



TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

FALL 2016 ISSUE 89

19th Quinquennial Reviving Our Spirit



*As long as there is one
Secular Franciscan in the world,
there will be joy.*

Fr. Pio Jackson, OFM

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 candidates 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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THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

MINISTER'S MESSAGE National Minister, Jan Parker, OFS

We've Been Revived!

Just before the closing Mass of our 19th Secular Franciscan Quinquennial Congress, I came forward to share a song that I believe was inspired. The nervousness I felt at that moment was overpowered by the joy of seeing the incredible blessings of the previous three days. The song flew out of my heart, and with conviction I was able to sing, *"O how our God has blessed us! We praise his name on high! It's been a great Quinquennial and we have been revived!"*

It was a great Quinquennial – one where we truly could see God at work reviving our spirit. On the last day we were asked to reflect on all that we had experienced and answer the question: "How has your Franciscan spirit been revived?" My response is, "Oh, in so many ways!" I share a few reflections here, but my hope is that every page of this issue of the *TAU* will help those who were at the Q share what we were given.

The Spirit of Fraternity: It is quite something to be in a room with 600 Franciscans! As I looked around I could not help thinking of the early Franciscans, gathered at a Chapter of Mats, sharing how their lives had been transformed by Francis of Assisi. This was our experience at the Q. We listened, shared and laughed. We reconnected with Franciscan brothers and sisters, many who had touched our lives in the past. We met many new Franciscans, all with familiar hearts. We heard inspirational stories, and we learned so much. God bless the many wonderful presenters and the gifted OFS servant leaders who gave so much and worked so diligently. The joy of fraternity was everywhere!

The Spirit of Vocation: What a gift we received from Friar Dan Horan who led us to look at the heart of our call. From the life of Francis, he pulled out those particular charisms that are the foundation of our Franciscan life – minority, mercy, universal kinship, poverty, peace, love, joy. Our world is so in need of these! How do we give these charisms expression in today's world? Considering the challenges that face us, the depth of commitment needed to live our call is sobering. Still, my response is to do my best. In Friar Lester Bach's words, "Our vocation expects us to give flesh, in daily life, to the words of our Franciscan profession." The call on my heart to go deeper was renewed.

The Spirit of Conversion: The formation at this Q also challenged us to look at ourselves and our need for

conversion. What came to my mind is a prayer written in my journal, "Lord help me to see the truth about myself that I am afraid to face." How open am I to the fact that I could be going in a wrong direction? Am I willing to take the time to listen to those who think differently? To see things in a new way? Am I open to learning? To changing? We *can* change, and we often need to. For me, mercy, minority and trust in God are so linked with conversion. This Q helped revive me as a penitent.

The Spirit of Peacemaking: How strong was the revival of our Franciscan call to be peacemakers and reconcilers! We often face difficult situations, with no easy answers. Franciscans are called to be the bridge, to stand faithfully in the gap within the tension of opposing viewpoints. Sometimes we need to step back a bit first, as our sister Carolyn Townes suggests. Pray. Breathe. Find God's peace within ourselves. We can then lean on the Holy Spirit to guide our conversations deeper, to help each side to lay down arms and seek that which all can embrace. Peacemaking is a way of loving – and love always revives.

The Spirit of Unity: We are so individual, so diverse, with so many different viewpoints and experiences, and so many gifts. In many ways we are all over the board! Yet, our experience of unity is so grand! As one sister shared with me, "I am more convinced all the time that there is only one life, and we are all part of it." Wow! We truly are in this together. We celebrate this one Life most profoundly in the Eucharist, and our liturgies at the Q were rich. A phrase from one of our Communion songs comes to mind, "For many are we and broken we come, but we shall become one" – a testament to our poverty as well as our desire for unity. The one voice of 600 Franciscans in song was uplifting. The one voice of 600 Franciscans joined in prayer was strong. One song. One prayer. One Love. We felt it in every hug! I came away with a renewed confidence in the unity of the Secular Franciscan Order. The center will hold, as we center ourselves in Christ who holds all things together.

The Spirit of Revival: As the song goes, "*We have been revived!*" But we did not revive ourselves. As our General Minister Tibor Kauser, OFS, wisely shared, "God is reviving us," He described this well, as in the practice of reviving someone by the use of chest compressions, saying, "We often need a shock. God is surprising us, shocking us, giving us mouth-to-mouth

resuscitation as he breathes on us and says, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ (Jn. 20.22).” The Q was very much like that – an infusion of the Holy Spirit to bring us alive in Christ. (Tibor’s presentation, which captures the essence of Franciscan revival in a few simple slides, is posted on our Quinquennial webpage: <http://www.quinquennial.org/p/pp-slides.html>)

The Spirit of Evangelization: When something wonderful happens, it needs to be shared. In the program the Q Committee wrote, “The purpose of this Q 2016 is to go out and share the Good News... with a deeper understanding of our role in today’s world to live the Gospel in all we say, think and do.” So true. We treasure the gift of our Franciscan vocation, but we must know this charism was not given for ourselves alone. Pope Francis says it this way, “They (charisms) are not an inheritance, safely secured and entrusted to a small group for safekeeping; rather they are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the

Church, drawn to the center which is Christ and then channeled into an evangelizing impulse.” (Ref. *Evangelii Gaudium*, para. 130-131). The blessings of the Q were given to be shared. We must be that *evangelizing impulse* going forth, in the words of St. Francis, “to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart and to bring home those who have lost their way.” We heard this call at Friday’s Mass, in the Gospel for the feast of St. Junipero Serra, “Jesus approached and said to them, ‘Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations.’” Fr. Martin Bitzer echoed this call in his homily saying, “Go! Go with joy! Share the love of Christ!” Then, with a twinkle in his eye, he added, “Run, Forrest, run!” So, let us run! And in the words of the song that, by God’s grace, I was able to sing with such conviction, “Go on now, go! Go out that door, and share the love of Jesus with more and more and more! We’ve got all our love to give, we’ve got the Gospel life to live – we’ve been revived! Praise God on high! We’ve been revived!”

We’ve Been Revived!

*Sung first to the Q Committee to the tune of “I Will Survive” by Gloria Gainer.
Music by Dino Ferkaris & Freddie Perren*

At first you were afraid, a little petrified. But you said, “yes, I’ll do it” with these women by your side. You spent oh, so many nights, working oh, so hard and long, and you grew strong, and you learned how to get along!

And now we’re here, in this great space. Yes, you brought it all together with a smile on your face! So I have called you up here, before we say goodbye, ’cause we just want to thank you, and praise God you survived!

So I thank you! And I thank you!
And I thank you, and you, and all of you
(Turning to all assembled)
For this amazing Q!
O how our God has blessed us!
We praise his name on high!
It’s been a great Quinquennial and we have been revived!

We’ve been revived! We’ve been revived!
We felt the love of Jesus, His Spirit is alive!
We’ve got all our love to give,
We’ve got the Gospel life to live,
We’ve been revived. Yes, we’re revived!

We listened to great speakers; you all did your part,
The liturgies and homilies they really touched our hearts,
And all the sweet, sweet fellowship – too soon we’ll say goodbye!
Oh I could cry! But let us raise our banner high!

We’ve turned around – so go out that door
And share the love of Jesus with more and more and more!
We’ve got all our love to give and the Gospel life to live
We’ve been revived! We’ve been revived! Hey! Hey!

Now look and see – we’ve been renewed!
We’re not chained up little persons, not knowing what to do.
The Spirit just dropped in on us, God’s calling you and me
To go rebuild his church in this Year of Mercy!
So go on now, go! Go out that door!
And share the love of Jesus with more and more and more!
We’ve got all our love to give, we’ve got the Gospel life to live
We’ve been revived! Praise God on high!
We’ve been revived!





the 19th

'My heart came to life'

ST. LOUIS, MO -- "As soon as I hit the door, my heart came to life."

That comment by Fr. Pio Jackson, OFM, perhaps summed up best what the opening of the Quinquennial Congress meant to a throng of Secular Franciscans, friars and religious sisters.

Continued on next page.

