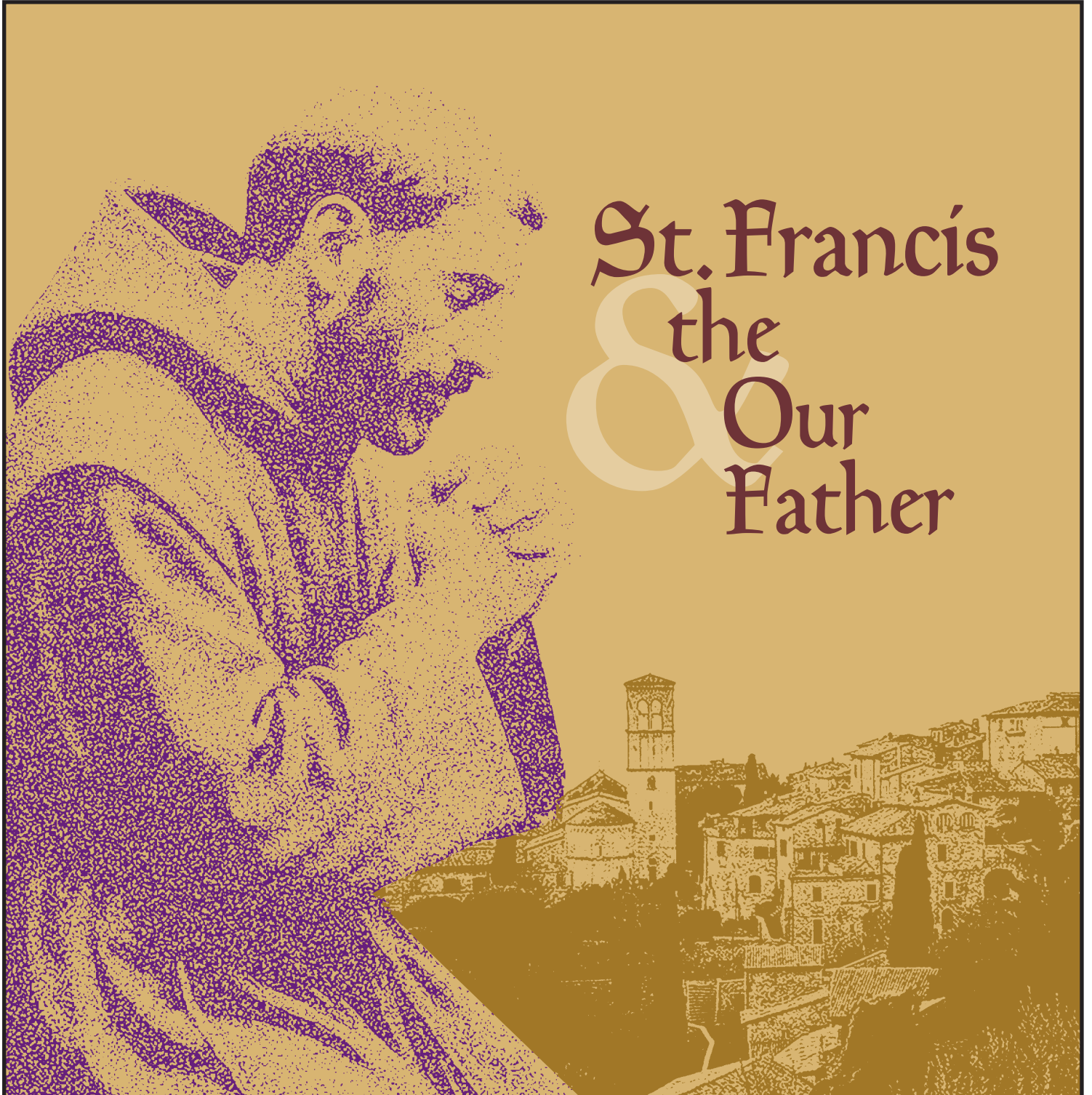




TAU-USA

Summer 2026 Issue 120

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE
SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER



St. Francis & the Our Father



Mission to Share the Vision

The TAU-USA, a publication of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order of the United States, is a vital communication link between the OFS-USA leadership and all candidates and all professed Secular Franciscans throughout the United States. The articles within the publication, while sharing the Secular Franciscan charism and vision, are intended to inform, inspire, and challenge.

