

The Way of St. Francis



Becoming Franciscan

Prayer, Fraternity, Joy, Service

The Franciscan Friars of the Province of Saint Barbara are members of a Roman Catholic religious order, from a diversity of backgrounds and cultures, dedicated to serving the poor and promoting justice, peace, care of creation, and reconciliation in the joyful and prophetic spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

★ ★ ★

The Way of St. Francis

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★ ★ ★



It was a joyous day for the community August 23, when Henri Djojo, OFM (center), professed Solemn Vows. It is a lifelong commitment, preceded for him by a decade of discernment and preparation. He will be ordained as priest in the coming months.

Photo by Bradley Tuel, OFM

www.sbfranciscans.org



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dear friends

Peace & all good!

Advent is here!

As we creep our way out of this pandemic-that-won't-end I am mindful of the many ways that we've experienced pandemic hardship. As I've said in this column before, we each have suffered in various ways, and to different degrees—from personal tragedy to inconvenience or rejection.

With so many different experiences, perspectives, deeply held opinions pro and con, how can we ever find peace together? Yet, my sisters and brothers, that is what life is all about. And especially, right now, that is what Advent is all about. How can we, as St. Francis implored, open up our hearts to the nitty-gritty, real, earthy, stable-born Prince of Peace, born in each other, in ALL of us?

To do so, we have to open ourselves a bit to others' experiences, others' understandings, even when we're sure the other one has it wrong. We have to move outside of our pack, outside of our safe, Assisi-like walls, out to the place where the other is. Isn't that what St. Francis did?

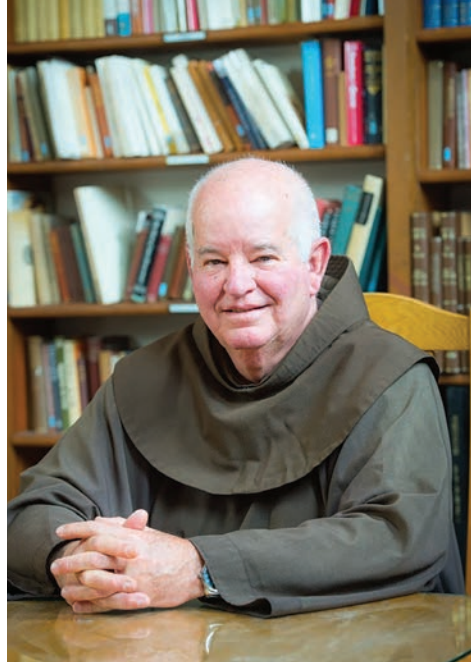
We would go that extra mile for the poor, we say. Would we go that extra mile for people more like us in social standing but really different in understanding? Now, there's a challenge for Advent this year!

This is as hard for us Franciscans as it is for you, by the way. We are Church together, helping each other to live closely to the Gospel. We might all be mindful of that this year. Our hearts must be open to the poor, the stranger, the immigrant, for sure. But can we open our hearts to our cantankerous peers? And be joyful along the way? Joy, after all, is the key to Advent.

God bless,

Fr. David Gaa, OFM

Minister Provincial, Province of St. Barbara



calendar



Photo: Bradley Tuel, OFM

Zoom Online: ADVENT SERIES, "Women in Scripture Who Waited for God's Promise: SARAH, RUTH, ELIZABETH, AND MARY"

11/23, 30; 12/7–14

(All from 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.)

Facilitator: Jan Stegner, MTS, MMC

San Damiano Retreat

Danville, California

sandamiano.org

925-837-9141

Advent Day of Reflection

12/1

Facilitator: Fr. Paul Botenhagen, OFM

St. Francis Retreat Center

San Juan Bautista, California

Stfrancisretreat.org

831-623-4234

Grief and Loss Retreat

12/3–5

Anyone who has known the joy of love has most likely experienced the pain of loss. Grief is a natural part of life, yet we all grieve differently and often need help to find our way through it. Retreat leader Tim Ringgold provides a supportive setting where you will gain new insights into the grief process and discover ways to heal and move forward from this intense and painful period.

Facilitator: Tim Ringgold

Franciscan Renewal Center

Paradise Valley, Arizona

Thecasa.org

Feast of Immaculate Conception/Advent Day of Reflection

12/8

Facilitator: Fr. Tom Bonacci

San Damiano Retreat

Danville, California

sandamiano.org

925-837-9141

Iconography Retreat: A Brush with God

12/9–12

We will use a Coptic icon as our prototype. The Coptic or Egyptian style is very old and unique, and we will use the same step-by-step process, doing one layer of color at a time, to arrive at our destination. No previous experience or inborn talent is required. Come and paint, pray, and enjoy the company of a community of people wading into the silence of a brushstroke.

Facilitator: Peter Pearson, M Div, Iconographer

Franciscan Renewal Center

Paradise Valley, Arizona

Thecasa.org

Emmaus Ministry for Grieving Parents

12/10–12

Of all the pains that life can hand us, arguably the most searing is the loss of a child. During this weekend, just as Jesus joined his distraught disciples on the road to Emmaus, we pray for all of our parents and we ask Jesus to join us as we walk the horrendous journey of grieving our loss every day. EMMAUS Ministry for Grieving Parents is a unique ministry that serves the spiritual needs of grieving parents whose children of any age have died by any cause, no matter how long ago.

Facilitators: Marianne Gouveia and Greg Eckerman

Franciscan Renewal Center

Paradise Valley, Arizona

Thecasa.org

Men's Retreat: Spiritual Hydration and the Gift of Enough

12/10–12

What is Spiritual Hydration, the gift of enough? It is not really so much a task, as it is the permission to embrace our DNA wiring to be replenished. Before we trade in this life for the life we "should" have, let us taste This Life—meaning the invitation

continued on page 28

along the way

Inner Beauty

By Dan Lackie, OFM

My cousin Molly was one of those people who was always giving life a big, warm hug—her own and others. She drove a yellow VW and was most in her element at art festivals and craft fairs. I remember her pulling my mother along from booth to booth at a college art festival, having her try on hats. Molly loved hats, but more than anything she loved her artists—the local kind, out of the spotlight. She gave them encouragement.

