

T **TAU-USA**

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

SPRING 2016 ISSUE 87



**Let us become agents of mercy,
channels through which God can water the earth,
protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish.**

Pope Francis - Easter Urbi et Orbi message on March 31, 2013

Mission to Share the Vision

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



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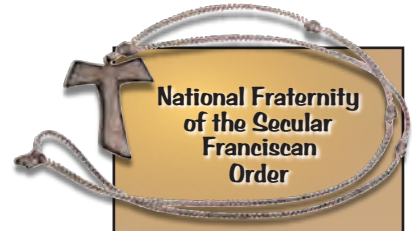
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TAU-USA is published quarterly. All candidates and professed Secular Franciscans receive the newsletter without charge. For subscription or change of address information, write to: Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, OFS, 1933 Tudor Dr, San Jacinto, CA 92583-6035, or cylmaljan@earthlink.net. Subscriptions per year cost \$4.00 for U. S., \$6.00 for Canadian, \$15.00 for Overseas.



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THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

National Minister, Jan Parker, OFS

Son Beam

An Easter Story

The sun was shining brightly on Sunday morning, February 7, and the air was warm. It was a surprising and welcome spring-like break from the winter cold. I was on my way to Cape Girardeau, Missouri, where St. Padre Pio Emerging Fraternity would be celebrating two professions. As I drove south from St. Louis through the wooded hills and river bottom farmland, there was such a feel of Easter in the air! And why not? The story of St. Padre Pio Fraternity is quite an Easter story, and even Sister Mother Earth was rejoicing this day!

Their story began with a phone call from Celeste Obermiller in 2006. I was the Minister of St. Clare Region at that time. When I answered the phone a cheerful voice said, "Hello, Jan, this is Celeste Obermiller calling you from Cape Girardeau, Missouri. I just moved here from Florida. I need to join the Franciscan fraternity here in Cape. Could you please help me?" There was such an earnest anticipation in her voice I could hardly break the news to her that there was no fraternity in Cape. When I told her that the closest fraternity was in St. Louis, two hours away, Celeste was incredulous. "Oh, Jan, please tell me you are kidding! My son won't let me drive that far! What will I do?" Her sincere disappointment touched my heart. Celeste's move to Cape to be close to her son had come at an unfortunate time in her Franciscan journey – she had completed initial formation, but had not yet professed. As we continued to talk I was struck by the depth of her commitment to her Franciscan call. Convinced of her sincerity, I made a simple suggestion, "Celeste, would you want to start a fraternity there in Cape?" She was so delighted! "I can do that?" she asked, and quickly added, "Oh, please, tell me how! When can I start?" Of course at that time I did not realize that Celeste was 85 years old, but that didn't seem to matter to her one bit – she wanted a fraternity.

I have seldom met anyone quite so determined as Celeste, but it is her Franciscan spirit that truly makes an impression. She naturally relates to everyone with kindness and genuine respect, and she has an amazing ability to show God's love in a spontaneous and joyful manner. Our fraternity adopted her, and our Region embraced her. In August of 2006 she was professed into San Damiano Fraternity at our Regional Retreat.

She beamed with joy.

In the months that followed, Celeste eagerly set out each day to promote the Order. Celeste is tiny herself, and at that time she drove a tiny car that was as bright a yellow as I have ever seen. Her license plate read SON BEAM. She was the only professed Secular Franciscan in Southeast Missouri but nothing stopped her. I delighted in her stories of meeting with parish priests, sending notices to the rural newspapers, putting flyers in churches, and talking with everyone she met about the joy of loving God as a Franciscan. (She is spunky, to say the least, with a sweet persistence that just makes you smile!) People started to respond and in March of 2007, an inquiry group formed.

I remember Celeste calling me to review the schedule for that first meeting. She was so excited but a bit nervous. She had received permission to meet at St. Francis Medical Center (St. Francis, of course!) They would gather on a Saturday morning for Mass in the hospital chapel, enjoy breakfast in the cafeteria and then gather in the meeting room provided them for formation. I assured her that her little fraternity was on its way! The name chosen for the fraternity was St. Padre Pio Fraternity.

When I told Celeste that she really needed to find a Spiritual Assistant she said, "Well this will be a challenge," but within a week she had one. Celeste discovered that the principal of the local Catholic high school was a Franciscan, Brother David Migliorino, OSF, a member of the Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn. He was the only friar in town, with very limited time, but who could say no to Celeste? Br. David journeyed with the little group and was a great source of encouragement. (Later the group was blessed to meet their current Spiritual Assistant, Sr. Maureen Elfrink, OSF.)

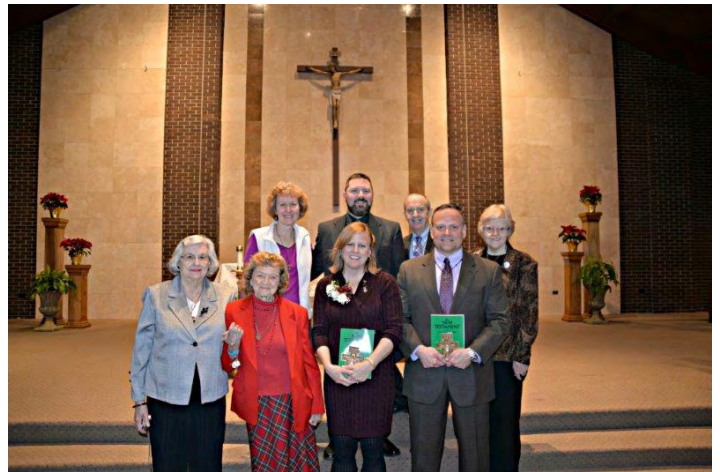
Celeste continued to be diligent, shepherding her newfound brothers and sisters and always attentive to do things "just right." In June of 2008, four Inquirers were accepted into Candidacy, and another was received in November of 2009. In October 2010 Dorothy Arnzen, Shawn Asmus and Anita Tygett were professed at a Sunday Mass at Immaculate Conception Church in Jackson, Missouri. In August 2011, all the members attended that year's Regional Retreat, where

Marvin Glueck and Mary Joseph made their profession, bringing the total membership of St. Padre Pio Fraternity to six professed. Celeste was ecstatic and so was I! This little fraternity had bonded in their 4½ year journey together. The love among them was a witness to all things Franciscan.

Suddenly, just a year later and within a six month period, two of their members met Sister Death. In December 2012, Dorothy, 82, died from illness, and tragically the following May in 2013, Mary, just 57, was murdered, along with her son. The fraternity was understandably shaken. During this time of grief and trial their love and faith in God carried them.

Fast forward to Sunday, February 7, 2016. I arrived at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Cape Girardeau, and many warm greetings were exchanged. As the 10:45 a.m. Mass began, the Pastor, Fr. David Hulshof, graciously introduced me to the congregation, welcomed the many Franciscan visitors (20 Seculars and three Poor Clares) and remarked on the importance of what would take place that day. The parish community's support was amazing and could be heard in their joyous singing. The Sunday readings were rich with meaning, and Fr. David's homily spoke of the call to the Gospel life. The candidates, Julie Schuchardt and Tony Peters, were called to the altar along with their sponsors. I was honored to be there for Julie. We knelt as Fr. David prayed, "Lord, may the Spirit of your love penetrate their hearts..."

I can only imagine Celeste's joy as Julie and Tony each made their profession that day. At 95 years of age, she finally has the Franciscan fraternity she longed for. As I stood there beside Julie, hearing once again these beautiful words, my own heart overflowed as well. "I, N.N... consecrate myself to the service of God's kingdom... and promise to live all the days of my life the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Secular Franciscan Order." Celeste wasn't the only one beaming, and the Son was shining brightly.



St. Padre Pio Emerging Fraternity, front from left: Vice-Minister Anita Tygett OFS, founding member Celeste Obermiller OFS, newly professed Julie Schuchardt OFS and Tony Peters OFS. Back row from left: National Minister Jan Parker OFS, Fraternity Minister Shawn Asmus OFS, Formation Director Marvin Glueck OFS and Spiritual Assistant Sr. Maureen Elfrink OSF.



