

TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

WINTER 2012 - ISSUE 74

*Called to build a more fraternal
and evangelical world.*



NAFRA Chapter of Elections

October 16-21, 2012
Denver, Colorado



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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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MINISTER'S MESSAGE

National Minister, Tom Bello, OFS

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

Beloved National Family,

May the Lord bring us Peace! As I have said many times, we are wasting each other's time in fraternity if we are not, as good Secular Franciscans, trying to bring each other to salvation. As my first TAU-USA article since the National Fraternity re-elected me as National Minister, please permit me to share with you Saint Francis's Five-Point Plan for Salvation, found in the very first words of the Prologue in our Secular Franciscan Rule:

"All who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with all their strength (cf. Mk 12:30), and love their neighbors as themselves (cf. Mt 22:39) and hate their bodies with their vices and sins, and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and produce worthy fruits of penance.

Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, because 'the spirit of the Lord will rest upon them' (cf. Is 11:2) and he will make 'his home and dwelling among them' (cf. Jn 14:23), and they are the sons of the heavenly Father (cf. Mt 5:45), whose works they do, and they are the spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Mt 12:50)."

Point One: "Love the Lord with (our) whole heart, with (our) whole soul and mind, with all (our) strength" (cf. Mk 12:30).

Our Lord in St. Mark's Gospel (12:30) quotes the great "Shema" or "Call" from Deuteronomy. Scholars have argued that this great "Shema" is the heart of the whole Jewish Torah, and the heart of this "Shema" is love: "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! **Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength**" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

As Sister Ilia Delio shared with us at the Q, St. Francis's prayer before the Crucifix at San Damiano begins, "Most High, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart." Sister Ilia went on to explain that the heart is the key to St. Francis, not the mind; and love is the highest good. To St. Francis, love is the deepest form of knowledge, for love offers the knowledge and power of God, Who is love (1 John 4:8,16), a relational love in the Blessed Trinity, an outward-moving love toward all Creation.

Thus, **Point Two:** "Love (our) neighbors as (our)selves (cf. Mt 22:39)."

We know we cannot love the divine God we cannot see if we do not love our sisters and brothers whom we do see. That self-giving love must start with the love God has already given us in creating and sustaining us, and with that divine spark in our spirits, minds and hearts, we must try to reflect, in our feeble, human way, God's love for all of Creation by our love for one another.

Nothing can be more important than Love, Which comes from God, Which is God, Which reaches out to our sisters and brothers, and Which returns to God, Love without end, Love without sin.

Thus, **Point Three:** “Hate (our) bodies with their vices and sins” does not mean that we hate ourselves. Rather, we hate anything within us that might separate us from God since nothing outside us can ever separate us from the Love of God. As Saint Paul wrote, **“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth,** nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

We all know we have three great enemies: the devil, the world and the flesh, and perhaps the most tempting of these enemies is within us, in our fallen natures. Again, as St. Paul confessed, “I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want . . . taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members (Romans 7:19,23). We must actively hate, or fight against, anything in us that would push out the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit and turn us toward the devil and sin. St. Paul knew it was not easy struggling against himself: “Miserable one that I am! Who will deliver me from this mortal body? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 7:24-25).

Thus, **Point Four:** “Receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Since Christ Himself proclaimed in all truth, “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6), and as St. Francis wrote in his Testament, “in this world I cannot see the most high Son of God with my own eyes, except for his most holy Body and Blood,” then we must cling to Christ: Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

As the Testament continues: “Above everything else, I want this most holy Sacrament to be honored and venerated.” Christ is our only hope against the devil, a fallen angel far superior to us, yet vastly inferior to God. Christ is our sure defense against the world with its “sensual lust, enticement for the eyes and a pretentious life” (1 John 2:16). Christ alone is the one way out from self and sin as He urges us to a daily, ongoing conversion: “The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

What else is there to do?

Well, **Point Five:** “Produce worthy fruits of penance.”

For the rest of our lives, as Brothers and Sisters in Penance, anything that turns us closer to God and away from sin is a worthy fruit of penance. Certainly, the great fruits of the Holy Spirit offer focus here: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

Again, we start with love. We are called to “rejoice always” (1 Thessalonians 5:16). As good Franciscans, we must be instruments of the Lord’s peace; and to do so, we need unending patience and kindness. Our hearts must be like the Lord’s: generous, faithful and gentle. We must exhibit self-control.

As St. Paul said, “Against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:23).

Interestingly, St. Paul goes on to say, **“Now those who belong to Christ [Jesus] have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit”** (Galatians 5:24-25), leading us to conclude where we began: with the Prologue.

Through the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit at our Baptisms, as children of God and “spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ,” we love God first, and with God’s love, love one another as we love ourselves. We consciously fight to turn away from sin with the direct help of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. We produce worthy, lifelong fruits of penance.

Of course, the three chapters and twenty-six paragraphs of our Secular Franciscan Rule that follow these initial words will detail the living out of this Five-Point Plan of Salvation. The focus is Christ. The end is salvation. The way is love.

Peace and love, Tom



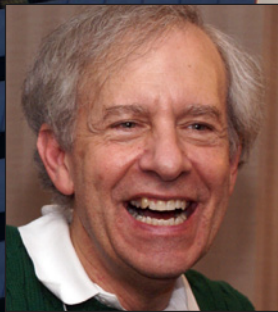
NAFRA Chapter a 'privileged moment'

By BOB AND MARY STRONACH, OFS

The focus of the national chapter was on the good of the order, and the vitality of its future.

Held Oct. 16-21 at Loews Hotel in Denver, Colorado, the chapter began with dinner and

National Minister Deacon Tom Bello's opening remarks, welcoming regional ministers and delegates, proclaiming the Word of God, and prodding everyone to pray and "search for what is best for the life of the Fraternity."



MEET THE 2012-2015 NATIONAL LEADERS

Top, left to right: National Minister Deacon Tom Bello, OFS; Vice Minister Elaine Hedtke, OFS; Secretary Jan Parker, OFS; Treasurer Cyl Maljan, OFS; Councilor Mary Bittner, OFS; Councilor Arturo Villareal, OFS; Councilor Mary Frances Charsky, OFS; International Councilor Mary Stronach, OFS, and President-in-Turn of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR.



Continued from previous page.

Two days of discussions and geographic break-outs culminated with the assembly agreeing on the U.S. order's priorities for the next three years. There are three primary thrusts -- communications, formation and spiritual assistance -- all regarded as equally important and interrelated. A sort of Trinitarian triangle. And encircling, or immersed in, this priority triangle are the additional priorities of youth, vocations, and expressing the Franciscan charism in the world (outreach).

Those priority discussions and the awarding of the *Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Award* to disability advocate Janice Benton led to two other actions:

- a call to the winner of the U.S. presidential election to regard all of creation, especially human life, as having dignity and value.
- a theme for 2013 for the National Fraternity (NAFRA) -- *Be the Bridge: Accept all people as a gift of God.*

Accepting people as a gift was a running motif. For example:



Deacon Tom Bello jotted down main points as small group spokespersons (such as Jeff Ramirez) reported the results of their discussions.



Mary Anne Lenzi, OFS, minister of the hosting Santa Maria de las Montañas Region, her planning committee and numerous volunteer workers from the region received rounds of applause for all their hard work on behalf of the chapter.



Violeta Manibusan, OFS, minister of a new fraternity in Guam, attended with a Guam delegation.

Regional ministers and delegates discuss and reflect on priorities for the Secular Franciscan Order.

• Friar spiritual assistants preached that Franciscans need to be peacemakers, rising above discord and dissent within the church, listening to and accepting others even when disagreeing, and embracing ecumenical brethren. “Our charism is to reach out...and say, while we disagree, we love you,” noted Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap, outgoing president-in-turn of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants. “...We each bring our own imperfect understanding of faith to the table... Your Rule says every day there should be conversion... I’ve got plenty of opportunities for conversion. So do you.”

• Rev. Deacon Joan Verett of the Anglican Third Order Society of St. Francis and Craig Miller of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans expressed their grief over the recent death of Ed Shirley, OFS, who chaired NAFRA’s Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee. “In Ed’s passing, we all lost a dear brother,” Miller said. Verrett, who has attended several national gatherings, said she “feels like I’m coming home” when she’s among Secular Franciscans, and Miller said their time at the Quinquennial Congress in Chicago was “simply awesome.”

