



“THE FLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS”
THE POPE ST. JOHN XXIII
SECULAR FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY
 Davidsonville, Maryland



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

“Living Our Faith”

It is easy to talk about our faith and what we should do. I am pretty good at that! However: putting our faith into action is where the rubber meets the road and the actionable doing gets hard. If you are like me, I find great excuses for not living my faith. Some of them may be familiar to you – I don’t have time, that person annoys me, I don’t want to share in groups, and it is not where I feel I am being called. These are just a few excuses, and I could probably go on forever. So given all this as Franciscans how do we best live our faith.

St. Francis of Assisi emphasized living a life that reflects one faith through love, service and humility. He believed in living a life of simplicity, embracing poverty for spiritual growth and serving others, particularly the poor and the marginalized. He also stressed the importance of knowing oneself, others and creation. Francis stressed that faith is not just a belief, but a way of life. One’s actions should reflect our faith, and that true faith leads to acts of service and love.

I have come to truly believe that radical conversion is ongoing. I have always been someone who wants to get it done – to check the box... This is simply not what we are called to do. We must look for all the ways we can best live our faith as God wills it! Let God put the opportunities before us and prayerfully accept what he asks of us. Put love first as he did by His death on the cross! One thing I have truly begun to focus on is my family. After forty-seven years of marriage, it is fair to say that patience with my husband (who can annoy me) is not my virtue. I have tried to truly pray and react in a loving and kind way instead of my usual non-sarcastic responses. Simple, but one way to begin. I know we all can find small

ways to change and convert and live our faith!

So today, I am going to walk the road God puts me on. Show me what you ask me. Let me put one step in front of the other and, if I stumble, pick me up and point me in the direction You want me to go. Life is an ongoing journey. Thank you for all the community of angels and saints that guide me, especially our beloved St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare!

“The deeds that you do may be the only sermon that some people will hear today.” - *St. Francis of Assisi*

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Our VICE MINISTER'S MUSINGS by *Joe O'Dea, OFS*



"Bringing Truth To A Divided World"

Jesus said he did not come to bring peace; he came to bring division (Lk 12:49-53). The footnote in the New American Bible says, "Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom is a refining and purifying fire. His message that meets with acceptance or rejection will be a source of conflict and dissension even within families." This has a reference to Micah 7:6, but you need to read the whole short chapter 7 to see what He's quite possibly referring to.

This is a prophecy of Jesus; it's not what he wanted. He simply knew that some would not accept Him, and those that did would be opposed by the world. Jesus wants us all to get to heaven. That is our task. Go into the division and speak words of healing, hope, peace, joy, and love to those who desperately want it, but may not be ready to give up the "world" yet. Bishop Sheen said, "We must see in the body of every man who hates, a soul that was made to love." Worldly people are all around us. We're divided on many moral issues involving energy, immigration, justice, socialist ideas, anti-Semitism, abortion, and sexual behavior and being.

We must do our own investigation or learning on these issues to find out why the Church or Scripture takes its stand. Who can be converted by hearing, "the Church opposes your view!?" I imagine myself often in a conversation with someone I need to bring truth to. What Scripture or Church teaching can I draw on to help someone move from their view to the truth? This is how I think of the questions to ask and then find answers so that I may be better able to handle a conversation that may draw someone to the truth. I've learned some great things from YouTube videos that have helped.

We Secular Franciscans must not ignore gaining wisdom, the truth - not what we want to side with, and bring that truth wherever we can. How do we do that? I've started interesting conversations by just stating something straight out of the Bible in an impartial way that is a hot issue of the day, and when I find out where a person stands, I listen, ask questions, and bring truth gently. Consider ending such a conversation with a warm invitation to our **OCIA** (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) class this fall!

SEEDS OF FAITH by *Nina Teti, OFS*

It has taken several months to getting my strength back and reorganizing my life to meet my present needs. Living alone is very challenging and requires many changes ... mostly patience and constantly focusing on the moment.

Let's continue this faith journey. I would like to share my *go to prayer* for encountering Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. This prayer was given to me when I made my First Communion and is one of my most treasured prayers to this day

MY HOLY COMMUNION

When I approach the altar and...
I kneel before the rail...
The pleasures of the world appear...
So empty, and so pale...
Because the power of the priest...
Has touched infinity...
And in a moment he will share...
His miracle with me...
I dwell in reverence and awe...
That God should ordain...
His precious Blood and Body to...
Invade my every vein...
And when I have received the Host...
And I begin to pray...
I cannot look at anything...
Or keep my tears away...
My tears of sorrow for the sins...
For which he sacrificed...
And all the tears of ecstasy...
In joy with Jesus Christ!