By BOB & MARY STRONACH, OFS



RENAISSANCE HOTEL

**'Reviving
Our
Spirit'**

More than 600 Franciscan family members came together for the 19th Quinquennial Congress, June 30-July 4, 2016 at the Renaissance Airport Hotel in St. Louis, MO.



Pio Jackson, OFM
Opening Mass celebrant

continued from previous page

Celebrating the opening Mass June 30 in a packed grand ballroom at the Renaissance St. Louis Airport Hotel, Father Pio pointed the theme of “Reviving Our Spirit” as timely and appropriate – especially when it’s the Secular Franciscan Order that often inspires and lifts his spirit.

Joy and hospitality characterize the Secular Franciscan charism, he said.

“Out of the side of Christ flowed



Tibor Kauser, OFS, and Jan Parker, OFS
The Minister General and National Minister

blood, water – and Secular Franciscans,” he said to laughter and applause. “As long as there is one Secular Franciscan in the world, there will be joy.”

He added: “You are at the heart of the church” -- that “dynamism we need to revive our hearts... (where) one act of charity can change the world.”

Noting that the Quinquennial coincides with the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Friar Pio urged the crowd of over 550 Franciscans to work at knowing “how to

read hearts,” to avoid anything condemnatory, and to meet the challenge “to give a transfusion to the rest of the word” – “to set it on fire.”

In other words, “revive yourself so you can revive others.”

Following Mass and dinner, National Minister Jan Parker, OFS, introduced Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, who struck a similar tone, urging everyone to spend time at the congress experiencing and spreading joy.

Friar author shares his dream

Fr. Murray Bodo, OFM, was in the midst of a personal crisis when St. Anthony Messenger Press asked him to write a book about St. Francis of Assisi. He couldn’t, he thought. Besides, he was extremely busy teaching and carrying out other duties. Then the editor told him he would be taking time off and going to Assisi.

A sound of awe murmured through the audience at the Quinquennial Congress Thursday evening (June 30).

“That’s the same thing I said,” he responded to the crowd. Of course, he told the editor, “yes!”

Once he was in Assisi, the book seemed to write itself. “I wrote almost every day in the morning. The words just came. I thought someone was writing it for me... I felt I was a channel.”

That book, *Francis: the Journey and the Dream*, sold 300,000 copies. That was 1972 – and it launched a 31-book writing career.

He appeared at the Q to thank Secular Franciscans for being among his most avid readers – and to share a few words from his latest work, his autobiography, *Gathering Shards: A Franciscan Life*.



Murray Bodo, OFM
Opening evening speaker

DAY 2



Dan Horan, OFM

DANIEL P. HORAN, OFM

Franciscan friar with Holy Name Province, author of several books (his first was “Dating God” and his most recent was “The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton”), columnist for America magazine, and visiting assistant professor of Systematic Theology at the Catholic Theological Union (Chicago). He is completing a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology at Boston College.

Keynoter ‘Dan’ focuses on creation, poverty

Keynoter Fr. Dan Horan, OFM, took the Quinquennial Congress through – now up to 595 attendees – on a journey of “mercy and minority” in the Franciscan tradition Friday, July 1.

He delved into “creation and poverty” – recognizing, as all Franciscans are called to do, a universal kinship with all of creation, and coming to understand the reality of Franciscan poverty as something more, as something holding

richer depth than the simple phrase of “being poor in spirit.”

“We have to take seriously what it means to be Franciscan.”

He also wanted to set a tone of a Franciscan familial relationship encompassing friars, sisters and Secular Franciscans.

“I invite you to call me Dan... We are either a family or we’re not. I want to be your brother, Dan.”

He referred to the “joy and challenge

of our Gospel call,” and noted that Francis was not only called to live the Gospel, but also to be minor, to be lesser, to not place himself above others.

“It begins with poverty.” Being in kinship with the poor, the troubled, the hurting – and recognizing the dignity of all creation.

He noted: “This is the challenge before us” while “reviving, renewing our spirit, our vocation.”

Fr. Lester: Build relationships, have impact



Lester Bach, OFM Cap.

When it comes to serving others – such as in a soup kitchen – “it’s not so much what you do, but how you do it.” In other words, it’s about building relationships, noted Capuchin Friar Lester Bach, a featured presenter on Day 2 of the Quinquennial Congress.

It starts with Secular Franciscan fraternities, with a spirituality steeped in the love of the Trinity, and a call to love one another.

“The more you can relate to the people you serve, the better.”

Indeed, he said, “there should be a change in you when you are helping others.”

Father Lester said he wasn’t going to heap praise on Secular Franciscans, as other presenters had. Instead, he wanted to remind Seculars to recognize the need for conversion, and to prod fraternities to move beyond a devotional mindset to one of expressing God’s love in action, in relationships.

“Fraternities should have some sort of impact.”

Remember, he said, “the Franciscan vocation leaves no one out of your concern and compassion.”



Dan Horan, OFM, began his second Quinquennial Congress presentation Saturday, July 2, by pointing to the Cantic of the Sun. It perhaps was a culminating expression of Francis' journey from *violence to peacemaking*.

Francis dreamed of being a warrior knight, but was slapped with the reality of becoming a prisoner of war. His life changed, and eventually he started on a path of discovering and living the Gospel, and becoming a peacemaker.

The cantic recognized how the sun, the moon, all of nature were being true to themselves and therefore naturally giving praise to God.

The question, Friar Dan noted, is how can humans be true to themselves – in other words, how to get beyond the “original sin” of not being what God wants us to be? Non-violence and peacemaking, he suggests, is at the heart of the Franciscan tradition. In fact, the Secular Franciscan rule calls us “to be instruments of peace.”

Being Franciscan means being “contrary to the logic of the world.” To be a peacemaker is a “foundational call,” he said. “How are we living our vocation?”

The friar pointed to three types of violence troubling the U.S.

1. Gun violence. “33,626 people were killed by firearms” in the U.S. in 2013.

Many of these acts of violence occurred in the home, he noted, pointing to instances of children coming across a weapon and accidentally killing themselves or family members.

2. Capital punishment. Recent popes proclaimed that killing others for crimes was not acceptable.

3. Violence in our hearts. It’s where we dehumanize others. Look at what “we hold in our hearts” – judgements and prejudices.

The Franciscan tradition of being lesser, minor – coupled with Gospel love – can overcome such violence.

“The Gospel is so beautiful.”



‘The most Franciscan papal encyclical ever!’

Keith Warner, OFM, stood at the podium on the third day of the Quinquennial Congress and proclaimed:

“‘Laudato Si’ is the most Franciscan papal encyclical ever!”

“Yeah!” the audience murmured in reply.

Brother Keith raised his voice:

“‘Laudato Si’ is the most Franciscan papal encyclical ever!”

“YEAH!” the audience shouted back.

Thus began Brother Keith’s featured presentation on an encyclical riddled with Franciscan gems.

“We are in a Franciscan moment in the church,” he said, noting: “St. Francis is featured prominently in this encyclical, more so than any encyclical ever. He is promoted as an example for Chris-

tian living today, in the 21st Century.”

St. Francis is cited as an example of “integral ecology” – the relational and holistic connection of nature, God and humanity.

Brother Keith pointed to another connectedness – “the cry of the poor” and “the cry of the earth.” Care for the poor and care for the earth are together,

Continued on next page.

DAY 4

Fr. Dan: 'Good News' should prod us

The Gospel is the good news.
But for whom?

It can comfort the afflicted. But it can also afflict the comfortable – those who need to be nudged out of their comfort zone in order to better respond to the call of the Gospel.

That's how Franciscan Father Dan Horan introduced his final and third keynote presentation Sunday, July 3, at the Quinquennial Congress.

He noted that his topic of *Racism and Xenophobia* may surely make some uncomfortable. In fact, the "Good News should make us uncomfortable. We need to be awoken."

He pointed to the fact that the site of the Q was just 3.8 miles from Ferguson (which became a symbol and hotbed of racial unrest). People may not realize that social status and institutional structures may foster racial attitudes.