Father Lester summed it up another way: “All of us are part of being Christ present in the world.”

THE NEXT DAY, Bello continued to focus on the chapter as being a place of vision. “The celebration of chapter becomes a privileged moment...It’s the Holy Spirit’s order, not mine...not yours, not ours. It’s the Holy Spirit’s.”

Roll call revealed that all 30 regions were represented, with only two regional ministers not present due to health.

Garnet Moses, OFS, of Canada brought greetings from General Minister Encarnita del Pozo, saying she “would like to acknowledge the whole Franciscan family as one.” As presider of elections, he issued three calls for nominations from the floor over the next three days. Joining him was another international visitor, Fr. Carlos Reyes,



Lester Bach, OFM Cap



Kevin Queally, TOR



Fr. Steve Gross, OFM Conv., along with Fathers Lester and Kevin, conducted a session on the role of spiritual assistants, pointing to the importance of “life-giving union” and “vital reciprocity” (or “essential mutual exchange”) within the Franciscan family. They also identified a need to accept and love one another, noting that polarization can occur with single-issue Franciscans.



Deacon Joan Verrett represented Anglican Franciscans. Graig Miller is minister general of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (whose members come from 15 different denominations).



Garnet Moses, OFS, presided over the NAFRA elections, representing the International Fraternity.

OFM Cap., representing the Conference of General Spiritual Assistants.

Bello began his national minister’s report by proclaiming the Gospel passage, “You are the salt of the earth,” and then referred to Pope Benedict XVI’s call for a year of faith -- a renewal of the church “achieved through the witness offered by the lives of believers.” It’s a summons to “authentic and renewed conversion.”

That’s what the Franciscan order is

about, continuing Christ’s call to Francis to “rebuild my church.”

Pointing to declining membership numbers -- 13,328 active professed vs. 13,420 the previous year and some 14,000 the year before that -- Bello asked, “What is the Holy Spirit calling us to do?” and “Do we offer a spiritual reality sufficiently attractive to bring us new life?”

With such questions in mind, he had



PRAYERFUL BOOST

With a hotel conference room converted to a chapel, Chapter attendees got to refresh the spirit by attending daily mass, participating in group prayer, and spending quiet time in contemplation.

asked a Franciscan youth (YouFra) at the Quinquennial Congress in Chicago this past July why she was involved. Siena College student Gladys Veloz listed three things she found in a YouFra group at the college: (1) a faith-based community, (2) a welcoming community with good people, and (3) a community trying to improve the world, a community that's "doing something."

"I was really struck by that," he said. Nationally, what could be done? He already saw hopeful signs. The Quinquennial (the Q) was one of them -- where he saw "a true revival of the evangelical spirit...with fidelity to the charism and to the rule."

In fact, it was one of his three "great joys of 2012," he said. The others were:

- The "Forming the Formators" workshop and the national release of the new "FUN" formation manual. He was delighted at how the workshop has been replicated across the regions.

- The first-ever JPIC Rally. "I loved the one-on-one sharing" and the insight coming out of Fr. Pio Jackson's assessment that JPIC is "the DNA of our Franciscan life."

He said the National Executive

Council (NEC) hoped to appoint a Youth/Young Adult chair and that he was hopeful for a joint JPIC/Youth Rally in 2013 "to continue the momentum." After the elections, the NEC appointed Rob Breen, Ph.D., OFS, the YouFra mentor at Siena College, as youth chair, and scheduled a joint JPIC/Youth gathering for July 25-28 at Our Lady of the Snows Shrine in Belleville, Illinois.

Bello reminded the assembly that the 'Q' helped to bring some focus on the future direction of the order, with three primary thrusts:

1. Rebuilding and building bridges.
2. Better formation at all levels.
3. "Be who we are in all we do"... be "children of the Gospel."

Those points complement the evangelizing theme of the Year of Faith:

1. Evangelize the evangelizers. "That's us... to draw ourselves closer to Christ."
2. Evangelize the evangelized. "The people of our fraternities... We need vital Franciscan fraternities."
3. Evangelize others -- the "people not in our fraternities... bringing the joy and the witness of the Good News by our lives."

All of this "brings us back to that constant need for conversion," Bello

concluded, "for prayer, devotion, charity and almsgiving in our lives."

THE SMALL GROUP break-outs revealed common concerns and interests among the regions, and not only led to priority topics for the next three years, but also the creation of two new national committees -- communications and spiritual assistance development.

With fewer Franciscan religious available to serve as spiritual assistants, and with the lack of a Franciscan religious presence in many areas, the assembly saw an urgent need to address the challenge of providing spiritual assistants for local and regional fraternities.

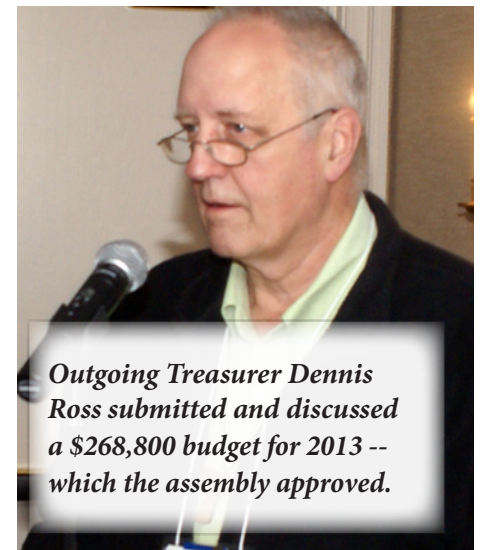
The assembly also saw a need to better communications at various levels, especially in the areas of reaching out in ministry, of attracting vocations, and of reviewing Tau-USA and the NAFRA website.

NOT ONLY was Franciscan youth a topic of discussion, but it also presented itself in the flesh with the arrival of Pamela Townsend, a student at Siena College near Albany, NY. Part of a YouFra group that's journeying with Secular



Jerry Rousseau of Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region and Sylvia Paoli of St. Francis Region were among those reporting the results of small group breakouts.

FRANCESCO'S CAFE
NAFRA served up a menu of exhibits touting the work of Commissions and Committees, and Franciscan organizations like Franciscan Mission Service (above), Franciscan Action Network (top right) and JPIC award-winner Jan Benton (right).



Outgoing Treasurer Dennis Ross submitted and discussed a \$268,800 budget for 2013 -- which the assembly approved.

Franciscan mentors, Pamela attracted some 30 attendees to an impromptu roundtable discussion. She spoke of meeting two to three times a month over pizza, song and open sharing. They're fascinated by Franciscan studies and the Franciscan perspective on peace and justice issues. They want to go out and do things, such as working on an environmental project or visiting the Catholic Worker House in Albany.

The group erupted in laughter when Clare Ferris, the young daughter of JPIC Chair Kent Ferris, spoke of her reaction to meeting YouFra at the Quinquennial this past summer:

"It was really awesome to see other people who weren't old and really Franciscan!"



A few talented Franciscans provided music for liturgies and evening entertainment. Among them were Jan Parker, left, and Jim and Cindy Wesley.

Advocate Receives 'Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Award'

JANICE BENTON HEADS NATIONAL CATHOLIC PARTNERSHIP ON DISABILITY

DENVER -- "Don't think of disabilities as exceptional... We say it's a normal part of life."

That's how Janice L. Benton, OFS, described her advocacy work Oct. 18 before the national gathering of the U.S. Secular Franciscan Order -- where she was honored with the Franciscan Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Award.

"You should make assumptions that people with disabilities want to be part of our community."

A Secular Franciscan herself, Benton encouraged Secular Franciscans to start building relationships, one on one. The Franciscan vocation, she noted, is about affirming the dignity of life. That covers a wide range of people -- those with such disorders as Down syndrome, refugees who come across the border, victims of human trafficking, elderly persons deteriorating physically and mentally, homeless children everywhere.

Recognizing the needs of people with disabilities is not just an issue of charity, Benton said. "It's an issue of justice."

Justice, first of all, means recognizing people as having value, she said, and



Janice Benton, OFS

fighting against such things as abuse in institutions and providing what people need to be able to participate meaning-

fully in life. A big concern for her, she said, is that "our society, our culture is teaching that some people are disposable." These folks are "despised" because they're costly, inconvenient or requiring too much time. This involves everything from aborting less-than-perfect babies to organ donation pressure to so-called compassionate death.

