

SUMMER 2025

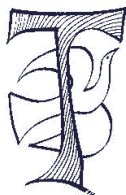
Communio

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



Save the Date
Annual Regional Gathering
Aug. 8-10, 2025
Ridgecrest Conference Center
Black Mountain, NC
Registration information coming to your local fraternity soon.

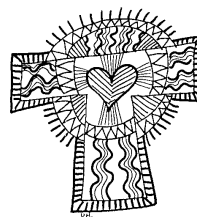
Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate



SUMMER 2025

Minister's Letter Summer 2025

How do You Define Joy!!

Our Father Francis speaks of perfect joy.

On numerous occasions people in formation have asked me to help define perfect joy, always a challenge. But let me give you some examples recently in my life that help me on a personal level seek and find joy.

Easter Season – Joy.

Our Lord went through his passion and resurrection for me, for us. Knowing that Jesus did this for me on a personal level is perfect joy.

The leadership of our beloved Pope Francis – Joy.

To truly lead by his examples of mercy and care for those on the margins. Helps me to see what perfect joy can be.

Our new Pope Leo XIV – perfect joy.

“To all of you, brothers and sisters of Rome, of Italy, of the whole world, we want to be a synodal Church, a Church that walks, a Church that always seeks peace, that always seeks charity, that always seeks to be close especially to those who suffer.”

Helps to know that as a Secular Franciscan I can strive to walk with the global church in joy.

To meet with Bishop Martin and Bishop Zarama

To build relationships and walk in partnership with our local bishops serving those in our communities, joy.

To be with our sisters and brothers in community

To spend a weekend with the REC and our spiritual assistants. To grow together to serve our sisters and brothers of the Region as servant leaders. To come with the anticipation of growing and strengthening relationships. Servant leadership is joy.

To care for our aging sisters and brothers, to welcome those who are curious about our Order, to see the face of Christ in all.

This is perfect joy!

*Peace and all good
Ellen*



Go Forth with Hope



The Secular Franciscan-USA National Executive Council has made Vocations, Relationships and Communications its priorities for the last three years. In a recent article in the TAU, [*Hope Built on Faith Results in an Increase in Vocations*](#),¹ the author, Anne Mulqueen OFS suggests applying the virtue of hope with three steps to encourage **new** vocations: Pray, Invite, and Be Authentic Witnesses.

But what about existing vocations? How do we enliven our existing vocations with that same hope? How can we be authentic witnesses?

We are the living stones of our fraternities. The living stones that uphold the structure of our privileged place.² Our elected leaders, those who have said yes to servant leadership, animate, guide, and bring life to that privileged place.³

I would posit, that with hope, the same three steps, Pray, Invite, and be Authentic witnesses, also apply to calling sisters and brothers to servant leadership at all levels of fraternity.

In August, The Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region will celebrate the Chapter of Elections for regional offices. I humbly ask that you each pray. Listen and look for the call of the Holy Spirit. See the gifts in yourself and in others. Consider the grace and fire that breathes life into authentic witnesses, into the leaders who frame, stabilize and uphold the privileged place of fraternity. Invite a brother or sister with the desired gifts, talents or skills to accept a nomination for office. Gaze into the mirror, and perhaps invite yourself.

In her article, Anne goes on to say this of being an authentic witness:

*We live in an anxious age, and our need for meaning and purpose is great. Many people we meet daily hunger for a deeper connection to God and may not know what that hunger is or how to satisfy it. They need to see in us what they are looking for. As Aquinas said, hope prevails despite difficulties. And we, like Francis and Clare, cling to that hope. Francis' followers found solace and purpose in the gospel way of life. If we live our charism as Francis did, the people God has called to be Secular Franciscans will flock to us.*⁴

We all have anxieties, doubts and fears. Sometimes “no” just seems simpler. Safer. But what if it’s the Shepherd’s voice calling and encouraging? Remember in the gospel of Luke, Ch 5, Jesus instructs Peter to put his nets out into the deep for a catch. With doubt and little hope Peter replies, “*Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.*” We all know how that story ends. How much more is in store for us if we go forth with the virtue of hope, or as Franciscans, joyful hope? Let us be those Secular Franciscan witnesses that draw the people God has called.

Lynn Oeser, OFS Regional Formation Director



BREAKING OUR HEARTS WIDE OPEN

OFS General Constitutions #18, P 2:

Rule 13. They should deepen the true foundations of universal kinship and create a spirit of welcome and an atmosphere of fraternity everywhere. They should firmly commit themselves to oppose every form of exploitation, discrimination, and marginalisation and against every attitude of indifference in relation to others.

By Allison Salerno, OFS, Regional JPIC Animator

EL PASO, TEXAS: Kenzie Spigner stood outside the door on East San Antonio Avenue, blocks from downtown El Paso, guiding a 61-year-old migrant from Mexico to a waiting medical shuttle.

The man, using his wheelchair as a walker, had come to the United States from the neighboring city of Juarez on a tourist visa and had become a labor trafficking victim. He'd offered to work with family members in Colorado, only to be physically abused by his nephew there and enduring serious physical damage. He's applying for a u_Visa, a nonimmigrant visa available to victims of crimes who have suffered "substantial mental or physical abuse while in the U.S. and who are willing to assist law enforcement and government officials in the investigation or prosecution of the criminal activity. "

Spigner, 22, is a recent graduate of Creighton University who has made a year-long commitment to volunteer here at Annunciation House, a shelter for migrants. She earns a stipend of \$200 a month to help pay for her own expenses, such as her phone and car bills. She lives at Annunciation House in her own bedroom, with a bathroom she shares with five other volunteers. Their job is to help migrants, who are referred to as guests. She helps to feed, house and clothe guests.

In this way, the volunteers are fulfilling some of the Corporal Acts of Mercy our Catholic faith requires of us.



Praying at the border wall in Sunland Park, NM

. At center is Father Ignatius "Iggy" Harding, OFM, from the Cabrini Border Migrant Ministry Fraternity in the Diocese of El Paso.

I met Spigner early May when I participated in a May 8 to 11 retreat of JPIC Animators from across the country. We stayed at Holy Cross Retreat Center in Mesilla Park, New Mexico, about an hour west of El Paso. Franciscan Friars have lived at the 40-acre site, which includes a pecan farm, since 1955 and have been offering retreats since September 1957.

