

Our Lady of Indiana Regional Fraternity

January-March 2025

50th Anniversary of Joan Hamnik's Profession



*Pictured from left: Jan Mucha
(Joan's daughter), Joan Hamnik,
OFS, and Fr. Don Blaesus, OFM.*

On November 16, Our Lady of Lourdes Fraternity celebrated the 50th anniversary of Joan Hamnik's profession in the Secular Franciscan Order (November 17, 1974). This milestone was honored during our annual Mass of Remembrance, celebrated by our Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Don Blaesus, OFM. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Fr. Don for presiding over this special occasion and for his unwavering support of our fraternity.

Joan's 50 years as a professed Secular Franciscan have been marked by her deep commitment to living the Gospel life and serving others in the spirit of St. Francis. Her dedication and contributions have inspired countless fraternity members and enriched our Franciscan family.

Following the Mass, fraternity members gathered to celebrate Joan's remarkable journey with a potluck meal. Joan's daughter, Jan Mucha, also joined the celebration, adding a special family touch to this joyous occasion.

In addition to her work as a Secular Franciscan, Joan served as the head Sacristan at St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Schererville, IN, for 50 years. She feels privileged and honored to have served the Lord in this capacity. Joan wanted to highlight this role to demonstrate how Secular Franciscans make a meaningful difference both through Church ministries and in the broader world.

We are deeply grateful for Joan's lifetime of service and pray for God's continued blessings on her as she continues to walk in the footsteps of St. Francis.

"We, the Secular Franciscans of Our Lady of Indiana Regional Fraternity, are called by virtue of Baptism and Confirmation to holiness. We are committed by our Profession to living the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in our time according to the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi for the rebuilding of the Church.

With the help of Mary our Advocate, Protectress, and Patroness, we will foster prayer, vital fraternities, and communication. We will provide direction, support and resources to local fraternities for understanding and implementing the Rule, the General Constitutions, and the National Statutes of the Secular Franciscan Order, and our Regional Fraternity Guidelines."

A Word from Our Minister...

As December began there was an air of expectancy, anticipation, excitement, and joyfulness. Our family has held the tradition of the (Advent) Jesse Tree since my oldest grandson was three-and-a-half years old. It won't be quite the same next year as he'll be going off to college in the fall, destination yet unknown. So, it's a different kind of longing, hopefulness, and savoring. The prayers and handmade symbols are very unique. We all look forward to clearing the table after dinner to light the Advent candles, read the Scriptures, and say the prayers each evening. We've pondered and discussed the many aspects of what it must have been like for a pregnant Mary and worrying Joseph to journey over rough terrain for seeming endless days and nights only to reach Bethlehem and find no inn to deliver the baby Jesus. The Incarnation is the greatest event in all of history. Time is measured as BC, Before Christ, and AD, After Christ's birth. It is the greatest love story of all time. John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

In keeping with the tradition of the Jesse Tree, it was also time to bring out my photographs of Greccio. I had the distinct pleasure of visiting this remarkable little town during one of Sister Agnes Marie's Assisi pilgrimages. As you're pulling into the parking lot, what initially catches your attention is the fact the village was carved into the side of a mountain. Then you begin to wonder how you're going to get up there. As your eyes follow the stone wall, you see a lovely statue of St. Francis, then you focus on the towering stone stairway that leads to the monastic complex of Greccio up above. It is composed of a sanctuary, known as the hermitage, that contains the original chapel, a church, and in its crypt, there are preserved frescos from the 14th century and the nativity scene. There in an adjacent room are displayed creches from around the world, from the simplest to the very ornate renderings of the nativity. It is amazing to see how the most basic materials are utilized to create a work of spiritual art next to ornate and hand-carved models. Each inspires a sense of awe and wonder. As we entered the church, there was a life-sized tableau of the nativity. I could have spent the day sitting in front of this life-like creche just feeling the experience of the story of the first Christmas. We celebrated Mass in the church and its uniqueness remains with me still.

