

TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

Fall 2015 ISSUE 85



Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day and through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;
and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.

Mission to Share the Vision

The TAU-USA, a publication of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order of the United States, is a vital communication link between the NAFRA leadership and all professed Secular Franciscans throughout the United States. The articles within the publication, while sharing the Secular Franciscan charism and vision, are intended to inform, inspire, and challenge.



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Contents

Minister's Message.	1
<i>by Tom Bello, OFS</i>	
Annual Review.	3
<i>by Tom Bello, OFS</i>	
News from the NEC.	5
Spiritual Assistance	7
<i>by Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap</i>	
CNSA Message	9
<i>by Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR</i>	
Ecumenical/Interfaith Commission.	11
<i>by Anne Mulqueen, OFS</i>	
Formation Commission	12
<i>by Mary Anne Lenzi, OFS</i>	
Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.	13
<i>by Carolyn Townes, OFS</i>	
Youth and Young Adults Commission.	15
<i>by Sue and Christy Nelson, OFS</i>	
Communication Committee Report	16
<i>by Cindy Wesley, OFS</i>	
NAFRA National Archive Report	17
<i>by Sharon Deveaux, OFS,</i>	
Vocation Committee Report.	18
<i>by Jane DeRose-Bamman OFS</i>	
Franciscan Living.	19
<i>by Francine Gikow, OFS</i>	
Quinquennial 2016.	20
<i>by Susan Simeone, OFS</i>	
Smoky Valley Printing.	21

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THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

National Minister, Tom Bello, OFS

LADY, HOLY QUEEN, HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD, VIRGIN!

"I greet you, Lady, Holy Queen, Holy Mary, Mother of God, Virgin...chosen by the most holy Father of heaven; consecrated to holiness thorough His most holy and beloved Son and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. In you was and is the whole fullness of grace and everything that is good." St. Francis.

"Mary, mother of Jesus, please be a mother to me now." Blessed Mother Teresa.

Beloved National Family, May the Lord give us Peace!

Please permit me in this last article that I will write as National Minister to focus on the Blessed Mother, my Mother, your Mother, the Mother of our Order, the Fifth Gospel.

Of course, we all know the names of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

How many of us know the name of the fifth Gospel: Mary?

She is the Gospel written by God through Her life.

We are each called to be living Gospels like Mary.

Mary is our mother in faith. She is the first believer in Jesus Christ, the Son announced to her and conceived in her womb by the Holy Spirit.

Our Secular Franciscan Rule Four calls us devote ourselves "especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel."

As the fifth Gospel, as the first believer, as our Mother, Mary can lead us all into a closer encounter with all the Gospels and with her Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Our Secular Franciscan Rule Nine tells us of the great love our Father Francis had for the Blessed Mother: "She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his



family. The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently."

Blessed Thomas of Celano, whom Franciscan scholars identify as directly knowing St. Francis, supports our Rule when he writes and praises:

"Toward the Mother of Jesus he [St. Francis] was filled with an inexpressible love, because it was she who made the Lord of majesty our brother. He sang special Praises to her, poured out prayers to her, offered her his affections, so many and so great that the tongue of man cannot recount them. But what

delights us most, he made her the advocate of the order and placed under her wings the sons he was about to leave that she might cherish them and protect them to the end.

"Hail, advocate of the poor! Fulfill toward us your office of protectress until the time set by the Father."

Having lost my own Mother just in the last year and facing my own possible loss to this world, I feel myself drawn more and more to the Blessed Mother. I feel her consoling presence and find great peace whenever I pray to her.

I pray that none of you ever has serious surgery requiring total anesthesia. My health had always been good until this past June when my small intestines "telescoped" (in the words of the doctors), and I couldn't process any solid foods through my system. A wonderful female surgeon, a wife and mom and Catholic, removed four dangerous tumors, leaving another ten smaller and less dangerous ones for treatment at a later date, all of which, when biopsied, confirmed what the doctors had feared would be

metastatic melanoma, which had first appeared as just a small dot on my back, easily removed, in 2005.

When I woke in the hospital after the surgery in a groggy consciousness, there was honestly nothing I could do for the next 12 hours except pray the Rosary and talk to my Mother.

Those prayers gave and have given and, I believe, will always give peace.

As we live in the Americas, I have always had a special devotion to our Blessed Mother's appearances to St. Juan Diego, the miraculous image of herself that she left on his tilma as Our Lady of Guadalupe for us, and her consoling words to him and to all.

Much has been written about the history of this appearance, the miracle of this image on the tilma and the conversation between Juan and the Blessed Lady. I would encourage your online or other research for your own personal faith formation and consolation.

More importantly, I would encourage your greater prayer and devotion to the Blessed Mother, our Mother, my Mother. I try always to carry this image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, along with an image of the Sacred Heart, St. Francis and St. Anthony on my person, and if you could come to my bedroom where I am writing you right now, you could find her and them immediately!

I pray to her daily, and she always takes me closer to her Son, closer to Peace.

If you don't want my advice, I give you the advice of one of my favorite 20th Century Franciscan saints, whose shrine, church and museum I have all visited and prayed at in Niepokalanów, Poland: St. Maximilian Kolbe, OFM Conventual, who wrote:

"It is beyond all doubt that Mary's will represents to us the will of God himself. By dedicating ourselves to her we become in her hands instruments of God's mercy even as she was such an instrument in God's hands. We should let ourselves be guided and led by Mary and rest quiet and secure in her hands. She will watch out for us, provide for us, answer our needs of body and spirit; she will dissolve all our difficulties and worries."

Of course, our Mother Mary continues to care and pray for me and you and all of creation. She continues to be that fifth Gospel as she "treasures the entire life of Jesus in her heart," just as Pope Francis shared with us this past Pentecost on May 24, 2015, in

his beautiful Encyclical "*Laudato, Si*" (Praise to You, O Lord) when he wrote at Number 241:

"Mary, the Mother who cared for Jesus, now cares with maternal affection and pain for this wounded world. Just as her pierced heart mourned the death of Jesus, so now she grieves for the sufferings of the crucified poor and for the creatures of this world laid waste by human power. Completely transfigured, she now lives with Jesus, and all creatures sing of her fairness. She is the Woman, 'clothed in the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars' (Rev 12:1). Carried up into heaven, she is the Mother and Queen of all creation. In her glorified body, together with the Risen Christ, part of creation has reached the fullness of its beauty. She treasures the entire life of Jesus in her heart (cf. Lk 2:19,51), and now understands the meaning of all things. Hence, we can ask her to enable us to look at this world with eyes of wisdom."

Permit me to leave you with my undying love, gratitude and prayers this depiction of the conversation between our Blessed Mother and St. Juan Diego that I read when in need, which recently has been frequently:

Know for certain that I am the perfect and perpetual Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God ... here I will show and offer all my love, my compassion and protection to the people.

I am your merciful Mother, the Mother of all who love me, of those who cry to me, of those who have confidence in me.

Here I will hear their weeping and their sorrows ... their necessities and misfortunes. Listen and let it penetrate your heart.

Do not be troubled or weighed down with grief. Do not fear any illness or vexation, anxiety or pain.

Am I not here who am your Mother?

Are you not under my shadow and my protection?

Am I not your fountain of life?

Are you not in the fold of my mantle?

In the crossing of my arms?

Is there anything else you need?

2015: A BRIEF REVIEW FROM THE NATIONAL MINISTER THE GOOD AND THE BAD

by Tom Bello OFS, National Minister

At the 2014 National Chapter, the National Fraternity voted as its Theme for 2015: “Be the joyful face of Christ to all!” That is the challenge of perfect joy in the face of bad and good.

