



NEWSLETTER

Padre Pio Fraternity
Secular Franciscan Order of Central North Carolina

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July 2026

Congratulations to Our Newly Professed

On June 20, eight members of our fraternity made their permanent profession at a Mass at St. Francis of Assisi Church, officiated by Fr. Hugh Macsherry, OFM and St. Francis pastor Fr. Chris Koehn with about 100 people in attendance.

In this beautiful mass, along with family and friends of the newly professed, we celebrated their making a lifelong commitment to live the Gospel according to the spirit and rule of St. Francis of Assisi, while remaining lay persons. May we all strive to support these brothers and sisters in their 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

May God bless the newly professed abundantly!

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



Profession June 20, 2026



Padre Pio Fraternity Supports Mission to Nigeria

In January 2027, members of the Padre Pio Fraternity will accompany Fr. Joseph Ita Sam, C.M., on a mission trip to his home village in Nigeria. Traveling with him will be Mary Cockrill, OFS, Rosemary Cjekowski, OFS, and her husband Joe, and Theresa Flynn, OFS.

The mission team will visit communities in Enugu State and Akwa-Ibom State, where they will meet the people of the villages, learn about their daily lives, and work alongside them in a spirit of mutual respect and service. The journey is rooted in the Franciscan call to encounter Christ in every person and to build relationships across cultures.

During the visit, the group will also tour the Vincentian seminary where Fr. Joseph studied for the priesthood, providing a meaningful opportunity to learn more about his vocation and the formation of future priests in Nigeria. Fr. Joseph was formerly at St. Francis of Assisi and is now serving as assistant to the bishop for liturgy in the Raleigh Diocese.

The team hopes to support several initiatives that will have a lasting impact on the local communities. One important goal is to provide vocational training by helping send 12 young men and 12 young women—representing the 12 tribes in Fr. Joseph's village—to vocational schools where they can learn skilled trades and build sustainable futures.

The mission also seeks to improve educational opportunities by purchasing desks, chairs, blackboards, and other essential school supplies. In addition, the team will address food insecurity by supporting a program that provides nightly meals of rice and beans for those in need.

At its most recent meeting, the Padre Pio Fraternity Council voted to support this mission effort, recognizing it as an opportunity to live our Franciscan vocation through solidarity, service, and accompaniment.

You can contribute to the effort by donating to the fraternity and designating it for the Nigeria Mission or by giving money to Mary Cockrill, who is helping coordinate the effort. Please keep Fr. Joseph and the mission team in your prayers as they prepare for this journey. May God bless their travels, strengthen their ministry, and make them instruments of peace and hope for all those they encounter.



Pilgrimage to Immaculate Conception Church

All members of the Padre Pio Fraternity are invited to join their brothers and sisters for a pilgrimage to Immaculate Conception Church in Durham on Wednesday, July 29, beginning at noon. Our pilgrimage will begin with the celebration of Mass, with Fr. Hugh Macsherry, OFM, as the celebrant. Following Mass, Fr. Hugh will speak to us.

This pilgrimage is especially meaningful as Pope Leo XIV has proclaimed a Year of Saint Francis from January 10, 2026, through January 10, 2027, commemorating the 800th anniversary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi. The Jubilee Year extends the graces of the 2025 Jubilee and offers the faithful the opportunity to receive a plenary indulgence.

To obtain the plenary indulgence, the faithful must fulfill the three usual conditions:

- receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- receive Holy Communion
- and pray for the intentions of the Holy Father.

They must also make a pilgrimage to a Franciscan church or place of worship, maintain detachment from all sin, spend time in prayer and pious meditation, and pray for charity, harmony, and the intentions of the Church, including the Our Father, the Creed, and prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Following our pilgrimage to Immaculate Conception, everyone is invited to continue the fellowship by gathering for lunch at a local restaurant in Durham.

Pilgrimages have long been an important part of the Franciscan tradition, inviting us to deepen our relationship with Christ, walk in the footsteps of St. Francis, and strengthen the bonds of fraternity. We hope you will join us for this special day of prayer, learning, and fellowship.

If you have any questions, please contact Merc Cooley, OFS.





Register Now for the 2026 Annual Regional Gathering

All brothers and sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order are warmly invited to attend the 2026 Annual Regional Gathering (ARG), to be held September 11–13 at the Ridgcrest Conference Center in Black Mountain, North Carolina.

This year's inspiring theme is "Into New Life: Celebrating the Easter of St. Francis." The gathering will feature nationally renowned Franciscan scholar Dr. Darleen Pryds as the keynote speaker. Please register no later than July 26 by completing the online registration form:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeIodqraqQohYdSRnCF9eVdBWRQKM FtFLmwwVvfvM-OdMw8Sg/viewform>

Payment in full will be due at check-in on September 11. Lodging Rates:

- Single: \$415
- Double: \$246 per person
- Triple: \$196.33 per person
- Quad: \$171.50 per person

No one should miss this wonderful weekend because of financial concerns. The region offers assistance through the Ed Campbell Scholarship Fund. Scholarship applications are due to Charlie Comberrel by August 15. Scholarship application:

<https://irp.cdn-website.com/cd2a661e/files/uploaded/Ed+Campbell+Scholarship+Request+Form+%28ARG%29.pdf>

In addition, our Padre Pio Fraternity also offers scholarship assistance to members who need help attending the gathering. See any council member about this.