CONTENTS

- | | | | | |
|----------|--|-----------|--|---|
| 1 | Our Father
By Diane Menditto, OFS
National Vice Minister | 9 | Forgive Us!
By Vickie Klick, OFS
Chair, NAFRA Centenary Task Force | National Executive Council
nec.ofs.usa@gmail.com |
| 2 | Who are in Heaven
By Justin Carisio, OFS
National Formation Commission | 10 | As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us
By Francine Gikow, OFS | National Minister
Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS |
| 3 | Holy be Your Name: A Call to Praise and Purpose
By Kathleen Molaro, OFS
Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission Chair | 11 | And Lead Us Not Into Temptation: Hidden or Obvious, Sudden or Persistent.
By Corinne Lorenzet, OFS
National Councilor; CNSA Secretary | National Vice Minister
Diane Menditto, OFS |
| 4 | Your Kingdom Come; My Kingdom Go
By Kathleen Molaro, OFS
Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission Chair | | Deliver Us From Evil
By Bret Thoman, OFS | National Secretary
Susan Ronan, OFS |
| 5 | Your Will be Done
By Joe Makley
National JPIC Animator | 12 | Blessings on the 50th Anniversary of Your Ordination Fr. Christopher Panagoplos!
By Mary Frances Charsky, OFS
International Councilor | National Treasurer
Steve Roszhart, OFS |
| 6 | A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
(The Undated Writings) FA:ED 1:158 | | | National Councilor
Christine Blood, OFS |
| 8 | Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread
By Mary Frances Charsky, OFS
International Councilor | 13 | Why, After You, Francis?
By Fr. Marek Stybor, OFM Conv.
CNSA President-in-Turn | National Councilor
Christopher Leone, OFS |
| | | | | National Councilor
Corinne Lorenzet, OFS |
| | | | | International Councilor
Mary Frances Charsky, OFS |
| | | | | CNSA President-in-turn
Fr. Marek Stybor, OFM Conv. |
-
- Conference of National Spiritual Assistants:**
Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR
Fr. Cidouane Joseph, OFM
Fr. John De La Riva, OFM Cap.
Fr. Marek Stybor, OFM Conv.
-

TAU-USA Editorial Staff

Editor
Caroline Yandell, OFS

Layout and Design
Stan Sisson, OFS

NEC Consultants
Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS
Diane Menditto, OFS

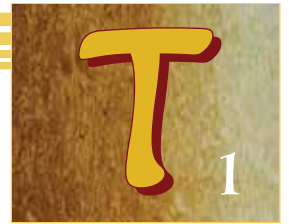
Website Coordinators
James Thomas, OFS
Sharon Winzeler, OFS

Translator Coordinators
Marisol Cesar, OFS
JC Liu, OFS

TAU-USA email
tau.usa.editor@gmail.com

Our Father

By Diane Menditto, OFS • National Vice Minister



As we continue our celebration of the “Easter of St. Francis,” our attention now turns to his relationship with God. For the theme of this issue of the TAU, we have chosen the *Prayer Inspired by the Our Father* (FA:ED, vol.1, p.158). This prayer is one of the clearest windows into St. Francis’s inner spirituality: contemplative, Trinitarian, and centered on God’s overflowing goodness. It is an authentic Franciscan text preserved in the earliest manuscript collections and universally accepted by modern scholars. *“Two thirteenth-century examples of this type of commentary on the Lord’s Prayer suggest that this style of prayer forms a ‘catechism of prayer’ offering strong attitudes toward, as well as images of, God. In fact, this writing is perhaps the only instance in which we find an example of how Francis responded to his brothers’ request to teach them how to pray.”* (FA:ED, vol. 1, p. 158)

This prayer served as a formation tool for the early fraternity, shaping their understanding of God, grace, forgiveness, and the Christian life. Although Francis follows the common medieval practice of expanding each petition of a prayer through contemplative reflection, his expression remains unmistakably Franciscan: simple, warm, and wholly centered on God’s goodness. Our Seraphic Father begins the prayer by saying:

“O *Our Father* most holy:

Our Creator, Redeemer, Consoler, and Savior.”

St. Francis’ vision of God is Trinitarian: He is the Creator, Redeemer, Consoler, and Supreme Good. He tells us in those few words what theologians down the ages have expounded upon in thousands of pages and hundreds of volumes. Each time we say, “Our Father,” we place ourselves in the Father’s hands which is exactly what St. Francis wanted for himself and his followers - surrender.

By reading Francis’ other writings, we find that “*Creator, Redeemer, Consoler, and Supreme Good*” are not titles that are only found in this particular prayer. They echo a pattern found throughout his authentic writings. These titles form part of Francis’ characteristic way of naming God: effusive praise, Trinitarian structure, and an emphasis on God’s overflowing goodness. Francis’ desire to be a son of God the Father draws us into

the entire Trinity and reminds us that when we say “Our Father,” we unite ourselves to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As you pray with this text and allow it to lead you more deeply into Franciscan spirituality, you may also wish to explore other instances in which Francis refers to God the Father: They can be found on the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition website:

<https://digitalcollections.franciscantradition.org/pages/early-sources-table-of-contents>

Just these few words will provide hours of meditation and contemplation both at home and at adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. Perhaps these questions will help you to get started:

+ How does Francis’s understanding of “Father” deepen your own understanding of the Trinity?

+ Where do you experience God as Creator, Redeemer, or Consoler in your life?

Other References to God the Father as Creator, Redeemer, Consoler, and Supreme Good

CREATOR: Earlier Rule 23 (FA:ED, Vol. 1, p. 63.); Praises of God (FA:ED, Vol. 1, pp. 109–110); Letter to the Entire Order (FA:ED, Vol. 1, p. 116) Also read the background provided for each writing.

