



FALL 2025

THE SERAPH

Newsletter of St. Bonaventure Province

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Br. Bernard Fonkalsrud gave the final talk for the Koinonia Retreat offered for students of the University of Wisconsin - Platteville



FROM OUR PROVINCIAL

Fr. Paul Joseph Langevin, OFM Conv.

As we celebrate the *Transitus*, the passage of St. Francis through death into eternal life, the remembrance shouldn't be something we only do on the 3rd of October. As the Body of Christ, we are called not to sit and consider but to go and do. Because in the end, it's the doing (and what we fail to do) on which we will be judged.

It is not enough to hear of Jesus' foot-washing before his Passion and not also hear his words, *"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

With so much happening in our country and elsewhere in the world, we can certainly feel like it's too much and that all we can do is sit and consider – or worse yet, sit and ignore. How do we go and do in the face of overwhelming crises? Let us all follow the example of St. Francis and be preachers of peace and of goodness! Pace e bene!

St. Francis taught us with his words and actions to imitate Christ. He calls for a peace that is deep, wide, and all-

inclusive. St. Francis challenged his brothers — and he challenges us — to learn that preaching peace must be rooted in inner conversion. Saint Francis said, *"As you announce peace with your mouth, make sure that you have a greater peace in your hearts. [...] Let everyone be drawn to peace and kindness through your peace and gentleness. For we have been called to this: to cure the wounded, to bind up the broken, and to recall the erring."*

For some, being a preacher of peace and goodness might mean:

- Approaching disagreements with greater respect and humility, seeking to understand not to convince someone they are wrong;
- Putting down our electronics and getting involved in acts of service;
- Maintaining a hopeful perspective (and not just during this Jubilee Year) and keeping our eyes on the prize of eternal life with God which helps us keep our perspective and preserve our peace in the face of so much suffering.

What it means for us all is to go and do; in both the simple things of daily life as well as the things that are profound.

THE TRANSITUS AROUND THE PROVINCE



National Shrine of St. Maximilian Kolbe - Marytown (Libertyville, IL)



Mary, Mother of God Parish (Chicago, IL)





Fr. Benedict is Preaching in Italy
One of our Australian Friars, Fr. Benedict La Volpe, is serving in Assisi, Italy! He has been there for a few years now helping with hospitality and mission work.

FROM THE MISSION ADVANCEMENT OFFICE

A Season of Gratitude and Generosity

As we enter the season of Thanksgiving, our hearts naturally turn toward gratitude for God's abundant blessings, for the gift of faith, and for you, our faithful friends and benefactors. Your generosity has made it possible for our Franciscan friars to live the Gospel and serve those most in need through prayer, ministry, and compassion.

Thanksgiving reminds us that every good gift comes from the Lord. It's also a time to reflect on how we can respond to those blessings by giving back so that the mission of St. Francis may continue to shine in our world.

As the year draws to a close, we invite our friends to prayerfully consider making a special gift before December 31st. These end-of-year gifts not only help the friars continue their ministries but may also provide meaningful **tax-saving benefits** for you. Two simple and impactful ways to give include:

1) Gifts of Appreciated Stock: Donating shares of appreciated securities can allow you to avoid capital gains taxes while receiving a charitable deduction for the full fair market value of the stock.

2) Charitable IRA Contributions: If you are age 70½ or older, you can make a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) directly from your IRA. This gift counts toward your required minimum distribution and is not included in your taxable income.

In mid-November, you'll receive our annual year-end appeal in your mailbox. This mailing shares the stories of how your generosity helps the friars continue their ministries of prayer, education, and service. We invite you to prayerfully consider making a gift when it arrives as your support makes a difference. Your year-end gift — whether of stock, through your IRA, or a traditional cash donation — helps sustain the friars' prayerful presence and Franciscan outreach. Together, we can continue to share Christ's Good News.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving, please know that you are remembered daily in the friars' prayers with deep gratitude. May the Lord bless you abundantly for the goodness you share. Peace and all good.

