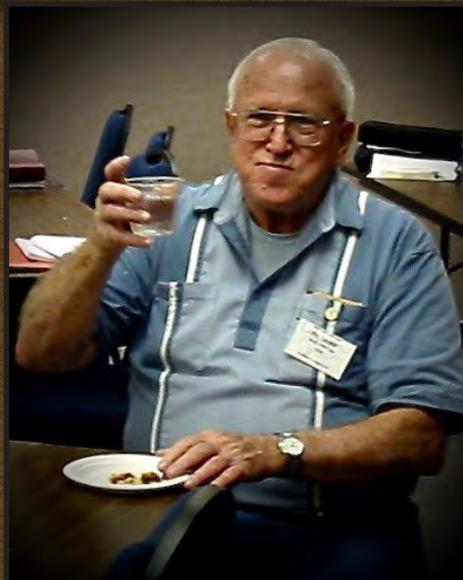
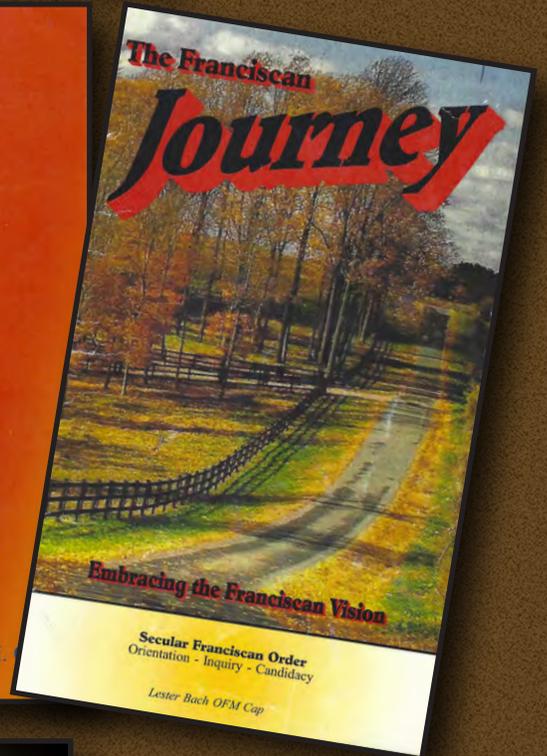
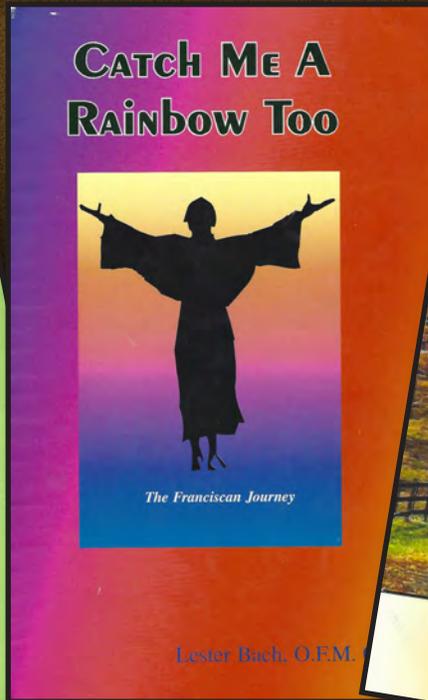
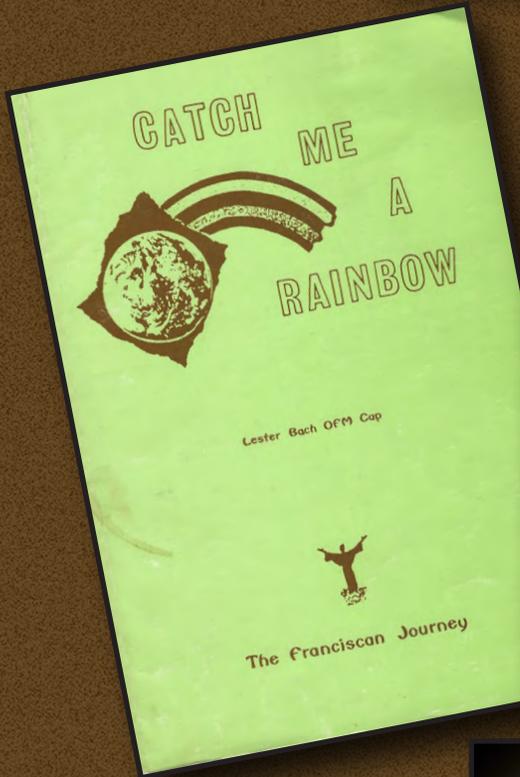


TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

Spring 2020 Issue 100



Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap. (1931-2020)

Thank you for teaching us to
"Journey Together in Love and Compassion"

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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Request to receive the TAU-USA as only a digital version, or general database questions, contact the Database Administrator, Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, OFS
cylmaljan@earthlink.net.

A Spanish version of the TAU-USA is now available and being mailed to Spanish speaking members upon request. If you wish to receive the TAU USA in Spanish and not English, please send your name, address, fraternity name and region name to: Cindy Wesley OFS, cw93444@gmail.com or 846 Calimex Place, Nipomo, CA 93444.



- * INFORM
- * INSPIRE
- * CHALLENGE

OUR MISSION IS TO SHARE THE VISION

* 100TH Anniversary Issue *

While working on the last issue of the *TAU-USA*, we realized that this will be an anniversary issue — #100. Through the years, teams of Franciscan brothers and sisters have worked together making each issue a vital communication link to all members of the Secular Franciscan Order, USA.

The *TAU-USA* is a quarterly publication of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order of the United States. It serves as a vital communication link between the National Fraternity Leadership and all professed and aspiring Secular Franciscans throughout the United States. Each article in the publication, while sharing the Secular Franciscan charism and vision, is intended to inform, inspire, and challenge. Many of the articles of the *TAU-USA* are excellent resources for ongoing formation.

Each issue is the result the teamwork of Secular Franciscans from around the country. Many of the articles are written by members of the National Executive Council and the various committees and commissions. Articles are regularly submitted by the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA), the four spiritual assistants, one from

each friar obedience (Order of Friars Minor, OFM Capuchin, OFM Conventual, and Third Order Regular), who provide assistance to the National Fraternity. For many years, Fr. Lester Bach was a regular contributor. Occasionally, articles are also submitted by Secular Franciscans from the various fraternities around the country. The production staff includes copy editing, layout, proofing, translation and layout in Spanish and Korean, and the posting of an electronic version on the national website. The management of the National Database is also part of the production process; it is the source of the accurate and updated mailing list for more than 13,400 names. All work is done by volunteers from the Secular Franciscans family. The printing and mailing of the English and Spanish issues are handled by Valley Offset Printing and Smoky Valley Printing in Kansas.

History of the National Newsletter

by Bill Wicks, OFS

Look in Volume III, pages 148-156. It has the history of the TAU-USA and lists the editors up to 2007. The first national newsletter was published by Fr. Max Poppy, OFM, in 1936. Refer to pages 237-238 of Volume I of our history.

The publication of the national newsletter was resumed in 1991, after a hiatus of 20 years. It was and is published quarterly. Elizabeth Ryder, SFO, was the editor, and James David Lynch, SFO, was the National Minister at that time. It should be noted that during the above-mentioned hiatus, much of the news of the Order was published in the *Franciscan Herald and Forum*; the *Herald* ceased publishing in 1987.

With each editor, the newsletter showed improvement, some of which had to do with the improvements in word processing software, some with the change of the size and quality of printed

paper and the number of pages. Each editor gifted us with her/his unique creativity.

The Naming of the National Newsletter

In the summer of 1995, a survey was taken of the subscribers to select a name for the national newsletter. There were more 100 entries. The name selected by the Executive Council, *TAU-USA*, was submitted by Ralph Schlueter, SFO, former newsletter editor for St. John the Baptist Province and Holy Trinity Region. As a prize, Ralph was awarded a copy of the Liturgy of the Hours. The newsletter name was first used in the Winter 1996 edition.

ISSUE #100

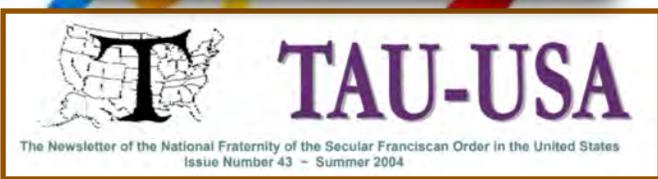
TAU-USA EDITORS OVER THE YEARS



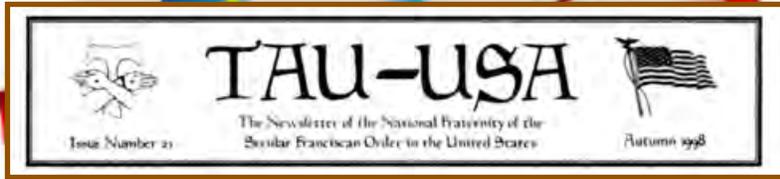
2012 - Current
Jim & Cindy Wesley



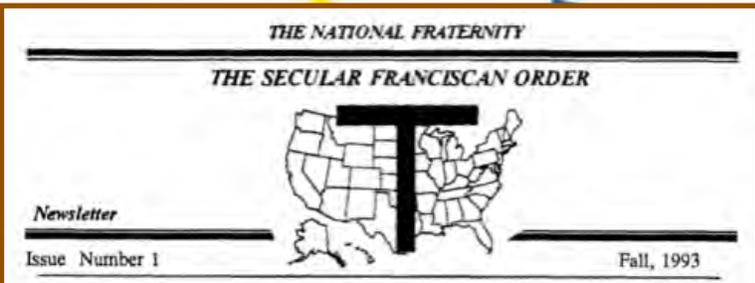
2010
Anna Geraci



2003
Frances Wicks



1998
Tony & Daria Outhwaite



1993
Patti Normile

1991
Elizabeth Ryder



1989
Gloria Shriver

THANK YOU TO OUR EDITORS AND MANY CONTRIBUTORS!



