

OCTOBER 2025

San Damiano Chapel

NEWSLETTER

October 2025

GENTLE OCTOBER AND THE SPIRIT OF ASSISI

In October, the longer nights become the norm in northern climates, and although the weather can still be “clement”, the year begins to wind down as leaves turn gold and mornings get frosty. Despite this, some glorious achievements come forward for celebration this month, most prominently, our patron St Francis of Assisi (October 4). His gentility is shown in his love for the poor and creation. Naturally, pet blessings are popular – San Damiano has attracted an array of dogs, cats, fish, turtles and even a horse along with llamas..and other gentle species. Saint Francis’ gentleness is also extended to Saint Therese (October 1) known for her “Little Way”, a simple, gentle approach to God; the gentle Guardian Angels (October 2) are held up for our children as well as for us – powerful examples of God’s amazing care! Many more feasts soothe our moods and provide spiritual wellbeing; these include (just to mention a few): Good Pope Saint John XXIII (October 11); the glorious Saint Therese of Avila (October 15); Gentle St Luke, the evangelist and physician (October 18); the ever-youthful Pope St John Paul II (October 22); and of course, the ruddy and faithful apostles, Saints Simon and Jude (October 28).

And then, what I consider the “grand finale” of October is the very last day: the Eve of All the Saints (or “Haloed”), ‘Halloween’. This is a celebration preparation for all those people, many unknown, who assumed a gentle orientation to God. How can this be such a beautiful time of year? Maybe it’s the leaves, the harvest or the gentle transition to a silvery winter, nevertheless we pray, may the great saints we celebrate gives us a respite from a world in need of calm and gentleness. What we need is a spirit of Assisi...see the next article!

Brother Conrad OFM

Chapel Schedule and Mass Opportunities:

Sunday Mass:

11:00 am
(San Damiano Chapel)

Monday:

Daily Mass at 11am
(St. Rose Convent)

Tuesday:

Daily Mass at 11
(St. Rose Convent)

Wednesday

Daily Mass at 11am
(St. Rose Convent)

Thursday:

Daily Mass at 11am
(St. Rose Convent)

Friday:

Daily Mass at 11am
(St. Rose Convent)

Sacrament of Reconciliation
Sundays at 10:30 am or available
by appointment –
contact Fr. Conrad or Fr. Michael



VITERBO
UNIVERSITY

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STBC - Sister Thea Bowman Center



SPIRIT OF ASSISI DAY: OCTOBER 27

The spirit of Assisi: it was Pope John Paul II who coined the expression. Since October 27, 1986, this “spirit” has been felt a little everywhere, losing none of its power of its first happening. Everyone says, when it occurred (I remember it personally) you could hear the world’s heart beat. How and why?

Pope John Paul II knew that continuous dialogue between different denominations and religions was the most effective means of bringing about mutual understanding and reconciliation. He knew that people who shared belief in a supernatural reality could come together, find common ground, and pray communally for peace. He was the person who could make this a reality.

In apprehension of the strife and warfare of the world (sound familiar), Pope John Paul II courageously decided to promote a movement to strengthen the cause of peace and he decided the best place to launch this initiative was Assisi.

In this way on October 27, 1986, this Holy Father succeeded for the first time in history, in bringing together 160 religious leaders from all over the world: Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Christians, as well as representatives of Hinduism, Sikhism, Shintoism, Zoroastrianism, Baha’i, Judaism, Islam, African and North American animists. They represented 32 Christian religious organizations and 11 other non-Christian world religions.

A milestone event! The world, amazed and impressed, stood still for a moment of silent prayer. At the conclusion, Pope John Paul said “for the first time in history, we have come together from everywhere in this place dedicated to Saint Francis, to witness before the world, each according to his own conviction, about the transcendent quality of peace.” Pope Francis has since designated this day as a day of prayer and fasting for world peace. Franciscans have asked all those who love Saint Francis to do something for peace.

On October 27, I will be with Viterbo Alumni visiting Ireland’s Franciscan foundations. I have already planned to gather all of us in the spirit of that day. Let us all be united wherever we are and continue the Spirit of Assisi. Peace and all good!

Br Conrad OFM



“Thin Places”

An Autumn October Reflection

Michael Weldon, OFM

“SALVE!” If I hadn’t been looking down at the steps in the old Irish castle I was touring, I would have missed it. The first word of the “Hail Mary” in Latin. But it’s more than just the English equivalent, “Hail” or the American “Howdy” honored guest. Those formal words inscribed on the step gave a sacred hello to generations of feet that had climbed on it through the door of that medieval dwelling.

