

Padre Pio Fraternity

Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region

On-Going Formation



Mary Ellen McGuire, director of Justice and Peace at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Community, recently offered a thoughtful presentation on *Dilexi Te* — “I Have Loved You” — an encyclical rooted in the Church’s call to solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, at our gathering on Sunday, May 17.

Drawing from the work begun by Pope Francis and compiled by Pope Leo XIV, the document challenges Catholics to encounter Christ through relationships with those living in poverty.

McGuire emphasized one of the encyclical’s central themes: “The poor are teachers of the Gospel.” Rather than seeing people in poverty merely as recipients of charity, *Dilexi Te* calls the faithful to recognize them as bearers of wisdom, dignity, and the living presence of God. “The poor are our treasure,” she explained. “They are the living face of the Church.”

The presentation explored several key themes of the encyclical, including Pope Leo’s credibility as a moral voice in today’s world and the urgent need for action in the face of widening inequality. McGuire noted that the document offers a strong indictment of indifference among wealthy societies and economic systems that leave many people marginalized or forgotten.

She also highlighted the encyclical’s deep roots in Scripture and Catholic tradition. From the prophets to the teachings of Jesus, care for the poor has always been central to the Gospel message. The document traces the long relationship between the Church and the poor while inviting believers to renew a spirituality of charity grounded in love, humility, and encounter.

McGuire devoted special attention to the example of St. Francis of Assisi, noting that there is an extended passage in *Dilexi Te* dedicated to Francis and his understanding of poverty. St. Francis desired to emulate Jesus, who “made himself poor for us.” For Francis, poverty was not simply the absence of possessions, but a deeply relational way of living — one that created closeness with God and solidarity with others. By embracing simplicity and walking alongside those who (*cont’d, next page*)

(*cont'd*) suffered, Francis sought to mirror Christ's humility, compassion, and complete dependence on God.

A significant portion of the discussion focused on Jesus' identification with the poor and the Church's "preferential option for the poor" — the theological principle that the needs of society's most vulnerable must hold a special place in Christian life and decision-making. McGuire stressed that the Church has an obligation to the poor and weak.

Because the poor have a special place to encounter God, they must be seen as subjects, not objects, of charity. Charity, she explained, is not simply an act of generosity, but a way of living that recognizes the dignity, voice, and sacred worth of every human person.

Participants later gathered in small groups to reflect on questions inspired by the encyclical. Discussions explored whether Pope Leo's words apply equally to voluntary and involuntary poverty, and participants completed statements such as "The poor _____," "The Church _____," and "Poverty results from _____" using themes from *Dilexi Te*.

Groups also discussed what Pope Leo describes as "new forms of poverty," including loneliness, exclusion, displacement, and spiritual isolation in modern society.

Other conversations invited participants to reflect personally and spiritually. Where are we being called to do more? Participants also considered practical and systematic ways to address the root cause of poverty, while examining the ways the encyclical resonates with and challenges Franciscan spirituality and values.

Throughout the presentation and discussions, participants were reminded that the Gospel calls Christians not only to serve the poor, but also to listen, learn, and walk alongside them. In the spirit of *Dilexi Te*, the faithful are invited to move beyond indifference and toward deeper compassion, solidarity, and love.

— Sharon Winzeler, OFS

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Valorie Davis, OFS, Nkem Okereke,
OFS, & Ann Wester, OFS

Holy Father's Intentions for June –

For the Values of Sports

Let us pray that sports be an instrument of peace, encounter and dialogue among cultures and nations, and that they promote values such as respect, solidarity, and personal growth.

Words of Faith by Padre Pio:

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the safest refuge in all trials.

