

St. Bonaventure Fraternity

January, 2026 Newsletter

Council

James Foxwell, OFS Minister
Leslie Armas, OFS Vice Minister
Cliff Evans, OFS Formation Director
Tamra Catt, OFS Treasurer
Michael Coleman, OFS Secretary
Valerye Milleson, OFS Councillor

Ongoing Events

Gathering Every 3rd Saturday
(unless otherwise noted)
Next: 1/17/2026 1-3 pm @ Green
Cove Springs Mission Church

Council Meeting every 1st
Monday Next: 2/26 6:30 pm via
Zoom

Coming Events

Council Election 3/21/26
1:00 - 3:00 pm @ Green Cove
Springs Mission Church

* **Profession** 7/18/26 Time TBD
Barbara, Kathleen, Mario and
Ricky @ Sacred Heart Church,
Fleming Island

Blessing of the Animals TBA

Transitus 800th Anniversary
10/3/26 Time and Location TBD

Day of Reflection 11/21/26
10:00 am- 12:00 pm Sacred
Heart Church, Fleming Island

Christmas Gathering
12/19/2026 1-3 pm @ Green
Cove Springs Mission Church

Franciscan Monthly Commitment

We realize the importance of glorifying God, of striving for personal holiness, and of working for the spiritual and temporal welfare of others.

We recognize the great value of the Secular Franciscan Way of Life in seeking to achieve these important goals.

Therefore, we resolve to observe the teachings of Jesus Christ, by following in his footsteps, according to the spirit and Rule of St. Francis.

With the help of the grace of God, we will try to participate as fully and as often as possible in the celebration of the Mass, in the other Sacraments of the Church, especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, the official prayer of the Church.

We will try to spend a portion of time each day in personal prayer and service to others.

We will involve ourselves in the life of our Fraternity each month, in an effort to build a stronger community and as an expression of our commitment to our Franciscan Profession.

We will contribute according to our means, time, talent, and possessions to the charities of the Church and the Franciscan Family, especially to the unborn, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering. We will uphold the dignity of every person and the worth of all creation.

We will demonstrate our commitment to the Commandments of God and to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

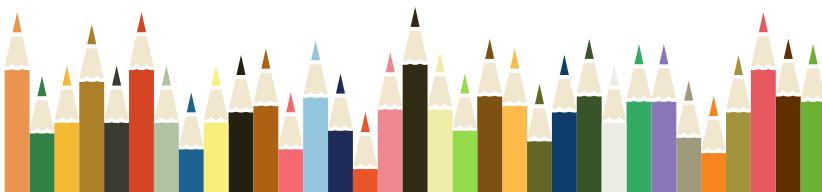
We will continually try to turn closer to the Lord and make daily conversion of mind and heart our intention.

We will use the material and spiritual gifts that we have received in a spirit of justice, moderation, and generosity.

We will wear the Tau Cross daily as the official symbol of our membership in the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States.

By our actions and our speech, we will show others that we are followers of the Gospel, by setting a good example and striving to be peacemakers in our society and within our own families.

This we resolve through the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Francis, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Prayer Requests

Joe & Shirley Payne
Jeff Majewski
Regional Prayer Requests
Respect for All Life from
Conception to Death
End to Death Sentence

Ongoing Formation

Try to spend Three Holy Half Hours in contemplation during the month of the material proposed for our review by our Formation Director.

January Gathering

Guest Speaker Dr. Mary Soha
Five Franciscan Martyrs

Fall 2025 in Review

October was a busy month. On October 4th the Blessing of the Animals took place after the 10:00 a.m. Mass at Sacred Heart Church. The Transitus was observed after the 5:30 p.m. Mass and was also live - streamed. A Come and See Event was held on October 18th. Barbara, Mike, Valerye and Ricky shared their Secular Franciscan Vocation and Cliff provided an overview of our charism.

We were all doubly blessed in November when Fr. Mormando led a Day of Recollection concluding with Mass and Irina's Profession. A special blessing was also conferred on Kathy by Fr. Mormando, Jeanne Swaynos, our Regional Minister, and all present as she continues her efforts in seeking the possibility of starting a fraternity in Nassau County.

December's Christmas Gathering was attended by 17 brothers and sisters who prayed the Stations of the Crib followed by a challenging game of Franciscan facts/trivia. Cliff won top prize...a beautiful Franciscan apron!

A great end to a wonderful Jubilee Year!