From left to right: Deacon Steven Schisler OFS, Rev. David Hulshof, Jan Parker OFS, Julie Schuchardt OFS, Tony Peters OFS, and Gary Haller OFS

Postscript

A note to Jan Parker from newly professed Julie Schuchardt OFS

Jan, I really enjoyed reading the history of our fraternity and found it very interesting. Thank you for sharing with us! In November 2006, my husband Eric and I went on a tour to Italy with a group from our diocese. Celeste was also on that tour and that is where I met her, although I didn't get to know her well because of our large group. Now I am realizing for the first time that she was newly professed when we made that trip! I mentioned it to Eric, and he said, "Yes, don't you remember everyone was talking about how she was some sort of Franciscan, but nobody knew exactly what it was?" We visited Assisi and that is when I first felt at home with the Franciscans, although back then I knew very little about St. Francis and St. Clare. Now I really wish I had visited more with Celeste on that trip! Our lives are like a tapestry, and I guess it all comes together at the right time, not our time but God's time. Anyway, I would have never put that together without the dates and information you sent us. Thank you!

Sharing **T**he Vision

April 2016

News from the National Executive Council (NEC)

By Jan Parker, OFS

Thank you for your prayers for the National Executive Council (NEC) and for your wonderful support! The newly elected NEC gathered for our first meeting in Albany, New York, Dec. 3-6, 2015, blessed with wonderful hospitality from the Sisters of St. Joseph. We prayed, shared and worked hard together. We continued our work via conference calls on January 6 & 28, and February 11, 2016. Here are some highlights from those meetings.

2016 Quinquennial Q Scholarships

The NEC voted to allocate up to \$10,000 to assist those who wish to attend the Q. The assistance will be strictly need-based. OFS members can apply individually (and confidentially) directly to the National Treasurer. Forms are on the website. The NEC encourages Regional Executive Councils to work with their Fraternities to provide funding prior to applying to NAFRA for assistance.

Room at the Q

The Renaissance St. Louis Airport Hotel, the home of the 2016 Q, has enough room for 600 attendees – *but only if everyone books EARLY*. The best way to insure that there are rooms for all who wish to attend is *early registration and early booking of your hotel room*. We cannot guarantee room at the Q for those registering after June 9.

Q Invitations

Letters of invitation to the 2016 Quinquennial will be sent to the 1st Order and TOR Provincials and Provincial Spiritual Assistants. **The NEC encourages all Regions to invite their Regional Spiritual Assistant(s) to the Q and to cover their expenses.**

2015-2018 Appointments of Commission and Committee Chairs

At our December 2015 meeting the NEC made several decisions regarding our National Commissions and Committees. JPIC Chair Carolyn Townes and Formation Chair Mary Anne Lenzi were each re-appointed to a three-year term ending at our Elective Chapter in the fall of 2018.

National Committee Chairs and those individually appointed for specific tasks were re-appointed to a one-year term, ending on December 31, 2016.

Youth and Young Adult Commission

After extensive dialogue and prayerful discernment, the NEC decided to spend at least a year of continuing discernment to determine, together with the National Fraternity, the direction our youth efforts are to follow in the future. The appointment of a Youth Commission Chair will be deferred until this discernment has been completed and the National Fraternity has voted on the recommendations.

Guidelines for the National Commissions and Committees

Guidelines for the National Commissions and Committees are under review. These guidelines cover the selection and appointment process, meeting and reporting requirements, and budgetary concerns for our Commissions and Committees. We have requested input from past and current Commission and Committee Chairs and from the members of the National Fraternity Council.

Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) New Members

Br. Bob Brady, OFM, remains on the CNSA as President-in-Turn. Joining him as National Spiritual Assistants are Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, and Br. Alexander Escalera, OFM Cap. Welcome, good brothers!

Regions Encouraged to Build Relationships with Friars (Provincial Outreach Project)

The NEC strongly encourages Regional Fraternities to build relationships and increase communication with Provincial Ministers and Provincial Spiritual Assistants (PSA). The NEC is happy to assist you should you have any questions about how to do this. Opportunities for outreach: send hard copies of your Region's newsletter to each Provincial, each PSA and each friary in your Region; invite and inform them of Regional events (Chapters, Retreats, etc.); submit a copy of your Annual Report. Individual local fraternities may wish to send a copy of their own Annual Report to the PSA to which their fraternity is bonded.

Vocations Committee / Social Media

Vocations Committee Chair Jane DeRose-Bamman has been facilitating monthly conference calls to discuss vocations and use of social media. Send your ideas her way!

Spanish and Korean Translations of Formation Books

The Spanish and Korean versions of *The Franciscan Journey* by Fr. Lester Bach are scheduled to be printed during the first quarter of this year.

NAFRA Traveler Guidelines

The NEC has approved an updated version of the *NAFRA Traveler Guidelines – Policy on Reimbursement of Travel-related Expenses*. This document is posted on the NAFRA website.

H2O Project

JPIC Chair Carolyn Townes is leading our annual Lenten outreach — the H2O Project. Carolyn sent information on this project to all Regional Ministers and JPIC Animators on February 7, 2016. Donations to the H2O project are collected throughout the year.

NEC Calendar

The NEC will meet in Atlanta, Georgia, March 4-6, 2016. A meeting is also planned for July 4-5, 2016, in St. Louis after the Quinquennial.

MercyHour – A Year of Mercy Opportunity

Our beloved former National Minister Tom Bello, OFS, has teamed up with John Clem, OFS, to produce a wonderful website called "MercyHour." One feature is a daily "MercyHour" email meditation that will be sent to you upon request. See how to sign up by going to the "About" page on the website: <http://mercyhour.org/>



WELCOME TO 2016!

December 16, 2015 came and I finished a semester-long sabbatical of ongoing formation at the Franciscan School of Theology in Oceanside, CA. Among the classes was a class by Bill Short OFM on *Franciscan themes* and a class by Wayne Hellmann OFM Conv, *comparing the writings of St. Francis and Pope Francis* (Evangelii Gaudium and Laudato Si'). These Friars (together with Regis Armstrong OFM Cap) edited the three volumes titled: *St Francis of Assisi - The Saint / The Founder / The Prophet*.

I met with various Secular Franciscans in southern California, a blessing during my time there. I even attended a Christmas party with a hospitable Korean fraternity. During this time I also completed a book, written with Vinal Van Benthem OFS, entitled *WAITING FOR LOVE*. We're hoping it will be available at the "Q".

I will share ideas at the "Q" about the Trinity and implications for Franciscan life. They are not solutions but ideas to assist fraternities to prompt a rich level of dedication. In this issue of TAU-USA I am sharing some ideas that might help us engage in dialogue at the "Q".

A REALITY CHECK

Seculars model the vision of St. Francis and Clare in their lives. Such growth is ongoing for us. E.g. the work of the national formation team is an example of dedicated service. The insights of national committees and leaders around the country are clear in their workshops and articles in TAU-USA. Good material is available. Franciscans who absorb the ideas grow wiser as well as giving the ideas expression in their lives.

It would be a sad day for fraternity life if people follow a path known as *"We always did it this way!"* Fraternity life is less invigorating for such fraternity members since nothing changes. I hope your fraternity is not among them. Councils, do not presume the spirit of your membership without doing an evaluation of the members' dedication to and implementation of the 1978 OFS Rule!

Ideas that I share here and at the "Q" are meant to stimulate dialogue and enrich our dedication to the OFS way of life. Each fraternity does its own evaluation. If

something needs change, members engage in dialogue to find ways to make changes. The challenge supports both personal and fraternity *conversion*. The OFS Rule requires *daily conversion* (cfr. Article #7). At regular gatherings, fraternity members can share stories about their OFS life. Personal stories offer ways and insights that assist us in seeking *conversion* in our personal Franciscan lives!

The Trinity prompts Franciscans to proclaim, in their lives, a vision of the 1978 Rule of life. The Trinity calls us to model the message of St. Francis (Gospel living) for people. Failure is not an option. Nor is success easily achieved. *Love, persistence, prayer, conversion, learning, and trust in the Trinity* are normal tools of support for Franciscans on this journey.

Sharing experiences from daily life helps Franciscans bring gospel gifts to - the fraternity, spouses, families, organizations, cities, parishes, politicians, enemies and people who are *waiting for love!* It happens in supermarkets, malls, restaurants, car trips, people meetings, kitchens, schools, parishes, sick beds, at home, and everywhere we go.

