

# FRANCISCAN BROTHERS OF PEACE

Newsmagazine A.D. 2010 Volume 24 / 1st Edition



*Brother Michael,  
pray for us!*

## A PILGRIMAGE TO ASSISI



Congratulations Bishop Paul D. Sirba!

# Brotherhood Update

by Brother Paul, Guardian Overall



## Glory to Jesus Christ!

I would like to thank everyone who helped us in so many tremendous ways this past holiday season to bring the gift of love and nourishment to so many struggling families. Each one expressed such deep gratitude, and we wanted to pass that along to you... you are the hands and feet of Christ in our world today, and it is only through your great generosity that our little community is able to do anything so tangible and far-reaching. THANK YOU so much, and may God bless each and every one of you!

## Holiday Outreach a Great Success!

It was a great season of love and generosity that enabled us to provide holiday groceries, turkeys and hams to more than 575 families for both Thanksgiving and Christmas, thus making it our largest holiday program to date. We are grateful to report that our food donations soared to record heights. Helen Rush, one of our long-time food shelf volunteers (almost 20 years!) stated after our holiday programs were complete, "We have more food now in our emergency food shelf

then I have ever seen in all my years here." It truly was one of the strongest outpourings of generosity that we have been privileged to witness.

On behalf of all of our families in need, the Franciscan Brothers of Peace would like to thank everyone who made the programs such a great success! Thank you to all the schools, parishes, religious and civic organizations, stores, banks, medical clinics, local businesses, networking organizations and individuals. May God bless you for your time and resources, but most of all for helping us to help others in need. You have helped us in a real and tangible way to give witness to the Gospel of Life.

Please continue to help us all year round with our emergency food programs. These are very rough economic times for many of our sisters and brothers, and we depend on your generosity to help us continue this vital act of Christian charity. For more information on our ongoing emergency food programs, please contact Brother Pio at Queen of Peace Friary, 651-646-8586.

*"If you have men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men."*  
— ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI



Br. Seraphim's parents and sister visited during the Christmas holiday!

# A New Shepherd for Duluth

## Congratulations to Our Dear Friend Bishop Paul D. Sirba

**I**t was just about six months ago when Brother Paul and then Father Paul Sirba were having lunch at a local restaurant. The two of them have been long-time friends, both being 1982 graduates of the University of Saint Thomas in Saint Paul, and both attending the Saint Paul Seminary together. One topic of conversation was catching up on news about their classmates, leading to the subject of "bishops." The two men reflected on how amazing it was that two of their classmates had been recently consecrated bishops — Bishop Peter Christensen for the Superior (Wisconsin) Diocese and Bishop Lee Piche as the new Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Father Sirba had just been appointed vicar general of the Archdiocese. Br. Paul thought to himself, "I'm talking to the next bishop", then joked with Fr. Paul to "watch out... God often works in groups of three, for He is Three in One, after all!"

Just four months after that lunch meeting, Father Paul Sirba was contacted by the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Pietro Sambi, and was informed that Pope Benedict XVI was appointing him to be the new Bishop of the Duluth, Minnesota Diocese. The appointment of bishop-elect Sirba was not made public until October 15, 2009. For some time bishop-elect Sirba was under Papal orders to not discuss this matter with anyone. Bishop Sirba later reflected, "It is hard to describe the rush of emotions that I felt in a split second — from amazement to disbelief to unworthiness to excitement, and to a sudden awareness that my life was about to change, shall we say, in a big way."

On December 14, 2009, the Feast of Saint John of the Cross, Bishop Paul David Sirba was consecrated the 9th Bishop of the Diocese of Duluth. In a letter read at the ordination ceremony Pope Benedict XVI stated to Bishop Sirba, "We have chosen you, beloved son, endowed as you are with maturity, character, knowledge and pastoral experience, to be suitable for the undertaking of this office."

