

# OFS



# ALTAR EVENTS

**NOVEMBER**  
2021

**CONNECTING SECULAR FRANCISCAN  
MEMBERS THROUGHOUT THE REGION**

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**“Celebrating the Year of Saint Joseph” Dec. 8, 2020 – Dec. 8, 2021**

HAPPY  
**Thanksgiving**  
**DAY**  
Blessings

**DEADLINE FOR THE  
DECEMBER ISSUE  
IS NOVEMBER 25<sup>th</sup>**

**IF YOUR FRATERNITY OR PARISH  
HAS PLANNED A GATHERING OR  
A SPECIAL EVENT, PLEASE SHARE  
YOUR INFORMATION FOR E-PUBLICATION  
BY THE 25<sup>TH</sup> OF THE MONTH.**

**Let's come together  
with other Franciscans  
to pray, learn, share,  
and most importantly,  
to gather together  
and socialize with  
one another.**

#### **ADVENT BEGINS: NOVEMBER 28, 2021**

Beginning the Church's liturgical year, Advent (from, "ad-venire" in Latin or "to come to") is the season encompassing the four Sundays (and weekdays) leading up to the celebration of Christmas.

The Advent season is a time of **preparation** that directs our hearts and minds to Christ's second coming at the end of time and to the anniversary of Our Lord's birth on Christmas.

From the earliest days of the Church, people have been fascinated by Jesus' promise to come back. But the scripture readings during Advent tell us not to waste our time with predictions. Advent is not about speculation. Our Advent readings call us to be alert and ready, not weighted down and distracted by the cares of this world (*Lk 21:34-36*).

Like Lent, the liturgical color for Advent is purple since both are seasons that prepare us for great feast days. Advent also includes an element of penance in the sense of preparing, quieting, and disciplining our hearts for the full joy of Christmas.



## OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

November 2021



### OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS



The TROUBADOUR MAGAZINE  
OFS E-VENTS NEWSLETTER

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Dear brothers and sisters in Saint Francis,

Peace and blessings to you!

I am repeating my letter and my plea to you from October.  
Please share your fraternity news.

It has been some time since our last issue and a lot has happened. Much has changed, yet one thing has remained constant— our love of God and our secular Franciscan vocation. Thanks be to God, gatherings are starting anew and event calendars are filling up.

With this issue, we, too are starting anew with our monthly *OFS E-vents* newsletter, available electronically only to all fraternity members. Its purpose will be to improve communications within the entire regional membership. Our mission is to share upcoming gatherings and events planned by your fraternity and your Church parish with one another so no one feels left out or isolated. Send your event information and we will publish your news.

Although most of us have resumed local fraternity meetings, this newsletter will allow us an opportunity to create a greater awareness of events taking place within other fraternities, the OLTAR region, and the local parishes throughout the calendar year. Opportunities where we may come together to pray, learn, share, and most importantly, to gather together and socialize with one another. Not only will improved communications help generate a greater response rate, but it will also serve as inspiration to other fraternities.

To accomplish this, I need your help and cooperation. I ask that you send me your fraternity or parish event information for our publication. Send me the basics; give me the who, what, when, where, why, (and even how) of the event, along with your name and contact information. If I have questions, I'll contact you directly. It's that simple! You may e-mail, text, or call me directly using your preferred contact method to my listing above.

Please send your event information with as much time as possible before the event takes place. The publication deadline for each issue will be the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month. *OFS E-vents* newsletter will be published and sent electronically the 1<sup>st</sup> week of each month.

I look forward to working with each of you and thank you in advance for your support. With many thanks and blessings,

*Anna*

# Keeping Holy Things Handy



**Y**ears ago, I was cleaning my apartment when a strong sense came over me — an absolute certainty that Mary wanted me to have a Miraculous Medal.

I'd never given a thought to the Miraculous Medal before, but the push was so strong that I called my husband and asked him if he would pick one up for me at the local Catholic store on his way home from work, which he kindly did without even questioning my news that the Mother of God wished me to have it.

