

TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

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Be the merciful presence of God

NAFRA Theme 2014



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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 Winter issue of the TAU USA is the first issue to be printed in Spanish. Copies in Spanish are being sent in bulk to fraternity ministers/ delegates for distribution at meetings in addition to being on the national website.

BUT...starting with the Spring issue of the TAU USA it will be possible for Bob Herbelin to designate on the national database whether a person wishes to receive in the mail the TAU USA in Spanish.

SO...we now need fraternity ministers to send us the names of members who wish to receive the TAU USA in the mail in Spanish and not English. Please send the member's name, address, fraternity name and region name to: Cindy Wesley ofs, cwesley@mcn.org or 846 Calimex Place, Nipomo, CA 93444.

Note: All articles followed by ✱ have Spanish translations on the NAFRA website.

TAU-USA is published quarterly. Each professed Secular receives the newsletter without charge. For subscription or change of address information, write to: Randy Heinz, OFS, 810 Steffanich Drive, Billings, MT 59105, or randyheinz@gmail.com. Subscriptions per year cost \$4.00 for U. S., \$6.00 for Canadian, \$15.00 for Overseas.

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THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

National Minister, Tom Bello, OFS

Miserando atque Eligendo

Beloved Sisters and Brothers of Penance,
The Lord's Peace be with you.

On Tuesday evening, October 15, 2013, I welcomed everyone to our National Chapter at the Savior Pastoral Center outside of Kansas City, Kansas, with the words: "Miserando atque Eligendo." I chose these words because since our last National Chapter in 2012, we and the whole Catholic Church have been blessed with a new Holy Father, the first who had chosen the name of Francis! These Latin words form Pope Francis' Papal Motto, displayed just below his Papal Coat of Arms. Even if they are hard words to translate, "Miserando atque Eligendo" are words clearly important to our Holy Father, and they should be important to us as followers of Christ in the



footsteps of St. Francis and Pope Francis.

The words, "Miserando atque Eligendo," come from a description of the Call of Matthew by St. Bede, given in the Second Reading from the Divine Office for the Feast of St. Matthew on September 21. The whole Latin description "*Vidit ergo Jesus publicanum, et quia miserando atque eligendo vidit, ait illi, 'Sequere me'.*" might be translated as "Jesus therefore sees the tax collector, and since he sees by having mercy (or by looking at him with the eyes of mercy) (or by "mercy-ing" him, as the Holy Father has translated it) (miserando) and (atque) by choosing (eligendo), he says to him, 'Follow me'."

Thus, St. Bede's inspiring homily offers a meditation on divine mercy, for Jesus calls Matthew (which means "gift of God") not for what he was (a tax collector and sinner), but for what he could be (an Apostle and Gospel writer) if he only said yes to the grace of God. And once he said yes to God, "Matthew drew after him a whole crowd of sinners along the same road to salvation," writes St. Bede.

According to the news agency ZENIT, which quoted a communiqué about the Papal Motto, a young Jorge Bergoglio, at the age of 17, after Confession, "experienced in a particular way, the loving presence of God in his life. . . . [H]is heart was touched by the descent of the mercy of God, who with tender love called him to the religious life" (<http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-s-motto-miserando-atque-eligendo>).

Jorge Bergoglio became, of course, our new Holy Father, and in a now-famous interview ("A Big Heart Open to God" <http://www.americamagazine.org/pope-interview>), Pope Francis compares his own conversion to Caravaggio's beautiful painting, "The Calling of St. Matthew," hanging in Rome. And like St. Matthew, Pope Francis has spent the early days of his Papacy calling sinners to the mercy and salvation of God.

Although we may never become Popes, all of us have received the Lord's mercy and have been chosen "before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before him" (Ephesians 1:4). The Lord looked with love upon us when He chose us, perhaps through our parents and the Holy Spirit, to receive the great Sacrament of Initiation at Baptism. The Lord "mercied" us, if you will, and chose us when He called us to profess ourselves permanently as Secular Franciscans.

The Lord continues to look upon us with mercy and choose us at every Holy Sacrifice of the Mass as we receive His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. The Lord continues to love us and shower us with mercy every time we confess our sins and choose, only with God's great grace, to begin a new life of grace. The Lord continues to mercy us, if you will, every day by

sustaining our very lives and by choosing us to follow Him anew as we turn away from sin and are faithful to the Gospel, a conversion we Secular Franciscans must make on a daily basis, even today as we read these words (Secular Franciscan Rule 7).

You may recall a recent Gospel from St. Luke on the Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time. There were three mercy-ings, if you will, the return of the prodigal son, the finding of the lost sheep and the finding of the lost coin (Luke 15:1-32). The parable of the prodigal son is justly famous and has already been given as a Gospel by itself on the Fourth Sunday of Lent, but consider for a moment the other shorter parables of the lost sheep and coin. A lost coin cannot find itself! I don't know much about sheep, but I don't think a lost sheep can find itself either! Perhaps as with the tax collector Matthew, conversion or repentance is not so much by our willing or doing it as by God looking at us with mercy and choosing us (*miserando atque eligendo*). God is always calling us, always seeking us, always mercy-ing us. All we have to do is allow ourselves to be found and then follow the Lord.

In joy, as did Jorge Bergoglio as a young sinner of 17, as does Pope Francis today, still a sinner, let us, in our own sinfulness, accept the Lord's mercy and follow Him. How do we best follow the Lord? By doing what He did. In Matthew's Gospel, our Lord tells us in the Sermon on the Mount, "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). In Luke's

Gospel, our Lord tells us in the Sermon on the Plain, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). Perhaps the closest we can come to imitating the Lord's perfection is by extending the Lord's mercy and election (*miserando atque eligendo*) to all we meet.

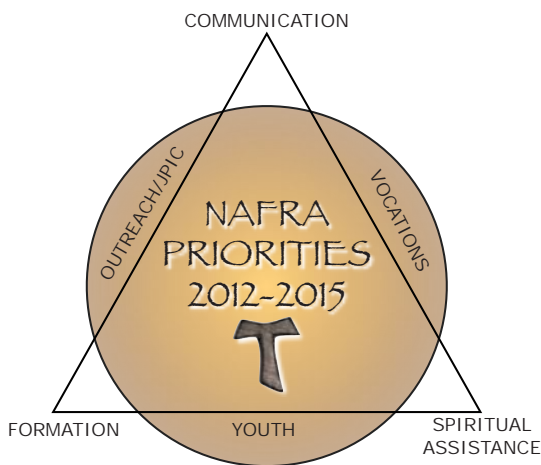
This may indeed be the New Evangelization in our broken, often unmerciful, world: to proclaim to all, especially those who may feel the most lost, that Jesus is calling all in love and mercy to follow Him. This surely is one interpretation of the new theme adopted for all of us for all of 2014 by the National Fraternity at the end of our National Chapter in Kansas City, Kansas, on Saturday, October 19, 2013: "Be the Merciful Presence of God."

Let us take this theme, let us take the Pope's Motto, let us take the mercy we have all received and give that mercy to all we meet.

