



TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

Spring 2017 ISSUE 91



Photograph by Maurice Richard, OFM Conv.

O Breath of God, unite us in action!

2017 NAFRA Theme

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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Spanish Editor

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Copy Editor

Mary Lou Coffman,
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Special Assignments

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Mary and Bob
Stronach, OFS

NEC Consultants

Jan Parker, OFS
Mary Bittner, OFS
Mary Stronach, OFS

CNSA Contributor

Fr. Lester Bach,
OFM Cap

Database

Administrator

Robert Herbelin, OFS

Subscription Coordinator

Cecilia Maljan-
Herbelin, OFS

Webmaster

Dan Mulholland, OFS

TAU-USA email

tausa.ofs@gmail.com

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Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, OFS, 540 W. Nelson Rd, Sequim, WA 98382
92583-6035, or cylmaljan@earthlink.net.

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Note:

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



NAFRA

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

When Things are Out of Order

by Jan Parker, OFS National Minister

Dear Brothers and Sisters, there are wonderful joys in fraternity life, but there are certainly times of struggle and questioning as well. Life is not always easy, and Franciscan life is no exception. There are the usual questions such as: “Does this Inquirer shows signs of an OFS vocation? Is this Candidate ready for profession? How should our fraternity use these funds?” These are difficult enough, especially if there is disagreement among those making a decision. But the difficulty escalates when unexpected and serious situations arise – a treasurer mishandling funds, a disruptive fraternity member, a council member who is not meeting his/her responsibilities, a fraternity member who may not be living in accord with Church teaching, factions within a fraternity, or a council that is fractured. These are very real situations that can cause much angst. A fraternity may feel at a loss as to how to address these issues. There are often different sides that must be considered. It can become confusing and hard to determine what to do.

In a serious situation we certainly don’t want to overreact, or react too quickly. We pray. We talk things over. We may need to reach out to a member of a higher level. We are well aware that our decisions and actions – and our non-actions as well – will deeply affect the lives of others, *and* the life of the fraternity, so it is not unusual to find ourselves second guessing, “Are we doing the right thing? Is this God’s will? Is this the loving thing to do?” When our emotions are heightened and our heads are spinning it’s hard to land on any one answer that brings peace. We may begin to think that there’s no good way out. The stress can be so great we just want to run away!

Well, please, don’t run away! I have been in these situations myself, and I can honestly assure you that God will show you a way and give you the grace you need. It won’t necessarily be easy and it may take time, but the spiritual benefits are amazing. You will

experience remarkable growth in trust, a great sense of wonder at how God can work through any circumstance to turn it to the good, and incredible peace. I have learned to do two things when faced with a stressful decision. First of all, let it go and give it to God, and secondly, go through a process of discernment.

There is a wonderful writing from our very down-to-earth St. Francis that has been a help to me in accomplishing both of these steps. I share it with you here, and follow it with some thoughts on how it helps me to first, let go, and secondly, to discern.

“Virtue Puts Vice to Flight

*Where there is charity and wisdom,
there is neither fear nor ignorance.*

*Where there is patience and humility,
there is neither anger nor disturbance.*

*Where there is poverty with joy,
there is neither greed nor avarice.*

*Where there is quiet and meditation,
there is neither anxiety nor restlessness.*

*Where there is fear of the Lord to guard an entrance,
there the enemy cannot have a place to enter.*

*Where there is mercy and discretion,
there is neither excess nor hardness of heart.¹*

Let Go, and Give It to God

Fr. Lester Bach is fond of the saying, “When you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop digging!” It is true. Experience has taught me that when I am stressed and struggling to find an answer, I need to stop – just stop, let go and give it to God. “*Where there is quiet and meditation, there is neither anxiety nor restlessness.*” There,

¹ Admonition XXVII, St. Francis of Assisi, "Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Vol.1, The Saint"

in God's presence I see that it is not so much the situation that is causing stress, but rather fear, anxiety and worry. These are vices that blur our vision and block our ability to access a situation honestly. In his admonition, St. Francis names other vices: ignorance, anger, disturbance and greed – and also names the *virtues* that are, for each vice, a remedy.

Whether we are frozen by fear, distracted by anger, or hampered by greed, we simply need to seek the corresponding virtue. If you are fearful, seek charity; if angry, seek patience; if anxious and restless, seek quiet and meditation, and so on. Though all these great virtues are to be desired, we need only focus on one, for St. Francis assures us that “whoever possesses one [virtue], and does not offend the others, possesses all.”² When you open up to the Holy Spirit, and ask to be filled with even just one holy virtue, it seems that *all that is of God* flows into your heart as well. Try it! Virtue brings purity of heart and clarity of vision. It not only puts vice to flight, it makes possible ease, self-mastery and joy.³ A virtuous reality! Once we are at peace, we are in a much better place to discern what God wants us to do.

The Process of Discernment

Discernment helps us know what to do when faced with a serious question or a difficult situation. The fruit of discernment is clear direction from the Holy Spirit. I must tell you that in all my Franciscan life I have found no better guide to discernment than one given to us by our sister Anne Mulqueen.⁴ Her simple and clear steps for discernment of a vocation can be applied to any situation. You will find it in *For Up to Now* (the FUN Manual). I highly recommend it.

I have found St. Francis's 27th admonition to be a great reminder that in discernment we need both truth and love. “*Where there is charity (love) and wisdom (truth) there is neither fear nor ignorance.*” Fear and ignorance are two huge roadblocks to discernment. For good discernment we need to focus on truth and on love. We should always pray, “O God, inspire us with your wisdom and love...”⁵

Wisdom (Truth) – Wisdom resides in a heart that is humble and pure and helps us to see beyond ourselves to the purpose and plan of God – a plan that is always

achieved, often in the most interesting of ways. Wisdom reminds us first of all to pray, to look to the Gospel, to speak to all those involved in a situation, and to seek counsel from others. Wisdom then leads us to be informed by the important resources we have been given - the Rule, Ritual, Constitution and Statutes - our “essential documents”, alongside other wonderful resources such as the Handbook for Spiritual Assistance, the Handbook for Franciscan Servant Leadership, our national formation manual, For Up to Now (FUN Manual) and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. More than once have I found an answer simply by taking a second look at one of these resources - a word to the wise!

Charity (Love) – Perfect love casts out fear. We should never fear when faced with a tough decision. God loves us and gives us the will and the courage to do what is best. Our brothers and sisters love us, and in them we find counsel, support and understanding. In our decisions we need to be guided by our love for the Order, and look to the greater good. God will always guide us and will never mislead us. In some situations, he will show us that real love needs to be “tough love.” It's not easy to confront someone with the truth, but again, we are guided by love. When we love someone enough to close a door they should not go through, we help them find the door that God is holding open for them. Love never fails.

In the end, a decision is made. If vices have been put to flight, if virtue has given guidance, and if you have faithfully followed a process of discernment, be at peace. You have done well and have done the best you could. Follow through on the decision you have reached and let God take it from there. The Holy Spirit will complete any work that you think is unfinished. It's not our Order. It's God's. It's only through Him and in Him that all things come to order.



² Salutation of the Virtues, St. Francis of Assisi, "Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Vol.1, The Saint"

³ Catechism of the Catholic Church Second Edition, 1997 - #1804

⁴ For Up to Now: For the Formator, Anne Mulqueen OFS

⁵ Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order, page 39



National Executive Council Updates

From the National Executive Council (NEC) to the National Fraternity (NAFRA)

OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

2021 Quinquennial Committee Chair Needed

We are grateful that in the past months we have received responses from many OFS brothers and sisters willing to serve the National Fraternity in various capacities – but one very important position remains unfilled. We are still in need of a leader for our 2021 Quinquennial (“Q”) Committee. We believe God has placed a call in someone’s heart to be this leader. Please contact Jane DeRose-Bamman at janedbsfo@msn.com for an application or for more information.

Do you have ideas for the 2021 Quinquennial?

The NEC is interested in your ideas for the 2021 Quinquennial. Please send your suggestions for a theme, a keynote speaker, or Q activities, etc., to Mary Bittner at mbittner@umich.edu

Communications Personnel Needed

The NEC is seeking OFS members to serve in various areas of communications. Qualifications: professed OFS members eager to spread the good news about our Order, with talent, time and energy to assist with OFS communications. Possible areas of focus would include: news publications, website support, special sections or articles for the TAU-USA, promotional material, outreach to national media including EWTN, Catholic periodicals or other publications. We need writers, designers, photographers, videographers, reporters, graphic artists and digital media specialists. If you are interested, please send your resume and a description of your interest to Jane DeRose-Bamman at janedbsfo@msn.com, or contact any member of the NEC for more information.

2017 NATIONAL OFS CALENDAR

July 27-30

JPIC Retreat, St. Louis, Mo.
Youth Outreach Workshop,
St. Louis, Mo.

August 17-20

Regional Formation Directors Gathering,
St. Louis, Mo.

