



March 2025

THE CALL

St. Thomas More Fraternity, Secular Franciscan Order

From Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel

Minister: Andrea Bender, OFS; Vice Minister: Sita Chakrawarti, OFS; Secretary: Thomas Bender, OFS; Treasurer: Joseph Kennedy, OFS (appointed); Formation Director: Janette Martin, OFS; Councilors-at-Large: Ann Corro, OFS, Michael Landrigan, OFS

Meeting – 1:00 pm. - Sunday, March 9, 2025

- We are collecting towels for the Lamb Center for use in showers for homeless men
- *Election* – Bring your Rituals!.

Remote Access to the Monthly Meeting Info

No remote access for the election!

Minister's Notes

We have all experienced using our phone to search for some product or something our phone interprets as a product we really want. Three weeks later we are still receiving alerts for the product or related products.

The scarier one for me is choosing to follow a link in a news feed. Your news feed has suddenly been transformed to at least 50% related topics. When you add the 25% thinly disguised ads what is left? What news stories have been dropped off the page? Does my following a link out of curiosity about a well written headline mean I miss an opportunity to direct prayer where it is most needed? (By the way, thank you for all the prayers headed my way—they were and are needed.)

What does this have to do with our spiritual life? I first started this meditation thinking and praying about a reflection. At St. Charles, where I sit in the front pew in front of the

altar (few distractions) one of our celebrants holds the patent on an angle while he uses the purificator to brush crumbs into the chalice after taking the host. The underside of the patent reflects the crucifix that is laid flat on the altar. This happens often enough that it sparks prayer. Though praying before a crucifix is a good thing, especially around communion, I also wonder about focusing on a reflection. Am I separating myself from the actual gift? That led to my questions about my behavior around a news feed and those annoying alerts offering products I either don't want, already have or can't afford. Maybe my prayer should focus on thank you for gifts received. Thank you for the gift of serving as your minister for six years. Please turn out March 9 for the election of the new council.

Pax et Bonum, Andrea

Prayer Intentions

For...

- Healing for Pope Francis.
- *Peace in the Holy Land and the Middle East and the victims of the violence.*
- A just peace in Ukraine and protection for her Ukrainian and Ruthenian Rite Catholics.
- *Federal Employees negotiating this time of uncertainty.*
- *Andrew, Ann Wester's son-in-law John's cousin, has a wife and 3 children. He fell in a roofing accident and is hospitalized with most of his ribs broken, a punctured lung, pneumonia and brain injuries.*
- Healing for Andrea Bender, OFS.
- *Healing for Pat Riggles, OFS for a broken hip*
- Ann Wester, OFS as she recovers from a broken elbow.
- *Grace Coipuram, OFS*
- Liz Shaeffer's niece, Sarah, recovering from two abdominal surgeries that left her with colostomy bag for an indeterminate time.
- *Patricia Kennedy, mother of Joseph Kennedy, OFS who is recovering from congestive heart failure.*
- Louis, son of Clarissa, of STM Parish, and for all those suffering from depression.
- *Friends of Liz, Mark who is undergoing chemo for stage 4 melanoma and Dan who has Parkinson's Disease.*
- The sister of a friend of April, who does not want her sister to pray for her.
- *April's friend, whose husband avoids Church, and his ex-wife who never went to Church.*
- *The grandson of April's friend and another friend with suddenly worsening dementia.*
- The Poor Holy Souls in Purgatory.
- *Religious freedom and for all persecuted for their belief in God.*
- Prisoners, the sick, poor, hungry, lonely, the elderly and their caregivers, homeless, unemployed, the dying and those with no one to pray for them.
- *The work of the Order of Malta in Bethlehem in this time of strife and war.*
- The union of all Christians and the salvation of all.
- *The health, protection and guidance all bishops and priests.*
- For vocations to all branches of the Franciscan family.

Professions

3/11/06

Elizabeth T Shaeffer (Elizabeth of Hungary)

Birthdays of the Month

Elly Escobal (16th)

April

Randy Bender (10th)

April Garcia (16th)

Necrology

Edward G Gleason – Mar 9, 1987

Patricia Smith – Mar 2003

Bettyann Ostergren – Mar 2005

Mary E. McDonough – Mar 1, 2006

Edwin Finney – Mar 28, 2007

Margaret Fitzgerald – Mar 31, 2011

Dcn Thomas Bello (Min.) – Mar 29, 2016

Secretary's Notes

In this issue of *The Call* we have Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM's reflection on listening. In particular, he reflects on the role of listening that is involved in the synodal process. This reflection is on page 3, and remember that Fr. Jerome asks for feedback.

