

TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE
SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

Winter 2023 Issue 108

Listen
Discern
Go Forth



OFS - USA National Theme 2022 - 2025

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 OFS-USA leadership and all candidates and all professed Secular Franciscans throughout the United States. The articles within the publication, while sharing the Secular Franciscan charism and vision, are intended to inform, inspire, and challenge.



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OFS-USA

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER-USA

NATIONAL MINISTER'S MESSAGE

by Jane DeRose-Bamman OFS

Have you heard the adage: "If everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority?"¹

Of course, we don't profess to live one article of the Rule at a time. But like the liturgical seasons, or the feast days, it does help to focus on one facet to deepen our understanding of it. We focus on one aspect while still applying the other aspects of our faith and Rule each day.

At many elective chapters, the National Fraternity Council sets priorities for the new National Executive Council (NEC). In October 2022, the National Fraternity Council (NEC members, 30 Regional Ministers and Conference of National Spiritual Assistants) voted on the priorities for the next three years: **Vocations, Communications and Relationships**.

A few hours after we set the priorities, I was elected OFS-USA National Minister. Seeing that I had the pleasure of serving the OFS-USA on the Vocations Committee for several years, I found the priorities to be very fitting. This article focuses on Vocations. Future articles will address Communications and Relationships.

During my tenure on the Vocations Committee, I worked with many others to come up with tools and ideas for sharing our love for our vocation and how to get the word out about the Order. (See the national website for the Vocations Tool Kit, brochures, Vocation Prayer cards, Testimonials, Elevator Speeches.)

Many of us are lifelong Catholics. What was your reaction when you first heard about the Secular Franciscan Order? Did you respond: "I wonder why I never heard of it before?" The same thing happened to me as a young adult living in Chicago. This reaction should be the exception.

Article 45 of the *OFS General Constitutions* charges us individually and as councils to promote vocations.

Are you convinced of the validity of the Franciscan way of life? If so, your enthusiasm should be contagious. I challenge each member of OFS-USA to meditate on why we became Secular Franciscans in the first place. Then, give serious thought to why the Order is special in our lives. Once we have thought and prayed about our own commitment, we will be ready to talk about our vocation to others. We will be ready to "spread the word" and the joy of following Jesus in the footsteps of St. Francis.² Who knows how many hearts we will touch?

General Constitutions Article 45

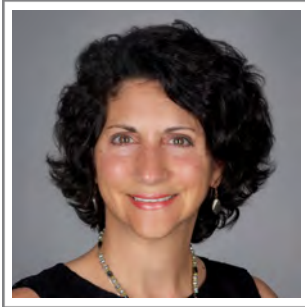
1. The promotion of vocations to the Order is a duty of all the brothers and sisters and is a sign of the vitality of the fraternities themselves. The brothers and sisters, convinced of the validity of the Franciscan way of life, should pray that God may give the grace of the Franciscan vocation to new members.
2. Although nothing can substitute for the witness of each member and of the fraternity, the councils must adopt appropriate means to promote the Secular Franciscan vocation.

¹ I can't really find who penned that saying....but I know our sister, Mary Bittner, OFS, (former National Vice Minister), has shared it many times in the last few years during NEC meetings or OFS-USA National Fraternity Chapters.

² Article 6 of OFS Rule: "...Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words..."

MEET THE NEWLY ELECTED OFS-USA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS



Office: Minister

Region: Our Lady of Guadalupe - Empress of the Americas

Residence: Roswell, NM

Local Fraternity: St. Francis

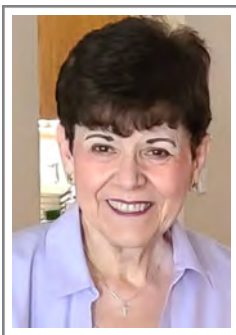
Year professed: 1995

Motivated to be a servant leader because. . . “I never dreamed that I would one day be National Minister. My journey as a member was strengthened with each position - whether elected or appointed. Local minister, regional ecology commission chair, national ecology commission, local secretary,

newsletter editor, local treasurer, vocations committee, local minister, national secretary, and currently national minister. My vocation flourishes by witnessing how others live their vocations. So, selfishly, I am motivated to serve because I learn so much from my Franciscan brothers and sisters—they truly nourish my vocation.”

Additional info: “Brian Bamman is my best friend. We've been married for 32 years. We were not blessed with children but cared for the adults God brought into our lives. We moved to Roswell, NM, in 2018. It's small. I can go for months without driving over 40 miles per hour. Although small, this community is blessed with OFM Friars, Poor Clare nuns, and OFS. When I am not working or at a fraternity meeting (in-person or virtually), I would probably be playing tennis, thinking about playing tennis or planning a trip.”

Diane F. Menditto, OFS



Office: Vice Minister

Region: Our Lady of the Angels

Residence: Hackensack, NJ

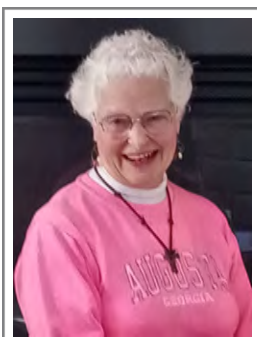
Local Fraternity: St. Francis

Year professed: 1979

Motivated to be a servant leader because. . . “Servant leadership is the best way I know to share the gifts God has given me with my brothers and sisters. Serving the National Fraternity allows me to collaborate with others in moving the Order forward. Sharing what I have learned from great leaders and formators during my 43 years as a Secular Franciscan gives me great joy,”

Additional info: “I love flowers, photography, traveling, teaching and speaking Spanish.”

Susan Ronan, OFS



Office: Secretary

Region: St. Elizabeth of Hungary

City: Sandown, NH

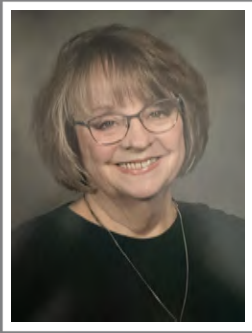
Local Fraternity: Greccio

Year professed: 2003

Motivated to be a servant leader because. . . “The Lord has blessed me with so many gifts—an amazing family, loyal and faithful friends, a love-filled life. It is an honor to offer any assistance I can to my Franciscan brothers and sisters.”

Additional info: “Music has been a blessed thread throughout my life...just love to sing!”

Claudia Kauzlarich, OFS



Office: Treasurer

Region: Juan de Padilla

City: Harrisonville, MO

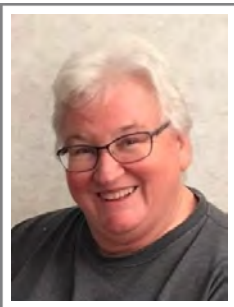
Local Fraternity: Secular Franciscans of the Holy Eucharist

Year professed: 2008

Motivated to be a servant leader because. . . “The Love of God, Christ requests it of us, as well as love of the Order and my brothers and sisters in Francis and Clare.”

Additional info: “The NEC is here to serve each of you. Contact me if you have any questions.”

Cherryle Fruge, OFS



Office: National Councilor

Region: St. Joan of Arc

Residence: Lake Charles, LA

Local Fraternity: San Damiano

Year professed: 2003

Motivated to be a servant leader because. . . “Holy God’s Love motivates me to be all I can as a servant leader. I’m very grateful that my Lord gave me sisters and brothers as companions along the way to mentor me into this role as a servant leader from local, regional and now at national level. I feel the Holy Spirit has been teaching me to live and work with you as if you are my spouse so that I can learn what servant leadership truly is. As

Jesus has shown us, we must also do — “I have come to serve, not to be served.” Having never been married, I remember vividly while I was in adoration and before I was to facilitate the teaching on the sacrament of Holy Matrimony in RCIA, I was enlightened in a most profound way that Jesus is my Spouse. This spousal love is being revealed between you and me because as members of the Body of Christ, as His Church, we are His spouse and spousal to each other. This kind of unity is linking us in a very unique way. I look forward to building that deep abiding love with the wider fraternity as this new journey begins in my life. Come Holy Spirit! Show us the way of truth through God’s Love. Amen.”

