



## “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*

Sometimes my head spins from the amount of “stuff” that needs my attention. I have always been someone who must do things well with strict attention to details. As many of you know, I am fifth in a family of ten children. Although I never wanted attention brought to myself, I found that I needed to always do everything well so that I would be noticed and maintain the status quo. This was certainly not an expectation that my parents placed on me. I was the one that placed it on myself. So, I like to be busy and to get deep into details of projects.

This last year in my prayer life I am constantly hearing God tell me to **“be quiet and to attentively listen to him”**. Well, you can imagine this is a huge task for someone like me! St. Francis of Assisi embodied silent prayer and spent his quiet time talking to God. So how do I try and detach from the busyness of the world and rest in His arms? I started by finding a quiet spot where I could hide. **Two of my favorite spots are my kitchen which looks out on our property where I can watch the birds and other animals**

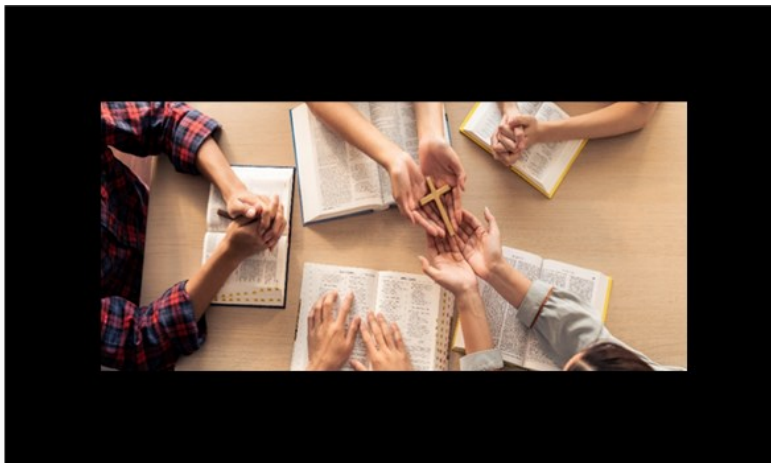
**and the Eucharistic Adoration Oratory** in the wee hours of the morning with only a light shining on Him in the monstrance! I get rid of all my books and anything else physically that can distract me, and I simply say, **“What do you ask of me Lord”**? I often receive a thought about someone or something I need to do and focus on doing that. I tried doing this for ten minutes to start, and have now increased to thirty to forty-five minutes of pure quiet time with Him. Is it always focused? – No! I am determined to keep trying so I will try again and again!



So why is all this important!!! I need to slow down, surrender to God, and take time to enhance my personal relationship with Him. I feel like my personal time with Him is stolen if I don’t cultivate it and look for **hope in Him**. It is my time for me to reset and recover His unconditional love and grace. Take time to appreciate the gift of relationship we can have with God. Rest quietly in His arms! One of my favorite saints, Theresa of Calcutta, said this of silence, “God is the friend of silence. In prayer and silence God will speak to you if you are open and listen. In silence we find new energy and unity with Our Creator”. Be still and listen, then act! ***Peace and All Good and God Bless!***

## Our VICE MINISTER'S MUSINGS

by *Joe O'Dea, OFS*



### AM I PREPARED FOR THAT OPPORTUNITY TO BE THE VOICE OF GOD FOR SOMEONE?

Since we're called to evangelize, it makes sense that we need to be prepared for that next situation. Obviously, the first line of help and preparation is going to God first, and with our whole heart, asking for all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Time in adoration, praying the rosary daily, making small sacrifices, should be a routine. I believe if we're pursuing the knowledge of our faith as we should, and we ponder it, we can not only be ready for that opportunity to evangelize, but we can bring it about.

If we've made God the sovereign of our lives, we will probably feel more free to talk about him to others. We talk about what excites us. Maybe in a public situation, we can make an appropriate comment that might elicit curiosity in someone else, or part-take in a conversation. You don't have to be an expert to start. When I was relearning my faith as an adult, built on the foundation I learned as a child, I found it exciting. In my business community I had some very devout protestant friends, and we would get in great conversations. When they challenged my Catholic faith with, "Catholics are not going to get to heaven because..." and I didn't know what to say, I learned the art of saying, "let me get back to you on that". I would read and research and the next time I saw them, I answered their challenge. I came to know my faith much better that way.