Once I had the medal, I began to read up on how the visionary, [St. Catherine Laboure](#), was instructed by Mary to have the image struck, and the prayer that surrounded the image,

***“O Mary, conceived without sin,  
pray for us who have recourse to thee,”  
became a prayer that I still utter every day.***

I wore the medal for many years — and have prayed many Miraculous Medal novenas thanks to the constant reminder of its weight upon my breast — until one moment at church, when I felt a shove to part with it that was as strong and certain as had been the call to wear it. I'd stopped into church midday, to pray an Office of Readings, when a man sat before me — in the whole huge and empty church, he plopped down right in front of me — and began to weep, loudly and with gasps that sounded like they were rising from the very depths of his soul. I felt compelled to remove the medal from my neck and slip it into his hand. He looked at the medal, then to me, and then to the crucifix above us, with an expression of wonder, and choked out a “Thank you.” I patted his shoulder and said, “I'll pray for you,” and then disappeared, because I was feeling shy about intruding. More confident in my faith, now, I think today I might have talked to him and discovered what his story was — perhaps it was a great, miraculous one that would have explained his stunned expression toward the crucifix. Or perhaps it was never my story to know at all.

I left the church feeling quite certain that I had been meant to give away my medal, but I did find myself missing it, often. That's when it occurred to me to keep handy with me a number of blessed Holy Things, with the sole intention of their being given away. I started with a small packet of Miraculous Medals — and eventually moved on to Holy Cards and other Sacramentals. They quickly got handed around to young people I met, particularly of teenaged and college age, who were not praying, and were not being prayed for reliably by anyone in their mostly-agnostic families. They would often posture as sophisticates “too cool” for church, but not too stupid to ignore the reality of evil. “Just keep it on you,” I would tell them.

I have learned that some of them still keep the medal or card, either in their pockets or their wallets. It's a small thing, but knowing it, now I can ask Mary to pray for them, and bring them closer to Christ, with a bit more force. “He keeps your medal,” I remind her.



**RELICS PRESENTATION BY FATHER CARLOS MARTINS, CC**  
**by MARY-FRANCES REAVEY, OSF**

**O**n October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021, I went to see the *Treasures of the Church* display at Mary Mother of God Church in Hillsborough, New Jersey. I knew ahead of time that there would be over 150 Relics on display and was interested to hear explanations of what makes something a relic and how they are verified as genuine. I wasn't disappointed!

There was a presentation by Fr. Carlos Martins about how something becomes a relic and why we honor this item; he told the story of St. Maria Goretti, the youngest Saint in the church, having died when she was 11 years old. I was interested in St. Pope John Paul II's relics which seem to be abundant, having so recently died there are many articles that he touched, and I was interested in St. Francis and St. Clare – for obvious reasons.

The most amazing relics were Mary's Veil and a piece of the True Cross. Fr. Martins explained the history behind the True Cross and why we can be sure it is the TRUE CROSS even after 2000 years.

Constantine the Great was the first Roman Emperor (*reigned 306-337*) to convert to Christianity in 312. He convoked the First Council of Nicaea in 325, which produced the statement of Christian belief known as the Nicene Creed. Constantine then sent his mother, Helena, (*later St. Helena of the Cross*) to Jerusalem to find the "Relics of Christian Tradition".



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# BRINGING BACK THE DEAD . . .

## CATHOLIC STYLE

**MOVE OVER, SPOOKY HALLOWEEN TRADITIONS; IN THIS WALK THROUGH A DARK CEMETERY YOU MAY ENCOUNTER SOMETHING LIFE-CHANGING.**

**F**orget about ghosts and goblins on Halloween; how about a walk through a dark cemetery where dead people who once walked the earth appear out of nowhere and talk to you about life and death, heaven and hell?

The [“Back from the Dead Cemetery Walk”](#) in Emmitsburg, Maryland has provided such an experience every October for the past 21 years. Held in the historic cemetery on the grounds of the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Shrine, it’s the brainchild of Fr. Brian Nolan, chaplain for Mount Saint Mary’s University.

