



The Seraph Messenger

of St Ann's Fraternity, Green Bay, WI
"My God and my all"

Sept./Oct. Issue 2024

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800th Anniversary of Francis' Stigmata Celebrated



This week, Franciscans around the world commemorated the 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi receiving the stigmata on Sept. 17, 1224, the appearance of the bodily wounds of Christ's crucifixion.

At an audience with members of the Franciscan communities of La Verna, Italy, where St. Francis was staying when he received the wounds of Christ, Pope Francis commemorated the eighth centenary and said the stigmata serves as a reminder of "the pain suffered by Jesus in His own flesh for our love and salvation."

Father Massimo Fusarelli, minister general of the Order of Friars Minor, reflected on the significance of the stigmata for the Franciscan community. "For us Franciscans, the stigmata are both a seal and a new beginning. They are a reminder that at the heart of Francis' life, and our lives, is Jesus Christ above all else," he said. St. Francis, through his intense devotion to Christ, was marked with the wounds of the crucified Jesus, a grace few have received in the history of the Church. These physical marks symbolized St. Francis' profound union with Christ's suffering and his deep humility. Brother Matteo, secretary for the 800th anniversary celebrations emphasized that the stigmata are "a sign that a life spent for the Gospel, even in suffering, bears fruit."

Other upcoming Franciscan 800th Celebrations

- 2025- composition of the *Canticle of the Sun*
- 2026- Transitus of St. Francis

One Secular Franciscan Life



Why am I a Secular Franciscan? It begins with an invitation to join. Not to lessen the movement of the Holy Spirit nor the answer to God's call, but I became a Franciscan because Jeff Gumz invited me. It was subtle, no pressure, non-threatening. He would say to me, "Tom on Thursday we are having a Christmas party. LB is a great cook. Do you want to come?" Once I heard "free food" I was already out the door. Or he would give me a handout on Franciscan spirituality or prayer and say, "Tom, I think you might enjoy reading this and we could discuss it later." These were gentle nudges, subtle invitations to join. One could be more direct but either way for us to grow as a fraternity all of us need to be inviting others to join. It starts with an invitation.

Why do I remain a Secular Franciscan?

I was a Knight of Columbus and enjoyed the male bonding and charity work that this group did, but I sought a place to grow deeper in faith. The Secular Franciscans provided this depth and breath for spiritual growth. The formation stages towards profession (Orientation, Inquiry, Candidacy) gave me a background in Franciscan spirituality and challenged my commitment to Gospel living. The ongoing formation continues to do this. I seek unity with Jesus Christ. The Franciscan walk is my avenue to oneness with Christ (Jn 17:21).

Some of the pillars or foundations of Franciscan spirituality that I try to embrace are poverty, humility, be a peacemaker, see God in all creation animate and inanimate, a balance between the contemplative/prayer) and active ministry and last but not least Franciscan joy. I am not alone on this journey. My Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters inspire and challenge me to be better, more Christ like, to be the best version of myself. I remain a Secular Franciscan because where else can one find such committed and loving people.

Example of Franciscan Joy:

A fellow fraternity member and I made a visit to shut-in OFS member at the nursing home. This shut-in has been bed ridden-paralyzed in lower extremities for many years. At the end of the visit, this bed-ridden OFS member sings us a song as a departing blessing. Pure joy. What a blessing he is. So why do I remain a Secular Franciscan? It is because my Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters lead me closer to Christ. In their example, I am challenged to grow and be more like them, more like Christ. My Franciscan Walk would not be rich and fulfilling if it were not for fraternity. St. Francis formed a community for a reason – we all help each other grow in faith, grow in love, and grow in living the pillars of

Franciscan spirituality. Thank you, St. Ann Fraternity members, for all you do for me. Peace, Tom Koene

Franciscan Reflection on Labor

This reflection is offered in July by Br. Jerome, ofm, an OFS spiritual assistant in the Our Lady of Guadalupe Province.

When I was a child, September was still the start of school, directly after Labor Day. When school districts started to move the start of the school year earlier, some protested because high school students had summer jobs and families had vacations—during which, it was expected, some of the students could still be working at resorts. Originally, the teens would have been working on farms. Still, they should labor.

After I finished school, I heard more and more frequently about schools that required some kind of public service; this was already required in my high school for those who would join the National Honor Society. No surprise that Catholic schools would require some practice of the Gospel that would help someone, but the move increased across the public realm as well.

