

TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

Summer/Fall 2019 Issue 98



PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS LIGHT

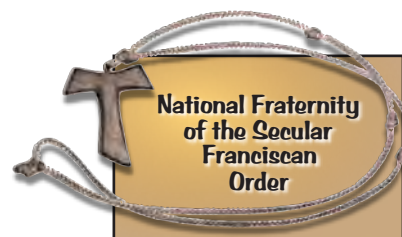
St. Clare of Assisi statue, Suore Francescane Dell'Atonement, St. Anthony's Convent, Assisi, Italy

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 OFS-USA 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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OFS-USA

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER-USA

NATIONAL MINISTER'S MESSAGE

by Jan Parker, OFS

LET US SERVE THE LORD WITH A PURE HEART AND MIND

All of us like to get things done, and like many of you I have quite a to-do list. My list is kept on individual note cards, one task per card. I like to shuffle through the cards to prioritize what's next and then work to get it done. There is something very satisfying about accomplishing a task collegially, creatively and joyfully, knowing you have done what is yours to do. What a great feeling to get something off our to do list!

No matter what method we use to help us get things done, there are times in life when we are stopped dead in our tracks. It may be loss, conflict or confusion, but when something big lands right in our path, we are often stopped short. We are consumed by what is before us, with little energy to do anything else. I had a profound experience of this a few years ago. I was paralyzed by a gut-wrenching quandary. My stress level was high, deadlines were upon me, and I faced a situation with seemingly no Franciscan way out. It was horrible. I kept asking myself what is the right thing to do? I went back and forth. I prayed and prayed. I consulted with friends, but I was stuck. On top of everything else, I was a new minister, and our council was preparing for its first visitation. More stress! Little did I know; it was this visitation that would change everything.

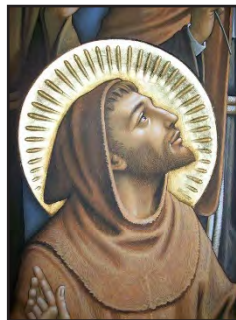
On the day of our visitation, our fraternal visitor asked to meet with each council member one-on-one. Somehow I knew I needed to go first. I sat down to talk with her, filled with both hope and fear. I knew she was there to help me, but what could she do? She began by simply asking, "What's going on, Jan?" and that was all it took. I could not hold back my tears. She listened with compassion as I poured out the whole story. When I was finished, she looked directly into my eyes, and said, "*Jan, you must have purity of heart.*" Her words cut keenly. She was right. Her wisdom at that moment was God sent.

It may seem odd to you that this answer would be so very helpful to me, but purity of heart was exactly what I needed.

Purity of heart sets us free. St. Francis calls us to this freedom, to "put aside every care and anxiety, to serve, love, honor and adore the Lord God with a clean heart and a pure mind."¹

Purity of heart begins with prayer. We must "pray always with a pure heart."² I had been praying, but where was the center of my heart? Was it in God, or in myself? Purity of heart means we must clear our hearts of any ego attachments – our self-image, self-concern, self-preservation. Surrender is key. I needed to put aside the workings of my mind and let go of my obsessions – all my questions, doubts and fears. Only then would my heart be pure – and free to be open to the direction of God's Spirit dwelling within me.

Purity of heart gives us new sight – a new way of seeing things. I was seeing things from my perspective, not as God sees them. "A pure heart sees into the depth of things. Our hearts are pure when we see earthly things from on high, that is when we see their true value."³ What was the true value in this situation? I needed to see this clearly. Once I could see the activity of the Holy Spirit in the midst of all that was happening, I was no longer paralyzed.



Ever since that day, the words "pure of heart" jump out at me. My understanding and appreciation of being pure in heart have steadily deepened. I see it in Francis's prayer before the crucifix, "bring light to the darkness of my heart," and in his Later Rule, "Desire above all things (*supra omnia*) to have the Spirit of the Lord and its holy activity [and] to pray always with a pure heart." Most especially I see it in our OFS Rule: "Witnessing to the good yet to come and obliged to acquire purity of heart because of the vocation they have embraced, they should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters."⁴

Interestingly enough, a few weeks ago I learned that the Chinese word for "intelligence" or "bright" (慧) has a connection to purity of heart. The word consists of two pictograms: at the top is the word for broom (扫); the bottom is the word for heart (心). The bright person, the person of wisdom, has a heart swept clean. Blessed indeed are the pure of heart!⁵

*"We must not be wise and prudent according to the flesh,
but, instead, we must be simple, humble and pure."*

Francis of Assisi, Second Letter to the Faithful

¹ Francis of Assisi, Earlier Rule 22. 25-31

² Francis of Assisi, Later Rule 10.8

³ Ilia Delio, Franciscan Prayer, pg 112

⁴ Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, Article 12

⁵ Matthew 5:8

2018-2021 NATIONAL PRIORITY
FRATERNITY LIFE



Pope Francis on “Fraternity”

*Address of Pope Francis to the General Chapter of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual
June 17, 2019*

The Gospel is for you, dear brothers, “rule and life” (Saint Francis, *Regula Bullata*, I, 1) and your mission is none other than that of being a living Gospel, “a living ‘exegesis’ of God’s word” as Benedict XVI said (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, 83). The Gospel must be your handbook. Always listen to it carefully; pray with it; and following the example of Mary, “Virgin made Church” (see Saint Francis, *Greeting to the Blessed Virgin Mary*, 1), meditate assiduously, so that, by assimilating it, you may conform your life to the life of Christ.

This way of following is characterized, first of all, by *fraternity*, which Francis considered a gift: “The Lord gave me brothers” (*Testament*, 14). Fraternity is a gift to be received with gratitude. It is a reality that is always “on the move”, under construction, and therefore asks for the contribution of all, without anyone excluding himself or being excluded; in which there are no “consumers” but only builders (see *General Constitution OFMConv*, 55,

5). A reality in which we can live out paths of continuous apprenticeship, of openness to the other, of mutual interchange; a welcoming reality, ready and willing to accompany; a reality in which it is possible to take a break from everyday life, to cultivate silence and the contemplative gaze and thus recognize in it the imprint of God; a reality in which you all consider yourself brothers, both ministers and other members of the fraternity; an experience in which everyone is called to love and nurture his brother, just as a mother loves and nurtures her own child (see Saint Francis, *Regula non Bullata*, IX, 11). I urge you to nurture your fraternity with the spirit of holy prayer and devotion “to which all other temporal things must serve” (Id., *Regula Bullata*, V, 2). In this way, your fraternal life in community becomes a form of prophecy in the Church and in the world; and it becomes a school of communion, to be exercised always, following the example of Francis, in a relationship of love and obedience with the Pastors.

- 1) Pope Francis is addressing First Order friars, but his thoughts on fraternity are also relevant to Secular Franciscans. He observes that Francis considered fraternity a gift. How is fraternity a gift to you?
- 2) The Holy Father lists a series of attributes which characterize the reality of fraternity. Which of these attributes apply to your local fraternity? What are some practical ways you could nurture them?
- 3) Pope Francis suggests that the outcome of fraternal life is community is a “form of prophecy in the Church and in the world, and a school of communion”. Which articles of the OFS Rule call us to a prophetic stance? To living in communion?
- 4) How visible is your fraternity in your local parish? Your community?



Gentleness in Fraternal Life

Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM

One of my favorite St. Francis stories takes place at Rivo Torto. In the middle of the night, one of the brothers cries out, “I’m dying! I’m dying!” He feels like he is dying of hunger, so strict did he keep the fast, seeking only to eat as much (or as little) as St. Francis himself ate. But it was not enough for his body, so he cries out in the night. St. Francis wakes everyone up, and they eat a little snack together (see FA:ED 3, page 278). What a beautiful expression of fraternity!

We Franciscans talk about fraternity, but that word *fraternity* means different things to different people. One of the friars in my province, when he was young, first thought this would be like a college fraternity. Or maybe “Franciscan Family” gives some of us a better intuition on what kind of fraternity we are called to live. But not all of us have the same expectations or experiences of our biological brothers and sisters.

Thankfully, we have the Franciscan tradition to give us some good examples of how to live this Gospel sense of fraternity, stories that we share in common that encourage and challenge us in living fraternity. The Rivo Torto experience teaches us something of the *gentleness* of our fraternal life, which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:19-25). We might remember how St. Francis urges his brothers to make sure that a brother who has sinned always sees mercy rather than shame and scolding.

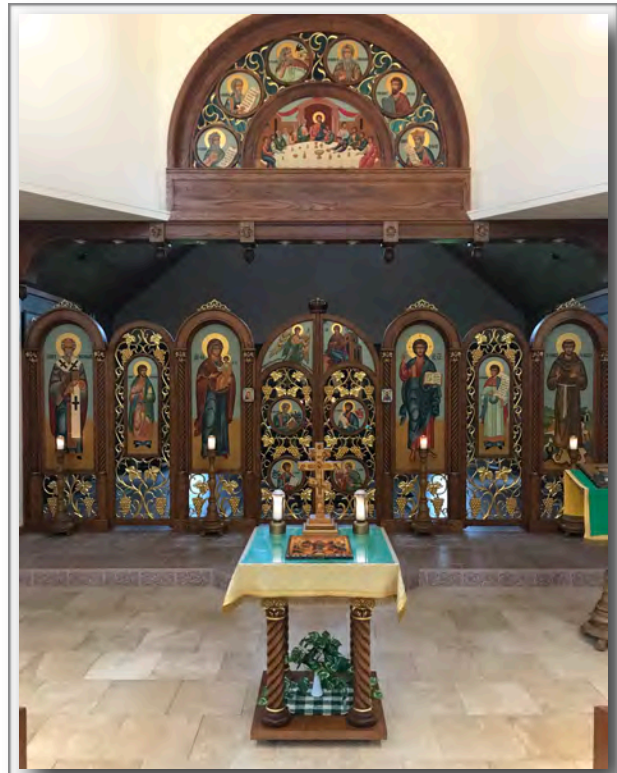
If any one of the brothers, at the instigation of the enemy, shall have sinned mortally, let him be bound by obedience to have recourse to his guardian. Let all the brothers who know that he has sinned not bring shame upon him or slander him; let them, instead, show great mercy to him and keep the sin of their brother very secret because those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. (*Letter to a Minister*)

St. Francis took great care to instruct those in leadership to show mercy even as they impose and enforce necessary regulations. When those in charge are unable to restrain the storm of their own emotions, their own feelings of offense, it becomes

impossible to be gentle... the storm lashes against the guilty and the innocent. Cultivating humility, for example, helps us to sow other attitudes in our hearts that can help us to bear the fruit of gentleness. I can’t be harsh on someone because I am aware that I, too, am a sinner.