I pray that your 2015 has been better than my 2015. The Lord brings crosses and suffering to all of us, so I am not complaining, but simply reporting.

Please permit me to start with the good, just as the Bible does, for in Genesis Chapter One, God sees that everything is good. Only in Genesis Chapter Three do we human beings fall.

The good was mostly every single meeting that I attended with my brothers and sisters at every level of fraternity.

Although it occurred in November 2014, I attended my first International Chapter in Assisi Italy and met brothers and sisters from all over the world. We are a vibrant and YOUNG International family to which I pray we can reach out in many ways, especially in twinning with other National fraternities.

At the National level, I mention specifically three gatherings that I was unfortunately unable to attend because of health issues, but from which I have received glowing reviews, plus, very gratefully, many cards and prayers:

One, the Summer Seminar on Servant Leadership at Saint Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania.

Two, the JPIC Peace Retreat at Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois.

Three, the Formation Retreat at the Franciscan Prayer Center in Independence, Missouri.

I pray that an article in the *TAU-USA* might capture some of the joy, fellowship and formation from each of these National gatherings of 2015 and that we can continue to gather nationally, because our National family is very strong, if not so youthful as the International family.

We need to communicate and share more to be better sisters and brothers to one another across this great land of the United States.

Regionally, I was blessed to attend two excellent Regional Chapters before my health failed: one in the Five Franciscan Martyrs Region, largely in Florida, and the other in the Franciscans of the Prairie region, largely in Illinois.

Both of these Regions modeled caring, organized and responsible servant leadership, formation and apostolic works that I pray every Region can show.

I have also attended my own local fraternity meetings at St. Thomas More fraternity in Arlington Virginia, where I began my Secular Franciscan call, and where I pray I will end it in this world. Many of these good sisters and brothers have journeyed together with me since the 1980s, and that long-time constant contact is so richly meaningful.

I pray that all of us always and all ways will do all we can to sustain the vitality and love of our local fraternities.

Fraternity to me is family. It is not always necessary to agree, but we all need to love and share, gather, grow and pray with one another.

We are blessed with so many brothers and sisters so committed to the Lord following the Secular Franciscan Way of Life!

We come from all walks of life, political persuasions and personal opinions, but when truly called, we are all brothers and sisters in the Lord, and we actually walk with the Lord and one another during our fraternal gatherings that I have attended in 2015 at every level.

This is so good, and it is the greatest good, for it comes from God for our salvation and the salvation of all.

The bad, of course, is the second part of the Prologue to the Secular Franciscan Rule, when we do not act like brothers and sisters.

In this review, I will not single out any person, fraternity or region individually. Nor have I observed, thank God, really unFranciscan behavior by Secular Franciscans directly before my face, but I have heard of this happening too often at every level.

Perhaps this is only malicious gossip or perhaps we all need to grow up, get along and act more like Christ!

As National Minister, I pray every day for myself and other brothers and sisters, individually or even in fraternity, who have been permanently professed as Secular Franciscans in the United States and who do not pray, act and live as ones called by God to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saints Francis and Clare.

To me this is the most important bad.

Also very bad was the loss from the National Treasury of monies that could have been much better spent in many other areas.

This brief review is not the best place to discuss this loss and possible remedies and National guidelines going forward. The NEC will do this together with the National Fraternity gathered in National Chapter, with its full “legislative, deliberative, and elective powers” (Article 68.1 of the General Constitutions)

October 13-18, 2015, in Clinton, New Jersey, and any National guidelines, soapproved, will be shared with the National family.

“*Siempre adelante*” (Always Forward!) has been the decision of the NEC and the National Fraternity for the 2016 Quinquennial. We have already proceeded to identify St. Louis, Missouri, as our location, and a Quinquennial Committee is working with the NEC to make the 2016 Q the best ever!

Please plan now to attend June 30 to July 4, 2016, at the Renaissance St. Louis Airport Hotel, a beautiful facility right next to the airport.

I conclude this brief review of 2015 with my prayers for your Peace and all of God’s Good.

“Be the joyful face of Christ to all!”

REMEMBERING THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER THROUGH WILLS, BEQUESTS, DONATIONS AND PRAYERS

Preserving and extending our Secular Franciscan Order and way of life *is* possible. Each of us can play an important part at our national, regional and local levels, and even at the international level. This can be done in many ways, including a bequest in our wills.

Suggested beneficiaries:

- Your Local Fraternity
- Your Region
- National Fraternity (NAFRA)
- International Fraternity (CIOFS)

There are several types of bequests you can make to support a fraternity such as: *General Bequests, Specific Bequests and Percentage Bequests.*

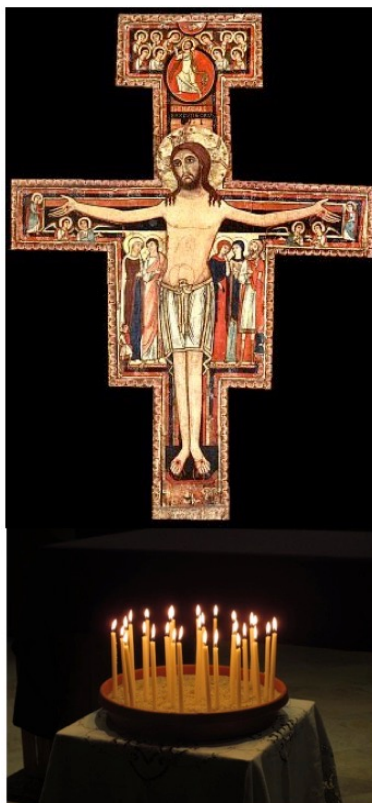
Donation can include stocks, annuities and IRA distributions. You can help secure the future of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States of America by making a tax-deductible gift now or in the future.

Please consider your legacy and include your local fraternity, your region, your national fraternity and the international fraternity. If you wish to direct your contribution to a specific category such as scholarships, youth or formation you may do so.

Please consider praying St. Francis’s *Prayer Before the Crucifix* for all of us daily.

**All-highest, glorious God,
Cast your light into the
darkness of our hearts.
Give us right faith, firm
hope, perfect charity
And profound humility,
With wisdom and
perception, O Lord,
So that we may do what is
truly your holy will.
Amen.**

God is blessing you! Pax et bonum.



National Executive Council News

National Fraternity Elective Chapter

The Call to Servant Leadership

The National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order will gather for an Elective Chapter October 13-18, 2015, in Clinton, New Jersey. This Chapter will be hosted by the Our Lady of the Angels Regional Fraternity. In the Franciscan tradition, Chapters are of extreme importance. These gatherings in the name of the Lord constitute true celebrations of life in fraternity, animated by the Holy Spirit.

General Minister Architect, Singing Friar Preside at NAFRA Chapter of Elections



General Minister Tibor Kauser, OFS, will conduct the National Chapter of Elections during the week of October 13. Joining him as pastoral witness will be General Spiritual Assistant Fr. Amando Trujillo-Cano, TOR.

Tibor is an architect by profession. As architects do, he creates a vision of a structure and then designs it according to the needs of the occupants. As the new general minister (elected last November), he envisions an order of Secular Franciscans who are united in fraternities and living and breathing the Franciscan charism. During the last General

Chapter, he and fellow Presidency Councilor Benedetto Lino spearheaded a project to get councilors from around the world to reach out to brothers and sisters and to hear their concerns about the needs of the order and how to initiate appropriate changes. Tibor was professed in 1991. He and his wife Agnes joined the order together in 1989 – the same year they were married. They have three children, Jakab, Anna and Balint. He established his own architectural studio in 1999.