God's Peace and Mercy to all,
Tom



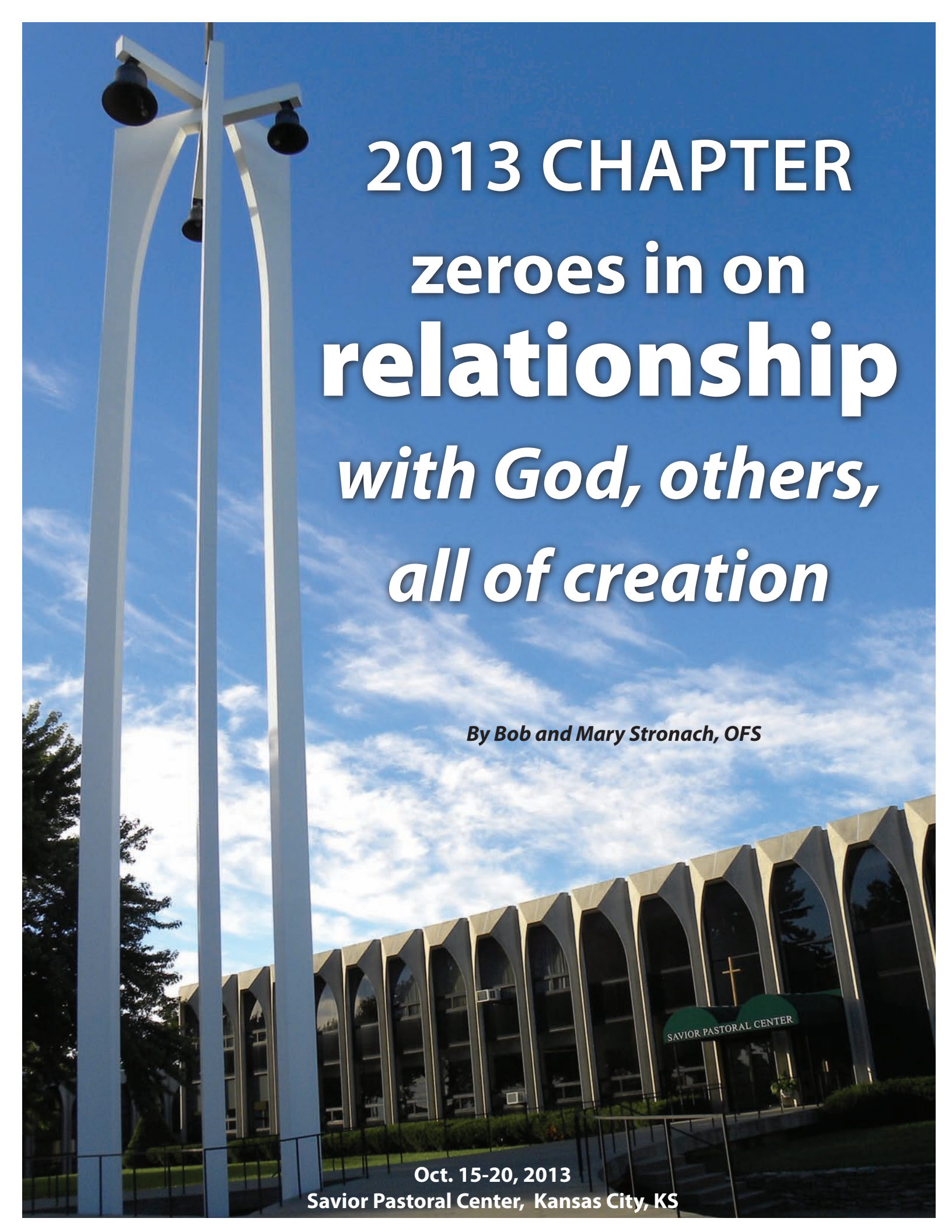
The following is the introductory statement from Tom Bello's Minister report to the 2013 NAFRA Chapter.



Everyone can look at drawings in different ways, and I have looked at this schema for almost a year now, and here is what I have grown to see. We start with the Tau Cross. The Tau Cross is our habit, of course, so it represents the individual Secular Franciscan, you or me. The ball that envelops us is our fraternity, our world. The fraternity is our world. Framing the ball is the triangle, symbolizing the Trinity. That Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit not only is the life of the world, but also the life of the square, which is our four-cornered Church: one, holy, catholic and apostolic. The Church is greater than the world, greater than our fraternity? Yes, we work out our salvation in fraternity out in the world, but we are framed by the Church, the visible sign of God's salvific grace, God's people, the Mystical Body of Christ, always enlivened by the dynamism and vitality of the Trinity.

Any sufficient explanation of the Blessed Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit certainly exceeds the capabilities of this reporter and the limitations of this Report. Similarly, the

Church's four corners of being One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic escape the limits of this report. One individual symbolized by the Tau Cross will be approached at the end of this report. The major focus then will be on that circle of life, that circle of our world: the Fraternity and the six priorities set by the National Fraternity to build Fraternity: Formation, Spiritual Direction, Communication, Youth, Vocations and JPIC/ Outreach.



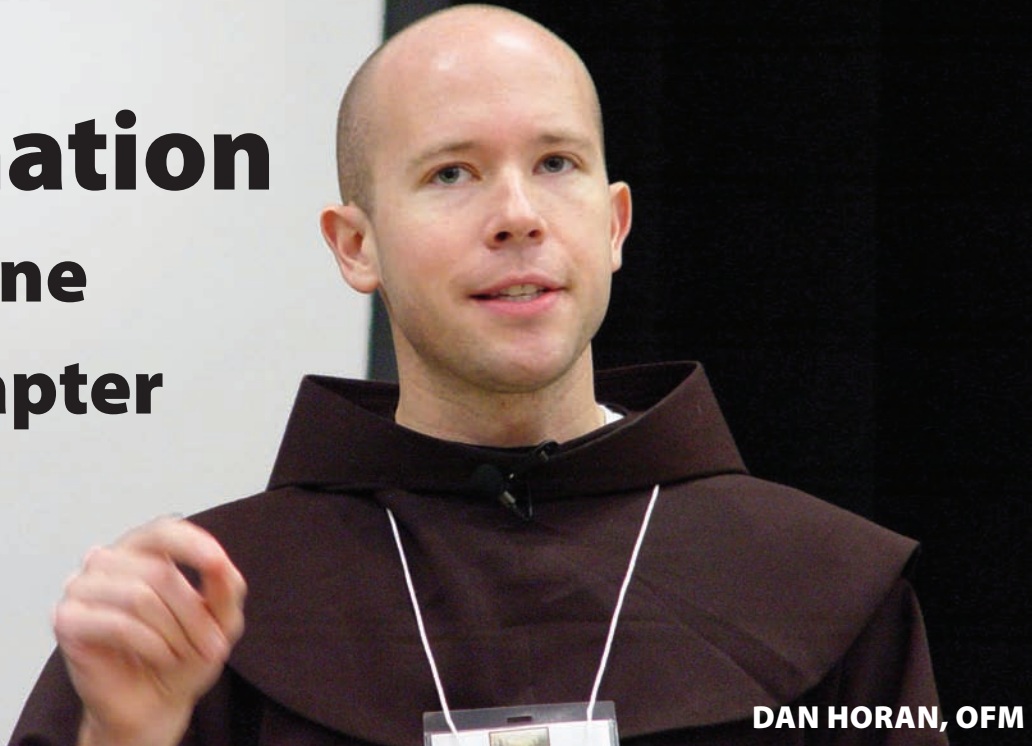
2013 CHAPTER
zeroes in on
relationship
with God, others,
all of creation

By Bob and Mary Stronach, OFS

Oct. 15-20, 2013

Savior Pastoral Center, Kansas City, KS

A day of formation sets tone for chapter



DAN HORAN, OFM

“Relationship stands at the heart of the Gospel... Relationship is at the heart of our entire tradition.”

Speaking to a group of over 80 Secular Franciscan leaders, friars and guests from around the country, Father Dan Horan, OFM, challenged the audience to live the theme of the annual chapter – *“Be the Bridge: Accept all people as a gift of God.”*

Bridges imply relationship – first and foremost, that all important relationship with God; what Friar Dan calls **“dating God”** (the subject of his first book). And then, there is that special relationship we should be developing with our fellow man, and finally the challenge of establishing that kinship with all of creation.

How do we build these bridges, these relationships? We can learn about relationship through the Gospels, says Fr. Dan, who was ordained in 2012 and is already a prolific author with five books published. God makes himself known through the proph-

ets in the Old Testament, and now, God speaks through his Son. Friar Dan pointed to St. Augustine and St. Bonaventure who noted that God disclosed who He is through creation.

“If you want to know how God loves, love the unloveable, touch the untouchable.”

Jesus is not just God; He is the Son incarnate, he continued. The Son makes present who we are because Christ is fully God and fully human. For us to be fully human is to be like Christ. As Franciscans, to live the Gospel following St. Francis means to live the priority of God.

When you reflect on it, the young St. Francis “was not unlike women and men who are in college today... not super involved, go to Mass a couple times a year, go to bars, tailgating, a good guy to hang out with, not all that concerned about life except perhaps for his family and friends. We can relate to that... Francis was not born a saint.” What we are before

God, THAT we are... nothing more and nothing less.

Over time, however, Francis developed his uniqueness – to live the gospel more completely.

BY TAKING the Assisi saint’s name, Pope Francis has a challenge. Will he live up to his name? “What blows our minds is the way he (Pope Francis) models... preaching by deeds, getting close to the people, embracing people.”

This should come naturally to us by our baptism and profession, he said. Christ calls us to conversion at every point in our lives. Take, for example, St. Peter. He experienced conversion many times... When Christ was persecuted, Peter denied Christ three times.

What was the beginning of Francis conversion? Was it the leper? Reading the scriptures? At Mass? His prayer before the San Damiano cross where Christ told him to rebuild his church? Francis’ reply to Christ’s request – to rebuild the local church with stones and mortar -- had almost



nothing to do with being Christian. “But, it had a lot to do with his relationship with God.”