CARING FOR CREATION by *Chris Gordon, OFS*



Caring for Creation means bugs too! This year portends something special. Yes, there will be cicadas, but what else is hitting the windshield? Well, red splatters are probably female blood sucking mosquitoes. Cream color blotches are probably moths and butterflies. Then there are the love bugs. They are often splattered in pairs.

Well, typically there seems to be less and less of all the bugs hitting our cars, flying into our face, and generally making a pest of themselves lately. Why, you might ask?

There's the ever-more use of pesticides, suburbanization, and changes to the environment on a grand scale. Most of these insects that we notice are actually a food source in the chain of life for all the mammals and birds we love to see so much on our walks in the woods.

Oh, the portend thing! Well, there seems to be more bugs this year, and that's a good thing, because those bugs will be feeding all those insectivores. Early in the season, I see Bluebirds eating at the bird feeder because the insects have not emerged yet. By the time they start laying eggs and raising chicks, the insects will be there in time to feed the babies. Let's not forget Woodpeckers, who eat larva in rotting trees, and Swallows, who catch them on the wing. Be careful with pesticides; you may be harming more wildlife than you realize! **Be kind to yourself, and, if you can, be kind to someone else!**



LIVING OUR FAITH by *Patricia Sullivan, OFS*

I am a convert, as well as a revert, to Catholicism. I converted, at age 14, when I was able to attend Catholic boarding schools after living 12 years in foster care. So, when I learned about Christ from the good nuns in these schools, my **image of Christ** (and His Blessed Mother) is, and has always been, that of love, humility, gentleness, kindness, forgiveness, and **always** concerned with those who “are down on their luck” i.e. the **poor, homeless, displaced, sick**, etc. So, I know, through my faith, and now as a Franciscan,

that just as St. Francis saw the face of Christ in the poor, sick, and homeless he met, that it is **Christ, too, that I must see** when I meet or interact with those in need! And, I do!

On Thursday, May 8, of this year, at about 9:30 pm, I was given the opportunity, and I believe gift from God, of “seeing the face of Christ” in a man who suddenly appeared on my front porch, with a huge bag sitting next to him, talking to my son, Kevin, who usually sits on the front porch listening to music before he goes to bed. It was 2 of my grandchildren who came barreling down the steps, as I was reading in the living room, telling me that Chuck, a former coworker of my son-in-law, was on our front porch and had no place to go. Something had happened where he was living with his sister, and he had no place to go. My grandchildren told me my son-in-law was getting out a tent out of our shed that Chuck could use in the woods behind a mall in Bowie, where apparently homeless people stay in tents, until Chuck could find someplace to live! I never knew there was such a place behind a mall in Bowie!!!

I had met Chuck over the past 15 years or so only in passing, when he would come to see my son-in-law since they were former coworkers. He always spoke and was polite, but I never knew much about him until about 3 years ago, when I was informed Chuck had had 3 hearts attacks, survived them all, and was living with his sister. He suffers from leg/hip pain, difficulty walking on one of his legs, not able to work, and has no income except food stamps!!! Knowing that, when I went outside on the porch to see Chuck, who was very distressed, I decided, then and there, that there was **no way I was going to let my son-in-law take him someplace in the woods to stay in a tent!!!** I knew Chuck had had 3 heart attacks, and even though there was still so much I didn’t know about his circumstances, **there was no way I was going to allow that to happen!** My family, on the other hand, was split in their views, and it wasn’t until I said to them “who pays the mortgage in this house”, that they knew I wasn’t going to back down, and Chuck was staying!

It was at that moment that I said to them something I never dreamed I would ever be saying to them that night, and something I don’t believe they had ever heard before from me! And that was “Chuck right now is without a place to stay for the night, and is in need, and to me, and to all of us here in this house, he is, right now, on our porch, the **“face of Christ”**”, and we, not me, or any of us, are going to neglect him!

I will never forget the absolute silence that followed when I said that, and no one ventured to respond to what I had just said. I am not even sure they understood what I said when I said **“the face of Christ”** to them, but several days later my son, Kevin, asked me about that, and I shared with him that seeing the **“face of Christ”** in others, especially those in need, is part of **“Living My Faith”**!

