

NEWSLETTER

Sacred Heart Fraternity, Austin, Texas

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December: Month dedicated to The Immaculate Conception

The month of December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. The first 24 days of December fall during the liturgical season known as of Advent and are represented by the liturgical color purple — a symbol of penance, mortification and the sorrow of a contrite heart. The remaining days of December mark the beginning of the Christmas season. The liturgical color changes to white or gold — a symbol of joy, purity and innocence.

The liturgy of Advent focuses on remembering Christ's first coming at Bethlehem which then directs our mind to Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. The readings focus on the people of the Old Testament awaiting the Messiah, John the Baptist, heralding the way for Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary and her maternal preparations.

The month of December is filled with expectation and celebration. Preparation is the key word for the first 24 days of December. Everyone is getting ready for Christmas — shopping and decorating, baking and cleaning. Too often, however, we are so busy with the material preparations



that we lose sight of the real reason for our activity.

Christmas is a Christian feast — and we must reclaim it as such! In the same way that a family eagerly prepares for a baby, so in Advent should we prepare for the coming of the Christ Child. We should keep Advent as a season of waiting and longing, of conversion and of hope and keep our thoughts on the incredible love and humility of our God in taking on the flesh of the Virgin Mary.

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December—Month dedicated to The Immaculate Conception *(continued)*

Let us not forget to prepare a peaceful place in our hearts wherein our Savior may come to dwell.

The best person we can turn to for help during Advent is Mary, Christ's and our Mother. She awaited the day of His birth with more eagerness than any other human being. Her preparation was complete in every respect. Let's crown our preparation and borrow something of Mary's prayerfulness, her purity and whole-hearted submission to God's will.

“O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you.”

FOOD PANTRY:

The pantry will open at 9:00 and we will distribute food until 10:30. Please come a little bit early to help set up the boxes of food. As usual, we will comply with all Covid guidelines for safety. Masks will be required.

This will be a drive through only. Drivers will not be allowed to leave their cars. We will place the boxes of food in the trunk or back seat.



This Month at our Fraternity Meeting:

For ongoing formation this month we will complete the reading of our Holy Father's encyclical Fratelli Tutti. We will read and discuss chapter 8. Also in the discussion, we will talk about Admonition 22. Initial Formation for Inquirers and Candidates will be as follows: Charlie and Spenser will review Chapter 3 and Karla and Mark will review Chapter 21 in the Franciscan Journey.

We will meet at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church in classroom 3. Initial formation will start at 10:30 after closing the Food Pantry. Mass with friar Fr. Florencio will be at 12:00 noon in the church. After Mass we will meet back in classroom 3 for a meal. Ongoing formation will begin at 1:00 pm.

I'd like to remind everyone about our Chapter of Elections that will be coming June 18th. This is when we get to vote for the next council members that will lead us for the next 3 years. The positions to be elected are as follows: Minister, Vice Minister, Secretary, Treasurer and Director of Formation. We are accepting nominations. Please keep praying to the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts for this very important event in our community life. Is God calling you to serve?

We now have a representative for FY & YA (Franciscan Youth and Young Adults). Stephanie Cheatham has agreed to be our representative for this position. We are now needing a representative for JPIC (Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation). Please let council know if you are interested in filling this position.

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Sunday, December 12, 2021

Our Lady of Guadalupe, also known as the Virgin of Guadalupe, is the title given to Virgin Mary, mother of Our Lord Jesus associated with a series of five apparitions in December 1531, and a venerated image on the cloak worn by Juan Diego which is enshrined at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City.

Please consider joining the pilgrimage for Our Lady of Guadalupe Sunday, December 12th starting at Dolores Church located at 1111 Montopolis Dr. Austin, 78741 at 11:00 am, walking to Cristo Rey Church, then to Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. Contact Victoria Ruiz for more information at 512-679-9181.

Saturday, December 11th, a Spanish Mass in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe will be celebrated by The Most Rev. Bishop Joe Vasquez at 11:00 am at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church.



History of The Tau Cross

What is the meaning of the Tau Cross, so loved by Saint Francis?

