

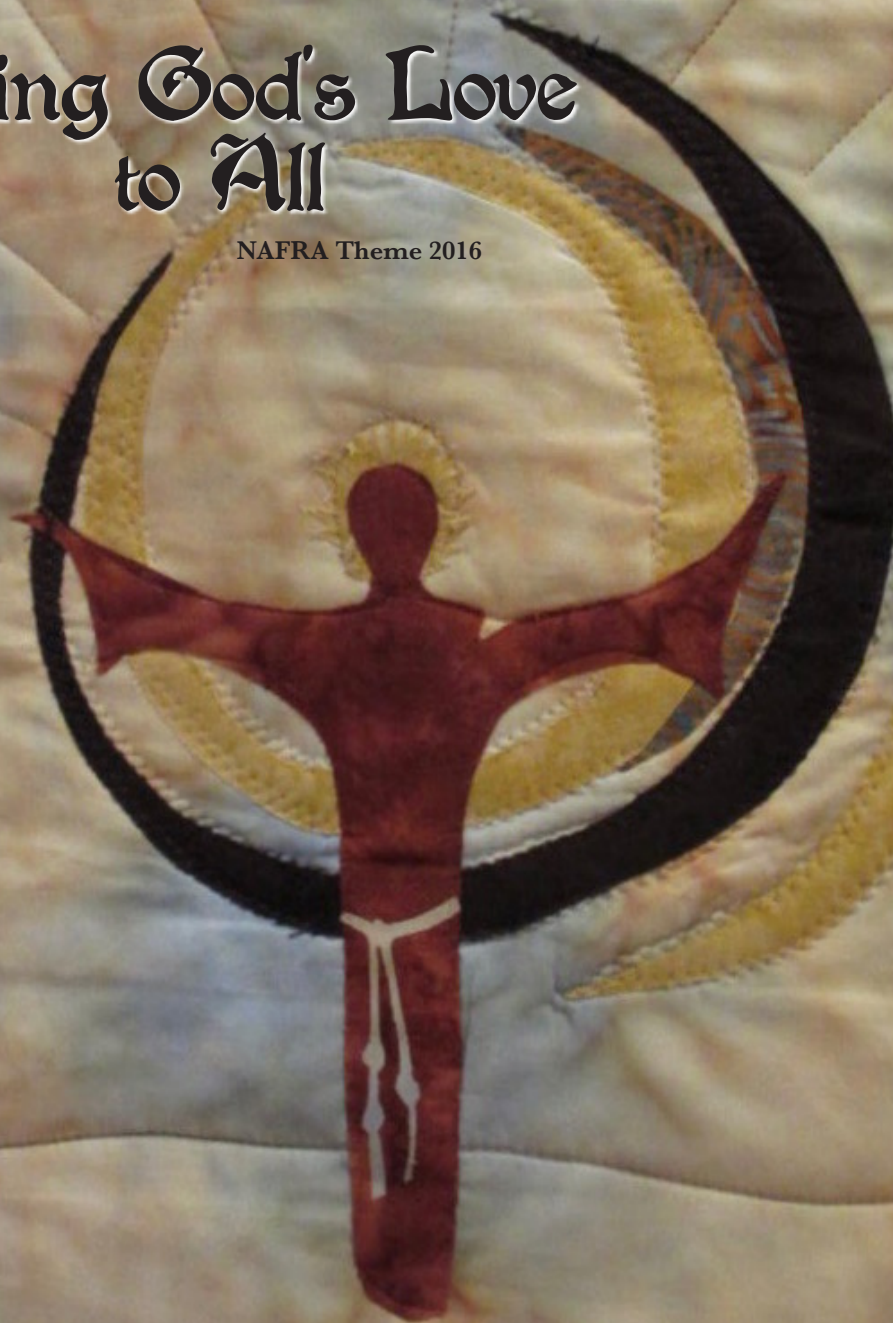
TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

Winter 2015 ISSUE 86

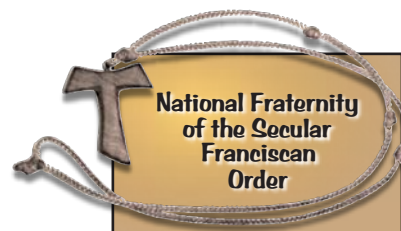
Bring God's Love
to All

NAFRA Theme 2016



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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Note:

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MINISTER'S MESSAGE

National Minister, Jan Parker, OFS

FINDING JOY IN OUR LITTLENESS

As I write my first TAU article as National Minister, I am thinking about each one of you, my brothers and sisters. So many of you have touched my life and made a difference! In this Advent season one of you in particular comes to mind, and that would be Charlie Markus, OFS.

I met Charlie 30 years ago at St. Crispin Friary in St. Louis. We began formation together and professed together in 1988. Charlie was a Navy veteran and a retired factory worker who spent time every day walking around the city. Many referred to him as "Walkin' Charlie."

During our formation, Charlie impressed me so much. One afternoon we were discussing a chapter from Omer Englebert's biography of St. Francis. Charlie pulled out another book from his back pocket. It was "Francis, Brother of the Universe" by Marvel Comics. He opened that comic book and showed us a page that got right to the heart of the matter at hand. It was a "God-moment" that I have never forgotten.

God touches our hearts in the most simple yet profound ways. When God wanted to be close to us, he got right to the heart of the matter. He became one of us. God became human, stepping into our poverty, our littleness, so he could love us with a human heart. So simple, yet so profound.

When our brother Francis wanted to understand this poverty of Christ, he got right to the heart of the matter as well. He set up a manger scene so we could see "with our bodily eyes"¹ the reality of the birth of Jesus. We look upon the Babe of Bethlehem. We begin to understand, and are filled with wonder. Simple, but profound.

What Charlie taught me that day was a lesson in simplicity and the joy of littleness. I needed his Franciscan example then, and I turn to it now again, so many years later.



Life can get complicated. There are many demands on our time. Every day we are busy! We work hard to prove to ourselves that we have it all together. We strive to live up to an identity that the world would applaud – but that is not who we are.

Jesus shows us another way – a way of poverty, of littleness. He comes to us as a Child, as Bread, so we can touch him, love him, hold him, and know the love of the Father. We, too, must come as little children.

Lord, are we poor enough to be your saints? Have we strived to purify our hearts from every tendency and yearning for power and possession? Can we admit that we do not have all the answers? We truly are poor and in need.

Show us our poverty, Lord! Help us to admit that we are in need of you. Help us open our hearts to Christ, to the Eucharist, to one another. Call us to conversion. Then we shall rejoice in our littleness, for God is at work within us!

It is only in this way - in recognizing our poverty – that we truly become who God created us to be. In our littleness, we are free and at peace. We stop grasping. In our poverty, we embody and reflect the peace, love, and joy of Christ. In our poverty, Christ can be born in us – and born in our world!

Following in the footsteps of St. Francis and rejoicing in his littleness, our brother Charlie knew what Christmas was all about. Charlie was famous for saying, "Every morning is Christmas...and every evening is Thanksgiving," and he was right.

1. "...see with bodily eyes" is a phrase is from *The Life of St. Francis*, by Thomas of Celano, Chapter 30. Chapter 30 is entitled "The Manger He Made in Celebration of the Lord's Birth." I would strongly encourage you to read this Chapter with your fraternity during the Christmas season. It can be found in **Francis of Assisi - The Saint: Early Documents, vol. 1** by Regis J. Armstrong, on page 254; and in other places.

NATIONAL CHAPTER OF ELECTIONS

by
Bob & Mary Stronach, OFS



Meet the New National Executive Council

BRING GOD'S LOVE TO ALL

THE SUN THAT NEVER SETS

“Love and fraternal friendship.” That’s the essence of coming together in chapter, outgoing National Vice Minister Elaine Hedtke, OFS, declared at the opening of the national gathering in Clinton, NJ, on Tuesday, Oct. 13.

In fact, “it’s built into our DNA” as Franciscans, she said.