When Jesus asked Peter three times, “Peter, do you love me?”, Peter initially replied, “Lord, you know I love you.” By the time Christ asked him the third time, Peter was more than frustrated, he was angry and distressed. But, Father Dan noted, Jesus was talking of three kinds of love: filia (brotherly love, which comes easily and requires little work), eros (passion-driven love) and agape (the love of Christ, sacrificial love, which is hard work). Jesus meets Peter where he is. He says to Peter, you love the way you can right now, when it’s easy; but later, when you are challenged, can you love that agape love? “Did Francis love that way? Can we love that way?”

Father Dan used the image of dating God as a way to build a relationship with Him. Dating is active, he said. It is a human relationship. Some

people say that God is so different from us – not human. That is true, and false. God knows a lot about us. We have to remember that the Word became flesh – the Incarnation was God’s plan forever. It was not because of sin that Christ came. Yes, God becomes human to redeem us, but, He chose us in Him before the foundations in love. He destined us for adoption. It was God’s plan for all eternity. Because of the Incarnation, God, through Jesus, knows what it means to be in a human relationship

Friar Dan compared our spiritual growth, our relationship with God, as going from “dating” to “being a

spouse,” which requires more effort, and doesn’t come as easily as it did in the dating phase. But it is in this agape love that we find transformation.

He encouraged each attendee to think of his or her whole life as prayer, as “on-going conversion” -- and that you “need dating to keep it exciting.”

THE DAY of formation morphed into an experience of relationship-building using a tool known as “one-on-ones” -- or as outgoing JPIC Chair Kent Ferris put it, “sacred conversations.” Everyone paired off with someone else and spent time learning about the other, both his/her uniqueness and things in common.



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

FOUNDED MINISTRY TO HELP ALLEVIATE POVERTY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

A visit to East Africa in 2001 changed Dr. Margie Sweeney's life. The poverty she saw, and the realization, she said, that God was calling her, led the family physician to found the non-profit charity, Helping Hands Healing Ministries, Inc. (HHHM) to help alleviate poverty in developing countries.

For her efforts and example, Dr. Sweeney received the Franciscan Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Award during the annual chapter.

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. JPIC Chair Kent Ferris, OFS, cited several of her projects, such as assisting a school in Zambia with electrical hook-ups, starting a dairy farm in Tanzania to provide nutrition to 400 people, offering tuition assistance for various students in Africa, and more recently, making a series of medical mission trips to Haiti.

A professed Secular Franciscan herself, Dr. Sweeney is minister of St. Michael the Archangel Fraternity in Tampa, FL. She resides in St. Cloud, FL with her civil-engineer husband, Michael. They have a son, Patrick, and a daughter, Kelly.

Her trip to Africa was memorable for another reason. She landed at Nairobi, Kenya on Sept. 11, 2001. She didn't know about the terrorist attacks back in America until a nun came up to her at the airport and said she was so sorry.

"I gained a new level of faith and trust in God," she told the 80 chapter attendees, representing over 13,000 Secular Franciscans across the U.S. and Guam. "I had a new attitude of gratitude."



MARGIE SWEENEY, MD, OFS

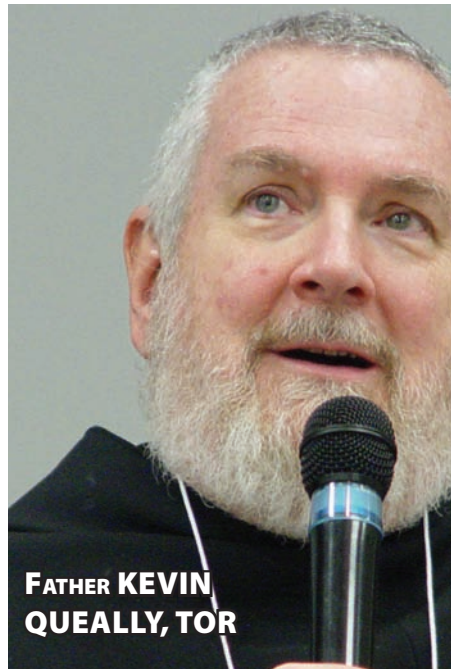


Dr. Margie Sweeney, OFS, second from right, poses with medical mission team in Haiti in 2013 during their 4.2-mile mountainous trek to get to hard-to-reach patients. BELOW: Dr. Margie gives milk to Haitian children in wake of 2010 earthquake.



The business of the chapter

DEACON TOM BELLO, OFS



FATHER KEVIN QUEALLY, TOR

The business of the National Fraternity occupied a good portion of the chapter, with various officers, commissions/committees and certain guests giving presentations. There was also an invitation to spiritual growth, recognizing, as National Secretary Jan Parker put it, the national gathering as a sacred space.

National Minister Tom Bello, OFS, in his welcoming remarks, tried to establish a sense of family and relationship, taking time to introduce officers, commission/committee appointees, regional ministers and delegates, and special guests, such as Fr. Patrick Castro, OFM Cap., representing Guam Secular Franciscans; Deacon Joan Verret from the Episcopal Third Order Society of St. Francis (TSSF), and Bro. C.J. Boylan of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans.

COMMUNITY PRAYER dotted the days, along with Mass and spiritual bolts hurled by homilists seeking to prod our Franciscan response to the Gospel. For example, during the opening Mass, National Spiritual Assistant Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR, warned



Bro. C.J. Boylan, OEF, and Dc. Joan Verret, TSSF, and Jim Flickinger, OFS

against worrying about superficial things, as the Pharisees did, instead of addressing important issues, such as “who we are inside.” “Sometimes, as Franciscans, we become too legalistic. We should listen to Pope Francis’ message of compassion, mercy, love and care. We have to be filled with life in the spirit, filled with love.”

He quoted St. Teresa of Avila who said that to be absorbed in externals of faith is to be absorbed in emptiness. “Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you...God alone suffices.”

The order shouldn’t be shrinking, he said. “We should be growing. We have

to be who we are called to be – filled with love, compassion and mercy.”

(At the Mass, newlyweds Bob and Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, OFS, renewed their wedding vows in front of their brothers and sisters. They met at the national gathering several years ago and married in February 2013.)

The next day, National Spiritual Assistant Fr. Matthias Wesnofske, OFM Cap., struck a similar tone, referring to Pharisee concern for rules over spirit. He acknowledged most of those present were in leadership positions, in effect becoming “interpreters of the law,” as they make visi-



The chapter provided daily opportunities for praying in community.

tations to local fraternities, answer questions about the Franciscan Rule and Constitutions, even help decide who should be professed.

“The danger is we can lose sight of the function of the order. We have to ask ourselves, are our members holier today? Are we animating our members? Are more people attracted to the order because they see it as a means to holiness?”

Fr. Patrick Castro, OFM Cap., a spiritual assistant from Guam, offered the third Mass, quickly prodding: “When was the last time we died to ourselves and came alive in Jesus Christ?” While opening ourselves up to the Lord “leaves ourselves vulnerable, St. Francis did not live a day without Jesus Christ...without developing his relationship with the Lord.”

Father Matthias was back the following day, spurring everyone to be bridges to all people -- “the rejected, the humble, the lepers among us” -- and to not be afraid of stretching “ourselves to great lengths.” Part of stretching is being open to God’s surprises. When St. Francis got the message to “rebuild my church, he didn’t say, please, no more surprises. No more stretching...”

“God has called all of you to more...and the Eucharist will fortify us to stretch further.”

The chapter’s final Mass saw National Spiritual Assistant Fr. Stephen Gross, OFM Conv., pointing to the need to improve our prayer life. When reading or reciting prayer, it’s not quite prayer yet. It’s more of a tool. True prayer, prayer of the heart, brings us “before the awesome presence of God.” He referred to the Latin saying, *si cor non orat in vanum lingua laborat*, which means, “If the heart does not pray, in vain does the tongue labor.”

“We need to train the heart” not to succumb to distractions. “There’s some pain, but we need to grow and stretch.”

AN OFS DISASTER TEAM

Amazon Relief founder Jim Flickinger, OFS, announced he would like to establish a Secular Franciscan Disaster Response Team that could serve people in need in the wake of a disaster. A number of people volunteered to work with Jim and his wife, Lois, OFS, to determine what direction to take.

GUAM JOINS NAFRA

The delegate body unanimously voted to accept St. Padre Pio community in Guam as an emerging fraternity under the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States.



Jan Parker, OFS, and Sylvia Paoli, OFS, brought music to the liturgies.

