



VOL. 16, NO. 4

Monthly NEWSLETTER

Secular Franciscan Order of Central North Carolina

PADRE PIO FRATERNITY ofscentralnc.org

APRIL 1, 2026

INCORPORATING SIMPLICITY TO MAKE ROOM FOR GOD

**In the spirit of St. Francis, simplicity
becomes a path of freedom and joy**

At our March 22 gathering, Shannon Brooks, OFS, offered a rich reflection on Part 1 of *The Gift of Simplicity*, inviting us to embrace a way of life deeply rooted in the Gospel and in the spirit of St. Francis.

In a world that often pulls us toward excess and distraction, we were gently reminded that simplicity is not about having less for its own sake, but about making room for God.

Drawing from Scripture, Shannon explored the many facets of simplicity, including formation of the heart and intellect, holy detachment, compassion, humility, nonjudgment, and gratitude. Each of these reflects our Franciscan vocation to live with

See **GATHERING,**
NEXT PAGE ➡



Photo by Christine Skall

Shannon Brooks, OFS, offers a rich reflection on Part 1 of *The Gift of Simplicity*, inviting us to embrace a way of life deeply rooted in the Gospel and in the spirit of St. Francis.

TABLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Share how you weave one of these virtues into daily practice. [The virtues discussed are: HEART, INTELLECT, DETACHMENT, COMPASSION, HUMILITY, SILENCE, NON-JUDGING, GRATITUDE]
- 2 What insight from today's formation session or our group's discussion really hit home for you?

GATHERING

➡ Continued from **PREVIOUS PAGE**

an undivided heart, centered on Christ and attentive to the presence of God in all things.

This call resonates strongly with the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, which invites us in Article 4 to “*go from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel.*” Simplicity helps us do just that. By clearing away what distracts or divides us, we become more able to hear the Word, to recognize Christ in others, and to respond with love.

Likewise, Article 11 reminds us to “*simplify our material needs*” and to be mindful of our responsibilities toward all of creation. In this way, simplicity becomes not only a personal discipline but a witness that reflects trust in God’s providence and solidarity with the poor.

In the spirit of St. Francis, simplicity becomes a path of freedom and joy. As he counseled his brothers, *"Keep yourselves free from all anxiety and care, so that you may serve the Lord God with a pure heart and a clear mind."* By letting go of what weighs us down, we become more available to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

May we carry this reflection into our daily lives, striving to live the Gospel in the manner of St. Francis with simplicity, humility, and joyful hearts, always making space for the Spirit to lead us.

Announcements regarding upcoming events were also shared. As a fraternity, we continue to journey together in prayer, formation, and fellowship.

Next month our gathering will feature the welcome Rite of Candidacy for our aspirants and a short formation session. We will resume discussing *The Gift of Simplicity* in May.

We encourage everyone to stay connected by visiting our calendar page:

<https://ofscentralnc.org/padre-pio-calendar-of-events/calendar/>

“KEEP YOURSELVES
FREE FROM ALL
ANXIETY AND
CARE, SO THAT YOU
MAY SERVE THE
LORD GOD WITH A
PURE HEART AND
A CLEAR MIND.”

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

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.

Happy BIRTHDAY



APR.
19



RICHARD
HAMMER, OFS

APR.
20



JEANETTE
COTTONE, OFS

APR.
29



MARIANNE
NORRIS, OFS

APR.
24

SERVE LUNCH AT THE ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY at

Saint Francis of Assisi

11:30am-2:30pm on Friday,
April 24. (We don't have to cook;
we will put out food and drinks.)
Please sign up on Sign-Up Genius.
➔ St. Francis of Assisi Church,
11401 Leesville Rd., Raleigh, NC
27613. www.stfrancisraleigh.org.
919-847-8205.

ONGOING
APR.
25➔

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:** 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.

ONGOING
APR.
26➔

PADRE PIO FRATERNITY GATHERINGS

These are the upcoming regular monthly Padre Pio Fraternity gatherings on the **4th Sunday of each month.** The upcoming gathering on Sunday, April 26, will feature a visit from members of the St. Thomas More Fraternity, Wilmington. They are making a pilgrimage to St. Francis of Assisi Church for the

Year of St. Francis. **UPCOMING GATHERING DATES:** 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.

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

See EVENTS, NEXT PAGE ➔

**WATCH THIS
SPACE FOR
UPCOMING
BIRTHDAYS
AND
PROFESSIONS
EACH MONTH**

EVENTS ††††††††††††

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PREVIOUS PAGE

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.

