

**“THE FLOWERS OF SAINT FRANCIS”**  
*THE POPE ST. JOHN XXIII SECULAR FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY*



DAVIDSONVILLE, MARYLAND





### **COUNCIL MEMBERS**

#### **SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT**

Brother Michael Meza, OFM Cap.  
mz\_mchl@yahoo.com

#### **MINISTER**

Ann Marie Pessagno, OFS  
ampessagno@yahoo.com

#### **VICE MINISTER**

Joe O'Dea, OFS  
remaincalmtoday@yahoo.com

#### **TREASURER**

July Hool, OFS  
judymhool@gmail.com

#### **SECRETARY**

Mary Rohde, OFS  
r3rohde@msn.com

#### **FORMATION DIRECTOR**

Jeanne Catrow, OFS  
jacatrow@gmail.com

## **Our MINISTER'S MUSINGS by Ann Marie Pessagno, OFS**

### **Answering God's Call**

I have always been someone who needs to think about what I am being asked to do. I remember Brother Michael Meza, our Spiritual Assistant, saying to us that when the call comes to be a servant leader of our Fraternity, you faithfully accept and serve. Little did I know that he meant me! When Ron Van Nest decided to step down as our Minister, he asked that I consider this role. I had a million reasons why I couldn't do it. Family responsibilities, church obligations, travel wishes, and the old and familiar – "I am simply not worthy or capable!" Then those words flooded back – answer when you are called! So, then I thought – "they won't possibly vote for me!" Well, you did and here I am! Do I feel ready, able, and knowledgeable? The answer is **no!** I have been blessed to have had a mentor in Ron Van Nest. He has taught me and answered every imaginable question that I have had. I am fully confident that he will be there to assist me as I journey in my new role. God has blessed us with an incredibly talented and faith-filled Council. I am in awe of their many gifts and skills. I can feel them encircling me and leading me with their faith and wisdom. I am certain that this Council will be strong capable servant leaders!

As many of you know, I am from a family of ten. I was fifth in the line-up. I struggled to find my place and purpose in the middle of the pack. We were a loving community who helped each other. My faith was cultivated and nourished by my amazing parents, Ted and Margaret. I knew that God was supreme in my life and that serving others was how I was to live. I look upon each of you as my new community of support. I have seen first-hand your many gifts and treasures. You unselfishly serve in your many apostolates and have made numerous contributions to our Fraternity. I know that when I need a good ear or some wisdom, that turning to any of you is where I go first. Please continue to answer "yes" to the call to serve and help us all to make our Fraternity grow in the footsteps of St. Francis. I am here to be a servant leader with this dedicated Council.

**We can and will do this together! *God Bless! Peace and All Good,***

Ann Marie Pessagno, OFS, Minister  
Pope St. John XXIII Secular Franciscan Fraternity

*"The only thing ever achieved in life without effort is failure."  
St. Francis of Assisi*



## My Littlest Seeds – by *Nina Teti, OFS*

**B**ehind us was the busiest time of the year! The winter of my life - although not as busy as years past - regardless, still cluttered the brain with endless tasks. When returning to my home where peace welcomed me (I know you can relate to that feeling), I call it “my sanctuary” where “silence” begins to rescue me from the noise of the world! I missed the comfort of my surroundings. Taking a deep breath in my high back chair, closing the eyes, and “thanking” God for stepping out with me, but softly nudging me when it was time to return to the silence. My sisters and brothers, I invite you to find your quiet place, close your eyes, shut out the world, and listen for that gentle voice **IN SILENCE!**

Mother Theresa “*Where There is Love, There is God*”

### THE FRUIT OF SILENCE IS PRAYER

**If you are hungry to hear the voice of God, you will hear!  
To hear, you have to cut off all other things!**



## Caring for Creation – by *Chris Gordon, OFS*

Caring for Creation means **YOU** too!

**I** was talking to a friend about what I should write about! Fresh ideas are always welcome. So, in his wisdom, he said, “**Doing my best to keep my hand in God’s hand, and helping others to see the attraction of doing, so they may do the same...**” Profound I think, which reminds me of the **Letter of James Chapter 2**: “So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” So, that is it! Our journey is about the never-ending beauty of God’s Creation and our appreciation for it. Therefore, let us protect, with love, our Care for God’s Creation in our everyday lives! So, my simple hope is that every once in a while, someone sees and appreciates nature as they go about their lives! Do they take a walk through the woods and pause to hear the animals rustling in the leaves for food? Perhaps we can put up a bird feeder, (I will help) start a compost pile and recycle. There are a dozen other ways that we can each do to bring Caring for Creation into our own lives! What will you do? **PS** - I’m so glad the plastic bags are gone from the retail stores!