Father. Amando realized his Franciscan calling in 1981 during his second year of college, when he joined the Third Order Regular. He took solemn vows in Mexico in 1987. He studied philosophy, theology and music education. (You'll seldom see him without his guitar performing some of his own songs.) His assignments have taken him to Mexico City, where he served as formation director, and Texas, where he was involved in parish ministry and served as vocations director and initial formation director. At the 2007 TOR General Chapter, he was elected general counselor and later appointed as general spiritual assistant to the OFS-YouFra. In 2013, Fr. Amando was elected vicar general of the TOR. He currently is one of four general spiritual assistants for the OFS.

The International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order (CIOFS) provides guidelines for the celebrations of Chapters noting: “The Chapter is to be always celebrated in an attitude of conversion, since there is a search for greater perfection in life according to the Rule, in fraternity. In the Chapter, all personal interests and ambitions of power must be excluded. Everything must be done according to the example of Jesus Christ, in the spirit of service.

A poster for the NAFRA 2015 Elective Chapter. The poster features a stylized sunburst graphic at the top right. The text reads: "NAFRA 2015", "Be the Joyful Face of Christ to all!", "The National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order", "ELECTIVE CHAPTER", "October 13-18, 2015", "Holiday Inn Clinton", "111 West Main Street", "Clinton, New Jersey 08809", "Hotel Front Desk: 1-908-735-5111", "Hotel Fax: 1-908-730-9768", "http://www.holidayinn.com/hotels/us/en/clinton/connj/hoteldetail", "Hosted by the Our Lady of the Angels Regional Fraternity", "New York and New Jersey". There is also a small image of a figure with arms raised in a circle.

Therefore, the essential aspects of a Chapter are: (1) the proclamation of the Word of God, which enlightens the themes to be discussed, (2) prayer and (3) the search for what is best for the life of the Fraternity.”

CIOFS adds that an elective chapter, at any level, is celebrated to: (1) reflect together on the situation of the Fraternity, (2) decide what should be done for the life and mission of the Order, (3) invoke the help of the Holy Spirit so that He may purify the hearts, enlighten the minds and make those present docile to His motions at such an important time for the life of the Fraternity and (4) choose and vote for the responsible people to guide and animate the Fraternity.

Prayer and discernment are vital for the good judgement to elect those who demonstrate:

- A true love for and deep sense of belonging to the OFS.
- A marked sense and spirit of service.
- Concrete availability of time, mind and heart for the Fraternity.
- Human, spiritual and character qualities, as well as the experience and preparation needed, to cope with the challenges the Fraternity might face in the given time.

The 2010 revised edition of the *Handbook for Franciscan Servant Leadership* is a wonderful resource for those called to servant leadership in the Franciscan Order. It outlines three essential characteristics of one who assumes a Franciscan servant leadership role: (1) that the call of commission is initiated by God, (2) that the response or commitment is wholehearted and (3) that the leader has or is open to receiving the vision necessary to serve in a servant leadership capacity. The handbook notes, “*The vitality and growth of fraternal life is usually related to the absence or presence of these characteristics in its leaders.*”

The *Handbook* also includes the following: Prayer for OFS Leadership adapted by Kevin Queally, TOR, and Anne Mulqueen, OFS:

PRAYER FOR OFS LEADERSHIP

Give us, O God,
leaders whose hearts are large enough
to match the breadth of our own souls
and give us souls strong enough
to follow leaders of vision and wisdom.

In seeking a leader, let us seek
more than our own enhancement —
though enhancement we hope for —
more than security for our own plans and vision —
though security we need —
more than satisfaction for our own selfish wants —
though many things we desire.

Give us the hearts to choose and follow the leader
who will work with other leaders
to bring Your will to the agenda
and help us to fulfill it.

Give us leaders who lead us to virtue
without seeking to impose
their own version of virtue on others.

Give us leaders who will provide
for the advancement of our Order
without dictating to others to achieve it.

Give us insight enough ourselves
to choose as leaders those who can tell
strength from power,
growth from greed,
leadership from dominance,
and real greatness from the trappings of grandiosity.

We trust you, Great God,
to open our hearts to learn
from those to whom you speak in different tongues
and to respect the life and words
of those to whom you entrusted
the good of other parts of this globe.

We beg you, Great God,
give us the vision as Secular Franciscans
to know where holy leadership truly lies,
to pursue it diligently,
to ask it to respect the integrity of every person
in the entire Order.

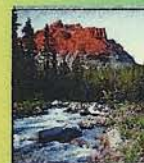
We ask these things, Great God,
with minds open to your word
and hearts that trust in your eternal care.
Amen

*Adapted and pdated September 1, 2012
by Kevin Queally, TOR, and Anne Mulqueen, OFS*

News Views

Franciscan life in the 21st Century

Lester Bach OFM Cap



Meandering through Franciscan ideas

MEANDERING

Sixty five years as a Capuchin-Franciscan helps me to discover fresh ways to learn about living a Franciscan life in this interesting, frightening, and frustrating 21st century. It is a challenge for all of us who use the Gospel as a primary source for making choices in life. I'll share a few ideas that invite "conversion" in my life. I invite you to "meander" with me, and take time to see how you would personally, or as a fraternity, respond to modern situations with a Franciscan spirit.



Some meanderings take us into issues that influence many peoples' lives. Some will touch your life, inviting an exploration and evaluation of your decision-making process. Many events touch people who, in a gospel sense, are "neighbors" whom we are called to love. People may have little control in many events. How do Franciscans

deal with such situations? Are we able to offer quick solutions? Or does it take time and patience to design a program that makes a difference? What contribution can you and the fraternity offer?

So, meandering we go:

Dealing with violence:

1. Some areas in our world face police and citizen violence, or the rejection of individuals, immigrants or other groups, often with uncertain information about the threat these people supposedly pose. Serious injustice or even death can be part of these situations. Lots of comments from public figures often follow.

How does a Franciscan respond as "neighbor" to these people? How could violence be avoided? Is racial prejudice involved? How do you respond to the "experts" who offer solutions? Do you analyze their "solutions" to see the values on which their solutions are based? Do you understand the attitudes of the involved people? What does our Franciscan spirit require of us? Does your response radiate from a gospel source?

Fall - 2015

Dialogue at fraternity gatherings might help Franciscans recognize that we have a multitude of different ideas. What is the source of your feelings? Will they contribute to solutions or make the violent situation worse than before? In reality, what is required by our Franciscan spirit? How will you come to reasonable, gospel-oriented decision(s) as a community? What hinders a good solution? What can be done? How long will it take?

2. International violence is a serious breach in the implementation of human rights. Franciscans support actions that respect human rights, but it will take time to deal with all the ethnic, tribal, cultural, national, religious, and financial attitudes and interests within countries and among groups and individuals around the world!

What can we do beyond fervent prayer? All of these people are God's people. The differences and needs are often contradictory, even among Franciscans. We need true knowledge about the realities that are involved. Not everything proclaimed in the media is the whole truth. Sometimes it is quite the opposite.

Franciscans avoid violence and invest in embracing and expressing the open-hearted spirit of St. Francis. Personal experiences may confront you with many situations of violence - physical, vocal, or the "silent treatment." It happens in family life, in parishes, and in social groups around the world. In dealing with violence we search for effective and realistic solutions. Or we may choose to support people who offer good ideas. Serious, prayerful and practical dialogue is part of the Franciscan calling to be *instruments of peace*. For motivation, reflect together on *Article 19* of the OFS Rule. The following words of St. Francis illustrate the requirement of mercy.

