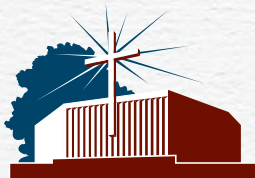


Winter 2023/24

...find the missing peace.

FRANCISCAN

RETREATS AND SPIRITUALITY CENTER



A spiritual oasis for people of all faiths seeking a deeper relationship with the Almighty.



That Abiding Presence

by Fr. Jim Kent, OFM Conv., Director

Once again the holiday season is approaching with its foods, rituals, and religious celebrations. For some of us, it's a time of expectation and delight, of family and friends, a culmination of the last twelve months and a springboard to the year to come. There are decorations from rooftops to basements, as well as songs we know by heart and can sing along. Well, at least the first verses.

Of course, this is not a welcome season for all. For some there is no family and for others family dynamics make it a very difficult time, bringing people together where sparks are likely to fly and maybe an explosion or two. It's a time when past hurts and old wounds fester.

I know of a widower who married a widow, and both had large families of adult children, none of whom were happy with their union. The two had long been friends before the passing of their spouses and their relationship formed quite naturally, but that didn't matter to their children. Consequently, he always approached the holidays with a burning pit in his stomach, knowing most of their family didn't want to be together. The season he used to treasure was now nothing but a burden. His goal was simply to survive. Just gut it out and move on.

While this is sad and perhaps tragic, it is also very real and no amount of turkey or pumpkin pie, twinkling lights, manger scenes, or gift-giving could provide a healing balm.

There are others who find the holidays a blur. There is so much to do and so many people to visit! Surely we can be swept away by dressing up the home inside and out, from baking goodies, and then making the rounds to family, friends, neighbors. It can all be so exhausting.

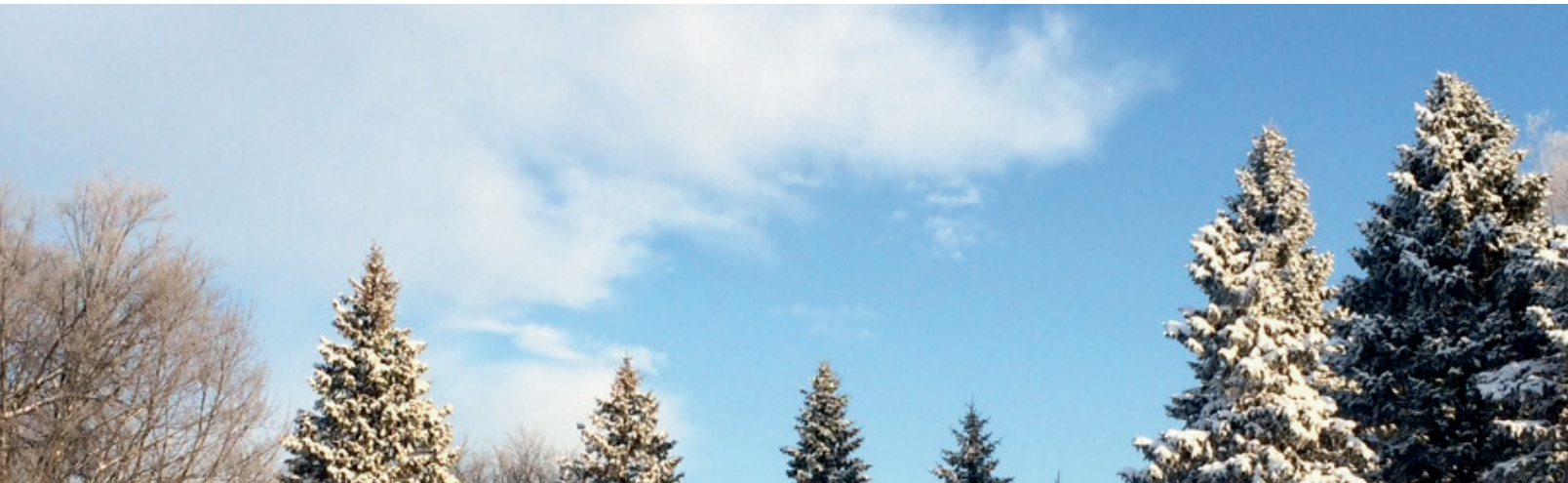
And while many of us might dream of a white Christmas, the larger world reminds us that two-thirds of the Catholics across the globe live in the southern hemisphere, making it their summer. We always need to challenge our expectations, to look behind the tinsel, to go beyond the sentimental and superficial and see the gift of God in our midst.