Molly was an “anonymous Franciscan,” even to the end, as cancer was overcoming her, she was giving herself away, artfully of course.

In his Letter to Artists, St. John Paul II, wrote: “Every genuine art form in its own way is a path to the inmost reality of humanity....By nature artists are alert to every ‘epiphany’ of the inner beauty of things.” At our best, that’s what followers of Francis promote, isn’t it, the inner beauty of things?

My late cousin Molly taught me something about that. She was a woman truly

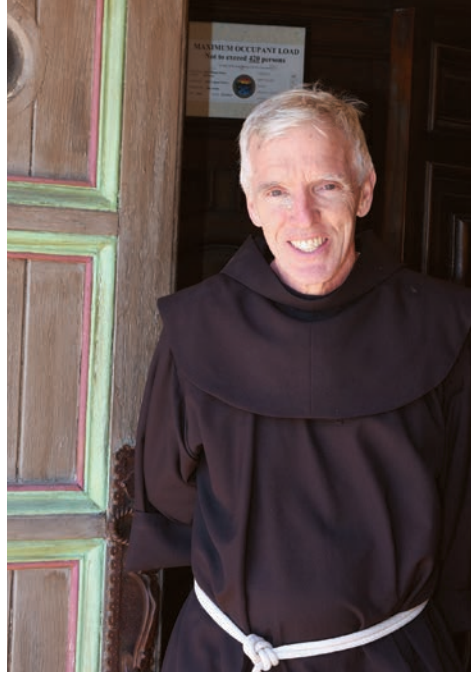


Photo: John Feister

alive and joy-filled right up to the end of her life last year, when cancer overcame her. A bookmark among her possessions said, “The most visible creators are those artists whose medium is life itself....They are artists of being alive.”

At the festival, Mom settled on a floppy red hat with random buttons and baubles fastened to the brim. She plopped it on her head, threw a hand in the air, and struck a jaunty pose, her inner beauty on full display. I’ll always remember her that way. That was the effect Molly had on all of us. *Pace e Bene*, dear cousin!

St. Francis called his early followers “mothers of the Lord” as they brought the Word of God to life through deeds marked by love. That is creativity. It’s art as an act of love, of sharing, of justice. Can we bring that loving creativity into our preparation for Christmas? Let’s ponder being “mothers of the Lord” this year as we make, bake, or find gifts. What better way to anticipate the feast of the God coming to live among us! ❖



Photo: Jonathan Borba

Father Dan Lackie, OFM, is pastor of St. Barbara Parish, Old Mission Santa Barbara.

donor profile

A Break for Gratitude

By Joe Ledbetter, Director of Development



There is a well-known Franciscan saying, “All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle.” It is in this spirit

we take a reprieve from the usual donor profile format in this issue of *The Way of St. Francis*. Instead of focusing on a single donor, I wanted to share the impact of—and gratitude for—the collective support the friars received this year from donors across the country.

The ripple effects of the pandemic continue to emerge. According to philanthropy research groups Candid and the Center for Disaster Philanthropy, over one-third of US nonprofits are in jeopardy of closing due to the financial harm inflicted by the pandemic. Through your generosity, we are not among them.

Back in April 2020, the severity of the pandemic began to set in. Retreat centers and parishes faced a total loss of income. St. Anthony’s in San Francisco and St. Francis Center in Los Angeles were severely limited in serving people in need; jobs were at risk. “All the darkness in the world” shrouded our brothers and sisters.

After much prayer and reflection, the friars determined to protect the jobs of our sponsored ministries staff. “We are a family,” was the message, “and we take care of each other. We will provide the funds to support your staff until the



Photo: ©www.peterjordanphoto.com

pandemic restrictions are gone.” Father David sent out a call for support and the response was resounding. The darkness would not extinguish a single candle.

The generosity of our donors is truly inspiring. It got us through the worst of the pandemic and now propels us forward with hope. It supports our ministries where they need support, it forms new friars, it cares for our elderly friars.

On behalf of the Franciscan Friars of the Province of Saint Barbara, I want to express my most sincere gratitude for each and every person that helped keep the darkness at bay. You really stepped up when the friars needed you most, with increased giving and signing up for recurring monthly gifts. We are also blessed to have several more donors include the Franciscans in their legacy planning. Thank you!

On a personal note, I knew little about Franciscans when I came here a few years ago. It’s a blessing to see what a good fit it is for me. “For it is in giving that we receive,” I taught my young daughter. How refreshing to learn where that saying came from! ♦

For information on how you can support the friars—including gifts of stock, legacy planning, recurring monthly giving, and corporate donation-matching—email me, Joe Ledbetter, at jledbetter@sbofm.org.

snapshot

A window at Old Mission San Luis Rey provides a halo as Friar Henri Djojo professes, and Friar Provincial David Gaa accepts, lifelong Solemn Vows. It's a defining moment in friar formation.

Photo by Bradley Tuel, OFM





common ground

Blowing and Bursting Bubbles

BY JANET GARDNER

"Chaos often precedes great creativity, and faith precedes great leaps into new knowledge."—Richard Rohr, OFM

The second week of March 2020 was a busy week—reviewing financials, planning for San Damiano's annual Holy Week retreat, preparing for a public Earth Day celebration, and interviewing

a new gift shop manager. Then came COVID. By March 13, a shadow was cast over all these plans when the then-president declared a national emergency. What had been a few hosted group cancellations the week prior became a deluge of deferrals.

