

TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

Fall/Winter 2017 ISSUE 93



Ruby Mountains, Nevada

Photograph by April Child

To every thing there is a season
and a time to every purpose under the heavens.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

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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A Spanish version of the TAU-USA is now available and being mailed to Spanish speaking members upon request. If you wish to receive the TAU USA in Spanish and not English, please send your name, address, fraternity name and region name to: Cindy Wesley OFS, cw93444@gmail.com or 846 Calimex Place, Nipomo, CA 93444.



NAFRA-USA

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER-USA

National Minister's Message

by Jan Parker, OFS

Two events this past October made quite an impact in my life, both personally and in my role as National Minister. The first of these events was our National Fraternity Chapter at Mount St. Francis, Indiana. The second was the Korean Congress in Huntington, New York. Each of these large gatherings of Secular Franciscans from across the country had its own unique purpose, and each also presented some particular challenges. To be honest, I headed to each of these events with some anxious concerns, but prayer was answered and love won the day! I came away filled with such joy, wonder and thankfulness that my heart is still dancing as I think about it. What struck me to the point of amazement is the fraternal love I witnessed and experienced when it could have so easily gone another way. My sisters and brothers, you were shining like stars! And that is exactly the point.



We are all too aware of the darkness of sin in our world. Controversial issues can polarize us. Difficult discussions can become contentious. Hardheartedness can obscure our vision. Language and cultural barriers can cause mistrust and isolation. This darkness can affect each of us, and our fraternity gatherings are not immune. Yes, evil is invasive, but there is nothing to fear. Darkness can never overcome the light of Christ which has come into the world (cf. John 1:1-18).

Light breaks into the darkness when kindness and courtesy abound; when someone thinks of your needs ahead of time and provides for them; when you are new to a group and receive a great welcome; when you do not know the language and willing translators are ever at your side; when a forum is established so that every voice – even the newest, and even the least – is heard and respected; when deliberations are filled with active listening; when we really do seek to understand more than to be understood, and when joy and laughter fill a room. This was my experience at each of these events.

At the Chapter it was a joy to hear convictions expressed with gentleness and humility; and heartwarming to see tender concern shown to those who struggled with a majority decision. There were differences of opinion but no discord. Bumps in the road were patiently tolerated as the Holy Spirit worked and we trusted the process. The Korean Congress was an example beyond compare of how to include those who do not speak the language, how to gently invite and encourage someone unfamiliar to enjoy cultural traditions. My feeble attempts at speaking Korean were warmly received.

Brothers and sisters, we know it's never easy to be away from home and in a strange place. It's not easy to create fraternity in a group where some have known each other a long time, and some are new. None of these challenges are easy to deal with, but you did it! Yes, there were a few inconveniences, but cooking breakfast together gave us an opportunity for team building and exploring culinary gifts; community bathrooms provided an experience of our common humanity. These hurdles were a source of joy as we gently and humbly helped one another over them.

It's an amazing thing to be around this kind of love. It can change you. It opens you up to what is real and true and good. It can fill you with wonder. St. Augustine says, "Love gives birth to unity, pride

gives birth to division.” I assure you neither pride nor divisiveness were to be found.

I can't thank you enough for showing me – loud and clear – what love is all about. It's not that these gatherings were any more special than so many others, but I was obviously at a place where I really needed to witness love in action. I needed an anchor of hope to keep me believing that our profession to live the gospel really does make a difference in our lives.

I pray this kind of love will always be seen when we come together, but our call is to also bring this love to the world. I believe that is happening. I also believe that what I experienced at these two events will make a big difference in the life of our Order and mold us in the year ahead. Love always points the way forward.

In a few weeks we will celebrate Christmas, and I will be gazing at the manger scene and all the lights

on my tree. As I look at each little light I will think of each of you, twinkling like stars in the sky above Bethlehem. You are bright with love as you look upon the Babe. The Light you reflect points out the way for others, as if to say, “I have found Love, and He is right here in the manger!”

Our love story with the Lord continues. He loves us and comes to us so humbly. Let us go to him humbly as well, eager to receive His Love.

*“Be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full of accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation in which you shine like stars in the world.”
Philippians 2:2-4, 14-15*

P.S. Shortly after writing this article I found the following passage from The Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano. It describes those early gatherings of the Lesser Brothers. It is a fitting description of our gatherings as well:

“The noble building of charity rises *upon the foundation* of perseverance;
and in it *living stones*,
gathered from every part of the world,
have been built in to a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.
What a great flame of charity burned in the new disciples of Christ!
What great love of devout company flourished in them!

When they all gathered somewhere
or met each other on the road (which frequently happened),
in that place a shoot of spiritual love sprang up,
scattering over all love the seeds of real delight.

What more can I say?
There were
chaste embraces, delightful affection, a holy kiss,
sweet conversation,
modest laughter, joyful looks, *a clear eye*,
a supple spirit, *a peaceable tongue*, *a mild answer*,
a single purpose, prompt obedience and untiring hands.”

Sharing The Vision

News from the National Executive Council

by Jan Parker and Mary Bittner

Faithful, Fraternal and Fruitful

These words come to mind as we reflect on our 2017 National Fraternity Chapter. It was faithful to all that a Chapter should be. It was fraternal, uniting us in prayer, relationship building and ongoing formation. It was fruitful in all that was accomplished. We are thankful for your prayers and thankful for how the Holy Spirit led us in every aspect and each day of our five-day gathering of more than fifty National Fraternity Servant Leaders. An overview of the Chapter can be found in the special section in this issue of TAU-USA. We also highlight the following:

2017 State of the Order

The State of the Order is a talk given by the National Minister at each Chapter; that talk is based on a comprehensive report with the same name. The actual State of the Order report is sent out each year prior to Chapter. This year it is a 12-page report that includes an overview of the past year, a summary of accomplishments in each area of priority and an outline of the challenges that face us as an Order. Ancillary reports from our National Commissions and Committees are attached to the State of the Order for reference. If you are interested in learning more about the current state of our National Fraternity, this report is a “must read.” You can find the State of the Order report on our website under “Annual Reports to the OFS-USA,” or by requesting a copy from Jane DeRose-Bamman at janeCBSfo@msn.com.

New Vision for Youth, Vocations and Multiculturalism

There is a great need in our Order for individuals and local fraternities to become educated, inspired and motivated to action in the areas of Youth, Vocations and Multiculturalism. To meet this need, we have given much emphasis to these areas during the past year. God is blessing our efforts. By different paths and on different timelines, three Chairs have emerged who are bringing new life and new vision to each of these priorities: Kathleen Molaro (Youth), Jane DeRose-Bamman (Vocations) and Willie Guadalupe (Multiculturalism). These three women are passionate and inspirational leaders who each bring with them a vision of what is possible.

At our 2017 Chapter, we brought these three “chairs” to the table, so to speak, by inviting Kathleen, Jane and Willie to speak to us. Their presentations were creative and captivating. Youth Commission Chair Kathleen Molaro showed a photo of an OFS gathering and asked, “Where are the youth?” Then, with a little humor, she got to the heart of the matter, emboldening us with the

confidence that we *can* engage youth – it’s not impossible, we simply need to summon the courage to take the necessary steps. Vocation Chair Jane DeRose-Bamman shared her experience on a plane to show that “there’s no vacation from vocations” – she talked with those seated near her and offered them a copy of the TAU-USA. Jane then showed us the power of a trademark, endorsed our new OFS-USA logo, and invited us to open the Vocations Tool Kit to find more ways to promote the Order. Willie Guadalupe’s presentation on “Multiculturalism and Diversity” was a passionate plea that we not isolate ourselves or ignore others because of language, culture or other barriers. She stressed the need for inclusiveness, stating that it is not only a matter of love, but of justice. Her presentation ended with practical and important recommendations and a heartfelt prayer for unity.

Jane, Kathleen and Willie are each gifted and enthusiastic, but they cannot bring renewal to these vital areas of Youth, Vocations and Multiculturalism unless their enthusiasm is shared by each local fraternity and each Region. How can we accomplish this? It would be great to bring each of these women, with their zeal and ideas, to your local fraternity – that may or may not be possible – but each of them is available to you by email or phone. Each one of them is ready and willing to help you create dynamic initiatives to engage youth, promote vocations with enthusiasm and build relationships across cultures to bring us the richness of all our brothers and sisters.

What is *also* possible is to welcome their message and their recommendations. You might start by looking at their PowerPoint presentations, available on our website. Follow up by viewing these presentations together with your local fraternity or at a Regional gathering. Read the articles on Youth, Vocations and Multiculturalism in this issue, or past issues of the TAU-USA. Finally, and most importantly, spend some time *talking about what you can do*. What a change there would be in our Order if each local fraternity and each Region took these messages to heart and put these recommendations into action!