TAU-USA Editorial Staff Meeting 2003, Frances Wicks, Editor - Center

THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY
of
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

Newsletter Summer, 1991

MARY AND THE EUCHARIST
James David Lynch, SFO
National Minister

Very close are the links that unite our Blessed Lady to the Holy Eucharist. We need God, and our hearts naturally go in search of him. The pagans of old and of our time, even the most primitive, worship a god or gods and are constantly making for themselves images of their false gods. God granted us Christians the grace and the opportunity of satisfying our need of God by means of the mystery of the Incarnation, and later by means of the Holy Eucharist.

The Son of God came down from heaven and dwelt here on this very earth. He dwelt here amongst us just as one of us. We could see him, know him, speak to him, touch him, and love him as any other friend or companion. But a day was to come when he would die and pass from this world.

Before that day came, he arranged for a continued Incarnation. The Holy Eucharist was the means he devised. He would remain with us until the end of time, not now under the appearance of a child of man, but under the outward appearance of bread. He is really with us, and we with him. We can speak to him and love him and become intimately united to him. Food, by assimilation, becomes one with the eater; so, Christ in the Eucharist becomes one with us. The Holy Eucharist is a continued Incarnation. It is the application of the Incarnation to each of us. This is how God satisfied the craving we have for him.

God indeed has given us the gift of the Incarnation. Did he not give it to us through Mary? And this second gift of the continued Incarnation is given to us also through Mary. Mary is still giving and presenting her Child to the world as she gave and presented him to the shepherds and magi. Let us thank Mary for the gift of Jesus in our tabernacles.

O Mary, help me to live as a faithful disciple of Jesus for the building up of Christian society and the joy of the Catholic Church. I greet you, mother, morning and evening; I pray to you as I go upon my way; from you I hope for the inspiration and encouragement that will enable me to fulfill the sacred promises of my earthly vocation, give glory to God and win eternal salvation. O Mary! Like you in Bethlehem and on Golgotha, I too wish to stay always close to Jesus. He is the eternal King of all ages and all peoples.
— Pope John XXIII

1991 Edition

Issue Number 33 Winter 2001

Will The Dust Ever Settle?
William Wicks, SFO, National Minister

After the vivid and tragic events of September 11, one image that returns to my mind over and over again is that of the dust-covered humanity groping their way through fallout from the crushed twin towers. I can still picture in my mind their apparently featureless faces, clouded with dust, marching away from Ground Zero, stepping over the debris, towards life. It is an image of hope. They had made it; they were walking to life. They could go home to their families, thankful that they had survived. But, the question remains: will they ever be the same?

That same question can be asked of us. Will we ever be the same? I will try to answer the question for myself, and for all of us. For all of us, I can say that suddenly we feel vulnerable. A paradigm shift has occurred in our sense of well-being. We are no longer separated geographically from political terror that was, up to that time, being perpetrated elsewhere in the world. So, how have I changed?

There is now a sense of urgency in my living of the Gospel. That terrible event, I learned that I must be more understanding of others' beliefs. I have learned that I must daily thank God for this gift of life. The "spiritual dust" fallout from the September 11 tragedy is still driving over me and filtering through my soul. I was thrust more deeply into the Paschal mystery, and not by my own choice. I cannot escape that feeling. I know that I feel closer to all of you, and that some things that were once important to me, no longer are. For a month, my American flag hung outside my house, just like all the other houses on my block. My "Tau flag" is being displayed more often. I have attended Mass more frequently. I feel the need to be more connected with people, and with God. I need the presence of others now more than ever before - anyway that I can get it over the phone, via e-mail, face to face. My dust-covered soul seems to be seeking a way to escape, as were those walking and running away from Ground Zero - looking for life. I ask myself: is there now a Ground Zero here in my heart? Perhaps I will know when the dust settles, if it ever does. Is it a bad thing if it never does? And is it a bad thing if Ground Zero never leaves my soul? Perhaps it was there all the while, and just revealed itself on September 11.

Eventually, members of Saint Thomas More Secular Franciscan Fraternity, to which she belonged, and her many other friends, consoled that she had parted along with some 315 members of the firm. A liturgical minister at Saint Francis Church, Carol had humbled and directed the Saint Francis Caritas Creativity Project. She guided many of its activities, including exhibits in the gallery set up in the former friary lobby on 31st Street.

"She can't be replaced," said Ann McCarty, whose paintings were recently exhibited in the gallery. Our sister was washed clean to Baptism, and nourished with the body and blood of the Lord in the Eucharist. As a Secular Franciscan, she was united more closely with the Lord, and with us, through the observance of our way of life. As she strove to follow this Rule of Life, may the Lord now take her to Himself, and grant her a place among His saints in glory.

— from the Secular Franciscan Wake Service

2001 Edition

Newsletter of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States
 Issue Number Forty-five ~ Winter 2004

T

TAU-USA

Our hearts are ready and waiting. Come, Lord Jesus, and have a Happy Birthday with us!

2004 Edition

PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER IN THE UNITED STATES
News letter

Meet High, all power-full, good Lord, Yours are the praises, the glory and the honor and all blessing, To You alone, Most High, do they belong and no human is worthy to mention Your name.

2009-2012
NATIONAL FRATERNITY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

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International Counselor

Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap
CNSA President-in-Turn

Dear brothers and sisters in St. Francis,

Get ready dear readers, this special formation issue of the TAU-USA is filled with such exciting, entertaining and educational articles that it will be hard to put down once you start reading.

First and foremost of course, are the many articles written about the "For Up to Now" (FUN) formation manual. This issue captures the essence of the manual and presents it from every point of view. We hear from the members of the National Formation Commission, and from ministers and formation directors who were good enough to share their experience and expertise. We hear from several regions who have held their first presentations to "Forming the Formators" workshops; we hear from regional ministers who share their thoughts and concerns; and learn of their future plans for implementing the manual.

As you read the articles, it is clear that FUN is not just for the newcomers to our beloved order, it also serves as a rejuvenating shot-in-the-arm for the rest of us. I must admit that I am filled with renewed pride in being a Secular Franciscan, and in seeing the incredible dedication and love in the creation and presentation of this wonderful manual. There are indeed exciting times for our order. Our National Formation Commission has clearly shown what we think to do, but they haven't stopped there. Turn to page 40, you'll find that they are welcoming invitations from the regions, to attend workshops, give presentations and answer questions "on the spot." They are so invested in FUN that they are willing to give more of their time and efforts while asking only for room and board.

It is now our turn: let us begin—together. *Ann*

CELEBRATING THE 8TH CENTENARY OF THE CONSECRATION OF ST. CLARE
April 16, 2011—August 11, 2012

FOR TABLE OF CONTENTS SEE PAGE 11

2011 Edition



OFS-USA

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER-USA

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

By Jan Parker OFS

MY STORY, OUR STORY, THE STORY

Each of us, as we follow God's path for us, find ourselves in places we never dreamed we would be, doing things we never thought we would do. I was thinking about this as I returned from Guam earlier this year. On this long flight, I sat in a state of wonder. I had traveled half-way around the world over the vast Pacific Ocean to this tiny island. Never in my life did I think I would go to Guam even once, let alone twice. Yet this is where God led me.



Members of St. Padre Pio Fraternity Council with Jan Parker at the celebration of their canonical establishment, January 4, 2020.

Now, three months after my return from Guam, the world is dealing with a corona virus pandemic. Life has dramatically changed for all of us. We find ourselves in uncharted waters dealing with unbelievable physical and emotional challenges. Who would have imagined anything like this ever happening? Life is certainly a mystery, with all its twists and turns. We trust that we are being guided but find ourselves

questioning. Where is it all leading? What is the meaning of it all?

Years ago, at a workshop on Christian initiation, I was introduced to a rainbow shaped diagram like the one pictured below. At the bottom were the words "My Story." On the half circle band above it were the words, "Our Story"; and at the top, in an overarching band, were the words "The Story". Kathy, our facilitator, explained the diagram this way: "We each have our own unique story – let's call it My Story. My Story, as important as it is, is part of something bigger. Let's call this Our Story. Our Story is the story we share with our families and friends in our homes and workplaces. It's the story of our faith community and the wider Church, and it is even more. Our Story is the story of all people, the story of our world and all creation. But above all that, there is something even greater. Let's call it The Story. What is The Story? It's a story written by and known only to God." This simple diagram gave me a way to see how it all fits together.



My Story

Each of us has a unique story, and a unique experience of God. At some point, whether suddenly or gradually, we recognize God calling us to himself. This realization of God's presence in our lives is deep, real, and personal. It

profoundly impacts our lives and set us on a particular path. This is “My Story,” and it continues to unfold in our lives. My Story is no small thing to me, or to God. Nevertheless, it is part of something bigger.

Our Story

My Story is part of Our Story. We are intricately connected with each other and our world. God leads each of us to play our part in Our Story, to care for each other and for all creation. What we do, or what we refuse to do, makes a difference in our worldwide community and to our planet. Old or young, believer or non-believer, liberal or conservative, we are all in the same boat. Ignoring others in the boat and leaning our own way will cause the boat to tilt and eventually sink. We cannot make it on our own. We live our best lives when we lean on each other, work together, and learn from each other.

The Story

As people of faith, we know we are also part of “The Story,” the story written by and known only to God. We will not know the fullness of The Story until we reach heaven, but faith tells us that God is ordering all things to bring The Story to fulfillment. In our daily lives, as we walk in that faith, we play our part in The Story.

