



OF SPECIAL
INTEREST:

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Minister's Message

Brothers and Sisters,

Peace and all good!

As we begin a new year, I want to pause and reflect on a feast that often passes quietly in the midst of Advent's busyness: the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. While it may be overlooked in the rush toward Christmas, its meaning, especially for the people of Mexico and the wider Church, is profound.

The miracle of Guadalupe arrived at a moment of deep division and suffering. The Spanish conquest had left wounds on both sides, and the gap between Spanish Christianity and indigenous Aztec culture seemed impossible to bridge. What emerged at Tepeyac was not simply a religious image, but a moment of reconciliation. Mary appeared not as a foreign queen, but clothed in symbols that spoke directly to the indigenous people — bearing the features, posture, and signs associated with an Aztec earth mother, yet unmistakably pointing beyond herself to the living God she carried within her.

In this way, Guadalupe became a kind of *Mexican phoenix* — rising from the ashes of conquest, violence, and misunderstanding. She did not erase culture; she transformed it. The fusion of Aztec and Christian symbolism made the Gospel intelligible, approachable, and deeply human. It allowed faith to take root not by force, but by love. The result was not only widespread conversion, but the birth of a uniquely Mexican identity.

There is something profoundly Franciscan in this story. Guadalupe reminds us that God does not stand outside culture or history. Instead, God enters fully into human reality, speaking our language, honoring our dignity, and healing divisions from within. She teaches us that true evangelization is never about domination, but about encounter.

In 2026, may the example of Our Lady of Guadalupe inspire us to be instruments of unity in a divided world. May we learn to listen deeply, honor differences, and trust that God is already at work in places we might least expect.

Like Juan Diego, may we have the humility and the courage to carry hope where it is most needed.

Josh





Organization

Tau Fraternity
St. Joseph Catholic Church
750 Peachtree St.
Herndon, VA 20170

Meetings every 1st Sunday
of the month at:
St. Joseph Catholic Church
750 Peachtree St. - Room 205

PACE
& BENE

The Tau Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order was canonically established on June 21, 1992. The fraternity is affiliated with the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Tau Fraternity is in the St. Margaret of Cortona Region of the Secular Franciscan Order.

The Tau Fraternity Council currently includes the following officers:

- Minister — Josh Goldberg, OFS
- Vice Minister — Cynthia Filan-Kim, OFS
- Formation Director — Gil Donahue, OFS
- Secretary — William Richey, OFS
- Treasurer — Joe Boyle, OFS
- Councilor-At-Large — Kimberley Heatherington, OFS



Monthly Tau Contemplative Prayer & Franciscan Spirituality Zoom Discussion led by Gil Donahue, OFS



The Tau Contemplative Prayer
& Franciscan Spirituality
discussion group will take place
Monday, January 12
from 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

The theme will be
“Following Francis in 2026”

Contact Gil to receive a Zoom link
(no need to e-mail if you're already on his list)

TAU CHRISTMAS PARTY

On Sunday, December 7, members of Tau Fraternity and friends gathered in Room 205 of the St. Joseph Parish Center for the annual Tau Christmas Party.

Unfortunately, it seems there were no pictures taken ... but it was reported that a festive time was had by all!



RECAP OF DECEMBER 7 GATHERING

ANNUAL TAU CHRISTMAS PARTY

The program began with “A Christmas Devotional Prayer” adapted from Marion Habig, OFM’s, *Secular Franciscan Companion* (1987; revised by Deacon Dave & Therese Ream, OFS, in 2017).

Then our Vice Minister Cyndy Filan-Kim, OFS, read to us the following Advent Reflection, “Why St. Francis Loved Christmas,” written by our Formation Director Gil Donahue, OFS, in November of this year.

