



Conventual Franciscan Friars Saint Anthony's Newsletter

Spring 2020

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Seeds of HOPE

By Friar Mario Serrano OFM Conv.

Come, Holy Spirit, come and make us notice Spring and Resurrection.

Spring has arrived, and God once again is revealing love and resurrection. We cannot ignore that we are living in a unique time. Lent is over, and we are making our way through Easter Season towards Pentecost, yet we are still required to make the sacrifice of remaining physically distant from one another and sheltered in place. We have experienced a sudden halt. No longer do we find ourselves teaching, learning, running, administering, in the routine we have called life. Often, we found ourselves with little time and not enough energy for awareness. Let us not be caught unaware of Spring and Resurrection. As we are now being forced to see life through a new lens and rely on our creativity and our imaginations, let us not forget to see the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that transformed death into Resurrected Life and empowered the disciples.

I am always excited to hear about the early Christian community during the Easter Season being so bold as they go and proclaim the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Yet, we cannot overlook that our early Christian brothers and sisters also found themselves “behind closed doors” (John 20). In the upper room with locked doors, they too most likely sat in doubt, despair, and disappointment feeling exhausted after witnessing the condemnation, cruelty, and crucifixion. A mental and emotional shutdown, as hope has been



Fr. Mario Serrano celebrates Mass at Ysleta Mission Church in El Paso, TX
Photo Credit: Al Baeza



hijacked by havoc and fear and has frozen their lives. Nevertheless, the unimaginable happens, Jesus Christ, the Resurrected One, appears in their midst and says: “Peace be with you.”

Fear kept the early disciples behind closed doors as safety has kept us behind our closed doors. But even within our sheltering in place for the sake of safety, this doesn't mean that we are to lounge around and wait with our thoughts and emotions. God is whispering new life inside of us, but we must let go of our preoccupations and obsessions. We must trust! The Risen One is desiring an encounter with us and is also lovingly saying to us, “Peace be with you.” May these words give us great comfort and allow us to breathe in the Spirit of New Life. May you and I join the hope-filled voices of our ancestors of faith and the voices of our friars as we are continuing to find bold ways of singing our anthem, Jesus Christ is Risen, Alleluia, Alleluia!



Dear Friends,

What a challenge it has been during the last few months. As friars, we are not only accustomed to living within our fraternity of brothers but also working, ministering, and being active in the larger communities we live. We miss seeing you, dear friends. Please, rest assured you haven't left our thoughts, hearts, and prayers as we find our way through this time of isolation and uncertainty.



Fr. John Elmer OFM Conv.

In this issue of the St. Anthony's Newsletter, we look at the friar's as both literal and figurative "Seed Planters" and reflect on the hope that Spring and God's Light brings to us.

As friars of the "first-order" of the Franciscan family founded by St. Francis of Assisi in the early 13th century, our very way of life and tradition sprouted from St. Francis' seed. During that time, our Franciscan Order has seen dark days, but still, we remain faithful to doing God's work through St. Francis' example, living the Gospel.

Your generosity and support continue to equally humble us and invigorate us as we continue to "plant seeds" of faith... compassion... and love.

Fr. John Elmer OFM Conv.
Spiritual Director

In Thanksgiving

Dear Fr. John,

I am thankful for the blessings of my faith, my family, and health.

C.C.

Dear Fr. John,

I am thankful for a great family and we get along with each other.

D.K. and L.K.

Dear Fr. John,

I am thankful for Friar Bryan Hajovsky- Pastor at St. Bonaventure Catholic Community, our parish has many blessings. We are especially blessed to have Friar Bryan here (Bloomington, MN). Blessings to the friars throughout the world!

M.C.

Photo Credit: Al Baeza



Ministering Through Media

By Friar Mario Serrano OFM Conv.