The idea for the walk was inspired by a haunted house at Mount Saint Mary’s, where students would meet Frankenstein, Dracula, etc. It was controversial among seminarians because of its secular nature, but Nolan says the justification for it was that, “first we spook the college students, then we evangelize them. At the end... the Legion of Mary handed out rosaries and prayer cards.” But he remembers thinking, “Why can’t we create something that would help college students learn about their Catholic faith on questions of the afterlife, angels, and the saints who showed us how to live the Christian life?”

Eventually, that’s what he did. A few years after his ordination, Nolan – who’s been involved in theater over the years – began writing the scripts for a “Back from the Dead Cemetery Walk,” which he calls an “evangelization drama.” Nolan wanted it to be “inspiring, encouraging, and prayer-provoking.” He intentionally avoided controversial theories of the “Last Things” in the scripts and instead used references for private revelation from sources like St. Teresa of Avila and St. Catherine of Genoa, mainstream teaching of the Catholic faith, and stories from the lives of the saints about how to love God and neighbor.

Nolan attributes the notion of this Cemetery Walk to St. Francis’ approach to spreading the Gospel. “He was the first to promote a ‘live Nativity’ during Christmastime, and also encouraged the faithful, for whom the vast majority would be unable to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to meditate on the Way or Stations of the Cross during Lent,” explains Nolan. “The Cemetery Walk extends this idea to evangelizing our culture during the month of October. When the secular world is speaking about ‘the afterlife, the dead and demons,’ this program helps one reflect on preparing to meet our Lord, living the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity and the reality of both the good and fallen angels.”

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#### SO WHAT EXACTLY DOES A PERSON ACTUALLY EXPERIENCE ON ONE OF THESE WALKS?

Perhaps it goes without saying that it's held in the dark. You must reserve tickets for the free event in advance and groups of 8-15 people are let in one-at-a-time, greeted by a lantern-carrying grave digger who welcomes the participants and sets the stage for what they'll encounter.

During the approximately 40-minute walk, many familiar people show up, like St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. John of the Cross, Souls in purgatory, two young children from heaven, a Screwtape devil along with . . .

St. Teresa of Avila
Man experiencing purification (Purgatory)
St. Therese of Lisieux
Little Ones from Heaven
St. Edith Stein (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, OCD)
St. Martin de Porres
The Devil
Fr. Jean de Breubeuf
Bl. Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko
St. Gianna Molla
St. Cecilia
St. Josephine Bakhita
Bl. Fr. Miguel Pro
St. Anthony of the Desert
Cardinal Francis-Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận

Sometimes these characters even know participants by name, which enhances the personal experience, and provides an extra surprise. The drama is designed that way – to move participants and inspire them, as well as to help them ponder death, judgment, heaven and hell. One woman told Nolan that her friend went on the walk and was changed. “He was crying about it. And the next day he forgave somebody who he had not been able to forgive,” she said.

The actors themselves – who are integral to the success of the dramatization and are usually amateurs as well as people of faith – are themselves changed by the experience. “We have many seminarians participate, and some actors return year after year,” says Nolan.

The Walk has grown every year in Emmitsburg, Maryland without much advertising and this year it will be held over five evenings to accommodate the growing interest. Other groups around the country are now beginning these Cemetery Walks, too. [The Back from Dead web site offers a packet for sale](#) for those who want to start one – a “soup to nuts” guide which includes scripts for the actors, advice about costumes and staging, and details of how to plan one. Each year the packet is updated, but a one-time purchase of \$75 provides lifetime access to all updates and additional info. 

The Back from the Dead Cemetery Walk provides a thrill for all those who enjoy the spooky elements of Halloween, but within a Christian context.

Ultimately, though, Nolan says it's an invitation to live a life of holiness and faithfulness.

# Litany for the Souls in Purgatory



EACH REQUEST IS ANSWERED WITH  
MY JESUS MERCY.