That theme permeated the chapter as regional ministers, officers, delegates, friars, guests and observers renewed acquaintances or made new friends.

Our Lady of Angels Region hosted the gathering under the leadership of Regional Minister Diane Menditto, OFS, and Planning Chair Ron Pihokker, OFS.

It also was a chapter of elections, with Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, of Hungary installing a new executive council on Saturday and General Spiritual Assistant Amando Trujillo-Cano, TOR, of Rome, Italy, witnessing for the church.

Outgoing National Secretary Jan Parker, OFS, appeared visibly shaken at her election as national minister, but quickly quipped: “Christ is the sun that never sets.”



Elaine Hedtke, OFS
OUTGOING NATIONAL VICE MINISTER



Jan Parker, OFS
NATIONAL MINISTER

DAY 1 GREAT JOY

During the opening mass, Msgr. William Benwell, vicar general of the Diocese of Metuchen, expressed “great joy” at welcoming Secular Franciscans to the diocese, especially since he is a spiritual assistant to one of the New Jersey fraternities.

Monsignor Benwell mentioned he had the opportunity to visit the tombs of several saints whose churches were practically empty. But when he visited Assisi to pray at Francis’ tomb, he was one among thousands. So many “wanted to capture something of the spirit of Francis,” who lived by his own words, “To me life is Christ.”

Following mass, Youth and Young



Msgr. William Benwell
DIOCESAN VICAR GENERAL

Adult Commission Co-chair Christy Nelson, OFS, gave an update on the “SHINE” approach to reaching out to “younger” folk. She and her co-chair mom, Sue Nelson, created SHINE toolkits to guide interested fraternities. “The game plan,” Christy said, “is to bring the next generation of Catholics closer to Christ through Franciscan spiritual experiences.”

ECUMENICAL FRANCISCAN: A FOCUS ON FRANCIS AND CLARE

No stranger to a Secular Franciscan national gathering, Soshana Kay was warmly welcomed as a sister, albeit ecumenical, Franciscan. As co-minis-



Soshana Kay, OEF

ter of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, she shared her poem about differences and similarities of the orders. Difference in size (“thousands upon thousands” vs. “tens upon tens”) and age (“800 years old” vs “30 something”) and membership (“Catholic and Protestant” vs Catholic). “But at our deepest cores, the differ-

ence fades fast...”

“We want to follow Jesus like Francis and Clare.

We want to kiss the leper, feed the hungry, save the planet, stop the violence, end the war, tear down the walls, build the bridges, light the darkness, rebuild the Church.”

PAGE 2

Attendees at the National Chapter got to visit the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark, N.J. INSET: National leaders, front l-r, Vice Minister Mary Bittner, Minister Jan Parker, Secretary Mattie Ward; rear, l-r: Councilor Joan Geiger, Councilor Willie Guadalupe, Treasurer Jerry Rousseau, International Councilor Mary Stronach, Councilor Mary Frances Charsky, and CNSA President-in-Turn Friar Bob Brady.

They recommended a simple approach to connect with youth and young adults – reach out to them in their situations, and ask how to be of assistance. Change from “come to our meeting” to “how can we serve you?” In other words, Christy said, it’s about “SHINING your spiritual light.”

DAY 2 REJOICE ALWAYS

“Rejoice!”

That was the title and theme for Deacon Tom Bello’s address to the chapter Wednesday, Oct. 14. Despite battling cancer, the outgoing national minister rejoiced in Pope Francis’ visit to the U.S. and his speech before the U.S. Congress.

“Rejoice in the Lord always...” he quoted. “The Lord is near... Have no anxiety at all.”

He called on fraternities to take action in a number of ways:

- Have a mentor for every candidate in formation.
- Have candidates choose and complete a service apostolate before profession.
- Be mindful of how fraternity gatherings are conducted. It’s not all business; or, rather, the real business of the order is each other – “our relationships.” “We need time together, social sharing... That’s how we keep and welcome new members.”

COMMITTEES REPORT

The afternoon featured group breakouts by geographic region and brief appearances by commission and



Deacon Tom Bello, OFS
OUTGOING NATIONAL MINISTER



Barb Morgan, Kate Kleinert, Judy Haupt and Susan Simeone
THE QUINQUENNIAL COMMITTEE

committee chairs.

“Regional formation directors were enthused about getting together, sharing, networking,” National Formation Chair Mary Ann Lenzi, OFS, said about the national formation workshop held earlier in the year.

Noted Ecumenical/Interfaith Chair Anne Mulqueen, OFS: “I’ve been a witness to the essential unity of the church” through dialogue and collaboration among the orders; namely, the Secular Franciscan Order, the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, and the Anglican Third Order Society of St. Francis. (The latter two were represented at the chapter.)

“See you in St. Louis!” enthused Quinquennial Committee members as they encouraged people to start registering for the July 2016 event.

Quipped Computer Committee Chair Dan Mulholland, OFS: “We fulfill a function that St. Francis never envisioned.”

“Translations of the Tau and formation materials are slowly expanding,” especially in Spanish and Korean, noted Communications Committee Chair Cindy Wesley, OFS.

“Develop an elevator speech about the Secular Franciscan Order,” urged Vocations Chair Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS, in a video message. (She arrived a day later.)



Mary Ann Lenzi, OFS; Anne Mulqueen, OFS; Cindy Wesley, OFS, and Dan Mulholland, OFS.



Friar Christopher Panagoplos, TOR

SEE WITH EYES OF FAITH

A fraternity gathering like the national chapter is a “fraternal expression” where we see reality “with the eyes of faith,” National Spiritual Assistant Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, noted at the Wednesday evening mass.

Prayer and community are essential, he said, for the Holy Spirit to be involved in chapter decisions.

REVIVE OUR SPIRIT

The Q Committee helped to cap off the day by noting: the Quinquennial Congress in July 2016 will be about “**Reviving Our Spirit.**”

Committee member Kate Kleintert, OFS, said they would be asking attendees to bring or send hygiene products for “blessing bags” to give to the homeless through St. Anthony’s Food Pantry in St. Louis.

DAY 3

NON-CATHOLICS HAIL ‘LAUDATO SI’

Non-Catholics may be as intrigued as Catholics by Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Laudato Si*, Anglican Fr. Mosud Ibn Syedulla, TSSF, told the gathering Thursday morning, especially since it speaks to the whole world. In fact, he said, the interfaith committee of Ecumenical, Anglican and Catholic Franciscans is planning a conference on *Laudato Si*. “It’s a centerpiece for our work... to help heal the world.”



Fr. Mosud Ibn Syedulla, TSSF, and Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS

ORDER EYES CHALLENGES

“Concrete problems” afflict too many fraternities around the world, noted Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS – which is why the 2014 General Chapter put a focus on “how to manage an order like the OFS.”

While management is a term more often seen in business, with the Secular Franciscan Order it’s about “building the kingdom of God,” about “fraternal animation and guidance.”

He listed problems the International Council (CIOFS) has identified:

- misunderstanding the roles of minister and vice minister.
- councilors not open to collaboration, support, advice (see it as interfering rather than helpful).

- insufficient involvement by the non-elected.
- lack of permanent structure/positions.
- self-isolation (such as in a parish or local community).
- insufficient visitations (fraternal and pastoral).
- insufficient collaboration with the Franciscan Family.
- insufficient involvement in church structure.
- lack of horizontal and vertical communication.
- lack of understanding of OFS/YouFra relationship.

(A NAFRA committee, chaired by International Councilor Mary Stronach, OFS, is addressing the “management of the order” issue, with plans to submit recommendations to CIOFS.)

‘DAY AWAY’

The great majority of chapter attendees spent the afternoon in the “day away” program, visiting Liberty Park (with many riding the ferry to Ellis Island and around the Statue of Liberty) and then traveling to the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark (see cover), where Auxiliary Bishop Manuel Cruz celebrated mass and welcomed the Franciscan visitors.



Auxiliary Bishop Manuel Cruz welcomed Chapter participants.

