

FALL 2025

Communio Special Edition

ARG 2025

That All May Be One
Newsletter of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region
Secular Franciscan Order



Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate



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ANNUAL REGIONAL GATHERING 2025



[You can view the events on the BSSF website.](#)

State of the Region

Nearly 200 members of the Secular Franciscan community from across the region gathered in Black Mountain, NC, from August 10–12 for the Annual Regional Gathering — a weekend filled with prayer, fellowship, and gratitude.

Ellen Ferrone, OFS, welcomed attendees with warmth and reverence, acknowledging national visitors Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM, and Josh Molidor, OFS, as well as special guests Sr. Nancy Shively, OSC, and Sr. Bernedette Cappola, OSC from Travelers Rest.

“How blessed we are to be here as a true Franciscan family,” Ellen shared, noting the joyful representation of all three Franciscan orders.

Though absent, the recent arrival of three friars from Our Lady of Guadalupe Province to Charlotte, NC, was celebrated as a hopeful sign of future collaboration in faith and service.

In her State-of-the-Region address, Ferrone highlighted that we have:

- 501 professed members
- 62 candidates
- 16 inquirers
- 20 aspirants
- 26 fraternities and 2 emerging groups

A moment of remembrance was offered for 18 members who passed away over the past year, especially Deacon Thomas Shaver, a longtime regional spiritual assistant.

“Our family is ever-growing and evolving,” Ellen said, urging members to continue fostering retreats, Transitus celebrations, and other inter-fraternity activities that deepen spiritual bonds.

April’s Regional Fraternity Council meeting in Anderson, SC, brought together new local ministers, spiritual assistants, and spiritual assistants in formation for a weekend of enrichment, with Fr. Jerome leading formation sessions. Supported by a national Duns Scotus Grant and local generosity, nearly half of the costs were covered.

“Our spiritual assistants are the heart of our fraternities,” said Ferrone. “Please thank them when you can — their servant leadership is a gift.”

In a moment of celebration, the St. Padre Pio Group in Indian Land, SC, was formally recognized as an emerging fraternity, thanks to the mentorship of the St. Clare Fraternity of Aiken, SC. Fr. Jerome presented their establishment documents to John Myers, leader of the new group.

Formation director Lynn Oeser, OFS, continues to lead bi-monthly formation sessions, empowering both spiritual assistants and formation directors. Fraternities across Georgia and North Carolina marked professions and visitations, while the Poor Clares in Travelers Rest welcomed regional members for a time of grace and joy.

Youth and young adult outreach is growing, with notable efforts from the St. Clare Fraternity in Winston-Salem at Wake Forest University and the St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity at UNC- Charlotte.

“Thanks to Fran Acosta’s dedication and the presence of our new OLG friars, this outreach is flourishing,” Ellen noted.

Recent visits on behalf of the BSSF region to Bishops Michael Martin, OFM Conv., (Charlotte) and Luis Raphael (Raleigh) further advanced conversations around vocations and fraternity life.

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The Regional Executive Council (REC) continues to enhance fraternity support through updated visitation processes and continued “Meet & Greet” Zoom calls with newly elected local councils.

Ellen closed by expressing deep gratitude to all who helped make the gathering possible, including volunteers from St. John Vianney, the Franciscan Family Bookstore team, and those organizing logistics and merchandise.

“Each of you is a blessing,” Ferrone concluded. “Together, we are building up the Kingdom of God in the spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare.”

[You can view Ellen’s State of the Region address and other ARG presentations on the website.](#)



ELECTION NEWS

The Brothers and Sisters of the St. Francis Region Executive Council (REC) began a three-year term after an election at the Aug. 8-10 Annual Regional Gathering in Black Mountain, NC.

Elected were Minister Ellen Ferrone, OFS; Vice-Minister David Cruze-Urbe, OFS; Secretary Theresa Christie, OFS; Treasurer Charlie Comberrel, OFS; and Formation Director Lynn Oeser, OFS.

Elected councilors

Area 1: Gabrielle Cruz-Urbe, OFS

Area 2: Margi Williams, OFS

Area 3: Becky Bresnahan, OFS and Susan McArthur, OFS

Area 4: Frances Acosta, OFS and Michaelleen Ann Davis, OFS

Area 5: Lee Cunningham, OFS, and Travis Bongiorno OFS

Local council ministers and members of the Regional Executive Council voted in the election.

