



Bret and Family in Jerusalem, 2015

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

St. Francis Pilgrimages began after Bret and Katia 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. Shortly after, Bret and Katia dedicated themselves full-time to their pilgrimage ministry.

To date, they have organized over 80 pilgrimages and personally journeyed with 1,600 people of more than 20 different nationalities. Destinations include all of Italy, the Holy Land, Spain and Portugal, Medjugorje, Poland, and more. Groups have originated in the US, Canada, Ireland, Guam, Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, and Malaysia; they have been large and small and consist of parishes, families, schools, youth groups, retreat centers, secular Franciscan fraternities/ regions, and more.

Bret has a master's degree in Italian and a certificate in Franciscan studies. He was formerly director of formation for his SFO fraternity and has worked as a teacher and translator of Italian, as a flight instructor and airline pilot, and has written and translated a number of books. Bret once interpreted live for CNN during the Papal Conclave and announced the election of Pope Francis; the following week, he interpreted live on CNN during Pope Francis's Inaugural Mass. 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. Today Katia assists Bret in the pilgrimage business, takes care of the kids, and paints in her free time.

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.