Friar Dan said St. Francis renounced the power structure of his time, quitting his social status, embracing evangelical poverty, and acting on the notion that he was no better than anyone else – he and his brothers were, in fact, lesser or minor. For example, he went against church and civil practices and social customs to embrace lepers. Like



leprosy of that bygone era, racism is a loaded word, Father Dan suggested. Understanding racism goes beyond just seeing individual acts of meanness. It recognizes a more complex condition involving attitudes and biases perpetuated by cultural, institutional and class experiences. Perhaps there are indicators of systemic injustice and ingrained bias, such as: more inmates of color are on death row, and some bandages are marketed as "flesh" toned.

As Franciscans "we have to open

our hearts" and "listen to each other's experiences." With the Franciscan vocation, "we're called to stand up against injustice."

To counter Xenophobia (fear of that which is different, foreign, strange), one needs to embrace the other. Just like people today, Francis found himself raised in the context of a discriminatory world view. For example, there were civil and ecclesiastical rules affecting lepers. They were required to ring bells announcing their approach. Francis, however, didn't let fear stop him from breaking from such traditions; and he instructed his brothers "to serve those that are different from you" and "acknowledge you are Christian."

He felt a solidarity with Muslim sisters and brothers. How could he do it? "No one had to fear Francis... (He had) no lust for power or control."

He saw common ground in faith and humanity.

Friar Dan categorized several types of xenophobia – religion, sexual orientation, and nationality.

And Franciscans are challenged to stand up, to speak out.

As witnesses to the Gospel, he concluded, "it calls us" to take risks.

MOST FRANCISCAN ENCYCLICAL

Continued from previous page.

always. Pope Francis is engaging in a dialogue that one cannot protect the earth without protecting the poor, and vice versa.

A third item he pointed to was how the encyclical uses the Franciscan approach to ethics – that nature has dignity and value, and that "Laudato Si" helps shift the conversation to an ethics of care that sees the world in a loving relationship. It incorporates a sense of global consciousness and the common good.

He encouraged the crowd to look for six Franciscan gems in the encyclical:

1. Direct experience of God in nature is good. "Laudato Si" speaks about ecological spirituality.

2. Humanity's relationship with the Earth should be characterized by praise of God and appreciation of beauty. "Many of our conventional environmentalist friends don't approach creation with these attitudes."

3. The common good is global, in need of collaborative approaches and dialogue.

4. Economic justice and environmental protection need to work hand in hand.

5. Recognizing beauty as a path to God, and love of beauty as a spiritual practice. "Beauty is another name for God in our tradition."

6. We are called to ecological conversion. He quoted: "An ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm in resolving the world's problems and in offering ourselves to God 'as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable.'"

Fear not in Franciscan love and joy



Carolyn Townes, OFS

Overcoming fear and recognizing the love of God within us.

Those two things can fuel something greater in the Franciscan vocation, suggests National JPIC Chair Carolyn Townes, OFS, a featured speaker on the final day of the Quinquennial Congress on Sunday, July 3.

She asked the “Q” attendees – now up to 620 – what Christ’s greatest commandant was.

“Love God and love your neighbor as yourself,” the audience echoed in several variations.

The Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Commission chair pointed to fear as being real, “but our God is bigger.”

“God has given us power – not ego, not pride, not false self... but the power of the Spirit of the One who is in you.”

She added: “God has not given you a spirit of mediocrity. Why do we play

small when our God is so big?”

Carolyn suggested using “one attribute about yourself that you love.”

“Go do and be that with everyone you come in contact with. Do it with Franciscan joy. Times can get hard, and if you’re going through hell, keep going and you’ll come out on fire!”

She added: “Everywhere you go, be the Gospel, be the face of it, be the stoke. Stoke a fire in someone’s flame.”

She shouted: “Franciscan joy. How many of you got it? Franciscan peace. How many of you got it?” The audience roared its response to each question.

“Don’t forget it. Keep stoking the flame of the fire every moment.”

And do not settle for mediocrity, she noted.

“We are above average. Be that. Be that... You have the power of prayer; you have the power of love.”

Q sprouts ‘blessing bags’ for homeless

Hundreds of homeless and struggling families in St. Louis received a special “blessing”, thanks to the 19th Quinquennial Congress’ Blessing Bag Project. Q Co-Chair Kate Kleinart put it this way: “We’re leaving St. Louis a little better than we found it.”

Attendees prepared bags of goodies and personal care items for the homeless and struggling families. The products were donated by Franciscans across the country as well as a few companies.

In fact, Friday afternoon saw an endless line of Franciscans stuffing “Blessing Bags” with various snacks, other goodies, socks and personal hygiene products. They filled 61 boxes with the bags, and then another 40 boxes with larger goodies, bars of soap and large containers of shampoo. The 101 boxes were to be handed over to St. Anthony Food



Sr. Connie Probst

Pantry, which serves over 800 families, including the homeless, in St. Louis.

A stunned food pantry director, Franciscan Sister Connie Probst, asked to address the congress later in the day. She related how she was delighted to hear that Secular Franciscans were donating goodie bags, and showed up with her car. It wasn’t big enough. She had to return with the food pantry’s van.

While watching the boxes literally be-

ing squeezed into the van, Sister Connie estimated that she and food pantry volunteer Janie Barton were hauling away about 4,000 pounds in donated goods – and well over 1,000 Blessing Bags.

Kleinart noted that the bags included holy cards bearing the message, “Filling this Blessing Bag for you has been a blessing for me! I will keep you in my prayers and ask St. Francis to keep you in his care.”

Q concludes with burst of Franciscan joy

The 19th Q concluded in a burst of Franciscan joy. National Minister Jan Parker, OFS, left the audience cheering and laughing as she belted out a special rendition of Gloria Gaynor's "I will survive" – except that her lyrics changed it to "We've been revived." The outburst preceded the congress' concluding Mass.

"We had such joy these past few days," celebrant Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, noted. "When we gather, it bubbles forth. We took a journey with Dan (Horan) and now we're back to the beginning – penance." He said St. Francis had identified himself with Secular Franciscans – the original brother and sisters of penance.

He noted that "prayer, poverty, humility, conversion" were the four values that



National Minister Jan Parker, OFS, performs a special rendition of "I will survive" as Q Chair Susan Simeone claps along.

Francis stood for, and that characterize Franciscan life today. In fact, the "charism of the order is conversion of life," he said, and asked: How does this ongoing conversion have expression today?

The answer is "to act justly," to have

a "simple and uncluttered life," "to help the poor, the homeless, the abused, the unemployed... – the list goes on and on."

Responding to others' needs "means we are humble and attentive." After all, "in God's plan there is room for every-



National Spiritual Assistant Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, at the closing Mass.

Franciscan sister from Uganda stunned by outpouring

Following the concluding Mass, before the throng of Franciscans could depart, Sister Caritas Barajingitwa of the Little Sisters of St. Francis (LSOSF) stepped up to the podium to express her heartfelt gratitude for the spontaneous outpouring of donations for her orphanage in Uganda.

Earlier in the day, NAFRA PR co-chair Bob Stronach, OFS, stepped to the podium to tell everyone that someone was in their midst who responded to the AIDS epidemic that devastated families in Africa and opened a vocational orphanage, and that she was laying the

groundwork to build a primary school. In fact, her work on behalf of children was brought to the attention of the U.S. Secular Franciscan Order, which honored her last fall with its Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Award.

Bob took out a \$20 bill to give to Sister Caritas and invited Q attendees to do the same. In a matter of minutes, seculars and friars were lined up, handing over cash and checks, and hugging the nun. Donations continued throughout the day – which prompted Q Chair Susan Simeone to announce that a stunned Sister Caritas received a total of \$6,556.95.



Sr. Caritas Barajingitwa, LSOSF



VIEW THE Q VOCATION TESTIMONIALS
Using a smartphone videocam, National Vocation Committee Chair Jane DeRose-Bamman (left) recorded testimonials about the Franciscan vocation. Some 50 Quinquennial Congress attendees participated. See the testimonials at [YouTube.com/secularfranciscans](https://www.youtube.com/secularfranciscans).

EXPERIENCE THE Q THROUGH VIDEO
Experience or relive the Quinquennial Congress. DVDs of the featured Q presentations may be ordered at: franciscanvideos.com

QUINQUENNIAL CANDIDS



Filling "blessing bags" for the homeless.

