



VOL. 16, NO. 3

Monthly NEWSLETTER

Secular Franciscan Order of Central North Carolina



PADRE PIO FRATERNITY ofscentralnc.org

MARCH 1, 2026

— A Snapshot from the Wisdom of St. Francis —

HOW TO PRAY ALWAYS

St. Francis stayed connected to God every moment of every day

— WRITTEN BY —
CHRISTINE SKALL



SCRIPTURE: “Pray without ceasing.”

— 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Dear readers, I have been encouraged to keep the newsletter content focused on Franciscan life, and this is especially why I feel so strongly compelled to write this front-page article about how to pray always, from the moment you open your eyes in the morning until the moment you shut them at night as you go to sleep.

Prayer and closeness to God is at the core of Franciscan life and, you see, constant prayer was essential to our dear Saint Francis of Assisi because he viewed it as his primary source of strength, comfort, and refuge. It was the foundation of his intimate relationship with Christ, enabling him to live a life of poverty, humility, and active, joyful service as an instrument of peace.

See **PRAYER, PAGE 17** ➡➡



SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI TAUGHT THAT “PRAYING ALWAYS” MEANS TURNING ALL OF LIFE INTO A CONSTANT WORDLESS AWARENESS OF GOD’S PRESENCE.

— COLUMN —

THE VALUE OF A VISIT



BISHOP LUIS
RAFAEL ZARAMA

FROM THE BISHOP

[EDITOR'S NOTE.

This column was originally published in *NC CATHOLICS, The Magazine Of The Catholic Church In Eastern North Carolina* and is being used in our newsletter with permission.]

Two years ago we traveled around the diocese with the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the monstrance: Jesus-on-the-move. During one of our stops, we visited a mobile home community and spent time with a family who warmly welcomed Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. We prayed and sang. Afterward, we spent time chatting with some of the children.

I asked them, *“What would you like to ask Jesus for?”* Their answers varied, but one caught my attention. A boy, about 5 years old, responded: *“I ask Jesus to give us a new truck.”* His answer took us by surprise and brought a smile to our faces.

I asked him why he made this request, and the young boy explained, *“I want us - my family - to be able to visit my grandparents who live in Mexico. I miss them very much, but we can't go because our car doesn't work very well.”*

His reason deeply moved me. His request was not selfish. The young boy didn't focus on his own needs; instead, he expressed the profound longing to fulfill a shared family desire: to travel, to visit, to rejoice and to share life with loved ones.

This anecdote reminds us that Jesus-on-the-move travels throughout our diocese to meet us.

“THE LIFE AND MISSION OF PADRE PIO PROVE THAT DIFFICULTIES AND SORROWS, IF ACCEPTED OUT OF LOVE, ARE TRANSFORMED INTO A PRIVILEGED WAY OF HOLINESS, WHICH OPENS ONTO THE HORIZONS OF A GREATER GOOD, KNOWN ONLY TO THE LORD.”

POPE JOHN PAUL II

He is Jesus who brings hope and needs *“transportation”* to reach those brothers and sisters who, for various reasons, have drifted away but long for a visit to feel loved and wanted, and to be reminded that they're infinitely valuable, irreplaceable and indispensable.

Jesus longs to be with his people; He wants to visit and share his life with each and every one of us. He wants us to invite him to live every moment and event in our life with him. Jesus, who is love and mercy itself, seeks to encounter us, but doesn't need a truck or car. He needs hearts filled with a missionary spirit, ready to receive him and accompany him on his journey.

Such a heart is the *“Uber”* Jesus needs to evangelize because a missionary spirit - the spirit of hope - is essential for sharing the joy of the Gospel. God grants this spirit to all who welcome his message of the Good News of love and hope. Love awakens gratitude and hope in the heart: evangelizes it, renews it and transforms it.

To be *“Uber”* for Jesus means responding to the longing, deep inside every person, to be loved by him and share his love, especially with those in the peripheries of society, who want to know that love is real. To be *“Uber”* of Jesus means allowing the Holy Spirit, the Divine Sculptor, to shape our hearts into Christ so that we may experience the joy of serving and loving others.

Where do we begin? We start with our families, reaching first to those who, for various reasons,

are distant or isolated. Often, it's not the lack of transportation that prevents us from visiting loved ones but the absence of a missionary heart - a heart willing to become an instrument of hope and evangelization.

The love of God is always new and always renews us. It opens the door to the hope of a better future, inspiring us to dream and imagine fresh possibilities. Love also compels us to share what we have gratuitously received.

As Lent begins, let us, in the best diocese in the world, ensure that the missionary spirit of Jesus-on-the-move, that spirit of gratitude, is present.

Recognizing that we are made to be loved by him prompts us to pray. Let us ask that Jesus-on-the-move will find hearts open to his touch and eager to be evangelized by the truth and life he offers, especially through the sacraments and his Church.

Let us keep dreaming and living the present in the love of Jesus, so that our diocese may continue proclaiming the Gospel of Love and serving as a beacon of hope for another 100 years. May those celebrating the bicentennial look back and joyfully proclaim, as we do today, that our diocese is *“the best in the world!”* John Paul II. In his homily, the Pope said, *“The life and mission of Padre Pio prove that difficulties and sorrows, if accepted out of love, are transformed into a privileged way of holiness, which opens onto the horizons of a greater good, known only to the Lord.”* 

— OUR HEAVENLY FAMILY: THE SAINTS —

Saint of the Day // MARCH 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 SAINT DAVID OF WALES	2 SAINT AGNES OF BOHEMIA	3 SAINT KATHARINE DREXEL	4 SAINT CASIMIR	5 SAINT JOHN JOSEPH OF THE CROSS	6 SAINT MARY ANN OF JESUS OF PAREDES	7 SAINTS PERPETUA AND FELICITY
8 SAINT JOHN OF GOD	9 SAINT FRANCES OF ROME	10 SAINT DOMINIC SAVIO	11 SAINT JOHN OGILVIE	12 BLESSED ANGELA SALAWA	13 SAINT LEANDER OF SEVILLE	14 SAINT MAXIMILIAN
15 SAINT LOUISE DE MARILLAC	16 SAINT CLEMENT MARY HOFBAUER	17 SAINT PATRICK	18 SAINT CYRIL OF JERUSALEM	19 SAINT JOSEPH, HUSBAND OF MARY	20 SAINT SALVATOR OF HORTA	21 BLESSED JOHN OF PARMA
22 SAINT NICHOLAS OWEN	23 SAINT TURIBIUS OF MOGROVEJO	24 SAINT OSCAR ARNULFO ROMERO	25 ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD	26 SAINT CATHERINE OF GENOA	27 SAINT GREGORY OF NAREK	28 SAINT CATHERINE OF BOLOGNA
29 SAINT LUDOVICO OF CASORIA	30 SAINT PETER REGALADO	31 SAINT STEPHEN OF MAR SABA				

— SOURCE: FRANCISCANMEDIA.ORG

MARCH 25

MARIAN FEAST DAY



— SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The Annunciation

REFLECTION

The feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, now recognized as a solemnity, was first celebrated in the fourth or fifth century. Its central focus is the Incarnation: God has become one of us. From all eternity God had decided that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity should become human. Now, as *Luke 1:26-38* tells us, the decision is being realized. The God-Man embraces all humanity, indeed all creation, to bring it to God in one great act of love. Because human beings have rejected God, Jesus will accept a life of suffering and an agonizing death: *“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13).* Mary has an important role to play in God’s plan. From all eternity, God destined her to be the mother of Jesus and closely related to him in the creation and redemption of the world. We could say that God’s decrees of creation and redemption are joined in the decree of Incarnation. Because Mary is God’s instrument in the Incarnation, she has a role to play with Jesus in creation and redemption. It is a God-given role. It is God’s grace from beginning to end. Mary becomes the eminent figure she is only by God’s grace. She is the empty space where God could act. Everything she is she owes to the Trinity. Mary is the virgin-mother who fulfills *Isaiah 7:14* in a way that Isaiah could not have imagined. She is united with her son in carrying out the will of God (*Psalms 40:8-9; Hebrews 10:7-9; Luke 1:38*). Together with Jesus, the privileged and graced Mary is the link between heaven and earth. She is the human being who best, after Jesus, exemplifies the possibilities of human existence. She received into her lowliness the infinite love of God. She shows how an ordinary human being can reflect God in the ordinary circumstances of life. She exemplifies what the Church and every member of the Church is meant to become. She is the ultimate product of the creative and redemptive power of God. She manifests what the Incarnation is meant to accomplish for all of us.

