



SPRING 2026

# THE SERAPH

Newsletter of St. Bonaventure Province

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Triduum at the Novitiate (Arroyo Grande, CA)



## FROM OUR PROVINCIAL

**Fr. Paul Joseph**

In the light of the Resurrection, I greet you with the joy that stands at the very heart of our Christian faith. The empty tomb proclaims a truth that has sustained the Church in every age: life has conquered death, hope has overcome despair, and the love of God has proven stronger than every darkness.

As Conventual Franciscan Friars, the celebration of Easter renews our understanding of vocation. The Risen Lord does not remain in the tomb or on the road behind us; He goes ahead of us and calls us again, just as He called the first disciples. Our Franciscan life—marked by fraternity, minority, and joyful service—finds its deepest meaning in this encounter with the living Christ.

Saint Francis himself was captivated by the humility of God revealed in Jesus Christ. In the Resurrection we see that humility crowned with glory. The Crucified One is the Risen One, and the wounds of love become the signs of victory. This mystery invites us to live with courage and simplicity, trusting that God is always bringing new life even where we see only limits or uncertainty.

I am so grateful to all the friars for their faithful witness to the Gospel. Their prayers, fraternity, and ministry make the presence of Christ visible in so many places—parishes, schools, shrines, and among the poor and forgotten. I pray that the joy of Easter renews our zeal and reminds us that the Lord continues to work through our lives.

*Continued on page 2*



## Exposition of the Bones of St. Francis An 800 Year First

For the first time since his death, pilgrims had the blessing of venerating the sacred bones of St. Francis of Assisi. To commemorate 800 years since the death of our Seraphic Father, his mortal remains were on display for a limited time to the thousands of people coming to visit the Basilica in Assisi to obtain a Plenary Indulgence as part of the extraordinary Jubilee Year of St. Francis, declared by Pope Leo XIV.

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In my heart and prayers is a special place for all our benefactors and friends. Please know how deeply grateful we are for your generosity and prayerful support. You share in the mission of our Province in a real and meaningful way. Through your kindness, the work of the Gospel continues, and the spirit of Saint Francis reaches many hearts.

In a world often burdened by anxiety and division, the message of Easter remains wonderfully simple and profoundly hopeful: Christ is alive. Because He lives, we can live with trust, with joy, and with hearts open to one another.

May the Risen Lord bless you and your families with peace. May He renew our fraternity and strengthen us in the mission entrusted to us. And may the joy of Easter fill your hearts today and throughout the year.



*Peace and all good!*  
**Friar Paul Joseph**

## FRANCISCAN EASTER FRATERNITY

St. Josaphat (Basilica) Friary hosted the Milwaukee based Capuchin community for dinner and fraternity during Easter week. The two communities are planning joint events for the Jubilee Year of Saint Francis.



# EASTER TRIDUUM AROUND THE PROVINCE

The Basilica of St. Josaphat (Milwaukee, WI)



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



Br. Tom repurposing  
Easter plates



Mary, Mother of God Parish (Chicago, IL)



Cristo Rey Parish (Austin, TX)



Four Saints Catholic Parishes (Central IL)



St. Ann's (Toluca)

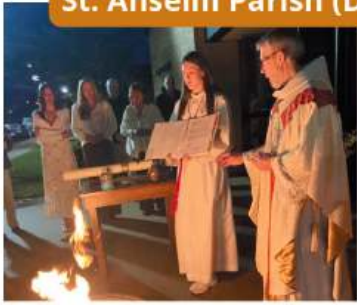


St. Patrick's (Minonk)



St. Mary's (Wenona)

St. Anselm Parish (Dearborn Heights, MI)



Postulants & Novices (Arroyo Grande, CA)



## FR. BENEDICT LA VOLPE'S ADVENTURES

Preaching a retreat for Maltese Friars at the Basilica and Tomb of St. Francis



Preaching a retreat for Friars in Subukia, Kenya



Making new friends

The Austalian Friars' Final Mass at St. Joseph Parish, Springvale, VIC  
Melbourne Archbishop Peter Comensoli presiding





St. Lawrence Seminary HS visit to Marytown



'Men of Christ' Conference, Milwaukee, WI

## FROM THE VOCATION OFFICE

BR. BERNARD MARY FONKALSRUD, OFM CONV., VOCATION DIRECTOR

The past three months have been filled with a mix of exciting vocation events around the Midwest, and a load of necessary administrative work as men submitted their applications for the 2026 Postulancy Program.