We prayed and also learned about border ministries. We heard from people who work with migrants, most of whom are women with children. We learned about the defunding of immigration courts, as well as about new policies that have eliminated many of the legal paths to citizenship for asylum seekers, migrants and refugees.

SUMMER 2025

On Friday May 9, we celebrated a bilingual Mass at Saint Martin De Porres Catholic Church in Sunland Park, New Mexico. After Mass, at the nearby 18-foot-high metal border wall, we prayed for the souls of migrants who died crossing the border.

Within a five- mile radius of the church, more than 100 migrants died last year of heat-related issues, such as dehydration and heat stroke. According to the Associated Press, “smuggling gangs steer them — exhausted, dehydrated and malnourished — mostly into the hot desert, canyons or mountains west of El Paso, Texas.” You can search migrant death databases at the website of [No More Deaths/ No Más Muertes](#)

For Spigner, who grew up Baptist in Nebraska, working with migrants in El Paso has been transformative.

“It’s an experience that nurtures your soul,” said Spigner. “Our cups are half full. Working here is a way of filling that cup.”

One of the regional JPIC animators I met on the retreat was Patricia Grace, OFS, of San Diego. As fraternities discern how best to develop apostolates that reflect our Franciscan charism, a question to ask is: “What breaks my heart wide open?”

She added: “This is our leper moment. When the Lord sees suffering, may he see a Franciscan.”



HOW TO MAKE OUR FRATERNAL GATHERINGS GREENER: A ZOOM MEETING IN JUNE WILL GIVE YOU STEPS TO CONSIDER

Chapter two of our Rule includes: “Respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which ‘bear the imprint of the Most High,’ and ... strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.”

A simple way to put this exhortation into action is by making our monthly fraternity gatherings greener, that is, to minimize their negative impacts on the natural world.

All are welcome on Tuesday June 24 at 10 a.m. (eastern time) and Thursday June at 7:30 p.m., Laura Cleary, OFS of Immaculate Conception Fraternity in Jonesboro, Ga. presents a 30-minute webinar to offer concrete ideas for greener gatherings. The webinar will be moderated by regional JPIC animator Allison Salerno, OFS and include time for questions. Please contact Allison at allisonbsalerno@pm.me for the zoom links.

Laura is a retired high school biology and chemistry teacher with a passion for ecology. “The universe, our tangible space, has always been very important to me,” she says.

Rethinking the Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation: A Process for Building Relationships and Strengthening our Charism

**David Cruz-Uribe, OFS
REC Visitation Taskforce**

Over the past three years, as the area councilors and other members of the REC have participated in visitations, something has become very clear to us: no one likes visitations. While the visitation gathering themselves are often joyful and fruitful, they are preceded by a lot of anxiety on the part of local ministers and councils: we have heard it compared to getting audited, or having the principal come and observe your classroom. And there is a sense that visitations sometimes focus on the wrong things, spending too much time on paperwork and not enough on the bigger picture.

In response to these concerns, the REC formed a visitation taskforce to examine what we have been doing and to think about ways we can make visitations less stressful, more fulfilling, and focused on the heart of what it means to be Franciscans living in community. After much discussion and reflection on our General Constitutions (Articles 92-95), and prayerfully considering the images of visitation in Scripture (e.g. Luke 1:39-45), the taskforce has created a new outline for how visitations should go. The REC has discussed and approved it, and it has been shared with the spiritual assistants, who also approved it. It is a work in progress, but beginning this spring the fraternal and pastoral visits will begin to implement it.



What is going to change? First, we are going to try to focus on the key reasons for the visitations, as outlined in our Constitutions. They describe them in this way:

The purpose of both the pastoral and fraternal visits is to revive the evangelical Franciscan spirit, to assure fidelity to the charism and to the Rule, to offer help to fraternity life, to reinforce the bond of the unity of the Order, and to promote its most effective integration into the Franciscan family and the Church. (GC Art. 92)

Visitors are not there only to inspect your records or criticize how your meetings are run. They are there to build up relationships: between and among the regional fraternity, the First Order, and the local fraternity. They are there as a visible sign of our unity, and also to make concrete the concern and support that the region has for each local fraternity.

SUMMER 2025

Second, we do not want the visitation to be a one day event, but a process. A year before the visitation, the newly elected local council will be asked to meet on Zoom with the REC, so that they can begin to forge connections. Two or three months prior to the actual visitation, the local council and the visitors will meet to plan the visitation and to make sure everyone has clear expectations for what will occur. The month before the visitation, we are asking that the local fraternity meet and engage in dialog and self-reflection about their own fraternity. And finally, the actual visitation will have a lot of time set aside for sharing and reflection between the visitors and the local council, those in initial formation, and with the whole fraternity.

It may be the case that the visitors find problems or areas of concern, and will ask the fraternity to address them. It is our hope that the visitors will be prepared to listen and understand why and how the local fraternity is doing what it is doing. And at the same time, we hope that the local fraternity will see this fraternal correction as an opportunity to grow in love and fidelity to our charism.

Ultimately, we hope that the visitation process will result in better relationships between the regional and local fraternities, a renewed sense of commitment to our Rule and our Franciscan charism, and an increase in the "*evangelical and apostolic vitality*" of the local fraternity. (GC Art. 93) The area councilors and spiritual assistants look forward to meeting and sharing with you!

St. Francis Springs Prayer Center Columbarium Blessing and Mass with Bishop Michael Martin, ofm, conv. April 27, 2025

The bishop's visit was an inspirational experience! Even though it was a beautiful day, Bishop Martin, OFM conv., said Mass in the indoor Chapel to an overflow group. The Meek Squad, official musical group of the Springs, played several hymns during the Mass, including, "Come to Me All Who Are Weary," "You Are Love" and "The Beatitudes." In his homily, Bishop Martin fondly recalled his past visits to the Springs and urged us to view the world through our "faith lens," rather than viewing our faith through a "worldly lens." After Mass, the group processed to the columbarium, with a brief stop at the peace pole to pray St. Francis' Peace

Prayer. The bishop then blessed the columbarium and read the names of those already inurned there. The Franciscan Family of Greensboro (FFG) fraternity honored Bishop Martin with two gifts: a brass medallion, made by Jim Gallucci, commemorating the columbarium blessing and the 800th anniversary of the *Canticle of the Creatures*, and a prayer shawl, made by Judith Walsh, over which we prayed that he would continue to bring Franciscan peace in all his encounters. Members of other fraternities were also in attendance. (Blessed Sacrament, of which Paul Bobak is Vice Minister)



From left to right: Barbara Dawson, Joe Vodenichar, Jeanne Carter, Bishop Martin, Kathy Gallucci, Eunice Barr, Shirley Robless, Fr. Sanchez (assistant to the Bishop), Paul Bobak, Bob Pearson. (All are members of FFG, except Paul Bobak, who is Vice Minister of the Blessed Sacrament fraternity.)