— SOURCE: FRANCISCANMEDIA.ORG

Important DATES

SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING IN AND AROUND THE PADRE PIO FRATERNITY. Take note of upcoming important events and remember upcoming Birthdays & Profession Anniversaries.

Upcoming EVENTS

SEP. 11-13: ANNUAL GATHERING in BLACK MOUNTAIN, NC

The Annual Regional Gathering will be held Sep. 11-13 at Ridgcrest Conference Center in Black Mountain, NC. Join us at this beautiful quiet center where you can spend some quality time with The Lord and fellow Franciscans. This will be a great time for spiritual renewal.

SOURCE: ridgcrestconferencecenter.com. Used with permission.

ONGOING MAR. 2 →

JOIN US FOR A NOVENA FOR THE POOR

Join us for nine days of a short scripture reflection and a moving, original novena authored by Greener Lent member and Secular Franciscan, Michael Hancock **Mon. March 2 to Tue. March 10 at 7pm.** This beautiful Novena captures so much of what Lent is about, our practices of praying, fasting & abstaining, and giving to the poor to grow closer to Christ and experience the joy our encounter with Him brings. The poor need us to willingly share our resources. ➔ Meetings are held online at [THIS LINK.](#)

ONGOING MAR. 22 →

PADRE PIO FRATERNITY GATHERINGS

These are the upcoming regular monthly Padre Pio Fraternity gatherings on the **4th Sunday of each month.** Note that there will not be a meeting in December because it would be on the week leading up to Christmas. **UPCOMING GATHERING DATES: March 22, April 26, May 17, June 28, July 26, Aug. 23, Sept. 27, Oct. 25, Nov. 22.** ➔ St. Francis of Assisi Church, 11401 Leesville Rd., Raleigh, NC 27613. www.stfrancisraleigh.org. 919-847-8205.

ONGOING MAR. 28 →

OAK CITY CARES The Padre Pio Fraternity contributes to, and helps to serve, the Saturday mid-day meal for hundreds of clients of Oak City Outreach in the downtown Raleigh area **every 4th Saturday of each month.** Fraternity members may sign up to bring food items, help to serve and converse with the outreach center's participants. This ministry is coordinated by Fraternity member Mary Cockrill. **UPCOMING DATES: Mar. 28, Apr. 25, May 23, Jun. 27, Jul. 25, Aug. 22, Sep. 26, Oct. 24, Nov. 28, Dec. 26.** ➔ Oak City Outreach Center, 215 S Person St., Raleigh, NC 27601. 919-847-8205.

See EVENTS, NEXT PAGE ➔

Happy BIRTHDAY

MAR. 5
CHARLOTTE WITOSKY, OFS

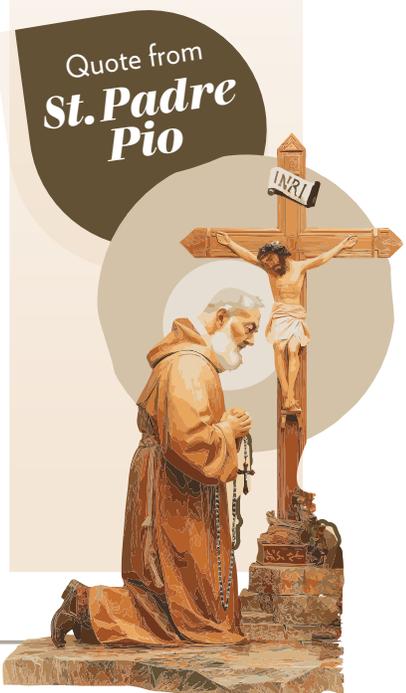
MAR. 11
STACY LEWIS

MAR. 12
SUZIE NELSON, OFS

MAR. 15
DAVE SHICK, OFS

MAR. 24
GLADYS WHITEHOUSE, OFS

“PRAYER IS THE BEST WEAPON WE POSSESS, THE KEY THAT OPENS THE HEART OF GOD.”



EVENTS ††††††††††

➔ *Continued from*
PREVIOUS PAGE

**MAY
8-10**

RETREAT AT ST. FRANCIS SPRINGS Join us at this beautiful quiet center where you can spend some quality time with The Lord and fellow Franciscans from

May 8-10. This will be a great time for spiritual renewal and the retreat will be led by Fr. Steve Kluge, OFM. Please sign up before our meeting on Feb. 22 if you would like to attend. We will ask for 50% payment by Feb. 22 and the remainder by April 15. Per-person cost for the three days is \$340/single and \$200 for a shared double room. St. Francis Springs recently added \$30/night for shared rooms. (Cost for the weekend for a couple is \$400.) To sign up, go to [SignUpGenius](#). Cancel by Feb. 22. The retreat begins with dinner on Friday night and ends with brunch on Sunday morning. Scholarship money is available through our endowment fund. Please contact any council member for more information. ➔ 477 Grogan Rd, Stoneville, NC 27048. 336-573-3751.

**JUN.
20**

PADRE PIO PERMANENT PROFESSION Our candidates will profess at a Mass celebrated by Fr. Hugh Macsherry, OFM, at 11 am on Sat., June 20, at St. Francis of Assisi.

Please mark your calendars now. This will serve as our monthly meeting, so there will be no gathering in June. ➔ St. Francis of Assisi Church, 11401 Leesville Rd., Raleigh, NC 27613. www.stfrancisraleigh.org. 919-847-8205.

**JUL.
29➔**

2026 NATIONAL QUINQUENNIAL This is a National Congress when Secular Franciscans gather to celebrate our shared calling with prayer, formation,

and fellowship and will be held **July 29-Aug. 2** in Lexington, KY. There is an Early Bird discount available until Dec. 31. Find information on the three keynote speakers, how to register, and more at <https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/21st-quinquennial-congress-q2026/>. ➔ Marriott Griffin Gate Golf Resort & Spa, 1800 Newtown Pike, Lexington, KY, 40511 US.