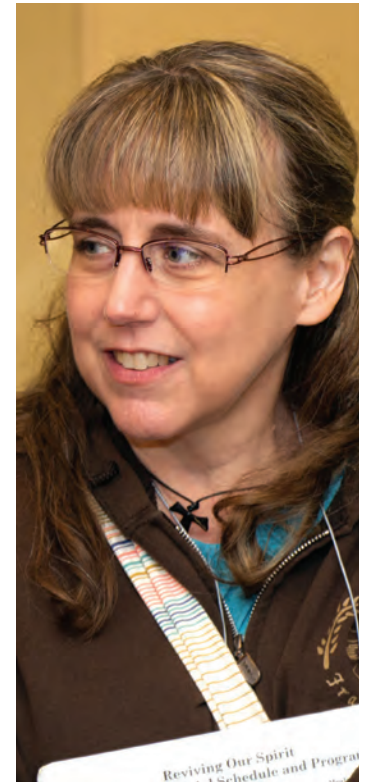
QUINQUENNIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Secular Franciscan Order in the United States sponsors a Quinquennial Congress usually every five years to bring together the Franciscan family from all over the U.S. and even other countries.

The 2016 "Q" Planning Committee was headed by Co-Chairs Susan Simeone and Kate Kleinert. Other key members: **Barb Morgan**, OFS; **Judy Haupt**, OFS; **Kathryn Wohnoutka**, OFS; **Fr. Pio Jackson**, OFM.

Quinquennial attendees assembled in 'little fraternities' to discuss the day's main presentations and also got to take advantage of break-out sessions on a variety of topics.







FORMATION COMMISSION

WE ARE CALLED

by Mary Anne Lenzi, OFS

On June 30, I was standing in line waiting to board a Southwest Airlines flight bound for St. Louis. In airports across the country, some 500 plus sisters and brothers were also heading for the same destination. Another 100 or so had set their GPS devices to I-70, Exit 237. I was reminded of a passage from Fortini's book about St. Francis. He was telling of the early brothers getting together at the Porziuncola. He wrote, "*They walked over mountain and plain, exulting in the thought that in the same hour, from everywhere, near and far, their brothers were also walking toward their own holy celebration.*" We were all anxious to congregate in this city dedicated to the patron of our Order. What was it that made this event so important? Simply being together as family seemed enough to *revive* my spirit!

Secular Franciscans in the United States have been gathering as one family since 1921. It was at the first Congress that one national Third Order was proposed, then organized and formed. Every five years since that time, with one slight delay, we have assembled, with equal voice, to deepen our vocation and commitment to our Rule and to each other. My hope is that the brothers and sisters that attended this gathering returned to their local fraternities and shared their experiences.

Let me share my experience of the Congress with the message and challenge important to all Secular Franciscans. I hope you begin to feel the revitalizing breath of the Spirit. Fr. Lester Bach opened and ended his message with this song. It stayed with me. The song was written by David Haas and is based on Micah 6:8. For background music, Fr. Dan Horan recorded a piano piece for his friends. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Stc1INNMf7I>.

We gathered at Table in prayer and in praise. We sang:

*Come! Live in the light!
Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!
We are called to be light for the kingdom, to live in
the freedom of the city of God!*

We are called to act with justice, we are called to love tenderly, we are called to serve one another; to walk humbly with God.

We were attentive to the words of our brothers as they reminded us of God's mercy and our minority. In small fraternities, we pondered our place in creation and how the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are connected in our communities. We dared to share the violence in our hearts and our need for transformation and were comforted with a kind word, an embrace, a message of peace. We asked ourselves, "*Of whom or of what am I most afraid?*" as we contemplated our personal call to live the Gospel each day. Another name for God is Beauty! We sang:

*Come! Open your heart!
Show your mercy to all those in fear!
We are called to be hope for the hopeless, so all hatred
and blindness will be no more!*

We are called to act with justice, we are called to love tenderly, we are called to serve on another; to walk humbly with God.

We packed our bags and prepared to return to our everyday 9 to 5 lives. We whispered a prayer of gratitude for our family, our fellowship, our fraternity. We hummed a hymn of praise for our joy and sadness, our laughter and tears, our excitement, our challenge, our surrender to Love. We sang:

*Sing! Sing a new song!
Sing of the great day when all will be one!
God will reign, and we'll walk with each other as
sisters and brothers united in love!*

We are called to act with justice, we are called to love tenderly, we are called to serve on another; to walk humbly with God.

I also encourage you to live the "Q" with the full presentations at www.quinquennial.org. For DVD's go to www.Franciscanvideos.com.



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



ANIMATING PEACE AND JUSTICE AT THE “Q”

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, National JPIC Animator

“For God has not given you a spirit of fear; but of power, love, and a sound mind.” ~ 2 Timothy 1:7



As I had never attended a Quinquennial Congress in the past, I did not know quite what to expect. Yes, I had heard many stories in passing about the “Q”; and they were always affectionately referred to by the city in which they were held. So when I was asked to be one of the speakers at the 2016 Q, I said absolutely. I always look forward to sharing my heart with my brother and sister Franciscans. I met with the Q Committee to get a grasp on what was mine to do. I was told that I would animate and ignite the brothers and sisters. Well, I believe that *is* what is mine to do: animate, guide, ignite and enliven – by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The above Scripture passage was dropped in my spirit last March. I didn’t know why; but when you work alongside the Holy Spirit, you don’t ask why. By day three of the Q, the *why* became clear. Friar Dan Horan’s talk on racism and xenophobia sparked something in the hearts and minds of his audience. By the end of our Little Fraternity sharing, fear was a common concept in the conversations I was privy to. I knew hearts were heavy and filled with many more questions than answers; which I believe is a good thing. As the German poet, Rainer Maria Rilke once wrote, live the questions; don’t be quick to find the answers, but just live the questions.

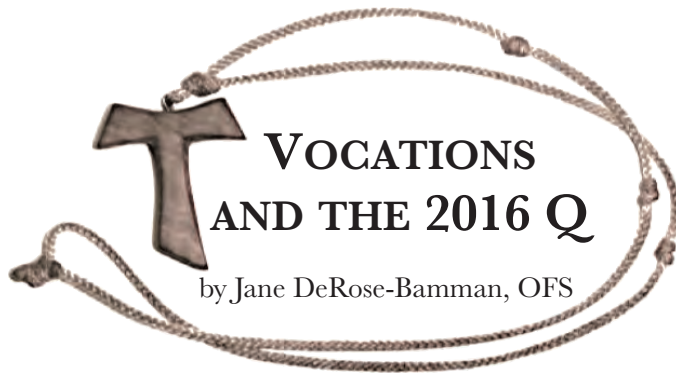
Let us recall the Gospel story of Jesus in the boat asleep as the storms came crashing and tossing the boat to and fro. The disciples were afraid they would

perish in that storm. Fearful and a bit annoyed, they woke Jesus to ask if he cared that they were about to perish. Matthew’s Gospel tells us that Jesus got up and rebuked the winds and the sea as he asked the disciples why were they afraid. When Jesus is in your boat, what have you to fear? In our world, there are many things to be concerned with: the “isms” constantly plague us as violence is on the rise. Do not let Jesus out of your boat! And if he wants to take a nap, let him!

It is perfectly normal to feel fear. It is one of our natural defenses against clear and present dangers. We need to be afraid when we encounter a threat or life-endangering situations. But as the threat passes, so should the fear. Unfortunately, we tend to fear things and situations that are not life threatening, like public speaking. These types of fear paralyze us and keep us from being who God created us to be. God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind. The power of Him who is within you as opposed to him who lives in the world. As Scripture tells us, perfect love casts out fear. Perfect love is also a present-moment experience, while fear is fretting about what will happen in the future. Be here, now. Stay in the present moment, in that perfect love – which is the peace and love that surpasses all understanding.

So, just for today, meditate on your relationship with the Lord. Is it deep and abiding? Or, is it lukewarm and shallow? Your relationship with our loving God determines your reactions to fear. What can you do right in this moment to strengthen that relationship, so that you abide in love and not in fear? We live out our love of God by loving our brothers and sisters. Who can you pray for right now, in this moment? Who can you give an encouraging word to right now, in this moment? Who can you comfort right now, in this moment? What you do for the least of these brothers and sisters, you have done for our loving Lord. Remember, keep Jesus in your boat and do not fear the storm.