REDEEMER: Earlier Rule 23; Letter to the Entire Order

CONSOLER: Implied in the Prayer Before the Crucifix; Office of the Passion (God who comforts, enlightens, guides) (FA:ED, Vol. 1, p. 40)

SUPREME GOOD: Praises of God; Earlier Rule 23; Letter to the Entire Order; Office of the Passion (FA:ED, Vol. 1, p. 139)

Main Reference used for this article:

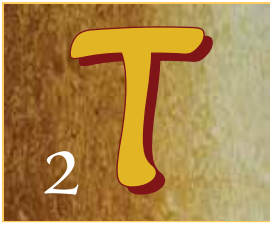
Armstrong, R., Hellmann, J., & Short, W. (Eds.). (1999). Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Volume 1: The Saint. New York: New City Press.

Other reading:

Short, William J., OFM. The Franciscans. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989.

Thompson, Augustine, OP. Francis of Assisi: A New Biography. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012.

Armstrong, Regis J., OFM Cap. St. Francis of Assisi: Writings for a Gospel Life. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1994.



Who are in Heaven

By Justin Carisio, OFS • National Formation Commission

We can never be certain how St. Francis of Assisi envisioned heaven and the majesty of God. Francis was a medieval man, and his understanding of the cosmos was radically different from ours. But for centuries, Christians had accepted a model of the universe as one constructed with the Earth at the center, and the Sun, the Moon, and the planets in separate, concentric spheres moving outward to the sphere of the stars.

Beyond this last sphere of visible creation was an “Empyrean Heaven”¹ depicted as a realm of unimaginable light but nevertheless an actual place where God lives with the angels and the saints. Francis hints at an awareness of this in the Canticum of the Creatures when he praises God for Sir Brother Sun who “is beautiful and radiant with great splendor; and bears a likeness of You, Most High one.”²

In Section 2, “Who are in heaven,” of his *Prayer Inspired by the Our Father*, Francis addresses the Father in the second person, maintaining the voice he will use throughout the Prayer. Francis is explicit, poetic, and theological. He identifies actions the Lord performs in heaven, each of which reveals something of God’s nature: God enlightens the angels and saints; he inflames them; he dwells in them.

Each of these actions in turn is directly related to an aspect of the Father that Francis identifies. The act of enlightening imparts knowledge in the heavenly hosts, because “You, Lord, are light.” Inflaming the angels and the saints enables them to love, because “You, Lord, are love.” Dwelling in them fills them with happiness, because “You, Lord, are Supreme Good.” Thus does Francis articulate his theology of the Father: God is light. God is love. God is good.

It is upon the last of these - the goodness of God - that Francis elaborates. He addresses the Lord as

“Supreme Good, the Eternal Good, / from whom all good comes / without Whom there is no good.” It is crucial to appreciate that Francis does not use good as an adjective, but rather as a noun. Good is not something that modifies or describes God; Good is who God is. One may infer from this amplification that God - as both the Good and the source of all good - factors into Francis’ theological understanding of the gospel life in a particularly important way.

The Our Father is a prayer of praise, but also a prayer of petition and supplication as Francis will emphasize in the subsequent sections. The Father “from Whom all good comes” graces his people on earth. Francis may well be urging the brothers to pray for God’s light to guide them, God’s love to inflame them, and God’s goodness to dwell within them as they live the gospel life and work out their salvation here and now.

Thus, for St. Francis, the “who are in heaven” section of his *Prayer Inspired by the Our Father* is a theological speculation as well as an invitation to contemplate the mystery of God’s nature while remaining open to his transforming grace. In Francis’ hands, this phrase becomes a vision of divine sublimity and a reminder that the destiny of the soul is to be in heaven with the Father, who is the Eternal Good.

¹“What Is the ‘Empyrean Heaven’? The Medieval Cosmology That Placed the Dwelling of God Physically Above the Stars,” Catholicus.eu English, May 25, 2026,

<https://catholicus.eu/en/what-is-the-medieval-cosmology-that-placed-the-dwelling-place-of-god-physically-above-the-stars/>.

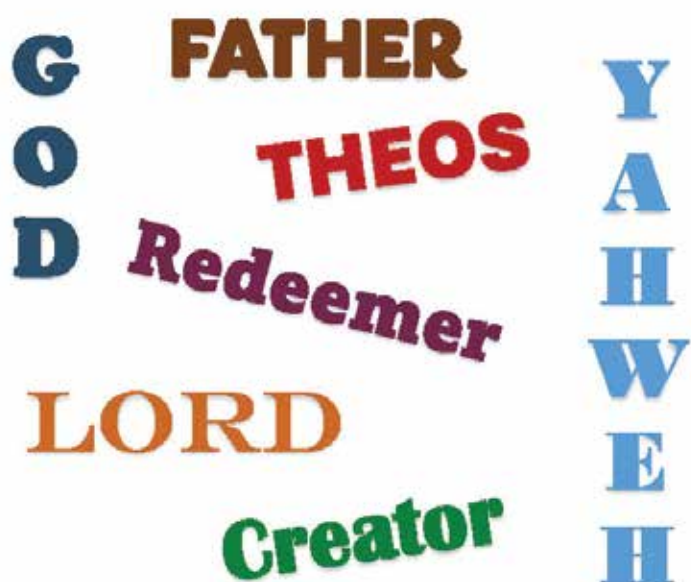
²Quotations from the writings of St. Francis are taken from Francis of Assisi: Early Documents (FA:ED I), edited by Regis Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, William J. Short (New York, London, and Manila: New City Press, 1999).