**SEP.
11-13**

ANNUAL REGIONAL GATHERING A time to gather together all the Secular Franciscans of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region for our Annual Regional Gathering

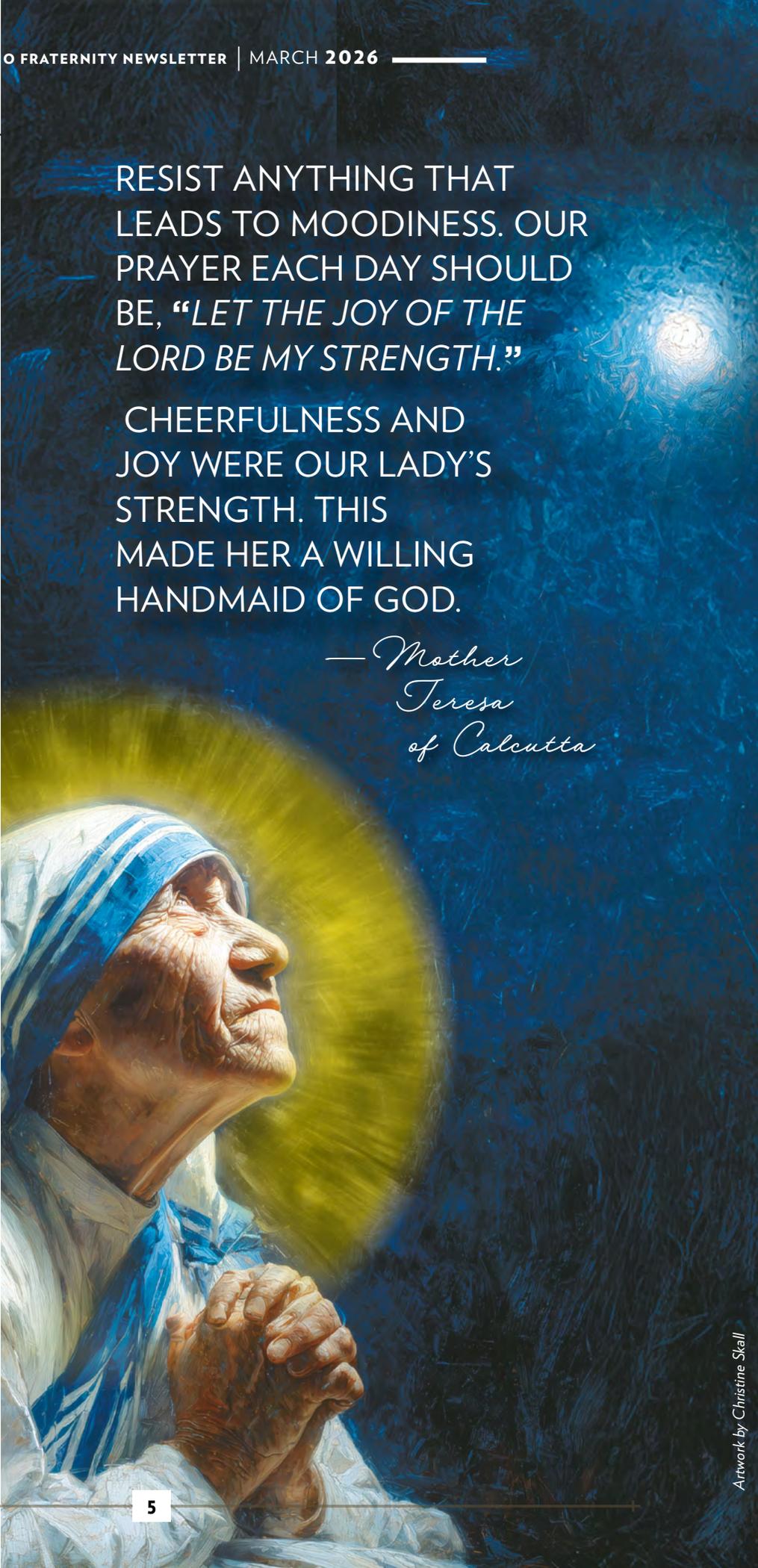
(ARG). This is also a time for prayer, a time for fellowship, a time to learn, a time to share, and a time for joy. Because of the date of the national Quinquennial, our Annual Regional Gathering (ARG) will be Sept. 11-13. Darleen Pryds, PhD will be a speaker at both the National Quinquennial and the ARG. She has a lovely article on living the Canticle of the Creatures that we encourage you to read at <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/st-anthony-messenger/living-the-canticle-of-the-creatures> ➔ Ridgecrest Conference Center, Black Mountain, NC, 1 Ridgecrest Dr, Black Mountain, NC 28711. 828-669-8022.



RESIST ANYTHING THAT LEADS TO MOODINESS. OUR PRAYER EACH DAY SHOULD BE, “LET THE JOY OF THE LORD BE MY STRENGTH.”

CHEERFULNESS AND JOY WERE OUR LADY’S STRENGTH. THIS MADE HER A WILLING HANDMAID OF GOD.

— Mother Teresa of Calcutta



Artwork by Christine Skell

Padre Pio Fraternity GATHERING

NOTES

A RECAP OF THE MOST RECENT FRATERNITY GATHERING. Highlights and discussion points from the July Fraternity Gathering are noted below.

Gathering HIGHLIGHTS

We celebrated the Rite of Extraction, one of the oldest traditions in the Franciscan family at our gathering on Sunday, Feb. 22. Travis Bongiorno, OFS, led the annual ritual.

We celebrated the Rite of Extraction, one of the oldest traditions in the Franciscan family at our gathering on Sunday, Feb. 22. Travis Bongiorno, OFS, led the annual ritual.

Shared by the First, Second, and Third Orders, this cherished custom reminds us that God speaks to us through:

- **Examples of the saints**
 - **Sacred Scripture**
 - **The virtues**
 - **One another**
- Each participant prayerfully and randomly selected:
- **A saint who becomes our patron for the year (Blessed, Venerable, Servant**



Travis Bongiorno, OFS, leads the Rite of Extraction at our Padre Pio Fraternity Gathering in February.

of God, or canonized Saint). Guided by the Holy Spirit, this Saint may have something unexpected to teach you. Research your saint's life and consider how his or her life might inspire your resolutions, shape your prayer, or accompany you throughout the year.

- **A scripture verse.** Use for reflection and

spiritual growth. As you meditate on this passage, ask: What is the Holy Spirit directing me to do?

- **A virtue to cultivate intentionally in the coming year.** With the help of the Holy Spirit, strive to grow in this virtue.
- **A prayer person who is a member,**

See **GATHERING, NEXT PAGE** ➔

TABLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1 Each person at the table gives the name of the Saint you chose. Everyone shares what they know about the Saint. (After everyone has shared their Saint, Virtue and Scripture, you can do some research on your saint, time permitting).

2 Each person shares the virtue they selected. What is your reaction to the Holy Spirit's choice of this virtue for you to cultivate.?

3 Each person shares your scripture verse. Reflect upon its meaning for you.

4 If you have participated in an Extraction previously, share with your group how you have used/not used previous extractions. How have they been helpful, of value?

5 After small group time, You may share with the larger group only if you are moved to do so.



[PADRE PIO FRATERNITY IN THE NEWS]

Padre Pio Fraternity Leads Stations of The Cross



The Padre Pio Fraternity led The Stations of The Cross at St. Francis of Assisi Friday, February 22. Leading the Stations are Michael Hancock, bearing the cross, and readers Marianne Norris and Stacey Lewis.

The Padre Pio Fraternity led The Stations of The Cross at St. Francis of Assisi at 6pm Friday, February 27. Marianne Norris and Stacy Lewis read the Stations while Michael hancock walked alongside them bearing the Cross.

For those not in the know, a plenary indulgence is granted to the faithful who piously meditate on the Passion and Death of Jesus while moving between 14 legitimately erected Stations of the Cross.¹ This act can be performed individually or publicly, requires at least some vocal prayers, and can be done any day, with special focus on Fridays in Lent. These indulgences can be offered for the Holy Souls. This really helps the Souls in Purgatory and one day they will thank you!

