple, and despicable; for what a man is before God, that he is and nothing more.”

“Where there is charity and wisdom, there is neither fear nor ignorance. Where there is patience and humility there is neither anger nor worry.”

Red Wednesday: Churches lit red to honor persecuted Christians by Aletea website

This November 23, churches across the world are framed in red light to raise awareness of the persecution of Christians taking place in the world today. The #RedWednesday initiative is organized by Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), which recently released a report that found Christian persecution is increasing in 75% of the 24 countries they examined.

The report, “Persecuted and Forgotten? A Report on Christians Oppressed for Their Faith 2020-22”, highlighted several areas of the world where Christians face particularly harsh persecution. In the Middle East, for example, nations like Syria and Iraq have seen large portions of their Christian population flee in recent years. Meanwhile the more diverse nations, like Egypt and Pakistan, have marked a significant rise in the systematic kidnapping and sexual abuse of Christian girls.

ACN’s report went on to note that North Korea is suppressing the faith and India has marked a rise in violence against Christians. Some of the worst offenses, however, came from Nigeria, where ACN describes the treatment of Christians as “genocide.” ACN cites the murders of more than 7,600 Nigerian Christians between January 2021 and June 2022, including the Pentecost Sunday attack on a church mid-service that saw more than 40 worshipers killed.

Bishop Jude Arogundade of Ondo, who heads the diocese in which this atrocity took place, commented: “The world is silent as attacks on Churches, their personnel and institutions have become routine. How many corpses are required to get the world’s attention?”

Secure in His Name – Mediation of the Day by Aletea website

Let us be subject to his most holy and glorious name and escape the threats Wisdom has uttered in advance against the disobedient. Thus, we shall find shelter, firmly reposing on the most holy name of his majesty. Accept our counsel, and you shall have nothing to regret. For as truly as God lives, as truly as the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit live, and the faith and the hope of the elect, so truly will he who in a humble frame of mind...carries out the commandments and precepts given by God, be enrolled and be in good standing among the number of those who are on the way to salvation through Jesus Christ.... For our part we shall offer earnest prayer and supplication that the Creator of the universe may preserve [his chosen ones] in all the world through his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, through whom he has called us out of darkness into light, out of ignorance into the full knowledge of the splendor of his name, that we may hope in his name which gave existence to all creation.

Open the eyes of our heart, that we know you who alone are highest among the highest and holy.... You gaze upon the deep. You behold the works of men. [You are] the Helper in danger, the Savior in despair, the Creator and Watcher of every spirit. You multiply the nations upon earth. And from among all, you have chosen those that love you through Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, through whom you have instructed, sanctified, and honored us. We beg you, O Master, to be our helper and protector: deliver those of us who are in distress, raise up the fallen, bring back the erring of your people, feed the hungry, ransom our prisoners, set the infirm upon their feet, comfort the fainthearted. Let all the nations know that you are the only God, that Jesus Christ is your Son, that we are your people and the sheep of your pasture.

- *Saint Clement of Rome*