

# Padre Pio Fraternity

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

## ***the little flowers of Padre Pio Fraternity***

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December 2024

### Minister's Memo

*This month's message is from national minister Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS, and is also available on the [national Secular Franciscan website](#).*

Don't jump to Christmas too early.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
New Year's blessings to you. The beginning of the liturgical year also means the start of the Advent Season. Notice I wrote Advent Season, not Christmas Season. Although the Church says the Christmas Season doesn't start for 3+ weeks, the rest of society doesn't buy it. Most of our friends, neighbors and businesses have jumped to Christmas already. By the time the Feast of the Nativity arrives, and the actual Christmas Season begins, many have moved on - ready to take down the decorations. As Catholic Christians and especially Franciscans, I encourage you to resist the societal push to jump ahead. This year we have 24 days of Advent... savor the time. The season is about preparing our hearts – getting us ready for the celebration of Our Lord's birth – as St. Francis called it, the “Feast of Feasts.” (Francis of Assisi: Early Documents. The Founder Chapter CLI, p 374)



It does not take much for me to get distracted from the reality that God is with us daily – especially when the noise of the commercial Christmas starts earlier and gets louder each year. The commercial Christmas can bring a type of joy – but I find that it does not last. Advent is an opportunity or invitation to reflect, dive deeper, into the meaning of the Incarnation – to sustain lasting joy. So, I do my best to resist jumping into the commercial Christmas season the day after Thanksgiving by focusing on the Advent Season. We are in control of how we react to the noise of this time.

What special features will you build into your Advent experience?

Will your fraternity focus on Advent in December?

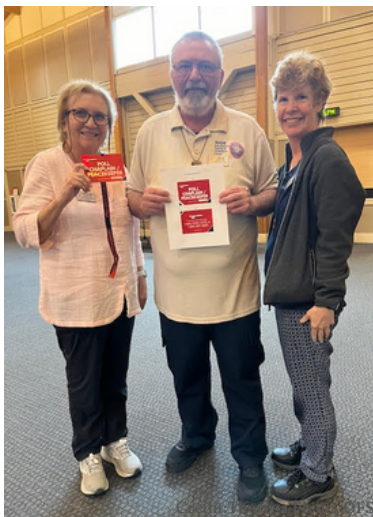
When do you decorate your home?

Brian and I put up the lights on the outside. Currently the main decoration on the inside is an Advent wreath. Do you have one in your home? We light the candle(s) Continued...

View the calendar [here](#).

There are many ways for us to participate in the Advent Season. Thank you for considering my request to spend time in Advent and not to jump immediately to Christmas. As you are transformed, may the light of Christ shine through you to family, co-workers, friends, neighbors and everyone you encounter. May our Advent help us to “testify to the whole world of God’s great power working everywhere.”

Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS  
National Minister



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# Priest, Prophet, King–St. Francis

by Ellen Ferrone, OFS, BSSF Regional Minister

Every day is a day to be grateful for the love and generosity of our God, family, friends, and fraternity sisters and brothers.

We are in the season of gratitude and joy, which many outwardly celebrate. Times like this remind us of our baptismal call to be priest, prophet, and king, especially in the context of our seraphic father, Francis.

As a priest, Francis preached always. How do I preach? With kind words, and sincere gestures—actions that speak louder than words.

As Prophet, in Francis's simple desire to remind the people of the Rieti Valley of the humble beginnings of Our Lord, he said to Brother John, go and make things ready to celebrate the birth of Our Lord.

How am I a prophet? Do I see the needs of others, especially those on the margins and work to end injustices?

Eight hundred years later we as Franciscans take a special joy in this celebration of the humility of Our God. Article 11 of our Rule says, "Trusting in the Father, Christ chose for himself and his mother a poor and humble life...Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs..." let us recommit ourselves to a humble life.

As king, Francis cared for his brothers, the Poor Clares, the lepers, and the marginalized. As kings, may we all encounter and embrace those on the margins in our society.

My prayer for us all is that in this holy season, we may all live our Franciscan lives as priests, prophets, and kings.

May the Lord bless us and keep us safe.