JPIC AWARD HONORS AFRICAN NUN FOR ORPHAN WORK

Sister Caritas Barajingitwa, LSOSF, dreamed of providing a loving home and practical education for orphans in Africa. With the help of American donations, that dream came true when she opened Holy Family Vocational Orphanage in Southern Uganda.

For her work, the U.S. Secular Franciscan Order, meeting in national chapter in Clinton, NJ, Oct. 13-18, honored Sister Caritas with the Franciscan Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Award.

JPIC Commission Chair Carolyn Townes, OFS, introduced Sister Caritas, citing her for creating a future for children of AIDS victims.

The award includes a \$2,500 prize. The money is earmarked for a new school, said Sister Caritas, a member of the African-based Little Sisters of St. Francis.

The orphanage houses 18 children, and includes 13 acres for farming plus 13 acres for future dormitories and a new school, eventually to accommodate 100 children.

Sister Caritas got the idea for the orphanage while pursuing a master's degree in education in the late 1990s at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec. In fact, the idea became her master's thesis, she said.

"Going back to Uganda, I thought it would be just a matter of putting the project into place,"



Sr. Caritas Barajingitwa, LSOSF, embraces JPIC Chair Carolyn Townes, OFS, during the awards ceremony.

she recalled. "I went door to door begging, to no avail."

But God opened another door, as she would put it.

The pastor of St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Binghamton, NY wrote a letter to the mother superior of the Little Sisters, asking her to send one of her sisters to work in his parish. The mother superior summoned Sister Caritas and told her she was going to the United States. She arrived in June 2001. Two years later, thanks to donations

by American Catholics, she was able to open Holy Family Vocational Orphanage and welcome the children into its protection.

Secular Franciscans and other friends in Binghamton established the Holy Family Vocational Orphanage Foundation to continue raising funds for the orphanage and further Sister Caritas' dream.

A proponent of teaching practical life skills as well as academics, Sister Caritas said the orphanage teaches home economics, carpentry, basket weaving, sewing and tailoring, and farming and animal husbandry.

However, sister noted, for the orphans, "knowing that they are loved is most important" because "then they will be able to love others."

ON GLOBAL JPIC TEAM

National JPIC Commission Chair Carolyn Townsend, OFS, has been appointed to the Order's international JPIC team.

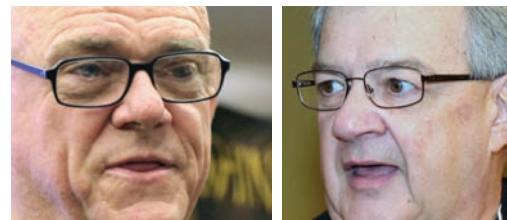
DAY 4

CNSA TALKS TRAINING

"Your Rule helps me understand my own," Fr. Chris Panagoplos, TOR, noted in a session conducted by the Conference of National Spiritual

Assistants (CNSA). He made that statement after being officially welcomed by Br. Bob Brady, OFM, CNSA president-in-turn.

Brother Bob also thanked Fr. Matthias Wesnofske, OFM Cap., who was completing his term on



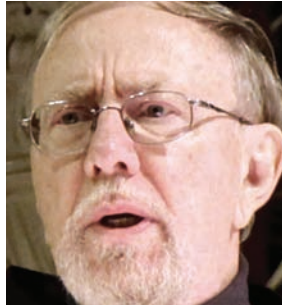
Friars Bob Brady, OFM, & Chris Panagoplos, TOR.

CNSA, sparking a standing ovation for the friar.

Brother Bob announced that the new Conventual member of CNSA will be Fr. Linus DiSantis, OFM Conv., currently stationed in Syracuse, NY.

They introduced guidelines for spiritual assistant training, with CNSA Executive Secretary Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, OFS, giving an overview:

- Franciscan Family Connections is the basic text.
- Additional resources include the FUN Manual, Essential Documents of the Secular Franciscan Order, and Handbook for Spiritual Assistants.



Friar Matthias Wesnofske, OFM Cap., and Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, OFS.

• While over half of SA training programs are correspondence-based, more and more are combining correspondence and in-person classes. Whatever the type of training, “you have to have internships and mentoring.”

Friar Bob encouraged regional ministers to be in touch with provincial spiritual assistants as much as possible, especially since provincial SAs are the ones who appoint spiritual assistants.

THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS: FRANCIS' CALL

“From the fast and furious to the Passion of Christ.”

That’s how General Spiritual Assistant Amando Trujillo-Cano, TOR, described St. Francis’ vocational call.

He and Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, capped Friday morning with formation presentations.

Francis wasn’t always saintly, the friar said. Before his conversion, he hit “rock bottom.”

After his conversion, when he embraced the leper, Francis also was embracing the suffering Christ. His mercy toward lepers was the same mercy he experienced from God. “That which seemed bitter became sweet.”

Father Amando echoed what Francis wrote, “the Lord gave me brothers” to live the Gospel life, just as Jesus said, “You are brothers.”

The Lord also called Clare. In fact, he said, Francis cannot be fully understood without Clare. Plus, the Holy Spirit attracted “other penitents” to the experience of fraternity.

Francis didn’t have a GPS device



Friar Amando Trujillo-Cano, TOR

to find his way. Instead he looked for God’s clue, and found it in the Portiuncula, where it became clear that “the essence of St. Francis’ vocation was following Christ in evangelical poverty.” He embraced Christ’s humility and poverty with joy. Even the “perfect joy” of being scorned and rejected by his own, as he imagined in a lesson told to Brother Leo.

Hearing Christ’s call to repair his

church, Francis rebuilt three small churches until he realized the wider mission of calling people to conversion.

Sacramental life – Christ in the Eucharist – was central to Francis, and the Franciscan calling. In fact, Fr. Amando said, Francis was “dancing to God’s music.” In other words, he was open to the Holy Spirit. “If he was a great saint, it was because he let the Holy Spirit guide him.”

OFS IS REAL VOCATION

Tibor opened his talk with a comment on the church-endorsed reality of the Secular Franciscan Order: “Our vocation is a real vocation... It is a call of God.”

He went on to describe some characteristics of the Secular Franciscan vocation. Thanks to the love of God, he said, Secular Franciscans are free to do good; they’re inventive and talented; they’re sensitive for justice; they’re respectful of creation; they’re seeking peace; they’re seeking simple solutions; they seek minimum instruments but maximum compassion and solidarity; and they have courageous meekness and tender determination.

LEADERS URGE FRATERNITIES TO EMBRACE THE VULNERABLE

Secular Franciscan leaders are calling on their 600-plus Franciscan fraternities across the U.S. “to take action and help adopt and embrace migrants and our most vulnerable people.”

Meeting in national chapter in Clinton, NJ, Oct. 13-18, the 40 leaders and delegates issued a statement, declaring “our solidarity with the poor, the marginalized and refugees.”

Referring to Pope Francis’ call in *Laudato Si* “to recognize that other human beings have a value of their own in God’s eyes,” they asked: “How is God calling us to care for His creation with a human face?... How do we respond to their basic human rights and needs with Franciscan care and love?”

The statement continued: “Thousands of migrants are seeking a homeland to escape terror-

ism, persecution and even death. This is the largest migration since the early 20th century.”

It concluded: “We pray with Pope Francis in *Laudato Si*: ‘Oh God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes’.”

The leaders and delegates represent some 13,000 Secular Franciscans.



Mary Anne Lenzi, OFS

FORMATION: ENCOUNTERING BEAUTY

Reflecting the Franciscan notion of universal kinship with all of creation, Formation Chair Mary Anne Lenzi offered a “breath of fresh air” in a pictorial slideshow presentation titled, “The Beauty of It All.”

“Open your heart to praise beauty,” she suggested, then quoted Francis: “You are holy, Lord God, who does wonderful things... You are all our sweetness.”

She would comment on an image, then pause and encourage reflection:

- the order and harmony of the created world results from the diversity of being.
- “Laudato Si” points to nature as

a magnificent book in which God speaks to us.