“Why St. Francis Loved Christmas”

Gil Donahue, OFS

Christmas has become for us Christians a very festive season. The commercial aspect sometimes overwhelms the religious element. Even so, we enjoy opportunities to share good times with family and friends. In our region of the northern hemisphere, with fewer hours of sunlight, we revel in the outdoor decorations and other Christmas lights — traditions which are very comforting to us.

Francis, who so admired humility, was deeply touched by Jesus Christ being born as a poor baby. To make the importance of this evident to others, he established the first living manger scene at Greccio. In Jesus, God was physically present to the world. As a newborn, he was both humble and vulnerable, completely dependent on his family for his well-being.

As the Church is the body of Jesus, Francis understood that it, too, is vulnerable and needing our care and attention. The most direct way Francis could manage this was to be, like Jesus, as present as possible to all other people. And especially to those in need (i.e., all of us).

In the Incarnation, God demonstrated his deep love for humanity. And God sought to directly experience humanity the way we do — with the exception of our sinful failings. In line with Jesus’ example, Francis taught members of his Order to be as present as possible to the poor.

RECAP OF DECEMBER 7 GATHERING

ANNUAL TAU CHRISTMAS PARTY, CONTINUED

Over the ages, Francis' special insights have been developed by theologians of note, especially St. Bonaventure and Bl. John Duns Scotus. Taking a somewhat different view than St. Thomas Aquinas, Scotus understood that the Incarnation was God's original plan, not just a reaction to sin. As Jesus often described himself as the Good Shepherd, in Jesus God was seeking to recall all humankind to the manner in which God had originally intended us to live.

For Franciscans, the Incarnation is the ultimate manifestation of God's love and humility. God became human to intimately connect with His creation. Jesus is the "firstborn of every creature" (Colossians 1:15). Thus, Franciscans understand that the Incarnation is the "primacy of Christ" in relation to the cosmos.

Indeed, Christ is the "preeminent gift of God." Francis of Assisi's insights into the beauty of creation are seen as flowing from his understanding of Christ's central role in creation itself. Keeping these spiritual elements of Christmas in mind, let us look for opportunities to reflect God's joy into the lives of others as we make our pilgrimage through Advent to Christmas.



APOSTOLATES

MISSIONARIES OF CHARITY HOSPICE

Thanks to our brothers and sisters who support the apostolate at the Missionaries of Charity Gift of Peace House. The next food delivery will be on **Saturday, February 14.**

If you have not previously participated, please consider doing so. Also, if you want to come along to the Missionaries of Charity Hospice in DC to help with delivery of food and supplies, let Joe and Veronica know.

POOR CLARES OF NEW JERSEY

Tau Fraternity supports the Monastery of St. Clare in Chesterfield, NJ, with a biannual monetary donation. The monastery is home to Sister Karen Stapleton, OSC, who began her Franciscan journey with Tau Fraternity. The main work of the Poor Clares of NJ is to provide Altar Bread to parishes in the diocese of Trenton.

For more information, or to submit a prayer intention to the Poor Clares, see [The Poor Clares of New Jersey — Joyfully Embracing the Gospel Way of Life .\(poorclaresnewjersey.com\)](http://www.poorclaresnewjersey.com)

Watch their YouTube video [A Quiet Joy: New Jersey's Monastery of Saint Clare](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

ECUMENICAL APOSTOLATE

Tau Fraternity partners with the First Baptist Church of Herndon to provide English lessons to students. Tau members volunteer time and talent to teach at Introductory, Intermediate, and Advanced levels. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Bill Bouffard.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Help to feed the hungry. Joe Boyle, OFS, volunteered to shop and deliver food to the St. Vincent de Paul Society chapter at St. Timothy Catholic Church. Food donations may be dropped off prior to the Tau Gathering in the stairwell on the right at St. Joseph School. You can also provide a monetary donation to Joe, who is Tau Treasurer. Thank you!