Take a Cue from Example of Pope Francis, U.S. Order Urges NATIONAL FRATERNITY ISSUES STATEMENT TO ALL PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL

Leaders of the Secular Franciscan Order have issued an appeal to “all people of good will” to take a cue from the example of Pope Francis and embrace the world in love in their everyday lives.

“Pope Francis embraces the ideals close to the heart of Saint Francis of Assisi himself, including love for the poor and marginalized, care for creation, and peace-making,” the Order’s national chapter said in a statement while meeting in Kansas City, KS, Oct. 19. “He vividly shows us that no individual is far from the heart of God, and thus, no individual may be rejected.”

The leaders, representing more than 13,000 Secu-

lar Franciscans across the U.S. and in Guam, cited the pope’s “bold peacemaking initiatives,” including the “daring call to the world to fast and pray” over the war in Syria. “We wish to affirm and promote the spirit of non-violence and reconciliation embodied by his words and witness... We support his efforts to embrace the world in love and to remind us of our call to be accepting of all people, recognizing that in mercy there is also justice.”

They added: “As Secular Franciscans we pledge to work together to build a society which embraces these Gospel values. We therefore commit ourselves to prayer and compassionate action.”

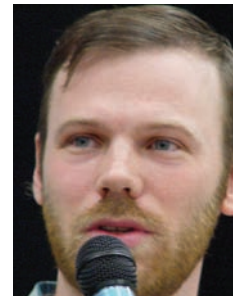


Kim Smolik, Ed D, exec. dir. of Franciscan Mission Service: “FMS is a pathway to live out the Franciscan charism.”



Carolyn Townes, OSF, is the new national Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation (JPIC) chair.

Rhett Engelking, OFS, is overseeing the launch of FAN’s Franciscan Earth Corps for youth. He is also NAFRA’s new national JPIC vice chair.



FAIR SHARE FOR CANDIDATES

With the International Fraternity expecting fraternities to contribute fair share for candidates as well as professed members, the National Fraternity voted for U.S. fraternities to start doing the same, effective January of 2015, based on 2014 membership numbers.

DEVELOPMENT FUND

National Councilor Mary Frances Charsky, OFS, made a “Live and Give; Give and Live” pitch for the NAFRA Development Committee, appealing for donations to the Donor Fund. The committee also promotes bequests and is hoping to establish an endowment fund for the OFS.

CNSA ENCOURAGES

The Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) encouraged

regional fraternities to foster a relationship with Franciscan provincials and provincial spiritual assistants, and plans to appoint a Secular Franciscan spiritual assistant to CNSA by 2015 (noting the move away from the term “lay spiritual assistant” to the more precise “Secular Franciscan spiritual assistant”).

FAN SUPPORT

The National Fraternity unanimously voted to continue membership in Franciscan Action Network, with an annual donation of \$1 per professed member.

PRISON GUIDELINES

The delegate body unanimously approved national guidelines for Secular Franciscans involved in prison ministry. There should be no OFS formation for individuals while they are

incarcerated. “It’s a personal ministry,” noted National Spiritual Assistant Fr. Stephen Gross, OFM Conv.

2014 BUDGET

The National Fraternity unanimously approved a \$269,800 budget for 2014 after tweaking a few line items.

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

The national body approved the following charitable donations:

- \$1,000 to Franciscans International from the Donor Fund.
- \$4,000 to Franciscan Mission Service from the Donor Fund, earmarked for “FMS expansion.”
- \$2,000 to Amazon Relief from the Charitable Projects Restricted Fund.
- \$1,000 to Franciscan Family Apostolate from the Charitable Projects Restricted Fund.



CHAPTER CANDIDS

YouFra Chair Rob Breen thinks youth are attracted to the Franciscan charism. "The fraternity model can be transforming for young people."

Be merciful

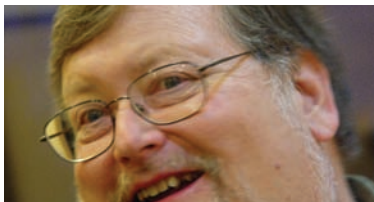
The best way to follow Christ is by having mercy.

That suggestion by National Minister Dc. Tom Bello, OFS, helped to open the chapter. He referred to Pope Francis' motto, "Misericordiam in eligendo", and the Holy Father's interpretation, "by 'mercy', by choosing him."

"We are all sinners, yet we were all chosen by Christ 'mercy' us," he said.

The idea that God chose us in mercy percolated as the chapter considered a theme for 2014. The result:

"Be the merciful presence of God."



Sharing The Vision

NAFRA Regional Executive Council Updates

by Jan Parker, National Secretary

National Executive Council

National Minister

Tom Bello, OFS

National Vice Minister

Elaine Hedtke, OFS

National Secretary

Jan Parker, OFS

National Treasurer

Cecila Maljan, OFS

National Councilor

Mary Bittner, OFS

National Councilor

Mary Frances
Charsky, OFS

National Councilor

Arturo Villarreal, OFS

International Councilor

Mary Stronach, OFS

National

Spiritual Assistant

Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR

As you look through this issue of the TAU you will see lots of news about the National Fraternity (NAFRA) Chapter, but you'll also see something very familiar. Our NAFRA gathering – like any fraternity gathering, local or regional – is built around those very familiar “four marks” of prayer, formation, fraternal sharing and necessary business. Looking at the Chapter photos you can catch glimpses of the Holy Spirit at work as we devoted time to each of these four aspects of fraternity life.

There were graced moments of prayer, an inspiring day of formation, joyful fraternal sharing, and yes ... business.

Although business is never the primary concern of a fraternity gathering, our Order is served by our attention to it. As we go from gospel to life, and life to the gospel, our approach to business is transformed. Financial planning turns into stewardship. The work of our Commissions and Committees becomes formation. Wise decisions bring life to our national priorities. Paraphrasing Article 16 of our OFS Rule, we are to “esteem *business*, both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community.”

The following are the highlights of the business addressed at our 2013 NAFRA Chapter.

Communications Committee

- Has completed a study to evaluate current areas of communication including: TAU-USA publication, NAFRA electronic lists, OFS websites, Public Relations, Translations.
- Currently working to update our national website (NAFRA-sfo.org)
- Will provide a printed Spanish edition of TAU-USA, starting in 2014

Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation Commission (JPIC)

- Presentation of National JPIC Award to Margie Sweeney, MD, OFS
- Appreciation to Kent Ferris for his years of service as JPIC Commission Chair.
- Blessing of new JPIC Commission Chair, Carolyn Townes and JPIC Vice-Chair Rhett Engelking.
- Carolyn Townes to send to all Regions her “12 Weeks of Franciscan Peace” program.
- Rhett Engelking reported on the growth of “Franciscan Earth Corps” – a program for youth involvement and education in Franciscan spirituality.

OFS Disaster Relief

Jim Flickinger OFS presented his vision for an OFS disaster response team. National Fraternity members were given an opportunity to sign up as volunteers, prayer partners, or to request more information.

Youth Commission

Youth Commission Chair, Rob Breen is working with the draft plan from the Confab to build capacity (infrastructure) for YouFra development in the USA and seeking OFS members who feel called to work with youth. Rob reported that “post-Confab” several OFS members went directly home and began working to build a YouFra in their area.

Development Committee

“*Live and give. Give and live*” was the appeal to “the living” to make donations to the Donor Fund for the purposes of charitable giving, outreach and funding for OFS activities. This committee continues to promote bequests and the establishment of a future endowment fund for the OFS.

Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) and Task Force on Spiritual Assistant Development

- Providing well prepared and suitable Spiritual Assistants remains a priority of the CNSA.
- There are plans for a Secular Spiritual Assistant to be appointed to the CNSA by 2015.
- The CNSA encourages OFS Regional Fraternities to be in relationship with the Provincials and Provincial Spiritual Assistants in their Regions.
- The Task Force presented the enlightening results of the national survey on Spiritual Assistance. The complete survey and a PowerPoint summary are available upon request.
- The September 2013 CNSA meeting in Maine included a very successful one day workshop for Local and Regional Spiritual Assistants.
- The CNSA and the Task Force will jointly present on the topic of Spiritual Assistance at the July 2014 Summer Seminar in Loretto, PA.
- A workshop for Provincial and Regional Spiritual Assistants will be held September 24-25, 2014 in Marytown, Illinois.

Endorsement and Continued Financial Support of the Franciscan Action Network (FAN)

Patrick Carolan, Executive Director of FAN, reported on the progress FAN has made in the past five years, citing examples of how their work has become known and respected. The presence of FAN has raised awareness of the Franciscan charism and the entire Franciscan family. The National Fraternity voted unanimously to retain membership with FAN at the \$1.00 per professed member rate.

