


**“THE FLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS”**


**THE POPE ST. JOHN XXIII  
SECULAR FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY  
Davidsonville, Maryland**

**Our MINISTER’S MUSINGS - by *Ann Marie Pessagno, OFS***

### **Leading a Sacramental Life**

**I** have been giving much thought to Father Patrick’s talk that he gave at our fraternity meeting on Saturday August 10, 2024. He said our path to sainthood and holiness is to truly live a sacramental life. He emphasized Sunday Mass, daily Mass attendance, monthly confession and prayer with a focus on Eucharistic Adoration in a Holy Hour. I must admit I thought “okay this isn’t too hard!” Another fraternity sister said she was doing her checklist as he was outlining these, and the checkboxes seemed complete. Oh, but wait.... Then it hit me! As Secular Franciscans, especially those who have been professed, we have made life long and sincere promises to do these things faithfully. It cannot be simply a checkbox, or I got this attitude - it is so much more than that!

**I** speak for myself as I ponder the real work and effort it takes to live a sacramental life. How do I attend Sunday Mass? Do I prepare beforehand, read the readings in advance and engage in the Mass with all my heart? Am I an example to those around me in my singing, prayers and praise of God or do I look like someone who is going through the motions and is looking at my watch? Do I willingly and joyfully run to confession to receive God’s mercy, grace and forgiveness or is it a duty? Do I pray from the heart with reverence and devotion, and do I run to Eucharistic Adoration to spend personal time with Our Lord because I love to be with Him? If I am really honest, I have a long way to go and can do so many things better!

**I** would also add that my time in Medjugorje has taught me to focus on the five pillars – another simple way to follow Jesus. Mary always points us to her Son and wants our eyes focused on the cross! She also outlines Mass, prayer, rosary and Adoration, confession, getting to know her Son through diving deep in the scriptures and through fasting on bread and water, especially Wednesday’s and Fridays. Seems simple right? I often feel like I get it right some of the time somewhat and fail miserably at other times.

**So**, what is the point? What I have learned most from my almost five years of being a Secular Franciscan is this - we might never get any of this right or perfect, but we must stay on the path and never give up! Every time I stumble and fail, I need to get back up and try harder to do these things with my heart and with every fiber of my being.

Something that Father Pat said really resonated with me. The way that he said it was with such reverence, passion and intensity. **“I promise you that if you commit to these ways on your path to holiness and sainthood it will enhance and change your life and your relationship with Jesus”**. Even though I know how hard and challenging this is – this is our calling and journey! So, let’s put out our hands and help each other!

Peace and All Good and God Bless,  
*Ann Marie Pessagno, OFS*



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## **Our VICE MINISTER'S MUSINGS**

by *Joe O'Dea, OFS*

### **Dialoging with Others**

Ever since the first time I heard, “never talk religion or politics”, I knew there was something wrong with that. So much of our personal, family, and nation’s moral life is in our government leader’s hands. When we talk about the present issues between ourselves and our leaders, we can change our moral direction toward God, not away from him!

Our founding fathers, who God led here to establish the new government we have, with freedom never before seen - the freedom of religion for one, told us that talking to others about the social/political issues would be essential to being informed citizens. With that, we can choose our leaders wisely and appeal to them on any issue to ensure that our freedoms and moral life aren’t lost. But we don’t talk because we no longer know how without getting into arguments. The first best thing we can do is *listen*. Often, we interject mid-sentence, as I often have, and that never works. “Let them talk” is the whisper in my ear lately, and it really works! All of us are more open to listen when others let us talk.

Jesus told us to proclaim the Gospel. Are we? I know I don’t enough. It’s for the good of souls, and the good of the world. Nothing lights people up like hearing something they need to hear about God at a big moment in their lives. There is a way to do it though. First, asking for God’s help works. Listen and speak gently. Disagreeing seldom works. Asking a question engages dialog. Then we can proclaim whatever we feel God is giving us for that person.

We can apply what St. Francis would tell us - be respectful, and when we genuinely listen to others with care, perhaps they’ll genuinely listen to us. This can make the difference between keeping our freedom or losing it; or gaining higher moral ground, or losing it, which hurts everyone. We also need to do something we may not like; listen to the news from the other side. Just like Protestants who believe something about Catholics that isn’t true helps them form a negative attitude about us, so does our believing in something we might find isn’t true give us a wrong view of an issue and hurts others. Truth is always liberating. Let us all love truth and wisdom, being open to the guidance of God for our sake and the sake of the world!