2018 National Fraternity Theme

With a new year also comes a new national theme. In 2018, we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Pauline Rule, and our 2018 theme reflects this occasion. The theme chosen by those gathered in Chapter is: “Renewed and Confirmed: Live the Treasure!” It includes the tag line “Celebrating 40 years of our OFS Rule.” Our 1978 Rule is certainly a gift to celebrate. Let this Rule, this call to live the gospel life, guide us in the year ahead. Let us be faithful, fraternal and fruitful in living the Rule. Let’s be Franciscans!

The world needs this Franciscan spirit, this Franciscan vision of life. It is expected that you, beloved children, know it deeply, love it with passion, above all that you live it with the perfection that your state allows.

~ Pope Pius XII, *To the Secular Franciscans of Italy*, 1 July 1956

'Hearts Alive'

Special section by
BOB & MARY STRONACH, OFS

A PERSPECTIVE ON THE NATIONAL CHAPTER

by PAT CHALMERS, OFS

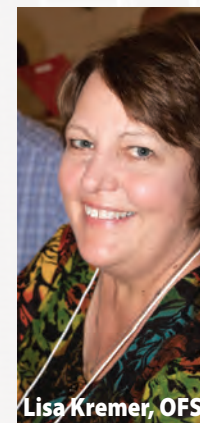
The National Chapter of Secular Franciscan Order, held September 26 to October 1, saw 'hearts alive' and in action.

The Chapter pulled our hearts together (the engines of our beings). We were fueled by the Holy Spirit. He united us in the bonds of Fraternity.

Over 80 regional ministers and guests travelled from as near as Holy Trinity Region, the chapter host, and as far away as Guam, nearly halfway around the world. This gathering brought to mind a chapter called by Francis of Assisi in our fraternal early days. The site of the gathering (Mount Saint Francis, Indiana; just northwest of Louisville, KY), while uniquely Franciscan, was considerably

more hospitable and modern than the 13th century hills of Italy. Yet that spirit of Franciscanism was evident in all we did. As Francis himself noted in the Siena Testament: *"Write that I bless all my brothers, (those) who are in the Order, and who will come until the end of the world... Let them always love and be faithful to our Lady Holy Poverty, and let them always be faithful and subject to the prelates and clerics of Holy Mother Church."*

Continued on next page.



Lisa Kremer, OFS

'Peace' Award Reveals a Journey of 'Yes'

by MARY STRONACH, OFS

Lisa Kremer, OFS is "one who keeps saying 'yes'."

That "yes" journey, which began in 2002 with her Secular Franciscan profession and a trip to Guatemala, led to her receiving the 2017 Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Award at the National Chapter.

She advocates for immigrants, and gives their children the opportunity to visit grandparents back in Central America.

National JPIC Animator Carolyn Townes, OFS, put it this way: "When one of ours gets it, ALLELUIA!"

Continued on next page.



Chapter participants were often smiling when not adding spirited voices to the discussion.

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National spiritual assistants, friars (priests and brothers), deacons – all joined with their secular brothers and sisters to animate this Chapter.

A typical work day went for 11 hours with breaks interspersed for meals, prayer, and free time. The actual work time was about 8 hours, plus or minus. Time devoted to group prayer amounted to about an hour and a half. The meetings chained together smoothly,

linking ideas, discussions, imperatives, and decisions into a smooth flowing “instrumentum laboris.” This instrument of work seemed nearly musical in both form and function.

Which brings us to rushing (literally) through meetings -- meetings that examined our animation with regards to: Formation (direction, directors, way & means); Duns Scotus Fund; Franciscan Action Network (FAN); our National Fraternity; Instrumentum Laboris; our

2018 theme; spiritual assistance; ongoing formation. And other priorities such as vocations, communications, ecumenical/interfaith, finances, and, where we are going.

The accompanying dialogue seemed truly inspired. It’s no wonder that National Minister Jan Parker so often prayed:

“Let us be fully open to the grace of the Holy Spirit.”

JPIC AWARD *continued from previous page*

2002 was a pivotal year – a conversion experience, her profession, and a campus ministry trip to Guatemala.

Going to an underdeveloped country and getting to know Guatemalans made such an impact that she returned five years later. But this time, she decided to change the name from a “mission” trip to an “awareness” trip. In 2009, she said “yes” again for another trip.

By this time, Lisa had moved to Worthington, Minnesota, where there is a large group of Guatemalans. She became friends with these people. Here, a Guatemalan housekeeper in the local rectory asked Lisa to visit her mom whom she had not seen for 15 years. The mother lived in a rural, indigenous, dangerous region. Based on the advice of the parish priest who said that God wanted her to go, she journeyed to San Marcos with a driver and bodyguard. Lisa met with the families but felt guilty because the Guatemalan children back



Lisa Kremer, OFS, with National JPIC Animator Carolyn Townes, OFS

home could not visit their extended families, especially grandparents, in the home of their ancestors.

A revelation got Lisa to take action... While the parents are undocumented and cannot risk journeying back to their homeland, the children are US citizens. They can travel freely and openly and meet and enjoy the families their

parents had left behind in Guatemala. “Familias Juntas” (Connected Families) was born! “God opened all doors,” said Lisa. Around the same time Lisa met a Guatemalan filmmaker, Luis Argueta, who wanted to document the journey.

While concerned about the risks of such an open activity, the parents

Continued on next page

Challenges Help Set Priorities, National Minister Reports

'WE ARE BLESSED WITH THE GIFT OF GOD'S POWER!'

National Minister Jan Parker began the State of the Order report leading all in song and giving thanks to God for the bonds of fraternity. In particular she noted the growing bond with our OFS brothers and sisters around the world. Citing both "joys and struggles" during the year, she said that "challenges help us set priorities."

Jan outlined each area of priority stating the importance of:

- solid formation,
- the active presence of Spiritual Assistants,
- a coordinated communications structure,
- wider public relations,
- a new website,



- improvements to the database,
- our responsibilities in the area of social justice.

"We do so well in the our charitable outreach," she said, "but bringing our voice to public policy is part of the Bishop's call for love in action, and part of our call."

She announced:

- an upcoming survey to coordinate outreach to other countries,
- a new Vocations Toolkit to assist local fraternities in their efforts,
- a Guidelines Task Force to review and publish national policies.

Noting the importance of a "brand," Jan unveiled the new OFS-USA logo –

an original artistic version of the TAU that is "more alive."

Stating that "servant leadership is not easy," she reminded council members to turn to each other for support especially when facing decisions for the good of the Order. Pointing to a San Damiano cross, she said, "Here is where we find our strength."

In closing Jan led all in a blessing based on the Beatitudes, stating that *we have been blessed with the gift of power.*

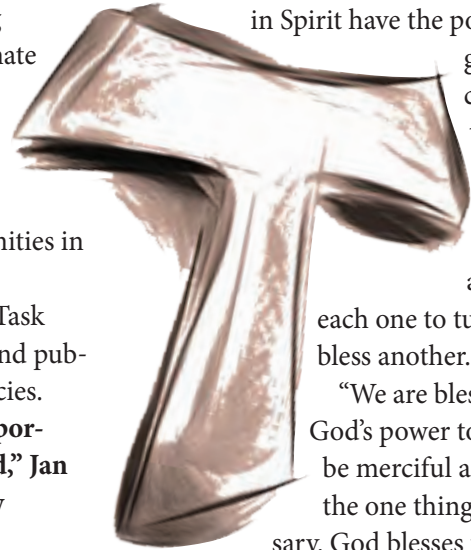
Beginning with, "the gentle poor in Spirit have the power to

give," she continued this litany of God's empowerment, and asked

each one to turn and bless another.

"We are blessed with God's power to unite, to be merciful and to find the one thing necessary. God blesses us, and

we in turn bless each other in so many ways!"



JPIC AWARD *continued from previous page*

agreed, feeling that the story needed to be told. The film, called "Abrazos", which means "hugs" in Spanish, was recently shown to Pope Francis.

Since that first amazing family reunion, Lisa made a number of trips to introduce children to their grandparents.

Lisa's ministry now encompasses a network of volunteers, advocating for families, providing transportation and support for immigration court, connecting with immigration lawyers, visiting people in jail, and supporting families of those who have been deported. She also has a "Dreamcatcher's Program" that helps these "bright" kids envision a better future.

Lisa tells the story of a young women she met in Guatemala who provided this perspective:

"You (U.S. volunteers) come to Guatemala on an airplane. We invite you into our homes and maybe feed you food we can't afford to give our children... We come to your country on a long trip across the desert. We leave our families behind, go into debt. When we get to your country, we're sick, injured and called illegal. We work the worst jobs, hiding all the time for fear that someone will send us back..."

Lisa took a long pause, and added: "And that's why the poor will inherit the kingdom of heaven."



