

FALL 2026

THE SERAPH

Newsletter of St. Bonaventure Province

NEWS & NOTEABLES:

New Faces Around the Province - 2
From the Minister General - 3
Vocation Office - 6
RIP + Br. Martin Schmitz - 7
News From the Apostolates - 8
From the SB Formundi - 12
Mission Advancement - 15
Upcoming Events & More - 16



St. Ita Crucifix - Shadow has a resemblance of St. Francis



FROM OUR PROVINCIAL

Fr. Paul Joseph

Greetings and peace to all!

As we celebrate the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi and mark the 800th anniversary of his passing into eternal life, we are invited once again to reflect on the gift of his life and the enduring power of the Gospel he embraced so completely. Eight centuries later, Saint Francis continues to inspire us to follow Christ with humility, simplicity, fraternity, and a heart open to all creation.

In this special anniversary year, we are grateful for the message of our Minister General to the Order, which reminds us that the Franciscan charism is not simply a treasured inheritance from the past, but a living vocation that calls us to renewal and faithful witness today. May Saint Francis help each of us to rediscover the joy of our calling and to share the peace of Christ with everyone we encounter.

We are also pleased to welcome our new friars to Saint Bonaventure Province: Valence, Masseo, Gregory, John, and Martin. We thank God for their presence among us and for the gifts they bring to our fraternity and ministries. May they find in our Province a home marked by prayer, mutual support, and a shared commitment to the Gospel.

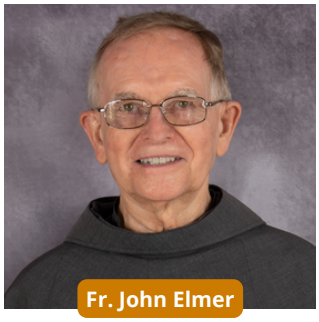
The pages of this newsletter offer a glimpse of the life and mission entrusted to us. From the blessing of animals and other celebrations at our ministry sites to the Marian Kolbe Conference and statue blessing at Marytown, these stories remind us that Franciscan life continues to touch hearts in many different ways. We also remember with gratitude our beloved +Br. Martin Schmitz, whose life and witness remain part of the story of our fraternity. We hold him in prayer and commend him to the loving mercy of God.

Continued on Page 2


Fr. Valence Kisaka


Fr. Masseo Gonzales


Fr. Gregory Wierzowiecki


Fr. John Elmer


Fr. Martin Buntov

SOME NEW FACES AROUND THE PROVINCE

Since the last edition of 'The Seraph,' there have been some new faces who have appeared in the Province. Fr. Valence Kisaka (Tanzania) and Fr. Masseo Gonzales (SJC Province) are assigned to assist at the National Shrine of St. Maximilian Kolbe ('Marytown') in Libertyville, IL; Fr. Gregory Wierzowiecki (Krakow, Poland) is assigned to assist with parochial ministry in Dearborn Heights, MI; Fr. John Elmer (OLC Province) will serve as 'wisdom figure' to the Postulancy Program in Chicago, IL; and Fr. Martin Buntov (Krakow, Poland) is assigned to assist with parochial ministry at St. Josaphat Basilica in Milwaukee, WI.

Continued from Page 1

As Provincial, I am deeply grateful for all who sustain our life and mission. To our friars, benefactors, donors, families, collaborators, and friends: thank you for your prayers, generosity, encouragement, and faithful support. Your partnership enables us to serve the Church, accompany those in need, educate and form future friars, and continue living the Franciscan way of life.

As we look toward the next chapter of our Province's story, may we remember that we are not simply preserving a legacy. We are called to make the Gospel visible through the way we live, serve, forgive, and love.

May Saint Francis intercede for us, and may the Lord bless you with His peace.

Peace and all good!

Fraternally in Saint Francis,

Friar Paul Joseph Langevin
Minister Provincial
St. Bonaventure Province, Midwest USA



FR. ARTURO FELIX - PROOF OF LIFE

Fr. Arturo Felix left in May 2026 to begin his doctoral studies in Rome and is residing at the Order's Seraphicum College. While we miss our dear confrere here in the Midwest, we are so pleased that he has this opportunity, which will greatly benefit himself and the Order. Fr. Arturo is not one to take pictures of himself, nor does he have social media, BUT, we were able to spot him in this candid photo during the Transistus service. Please keep Fr. Arturo in your prayers during his studies!