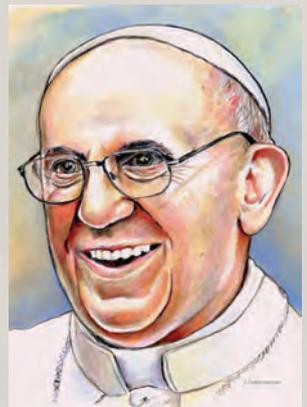
Ten years ago, in the Fall of 2010, I signed up to take a course entitled, Effective Use of Technology for Ministry, as part of my Theological Studies. Little did I know that this course would prepare me for the live-streaming, digital posting, and the interactive technology ministers who are being forcefully introduced today due to the Coronavirus. That is if one desires to continue communicating with those who we love and/or with those who we normally would be engaging in ministry through person to person encounters.

In 2004, the Pew Center for Research study showed that 82 million people went online daily for religious purposes. I would claim that number is much higher now due to that fact that this has become the primary way of encounter since the Coronavirus.

While churches are limited or closed, we are blessed with the opportunity to bring Christ into your homes. We invite you to explore ways to connect with our friars and us at:

<https://franciscansusa.org/media>

Tonight, we acquire a fundamental right that can never be taken away from us: the right to hope. It is a new and living hope that comes from God. It is not mere optimism; it is not a pat on the back or an empty word of encouragement, with a passing smile. No. It is a gift from heaven, which we could not have earned on our own. Over these weeks, we have kept repeating, "All will be well", clinging to the beauty of our humanity and allowing words of encouragement to rise up from our hearts. But as the days go by and fears grow, even the boldest hope can dissipate. So, let us not give in to resignation; let us not place a stone before hope. We can and must hope, because God is faithful. Dear sister, dear brother, even if in your heart you have buried hope, do not give up: God is greater."



-- Easter Vigil homily of Pope Francis,
delivered April 11, 2020 at St. Peter's Basilica.

Cultivating the Seed

Young Friars Grow Towards God's Light



Fr. Paul Schloemer celebrates Mass with his students in formation.

As young friars progress in their journey from vocation to formation. Formation directors friar Gary Johnson OFM Conv. and friar Paul Schloemer OFM Conv. share what they do and their experiences tending to young friars as they watch them grow and mature.

By Friar Gary Johnson OFM Conv.

My co-director friar Andy Martinez is known for saying that in his experience, "Formation works." *Formation* is the ministry that we've been called to, helping new members of our community in their vocational and ministerial discernment of our life. He's mentioned this in several homilies here at our formation house, San Damiano Friary here in San Antonio, Texas. He'll begin with how he noticed this growth taking place when he was a friar student years ago. He develops this concept with an invitation to us, his gathered listeners, to patience and perseverance in the process of our own continued growth and discernment.

Both Andy and I look back upon our gradual growth as friars, to remind ourselves that it was over time, and in response to God's call in conjunction with the ministry of our formation directors, and their patience with us and challenges to us, that we moved to greater maturity as friars. We see this same process taking place in the men to whom we minister. Whether it be the greater openness that one of our friars in Formation begins to reveal by going deeper during faith sharing. Or, the greater sense of self-less giving of one brother to another in service while the other is in need, these men in our formation process give us hope. While there comes a time for decision making, vocational discernment indeed takes time; it cannot and must not be rushed. Our ministry as formation directors calls us always to find a balancing between encouraging our friar students toward a more formal commitment to our lives and giving them the space to grow in adult maturity as a reply to God's call.

It is, indeed, a privilege for us to minister to these men sensing a call to our life. They give us hope great hope.

By Friar Paul Schloemer OFM Conv.

Peace and all good! When I was the Vocation Director for the Province, people used to ask me what exactly a vocation director did. I would even get this question from Diocesan priests who were the vocation directors for their diocese because their model of handling vocations tended to be quite different. They would generally accompany their seminarians from the moment they expressed interest in their eventual ordinations. I, on the other hand, would glibly respond (and if you know me, most of my responses tend toward the glib), "I just bring 'em in and hand 'em off." And the Friar to whom I would "hand 'em off" was the Formation Director.