September 21-25

NEC Meeting, Mt. St. Francis, Indiana

September 26 to October 1

NAFRA Chapter, Mt. St. Francis, Indiana

November 4-11

General Chapter (CIOFS), Rome, Italy

Oh Breath of God, Unite Us in Action!

Tell us your story! How is the Holy Spirit uniting us in action?

How are you welcoming the stranger, feeding the hungry, consoling the sorrowful, helping the poor, reaching out to the lonely, or caring for the earth?

In the next issue of *TAU-USA*, we would like to tell your story of how the Holy Spirit is uniting us in action.

Please describe your activity in a few sentences, including who is involved and the outcome. Please include a high-quality photo of you or your fraternity in this action. We are not looking for activities that have to do with the “housekeeping” of our own order, such as retreats, workshops or OFS-focused gatherings. Rather, we are looking for stories of our apostolates and outreach to those in the wider community.

Think "Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation!"

Send your stories and photos to tausa ofs@gmail.com

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If all the people who sleep in church were placed end-to-end, they'd be more comfortable



Secular Franciscans for the 21st Century
Lester Bach OFM Cap - Winter, 2016-2017

✦ **REMEMBER** ✦

✦ **Benet Fonck OFM - Died on December 23, 2016**

Around the turn of the century (2000), CNSA received many sharings from Benet as he ministered with us. He shared his experiences of OFS from his international ministry in Rome and served the CNSA, as well as ministry with local fraternities. In his work with CNSA he shared wise ideas and insights. His formation book: *Fully mature with the fullness of Christ* is a fine text. He generously shared his many skills with us. We celebrate his gifts and dedication to the OFS. Benet was a friar whose insights and dedication are well known. Thank you, blessed Trinity, for sharing Benet with us.

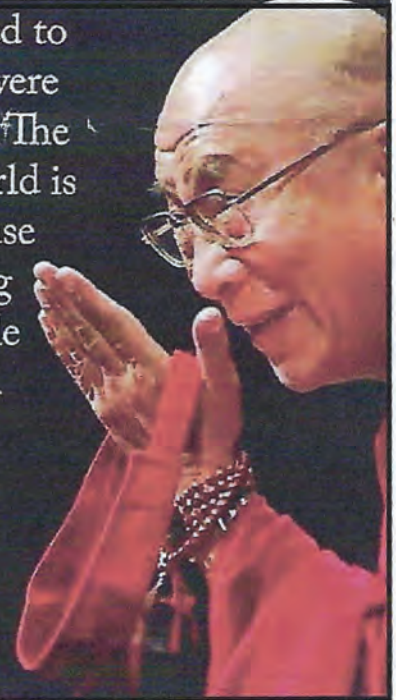
✦ **John Sullivan OFM - Also died in December, 2016.**

John also served CNSA in the new century of 2000. He knew the OFS documents and followed their guidance as OFS Provincial spiritual assistant within Sacred Heart OFM Province. Sharing his viewpoints helped to keep us on a path of taking OFS documents seriously. His service assisted the seculars as a concerned brother to all. Beloved Trinity, thank you for our brother, John.

✦ We likewise celebrate the life and death of **Secular Franciscans**. May they (and we) join Benet and John in a chorus of praise to the Trinity for their lives. Each of us embraces our present Franciscan life in the ministry in our lives where love is needed.

Thanks to the "The Poverello," for this quotation.
St. Bonaventure OFS fraternity, Detroit, MI.

People were created to be loved. Things were created to be used. The reason why the world is in chaos is because things are being loved and people are being used.



While the above quote may not touch every situation, it calls us to reflect on Article 11 of the OFS Rule and Article 15.3 of the OFS General Constitutions (GC):

OFS Rule - Article 11: *Trusting in the Father, Christ chose for himself and his mother a poor and humble life, even though he valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children. Thus, in the spirit of "the beatitudes," and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.*

GC - Article 15.3: *Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to reduce their own personal needs so as to be better able to share spiritual and material goods with their brothers and sisters, especially those most in need. They should give thanks to God for the goods they have received, using them as good stewards and not as owners. They should take a firm position against consumerism and against ideologies and practices which prefer riches over human and religious values and which permit the exploitation of the human person.*



Bill Short OFM, a recognized name in Franciscan spirituality, has a new ministry. He has been appointed as director of the Collegium S. Bonaventure - an international Center

for Franciscan Studies and Research located at St Isidore in Rome.

Congratulations, Bill. We hope you can keep in touch with us.

*** A New Book! ***



Vinal Van Benthem OFS and Lester Bach OFM Cap, have written a new book for ongoing

formation: **Waiting for Love.**

It includes our personal ideas, but we share quotations from people like Pope Francis, Benedict XVI, Henri Nouwen, Jean Vanier, Francis of Assisi, and ordinary folks who share their Franciscan vision. Each of the 15 chapters contain ideas that assist group discussion and personal reflection.

In church, family & community discussions, in public & political interaction, people use different tools to win a debate. They seek to overcome in topics under discussion. People have strong opinions & ideas about many subjects. They invest talent & energy to succeed in arguments.



The USA has over 300 million people. There are a variety of cultures, political leanings, specific insights, education and ideas on any subject, religion included. Disagreements seem almost normal. **Dialogue** takes time, but it can bring people to understand one another rather than rejecting realistic dialogue and possible solutions. (Cfr. Waiting for Love - Pages 38 to 42). **It is available from Smoky Valley Printing.** (Cfr. Inside back cover of TAU-USA.)

* At the news of the death of Fr. Benet Fonck OFM, I remember an article he wrote for the revised **Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order** (page 53). It focuses on the role of Eucharist at regular OFS fraternity gatherings. It is good reading since many Secular Franciscans believe Eucharist is meant to be a part of every gathering - which is not quite accurate! Here is a copy of his article.

(Nov 7, 2001) It is true that Article 14.2 of the General Constitutions (GC) states: *The Eucharist is the center of the life of the Church. Christ unites us to himself and to one another as a single body in it. Therefore, the Eucharist should be the center of the life of the fraternity. The brothers and sisters should participate in the Eucharist as frequently as possible.*

It is also true that Article 53.2 (GC) states: *They should come together periodically (Emphasis mine) as an ecclesial community to celebrate the Eucharist in a climate which strengthens the fraternal bond and characterizes the identity of the Franciscan Family.*

And the footnote to Article 42.3 (GC) indicates that profession ought to take place during the Eucharist.

Yet, Article 24 of the OFS Rule points out: *To foster communion among the members, the council should organize regular and frequent meetings of the community ... (and) should adopt appropriate means for growth in Franciscan and ecclesial life and encourage everyone to a life in fraternity.*

So, Article 53.1 (GC) builds on this idea by stating: *The fraternity must offer its members opportunities for coming together and collaborating through meetings to be held with as great a frequency as allowed by the situation and with the involvement of all its members.* The GC picks up on the idea of ongoing-formation in Article 44.2: *The fraternity has the duty to help its members with programs of continuing formation: a) to listen to and to meditate on the Word of God, going from gospel to life and life to gospel. b) to reflect on events in the Church and in society in the light of faith and with the help of documents of the teaching Church, consequently taking consistent positions; c) to realize and deepen the Franciscan vocation.*

What does all this say? *Though the Eucharist is central in the life-style and mind-set of Secular Franciscans and ought to be part of the fraternity's gathering on a periodic or occasional basis, like at professions or special events, it is NOT meant to be a part of the regular and frequent meetings of the fraternity because that has a different objective all together. The objective - according to both the Rule & General Constitutions - is what the French call a review of life or a faith-sharing based on the Word (not Eucharist) to nourish and strengthen the apostolic, ecclesial, and Franciscan dimensions of OFS life. Peace.*



Benet

Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom.
Laudato Si' - Pope Francis - #205



Ordo Franciscanus Sæcularis



CIOFS Presidency Meeting Spring 2017

THE FRATERNITY COUNCIL – ON A GLOBAL LEVEL

By Mary Stronach, OFS
International Councilor

Editor's Note: As interpreter for CIOFS, Mary has had the opportunity to observe CIOFS in action during the semi-annual meetings. Below are some of her observations.

When fraternity officers meet as an executive council, they enter a privileged place – where they pray, experience ongoing formation, plan gatherings and events, and tackle the business of the Order, including the needs of members.

Imagine that council on a global scale. Add the element of different cultures and languages. Add the element of travel across the oceans and continents. You have before you the International Executive Council, called the CIOFS Presidency, which meets twice a year in Rome.

No discussion or problem is small or simple at this level. Documents are translated into the four official languages. Ideas and conversations need language interpreters to ensure accuracy. Travel is gauged in thousands of miles. Congresses and workshops include OFS members from numerous countries.

Travel to national chapters means getting through customs... and, if the paperwork does not comply with the latest guidelines (which is not always clearly documented by the country) then it might mean you don't get into the country and you return to the country of origin. If you do get in, it might mean an unexpected additional 10 hours of travel by bus to your destination and staying an extra two or three days because flights out of the country are limited. The norm is: expect delays and setbacks.