Additional info: “My parents are deceased. I have two siblings. Carol is the oldest. She lives about an hour from me in Lafayette. My brother Phil was the middle child. I guess by now you know who the “baby” is. Phil and his wife, Sandra passed away a few years back. I was blessed with a 40-year career in a petroleum refinery in Lake Charles, LA. I retired in 2015 and have immensely enjoyed being of service to the church and to the Secular Franciscan Order. Even though the conversion journey has not been easy, I’m madly in love with the work of the Holy Spirit! After all that’s why I’m here because of God’s Amazing Grace.”

Joshua Molidor, OFS



Office: National Councilor

Region: Los Tres Companeros

Residence: Frisco, TX

Local Fraternity: Immaculata

Year professed: 1994

Motivated to be a servant leader because. . . “Our Rule, which asks us to be ready and willing to serve, and is a duty of responsibility to each member (Art. 21)”

Donna Hollis, OFS



Office: National Councilor

Region: Our Lady of Guadalupe

City: Las Cruces, NM

Local Fraternity: Our Lady of Guadalupe

Year professed: 1983

Motivated to be a servant leader because. . . “What motivates me is getting to know my brothers and sisters and being a support to them. My calling is to lift up people’s hearts and give them reasons for spiritual joy. Being Franciscan is to take on the charism of St. Francis, who himself worked with the marginalized emulating the Gospel life. I can do no less. My heart is in love with our Order

and those who live out this life. We are the heart, eyes, hands, and feet to others, showing compassion to all people. My true joy of being a councilor is the opportunity to go and visit with my brothers and sisters, encouraging them and showing God’s love and grace in every situation that we grow through together.”

Mary Frances Charsky, OFS



Office: International Councilor

Region: St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region

Residence: Binghamton, NY

Local Fraternity: St. Francis

Year professed: 1981

Motivated to be a servant leader because. . . “The joy of being with brothers and sisters encouraging each other on our journey to the Lord our God motivates me to be a Franciscan servant leader. I cherish these times. The Holy Spirit helps me to keep in mind what Jesus would do and to see Jesus in all others. It is as easy as breathing. I see the talents and the gifts of my brothers and sisters. Those who have

come before us are role models that we honor and remember. We are grateful for our ability to follow Jesus in the footsteps of St. Francis and St. Clare. My true joy in being a Councilor is the opportunity to go and visit with my Brothers and Sisters, encouraging them and showing God’s love and grace in every situation that we grow through together.”

Fr. John DeLaRiva, OFM Cap.



President-in-Turn of Conference of National Spiritual Assistants

Born (in February of 1961) and raised in Orange County, California.

At the age of 29, I joined the Capuchin Franciscans in 1989.

Professed Final Vows in 1996, and was ordained a Priest in 1999.

My ministries have focused on Parish work, Chaplaincy for Hospitals, High Schools, and Jails.

My last assignment was as Rector of the National Shrine of Saint Francis of Assisi located in San Francisco, CA.



By Sharon Winzeler, OFS, Public Relations Chair

Hosted by the Divine Mercy Region, the first face-to-face chapter meeting in three years included formation, fellowship, a tour of the Blessed Solanus Casey Center, and Detroit landmarks, as well as the election of a new National Executive Council to three-year terms. A one-man play based on the life of Blessed Solanus was also featured. In addition, election procedures were updated, and the theme and priorities of the coming term were decided.

On the final day of chapter, Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS, was elected national minister.

Others elected to the national council were: Vice Minister Diane F. Menditto, OFS; Secretary Susan Ronan, OFS; Treasurer Claudia Kauzlarich, OFS; International Councilor Mary Frances Charsky, OFS; and National Councilors Cherryle Fruge, OFS, Donna Hollis, OFS, and Joshua Molidor, OFS.

Fr. Christopher Shorrock, OFM Conv., became CNSA president-in-turn at Chapter. Because Fr. Chris was called back to his native Australia, Fr. John DeLa Riva, OFM Cap., became president-in-turn on Jan. 1.

Attending were eight NEC members, 30 regional ministers or vice ministers, four CNSA members, and 35 commission and committee members, nominees, and observers. CIOFS Presidency Councilor Silvia (Sissi) Diana, OFS, of Argentina, presided at the

elections on behalf of Tibor Kauser, OFS, Minister General.



Bishop Gerard W. Battersby of Detroit opened the National Chapter with a Mass that included a homily reminding listeners of the hope we have in Jesus Christ. The Christ who animated Peter and the other apostles is the same one who animates us.

“The first historical proof of the risen Lord was when the apostles encountered Him after the resurrection. Before they witnessed the resurrection, it was hard for the apostles to remember Jesus’ promise, especially after His savage death. Can you imagine how they must have savored the wonder and explosion of joy that changed everything for everyone? The disciples became transformed men and women,” Bishop Battersby said.

“The North Star guiding our lives is the fact that He is risen. That is the life-giving transformation, because we are risen with Him, and we come to know Him as the Lord of all creation. This changes everything for us as it did for the apostles and Francis,” he said.

“The Father’s plan is for us to become like Jesus. Do not be afraid. You have eternity to work it out,” he said. “We must always press into the Resurrection.”

New Regional Ministers

Ten of the regional ministers were newly elected and arrived early for an orientation session led by Bob Longo, OFS, of the St. Margaret of Cortona Region.

Regions with newly elected ministers are: Blessed Solanus Casey, Patricia Wilkin, OFS; Brothers and Sisters of St Francis, Ellen Ferrone, OFS; Franciscans of the Prairie, Kathy Adams, OFS; Juan de Padilla, Brenda Haas, OFS; Lady Poverty, Kathy Barton, OFS; Los Tres Companeros, Paul Gonzalez, OFS; Mother Cabrini, Bob Burnham, OFS; Our Lady of Indiana, Cyndi Pilot, OFS; Our Lady of the Rockies, Pamela Boespflug, OFS; and St. Joan of Arc, Elizabeth Killeen, OFS.

Kathy Barton, OFS was unable to attend. Ed Meegan, OFS, Vice-Minister, attended chapter for the Lady Poverty Region.

State of the Order

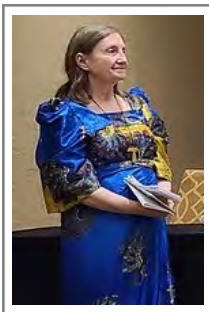


Outgoing National Minister Jan Parker, OFS, delivered her final State-of-the-Order, which can be [viewed](#) or [read](#) on the Secular Franciscan website. She referenced [a](#) YouTube video by [Dr. Thomas](#)

Nairn, OFM, called [“A Franciscan Spirituality of Discernment,”](#) which calls us to “Listen, Discern, and Go Forth.”

The call to “Listen, Discern, Go Forth” was adopted as the theme for the national fraternity for the next three years.

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Award Recipient



Louise Sandberg, OFS, received the 2022 Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Award presented by Joseph Makley, OFS, co-chair for the JPIC Commission. Louise recounted the inspiration she found in Africa. On her first mission there, she said, “I felt like I was visiting God’s favorite people in the whole world.” A [video of](#)

[Louise’s talk](#) is posted on the website.

Guidelines for OFS Councils

Regional ministers were introduced to the CIOFS document [Guidelines for OFS Councils](#) which emphasizes the important role local fraternities play in the order. Local fraternities bear the responsibility of accepting, forming and admitting to profession new members as well as the continuing work of helping professed members remain active in the order.

The document also explained how the role of minister in the fraternity differs from that of a leader in another club or organization. “The office of Minister cannot be compared to the office of President of any civil law association: it has the function of coordination and representation, it has specific tasks, but does not have “power” prevailing over the other members of the Council,” according to the document.

The document outlines the responsibilities of council members, citing the importance of service to the fraternity. “[A council member is] called in the first person to work for the good of the OFS and to be interested in every aspect of fraternal life, regardless of the service office covered. The style of service in the Council is that of the ‘washing of the feet’ (Jn. 13, 12-17), which is the biblical foundation of service, in the ‘minority.’”