Peace

Ellen

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## A Hidden Hope

The world lies in the power of the evil one. The world does not recognize the light that shines in the darkness. It never did; it never will. But there are people who, in the midst of the world, live with the knowledge that he is alive and dwells within us, that he has overcome the power of death and opens the way to glory. Are there people who come together, who come around the table and do what he did, in memory of him? Are there people who keep telling each other the stories of hope and, together, go out to care for their fellow human beings, not pretending to solve all problems, but to bring a smile to a dying man and a little hope to a lonely child?

It is so little, so unspectacular, yes, so hidden, this Eucharistic life, but it is like yeast, like a mustard seed, like a smile on a baby's face. It is what keeps faith, hope, and love alive in a world that is constantly on the brink of self-destruction.



## Traditional Franciscan Calendar December – Month of the Incarnation

1. Bl Marie-Angele Astorch
2. Bl. Raphael Chylinski
3. St. Francis Xavier, Priest
4. Bl. Francois Galves
6. Bl. Elisabeth la Bonne
7. Bl. Louis Beltrame Quattrocchi
8. Feast of the Immaculate Conception
9. Bl. Delphine de Glandeves
10. Bl. Conrad d'Offide
11. Bl. Hugolin Magalotti
12. Discovery of the tomb of St. Francis 1820
13. Bl. Pius Bartosik
14. Bl. Barthole Buonpedini
15. Mary Queen of the Seraphic Order
16. Bl. Honorat de Biala
17. Bl. Francois Bell, Priest
18. Bl. Marie-Francoise Schervier
19. Bl. Jean Discalceat
20. Bl. Antoine Galvao
21. St. Raphael Kalinowski
22. St. Francis Xavier Cabrini
23. Bl. Nicolas Factor
24. Bl. Bentivoglio de Bonio
25. Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
26. St. Albert Chmielowski
27. Bl. Mathie de Nazareis
28. Feast of the Holy Innocents
29. Bl Gerard de Valence
30. Bl. Marguerite Colonna
31. St. Gaspard Buffalo

## The Pope's Prayer Intentions December

For pilgrims of hope  
We pray that this Jubilee Year  
strengthen our faith, helping us  
to recognize the Risen Christ in  
our daily lives, and that it may  
transform us into pilgrims of  
Christian hope.

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6 Fr. Hugh Macsherry, OFM

11 Ida Irwin, OFS

28 Mary Cockrill, OFS  
& Sharon Winzeler, OFS

## *Congratulations*

### Profession Anniversaries

Lee Cunningham, OFS,  
Michael Hancock, OFS,  
Ellen Ferrone, OFS,  
Theresa Flynn, OFS,  
Chris Peffley, OFS &  
Lynn Oeser, OFS  
12/2/2017



# Celebrating the Canticle of the Creatures 1225-2025



	Event	Symbol	Theological Dimension <i>Our life in Christ</i> (formation)	Anthropological Dimension <i>Our life as brothers and sisters</i> (formation)	Ecclesiological Dimension <i>Our life in communion</i> (mission)	Sociological Dimension <i>Our life in the World</i> (JPIC)
2025 You are beauty	The Canticle	The Earth	The presence of God in the Book of Creation	Amazement, humility and gratitude as vital attitudes	The heart of our mission: the construction of universal fraternity	Another way of life is possible: integral ecology

## *The Canticle of Brother Sun (1225)*

**Background:** The companions of Saint Francis tell us that the *Canticle of Brother Sun* was composed while he was staying in a small hut next to San Damiano.<sup>a</sup> The saint had completed a long and no doubt exhausting preaching tour after his time on LaVerna, August to September, 1224, and spent time convalescing close to Saint Clare and the Poor Ladies. Almost blind and completely helpless, his body racked in agony, Francis lay in a little darkened cell. In those long hours of interior and exterior darkness, he endured severe temptations of despondency. Yet during one of those moments of discouragement, the Lord assured him that he would enjoy heavenly glory and this inspired this canticle of joy that will always characterize Franciscan spirituality.

We might wonder what were the intentions of the stigmatized, mystic Saint Francis in desiring to spend time at San Damiano. Thomas of Celano and Bonaventure write of his desire to return to his beginnings, that is, to practice once again the patterns of his conversion that first led him to the Lord. No doubt San Damiano was a sentimental favorite in this regard since it was there that the call to rebuild the Lord's house was first made known to him. But it may also be that Francis realized how completely Clare and her sisters had come to live a fuller Trinitarian life.