The number of regional areas represented by councilors increased from three to five. Two new councilors were added to make the areas smaller for ease of communication, said Ellen Ferrone, OFS, who was re-elected minister. This decision was made by the REC based on a recommendation in the national visitation report submitted in 2024.



Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM and Josh Molidor, OFS



Front: Michaelleen Davis, OFS; Becky Bresnahan, OFS; Susan McArthur, OFS; Fr. Bob Menard, OFM; Ellen Ferrone, OFS; Charlie Comberrel, OFS
Back: Allison Salerno, OFS; Margi Williams, OFS; Lee Cunningham, OFS; Theresa Christie, OFS; David Cruze-Urbe, OFS; Frances Acosta, OFS; Travis Bongiorno, OFS; Gabrielle Cruz-Urbe, OFS

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Nearly 200 fraternity members attended the annual meeting that also included talks on the Cantic of Creation by Fr. Bob Menard, OFM, a panel discussion on the effects of Hurricane Helene on fraternity members in its path, 24-hour Eucharistic adoration, a bookstore sponsored by St. Francis Springs, two Masses, a penitential prayer service, Rites of Remembrance for 17 members in the region who died in the past year. Among them were former spiritual assistant Thomas Shaver, OFS. Leading the Office for the Dead was the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Augusta, GA.

A special effort to share stories and information was made at meals through table talks. Tables were identified by topics and led by fellow Franciscans so members could exchange information and learn more about Formation, Franciscan Youth, JPIC, Multicultural, Spiritual Assistants, the Communio, and how to increase vocations in the order.



Once again, a choir of Franciscan musicians, under the direction of Theresa Christie, OFS, led the singing at Mass and prayer services.

Golf cart rides helped some members navigate the hills of the conference center and was organized by Zubair Simonson, OFS.

Fraternity members took time to work on a three-year-old apostolate. On Friday, two huge spools of orange mesh arrived and on Sunday **10,000** gleaning bags destined for the fields around North Carolina were packed up. Members spent their free moments cutting and tying the gleaning bags.

Last year the Society of St. Andrew distributed 21,822,248 servings of fresh food to those in need. Much of it was collected in gleaning bags made by volunteers.

Last year, ARG attendees completed 5,000 bags in 12 hours, so the decision was made to double the number this year, according to Vice-Minister David Cruze-Urbe, OFS, who organized the project.

Next year's ARG will be Sept. 11-13 at the Black Mountain Conference Center. If you are interested in helping with registration or any other activities, contact Area 5 Councilor Lee Cunningham at emcunningham3@gmail.com



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Travis Bongiorno delivered the 10,000 gleaming bags on August 10, 2025.

Hi guys!

Just wanted to thank both of you and your organization for your help making bags! These will be so helpful for our events this fall. Thanks again!

Warm regards,

Taylor Wolfe (she/her/hers)

Central & Eastern Carolinas Program Coordinator

Society of St. Andrew

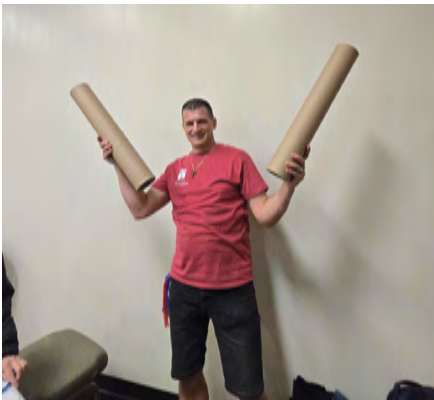
[504 W. Chapel Hill Street, Durham NC 27701](#)

919-309-5261 | [EndHunger.org](#)

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The Society of St. Andrew is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law, your gift brings people together to harvest fresh produce and share that good food with hungry people in their communities.



Spirit of Sharing Table Talks

It was such a pleasure to share a meal with Franciscans from several fraternities during ARG this year: St. Thomas More—Wilmington; Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg—Blairsville; Padre Pio—Raleigh; Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary—Bluffton; St. Clare—Ashville; Mother Cabrini—Anderson; and Fraternity of the Stigmata of St. Francis—Johns Creek. We all had one thing in common, a spirit of sharing!