Happy Birthday

Lynn Meserole – June 2

Frank Peluso, OFS – June 12

Rosemary Czejkowski – June 15

Bob Marge, OFS – June 16

Joanne Jacovec, OFS – June 19

Profession Anniversaries

Ann Wester, OFS – June 10, 1985

**Victoria Romero, OFS & Marie Roccoforte, OFS –
June 25, 2016**

**Jeanne Casciere, OFS, Joan Monti, OFS, Phil &
Anna Rzewnicki, OFS, Dave Shick, OFS, Ben &
Gladys Whitehouse, OFS, Mike Oeser, OFS – June
27, 2020**

Reminder:

We will next be serving at Oak City Cares on June 27,
2026

June – Month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

1. Bl. Felix of Nicosia, lay brother, Capuchin religious. d/ 1787
2. Bl. John Pelingotto, Confessor, Franciscan Third Order Secular, d. 1304
3. Bl. Andrew of Spello, Priest, religious of the Franciscan 1st Order, d. 1254
4. St. Francois Caracciolo, Priest, had been a tertiary before founding or joining another religious Institute, d. 1608
5. Bl. Pacific of Cerano, Priest, religious of the Franciscan 1st Order, d. 1482
6. Bl. Lawrence of Villamagna, Priest, religious of the Franciscan 1st Order, d. 1535
7. Bl. Himiliana Cerchi, Virgin, Franciscan Third Order Secular, d. 1246
8. Bl. Nicolas de Gesturi, lay brother, Capuchin religious, d. 1958
9. Bl. Innocent Guz, Priest, Conventual religious, martyr 1940
10. Bl. Edouard Poppe, Priest, Franciscan Third Order Secular, d. 1924
11. Bl. Yolanda of Hungary, Virgin, of the Franciscan 2nd-Order; a "Poor Clare" sister, d. 1298
12. Bl. Yolande (Jolenta) of Poland, Widow, Second Order, d. 1298.
13. St. Anthony of Padua, Priest, religious of the Franciscan 1st Order, d. 1231 Plenary Indulgence for cordbearers
14. Bl. Zephirin Jimenez, Martyr, Franciscan Third Order Secular, d. 1936
15. St. Vincenta Gerosa, Virgin, had been a tertiary before founding or joining another religious Institute, d. 1847, and Saint Mary Bartholomea Capitanio.
16. Bl. Marie-Therese Scherer, Virgin, had been a tertiary before founding or joining another religious Institute, d. 1888
17. Bl. Peter Gambacorti, Confessor, Franciscan Third Order Secular, d. 1435
18. Bl. Guy of Cortona, Priest, religious of the Franciscan 1st Order, d. 1250
19. Venerable Matthew Talbot, Confessor, Third Order, d. 1925
20. Servant of God John Zumarraga, Confessor, First Order, d. 1548
21. Servant of God Leonore Gusman, Virgin, Second Order
22. St. Thomas More, Martyr, Franciscan Third Order Secular, d. 1943
23. St. Joseph Cafasso, Priest, Franciscan Third Order Secular, d. 1860
24. Servant of God Illuminatus of Rieti, Confessor, First Order, d. 1266
25. Bl. Bienvenu de Gubbio, lay brother, religious of the Franciscan 1st Order, d. 1232
26. Bl. Frederick Jassoone, Priest, religious of the Franciscan 1st Order, d. 1916
27. Bl. Marguerite Baeyss, Virgin, Franciscan Third Order Secular, d. 1879
28. St. Barthelemie Capitanio, Virgin, had been a tertiary before founding or joining another religious Institute, d. 1833
29. Sts. Peter and Paul, Holy Day of Obligation, Plenary Indulgence
30. Bl. Raymond Lulle, Martyr, Franciscan Third Order Secular, d. 1315

Fraternity Website:

ofscentralnc.org

Monsignor Wall – A “Second Class Relic”

Msgr. John Wall recently shared a memorable and deeply personal account of his encounter with Padre Pio while he was a seminarian studying at the North American College in Rome at our gathering on Sunday, April 24.

His presentation offered not only a glimpse into the holiness and mystery surrounding St. Padre Pio (1887-1968), but also the warmth, humor, and humanity that many people experienced in his presence.

Msgr. Wall explained that he and two fellow seminarians decided to visit Padre Pio after hearing many stories about him. Upon arriving in Pietrelcina, they contacted an American priest who was living there. What was intended to be a brief visit turned into several hours of listening to stories of extraordinary events and miracles associated with Padre Pio.