In any case, this canticle of praise, filled with Francis's vision of a universe mirroring the presence of the Triune God, could only have come from the heart of a mystic.<sup>b</sup> When seen in the light of San Damiano, filled as it is with images of both saints Francis and Clare, the *Canticle of Brother Sun* becomes a beautiful, meaningful reflection of both.



Credit: Rachel Bongiorno, OFS

Padre Pio Fraternity Gathering Sunday November 24, 2024

*Marie Bianca, OFS, giving a talk on Ecumenism*

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### **Sharing Our Blessings – The Christmas Spider, an Eastern European Legend**

by Deacon Phil Rz., OFS

Many cultures have their unique Christmas ornaments. A couple of tales have led to spiders having a place on Christmas trees in Eastern Europe. As we've all heard tell, Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem, perhaps in a cave. Shortly thereafter, Mary and Joseph fled to Africa with the Christ child, to escape the soldiers of Herod. In their flight, it is rumored that they hid in caves to avoid the pursuing soldiers. In one case, the soldiers are said to have been close on their heels, and the holy family was saved by spiders, who swiftly covered the entrance of their cave with webs. When a soldier sent to scout their cave saw the webs, he decided that nothing had been in that particular cave recently, there was no need to waste time checking it. In recognition of those ancient Israeli spiders' good deed, some people place spider ornaments on their Christmas trees...and the tale has even made its way to the pages of a children's book.

Sometimes thereafter, in the not-so-distant past, somewhere in Ukraine, a family was preparing for the winter holidays. They cleaned the house in preparation for decorating it. Of course, being thoughtful people (and not wanting bad luck) they made sure not to harm spiders when they removed their webs. Once that was taken care of, they put their decorations up, and took a well-deserved rest.

Once all the humans had all gone to sleep, the spiders scurried from their hiding places. Or perhaps the spider eggs brought in on the tree hatched in the warm house. Regardless of how the spiders got there, they began to investigate the tree. The spiders marveled at its decorations – so different from the trees outside! In an attempt to contribute, the spiders coated it in their webs...Unfortunately, many humans don't think spiderwebs make good decoration. Later in the night, Father Frost appeared (or Father Christmas, Saint Nicholas, or the Christ Child...there are many variant tales). Regardless of who the holiday wonderworker was, he saw what the spiders had done, and turned all their webs into threads of silver and gold. And thus the very first tinsel was created. Born of the spiders' desire to contribute to the winter celebration.

Not only do spiders get special protection during the holidays, they also get an honored place in Christmas décor. Often, Ukrainians who put up a Christmas tree include small spider ornaments and tinsel to represent spider webs.

## 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](http://ofscentralnc.org)

Facebook: Padre Pio Fraternity Secular

Franciscan Order of Central North Carolina

## Apostolates

JPIC: Theresa Flynn, OFS

Newsletter & Facebook: Rachel Bongiorno, OFS

Oak City Cares:

Mary Cockrill, OFS

On-going Formation Team:

Mercedes Cooley, 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: Laurie Wilburn, OFS

We welcome those who would like to learn more about the Secular Franciscans.

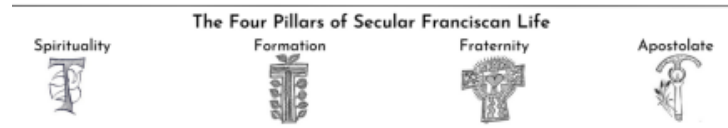
Join us for our monthly gatherings on the fourth Sunday of each month,

beginning at 2:30 p.m. Location:

Fellowship Hall at St. Francis of Assisi

Catholic Church, 11401 Leesville Rd.,

Raleigh, North Carolina.



## Fraternity Upcoming Events:

Saturday, Dec. 7, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Annual Advent retreat. Please inform Jeanne Casciere of your attendance.

We request \$15 to cover costs.

Friday, Dec. 13 at 6:30 p.m.

Second Annual Feast of Nativity observance at St. Francis of Assisi Church.

Saturday, Dec. 28, Oak City Cares apostolate meal service.

The annual Epiphany Party will be held from 2-4 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 12, at the home of Gladys and Ben Whitehouse.