Holy be Your Name: A Call to Praise and Purpose

By Kathleen Molaro, OFS • Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission Chair



When we pray “holy be Your name,” we ask that God’s name be honored not only by our words, but also by the way we live. St. Francis reminds us that the more deeply we come to know God, the more clearly we recognize His blessings, promises, majesty, and judgments. As we give thanks for His presence in our lives, our relationship with Him deepens.



These words invite us to wholehearted worship, with Jesus at the center of our lives. This part of the Lord’s Prayer is not passive; it is a call to turn away from seeking praise for ourselves and to direct our praise to God.

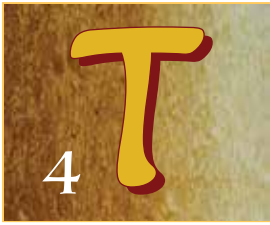
For young people in particular, growing in faith often means moving from a self-centered outlook toward a more mature understanding of their place in the world and their responsibility to serve others. This can be difficult, especially for teens, who face countless distractions, viewpoints, and choices pulling them in other directions. Praying “holy be Your name” is not enough; we are called to live those words.

Teen self-centeredness - often called adolescent egocentrism - is a normal stage of development. It serves a biological and psychological purpose, helping teens separate from their families as they build independence and a unique identity. We can enrich this stage by helping them recognize that all good comes from God. As we grow older, we too must remember that mature faith continually seeks purity of heart. Our Rule (art. 12) emphasizes the importance of “witnessing to the good yet to come and obliged to acquire purity of heart,” as we strive to be examples for younger generations.

Keeping Jesus at the center and remaining aware of God’s goodness and mercy require a conscious decision. It is easy to seek affirmation for ourselves and our accomplishments. Yet rather than building up our own name, we are called to share the Good News and glorify God’s name.

Recently, I noticed a group of young adults attending morning Mass. Afterward, I approached them, shared how pleased I was to see their joyful and prayerful spirit, and asked where they were from and what had brought them to our liturgy. Their answer was inspiring: “We feel so blessed by the people in our lives, the opportunities we have, and the environment we enjoy here in Northern California that we praise and thank God by celebrating Mass whenever and wherever we can.” They were simply traveling, yet recognizing God’s presence and grace had become an essential part of their journey.

As Franciscans, we are called to witness that all good comes from God and returns to Him in praise. When young people see us living with gratitude, humility, and joy, they learn that holiness is alive in ordinary moments. To pray “holy be Your name” is to let our lives proclaim what our words profess: God is worthy of all honor, glory, and praise.



Your Kingdom Come; My Kingdom Go

By Kathleen Molaro, OFS • Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission Chair

“Your Kingdom come” is first a prayer for the fullness of God’s everlasting kingdom, but it is also a call to recognize and serve His kingdom already present among us. The kingdom is wherever the King is known, believed in, and worshipped. For those who pray these words, the petition carries both hope and responsibility: Your kingdom come, my kingdom go.

Our Rule calls us to “go forth as witnesses and instruments of her (the Church’s) mission proclaiming Christ to all people by their life and words.” (Art. 6) In this petition, we are invited to move into the world as Jesus’ disciples did, and challenged to bring the Good News, through His grace, to all the world as co-participants in the Church’s mission. The reward, as St. Francis reminds us, is “eternal enjoyment,” “clear vision,” “perfect love,” and “blessed companionship” with our Lord.

Praying for the kingdom is not passive waiting. According to the Catholic Catechism, “Man’s vocation to eternal life does not suppress, but actually reinforces, his duty to put into action in the world the energies and means received from the Creator to serve justice and peace.” (CC #2820) While we wait for the eternal kingdom, we can experience the kingdom here in our earthly existence through the Word, the Eucharist, and each other. We can show others the kingdom through acts of charity, kindness, and mercy.

To pray “Your kingdom come” is therefore to surrender our own small and meager kingdoms. Your kingdom come, my kingdom go. Centering our lives on the Gospel and on the Lord Jesus Christ is the way to enter more fully into God’s kingdom, yet this surrender is difficult to remember when we are overwhelmed by the ordinary tasks of daily life.

