The Cord

April 2026

Newsletter of the San Luis Rey SeculaFranciscan Fraternity

http://www.slr-ofs.org

Monthly Meetings are on the Second Sunday

The April meeting will be on ***April 12, 2026***

at the Mission San Luis Rey Retreat Center.

Oceanside, California

- 12 noon: Social time in the gathering room
- 12:40 pm: Prayers together in the St Clare chapel
- 1-3pm: General meeting

For those who cannot join us in person, please, join us on Zoom at 1:00 pm.

SLR Zoom Meeting [Meeting ID: 871 4460 4825 , Password: 1978]

SLR General Meeting Winter/ Spring 2026 dates

- April 12, 2026 … *Divine Mercy Sunday*
- May 17, 2026 … *[Fraternity meeting held on the 3rd Sunday in May]*

Spring has SPRUNG!

Minister's Message: April 2026

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

As we enter April, I invite our fraternity to renew a simple, but demanding focus: to choose love and compassion in concrete ways, especially toward those who live at society's edges. For Franciscans—religious and secular alike—this is not a political slogan or a passing cause, but a Gospel-shaped way of seeing, where the dignity of every person comes first and where the measure of our faith is often found in how we treat the poor, the excluded, and the overlooked.

This month, may we hold in prayer and in practice our immigrant neighbors—those who have arrived recently as well as those who have been here for generations, but who still feel unwanted or unsafe.

Many of us carry strong convictions about policies and borders, and we may not all agree on solutions. We are blessed, in that our Franciscan commitment calls us to begin not with labels, but with faces; not with arguments, but with mercy. I have seen how we can respect differences of opinion while steadfastly refusing indifference, contempt, or cruelty. We understand that compassion is not agreement, but recognition of shared humanity. The love that emanates from each member of our fraternity is nothing short of inspiring. Thank you, Holy Spirit! I'm so grateful that this is who we are!

At our gathering this month we will be learning about Franciscan dedication to, practice of, and influence on healthcare. The history is so rich, and we do share in the responsibility for its future. Please do your best to attend. For those who are homebound, please join us on Zoom (thank you, Karen!).

June will bring another opportunity for us to put our love into action as we participate in the Million Meals food distribution. Let's put this on our calendars!

May the Lord give us peace – both in recognition and acceptance of our diverse views, and more importantly, as the fruit of humility and courageous love as we walk with the poor and the disenfranchised.

Love, peace, and all good,
Connie

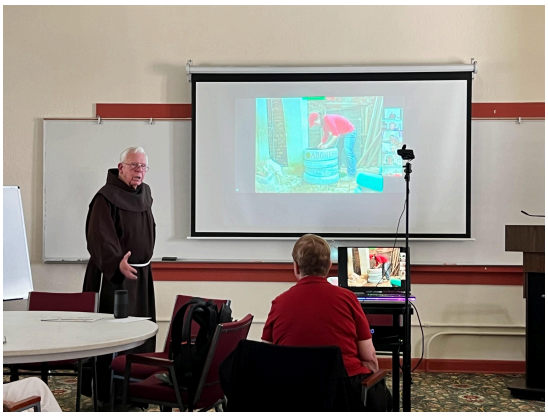
Constance Collins OFS
Minister

Father Richard and Brother Iggy (and company!) showing Franciscan solidarity with immigrants on March 28 on the plaza of the Oceanside Library.

Photo courtesy of Corinne Helena

A Reflection

At our March Fraternity meeting Bro Iggy Harding, OFM, gave us a wonderful presentation on his forty plus years as a missionary in Bolivia. It was informative and inspirational. I learned that there are something like fifteen different indigenous languages in Bolivia. Spanish is spoken in the larger cities. I'm not sure why that surprised me, but it did. In my provincial ignorance, I thought that Spanish and Portuguese were the only languages of South America. It's embarrassing to even write that down!