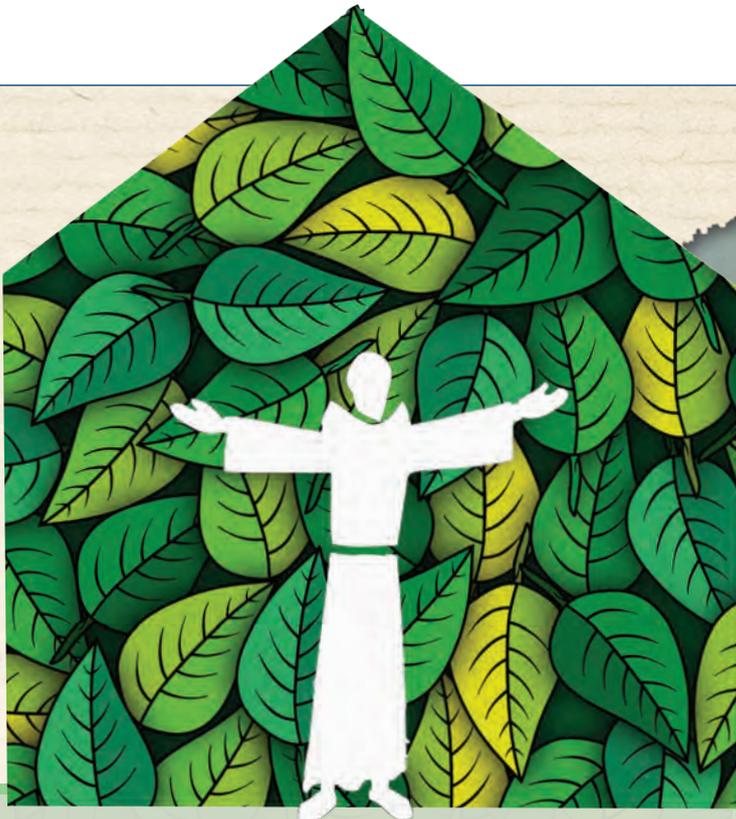
Now, I am that guy that gets the handoff. And I love it.



Fr. Andy Martinez OFM Conv. leads morning prayers at the San Antonio - House of Formation

All of us, beginning with good Catholic families, to good parishes and the excellent examples of many priests and religious, and through the work of the Vocation Director, are involved in the "planting" of the seeds of a vocation to ministry in the Church. But once that person (young man in the case of the Conventual Franciscans) makes that leap into the Call, it is the Formation Director that is primarily responsible for cultivating that seed. Through classes, mentoring, correction, and mostly example, that tiny whisper that the Lord uses to call us, can be formed into a conviction of a Gospel life as a Friar.

As the budding of new flowers belies the current Covid-19 pandemic and gives us Easter hope that life will always triumph over death, the fine young men I have the privilege to form also are a great sign of hope. They certainly have their challenges. They, like all of us, struggle to find their way in the world. But, like the other signs of Spring giving testimony to the presence of our Creating God, they continuously grow toward the light of Christ and offer themselves over and over to that light. Perhaps not all of them will end up as solemnly professed Franciscans. Perhaps, God will call them to some other way of life. But I, as should we all, thank God that their willingness to say yes, is proof that Christ is still active in our Church, and hope "Springs" eternal!



Reflection from the Greenhouse

By Friar Roberto Macias OFM Conv.

As I reflect on the concluding stages of my initial formation in the novitiate, I can't help but think of how God always manages to surprise us. "Why not have everyone in the world share this experience of novitiate with you, even if it is just for some months?" During this time of self-isolation from our day to day activities, I would like to share my experience and reflections in this, and hopefully share my positive outlook during this "world-wide time out."

