

TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

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2012 Quinquennial



Why
Francis?



Claim
the Gift

*Looking Back at the
2012 Quinquennial Congress*



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 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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THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

National Minister, Tom Bello, OFS

Lessons Learned or Relearned from the 2012 Quinquennial

What was your greatest joy and learning experience from last summer 2012? I believe mine was attending the 2012 Quinquennial in Chicago. The joy is easy to explain: gathering in prayer with family; sharing Christ in action, word and sacrament; meeting and learning with 617, I believe, the final count, Secular Franciscans from all over the United States, and internationally as well with both our Minister and Vice Minister General of our entire Order, Encarnita del Pozo from Spain and Doug Clorey from Canada.

What did I learn? Well, let me focus in three general areas of lessons learned or relearned. The three general areas are first, doing the work and paying attention to detail; second, understanding and sharing the Franciscan gift; and third, putting our gifted vocation into action and outreach.

First, doing the work and paying attention to detail. As you can well imagine, planning and hosting something as huge as the Q doesn't just happen. Being a good Secular Franciscan leader at any level of fraternity doesn't just happen. Being a good Catholic--a good wife or husband, a good parent, a good worker--doesn't just happen. I learned or relearned this lesson from all the marvelous work of the Q Committee, the National Executive Council and the host Mother Cabrini Region, who all played a huge part in the planning and success of the Q.

One person will have to represent all, and he is the big brother I never had, my predecessor and better, Patrick Mendes. If you didn't see Patrick, you were not at the Q. He was everywhere, helping all in need. You might well ask why an outgoing National Minister would even want to bother with all the headaches and heartaches that go into an enterprise as gigantic as the Q! No matter. As far as I know, Patrick had a voice in every major or minor decision concerning the overall planning and the day-to-day administration of the Q.

For example, from the major, he helped select our excellent speakers; to the minor, he helped me find an alb to wear to assist at the opening Mass when I couldn't bring one in my overloaded suitcase. Further, he helped Debbie Tessier, the National Minister from Canada, find a room when the hotel "misplaced" her registration. Not only that--he "kidnapped" me to go with him to the airport to pick Debbie up himself, personally, to bring her to the hotel!

I'm not sure how many hours of sleep Patrick had in the days leading up to and during the Q because usually the first person I saw in the morning was the last person I saw in the evening: Patrick! Thus, Patrick offers the first lesson I learned or relearned from the Q: Good things don't just happen. They take hard work and attention to details.

The second lesson learned or relearned from the Q concerns the great heritage of our Franciscan tradition, understanding and sharing that gift. In different ways, all of our excellent speakers at the Q, and each person who I talked and shared with, helped me understand and share our Franciscan heritage.

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Again, if I have to choose one person to speak for all, please permit me to choose Sister Ilia Delio, OSF. Where to begin with all she has shared with us in her many books, her three Q talks and in her personal conversations? Well, let me briefly share one of her insights into St. Francis. His prayer before the Crucifix at San Damiano begins, “Most High, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart.” And St. Ilia went on to explain that the heart is the key to St. Francis, not the mind; and love is the highest good. Love is the deepest form of knowledge; love is the knowledge and power of God. God is outward-moving love; God is deeply in love with Creation. Love is relational, seen in the love of the Father for the Son, the Son for the Father, a Love Who is the Holy Spirit. The whole of Creation is a movement of love, a movement of the Trinity into all of Creation.

Thus, Sister Ilia continued, the world is so very rich in God’s love, which is the treasure within, the treasure that God gave us in the gift of Creation, the gift of the Incarnation.

Further, Jesus is THE revelation of God, the missing clue to solving God, the Universe, and ourselves. Creation and Incarnation both show God’s self-emptying outward-moving Love; and our Franciscan gift, our Franciscan call, is to name, proclaim and live that Love Who is always present, the great I AM, in ourselves and in all the world around us. The fullness of the Incarnation is our own Christifying the world, our own self-emptying love in imitation of St. Francis, who himself imitated Christ and begged all of his followers to do the same.

Perhaps St. Ilia explained this gift best to me at the Q, but many sisters and brothers shared that precious gift of our Franciscan vocation with me. I could see, hear and feel the Love of God passing through them to all around them.

The third and final learning or relearning from the Q follows from the second; namely, putting our gifted vocation into action and outreach. Of course, all of us are trying in our daily lives as members of the Secular Franciscan Order to put our calling into the service of our brothers and sisters in the world. This is part and parcel of our Secular Franciscan Rule, as seen for just one example, in Number 19 of our Rule: “Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon. Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others.”

Again, Patrick, Sister Ilia, all the speakers, planners and participants that I heard, saw and met at the Q are striving to put our call into life, but perhaps if one can best represent us all it would be our dear brother Ed Shirley, who has departed this life after sharing his gifts so fully with us at the Q and with all his students and all of us in the Franciscan family and in the world.

How can I summarize Ed? It’s impossible of course to capture in a few words the magnificence of his being. Permit me to say that I remember just after I had been elected National Minister that Ed was attending, I think, a Christian/Buddhist Dialogue Conference in Washington, DC. He had called to discuss with me his continuing in his appointed position as Chair of our National Fraternity’s Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee. We met at a local restaurant and had a thoroughly delightful exchange on St. Francis, the Blessed Mother, God, the world, truth, beauty and love, all in no particular order, but each with an absolute rightness to appear at each’s particular moment in the evening.

As we were talking, I couldn’t help thinking, “If there is one person who can bring the Secular Franciscan charism to interface with the Buddhists, the Moslems, and the other members of our Christian family, who might be better than Ed?” Ed walked the talk. He was a theologian who lived what he believed. He in particular, but many others at the Q, showed me how to put our gifted vocation into action and outreach.

Again, these are three lessons I learned or relearned at the Q: one, hard work and attention to detail; two, understanding and sharing our Franciscan gift; three, putting our gifted vocation into action and outreach. Thanks to all of you who helped me learn or relearn these lessons, particularly Patrick Mendes, Sister Ilia and Ed Shirley. May God bless and keep you and all of us!

LEADERS BRING SPECIAL MESSAGES

3 simple prayers open Quinquennial

the 18th



Deacon Tom Bello

CHICAGO -- National Minister Tom Bello, General Minister Encarnita del Pozo and Chicago Auxiliary Bishop George J. Rassas all had special messages for some 600 Franciscans participating in the opening of the 18th Quinquennial Congress here July 3.

Deacon Bello said he had three simple prayers for the group. "My first prayer is that everybody knows we are family. There are no strangers here. We're all brothers and sisters." The audience erupted into wild applause.

continued on next page

By BOB & MARY STRONACH, OFS

Some 600 Franciscan family members came together for the 18th Quinquennial Congress, July 3 - 7, 2012 at the Holiday Inn Skokie on the north side of Chicago.



Encarnación del Pozo, OFS
General minister

continued from previous page

His second prayer was to “think of yourself as the largest manifestation of the national fraternity,” and as such, to ponder “what it means to be a Secular Franciscan in the United States in 2012,” and “where do we go from here, what is our future?”

His third prayer was to remember that “we are all brothers and sisters of penance,” which to him reflects a turning away from sin and a turning toward God. “Let us be Spirit-filled... Let this be daily on-going conversion.”

THE GENERAL MINISTER, who flew in from Spain and was introduced



Bishop George J. Rassas
Chicago auxiliary bishop

to a rousing standing ovation, said she was struck by the theme of the Quinquennial, “Why Francis? Claim the Gift.” It hit her as an “insistent call” for a “supernatural gift,” to ask for it over and over again. It’s not unlike the way Francis responded “to the supernatural love God gave to him.” Noting that the congress would be a journey for herself as well as everyone else, she prayed that “we all perceive in ourselves the gift God is offering us.”

BISHOP RASSAS celebrated the opening liturgy, noting it was the feast of St. Thomas the Apostle. Thomas was the epitome of the saying, “seeing is be-

lieving,” doubting the risen Christ really had visited his fellow apostles. But his later profession of faith, “my Lord and my God,” turned the saying around to “believing is seeing.”

Believing is seeing the presence of Christ in the world, he said.

St. Clare, he noted, took it a step further by encouraging followers to gaze on the image of Christ, consider the image of Christ, contemplate the image of Christ, and then take action and imitate Christ.

Likewise, the bishop encouraged the Franciscans to take action and “extend the compassion of Jesus to others, especially the most vulnerable.”



The opening session was filled with nearly 600 Secular Franciscans, and First, Second and Third Order religious.



DAY 2

Francis gets to heart of matter, keynote speaker notes

Franciscan theologian Sr. Ilia Delio, OSF, reminded attendees at the 18th Quinquennial Congress that St. Francis of Assisi had wanted to be a famous knight until he smashed into the reality of battle, ending up as a prisoner of war and ill. But it's often when times are tough that God speaks to us, she noted, and touches our heart.

"The key to Francis...is not the mind, but the heart," said Sister Ilia, whose two keynote talks highlighted day 2 of the "Q". The morning presentation addressed the conference theme, "Why Francis? Claim the Gift." The afternoon talk zeroed in on a Franciscan view of God.

After each presentation, attendees broke into small groups, or "fraternities," to reflect on and discuss a series of questions related to Sister Ilia's topics.

Francis demonstrates, she said, that "the way to search for God begins within... begins with the heart."

Reflecting back on what the Lord meant when he told Francis to "go and repair my house, which has fallen into ruin," "we realize 'go repair my house'

starts with an inner house," she said.

By going within himself and experiencing an on-going conversion, Francis couldn't help but go out and impact the church and world around him.

Francis didn't choose an apostolic life, or focus on a mission. He simply chose the whole Gospel and focused on the life of Jesus Christ.

"That's what marks Francis' life," sister said. It was a whole-hearted dedication to the life of Christ, with a focus on joy and hope in the risen Christ.

Contemplating Christ, he saw that the Incarnation, with God coming among us, was an incredible gift of love. "Francis understood this...and he lived in that thankfulness of the gift." Sister Ilia imagined Francis getting up in the morning and saying "thank you," recognizing "everything is gift."

Because of Francis, Franciscans carry "fundamental values that we can offer the world today."

One is the spirit of poverty. Not poverty from material things. But a realization that, as Christ showed, we are dependent on one another and that all

Sr. Ilia Delio, OSF

Keynote speaker, Franciscan sister, author of ten books, and senior fellow at Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University, where she concentrates in the area of science and religion. She holds a doctorate in pharmacology from New Jersey Medical School/Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and a doctorate in historical theology from Fordham University.



Attendees broke into small discussion groups after each talk, affording the opportunity to bond as a "local fraternity" while exploring the meaning of their Franciscan vocation in the context of messages brought by the keynote and plenary speakers.



of creation is good. Francis grasped, she said, that the world is not poor. Rather, it is rich in God's goodness.

Francis would say goodness is in the heart of the world -- the treasure hidden within. Franciscans aren't about bringing good where it is not, but about discerning the good already there.

Francis shows that "what fills us inwardly must express itself outwardly," and it requires on-going conversion. "It's not what we pray," she said, "but how we experience the presence of God through Christ."

The interior journey, the on-going conversion, leads to becoming an "authentic human person" and a change that can't help but express itself. Franciscan life is not a life of work, she noted.

"It's a life of example, of how we live as brothers and sisters."

It's a life-long process of shifting from self-centeredness towards God-centeredness, and it "let's us be open to grace."