Fair Share for Candidates

The National Fraternity approved the following motion: With respect to contributing to NAFRA their national Fair Share, beginning in 2015 candidates will be treated in the same manner as we treat all professed. In 2015, each Region will contribute to NAFRA the same Fair Share for each candidate and professed member, based on membership as of Dec. 31, 2014. The Regions will continue to set their own Fair Share amount for professed members and candidates. *Note: Providing subscriptions to the TAU-USA for Candidates is a future NAFRA agenda item.*

Budget Discussion and Approval

The National Fraternity unanimously approved a budget for 2014. A copy of the 2014 budget is available by request and will also be published in the 2014 spring issue of TAU-USA.

Prison Ministry Statement

The National Fraternity unanimously approved national guidelines for Prison Ministry for the OFS. A copy of these guidelines is available by request.

Charitable Donations

Over the last four years, our Secular Franciscan family has contributed \$73,000 to charity [\$42,500 from individuals in response to Special Appeals (e.g., Hurricane Sandy relief), and \$29,500 from the NAFRA Donor Fund to Special Appeals and to Franciscan organizations].

Special Appeals during 2013 included:

- Hurricane Sandy Relief (\$4366)
- US Tornado Relief (\$2000)
- Franciscans International (\$9052)
- Syria Relief (\$1550)

This year at Chapter the National Fraternity approved the following additional donations:

- \$1000 to Franciscans International.
- \$4000 to Franciscan Mission Service, earmarked for “FMS expansion”.
- \$2000 to Amazon Relief.
- \$1000 to Franciscan Family Apostolate.

Future National Gatherings

The NEC presented a draft 3-5 year schedule for National Gatherings:

- July 10, 2014 - Summer Seminar on Spiritual Assistance
- August 21-24, 2014 – Possible National Retreat directed by Br. Bill Short OFM
- October 21-26, 2014 - NAFRA Chapter in Lake Dallas, Texas
- 2014-2015 - Possible Youth Event
- 2015 - Peace Retreat with Carolyn Townes and Fr. Kevin Queally
- 2015 - Summer Seminar on Servant Leadership or Youth
- October 2015 - NAFRA Chapter
- July 1-6, 2016 - Quinquennial in Denver, Colorado

Fraternity Register of Professions

The NEC presented a sample of a hardbound fraternity register. Design suggestions were made and a final draft will be submitted to the National Fraternity for approval sometime early in 2014.

OFS Fraternities in Guam

The National Fraternity unanimously agreed to accept the St. Padre Pio community from Guam as an emerging community within NAFRA, with the intention that they become part of NAFRA, and gave approval for the National Fraternity to serve as the sponsoring fraternity.

National Theme for 2014

God chose us in mercy. As we continue to “be the bridge”, joyful in our universal kinship (OFS Rule, Art. 19), and having experienced the “transforming power of love and pardon” (OFS Rule, Art. 20) our national theme for 2014 is *“Be the merciful presence of God”*.

Please send requests for copies of reports, statements or guidelines, etc., to jansfo@yahoo.com





Formation Commission

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

by Bob Fitzsimmons, OFS
National Formation Commission Chair

Transformation?



Several editions ago, I gave a very general overview of the Interior Castles or Mansions of Teresa of Avila, a great Carmelite Mystic, not as a thermometer to take our spiritual temperature, but as an invitation to explore, deeper and deeper, our own hearts and desires for a relationship with the Divine. Transformation, though implied throughout the *FUN Manual*, is perhaps not addressed explicitly enough. Formation is just the beginning and profession merely a door that invites us into deeper relationships. Profession is not graduation, or the reward owed for sticking it out and “passing” the course. I would like to say that all who profess, like all who are baptized, understand the call to go deeper, though reality shows that most do not have the desire to embrace this type of journey, or understand that a deeper journey awaits. Our goal in emphasizing transformation is to raise awareness that a deeper richer journey awaits all who desire to seek it and allow themselves to pursue it. Will we mirror God’s desire for us with our desire for Him?

Building on the groundwork discussed by Fr. Dan Horan, OFM, at the last National Chapter, we gathered in Denver a few weeks ago to look at our focus for the next phases of formation. Our initial thoughts emphasized our continuing commitment to enhancing our desire for deeper spiritual trans-

formation. There is a golden thread that runs throughout Christianity, and more specifically in our Franciscan Spirituality. Our Franciscan Spirituality is more than simply observing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but becoming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Fr. Dan’s discussion of Franciscan contemplation as *speculatio*, looking into the mirror, from the writings of Bonaventure, is our clue to the transformation commitment inherent in our Profession. If we delve into the writings of Clare to Agnes, we hear the charge once again, *speculatio!* Mirror, gaze into the mirror, and behold the Christ. BUT, the reflected image is us! Right again! The legacy left us by Francis is just that, to gaze at the mirror of the Cross, of the Christ and in that mirror to see ourselves.

But we are flesh, and to delve deeper, we need to be encouraged by our sisters and brothers to journey on, to always be a seeker of Christ reflected back to us in the mirror of ourselves. We

need that safe and special place of the Gospel, our fraternities.

The next very important phase in our continuous development is the need to intensify our on-going formation. The *FUN Manual* focused on initial formation, the first phase of the process. Now we need to focus our attention and energy on both on-going sustained formation and additionally on that special first year after profession. We need to provide a period of *Mystogogia*, where the newly professed, full of joy and energy can gather with other newly professed to fan the flame and breathe the fire back into all the members of their “extended” fraternities.

How can fraternities invigorate their fraternal life and collaboratively bring the Gospel to life? What activities might the fraternity embrace that make our charism visible in the world? How might several fraternities work together giving witness to our larger identity as an Order within the Church, and not simply as isolated groups? Lastly, how might we bridge the gap between hearing the Gospel and being Gospel, an authentic experiential link between our spoken Profession and living the Gospel as other Christs.

Perhaps we have made everything too heady, cerebral and academic. Perhaps we have removed the life from our Gospel to Life motto, and we have failed to connect this Gospel with its mandates to actively seek Peace, Justice and Solidarity with the poor. This I believe is the reality of our vocation when we profess to be Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel. Our Rule guides us by saying:

Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite

choices in harmony with their faith. (Rule chapter 2:15)

Inherent then in our Profession is a commitment to make the Gospel visible, not simply in our church lives, but by becoming kin/family to all creation and through prayer, love and elbow grease, to be the peacemakers, the reconcilers, and the lovers of all that God has made, and where we fall short in our humanness is where our sisters and brothers are needed most. It is here we are nourished with human touch, reaffirmed in our journeys, and encouraged again to become imitators of Christ.

Yes, on-going formation or maybe better on-going nourishment is what is next, for my final year in the NFC and hopefully with full NAFRA support this is the mandate for the new NFC. To help us be aware of the nourishment we need and to empower us to provide this sustenance for each other. I believe this will enable us to become what we eat at the Eucharist and in turn become Eucharist, to add flesh to our God for the world today.

Yes Transformation! We cannot teach it, only walk with each other and encourage each other to seek and to desire a deeper, way past dating, relationship with Our God. Here the head stuff must give way to experience, to touch, to hear encouraging words. We need the laying on of hands frequently, to experience and know we are loved, to sustain our searching and enflame our desire. This I think is our purpose to guide, accompany, to animate our fraternities so we all experience our souls’ journey into the mind of God.

Pace e bene
fitz

CNSA News and Views

Franciscan Life in the 21st Century

Lester Bach OFM Cap



Chantal (India)

Some Fundamentals



In the course of human events, things change. The mindset of people in Congress holds a variety of views and each one considers him/herself to be right. In the Church, people have all sorts of ideas about the Catholic Church, and each one considers their ideas to be right. In families people with experience push personal ideas and ignore ideas of people just getting a good start in life, and vice-versa. Each person considers him/herself to be right.

The common thread here, perhaps, is in our inability (unwillingness?) to listen to one another, to take time to hear and understand the ideas of others as a source of information - even if we disagree. Refusal to offer *attentive listening* means we may not really care to understand the ideas of that "other" person or group. Franciscans, however, show courtesy, concern, and respect. Each quality requires us to understand experiences and ideas which may differ from our own.

Here are ideas about spiritual assistance to the OFS. Secular Franciscans and others have a variety of ideas about spiritual assistance. These ideas often conflict with one another. Below are ideas from documents and practices in the Church and the Franciscan family that may prove helpful.