Jennifer Georgis
Director of Mission Advancement

SOLEMN PROFESSIONS & PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY

National Shrine of Saint Maximilian Kolbe - Marytown (Libertyville, IL)

In preparation for the upcoming 2026 Provincial Chapter, the Solemnly Professed friars of St. Bonaventure Province, assembled to have initial discussions on how they might approach the future with a sense of renewal, security, and in collaboration with the other Provinces of North America. The Assembly also coincided with the occasion of the Solemn Profession of two friars.

On the evening of September 15, in the presence of the friars of the province and beyond, together with family, friends, and other guests, friars Tarcisius Bucca and Anthony Ruffolo made their Solemn Profession of Vows.

In his homily, the Minister Provincial, Fr. Paul Joseph Langevin, described our Franciscan life as a "counter cultural quest for holiness," and went on to described the Religious Vows as *"a radical 'yes' to the Divine initiative; a response to God's love poured into our hearts; a way of life that has caused people to think that we are stark-raving-mad for over eight-hundred years, and yet, has proved to be so contagious that eight-hundred years later men like yourselves have found this Franciscan vocation irresistible."*

He continued, *"...we friars, continue to support one another in our way of life with integrity and with holiness; that's why so many friars are here tonight for the public celebration of Solemn Vows - we all want to express our fraternal support, in this, our vowed life."*



The Rite of Religious Profession proceeded with both men being questioned about their intentions, and after answering in the affirmative, they prostrated themselves in total self-giving to the Lord as the Litany of the Saints was chanted. The Minister Provincial then prayed over the men, after which each came forward to profess their Solemn Vows into his hands, officially witnessed by selected members of the Order. After a solemn prayer, the newly Professed, Minister Provincial, and witnesses, then approached the altar to sign the Book of Profession; all Solemnly Professed members of the Order then came forward to offer a fraternal sign of congratulations and welcome to the men.

The Holy Mass then continued as usual, with beautiful musical accompaniment and assisted by a dedicated crew of altar servers. A delicious celebratory dinner, prepared by the Marytown staff, was then enjoyed by all guests in an atmosphere of fraternity and joy.

A full recording of the Solemn Profession can be viewed by scanning the QR code or following the link to Marytown's Youtube channel:
tinyurl.com/solemnvows



NEWS FROM THE APOSTOLATES

ST. LINUS PARISH (DEARBORN HEIGHTS, MI)

Thank you to Fr. Pius

Fr. Pius Musyoka, the Vocation Director of the Kenyan Province of St. Francis of Assisi, has been assisting at St. Linus Parish and School during Fr. Patrick Stoffer's convalescence. Some of Fr. Pius' projects include speaking to 7th and 8th graders about vocations on the Feast of St. Linus and blessing pets on the Feast of St. Francis. He also taught our students a Swahili song. As part of the activity, he gave each student a cross to take home and blessed them all.



SAN DAMIANO FRIARY (SAN ANTONIO, TX)

Care for Creation Mass & Procession

On September 14, Simply Professed Friars James Carlo and Maximilian Anselm attended an outdoor Mass at Mission San Francisco de Espada to celebrate of the Season of Creation. This was followed by a walking pilgrimage in support of God's creation on the river trail to Mission San Juan Capistrano.



MARY, MOTHER OF GOD PARISH (CHICAGO, IL)

Choral Masses to Celebrate Marian Feasts

Earlier this year, Mary, Mother of God Parish honored the Virgin Mary with two special choral Masses. In August, we celebrated the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and in October, we celebrated the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. Our Catholic cultural center, St. Gregory's Hall, sponsored both Masses and music was specially arranged by Composer-in-Residence Kevin Allen.



FOUR SAINTS CATHOLIC CHURCHES (CENTRAL ILLINOIS)



The Toluca Labor Day Parade

The friars of Holy Family Friary participated in this local tradition which is the capstone of a weekend full of events. On the float, Fr. Steve McKinley dressed up as Pope Leo – costume complete with a White Sox cap – and Fr. Patrick Greenough was one of his Swiss Guards!



Celebrating the Feast of St. Ann

Parishioners gathered in the parish hall of St. Ann's Parish in Toluca, IL to celebrate the feast of their patroness.

St. Patrick's Finished Ceiling

As mentioned in the last issue of The Seraph, the entire roof of St. Patrick's Church in Minonk, IL was replaced earlier this year. Now we are proud to share photographs of the finished ceiling!



