

praedicare

SPRING 2026 • VOLUME II • ISSUE 1



FRIENDSHIP IN CHRIST

*Finding the Face of Jesus
in Those Beside Us*

Dear friends in Christ,

What a blessing it is to address you as friends!

St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that the grace given to us through Jesus Christ includes the theological virtue of charity by which we are truly made the friends of God. This friendship with God is at the heart of Christian life and is the source of the fraternal life of the Dominican Friars and our preaching, through which we invite others to that same friendship with him. Divine and human friendship are gifts beyond compare.

One of the most important truths of the Christian life is that Jesus Christ is our truest and most faithful friend. While many in the world despair of true happiness, Christians find this in Jesus. As Fr. Gabriel O'Donnell, O.P., writes, God "sent his Son to take on a human nature to convince us of his love and offer an intimate friendship that can heal the deepest wounds and yield a harvest of happiness even in the midst of suffering and pain." You can find further reflections on finding Jesus in the depths of our souls on page 2.

We grow in love for Jesus through our friendships with others. In fact, friendship is an important part of God's plan for our salvation. "Through friendship, God breaks through our isolation and leads us back to himself," writes Fr. Gregory Pine, O.P. "It's not just something extra. It is one of the essential goods of Christian life." To explore how these relationships guide us back to the Most Holy Trinity, see page 4.

Friendship among Dominican Friars is essential to our life. We live, pray, and serve together and our fraternal life makes our ministry fruitful. Whether we serve in parishes, on college campuses, or in hospitals, we do so as a community of brothers. To see how this common life strengthens our apostolate, turn to page 7.

We see the fruit of this mission in the deep friendships we form with people from all walks of life. On page 18, you will find a moving account from one of our friends on how God has worked through his relationships with Friars.

We are so grateful for you, our friends and partners in the Dominican mission of preaching for the salvation of souls. Please know of my continued prayers for you and your loved ones.

In Christ, Our Lady, and St. Dominic,



FR. JOHN PAUL KERN, O.P.

Executive Director
Dominican Friars Foundation



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VOLUME II • ISSUE 1 • SPRING 2026

*A Magazine for the Friends of the
Dominican Friars Province of Saint Joseph*

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On the Cover
*Photo by George
Goss. Read more
about Dominican
fraternal life on
page 7.*

Inside This Issue



To Our Friends

THE BEST OF FRIENDS

2 | *Fr. Gabriel O'Donnell, O.P.*

WE GO TO GOD TOGETHER

4 | *Fr. Gregory Pine, O.P.*



The Dominican Mission

BROTHERS AMONG BROTHERS IN FRIENDSHIP WITH CHRIST

7 | *Praedicare Staff*

A LOVE FOR CHRIST, FOR THE POOR, AND FOR THE LAW

12 | *Praedicare Staff*



To Build the Church

THE PRICELESS GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP

16 | *Praedicare Staff*

NOTHING SHORT OF PROVIDENTIAL

18 | *Praedicare Staff*

AROUND THE PROVINCE

20 | *Praedicare Staff*

The BEST of FRIENDS

FR. GABRIEL O'DONNELL, O.P.



At the Last Supper, Jesus said to his Apostles, "I have called you friends" (Jn 15:15). He extends His friendship to us, especially as we receive Him in the Most Holy Eucharist. (The Last Supper, Domenico Ghirlandaio, 1449-1494, Museo di San Marco, Florence, Italy)



The lament about the increase in anxiety and the epidemic rise in suicide among the younger generation is often reported by news outlets and in social media. “Why” and “What to do about it” are usually part of the report. These clear indications of deep inner conflicts and emotional struggles suggest that we are raising youngsters lacking inner resources to cope with daily life and even to accept the reality of who they have become in their short lives. “Who am I?” and “Why am I like this?” are questions posed to medical professionals and religious leaders alike. Loneliness and isolation abound among those on the road to adulthood. Parents, teachers and Catholic priests as pastoral counselors, spiritual directors, or confessors are daily confronted with such issues.

There are no simple answers to the difficulties facing the rising generations, but part of the current crisis is a failure to acknowledge that one’s identity is rooted in the deepest part of us, that realm invisible even to ourselves: the heart, the hidden spirit, the soul of the person. I speak of that region of the self where reality strikes most forcefully whether that be love and intimacy or rejection and betrayal. There, the spiritual resources to endure pain, sorrow and disappointment must be developed. The interior self must come to terms with the truth that the kind of person one has become will determine what one chooses as the direction of one’s life. Social media and electronic devices as a way of life make such authentic inner choices and decisions difficult.

The universal longing within the human person for love, acceptance and significance can open a person to the encounter with God, with Jesus Christ. In the Gospel, Jesus always touches hearts: His words and actions reach into the depths of a person’s spirit to convince them of his unconditional love despite sin, confusion or any form of misery that burdens one. Jesus promises to remain with us always as companion and friend. This encounter, of course, requires faith.

Pope Leo speaks of the “journey of the heart” as the challenge every Christian must make to discover true meaning and happiness in life. Here he reflects Saint Augustine’s famous dictum, “You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” Our culture, preoccupied with self-help, self-promotion and self-actualization on one hand, and self-harm and self-destruction on the other, fails to realize that the One who is truly Other, God Himself, desires to fill the emptiness, suffering and loneliness of the human heart. He sent his Son to take on a human nature to convince us of his love and offer an intimate friendship that can heal the deepest wounds and yield a harvest of happiness even in the midst of suffering and pain. ✠

**The One who is truly Other,
God Himself, desires to fill
the emptiness, suffering and
loneliness of the human heart.**

Fr. Gabriel O'Donnell, O.P., entered the Order of Preachers in 1963 and was ordained a priest in 1970. He is a professor and spiritual director at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, MD. He previously taught at the Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC; St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia, PA; and the Angelicum in Rome. He serves as the vice-postulator for the canonization of Blessed Michael J. McGivney, founder of the Knights of Columbus, and Venerable Rose Hawthorne, O.P., the foundress of the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne.