Another way of looking at it: "Conversion is a coming home to oneself... to realize that the God of the universe is the God of my heart." Conversion is also realizing that "the God in you is the God in me."

Another aspect of poverty is letting go of the need to control and of being possessive. "Possessive power makes true communication between persons and with creation impossible," sister noted. In addition, without letting go, "there is

no room within us to receive God."

A second fundamental value Franciscans offer the world is humility. In fact, sister describes poverty and humility as sisters. "Humility recognizes the earthly limits of our humanity" -- especially in the face of a God whose love inexorably gushes forth.

God's incredible act of humility through the crucified Christ and the Holy Eucharist allowed Francis to be taken up into the goodness of God and begin to develop a new relationship with nature, with creation... to begin to see Brother Cricket and Sister Star. "Everything in creation 'spoke' to Francis of God."

Yet another aspect of poverty is prayer and contemplation. "Without poverty,



TOP, ABOVE, OPPOSITE PAGE: Smiles were contagious. RIGHT: National Secretary Jan Parker and National Minister Tom Bello presented a gift and offered words of appreciation to Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM, (center) who is stepping down as a national spiritual assistant.



true prayer is hard to nourish,” she said.

Prayer and solitude were an essential part of Francis’ life, as the saint contemplated the “living Word of God,” which led to him “going out into the marketplace” with the fruits of that prayer. “Contemplation really begins with ourselves” -- accepting oneself in the inner journey towards God. With Franciscans called to be active contemplatives, “contemplation is not a way of prayer, it’s a style of life.”

In fact, she said, “the whole of Francis’ life is outward moving.” And it’s a combination of inner and outward love. “There is not true love of God and neighbor without the love of self.”

Sister Ilia added: “We live in a culture that is dying, is dying for identity as a

human person. This is what we have.”

The audience erupted into applause.

So what is an Evangelical person to do? The first thing is pray and be a living witness. And remember, “whatever happens in our life, God is there.”

In other words, “we are called to celebrate the gift of God’s goodness” and “bear witness to the Gospel.”

IN THE AFTERNOON session, Sister Ilia went on to elaborate on the concept that God is love, that the Son expresses the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is the bond of love of the Trinity. The Father is the ultimate source of goodness. “We’re talking about a fountain of gushing goodness.” Like Niagara Falls, only infinitely greater.

“Love is what God is.” And “one of the greatest contributions of Franciscans to the 21st century” is that we “understand love as the deepest form of knowledge.”

In spite of the fact that “God is ineffable, beyond what we could grasp,” God bends down in love “to embrace this tiny fragile creation.” God is so outward-moving in love, He doesn’t leave anyone out of the picture.

This leads to two different schools of thought about why Jesus came. One tradition is that because mankind sinned, Christ came to provide salvation. The Franciscan view is that Christ would have come whether mankind had sinned or not -- an inevitable result of the goodness and love of God expressing itself in Christ.



DAY 3

Theologians point to human dignity, prayer

The third day of the Quinquennial Congress featured two Franciscan theologians.

Sr. Ilia Delio, OSF, led off with her third and final talk, addressing the Franciscan understanding of the human person; that is, seeing the human person as sacrament.

Then, following Mass celebrated by Fr. Stephen Gross, OFM Conv. and a lunch break, Secular Franciscan Ed Shirley, OFS, who taught theology at St. Edward's University, addressed the topic, *"Deepening Our Relationship with God."*

In the evening, musician/composer Friar Robert Hutmacher, OFM, performed a concert on the harp and piano.

THE FRANCISCAN tradition is really a heritage of human personhood, Sister Ilia said. Francis of Assisi becomes a model for recognizing human dignity. As his relationship with God deepened, Francis started gaining a new vision of everything around him. On the road one day he came upon a leper, and on impulse he embraced and kissed him. What once filled him with fear he now saw as a person who bore the image of Christ.

He recounted, "what was bitter, tasted

sweet," because he met the goodness of God in the human person. He realized humanity is good and loved by God because it bears the divine image. In the person, God is alive.

Sister imagined Francis stepping back and saying, "WOW! God is among us!"

And this experience of God means we are in relationship with others, even with all of creation. "When we unite, God becomes alive in us," she said. Like Jesus says in the Gospel, "when two or more are gathered in my name, I am with you."

In today's culture, she noted, we've lost sight of human personhood. But Franciscans have the solution. As Franciscan thinker John Duns Scotus put it: God creates us in a way that He's uniquely present in everything. Each person, each creature is unique to God.

"Everything has a unique being-ness to it," sister said. It's a "this-ness" that's irrepeatable.

"Each and every thing, no matter how

small or seemingly insignificant, is of infinite value because it images God in its own unique being."

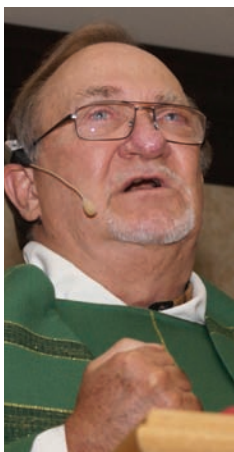
And people of faith like Francis recognize this with "a penetrating vision that gets to the truth of reality" -- unlike today's culture where "we see but we don't see, we hear but we don't hear." Modern culture "has deadened our eyes and ears to all of this."

The Franciscan understanding of the sacredness of life takes it a step further. "To love authentically is to accept other humans and all creatures on their own terms." And to give them time. "We in our culture don't have time for one another," she said, nor for creation. She showed images of homeless people, noting that society treats them as disposable.

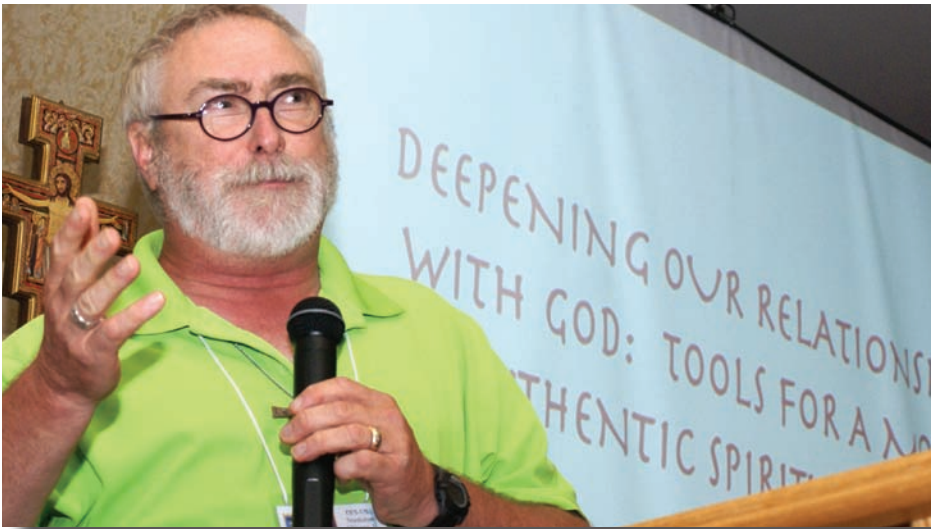
"Francis had time."



Sister Ilia Delio with Vice General Minister Doug Clorey and International Councilor Anne Mulqueen.



LEFT: Fr. Stephen Gross, OFM Conv. CENTER & RIGHT: Small group "local fraternities," where even small children were at home.



Ed Shirley, OFS

Plenary speaker and theology professor at St. Edward's University in Austin. The order suffered a loss when Ed died unexpectedly Aug. 15 while recovering from shoulder surgery.

The Evangelical life is a relational life, she said, and added: Francis came alive in the reality of God's gift. Do we see each other as gift?

"We are called to be among people... and discover the presence of God in every person." And that comes with bearing witness to the Christian life, not engaging in quarrels and disputes (even though we differ), and not controlling others, but, for God's sake, entering into dialogue, offering respect, listening and learning.

To accomplish all this, we need to "let go" (spirit of poverty), have inner space for God, and compassion.

Of course, it's not easy. Francis himself struggled. Sister Ilia imagined the saint saying to himself, "I'm running off to the mountain and never coming back. These guys are nuts."

But he always came back, moving outwardly because of what filled him inwardly.

"Francis did not so much pray as he became a living prayer."

With Francis as a model, and with ongoing conversion, "we need to reclaim that every person is an icon uniquely written by God."

ED SHIRLEY'S afternoon talk zeroed

in on the transforming power of prayer, with some theology tossed in, such as Bonaventure's look at the Trinity.

He began the session by referring to Sister Ilia and saying he would throw down the gauntlet were she present. "Sure, she had a great presentation, but can she do that and play the harmonica, too?" He whipped out the instrument to a roar of laughter and then began playing "Ode to Joy."

He noted that a Franciscan view of the Trinity (with the Father as the source, the Son expressing the Father, and the Holy Spirit as the love uniting them) sees a dynamic, inter-penetrating relationship that wends its way through and is imprinted on all of creation. It's a realization that led Francis to declare the sun as his brother and the moon, his sister.

Ed Shirley "danced" around a "fancy word" -- Perichoresis -- which refers to the indwelling and inter-penetrating relationship between the Father and the Son. He called it the divine do-si-do of the Father and the Son, with the Spirit being the Dance.

Like the Trinity, there are three phases of Franciscan life, all mentioned in the Rule, that have a dynamic relationship, a

flowing back and forth, he said. They are prayer and contemplation, transformation of consciousness/vision, and apostolic action. Prayer leads to transformation, where we begin to see the world as pregnant with Christ, which leads to apostolic action and in turn leads more deeply into a transforming vision. And seeing the world "shining with the Trinity and incarnating Christ, we are struck with awe and wonder." This, in turn, leads to deeper prayer.

This deepening prayer and grander vision should lead us to be "transforming lives, just as certainly as bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ."

It's a little like the attitude and vision of three stone carvers. When each was asked what he was doing, one said 'carving a stone'. The second said he was putting food on the table, and the third said he was building a grand cathedral. What is the difference? Their vision, their mindfulness.



Friar Robert Hutmacher, a Chicago-based composer and musician, capped the day with performances on the piano and harp.

DAY 4



Plenary speaker Br. Bill Short, OFM, poses for picture with Quinquennial Co-chair Patrick Mendes, OFS.

Order's history chaotic while showing vitality

"We're so diverse...and beautiful."

That was one of Br. Bill Short's opening comments about the Franciscan Family. The theology professor tried to put the Secular Franciscan Order, originally called Third Order, in the context of the family's history, which, he noted, one historian referred to as chaotic, but nonetheless showing vitality because it has flourished for 800 years.

"If we were doing the history of the

Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), this would be quick and clear," Brother Bill quipped to peels of laughter.

Despite tensions among branches in the early years, and later oppression and suppression by secular states in Europe in later centuries, the Franciscan movement is a model of inclusivity. And it's all based on a far-reaching innovation that Francis and Clare introduced to society and the church -- to live the Gospel of

Jesus Christ. It's an indelible mark on all the branches and orders -- the first, the second, the third orders.

The Third Order history is replete with a combination of religious, secular and something-in-between; and the secular and something-in-between had profound impact on society through their front-line apostolic works (especially among the poor and sick). Seculars (known as brothers and sisters of penance) tried to live the Gospel while living at home with their families and going to work. Some, especially women, tried living in lay communities, and were independent, which brought suspicion because they were not under male authority, so many adopted the Third Order Rule to stave off persecution.