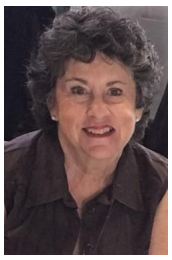
Bro Iggy was in YouFra and then a Secular before joining the Friars. His time in Bolivia came as a surprise assignment and what a gift it turned out to be – both for Bro Iggy and for Bolivia. I was humbled by some of the stories he told. I was also encouraged by them. His stories showed the power of advocating for the least of us. They showed how people working together with a purpose and creativity can accomplish so much.

There was the group of people who lived in the garbage dump who had no place to go if they were kicked out. There was the recovery home for burned children so they didn't have to return home without time to heal from burns. Apparently, there are a lot of open fires in the homes and children getting burned is not rare. There are many more, too many to report.

I think the one statement that stayed with me the most was Bro Iggy saying that a young man asked him: "Is it true in America that people shower in the same water that they drink?" I literally cringed internally and the question popped into my head: "What kind of water do they bathe in?!" I don't even drink our tap water without filtering it! The presentation left me in a place of deep gratitude. I could as easily have been born into the poverty of Bolivia as I was born into the comfort of the United States.

My mental meanderings then took me to look at the war of choice we are currently engaged in. Somehow, we can afford, as a country, to spend a billion dollars a day on destruction and death, while decimating life-giving support because it ' costs too much'! My heart aches at the suffering we are causing around the world. When I struggle with the answer, I return to the words of St Francis as he greeted Sister Death: I have done what is mine to do. May the Lord show you what is yours to do.

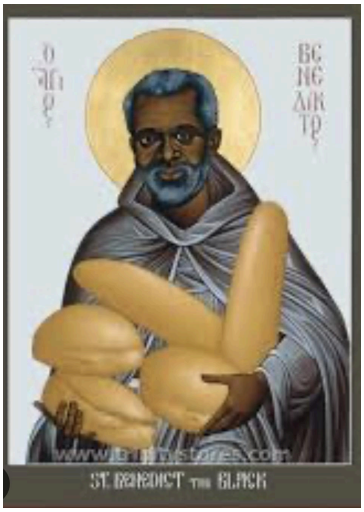
Come Holy Spirit!



Corinne Helena OFS

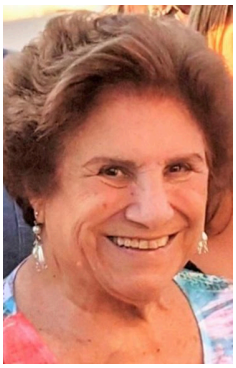
Formation Director

Then and Now…Humble Service



I stumbled upon a Franciscan Saint I found fascinating. His feast day happens to fall this month on April 4th.

First a little history. He was known as St. Benedict the Black. He was also sometimes referred to as "the Moor or the African". His parents were slaves shipped to Messina, Sicily. Benedict was born there in 1526. He was freed at age 18 and lived as a humble farmer. He joined a group of hermits that followed the Rule of St. Francis until 1564 when Pope Pius IV disbanded them to join the first order (OFM's).



He eventually became the novice master, then guardian of the friars, although reluctantly. These positions were rarely held by someone with status as a brother. His life was a living out of St. Francis admonition #IV.

> "I did not come to be served, but to serve (Mt:20:28), our Lord tells us. Those who are put in charge of others should be no prouder of their office than if they had been appointed to wash the feet of their confreres. They should no more be upset at the loss of their authority than they would be if they were deprived of the task of washing feet".

This reminds me of the witness of our dear sister Prudy who we recently lost to Sister Death. Thanks to Connie for sharing Prudy's Cord article from last June. I enjoyed reading again her service through the years in her profession of gospel living. She lovingly spent many years caring for her sick husband. She closed her article with these words. "I love the Franciscan way of life with its humility, peace, service to others, and its purpose to please God from gospel to life and life to gospel."

