

Padre Pio Fraternity

Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region
Secular Franciscan Order
of Central
North Carolina

the little flowers of Padre Pio Fraternity

Minister's Memo

by Sharon Winzeler, OFS, Minister

Suddenly, it's here.

Forty days of Lent have led us to the doorway of hope.

The rock is rolled away from the tomb, empty of everything but the burial cloths of Jesus.

The Gospel reading of Easter Sunday ends with, "For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead." (John 20:8-9)

God gave the disciples time to understand the meaning of His life and death.

The Easter season gives us time anew to reflect on the joy His resurrection brings to our lives.

As we continue the Gospel readings in the Octave of Easter, we, like the disciples of Jesus, will encounter Him along our paths. Look for the signs that He is with you. Welcome Him.

St. Francis of Assisi longed so much for the presence of Jesus that he received the stigmata—800 years ago. We will observe that anniversary on Sept. 17.

For now, remember that for Francis, living the gospel life meant accepting God's love.

Walk through that doorway to hope that Jesus created for us and find the loving, healing, joyous presence of our Lord—and say thank you.

Image Credit: Canva

Fraternity Council

Spiritual Assistant: Fr. Hugh Macsherry, OFM

Minister: Sharon Winzeler, OFS

Vice Minister: Rachel Bongiorno, OFS

Formation Director: Gladys Whitehouse, OFS

Treasurer: Janette Perez, OFS

Secretary: Mary Cockrill, OFS

Councilors:

Richard Hammer, OFS

Travis Bongiorno, OFS

Anne Evangelista, OFS

BSSF Region Minister: Ellen Ferrone, OFS

Area 3 Councilors:

Lee Cunningham, OFS &

Betti Pettinati-Longinotti, OFS

Our website: ofscentralnc.org

Facebook: Padre Pio Fraternity Secular Franciscan
Order of Central North Carolina

Apostolates

JPIC, Newsletter & Facebook: Rachel Bongiorno, OFS

Oak City Cares:

MaryLou Holloway, OFS & Mary Cockrill, OFS

On-going Formation Team:

Gladys Whitehouse, OFS

Prayer Requests:

Deacon Phil Rzewnicki, OFS

CPO & Fraternity Library: Maureen Copan, OFS

Website: Sharon Winzeler, OFS

Hospitality:

Maureen McFadden, OFS & Alma Hammer, OFS

Sunshine: Frank Peluso, OFS & Laurie Wilburn, OFS

We welcome those who would like to learn more about the Secular Franciscans. Join us for our monthly gatherings on the fourth Sunday of each month, beginning at 2:30 p.m.
Location: Founders Room at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, 11401 Leesville Rd., Raleigh, North Carolina.



Ahead! Courage! In the spiritual life he who does not advance goes backward. It happens as with a boat which always must go ahead. If it stand still the wind will blow it back.- Padre Pio

Pruning

Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-dresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, to make it bear even more" (John 15:1-2).

These words open a new perspective on suffering for me. Pruning helps trees to bear more fruit. Even when I bear fruit, even when I do things for God's kingdom, even when people express gratitude for coming to know Jesus through me, I need a lot more pruning. Many unnecessary branches and twigs prevent the vine from bearing all the fruit it can. They have to be clipped off. This is a painful process, all the more so because I do not know that they are unnecessary. They often seem beautiful, charming, and very alive. But they need to be cut away so that more fruit can grow.

It helps me to think about painful rejections, moments of loneliness, feelings of inner darkness and despair, and lack of support and human affection as God's pruning. I am aware that I might have settled too soon for the few fruits that I can recognize in my life. I might say, "Well, I am doing some good here and there, and I should be grateful for and content with the little good I do." But that might be false modesty and even a form of spiritual laziness. God calls me to more. God wants to prune me. A pruned vine does not look beautiful, but during harvest time it produces much fruit. The great challenge is to continue to recognize God's pruning hand in my life. Then I can avoid resentment and depression and become even more grateful that I am called upon to bear even more fruit than I thought I could. Suffering then becomes a way of purification and allows me to rejoice in its fruits with deep gratitude and without pride.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Henri J. Nouwen".