On the pages following we will include The Stations that were prayed. These were compiled by Sister Miriam Varley, OSC and Friar Stephen Kluge, OFM.

1. You can gain a plenary indulgence for praying the Stations of the Cross on any Friday outside of Lent as well, provided the stations are legitimately erected and you fulfill the necessary conditions. While Lenten Fridays offer specific opportunities for this, the Church allows this, as well as on any day of the year. To gain a plenary indulgence, you must also be in a state of grace and fulfill the usual conditions: SACRAMENTAL CONFESSION (within roughly 8 days before or after), EUCHARISTIC COMMUNION, PRAYER FOR THE POPE'S INTENTIONS (e.g. one Our Father and Hail Mary), COMPLETE DETACHMENT FROM ALL SIN, EVEN VENIAL SIN.

See STATIONS, NEXT PAGE ➔

Stations of The Cross

Compiled by Sister Miriam Varley, O.S.C.
and Friar Stephen Kluge, O.F.M.

Opening Prayer

Leader begins:

In the name of the Father...
(Make the Sign of The Cross)

All: Amen.

Leader:

Lord Jesus, you willingly embraced the wood of the cross as an act of total surrender in love for the Father and the reconciliation of the entire universe. This evening, as we retrace your steps, send us your spirit so that our hearts may be warmed and our lives renewed. May the example and invitation of your love inspire us to forsake selfishness and embrace wholeheartedly the way to victory, for you live and reign, forever and ever.

All: Amen.



Artwork by Christine Skall

+ The First Station Jesus is Condemned to Death



Leader:

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. (Genuflect)

All:

Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader:

Unemployment, health issues, divorce: whatever the circumstances, we may at some

point in our lives feel out of control. But Jesus knew that no matter how the outward circumstances appeared, a loving Father was in control and would use whatever was happening for good.

Let us pray: Dear Jesus, when the circumstances of our life are challenging, help us to trust in Your loving presence. May whatever happens to us help us to grow in empathy for all who suffer. For you are Lord forever and ever.

All: Amen

+ The Second Station Jesus Takes Up His Cross



Leader:

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. (Genuflect)

All:

Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader:

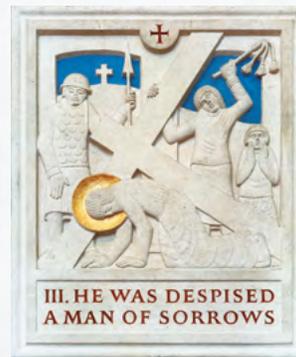
His cross was made of wood. Our cross that we are called to carry might be a

loved one, addiction, physical or emotional abuse, mental illness, physical diminishment: there are as many crosses as there are people in the world.

Let us pray: Dear Jesus, sanctify the crosses we carry. By remembering Your example, may our fears and weakness be transformed into faith and strength. For this we pray...

All: Amen

+ The Third Station Jesus Falls the First Time



Leader:

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you. (Genuflect)

All:

Because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader:

Heavy was the wood of Your cross. No matter the cross I carry, it too is heavy.

My faith might be small and weak, so it's okay to fall under the weight of my cross.

Let us pray: Dear Jesus, when we fall, and no matter how many times we fall, we know that You are with us and continue to love us. We trust that You will give us the strength and courage to pick up ourselves so we may continue on our journeys, for you live and reign forever and ever.

All: Amen

See STATIONS, NEXT PAGE ➡➡

[MEET A FELLOW FRANCISCAN]

EACH MONTH WE GET TO KNOW ONE OF OUR FRATERNITY MEMBERS A LITTLE BETTER :)

Jackie Centamore Prayer is the anchor of her life

1 In two minutes or less, tell us a little about your background (*family, occupation, heritage, etc.*).

I'm a mom to two teenagers—Caitlin (15) and Sebastian (16)—who definitely keep life interesting and full! They both graduated from Saint Mary Magdalene and are now at Panther Creek as a freshman and sophomore. Watching them grow into the young people God is calling them to be is one of my greatest joys (and humbling experiences!).

My husband and I will celebrate 18 years of marriage this March. We actually met in high school and were close friends for years before reconnecting in our early thirties. It still feels like such a gift—and a little reminder that God's timing is always better than ours.

I work full time in the shopping center leasing industry, which means I travel about half the year. When I'm home, I'm grateful for the flexibility to work remotely. That balance has been a real blessing for our family.

A few years ago, I completed my training as a spiritual director, and I now have the privilege of accompanying several women from Saint Mary Magdalene as they grow in their faith. Walking with others as they seek to listen more deeply to the Lord has been a beautiful grace in my own life as well.

2 Tell us a little about your faith and your relationship with God.

I am a convert to Catholicism, having entered the Church in 2018. My journey began in a very unexpected way. After a hospitalization in 2017 that truly rocked both my world and my family's, I found myself seeking something deeper, steadier—Someone steadier. I entered RCIA that September. By God's grace, I was released from the hospital on Easter Sunday, and I was confirmed the following Easter. Even in suffering, the Lord was so gentle and so present.

Looking back, I can see that He had always been quietly planting seeds. As a child, I spent most summers in Italy visiting my mother's family. My great-aunt was a cloistered nun, and we visited her often.

“EVEN IN SUFFERING, THE LORD WAS SO GENTLE AND SO PRESENT.”

JACKIE CENTAMORE
WIFE, MOM, SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR, LOVING SERVANT OF GOD



Jackie Centamore knows that God's timing is best :)

What stays with me isn't so much what was said, but the joy. The light in her face—especially in her eyes—along with the Mother Superior and the other sisters who would come out to greet visitors. There was a peace and joy that felt otherworldly, yet completely real. I didn't have language for it then, but I do now.

When I married my husband, I agreed that we would raise our children Catholic. He never once pressured me to convert. He simply trusted the Lord. His faith is steady and deeply rooted, and he knew better than to interfere with God's timing. In hindsight, that patience was such a gift. The Lord was working—

See JACKIE, NEXT PAGE ➡

JACKIE ††††††††††

➔ Continued from **PREVIOUS PAGE**

walk with others through prayer, presence, and encouragement, and to extend that care outward by serving those in need. My desire is to reflect God's love in both small, everyday moments and tangible acts of compassion, helping others encounter Christ in their lives.

8 We already know you love Saint Francis. Do you have another favourite Saint? Why does that Saint appeal to you?

Some of my favorite saints are Saint Teresa of Ávila and Saint Faustina. I have a deep love for the Divine Mercy message and chaplet, which has become very dear to my heart. After my conversion, I began my faith journey with Saint Teresa's The Interior Castle, and through her writings, I discovered the beauty of the contemplative life and the Carmelite tradition. This led me to the Ávila Institute, where I explored Dan Burke's teachings and, over a 40-week journey with the 19th Annotated, discerned God's call to deepen my own prayer life and serve others by enrolling in Divine Mercy University's two-year program to become a Spiritual Director.