No matter how blessed, overwhelmed, or hurt the holiday season makes us feel, the essence of the celebrations of Thanksgiving and Christmas, at their very core, is gathering around the altar as we do a meal, is the light that slowly overcomes darkness, is the presence of God-with-us.

May that presence abide throughout the season.



Fr. Jim Kent



Retreat Schedule through December 2024

Step aside from all the challenges and uncertainties of this time for a weekend of spiritual connection and renewal at **Franciscan Retreats and Spirituality Center** in Prior Lake.



2024 Retreat Calendar

January 19-21	Women's Weekend	October 4-6	Women's Weekend
February 9-11	Married Couples	October 18-20	Women's Weekend
February 21	Lenten Day of Prayer	October 25-27	Friends of Francis
February 23-25	Women's Weekend	November 1-3	Women's Weekend
February 28	Lenten Day of Prayer	December 4	Advent Day of Prayer
March 6	Lenten Day of Prayer	December 6-8	Serenity Retreat
March 13	Lenten Day of Prayer	December 11	Advent Day of Prayer
March 22-24	Women's Palm Sunday Retreat	December 13-15	Men's Weekend Retreat
March 28-30	Men's Holy Week	December 18	Advent Day of Prayer
April 5-7	Married Couples		
April 19-21	Women's Weekend		
May 9	FIA Dinner		
May 14-16	Women's Midweek		
June 11-13	Women's Midweek		
June 20-23	Men & Women Silent Retreat		
August 8-11	Men & Women Silent Retreat		
September 10-12	Women's Midweek		
September 19-22	Men & Women Silent Retreat		

We are pleased to fulfill your Mass intentions throughout the year. Call 952-447-2182.

Register for Retreats

Call **952-447-2182**

Online www.franciscanretreats.net/calendar-1

or

Complete **Registration Form** below

Registration Form

Retreat Dates _____

Name _____ Telephone # _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ - _____ E-Mail _____

Registration Fee \$40.00* Payment Check # _____

Credit Card: Visa Discover MasterCard # _____ - _____ - _____ Exp. Date _____ Sec. Code _____

Signature Approval _____

Send to: Franciscan Retreats and Spirituality Center, 16385 Saint Francis Lane, Prior Lake, MN 55372-2220

***A non-refundable registration fee of \$40.00 per person is required and must be received in order to reserve a room. The suggested retreat offering of \$200 (\$285 for three-night retreats) can be paid while you are here on retreat.**

Just around the corner...

Serenity Retreat
for those in recovery from addictions —
theme; *Stage 2 Recovery*
December 1-3, 2023



Linda Fischer, ASC

Presented by Sr. Linda Fischer, ASC
Sr. Linda Fischer is a member of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ from Columbia, PA. A teacher by profession, Sr. Linda left the classroom in 2005. Since then

she has been involved in full-time 12-Step retreat ministry giving retreats to members of Alcoholics Anonymous and other related 12-Step groups.

Sr. Linda has been a grateful recovering alcoholic for the past 32 years and says she loves facilitating recovery retreats because “she receives every bit as much as she gives.” She calls her own journey in recovery one of the greatest blessings in her life.

Stage 2 Recovery is rebuilding the life that was almost lost — the life in our active addiction, no matter the 12-Step Program we identify with. In Stage 2 Recovery we take the Steps out of the book, off the wall, and we apply them, not only to our lives as recovering alcoholics, members of AI-Anon, etc., but to our daily lives. Then the 12 Steps truly become our ‘way of life’.

A \$35 per person non-refundable registration fee is required to confirm your space for a retreat. This fee is in addition to the \$190 suggested donation per person for the weekend. (Includes programs, meals and private room with private shower/toilet.)



Annual Christmas Appeal

What do the Beetles, black and white television, 30 cent gallons of gas, and Franciscan Retreat Center toilets have in common? They all date back to the 1960s!

This year our Annual Christmas Appeal will be for replacing our many toilets. We are seeking \$18,000 for replacement, installation, and disposal of the 58-year-old toilets.

These toilets are original — installed in 1965. While we cherish our history, we also recognize that it's time to modernize and improve our facility. The new toilets will be a more modern height (helpful for many) and use water much more efficiently, saving tens-of-thousands of gallons per year. New toilets also feature simpler mechanisms requiring less repair, ensuring they'll be reliable for decades to come.