Diane F. Menditto, OFS, Francine Gikow, OFS, and Anne Mulqueen, OFS, from the National Formation Commission delivered a [presentation on the guidelines](#) that can be found on the website.

Theme and Priorities

“Listen, Discern, Go Forth” was adopted as the three-year theme for the national fraternity. [Reflection questions based on the theme](#) were developed by the National Formation Commission and are available for ongoing formation. Each session connects the theme to the Rule and provides instruction and reflection questions.

The theme will also help direct actions on the priorities of vocations, communications and relationships.

Outgoing Minister Jan Parker noted that listening is a holy encounter in the lives of Franciscans.

“This initial step of listening does not mean a passive hearing (which implies that the action is one-sided), rather it’s very active. In essence, listening becomes an encounter, an encounter with God and with others, an encounter that is critical in directing our

discernment. He then challenges us to go forth,” Jan said.

Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) Presentations

Keeping with the theme of listening, four friars from the CNSA presented formation on how to converse with and listen to members of the order. Their talks can be viewed at the [Chapter 2022 page](#) of the Secular Franciscan website.



Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM, outgoing president-in-turn, discussed [“Why Is There A Visitation?”](#) Fr. Jerome explained that visitations “help others to experience what it is to be heard, so they also know how to listen.” He said visitations give local councils the ability to experience

discernment and the “prayer, caution and courage that go into it.” In turn, he said, they learn better how to discern and lead.



Fr. John DeLa Riva, OFM Cap. echoed the “Listen, Discern, Go Forth” message by advising regional ministers to “practice very keen listening. You go on a visitation so you can hear. Listen well.” The title of his presentation is [“Animate and Inspire.”](#)



Fr. Christopher Shorrock, OFM Conv., who lived in Milwaukee until recently returning to Australia, talked about the need for [Spiritual Assistants](#). He offered reminders to the professed who are considering the spiritual assistant training program. First, going through the program doesn't

guarantee you will be a spiritual assistant, but it has its rewards. “If you are called and not chosen, you will be a better Franciscan for it,” he said.

He also reminded the audience that serving as a spiritual assistant is not a lifelong commitment. There are term limits, giving the fraternity and spiritual assistant a good opportunity “to refresh and move on.”



Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR spoke on [“Discernment.”](#) He talked about how we have gone through dark times with the pandemic and injustices. He compared our situation to the time the Israelites spent in the desert.

“They called out for change. God sent Moses.”

We are traveling in the wilderness like the Israelites. “God has found us, is traveling with us. We should never, ever forget,” Fr. Christopher said.

The wilderness gives us a new appreciation of our dependency on God and calls us to be Christo-centric as we see, judge, and act. He encouraged the audience to share this in community with our brothers and sisters.

“Be the visible presence of the invisible ones as agents of God,” he said.

Servant Leadership



The morning of the election, Fr. Cidoune Joseph, OFM presented a talk on Franciscan servant leadership.

Calling upon Franciscan servant leaders to follow the example of John the Baptist, Fr. Cid said, “A Franciscan servant leader loses him/herself in

their ministry. Like John the Baptist – they decrease so that others may increase. Jesus and Francis, of course, are our models for this.”

“Franciscan servant leaders are always in second place to the people they serve. The ministry is not about them – but about others and their needs,” he said.

Servant leaders are extensions of Jesus and model His virtues, such as compassion, service, love, forgiveness, commitment, prayerfulness, gentleness, patience, and humility, Fr. Cid said.

The [full text of Fr. Cid's talk](#) can be found on the website.

Election Procedures

A set of procedures for elections was adopted. First, the National Fraternity Council adopted National Fraternity Election Procedures. This document addresses all aspects of the national election, including requirements for the election of persons running for a third term. Second, [Guidelines for Nominations from the Floor](#) were approved at chapter. The guidelines outline the procedure for nominating officers at the election. Regional and local fraternities may also use them but are not bound by them.

**2023 National Chapter
August 23-27
Pallottine Renewal Center St. Louis, MO.**



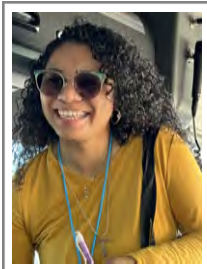
DAY AWAY PILGRIMAGE

Solanus Casey Center – Bus Tour – Ford’s Garage

By Michael Gath, OFS

For the day away during the National Chapter event, the Divine Mercy Region hosts treated fraternity members to a bus tour of the City of Detroit. We experienced the [Solanus Casey Center](#), including the celebration of Mass at the St. Bonaventure Chapel connected to the center.

On the way, we crossed Detroit’s Gateway Bridge. This bridge was built in preparation for the 2007 Super Bowl XL, which was evident by the designers incorporating football-like ovals in its structure.



Next, riding along Interstate 96, we passed the biggest tire on the planet—the Uniroyal Giant Tire. It was produced by the United States Rubber Company in 1964 for the New York World’s Fair as a Ferris wheel. Not long after the fair ended, the giant tire was disassembled and shipped to Detroit.

Moving along, we were able to see something unique to Detroit, known to be the third most visited tourist site for city, the [Heidelberg Project](#). This art project was designed around two city blocks to inspire people to use artistic expression to enhance their lives and communities. It is in a neighborhood that suffered deterioration after the 1967 Detroit riots.



Once at the Solanus Casey Center, we entered through the Creation Garden. Intriguing pieces of art symbolized Sister Water, Moon, Earth, Brother Sun, Fire, Wind, and a four-thousand-year-old piece of dark wood depicting Sister Bodily Death.

Entering the Solanus Casey Center, we were greeted by many seculars from Divine Mercy Region. Sally McCuen, OFS, a co-author of a self-guided prayer booklet about the Center, gave the opening presentation.



Bernard Casey (a.k.a Blessed Solanus Casey) was born and grew up in Prescott, WI. He took on many jobs before considering religious life. After working as a logger, prison guard, and streetcar operator, his life changed when he witnessed a murder. In prayer, he heard the words "Go to Detroit," which he did. He headed to St. Bonaventure Monastery.

In the seminary, he was given the name Solanus as a Capuchin simplex priest. God would grant many with blessings of healing and answered prayers through Blessed Solanus Casey's intercession for them. The uniqueness of Solanus was that he was sought by everyone. All denominations of faith, and even atheists, would seek him out for help with their intentions. He was known to have a deep desire for the conversion and unity of the world.

During the guided tour, our first exhibit was the Beatitudes of Christ. Here we encountered life-sized bronze statues of those who exemplified the

beatitudes. They included Blessed Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King Jr., and Archbishop Oscar Romero.



We entered the museum section dedicated to Blessed Solanus Casey's personal artifacts. Immediately on entry, we were able to see what a big family Solanus came from through life size displays of photographs that must have been taken shortly after he entered the order.

On exhibit were items such as his habit, violin, sandals, prayer book, and rosary. Also within this section of the museum is a replica of his humble bedroom. Winding through toward the end of the exhibit, the center has Blessed Solanus Casey's desk on display.

Moving on, we finally approached the tomb of Blessed Solanus Casey, located at the entrance to St. Bonaventure Chapel. The public can pray next to the exposed crypt containing his coffin, which is covered by glass.

We attended Mass in the St. Bonaventure Monastery Chapel. Beautifully designed, it includes a magnificent painting by Wilhelm Lamprecht of St. Francis receiving the stigmata. It was restored and shipped from St. Francis of Assisi Church in Milwaukee, where Blessed Solanus Casey was ordained. Directly in the rear of the Chapel is a relic of Blessed Solanus Casey.

Before Mass, we heard the testimony of a friar whose family was related to the Caseys. He explained how his brother was involved in a serious accident and was likely to lose his leg. After meeting with Blessed

Solanus and asking for prayers, he told them everything would be all right. On the day of surgery, the doctors determined that the boy would not require the surgery. A healing had been granted.



Concluding our visit and celebration of Mass at the Solanus Casey Center and St. Bonaventure Chapel, we boarded the bus for the second part of the Detroit tour. We went to Belle Isle, and as our friendly bus driver, Earnest, kindly pointed out, it was at one time known as Hog Island. At one point the island was infested with snakes. To combat this, a herd of pigs was released on the island. It must have worked, because now the Belle Isle is a beautiful park that hosts a conservatory, nature center, and giant slide.