2018

NATIONAL THEME

**Renewed and Confirmed:
Live the Treasure!**

*(Celebrating 40 years
of our OFS Rule)*

THE BUSINESS OF THE ORDER

NATIONAL CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

Finances

Treasurer Jerry Rousseau, OFS, provided an overview of the Treasurer's report. He mentioned the use of restricted accounts with donations to CIOFS (international council of the Secular Franciscan Order) for help with costs for the General Chapter, including the funding for travel to the General Chapter for English-speaking African nations and the H2O Collections project. The report was approved.



The budget for 2018 is up approximately \$20,000 to a total of \$306,782, but, Jerry emphasized, there would be no need to increase Fair Share. The budget won unanimous approval.

New Website

Lee Potts, OFS, the new website designer, unveiled the shell of the new NAFRA website. A goal is to have a modern site which will attract young people. It should be useful to members and people who don't know about the Order. There was a positive response to the detail revealed which included an events calendar, a translation feature and a secured back-up system.



Lee Potts, OFS, discusses development of a new NAFRA website.

Charitable Giving

The Charitable Giving Task Force recommended the distribution of \$13,000 to 13 charities. The amounts for each were determined by the number of votes received by each charity. The charities were: Villa la Paz Foundation, Holy Cross Retreat Center, Amazon Relief, To The Nations Inc., Outreach to First Nation People, Franciscan Family Apostolate, Remedio entre Todos, Franciscan Ministries, Holy Family Vocational Orphanage Foundation in Uganda, St. Francis Inn, Franciscan Mission Service, Blessed Mary Angela Spirituality Center Among the Poor, and Franciscan Federation for the Holy Land. The recommendations of the Task Force were approved by the body.

Duns Scotus

The Duns Scotus Fund may be used for OFS Formation projects. Grants are based on merit and financial need.

Fostering Stronger Ties with Bishops

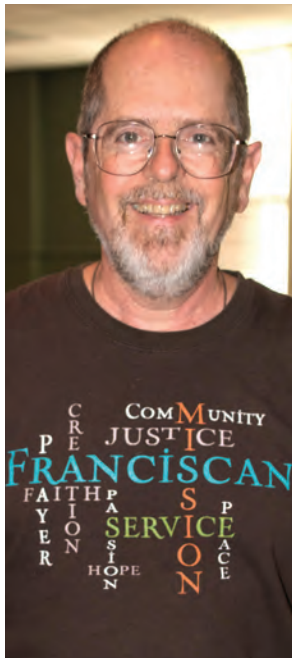
In a discussion directed by David Seitz, OFS, on fostering Regional Fraternity relationships with local bishops, several suggestions were shared:

- Write letters to bishop stating who we are, which fraternities are in their diocese and contact.
- When the bishop visits the parish (for confirmation, etc), it is an opportunity to introduce yourself and thank him for guidance.
- Share newsletter with bishops, provincials, provincial SAs.
- Send anniversary cards to Bishop on date of appointment.
- RMs should introduce themselves to Bishop.
- Invite the bishop or his representative to anniversary celebrations and Franciscan Feast days.
- The more we are involved in parish and diocesan life, the more people know about the OFS.
- Suggest interviews in diocesan newsletters.
- Get into the diocesan directory.

Continued on next page.

Franciscan Mission Service Partnership

Patrick Martin, OFS, president of the board of Franciscan Mission Services (FMS), proposed a partnership with the OFS. Founded in 1985, FMS sends lay people to serve in



other countries and then brings them back on “reverse mission” – to share the experience with communities in the U.S.

Patrick requested:

- Prayer.
- Participants for an OFS Short Term Mission Trip (1-2 weeks to Bolivia or Guatemala, approximately \$2K per person).
- Information and talent sharing. He is willing to help share with young adults.
- Keeping returned missionaries involved in the Franciscan family.
- Money. OFS has been very generous in the past.

Patrick said this partnership is directed to Regional and Local fraternities. Any interested OFS can contact Patrick for information. There are no budgetary implications for NAFRA. Patrick added: “This could be an opportunity to bring young adults into our Order.”

Franciscan Youth

New Youth Commission Chair Kathleen Molaro, OFS, is facing some challenges, she says, especially with distance and with a lack of animators for Franciscan youth in fraternities.



There’s opportunity in a “large diversity of youth.”

This past summer’s Youth Visioning Workshop helped Kathleen begin to assess and embrace the challenge of reaching Franciscan Youth. She explained that during the process, drafts of an updated vision and mission statement were written, a list of tasks were identified, a timeline was determined and the makeup of a commission were highlighted.

World Youth Day, she added, is scheduled for January 2019. “We are compelled to go,” she said. “We must... And let us become the bridge (as Mary is the bridge to Christ, as represented in the logo for World Youth Day).”



Willie Guadalupe, OFS, new chair for Multiculturalism and Diversity.

Multicultural Brothers and Sisters

“Discover a friend!” urged Willie Guadalupe, new chair for Multiculturalism and Diversity. “Diversity acknowledges differences. Multiculturalism accepts differences,” she explained, adding several actions that we, as OFS members should be doing to embrace our brothers and sisters and to discover a new friend: “Recognize diversity. Respect differences. Acknowledge. Value. Encourage. Empower. Celebrate rather than tolerate. Be proactive in listening. Accept all people as a gift of God.”

“This is a justice issue,” she said. “We cannot tolerate actions that deny basic human justice.”

After charting projected growth of various population groups, she addressed the issues of language, of having bilingual fraternities and formation materials, and resources in other languages.

She recommended that the attendees assess the pulse of their communities, develop strategies to attract multicultural candidates and consider bilingual fraternities where that sense of fraternity is experienced by all members.

No Vacation from Vocation

“There is never a vacation from your vocation,” reminded Vocations Chair Jane DeRose-Bamman. “Spreading the word is everyone’s responsibility.”

To that end, “we need a variety of tools to build the kingdom,” she said, explaining that a vocations toolkit would be available in early 2018. Among the tools to promote the Order are promotional items like: pens, stickers, magnets, t-shirts, license plate holders. The new on-line toolkit will include: A Come & See Outline, prayers, business cards, brochures, social media access, the new logo, on-line testimonials, and Spanish and Korean tools.

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Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee

Donna Hollis, OFS, a member of the Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee, shared her emotional journey of faith to Ca-



tholicism and to Francis triggered by her viewing of the movie, *Brother Sun Sister Moon*. Her anti-Catholic parents and her initial concerns about Mary's role didn't sway her. She reported that, after some years, her mother, who was initially angry with the church because her best friend became a cloistered nun, also became Catholic.

"We go through life with misconceptions, but we still have to be open to new people...we must draw together at one table."

At the end of her session, she invited those interested to view the new video that the committee produced on building awareness to what ecumenism is and what they are doing. The title of the video is: "The Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity: An Instrument of Peace."

CNSA Report

With the departure of Brother Bob Brady, OFM, from the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA), the CNSA consists of only two national spiritual assistants.



Brother Alexander Escalera, OFM Cap., announced that he was actively reaching out to the four obediences to address the need. He also spoke to the issue of initiating an abuse prevention program. "We need a policy," he said. "Certification must be in effect before placement for a spiritual assistant. It is required for all – present and

future."

Loving Farewell to Brother Bob

Was it a roast or a toast? Memories abounded. Love overflowed. Applause of appreciation filled the room when the attendees said their goodbyes to National Spiritual Assistant Br. Bob Brady, OFM. After comparing him to a piano, a finely-tuned instrument, *with a shiny top*, Fr. Christopher Panogoplos, TOR, gave him a touching send-off by saying, "We will continue to honor you by our Franciscan living."

As part of his closing remarks, Brother Bob said: "My hopes are that you commit yourselves to find ways to reach out to those who have less than yourselves – to help fill the void."



Fr. Christopher Panogoplos, TOR

A Brief History of the Order

During one session, Fr. Christopher Panogoplos, TOR, provided a brief historical overview of the Franciscan family, reminding attendees of their origins as the Brothers and Sisters of Penance. "The name of the order includes the word 'penance.'"

Our first rule was approved in 1289 by Pope Nicholas IV. After that time, many left their homes to live in community, following the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Thus, he said, in 1447 the Third Order Regulars (TOR) grew from our roots. The TORs, he said, are our "children." "The Third Order Regular has come from you."

In 1927 with the rule approved by Pius XI, we were all banded together into one, including religious sisters and priests. This rule emphasized daily conversion, he said.

Next year, we are celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the OFS Rule of 1978 and the TOR will be celebrating the 35th Anniversary of their updated rule.



Brother Bob and Father Christopher.

Formation Team Serves Franciscan 'Tea' for the Soul

If the National Formation Team has its way, Franciscans can savor a cup of tea in a variety of charismatic flavors.