Bishop Robert Barron talks about faith, stating, *“We have an adventurous God, and faith is the proper response to such a God.... Faith is an attitude of trust in the God who is always holding out new possibilities to us.”* Those possibilities may seem impossible to us, but they are not impossible to God. He may call us to something we are not sure we can do or ask us to accept a situation we would rather change. God’s ways simply do not always make sense to us. This is where our faith in God, and our belief in a greater story, comes in. God is with us and is guiding us. His guidance may be

unseen, but it is not unfelt. Empowered by grace, we can follow God’s call and play our part in The Story. We trust in divine providence, for *“God’s love for man will never rest until he has raised our earthbound nature from glory to glory and made it one with his own in heaven.”*¹

When we look at the events of our lives through the eyes of faith, we understand that My Story and Our Story ultimately only have meaning within The Story. God has called each of us for a time and a purpose. When it comes to the big questions in life, all we need do is look up in faith. *“[God] has revealed himself and given himself to man. He has thus provided the definitive, super-abundant answer to the questions man asks himself about the meaning and purpose of his life.”*² Our belief that God is using us to write The Story gives our lives great meaning, beyond what we can know. This faith bolsters our determination to follow the Holy Spirit’s lead, even into the unknown. This faith gives meaning especially to our suffering. No matter how difficult, no matter the missteps along the way, God’s providence is there for us. We get up again, turn to God, and keep going. All this because *“God, who is rich in mercy,...made us alive together with Christ...”*³ Alive together, yes, for The Story is ultimately the story of Resurrection, a story of hope and joy as we celebrate and live within the Paschal Mystery.



*“The heavens proclaim the glory of God
and the firmament shows forth the work of his hands. Day unto day
takes up the story and night unto night makes known the message.”
(Psalm 19)*

¹ St. Andrew of Crete, Office of Readings for Palm Sunday

² Catechism of the Catholic Church, 68

³ Ephesians 2:4-5

Does looking at all this have an impact on us as Franciscans? For sure, it does. My own Story started long before I became a Franciscan. My Story is rooted in Christ, and my Franciscan vocation stems from that initial encounter. I am not in the Order only to learn about Francis and be enamored by his life, but to live the Gospel. Francis himself said, “I have done what was mine to do, may Christ teach you what is yours.” Those around me may well see Francis or Clare reflected in my life, but ultimately it must be Christ that I proclaim as I live the Gospel.

When it comes to Our Story, that’s easy. For Franciscans it’s all about fraternity and universal kinship. We are keenly aware of a story beyond ourselves. We are called to identify with the lowly and lift them up to their true dignity. We care for all of creation. Within the Order, the bonds of fraternity help us live our professions, conform our lives to Christ, and pour ourselves out as Christ did upon the Cross. When we stumble and fall, we know sisters and brothers understand and are there to help. Our fraternities depend on each of us to be active members of the Order at every level – local, regional, national and international. We cannot sit still. We need to keep moving forward, striving for ongoing daily conversion. Only in this way do we contribute to Our Story.

Finally, we look to “Our Franciscan Story” as part of The Story. It was God who inspired Francis, and God led others to follow him. God continues to guide and help us as an Order. Grace comes when we most need it, at times unbidden and unexpected, giving us the impetus to move forward as an Order. Whether Franciscans are journeying halfway around the world or standing together (six feet apart) facing the challenges of a pandemic, we know our witness is part of The Story —something greater and far beyond us, embracing all. St. Francis encourages us to “follow the Lord’s most holy

commands to the very end”⁴ as we look towards the Son of Man’s coming in glory. In that moment, we will know the fullness of The Story, as we hear Christ saying to all who “acknowledged, adored and served him in sincere repentance: ‘Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.’”⁵

More on “Our Story” The “Q” Tee Shirt Blanket



With your help, the Q Committee has created a special tee shirt blanket for the 2021 Quinquennial Congress (the “Q”). When I first laid eyes on it, I was filled with delight! How amazing to think that each donated tee shirt was worn by a fellow Franciscan somewhere across our country, or perhaps by someone beyond our borders. Look at “us”, all stitched together. Truly this is “fraternity in a blanket” – a great image of “Our Story.” The eventual winner of this blanket is known only to God, but what a gift it will be! Details about the 2021 Q, and how to win this blanket, will be posted on our OFS-USA website (secularfranciscansusa.org) starting in August 2021. (By the way, my shirt is the yellow one, bottom row, in the center.)

Peace and all good!
Jan

⁴ Office of the Passion of St. Francis of Assisi, Psalm 15

⁵ Mt. 25:34, cf TOR Rule, Art. 2

SHARING THE VISION

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Greetings of peace, Franciscan Brothers and Sisters,

Due to the coronavirus pandemic many of our Franciscan gatherings have been cancelled. While we must follow our local, state and national officials regarding distancing, we encourage you to remain in touch with your fraternity brothers and sisters. Consider conference calls and video meetings where possible. Those who do not use a computer will welcome a phone call. The NEC is with you in prayer. With God's grace we will weather this storm.

Formation Visioning Update

A message from Diane Menditto, National Formation Commission Chair

Since Chapter, exciting things have been happening with the National Formation Commission and with our formation Visioning Team. In October, I reported to the National Executive Council that we were in the process of choosing writers for the new formation materials. Since then, the writers have been contacted and have begun their work. At the end of February, they submitted the first drafts of their chapters.

Along with the topics covered in *For Up to Now*, we are including new material. There will be chapters on "First Steps," Prayer, Scripture, Early Franciscan Sources, Servant Leadership, and Youth, and two guides for days of reflection—one before Admission and one before Profession. A facilitators' edition will accompany the formation texts.

The Visioning Team plans to review the second drafts of chapters by the end of June and to discuss the layout of the books. As you can see, we are making progress, and we are excited!

The National Formation Commission is also preparing our Regional Formation Directors workshop, which will be held August 20-23, 2020. We plan to utilize teleconferencing for this event, as travel may still be unwise at that time. We are hoping that every Regional Fraternity will be represented at the workshop.

What's New on the National Website?

Our OFS-USA website is a treasure chest with new items posted every week. Currently on the home page you can find our Minister General's letter on the

coronavirus pandemic, his Easter reflection, and a link to a selection of formation resources on our National Priority of Fraternity. On the [Guidelines, Forms and Other Resources](#) tab are the Transfer Form, Vocations Tool Kit, "Come and See Brochure," the Digests, and "How to apply for a Duns Scotus Formation Fund (DSFF) Grant." We continue to receive inquiries from the "Contact Us" tab on the website. Terri Leone, OFS, former Minister of Saint Katharine Drexel Regional Fraternity, assists us in responding to these emails and also returns calls received on our 1-800-FRANCIS phone line.

International and National OFS Statutes

The International Council of the OFS (CIOFS) is in the process of revising and adding to the International Statutes, increasing the number of articles from the current 24 to 83. The NEC is reviewing the current draft. Approval is scheduled for the CIOFS Elective Chapter in November 2020. If you would like a copy of the draft International Statutes, send a request to nec.ofs.usa@gmail.com.

The NEC's work on the revision of our own National Statutes continues. New sections will include the process of canonical establishment and deactivation of local fraternities. Election procedures and voting norms for OFS Spiritual Assistants will also be addressed. We will keep you updated.

Spanish and Korean Presentations at the 2021 Quinquennial Congress

Our 2021 Quinquennial Congress will feature several presentations for our Spanish- and Korean- speaking sisters and brothers. We look forward to the 2021 Q being the largest gathering of Secular Franciscans in recent memory. For registration information please see page 28 in this issue of *TAU-USA*.

Summer Seminar at Franciscan University

The Summer Seminar planned for this July at the Franciscan University in Loretto, PA has been postponed until the summer of 2021.

FRATERNITY LIFE

Living Fraternal Communion

By Mary Bittner, OFS

During the Easter season, we read at Mass about the growth of the early Christian community as described in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

“These remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. The many miracles and signs worked through the apostles made a deep impression on everyone. The faithful all lived together and owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and shared out the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed. They went as a body to the Temple every day but met in their houses for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved.” Acts 2: 42-47

What should we note from this passage? The most obvious fact is that there, in first century Jerusalem, the Gospel was being lived. The Reign of God spoken of by Jesus in the gospels was becoming a reality in the lives of ordinary people. This reality was a powerful sign to the people around them, Jews and pagans alike. Yes, there were “miracles” and “signs.” Probably just as impressive to their audience was the fact that these Christians “lived together” and “sold their goods and possessions and shared out the proceeds” according to need, that “they shared their food gladly and generously.” In short, they both worshiped and lived as a community, a community of those whose lives had been transformed by the Good News.

Moreover, within a short time the community of believers included members of diverse social groups (slaves and freemen, pagans and Samaritans, Jews and Greeks), whose lives were characterized by a unity that would have been undreamed of a few years earlier. This was not an easy, painless coming together of like-minded individuals. No. Numerous references in Acts and Paul’s epistles make it only too clear the difficulty people had in accepting others whose backgrounds differed from their own. But unity was of utmost importance to them, and they persevered.

Jesus spoke of this sort of unity in a solemn moment at the Last Supper. *“I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory that you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.” (John 17:20-23)*

This is such a stupendous prayer that it’s hard to believe it’s true. Think about it. Jesus asked the Father that *our unity with Him and with each other might be as profound as the unity between Himself and His Father*. We may forget to be surprised by this because of our familiarity with the text, but this has to be one of the most amazing and challenging passages in Scripture. Furthermore, wonderful as it may be, this unity is not just for our own benefit. Jesus asks that we “may be brought to perfection as one” *so that the world may know the truth about Himself*. Our unity is meant to be profound and blatantly obvious, a sign to the unbelieving world.

You can probably see where this is leading. What was true for the followers of Jesus in the year 34 A.D. should be true for us living in 2020. As Franciscans, we have pledged ourselves to live the Gospel life as Francis did, as those early Christians did. The unity Jesus called for is as critical now as it ever was.

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1. Is your local fraternity a relatively homogeneous group? If so, would someone of a different background feel welcome? How do you know?
 2. Are those in your fraternity deeply committed to unity, or do you have a surface, “feel good” unity that falters as soon as people disagree? Is it possible to disagree and still have unity?
 3. Does your fraternity display the sort of unity that can convince the world? If not, what should you do about it?