Some of the ideas we shared include:

Hosting “Come and See” events in parishes in the area of the fraternity. Fraternity members should be ‘visible’ during the Mass, sitting together as a group. Anyone who expresses interest should have a member of the fraternity serve as a liaison for that person, contacting them before the next gathering and then welcoming them to the gathering. They need to remain in contact to answer any questions and continue to form a relationship.

Building on the “each one, reach one” idea, fraternity members should be encouraged to identify individuals in their parish who exhibit a “Franciscan Spirit” and speak with them personally to invite them to consider the Secular Franciscan way of life. Becky Bresnahan shared an example. She approached a truly Franciscan-spirited deacon at her church. She approached him after a Mass in which he preached a truly Franciscan message. She told him she’d noticed his spirit was particularly Franciscan-focused and asked if he’d ever considered a vocation to the Franciscan family. He admitted he had but was still unsure if he was truly called. Her response: “God calls us all in many different ways. What if everything I expressed to him wasn’t actually coming from me?” Then she winked and walked away.

Margi Williams encouraged us to find ways to include those who are unable to attend gatherings. Reach out to them to keep them involved.

Sharon Winzeler mentioned that her fraternity benefitted from a Franciscan Priest who really encouraged parishioners to get involved with the fraternity. She also mentioned that their fraternity has a specific time for the next initial formation to start and then they have a larger group for sharing the journey. Her fraternity is now finding ways to build relationships within the larger fraternity.

Deacon Phil Rzewnicki strongly encouraged us to pray the Franciscan Vocation Petitions for Liturgy of the Hours available from <https://secularfranciscansusa.org/wp-content/uploads/Franciscan-Vocation-Petitions-for-Liturgy-of-the-Hours.pdf>

There are other great Vocation resources available from the National and Regional websites. The Tau had a full edition on Vocations.

Janet Angelillo, OFS, Regional Minister from the Bl. Solanus Casey Regional Fraternity
Provided the following suggestions:

- Start a library to share Franciscan books, especially *The Lessons of St. Francis*, *How to bring Simplicity and Spirituality* by Talbot. Use these for new visitors. Don’t ask them to sign them out—just please read and then give back so someone else may enjoy.
- Ask for 5 minutes to speak to the Priests and Deacons in the Deanery
- Think about best meeting times/days if you are trying to reach younger members
- Within the fraternity, arrange for buddies who check in with others via email and phone calls, especially those who are unable to attend.
- Host a Day of Prayer:
 - Adoration

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- Prayer for Vocations
- Prayer for world problems
- Find ways to plant seeds—especially with youth groups. Use the Canticle of Creation as a great starting point to teach stewardship.
- Her Fraternity works with Petco for donated cat food & dog food. They work with the youth group to repackage the food and then take it to the shelter.

Others have expressed interest in sharing ideas and in hearing what others are doing. We hope to schedule a ZOOM meeting in the near future and would love if you could attend to share your success stories as well as glean ideas from others.

Peace and all good,
Mary Sacavage, OFS
Minister, Blessed John Duns Scotus Fraternity

Survivors Share Stories of Resilience and Spiritual Growth After Hurricane Helen

One year after Hurricane Helen tore through the Southeast, survivors gathered at the Annual Regional Gathering for a powerful panel that blended storytelling, faith, and healing.

The featured three Secular Franciscans sharing how they endured the storm's devastation and how it transformed their spirituality.

As attendees found their seats and a screen displayed a "Pledge of Commitment to Protect and Heal God's Creation," moderator Allisen Salerno, OFS, a regional JPIC animator and journalist who covered Helene for *The Washington Post*, welcomed the group.

"We have come to renew our covenant with God and one another," the audience recited the pledge. "We have come to protect God's creation."

Allisen, who reported on Helene's impact across Georgia, South Carolina, and Tennessee, emphasized that the storm wasn't just a meteorological event. She called it a spiritual reckoning. "What does the church tell us about climate change?" she asked. "It's about the future of God's creation and the one human family."

Hurricane Helene made landfall in Florida, on September 26, 2024. Within 24 hours, it intensified from a Category 1 to a Category 4 storm with 140 mph winds. By the time Helene moved inland, it had claimed over 230 lives, making it the third-deadliest U.S. hurricane in six decades.

