

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

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

**THE FRANCISCAN SPIRIT NEWSLETTER**

**February 2023**

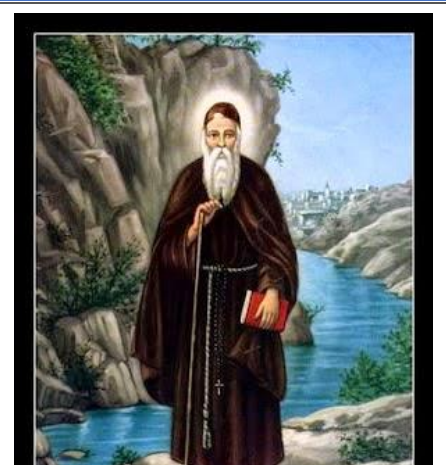
**Next Meeting: February 4th at 10:00 am at  
Neumann Hall (behind the Old Church)**

**Saint Conrad of Piacenza – February 19th**

Hermit of the Third Order of St. Francis. He belonged to one of the noblest families of Piacenza and having married when he was quite young (married Euphrosyne, daughter of a nobleman), led a virtuous and God-fearing life. On one occasion, when he was engaged in his usual pastime of hunting, he ordered his attendants to fire some brushwood in which game had taken refuge. The prevailing wind caused the flames to spread rapidly, and the surrounding fields and forest were soon in a state of conflagration. A mendicant, who happened to be found near the place where the fire had originated, was accused of being the author. He was imprisoned, tried, and condemned to death. As the poor man was being led to execution, Conrad, stricken with remorse, made open confession of his guilt; and in order to repair the damage of which he had been the cause, was obliged to sell all his possessions.

Thus, reduced to poverty, Conrad retired to a lonely hermitage some distance from Piacenza, while his wife entered the Order of Poor Clares (Conrad and his wife agreed to separate: she to a Poor Clare monastery and he to a group of hermits following the Third Order Rule. His reputation for holiness, however, spread quickly. Since his many visitors destroyed his solitude, Conrad went to a more remote spot in Sicily where he lived 36 years as a hermit, praying for himself and for the rest of the world).

Later he went to Rome, and thence to Sicily, where he lived a most austere and penitential life and worked numerous miracles. He is especially invoked for the cure of hernia. In 1515 Leo X permitted the town of Noto to celebrate his feast, which permission was later extended by Urban VIII to the whole Order of St. Francis. Conrad died kneeling before a crucifix. He was canonized in 1625. His feast is kept in the Franciscan Order on 19 February.



**Saint Conrad of Piacenza**

**HAPPY WINTER!**

Birthdays:

- Carmelina Adinolfi (14th)

Prayer Intentions:

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

**February Meeting: Meet 9:00 am at St. John's for mass & then meeting in Neumann Hall.**

*"So lost to piety were these Egyptians, such foolish reasonings led them astray, that they worshipped brute reptiles, and despicable vermin. And swarms of brute beasts thou didst send to execute thy vengeance, for the more proof that a man's own sins are the instrument of his punishment." (Wisdom 11:16-17)*

**From “The General Constitutions of The SFO” – Article 23-1**

*“Peace is the work of justice and the fruit of reconciliation and of fraternal love. Secular Franciscans are called to be bearers of peace in their families and in society:*

- they should see to the proposal and spreading of peaceful ideas and attitudes;*
- they should develop their own initiatives and should collaborate, individually and as a fraternity, with initiatives of the Pope, the local Churches, and the Franciscan Family;*
- they should collaborate with those movements and institutions which promote peace while respecting its authentic foundations.*

**Minister’s Message** - by Rich Erdlen

Happy New Year to all the brothers and sisters! Every year is a providential one in the Lord. 2023 has a particular significance in that it contains the 45th anniversary of The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. On June 24, 1978 (a Saturday this year), Pope Paul VI announced, through his secretary of state, the following: “Having consulted with the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, which has diligently examined and carefully evaluated the text, we approve and confirm with our apostolic authority and sanction the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. By this letter and our apostolic authority, we abrogate the previous rule of what was formerly called the Franciscan Third Order.” On the day of Transitus that year, our Minister General, Manuela Mattioli OFS, received the new rule with gratitude from the four Ministers General of the Franciscan family, saying “we beg all the brothers and sisters to cherish it, to know it well, but above all to live it daily so they will be able to ‘die with it’. It is fortuitous that our Regional Formation Director, Anne Mulqueen, suggested that we renew our Franciscan charism by studying our Rule. The Fraternity Council agreed that monthly discussion of the rule will be part of our on-going formation. We’ll start with the prologue in January, leaving 26 brief units of a paragraph or two to nourish us throughout the year. May we receive the Rule with the same joy as our forebearers did, recognizing it as the fruit of the Second Vatican Council. *Prosit!*

**God Conquers Our Evil with Good** by Richard Rohr, OFM

God resists our evil and conquers it with good, or how could God ask the same of us?! Think about that. God shocks and stuns us into love. God does not love us if we change; God loves us so that we can change. Only love effects true inner transformation, not duress, guilt, shunning, or social pressure. Love is not love unless it is totally free. Grace is not grace unless it is totally free. You would think Christian people would know that by now, but it is still a secret of the soul.