Traditional Franciscan Calendar
April- Month of the Holy Face and the
Redemption

1. Bl. Elisabeth Vendramini
2. St. Francois de Paule
3. St. Benoit le Maure
4. Bl. Guillaume de Sicli
5. St. Marie-Crescence
6. Bl. Angele Salawa
7. Bl. Maria-Assunta
8. Bl. Julien de St. Augustin
9. Bl. Thomas de Tolentino
10. Bl. Marc de Bologne
11. Bl. Ange De Chivasso
12. Bl. Boniface Zukowski
13. Bl. Isabelle Rovira
14. Bl. Lidwyne de Schiedam
15. Bl. Gandolphe de Binasco
16. St. Benedict-Joseph Labore
17. Bl. Paul de St. Madeleine
18. Bl. Andre Hibernon
19. Bl. Conrad e Ascoli, Priest
20. Bl. Anastase Pankewicz
21. Bl. Francois de Fabriano
22. St. Conrad de Parzham
23. Bl. Gilles of Assisi
24. St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen
25. St. Marc
26. Bl. Pierre De Pethancourt
27. St. Zita de Lucques
28. St. Paul of the Cross
29. Bl. Benoit d'Urbain
30. St. Joseph-Benoit Cottolengo

The Pope's Prayer Intentions for April
For the role of women

We pray that the dignity and immense value of women be recognized in every culture, and for the end of discrimination that they experience in different parts of the world.

Happy Birthday

13- Shannon Brooks, OFS

19- Richard Hammer, OFS

20- Jeanette Cottone, OFS

29- Marianne Norris

Profession Anniversaries

Gail Halada, OFS

April 5, 2004

Deacon Cyril, OFS

April 27, 2016

Save the dates:

May 11-13 Retreat at St. Francis Springs

Aug. 9-11 Annual Regional Gathering (ARG)
at Retreat Center, Black
Mountain, NC.

Sept. 7 Fraternity picnic at Bond Park, Cary.

Apostolate feeding the hungry at Oak City
Cares: March 23, April 27,
May 25, June 22, July 27, Aug. 24, Sept. 28,
Nov. 23, and Dec. 28.

Consider adding 2:30 p.m. on the fourth
Saturday of each month as a
recurring event in your calendar.

Sharing Our Blessings

by Deacon Phil Rz., OFS

At our most recent Annual Regional Gathering last August, a few of us professed brothers and sisters came to the completion of a 2-year spiritual assistant training program. One of the topics that impressed me the most was the idea of emphasizing dialogue in matters where there are differences of opinion. To me this may be something of value for many situations experiencing polarization in our society. From an organization dealing with ethics and morals in research (The Embassy of Good Science), I found an interesting discussion on dialogue vs. debate. Dialogue focuses on listening to the other and being open to the other's perspective, whereas debate aims at convincing the other through argumentation.

In many situations in life requiring decisions where integrity or fair practices need to be considered, it is not always simple to apply rules and to know what is the right action according to a code of conduct. A dialogue can help to find ways to deal with such issues. The idea of dialogue is not only being nice and friendly. The aim is to come to a better view of the situation, gaining knowledge and understanding. This requires that one seriously investigates the relevance of the perspective of the other. Being open to the perspective of the other does not mean simply giving up one's own point of view, but being prepared to learn from the other's point of view. By exchanging perspectives, dialogue can result in a fusion of horizons.