Pictured: Members and friends of the National Commission of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation at the Q



The Q was invigorating, inspiring and exhausting, thanks to the many sisters and brothers who made it a fabulous experience. Before we knew it, it was over. But is it really? Not if we keep talking about it and applying what was learned there. Here is a summary from the Vocations perspective.

Of course, our focus was on how to spread the word about our Order. Social Media is one easy, cost-effective means of spreading the word, but we have to use it for it to be a benefit. Members of the Vocation Committee and Social Media Subcommittee prepared a breakout session titled: “U.S. Franciscans and Social Media: NAFRA’s Presence on the Internet.” More than 50 participants attended the breakout sessions including two of our international visitors. The presentations and the handouts “How to Stay Safe on Facebook” and “Email Etiquette” are available on the NAFRA website at:

http://www.nafra-sfo.org/Q2016/201607_FranciscansAndSocialMediaPresentation.pdf

<http://www.nafra-sfo.org/Q2016/HowToStaySafeOnFacebook.pdf>

http://www.nafra-sfo.org/Q2016/20160703_Handouts.pdf

Diane Menditto, Kathleen White, John Clem and I walked through the website (and all the great information available there) and the NAFRA Facebook page. The team shared tips to alleviate concerns about participating in social media and offered handouts for later reference. The main message was, of course, we are all responsible for fostering vocations. so try social media to get the word out to family, friends, co-workers, co-parishioners. Kathleen also invited everyone with email addresses to subscribe to receive the TAU-Daily emails — a daily vocation boost. For more than 10 years, Kathleen has been posting a daily reflection rotating from the Rule, Admonitions, Little Flowers, General Constitutions, National Statutes, Franciscan Saints, etc. The “TAU-DAILY” list is open to ANYONE interested in receiving daily post(s). (It is not a

discussion list and is configured not to post anyone’s comments, requests, etc.) If you are interested in receiving the daily posts — no matter what office (or no office) you hold, send a blank email to TAU-Daily-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

A second effort was recording Vocation Testimonials — short videos documenting vocation journeys. Again, more than 50 people agreed to record the testimonies, and they are posted on the FranciscanVideos.com Secular Franciscan You Tube Channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/SecularFranciscans>. Help us to highlight the channel, so the stories can inspire potential family members. If you’d like to share your story, send it (if it is small enough to be emailed) or post it to the Cloud and send me the link at OFSVocationscommittee@gmail.com so we can post it with the others. If you aren’t sure what to say, practice responding to one of the following:

1. Describe the most important moment of your Secular Franciscan vocation.
2. How would you describe the OFS to someone who knows nothing about it?
3. During your Secular Franciscan life, who/what has inspired you most? Why? How?
4. If you had it to do over, would you become a Secular Franciscan? Why?
5. How did you learn about the OFS?
6. What does being a Secular Franciscan mean to you?

The Q theme was Revival. Even if you weren’t able to attend, there is much you can do to help us continue the revival! Share about the OFS in your families and parish communities. Prepare yourself by reviewing the NAFRA website and like us on Facebook. But most importantly, thanks for witnessing to others about this important calling.

As usual, share your success stories and vocation testimonials at:

OFSvocationscommittee@gmail.com

Important sites:

www.nafra-sfo.org

<http://www.nafraformation.org>

FACEBOOK: [Secular Franciscans – NAFRA, USA](https://www.facebook.com/Secular-Franciscans-Nafra-USA-128856987168774/) (<https://www.facebook.com/Secular-Franciscans-Nafra-USA-128856987168774/>)

TWITTER: <https://twitter.com/SecFranNAFRA>

FRANCISCAN LIVING

AM I LIVING WHAT I PROFESS?

By Francine Gikow, OFS

Coming home from the Quinquennial, I pondered my response to Fr. Dan Horan's challenge to truly live as we profess to be as Secular Franciscans. I re-studied the Rule and meditated on specific sections during my prayer time. In a way, it was an examination of conscience with the Rule. It has forced me to identify how I fall short in following the Rule I profess. The following are some fruits of this self-examination.

"...let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ... (Rule 7). How did Christ act in his lifetime, and how have I acted contrary to His model? Am I judgmental? (Jesus neither judged nor condemned, since He left it to the Father at the end of time.) Do I show mercy? (Jesus showed mercy to all, and no person was beyond His mercy.) Do I act with violence toward others either by deed or the spoken word? (I was convicted that I do violence—sometimes by my own fear overcoming my good intentions, or by anger over some past injury expressing itself toward others.)

"Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment..." (Rule 11). Although this Rule focuses on the spirit of detachment from temporal goods, any Secular Franciscan is aware that this is only half the battle. A Secular Franciscan is called to be detached at an even deeper spiritual level: detachment from self-absorption, self-interest and his or her own desires. For if we are attached to something, even if it is toward our own "issues," then we are not truly free. Instead, "victimhood" owns me.

Rule 12 continues this theme with: *"They should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters."* Am I truly detached (free) from my own fears, which can separate me from others? Do I fear those different from me, i.e., Muslims, Jews, immigrants, the poor, drug addicted, homeless? How am I attached to my own self-concerns, which prevent me from being truly free to love my brothers and sisters?

"Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children" (Rule 11). Have I hoarded goods that have been lent to me by the Father? Have I been stingy with the time God has given me? Do I cut people off when they are sharing something important to them? Do I refuse to donate to others if they don't meet my criteria of being "deserving" or if they make choices that are different from mine? Do I donate with "conditions" or with strings attached?

"Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives" (Rule 15.) I don't think justice is only equality but instead a fairness for each person's needs but not necessarily their wants. Can you have mercy without justice, or justice without mercy, or are they two sides of the same coin? Maybe it isn't an "either/or" (exclusive) but a "both/and" (inclusive) concept. Surely living justice takes courage as we are called to stand for the poor, the disliked, the unpopular, and the misaligned. Have I caved in under others' pressure and given favors? Do I have the courage and trust in God to be the "voice crying out in the desert"?

"Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly..." Rule 19. When I read this Rule, I realized that I am to bring peace to others without reserve. As Fr. Horan said, it is not just a "feel good" effort. Our Rule does not qualify in what circumstances I am to bring peace or even whether a conflict measures up to the "just" war definition. Do I condone violence or war when it suits my views or do I stand for nonviolence without reservation? Our Rule demands peacemaking without excuses or qualification. We are to act as peacemaking people unceasingly—always and everywhere, no matter the circumstances. That is our tradition stemming from our first Rule when Secular Franciscans were prohibited from bearing arms and going to war. It is who we are. It is who we are meant to be—because we "trust in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the power of love and pardon" (Rule 19).

Finally, Rule 18 grabbed my attention: *"...they should strive to move from exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship."* Do I take creation for granted, accepting the world's ideal of use, abuse and depletion of God's creation? I know I have been guilty of neglect if not abuse. I have been a mindless consumer of energy, food, plants and animals instead of a lover and a friend. How can I change this?

As you can see, our Rule continues to challenge us. It makes me uneasy—which is a good thing in the spiritual life because it is an impetus for change. As the words of our own Rule direct: *"...let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls 'conversion'" (Rule 7).*

Sharing The Vision

News from the National Executive Council (NEC) to the National Fraternity (NAFRA)

The Quinquennial on Video

Many of the wonderful presentations given at our 2016 Q are now available on DVD. These DVD's give everyone the opportunity to share the Q experience, and more importantly the opportunity for solid ongoing formation. Many of these talks challenged us, speaking directly to us as Secular Franciscans living the Gospel in 2016. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of these DVD's — view them together with your fraternity, use the excellent discussion questions from the Q program and revive your spirit once again! Quinquennial DVD's can be purchased at: franciscanvideos.com.

Guidelines for National Commissions and Committees

The NEC has finalized and approved the Guidelines for National Commissions and Committees. These Guidelines cover the responsibilities of the NEC in the selection and appointment process, as well as the meeting and reporting requirements for national commissions and committees. For copies see the NAFRA Website under Resources/National Guidelines.