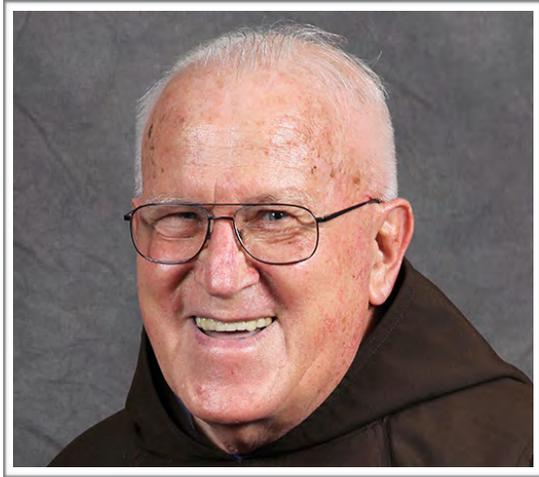
REMEMBERING FATHER LESTER BACH, OFM CAP.

He was the Bridge

by Sharon Winzeler OFS

With the death of Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap, Secular Franciscans lost a friend, mentor, author, spiritual assistant, and beloved friar on Feb. 2, 2020..

Fr. Bach is familiar to all Secular Franciscans as the author of formation materials, especially the spiral-bound text *The Franciscan Journey*, which is used throughout initiation, orientation, and candidacy.



Fr. Bach made his perpetual profession as a Capuchin in 1950 and was ordained in 1957. He began working with the Secular Franciscans in the 1960s. He served as Provincial Spiritual Assistant on the La Verna Regional Council, which covers Wisconsin and the upper peninsula of Michigan. Fr. Bach represented the Capuchins on the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants.

When he prepared to retire as Spiritual Assistant to the La Verna Regional Council about 10 years ago, he asked Lee Ann Niebuhr and Ed Voss to take his place. “Nobody could fill his shoes,” Niebuhr noted. “He was always active in the Region and he agreed to remain as Spiritual Assistant until Ed and I finished our spiritual assistant training.”

Fr. Bach served as a friar in Huntington and Crown Point, Ind., Saginaw, Mich., Madison and

Marathon, Wisconsin, and Chicago, Ill. On his 65th anniversary as a friar in 2015, Fr. Bach said in an article in *The Harvest News*, “During my entire ministry I worked with the Secular Franciscan Order as a spiritual assistant at various levels. I wrote several initial formation books as well as a commentary on the Secular Franciscan Constitutions. In 2000, the NAPCC (Capuchin provincials) appointed me to the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) on which I served for 12 years. These ministries have served me well and enhanced my Capuchin life. They were and are a source of my growth both personally and in various ministries. I thank God for my brother friars, for my family, for the warm relationships in my ministries, and for the gift of 65 years in my Capuchin vocation.”

Fr. Bach served the Secular Franciscans well, according to Niebuhr, who knew him since the late 1990s. “He was a man of the people and felt very comfortable among people in the secular lifestyle,” Niebuhr said. “He loved being with ordinary folks.” Niebuhr describes Fr. Bach as the good shepherd of his flock. “He always sought to be with the sheep. He was totally a man of the people.”

One of his strengths was facilitating dialogue rather than debate. “He was good at creating ‘and’ situations, not ‘either/or,’” Niebuhr said. “When discussions became tense, such as during a tough decision to remove a member from a fraternity, he would fall back and ask, ‘What is the most merciful way to look at this?’” she said. His answer would be “try to love her more.”

Fr. Bach also knew how to get people’s attention in a positive way. Niebuhr recalled a national gathering where everyone was standing around talking and it was past time to get started with the session. “Lester simply started singing a song that everybody knew. Eventually people heard and started singing, and slowly made their way to their

seats,” Niebuhr said. “He showed us that in times of turmoil, instead of simply continuing to sing your own song, you join together and sing one song with one another,” she said.

Fr. Bach valued Secular Franciscans and “glowed” when Niebuhr told him about recent initiatives discussed at a 2019 CNSA meeting in St. Louis that called for Seculars and Friars to work more closely together. “He glowed when I told him about it,” Niebuhr said, “and asked ‘How can we start this initiative in our Region?’”

“He was so instrumental in forming the seculars. It’s true that he wrote all those books. But Lester was the person and not the author when you talked with him,” she said.

The beauty of this man shone through, even during his final days in hospice, according to a conversation shared by National Minister Jan Parker, OFS. “He misses writing, and says his computer is broken, and those days are behind him now, but he is cheering us on, that’s for sure. He indicated that we should ‘take it from here’ and we should not forget that it’s ‘all about Love, which means it’s all about God’ and it’s ‘one and the same, you know.’” Jan added that she would never forget a homily by Fr. Lester, given at the 2012 Quinquennial, during which he called us to “*be the bridge.*” That phrase became a National OFS-USA theme the following year and is a phrase often repeated by Seculars throughout the country.



Fr. Bach is survived by his sister, Anna R. Gillis of Stevens Point, Wisconsin, and numerous nieces and nephews, as well as his many Capuchin brothers with whom he lived, prayed and ministered for more than 70 years. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Feb. 10 at St. Joseph Church in Appleton, Wisconsin. He is interred at Holy Cross Cemetery in Mt. Cavalry, Wisconsin. Fr. Bach was a columnist for the *TAU-USA* and the *La Verna Vision*, a regional Secular Franciscan newsletter.

Fr. Bach was a prolific writer and authored many books on Secular Franciscans and spirituality, including:

Giving Life to the Words (2014). A spiritual commentary on the OFS General Constitutions

Franciscan Family Connections (2007). Training book for spiritual assistants to the Secular Franciscan Order

Capturing the Spirit of Francis & Clare (2007). Ongoing formation book for the Secular Franciscan Order

Seeking a Gospel Life (2008). General book on the spirit of Francis and living the gospel vision

Take Time for Sunsets (1975). Reflections on Franciscan Spirituality

Catch me a Rainbow (1990). Formation book for Secular Franciscans

Called to Rebuild the Church. a spiritual commentary on the General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order (1997)

Where Bible & Life Connect (1998). Reflections for Spiritual Directors

Catch Me a Rainbow Too (1999). Book for initial formation

Come and See. Authored with Teresa Baker, OFS (2001)

Life-Giving Union (2003). His revision of an updated text for spiritual assistants

Pick More Daisies (2004). Ongoing formation for Secular Franciscans

Take Time for Sunsets (1975). Reflections on nature’s beauty

Where Bible and Life Connect: Reflections of a Spiritual Director (1995)



A Culture of Contempt

Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, T.O.R., CNSA

*“Grant all the faithful of the Church,
looking into the signs of the times by the light of faith,
may constantly devote themselves to the service of the Gospel.”
(III Mass for Various Needs)*

This Prayer of the Church and the Profession of the OFS Rule direct our witness and mission to build a more fraternal and Gospel-centered world. In St Francis’ day, and in our own day, the members of the Franciscan Family are in a continuous struggle to build an alternative society. The dominant paradigm in our world is division, polarization. Herein lies the challenge: Is our world God’s world? And in my own quirkiness, why can’t people stand each other?

Attitudes are difficult to change. One attitude has come across my radar: “We know...but so what?” Charmed, no. Chilled, yes. Such an attitude infects and poisons truth. Lying voices fly 24/7, while the truth of the Gospel at Sunday Mass gets less than 20 minutes...a week!

You’ve heard these voices. They tell you to swap personal integrity for what they sell. They persuade you barter your convictions for an easy deal; to exchange your devotion for a cheap thrill. “We know...but so what.” Lies and deception eat away at the human spirit, tear at the fabric of society. They taunt and tantalize; they flirt and flatter. It’s ok; don’t worry, no one will know.

Evil breaks down the doors of our hearts. Jesus stands and taps gently. The voices of lies and deception scream for our allegiance. Jesus softly and tenderly requests it. They promise shiny new objects. Jesus invites us to dine with Him at table.

Our Rule challenges us as Franciscans to build the Kingdom of God in temporal situations and activities. We do not live in two worlds, nor do we live two lives. We may not accept everything that people develop, nor embrace ideas that oppose the Gospel. Like it or not, we live in one world. And it belongs to God. (Thank you, dear brother, Father

Lester. May God be good to you as you have been to us!)

Our Constitutions reiterate the fact that we have membership “*both in the Church and in society as an inseparable reality*” (20.1). This world is where we implement the Gospel. Here is where we work to build the kind of society that offers light and life rather than darkness and destruction. Our political systems need to be constantly called to accountability. We will do our best to fulfill what the Gospel asks of us. We support the Church when we accept personal responsibility to be Gospel-oriented. We discard any approach that makes us two-faced.

Our Profession mandates that we be the best servants we can be. Formation in fraternity, enriched by life experiences, having intimacy with Jesus in prayer—these are key in being good and responsible Franciscans, whose primary contribution is to build a Gospel society.

St Francis experienced polarization in the Order, in the Church, and in the society of his day. It was painful indeed, but he showed us that pain can be quenched by mercy and forgiveness. Habits and temptations will always be with us. What’s needed is a change of heart, a heart filled with mercy and forgiveness.

Let us, then, pray with St Francis’ the *Salutation of the Virtues*, where he reminds us to take to heart and not forget the virtues—simplicity, poverty, humility, charity, and obedience, led by holy wisdom. May we stand firm in the challenge of social transformation, for a world governed not by sin and evil, but by virtues. Virtues proceed from the heart of God. We pray that we may have God in the heart.

AS WE LOOK TO OUR OWN WELLBEING, THINK OF OTHERS

By Alexander Escalera, O.F.M. Cap.

As part of our Franciscan charism, we have the idea that not only do we need to look to our own wellbeing, but we must also consider the welfare of others who surround us, even if our own life is not going the way we want it. For this, we have the example of St. Francis and his encounter with the leper. Francis was going through a major conversion point in his life (as he would for most of his life). He was trying to find out what God wanted him to do with his life. Where was God leading him? This was not an easy task for one who had tried it and still continued to do so. Yet God answered Francis in giving him the grace to embrace the leper, to be God's instrument in showing His mercy and love even though he still had so many questions of his own.