We Go to God TOGETHER

BY FR. GREGORY PINE, O.P.

“There are no words to express the abyss between isolation and having one ally. It may be conceded to the mathematician that four is twice two. But two is not twice one; two is two thousand times one.”

– G.K. CHESTERTON, *The Man Who Was Thursday*

Mathematicians might scoff at G.K. Chesterton’s mathematical abilities, but he captures a profound truth.

To some, friendship may seem like a luxury—a pleasant way to pass the time, a way to avoid boredom whilst here on earth. In point of fact, though, friendship is vital, a building block of Christian flourishing.

Friendship is one of the chosen ways by which God pours out His divine life and draws us into a pattern of healing and growth. Friendship is part of how God cultivates communion. Through friendship, God breaks through our isolation and leads us back to Himself. It’s not just something extra. It is one of the essential goods of Christian life.

Friendship is a form of love, and love is a combination of two desires. Basically, it is a

desire for the good of the beloved and a desire for union with the beloved. The friend wants to promote the good of the other. He wants to encourage the other in his noble pursuits, but not as something that’s at a distance. The friend wants to be bound up with the other. It should be a common project, a common pursuit.

Aristotle, the greatest of the Greek philosophers who lived long before the coming of Jesus Christ, observed that there were three kinds of friendships: those that were useful, those that were pleasurable, and those that were grounded in the most noble pursuits. And of these, he rated noble friendship as the highest of them all.

Christians have long recognized the truth of Aristotle’s claim. For instance, St. Gregory Nazianzen wrote an oration following the death



The author, Fr. Gregory Pine, O.P. (right) leads a Bible study at the 2026 SEEK conference in early January.

of his friend St. Basil the Great in the late fourth century. In a touching tribute to his friend, St. Gregory said, “Our single object and ambition was virtue, and a life of hope in the blessings that are to come. . . . We followed the guidance of God’s law and spurred each other on to virtue.”

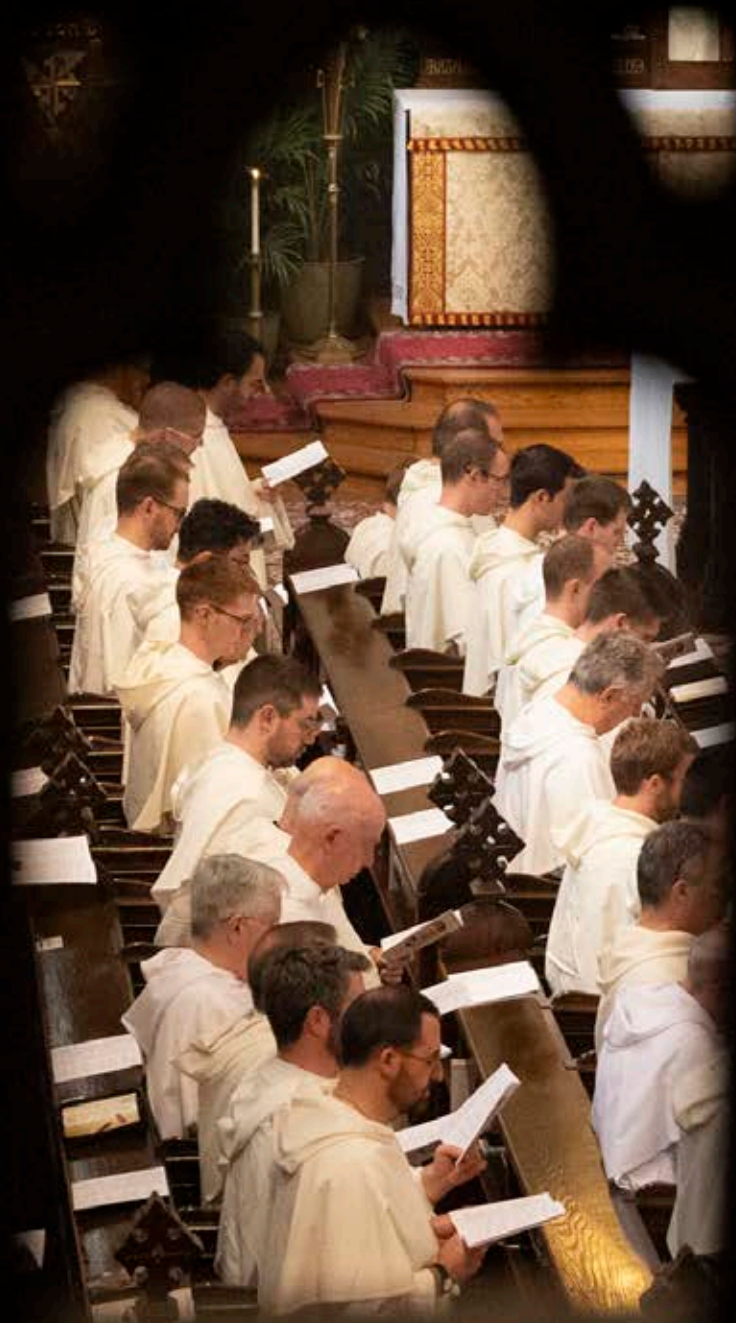
Friends can challenge each other to pursue virtue without making each other a kind of project. They can call each other further up and further into the life of God, into the life of grace by the example that they set, maybe even sometimes by the correction that they give.

As a Dominican Friar, I know this dynamic well. In my life, I have been most encouraged or most edified in my Christian faith and practice by the good example of my Dominican brothers. The way that they live their religious consecration inspires me. Often it’s a kind of corrective. By

seeing their witness, I recognize a way in which my own life is still lacking.