Submitted by Kathy Gallucci, OFS, Minister
Franciscan Fraternity of Greensboro.

Pro-Life In-Between

*By Rebecca Bresnahan, OFS
Local JPIC Animator, St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Augusta, GA*

As the JPIC animator for our fraternity, I've spent this year focusing on the aspects of the pro-life movement we often overlook.

Catholics are widely known for being pro-life, and we Franciscans even more so. We profess respect for life from conception to natural death. We pray at abortion clinics and write letters to lawmakers opposing capital punishment—both actions we rightly consider forms of legalized murder. When it comes to issues like abortion, we do an admirable job making our beliefs known and taking action.

We address the beginning and end of life quite effectively—but what about everything in between? Conception takes a moment. Pregnancy, though full of risk and vulnerability, lasts just nine months. Death happens in an instant. What about the years and decades between those moments?

Let's consider just a few of the many situations that challenge our commitment to being truly pro-life:

A child spared from abortion dies years later because her mother couldn't afford health insurance. That's the in-between.

A desperate family flees a violent regime, risking everything for safety. We may debate immigration policy, but our moral obligation to offer aid remains. That's the in-between.

A white mother teaches her daughter how to talk her way out of a traffic ticket. A Black mother teaches her son how to survive the same encounter. A white man walks through a neighborhood without notice, while a Black man doing the same ends up flagged on local apps as "suspicious." That's the in-between.

A disabled veteran, once willing to die for his country, now sleeps under a bridge because he can't find work, and the government he served makes it nearly impossible to get benefits. That's the in-between.

Where are we in these stories? How do our ministries respond to these realities?

There are countless "in-betweens." Ignoring them—or denying their existence—makes us complicit in their continuation. To be truly pro-life, we must first take our heads out of the sand and recognize these challenges for what they are: pro-life issues.

Only then can we honestly espouse the title of "Pro-Life."



Traveling and need to find the closest Catholic Church and Mass times?

<https://masstimes.org/>

SUMMER 2025

ARG 2025

This year's theme:

Celebrating the Canticle of the Creatures: Sisters and Brothers serving in Fraternity with Creation

August 8, 9, 10, 2025

Ridgecrest Conference Center, Black Mountain, NC

The planning committees are still working on the agenda and activities. The overall flow is similar to previous years. Start Friday evening at 5 with LOH, conclude Sunday morning after Mass.

We are looking at the time when the RFC will be in the Council meeting and election to have some creative options for our members.

The Registratin

Form has been sent to all the ministers. If you have any questions, please reach out to your area councilor.

Please return the spreadsheet no later than July 10th to the following Area Councilors:

Area 1: Margi Williams, OFS

Area 2: JC Liu, OFS

Area 3: Lee Cunningham, OFS

We ask that when you send it back to the area councilor you rename the form with your Fraternity name in the title. This is a big help when we have 28 files we are working with. Thank you for your help on this.

Your members are responsible for all costs even if they cancel. This includes those who register as Day Guests.

Last year unfortunately there were many Day Guests who didn't show up, some reimbursed the Region, some didn't. It will be the Minister and Council who will be responsible for collecting any costs not covered by members.

Items of Note:

1. Please bring your fraternity banners.
2. Please bring your apostolate display - **you will have 3' of a 6' table.** .
3. As a reminder for those who may have financial challenges we have the Ed Campbell Scholarship Fund. To apply see the attached for information. The application is due to Zubair Simonson by July 1.
3. We will have a 6-seater golf cart to help transport people from the main buildings to the dining hall. We hope this will help those who have had challenges navigating the grounds. **There is a space on the registration form to indicate if you will be accessing the golf cart.** This will help with our planning to have these numbers in advance.
4. St Francis Springs Prayer Center will have their Bookstore.

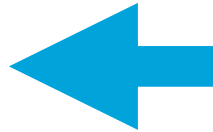
SUMMER 2025



https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd9YpKe1xNpnSLmIotsONwRn1bhINdiK4C-_py1AOG39fmr5w/viewform

Don't "no" before you say "yes."

2025 is an election year for our region. Do you feel called to serve, do you know someone with a certain set of skills? Prayerfully consider if you or someone you know should serve our Region in a leadership position.



Follow the link to the nomination form

Nominations are now open. There will be a call for nominations at the ARG.

2025 ARG T-SHIRTS

To order a 2025 ARG T Shirt

1. Please go to: <https://betti-pettinati-longinotti.square.site/>
2. Click on T shirt and then size to order
3. **Indicate your Fraternity name**
4. Pay for ARG T Shirt (Cost per T Shirt is \$20.00 plus tax).
5. Pick up of T Shirts will be at Ridgecrest at our ARG on 8/8-8/9 2025
6. You should receive a confirmation of your order from Square.

Text on back: 800th Anniversary of the Canticle of the Creatures; Text on front with Tau-Brothers and Sisters of the St. Francis Region in the Jubilee Year of Hope.

Logo Design on back is made possible with permission from CIOFS.

Orders need to be made by **July 15th, midnight.**

No T Shirts will be available, for sale, on site at our ARG.



Front

Back

Franciscan Youth and Young Adults - BSSF Region

Well we are underway with our new ongoing training for animators. We have a number of folks participating. The training is designed to illustrate how very possible and real the opportunity to be involved with youth is. The degree will vary by fraternity and locale. The beauty of the design is you can make it fit your situation as we know each is somewhat different.

