



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.

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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

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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.”

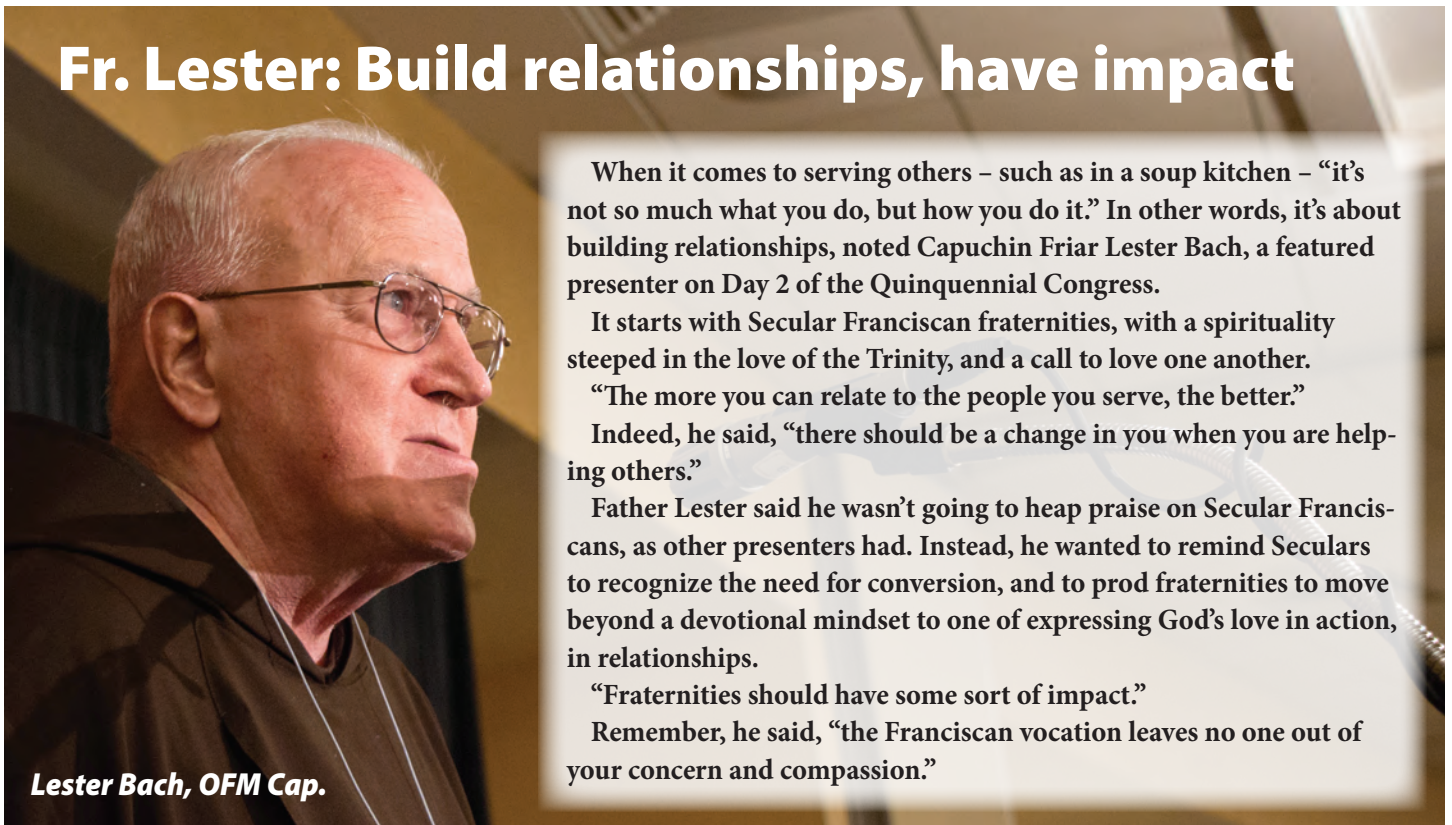
He referred to the “joy and challenge

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.