Day of Recollection On Prayer

A large group gathered for a day of recollection On Prayer, St. John the Baptist Oratory in Lostant, IL.

BASILICA OF ST. JOSAPHAT (MILWAUKEE, WI)

St. Josaphat Basilica Foundation Gala

On October 11, the St. Josaphat Basilica Foundation held their gala at the Wisconsin Club. Thank you to everyone who joined us an evening filled with fun and generosity!



Welcoming Adult Converts to the Faith

This fall, we welcomed over 70 people into the OCIA program for those who are either becoming Catholic or receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. Please keep them in your prayers as they continue their journey.

NATIONAL SHRINE OF ST. MAXIMILIAN KOLBE - MARYTOWN (LIBERTYVILLE, IL)

Marian Conference & Kolbe Award

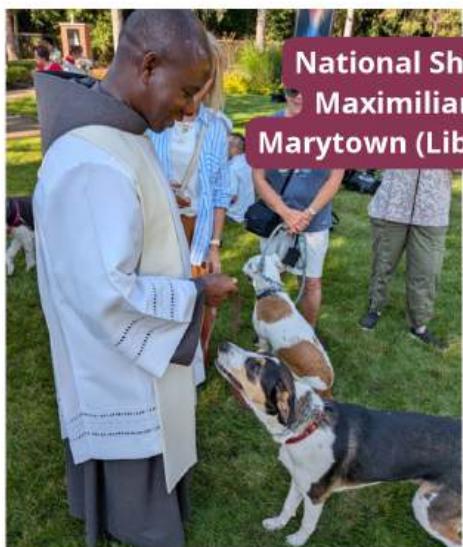
The Kolbe Award is given to those individuals and groups who live out their Militia of the Immaculata (MI) consecration to Mary in the spirituality of St. Maximilian Kolbe at an extraordinary level, in pursuit of the spiritual and apostolic ends of the MI. This year's award recipient and guest speaker was the Very Reverend Chris Alar, MIC.



PET BLESSINGS AROUND THE PROVINCE



St. Linus Parish
(Dearborn Heights, MI)



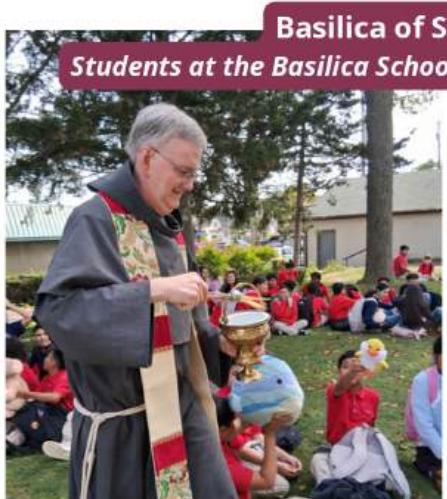
National Shrine of St.
Maximilian Kolbe -
Marytown (Libertyville, IL)



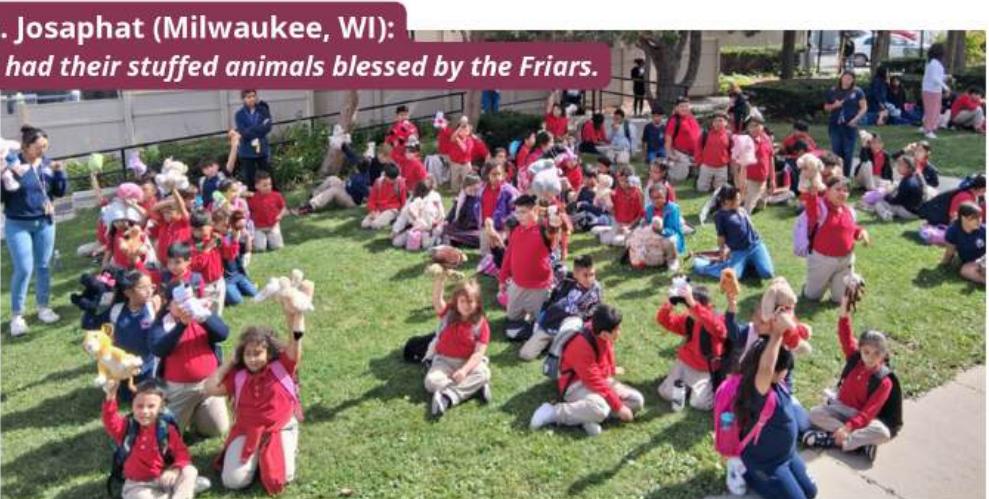
Mary, Mother of God Parish (Chicago, IL)



House of Studies
(Chicago, IL)



Basilica of St. Josaphat (Milwaukee, WI):
Students at the Basilica School had their stuffed animals blessed by the Friars.