This tension becomes especially visible in daily responsibilities. I once asked a group of young adults how they kept their eyes on the kingdom while balancing studies, marriage and children,

bills, and countless other distractions - important or not. One young father replied, “It’s hard because I become so focused on myself and my own little kingdom. I need to remind myself to see the bigger picture and keep my eyes on the true kingdom. I pray every morning for the grace to do that.”

He was correct. St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, “The kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 14:17) Prayer is essential for the task of seeking eternal salvation and bringing the kingdom to others. Paul also tells us through his letter to the Corinthians, “Do you not know that the unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God?” (1 Cor. 6:9) A big part of awaiting the kingdom and encouraging others to seek it is being good examples of daily conversion. Our OFS Rule tells us, “The sacrament of reconciliation is the privileged sign of the Father’s mercy and the source of grace.” (Art. 7)

Your kingdom come; my kingdom go. Each time we pray these words, we ask for the grace to let go of self-rule and to live as signs of God’s reign through detachment, prayer, reconciliation, and daily conversion. In this way, we prepare for everlasting life in God’s kingdom and help others glimpse that kingdom on earth while we wait in hope.



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

Your Will be Done

By Joe Makley • National JPIC Animator

T
5

Your will be done on earth as in heaven: St Francis used this passage in the Lord's Prayer to emphasize our responsibilities under the first commandment, to love God with our whole heart, our whole soul, and our whole strength, and the second, to love our neighbor as ourselves. St Francis' transcendent strategy of "Seeking Your glory in everything" is expressed in the Canticum of the Creatures, where all creation sings of God. It is easier, when aspiring to always see God's glory, to understand that it is everywhere.

St. Francis tells us to love our neighbors by drawing them to the love of God with our whole strength. How do we draw others to the love of God except by embodying that love in service? We have to be like Jesus, a light in the darkness. Francis said we should be "rejoicing in the good of others as in our own, and by suffering with others at their misfortunes." The Church's social teaching calls this *solidarity*.

When our neighbors hear themselves demeaned as "illegals," and are unjustly detained and separated from family, our members' acts of Franciscan accompaniment (court assistance, food, financial help, rides, etc.) show them the love of God. When mothers abroad fear for their children in a rain of missile and drone strikes, our members advocate along with the Church, for "Cease fire! Stop the bombing!" And when our neighbors find themselves cast out into the urban encampments, suffering from multiple adverse conditions and lacking safety, a good Franciscan like Brother David Buer, OFM, will be there with a sandwich and

cup of coffee. St Francis knew the secret about loving service as evangelization. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7)



Secular Franciscan working alongside a Missionaries of Charity sister at a hospice for otherwise homeless individuals, preparing a meal for 50 plus residents. Shared by Pat Boye, OFS, JPIC animator for St. Margaret of Cortona Region.

A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father

(The Undated Writings) FA:ED 1:158

O Our Father most holy:
Our Creator, Redeemer, Consoler, and Savior:

Who are in heaven:

In the angels and the saints,
enlightening them to know, for You, Lord, are light;
inflaming them to love, for You, Lord, are love;
dwelling in them and filling them with happiness,
for You, Lord, are Supreme Good, the Eternal Good,
from Whom all good comes
without Whom there is no good.

Holy be Your Name:

May knowledge of you become clearer in us
that we may know
the breadth of Your blessings,
the length of Your promises,
the height of Your majesty,
the depth of Your judgments.

Your kingdom come:

That You may rule in us through Your grace
and enable us to come to Your kingdom
where there is clear vision of You,
perfect love of You,
blessed companionship with You,
eternal enjoyment of You.

Your will be done on earth as in heaven:

That we may love You
with our whole heart by always thinking of You,
with our whole soul by always desiring You,
with our whole mind by always directing all
our intentions to You,
and by seeking Your glory in everything,
with all our whole strength by exerting
all our energies and affections of body and soul
in the service of Your love and of nothing else;
and we may love our neighbor as ourselves



by drawing them all to Your love
with our whole strength,
by rejoicing in the good of others as in our own,
by suffering with others at their misfortunes,
and by giving offense to no one.

Give us this day:

in remembrance, understanding, and reverence
of that love which (our Lord Jesus Christ) had for us
and of those things that He said and did
and suffered for us.

our daily Bread:

Your own beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Forgive us our trespasses:

through Your ineffable mercy
through the power of the passion of
Your beloved Son
and through the merits and intercession
of the ever blessed Virgin and all Your elect.

As we forgive those who trespass against us:

And what we do not completely forgive,
make us, Lord, forgive completely
that we may truly love our enemies because of You
and we may fervently intercede for them before You,
returning no one evil for evil
and we may strive to help everyone in You.

And lead us not into temptation:

hidden or obvious, sudden or persistent.

But deliver us from evil:

past, present, and to come.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.



Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

By Mary Frances Charsky, OFS • International Councilor

Each day, God the Father offers us countless moments of grace, but none more profound than the gift of the Eucharist, **His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ**, given for us. In Holy Communion we receive not only spiritual nourishment, but the living presence of the One who loved us unto suffering, death, and resurrection.