Last year, the whole Franciscan family focused on celebrating the five-hundred-year anniversary of St. Francis' reenactment of the birth of Jesus in Greccio, Italy: bringing to life Francis' visualization of Jesus' birth. He made it feel real to all who witnessed it. God became man in the form of a tiny baby and changed the world forever, bringing love and hope to a longing world.

May the Lord bless you and your families and grant you joy, peace, and happiness this Christmas season.

Cyndi

The Incarnation



The Formation Corner

At the Mass I attended on Christmas day, I was struck by the first reading from Isaiah. It begins with a message that glad tidings of salvation are coming to Zion, and then goes on to say that, even as the sentinels announce the arrival of the messenger, the “Lord [is] restoring Zion.”

I thought, “What does restore mean?” Lo and behold, when I looked it up, the second definition had a wonderfully familiar word to us Franciscans: *repair or renovate (a building, work of art, vehicle, etc.) so as to return it to its original condition*. OK, I might have gotten just a little bit excited about this. In order to let this idea gel a little,

On Thursday, as I was about to pray Psalm 128 in the Liturgy of the Hours (Vol IV, page 1128), I came to the line, “May the Lord bless you from Zion all the days of your life.” Just above this Psalm was a quote from Arnobius that Zion refers to the Church.

When I put Isaiah, Christmas, and Arnobius together, what emerged was that God was rebuilding the Church through His Son. Now this statement needs some clarification. To that end, let’s look at the word Church.

Now we must return to our Jewish roots. This takes us to the Hebrew word *qahal*, which means *assembly*. To put this in some kind of context: on Ash Wednesday, if we were to read the first reading from the prophet Joel in Hebrew, it would be very familiar to us when we read *proclaim a fast, call an assembly* (*qahal*). From Hebrew, we go to Greek for the same word, which is *ekklesia*, then to Latin (*ecclesia*), then to Germanic/Saxon (*kirke*), then to modern English (*Church*). This makes sense when we understand the Church to be the people of God and not a mere structure, no matter how humble (like San Damiano) or grand (like Notre Dame cathedral) it may be.

Where am I going with this?

When St. Francis was praying in that little run-down church of San Damiano more than 800 years ago, he was told to “go rebuild My house,” that is the Church (FA:ED, Vol II, page 249). At first, as we know, he took the instruction literally, but gradually came to understand its deeper meaning. In other words, he heard and responded; he was obedient. For those of us to be called to “follow in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi” (Rule, article 1), we are also called to rebuild the Church.

To return to the Christmas Mass reading, God wants His Church, his assembly, his people, to be restored. We are called to that mission. In this way, we become active participants in the ongoing work of “redemptive obedience” (Rule, article 10). It is the path to life.

I am reminded of the story from a few years ago when the Holy Father spoke with Tibor Kauser, our Minister General. He said to Tibor, “You are the head of the largest Order in the Church. Where are you?” I don’t know what Tibor answered, but I know what my answer would have been in light of our mandate to rebuild/restore the Church. At the risk of sounding cheeky, I would have responded with the question, “Holy Father, where are you looking for us? If you’re looking for us in ivory towers and cathedrals, you might find a very select few of us there, but you’re likelier to find us working in soup kitchens or food pantries, in nursing homes or hospitals, in schools, in parishes, or wherever there is a need. That is where Christ would have been; that is where St. Francis would have been; and that is where we are now. It is where we are called to rebuild the Church.

Peace and all good!

Your little sister, Barb

Immaculate Conception fraternity



Immaculate Conception fraternity, Mishawaka, had its triennial elections on November 16, 2024. Pictured from left to right are JoAnne Podemski, Councilor; Ruthi Carrillo, Secretary; Tim Short, Formation Director; Caroline Ramirez, Minister; Arthur Singleton, Councilor; Ray Daly, Treasurer; and Jorge Muniz, Vice Minister. Thanks to these brothers and sisters for their willingness to serve their fraternity.