That's where Franciscans come in, she said, because they understand, as Franciscan Theologian Sr. Ilia Delio put it at the Quinquennial Congress in July, that all of humanity is imprinted with the dignity of God and that nothing in creation is accidental. Nothing is worthless.

Benton has been an advocate for 30 years, including the last eight as executive director of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) in Washington, D.C. She serves as vocation director for a fraternity of deaf Secular Franciscans.

National Minister Deacon Tom Bello, OFS, presented the JPIC Award, a glass statue of a pair of hands enveloping the globe, along with a \$2,000 prize, noting: "You are a hero for me. You are my 'Secular Franciscan' Secular Franciscan."

STATEMENT OF THE U.S. SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

to the U.S. Presidential Candidates, President Barack Obama and Gov. Mitt Romney.

We encourage the winner of the presidential election, as well as other leaders of government and business, to approach politics and the marketplace with the foundational premise that all of creation, especially human life, has dignity and value.

That sets the stage for recognizing that: people with disabilities have value, disabilities are a normal part of life, we should assume people with disabilities want to be meaningfully engaged in society, and that their participation contributes significantly to the fabric of society.

Further, this vision seeks to preserve the dignity of a wide range of people -- persons such as those with Down syndrome or other disabilities, victims of human trafficking, elderly persons in declining health, the poor among us, refugees who come across the border, homeless children everywhere.

Recognizing the value of people is not just an issue of char-

ity. It is an issue of justice. This is counter to today's cultural notion that some people are disposable -- are despised because they're costly, inconvenient or requiring too much time. This involves everything from aborting babies thought to be less than perfect... to organ donation pressure... to so-called "compassionate" death.

The national body of the U.S. Secular Franciscan Order, gathered in Denver, Colorado, and representing 13,400 members, is committing the Order to prayer and activity around the issues confronting our national leaders in 2013 and beyond (especially during the Catholic Church's Year of Faith). Our National Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission will coordinate action items for the 30 Secular Franciscan regions across the U.S.

October 19, 2012

Chapter Elects National Leaders for Next 3 Years



AFTER INSTALLATION MASS: from left, Elaine Hedtke, Tom Bello, Cyl Maljan, Jan Parker, Mary Frances Charsky, Mary Bittner, Arturo Villareal. Not shown: Mary Stronach and Fr. Kevin Queally.

The Secular Franciscan Order in the United States elected national leaders for the next three years during its Chapter Oct. 20 in Denver, Colorado.

Deacon **Tom Bello**, OFS, McLean, VA was re-elected national minister for a second three-year term.

Other re-elected officers:

- Vice Minister **Elaine Hedtke**, OFS, of Port Angeles, WA.
- Secretary **Jan Parker**, OFS, of O'Fallon, MO.
- Councilor **Mary Bittner**, OFS, of Ypsilanti, MI.
- Councilor **Arturo Villareal**, OFS, of El Paso, TX.

Newly elected:

- Treasurer **Cyl Maljan**, OFS, of Pittsburgh, PA.
- Councilor **Mary Frances Charsky**, OFS, of Binghamton, NY.
- International Councilor **Mary Stronach**, OFS, of Marcy, NY.

As the incoming president-in-turn of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants, Fr. **Kevin Queally**, TOR, joins the National Executive Council as a member.

TOM BELLO, OFS

Professed in 1983, Tom is a member of St. Thomas More Fraternity in Arlington, VA. He is a former minister of St. Margaret of Cortona Region. On the national level, Tom has worked on the National Statutes and previously served as national vice minister. He has worked as an ESOL teacher for over two decades. Tom and his wife Judy have three children.

ELAINE HEDTKE

Professed in 1965, Elaine was formation director for her fraternity, and, for

Troubadours of Peace Region, she served as commissioner for liturgy, vice minister and minister. Most of her career has been spent as a law enforcement officer. She has four adult, married children.

JAN PARKER, OFS

Professed in 1988, Jan is a member of San Damiano Fraternity where she served as formation director, secretary and minister. For St. Clare Region, she was formation director and minister. A former full-time pastoral associate involved in liturgy and music, Jan works in a family home-improvement business.

CECILIA (CYL) MALJAN, OFS

Cyl was minister of Lady Poverty Region. Professed in 2001, Cyl is a member of St. Augustine Fraternity in Lawrenceville, PA. She has been executive secretary to the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants since 2010, and she was a member of the 2012 Quinquennial Committee as registrar. Cyl is retired from Bank of New York Mellon.

MARY BITTNER, OFS

Mary is former minister and vice minister of Divine Mercy Region. At her local fraternity of St. Joseph, she has been formation team member, secretary, minister, councilor. Mary is a research assistant professor at University of Michigan Medical School in Ann Arbor, MI.

MARY FRANCES CHARSKY, OFS

Mary Frances was minister of the St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region. A retired elementary school principal, Mary Frances has been a member of St. Francis Fraternity in Binghamton for over 30 years.

She served as local minister as well as in other positions. In her church she has been Eucharistic minister, member of the parish council, and member of the adult formation and social justice committees. She is a board member of Holy Family Vocational Orphanage Foundation.

ARTURO VILLAREAL, OFS

Arturo has served as vice minister of Empress of the Americas region and was professed in 1981. He is member of St. Patrick's Fraternity in El Paso. He and his wife, Sofia, also a Secular Franciscan, have three children, Diana, Ben and Natalie.

Arturo also was elected alternate international councilor.

MARY STRONACH, OFS

Mary was formation director for St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region. Professed in 2003 at St. Joseph Fraternity in Utica, NY, Mary has served the national fraternity as public relations co-chair and the international fraternity as an interpreter-translator. She teaches Spanish and Italian at Utica College, and operates a PR firm catering to non-profits. Mary and husband Robert have two daughters, three sons, and four granddaughters.

KEVIN QUEALLY, TOR

Father Kevin resides at St. Francis Friary in Loretto, PA. He is former secretary general for the Third Order Regular, stationed in Rome, Italy. After returning in 2001, he spent over seven years working in campus ministry and later as assistant vice president for mission and ministry at St. Francis University in Loretto, PA. From 2009 to 2012 he was chaplain and director of campus ministry at Alvernia University in Reading, PA.

FACES OF THE 2012 CHAPTER



YouFra Pamela Townsend, left, addresses some 30 chapter attendees during an evening roundtable discussion on youth.



NAFRA Chapter participants pose for group photo (above and below).



Peace Remembering Ed Shirley, OFS Joy

(December. 25, 1953 – August 15, 2012)

The sad news that Ed Shirley, a charismatic Secular Franciscan leader, unexpectedly died on August 15 while recovering from shoulder surgery shocked Secular Franciscans across the United. Ed, a professor at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas, was a gifted speaker who was said to have "charmed students with wit, humor, his banjo playing and his gift for telling a story." He used these same gifts at OFS events around the country. Within the Order, he was an excellent educator, theologian and interfaith advocate. He authored the "Theology of the Catholic Church" chapter in the *FUN Manual*. Over the years, we were blessed to have him share his wisdom and knowledge as a National Secular Franciscan leader.



Deepening Our Relationship with God The Transforming Power of Prayer

A summary of Ed's July 5 talk at the Quinquennial
by *Mary Stronach*

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 Delio 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." After a couple of bars, the audience began to sing along.

He noted that a Franciscan view of the Trinity (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 aspects of Franciscan life, all mentioned in the Rule, which 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 he was 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.



A memorable image of Ed signaling the beginning of an interfaith peace event at San Juan Bautista during the NAFRA Chapter, 2011

Sharing The Vision

NAFRA Executive Council Updates

by Jan Parker, OFS National Secretary,
in consultation with Mary Bittner, OFS National Councilor

As I headed home from our National Fraternity (NAFRA) Chapter this past October, I was literally coming down from a mountaintop, leaving behind the mile-high city of Denver and the beautiful Rocky Mountains as I drove east. In front of me was nothing but sky and miles of flat land, but my spirits were high! What was this joy all about? Was I excited about driving across Kansas for the next six hours? Well, to be honest, yes. I love Kansas. But the reason for my joy had more to do with a wide sky of possibility and hearts as open as the prairie before me. I had witnessed the work of the Holy Spirit at our Chapter! My joy wasn't just about Kansas anymore — I was off to share a vision. A wonderful vision of ours! (And, yes, you can put that to music.)