The space between things – when we move from one place to another is a sacred ground. From Dawn to– day or dusk to – dark, one landscape or geographical space to another, times of journey or pilgrimage, or from one awareness to another, we build something new. They fly by us, or we by them. We also pass through big thresholds collectively. I believe we are passing through one nationally as this presidency unfolds and crowds take to the streets to highlight the freedoms of our U.S. frames of democracy. I have a hard time imagining what it will look like on the other side. In times when old structures start to fall away, forces are released, sometimes powerful and overwhelming. We need to pay attention and call them by name.

The Celts call these thresholds “thin places” where heaven and earth are closer and the veil between worlds is thin. They are “portals” that can alert us with awe to the presence of the Sacred. The end of October on All Hallows Eve, the night before All Saints marked the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter, or the “darker half” of the year, as they called it. Traditionally it was a time where the space was most thin, even porous. Myths noted that dark creatures and “wee folk” passed back and forth. But I think that these sacred threshold times are more familiar than one might think. Like going in and out of doors, from one country to another, from states of life to new awareness of the door we are to others.

I went looking for one on a trip to Ireland in 2015. In Donegal, I found it – “a thin place” –almost by accident. Or it found me. A magical old ruin on the point of the Bay of Donegal surprised me, a holy space where my brother Franciscans had built a friary in 1474. In 1601 it was destroyed by the British who used it as an arsenal for gunpowder. The friars were dispersed and lived in the hills as hermits and on the road as itinerant clergy. In 1636 Friar Michael O’Leary and his brother friars in exile wrote the “Annals of the Four Masters,” the first attempt to make a compendium of Irish history there. I walked up to its ruins on a coffee break from my tour. The rest of the group were shopping. Following my nose from the bus that brought us, there it was. I put my hand though an old medieval window frame and photographed it. I could feel the magic on my knuckles, old Franciscan thin-ness. Many cemetery markers signed places of burial during times when the clergy were diminished by British rule. It was the only consecrated ground for burials. A friend followed me up with a cup of coffee and we stayed for while exploring it. We were aware of breathless awe lingering about that sacred Franciscan spot.

The Ancient Celts placed threshold stones at the entrance to a portal or passageway into a sacred site. Touching either side was a reminder that the soul was crossing into sanctified space. Churches were sometime built there. The Irish had a fascination for the spiritual quality of boundary places. Celtic monks in particular, were attracted to edge places. “Liminality” was a word coined by Anthropologist Victor Turner for those ancient spots. Irish Hermit St. Columbanus wrote a 7th Century letter to Pope Boniface IV and described his new people as “ultimi habitatores mundi,” inhabitants of the world’s edge. The very fringes of the ancient Roman world gave them a unique lens into their landscape of the world. I think this a good description of our Franciscan world at this juncture of our history. In Franciscan places like this university, what does it mean for us to live as inhabitants at our world’s edge? Yet here we are. What would we have to do we go deeper in claiming that identity? What ascetism or practices promote that perspective?

I’d like us to consider the practice an “asceticism” of thresholds this October. These are simple practices that make us more human. Friar Kenan Osborne once said that Franciscan evangelization is a “humanizing” after the pattern of Jesus. Instead of trying to be holy it was a “habitus” (fun word) of being just human. Some sacred habits like the Jewish custom of kissing the small Torah Scrolls at door posts have great power. Or maybe, it’s like dipping our fingers in the holy water at the doors of a Catholic church or blessing our front doors with chalk each year at January feast of the Epiphany. In those little practices, we make conscious steps into the in-between space from what has been to what comes next. The thresholds of the day invite us to pause and offer a blessing honoring the “infinities” in each moment. It’s good science. The thinness of any moment also highlights a sense of the “Holy” that make the thinness less frightening. As we wander about this year’s Autumn days let’s keep our senses open. Can we be aware of the edge places arriving or leaving a building, passing from one room to another. Can we be a little alert to the truth that we are just passing through pilgrims. Something; someone was here before we were.