NAFRA Committee Appointments

“The brothers and sisters, rejecting all ambition, should show love for the fraternity with a spirit of service, prepared both to accept and to relinquish the office.” (OFS General Constitutions, Art. 32)

The following OFS members have accepted an appointment to serve the National Fraternity for a three-year term, from Chapter 2016 to Chapter 2019. Praise God for all servant leaders past, present and to come!

TAU-USA Editor – Jim Wesley, OFS

Archivist – Sharon Deveaux, OFS

Vocations – Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS

1-800-FRANCIS Facilitator – Kathleen White, OFS

Communications Committee and Public Relations – Changes Ahead?

At our July 2016 meeting, the NEC addressed the questions: What is the mission of the Communications Committee? What activities fall under its purview? Are there structural changes that might improve the flow of communications? Is there a need for a Public Relations Committee, as opposed to the appointment of an individual? This discussion will continue in November at our 2016 NAFRA Chapter, first as we meet with the Communications Committee and then with the National Fraternity Council. Appointment of a new Communications Chair is on hold, pending discussion of these questions.

How can we thank them enough?

After many years of service National Historian Bill Wicks, OFS, and Ecumenical/Interfaith Chair Anne Mulqueen, , are stepping down from these positions. Truly, we cannot thank them enough for all of the service they have given our Order.

NAFRA Historian and Computer Committee Members Needed

The NEC is seeking applicants for the position of National Historian, and the Computer Committee is seeking new members. For information on these positions and the application process, please see the related articles on page 24 of this issue of the TAU-USA.

Youth and Young Adult Commission Study

The NEC continues their study of YouFra to define the future direction for our National Youth and Young Adult Commission. In May, we reviewed YouFra and FYAA documents and resources. In

July we were blessed to have International Councilor Ana Fruk, OFS, as well as our General Minister Tibor Kauser, OFS, present with us at our NEC meeting for a discussion of YouFra. Ana is a former International YouFra coordinator and currently serves on the Order's International Executive Council as a CIOFS Presidency Councilor and YouFra Animator. Ana and Tibor gave us important input and good food for thought. We have grown in our understanding of YouFra and what is "ours to do." A report on our progress will be distributed prior to Chapter.

Important note: Our study of a direction for the Youth Commission at the national level was never meant to stop any of the good work that is going on with youth, locally or regionally. *Local and regional fraternities are encouraged to continue, or begin, outreach to youth as directed by the Holy Spirit.* Any questions on this, please contact your NEC Councilor.

Twining Discussion with International Councilor Jenny Harrington OFS

At our July meeting we met with CIOFS Councilor Jenny Harrington, OFS. Jenny lives in Johannesburg, South Africa, and is the Councilor assigned to the English speaking countries of Africa, and the United States and Canada. What a blessing to have Jenny's perspective on how we might connect with national fraternities in South Africa! CIOFS is currently working on guidelines for this kind of "twining." More on this topic will be shared at our 2016 NAFRA Chapter.

2016 NAFRA Chapter and CIOFS Visitation

Our 2016 Chapter will include a Pastoral and Fraternal Visit from the International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order (CIOFS). Vice-Minister General, Maria Consuelo de Nunez, OFS (fondly known as Chelito) is our Fraternal Visitor. Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap., is our Pastoral Visitor. Copies of the 2010 CIOFS Visitation Report and the 2012 document *U.S. (NAFRA) Response to Recommendations from CIOFS* are available on request.

National Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Gathering – July 2017

Our National JPIC Commission is planning a national gathering from Thursday evening, July

27 through Sunday, July 30, 2017, in St. Louis, MO. This event will be open to all OFS members. Details will be announced soon.

National Formation Directors Workshop – August 2017

Our National Formation Commission is planning a Regional Formation Directors gathering to be held beginning Thursday evening, August 17 through Sunday, August 20, 2017, in St. Louis, MO. (Note: This is a change of date from what was announced in the last issue of *TAU-USA*.) Details will be announced soon. Financial assistance will be provided by the Duns Scotus Trust Fund.

NEC Guidelines for Approval of Contracts

The NEC is currently reviewing contracts from several venues for two national gatherings that will be held in 2017. The NEC has agreed that all contracts that obligate NAFRA financially are to be seen and approved by the entire NEC.

2016 NAFRA Calendar

October 28 – November 1

NEC Meeting Visitation, Canterbury Retreat Center, Oviedo, Florida

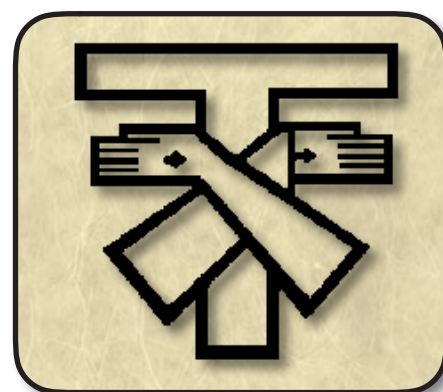
November 1-6

NAFRA Chapter / CIOFS Visitation, San Pedro Retreat Center, Winter Park, Florida

TAU-USA 2016 Schedule

The winter issue of the *TAU-USA* will be mailed in January 2017. The deadline for articles is November 28, 2016.

Emails to the National Minister can be sent to:
OFS.National.Minister.USA@gmail.com



**CONSIDER**

As we examine our country and our world at this time of history, it seems a muddled place to live. The list of troubles and problems are a bit discouraging. But at the same time Christians and Franciscans are not unemployed gospel people. Following the Gospel is not universally embraced and that fact opens employment opportunities for gospel people. Our vocation (employment) is to develop and pass on the love we receive from the Trinity. Faith and hope are qualities that aide us in sharing love. Loving one another is essential if we wish to be faithful to the Gospel and the OFS Rule. Our relationship with the Trinity is built on faith. Faith opens the door to hope, with love as a consequence. We do this in a world where many experiences do not fill us with hope. Our Franciscan vocation calls for faith, hope and charity. We recognize how important they are for profession as a secular Franciscan.

*Hearing that he had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees came together in a body, and one of them tried to catch him out with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment of the law?" He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." That is the greatest, the first commandment. The second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." **Everything in the law and the prophets hangs on these two commandments.***

Matthew 22: 34-40 (REB)

We do not need to be a genius to believe and understand this basic scriptural text. The scriptural formula doesn't require a lot of dialogue. It's meaning is clear!

The difficult part is **HOW to practice love** in our lives? Here are a few issues for personal reflection and dialogue: E.g. Dealing with spousal arguments; children's conflicts; terrorist tragedies; medical emergencies; experiencing the loss of a loved one; dealing with problems of old age; handling unemployment; loving people who are homosexual; reaching out to refugees; helping migrants find a home; forgiving people who hurt us; dealing with people's arrogance; accepting our need for conversion; dealing with public figures whose values differ from our own; dealing with Franciscans who skip tough articles of the OFS Rule; people who criticize others but rarely share supportive ideas; people who talk a lot but rarely show up to work; arrogant people who are always right; people who are unjust and blame others when things go wrong; people who act like the Franciscan vocation is just another club; people who create disunity; people who refuse to even try to love their 'enemies.' These issues begin a list that invites serious dialogue among Franciscans.

QUALITIES of the OFS Rule

Article 1: ... *they intend to **make present the charisma** of their common Seraphic Father ...*

Article 2: ... *In these fraternities the brothers and sisters, **led by the Spirit, strive for perfect charity** in their own secular state. ...*

Article 3: *The present Rule ...adapts the OFS to the **needs and expectations of the Holy Church** in the conditions of changing times. ...*

Article 4: ... ***Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life he has come to give abundantly.***

Article 5: ... *seek to **encounter the living and active person of Christ** in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, and in liturgical activity. ...*

Article 6: ... *Therefore, they should go forth as **witnesses and instruments of her (Church's) mission** among all people, **proclaiming Christ** by their life and words ...*

Article 7: ... *let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of **Christ** by means of that **radical interior change** which the Gospel calls "conversion" ...*

Article 8: ... *let **prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do.** ... Let them join in liturgical prayer in one of the forms proposed by the Church, ...*

Article 9: ... *The Secular Franciscans should express **their ardent love for her (Mary)** by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.*

Article 10: ... *let them **faithfully fulfill the duties** proper to their various circumstances of life. ...*

Article 11: ... *Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper **spirit of detachment** from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. ... In the spirit of 'the beatitudes,' ...*

they should strive to **purify their hearts** from every tendency and yearning for possessions and power.