So I thank God for the gift of the Dominican Friars he has called to the Order, and not only them, but all those friends he has given me who make life possible. None of us will journey to God alone—we will go to God together. For two is not twice one. It is two thousand times one. ❀

Fr. Gregory Pine, O.P., entered the Order of Preachers in 2010 and was ordained a priest in 2016. He is an assistant professor of dogmatic and moral theology at the Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC. He is the author of numerous books and a co-host of the popular podcast Godsplaining.





Brothers Among Brothers in
FRIENDSHIP
with **CHRIST**

BY PRAEDICARE STAFF

For those called to be Dominican Friars, friendship *with* Christ and *in* Christ takes on a particular meaning: It is shaped especially within community life. The Friars' common life is fundamental for them in every way—as men, as priests, as preachers for the people of God.

A life lived “completely in common” is what “grounds and enables the life of preaching, and teaching, and celebrating the sacraments, and everything else,” explained Fr. Gabriel Torretta, O.P., an assistant professor of theology at Providence College.

His voice tinged with excitement, Fr. Gabriel searched for a way to adequately express the importance of community life. He recounted how St. Dominic, in the earliest days of the Order, sent the brothers two by two to engage the world, just as Christ did. St. Dominic did this, Fr. Gabriel marveled, when there were only 12 or so brothers to send. Why not wait until he had a more solid group? Greater numbers?





"To be saved is to be a friend of Christ," said Fr. Clement Dickie, O.P., (center), an associate chaplain at Providence College. (Photo courtesy of Providence College)

"But then I lived it," he said, "and I realized... You have one Dominican, and he can do really good work, maybe great work. But you have two Dominicans, and you have a totally different reality. Not twice as much work, or three times as much work—you have weird orders of magnitude... You're just in a different world."

He continued: "It's like you're in a video game, and you've hit some level trip that you didn't realize existed, and now suddenly the world is 10 times as large, and you have all of these power-ups, and you're just like, 'I don't know what's happening, because I'm still just doing what I was doing before, but suddenly everything is just completely different.'"

Better Together

The fruits of the Friars' ministry at Providence College illustrate the powerful impact of the Dominican community. Both students and staff are discovering the Church with the help of the Friars. This year, there are 70 participants in the OCIA program.

Last year, there were more than 50. And five student brothers currently in formation as Dominican Friars graduated from Providence College. Additionally, seminarians for the Diocese of Providence are assigned to study at Providence College, extending the Dominicans' influence even further.

In addition to being known as theological and philosophical powerhouses, Friars teach in a whole range of departments, including mathematics, economics, and biology—plus serve as chaplains for Providence College's Campus Ministry and its sports teams. Off campus, they serve as chaplains for Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design.

This increased fruitfulness happens, in a "really wild way," according to Fr. Gabriel, because of how the Holy Spirit acts through them. Friars "work infinitely better together than they work separately," Fr. Gabriel said. It is "something absolutely fundamental to the life of the Order—that Dominic sent

them out in pairs, rather than one by one."

Living for each other

The common life requires effort, Fr. Gabriel acknowledged, as each brother finds in his brethren what he finds also in himself: the desire to "do their own thing in various ways."

Thus the Dominican vocation is an invitation to continually pursue a truly common life, to work against the pull toward egotism, and strive for St. Dominic's vision. Like the early Church, the Friars must strive to be of "one heart and mind" (Acts 4:32).

"The Dominican cannot be fully alive unless he is drawn out and challenged, and humbled, and smoothed out by the actual...human beings around him," Fr. Gabriel said.

The married man or woman will see their own life and struggles reflected in the Friars' community life and its similar challenges. "Shedding a light on the dark places of the heart, and the smoothing out of the roughness of my incessant,

constant desire for my own individual will—that’s a recognizable characteristic of marriage, and growth in shared life. And it is emphatically and dramatically found in religious life,” Fr. Gabriel said.

Practicing for heaven

“To be saved is to be a friend of Christ,” explained Fr. Clement Dickie, O.P., an associate chaplain at Providence College. “Charity is...friendship with God,” he said.

As a consequence of this charity, Friars must love other members of the community out of love for God. Living the communal life, then, is “practicing for the life of heaven,” he said. “It’s actually living the life of heaven on earth.”

“We face a lot of imperfections here on earth,” he said, “because of the burden of sin.”

Living and thriving in a community is a learning process. For the first year of formation as a Friar, a brother is under the instruction of a novice master, and then when he moves on to study philosophy and theology, he reports to a student master. These Friars, called “formators,” show him how to live in community.

The novice master or student master “corrects you,” Fr. Clement explained, “if you are creating undue burden for everybody else.”

Thus forged into a group of brethren, the Dominicans become support for each other. And that support extends beyond the walls of the priory, into the halls and streets of their ministries. The core of common life, like the center of a wheel, extends out into the community.

“As Friars, we come together multiple times a day, for prayer and for a shared time together over a meal, in addition to all the other little ways we connect with each other as we’re going about our day,” explained Fr. Luke Hoyt, O.P., who is the pastor of Holy Innocents Parish in Pleasantville, NY. “But those little centers of shared prayer and communion over a meal give us the rootedness from which we’re able to

labor in the work of ministry, as well as something to return to.”

In Pleasantville, for example, this extension of Dominican community life into the life of the parish is clearly visible.

The church is currently undergoing renovation to add an Adoration Chapel, and the parish is characterized by a robust sacramental, spiritual, and fraternal life. Their activities include First Friday Adoration, Bible studies, book clubs, potlucks, movie nights, and even ski trips and hikes. The Friars themselves are a visible part of the town, from Memorial Day celebrations to the



(Photo courtesy of Providence College)

"If a man cannot be a friend, he cannot be a Dominican. It's just actually that strong...To commit to a life as a Dominican is to commit to a life of learning to be a friend."