Brother Bill, an OFM Franciscan who has taught at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, CA, since 1983, pointed to major examples of women lay communities that eventually evolved into religious communities still in existence today. They took their inspiration from Francis and Clare and saintly Third Order members like St. Elizabeth of Hungary. Male religious communities rose similarly. A major player was what was to become known as the Third Order Regular (TOR) friars.

The Third Order tertiaries (which today comprise the Secular Franciscan Order) went through periods of growth and decline over the centuries. The Great Plague decimated fraternities, whose members were usually in the forefront of caring for the sick and burying the dead. Later, several popes encouraged the spread of the Third Order, thinking it would help revitalize the church. While membership swelled, formation wasn't always what it should have been, Brother Bill pointed out.

Despite its seemingly fractured structure, the Franciscan Family has strength in its diversity, inclusiveness, and in a common charge to live the "holy Gospel of Jesus Christ" in the footsteps of St. Francis.



The morning sessions ended with mass celebrated by Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap., after which General Spiritual Assistant Amando Trujillo-Cano, TOR, presented a gift to Father Lester. Then, Father Amando performed one of his original songs with General Vice Minister Doug Clorey.



Pat Brandwein-Ball, OFS
Plenary speaker and former national councilor.

Just start the journey, speaker challenges

Pat Brandwein-Ball, OFS, took a moment to survey the hall from the podium and said:

“From up here the room is aglow because I see in your eyes the light of God.”

Then she reminded attendees that “God wants us” to be holy, which the first part of the Secular Franciscan Rule addresses.

“The second part of the Rule talks to us about our presence in the world,” which comes out of living the first part of the Rule.

The Rule and Constitutions are important documents in the life of the Order. Reading and studying them, and absorbing them internally help shape the Secular Franciscan identity.

“Franciscanism is not something you can put on and take off...” she said. “It’s something you live and breath.”

How do we get to that point?

“We’re called to be saints, after all. It’s in that call we need to take a look at ourselves. What do we need to change within ourselves? Where is God calling us in our lives?”

She added: “Jesus came to make things anew. Let us not stand in the way of him making us new... of making the order new.”

Pointing to the second part of the conference theme, “Claim the Gift,” she said “it refers to our vocation” and claiming it is part of answering the question of where God is calling us to be.

She concluded by offering a challenge to “start the journey.” Quoting from the book, *Pathways to Re-creating*, she advised that mission statements and waiting for everyone to get on board are not enough. Just start the journey.

You can expect failure and ups and down. But just start the journey, and get up and start it again.



Ed Shirley, OFS, was part of the evening’s entertainment, strumming the banjo for a rousing sing-along.





Anne Mulqueen, OFS
International councilor



Clare McCluggage Reidy, OFS
Quinquennial co-chair



Encarnación del Pozo, OFS
General minister

DAY 5

'Be Christ in the world' is a key message

"Secular Franciscans are Christ in the world."

And "just do it".

That was how Quinquennial co-chair Clare McCluggage Reidy, OFS, summed up the messages of some of the presenters at the 18th "Q".

International Councilor Anne Mulqueen spoke those words on behalf of Clare, who was ill, during the morning session on Saturday, July 7, the final full day of the conference.

She charged attendees to do some quiet prayer and reflection and then meet in small "fraternities" to address such thought-provoking questions as "what are we called to be as Secular Franciscans" and "what would the order look like if we were doing everything right."

But before Anne discharged them to their assignment, General Minister Encarnita del Pozo took to the podium to say goodbye and offer a few thoughts of her own.

"I'm thankful for sharing these five days of my life with you," she said... "You, my brothers and sisters, are the reason for my service...I have experi-

enced very strong moments" at the Q.

She noted: "Christ gave Francis a mission to rebuild the church. In today's world the church is also falling apart." In our secular state of life, "we are called to repair, to rebuild...in everything we do." For example, "we rebuild the church when we accompany those in pain and suffering... we rebuild the church when we listen to our brothers and sisters."

She was greeted by applause when she mentioned that "you have (Secular Franciscan) brothers and sisters in 113 countries," and reminded everyone:

"His love for us should turn into love for Him, and for one another."

"Who are we?" she asked. "We are for God. We are for church. We are for society. We are for one another..."

"We are to live the Gospel in FRATER-NI-TY," she emphasized, sparking rousing applause.

Then she sang a short Spanish ballad in which she said "goodbye with her heart, but not with her soul," which is now with U.S. Secular Franciscans.

She left the stage to a standing ovation.



The assembly prays for Clare before she was taken to the hospital.

'Be who we are in all we do,' leader sums up

Calling it "a Trinity of Scary Basics," National Minister Deacon Tom Bello summed up what he saw as key themes coming out of the small group discussions at the 18th Quinquennial Congress.

He saw an initial overarching three-part theme of a life-long commitment to the Trinity, a life-long commitment to fraternity, and a life-long commitment to sanctification of the self.

And that comes with one primary goal: Salvation within and through the fraternity with the help of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

He cited three practical implications: Keep our charism alive, keep our fraternities alive, and keep ourselves alive (on-going formation and self-improvement). Those are accomplished through prayer, priority and commitment.

Regarding the specific ideas coming out of the discussions, he pointed to three basic concepts:

1. **Rebuilding and building bridges** (in fraternity, church, world) and better communication.
2. **Better formation** at all levels.
3. **Be who we are in all we do.** "Be better children of the Gospel, making Christ ever-present in the world."

AFTER HIS presentation, Tom gave out several prizes, including recognizing the longest professed member in attendance -- Mary Ceil McManus, who found herself facing cheers and a standing ovation for being professed 67 years.

Professed on July 1, 1945, Mary Ceil turned 91 on July 10. She is a member of St. Anthony Fraternity in Oaklawn, Illinois.



National Minister Deacon Tom Bello, OFS



Mary Ceil McManus, OFS, 91

A standing ovation for being longest-professed in the room.

QUINQUENNIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Secular Franciscan Order in the United States sponsors a Quinquennial Congress every five years to bring together the Franciscan family from all over the U.S. and even other countries.

The 2012 "Q" Planning Committee was headed by Co-Chairs **Clare McCluggage Reidy**, OFS, a former national councilor, and **Patrick Mendes**, OFS, former national minister.

Other members:

- Tom Bello, OFS, national minister.
- Fr. Larry Dreffein, OFM, spiritual assistant.
- Cyl Maljan, OFS.
- Barb Morgan, OFS.
- Sarah Mulholland, OFS.
- Anne Mulqueen, OFS, international councilor.
- Michael Reidy, OFS.
- Dennis Ross, OFS, national treasurer.

QUINQUENNIAL CANDIDS



It seemed as though everyone wanted a photo op with the general minister, who was only happy to oblige.



TOP: The closing liturgy featured a graceful, liturgical dance by Donna Hollis, OFS. BELOW: Quinquennial logo, designed by Lisa Landwehr, OFS, of St. Cloud Fraternity in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

National Minister Tom Bello welcomes YouFra attendee from Siena College.



ECUMENICAL FRANCISCANS: Rev. Joan Verret, TSSF, representing the Anglican Third Order Society of St. Francis, and Craig Robert Miller, OEF, minister general of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans.

Experience the Q on DVD: FranciscanVideos.com

LOOKING BACK AT THE 2012 QUINQUENNIAL CONGRESS

WHY FRANCIS? CLAIM THE GIFT

“Francis, build up my house which is in ruin.”

by Sandra Kisel, OFS, Mother Cabrini Region



What makes Francis so lovable and identifiable is his humanness; he is a creature of God like all of us! Yet God called him to build up his house, both within himself and around him. Francis didn't have all the answers to God's will any more than any of us; Francis' prayer before the crucifix exemplifies Francis's self-emptying prayers before God for help so

he could do God's will and live in the will of God in whatever God asked of him in spite of his weakness and fragility. Looking at our own selves as in a mirror...what do we see? We need to “embrace our own humanness/our identity and experience that which makes us most like Christ.” Only by embracing our humanness, weaknesses and frailty, can we follow in the footprints of Christ, so we look at Jesus not only on the Cross but throughout His whole life!

Sr. Ilia said we are called to contemplate Christ as the image of the God we cannot see. *We're called to focus on the whole Gospel*, Christ's life with all its ups and downs, twists and turns. The Franciscan focus is on Christ rather than self; and letting go of controls and all things that hold us back, such as fear, anxiety and suffering or animosity, or what happened yesterday or what might happen tomorrow! All these keep us from the love of Christ, *“I AM the Sculptor, you are the clay, be silent*

earth and obey, so I may do with you as I may.” We grow in our need for God and desire Him, recognizing how helpless we are without Him. In the *Office of the Passion*, Francis contemplated hourly all that was written of Jesus. He knew Holy Scripture and intimately united his life with Christ until, with Christ, he finally became the image of the one he loved.

Creation sings of the beauty of God within it; the mystery of the Incarnation tells the story of God's love; God wants an intimate/loving relationship with His creation, to walk with us. Franciscan Gospel life turns us from the old way of seeing things to seeing all things new through God's love, mind and perspective; through His presence within us, changing us from our self-centeredness toward God-centeredness; i.e., what does God want? What will make Him happy? Just as every flower and tree is unique, so is every creature. All have been created in the mind of God from all eternity. We are reminded that it's not what we do, but BEing who and what God has created us to be in this time and place, for Him, living in Him and He in us, being the best we can be, sharers in his Divine life for the life of the world: this is what He wants. Francis changed the times he lived in by living the Gospel in all its dimensions day to day with, in and through Christ. We're called to carry Christ into the world, to make God alive to all. We are brothers and sisters of all creation, children through Christ of the Father, mothers of Christ the Son, spouses of the Holy Spirit! Francis, through intimate union and self-emptying love, understood the gift of the Father...***God is not somewhere out there but dwells in us!***

WHO ARE YOU, O LORD? A FRANCISCAN VIEW OF GOD

by Mary Ann Sullivan, OFS, St. Clare Region

Sr. Ilia gave an inspired Franciscan interpretation of God's love alive and present in us and everywhere around us. As Franciscans, we are called to recognize the risen Christ in all of nature. Our lives are to be a vivid display for the whole universe, that they shall see it is no

accident that our God, who is love and is pregnant with love, has called us to be love!



CLAIM THE GIFT!

by Dorothy Ann Roland, OFS, Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region

Each of us has been called by the Holy Spirit to our vocation in the Secular Franciscan Order. Anne Mulqueen stated that “things change when the Holy Spirit is involved.” Think back to your own profession – remember the excitement, the fervor, the desires that were so strong as we said “Yes, this is what I want.” For some of you, your profession was recent; for others, a few too many years ago.

Let us claim the gift of our vocation again and again! With each breath of every day; with each step forward in our Franciscan journey, let us fan the flames of our gifts our heavenly Father has given to us. Don't be afraid! He sustains us and will provide us with what we need for our mission here on earth. We are parts of each other; there is only God at work to make us whole.



We are Christ in the world today. Be open to change and conversion. Listen for how you are being called now to do God's work. Remember from your profession to the Gospel Life that “your membership in your fraternity is a cause of great joy and hope for your community and for the whole Church.” Remember too that “our seraphic father Francis encourages you in the words of his Testament: ‘May whoever observes all this be filled in Heaven with the blessing of the Most High Father, and on earth with that of His Beloved Son, together with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and all the powers of heaven.’”

So let us take our vocation more seriously; let us rebuild, reform, and renew ourselves and our fraternities! Let each of us “Claim the Gift”!