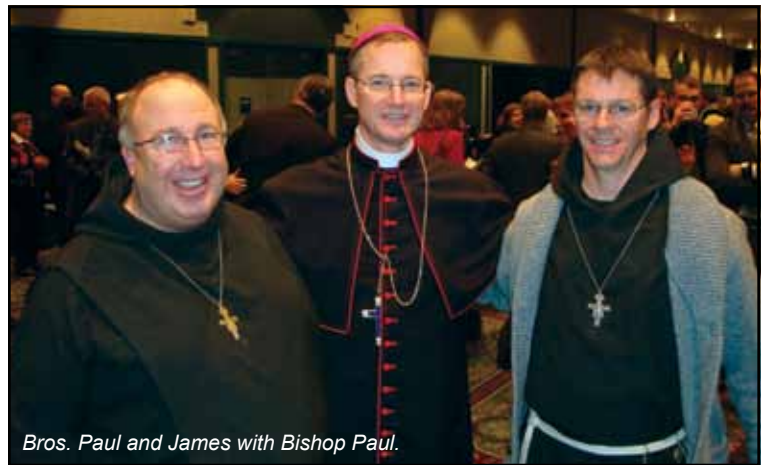
Metropolitan Archbishop John C. Nienstedt of Saint Paul and Minneapolis proclaimed to the two thousand lay faithful, bishops, clergy and religious gathered for the ordination ceremony at the Duluth Convention Center that "this is a day of great rejoicing for this local church."

Brother Paul O'Donnell, fbp, Guardian of the Franciscan Brothers of Peace, along with several of the brothers were in Duluth for the ordination and on hand to celebrate with their dear friend. "I am so happy for the people of Duluth," Brother Paul stated, "they are getting one of the finest men of faith that I know." As for Bishop Sirba Br. Paul said, "I can't wait to hear what we'll talk about at our next lunch meeting!"

**May God Bless You Bishop Paul!**  
— from your Franciscan Brothers of Peace



Photo by Dave Hrbacek



Bros. Paul and James with Bishop Paul.



Our dear friend Bishop Peter Christensen of Superior joins the group

In honor of Brother Paul's 25th Jubilee as a Franciscan Brother of Peace, he and Brother Conrad traveled to Rome for the canonization of Father Damien of Molokai on October 11, 2009, as reported in our last issue.

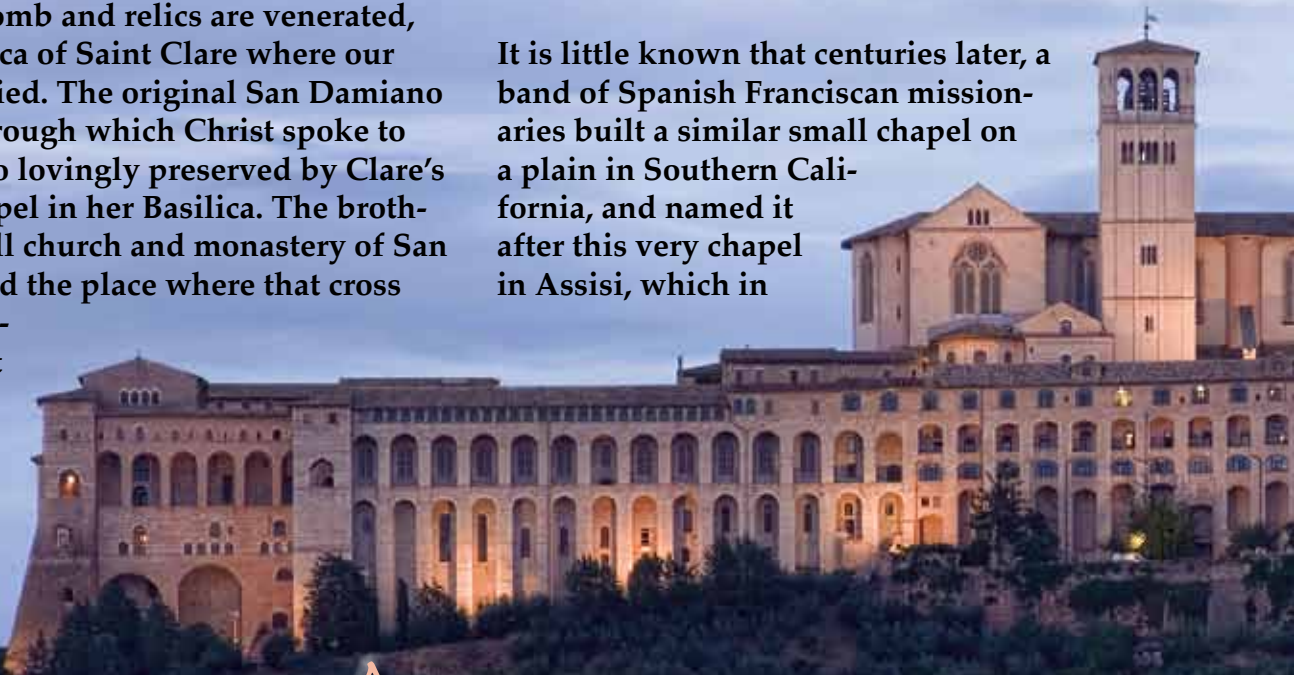
While in Italy the brothers made a pilgrimage to Assisi, the birthplace of Saint Francis and Saint Clare. The brothers visited the Basilica of Saint Francis where his tomb and relics are venerated, as well as the Basilica of Saint Clare where our Holy Mother is buried. The original San Damiano crucifix, the icon through which Christ spoke to Saint Francis, is also lovingly preserved by Clare's sisters in a side chapel in her Basilica. The brothers went to the small church and monastery of San Damiano and visited the place where that cross was originally located, and where Saint Clare and her earliest sisters lived and where she eventually died.