- The world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and prayer.
- Beauty is another name for God.
- Escape to a place of beauty. (How easy is it to notice beauty around you? What gets in your way?)
- While Thomas of Celano referred to Francis, in art, praising the Artist (with capital A), John Duns Scotus saw God as a loving and liberal creator, saw the absolute irreplaceable value of each thing, and saw the enormous dignity of the created order.

It’s about being open to the heart of the Spirit, Mary Ann concluded – about seeing harmony, balance, rhythm around us. A kind of union called Beauty.

SMELLING THE FLOWERS

Father Matthias picked up on the formation theme of appreciating beauty in his homily at the Friday evening mass.

Imagine taking a walk with Jesus, and then with Francis, stopping to notice the birds, the grass, the trees, the flowers.

In the message of divine providence in the day’s readings, “God cares even for these small birds.”

The Franciscan way is a way of simplicity, he said.

“We pray without anxiety, without worry (because if God cares for even the sparrows, imagine how much more He cares for us).”

DAY 5

CHAPTER ADOPTS BUDGET, THEME

Among the final items of business before the chapter headed into Saturday’s elections, the body:

- approved a \$273,150 budget for 2016.
- issued a statement of solidarity with refugees (see top of page).
- adopted a new theme for the year:

‘Bring God’s love to all!’

CHAPTER ELECTS LEADERS FOR NEXT 3 YEARS

Jan Parker, OFS, of O'Fallon, MO, was elected national minister Saturday afternoon. She and the other newly elected leaders serve a three-year term.

Jan was national secretary for the past six years and before that, was regional minister of St. Clare Region. Jan, who has three adult children, works in the family business, and formerly was a full-time pastoral associate and coordinator of music and liturgy for her parish.

The other members of the national executive council are:

- Vice Minister **Mary Bittner**, OFS, of Ypsilanti, MI, a national councilor for the past six years. Before that she was regional minister of Divine Mercy Region for six years. Mary is an associate research scientist at University of Michigan Medical School, Ann Arbor, MI.

- Secretary **Mattie Ward**, OFS, of New Hope, PA, regional minister of Saint Katharine Drexel Region for nearly nine years. Mattie is employed

as deputy clerk to a federal district judge.

- Treasurer **Jerry Rousseau**, OFS, of Blairsville, GA, regional minister of Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region for the past five years. A retired director for Delta Airlines, Jerry and his wife, Madeline, have four children.

- International Councilor **Mary Stronach**, OFS, of Marcy, NY. This is her second term. Previously she was formation director for St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region. She teaches Spanish at Utica College, is outreach coordinator for MAMI Interpreters, and operates Stronach Associates public relations consulting. Mary and her husband, Robert, have two daughters and three sons.

- National Councilor **Mary Frances Charsky**, OFS, of Binghamton, NY. This is her second term. She also was elected alternate international councilor. Previously she was regional minister of St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region. She is a

retired elementary school principal.

- National Councilor **Awilda (Willie) Guadalupe**, OFS, of Newnan, GA. She has served as a regional councilor for Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region, and on the national communications committee. A retired civilian employee of the Department of Defense, Willie and her husband, Israel, have two daughters.

- National Councilor **Joan Geiger**, SFO, of Bellerose, NY, regional minister of Tau Cross Region for more than five years. She is retired from the New York City Department of Education.

- President-in-turn of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants Friar **Bob Brady**, OFM, of Oakland, CA. A national spiritual assistant since 2006, the Franciscan brother has been involved in ministry to the elderly and in social work at shelters, drop-in centers and with Catholic Charities. He also spent six years at his order's headquarters in Rome, Italy.

ALWAYS TIME FOR FRANCISCAN JOY



Sharing The Vision

News from the 2015 National Fraternity Chapter

Summary of the National Minister's State of the Order Address

The State of the Order address given by Tom Bello, OFS is posted on the NAFRA website in its entirety.

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:4-7

The organizing principle for this Annual Report will be the six priorities set by the National Fraternity to build Fraternity: Spiritual Assistance, Formation, Youth, Outreach/JPIC, Communication and Vocations. These priorities on building fraternity should also keep the joy of Christ front and center. In other words, it is not only WHAT we are doing, for example, Formation or JPIC, but also HOW we are doing it, prayerfully, with the joy of Christ.

Fraternity is essential to our Secular Franciscan call. Fraternity is where we Secular Franciscans work out our salvation and the salvation of our sisters and brothers. *"Perhaps no aspect of the Secular Franciscan life should be of more concern to those called to leadership than the vitality of the fraternity, be it local, regional, national or international."*

Two great concerns

We continue to show both a lack of knowledge of the Essential Documents and of the Franciscan Charism and the lack of a sincere lifelong commitment to living intensely the Gospel life of Christ in the footsteps of Saints Francis and Clare.

Recommendations

- (1) More individual and fraternal prayer from our hearts at every Secular Franciscan gathering.
- (2) Better Formation, from Initial to Ongoing, in every Fraternity, Local, Regional and National, at every opportunity.

- (3) More social sharing and JOY at every Secular Franciscan gathering.

Action Items

- (1) Every single fraternity in every Region needs Spiritual Assistance.
- (2) Every professed Secular Franciscan asks the Holy Spirit for guidance on how to bring more and better prayer into one's life and the life of the fraternity, and then follow the Spirit's lead!
- (3) Every year, with the single exception of those years when we try to gather the whole Franciscan family at a Quinquennial, the National Formation Team will gather all the Regional Formation Directors, and every year on a different date, the Regional Formation Teams will gather all the Local Fraternity Formation Directors to discuss formation.
- (4) Every Candidate in every local fraternity (1) has a mentor from that fraternity, in addition to the formation director, to journey with the Candidate, (2) at the beginning of Candidacy receives or purchases the Essential Documents, and does homework in the documents between each Candidacy session, (3) reads Friar Felice Cangelosi's article on profession, (4) watches Friar Richard Trezza's two YouTube presentations on Profession, (5) discusses both articles and both presentations with the mentor and/or formation director and/or other candidates, (6) chooses and completes a service apostolate to the satisfaction of the mentor or formation director prior to Profession.
- (5) Every Secular Franciscan gathering will have time for social interaction between and among sisters and brothers. "I give you a new commandment: love one another" John 13:34-35. This love should be seen in our joy and our

caring, regardless of disagreements or contentious discussions. Without others seeing our love and our joy, how can we ever keep the people we now have or receive from the Lord new membership and life?

- (6) Continue our National Communications Committee.
- (7) Every Fraternity at every level, local, regional and national, will adopt and report progress on at

least one apostolate to the margins, as each fraternity so defines those margins. Examples: ministry to the homebound in our own Franciscan family, to the hungry and homeless, the imprisoned and hospitalized in our local areas, or international outreach to migrants and refugees, the sick and suffering throughout the world.

Other Chapter Highlights

Presentations by Minister General and General Spiritual Assistant

Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS and General Spiritual Assistant Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR gave presentations at Chapter on the following topics. Summaries of these talks are posted on the NAFRA website. Of particular impact was Tibor Kauser's Specifics of the Secular Franciscan Vocation, which addresses the heart of our call as Secular Franciscans. A study and discussion of any of these presentations would be valuable for individual or fraternity formation.

- Management of the Secular Franciscan Order
- Specifics of St. Francis' Call
- Specifics of the Secular Franciscan Vocation

Spiritual Assistant Training Guidelines

The Task Force on Spiritual Assistant Development in conjunction with the CNSA has developed Spiritual Assistant Training Program Guidelines for Regions. Copies of these very important guidelines were distributed to all Regional Ministers attending the 2015 NAFRA Chapter.

CIOFS Project for "Management of the Order"

The Management of the Order Committee facilitated a focus group activity. A national survey of all OFS members will follow. Recommendations on "how the Order can live up to the vision of St. Francis" will be part of the Committee's report to CIOFS.

Bequest and Donations

In July 2015 the National Fraternity received a \$54,861.39 bequest from the estate of Bernice A. Wrablik, of St. Louis, Missouri. Bernice was aware of the Order through friendships with Secular Franciscans in St. Clare Region. We are blessed and grateful!