A modern day example: My brother, Deacon Stephen Gabriel Escalera, passed away on October 29, 2019, due to complications from a liver disease. He was a deacon at Christ the King Parish in Pueblo, Colorado, and leaves behind a wife and two children. Steve was 53, his daughter is a senior in high school, and his son is in junior high. My brother suffered greatly in his more than three-month stay in the ICU at the University of Denver Hospital. When I visited him in August 2019, he was writhing in pain on his bed, he had a tracheotomy, and his face was contorting from all his suffering.

"God is not fair," "God works in mysterious ways," and "Why do bad things happen to good people?" are almost clichéd phrases given how much use they get. Many will see my brother Steve's suffering for such a long time before his final passing, dying so young and leaving behind such young children as tragic. Yet in the Introduction to his book, *"God Is Not Fair And Other Reasons For Gratitude,"* Daniel Horan, OFM, states that the simple premise is that God's way is not our way; God's lack of fairness by human standards should challenge and show us how inappropriate, inhumane, and unchristian we actually are. We would project how we see our own world view, put that on other people, and even our own religion, as if to say these things are not our way but God's way.

In the story of my brother, several days before he passed away, our parents were with him. At some

point, a cleaning lady came in to tidy up Steve's room. She told mom and dad how much she admired Steve because he was a fighter, fighting his illness till the end. She was a bit sad, however. Her own daughter had just been taken to the hospital for trouble breathing. Upon examination, it was discovered she had a heart defect. The doctor examined further and found out she had diabetes. And upon even further examination, it was discovered she had a lump on her leg, and the doctor couldn't figure out what it was. She was going to go visit her daughter after her shift ended. She turned to leave after she cleaned up, and Steve, who could not speak due to the tracheotomy, motioned to get her attention. He then pointed to himself, clasped his hands like praying, then pointed at her. Translation, "I'm going to pray for you." Even as he lay there dying, my brother God gave him the grace to think of others in their need. Surely this was not where Steve had intended his life to go, but he was always open to God's will.

As I write this letter, the coronavirus is spreading throughout the world. I don't know if, by the time you read this, it will be under control or not. But in this time of uncertainty, be safe and healthy, and may God give you His grace to think of and help the other.

Remembering Lester

The Conference of National Spiritual Assistants extends our prayers and condolences to the Capuchin Friars of the Province of St. Joseph at the passing of their brother, Father Lester Bach. We have come to know and work with Lester as a Spiritual Assistant on various levels in the Secular Franciscan Order. His Franciscan spirituality as an author of many books on Initial and Continuing Formation deepened the vocation of the sisters and brothers living as Franciscans in the midst of world. Our grateful acknowledgment is given to Lester for initiating the "Life-Giving Union" course for preparing "suitable and well-prepared" spiritual assistants. We can say, then, with our Lord, "Well done, good and faithful, 'suitable and well-prepared' servant, enter into the joy of your Lord."



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



CELEBRATING SISTER MOTHER EARTH

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, National Animator

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth, who sustains us and governs us
and who produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.*

~ From the Cantic of Creation by Francis of Assisi

“LAUDATO SI, mi’ Signore” – “Praise be to you, my Lord.”
In the words of this beautiful cantic, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs”. ~ From the opening of *Laudato Si’*, 2015

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and the 5th anniversary of Pope Francis’ much anticipated encyclical, *Laudato Si’*. These important milestones have ignited a renewed energy and excitement for environmental justice issues. They have also brought back to light the tremendous damage we are doing to the earth, our common home.

Earth Day is an annual event celebrated around the world on April 22 to demonstrate support for the protection of our environment; of our Sister, Mother Earth. Earth Day is a global reminder that we have to continue to care for our common home. Unfortunately, we as a people have been negligent in that care and have done great harm to the earth. Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si’*: “*This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she ‘groans in travail.’ We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth; our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.*”



More than 800 years ago, Saint Francis wrote that our Sister Mother Earth sustains and governs us; she gives us life. Instead of returning the favor, we have laughed in her face by the damage and the harm we have done to her. The social teaching of our Church speaks to us of caring for all of God’s creation – this includes God’s people and God’s earth. In *Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) writes: “*We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God’s creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.*”

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI wrote in his 2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*: “*The environment is God’s gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole.... Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other*” (48, 51).

Finally, Article 18 of our Holy Rule states: “*Moreover [we] should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which “bear the imprint of the Most High,” and [we] should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship*”. This is not just a lovely suggestion or some pie-in-the-sky platitude, this is what we promise, what we profess. As Secular Franciscans, let us continue to call to mind the words of our Holy Rule and our seraphic Father Francis who called our earth Mother and Sister. Let us always show Sister Mother Earth the reverence and respect that Saint Francis showed. May the Lord continue to grant you peace.



FORMATION COMMISSION

A REFLECTION ON OUR FRANCISCAN SENSES

by Layna Maher, OFS

When we were very young, we learned that we have five basic senses that help us collect information and process the world around us. We see, we hear, we smell, we touch, and we taste. Our senses give us an awareness of the world around us.

As Franciscans, we strive daily to live a Gospel life and follow Jesus in the footsteps of our Seraphic Father Francis. We have the opportunity and responsibility to preach the Gospel with every encounter and interaction we have. Daily conversion calls us to do just that. We are called by our profession to let the Gospel values guide the way we perceive, interpret, and interact with the world around us. With our basic senses in mind, let us ask ourselves these questions and reflect on our answers.

Do I see others with Franciscan eyes? Do I use a Franciscan lens as I take in the world and see the imprint of the Most High? Especially when I meet others who are different and hold different beliefs, do I see and accept them “as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ?” (OFS Rule: Art.5) What do people see when they see me? Are my actions an observable example of Christ? What does God see as he looks into my heart?

Do I hear with Franciscan ears of love? Do I hear and answer the call of the Spirit? Do I hear the cry of the poor? Let us hear “The option for those who are least, those whom society discards” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 195). What do people hear when I speak? Are my words of love and a proclamation of Christ? What does God hear when he listens to my prayers?

Do I smell with a Franciscan nose? Do I recognize the fragrant beauty of creation? In 2 Corinthians 2:14-15, the apostle Paul tells us “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ and manifests through us the odor of the knowledge of him in every place. For we are the aroma of Christ for God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.” Do I smell of the fragrance of Christ’s love?

Do I touch with Franciscan compassion? Do I reach out and relate to others with love? Am I willing to open my heart to love others with the same acceptance St. Francis gave as he embraced the leper? Do I keep in touch with my Franciscan brothers and sisters and participate in fraternity life?

Do I taste with a Franciscan tongue? Do my thoughts and ideals have the flavor of the Franciscan? Consider my Franciscan palate. Do I savor the Gospel? Do I pray for vocations and ask others to taste and see? We are reminded and reassured in Psalm 34:9 to “Taste and see that the LORD is good.” Do I trust in the Lord? Has what seemed bitter “changed... into sweetness of body and soul?” (Testament of St. Francis) Do I taste the sweetness of body and soul?

Sisters and Brothers, we are called to be messengers of perfect joy as Secular Franciscans, members of an evangelical order. We must ask ourselves, do our words, thoughts and actions exude Franciscan love and mercy so others experience Christ’s love? Are you using your Franciscan senses?





ACCOMPANYING YOUNG PEOPLE: LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

Kathleen Molaro, OFS
National Franciscan Youth and Young Adult
Commission Chair

The National Franciscan Youth and Young Adult (FY/YA) commission was formed in 1995, and members have contributed articles to the *TAU-USA* since its inception in 1996. In looking back at the very first FY/YA commission article published, it is interesting to note that right from the start, the intention of the commission has been to motivate Secular Franciscans to understand our role in accompanying youth. Young people, our society, and our Church have all changed dramatically. In this 100th issue of the *TAU-USA*, however, the current commission points out that the responsibility to accompany young people in their journey has not changed.

The opening of the 1996 commission article, written by Mary and Anthony Mazotti, states, “Spiritually motivated and dedicated youth are not formed in a vacuum. They are lifted up by those going from Gospel to life and life to Gospel.” Our Bishops recently stressed that in this pluralistic, confusing world, walking with young people toward wholeness and holiness is essential. They state in the final document of their 2018 synod on young people, “Being present, supporting and accompanying the journey towards authentic choices is one way for the Church to exercise her maternal function... Service of this kind is simply the continuation of the way in which the God of Jesus Christ acts towards his people: through constant and heartfelt presence, dedicated and loving closeness and tenderness without limits.”²

As Secular Franciscans, we are called to this same mission. Isn't that what fraternity is all about? Neither Jesus nor Francis sent their disciples out to spread the gospel alone. We work together, and our efforts would be blessed with young people by our side.

The 1996 *TAU-USA* article also said, “The Church recognizes that there is a great hunger among youth for deeper meaning and purpose to their lives. There is a strong desire among many of them to make the world a better place, to save it from its seemingly bent to self-destruct.”³ The current commission agrees and

believes we all need to rise to the challenge in offering young people opportunities to discover and utilize their gifts.

Our charism leads us to incorporate social justice action. Young people realize it is imperative to be “hands-on” in working for change. They are eager to offer their time and talents and to assume responsibility. We find young people at the forefront, seeking creative ways to combat social and environmental diseases, discrimination, racism and violence that permeates our world.

Recently, Pope Francis recognized this hunger and exhorted young people to view their lives as mission. He tells them they should refrain from asking “Who am I?” They will find more meaning in life by asking “For whom am I?”⁴ Don't we all strive to know God's plan for us? To seek purpose in our work? Walking with a young person is an important step toward holiness, not only for the youth, but for those who serve them. Through formation, fraternity, and service, we all grow in our faith. “In a world marked by diversity of peoples and variety of cultures, 'walking together' is fundamental if the initiatives of solidarity, integration and promotion of justice are to be credible and effective,”⁵ whether in 1996 or 2020.