Thus, the tradition lives on today. I write this while visiting a friary where many of the friars are elderly, and praise God, even in their imperfections and foibles, they live a kind of gentle support and mutual encouragement that is a great light. This Christian light shining in the ordinary events of their lives and their welcome of guests must be what Jesus means when he tells us, “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14).

Icon Screen, Chapel at Holy Dormition Byzantine



Franciscan Friary, Sybertsville, PA, where Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM, a Byzantine Franciscan Friar, is Guardian.

SHARING THE VISION

“Life-Giving Union” - An Historic National Gathering on Spiritual Assistance

In recent years there have been many discussions about the decreasing number of Friars and the shortage of Spiritual Assistants.¹ Religious sisters and OFS members are helping to fill the gap, but the question often asked is: **“How will we maintain our bond with the First Order and TOR Friars?”** Knowing that solutions could only be found via collaboration with the friars, in 2018 the National Executive Council (NEC) petitioned the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) to convene a summit on this topic, pledging full logistical support and major funding by way the Duns Scotus Formation Trust Fund grant. What the CNSA brought to fruition in response was beyond our dreams! The following article by Sharon Winzeler, OFS, provides the details.



Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, CNSA President-in-turn, delivers the welcoming address

A joyful, holy and historic meeting entitled “Our Life-Giving Union: Discussion and Discernment” has enriched the bonds within the Franciscan Family. The conference, held Aug. 26-29 at the Mercy Center in St. Louis, produced a number of recommendations intended to continue and enhance the work that was begun. In attendance were four Provincial Ministers, ten Friar Delegates of the Provincial, 25 Regional Spiritual Assistants, and members of the CNSA, the National Executive Council and Commission Chairs, who spent three days praying, sharing ideas, listening, eating, and laughing together. “In those three days came the answer for which we gathered: that we as Franciscans might serve the Church and the Church’s mission better,” said Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, President-in-Turn of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants. “We, (friars, sisters and seculars) need to go side-by-side into the future.”

The keynote speaker was Father Michael Higgins, TOR, president of the Franciscan School of Theology at the University of San Diego and past General Spiritual Assistant to the OFS. In preparation for this conference, Fr. Higgins consulted with Benedetto Lino, OFS, a former member of the International OFS Presidency. Topics presented included the co-responsibility among the orders, and

the *altius moderamen*, the higher direction or governance in accordance with the Rule and the General Constitutions of the OFS. “The spiritual and pastoral care of the OFS, in virtue of its belonging to the same spiritual family, is entrusted by the Church to the Franciscan First Order and the TOR, to whom the Secular Fraternity has been united for centuries,” Fr. Higgins cited from the Statutes for Spiritual Assistance to the OFS.²



Fr. Michael Higgins, TOR, delivers the first of two Keynote addresses

“The conference was everything we wanted and then some,” said Miriam Kennedy, OFS, executive secretary of the CNSA at the conclusion of the event. Jan Parker, OFS, National Minister added, “Our time together was invaluable. We shared so much and experienced such joy. Truly we are one Franciscan family, sharing a God-given mission.”

The conference built relationships and produced some immediate responses. During the conference, Jan Parker was invited by the Sacred Heart Province to speak at its next Provincial Chapter in June 2020. Fr. David Gaa, OFM, Provincial Minister of St. Barbara Province, made plans for a first-time meeting with the Regional Spiritual Assistants in his province. Two OFS Regional Spiritual Assistants met the Provincials who had appointed them. Because of time constraints and geography, provincials often do not meet the

¹ See the **2017 OFS-USA State of the Order**, pp. 5-7, reporting on the status of Spiritual Assistance in the OFS-USA at https://secularfranciscansusa.org/wp-content/uploads/State_of_the_Order_Report-2017.pdf or request a copy from the National Secretary.

² Fr. Michael Higgins’ two keynote presentations, and photos from the conference are available on the OFS-USA website: www.secularfranciscansusa.org



Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM, (CNSA), facilitates one of the small groups consisting of (clockwise) Theresa Ream, OFS, Kathy Taormina, OFS, Carolyn Townes, OFS, Sr. Pat Michalek, OSF, Br. Gordon Boykin, OFM, and Fr. Andrew McCarty, OFM Cap.

- ❖TOR and 1st Order Provincials inviting a representative of their OFS Regions to meet with the Provincial Councils twice a year to report and discuss mutual needs.

- ❖Building on the model of the conference just held by scheduling periodic events.

- ❖Increasing communications among the orders - providing visitation reports, newsletters, action photos and captions of OFS activities.

- ❖Mutual invitations to gatherings and shared mission projects.

- ❖Sending friars in formation to attend monthly OFS fraternity gatherings for one year.

spiritual assistants they appoint. Instead, they rely on recommendations from the Region.

Conference attendees collaborated on a list of recommendations, the most popular being a Franciscan family council, a permanent group named “Heart of the Family.” This council would keep the lifeblood of information and common concerns among the “four chambers” flowing. Council members would include representatives from the OFS, Franciscan First Order, TORs, Poor Clares and TOR Sisters. Another popular recommendation was the establishment of “Mission Bands” of First Order and TOR friars to travel and engage with OFS who live in areas where friars are not actively present. Other recommendations included:

Attendees welcomed opportunities to engage in more collegiality among the orders. “We recognize there is a vital reciprocity that should be shared with one another. The fullest expression of the Franciscan charism comes when we are working together,” Fr. Higgins said.

“The Secular Order is an order in its own right,” he said, “and all orders working more closely together and communicating ideas and actions will strengthen everyone. Clear, constant communication between the friars and seculars is important.”

Fr. Higgins stated that a common family, charism, and birth of the orders call all Franciscans to learn more about each other. He believes that friars should meet with Secular Franciscans during their formation to learn more about them, as well as participate in yearly gatherings among the leadership. “Once you get to know the Seculars, you sort of fall in love with them,” Fr. Higgins said.

Reflecting on the success of this gathering, Fr. Christopher Panagoplos stated, “It was a true family gathering, a dream of many sunsets, now a reality. From these three days, a new light has dawned.... With passion and the flame of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, our future, more than ever, is dependent on this vital reciprocity.”



National Minister, Jan Parker, OFS with the four Provincials in attendance at the August Gathering: Fr. David Gaa, OFM, (St. Barbara Province), Fr. James Gannon, OFM, (Assumption of the B.V.M. Province), Fr. Thomas Nairn, OFM, (Sacred Heart Province), and Fr. Jack Clark Robinson, OFM, (Our Lady of Guadalupe Province)



ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS CONCILIVM INTERNATIONALE (CIOFS)

by Awilda Guadalupe, OFS, International Councilor

CIOFS Vox Franciscan Newsletter — Summer 2019 Highlights

With the realization that many of our brothers and sisters are not on Facebook or other social networks, I have decided to provide the highlight of the CIOFS VOX Franciscan quarterly newsletter Summer 2019 edition. My hope is to keep us connected with our Franciscan brothers and sisters worldwide.

YouFra at World Youth Day

Franciscan Youth Councilor Andrea Odak Karlović, OFS, reported on the international YouFra gathering at World Youth Day in Panama, and we hope for another OFS-YouFra European Congress, this time in Spain, and for a third International YouFra Assembly in Mexico. The YouFra International Gathering took place on January 17-21, 2019, the days prior to World Youth Day in Panama. The motto for the gathering was, “We are brothers and sisters following the Teacher, as Mary did.” (cf. Mt 23:8). This fraternal gathering consisted of 120 brothers and sisters from around the world. They came from Vietnam, Europe, and North America, as well as from Latin America. We shared moments of prayer, formation, spirituality, reflection, fellowship and, of course, the Holy Eucharist.

CIOFS: A Meeting and a Pilgrimage

The spring meeting of the CIOFS Presidency became a pilgrimage. Members gathered in Rome at the Seraphicum (Pontifical University of St. Bonaventure) and boarded a bus to head 180 miles east through the Apennine Mountains to San Giovanni Rotondo in Puglia (province of Foggia and region of Apulia), not far from the Adriatic Sea. As usual, the business of the order was conducted – reporting on visits to national fraternities, planning for the 2020 General Chapter, and getting updates from the formation, finance, juridical, JPIC, and communications commissions. They were also immersed in the spiritual impact of St. Padre Pio.

During the Presidency meeting (March 16-23), the body of Padre Pio was on display in the crypt under the older church. His body rested at eye level, encased in glass, in the center of the room.

During a break, the members were blessed by a visit to Monte Sant’ Angelo, which houses the underground Sanctuary of St. Michael the

Archangel, and to the tomb of former Minister General Emmanuela de Nunzio, OFS, in Rodi Garganico. Several Presidency members who had met Emmanuela were particularly inspired to visit her resting place in a mausoleum. She was the second minister general of the reorganized worldwide Secular Franciscan Order.

On the final day in San Giovanni Rotondo, Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, celebrated his last Mass as a member of the Conference of General Assistants, having served 12 years with the Presidency.

OFS Action Around Globe

The 6th Asia-Oceania Congress of the OFS and YouFra will take place in Vietnam in 2020, Presidency Councilor Augustine Yoon reported. With a theme of “Go and Repair My Church,” the congress is expected to attract more than a hundred participants from 17 national fraternities. The congress, which will be held May 20-26, 2020, in the city of Vung Tau, will feature, among other things, talks by the OFS minister general and vice minister general, roundtable discussion on vocation development, and group discussions on spiritual assistance, JPIC, financing, YouFra, membership administration and communications.

There is a newly forming fraternity in Kuwait, presidency councilor Michel Janian reported. He visited Kuwait in January, meeting with members of the group who had petitioned the CIOFS Presidency for support and recognition. The group has been meeting for three years, inspired by a visiting friar, and consists of five people from the Philippines who live and work in Kuwait.

There is a newly forming group in Bahrain, Presidency councilor Michel Janian visited the Kingdom of Bahrain in January 2019 to meet with a group of some 30 aspirants interested in becoming Secular Franciscans.

The “Well4Africa” project, flowing out of the 3rd European OFS and YouFra Congress in Lithuania last year, is moving ahead in various phases in Malawi, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Drilling water wells in needed areas was meant to be a special fruit of the congress, with more than 38,000 euros raised at the time.



