

The Canticle

OF THE CAPUCHIN RETREAT CENTER



FALL/WINTER NEWSLETTER 2025



UPCOMING EVENTS

at the Capuchin Retreat Center



YOUNG ADULT MEN'S GROUP

1ST MONDAYS, 7-9PM



PRIVATE/DIRECTED RETREAT

Feb 15-21, 2026



ADVENT SERIES 2025

DEC 7, 10, & 17, 2025



ICONOGRAPHY RETREAT

FEB 15-21, 2026



LENTEN SERIES 2026

WEDNESDAYS DURING LENT



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OH DEER! - GARDENING WITH OUR FROLICKING FRIENDS 06

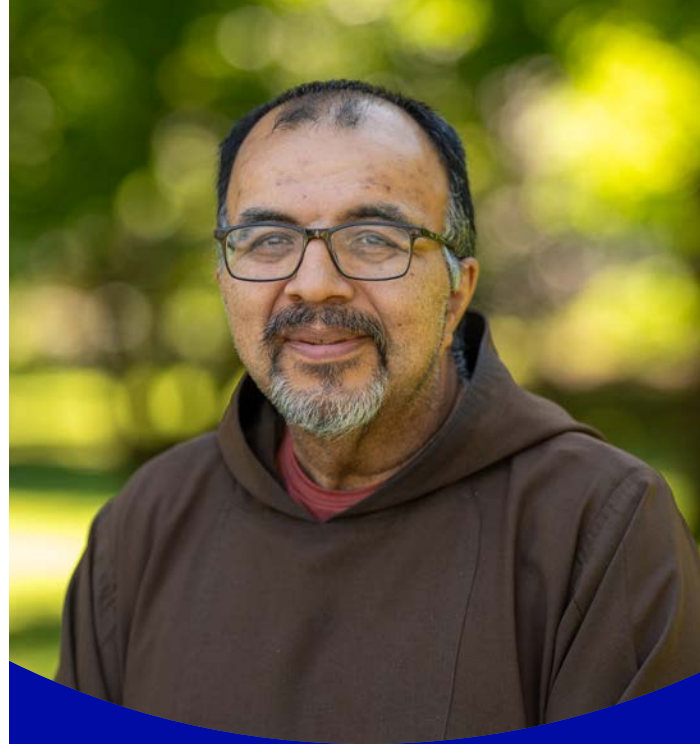
Br. John Scherer discusses the beauty of the local wildlife seen amidst the Capuchin Retreat grounds but also the frustration of trying to keep these graceful creatures from eating the plants.

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For John Culcasi and others who've met at the Capuchin Retreat Center for their men's group this past year, they've discovered so much more about St. Francis than they could have imagined.

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Save the date for next year's annual fundraisers. Join us as we celebrate the 5th Annual Gouda Evening on June 14, 2026 and the 3rd Annual Capuchin Golf Classic on September 26, 2026.



From the **DIRECTOR**

It has almost been four years since first arriving to Washington Township, and things continue to grow and develop with each year. It's not just about buildings or the grounds, but our very retreatants experiencing the depth of God's tranquility with each passing year.

I pray that as we continue to provide this well-received newsletter, we can provide you with a glimpse not only of changes and plans, but of the stories of people's lives who have been changed and affected by being a part of our community here at Capuchin Retreat Center. May the Autumn be a time of enjoying the sights and colors of nature. We hope to see you soon!

Fr. Vito Martinez, OFM Cap.
Director of Capuchin Retreat Center

Finding a Place **OF PEACE**

*Article written by
Br. Vito Martinez,
OFM Cap. based on a
review by Mark and
Sandy DiPaola*

For Mark and Sandi DiPaola, Capuchin Retreat Center has never been just a building or a weekend program. It has been, in Mark's words, "a retreat from our hectic daily lives." Over the years, this faithful couple has woven the retreat center into the fabric of their marriage and family life, discovering here a place of peace, prayer, and deep belonging.

Their journey with the Capuchins began many years ago, being members of St. Clement of Rome Parish in Romeo and seeing different Capuchins for the Sunday Masses. What began as occasional introductions became a steady pattern of friendship with the friars at the retreat center: Advent walks through falling snow, reflective Stations of the Cross, and simple afternoons walking the wooded trails or helping to clean up the grounds. Each encounter has drawn them more deeply into their relationship with God — and into communion with one another.

The friars, they say, have become family. "They are warm, welcoming, and insightful," Mark shares. "They help us strengthen our relationship with God and with everyone we encounter." That sense of family is not limited



Sandi DiPaola (left) and her husband Mark DiPaola (right) pose for a photo with Br. Bob Malloy, OFM Cap. (middle).