I wish to know in this way if you love the Lord and me, his servant and yours; that there is not any brother in the world who would have sinned - however much he could have sinned - who, after he looked into your eyes, would depart without your mercy, if he is looking for mercy. And if he were not looking for mercy, you would ask him if he wants mercy. And if he would sin a thousand times before

your eyes, love him more than me so that you may draw him to the Lord; and always be merciful with brothers such as these.

*A Letter to a Minister - Francis of Assisi - the Saint
Vol I - Page 97- 98*

These elements of a Franciscan spirit invite us to show mercy in marital arguments, in neighborhood disputes, in religious or parish conflicts, in disputes in fraternity life, or in governmental disagreements at all levels. Choosing violence as a solution can create future problems in achieving peace. It can seem to be the "simplest" way to take care of enemies. Get rid of (kill? deport? separate from?) the present enemies! Doing so might create an atmosphere for future problems. Whether it shows a gospel spirit is quite another question.

Dealing with environmental issues

Mis-understandings about environmental issues, including climate change, abound. People whose investments are threatened by responsible environmental action, may face a loss of income, plus a need for conversion to new ideas in dealing with nature. Such changes are not easily accepted. Some people poke fun at the "tree-huggers" or people who have fresh (and sometimes threatening) information about environmental issues.

Some people say these folks are incorrect! (Whether they are or not is often not examined.) There can be conflicts between people who accept or reject the challenge posed by ecological facts. Convincing more than 300 million Americans one way or the other is no easy task. Convincing other countries is no simple process. But at least we Franciscans will be part of the search for practical solutions.

We each want to believe whatever supports our side of an argument. Our *listening ability* is called to account. Earth's resources are not unlimited. Droughts kill the possible growth of food. Floods can wash out fertile fields. Our use of water can create problems that have no simple solutions. The use of various fertilizers and crop protection can have multiple effects on land and crops. They may not always be helpful tools in the long run.

As stewards of the earth, we take time and effort to treat the earth with care for the benefit of all people. Pope Francis' Encyclical letter, **Laudato Si** (*On Care for our Common Home*) spells out many issues to be addressed. He calls on the spirit of St. Francis to form our insights about creation.

He (Francis of Assisi) shows us just how inseparable the

bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.

Francis helps us to see that an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human. ... His response to the world around was so much more than intellectual appreciation or economic calculus, for to him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection. His disciple, St. Bonaventure, tells us that: "from a reflection on the primary source of all things, filled with even more abundant piety, he would call all creatures, no matter how small, by the name of 'brother or sister'." (Francis of Assisi; early documents - Vol II - Page 590) Such a conviction cannot be written off as naive romanticism, for it affects the choices which determine our behavior; if we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united to all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously. The poverty and austerity of St. Francis were no mere veneer of asceticism, but something radical: a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled.

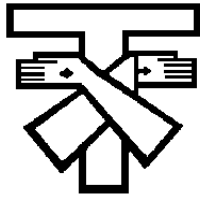
Si Laudato - Articles 10-11

Pope Francis offers a foundation for concern for ecology. *It is not romanticism!* It is human practicality, showing sincere care for the earth which supports life. The ministry of ecology has to do with the consequences of what we receive from God as stewards of the earth. Recycling and re-use of materials of the earth is good. (Habitat for Humanity/Restore, Vincent dePaul, Goodwill and many other programs offer ways to share). But it does not exhaust what we need to accomplish.

Stewards of God's gifts, we share what others need in order for them to achieve a healthy way of life: from hugs to loans; from acceptance to support; from forgiveness to embrace; from clean parks to open minds; from recycling to welcoming people whose practices differ from ours: from learning how to love to abandoning ways of hatred.

God of love, show us our place in the world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth, for not one of them is forgotten in your sight. Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live. The poor and the earth are crying out. O Lord, seize us with your power and light, help us to protect all life, to prepare a better future for the coming of your kingdom of justice, peace, love and beauty. Praise be to you. Amen

Si Laudato - Article 246



Conference of National Spiritual Assistants

DAILY CONVERSION OF HEART OUR WAY OF LIFE

By Fr. Kevin M. Queally, TOR



United by their vocation as "brothers and sisters of penance" and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the Gospel itself calls "conversion." Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily. – OFS Rule, Article #7

During a recent Regional Visitation, I gave a continuing formation session on conversion as the charism of our common Third Order, both Regular and Secular (now OFS). It seems like this is a good opportunity to share some of this material. In a sense, as the Regional Spiritual Assistant in that Region pointed out, a Visitation is meant to “remind us of who we are.”

In July, during a presentation to the friars of the Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus of the Third Order Regular, the presenter reminded us that our charism connects us to the larger Order, and that the charism feeds our spirituality. It helps us to carry out the prescriptions in Matthew 25, for example, moving from prayer to action. In the case of the Third Order of Saint Francis of Penance, this charism might be referred to as “**conversion.**”

An understanding of the word “*penance*” would be very helpful here, enabling us to understand clearly what it is we mean when we use that word. In a little book by Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., called *The Secret of Saint Francis of Assisi*, published by Zenit, on pages 25 and 26 we see this: “...the Poverello almost always speaks of ‘doing penance.’ Celano tells us that ‘he then began to preach penance to all with such a fervent and joyful attitude. (Prima Vita, 13) ... Francis preached, recommended and begged his hearers to do penance.”

The preacher to the Papal Household since 1980 is reminding us of the early days of Saint Francis’ religious life. He asks the reader to understand what the Saint meant by “penance,” admitting that he himself had misunderstood the meaning for a long time. It refers not only to the sacrament, or to an action. (Fr. Raniero notes that the Saint does not say,

“Do penances” but to “Do penance,” *i.e., poenitentiam agere.*) The root of the word comes from *metanoia*, meaning to turn around, change direction. This is the word in the original Greek which came into the Latin translations as *poenitentia*, which Fr. Raniero says would rightly be translated “be converted” or “repent.”

Saint Bonaventure, in his *Legenda Maior* (“Major Life of Saint Francis”) says the following:

“For set on fire by the fervor of his preaching, a great number of people bound themselves by new laws of penance, according to the *Rule* which they received from the man of God. Christ’s servant decided to name this way of life the **Order of the Brothers of Penance**. As the road of penance is common to all who are striving toward heaven, so this way of life admits clerics and lay, virgins and married of both sexes. How meritorious it is before God is clear from the numerous miracles performed by some of its members.”

Here we see confirmed the historic roots of the Third Order as welcoming all persons, but also, very importantly, its basis in “penance.”

Fr. Raffaele Pazzelli, TOR, in his book *The Third Order and Saint Francis*, notes that the foundations of the Third Order reach far back into history, to the times of the Roman persecutions. Those who denied the faith but later wanted to return to the Church when the persecutions were over were obliged to “do penance.” This included dressing simply and performing the works of mercy. Fr. Roland Faley, TOR, renowned Scripture scholar and former TOR Minister General, said that the “Order of Penance” waxed and waned over the centuries. Those drawn to follow were not only persons returning to the Church, but those who found meaning in continual conversion. There being no active religious life for women at that time, the Order attracted recluses, hermits, widows and many others. He says that Saint Francis initially joined the loosely organized “Order of Penance,” referring to Celano’s account of Francis sending out the friars. Celano says that when the friars asked how they should identify themselves, Francis said, “Say you

are penitents from the city of Assisi.” Of course, he went on to found the “First Order,” but the Order of Penance became what we have known as the Third Order.