For more information, see:

<https://sttimothyparish.org/outreach-and-ministries/st-vincent-de-paul/>

FRANCISCAN MISSION SERVICE

Tau Fraternity provides a biannual monetary donation to Franciscan Mission Service. The organization prepares and supports lay Catholics for mission service opportunities around the globe. For more information, see [Home | Franciscan Mission Service](http://www.franciscanmission.org)

PRAYER SHAWL APOSTOLATE

Tau Fraternity provides handmade prayer shawls to individuals in the Diocese of Arlington. Currently, shawls are being provided to pregnant women participating in the Gabriel Project. For more information, please contact Sharon Goldberg, OFS.



James 2:17

APOSTOLATES: ESL UPDATE

Sally White, OFS, shares this update:

“The students at the English Language (ESL) apostolate celebrated completion of the fall semester December 16 with a special program honoring the students and the Herndon Moose Lodge members. Before the program, Dorothy Chambers, the ESL coordinator for the First Baptist Church, took the members of the Moose Lodge on a tour of the classrooms so they could see the classes being taught and all the furniture purchased by the Moose’s last donation.

“Then students, teachers and volunteers from Tau Fraternity and First Baptist Church brought food for a wonderful feast that included many different dishes from the student’s native countries. After the feast Keven LeBlanc, Mayor of Herndon, awarded certificates to the students. Then the Moose Lodge presented another surprise donation of \$5000 for the ESL apostolate.”



APOSTOLATES: SHAWL MINISTRY

Sharon Goldberg, OFS, reports:

“We will be delivering prayer lap blankets for homebound patients at St. Joseph’s, in expansion of our shawl ministry.”



2026 FRATERNITY THEME

OUR TAU FRATERNITY THEME FOR 2026: “WE ARE FAMILY”

The Council has adopted this theme for the new year, considering it as an ideal to focus our attention, and an aspiration to grow toward. Several years ago, another Tau Minister asked me, “Are we as fraternity members close enough to discuss difficult issues?” I responded, “I indeed hope so.” However, several situations during subsequent fraternity meetings indicated we had not yet achieved that capacity. So, this is a goal still ahead of us.

As individual Secular Franciscans, we have already discerned that this is the place for us. Similarly, the already-professed members have welcomed us into the “family” and have helped us in our individual spiritual growth. Our Rule combines prayer, study, and action as essentials in helping us form the community we ideally should be. We are called to pull together, support each other, value each other, and further the Gospel Life that we individually and fraternally represent.

At the present time in our country and the world, we are living in a period when apparently everything has become politicized. And certainly the fraternity is not, and should not be, a forum for partisan matters. We should be able to rise above that, and we should be embracing the Gospel message in all that we say and do. We need to remember that living the Gospel life has always been counter-cultural, since it overtly challenges “secular” society. Being witnesses to the Gospel is not always easy or without pain.

As part of this month’s Ongoing Formation, I am sending out (and will briefly discuss in our meeting) the importance of “Franciscan Listening.” This, I hope, will accompany and add further context to Fr. Kevin’s discussion on this important topic. In my remarks, I use the word “empathy,” which our National Vice Minister Diane Menditto also uses. It is a shame that the word recently has become somewhat politically incorrect in some circles. There is a tendency to quickly judge others, place a label on them (e.g., too empathic, woke, or unpatriotic), and then summarily dismiss them and their views. We Franciscans should make the effort to rise above such an inclination. Each person should be respected for their essential dignity, listened to carefully and meaningfully, and responded to with charity and consideration. We do not always have to agree with each other. Just as in our individual biological families, we must often “give space” to those who see life in a different way than we do. Within our fraternity, we should acknowledge and participate in our common purpose of spurring spiritual growth and understanding.

Let us ask Sts. Francis and Clare to pray for us as we take on this mission in 2026.