Page 4 has the announcement for the Day of Reflection for Inquirers and Candidates on Saturday, March 29, 2024. Br. Mike Meza, OFM, Cap, a regional spiritual assistant is giving the presentations.

This month we recall the passing of Deacon Tom Bello, OFS. I did not know him as well as most in the fraternity but on page 5 is his last Spring reflection in Tau-USA from when he was National Minister.

Page 6 begins the Saints of the Month feature.

Please remember that we need all active members of the Fraternity present at Our Lady of Lourdes on time to vote in the election. No one can vote remotely and anyone arriving after the election starts will not be able to vote as well. The slate for the election is

Minister: Sita chakrawarti, OFS

Vice-Minister: Jan Martin, OFS

Secretary: Randy Bender, OFS

Treasurer: Joseph Kennedy, OFS

Formation Director: Michael Landrigan, OFS

Anyone not on the slate can nominate themselves or someone else for office as well. See you Sunday!

Peace and Good, Randy



Listen

There are different kinds of hearing. I notice the buzz of fluorescent lights. I hear someone call out my name. I pay attention to someone who is telling me something important. There is the “hey, listen” kind of call, and the “Listen now...” demand.

The various synods of the Church—or the synod of my Franciscan province—invite us to a different kind of hearing. When I do a pastoral visitation, I often use the analogy of how a doctor listens not only to what you say about your health but also to the things you don’t say—or can’t say. Synods help us to hear the heart and lungs of the Church.

A synod is an opportunity not only to speak but especially to listen. Partly we hear the annoying buzz of something that doesn’t work right but that we don’t know how to fix. We hear people who are, like us, striving to be faithful to a God who is ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, and incomprehensible.

At my province’s Synod earlier this year, we heard from several friars and laypersons who are “young adults.” For about an hour, we heard their stories, their experiences of the Church, and their joys and hopes, their griefs and anxieties (see *Gaudium et Spes*). This shaped our discussion and the direction we suggested to our provincial leadership. You can read more about the panel discussion at <https://friars.us/article/2025/01/16/young-adults-show-passion-and-commitment-to-franciscans-and-the-church-at-provincial-synod> but listening is the most critical part of a synod. The synod is not an assembly to make decisions but rather a forum to help the leadership hear from more than just those who happen to have their ear. Thus, the bishops of the Church broadly solicit our perspectives and experiences not for us to boss them around, but in order to hear what life is like where we are, so that they can make more informed decisions and better address the salvation of the Gospel to the whole of humanity.

For your reflection: How do I voice my experience to others? What seems to work well? How do I listen to others? Describe a time that you made an effort to pay attention to someone who had a different perspective that changed how you thought about something.

With gratitude to Mary Good, OFS, who suggested that I write about synodality.

Jerome, ofm
National Spiritual Assistant
OFS Animator, OFM Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe
ofs.assistant@friars.us

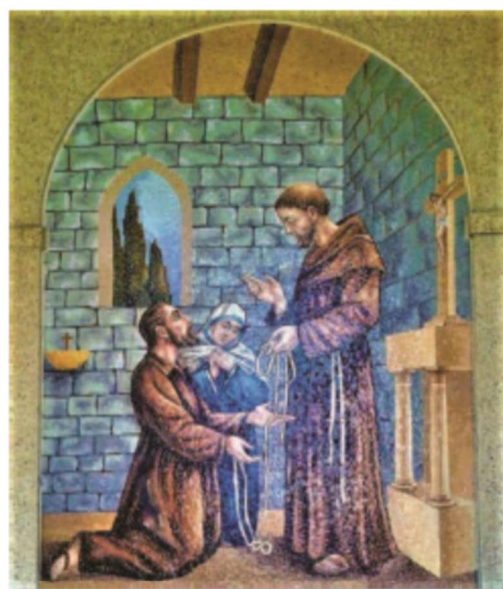
We'd love your feedback!
email jeromeofm@gmail.com

St. Margaret of Cortona OFS Region

Day of Reflection for Inquirers and Candidates

**All Inquirers, Candidates, and OFS members
are welcome!**

Join us for this Day of Reflection that will help you discern and prepare for your future with the OFS. Profession into the Secular Franciscan Order is a solemn and ecclesial lifelong commitment. Prayer and discernment is necessary before one makes the promises of profession.