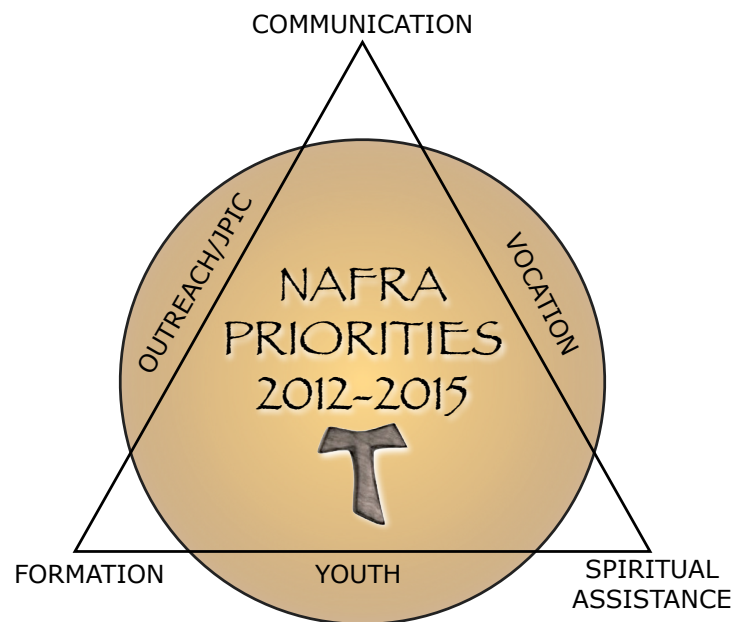
Your servant leaders gathered in Chapter for five days to listen to the Word of God, to pray, to look back and to look forward, and to name the successes and the needs of our Order. We dialogued to share input, to ask important questions and discern our future direction. An incredible amount of prayerful time and energy was given to this.

It was clear that the national gatherings of the past two years, most especially the recent Quinquennial Congress, have contributed significantly to our journey as an Order. The Holy Spirit seemed to bridge one event to the next to help us set a course. At Chapter we asked each other, "What is the most important insight or direction you see coming from the Quinquennial? Are there common themes? How can these common themes, insights or directions be made concrete and implemented by this National Chapter for the future life of our Order?"

OFS National Theme for 2013

The importance of relationships came up repeatedly at the Quinquennial in what we heard from our speakers and in our sharing with each other. Relationship is key to peacemaking, justice building, understanding and acceptance. How we build relationships as Franciscans became very clear when Fr. Lester

Bach challenged us to "be the bridge." Our Theme Committee at Chapter embraced these simple but powerful words. Inspired by a talk given by JPIC Award winner Jan Benton, OFS, the committee added a phrase from our Rule, and our national theme was born! Be the Bridge: Accept all people as a Gift of God.



National Priorities

The continued movement of the Spirit was seen in the discernment of our national priorities for the next three years. As each geographic group of Regional Ministers reported back to the body the following priorities were quickly recognized: Communication, Formation, Spiritual Assistance, Youth, Outreach/JPIC and Vocations. These priorities were incorporated in a diagram to show their interrelatedness. The National Executive Council (NEC) will be guided by these priorities for the next three years.

Communication

By early 2013, the NEC will establish a committee to study communication issues at all levels and in all directions, including public relations and the promotion of the Order. Specific concerns include our web page, translations, and the content, cost and delivery of the TAU-USA. A line item for Communications was added to the budget. The NEC appointed Jim Wesley as TAU-USA Editor and Cindy Wesley to coordinate Spanish translations. (Note: Anna Geraci will continue to work on the issue of TAU-USA devoted to the Quinquennial, which was delayed by Hurricane Sandy.)

Formation

Bob Fitzsimmons has been reappointed chair of our National Formation Commission (NFC). New members will join the NFC to work on additions to the *For Up to Now (FUN) Manual*, a follow-up “FUN” workshop, continued regional support, and a revision of formation questions for Visitations.

Spiritual Assistance

The NEC will establish a Spiritual Assistance Development Committee in 2013 to work in conjunction with the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) to address the great need for well-prepared Spiritual Assistants and the surrounding concerns of training, appointment, follow-up support and consistency across the United States. A line item was added to the budget for this purpose. The CNSA has asked the NEC to approve proposals for (1) joint meetings of the CNSA and NEC and (2) bringing a Lay Spiritual Assistant (LSA) into its conference.

Outreach/ Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

Kent Ferris will continue to chair our JPIC Commission for an additional year, developing essential leadership and expanding involvement at every level. A JPIC/Youth Rally will be held July 25–28, 2013, building on the momentum of the 2012 Rally.

Youth and Young Adults

Rob Breen has been appointed Youth Commission Chair to lead us as we set goals and build a foundation for ministry with youth and young adults in the United States. The relationship between youth and JPIC will be explored at the 2013 JPIC/Youth Rally.

Vocations

Serious attention will be given to this priority. Promotion of vocations begins and ends with prayer, but the

vitality of fraternal life, public witness of our charism, communication, public relations and relationship with youth are important aspects to consider.

In other NEC action, Anne Mulqueen was appointed Chair of the Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee. The NEC asked that Ed Shirley be honored in some way as this committee continues their work.

Future National Gatherings

National gatherings further the life of our Order, celebrate (make present) our charism, nourish us spiritually, provide formation, build relationships and aid communication. Plans for 2014 national workshops on Servant Leadership and Formation are developing. Both a national gathering on Spiritual Assistance and a national retreat are being considered. The following gatherings are set:

- ❖ Summer Seminar: “Finding Our History: An Interactive Theater Presentation” in Loretto, Penn., July 4–8, 2013
- ❖ JPIC/Youth Rally in Belleville, Ill., July 25–28, 2013
- ❖ National Fraternity (NAFRA) Chapter in Kansas City, Kan., October 15–20, 2013.

A Vision for an “Authentic and Renewed Conversion”

Though several weeks have passed, I am still energized by all that took place at our Chapter. Loews Hotel became a sacred space filled with love, joy and sacramental moments. In that space the Holy Spirit guided us and gifted us with a vision — an image — that speaks to our hearts, and also challenges us to conversion.

In his keynote address, our Minister, Tom Bello, echoed this challenge, calling us to an “authentic and renewed conversion.”

- ❖ If we reflected every day on how to “be the bridge” it would require immense conversion. This is where the Holy Spirit is drawing us at this time. Ignited and united by this vision we go forward.
- ❖ You can listen to a recording of National Minister Tom Bello’s keynote address and view the accompanying keynote PowerPoint by going to our National Fraternity’s website www.nafra-sfo.org and clicking on “Meetings and Resources.”



National Formation Commission

The Rest of the Story

by Bob Fitzsimmons, OFS
National Formation Chair

Traveling around the Regions helping with *For Up to Now* “FUN” workshops, I can say I have spoken a lot about the basis of Franciscan Spirituality, namely relationship and kenotic love.

As a refresher, kenotic love is the nature of the Father made visible through the life of Jesus and the actions of the Holy Spirit. Kenosis is literally “self-emptying,” or perhaps easier to understand, complete “self-giving.” What a love we have in our God, who gives Himself for love of us and out of a desire to be loved by us in return.

We speak of this great self-giving when we speak of Incarnation, Passion and Eucharist. These are the actions of God, (the original intention for creation), whereby God becomes one of us, for us, one of us, forever with us, and one of us, for love of us. We speak of the process of God constantly giving Himself away (kenosis) to fill us. And it is our re-filling of us we do not speak so much of. The giving is sacrificial, penitential, somehow appropriate for a fragile, broken and sinful creature, but it is only half of the story — the other half is what mystics speak of, and maybe we should too!

This second half of the story, the other part of the kenosis mystery, is *theosis* or in English divinization. We ask for it at every Mass offered by the Church: **“By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled Himself to share in our humanity”**. Though not often said out loud, it is pronounced during the preparation of the gifts, as the water and wine are mingled, becoming one.

In the workshops, I often use the Icon called the Rublev Trinity. If you look closely or at a larger print, you will notice a small box in the table between the Father (red) and the Holy Spirit (green). Several years ago, I was able to speak to an Orthodox monk about this beautiful visual prayer (Icon). Though neither of us had seen the original, we shared ideas about the box, his being the idea of a door, mine, (from various readings), a mirror. Both images work exceptionally well, but I like mirror better. As a pilgrim might approach a holy relic to venerate it, he/she would normally assume the posture of a penitent, a slow reverent approach on bended knee, not just out of sorrow for personal sins, but in the mind of one seeking a deeper understanding and participation in both truth and mystery.