Fr. Gabriel Torretta, O.P.

village block parties and more.

Noted one parishioner: “Because the Friars are so woven into the life of the town, parish life doesn’t feel separate. Seeing them around—after Mass or at town events—often sparks questions from friends and opens the door to deeper conversations about faith.”

The reach of these Friars actually extends far beyond Pleasantville. The Friars have undertaken campus ministry for the colleges in Westchester County, filling an important pastoral void. Also, one of the Friars in the community, Fr. Philip Nolan, O.P., is the editor-in-chief of the magazine and prayer companion *Magnificat*, which has a monthly English-language circulation of 230,000. *Magnificat* also has versions in Spanish, German, French and even Lithuanian. This Dominican community in a New York village of fewer than 8,000 people has a truly international reach.

And yet the elements that build up common life are usually ordinary and subtle.

“In addition to the scheduled meals and prayers, there are also the simple everyday interactions,” Fr. Luke said. “In every house I’ve lived in there have been Friars who, in the middle of a busy day, would ask you how you were doing—and you would know they actually cared how you were doing and it wasn’t just a formality.”

"A home to go to"

Each brother is able to share his Dominican life not only with brethren his own age, but those both younger and older. Having the experience of older Friars can be transformative, both in community life and in the apostolate.

“Being multi-generational is a big, big part of the Order,” Fr. Luke said, “And, just like it is for a family—a family has grandkids and grandparents, and parents, and everything in between—and so, similarly, we ourselves recognize that that’s a feature of our life, and a valued part of our life.”

While many of the historical accounts

of St. Dominic detail particular moments when he was acting alone, something else shines through, Fr. Clement suggested.

“You do get the sense that part of what enabled him, or animated him, to be able to do those things is that he was building something larger than himself, that there was more to it than that—that there was a home to go to.”

And that home is a place of peace and support when the ministry is challenging—not just for advice and a place to “think things out and solve problems.” It’s more than that.

Fr. Clement explained: “The community’s a place that you can go back to—where you’re going to be less bothered by whatever troubles are going on—on campus, or in the parish, in the ministry. There, the life of prayer goes on... There are people who are going to bring you down if you get too high, and bring you up if you get too low.”

Life in community “can help put everything into perspective,” Fr. Clement said.

In the end, friendship with Christ—and through Him, friendship in communal life—is a fundamental part of being a Dominican, being a priest...and being a Christian.

“If that’s not the basis of my whole life as a priest, then I really have nothing,” Fr. Luke reflected. “So that, to me, that’s everything.”

As Fr. Luke describes, the charity a Dominican Friar receives from his friendship with Christ overflows to his brothers and then outward to their shared mission territory. Dominican fraternal life requires constantly striving to live for God and for the community, to be sure, and yet, it is in the shared life that they find both their fruitfulness and their joy. 🌹



Fr. Luke Hoyt, O.P., (center) greets parishioners after Mass at Holy Innocents Parish in Pleasantville, NY, on February 8.



Fr. Clement Dickie, O.P., (bottom left) and Fr. Gregory Santy, O.P., (bottom right) lead Providence College students on a retreat in November 2025. (Photo courtesy of Fr. Clement Dickie, O.P.)

Spotlight on Dominican Life:

THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Among the many communal practices of the Dominican Order, praying the Liturgy of the Hours together is one of the most important.

All clergy and religious must pray the Liturgy of the Hours every day. In the Liturgy of the Hours, participants chant or recite psalms and other scriptural readings to praise God, with each period of prayer called an “office” or “hour,” giving the Liturgy of the Hours its name.

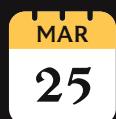
Most of the hours take their name from the time of day at which they are prayed: Morning Prayer, Daytime Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Night Prayer. There is also the Office of Readings, which, in addition to the psalms, includes a lengthier passage from the Bible and a long non-scriptural reading, which comments on scripture, the moral or spiritual life, the liturgical feast for the day, or similar topics.

While diocesan clergy or members of some religious orders like the Jesuits generally recite the office privately, Dominican Friars pray them together. They often sing the hours, drawing on the long tradition of chant that is unique to the order. Throughout the history of the Order, Night Prayer, also called Compline, has often been celebrated with particular solemnity. Due to travel for preaching missions and similar ministries, Friars might not be home in time for Evening Prayer, which monastic communities have historically observed with great reverence. Thus, the Dominican Order has tended to favor Night Prayer, which it customarily concludes with a hymn to St. Dominic and a procession to a statue of Our Lady, who is the Queen of Preachers.



Dominican Friars chant Evening Prayer at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC.

UPCOMING



Solemn Mass for the Annunciation and Rosary Confraternity Enrollment

Church of St. Vincent Ferrer
New York City, NY



Priesthood Ordinations

St. Dominic Church
Washington, DC



St. Dominic Dinner

Dominican House of Studies
Washington, DC



Godsplaining Retreat

Bellarmino University
Louisville, KY

A Love for Christ, For the Poor, and For the Law

*An interview with Fr. Pius Pietrzyk, O.P.,
on helping the nation's poor access legal services*

Fr. Pius Pietrzyk, O.P., quickly chuckles when he's addressed not just as "Reverend Father," but as "Honorable and Reverend Father."

"I don't use the 'Honorable' title ever," he says. But he acknowledges that it must be technically correct because he holds a position that was confirmed by the U.S. Senate. "I think so. But I don't know. I've never looked it up. And never used the title," he laughs.

