



SPRING 2025 - EASTER

THE SERAPH

Newsletter of St. Bonaventure Province

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FROM OUR PROVINCIAL

**Fr. Paul Joseph
Langevin, OFM Conv.**

***The Lord is
risen! Alleluia!
"This is the day
the Lord has
made; let us
rejoice and be
glad." Alleluia!***

Happy Easter! Together, we celebrate the 'light of Christ' and the Resurrected Lord as Pilgrims of Hope! Having processed in with the Paschal candle at the Easter Vigil, we rejoice! We rejoice because the Lord's Resurrection has the most profound and central importance for our lives, filling them with a new light and purpose.

We know the darkness all too well. Our sins and petty judgments; our pride and inability to say, *"I am sorry."* It is the darkness in which rich nations expand their wealth while exploiting the poor. It is losing a parent, child, or loved one. It is that same darkness of Good Friday as the disciples witnessed the horrific violence of the cross. Are there parts of our own lives where we lack trust to believe that the light of Christ can enlighten all places if we let it?

My brothers and sisters, as we responded, *"Thanks be to God"* to the proclamation of 'the light of Christ' at the Easter Vigil, that very act should refresh our faith. What greater gift have we than the sure hope of sharing in the Lord's triumph over sin and death and living with him in God.

Growing up, we didn't exchange gifts at Easter (with six kids, Mom and Dad were probably still paying off the ones from Christmas!). Candy filled baskets – for sure, but no presents. Truth be told and shame the devil, there's no greater gift than the new life we receive through faith and baptism. While we renew our baptismal promises at Easter, it is something we should be renewing each time we dip our fingers into the holy water as we enter churches and chapels throughout the entire year. As Pilgrims of Hope, our world needs our witness and our belief in the Resurrection and Jesus' power to penetrate darkness and despair. By our baptism, we have been commissioned to spread the gospel message even in the darkest places and most difficult of times. May our *"I do"* responses remind us to shine the light of Christ in this world by all we say and do.

Throughout this Easter season and especially throughout our Jubilee Year, let us pray for the gift of hope to be increased in our lives and in the lives of all our brothers and sisters. May this simple act of hope, *"Jesus, I trust in You!"* be on our lips and in our hearts.

HOLY WEEK AROUND THE PROVINCE



Postulants at Palm Sunday Mass



Cristo Rey Parish (TX)



St. Ita



Marytown



The Basilica



St. Gregory the Great

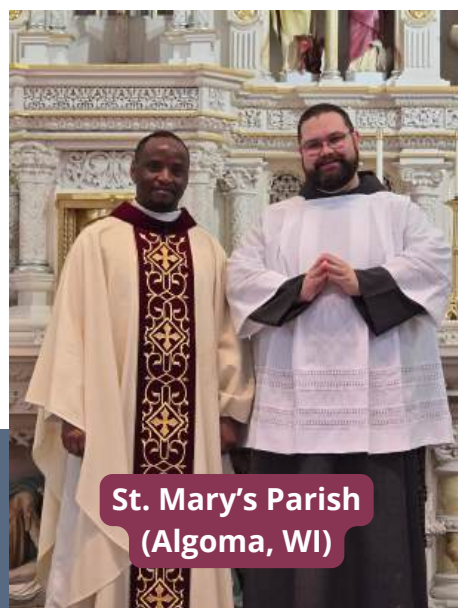
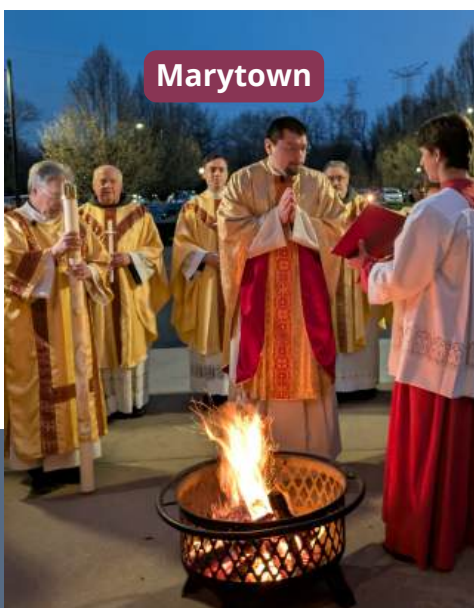


Novitiate



St. Patrick

HOLY WEEK AROUND THE PROVINCE





Visiting the Friars in Algoma

Br. Bernard Mary and Fr. Simon joined Fr. Timothy at St. Mary's Parish in Algoma, WI, to celebrate the Easter Triduum. It was a beautiful, solemn occasion for our Commonwealth brothers and the whole parish community.