From Belle Isle, we headed to downtown Detroit. The bus ride through downtown gave us good views of some of Detroit's well-known landmarks, including:

- The Spirit of Detroit – A downtown monument displaying a large figure holding a sphere with rays symbolizing God in one hand and family in the other.
- The Renaissance Center – A group of seven connected skyscrapers and headquarters of General Motors.
- The Kern's Clock – A historic clock that once adorned the Ernst Kern Company department store

- Detroit Professional Sports Venues – Comerica Park, Ford Field, Little Caesar's Arena

After leaving downtown Detroit, we headed to Ford's Garage restaurant. We had great fellowship and a good meal to cap the day's tour. Ford's Garage gives the sense of being an old-time service station back in the 1920s. On display were vintage Ford automobiles and gas pumps from the early days.

Thanks to the Divine Mercy Region hosts for a fantastic pilgrimage/tour of the gems of the Motor City.

Blessed Solanus Casey

by Donna Hollis, OFS

Sometimes we look at Saints whose actions appear to be beyond our capabilities. Blessed Solanus Casey's actions are very much within reach as he focused on the relationships with those he encountered.

At the Chapter, the life of Blessed Solanus Casey was portrayed in a most creative way with storytelling, video, music, and song, with audience participation in the play "More Love than Skill: A Saint and His Fiddle" by Br. Al Mascia, OFM.

The ambience of the play touched the heart strings of those of us who attended. The story of Blessed Solanus Casey came alive with the personal touches that the actor shared with enthusiasm. The songs were like chants that gave us time to reflect on who this blessed man was and how he lived by reaching out to the marginalized in our society.

Blessed Solanus embodied the prayer attributed to St. Teresa of Ávila, "Christ has no body now but yours, no hands, no feet but yours. We are the compassion that looks out to the world..."

I left with a sense of what was in Blessed Solanus's heart and with respect for his ministry to those in need. He was a man of God who changed people's hearts and lives. We, in turn, can mirror his heart by reaching out with compassion to those most in need.

If you would like to learn more about Br. Al Mascia, OFM, and his ministry, visit: <http://brotheral.org/>



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO LOVE

by Joseph Makley, OFS



Jan Parker, OFS, former National Minister; Louise Sandberg, OFS, 2022 JPIC Award Recipient; Joseph Makley, OFS, Co-Chair, JPIC Commission.

What follows is a brief interview with Louise Sandberg, our JPIC award recipient for 2022.

Louise is currently a counselor and the JPIC animator for Tau Cross Region (The Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk counties.) Her fraternity is Blessed Raymond Lull, in Hewlett, NY.

What inspired you to become a secular Franciscan?

St Francis has inspired me since I was a little girl and read a biography of his life. My friend, Deacon Bob Campbell invited me to come to Franciscans Living in Community (FLIC), originally Secular Experience of Living Franciscanism (SELF). I was the only non-professed person there!! I had never even been

to a fraternity gathering. Bill McVernon seemed to be in charge. He came up to me and reprimanded me for not having a Tau Cross! When he heard my story, he gave me one and told me not to tell anyone! He is long gone to heaven. But I found my home with like-minded, loving people. Carolyn Townes was one of them. I attended all her talks and felt her to be a beautiful kindred spirit. I was already a missionary to Ghana, West Africa. With a spiritual director, I had looked into: becoming a religious, getting married, or staying single, because I wanted to follow God's call, not my will. God seemed to be calling me to a Secular life.

So I started going with Bob to his fraternity gatherings and was professed May 7, 2004.

What keeps you going?

I read the mass readings every day. I keep reading until I am inspired. Then I live that scripture the best I can, with God's help. I often join my friends on Zoom for prayer, meditation, the Liturgy of the Hours, and fellowship.

I love people. I maintain my connection with my friends in Ghana, Uganda, Mexico, and locally, those I serve, who are women and children in need. I run support groups in English and Spanish, including a group for healing from childhood abuse. I am inspired by the resilience and love of those who are materially poor but rich in love, joy, peace, compassion, generosity, and gratitude. Every day is an adventure and an opportunity to listen with love, serve with humility, and surrender my will and ego living the Gospel.

Can you describe your work as a pediatric nurse?

I am a pediatric Home Care nurse for very vulnerable, fragile children. What they are unable to do, I do for them. I believe in empowering my patients, loving them, and letting them teach me how they want to be cared for. My last few patients I watched grow from young children to mature adolescents and young adults. I even went to college with one!

I do their physical care—washing them, dressing them, helping them move and breathe. They show me how valuable life is by loving their lives, never complaining about their disability, and overcoming every obstacle with their determination and God-given talents, with a little encouragement and support. I cannot say pick up your mat and walk, but I can position their hand on their joystick so they can drive their own motorized wheelchair.

How did you decide to become a JPIC animator?

I feel like Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation chose me!! I always respond to the cry of the poor with prayer and action. In 1990, when the Jesuits and their housekeeper were killed in El

Salvador, I protested at the office of my congressman against the millions of dollars we were sending in military aid to El Salvador. It was being used to kill the people. In my prayer, I saw my tax money was killing innocent people, and I was in a place to safely protest, risking only arrest, while they risked death, mutilation, and disappearance daily. I was arrested and tried with nine other Catholics from Pax Christi. Ray McGrath, our congressman, voted against that aid for the first time during our trial.

When a Ugandan told me about people dying from dirty water, I looked at my access to clean water every day, all day. I decided to help. I raised the money for a protected spring for a small village. I thought this would be my one big contribution. When I went there on mission with Secular Franciscan Stephen Smith, OFS, (tothenationsmissions.com) after meeting him at the 2016 Quinquennial, I was greeted with drumming and dancing, gifts and a presentation. Then as I was ready to leave, I was introduced to another desperate community with dirty water! So with the 2022 JPIC award, look what we did!! (See before and after photos.)



Old unsafe water source in Uganda village



New protected spring providing clean water



Lent 2023: Interior Cultivation

Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR

“Listen” - Gardens are attractive by virtue of their beauty and bounty. Gardens delight our senses and ground us in the earth. They are the object of fruitful reflection and hands-on prayer. Gardens can speak to us of promise and hope, of dying/rising. These carefully tended plots of earth can be an expression of God’s lavish abundance, as well as a challenge of trust as unseen seeds take root and grow. Sometimes when we allow the mystery of a garden to enter into us, it yields forth its secrets.

Brothers and sisters, let us do some interior cultivation in the garden of our hearts. The “Lenten spring” is prime time for “interior cultivation.” With the help of the Holy Spirit, let us dig deeper into the place where our relationship with Jesus grows. St Francis helps us acquire needed garden implements: the yellow-green newness of springtime; the fragrant blossoms adorning our Sister Mother Earth; the restorative warmth of Brother Sun.

“Discern”—Our lives are a running towards something or a running away from something. We repel and avoid. We desire and yearn. As gardeners, we till the soil, we break through the hard surface layer: clumps of resentments, hard rocks of indifference, old roots of grievances. What blocks the way when I try to open my heart to Jesus? What stones am I stumbling on in my Franciscan journey? What old roots am I getting tangled up in as I try to nourish the seed of God’s Word in my heart?

One of those mysterious processes that contribute to the growth of gardens is composting. A compost pile—let’s do some interior cultivation with our own compost pile. My prayer and reflection during these Lenten days have brought me to the conscious

recognition of the shadow-side of my personality. I had known for some time that I possess certain personality traits and character flaws that I’d rather not have. I had also been under the illusion that it would be a matter of time before I could eliminate these defects and move on. What I realized was that these pieces and parts of me were integral to who I am, and that I’d never be rid of them. In fact, they are essential to my becoming fully human.

This discovery was depressing, indeed. Also needed for interior cultivation to work in the soil of my heart was my compost pile. What turned things around for me was what I placed on the compost pile that is me: impatience, confusion, doubt with a touch of stubbornness, control, leftover anger, old thinking patterns that don’t work anymore, words spoken in haste without love, unspoken words that contribute to pain and disharmony.