Gil Donahue, OFS — Formation Director

TAU COMMITTEES

If you are interested in participating actively in a Tau Committee, take a moment to chat with the chair:

Cultural Diversity Committee (ESL) — Sally White

Hospitality Committee — Cyndy Filan-Kim, OFS

Interfaith/Ecumenical Committee — Kimberley Heatherington, OFS

Infirmarian Committee — Sharon Goldberg, OFS

JPIC (Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation) — Sally White

Recruitment Committee — Vacant

Technology Committee — John Ata, OFS



PRAYER INTENTIONS

HEAR US, LORD!

Please keep the following intentions in your prayers:

For Pope Leo XIV.

For the physical and spiritual healing of Sylvia Capurso; Cynthia Filan-Kim's sister; Sally White; Sally's husband Gary; Richard & Carole Clarke; their grandsons Liam and Rory.

For peace in the Middle East.

For the patients and Sisters at the Missionaries of Charity Gift of Peace House.

For the people affected by Coronavirus and their caregivers.

For the Mother of Mercy Free Medical Clinic and its patients.

For all peoples who suffer persecution.

For the country of Myanmar and its citizens.

For the victims of natural disasters and terror attacks.

For refugees and migrant workers.

For Russians opposing the war in Ukraine.

For all those who have lost their jobs, and are in need of employment.

For all those who have received shawls from the Tau Prayer Shawl Ministry.

For an end to political violence, and for unity in our country.

For all those who are in need of our prayers who have been inadvertently omitted from this list.

Please send prayer requests to Josh Goldberg, OFS.

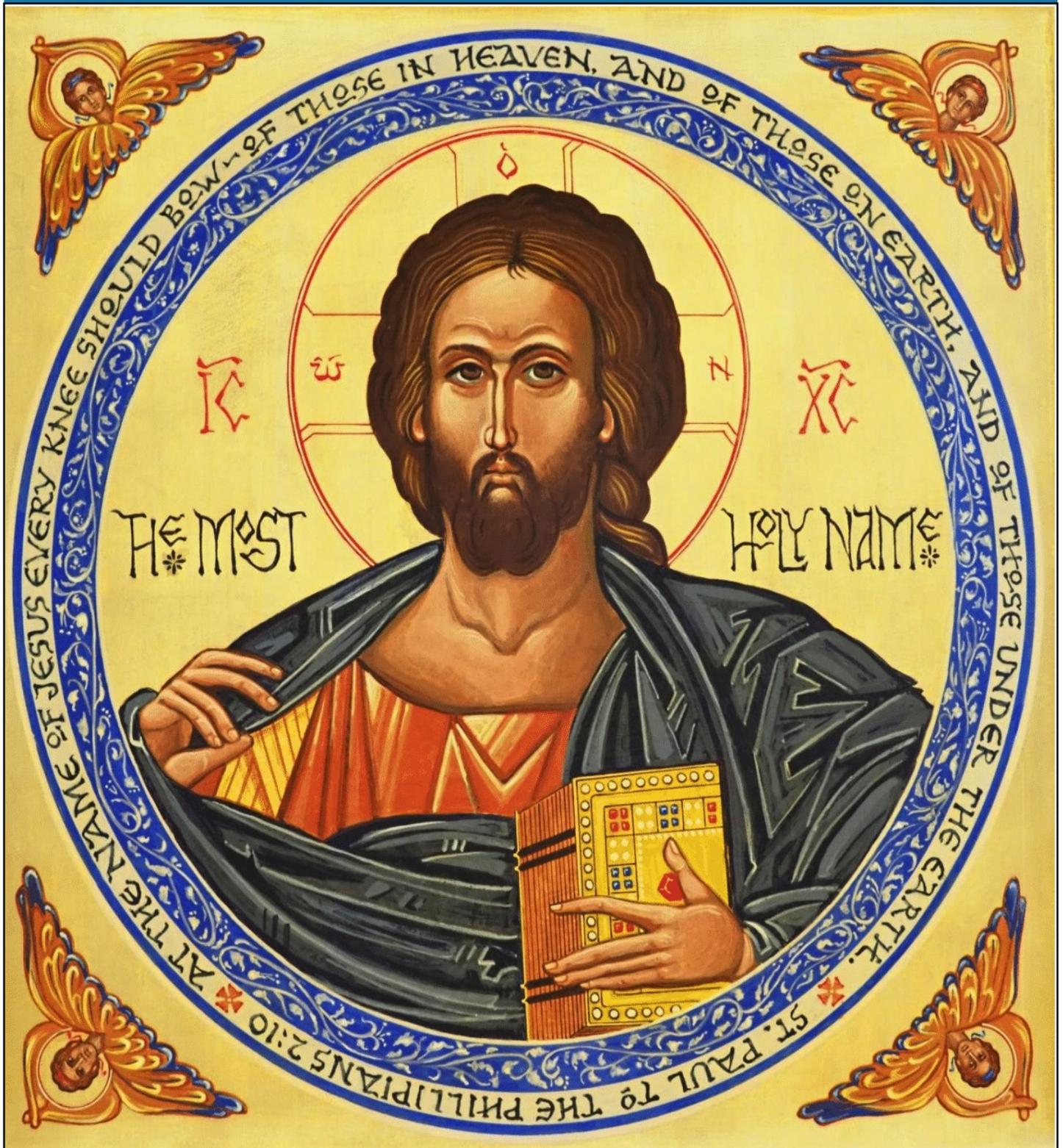
***Do not be anxious about anything,
but in everything, by prayer and
petition, with thanksgiving, present
your request to God.***