Or, as the theme for their presentation put it: *"Tea for your Franciscan soul: A moment of retreat."*

Headed by Mary Anne Lenzi, OFS, the team served National Chapter attendees a cup of "tea" by handing out cards, each with a different selection of Franciscan "tea" bags. They included words that end with a "tea" sound (or the letters "ty"); namely, authenticity, unity, activity, hilarity, diversity, formability, priority, sensitivity, hospitality, spirituality, poverty, humility, simplicity, charity, fraternity.

What is the essence of our "tea?" they asked. They urged attendees to smell the "aroma" of their "tea." How does it blend with one's identity as a Francis-



Formation Commission Chair Mary Anne Lenzi, OFS, and Formation Spiritual Assistant Anne Mulqueen, OFS.

can? How does this "ty" manifest itself in one's life? What might God be inviting one to do?

Soft music in the background allowed the attendees time to consider and process how their "-ty" word fit into their Franciscan reality and to allow God to

speak to them.

A few shared observations:

- *Formability* – It's like "clay. I must learn when to stop to determine who is forming me." -- Patsy Phillips, OFS, *Los Tres Compañeros*.

- *Humility* "goes well with humble pie-ty." -- Linda Trythall, OFS, *Our Lady of the Rockies*.

- *Activity* – "If you're not going to do anything, then why wear the TAU? Re-define your activity based upon your shell (wearing of Tau)." -- Jeane Swaynos, OFS, *Five Franciscan Martyrs*.

- *Authenticity* – "There was no duplicity in Francis. He was all in." -- David Seitz, OFS, *Divine Mercy*.

In closing, the team urged: "Take your 'tea' with you and sip it with other people."

U.S. Order Declares Solidarity with Refugees, Poor, Those Facing Hatred

On behalf of 12,000 Secular Franciscans across the U.S., the National Fraternity issued a statement at the Chapter declaring "our solidarity with those who are immersed in situations that cause division, fear, and hopelessness."

The statement pointed to "refugees fleeing unbearable conditions," families in poverty, and people trapped "where racism, hatred, and violence prevail."

The statement expressed concern over the "failure of Congress to act on issues of immigration." Noting their Rule challenges Secular Franciscans to be "at the forefront of promoting justice" and to "strive to bring joy and hope to others," the statement challenged "all people of faith" to: "take actions that promote peace and justice; work to change policies that disrespect the dignity of the

least among us; offer a helping hand to those in need; and pray always."

The statement concludes: "Pope Francis has told us that it is time, in doing this important work, for us to witness 'patient expectation and apostolic endurance.' (Evangeli Gaudium) It is time for us to become 'this hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast.'" (Heb. 6: 19)

GEO Groups Discuss Franciscan Action Network

During the National Chapter, Geographical (GEO) Groups were formed of about ten regional ministers each to address several topics, including Franciscan Action Network (FAN). The groups offered a variety of perspectives on whether the U.S. Secular Franciscan Order should continue funding FAN.

Some teams supported the National

Executive Council's recommendation to fund FAN for one more year. "We need a seat at the table (referring to the fact that Carlos Calderón, OFS, was invited to serve on the board). We must continue the dialogue to clarify expectations."

"Be more transparent on the Hill and don't just have controversial rhetoric," said another team. "Rhetoric is the

problem. Francis didn't do it this way."

Another team suggested that we "be our own Secular Franciscan voice... We should have more control, more involvement and not give it away."

Once all teams presented their perspectives, the body had an open discussion, and voted overwhelmingly to fund FAN for another year.

Chapter's Masses Offer Advice on Living the Gospel

Daily Masses at the National Chapter were not only food for the soul, but offered insights on priority living.

Setting priorities is a “familiar struggle,” noted Lexington, KY Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv.

“Sometimes it’s easier to practice faith with struggles. It’s harder to give proper priority when things are easier.”

Presiding at Mass on the third day of the chapter, the bishop asked: “Did you ever notice that all the money-making in the world is not satisfying?”

The challenge is “living the Gospel message in secularity.” That’s what it means to be Franciscan. “We need to bring things into perspective and priorities.”

If we were to set the right priorities, he challenged attendees to imagine, “What if we make the powers nervous because we’re promoting life, had policies that promote family life, the dignity of the worker? What if we made the powers nervous, making a splash, making them perplexed, creating a stir?”

He added: “Recognize the words of Jesus as a transformative event and put the Gospel forward. Challenge those who make it difficult to put the Gospel into practice.” That should be the priority.

At another Mass, Fr. Ed McKenzie, OFM, provincial spiritual assistant for Sacred Heart Province, pointed to “leadership” as a priority. “Others flow



Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv.

from this.”

“We’re here as leaders of the Order and the Messiah is among us. We were led here by someone and chosen to lead others.”

In the case of Jesus, he needed 12 leaders to kick-start the process and then pass it on to others. Success is hinged on choosing the right people.

The goal to becoming a better leader is a never-ending process, he said.

Jesus says, what you see is what you get with a leader. “Don’t put on airs. Practice what you preach. Call a spade a spade. This can rub people the wrong

way, but then, love is tough. Tell it like it is.”

Another leadership quality is to be able to change your mind. You “need to be open to the facts, even those that don’t support our position. Be open to possibility. Often we become immovable. My road or the highway.”

A leader should be “a thoughtful and reflective person, careful in considering things,” so “think before you act.”

As leaders, we “embrace the values important to Francis – honesty, humility, faith, generosity.”

“A good leader is honest about his faith and his doubts. That’s sincerity.”

At the opening Mass, National Spiritual Assistant Fr. Christopher Panopoulos, TOR, pointed to the priority of Gospel-inspired action.

The “Gospel will never be politically correct,” he said. “The Secular Franciscan Order will never be politically correct. We must leave our comfort zones...where we will be challenged...to travel with those left for dead.”

He added: “We’re confronted with so many challenges threatening Gospel living... We come to this holy place to discuss what we are about, not just by words but by action. We take to heart what the church is asking us to do joyfully.”

He added: “You know who the lepers are. Reach out so they can feel the love of God.”

GEO Groups Tackle Priorities for ‘Instrumentum Laboris’

GEO Groups tackled the issues and recommendations set forth by the document entitled “Instrumentum Laboris,” which was submitted by CIOFS to national fraternities for review and recommendations on priorities.

Instrumentum Laboris addressed eight priority areas: Formation, Fraternal Life, Building a Fraternal and

Evangelical World, Leadership, Communications, Finance, Spiritual Assistance, Franciscan Youth. Each area offered proposals based on the recommendation of the national fraternities around the world.

Following the GEO groups’ presentations, the body decided that top priorities for the U.S. Order were: Forma-

tion, Communication, Leadership and Fraternal Life.

The National Fraternity decided to support the priorities financially in principal, especially formation, but wanted to wait until the General Chapter decided what to support and approve, and the types of funding the International Fraternity would need.

Youth Visioning & JPIC Animation CONCURRENT SUMMER WORKSHOPS



Br. Richard Contino, OSF

“We’re preparing the next greatest generation.”

That’s how Br. Richard Contino, OSF, views Franciscan youth ministry.

It was a statement that resonated with a dozen Secular Franciscans who were envisioning how to bring to life an OFS youth/young adult (YYA) program in the U.S.

Meeting in St. Louis, MO, July 27-30, in conjunction with a gathering of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) animators, the group tackled a vision and potential action items for reviving the YYA commission.

“If Franciscans can’t be a presence for youth, who can?” said Friar Richard, an educator with the Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn. He was a featured presenter for the group, comprised of three national officers and Secular Franciscans involved in youth ministries.

“Be authentic,” the friar urged. Authenticity “is what kids are seeking today.” That’s “where we start, and I do

think we have a phenomenal story (in the Franciscan charism).”

Describing interaction with youth as a kind of “cross-pollination,” the friar pointed to Franciscans as being “living instruments.” In other words, “we help lead them where God wants them to be.”

“Engagement” is a key word, he noted. “It’s being a teacher and a mentor.”

As far as being authentic and engaging, Friar Richard pointed to the words said during a deacon’s ordination as painting a state of action to emulate:

“Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you preach.” That sums up what St. Francis was: Authentic.

A couple of 30-somethings in the group pointed to some common interests that youth have.

“They’re concerned about dating,” Heather Cherniak, OFS, said, noting that they wonder about being professed

and often ask, “What’s it like dating as a Secular Franciscan?”

Kelly Moltzen, an OFS candidate active with Franciscan Action Network, pointed to the way youth tune into social justice issues. “That’s the way to get youth engaged.” Others quickly agreed that JPIC appeals to younger folk because it’s a way to take action and be involved in something meaningful.

Meanwhile, in a nearby room, the JPIC animators were sharing their challenges and successes, nourishing one another.

“Are you a truly Spirit-filled animator?” challenged National JPIC Animator Carolyn Townes.