Peace - Justice - Conversion - Mercy - Dialogue - Forgiveness - Love - Understanding - Relationships - Compassion - Solidarity - Bringing joy, are qualities expected of Franciscans. They are obvious signs of development in daily life. Fraternity gatherings can provide guidance to live these goals through shared life-experiences.

Devotions can be a healthy part of Franciscan gatherings. But they are expected to support actual change in our hearts. If we multiply devotions and make no personal changes, we become a bit unbalanced. Of course, it is easier to

add a devotion than to change a heart. We need balance in our lives. Check whether your devotions stimulate *conversion* and *growth* in Franciscan spirituality.

Loving others is a spiritual force drawing us to union with God; indeed, one who does not love others "walks in the darkness" (1 John 2:11), "remains in death" (1 John 3:14) and "does not know God" (1 John 4: 8). Benedict XVI has said that "closing our eyes to our neighbor also blinds us to God," And that love is, in the end, the only light which "can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage to keep living and working." (Benedict XVI) When we live out a spirituality of drawing nearer to others and seeking their welfare, our hearts are opened wide to the Lord's greatest and most bountiful gifts. Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God. Whenever our eyes are opened to acknowledge the 'other' we grow in the light of faith and knowledge of God. If we want to advance in the spiritual life, then, we must constantly be missionaries. ... A committed missionary knows the joy of being a spring which spills over and refreshes others. ... We do not live better when we flee, hide, refuse to share, stop living and lock ourselves up in our own comforts. Such a life is nothing less than slow suicide.

Evangelii Gaudium - The Joy of the Gospel
Pope Francis - #272

The words of Pope Francis challenge us to BE professed Franciscans. The Trinity calls us to live a gospel life through daily observance of the OFS Rule. Fraternity gatherings can *provide* ways and means to share insights and experiences with one another. It is one way to be involved with our brothers and sisters. At profession we promised to practice what we profess! The monthly gathering is one place to learn from one another. It requires effort by the members and local, regional, national and international councils to extend our ability to *BE Franciscans*. Otherwise why answer the Trinity's call?

Programs with guest speakers are fine. But we need to dialogue with the speaker and among ourselves to spell out how the

topic applies to Franciscan life. Attentive listening helps us learn. *Dialogue* helps us see how topics touch our hearts as Franciscans. Passivity, on the other hand, does little to stimulate *conversion* or *deepen relationships*.

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

OFS Rule - #7

People who dialogue listen to other's stories. We may recognize ourselves there. The same is true as others listen to us. Personal struggles seem easier to manage when another's human experience shares similar difficulties from personal experiences. *We are not alone.* Sharing experiences through dialogue can prompt fresh solutions as we share ideas. We get to know each other as we share common stories from living the OFS Rule. None of this happens if we are passive or just clap or quietly ponder good ideas someone shared. If we rarely invest in dialogue, many good ideas will likely remain stagnant.

Check the hours spent at regular fraternity gatherings. Gatherings support the creation of meaningful growth. Three or four hours a month is about 36 to 48 hours a year - about two days. We must make good use of these hours together. Councils and members support extra gatherings which may include regional and district gatherings, 'fun' times, professions, jubilees, workshops, special initial and ongoing formation sessions. Formation sessions can include members who never had solid formation. Other gatherings can offer support to parish programs, plan visits to shut-ins, or develop well-planned visitations. These and other efforts are important for fraternity life. They build *unity*. We dialogue when politics, violence, illness or terror challenge our way of living. *Conversion* is vital for Franciscans as is *unity* with our brothers and sisters - and the Trinity.

+++

The Lord's missionary mandate includes a call to growth in faith: "Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Mt. 28: 20). Hence it is clear that the first proclamation also calls for ongoing formation and maturation. Evangelization aims at a process of growth which entails taking seriously each person and God's plan for his or her life. All of us need to grow in Christ. Evangelization should stimulate a desire for this growth, so that each of us can say wholeheartedly: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (Gal 2: 20)

It would not be right to see this call to growth exclusively or primarily in terms of doctrinal formation. It has to do with "observing" all that the Lord has shown us as the way of responding to his love.

Evangelii Gaudium - The Joy of the Gospel

Pope Francis - #160 - 161



FORMATION COMMISSION

MAY THE LORD GIVE YOU PEACE

by Mary Anne Lenzi, OFS

We are so busy serving and doing what is expected of us that sometimes we run out of steam and grow weary. It is in this blessed state that we know we must return to the source of our strength and our peace—we *ascend into God* through prayer and Holy Scripture.

Are we brave enough to admit we have spent time in the desert—time when our faith has been tested? Even the great Franciscan St. Bonaventure experienced moments when the well ran dry and he longed for consolation.

In 1259, in a state of exhaustion, St. Bonaventure traveled to the mountain of La Verna to meditate on the vision and experience of St. Francis, and this is what he wrote:

When therefore by the example of most blessed Father Francis I sought with a panting spirit this peace, I a sinner, who, unworthy in all things ascend to the place of the most blessed father himself ... after his transitus; it happened that with the divine permission ... I turned aside with the love of seeking peace of spirit towards Mount Alverna as towards a quiet place, and staying there, while I considered in mind some mental ascensions into God, among others there occurred that miracle, which in the aforesaid place happened to blessed Francis himself, that is, of the vision of the Seraph winged after the likeness of the Crucified. ... [Journey of the Mind into God – paragraph 2]

To understand why St. Bonaventure chose La Verna for comfort and peace, we need to consider the experience of St. Francis on that holy mountain. From the beginning of his conversion, St. Francis had a deep devotion to Christ crucified. Two years before his death, he traveled to La Verna to fast and pray. While in a state of deep contemplation, he had a vision of a seraph with six

wings of fire descending toward him. After the vision receded, St. Francis was left not only with the marks of the Crucified Christ, but with a love so deep that this love inspired him to write the *Praises of God* that he gave to Br. Leo along with a personal blessing.

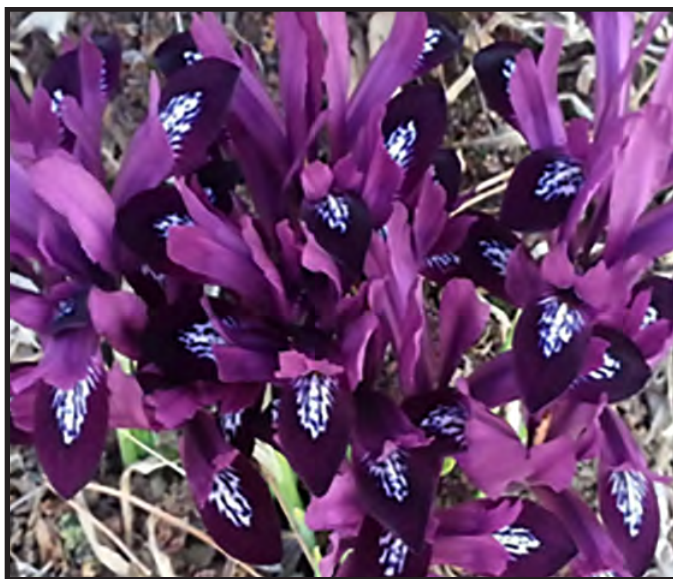


Andre Vauchez, a French medievalist, in his book *Francis of Assisi* writes: *In this short message, the Poor Man of Assisi, without making the least allusion to what he just lived through, limits himself to reproducing a passage from the Book of Numbers (Num. 6:24-26). But the choice of this text from the Old Testament is not without significance, since it evokes the manifestation of God to a person: "May the Lord bless you and*

keep you! May he show his face to you and show mercy to you. May he turn his face toward you and give you peace!" Destined for Leo, this formula probably gives us an echo of the spiritual experience that Francis had just lived through and which had transformed him. (p. 130)

Can anyone fully understand the experience of St. Francis and St. Bonaventure? I don't think so; however, we can have our own experiences of love, joy and compassion when we contemplate the love of Christ crucified and travel our own path to La Verna. St. Bonaventure wrote: *As the vision disappeared, it left [Francis'] heart burning with a marvelous ardor and impressed upon his body an image of the signs which was not less marvelous. There and then the marks of nails began to appear in his hands and feet, just as he had seen them in this vision of the crucified man (Chapter 13. Section 3).* When we journey with Christ, St. Francis' prayer for Br. Leo will be manifested in our lives—we will see the face of the Lord and be blessed with His mercy and His peace.