9 If you would like to, please name some other favourite Saints.

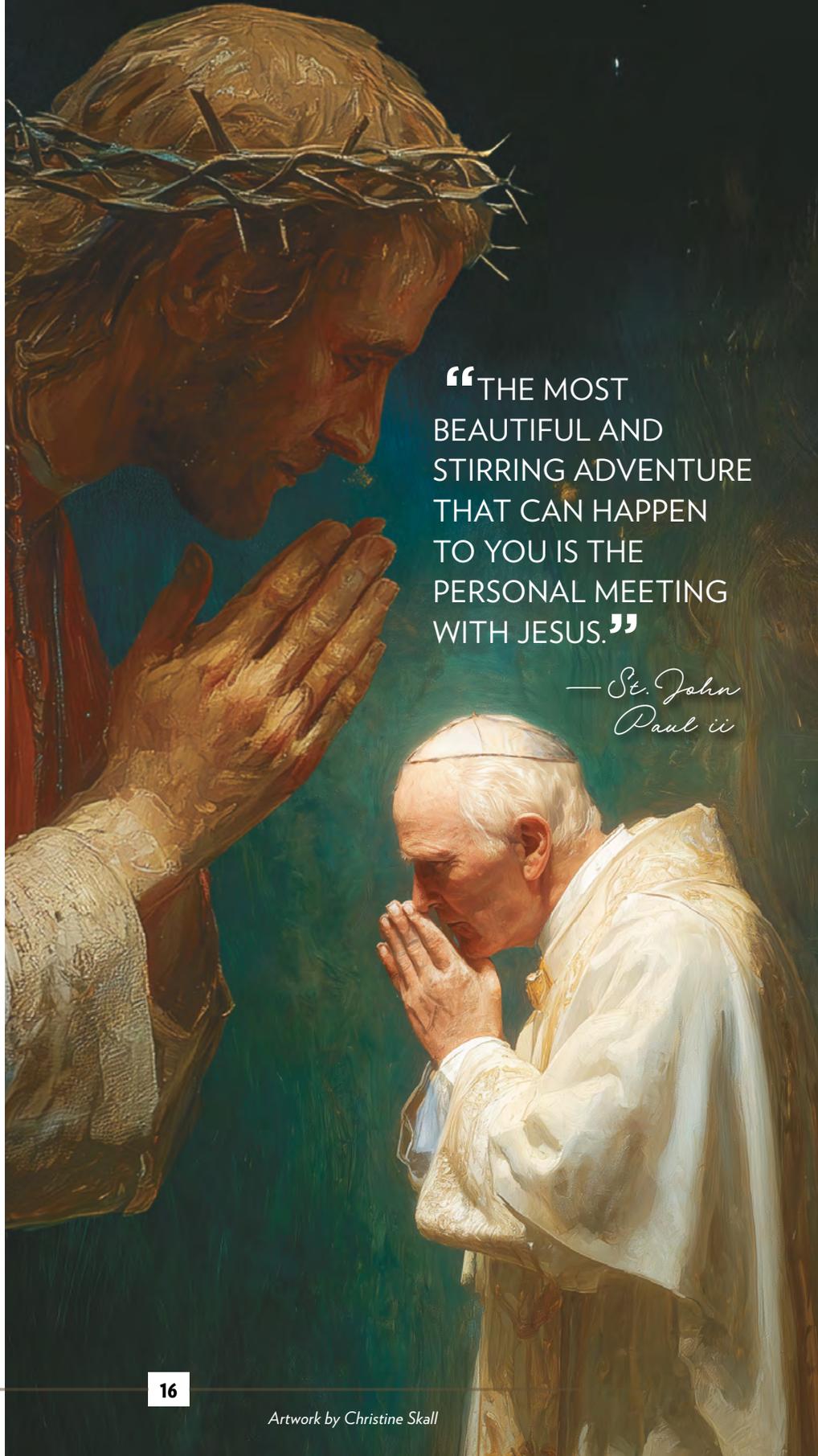
Pope St John Paul 2 — Divine Mercy Sunday!!

10 Share a favourite quote from one of the Saints that has meant a lot to you.

"Let us begin again, for up until now we have done nothing."

This quote from St Francis reflects his humility and daily conversion something that I strive for every minute of every day. The idea that every day is a fresh start to love God more fully is comforting to my soul.

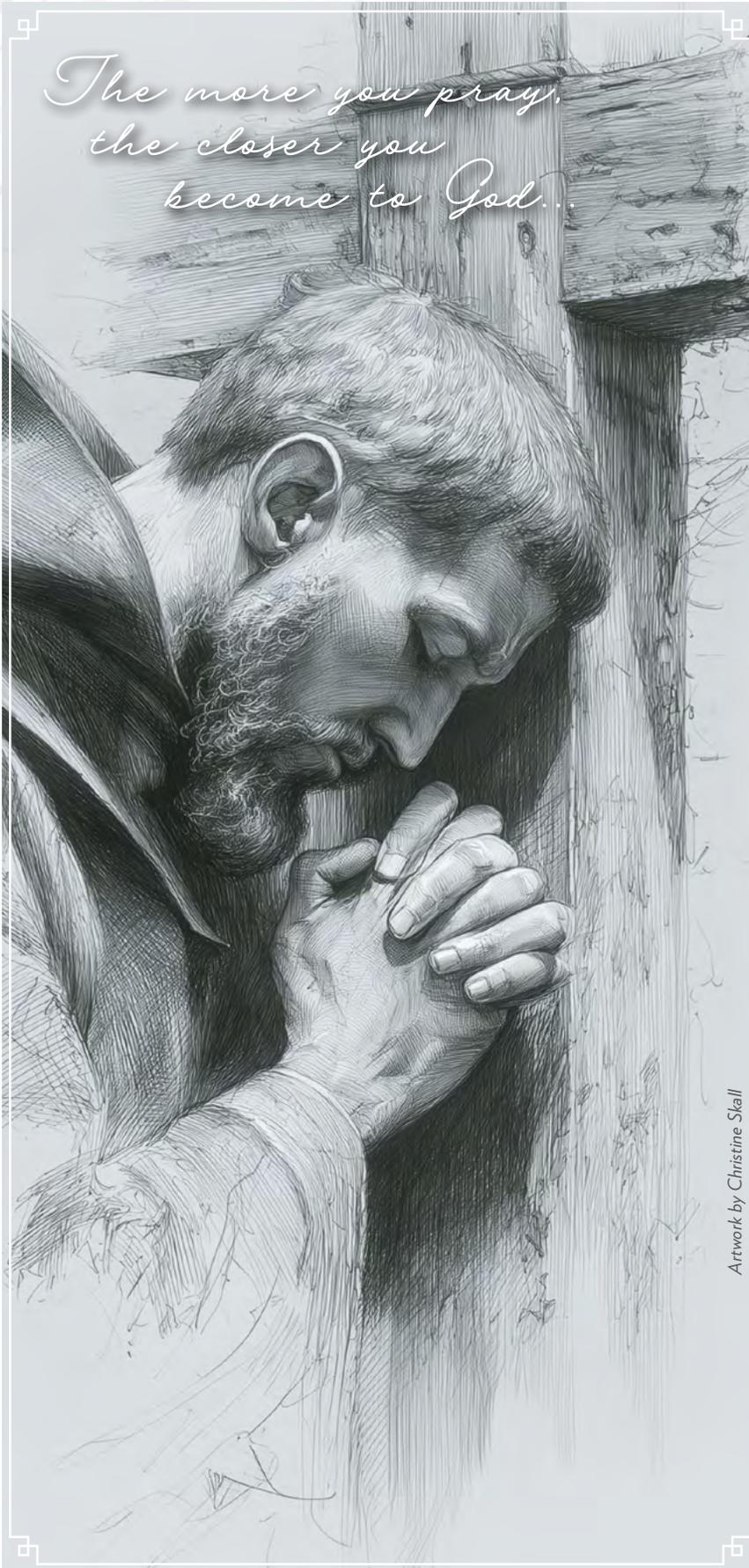
— ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI 



“THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND STIRRING ADVENTURE THAT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU IS THE PERSONAL MEETING WITH JESUS.”