When I first started my novitiate, I was pretty overwhelmed by the amount of time I could sit in the silence and how long it seemed, I remember that one single day would feel like two. Housework and personal hobbies kept me busy. Having a proper diet and developing an exercise routine certainly helped pass the time. However, as much as we would like to fill our day with an endless combination of housework and hobbies, let us not forget, this opens up a window to elevate our prayer life and to be thankful. Through my experience, I have grown to admire and respect those who willingly choose this isolated way of life.

My hope for myself and others is when we feel hopeless and gloominess that can radiate from our day to day let us look toward the tree of life, the one that created it all and admit that we are afraid. Let us make this reality our own Gethsemane, going to God in our distress for fear of what would happen but openness to the Father's will.

Hope seeds sprouting Life
Springing from where
darkness ruled
Future warm in Light.

-Friar Charles McCarthy OFM Conv.

Reaping the Harvest

The Franciscan Kitchen Celebrates It's 40th Anniversary

In February, we celebrated four decades of feeding the hungry throughout the Louisville, KY community at the 40th Anniversary of the Franciscan Kitchen (formerly Franciscan Shelter House).

Friar James Fields began a ministry intent on helping those in need and fed seven meals the first day they served lunch at the shelter house. Inspired by Brother Jim's compassion, an extraordinary group of generous volunteers (including at least one of our friars most days) carry on his ministry, serving on average 400 meals daily. It, like many of our friar's ministries, started small and was nurtured by the friars and their supporters. Now fully matured, it supports itself and works as its own, individual, organization.

The celebration included a citation of appreciation from State Representative Attica Scott and the Kentucky House of Representatives, the dedication and blessing of the dining room in memory of Brother Jim, and shared memories with those who have volunteered over the years. What an honor and a privilege to serve those in need then, now, and in the future.



Our friars join in the 40th Anniversary Celebration.



Laudato Sí

A Call To Revisit Pope Francis’s Gift To Us And Mother Earth On The 5th Anniversary

By Friar Wayne Hellmann OFM Conv.



An examination of conscience is appropriate on this fifth anniversary, May 24th, 2020. Remember the excitement after Pope Francis’ election? At least some friars spoke that the Franciscan Moment had arrived. Then, two years later, he handed that moment to us on a platter, the gift of Laudato Sí.

Not only was that social encyclical the longest and most comprehensive of any other encyclical in modern time, but it was also the first to draw in a pronounced way from Franciscan sources (Francis and Bonaventure). Little did St. Francis know his hymn to Brother Sun would enter papal magisterium.

Pope Francis addressed his message to every human person on the planet. During the last five years, it has been the most widely read and most often quoted papal document in history. Far beyond the Catholic world and deep into the global Catholic world, it has been enthusiastically received. There is a notable exception: North American Catholics. Is this hesitancy, I wonder, also the reality among us North American Friars, even after the pope later declared care of creation as the eighth work of mercy?

Institutionally, we have made progress with solar panels and geothermal heating/cooling. Yet, it is now time to ask ourselves how deeply and effectively this Magisterial teaching seeps into

the practical consciousness of our own personal lives. As Pope Francis later commented: **“Civilization requires energy, but energy must not destroy civilization.”**

During these spring days of sheltered silence here at the Mount, I wake up to the singing of birds. By an evening walk in the forest, full concert swells. Last year I did not notice. Maybe during these stay at home days, our winged brothers and sisters enjoy a fresher breath of air.

Would that we could completely cease our addictive chain smoking of CO2 and diesel fumes. As we celebrate the days of Easter and Pentecost, let us ponder the beauty and sacredness of “the fruit of the earth.”, as we pray during the offertory of the Mass.



Flowers bloom in Spring - El Paso, TX
Photo Credit: Al Baeza

If you have not read Laudato Sí, I encourage you to do so. If you have read it, give it a second read. Pope Francis’s gift to us and the planet we inhabit remains more relevant than ever.