I used a medieval saint and a medieval historian to help me make sense of my journey through both the consolations and the deserts of my life. In my dry times I often wander with St. Francis and Bonaventure up to the mountain of La Verna. These two saints help me to contemplate the nearness of the Word and to persevere on my journey to fully live a life marked by Christ.



This article was inspired by a *Lectio Divina* prayed and shared in a recent Catholic biblical school class. The verse was: *"The word is very near to you, it is in your mouth and in your heart so you can do it. Deut. 30:14 (RSV)* and referred to by Paul in Romans 10:8. The verse took hold. I let the words settle within me. Then in the way of St. Clare, I went to the garden to gaze. There in the barren ground were the first blooms of the season, passionate petals, delicately imprinted, marked by the Creator. I am reassured, refreshed.

Take a few minutes with a verse from Holy Scripture. What does it say to you? Where does it lead you? How do you respond?

You can do it!

The Word is so very near to you.

He is in your heart.

You are blessed. Be at Peace.

Lectio Divina is a way of praying with the Scriptures that allows us to enter into a personal conversation and deeper relationship with the living God. We listen and respond in prayer and contemplation. *Lectio Divina* traditionally follows these four steps: Reading a passage, reflecting on the words that capture our attention, responding in silent prayer and resting in the presence of the Lord.

Gaze. Consider. Contemplate. Imitate.





JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



THE FRANCISCAN FACE OF MERCY

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, National JPIC Animator

In **Misericordiae Vultus**, the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, Pope Francis writes: *Jesus of Nazareth is the face of the Father's mercy. By his words, his actions, and his entire person, Jesus reveals the mercy of God. He goes on to write: We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends in it.*

Mercy. The very word denotes compassion, forgiveness and understanding. True mercy, our Holy Father tells us, demands justice. The mercy God gives us demands justice. In His infinite wisdom, God has anointed each one of us with the call of living the Gospel in a special way. That anointing, that call, comes with the responsibility to be and do mercy, love, peace and justice. The Secular Franciscan Order is not just another group we join because we enjoy the socials and the prayers. It is a living call to be the face of mercy to one another. It is a living call to be the face of justice to those who are on the margins of society. It is a living call to be the face of our Lord and Redeemer, to those who, for whatever reason, cannot see his face anywhere else. We, as Secular Franciscans, have been called to be the face of mercy in the marketplace, in the workplace, in the mean streets of a society that does not want to recognize that merciful face.

I have been privileged to travel around the country speaking with fraternities and regions about JPIC. But I do not speak about the Franciscan Commission of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. I speak about being and doing love, being and doing mercy, being and doing empathy and compassion. I speak about being and doing the Gospel, from which springs our Holy Rule. This is the very heart of justice and peace. Being and doing love and mercy is how we love and care for one another. This is

justice. This is peace. This is living in harmony with all of God's creation.

The Franciscan face of mercy endures, because God's mercy endures forever, as the Psalmist intones. To let go of anger, violence, and revenge is a necessary condition to living joyfully, to being the face of mercy. Blessed are the merciful, Jesus tells us, for they shall obtain mercy. To receive mercy, we must extend mercy. When we extend violence and wrath, we get more of the same in return. As Franciscans, we have been called to a higher standard. Mediocrity is not acceptable. We have not been called to mediocrity. We must strive for excellence in the Kingdom of God. We will not do it perfectly, and we will fall; after all, we suffer from human frailty. We also suffer from "people-itis." Life is filled with people! If there were no people, then we *would* be perfect! Since our world is so "peopley," moment to moment conversion is necessary. How great that we have a Savior who understands because he hung out with 12 of those people!

As the Church, we are commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person (MV, 12). How are you being and doing the Franciscan face of mercy to those people you come in contact with? Especially the "peopley" ones – those who push your non-Franciscan buttons or cut you off in traffic and give you the peace sign with one finger? Can you extend mercy to them? Will you extend mercy to them? No one said this would be easy. Pope Francis reminds us that without a witness to mercy, life becomes fruitless and sterile, as if sequestered in a barren desert. Our call is to witness to mercy; to be the Franciscan face of mercy. May the Lord grant you peace and mercy on your journey.

FRANCISCAN LIVING

The Challenge of Mercy

By Francine Gikow, OFS, Staff Editor

During the Year of Mercy, we are encouraged to pray, study and act for mercy.

We are exhorted to meditate and pray the Divine Mercy chaplet, study the Mercy documents of the Church (*Misericordiae Vultus* by Pope Francis and *Dives in Misericordia* by Pope St. John Paul II) and to perform the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.

However, these efforts can become empty and meaningless unless we confront how we show or do not show mercy toward others in our everyday lives. Mercy is not meant to be just another program in the Church or a “feel good” exercise. Rather it is meant to be a tough-love challenge in changing our approach to others.

Lately I have been finding myself being very judgmental toward others and have realized that this attitude begins within my thoughts as I think of others. When I went to confession, the priest pointedly asked me whether I look at people seeing the bad in them, and if so, shouldn't I be looking for the good in them instead? After all, God always looks for the good, and isn't compassion one of the main attributes of God?

As Pope Francis says: “To refrain from judgment and condemnation means, in a positive sense, to know how to accept the good in every person and to spare him any suffering that might be caused by our partial judgment and our presumption to know everything about him.”¹

Pope Francis goes on to say, “Human beings, whenever they judge, look no farther than the surface, whereas the Father looks into the depths of the soul.” If we don't truly believe and act on these words, then we are missing the whole point of Jesus' crucifixion. God loves us, wildly, passionately and immeasurably!²

God's compassion is open to everyone: “...for he [God] is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked” (Lk 6:35) . NO ONE is exempt from God's mercy no matter what they have done... not even me! I need to live this truth and act towards others with compassion, mercy and love.

I have begun to realize that my judgmental attitude started with some unresolved hurt from my past. The

hurt left me with anger and a fear of being hurt again. So subconsciously I projected my anger and fears outward, and I began to approach others negatively, judging people with my impossibly high standards, and finding scapegoats for my unresolved feelings. As you know, violence toward others (and being judgmental is a type of violence) begets violence, and a vicious cycle is perpetuated. Instead of acknowledging and accepting the hurtful injury, embracing my wounds in unity with Jesus' cross and forgiving the person, I chose to wallow in my self-victimization and attack others through my critical attitude — not very Franciscan at all!

For as Pope Francis says in *Misericordiae Vultus*:

“The Lord Jesus shows us the steps of the pilgrimage to attain our goal.

‘Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back’ (Lk 6:37-38).”³

Christ is *the* model of forgiveness and mercy. He not only forgave his enemies, but also loved them. He embraced his wounds and transformed them into love by forgiveness. This forgiveness breaks the cycle of condemnation and harm.

But what about justice, you might say? Pope Francis clarifies this when he states: “Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God's way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert and believe... Mere justice is not enough... anyone who makes a mistake must pay the price. However, this is just the beginning of conversion, not its end, because one begins to feel the tenderness and mercy of God.”⁴

It has been said: “the compassionate person offers salvation by offering healing and love.”⁵ Isn't that what we are about as Secular Franciscans?

Meditation: “What makes us most like Christ is our frail and fragile humanity. If we truly loved our frail and fragile humanity, we would love the frailty of others as well.”⁶

¹ Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, 14

² op. cit., 14.

³ op. cit., 14.

⁴ op. cit., 21.

⁵ Ilia Delio, *Compassion: Living in the Spirit of St. Francis*. Cincinnati OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2011, p. 58.

⁶ Ilia Delio, p.72.

HOW CAN THERE BE MERCY IN A WAR ZONE?

by Mary Bittner, OFS

I'd like to tell you a true story. It was told to me by a hospital chaplain, who some years ago had been stationed with U.S. troops in Beirut.

Our story opens at a time when tensions were running high between the American troops and the local population, a few days after a series of severe bombing attacks had driven the tension level even higher.

One afternoon, several soldiers on guard duty noticed an old woman hobbling slowly up the road toward them, pulling a cart that carried a strange contraption. The day was hot and dusty, and the cart was assuredly heavy, for the old woman moved very, very slowly.

When she finally reached the soldiers, the woman stopped, detached a teapot from the apparatus, poured herself a cup of tea, and drank it in silence. She next unearthed from her cart several cups, and proceeded to offer cups of tea to the soldiers. A couple of them, including my chaplain acquaintance, accepted her invitation and drank. She then nodded and headed her cart back down the dusty road.