FORMATION COMMISSION

CHRIST INCARNATE, THE SECOND PERSON OF THE BLESSED TRINITY

By Anne Mulqueen, OFS

Let me introduce myself. My name is Anne Mulqueen, and I am spiritual assistant to the National Formation Commission. I have been professed for 35 years and have held many positions in the Order. My first elected position 34.5 years ago was as local formation director for Mary Our Queen fraternity in Baltimore, Md. Every position I have held since that election has been enriched by my formation background. I consider that initial election a graced moment. God led me to serve in ways I never imagined I could.

Our National Formation Chair, Diane Menditto, OFS, asked the members of the Commission to take turns writing formation articles for *TAU-USA*, so eventually you will hear from all of us. The topics we choose will give you some insight into each writer. Pray that we have something worthwhile to say. And as Pope Francis said, "The Spirit himself is 'God's gift' par excellence ...," so I am trusting the Holy Spirit to inspire me to write something of value.

Christ Incarnate, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is the topic I chose.

The Centrality of Christ in the Life of Secular Franciscans

I believe most members of the Secular Franciscan Order could recite, at least in part, the first paragraph of Article 4.

The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people.

Clearly stated in Article 4 is the expectation that we consciously intend to make Christ the inspiration and center of our life with God and people. To accomplish this, we must have an intimate relationship with Christ, and we must know what He said and did. Through a careful reading of the gospel, we will be able to go "... from gospel to life and life to the gospel."

As Scripture tells us, Christ reveals the nature of the Father when he tells his disciples, "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also...." (John 14:7). This statement comes immediately after Jesus tells them that He is the way and the truth and the life. These words of Jesus show us the way to the Father and give us a blueprint to follow. These words reveal Jesus' identity. "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." (Colossians 1:15). In essence, all we know of God, is revealed through Christ.

We know from our formation that after St. Francis' conversion experiences, he focused his life and actions on the human person of Jesus. But the *transformed* saint was once, as a young adult, desiring glory through war. Gradually, through a vision on his way to a crusade, his experience with a leper, and a commission from the crucified Christ to rebuild God's house, St. Francis was transformed into another Christ.

Primacy of Christ in the Life of a Secular Franciscan

What was the reason for the Incarnation? Let's listen to the gospel of John.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made, and without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:1-5)

Now we know that the epistle to the Colossians calls Jesus the *image of the invisible God*. And the gospel of John tells us that *without Him nothing was made*; therefore, it follows naturally that God, who is absolutely free, wants to be known by his creation—us!

John Duns Scotus' doctrine of the Primacy of Christ centers on Scotus' premise that since God possesses divine freedom, God freely expressed divine love for all creation through the Incarnation. The Incarnate Christ reveals God's divine nature as one of love and goodness.

Many of us are familiar with the Franciscan Question: "Would Christ have come if Adam did not sin?" This question is not meant to deny the nature of sin and the redemptive work of Christ. Instead, it speaks of God's intention from all eternity to unite all that God created, animate and inanimate, into the life and love of the Trinity. From all eternity the Almighty desires to express God's divine nature as overflowing love. Quoting Bill Short, OFM, "God doesn't build a Taj Mahal to cover a pothole." Our sin is a pothole in comparison to the gift of the Incarnation.

Jesus the Anointed One of God – Humanity's Blueprint and Model

All of us are created according to the humanity of Christ. And although we are created in His image, we still need to grow into his likeness. This is the work of conversion.

One of my favorite Scriptures is from Colossians 1:27, **"...Christ in you, the hope of glory."** This Scripture reminds me of the Prologue to our Rule, in which St. Francis promises me that if I make a place for Christ in my heart and persevere in doing the will of the Father, "the spirit of the Lord will rest upon [me]" and I will be a child "... of the heavenly Father..." and a "spouse, brother, and mother of our Lord Jesus Christ." All this will be mine and it can be yours if Christ lives in us through "...a holy life [that] give light to others by example."

Using a Franciscan lens, Christ, the center of the Blessed Trinity, is the one who reveals to us a loving and fruitful relationship between all of creation and the Trinity—God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

My prayer for you is that Christ, the hope of glory, will dwell in your heart now and forever more.

Questions for Reflection:

- ❖ Who is Christ for you personally, and how do you identify with Him?
- ❖ Do you hear a call to become "Another Christ?" How would that change your life?

Formation Initiatives Workshop – A Time of Work ... A Time of Prayer

Just as Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, let prayer and contemplation be the soul of their being and of all they do. (See Article 8, OFS Rule)



**Come,
Holy Spirit**

**Come Holy Spirit
Dwell in our hearts,
Illumine our minds,
Direct our decisions
and Be our Guide.
Amen**

Twenty-five Secular Franciscans and Spiritual Assistants – whose passion is formation – lived the Rule in a spiritual, fraternal way during the second visioning session of the National Formation Commission at Carondelet Hospitality Center near Albany, NY. “The Formation Initiatives Workshop,” ran over three days, April 4-7.

As is typical of many OFS gatherings, the days began and ended in prayer with Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours. Before each session, the team called on the Holy Spirit to guide them.

And He did... from session to session, in small group breakouts and large group presentations. Their prayer manifested itself in the form of hundreds of ideas and formation initiatives that appeared on dozens of sheets of newsprint covering three walls of the hall.

The topics for their work centered on the key areas of formation identified at the first visioning workshop held in August 2018: the Rule and Constitutions, Sacred Scripture, Franciscan Sources, Fraternity, Inclusivity, Franciscan Spirituality, the Fun Manual, Ongoing Formation.

Formation Chair, Diane Menditto, OFS welcomed all, announcing that she felt a strong wind (the Holy Spirit) enveloping the group, and bringing inspiration. Group sessions were introduced by one of the members of the Formation Visioning Team: Mary Bittner, OFS (National Vice Minister), Justin Carisio, OFS, Francine Gikow, OFS, Layna Maher, OFS, Patrick Martin, OFS, Diane Menditto, OFS, Anne Mulqueen, OFS, Jan Parker, OFS (National Minister), and Mary Stronach, OFS.

Task Forces are now being organized to prepare new and/or edited documents and supplemental materials for Formation.



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



THE COMPENDIUM AS A COMPANION: STUDYING CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

by Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, National Animator, Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

Although we say we believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church every Sunday and Holy Day, we are made up of millions of differing opinions about various other topics, especially about how we are to behave and respond to social justice issues. Some lean more towards giving unconditional assistance and support, while others say that we need to allow people to do for themselves, let them pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. The problem becomes muddled when those people have no straps or boots, for that matter.

As Catholic Christians, how do we navigate those muddy waters of how and when to give aide and assistance? As Franciscans, we are called to follow the gospel of Jesus in the manner of Saint Francis. We can then ask what would Jesus or Francis do? This is where Catholic social teaching comes in. Derived from biblical, moral and ecclesial resources, Catholic social teaching is the compass that shows us the way, especially in matters of social justice and peace.

The **Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church** was published by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in 2004 at the request of Pope John Paul II. It is a compilation of all the writings of the Church (until 2005) on issues of social concerns. Every Secular Franciscan should have a copy of this text in their personal library – right next to the Catechism and the Essential Documents. Unlike many other books on our shelves, this one should not have any dust collecting on it. It is a document to be pulled out frequently, studied and used. Because it is over 450 pages, it is not something you can carry around easily, but it can become a great bedside companion. And though it may start out as a cure for insomnia, you will find yourself referring to it again and again for answers in matters of justice, love and peace.

“This work also shows the value of Catholic social doctrine as an instrument of evangelization (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 54), because it places the human person and society in relationship with the light of the Gospel. The principles of the Church's social doctrine, which are based on the natural law, are then

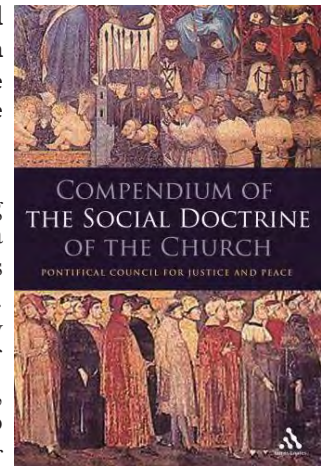
seen to be confirmed and strengthened, in the faith of the Church, by the Gospel of Christ.” (2)

Unless you are living your life strictly as a hermit, you will always have to deal with people. You cannot get away from other children of God. As a child of God, you need to know how to live, move and have your being in relation with

others who also live, move and have their being in the world. As Secular Franciscans, we live and move in fraternities, where there are other people. Because you are a wonderful, uniquely made child of God who has thoughts and opinions, you will no doubt run into other wonderful, uniquely made children of God who have differing thoughts and opinions that just might clash with yours. This is what is known as conflict. Wherever there are people, there will be conflicts. Conflicts are normal and necessary; violence is not. How are you handling your conflicts with those other uniquely made children of God?

First, you recognize them as uniquely made children of God. If you count the number of times I have referred to my sisters and brothers as “children of God,” then let that be your first lesson. if we refer to them as children of God, they do not become enemy or object. We know how an enemy or an object is treated. The *Compendium* reminds us they are *Imago Dei*; made in the image and likeness of God. Even if they do not agree with everything we believe in, they are still made in the image and likeness of God. Even if they dress differently or smell differently, or sit in my pew at church (second row, on the end), they are still made in the image and likeness of God. The Bible, our Rule, the Catechism, our faith, the Church and the *Compendium*, tells us so.

May the Lord continue to grant you peace.





Ecumenical Interfaith Committee Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity

Why Is It Important for Catholics/Secular Franciscans (OFS) to Collaborate Ecumenically?

By Kelly Moltzen, OFS

After finishing high school, becoming an “alumna” of Capuchin Youth & Family Ministries (CYFM), and going away to college, I gradually began to yearn more and more for the charism of the Franciscan community I had through CYFM but didn’t feel through my college’s Catholic Campus Ministry. I found more of a sense of this charism through InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, an ecumenical Christian fellowship organization on campus.

While there were a few Catholics who attended both Catholic Campus Ministry and InterVarsity, there were also many Protestants who helped contribute to the community I felt deeply through InterVarsity. It was an opportunity to meet and fellowship with other Christians who genuinely sought to follow Jesus. We did service projects together, worshipped together, and did Bible study together.

