

Franciscan Spiritual Center

Renew one's spirit | See with new eyes

Learn and connect | Find peace, quiet, and rest



October 2026

People often assume a spiritual center is a place for people with unwavering faith. That hasn't been my experience. Working here has shown me something different. I've watched people arrive carrying grief, uncertainty, loneliness, curiosity, and hope. Not everyone comes because they have answers. Many come because they have questions.

As an administrative assistant, I spend most of my time behind the scenes. I answer emails, help people register for programs, and prepare the details for our wonderful programs. It may not seem like sacred work, but over time I've realized that every interaction matters. Sometimes people are excited to attend. Sometimes they're hesitant or unsure if they belong. Again and again, I've seen how they're met with kindness rather than expectation of certainty.

I've also had the opportunity to read nearly every program description that comes through our office. Whether the topic is prayer, writing, SoulCollage®, spiritual direction, or simply learning to be present, there is a common thread: an invitation to slow down and make room for God and his loving Presence.

I don't know where everyone is on their spiritual journey. I do know they're welcomed. In a world that often demands certainty before belonging - I've come to see how rare this is.

Welcome,

Katie Lazarus

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My father's hands are large — much larger than mine. They are rough in the palms and fingertips. Like a tactile map, I trace the grooves with my much smaller 9-year-old hand. He holds my hand when we cross streets or when he quickens his pace to be sure I keep up.

My dad smells like rubber, carrying the scent of his job home with him. In the evening, after he showers and settles into his recliner, I climb into his lap — even then, I still smell the rubber as I rest my head against his shoulder.

My dad is a recovering alcoholic, with many years in sobriety — so many that I have never known him any other way. When he does wrong, he promptly admits it and makes amends. His sobriety is steady and wholehearted. He carries the message to those still suffering and lives the principles of AA in all his affairs.

Sometimes, I sat in on meetings with him. I saw grown men cry — for their children, for their families, for the damage they'd done. I watched as those same men slowly grew into more rounded people, the shape of sobriety inhabiting them. Always, I watched my dad extend his hand — to clasp a shoulder, to hold someone in prayer, or to pass along a 30-day chip. He was jubilant in their success, and in a way that children can, I understood.

Sometimes, at the end of a meeting, someone would call to me, "Katie, how does it go again?"

I'd sheepishly reply, "Whose Father?"

And in perfect unison, a chorus of voices would echo back, "Our Father."

The line between the Franciscan Spiritual Center and my early experiences with my dad is very clear in my mind: each person's relationship with God is unique. Like in Alcoholics Anonymous, having a clear and all-knowing definition of God is not necessary. It is, in fact, a hindrance.

As someone who is not fundamentally religious, I have struggled with many concepts of faith. Mostly, I struggle to understand how someone could believe wholeheartedly in a higher power that they cannot fully comprehend. I never imagined that faith and doubt could exist in union — two sides of the same coin.

Working at the Franciscan Spiritual Center has prompted me to revisit my understanding of God and God's works. Sometimes, I find the answers to my wonderings through the spirituality of others, through their love for God — reflected in their actions and in their approach to life, much like my dad.

The Franciscan Spiritual Center, like those AA halls of my childhood, is a place where people can show up exactly as they are and find love, faith, and hope. It is a place where doubt and belief can live side by side, where healing is possible, and where God's love is carried out in action.

Your support makes this work possible. With your gift, you help us continue offering a space where lives are transformed — where hands reach out, just as my father's once did, to guide and steady someone else on the path.

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With gratitude and curiosity,

Katie Lazarus



September 2024

As someone new to The Franciscan Center, I've had the opportunity to truly experience their "radical hospitality." Initially, I understood this concept to extend to surface comforts, but after some time I have found that the Franciscan Center and the people who frequent it possess a kindness that reaches into the core of a person: an ideal and a presence that accurately reflects that of St. Francis.

Again, as a newcomer, but this time to the concept of organized religion. Spirituality was very much a constant in my childhood, but mostly it was a private idea, without designed practices or policies. My mother with her many images of Jesus, and her deeply held beliefs in karma and divine intervention. My father, who urged me to have my own relationship with God, as I understood Him.

This is all to say that when I came to the Center, I was concerned that my patchwork of beliefs, of questions, and ultimately of spirituality would be seen negatively or perhaps even be unwelcome. This, as I have realized, could not have been any further from the truth.

The Center is a true embodiment of the notion "come as you are" - a spiritual space of genuine inclusion. And, as you and I know, that is truly a Franciscan ideal.

With gratitude,

Katie Lazarus