

Lent 2026 A Franciscan Journey



THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

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About This Lenten Journey

This Lenten program invites you into a 40-day journey of transformation through the wisdom of Saint Francis. Each week focuses on a key phrase from Pope Leo XIV's prayer, offering a spiritual theme to guide your prayer, reflection, and action.

Rather than daily suggestions, this program offers weekly focal points with suggested practices. Choose the actions that speak to your heart and circumstances. The goal is not to do everything, but to allow one theme to permeate your week, shaping how you see, pray, and live.

As we celebrate the Franciscan Jubilee—800 years since Saint Francis embraced Sister Death—may we learn from his life to embrace our own journey toward wholeness, peace, and radical love.



Prayer to St. Francis for Peace*

Saint Francis, our brother, you who eight hundred years ago went to meet Sister Death as a man at peace, intercede for us before the Lord.

You recognized true peace in the Crucifix of San Damiano, teach us to seek in Him the source of all reconciliation that breaks down every wall.

You who, unarmed, crossed the lines of war and misunderstanding, give us the courage to build bridges where the world raises up boundaries.

In this time afflicted by conflict and division, intercede for us so that we may become peacemakers: unarmed and disarming witnesses of the peace that comes from Christ. *Amen.*

Would you like a prayer card?
Just email us and we'll mail one to you.
communications@osfphila.org

Weekly Reflections for the Franciscan Jubilee Year

Ash Wednesday – February 28

"You who eight hundred years ago went to meet Sister Death as a man at peace"

Theme: Embracing Mortality with Peace • Francis approached death not with fear but with welcome, calling it "Sister Death." This week, we begin our Lenten journey by acknowledging our own mortality—not morbidly, but truthfully. When we befriend our finitude, we learn to cherish each day and live with greater intention.

March 1 – March 7

"You recognized true peace in the Crucifix of San Damiano"

Theme: Finding Peace in the Cross • Francis heard Christ speak to him from the San Damiano cross: "Rebuild my church." The cross was not a symbol of defeat but of transformative love. This week, we contemplate how suffering, when united with Christ, becomes a source of healing and peace.

Suggested Practices:

- Reflect on the ashes you receive on Ash Wednesday: Remember you are dust. Let this truth humble and liberate you.
- Journal: What would it mean to live as if you had only one year left? What would change?
- Read Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures*, especially the verse on Sister Death.
- Practice gratitude: Each evening, name three gifts of the day.
- Reach out to someone you've been meaning to connect with—don't wait.
- Choose a charity to give to for Lent. What luxuries can you sacrifice to share your abundance with others?

Suggested Practices:

- Pray before a crucifix: Spend time in silence, asking Christ to speak to you.
- Journal: Identify your "San Damiano moment." Where is God calling you to rebuild?
- Meditate on the Stations of the Cross, focusing on Christ's peace amid suffering.
- Embrace a small suffering this week—physical discomfort, inconvenience—as an offering.
- Serve someone who is suffering: visit, call, or send a note of encouragement.
- Pray for the suffering of the world. Where is Christ being crucified today?

March 8 – March 14*“Teach us to seek in Him the source of all reconciliation”*

Theme: Christ as the Source of Reconciliation • All healing begins in Christ. Francis understood that true reconciliation—with God, others, and ourselves—flows from the cross. This week, we turn to Christ as the wellspring of peace, recognizing that we cannot manufacture unity on our own.

Suggested Practices:

- Go to Reconciliation: Experience Christ's mercy and forgiveness directly.
- Journal: Examine your heart: Where do you need to forgive yourself? Others?
- Pray for someone you struggle to love, asking God to change your heart.
- Read *Matthew 18: 21-35*. What does it teach us about Christian forgiveness?
- Initiate reconciliation: Reach out to someone you're estranged from and open up the lines of communication.
- Practice listening to those with whom you disagree and search for common ground.