OCT 3 TRANSITUS 800th Anniversary of the Transitus of St. Francis of Assisi Transitus refers to the celebration of St. Francis of Assisi's passage from earthly life to eternal life. The word "transitus" is Latin for "passage" or "crossing". Transitus is a significant event marking the end of St. Francis's and will be observed October 3rd, the vigil of his feast day. At the end of the Transitus service, professed Secular Franciscans will have the opportunity to renew our commitment to the Gospel way of life. ➔ Immaculate Conception Church, 810 W Chapel Hill Street, Durham, NC 27701, 919-682-3449



VISIT

ofscentralnc.org/padre-pio-calendar-of-events/calendar

TO KEEP UPDATED WITH
NEW AND ONGOING EVENTS.

[MEET A FELLOW FRANCISCAN]

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

Rosemary Czejkowski

God's Goodness has always been present

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

I am the 2nd of 5 children of an Irish Catholic family from Pittsburgh PA. However, I have lived in Raleigh since I was 13 when my family moved here for my father's job and it has been the place which has most formed me. Raleigh was very small then, and the number of Catholics in Raleigh was even smaller. Growing up here, my family attended Our Lady of Lourdes parish and it was there I met my husband Joe. After our first 2 children we moved our growing family to St Francis and welcomed 2 more. We have parented our 4 children to adulthood and have acquired a new and wonderful role in the last 5 years as grandparents to 2 lovely little ladies. My granddaughters call me "Bud" and they are the joy of my life.

Wife, mother and grandmother are my favorite and most enriching roles. I have also had the privilege of being a Physical Therapist serving and assisting folks in rehabilitation from hospital to health and home. I also had the privilege to home-school our children until high school and I treasure the time we had to learn and grow together. Currently, I am a retired

PT, babysitter and support to our child with special needs as well as an active volunteer at St Francis.

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

I was blessed to be raised in a faithful Catholic family. Full, active and conscience participation was modeled and encouraged for as long I can remember. My parents didn't just attend mass, we were fully part of parish life. My parents prioritized catholic school education so I was blessed to have my faith nurtured as part of my education through high school. Our move to Raleigh was significant in our faith journey. The diocese was small but growing -so there were many

“IT WAS ON A RETREAT THAT I ENCOUNTERED THE LOVE OF JESUS IN A NEW AND PROFOUND WAY.”

ROSEMARY CZEJKOWSKI
WIFE, MOTHER,
GRANDMOTHER,
PHYSICAL THERAPIST



opportunities to be involved. As a junior in high school, I was invited to participate in and later team a Search retreat. It was on this retreat that I encountered the love of Jesus in a new and profound way, and I was changed. It was a head to heart moment. All the head knowledge I had previously had was suddenly inflamed and I was set on a path as a seeker. Personal prayer and studying the bible were new to me and profoundly influenced by the many faithful Christians God placed in my circle of influence, with only a few of these being Catholic. Growing up Catholic in the south was a lesson in apologetics. I had to learn why I was catholic and I am

See ROSEMARY, NEXT PAGE ➡

ROSEMARY

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grateful for the challenge this gave me. Throughout my life God has been so present to me, always surrounding me with so many godly, faithful people to nurture and encourage me to grow deeper in love with God. I can look back and see how God was using all of it to continue growing me to become the fullness of who God had created me to be. Through bible studies, prayer groups, retreats and deep abiding friendships rooted in faith, I continue to be formed, grown, stretched, and blessed.

While I can see all the ways God has invited me to encounter all the good He has in store for me, I would be remiss to overlook the presence of God's goodness that has been present to me in the darkest and most challenging times of my life. God and I had some serious words when our youngest was born with Down syndrome and needed open heart surgery. Wayward young adults and the loss of my father-in-law and then parents were times of deep loss and grieving that were also moments of grace because God was present in each of them. And when I was not sure of God's presence, it was the people of God who held me up, walked quietly beside me, and witnessed over and over to me the love of God that continues to be my in life.

3 Why did you feel called to become a Secular Franciscan?

Looking back, I can see that I wasn't sure at first that being a Secular Franciscan's was a calling for me. I love our Franciscan parish and through the Friars who ministered in our community for years, I came to know and love St. Francis. I certainly considered myself a Franciscan at heart but didn't consider it a vocational calling. I knew and admired many people who were seculars but I wanted

“BEING A PART OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN COMMUNITY AFFORDS ME FELLOWSHIP AND COMMUNITY WITH MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE A HEART TO SEEK AFTER JESUS CHRIST...”

