



THE NEW NATIONAL HISTORIAN

Tom McNamara, OFS, is our new National Historian. He was born in Chicago, Ill., and grew up in Phoenix, Ariz., where he lives with his wife JoAnne.

A graduate of Regina Cleri Seminary, Tom studied Fine Art at SCC, ASU and Prescott College, earning a master's degree in Counseling/Art Therapy. Professed with JoAnne on June 13, 2011, in St. Francis Fraternity, St. Thomas More Region, Tom served three years as Regional Vice Minister, taking on the job of Archivist, where he explores the rich local history of our Order in Arizona. In March 2019, Tom accepted the job of National Historian and began work on the next History of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States.

Loom of God

by Tom McNamara, OFS

The purpose of history is to reveal God to all Creation. God made history and then entered into it so that we can be together.

No one can understand God without understanding the ongoing journey of life. Time is woven around us like a "cloth-of-one-piece," and God is its weaver.

Life, revelation, history — all these things are gifts. Franciscans learn this and make our journey in wonder and joy. We know that life can be shared with others, and so life becomes not a drudge, but a celebration; a feast of rejoicing. Everyone has a seat at God's table. Everyone is given a beautiful garment, woven by God's own hand. That garment is our history.

But what many don't realize is that history is

not only about the past, it is also about our future. It's all going toward union with God, and this — this is what changes us.

History is a force that bends and turns our destiny to bring us home. We Christians call this force "conversion." None of it is accidental — conversion follows and reveals God's intention. The pattern of conversion is already in God's mind. Woven of countless threads — some shining, some dull, some hardy, some delicate — our history reveals life's wholeness, how everything works together for the fulfillment of God's plan.

On our journey, ego takes a seat. The hand of love smooths the gathering fabric. Though we see it in bits and glimpses, everything in our history is as it should be. God looks upon what God has woven and cries tears of joy.

The apostolate of history-gathering and history-telling is a ministry that helps the whole community understand who we were, who we are today, and who we are becoming. It is a mission that reveals to the world its true beauty and value.

History shows us where we need to change, how we need to adjust course. For this we call on the Holy Spirit, who guides us "from the helm." Though we can only imagine the joy of our destination, we are sure of its existence. Our journey has been illumined by the journeys of those "who have gone before us, marked with the sign of faith." It is for them, and for those who will follow after us, that we make the journey and keep a record of it.

We hope to complete a new History, covering the years 2008-2020, in time for our coming Quinquennial. If you would like to share your stories, if you know people who have been true guides on the way, or if you have ideas where this is all leading, be welcome to call or write.

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