

“THE FLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS”



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



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## Our MINISTER'S MUSINGS

by

*Ann Marie Pessagno, OFS*

### The Gift of Serving Others



I recently watched my eleven-year-old granddaughter perform in a play with the **Penguin Project** through the **Talent Machine of Annapolis**. She served as a **mentor for a special needs gal**. Her job was to learn the lines and dance steps alongside her actor so that she could shadow and assist her to be successful in her role. For four months I watched Lily painstakingly learn what she needed to know three to four times a week without fail. It was not easy and took a great deal of patience, understanding and time. Chole was difficult to keep on task, and she had a hard time remembering lines and dance steps. I carefully watched how Lily would handle the challenges of her assignment. At first the two girls struggled a bit to find a way to work together. Over time what I witnessed was a beautiful collaborative effort and a desire to have fun and deliver a great performance. **Lily showed me the real gift of how to serve others with tremendous love, devotion and respect.** The girls worked together to get the job done. I watched Lily carefully assist Chole. She was determined to make her shine and to allow her to completely enjoy herself. **She wanted Chole to be in the spotlight, and the focus to be her alone!** I observed handholding, hugs, funny conversations, and mostly a deep admiration for this incredible special girl. **Lily got what it meant to serve without being the center.** In the end it was a masterful performance with pure love radiating. **I knew that Lily was aware that she had dispensed so much effort, but the real gift was that she had received so much in return.** I am grateful to Lily for being a true example to me of how to authentically serve with your heart.

**How** are you being called to serve? I often ponder what God is calling me to do and how I can best serve Him according to His will. We can come up with all kinds of excuses as to why we can't do something, but we can if we **simply say yes** and **trust in God's plan**. Easy to say, but hard to do! I need to challenge myself and walk with Him not journeying on my own road because it is what I want and it is easy and comfortable to do. Sometimes we are asked to do hard things, but we are never alone! I was asked two and one half years ago to serve as Minister of Pope St. John XXIII Secular Franciscan fraternity. My initial reaction was a resounding NO! I had a million excuses as to why I could not serve. Finally, in prayer and in Adoration, and through the guidance of Brother Michael Meza, I was asked to say YES to the call, to my commitment in Profession, and to trust. I did it! It has been challenging but rewarding. I ask that each of you prayerfully consider serving on our Council with your abilities and talents. **Say YES and trust Him! He will absolutely walk beside you!**

St. Francis of Assisi spent his life serving others in the example of Jesus who said:

**"I have come to serve, not to be served."**

## Our VICE MINISTER'S MUSINGS

by  
*Joe O'Dea, OFS*

### Order of Christian Initiation for Adults Program (OCIA)

**F**or the past two years I've helped out with the deacons and Charles Burk with the OCIA program (formerly RCIA). I lend no formal training, knowledge, or experience as they do, but when I discussed with Charles my experience in handling protestant objections to our Catholic faith that I used to get from my many protestant friends in my former business community, he was interested.

**I**n OCIA, I talk with non-Catholics who have come to a point where they are interested in learning about the true deposit of faith established by Jesus Christ Himself. Some still carry doubts with them and they're looking for that answer, but those doubts are opportunities for them to realize the true love of the one true God who brought them there!

**A**fter coming back to my faith, I learned what objections to the Catholic faith people of other denominations have, and how to answer them. I became a student of apologetics and after some time, one day as I was approaching my office door, I heard someone inside say, "I don't know, let's ask Fr. Joe about that". It was only a humorous remark, there was a question I was about to walk into, and there was a reason for that remark- they knew I was Catholic, and studying my faith. God has done well with me, and I'm giving him a return!

**I**'ve learned over the years that I don't have to conquer their doubt; I just have to tell the truth and let God work in them. All have been told something about our faith that isn't true. All one needs to do is explain that truth to them, and that opens them up for more.

**I**'m sure if Martin Luther prayed with a loving heart desiring to only do what the Holy Spirit guided him to do, he would never have divided the church as he did. **Men are fallible - you can't throw out the baby with the bath water, and the Church has been persecuted more than once.** God assures us it will survive!