FROM THE MINISTER GENERAL



Greetings to the Entire Order
Solemnity of St. Francis 2026
Jubilee Year

Dearest brothers,
May my jubilee greetings reach you!

God's Providence has willed that we, of all people, should live through and celebrate the 800th anniversary of St. Francis' passing from this world to the Father, and for this we are truly grateful.

As we celebrate this unique event, let us ask for the grace to know how to "take a risk." Let me explain: to risk ourselves completely so that our lives may mirror St. Francis of Assisi, who, after stripping himself of everything, chose to die to himself and learned to return every good thing he received to the Lord. He allowed the Spirit of the Lord, through His holy work, to bring to full bloom within him perfect joy and that springtime of faith that, even today, countless men and women throughout the world recognize and admire.

Brothers, "the one who sows for the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit" (Gal. 6:8).

Therefore, I invite you to celebrate this year by taking, both within yourselves and in your fraternities, a decisive step toward conversion and renewal in following the Seraphic Father—a step that will make your commitment to the Lord fuller and more wholehearted, without settling for the bare minimum.

Let us take the risk! Let us ask the Lord for the strength to free ourselves from worldly temptations and ways of thinking, so that we may dare to pursue holiness!

As we, the Ministers General of the Franciscan Family, recalled in the document 2023–2026: A Multifaceted Centenary Celebrating Several Centenaries, issued on January 1, 2022: "Celebrating the passing of the Poverello is an occasion to remember that we are all called to holiness and that, like Francis, we are invited to reflect the beauty of the Gospel and of our Franciscan vocation …"

Beloved brothers, I wish you a fruitful celebration of this Centenary and a renewed and courageous commitment to discipleship along the paths of the Lord, in the spirit of Francis of Assisi, St. Clare, and the first fraternities.

Assisi, October 3, 2026

fr. Carlos A. Trovarelli

Friar Carlos A. TROVARELLI
Minister General



SIGILLUM MINISTRI GENERALIS OFM CONV.

PET BLESSINGS AROUND THE PROVINCE

House of Studies - Chicago, IL





Mary, Mother of God Parish - Chicago, IL









Marytown - Libertyville, IL





Basilica of St. Josaphat - Milwaukee, WI

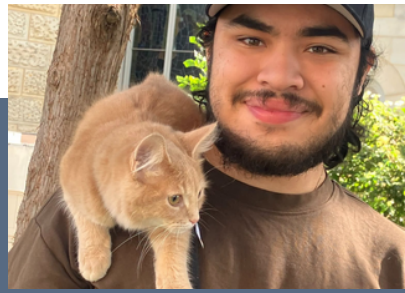






St. Anselm Parish - Dearborn Heights, MI





THE 800TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TRANSITUS OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI





Marytown, Libertyville, IL





Inter-Franciscan Transitus, Mary, Mother of God Parish, Chicago, IL









Post-Novitiate Formation Community, Inter-Franciscan Transitus, San Antonio, TX



Sts. Peter & Lambert Parish Day, Skokie, IL



Fenwick High School Vocations Mass
Oak Park, IL

FROM THE VOCATION OFFICE

Br. Bernard Mary Fonkalsrud, OFM Conv., Vocation Director

After the busy first half of the year, the month of August gave a small reprieve from major events and allowed for some time to recuperate and plan for the coming months. During this time, I was able to visit our Kenyan Friars in Algoma, WI, and share our Franciscan charism with families beginning CCD classes at St. Mary's Parish during an evening of fun activities at a local parishioner-owned farm.