How it works:

- The course is divided into seasons roughly equaling a quarter of the year.
 - Each season kicks off with a zoom that recaps the prior season and introduces the new season.
 - During the zoom folks dialogue about their experiences sharing obstacles real or perceived.
 - Others are able to chime in and offer their real life experiences.
 - The course work resides on line on a platform called "Canvas".
 - You are able to work at your own pace when your schedule allows
- the link: <https://canvas.instructure.com/login/canvas>

Action point:

- Have a person in your fraternity participating so you can grow.
- Have FYYA on the gathering agenda monthly.
- Schedule something, anything for youth using your local parish youth minister etc....

The first step is the hardest..... Take it!!!

Peace and all good

R.A.Dorsch O.F.S., Regional FYYA Animator

"Everything in creation is an example, manifestation and illustration of God in space and time (Romans 1:20)

Earth Day April 22, 2025, at St. Francis Springs Prayer Center A Decade of Laudato Si': Prophecy, Crisis, and a Call to Creation Care



Dr. Catherine Wright

Our speaker, Dr. Catherine Wright, is an interdisciplinary Christian ecotheologian and Associate Professor in the Religious Studies Department at Wingate University. Catherine used her second book, "Caring for Our Common Home: A Practical Guide to *Laudato Si'*" to explore the real-life implications of Pope Francis' "green" pastoral letter. She organized her presentation around the four classic cosmic elements – water, earth, air, and fire. The presentation was enhanced with meditative music and scripture to integrate our discussions with hope-filled ways to mitigate the ecological crisis and

inspire care for creation as demanded by the gospels. *Laudato Si'*, which derives its title from Saint Francis' Canticle of the Sun, calls for our ecological conversion. Catherine offers a spiritual and practical framework for deepening our Catholic commitment to creation care that can lead to that conversion. About 25 people attended the event.

The Reverse Prayer of St. Francis

Dear Lord, make me a channel of disturbance.

Where there is apathy, let me provoke,
where there is compliance, let me bring questioning,
where there is silence, may I be a voice.

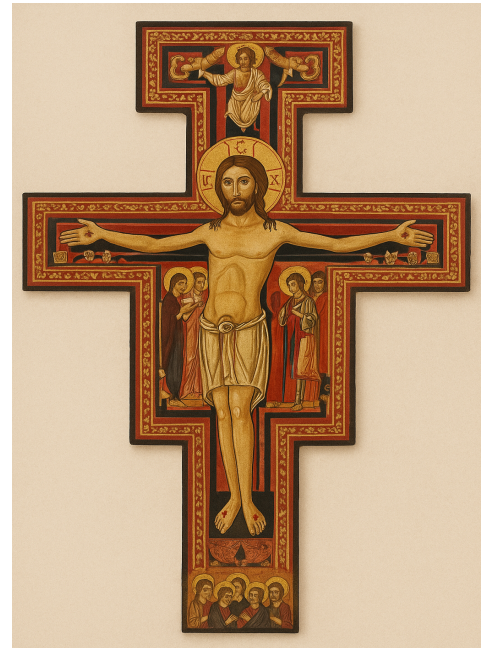
Where there is too much comfort
and too little action, grant disruption.
Where there are doors closed and hearts locked,
grant me the willingness to listen.

When laws dictate and pain is overlooked..
when tradition speaks louder than need..
grant that I may seek rather to do justice
than to talk about it.

Disturb us, O Lord,
to be with, as well as for the alienated;
to love the unlovable as well as the lovely,
Lord make me a channel of disturbance.

Amen.

—[Author unknown](#)



SOS

(Sharing our Spirit)

Submitted by Mary Sacavage, OFS, Minister, Fraternity of Bl Duns Scotus, Murrell's Inlet

When we see **SOS** we think of the universal distress call. Perhaps the Titanic comes to mind—Save Our Ship or Save Our Souls. Or maybe you think about “Save Our Secular Fraternity” especially if your numbers are few, members are aging and have health issues. Perhaps Sister Death has visited your fraternity brothers and sisters.

What are we to do? “We pray without ceasing for God to send us new members, but he doesn’t seem to hear us.” Rather than giving in to despair, instead ask, as Brother Francis admonished, “What is ours to do?”

Some suggestions: First, engage in some self-reflection--Is your fraternity welcoming? Are you living the Franciscan charism? Are you joy filled? Do our actions towards one another reflect our commitment to our vocation?

If the answer is yes, then move on to step two—‘each one, reach one.’ Reach out to those in your parish who seem to be living the Franciscan spirit. Recognize that not everyone is called to this vocation. Remember that this is not a social club--it is a way of life.

Third, realize that you are not alone. There are many resources available on the Regional and National websites. Plus, the Brothers and Sisters of Saint Francis Region serves as a great network of Fraternity Ministers, some of whom may have found great ways to promote the charism and others may be in a similar situation to your fraternity, trying to reach out to new members. This is a great opportunity to share ideas about what has worked and what hasn't. If you are interested in networking, please consider sharing a meal with other ministers at ARG where we can share ideas. Let's make this ongoing dialogue. If you are interested, please let me know. Mary Sacavage, OFS, email: marysac208@gmail.com. I look forward to sharing ideas at ARG. If you have promotional materials, you may want to include those on your Fraternity display.

New Evangelization Ministry in Charlotte

Farther Casey Cole, OFM and his brother friars will start up a new ministry in Charlotte, NC. You may remember Fr. Cole from the YouTube Channel - Breaking the Habit. Follow the link to find out about this new ministry.



<https://catholicnewsherald.com/87-news/11671-three-franciscans-launch-unique-outreach-with-charlotte-diocese>



<https://www.youtube.com/breakinginthehabit>

Is your Fraternity struggling to find an apostolate that everyone can do?

Check out: Project Linus is a national organization whose volunteers, called "blanketeers," make blankets for distribution to children who are seriously ill or have been traumatized. There may be a chapter near you <https://www.projectlinus.org/>

Our Lady of the Rosary Makers make rosaries for distribution to missions all over the world. <https://www.olrm.org/>

FRATERNITY APOSTOLATE ACTIVITIES

Fraternity of the Stigmata of St. Francis - John's Creek, GA

Submitted by Margi Williams, OFS, Minister Fraternity of the Stigmata of St. Francis

Combining "Gospel to Life" and Integrity of Creation: Our Fraternity's Group Apostolate

Easter is a time of joyous celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is a special joy for those who, during the Easter Vigil, come into full communion with the Catholic Church. For these precious souls, the seed of Faith was once planted and drew them to the Catholic Church. Along their journey, many cared for them and their growing faith. Some watered and some fertilized. The Fraternity of the Stigmata of St. Francis, Johns Creek, GA has the joy of providing some nutrients to some of these precious souls.