On Saturday, February 14, students from St. Lawrence Seminary High School, Mount Calvary, WI, visited the National Shrine of St. Maximilian Kolbe at Marytown, Libertyville, IL, and had the opportunity to learn more about the Conventual Franciscans and the witness of St. Maximilian Kolbe. Accompanied by their campus minister, Fr. Baudry Ulric Metangmo, OFM Cap., the students are part of a campus based discernment group.

I was blessed to be invited to present reflections on St. Maximilian Kolbe at St. Ann Parish, Pleasant Prairie, WI. I brought with me a First Class Relic of the Saint, which the Parish promoted ahead of time. The night began with a Eucharistic Holy Hour - because of the Relic, the organizers were astounded to have quadrupled the usual number in attendance. I offered reflections on the Eucharist, quoting a number of Franciscan saints. After veneration of the Relic, I spoke to their Confirmation students on St. Maximilian Kolbe and Lent.

On March 12, I was invited to co-present a talk on St. Francis and the Eucharist with Sr. Mary Ann Spanjers, OFS, from the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. The talk was held at the Catholic Center of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. On March 14, we had a Vocation Table at the 'Men of Christ' Conference (Milwaukee, WI); we also sponsored five men to attend the conference who are discerning with us. On March 20, I was asked to be a part of a Vocations Panel at the Theology on Tap event organized by Our Lady of Lourdes Young Adults, Green Bay, WI, together with a sister, diocesan priest, and a married couple. Between March 25-27 I facilitated a Vocation Table at Benedictine College (Atchison, KS) 'Vocation Fair,' and between April 13-16 I again assisted as a Spiritual Guide for the 'Busy Students Retreat' at St. Ambrose University (Davenport, IA).

Over the weekend of April 17-19, we held our first 'Come & See' weekend for 2026. Seven men were in attendance (one went home sick), and each expressed how much they enjoyed the experience and opportunity to engage with the community and learn more about the Franciscan life and our Province of St. Bonaventure. KEEP PRAYING FOR VOCATIONS!



Theology on Tap Vocations Pannel, Green Bay, WI



April 'Come & See' Weekend in Chicago

# REQUIESCAT IN PACE + FR. EDMOND DESFORGES

On Thursday, March 12, 2026, Fr. Edmond DesForges (76yo) passed into eternal life at Northwest Community Hospital, Arlington Heights, IL, after a short battle with pneumonia and organ failure; he had been a resident at St. Joseph's Home in Palatine, IL, run by the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Born in Chicago, IL, in 1949, Fr. Edmond had a love of the French language, inspired by his French-Canadian roots, studying it at Loyola University in Chicago, before entering the Conventual Franciscan Novitiate in Lake Forest, IL, and professing Solemn Vows in the 1970s. Completing his seminary studies at the University of St. Michael in Toronto, Canada, he was ordained to the priesthood on April 30, 1977, at St. Josaphat Basilica in Milwaukee, WI. Fr. Edmond served the community in parishes, chaplaincies, and at the Province's St. Hedwig Cemetery, but he will be most fondly remembered by staff and students during his years teaching in Detroit, MI, at both Saint Hedwig High School (Detroit, MI), and Divine Child High School (Dearborn Hights, MI).

Fr. Edmond's Wake Service was held on Monday evening, March 23, at the National Shrine of St. Maximilian Kolbe ('Marytown,' Libertyville, IL) and solemn Funeral Mass, presided by Very Rev. Paul Joseph Langevin, OFM Conv., Minister Provincial, also held at Marytown the following day with a good number of family, friars, and friends from around the country in attendance. Fr. Edmon's earthly body was laid to rest in the friars' section at St. Adalbert's Cemetery, Milwaukee, WI. May he, and all the dearly departed, rest in the peace of Christ.