One particularly impactful thing we did was read *The Irresistible Revolution* by Shane Claiborne. That book inspired me to want to live in intentional community once I moved to New York City. I settled into the Bronx with several non-Catholics who introduced me to the work of Dorothy Day and her Catholic Worker movement, Fr. Richard Rohr, and others who like Shane Claiborne were associated with the Red-Letter Christian movement (people who are working to take the words of Jesus seriously, looking particularly at Jesus’ words, which in many Bibles are written in red letters to distinguish them from the rest of the text).

Members of InterVarsity and the Red-Letter Christians movement launched LoGOFF (Local, Green, Organic, Fair-trade, Slave-Free), created opportunities for faith-rooted organizing in New York City, and initiated efforts to address health disparities through organizing a Food, Faith & Health Disparities conference. For years, this has given me hope that we can better use our Eucharistic meal practices as the food to sustain work to make sure everyone is treated like a human being regardless of race, has access to affordable, nourishing food, and has a consciousness of the value of God-given food over hyper-processed foods with little nutritional value.

It’s been non-Catholic Franciscan-hearted Christians who have most often accompanied my path living in community in the Bronx, including participating in dinners that are more about shared fellowship, hopes, dreams and goals than they are about arguments or differences of opinion over church history and ecclesiastical splits. This all has given me life.

So when I discovered that the Franciscan family is ecumenical, as there are other Christians who value following in the footsteps of St. Francis and who have created orders within their denominations to follow him —and were united in mission for peace, justice and integrity of creation through the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity and the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) — I was overjoyed. Building the Kingdom of Heaven together with Franciscan

Christians of different denominations and even working through interfaith collaboration for the common good... imagine that! What could we not accomplish?

Sadly, I have often gotten the impression that many Catholics and OFS members seem to talk about following the path of Jesus and Francis as something exclusive to Catholics, instead of seeking to build the Kingdom of God in partnership with Christians of other denominations and listening to the experiences that Protestants have to share with us.

Jesus' words were meant for everybody, and there are many Christians who truly live them out. By acknowledging our shared values of baptism, vocation, charism, Christ-Centered spirituality, and prophetic voice, we can identify other Franciscans and Franciscan-hearted individuals with whom we can work to bring the kingdom of Heaven to Earth. Those who serve the marginalized, those who see others' destinies tied with their own, those who recognize we are co-creators with God in this ever-expanding universe, who speak truth to power to authorities

within hierarchies that are not serving God's people, who commit their vocations to peace, justice and integrity of creation — these are our kin. They are Franciscan-hearted individuals doing what they can to bring Christ to the world.

Non-Catholics may in fact be models of living out Catholic Social Teaching without calling it that. To see Christ in the other and to listen to the calling from God to protect and restore human dignity beyond birth, across the entire span of life — that is Christian and Franciscan. To live as if we are interconnected with one another and all creation is Franciscan.

Christ, Francis, Clare, and the many other prophetic witnesses in our Church's history meant us to follow them, not just to revere them or to remember them once a year. Our contemporary Dorothy Day, whose canonization is under consideration, said, "Don't call me a saint. I don't want to be dismissed that easily."

So we must ask ourselves, what can we do to ensure the lessons these people taught us while on this earth are taken seriously by all followers of Christ?



Pope Francis with religious leaders from around the world.



YOUFRA NEWS: WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE UNITED STATES

Kathleen Molaro, OFS

National Youth and Young Adult Commission Chair

There are individuals, fraternities, and regions all across the United States who are taking our OFS Rule, Article 24 to "foster communion among members," seriously, especially with our young people.

The main way Secular Franciscans are inviting our younger generations to explore and embrace a Gospel life is by giving witness to them. Fidelity to our faith, generous lives of service, joyful and hopeful attitudes, and authentically living our vocation in their presence are all ways to ignite their passion to do the same. Our young people need encouragement, inspiration, and support in their journey towards holiness. This gift of sanctifying grace to the youth and young adults has taken many forms.



Young people enjoy opportunities to engage in God's creation.

Involvement as Individuals

There are many individuals who are reaching out. For instance, Heather Cherniak, from St. Elizabeth of Hungary Region, feels that young adults need authentic relationships. Among other involvement, she also organized the "Holy Spirits," a Franciscan program similar to Theology on Tap. Mark Carroll, in addition to acting as Minister of St. Maximilian Kolbe region, has given a presentation entitled *Francis: The Man, the Knight, and the Saint* and sometimes delivers pizza to the youth at their evening gatherings. Kelly Moltzen, Our Lady of Angels Region, although a busy young adult immersed in the world of justice and peace, planned and hosted a "Come and See" for young adults and wrote an inspiring testament about

her experience at the YouFra International Gathering in Panama.

Fraternity-Sponsored Events



Some fraternities are working together to reach out to youth with one-time events—a wonderful and much appreciated way to step into their world. For example, a fraternity in Montana, Our Lady of the Rockies Region, recently hosted a group of 55 youth and their adult leaders who had traveled from Northern California on the last night of their long journey to work for Young Neighbors in Action, a week-long mission/immersion experience for young Catholics. The fraternity not only housed them, but fed them a wonderful dinner. The fraternity in Paradise, California, in St. Junipero Serra Region, whose town was destroyed by fire, worked with young people replanting the Franciscan garden and landscaping around the church. Animators have shared about dramas, transitus commemorations, and feast day celebrations, which young people have participated in and sometimes planned themselves.

Fraternity Youth/Young Adult Apostolates

A few fraternities have an ongoing ministry to youth or young adults. For instance, fraternities in the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis region provide meals and stock a food pantry at universities in Georgia. Another local fraternity in that region brings pizza to a parish youth group and does an annual presentation about St. Francis. St. John's Fraternity in Fresno, California, helps Newman Center students once a month by providing a meal at their gathering. They don't participate in the gathering other than to work in the kitchen, but members share that the young adults often end up helping them in preparation or clean-up. Conversations and sharing their lives happens with dishtowels in hand! Although these fraternities aren't directly mentoring, their gift of time still offers a chance to build relationships, share their faith in a casual setting, and demonstrate true servant leadership.

Regional YouFra Support

The optimal way of establishing YouFra is through the

support of a whole region. “It takes a village” rings true as we struggle with gaining momentum in bringing Franciscan spirituality to the younger generation. There are a handful of regions that are actually working toward establishing (or already have) YouFra groups. Our most recent request for establishing a YouFra comes from Arizona. Brother Scott Slattum, OFM, has been providing evenings of faith sharing, community building, and leadership training for many young adults. Some of those he has worked with for over a year are now asking to form a YouFra. They are all in their twenties, are mostly post graduate students from University of Arizona, and are seeking a deeper way to explore and live their faith and build a Franciscan community. In the Five Franciscan Martyrs Region, Janice Novello has a group of 11 people on her committee to start Franciscan-based youth groups. The hope is that they will eventually

lead to established YouFra groups. She and her team are working in many ways with younger youth. One of their goals is to develop a Franciscan summer camp experience for elementary age children. Wouldn't that be a fun thing to share across the country!

Don't Give Up!

Keep familiarizing yourselves with the documents. Prepare and motivate your fraternities and regions to take advantage of the soon-to-be-released formation sessions and retreat options. Unite. Ignite. Invite.

As we used to say back in the sixties, “Keep on truckin'!” Don't give up on your goals. Or perhaps even more apt, “Keep the faith.” With God, anything is possible! The accompanying pictures speak volumes about ways we are bringing the Gospel to young Catholics in the United States.



Young people engage in their faith through drama and liturgies. Some have even written their own scripts or participated in planning special liturgies.



There are many ways to encourage service. This group of youth visit a local Assisted Living facility



Youth examine a “peace Pole,” and spend the day exploring ways to become peacemakers.



After their devastating fire, Paradise folks work with a group of youth replanting their Franciscan Garden.



THE NEW NATIONAL HISTORIAN

Tom McNamara, OFS, is our new National Historian. He was born in Chicago, Ill., and grew up in Phoenix, Ariz., where he lives with his wife JoAnne.

A graduate of Regina Cleri Seminary, Tom studied Fine Art at SCC, ASU and Prescott College, earning a master's degree in Counseling/Art Therapy. Professed with JoAnne on June 13, 2011, in St. Francis Fraternity, St. Thomas More Region, Tom served three years as Regional Vice Minister, taking on the job of Archivist, where he explores the rich local history of our Order in Arizona. In March 2019, Tom accepted the job of National Historian and began work on the next History of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States.

Loom of God

by Tom McNamara, OFS

The purpose of history is to reveal God to all Creation. God made history and then entered into it so that we can be together.

No one can understand God without understanding the ongoing journey of life. Time is woven around us like a "cloth-of-one-piece," and God is its weaver.

Life, revelation, history — all these things are gifts. Franciscans learn this and make our journey in wonder and joy. We know that life can be shared with others, and so life becomes not a drudge, but a celebration; a feast of rejoicing. Everyone has a seat at God's table. Everyone is given a beautiful garment, woven by God's own hand. That garment is our history.

But what many don't realize is that history is

not only about the past, it is also about our future. It's all going toward union with God, and this — this is what changes us.

History is a force that bends and turns our destiny to bring us home. We Christians call this force "conversion." None of it is accidental — conversion follows and reveals God's intention. The pattern of conversion is already in God's mind. Woven of countless threads — some shining, some dull, some hardy, some delicate — our history reveals life's wholeness, how everything works together for the fulfillment of God's plan.

On our journey, ego takes a seat. The hand of love smooths the gathering fabric. Though we see it in bits and glimpses, everything in our history is as it should be. God looks upon what God has woven and cries tears of joy.

The apostolate of history-gathering and history-telling is a ministry that helps the whole community understand who we were, who we are today, and who we are becoming. It is a mission that reveals to the world its true beauty and value.

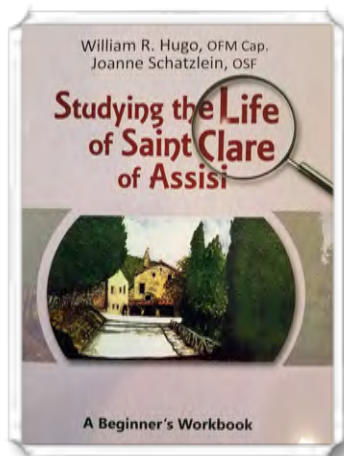
History shows us where we need to change, how we need to adjust course. For this we call on the Holy Spirit, who guides us "from the helm." Though we can only imagine the joy of our destination, we are sure of its existence. Our journey has been illumined by the journeys of those "who have gone before us, marked with the sign of faith." It is for them, and for those who will follow after us, that we make the journey and keep a record of it.