St. Francis of Assisi blessing the
first Secular Franciscans.



Br. Michael Meza, OFM-Cap will guide and teach us about this deeply spiritual step that you are about to make in your relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. What does your commitment mean? How does Franciscan spirituality and charism effect your everyday life? What is the Franciscan way of Life? What is the "radical internal change" that the Rule speaks about? Come to intensify your understanding and reflect on this direction for your life.

All Inquirers, Candidates, and OFS members are welcome!

This is a good way to renew your commitment and ignite your conversion of the Franciscan way of life.

Where: Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in America, 1400 Quincy St. NE, DC

When: March 29, 2025 Saturday, 9:30am—3:00pm

Cost: \$50 lunch is included

A freewill offering will be collected for Br. Michael Meza, OFM Cap

REGISTER: DEADLINE MARCH 21, 2025

Register online at: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/March29Reflection#/>

You can pay electronically online or at the door. If paying at the door by check please make it payable to: **St. Margaret of Cortona OFS Region**

Contact for more information or assistance with registration.

Rita Colleran OFS, Regional Formation Director, rlcolleran10@gmail.com cell: 703-310-9958



FOLLOW ME

May the Lord bring us Peace!

Permit me to offer in this article the "flip side" of the last article "Miserando atque Eligendo"

(http://www.nafra-sfo.org/tau-usa/articles/winter13/minister_winter13.pdf).

In that article, I focused on Christ's "looking with mercy" (miserando) on Levi, a tax collector, on our Holy Father Pope Francis and on all of us in "choosing" (eligendo) us to follow Him. In this article, I will focus on our response to our Lord's merciful choice or election of us to "Follow me." (Christ is on the right side of the great Caravaggio painting, The Calling of St. Matthew, above; now I will concentrate on Levi/Matthew on the left side of the painting.)

As you may recall, Miserando atque Eligendo is from a famous homily by St. Bede on the Call of St. Matthew in the Office of Readings for St. Matthew's Feast Day on September 21. St. Bede wrote what it meant for Matthew and for us to "follow" the Lord Jesus:

"By 'follow' he meant not so much the movement of feet as of the heart, the carrying out of a way of life. For one who says that he lives in Christ ought himself to walk just as he walked, not to aim at earthly things, not to pursue perishable gains, but to flee base praise, to embrace willingly the contempt of all that is worldly for the sake of heavenly glory, to do good to all, to inflict injuries upon no one in bitterness, to suffer patiently those injuries that come to oneself, to ask God's forgiveness for those who oppress, never to seek one's own glory but always God's, and to uphold whatever helps one love heavenly things. This is what is meant by following

Christ. In this way, disregarding earthly gains, Matthew attached himself to the band of followers of One who had no riches. For the Lord himself, who outwardly called Matthew by a word, inwardly bestowed upon him the gift of an invisible impulse so that he was able to follow."

That "gift of an invisible impulse" is the gift of sanctifying grace, which Christ is ready, in His mercy, to bestow on all who, like Levi the tax collector, are ready to turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.

Thus, the call to "follow me" is a call to conversion. This call to conversion is truly the Lenten call, clearly the Christian call, clearly our call as Secular Franciscans. Christ is calling all of us every day. Every day. All of us. Our Secular Franciscan Rule 7 says "United by their vocation as 'brothers and sisters of penance' and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel calls 'conversion.' Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily."

The very first words that Christ utters in the historically first written gospel are uttered to all, even before the call of the first disciples: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

And as we know from The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, Lumen Gentium (LG), in its challenging Fifth Chapter, entitled "The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church," that call to all, that universal call to "follow me," is a call to holiness:

“The Lord Jesus, the divine Teacher and Model of all perfection, preached holiness of life to each and every one of His disciples of every condition” (LG 40 Para 1.). “All are called to holiness” (Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 2013). “All the faithful of Christ are invited to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state. Indeed they have an obligation to so strive” (LG 42 Para 5.).

Okay, well, what is holiness? CCC 2028, quoting LG 40 Para. 2, reads “All Christians . . . are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity.” Wow! The perfection of charity. To which a quote from St. Gregory of Nyssa, brother of St. Basil, is added: “Christian perfection has but one limit, that of having none.”