**O** Jesus, Thou suffered and died that all mankind might be saved and brought to eternal happiness. Hear our pleas for further mercy on the souls of:

My dear parents and grandparents,  
My brothers and sisters and other  
near relatives,  
My godparents and sponsors of  
Confirmation,  
My spiritual and temporal benefactors,  
My friends and neighbors,  
All for whom love or duty bids me pray,  
Those who have suffered disadvantage  
or harm through me,  
Those who have offended me,  
Those whose release is near at hand,  
Those who desire most to be united to Thee,  
Those who endure the greatest sufferings,  
Those whose release is most remote,  
Those who are least remembered,  
Those who are most deserving on  
account of their services to the Church,  
The rich, who are now the most destitute,  
The mighty, who are now powerless,  
The once spiritually blind, who now see  
their folly,  
The frivolous, who spent their time in  
idleness,  
The poor who did not seek the  
treasures of heaven,  
The tepid who devoted little time  
to prayer,

The indolent who neglected to perform  
good works,  
Those of little faith, who neglected the  
frequent reception of the Sacraments,  
The habitual sinners, who owe their  
salvation to a miracle of grace,  
Parents who failed to watch over their  
children,  
Superiors who were not solicitous for  
the salvation of those entrusted to them,  
Those who strove for worldly riches and  
pleasures,  
The worldly minded, who failed to use  
their wealth and talent for the service  
of God,  
Those who witnessed the death of others,  
but would not think of their own,  
Those who did not provide for the life  
hereafter,  
Those whose sentence is severe because  
of the great things entrusted to them,  
The popes, kings, and rulers,  
The bishops and their counselors,  
My teachers and spiritual advisors,  
The priests and religious of the Church,  
The defenders of the Holy Faith,  
Those who died on the battlefield,  
Those who fought for their country,

Those who were buried in the sea,  
Those who died of stroke,  
Those who died of heart attacks,  
Those who suffered and died of cancer,  
Those who died suddenly in accidents,  
Those who died without the Last Rites,  
Those who shall die within the next 24 hours,  
My own poor soul when I shall have to  
appear before Thy judgment seat,

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,  
and let perpetual light shine upon them:  
For evermore with Thy Saints,  
because Thou art gracious.

May the prayer of Thy suppliant people,  
we beseech Thee, O Lord,  
benefit the souls of Thy departed  
servants and handmaids:  
that Thou may both deliver them  
from all their sins. Amen.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.  
And let perpetual light shine on them.  
Amen.

May their souls and the souls of all  
the faithful departed through the  
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

CALLED TO SERVE:

BIRTH OF SECULAR  
FRANCISCAN  
FRATERNITY

BY TONI MACONI, OFS



BOOK:  
[TAUPUBLISHING.COM](http://TAUPUBLISHING.COM)  
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“THIS IS THE STORY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE LITTLE PORTION SECULAR FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY, OF HOW A GROUP OF LAY PEOPLE CAME TOGETHER TO HELP A FRIEND WHO HAD A DREAM TO HELP THE POOR. IN DOING SO, THEY TRANSFORMED A CRUMBLING BUILDING IN THE SOUTH BRONX INTO A THRIVING RETREAT HOUSE, HELPED RUN THAT RETREAT HOUSE, AND FORMED THE FRATERNITY THAT LIVES ON TODAY.”

**“CALLED TO SERVE:**

**BIRTH OF A SECULAR FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY”**

by Toni Maconi, OSF

**S**ecular Franciscan fraternities often come from humble beginnings. Such was the case for one particular fraternity that set down roots in a crumbling building in the South Bronx in 1982.

The founding members were an unlikely group, of all ages, but with the same burning zeal in their hearts. They had come together to renovate a building, which eventually became a retreat house in the South Bronx. They began working together, and then realized that they wanted something more permanent. Such austere beginnings are seldom documented, but this one is, in “Called to Serve: The Birth of a Secular Franciscan Fraternity” by Toni Maconi, OSF, ([taupublishing.com](http://taupublishing.com)). Not only that, it stands as testament to the strength of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order.