I found that by reading great books from very authoritative sources helped a lot. There are a good number of very authoritative web sites like [ascensionpress.com](http://ascensionpress.com), [stpaulcenter.com](http://stpaulcenter.com), Formed, and many others that have exceptional video course material. St. Paul Center offers a weekly 30-minute commentary on the next Sunday's readings called, "Word of God". Dr. John Bergsma and Dr. Scott Hahn target a wide audience from parishioners to priests for material for their homilies. My understanding of the Sunday readings has deepened much beyond what I ever thought. Bergsma and Hahn are also very entertaining to listen to.

I am far more confident to strike up a conversation appropriately, or part-take in one, and not only explain our Catholic faith, but excite someone else to go deeper. It's not hard to learn the usual sticking points of our Protestant friends and draw them to a much deeper understanding, that will ignite them to hopefully come to the Catholic faith. I don't know how to handle every situation, but God seems to guide me well. But getting the knowledge is the fun. The tools for spreading the faith are here. We just have to use them. Think of the impact you can have on the lives of others, and those whom they pass on what you taught them. That is very far-reaching and pleasing to our Lord!

# HOPE

by

*Penny Jones, OFS*



What is it? Where does it come from? Is it personal?

I asked and was told it was the thought for a positive outcome. Where does this come from? Do we generate it from within? Some people are filled with negative responses; does this mean they are without hope? I certainly hope not. 😊

It is in my opinion that hope is faith-filled. Faith, hope and love are the gifts from God. That is where my hope comes from. I believe in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and it fills me with Joy. I pray to the Holy Spirit when hope is needed. I usually pray for hope in others as I am filled with the virtue of hope.

St Paul wrote, "In hope we have been saved." It is through prayer that hope is received, it is a gift from God and is received through prayer, faith and love and is in the heart of every person who wants to receive the gift that has been given freely. God gave his only son for the forgiveness of sin for each person.

## FRANCISCAN FEATURE

### *Chapter III*

#### **HOW, CHANGED IN MIND BUT NOT IN BODY, FRANCIS TALKED ALLEGORICALLY ABOUT THE TREASURE HE HAD FOUND AND ABOUT HIS BRIDE**



Changed in mind but not in body, he now refused to go Apulia and was anxious to direct his will to God's. Thus he retired for a short time from the tumult and business of the world and was anxious to keep Jesus Christ in his inmost self. Like an experienced merchant, he concealed *the pearl he had found* from the eyes of mockers and *selling all he had*, he tried to buy it secretly.

Now there was in the city of Assisi a man he loved more than all the rest. They were of the same age and the constant intimacy of their mutual love made him bold to share his secrets with him. He often brought him to remove places suitable for talking, asserting that he had found a great and valuable treasure. This man was overjoyed, and since he was so excited about what he heard, he gladly went with him whenever he was summoned. There was a cave near the city, where they often went and talked together about the treasure. **The man of God, who was already holy because of his holy intention, was accustomed to entering the cave, while his companion waited outside, and inspired by a new and extraordinary spirit he would pray to his *Father in secret*.** He acted in such a way that no one would know what was happening within. Wisely taking the occasion of the good to conceal the better, he consulted God along about his holy purpose. He prayed with all his heart that the eternal and true God guide his way and *teach him to do His will*. He endured great suffering in his soul, and he was not able to rest until he accomplished in action what he had conceived in his heart. Different thoughts followed one after another, and their relentlessness severely disturbed him. He was burning inwardly with a divine fire, and he was unable to conceal outwardly the flame kindled in his soul. He repented that he had sinned so grievously and that he had offended *the eyes of majesty*. While his past and present transgressions no longer delighted him, he was not yet fully confident of refraining from future ones. Therefore, when he came back out to his companion, he was so exhausted that one person seemed to have entered, and another to have come out.

