

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

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

THE FRANCISCAN SPIRIT NEWSLETTER

January 2023

**Next Meeting: January 7th at 10:00 am at
Neumann Hall (behind the Old Church)**

Saint Charles of Sezze – January 18th

Charles was born Giancarlo Marchioni to a devout farming family of modest means in Sezze, about 40 miles south of Rome. As a young man he helped with tasks on the farm, tending to the livestock and ploughing. His parents hoped he would eventually study for the priesthood, but he was a poor student, so that avenue was closed.

When he was 20, he fell seriously ill and made a vow to become a Franciscan if he recovered. He joined the Reformed Friars Minor at Nazzano in 1635; his parents continued to press him and his superiors to pursue ordination, but Charles knew his own capacities and was content with a life of humble service.

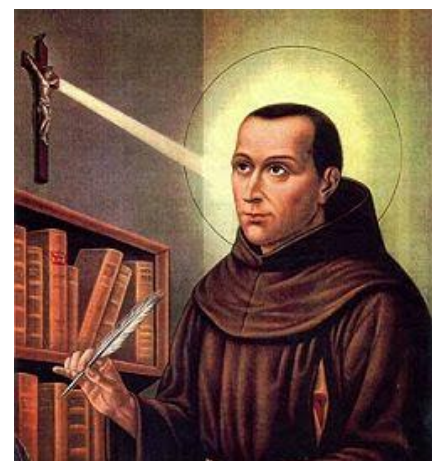
Charles was assigned to a number of friaries in the Roman province, working at various jobs: porter, gardener, cook, quaestor (the friar who went out begging for alms), and sacristan. He also devoted himself to intense prayer and works of charity.

In practical matters Charles often seemed to be awkward, a “disaster waiting to happen”: once, while cooking, he created a major fire in the friary. On the other hand, he developed a powerful spiritual insight into people and situations.

Once, the guardian of a convent ordered Charles—who was the porter at the time—to give food only to traveling friars who came to the door. He did this in obedience, and alms to the friars decreased. He persuaded the guardian that the two facts were related. When the friars resumed helping all who requested assistance, offerings to the friars increased. Gradually, Charles’s reputation spread; he was sought out for advice by prominent families and high ecclesiastics, including three popes.

Despite his lack of education, Charles began to put his insights into writing. Besides an extensive correspondence, he wrote a number of devotional works, described as “solid, spiritual, and seraphic.” Most famous was his spiritual autobiography, “The Grandeurs of the Mercies of God,” written at the command of his confessor.

Charles died at the friary of San Francesco a Ripa in Rome on January 6, 1670. He was beatified in 1882 and canonized by Pope Saint John XXIII in 1959.



Saint Charles of Sezze

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

Birthdays:

- Diane LoSasso (23rd)
- Scott Stevens (14th)

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

January Meeting: Meet 9:00 am at St. John’s for mass & then meeting in Neumann Hall. Bring a food item for our Holiday Brunch after the meeting!

*“And the Word was made flesh, and came to dwell among us; and we had sight of his glory, glory such as belongs to the Father’s only-begotten Son, full of grace and truth.”
(John 1:15)*

From “The General Constitutions of The SFO” – Article 22-3

“The renunciation of the use of violence, characteristic of the followers of Francis, does not mean the renunciation of action. However, the brothers and sisters should take care that their interventions are always inspired by Christian love.”

Discover your patron saint for 2023! – by Aletea website

Start the New Year choosing a Saint who will be your intercessor and support. St. Faustina drew a saint every year! The beginning of a new year is a moment for many of us to take stock, make resolutions, and set new goals. Unfortunately, it often happens that our enthusiasm quickly fades, and there is barely enough motivation to last even through January....

Let's turn to patron saints for help instead! Your patron saint is an intercessor in heaven. Entrusting your intentions to the intercession of God's Saints is a beautiful custom that will not only help you persevere in times of trial and hardship this year, but also open your heart to God's plan for you.

The tradition of drawing a patron saint of the year is particularly cherished by the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, to which St. Sister Faustina Kowalska belonged. In her Diary, she recalls January 1, 1935, as follows:

“When we came to the refectory for breakfast, after we had said our goodbyes, the drawing of the patrons began. When I approached the pictures on which the patron saints are written, I took them without thinking, but without reading immediately; I wanted to mortify myself for a few minutes. Then I hear a voice in my soul: I am your patron, read. At that moment I looked at the inscription and read: patron saint for 1935 – the Blessed Eucharist. My heart trembled with joy (Acts 360).”