THE RULE OF THE OFS AND PRESENCE IN THE WORLD

By Charles Lieser, OFS, Los Tres Compañeros Region

Pat Brandwein-Ball's hobby of gardening has become part of her Franciscan vocation and informs her understanding of the Rule and the Order. Pat's “heirloom garden” with Amish paste tomatoes, Reisentaub tomatoes, black beans, squash and Cherokee Trail of Tears roses reminds her of the variety and character of her cherished Franciscan Order. Pat used the garden analogy to illustrate the first part of our Rule, which teaches and informs us who we are and what we are to become. “We are not to imitate Francis' actions and dress but take Francis as an imitation of Christ into our hearts, then into the world, to make a difference as we live out our Franciscan vocation in the world.

Pat reminds us that our Franciscan vocation should inform, animate and permeate our apostolates, our daily life, our very existence as human beings and everything with which we come in contact. She then departed from her slides and prepared remarks with a Franciscan call to action.

- Do not let God down!
- Do not let your Franciscan brothers and sisters down!
- Make holiness part of our being and part of everything we do!
- Change toward God!
- Be energized!
- Become the person we are called by God to be!
- Conversion!
- Prayer!
- Meditation
- Turn off the gadgets, turn on the people!
- Pray with eyes open and see the world around you!
- See the pain, see with your heart. Soften others' hearts!
- Answer God's call!

This is what the Rule is about. Along the way we need to be evangelized before we can evangelize.

Finally, Pat called us to answer these questions:

- Why are we here?
- Where are we going?
- What is God's call?

Look at it! Study it! Pray for it!

REFLECTION ON THE HOMILY OF FR. STEVE GROSS, OFM CONV., CNSA

by Dianne Prior, OFS, Blessed Junipero Serra Region

Fr. Steve Gross, OFM Conv., was the presider at the Thursday morning Mass. As always, his style with humor challenged us as Franciscans to live the Gospel. Please note that the following is what I heard; it's not necessarily exactly what Fr. Steve said.

As Franciscans, you are called to an intensification, a more authentic manifestation, of a Catholic-Christian life. Your fraternity should be calling you to conversion, not telling you what you want to hear. Why did you come to the "Q"? To be entertained? To look the part? To look good? You are capable of so much more!

Experience a renewed heart...experience a renewed mind... then your bodies will be anxious to put that into action. Who are you becoming in God's name? You are God's creation and carry Christ in you. Respect who you are. Always be aware of your dignity.

Just after communion, Fr. Steve, motioning to the now empty vessels upon the altar, shared this inspiring message: "These sacred vessels have accomplished their purpose; now we are the vessels who hold the Lord within; to carry the Lord to the world."

DEEPENING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, TOOLS FOR A MORE AUTHENTIC SPIRITUAL LIFE

By Beth Freistroffer, OFS, Our Lady of Indiana Region

Perichoresis. This is the big word that stood out for me during Ed Shirley's very entertaining presentation. Never heard of it before. *Perichoresis.* The relationship of the Triune God, mutual indwelling without loss of personal identity. The Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable and cannot act apart from one another, as Ed describes it, "dancing through and around each other."

What is this for me? It is a better understanding of the workings of the Holy Trinity in

relationship to my life. I am one with God the Father, one with the Son, and Holy Spirit. I am one with creation and every person on earth. Through apostolic action and prayer I act in the world and the world acts upon me, all with my very special uniqueness... I matter to God!

With this in mind, I should be able to let God "be" within me, loving everyone and all of creation. Wow! This is a daily conversion, and I thank God for the gift of my Franciscan spirituality to help me along this process.

REFLECTION ON THE HOMILY OF FR. LESTER BACH, OFM CAP., CNSA

By Marietta M. Advincula, OSF, La Verna Region

Jesus said to Matthew, "Follow me." The Pharisees asked his disciples why Jesus ate with the tax collectors and sinners. Jesus said, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do... I desire mercy, not sacrifice. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners." Fr. Lester reminded us as Franciscans to identify with the merciful face of Christ. He gave three scenarios in the house of Matthew to challenge us how to respond as merciful Franciscans.

First, Matthew seats us by a gay person and his partner. Second, we are seated by an atheist, and third, we find ourselves seated with the Sadducees, who do not believe in resurrection. These scenarios could indeed create a wall in our

communication. However, as Franciscans, we need to build a door to enter through the wall to find compassion, love and respect for those who think and act differently from us. Another image Fr. Lester provided, to help create conversion, is for Franciscans to be bridge builders. These doors and bridges will heal the sick and the sinners, as Jesus tells us in the Gospel. The doors and bridges are instruments for us to dialogue and better understand each other, although we may disagree. Fr. Lester calls us to be open to people regardless who we are and open the door, our heart, to everybody in respect to the human being created by God.

Finally, he told of the story of Jacob the Baker, who feared he would lose part of himself if he got married. The good shepherd told Jacob that if he married someone, he would not lose part of

himself but would no longer be lost in himself. Jesus tells us to learn the meaning of the words, listen to the Gospel.

DEEPENING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Mary Lou Kreider, OFS

Ed Shirley, our own theologian, shared some very insightful thoughts on building our relationship with God. Perhaps the keyword is “Relationship. Ed demonstrated *haecceitas*, “thisness,” “Edness,” as he opened his talk playing “Ode to Joy” on his harmonica. What a fitting song for Franciscans!

Ed explained the Franciscan view of the Trinity, using the word *Perichoresis* to describe the intense relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as one of mutual indwelling, abiding in each other eternally. The Father is the source, fountain fullness expression of love and creativity, which extends to the Son, who is the Word, the expression, the exemplar, returning to the Father, culminating in the Holy Spirit. All this manifests itself in the constant dance of love, *perichoresis*, the unending circle.

Secular Franciscans are invited into the dance with our own Rule of 1978. Franciscan life has

three phases, prayer, contemplation and transformation. Prayer leads us to see the world, “pregnant with Christ.” Contemplation stirs deeper prayer of wonder and awe, which leads us to transformation and action, which brings us back to prayer.

Perichoresis!! We have much to help us in our life dance: liturgical cycles, liturgy of the hours, scripture and especially Liturgy, where a sacred moment transforms us into the “Body of Christ,” and the dance continues into the world. We are the very footprints (vestiges) of God.

The words, universal kinship, universal priesthood, holistic, *metanoia*, justice, peace, ecology and family take on a new life of Franciscan vocation! The Circle of LOVE!

Perichoresis!!

Thank you, Ed!!

THE RULE OF THE SFO^[1] AND PRESENCE IN THE WORLD

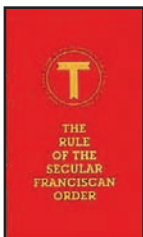
Carol Gentile, OFS

On July 7, 2012, at the Eighteenth Quinquennial Congress, Pat Brandwein-Ball gave a presentation on **THE RULE OF THE SFO AND PRESENCE IN WORLD**. Pat began her presentation by sharing her dream to start a *community garden* and that dream came true. Pat’s garden includes diverse vegetables from different parts of the country that she shares with others. What does the diversity of her garden have to do with the Rule of the SFO and Presence in the World? “Plenty!” she exclaimed. We Franciscans are as diverse in appearance and gifts as the vegetables in her garden. She then took a moment to gaze out from the podium and said: “From up here the room is aglow because I see in your eyes the light of God.”

Pat reminded us that the first portion of our Rule speaks about who we are as Secular Franciscans and that God calls us to holiness. The

second portion of our Rule, which encompasses justice, peace and the integrity of creation, challenges us to actively live our presence in the world. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that life in Christ includes the social teachings of the Church. “Therefore,” Pat said, “we are responsible for incorporating these articles of the Rule into our daily lives as prayer, action and as a formation tool.”

As Pat continued her presentation, she mentioned that in 1978 we had no General Constitutions to explain who we are. But today, we have, in addition to the Rule, General Constitutions, National Statutes and the *For Up to Now (FUN) Manual*. Pat continued by saying, “Just having these documents doesn’t make us Franciscan. We must study them and pray them.” When we think of our presence in the world, we must dig deep inside ourselves and decide who we are and what we are called to do. Being a Franciscan includes



every part of our lives, both inside and outside. It is at the core of our being.

The challenge Pat presented was: How do we get to this point in our lives? We are called to be Holy—we are called to be saints. We need to look at our personal lives and ask ourselves, “What do I need to do to change?” “How can I get energized again?” Pat claims, “We need to unclutter our lives and turn off our electronic devices, so that we can pray with our eyes open and see others with our hearts!” Pat said,

God has something special for us to do! There is a reason we were created. We need to rework and integrate new information and rework the clay and renew the pot.

Pat then read an excerpt from the Congress program, written by the 2012 Quinquennial Planning Committee, entitled *Why Francis? Claim the Gift!*

Brother Masseo . . . wanted to see how humble (Francis) was. He said to Saint Francis: “Why you? Why you?” Saint Francis replied: “What does Brother Masseo mean?” “The whole world seems to be coming after you and everyone is seeking to see you, to hear you, and to obey you: You are not a handsome man; you are not a man of great knowledge or wisdom; you are not of noble birth! Why does the whole world come to you?”

Why do we follow Francis? What does the life and example of Francis have to say to us in the 21st Century? Why is the Spirit pointing us to him? Why do YOU follow Francis? Let our hearts burn within us as we listen to our brothers and sisters, opening our hearts to see in one another the reflection of the face of our Beloved Lord and hear His Voice.

The second part of the theme, *Claim the Gift*, refers to the gift of our vocation. God has been preparing us, there is no doubt, to *put out into the deep*, quoting from Pope John Paul II’s address to the General Chapter in 2002, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. This call to claim our gift has been building

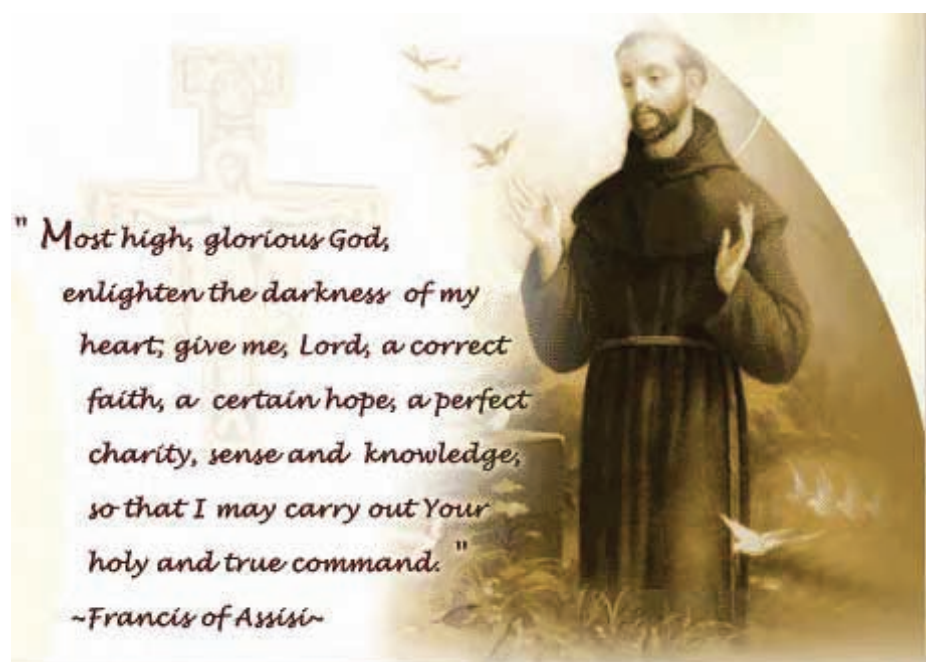
through previous Quinquennials focused on the themes of *Refounding, The Time is Now, the Kingdom is at Hand, Called to Build a More Fraternal and Evangelical Word: Many Cultures, Through Francis, In Christ*. It has been building through the CIOFS General Chapters calling for better and more thorough formation, developing a *Sense of Identity and Belonging to the Order*, and *Evangelized to Evangelize*.