## FRANCISCAN FEATURE

### *Chapter 17*

HOW, WHILE SAINT FRANCIS WAS PRAYING AT NIGHT,  
A YOUNG BROTHER, A BOY, SAW CHRIST AND THE VIRGIN MARY  
AND MANY OTHER SAINTS TALK WITH HIM



A boy who was very pure and innocent was received into the Order while Saint Francis was living; and he was staying in a small place where the brothers, out of necessity, slept outside on the ground. Saint Francis once came to this place and in the evening after saying compline, he went off to sleep as he usually did, so could get up at night to pray when the other brothers were asleep. The boy had in mind to spy attentively on Saint Francis's movements in order to find out about his holiness and especially to know what the saint did at night when he arose. To make sure that sleep would not overcome him, he lay down to sleep at Saint Francis's side and tied his cord to that of Saint Francis, so he would feel when the saint arose. And Saint Francis did not feel any of this. That night, during the first time of sleep, when all the other brothers were sleeping, St. Francis got up and found his cord tied that way. He gently untied it so that the boy did not feel it, and Saint Francis went alone into the woods near the place, entering a little cell there and set himself to pray. The boy awoke after a while and found the cord untied and Saint Francis gone, so he got up to look for him. When he found the gate to the woods open, he thought that Saint Francis had gone out there, so he entered the woods. Reaching the place where Saint Francis was praying, he began to hear a great sound of voices. Going closer so that he might see and understand what he heard, he saw a wonderful light surrounding Saint Francis on all sides, and in it he saw Christ and the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist and the Evangelist and a great multitude of angels speaking with Saint Francis. When the boy saw and heard this, he fell to the ground as if dead. Then, when the mystery of that holy apparition ended, Saint Francis was returning to the place. And his foot bumped into the boy lying almost dead on the path. Out of compassion, he lifted him up, took him in his arms and carried him back, as a good shepherd does with his little sheep.

Learning from him later about how he saw the vision, he ordered him never to tell anyone, that is, while he lived. The boy, growing in the grace of God and devotion to Saint Francis, was an important man in the Order, and, after the death of Saint Francis, he revealed that vision to the brothers.

To the glory of Jesus Christ  
And the little poor man Francis.  
Amen

(Francis of Assisi Early Documents – The Prophet – Vol III: “The Little Flowers of Saint Francis” pp 594-595)



## God's Tapestry



by  
*Elizabeth Brownlee*

**G**od has a plan for each of our lives! Our life is like a “tapestry” in which God helps us “weave in and out in this life”. In my life, I started to see God weave His tapestry!

**I** heard the Holy Spirit’s voice a couple of years ago when a close friend invited me to a Walking with Purpose bible class at our Lady of the Fields Catholic Church in Millersville, MD. As I sat in the first bible class, I felt the power of the Holy Spirit overwhelm me! At that moment, I knew I was in the right place; however, that was not the only thing overwhelming me! The Holy Spirit asked me to invite another woman to the bible class. My response was, “Humm, I don’t think so. I don’t know her that well, and she is going to ask me too many questions.”

**T**he Holy Spirit would not give up in the request because when God has a plan, He will direct you in toward that path! In obedience, and to avoid a conversation with the woman, I was guided by the Holy Spirit to email the woman and invite her to the bible class. The woman immediately responded to the email, and she was at the next class. The woman’s name was **Nora Morris!** That year, my close friend, Nora, and I, completed the bible class. The following year my close friend started Walking with Purpose at Holy Family; however, Nora and I stayed at Our Lady of the Fields. We became close friends, and in a way, sisters! Many things transpired in our relationship; it was a roller coaster ride to say the least!

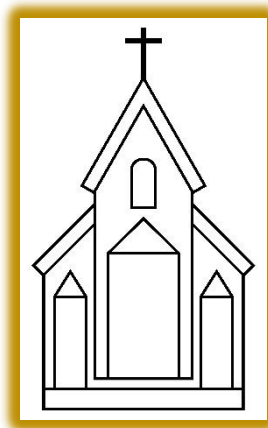
**A**fter completing the second year at Our Lady of the Fields, Nora and I returned to Holy Family. Nora was volunteering for every ministry because she wanted to know God better. When I look back, I can see God was preparing us for a battle!