One day, when he had invoked the Lord's mercy with his whole heart, the Lord showed him what he must do. **He was filled with such great joy** that, failing to restrain himself in the face of his happiness, he carelessly mentioned something to others. Even though he could not remain silent because of the greatness of the love inspired in him, he nevertheless spoke cautiously and in riddles. Just as he spoke to his special friend about a *hidden treasure*, so he endeavored to talk to others in figures of speech. He said that he did not want to go to Apulia, but promised to do great and noble deeds at home. People thought he wanted to get married, and they would ask him: "Do you want to get married, Francis?" He replied: "I will take a bride more noble and more beautiful than you have ever seen, and she will surpass the rest in beauty and excel all others in wisdom."

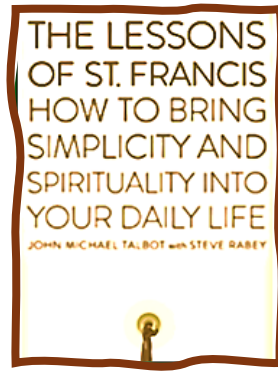


Indeed  
*the unstained bride* of God is  
the true *religion* that he embraced,  
and the hidden treasure *the kingdom of heaven*,  
that he sought with great longing.  
For it has to be that the gospel call be fulfilled  
in the one who was to be  
*in faith and truth*  
*a minister of the gospel.*



(Francis of Assisi Early Documents – The Saint – Vol. I)  
“The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano” (The First Book, pp. 187-188)

# ONGOING FRATERNITY FORMATION



## Book Discussion

### **The Lesson of St. Francis: How to bring Simplicity and Spirituality into Your Daily Life**

by  
*John Talbot and Steve Rabey*

This was a discussion of the second half of this book Chapters 8-14 as ongoing formation for October 2, 2024. The members were divided into groups to discuss the chapters. [Comments for each chapter are as follows:](#)

**Chapter 8 (Community)** Outreach projects that bring the spirit of St. Francis into our community and the world are the responsibilities of Secular Franciscans. The Franciscan Action Network (FAN) is a great website and agency that sends out weekly newsletters and provides opportunities to become involved with JPIC issues.

**Chapter 9 (Compassion)** If we have compassion other virtues will grow within us. Allow God to love others through me, treat everyone like you would treat Jesus and dialogue with others especially when there is a difference of opinion.

**Chapter 10 (Creation)** Creation is our gift from God and an expression of his love. We honor God by appreciating what he has given to us and to disregard the treasure is to dishonor him. One needs an awareness of God to see His beauty in creation.

**Chapter 11 (Service)** As professed Secular Franciscans we vow to be servant leaders in whatever we are called to do. We must act as God's hands on earth.

**Chapter 12 (Peace)** When we find peace within ourselves, we can share peace with others.

**Chapter 13 (Prayer)** Prayer is the sacred place that allows us the intimate knowledge of God and helps us grow in our personal relationship with him. We need to learn to listen to his voice in our quiet time and realize that we carry Him within ourselves. Adoration is a perfect place to rest with Him.

**Chapter 14 (His Life and Legacy)** Francis lived his life as close to Jesus as possible. He honored Mary, Our Mother and truly loved gospel life.