Aside from continuing to Zoom with vocation inquirers and facilitate some individual visits, the first major event for the second part of the year was the local St. Bonaventure Province 'Come & See' weekend at the House of Studies, Chicago, IL. Twelve discerners attended the weekend, held from September 25-27, where they were able to encounter the resident Postulants and Friars. The experience included praying the Liturgy of the Hours, Holy Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, the Franciscan Crown, times for sharing personal stories and having the chance to ask questions. Participants also received introductions to St. Francis of Assisi and the Conventual Franciscan tradition, and were able to visit our local ministry sites nearby. A good number have expressed their desire to attend the next Come & See weekend at Marytown in December.

(See pictures on back page)

On Saturday, October 3, I had the opportunity to join Sts. Peter and Lambert Parish, Skokie, IL, for their 'Parish Day' with CCD Families and open to all parishioners - I presented a talk on 'Faith in the Family & Community Building.' It was a great turn out, and the Franciscan Saints holy cards were a big hit. On Wednesday, October 6, Fenwick High School, a Dominican School, invited a number of Religious to join them for a 'Vocations Mass & Breakfast' where students had the opportunity to engage and learn more about discerning a vocation to Religious Life and the Priesthood.

The University of Iowa invited me to join them for their 'Fall Retreat,' held over October 9-11. The retreat was themed around the Jubilee Year of St. Francis, 'Go, Rebuild My Church,' and I presented a talk on 'Relationship.' After, I was also invited to present a talk on Fr. Kolbe at the University of Northern Iowa and offer Spiritual Direction over a few days. From October 23-25, I also assisted at and presented vocational talks at the 'Koinonia' Retreat for the male students at the University of Wisconsin, Platteville. All these experiences were grace filled, and offered me quality time to engage with students and have meaningful discussions on faith and discernment.



University of Iowa Fall Retreat,
Br. Bernard Mary's talk on 'Relationship'



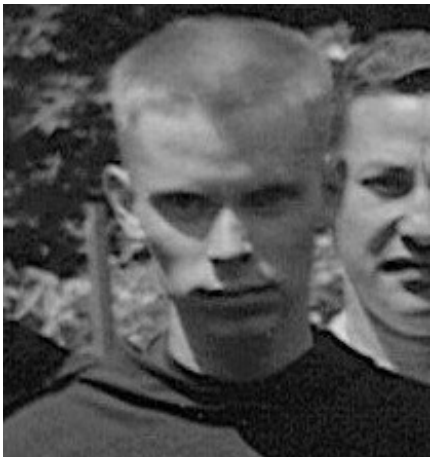
Br. Bernard Mary and University of Iowa students recreating the painting 'Washington Crossing of the Delaware'

REQUIESCAT IN PACE
+BR. MARTIN SCHMITZ

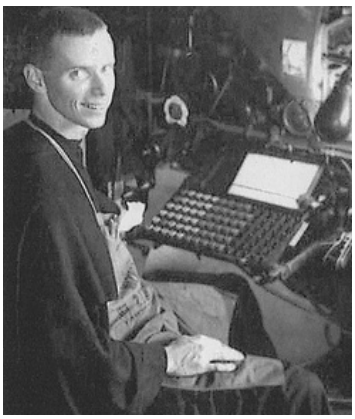
On Monday, August 24, 2026, +Br. Martin Schmitz was embraced by Sister Death at the Little Sisters of the Poor – St. Joseph Home for the Elderly in Palatine, IL, aged 96, and having been a Franciscan Religious Brother for over 75 years. His loss is felt throughout the Province of St. Bonaventure and beyond; he was the last of the pioneers of Marytown and among its first vocations in 1948. He lived his life inspired by the witness of St. Francis and St. Maximilian Kolbe, and was completely dedicated to serving the Immaculata.

The Franciscan Wake Service was held in the Chapel of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament at the National Shrine of St. Maximilian Kolbe (Marytown) on Thursday evening, August 27, 2026. With Fr. Lawrence Zurek presiding, the Wake Service was well attended by many friars, staff, and friends. Br. Joseph Wood gave a touching tribute to Br. Martin, reflecting on his saintly character, devoted life, and tireless commitment to our Order and mission.