The next day she and her tea cart were back, and this time several of the men were willing to drink her tea. The following day even more men were waiting, and the old woman was accompanied by several of her own friends.

This went on. Each day the old woman made tea, and the men drank tea with her. Her friends started bringing food—little Middle Eastern pastries and delicacies—which they shared with the soldiers.

After a time, one of the men followed the old woman to see where she lived—a bombed-out building with no roof. The soldiers went back and repaired her house... now she had a roof over her head. And each day she and the soldiers continued to share tea.

What had happened there, on a dusty street in war-torn Beirut? Mercy given. Mercy received. Mercy.

A FUTURE NOT OUR OWN

It helps now and then to step back and take a long view.

The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection, no pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the Church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water the seeds already planted knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing this.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

This reflection prayer was recently shared at the Saint Junipero Serra Regional Visitation Chapter by Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, National Spiritual Assistant, who was the national pastoral visitor at the Chapter.

The prayer was composed by Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw, drafted for a homily by Cardinal John Dearden in Nov. 1979 for a celebration of departed priests. As a reflection on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Bishop Romero, Bishop Untener included in a reflection book a passage titled "The mystery of the Romero Prayer." The mystery is that the words of the prayer are attributed to Oscar Romero, but they were never spoken by him.

USCCB Website:



Update from Management of the Order Committee

All OFS in U.S. Urged to Participate in Survey

By Mary Stronach, OFS
International Councilor

I had chills running down my spine – not from the sub-zero weather we are experiencing in Upstate New York – but from reviewing the draft of the survey the Management of the Order Committee has been preparing for all members of the Order in the United States.

Believe it or not, the simple process of answering questions about our Order empowers us as an Order. We **do** have control of the direction of the Order – at the local level, at the regional level, at the national level, and yes, at the international level.

The process of answering the survey actually makes us more aware of our Order, suggests possibilities, and opens the doors of opportunities we may not have recognized.

So join us in completing the survey. The survey link to Survey Monkey (an online survey tool) will be sent to all Regional Ministers through the NAFRA-List. It should be forwarded to local ministers and all individual brothers and sisters of the order. It will be open and available from March 1 to April 2.

We apologize in advance to our brothers and sisters who do not read English. We plan to make the survey available in translation at a later date.

We ask you to do four things:

1. Take the survey. It will take about 30 minutes. Go to: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MOTO_NAFRA
2. As you are taking the survey, make a mental note of how you, as a member of the Order, can tackle a simple problem or support an endeavor at your local or regional fraternity level.

3. Forward the link to OFS brothers and sisters you know who have access to a computer and invite them to take the survey. *It should be taken only once.*
4. Print out surveys for brothers and sisters who do not have a computer. Ask them to take the paper survey and to give it back to you. We would appreciate it if you could help us by inputting their answers on the Survey Monkey Tool. If that is not possible, please mail it to us at: Mary Stronach, OFS, P.O. Box 232, Marcy, NY 13403 before the April 2 closing date. Those who do not have computers might want to ask a relative for help in accessing the survey on-line or may want to go to the library.

While the survey represents a milestone in the work to be accomplished by the Management of the Order Committee, there is still much to be done. But, it cannot be accomplished unless our brothers and sisters help us by responding to the survey. By doing so, you too will be a part of taking the Order into the future – moving it forward to new levels of spirituality and presence in the world and uniting the Order as it has never been united before. The process at our national, regional and local levels should help us anchor ourselves as an Order – it should challenge us and awaken new possibilities.

The members of the committee wish to thank you for your support in this endeavor: *Tom Bello, OFS, Mary Bittner, OFS, Mary Frances Charsky, OFS, Dawn Rusinko, OFS, DonnaMarie Flanagan Kaminsky, OFS, Anne Mulqueen, OFS, Patricia Serotkin, OFS, Mary Stronach, OFS, Karen Szczesniak, OFS, Carolyn Townes, OFS, Jan Parker, OFS (ex officio).*

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL TREASURER CALENDAR YEAR 2015

By Jerry Rousseau, OFS

Dear brothers and sisters,

Blessings to all of you in this Jubilee Year of Mercy!

It is my privilege to present to you the Calendar Year 2015 financial reports for our National Fraternity. The three reports consist of a) the General Funds Report, b) the Restricted Funds report, and c) a description of all activities that took place in all current restricted fund accounts during this past year.

In an effort toward greater transparency from your NEC, I will try to address the questions that I might have had as a Regional Minister or as an invested fraternity member when looking over these reports.

First of all, to really grasp the full picture of our finances, one needs to review all three reports as separate slices of one pie.

General Funds Report

This is a recap of all income and expenses experienced relative to the 2015 Budget. While total expenses remained below budget, the anticipated income was also substantially below budget, resulting in a deficit of \$56,033.34. Reviewing the minutes of the 2014 Chapter, at which this budget was approved, this shortfall was anticipated. and aggregate profits over previous years were shown as miscellaneous income in order to present a balanced budget. The majority agreed with this approach, as the expenses presented were believed to be necessary. It should be noted that our deficit would have been substantially less had we not incurred a penalty for canceling the original venue for the 2016 Quinquennial (\$49,349.25). Details of this were reviewed by the National Fraternity Council at our 2015 Chapter. Account 7150 (Council meetings) went over budget by \$3,305.86 due to

an extra meeting of the NEC in December for the newly elected council to conduct business.

On the positive side, please note that our beginning balance of checking and savings on January 1, 2015, was \$349,064.08, while our ending balance for these working funds on December 31, 2015, is \$340,931.64. This is due primarily to the generosity of our members in the form of bequests and other donations to our donor fund (account 7307).

Restricted Funds Report

The top half of this report lists the beginning and ending balances for each account in this fund with net activity by quarter. The bottom half reports the status of the Duns Scotus Secular Franciscan Formation Trust Fund, which was incorporated in 1997 as the result of a grant from St. John the Baptist Province. This report indicates the investment funds' value at the end of each of the past ten years.

Restricted Funds Activity by Account

The third report is a detailed accounting of all contributions and donations received during 2015, as well as disbursements by NAFRA from each individual account. The majority of activity took place in the donor fund, account 7307.

It is both sobering and humbling to have been granted the responsibility for the care and administration of NAFRA's finances in concert with the other elected members of the National Executive Council. I am available to answer any questions you might have and pledge my continued due diligence in service to our members. Thank you for your trust and support.