What is sought is not only forgiveness, but a change in perspective, change of heart, transformation, so that the words of the Gospel are no longer hidden in the parables of antiquity. The Gospel becomes NOW!

So in this prayerful, meditative approach to the “Trinity” one begins to see a reflection in this little mirror, and yes it is a door — a door into the very table fellowship or Life of the Trinity. *How about that for a personal invitation from our God!* I hold to my idea that it is actually a polished mirror, because as we draw closer the image of self becomes more evident. The image of a broken fragile human being, a finite contingent creation, me, and I/we are being invited to recline at this table. We are being invited to the table of God, not in some imagined heaven of soul space, but in the here and now and in our fullness or emptiness. The image in the mirror is each of us, and we are shown entering life in the Trinity. Accepting God’s personal invitation!

If you read Bonaventure’s *Itinerarium (Mind’s Journey into God)* you will notice that Bonaventure is leading us on a path much like the Icon of the Trinity, a path that leads us to the conformity Francis and Clare speak of as imitation of the Christ. Imitation not to just be a copy, but imitation in the medieval understanding, to be transformed into. We are called in our vocation to become, like Francis, an “*alter Christus*,” another Christ. Allowing ourselves to lose ourselves and to be transformed is to enter the Trinity, or the mind of God, or the imitation of Christ – this is the crux of our profession – to finally be not just for God, but to be God’s own!

The final words of *The Journey of the Mind into God*, read in the light of St Bonaventure’s theology of the Cross, are a clear and realistic expression of Franciscan spirituality:

"If you seek in what manner these things occur (that is, the ascent towards God) interrogate grace, not doctrine; desire, not understanding; the groan of praying, not the study of reading... not light, but the fire totally inflaming, transferring one into God" (*Itinerarium* VII 6).

Bonaventure’s theology of the Cross, must lead us to understand Francis own love for creation and his joy at the beauty of God’s creation. The whole creation speaks loudly of God, of the good and beautiful God; of his love! That is the whole purpose of *theosis*, to enter into the mind and heart of God, to be transformed into love and beauty (God), and to place this incredible gift into the mission of the Church.

Here transformed in Love itself, we can fully realize the charge given us by Pope (now Blessed) John Paul II in his audience for the Secular Franciscan Order:

“The Church expects from the unique Franciscan Secular Order a great service to the cause of the Kingdom of God in the world today. . . . so as to present yourself to the world as a "community of love" (SFO, Rule, art. 26). John Paul II 22 November 2002.

Let us then and with one mind fulfil our charge

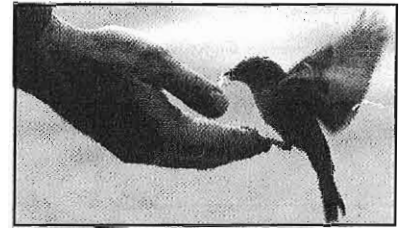
- ❖ **“Make present the charism of Saint Francis in the life and in the mission of the Church (Rule of the OFS, Chapter 1: #1)**
- ❖ **Become sacraments of Christ and make visible the Father’s Love**
- ❖ **Evangelize - to build a more just and fraternal world (Rule Chapter 2 #14) *The Church and the world are waiting for a courageous and effective response from us.***

*Many Blessings to all,
Fitz*



CNSA News and Views

Franciscan life in the 21st Century



Lester Bach OFM Cap

Important ideas on SA's

There is some confusion and a variety of ideas about the role of Spiritual assistants (SA's) in the OFS. The training program (*Franciscan Family Connections*) is good but needs local additions. In addition, people called to be a SA need good "people skills." Intellectual ideas and spirituality are good, but not quite enough. SA's must be respectful and open with people. They need to be non-judgmental as they listen to people. They need to be clear about issues without dominating a conversation. Knowing the Rule and OFS documents is important but not enough. **People skills** are vital for a good SA.

How does the SA fit into the OFS way of life? There are many ideas that may be only partially true. Reflect on these OFS documents.

In various ways and forms but in life-giving union with each other, they (SA's) intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church.
OFS Rule #1

By virtue of the vital reciprocity between the religious (SA's) and the secular members of the Franciscan family and in regard to the responsibilities of major superiors, spiritual assistance to the fraternities of the OFS at all levels must be assured as a fundamental element of communion.

Constitutions - Article 89.1

1. Rule 1 Secular Franciscans should seek ways to live in life-giving reciprocal communion with all members of the Franciscan family. They should be ready to promote common initiatives or participate in them with the religious of the First, Second and Third Orders, with Secular Institutes, and with other lay ecclesial groups that recognize Francis as a model and inspiration in order to work together to spread the Gospel, remove the causes of marginalization, and serve the cause of peace.

Constitutions - Article 98.1

Vital reciprocity and life-giving union describe the role of a SA. The word vital means something that is essential to life. Reciprocity means a mutual exchange. Hence, a SA is vital to OFS life and includes a mutual exchange between the OFS and the SA that is essential for the life of the whole Franciscan family. A few conclusions ...

+ A fraternity cannot be canonically established without a SA and a bonding to a province of the 1st Order/TOR. This is done no later than the beginning of the last three years of an *emerging group*. The council of an *emerging group*, after consultation, is appointed by the REC and mentored by the sponsoring fraternity council. (cf. *Handbook for SA's to the OFS* (2012)- Pages 37- 41 - Smoky Valley Printing - cf. back page of TAU-USA)



+ At all levels, only the major superiors of the 1st Order / TOR, or their delegate, have the authority to appoint a SA. It is the duty of the major superior (or his delegate), in consultation with the appropriate council of the OFS.

+ Additions to the training program for SA's should reflect the needs of the OFS Region involved. The people who mentor the program are encouraged to develop additional elements in collaboration with the regional council.



Here I am again! My brothers at CNSA asked me to continue writing this column. I enjoy it, so it was easy to say "Yes!"

The graphic in the title, with the bird-in-hand, has a saying that goes with it: *Little Bird, fly over the barbed wire and the ruins of war, and sing a song of peace!*

Living in a world of violence, singing a *song of peace* is a symbol of what all Franciscans should do - We ... *sing a song of peace - everywhere!*" Or, as the OFS Rule puts it:

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.

OFS Rule - #19

What are you doing? In your home? In your neighborhood? In your parish? Where violence reigns? In your political talk? When you address immigration issues? When changing opinions? At work? In fraternity life? In prayerfulness for peace? In compassion for those in need? In dialogue on issues? In your personal conversions? In dealing with "enemies?"

Well, what?



Fresh NAFRA statistics
December 31, 2011

Professed:

Active & active-excused - 13,328
Candidates - 1156
Inquirers - 688
Orientation - 194 (under reported!)

Fraternities - 613

Emerging groups - 41
Newly forming groups - 36

Language groups

English - 12,456 / Spanish - 440 /
Korean - 413 / Vietnamese - 103 /
Polish 18 / Portugese - 14

Thanks to Elaine Hedtke OFS

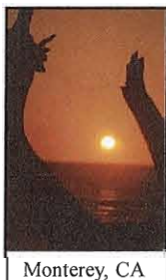


Integrity of creation (JPIC) is important for Franciscans. There are many ways to help. We show diligent care for all that God has created. Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures* calls the creatures and the universe his brother and sister. That relationship requires that:

... they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.
OFS Rule #18

We have been slow to give up on the myth of Earth's infinite generosity.

✦
Rather grandly, we have overdrawn our accounts.



Monterey, CA

Something to Think About

The friar graphic in this column shows friars with various responses to the quality of the soloist. (Card produced by The Franciscan Center - Greensboro, NC). There is a smile or smirk, a sad feeling, or an "O my goodness" response - and the soloist seems unaware.

At Franciscan gatherings there are different reactions to topics or presentations. I do not expect uniformity. But our way of life calls for positive ideas to make our *melody* (unity) more obvious! Dialogue finds ways to blend qualities from a variety of gifts. But sometimes we debate and go home without any form of *conversion*. It's easy to be "righteous;" to believe we are the "Catholic" Franciscans; or "wise" Franciscans; or the most "well-read" Franciscans; or "most experienced" Franciscans; or whatever!