The following day, the Minister Provincial of St. Bonaventure Province, Very Rev. Paul Joseph Langevin, presided over the solemn Holy Mass of Christian Burial at Marytown. The Chapel was full of people, all gathering to bid farewell to God's "good and faithful servant." As his casket was placed into the hearse, the friars chanted the 'Salve Regina,' asking Our Lady's intercession for the soul of Br. Martin. He was laid to rest in the friar's section in St. Adalbert Cemetery, Milwaukee, WI.

















NEWS FROM THE APOSTOLATES

THE BASILICA OF ST. JOSAPHAT, MILWAUKEE, WI

ARCHDIOCESAN YA KICKBALL TOURNEY

They might not have brought the golden ball trophy back home to the 'Dome,' but the Basilica Young Adults sure gave it their all at the Archdiocesan Young Adult Kickball Tournament held on Saturday, September 12. Our own Fr. Martin Buntov also joined in on the kickball fun!





FRANCISCAN 'CORDA PIA' DEVOTION

The Corda Pia is a centuries-old sung devotion, unique to the Conventual Franciscan Order. Its earliest attestation is the 16th century, though it could be older. It is sung in the context of a procession in honor of the Stigmata of St. Francis. On October 2, the Basilica continued this ancient tradition, together with the friars, parishioners, and members of other Franciscan and Religious communities. Through the beautiful chanting, solemn candle-light procession, and recitation of prayers, this was the perfect meditation to begin commemorations of the 800th anniversary of the death of Saint Francis of Assisi.









USCCB BISHOPS AT THE BASILICA

On October 7, the Basilica welcomed Archbishop Grob and bishops from the USCCB Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions during their visit to Milwaukee. The Friars and parish community expressed gratitude for the committee's work supporting Catholic communities with limited resources and offered their continued prayers for the bishops and their mission.









BASILICA OCIA SESSIONS BEGIN

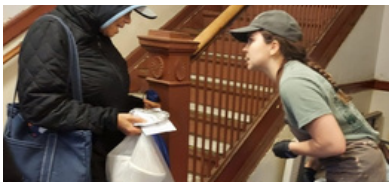
The Basilica Parish OCIA and Adult Confirmation programs for the year have kicked off, and praise be to God for around 80 people currently participating! The largest in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

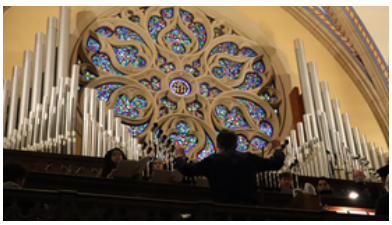


MARY, MOTHER OF GOD PARISH, CHICAGO, IL








SYMPOSIUM ON MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS

On Saturday, September 19, St. Gregory's Hall hosted "Work, Family, & Human Dignity in the Digital Age: A Symposium on Pope Leo XIV's Encyclical Magnifica Humanitas." This symposium reflected on the encyclical, understanding its place in the context of the Church's social teaching and the particular ways it addresses concerns for human dignity in work, family, and economic life.

'PACK HOPE - RETURN HOPE'

Parishioners and St. Vincent de Paul Society volunteers packed more than 200 drawstring bags filled with toiletries and essentials to share with people at the St. Thomas of Canterbury Food Panty & Soup Kitchen. The bags also included reusable water bottles and $20 in "Chicago Shares" vouchers, which can be used to buy meals.

FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Mary, Mother of God Parish had a very full and beautiful celebration of the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Sunday, October 4. Each of the the Parish churches were priviledged to use the readings for the Feast, rather than the usual Sunday readings that day. The liturgies were solemn, the preaching was truly inspired, and the parishioners felt so blessed to be a part of the Franciscan Family. In addition to the Sunday Masses, the Parish also hosted a '800th Anniversary Concert,' taking St. Francis' own writings and setting them to music. St. Ita Church's Director of Music, Mr. Dan Lagacy, curated a selection of original works for chamber orchestra & choir. It was a deeply reverent performance enjoyed by all.

NEIGHBORHOOD ROSARY WALK

The first 'Rosary Walk' of October was a blessed success! The Militia of the Immaculata joined the Saturday morning Mass crew at St. Ita Church before walking through the neighborhood, praying.