'Edmond, Michael Glastetter, Juniper Kriss, Steve McKinley, Martin Schmitz and I took 40 people on a pilgrimage to France. One day we were in Normandy and it was raining sideways as it often does in Normandy and we managed to find a small cafe and Edmond ordered a pail of Mussels and when they arrived he was in Heaven! I can now see Michael and Juniper pulling up a seat for Edmond at the Heavenly Banquet and Jesus coming over and placing a pail of Mussels in front of Edmond saying, "Welcome to Heaven!"  
- Fr. Patrick Greenough, OFM Conv.



# NEWS FROM THE APOSTOLATES

## THE BASILICA OF ST. JOSAPHAT, MILWAUKEE, WI

### **MADRE PELEGRINA STATUE WELCOMED**

The faithful gathered with Archbishop Grob on Friday, April 20, to welcome the Madre Peregrina statue with a beautiful Mass at the Basilica of St. Josaphat, Milwaukee.

The Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico began an international tour with a Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe to prepare everyone for the 500th anniversary of the Apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Each location it visits will be holding special events for Pilgrims to come and learn about Our Lady of Guadalupe, to pray and offer their petitions with time to venerate this life sized image of Our Lady.

The primary purpose of the "Madre Peregrina" sculpture is to bring the spiritual presence and intercessory power of Our Lady of Guadalupe to communities worldwide, fostering peace, hope, and living faith among pilgrims.



### **FRIAR ANTHONY INSTITUTED A LECTOR**

On March 11, Friar Anthony Ruffolo, who is studying at Sacred Heart Seminary, Hales Corners, WI, was formally instituted as a Lector. The lector is instituted to proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture during the celebration of Holy Mass. Being instituted a Lector is a significant milestone on Friar Anthony's journey towards the Sacred Priesthood.



### **NEW JUBILEE SHRINE OF ST. FRANCIS**

On April 21, the Basilica welcomed Archbishop Grob as he formally blessed and commenced the new Jubilee Shrine of Saint Francis. Declared by Pope Leo XIV, the Jubilee Year of St. Francis, is a special time of grace, renewal and peace, celebrating his life and commemorating his death 800 years ago in 1226.



## MARY, MOTHER OF GOD PARISH, CHICAGO, IL

### **LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION**

Lunar New Year Celebration (February 2026) Mary, Mother of God Parish marked the Lunar New Year for the year of the Fire Horse with a celebration led by the parish's Vietnamese community (In Vietnam, this festival is called 'Tet').

Parishioners gathered at St. Thomas of Canterbury church for morning Mass followed by a lively reception. The church was decked in traditional decorations and the liturgy featured music from St. Thomas' Vietnamese choir. Mass ended with the iconic red envelope exchange and afterwards everyone went to the social hall for delicious food, music, and bingo!



### **LENTEN FILM SCREENING**

Mary, Mother of God Parish learned about the Franciscan Conventual St. Maximilian Kolbe through this year's Lenten Film Screening. The film "Triumph of the Heart" details St. Maximilian's final days at Auschwitz Concentration Camp before he sacrificed his life to save another prisoner. Before the screening, a bilingual introduction to the life and legacy of the friar was given in English and Spanish.



## NATIONAL SHRINE OF ST. MAXIMILIAN KOLBE, 'MARYTOWN' LIBERTYVILLE, IL

### ***DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY***

On Divine Mercy Sunday, Marytown was honored to welcome Fr. James Kubicki, SJ, as guest speaker for the Feast Day. After the recitation of the Divine Mercy Chaplat, Fr. James gave a powerful and insightful reflection for all those attending. Fr. James was the national director of the Apostleship of Prayer from 2003 to 2017, and currently leads retreats and parish missions while serving as a spiritual director at St. Francis de Sales Seminary in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

### ***SPRING HAS SPRUNG!***

With the weather getting gradually warmer, the grounds of Marytown are beginning to fill with spectacular color as the trees and freshly planted bulbs are blooming. The Spring season also brings with it an increase in visitors to the Shrine who can now make use of the outdoor spaces available for deeper prayer and reflection, including the Way of the Cross, the Rosary gardens, and shrines dedicated to the Infant Jesus, Sacred Heart, Divine Mercy, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Fatima, St. Jude, St. Anthony, St. Pio of Pietrelchina, and more. There is plenty of upkeep required with these amazing grounds, and Marytown relies greatly on the generosity of our benefactors who are always so generous in assisting to cover the costs to keep the Shrine beautiful.