The following morning brought an experience Msgr. Wall said he would never forget. The three seminarians were gathered in a crowded sacristy when a sacristan approached them and announced that one person was needed to serve Padre Pio’s Mass. After quickly “throwing fingers” to decide who would serve, Msgr. Wall was chosen.

The Mass proceeded normally at first. Celebrated in Latin, it followed the familiar rhythm Msgr. Wall had known since his days as a young altar server. But everything changed at the consecration. After pronouncing the words over the host — “Hoc est enim Corpus Meum” — Padre Pio elevated the Eucharist and then entered what Monsignor Wall described as a trance-like state. After several moments, he resumed the Mass, only to enter another trance after consecrating the wine. Eventually the liturgy continued as usual, while the congregation — which included local villagers, American servicemen, and bicyclists traveling across the country — watched in reverent silence.

After Mass, the sacristy again filled with people eager to see Padre Pio. Msgr. Wall recalled that he had hidden a camera beneath his surplus but never attempted to take a photograph. As Padre Pio walked through the crowded room, he suddenly stopped in front of the young seminarian, smiling warmly. Then, to Msgr. Wall’s astonishment, Padre Pio began gently patting and playfully slapping his face while speaking rapidly in a dialect he could not understand.

The room reacted immediately. Some Italian women shook their fingers at him while others appeared upset. Msgr. Wall admitted he was completely embarrassed and confused, uncertain what he had done wrong. Padre Pio then walked away — only to return moments later and repeat the playful slaps and mysterious remarks before finally leaving the room.

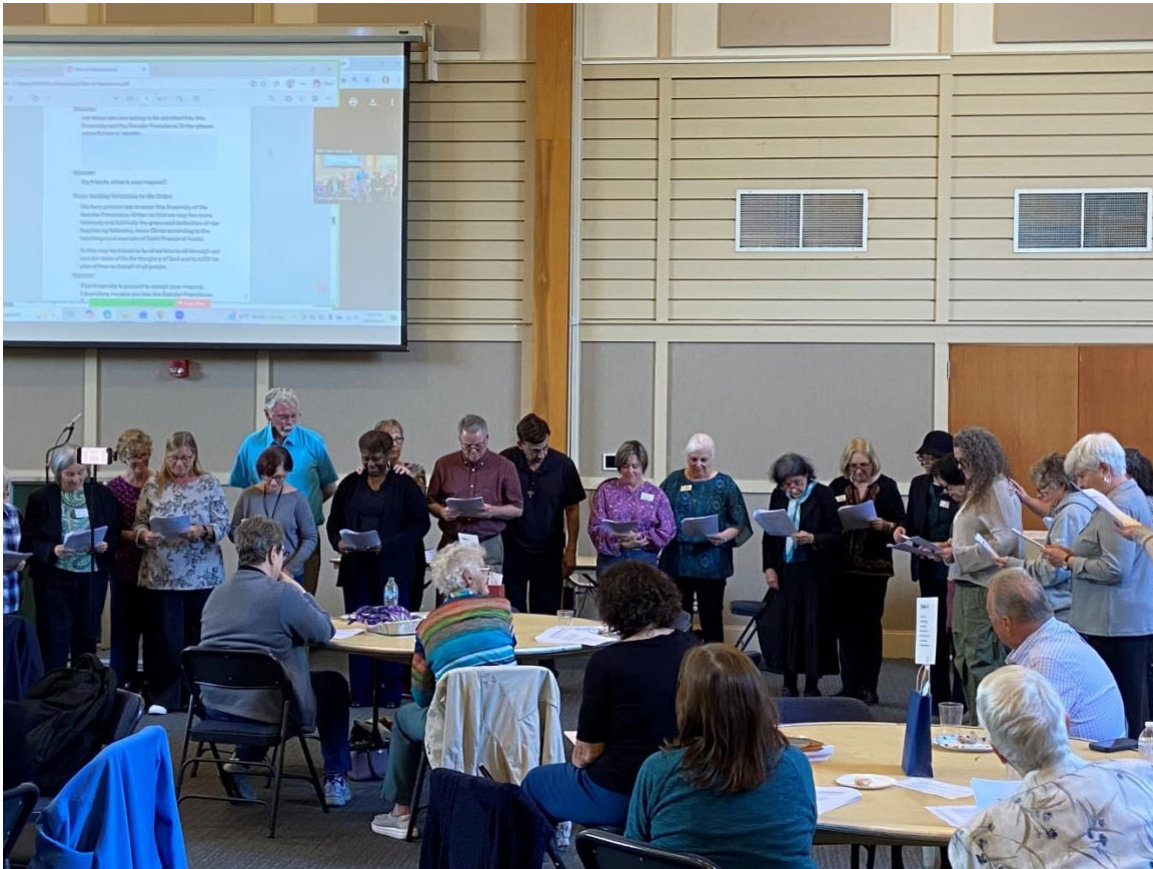
Wanting to understand what had happened, Msgr. Wall later asked the sacristan to translate Padre Pio’s words. The explanation revealed the saint’s mischievous sense of humor. *(cont’d next page)*