We want to hear again the Spirit’s call in our hearts, offering us again consecration to the Gospel life of joyful and loving service to God through His Church and to His people. What does that vocation look like in 2012 and beyond? What IS God asking of the Secular Franciscans of the United States in this Third Millennium? Pat’s challenge: “Take some time to REFOCUS! Why are you here? Where is God calling us?”

Pat concluded by offering us a challenge to *start the journey*. Quoting from the book, *Pathways to Re-creating Religious Communities* she said, “Just start the Journey. You can expect failures; just begin again.”

Trust in the Holy Spirit to move us and guide us on our journey.

□ The acronym “SFO” is no longer used. As of October 2011, “OFS” is the official acronym for the Secular Franciscan Order.



Reunion & Affirmation

By Margarita Rodriguez OFS, Councilor, St. Francis Region



There are two words that come to mind in describing the 2012 Quinquennial (The “Q”) “Reunion” and “Affirmation”.

The “Q” was like a family reunion. I felt this throughout the entire week.

Brother Bill Short gave us a beautiful history lesson on the Order, putting our OFS in context of that history. He began by saying that we are an “interactive” family. What one branch does affects the other branches.

Although the majority of us were OFS, we had brothers and sisters from the other branches: the First, Second and Third Orders of our Church. However, Franciscan brothers and sisters outside the Catholic Church were also present. I had the pleasure of having a Franciscan sister who was a deacon in her denomination as one of my “Q” fraternity members.

The “Q” fraternities were formed so we could have a smaller fraternity experience in which to share the topics and questions after our talks. You know that as Franciscans we were able to bond with our “Q” fraternity in a very short amount of time, and it gave us an opportunity to get to know some new family members a little better. I know that if God enables me to attend the next “Q,” I will recognize them there and hopefully remember their names.

The other aspect of the “Q” that affected me was the affirmation I felt our Region received through the week in the topics and talks.

Certainly the talks given by Sr. Ilia Delio and Brother Bill Short were alone worth the trip. However, I was impressed by the affirmation that I felt seeing that our own St. Francis Region is not too far off the mark in getting our formation act together. All the talks had elements of topics we have already approached and addressed in our own Region as important details and aspects of formation that we need. The fact that about 38 people from our Region were present is a testament to that understanding of who we are and especially where we are in the family constellation that is the Family of Francis.

The icing on the cake was sharing that week with our International Minister, Encarnación del Pozo, OFS, Minister General, Doug Clorey, OFS, Vice Minister General, Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, General Assistant of the OFS-YouFra.

Being able to meet and talk to our international minister was a special blessing for many of us who had the chance to do so. This was truly a Family Reunion that I thank God that I was able to experience.

Many times throughout the week I prayed for all of us in the Region, missing you and praying that we would be able to bring back a little piece of the joy we experienced. We may never be able to gather so many of us together at one time until we gather with our Lord and Father Francis himself, but I think we had a little glimpse of what a fraternity gathering in heaven will be like.

Our “Q” Experience

By Mary Nelson, OFS, Canticles of the Son Fraternity & Pat Trimble, OFS, St. Bonaventure Fraternity

What joy to spend five days with 600 plus of our closest Franciscan friends!! The eighteenth Quinquennial of the National Fraternity of Secular Franciscans celebrating the Franciscan family was held in Chicago, Ill., on July 3 to 8, 2012. Also

representing the Lady Poverty Region were Cyl Maljan, Mary Lou Kreider and Carol Gentile.

The principal speaker was Franciscan Sister Ilia Delio, OSF, acclaimed author and teacher. Sr. Ilia’s three presentations held the audience spell-

bound and deeply moved and can be described as scholarly and simple, universal and individually applicable, humorous and thought-provoking. Her talks were entitled “Why Francis? Claim the Gift!” “Who are you, O Lord?” and “What am I?” as she challenged us to think about our relatedness to each other and to creation. (All the presentations are available on a set of 4 DVDs in about two months.)

Ed Shirley, OFS, a professor of Religious and Theological Studies, taught us the meaning of the word, “*perichoresis*” with a humorous explanation of the nature of the Trinity as it intertwines with all of creation.

Br. Bill Short, OFM, teacher, author and speaker, presented a fascinating history of the relationship of all three Franciscan Orders over the 800 years since the time of St. Francis. Br. Bill noted that Franciscans are “pre-Pentecostal,” that is, we study and live the gospel life of Jesus which preceded the *Acts of the Apostles*. This history lesson is available online at www.Quinquennial.org for your edification.

Pat Brandwein-Ball, OFS, the final speaker, has served in elected leadership in our Order since 1992. In her inspiring talk, she challenged us to “just do it.” She recommended that we review the Constitutions and specifically study the section on the Life of Christ in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

After each featured presentation the whole group split into “Q fraternities” of about six to ten persons each, where we met and discussed the “lesson learned and enlightenment gained.”

Liturgy of the Mass was celebrated each day with a different celebrant. We were welcomed by Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Chicago, George Rassas on Tuesday, followed by our own Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR, Fr. Stephen Gross, OFM Conv., and Fr. Lester Bach, OFM /Cap., all National Spiritual Assistants to our Order. Fr. Lester was recognized as a friend and advocate of OFS with more than 40 years of service. To hear the soaring thunder of 600 voices raised in prayer and praise and song was memorable.

A stellar evening concert was a highlight as we listened to Fr. Robert Hutmacher, OFM, play the harp and the grand piano (although not simultaneously!). To our delight, he performed 13th century-inspired pieces, which he had composed and dedicated to Lady Clare, on the harp. Fr. Bob changed the tempo from hymns to ragtime for our surprised enjoyment as he went from harp to piano and back. His performing arts ministry is called “*Chiesa Nuova*” and you can purchase it on the Web.

There were many opportunities each day to converse and share with the really important leaders of our Order, who made themselves “present” to everyone. We met Doug Clorey, OFS, from Canada (Vice Minister General of CIOFS) on the bus to the hotel, shared an elevator with Sr. Ilia and later had her autograph her book for us, broke bread with NAFRA Minister Tom Bello; Anne Mulqueen; Patrick Mendes; Patrick Carolan, Executive Director of Franciscan Action Network; Rob Breen, who works with YouFra in Blessed Kateri Region; the International Minister General, Encarnación del Pozo, OFS (who does not speak English and we do not speak Spanish, so a smile went a long way!); Fr. Armando Trujillo-Cano TOR, of CIOFS’ Conference of General Spiritual Assistants, and many TORs (both friars and sisters), Capuchins, Conventuals, and OFMs, a couple of Poor Clare sisters, spiritual assistants including many lay spiritual assistants, formation directors, from across the country and just plain seculars like us.

Unfortunately we had to leave the conference a day early on Saturday so we missed some of the closing sessions, reports and farewells. Nevertheless we felt we had made hundreds of contacts with our Franciscan brothers and sisters, shared smiles and hugs, addresses and information, ideas and faith experiences, connected with mutual friends and promised future exchanges. And perhaps this is the most amazing of all the benefits we gained at the Q, that is, to have made a difference, an impact, a good impression, a warm feeling of inclusion by becoming a closer, more involved and loving family of Franciscans.

FRANCISCAN LIVING

A Family Reunion

By Francine Gikow, SFO, Staff Editor

“Why Francis? Claim the Gift!” with this motto, the Eighteenth Quinquennial Congress of the Secular Franciscan Order of the United States began! And oh, what a gathering it was!

Over 600 Secular Franciscans from all parts of the United States invaded the Skokie, Illinois Holiday Inn (and I do mean *invaded*, since the hotel did not know what hit it!)

Deacon Tom Bello, our national Minister, set the tone by saying: “My first prayer is that everybody knows we are family. There are no strangers here. We’re all brothers and sisters.”

This love among the brothers and sisters was so evident in the spirit of the congress: people greeting one another like long lost friends with hugs and tears (in *reality* as brother or sister), making jokes, sharing meals, sharing difficulties, being together! We prayed for each other. We rejoiced with each other. We grieved with each other.

Ilia Delio, OSF, our keynote speaker, stated that our Order is an *Order of Relationships*. “Franciscan life is a moving out- a fountain fullness of love. We find that our engagement with others is an engagement with God.” Presenter Ed Shirley described our life, “Like the Trinity: there are three phases of Franciscan life, all mentioned in the Rule, that have a dynamic relationship, a flowing back and forth – prayer, transformation/vision, then apostolic action. *Prayer* leads to *transformation*, where we begin to see the world as pregnant with Christ, which leads to *apostolic action* and in turn leads more deeply into a *transforming vision*. And seeing the world “shining with the Trinity and incarnating Christ, we are struck with awe and wonder. This in turn, leads to deeper *prayer*.”

Do you see God in your fraternity brothers and sisters? Can you envision this dynamic relationship between prayer, transformation/vision leading to apostolic action in your life and in your fraternity? I did at the “Q”! The small discussion groups, or what we called our “Q”

fraternities, were where we shared our thoughts and hopes for the Order. They became for us a visible sign of Christ’s love for each one of us, which we in turn, shared with one another. God enfleshed in a human became real! This is where we found God!

A spirit of “family” was very much in evidence in the “Q fraternities!” We prayed as brothers and sisters, were transformed with a new vision, and considered action as we sought to determine a path for the future. We were united in God for a common purpose.

Sr. Ilia stated that the word “world” is WORD with Love in it (W-O-R-L-D)! This love makes our order different. It is the main orientation of our brothers and sisters as Franciscans. We are people who love. We are not specialists in apologetics, nor are we specialists in preaching, nor in any specific apostolate. In fact, we are not specialists in anything but generalists in living out our brotherhood/sisterhood in love; our life based upon the evangelical life that Jesus lived with his apostles. We are evangelists, living the life of overflowing God’s love in each other and ourselves. Our Franciscan tradition could, in fact, be described as “Christian humanism,” in the best sense of the word because we see the human person as sacrament. We seek out the living face of God in our relationships with each other. As Sr. Ilia said, “The glory of God is the human person fully alive!”

However, the love we experienced in the “Q” fraternities was not the only place where we experienced the love of brothers and sisters. Our General Minister, Encarnación del Pozo, OFS, (called with affection in the familiar form, Encarnita) spoke about the “Q” and the international family of Secular Franciscans: “you have (Secular Franciscan) brothers and sisters in 113 countries’ and “His [God’s] love for us should turn into love for Him and for one another.” “Who are we?” she asked. “We are for God. We are for Church. We are for society. We are for one another!”

Sharing The Vision

NAFRA Regional Executive Council Updates

by Jan Parker, OFS, National Secretary

“Proclaim God’s deeds, and do not be slack in praising him! (Tobit 12:6)

A profound experience holds profound meaning and our 2012 Quinquennial was an experience with profound meaning for us all. For five days, 617 Secular Franciscans gathered for a journey of spiritual renewal and discovery to discern together “What is God calling us to do or be in the 21st century?” The experience we shared and the answers we received are making a tremendous impact on our Order.