In fact, Fr. Pius is likely the only priest in the country to have a Senate-confirmed appointment. He is the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation (LSC), a 501(c)(3) organization, created by the U.S. Congress in 1974. It works to fund organizations that provide legal services in civil cases to those who cannot afford a lawyer on their own.

The Board's responsibility is to ensure that that money, almost all of which comes from the federal government, is spent according to the intentions of Congress.

They also see themselves as national advocates for providing the poor with access to legal representation in civil cases.

He explains: "Most Americans understand that

if they are convicted of a crime, they have access to a lawyer whether or not they can afford it. But what if you are threatened with losing your house or having your children taken away or something like that? Are you guaranteed access to a lawyer? Many Americans will say yes. They are wrong. They do not have access to a lawyer in the same way that they would in a criminal matter."

Funds entrusted to the Legal Services Corporation go mostly to domestic cases such as evictions and violence against women, or cases where a right to benefits, such as Social Security or veteran's benefits, are being denied. There are also grants for disaster recovery work, or issues in the field of education, among others. To qualify for access to the funds, a client's annual income must be less than 150% of the federal poverty line. In 2026, 150% of the federal poverty line is an annual income of \$23,940 for a single person, or \$49,500 for a family of four.

For Fr. Pius, now 15 years into his work as a board member, this is a way for him to serve Christ, his country, and the poor. We asked him to tell us about this unique mission. (The interview has been edited for length and clarity.)

Fr. Pius Pietrzyk, O.P., serves as the Vice Chair of the Legal Services Corporation, which promotes legal assistance to the poor in civil matters. (Photo courtesy of the Legal Services Corporation)



Praedicare: What attracted you to this work?

Fr. Pius: I did not seek this out. I guess I was raised with a sense of civic obligation and responsibility so that when the government asks you to serve, your initial response is, “If I can, yes.” So it is an opportunity to serve in a great way.

The more I learned about it, the more I wanted to help. One, because of the nature of those who

need to be helped. I spent most of my life as a lawyer. My application to college began, “I love the law.” I knew I wanted to be a lawyer on my first day of college. I sort of lived the law.

The importance of the rule of law and a functioning court system is essential to any civilized society. Which means you do have to provide some mechanism for the poor to be able



Fr. Pius Pietrzyk, O.P., (third from left) and his colleagues on the Board of the Legal Services Corporation were sworn in by the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia (center) in 2011. (Photo courtesy of the Legal Services Corporation)

to access those things or you are in effect denying justice to a whole swath of people.

So that was attractive to me: a way to continue to serve the poor using my experience in the legal world.

Praedicare: How has the Dominican charism and mission influenced your approach to this work?

Fr. Pius: One is the strong sense of virtue, and the developed sense of virtue, including Thomas [Aquinas'] sense of justice: the notion that justice isn't simply that which is meted out by the government, but that there is an inherent right to things, and that any functioning society has mechanisms for its members to be able to secure justice. I think that's really part of a Dominican understanding of the nature of a society like a state.

And not just Thomas. If you look at the [Dominican] tradition, for example, Bartolomé

de las Casas and his speaking up for the indigenous people. Many of them were quite poor in comparison to the wealthier Spanish. There was a tendency by many in society at the time to see them as less than human and not deserving of rights.

Because of our anthropology, there was a strong Dominican defense of the value of those persons, the equality that they must have in the law. Justice is fundamentally about equality, which the law protects. So even outside of St. Thomas—rooted in his teaching—it is very much part of the Dominican approach.

Praedicare: Has there been any negative reaction to your being a priest?

Fr. Pius: It's never been a problem. I've been "Fr. Pius" since the first day I was there. They've never

seen me in anything but my religious habit. I've been in the legal community so long that I'm fairly well known and very visible. So it's never been an issue at all. And sometimes we'll visit grantees and I've been asked for blessings, and I've had my hand kissed by some of our grantees. I've never had anything negative.

Praedicare: When someone asks about the Dominicans, about your work as a priest, the habit, how do you respond?

Fr. Pius: I tell them the truth! Most of them are just curious about it. It's unusual for them, particularly my path, because the firm that I was at in Chicago, Sidley Austin, is a large international firm. So people are often, particularly in the legal world, interested about the move from a massive, very successful international law firm like Sidley Austin, to doing what I do.

Praedicare: What's been the most enjoyable part for you?

Fr. Pius: Oh, hearing the stories of the clients. Meeting our clients. Hearing about the ways in which we've helped people.

I'll give you a story. This was at one of our meetings in New York, and there was a woman who addressed us, and told us a little bit of her story. She had grown up as a child in an abusive household, very abusive. When she had gotten older, she had then moved to an abusive, romantic relationship. She didn't think much of that, because she just thought that's what her life was. At one point, it got bad enough that a friend directed her to one of our lawyers. The lawyer helped her remove herself from the abusive situation. But more than that, what the lawyer did was help her understand that she didn't deserve to be abused, that it was possible to live a life without that kind of abuse. And she said to us, she said—as silly as it sounds to us—it just didn't occur to her. It really didn't. She just was so used to a life of abuse that she couldn't even imagine a life without it.

We got her out of it. The lawyer helped her get in contact with a social worker to deal with some of the trauma of abuse. When she was talking to us, she was a manager of a bank doing very successfully on her own, many years removed from the abuse. She really credits the lawyer—again, not just with filing a case for her, but utterly changing her life, and her view of what her life could be. Stories like that make everything that we do worthwhile.

Again, I'm not on the front lines doing that work—but knowing that I'm doing things to help facilitate that, that's what makes it all worthwhile.

Praedicare: What from the Dominican tradition can our readers incorporate into their own efforts for the poor?

Fr. Pius: Thomas reminds us that charity is the form of all the virtues. And that our primary duty as Christians is that: love. Love God, and in loving God, love our neighbors.