As a representative of the presidency, you just never know exactly what you will experience when traveling to a national chapter of elections or a visitation... stark poverty, a language barrier, a cultural issue (hierarchy which is not consistent with the Franciscan charism), lack of internet access, no phone access, no electricity, no written language, unusual food cooked over an outdoor fire, regional dialects and tongues that limit communication. Stories around the CIOFS table cross the gamut of experiences, from personal hardships for the members to political challenges that limit their freedom to practice their faith.

You'll recognize some problems ... Lack of spiritual assistants. Lack of formation. Not having a sense of belonging. Or maybe a group that wants to wear Franciscan habits like the friars.

Whatever the issue, whatever the challenge, whatever the celebration, it is viewed and must be resolved through the multicultural lens of over 116 countries – national fraternities, emerging fraternities and some countries with a Secular Franciscan presence but no national fraternities.

With political issues, the Order may need to take small, cautious steps – to protect the brothers and sisters and to ensure safe access.

The Juridical Commission reviews changes in national statutes from countries across the globe. It, along with the Presidency, reviews membership or fraternity issues that have traveled up the chain of command.

Other topics bring excitement and new possibilities. Are there new OFS candidates for beatification? What are the possibilities for on-line formation classes? Are there new, emerging fraternities around the world? Have we discovered OFS and brothers and sisters who embrace the Franciscan charism in unexpected areas of the world? How do we reach them? How do we support their journey?

Addressing the needs of a world order is very challenging and multifaceted, but it comes down to one important common element... as members of the OFS, we love our brothers and sisters and we continue to find ways to reach out to each other to establish a fraternal bond and to journey together.



General Minister Tibor Kauser, OFS makes a point as Secretary Isabella DiPaoli listens to the interpreter in headphones and takes minutes of the meeting, as General Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap, Andrea Odak, OFS Franciscan Youth Councilor, and Ana Fruk, OFS Presidency Councilor listen to comments.



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



ARE YOU A MINDFUL COMMUNICATOR?

By Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, National JPIC Animator

Have you ever been engaged in a dialogue with someone only to realize s/he did not really comprehend what you were saying? Have you ever witnessed or heard something one way, only to discover the intended meaning was totally opposite of what you thought? Have you ever been in a conversation with someone for several minutes without really hearing what the other person said because you were rehearsing your response?

If you answered YES to these questions, take heart, you are not alone. Miscommunication is universal to the human experience and happens more often than we would like to admit. Miscommunication can lead to misunderstandings; which happens when the receiver understands a message differently from what the sender intended. Consider this cleaning service advertisement: "Tired of cleaning yourself? Let me do it." Or this used car ad: "Used Cars: Why go elsewhere to be cheated? Come here first!" These may be humorous examples, but the point is the same. What the writer intended and what the reader understood are undoubtedly two different things.

In our fraternal and familial lives, the consequences of such miscommunication can be damaging and divisive. We tend to shy away from anything that can lead to conflicts or misunderstandings. We would rather stay with our assumptions instead of asking questions to gain clarity and understanding. This leads to more miscommunication and more division. Asking questions can build bridges of understanding and lead to greater clarity and better communication. Once you ask those clarifying questions, you must then listen for the answer.

Think about the number of people Jesus encountered in the Gospels who he asked what they wanted Jesus to do for them. Now, being the Son of God, I am sure Jesus already knew what these folks wanted: the blind wanted sight, the lame wanted healing, and the lepers wanted to be made clean as to be re-integrated into society. But Jesus still asked them what they wanted

him to do for them. Asking questions gains greater clarity and also validates the person being asked. It gives them the opportunity to express their needs and share what is on their heart. Once Jesus asked, he listened. Good communication is a two-way street of speaking and listening. Remember, God gave us mouths that close and ears that don't. Two ears and one mouth means we must listen twice as much as we speak.

I invite you to ask yourself "How can I become a better communicator?" My response: speak and listen more mindfully. Strive to become a more mindful communicator. Do not make assumptions. THINK before you speak. Listen without judgment or rebuttal. Ask engaging questions to gain clarity and understanding. The best question you can ask when in an intense dialogue is, "*What do you need me to understand right now?*" Then listen for the answer; listen to understand and not to fix or convict. This gets even trickier when there are different languages or cultures involved.

At the JPIC Animate Peace Gathering this summer, we will discuss using mindful and nonviolent communication to build bridges of clarity, understanding and unity. Statistics show that miscommunication is one of the biggest culprits to conflicts and division. Come and learn the art of mindful listening and how to ask questions that clarify, not vilify. The Gathering is July 27 – 30, 2017 in St. Louis, Mo. For more information, please email Carolyn at ctownes26@hotmail.com.





FORMATION COMMISSION

LIVING THE RULE MEDITATIONS FROM A MORNING COMMUTE

by Mary Anne Lenzi, OFS

It was an ordinary day. I opened my eyes at 5:54 a.m., thanked the Lord for a new day, a good night's rest, the roof over my head, the food on my table and the ability to work. Yes, work. I rolled over to savor the last few minutes before 6:00 a.m.

It was an ordinary day. I opened my eyes, instantly aware of the melody from the 7:00 a.m. alarm. Ahhh! **WORK!** I was up and quickly dressed. I added a petition to my morning prayer: Oh Lord, remove the clutter from my mind, help me to focus so that I may follow you today, just like St. Francis! Amen! I pulled my lunch bag from the refrigerator. Grabbed my "to go" mug and was off, ready for the morning traffic merge.

Midway through the commute, distracted by blaring inner chatter, I missed a turn. Oops! New direction! Focus. Slowing down and paying closer attention to a revised route, I took a deep breath. OK, it's You and me. Lead me Lord! Easing into the traffic flow I noticed the bumper sticker on the car ahead, I read: **I LOVE MY DOG!** How nice, I thought, to have a cuddly creature, a companion for the journey, that loves without question. Too bad they make me sneeze! Yet isn't it a beautiful morning?

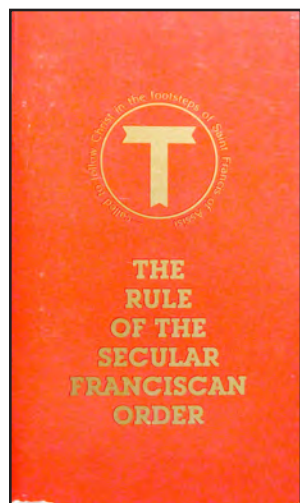
Continuing the journey, and approaching the next signal, two perfectly placed notes came into view on the trunk of a Golden Toyota. I read: **JESUS IS THE ANSWER!** and **BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS!** OK, you have my attention. I inched my way up, parallel to the vehicle, in the hope of catching the eye of the driver. I considered a loud "honk"; however, that might have startled instead of conveying the joyful, familial connection I felt. I hoped to share a smile and big thumbs up. We were brother and sister on the road.



Just a little further, my destination in sight, I stopped for the last signal. Through the back window of the SUV ahead of me, hanging from the rearview mirror, I gazed, somewhat amazed, while my heart read: **TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW ME!** I took another deep, peaceful breath. *This is what I want, this is what I seek, this is what I desire to do with all my heart.* The light changed to "go.. In half a block, I pulled into my usual parking spot, pressed 16 on the elevator pad and arrived at the office renewed in spirit and purpose, eager to share and to serve. What began as ordinary became so much more!

It was an extraordinary day! Weeks have gone by, yet this experience remains with me. I ruminate on the route and meditate on its movement. It has become a commute of contemplation. I asked the Lord to lead me. I let go and let Him take the wheel when the road before me changed. I paid attention and faithfully followed the words. They were simple and direct.

It was an extraordinary day when I asked to be admitted to profession of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order and to make a permanent commitment to the gospel life. It has been several years. I needed a reminder on how to live my promise daily. God answers prayer! The Rule is my roadmap.



THE RULE AS ROAD MAP

Excerpts from Chapter Two – The Way of Life

PRAYER – Starting Point – 5. As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, so let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do. . . .

WORK – Daily Destination -13. Let them esteem work both as a gift

and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community . . .

I LOVE MY DOG! - Path of Awareness - 15. Moreover, they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which "bear the imprint of the Most High," and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.

JESUS IS THE ANSWER! – Entering the Highway – 1. The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people. Christ, the gift of the Father’s love, is the way to him, is the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly. Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel.

BE STRONG and COURAGEOUS! – Fearless in the Fast Lane – 12. Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of

public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS – The Road to Renewal – 4. 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 calls “conversion.” Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily. . . . the sacrament of reconciliation is the privileged sign of the Father’s mercy and the source of grace.

Suggested ongoing formation:

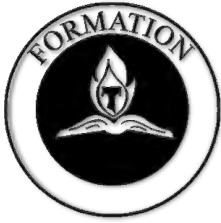
In solitude meditate on, or in fraternity share, your everyday experiences and how they relate to our Rule. Each day we need to pray the Rule in order to live the Rule."