Since we didn’t have an extra bedroom for Chuck, he slept on our living room couch, and we found him to be very gracious and respectful, and when I discovered he took a multitude of medicines, I made sure he took them. We also made sure he went to a cardiology appointment he had, and I was able to spend a little time talking with him and getting to know him better, and even watched some movies with him. He helped around the yard as he could. Chuck stayed with us until May 26, a little over 2 weeks, and is now with someone he has happily known for years, with the expectation to reunite with his sister. Chuck remains in my daily prayers, and I pray he is safe and happy!

Thinking about Chuck now and everything that happened these past few weeks, **I feel in my heart I did the right thing offering Chuck a place to stay for a few weeks.** I strongly feel from my background living in foster homes as a child, that I am able to identify, in my own unique way through those experiences, with those who are “down on their luck” and need help, just as I needed help when I was a child. So, when I ponder about **“Living My Faith”** in today’s world, which is not always easy to do, I know, in my heart, that God gave me a special way to **“Live My Faith”** a few weeks ago when I found Chuck on my porch with nowhere to stay! **He was, and is, the face of Christ to me!**

ONGOING FRATERNITY FORMATION

Faith Journey - March 5, 2025

Ron Van Nest, OFS, shared his life and faith journey with the membership. He was the first Minister of Pope St. John XXIII Secular Franciscan Fraternity canonically established on October 19, 2019. Ron discussed his career, his personal journey and sees his life as a tree with many branches and life-changing events. He had a Catholic education and eventually became interested in a career as a nurse anesthetist. During his early adult life, he fell away from his faith, but his faith was rekindled when he was asked to teach religious education classes. During his career in medicine, he was asked to participate in abortions and refused. Desert Storm made him fear for his life, but the loss of his son at twenty rattled his faith to the core. He was eventually able to restore his faith in God's plan for him. Ron's assignment led him to Riva Maryland and Holy Family Catholic church where he met Father Andy Aaron, Pastor. Father Andy Aaron encouraged him to look at starting a Secular Franciscan Fraternity at Holy Family Church. In the interim, his daughter adopted a baby girl, and his wife died when their granddaughter turned two. Ron worked diligently to establish Pope St. John XXIII Secular Franciscan Fraternity. St. Conrad's sponsored the emerging Fraternity and assisted with Formation of the first candidates. Thanks to his vision and determination, **Pope St. John XXIII Secular Franciscan Fraternity is alive and thriving!**



The Capillaries of Christ: Understanding the Part You Play in His Body

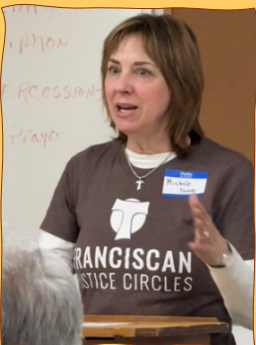
Book Discussion

March 15, 2025



Pope St. John XXIII and St. Conrad's Secular Franciscan Fraternities met jointly on Saturday March 15, 2025, at Holy Family Catholic Church. Marty Mitchell led a discussion about his book, **The Capillaries of Christ: Understanding the Part You Play in His Body**. He is a Catholic speaker and illuminator who has a unique passion for helping others understand their part in the Body of Christ, so they can be filled with love, joy, happiness and the peace of God that comes from loving their best blessed life! Marty spoke about the messages of love of God and neighbor, and unity in the Body and Christ. He spoke about our God-given uniqueness, and asked that we strive for our full potential by shining a light on our talents and gifts and all their goodness. Marty encourages us to be filled with, and share the love, peace and joy of Christ by **intentionally** playing our part in His Body every day!