Mark and his fellow Knights of Columbus members are regular volunteers at the Capuchin Retreat Center and have often helped out by cleaning up the grounds.

to the Capuchins; it extends to the staff, fellow retreatants, and all who find a home here. For Mark and Sandi, Mass at the retreat house has become a cherished routine. Friday mornings often find them in the chapel, giving thanks for the Lord's sacrifice. The quiet intimacy of the daily Eucharist sets the tone for their day, while the monthly Healing Masses — filled with faithful voices invoking the intercession of Blessed Solanus Casey — have left a lasting mark on their hearts.

Mark and Sandi's devotion is not only spiritual but practical. Through the Knights of Columbus Council at St. Clement of Rome, they have brought their time, skills, and energy to support the center's needs. Fr. Vito serves both as retreat director and as their council's worthy chaplain and has become a bridge between their parish community and the Capuchins. Together, the Knights of Columbus have assisted with fundraising, offered labor for projects, and supported improvements on the grounds and facilities. "The Knights are blessed to have this relationship," Mark says, "and excited to see how it will grow."

For Mark and Sandi, their connection to the Capuchin Retreat Center is ultimately about

"It has made us better Catholics and strengthened our marriage."

transformation. "It has made us better Catholics and strengthened our marriage," they testify. Their love story is one that blends prayer with action, faith with generosity, and gratitude with service. The couple models what so many donors, volunteers, and retreatants discover: that the retreat center is not only a place set apart, but also a source of renewal that flows back into our lives and communities.

Mark and Sandi's story reminds us why the Capuchin Retreat Center matters. It is not simply a ministry program; it is a place where lives are touched, faith is deepened, and families are strengthened. As they continue to walk the trails, attend Mass, and serve alongside the friars, they carry with them a conviction that resonates with all who have been blessed here: gratitude for God's gifts and hope for the future.

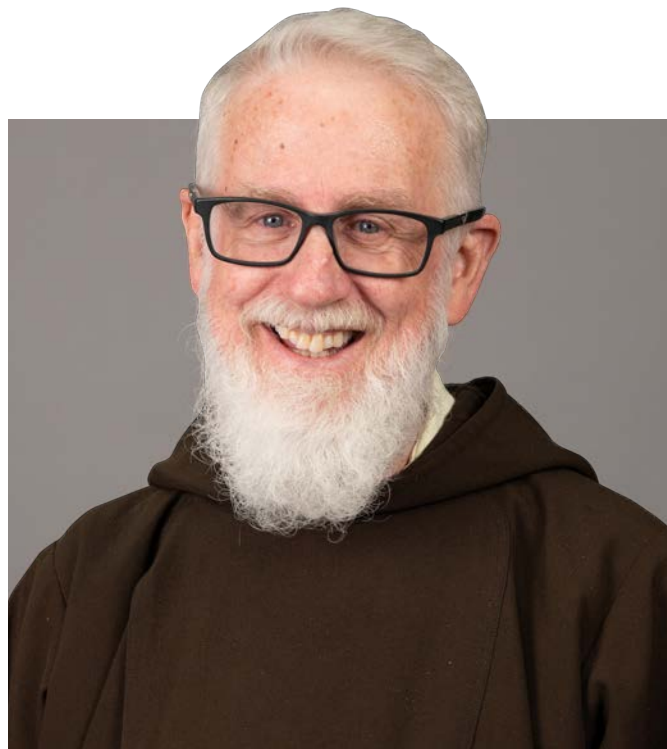


OH DEER!

Our Frolicking Friends

One of the things about Capuchin Retreat Center that always gets comments from our retreatants is the deer that live here. With our 96 mostly wooded acres bordering scenic Stony Creek Metropark, we have many deer roaming our property. They are beautiful and graceful creatures. The fawns, sometimes found curled up in the leaves—as a group of volunteers discovered this past spring while cleaning up for the Gouda Evening—are precious and irresistibly cute. There was a doe last summer that had triplets. That’s a healthy doe indeed! One morning this past spring a fawn ran around at full speed, returning to its mother to nurse briefly before darting off again, which was very entertaining to watch. With the first snowfall, the young ones seem like real children frolicking joyfully in the snow. They can look funny standing on their hind legs to reach crabapples or other leaves they want to eat. The Bible has many references to deer—Psalm 42, “as the deer yearn for running streams, so too, does my heart yearn for you, my God,” for example. St. Francis is often pictured with a deer, as in the statue in our chapel and the fountain in the courtyard.

Most of us have seen the cute wildlife around the retreat center, but gardeners know the struggle that comes with.



Article by Br. John Scherer, OFM Cap.