Karron has many times reminded us of Prudy's generous heart in serving the sick and homebound members of our fraternity. Prudy visited, along with other Franciscans when my husband Rock was on hospice and brought food. She delighted in making people happy with her amazing desserts. Her kindness will not be forgotten by many.

It is interesting to me that both St. Benedict and Prudy loved to humbly share their talents with others. I like to connect this to what we professed to do in our Rule. From Article 10 we read…" let them (Secular Franciscans) exercise their responsibilities competently in the Christian spirit of service." Both these wonderful Franciscans set love for "the other" as a starting point, not a duty. Let us give thanks for all Franciscans who seek to humbly serve in their own unique way to share the love of Christ with others in this perfect time in history where God has graciously placed us now. God bring you peace, Jan

Jan DeSpain OFS

Councilor

Blessed Brother Giles of Assisi

At the tomb where Blessed Brother Giles of Assisi is laid to rest, the inscription reads:

"India is famous for its gems, Saba for its incense, Arabia for its gold, Egypt for its wisdom, Italy for its power: Now, therefore, let Augusta Perugia exult, rejoice, and boast about this incomparable treasure of Blessed Giles, who remains forever the cornerstone of the wonderful edifice of the Order of the Friars Minor."

Sarcophagus of the Blessed Giles (4th century AD)
Oratorio di San Bernardino, Perugia

I, Heidi Madden, believe that if Brother Giles had looked up from his gardening chores and had seen this inscription about him, he would probably have been shocked, causing him to take a good smashing wack at it with his shovel. Then, coming to his senses, he would have thought about it for a while and then said something very insightful, a paradoxical thought no doubt, later preserved for prosperity.

Blessed Brother Giles was the 3rd member of the quickly developing First Order of St. Francis. A resident of Assisi, as well, Giles had heard that two other men had sold all of their possessions to follow Francis in his life of poverty and living the Gospel. Giles, a simple, uneducated farmer, quickly sold all of his things and ran off, searching for St Francis. At a fork in the road, Giles stopped and prayed to God for guidance in which way to go. Then St Francis stepped out of the woods with his friends, Bernard and Peter Catana and said "Here is a good brother God has sent us! Let us sit down to table and celebrate his coming. (This event is now celebrated as April 23, 1208.)

It has been commented about Brother Giles that his life was divided into two periods:
One of action, the other of contemplation. From the very beginning of his vocation, Brother Giles spent his days traveling. He made pilgrimages to holy places in Rome and Spain and is said to have been the first Brother Minor to walk the Sorrowful Way in Jeruselum. At one point , he tried to go to Tunis, Africa but the Christians there put him back on his boat and sent him home. (It had something to do with not wanting to stir up the Moslem population by trying to evangelize them. Brother Giles was known for his enthusiasm for the Gospel!)

Every day of his life, Brother Giles worked for his daily bread. He was known to haul water, gather wood, pick grapes, and even volunteered to shake walnuts out of a tree to help a farmer. What he couldn't eat that day, he gave away, keeping his spirit and his load always light. Brother Giles made it a habit of only working part of a day, not because he was lazy but so that he had time for prayer. If someone wanted him to work a whole day, he would only agree if he could stop to pray the holy hours. As a man of the earth, he valued the simple humility that comes from manual labor and not intellectual accolades.

Brother Giles had a gift for observing and understanding our flawed human nature. His early travels gave him the opportunity to witness, first hand, the state of the world during his time. In him grew a holy wisdom and many people, even the pope, valued his advice. When he finally asked St. Francis for permission to settle in one place, St. Francis saw the value of his missionary travels but, instead, let him live the contemplative life in Monte Ridipo near Perygia, Italy.

The friary of San Francesco al Monte, Monteripido, outside Perugia, today. In Giles' time there was a hermitage, chapel, and a few other small buildings.