**T**hat same year, turmoil overcame Holy Family. Our priest was under attack by some parishioners and the rest of us did not know what to do or how to protect him, but God had a plan! Nora, I, and other

parishioners began praying and uniting ourselves to try to let go of our emotions and listen to the Holy Spirit. The message was: “Defend your church, be warriors!” During that time of turmoil, I wrote weekly, maybe daily, emails to a group of emails given to me by other parishioners. People wanted to know how we were to keep our church solid and our priest in place. I prayed over every email and only listened to the Holy Spirit as I read scripture and the catechism. I had to stay grounded in the Word. After months of distributing information via email to the parishioners, praying in community, having weekly meetings, and writing daily letters to the Archdiocese, our church and priest survived the storm! Our priest returned to the parish, and the community rejoiced!

**A** few weeks after our priest’s arrival, Nora met me at the Chapel to tell me she had pancreatic cancer! My world stopped! Really, Lord? I looked at Jesus crucified and tried so hard not to cry and be stoic. I heard the Holy Spirit say, “You need to write to the community and invite them to pray.” Again, I said, “I don’t think so!” Nora was a very private person! Besides her father having passed away, her mom living in Florida, and her immediate family, I knew little about her. However, I told Nora what the Holy Spirit asked, and she resisted. I told her it was not her decision! Holy Family’s journey of prayer, faith, hope, and love began all over again. Holy Family was stronger and more united than ever! Nevertheless, Nora died a year and a half later after our priest’s return. All our friends saw the “tapestry” God had woven on one of our dear one’s life. God was helping Nora focus on Him!

**I** continued to write for three years after Nora’s death. I wrote about her influence in the life of Holy Family’s community, Walking with Purpose’s women group, and those she touched with her life on earth’s journey. As many times as I look back at that first email I wrote inviting Nora to the bible class, I see that God wanted Nora to be in a more intimate relationship with Him as she suffered through the cancer and began to leave her family in the world! Our priest’s spiritual journey and Nora’s suffering showed me God’s mercy. God taught me to listen and obey. God also wanted me to teach people to pray, and so began the **Holy Hour Ministry**. In addition, the emails are to inspire people to come closer to Him. The Holy Spirit inspires me to move, move, move! I do so through spiritual guidance, prayer, and confession because I know God is still “weaving my tapestry” and I want it to be “beautiful”!



## Blessing of the Animals

by  
*Kathy Brady, OFS*



The Franciscan Fraternity of Holy Family Catholic Church in Davidsonville invited all neighboring churches of every denomination to join us as we celebrated the **Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi** with the annual “**Blessing of the Animals**”. The annual event was started by St. Francis, who on the first weekend in October, called for anyone who wished to have their animals blessed by him to bring them to the Cathedral where he was. Thousands came with every sort of livestock and creature! In remembrance of his blessing, this annual Franciscan tradition took place on Sunday, October 1st at 12:30 pm behind Holy Family Catholic Church in the back parking area. This was a well-attended ecumenical event. All participants, including the animals, had a fun, wonderful and enjoyable day. For our animal guests, they received holy medals, snacks and treats, and each animal was blessed individually! The Franciscans of the Pope St. John the 23rd Fraternity of Holy Family invite you and your pet to share in this wonderful event with us each October here at Holy Family Catholic Church.





**Winter Relief Dinner**  
by  
*Ann Marie Pessagno, OFS, Minister*



**P**ope St. John XXIII Franciscan Fraternity sponsored a dinner meal with the **Winter Relief Program** at Holy Family Catholic Church on Thursday November 23, 2023. The menu was pot roast, mashed potatoes, carrots, salad, and fruit pies for dessert. The team worked hard to prepare the meal for our brother and sisters who attended the program. There was laughter, joy, and fellowship as we shared a meal together. It was an honor and a privilege to serve our neighbors in need!



**Franciscans Christmas Party** by *Kathy Brady, OFS*



**E**ach year the Fraternity of Pope St. John the 23<sup>rd</sup> takes some time to celebrate the Christmas season with an annual gathering of all Fraternity members for a Christmas party celebration. As usual, the party is a potluck of wonderful dishes, each brought by the Fraternity members, as we share favorite recipes and food we all love to eat! The whole Fraternity enjoys the fellowship, casual gathering, and old-fashioned Christmas fun. Each member has a chance to enjoy the wonderful association and collection of their brother and sister Fraternity members, and the fun it is to gather as a “true family”! We pray before the meal, and then feast together and visit and enjoy each other’s company. This is truly a family gathering. What a joyful and wonderful time together!



## Council Elections

by

*Ann Marie Pessagno, OFS. Minister*

Pope Saint John XXIII Fraternity held elections for their Council on November 1, 2023 at their monthly Fraternity meeting. **Bob Longo, OFS**, Regional Director of Saint Margaret of Cortona, and **Brother Michael Meza, OFM Cap**, Spiritual Assistant to Pope Saint John XXIII Secular Fraternity, presided over the elections. Professed members voted for the nominated and accepted candidates as required by the rules.