We hope to complete a new History, covering the years 2008-2020, in time for our coming Quinquennial. If you would like to share your stories, if you know people who have been true guides on the way, or if you have ideas where this is all leading, be welcome to call or write.

You can reach Tom at trmcnamara@yahoo.com or by mail: Tom McNamara, 5024 E. Virginia Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85008. Phone: (602) 840-0673.

BOOK REVIEW

Studying the Life of St. Clare of Assisi: A Beginner's Workbook



ST. CLARE STUDY DAY HELD IN DETROIT'S SOLANUS CASEY CENTER

St. Bonaventure Secular Franciscan Fraternity in Detroit, Michigan and the Solanus Casey Center co-sponsored a St. Clare Study Day on August 10, 2019. It was a Franciscan day of study and reflection on the life and spirituality of St. Clare of Assisi. Capuchin Bro. Bill Hugo, co-author of a new book on studying the life and writings of St. Clare using the primary sources, facilitated the discussion on this vital saint in the Franciscan tradition. There were about 100 Franciscans in attendance and most were Seculars from surrounding fraternities in Divine Mercy Region.

Bro. Bill shared with us the importance of studying St. Clare. She was a strong leader, prolific writer and most of all a sister of St. Francis. We get to know St. Francis at a deeper level through St. Clare. He continued with the history of the medieval women monasteries. After lunch we studied the Letters to Agnes, which included St. Clare's plan for prayer. The first three stages of prayer gaze, consider and contemplate were important and made imitation possible. Clare's fourth step imitation (transformation) is the final step of prayer. Clare made imitation part of her prayer and not just the



result

of the prayer. The addition of this fourth step without question is credited to St. Clare. Bro. Bill's new book contains all the concepts presented in much greater detail.



The day concluded with the Vigil Mass for St. Clare. The liturgical music and musicians were a highlight of the day filling the chapel with Franciscan music and joy. A wonderful day it was for all.

The text used for the Study Day, *Studying the Life of St. Clare of Assisi: A Beginner's Workbook* by William R. Hugo, OFM Cap. and Joanne Schatzlein, OSF (New City Press, 2019), is available directly from the publisher www.newcitypress.com or from amazon.com.

LAUDATO SÍ GENERATION CONFERENCE SHEDS LIGHT ON ISSUES AND NEEDS

by Kelly Moltzen, OFS

New and exciting initiatives, like the Great Green Wall across 11 African countries, were addressed at the Laudato Sí Generation Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya, July 15 and 16. Organized by the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA), the Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development, UN Environment, and World Wildlife Fund Africa, it focused on the role of faith and religion in the care for our common home, the role of youth, the role of indigenous communities, and the role of Africa.

Some of the main takeaways of the conference were:

1. The WWF effort, called the [New Deal for Nature and People](#), which plans to ask heads of state to adopt a policy to halve the footprint of production and consumption by 2030.
2. The [Great Green Wall \(and forthcoming film of the same name\)](#) and the “[Laudato Tree](#)” initiatives supported by Don Mullan and the Society of African Missions from Ireland, which plans to “build a wall of trees” spanning 11 countries and measuring 8,000 km long and 15 km wide. This 8-billion-dollar project is expected to help with desertification caused by climate breakdown. The trees will help restore the degraded land — reducing erosion, retaining moisture in the soil, improving plantings, and providing jobs and hope for the millions of people of sub-Saharan Africa



who were expected to migrate.

3. The Irish government has provided \$1.2 million to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification for research into what is needed to actually create the Great Green Wall, including the kind of peacemaking dialogues that are needed among tribes in order to get everyone in a community to agree to the initiative, which is set to create jobs and livelihoods for many people across the Sahel. (As I heard about the momentum around the

Great Green Wall, I kept thinking about how much Latin America needs something similar to stem the violence and migrant crisis in the Americas.)

4. An [Interfaith Rainforest Initiative](#) called REPAC is working on the Congo basin. It is a sister effort to REPAM, which is working on the Amazon.
5. The 50th Anniversary of Earth Day in 2020, during which the Vatican is planning to get 50 dioceses, 50 schools, 50 universities, 50 hospitals, 50 banks, 50 cities and 50 farms to lead by example and commit to *Laudato Si'* practices.
6. Individual CYNESA country chapters that are planting trees, conserving wildlife, and
7. The [Faith for Earth](#) initiative of UN Environment, which is planning to start a youth forum.

During the conference some serious issues were also addressed:

1. Access to land, especially for indigenous peoples, is a serious issue.
2. Due to their activism, groups that speak up and challenge governments are putting themselves at risk and are being threatened.
3. Air pollution, especially in Nairobi, is a huge problem. The dirty fuels are [highly toxic and lacking in regulatory standards](#): "Pollution and poor air quality are now killing more Africans than AIDS/HIV." [UN Environment has called for a stop to the flow of dirty fuel to West Africa](#) and written about how the [idling of buses is contributing to the air pollution](#).
4. The **Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa** (CYNESA) is comprised of many young adults who are just finishing college and looking to network for potential job opportunities. There are many educated youth who need green job opportunities. Yet illiteracy is still at 46% in Africa.
5. Youth need to be savvy if they want to be in dialogue with the business sector through the UN. On the one hand, they want to tell businesses that youth are aware of what businesses are doing and are forming to fight against it." On the other hand, some African businessmen are destroying

the environment but may not be aware of the impact of their actions and need to be sensitized. The business community provides statistics about employment; but environmental advocates are not as organized when it comes to having statistics prepared about the potential of green job creation.

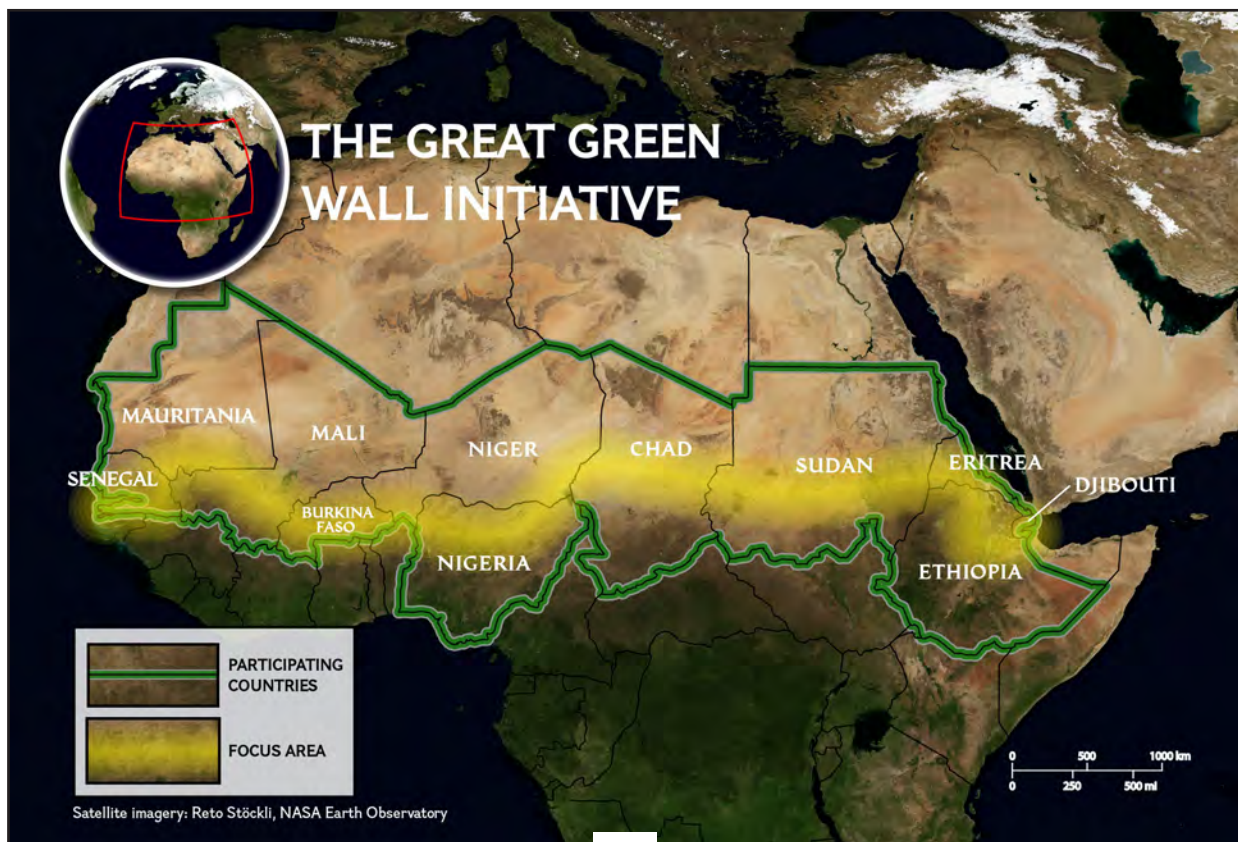
The trip also provided the opportunity to meet with Sister Mary Frances Wangari Sebastian and YouFra member Steeven Kezanutima in the [JPIC Franciscans Africa](#) (JPICFA) office in Kenya. They promote lobbying and advocacy, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, building upon the training they have had with Franciscans International to engage people at a grassroots level. Their efforts are rooted in sensitizing people about the importance of ecological solutions and an understanding of the need for land access, especially among indigenous peoples. They have successfully advocated for the Mukuru slum in Nairobi to be recognized as a Special Planning Area by the national government. Every year since 2014, they have held an Interfaith Youth Forum for Peace and Environment. This year's forum will be on September 20-21 and will include participation in the Fridays for Future worldwide climate strike initiated by Greta Thunberg, as well as the International Day of Peace. Steeven hopes this will connect with other Laudato Si' Generation efforts around the world. He has also created a [documentary](#) about Fr. John Kaiser, an

American priest who served in Kenya for decades and was assassinated for standing up against human rights abuses, and Steeven has partnered with the Capuchin Franciscans to create Capuchin TV episodes such as [Earth in 2050](#), [Green Talent Show](#) and [Birthday Tree Planting](#).