“It’s not a job. It’s a ministry,” she reminded them. “It’s the Holy Spirit’s job. It’s yours to animate.” In other words, “we have to allow the Spirit to guide us.”

She said they could “make a better impact through divine intervention.” “Not my will. Thy will be done.”



Heather Cherniak, OFS; Kelly Moltzen, OFS candidate, and JPIC’s Carolyn Townes, OFS.



FRANCISCAN YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT COMMISSION REPORT

by Kathleen Molaro, OFS FYYA Commission Chair

As Catholics, and especially as Franciscans, how can we assist young people in their desire to grow closer to God, serve the world in meaningful ways, and find purpose in life? In what ways can we help them experience the transformative power in choosing Gospel lives? Where do we need to be and what do we need to do to fulfill our Baptism and Profession promises?

To examine such questions, 15 of us from around the country traveled to Missouri this August for a Franciscan Youth and Young Adult workshop the National Executive Council initiated and facilitated. We gathered to pray, reflect on various documents, discuss what we've learned from past commissions, and discern future goals. The days were packed with powerful work and an amazing, joyful spirit. We left feeling motivated, confident, and hopeful.

I agreed to be the FYYA Commission Chair because I trusted in the energy and enthusiasm I had witnessed at that gathering! All across the country, we have Franciscan brothers and sisters with great gifts, valuable experience, and determined attitudes. There will be many ways for you to get involved.

Mark Carroll from Ohio and Akisha Townsend Eaton from Tennessee have joined me as the core commission, along with Kathy Taormina from Minnesota, who will serve as our Spiritual Assistant. As the word "commission" implies, however, all Secular Franciscans are sent forth together on this mission. The FYYA Commission is here to serve you and has already begun the work, but unless individuals and fraternities take our Rule and Constitutions seriously, that we "accompany youth on their journey" (GC: Art. 97), our efforts will not bear fruit.

Br. Richard Contino, OSF, shared during our gathering, "We must be ready, willing, and determined to offer our young people and each other life preservers of faith and practice, with a Franciscan perspective and alternative in the world that is so lacking today." The FYYA Commission will meet in the beginning of December to continue our work, but we also invite participation from you.

What you can do now.

1. Pray! Pray! Pray! Robert Montoya, from Santa Maria de Las Montanas, told me he's been lighting a candle every Sunday for the FYYA Commission. Great idea. Thank you, Robert.
2. Seek a FYYA contact person for your region. This would be someone who is willing to receive and disseminate information. Communication and networking is vital.
3. Keep your eyes, ears, and hearts open to those who might eventually serve as FYYA Spiritual Assistants and Animators (as opposed to the contact person, an Animator would work more directly with youth). No names yet, as "job" descriptions will come soon, and training will be available later, but at least be thinking about who in your region might be willing.
4. Start discussing the presence of youth/young adults in your area. Do you have access to college students? Are there young adults in your parish? High school youth groups, catechism or Catholic school students? Are there existing programs you could tap into? What type of connection is feasible for you to make? Our goal is to eventually network with one another to share ideas and resources.

We are called to "develop appropriate means for growth in Franciscan and ecclesial life..." (Rule, art. 24). The time is ripe for a renewal of purpose and courageous action in the area of Franciscan Youth and Young Adults!



BEARERS OF PEACE AND OUR UNCONSCIOUS BIASES

By Carolyn D. Townes, OFS,
National JPIC Animator

“Mindful that 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 in the transforming power of love and pardon. Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others.” (OFS Rule, Art. 19)

When we speak of being bearers of peace and trusting in the divine seed in everyone, we must recognize and become aware of our unconscious biases towards them. We cannot be bearers of peace while operating out of an unconscious bias toward another. **Unconscious bias** refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. They are automatic associations; the things that automatically come to mind when we experience certain stimuli. We then make uninformed, non-premeditated assumptions from those associations. They could be verbal or non-verbal and can malign, insult, or snub people who are of a different color, age, gender, physical ability, culture, language, etc.

Author and columnist Malcolm Gladwell states in his 2007 book **Blink**: *“Our minds reach conclusions without our knowledge.”* Our brains are constantly sorting through data, coming to conclusions without our realizing it. We couldn’t get through our everyday lives if we had to consciously think and sort through every piece of mind data. It is a necessary process that our brains sort through all of this data for us without our knowing it. Sometimes our brains will come to really quick conclusions; then we act on those quick conclusions. This all happens unconsciously, of course, and it originates from our cultural backgrounds and experiences. If we have encountered one or two people who behaved a certain way, we will tend towards believing that all similar people behave that way. We end up vilifying the group instead of convicting the behavior of one or two individuals.

What are your initial and automatic gut reactions or assumptions about certain people or situations? Do those initial reactions honor the divine seed in that individual? Is the person with all the tattoos and piercings of criminal mentality? Since a group of Muslims bombed our structures, are all Muslims terrorists? Trusting the presence of the divine seed in everyone means just that: everyone. Each and every person is a child of God and must be treated as such; regardless of any other differences. We are to hold people accountable for unjust or criminal behavior, not because they are of a different nationality or religion.

In Verbum Domini, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI writes: “God does not reveal himself in the abstract, but by using languages, imagery and expressions that are bound to different cultures. This relationship has proved fruitful, as the history of the Church abundantly testifies. Today

it is entering a new phase due to the spread of the Gospel and its taking root within different cultures, as well as more recent developments in the culture of the West. It calls in the first place for a recognition of the importance of culture as such for the life of every man and woman. The phenomenon of culture is, in its various aspects, an essential datum of human experience.” (VD, 2010)

As Franciscans, we *are* the spread of the Gospel to all people by our very lives and courageous initiatives. We are called to counter-culturalism as we behave in the manner of our Lord Jesus. We recognize the culture of another as a means of learning and growing in love and connection; not as a means of division or exclusivity. Notice the exchange in the following Gospel passage:

From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” But she answered him, “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” Then he said to her, “For saying that, you may go – the demon has left your daughter.” So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. (Mark 7:24 – 30)

The woman, being different, was not afraid to approach this preacher and healer from another culture and country. This was not about her, but about the healing of her daughter. She even stood her ground in the face of being called out as not being “one of us.” But Jesus recognized her faith which surpassed her differences. Can we look beyond the differences and see into the hearts of those we encounter? Can we look with the eyes of faith and compassion to truly see the other? Can we stop, take a deep breath and ask ourselves what am I really thinking about this person right before me? And, is it fair to judge this person based on those thoughts? How can I take a step back and really see the person with the eyes of faith as Jesus would?

Take these questions to prayer and keep them close to hand and heart when faced with making a decision that might be based on an unconscious bias. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in those decisions. You will not only begin to trust in the presence of the divine seed in others, but in yourself as well. May the Lord give you His peace.

News & Views

CNSA



TAV USA - Fall - 2017 - Lester Bach OFM Cap - CNSA Emeritus

WHAT NOW?

Psst: Read the cartoon first.

What does this say about Franciscans? Are we some kind of fanatics? Does our desire to live the gospel, as guided by the OFS Rule, make us look like extremists? Do we feel like outsiders in homes, farms, churches and offices of the world?

If you're a bit like me, I certainly can learn better ways to dialogue with others; better ways to forgive angry words; better ways to achieve unity with people; better ways to deal with emotions, and to persist in caring for others.

We share gospel ways without being arbitrary. We find ways to work with conservatives, moderates and extremists. I kid you not!

Each of us can think we are always right. We cling to our ideas and opinions. We may not be open to the possibility that we could be wrong. Thus we may not even have an



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understanding of "another's" point of view. Dialogue with male or female, young or old, friend or enemy, calls for *attentive listening*. At least we actually hear and understand the ideas even if we disagree. We cannot afford to deal arrogantly with people who disagree with us. It is possible we may not always be totally correct! It takes patience to listen and understand another's point of view and maintain a relationship even when we disagree. Many parents learn this wisdom in their family arguments. Arrogance seldom give others a reason to listen to us. If they do listen (including children, relatives and friends), they may act otherwise when they are not in our presence.

Political and social situations test gospel values and religious perceptions. They challenge our ability to follow the entire OFS Rule. The Rule is sensible, offering a dedicated way to live. Our attempt to *live it* in daily life can be difficult. That's what *profession* is about - *faithfulness!* Intellectual acceptance without consequent action, is a partial approach to faithfulness to the OFS Rule. Our vocation calls us to practice the entire OFS Rule and influence society both within and outside of fraternal life. We are ordinary

people who **profess** to follow the OFS Rule. St. Francis and St. Clare teach us through their lives and words as we attempt to design a more peaceful and friendly world.

The concern for non-violence, sustainable development, justice and peace, and care for our environment are of vital importance for our humanity. They cannot, however, be understood apart from a profound reflection upon the innate dignity of every human life from conception to natural death, a dignity conferred by God Himself and thus inviolable.