Chris Reynolds, OFS and Margi Williams, OFS

As Secular Franciscans, the Gospel is the foundation of our charism as we endeavor to live Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel. And, as Secular Franciscans, we care about the Integrity of Creation. Our Fraternity combines proclaiming the Gospel and Integrity of Creation into a special Magnificat Mass Booklet Group Apostolate.

Many Catholics receive the monthly Magnificat, which after the month is over is discarded. The Word of God may be thrown in the trash! Our Fraternity, as a group Apostolate, repurposes paper Magnificats into Mass Booklets as a gift to those who are going through OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults; formerly RCIA), to be in full communion with the Catholic Church.

Our Magnificat Mass Booklet Group Apostolate starts simply with a bin at St. Monica's Catholic Church, Duluth, GA, where parishioners place their used Magnificats. One Fraternity member brings these Magnificats to another member who sorts them and brings them to our Gatherings. Then, we get out our aggression! As a group activity during the Gathering, the front cover and the back prayers are torn off and the pages with the Order of the Mass are separated out.

These pages are given to our Apostolate Councilor who coordinates a time for a group from our Fraternity to sew these pages into the Mass

Booklets. Prayers and hand written messages to the recipients are placed inside the front cover; information about our Fraternity is placed inside the back cover.

Around Christmas time, the Magnificat Mass Booklets are given to those going through OCIA in our local churches to use as a handy guide while they are learning about the Order of the Mass. At this time, over

SUMMER 2025

300 Mass Booklets have been joyously given out. Love for the Gospel and Integrity of Creation are combined.

And, this is a whole Fraternity apostolate. Many of our fraternities are challenged by distance and have members who can no longer attend Gatherings in person. This Apostolate uses a three-pronged approach to include as many brothers and sisters as possible. Some do the Apostolate (sewing the booklets and giving them out), some provide the materials for the Apostolate (collecting them, providing construction paper for the covers and sewing supplies) and others pray over them as they are being made. We let everyone know the date and time of the sewing and encourage prayer support. We also set up a Zoom meeting so that members can see these Mass Booklets being made in real time as they pray over this Apostolate.

With this three-pronged approach we have found a way to involve our whole Fraternity in sharing the Gospel and promoting Integrity of Creation. You are invited to come by our table at ARG to find out more and to see these special Mass Booklets, which have blessed so many.



Preparing Magnificats: L to R: Carey Whipple, Candidate; Tabitha Whang OFS, Drew Bogda, Candidate and Jo Ann Rademacher OFS



Giving Mass Booklets at OCIA Class: L to R: David Rohr OFS and Margi Williams OFS

St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity, Bessemer AL

Submitted by Kelly Horwitz, OFS, Secretary, St Joseph Cupertino Fraternity, Bessemer, AL

In 2018, the Friars Poor of Jesus Christ, a Franciscan order founded in Brazil, arrived in Birmingham at the request of the bishop to serve the homeless. The friars take to the streets twice a week, visiting the homeless under bridges, parks and other places where they convene. The friars bring bagged lunches, hot meals, clothes and toiletries, but perhaps most importantly, like St. Francis, they embrace the poor - literally and figuratively - and develop relationships with those living on the margins of our society. More recently, the friars have begun serving meals several nights a week to those who come to their door in a poor part of the city.

St. Joseph Cupertino developed a relationship with our Franciscan brothers in 2021. Once a month, several of our fraternity members who are able, join the friars in their street ministry, making meals and visiting the homeless. In addition, our fraternity makes a monthly financial donation to the friars' work.

SUMMER 2025

Recently, our fraternity expanded its support by asking what item we could collect and donate on a monthly basis. The answer surprised us: chips! Upon further reflection, it made perfect sense. Between their street ministry and feeding their neighbors, the friars easily use 500 individual bags of chips each month. Our fraternity set to work with our minister, David Cruz-Urbe, announcing the initiative to our host parish, St. Francis of Assisi in Bessemer. As Jesus tells us, "Ask and you shall receive!" The parish's support was gratifying and overwhelming. As you can see from the photos, they donated enough boxes of chips to fill an SUV. The friars - and undoubtedly those they serve - were delighted.

The laborers may be few, but the harvest indeed is great when Franciscan friars, Secular Franciscans and a parish named for St. Francis join forces!



Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity, Bluffton, SC

Submitted by Judy Graff, OFS, Minister, sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity, Bluffton, SC

Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity meets in Bluffton, SC and has members from the following parishes in the low country; St. Gregory the Great, St. Francis by the Sea, St. Peter Beaufort plus a member from St. Anne in Richmond Hill, GA. One of our Apostolates includes cooking meals for those in need. To be distributed by the Sisters of St. Francis Center on St. Helena Island, SC.

We recently prepared meals on April 12 to be frozen and delivered to Sr. Canice Adams, SSCM at the center on April 14. Cooking took place in kitchen at St. Gregory the Great.



6 members cooked 76 meals for St. Francis Mission (Barbara Gloven, OFS/ Angela Cavalluzzi, OFS / Vickie White, Inquirer / Marie Knutso OFS Candidate (eff 5/3/25) / Chrisatine Lukesh, OFS and Debbie Cloisham, OFS who coordinated the cooking.

Shout Out Page:



In recognition for creative ideas in a fraternity. Please submit the creative ways that your fraternity creates a more fraternal atmosphere for its members

Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity , Bluffton, SC

On a recent visitation it was noted that this Fraternity has a travelling San Damiano Cross. A gift to the fraternity from a member who had passed on, the fraternity members take turns taking the cross home. This way the whole fraternity has the opportunity to enjoy this beautiful cross.

NEW COUNCILS

Type to enter text



(From left to right):
Bob Dorsch, Minister; Ray Fleming, Councilor 3; Elsa Sabio, Secretary; Hernan Sabio, Councilor 1; Elizabeth Sandy, Treasurer; Kris Jonczak, Councilor 2; Laura Gurnee, Vice Minister; Betti Longinotti, Formation Director.