Profession Anniversaries

HOLY FAMILY

1/6/2019 Eric Bobilya
 1/6/2019 Gina Lee
 1/8/2017 Francis Albert,
 1/8/2017 Michael Maloney
 1/8/2017 Susan Maloney
 2/10/2008 Kathy Harpel,
 3/17/1985 Jon Cooper
 3/18/1981 George Foster

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

2/6/2004 Patricia Bellm
 3/19/2007 Jim Fuchs

LADY CLARE

1/26/1987 David White
 1/26/1987 Kathleen White

LITTLE PORTION

2/1/2020 Michael Booth
 2/1/2020 Michael Moon
 3/15/1989 Pauline Creutzburg
 3/15/1989 David Dieringer

OUR LADY OF LOURDES

3/17/2018 Gloria Walker

PEOPLE OF PEACE

2/9/1998 William Manning III

PEOPLE OF PEACE

2/13/1984 Shelia Gilbert
 3/28/1983 Joseph Stetzel

ST. ANTHONY

3/25/2014 Luann Bartlett
 3/25/2014 Lory Lee
 3/25/2014 Jake Marhoefer
 3/25/2014 Melinda Marhoefer

ST. BONIFACE

1/26/2019 Karen Sullivan
 3/6/1977 Betty Price

ST. CHARLES

1/22/2012 Karen Amstutz

ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS

1/26/1992 Paul Krilich
 3/17/2018 Joseph Martinez
 3/20/1994 Mary Mitchell

ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS

3/20/1994 Barbara Wiecinski
 3/24/1991 Joanna Polanski

ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

3/27/2011 Judy Johnson

ST. ROSE OF VITERBO

2/13/2005 Carlos Montanez

*The Regional newsletter is published in January, April, July, and October on the first of the month. The deadlines to submit news, such as professions, retreats/days of reflection, election results, etc., are due by the 15th of the month prior to publication. **Ministers**, please email submissions to: Barb Braley at bbraley345@gmail.com.*

Our Lady of Lourdes Fraternity Profession

On October 19, 2024, in front of family, friends and Our Lady of Lourdes Fraternity, four ladies made their profession to “live all the days of my life the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Secular Franciscan Order by observing its rule of life.” Diane Gralewski, Jean Simpson, Michele Toney and Charina Bernarte, pledged their permanent commitment to love and follow Jesus, our Lord in closer unity with the Church by embracing His gospel life through the Secular Franciscan Rule as professed members of Our Lady of Lourdes Fraternity more deeply. This joyous occasion was made before our Eucharistic Lord during a Mass celebrated by our Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM. Additionally, his fellow friar Fr. Art Anderson, OFM, joined us as cantor. Assisting Fr. Don were fellow Seculars Deacon Napoleon Tabion, OFS, and Carol Hoffman, OFS, as servers. Cindy Varenkamp, OFS, prepared the worship aids and was the music director and organist. All the members of Our Lady of Lourdes Council also participated in the Commitment Rite.

The most important acknowledgements go to Carole Donner, OFS, and Tina Popiela, OFS, as Formation Directors, along with Sharon Marmalejo, OFS. Without their dedication and example this day would not have happened. Our fraternity’s heartfelt thanks!

Our newly professed would like to share their thoughts and feelings about their special day:

I want to express my sincerest gratitude. Our Profession was simply beautiful and a profound event in my life. I was completely overwhelmed by the love, friendship, and support shown by all of you. I am deeply grateful for being accepted by the Our Lady of Lourdes Fraternity as a “newly professed” Franciscan. I look forward to the Community’s help and encouragement to live the Gospel way of life as St. Frances did. Thank you everyone and God Bless! Peace and all good, Michele Toney, OFS

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Our Lady of Lourdes Fraternity, I cannot thank you or our dear Lord enough or have the words to express my gratitude, appreciation and love for you for welcoming me into the Secular Franciscan Third Order. Your prayers have blessed me and carried me to this day to be able to embrace my Profession. I humbly bow before you on bended, broken legs shouting hallelujah, Glory to God, for He is merciful. Thank you again. I wish God’s peace upon you and your families. Amen. Jean Simpson, PhD, OFS

Being professed as a secular Franciscan was a surreal feeling. Like I am walking in cloud nine, but at the same time I know this is just the beginning. It was a wonderful experience. May the Holy Spirit guide me that I may walk always toward Christ in the footsteps of St Francis. Charina Bernarte, OFS

I was excited about the profession. I didn’t know what to expect which made me a little bit nervous. I know I wanted to thank everyone for their support and help during our formation especially Tina and Sharon along with Carole. My fellow candidates are newfound friends. We learned together in our own ways. Being a Secular Franciscan has made me feel like a changed person. I want to deepen my relationship with God and pray for guidance to help me live the Gospel according to the Rule.