The monastic tradition of “STATIO,” is another simple October practice that does this. Imagine taking one step at a time. Will people think we are weird? In the middle of all our multi-tasking, adapt a simple practice of stopping one thing before beginning another. It is a place of reverence and acknowledgement for that space of transition, a place of stillness where we can let go of what went before and open ourselves to what comes next. I noticed it in teaching rubrics at the seminary for men preparing to be priests over the past 20 years. We all have a hard time doing one thing at a time: holding a book, a greeting, waiting for response, washing hands, calling to prayer, pausing with a “Let us pray...” before speaking the words of a collect prayer.

In the thresholds of the coming Autumn days, I invite you, maybe I “double dog dare you,” to pause....as you pass through the many doors of Viterbo. Many have walked through before you. Offer a blessing honoring the infinity of memories and potentials in each moment. In the thinness of the moment, feel the breathing of the divine, to make the thinness more accessible.

As we wander through the edge places, arriving or leaving a room or a building, passing from one room to another. Stop. Don’t pass thorough so quickly. Be aware. It is sacred ground. And acknowledge it with gratitude. Maybe kiss your fingers as you touch the door frame. Amen.

Lady Jacoba was deeply struck by St. Francis of Assisi and consequently became a Third Order Franciscan. She kindly offered one special treat to Francis – a delicious almond treat, and upon his deathbed, Francis requested some of these cookies. As his friend, she was allowed to enter the friary to deliver these almond sweets to her cherished friend. The cookies are a cherished tradition as we celebrate the Feast of Francis.

LADY JACOBA'S ALMOND COOKIES

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 CUP BUTTER, SOFTENED
- 1 CUP SUGAR (OR LESS)
- 2 EGGS, DIVIDED
- 1 TEASPOON REAL VANILLA EXTRACT
- 1 TEASPOON ALMOND EXTRACT
- 2 CUPS WHITE OR WHOLE WHEAT FLOUR
- 1 CUP ALMOND FLOUR
- 1 TEASPOON BAKING SODA
- 1/2 TEASPOON SALT
- 1 TEASPOON WATER
- 1 CUP GROUND ALMONDS (ADD FINELY CHOPPED PIECES TO THE BATTER AND COARSER, BIGGER PIECES ON TOP)



INSTRUCTIONS:

PREHEAT OVEN TO 325 DEGREES.
BEAT BUTTER AND SUGAR UNTIL CREAMY.
SEPARATE ONE EGG. SAVE THE EGG WHITE IN A SMALL BOWL TO USE FOR DIPPING THE BALLS OF DOUGH TO GET ALMONDS TO STICK ON TOP BEFORE BAKING. ADD THE YOLK AND THE OTHER EGG TO THE CREAMY BUTTER MIX ALONG WITH ALL THE OTHER WET INGREDIENTS. BEAT UNTIL WELL MIXED.

STIR FLOUR, SALT, AND BAKING SODA TOGETHER IN A SEPARATE BOWL. THEN INCREMENTALLY ADD TO THE WET MIX. WORK THE DOUGH UNTIL IT HOLDS TOGETHER AND CAN BE FORMED INTO BALLS. IF THE DOUGH IS TOO THIN, ADD MORE WHEAT FLOUR. ROLL THE DOUGH INTO 1-INCH BALLS. DIP THE TOP HALF IN EGG WHITE AND ROLL IN ALMONDS. PLACE ON A LIGHTLY GREASED COOKING TRAY AND GENTLY FLATTEN WITH A SPOON OR YOUR HAND. BAKE 14-16 MINUTES OR UNTIL THE EDGES ARE LIGHTLY BROWNED.

COOL ONE MINUTE ON COOKIE SHEET BEFORE REMOVING FROM TRAY. COOL COMPLETELY AND STORE IN AN AIRTIGHT CONTAINER. THE COOKIES SHOULD BE CONSUMED WITHIN A WEEK OR FROZEN FOR LATER USE.

MAKES ABOUT 3 DOZEN COOKIES.



What makes St. Francis such a universally beloved personality?

St. Francis is loved by people of all faiths and persuasions. He is the saint of ecology, the lover of animals, the one who can talk to a wolf, and many more titles given to this man from Assisi, who was not rich, or influential in his own town. He had no thought of being famous. He did not have a goal of being a great teacher, nor did he even think of being a saint.

The stories we hear about St. Francis are about Francis Bernadine, the young man who was experiencing the freedom of living “on his own.” He could do as he pleased. He was not under the control of his father. –and on and on.

Yes, the stories we hear are those of a young man sowing his oats. Sound familiar? All of us go through the mistakes of that first freedom. We don’t know the results of the choices we make until those mistakes are made.