Near Assisi the brothers

climbed Mount Subasio to the caves where Saint Francis wrote his Rule for the order. They also were able to visit the large Church of Saint Mary of the Angels on the lower plain below the historic city, built over the small, original chapel of the same name, also known as the Portiuncula. It was at this very tiny, ancient pilgrimage church that Saint Francis and his earliest companions began their life together.

It is little known that centuries later, a band of Spanish Franciscan missionaries built a similar small chapel on a plain in Southern California, and named it after this very chapel in Assisi, which in

# A PILGRIMAGE TO ASSISI



In front of the Basilica of St. Francis.



Heading toward San Damiano...



At San Damiano, with outline of original church.



Icon of St. Clare, in the re

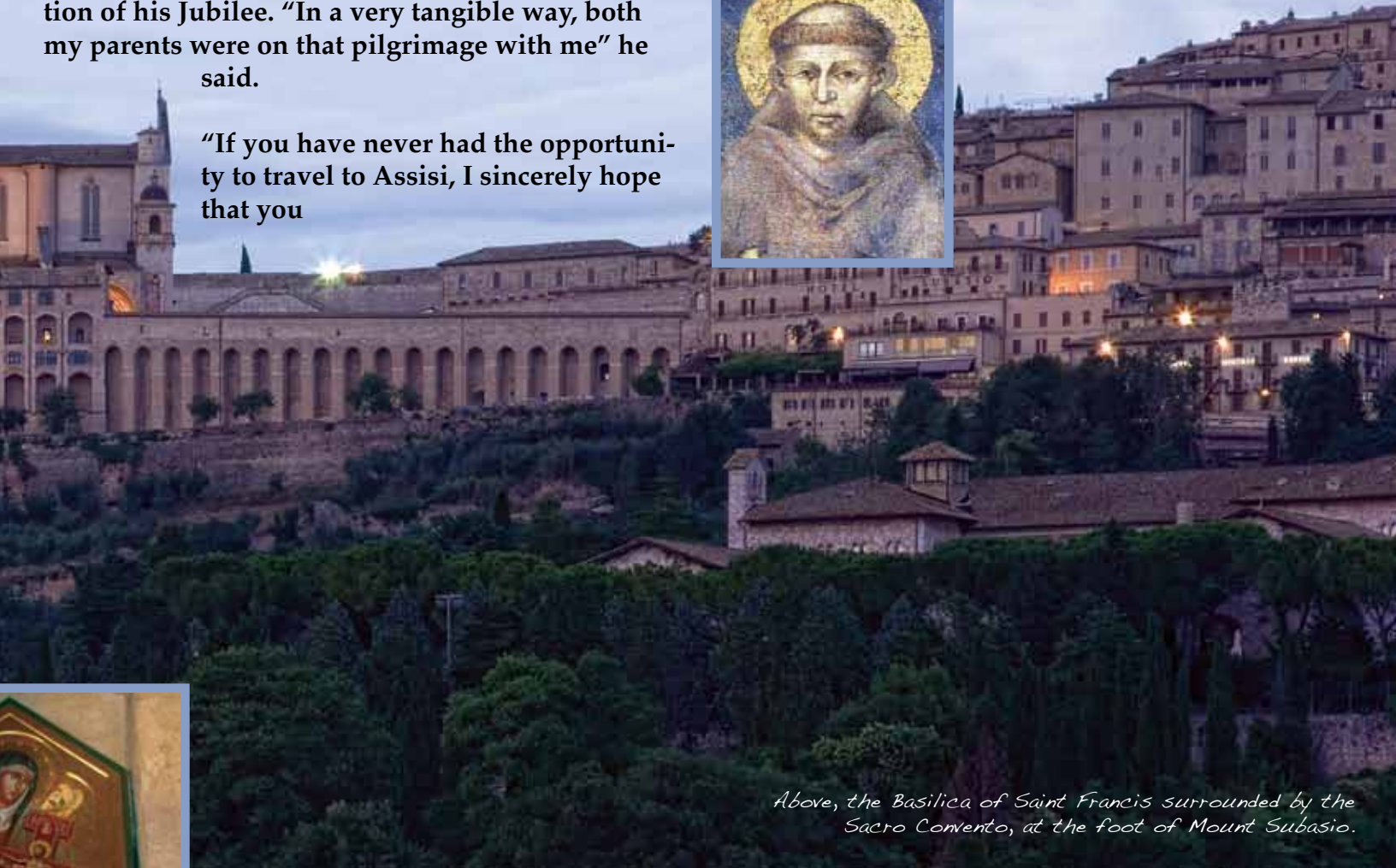
Spanish is called Santa Maria des Los Angeles... such humble beginnings for that great western metropolis!