The local fraternity ... should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.
OFS Rule #22

Franciscans learn to build relationships, within and outside the fraternity, so that *unity* is the result even if responses differ. The Gospel is not one-dimensional except in its call to love God, our neighbor, and ourselves. Love finds a variety of personal and community ways of expression. We respond to many needs among people and within ourselves. We seek a dedicated spirit that is gentle and compassionate. When we differ, we seek ways and means to understand and maintain loving relationships - even when we may not agree. The goal is *unity* and not separation! Jesus' call to *unity* reflects the example that he and the Father give us - *being one!*

May they all be one; as you, Father, are in me and I in you, so also may they be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. (John 17:21) *I give you a new commandment: love one another; as I have loved you, so you are to love one another. If there is this love among you, then everyone will know that you are my disciples.* (John 13:34-35)

We learn to love one another - as men or women; young or old; experienced or new-born; in sickness or health; in marriage or single life; as an employee or employer; as a servant-leader or an ordinary fraternity member; as a parent or a child; as a teacher or a learner; as a criminal or a just one; as dedicated or indifferent. Each day we respond to today's events. We choose never to abandon the commandment to love one another. We learn from our community *how to love* in the various situations of life. *If love is absent, what happens? (Look around!)*

The Franciscan Family

We call the Franciscan family to be a new creation in the Church and the world, as community and servant.



✦ We rejoice that young people find the Franciscan way attractive. Together with them we are committed to creating a climate for the pursuit of a Franciscan understanding of our time.

✦ To this end, educational programs will be developed with special emphasis on the charism of Francis, Sacred Scripture, and the social issues of today.

✦ For lay Franciscans to be formed in the likeness of Jesus Christ in the fraternity, **more frequent meetings are necessary**, along with the kind of guidance which demands a genuine response to the Franciscan way.

✦ In response of love for the Church, we will join in parish activities that will **foster the growth of the Church as a community**, involving ourselves in a special way in the liturgical renewal.

A selection from the goals of the OFS Congress in Santa Clara, CA - August 13-19, 1972

Over 500 OFS members were in attendance



Allies on Climate Change

by Lonnie Ellis

ellis@franciscanaction.org

For several years, the Pentagon, led by the Navy, has been planning for the impacts of climate change, referring to it as a “threat multiplier,” U.S. Navy Vice Admiral Dennis McGinn spoke about our “over reliance on fossil fuels” in his 2009 testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He said, “Climate change has the potential to create sustained natural and humanitarian disasters on a scale and at a frequency far beyond those we see today.” What will happen when cities flood and “climate refugees” flow across national borders, when people fighting for their lives meet a military intent on keeping them out? This situation threatens millions in Bangladesh and India and in many other countries.

Just four years ago, our national leaders seemed to want to take action to stem these threats to global stability. The [2008 GOP platform](#) called for “technology-driven, market-based solutions that will decrease emissions, reduce excess greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, increase energy efficiency, mitigate the impact of climate change.”

Now that the challenges have been acknowledged, we need inspired hope and action, starting with people of faith. Earlier this month, 70 leaders among the Franciscans went to the desert of Arizona for spiritual grounding and to re-envision a path out of our terrible politics. Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM, worked with our group from [Franciscan Action Network](#) (FAN) to move past the same old dualistic patterns of looking at issues and into a new way of seeing the path forward. The ecumenical group of sisters, friars, lay Franciscans and ministry leaders of Franciscan parishes included leaders like Sr. Glenna Czachor, OSF, Director of Justice and Peace Advocacy for the Wheaton Franciscans and a leader among U.S. nuns, and Fr. Michael Lasky, OFM Conv., Regional Director for the Americas of Franciscans International. Franciscans have a long tradition of being one of the most credible voices for the earth, including [recent advocacy](#) on climate change.

We left our Arizona gathering with a plan to bring the influence of unusual allies on climate change to strategically chosen members of congress. People of faith have the unique ability to bring different voices together, beyond narrow self-interest, for uncommon conversations. Imagine if people of faith could set the table for military and environmental voices to join with representatives of agriculture, manufacturing and logging interests in bringing a unified climate change message to public officials. Linking the economic interests of climate change with the moral

imperative to do right by future generations seems to be the best chance to break through the intransigence of our politics on this issue to appeal to progressives, moderates and conservatives alike.

People of faith have the unique ability to bring different voices together, beyond narrow self-interest, for uncommon conversations.

If our national leaders are not willingly having a conversation about climate change – I am convinced a chorus of uncommon voices of Franciscans and other people of faith can force that to change soon.

Franciscan Earth Corps

The Franciscan Action Network is proposing the formation of a **Franciscan Earth Corps** consisting of a network of young adults in their 20s and 30s and professed Secular Franciscans, who will expand the reach of Franciscan spirituality and the Franciscan way of doing justice work. The long-term goal is to grow the Franciscan family, in both professed members and Franciscan-hearted members, and build up our wonderful work for justice and care for creation. Franciscan Earth Corps will involve spiritual formation and action, using the Secular Franciscan Rule as a framework that can be summarized by the four core values of: Social and Environmental Justice, Franciscan Spirituality, Community, and Simple Living. Elements of the program are Action for Justice, Study and Reflection, Retreats, and Sustainable Living Projects. This project has a goal of creating sustainable young adult ministries in 20 U.S. cities by the end of 2016, as well as gaining hundreds of additional members through an online community.

Lonnie Ellis, is a candidate with the Secular Franciscan fraternity of St. Anthony of Nagasaki in Washington, DC



Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Commission Update

by Kent Ferris, OFS

The National Fraternity Chapter in Denver was a great Chapter! We were blessed to have our sister Janice Benton, OFS, Executive Director of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability, join us to receive the 2012 JPIC Award and provide us with the impetus for the NAFRA Statement addressed to the presidential candidates on the dignity of human life and justice. During 2013 the JPIC Commission will provide a series of monthly updates broadening our understanding of and appreciation for the dignity of life and justice.

The commission continues to work on projects including the development of a Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission webpage that will have a link on the NAFRA website. Early preparations for a second JPIC gathering slated for July 2013 will also be addressed.

We continue to strengthen our relationship with the Franciscan Action Network (FAN). FAN is our means of staying connected with JPIC entities in the other orders in our Franciscan family. FAN also strengthens our efforts, ranging from care for creation to immigration and basic civility in public discourse. FAN also sponsored a retreat, "The Conversion to Right Relationship," with Father Richard Rohr, OFM, which some Secular Franciscans were able to attend. How blessed we are to benefit from both JPIC and FAN gatherings. The means of building community within the Order is multiplied by these opportunities!

The JPIC Commission will benefit from the volunteer efforts of a small group of regional ministers and National Executive Council representation who will review and strengthen the nomination and selection process for the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Award.

Finally, as Father Pio Jackson, OFM, said during the 2012 JPIC Rally at our Lady of the Snows Retreat Center, "JPIC is part of our Franciscan DNA." I understand this to mean that it is less about being satisfied that we have a regional fraternity JPIC animator, and more about understanding that just as we are to go from Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel, we are to "praise and glorify him forever!" in all the ways we show respect for the dignity of human life through justice, peace and the integrity of creation. We accomplish this, stay true to this obligation, by developing relationships and in turn broadening them to create a sense of community and fraternity.

Let me conclude by noting from Chapter 2, Section 9 of our Rule, that St. Francis declared the Virgin Mary as the protectress and advocate of his family. Maybe it would be appropriate to review this prayer from Blessed Pope John Paul II who addressed this prayer for peace to "Mary, the Light of Hope":

Immaculate Heart of Mary, help us to conquer the menace of evil, which so easily takes root in the hearts of the people today, and whose immeasurable effects already weigh down upon our modern world and seem to block the paths toward the future.

From famine and war, deliver us. From nuclear war, from incalculable self-destruction, from every kind of war, deliver us. From sins against human life from its very beginning, deliver us. From hatred and from the demeaning of the dignity of the children of God, deliver us. From every kind of injustice in the life of society, both national and international, deliver us. From readiness to trample on the commandments of God, deliver us. From attempts to stifle in human hearts the very truth of God, deliver us. From the loss of awareness of good and evil, deliver us. From sins against the Holy Spirit, deliver us.

Accept, O Mother of Christ, this cry laden with sufferings of all individual human beings, laden with the sufferings of whole societies. Help us with the power of the Holy Spirit to conquer all sin: individual sin and the "sin of the world," sin in all its manifestations.