We all know the rest. Stay-at-home orders we thought might be weeks dragged on to become months of uncertainty. Individuals, as well as the entire organization, went through Elizabeth Kübler Ross' stages of grief in non-linear fashion: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

I'd add panic to the list. The Province did much to calm frazzled nerves by continuing to pay our full salaries through June 30, 2020. [The Province, with the help of generous donors, did the same for its other ministries too.] Closer to home, when people couldn't purchase necessities such as toilet paper,

Devoted in spirit and deed, Rick Medeiros takes advantage of the downtime to improve the facility, deep-cleaning this Marian shrine.



Photo courtesy of Janet Gardner





Photo courtesy of Janet Gardner

Much of the San Damiano Retreat staff, including beloved dog, Dani, pose for an annual photo last year—this one at Halloween, with a touch of Christmas!

rice, and beans, we bought through our distributors and resold them to our employees at cost.

With our basic needs met, we were freed up to re-envision how we might deliver our ministry of hospitality and spiritual nourishment. Richard Rohr's words at this article's start rang true. We began having regular meetings with the other retreat houses in the Province, holding space for each other and the Holy Spirit. We started offering Zoom retreats, some as joint retreats with our sister retreat centers. We tried some new fundraisers: silent auction and rummage sale online, a drive-thru crab feed, and a virtual Camino walk. As time progressed, we offered outdoor space for memorial services.

The shutdown cut both ways for our physical facilities. We were constrained by a lack of income, but with the guest and conference rooms empty, this was an opportunity to close spaces and do noisy work. We used restricted donations made pre-pandemic to do several upgrades, including to our library. Father Philip Garcia helped us make a wonderful discovery: Underneath the hideous,

green-patterned carpet there was the original, beautiful, green tile. After painstaking effort, the room is a lovely combination of new and old.

The restoration extended outdoors. It was as if we were looking at what was old with new and appreciative eyes. A few examples:

- Volunteer Rick Medeiros noticed our Mary at the entryway was dirty and deserving of more suitable surroundings. He has been working with renowned sculptor Mario Chiodo to restore and beautify the space.
- Another generous donor offered to fund replacement of decks on the hillside overlooking Mt. Diablo.
- The Province once again came through in a big way, offering funds for several large capital projects essential to the longevity of San Damiano.

It has not all been goodness and light. Two active employees and one furloughed employee tested positive for COVID. Praise to God, they are OK!

The retreat often is a place of celebration. Here Friar Philip Garcia gives a rose to confrere Ray Bucher at a Mass celebrating the Feast of St. Clare.



Photo courtesy of Janet Gardner

In the second year of the pandemic, it is apparent that the staff need restoration. Under the stress of keeping the ministry alive, there has been sacrifice to physical, emotional, and spiritual health. There is some tension and strain on relationships. At work and at home, we have been in one sort of bubble or another for a long time.

Light at tunnel’s end

Relief comes in many forms. Initially, it was from individual private retreat guests returning to or discovering San Damiano. Although 2020’s Holy Week retreat was canceled, it was back in 2021. We witnessed the Resurrection through a wearied yet hopeful lens.

Interim Directors Lisa Briones and Alison Yount kept faith and optimism alive that guests would return. And they are returning. The high schools are coming back, as well as many of the groups that had deferred their 2020/2021 retreats.

Perhaps the strongest validation of vitality was our Annual Jazz Reception. Over 170 guests gathered outdoors in our courtyard to listen to the Bay Area’s CoolTones Big Band, sip wine, and enjoy served appetizers. There were familiar faces as well as new ones. Our new director, Jim Greer, addressed the crowd saying, “There’s nothing sadder than

an empty retreat house.” There was no sadness on that sunny Sunday afternoon.

I write in the climate of uncertainty regarding the rising cases due to the Delta variant of COVID-19. A cynical view of the future is that of rotating cycles of loss, sequestration, vaccination, relief, and repeat. Perhaps what people find most disarming is the blatant reminder that we are not in control—we never were. But, as Richard Rohr says, “Our uncertainty is the doorway into mystery, the doorway into surrender, the path to God that Jesus called ‘faith.’”

More than ever, the world needs Franciscan spirituality. It reminds us that life is not about order and control; life is about love. That is why our God chose to enter into the chaos of our world as a powerless, poor child in a barn. Francis understood that 1,200 years later. We humbly seek to understand it today. ❖

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Janet Gardner is Project Manager at San Damiano Retreat, a Franciscan ministry in Danville, California.

Advent's Opportunity

BY GREG FRIEDMAN, OFM

Chuck Stringer is a man I've never met face-to-face. His friendship is a gift I received during these long months of lockdown and separation due to COVID-19. We met in a Zoom-based poetry course and have continued to interact at virtual poetry readings. Chuck and his fellow poets in that community have given me hope in the power of art and creativity in what has otherwise been a bleak time, a time of loss, a time when hope has been in short supply.

Chuck gave me the seed of an idea, based on the parable of the Good Samaritan, which took root in a poem I wrote called "Reboot," later published in the online journal, *Rise Up Review*. It's a poem that points toward hope, a big theme of Advent. Here's how it starts, with our common experience of work-

ing on a computer—and getting error messages:

*A blue circle whirls endlessly
Across our screens of hate.
Tiny spheres extrude their spines,
Swell the graphs in rising ridges until—
"Please wait," flashes.
...*

*Please wait for your life to matter,
For prophecy to move mountains
Of stone where others stumble.
Please wait for the vaccine,
For it all to go away, for normal to return.
(Faces wait at the nursing home window).
Please wait...*

Our Advent Scripture is full of poetry about waiting. They begin with the bibli-



Photo courtesy of St. John the Baptist Province

Author Father Greg Friedman, OFM (left) shares the Church's message: Advent is a season of hope. It's also a season when poetic spirit flourishes.