To make the weekend more accessible for everyone, the regional fraternity has arranged several accommodations:

- Rooms have been reserved in the Rhododendron Building, which also houses the conference room and cafeteria. These upstairs rooms are served by an elevator. While only three rooms are fully handicapped accessible, staying in this building will reduce walking for many participants. Be sure to indicate your preference for the Rhododendron Building on the registration form.
- A six-passenger golf cart will be available throughout the weekend to transport participants between the main buildings and the dining hall. If you anticipate using the golf cart, please note this on your registration form so planners can prepare accordingly. A cell phone number will also be available during the gathering to request transportation assistance.
- St. Francis Springs Prayer Center's bookstore will be available during the weekend.



JOIN US!

Upcoming Events

- **Gatherings:** July 26; Aug. 23, (Regional visitation), Sept. 27, Oct. 25, Nov. 22
- **Oak City Cares:** July 25, Aug. 22, Sept. 26, Oct. 24, Nov. 28, and Dec. 26.
- **Pilgrimage** to Immaculate Conception, Durham: Wednesday, July 29. Noon Mass followed by a brief talk by Fr. Hugh and lunch at a local restaurant.
- **Secular Franciscan Quinquennial** July 29-Aug. 1 in Lexington, KY
- **Brown Bag Ministry** on August 15th:
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080A44AFA92F4-64561278-july#/>
- **Annual Fraternity Picnic**, Saturday, Sept. 5, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at Bond Park.
- **Regional Event: ARG** Sept. 11-13 2026 Registration deadline July 26. Sign up at <https://forms.gle/FH3rb3HZifo4ysdX6>. Payment is due upon arrival at Ridgecrest Conference Center, Black Mountain, NC.

Franciscan Jubilee Year News

As our church marks 800 years since Saint Francis' transitus, people celebrate in unique ways near and far.

- St. Francis of Assisi in Raleigh invites all to many events honoring the Jubilee Year.
- Diocese of Raleigh invites all to a Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation.
- Read about a St. Francis of Assisi parishioner's way of honoring St. Francis with his poetry.
- Read about jubilee pilgrimages to Italy.



Blessing of Saint Francis

May the Lord bless you.

May the Lord keep you.

May He show His face to you and have mercy.

May He turn to you His countenance and give you peace.

The Lord bless you.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

July 2 - Chris Peffley, OFS
 July 5 - Victoria Romero, OFS
 July 8 - Doug Thoren
 July 9 - Ann Wester, OFS
 July 10 - Judy Newell, OFS
 July 21 - Eyram Klu, OFS & Maria Marge, OFS



Fraternity Council

Spiritual Assistant:
 Fr. Hugh Macsherry, OFM

Minister:
 Sharon Winzeler, OFS

Vice Minister:
 Rachel Bongiorno, OFS

Formation Director:
 Gladys Whitehouse, OFS

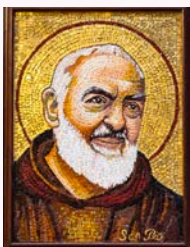
Treasurer:
 Janette Perez, OFS

Secretary:
 Mary Cockrill, OFS

Councilors:
 Travis Bongiorno, OFS
 Anne Evangelista, OFS
 Richard Hammer, OFS

BSSF Region Minister:
 Ellen Ferrone, OFS

Area 5 Councilor:
 Fran Acosta, OFS



*My past, O Lord,
 to your mercy;
 my present,
 to your love;
 my future,
 to your providence!
 ~Padre Pio*

Blessings on your anniversary

Professed 7/12/14 - Maureen Copan, OFS, Suzie Nelson, OFS, Sharon Winzeler, OFS

Professed 7/15/23 - David Abell, OFS, Rachel Bongiorno, OFS, Travis Bongiorno, OFS, Mary Cockrill, OFS, Mercedes Cooley, OFS, Valorie Davis, OFS, Brian Denison, OFS, Anne Evangelista, OFS, Alma Hammer, OFS, Richard Hammer, OFS, Maureen McFadden, OFS, Nkem Okereke, OFS, Janette Perez, OFS, Henry Simms, OFS

Apostolates

JPIC:
 Theresa Flynn, OFS

Website:
 Sharon Winzeler, OFS

Oak City Cares:
 Mary Cockrill, OFS
 Marianne Norris, OFS

Sunshine:
 Laurie Wilburn, OFS

CPO & Fraternity Library:
 Maureen Copan, OFS

Facebook:
 Rachel Bongiorno, OFS

On-Going Formation:
 Mercedes Cooley, OFS

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

Prayer Requests:
 Deacon Phil Rzewnicki, OFS

Newsletter:
 Lori Zagiba

CPO & Fraternity Library:
 Maureen Copan, OFS