The survivors who spoke on the panel recounted the physical damage and delved into the spiritual challenges and revelations that followed.

Carrie Murga, a schoolteacher and Secular Franciscan from Augusta, Georgia, described waking up at 4:20 a.m. to howling winds and her cat tugging at her hair. Soon after, three massive trees crashed into her home, ripping holes in the roof and collapsing the dining room ceiling.

"I didn't care about the house. I cared about the hickory tree," she said. "That's when I knew I was truly Franciscan."

Despite nearly three weeks without electricity and a brief period without water due to underground infrastructure damage, Carrie said the most difficult lesson was spiritual not material.

"I'm a giver. I don't like asking for help. But I had to learn to receive. That was humbling."

Gene Macgruder, OFS, from Hendersonville, North Carolina, slept through much of the storm due to having removed his cochlear implants at night. His sister, awakened by water flooding into their garage, ran outside only to be struck and briefly knocked unconscious by a falling tree.

When Gene awoke, he found multiple trees had destroyed his car, part of his roof, and blocked the roads. But amidst the chaos, neighbors emerged, many of whom he had never spoken with before.

"I didn't even know their names," Jean said. "But suddenly, everyone was helping everyone."

Gene credits his faith and local volunteers, including Southern Baptist disaster teams, for helping him get back on his feet. "You must have faith in God. Don't be afraid to ask for help."

Greg Pozzi, also of Hendersonville, shared perhaps the most harrowing story of the panel. As Helen raged overhead, he sat in his living room after a power outage disrupted his CPAP machine. Moments later, a tree came crashing through the roof, missing him by mere seconds.

"A branch stabbed me in the back, and that's when I knew to hit the floor," he recalled. "Had I waited two more seconds, I'd be dead."

Greg was taken in by his landlord for six months during the rebuild. During that time, the two prayed the Liturgy of the Hours each morning and helped neighbors in need, including a 103-year-old woman whose driveway was blocked by downed trees.

"Going through this helped me understand what St. Francis meant by 'perfect joy,'" he said. "I've learned to be grateful for what I have and to not dwell on what I've lost."

Audience members shared their own experiences during the Q&A, including one man from Swannanoa who went without electricity for a month and another whose son in the National Guard helped with relief efforts.

"We're still recovering," Carrie added. "Trees are still down in yards. Some friends still aren't back in their homes. We're doing what we can and trusting God with the rest."

For many who attended, the session was more than just a panel. It was a sacred space of vulnerability, reflection, and renewal.

As the climate crisis fuels stronger, faster, and more unpredictable storms, religious communities like these Franciscans are beginning to play a more visible role in spiritual and ecological recovery.

From quoting Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'* to recalling the 2001 U.S. Bishops' statement on climate change, the message was clear: this is not just a scientific or political issue—it's a moral one.

As one panelist put it, "Climate change is about the one human family and about protecting what God has made."

Pledge of Commitment

*To Protect and Heal God's Creation
(From United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)*

We have come to renew our covenant with God and with one another in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

We have come to help protect God's creation.

We have come as followers of Jesus to commit ourselves anew to one another and to heal injustice and poverty.

We have come to stand together against all threats to life.

We have come to discover some new beauty every day in God's creation:
the sunrise and sunset,

birds, flowers and trees, rainbows in the sky, the stars, the many forms of life in the forest.

We have come to listen to the "music of the universe"—water flowing over rocks, the wind, trees bending in the wind, raindrops pattering the roof.

We will always remember that God speaks to us through the beauty of his creation, and we will try our best to answer God's call to reverence all that he has created.

Fr. Bob Menard's Homily

In a stirring reflection that wove together history, spirituality, art, and personal testimony, Fr. Bob Menard, OFM, delivered a powerful talk on the life of St. Francis of Assisi and the enduring call of his “Canticle of the Creatures.” The talk invited listeners to journey beyond the walls of Assisi into a deeper understanding of what it means to live a gospel-centered life.

Fr. Bob is the spiritual assistant to the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region.

Fr. Bob opened with a simple but profound truth: “Words have meaning. They provoke change. They shape lives and history.” He reminded listeners that the words of St. Francis transformed not only his immediate community but continue to shape how we view creation, humility, and our shared humanity.