The tale of the Tau

At least once in your life you'll be asked about the meaning of the cross, usually made of wood, which is shaped like a "T" and is often worn by Franciscan friars. With the help of the portal, St. Francis Patron of Italy, we sought to understand the meaning of the Tau.

Ancient Origin

Tau is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet and was used symbolically in the Old Testament. It was already spoken of in the Book of Ezekiel: "The Lord said to him, 'Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark upon the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over the abominations... (Ez. 9:4). The Tau is the sign placed upon the foreheads of the poor of Israel, it saves them from extermination.

It was then adopted by the very first Christians, for a twofold reason:

1. As the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, it prophesied the Last Day and had the same function as the Greek letter Omega as it appears in the Book of Revelation: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water without price from the fountain of the water of life ... I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Rev. 21:6;22:13).

2. The Christians adopted the Tau, because its form reminded them of the Cross on which Christ was immolated for the salvation of the world.

What it is not

- The Tau is not a magic amulet.
- It is not a fetish, much less a trinket.
- Nor is it a charm that is hung only because it "brings good luck."

What it is a sign of?

- It is a concrete sign of Christian devotion, but above all it is a sign of the commitment of one's life to following the poor and crucified Christ.
- It is a sign of the awareness of a Christian, i.e. of a child of God, a child who has escaped danger, of one who has been redeemed and saved. It is a sign of powerful protection against evil (Ez.9,6).
- It is a sign willed by God for me, it is a divine privilege (Rev.9:4; Rev.7:1-4; Rev.14:1).
- It is the sign of the Lord's redeemed, of the unblemished, of those who trust Him, of those who see themselves as beloved children and who know that they are precious to God (Ez.9:6).

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History of The Tau Cross *(continued)*

- It is a symbol of the dignity of the children of God, for it is the Cross that held Christ.
- It is a sign that reminds me that I too must be strong in time of trial, ready to obey the Father, and docile in submission, as Jesus was docile before the Father's will.

"Look at the crucifix and it will teach you everything..."

St. Francis and the cross

Because of the Tau's resemblance to the cross, this sign was very dear to St. Francis of Assisi, so much so that it occupied an important place in his life as well as his gestures. In him the ancient prophetic sign was actualized, regained its saving power and expressed the beatitude of poverty, which is an essential element of the Franciscan way of life.

"Whenever necessity or charity required, St. Francis marked with this seal the letters he sent" (FF 980); "He began all of his actions with it" (FF 1347). The Tau was therefore the sign dearest to Francis, his seal, the telltale sign of a deep spiritual conviction that the salvation of every man is only in the Cross of Christ.

Thus the Tau, which is backed by a solid biblical and Christian tradition, was received by St. Francis for its spiritual value. The Saint of Assisi took hold of this sign in a manner so complete and intense that, at the end of his life and through the stigmata impressed in his flesh he became the living image of the Tau that he had so often contemplated, drawn, and especially loved.

Why wood?

Wood is a very poor and flexible material, and the children of God are called to live simply and in poverty of spirit (Mt.5:3). Wood is a material that is easily crafted, and the baptized Christian too must be shaped in everyday life by the Word of God, in order to be a herald of the Gospel.

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ADVENT is a time of expectation and preparation for both the celebration of the birth of Jesus at Christmas and the return of Jesus at the Second Coming.

Let us learn from our Holy Father St. Francis as written in the Prophet.

(Christ instructs Francis)

Jesus Christ found him faithful, obedient, grateful, simple, upright, humble, in accord with His heart; and revealed to him the first and last perfection of His evangelical life and that of His mother, His apostles, and the evangelists. He opened his ears and trained him with a powerful hand in the incorruptible and perfect works of heaven, and placed Himself in his heart, his mouth, and his arms.

“Naked, being born of the Virgin in a way words cannot describe, I was wrapped in the swaddling clothes of poverty, and lay in the manger of humility, because I did not want to have a place in the inn, so that, in a mystery, I might show poverty to be the sure way to the kingdom of heaven, and I might confirm in words and deeds the humble lovers and observers of poverty to be heirs and kings of that same kingdom, ordained by my Father from eternity.” - (The Prophet pg. 381)



Have a joyful and Blessed Christmas!