**S**o what happened then? First, there were Lutherans, then others not led by the Holy Spirit, who decided that belief in many other things Jesus Christ had made a part of the essential faith that would get us to heaven, were not essential to a soul. Even though all Bibles have Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Corinthians warning them about "divisions among them", that did not stop men from establishing those very divisions as churches some 1500 years later. **(1 Cor 1:10- 17)**

**I**n the aftermath of this, **the Church instructs interested non-Catholics through the OCIA program. I am so encouraged that the Holy Spirit is leading people back to the Catholic Church -- the only Church established by Jesus Christ Himself, revealed to us in Scripture, with all the divinely inspired sacraments necessary to make us holy here so as to lead us to that share in the divinity of God!** We need instruction because preparation for the sacraments of **Baptism, Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation** provide the knowledge necessary for a person to understand and agree to the covenant we enter into when we participate in community worship and receive the Body of Christ at Mass. **All these new members of our Church are testimony to a loving God guiding them and setting them on fire. They are energized and know they are where they are called to be!**

**Do** you know anyone you can invite to the Program starting in September? Can you seek out someone?



## CARING FOR CREATION by *Chris Gordon, OFS*

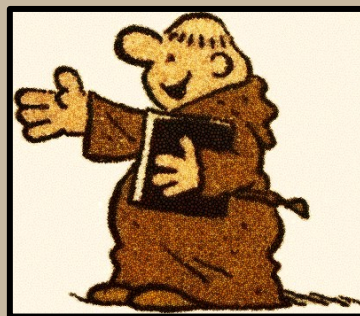
**Caring for Creation** means invasive species too. That doesn't mean I have to love them. Currently, there is an invasion of **Garlic Mustard** over at the Fire Pit and Meditation Trail area behind the Old Post Office here at Holy Family.



**What** you might wonder is, what difference does it make what is growing in the woods? Are not all of God's creations good? Both plants and animals evolve together in either harmony, or more often in fierce warfare! Sometimes that shift takes years. An invasive can suddenly upset the balance of these co-evolved species. That forest of Garlic Mustard provides little nutrition to our native wildlife. Those native plants that do can get smothered by the faster growing invasive which often starts growing earlier in the Spring.

**If** I can say a few words about **English Ivy**. This plant was brought here by our forefathers from where? You guessed it – **England!** They wanted to bring a little of their homeland here to the New World. What they didn't realize was we have an **even better environment** for Ivy to grow than they do over there! Left alone, it will completely cover a wall on a house, thus destroying the integrity of that structure! This can become a very expensive problem. As for trees, Ivy can completely envelop a very large tree in a few years. That Ivy can weigh in the hundreds, and even thousands, of pounds wet when it rains. It doesn't take much of a wind gust to topple the otherwise healthy tree that would have lived many more years. When growing on any vertical surface, Ivy will flower and go to seed. Birds will eat the seeds and spread them around the forest; sprouts will suddenly appear in your yard.

**And** then there is **Oriental Bitter Sweet Porcelain Berry**, and **Kudzu**, to name a few more! Sigh...come join me on a **Saturday morning** to remove these invasives. English Ivy too. You can email me at [christophergordon@verizon.net](mailto:christophergordon@verizon.net). We can make a difference!



**Be kind to yourself, and when you can, help another!**



## SEEDS OF FAITH

by

*Nina Teti, OFS*



*Christ said 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off happy, sells everything he has and buys the field'. Matthew 13:44*

**This** passage is to suggest some ways of discovering the hidden treasure in what you may consider a most unlikely field, **yourself!** So let us continue our journey as Franciscans through the detours and crossroads of this earthly life until we rest in the Lord, the hidden treasure!

**If** we were able to discover what we really want, if we could become conscious of the deepest desire within us, then we should have discovered God's will and that is our freedom. He wants us to discover what we really want and who we really are.

**A** saint is the person who has discovered his/her deepest desire. They then 'do their own thing' which is also God's thing. Their will and God's are in harmony, so that their lives are characterized by a continuous peace, tranquility, freedom and joy, even – perhaps especially – in crisis and suffering; therefore our one dominating desire and fundamental choice must be to live in LOVE in His presence!