ROSEMARY CZEJKOWSKI
WIFE, MOTHER,
GRANDMOTHER,
PHYSICAL THERAPIST

to follow Jesus, not Francis. I was invited by people whom I admire very much to come and explore more about it, and through this formation experience I have come to understand how much my desire to follow in the footsteps of Christ is mirrored in how Francis sought and tried to be totally Christ-like. When I learned about Saint Clare and her life, it deepened the calling within me. Clare has become my spiritual model and intercessor.

4 What stage are you at in your Franciscan journey? (Are you a visitor, orientee, inquirer, candidate or are you already professed and when?)

I am currently a candidate. If I am accepted and complete the formation then profession will be this June.

5 What do you feel that you gain from being a part of the Secular Franciscan community?

Being a part of the secular Franciscan community affords me fellowship and community with men and women who have a heart to seek after Jesus Christ, following the charisms and the rules laid out by St Francis that bring joy. I am astounded by the gifted and faithful people who are humble enough to recognize that they are on a journey and I seek to learn and understand from all of them. It is a beautiful witness and model for me in my life.

6 What do you feel that you can offer to the Secular Franciscan community?

I have been praying about how my gifts can be used as part of our Secular Franciscan group I have been involved in many ministries at St. Francis and in the diocese, mostly focused around family life and marriage. Currently I am co-leader of our Womens Ministry. I have been involved in retreats, both speaking and planning, so maybe I will have some gifts to offer the formation team. I love the opportunities available to be part of the apostolates and to serve at Oak City Cares.

7 What do you feel, as a Franciscan, that you can offer to others out there?

Through formation and preparation for profession, I've learned so much more about the depth of a Franciscan's life — how to seek Christ and be open to receiving the graces that are available to me through faith, Sacraments, and my

See ROSEMARY, NEXT PAGE ➔

ROSEMARY ++++++

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formation, allowing Franciscan spirituality to influence all parts of my life. Bringing the spirit of Francis to the Women's Ministry, to the Youth Group, and to my Prayer Group will be ways to live out this call.

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

As part of formation we had to learn more about St. Clare and she has become a new role model and intercessor for me. I loved coming to know how she pursued her vocation wholeheartedly, without compromise, and as a stunning example of servant leadership. She is the newest saint to captivate my heart but there are so many saints who I consider part of my team.

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

First and second are the Blessed Mother Mary and her most holy spouse St. Joseph who I have consecrated my life to. Some other favorite saints are: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton who has journeyed with me since my confirmation; St. Catherine of Siena whose writings and bold spirit encourage me; St. John Paul II whose teachings and witness have shaped me and led me to many ministries; St. Mother Theresa who has taught me to pray and serve; St. Therese of Lisieux who, in her "Story of a Soul", has taught me simple acceptance of God's love and the great importance of offering every big and little task of the day to God; Servant of God Catherine DeHueck Doherty whose teachings and writings have formed many godly women and who poured life into me through the Madonna House Apostolate. I could go on but the list is almost inexhaustible. I love the saints !



Rosemary and Joe Czejkowski

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

"Do whatever He tells you." (Jn 2 :5)

– THE BLESSED MOTHER

"We must fight our battle between fear and hope in the knowledge that hope is always the stronger, because He who comes to our help is almighty."

– ST> FRANCES DE SALES

"Until you know deep inside that Jesus thirsts for you, you cannot begin to know who He wants to be for you and who He wants you to be... He knows your weaknesses, He wants only your love, wants only the chance to love you."

– ST. MOTHER THERESA



[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 :)

FRATERNITY COUNCIL

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MINISTER

Sharon Winzeler, OFS

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Theresa Flynn, OFS

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Christine Skall

FACEBOOK

Rachel Bongiorno, OFS

OAK CITY CARES

Mary Cockrill, OFS

Marianne Norris, OFS

ON-GOING FORMATION TEAM

Mercedes Cooley, OFS

PRAYER REQUESTS

Deacon Phil Rzewnicki, OFS

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Maureen Copan, OFS

WEBSITE:

Sharon Winzeler, OFS

HOSPITALITY

Valorie Davis, OFS

Nkem Okereke, OFS

Ann Wester, OFS

SUNSHINE

Laurie Wilburn, OFS

WEBSITE: OFSCentralNC.org

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

[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 rchlrbnsn@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.