During the Chapter the National Fraternity approved the following donations: \$9000 to Terra Sancta Ministries (Franciscan Outreach to those living in the Holy Land); \$6000 to CIOFS designated for aid to the OFS Fraternities in the Holy Land; and \$1000 each to the following five charities: South Carolina Flood Relief, Franciscans International, Franciscan Mission Service, Amazon Relief, and Franciscan Family Apostolate.



* TRANSLATORS STILL NEEDED *

As many of you may know, the TAU USA is also published in Spanish and Korean. We started publishing and mailing hard copies in Spanish about 1½ years ago. Last year we began putting Korean translations of three articles for each edition on the NAFRA website. Recently we acquired eight more Korean translators! Thanks to those who are volunteering to do this wonderful work!

BUT... we are still in need of two or three more bilingual Spanish speakers to help with translations. We also need four or five more bilingual Korean Secular Franciscans so we can translate the entire TAU USA edition each time.

Please contact Cindy Wesley, cw93444@gmail.com if you can help.

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

BUDGET FOR 2016

Approved at NAFRA Chapter October 16, 2015

Acct # - - - INCOME - - - - -	AMOUNT
6110 FAIR SHARE @ \$17 (12,494 professed & 1063 candidates in 2015)	\$ 230,469
6120 INTEREST	\$ 145
6200 FORMATION BOOK SALES	\$ 42,400
6140 MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 10,236
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 283,250
- - - EXPENSES - - - - -	
7110 CIOFS FAIR SHARE (19,738 Euros for 2016)	\$ 22,500
7115 FAN	\$ 12,500
7120 NEWSLETTER	\$ 55,000
7130 ANNUAL MEETING	\$ 58,000
7135 QUINQUENNIAL meeting expenses only	\$ 13,100
7140 COUNCIL OFFICERS	\$ 3,000
7145 CIOFS MEETING	\$ -
7150 COUNCIL MEETINGS	\$ 19,000
7155 LIABILITY INSURANCE actual cost	\$ 3,800
7160 CIOFS VISITATION (2016 Visitation)	\$ 7,500
7172 JPIC AWARD	\$ 3,000
7173 ARCHIVES	\$ 2,250
7175 HISTORIAN	\$ -
7176 COMPUTER COMMITTEE	\$ 9,000
7180 FORMATION - PRINTING	\$ 20,000
7180 L FORMATION - PRINTING Language	\$ -
7181 FORMATION COMMISSION	\$ 9,000
7182 S A Training Program Development	\$ -
7183 VOCATIONS COMMITTEE	\$ 1,500
7184 PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE	\$ 1,000
7186 JPIC COMMISSION	\$ 7,500
7187 YOUTH COMMISSION	\$ 9,500
7188 ECUMENICAL - INTERFAITH COMMITTEE	\$ 9,500
7198 COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE	\$ 3,600
7199 CONF NAT SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS	\$ 8,000
7200 OTHER EXPENSES	\$ 5,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 283,250
NET INCOME (DEFICIT)	\$ -



ANIMATING AND GUIDING THE ORDER – FOCUS GROUPS A CIOFS MANAGEMENT OF THE ORDER PROJECT

By Mary Stronach, OFS, International Councilor

Regional ministers from around the country, spiritual assistants, guests and observers gathered in teams of six or seven to discuss the Secular Franciscan Order during the National Chapter in October.

Their task was to address two questions:

1. What will it take to develop our Order fully?
2. What can be done to bring about that development?

The energetic discussions revealed a vision and understanding that, while we are talking about a world order, it is very personal and spiritual. We need “spiritually mature members, responsive to the spirit and a commitment to better formation,” they said. Put the Franciscan charism and history, the Rule, Constitution, and Statutes at the forefront of both initial and ongoing formation. We should be forming our councils at all levels, forming our formators and our spiritual assistants.

We should take formation to a new level by using the Internet – social media, webinars, accessing our websites more frequently. Let’s have “technology partners,” they said, who can assist those who need help with the new technology. We should also be using the social media and media to make the world aware of us.

Communication is important, both vertical and horizontal, they said. It is a part of relationship building – between one member and another, one fraternity and another, one level and another. Relationship building should spread to church and community, they added. Seculars should be taking servant leadership roles in their parishes.

Fraternity is a privileged place, a “community of love.” It encourages and empowers us to leave our “comfort zone.” Communicate. Collaborate. Establish fraternity apostolates. Make gatherings vibrant – full of joy, energy, and camaraderie.

The Focus Groups provided much food for thought, many ideas for us as an order to consider and reflect upon. The responses will be used to help develop questions for a survey for members of the OFS in the United States.

Once all responses have been collated, the Management of the Order Committee will be preparing a two-page report that will be sent to the Presidency at CIOFS. Reports from all the National Fraternities from around the world will be reviewed, compiled and brought to the next General Chapter to determine the priorities and the future of the Order.

News & Views

Franciscan Life in the 21st Century
Lester Bach OFM Cap



NEW COUNCILS

It is ordinary that changes occur after elections. New councilors bring a variety of life experiences. These experiences may be helpful in making council decisions -or they may hinder the way a council functions. We all bring wonders and warts with us wherever we go. We may identify the wonders or warts early on and support or question them as needed. Do your decisions enrich Franciscan fraternity life? Do they cause conflict? Why? How do you handle the conflict? Prayer to the Holy Spirit and dialogue are needed.

1. **COUNCILS** - Do council decisions enhance fraternity life and find acceptance or not? If not, why not? That answer will require honesty, understanding, and willingness to dialogue. The presence of conflict is possible. But if Franciscans resist and do nothing but criticize decisions, the council will need to pray and dialogue, dealing with the consequences of their decisions. Some people resist change no matter how good or important it is. Some people support every change without considering its consequences. Some folks don't want to change and are stubborn about it. They presume that they alone understand Franciscan life. Councils respectfully discern who is right or wrong (or partially so).

2. **\$\$\$\$** In deciding financial issues some resistance is predictable. Developing a healthy fraternity may require increasing the "fair share." At a time when the country's economy is not exactly blossoming, negative reactions are understandable. Clarity about needs, and finding creative programs to increase income, becomes important. Fraternity finances need support in order to have a balanced treasury.

Suggestions can recognize the need for fresh sources of income to meet normal and/or unexpected needs of fraternity life. Remind one another that profession includes articles 24 and 25 of the OFS Rule. Secular Franciscans have committed themselves, by profession, to contribute *according to their means*. Personal and fraternity needs do change and prayerful dialogue may be required. Councils can consult with the members when needed. The councils remain responsible for the decisions they make for the good of the fraternity. The support of the members is important to the council and the fraternity. How the council functions makes a difference in the development of fraternity life.

Finances can be a delicate issue. This is especially true if OFS members are growing older, with fixed incomes and no likelihood of increased income. Or, if they are younger and have multiple bills, from college tuition: apartment/house payments: food; transportation; doctor bills; education costs; clothing; insurance; etc. People with competent financial skills might assist in dealing with these situations.

3. **WOW!** The fraternity family needs the support of all the members - across the board. Whatever happens to members has consequences for the whole fraternity. In making suggestions to the council (at all levels) members should realize that their ideas may be compared to or combined with other ideas. The interaction is respectful and courteous, both listening and sharing. *It illustrates the quality of their Franciscan dedication to the common good of fraternity life.* It is not a way to promote personal projects. We allow for critique and additions or subtractions to our suggestions. Blended with other ideas, it is a good process for fraternity growth.

This blend of ideas provides an insight into the Franciscan pattern of fraternity government & growth. Input and suggestions reveal each individual's grasp of their Franciscan, gospel-oriented, vocation. If nobody offers ideas, the council should address that issue. The way a council functions may need to be evaluated. Encouragement and openness will stimulate commitment to this 24/7 way of life. Initiate a conversation that fits your fraternity. Franciscans

remain respectful of each other's ideas. Good dialogue will be productive for fraternal life. As someone once put it, make certain to *keep the "main thing" the "main thing!"*

4. **AND THEN:** Article 24 of the OFS Rule:

To foster communion among members, the council should organize regular and frequent meetings of the community as well as meeting with other Franciscan groups, especially youth groups. It should adopt appropriate means for growth in Franciscan and ecclesial life and encourage everyone to a life of fraternity. This communion continues with deceased brothers and sisters through prayer for them.