Here we are, a year later, and I see the energy from the Q in every activity of our Order, expressed in a myriad of ways. Priorities are being addressed by our national fraternity. Regions are enlivened as we implement what we have learned. There is spiritual growth and a hunger for more. It’s very exciting to see all of this from a national viewpoint, but my toes absolutely tingle when I see how experiences from the Q impact even a small group of four candidates from my local fraternity gathered for initial formation. Yes, this is happening!

So just how did we gather the thoughts of 617 Franciscans and translate them into a plan of action? It was quite a process. Our Quinquennial Committee crafted a beautiful program for visioning. Inspired by liturgies, gifted speakers and marvelous conversations, we met in small Q fraternities to consider a series of questions. Each group’s reflections were carefully recorded. In the final hours of the Q our 60-some facilitators met and a lively and intense distillation ensued. The process of bringing all these ideas together was not perfect, but it was perfectly Franciscan. The Holy Spirit danced in the room as we together approved a final list of key themes and insights. Now, how to present this to the general assembly? Tom Bello rose to the occasion. With love, joy and Franciscan simplicity, Tom masterfully shaped an inspiring summary of our call. It was a fitting end to the Q — but only the beginning of the impact.

In the following, the NEC collected written summaries of the discussions and categorized them into a 16-page “grand list.” Cindy Wesley discovered a quote that became the title of this

list: *“Gather the wisdom and weave a dream powerful enough to awaken a community’s soul.”* This list and Tom’s summary were wonderful resources for the National Council as we prepared for our October 2012 Chapter. At Chapter came the question: How do we best implement these ideas? Insights from the Q were quite evident as we unanimously chose a theme, established our national priorities and set a course.

In the past two issues of the *TAU-USA* we have shared the vision and the progress we are making. Our Formation, JPIC and Youth Commissions are strong, with infusions of new energy. Three newly-formed committees are diligently addressing the priorities of Spiritual Assistance, Communications and Vocations. A new committee focusing on development (endowments, bequests, etc.) has been established. We have two national gatherings this July — the Summer Seminar and the JPIC/Youth Confab. In traveling to 17 of our 30 regions since October, the NEC sees strong bonds of fraternity, greater commitment, new leadership and much joy. We have a wonderful national newsletter to keep us connected, and to top it off, there’s a lot of bridge building going on! Much more will continue to be written on our progress for future issues, but praise God that what is most important has been written on our hearts and is being reflected in our lives. May we continue to “Claim the Gift”!

(Tom’s summary, as well as the “grand list,” can be emailed or mailed to you - just ask!)

Plan now to attend the next Quinquennial gathering!

The tentative date for our next "Q" is July of 2016. What? Just four years from the last "Q"? Yes, just four years from Q 2012! Why? In 2021 we want to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the first National Congress of what was then known as the "Third Order of St. Francis". The year "2021 is just nine years from "2012". We will gather in 2016 in order to have five years to prepare for this major event - the 100th "Q" Anniversary. Stay tuned for more details.

News & Views

Franciscan Life in the 21st Century

Lester Bach OFM Cap



Try this quiz

1. What should initial formation sessions accomplish? How effective is your fraternity's formation?
2. Who has the authority to appoint spiritual assistants? Who must be contacted to get a Spiritual assistant appointed?
3. Why has the Church required the OFS to have spiritual assistants? What is their role in fraternal life? How can you evaluate a person's readiness to be a spiritual assistant?
4. How many "conversions" have you had this past month? If none, how do you fulfill article #7 of the OFS Rule?
5. Who has the authority to receive the profession of fraternity candidates? Where is the profession recorded?
6. What is the purpose of the *For Up To Now* (FUN) Manual? Who should use it? What criteria do councils use in selecting initial and ongoing formation texts?
7. Besides finances, what do you contribute to fraternity life? Do you think it's enough? Why?
8. How do you fulfill the first paragraph of Article #19 of the Rule? Does it have any effect on your way of dealing with people? If

Pope Francis

After washing their feet he put on his garment and sat down again. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" He asked. " You call me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Then if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. I have set you an example; you are to do as I have done for you ... "

John 13:12-15 (REB)

Pope Francis washed the feet of prisoners, men and women, Muslim and European. - "... you are to do as I have done for you."

Pope Francis could have simply told us why he did it, but he showed us. When our Lord and Teacher sets an example we follow it, period. It is an example that carries love in its heart. It opens the door to relationships when a leader fulfills Jesus' directive: "... you also ought to wash one another's feet." It is not a story about clean feet. Rather it shows a leader illustrating the power of love - to be a servant.

I'm certain Pope Francis will offer other examples in his life as our spiritual leader. But the lesson is clear - *Go and do likewise*. Not just to wash feet but to be leaders who serve rather than using power to dominate others. He is a good man, named after our Francis, teaching Franciscans how to follow the Gospel. *"Just do it!"* We say with gratitude: *Thank you, Pope Francis! Give us more of the same!*

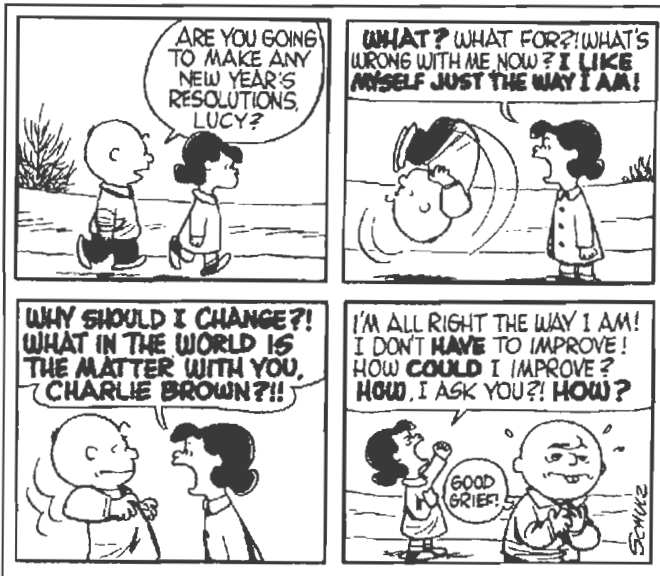
So What?

Franciscan leaders make visitations around the country and sometimes run into situations of conflict. Some Franciscans stubbornly act like they know-it-all, no matter what the "all" may be. They tell others how wrong they are. There is no *attentive listening* because they already have the answers. They know-it-all whether it is about fraternal issues or faith issues or social issues or political issues or religious issues or human dignity issues or violence issues or ... on and on. Perhaps occasionally you find yourself doing this. These actions fail to reflect the Franciscan spirit. Some Franciscans have little experience of the *radical interior change* called for by #7 of the OFS Rule.

People can stubbornly cling to their opinions. They are good debaters, winning arguments with the power of personality or supposed intelligence. Perhaps their need to be right springs from a fear of what *conversion* would require. *Attentive listening* and *dialogue* are not part of their vocabulary. They believe that they offer service by always being right. Thus they can guide us with their wisdom and experience.(?) It is difficult to dialogue with them in order to come to an understanding of one another's ideas or opinions. Heavens knows we could all use some *conversion*. *Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily* (#7). DO IT!

Summer - 2013

Monologue replaces dialogue in their conversations. Any of us might feel "right" on occasion. It becomes problematic if it extends to everything that people share. Something of community life suffers when individuals so dominate discussions that people stop sharing. That is never something to be praised. In a Charley Brown cartoon, Lucy may be a prime example of an opinionated person. However,



when we do have accurate information, we share it, gifting another person with loving concern. We leave the door open to dialogue so that understanding can develop between us. Enough said!

But if we make judgments we also need to listen to these

words from *The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (*Gaudium et Spes*) - Vatican II:

*We should also have respect and love for those who think differently than we do in social, political, or even religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we **understand** others, the more we can dialogue with them, seeking understanding. This is not to say we should accept untruth as truth, or meanness as goodness. But the people whom we believe to be in untruth are dignified nonetheless, and we teach that only God can make judgment in the end. God alone is the searcher of the human heart, and we should not make judgments about the internal guilt of anyone. To the contrary, we are taught by Jesus to love even those we consider our enemies.*

Gaudium et Spes - Vatican II - Paragraph 28
Vatican II in Plain English - Wm Huebsch - Vol 2 - Page 146

Franciscans accept this need for understanding. We choose to help one another discover what most clearly reflects the Gospel. As we love one another we give a healthy example of the heart of the Gospel - *Love one another as I have loved you!* Seeking the truth together helps us avoid creating obstacles that come with too much "know-it-all-ism."

If we are to serve, if we are to minister, we have to get 'right' inside. And so let us pray: Spirit, touch me. Touch me with your grace. Touch me with your wisdom. Touch me with your love so that I can help somebody, so that I can serve somebody, so that I can bless somebody. Be the bridge over troubled waters so that I can be the balm in Gilead, be the hands of Jesus stretched out to heal.

In My Own Words - Thea Bowman FSPA - Page 49

... they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue (listening and sharing), trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.

OFS Rule - #19

not, why not?

Answers to some questions can be found in the OFS Constitutions (Articles 91.2d / 85.1, 2, / 40.2, .3, / 88.1, .2, .3 / 90.1, .2, .3, .4 / 42.3) National Statutes (Articles 19.1 - 6 / 16.1 - 4) {cf. *The Essential Documents of the SFO*} Other answers will come from your own heart or through dialogue with OFS members!

Young People

Ministry with young people is an opportunity to build relationships. Their energy, enthusiasm and willingness to stand up for what they believe is a gift to us. Collaboration offers experiences of love at work. Listen to this experience of a young woman who missioned in Ecuador:

As a result of the trip, I am stronger, braver, more thoughtful, more intentional, more simplistic, more grateful, more inspired, and most importantly, happier - happier than I have ever been in my life. ... The Ecuadoreans, through their selfless actions, devout faith, and immense gratitude, have taught me more than any book ever could. They see us, the volunteers, as an extraordinary gift from God, but I see them as the truly extraordinary gift. In simple ways they showed me the meaning of life and what is really important.

With permission from *Jane*

My cup runneth over because Jane is my nieces' grand-daughter.



Young people, and Franciscans who minister with them, deal with many issues. It may be demanding or frustrating. It can also

be a delightful experience to be present to the love and concern expressed by young people and Franciscans in real life.

Faithful, loving Franciscans, good listeners, and understanding adults who care about young people, can stimulate similar qualities in one another. Ministry with young people is not simply a way to bring people to the OFS. Together we bring the Gospel to people so that, collaborately, we help to build our world and Church to become a better place in which people can live.



A LETTER TO POPE FRANCIS FROM THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

The following is a copy of a letter from the CIOFS Presidency that was sent to Pope Francis on behalf of Secular Franciscans around the world.

Rome, 13 April 2013

To our Beloved Father and “Lord Pope” Francis,

The hearts of the brothers and sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order, present in 111 countries of the world, and of the Franciscan Youth, present in 68 countries, overflowed with joy at your election to the Chair of Saint Peter, and we thank the good Lord for this gift of His mercy.

We feel extremely close to you spiritually, not only on account of your decision to take the name of our blessed Founder, and of the foundations and style of your program and ministry, but also because of your charity and fatherly gentleness, which have touched our hearts, moving us all to commit ourselves even more deeply to “rebuild” a Church that is ever more holy, ever closer to the poor and to the least ones of our world.