*Joe O'Dea, OFS*

## Seeds of Faith – by *Nina Teti, OFS*

I wanted to share an article I wrote when I was active in the Spiritual Life Ministry at my parish church, St. Anthony, North Beach...a tucked away "treasure" which I mentioned in the first issue. St. Francis and St. Clare were two kindred souls who invoked prayer and sacrifice as they encountered joys and sorrows in their journey to God on earth. I thought this "treasure" would enlighten how my encounter and relationship with Jesus led me to the Secular Franciscans!

### The "Gift" that Keeps on Giving



In the spring of 1957, I graduated from Sacred Heart Academy, Washington DC. As a graduation gift, I received a personalized "**Imitation of Christ**" written by Thomas Kempis. A small book, beautifully bound in black leather and gold gilded edges. As I began to read, I realized it was beyond my spiritual depth at that time in my life and tucked it away, but treasured it because it was gifted to me by my Godmother.

Fifty-three years later, my husband and I built a home for our family to make memories on the Chesapeake Bay, and St Anthony's became our parish home as well. As I was unpacking, I found the tucked away "**Imitation of Christ**". (You never know what surfaces after so many years). In the serenity and peacefulness of my new home, I began to read and reflect on the context. It was a difficult read as it was in old English, *thee* and *thou*. Intrigued, I found I could purchase the revised translation in the vernacular. Absorbed in the masterly written dialogue, I could not put it down. My mind and spirit were constantly drawing me to continue and discern what the Lord, who became my entrusted friend, was personally revealing to me. This literary and spiritual book of prayer is an intimate conversation between Christ and Disciple. We are always searching for answers wherever we are in our fragile state of being, whether it's joys or sorrows, but knowing the Lord is always there to freely listen and give advice is humbling. I am on my third reading and each time, I find myself surrendering to His Infinite Love and Divine Mercy, echoing the thoughts of the Disciple. My beloved husband passed away in May, and in **Book 3, Chapter 29: How We Should Call Upon God and Bless Him in Time of Tribulation!**

**Chapter 30: On Asking the Divine Assistance and on Confidence of Recovering Grace** were most comforting, because I was grieving, angry and had many doubts and questions. Nine months have passed and I am at peace, still moments of weeping, but feeling my beloved husband's presence within me, because through prayer and the Eucharist, I trust in my Lord who loves me. Today, the intimacy and the poetry of Christ speaks to me in **Book 3, Chapter 6: True Solace is to Be Sought in God Alone.**

**Chapter 7: That All Our Cares Must be Placed in God.** As I continue my earthly journey, I have no doubt another Chapter will captivate my heart and depths of my soul and draw me ever closer to my Lord in holiness, until I rest in Him. Next to the **Bible**, the "Imitation of Christ" is the most spiritually read book!

It is small and can go anywhere with you. I invite and encourage you to fall deeper in Love with Christ, as I have, and seek Him. In **Book 4, HE GIVES HIMSELF TO YOU** in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and **MERCIFULLY FORGIVES YOU** in Reconciliation and embraces, invites and **AWAITS YOU** to spend time in silence, quietly talking with Him in Adoration. We all have a story to tell!

Enjoy the rest of the summer. *Pace e Bene!*

*Nina Teti, OFS*

## Fraternity Meeting 8/10/24

### “Walking in the Way of St. Francis in Our Everyday Lives”

by *Father Patrick Monahan O.F.M.CAP*

Our Fraternity meeting was well attended by our members, Franciscan Seculars from St. Conrad’s Fraternity and parishioners from Holy Family Church. Father Patrick serves as a military chaplain and teacher at St. Francis Academy in Baltimore. He recently served as the Spiritual Advisor for St. Conrad’s Secular Francis Fraternity. He connected Pope St. John XXIII and St. Francis with their military service with links to our present-day military men and women. He went on say how St. Francis was broken from his capture and prison confinement and sought refuge in the small chapel of San Damiano and prayed fervently before the cross. **“Church is like a field hospital after the battle,”** said Pope Francis. Did St. Francis suffer PTSD? Did he decide to live among the lepers because he realized his own sinfulness and received God’s grace and mercy to dedicate his life to the poor and unrecognized. Father Patrick referenced Murray Bodo’s *The Journey and the Dream* as well as GK Chesterton’s book on St. Francis to further investigate.