OFS Rule #24

Is it possible to live a knowledgeable and committed Franciscan life when we gather only once a month for 3 or 4 hours? *That's about 36 or 48 hours a year* (out of 5,840 waking hours in a year - excluding 8 hrs of sleep!) to maintain and deepen the Franciscan way of life 24/7. I realize other special programs may occur. But the regular gatherings may need to be upgraded. ***The way a gathering is conducted really makes a difference.*** This is true whatever happens in the lives of professed Franciscans. Regional gatherings may also receive substantive ideas promoted within local fraternities.

If regular gatherings are not enough, how does a fraternity council improve things? Small group dialogue at regular gatherings can help. Extra gatherings may be another way to enrich fraternity life for those who are able to attend. Share ideas with one another as much as possible. If small groups develop outside the regular gathering, they share their ideas & conclusions with the larger fraternity. The councils guide such groups so they remain contributing members to fraternity life. Be aware of the consequences when you make changes. Not all changes are equally effective for improving your fraternity's life (Try them for 3 or 4 gatherings). Change them if needed. Develop programs that best fit your fraternity life. Review and renew them as necessary. As growth occurs, more changes may be needed. Don't get caught in a *"we always did it this way"* approach. Leave an 'open door' for fresh possibilities as yet untried and/or prompted by the Holy Spirit.

5. **FORMATION** - Councils, at every level, make certain that ***initial and ongoing formation*** is alive and well, guided by a team. Neglecting formation in Franciscan life can be disastrous. Devotions might be promoted while continued learning is neglected or *vice versa*. Neglect may create an unbalanced atmosphere in fraternity life that spills over into everyday secular life. These failures may neglect articles of the OFS Rule that deal with the poor, or the work for peace, or ecology, as well as articles calling for prayerfulness. Growth in Franciscan living can be diminished. *Prayerfulness* may grow, but its partner, *action*, may be unknown, or *vice versa*. A *prayerful and active* fraternity recognizes the ***need for balance*** between prayerfulness and activity.

The local fraternity is to be established canonically. It becomes the basic unit of the whole Order and a visible sign of the Church,

the community of love. This 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

Supportive materials can be found on the inside back cover of TAU-USA. Initial formation books need to be approved and used. Article #44.2 (OFS Constitutions) calls for *newly professed* members to have specific ongoing formation (E.g. *"What it Takes"*). Regular *ongoing formation* continues from Profession until Sister Death arrives.

These requirements are fulfilled by the fraternity members and councils as a collegial responsibility. The OFS way of life requires a lifetime of enriched learning. The Constitutions make this very clear. ***"Giving Life to the Words"*** offers a spiritual commentary on the OFS Constitutions. Learning, by itself, is not enough. It finds expression at gatherings, in the activities of everyday life, in personal prayerfulness and conversion.

Fraternities task leaders to share useful ideas with other fraternities in the region or on the national level. Local Councils and Regional Executive Councils offer support to one another. They share effective ideas with the National Executive Council. We owe it to one another to share ideas that work well. Sharing ideas as well as effective ways & means to enhance fraternity life are a common activity.

As it expands, goodness takes root and develops. If we wish to lead a dignified and fulfilling life, we have to reach out to others and seek their good. In this sense, several sayings of St. Paul will not surprise us: "The love of Christ urges us on" (2 Corinthians 5:14); "Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:16)

The Joy of the Gospel - Pope Francis - #9

Spirit-filled evangelizers are evangelizers who pray and work. Mystical notions without a solid social and missionary outreach are of no help to evangelization, nor are dissertations or social or pastoral practices which lack a spirituality which can change hearts.

The Joy of the Gospel - Pope Francis - #262



Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Walking Together

by Anne Mulqueen, OFS

Did you know that the prayer themes for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity were first formulated in 1968 and were jointly prepared by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches? I did not. However, in the process of doing a little research for this article, I happened upon the Vatican website entitled *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*. This is what I found.

Every January, we participate in a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This coming year's theme is *Called to Proclaim the Mighty Acts of the Lord* (1 Peter 2:9). So I decided to read further, whereupon I discovered a list of all the themes from 1968 to 2015. I became intrigued and decided to look for a pattern. Bear in mind, we are dealing with 48 years of prayer!



At the end of this article I will tell you what spoke to my heart, and I challenge you to take all 48 themes and Scripture passages and meditate on them to see what the Lord may be saying to you about Christian unity. Look up each Scripture passage in your Bible. Although it is time-consuming, it is worth it!

The themes and scripture passages for each year were as follows:

1968: To the praise of his glory (Eph 1:14)

1969: Called to freedom (Gal 5:13)

1970: We are fellow workers for God
(1 Cor 3:9)

1971: ...and the communion of the Holy
Spirit (2 Cor 13:13)

1972: I give you a new commandment
(Jn 13:34)

1973: Lord, teach us to pray (Lk 11:1)

1974: That every tongue confess: Jesus
Christ is Lord (Phil 2:1-13)

1975: God's purpose: all things in Christ
(Eph 1:3-10)

1976: We shall be like him (1 Jn 3:2) or,
Called to become what we are

1977: Enduring together in hope (Rom 5:1-5)

1978: No longer strangers (Eph 2:13-22)

1979: Serve one another to the glory of
God (1 Pet 4:7-11)

1980: Your kingdom come (Mt 6:20)

1981: One Spirit – many gifts – one body
(1 Cor 12:3b-13)

1982: May all find their home in you, O Lord
(Psalm 84)

1983: Jesus Christ – the Life of the World
(1 Jn 1:1-4)

1984: Called to be one through the cross of
our Lord (1 Cor 2:2 + Col 1:20)

1985: From death to life with Christ
(Eph 2:4-7)

1986: You shall be my witnesses
(Acts 1:6-8)

1987: United in Christ – a New Creation
(2 Cor 5:17 + 6:4a)

1988: The love of God casts out fear
(1 Jn 4:18)

1989: Building community: one body in
Christ (Rom 12:5-6a)

1990: That they all may be one... That the
world may believe (John 17)

1991: Praise the Lord, all you nations!
(Psalm 117 + Rom 15:5-13)

1992: I am with you always ... Go,
therefore (Mt 28:16-20)

1993: Bearing the fruit of the Spirit for
Christian unity (Gal 5:22-23)

1994: The household of God: called to be
one in heart and mind (Acts 4:23-37)

1995: Koinonia: communion in God and with
one another (John 15:1-17)

1996: Behold, I stand at the door and knock
(Rev 3:14-22)

1997: We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be
reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:20)

1998: The Spirit helps us in our weakness
(Rom 8:14-27)

1999: He will dwell with them as their God,
they will be his peoples (Rev 21:1-7)

2000: Blessed be God who has blessed us in
Christ (Eph 1:3-14)

2001: I am the Way, and the Truth, and the
Life (Jn 14:1-6)

2002: For with you is the fountain of life
(Psalm 36:5-9)

2003: We have this treasure in clay jars
(2 Cor 4:4-18)

2004: My peace I give to you
(Jn 14:23-31; John 14:27)

2005: Christ, the one foundation of the
church (1 Cor 3:1-23)

2006: Where two or three are gathered in my
name, there I am among them (Mt 18:18-20)

2007: He even makes the deaf to hear and the
mute to speak (Mk 7:31-37)

2008: Pray without ceasing
(1Thes 5:12a-13b-18)

2009: That they may become one in your hand
(Ez 37:15-28)

2010: You are witnesses of these things
(Lk 24:48)

2011: One in the apostles' teaching,
fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer
(Acts 2:42)

2012: We will all be Changed by the Victory
of our Lord Jesus Christ
(1Cor 15:51-58)

2013: What does God require of us? (Mi 6:6-8)

2014: Has Christ been divided? (1 Cor 1:1-17)

2015: Jesus said to her: Give me a drink
(Jn 4:7)

This is what stayed with me after I set aside my
“thinking” faculty and simply opened my heart to
listen to God.