**Fright, dismay—
yet we are to hope
nonetheless, early
Advent Scripture
tells us. Jesus says,
“Raise your heads,
because your
redemption is
at hand.”**



Madonna On the Crescent Moon, Peter Paul Rubens

cal language we call “apocalyptic”—the poetry of strange visions and predictions of dire events anticipating the end of time. Early Christians, beset by persecution, adopted apocalyptic imagery to sustain them in hope. They recalled Jesus’ assurance that he was with them—and all would be well.

This year on the First Sunday of Advent Jesus tells his disciples, “There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay. . . . People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world.” But he commands them to “stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand (Lk 21:25–28, 34–36). Vigilance and prayer will strengthen them.

Luke’s community must have found Jesus’ words comforting—as have believers down through the ages, even though we still await the “final coming” of Christ. Terrible as the scourge of COVID has been, we know that Christians have endured through great difficulties in past times. We can draw comfort from Jesus’ assurances for our time.

Other Advent readings sound another important seasonal note: joy. Our waiting is not to be marked by gloom. Granted, it is not easy to be joyful when

our lives—personal and communal—experience the suffering and death inflicted by the pandemic. Uncertainty and isolation have colored so much of this time when please wait seems to be the constant, repeating “error message” on the screens of our lives.

And yet, the biblical prophets urged God’s people to be joyful. On the Second Sunday of Advent we hear from the Book of Baruch: “Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery . . . for God is leading Israel in joy by the light of his glory, with his mercy and justice for company” (see Bar 5:1–9). On the Third Sunday of Advent, the prophet Zephaniah cries out, “Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! . . . The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst,/you have no further misfortune to fear” (see Zep 3:14–18a).

Such joy is more easily experienced in community. St. Paul assures the Philippians: “Brothers and sisters: I pray always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now” (see Phil 1:4–6, 8–11, for the Second Sunday of Advent).

Our families have been locked down one way or another. When we couldn’t worship in our churches, our parishes had to discover a virtual community to

pray together. We've relied on "drive-by" visits with elderly and shut-in members. But as always in human life, when we adapt in our relationships, we find reasons to rejoice.

That was my experience in the community of poets I discovered on Zoom. It's proof of what Franciscan Father Tom Nairn, provincial minister of the OFM Sacred Heart Province, said recently, "COVID has taken away; COVID has also given."

I believe that if we are to move forward from the time of COVID, we must—in the language of computerese—reboot. As we've seen in recent months, we cannot return to some older sense of normal. We must learn and grow and put into our "rebooted lives" what the Gospel stories of Advent and Christmas tell us about Jesus' birth, and what they "prefigure" of his proclamation of the good news.

In the later Advent Gospels, John the Baptist urges his hearers to act justly. Elizabeth greets Mary with a definition of discipleship, which will be echoed by Jesus: "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled" (see Lk 1:39–45).

My poet friend, Chuck Stringer, inspired me with Luke's story of the Good

Samaritan as a guide for a "rebooted life" post-pandemic. That simple gift, borne out of the community of poets during COVID, led me to my own wish—and plea—for hope in this time:

Reboot,

*says the shaman, the poet,
The ancient prophet: It's time
For deserts to bloom and strangers
To stream to the mountain. The waiting
Is wreathed in green branches
Circling endlessly in promise,
Where four candles mark kairos-points
Of coming to reboot.*

*Control-alt-delete—
Spirit-breath, reveal radical imagining
On Jericho's road where we cross
The unsafe distance of angry bridges,
Brave the fists of fear
And learn to traverse time
When zoom-bound energies emerge
From behind our quarantined walls
And conjure Samaritans stopping
To bind wounded enemies,
Find a neighbor there. ♦*

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*Greg Friedman, OFM, is secretary for Province
of Our Lady of Guadalupe.*

**"Blessed are you
who believed that
what was spoken
to you by the Lord
would be fulfilled,"
spoke Elizabeth to
Mary, proclaiming
the path of
discipleship.**



Photo: Bradley Tuel, OFM

The background of the entire page is a medieval fresco of St. Francis. It depicts his face with a simple, earthy style, showing his eyes, nose, mouth, and a beard. His hands are visible at the bottom, one pointing upwards and the other downwards. The colors are muted, with browns, tans, and greys.

Becoming Franciscan

St. Francis would continually instruct his friars on living simply, but as his movement grew he reluctantly agreed there was need for more formal formation. The need never went away.

We built this small special section after talking with a few St. Barbara Franciscans about aspects of formation today. Two, Brothers Joan and Juan Luis, are newly professed; they are spending a year as “Brothers Walking Together” in pastoral ministry before continuing their academic training. At the other end of formation we talked with Brothers Henri and James, soon to be ordained, who took solemn, lifelong vows within the last year. We have interviews from all four, and a photo story from Brother Henri’s solemn profession.

Finally we are featuring a follow-up story on the newly launched formation program developed for anyone in the Franciscan family, anywhere in the world. It’s online.

The greatest formation for any friar is his life of service. But we thought you might enjoy this glimpse of the more formal side. —JF

Considered the oldest portrait of St. Francis, this image is in Benedict’s Cave at Mt. Subasio, where Francis went to pray.

friar's life

Brothers Walking Together

BY JOHN FEISTER

He went from working as a furniture installer at Google headquarters to helping build a church in Maunabo, Puerto Rico. That's Brother Joan Perez Lombera, a newly professed friar who's spending a year in the Brothers Walking Together program. He's one of eight new friars from across the United States taking time learning practical ways of doing ministry among people in poverty, before heading to graduate school.

"They want us to experience a different culture than what we are accustomed to," says Brother Joan. Having prepared in the group program in Puerto Rico and elsewhere, the friars will be spending a year at ministry sites.