Later Blessed Brother Giles experienced so many prayerful ecstasies that his Brothers warned visitors not to say the word "paradise" or mention Heaven around Brother Giles or he would go there in his mind and not return for a couple of hours (or days!) Brother Giles was very close to St. Francis and was present at his death. In a time of changing opinions about the future direction of the Order, Blessed Brother Giles chose to stay true to the way St. Francis lived, in humility, poverty and suppreme, unwavering patience. This fidelity to the simple contempletive life, it was said, irked some of the more "progressive"members of the Brothers Minor.

As a story goes, one of the Brothers, knowing how much Brother Giles loved to be in the garden, took a sword and started whacking the vegetables to pieces. Surprised, Brother Giles yelled, grabbed him and promptly threw him out of the garden! The brother then questioned where his patience and holiness went. Recovering, Brother Giles replied, " Pardon me, Brother, but thy invasion was so sudden I was not armed and had no time to fortify myself."

The sayings of Brother Giles were so valued in his time that many of them were written down to our spiritual benefit today. Below is the link to a PDF form of the book :

The Golden Sayings of B. Brother Giles of Assisi

The introduction is a wealth of information about Brother Giles' life, the ins and outs of academic versus legendary story telling and a whisper of the connection between the struggles toward holiness in 13th and 21st centuries. I look forward to diving deeper into the thoughts of this honest, witty and yet very humble brother in Christ.

May the Peace of Christ be with you,

Heidi Madden OFS

Secretary

Information and registration for the "Q" :

21st Quinquennial Congress (Q2026) – Secular Franciscan Order – USA

Blessing for the Sick

Lord Jesus, when you were on earth, they brought the sick to you and you healed them all. Today I ask you to bless all those in sickness, in weakness, and in pain. For those who are blind and who cannot see the light of the sun; the beauty of the world, or the faces of their friends: Bless your people, O Lord…

- *For our francican brothers and sisters who are experiencing the suffering of illness and isolation, be comforted by the prayers and communion of their fraternities.* ***We pray to the Lord…***
- *For all world leaders who labor for peace and the well being of all people. May those who can only see conflict as a path to resolutions benefit from their wisdom.* ***We pray to the Lord…***
- *For all who seek safety and security in all parts of the world and those who make national policies will listen to their voices .* ***We pray to the Lord…***
- *For the soul of Marta's brother, Denes, who went to Our Lord in the early days of March. May his family find peace and comfort from the loss in the time to come.* ***We pray to the Lord…***
- *For all of our OFS brothers and sisters, especially…*

- Mary Gregush OFS April 28, 2009
- Elaine Smith OFS April 2, 2012
- Mary Behnke OFS April 6, 2018
- Rock DeSpain OFS April 5, 2024

May the souls of our faithfully departed rest in peace. Amen

Professions in the Month of April:

- Marta Kassai OFS April 24, 1994
- Winnie Bauer OFS (Emerita) April 10, 2005

Let us continue to pray for and support all those in Formation:

- ***Candidates: Maria, Cathy, Mark and Mary Jo***
- ***Inquirers: Francisco, Vivian and Varya***

Happy April Birthday wishes to Corinne H!

The San Luis Rey Fraternity Council

 Constance Collins OFS Minister	 Linda Gossett OFS Vice-Minister	 Corinne Helena OFS Formation Director	 Father Richard Juzix OFM Spiritual Assistant
 Heidi Madden OFS Secretary Cord Newsletter Editor	 Carolyn Brock OFS Treasurer & Outreach	 Jan DeSpain OFS Councilor	 Elizabeth Mavis OFS Councilor & Formator

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Zoom Meeting Link

Meeting ID: 871 4460 4825 Passcode: 1978
Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.
Monthly:
https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/tZMsc-2urj8iGNHlBUHN6s7O-g4_znUHzQCg/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGvrz8uHNSRuBuCRpwEBY-gLO7ziClHjY11kD3QKw4FcVTZe-UWDahxJfDK

Meeting ID: 871 4460 4825
Passcode: 1978

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