In his doctoral dissertation, published under the title *De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam (Concerning Those Who Do Penance)*, Fr. Robert Stewart, OFM, writes on the development of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. He maintains that the key to understanding the OFS Rule is to look at it through the prism of the Prologue to the Rule. Remember that the revised *Rules* of both the Third Order Regular (1982) and Secular Franciscan Order (1978) share the same Prologue! In this Prologue, addressed “to those who do penance,” we read that it is also addressed to: “All who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with all their strength (cf. Mk 12:30), and love their neighbors as themselves (cf. Mt 22:39) and hate their bodies with their vices and sins, and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and produce worthy fruits of penance.” The rest of the Rule then makes sense as the penitents (we in the

Third Order) “do these things,” (next line in the Prologue) and strive to produce those **worthy fruits of penance**.

Given all of this, it makes sense that an older, more complete name for the Third Order Regular was *Third Order Regular of Saint Francis of Penance*. We cannot forget our heritage as “penitents” (a sobriquet Brother Bill Short, OFM, used in a presentation to the TOR friars in July). We receive from our predecessors in the Third Order the charism of conversion, the admonition to dress simply, and the call to practice the works of mercy. It is not by accident that so many of the ministries in which we feel called to engage, e.g., soup kitchens and prison ministry, fall firmly within the works of mercy.

I come to an end of my 12 years with the National Fraternity. I thank you all who have been so kind to me over these years. It has almost always been a wonderful, inspiring and life-giving experience. I will continue praying for you all with a very grateful heart.

CNSA Annual Meeting

St Francis Retreat House in Easton, PA, September 13-17, 2015



From left to right, standing: Fr Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, incoming TOR representative; Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, OFS, Executive Secretary; Fr Kevin Queally, TOR, outgoing TOR representative; John Sanborn, OFS, Treasurer.
Seated: Br Robert Brady, OFM, President-in-Turn; Robert Herbelin, OFS, accompanying his wife;
Fr Matthias Wesnofske, OFM Cap.



Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Walking Together

by Anne Mulqueen, OFS

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This will be a rather brief explanation of the composition and activities of the Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee. The Secular Franciscan involvement in ecumenical/interfaith activities is twofold. One is solely within the Secular Franciscan Order, and the other is in cooperation with Franciscans of other denominations.

The members of the first category, the National Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee, are: Delia Banchs from Harker Heights, TX, Mike Carsten from Detroit, MI, Mary Lou Kreider from Erie, PA, John Szczepanski from Valparaiso, IN, and Anne Mulqueen from Kingsville, MD. So you see, the committee gathers Secular Franciscans from many areas of the country.

The second category, the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity, is our other significant ecumenical/interfaith involvement. Currently it is composed of three denominations. Mike Carsten and I represent the Catholic Church, both Eastern and Roman rites. The Rev. Masud Ibn Syedullah and Deacon Joan Verret represent the Third Order Society of St. Francis (TSSF), an Anglican/Episcopal Order. Louis Canter and Richard LeFevre represent the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (OEF), which is comprised of many different Christian denominations.

Now that you know who we are, let me tell you what we do. Last year, both committees, the OFS Committee and the Joint Committee, gathered together for an interfaith conference to celebrate the unity and common life we share in our **One**

God. The conference presenters were drawn from the three Abrahamic religions; Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The participants also were drawn from all three religions. After the presentations, we asked the participants how the conference was beneficial to them. In essence, the participants said, “it broadened my horizon about other faiths...,” “...the Conference left me filled with hope that we might actually achieve peace in the world...,” “...it helped me to have a better understanding of the connectedness between the Abrahamic religions.”

In September 2015, the Joint Committee met at the Franciscan Retreat Center in Aston, PA. Our primary task was to focus on what we would do for the coming year. After much silent and communal prayer, we arrived at a consensus that we would use Pope Francis’ Encyclical *Laudato si’* as our resource and apply it to the Elements of Franciscan Unity, which are Baptism in Christ, Vocation, Charism, Christ-Centered and Prophetic Voice.



If you have a copy of *Laudato si’* and are willing to join with me in applying the five elements of Franciscan unity to the Encyclical, please send your comments to me at:

Amulqueensfo@gmail.com.

Wishing you peace and all that is good,
Your sister Anne Mulqueen, OFS



FORMATION COMMISSION

SUMMONED INTO BEAUTY

by Mary Anne Lenzi, OFS

As I walked into church this evening a medley of hymns seemed to waft through the air. I began silently humming one familiar melody until the words became clear and beckoned.

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?

Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown? Will you let my name be known?

Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Along with the notes played together as a pleasing D major chord, the repetition of the question “will you” filled me with an inexplicable sense of belonging, knowing and assurance. It was an overwhelmingly delightful moment in an otherwise routine walk to take a seat among my parish community. Harmony is one characteristic of beauty and is expressed in painting, poetry, movement and, in this instance, music. The perfect blend of tone, intensity and rhythm balanced by the gentle invitation and willing acceptance culminated in a completely satisfying experience of mind and heart. Simply stated, a God moment.

In recent *TAU* articles we have shared our transformational experiences through our observation of beauty in creation. We became *aware* through the colorful new growth in a spring garden, majestic mountains, turquoise lakes and wildflowers. We expressed its *unfolding* through sincere gratitude, understanding and love of all that speaks of the Creator. During this same time we were reminded of the fragility of our world and environment and the effect it has on all of us, especially the poor. Since beauty is a part of our everyday, how will we respond?

A deeper expression of beauty was *embraced* this August at the Franciscan Prayer Center in Independence, Missouri, as 30 regional formation directors and regional representatives gathered in fraternity. It was a beauty of the heart. Some of us had already met at other times and in other places or made acquaintances via email. It was wonderful to recognize and embrace each other. Getting together for this brief weekend of prayer, presentation, sharing and fellowship solidified our extended family bond. One participant wrote: “[the workshop] . . . provided a forum for building and forming strong relationships among the participants that will carry over beyond the workshop and help to strengthen the OFS in the United States.”

The weekend centered on the theme “Be Who We Say We Are,” with presentations highlighting some early writings of Francis, and focusing on Belonging,

Communication, Dialog, Listening, Respect and the Spirituality of the Formator. There was time for individual re-evaluation and reflection of our profession to live a gospel life. And time to share, as formators, our needs, concerns and desires for our regional fraternities. Another participant wrote: “Being with our sisters and brothers who share the challenge of the Formator’s responsibility – learning with them – hearing their concerns – realizing that we were so close in thought and what our hearts were questioning.”

It seems that when we gather there is hardly ever enough time. It was the consensus of those gathered that we should come together as fraternity, more often, annually, if possible, for a longer period of time in a central location, or, perhaps meet in geographic areas that would be more accessible to local formators. It was also suggested that we consider a “student guide” for FUN chapters. We will collaborate on sharing forms, record keeping and guidelines. Other future suggested topics were discernment and spirituality of the formator; conflict resolution; problem solving, and scope and sequence of topics for initial and ongoing formation. The commission continues to discuss and refine means of communication.

We all voiced a concern regarding the future of our Order. However, I am encouraged by the fervor and fire, passion and commitment of the Regional Formation Directors. They are true examples of gospel joy! We trust that the Holy Spirit is in charge of our Order. Our gathering was an experience of sharing in the divine beauty of creation, harmony, dignity, and the beauty and surrender of the human heart.

As the commission concludes this year of orientation in beauty and relationship, we ask you to reflect on your experiences of Beauty, in creation, with members of your family and fraternity and with our God. We join our voices once again in response to the call of our vocation and our yes to serve each other as sisters and brothers.

Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name.