Celebrate With Us

On the 5th Anniversary of Pope Francis’s Encyclical Laudato Sí, the Pope is asking for global participation from May 16-24, 2020. In a recorded video message, the Pope said, “The cry of the earth and the cry of the poor cannot continue. Let’s take care of creation, a gift of our good Creator God. Let’s celebrate Laudato Sí Week together.”

We plan to celebrate Laudato Sí throughout the Province in a variety of ways. At Mount St. Francis, we will celebrate by giving away three hundred native species tree seedlings to the community in a safe, drive-up setting. A special Mass will focus on “Our Common Home.” Fr. Tom Smith will lead an online prayer for Laudato Sí at Holy Cross Retreat Center in Mesilla Park, New Mexico. In addition to these events, we will celebrate Masses throughout the week and the Province.

More information about Laudato Sí Week and Province events can be found on our Facebook page @FranciscanEarthCare. Please follow us for current information on events, project updates, and more!

Prophets of a Future Not Our Own

By Friar Pedro Lopez OFM Conv.

While in Postulancy, before knowing who St. Oscar Romero was, I had heard of an Archbishop martyred in Central America. However, I didn't know who he was nor what he did. Years later, not only have I had the opportunity to visit his tomb at the Cathedral in downtown San Salvador, El Salvador, but I also call San Salvador home. It is where I live in one of our friaries and attend the University of Central America.

Now, the month of March reminds me very much of the life of San Oscar Romero. Since his martyrdom on March 24, 1980, this month has become, year after year, a space for meditation, contemplation, reflection, remembrance, and enlightenment of the martyred Archbishop's life for myself and many of those familiar with his story. His legacy is rich in implications of many kinds: socio-political, historical, educational, and moral.

His moral legacy, in particular, has become an essential foundation of my beliefs. It gives me an awareness and clarity to the simple fact; our commitment to others is vital. Having a clear understanding that we are committed to others and their problems, losses, needs, sufferings, joys, laughter, and victories is of considerable significance to humanity and one of his values I hold most close. His legacy has taught me many values. These values are a matter of conscience, and bring a better understanding of what is good or bad, human or merciless.

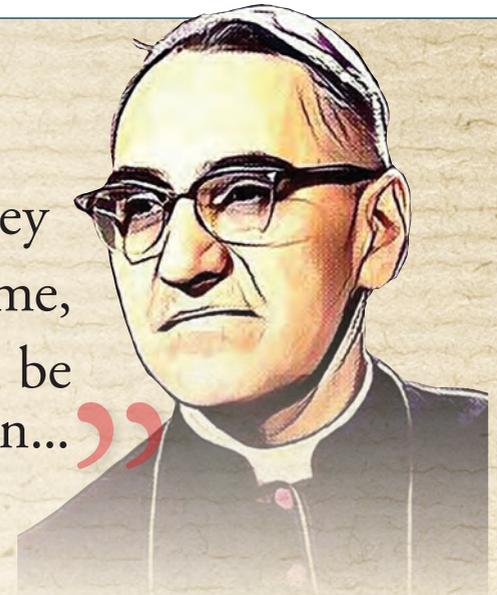
My time in CPE and Mt. Carmel in El Paso, TX, provided me the privilege to be close with the sick. Now in El Salvador, I have been able to again be close and experience something Romero called "el sentir con la gente" (to feel with the people). Through my experiences, I have found a more profound identification and closeness with the sick and all those who suffer. Within a new context in which I live, I'm connecting my beliefs with the people of God.

Another phrase from Monseñor Romero that captivates me is "Si me matan, resucitaré en el pueblo..." ("If they kill me, I will be reborn...") This goes hand in hand with John's scripture passage, "unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit." Monseñor Romero's legacy continues alive in the people of El Salvador. The work he did while alive continues through the people of today. I see how the people in our Conventual parish "Jesus of the Merciful" come together to help those in need. I see the people show solidarity and union. I see Romero's fallen seed in full bloom.