Much of the talk emphasized the significance of Francis’s departure from the city of Assisi. Fr. Bob described this moment not as a rejection of the city, but as a radical embracing of a new identity—one grounded in God, simplicity, and universal kinship. By walking away from privilege and into the wild valley of Rieti, Francis became, as Fr. Bob said, “a pilgrim of hope.”

From the green heart of Italy to the remote mountains Francis’s journey became one of discovery—not just of place, but of purpose. At places like the Portiuncula and Greccio, Francis not only rebuilt churches, but he rebuilt hearts. He modeled a life of service, joy, and unity with all of God’s creatures.

The centerpiece of Fr. Bob’s reflection was the *Canticle of the Creatures*, a hymn of praise composed by Francis during his final days. This was no mere poem, Fr. Bob asserted. It was a “rule of life.” Fr. Bob said it is a call to live in relationship with all of creation and each other, grounded in reconciliation, forgiveness, and peace.

Francis’s vision was not abstract spirituality but a lived gospel. “He went around doing good,” Fr. Bob emphasized. “He sang the Canticle for our consolation and the edification of our neighbor.” And with that, Francis sent his brothers and sisters out to witness.

Fr. Bob then turned to the work of artist John August Swanson, whose silk stereograph of St. Francis captures the saint not as a preacher, but as a listener. “He’s not talking to the animals. he’s listening,” Fr. Bob observed. In that attentive stillness, Francis models way of knowing the reflects communion, humility, and reverence.

The artwork’s frame tells the fuller story. It conveys works of mercy, cosmic imagery, and the Canticle in visual form. It becomes a modern icon for a timeless message.

Fr. Bob concluded by introducing a figure who, though not canonized, embodied the same spirit of Francis. She is Edith Weisskoff Jolson, a Jewish psychologist, teacher, Holocaust refugee, and logotherapy scholar. His friendship with her began in a campus chapel and deepened through a shared love for the 1972 film *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*.

Edith’s story, marked by suffering, mental illness, and ultimately profound spiritual insight, resonated deeply with Francis’s message. In her memoir, she wrote, “We must die to be reborn... Power destroys, but humility nourishes.” She called madness a gift, through which she rediscovered her identity: “I am a teacher. I will always teach.”

Her call to “share the gift” echoed Francis’s own charge: “I have done what is mine to do. May the Lord teach you what is yours to do.”

Fr. Bob’s talk left the audience with a challenge and a blessing. The *Canticle of the Creatures* is not an artifact; it is a way of life. In a world hungry for peace, burdened by suffering, and fractured by division, Francis’s vision offers an antidote: live simply, love broadly, listen deeply, and walk humbly with all of creation.

As Fr. Bob echoed the words of Edith Weisskoff Jolson, he left listeners with a final call to action: “Join hands with your brothers and sisters and march... Liberate the road of life.”

[You can view Fr. Bob’s homily and other ARG presentations on the website.](#)

Fr. Jerome Wolbert's Homily

In a moving Sunday morning homily, Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM, offered a reflection that called listeners beyond distraction and fear into a life of devotion that overflows into the world. Delivered with humility and candor, Fr. Jerome's words touched on themes of attention, action, healing, and the transformative power of love.

Opening with humor about stage fright and the discomfort of microphones, Fr. Jerome quickly turned to a deeper message about devotion, in the fullest sense of the word. Drawing from the words of Moses in the day's readings, he emphasized that devotion to God isn't just about rituals or rules, but about the deliberate, loving focus on God and God's ways.

"Our relationship with God begs for that devotion," he said, "so much so that our whole being exudes with love for God."

Fr. Jerome pointed to the ancient command to "write God's name on your doorposts and on your heart" as more than a metaphor. While joking that Moses wasn't necessarily advocating tattoos, he noted that this kind of devotion means letting God permeate everything, including our homes, our conversations, our relationships.

"It's not about forcing religion on others—especially not our children—but letting the love of God affect everything you do," he said. "That kind of devotion prompts a dedication people can see."

Reflecting on the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, Fr. Jerome acknowledged how some members may feel uncertain or even hesitant about being "out in the world," especially when it comes to political or public engagement. But he reassured them: living the gospel necessarily means being involved in one's community, and that one may be surprised at how economic and political action look.