NATIONAL FRANCISCAN YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT COMMISSION

The FY/YA Animator Training,
previously scheduled for September 10-14,
in Belleville, Illinois, has been postponed until
further notice.

We will contact you when there is a new date.

¹ Wicks, William, *A History of the Secular Franciscan Order*, Vol. III, Smoky Valley Printing, Lindsborg, KS, 261

² Young People, *The Faith and Vocational Discernment: Final Document of the Fifteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 91

³ Wicks, William. [Ibid? some fuller citation?]

⁴ Young People, *The Faith and Vocational Discernment*, 69

⁵ Ibid, 126



NATIONAL ARCHIVES OFS-USA

OUR NATIONAL ARCHIVES: IDENTIFYING, ORGANIZING AND PRESERVING

By Sharon Dale, OFS

Last November, I flew to St. Bonaventure University in New York to have a first look at our National Archives, located in the lower level of St. Francis Hall. At first look I thought, “Oh my, look at all these boxes!” Indeed, there were 237 boxes labeled by number.

The room was clean and comfortable, dimly lit, and looked to be safe and secure for our precious Secular Franciscan records. Boxes were stored on sturdy shelving units and no box was stored on the floor. Temperature, lighting, cleanliness and safe storage are important when a “home” for archives is being considered.

What are archives?

Archives are important documents and artifacts that need to be preserved. They are as diverse as the institutions and people they serve. They are located in federal, state, and local governments, colleges and universities, religious institutions, businesses, hospitals, museums, and historical societies—wherever it is important to retain the records of people or organizations. Included in archives are important letters, photographs, films, audio and video recordings, very important manuscripts, business meetings, and so on.



As the National Archivist of OFS-USA, I am responsible for selecting pertinent records, arranging and naming them, and ensuring the long-term preservation of the collection. When needed, I can assist researchers and plan exhibits and other out-reach programs.

Why is it important to identify and organize records?

An archivist is more than a historian—more like a museum curator. I take the minutes of OFS national meetings, the correspondence to and from our International Order, the continued work of our various national commissions and committees, the elections of regional officers, reports from Quinquennials and a hundred (only slightly exaggerating) other sources that are sent, and create files. These files will be stored alphabetically for easier future access, then placed into numbered boxes. Only books that have been written to memorialize important OFS national events will also be kept as archived matter. You know from your workspace at home, filing bills coming in and payments being made, emails to be answered and so on, that one must be organized. If not, the inevitable “I can’t find...” becomes your wail.

What about preservation?

Taking care of the records tagged as important at the national level, as well as being the archivist/secretary at the regional level is essential to assure their longevity. At the regional level annual reports, documents of establishment, visitation reports, pictures of fraternity events and so on should be stored.



The area chosen should be well-ventilated, safe and secure, with low to no light. Other members of your regional council should be aware of and approve the space chosen. If archived material must be stored in a basement, there should be no humidity issues. All boxes should be archival (bank boxes are fine). Every-day cardboard boxes should not be used, as they aren't sturdy enough for long-term storage. Boxes should be identified as OFS material. So many records are lost because family members look at unmarked boxes as "throw-aways."

It is most desirable is to have records scanned into a computer so that there is not only hard-copy, but in case of possible "lost items," your fraternity would have the electronic backup.

Looking ahead

I'm looking forward to the work ahead in our National Archives. Sharon Deveaux, my predecessor, has done a great job in acquiring mountains of documents and interesting artifacts of our early years, first as Franciscan provinces, then as regions. A special place will be established for non-paper items such as reels of film from the old television series *Hour of St. Francis*, old scapulars and cords, burial garments and tunics, profession crosses and various Third Order ribbons and medals. My priority will be to make sure all files are itemized and properly labeled in boxes. After getting access to a scanner, my hope is to provide an electronic backup of all paper documents.

It is the hope of National Historian Tom McNamara and I to have a "museum" of sorts at our upcoming Quinquennial in 2021, where we will have documents and artifacts available relating to the early years of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States.

Archives Mission Statement

(Quoted from an undated document in the archives.)

- ❖ *The Secular Franciscan Order in the United States is an organization consisting of a National Fraternity, 31 regional fraternities, many local fraternities and more than 17,000 members. Its history includes many personal and institutional activities, functions, ministries and events which demonstrate and encourage Franciscan spirituality and the vocation to be followers of Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi, according to our Rule.*
- ❖ *The Archives... serves as the main repository for the historical documents, official records, photographs, books, letters, artwork, memorabilia and many other materials that pertain to the history of the Order in the United States. The establishment of the Archives is in fulfillment of Article 6.3 of the National Statutes.*
- ❖ *The purpose and mission is to actively collect existing materials, appraise materials for historical significance, organize material into a cohesive collection, ensure the physical care and preservation of the collection, and to facilitate scholarly interpretation and use of the collection.*

EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY IN TIMES OF NECESSITY AND CHANGE

By John Baldino, OFS, MALS

From quarantines to stay-at-home orders, isolation is a challenge for those who meet regularly in fraternities and participate in parish and community activities. Secular Franciscans are in the world, working and playing among people all the time, so it is no surprise that during a time in which people must avoid contact with each other brothers and sisters may feel apprehensive. While fraternity meetings are the equivalent of a monastery for the brothers and sisters of penance, the Secular Franciscan Order is not cloistered. It operates beyond monasteries.

In spite of drastic measures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, today's situation is not debilitating. The Order should not allow this crisis to curb meetings and actions. Digital communication platforms like Zoom, FaceTime, Google Hangouts, and even conference calling connect people in ways almost as closely as in-person gatherings. Social platforms like Facebook and Instagram present evangelization opportunities for Secular Franciscans and all the faithful. Websites share schedules, formation materials, prayers, and inspiring words.

Fear precludes many from using these technologies. It is human nature to fear the unknown, and that fear is prominent when it comes to digital media. If Secular Franciscans are driven only by fear of basic communication technology as it emerges, obsolescence will surely come next—and soon. Websites, social media presence, and communication technology are vital to the success of any organization—especially one that is expected to preach the Gospel at all times. These platforms are key when traditional face-to-face interactions are not possible, and optimal supplements even when in-person contact is permitted.

Fear notwithstanding, human beings communicate digitally. Remaining relevant means adapting and embracing the way the faithful communicate.

The Catholic Church has a long history of embracing communication technology. From

being among the first to abandon scrolls in favor of the codex to Fr. Gabriel Richard publishing the first Catholic newspaper in the United States in 1802 to St. Maximilian Kolbe using magazines and radio to combat Nazi propaganda in Poland and Japan during World War II, the Church has been a pioneer in communicating with people in the way they want to be reached. Kolbe said, “If Jesus or St. Francis were alive today, they would use modern communication technology to reach the people.”

Email was first introduced in the 1970s, videoconferencing in the 1980s, so today's modern technology is not really new at all. There are just new, better platforms that deliver that technology to more people today than 30 years ago.

Jesus tells us “Be not afraid.” St. Clare said, “Go forth without fear.” The Minister General of the Secular Franciscan Order, Tibor Kauser, OFS, wrote in his Easter message, “Do not be afraid of using contemporary instruments and tools. Share your feelings, your experiences with each other,” he wrote. “Make phone calls, write e-mails, short messages, organize videoconferences.”

Once fear is overcome and the realization of a technological society sets in, the instruments available abound. Fraternity meetings and community prayer are easily conducted via Zoom and Google Hangouts. These videoconferencing services offer brothers and sisters the opportunity to see each other while meeting. It is the next best option to meeting in person, and the best option when in-person meetings are not possible. Facebook is an opportunity to evangelize, sharing scripture quotes, images (those not protected by copyright), and even links to the written word on fraternity websites. Blogging on websites can supplement formation for the fraternity, the region, and the nation. It puts more content available to be used and shared.

Technology created by man can be used for the greater glory of God as we face unprecedented times.

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order - USA

Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual

January through December 2019

	ACTUAL	BUDGET	\$ Over/Under	Budget
	Jan - Dec 2019	Jan - Dec 2019	Budget	Jan - Dec 2020
Ordinary Income/Expense				
Income				
4000 · Fair Share	217,390.00	218,688.00	(1,298.00)	214,000.00
4100 · Formation Sales	38,027.30	45,000.00	(6,972.70)	35,000.00
4210 · Interest Income-Certificates of Deposit	2,305.03	3,800.00	(1,494.97)	2,200.00
4220 · Interest Income-Money Market	1,776.16	-	1,776.16	1,600.00
4400 · Miscellaneous Income	718.30	75,253.00	(74,534.70) (1)	500.00
4410 · Annual Chapter Reimbursements	4,885.00	-	4,885.00 (2)	-
Total Income	<u>265,101.79</u>	<u>342,741.00</u>	<u>(77,639.21)</u>	<u>253,300.00</u>
Expense				
5100 · CIOFS Fair Share	24,866.00	25,241.00	(375.00)	25,500.00
5120 · TAU-USA Newsletter	43,063.98	55,700.00	(12,636.02) (3)	55,700.00
5130 · CNSA -Conf Nat'l Spiritual Asst	8,000.00	8,000.00	-	8,000.00
5200 · Annual Chapter	30,010.35	41,000.00	(10,989.65) (4)	58,000.00
5300 · National Executive Council	22,260.14	30,000.00	(7,739.86)	30,000.00
5505 · Communications Committee	662.19	2,000.00	(1,337.81)	2,000.00
5510 · Website Committee	3,573.94	-	3,573.94 (5)	370.00
5512 · Database Committee	-	29,430.00	(29,430.00) (5)	6,700.00
5515 · Ecumenical Interfaith Committee	4,616.81	8,600.00	(3,983.19)	7,000.00
5520 · Formation Commission	17,938.38	20,000.00	(2,061.62)	21,300.00
5530 · Historian	-	1,940.00	(1,940.00)	2,500.00
5535 · Justice, Peace, Integrity Creation	11,380.41	10,000.00	1,380.41	14,500.00
5545 · Multi-Cultural Committee	159.60	2,000.00	(1,840.40)	2,000.00
5550 · MOTO Implementation CIOFS	10,000.00	20,000.00	(10,000.00) (6)	10,000.00
5555 · National Archives	1,100.51	2,000.00	(899.49)	4,000.00
5560 · Public Relations	1,957.90	2,000.00	(42.10)	2,000.00
5570 · Vocations Committee	615.42	3,030.00	(2,414.58)	2,000.00
5675 · Youth & Young Adult (FYA) Commission	6,823.42	15,000.00	(8,176.58)	17,000.00
5598 · Quinquennial Planning	7,108.30	10,000.00	(2,891.70)	10,000.00
6155 · Formation Printing	9,975.00	20,000.00	(10,025.00) (7)	17,000.00
6158 · Formation Printing - Languages	3,000.00	12,000.00	(9,000.00) (7)	12,000.00
6160 · Royalties Paid	1,580.81	-	1,580.81 (8)	2,600.00
6300 · JPIC Outreach - FAN	12,000.00	12,000.00	-	12,000.00
6310 · JPIC Outreach - Franciscan Intl	1,000.00	1,000.00	-	1,000.00
6320 · JPIC Award	3,000.00	3,000.00	-	3,000.00
6400 · Liability Insurance	3,799.00	3,800.00	(1.00)	3,800.00
7200 · Other Expenses	1,402.52	5,000.00	(3,597.48)	3,500.00
Total Expense	<u>229,894.68</u>	<u>342,741.00</u>	<u>(112,846.32)</u>	<u>333,470.00</u>
Net Ordinary Income (Loss)	<u>35,207.11</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>35,207.11</u>	<u>(80,170.00)</u>
Projected loss to be covered by money in savings				<u>80,170.00</u>
				<u>-</u>