“It was such a wonderful, prayerful time for me; walking the streets of Assisi and visiting all the holy places... blisters and all!” said Brother Paul. Brother Paul’s mother passed away on October 4, 2008, on the very feast of Saint Francis. She had gifted this pilgrimage to Brother Paul in anticipation of his Jubilee. “In a very tangible way, both my parents were on that pilgrimage with me” he said.

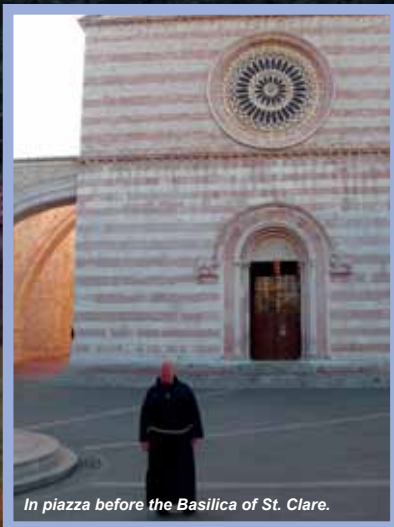
“If you have never had the opportunity to travel to Assisi, I sincerely hope that you

are able to someday. It is truly a unique spiritual center for the world, and a place of intense peace. For Catholics in particular — after the Holy Land — there is hardly a place on earth that can compare to the beauty and spiritual richness of Assisi!”

In the words of Saint Francis, we wish you all *Pace e Bene! Pax et Bonum! Peace and All Good!*



*Above, the Basilica of Saint Francis surrounded by the Sacro Convento, at the foot of Mount Subasio.*



*In piazza before the Basilica of St. Clare.*



*Br. Conrad and St. Francis hangin' in Assisi!*



*At San Rufino Cathedral where Francis and Clare were baptized into the Catholic Faith.*

# Haunted by Terri Schiavo

By Wesley J. Smith

**T**ERRI SCHIAVO CONTINUES TO PRICK OUR COLLECTIVE CONSCIENCE, our sensitivity to the way she died — deprived of all food and water, even the balm of ice chips for nearly two weeks — as raw today as on the day she drew her last breath five years ago next March.

Usually, the trauma remains just beneath the surface. But every once in a while events conspire to bring it all back to the fore. Take, for example, the intense international focus paid to Rom Houben. In 1983, Houben suffered catastrophic head injuries in an automobile accident. He was brought to the hospital unconscious. Doctors eventually concluded that his case was hopeless, that he was in a persistent vegetative state.

The PVS diagnosis meant that on the day Terri died, most bioethicists would have also approved Rom being dehydrated to death. He is no longer a “person,” they might have said. Why prolong a useless life? Indeed, removing food and water from the profoundly cognitively impaired, has, over the last twenty years, been legalized in all fifty states and declared by bioethicists and judges to be fully ethical, indeed, just a matter of “death with dignity.” This, even though repeated studies have shown that about 40% of PVS diagnoses are mistaken.