The Beatitudes, St. Francis of Assisi, and Us *“The poor in spirit”*

[1] *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount as recorded by Matthew, presents a surprising paradox – blessed (happy) are the poor (needy, wanting, lacking, mendicant) in spirit. [This contrasts to Luke’s Gospel which omits “in spirit”, evoking dissimilar connotations.] Yet either way, the paradox rests in that the path to happiness is rooted in poverty of the spirit. It is here that we must examine the Biblical definition of “spirit.” According to the second creation story in Genesis 2, God breathed His divine breath into Adam – the spirit is the breath of God that makes us human, it is at the core of our being, inseparable from our intimate spiritual dimension. “Thus, ‘the poor in spirit’ are those who are and who feel poor, mendicant in their intimate being. Jesus proclaims them Blessed because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.” (Pope Francis, 2/2020). It is our soul itself with our faculty of choice, free will, our very relationship with God. S. J. Rummelsburg (2024) notes that “poor in spirit” is humility rather than material impoverishment, noting that the “poor in spirit” are not weak; but rather exhibit strength through their detachment from the material riches of our secular world. This is further emphasized by St. Leo the Great, “blessed, therefore, is poverty which is not possessed with a love of temporal things, and does not seek to increase with the riches of the world, but is eager to amass heavenly possession.” Matthew 23:12 is a further biblical foundation, “he who humbles himself shall be exalted.”

Yet there is more to poverty “in spirit” than a detachment from the materialism of our fallen secular world. It is the recognition of our own frailty, our vulnerability, our inabilities, our limitations, our dependance on God for all we have and are. Our poverty of spirit is dependent upon just that – our recognition of **total** dependence on God and our complete surrender to His will – nothing we have, nothing we have achieved is of our making. All are blessings from God. We are not and cannot be self-sufficient as modern society claims as an imperative, and striving for that is an exercise in futility. Fr. Jeffrey Kirby (2017) states that happiness is a decision, a choice that we have by way of our free will. We can “spin our wheels” in the modern “rat race” for fame and fortune that is fleeting and is accompanied by frustration, disillusionment, misery, disappointment, stress, and the dissatisfaction of never reaching the pinnacle – there is always one more rung on the ladder. Jesus is the ultimate beatitude and came to share that blessing when He came to share Himself cloaked of our humanity. The choice is ours. BUT, in choosing happiness, we MUST choose Jesus Christ – all aspects of Him, which includes His cross. In making this decision to be happy, we open ourselves, beckoning and literally giving permission for God’s grace to work within us, strengthening our relationship, thus bringing us salvation and His kingdom. Although this path excludes the fabricated happiness of the world with its recognizable moments of temporary euphoria, God desires for us to be happy and to partake of and relish His Kingdom of Happiness. Casey Cole, OFM (2022) states it eloquently: “Beatitudes do more than just pacify us for the future; they provide us with opportunities to partake in the divine life here and now.” [This first beatitude is written in the present tense – for theirs **is**...] “That is, they offer a path toward radical change in the present. Jesus tells us that the kingdom of heaven is at hand; the blessedness of God is inbreaking, transforming the world around us.” With true poverty of spirit comes the realization that God is enough, facilitating surrender. As a friend from college put it (in another context, but the thought is apropos), God is an “elegant sufficiency.” He is knocking at the doors of our hearts, the “poor in spirit” (humble, contrite, mendicant) open the door with joy and welcome, inviting into themselves the King and His kingdom. Pope Francis sums up our condition succinctly: “we do not have to transform ourselves to become poor in spirit.

We do not have to undergo any transformation because we already are! We are poor... or more clearly: we are ‘wretched’ in spirit! We are in need of everything. We are all poor in spirit, we are beggars. It is the human condition.” We simply must recognize this and respond accordingly, emptying ourselves and making room for God, embracing and being joyful in our total dependence upon Him.

SUMMER 2025

St. Francis embodied the nature of the “poor in spirit” both figuratively and literally with his embrace of his Lady Poverty. The process was not instantaneous and involved many “encounters” beginning with his dream/ vision on his way to Apulia. It was a time of awakening, a time of formation. St. Bonaventure recounts Francis’s encounter with the leper. “From that time forth, he put on the spirit of poverty, the feeling of humility, and the love of inward godliness.” (Romero, 2021) After exchanging clothes with a beggar in Rome, Bonaventure notes: “in his lowly state, he received peace and happiness by denying himself and relinquishing all to the Lord.” There were dramatic events including his encounter with his father before the Bishop of Assisi in the public square. It was this event that was the pivotal moment – Francis surrendered everything he owned to serve the Lord and was finally on his way to true knighthood – becoming Christ’s knight. He understood that the promised princess of his initial vision was in actuality “Lady Poverty,” a lady that he would serve well. Francis’s actions illustrate a *kenosis*, an emptying of self and inner surrender of spiritual poverty. Beyond the physical, Francis emptied himself of all: his hopes, his dreams, the favor of family and friends, and admiration and adulation of many in the community. This emptiness of self, created room for God who filled the space with “His sweetness.” These were the first steps of a new life filled with true and satisfying happiness.

In line with Luke’s Gospel, “Blessed are the poor” which omitted “in spirit”, St. Francis embraced a self-imposed material poverty, possessing absolutely nothing. However, this voluntary poverty was not focused on the materialistic facet, but rather on banishing acquisitiveness and its associated vices. Acquisitiveness is centered on a propensity to seek security in the “gods” of secularism: egocentrism, hard-won reputation, control, power, the need to be right at all times, etc. In seeking these, we inadvertently cling to their side-effects: anxiety, disappointment, disillusionment, shame, failure, and fear. Through his love of Lady Poverty and dutiful service to her, St. Francis taught us a powerful and compelling lesson – happiness lies not in clinging to anything we can acquire, but rather in letting go of *everything*. Francis’s material poverty was conspicuous and extreme leading people to genuinely considered him to be mad. What was not as obvious was what he shed on a much deeper level. He was able to let go of our all too human tendency to judge ourselves and others based on exterior qualities (social standing, status, and all the “gods” listed above), his personal reputation, and worldly ambitions. He repressed and banished his fastidiousness, kissing the suppurating sores of the leper; joining the ranks of the homeless and destitute, voluntarily possessing literally nothing. Alban McCoy wrote in *The Tablet*, Feb.14, 2022, “He let go of all these things because for him, they were an obstacle to what he really wanted, what he wanted above all else. He let go of everything lest it got in the way of being able fully and uninhibitedly to love God, in Himself and in His creation.” In letting go as he did, Francis turned the world and its closely held values upside down. McCoy continues, “where others saw security, he saw captivity; what for others represented success, was for him a source of strife, a distraction from and an obstacle to loving God and neighbor wholeheartedly.” In relinquishing all, the space they occupied became available to be filled with joy, peace, happiness – the Kingdom of God. Edward Hays, quoted by McCoy, referred to St. Francis as “a holy pyromaniac, eager to set our hearts madly ablaze with love for God, for Christ, for all humanity, and for all creation.”