Readers should ask themselves constantly, what can I do? What am I doing? And what can I do to serve those in need, particularly the poor?

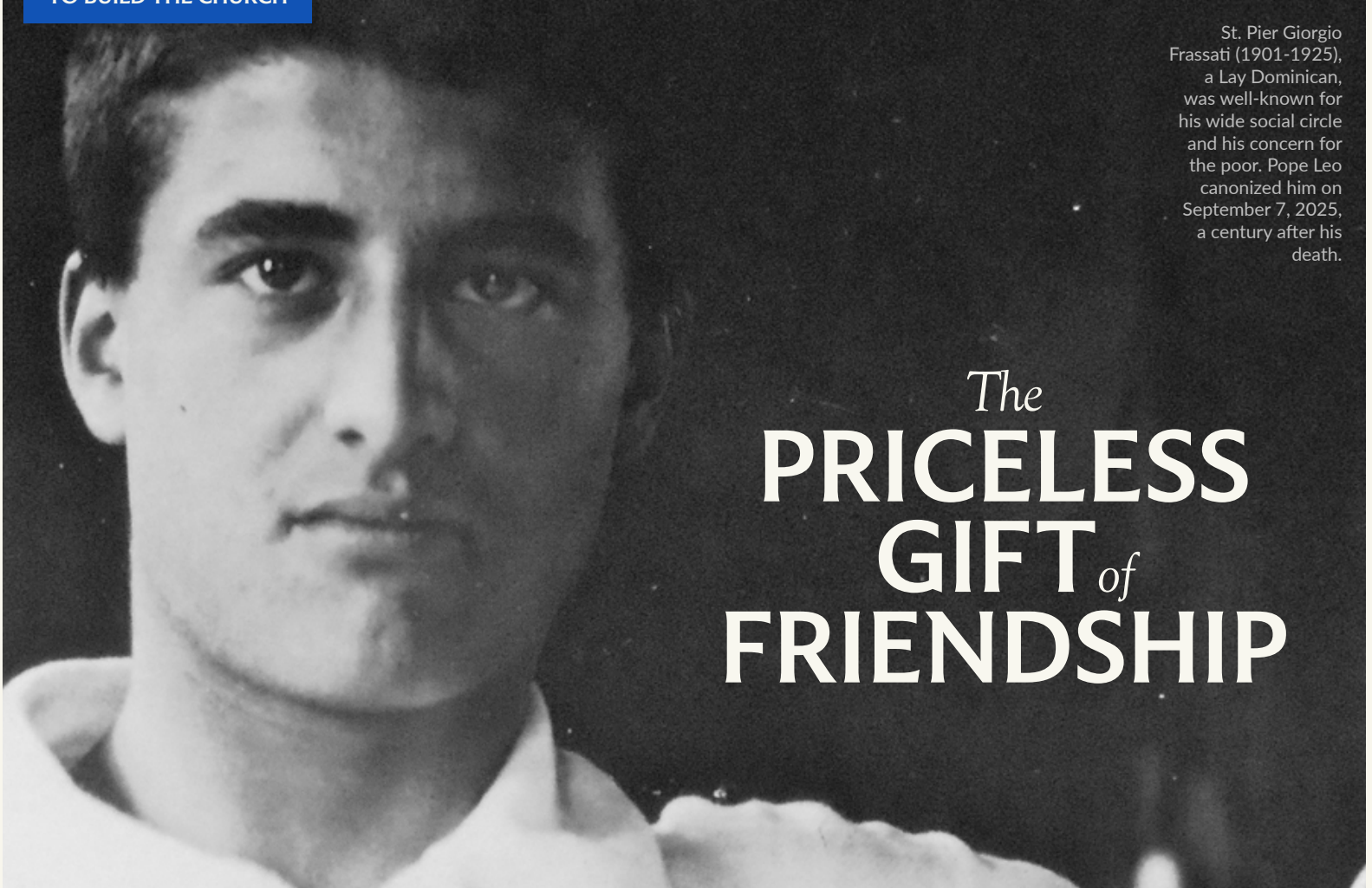
We do this kind of work, not because we like it, not because we're going to get anything out of it, but because this person is in need of it.

Praedicare: What does it mean to be a friend of Christ?

Fr. Pius: To be a friend of Christ is to be a friend of those whom Christ loves, right? Christ died on the Cross for the salvation of humanity. He died for us, not because we are good—because he wants to make us good. To be in friendship with him is to assist him in carrying out that mission: that is, to tend to those for whom he died. ✠

Fr. Pius Pietrzyk, O.P., entered the Order of Preachers in 2003 and was ordained to the priesthood in 2008. In addition to holding a civil law degree, he also earned a canon law degree. He currently serves as the Vicar Provincial for Administration for the Dominican Friars Province of St. Joseph.

St. Pier Giorgio Frassati (1901-1925), a Lay Dominican, was well-known for his wide social circle and his concern for the poor. Pope Leo canonized him on September 7, 2025, a century after his death.



The PRICELESS GIFT *of* FRIENDSHIP

If there is one Dominican saint who wants to be your friend, it is St. Pier Giorgio Frassati.

While the Church raises up saints as models because of their “heroic virtue,” Christians can learn from St. Pier Giorgio how virtue is practiced in ordinary ways, like the witness of joy or simply a smile.

St. Pier Giorgio (1901-1925) was a magnetic character, attracting a wide circle of devoted and loyal friends. Reading their letters to each other when he died suddenly at age 24 reveals just how much they were captivated by him: by his teasing, his antics, his kindness—and especially by his faith.