I. Spiritual assistants represent the 1st Order/TOR in 'assisting' the OFS. Where does their authority come from? Let's look at a bit of history:

Nicolas IV became the first Franciscan Pope on February 15, 1288. He was bombarded by Franciscan Penitents and others to give approval to "their" rule. On August 18, 1289, he issued a Rule for Franciscan penitents. As is frequently the case, neither the Penitents nor the Friars were totally happy with this Rule. Nicolas had designated the Friars as the "visitors" of the fraternities. Lack of acceptance is obvious. Within a year, on August 8, 1290, Nicolas issued a stronger text, *Unigenitus Dei Filius*. He re-asserted that the visitors of the penitents *would* come from the Friars. Gradually both sides accepted the papal direction. Since then the 1st Order/TOR have authority from the Church to do (among other things) the pastoral visitations of the fraternities. This authority is now mandated by the Church and Canon law #303 and is called - *Altius Moderamen*.

cf. "*De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam*" - *The Rule of the SFO: Origins, Development, Interpretation*" - Robert Stewart OFM - Page 202

The authority of the spiritual assistants, at every level, comes from the Church through the major superiors of the 1st Order/TOR. It does *NOT* come from the OFS. The OFS constitutions do require the major superiors or their delegate to *consult* with

Winter - 2013

Reflections on leadership

Truth cannot be compromised. The truth of what we say is shown by what we do. As someone has put it: "If you don't live it, you don't believe it!"

The Leaders of the Future - Hesselbein, Goldsmith, Beckhard - Page 247

Community is a phenomenon that occurs most easily when free people with some sense of equal worth join together voluntarily for a common enterprise. Great leaders create a sense of freedom, voluntariness, and common worth. They do this most easily in smaller organizations that allow a lot of face-to-face contact. As organizations become larger, more complex, and more widely distributed geographically, it becomes harder to create enough common vision and enough community spirit to guide actions without increasing reliance on a chain of command. When people are separated by distance, vast differences in power and wealth, and conflict over resources and promotions, political struggle often replaces community.

Ibid - Page 28



We face difficult issues of community life: because we are spread out; there are differences in skills; and there are differences in implementing the *Rule and Constitutions* among us. Councils need clarity in understanding their responsibilities. A community does not function like a large company. Neither are leaders expected to create hierarchies to hand down decrees. We take a more difficult road.

OFS leaders involve members in determining the goals and tools that enable a fraternity to be a community and not just a group of people who happen to meet regularly. *Developing relationships based on love for one another* is different than working at a business for

the appropriate fraternity council before appointing a spiritual assistant (General & Provincial Spiritual Assistants are delegates of the major superiors).

2. How is this authority carried out in practice?

This mandate, given by the Catholic Church to the 1st Order/TOR, to assist the OFS, is indicated in the OFS Constitutions, Articles 85.1 & .2; 86.1; 95.1. The mandate (authority) of the Church (*Altius moderamen*) is given to the major superiors and the friars they delegate (General and Provincial SAs) in order:

- A) to promote fidelity to the Franciscan charism in its secular expression;
- B) to assure the observance of the OFS Rule and Constitutions;
- C) to provide support & accountability for OFS life in fraternity (OFS Rule #26).



These responsibilities, *mandated by the Church*, are fulfilled by the major superiors (& delegates) through:

- 1) establishing Franciscan fraternities of the OFS;
- 2) appointing spiritual assistants on the various levels;
- 3) conducting pastoral visitations of the fraternities at the various levels. (Generally these visitations are conducted by a *regional SA*. But Provincials and PSAs are free to make separate visits to fraternities bonded to their province.)

3. Fraternities are "bonded" to a particular Province of the 1st Order/TOR.

A fraternity is *bonded* to the 1st Order/TOR province whose major superior or delegate officially establishes the fraternity. The *Document of Establishment* will contain the appropriate information. It is important to have the document of establishment in the archives!

If, for good reasons, the fraternity or the *bonded* province wish to **transfer a fraternity to another Province**, they apply to the major superior or delegate of the involved provinces and dialogue with the affected fraternity about the transfer. An official request includes the reason(s) for the transfer. When agreement is achieved the official transfer can take place. A copy of the official transfer is done in writing and kept in the archives.

4. The major superiors or their delegates, mandated by the *altius moderamen* from the Church, have the authority to establish fraternities, appoint SAs and conduct pastoral visitations. The goal of the mandate is achieved by relating to the OFS as brothers and sisters (of the Franciscan Family) and not simply by fulfilling duties required by canon law.

The ministry performed by the 1st Order/TOR with the OFS is to assure that the Franciscan charism is strengthened and supported by the ministry of SAs and councils at all levels.

SAs serve as *brothers and sisters*, related in a special way to the OFS. SAs *reinforce the bond of unity* between the 1st Order/TOR and the OFS (cf. Constitutions - Article 92.1). E.g. A visitation is a *privileged moment of communion with the 1st Order/TOR* (Constitutions - Article 95.1). Other terms of unity include - *life-giving union / vital reciprocity*.

5. The OFS Constitutions (Article 85.2) gives a definition of the spiritual care that is the responsibility of the 1st Order/TOR major superiors (and their delegates):

*The spiritual and pastoral care of the OFS, entrusted by the Church to the Franciscan 1st Order/TOR, is the responsibility, above all, of their general and provincial ministers. The *altius moderamen*, of which Canon 303 speaks, belongs to them. The purpose of *altius moderamen* is to guarantee the fidelity of the OFS to the Franciscan charism, communion with the Church and union with the Franciscan family, values which represent a vital commitment for the secular Franciscans.*

wages.

Formation requires OFS members to develop relationships with the Trinity; with all our neighbors, including enemies; and with a gentle love of self. Thus the entire Franciscan community follows these gospel words:

You have heard that they were told, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you this: Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors; only so can you be children of your heavenly Father, who causes the sun to rise on the good and the bad alike, and sends his rain on the innocent and the wicked. If you love only those who love you, what reward can you expect? Even the tax-collectors do as much as that. ... there must be no limit to your goodness, as your heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds."

Matthew 5: 43-46, 48

Franciscans perceive reality as the place where we fill life with actions of love. We view people in the way that G.K. Chesterton describes in his book: *St. Francis of Assisi* - Image books - Page 96-97:

Whatever his (Francis') taste in monsters, he never saw before him a many-headed beast. He only saw the image of God multiplied but never monotonous. To him a man was always a man and did not disappear in a dense crowd any more than in a desert. He honored all men; that is, he not only loved but respected them all. What gave him his extraordinary power was this; that from the Pope to the beggar, from the sultan of Syria in his pavilion to the ragged robbers crawling out of the wood, there was never a man who looked into those brown burning eyes without being certain that Francis Bernadone was really interested in him, in his own individual life from the cradle to the grave; that he himself was being valued and taken seriously, and not merely added to the spoils of some social policy or the names in some clerical document.

This way of love is practiced in community life and extended beyond it to include all people both in the Church and in society. As the OFS Rule expresses it:



... a sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on a equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly ...

OFS Rule #13



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



Newly Appointed JPIC Chair Carolyn Townes, OFS



Greetings of peace, my dear Franciscan Family!

I am honored and humbled to have been appointed your National Chair for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. By the grace of God and through the intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary, we will continue the good work begun by our dear brother, Kent

Ferris, OFS. I want to thank Kent for his dedication, commitment and the work he began for the National Fraternity. I am pleased he will remain on the JPIC Commission helping to continue to move the efforts of justice, peace and the integrity of creation forward.

I am currently a member of Our Lady Queen of the Angels Emerging Community in Columbia, S.C. I am the Regional JPIC Animator for the Brothers and Sisters of Saint Francis Region, which encompasses North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee.

I came into the Roman Catholic Church in 1997, was professed in 2000, and have dedicated my life to animating and guiding others to be instruments of peace in the world. In August and September of 2001, my life took a major detour and I was plunged into the world of pain and grief. As I was unable to lead, it was the Holy Spirit who took the reins of my shattered life and recreated a life of healing service. As a spiritual life coach and grief counselor, I have journeyed with hundreds of women and men who have lost loved ones. I have also traveled that road as a workshop facilitator, class instructor, retreat director and mentor to hundreds more.

I was introduced to Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation in 2003, when I worked with the friars of Holy Name Province in New York City. I was involved in the Peace and Justice Apostolate as a Secular when I was asked by the pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Church in Manhattan to become the JPIC Animator.