Be mindful of the ordinary, it is good, reliable, efficient.

Contemplate the extraordinary; it is All Good, Supreme Good, Total Good.

Peace to you and every good.





ONGOING FORMATION RESOURCE SUGGESTIONS

Francis of Assisi, the Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint

Andre Vauchez, translated by Michael F. Cusato

Review by Anne Mulqueen, OFS, Spiritual Assistant, National Formation Commission

There are four sections to this book. Much of Vauchez' research is based on the Legend of the Three Companions.



The first section is biographical and not all scholars agree on the biographical information. However, Vauchez does portray Francis as devoted to God and emphasizes his humanity. He sees Francis rooted in the world.

The second and third sections are stories of St. Francis—the myths and legends—his canonization and construction of the basilica. Vauchez talks of Francis' desire to renounce power and embrace poverty. Of interest is the description of how following Francis' death, the brothers lost their connection with their founder.

In section four Vauchez reflects on Francis' writings, namely the Letter to the Faithful, Francis' Testament, the Canticle of Brother Sun, and the Rules. Vauchez describes how Francis experienced God through his senses, and that Francis considered the Gospels the norm for Christian living.

Overall, Vauchez presents a human Francis – one that can be followed by anyone who desires to live the Gospel, make peace and enter into an inclusive relationships with all God's creation: human, animate and inanimate. He believes people were more attracted to Francis' authenticity and sincerity, than his brilliance or preaching.

Vauchez provides an objective assessment of St. Francis. He describes St. Francis as an ascetic and an orthodox Catholic. I believe Vauchez' book is a clear and balanced account of St. Francis' life and his legacy after his death.

**Additional Ongoing formation suggestions from Diane Menditto OFS,
National Formation Commission**



**Now You
KNOW
MEDIA**

www.nowyouknowmedia.com

I strongly recommend the CDs or podcast from Now You Know Media by Bro. Bill Short, OFM on **St. Bonaventure, The Soul's Journey Into God.** Beautiful and easy-to-follow explanation of a very complex writing by St. Bonaventure.



www.taupublishing.org

Along with these talks, for those who are interested in a deeper experience, I recommend **A Forty-Day Journey Into God with St. Bonaventure** -- Tau Publishing-- by Josef Raischl, OFS and André Cirino, OFM. This book gives daily passages (and explanatory diagrams) with reflections and exercises.

For those who would like some Franciscan music in their lives, I recommend the CD and companion book **Love Holding Love: Mantras Drawn from the Writings of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi** also from Tau Publishing-- by Joseph Raischl, OFS, beautiful music--great for introducing prayer or a formation topic.

* NEW ONGOING FORMATION BOOKS *

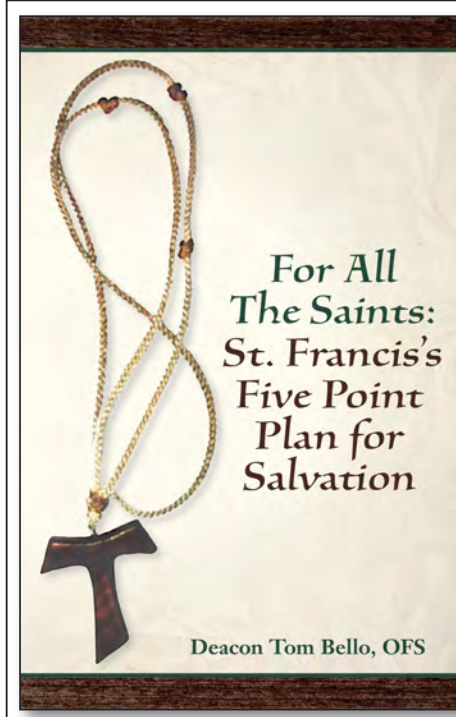
FOR ALL THE SAINTS: ST. FRANCIS'S FIVE POINT PLAN FOR SALVATION

By Deacon Tom Bello OFS

Review by Donna Hollis, OFS
Regional Minister,
Our Lady of Guadalupe Region

Within this book is a treasure of writings compiled from articles of our beloved late National Minister, Deacon Tom Bello, OFS. The articles reflect understanding he acquired from many years as a Secular Franciscan and experiences he lived out in community/fraternity. Tom speaks from the heart with all that he shares and challenges us to stretch beyond ourselves and beyond our own understanding within our service to the Secular Franciscan Order.

As a Regional Minister, I have used Tom's articles for ongoing formation and continuing education when making Regional Visitations to local Fraternities. I find these articles build unity and a wider vision of the



*For All The Saints:
St. Francis's Five Point Plan for
Salvation*

A NEW ONGOING FORMATION RESOURCE
by Tom Bello, OFS

While serving as minister of the National Secular Franciscan Fraternity, Tom Bello wrote a series of articles for the TAU-USA. This new book is a collection of these articles with discussion questions. The book is a gift from Tom to the Order to be used as an ongoing formation resource.



Purchase Price: \$10.00

Order From:

Tau Publishing
c/o Vesuvius Press Incorporated
4806 South 40th Street
Phoenix, AZ 85040

Please feel free to call us at 602-625-6183 or send us a fax at 602-651-1875.

Secular Franciscan Order for the local Fraternity. Tom's words connect the local, Regional, National and International families as one big Community. At the end of each chapter there are reflection questions for us to ponder more deeply into our calling as Secular Franciscans and to share those insights with one another. This book will be a wonderful ongoing formation resource.



**Available from
Smoky Valley Printing**

See the order form on
page 25

Waiting For Love

by Lester Bach OFM and Vinal Van Benthem OFS

Excerpt from the Preface:

Waiting for Love considers many elements of the Franciscan way of life. These ideas grow in the human mind, heart and emotions. They spring from reading, writing, reflecting, praying and acting on the gospel word as a community. We use the tools of dialogue in our interaction with one another.

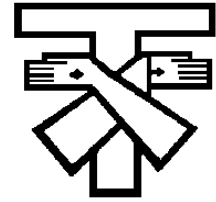
Looking to the interconnectedness of the Trinity as our model, the letters and documents of popes and poets as signposts along the way, and the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order as our guide, we invite the reader to journey with us. Together we will explore how we might turn to dialogue in relationship as an alternative to individualism and divisiveness. Using the words of Scripture and examples of situations we have encountered in our own lives we will take the reader from Gospel to life and back again. And in a world where communication is too often limited to text messages and information conveyed via the internet we will come again to appreciate the joys of dialogue and simple, one-on-one conversation.

We invite you to act in ways that bring joy to your life. Among the Trinity's gifts to us is the ability to implement personal conversion and other qualities required by the OFS Rule.



Imaginative retelling of Francis's story paints warm portrait of Poverello

Book review by Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS



At a retreat last May in the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region, Father Steve Gross, OFM Conv., said that we “need to know the real flesh-and-blood Francis” by reading what Francis said and wrote.

In *St. Francis of Assisi*, Bret Thoman, OFS, has presented us with just such a living, intimate portrait.

Director of St. Francis Pilgrimages and a member of Immaculate Conception Fraternity in Jonesboro, Ga., Bret based his book on Francis's words and those of his early biographers found in such texts as the three-volume *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*.

Bret's incorporated his imagination seamlessly into what we know from those original sources. As I read, I found that I was journeying with Francis and I felt closer to him than I had in some other Francis biographies I've read.

I experienced Francis's hopes, dreams, doubts, longings – someone not so different from me (at least at the outset). Francis shows us that we all have the opportunity to grow in holiness and our love of God. – if we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. He had to grow in his vocation, just as we do. It wasn't any easier for him than it is for us.

Francis listened constantly in prayer and in all he saw around him, including what he found in hermitages and other remote locations. God and Francis, nature and Francis, were present to each other:

“During the cold months, the heat of the fire warmed his body and his inner being; he always kept the embers lit as long as possible. How he rejoiced on those first spring days when the power of the Mediterranean sun warmed the land on which he often lay. During the hot summer months, the coolness of the caves refreshed his body...

“As Francis descended into the barrenness of the caves in solitude and silence, he felt like he was entering something much bigger than himself. It was almost as if he were descending into the womb of the earth where he felt God comforting, nurturing, and protecting him. In the caves, he was

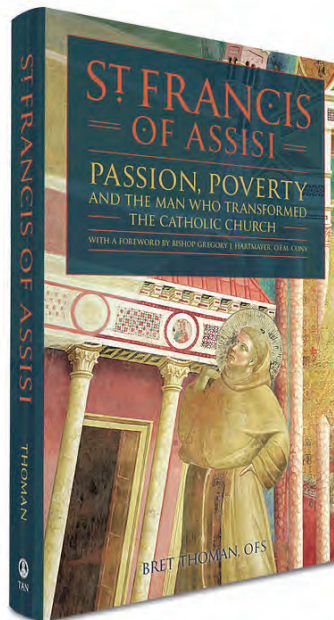
filled with a powerful – almost overwhelming – sense of God's power, goodness, and love” (146).