— St. John Paul II

*The more you pray,
the closer you
become to God.*



Artwork by Christine Skall

PRAYER ++++++

➔ *Continued from* **PAGE 1**

St. Francis of Assisi taught that “*praying always*” means turning all of life into a constant wordless awareness of God’s presence, rather than just reciting vocal prayers alone. He emphasized finding God in nature, offering spontaneous, silent prayers during daily activities, and letting actions of love and poverty act as a living prayer all day long. Saint Francis did not provide a step-by-step manual on “*how*” to pray always, but he lived a life where prayer was inseparable from thought, word and action. His approach was to personally become a living prayer.

The more you pray, the closer you become to Jesus (to God) & the more you trust in Him, and the closer you become to Jesus, the more you become aware of His Beautiful Presence, and aware that He is there all the time RIGHT next to you, every second of every day. Once you start to become fully aware of His Presence, you will never ever feel lonely again, and you will start to experience His sweetest Love and Peace in a profound way.

See **PRAYER, NEXT PAGE** ➔➔

“ THIS, THEN,
IS HOW YOU
SHOULD PRAY:
‘OUR FATHER
IN HEAVEN,
HALLOWED BE
YOUR NAME.’ ”

MATTHEW 6:9

PRAYER ††††††††

➔ *Continued from*
PREVIOUS PAGE

to my usual prayer routines and, as a result, I have always bounced back and been even stronger than before, thanks be to Our Most Loving Father.

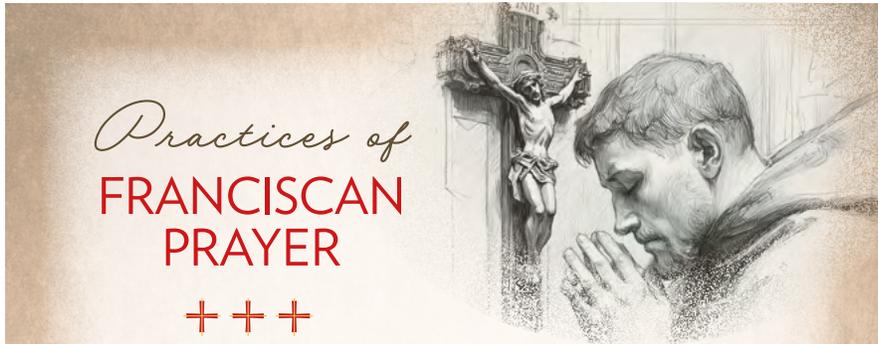
St. Ignatius of Loyola also recommended that an Examen be part of daily prayer, and this is especially beneficial when done at the end of day, before sleep. This involves reflecting on where God was present or not present throughout the day, and asking forgiveness for faults and sins, and being committed to doing better the next day, always with God's help.

ALL TIMES AND ALL THINGS CAN BE PRAYER

All times and all things can be prayer. There is a time for quiet meditation and a time for crying and pleading to God to make his presence known. And most of all, there is the response to God's grace of simply being present in the moment. It sounds simple enough, but it takes a willingness to recognize that God is present in all of creation, and also that Jesus is right next to us at every second of every day. Whether I'm sitting before the Eucharist in the tabernacle, or watching a beautiful sunrise, or seeing a teardrop fall from a friend's face as they experience grief... as long as I am aware of God throughout the day and reaching out to Him with interior greetings, acts of love, or thanking Him... then I am praying. And this will keep me close to Our Lord, where each of us belong.

May God bless each of you, and your loved ones, in a most special and beautiful way. ✚

1. From "AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVOUT LIFE" by Saint Frances De Sales.



Practices of FRANCISCAN PRAYER



KEY PRINCIPLES OF FRANCISCAN PRAYER

- + **BECOME" PRAYER:** Francis aimed not just to say prayers, but to become a living, walking prayer, offering every breath and heartbeat to God.
- + **SPONTANEOUS HEARTFELT MOMENTS:** As you feel moved or inspired by God's goodness in creatures or daily tasks, offer silent, wordless prayers in response.
- + **ACTIONS AS PRAYER:** Francis exemplified a life where actions speak louder than words—a "*preach the Gospel at all times, use words if necessary*" approach—acting with love, poverty, and joy.
- + **THE LORD'S PRAYER:** He left specific, heartfelt instructions to meditate deeply on the Lord's Prayer (Our Father).
- + **FINDING GOD EVERYWHERE:** He believed in finding God in the "messiness" of life, seeing God as the "*Most High, all-powerful, good Lord*" in every circumstance.

PRACTICAL STEPS FROM THE FRANCISCAN PATH

- + **START WITH THE HEART:** Be aware of your inner state, and when moved by joy, sorrow, or wonder, radiate that feeling back to God in silent praise.
- + **SEE GOD IN OTHERS:** Notice God's goodness and mercy in other people and creatures, and offer silent prayers for them.
- + **USE SHORT, SIMPLE PRAYERS:** Utilize short phrases like "*My God and my All*" or the Peace Prayer to keep focused on God throughout the day.
- + **BALANCE ACTION WITH SOLITUDE:** While living in the world, regularly retreat to quiet, solitary places for deeper contemplation.
- + **BE PRESENT:** Simply being present to the moment is a form of responding to God's grace.

HERE IS HOW ST. FRANCIS TAUGHT OTHERS TO MAINTAIN A CONSTANT SPIRIT OF PRAYER

- + **SUBORDINATE EVERYTHING TO THE SPIRIT:** In his Rule, Francis instructed friars that while they should work hard to avoid idleness, they must *never "extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion,"* to which all temporal things must be subordinate.
- + **CREATE AN INNER "DWELLING PLACE":** He exhorted his followers to make a "home and dwelling place within" for the Lord. This allowed him to remain in God's presence whether he was preaching to crowds or traveling alone.
- + **PRAYER THROUGH DEEDS:** Though the famous quote "*Preach the Gospel at all times; when necessary, use words*" is widely attributed to him, it reflects his core belief that one's life should be a "*silent sermon*".
- + **FIND GOD IN CREATION:** Francis used the natural world—the sun, moon, and even death—as prompts for prayer, seeing every creature as a "*brother*" or "*sister*" that reflected the Creator's beauty.
- + **THE "MY GOD AND MY ALL" ATTITUDE:** His biographers note that he would often spend entire nights repeating the phrase "*My God and my All*," a practice of Centering Prayer that simplified his focus to God alone.
- + **FORMAL FOUNDATIONS:** To sustain this constant awareness, he used traditional anchors like the Liturgy of the Hours and deep meditation on the Lord's Prayer.

Artwork by Christine Skall

[PRAYERS & DEVOTIONS]



POPE
LEO XIV

The Pope's PRAYER INTENTIONS

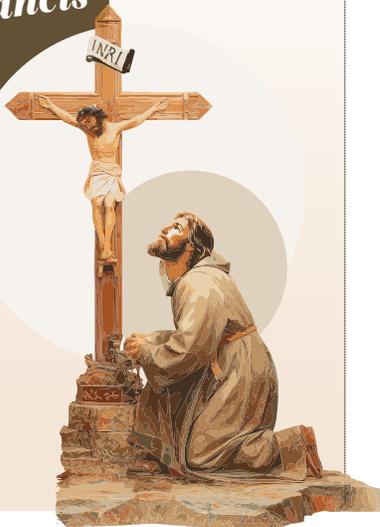
FOR DISARMAMENT AND PEACE

Let us pray that nations move toward effective disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, and that world leaders choose the path of dialogue and diplomacy instead of violence.