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

MARIAN KOLBE CONFERENCE & AWARD

On August 15, the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Marytown hosted their annual Marian Kolbe Conference. Mr. Joshua Mazrin, author and M.I. National Council Member, presented an engaging talk on St. Maximilian Kolbe and our Blessed Mother. Following the talk, Mr. Peter Ptak, longtime friend and employee of Marytown, received the annual Kolbe Award for his service to the Church and living out his Marian consecration at an extraordinary level.







NEW STATUE UNVEILED AND BLESSED

On the same day as the Marian Kolbe Conference, Marytown celebrated the unveiling of a brand-new bronze statue at the front entrance of the Shrine. Sculpted in Poland and cast in the Ukraine, the statue depicts the Blessed Virgin Mary atop the globe, with St. Maximilian Kolbe kneeling in veneration. Hundreds of people, including a large Polish delegation, were present for the Assumption Mass. With so many people, extra attendees were seated in overflow areas in both the welcome center and Founder's Hall where the Mass was livestreamed. Fr. Lawrence Zurek celebrated the Mass, assisted by Dcn. Tom Gaida, with local friar priests and polish clergy concelebrating. The beautiful music was provided by a mix of the organ and cantor, together with a Polish Orchestra. After the Mass, Polish delegates read out letters from the Office of the President of the Republic of Poland, and from the Guardian of Niepokalanów, the friary which St. Maximilian Kolbe founded. Though there had been rain, when it came time to go outside for the unveiling and blessing of the new statue, the clouds dispersed and everyone was able to enjoy the occasion without the threat of getting wet.











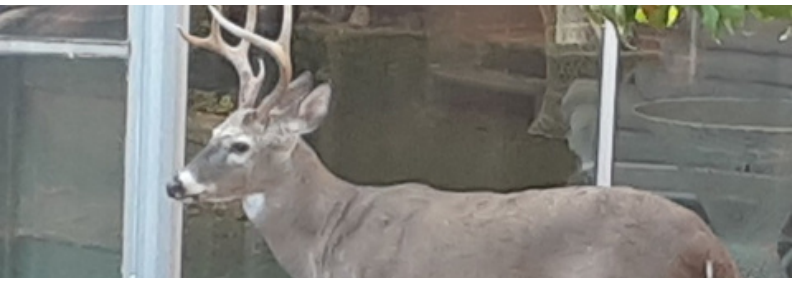




ST. ANSELM & ST. LINUS PARISHES, ST. HEDWIG CEMETERY
DEARBORN HEIGHTS, MI









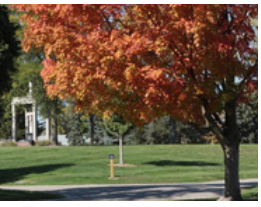


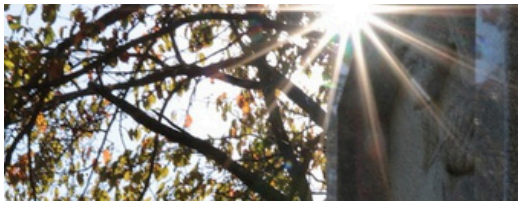












PARISH FRANCISCAN CELEBRATIONS

St. Anselm and St. Linus parishes started off the three day weekend by participating together in the Transitus, which took place at St. Linus Parish. Many parishioners of both parishes had never been a part of such a service and thought it was wonderful and moving. Each parish then had their own services for blessing the animals and celebrating the Feast of St. Francis during the weekend Masses. All Saints Friary also had two vocation guests, Kevin Howey and Jake VanDerLinden, both from the Detroit area. They are actively discerning the Franciscan life and potentially entering into formation with our Province. Since they are locals, Fr. Hans Flondor asked them to come visit over the weekend of the Feast of St. Francis. A week or so later, St. Francis sent an unusual visitor to the friary backyard. He has many points atop of his head!