There’s a worthy goal to wrap ourselves around: the perfection of charity. Let’s say it again: the perfection of charity! Now we know where we’re headed. Now we know the way to get there. Now we surely know we can’t do it on our own: be perfect in charity? We need God’s great grace. We need the help of our brothers and sisters, the help of our great Franciscan family.

We should also now know what sin is. Quite simply, sin detracts or draws us away from that perfection of charity. We are not following God; we are following our own will, our desire for pleasure, the will of the world or, worst of all, the will of the devil: “sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life” (1 John 2:16). Thus, the three great works of conversion, the three great works of Lent: self-denial or fasting to combat sensual lust; charity or almsgiving to combat enticements for the eyes; and prayer or turning to God to combat the pretentious life. All lead to holiness, the perfection of charity.

If we are sincere about following Christ and committed to pursuing the perfection of charity, let us learn, almost by second nature, always to ask: Is this thought being thought in charity? Are these words being formed in charity? Will these words be spoken in charity? Is this contemplated action being

contemplated in charity? Will this action thus be done in charity? Will I receive this person approaching me, sitting near me, driving beside me, in charity?

Of course, to some extent, we cannot control certain basic impulses or what other people may think about us or say or do to us. Nonetheless, we can try to control how we respond to those inner impulses and to what we receive or perceive from outside. That’s when and where charity must kick in.

Again, Christ or Charity is the way. Christ or Charity is the goal. Christ or Charity should be the spark that fires our thoughts, words and deeds. If not, we run the risk of not following Christ. We run the risk of imperfection. We run the risk of sin.

One final note. A friendly Pastor once pulled me aside and gave in similar words the following “chiding” I offer to you:

“Tom, the Lord said, ‘Follow me.’ He didn’t say ‘Go out in front and show me how it should be done. I went into the desert to be tempted directly by the devil so that you would not have to go and seek the devil directly. I was hung on the Cross for the ransom of many so that you do not need to try single-handedly to sacrifice yourself for the ransom of many. I need to go first, not you. Okay?’”

Moreover, I said ‘Follow me,’ not ‘Tom, walk beside me.’ Yes, I may need to carry you from time to time, but you don’t need to be beside me pointing out how you don’t like how this or that is done or not done in My Church, by My bishops and priests. No, I’m not looking for an equal. I already have the Father and the Holy Spirit. I just need you to “follow me.”” Okay?”

Sisters and Brothers, let us pray for one another that we may be given the grace to follow wherever Christ chooses to lead us.

Peace and love, Tom

Tau-USA, Spring 2014, Issue 79, pp. 1-2

Saints of the Month

<https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/wp-content/uploads/Franciscan-Saints-2022-1-Catalog-by-Mary-Lou-Coffman-OFS.pdf>

March 2

St. Agnes of Prague, Virgin, Poor Clare (1205-March 6, 1282)

<https://catholicsaints.info/saint-agnes-of-prague/>

March 3

Bls. Liberatus Weiss, Samuele Marzorati and Michele Pio Fasoli, Martyrs of Gondar, Ethiopia, Priests, Order of Friars Minor (d. 1716)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Laurentius_Weiss_and_companions

Bl. Innocent of Berzo, Priest, First Order Capuchin (March 19, 1844-March 3, 1890)
<https://www.capdox.capuchin.org.au/saints-blesseds/blessed-innocenzo-da-berzo/>

March 5

St. John-Joseph of the Cross, Priest, Alcantarine Franciscan (August 15, 1654-March 5, 1839)
<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-john-joseph-of-the-cross/>

March 6

St. Colette de Corbie, Foundress: Colettine Poor Clares (February 13, 1381-March 6, 1447)
<http://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/st-colette-de-corbie.html>

March 7

Bl. Christopher of Milan, Priest, First Order Franciscan (d. 1485)
<https://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/blessed-christopher-of-milan.html>

March 9

St. Catherine of Bologna, Poor Clare Sister (September 8, 1413-March 9, 1463)
<https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/saints/saints-stories-for-all-ages/saint-catherine-of-bologna/>
St. Frances of Rome, Franciscan Third Order Secular, Oblates of St. Benedict (1384-March 9, 1440)
<http://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/st-frances-of-rome.html>

March 11

Bl. John Baptist Righi of Fabriano, Priest, Order of Friars Minor (1469-March 11, 1539)
<http://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/john-baptist-righi.html>
Bl. John Kearney, Priest, Order of Friars Minor, Martyr (1619-March 11, 1653)
<https://theblackcordelias.wordpress.com/2009/03/11/blessed-john-kearney-march-11/>