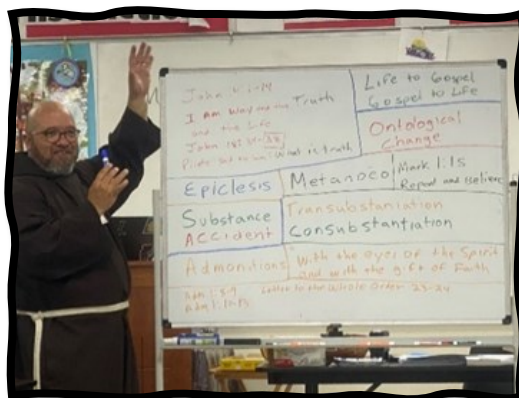


## The Real Presence

by

*Brother Michael Meza, OFM CAP*

**Brother Michael Meza**, OFM CAP, Spiritual Assistant of Pope St. John XXIII Secular Franciscan Fraternity, spoke on *The Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist* in ongoing formation on November 6, 2024. He explained the Eucharist as the source and summit of our faith which begins with our Baptism into our faith communities and continues with our receiving First Communion and on through our Confirmation. In our journey within the community, we are converted every time we pray the Creed. As we mature, we begin to question. Our identity begins in the womb. At Baptism, our parents choose to identify us as Christians. At Confirmation we choose for ourselves to remain faithful, and the Eucharist leads us to continual conversion. It transforms us into a new being. Through the mystery of faith and the words we pray during the Consecration, we enter the reality of the Eucharist. Through the sacrament of Ordination, the priest brings the offerings of the congregation, the ontological change brings us the true presence of the body of Christ. To truly understand the True Presence, we must be in the spirit of faith and understanding!



## Winter Relief

by

*Ann Marie Pessagno, OFS*

**O**n Thursday December 5, 2024, Pope St. John XXIII Secular Franciscan Fraternity provided a dinner meal for the participants of the Winter Relief program. We served pulled pork, green beans, cole slaw, rolls and desserts. The members prepared the meal and served it. We also spent time in fellowship with the clients eating a meal with them and conversing with them. It was a fun evening of good conversation and sharing with each other!



# Christmas Gathering

by

*Ann Marie Pessagno, OFS*

Pope St. John XXIII Secular Franciscan fraternity held their Christmas gathering at the home of our sister, Kathy Brady and her husband Sean on Sunday December 15, 2024. It was a wonderful gift of fellowship in their beautiful and welcoming home. Everyone brought something to share to eat and there was plenty of good food but most importantly great conversation and laughter. It was wonderful to come together in community to celebrate this magnificent time of year!



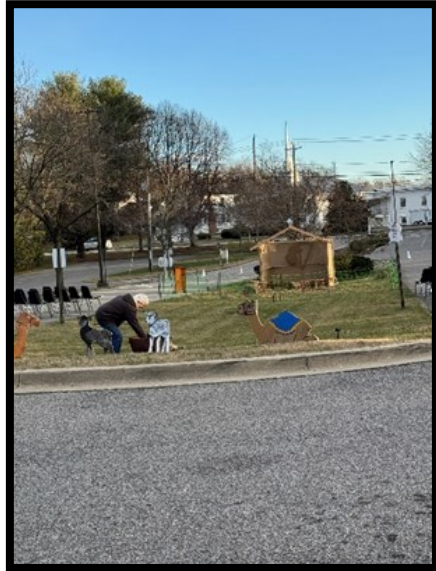
## Live Nativity

by

*Ann Marie Pessagno, OFS*

Pope St. John XXIII Secular Franciscans helped to sponsor the first **Live Nativity at Holy Family Church** on **Saturday December 21, 2024**, after the 5 PM Mass. Although it was cold, the event was well received by all those who attended it. A manger was constructed, and two sheep and a donkey were obtained to help enliven the experience. In addition, there were also cut out wooden animals and sheep that were positioned around a firepit for people to warm themselves. Several young adults and older adults volunteered to be characters in the scene – Mary, Joseph, Angel, Shepherd and Wise Men. There was a short program that included a welcome by Father Mike, Gospel reading from Luke and a history of the live nativity experience which St. Francis of Assisi originated. The participants also sang Silent Night together. There was hot cocoa and cookies served and Christmas carols playing. The event reminded all of us about the true meaning of what Christmas is all about!





## Formation Forum by *Jeanne Catrow, OFS*

“We are placed in our different ranks and stations, not to get what we can out of them for ourselves, but to labor in them for Him. As Christ has worked, we too have but to labor in them for Him. As Christ has His work, we too have ours; as He rejoiced to do his work, we must rejoice in ours also.” -- *St. John Neumann*

As we strive in our secular state to do the will of the Father, we are reminded that Christ rejoiced in His Father’s work. May we do the same.