Father Patrick asked the group: **“Who is St. Francis to you?”** Answers included: **poverty; peace; nature; helping those in need; humility and contemplation.** He was **intentional in his faith** and **“found his cave”** in the secular world.

**H**ow do we become saints? Answer: Live a sacramental life. Go to Church! Just as the world needed St Francis in 1220, God put us here because He needs us here today! As Secular Franciscans, we need to actively attend Sunday Mass and daily Mass at least once during week, go to confession monthly, and pray from the heart daily with frequent Eucharistic Holy Hours to grow in holiness. Father Patrick promised that these items done consistently, and with devotion, would change our lives!



## My Apostolate as A Prayer Warrior

by *Sandy Horvath, OFS*

Several months ago, our fraternity Minister, Ann Marie Pessagno, OFS, sent us an e-mail asking us to list the Apostolates we were involved in and to send the list to her. It made me look back on my life and how many ministries I had been involved in for decades. I was sad to realize this part of my life was now in the past. I had sent her a text saying my focus now is to pray for the many needs of others!



Last month she asked me to write an article for the Newsletter on my Prayer Ministry. Prayer has always been a very important part of my life. In my twilight years now, I have felt the Holy Spirit guiding me to concentrate my prayers to other's requests. This has been such a blessing to me. To know that my prayers are joined with many others who are also praying for each person. I belong to an Army of Prayer Warriors for the sake of others!

I have a heart prayer, a cancer prayer and Padre Pio's daily prayer for other's needs, "The Efficacious Novena Prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus."

I write each name and need so I can focus on each of them daily. Many of the people I don't know, but I feel a special closeness to each of them. Friends know that I keep the names on my list. Even when they have passed away, I write R.I.P., and the date, pray that they are at peace, and pray for their loved ones that are grieving!

I thank the Holy Spirit for guiding me to this ministry. It has given me so much joy and my own sense of peace because I continue to help others!

*Sandy Horvath, OFS*

## Caring for Creation: Seeds of Life

by *Chris Gordon, OFS*

Have you ever cleared an area in preparation for doing a fresh planting of your favorite flowers and veggies in the garden? Did you soon discover all these weeds suddenly popping up everywhere? (I like to remind folks, weeds are just plants growing in a place not intended, native or otherwise.). Where did they all come from?



Well, it turns out the seeds, also known as plant embryos, were there all along. Those seeds are like a space capsule, encased in a seed coat, carrying everything needed in space and time to survive. In some cases, they lay dormant for many years, yes even centuries. They are waiting for just the right circumstances of moisture and temperature to sprout and bring new life to your garden space. Many thanks for turning the soil and bringing those seeds to the surface, providing all that sunshine and moisture. This is one of the reasons No Till Farming is making such a resurgence, in an attempt to limit pesticides.

This is a great time of year to gather native seeds from the flowers you do have, You will be able to plant them next year, or even share with your friends and neighbors. Let's just make sure they are native to our Maryland ecosystem. Internet photo searches of flowers can be very helpful. Store seeds in labeled paper envelopes to prevent mold. If you can, leave some of the spent flowers in place as long as possible. So many birds depend on these seeds to put on fat for their migration or to survive the cold weather ahead. "Real friends share natives and don't share invasives". Oh, that's a column for another day.

*Chris Gordon, OFS*



## FRANCISCAN FEATURE

### Chapter Seven

### HIS ZEAL FOR PRAYER *and* THE DIVINE OFFICE *and* FOR PRESERVING SPIRITUAL JOY IN HIMSELF AND IN OTHERS

#### FIRST, PRAYER AND THE DIVINE OFFICE

Although he had been afflicted with illness for many years, he was, nevertheless, especially devout and reverent toward prayer and the divine office. Thus, when he was praying or reciting the canonical hours, he never leaned against a wall or partition, but always stood erect, with his head uncovered, and sometimes on his knees, especially when he spent the greater part of the day and night in prayer.

When he went through the world on foot, he always would stop walking when he wanted to say his hours. If he was riding on horseback, because of his infirmity, he would always get down to say the office.

