



St. Francis Pilgrimages began after Bret and Katia Thoman - both Secular (Third Order) Franciscans - attended a retreat in Loreto, Italy led by local Franciscans in 2003. The friars took them on a mini-pilgrimage where they discovered the hidden Franciscan places of that region. Immediately, they had a desire to bring English-speaking people on such a pilgrimage. Since then Bret and Katia have dedicated themselves full-time to their pilgrimage ministry, and destinations now include all of Italy.

They have organized over 50 pilgrimages and personally journeyed with 1,200 people of more than 20 different nationalities throughout all of Italy. Groups have been large or small, and have originated in the US, Canada, Ireland, Guam, Singapore, Japan, and Malaysia; they have been parishes, families, colleges, youth groups, retreat centers, secular Franciscan fraternities/ regions, and others.

Bret and Katia Thoman have been married since 2002, and they made their profession as Secular Franciscans in 2006. They have two small children, Claremarie and Iacopo. They live in Georgia (in the US), but visit Italy often.

Bret has a masters degree in Italian and a certificate in Franciscan studies. He is currently the director of formation for his local fraternity in Georgia, Immaculate Conception. He has worked as a teacher and translator of Italian, as an airline pilot, and has written two books (see below). He currently writes, gives flight instruction, and is a part-time instructor for St. Francis University's Franciscan studies program (ICFL) [Click here for link](#). He has translated two books for Pauline Books and Media: one written by Archbishop Bruno Forte, and another written by Fr. Raneiro Cantalamessa, OFM.Cap. Bret interpreted live on CNN the Papal Conclave and announced the election of Pope Francis; he also interpreted live on CNN Pope Francis's

Inaugural Mass one week later. Bret also runs a separate company specializing in customized group or individual travel to Italy. [Click here for link.](#)

Katia was born in Apulia in southern Italy. She lived in Assisi for 7 years where she graduated with a degree in tourism from the University of Perugia and worked in several hotels. In Assisi she developed lifelong friendships with the Franciscan friars and sisters.

Bret and Katia's life experiences in Italy, their vocation as Secular Franciscans, and their devotion to Franciscan spirituality make their pilgrimages a personal, unique experience.

Itineraries to Italy include familiar places like Rome, Assisi, Siena, Florence, Loreto, San Giovanni Rotondo, Orvieto, Lanciano, and more, but we also take you to the special hidden places, known only to locals, away from the crowds. We organize groups also to the Holy Land customized the way you want it, or let us suggest one for you.

We have worked with groups large or small from parishes, youth groups and high schools, retreat centers, families, third order Franciscan groups, and more. We specialize in groups of all sizes, and our work with small private groups allows us to offer flexibility that the big tour companies cannot.

Ask us about how we help individuals, couples, or small groups organize their own itineraries.