Article 12: ... they should set themselves **free to love God** and their brothers and sisters.

Article 13: ... the Secular Franciscans, with a gentle and courteous spirit, **accept all people as a gift of the Lord** and an image of Christ. A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people ...

Article 14: Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to **build a more fraternal and evangelical world** so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. ... let them exercise their responsibilities competently in the **Christian spirit of service**.

Article 15: Let them ... **be in the forefront in promoting justice** by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives ...

Article 16: Let them **esteem work** both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community.

Article 17: In their family they should **cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity, and respect for life** ... By living the grace of matrimony, husbands and wives ... should **bear witness ... to the love of Christ** for his Church. They should joyfully accompany their children on their journey, providing a simple and open Christian education and being attentive to the vocation of each child.

Article 18: ... they should **respect all creatures**, ... and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.

Article 19: ... they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should **seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue**, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and the transforming power of love and pardon ... **strive to bring joy and hope to others**. ... and serenely tend toward the ultimate encounter with the Father

Read Articles 20 to 26 dealing with organization (20), Structures and fraternity life (21), canonical establishment (22), formation / profession (23), Gatherings (24), Expenses (25), Spiritual assistance (26).

The narrow columns in this article summarize the OFS Rule, listing qualities we profess to follow as Secular Franciscans. The OFS Rule is a Trinitarian gift for us to model in the Church and the world.

The following short list of Franciscan responses might help personal reflection and practice. As you reflect, do not wallow in guilt feelings. Rather let the Rule stimulate and guide you to nurture these good seeds. Respond to the Trinity's call and choose to dialogue with one another to give "flesh" to the requirements of the OFS Rule.

Our task as gospel people is to impact both the wider world and our at-home world. In place of revenge we bring forgiveness. In place of fear we bring confidence. Instead of anger we bring gentleness. In place of indifference we bring love. In place of competition we bring co-operation. In place of put-downs, we bring support. In place of artificiality we bring spiritual reality. In place of rivalry we bring community. In place of false ideas we bring gospel truth. In place of technical tools we bring scriptural insights. In place of selfishness we bring generosity. In place of resistance we accept our need for conversion. In place of arrogance we bring a listening heart. In place of know-it-all-ism we open our mind and heart to fresh ideas. In place of ultra-busyness we bring gentle quiet. In place of revenge we bring forgiveness - etc.

Each day we embrace the wisdom of the **Trinity**. We are not convinced by shallow human arguments. We look for rich ideas that show respect for the Trinity, people (obviously) and to all of creation.

*With this in mind, then, I kneel in prayer to the **Father**, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name, that out of the treasures of his glory he may grant you inward strength and power through his **Spirit**, that through faith **Christ** may dwell in your hearts in love. With deep roots and firm foundations may you, in company with all God's people, be strong to grasp what is the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ's love, and to know it, though it is beyond knowledge. So may you be filled with the very fullness of God.*

Ephesians 4:14-19 (REB)

I think we are aware that many Seculars had a limited or non-existent time of *initial formation*. I don't think we need to spend time blaming people. After the new Rule appeared in 1978, it took time to develop programs of *initial formation*. During that period and, even now, some people have very little formation. Whoever recognizes their lack of *initial or ongoing formation should seek it!* We need Franciscans who are well-formed. Seculars who lack good formation need to get updated formation. We hope to come to a point when all fraternity members are on the 'same page,' formation-wise, contributing wisely.

Councils on each level normally assist in this task. Without common knowledge, direction and a true Franciscan spirit, we un-intentionally put obstacles in our ability to live Franciscan lives. Common dialogue at regular gatherings can be a part of *ongoing formation*. We readily relate to each other through shared Franciscan experiences.

**The Franciscan way of life is our way to create a Church and world of respect, faith, hope, love and peace.
Let people know your beliefs by the way you live the OFS Rule!**



Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Walking Together

by Anne Mulqueen, OFS

Dear brothers and sisters,

As reported in the last issue of TAU-USA, a new Chair for the Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee will be selected, and my term of office will end at the November Chapter of the National Fraternity. What a joy it has been to chair this committee for the past four years, and I will miss writing to you. It is a privilege to work with countless deeply spiritual and talented people—too many to list.

One great benefit of term limits is that it encourages Secular Franciscans with fresh ideas to seek leadership roles in the OFS. And knowing that your time in office will come to an end, forces you to think about the impact you will leave on the members you serve. The impact I wish to leave is to encourage you to study the original documents for ecumenical and interfaith action. These documents come from the Second Vatican Council; *Unitatis Redintegration* (Decree on Ecumenism) and *Nostra Aetate* (The Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions). They can be accessed on the Vatican website.

Unitatis Redintegration (Decree on Ecumenism)

This document addresses restoring unity among Christian churches. It delves into the history of disunity between East and West, as well as between the Roman church and the churches of the Reformation. Obviously, I cannot allude to all the chapters of this document due to space constraints, but the following passages deserve careful consideration.

Unitatis Redintegration 1 views unity as a priority.

The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only.

Unitatis Redintegration 3 is a history lesson on the divisions among Christians.

Even in the beginnings of this one and only Church of God, there arose certain rifts, (Cf. 1 Cor. 11, 18-19; Gal. 1, 6-9; 1

Jn. 2, 18-19.) which the Apostle strongly condemned. (Cf. 1 Cor. 1, 11 sqq; 11, 22.)

Unitatis Redintegration 5 states that ecumenism is a concern for ordinary people.

The attainment of union is the concern of the whole Church, faithful and shepherds alike. This concern extends to everyone....

Unitatis Redintegration 9 speaks of Catholic and non-Catholic dialogue.

We must get to know the outlook of our separated [brothers and sisters]. To achieve this purpose, study is of necessity required, and this must be pursued with a sense of realism and good will.

Unitatis Redintegration 20, my final point, speaks of our common focus on Christ.

Our thoughts turn first to those Christians who make open confession of Jesus Christ as God and Lord and as the sole Mediator between God and (humankind), to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Nostra Aetate (The Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions)

This document relates to humanity's common search for God. It addresses the religions outside the Abrahamic monotheistic traditions and then speaks of Islam, Judaism and respectful relations. These religions seek to reach beyond themselves to attain union with the creator of all.

Nostra Aetate 3 in regard to Islam states:

They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God.

Nostra Aetate 4 in regard to Judaism states:

Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets.

... Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross, Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in Himself.

Nostra Aetate 5 concludes with:

We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: "He who does not love does not know God" (1 John 4:8).

Commitment to ecumenical and interfaith work is based on love, prayer and personal conversion and respectful communication, and I'm sure I've missed other components. Prayer is essential so our activities mirror and express Jesus' desire in John 17:21 that *all may be one*. A converted heart is essential, because fractured relations do exist among Christians and non-Christians faiths. Consequently, all persons serving in this area need to be open to God's

inspiration and direction. When entering into communication with those of other faith traditions, we need to possess a sound grasp of our own faith. And since the greatest of all virtues is love, to enter into ecumenical-interfaith encounters, it is essential to ask the Holy Spirit to give us the grace to be respectful, humble, genuine, gentle and generous because all God's people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

I am grateful for this opportunity to express my appreciation to you. You have made my time of service a wonderful experience. I have learned so much through our interaction, and I will miss serving you in this capacity.

Your sister in Christ, Saints Francis and Clare,
Anne Mulqueen, ofs



OFS DISASTER RESPONSE TEAM

By Jim Flickinger, OFS

About three years ago NAFRA began investigating the possibility of establishing an OFS team to respond to disasters in our country.

After this was looked into, a decision was made to establish the team, but to "roll it out" from region to region. Our plan was to work with Catholic Charities in Florida, an area where we know hurricanes will occur and with an organization (Catholic Charities) that has experience in responding to such disasters. After getting some experience, we would work to respond to disasters in other regions of the country.

We have had a very good response from Secular Franciscans who are willing to help with the disaster relief work. Our "problem" — if we want to call it a problem — is that there have been no hurricanes in Florida during the past three years. The result is that our team has not been able to get, gain experience, and expand into other regions of our country.