"Taking soup to a neighbor? That's an economic and political action," he said. "It's love of neighbor. It's devotion. It's all of one cloth."

He encouraged listeners to embrace their unique expressions of faith, whether through activism, service, prayer, or simply consistent acts of kindness.

Turning to the liturgy of the hours, Fr. Jerome invited those gathered to consider how the constant rhythm of the Psalms shapes their hearts.

"The Psalms form us," he said, "just as they once formed a young man who walked around the Holy Land and made it holier—not only because He was a man, but because He was also God."

This prayer, he said, nurtures the kind of trust and dedication Jesus revealed in the gospels. Faith can move not only mountains of stone, but also "the mountains in our hearts," Fr. Jerome said.

Fr. Jerome concluded with a powerful story from the book *Sing for Your Life*, the memoir of opera singer Ryan Speedo Green. Green, once a troubled youth placed in a juvenile institution, found a turning point through the quiet, persistent love of one woman. This one act of devotion stayed with him even when he couldn't remember her name.

"She loved him. He chose to respond. And both of those things were true," Fr. Jerome reflected. "That kind of love moves hearts. That kind of faith changes lives."

The lesson? Devotion is not just a private spiritual exercise—it is a force that prompts dedication, fosters healing, and calls each of us into a deeper relationship with God and with others.

"Our devotion and our dedication to the Lord," Fr. Jerome concluded, "opens up our hearts to love. Even the people we find hardest to love. And that kind of love... that's the kind that moves mountains."

[You can view Fr. Jerome's homily and other ARG presentations on the website.](#)

Time Spent in Kenya

Submitted by Bob Pape, OFS; *Minister, St. Thomas More Fraternity, Wilmington*

This past February (2025) I had the honor to live with a Franciscan priest Father Felix Ndolo a member of the Franciscan Servants of Mary Queen of Love (FSMQL)

I lived with Father Felix for approximately 5 weeks in Lolgorian, Kenya which is a 7-hour drive West of the Capital City of Nairobi. Close to the Uganda border. As a matter of fact, one Sunday afternoon, we drove to Uganda for a little sightseeing and lunch.

This was my third trip to Africa. I was invited to live in the rectory with Father Felix and the pastor of Sacred Heart R C Church. The main church along with the parish school is on a campus comprising 60 acres. There are 27 mission churches attached to the parish. Several days a week Father Felix and I would venture out to visit these mission churches on a rotating basis. The travel time ranged from 30 minutes at a minimum to 90 minutes to the further communities. Mass was celebrated in a dilapidated building, someone's home or most often under a large tree. Sheep, goats, donkeys, cattle etc would often stop by to see what was going on. My limited vocabulary is not adequate to describe the roads that were travelled to visit the mission churches. Each community visited the congregants demonstrated extraordinary strength in the face of many physical challenges, a deep faith in Jesus and an overall joyful spirit. The vast majority of the people were dirt poor. The people were happy and always welcoming. During Mass each family presented their tithing. The tithing ranged from grain, a chicken or rooster and little actual money. One lady presented to me three eggs for her offering. The presentation of three eggs was very emotional for me and really hit home.

One day we were traveling to a particularly remote outpost. After about an hour drive Father Felix stopped the car on the side of the road. I learned not to ask too many questions. Suddenly two motor bikes came out of the forest. I was then informed that the last several miles of traveling would be by motor bike. The drivers were Peter and Paul (true story). Father Felix asked which driver I would prefer. Without hesitation I said Peter. I introduced myself to Peter and noticed that he was wearing a very nice helmet for the journey. I asked if he had one for his passenger. The answer was he only had one and off we went.

Obviously, Father Felix and I had many hours in the car together. This time together enriched my Franciscan Spirituality and Charism. The life and times of St Francis, Clare, Bonaventure, Blessed John Duns Scotus and the gospel reading at Mass were the primary topics of conversation. Since the sermons were in Swahili Father Felix often presented the sermon in English for my understanding as we were driving to the next mission location. He is an outstanding homilist. A highlight of the trip was the opportunity to have lunch with Father David Kamue Mbugua OFMCAP. He is the Chair of the Franciscan Family Association in Kenya and the Supreme Moderator of the Franciscan Servants of Mary Queen of Love. The letters behind his name are too many to mention. (Please google Father David). I fail to remember the specific topic being discussed. However, I vividly remember that Father David spoke for a minimum of 30 minutes extemporaneously comparing and contrasting the teachings of St Bonaventure vs St Thomas Aquinas on the topic. Simply amazing.