*I shall not pass this way again;  
And any good therefore that I can show,  
Let me do it now.  
Let me not defer it or neglect it,  
For I shall not pass this way again.*

Reflection from GOD OF SURPRISES by Gerald W Hughes S.J.



## A Reflection on Relics

by

*Ron Van Nest, OFS*

**At** a recent fraternity meeting I passed around a relic that a friend of mine had lent to me. It was of **Saint Francis of Assisi!**



**AS** I was preparing for that gathering, I recalled, over my life, that I have seen a lot of people "ogle" over relics. And it occurred to me, as Franciscans, we should **recognize relics in perspective!** At that same meeting, I presented a pyx. **That pyx has carried the body of Christ.** I have used it to take the Eucharist to homes and prisons. I asked, "**Which is more important? The relic or the pyx?**"

**In** that same manner of thinking, **we are all relics!** I don't mean that because we are old, but because **we have all held the body of Christ in our own hands; our hands are relics!!!** Francis himself would grasp the hands of priests and kiss them, because they had held the Body of Christ!



## MY Reflections on Prison Ministry

by

*Ron Van Nest, OFS*

**Before** I started prison ministry, I attended a talk given by Deacon Seigfried Presberry, who is the head of Prison Ministry for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. While talking with him I asked, “How can I be accepted as a prison minister when I have never been in jail or prison myself; my only run-in with the law has been a couple of parking tickets. So, **how can I identify with them; or, how can they identify with me and accept me as identifying with them?**” He said I should not be concerned about that. The inmates are most grateful for my coming. Their attitude is “**Who am I that you would leave your family and come here to a prison - to see me?**” They are very grateful for that visit, so much so that your background doesn't mean anything to them. They're happy to have you and very grateful that you're there. I did keep that in mind when I started volunteering; and it has always been true. I've never left a prison or jail without the inmate or inmates saying “thank you for coming”. But, as nice as that is, visiting a prison or jail is not a kumbaya experience!

**I've had two emotions as I have participated in this ministry; one obvious, the other a surprise!** The most obvious emotion is **fear**. It's scary going into a jail or prison. They really are dangerous places - jails more so than prisons, and the loud clanging of doors and cells is unnerving!

**The inmates in jails are generally very angry.** They are angry that they got caught; they believe they are really innocent; they have to wait so long for trial; they can't make bail! You name it, they're mad! As a result, they are quite volatile!

**Prisons** I have found to be less so. The inmates are more resigned to their status, and most of their bad feelings are directed at other inmates, or at particular Correction Officers - the guards!

**The** other emotion I did not expect to have is **sadness**. I know that most of these people have done some very bad things and are rightfully imprisoned. I have not made it a point to learn why they were convicted. I'm more concerned with how they are now, and how I may help them going into the future - particularly how they relate to God!

I go to the **state prison for women** about every three weeks, and while there, one or two of my partners and I **conduct a communion service**. We have about 15 regular attendees; some I have gotten to know fairly well. **What I find painful is I have done a lot of interesting and fun things in the interim when I have not been with them. When I return, especially to prison, they are still there!** I have been to Disney World, on Disney cruises, and beach vacations - **and they haven't moved much more than a hundred yards from where I last saw them!** One of the ladies I know quite well mentioned the other day that she has been there 37 years! Yes, 37 years!

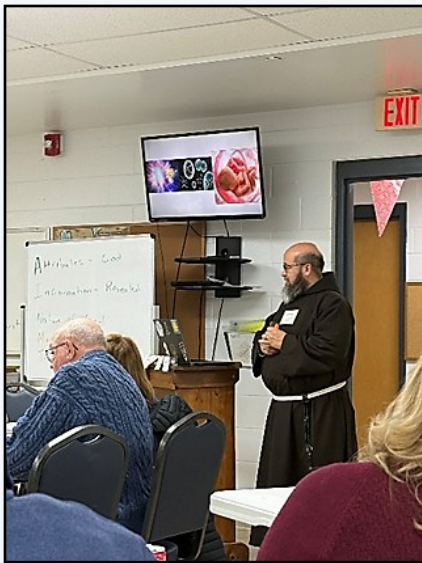
I wish there was some way for society to punish appropriately; that the punishment would be just enough, and not excessive. But unfortunately, we don't have that insight!