I like the way Bret tells us about life in Assisi by including Francis in events, such as what happened to someone with leprosy. Francis loathed and avoided lepers, as did most people, but leprosy infected rich and poor, so one or more of Francis's friends might have contracted the disease. Describing how lepers were expelled from Assisi, Bret imagines the tender-hearted Francis joining the procession taking a friend into his exile and living death.

Of course, no biography of Francis would be complete without the wolf of Gubbio. Bret tells the story of the wolf by having Francis recall that incident as he is captured by the Saracens.

Be sure to read the interesting footnotes, which provide much additional information and background; as in the footnote on the wolf: “It can be considered an allegory for Franciscan peacemaking. However, the bones of an actual wolf are still preserved today in a church near Gubbio. They are believed to be the same wolf that Francis tamed” (172).

Being so close to Francis, I felt that he had become my friend. That must be why the account of his death had me close to tears. The book contains eight pages of Bret's color photos of locations important in Francis's life. There is also an excellent index. This biography is a wonderful way to get to know Francis on a deeper level and to journey with him.



ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI PASSION, POVERTY AND THE MAN WHO TRANSFORMED THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

WITH A FOREWORD BY BISHOP GREGORY J. HARTMAYER, O.F.M. CONV.

“[This book] should not be missed.”

-Tibor Kauser, OFS—International
General Minister for the Secular
Franciscan Order

“A literary pilgrimage...
Francis of Assisi comes
alive in these pages...
Read this book!”

-Fr. Albert Haase, OFM, author

“A flesh-and-blood Francis
Bernardone... A vivid picture of
the milieu in which he lived...”

-Fr. Murray Bodo, OFM, author

“I highly recommend
this book.”

-Sr. Ilija Delio, OSF,
Villanova University

*St. Francis of Assisi: Passion, Poverty and the Man
Who Transformed the Catholic Church*

by Bret Thoman, OFS.

TAN Books, Charlotte, N.C., 2016

www.tanbooks.com



TAN BOOKS



THE ST. FRANCIS OPTION

by Bret Thoman, OFS

You may have heard about a new book called, *Benedict Option*. It draws on the example of St. Benedict, who fled the decadence of Rome to live in the mountains as a hermit and began guiding others in monasticism. While

western society entered into a centuries-long period of decline, religious life flourished in the monasteries as monks safeguarded not only the Christian life, but also western culture.

In an ever more decadent society, the “Benedict Option” argues for today’s Christians to similarly retreat from society, live in strong faith-based communities, and a re-evangelize our culture from the outside.

But does God really want Christians to withdraw from the world? Is there another way? What about a “St. Francis Option”?

You probably know that Francis, like Benedict, often retreated up to the mountains for retreats. Early in his conversion, Francis found great solace in hermitages away from the problems of the world. His biographer wrote: “He frequently chose solitary places so that he could direct his mind completely to God” (Celano, *First Life*, Chapter 27, 71).

On the mountaintop, Francis surely loved God with all his “heart, soul, and mind.” And, likely, he also felt freedom -- from people, their problems and difficulties. For Francis, the mountains were like the vertical beam of the cross -- the part that pointed up, to God.

This is the “transcendent” aspect of Francis’ spirituality. And here Francis appears to be have exercised the “Benedict Option.”

However, like Peter, who also wished to build “three tents” and stay on Mt. Tabor (see Matthew 17:4), Francis was not to remain in permanent retreat. And

here the Benedict Option for Francis ends. Francis (like Peter) had to descend back down to the “valley” where his work would be carried out.

And there God revealed how he wished for him to live: he renounced his possessions, rebuilt churches, began to preach, and begged for alms. Yet the culmination of his conversion was when he embraced a leper (see “Testament” 4).

In serving the marginalized, Francis embraced that other aspect of Christian spirituality: Immanence. For the cross has two beams -- vertical, as well as horizontal. Down in the valley, Francis would live out the second imperative of the Gospel: loving “neighbor as oneself.”

Thus, the charism given to Francis was not solely one of retreat or flight; it was also one of service to people. Yet, Francis continued to periodically return to the mountains for retreat and prayer throughout his entire life. Thus, Francis spent his life alternating back and forth between the mountains and valley.

In this, Francis was really walking in the pathway of much bigger footsteps. For it was Christ himself who prayed in solitude and served people. For though Christ “often withdrew to the wilderness to pray” (Luke 5:16), he always returned back down to the valley where he preached, healed, performed miracles and taught.

Francis’s life thus would not be prayer alone or ministry alone; it would be both the contemplative and active life, alternating between the mountains and the valleys. It was transcendent, as well as immanent. Francis’s mountains would include Sinai as well as the Mount of Beatitudes. Never the first or the second -- but both -- one in fulfillment of the other.

This is known as the “total Gospel life.” And it is what I would call the “St. Francis Option.”

During these uncertain times in our country and world, may the “St. Francis Option” offer us direction, as well as hope.

Bret Thoman, OFS is the author of *Francis of Assisi: Passion, Poverty, and the Man Who Transformed the Catholic Church*.



Ecumenical Interfaith Committee Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity

Our vision is to educate and to raise the awareness of our Franciscan sisters and brothers in the United States to the ecumenical and interfaith movements in the Church.

Introducing the Spring Newsletter
www.ofsusaecumenicalinterfaith.org

Welcome

Imam Mohamad Bashar Arafat to the Ecumenical Interfaith Committee

Imam Arafat serves as the president of the Islamic Affairs Council of Maryland and the president of the Civilizations Exchange & Cooperation Foundation. He earned his reputation as a scholar and teacher of Islamic spirituality through his formal education at Damascus University and his dedication to pursue a true understanding and relationship with Allah. This dedication has led him to extensive involvements with many national and international interfaith organizations that work to bring people together to create a world in which peace and cooperation is the goal. Since January 2005, Imam Arafat has been conducting programs on Islam in America through the International Speakers Program of the United States Department of State in more than 25 countries. He is currently teaching at Notre Dame of Maryland University.



INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM

by Imam Mohamad Bashar Arafat

Excerpt from the Spring OFS-USA-EIC Newsletter

What is Islam?

The Arabic word “Islam” literally means “surrender” or “submission.” Islam, as a faith, means total and sincere surrender to God so one can live in peace and tranquility. The Arabic word “salam” means “peace” and the phrase “assalamu alaikum” means “peace be with you,” the greeting of Muslims around the world. This peace is achieved through active obedience to the revealed commandments of God and by following the teachings of His prophet, Muhammad, the son of Abdullah, born in Makkah in 570 AD. It was not Muhammad, but Adam, who first brought Islam to humanity. Then each prophet and messenger came to exhort the people to a clear understanding of God’s

commandments. They offered teachings relevant to their time until God chose the final prophet, Muhammad, to come with the Last Testament referred to as the Qur’an. It is the Muslim’s holy book, which speaks in detail regarding five of the twenty-five recognized prophets, who are considered to be the chief prophets of authority: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad.

The Sultan & The Saint

Francis went to meet the Sultan because Francis rejected the violence of the Crusades and religious wars. After meeting the Sultan and experiencing Muslim spirituality, St. Francis went through a transformation in which he had a new vision of

Christians and Muslims living in peace and harmony and saw his mission and that of his followers to be one of building bridges between the people of the two faith traditions.

Today, nearly 99 percent of Muslims around the world have not even heard and do not talk about the story of the Sultan & the Saint.

This is one of the most important stories today for the Muslim world. It has nearly been forgotten in the Arab world. I have been asking many of my friends and people I come across: "Do you remember or have you read about the story of the Sultan and the Saint?" Most have never heard the story!!!

Now we are in a crisis!! We only talk about problems like Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda, Zawahiri and Isis. We don't talk about the Sultan, who welcomed St. Francis and engaged in discussions with him. Also in the West, we should talk more about St. Francis, who went to build bridges of interfaith, dialogue and outreach.

I have been reading in Arabic from different Christian sources in the Middle East about how this story impacted Christians in the Holy Land and other places in the Middle East.

I really feel that it is about time that our faith communities in America do a little bit more guided by the spirit of the Sultan, who welcomed the Saint. As an Imam in the United States, I feel it is about time to use this story and prepare a curriculum accessible to various audiences regardless of their religion, age or nationality to transmit the true meaning of brotherhood, spirituality and compassion, the only path to peaceful coexistence in a religiously and culturally pluralistic world. We are witnessing a unique period in the history of mankind. We have social media and the super information highway accessible on every corner of this earth. The challenge for us is how we are going to use these kinds of blessings from Almighty. The blessings of knowledge and the blessings of technology can be used for our benefit or for our destruction. Are we going to use them for our well-being or for our ego and self-fulfillment?

I hope that a new era is about to start. These days, with the issues of refugees and immigrants, who are part of the results of broken systems of our civilization of today, the only solution is true cooperation between the followers of the Sultan and the followers of Saint Francis, Muslims and Christians.