JPICFA used to receive funding from Misesan Cara from Ireland; however, because there are currently no Irish missionaries in their region, Misesan Cara has not renewed its funding. I believe their efforts should be funded in Nairobi and that we should find a way to bring this work elsewhere, including the United States.

The JPICFA efforts, as well as the overall lessons from the Laudato Si Generation conference, provide examples of how the rest of us can better link the elements of JPIC, Formation, Youth and Young Adults, and Ecumenical-Interfaith Relations. My hope is that these stories from Africa will inspire us to find new ways to integrate these efforts more strongly, to form and engage more youth and young adults and all people to work on JPIC issues together, through ecumenical-interfaith relationship-building and collaboration.

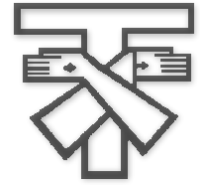
Support for the conference was provided by the Catholic Climate Covenant and Partnerships for Change. The Holy See mission in Nairobi, led by the Apostolic Nuncio, was also a valuable contributor to the conference.





STRETCHING

by Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS



How willing am I to do God's will? If I pray or say God's will be done – do I mean it? Of course, that is what the Franciscan journey is all about – recognizing God is in control.

In many ways, trusting in God's will is like stretching. If you've ever had a pulled muscle, you know the importance of stretching before exercising. Tight or taut muscles can be loosened up by slow steady stretches or easy repetitive motions to warm-up the muscles. It's amazing how much additional length you can get by stretching those muscles – back, legs, arms. It's worth it to take the time to stretch so one can avoid dealing with the pain.

This lesson can be applied to our prayer lives. We need to experience a form of stretching to prepare us for various struggles that may find their way into our lives. This is what I've come to think of as ***spiritual*** stretching.

You have an encounter that challenges you; for example:

1. Someone cuts you off in traffic or at the grocery store.
2. A fraternity brother or sister takes an opposite political position than you.
3. A family member or coworker disrespects you.
4. You, a family member or friend is very sick.

How do you respond? What does it take to respond gracefully and lovingly if any response is needed? Can we allow ourselves to be stretched a bit with each encounter?

As a recovering perfectionist, although I have been professed for more than 24 years, my spiritual stretching or limberness has varied throughout the years. Physically, I've never been able to bend over and touch my toes without bending my knees. Spiritually, I continue to work on allowing God to lead.

One area where I have experienced spiritual stretching is in response to nominations to serve on OFS fraternity councils. I have been a nominee many times. But I haven't always had the "God's will be done" attitude or "a ready and willing spirit"¹. In fact, there were times when I said no, or made it known ahead of time, that I didn't have time to serve. I didn't even pray about it before I responded. I just knew that if my name were to be placed on the ballot I would be elected. (Some humility, eh?) My time was filled – working full-time, building a relationship with my husband, who wasn't a Franciscan, and participating in other interests (*e.g.*, tennis, volunteer activities). So I took matters into my own hands – not accepting the nomination or accepting it while grumbling about all the other things I had to do. Well, God worked on my humility and trust – for in some of those elections I wasn't elected!² Wonderful examples of the reality that God ***IS*** in control of the elections too – no matter how good a candidate I thought I was. As I stretched – spiritually – I came to understand that God knew that I was not ready and was perhaps "not qualified" to serve.

Praying, and allowing God to work through prayer time can transform us from a babbling shallow stream to a calm deep body of water. These days, when I get ready to do something – I'm getting better at saying or thinking, "Okay God, it's your lead." I'm getting better at stretching to allow time for God to lead my responses instead of allowing my initial reactions to be the first thing out of my mouth.

If God hasn't given up on me yet, then I certainly want to keep trying and will put the necessary time into the stretching. Maybe someday I'll be able to touch my toes without bending my knees... spiritually speaking.

¹ OFS Rule Article 21

² My name had been on the ballot as a nominee for a National Executive Council position for elections held in 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018. For five of those elections, I wasn't elected. It began to feel like "Always a nominee and never an executive council member." Surprisingly, I was elected in October 2018,

FRANCISCAN LIVING

A DIFFERENT KIND OF BEAUTY

By Francine Gikow, OFS

Are you wounded? Were you wounded by someone or some experience that impacts you to this day? Do you carry those experiences like baggage that weigh you down and impede your joy in life? Did you ask for healing, but God seemingly ignores your plea? Do you know that your wounds can be beautiful? How is that even possible?

I believe everyone has experienced some sort of "wounded-ness" in their past. No one is immune. However, some people seem to attract more than their share of catastrophe and suffering. You may know someone like this, but in spite of the wounds, he or she demonstrates trust, peace and the love of God. That's beauty!

So let's take a closer look at wounds, holiness and beauty. St. Francis had wounds—both emotional and physical. His emotional wounds might have been caused by his experience of war in Perugia and developed into what is now known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.¹ It was in prison that St. Francis examined his life and his relationship with God. Francis also had (I am sure) emotional wounds from his fractured relationship with his father, which may never have been resolved.

Francis' physical wounds are also well documented. His failing health and eyesight impaired his ministry. It must have been such a source of frustration and suffering! But it was his bodily bearing of the wounds of Christ in secret and silence that mirrored Christ's love. Francis became an "alter Christus."

Celano reflected on the paradox of how Francis' bodily wounds could be beautiful:

"... they rendered beautiful that sick and tormented body.... Because they also showed forth the wounds of Christ, they spoke to those who saw them about the way in which our wounds are transformed by the presence of the Incarnate Word who came into our world to share our grief."²

Sr. Mary Teresa Downing, OSC, describes the sanctification of our wounds, stating: "Those wounds are imprinted by the hand of God...especially when we abandon ourselves to the work of redemption so that it can flow outward from our own lives."³ What does "the work of redemption" mean here? How do we do it?

The "work of redemption" is the joining of our suffering with Jesus for the sanctification of the world. In other words: Offer it up! Offer it up to God for others. "Offering it up" gets us past our own self pity and gives us a focus on others. It makes our wounds precious by giving them spiritual value. Like Francis, others may see our lives transformed with the presence of God and find a way to glimpse God through us.

It is not easy to "offer up" our sufferings to God. Wallowing in self pity sure feels good at times. We are so tempted to keep feeding our wounds and thereby enlarging them by giving them inordinate attention. Instead of feeding our self pity, isn't it better to turn our attention to what we *can do* with our wounds by making them our own "work of redemption." Sounds simple, but it's difficult to do!

Instead, think about how our love of God and others can be a beautiful gift! Sharing in the work of redemption is a thing of beauty because we share in His love for us and in the beauty of the Son of God. Jesus carried his wounds of betrayal, crucifixion, and death as a sign of His Love for us. As St. Clare says, "gaze, consider, contemplate [sic] desiring to imitate your Spouse!"⁴

Do not be afraid of your wounds. Do not consider them "baggage" or something to endure. Rather, see their beauty as Christ sees them:

"If you suffer with Him, you will reign with Him. Weeping with Him, you will rejoice with Him; dying on the cross of tribulation with Him, you will possess heavenly mansions with Him among the splendor of the saints..."⁵

¹ Weichec, Nancy. "St. Francis and US Veterans." *St. Anthony Messenger*, 24 Oct. 2018.

² Celano, *Life of St. Francis*, Ch IX as described in Downing, O.S.C., Sr. Frances Teresa. *Saint Clare of Assisi*. Tau Publishing, 2015. p. 154-5.

³ Downing, p. 154.

⁴ 2LAg:20

⁵ 2LAg: 21



CONFERENZA DELLA FAMIGLIA FRANCESCA

CFF: 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF FRANCISCANS INTERNATIONAL

Roma, 17 April 2019

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Warm Franciscan greetings to all! It is our pleasure to write to you during the 30th Anniversary celebration of Franciscans International (FI). As you know, FI is the only common ministry project of the Franciscan Family. It was created thirty years ago from the grassroots up, based on the vision of various sisters and brothers who were inspired by a dream of sharing our Franciscan message and values at a global level through the structures of the United Nations (UN). In the last three decades FI has undergone various changes, but it has continued its commitment to serve peace, the poor and the planet.

In the not-too-distant past FI passed through a difficult period and was challenged to undergo a thorough review and renewal. We are happy to report that this process has been completed. Financially, expenses are down and income has been re-directed in such a way that two-thirds of our receipts are now spent on the advocacy program. Our dedicated and competent staff is guided by a four-year Strategic Plan that was adopted two years ago, and which has recently been reviewed and updated for a further two years. The International Board of Directors (IBD) has been streamlined; it now consists of eight members (OFS, IFC-TOR, TOR, Anglican Franciscans, OFM Cap, OFM Conv., OFM, and the Executive Director of FI). The IBD works well with the staff and has a good relationship with the Conference of the Franciscan Family (CFF). You might be interested to know that recently FI received an award from UNICEF, recognizing it for best use of UN structures/processes in its work on “witch children” in Benin.

As we celebrate this 30th Anniversary, we are thankful for the work of so many who have made FI into an organization that is highly respected at the UN: by the UN staff, by country delegations, by other religious groups, and by fellow NGOs and other civil society organizations that work together with us. At the same time, we need to look to the future. While the current situation of FI is “balanced”, finances are still tight and challenging. We do not look to become a huge organization, but we would be able to do our work at the UN more effectively if the staff were not so pressed to find the time to request the resources needed to make our operation run.

In this spirit we ask first of all for your continued prayers for the success of FI. The spirit behind FI is what keeps our work vibrant and effective. At the same time we ask that you consider supporting FI financially. You might want to make a one-time contribution during this 30th anniversary celebration, in addition to a yearly donation to FI's work. You might also know of others who would be interested in supporting the work that FI is doing at the UN; please approach them and share with them our vision of defending the human rights of our sisters and brothers throughout the world, in the perspectives of our Franciscan values. The staff of FI and the members of the IBD are ready to provide you any information you might need in these considerations.

We thank all who have been contributing generously to FI throughout these 30 years. We appeal to all members of the Franciscan Family to join together in supporting the work of FI, contributing spiritually and financially, thus seeking to promote the Reign of God in our midst today!