NEW MARIAN STATUES FOR CLASSROOMS

In the classrooms of St. Anselm School, the Knights of Columbas noticed that many of our older statues of Mary had become chipped and worn over time. They took up a collection and bought each of the school rooms new small Marian statues, fourteen in total. At one of the weekly school Masses, Fr. Hans Flondor blessed them all. Our Lady is surrounded by Third Graders as they show off their new statues of Mary. For a closer look, principal Brian Ownes displays one of the statues.

AUTUMN AT ST. HEDWIG CEMETERY

Autumn has been slowly unveiling itself in Dearborn Heights and the Detroit area. The leaves are beginning to change their colors and fall in different areas of St. Hedwig Cemetery. The days get to the upper sixties or lower seventies, and you wake up to nice crisp mornings just below forty degrees. We have a room for you to retreat in here at All Saints Friary.

FROM THE FORMUNDI OF ST. BONAVENTURE

POSTULANTS



My time in Postulancy over the past three months has been a very blessed experience. It has left me feeling grateful for the opportunity to live in community and I have grown deeper in my appreciation for the Conventual Franciscan charism. As a group, our class seems to have gelled fairly quickly and we already seem able to be relaxed and just be ourselves around each other. Since arriving, I have especially enjoyed the opportunities to develop a more structured prayer life, enjoy times of fraternity with my fellow postulants, and engage in the different apostolates. A highlight for me recently was getting to celebrate the transitus of St. Francis at St. Ita Church and to see so many different Franciscans come together to celebrate the passing of their founder.

Hello, my name is Alex Teich and my Postulancy experience has been extremely fruitful for my discernment. I believe I have progressed and grown more than any other time in my life in these few months here. We have fantastic classes led by Friars and mentorship by those Friars living in the formation house with us. We also have had the privilege of learning an array of topics from different Friars from all over. Also, after a few months in ministry, we have begun to form very impactful relationships with those who we minister to. All we are asked is to try to do what God wants us to do each day, step by step increasing our faith. I am very grateful to be here and am extremely excited about the future!





It has been an engaging three months of Postulancy thus far. The ministries we do as postulants in the soup kitchen and visiting and assisting with the residents at the Little Sisters of the Poor have been eye opening, finding Christ in the people we serve. As I have a love and fascination with history, especially when it comes to history in the Church, I find it intriguing to learn about the history of the order and have appreciated the classes we have had on that topic. I believe that as the months have gone by we have been bonding a little more not only as a class but as brothers, something I think St. Francis would be proud of.

These last few months have proven formative in ways that I never could have expected or prepared for. Postulancy, both in and out of the house, has taught me many things I didn't know that I needed or wanted to know! Having recently gone through a multitude of unexpected medical tests and procedures, it is easy to get caught up in the negatives. Yet, it is just as easy to forget them in the joy of community, whether that be common prayer or common ministry, where I often find the most joy.





Postulancy has been one of the most growth-filled and fulfilling times of my life. I have met so many people from different walks of life that have really opened my eyes to so many different perspectives. I have gotten close to all the other guys and had plenty of laughs, as well as making memories to carry with me for life. While postulancy has its ups and downs, it's a massive learning experience, and I am so excited to see where it continues to take us.

NOVICES



CRAIG

Novitiate has been a wonderful experience so far. The rhythm of prayer and solitude in sunny California has been good for me, and I truly feel that I am growing a great deal, both spiritually and personally. Much of my free time is spent reading, and I have enjoyed reading eighteen books over these past four months! One of our brothers discerned out, which was very sad, but I know he must follow the path that will help him live his holiest life. The rest of the community is doing great, and we all get along very well. The formators and professed friars are a joy to be around, and I am grateful for their presence and guidance. I look forward to the rest of the year and seeing how this experience continues to shape me for the better.

My Novitiate experience so far has been a period of both rest and challenge. Being away from the distractions of social media and the outside world has allowed me to learn to live in the present moment and take on new good habits. I have been able to wake up earlier each day to go on runs around the neighborhood and end the day by reading a few chapters from a book. Some of the challenges have been the lack of instant communication with loved ones and coming up with new dishes to cook for the community once my turn to cook for the week rolls around. Despite the difficulties, I am grateful to have these opportunities for me to grow and stretch myself to give more to God and others.