FROM THE VOCATIONS OFFICE

After a much-needed vacation home to Australia, I returned to the United States refreshed and ready to get back to work. A big part of my job is keeping in contact with discerners. Usually, when a man first expresses his desire to learn more about our Order, we organize a time to meet, often over Zoom to begin with. Once the ice has been broken, I can then offer more opportunities to encounter the friars.

'Come & See' weekends are unique experiences I try to arrange a few times in the year. Men come to have three days where they can ask all the questions they want and encounter our life, fraternity, prayer, and apostolates. September's 'Come & See' was held at St. Bonaventure Friary and House of Studies in Chicago, IL. Nine men attended from around the Midwest and beyond. They all expressed how helpful the weekend was for their discernment, especially the opportunity to engage with the Postulants, who were in their shoes just a few months ago.

The next Provincial 'Come & See' weekend will be held at the National Shrine of St. Maximilian Kolbe (Marytown, IL) from December 5-7. There is also the common CFF 'Come & See' weekend being held in Chicago from November 7-9, with ten men from the OLA, OLC, and SB Provinces respectively coming for the experience.

I was blessed to be invited again this year to assist with the 'Koinonia' retreat held annually for first-year students at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. They asked me to present the final talk themed around 'where to from here?' and discernment. Being present to the young men brought many opportunities for deep conversations about life, faith, and discerning God's will for one's life. The Catholic community at UW-Platteville is dynamic and inspiring, and I feel privileged to be able to connect with them.

November is gearing up to be a jam-packed month of events and opportunities. I'll be attending the Diocesan Vocation Fairs in both Green Bay and Joliet; up to the University of Michigan - Ann Arbor, MI, for a 'Vocations Meet and Greet'; over to St. Edward Parish, Chicago, to speak to the students; down to Davenport, IA, for St. Ambrose University's 'Busy Students Retreat'; up to the 'Inheritance' young adult conference in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, WI, where I'll also be teaching an OCIA class on the Blessed Virgin Mary at our Basilica of St. Josaphat; attending the Great Lakes Catholic Men's Conference in DeKalb, IL; and potentially playing 'kickball' with clergy, religious, and lay faithful in Kenosha, WI. Pray for me! I'm tired just writing this. Peace.

Br. Bernard Mary Fonkalsrud
Vocation Director





FRANCISCAN MONTH

franciscanmonth.org

October was Franciscan Month!

Thank you all for celebrating the inaugural year of this initiative of the Franciscan Family in the USA. The mission is to celebrate our charism and highlight Franciscan living in today's world. We want people of all ages to know October as Franciscan Month and to make the choice to live in the spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare all year round.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NOVEMBER — PROVINCIAL ELECTION BEGINS

NOVEMBER 7-9 — CFF 'COME & SEE' WEEKEND AT THE HOUSE OF STUDIES

DECEMBER 5-7 — 'COME & SEE' WEEKEND AT MARYTOWN

JUNE 10-13 — FESTIVAL OF FRANCIS: GATEHRING OF BROTHERS (ALLEGANY, NY)

Thank You & Farewell to Stephanie Held

Over the past year and a half, Stephanie Held has served as our 'Vocations Communication Coordinator,' based at the Vocation Office in Chicago. She has worked hard to update our printed materials, website, social media, and even *The Seraph*. She has patiently listened to our spontaneous, and often crazy, ideas and made them a reality. She is a joy to be around, and the friars and Postulants always look forward to her presence in the friary. We give thanks and bid farewell to Stephanie and wish her every blessing as she begins formation with the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in La Crosse, WI. Please keep her in your prayers as she takes this exciting next step in her vocational journey, and for our Vocation Office as we try to find someone to fill these very big shoes!



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