To pray for “our daily bread” is to acknowledge this love with reverence: the love that moved the Father to send His only begotten Son, and the love that moved Jesus to offer Himself completely for our salvation. Our lives become a response to that love, lived with gratitude, humility, and the desire to mirror Christ’s compassion.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament deepens this understanding. In the quiet gaze upon the Host, we recognize the Bread that sustains us through our daily work, sacrifices, and sufferings. It is here that our hearts learn again the simplicity and devotion of St. Francis, who saw the Eucharist as the radiant center of Christian life.

At the Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of His brothers and said, “Do this in memory of me.” In this gesture and command, He revealed that the Bread we receive becomes the life we must live, a life of service, fraternity, and self-giving love.



May our prayer for “daily bread” renew in us the desire to live as Eucharistic people, nourished by Christ and sent forth to be His presence in the world.

Forgive Us!

By Vickie Klick, OFS • Chair, NAFRA Centenary Task Force



Forgive us our trespasses:

through Your ineffable mercy through the power of the passion of Your beloved Son and through the merits and intercession of the ever blessed Virgin and all Your elect.

We all need forgiveness. Francis underscores the magnitude of God's power to forgive and the limitlessness of His mercy. He seems to be reassuring himself, and us, that no matter how sinful we feel – and are! – the Father is ready and able to show us mercy and forgiveness.

In addition to the mercy of the Father and the passion of the Son, Francis counts on the intercession of the Virgin Mary and “all Your elect.” While he may have meant those who are already enjoying the glories of heaven, I think we should take it as an affirmation of the value of **our** prayers for each other. We can and should pray for our brothers and sisters in fraternity, in addition to our families, our co-workers, and everyone else with whom we are connected in any way.

While we all pray the Our Father frequently, and we mean what we pray, how much do we secretly hope that we aren't in *that* much need of forgiveness? If Francis recognized himself as a sinner, where should that leave the rest of us? Our Rule emphasizes our shared need and the means for our renewal.

United by their vocation as “brothers and sisters of penance”, and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls “conversion.” Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily.

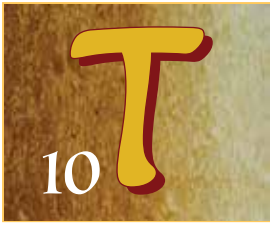
On this road to renewal the sacrament of reconciliation is the privileged sign of the Father's mercy and the source of grace. [OFS Rule, Art. 7]

I became Catholic in 1982 and was professed in the Secular Franciscan Order in 1985. However, I only started receiving the sacrament of reconciliation on a regular basis in spring of 2025. I can confirm that it matters! My mindset has changed from, “Is this something I must confess?” to “What do I need to confess this time?” I also can see (some) improvement in my habitual faults, though I frequently need to return to reconciliation for a booster. It's a good thing for me that God is so patient with us (while at the same time, I'm confessing faults caused by my own *impatience*). If regular confession “whether I need it or not” isn't yet part of your spiritual practice, I strongly recommend it, at whatever interval works for you.

It's always helpful to look at how our Constitutions elaborate on the brief paragraphs of the Rule.

Rule 7. Secular Franciscans, called in earlier times “the brothers and sisters of penance,” propose to live in the spirit of continual conversion. Some means to cultivate this characteristic of the Franciscan vocation, individually, and in fraternity, are: listening to and celebrating the Word of God; review of life; spiritual retreats; the help of a spiritual adviser, and penitential celebrations. They should approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently and participate in the communal celebration of it, whether in the Fraternity, or with the whole people of God. [OFS Constitutions, Article 13.1]

Each time we pray, “Forgive us our trespasses,” let us resolve to live more fully the spirit of continual conversion to which we are called.



As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us

By Francine Gikow, OFS

In *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, the first definition of "trespass" is "a violation of moral or social ethics, especially sin." In the Our Father prayer, it means those sins or wrongs committed against us. These are the moments when people injure us, let us down, break our trust, and/or hurt our feelings.

For St. Francis, forgiveness is not a simple task. It is a deep, spiritual action that requires God's intervention. Francis gives us a gentle, structured way to process and let go of hurts: We have to decide to choose love over hate. We ask for the strength to love our enemies and fervently intercede for them before God. "Forgiveness bears witness that, in this world, love is stronger than sin." (CCC: 2844)

In the Catholic faith, forgiveness is a divine command and a choice, not a feeling. Jesus teaches to receive God's mercy, we must forgive others. This means consciously letting go of anger and a desire for revenge, even when the person who hurt you is not sorry. Forgiveness does not require the person who has injured you to fix the damage which occurred nor "make up" for their injury. It depends upon your decision to forgive based in God.

Forgiveness is a process - it takes time. Forgiveness doesn't automatically make us feel better or is a "one and done" but it is a choice...a choice to let go of the burden of carrying anger, revenge, and hatred so that ultimately we may be freed of the feelings controlling our lives. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, "It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory in transforming the hurt into intercession" (No. 2843).