Philippians 4:6-7



JANUARY: MONTH OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

POETRY, DEVOTIONS & PRAYER



JANUARY: MONTH OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

POETRY, DEVOTIONS & PRAYER



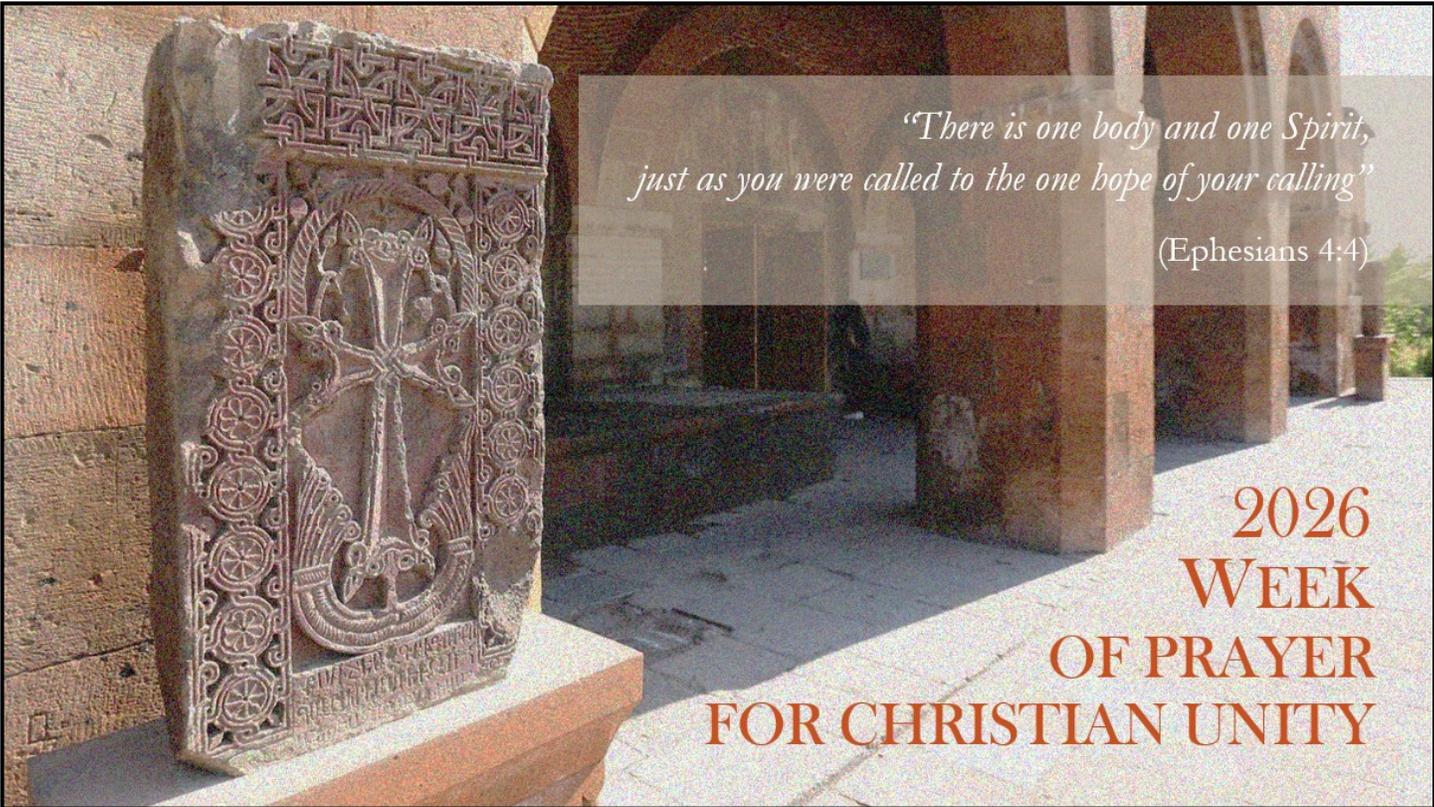
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How sweet the Name of JESUS sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole,
And calms the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary, rest.