— from the book *Breathing Under Water: Spirituality and the Twelve Steps*

**FRANCISCAN  
TEACHINGS**

**Quotes of St. Francis**

“My dear son, be patient because the weaknesses of the body are given to us in this world by God for the salvation of the soul. So they are of great merit when they are borne patiently.”

“Keep a clear eye toward life’s end. Do not forget your purpose and destiny as God’s creature. What you are in his sight is what you are and nothing more.”

“If you have men who will exclude any of God’s creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men.”

“Blessed is the servant who loves his brother as much when he is sick and useless as when he is well and can be of service to him.”

“Blessed is he who loves his brother as well when he is afar off as when he is by his side, and who would say nothing behind his back he might not, in love, say before his face.”

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## **January Reflection** by Brother Vincent

I just wasn't up to going to art class that day. My heart was heavy. Some would call it the winter blues, but that wasn't it. I forced myself to go because we were celebrating Stephanie's birthday. It wasn't really a surprise. The subject for the class was a wheat field with a heavy wind blowing, but the gorgeous blue sky was without a cloud. When my art teacher came by, he said, "your colors are all wrong." I was seeing a storm brewing. I walked away and said I needed some air. Outside I could see someone sitting on the curb at the end of the block. It looked like Stephanie. I walked down the street and paused, "Steph?" She waited a minute and then without looking up at me, she mumbled into her folded knees, "my twin sister killed herself this morning."

I slowly sat next to her on the curb and just held her. She started sobbing uncontrollably and I joined her. After a few minutes it started drizzling. She spoke barely audibly asking me if I'd go to the nearby playground with her. "We can sit on the swings and cry our eyes out and no one will know in the rain." Eventually we went back to our art class and Stephanie acted like nothing was wrong. I just couldn't bring myself to join in with the others singing happy birthday. Within days Stephanie and her mom were gone. I had no idea where they moved to, and I never heard from her again, but something happened that day as we sat on the swings with only the sound of the raindrops falling on our clothes. How do I put it into words?

No two artists will paint a landscape exactly the same. Not even identical twins always know what restlessness may be stirring in the other's soul, but whenever I hear of someone in turmoil, that day comes back to me. I realize I was truly myself at that moment. You may call it compassion, but something converged within us. We were carried away to a place of silent observance. I would venture to say that during the pandemic "lockdown" many people had a similar experience. May I remind you all St. Francis endured while he was imprisoned and the inner storms he suffered after returning to Assisi. Wasn't his encounter with the leper, a moment of silent awakening, when they "converged" and he found his true self? And kneeling before the crucifix at San Damiano, Francis was 'carried away' yet truly present. He wouldn't accept the commendations of elders or clerics. He knew what he heard within his very soul and heart. The 'winter blues' persisted, but he ventured on. Advisors told him exactly what should happen, but he saw things differently, as Jesus did. He found the broken and the despised and sat down and cried with them.

When we experience such a profound awareness of God's life and love mingled within our being, we may recognize an inner cry and sense the desire for belonging among the despairing and oppressed. Enemies are reconciled, the disfigured are healed, and wonders of His love and mercy fill the redeemed. All in the silence of the moment when we find our true selves encountering a troubled soul, who feels alone and misunderstood. Allow yourself to be carried away so another can find the breath of God and live.

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**Celebrate God's Creation** — from the book *The Peace of Christmas: Quiet Reflections from Pope Francis* by Diane M. Houdek

Our holiday celebrations often keep us indoors. In northern climates, this might be partly because the cold and snowy weather makes going outside a difficult and even unpleasant experience. We hurry from house to car and then into another warm house. In warm climates, the heat finds us scurrying between air-conditioned buildings. But creation—including the weather—is a gift to be celebrated, not something simply to be controlled and altered. We lose our sense of wonder in nature when we become too absorbed in the structures of everyday life. Most of us have jobs and other responsibilities that keep us indoors. The people of the Bible lived much closer to the land than we do today. Navigating by the stars was something they did as a matter of course. Jesus's parables reflect a deep knowledge of flocks, fields, and fishing. We can understand these stories better if we grow in our awareness of creation. Pope Francis, like his namesake, St. Francis of Assisi, calls us to read God's presence not only in our holy books but in the holiness of the world around us, plant and animal as well as human.