Tibor Kauser, OFS
Minister General
CFF President

Sr. Deborah Lockwood, OSF
Minister General

Fr. Roberto Genuin, OFM Cap
Minister General

Fr. Nicholas Polichnowski, TOR
Minister General

Fr. Marco Tasca, OFM Conv
Minister General

Fr. Michael Anthony Perry, OFM
Minister General



30 Years of Human Rights Advocacy at the UN



Franciscans International
A voice at the United Nations

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

For most of us 'human rights' is a vague and abstract term. It seldom moves us until we're confronted with what it means *to lack human rights*. Here's an example:

Try to imagine living without an official identity such as a birth or marriage record. As Americans our main concern is 'privacy' and how to protect our health and identity records. But have you ever imagined what it's like to have *no legal recognition of your existence*? No Social Security number or legal ID?

With a legal identity, an individual has improved access to essential services, such as healthcare, education and social welfare. Far too many in this world *lack an official identity*, and as mundane as this sounds, human rights advocates work on matters such as this.

This simple issue caught my attention several years ago and caused me to follow the work of Franciscans International (FI) more closely ever since. I subscribe to their newsletter and follow their activities online. Human rights and Gospel values are truly linked, and our Franciscan family has a voice that's heard at the United Nations through Franciscans International.

I encourage YOU to learn more about the mission of FI. Try utilizing their inspirational resources with your local fraternity. Please join in with prayer and financial support.

Jim Thomas, OFS
Bl. Solanus Casey Regional Vice Minister

"It truly is notable that Franciscans International is one of the few non-governmental organizations that have general consultative status. What this means is that Franciscans are really listened to because they are on the ground all around the world and know firsthand the suffering that is caused by injustice."

Jan Parker, OFS
National Minister - OFS-USA



"The first thirty years of FI have been dedicated to a program promoting values of the Gospel, a Franciscan ethics capable of dialogue and collaboration with people, structures and mechanisms of the UN..."

Br. Michael Perry, OFM
Minister General



30 Years of Human Rights Advocacy at the UN



Franciscans International
A voice at the United Nations

Conference of the Franciscan Family Celebrates 30 Years at the UN **Memory and Prophecy: Franciscan Voices at the United Nations**

Thirty years ago, the Franciscan Family established a voice at the United Nations. As part of the celebration to mark this thirty-year presence, the Conference of the Franciscan Family (CFF) organized a gathering on 16 July in the Auditorium Antonianum in Rome.

Themed 'Memory and Prophecy', the event brought together over 90 sisters and brothers to reflect on the accomplishments of the past three decades as well as the challenges and opportunities ahead. The [keynote address](#) was delivered by Br. Michael Perry, Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor. Tracing the history of Franciscans International (FI), he acknowledged the particular contributions of the late Sr. Elizabeth Cameron, OSF, and Br. Dionysius Minthoff, OFM – who, at age 88, continues to work with vulnerable migrants in Malta.

Their conviction that Franciscan spirituality and ethics shared many common values with the founding charter of the United Nations ultimately led to the establishment of FI as the first ever common ministry on the international and intra-familial scale in the history of the Franciscan movement.

For the full article see FI's home page at www.franciscansinternational.org

The Conference of the Franciscan Family is the collaborative body which unites Franciscans worldwide. The Secular Franciscan Order is a member of this conference.

We are a Franciscan voice at the United Nations protecting the vulnerable, the forgotten, and our wounded earth through advocacy.

Financial support is needed

Franciscans International is entirely dependent on donations from Franciscan Orders and Congregations (including the OFS-USA), funding agencies and institutions, parishes, and people sensitive to Franciscan values of solidarity, peace, social justice, and respect for the environment.

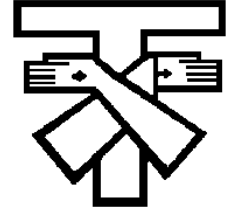
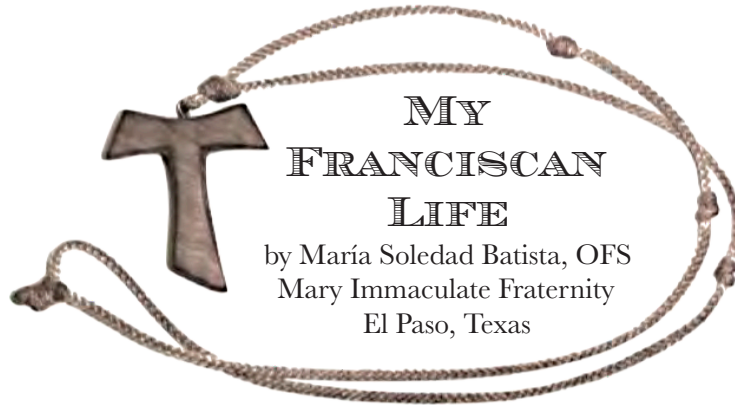
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Please note in the memo: "Franciscans International" and send to:

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**MY
FRANCISCAN
LIFE**
by María Soledad Batista, OFS
Mary Immaculate Fraternity
El Paso, Texas

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

I can't believe I have been a Secular Franciscan for 50 years. While reading our roster, my dear sister, Isela Sanchez, noticed that it had been 50 years. She mentioned the date I professed, which was March 1969, at our meeting and even had a beautiful card for me that everybody signed. That was a beautiful feeling.

My parents were Secular Franciscan all their lives. They met at their fraternity meetings. Later they got married. In their wedding pictures, they are wearing their brown scapular and their white cord.

I remember they used to take us to their fraternity meetings at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Juarez, Mexico, when we were little. I joined the Nifra, which they used to call "Jardin Seráfico" or The Seraphic Garden for Children. I remember our teachers were very sweet to all of us.

Later, I joined Youthfra. It was the most memorable part of my youth. There I received my formation to become a Secular Franciscan. I was 17 years old when I professed. That took place at Senecu in Juárez, México.

We moved to El Paso when I was 20 years old. We joined The Saint Luis Rey fraternity. While we were at this fraternity, I served as minister twice, as vice-minister, and as a councilor, and at the regional level, I served as an Area Rep. Recently, I joined the Mary Immaculate fraternity, because it is much closer to my house. My mom passed away eight years ago, and my dad is no longer attending our meetings. I have been in this fraternity for about six years. At this time, I'm serving as an Area Rep for three fraternities.

I can say I have been a Secular Franciscan all my life, and it has been such a wonderful blessing. A few years ago, I had the opportunity to visit Assisi. It was an indescribable feeling to be there. Our Father Francis has been with me all this time and he won't let me go. I can't imagine my life without being a Franciscan.

It is an honor for me to share my life story as a Franciscan with you, my brothers and sisters. I anticipate seeing the wonderful blessings our Father Saint Francis has gained for all of us.

Thank you!

María Soledad Batista OFS



160 Years

Utica, NY Fraternity Celebrates With Awards and Street Signs



Betty Frank, OFS, who was professed 70 years ago and is one of the longest living professed Secular Franciscans in the U.S., helped to unveil the "Welcome to Utica" sign for city officials during the 160th Anniversary Celebration of St. Joseph Fraternity. Founded in March 1859, the fraternity is the second oldest in the country. Photo by Alex Stronach.

By MARY STRONACH, OFS

"Welcome to Utica. The Home of St. Marianne Cope."

St. Joseph Fraternity and City of Utica officials unveiled a street sign sporting those words before a crowd of 100 people during the fraternity's 160th anniversary celebration Aug. 18 at the Irish Cultural Center in Utica, NY.

The fraternity donated four signs, which the city installed at the north, south, east and west entrances to Utica.

Marcus Phillips, the mayor's chief of staff, said the city was glad to work with the Secular Franciscan Order. "The reason is because the Catholic tradition, which St. Marianne Cope represents, is kind of what made the city what it is today" with "a spirit of giving" that propels the area's generosity in fundraising and being open to immigrants and refugees. He also singled out city sign department supervisor Mark Sokolowski for expediting the project.

Common Council President Michael Galime read a proclamation from Mayor Robert Palmieri, honoring the fraternity. The fraternity also received a proclamation from County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr., declaring Aug. 18 as St. Joseph Fraternity Day in Oneida County.

State Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon was on hand to present an Assembly proclamation, recognizing the

fraternity as the second oldest in the U.S. (founded in March, 1859), and joined in honoring several individuals for their charitable works.

Fraternity Minister Robert Stronach, OFS, presented the *Silent Giver Award* to **Jo Ginnity, OFS**, "for lifetime achievement for service to the Order, Church and Community." Since she was in a nursing and rehab facility at the time, Stronach surprised her via a cell phone, with the audience giving a loud ovation and singing "Happy Birthday" to her.

Stronach then presented the *St. Mother Marianne Cope Award* to three individuals:

- **Ed Morgan**, director of Mother Marianne's West Side Kitchen at St. Joseph-St. Patrick Parish, for coordinating the soup kitchen operation that served over 53,000 meals in the past year to the jobless, underemployed and homeless.
- **Marion "Duffy" Geary, OFS**, for her work with soup kitchens, food pantries and prison ministry. She is a member of Holy Family Fraternity in Vernon, NY.
- **Elizabeth "Betty" Frank, OFS**, for her ministries at St. Joseph-St. Patrick Church as a professed Secular Franciscan for 70 years. Among other things, she co-founded Perpetual Adoration at the parish (still going strong after 27 years with some 300 volunteers).

Stronach expressed his gratitude to a community of lay



Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, national spiritual assistant, addresses the 160th anniversary celebrants. Photo by Alex Stronach.

Carmelites from New Hartford, NY, which sent a congratulatory message citing “160 years of faithful service in the spirit and love of the Franciscan charism” and announcing a \$400 donation in the fraternity’s honor to Mother Marianne’s West Side Kitchen. The message was signed by Diana Evans, president of the Community of St. Joseph the Protector, Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites (OCDS).

Stronach also quoted from a congratulatory letter from Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS. Writing from Rome, Italy, he cited the fraternity’s “significant past” and “praiseworthy present” with its various ministries.

Fraternity Vice Minister Katie Koscinski, OFS, who serves on the St. Kateri Tekakwitha Regional Executive Council, presented a gift on behalf of Regional Minister Alfred Picogna, OFS – a framed collage of congratulatory messages from fraternities across the region.

Fr. Richard Dellos, pastor of St. Joseph-St. Patrick Church, offered the invocation at the afternoon banquet, citing the beginnings of the Franciscan charism when Francis of Assisi heard Christ’s call to “rebuild my church.”

The celebration began earlier in the day with Mass across the street at St. Joseph-St. Patrick Church, where National Spiritual Assistant Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, spoke of the fire of faith in a world that both subtly and overtly erodes Christian values and beliefs. He urged Christians to

stand up for what they believe.