Peace and All Good,

Jerry Rousseau, OFS

General Fund Reports for Calendar Year 2015

National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order - USA							
General Fund Reports for Calendar Year 2015							
	Quarter Ending On:	3/31/15	6/30/15	9/30/15	12/31/15	TOTAL FOR	BUDGET
Acct #	INCOME					YEAR	for 2015
6110	FAIR SHARE	\$ 7,395.00	\$ 174,938.50	\$ 46,381.25		\$ 228,714.75	\$ 233,700
6120	INTEREST	\$ 42.75	\$ 44.30	\$ 48.30	48.30	\$ 183.65	\$ 145
6200	FORMATION SALES	\$ 8,880.22	\$ 12,303.75	\$ 11,916.23	8,396.25	\$ 41,496.45	\$ 50,350
6140	MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 19.96	\$ 4,654.44			\$ 4,674.40	\$ 72,000
	TOTAL INCOME	\$ 16,337.93	\$ 191,940.99	\$ 58,345.78	\$ 8,444.55	\$ 275,069.25	\$ 356,195
	EXPENSES						
7110	CIOFS (19,256 Euros)			\$ (21,958.81)		\$ (21,958.81)	\$ 25,000
7115	FAN Fran. Action Network	\$ 595.00		\$ (13,089.00)		\$ (12,494.00)	\$ 12,700
7120	NEWSLETTER	\$ (12,628.90)	\$ 18.00	\$ (26,575.29)	(12,884.78)	\$ (52,070.97)	\$ 52,000
7130	ANNUAL MEETING	\$ (10,634.60)		\$ (47,084.72)	2,305.33	\$ (55,413.99)	\$ 70,000
7135	QUINQUENNIAL CONGRESS		\$ (50,717.88)	\$ (3,030.46)	(1,869.00)	\$ (55,617.34)	\$ 45,000
7140	COUNCIL OFFICERS	\$ (259.60)	\$ (1,939.52)	\$ (233.26)	(448.62)	\$ (2,881.00)	\$ 3,000
7145	CIOFS MEETING					\$ -	\$ -
7150	COUNCIL MEETINGS	\$ (8,482.38)	\$ (3,799.45)	\$ (3,089.81)	(6,934.22)	\$ (22,305.86)	\$ 19,000
7155	LIABILITY INSURANCE		\$ (3,799.00)			\$ (3,799.00)	\$ 3,800
7160	CIOFS VISITATION			\$ (1,425.78)	(1,526.20)	\$ (2,951.98)	\$ 7,500
7172	JPIC AWARD COMMITTEE				(3,000.00)	\$ (3,000.00)	\$ 3,000
7173	NATIONAL ARCHIVES		\$ (1,600.00)	\$ (148.62)		\$ (1,748.62)	\$ 2,125
7176	COMPUTER COMMITTEE	\$ (1,199.99)	\$ (2,001.54)	\$ (1,124.50)	(2,603.56)	\$ (6,929.59)	\$ 7,540
7180	FORMATION-PRINTING	\$ (13,650.00)	\$ (4,050.00)	\$ (750.00)	(6,450.00)	\$ (24,900.00)	\$ 20,000
7180-L	FORMATION-Printing Language				(12,000.00)	\$ (12,000.00)	\$ 15,000
7181	FORMATION	\$ (1,866.65)		\$ (4,532.06)	(1,139.76)	\$ (7,538.47)	\$ 14,200
7182	S A DEVELOPMENT			\$ (454.51)		\$ (454.51)	\$ 500
7183	VOCATIONS	\$ (192.49)	\$ (185.20)	\$ (147.41)	(2,117.17)	\$ (2,642.27)	\$ 3,650
7184	PR					\$ -	\$ 1,000
7186	J P I C		\$ (1,698.12)	\$ (5,408.18)	(1,167.75)	\$ (8,274.05)	\$ 7,500
7187	YOUTH	\$ (120.00)	\$ (556.65)	\$ (12,048.35)		\$ (12,725.00)	\$ 12,000
7188	ECUMENICAL COMMITTEE	\$ (2,299.60)	\$ (73.50)	\$ (1,041.59)	(685.19)	\$ (4,099.88)	\$ 10,680
7198	COMMUNICATIONS			\$ (511.50)		\$ (511.50)	\$ 3,000
7199	CNSA		\$ (8,000.00)			\$ (8,000.00)	\$ 8,000
7200	OTHER EXPENSES			\$ (2,915.00)	(5,870.75)	\$ (8,785.75)	\$ 10,000
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ (50,739.21)	\$ (78,402.86)	\$ (145,568.85)	\$ (56,391.67)	\$ (331,102.59)	\$ 356,195.00
	NET INCOME (EXPENSE)	\$ (34,401.28)	\$ 113,538.13	\$ (87,223.07)	\$ (48,127.37)	\$ (56,033.34)	
Bank Balances of General Funds:							
	Beginning: CHECKING	\$ 162,187.36	\$ 128,132.33	\$ 240,937.16	\$ 151,496.96		
	SAVINGS	\$ 186,876.72	\$ 186,919.47	\$ 186,963.77	\$ 187,012.07		
	TOTAL - Beginning Balance	\$ 349,064.08	\$ 315,051.80	\$ 427,900.93	\$ 338,509.03		
	Less Restricted Funds	\$ (65,960.75)	\$ (66,349.75)	\$ (65,660.75)	\$ (63,491.92)		
	TOTAL - Available Funds	\$ 283,103.33	\$ 248,702.05	\$ 362,240.18	\$ 275,017.11		
	Ending: CHECKING	\$ 128,132.33	\$ 240,937.16	\$ 151,496.96	\$ 153,871.27		
	SAVINGS (combined)	\$ 186,919.47	\$ 186,963.77	\$ 187,012.07	\$ 187,060.37		
	TOTAL - Ending Balance	\$ 315,051.80	\$ 427,900.93	\$ 338,509.03	\$ 340,931.64		
	Less Restricted Funds	\$ (66,349.75)	\$ (65,660.75)	\$ (63,491.92)	(112,803.34)		
	TOTAL - Available Funds	\$ 248,702.05	\$ 362,240.18	\$ 275,017.11	\$ 228,128.30		
2015 Annual Report Respectfully submitted by Jerry Rousseau,OFS, National Treasurer							

Calendar Year 2015 Annual Financial Report - Restricted Funds

1/22/2016

**National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order - USA
Calendar Year 2015 Annual Financial Report - Restricted Funds**

RESTRICTED FUNDS REPORT

Acct#	RESTRICTED FUNDS	Quarter Ending On:				YEAR TOTAL	ENDING BALANCE
		3/31/15	6/30/15	9/30/15	12/31/15		
7303	REGIONAL NEEDS	\$ 10,000.00	(1,000.00)			\$ (1,000.00)	\$ 9,000.00
7304	EMERGENCY FUND	\$ 10,000.00					\$ 10,000.00
7305	CHARITABLE PROJECTS	\$ 3,000.00					\$ 3,000.00
7306	NATIONAL EVENTS	\$ 6,209.52					\$ 6,209.52
7307	DONOR FUND	\$ 7,571.90	\$ 10.00		\$ 36,411.39	\$ 36,421.39	\$ 43,993.29
7310	CIOFS OFFICE FUND & SPECIAL APPEAL	\$ -	\$ 500.00	\$ (500.00)			\$ -
7314	FORMATION COMM FUND	\$ 1,317.10					\$ 1,317.10
7315	ECUMENICAL COMM FUND	\$ 1,138.20					\$ 1,138.20
7316	YOUTH H2O COLLECTIONS	\$ -	\$ (869.00)	\$ 311.17	50.00	\$ 361.17	\$ 361.17
7317	Y/YA YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP	\$ 2,488.05					\$ 2,488.05
7319	GIFT FUND	\$ -					\$ -
7335	QUINQUENNIAL FUND	\$ -			10,240.00	10,240.00	\$ 10,240.00
7375	HISTORY BOOKS print, sales	\$ (7,327.70)	\$ 20.00	\$ 170.00	20.00	\$ 210.00	\$ (7,117.70)
	DUNS SCOTUS GRANT						
8110	AVAILABLE FOR GRANTS	\$ 30,793.00		\$ (2,000.00)		\$ (2,000.00)	\$ 28,793.00
8220	LEGAL & OTHER EXPENSES	\$ 4,273.77			(893.06)	(893.06)	\$ 3,380.71
	TOTALS	69,463.84	389.00	(689.00)	45,808.33	43,339.50	112,803.34

		Investment Account	Total Value
DUNS SCOTUS SECULAR FRANCISCAN FORMATION TRUST FUND			
12/31/06	Trust Fund Balance	\$ 615,286.39	\$615,286.39
12/31/07	Trust Fund Balance	\$ 656,513.39	\$656,513.39
12/31/08	Trust Fund Balance end of 2008	\$ 426,423.39	\$426,423.39
12/31/09	Trust Fund Balance end of 2009	\$ 543,308.80	\$543,308.80
12/31/10	Trust Fund Balance end of 2010	\$ 660,194.21	\$660,194.21
12/31/11	Trust Fund Balance end of 2011	\$ 591,675.00	\$591,675.00
12/31/12	Trust Fund Balance end of 2012	\$ 658,566.00	\$658,566.00
12/31/13	Trust Fund Balance end of 2013	\$ 820,013.16	\$820,013.16
12/31/14	Trust Fund Balance	\$ 911,069.67	\$911,069.67
3/31/15	Investment gains/losses: First Quarter	\$ 10,989.65	
	Trust Fund Balance	\$ 922,059.32	\$922,059.32
6/30/15	Investment gains/losses: Second Quarter	\$ (11,331.19)	
	Trust Fund Balance	\$ 910,728.13	\$910,728.13
9/30/15	Investment gains/losses: Third Quarter	-\$61,932.01	
	Trust Fund Balance	\$848,796.12	\$848,796.12
12/31/15	Investment gains/losses: Fourth Quarter	37,438.72	
	Trust Fund Balance	886,234.84	\$886,234.84