Forgiveness is NOT saying what the person did was OK. It is saying, "What you did was wrong but I choose to love you anyway." We break the cycle of pain by forgiving. It prevents returning evil for evil and instead strives to share Christ's love. It is an

AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US:

And what we do not completely forgive,
make us, Lord, forgive completely
that we may truly love our enemies because of You
and we may fervently intercede for them before You,
returning no one evil for evil
and we may strive to help everyone in You.

St. Francis of Assisi

intention to pray for that person in the love that we have already experienced from the love that God has shown us.

If there is re-injury, the process begins again. It opens another opportunity to choose to forgive again. Matthew: 18:21-22, states: "*Then Peter approaching asked him, 'Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I say to you, not seven times but seventy times seven.'*" The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible describes the term "seventy times seven" as denoting "limitless forgiveness and mercy," the behavior Jesus expected from the apostles...and from us.

Forgiveness leads to a participation in the mystery of God's love for each one of us. By our choices, we show that love is stronger than sin. Perhaps this is why the old adage rings true: "To err is human; to forgive, divine." Genuine forgiveness draws us right into the heart of divine life.

For further study:

Read: Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2842-2845

Reflect: Look at the difficult relationships in your life and ask yourself: Do I hold grudges? Have I been reluctant to forgive someone? (Psst...sometimes it is even yourself who needs forgiveness!)

Act: Pray for that individual and ask God to help you to love that person as God loves you.

And Lead Us Not Into Temptation: Hidden or Obvious, Sudden or Persistent

By Corinne Lorenzet, OFS • National Councilor; CNSA Secretary



At first glance, and without reflection, this line in the Our Father can be confusing. Why would our God, whom Francis, in the first verses of his reflection on the Lord's Prayer, describes as "...Supreme Good, the Eternal Good, from Whom all good comes ..." lead me into temptation? In my own prayer and study, and with good spiritual direction, I have come to a better understanding of its meaning.

Some years ago, I participated in a four-year Biblical School offered in my diocese. From the beginning of the program, the instructors emphasized the importance of understanding translation, historical context, audience, etc. of the text. When we dove into the Lord's Prayer, the instructor emphasized that the Hebrew of this verse more accurately means "do not allow us to enter into or succumb to temptation."

For me, this verse is a plea for God's help. Temptation is not the same as sin, but certainly leads to it. A lot of situations tempt me. I know what they are. But am I disciplined enough to set the boundaries in my life that I need to avoid them? When I find myself in them, do I know how (and have the desire) to get out of them?

In the traditional Act of Contrition, we ask to "avoid the near occasion of sin." I read somewhere that the more we put ourselves in positions that could lead to sin, the easier it will be for us to give in to the temptations.

How on target Francis is in describing temptation as "hidden or obvious, sudden or persistent." In his writings, he often refers to his temptations. (Remember the stories of rolling in the snow or in the rose bushes.)

I once said to my confessor, "I come with the same sins..." - persistent, obvious temptations that are my biggest faults. I am constantly aware of these and try my best to avoid them. I most need God's help to lead me away from the "hidden" and "sudden" temptations. They often cause me to rationalize my behavior. It is in these situations that my awareness fails, and I lose sight of God trying to lead me away from the temptation.

God will always lead me toward Himself, toward love, mercy, and compassion. Francis reminds me that God's way is always the Way. I need to let Him lead.

Deliver Us From Evil

By Bret Thoman, OFS

At the conclusion of his commentary on the Our Father, St. Francis of Assisi offers a remarkably brief reflection on Jesus' final petition: "But deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13). He adds simply, "past, present, and to come." Though brief compared to his reflections on the other petitions, these words are rich in wisdom and faith. In just a few words, Francis places the entirety of his life into the hands of the Father.

At first glance, when we pray, "Deliver us from evil," we often think only of our present struggles. This is well and good. Each day brings its own temptations and challenges. We face discouragement, fear, impatience, pride, resentment, and countless distractions that draw us away from God. When we ask God to help us now, this prayer becomes a cry of dependence.

Yet Francis invites us to see that God's saving power extends beyond the present moment. God is not bound by time as we are.

A popular anecdote about Padre Pio tells of a barber who noticed the saint praying during a haircut and asked whom he was praying for. Padre Pio replied that he was praying for the conversion of his uncle. The barber was surprised, noting that his uncle had died many years earlier. Padre Pio's response reflected a profound spiritual insight: although the uncle's death was in the past from a human perspective, God is not bound by time and can apply present prayers to graces given at the moment of death. The story illustrates the Christian belief that God's providence transcends time and that no sincere prayer is ever wasted. As Thomas Aquinas put it, God possesses all of time in an eternal "now."

continued on page 12



Deliver Us From Evil

continued from page 11

When Francis asks God to deliver us from the evil of the past, he is not merely asking us to forget old wounds or regrets. He is asking the eternal God to apply the merits of Christ's Passion to every part of our story - to bring His saving grace precisely into those moments, to redeem what has wounded us, and to heal what still affects us. We begin to see our story differently. We discover that God has always been with us and has never abandoned us. Our memories begin to heal.