To learn more about Islam, please read Imam Arafat's entire article. See the link below

Secular Franciscans Learn the Similarities between our Faith and Islam

by Don Watkins, OFS

Excerpt from the Spring OFS-USA-EIC Newsletter

St. Irenaeus Fraternity recently joined with neighboring St. Bonaventure Fraternity, (St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region) to learn about the similarities between our two faiths. Don Watkins, OFS published an article about that experience on the web. This same article will be published in

Franciscan Connections which is a journal of the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University. The Fraternity also is reaching out to the Olean, New York area Islamic Community and has expressed a desire for the fraternity to visit their mosque.

The complete text for the preceding articles can be found on the new Ecumenical Interfaith website. Click on the link for the spring newsletter at the top of the homepage.

www.ofsusaecumenicalinterfaith.org

Facebook: @OFSUSAEIC - Twitter: @Ofs_Usa_Eic



ELEVATOR SPEECH - CHOOSING YOUR WORDS WISELY TO PROMOTE VOCATIONS

by Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS

Have you ever asked someone a simple question and received a lengthy response? Did you pay attention to the response, or did you wander off to another place and time after about the fourth word? Some topics grab our attention and other things simply do not. What is it that makes us pay attention?

Stories usually captivate the audience. I think that is why Jesus used parables. He knew he could get people's attention as well as get his point across. Francis, of course, preferred actions over words. But we know that words are necessary, and so we should choose them wisely.

How good are you at telling stories? The goal, of course, is to captivate the audience more than put the people to sleep. One way to do that is to develop an "Elevator Speech." The speech should last about the time of a typical elevator ride (30 seconds to 1 minute). (Note: If you live or work in a high-rise, then you'll have more time.)

The story about your journey to the OFS is an important one to share. However, stream of consciousness sharing may not be effective at capturing the other person's attention. So I encourage you to develop your personal elevator speech. You can borrow our slogan—"Gospel to Life and Life to the Gospel" of course, but sharing details about your personal journey is a must. Recall how God led you to the Order or how an OFS touched your life. Practice it so it flows off the tip of your tongue. Again, the point isn't the length—but the choice of words.

The Spring 2016 Vocations article included a list of several questions to consider as a way to create your elevator speech/testimonial. More than 60 people allowed me to videotape their testimonials during the Q Congress in St. Louis, Mo. and the Annual Chapter in Winter Park, Fla. Those

testimonials are now posted to the Secular Franciscan You Tube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/SecularFranciscans>. Thanks to those who accepted my invitation to share.

With more than 12,000 OFS in the United States, there are at least 11,940 more who have not shared a testimonial with me. Please help me by sending your testimonials to be posted to that site. (Have someone record it using a smart phone and send to me.) This may be a good activity for a local fraternity gathering.

At the time of writing the article, I was a slacker too (i.e., my testimony is not posted). So I am planning to have mine posted before this edition is published. I encourage you to check out the You Tube Channel to see if I have followed through on my plan.

Whether or not you send me your testimonial, practice it with your family (biological and Franciscan) and test it out on some parishioners. Let me know how it goes for you. (OFSvocationscommittee@gmail.com)

In the meanwhile... keep praying the prayer for vocations. Thanks for all your efforts to bring the Gospel alive to everyone you encounter! Pax.

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!

FRANCISCAN LIVING

FROM GOSPEL TO MY LIFE AND MY LIFE TO THE GOSPEL

By Francine Gikow, OFS

I was the man who fell victim to the robbers. I was stripped, beaten and left for half dead. A priest happened to come by and I thought: “He is a man of religion and compassion. He will help me... but the priest not only passed me by but even moved over to the other side of the street as if I had a contagious disease! The same thing happened again with a Levite—another important leader in the temple. Same result—avoiding me and refusing to approach me while I called out for help! I felt abandoned, invisible and neglected. Those I counted on as friends did nothing to help. I felt alone.

Finally, an immigrant stranger approached. Not only did he help me, but he brought me to a room where I could receive care and slowly regain my health. In fact, he paid for it all, since everything I once had had been stolen from me! He saw me as a person, not a victim. He made me whole again!

As I reflected on this meditation of the Good Samaritan, it caused me to consider how the man felt who had been robbed of his whole livelihood and even his health. He had nothing left and was forced to depend on the kindness of others. How disappointed he was in the supposedly “good” people from his society to whom he turned in trust and hope. How grateful he was to the immigrant stranger who saw his humanity and responded to it. Oh, how he rejoiced in the goodness of God for showing His mercy by sending him a complete stranger who was willing to do for God what others refused to do.

I sat with these feelings for a while and then tried to be available to hear what God wanted me to hear from the message of this gospel. I felt God wanted me to be more sensitive to each person I meet and not to ignore, avoid or pass by others in need of an ear to hear or a caring touch. I ended the meditation with a resolution to be more sensitive to others—to be an instrument of God’s love and concern for those who have nothing or are in need.

This was my personal meditation/dialog with God about the “Good Samaritan” gospel from scripture. I love to use St. Clare’s method of meditation; Gaze upon Him, Consider Him, Contemplate Him as you Imitate Him. *Gazing*, in the medieval sense is not just looking but “gazing from the heart,” which engages more of the senses: hearing, imaginative seeing, touch and smell. *Considering*, I like to think, is entering into the scripture and considering how you would feel or how the people involved would have felt being

in that situation. If we allow time for listening to God, He can speak to us, giving us little inspirations or thoughts. *Contemplating* is moving toward lifting our hearts to God, resting in His love and allowing God to love us back. *Imitation* is the resolve to do what God has asked us to do. This is classic Franciscan meditation. In fact, Francis entered into imaginative meditation so personally that he decided to recreate the nativity in Greccio!

So do you read scripture and meditate on it like this? Can you hear the Living Word of God speaking to you in scripture? Do you let the gospels direct your life by going from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel? Do the Gospels soften you, direct you, and change you? After all, this is what we say we do as Franciscans! But do we?

The very first paragraph in “The Way of Life of our Rule” is this: “to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ...” and that “Secular Franciscans should devote themselves to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel” (Rule II: 4). This means we should read and meditate on the gospels, preferably *daily*. It should be a priority in our life because this is how God speaks to us as the Living Word of God.

The imaginative meditation prayer is different from *studying* scripture as an intellectual exercise (although study has its place in our spiritual development). The goal of our scriptural prayer as Franciscans, moreover, is to *make a difference in the way we live our lives!* Meditating on scripture should be a personal dialog with God about the meaning of the passage for YOU. Again, it is all about relationship—our relationship with God through His spoken, living Word.

Yes, it takes time. Time, which we have to prioritize to ensure that this special time is reserved for our relationship. Time to just sit with our Lord, be ready to hear His Word for us, “waste time” with Him, love Him... and let Him love us back.