We have read the biographies, the stories, the legends and are vicarious witnesses to and beneficiaries of Francis’s spiritual poverty, his vulnerability and openness that invited God into his very being. We are not called to the harsh physical poverty that St. Francis embraced, but rather to the interior kenosis that invites God in and permits Him to fill us with Himself, His grace and blessings. Fr. Kirby noted: “The summons to live poor in spirit is not only a spiritual call to dependency and humility, but also a command to temperance and detachment.” In his 2014 address on World Youth Day, a Reflection on the Beatitudes, Pope Francis offered three suggestions for making spiritual poverty a way of life. First, freedom/detachment from material possession. The Gospel way of life is one of sobriety, rejection of the modern culture of consumerism and its possessiveness with its idolatry of money and lavish and wasteful spending. “Just as we need courage to be happy, we also need the courage to live simply.” (Pope Francis, 2014). [In addition, and on a concrete note – purge your closets regularly, giving to the poor those things that you don’t use, and perhaps a few that you do. If you have the urge to purchase an article that is simply a whim, and you have the funds, purchase an item and donate it. These are in line with the suggestions of the Pope.] Secondly, Pope Francis identifies a cultural

SUMMER 2025

need for a systemic conversion in the way the poor are viewed and a need to restore solidarity “to the heart of the human culture.” A systemic conversion must begin within an individual and move outward, involving the greater community. This is even more relevant with newer forms of poverty such as addiction, depression, feeling unwanted and unloved. Rhetoric is insufficient – action is required. We must meet the poor at all levels where they are, looking into their eyes and listening intently. “The poor provide us with a concrete opportunity to encounter Christ Himself, and to touch suffering flesh.” (Pope Francis, 2014) Finally, our pontiff challenges us to remember that the poor are not just people we can provide for, but, also, that they have much to offer us and teach us as well – the “wisdom of the poor.” They remind us that a person’s value is not measured by the secular standards of our times, but by the dignity inherent in being a child of God. “The poor can teach us much about humility and trust in God.” (Pope Francis, 2014) Remember the lyrics, “The Lord hears the cry of the poor. Blessed be the Lord.” (John Foley, S.J., The Cry of the Poor).

A full list of references is available upon request.

Cindy Craig, OFS, Councilor/Spirituality Pillar, St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Augusta, GA



For Information about the Jubilee Year activities visit:

<https://www.usccb.org/jubilee2025>



For more information on the Q visit:

<https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/21st-quinquennial-congress-q2026/>

**Registration for the Q opens on
August, 15, 2025**

REC and Spiritual Assistants Meet

By Lynn Oeser, OFS

On April 25 -27th the REC and Spiritual Assistants of the BSSF Region came together for a Formation on Visitations. Fr. Jerome Wolbert OFM, Provincial Spiritual Assistant, Our Lady of Guadalupe (OFM) Province and CNSA Friar, facilitated the Formation. The purpose of the event was to look at ways to conduct and guide visitations in such a way that they become an experience that nurtures, informs, builds and inspires growth.

Fr. Jerome explained that provincial minister of the province that a local fraternity is bonded to is responsible and accountable for fidelity to the Franciscan Charism and Spiritual Assistance in the local Fraternity. Fraternities without a Spiritual Assistant should reach out to the provincial of the First Order or TOR that they are bonded to and seek help in finding a Spiritual Assistance. Various experiences from visitations were discussed and possible interventions were explored.

David Cruz-Uribe, OFS presented the work of the REC visitation task force. The Task force began with guidance from the General Constitutions of the OFS and took into consideration the NEC priorities of Relationships and Communication. The task force is looking at ways for the fraternal visitation to be seen in a positive light as a process as opposed to an event.

The weekend was a rich blend of relationship building, shared experiences and joy. One of the most sacred moments came as we commenced for dinner at our buffet that was adjacent to a public space and the bar. Fr Jerome asked for the Our Father to be chanted. We chanted. The people around stood in solemn respect. Some talked to us the evening went on. It was a beautiful way of *being* in the world.





Health Tips from Dr. T

Theresa L. Christie, MD, OFS
St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity
Augusta GA



Sitting Is the New Smoking: The Hidden Health Risks of a Sedentary Lifestyle

In recent years, health experts have warned that **sitting is the new smoking**. They have done this to emphasize the serious health risks associated with prolonged inactivity. While smoking and sitting are different in nature, both have been linked to chronic diseases and reduced life expectancy. A sedentary lifestyle, characterized by long periods of sitting, can increase the risk of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and even early death.

What is the impact of excessive sitting on **cardiovascular health**? Studies show that prolonged sitting slows blood circulation- leading to higher blood pressure. This then leads to an increased risk of heart disease. Just as smoking damages arteries over time, a sedentary lifestyle contributes to plaque buildup in the blood vessels. This combined with increased blood pressure increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Another major consequence of sitting too much is its effect on **metabolism and weight gain**. When people sit for long hours, their bodies burn fewer calories, this leads to fat accumulation and a higher risk of obesity. Additionally, prolonged inactivity decreases insulin sensitivity, which makes individuals more susceptible to type 2 diabetes.