What a compost pile! Humus—of earth, the ground, the soil. Human—an earthly one. I am of earth. My own humus, product of my life’s compost pile, fertilizing the transformation process that allows me to become human. Humus. Human. Humility. I need to remember that I am an earthly one. Yes, I aspire to things of the Spirit. Yes, God chooses to love me and use me—for love, for service, for justice. But God chooses. Like Francis, I am nothing. I am humus. I am human.

Each of us needs to experience the miracle of transformation, especially in these days of Lent, to embrace the pieces and parts that are in need of God’s healing touch. Interior cultivation allows for those personality traits we find most despicable to become integrated, the raw material for personal growth, so that they nourish

our lives. When I think of the shadow elements that I want to reject, wisdom teaches that these are valuable—compostable—because they keep me coming back to God and His healing grace, the

healing that yields a new kind of energy that revitalizes everyday living.

“Go Forth”

Prayer enriches the soul as compost does the soil. And so, I pray:

Come, Lord Jesus, let me feel Your presence, and hear Your voice.
Open the eyes of my heart,
illuminate within it places of eternal Lent where I have not permitted Your love entry.
Help me to open these places.
Root out that which needs to leave, and make room for the joy of Your resurrection.
Open the eyes of my heart to see You
in those with whom I live and work and share fraternity.
Come to those broken places in me,
in those relationships with others, in the world around me,
in need of reconciliation, with the healing of Your resurrection.
Open the eyes of my heart to see You in those whose walk is long and lonely
through their personal Gethsemane.
Allow me to accompany You in them.
Remain with me, remind me, and lift up into the light,
the dormant confidence of hope in the joy of Your resurrection.

“Changed in mind but not in body, Francis was eager to direct his will to God’s will. Thus, he retired for a short time from the tumult and business of the world and was anxious to keep Jesus Christ in his inmost self. Like an experienced merchant, he concealed the pearl he had found from the eyes of mockers and, selling all he had, he tried to buy it secretly.... He acted in such a way that no one would know what was happening within. Wisely taking the occasion of the good to conceal the better, Francis consulted God alone about his holy purpose. He prayed with all his heart that the eternal and true God guide his way and teach him to do God’s will. He endured great suffering in his soul, and was not able to rest until he accomplished in action what he had conceived in his heart.” (1Celano 6)

Let’s make this opportunity “intentional,” to cultivate the soil of the heart, and to keep Jesus in our inmost self. Let us not rest until Christ comes to birth in the heart. Beauty and bounty, then, will live in the garden of our heart.





WE ARE ALL VOLUNTEERS

by Jane DeRose-Bamman and Diane Menditto

According to the Google Dictionary/Oxford Languages website: “Volunteer” means: “a person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task.”

Each Secular Franciscan is a volunteer of sorts... a volunteer for Jesus. We choose daily to say yes to our vocation, going from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel. Although elected to our positions, the members of the new National Executive Council volunteered to serve in those positions.

There are other volunteers in the Order who serve in appointed positions. The appointees are often behind the scenes. Without those willing to serve in appointed positions, those who were elected would be floundering immediately upon election.

On the national level, these appointments are in the areas of the Commissions (Formation; Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation; and Youth/Young Adult), the National Database, the TAU-USA newsletter, 1-800-Francis vocations line, the national website, archives, historian, public relations specialists and, more recently, those working with social media and accessibility concerns. There are also very task specific appointments, e.g., the Quinquennial Committee, which lasts for five years. Many members of the Database Committee (formerly the Computer Committee) and TAU-USA Committee have served for more than 10 years. Some committee chairs and members have served in various roles as committees have transitioned. We are not sure that people would have said yes to their original appointment if they had known it would last 5+ years. Here are a few of those who have been serving for many years:

Dan Mulholland, OFS, served as a JPIC Commission Co-Chair and transitioned to the Computer Committee, and as an offshoot has helped with the website, social media, TAU-USA, setting up and maintaining email listserv, and many other tasks. He always offers his expertise, as well as sharing his knowledge with others. He is active with his local and regional fraternities. His unending “yes” to volunteer and share his gifts is inspiring.

Bob Herbelin, OFS, has been managing the current database for 20 years. He has been helped by the Computer Committee members, but Bob is the main database manager. Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, OFS, for about eight years now, has been overseeing access to the database. Bob and Cyl create the National Directory based on the database information. Cyl also maintains the mailing list for the *Tau-USA*. Bob helps with the annual report functions of the database. They are working with the Database Committee to set up the new database (which we hope to roll out in 2023). Thanks to Bob and Cyl for their longtime efforts.

Randy Heinz, OFS, managed the mailing list for many years before Cyl. He was integral in initiating the new website, Twitter, and Facebook pages. Thanks to Randy for helping us evolve with our communication methods.

Jim and Cindy Wesley, OFS, work on key parts of our communication efforts with the *Tau-USA* newsletter. They have been working on compiling the articles as well as translating them for more than 10 years. Their efforts have produced 32 newsletters in English and Spanish. Their consistent labor of love is a gift for the OFS-USA. Combined with efforts from the website committee members, we have all versions of the newsletter since 1987 posted to the website. <https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/tau-usa-newsletter/>

Unfortunately, we aren’t able to list all the volunteers here by name. Thanks to all who have been and will be willing to accept appointments!

Because an appointment should not be considered a life-long commitment, the NEC is soliciting applications for our Commission Chairs—National Formation, National Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation, and National Youth/Young Adult, and the *Tau-USA* Editor in this newsletter. The NEC will solicit applications for other appointed positions in future *Tau-USA* editions.

OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

National Formation Commission Chair Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission Chair Youth/Young Adult Commission Chair Tau-USA Editor

The National Executive Council is seeking applicants for the above positions. Persons interested in serving in one of these capacities or nominating someone for a position, should contact the National Secretary, Susan Ronan, OFS, at ofsusasecretary@gmail.com AND National Vice Minister, Diane Menditto, OFS, at diane.menditto@gmail.com for an application form prior to March 15, 2023.

Applications will be due by March 31, 2023.

The qualities required for these positions include:

- Strong knowledge of our Catholic Faith
- Good writing and communication skills
- Ability to travel, as needed, including attendance at the annual National Chapter
- Experience conducting “Zoom-style” and “In-Person” meetings
- Ability to prepare and meet an annual budget
- Experience and skills relating to the particular position (e.g., leading formation program or serving as a local or regional formation director; participating in programs to further justice, peace, or integrity of creation (JPIC) or serving as local or regional JPIC chair; participating in Youth/Young Adult activities to share the love of the Franciscan Order with the youth; producing a newsletter for fraternities, other volunteer work including use of specific software programs for newsletter).

Application forms for the individual positions will be emailed to interested persons. The NEC will review all applications and determine whether video interviews will be conducted. The intention is to make appointments prior to August 2023. For additional information, contact Susan Ronan, OFS, at ofsusasecretary@gmail.com.

CHAPTER OF MATS IN NOVEMBER 2024

The CIOFS Presidency is planning a Chapter of Mats for the Secular Franciscan Order and YouFra to be held November 14-19, 2024 in Rome, Italy. This will immediately follow the 2024 General Chapter. It is a way to celebrate the 800th anniversaries of important events in the life of St. Francis. In December 2022 and January 2023, the OFS-USA asked Regional Ministers to compile the names of individuals (OFS and family members, YouFra and Spiritual Assistants) interested in participating. Over 500 persons from the OFS-USA expressed interest in attending. CIOFS will be compiling information from all the National Fraternities to determine logistics for the gathering. The National Executive Council will share information once the CIOFS Presidency has finalized plans for this very special event. Stay tuned!

SUGGESTIONS FOR GATHERING LOCATIONS

The National Executive Council plans face-to-face meetings throughout the year. Meeting sizes range from 12 persons (NEC meetings) to 80+ persons (Chapter). Preference is to stay at a retreat center located in proximity to an airport. We are looking for locations for 2024, 2025 and 2026. If you know of a retreat center, friary or convent that may be large enough to hold such a meeting, please share the name of the facility, location and contact information with Susan Ronan, OFS, National Secretary at ofsusasecretary@gmail.com. Thank you for the suggestions.