Pope Benedict XVI - July 17, 2008

Perhaps we find it difficult to embrace such ideals. But we must do more than read the words. We implement ideas, practicing them in daily life. To show dignity to violent men or women isn't the same as approval of their actions nor a way to support their lifestyle. It does mean being **faithful** to our profession.

The Franciscan spirit looks for ways to help people realize their dignity, given by the Trinity. It may take a long time or even a lifetime before they accept respect and concern and learn new ways. Our task is to be **faithful** to our profession as Franciscans. That includes choosing to share appropriate daily experiences at fraternity gatherings.

... I implore you by God's mercy to offer your very selves to Him: a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for His acceptance, the worship offered by mind and heart. Conform no longer to the pattern of this present world, but be transformed by the renewal of your minds. Then you will be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is good, acceptable, and perfect.

By authority of the grace God has given me I say to everyone among you: do not think too highly of yourself, but form a sober estimate based on the measure of faith that God has dealt to each of you. ...

... Let us use the different gifts allotted to us by God's grace; the gift of inspired utterance, for example, let us use in proportion to our faith; the gift of administration to administer; the gift of teaching to teach, the gift of counseling to counsel. If you give to charity, give without grudging; if you are a leader, lead with enthusiasm; if you help others in distress, do it cheerfully.

Love in all sincerity, loathing evil and holding fast to the good. Let love of the Christian

community show itself in mutual affection. Esteem others more highly than yourself.

Romans 12: 1-3 / 6-10 (REB)



Many things are learned between:

Grandparents and grandchildren;

between parents, children and spouses;

between friends and relatives.

between enemies and strangers

We may not be 100% successful in the desire to develop relationships and live "gospelly." But we persist and learn fresh ways from one another. We live in a way that people can understand the gospel when they observe us! We discover people with a vocation to the OFS. The more fully the OFS Rule shows in our lives, the better our attraction to others. Pious words are not enough. Daily life needs to offer a clear example of gospel living.

A Church which 'goes forth' is a Church whose doors are open. Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world. Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way. At times we have to be like the father of the prodigal son, who always keeps his door open so that when the son returns, he can readily pass through it.

Evangelii Gaudium - The joy of the gospel - Pope Francis - #46

I recently attended a retreat/workshop given by Robert J. Wicks. He tells this story in his book, **Night Call** - *Embracing compassion and hope in a troubled world.*

Now, when I teach, supervise, or mentor professional helpers and healers, I remember this (Previous story) about myself and surprise them with the comment: "Don't be sensitive to others who are different than you are." After I give the time for this to set in and see their surprised, sometimes shocked reactions, I finally go on. "No, don't merely be sensitive to those you seek to help to heal, because 'sensitivity' is frequently a code word for "I'll learn their language so I can teach them my truths." Sensitivity is not enough. We must go beyond and be willing to learn from everyone around us" (Even those who seem not to have the time to acknowledge us during our daily walks).

Night Call - Robert J. Wicks - Pages 16-17
2018 - Oxford University Press

Make me an instrument of your peace. - Please!



FORMATION COMMISSION

TEA FOR YOUR FRANCISCAN SOUL¹ A MOMENT OF MEDITATION AND CONTEMPLATION

by Mary Anne Lenzi, OFS

Like tea, we need to be steeped—steeped in God’s abundant love! This is slow work, as we see in a mirror dimly (1 Cor.12:13), and are often slow to understand. But it is when we KNOW of God’s unfailing, unconditional love that we are able to open ourselves to grow, to be transformed.

In September, I was invited to join a local **fraternity** in their day of retreat. The theme was “*Tea for Your Franciscan Soul.*” I could not imagine what to expect from the title, yet I was receptive and reassured by the **hospitality** of this **community**. I was so inspired by the outcome of this tea party that I invited the National Fraternity to savor a cup of Franciscan tea during our formation presentation at the annual chapter. Together we lingered over a subtle blend of identity—inhaling and ingesting the essence; the fusion of **poverty, humility, simplicity, charity**—each sip bringing us closer to the ultimate **unity** and **reality** of the **Trinity**.

If you wish, select one or two “Teas” from the left hand-column. Breathe in, relax and drink your tea slowly. Use these questions as a meditation guide.

- Activity
- Audacity
- Authenticity
- Catholicity
- Charity
- Chastity
- Circularity
- Clarity
- Community
- Creativity
- Curiosity
- Dependability
- Dignity
- Diversity
- Flexibility
- Formability
- Generosity
- Gratuity
- Hilarity
- Hospitality
- Humanity
- Humility
- Identity
- Integrity
- Interiority
- Minority
- Mutuality
- Poverty
- Receptivity
- Sanctity
- Serenity
- Simplicity
- Spirituality
- Spontaneity
- Trinity
- Unity



What attracted me to this “tea”?

How does this “tea” manifest itself in my life?

What are my challenges in regard to this tea?

What areas of conversion might God be inviting me to in regard to this tea?

At the end of this meditation, give thanks to God for any insights you have received... and enjoy and savor your special “tea”! God’s gift!

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of the one Spirit. (1 Cor 12:13)

Only the Spirit can awaken diversity, plurality, and multiplicity while at the same time building unity.
Pope Francis

¹ Inspiration of Sister Rita Commack, OSF, Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity; adapted and used with permission.



Ecumenical Interfaith Committee Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE JEWISH – AND A FEMALE JEWISH RABBI WHO LEADS AN INTERFAITH ORGANIZATION

by Rabbi Dorit Edut

What does it mean to be Jewish ?

Being Jewish is not only belonging to a faith group, but is also a culture and a people. It takes on many shapes and forms today – from ultra-Orthodox men in black coats and wide-brimmed hats who spend their days in study and prayer to those who are non-religious activists for many social and political causes while enjoying a dietary connection to their Jewish heritage. Even the old cliché about “looking Jewish” doesn’t hold in Israel, where there are Jews from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and South America. So what are really the elements all these different individuals have in common?

First, there is a common history, going back some three thousand years to Abraham, and then through Moses, Kings Saul, David and Solomon, the Destruction of the First Temple and Exile to Babylonia (modern-day Iraq), the Return and life under the Persians, Greeks, and Romans until the Destruction of the Second Temple and Exile all over the Roman Empire.... And so on, until the Holocaust of the Nazi era in the 20th century and the miraculous establishment of the State of Israel as an independent Jewish country in 1948.

During all these years, we learned survival skills and kept our devotion to the learning of the Torah (the source of Jewish laws, which have been adapted to the different living conditions and challenges by the sages of each generation and written down in our Talmud, Codes and Responsa literature). From these sources, the values of education, of preserving life, of treating others with kindness, and pursuing justice for all human beings evolved and have been embedded in the lifestyles of Jews to this day. This is the second common factor we all share.

Thirdly, there has been a connection to the Land of Israel since the beginning of our history, for many centuries a dream that we would all return there when the Messiah would come and establish a center of world peace. When the Zionist movement began at the end of the 19th century, many Jews believed it was

time to make this dream a reality so there could be a refuge from anti-Semitism and a chance to show the rest of the world that we were a normal people like everyone else. Today, 69 years after the United Nations recognized the Jewish state, Israel is definitely a source of great pride for our people, although it has also engendered much debate and criticism among Jews and non-Jews, for some of its policies. Suffice it to say that Israel remains a major focal point for Jews all around the world, and it is still considered a great and good deed to “go up” to live there permanently.

Fourth, Jews have their own calendar – a lunar one with some solar adjustments – that is filled with holiday celebrations that have brought families together since the Temple times so the values of our heritage can not only be experienced through the rituals, customs, foods, prayers and stories but also passed on to the next generation. There is actually only one month in the year without a single holiday or fast day – but even this month contains four Sabbaths, which are considered weekly holidays.

Finally, the main thing we all share – except for those who are humanist or secular Jews – is the belief in one God Who is the Creator of all life, Who cares for all creatures, Who is compassionate and just, all-knowing, and eternal. It is through God’s guidance that we have received the Law, God’s moral requirements of humanity, which, if followed, will bring about world peace and grant us all eternal life.

How did you become a female rabbi?

My own journey to become a rabbi began in 1949, when I was born the daughter of Holocaust survivors who met after WWII in New York City. My mother, who came from Luxembourg, was hidden by the French Resistance in southern France for four years with false Catholic identity papers. My father, who fled to Israel from Berlin with his family in 1934, ended up in the American Army as a translator getting intelligence from German POWs and later supervised the German translators at the Nuremberg Trials. Their experiences impacted my sister and me

very deeply, and we often felt the need to succeed and help secure our own lives and those of our parents here. We also grew up with strong Jewish identities, and already at age 13 I had the desire to become a rabbi – at a time when girls could not even have a Bat Mitzvah. (In the early 1960s only boys had a Bar Mitzvah, a ceremony marking an adolescent’s responsibility to take on Jewish ritual and ethical practices; the Bat Mitzvah is the ceremony for girls.)