Rebuilding a church in Puerto Rico was just a taste of the kind of practical needs that any friar sets out to address. Work-

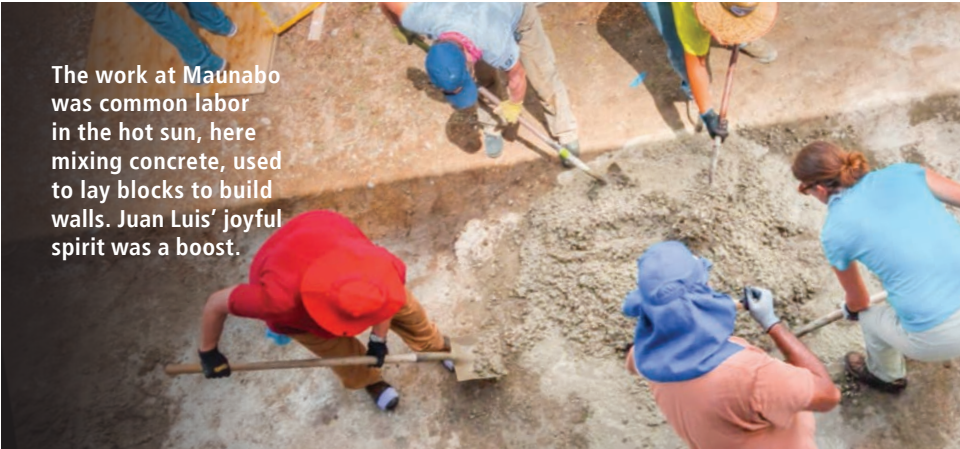
ing alongside lay volunteers, often with women in leadership roles—"It opens their eyes," says Father Mike Johnson, of New York's Holy Name Province. He crafted the immersion/reflection program at the request of formation directors from the six US provinces.

The program is designed to give the friars, after they come out of novitiate, "a new lens, a lens that comes out of a profound, extensive experience of working with the poor and the marginalized in a culture other than their own," says Father Mike. All that happens in Franciscan community. They'll get a taste of what will become a lifetime of active ministry.

"It's more of a pilgrimage experience," says Father Mike. "They're placed in situations where they'll come in con-



The brothers spent one week in Maunabo, Puerto Rico, helping rebuild a damaged church—very Franciscan! Brother Juan Luis is seated, back row center.



The work at Maunabo was common labor in the hot sun, here mixing concrete, used to lay blocks to build walls. Juan Luis' joyful spirit was a boost.

tact with lots of different people who will help them to grow in experience. They'll be stretched in ways outside their comfort zones, where they learn to face their fears and not allow them to hold them back." The "on-the-ground" experience is complemented by structured reflection, guided by a spiritual director.

Where They Are

Everything was ready to launch early in 2020 when the pandemic struck. Hard stop. "Then in December of last year we decided that we would kind of pull it in a little bit. So for this initial year, we have two sites that are San Francisco and Philly, working in soup kitchens, with the poor and marginalized. Then there is a ministry that's around the border. They're doing part of their time in Mexico, and part of their time in the States."

Saint Barbara's Brother Juan Luis Guerrero came to work in the Tenderloin District in San Francisco; the aforementioned Brother Joan Perez, also from this province, is in Philadelphia. But first, they spent a month preparing in Washington, DC, in Appalachia, and finally in Puerto Rico.

Brother Joan, born in Mexico and still in the limbo of the US immigration DACA program, stayed inside the continental United States rather than risking the delay of some immigration mixup. He started his yearlong service among

friars in Philadelphia's St. Francis Inn a few weeks early.

Brother Juan Luis, now in San Francisco, recalls the preparation days in Appalachian Virginia: "We were painting the outside of a church. The priest was so happy! Some parishioners from St. Camilla's parish in Washington drove all that way to help. We got some training on how to lay down bricks." That first week was preparation for the coming work in Puerto Rico.

The second week was in Washington, DC, with Franciscan Mission Service. "We had the whole week of intense workshops on all the things that you need to be a missionary," Juan Luis recalls. "That was great! Then on the third week, we went to Philadelphia, to St. Francis Inn. We served the homeless, worked in the soup kitchen cooking, helped distribute food, and cleaned the streets. That was nice." Clearly, he is animated by his Franciscan work.

The final preparation week, in Maunabo, Puerto Rico, they built an access ramp, doorways, and installed windows—rebuilding still from 2017's Hurricane Maria. Among the local people there he found his stride: "To see their happy faces motivates me a lot. Sometimes you don't know how many people are in need. Yet these people are happy. They don't need large sums of money for happiness." The meals,



Brother Joan loves his work at Philadelphia's St. Francis Inn: "I think of a new way of being in the world and helping people. So I'm really happy."

guitars, warmth, and hospitality drove home the point.

Father Mike especially remembers the new friar's love of music. "Juan Luis is joyful! There were times when the work was really, really hard. We had music going and all of a sudden, Juan Luis would start dancing and we'd all just stop and relax for a minute. That's what St. Francis would have done."

For Brother Joan Perez, the experience of immersion back in Philadelphia is teaching him about living as a Franciscan. "I think of a new way of being in the world and helping people. So I'm really happy." He had feared he would merely drift through life. "But being here in formation and discerning this is what God wants me to be has driven the fear out of me. I feel that if I died today, I can be at peace with myself." That's a deep longing that St. Francis himself would understand.

Brother Joan's new way of being in the world is one of community. That is exactly what Father Mike, the program director, wants to develop in these new friars. "The formation directors wanted the brothers [who had lived together at Old Mission Santa Barbara as novices] to be together for one more year, because a lot of formation is a peer formation. One of the things that I really loved about them is they took care of each other. There is no greater tribute to a

brother than to take care of each other."

Part of the program is reflection, then sending written reports to the director. "They're brimming with enthusiasm for Franciscan life," says Father Mike. As they move through their apostolates in the coming year, that enthusiasm is sure to grow. At year's end, before they move back into the bubble of formal academic training, they'll spend a week listening to each other, sharing their experiences, back in California.