Already we recognize our own identity in your teachings, so rich in the “Franciscan” charism, by which you enhance the wealth and depth of the profound and fruitful magisterium of our beloved Pope Benedict XVI.

As secular Franciscans, thanks to you, we feel even more profoundly challenged and stimulated to renew our commitment to serve the Church, our Christian brothers and sisters and all people, in the most authentic style of Saint Francis.

Beloved Father, to place the words “Lord Pope” and “Francis” together is a cause of deep emotion for us and we desire nothing less and nothing better than to be at your service as humble servants of your pastoral activity for the benefit of the whole Church and of the world.

Holy Father, we love you from the depths of our hearts and we hope to be able to meet you personally in the very near future, to express to you the depth of our communion with you, and to deepen “*the special bond with the Roman Pontiff, from whom the Secular Franciscan Order has received the approval of its Rule and the confirmation of its mission in the Church and in the world.*” (CC.GG. 99.2). Constantly “*inspired by Saint Francis and like him called to rebuild the Church, we wish to express to you all the living force of our desire “to live in full communion with the Pope, Bishops and Priests, fostering an open and trusting dialogue of apostolic effectiveness”*”, as our Rule says (art. 6), which we have all wholeheartedly promised.

Confidently awaiting the joy of being able to meet you, beloved Father, and assuring you of our prayers for your Petrine ministry and for your life, we beg the favor of your blessing.

Encarnación del Pozo, OFS Minister General Spain

Doug Clorey, OFS Vice-Minister General Canada

Lucy Almirañez, OFS Councillor for Asia-Africa-Oceania (English) Philippines

Maria Aparecida Crepaldi, OFS

Tibor Kauser, OFS Councillor for Europe-North America (English) Hungary

Ewald Kreuzer, OFS Councillor for Europe Central and East (German) Austria

Maria Consuelo de Nuñez, OFS Councillor for Latin America-Spain (Spanish) Venezuela

Ana Fruk, OFS and YouFra Councillor and International Coordinator, Franciscan Youth Croatia

Br. Jose Antonio Cruz Duarte, OFM General Assistant OFS and YouFra Brazil

Br. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR General Assistant OFS and YouFra Mexico

Lucio Monti, OFS General Treasurer Italy - Latina Councillor for South (Portuguese) Brazil America-Africa-Europe

Michèle Altmeyer, OFS Councillor for Africa-Europe (French) France

Benedetto Lino, OFS Councillor for Europe-Middle East (Italian) Italy

Br. Amanuel Mesgun Temelso, OFM Cap. President, Conference of Spiritual Assistants OFS and YouFra Eritrea

Br. Martín Pablo Bitzer, OFM Conv. General Assistant OFS and YouFra Argentina

Isabella Di Paola, OFS General Secretary Italy - Rome



PONDERING THE WISDOM OF PAPA FRANCESCO

The following excerpts are from the daily mass homilies of Pope Francis. www.news.va/en and the *Missio* app for digital devices

“Your fidelity to the Church still needs you to stand strong against the hypocrisies that result from a closed and sick heart.

But your main task isn't to build walls, but bridges. It is to establish a dialogue with all persons, even those who don't share the Christian faith but who cultivate outstanding qualities of the human spirit and even with those who oppress the Church and harass her in manifold ways. ... Through dialogue it is always possible to get closer to the truth, which is a gift of God, and to enrich one another. Dialogue means being convinced that the other has something good to say, making room for their point of view, their opinion, their proposals, without falling, of course, into relativism. For dialogue to exist, it is necessary to lower the defenses and open the doors.”

June 14, 2013

“Keeping the Word of God: what does this mean? Do I receive the Word, and then take a bottle and put the word into the bottle and keep it there? No. Keeping the Word of God means that our heart opens, it is open to that Word just like the earth opens to receive the seed. The Word of God is a seed and is sown. And Jesus told us what happens with the seeds: some fall along the path, and the birds come and eat them; this Word is not kept, these hearts do not know how to receive it.”

June 8, 2013

“A God who draws near out of love, walks with His people, and this walk comes to an unimaginable point. We could never have imagined that the same Lord would become one of us and walk with us, be present with us, present in His Church, present in the Eucharist, present in His Word, present in the poor; He is present, walking with us. And this is closeness: the shepherd close to his flock, close to his sheep, whom he knows, one by one. ”

“Tenderness! But the Lord loves us tenderly. The Lord knows that beautiful science of caresses, the tenderness of God. He does not love us with words. He comes close - closeness - and gives us His love with tenderness. Closeness and tenderness! The Lord loves us in these two ways, He draws near and gives all His love even in the smallest things: with tenderness. And this is a powerful love, because closeness and tenderness reveal the strength of God's love.”

June 7, 2013

“A few days ago, on the Feast of Corpus Christi, we read the story of the miracle of the loaves: Jesus feeds the crowd with five loaves and two fishes. And the conclusion of the piece is important: " They all ate and were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets" (Lk 9:17). Jesus asks his disciples not to throw anything away: no waste! There is this fact of twelve baskets: Why twelve? What does this mean? Twelve is the number of the tribes of Israel, which symbolically represent all people. And this tells us that when food is shared in a fair way, with solidarity, when no one is deprived, every community can meet the needs of the poorest. Human ecology and environmental ecology walk together.

So I would like us all to make a serious commitment to respect and protect creation, to be attentive to every person, to counter the culture of waste and disposable, to promote a culture of solidarity and of encounter.”

June 5, 2013

“There is a danger of idolatry: idolatry, which is brought to us through the spirit of the world. And in this Jesus was clear: the spirit of the world, no. At the Last Supper he asks the Father to defend us from the spirit of the world, because the spirit of the world leads us to idolatry.

Idolatry is subtle...we all have our hidden idols and the path of life to follow, to not be far from the kingdom of God, involves discovering our hidden idols.”

May 6, 2013

“It's the Spirit that guides us: He is the author of joy, the Creator of joy. And this joy in the Holy Spirit gives us true Christian freedom. Without joy, we Christians cannot become free, we become slaves to our sorrows. The great Paul VI said that you cannot advance the Gospel with sad, hopeless, discouraged Christians. You cannot. A certain mournful behavior, no? Often Christians behave as if they were going to a funeral procession rather than to praise God, no? And this joy comes from praise, Mary's praise, this praise that Zephaniah speaks of, Simeon and Anna's praise: this praise of God!”

May 5, 2013

“War is madness. It is the suicide of humanity. It is an act of faith in money, which for the powerful of the earth is more important than the human being.”

March 5, 2016



NATIONAL FORMATION COMMISSION

Formation as the invitation to transformation!

by Bob Fitzsimmons, OFS, National Formation Chair

What's in a name? As you might be aware, the FUN project as you now know it was just the beginning of revising the formation process and will hopefully lead us into the next step.

For Up to Now, as well as the rest of our past and current formation materials, which by the way I think are quite good, can only take us so far. That point is to introduce us to the Franciscan Spirit, Charism and Legacy. After our months of formation, when we have finally “arrived,” we are essentially Franciscan functionaries — a good first step, but totally inadequate to infuse our fraternities, our Church, and our world with the love expressed in Sacred Scripture, or the unfathomable love experienced in the Holy Eucharist.

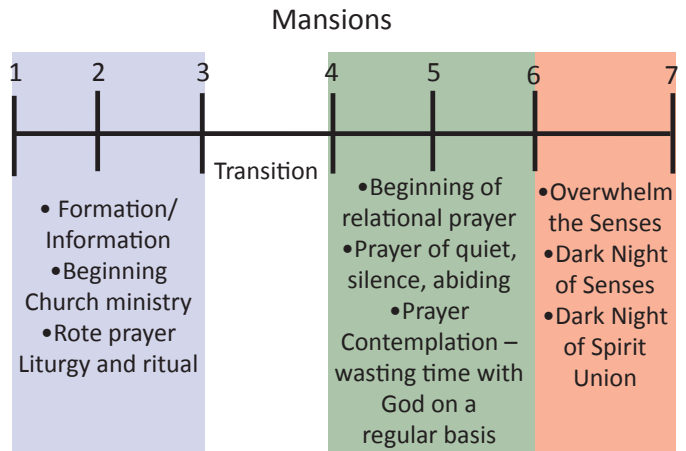
Yes you heard me right – functionaries! Our formation was and is always designed with one task in mind, the ultimate transformation of the person into the *alter Christus*. This is no less than the goal and legacy of Francis’ own life journey. To settle for less completely waters down the power of our Charism.

Long ago when I wrote my first article for the *TAU-USA*, I mentioned that as Christians our current formation or catechesis does not take us much beyond information that helps us become functional parishioners and disciples and, in our case, Franciscans.

If we relate this to, say, the *Interior Castle* of Teresa of Avila, or even look at the spiritual timeline for Francis (see the *FUN Manual*) we might begin to realize that the majority of our formation is of the informational kind. Let’s take a visual look at what I am speaking about using St. Teresa’s Seven Mansions from *Interior Castle*.

Granted, this is a very brief view, and we will flow back and forth between and among various mansions at different times, but we will ultimately settle in the one that supports our

comfort zone and perhaps stall our movement into relationship with God as full Trinity.



Movement into the unknown is much like a child’s testing of something new; we might stick a big toe in and when discomfort sets in, quickly withdraw to a known and safer place. Spirituality is no different, except we are being invited deeper into relationship with our God, the Gracious Mystery! But the experience is new and unknown and perhaps a bit scary, since it is always beyond our control.

Stop for a moment and ask yourself: Where do you think Francis’ legacy calls us to be?

Using the above illustration of the *Interior Castle*, the first three Mansions acknowledge (as adults) our desire to know and follow Christ, to realize that Jesus is the Beloved Son of God, who is our Lord, teacher and redeemer. In Jesus, we come to see the depth of the Father’s love and the extreme resistance to that love of the world we live in. In the early stages, we generally become very active in our Church communities and ministries, our fraternities and Order, though mostly in outward expressions We might be filled with zeal, as it was with early Brother Francis in his church rebuilding phase. We cannot, however, rest here for long, because in this place we are grounded in information, but experiences beckon.

The fourth Mansion reflects our desire to deepen our intimacy with God and becomes the

transition from information (formation), external expressions, group prayer, Scripture Study and liturgy — all those places where we first and most easily found God, into an ever deepening intimate and internal relationship. We begin to seek God hiding within and begin to long for more intimacy with Him. Our ministry and prayer expands even more as we grasp the reality of God's desire and love for us and we seek to become more fully conformed to Jesus and to do what he did.

The last three Mansions begin the approach to union with God, to transformation of ourselves into other Christs (like Francis, we seek to be *alter Christus*), in order to be loved and to fully love.

Prayer generally is no longer expressed in words; we have arrived at the place where our hearts and God's heart are known to both and freely given; we have arrived at what many call abiding prayer, the prayer of quiet. **I like the prayer of intimate presence.** Words are not needed, because resting in each other we are fully known, accepted and fully loved.

Here, God our Father finishes our purification and draws us the remaining way to Himself. Yes this last part of the journey (read Francis' life and be attentive to his trials) is painful. John of the Cross gave us some guides, signs along the way (*Ascent of Mt Carmel* and *Dark Night of the Soul*), to keep us going, especially during the necessary trials. God is with us — He is just cleaning out the old baggage so he has room to move in us.

This is what formation must truly be about, and I hope may be the next phase in the FUN follow up, so we can help our brothers and sisters to become wise and loving spiritual guides for us.