His faith was nurtured, in no small measure, by the witness of the Dominican Order. He made his profession as a Lay Dominican in 1922, at the young age of 21. St. Catherine of

Siena—another Dominican known for cultivating a circle of devoted followers—inspired him, and he avidly read her *Dialogue*, a lengthy conversation between her and God the Father on Divine Providence. He also undertook a systematic study of St. Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*. St. Pier Giorgio often carried a 15-decade Rosary, praying it loudly while walking around his hometown of Turin, Italy.

He had a clear vision of his role in society. He spent countless hours visiting the needy, relieving their suffering—much to the frustration of his well-off and well-connected parents. Yet, for him, even his great charity was not enough. As the political situation of Italy deteriorated, St. Pier Giorgio was more and more intent on his work for social reform. He turned to the example of the preaching Dominican Friars

for inspiration and nourishment, and courageously defended the Church’s social teaching as Fascism was on the rise in Italy. He did not hide his piety under a bushel basket.

“Yet piety did not stifle the flame of his glance, did not cloud his brow, did not extinguish the smile on his face,” wrote Archbishop Martin Stanislaus Gillet, O.P., who was present when St. Pier Giorgio made his profession as a Lay Dominican and who later became Master of the Order. “On the contrary, everything about him shone with joy, because he let his beautiful nature flower in the sunlight of God.”

His joy was evident to those he met. He dubbed the group of his most intimate friends the “Company of Shady Characters,” and they delighted in amusing each other—one writes to another about having Pier Giorgio

“laughing like a crazy person”—with the farcical rules and regulations of the “Company.”

Frassati’s social bridge-building points to a higher goal on the ladder of friendship; not the lowest rung of pure pleasure, nor the middle rungs of social usefulness: St. Pier Giorgio was always aiming for the highest heights of union with God.

His “Company of Shady Characters” was a case in point. His younger sister Luciana would write in *I giorni della sua vita (The Days of His Life)*, that he “devised the group and created it as a way to do good without even the members of the group being fully aware of it.”

For instance, he would invite his friends for a hike—and then have them go to Mass as part of the deal, sometimes going so far as to arrange for a priest to meet them at a chapel along the route.

He “gathered everyone under the magical sign of his smile,” his sister explained, and his “preferred weapon,” was joy. “Only in this way was it possible to maintain such distinct individuals united.”

“What was important was to be together as much as possible, under the great banner of the faith,” Luciana wrote, and the testimonies of his friends confirmed this, as they remembered how one minute he was making them laugh, and the next minute was settling down to pray the Rosary. They spoke of the “miracle of sanctity” in him—a “joyful, unworried, innocent, and renewing” holiness, “like the waters of the mountain streams.”

His love of God consumed him so much that he seemed to forget himself. For instance, during Eucharistic Adoration, people observed hot wax dripping from a candle onto his suit

without him noticing.

Such an all-consuming faith inspired and attracted more than just his peers.

Luciana remembered a priest close to the saint who said it was “a real spiritual joy to pray near him’ and that he considered a ‘miracle’ his way of attracting others to virtue by means of his many-sided and unique personality.”

In keeping with this unique character, he died a grace-filled and sacrificial death. While visiting the poor in late June 1925, he contracted polio, which caused debilitating pain. When his maternal grandmother died on July 1, he deflected attention from his own suffering. On July 3, he had his sister send medicine to the poor. He died a day later, comforted by the words of a priest who assured him he would still share his faith with his family from heaven, just as he did on earth.

The multitudes of the poor who turned up to his funeral showed that his friendship was extended to all. St. Pier Giorgio’s friends and even his whole city knew the treasure they had in him, though as is often the case, their affection became uniquely evident after his death.

Luciana’s short biography of St. Pier Giorgio, titled *A Man of the Beatitudes: Pier Giorgio Frassati*, records the words of a journalist at his funeral: “This was the most moving and edifying funeral I have ever been to, either as a journalist or as a private person... nearly all common people, little people, little women and artisans, and lots of mothers with babies. The houses in Borgo Crocetta were emptied of all who were not at work. Few had known Pier Giorgio but they had heard of his faith, his works of charity, and they had come full of respect and

admiration and from curiosity. They wanted to know more, they wanted to know everything about him, the young man who in death had become the friend, the brother, of each of them.”

As much as people wanted to know more about him in death, his parents—who were on the verge of separating at the time of his death—were probably most astounded by what they learned. They had no idea of the extent of his generosity and popularity, and they were shocked when thousands of people turned out to pay their respects on the day of his funeral. Moved by his saintly witness, his parents resolved their differences.

St. Pier Giorgio continued to inspire his friends after death. As Clementina Luotto wrote in a letter two days after his death, “He will give us the active love we ought to have, above all because he gave us the priceless gift of his friendship. Let us cling to the cross and love each other in his memory as if and more than if he were still with us. Perhaps that way we shall see his smile shine among us again.”

And as if prescient of his own early departure for the Father’s House, he once wrote: “Unfortunately earthly friendships produce sorrow in our hearts because of the departure of those we love, but I would like for us to pledge a pact which knows no earthly boundaries nor temporal limits: union in prayer.”

Thankfully, as one of the Church’s newest saints, St. Pier Giorgio Frassati is united with us in prayer. From his heavenly vantage point, he can lead us again into an appreciation of the truth in friendship, to a deep resolve to take up his weapon of joy, and yes, to remember the power of a smile. ✠





NOTHING SHORT *of* PROVIDENTIAL

A 20-year friendship with the Dominican Friars gives hope for the future



When casual conversation, a search for the truth, and concern for society's most vulnerable come together, you get a life-long friendship with the Dominican Friars.

"My life has been incredibly enriched, and I know my wife would say the exact same, by our involvement with the Friars," said Edward "Ed" Sweeney, a friendly Manhattanite who has made the Catholic faith and community service a priority for his life.

His relationship with friars brings to life St. Paul's ancient metaphor of the Church as the Body of Christ, one where the unique gifts of the laity and the intellectual depth of the Dominican Friars combine to foster a hopeful future.