(cont'd) At that time, Church law held that striking a priest could result in excommunication. Padre Pio, smiling and teasing the young seminarian, had been saying, "I can hit you, but you can't hit me."

The story brought laughter to those listening to Msgr. Wall's presentation, but it also revealed something deeper about Padre Pio. Known throughout the world for his mystical experiences, the stigmata, and reports of miracles, Padre Pio also possessed a joyful and playful spirit that put people at ease. Through Msgr. Wall's vivid recollections, listeners encountered not simply a legendary saint, but a living, breathing priest whose holiness was accompanied by warmth, humor, and profound humanity.

-Richard Hammer, OFS



On Sunday, April 18, the Padre Pio Fraternity welcomed 11 new candidates. They are Jackie Centamore, OFS; Carla Fostiere, OFS; Michelle Hicks, OFS; Vicki Jack, OFS; Beth Lyon, OFS; Lynn Meserole, OFS; Denise Mickalites, OFS; Rula Osta, OFS; Hui Sharp, OFS; Michael Sharp, OFS; and Lori Zagiba, OFS. These candidates are continuing their formation and discerning their permanent call to the Secular Franciscan Order.



Highlights of the May 8-10, 2026, retreat at St. Francis Springs. The weekend included formation, prayer, fraternity and a celebration of Fr. Steven Kluge's 25th ordination anniversary.

A Joyful Announcement:

Eight members of the Padre Pio Fraternity will make their permanent profession at an 11 a.m. Mass on Saturday, June 20, at St. Francis of Assisi Church, which will take place of our monthly gathering in June. Fr. Hugh Macsherry, OFM, will officiate. A reception will follow the service in Fellowship Hall.

To be permanently professed as a Secular Franciscan means that a person has made a lifelong commitment to live the Gospel according to the spirit and rule of St. Francis of Assisi, while remaining a lay person. A permanently professed member of the Secular Franciscan Order (often called the OFS, from *Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis*) promises to:

- Follow Christ in the example of Francis
- Live the Gospel in daily life — family, work, parish, community, and society
- Practice simplicity, humility, peace, prayer, and care for the poor and creation
- Participate actively in fraternity life and the Church
- Continue ongoing conversion of heart

Profession is not a vow like those taken by friars or sisters (poverty, chastity, obedience in the religious sense). Instead, it is a sacred public promise made before God and the Church to live the Franciscan way of life permanently.



*With great joy, Padre Pio Fraternity
of the Secular Franciscan Order invites you
to join us for the Permanent Profession of*

Courtney Cantrell, OFS
Rosemary Czejkowski, OFS
Eyram Klu, OFS
Stacy Lewis, OFS
Debra Marusak, OFS
Dorothy Ann Pribish, OFS
John Price, OFS
Barbara Redzich, OFS

On Saturday, June 20, 2026
11 a.m. Mass
St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church
11401 Leesville Road
Raleigh, North Carolina 27613
Reception immediately following Mass
in Fellowship Hall