FROM THE MISSION ADVANCEMENT OFFICE

A Heartfelt Thank You for Your Generosity: Christmas Appeal Success

As we step into the vibrant season of Easter, we are filled with deep gratitude for the overwhelming generosity you showed during our Christmas Appeal. The gifts you shared with us during the Christmas season continue to bear fruit as we embrace this new season of growth and renewal.

Thanks to your extraordinary generosity, we are able to further our ministries in significant ways — especially in supporting the formation and education of the next generation of Conventual Franciscan friars, and in providing care for our retired and infirmed brothers.

In this time of renewal, your support stands as a living testament to the enduring spirit of service and compassion within our community. Through your contributions, we are able to nurture seeds of hope and faith in the friars of tomorrow while honoring and caring for those who have served so faithfully in the past.

Donor Profile: A True Friend of the Friars

We are pleased to highlight special donors whose generosity has helped our ministries flourish. Mark and Jenny Hocking, longtime friends of our Franciscan family, have made an extraordinary impact through their recent gift to our Christmas Appeal.

Mark and Jenny are parishioners at Holy Family Parish in Peoria, Illinois. Although the friars are no longer serving at Holy Family, the Hockings continue to support St. Bonaventure Province. This year, Mark went a step further by submitting paperwork to secure a matching gift from his employer — doubling the impact of their donation. Additionally, he uploaded the Province's giving information to his employer's national giving platform, offering other potential donors the opportunity to invest in the Franciscan mission.



We are deeply grateful for the many ways our friends and supporters strengthen our ministries. If you're interested in learning how to use your employer's matching gift program to multiply your giving to the Friars, please contact Director of Mission Advancement, Jennifer Georgis, at 773-274-7681 ext. 253 or MissionAdvancement@FranciscanCommunity.org.

NEWS FROM THE APOSTOLATES

HOUSE OF STUDIES (CHICAGO, IL)

Reflection on the Postulancy Year from George Harris, Postulant

Postulancy is coming to its end, and the year has been entirely different than what I expected. Which is funny, because I tried to have almost no expectations coming into it, and yet somehow, I was still wrong. This seems to be an extremely common experience; we are all wrong about what it will be like. Will we be praying 24/7 and learn to become ultra pious? Will we be reading endlessly on Catholic Spirituality? Are we going to help all the poor people of the world? It turns out that it's a little of all of this while also being something even more as well.



Postulancy prepares us to be a member of the Franciscan community, which entails all of these things but also the comradery of an international brotherhood. Meeting Friars from across the world is an unexpected bonus, learning from extraordinarily intelligent Friars who grace us with guest lectures, traveling to meet newly professed Friars and speaking with Friars with over 50 years' experience, is all a part of this unexpected year. The rhythm of daily prayer, Mass, ministry service, reading, community events, and dishes; endless dishes, puts you

version filled with kind, helpful people. Contributing to an 800-year-old tradition within a 2000-year-old tradition has a magical quality to it. Change occurs gradually here, and God willing, permanently. Whatever may happen as I move forward, I know I am better for this last year of my life.

Reception of First Class Relics of the Franciscan Martyrs of Pariacoto, Peru

On August 9, 1991, in the mountain village of Pariacoto, Peru, two Conventual Franciscan friars, Fr. Michał Tomaszek and Fr. Zbigniew Strzałkowski, were taken by members of the Shining Path group. Accusing the friars of wielding power over the people—despite their mission of serving the poor—the terrorists refused to listen to their explanations. The next day, their bodies were found.

In honor of their witness and to encourage vocations, our Province petitioned for First Class Relics of the martyrs. The relics were presented on March 14, by Br. Jan Hruszowiec, the Postulator for their cause, and Fr. Dawid Furgał. May Blesseds Michał and Zbigniew intercede for us and encouraging us to preach the truth with love and courage.



MARYTOWN: NATIONAL SHRINE OF ST. MAXIMILIAN KOLBE

In Memory of Br. David Wagner

Earlier this year, Br. David Wagner, OFM Conv. passed into eternal rest. His Franciscan Wake and Mass of Christian Burial were held in late March in the Marytown Chapel.

Br. David served the Order faithfully for many years working as a teacher, administrator, formator, and manager of the giftshop at Marytown. In recent years, he spent much of his time decorating the Marytown chapel with flowers for the many liturgies. Let us give thanks for all the friars and lay persons who cared for Br. David at the end of his life. May he rest in peace.