March 15 – March 21*“That breaks down every wall”*

Theme: Breaking Down Walls • Christ's peace demolishes the barriers we erect between us and God, between neighbor and stranger, between our true selves and our masks. Francis lived radically open to others, tearing down the walls of class, wealth, and respectability. This week, we ask: What walls am I maintaining?

Suggested Practices:

- Journal: Identify your walls: Fear? Pride? Prejudice? Name them honestly.
- Cross a social boundary: Engage someone different from you—different politics, background, age.
- Practice vulnerability: Share something true with a trusted friend or spiritual director.
- Simplify: Give away something that creates distance between you and others.
- Pray for unity in our Church, country, and world, asking God to heal divisions.
- Research organizations in your area that are working on creating unity and see how you can get involved.

March 22 – March 28*“You who, unarmed, crossed the lines of war and misunderstanding”*

Theme: Unarmed Courage • Francis walked into enemy camps with nothing but prayer and trust. He crossed battle lines, met the Sultan, and modeled what it meant to be defenseless yet unafraid. This week, we reflect on how we can approach conflict without weapons—physical, verbal, or emotional.

Suggested Practices:

- Journal: Examine your defenses: How do you protect yourself in conflict? How can you lower them?
- Practice non-reactivity: When criticized or attacked, pause before responding.
- Listen deeply: Have a conversation where you only seek to understand, not to convince.
- Read the story of Francis' meeting with Sultan al-Kamil as a model of peaceful dialogue.
- Support peacemaking work: Donate to or volunteer with an organization working for conflict resolution.
- Where do you see conflicts in our world? Pray for peace and understanding.

March 29 – April 4**HOLY WEEK***“Give us the courage to build bridges where the world raises up boundaries”*

Theme: Building Bridges • As we enter Holy Week, we watch Christ build the ultimate bridge—between heaven and earth, divinity and humanity, justice and mercy. Francis followed this path, bringing together lepers and lords, Muslims and Christians, creatures and Creator. We are called to do the same.

Suggested Practices:

- Journal: Identify a concrete division: In your family, community, or church. How can you be a bridge?
- Invite unlikely companions: Host a meal or gathering that brings different people together.
- Participate fully in Holy Week liturgies: Let the drama of Christ's passion inform your peacemaking.
- Pray Pope Leo's Prayer for St. Francis daily this week.
- Mediate or facilitate: If there's conflict around you, offer to help people understand each other.
- Call your legislators and ask them to seek ways to find common ground and bridge the divisions between left and right.

April 5 – April 11**EASTER WEEK***“Unarmed and disarming witnesses of the peace that comes from Christ”*

Theme: Witnessing Resurrection Peace • Christ rises and speaks one word: Peace. This is the peace Francis embodied—not passive but powerful, not weak but world-changing. As we celebrate Easter, we become witnesses of resurrection, carrying peace into every corner of our lives. The Franciscan Jubilee reminds us: for 800 years, this witness has endured. Now it's our turn.

Suggested Practices:

- Journal: What does resurrection mean for your life? What have you learned about yourself, God, and others during this Lenten journey?
- Celebrate Easter joy: Let your gladness be a witness to hope.
- Speak peace: Greet others with “Peace and all good” and mean it.
- Share your Lenten journey: Tell someone how Francis has shaped your faith this season.
- Commit to one ongoing practice: Choose one action from these weeks to continue beyond Easter.
- Bless others: Identify three people and ask God's peace upon them daily.

Carrying Peace Beyond Lent • Lent ends, but the call to be peacemakers continues. Saint Francis spent his life learning what it means to live peacefully—with God, with others, with creation, with himself. The Franciscan Jubilee invites us into this same apprenticeship. As you move beyond these 40 days, consider: **Which week's theme resonated most deeply? Return to it regularly. What practice became life-giving? Make it a habit. Where did you experience transformation? Give thanks and continue to nurture it.** May Saint Francis, our brother, intercede for us. May we, like him, meet Sister Death one day as people at peace—having spent our lives building bridges, breaking down walls, and witnessing to the peace that comes from Christ alone. **Amen.**