OUR FRATERNITY GATHERING: OUR LIFE!

by Francine Gikow, OFS

Why is being in a fraternity so important? Short Answer: because it is our brothers and sisters who support and challenge us to *live* the LIFE of a Secular Franciscan. We cannot do it alone! We learn about ourselves and our charism by living in fraternity. Living with the same people in fraternity for the rest of our lives (unless we relocate) challenges us to an ever deepening relationship with others in a new family of faith. As family, our Constitutions outline this responsibility when it states: ***“The brothers and sisters are co-responsible for the life of the fraternity to which they belong...The sense of co-responsibility of the members requires personal presence, witness, prayer, and active collaboration...”*** (GC 30, 1-2-) Therefore, fraternity is all about *relationships and responsibility*. Without relationship, we do not have fraternity. Without responsibility, we do not have fraternity. We are *co-responsible* and *co-accountable* for our fraternity life. We must be participating “in fraternity” as Secular Franciscans—there are NO isolated members. It is a part of our charism, and it is what we promised at profession. We owe our brothers and sisters our presence. It is VITAL to our vocation.

Our fraternity is canonically established, which means that we are officially an arm of the Catholic Church—so we should be a role model or example of a “little church.” Fraternity is not a prayer group, a business meeting, or a sodality. We are an Order in the Church and have a different goal than any other parish group: our goal is *to grow in holiness* through living the Secular Franciscan life in fraternity.

To grow in holiness means we need a stable, committed (permanently professed) community of like-minded brothers and sisters to encourage us in our journey, challenge us to conversion and to accompany us in our sorrows and joys. In other words, we need a family! Since fraternity, and the

ongoing Franciscan formation it provides, is crucial in our Secular Franciscan journey, we *prioritize* our attendance at gatherings before parish or other commitments.

There are four essentials that make up a Fraternity Gathering. They are:

- **A Communal Prayer Experience**
- **Announcements** (very short in length)
- **Ongoing Formation** (This is the most important part of the gathering and should be given the longest time allotment,)
- **Social**

(Please note: All four elements/parts should be present for most meetings except for an occasional celebration or feast.) A time schedule for the fraternity gathering ensures that all four elements are addressed and given their due. There should also be a balance between times for prayer, ongoing formation, business, and social interaction within the fraternity gathering.



The Fraternity Council is encouraged to develop a yearly formation plan or calendar of formation topics for each fraternity gathering. Topics and ideas can come from the CIOFS and National OFS websites, Papal encyclicals, Formation Fridays, TAU articles, Franciscan books, and the identified needs of the fraternity seen by the Council. The regional formation team can be invaluable in helping to locate resources and materials for a particular theme.

Let's look at each element individually. The suggested

time schedule identified in each section is for a two-hour gathering. Of course, if there is additional time available, segments can be lengthened accordingly. Ultimately, the fraternity council is responsible for developing an appropriate schedule for the gathering and adhering to it.

Ongoing Formation: (approx. 30-40 minutes)

Ongoing formation is considered *the most important part* of a fraternity gathering and is *the only place* where we are fed Franciscan and lay spirituality, as well as the Franciscan charism. Ongoing formation offers study and practice in the Secular Franciscan Way of Life and through its discussions, reflections, and the sharing of relationships, we develop a cohesiveness of mission in the fraternity's ongoing formation. Attendance is crucial for each and every gathering, because we are, in a sense, feeding ourselves and others with "Franciscan food" in ongoing formation. When it's absent, we starve!

Communal Prayer Time: (about 15-20 minutes)

Communal prayer times should be Franciscan in focus and could be taken from a selection of the *Liturgy of the Hours* or the *Office of the Passion*, intercessory prayer, a decade of the Crown rosary, Stations of the Cross, Gospel meditation, words of St. Francis or Clare, and many others. Prayer time is NOT a time for private devotions, or the latest trend in pious practices/activities. Please Note: Attending Mass as a fraternity is nice, but it is *not* a mandatory part of a fraternity's prayer time.

Announcements: (usually 10 minutes or less)

Fraternity business should be the shortest portion of the fraternity gathering. Announcements of retreats, upcoming events, anniversaries, and deaths can be highlighted in the newsletter, with a short mention at the gathering. Fraternity apostolates and volunteer needs could be discussed with signup sheets available. CIOFS/NAFRA/Regional News can be listed in the fraternity newsletter and briefly mentioned at the gathering.

The Social: (usually around 30 minutes)

This, too, is an essential part of the gathering. It provides a way to deepen relationships through sharing of personal news within the fraternity in a casual but caring environment. Every gathering should include time for the brothers and sisters to informally share among themselves and encounter each other. From experience, I realize that this

element of the fraternity gathering is the most likely of all the elements to extend past its allotted time. It is important, however, that someone is assigned to monitor the time and announce the ending of the social in order to clean up and progress to another part of the gathering. Continued eating during prayer time and/or ongoing formation should be discouraged, because it distracts from prayer and the content of the ongoing formation.

Needless to say, having a loving, active, joyful fraternity does not simply happen. It takes a lot of work! Because we are a "gathering" not a meeting, we rely on the Holy Spirit guiding us. We are not a business, nor are we "run" like a business, but rather, we lead by consensus and by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is known as "servant leadership" in the Secular Franciscan Order. To be a servant leader in the order, is to first serve and animate (inspire) a fraternity. It is sacrificial in nature because it is a gift freely given to the fraternity with a generous spirit of service. The elected Council's style of servant leadership - is NOT directing, but rather listening deeply and with compassion.

It is NOT "My way or the highway" but rather being open to new ideas/concepts.

IT is NOT power and control but rather valuing and encouraging the growth of others.

The "Ideal" Fraternity has:

- the "anima" (or spirit) of the Franciscan Charism, which is JOY,
- a cohesiveness of fraternal spirit and sharing,
- a sincere love witnessed in personal interactions,
- acceptance and warmth,
- unity of purpose while accepting diversity in expression.

At our profession, we promised to "make the fraternity a genuine ecclesial assembly and a living Franciscan community"(OFS Ritual, p.22). Let us do what we have promised to do!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What inspired you in this article? Describe what inspired you and why.
2. What are some "take aways" or ideas you want to remember?
3. What idea or thought challenges you the most and why?
4. What will you change in your Secular Franciscan life as a result of this article?



ONE YOUNG LADY'S FAITH JOURNEY

By Kathleen Molaro, OFS

Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission Chair

With her permission, I share with you a conversation I had with my young adult granddaughter. We hadn't been together in person for a while, and sat with a cup of tea, enjoying each other's company.

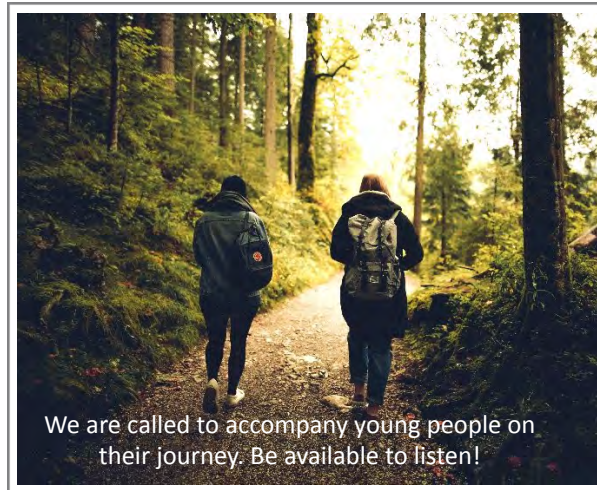
Me: A while ago I talked to you when you were struggling with depression and a lack of enthusiasm for going to Church or even praying.

Sophia: I was going through a rough time. Going to Mass seemed like a burden, something I had to do. I didn't believe I had any relationship with God. As a high schooler, I also felt a bit used. Our youth group was always being asked to set up chairs, serve at Church dinners, babysit, and that sort of thing. I really didn't feel like I belonged in any meaningful way. There was something missing in my life, and I didn't know what it was.

