



The historical location of the Christmas celebration (1223). It was in a small cave next to a small hermitage where the friars lived.

The Nativity Scene – A Franciscan Tradition

Peace and good! As many of you know, I was a pilgrimage leader for the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program. This ministry provided me with many blessings and opportunities to “walk in the footsteps” of Francis of Assisi with pilgrims from Franciscan-sponsored Health Care Institutions, Franciscan-sponsored Colleges/Universities, and friars from our Province.

As pilgrims, we “walked in the footsteps” of Francis of Assisi and learned much about his conversion moments, as well as, his personal relationship with Christ. Whether Francis was seeking counsel from the pope in Rome, taking his Gospel message to towns and villages, tending to lepers in the valley below Assisi, or looking for prayerful solitude in mountainside hermitages, Francis was open to the grace of the Holy Spirit. His life was a continuous spiritual journey.

One particular journey pilgrims take is a trip from Assisi to Greccio. Greccio is the site of one of Francis’ mountain retreats. The focus and importance of experiencing Greccio is to gain a better understanding of Francis’ understanding of the Incarnation – the birth of Christ. This is the site of Francis’ reenactment of the Christ Child’s birth. Francis’ journey to Greccio was one of expectant hope in receiving and sharing God’s love. The pilgrims and pilgrimage leaders also traveled to Greccio in a spirit of expectant hope to celebrate God’s love.

While many may think of Francis’ experience at Greccio with the celebration of the Christmas manger scene, let us remember that Francis’ journey invites us to discover and share God’s presence among us.

Christmas at St. Joseph Catholic Church

Over the past twenty years, parishioners of the parish have enjoyed the beauty of our nativity scene each Christmas season. The nativity scene has been the work of the friars, facility staff, several benefactors, and a few individuals who in the past built the background for the nativity scene.

The parish has 30 Fontanini statutes which make up our understanding of the Christmas story each year. The majority of these statutes have been donated by parishioners. It is with sincere gratitude that the friars and Pastoral Staff thank the benefactors who have purchased the Fontanini statutes and the parishioners who have built the nativity scenes used in the past.

Christmas Blessings!

Father Tom