For several years, I have tried to present a God who madly desires us, who names us His beloved, who wants to be embraced as our bridegroom — we must also desire Him in a mutual embrace.

Our formation, as information, begins to equip us for this journey, but like our Blessed Mother, it takes our YES. Our yes moves us beyond being a

functional Franciscan, one who understands, to a Franciscan in love, one who has become.

I can recall speaking to a person seeking to be closer to God by trying the Franciscan way— a brilliant person who when asked could tell me facts on some of the Franciscan saints that I never knew, yet with all of the knowledge at his fingertips, could share nothing of the insights they give us on the nature of God's love and desire. I fear too many of us fall into that category; we know the facts but don't experience the relationship! We just have not yet fallen in love with love. This was perhaps Francis' greatest lament, even for his own family. **“Love is not Loved.”**

Sure we are busy, with lives full of busyness, and we generally hide ourselves from God's love, using life as our excuse. Of course, we do like to trot God out when we need or want something, but then once we ask, we conveniently put God back into our little boxes and once again allow life (busyness) to block our way.

When we professed, we all said the words of self-consecration. We were no longer our own, but as an oblation, (yes just like the Eucharist) we offered ourselves first to God, for His use and asked that we be transformed, just like the bread and wine into the Christ. There, we publicly declared that our first love was for God and we would spend our lives entering more deeply into His love (which, by the way, empowers us to love spouses, families, the Church, the world, all creation ever more deeply and unselfishly).

Like Francis, we need to learn how to abide in God, to rest in the silence of the cave of our hearts, and yes, we need to learn how to shut up and be still, turn off our words and open our beings to let God be God., After all, as I said earlier, it's God's desire to be our lover and to embrace us as his Beloved!

Be brave dear sisters and brothers and enter the Gracious Mystery, unfathomable love awaits!

Pace e bene,
Bob



Attracting the Next Generation of Franciscans

Rhett Engelking has just taken a leap of faith. He left a promising career as a health professional in Milwaukee and moved to Washington, D.C., to help launch Franciscan Earth Corps—a national community of young adults engaging in Franciscan spirituality and care for creation. Rhett and Lonnie Ellis, two young Secular Franciscans working for Franciscan Action Network (FAN), have already helped start Franciscan Earth Corps groups of young adults (aged 18-35) in Syracuse, Long Island, Camden, Tampa, Milwaukee, Silver Spring, Md., and the town of Nogales on the Arizona-Mexico border. Many of these young adults are already becoming interested in the Secular Franciscan Order. The goal for Rhett and Lonnie is to create sustainable groups of Franciscan-hearted young adults in 25 cities and an online membership of 1,000 individuals at the end of 3 years.

Rhett will receive a stipend through FAN and has a place to stay through the kindness of friends, but we need your support—

Please help Rhett take this leap of faith and recruit the next generation of Franciscans. We ask that you give generously—we need to raise \$45,000 to support him and his work to bring hundreds of young adults into the Franciscan family.



“Our way of engaging young adults in the Franciscan charism is by digging in the dirt together, learning to see everything as sacred, and cultivating our universal sense of belonging.”

- Rhett Engelking, from an article in the National Catholic Reporter

Donate on FAN’s re-designed website:
www.FranciscanAction.org/Donate

Rhett’s passion is exactly what we need to recruit young Franciscans—he is committed to living like St. Francis, energetic for justice, and a student of contemplative spirituality. Young adults are attracted to action that makes the world a better place and vibrant spirituality that provides meaning.

We owe a great deal to Rob Breen, Franciscan Youth Chair of NAFRA, who is advising FAN on the project and who has been running Franciscan Earth Corps in upstate New York since 2003. We look forward to continuing to work alongside the NAFRA commission—while Franciscan Earth Corps casts the net broadly and ecumenically, the NAFRA YouFra program will help deepen the journey for young Catholics.

Donate online:

www.FranciscanAction.org/Donate

Read more:

www.FranciscanEarthCorps.org

Or by mail:

**Franciscan Action Network
3025 4th Street NE, Suite 18
Washington, DC 20017**

**Email us to get involved with young adults and care for creation in your community:
earthcorps@franciscanaction.org**



Young adults from St. Francis of Assisi parish in Milwaukee work on a garden that provides food to St. Ben's Meal Program.



EQUALITY

*Rita Baughman, OFS
St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity
St. Clare Region*

Perhaps one of the most frequent statements I hear as Formation Director for our Fraternity is “I just don’t think I am worthy enough, good enough, holy enough, to be a Secular Franciscan.” When I hear those comments, I don’t quite know what to say, except “If you are perfect, you are probably NOT meant to be a Secular Franciscan!”

St. Francis was all about humility, and frequently commented and reminded his brothers of just how unworthy he was. If we were perfect, we would have no further spiritual journey to pursue, no need of conversion, because we are already right where we “think” we need to be in our lives. But as I was once told many years ago, the minute you become “comfortable” in your spiritual journey, that is when you must seek that deeper conversion, because being comfortable means a stagnation of soul and spirit. Whether we are theologians, sedentary as invalids or resigned to a life of monastic seclusion, there is always room for growth in the Lord. He has great promise for all of us, in our own individual state of life.

It is out of our knowledge of being imperfect that we can become perfect in the Lord by His grace and by always seeking to become like Christ in His thoughts and in His deeds. As we realize our need for additional conversion, that we are not perfect, that we are truly “minors” as Francis called himself and his brothers, the more emphatic our efforts will be to reach that destiny of receiving the graces we need that will polish the virtues that make us holy.

We also need to remember that being a Secular Franciscan does not elevate us to sainthood at our Profession! We are “minors”; we are all united as brothers and sisters with the rest of the world, sinners as well as saints. One of St. Francis’s key virtues was humility. Therefore, we desire to be humble, always with the knowledge that we are striving for perfection until we meet Our Savior. In the Gospel of Matthew 9:12, when Jesus was questioned about eating with the tax collectors and sinners, He said “I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.” We are certainly doing the Lord’s work the most when we reach out to those who are in most need. And among those in need are our brothers and sisters in our own Fraternity, for we all need the growth that can be nourished by each other.

In our imperfections, our unworthiness, we grow by inspiring each other with our charism of joy. We grow and share our charisms when we pray for and with them in times of sorrow, by assisting in business matters, by just being available to a brother or sister who has the same spirit as Francis. I have been very inspired by our newest members in formation because

they are excited and spiritually hungry for a closer walk with Jesus in the manner of Francis. I have been very inspired as well by our members who have been Franciscans for a very long time. I gain much from their wisdom, experience and knowledge of all things Franciscan.

Francis always tried to impress upon the friars by personal example and silent teaching, not by speaking theologically. As a matter of fact, his main study and source of inspiration was the Bible, specifically the Gospels. However, he saw great promise in all his brothers, whether they were learned or not. Let us all remember to encourage and inspire one another as equals, all striving towards the same goal, a life with Jesus both here on earth and eternally. Praise be Jesus Christ, now and forever.

Contemplation

*Deacon Steve Schisler, OFM
St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity
St. Clare Region*

I am sponge-like, an ordinary kitchen sponge.

I am hard and dry, mostly useless.

Little by little God drops His Life-giving Water of grace and love on me.

I begin to soften, I learn how to bend.

Some of this Water is left everywhere I touch by my life.

A small smear, a tiny spot.

As I yearn for more and more of this Life-giving Water,

I spend time in prayer, in Sacrament, in God’s Holy Presence.

I yearn for the refreshing Life-giving Water, that Divine Life.

I become a dripping, refreshing, cooling mess.

And more and more of that Water is left on everyone I touch in life.

As I enter more intimately in prayer, in contemplation, I immerse myself in the deep endless reservoir of God.

And soon I begin to lose track of myself, where the sponge that I am ends

And the Divine Life-giving Water that is God, begins.

We are one, total immersion in the Divine,

Ready to bring Life-giving Water to everyone I encounter.

Being one with Christ, acting in the person of Christ, Incarnation.

ANSWERING THE CALL: WHY SOME SAY YES

*Kathleen Molaro, OFS
Blessed Junipero Serra Regional Secretary*

Our Secular Franciscan vocation challenges us to nurture our spiritual lives, be bearers of peace, work for justice and bring hope to others. As an Order, this daunting task takes vision and organization and requires the gifts of many. So why do we say “no” or “I can't” when asked to serve?

As part of the planning team for the 2011 NAFRA Chapter, my responsibility included working in the background during the week. I looked forward to meeting our leaders and assumed they would be retired, have perfect health and family situations, unlimited income, incredible leadership skills, be computer savvy, etc. etc. My mind reeled with the list of qualifications they must have! Instead, I met brothers and sisters who said “yes” to the call, in spite of their hardships and busy daily lives. None had every qualification I had imagined! So why did they say yes?

“Someone asked.”

The most common answer: “Someone asked me to.” Obviously we take our talents into consideration when discerning, but often someone else sees something in us that we miss. One suggested, “Prayerfully consider when invited, and encourage each other to recognize God given gifts. By saying yes, I have discovered so much about myself!”

“I love my Franciscan family and wanted to help.”

The *Servant Leadership Handbook* (pg.13) states “Shared leadership is the common denominator that keeps a family in proper balance and harmony.” Many leaders said they simply knew they were needed. One shared, “Our regional minister felt overwhelmed with responsibilities and prayed someone would step forward. It wouldn't have been right to say no — what a gift it's been to take an active part in this work.”

“God nudged me out of my comfort zone.”

Many admitted they had fears but trusted the Holy Spirit and were surprised when elected. “God wouldn't give me more than I can handle,” one gentleman said. “He has faith in me that I often don't have in myself.” If we stay strong in our relationship with God, we can hear his call and have the courage to answer. “I've never been disappointed, even though I was petrified,” said another. “Being a regional minister has taken me out of myself and into the big OFS family. We're not alone!”

“I must be crazy like Francis!”

My favorite answer. But what a good kind of crazy! Don't we all crave Francis' zeal and unswerving devotion? Saying yes will undoubtedly stretch us, but what a gift to truly help our Order become instruments of peace, by sharing our time and talent.

As Francis lay dying, he told his brothers, “I have done what is mine to do; may Christ teach you what is yours.” An essential part of the OFS charism is that of service. Our fraternity provides encouragement, strength, challenge and opportunity to grow closer to God. We are unified by our vocations. What our leaders advised will also hold true within our fraternities, and our regions. So consider saying yes to the call, and discover how you can be a gift to your big Franciscan family.

About God's Work

(Dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi)

“Francis, dear Francis, where did you go?”

The brothers exclaimed to him.

“The night is abound with nocturnal sounds;

It is late, and the light is so dim.”

“My brothers,” said he, “you still can't see?”

Our Father's word I must spread –

And travel to every woodland and valley;

There is no time for bed.”

But Francis, dear Francis, we fear the loss

From losing your presence and love.

The woods are dark and danger-filled,

And no moonlight is showing above.”

“Dear brother,” said he, “there is no fear

For our lord is my Guiding Light;

He shows me each path which I must follow,

And His power makes evil take flight.

There is nothing more that you must learn

For our lord has filled all our needs;

The satchel for your journey is within your soul:

Love, Joy, Peace are the planting seeds.

So spread these seeds throughout the world,

This is our Lords, command,

And when I am gone, you can still carry on;

From heaven I will hold your hand.”

by Ellen Jennings, OFS

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