Dear Name, the Rock on which I build,
My Shield and Hiding Place,
My never failing treasury, filled
With boundless stores of grace

Jesus! my Shepherd, Husband, Friend,
My Prophet, Priest and King,
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
Accept the praise I bring.



*“There is one body and one Spirit,
just as you were called to the one hope of your calling”*

(Ephesians 4:4)

2026 WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

JANUARY 18-25, 2026

The theme of the *2026 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* comes from the Letter to the Ephesians: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling” (Eph 4:4). The prayers and reflections were prepared by an ecumenical group coordinated by the Inter-Church Relations’ Department of the Armenian Apostolic Church. As usual, an international team appointed jointly by the DPCU and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches worked with the drafters to finalize the materials at a meeting held from 13 to 18 October 2024 at the Holy See of Etchmiadzin, Armenia.

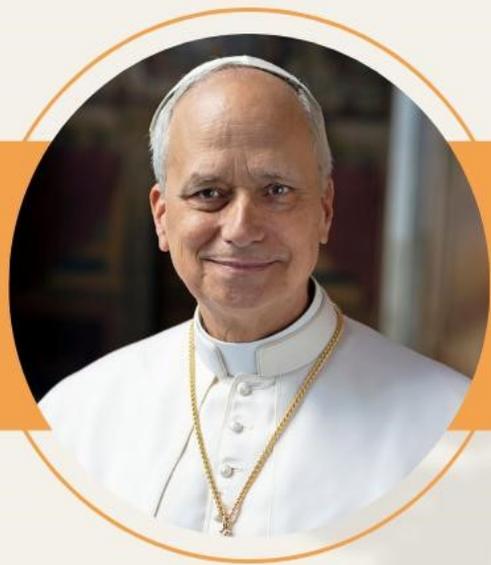
The materials draw upon centuries-old traditions of prayer used by the Armenian people, along with hymns that originated in the ancient monasteries and churches of Armenia, some of which date as far back as the fourth century. The *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2026* therefore offers an invitation to draw upon this shared Christian heritage and to delve more deeply into our fellowship in Christ, which unites Christians worldwide.

www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/news/2025/2025-06-23-texts-for-2026-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity.html

SEE DAILY PRAYERS FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY HERE, ON P. 23

www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/settimana-di-preghiera-per-l-unita/semaine-de-priere-pour-l-unite-des-chretiens-20241/anglais.html

POPE'S INTENTION: JANUARY



FOR PRAYER WITH THE WORD OF GOD

Let us pray that praying with the Word of God be nourishment for our lives and a source of hope in our communities, helping us to build a more fraternal and missionary Church.