So I bided my time, going to Israel to finish college, where I became fluent in Hebrew and immersed myself in life there, finding my wonderful husband some 46 years ago. When we returned to the United States, I became both a teacher of both Jewish studies and of public school social studies and then a crisis and family counselor. Finally at age 50, I applied to rabbinic school. Of course, during all this I was also busy raising our three daughters.

When I was accepted to the Academy for Jewish Religion in New York City, I was overjoyed. Yes, it took quite a lot of hard work and sleepless nights, but I loved my teachers, my studies, and my new friends – all of whom were also mid-life career changers who had similar dreams. As part of our training, I took a nine-week course and served as a hospital chaplain in Michigan, served as an administrator of a part-time Jewish school for two years, and was a student rabbi for several congregations in both New York and Michigan.

But it was not until I had my own pulpit in upstate Michigan that I encountered those – both men and women – who did not yet accept the idea of a female rabbi. So it took some special efforts on my part to understand their resistance and to do what I could to show them that I could be their spiritual leader and teacher – which is what “rabbi” really means. It was there, too, that I began my first efforts in interfaith work, mainly in order to help this congregation feel more secure and integrated into the community. We held several ecumenical services at the synagogue, inviting Christian congregations to participate in the prayers and the luncheon that followed.

How does your Judaism inform your interfaith work?

When my next pulpit brought me to the heart of downtown Detroit, I knew I needed to reach out to the other faith groups nearby to let them know of the desire of this small Jewish enclave to be part of the community and to help in the revival of this great city.

I also believed that the idea of One God, which we affirm twice daily in our prayers, leads us to be connected and caring for ALL people, much like the examples of our ancestors Abraham and Sarah. Furthermore, the importance of working for equality and justice is ingrained through the words of our Prophets and the slavery experience of Egypt, which we are bidden never to forget – through the Passover holiday and in our daily prayers as well. Thus, it was a natural impulse for me to find leaders of other faith-based groups – Baptists, Catholics, Methodists, Unitarians, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Unificationists, Hare Krishna, etc. – to create an interfaith outreach networking group that would bring the resources of our different congregations and civic groups together to help the families and children in Detroit during this time of transformation.

From my own experiences as a teacher and crisis counselor, I knew the non-profits and faith organizations had been filling in the huge gaps to help the needy when the local and state governments and private businesses had failed to provide vital resources, especially during the Recession years. I saw there was a lot of duplication going on, so I thought it would be best if we could combine our efforts to meet these needs, as well as to create new programs where needs were unmet.

Of course, I learned so much about other faiths and social processes this way, and continue this personal growth daily. I was thrilled that so many others willing to join this effort, and today the Detroit Interfaith Outreach Network is a vibrant group, with more than 300 people attending our different events and participating in our projects. For me, one of the highest moments of spiritual awakening and gratitude came during our first interfaith service and potluck at the Catholic church of St. Peter Claver in Detroit. I sat at the altar, looking out at the large interfaith assembly that had just heard a young Muslim boy chant by heart from the Kor’an, and that were now singing a praise to God along with the Hare Krishna group. ‘This’, I said to myself, ‘is what God wants of us – to be together in peace, enjoying life and aware of God’s goodness.’





MULTICULTURALISM AND DIVERSITY IN THE OFS

by Willie Guadalupe, OFS Multicultural Councilor

We need to make the Secular Franciscan Order a welcoming home for all the ethnic groups in our regions that are being called to our Franciscan vocation. We need to accept, welcome, embrace, be enriched by, and fully include our brothers and sisters from different distinct cultural or ethnic groups within a society into our regional fraternities.

Time and time again, Pope John Paul II echoed the teachings of his predecessors and of the Second Vatican Council that “it is one of the properties of the human person that he can achieve true and full humanity only by means of culture” (Gaudium et Spes, no. 53) and that to take away a person’s culture is therefore to damage human dignity grievously. Communion does not abolish differences, but brings together one family, diverse and united in the one Lord.¹

The link between justice and relationship moves us to develop personal perspectives and actions that build on relationships. We cannot tolerate actions that deny basic human dignity for anyone involved. **“Problems can become opportunities when the right people come together.”**

*We can’t see other ethnic groups as ‘they and we’ but as ‘we and we.’
It’s us, all together. People of different cultures bring with them many qualities that can be a blessing to us all, especially the gift of an incarnated and lively faith.*

As your new NAFRA Multicultural Councilor, my first plan of action is to contact each Regional Minister to ask for your support in appointing a Multicultural Chair for your regions. The second phase will be to ask the Multicultural Chairs to take the pulse of the parishes in their areas known to serve specific racial, ethnic, cultural and/or linguistic groups to reach out and invite those who have a vocation to join our Order, perhaps by presenting a bilingual “Come and See”.

My goals are not only to continue to identify formation material that would need to be translated to other languages so there are no ambiguities and all are being formed with the same material used in the U.S., but also to address challenges encountering members of other ethnic groups.

It is also my intent to encourage the development of ongoing dialogue among ourselves, our leaders, and throughout the OFS communities to deepen our experience of community and help us to be “joyful and ready to place ourselves on an equal basis with” one another as our Rule 13 guides us to do.

¹ *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity* (USCCB, 2000), p. 31.

FRANCISCAN LIVING

JOY: THE FRUIT OF LOVE

By Francine Gikow, OFS

This summer a visiting Nigerian priest came to say Mass at the church I attend. He began each liturgy by asking us the same question: “Are you happy?” At first, the congregation did not know how to respond, but eventually we tentatively responded that we were happy. “Good!” he exclaimed. “You should be! God is present right here! He is with you!” From then on, we knew that we had to acknowledge that we were happy, but he never relented asking us the same question until we were *enthusiastically* responding to his question.

This frequent exchange started me thinking. Instead of “happy” I began to substitute the word, “joyful.” So I started asking myself (and others of my Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters) if I/we were truly joyful.

St. Francis was joyful. Franciscans, on the whole as an order, are considered joyful. But why is joy so important for us?

It all goes back to being in love. Being married for 41 years, I remember that God reveals Himself in relationship — especially in the marriage relationship. I think back to the heady days of early love — never spending enough time with each other, expressing our thoughts, desires and words of caring and love. Thinking constantly about each other, doing things for the other, being consumed with “being in love” all made us joyful, exuberant and so filled with love that it spilled over into everything we did. Fr. Dan Horan’s book “Dating God” hits the nail on the head.

In her Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague, St. Clare also describes to a relationship with God in marital terms as

*“Queen and Spouse of Jesus Christ:
...so that She might cling with all her heart to
him
Whose beauty all the blessed hosts of heaven
unceasingly admire,
Whose tenderness touches,
Whose contemplation refreshes
Whose kindness overflows
Whose delight overwhelms,
Whose remembrance delightfully dawns...”¹*

Clare’s expression of her love to her Spouse is a feminine expression of the same love Francis tried to put into words in his Praises of God:

*“You are the holy Lord, God.
Who does wonderful things.
You are strong, you are great.
You are the most high. ...*

*You are our sweetness, You are our eternal life: Great
and wonderful Lord, Almighty God, Merciful
Savior.”²*

But this description was not enough for Francis, so he attempted to express the sublime:

*“All- powerful, most holy,
most high, and supreme God:
all good,
supreme good, totally good,
You Who alone are good...”³*

As you reflect on these prayers of St. Francis, what strikes you? Stay with that thought or insight for a while. Bring it to God and rest in Him. Let the Spirit of God lead you. Think about the enthusiasm, gratitude and love that Francis tried to form into words. Let your own heart rise with gratitude, love and enthusiasm to God. Praise Him, love Him, and desire to imitate Him.

Francis could not describe God with any more superlatives than in his prayers. He could not say enough about his Love, or praise Him adequately with thoughts too high for words! Many of Francis’ prayers, praises and blessings attempted to describe the many facets of God but still fell short of the full grandeur of God.

Francis, a poet, was at a loss for words in praising God, but when words failed, contemplation took its place: “...for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints...”⁴

Like Francis, we too, can be at a loss for words about our experience of God. That’s OK, because through the Spirit we can carry the joy of our God to others. We don’t need words — our behavior brings credibility to our message. In fact, words can many times hinder our message! What is our message? It is simple! Our God is a great God and He loves us and we love Him! There is such joy in this! Spread the JOY!

¹ 4LAg: CA:ED, 54-55

² PrsG: FA:ED I, 109.

³ OFP: FA:ED:I, 162.

⁴ Rom 8: 26-27. (RSV Catholic ed.)

Oh Breath of God, Unite Us in Action

Continued



The Holy Spirit unites us in action!

Fraternities from around the country share stories of how the Holy Spirit is uniting them in action to welcome the stranger, feed the hungry, console the sorrowful, help the poor, reach out to the lonely, or care for the earth.