## ONGOING FRATERNITY FORMATION

### Trinitarian Spirituality - February 4, 2026

by

*Brother Michael Meza OFM Cap*



**Trinitarian** spirituality is a mystery in which we must have faith to believe that the Trinity is three in one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, individual entities, but the same God. St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure wrote about the Trinity, Aquinas from the point of view of nature and Bonaventure from love. God must illuminate us to understand; otherwise, we will not absorb it. It is the gift of grace that He pours into us to help us see this great mystery. We can find God in the Scriptures, but the Magisterium questions and defines, while Tradition gives us the why. Faith brings us to say YES; I may not understand but I believe! The three pillars of the Church authority: the **Magisterium**, **Sacred Tradition** and the **Sacred Scriptures** all uphold the oneness of God. The Catechism of the Catholic Church clearly puts forth one belief in the Trinity (Articles 261-267).

### Psalms - March 4, 2026 by *Father Jude Winkler, OFM Conv.*



**The** Psalms were written in Hebrew during the years of 1200 BC to 300 BC. The translation is difficult due to language interpretations. They were written like poetry, but without vowels, punctuation or spaces between words. Some were songs meant to be sung in the temple by the Levites; many were practical songs or prayers used by workers. **Many of the verses have several hidden messages, and repetition was used to stress something of importance.** The authors are not totally known. Some were written by David, others dedicated to him. Much symbolism was used which is unfamiliar to modern world. The **one hundred and fifty Psalms** are divided into five sections: **Laments, Praise/Hymns, Thanksgiving, Wisdom, and Royal or Messianic.** They have been used in the Church's liturgy since the beginning, and they are the **heart of our daily Liturgy of the Hours**, prayed by the Church for one another, not for self!

## Retreat April 18, 2026

(2 talks)

### Delexi Te by *Father Jude Winkler, OFM Conv.*

**This** is an exhortation that confirms the dignity of every human being! It was initiated by Pope Francis and finished by Pope Leo. **Caring for the poor is the focus!** We need to be cognizant of the poor and the hopeless of today in our society. St. Joseph was poor. When they presented Jesus in the temple, they could only afford two turtledoves as an offering. **Jesus came from poverty. We too should embrace being poor!** Jesus reaches out to the poor (shepherds at his birth) and (St. Dismas) the good thief at his death. We must reach out to prisoners and migrants – all the marginalized people! **We will be judged on how much we served and loved the broken ones in society.** As Christians we must become actively involved in social action. We must pray for all our brothers and sisters. **We heal the world one heart at a time.** We start with one action and give of our finances what we can - and more. **The poor are the face of Christ, and we must graciously serve all we encounter!**



### Forgiveness by *Father Jude Winkler, OM Conv.*

**God** redefined justice as mercy. God forgave us before the creation of the world, but we still need to turn to Him for mercy. **When we turn our back to God's love that is sin!** Mercy means loving and forgiving when the other does not deserve it. When someone hurts, it is a symptom of their brokenness. **They need to be healed by our love.** We must have the desire to forgive. **To forgive is one of the most God-like things we can do. To love and forgive without getting anything back -- that is Christ-love!** We can turn everything into grace if someone will **not** forgive us!

## **FORMATION FORUM** by *Jeanne Catrow, OFS*



**When** we look at the **intentions** and **promises** we make at the **Rite of Admission** and the **Rite of Profession**, two special, grace-filled times, we see the word “**service**”. In the Rite of Admission, we promise: to be of service to all through my secular state of life for the glory of God and to fulfill His plan of love on behalf of all people. In the Rite of Profession, we see renew my baptismal promises and consecrate myself to the service of His kingdom. In both of these rites, the words clearly recognize our call to care for the needs of others!