JOSHUA

SIMPLY PROFESSED



MAXIMILIAN ANSELM

My name is Friar Maximilian Anselm Rewa, and I am in my fourth and final year of simple vows and studies at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. I am preparing for priesthood ordination and will earn a Master of Divinity (MDiv.) and a Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology (STB) in May 2027. After graduation, I will make solemn profession before being ordained a deacon and priest. During my time at San Damiano Friary, I have served the poor, taught OCIA, engaged in social justice advocacy, and participated in campus ministry at Our Lady of the Lake University. I have also enjoyed recreation with fellow friars and friends. Though I feel ready for the next step in my journey, I will dearly miss the people I have met and cherish the memories made in San Antonio.

I am Friar James Carlo Muzzey, currently in my second year of simple vows and pursuing a BA in Pastoral Ministry with a concentration in Philosophy. I am actively involved in my school's OCIA program, where it is a true joy to accompany individuals on their journey of faith as they learn about the Catholic Church and prepare to become Catholic. Through this ministry, I have the opportunity to share in their spiritual growth while deepening my own understanding and appreciation of the Catholic faith. I look forward to continuing my formation and studies as I grow in my vocation and seek to serve God and His people.



JAMES CARLO



RAPHAEL MARIA

Life in San Antonio has been going well, with school and the beginnings of post-novitiate formation. We have weekly classes on Franciscan themes, including the Franciscan sources and ways of understanding Scripture through a Franciscan perspective. So far, I am doing very well in my classes and enjoying the opportunity to deepen my understanding of our Franciscan tradition. The only real hurdle has been adjusting to the climate and allergies in the San Antonio area. The other friars here have been very welcoming, and we are doing well in building fraternal life together. Overall, I am grateful for this new stage of formation and look forward to continuing to learn, grow, and deepen my vocation alongside my brother friars.

PLEASE, KEEP THESE MEN IN YOUR PRAYERS,
AND CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR AN INCREASE IN VOCATIONS!
THANK YOU!

EXTRA NEWS BITS

RELIC MISSION OF ST. CARLO ACUTIS VISITS MARY, MOTHER OF GOD PARISH

The Conventual Franciscan friars of Mary, Mother of God Parish welcomed Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino, the former Bishop of Assisi, on Saturday, September 5 for Mass, veneration of relics, and a reflection on St. Carlo Acutis and his connection to the Saints of Assisi. Archbishop Sorrentino is the curator of the tomb and relics of St. Carlo Acutis, the first millennial saint. He was a gracious celebrant and provided a wonderful reflection on St. Carlo, with many in attendance eager to learn more about one of the newest canonized saints.









FRIAR ANTHONY INSTITUTED ACOLYTE

On Wednesday, October 21, at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology in Hales Corners, Wisconsin, Friar Anthony Ruffolo and four other men were instituted as Acolytes by Most Rev. Robert Coerver, the Bishop of Lubbock, Texas. Friars from St. Josaphat Basilica, together with Br. Joseph Wood and Anthony's mother, were in attendance. This institution is just one necessary step closer to priestly ordination.





BASILICA FOUNDATION ANNUAL GALA

More than 200 guests gathered for the St. Josaphat Basilica Foundation's 'Heritage and Hope Gala,' October 10, enjoying live string quartet music, silent and live auctions, and an evening of fellowship. The event raised over $330,000 in support of the Basilica's preservation and restoration.





'MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS' IN CHICAGO

During the week of October 12–16, the Postulants welcomed Fr. Paul Lininger, CFF Director for 'Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation' (JPIC), to Chicago, IL. Through engaging classes based on the Pope's recent encyclical, he introduced key principles of Catholic social teaching that uphold human dignity amid today's challenges.