It is important to distinguish dialogue from debate. In a nutshell, the most relevant differences are the following:

- Dialogue focuses on learning from differences; debate focuses on finding one right answer
- Dialogue focuses on understanding the other; debate focuses on convincing the other
- Dialogue focuses on listening and questioning; debate focuses on speaking and arguing
- Dialogue focuses on looking for strengths in the position of the other; debate focuses on looking for weaknesses in the position of the other
- Dialogue focuses on exploring and considering; debate focuses on attacking and defending
- Dialogue focuses on reflection and learning; debate focuses on concluding and deciding

19. Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon. Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others. Since they are immersed in the resurrection of Christ, which gives true meaning to Sister Death, let them serenely tend toward the ultimate encounter with the Father.

Council Elections 2024-2027



Left to right: Councilor: Travis Bongiorno, OFS, Minister: Sharon Winzeler, OFS, Formation Director: Gladys Whitehouse, OFS, Secretary: Mary Cockrill, OFS, Treasurer: Janette Perez, OFS, Vice-Minister: Rachel Bongiorno, OFS, Councilor: Anne Evangelista, OFS & Councilor: Richard Hammer, OFS.

Meet the Inquirer



John Price

Born Nov 7, St. Louis Missouri.

My family & I moved from Columbus, Ohio to Raleigh in early 2020 and found a home at St. Francis and The Franciscan School (TFS).

My wife, Susan, and I met in college, have been together for 25 years and will celebrate our 20th wedding anniversary this summer! We are blessed with two amazing kids: Maddie (13) & Mitch (11) who are both thriving at TFS. We also have two amazing fur babies: Chuckles (15) & Boots (3). I lead a large business unit for my company and I strive to be a positive, energetic and effective business leader. My wife and I prioritize our kids and youth-related service (coaching, youth ministries & non-profit leadership) among other volunteer interests.

I am constantly inspired by the acts of service and leadership from our Fraternity members and am hopeful that my ongoing conversion and participation in our Fraternity will bring me closer to following Jesus in the footsteps of Saint Francis.

The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order

Match the Number to the Article

- 4 #- United themselves to the redemptive obedience of Jesus, who placed His will into the Father's hands, let them faithfully fulfill the duties proper to their various circumstances of life. Let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to Him even in difficulties and persecutions.
- 18 #- The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people. Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly. Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel.
- 1 #- The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to His every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family. The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.
- 10 #- Moreover, they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which "bear the imprint of the Most High," and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.
- 9 #- The Franciscan family, as one among many spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church, unites all members of the people of God -- laity, religious, and priests - who recognize that they are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi. In various ways and forms but in life-giving union with each other, they intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church.

See Answer Key on following page

We may not be asked to give witness by shedding our blood, but we will certainly be asked to give witness by being consistent and steadfast in fulfilling our baptismal promises, renewed and affirmed through profession in the OFS. By virtue of our Profession, the Rule and its application as found in the General Constitutions must represent for each of us a point of reference in our daily lives, beginning with our specific calling and our clear identity. On this foundation, we must build our lives anew and find a life plan (Franciscan radicalism, based on the gospel) and a place of ecclesial communion (the Fraternity) in which it should be possible for us to “learn the purpose and the way in which they are to live, love and suffer” (GC, art. 10).

-GENERAL CONSTITUTIONS OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

Answer Key:

#10- United themselves to the redemptive obedience of Jesus, who placed His will into the Father's hands, let them faithfully fulfill the duties proper to their various circumstances of life. Let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to Him even in difficulties and persecutions.

#4- The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people. Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly. Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel.

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#18- Moreover, they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which "bear the imprint of the Most High," and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.

#1- The Franciscan family, as one among many spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church, unites all members of the people of God -- laity, religious, and priests - who recognize that they are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi. In various ways and forms but in life-giving union with each other, they intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church.

Answers: 10, 4, 9, 18, 1

EARTH DAY 2024

This year, Earth Day's theme, Planet vs. Plastics, calls on all stakeholders - individuals, businesses, and governments - to unite in combating plastic pollution and protecting our health.

This movement demands a **60% REDUCTION** in plastic production by **2040** & the elimination of single-use plastics by **2030**, paving the way for a plastic-free future.

We're taking on the Plastics Pandemic from every angle - political, cultural, and personal.