Peace and all Good

Saint of the Month

St. Angela of Foligno (1248 – January 4, 1309) "Teacher of Theologians"

"Humility exists only in those who are poor enough to see that they possess nothing of their own." —*St. Angela of Foligno*

Reflection

St. Angela spent most of her early life seeking wealth and social position trying to increase her sense of self-worth. This led to a life of sin and self-centeredness. Around 40 years old, she could no longer bear the burden of sin and the emptiness of her life. She sought God's help in the Sacrament of Penance and was guided through her subsequent conversion by her Franciscan confessor. She ultimately entered the Secular Franciscan Order, sold most of her possessions and became immersed in meditating upon Christ Crucified, nursing the poor and begging for their needs.

Her conversion brought her to realize she was priceless, not because of any wealth or fame, but "because she was created and loved by God."

Saint Angela is the Patron Saint of:

Widows, those ridiculed for their piety, those struggling with temptation, and those grieving the loss of their children.

<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-clare-of-assisi/>

Place of burial: Church of San Francesco, Foligno Italy

Liturgical Feast Day: January 7

Authored: Book of Visions and Instructions

Notes from the Day of Recollection with Fr. Nick Mormando on November 15, 2025.

Fall in love with your Franciscan Vocation and exude the joy of the Gospel.

Each one is precious in Jesus' eyes. He loves us as we are but we must recognize that we need repentance and conversion. Ask for the wisdom to see yourself through God's eyes. We need God's gift of grace to do what the Lord wills us to do just as Solomon did. (Wisdom 9, Solomon's Prayer for Wisdom) Recognize what God is doing now, not in the past. Be faithful to your profession.

Refuse to let anxiety take hold of your thoughts. Being anxious about life means doubting God. Repent of a lack of trust. Get out of God's way. Pray the Surrender Novena by Fr. Dolingo Ruotolo daily.

(Isaiah 55) "Let all who are hungry or thirsty who have no money come and eat, come to the water and drink". Where is the water?

What is the deepest desire of your heart? When you come to the realization that you are empty (hungry & thirsty) and lack something is when you need to come to Him. Spend time in front of the Blessed Sacrament and ask Jesus what He wants from you to satisfy His hunger & thirst.

We are in relationship with God but some struggle receiving God's love because of past experiences. Just receive His forgiveness and love. Don't judge yourself. Don't put conditions on Jesus' love & forgiveness. Allow God to fill you with His love. Jesus needs to heal us so that we can receive His love & forgiveness and give it away, again, to another in need.

Be faithful to your profession and thank God for work BEGUN TODAY!

New Year's Thoughts from Brother Thomas

January, 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The beginning of a new year is a time when many, if not most of us, make resolutions to become: healthier, fitter, more social, less harried, more spiritual, and so on. These of course are admirable intentions.

Unfortunately, by the Monday of the second week of the year, resolve weakens and for many, lives go on as before and the desired life changes are forgotten.

On Monday, January 12th, the first Monday of Liturgical Ordinary Time this year the Optional Memorial of the Franciscan Saint, Bernard of Corleone, was observed. While Bernard's life and his successful efforts to resolve issues of fear, resentment and anger are indeed praiseworthy, they are not the subject of this letter. What spoke to me in a powerful way was the non-biblical reading of the Office of Reading for that day. It was taken from a sermon of Saint Bonaventure. Being a member of the St. Bonaventure Fraternity, I am always drawn to our patron's works and this one is particularly appropriate for the beginning of a new year, when serious resolutions are being made. I think appropriate for the beginning of a new year because the subject matter, **the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil**, is presented at the beginning of God's revelation of Himself to man in the Book of Genesis.

In this reading St. Bonaventure asserts: *"The cross is the tree of life."* He preaches: *"Although the cross, especially before Christ's passion was itself a horrible thing, it is nevertheless something to be sought after because it is the source of life."*... *"Viewed superficially the cross appears as the tree of death but to one who views it in depth the mystery of the cross shines forth as the tree of life because of he who hung upon it. Since it is the source of life, it gives life by infusing grace."*... *"The cross is the tree of life-giving grace which makes us new men in Christ and brings us to repentance."*

"What kind of wood is it that has the power to bring man from a barren desert to a verdant garden, from death to life. It is the wood of Christ's cross. Why did the Son of God suffer for men and not for angels? Because man is capable of doing penance, an angel is not. For man it is that wood which bears fruit through the moisture it receives from water, that is, the grace that brings one to do penance."

"Therefore, because the cross is the tree of life-giving grace, let us who have died so many times by reason of our sin long for that tree, do penance and suffer with Christ. 'Christ suffered in the flesh; therefore, arm yourselves with the same mentality.' says Saint Peter. Unless we do penance how shall we be able to give answer to Christ on judgment day?"

Brothers and sisters with this symbolism in mind one might appreciate why Eve did not eat of the tree of life and it gives us pause to think of some form of penance resolution that might be appropriate for us this new year.

Your Brother in Christ,

Thomas

PEACE AND ALL GOOD