**May** our focus always remain **to be of service to others**, especially the **poor** and the **marginalized**.

**Inspired** by the Holy Spirit, we continue to work toward the building of the kingdom by **proclaiming the Gospel by word and action**. We are blessed to have 10 people currently in Formation in our fraternity.

**Our** candidates, **Sonia Balboni, Jean Schaefer, and Genevieve DiUlio** are excited to announce their upcoming **Profession on October 24, 2026. MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!** They have been faithful to their vocation call, and truly are a gift to us! Please keep them in your prayers.

**Candidates Ed Muir, Teresa Love, Eric Love, and Kathie Taylor** continue to study and respond during their Formation program. In spite of several events, they carry their crosses like Francis and lift our fraternity by their faithfulness. Pray for their continued strength to complete their journey!

**And** we have three new Aspirants – what a gift to have **Sal Sylvester, Helen Brown, and Elizabeth Gaither** to be discerning their Franciscan calling. It is a joy to have them be a part of our fraternity. Please pray for their discernment!

**Be at peace, my brothers and sisters!**

## **FRATERNITY SNAPSHOTS**

(ongoing Fraternity activities)

# **We are here for you!**

**February 7 Wine and Cheese**




**Franciscan crew did a great job!**

**Collected \$100 in Donations!**

**Lots of good food and conversations!**

## PROFESSION ANNIVERSARIES

Tony Mazzuco	June 20, 1976		Chris Gordon	February 1, 2020
Jeanne Catrow	May 8, 1979		Ann Marie Pessagno	February 1, 2020
John Cobis	June 12, 2005		Nina Teti	February 1, 2020
Kathy Brady	September 17, 2016		Eugene (Duke) Jones	February 26, 2022
Kathy Duffy	September 17, 2016		Joe O'Dea	February 26, 2022
Judy Hool	September 17, 2016		Theresa Tucker	February 26, 2022
Sandy Horvath	September 17, 2016		Penny (Joyce) Jones	May 13, 2023
David Littleton	September 17, 2016		Patricia Sullivan	May 13, 2023
John Treichel	September 17, 2016		Elizabeth Brownlee	June 28, 2025
Ron Van Nest	September 17, 2016		Shawn Dickey	June 28, 2025
Marie Waleryszak	September 17, 2016		Barbara Henry	June 28, 2025
Laura Benso	November 17, 2018		Michael O'Rourke	June 28, 2025
Mary Rohde	November 17, 2018			

## BIRTHDAY WISHES

Helen Brown	July 12		Genevieve DiUlio	September 1
Theresa Tucker	July 12		Barbara Henry	September 7
Patricia Sullivan	July 27		Chris Gordon	September 14
Kathy Brady	July 28		Mary Rohde	September 14
Sandy Horvath	July 29		Laura Benso	September 16
Penny Jones	August 7		Shawn Dickey	September 20
Sal Sylvester	August 10		Michael O'Rourke	September 26
			Ed Muir	September 27

## TREASURY TIDBITS – DECEMBER 2025

December 31, 2025 Ending Balance Brought Forward			\$8,226.28
January - April 2026 Deposits		\$3,985.00	
January - April 2026 Withdrawals	\$3,455.82		
April 30, 2026 Ending Balance			\$8,755.46

### Rule 25: The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order

Regarding expenses necessary for the life of our fraternity and the needs of worship, of the apostolate, and of charity, ALL the brothers and sisters (Professed and Candidates) should offer a contribution according to their means.

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

Is the Holy Spirit calling you to be the next Treasurer of our Fraternity?  
Professed Franciscans, the position will be open at the October Council Elections

**Thank you for your generous donations! *Pax et bonum!***

## SAVE THE DATES

Pentecost Dinner	June 6, 2026
JPIC Regional Retreat for All	June 5-7, 2026 at Priestfield Retreat Center in West Virginia Theme is "Living Our Franciscan Charism". Lead by Father Stan Fortuna, CFT
Annual Regional Retreat for All	June 26-28, 2026 at Priestfield Retreat Center in West Virginia Theme is "Be the Light". Lead by Father Jude Winkler, OFM Conv.
Profession	October 24, 2026
Council Elections	November 2026

**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!