I could integrate the work I was doing with the Seculars with the work of JPIC. It was a beautiful collaboration. Father Pastor explained the three legs of JPIC: education, advocacy and direct service. Since St. Francis Church had a good grounding with advocacy and direct service, education was the piece that was lacking. That would be my job – to educate. He said I would be JPIC *Animator*, not director. Then I asked, “*What is an animator?*”

I created my own description of animator – one who gives life to something. I would give life to the issues of peace and social justice, thus inciting others to take action on those issues. Education would be the way I would bring the issues to life for those who had little or no knowledge of social justice issues. Through my passion and enthusiasm, as well as my infectious laugh, I would animate and guide people to take inspired action on important social issues.

Fast forward to today, I am still passionate and enthusiastic about educating people, especially Seculars, about what it means to be bearers of peace. As we go from Gospel to life and life to Gospel, we must also go from *being* peace to *doing* peace. Our Lord Jesus embodied peace before he *did* peace. Our Seraphic Father Francis embodied peace before he *did* peace. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis embodies peace which guides him to *do* peace. This too is our call as Secular Franciscans – to embody peace, to be bearers of peace, as our Rule states. Then we can go out into the marketplaces and exercise that peace that comes from deep within us. Being bearers of peace begins with knowing who we are in Christ; that we all are sons and daughters of the Almighty King of Peace. It is who we are. We must live who we truly are.

I invite you all to join me on this exciting journey of being bearers of peace to doing amazing peace and justice work in the world. It is our time to be in the forefront in promoting peace and justice by the testimony of our lives and our loving and courageous initiatives. Let us begin again.

May the Lord give you peace.

Carolyn D. Townes, O.F.S.
ctownes26@hotmail.com



Young Lay Franciscan Missioner Joins Bolivian OFS Community

By Kim Smolik,

Executive Director of Franciscan Mission Service

www.franciscanmissionservice.org

At an orphanage near Sacaba, Bolivia, little girls tie two blankets together for a jump rope. One Saturday, they invited Franciscan Mission Service's Jeff Sved to join in their game and broke into giggles when the 24-year-old missioner couldn't use their tiny toy. A few girls ran off and brought back a couple more blankets to make the jump rope longer.

"Then we practiced counting in Spanish, English and Quechua as I jumped," said Jeff.

Jeff found himself at the orphanage that Saturday morning – and many others – through his work with the *célula ecológica*, or ecological committee, of the national Franciscan movement Justicia y Paz.

In addition to working on the orphanage's garden, which helps feed the orphanage's residents and nuns, the ecological committee also leads education initiatives. Jeff has been a part of presentations on parishes and schools about what can be recycled, what can be composted, and what has to just be thrown out. He has also helped at a youth retreat by running environmentally-focused games such as a recycling race with garbage sorting to help the kids learn about what can be recycled or composted.

Through the ecology committee, Jeff met Miguel, the formation director for local Secular Franciscans. Jeff has had many good conversations about what it means for Miguel to be a Secular Franciscan. Because Jeff was very interested in learning more, Miguel invited him to participate fully in the local OFS community as a inquirer, although Jeff will likely not complete his formation while in Bolivia.

"It has been very exciting to get to know another part of the Franciscan family here," Jeff said.

He has been enjoying discussing the OFS rule on Monday nights, reflecting with the candidates every Sunday, and meeting with the entire OFS group twice a month.

"Their commitment to their faith, which is expressed in the desire to live a life of simplicity working for peace and justice, has continued to challenge me throughout my time with them."

In early October, he was "filled with joy" to witness the three candidates make their professions to fully enter the OFS community. He has spent the past three months with them in their formation.

"As a 24-year-old who has committed a meager two years to a life centered in joy and simplicity, it has been amazing to share time and community with a fraternity that had already committed three of years of their lives preparing to make a larger life-long vow," he said.

We are delighted that Jeff is able to find support in the Secular Franciscan community abroad, and we look forward to the U.S. secular community welcoming him back at the end of his service in Bolivia. The St. Anthony of Nagasaki fraternity — whose meetings we are honored to host in our formation house — in particular has embraced many of our lay missioners during their training and re-entry over the years

To read Jeff's blog, or to make a donation in support of him, go to www.franciscanmissionservice.org/jeff_sved.

Travel to Bolivia and meet Jeff

Join Franciscan Mission Service in traveling to Bolivia from May 2-12, 2014. Visit Jeff, our other missioners and their Bolivian partners at their ministries in the city of Cochabamba and the rural college of Carmen Pampa in the Andes Mountains. This is your opportunity to learn about poverty and other social justice issues in one of the poorest countries in Latin America.

This Short-Term Mission and Global Awareness Trip is open to anyone who is interested, and a minimum of eight people must register and pay a deposit by January 15, 2014, for the trip to happen. For more information, including a sample itinerary, see http://franciscanmissionservice.org/bolivia_trip

Can't make it in May? We'd love to organize a Short-Term Mission and Global Awareness Trip to Bolivia or South Africa for your fraternity. Email us at info@franciscanmissionservice.org to get started.



Giving Today and Tomorrow

Bea Sanford, OFS

Being a Secular Franciscan changed my life and I would hazard a guess that living the Rule and embracing the Franciscan spirit has probably changed your life as well. Through the Holy Spirit and this divinely inspired charism, I am able to integrate my core values with the life of a Secular Franciscan through daily conversion. I truly value the support of my local fraternity, along with the guidance from the regional, national, and even international level.

You can help secure the future of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order USA by making a tax-deductible gift **NOW** by sending a check for whatever amount you can.

On the other hand, you can make a gift that costs you nothing during your lifetime by making a planned gift. Planned gifts allow individuals to provide for themselves and their families, leave a permanent legacy for the future, while helping the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order USA. By making a planned gift, you may be able to increase your cash flow, reduce your estate and income taxes, and reduce or eliminate capital gains taxes

Unlike cash gifts or gifts of real estate or tangible property, planned gifts are donations that are meant to be paid at a future date. There are numerous benefits for individuals and for National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order USA. If you have sold a company or exercised stock options recently, making a planned gift may help you reduce your income taxes, eliminate capital gains taxes and estate taxes, provide for your family members, and ensure your support of National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order USA.

Life income gifts allow individuals to receive an income tax deduction, and a stream of payments during their lifetime while benefiting the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order USA in the future.

There are numerous ways to make a planned gift:

- Bequest through a Will or trust
- A life income gift such as a charitable remainder trust
- Providing for the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order USA through a lead trust, private foundation, donor-advised fund, or supporting organization
- Naming National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order USA as a beneficiary of an IRA or other retirement plan
- Assignment of a life insurance policy

To learn more about gifts that can benefit you, your family, and the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order USA contact:

Cecilia Maljan-Herbelin, OFS, Treasurer
1933 Tudor Drive
San Jacinto, CA 92583-6035
Phone 951-286-5284
Email cylmaljan@earthlink.net



*The fruit of silence is prayer.
The fruit of prayer is faith.
The fruit of faith is love.
The fruit of love is service.
The fruit of service is peace.*

Mother Teresa

FRANCISCAN LIVING

Expectations and Forgiveness

By Francine Gikow, SFO

Ever find yourself hypercritical of how your fraternity is run? Are you constantly finding the negative, rather than the positive in your community? If you are a past member of the Council, are you critical of how things are “not as good” rather than celebrating a renewal of life in fraternity? Are you vocal in broadcasting your dissatisfaction rather than going through the correct channels of positive feedback to the servant leaders in the fraternity? Complaints, negativity and power struggles become the norm and our life in fraternity suffers.

Unfortunately, conflict is not uncommon. Since we live in a life-long community, we are bound to experience tensions and challenges in our life with others. It is how these interpersonal challenges are met that makes the difference between a joyful, caring community or one so negative that it dies.

Nevertheless, if we look at these feelings as a spiritual journey, it is through prayer and solitude that we can examine ourselves and learn that God’s way is not our way. We learn that our issues about our fraternity life have to do with our own *expectations* about living in community? Do I *really expect* to always enjoy peace and joy with others without conflict or hard work? What *need* do I find in myself that is not being fulfilled to make me so critical? Do I have to be *in control* during an unstable period in my life? Do I think I am being ignored or undervalued?

It is important for long time fraternity members to examine our motives, approaches and expectations we have about life in community. Questioning in prayer, can lead to a conversion of heart and deeper life in the Spirit.

Are my expectations based in reality or are they merely wishes? Can we let go of our expectations and embrace change? Often our expectations can even exceed what is possible. After all, aren’t the people who we expect to be perfect, imperfect like ourselves? In the words of the gospel, can I remove the wooden beam from my eye before I complain about the splinter in another’s eye (Matt. 7:3)?

