



OFS: Secular Franciscan Order (& YouFra)

The Third Order of St. Francis in Ireland.

National Newsletter October 2025

“To follow Jesus in the footsteps of St. Francis”

Website: ofsireland.org



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OFS & YouFra European Congress in Barcelona Spain July 2025

OFS Ireland was represented at the IV OFS & YouFra European Congress by Liam Guilfoil and Finbarr Horgan from the Cork Fraternity. A report from the Congress is given on page 2 of this newsletter.

We would like to thank the Irish OFM Province who generously provided the funding for attendance at the Congress.

St Francis' definition of "Perfect Joy"

There are many challenges in these times for the world, for the Church and even for our Order. Perhaps it is an opportunity to demonstrate "perfect joy" as taught by our Holy Father St Francis

One day at Saint Mary [of the Angels] blessed Francis called Brother Leo: “Write,” he said, “what true joy is”. A messenger arrives and says that all the Masters of Paris have entered the Order. **Write: this isn’t true joy!** Or, that all the prelates, archbishops and bishops beyond the mountains, as well as the King of France and the King of England [have entered the Order]. **Write: this isn’t true joy!** Again, that my brothers have gone to the non-believers and converted all of them to the faith; again, that I have so much grace from God that I heal the sick and perform many miracles. I tell you true joy doesn’t consist in any of these things. “Then what is true joy?” “I return from Perugia and arrive here in the dead of night. It’s wintertime, muddy, and so cold that icicles have formed on the edges of my habit and keep striking my legs and blood flows from such wounds. Freezing, covered with mud and ice, I come to the gate and, after I’ve knocked and called for some time, a brother comes and asks: ‘Who are you?’ ‘Brother Francis,’ I answer. ‘Go away!’ he says. ‘This is not a decent hour to be wandering about! You may not come in!’ When I insist, he replies: ‘Go away! You are simple and stupid! Don’t come back to us again! There are many of us here like you—we don’t need you!’ I stand again at the door and say: ‘For the love of God, take me in tonight!’” And he replies: ‘I will not! Go to the Crosiers’ place and ask there!’ “I tell you this: If I had patience and did not become upset, true joy, as well as true virtue and the salvation of my soul, would consist in this.”

Reference: [FORMATION FRIDAY - True and Perfect Joy: Franciscans and Suffering - August 22, 2025 | Juan de Padilla](#)

Transitus of Our Holy Father St Francis

On the evening of October 3rd each year, Franciscans around the world celebrate the death of St. Francis. St. Francis spent the last few days before his death in praising the Lord and teaching his companions, whom he loved so much, to praise Christ with him. Now many fraternities do not have a Friary nearby where they can celebrate the Transitus. Our website has a document: **Transitus of St Francis (short form for use by OFS fraternities)** that can be used in such cases or even by individual OFS members. See [Resources – Secular Franciscan Order \(OFS\) – Ireland](#)

Laudato Si Webinar

The first joint webinar between OFS Great Britain and OFS Ireland will be held on Wednesday 15th October at 7.30 pm. The online event will involve the promotion of Pope Francis' encyclical 'Laudato Si – on care for our common home. A link for the webinar will be circulated by email. Please support this excellent and historic initiative.

A Washing Machine: Gift of Hope

Earlier this year, our General Minister, Tibor Kauser was in Zimbabwe. While there, he visited the **John Bradbourne Leprosy Center**. Servant of God, John Bradbourne (1921-1979)* was a Secular Franciscan brother of ours, whose cause for canonization is proceeding. Around 50 people are living in the center, under very simple, poor conditions. Those taking care of them are doing a wonderful job, making the place a home for them. All the robes, bedsheets and other linen are being washed by hand, because the washing machine has broken down. The Leprosy center needs an industrial washing machine, since a household one does not have enough capacity. They do not have the money to buy the machine, and it is very expensive (approx. €16,000). Tibor promised to do his best to find ways to collect the money for the washing machine. He sent an appeal to all the OFS national fraternities to help. The National Council will consider donating €1,000 on behalf of OFS Ireland, from the William Storey Charitable legacy, at their next meeting on October 11th.