Father Mike is confident these men will be looking at life a bit differently: "One of the things about moving people outside their comfort zone is it makes you more dependent on God. I think it brings you closer to God because you realize it's not about you, that it's God's spirit moving through you." That is a key to effective ministry.

Along the way, says Father Mike, "they'll learn openness and flexibility because ministry is unpredictable. They'll learn to be patient with themselves and with others, but also persistent." Of course, those lessons, the four pillars of the program, will be learned and relearned over time. With a spirit of openness, walking together with their brothers, those pillars will be the keys to a Franciscan life. ♦

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John Feister is editor of this publication.

forming the future

Road to Priesthood

BY JOHN FEISTER



Friar James Seiffert, among friar-witnesses, at his solemn profession ceremony before Minister Provincial David Gaa, at Old Mission San Luis Rey.

Photo: Provincial Archives

“For me, formation just started! I’ve been in initial formation, but now, for all my life, I’ll be in formation.” So says Brother Henri Djojo, and, at age 50, he means it. He’s now solemnly professed and nearing priestly ordination, ministering at Old Mission Santa Barbara. He’ll be ordained a transitional deacon this coming spring and ordained as priest sometime in the following year. Solemn profession, of course, is a lifelong commitment to be a Franciscan.

It’s been a long journey for Henri. He worked as an architect before discovering and accepting his call to become a Franciscan. One Sunday, about 10 years ago, a friend invited him to have lunch with Richard Purcell, a beloved friar coping with Lou Gehrig’s disease (ALS) in San Francisco. “It was a turning point for me. I met him at his house, then they wheeled him out to the garden, where we had lunch

A year at the Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale, Arizona, is where Friar James will complete preparation for pastoral ministry as ordained priest.



Photo courtesy of Franciscan Renewal Center

and talked for several hours. I saw him, suffering, but his joy exuded from him. Here he was, bedridden, not able to move a lot, but he was so happy, and so hospitable. I was already discerning religious life; that made me decide to join the friars." Now he hopes to bring his former career's work as architect to the benefit of his priestly ministry.

The same "formation by life experience" could be said of Brother James Seiffert, solemnly professed now since August 2019, and completing training since then. He's now spending his final year before diaconal ordination serving at The Casa, the Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale, Arizona.

His lifelong journey includes a career working among a tight-knit group of corporate sales reps at United Airlines, ("I've been to every continent except Africa" he says with a hint of pride). "After 22 years, I wanted to do something different." Along the way he was drawn to pastoral ministry at his parish (Most Holy Redeemer, San Francisco). Through that parish he companioned people with AIDS at the height of that crisis. "It was a lot of grieving and death—a lot of death. But it was very rewarding, just

being with them."

He followed that tug of pastoral ministry into the Franciscan Covenant Program, "a program for lay people, men and women, single or married, who live, work, and study with Franciscans in community," he explains. "I was there for about 18 months when Father Larry Dolan invited me to seriously consider religious life as a Franciscan brother." He was received in the postulancy program in Portland, Oregon, in 2012, and has spent the years since in postulancy, novitiate, and then renewing short-term vows during seminary in Franciscan School of Theology.

Along the way he worked in various Franciscan ministries, including homeless ministry in San Francisco, and even a year's immersion among a large Franciscan community in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. There were about 100 friars; he was one of two Americans. "I know

Like St. Junipero Serra behind him, Friar Henri Djojo will spend a life of ministry preaching the Good News and striving to build understanding.



Photo: Bradley Tuel, OFM



PHOTO: St. Barbara Parish at Old Mission Santa Barbara Facebook

Brother Henri is now learning the ropes of practical ministry at Old Mission Santa Barbara, here seen during a pandemic-mode outdoor Mass.

it sounds incredible, but the fraternal aspect is so strong there. It was a beautiful experience.” He taught English there.

Both men are in a “pastoral year” now, a kind of on-the-job training for the nuts and bolts of priestly ministry, how a priest is present in a parish, including all of the things most parishioners take for granted: being sure various populations are served, being present but not dominant at the right meetings, providing leadership as needed, attending to the sometimes-unpredictable sacramental and other needs of the faithful, being a Franciscan witness.

Brother Henri is finding his groove in the practicalities of parish life. Practical as “part of my training as an architect. I’m hands-on. If we have something, we do it right away. If we have an idea, we make it into an action and work on it. I’m more hands-on. You do it and make an adjustment.

“In architecture, things are constantly evolving. Especially when a project is under construction, there are lots of changes, on a daily basis. We draw it; we have to redraw it to solve a problem that we discover.” It’s a lot like ministry, he agrees. Flexibility and willingness to constantly revise will serve him well, as well as the joyful hospitality that Friar Purcell drew him into the fraternity with. “A brother told me that I’m hospitable. That I connect easily with the older crowd.” Those senior members

of parishes are often the pillars of the community.

But he also senses that the friars will use his professional experience organizing projects, using technology, even designing architecture, helping developers stay on schedule. There is always something being built, sold, or renovated and updated, after all. That’s especially true when ensuring accessible housing for older friars.

Brother James’ sense of compassion is what will guide him in his future ministry, his willingness to “accompany people in their brokenness, in their joys and sufferings,” he says. “God is so generous with what he’s given us, his love, the beauty of creation. Everything is a gift that God has given.”

It’s not hard to get either of these friars talking about the values that brought them into the Franciscan family. For now though, Brother Henri, like Brother James, focuses on learning the particulars of how parishes work. Both of them are shadowing other pastoral workers, under the guidance of a local mentor (Father Dan Lackie for Henri, Father Daniel Barica for James). Both are looking forward to their ordinations, first in the spring, then, as priests, some months later.

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John Feister is editor of this publication.