Diane Gralewski, OFS



Left to right: Jean Simpson, Michele Toney, Diane Gralewski and Charina Bernarte.

St. Mary of the Angels Fraternity



On Thanksgiving, Franciscan friars, deacons and Secular Franciscans and family members from St. Mary of the Angels Fraternity served a meal consisting of turkey, dressing, green beans, cranberries, mashed potatoes, and dessert to residents of the Carol Mosby Senior Housing Complex in Gary. The meals were delivered with the help of agents of the Department of Homeland Security who normally serve this area in their official capacity.

While the meal was served at no cost there was a gratuity included. That gratuity included sharing and caring, kindness and gratitude, prayer and hope and sorrow and joy. It was shared with all present, servers and guests alike, an immeasurable gift.

In the entryway of the building the bulletin board was filled with residents' thoughts for what they were thankful. Common among the notes were "for waking up," "for having a place to live" and "for having each other." One resident, evidently a suffering servant, was thankful for the Cubs and Bears.

The thought of "having each other" was shared by all present with a joy that everyone should have the opportunity to experience. One particular woman was sitting alone with her head down and tears in her eyes. I asked if I could pray with her, and we did. A short time later, Andrew, one of our kitchen fixtures, was sitting with her and they were laughing together. This was another of those "blessed moments" that become a part of one's life story. I am eager for the next one.



SAVE THE DATE

What: Formation Teams Workshop

Theme: A Formator's Toolbox

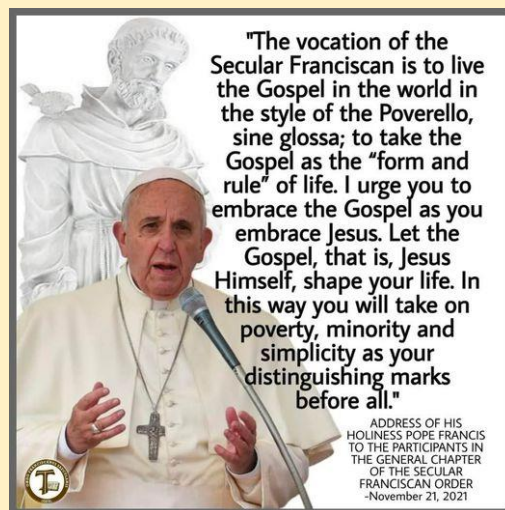
Date: Saturday, March 8, 2025

Time: 10:00 am - 3:00 pm (Eastern)

**Where: St. Joan of Arc, JP II Room
Kokomo (where we have Unity Day)**

**Who: Essential for all Formation
Directors & Spiritual Assistants.**

All members of the local formation team and/or Council may attend this event this year as we have a large space.



UPCOMING REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS

by Kathleen White OFS, Regional Lay Spiritual Assistant

The Regional Fraternity will be celebrating triennial elections and visitations at Chapter: June 13, 14, and 15 at St Francis University in Ft. Wayne. National representation will preside. This is an exciting time for us. Members of the Regional Executive Council and our local fraternity ministers (or their delegate) have voting privileges at the elections.

We will be electing Minister, Vice Minister, Secretary, Treasurer, Formation Director, and three Councilors. Nominations will be called for beginning in January. Are you a servant leader? Do you feel called to work closely with others to guide the Regional Fraternity for the next three years? You can nominate yourself, or any professed member of your fraternity. **Please send your nomination (include their email address) to Kathleen White (kdwofs@comcast.net).** They will be contacted in the early Spring to accept or decline the nomination.

What are the duties of the Regional Executive Council?

Please reference the General Constitutions, Articles 30-32 and 62-63 and the National Statutes, Articles 23-24. Feel free to contact any member of the REC to ask about their responsibilities and the blessings received in service to the Regional Fraternity.