During the past year NAFRA began looking into joining forces with St. Vincent de Paul USA Disaster Services (SVDP). NAFRA saw a number of advantages of unification with SVDP:

- 1) It is very experienced.
- 2) It has a full-time staff.

3) It has teams in place at all times, responding to disasters across the nation.

4) It has relationships in place with the American Red Cross, FEMA, etc.

5) NAFRA would not have to gain experience or "roll out" our program over what might be several years. Secular Franciscans can immediately join up with the SVDP team.

6) SVDP volunteers would, by working side by side with Secular Franciscans, be introduced to our Order.

As a result of our investigation and discussions with SVDP, NAFRA decided to unite forces with SVDP rather than develop its own disaster response team. Our unification should be seamless, easy, and immediate.

If you would like to become an active volunteer with SVDP, take a look at the SVDP website at <http://www.svdpcdisaster.org>. From there you will need to make contact with Jim Butler, the Director of Volunteer Management for SVDP. His e-mail address is jbutler@svdpcdisaster.org.

A YOUTH DISCOVERS SAINT FRANCIS

"What would St. Francis be doing in the world today" was the topic of an essay contest for eighth graders at St. Hedwig School. Mrs. Sarah Visser, their 8th Grade Teacher, supervised the essay writing and submitted 60 essays to the local St. Maximilian Kolbe Secular Franciscan Fraternity, which sponsored the essay contest in an effort to interact with youth. The following is the winning article.

THE LIFE-CHANGING SAINT

by Niko Tulian, 8th Grade Student

If Saint Francis were here today, our world would be very different from what it is now. Based on his story and his actions, this is what I think Saint Francis of Assisi would be doing to help our world today.

Saint Francis of Assisi was the patron saint of animals and ecology. He was born in 1181 in Assisi, Italy. During his early life, he grew up with a wealthy merchant father. When he was young, he became very spoiled. While surrounded by all that great wealth, he spent most of his early days in luxury. But soon, war between Assisi and Perugia broke out. This is where the Story of Saint Francis of Assisi begins.

Even at the beginning of his life story, I can still pick apart the little details that would show what Francis would be doing today to help benefit our world. Even though he grew up surrounded by immense wealth, Saint Francis still took the heart to turn his life around and spend his life in poverty. He would set an amazing example by showing us to live a life of simplicity. He would show us how to value education more and preach to the sick and needy.

Saint Francis spent nearly a year in prison after the war. Because of his inexperience in battle, he was swiftly captured and taken for ransom. He spent his days in prison awaiting the payment from his father. It was here in this jail cell that Saint Francis started receiving visions from God.

The ransom was paid, and he was set free in 1203. He returned to Assisi a completely different man. When he returned he felt empty inside. Drained by war, he set out to find something to fill the void in his heart. One day in the countryside, he was riding on the back of his horse and encountered a leper. Lepers were thought to be unclean, and most people would politely avert their eyes and walk away. But Saint Francis felt sympathy, and embraced the leper. After the event, He felt a sense of pleasure and started to embrace this feeling.

If Saint Francis encountered someone suffering from a very similar disease, I am sure he would have done very much the same. He would have felt sympathy towards the suffering person and have given them the love that nobody else would. In this word today, we need more people like Saint Francis. If we did, this would set an excellent example for people to convert their life to a life of simplicity based around God. This life of simplicity would impact people suffering

from natural disasters, political wars and even everyday problems.

After the first encounter with the leper, Francis started spending more time in churches around his home town. Every day he prayed, searching for an answer to fill the emptiness he felt. Luckily he found some pleasure in helping care for and nurse lepers. But one day, while he was at prayer, Francis heard the voice of Christ telling him to live a life of great poverty and to devote himself to God, He was also instructed to rebuild the Christian church. He obeyed and began preaching the good word all around Assisi and was soon joined by 12 followers.

In the present, Saint Francis would try his hardest to help people across the world answer their call from Christ. Even if he had to fly all the way across the ocean, he would still try to find the money to help someone in need of help to answer a call from God.

Lastly, in the building of the Christian Church, Saint Francis needed to raise money for the project. To obtain the money he needed, he sold some of his father's belongings without his permission. When Saint Francis came to the bishop with the money, he was immediately told to return it. Out of sorrow for what he had done, he humbled himself further and left Assisi to preach the good word.

In the present day, I think Saint Francis would help anyone with a similar problem. If someone had done something they shouldn't have, he would encourage them to fix the problem and repent the very same way he did.

In conclusion, based on events that occurred during Saint Francis's lifetime, I bet that if he were here today he would encourage us to live a life of simplicity, show us how to give comfort to the sick and needy, help us answer a call from Christ, and help us solve all our problems whether they are big or small.



Left to Right: Mrs. Sarah Visser, Teacher; Niko Tulian, Contest Winner; Erin Rucker, Principal; and Diane Halal OFS, St. Maximilian Kolbe Secular Franciscan Fraternity



FRANCISCAN STUDIES REFLECTION

by Alfred J. Picogna OFS
St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region

This summer, St. Bonaventure University and the School of Franciscan Studies hosted several Secular Franciscans in July in its presentation of another chapter in the tome of Franciscan Studies. Instructed by Julie McElmurry, *The Testament of St. Francis* highlighted multiple considerations imbedded within the *Testament*.

An overview of Franciscan writings introduced the seminar, followed by the background of the *Testament*. All participants were asked to copy the *Testament* into diaries that were provided. This activity had a dual effect. First, it became a sound way of digging deeper into the reality and meaning of the *Testament*, and, secondly, it generated a gift to give to someone else. That someone else became another member of the class. This was and continues to be the essence of

the Testament — read it, digest it, live it and pass it on.

An enjoyable role play of a press conference with St. Francis was enacted to enhance and enliven the wording of the *Testament*. Reflections contrasting and comparing 13th century thought with 21st century thought seemed to launch the entire *Testament* into current reality.

Rules for hermitages were presented and subsequently sampled in one class session using a “mother/son” approach. The resounding reaction was that it was a profound introspective experience with positive results.

Other presentations were offered the participants. Father David Couturier, OFM Cap, Executive Director, Franciscan Institute and Franciscan Publications: Dean, School of Franciscan Studies, delivered a powerful presentation. On another afternoon, Father Michael Calabria, OFM, entertained us with a special talk on Islam and Franciscans.

A late afternoon trip to Mount Irenaeus Franciscan Mountain Retreat, including the celebration of the Eucharist, rounded out the eventful week.

OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

NAFRA COMPUTER COMMITTEE

We need some OFS computer nerds to serve on the NAFRA Computer Committee.

We maintain the NAFRA List Servers, the NAFRA Website and the NAFRA Database for the Order.

Our most pressing needs are for database management folks. The database is nearly 15 years old and was developed to ensure that every Secular Franciscan in the country receives a copy of the *TAU-USA* newsletter. It generates *TAU-USA* mailing lists and serves as a source of Regional and Fraternal membership information for quick rosters and yearly reports. The software is old and needs to be upgraded, as parts of the programs are no longer supported.

If you have experience with databases and modern database language variants, please consider becoming a member of the NAFRA Computer Committee. We need your help.

If you are interested, please email Dan Mulholland, OFS, Computer Committee Chair (dannymai@aol.com) and copy Mattie Ward, OFS, National Secretary (mamamattiel@gmail.com). Include a brief summary of your Franciscan journey and a description of your computer experience and capabilities.

NATIONAL HISTORIAN

The National Executive Council is seeking applicants for the position of National Historian. If you are interested in serving in this capacity, or if you would like to nominate someone for the position, please contact National Secretary Mattie Ward OFS at mamamattiel@gmail.com for an application form before November 30, 2016.

The qualities required for the position of NAFRA Historian include:

- An interest in the history of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States
- The ability to conduct research
- Good writing and communication skills
- Familiarity with the structure of the Secular Franciscan Order
- A willingness to reach out to various Secular Franciscan Order groups, and the wider Franciscan family
- Ability to travel, as needed, to do research
- Willingness to gain knowledge of the OFS Archives at St. Bonaventure University
- The time and ability to begin writing the next volume of OFS History in the USA

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