A FALL MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF MISSION ADVANCEMENT

AN UNBROKEN CHAIN: THANK YOU, AND A LOOK AHEAD TO CHRISTMAS

A Ministry Handed On

If there is a season for saying thank you, it is autumn. The harvest is in, the evenings turn quiet, and gratitude comes a little more easily. This year, our gratitude is bound up with something larger than any one of us: the long tradition of Franciscan ministry, and the part you play in it. On the evening of October 3, 1226, St. Francis lay dying on the bare ground at the Porziuncola, the little chapel below Assisi. He left his brothers a few simple words: ***"I have done what is mine to do. May Christ teach you what is yours."*** His brothers could have let it end there. Instead, they took up what was theirs to do, learning it as Francis had: in prayer. St. Bonaventure, whose name our province carries. St. Maximilian Kolbe, a Conventual friar who gave his life for another man at Auschwitz. Link by link, Franciscans have handed on the Gospel by living it among the poor, the sick and the forgotten. That chain has never been broken.

Today it runs through our own friars. One sits at a bedside through our ministry with the Little Sisters of the Poor. Another serves a meal at the St. Thomas of Canterbury soup kitchen or welcomes a stranger at Marytown. Our Vocation Director walks alongside a young man listening for whether God is calling him, asking the question Francis left his brothers: what is mine to do?

This is ministry: not a program, but a grace. The friars meet Christ in the people they serve, and those they serve discover they are not alone. The grace runs both ways. The friars have never done this alone. All year long, you have prayed for them, given to them, and kept faith with them. At every bedside and every table, your support stands with them. Thank you. You are part of this story, and we are deeply grateful for you.

A Special Thank You for the Feast Day Collection

On the weekend of October 3–4, our parishes celebrated the Feast of St. Francis and the 800th anniversary of his Transitus, his holy passing to God. Across the province, parishioners answered the second collection for our core ministries with their characteristic generosity. To everyone who gave: thank you. Your gifts sustain our friars and their ministry. In giving, you shared in it. A special thanks to Queen of All Saints Parish in Wenona, Illinois, which joined the Feast Day collection for the first time. Fr. Paul Joseph celebrated the Masses there, and his warm welcome was a beautiful reminder that the Franciscan family keeps growing.

Coming This Christmas: The Chain of Grace

Our Christmas Appeal this year is called the Chain of Grace, and its theme says it plainly: **800 years. One chain. And you are part of it.** Every person who supports our friars takes hold of the next link. To give is to share in the vision Francis received at San Damiano when he heard Christ say, ***"Go, repair my house."*** That work goes on, and you are invited into it. Like prayer, a gift is spiritual work: loosening our hold on what we have and offering it back to God, as Francis did. So, we also invite you to walk this journey with us in prayer. Like Francis's first brothers, our thirteen postulants are asking Christ to teach them what is theirs to do. This Advent, please pray for them, for our elderly and infirm brothers, and for all those the friars serve.

Watch your mailbox the week before Thanksgiving for our Chain of Grace letter. When it arrives, we hope you'll take hold of the chain with us.

Thank you for taking your place in this chain of grace, through your giving and your prayer. What Francis began in Assisi, you are helping to hand on. May Christ teach each of us what is ours to do. You and your loved ones are remembered daily in the friars' prayers and at the altar.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUPPORT OUR MISSION?

Scan the QR code

or, Follow the link,
https://franciscancommunity.org/donate/





Labor Day Celebrations in Toluca, IL, with Fr. Steve McKinley dressed as George Washington, and Fr. Patrick Greenough dressed as a Colonist

> **"Study always to have Joy,
> for it befits not the servant of God
> to show before his brother
> or another sadness or a troubled face."**
>
> **- St. Francis of Assisi**
> ***The Mirror of Perfection* by Br. Leo of Assisi**

UPCOMING EVENTS

NOV 13-15 | CFF COME & SEE WEEKEND, CHICAGO, IL

DEC 4-6 | SB COME & SEE WEEKEND, MARYTOWN, LIBERTYVILLE, IL

JAN 4 | EPIPHANY PARTY, MARYTOWN, LIBERTYVILLE, IL

NOV 5 | DEC 15 | JAN 7 | SB DEFINITORY MEETINGS, MARYTOWN, LIBERTYVILLE, IL

St. Bonaventure Province, September 2026 'Come & See' Weekend, Chicago House of Studies *(more info on Page 6)*










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