Sharing Francis Widely

FST's Digital Learning Program

BY PAT FANNING

Doors to the world are opening at the Franciscan School of Theology, on the campus of University of San Diego, Father Garrett Galvin, OFM, PhD, observes. Franciscan institutions—hospitals, colleges, parishes, and more—seek to maintain their Franciscan spirit.

That requires learning Franciscanism. “Previously, you had to go someplace to undertake studies,” says Father Garrett. “Now we’re coming to you.”

Father Garret, president of the theology school, is speaking of a newly launched online, remote master’s degree

program in theological studies. Beginning this past September, you can receive Franciscan academic training from anywhere. “It’s a high quality product,” he says, beaming.

The Franciscan School of Theology (FST) has been on the campus of University of San Diego (USD) since 2019. University leaders approached FST with the idea of creating an online version of the graduate program in theological studies. FST and the university would share development costs and revenue generated. Initial funding was a major



PHOTO COURTESY OF FST

University of San Diego is host to the Franciscan School of Theology, now joining the university in offering online graduate degrees across the miles.

obstacle, eventually overcome by a major three-year pilot grant from the Province of Saint Barbara. The program will support itself through tuition.

"I was very skeptical." Now, after developing the program over the past three years, he sees it positively, as "a completely different way of learning."

Online degrees such as the theological studies program have hatched a new way of thinking about university courses. Traditionally a professor would develop a course, get it approved by the academic dean, and then teach the course in a classroom. Now that professor is a subject matter expert, working with an instructional designer and an instructional technologist. The three work together closely (though maybe from afar) to create a course.

The Subject Matter Expert (SME=professor) might start by creating a PowerPoint," a slide show, he explains. "Then you'll email that PowerPoint to the instructional designer. They'll put that PowerPoint into a more palatable form, which basically reflects the best practices for conveying information in the online environment."

Once the SME and the instructional designer agree that the right information will be presented correctly, the instructional designer works with an instructional technologist, checking in with the SME as they go. "A lot of

times they'll make it interactive," says Father Garrett. "They'll introduce elements that don't allow the student to be passive. For example, you can't just click through things. They'll have a little exam in the middle to be sure you're following it. The information technologist creates these elements to be sure the student is an active, rather than a passive, learner."

That's getting into the weeds a bit, but you get the idea. The team translates the course material into a rich online experience that can be taken by a qualified student, anywhere.

"This oftentimes can be better than a traditional classroom experience," says Father Garrett, speaking of learning styles. "If you've been in a traditional classroom, you know the extroverts will dominate it and the introverts don't want to say anything to embarrass themselves." That doesn't happen online, especially when students take the courses apart from the other students whenever it works for them ("asynchronously"). "You also avoid the experience of students falling asleep in class," he says—the bane of college professors.

Recorded lectures by FST faculty comprise part of the courses, along with assigned reading, writing assignments, and so on. A faculty member (professor/SME) guides each group of students as they move through the material.



Photo: Andre Lushina

From any internet connection worldwide, students can take FST courses online to complete a graduate degree in theological studies.



Renowned Franciscan scholar Joseph Chinnici, of St. Barbara Province, is one of the faculty members of FST who is developing and conducting online courses.

Students and teachers everywhere

There are currently about 55 students who attend the FST on campus, a number slightly impacted by the pandemic. That number will grow ideally to about 100, says Father Garrett. Students from the university (USD) can take classes in theological studies there too. Among the seven full-time and seven adjunct faculty are well-known Franciscan scholars, such as Michael Blastic, OFM; Joe Chinnici, OFM; and Darleen Pryds.

The online program offers courses by these same scholars as well as someday soon, faculty from afar. "Right now we start with our own professors. Each of us is designing and will teach his or her first course. Then we start talking to colleagues and peers, going to conventions, and coming up with lists of people who would like to be involved in this," he explains.

Where's the need for this? As we all struggle with the pandemic, the need for online learning is obvious, but this effort really isn't pandemic-driven. The combination of offering on-site and on-line classes will truly increase the impact of the program.

One of the greatest needs is right within the Franciscan family. "We have Franciscan institutions in most of the states. These universities need someone skilled in the charism to help the university stay close to its mission and minis-

tries," Father Garrett observes. "I think their institutions can probably help pay for it because their institutions are going to benefit enormously. Franciscan hospitals, parishes and social services will also benefit from a better understanding of our shared mission."

All of this goes far beyond the online lectures that you might see on various topics, including Franciscan ones, he explains. This is a full course of study: twelve courses, each seven weeks long, completed over two years. The result is a master's degree in theological studies. The FST is fully accredited to offer degrees in about 35 states. "I think we'll probably get to 48 or 49," he says. But that's not all: "People can do this anywhere in the world."

Developing the program has been an iterative process, says Father Garrett, where you learn, improve, and learn again. He compares its root to the *Latin iter*, translated literally as "journey." Developing this new digital way to study the charism of the Franciscan movement is certainly a journey, a work in progress. "You have to know your strengths and your weaknesses, and you have to be open to new things." Sounds kind of Franciscan, now, doesn't it? ♦

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Pat Fanning is a frequent contributor.

Enrollment information is online at fst.edu.

on the cover

A Day to Remember

PHOTOS BY BRADLEY TUEL, OFM



Now a friar commits for life, turning from *if* to *how*. The liturgy of Solemn Vows begins, brothers and friends together.



A quick consult with Brother Jeff Shackleton, at Old Mission San Luis Rey, as Brother Henri Djojo (right) prepares to head to the altar: It's a moment 10 years coming.



'Rebuild my Church,' says Jesus from the San Damiano crucifix to Franciscans today, as he did to St. Francis.



The friars gather, newly professed Brother Henri flanked by Minister Provincial Father David Gaa (left in photo) and his Vicar, Father Martin Ibarra.