One of those misdiagnoses, it turned out, was of Rom Houben. Unlike Terri, he is alive today and — literally — telling his tale because he didn’t have a spouse dedicated to making sure he died, nor a judge refusing his family’s every entreaty to try new brain tests. Indeed, his family eventually prevailed upon internationally renowned physician Dr. Steven Laureys to perform a PET scan of Rom’s brain — not available at the time of the initial diagnosis — which revealed startlingly that his brain activity was near normal. Further studies revealed that Rom Houbens was actually fully awake and aware but unable to communicate, a condition known as the “locked-in state.”

Therapy commenced and soon Rom was communicating in a rudimentary way by answering yes or no questions with the movement of a foot. Patiently over three years, his abilities improved. Rom now communicates with the help of a speech therapist — who moves his finger over a computer keyboard, allowing him to contract his finger to type each letter. He is now telling his story of years of terrible frustration and loneliness during the 23 years he was isolated by his inability to communicate — and then great joy of reconnecting with the world, an event he calls his “second birth.”

The news about Rom’s marked improvement has been surprisingly controversial. Some critics have grouched that his interactivity is actually a “facilitated communication” scam, in which the actual communicator is the therapist rather than the patient. But that seems unlikely. Dr. Laureys is internationally renowned, and in an interview in the *New Scientist*, he denied participating in such a subterfuge. A story in the *Associated Press* provided details casting doubt on the facilitated communication criticism:

One of the checks Laureys applied to verify Houben was really communicating was to send the speech therapist away before showing his patient different objects. When the aide came

back and Houben was asked to say what he saw, that same hand held by the aide punched in the right information, he said.

Meanwhile, as people marveled at Rom’s turn in fortune, Terri Schiavo quickly became the subtext of the story. While no one contended she was also locked-in (her autopsy stated that the condition of her brain was consistent with

either PVS or minimal consciousness), activists on both sides of the ethical debate over dehydrating patients weighed in about how to best care (or not care) for such patients. Noted bioethicist, Art Caplan, who strongly backed Michael Schiavo’s quest to end his wife’s life, assured people that it is proper to remove sustenance from the profoundly impaired whether or not they are actually unconscious.

Meanwhile, the *Huffington Post*’s resident bioethicist, Jacob Appel, argued that patients such as Rom should be considered for euthanasia: “Rather than offering a compelling reason to keep such patients alive,” Appel wrote, “the horrors of enduring such a petrified existence may offer a compelling reason to let them die.”

In contrast, the *Calgary Herald* spoke just as strongly when it editorialized, “The lesson from Houben’s case — and reinforced, sadly, too late by Schiavo’s case — is that if doctors and courts must err, it should always be on the side of life, and on the assumption that despite all outward appearances, the “I” is “indeed there.”

Others in the media also made the Schiavo connection. *Time*, for example, reported that Schiavo-type “legal fights are likely to become more common as classifications of brain-injury severity are revised.” *ABC* reported that Terri Schiavo’s family “felt heartbreak and vindication” about the story.

So Terri Schiavo remains very much with us. Polls show that most people believe that her dehydration was just and proper because she was so impaired. But perhaps our inner voice, the part of us that never lies, sees it differently. Perhaps the reason Terri Schiavo comes so quickly to mind whenever we hear stories about “miraculous” awakenings, is that we remain profoundly disturbed by what we did to her, haunted it would seem, by her beautifully smiling face.




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*Award winning author Wesley J. Smith is a Senior Fellow in Human Rights and Bioethics at The Discovery Institute and consults with the International Task Force on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide and the Center for Bioethics and Culture.*

## The Franciscan Brothers of Peace Applaud United States Bishops for Reaffirming the Obligation to Feed and Hydrate Vulnerable Persons

On November 18, 2009 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) voted 219 – 4 in favor of revising its directives that guide Catholic health care facilities on the issue of withdrawal of food and hydration from those who are disabled or ill. The bishops affirmed Pope John Paul II's papal allocution on the moral obligation to provide food and hydration to patients in the document "Life-Sustaining Treatments and the Vegetative State."

Due directly to the murder of Terri Schiavo and the behavior of her bishop who stood passively by, giving tacit and actual approval and support to those who denied her food and hydration, hundreds of thousands of phone calls went into the offices of the Catholic bishops in moral outrage over this barbarous act of legal euthanasia perpetrated upon Terri, causing her death on March 31, 2005. This outpouring of anger prompted the bishops to ask for clarification from the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Brother Paul O'Donnell, spiritual advisor to Terri Schiavo's family, also went to Rome with her family to meet with representatives from the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in May of 2005. The family of Terri Schiavo formally asked the Sacred Congregation to affirm Pope John Paul II's allocution on this issue, which it did on September 14, 2007, again stating

that the administration of food and hydration, even for those in so-called "vegetative states", is morally obligatory.