Elected members were:

<b>Minister:</b>	Ann Marie Pessagno, OFS
<b>Vice Minister:</b>	Joe O’Dea, OFS
<b>Secretary:</b>	Mary Rohde, OFS
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Judy Hool, OFS
<b>Formation Director:</b>	Jeanne Catrow, OFS
<b>Councilor-at-Large:</b>	Eugene (Duke) Jones, OFS

The Council is eager to get to work and serve the Fraternity!

We welcome the new members of the Council, **Joe O’Dea** and **Eugene (Duke) Jones**, and thank them for volunteering for these positions. We thank **Laura Benso, OFS** for her unwavering support and dedication to the Council. We also want to acknowledge our long-term Minister and Founder of this Fraternity, **Ron Van Nest, OFS**, whose commitment to servant leadership was always remarkably stellar!





## Formation Forum

by

*Jeanne Catrow, OFS,  
Formation Director*



*“It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit, and then you will be my disciples” Jn 15:8*

**P**ope St. John XXIII Fraternity continues to bear much fruit, and all glory to God for those who have answered His call to follow St. Francis to bring the Gospel to others. During our January and February Fraternity meetings, we welcomed **Genevieve DiUlio**, **Sonia Balboni**, and **Jean Schaefer** as Inquirers to our Fraternity. They have expressed a sincere interest in learning more about St. Francis and walking in his way. The Inquirers meet on the second Wednesday of each month. Please pray for their Discernment as they journey toward Candidacy.

**O**ur Candidates, **Barbara Henry**, **Shawn Dickey**, **Elizabeth Brownlee**, and **Michael O’Rourke**, continue their studies, and have reached the half-way point to their Profession! This group provides support to each other in our discussions, and consistently shares their spirituality and their call to Franciscan life with each other. They are always a blessing to those present, as the facilitators can attest!

**T**he 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. The Candidates meet on the third Wednesday of each month, and truly appreciate your prayers and support as they continue their journey.

**Some opportunities for Ongoing Formation include:**

**February 3, 2024** - Christ Living in Me Retreat: Lent on LaVerna with St. Francis at the Franciscan Monastery, Washington, DC.


**February 24, 2024** - Day of Reflection for Candidates and Inquirers at the Franciscan Monastery, Washington, DC. This is vital for any Candidates and Inquirers, but is a valuable opportunity for anyone on their Franciscan journey!

**September 6-8, 2024** - Chapter of Mats in Adamstown, Maryland. This is not only of spiritual importance, but a great time to meet members across our region and have a really good social time!

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



## Professional Anniversaries

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

## Best Wishes

Nina Teti	February 19		Eugene (Duke) Jones	March 27
Joe O'Dea	February 21		Jean Schaefer	May 22
Ann Marie Pessagno	March 14		David Littleton	June 4

## Save The Dates

February 3, 2024	Christ Living In Me Retreat: Lent on LaVerna with St. Francis of Assisi	Franciscan Monastery Washington, DC	9:30 AM-3 PM
February 23, 2024	Franciscan Sponsored Lenten Soup and Bread	Holy Family Catholic Church Davidsonville, MD	4:30 PM-7 PM
February 24, 2024	Day of Reflection for <u>Candidates</u> and <u>Inquirers</u>	Franciscan Monastery Washington, DC	9:30 AM-3 PM
April 6, 2024	Franciscan Wine and Cheese	Holy Family Catholic Church Davidsonville, MD	Following 5 PM Mass
April 20, 2024	Regional Council Elections	Our Lady of the Fields Catholic Church Millersville, MD	
May 18, 2024	Pentecost Dinner	Holy Family Catholic Church Davidsonville, MD	Following 5 PM Mass
September 6 – September 8, 2024	<u>Chapter of Mats</u> (retreat)	Claggett Center Adamstown, MD	

### Treasury Tidbits - December 2023 - by *Judy Hool, OFS, Treasurer*

<b>July 31, 2023 Ending Balance:</b>	<b>\$8,254.90</b>
<b>August - December 2023 Deposits:</b>	<b>\$2,981.00</b>
<b>August - December 2023 Withdrawals:</b>	
Fraternity Expenses	\$1,392.38
Fraternity Almsgiving	\$3,382.61
	<b>\$4,774.99</b>
<b>December 31, 2023 Ending Balance:</b>	<b>\$6,460.91</b>

Thank you for your generous donations. Our Fraternity will carefully and prayerfully manage the charitable contributions to serve our community.

**Pax et bonum!**

**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!