Faith Award

by Eileen Mantz, OFS

Holy Cross Fraternity presented its first Faith Award to Aaron Brown at Our Lady, Queen of the Americas Church in Conneaut Lake, PA on August 13th.

Aaron has an impressive list of achievements, many involve volunteer work in the community. He is in the Physician Assistant Program at Gannon Catholic University in Erie Pennsylvania.

Holy Cross Fraternity made the award available to all nine churches in Crawford County and received six applications, all were stellar students which made the selection process difficult and required the entire fraternity's participation. The fraternity prays for Aaron and all students as they spread their wings in the academic world.



Aaron Brown with parents, Robert and Rhonda

St. Josaphat Fraternity Outreach Programs

by Kurt Keidl, OFS



The brothers and sisters of St. Josaphat Fraternity in Milwaukee, WI volunteer regularly to serve the hungry, poor and homeless at two different free meal program sites twice each month.

Each Christmas our fraternity also assembles 350 birdseed packages. Our **Christmas Birdseed Project** has a three-fold purpose: to continue the venerable tradition of our founder, St. Francis, of feeding the birds on Christmas Day; to give a gift to family, friends, parishioners; to engage in vocation promotion to our Order.



Faith Award

by Mary McSteen, OFS

St. Clare fraternity, Lady Poverty Region Punxsutawney, PA. Following in the footsteps of Saint Francis, we allow the gospel of Matthew 25:31- 46 to guide our fraternity members in numerous ministries in the parish and the community.

The sharing of our time, love and gifts are always appreciated but it is we who are the recipients of a greater love from those we serve.





Servants of God Secular Franciscan Fraternity

Canonical Establishment Mass October 21, 2017
St. Elizabeth Church, Oakland, California



It truly was a beautiful ceremony. The bilingual aspect of the Mass was subtle but very beautiful. Some of the songs and readings were in Chinese, but Father Franklin has always emphasized that we not celebrate their culture and language as something that separates them...instead we should celebrate the commonality that brings us together.

A group of us were visiting at the reception and one of them mentioned "I thought we would just have cookies and tea." One of the Servants of God fraternity members laughed and said, "That is not the Chinese way." They roasted a whole pig and fixed many side dishes. We sat while they graciously served us then invited us to get seconds (and thirds and fourths) because they had so much food.

It was a wonderful event.

Kathleen Molaro, OFS
St. Junipero Serra Regional Minister

Establishing a Chinese Fraternity in the United States

by Joana DaRosa, OFS
Servants of God Fraternity Minister

In recent years the Bay Area has been a popular destination that Asians have chosen to resettle. According to the 2012 Census estimates, the three metropolitan areas with the largest Chinese-American population were:

- * Greater New York Combined Statistical Area at 735,019 people,
- * San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland Combined Statistical Area at 629,243 people, and
- * Greater Los Angeles Combined Statistical Area at about 566,968 people.



In the post-1965 era, 1st and 2nd generation immigrants include those from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. Ethnic Chinese from Malaysia and Vietnam who might identify themselves as Chinese, are also included in the Chinese-American population. This increased number of brothers and sisters, whether they are Catholic or non-Catholic, creates a great demand for serving their needs both spiritually and socially.

Since our location is centrally located in the Bay Area, Piedmont-Oakland, our Servants of God Fraternity serves brothers and sisters whose mother tongue is Chinese. This is a very important time of sharing for our brothers and sisters, as they feel more comfortable sharing their personal insights with others who have a similar cultural background and who speak the same language.

Through the teaching given by Fr. Franklin Fong, OFM, our Spiritual Assistant, we learn the three "Hs" process. As Franciscans, we learn through the senses in our "head," like seeing and hearing. We integrate the information in our head and we develop compassion and love in our "heart." From there, we take action through our "hands," like going out to serve and letting our light shine before others as the *Servants of God*.

Bishop Joseph Ha, OFM came from Hong Kong for a visit. He knew that our group is the first group in North America and he met with the newly established Servants of God Fraternity. Here he is pictured with Fr. Franklin Fong, OFM.



PATRIMONY OF THE OFS - PART 2

Introduction to the Financial Aspects of the OFS

by Jerry Rousseau, OFS National Treasurer

Dear brothers and sisters,

As I wrote in my article on Patrimony of the OFS in the Spring issue of *TAU-USA*:

The goods in the Church, therefore, are clearly destined for use by the community, because the members of the people of God are called to share the goods¹. Sharing is, in fact, the way of life of the Christian community. It is a visible manifestation of that deep unity of spirit that is gained through faith and charity. "This is the 'our' bread, 'one' for 'many.' The poverty of the Beatitudes is the virtue of sharing: it calls us to pool and to share both material and spiritual goods, not because it is required, but out of love, because the abundance of some may remedy the needs of others."²

This is a concept that can be found clearly expressed in Article 15.3 OFS GC: "Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to reduce their own personal needs so as to be better able to share spiritual and material goods with their brothers and sisters, especially those most in need. They should give thanks to God for the goods they have received, using them as good stewards and not as owners."

Following is how we, as individuals, local Fraternities, Regions, and the National Fraternity have shared "out of love" with those most in need so far this year.

- Donations and disbursements for Emergency aid to OFS brothers and sisters after several devastating hurricanes: \$15,000 (USA) + \$7,800 (Puerto Rico)
- Charitable donations: \$13,000 (shared among 13 charities recommended by members)
- Response to an appeal: CIOFS solidarity fund: \$19,145 (donations) + \$3,600 for General Chapter contribution (to assist with the management of the Order)
- H2O fund: \$4,500 (to provide for safe and clean water in Uganda)
- Duns Scotus Formation Trust Fund: \$25,540 (to assist with formation within the United States)
- Fair Share to CIOFS: \$22,608 (our portion in keeping with article 25 of our Rule)

Total: \$111,193



This is what Patrimony in the OFS is all about. Without the generosity of so many, we would not be able to support all these endeavors. Thank you to all who opened their hearts (and their wallets) to assist our brothers and sisters in need.

Jerry Rousseau, OFS

National Treasurer

¹ Lumen Gentium n. 13th

² Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 2,833

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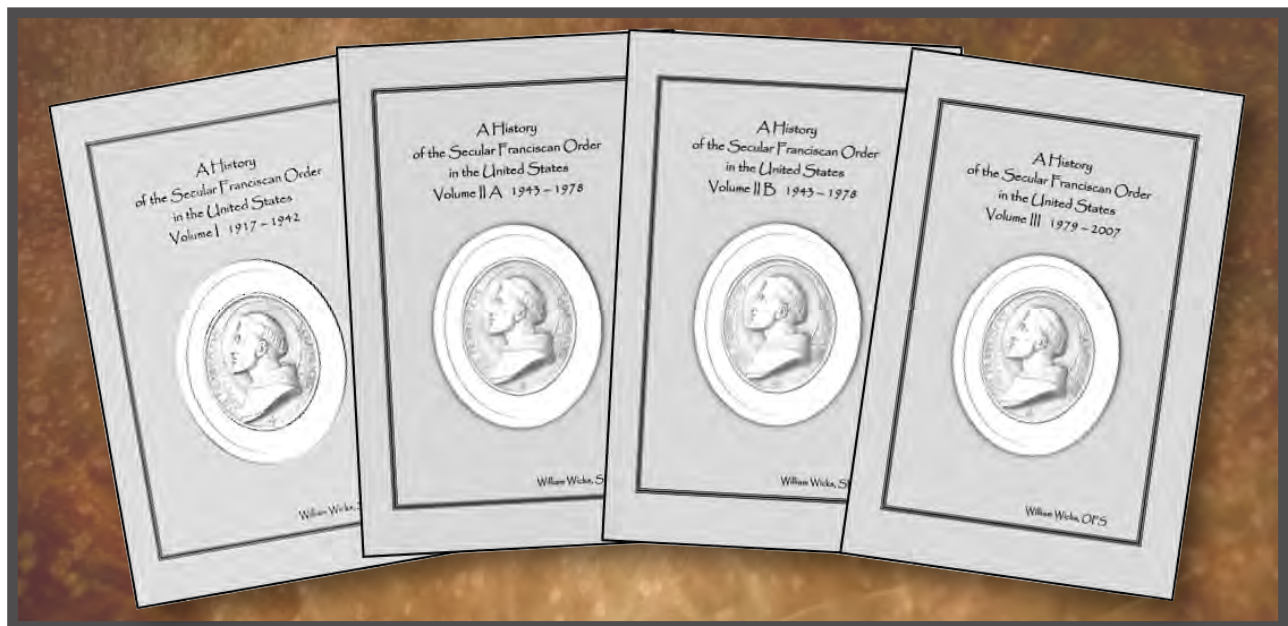
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