Franciscan Action Network – What's It All About? - April 2, 2025

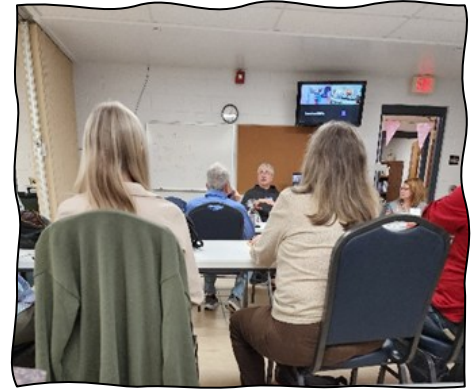


Michelle Dunne, OFS, Executive Director, did a terrific presentation on the Franciscan Action Network (FAN). Michelle stated that the mission of the network is, "Inspired by the Gospel of Jesus and the example of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare, the Franciscan Action Network is a collective Franciscan voice seeking to transform United States public policy related to peace making, care for creation, poverty and human rights." It advocates on critical issues including climate change, racial justice, poverty, immigration, gun violence, democracy, peace, and respect for life. FAN is based in Washington, DC, and has Franciscan Justice Circles in twenty-three states. These are usually small groups with special emphasis on cultivating young college age advocates. There are costs associated with training programs and scholarships are available. Fundraising is currently done in one of the outreach centers, such as soup kitchens in Baltimore with a benefit dinner. Michelle distributed informational pamphlets with information and contact information. She also provided a prayer card for all!



Servant Leadership

May 6, 2025



Father Jude Winkler, OFM Conv, presented a discussion on **Servant Leadership** and scripture from a Franciscan point of view. God made us to serve, and Father Winkler pointed out that the two most vulnerable times of the life of Christ were at **the Incarnation** and **on the cross!** These two occasions show us the true reasons God made us to serve. He **loves us to death, and to be the last not the first!** Children are the most in need, and they cannot offer anything back. We are the most God-like when we serve others; this is our great treasure. Servant leadership is to **guide by example**, not to control, condemn or dictate. Sometimes leadership is giving up a position for the good of the community. Mistakes are not sins, and the gospel of Jesus is “dusty and dirty”. Can we teach others how to be ‘Franciscan’ by example - by our gratitude to serve? Happiness is momentary, but joy is a sense of being where we should be. Pain is a holy gift from God, no matter what type of pain. Offer it up as a prayer to be joyful and carry it with Christ. Father Jude pointed out that God suffers with us when we mess up; can we offer it and carry the cross with Him? Faith means trust - believing that God’s love happened on the cross. We should picture heaven as very near, not something far away in the cloud!

FORMATION FORUM By *Jeanne Catrow, OFS*

“Walk the way of the Lord in simplicity, do not torment your spirit.” - St. Padre Pio

We are reminded daily to follow the simple life of Francis.


We are being **abundantly** blessed during this year of our Lord, 2025! Our fraternity will be celebrating the Profession of four candidates on June 28. Please keep **Michael O’Rourke, Barbara Henry, Shawn Dickey, and Elizabeth Brownlee** in your prayers as they enter the final weeks of their discernment to the Franciscan vocation. These candidates and our other candidates, Jean Schaefer, Genevieve DiUlio, and Sonia Balboni (along with our Minister, Ann Marie Pessagno) attended a recent mini-retreat at St. Anthony’s in Ellicott City, led by Fr. Jude Winkler, OFM, Conv. What a gift he is to our Fraternity!

Also, our other candidates are prayerfully progressing on their journey toward profession. Our goal is to meet by Zoom, if we must, and in person when we are able, due to distance considerations. Jean Schaefer, Genevieve DiUlio, and Sonia Balboni are truly a holy addition to our Fraternity – please keep them in your prayers.

And...we have a new group of 5 aspirants who meet on the last Wednesday of each month! Kathie Taylor, Ed Muir, Teresa Love, Eric Love, and Paul Becht were welcomed into our fraternity on May 7, 2025. 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!

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

Theresa Tucker Patricia Sullivan Kathy Brady Sandy Horvath Penny Jones Genevieve DiUlio Barbara Henry	July 12 July 27 July 28 July 29 August 7 September 1 September 7		Chris Gordon Mary Rohde Laura Benso Shawn Dickey Michael O'Rourke Edward Muir	September 14 September 14 September 16 September 20 September 26 September 27
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TREASURY TIDBITS – MAY 2025

December 31, 2024 Ending Balance	\$7,508.79
January - May 2025 Deposits	\$3,835.00
January – May 2025 Withdrawals	\$2,627.00
May 31, 2025 Ending Balance	\$8,716.79

Rule 25: The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Regarding expenses necessary for the life of the Fraternity and the needs of worship, of the apostolate and of charity, ALL the brothers and sisters should offer a contribution according to their means. Local fraternities should contribute toward the expenses of the higher Fraternity Councils.

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

October 2025 | **Fraternal and Pastoral Visit**

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) or our **Vice Minister**, Joe O'Dea, OFS (remaincalmtoday@yahoo.com). All are welcome!