We believe everyone deserves a healthy & thriving planet, free from plastic pollution. Our commitment stems from a deep understanding that plastic pollution not only impacts our oceans, our land, our wildlife, but also **DIRECTLY** affects **our own health**.

Plastic is personal.

Visit [EARTHDAY.ORG](https://earthday.org) to learn more and get involved.



On my Last Day

by Rachel Bongiorno, OES

This year for Holy Week, I decided to take some much-needed time off from work and actually attend as many events as possible our parish was having. This year was my first opportunity to attend the triduum with no obstacles.

That I can recall, I have never been to a Holy Thursday Mass. If I have, it has been forgotten with time. Life tends to pass us by in this way. Some context for you, I became a Catholic of my own volition on Easter of 2001, at 18 years old. A neighbor/childhood friend invited me to Mass when I began seeking and I never looked back. I received all of my Sacraments of initiation most joyfully. Since then, I have spent many years wandering, cobbling together my best intentions of what tradition is and what it meant to be “truly Catholic”. When I married, I gained family who shared the same faith and with profession, even more so.

I am familiar with our Christian concept of washing another’s feet. I am familiar with the scripture in which Jesus washes the feet of His disciples and that He tells us to do the same. It was not until *this* Holy Thursday that I really understood.

Less than a year ago, my parents, husband, my sister-n-law and myself were with my only sibling, my brother, when he passed away. There are things that happen in our lives that change us completely. Those times that become a part of who you are as a person. Therefore, this has been heavy on mind for some time. Our inevitable embrace with Sister Death.

Walking more closely with Jesus Christ this year, I allowed myself to really feel everything that was happening, to really reflect and embrace it. Easter and the days before it are such a bittersweet time. So sad but so beautiful. The scriptures share with us what Jesus choose to do those last days, knowing His fate, His purpose. He chose to wash His disciple’s feet.

After my brother passed away, I worried, and I thought about my own mortality, my parent’s, my husband’s... I thought about it so much that I asked the Lord to take those concerns from me. But this Holy Thursday, my eyes were opened. I understand. I will not dwell upon such things. I will do as He taught us, I will wash the feet of my brothers and sisters. And I will love with all of my heart, just as He did. +



FRANCISCAN INSTITUTE

The Franciscan Institute, located on the St. Bonaventure University campus, engages in three principal areas of scholarly concern: research, publications and academic conferences, workshops and seminars on the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition.

Summer 2024 programs

Secular Franciscans:

Francis of Assisi, 1224-1226: A Spirituality of Decline and True Joy

Three Saturdays: June 1, 8 and 15

11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. EST

No cost

This workshop, presented on Zoom, will look at what are called Francis of Assisi's "years of decline" (1224-1226). It was a time of increasing pain and spiritual suffering. Francis, blind and suffering from malaria and leprosy, heads to La Verna for a time of contemplation and solace. The Stigmata and the Canticle of the Creatures are the products of the important year of 1224.

"Years of decline" are an ever-present context of our own lives. We experience the decline of parents and grandparents, friends and siblings, and, before long, signs of our own. What can Francis of Assisi's years of decline teach us?

Fr. Jack Rathschmidt and Fr. Dave Couturier, both Capuchins, will address these questions and more in these three Saturday Zoom sessions. There will be time given for Secular Franciscans to talk with one another in small discussion groups on this critically important topic.

Secular Franciscan Conferences - Summer 2024

*Francis of Assisi, 1224-1226:
A Spirituality of Decline and True Joy*

Three Saturdays, June 1, 8 and 15, 2024
11:30-1:00 p.m. ET
(all sessions via Zoom only)

With
Fr. Jack Rathschmidt, OFM Cap.
Fr. David B. Couturier, OFM. Cap.

FREE!

For information on other summer courses visit:
Franciscan Institute
St. Bonaventure University

Source: SecularFranciscansUSA

See more here: sbu.edu/academics/academic-resources/franciscan-institute/programs-conferences