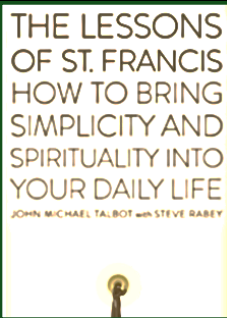
One time, it was raining very heavily, and he was riding horseback because of his illness and pressing need. Since he was already completely soaked, when he wanted to say the hours, he got off his horse; and he said the office, standing in this way on the roadside with the rain continually pouring down on him, with such fever of devotion and reverence, and as if he had been in a church or in a cell. And he said to his companion: **“If, in peace and quiet, the body wants to eat its food which, with the body, will eventually become food for worms, in what peace and quiet, and with what reverence and devotion should the soul receive its food, which is God Himself!”**

(Francis of Assisi Early Documents – The Prophet – Vol. III)

“The Beginning of A Mirror of Perfection of the *Status*” of a Lesser Brother (The Sabatier Edition, p. 341)



## ONGOING FORMATION FRATERNITY MEETINGS



### Fraternity Meeting 6/5/24

#### **Book Discussion: *How to Bring Simplicity and Spirituality into Your Daily Practice***

by

John Michael Talbot and Steve Rabey

The fraternity members were broken into six groups including a Zoom group and were each assigned the First Chapter and one other chapter to discuss. The chapters assigned were: **Tangible Saint** (all); **Simplicity**; **Joy**; **Solitude**; **Humility**; **Creativity and Chasity**. The

questions to ponder were:

- What are two takeaways for your chapter?
- What attracted you to follow in the footsteps of St. Francis?
- What are some practical ways that you can incorporate these virtues into your spiritual life?
- How did St. Francis demonstrate these virtues in his life?
- What might you add to your spiritual life from these ideas?

The groups spent forty minutes discussing the First Chapter and their assigned chapter. There were lively and engaged discussions. A few key takeaways were:

- Simplicity was how St. Francis lived, and it brought him immense joy.
- Joy can be a challenge and letting go and surrendering can bring much joy to us.
- Humility puts pride to shame, and daily conversion is necessary to make oneself humble.
- Creativity is in all of us and all around us.

The members agreed that we are all called to live as St. Francis did - **joyfully, simply with humility, exhibiting creativity in all our endeavors.**

### Fraternity Meeting 7/3/24

#### **Multiculturalism** - by *Sita Chakrawarti, OFS*

Sita Chakrawarti, OFS spoke to the Fraternity on the topic of Multiculturalism. Sita is the Virginia Area Councilor for St. Margaret of Cortona Region. She is a member of St. Thomas Moore Secular Franciscan Fraternity and was professed in 2016. She is a retired Foreign Service Officer and comes from a multicultural background.



Sita started off her discussion by asking **what multiculturalism means to all of us**. Answers included: inclusivity; welcoming spirit no matter your origins and appreciating diverse backgrounds and cultural traditions. Sita emphasized that we all see things differently with many divergent points of view. When we get out of our comfort zones, hostility can come into play.

**Who are our lepers today?** As Franciscans, we are to embrace our brothers and sisters and see the person within! Do we really strive to see the real person? We need to see the individual and, most importantly, to see Christ in all our encounters. We are called to embrace differences - even if you don't agree with them! St. Francis always exhibited respect and encouraged dialogue with others. We need to start with our own family and friends, and to always be a bridge for others.

In conclusion, Sita stressed that we are to value every human being, and **that we must be the change that the world needs to see today!** Be kind to all you meet. The smallest acts can make a huge impact on others. As Francis did, see the person of Christ in **ALL** our brothers and sisters!



## FRANCISCAN SAINTS WHO HAD THE STIGMATA

By  
*Judy Hool, OFS*

Judy introduced the topic stating that the marks of the stigmata are the wound marks of our crucified Lord for the purpose of drawing that person into a special union with Our Lord Jesus. They share in the passion for the conversion of sinners for the benefit of others. A person may have one or more of the marks, they may be visible or invisible, may not occur all at once but can be progressive. It is very difficult to prove. The stigmata has never been authenticated on a living person and much skepticism surrounds it. The stigmata is a true gift of grace given to only those whom the Lord wills. It cannot be healed and more than 90% of the verified cases are on women. Judy gave several instances of saints who bore the stigmata saying it was different for each who had it. It is often most apparent during the Passion of our Lord.