Henri lays, prostate, helpless without God, hands outstretched like the crucified Jesus, offering his everything before God and community, as the community prays: God be with him.



A new Henri stands before the community, marked with the cord's knots of vowed poverty, chastity, and obedience, ready to serve. ♦

to honor the dignity that is reflected by God's goodness and grace. We are wired to pause: to embrace the sacrament of the present, to see, hear, taste and touch grace, and the sacred in our world.

Facilitators: Terry Hershey and Deacon Phil Locascio
Franciscan Renewal Center
Paradise Valley, Arizona
Thecasa.org

Advent: Waiting in Wondrous Expectation
12/11

Facilitator: Fr. Vince Mesi, OFM
Mission San Luis Rey
Oceanside, California
Sanluisrey.org
760-757-3659

New Year's Eve Retreat: Strength for the Journey
12/30–1/1

Endings are new beginnings. As we cross the threshold into a new year, we realize that times are desperate for meaning, belonging, and blessings. So, we will ask for healing and closure for 2021. We will also invoke God's blessings upon us for 2022. In our parched deserts, we will discover a fresh well within us. We will have a festive New Year's Eve dinner, followed by a special Mass before midnight, asking the Holy Spirit to fill us with a new sense of hope to empower us as agents of compassion.

Facilitators: Fr. Rusty Shaughnessy, OFM and Norbert Zwickl
Franciscan Renewal Center
Paradise Valley, Arizona
Thecasa.org

Your Graced Legacy (Zoom or in-person)
1/7–9

Come away awhile and listen. On this retreat weekend, we will creatively use music, poetry, Scripture, quiet time, journaling, and small group sharing to explore your personal legacy. We will use this exploration to influence the deeper hope of what your celebration of life would look like. According to Rachael Freed: "As we accept the blessings and sacredness of our lives, then surely death, an integral part of life, must be sacred too." We invite you into this time with the Divine and one another.

Facilitators: Bidi Miller & Margaret Riley

San Damiano Retreat
Danville, California
sandamiano.org
925-837-9141

Wrestling With God: Finding Hope & Meaning
73rd Annual Men's Retreat
1/14–16

Facilitator: Fr. Ken Laverone, OFM
St. Francis Retreat Center
San Juan Bautista, California
Stfrancisretreat.org
831-623-4234

Learning from Francis & Clare in Times of Uncertainty
1/21–23

If we have learned nothing else through the Covid-19 plague it is that life is unpredictable and uncertain. Francis and Clare of Assisi also lived in difficult times, and their challenges inspired them to simplify their lives and faithfully rely on God's support. This weekend retreat is dedicated to exploring the lives of Francis and Clare, but even more important, translating what we can learn from these two saints to deepen our own faith journey.

Facilitator: Pauline Albert, PhD
San Damiano Retreat
Danville, California
sandamiano.org
925-837-9141

Serenity Retreat: Connect With Recovery
1/21–23

Continue your healing as you spend a full weekend in-person with women and men in recovery from alcoholism and addiction. Our focus is the



PHOTO OF SANTA RETREAT BY JOHN FEISER

12-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous. We invite members of Al-Anon, all AA groups, alcoholics, addicts, friends, and family members. Pray, meditate, and reflect in an inviting and peaceful environment.

Facilitator: Fr. Tom Weston, SJ
Mission San Luis Rey
Oceanside, California
Sanluisrey.org
760-757-3659

Married Couples Retreat
February 4–6

Do you feel like you have been together so much that you have drifted apart? Are you ready to reconnect and rediscover life-giving love? It begins with you. Join us for a weekend filled with fun, laughter, and connection. We will redefine life-giving love and enrich the golden rule—do unto others as you would have them do unto you by beginning with YOU.

Facilitators: Richard & Karla Obernesser,
Fr. Rusty Shaughnessy, OFM
San Damiano Retreat
Danville, California
sandamiano.org
925-837-9141

Being Beloved: An Art & Spirituality Retreat
February 5

Embracing our belovedness is a lifelong journey, for we can continually grow in knowing God's great love for us. Art can awaken places within us that the Spirit wants to embrace. In this interactive art retreat, engage with music, Lectio Divina in color, journal reflection, poetry, and the creation of a

personal mandala collage.

Facilitator: Glenda Campos
Mission San Luis Rey
Oceanside, California
Sanluisrey.org
760-757-3659

When We Care: Spiritual Resources for Caregivers
February 11–13

Welcome, caregivers! If addressing the essential needs of a loved one is a part of your daily life, this retreat offers refreshment and support. Drawing on Catholic and broader Judeo-Christian traditions, you're invited to reflect on caregiving in the context of personal spiritual growth. Together we'll enjoy group prayer and discussion, as well as suggestions for individual reflection.

Facilitator: Laura E. Pasquale
Mission San Luis Rey
Oceanside, California
Sanluisrey.org
760-757-3659

Retirement and Conscious Aging: Making Room for the Spirit as We Grow Older
March 4–6

As you consider your retirement years and grasp the reality of growing older, this retreat will explore the benefits and joys as well as the challenges and concerns ahead. How do we live this stage of our life well and see aging as a blessing? The combination of reduced work responsibilities and growing older provides an opportunity to live life differently and more contemplatively, moving from "doing" to "being." Discover how we can share our Spirit-

given gifts, talents, and experience in new ways that bring joy to ourselves and others and give continued meaning and purpose to our lives.

Facilitator: Jim Briggs
Franciscan Renewal Center
Paradise Valley, Arizona
Thecasa.org



Photo at Serra Retreat by John Falger

at last

“Move us to create
healthier societies
and a more
dignified world.”

—Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*,
Assisi, Oct. 4, 2020



The mural in progress, under
Brother Victor Vega's supervision,
was in our previous edition. The
product (right) signals hope at
LA's St. Francis Center.





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