Reflection written by Br. David towards the end of his life:

"I entered religious life in the late 60's, very influenced by the times and its slogans - "Love Not War," "Flower Power," etc. I wanted to be an activist, but I also yearned for the steadiness of consecrated life. I held down two part-time jobs to pay for the tuition of my Catholic high school. I loved dancing, long hair, porkchop sideburns, and bell bottom trousers! Even today, my tastes remain Peter, Paul, and Mary, Judy Collins, Simon and Garfunkel. Many years have passed - teaching school, ministering in parishes, assisting

in formation, directing choirs and a lot of cooking! With all of this behind me and as I grow into my own illnesses, I can better appreciate our sick and aging friars, their crosses, their prayers, and their good examples...as I hope mine will be too."



A New Face at Marytown

We were happy to welcome Fr. Boniface Nzioki Muia, OFM Conv. to the USA from Kenya. He will be in residence at Marytown learning the art of habit making under the tutelage of the maestro himself, Br. Augustine. Please pray for our brother friar as he gets settled and begins his time in our Province.



MARY, MOTHER OF GOD PARISH (CHICAGO, IL)

A Seat for Everyone: A Heartfelt Campaign

Mary, Mother of God Parish, launched the "A Seat for Everyone" campaign in the spirit of compassion, generosity, and community. The initiative, a partnership between the parish and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, has garnered emotional and financial support from parishioners. It embodies the Catholic Social Teaching that calls on us to serve others with dignity and compassion, and it provides a meaningful way for the parish to reach out to those on the margins.

The Beginnings of the Campaign

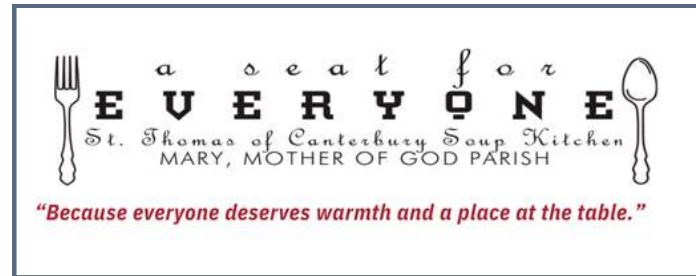
The Society of St. Vincent de Paul wanted to do something meaningful for the soup kitchen guests and find a way for parishioners to be a part of it. *"We thought, why not celebrate Christmas with a useful gift?" said Stephanie Held, the parish's Communications Coordinator. "What if we gave everyone a hoodie, as a symbol of inclusion and welcome, and encourage parishioners to sponsor one?"*

The Gift of a Hoodie

Fr. Alejandro Lopez, OFM Conv., with his graphic design background, created a logo for the hoodies, highlighting that everyone is welcome at the table of the Lord. The hoodies were then gifted to guests at the Soup Kitchen's Christmas party.

Getting the Parish Involved

Parishioners could sponsor a hoodie for a guest, purchase one for themselves to show support, or make a donation to the campaign at: motherofgodchicago.org/parish-news/seat-4-everyone. All proceeds support the parish's outreach ministries and the campaign's success has been heartwarming. So far, they've raised over \$4,000 in contributions.



A Symbol of Hope

Although the hoodie may seem like a simple piece of clothing, it has come to symbolize much more. It stands as a tangible reminder of Catholic Social Teaching and the works of mercy — feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and serving the marginalized.

Beyond fundraising, "A Seat for Everyone" has also deepened parishioners' commitment to each other and the Lord. *"This campaign really utilizes our talents as a parish," Held says. "From Fr. Alejandro's design expertise to the volunteers who organized the distribution of the hoodies, it's a beautiful display of what we can accomplish when we work together."*

With the success of "A Seat for Everyone," the parish is already considering how to expand the campaign and possibly organize another event during the Easter season.



FROM THE VOCATIONS OFFICE

These first few months are already off to a busy start. In February, Br. Bernard Mary, OFM Conv. was asked to come and share his story with the large group of young men, alongside Bishop Donald Hying of the Diocese of Madison. The men were genuinely interested and there was a great discussion.

Our Parish of Mary, Mother of God in Chicago hosted a Vocations Day for the Religious Education students. Br. Bernard, together with other guests, took turns sharing their faith journey and what led them to their respective Vocations. Brother then ventured up to the Kenyan Friars' presence in the Green Bay Diocese, where he was invited to speak at Masses and present a talk to students. The topic was on Discernment and incorporated the Jubilee Year theme, 'Pilgrims of Hope.'

As the application deadline to enter the CFF Postulancy Program approached, the four applicants came to the House of Studies to undertake the final step. Dr. Barbera Toohill graciously made the trip to administer the psychological evaluations – she is a former parishioner of ours from Holy Family and a good friend of the friars.