- It is the plan of the Triune God, that we be one,
“... as you, Father, are in me and I am in you,
may they also be in us, so that the world may
believe that you have sent me. (John 17:21).
- Prayer, love, and understanding are essential
elements if we are to honor the prayer of Jesus in
John 17:21.
- Christ always leads us back to prayer for
direction, commitment and strength to persevere.
- It is in Christ that we find unity.
- Christian unity is God’s will and God’s work; it
transcends human ability.
- In the world there may be division, but in Christ
there is no division, because there is only one
faith, one Lord and one baptism.
- We need to discover and celebrate the areas of
unity that already exist among us.
- We can and should walk together in our
ministries, sharing our common Gospel values.
- [I believe] entering into dialogue with those not in
full communion with the Catholic Church is an
opportunity to practice respect, understanding,
and love.
- And so much more. However, I want to know
what the Spirit of God was saying to you in these
passages, so write to me at
amulqueensfo@gmail.com.

St. John Paul II stated in *Ut Unum Sint*, “At the
Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church
committed itself irrevocably to following the path of
the ecumenical venture” (UUS 3), and that the
impetus is *fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit*
(UUS 7). So won’t you walk with me on the journey
toward unity? We may not see it in our lifetime, but
that does not excuse us from participation in God’s
plan for His Church.



THE MOMENT OF MERCY

By Jan Parker OFS

In the past few years I have grown in my appreciation of the *Office of the Passion*, particularly Psalm 15. St. Francis composed this psalm in honor of the Nativity of our Lord, and during the Christmas season he prayed it five

times a day. Last year I chose to pray it daily, not as often as Francis, but often enough that it became dear to me.

I remember praying it one night when I was feeling a little overwhelmed by the challenges of the day. I was longing for hope and peace. I read slowly, meditating on each verse, when suddenly these words of St. Francis jumped out at me: ***"On that day the Lord sent mercy and song in the night!"*** I felt a rush of joy, as if I truly did hear a song in the night!

"On that day" meant Christmas! "Mercy" meant Jesus! The "song in the night" is "Glory to God in the highest" - the song of the angels! I was delighted with this revelation: Christmas is a celebration of the Father's gift of Mercy! In that moment of mercy I found all the peace and hope I needed.

How appropriate that this **Year of Mercy** begins in Advent as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus. As Pope Francis announced in the first line of *Misericordiae Vultus*, *"Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy."* Truly, with the birth of Jesus, the Lord sent mercy and a song for our longest night. Let us open our hearts to Jesus! Let us celebrate Christmas as *"the moment of Mercy!"*

You are invited to contribute to our "Moment of Mercy" column in each issue of the TAU-USA during the Year of Mercy. Do you have a story of mercy received, or given, that you would like to share? Please send your story to tauusa.ofs@gmail.com. We look forward to your contributions.

Psalm Fifteen

Sing for joy to God our help;
With exultant voice
raise to the Lord God living and true a shout of
joy!

Because the Lord is the Most High,
The awesome, great King over all the earth.

For the most holy Father of heaven,
Our King before all ages,
Sent from on high the beloved Son
Who was born of the Blessed Virgin, Holy Mary.

He called out to God: You are my Father,
And God placed him as the firstborn,
The highest above all earthly Kings.

On that day the Lord sent mercy
And song in the night.

This is the day the Lord has made;
Let us rejoice in it and be glad.

For to us is given the beloved child most holy,
Born for us along the way and placed in a
manger
Because there was no room for him at the inn.

Glory to the Lord God in the highest
And on earth peace to those of good will.

Let heavens rejoice and earth exult,
Let the sea and all that is in it roar,
Let fields and everything in them sing for joy.

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord all
the earth!

For the Lord is great and highly to be praised;
More awesome than all gods.

Bring to the Lord, families of nations,
Bring to the Lord glory and honor,
Bring to the Lord the glory due his name.

Cast off the weight of sin and take up the Lord's
holy cross,
Follow the Lords' most holy commands to the
very end.

Glory to the Father and to the Son,
And to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now,
And will be forever. Amen.



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



FRANCISCAN COLLABORATION AND INCLUSION

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, National JPIC Animator

“There can be no peace, there can be no justice, there can be no integrity of creation if the things you believe does not agree with what you do.”

Before his crucifixion, Jesus prayed that we all may be one, just as he and the Father were one. One mind and one heart. Every Sunday when we profess our faith, we say we believe in **one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church**. Yet, we tend to operate from our separate little compartments and divisions. In one part of our lives, we are Catholic. In another part, we are Franciscan. In another, we are our roles and titles. Yes, we have many parts, but we are one body, as the Apostle Paul reminds us. One body means that we are all working together for the good of the one body, the one Church. As Franciscans, we work together for the good of our Franciscan Order.

During the NAFRA Chapter, I met with Franciscans International, the non-governmental organization that works with the United Nations to address human rights injustices that impact the poor and the most vulnerable in our world. Inspired by Franciscan values, FI brings issues to the UN to influence decision-makers in the hope of bringing about more just laws and living conditions. As we are nearly 13,000 Seculars in the United States, my question to Amanda Lyons, Advocacy Officer at FI was, how can we collaborate with you to help bring about a more just world? From that conversation, a “come and share” was arranged in New York City at the Church of Saint Francis of Assisi and co-sponsored by the Migration Center at St. Francis. Also in attendance were representatives from the Franciscan Action Network, Franciscan sisters, friars and seculars; including Sr. Caritas Barajingitwa, the 2015 recipient of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Award. We all gathered to learn about one another and to find out how we can collaborate and work together.

One thing I can safely say about Franciscans is we are all about helping to build the Beloved Community that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of. We all want the injustices righted and the divisions mended. We all want a world of peace and mercy for all. This does not mean there will be no trials or hardships. But it does mean that when those trials and hardships land

on someone’s doorstep, a Franciscan will be there to lend a helping hand, a listening ear and a caring heart. I truly believe that when there is a need, there is a Franciscan!

I recently attended the board meeting of the Franciscan Action Network to further collaborate and work to right the wrongs of injustice in our world. It began with the reception for the Cardinal Theodore McCarrick Award. This year’s award recipient was Rev. Fletcher Harper of GreenFaith and the OurVoices campaign. It was very humbling being in the presence of Franciscan friars, sisters and Franciscan-hearted folks working tirelessly to create a more just world. I am so moved by the dedication and love of these Franciscans who see what is unjust and are compelled to right those injustices. It is moving and heart-warming to witness this level of compassion. The Franciscan Action Network board has created four sub-committees as we move forward: Animation, Administration, Communication and Development.

My challenge to us all: work toward the Beloved Community that is the Franciscan Family. Do all you can to encourage, inspire and uplift your brothers and sisters – because there are many who are silently hurting and in pain. It is our challenge and call to work for the good of the entire Franciscan Family. This is our call for Franciscan collaboration and inclusion. We are never called to a spirit of exclusion or elitism. We are Gospel people; and evangelical love is who we are and what we do. We are called to love those who challenge our loving.

If you encounter something that seems wrong or unloving by a Franciscan or Franciscan entity, instead of vilifying them, ASK SOME QUESTIONS. I do believe that we are all wonderful and good-hearted people, wanting what is best for the Order and for the Church. To help bring about that Beloved Community – which is our Order and our Church, I invite you to witness the presence of the divine seed in everyone and honor that presence, as our Holy Rule encourages us to do. And as you witness the presence of the divine seed within them, show that same presence from within yourself.