By contributing to our Annual Christmas Appeal, you'll be helping us modernize our facilities and improve the comfort and experience for all who visit. This Appeal is a part of our ongoing commitment to create a welcoming, distraction free space where guests experience God's nurturing love as they explore their personal, ever-deepening life of faith.

Donate by using the attached envelope to mail a check, by going to the Annual Christmas Appeal donation page on our website, by calling the office (952-447-2182) or by using the QR code (below) with your smartphone. **All donations are tax deductible.** We thank you for your support and wish you a happy and holy holiday season!



Advent Days of Prayer November and December 2023

Theme: *Mary, Gentle Woman*

Nov 29 – *Mary, Gentle Woman*

Dec 6 – *The Annunciation*

Dec 13 – *The Visitation*

New this year — we are providing lunch! We've decided it's time to break with our long tradition of having guests bring their own brown bag lunch. If you still feel like bringing your own lunch, that's fine too of course — we will still refrigerate it for you.

Advent Days of Prayer provide you with an opportunity to enter into a time of holy prayer, reflection, and action. Give yourself the gift of some reflective time during this holy Advent season. Participants need only bring any reading material that they would like to have with them. Lunch will be provided by the Retreat Center. There will be input by the presenter, a guided prayer experience, an opportunity for Confession, Stations of the Cross, Liturgy of the Day and ample free time for personal prayer and reflection. These day retreats are not sequential; one may attend all of these days or the day that best fits into one's schedule.

Advent Days of Prayer schedule:

9:00 Arrival, coffee, tea

9:45 Welcome, Opening Prayer and Conference

10:30 Confessions and Spiritual Direction

11:30 Guided Prayer Experience

12:00 NEW in 2023 — Lunch provided by the Retreat Center!

1:00 Advent Station of the Cross

1:45 Mass

2:30 Departure

The suggested offering for the day is \$30.00.



Registration is optional but helpful. Register yourself or your group for Days of Prayer by going to the calendar page of our website, by calling our office or by scanning the QR code with a smartphone.

Eighth Centenary of the Christmas Creche



This year marks the 800th anniversary of the Live Nativity at Greccio, Italy. On that Christmas in 1223, St. Francis of Assisi had received permission to have a nativity in a cave outside the village of Greccio. Animals and hay filled the space around the manger, and St. Francis proclaimed and preached the Gospel.

An early biographer of the saint wrote, Francis desired “to represent the birth of that Child in Bethlehem in such a way that with our bodily eyes we may see what he suffered for lack of necessities of a newborn babe...”

During the nativity, some saw an infant appear in the manger that St. Francis picked up and embraced. Tradition also holds that people took pieces of the straw home and whoever touched it witnessed miracles or received healings.

Beginning with that Christmas in Greccio, the custom began to have manger scenes in churches and homes, just as many of us do today. All this began 800 years ago.

Men's Retreat

Theme: *Finding Meaning and Grace*

December 8-10, 2023

Fr Jim Kent, Fr Jim Van Dorn and Fr Steve McMichael are your presenters for the weekend.

To go on retreat is a strategic move (as it is in the military), to regroup, get re-energized, and renewed in faith, so we might return home a better man and disciple of Christ. The weekend will include prayers, Mass, conferences, opportunities for confession, adoration and spiritual direction, and delicious meals. Since the retreat begins on December 8, we will also include the holy day Mass for the Immaculate Conception.



Fr. Jim Kent



Fr. Jim Van Dorn



Fr. Steve McMichael



Register by going to the calendar page of our website, or by calling our office, or by scanning the QR code with a smartphone.

Sharing a Birthday with Jesus

by Brittany Huebl; Head of Housekeeping at FRSC

I wish you much health, happiness and good fortune, and after this life an eternal crown in Heaven. On Christmas Eve, this wish is accompanied by the sharing of the Polish Oplatki wafer. As the family and friends gather together for supper, the eldest member starts the tradition by breaking off a piece of the wafer and offering it to the next eldest along with the above wish. The wafer and the wish move down the line from person to person, until the youngest member is presented with the last piece. It is a beautiful tradition and a favorite part of my birthday celebration.

“People always pity us for having Christmas birthdays, but even as a kid I loved it,” recalls Fr. Paul Schloemer, OFM Conv., Formation Director in San Antonio, Texas, and born on Christmas Eve. “Everyone was home, the world seemed to be happy and celebrating, and I enjoyed going to Mass on my birthday.”