Every year St. Faustina was convinced of the great help of her patron saint and the intercession of heaven. How about you? Will you entrust your intentions to a patron saint this year?

Lionel Messi declares: “I knew God would bring this gift to me” by Aletea website

For soccer fans around the world, the excitement was palpable during the World Cup final in Qatar on Sunday. In a match that saw Argentina win the coveted cup against France after an action-packed match, which went into extra time and ended on a penalty shootout, the Argentinian captain, Lionel Messi, led his team to victory.

Messi is actually well known for his Catholic faith and has a large tattoo of Jesus Christ on his arm. He's also met with Pope Francis twice, who pointed out in an interview that while Messi was “very good,” he “isn't God.” “I just said that God was going to give it to me.” And it seemed he was right to put his faith in Him, as he scored two goals during the game itself, and then inspired his team by placing a penalty firmly into the back of the net in the penalty shootout.

FRANCISCAN TEACHINGS

Quotes of St. Francis

“All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle.”

“For it is in giving we receive.”

“Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take nothing that you have received....but only what you have given; a full heart enriched by honest service, love, sacrifice and courage.”

“Do few things but do them well, simple joys are holy.”

There is no use in walking anywhere to preach if your walking isn't your preaching.”

*“You are our hope,
You are our faith,
You are our charity,
You are our sweetness, You are our eternal life;
Great and wonderful Lord,
Almighty God, merciful Savior.”
Praises of God*

“A person sins who wishes to receive more from his neighbor than what he wishes to give of himself to the Lord God.”

Notes from a Friar: A Spirit of Gratitude by Jeremy Harrington, OFM

Unfortunately, some family gatherings are stressful because of long-held grudges and lack of forgiveness. But I don't want to focus on just Thanksgiving Day itself but being thankful every day as a basic virtue that can brighten our lives.

I tend to be a pretty happy guy. People tell me that I smile a lot. That comes as second nature to me because I count among my blessings a loving family and my fulfilling life as a Franciscan. I know that others carry many crosses and I listen to their stories with compassion. But I'm convinced that being thankful can brighten a dark day.

Benedictine David Steindl-Rast writes about the practice of gratitude as a way of healing oneself and society. He takes an active role in "Gratefulness: Network for Grateful Living," an interactive, online forum in which thousands from many countries participate. He sees gratitude as a remedy for the exploitation, oppression, and violence that plague our society. Thankfulness, he says, is also the heart of prayer.

Faith provides us with powerful reasons to be grateful. We recognize the Giver of all good things and put our trust in God who loves us.

"To be grateful is to recognize the love of God in everything he has given us—and he has given us everything," Thomas Merton writes. "Every breath we draw is a gift of his love, every moment of existence is a grace. Gratitude therefore takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and praise of the goodness of God. For the grateful person knows that God is good, not by hearsay but by experience. And that is what makes all the difference."

When we are mired in crisis, a spirit of gratitude can help us. It can prompt us to go deeper to the foundation on which can stand.

Toward the end of his life, St. Francis was in pain from the wounds in his body. He was going blind. But his faith in God's presence was real, and from his heart he sang a hymn of thanks: "Praise be my Lord for Brother Sun, Sister Moon and the stars, Sister Water, Brother Fire, our Sister Mother Earth. . . . Praise and bless my Lord and give him thanks."

The Conversion of St. Francis of Assisi by Sr. Rosemary Stets, OSF

A turning point in the life of the young Francis of Assisi was his capture and imprisonment following a battle with rival city Perugia in 1202. Upon being released, he returned to Assisi a changed man, no longer interested in the worldly amusements of his past and more deeply drawn to solitary prayer.

Over the next two years, he began to lead a "life of penance." This included not only mortification and self-denial but also a new vision of reality—seeing the world from God's point of view: a creation filled with beauty, joy, and goodness, reflecting the goodness and love of God, our Creator who deserved highest praise, worship, and love in return.

The first step in this metanoia was a generous response to God's grace when he embraced the leper, thus overcoming his revulsion for those with this dreaded disease and turning his heart to compassion and mercy. He began to live among lepers in the marginalized communities outside the walls of Assisi, serving their needs and thus reorienting his life from one of self-protection and personal enhancement to one of self-sacrifice and concern for others.

This has become the essential characteristic of Third Order Regular spirituality—a continuous turning to the Lord, serving others in imitation of Christ who came to serve and not be served, and following the example of St. Francis. The second chapter of the Third Order Regular Rule reads: "Led by God, let them begin a life of penance, conscious that all of us must be continuously and totally converted. As a sign of their conversion and consecration to gospel life they are to clothe themselves plainly and to live in simplicity" (Article 6).