Let there be revealed once more in the history of the world the infinite saving power of redemption: the power of merciful love. May it put a stop to evil. May it transform consciences. May your Immaculate Heart reveal for all the light of hope. Amen.

(For a copy of the JPIC Commission's Annual Report email Kent Ferris at ferris@davenportdiocese.org)



Short-Term Mission and Global Awareness Trips

By Kim Smolik,

Executive Director of Franciscan Mission Service

www.franciscanmissionservice.org

If you were to go on a 10-day vacation to Africa, your trip might center on witnessing the natural beauty of its jungle, plains or exotic animals. Your daily itinerary might be a checklist full of things to see and do.

But if members of your fraternity or from your region were to go on a Short-Term Mission and Global Awareness Trip to Africa with Franciscan Mission Service, things would be different.

Your trip would center on learning about the economic, social and environmental realities faced by the local people. Your days would include encounters with different ethnic groups, local youth and teachers, fair trade and artisan cooperatives, and human rights advocates, in addition to seeing the natural wonders. You would take part in daily prayer, guided reflection and social analysis to help you process your experiences and deepen your understanding and awareness of different cultures, customs and realities.

You wouldn't be crossing things off a checklist, you'd be crossing borders. And that is what makes short-term mission different from tourism or travel.

Franciscan Mission Services has been facilitating long-term mission experiences for 20 years. We know that not everyone is called to serve for that length of time, so our short-term trips to South Africa, Kenya and Washington, D.C., allow others to experience the transformational impact that crossing borders can have on their faith and

their understanding of the world.

Following St. Francis' example, FMS is committed to "treading lightly" in host countries and to approaching the people they meet with respect as listeners and learners, as opposed to seeing the negative aspects of the realities they will face and then trying to find ways to "fix" or make them better. In Kenya, for instance, your visit to a volunteer testing clinic to interact with teenagers who are living with HIV/AIDS will foster a better understanding of the pandemic and how it affects children and families.

Franciscan Mission Service's philosophy is based on the popular education model and the "Pastoral Circle" approach of "see, reflect, act." This model asks you to be observant, to reflect and ask questions as you face new and puzzling realities, and then to consider how this new information will impact your behavior. Such social analysis will help you to better appreciate God's work and to better discern your responsibility as a Christian in building the kingdom of God on earth.

This group learning and common experience is an excellent way for fraternities to strengthen relationships among their members while connecting with the poor abroad. The experience of mission also gives participants the potential to transform North American societies and churches and to act as advocates for peace, justice, reconciliation and care for creation.



To start planning a Short-Term Mission and Global Awareness Trip for your group, contact :

Br. Paul O'Keeffe, OFM,

paul@franciscanmissionservice.org,

202-832-1762, ext. 5, or visit

www.franciscanmissionservice.org.



Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Walking Together

by Anne Mulqueen, OFS

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

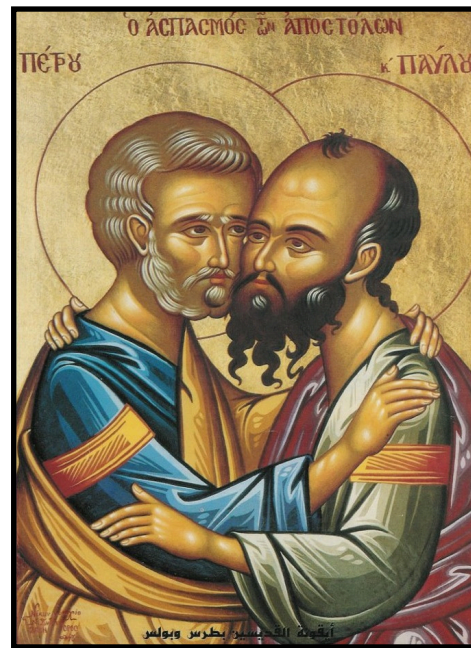
At the Chapter of Elections, October 2012, the newly elected National Executive Council appointed me – Anne Mulqueen – as Chair of the Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee. My predecessor was our beloved Franciscan Troubadour, Dr. Edward L. Shirley, OFS. Sister Death called Ed home suddenly on the Feast of the Assumption, and a great and loving son of Saints Francis and Clare was united with his Blessed Trinity. He is now part of the divine dance, and we miss his presence and his wisdom. To honor Ed and to honor you, the committee promises to continue the work of unity Ed and others before him have begun.

To understand the Catholic Church's position on ecumenism, it is best to begin by restating the introduction to *Unitatis Redintegratio* (UR), the *Decree on Ecumenism*, "**The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principle concerns of the Second Vatican Council.**" Two further concepts regarding ecumenism we will be exploring in future articles are:

•**Spiritual Ecumenism:** From UR n. 8 "This change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name 'spiritual ecumenism.' "

•**Growing in Communion:** From UR n. 3 "Those who believe in Christ and have been and have been truly baptized are in communion with the Catholic Church even though this communion is imperfect. The differences that exist in varying degrees between them and the Catholic Church – whether in doctrine and sometimes in discipline, or concerning the structure of the

Church – do indeed create many obstacles, sometimes serious ones, to full ecclesiastical communion. **The ecumenical movement is striving to overcome these obstacles.**" Reminding us of Jesus' call to unity, ". . . so that [we] may all be one." John 17:21



The icon of the Apostles Peter and Paul embracing is a sign of the early Church overcoming its differences and affirming its Christian unity—a reminder for us all.

We must keep in mind that divisions are contrary to God's will and impede our common witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Can we continue to live beside our separated brothers and sisters and treat them like strangers? We must pray that our common God and Father will satisfy the longing of our hearts and unite us one day into one Holy Church in Jesus Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Peace and all good to all God's children,

Your sister Anne Mulqueen, OFS

On behalf of the Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee



Franciscan Youth & Young Adult Commission



My name is Ríobart É. “Rob” Breen, OFS, and I am the newly appointed national Chair of the Franciscan Youth & Young Adult (YouFra) Commission. Over the past 20+ years, I have worked professionally as a youth minister, director of religious education, and campus minister, and have worked with youth and young adults in nonprofit and government agencies. I hold an undergraduate degree in art and history, with M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in environmental policy and administration. I studied youth and young adult ministry at St. Bernard’s Institute in Rochester, New York, and studied theology at the University of San Francisco.

My day job is professor of government and public policy, where I work extensively with college students. I am founder and director of the Anam Earth Center for Sustainability and Culture, a non-profit organization that engages in environmental education with youth, ecological service, youth leadership and environmental justice advocacy work. I grew up in the Hudson-Mohawk ecoregion of upstate New York, but also lived for many years in central and northern Arizona. I now live in a rural farm community just outside of Albany, New York, where my wife, Meghan (a Secular Franciscan), and I run the Glendara Sustainable Homestead with goats, chickens and ducks. We homeschool our four little children: Nuala Catherine (6), Éamon Pádraic (4), Maeve Máire (2), and our new baby, Brigid Gráinne (born at home on November 2, 2012).

I have served as regional Franciscan Youth Chair for the St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region, and currently serve as minister for my local St. Joseph the Worker fraternity, and animator for the St. Clare YouFra fraternity near Albany, New York. I authored the Franciscan Action Network’s *CAC: Franciscan Care for Creation* curriculum to train Franciscans and others in Franciscan

approaches to the environment. I am currently drafting a YouFra handbook to guide newly forming YouFra fraternities in Franciscan community, leadership, charism and ministry.