The Challenge to our Gardens

But there is another side of deer—they eat the plants that I have planted to beautify the retreat center gardens and walkways. Last winter I did a lot of research about what plants are “deer resistant,” which is really a euphemism for maybe they will overlook it if there is something better nearby. I ordered plants and planted them this spring with great hope and anticipation. I found that deer don’t read the same books that I do. The only plants that seem truly “safe” from them are daffodils (*Narcissus*) because they are poisonous. That doesn’t stop a deer, probably a curious first yearling, from taking a bite of the flowers and then spitting it out. The other flowers that seem to be resistant to them are those that smell sweetly, like iris and peonies. They don’t eat Oxeye daisy or Shasta daisies or ornamental onions (*Allium* ‘Purple Sensation’, ‘Millenium’ or *A. christophii*). The milkweed with its milky sap is left alone, but I have found that deer tromping through the garden have broken off stems of the butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*).

Other plants that have proven resilient against the deer are those with strong-scented foliage like sage (*Salvia*), catmint (*Nepeta*), Russian sage (*Perovskia*) or lavender (*Lavandula* ‘Phenomenal’), tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) and coreopsis (*Coreopsis verticillata* ‘Zagreb’). I got a number of native plants this past spring which were described as deer resistant, though not all proved to be. The best successes were Clustered Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*) and Hairy Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum verticillatum* var. *pilosum*) which, as the names suggest, smell refreshingly of mint.

The real disappointments were gladiolus; the leaves were left alone but not the flowers. Also, the Blazing Star (*Liatris*) were chomped off as they began to flower. They will be going to Br. Benoy at the Solanus Center. There’s always next year, another chance to learn and plant again. Gardeners never give up. Oh, deer!

Discovering the Story of **ST. FRANCIS**



Above: John Culcasi (left), baby Benedetta (middle) and Toni Culcasi (right) pose for a photo.



Article by John Culcasi

Embracing the Franciscan Spirit

The Capuchin Retreat Center and our interaction with the Capuchin community have been life-changing. Yes, I know, we live in a world full of hyperbole - but this is not one of those statements. I mean it, the Capuchins at the retreat center have opened my eyes to seeing and experiencing God in a completely new way; through relationship, hospitality, genuine and present interactions, and of course, through recognizing God's love and presence in the created world around us. My friends and I, who attended the men's group this past year discussing the life of St. Francis of Assisi at the retreat center, said the same thing: "There is something special here, and we want to explore it some more."

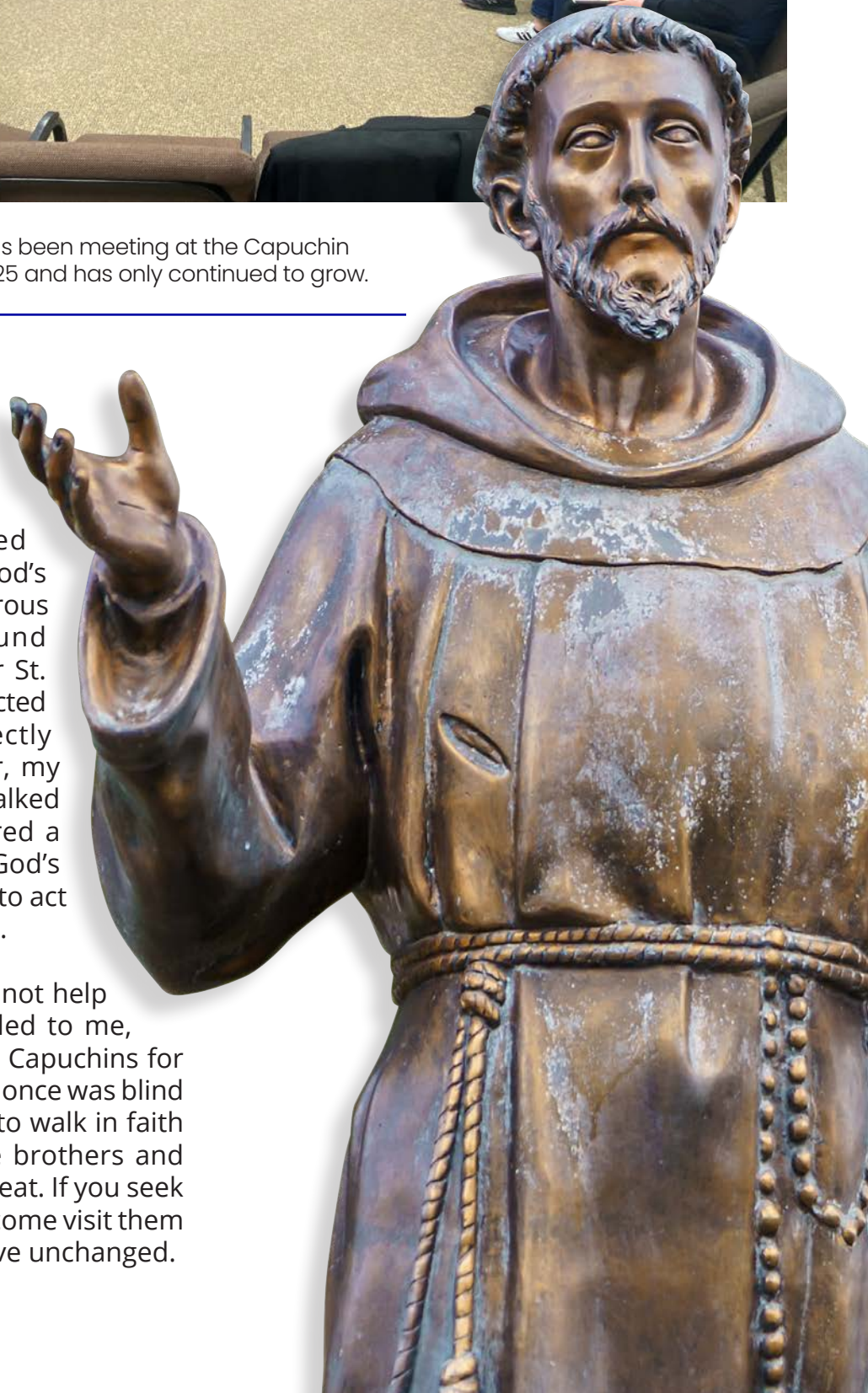
We had no idea of who St. Francis truly was. We had no idea that he was a young adult, a man struggling with his identity and purpose with full of so much passion and conviction. His story, brought to our attention by Br. Julius, was presented to us in a way that could be reflected in our own life experiences as young adult men. The times have changed, but the challenges we face and God's persistent invitation to us did not, do not, and will not.