CALENDAR: ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

January is the Month of the Holy Name of Jesus*

- Jan. 1 Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God
- Jan. 3 Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus
- Jan. 4 Tau Fraternity Gathering
The Epiphany of the Lord
Feast of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
Veronica O'Donnell's Profession
- Jan. 5 Feast of St. John Neumann
- Jan. 7 Feast of Blessed Angela of Foligno
- Jan. 11 The Baptism of the Lord
Kimberley Heatherington's Profession
- Jan. 12 Walter Gawlak's Birthday
- Jan. 15 Barbara Slivers' Birthday
- Jan. 18 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
(until Jan. 25)
- Jan. 23 Tambra Riggs-Gutierrez's Profession
- Jan. 24 Feast of St. Francis de Sales
Paola Larin's Profession
- Jan. 25 Carole Clarke's Birthday
- Jan. 29 Gil Donahue's Profession
- Jan. 31 Richard Clarke's Birthday

*See the Franciscan Calendar for more dates:
<https://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/traditional-franciscan-calendar.html>

January 2026

Su	Mo	Tue	We	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

February 2026

Su	Mo	Tue	We	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28



Monday, January 26 @ 7:30 PM

<https://files.ecatholic.com/2805/documents/2026/1/bulletin-2026-0111-Saints%20and%20Spirits.pdf?t=1767633235000>

Mass in Recognition of Martin Luther King Jr. Day



Sunday, January 18 @ 9:30 a.m.
Our Lady of Queen of Peace
2700 19th St. South, Arlington

NEXT TAU GATHERING

JANUARY 4, 2026

SCHEDULE

- 1:30 PM** Opening Prayer: Joe Boyle, OFS
Social Time
- 2:00 PM** Bill Richey, OFS:
Ongoing Formation
- 2:45 PM** Break
- 3:00 PM** Gil Donahue, OFS: "Charism"
- 3:30 PM** Angelus & Liturgy of the Hours
- 3:45 PM** Business Meeting
- 4:00 pm** Closing Prayer

St. Joseph
Room 205

INITIAL FORMATION

Aspirants
Ch. 1 in *The Franciscan Journey*

Candidates:
Ch. 13 in *The Franciscan Journey*

**During Epiphany, we will precede the
Liturgy of the Hours with The Angelus**

The Angelus

V. The Angel of the Lord declared
unto Mary,
R. And she conceived of the Holy
Spirit.
--- Pray The HAIL MARY ---

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord,
R. Be it done unto me according to
your Word.
--- Pray The HAIL MARY ---

V. And the Word was made flesh,
R. And dwelt among us.
--- Pray The HAIL MARY ---

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,
R. That we may be made worthy of the
promises of Christ.

--- LET US PRAY ---

Pour forth, we beseech You, O Lord, Your
grace into our hearts: that we, to whom
the Incarnation of Christ Your Son was
made known by the message of an Angel,
may by His Passion and Cross be brought
to the glory of His Resurrection. Through
the same Christ our Lord. Amen.



LITURGY OF THE HOURS The Epiphany of the Lord

Midday Prayer

<https://divineoffice.org/xmas-sixth-day-in-the-octave-dp2/?date=20251230>

Evening Prayer in Christian Prayer:

Ordinary: 694

Proper of Seasons: 169

Psalms and canticle as in Evening Prayer II
of Christmas: 147

Hymn: TBD

**Contact
Cyndy Filan-Kim, OFS,
to volunteer for
Scripture Reading &
Responsory, Opening Prayer,
& Presentations**