FINANCIAL REPORTS FOR 2016

National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order - USA							
Quarterly General Fund Reports for Calendar Year 2016 as of December 31, 2016							
	Quarter Ending On:	3/31/16	6/30/16	9/30/16	12/31/16	TOTAL FOR	BUDGET
Acct #	INCOME					YEAR	for 2016
6110	FAIR SHARE	\$ 1,569.25	\$ 129,308.50	\$ 71,196.00	21,736.50	\$ 223,810.25	\$ 230,469
6120	INTEREST	\$ 50.42	\$ 62.33	\$ 55.51	47.13	\$ 215.39	\$ 145
6200	FORMATION SALES	\$ 8,460.31	\$ 12,347.13	\$ 11,094.05	16,063.94	\$ 47,965.43	\$ 42,400
6140	MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 2,977.01	\$ 4,620.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 7,597.01	\$ 10,236
	TOTAL INCOME	\$ 13,056.99	\$ 146,337.96	\$ 82,345.56	\$ 37,847.57	\$ 279,588.08	\$ 283,250
	EXPENSES						
7110	CIOFS (19,256 Euros)			\$ (20,563.39)		\$ (20,563.39)	\$ 22,500
7115	FAN Fran. Action Network		\$ (12,500.00)		\$ -	\$ (12,500.00)	\$ 12,500
7120	NEWSLETTER	\$ (26,216.62)	\$ 10.00	\$ (12,886.02)	(12,874.65)	\$ (51,967.29)	\$ 55,000
7130	ANNUAL MEETING			\$ (803.56)	(28,610.71)	\$ (29,414.27)	\$ 58,000
7135	QUINQUENNIAL CONGRESS	\$ (762.40)	\$ (2,982.70)	\$ (409.31)		\$ (4,154.41)	\$ 13,100
7140	COUNCIL OFFICERS	\$ (259.75)	\$ (362.72)	\$ (86.56)	(1,233.24)	\$ (1,942.27)	\$ 3,000
7145	CIOFS MEETING					\$ -	\$ -
7150	COUNCIL MEETINGS	\$ (3,022.68)	\$ (8,100.36)	\$ (6,926.34)	(7,412.92)	\$ (25,462.30)	\$ 19,000
7155	LIABILITY INSURANCE		\$ (1,291.66)	\$ (2,507.34)		\$ (3,799.00)	\$ 3,800
7160	CIOFS VISITATION				(4,581.89)	\$ (4,581.89)	\$ 7,500
7172	JPIC AWARD COMMITTEE				(3,000.00)	\$ (3,000.00)	\$ 3,000
7173	NATIONAL ARCHIVES			\$ (1,789.26)		\$ (1,789.26)	\$ 2,250
7176	COMPUTER COMMITTEE	\$ (2,168.04)		\$ (697.00)	(2,506.16)	\$ (5,371.20)	\$ 9,000
7180	FORMATION-PRINTING		\$ (966.25)		(17,280.00)	\$ (18,246.25)	\$ 20,000
7180-L	FORMATION-Printing Language			\$ (1,275.00)		\$ (1,275.00)	\$ -
7181	FORMATION	\$ (941.15)	\$ (1,805.32)	\$ (3,462.85)	(979.63)	\$ (7,188.95)	\$ 9,000
7182	S A DEVELOPMENT					\$ -	\$ -
7183	VOCATIONS	\$ (82.58)	\$ (92.78)	\$ (89.44)	(625.86)	\$ (890.66)	\$ 1,500
7184	PR					\$ -	\$ 1,000
7186	J P I C		\$ (2,134.20)		(91.93)	\$ (2,226.13)	\$ 7,500
7187	YOUTH		\$ (104.00)			\$ (104.00)	\$ 9,500
7188	ECUMENICAL COMMITTEE	\$ (1,500.00)	\$ (320.66)	\$ (665.65)	(1,291.23)	\$ (3,777.54)	\$ 9,500
7198	COMMUNICATIONS					\$ -	\$ 3,600
7199	CNSA			\$ (8,000.00)		\$ (8,000.00)	\$ 8,000
7200	OTHER EXPENSES	\$ (78.00)	\$ (1,500.00)	\$ (110.84)	(645.00)	\$ (2,333.84)	\$ 5,000
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ (35,031.22)	\$ (32,150.65)	\$ (60,272.56)	\$ (81,133.22)	\$ (208,587.65)	\$ 283,250
	NET INCOME (EXPENSE)	\$ (21,974.23)	\$ 114,187.31	\$ 22,073.00	\$ (43,285.65)	\$ 71,000.43	
Bank Balances of General Funds:							
	Beginning: CHECKING	\$ 153,871.27	\$ 191,209.45	\$ 389,280.77	\$ 291,441.08		
	SAVINGS	\$ 187,060.37	\$ 187,110.79	\$ 187,173.12	\$ 187,228.63		
	TOTAL - Beginning Balance	\$ 340,931.64	\$ 378,320.24	\$ 576,453.89	\$ 478,669.71		
	Less Restricted Funds	(118,803.34)	(178,670.42)	(262,616.76)	(151,129.58)		
	TOTAL - Available Funds	\$ 222,128.30	\$ 199,649.82	\$ 313,837.13	\$ 327,540.13		
	Ending: CHECKING	\$ 191,209.45	\$ 389,280.77	\$ 291,441.08	\$ 237,175.17		
	SAVINGS (combined)	\$ 187,110.79	\$ 187,173.12	\$ 187,228.63	\$ 187,275.76		
	TOTAL - Ending Balance	\$ 378,320.24	\$ 576,453.89	\$ 478,669.71	\$ 424,450.93		
	Less Restricted Funds	(178,670.42)	(262,616.76)	(151,129.58)	(131,473.52)		
	TOTAL - Available Funds	\$ 199,649.82	\$ 313,837.13	\$ 327,540.13	\$ 292,977.41		
Respectfully submitted by Jerry Rousseau, OFS, National Treasurer							

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA *Restricted Accounts Report - As of December 31, 2016*

Account	Description of Activity	Received Donations	Donated by NAFRA	Amount Paid	Balance
7307	UNDESIGNATED CONTRIBUTIONS TO NAFRA				
	Balance at January 1, 2016	\$ 49,993.29			
0	Transfer to 7335 for scholarships			\$ (5,400.00)	
1	Transferred to 7305 for charity & 7319 Gifts (200)			\$ (7,838.00)	
2	Transfer to 7305 (8,000) & 7310 (2,000) -Chapter decision			\$ (10,000.00)	
7307-M	In Memoriam - estate of Roseann Frederick	\$ 5,000.00	xfr to local frat.	\$ (5,000.00)	
3	In Memoriam - estate of Stella Nadeau	\$ 8,400.00	xfr to 7303	\$ (8,400.00)	
7307-H	In Honor of NAFRA (Good of the Order)	\$ 1,587.00			
	Closing Balance	\$ 64,980.29		\$ (36,638.00)	\$ 28,342.29
7303	REGIONAL NEEDS				
	Balance at January 1, 2016	\$ 9,000.00			
0	Transfer to 7335 for scholarships			\$ (5,000.00)	
3	Transfer from 7307-M Chapter decision		\$ 8,400.00		
	Closing Balance	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 8,400.00	\$ (5,000.00)	\$ 12,400.00
7304	EMERGENCY AID				
	Balance at January 1, 2016	\$ 10,000.00	\$ (2,500.00)		
	Aid to OFS flood victims - St. Joan of Arc Region	\$ 16,375.75	\$ 2,500.00	\$ (18,875.75)	
	4th Quarter donations (St. Joan of Arc)	\$ 3,275.00		\$ (3,275.00)	
	Closing Balance	\$ 29,650.75		\$ (22,150.75)	\$ 7,500.00
7305	CHARITABLE DONATIONS				
	Balance at January 1, 2016	\$ 3,000.00		\$ (2,500.00)	
1	Donation to Holy Land from 2015 Chapter		\$ 6,000.00	\$ (6,000.00)	
	General aid to flood victims - Louisiana	\$ 2,020.00		\$ (2,020.00)	
	donations for Don Bosco schools + medicines	\$ 1,611.00		\$ (1,611.00)	
1 & 2	Donate to charity from 7307 (1000 + 8000)		\$ 9,000.00	\$ (9,000.00)	
1	XFR FAN donation - Bldd Junipero Serra Region	\$ 638.00		\$ (638.00)	
	Closing Balance	\$ 7,269.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ (21,769.00)	\$ 500.00
7306	NATIONAL EVENTS				
	Balance at January 1, 2016	\$ 6,209.52			
0	Transfer to 7335 for scholarships			\$ (4,000.00)	
	Closing Balance				\$ 2,209.52
7310	CIOFS SOLIDARITY FUND				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2016	\$ -			
	Donations received - St. Joseph frat. Baton Rouge	\$ 1,000.00		\$ (1,000.00)	
2	Transfer from 7307 - Chapter decision		\$ 2,000.00	\$ (2,000.00)	
	Closing Balance				\$ -
7314	FORMATION				
	Balance at January 1, 2016	\$ 1,317.10			
	Closing Balance				\$ 1,317.10
7315	ECUMENICAL - INTERFAITH				
	Balance at January 1, 2016	\$ 1,138.20			
	Closing Balance				\$ 1,138.20
7316	H2O COLLECTIONS				
	Balance at January 1, 2016	\$ 361.17			
	Contributions 1st Qtr	\$ 2,315.00			
	Contributions 2nd Qtr	\$ 1,956.53			
	Contributions 3rd Qtr	\$ 1,897.00		\$ (5,500.00)	
	Contributions 4th Quarter	\$ 199.94			
	Closing Balance	\$ 6,729.64			\$ 1,229.64
7317	YOUTH SCHOLARSHIPS				
	Balance at January 1, 2016	2,488.05			
	Closing Balance				\$ 2,488.05
7319	GIFTS OF APPRECIATION				
1	Transfer from 7307 (11-1-16) Br. Bob Brady, OFM		\$ 200.00	\$ (200.00)	
	Closing Balance				\$ -
7335	QUINQUENNIAL CONGRESS				
	Balance at January 1, 2016	\$ 10,240.00			
0	Transfers from 7303, 7306, 7307 - scholarships		\$ 14,400.00		
	Registrations 1st quarter	\$ 59,440.00			
	Registrations 2nd quarter	\$ 97,890.00			
	Miscellaneous income	\$ 18,605.50			
	Scholarships awarded -(Total)		(14,400.00)		
	Expenses			(139,986.87)	
	Refunds			(6,890.00)	
	Closing Balance	\$ 199,720.50		\$ (146,876.87)	\$ 52,843.63
7375	HISTORY BOOK SALES				
	Balance at January 1, 2016	\$ (7,117.70)			
	Sales - payment received	\$ 75.00			
	Closing Balance				\$ (7,042.70)
8110	DUNS SCOTUS TRUST FUND				
	AVAILABLE FOR GRANTS				
	Balance at January 1, 2016	\$ 28,793.00		\$ (1,500.00)	
	Closing Balance				\$ 27,293.00
8220	LEGAL AND OTHER EXPENSES				
	Balance at January 1, 2016	\$ 3,380.71			
	DSFTF board meeting - Feb 2016 - DEN			\$ (2,125.92)	
	Closing Balance				\$ 1,254.79
	TOTAL OF EACH COLUMN	\$ 354,634.06	\$ 25,400.00	\$ (248,560.54)	\$ 131,473.52