The book, which is now available on audio (*available at* [assisijourney.com](http://assisijourney.com)), details how the retreat house began as a dream. It also tells how that dream became a reality, and how it served the communities and people of the South Bronx. How the fraternity takes shape is no less interesting — from the moment this group of volunteers comes together, it is apparent they are of one heart, and within that heart burns a Franciscan flame.

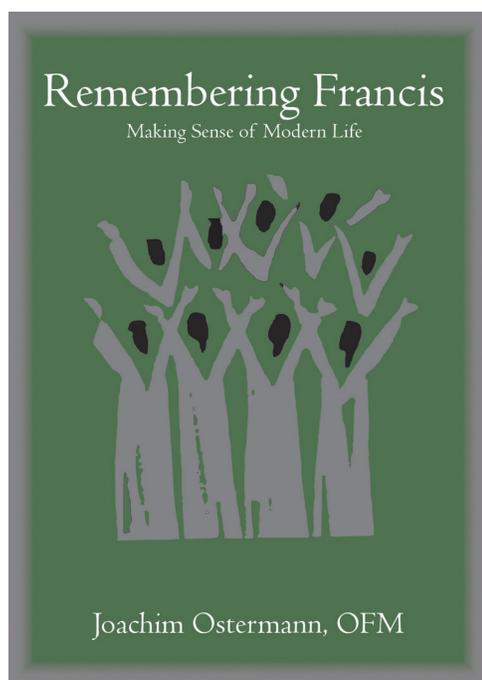
There was no fraternity at first. As the volunteers got together to renovate the building, they simply tackled the task at hand: shoring up the structure, making the inside livable, begging for donations of furniture, appliances, bedding, dishes. They didn’t realize it, but they were living the Franciscan Rule long before any of them knew what the Rule was, or what it required. It was only in looking back did they see they had been living and working as Franciscans long before they knew it.

“Birth of a Secular Franciscan Fraternity” — both book and audio — takes a look at how the fraternity came to be, and how it was embraced by many, many people. It is an enduring fraternity - as active today (although the retreat house is now closed) as it was so many years ago. The OFS rule is a living, breathing thing, but it needs God’s people to breathe life into it. And that is exactly what the founding members did - and continue to do today.

“Birth of a Secular Franciscan Fraternity” is not a how-to book for those looking to form a fraternity, but rather it is a promise of what could be, if those who want it are willing to work and sacrifice.

It is available for purchase at [taupublishing.com](http://taupublishing.com) for \$14.95. An audio version can be heard at [assisijourney.com](http://assisijourney.com) for free.





#### ORDER INFORMATION

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As intractable as the question might seem for the living, the evidence for a life well lived is utterly obvious when we gather to mourn someone's death. Like beauty, a life well lived seems impossible to define in abstract terms, but we know it when we see it. When we do, we are blown away by its significance. It resonates with us and with our hopes and dreams. It allows us to make sense of life and understand it and see its beauty. When it happens, we know that, indeed, here was a life well lived. It is what we all seek.

One such life well lived is the life of Francis of Assisi. Born in 1181 or 1182 to a father who was a wealthy cloth merchant, he aspired at first to success and status among the citizens of his hometown, Assisi. However, after being defeated and captured in one of the wars between medieval Italian cities, he abandoned these dreams of glory and set his life on a new path. One day at prayer, it was later said, he had heard the voice of God calling him to a new form of life meant to renew and reform Christian life. Whatever it was that put him on this new path, the example of his life made him the founder of a new order of men who wanted to live life as he did: in the utmost simplicity, with nothing of their own, dependent on the charity of others and with nothing but the Gospel of Christ as their guide.

Joachim Ostermann, OFM, holds a doctorate in biochemistry from the University of Munich. After a career in universities and biotechnology companies in the US and Canada, he changed course and became a Franciscan Friar. His scientific research interests were the mechanism of intracellular protein transport and the use of proteomics to understand disease mechanisms. Now they are the relationships between modern science, the Franciscan view of nature, and Christian faith. He lives in Montreal as a member of the Canadian Province of the Order of Friars Minor.