Contributions and Charitable Donations

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA					
Report of Contributions and Charitable Donations Made and received through NAFRA in 2015 - as of December 31, 2015					
Account	Description of Activity	Amt. Rec'd Donations	Amt. Donated by NAFRA	Amount	Balance
7303	REGIONAL NEEDS				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2015	\$ 10,000.00			
	Grant BJS Region			\$ (1,000.00)	
	Closing Balance				\$ 9,000.00
7304	EMERGENCY FUND				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2015	\$ 10,000.00			
	Closing Balance				\$ 10,000.00
7305	CHARITABLE PROJECTS				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2015	\$ 3,000.00			
	Closing Balance				\$ 3,000.00
7306	NATIONAL EVENTS				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2015	\$ 6,209.52			
	Closing Balance				\$ 6,209.52
7307	DONOR FUND				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2015	\$ 7,571.90			\$ 7,571.90
	General (Unspecified) Contributions:				
	Contributions 2nd Qtr	\$ 10.00			\$ 10.00
7307-M	In Memoriam - estate of Bernice Wrablick	\$ 56,111.39	see note	\$ (14,000.00)	
	In Memoriam - estate of Phyllis Bruno	\$ 1,000.00		\$ (6,000.00)	\$ 35,511.39
7307-H	In Honor of NAFRA	\$ 500.00			
	In Honor of Mary Agnes Hedrick	\$ 400.00			\$ 900.00
	Catholic Charities of SC		see note	\$ (1,000.00)	
	NAFRA appeal for flood victims	\$ 3,277.00		\$ (3,277.00)	
	In Honor of retiring CNSA members			\$ (600.00)	
	Closing Balance				\$ 43,993.29
7310	CIOFS OFFICE FUND				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2015				\$ -
	Donations received				\$ -
	contribution to the "Twinning" project for Africa	\$ 500.00		\$ (500.00)	\$ -
	Closing Balance				\$ -
7314	FORMATION COMM FUND				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2015	\$ 1,317.10			
	Closing Balance				\$ 1,317.10
7315	ECUMENICAL COMM FUND				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2015	\$ 1,138.20			
	Closing Balance				\$ 1,138.20
7316	H2O COLLECTIONS				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2015				\$ -
	Contributions 1st Qtr	\$ 869.00			\$ -
	Contributions 2nd Qtr	\$ 1,670.12		\$ (2,539.12)	\$ -
	Contributions 3rd Qtr (7/20, 8/12, 9/10)	\$ 311.17			\$ 311.17
	Contributions 4th Quarter	\$ 50.00			\$ 50.00
	Closing Balance				\$ 361.17
7317	Y/YA YOUTH SCHOLARSHIPS				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2015	2,488.05			
	Closing Balance				\$ 2,488.05
7335	QUINQUENNIAL FUND				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2015	\$0.00			
	Registrations 4th quarter	\$ 10,240.00			\$10,240.00
	Closing Balance				\$ 10,240.00
7375	HISTORY BOOK SALES				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2015	\$ (7,327.70)			
	1ST, 2nd AND 3RD QUARTER	\$ 210.00			
	Closing Balance				\$ (7,117.70)
	DUNS SCOTUS TRUST FUND				
8110	AVAILABLE FOR GRANTS				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2015	\$ 30,793.00		\$ (2,000.00)	
	Closing Balance				\$ 28,793.00
8220	LEGAL AND OTHER EXPENSES				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2015	\$ 4,273.77		\$ (893.06)	
	Closing Balance				\$ 3,380.71
	TOTAL OF EACH COLUMN	\$ 144,612.52		\$ (31,809.18)	\$ 112,803.34

Note: 7307-M Donations by NAFRA as follows: Terra Sancta \$9,000, Fran. Intl, Amazon Relief, Fran. Mission Svc., Fran. Family Apostolate: \$1,000 each
NAFRA donation to flood relief: \$1,000.00, 2014 retroactive donation to FMS: \$1,000 **Total: \$15,000**
Charitable donations: \$6,000 pending to be xfrd to CIOFS for Holv Land fraternities **Grand total \$21,000**

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE OFS?

by Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS

In past articles from the Vocations Committee, there has been a focus on our joint responsibility for promoting vocations – sharing the news about the Secular Franciscan Order. Have you talked about your vocation recently?

At one time in your life, it was so special that you were drawn to learn about it, and eventually you professed to live your life according to the OFS Rule. Did you talk about it to everyone who would listen – like it was the love of your life, best new invention or prize? Take a walk down memory lane – recall how you learned about the Order.

Whatever the approach was, it worked for you. Would that approach be a good way to introduce others to the Order? Was it the way someone responded to struggles? Was it the joy in the person's attitude? Was it working for social justice in your community? Remember the saying attributed to St. Francis: "Preach the Gospel always, and if necessary, use words." Our actions can be a powerful way of attracting vocations.

At the Quinquennial Congress (Q) in St. Louis, attendees will have the opportunity to record their vocation testimony, i.e., brag about this great Order to which the Holy Spirit led us. Participants are invited to record 2-3 minute testimonials. Some examples of questions to think about:

1. How did you learn about the OFS? What drew you to the Order?
2. How do you respond when someone asks: "What's that 'T' around your neck?"
3. What does being a Secular Franciscan mean to you?

The Q is several months away, so why not practice your "elevator speech" ahead of time? Testimonials will be posted to the Secular Franciscan YouTube Channel. I trust that the sharing will be a source of inspiration about this Way of Life.

Once we have our message down, with whom do we share it? (i.e., Who would potentially have a vocation?)

Start with other Catholics. Then get to know them. Do they have Franciscan traits?

Borrowing from the *For Up to Now* (FUN) manual we should be looking for individuals who:

- Are joy filled even in the midst of struggles;
- Desire to live the Gospel;
- Participate in the life of the Church and the apostolic life;
- Are familiar with Sacred Scripture;
- Are good cooks or bakers (ok – this wasn't in the FUN Manual, but good idea?).

Of course, this isn't an exhaustive list.

Think of the people in your family, parish and at work. Does anyone demonstrate those traits? Maybe it's time to invite him or her to learn more about the Order. In addition to talking about what you know, direct the person to your Formation Director and also to the NAFRA social media sites:

NAFRA website at www.nafra-sfo.org,

NAFRA Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Secular-Franciscans-Nafra-USA-128856987168774/>

Continue to turn things over to the Holy Spirit, be open to respond to those nudges and talk about how special your vocation is to you. Lastly, pray the following at least monthly:

National Prayer for Vocations to the Secular Franciscan Order

O good and gracious God, God of mercy, compassion, generosity, and love, as we live our lives today in the model of St. Francis, choosing daily to live the Gospel life, help us to help others hear your call. Help us to help others recognize their vocation as a Secular Franciscan that You have already planted in their heart. Help us, so that together we all may work to bring the Gospel to life. Amen! (Composed by Marian R. Crosby, OFS, at the 2010 NAFRA gathering in Scottsdale, AZ)

Send your comments to:
OFSVocationsCommitte@gmail.com





COME HOME TO THE Q AND BE WITH FAMILY

Kate Kleinert, OFS

God Himself must love the family structure since He spent so much time creating it. It flavors our prayers... Our Father... through the Son... we are adopted sons and daughters. It flows through our Franciscan lives because we are brothers and sisters in the truest sense of the words. And like most families, we mean to get together more often; but, somehow it never happens. We wait for a better time: after the holidays, when money isn't quite so tight, when my schedule isn't so busy....

Life does have a way of getting away from us. When was the last time you fed your vocation? Truly fed it? Or fed the vocation of one of our Brothers or Sisters? Every relationship needs some attention in order to be renewed and revived. The Q is the perfect opportunity to spend time with your own vocation and your Franciscan family.

“Little Fraternities” – little families - are formed so you will have a small group to meet with, talk about what you heard, discuss what you can take back and what you can learn from each other. If you have been to a Quinquennial in the past, you know what it is like to attend Mass with 600 people who share your beliefs and wear the same Tau. If this is your first time attending, I wish I had the talent to write what it is like. The last Q held in Chicago ended with the closing Mass. The Recessional hymn was *Go Make a Difference*. The faith and joy and fire of our Franciscanism nearly blew the roof off the Holiday Inn! All those voices raised as one, praising God and encouraging each other to **go make a difference**, I still feel it now. And I hold it out to you. This opportunity comes along every five years. There isn't a better time than now. Life is short, but it begins and ends with family. Please... meet me in St. Louis!