Br. Bernard Mary took the long road trip to Bismark, ND, to join the students and staff of the University of Mary for the 'Vocations Jamboree.' Attendees were intrigued by the first-class relics on display at the booth, many young men took materials, and a handful even left their details for follow-up.

While there, Br. Bernard and Sr. Teresa Paul, from the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, made a pilgrimage to the grave of Servant of God Michelle Duppong, a young woman whose Canonization cause has been opened by the Diocese of Bismark. They met Michelle's parents and spent the day on their farm hearing the about her amazing life, battle with cancer, and the miracles already attributed to her intercession.

On the first weekend of April, the House of Studies hosted five men for a Come & See Weekend. A number of other men have expressed a desire to continue discernment with our community.

As our students move onto the next stages of formation, we pray especially for Friars Anthony Ruffolo and Tarcisius Bucca as they prepare for their Solemn Vow pilgrimage and Solemn Profession; for Friar Maximilian Anselm Rewa, as he undertakes a Spanish emersion in Costa Rica; for Friar James Muzzey, as he completes the Novitiate year and professes Simple Vows; for George Harris, who completes Postulancy and will be invested as a Novice Friar in July. and finally for the three men, Joshua, Craig, and Jacob, who have been accepted into the CFF Postulancy Program for 2025-26 with our SB Province and will reside at the Chicago House of Studies from July. Thank you all for your ongoing support of our men in formation, as well as for our efforts in promoting vocations; may the Lord truly bless you, and give you His peace.



THE PROVINCE'S INCOMING POSTULANTS



Joshua Callado | Denver, CO

Having spent time in College Seminary for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, he eventually discerned out but completed his degree in Philosophy and Psychology. Josh then moved to Denver, CO, where he completed a Masters of Arts in Theology at the Augustine Institute. Josh is very involved in his local parish, including serving Mass, founding a men's group, cooking for festivals, and much more. He was inspired to consider the Franciscan life after encouragement from his Godmother and the correlation of his mother's passing on the Feast of St. Maximilian Kolbe, 2021. Despite the distance, Josh has visited the community a number of times and participated in multiple discernment opportunities.



Craig Chircop | Northfield, IL

Born to a Maltese father and a British mother, Craig has had opportunities to travel and live in different areas of the country. In his youth, he was very active and enjoyed competitive kite surfing. He has previously volunteered as a firefighter and lifeguard, and currently volunteers both at 'the Bread Brigade' at his local parish, and the St. Thomas of Canterbury Food Pantry, and is employed at Lowes. Craig is an easy-going, hard-working person with a big heart and has devoted his time to helping others and being available to those in need. He came across our website in June last year and began discerning with us, having visited our community on a casual basis and has attended multiple Come & See weekends.



Jacob Polinski | St. Charles, IL

Jake's faith came alive in college when he took a course on the History of Eastern Christianity which inspired him to look deeper into his Catholic roots. He was further influenced by modern 'digital-evangelists' like Fr. Mike Schmitz who helped him better appreciate the theological and philosophical truths of the faith. Jake recently finished his undergraduate studies at Purdue University, IN, with a Bachelor of Science and a minor in History. He has been greatly involved with the Catholic Center on campus and was the leader of the 'Hands and Feet of Christ' outreach ministry which serves the homeless at overnight shelters. He first contacted the community in 2023 and has come to a number of discernment opportunities and events.



Postulants & Novices at the Novitiate (Arroyo Grande, California)



Happy 95th Birthday to Br. Martin!

The Friars from Marytown went to visit Brother Martin Schmitz at the Little Sisters of the Poor for the occasion.

UPCOMING EVENTS

CFF 800TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CANTICLE OF CREATURES RETREATS

July 20-25, 2025 in Detroit, Michigan

September 1-6, 2025 in Santa Cruz, California

October 26-31, 2025 in Mesilla Park, New Mexico

MAY 5-8 — CFF MEETING INCLUDING THE DEFINITORS AT MOUNT ST. FRANCIS

MAY 10 — CALLED TO MORE (DISCERNMENT DAY)

MAY 11 — WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

MAY 28 — POSTULANCY CONCLUDES

JUNE 1-21 — 203RD GENERAL CHAPTER IN ROME

JULY 5 — WELCOMING OF NEW CLASS OF POSTULANTS

JULY 15 — FIRST PROFESSION

SEPTEMBER 14-16 — SOLEMN PROFESSION OF VOWS AND PROVINCE ASSEMBLY

OCTOBER 14-24 — PILGRIMAGE: IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST. PAUL



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