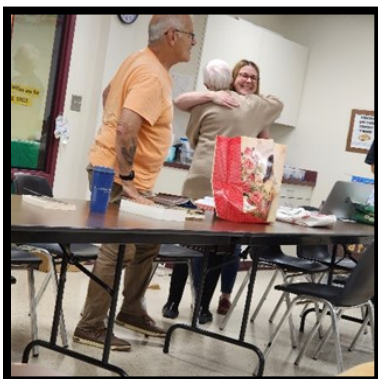
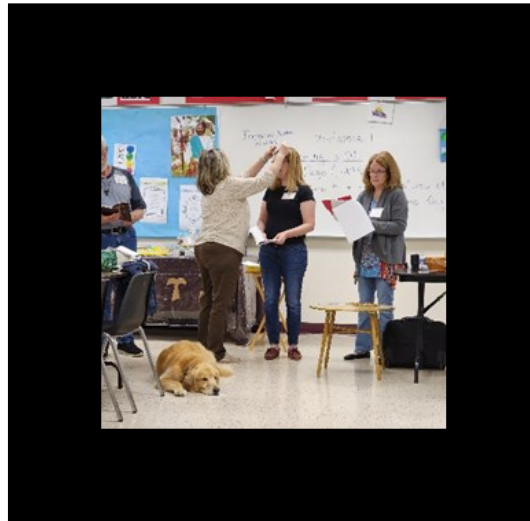
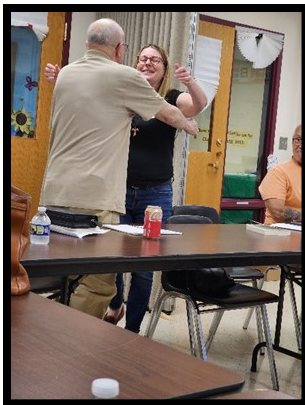
What a glorious year 2025 will be! Our fraternity will be celebrating the Profession of four candidates in June. We will be planning the liturgy for this celebration during the next few months. Please keep Michael O’Rourke, Barbara Henry, Shaun Dickey, and Elizabeth Brownlee in your prayers as they enter the final months of their discernment to the Franciscan vocation.

Also, our newer candidates are progressing and remaining enthusiastic about their journey toward profession. Our goal is to meet (over the next few months at least) by Zoom due to distance and weather considerations. Jean Schaefer, Genevieve DiUlio, and Sonia Balboni are such a gift to our fraternity – please keep them in your prayers.

And...we have a new group of aspirants who will meet on the last Wednesday of each month. How blessed we are to have these people join us and heed the call of the Holy Spirit to follow our father, St. Francis! We are abundantly blessed!

Go confidently in the peace and joy of the Lord, His holy Mother, Mary, and our models, St. Francis, and St. Claire!

### Sonia Balboni’s Admittance to the Fraternity Ceremony October 2, 2025



## PROFESSION 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
Ron Van Nest	September 17, 2016		Theresa Tucker	February 26, 2022
Marie Waleryszak	September 17, 2016		Penny (Joyce) Jones	May 13, 2023
			Patricia Sullivan	May 13, 2023

## BIRTHDAY WISHES

Nina Teti	February 19		Eugene (Duke) Jones	March 27
Joe O'Dea	February 21		Jean Schafer	May 22
Ann Marie Pessagno	March 14			

## TREASURY TIDBITS – DECEMBER 2024

<b>August 31, 2024 Ending Balance</b>	<b>\$8,825.46</b>
<b>September - December 2024 Deposits</b>	<b>\$3,230.00</b>
<b>September - December 2024 Withdrawals</b>	<b>\$4,546.67</b>
<b>December 31, 2024 Ending Balance</b>	<b>\$7,508.79</b>
<p><b>Thank you for your generous donations!</b>                  Our Fraternity will carefully and prayerfully manage the charitable contributions to serve our community.  <i>Pax et bonum!</i></p>	

## SAVE THE DATES

<b>March 29, 2025</b>	Day of Reflection for Inquirers and Candidates, Franciscan Monastery Washington, DC <b>Speaker:</b> Brother Michael Meza, OFM CAP (10 AM – 3 PM)
<b>June 25, 2025</b>	<b>Profession:</b> Barbara Henry, Elizabeth Brownlee, Shawn Dickey, and Michael O'Rourke Holy Family Catholic Church, Davidsonville, MD

**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)). Please feel free to check out our Fraternity website at <https://john23.sfousa.org>

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