Like Francis we can learn from those mistakes. We can change our thinking. We can become what God intends us to be. The exciting thing is that we don’t really know what that is.

All we have to do is try to do the right thing. Who knows? Maybe you will be a saint sometime!

Sister Malinda



Children's Corner

St. Francis of Assisi Feast Day — October 4th

Long ago, there was a kind man named Francis who loved Jesus very much. He wanted to live just like Jesus—poor, simple, and full of joy.

Francis gave away all his things and trusted God to take care of him. He loved every person he met, especially the poor and the sick.

Francis also loved animals and nature. He called the sun his “Brother Sun” and the moon his “Sister Moon.” One day, he even preached to the birds, and they listened quietly as if they understood!

Francis showed the world that when we love God with all our hearts, we also love people, animals, and the whole earth.

He is the patron saint of animals and nature.



At all times and seasons, in every country and place, every day and all day, we must have a true and humble faith.

St. Francis of Assisi

2025 is the 800th Anniversary of St. Francis' Canticle of the Creatures, inspired by his gratitude for creation, because he believed that all of creation manifests the goodness of God. Francis' Song is an expression of thanks and praise for God's many gifts!



Canticle of Creation Clues St. Francis of Assisi wrote a prayer-song called the "Canticle of Creation." Below are some verses from the canticle. Each contains clues about a part of God's creation: the earth, water, fire, the sun, or the moon. Use the clues to finish each sentence. Then unscramble the letters in the boxes and place them below to see a "kingly" gift God has in store for you!

Praised be my Lord God with all creatures, especially our brother the ____ ____ , which brings us the day, and the light. When we see him shine, Lord, we think of you!

Praised be my Lord for our sister the ____ ____, and for the stars, which God has set clear and lovely in heaven.

Praised be my Lord for our brother the ____ ____, and for air and clouds, and all weather ...

Praised be my Lord for our sister ____ ____, which is very useful and cleansing.

Praised be my Lord for our brother ____ ____ ____, through which you give us light in the darkness ...

Praised be my Lord for our mother the ____ ____, which gives us fruits, and flowers of many colors ...

Praised be my Lord for all those who forgive one another for God's love's sake ... You, O most High, shall give them a **C** ____ ____ ____ !

ANSWER: SUN, MOON, WIND, WATER, FIRE, EARTH, CROWN



Saint Francis Week 2025



Wednesday, October 1, 2025

San Damiano Chapel, Assisi Courtyard, Campus Grounds, FSPA Lobby

8-9 a.m. – Franciscan Lecture

San Damiano Chapel

Join us for a special lecture as part of VUSM 100, reflecting on the life and legacy of St. Francis. Hospitality will be offered before and after the event.

11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. – Franny Fest

Assisi Courtyard

Celebrate the spirit of St. Francis with food, fun, and fellowship!

- **Fun to include:** Community Lunch (Free Lunch for all), VU Departments, Clubs & Orgs. Tabling, Petting Zoo, Hy-Vee Flu Shot Clinic

- **12:30 p.m. – Viterbo Concert Choir Performance**

In case of cold or inclement weather, Franny Fest will move to the Mathy Center. An announcement will be made on the morning of Oct. 1st.

11 a.m. – 2 p.m. – Farmers Market

Assisi Courtyard

Support local farmers and artisans while enjoying the festivities!

1 p.m. – Tree Planting Ceremony

Near the Dancing Francis

Join us as we plant a silver maple grown from a cutting of a tree in the Theresienstadt Concentration Camp. This tree was gifted by Sam and DeDe Harris to honor Darryle Clott for 20 years of Holocaust education at Viterbo University.

5 p.m. – Hispanic Heritage Month Community Networking & Mariachi Celebration (HHM Event)

FSPA Lobby

Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month with an evening of vibrant music, meaningful connections, and cultural appreciation. Enjoy live mariachi music and community networking in the spirit of unity and joy.

Thursday, October 2, 2025

Sr. Thea Bowman Center, Place of Grace Catholic Worker House

9-11 a.m. – Morning MUG: A Special St. Francis Edition

Sr. Thea Bowman Center

Start your day with coffee, conversation, and community. This special edition of Morning MUG invites reflection on the values of St. Francis and how they shape our campus life.