The bishop's recent vote to revise their health care directives is a vitally important step toward mitigating and hopefully eliminating the influence of pro-euthanasia or "death with dignity" proponents sadly operative in some of our Catholic healthcare facilities; "ethics boards" and professionals influenced by modern pop psychology, rather than the teaching of the Church on this issue. Now the challenge of bringing dissenting professionals in the Catholic healthcare system to the proper understanding of this teaching begins.

The Franciscan Brothers applaud the Catholic Bishops for overwhelmingly approving the revision on food and hydration for our vulnerable and disabled sisters and brothers and upholding the sanctity of human life, regardless of one's condition of dependency. We urge all of the Christian faithful to pray for our bishops so that they will have the strength and courage to enforce these guidelines at our Catholic health care institutions.

As we approach the sad 5th anniversary of the death of Terri Schiavo, may we all be filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit to promote and defend the Gospel of Life. For the official USCCB press release go to: [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)

## March 31 — A Day to Remember

MARCH 31, 2010, WILL MARK THE 5TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF TERRI SCHINDLER SCHIAVO, and is the annual International Day of Prayer and Remembrance for Terri Schiavo, and all our vulnerable brothers and sisters. Events to mark this tragic day in American history will be held in major cities across the nation. A National Mass will be celebrated at Ave Maria University's Oratory near Naples, Florida, at 5:15 p.m. on that day.

*The Terri Schiavo Life and Hope Network*, formerly known as The Terri Schindler Schiavo Foundation, along with the Franciscan Brothers of Peace and Priests for Life, have established this day as a way to foster education, prayer, and activism to stop the discrimination perpetrated against disabled and vulnerable persons.

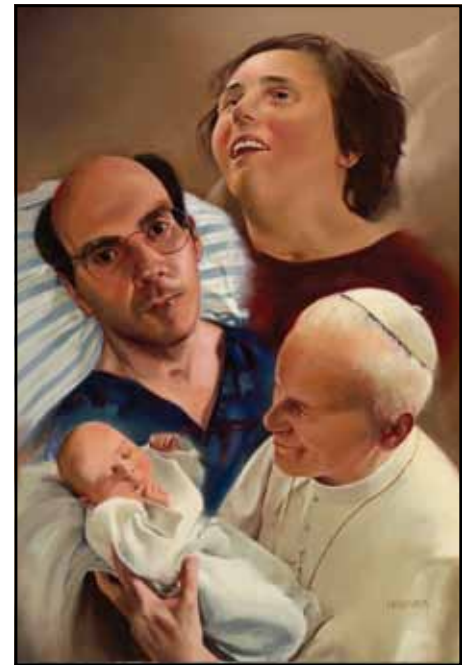
We invite all believers, places of worship and educational institutions, to

remember Terri Schiavo and to hold memorial services to promote the dignity of every human life, despite any disability or disease with which that life may be afflicted.

For more information on this special day of remembrance and an important announcement on a major news event to take place this spring in Terri's honor, please contact The Terri Schiavo Life and Hope Network at [www.terrisfight.org](http://www.terrisfight.org)