Let me turn and follow you and never be the same

In Your company I'll go where Your love and footsteps show.

Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

References to Beauty taken from Mary Beth Ingham, C.S.J., Rejoicing in the Works of the Lord; Beauty in the Franciscan Tradition; The Franciscan Heritage Series, Volume Six, The Franciscan Institute, 2009



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



2015 JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION HAPPENINGS

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, National JPIC Animator

This year's **Ecumenical Advocacy Days**, which took place in Washington, D.C., April 17–20, focused on "Breaking the Chains: Mass Incarceration and Systems of Exploitation." I heard from several folks who did not



attend that the topic was not appealing or pertinent to their ministries. Truth be told, I felt the same way, but decided to attend anyway. I was very

pleasantly surprised. Due to the recent increase of gun violence, the topic led into gun violence and mass shootings.

I attended workshops on Restorative Justice led by Joanne Blaney, a Maryknoll Missioner who spent the past 18 years training restorative practices in Brazil. We spoke at length about the use of restorative practices within the Secular order, particularly empathetic listening practices within local and regional council meetings.

I attended the **2015 Annual Federation Conference** at the Franciscan Federation Gathering, which took place in Indianapolis, Ind., June 19–21. This year's theme was "Responding to God's Love, A Franciscan Moral Vision." The main speakers were Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ, who spoke on Franciscan Discernment and Divine Love; Thomas Nairn, OFM, who spoke about the Franciscan conscience; and Joe Chinnici, OFM, who spoke of poverty as a form of life.

I had an engaging conversation with Interim Executive Director, Dianne Kaimann, OSF, about holistic collaboration with all the Franciscan Family, including the Seculars. We are all of one family and one charism and must continue to be in communion with one another, especially as all our numbers are dwindling.

In attendance with me was my sister and member of the National JPIC Commission, Rosemarie LeClercq,



OFS, from the Saint Thomas More Region in Scottsdale, Ariz.

I also had a conversation with Amanda Lyons from Franciscans International about more Secular

Franciscan involvement. A gathering is scheduled in New York City during the National Chapter.



I was blessed with a scholarship to attend the week-long course at **St. Bonaventure University** in Olean, N.Y., this past July. The course, "Assisi in the Time of

Francis: Birthplace of the Secular Franciscans," was taught by Franciscan scholar Jean-François Godet-Calogeras, PhD. It was wonderful to connect with Franciscans from all over the globe, including two Canadian sisters from Ontario and Nova Scotia; a brother from Japan; and our own Minister General, Tibor Kausar, OFS, from Hungary. Three others from my region, the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis also attended.



THE JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION ANIMATE PEACE RETREAT

What an incredibly blessed time it was at the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Animate Peace Retreat held August 20–23 at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois.

About 30 Seculars representing 18 regions were in attendance for a weekend of prayer, sharing, skills building and Franciscan joy. The weekend included presentations by the JPIC Vice-Chair, Rhett Engelking, OFS, and National JPIC Commission Spiritual Assistant, Brother David Buer, OFM, who also led our daily Morning and Evening Praise.

Retreatants participated in several Franciscan Sacred Pause Moments – five minutes of falling still and being silent. By the end of the retreat, the five minutes seemed shorter; suggesting that the pause can be as long or as short as needed. Several members shared that they would introduce the Franciscan Sacred Pause into their fraternities and councils.

We were also blessed to have Father Joe Zimmerman, OFM, from Quincey, Ill., who with Br. David gave a presentation on Blessed John Duns Scotus: Human Dignity and Community with the Rest of Creation. They also showed a short video on Father Augustus Tolton, the first Black priest ordained in the United States, a former slave who lived in the 19th century.

One retreatant, Jim Myres, OFS, of the Holy Trinity Region led a small pilgrimage to Ferguson, Mo., to meet with Deacon Al Love of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Parish, who ministers in the epicenter of



the violence. The group came back and reported on their time with the deacon, as well as what the sense of the area is like today.

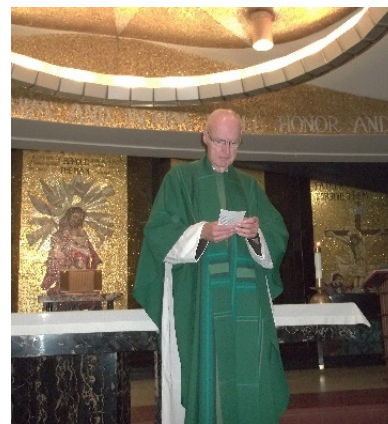
Also in attendance were our Youth and Young Adults Commission Co-chairs, Sue and Christy Nelson, who peppered the weekend with upcoming plans and events for engaging youth.

The main undercurrent of the weekend was the Cantic of the Creatures, which was the focus of our Morning and Evening Praise, and Pope Francis' encyclical, Laudato Si. These Morning and Evening Praise segments were the beginning of the prayers for the Season of Caring for Creation — which runs from September 1 to October 4.

Friar Joe celebrated the Sunday Liturgy for us on Saturday evening in the magnificent Christ the King Chapel. My regional sister, Theresa Christie, OFS, of the Brothers and Sisters of Saint Francis Region, gracefully and beautifully led the singing, making our Liturgy a Franciscan joy-filled experience.

I could never have pulled off such a blessed weekend without the dedicated and tireless assistance of my sister Cherryle Fruge, OFS, of the St. Joan of Arc Region. Thank you again, my dear sister! I also want to thank Br. David, who also doubled as chauffeur, doing pickups and drop offs to and from the MetroLink.

Thank you to all who came out to share, laugh, cry, sing, pray and eat together! I am truly full!





SHINE

Franciscan Youth & Young Adults

To bring the next generation of Catholics closer to Christ through Franciscan spiritual experiences

SHINE is...*Creating experiences for Catholics under 35*

in the United States to explore Franciscan spirituality.

While participating in fun and interactive community activities, dialogue, prayer, and religious readings, formation, and videos, young Catholics will interact with Secular Franciscans/OFS and observe us modeling our charism.

We will advocate a gospel life through our actions.

We will utilize our Rule, Ritual, Constitutions, National Statutes, Formation documents, JPIC materials, International Guidelines (CIOFS), and information regarding St. Francis of Assisi, St. Clare, Pope Francis, and Franciscan saints.

SHINE will encompass 4 opportunities for those under 35:

1. **Stand-alone Friends of Francis “Come & Grow” activities**
2. **Y.E.S. Explorers (Youth Exploring Spirituality), young Catholics who have made the 1-year Franciscan promise**
3. **Existing/Emerging YouFra Groups**
4. **Inquirers & Candidates, young Catholics who have met the requirements to pursue formation to become a Secular Franciscan**

Our outreach to young Catholics will have a positive impact on fraternities by stretching our Franciscan spirituality to partner with a generation that thinks and interacts differently from our current OFS population in the United States.

Secular Franciscans who are called to servant leadership for young Catholics through our Order will receive encouragement, prayers, tools and start-up financial support from our fraternities.

Secular Franciscans will care for young Catholics by demonstrating respect and keeping them safe from any harm while in our presence.

Our outreach to young Catholics will result in rebuilding our Order in the U.S. by planting the seeds of spirituality through our SHINE initiatives, and we will joyfully embrace young adults interested in early-lifetime professions.

SHINE/Youth & Young Adults FRATERNAL TOOLKIT

is now available

through the Resources tab

on our website: ShineLikeStFrancis.com



2015 REPORT FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Translations

TAU-USA is now completely printed in both Spanish and English and mailed out to individuals. In 2015 there has been three articles for each issue translated into Korean and posted on the NAFRA website. *The Franciscan Journey* has been translated into both Spanish and Korean. I have been told they will be available to purchase in early Fall. Current projects include translating *Essential Documents*. It has been suggested that more formation materials be translated.