Penny presented **Saint Veronica Giuliani**, a very gifted Capuchin mystic. She was born near Milan, Italy in 1660, entered the Capuchins at Cittidi Castello, Umbria in 1677 and remained there for the rest of her life. Canonized by Pope Gregory XVI, she showed great compassion to the poor, was known for her practicality and was humiliated by the five wounds of the stigmata.

Pat talked on **Saint Marguerite Bays** who was born to pious farmers in Switzerland. She never left her hometown of La Pierraz, and was very dedicated to children and young girls. She called the poor 'God's favorites'. At the age of 35 she developed intestinal cancer and prayed to the Blessed Mother to align her pain more directly to the Passion of Our Lord. Miraculously cured on December 8, 1854 as Pope Pius IX was pronouncing the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, her life was centered on God, making her very humble. She exhibited periods of ecstasy every Friday, reliving the phases of the Passion of Our Lord.

Theresa gave insight into **Saint Theresa Neumann** of Germany. Like Marguerite Bays, she entered periods of ecstasy every Friday when she would be covered in blood while experiencing the Passion of Jesus. Born in 1898, her wish to become a missionary to Africa was not possible after an accident left her paralyzed in both legs and blind while helping to fight a fire. Her time was spent in prayer and a miraculous recovery occurred in a vision when asked if she wished to be healed. Her answer was whatever the Lord willed was what she wanted. She received the stigmata and began a complete fast, taking only the Eucharist. She wanted the world to understand the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist. That through it, physical life can actually be maintained.

### **St. Margaret of Cortona 2024 OFS Chapter of Mats**

**How are we as Secular Franciscans poised to bring Christ to our world?  
What unique gifts do we have to offer?**

Jeanne Catrow, Judy Hool, Duke Jones, Joe O'Dea and Mary Rohde attended the **St. Margaret of Cortona 2024 OFS Chapter of Mats** at the Claggett Center in Adamstown, Maryland from September 6-September 8, 2024.

The Chapter of Mats, first assembled by St. Francis himself, is a time to assemble all Secular Franciscans from all Fraternities within the St. Margaret of Cortona Region to share and seek the Holy Spirit's guidance for the path we are to take in the coming years. This year's theme was **The Next 800 Years**, and the gathering explored **where we have been, where we are now, and where we are going!**







**Formation Forum** - by *Jeanne Catrow, OFS, Formation Director*

(from the **Little Flowers of St. Francis**)

One day Brother Giles asked another friar, “Do you have a good soul my dear brother?” The brother answered, “I don’t know.” Then Brother Giles said: “My brother, I want you to know that the things which make a soul good and blessed are holy contrition, holy humility, holy charity, holy devotion, and holy joy.”

May we always strive to obtain a good soul throughout our formation – both initial and ongoing.

We continue our studies with 3 new Candidates: Genevieve DiUlio, Sonia Balboni, and Jean Schaefer! They are a true asset to our fraternity and the Spirit has blessed us well. Genevieve and Jean were admitted into our Fraternity on September 4, and Sonia was admitted on October 2, 2024.

These new candidates meet on the second Wednesday of each month. Please continue your prayers for these inspired women as they continue their journeys to profession.