Last year Father Felix founded a school (Mayian School) literally from the ground up in a remote area of Narok County Kenya. The school was founded in the "bush" where children had little access to school. Mayian is a Maasai word for Blessings. Father Felix was approached by leaders and members of the community to assist in founding a school for their children. Many children were not going to school because of the distance and also due to their poor economic

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backgrounds. One of the community members donated land to Father Felix to demonstrate how desperate they were in need of a school. The school not only serves as a community school but also a school that is to help the poor from any part of the country to access education thus a blessing to many.

Currently the school is K – second grade. With the hope and expectation of adding one new grade per year. Already the enrollment is over 100 children.

Two quick stories.

I was playing soccer with the children one morning during class break.

After about 30 minutes of playing I was hoping the children would return to class. I was tired. Several students approached me and said they were thirsty. I thought that this would not be a major issue to resolve. I asked the closest teacher where I could get water for the thirsty children

The response startled me. We have no water. The children return home at 1:00 P.M. and they can get water at that time.

I was unaware that the school had no water.

On another day we had a distribution of Lollipops. The children love lollipops. It was like Christmas morning in our household many years ago. I was surprised how orderly the distribution was. Children waiting patiently in line for their turn to receive a simple lollipop in the hot sun.

It was not long before several children running in the dusty field fell and were covered from head to toe with a sticky lollipop. No sense speaking to the teachers about water for cleanup. I went directly to a small shed used for preparing meals. I thought to myself there had to be water in the so-called kitchen. When I explained my dilemma to the ladies working in the kitchen, the response was similar to the previous day with a slight twist. I was told If you help clean up one child then you will have to clean up all the children. Bottom line No Water Back to class with no clean up.

Before leaving Kenya money was raised to provide a 10000-liter tank to capture rain water from the roof of the school. This system provides water for the children for a couple months of the year.

So why have I included these stories in this article. I believe that we have a unique connection to the Franciscan Servants of Mary Queen of Love.

To the best of my knowledge this is the only Franciscan Third Order Founded by a Secular Franciscan. An Italian by the name of Tiziano Zanella.

He was and continues to this day to be affectionally referred to as PAPA. He owned a bakery in Italy which he sold and devoted his life to the people of Kenya. He wrote “Through my prayers help young men who may receive the gift of the priestly vocation in our community so that they may become bearers of Christ with the title of the Franciscan Servant of Mary Queen of Love.

He founded a school which is flourishing as well as a vocation school.

Father Felix is imitating the founder’s charism by establishing both a school and a vocation school to help the poor and the needy in the society especially in that part of Maasai land.

I humbly ask my fellow Secular Franciscans to consider a donation of any size to provide a “bore hole” for the children of this growing school in Narok County, Kenya

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Two other people and I have formed a non profit 501 C 3 . All donations are tax exempt. Every penny donated will be used for providing water to the children. We have no overhead.

The name of the 501 C 3 is **"Friends of Kambai Village and Beyond"**. A donation may be mailed to my home address **at Robert Pape 4967 S Island Drive North Myrtle Beach S C 29582.**

In early 2024 I was part of a group that raised funds to provide a bore hole in the village of Kambai. How did we raise the money for this Bore Hole. We have 166 donors in 16 different states that made contributions. Often a contact would say to me that I will ask the owner of my company, or a wealthy friend etc. May I suggest that you may know someone who is in a financial position to help. Please ask for their help. I dislike the role of asking for donations. However, I get over the hurdle by saying to myself it is for the children.

One of the water distribution points is located at the Kambai Primary School. I can tell you from firsthand experience that the lives of the children attending Kambai Primary School have been transformed.

This is my goal for the school founded by my friend Father Felix. Provide water to the children, transform their lives and give them hope for a better future through education. Every child deserves an education. Education is not possible if 3 to 4 hours a day are dedicated to gathering water for the family. Gathering water is the task of the children and women.