— SOURCE: USCCB.ORG

“ Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love. ”

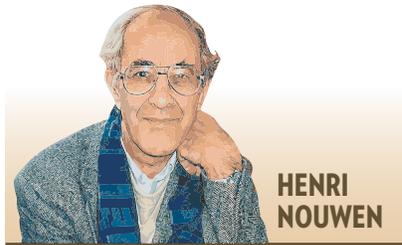
A Quote from
St. Francis



— HENRI NOUWEN SPIRITUALITY —

Artwork by Christine Skall

Making Our True Home in HIM



HENRI
NOUWEN

DAILY MEDITATION

Jesus travels with us and continues to reassure us every time we are driven to panic or tempted to destroy others or ourselves. And as he travels with us, he teaches us how to live in the house of love. It is far from easy to grasp his teaching because we keep looking at the high waves, the heavy winds, and the roaring storm. We keep saying: “Yes, yes.... but look!” Jesus is a very patient teacher. He never

stops telling us where to make our true home, what to look for, and how to live. When we are distracted, we focus upon all the dangers and forget what we have heard. But Jesus says over and over again: “*Make your home in me, as I make mine in you. Whoever remains in me, with me in them, bears fruit in plenty ... I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete*” (John 15:4, 5, 11). Thus, Jesus invites us to an intimate, fruitful, and ecstatic life in his home, which is ours too.

— SOURCE: LIFESIGNS: INTIMACY, FECUNDITY, AND ECSTASY IN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE, by Henri Nouwen

“ ...WHILE THEY WERE SAILING HE FELL ASLEEP. A WINDSTORM SWEEPED DOWN ON THE LAKE, AND THE BOAT WAS FILLING WITH WATER, AND THEY WERE IN DANGER. THEY WENT TO HIM AND WOKE HIM UP, SHOUTING, “MASTER, MASTER, WE ARE PERISHING!” AND WAKING UP, HE REBUKED THE WIND AND THE RAGING WAVES; THEY CEASED, AND THERE WAS A CALM. ”

— LUKE 8:23-24

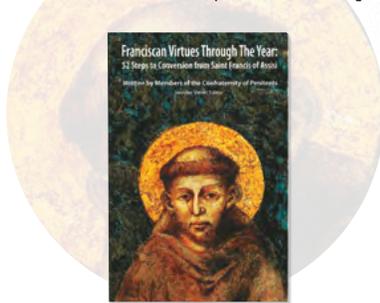
[BOOK STUDY]

FRANCISCAN
VIRTUES
THROUGH
THE YEAR

PART 8:
EMPATHY

52 Steps to Conversion
from St. Francis of Assisi

[EDITOR'S NOTE. "Confraternity of Penitents", the publisher of "Franciscan Virtues Through The Year", has kindly given us permission to "republish" this book in our newsletter. We are publishing "one virtue" (one chapter) a month in each newsletter until we have completed the book. If you missed Part One please feel free to go back to the Fraternity's August Newsletter so that you can catch up. If you would like to purchase the book so that you can read it in its entirety it is available from Amazon.com and franciscanthirdorderpenitents.com.]



Artwork by Christine Skall

8

VIRTUE
EMPATHY

REGARDING
EMPATHY...

SCRIPTURE: "For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am

not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I

might by any means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings."
(1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

WRITINGS OF ST. FRANCIS

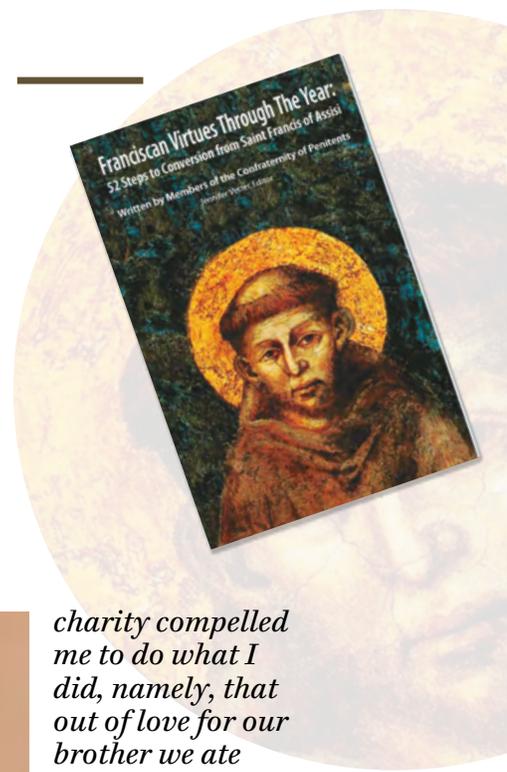
Blessed is the man who bears with his neighbor according to the frailty of

See EMPATHY, NEXT PAGE ➔

[BOOK STUDY cont.]

➔ Continued from PREVIOUS PAGE

VIRTUE 8 EMPATHY Cont.



his nature as much as he would wish to be borne by him if he should be in a like case. (Admonitions 18)

INCIDENT FROM THE LIFE OF SAINT FRANCIS

One time in the very beginning, that is, at the time when blessed Francis began to have brothers, he was staying with them at Rivo Torto. One night, around midnight, when they were all asleep in their beds, one of the brothers cried out, saying: "I'm dying! I'm dying!" Startled and frightened all the brothers woke up.

Getting up, blessed Francis said: "Brothers, get up and light a lamp." After the lamp was lit, blessed Francis said: "Who was it who said, I'm dying?"

"I'm the one," the brother answered.

"What's the matter, brother?" blessed Francis said to him. "Why are you dying?"

"I'm dying of hunger," he answered.



So that that brother would not be ashamed to eat alone, blessed Francis, a man of great charity and discernment, immediately had the table set and they all ate together with him. This brother, as well as the others, were newly converted to the Lord and afflicted their bodies excessively.

After the meal, blessed Francis said to the other brothers: "My brothers, I say that each of you must consider his own constitution, because, although one of you

may be sustained with less food than another, I still do not want one who needs more food to try imitating him in this. Rather, considering his constitution, he should provide his body with what it needs. Just as we must beware of overindulgence in eating, which harms body and soul, so we must beware of excessive abstinence even more, because the Lord desires mercy and not sacrifice."