### ***FRIAR JAMES MCCURRY RECIEVES INSTITUTE ON RELIGIOUS LIFE AWARD***

Friar James McCurry, OFM Conv., former minister provincial of Our Lady of the Angels Province, was honored on Apr. 11, 2026, as the 2026 *Pro Fidelitate et Virtute Award* recipient, by the Institute on Religious Life (IRL) at their annual meeting, this year themed "Mary, Mother and Model of the Consecrated Life," held at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois.



# A SPRING MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF MISSION ADVANCEMENT

JENNIFER GEORGIS, DIRECTOR OF MISSION ADVANCEMENT

Spring is the season when the Church reminds us that God is always doing something new. It is often quiet, often slow, but it is always faithful. Over the past 17 months, we have witnessed that same quiet, steady renewal within St. Bonaventure Province, and it is happening because of YOU.

Your generosity has not only sustained the friars in their daily ministries, but it has also helped our Province grow. As the friars prepare to gather for their quadrennial chapter this spring, I have had the privilege of preparing a comprehensive report on the work of the Office of Mission Advancement. What emerged was a clear, hopeful picture of a province moving forward with strength, stability, and renewed mission.

Because of your faithfulness, St. Bonaventure Province has seen remarkable increases in engagement, stewardship, and mission support. Over the past 17 months:

- **561%** year-over-year revenue growth supporting the friars since 2022
- **81%** growth in overall donor participation
- **89** new donors welcomed into our Franciscan family
- **61%** donor retention rate. The national average for faith-based nonprofits typically ranges from 45-55%

These are not just numbers. They are signs of a community that believes in the friars' mission and wants to help it flourish.

Because of your generosity:

- Elder friars receive the care, medication, and support they need after a lifetime of service.
- Student friars can study, pray, and grow into the next generation of Franciscan leaders.
- Ministries of mercy, preaching, and presence continue in parishes, schools, and neighborhoods where the friars serve quietly and faithfully.

As we move deeper into this Jubilee Year of St. Francis, we carry profound gratitude for you our partners in mission, our companions on the journey, our extended Franciscan family.



**Br. Martin Schmitz, OFM Conv. (96yo, seated)  
celebrated 75 Years of Religious Profession of Vows**

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUPPORT OUR MISSION?**

**Follow the link, or scan the QR code**

<https://franciscancommunity.org/donate/>



**THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR  
GENEROSITY!**

Roses at Marytown blooming for Spring





“Praised be you, my Lord,  
through our Sister, Mother Earth,  
who sustains us and directs us  
bringing forth all kinds of fruits  
and colored flowers and herbs.”

- St. Francis of Assisi, *Canticle of the Sun*

# UPCOMING EVENTS

**JULY 4 | INVESTITURE OF 2026/27 NOVICES, ARROYO GRANDE, CA**

**JULY 7 | WELCOME CEREMONY FOR 2026/27 POSTULANTS, CHICAGO, IL**

**JULY 20 - 24 | PART TWO OF PROVINCIAL CHAPTER, MARYTOWN, IL**

**JULY 22 | SIMPLE PROFESSION OF FRIAR GEORGE HARRIS, MARYTOWN, IL**

## FROM THE POST-NOVITIATE FORMATION HOUSE, TX



Veneration of the Cross



Friar Maximilian Anselm



Friar James Carlo



Friar Maximilian Anselm renews his Simple Vows



## LIVING OUR FAITH PODCAST

NEW EPISODE



### St. Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan Jubilee Year

with Archbishop Grob, Sr. Joanne Schatzlein, Fr. Bob Cook and Susan McNeil

Listen to the Podcast:

<https://tinyurl.com/fm97zj3f>



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