To start his story, Sweeney goes back almost 20 years. "Ed, you have to meet this priest," a friend said.

That priest was Fr. Gabriel Gillen, O.P., who was serving at the Church of St. Catherine of Siena in Manhattan. They clicked over casual conversation.



(Photos courtesy of Ed Sweeney)

Unfortunately, Fr. Gabriel's emergency beeper alerted him to a dying person in need of Anointing of the Sick, cutting their conversation short. Nonetheless, they kept in touch. "He's become certainly one of my closest friends," Sweeney recalled.

After that initial encounter, more Friars entered his life. As those friendships multiplied, Fr. Gabriel saw Sweeney's involvement in philanthropy in New York as a possible indication that he would consider supporting the Friars on a deeper level, and Ed agreed. "I've gotten a lot more out of it than perhaps I've put into it," he said.

His friendship with the Dominican Friars is also a source of hope and has strengthened his faith. He described his experience with the Dominican Friars as "a counter-narrative" to common accounts of closing churches and declining vocations.

"The amount of energy that the Friars have is something that I'm amazed and in awe of," Sweeney said. They have used that energy to share the truth with him.

He observed that, with the Friars, "There is no dumb question." They are "such intellectual heavyweights," he said. "I am grateful for their patience with me, because I've asked them many tough questions on a whole number of theological and philosophical issues."

The witness to the truth is sorely needed in society today, Sweeney reflected, offering as an example the problem of anxiety that is "very real in young people that I interact with."

"It's as real as a heart attack, this sort of darkness and despair and anxiety that they struggle with," he said. The Friars' "preaching of the truth and the Gospel

of Jesus" is a comfort in this battle. He recalled how a Friar once quoted St. Catherine of Siena, answering "What is the most essential truth in life?"

Her reply? "Know that you were loved before the beginning," he paraphrased.

"I think if people that are despairing, or that are searching for meaning to their life—for them to know that, it is such an enormous comfort," he said.

Providing comfort and care to others is important to Sweeney. He suffered the loss of a disabled brother who died young. He also saw a cousin flourish through the assistance of an organization that cares for those with special needs. These relations inform his conviction of the importance of the Gospel of Life, that every person is sacred. Movements in society to legalize physician-assisted suicide weigh heavily on him. Nonetheless, the witness of the Dominican Friars on behalf of the Gospel of Life gives him hope for the future.

The "caliber of men" entering the Order impresses him. "It's nothing short of providential," he said.

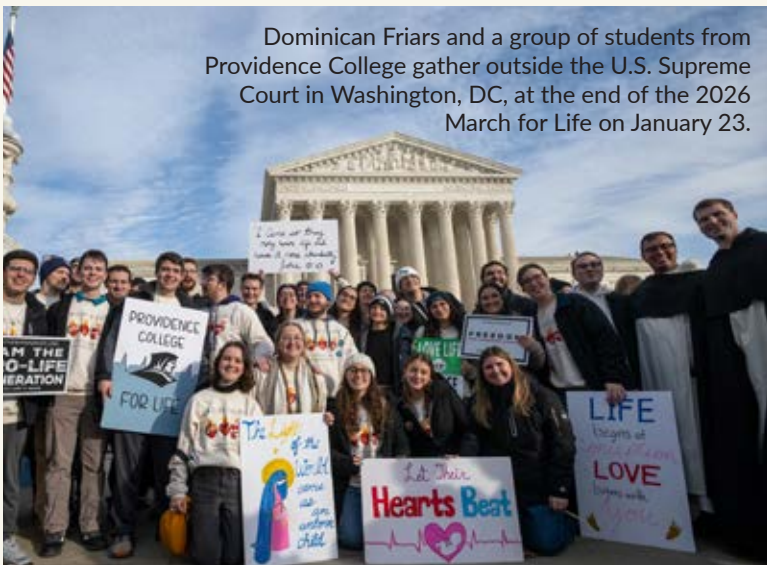
"These are the next leaders of the Church, for the next 100 years," he said. The investment in the Dominican Friars "is a pittance compared to the return on the investment."

Rooted in a 20-year friendship and a shared love for the pursuit of truth and gratitude for the gift of life, Sweeney's dedication to the Dominican Friars reflects a life-long pursuit of truth and human dignity. What began as a providential encounter in New York has evolved into a vital partnership in mission, allowing Sweeney to channel his personal history into a legacy of hope for the next generation of the Church. ✠

Fr. Peter Martyr Yungwirth, O.P., offers an early-morning Mass at the Church of St. Vincent Ferrer in New York City on January 23 before he and parishioners went to Washington, DC, for the March for Life.



Dominican Friars and a group of students from Providence College gather outside the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, DC, at the end of the 2026 March for Life on January 23.



On the occasion of their solemn profession, Br. Finbar Kantor, O.P.; Br. Jeremiah Tobin, O.P.; and Br. Samuel Trecost, O.P., (front: left to right) stand together with the Very Reverend Allen Moran, O.P., Prior Provincial of the Province of St. Joseph, who received their vows, on Saturday, January 31, 2026. This milestone marks the beginning of a lifelong dedication to the Dominican mission to preach the Gospel for the salvation of souls.



Fr. Joseph-Antony Kress, O.P., and Fr. Gregory Pine, O.P., record an episode of their hit podcast *Godsplaining* in front of a live audience at the 2026 SEEK conference in Columbus, OH. (Photo courtesy of Kyle Heimann Media)



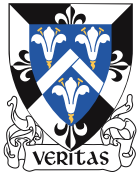


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REMEMBER YOU ARE DUST

Dominican Friars distribute ashes to the faithful on Ash Wednesday at the Church of St. Vincent Ferrer in New York City on February 18.