National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order - USA

Quarterly Financial Report for Calendar Year 2016

RESTRICTED FUNDS REPORT

Acct#	RESTRICTED FUNDS	BEGINNING BALANCE	Quarter Ending On:				YEAR TOTAL	ENDING BALANCE
			3/31/16	6/30/16	9/30/16	12/31/16		
7303	REGIONAL NEEDS	\$ 9,000.00	(5,000.00)			8,400.00	\$ 3,400.00	\$ 12,400.00
7304	EMERGENCY AID	\$ 10,000.00			(2,500.00)	\$ -	\$ (2,500.00)	\$ 7,500.00
7305	CHARITABLE DONATIONS	\$ 3,000.00				(2,500.00)	\$ (2,500.00)	\$ 500.00
7306	NATIONAL EVENTS	\$ 6,209.52	\$ (4,000.00)				\$ (4,000.00)	\$ 2,209.52
7307	UNDESIGNATED CONTRIBUTIONS	\$ 49,993.29	\$ (4,762.00)	\$ (638.00)	\$ 8,320.00	\$ (24,571.00)	\$ (21,651.00)	\$ 28,342.29
7310	CIOFS SOLIDARITY FUND	\$ -	\$ 1,000.00		\$ (1,000.00)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
7314	FORMATION	\$ 1,317.10					\$ -	\$ 1,317.10
7315	ECUMENICAL-INTERFAITH	\$ 1,138.20					\$ -	\$ 1,138.20
7316	H2O LENTEN PROJECT	\$ 361.17	\$ 2,315.00	\$ 1,956.53	\$ (3,603.00)	199.94	\$ 868.47	\$ 1,229.64
7317	YOUTH SCHOLARSHIPS	\$ 2,488.05					\$ -	\$ 2,488.05
7319	GIFTS OF APPRECIATION	\$ -				\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
7335	QUINQUENNIAL CONGRESS	\$ 10,240.00	72,440.00	82,627.81	\$ (112,464.18)		\$ 42,603.63	\$ 52,843.63
7375	HISTORY BOOKS print, sales	\$ (7,117.70)			\$ 75.00		\$ 75.00	\$ (7,042.70)
DUNS SCOTUS GRANT							\$ -	
8110	AVAILABLE FOR GRANTS	\$ 28,793.00				(1,500.00)	\$ (1,500.00)	\$ 27,293.00
8220	EXPENSES	\$ 3,380.71	(2,125.92)				\$ (2,125.92)	\$ 1,254.79
TOTALS		118,803.34	59,867.08	83,946.34	(111,172.18)	(19,971.06)	12,670.18	131,473.52

119,734.16

DUNS SCOTUS SECULAR FRANCISCAN FORMATION TRUST FUND

				Investment Account	Total Value
12/31/06	Trust Fund Balance			\$ 615,286.39	\$615,286.39
12/31/07	Trust Fund Balance			\$ 656,513.39	\$656,513.39
	Grant to SALT TEAM 3/25/08			\$ (5,000.00)	
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
	Duns Scotus Withdrawal			\$ (24,000.00)	
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
	Duns Scotus Redemption			\$ (25,000.00)	
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
12/31/15	Trust Fund Balance			\$ 886,234.84	\$886,234.84
3/31/16	Investment gains/losses: First Quarter			\$ 8,942.34	
	Trust Fund Balance			\$ 895,177.18	\$ 895,177.18
6/30/16	Investment gains/losses: Second Quarter			\$ 2,395.78	
	Trust Fund Balance			\$ 897,572.96	\$ 897,572.96
9/30/16	Investment gains/losses: Third Quarter			\$ 44,887.56	
	Trust Fund Balance			\$ 942,460.52	\$ 942,460.52
12/31/16	Investment gains/losses: Fourth Quarter			\$ 23,981.69	
	Trust Fund Balance			\$ 966,442.21	\$ 966,442.21

Respectfully submitted by Jerry Rousseau, OFS, National Treasurer

PATRIMONY OF THE OFS

Introduction to the Financial Aspects of the OFS

by Jerry Rousseau, OFS National Treasurer

The teaching of the Second Vatican Council, in particular the conciliar Constitution, *Gaudium et spes*, says, “the Church herself makes use of temporal things insofar as her own mission requires it.(1)” The church community lives, not only as a spiritual reality, but in the dynamics of human existence, including its material condition. This particular identity and condition are manifested in a style and form that consistently translate its human-divine nature and its salvific ministry. Therefore, the management of temporal goods must express and serve that community consisting of the one People of God.

The goods in the Church, therefore, are clearly destined for use by the community, because the members of the people of God are called to share the goods(2). Sharing is, in fact, the way of life of the Christian community. It is a visible manifestation of that deep unity of spirit that is gained through faith and charity. “This is the ‘our’ bread, ‘one’ for ‘many’.” The poverty of the Beatitudes is the virtue of sharing: it calls us to pool and to share both material and spiritual goods, not because it is required, but out of love, because the abundance of some may remedy the needs of others”(3).

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

All of article 15 of the GC OFS refers, moreover, to article 11 of the OFS Rule, which affirms: “Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children. Thus, in the spirit of the Beatitudes, and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they

should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.”

The consistency of the OFS teaching and the documents of the Church faithfully reflect moreover, the concept of Franciscan “pauperism” founded on the Gospel way of using the “world,” which condemns any unproductive “hoarding” while enhancing the bonds of reciprocity and solidarity (4). Thus, according to Franciscan economic thought, it is not a sin in itself to own property as long as what you have will be shared with those most in need: the purpose of using what is possessed (including money) is the community, the building of fraternal relations for the common good.

These are goals we also find in the early Christian communities, as evidenced by some passages of the *Acts of Apostles*(5), by which the primitive Franciscan fraternities (like the ones today) were inspired. St. Francis, attentive to the substance of the Gospel message, understands and lives this community aspect of goods, wanting to break away completely from them in order to better embrace God and Brothers, as a way of following the “poor” Christ.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:



This does not make practical sense, if one is not invited to live the charism proper to the OFS. We cannot hoard goods, we must share them. We cannot speculate, we must be generous. We cannot acquire without worrying about the

way in which we acquire. We must be responsible in the use, disposal and acquisition of goods in accordance with the desire of the donors. Reflect on these matters when making contributions to the common fund (OFS Rule, article 25).

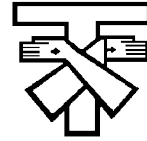
1 *Gaudium et spes* n. 76

2 *Lumen Gentium* n. 13th

3 Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 2,833

4 See “De usu paupere”, Peter John Olivi (1248-1298)

5 See Acts 2, 44-47, 4, 32-35



Endorsed by the National Executive Council of the Secular Franciscan Order - USA

“Multiculturalism and Diversity: Who is My Neighbor?” – Presenters



Mary Stronach, OFS - Multiculturalism has been at the center of Mary’s life, vocation and vision. As a foreign language teacher at the high school and college levels in Spanish, Italian, French and Latin, she has addressed diversity and how to work with people from different backgrounds. She has presented on multiculturalism and cultural competency in her role as Outreach Coordinator for an interpreting/translation organization call the Multicultural Association of Medical/Legal Interpreters. The organization serves refugees and immigrants from dozens of regions of the world – from Myanmar to Mexico.

Mary has been a Secular Franciscan since 2003 and has served at all levels. On the local and regional fraternity levels, she has been Formation Director and Commission Chair. On the national level, she and her husband, Bob, have been Public Relations Chairpersons since 2003. More recently, Mary was elected International Councilor. Mary has also served as translator/interpreter for the Presidency of the OFS in Rome, Italy.

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS is a spiritual life and leadership coach and a loss-to-life mindset strategist, where she uses faith-based principles to provide spiritual and emotional wellness to women moving from the pain of grief and loss to a new life of purpose and peace. Her passion and mission is to help them go from a place of tragedy and trauma to a place of peace and joy.

Since professing in 2000, Carolyn has served in leadership roles in the Secular Franciscan Order, including local fraternity minister and regional secretary. She is currently the Animator for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) on the regional and national levels and serving on the International JPIC Commission. She is also an Action Commissioner and board member for the Franciscan Action Network.



Registration Information

Download registration form or register online at: <https://my.francis.edu/sfubus/ICFL/ICFLseminar.asp>

Payment must accompany registration and is NON-REFUNDABLE.

Register before June 1st to receive a \$25 discount on the RESIDENT registration fee.

Absolutely no registrations accepted after Monday, June 19th.

Other questions? Contact Fr. Joe Lehman, TOR, (814) 472-3054 (daytime) or e-mail jlehman@francis.edu

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