Note 1: Variance explanations

- (1) Expenses for the year were less than budgeted therefore the amount expected to come from savings was not necessary
- (2) This reimbursement was previously netted with Chapter costs
- (3) 4 issues were budgeted; 3 issues were published
- (4) Chapter at a retreat center which is less than a hotel
- (5) Website & Database were put in separate expense accounts after approval of 2019 budget. Database has not incurred budgeted costs
- (6) These funds were not spent but recorded and placed in a restricted account
- (7) Printing less as we move toward new Formation materials
- (8) Previously netted with Formation sales

GENERAL FUND CASH BALANCES

	12/31/2018	General Fund Income	12/31/2019
Checking Accounts	\$ 256,533.55 (9)		\$ 218,845.80
Savings - Money Market	153,516.42		140,940.80
Savings - Certificates of Deposit	123,401.23		139,842.04
	<u>533,451.20</u>		<u>499,628.64</u>
Less Restricted Funds	(175,371.65)		(106,341.98)
Total Funds Available	<u>\$ 358,079.55</u>	<u>35,207.11</u>	<u>\$ 393,286.66</u>

(9) Beginning balance adjusted for \$1,561.44 credit card charges reported as 2018 expenses but not deducted from cash.

**NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA
RESTRICTED FUNDS REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2019**

	Beginning Balance 12/31/2018	2019 Contributions	2019 Disbursements	Ending Balance 12/31/2019
RESTRICTED FUND ACCOUNTS				
2105 Charitable Donations	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 135.00	\$ -	\$ 1,135.00
(1) 2110 CIOFS Solidarity Fund	1,550.00	2,000.00	(3,550.00)	-
(2) 2115 Emergency Aid-Fire Victims	26,807.00	14,382.00	(41,189.00)	-
(3) 2120 Emergency Aid	8,517.50	886.00	(3,033.50)	6,370.00
2125 Ecumenical - Interfaith	1,138.20	-	-	1,138.20
2130 Formation	-	200.00	-	200.00
(4) 2140 H2O Lenten Project	789.54	6,236.99	(5,000.00)	2,026.53
(5) 2147 MOTO	-	10,000.00	-	10,000.00
(6) 2150 National Events	2,209.52	-	(983.68)	1,225.84
2155 Quinquennial Congress	50,420.35	-	-	50,420.35
(7) 2160 Regional Needs	7,630.41	-	(7,630.41)	-
(8) 2165 Undesignated Contributions	5,123.29	2,550.00	(700.00)	6,973.29
2170 Youth Scholarships	443.05	-	-	443.05
DUNS SCOTUS GRANT FUNDS				
(9) 2260 Available for Grants	68,488.00	-	(42,078.28)	26,409.72
2270 Expenses	1,254.79	4,760.28	(6,015.07)	-
TOTALS	<u>\$ 175,371.65</u>	<u>\$ 41,150.27</u>	<u>\$ (110,179.94)</u>	<u>\$ 106,341.98</u>

NOTES:

- (1) CIOFS Solidarity contributions from a member and a local fraternity. They were wired to CIOFS March 2019 with our Fair Share.
- (2) Emergency Aid for the fire victims in Paradise, CA. Disbursements were for same.
- (3) Emergency Aid donations for Venezuela and India flood victims. Disbursements for same as well as Hurricane Dorian.
- (4) H2O Project contributions from members & regions and were donated to To The Nations.
- (5) Funds restricted for CIOFS for the Management of the Order Initiative.
- (6) Funds used for registration and travel expenses for two members to attend August 2019 Franciscan Federation.
- (7) Funds used to assist developing fraternities in Hawaii and establishment of Guam.
- (8) Undesignated Contributions are contributions received where donor has not designated a specific charitable cause. This fund also includes monies restricted by the NEC for charitable giving. Contributions were from 2 members & 1 region. Disbursements were to Franciscan Mission Services and remaining Guam expenses after Regional Needs was exhausted.
- (9) In 2019 the Duns Scotus Board granted awards to the National Formation Commission for Visioning I Workshop, 4 Regional Fraternities and the CNSA for Life Giving Union gathering.

**DUNS SCOTUS SECULAR FRANCISCAN FORMATION TRUST FUND
December 31, 2019**

	<u>Market Value</u>
12/31/2018 Investment Accounts, beginning balance	\$ 956,373.23
Interest, Dividends, Capital Gains Distributions Reinvested	38,726.24
Change in Market Value of Investments	<u>96,621.94</u>
12/31/2019 Investment Accounts, ending balance	<u>1,091,721.41</u>

NOTE 1: The funds designated as the Duns Scotus Trust Fund are held in two investment accounts. Dividends and realized capital gains are reinvested back into the investments held. The NEC reviews the investments with the fund advisers and an impartial investment adviser as necessary. The Change in Market Value of Investments is subject to the daily fluctuations of the stock market and can decrease in value more rapidly than increase.

NOTE 2: The original endowment from the Friars was \$500,000.00

Respectfully submitted by Claudia Kauzlarich, OFS, National Treasurer - March 19, 2020

FRANCISCAN LIVING

ST. CLARE: HER LIGHT AND HER WORDS

By Francine Gikow, OFS

Have you ever read what St. Clare actually wrote? If not, you will be in for a pleasant surprise! Although a lot has been written *about* St. Clare, reading what she actually said can be quite an eye opener! Her words are ripe with rare beauty, full of medieval sensuality reminiscent of the *Song of Songs* in the Hebrew bible. In her words, St. Clare reveals her relationship with the Lord and her Franciscan heart. She is a mystic in love with Love incarnate!

Please don't rush through these words of St. Clare. Read them slowly and let them seep into your heart and become your prayer. Savor them! They are Clare's gift to you!

In her letters to St. Agnes of Prague, St. Clare describes her relationship with her God and Spouse. She writes:

*"Draw me after you,
let us run in the fragrance of your perfumes,
O heavenly Spouse!
I will run and not tire,
until You bring me into the wine cellar,
until Your left hand is under my head
and Your right hand will embrace me happily,
You will kiss me with the happiest kiss of Your mouth."*¹

Clare did not easily arrive at this sacred place, however. She united herself with the Suffering Jesus, insisted on the love of poverty, and persevered in her vocation throughout her life.

*"If you suffer with Him, you will reign with Him;
dying on the cross of tribulation with Him,
you will possess heavenly mansions with Him among the
splendor of the saints
and in the Book of Life your name will be called glorious
among the peoples."*²

Clare embraced poverty, understanding that poverty's riches lie in dependence on God alone. In her words: *"For I firmly believe that you know the kingdom of heaven is promised and given by the Lord only to the poor because she who loves what is temporal loses the fruit of love."*³

Finally, St. Clare exhorts us:

*"What you hold, may you hold,
What you do, may you always do and not stop.
But with swift pace, light step, unswerving feet,
so that even your steps stir up no dust,
may you go forward
securely, joyfully, and swiftly,
on the path of prudent happiness,
believing nothing,
agreeing with nothing
that would dissuade you from this commitment."*⁴

As you can see, Clare was a strong lady. She fought for her "privilege of poverty," owning nothing, but relying only on what the good Lord would provide. She "agreed with nothing" that would dissuade her from this commitment to follow the poor Christ. She persevered despite many challenges.

We shall conclude with St. Clare's exhortation and blessing:

*"Always be lovers of your souls and
those of all your sisters [and brothers.]
And may you always be eager to observe
what you have promised the Lord.
May the Lord always be with you and
may you always be with Him. Amen."*⁵

All quotations from: Clare of Assisi: The Lady. New York, N.Y.: New City Press, 2006. Used with permission.

¹ 4LAg. 30-32.

² 2LAg 21-22.

³ 1LAg. 25.

⁴ 2LAg.11-14.

⁵ BICI. 14-16.



LOCKDOWN

Brother Richard Hendrick, OFM Cap.



Yes there is fear.
Yes there is isolation.
Yes there is panic buying.
Yes there is sickness.
Yes there is even death.

But,
They say that in Wuhan
after so many years of noise
You can hear the birds again.
They say that after just a few weeks of quiet
The sky is no longer thick with fumes
But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi
People are singing to each other
across the empty squares,
keeping their windows open
so that those who are alone
may hear the sounds of family around them.