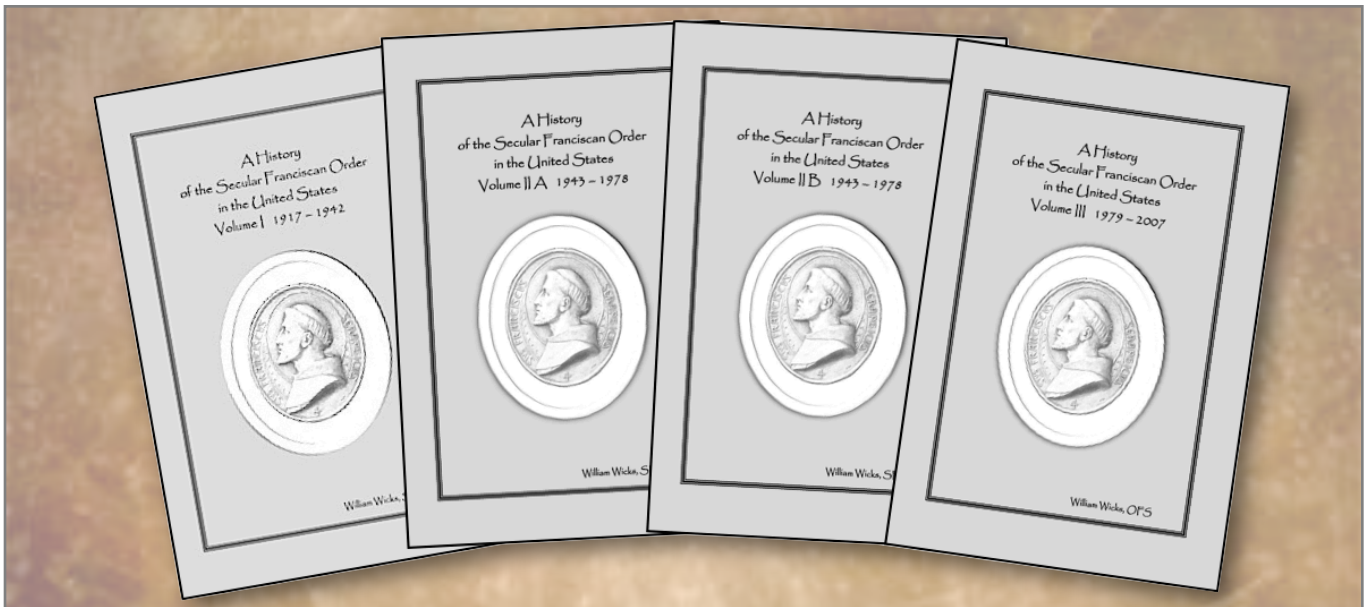
In my years of working with young people, I have identified some important issues and trends that present challenges when working with potential Franciscan youth and young adult groups today. First, there is a general secularization growing that frowns upon public expression of faith or integration of spirituality into decision-making and lifestyle. This generation of young people is not made up of joiners, and they are often too busy to make long term, serious commitments to any particular group or cause. I spoke with a group of young people recently who said that while they were passionate about their faith, they were clearly a tiny minority amongst their peers, and they had no Franciscan or Christian mentors in their lives. Older adults who live a Gospel life were simply not present in their own lives, and they longed for support, wisdom and direction from elders and mentors willing to share their faith.

There is a pervasive agreement amongst many young people that the world is rife with selfish people who are concerned only with money, status and materialism, and they experienced the emptiness of those pursuits. Many are deeply concerned about social justice issues and environmental sustainability issues, but are frustrated that many adults (who are politically more influential and more politically engaged) were not. They are passionate about community service, and want to make a difference in people’s lives with direct service. The Church in general plays very little role in their lives, and many believe the Church has lost its relevance in their lives because it does not address the most important issues of their generation. They have very little exposure to Catholic institutions and traditions other than attending Mass as children, and they are theologically and scripturally illiterate. Many feel lost and confused with so many conflicting messages and value systems bombarding them, and they want adult guides to turn to for help.

These are all challenges for us when developing a strategy and goals for how to reach out to young people with the Gospel life in the spirit of Francis and Clare. What worked for previous generations does not work for most of this generation today. May the Holy Spirit inspire us with vision, creativity and sensitivity to new ways of being Christ to young people, and in inviting them into the Franciscan Family.

***"Let us begin again,
for until now we have done nothing"***

– St. Francis



A History of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States

Volumes I - III, Our OFS History (1917 – 2007)

by William Wicks, OFS

Years ago, I presented a proposal to the Executive Council that I write a history of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States. It was going to take me not more than three years, and it would be contained in one book. Seven and a half years and four books later, it is complete.

The idea of writing a history was inspired by the content of four boxes that I received in the mail from the daughter of Jerry Rome, OFS. Jerry was a former Vice Minister who had recently passed away. The boxes contained meeting minutes from the 1920s and many unidentified photos of friars. These friars, with the help of Tertiaries (Secular Franciscans of that day), were instrumental in bringing our Order to where we are today; they were the shoulders on which we presently stand. I thought they, friars and Tertiaries, must be acknowledged; we owe it to them to get to know who they were and what they did for us.

The books are more a chronicle of events than a history. Many historians have a tendency to write position papers. I tried to keep my own opinions out of the writings.

There have been many perks associated with this labor. I have experienced many wonderful times: traveling to the friar provinces for research — staying at the friaries; conversation with the friars and listening to their stories; discovering the treasures of our history; visiting beautiful St. Bonaventure University where our archives are stored and working with our very capable archivist Sharon Deveaux, OFS.

It has also been a blessing to work with my editor, the

very capable Elizabeth Allen, OFS, who would drive up from San Diego to work with me. We would work all day; Frances would cook for us. And we would end the day with a DVD movie and a glass of wine.

A few words about Volume III, which covers the years 1979 to 2007 inclusive of the 2007 Quinquennial Congress. The major subjects covered by this book are:

- Regionalization
- National Statutes
- Formation (Guidelines for Initial Formation were, and still are, important)
- Communications (including *TAU-USA* and Internet Communications)
- Apostolic Commissions — with the two All Commission Conferences
- Youth Commission and the Ecumenical and Multicultural Committees
- The Quinquennial Congresses
- An Appendix that includes a list of leaders from 1980 to 2006.
- A chapter on celebrations that include days away and Franciscan experiences

These books cover the years up to 2007. Consequently, neither FAN, JPIC nor the FUN Manual are included; those will be major topics in Volume IV — which, hopefully, the historian who follows me will compile and record.

Thank you for giving me the honor of being your historian. I hope I have been worthy of this commission.

All four books: Volume I (1917 – 1942), Volume II A/ B (1943 – 1978) and Volume III are available from Smoky Valley Printing (see back cover).

A Theatrical, Multi-media Presentation

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE HISTORY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER IN THE UNITED STATES

Written and Produced by Bill Wicks

The annual Summer Seminar held at St. Francis University in Loretto, Penn., in July 2013 will present a theatrical, multi-media presentation of the highlights of our OFS history in the United States. The cast will include five Secular Franciscan “actors.” The audience will be invited to participate in the historical reenactments.

Segments of our history that will be presented are:

1. Immigration from Europe and the forming of fraternities.



2. The genesis of our national organization. At the 1921 Congress in Chicago, delegates decided to form a national organization. Dialogue recorded at the 1921 Congress resulted in the formation of a national organization. Attendees at the seminar will represent those delegates and read a script taken from the records.

3. Third Order Promotion: Did you ever hear of the Third Order? — 1916, 1945 and 2012 dialogue

4. The Hour of St. Francis — the most popular religious radio show of the 50s and 60s. Movie actors volunteered their talents. We will play a recorded episode taken from those shows and entertain you with an updated version.



5. The Peace Award Presentations — highlighting the award given to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Again members of the audience will represent those who received the award and provide a one or two sentence description of the awardees achievements.

5. The Modesty Campaign (Ladies in the audience will be asked to take the Modesty Pledge that the High School students took in the 50s).

6. The formulation of our Rule (taken from Fr. Bob Stewart OFM Cap.’s dissertation) — emphasizing the Assisi Congress where Third Order members were finally invited. Seventeen essential elements were the keystone of our new Rule. Members of the Audience will be asked to read each of the elements.

7. You will sing along with Jim and Cindy Wesley, OFS, the official song of the Third Order of St. Francis, which was sung in the past at regular meetings and other significant events. See “Hail St. Francis” below.



The Summer Seminar will be held from July 5 (afternoon) to the 7 (noon), 2013

St. Francis University, Loretto, Pennsylvania

Contact Cyl Maljan, OFS, (cylmaljan@earthlink.net)

for information regarding registration and transportation.

Hail St. Francis

Hail St. Francis, our father and patron, Seraph Saint of love divine.
 Bless they children in prayer assembled, true and trusting at thy Shrine.
 Teach us O Francis like thee to surrender.
 All to our savior with hearts pure and tender.
 Father dear, they love to share, Seraph of love, O hear our prayer
 Hail St Francis, Our father and patron, saint of calv’ry glorified
 Lead they children in tearful repentance, unto Christ who for us died.
 Teach us O Francis in life’s bitter trial.
 Like thee to glory in pain and denial
 Father dear, our cross to bear, knight of the cross, O hear our prayer.



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A History
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William Wicks, OFS