Me: Now you seem focused and strong in your faith. What caused that change, do you think?

Sophia: I felt lost and alone when my family moved across the country. I had no friends, no school because I had just graduated from high school, and had a brand-new environment to get used to. Then COVID struck. The only socializing I had with people my age was online. When I shared my feeling of loss and confusion with a stranger in a blog, she encouraged me to pray for God's will for my life. "God has a purpose for you," she said. "Pray for Him to reveal it to you. You may be in for a surprise. There's something waiting for you." We had a simple conversation that I pondered for quite a while. That little comment stirred a change in me.

Me: Sometimes even little moments in our life really transform us. Sounds like that was one of them! Did you have any other particular bigger incidents that influenced where you are now in your faith life?



Sophia: When my friend died in a car accident, I came to a point in my life where I had to make a choice. I could run from God and wallow in despair and anger, or I could seek God to help me through. I also really believed if I wanted to see my friend again someday in Heaven, I would need to live a

worthy life and keep my eyes on the Kingdom! The conversation about purpose in life resurfaced in my heart. I chose the path toward God, and now I have a great desire to encourage others to walk the same path. Maybe purpose isn't necessarily going to school or choosing a job or vocation. Instead, living with purpose might mean choosing a way of life... living with holy intention.

Me: Sounds like your "pondering" bore fruit and sent you on a search.

Sophia: It really did. I delved into many things. I started studying scripture by using Father Mike Schmitz's *Bible in a Year* program. I immersed myself in an on-line 14-part series about the Holy Spirit with Fr. Dave Pivonka. I learned to take Mass more seriously when my mom bought me an *Every Sacred Sunday Mass Journal* to use during the COVID shut down. Of course, I didn't

do all these things at once. But I just couldn't get enough. I was so excited, I moved from one study to another.

Me: Did things get better when your Church reopened?

Sophia: My Church has a lot to offer, so I joined the Church choir and a few groups. At a women's group, one day we were discussing how we share our faith with others. One of the other members asked me, "How do you share your faith with your friends? I imagine it's different than for us older folks." My answer was, "What friends? There's no one my age in the Church. You are my people now, and I really appreciate how you accept me, love me, and listen to me even though I'm a good 30 years or more younger than everyone else."

Me: So you enjoy your involvement?

Sophia: Certainly, and I know I'm growing closer and closer to God. I am respected as a valuable member of the community. I haven't been asked to set up chairs in a long time! But I am a little frustrated that there's no help for me to find other young people. I don't know how to do that. There might be people my age I don't know about, maybe even in the Catholic Churches nearby. I really wish there could be a young adult group.

Me: If there was such a group, what would it look like?

Sophia: I think it would be fairly simple. There are so many books and programs to use. We could invite speakers, even folks who could help us with life skills like budgeting or getting a job. The group could find social service projects to work on together and would benefit from lots of sharing and supporting one another in our journeys. We would pray and sometimes go to Mass together. We'd be able to run the group on our own once we have the support and gain leadership skills.

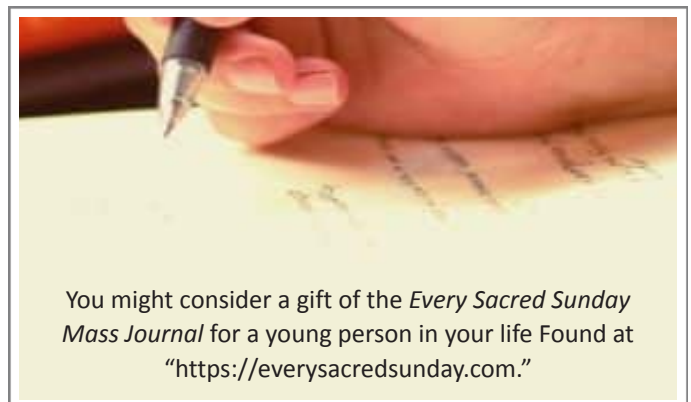
Me: So, back to how to find a purpose in life. What do you think it takes?

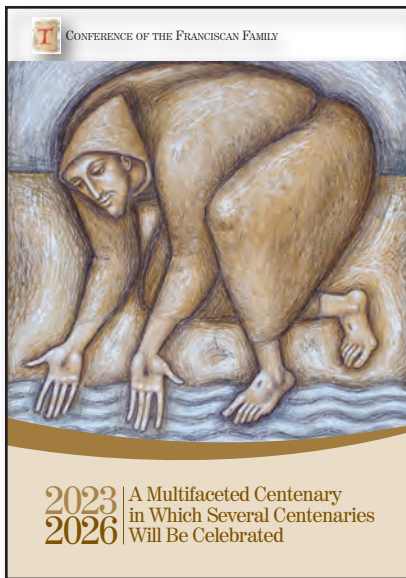
Sophia: Determination and follow through—we can't just talk about it; I believe we need four things:

1. We need to take action!
2. We need a consistent prayer life—we have to schedule in prayer time and remain faithful to it. It won't just happen automatically.
3. We need each other. An inspiring and spiritually healthy community helps a lot, whether it's people our age or not.
4. It's imperative to develop a deep relationship with God. I probably should have said that first!

Sophia: And now, I have a question for you, Grandma. Aren't these all the things you need too? Do we ever stop looking for purpose, a relationship with God, and a community to help us do all that?

Me: You're right, Sophia. That's why I hope we (older and younger) can walk together and bless each other in that journey. You've expressed many of the ideas our Youth and Young Adult Commission has discovered in our studying how to bring the Gospel to young people. Hearing from you has validated our work. Thanks for spending this time sharing with me.





THE FRANCISCAN CENTENARY

by Bret Thoman OFS

In January 2022, the Conference of the Franciscan Family sent out a letter to Franciscans everywhere announcing an important initiative: preparations for the next Franciscan Centenary. https://ciofs.info/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Centenario_ENG_def_pdf.pdf.

A centenary is a 100-year commemoration of a significant event. In the same way we celebrate birthdays or wedding or profession anniversaries, our order commemorates significant events in the life of Francis. These are moments to reflect. We take time to consider what these events mean to us, how they shaped or formed us, and how they affect our identity. We look back at what happened in time in order to consider where we are now, and where we wish to go from here.

Unlike our own life events, in which we recall such events in years, the order marks events in the life of St. Francis in terms of centuries. These are centenaries.

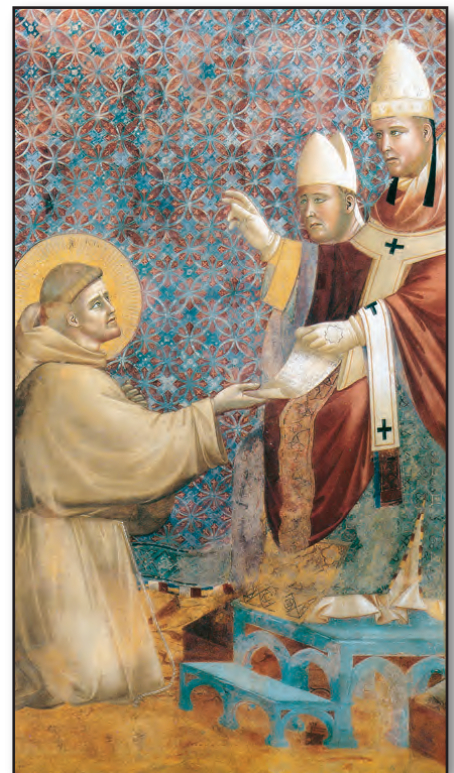
Anyone who has been on pilgrimage to Assisi may have noticed past centenaries. For example, in the cemetery chapel of Bastiola, not far from Assisi, there is a plaque dated 1912. It was placed there to commemorate the seventh centenary of St. Clare’s arrival; at the then monastery of San Paolo after leaving her family on Palm Sunday, 1212.

More recently, over the past two decades, there have been a number of eighth-centenary events. In 2006, there was the “spoliation” of Francis; that is, when he stripped before his father and the bishop (1206). In 2009, there was the oral approval of the rule by Pope Innocent X and the creation of the order (1209). In 2012, there was Clare’s conversion (1212). In 2017, there was the chapter of mats (1217), while in 2021, we recalled the letter written by Francis that marks the beginning of the Third Order (1221).