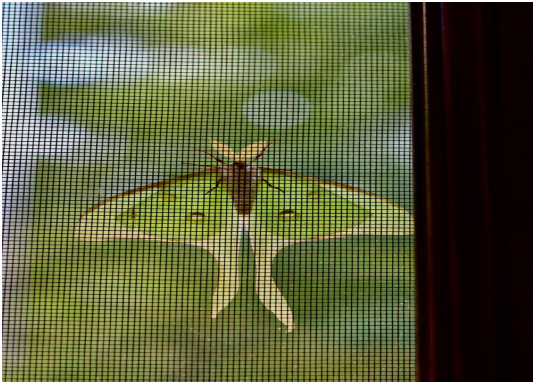
Sitting for extended periods also takes a toll on **musculoskeletal health**, particularly in the back, neck, and joints. Poor posture from slouching over desks or screens can lead to chronic pain, spinal misalignment, and weakened core muscles. Without regular movement, joints become stiff, increasing the risk of arthritis and mobility issues. Muscles atrophy and begin to lose stem cells which are important for repair when a muscle is injured. Regular strength and resistance training can help to replenish these stem cells and allow for faster recovery following an injury.

The mental health impact of excessive sitting is another growing concern. Lack of movement is associated with **increased stress, anxiety, and depression**. Exercise helps release endorphins—natural mood boosters—but a sedentary lifestyle limits this benefit, leading to lower energy levels and decreased overall well-being.



To combat the dangers of prolonged sitting, experts recommend incorporating more movement into our daily life. Simple changes, such as taking walking breaks, using a standing desk, stretching, or engaging in regular exercise, can significantly improve health. Start small and build from there.

Just as smoking was once underestimated for its dangers, excessive sitting is now recognized as a serious health risk. By prioritizing movement and reducing sedentary behavior, you can improve your physical and mental well-being, ultimately leading to a longer, healthier life.



800th Canticle of the Creatures

Annual Franciscan Celebration

In an attempt to draw Franciscans to a weekend each year to celebrate Christ, Francis, Clare and the Franciscan order, the following is planned:

The first weekend of October (3-5) will be blocked at St. Francis Springs Prayer Center for a celebration weekend to both honor Franciscans and celebrate the beauty of the last year.

We will be celebrating the 800th Anniversary of the Canticles of Creation. In addition, the following activities will take place

- a. 20th Anniversary Celebration Lunch and Musical from 12-2:30 on Friday, October 3rd. A time to hear from Father Louis Canino, OFM, have lunch, and listen to a live band perform music from the 60's.
- b. Transitus Event on Friday evening, October 3rd followed by Mass on Saturday
- c. Saturday afternoon, October 4th, Marie Dennie will train us on non-violence
- d. Mass and brunch on Sunday, October 5th.
- e. Price is a reduced rate of \$100 a night for this celebration.

You can register at:

<https://www.wetravel.com/trips/franciscan-celebration-st-francis-springs-prayer-center-39409211>

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](#)

The Gospel Through a Franciscan Lens

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

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



BSSF Regional Executive Council Roster

Minister: Ellen Ferrone, OFS

Vice Minister: Martha Roman, OFS

Secretary: Mary Sacavage, OFS

Treasurer: Zubair Simonson, OFS

Formation Director: Lynn Oeser, OFS

Spiritual Assistant: Fr. Bob Menard, OFM

Area Councilors

Area 1: Margi Williams, OFS; Gabrielle Cruz-Uribe, OFS

AL: Bessemer; **GA:** Athens, Blairsville, Conyers, Duluth, Jonesboro;

TN: Chattanooga, Knoxville, Nashville

Area 2: Becky Bresnahan, OFS; JC Liu, OFS

GA: Augusta, St. Simons Island; **NC:** Asheville, Charlotte, Hendersonville, Newton; **SC:** Aiken, Charleston, Columbia, Greenville, Hilton Head Island, Spartanburg

Area 3: Lee Cunningham, OFS; Betti Pettinati-Longinotti OFS

NC: Burlington, Elizabeth City, Fayetteville, Greensboro, Morehead City, Raleigh, Wilmington, Winston-Salem;

SC: Garden City

Archivist: Lee Cunningham, OFS

Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation Animator: Allisen Salerno, OFS

Multicultural Commission Chair: David Cruze-Uribe, OFS

Youth/Young Adult Fraternal Animator: Bob Dorsch, OFS

Prayer Ministry (online prayer requests)

Area 1: Lindy Crace, OFS

Area 2: Cathy Champon, OFS

Area 3: Bob Sabisch, OFS

Communio editor: Theresa Christie, OFS



SUMMER 2025

Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Schedule of Visitations and Elections						
	* confirmed					(Observer)
Date	Minister	Fraternity	E/V	Area	Councilor	SA
June 9*	Cathy Champon	St Clare, Ashville, NC	V	2	Betti Longinotti	Joanita Nellenbach
June 7-8*	Joan Rogers	Bl Solanus Casey, Morehead City, NC	V	3	Lee Cunningham	Georgette Schraeder
June 16*	Karen Perry	St Clare, Aiken, SC	E	2	Becky Bresnahan	Theresa Christie
June 20 - 21*	Mary Sacavage	Bl John Duns Scotus, Garden city, SC	V	3	Lee Cunningham	Dcn Phil Rzewnicki
June 20-22	SA Formation	St Francis Springs			Stoneville, NC	
June 27-28*	Michaeleen Davis	St Michael the Archangel, Spartanburg, SC	V	2	JC Liu	Charlie Comberel
Aug 1-2 *	JC Liu	Maximaillian Kolbe, Charlotte, NC	V	2	Becky Bresnahan	Fr Jerome Wolbert, OFM (Dave Shick)
Aug 8-10	ARG	Ridgecrest Conference Center,			Black Mountain, NC	
Aug 15-16	Terry Paridase	Sts Francis and Clare, Knoxville, TN	V	3	Margi Williams	Fr Jerome Wolbert, OFM
Aug 16-17	George Tutaj	Seven Dolors, Franklin, TN	V	3	Gabrielle Cruz-Uribe	Fr Jerome Wolbert, OFM
Aug 24*	David Cruz-Uribe	St. Joseph Cupertino, Bessemer AL	V	1	Margi Williams	Jean Schnieder
Sep 20 -21	Bob Pape	St. Thomas More, Wilmington, NC	V	3	Lee Cunningham	Dcn Phil Rzewnicki
Sep 27-28*	Sharon Winzeler	Padre Pio, Raleigh, NC	V	3	Betti Longinotti	Fr. John Eaton, OFM (Dave Shick)
Nov 14-16	SA Formation	St Francis Springs			Stoneville, NC	