According to the internet, outside of February 29, Christmas Day is the rarest birthday, followed by New Year's Day and Christmas Eve. For those ‘rare’ people out there who share in this most famous of birthdays, the average opinion seems to be that which Fr. Paul Schloemer observed, pity. Certainly, having a birthday on the same day as Jesus Christ has some draw backs; however, the day offers a number of positives, as well. Part of people's perspective depends on whether their birthday is lost or incorporated into the Christmas celebrations.

“I always wanted you to have a birthday,” my mom has said over the years. Joining my parents for their second married Christmas, they realized that our family's Christmas Eve and Day traditions

would have to work at including a Christmas Eve birthday. Being the oldest of seven children, the only Christmas traditions any of us have known, include my birthday. As a child, the benefits were obvious. Unlike my siblings, weekend or not, Dad was always home from work on my birthday, I received presents two days in a row, we got to stay up past midnight, Santa came on my birthday night, and we got to dress up fancy and go to a special Mass. As I aged, I did realize that having a birthday separated from an already fun and festive time had its advantages, too, and I could understand where people might pity a Christmas birthday.

“There were only two things that I didn't like,” says Fr. Paul. “I never had a birthday party with my friends – things were too hectic. And the WORST was that my little brother (five years younger) had a birthday on the 23rd, so we would share a birthday cake at midnight between the two days.”

It would be pretending, if I said that the festiveness of Christmas did not alter how Christmas birthdays are celebrated. However, as long as the birthday is still recognized in addition to the Christmas celebration (Christmas cards are not birthday cards and birthday presents are not wrapped as Christmas presents), it is a really neat time to have a birthday. For me, my birthday culminates with Midnight Mass, and we slip right into Christmas Day and its celebration. We leave for Mass singing *Happy Birthday* for me and return singing *Happy Birthday* to Jesus. In my opinion, it doesn't get much better than that.



Brittany Huebl

Sign Up For Our Electronic Newsletters Too!

We will now send two electronic newsletters a year and two traditional printed newsletters like the one you are reading now. We have done this to be better stewards of our resources. I'm sure it's no surprise to you that the cost of printing and paper has gone up. Postage rates have also climbed to a level where everything has gotten so expensive. We think the two different formats sent twice annually (still - four newsletters total) splits the difference. This new approach will also enable us to explore

other avenues of communication and offer you links to take you immediately to our most updated retreat schedules, conference titles, and spiritual resources.

If you are not on the electronic newsletter list already, email Bob Beck to be added — marketing@franciscanretreats.net.

Franciscan Retreats also now has a presence on Instagram. Follow us @franciscanretreatsmn to experience the retreat center tranquility and spirituality in a fresh, visually pleasing way.



Just a reminder—

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Christmas Cookie Recipe

Vanilla Cookies aka Happy Face Cookies

Cookie Dough Ingredients

2 cups sugar
½ cup butter
½ cup Crisco shortening
2 eggs
1 cup sour cream
½ tsp. baking powder
2 tsp. vanilla
6 cups flour

Directions

Roll half of the dough on a floured surface to about 3/8" thickness and cut with a 4 to 5" diameter cutter. Use other shaped cutters if you like.

The trick is to handle the dough as little as possible. Roll it out and cut patterns as close together as possible. Use a spatula to transfer them to a greased cookie sheet. Gentle squeeze

the "scraps" back together and lay aside until you've rolled and cut the second half of the dough. Then squeeze all the "scraps" together, roll, and cut.

Bake in preheated 350-degree oven until delicately brown around edges, 10-12 minutes.

Note: Grandma's recipe calls for 1 cup of lard; I use ½ cup butter and ½ cup Crisco.

Frost while still warm so frosting glazes the cookie and "glues" the decorations.

Cookie Frosting Ingredients

6 Tbls. butter
1 egg
1 tsp vanilla extract
2 tsp almond extract
2 Tbls. cream
4 ¾ cups powdered sugar
Food coloring, if desired

Directions

Cream butter, then add remaining ingredients and beat on high speed until very light and fluffy. If you want to change the consistency, add 1 tsp. cream and/or 1 Tbls. powdered sugar at a time.

Use Christmas Tree cutters with green frosting and decorate with red hots, M&M's, and licorice strips to decorate for Christmas.

This recipe for Vanilla Cookies comes from my Grandma Williams, who died before I was born. My mom made them, and when I started baking on my own, I started making them, too.