And he said: "Dearest brothers, great necessity and

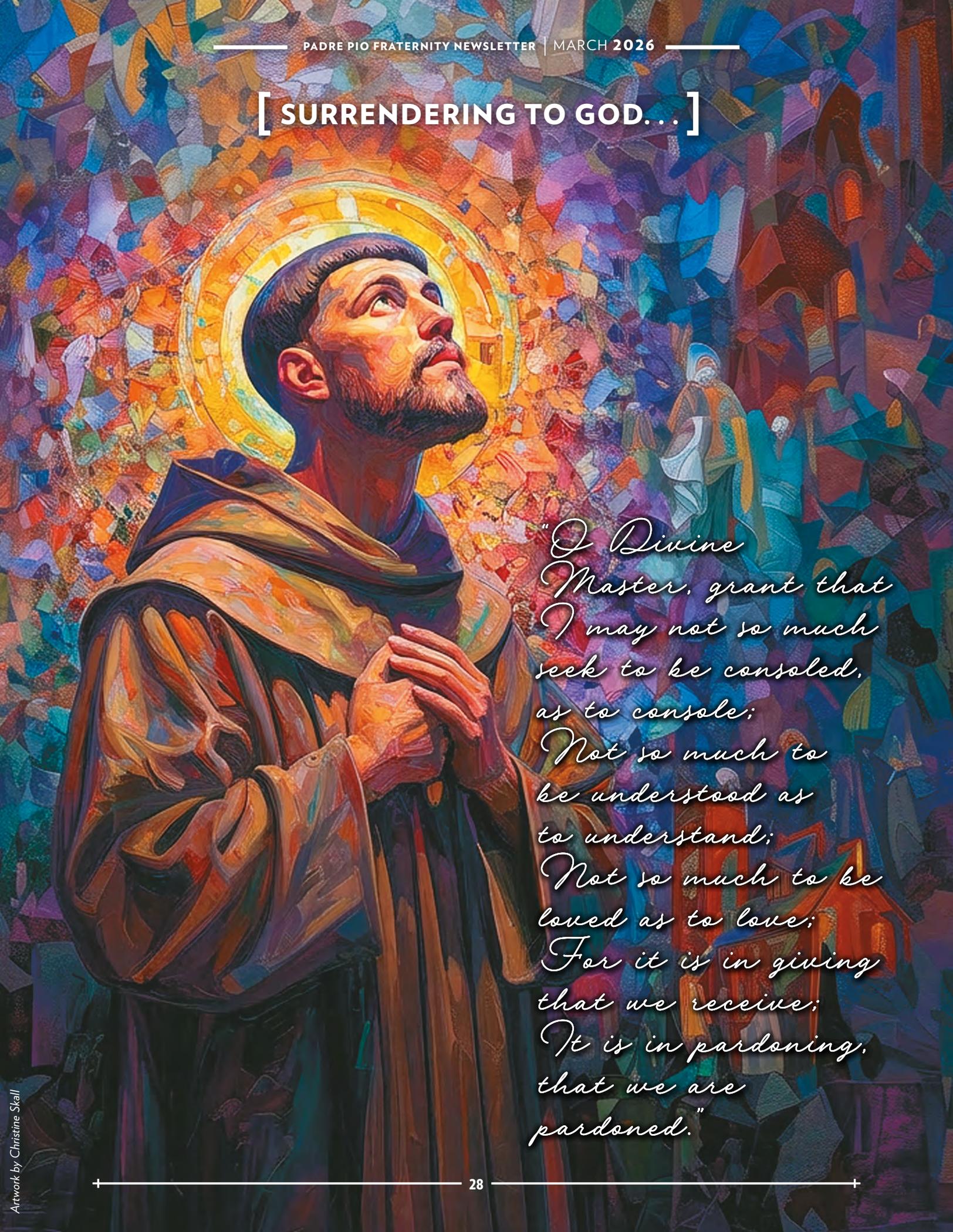
charity compelled me to do what I did, namely, that out of love for our brother we ate together with him, so that he wouldn't be embarrassed to eat alone. But I tell you, in the future I do not wish to act this way because it wouldn't be religious or decent. Let each one provide his body with what it needs as our poverty will allow. This is what I wish and command you." (The Assisi Compilation, 50)

EMPATHY IS A TREMENDOUS VIRTUE TO POSSESS

EMPATHY, THE ABILITY to understand and feel the emotions of the other person, is a tremendous virtue to possess. The Native American proverb, "Never criticize a man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins," puts into concrete terms the virtue of empathy.

See EMPATHY, NEXT PAGE ➔

[SURRENDERING TO GOD...]



"O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console; Not so much to be understood as to understand; Not so much to be loved as to love; For it is in giving that we receive; It is in pardoning, that we are pardoned."

[COMPLETE TRUST IN GOD...]

My Dearest Jesus...

*You are my Anchor amidst
troubled waters...*

*You are my Guiding Light
in the storms of life...*

*You are my Rock & Refuge
amidst the turbulent sea...*

*You are my Peace and Calm
in the world of noise...*

*You are my Protector against
all that may harm me...*

*You are my Best Friend...
You always were, You are
and You always will be...*

*You are my ALL
and Everything...*

*Thank You for always
staying right next to me...*

Thank You for Your Love...

I love You Jesus.

**“ NEVER DOUBT THIS [GOD’S LOVE],
WHATEVER MAY HAPPEN TO YOU
IN LIFE. AT EVERY MOMENT, YOU
ARE INFINITELY LOVED... ”**

— ST. JOHN PAUL II

[WHO'S WHO]

GET TO KNOW WHO'S WHO IN OUR FRATERNITY.

EACH AND EVERY MEMBER IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR "FRATERNITY UNIT" AS A WHOLE :)

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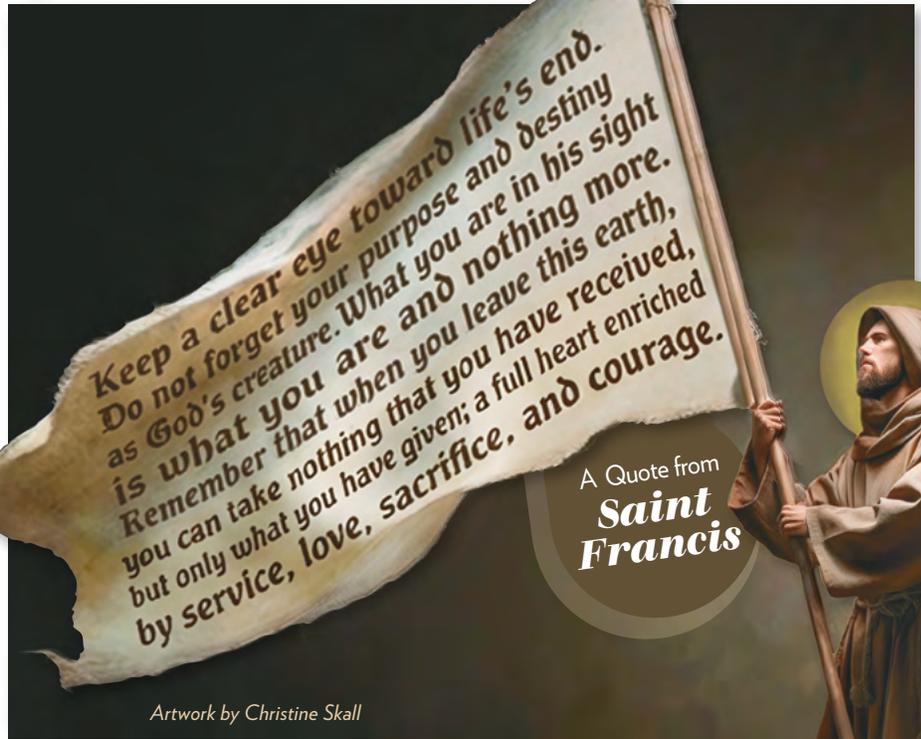
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[JOIN US]

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:

Clare Hall at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church,
11401 Leesville Rd., Raleigh, North Carolina.

DO YOU WANT TO BE MORE INVOLVED IN FRATERNITY LIFE?
Your Fraternity Council is organizing mini committees based on the Four Pillars! Sign up today and have your ideas be heard! Contact Sharon or Rachel for more information. swinzeler@gmail.com or rchlrsn@gmail.com



ATTENTION!

Is there something you would like to have shared with our Fraternity? Send your articles, photographs and non-copyrighted content to have it featured in our monthly newsletter. **Email it to me!** talyiana@gmail.com
Any and all content must be submitted by the 15th of each month at the latest, to be included in the next newsletter.