March 12

Bl. Angela Salawa of Cracow, Virgin, Third Order Secular (September 9, 1881-March 12, 1922)
<https://theblackcordelias.wordpress.com/2009/03/12/blessed-angela-aniela-salawa-march-12/>

March 16

Bl. Torello of Poppi, Third Order Secular (1202-March 16, 1282)
<https://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/blessed-torello-of-poppi.html>

March 17

Bl. Mark of Montegallo, Priest, Order of Friars Minor (1426-March 19, 1496)
<http://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/blessed-mark-of-montegallo.html>

March 18

St. Salvator of Horta, Lay Brother, Order of Friars Minor (December 1520-March 18, 1567)
<http://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/saint-salvator-of-horta.html>

March 19

St. Joseph, Foster Father of Our Lord
https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=4

March 20

Bl. Hippolyte Galentini, Confessor, Third Order Secular (d. 1620)
<https://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/blessed-hippolyte-galantini.html>

March 21

Bl. John of Parma, Minister General, Order of Friars Minor (c. 1209-March 19, 1289)
<http://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/blessed-john-of-parma.html>
St. Nicholas of Flüe, Minister General, Order of Friars Minor (c. 1447-March 21, 1487)
<https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/saints/nicholas-of-flue-710>

- March 22
St. Benvenute of Osimo, Bishop, Order of Friars Minor (d. March 22, 1282)
<http://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/saint-benvenute-of-osimo.html>
- March 23
Bl. Jeremy Lambertenghi, Priest, Third Order Secular (d. 1513)
<http://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/blessed-jeremy-lambertenghi.html>
- March 25
Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01542a.htm>
- March 28
Bl. Jane Mary of Maille, Third Order Secular (April 14, 1331-March 28, 1414)
<http://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/jane-mary-of-maille.html>
- March 30
Bl. Amadeus IX of Savoy, Third Order Secular (February 1, 1435-March 30, 1472)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amadeus_IX,_Duke_of_Savoy
Bl. Ludovico of Casoria, Priest, Order of Friars Minor (March 11, 1814-March 30, 1885)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludovico_of_Casoria
Bl. Maria Restituta Kafka, Sister, Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity (May 1, 1894-m. March 30, 1943) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Restituta_Kafka
St. Peter Regalado, Priest, OFM Conventual (1390-March 30, 1456)
<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-peter-regalado/>
- April 1
Bl. Henry Alfieri of Asti, Vicar General and Minister of the Order of Friars Minor (1315-1405)
<http://stevenwood.com/reflections/franciscan/0401-25.htm>
- April 2
Bl. Elisabetta Vendramini, Foundress, Third Order Sisters of St. Elizabeth of Hungary (April 9, 1790-April 2, 1860)
<https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/vendramini-elisabetta-bl>
St. Francis of Paola, Founder, Order of Minims (March 27, 1416-April 2, 1507)
<https://stevenwood.com/reflections/franciscan/0402-20.htm>
- April 3
St. Luigi Scrosoppi of Udine, Priest, Third Order Secular (August 4, 1804-April 3, 1884)
<https://catholicsaints.info/saint-luigi-scrosoppi-of-udine/>
- April 4
St. Benedict Larcari (the Moor) of San Fratello, Friar, Order of Friars Minor (1526-April 4, 1589)
<https://catholicreadings.org/saint-benedict-the-black-saint-of-the-day-april-4/>
- April 7
Bl. Maria Assunta Pallotta, Third Order Regular (August 20, 1878-April 7, 1905)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Assunta_Pallotta
- April 8
Bl. Julian of St. Augustine, Lay Brother, Order of Friars Minor (c. 1550-April 8, 1606)
<http://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/blessed-julian-of-saint-augustine.html>
- April 9
Bl. Thomas of Tolentino and Companions, Priest, Martyrs of India, Order of Friars Minor (Fr. James of Padua, Br. Demetrius of Tiflis, Fr. Peter of Siena) (d. 1321)
<https://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/thomas-of-tolentino-and-companions.html>
- April 10
Bl. Boniface Zukowski, Order of Friars Minor, Conventual, Martyr (January 13, 1913-April 10, 1942)
<http://catholicsaints.info/blessed-boniface-zukowski/>