Fr. Pedro playing music with the people of San Salvador

“If they
kill me,
I will be
reborn...”



Romero's Prayer

This prayer was first presented by Cardinal Dearden in 1979 and quoted by Pope Francis in 2015.

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the Church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

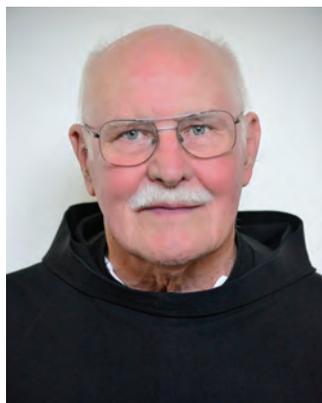
We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

†Fr. Philip Schneider OFM Conv.

Possessing athletic grace and quiet strength, Fr. Philip Schneider served God's people with humble spirit, gentle compassion, and most of all a deep love of God.



Friar Philip Schneider OFM Conv. passed away on January 24, 2020, in Toledo, Ohio. Born Donald Edward Schneider on March 18, 1934. "He will be lovingly missed by his family," said his sister Theresa Rinkoski. "His pastoral nature was very important to the family. He was always there, ready to listen and empathize. He was gentle, very gentle. He really cared about the people in his parish."

Fr. Philip professed Simple Vows in the Order of Friars Minor Conventual on July 12, 1953, Solemn Vows on July 12, 1956, and was ordained to the priesthood on February 19, 1961, at St. Paul Cathedral in St. Paul, Minnesota. In addition to his undergraduate and theology studies, he earned a Master's degree in mathematics from the University of Notre Dame in 1965, which he put to use as a teacher at Toledo Central Catholic and the Minor Seminary at Mount St. Francis.

In his student days at the Minor Seminary at Mount St. Francis in southern Indiana, Fr. Phil was a member of the basketball team that won the Paoli Sectional Championship in 1951. In later years he enjoyed playing golf and bowling.

"He was very athletic," said Friar Pius Poff OFM Conv., who was Fr. Philip's classmate for 13 years. "But to me he was most of all a very spiritual man, a very humble man, not one to draw attention to himself. He was not only humble, but also a very compassionate person."

Fr. Philip spent many years in pastoral ministry, serving parishes in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Angola and Terre Haute, Indiana, and Chicago Heights, Illinois. But his favorite assignment was at St. Paul's in Clear Lake, Indiana, where he served for more than 20 years. Friar Christian Moore taught with Fr. Philip at Mount St. Francis and served with him at San Rocco Parish in Chicago Heights.

"He did fine woodworking, but really he could do anything with his hands and knew how to fix things," Fr. Christian said. "When he was at St. Paul's in Clear Lake all those years, he did nearly all the maintenance himself. He was also a very good listener, and always there when people needed him. He had a very deep faith."

In a conversation not too long ago, Fr. Pius told Fr. Philip that it might be the last time they would speak together. "He told me you never know; we can meet in Heaven."

†Br. Jefferey Hines OFM Conv.

Br. Jeffrey Hines OFM Conv. passed away on April 11, 2020, in Bloomington, Minnesota. He was born Richard Joseph Hines on June 24, 1938, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

With his talent for telling stories and a profound devotion to the Blessed Mother (and her mother, St. Anne) Brother Jeffrey gave people a glimpse into the hidden life of Jesus. He spent his life welcoming pilgrims and retreatants across the Province of Our Lady of Consolation, helping them deepen their relationship with God. Depending on the circumstances, he could have a group of people laughing uproariously or praying devoutly.



He entered the Order of Friars Minor Conventual when he was 20, professed Simple Vows on July 14, 1962, in Auburn, Indiana. He professed his Solemn Vows on July 26, 1965, at the Basilica and National Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation (OLC Shrine) in Carey, Ohio, where over three different assignments he would spend 22 years of his life.