NAFRA Website

Updating/redesigning the website has been an ongoing topic of discussion. The computer committee maintains the website/database and makes whatever changes are required or requested. At last year's meeting it was decided that Mary Stronach and Willie Guadalupe would be responsible for writing an RFP to develop uniform navigation templates for use in updating various home pages on the NAFRA website. The current technology for the website is about 17 yrs. old and the database's technology is about 14 years old. This Draft Request for Proposal is complete and will be presented for discussion on October 13, 2015.

Social Media

We have a Facebook page but there is not much activity. We need a manager but at this point have been unable to find someone willing to take it on. Jerry Rousseau has been unsuccessful this year in finding a FACEBOOK manager. Opinions are that Social Media is necessary to attract younger members. It is also possible we will pair up with the Vocations Committee for this topic since one of the primary goals would be vocations of younger members.

Future Directions

TRANSLATIONS

- Expand number of articles of the TAU-USA in Korean on the website.
- Possibly expand to include articles in Vietnamese.
- Continue to translate into Spanish the Essential Documents - especially the National Statutes, and other formation materials.

WEBSITE

- Continue discussion of updating website and possibly forming a "website committee" made up of members from Computer Committee and Communications Committee and any other computer savvy individuals.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Explore working with the Vocations Committee in this area. Recruit people who are knowledgeable and willing to help out.

DIRECTORY OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

- To facilitate more communication between regions and their councils, it was suggested we attempt to have available a directory of regional councils.

THE NAFRA NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Annual Report - 2015

by Sharon Deveaux OFS,
NAFRA Archivist



Introduction

The National Fraternity (NAFRA) Archives was founded in 2004. The purpose was and still is to collect and preserve the records and materials relating to the activities and duties of the National Fraternity. This includes the National Council, committees and commissions, appointees and Spiritual Assistants. The records include council meeting minutes, financial records, *TAU USA*, QC, OFS records from OFM Provinces, Formation, Franciscan Youth and International Fraternity. The records are mainly written material and photographs. Our earliest dated record is a directory with an entry from the 1890s. This material is the history of Secular Franciscan Order in the United States and why it is so important to properly preserve it.

The archives are located at St. Bonaventure University in New York, 65 miles south of Buffalo. This is a Franciscan University, and they have allowed us to maintain a safe and neutral location for our archives. Before we had this location the records were spread throughout the United States in various home basements, spare rooms and garages. As a result, many records were lost or severely damaged. But those that survived have eventually been sent to our Archives for safekeeping.

The NAFRA Archives in New York is for National Fraternity records only. Regional records should stay with the Regions, and local fraternity records stay with the fraternity. If regional or fraternities need information about saving archives please contact Sharon Deveaux, OFS, at s.deveaux@att.net.

Annual Report - 2015

I traveled to St. Bonaventure University last July for four days. There were a number of boxes that had been mailed in for processing. These included:

- Regionalization records from Richard Morton
- Regional files and Duns Scotus Records from Bill Wicks

- Misc. NAFRA materials
- NAFRA Minutes from Jan Parker
- Apostolic Blessing from Pope Benedict XVI for 17th QC
- Three panoramic photographs from 1936, 1947 and 1931 of early QCs
- One panoramic photograph of the 1943 Peace Day

I also received requests for information from members of two fraternities.

- Christine Martin, OFS, from San Francisco asked for any material regarding their fraternity because they are writing a fraternity history. I did find an early history and sent her a copy of it. She was excited to get it.
- Kenton Miller, OFS, of Tulsa OK requested information about a de-activated fraternity. I found a short reference to it in the 1967 and 1972 directories.

Two other items of interest:

- Anne Mulqueen is looking for a copy of *St. Francis of Assisi* by Aldo Fontini. We do not have a copy in the archive,s and it is selling for a very high price on Amazon, so hopefully someday a copy will surface at an affordable price or free.
- I discovered 12 “Hour of St. Francis” episode tapes of the TV program. Is there interest in converting these to modern media ?

We now have 243 boxes of records, not including the books and some misc. material not in boxes.

I am anticipating that 2016 will be the same situation with the exception of having to buy more archival boxes from Gaylord Archival Co.

VOCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Promoting Vocations – Your Job Too!

Jane DeRose-Bamman OFS, Vocations Committee

The Vocations Committee was formed “to foster and sustain vocation consciousness among all people of the Universal Church by our Profession to the Gospel Way of Life. To initiate, encourage and support the efforts of the national OFS Family to promote the Secular Franciscan Order, with particular emphasis on nurturing individuals who desire, seek and commit to our way of life. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, this objective will be accomplished through prayer, development of promotional materials, sharing of ideas and maintaining national awareness.”

Since August 2014, the Committee has solicited your feedback on what you have done to attract people to explore the Order. To date, the Committee has received 104 suggestions or practices. The top 12 practices were summarized in the Winter 2014 *TAU-USA* article.



As the General Constitutions stress, prayer is critical in promoting vocations. One practice was submitted by Michael Cresenta, OFS, from St. Augustine Fraternity, Pittsburgh PA. He shared with us the Franciscan Family Chaplet prayer and

rosary. After searching on the internet, the following website was discovered which identified the author, another of our brothers, Nicholas H. Kovacs, OFS.

<https://franciscanchaplet.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/franciscan-family-chaplet1.pdf>

For 2015, the National Vocation Committee has challenged each local and regional fraternity to make a special “vocation promotion” effort by using one of the referenced Best Practices or another inspired effort. Geraldine Burton, OFS, from Saint Joseph Fraternity, Saint Joan of Arc Region emailed us with exciting news about the vocations event held in May 2015 — a spin off of a Come and See event — bringing together all the Secular Religious Institutes in her area to meet each other and learn about the charisms of each Order. She shared that while she was Director of Formation she had inquirers that were not called to the Franciscan way of life, but the Council had no idea to whom to refer them. More than 100 persons attended the event and 20 persons visited the OFS table.

It’s not too late to plan something for this year.

Another best practice was shared by Steve White, OFS, from Holy Trinity Region. He suggested giving a small bag of birdseed. I’ve also seen this suggestion from Jim and Sis Hein, OFS, with the following statement:

FEEDING THE BIRDS FOR SAINT FRANCIS

St. Francis wanted all creation to celebrate the birthday of Jesus. It was his desire that all mayors and Lords of Castles issue a decree that would require the scattering of grain on the roads on Christmas so that our friends, the birds, might have something to eat. The Secular Franciscans, who strive to follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis, ask you to use this token of a gift to feed the birds on Christmas Day – in the example of St. Francis of Assisi.

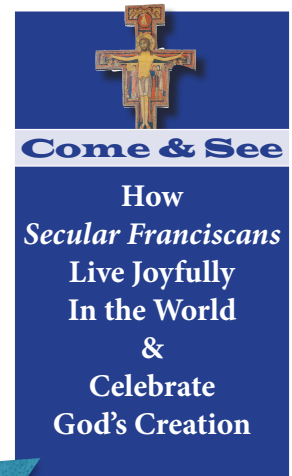
Pax Et Bonum (Peace and All Good)

The most effective way of promoting vocations is by understanding and living our vocation as Franciscans in the world. Sharing your story alone can give someone the direction they need to transform themselves and the world.