***Don't forget to meet me in St. Louis.
June 30 – July 4, 2016***

XIX QUINQUENNIAL

“Reviving Our Spirit”

**June 30 to July 4, 2016
St. Louis, Missouri**

*Registration information and registration is available on the NAFRA website;
<http://www.nafra-sfo.org/>*

Q Tip: Register Early to Win Q Quilt



“The first 300 folks to register for the 2016 Q will be entered in the drawing to win the Quinquennial Quilt that is being stitched by our sister, Cindy Wesley, OFS,” reports Q Committee member Kate Kleinert, OFS. “Chances will also be sold at the Q, but for your free entry to the drawing, get those registrations in!”



2016 Quinquennial Scholarship Fund

Dear Secular Franciscan Brothers and Sisters,
It is a great joy that the Quinquennial scholarship information is available now! How wonderful it will be to “meet you in St. Louis” for the Q!

For those who need financial help to attend the Quinquennial, consider NAFRA’s scholarship fund. The scholarship application must be completed and sent to our National Treasurer before the deadline due date of March 31. Scholarships will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

The scholarship fund application, Q registration form, and hotel information are available on the NAFRA website at <http://www.quinquennial.org/>

The fund provides full and partial scholarships to the 2016 Quinquennial for professed and/or candidates of a fraternity who would otherwise be unable to attend. The money for these scholarships comes from the Restricted Funds for National Events and Regional Needs Fund (originally set up from a bequest received in 2011). Up to \$10,000 has been approved by the NEC for this purpose. Requests for assistance from this fund should be made to the National Treasurer, Jerry Rousseau, OFS. All requests must be made using the application form. Information will be kept confidential.

Ideally, the local fraternity or regional fraternity should also provide assistance for their members to attend. That is one of the inherent purposes of the “Common Fund” which should exist in every local fraternity.

Applicants should present the form to their local minister/leader for verification that a true need exists and that no other source of revenue is available for use by the applicant. Please note: scholarship funds can be used only for registration costs and not to defray travel or other expenses.

Once approval has been obtained, the applicant will submit the registration form with a notation either that a full scholarship has been awarded or that payment for the difference of registration costs minus the approved scholarship amount is enclosed; *e.g.*, the cost of registration \$320(a), minus approved scholarship amount of \$120(b), equals payment of \$200(c).

$$[a \text{ minus } b = c]$$

Applicants must also have made hotel reservations and have a room confirmed (or have secured other accommodations).

No requests for scholarships will be accepted after the application deadline, **March 31, 2016**.

We pray that these funds will allow more of our brothers and sisters to attend the 2016 “Q” and serve as a blessing to all of us.

Peace and all good,
Your NEC and “Q” Committee Members



2016 Quinquennial
Reviving Our Spirit
Main Speakers and Breakout Sessions

Main Speakers: Father Dan Horan, OFM, Father Lester Bach, OFM Cap, Brother Keith Warner, OFM, Carolyn Townes, OFS, JPIC Commission, Ana Fruk, OFS International CIOFS YouFra Chair, and CNSA

Breakout Sessions

Mindful Listening: The Way to Peace

Carolyn Townes, OFS, JPIC Commission

It has been said that peace is not a way, it is *the* way. But how do we DO peace – mindfully, intentionally and compassionately? In this presentation, you will learn how to mindfully be and do peace in your life.

Rejoice, Let Your Spirit Soar

Donna Hollis, OFS

Participants will be led into active participation exploring the expression of movement as a language of prayer. Different exercises offered will enhance creativity and openness as a channel for the Holy Spirit to renew our spirits, allowing us the freedom to rejoice in mind and body.

Living the Spirituality of Laudato Si

Brother Keith Douglass Warner, OFM

This workshop will open up the spirituality resources in this encyclical and explore pathways toward putting its recommended practices into action in our communities.

To Pray as Francis Prayed:

The Office of the Passion

Mary Esther Stewart, OFS

One option for Secular Franciscan prayer is Francis' Office of the Passion, yet few Secular Franciscans even know what this is. Scholars consider this simple, heartfelt office to be Francis'

prayer journal. This presentation will introduce the participants to the beauty and accessibility of the Office of the Passion. Participants will receive handouts, and the full text will be available.

To Pray as Francis Prayed: A Contemplative Journey into the Heart of God

Mary Esther Stewart, OFS

Secular Franciscans are called to contemplative prayer. Sometimes this seems daunting or vague. St. Bonaventure, St. Francis' theologian, had the skill and insight to organize our Franciscan spirituality so contemplation is attainable for all of us. This presentation will utilize St. Bonaventure's *Soul's Journey into God* and Clare's prayer form to give a structure to contemplative prayer. Participants will receive handouts, and the full text of St. Bonaventure's work will be available.

Revitalizing Our Franciscan Charism: Merciful Compassion

Mary Raymond, OFS

Since this is the Year of Mercy, the presentation will consist of the Catholic Church's views of mercy and compassion in some of the papal encyclicals. We will give examples of saints and other members of the Mystical Body of Christ modeling compassion and mercy – with St. Francis at the top of the list.

Embracing Diversity and Multiculturalism in the OFS

Willie Guadalupe, OFS

This session will educate us and our fellow Secular Franciscans towards the realization of a Gospel vision of cultural diversity by drawing guidance and inspiration from the Sacred Scriptures, the Church's teachings, the OFS Rule, the Franciscan tradition (particularly the OFS Rule, the Constitutions, Ritual and the National Statutes).

TO THE NATIONS: Mission Uganda

Stephen H. Smith OFS

Pope Francis tells us as Christians we must renew our missionary zeal. The founder of To The Nations, Inc. will share his personal testimony about how as a Franciscan he said yes to his missionary call and invited others as his companions to share in the mission to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick and those in prison, stand beside the broken, all while showing the love of Jesus Christ to all of His creation.

The Art of Prayer in Action

Maria C Tiznado, OFS

The presentation will be four colorful banners that speak to reviving our Franciscan Spirit. The illustrations depict the life of Secular Franciscans in communion at church, family life, work and in society. This form of activity spent in drawing and coloring is prayer in action to awaken the Franciscan spirit within us.

Sharing Fragrant Words: Reflective Prayer in Common

Mary Bittner, OFS

We're all familiar with saying certain prayers together (liturgies, the rosary), but there are other types of prayer that can be prayed in common. This presentation will introduce a form of reflective prayer for small or large groups.

Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership

Mary Frances Charsky, OFS

The session includes examples of Servant Leadership with the goal of encouraging members to assume servant leadership roles in their fraternities. We will identify talents and gifts that can be developed in order to improve our skills as leaders and as collaborative brothers and sisters in our fraternity.

Reviving Our Spirit Through The Crosses We Bear

Cricket Aull, OFS

We all have trials and 'crosses' in our lives. But God, who created and sustains us in love, has a way for us to embrace these crosses not only with faith, but even with joy!

Reviving our Spirit with Music and Art

Jim and Cindy Wesley, OFS

Music and art are human endeavors that touch our souls. We find ourselves responding to music and art that enriches our spiritual lives, enhances our prayer lives, and expresses our own spirituality and relationship with God. In our presentation we will share the work of some musicians and artists, both Franciscan and non-Franciscan, who inspire our lives with their gifts.

Quinquennial Resources

www.quinquennial.org

- ❖ Registration forms
- ❖ Scholarship forms
- ❖ Suggested items for the *Blessing Bags*



**FOR SECULAR FRANCISCANS AND
THOSE WHO ACCOMPANY THEM...**

**THE TESTAMENT OF ST. FRANCIS:
PASSAGES FOR THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
JOURNEY TODAY**

Julie McElmurry, MS and MA in Franciscan Studies



As the renowned Franciscan scholar Jean Francois Godet-Calogeras indicates, the Testament of St. Francis, written shortly before his death, is a “remembrance, admonition, exhortation and testament altogether.”

This course will look at the Testament as a study of Francis’ own return “to the heart” and his encouragement to all his followers to do the same. A step by step analysis of this provocative text will provide Secular Franciscans and those interested in exploring the Franciscan vision a deeper understanding of ways to live and serve in the way of St. Francis today.

This course will be led by Julie McElmurry. She is the editor of a new book, *Living and Serving in the Way of St. Francis* (2015).

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