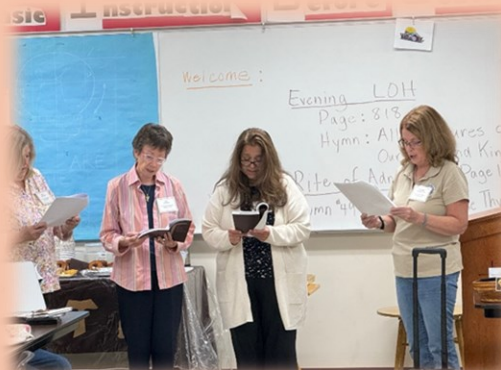
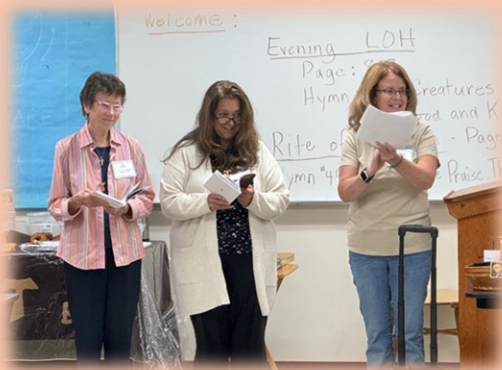
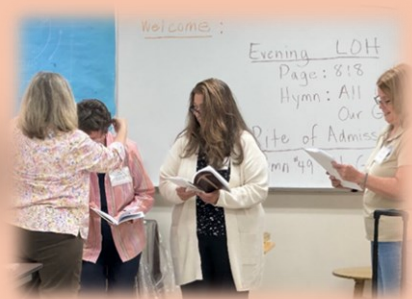
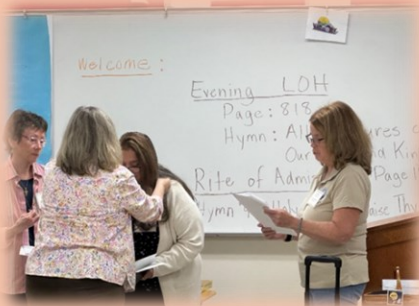
Our candidates, Barbara Henry, Shawn Dickey, Elizabeth Brownlee, and Michael O’Rourke, remain a gift to our fraternity with their devotion and prayerfulness. This group provides support to each other in our discussions, and consistently shares their spirituality and their call to the Franciscan life with each other. Please pray for them as they move toward Profession in the spring of 2025.

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.


These candidates meet on the third Wednesday of each month and truly appreciate your prayers and support as they continue their journey.

On Wednesday, October 23, 2024, there will be a Pope St. John XXIII Secular Franciscan Information Gathering at Holy Family Church from 7PM to 9PM. The Spirit has blessed us with aspirants wanting to know more about the Secular Franciscans. This will be an opportunity for these people to learn more about us before committing to the formation process. Please spread the word!

**Be at peace, my brothers and sisters in St. Francis!**



## PROFESSION 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 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 February 1, 2020 February 1, 2020 February 1, 2020 February 26, 2022 February 26, 2022 February 26, 2022 February 26, 2022 May 13, 2023 May 13, 2023
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## BIRTHDAY WISHES

Kathy Duffy Sonia Balboni Marie Waleryszak Judy Hool	October 26 November 1 November 1 November 2		Elizabeth Brownlee Jeanne Catrow Ron Van Nest	November 3 November 7 November 7
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## TREASURY TIDBITS – AUGUST 2024

<b>April 30, 2024 Ending Balance</b>	<b>\$8,665.66</b>
<b>May - August 2024 Deposits</b>	<b>\$1,370.19</b>
<b>May - August 2024 Withdrawals</b>	<b>\$1,210.39</b>
<b>August 31, 2024 Ending Balance</b>	<b>\$8,825.46</b>

**Thank you for your generous donations!**

Our Fraternity will carefully and prayerfully manage the charitable contributions to serve our community.

*Pax et bonum!*

## SAVE THE DATES

<b>October 3, 2024</b>	Transitus at Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land DC or Shrine of St. Anthony Ellicott City, MD
<b>October 4, 2024</b>	Feast of St. Francis of Assisi
<b>October 26, 2024</b>	Secular Franciscans and Dilemmas in Secular Culture at Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land, Washington, DC - Father Charlie Miller (930 AM to 330 PM)
<b>November 9-10, 2024</b>	Chapter of Ministers at Our Lady of Bethesda Retreat Center
<b>December 2-9, 2024</b>	Winter Relief at Holy Family Parish
<b>December 15, 2024</b>	Franciscan Christmas Party at Kathy Brady's Home (1PM to 5PM)
<b>December 21, 2024</b>	Franciscan Sponsored Live Manager after 5PM Mass (6PM to 8PM)
<b>February 1, 2025</b>	Wine and Cheese <b>after 5PM Mass</b> in Unity Hall at Holy Family Parish

**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**, Ann Marie Pessagno, OFS ([ampessagno@yahoo.com](mailto:ampessagno@yahoo.com)) or our **Vice Minister**, Joe O'Dea, OFS ([remaincalmtoday@yahoo.com](mailto:remaincalmtoday@yahoo.com)). All are welcome!