But these were all minor commemorations compared to the centenary events that will take place over the next few years. From 1223 through 1226, a series of major milestones in the life of St. Francis will be celebrated.

This year, 2023, we commemorate the eighth centenary of the approval of the Later Rule of St. Francis and the Christmas at Greccio (1223). Next year, in 2024, we will recall the Reception of the Stigmata on Mt. Laverna (1224). Then in 2025, we will commemorate the composition of the Canticle of the Creatures (1225). Finally, what is being referred to as the Easter of Francis – that is, his death and passing to eternal life (1226/2026) will be celebrated. These events will coincide with the Jubilee in the Catholic Church in 2025.

In future articles, I will be exploring these important events in the life of St. Francis by describing where they took place.



“PEACE WITH THE EARTH, PEACE WITH EACH OTHER, PEACE WITHIN”

Organizers of International World Day of Peace El Paso

by: Marie Bianca, OFS

Article 19 of our Rule calls us to be, “Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transformative power of love and pardon.” The question that follows is, “How is that accomplished?”

In late June, I was introduced to an amazing woman who was offering a wonderful gift to The Interfaith Alliance of the Southwest. This woman, Laurie Marshal, is the founder of The Singing Tree Foundation, promoting Unity Through Creativity. She wanted to partner with the Alliance and bring the Singing Tree Project to El Paso. It is the hope of both Laurie and the Interfaith Alliance of the Southwest to have the City of El Paso become declared an International City of Peace. On September 21, 2022, at Keystone Heritage Park Botanical Gardens in El Paso, from 12 PM to 8 PM, the gardens opened its doors to this wonderful celebration. The event welcomed vendors that promote peace, singers, dancers, speakers, and holistic healers, and promoted Peace Literacy.

Speakers spanned the world, from Mexico to Afghanistan. It was an honor to walk with these brothers and sisters from around the world, each bringing their unique story of peace. A local high school, Loreto Academy, asked the AP English class to speak to “Who is your Peace Hero.” They were asked to write essays about their peace hero, and the winners were invited to read their piece.

Each essay reflected a deep understanding of their world and most often of their families. Grandma Bea, (Beatriz Villegas), a native of the Ilhuicatlhulli-Bea tribe of



Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, brought the opening ceremony alive with her message of peace through song and chant in her native tongue. Later, Neema Soratgar from Afghanistan spoke of her quest for peace after fleeing from her country to come to El Paso to live in peace and work in the field of Research on Women’s Studies at the University of Texas-El Paso. Tigua dancers claiming the native lands in and around Las Cruces/El Paso danced for peace in traditional form. And the list of speakers went on, too many to list, each carrying the message of importance of communication, respect, and compassion for the earth, for each other and within ourselves.

An important expression of the day was the beautiful mural painted on one of the back walls of the park. This mural was worked on by members of the Interfaith team. Laurie Marshal did a very large piece of the mural, and each attendee was asked to add it to the wall of the Nectarine Tree. Blossoms, leaves, and birds were hand decorated by everyone and attached to the mural, to be adhered permanently later. It is Ms. Marshall’s belief that, with our combined efforts, we as a community can build a beautiful work of art displaying God’s presence, peace and joy in the world.

We are capable and called to do just that, working together building peace in the world. It did not matter what faith you practice, the color of your skin, the language you speak. The goal was unity and peace—something we all strive for in this world. Can you use your creativity to build peace in our world? When you do, your light shines even brighter. The world needs all the light we can shine with the Creator into this world.



“I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy.”

Rabindranath Tagore

NEW NATIONAL DATABASE UPDATE

The National Database for the Secular Franciscan Order of the USA is expected to roll out in May 2023.

At the recent National Chapter in October, members of the OFS-USA Database Committee provided a demo of the new database and projected the database would be introduced in the spring.

Two years ago, it was decided by the NEC to initiate a project to replace the existing National Database, which was implemented in older technology and is difficult to maintain and support. The new database is being developed by a team of OFS members guided by a Steering Committee of NEC members.

The National Database contains information about all our members and our fraternities at all levels, as well as other organizations and individuals involved with our Order, such as the Provinces to which our fraternities are bonded, and the Friars and Sisters serving as our Spiritual Assistants.

The software for the new database was selected in June of 2022. Since then, the team has completed the database design, security model, most of the data conversion processes, and most of the user interface.

In late November, the team determined that the Annual Regional Reporting process in the current system would not be able to be updated to accommodate the 2022 reporting cycle (due in early 2023). The committee began building a prototype and is about 80% complete with the database, form and reporting. This was unanticipated, so the estimate for completing the database is extended to May 2023.

The new database will provide all the capability of the existing database, plus several significant enhancements. Aside from being easier to maintain and change, the new database will provide:

- Online Help Desk for submitting requests, questions and issues
- Enhanced data extract capability (PDF/Excel downloads)
- Enhanced ad hoc and standard reporting (print-friendly rosters, directories etc.)
- Full history capture on key data tables (Organization, Person, Position Assignments)
- Flexible permissions structure allowing read or write access to multiple fraternities and/or regions
- Dual membership for members of newly forming groups and emerging fraternities (the sponsoring fraternity and the new group) without double-counting members
- Separate membership status and profession status to simplify searches
- Enhanced member search (global search, and search within a fraternity)
- Implementation of National guidelines for required data based on member status
- Capture of multiple languages/proficiencies, and interests for a member
- Multiple addresses for “snow birds”

Contact us at support@ofsusadb.zohodesk.com with questions, comments and suggestions.

DATABASE DESIGN/DEVELOPMENT TEAM:

Bill Mussatto, OFS

Bob Herbelin, OFS

Stephen Shields, OFS

Miriam Kennedy, OFS

Michael Hancock, OFS

**National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order-USA
2023 General Fund Budget - Adopted October 15, 2022**

	2023 Adopted Budget
Income	
Fair Share	\$ 202,000.00
Formation Sales	24,000.00
OFS-USA Bookstore	3,000.00
Interest Income-Certificate Deposit	25.00
Miscellaneous Income	1,000.00
Total Income	<u>\$ 230,025.00</u>
Expenses	
CIOFS Fair Share	40,000.00
TAU-USA Newsletter	45,150.00
CNSA -Conf Nat'l Spiritual Asst	8,000.00
Annual Chapter (includes International Visitors)	49,950.00
National Executive Council	58,500.00
Communication Summit	15,000.00
1st American OFS & XI Latin American Congress	5,000.00
Commissions & Committees	
Accessibility Committee	13,480.00
Archives	3,675.00
Bookstore	1,230.00
Database, Website, Computer Committee	5,585.00
Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee	8,190.00
Formation Commission	32,330.00
Franciscan Family Outreach	8,800.00
Historian	2,930.00
JPIC Commission	15,690.00
Multi-Cultural Committee	2,000.00
Public Relations	1,500.00
Quinquennial Planning	11,600.00
Vocations Committee	1,475.00
Website	910.00
Youth & Young Adult (FYA) Comm	8,690.00
Formation Sales Expenses	
Formation Printing	14,000.00
Formation Printing - Languages	12,000.00
Ritual revision & copyright purchase	6,000.00
Royalties Paid	-
JPIC Outreach - Franciscan Intl - donation	2,000.00
JPIC Award (including travel & lodging)	3,000.00
Liability Insurance	5,800.00
Professional services	8,000.00
Other Expenses	5,000.00
Total Expenses	<u>395,485.00</u>
Net General Fund Income (Loss)	(165,460.00)
Deficit will be covered by funds in savings	<u>165,460.00</u>
	<u><u>\$0.00</u></u>

The above budget for the 2023 year of the National Fraternity-USA was unanimously approved by the Regional Ministers at the October 2022 Chapter in Detroit, Michigan. If you have any questions regarding the above budget, please contact our National Treasurer at claudiakauz.sfo@gmail.com.

SECULAR FRANCISCAN BOOKS

IMPORTANT NOTICE:
Our policies have changed

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at claudiakauz.sfo@gmail.com

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