Moreover, God's grace extends into the future. The future is hidden from us. We do not know what joys or sorrows await us. We do not know the temptations we may face, the crosses we may be asked to bear, or the decisions that will shape our lives. Yet God knows. In our present age of anxiety, Francis teaches us to surrender the future to the Father's providence. We need not live in fear of

what may come. Instead, we place tomorrow in God's hands. We trust that the grace we need will be given when the moment arrives. We believe that no future trial can separate us from the love of Christ.

For the Christian, no part of life lies outside the reach of God's mercy. The evil of the past can be redeemed. The evil of the present can be overcome by grace. The evil yet to come can be entrusted to the Father's loving providence. In this way, the final petition of the Our Father becomes an act of total surrender to the God who holds all things in His hands.

With childlike trust, we place our past, our present, and our future before the Father, confident that His mercy is greater than every wound, every trial, and every fear.

Blessings on the 50th Anniversary of Your Ordination Fr. Christopher Panagoplos!

By Mary Frances Charsky, OFS • International Councilor



Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, T.O.R., is celebrating his 50th Anniversary of ordination on August 14, 2026, in the Immaculate Conception Province of the T.O.R. For five decades he has faithfully shared his ministry with humility, wisdom, and deep pastoral care. Currently Father Christopher is serving as a Spiritual Assistant in fraternities

nationally, regionally and locally. Fr. Christopher writes a weekly homily for the national website with a matching art piece such as a stained glass window, painting or photograph.

This stained glass window is of St. Francis and the first Secular Franciscans, Luchesio and Buonadonna, a husband and wife, who wished to follow Jesus as Francis did.

This represents Father Christopher's service to the Secular Franciscans throughout his priesthood.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude for his commitment to the Church and to all those he has accompanied along the way. Congratulations Father Christopher on this remarkable milestone!



Why, After You, Francis?

By Fr. Marek Stybor, OFM Conv. • CNSA President-in-Turn

T
13

Brother Masseo once asked St. Francis, “Why after you?” Brother Masseo, wanting to see how humble he was, went up to him and, as if joking, said, “Why after you, why after you, why after you?” Masseo then clarified, “I’m asking why the whole world comes after you, and everyone seems to want to see and hear you? You aren’t a handsome man, you aren’t someone of great learning, and you’re not noble; so why does the whole world come after you?” Francis answered that God chose him for his unworthiness and insufficiency to show His mercy. (Little flowers of St. Francis)

We often talk about St. Francis, who lived 800 years ago and still inspires people today to follow the Gospel. St. Francis is called “another Christ,” and his life was like Jesus’. St. Francis resembles Jesus, which is why his message is so inspiring and timeless. From St. Francis, we can learn:

1) Everyone has a mission in life. When he was dying, he said, “I have done my part; may the Lord teach you yours.” Everyone has a personal mission to discover.

2) Francis discovered a truly intriguing paradox in the Gospel: to truly shine, you must be the smallest. To be a light for others, you must first walk in the shadows. To truly give, you must have nothing - you must empty yourself completely. As Francis often said, “Hold nothing for yourself, that He who gives Himself totally may receive you totally.” When Francis was wounded and marked with the stigmata of Jesus, he could heal others’ wounds in a way that went beyond words. The stigmata were his secrets and a testament to his conformity with Christ.



Francis with the stigmata

3) Francis, the peacemaker. To keep your heart at peace, you need to embrace both the spirituality of failure and the spirituality of powerlessness.

4) Francis and the cross. The cross reminds me that winning isn’t everything. The Christian journey is always a journey from Friday to Sunday. For Francis, the Cross was the best medicine for the spiritual wounds of our souls.



Francis and the Cross

So, why do we celebrate the Year of St. Francis? Why do we need this year? The Jubilee Year of Hope has passed, but God’s love and mercy are always here. This is why the Holy Father was inspired by the Holy Spirit to continue this time of grace as we explore the mystery of God through the eyes of St. Francis of Assisi.

As we celebrate 800 years of St. Francis’ Easter, we are invited to ponder over and over again the radical choice our Seraphic Father made to live the Gospel. Radical love demands radical choices. We are left today with a simple choice: to be true Franciscans/Christians by becoming the Gospel for others or to remain nobody. We are called to trust and rely on God alone. Like St. Francis, we are invited to begin to do penance by the journey of self-conversion. Francis was deeply convinced that it was he, Francis, who had to be radically converted, and history proved him right.

My good brothers and sisters “While we have time, let us do good” (from Gal 6:10)

National Fraternity of OFS-USA
5000 Colerain Avenue
Cincinnati, OH
45223-1213



Gospel to Life Bookstore
The revised Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order is available
for order from the National Fraternity's online bookstore.
Access the bookstore for the Ritual, Rule and other offerings at:
<https://gospel-to-life-bookstore.square.site/>
Email questions to: GospelToLifeBookstore@gmail.com