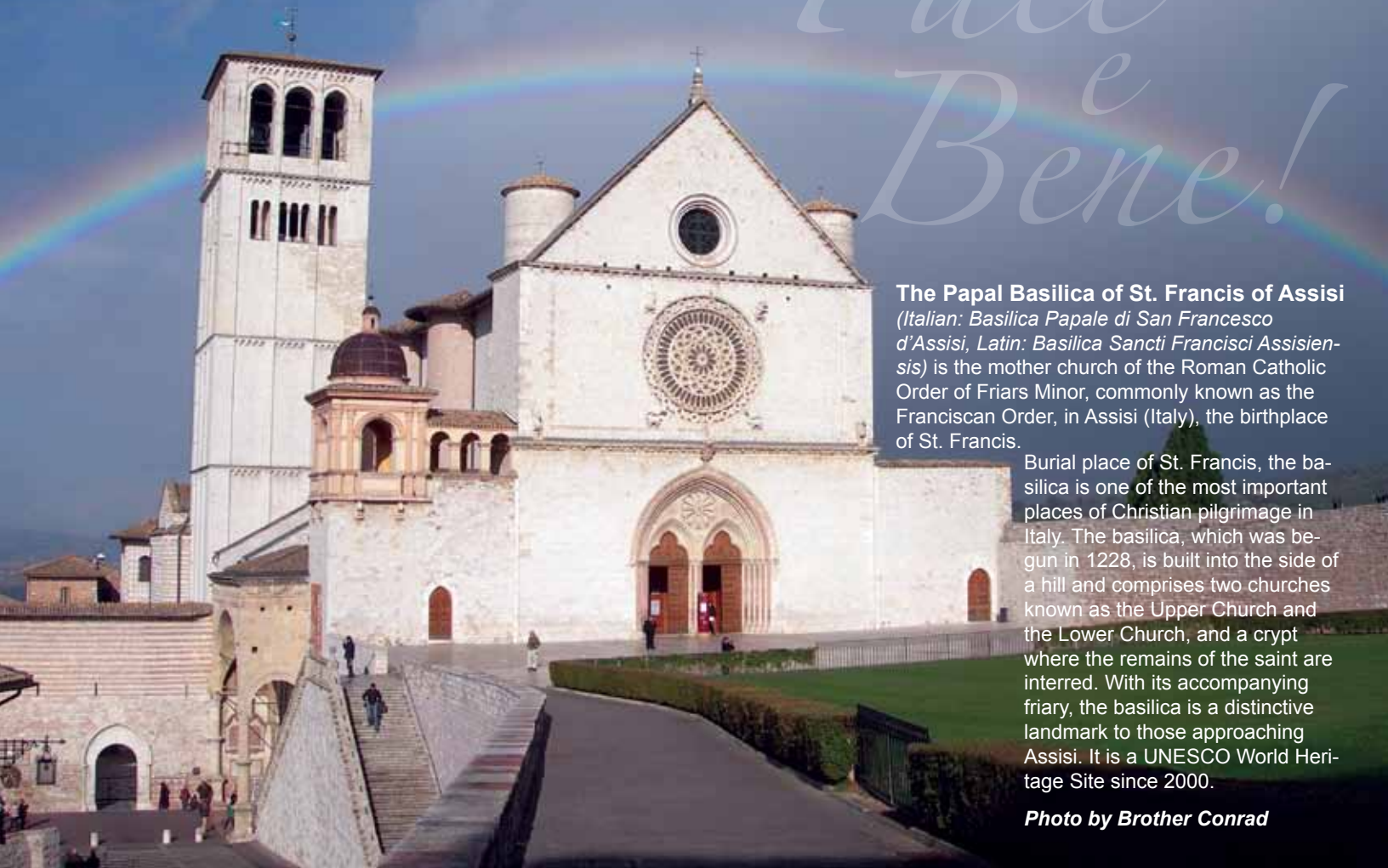
*"Euthanasia is a false solution to the drama of suffering, a solution unworthy of man. We are certain that no tear, whether it be of those who suffer or those who stand by them, goes un-noticed before God"*

— POPE BENEDICT XVI, FEBRUARY 1, 2009



*The Terri Schindler Schiavo Foundation is now*  
**The Terri Schiavo Life and Hope Network**

# Pace Bene!



**The Papal Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi** (Italian: *Basilica Papale di San Francesco d'Assisi*, Latin: *Basilica Sancti Francisci Assisiensis*) is the mother church of the Roman Catholic Order of Friars Minor, commonly known as the Franciscan Order, in Assisi (Italy), the birthplace of St. Francis.

Burial place of St. Francis, the basilica is one of the most important places of Christian pilgrimage in Italy. The basilica, which was begun in 1228, is built into the side of a hill and comprises two churches known as the Upper Church and the Lower Church, and a crypt where the remains of the saint are interred. With its accompanying friary, the basilica is a distinctive landmark to those approaching Assisi. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2000.

*Photo by Brother Conrad*



**Rowf!!**

## Begging Box

Please continue to remember our families in need by sending your donations of both perishable and non-perishable food to our emergency food shelf at Queen of Peace Friary.

Do you have a used car in good reliable condition? If so, please consider making a tax deductible donation to the brothers.

Donations and Gift Certificates are always needed. For more information please call 651-646-8586.

**THANK YOU**  
and may God bless you for your support!



**Every First Friday at 7:00 p.m.**  
**Adoration + Franciscan Crown Rosary**  
**Chanted Compline + Benediction**  
*Refreshments and Fellowship follow.*