The 1-800-FRANCIS line and email address have been busy. Carol Gentile, OFS, has been responding to those requests and reports. In the last year, 390 emails and 256 phone calls were received including emails from person from all across the United States, Brazil and the Philippines. Efforts have been working! Thank you, Carol, for sharing your joy for the Our Lord, the Order and your vocation in this special ministry.

In addition, the general brochure telling others about the Order has been updated. Check it out so you can have copies ready to distribute:

<https://www.nafra-sfo.org/forms/OFSBrochure-ComeAndSee-General.pdf>



Email your ideas, suggestions and answers to the above questions and “fill-in the blanks” to OFSVocationsCommittee@gmail.com. Thanks for helping us to fulfill Article 45 of the General Constitutions by promoting vocations.

FRANCISCAN LIVING

POPE FRANCIS' MESSAGE: RECOVER TRUST

By Francine Gikow, OFS

“Your religious family is called to express this concrete fraternity, through a recovery of mutual trust—and I underscore this: recovery of trust—in inter-personal relations, so that the world sees, believes, recognizing that the love of Christ heals wounds.”¹

This was Pope Francis' message to the Order of Friars Minor at their General Chapter on May 26, 2015. Here he speaks about the importance of a “recovery of mutual trust in interpersonal relations” within fraternities. This recovery of trust is *essential* for evangelical witness so that the world can be exposed to the love of Christ. Without this rebuilding, fraternities are doomed to reflect division rather than unity; anger instead of love; pettiness rather than charity.

Henri Nouwen saw “the primary purpose of living in community is to learn together about the life of the Spirit of God within and among us through prayer, support and accountability. Rational analysis, interpersonal dynamics, intellectual discussion and debate, while helpful in overcoming temporary obstacles, are not the primary spiritual tasks of a community of faith.”²

It is expected that those living a life in community, will experience interpersonal conflict at some point in time. When dissention occurs, and if mutual care, affection and love are missing, fraternity life suffers. We no longer witness to the love of Christ.

However when there is interpersonal conflict in fraternity, I view it, not as an issue with or about others but rather as an opportunity of growing in *my* spiritual journey. Since we profess to go “from gospel to life and life to the gospel” all of our life should be seen through the lens of being part of a spiritual journey. Seeing conflict as a part of my spiritual journey changed my understanding and approach to what was happening interpersonally.

Secondly, I also know that it is about *me* (rather than *them!*) I have to work on myself first. God has given *me* this experience of conflict for a purpose, and I have to be chiefly concerned about my response to it. I was once assigned an exercise that made me re-examine how I listen and respond to people.³ I was to listen to someone I didn't like or with whom I disagreed, for one half hour, and afterward answer the questions: “What did I hear? What did I experience? What did I notice about the person?” My answers to those questions revealed my very judgmental, critical attitude toward

that person...not very Christ-like at all! Jesus was consistently open to those who sincerely sought God. Can I not say the same about the other person, or am I just so angry that I cannot see *any* good in others? Who really has a poor “attitude” now? My honest response was, “ME!”

I have also gone back to scripture. Meditating on Mark 14: 17-21 (the Last Supper) is invaluable. Jesus already knew Judas would betray him, but Jesus still counted him as a friend and disciple and invited him to eat the last meal with him. Jesus included him in all his teachings, all his healings, all His Presence... all the while knowing that Judas would betray Him. This love for the person of Judas was what Christ was about! He loved Judas even though it would lead to betrayal, suffering and death. The challenge is: can I try to love the same?

Fraternity life is always about forgiveness too — both forgiving others and asking forgiveness for myself. We are challenged by the words of the Our Father: “...and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us!” Do we blithely say these words or do we act upon them? This is not to say that I find forgiveness easy or quick however. Authentic forgiveness means that we have to acknowledge our own wounds and stay with them for a while to do justice to ourselves and then move on. Forgiveness takes time, prayer and eventually a willingness to let go of our own “issues” so God can take over the healing. Forgiveness is a *decision* to actually forgive, trusting in God that He will give us the grace to behave accordingly in a loving, compassionate way. Initially we may not *feel* like we are forgiving others, but where the will goes, grace follows. Ultimately, forgiveness is the way of peace and of God.

Shared spiritual experience too is a great unifier of spiritual groups. Fraternity members might want to spend time together in meditation, prayer, contemplation and adoration. In this way, the Holy Spirit, who is the animator of religious life, takes over the leadership and membership of the fraternity and leads us to the peace of God.

For every member of a fraternity, recovery of trust after conflict has to go through a process of forgiveness, reconciliation and healing. There are no easy answers but each member has to do the “work” of reconciliation. Only when we are reconciled, loved and healed in fraternity can we become bearers of God's mercy, reconciliation and peace. Pax et bonum!

¹ Vatican City State: Pope Francis' Address to the General Chapter of the Order of Friars Minor, May 26, 2015.

² Henri Nouwen, *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk.* Harper-Collins Publishers: New York, 2006. p.126.

³ Many thanks to Sr. Linda Greenwood, OSF, and the Spiritual Direction Training program through Cardinal Stritch University offered at San Damiano House of Prayer, Lowell MA for permission to describe this exercise.

QUINQUENNIAL 2016

REVIVING OUR SPIRIT

By Susan Simeone, OFS

By our profession, we consecrate our lives to God. We are fully His. We recited these words and have heard them at all professions: “live all the days of my life the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Secular Franciscan Order by observing its rule of life. May the grace of the Holy Spirit, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and our holy father St. Francis, and the fraternal bonds of community always be my help, so that I may reach the goal of perfect Christian love.” (Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order, 1985, page 24). Saint Francis, when surrendering his will to God, found himself living his life for Him. We are called to do the same.

The **Q 2016** gathering of our Franciscan family is led by the Holy Spirit to praise and honor our Lord, our God and Our All! St. Francis led us and continues to be our role model in this way of life of joy, humility and peace. Come, let us rejoice, let us *revive our spirit* at **Q 2016** and let us go forth into the world sharing our gifts.

A family, according to St. Francis in his “Later Admonition and Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance,” is defined as various roles within one entity called a community. However, each of us, has opportunities to live the roles throughout our Franciscan way of life.

“We are spouses when the faithful soul is united by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are brothers, moreover, when we do the Will of His Father who is in heaven; mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through love and a pure and sincere conscience; and give Him birth through a holy activity, which must shine before others by example.”

Reviving Our Spirit, the theme of **Q 2016**, offers all brothers and sisters of Francis the opportunity to “re-create” ourselves and others as we refresh ourselves, renew our Franciscan spirituality, and discern how we can be better

spouses, mothers and brothers to all, in order to give birth to Him. We all need to return to the well, and the **Q 2016** offers a humble yet extraordinary experience of renewing our friendships within our Franciscan family members and gathering new friends to our family in an atmosphere of joy and peace.

Reviving Our Spirit plans to offer large and small group sessions in which speakers from different regions will share how they revive their spirits. Their gifts will be shared, and we will all benefit from witnessing them.

Please mark your calendar to be at this awesome Franciscan celebration, **Q 2016, in St. Louis, MO, June 30, July 1, 2, 3**, returning to your home to continue the work on July 4, 2016!

As Franciscans, we are called to be open to the many gifts the Holy Spirit gives us and to share those gifts with others. We are called to be merciful, to be patient, to be forgiving. Our work may be laborious at times but Jesus is with us. Our Seraphic father Francis is calling us to gather. The Holy Spirit is also calling us to be open to hear one another **Reviving Our Spirit!**



The
Reflective Questions
in Preparation for the
Quinquennial 2016
Reviving Our Spirit

- How do we live our faith through our profession?
- How can we serve one another in reviving our spirit?

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