* [September 2025 'Saint of Month': Servant of God John Bradburne \(1921-1979\) – Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis](#)



IV OFS & YouFra European Congress

The IV European Congress of the OFS and YouFra was held at Llinars del Valles, Barcelona from 14-19 July 2025. The congress was titled: 'Creation and Fraternity: One Family, One Mission'. The main theme of the Congress was: 'Praising Creation with the Canticle of the Creatures' (800 years of the Canticle of the Creatures). The congress was attended by over 120 participants from 20 countries: Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, and Ukraine. Ireland was represented at the congress by Liam Guilfoil and Finbarr Horgan, both from the Cork OFS Fraternity. Major Presentations and workshops included:

- Presentations on the Canticle of the Creatures (Fr. Salvador Jiménez Durán OFM and Manolo Sánchez OFS) and related workshops - much of the emphasis from these presentations was on Pope Francis' Encyclical 'Laudato Si', and how each of the Canticle's stanzas can inspire individual roles in evangelization.
- Presentations on the current membership numbers and the status of the OFS and YouFra in Northern and Southern Europe by Dina Shabalina OFS(Ukraine) and Noemi Paula Riccardi OFS(Italy) and YouFra (Juliana Kolanjian OFS, YouFra (Lebanon). This was followed by a talk encouraging future growth (His Excellency Salvador Cristau – Bishop of Tarrasa Spain).
- Two keynote addresses on: Servant Leadership in the OFS by Tibor Kauser, General Minister of the OFS and "YouFra Now" by Felix Chocojay, YouFra International Coordinator.
- A special presentation on the DANA project that was led by OFS Fraternity Valencia members in response to the floods in Valencia. This presentation provided a "template" for OFS Evangelization through community outreach and action.

As brothers and sisters, we were nourished through daily Eucharistic celebrations, opportunities to pray the OFS Office, Lauds, impromptu prayer services and an evening of Adoration (with Adoration music provided by youth from the parishes of Mare de Deu and Saint Anthony of Padua). The music, witness and warmth of all these experiences was truly moving and inspirational.

The hosts sponsored two group pilgrimages throughout the Congress to the Monastery of Our Lady of Montserrat (with a private address from Rt. Rev Abbot Manel Gasch OSB) and the second was a guided tour of the Basilica de la Sagrada Familia (with a private Mass in the Crypt with his Eminence Cardinal Juan Jose Omella).

During various conversations with the participants, and in feedback arising from certain presentations, concern was often expressed about the future of the OFS, particularly in Northern Europe where the numbers of fraternities and members have declined and where the membership is "aging". Some of this decline has been attributed to the COVID pandemic, which reduced general mass attendance; but the trend is also seen as a reflection of a rapid decline in religious practice throughout the region. For the OFS, a further difficulty has been to secure spiritual assistance, ongoing recruitment and revitalization.

Some common solutions voiced during the Congress were:

- To increase possibilities for online participation using technologies such as Zoom and other video conferencing means.
- Increasing OFS membership.
- Creating YouFra Chapters and youth engagement in general.
- Seeking spiritual assistance from non-traditional sources (i.e., TOR nuns, Diocesan Priests or Deacons that are OFS members, or non-Franciscan religious).
- Increasing dialogue and sharing among regions or national fraternities.

Much of the Congress was organized by the Spanish chapters of YouFra and attended by YouFra members from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Spain, Lebanon and Ukraine. An excellent presentation by Juliana Kolanjian, YouFra Lebanon spoke of the robust and active nature of YouFra in many European countries.

This beautiful icon of the Queen of the Franciscan Family was consecrated in Lithuania in 2018 and journeyed amongst the OFS/YouFra and First Order Franciscan sites in Lithuania. It was ceremoniously handed to the German OFS fraternity at the Barcelona Congress to tour Franciscan sites in Germany. It will then be ceremoniously handed over to the Great Britain fraternity for touring before coming to Ireland in January 2027. A team of volunteers and sites will be needed with the coordination of this event at various Irish OFS and First Order sites.