John's young adult men's group has been meeting at the Capuchin Retreat Center since January of 2025 and has only continued to grow.

Of all that we learned about St. Francis, I believe what made the biggest impact on me was "St. Francis' encounter with the leper." His realization that this man was a beloved child of God and created in God's image, even amidst such torturous ailments, became a profound conversion point not only for St. Francis but also for me. It convicted me to love the person directly in front of me—my neighbor, my family, or the stranger I had walked by and never noticed. It stirred a call within me to recognize God's presence in every person and to act with compassion and humility.

Although I still fall short, I cannot help but see what God has revealed to me, and I'm deeply grateful to the Capuchins for opening my eyes to the world I once was blind to. Their witness inspires me to walk in faith and love. May God bless the brothers and mission here at Capuchin Retreat. If you seek peace, clarity, or consolation, come visit them and I promise you will not leave unchanged.





Support the Capuchin Retreat Center!

Capuchin Retreat relies on the faithful support of friends like you to remain a place of peace and spiritual renewal for our retreatants. Consider taking the next step and becoming a part of our ministry today by making a recurring gift to support this sacred work. All gifts are fully tax-deductible as allowed by law.

Donate through the mail:

Capuchin Retreat Center, 62460 Mt. Vernon Rd., Washington, MI 48094

Donate from a bank account:

Use your bank's bill pay program to set up a one-time or recurring gift.

Donate with a credit/debit card:

Please visit our website at www.capretreat.org/give-now/ or scan the QR Code to the right to make a one-time or recurring donation in support of the retreat center.



Upcoming FUNDRAISERS

GOUDA EVENING FUNDRAISER



Sunday, June 14, 2026 | 3 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Join us at the Capuchin Retreat Center for our annual summer fundraiser on Sunday, June 14 with libations, cheese, dinner, and great times! This event features live music in the garden, guided tours of the property and our facilities, a live auction and raffle drawings! Tickets just \$75.

Scan the QR Code or visit: ofmcap.cc/goudaevening2026



3RD CAPUCHIN GOLF CLASSIC



Saturday, September 26, 2026 | 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

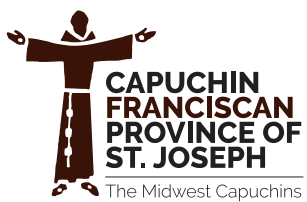
Join us next year at Twin Lakes Golf Club in Oakland Twp to support the Capuchin Retreat Center and the Solanus Casey Center! Your \$150 registration includes 18 holes of golf with a cart (4-person scramble format) with a continental breakfast, hotdog at the turn, 3 drink tickets, and a pasta buffet!

Scan the QR Code or visit: ofmcap.cc/golfclassic2026



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CAPUCHIN RETREAT CENTER

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