4:30 p.m. – Blessing and Distribution of Bread to the Neighborhood

Place of Grace (919 Hood Street)

Join us for a short, meaningful ritual rooted in the Franciscan tradition as we offer a special blessing over loaves of bread—symbols of nourishment, hospitality, and community. Following the blessing, we will walk together to share the bread with our neighbors, extending a gesture of peace and goodwill in the spirit of St. Francis.

Immediately afterward, all are warmly invited to stay for a 5 p.m. community dinner at Place of Grace, generously provided by the Secular Franciscans of La Crosse (Tau Shalom) and Campus Ministry.

Friday, October 3, 2025

San Damiano Chapel, Fine Arts Center Hall

★ **5:15 p.m. – Evening Transitus Prayer Service**

San Damiano Chapel

Join the Franciscan community tradition of reflecting on and honoring St. Francis' sacred passage from earthly life into eternal light.

7 p.m. – Live Band Karaoke (Family Day Event)

Fine Arts Center Recital Hall

If you are in town early for Family Day, join us on Friday night for our first-ever Live Band karaoke competition! All Are Welcome!

Saturday, October 4, 2025
The Feast of St. Francis & Family Day
La Crosse Community, San Damiano Chapel, FAC Recital Hall



9 a.m. – Family Day Service Saturday (Family Day Event)

Various Locations in La Crosse

This is an annual tradition in which students and their families join other members of the Viterbo community to undertake community service projects.

- Parents and students should coordinate their Service Saturday online registration.
- Registration deadline is Wednesday, October 1.
- Projects fill quickly—register early to secure your preferred placement. Check-in begins at 9 a.m. Service will be from 9:45 – 11:45 a.m. and will return to campus around 12 p.m. for lunch.

1:30 p.m. – Hidden Trails Corn Maze (Family Day Event)

West Salem, WI

Students will need to bring their Viterbo ID for free entry for themselves and their family. Arrive anytime between 1:30–3:30 p.m. No registration required.

★ **2 p.m. – St. Francis Day Liturgy**

San Damiano Chapel

Celebrate the Feast of St. Francis with a special liturgy honoring his life, legacy, and enduring call to peace, simplicity, and care for creation. All are welcome to join in this sacred celebration.

A reception will follow immediately after the liturgy.

★ **4 p.m. – St. Francis Day Pet Blessing**

Dancing Francis – Assisi Courtyard

Bring your furry, feathered, or scaly friends to receive a special blessing in honor of St. Francis, patron saint of animals and ecology. This joyful tradition celebrates the bond between humans and all living creatures.

Pet Supply Drive – Sept. 2 – Oct. 4

Donate new, unopened pet supplies for Coulee Region Humane Society

Drop-off: Franciscan Spirituality Center & Viterbo campus locations

Times: Mon–Fri, 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m. & during public events

List of needed items: fspa.org/centenary

Online donations: Text PET to 608-650-6464

5:30 p.m. – Viterbo Mini Golf Invitational (Family Day Event)

Murphy Center Library

Join us in the Todd Wehr Memorial Library for a lively round of mini golf with fun, food, and prizes. Students can play solo, with family/guests, or start a new tradition with your roommates. Stop by the library between 5:30–8:30 p.m. to join in on the fun! No registration required.

Sunday, October 5, 2025

11 a.m. & 6 p.m. – Sunday Mass

San Damiano Chapel

Gather with the Viterbo community for Sunday Mass as we conclude St. Francis Week in prayer, gratitude, and celebration of our Franciscan heritage. All are welcome.

★ Denotes a special university ritual from our Franciscan Tradition.



Canticle of the Sun

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Most high, all powerful, all good Lord!
All praise is yours, all glory, all honor, and all blessing.
To you, alone, Most High, do they belong.
No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce your name.

Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures,
especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day;
and you give light through him.
And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor!
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars;
in the heavens you have made them, precious and beautiful.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
and clouds and storms, and all the weather,
through which you give your creatures sustenance.

Be praised, My Lord, through Sister Water;
she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom you brighten the night.
He is beautiful and cheerful, and powerful and strong.

Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Mother Earth,
who feeds us and rules us,
and produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

Be praised, my Lord, through those who forgive for love of you;
through those who endure sickness and trial.
Happy those who endure in peace, for by you, Most High,
they will be crowned.

Be praised, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whose embrace no living person can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin!
Happy those she finds doing your most holy will.
The second death can do no harm to them.

Praise and bless my Lord, and give thanks,
and serve him with great humility.