FALL 2025

 <p>The Carpenter's Son <i>A Novel</i> John Gray</p>	<p>Join us! Via Zoom</p> <p>SEPT 24 2025</p> <p>7:00PM-8:30</p>
<p>Literary Musings Book Club Is Back!</p> <p>If you are interested in joining please email Fran using QR code or email below</p> <p>smfranciscanministry@gmail.com</p>	 

St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity is excited to announce that our book club will begin again on **Wednesday, September 24 at 7:00 PM**. We will be reading *The Carpenter's Son* by John Gray—our second book together.

We warmly invite members of REC and our nearby OFS family to join us. If you would like to participate, please email **Frances Acosta, "Stella Mundi Ministry"**

[<smfranciscanministry@gmail.com>](mailto:smfranciscanministry@gmail.com)

800th Anniversary of the Cantic of the Creatures at St. Francis Springs Prayer Center (Oct. 3-5)

Come celebrate a beautiful Franciscan weekend that will include a celebration of our 20th anniversary with a lunch on Friday, October 3rd at 12:30 pm. Fr. Louis Canino, OFM, will speak, followed by a Dixie band celebration. We will commemorate St. Francis' Transitus on Friday evening. Marie Dennis, the 2022 Pax Christi Teacher of Peace, will give a talk on nonviolence on Saturday at 3 pm. After dinner on Saturday, seculars from the Franciscan Family of Greensboro will perform a short "play" celebrating the Cantic. There will be Mass on Sunday at 10 am.

To register: <https://www.stfrancis.today/st-francis-springs-hosted-events/800th-canticles-of-creation>



YOU'RE INVITED!!

Celebrate the 800th Anniversary of the
Canticle of the Creatures with us



We're thrilled to invite you to a nationwide celebration like no other — **Franciscan Month 2025**, this October! This year marks the **800th anniversary of St. Francis's Canticle of the Creatures** and the **10th anniversary of Laudato Si'** — a truly historic moment for the entire Franciscan Family.

Whether you're part of a parish, school, college, or simply someone who shares the Franciscan spirit, this is your chance to take part in something beautiful and meaningful.

Here's what's in store:

Join friars, sisters, lay people, and ministries across the country as we live out St. Francis' call for care, connection and creation.

- A daily reflection
- Resources for schools, parishes and colleges
- Blessing of the Animal guides (October 4th Weekend)
- Lesson Plans, toolkits, downloadable materials
- A nationwide network of contributors and events

Franciscan Month Mailing List

For more information reach out to Brother
Gregory Cellini at gcellini@sfc.edu



***The Easter of Francis:
Rekindle the Flame.***

The 21st Quinquennial
Congress

July 29 - August 2, 2026

In Lexington, Kentucky

Please visit [21st Congress Secular Franciscan Order -
USA.](https://www.21stcongress.org/)



The **Jubilee Year 2025** is a special year of grace and spiritual renewal in the Catholic Church, proclaimed by Pope Francis. It marks a time of pilgrimage, forgiveness, and reconciliation, inviting the faithful to deepen their relationship with God.

Jubilee Years, also known as **Holy Years**, traditionally occur every 25 years. The 2025 Jubilee will follow the theme "**Pilgrims of Hope**", emphasizing faith, unity, and the Church's mission in a world facing challenges such as social injustice, conflict, and environmental concerns.

The Holy Doors of the four major basilicas in Rome—St. Peter's, St. John Lateran, St. Paul Outside the Walls, and St. Mary Major—will be opened, symbolizing an invitation to conversion and mercy.

As the first ordinary Jubilee since the Great Jubilee of 2000, the **2025 Jubilee Year** represents a significant moment of spiritual revival for the Catholic Church and a call for believers to embrace hope and renewal.

Franciscan **websites**



Franciscan reading: [St. Anthony Messenger](#)

The Monastery of St. Clare: [Poor Clares](#)

Franciscan Friars: [Our Lady of Guadalupe Province](#)

Pilgrimages: [Franciscan Pilgrimages](#)

Justice and Peace: [Franciscan Action Network](#)

Secular Franciscan Order: [National Secular Franciscan Website](#)

Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis: [Regional Secular Franciscan Website](#)

Consilium Internationale OFS: [CIOFS](#)

The Gospel Through a Franciscan Lens

Homilies from Fr. Christopher are available on the national website :

<https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/category/cnsa/homilies/>



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Communio editor: Theresa Christie, OFS