The current REC has found it beneficial to meet via Zoom, saving travel since members of the REC reside the full width of the state. The new REC may decide to meet in person or regularly via Zoom.

Please join me in prayer:

PRAYER FOR OFS LEADERSHIP

Give us, O God, leaders whose hearts are large enough to match the breadth of our own souls and give us souls strong enough to follow leaders of vision and wisdom. In seeking a leader, let us seek

- more than our own enhancement – though enhancement we hope for
- more than security for our own plans and vision -- though security we need
- more than satisfaction for our own selfish wants -- though many things we desire.

Give us the hearts to choose and follow the leader who will work with other leaders to bring Your will to the agenda and help us to fulfill it. Give us leaders who lead us to virtue without seeking to impose their own version of virtue on others. Help us also to see the seed of the Divine in each one so that we don't reject our brothers or sisters for thinking differently from us. May we always follow leaders who lead us to love all our brothers and sisters regardless of differences of race, ethnicity, or political persuasion. Give us leaders who will provide for the advancement of our Order without dictating to others to achieve it. Give us insight enough ourselves to choose as leaders those who can tell strength from power, growth from greed, leadership from dominance, and real greatness from the trappings of grandiosity. We trust you, Great God, to open our hearts to learn from those to whom you speak in different tongues and to respect the life and words of those to whom you entrusted the good of other parts of this globe. We beg you, Great God, give us the vision as Secular Franciscans to know where holy leadership truly lies, to pursue it diligently, to ask it to respect the integrity of every person in the entire Order. We ask these things, Great God, with minds open to your word and hearts that trust in your eternal care. Amen

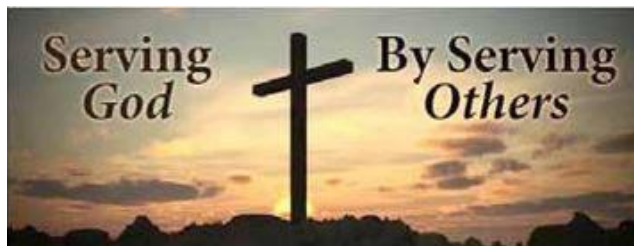
Adapted and Updated September 1, 2012
by: Kevin Queally, TOR and Anne Mulqueen, OFS

Editor's note: the nominations will open on Wednesday, January 1, 2025, and close on Saturday, March 15, 2025.

Our Sister Who Has Been Visited by Sister Death

Arlene Lewis 11/10/2024 St. Charles
Fraternity Professed on 11/22/2009

*Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord, and
let perpetual light shine upon her.*



International Website: www.ciOFS.org
National Website:

www.secularfranciscansusa.org

Regional Website: www.olirf-OFS.org

To join OUR LADY OF INDIANA list-serve, send a blank email to:

olirf+subscribe@googlegroups.com

Follow us on **Facebook**

CALENDAR

2/8	9:00 (ET)	REC (Zoom)
3/8	10:00 (ET)	Formation Teams Workshop, St. Joan of Arc, Kokomo
3/15		Deadline for April-June regional newsletter submissions
4/12	9:00 (ET)	REC (Zoom)
6/13-15	10-3 (ET)	Chapter of Mats (with elections & visitations), University of Saint Francis, Fort Wayne
6/15		Deadline for July-Sept regional newsletter submissions
8/9	9:00 (ET)	Unity Day, St. Joan of Arc, Kokomo
9/15		Deadline for Oct-Dec regional newsletter submissions
9/?	TBA	Canticle of the Creatures Centenary, Indy
10/11	9:00 (ET)	REC (Zoom)
11/8	10:00 (ET)	Chapter of Mats, St. Joan of Arc, Kokomo
12-15		Deadline for Jan-March regional newsletter submissions

PEACE AND ALL GOOD!

REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Minister	Cyndi Pilot	cyndipilot@gmail.com
Vice Minister	Rich Cain	richcain82@gmail.com
Secretary	Margaret Foust	maggiefoust@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Susan Solloway	ssollo42@gmail.com
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	Kathleen White	kdwofs@comcast.net