In his banquet talk, Father Christopher referred to the polarization taking place in public discourse, where people of different viewpoints argue even to the point of hatred, rather than listen and communicate. Secular Franciscans have a role in bridging such division.

“The heart of Franciscan living is relationship. Relationship with God, with others, and with creation.”

He added: “For St. Francis, fraternity summarized his radical living in solidarity with all of humanity and creation... Francis’ starting point rested in the faithful recognition of his relationship to the other.”

He pointed to St. Joseph Fraternity’s 160 years of striving to live the Gospel not only in the footsteps of St. Francis, but also in the spirit of St. Marianne Cope, who grew up in the parish and who is believed to be one of the first fraternity members (before she became a Franciscan sister).

“You have been and still are responding to immediate needs and specific situations: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for and healing the sick, visiting those in hospitals and prisons; focusing on people’s distress, focusing with empathy.”

A video message from National Minister Jan Parker, OFS, brought the celebration to a close, with her singing the Blessing of St. Clare, “*May you always be with God wherever you may be and may God be with you always.*”



Silent Giver Award recipient Jo Ginnity, OFS.



Mother Marianne Cope Award recipients Duffy Geary, OFS, Ed Morgan, and Betty Frank, OFS, with New York State Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon. Photo by Alex Stronach.



Secular Franciscans Explore “*Clare of God: A Spirituality for our Time*”

Summer Seminar recap by Anna Rzewnicki, SFO, Padre Pio Fraternity, Raleigh, N.C.

“Sometimes, we are drawn to something because it’s already in us,” said Sr. Loretta Schaff, OSF, D. Min., in her opening remarks at the 10th Annual Summer Seminar for Secular Franciscans, held July 11-14, 2019, at St. Francis University in Loretto, Penn. “We try to reach that something – heart to soul and back again,” she said.

Sharing insights from her reflections on St. Clare of Assisi (1194-1253), a contemporary of St. Francis of Assisi and founder of the Poor Ladies or Poor Clares, Sr. Loretta said she had a sense that Clare would have phrased it this way: “You are to be who you are, as I was who I was.”

Sr. Loretta, a sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia, musician, educator and regional spiritual assistant for the Troubadours of Peace Region in the

Learning more about St. Clare, her environment, abandonment of the wealth of her family and embracing Christ’s riches – his poverty – were among key takeaways for the 50-plus attendees, who represented 22 fraternities in 11 states from Delaware to Arizona.



Pacific Northwest, and Fr. John Petrikovic, OFM Cap., now a full-time preacher, Franciscan researcher and musician on the staff of the Assisi Franciscan Pilgrimages Program, co-led the seminar, incorporating music, art and liturgy to present the life and legacy of St. Clare and her relevance for our times.

The Very Rev. Joseph Lehman, TOR, Minister, Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, was spiritual assistant, and Br. Robert Herrick, OFM Cap., was music minister.

The presenters provided historical context, explaining that, like Francis, Clare and her two sisters – Catherine (later taking the name Agnes) and Beatrice – grew up as members of Assisi’s noble class in the feudal world of 13th century Italy. Theirs was an era of romanticism and rules of courtly life, including marriage and managing a household of their own.

They were guided by their mother Ortolana – a pious woman who was a poet and who had made several pilgrimages to Monte Gargano and Rome, as well as a hazardous journey to the Holy Land.

Theirs was also a turbulent era. From the age of six to 12, Clare, with her mother, sister and servants, lived in exile in Perugia until a treaty with the citizens of Assisi was settled in 1205.

When Clare was 17, she heard Francis preach. Her “heart was set on fire,” and she received radical grace, Sr. Loretta said. On Palm Sunday 1212, Clare left her family home and a life of nobility to join Francis, cutting her hair and

donning a poor tunic, as Francis and the brothers had. He brought her to a Benedictine monastery in nearby Bastia; later, her sister Catherine (Agnes) joined her there.

Their uncle Monaldo, now the family patriarch, angry about losing two daughters of the family who could enrich their noble status through marriage, accompanied by armed kinsmen, went to the monastery to bring Clare, and later Catherine, home; both successfully resisted.

Clare later moved to a residence with a women's community at Sant'Angelo in Panzo until Francis and the brothers could ready her new home at San Damiano – where St. Francis heard his call to rebuild the Church. They were joined by other women, including her mother after her husband's death.

Clare wrote a Form of Life for her community, which had grown to more than 50 women, and reluctantly accepted the title of abbess, although she preferred to serve as guardian. She provided a formula for the Poor Clares – gaze, consider, contemplate, so as to imitate – and held to a strict regimen: she fasted, went barefooted, sewed, and slept on a straw mat.

Clare's influence reached beyond her immediate community, as documented by four letters she wrote to Agnes of Prague, the daughter of the king of Bohemia (1234-1253), who sought to follow Clare's vision of poverty in following Christ Jesus. "What Clare said to Agnes is also meant for us," Sr. Loretta said.

In the four letters, Clare commends Agnes for selecting poverty; appears to provide spiritual direction; encourages her to be a co-worker with God, to become what she is reflecting on in the San Damiano cross; and encourages her to carry on living the Form of Life, saying, "Gaze upon that mirror each day and study your face in it. That reflection becomes a reflection to others."

Fr. John discussed Clare's efforts to receive approval from the Pope for the Poor Ladies' life of poverty. Like Francis, she wanted her sisters to live as "pilgrims and strangers in this world," allowing God to be God. Her "privilege of poverty" was to not accept lands and resources

which secured life for the sisters, like the other monasteries of Europe. Clare did not want to be forced to be "secure." She trusted God would provide.

Clare died at age 60, the day after approval for her Form of Life was granted by the Pope. She was canonized just two years later, in 1255.

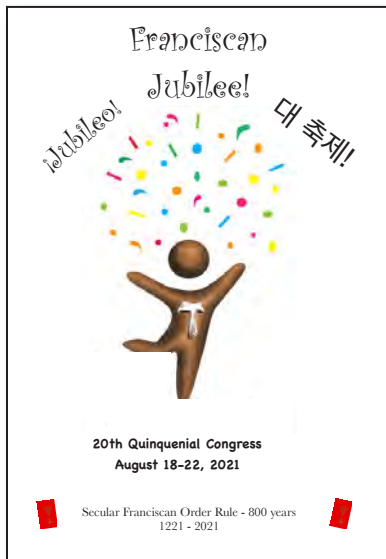
Fr. John said, "Seeing St. Clare's life in the context of the 13th century allows us to see that we are not called to pretend or to 'imitate' the details of what she did, but to respond to grace within our own contexts and lives."

He provided as example the Dossal of St. Clare, a painting from c. 1280 depicting events in her life, saying that "each of us could create a dossal of our own lives, to detail how God is working in and through our humanity."

Fr. John also discussed how Clare's and Francis' vision of an apostolic life had evolved through their century's understanding that Jesus' life was one of itinerancy. He had asked his disciples to "follow me;" their experiences on the road would teach them to respond to the Lord's invitation to exercise love in the real faces of those they encountered on the journey.

About fraternity, Sr. Loretta said, "That is the place where we can engage in deeper conversations. Find someone that you can talk with deeply about your relationship with Christ. Clare and Agnes were doing this, but it's so much bigger than the two of them. It's beyond Assisi; it's worldwide."

"Francis responded to the Spirit through the eyes of a merchant and future knight; Clare, through the eyes of a noble lady and bride," Fr. John said. "Our changing times will give shape to that same Spirit. Through contemplation and reflection on the mirror of Christ's immense love and charity, will we be able to incarnate that immense love in a language which we can speak today? Can we allow the clear light of God's mercy and peace to shine in the 21st century," he asked, "so that people can hear and be drawn to the Gospel in our time and space? It's truly a spirituality, not for the dust of history, but for our time."



20th Quinquennial Congress

CELEBRATE AND RENEW OUR FRANCISCAN CALLING IN
THE SPIRIT OF CONVERSION.

Phoenix Arizona - August 18-22, 2021

20th Quinquennial Congress Prayer:

Lord God, Heavenly Father, we come before you in awe of your love for us. We acknowledge Your divine seed in everyone. Through your merciful compassion, help us to see our need for conversion. In our service to each other let us experience this time of JUBILEE! We walk the path before us upon foundations laid by our brothers and sisters. We are thankful for our present and excited for our future, always believing that You, O Lord, guide our journey. AMEN

With nearly two years to go to the Quinquennial Congress, where we will celebrate the 800th anniversary of our Secular Order, we are actively seeking dynamic presenters who will not only add to our body of Franciscan knowledge but also speak to our hearts to increase our Franciscan spirituality and call us continuously to conversion.

Our first presenter, Father Couturier, OFM Cap, is the Dean of the School of Franciscan Studies at Saint Bonaventure University. He is a 1975 *summa cum laude* graduate of St. Anselm College. He earned a Masters in Divinity from Maryknoll School of Theology in 1978, a Licentiate in Psychology from the Gregorian University in 1984, and his PhD in Pastoral Psychology (Organization Studies) from the Graduate Theological Foundation in 2005. His familiarity with and expertise in how we are called to conversion and the stages we experience in conversion will bring deep discussions in our Little Fraternity groups, as well as insights in our personal reflection. At the Q, he will address the topic, *The Four Conversions: A Spirituality of Transformation*; which is the title of one of his books.

Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv, our second keynote presenter, is from the Diocese of Lexington, Kentucky. He is the third bishop of that diocese and was consecrated as bishop in 2015. He professed his solemn vows in 1992 after completing his studies in history and philosophy at Saint Louis University in Missouri. He received his degree of Master of Divinity and Licentiate of Sacred Theology with an emphasis on Church history. He was ordained a priest in 1995 and served in El Paso, Texas, parishes. Bishop Stowe joined the Pax Christi USA Board as their Episcopal President in 2018. His keen awareness of and active participation in today's opportunities to follow the Gospel by living our Franciscan lives of mercy and forgiveness will stir us to consider how we can improve our involvement in our individual communities to hear the marginalized and address their needs and to be their voices when they cannot be heard.

In the next article, we will share information about two Secular Franciscan couples who have lived their married life and raised their children in the Franciscan way of life through all ups and downs of today's encounters.

If you are interested in helping now with the Q 2021 planning, or during the Q, please contact Susan Simeone, 602-315-1950 or skimeone@cox.net.

Please send t-shirts with large Franciscan messages to
Kathy Taormina, OFS @ 920 Whitney Drive, Apple Valley MN 55124.
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