St. Francis saw the value of work. As Scripture says, “He who will not work, should not eat.” (2 Thessalonians 3:10) Even when he was too ill to work, Francis still *wanted* to work, to contribute to the life of the brothers. Monks through history practice “ora et labora,” prayer and work as twin pillars of their lives. There is a value to work.

The Lord God Himself worked for six days to create the universe. And he saw that it was “very good,” in spite of the eventual failings of certain creatures.

There is a value to work.

Recognizing the value of labor is a big part of the reason for the celebration of Labor Day. For some, it is merely a “day off” for vacations and picnics. But the intent is to stir us to recognize those around us who help bring food from the fields to our table or who make sure that we are safe and clean. From Nurses to Sanitation Workers, so many unglamorous jobs we take for granted still compel many to work even on this day of “vacation” from labor.

Perhaps paying attention can inspire gratitude, and gratitude might help us to respect more those people who are so crucial in our society, yet still so invisible.

Jerome, ofm

For your reflection (choose one and share your reflection with another member of your fraternity):

St. Paul wrote (2 Thessalonians 3:10-11): In fact, when we were with you, we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat. We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a disorderly way, by not keeping busy but minding the business of others." Think about a time when you realized you were just doing busywork, appearing to be busy. What was going on in your heart? Was there "a disorderliness" about your thoughts?

Do you have a spiritual practice to help bring order to your busy-ness, to help yourself work more effectively?

St. Paul also cautions us against appearing to be busy by being busy with the affairs of other people. What business of others is distracting for you? How do you resist the temptation to busy yourself with another person's affairs when they are doing exactly the thing that irritates or distracts you?

How do you plan to (or did you) thank someone for their labor this month?

If you would like, you can email Br. Jerome with any feedback to:

jeromeofm@gmail.com

[St. Ann's Fraternity at Our Lady of Champion](#)

A tree was planted at OLC Shrine last month and blessed by Fr. Bill Stout, OFM, the Priest Moderator/Priest Celebrant at St. Mary's of the Angels, Green Bay. In the spirit of *Laudato Si*, several trees were donated by the fraternity, to continue to beautify the peaceful grounds of *Our Lady of Champion Shrine*. Thanks to all who supported this worthwhile cause!



[Upon Further Reflection](#)

Fr. Pons recently sent this picture as a reflection on Mary of the Angels. I do not know where this

plaque is located but I do not think it is from the Holy Land.



Upcoming Events

-Fraternity Meeting: Saturday, Sept. 21th at 8:30 AM, St. Clare Hall. Please feel free to bring a snack to share.

-Transitus will be Thursday evening. Oct. 3, 2024, beginning at 6 pm, at St. Mary's of the Angels Church. Social in Clare Hall to follow, sponsored by the fraternity. All are invited to attend.

-Celebration for the feast day of St. Francis is at the 8:00 am Mass on Friday, Oct. 4th, 2024 at St. Mary's of the Angels Church. All are also invited to attend.

-Fraternity Meeting: Saturday, Oct. 19th, at 8:30 AM. St. Clare Hall. Please feel free to bring a snack.

Save the Date

The Secular Franciscan Order will celebrate the 800th anniversary of St. Francis' receiving the Stigmata at a national Zoom webinar this fall.

Mark your calendars now: Date: **Sunday, October 6, 2024**
Time: 3PM Eastern/**2PM Central**/1PM Mountain/Noon Pacific

Duration: 75 minutes Our plans include a talk on the Stigmata by Dr. Darlene Pryds, Associate Professor of Christian Spirituality and History at the Franciscan School of Theology, and a panel discussion featuring members of our national leadership. This will provide us with multiple perspectives on how Francis' experience connects to our lives as Secular Franciscans today.

The invitation to register for the Zoom event will be sent out about a month beforehand via our regional ministers and

regional formation directors. If you would like the registration information to be sent directly to you, please go to groups.google.com and request to be added to: "NAFRACentenaryContacts."

Kindly Keep in Prayer

- For fraternity members who no longer are able to be actively involved in fraternity life.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide St. Ann's Fraternity as it goes forward in decision-making and planning regarding relocation.
- Pray for greater peace and unity in our violent and divided society.
- Please continue to pray for a eucharistic renewal in our land and for many graces to continue to flow from the National Eucharistic Congress.
- Ongoing prayers for peace in the Middle East and Ukraine.
- For all fraternity member who are ill and for all sick relatives and friends.

To request prayers on the St. Ann's Fraternity prayer chain please email [Jeff Gumz@jagumz@gmail.com](mailto:Jeff.Gumz@gmail.com) or call Jan Campbell @920-609-3544.