FRANCISCAN LIVING

GOD TAKES OVER

By Francine Gikow, OFS

“Profession is the act by which a person places him/herself into the hands of God, enabling God to take hold of him, with the result that from the precise moment of Profession, the person no longer belongs to him/herself, but is considered as totally “expropriated” and at God’s entire disposal. By virtue of Profession, the person becomes God’s property, and therefore “sacred.”¹

By these words, Br. Felice Cangelosi, OFM, Cap., described how we give ourselves totally to God at the time of our profession. We have given to God what Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM, terms, “a blank check” with our lives! This is a pretty scary promise when you think about it! The full ramifications of this pledge are hard to imagine when we are called to live with God being in charge of our lives and not ourselves.

In actuality, we are never really in charge of our lives. God is! However, we think we are in charge, and we delude ourselves when it is really our self-centeredness trying to control rather than giving all to God.

Francis surely knew about giving himself over to the Lord and letting God direct his life! It is one of the wonders of Francis! God had a mission for Francis, but Francis needed to let go of his own wishes of knighthood, heroism and pleasure. It is the same with us. As St. Paul writes: “...How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord?”² Only God knows His plan for us. We only have to offer our lives to Him so He can do with it what He wills.

The words, “the person no longer belongs to him/herself, but is considered as totally ‘expropriated’ and at God’s entire disposal” are quite daunting when we have learned from infancy to rely only on ourselves. Our American culture revels in our independence and self-sufficiency. What we have promised has gone against some of the deepest ingrained values of our society. It is no wonder that we find it difficult to voluntarily offer our lives to God who is inexplicable and powerful! It may sound beautiful in concept to offer myself to the Lord, but the reality of it is difficult and hard. Only by the constant renewal of our profession, as well as our prayer-filled efforts of detachment and conversion, can we hope to progress in our offering of self to God.

One of the on-going ways we turn our lives over to God is through discernment. There are many ways to discern, but the end result is our search for how God wants us to act or “be” in a certain situation. We listen

to Him through scripture, through prayer, through the people in our lives. It is His will, not ours. As Jesus prayed to His Father in the agony of the garden, “...yet not what I want but what you want.”³

We have to reorient ourselves from “what I want” to “what God wants,” and that is not always easy! It takes a certain “poverty” of self or detachment. Of course, we can’t remove all our preferences as to what we may wish to happen, but we must remain open to God’s will as revealed in our lives. This humility, detachment of our will, is our offering. It is our sacrifice.

We also have to ask the Lord for the confirmation of our discernment, since we can deceive ourselves and unknowingly build up barriers, especially in those areas where we do not want to go. We have to let go of our feelings about the results of our discernment, since then we can be truly open to the Lord. The best outcome for us is to be neutral in our wishes for the result, because then it is truly God’s will and not ours. Sometimes I wrestle with a discernment trying to be free of my own wishes and offer it up to God in sacrifice. Sometimes after discernment is done, I find that the result is not really what God had in mind after all. Sometimes, I think God just wants me to offer myself to Him to do with whatever He wills. It may be my intention and willingness, rather than the end result, which matters most to God. In short, it is my love for Him that matters.

When God is truly in charge of our lives, our future life becomes a mystery: a mystery of where we are going and what we will be doing. Our future plans become more open to the often times unknown ways of the Lord. We find that this takes trust. Little by little we learn to trust the unknown God. Slowly, God peels away our sense of autonomy as we begin to rely on Him and follow His ways. God becomes greater while “I” become smaller. He has expropriated us for Himself; we become His property and therefore become “sacred.”

As Secular Franciscans, we have committed ourselves to live a penitential life with detachment and continual conversion toward God. It means letting go of our self-determination for God’s way of being. This self-sacrifice is what pleases God. As Br. Cangelosi added: “They, by promising to live the gospel life, make themselves entirely available to God and place their own bodies (persons) on the altar of Christ’s sacrifice as a holy victim pleasing to God... It is a commitment of life and for life.”⁴

1 Br. Felice Cangelosi, OFM, Cap. “Profession in the SFO: Gift and Commitment,” Address to the International Chapter, OFS, 2008, II:10.

2 Rom.11:33-34.

3 Matt.26:39

4 Cangelosi, II:6.

QUINQUENNIAL XIX

REVIVING OUR SPIRIT

Kate Kleinert, OFS

There are as many ways to revive our spirit as there are people in the world. It is unique to each one of us. What stirs my soul is different from what stirs your soul. But, one thing that is the same for all of us is that we need to be ready and be aware of the opportunities God sends our way.

That old phrase, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," is one that we didn't believe when we were young. We knew our parents had that one wrong! But now that we are older and mature in our vocations, we embrace that saying as a way of life.

These days I am either driving to a fraternity for an elections or a visitation, or I am headed somewhere to pick up a rescue dog. Both destinations take me outside my own area where, very often, I am stopped at a red light and a homeless person is asking for help. Of course I will help; but, am I ready for this "God moment?" By the time I scramble for my purse, dig through it for my wallet, and find a couple dollars, the person behind me is laying on the horn because the light has changed. I've missed the chance to help the homeless Christ on the corner, and I certainly missed the opportunity of doing something that would open my soul a wee bit wider for the grace of God to enter.

After driving away numerous times and feeling miserable, I decided I was going to be ready for the next opportunity. Now, I keep a couple of bucks folded up in the cup holder of my car. No one can see it, but I can put my hand on it and offer it in a few seconds. I always smile and say,

"God Bless You" and never once, not even one single time, did that person fail to say, "God Bless You" back. God is truly looking back at me through that person's eyes and blessing me for my effort. That alone can revive my spirit for quite some time.

The



One of the ways to participate in the Q, Reviving Our Spirit theme, is by taking part in **Operation Blessing Bag**. Gallon size ziplock bags will be filled with travel size toiletries, snacks, socks, etc. To make it more personal, there will be a holy card inserted in each bag with these words on the back: *Filling this bag for you has been a blessing for me! I will keep you in my prayers.* Then the person filling the bag can sign their first name. There will be **Operation Blessing Bag** sessions

throughout the Q where you can stop by and help fill some bags.

Over the next several months, a wonderful project for each fraternity and/or region will be to collect these types of items so that everyone will be taking part. Next June, the items can be shipped to the Renaissance Hotel for our **Operation Blessing Bag** sessions. At the end of the Q, these bags will be donated to the St. Anthony's Food Pantry in St. Louis. We will be leaving St. Louis a little better than we found it. And we all will have taken part in reviving our spirits!

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



XIX QUINQUENNIAL

“Reviving Our Spirit”

June 30 to July 4, 2016 Renaissance St. Louis Airport Hotel

Registration Form

Important Instructions:

1. Please **TYPE** or **PRINT** all information clearly.
2. Only one participant per registration form.
3. Payment must accompany this form.
4. Make your check for registration payable to **NAFRA**.
5. Mail this form with payment to: **Judy Haupt, OFS**
204 Abbey Glen Way
Hardeeville, SC 29927
6. Hotel reservations must be done separately by each person with the hotel prior to **June 9th** with the Renaissance St. Louis Airport Hotel, St. Louis, MO. Mention dates and code NAFRA to get the rate.
 Phone: 1-888-340-2594 or 1-314- 429-1100 Website: www.renaissancehotels.com/stlsa
PLEASE TYPE or PRINT CLEARLY (One name per form.)

Title First Name Last Name (Name on Badge if Different)

Address City State Zip Country

Phone E-Mail Address

Name of Your Secular Franciscan Order Region

Full Registration: See Information Sheet. Checks made payable to **NAFRA**. No refunds after **May 1st**.
Note: We cannot accommodate walk-in registrations at the Quinquennial.

Registration (Room not included.)	Program and Meals	Total Amount	Check #
Before April 15, 2016	\$320		
April 16 to May 31, 2016	\$370		
June 1 to June 9, 2016	\$420		

Day Only Registration: You may attend Thursday evening session for \$0.00 (Dinner **not** included).

Days	Amount Per Day	# of Days	Total Amount	Check #	Circle Days Attending
Before May 31, 2016	\$125				FRI SAT SUN
June 1 to June 9, 2016	\$140				FRI SAT SUN

- τ Special Dietary needs: _____
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