Consequently, can we forgive others for not fulfilling all our needs and desires? Can we forgive someone for not loving us in a way that only God can? In other words, *can we forgive someone for not being God?*

Yes, we can! We have to desire it and eventually we can forgive. Jesus instructed us to forgive “seventy-seven” times (Matt. 18:22). This ability to make the decision to forgive underlines our belief that we are not perfect. It reflects humility when we “let go” and give ourselves to God. We can become like the poor Christ who envisioned himself as a servant among servants. Christ did not get angry when someone did not believe in him. On the contrary, Jesus, repeatedly invited, loved and forgave those who opposed him.

A fraternity’s healing from division doesn’t just stop at forgiveness however. We must heal the woundedness of negativity by reconciling with each other. Through forgiveness and reconciliation, we can begin to celebrate each brother or sister as a reflection of God’s unconditional love. God loves us perfectly even though we are imperfect in our own eyes, but not in His!

Fraternal reconciliation really is a gift! It cements the bonds of fraternity, which become stronger than ever! Reconciliation celebrates seeing how God sees and values each person’s unique contribution to fraternity. Celebrating our uniqueness means to lift up, affirm, and rejoice in each person’s grace and gifts.

Negativity, criticism and blame are serious concerns in a fraternity. We, as Secular Franciscans, must have the courage to examine ourselves *first* to see if we are the cause of dissension in the fraternity before we accuse others. We have to practice forgiveness, reconciliation and the rejoicing in each person’s gift and grace. Then, and only then, can our fraternity truly become a reflection of God’s love to others.



Wanted: Executive Director for *The Dwelling Place*, a small Franciscan retreat/prayer center in rural Mississippi. The Dwelling Place, founded on the charism of St. Francis, offers both hospitality and prayer opportunities for renewal of spirit, mind and body. These occasions are provided through private or directed retreats, prayer and spiritual counseling and weekend retreat experiences for those who seek peace, joy and healing. For more information, contact Mary Horrell at www.dwellingplace.com, email address: dwellingpl@gmail.com or telephone 662-738-5348.

Little Weeds

Gimme that ol' time reverence . . .

By M. Marko, OFS

I went on a retreat, the topic of which was “reverence.” Upon seeing the title of it on the booklet, I had to wonder a bit. I mean, what is reverence? It is the awe with which we behold God. Period. And they’re gonna get a whole retreat outta this?

But it soon became obvious that reverence isn’t just for God, anymore than love, respect, consideration, etc., are just for God. And reverence works like these other things – if you truly feel them for God, you’ll feel them for everyone else, too. Just as you can’t love God and hate your neighbor, you can’t truly reverence Him if you have no respect for your neighbor. Once this connection is made, between the Creator and His creatures, it’s easy to see what reverence comprised and how one should go about including it in everyday life. It also becomes easy to see how little reverence seems to play in today’s world, even in our own individual lives. Reverence is a little like a budget: it looks great on paper, but it doesn’t always translate into real life that easily.

The easiest thing about reverence – and the hardest thing at the same time – is that it is comprehensive: no one and nothing is left out. You cannot be reverent only at work, or only at home, or only by yourself, or only for a certain amount of time each day. It’s for everyone, for everywhere, for everything, and 24/7.

It’s fairly easy to see the need for reverence where others are concerned. We’re all children of God. The idiot in the supply department, the jerk next door, your stupid brother-in-law – they’re all children of God and due a modicum of respect and reverence. (I didn’t say this is easy...) And let’s face it – they’re probably not too thrilled with you either.

But reverence goes beyond people. It extends to animals and our environment. There’s an old axiom that says you can tell how people treat other by how they treat animals. That’s true up to a point. Granted, you wouldn’t want someone who tortures animals over for dinner. But even if someone is kind to animals, they can still be pretty nasty to people. Why they’re nice to animals should be considered.

Is that little dog doted upon because she’s a child substitute? Or is it because she’s a good example of the wonder of God’s work? Is the Doberman kept well fed because it’ll eat someone’s face if it isn’t? Or is it well fed because not feeding it properly would be cruel and show a lack of respect for God’s creation? After all, God made animals first. They’re an important part of a well-ordered world.

We’re very environment conscious nowadays. That’s a good/bad thing. Good, because we’re finally aware of the damage that’s being done to Mother Earth and the fact that something has to be done. Bad, because it took so long to wake up and so much has already been done that can’t be undone. Species have become extinct (and continue to do so), forests have disappeared, and delicate ecosystems have been irreversibly upset – all in the name of “progress.” We’re finally catching on to the fact that we’re merely among the players on the stage – we ain’t the whole theatre.

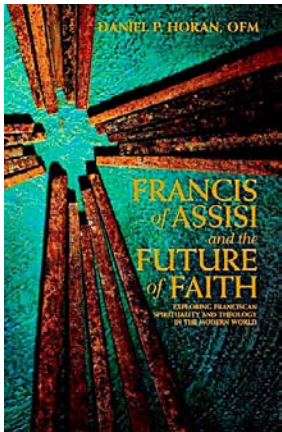
So by now it’s pretty obvious reverence is a full-time job. But remember when I said above that it’s called for even when you’re alone? Well, one way of showing disrespect for God is a lack of reverence for ourselves. We sell ourselves short; we dwell on what we can’t do and overlook what we can do. We know God doesn’t make junk; but, on occasion, we might think He was havin’ a bad day when He made us.

This doesn’t mean we go about demanding respect. If we live up to our Rule of Life, respect will come automatically. And I’m not talking about the groveling, kowtowing of sycophants. (Just as well: who can afford a good sycophant nowadays?) We’ll get the quiet respect we deserve, because it will be obvious you have that same respect and reverence for others.

Francis is the Patron Saint of ecology. At first glance, this might seem odd. It’s not like ecology was a hot-potato subject in his day. (Was there even a word for it back then?) But he was one with his world; he knew he was only part of the picture, that everyone and everything else had important parts to play, too. Everyone, everything was his brother or sister. That’s the reverence we’re called to.



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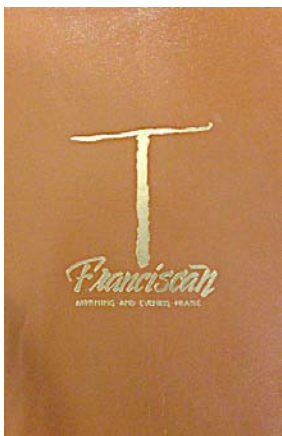


Francis of Assisi and the Future of Faith
 Exploring Franciscan Spirituality and Theology in the Modern World”
 by Fr. Daniel P. Horan, OFM

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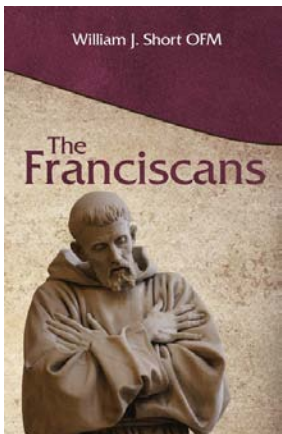
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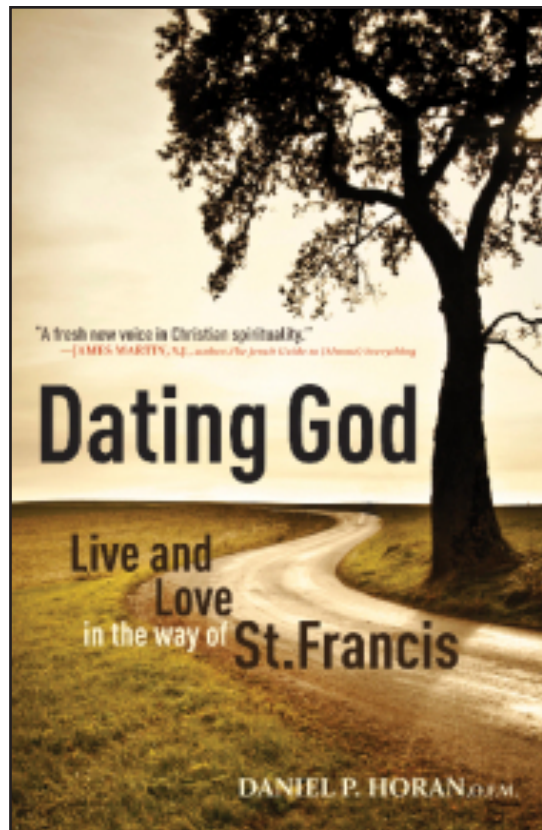
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Fr. Daniel Horan, OFM was the Formation speaker at the 2013 NAFRA Chapter.