In addition to his service at OLC Shrine, Br. Jeffrey also served as a guide in Assisi, Italy; Director of Franciscan Retreats and Spirituality Center in Prior Lake, Minnesota; Secretary for the Province of Our Lady of Consolation; and in the education and formation of student Friars.

"He had a profound love for the pilgrims, a deep respect for them and their different heritages," Br. Bob Roddy said. "In those days there were sometimes 50,000 pilgrims for the Feast of the Assumption. Although he was probably an introvert by nature, he was always very energized by their devotional piety."

The combination of Br. Jeffrey's experiences with the pilgrims, his deepening devotion to the Blessed Mother, and his skills as a writer resulted in lasting contributions to the Shrine and its visitors. Caught in Chicago during the blizzard of 1978, which immobilized the city and much of the Midwest, he turned his isolation in a hotel room into a mini-retreat with the Blessed Mother. During those days he rewrote A Pilgrim's Prayer Book for visitors to the OLC Shrine in Carey, Ohio. He also wrote a history of the Shrine that continues to be sold in the Shrine Gift Shop.

"He was a person with great appreciation for beauty," Br. Bob Roddy said. "He was an artist himself. In his journals, besides his writing, there are beautiful pen and ink drawings from his time in Assisi and other places. He had a sense of style. And along with that he had a deep sense of responsibility; he never did anything halfway - always properly and appropriately."

Thank you, for your gifts during this unique time.



We are all sharing a unique period of time. We are focused on staying healthy, medically, and financially. We have all been paying attention to what actions are to be taken from a medical standpoint, but the questions get more perplexing when we think about financial stability. You recognize the Friars' ministries are in jeopardy without continued financial support. The outpouring of your gifts has been lovingly received. In recent conversations with donors, some have seen a Franciscan gift annuity as a way to help the Friars and increase their income.

Safety, Security and an Income for Life

If you have an asset that is earning minimal income, you can exchange that for a Franciscan gift annuity, which will pay you a fixed amount for the remainder of your lifetime. The amount you receive is based on your age and gift amount given to the friars. For example, a person age 65 can make a gift of \$5000 or more and receive fixed payments for life of 4.7% of the original amount transferred. You will receive an income tax charitable deduction for the \$5000 gift, and a significant portion of the Franciscan gift annuity payment to you will be tax-free. The remainder of the Franciscan gift annuity will be used as a resource for the friars' ministries.

Please call me at 812-923-5250 to receive a charitable gift annuity application or to explore this concept further. Thank you again for all you do.

Peace be with you,

Shaunna Graf, Director of Major Gifts and Planned Giving



IMPORTANT INFO

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) was enacted on March 27, 2020. The link below offers a few key points to consider as you plan your continued support and make plans to reach out to your financial advisor.

<https://franciscansusa.org/cares>

Please pray for the intentions of those here, and for all your Franciscan family:

- | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| All those affected by the pandemic | Marc and Fay Campos | Mr. Kenneth Flood | Kenneth & Patricia Lombard | Mr. Anthony J Pellarin |
| All medical staff | Oralia M. Cardenas | Ms. Barbara Gadosik | Elden Martin | Mr. Mark Pearson |
| All essential employees | Mr. Robert C Cayer | Robert and Bertha Garza | Mr. Phillip D. McCullough | Mr. and Mrs. Jerald Rexelle |
| Mr. and Mrs. Acevedo-Torres | Ms. Catherine A. Chicoine | JoAnna M. Gellerman | Ms. Julia A McKnight | Mr. Leonard A Salvemini |
| Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Amiano | Mr. Don David Ciski | Mr. and Mrs. Thomas A Hammond | Ms. Ann K McQuaid | Ms Jeanette Sapienza |
| Faris and Stivani Attisha | Ms. Hope T. Cocchi | William and Mary Kay Harp | Mr. Richard C. Miller | Frank and Angie Sartor |
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Conventual Franciscan Friars

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