They say that a hotel in the west of Ireland
Is offering free meals and delivery to the
housebound.

Today a young woman I know
is busy spreading fliers with her number
through the neighborhood
So that the elders may have someone to call on.

Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and
Temples
are preparing to welcome
and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary

All over the world people are slowing down and
reflecting
All over the world people are looking at their
neighbors in a new way
All over the world people are waking up to a new
reality
To how big we really are.
To how little control we really have.
To what really matters.
To Love.

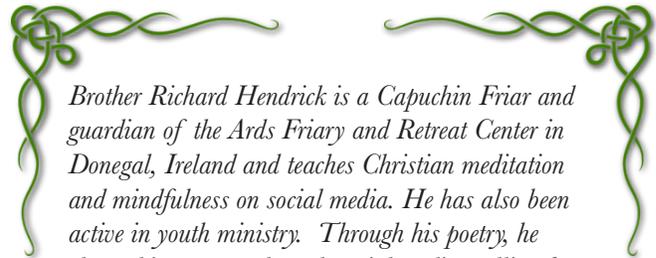
So we pray and we remember that
Yes there is fear.
But there does not have to be hate.

Yes there is isolation.
But there does not have to be loneliness.
Yes there is panic buying.
But there does not have to be meanness.
Yes there is sickness.
But there does not have to be disease of the soul.
Yes there is even death.
But there can always be a rebirth of love.

Wake to the choices you make as to how to live
now.
Today, breathe.
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic.

The birds are singing again
The sky is clearing,
Spring is coming,
And we are always encompassed by Love.

Open the windows of your soul
And though you may not be able
to touch across the empty square,
Sing.



Brother Richard Hendrick is a Capuchin Friar and guardian of the Ards Friary and Retreat Center in Donegal, Ireland and teaches Christian meditation and mindfulness on social media. He has also been active in youth ministry. Through his poetry, he shares his message through social media, calling for solidarity and empathy. Shortly after posting "Lockdown" on facebook it went viral around the world touching people's hearts and giving by giving them hope.



ST. PADRE PIO SECULAR FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY GUAM, U.S. TERRITORY

by Sharon Winzeler OFS

(with contributions by Joann San Nicolas, Ben Diaz, Therese Babauta, and Birdena Toves)



With the canonical establishment of the St. Padre Pio Fraternity on Jan. 4, 2020, in Guam, the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order USA now reaches to the westernmost part of the United States. “The Holy Spirit has found a welcome home in the hearts of the brothers and sisters of St. Padre Pio Fraternity, and these are not just pretty words. These Secular Franciscan have opened their hearts; they have each said: “yes, let it be done,” and “yes” to their vocation and all it entails,” National Minister Jan Parker, OFS, said at the establishment ceremony.



A festive Mass celebrating the new fraternity was held at Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in Agana Heights. The celebration included the distribution of 1,200 homemade almond cookies to all attendees.

(Almond cookies, baked by Lady Jacoba, were such a favorite of St. Francis that he asked her to bring him some when he lay on his deathbed.) Afterwards, all gathered for a grand ocean-side reception, which included brunch, the singing of Christmas carols honoring Christ’s birth, and a splendid cake on which was written, “Let us begin, for up to now we have done little or nothing,” (a famous quote from St. Francis of Assisi). All 28 members of the newly established fraternity, along with their families and six friars from St. Fidelis Friary in Agana Heights gathered for the reception. The patio was filled with laughter and joy.

Guam, an organized U.S. territory in Micronesia in the western Pacific Ocean, is a 12-hour plane ride from San Francisco and eight hours from Hawaii. Seventy-five percent of its population of 160,000 is Catholic. The island is 30 miles long and 12 miles wide at its widest point.

Violeta Manibusan, OFS, is minister of the fraternity, with 23 professed members, four inquirers and one in orientation. They began their journey toward establishing a fraternity on Guam in 2011.

In the beginning, professed members were formed by Fr. Patrick Castro, OFM Cap., who was appointed Spiritual Assistant by the Vice Provincial Fr. Joseph English, OFM Cap.

Fr. Castro presided at the Mass celebrating the establishment of St. Pio. “It took nine years with the Lord’s guidance and the guidance of the National Executive Council. Let us thank God,” he said. Fr. Castro challenged fraternity members, “This is a time of blessing and joy. It is also a time of admonition. Are you willing to continue to die to yourself and live for Christ? We die with the Lord, so we can live with the Lord.”

He also praised the members for the solidarity they express as fraternity. “We are called, like Francis, in humility, service and love, to be Christ’s

light in the world. This fraternity carries the light of Christ. They are always communicating with each other – 24/7 – always encouraging each other,” Fr. Castro said in his homily.

The Capuchin friars have a strong influence in Guam, according to Manibusan. “The first Capuchins arrived on Guam on August 12, 1901. Until the 1990s, the majority of the parishes were staffed by Capuchins. Today, five parishes are headed by Capuchin friars. The majority of our members are current parishioners of, or have been in, Capuchin parishes,” she said.

Fraternity members represent a variety of backgrounds. “Our members come from all walks of life and represent 10 out of the 26 parishes island-wide. Our member’s ages range from 35 to 73. Our professions varies in the local and federal government, specifically as educators, administrators, finance, civil service, engineering, warehousing, and the judicial branch. In the private sector, we have banking, airlines, finance, baker, and a few domestic engineers,” Manibusan said.

The fraternity meets twice a month at St. Fidelis Friary in Agana Heights. “We meet on the second Saturday of each month for prayer and initial formation class and on fourth Saturday for our monthly fraternity meeting, prayer, ongoing formation and fellowship,” Manibusan said. Members participate in a number of pro-life activities and serve in apostolates that help feed, clothe, and visit the sick, poor, and elderly on the island. Several members are members of the St. Joseph of Arimathea Society, a group that arranges a Christian burial for unclaimed bodies. St. Pio Fraternity hosts a long list of annual events, including Transitus, service retreats, Advent and Lenten Days of Recollection, Padre Pio Monthly Novena, and Mass devotion, as well as a May crowning of the Blessed Mother.

Plans for the fraternity meant years of collaboration between the members and the National Executive Council (NEC), which sponsored St. Pio. “We sought guidance from National Executive Council and traveled to Denver, Colo. in October 2012 for the NAFRA

Chapter. This was our first physical interaction with the NEC. We were invited by Bob Fitzsimmons, OFS, who at the time was part of the National Formation Team, to a formation training in Hawaii in the latter part of 2012, where we were introduced to the *For Up to Now (FUN) Manual*. We used the *FUN Manual* from 2012-2015. In 2016, Mary Frances Charsky, OFS, was assigned as our NEC point of contact and introduced us to the *Franciscan Journey* book, which we continue to use. On February 20-23, 2017, Tim and Kathy Taormina, OFS, from the Queen of Peace Region, Minn., volunteered their time and talent and came to Guam to conduct a formation workshop. In October 2018, the National Formation Commission, under the guidance of Diane Menditto, OFS, provided supplemental resources to enhance our formation,” Manibusan said.

Support from the NEC is continuing. “Diane continues to support us in our formation. In 2019, Francine Gikow, OFS, established communication with our local Formation Director, Therese Babauta, OFS, to offer additional assistance as needed. Our current NEC point of contact is Joshua Molidor, OFS, who witnessed our canonical establishment on January 04, 2020, along with Jan Parker, OFS, and Elizabeth Ishimitsu, OFS,” Manibusan said. Elizabeth Ishimitsu is the Minister of Ohan ’O Ke Anuenue Region in Hawaii, of which St. Padre Pio Fraternity is now part.

Jan Parker noted the significance of the new fraternity, as well as all the other local fraternities. “The local fraternity is the most important part of our worldwide Order. It is here in this fraternity that the brothers and sisters will find the help they need to go forth as witnesses and instruments of our common mission – to proclaim Christ, to see Christ, to be Christ in the world. In this way, all Franciscans do their part to rebuild the Church,” Parker said.

Other members of the St. Pio Fraternity Council are Vice-Minister, Teresita Flores; Secretary, Joann San Nicolas; Treasurer, Ben Diaz; Formation Director, Therese Babauta; and Councilor Birdena Toves and Deborah Tenorio.



MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS



FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS....

St. Francis of Assisi Deaf Fraternity
by Consuelo Wild, OFS

“Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible” St. Francis. It is good to begin with a quote of our Holy Father St. Francis. In this simple quote, I find what our Deaf Catholic Fraternity, is all about. It is a seed planted and still growing. More than 40 years later, we may still be the only Deaf OFS fraternity in the United States and elsewhere.



Founding Members, 1979

Our humble beginnings started with Deacon Paul Pernecky, OFS, who was also among the first deaf persons to be ordained a deacon. He is our group’s founder. Forty-one years ago, on January 14, 1979, the St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity of the Deaf was established in the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. at the Catholic Deaf Center (now dedicated as Pope Francis Center) in Landover Hills, Md.

The fraternity was started in 1978 with Francis Cannon as its first Minister, who served until 1985. In January 1979, the first members were professed. This included Deacon Pernecky and Francis Cannon, as well as Elise Pernecky, Patricia Porreca, Alan Porreca, Lucia Equiguen, George Bisaha, Paul Blicharz, and George Babinetz.

Another member of our Catholic Deaf Community joined OFS not long after the original members. Dorothy Steffanic began her formation in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1977. Later, she relocated in the Washington, D.C, area and became a professed Franciscan in St. Francis of Assisi Deaf Fraternity in 1979. Ms. Steffanic became the second minister of the fraternity in 1985. Another five members became newly professed between 1981 and 1999. Since then, many of these professed members have gone home to their Father, and others have moved away. Dorothy

shared how much becoming a Franciscan meant to her at the 25th Anniversary celebration of St. Francis of Assisi Deaf Fraternity. She said, “I am very interested in and marvel at St. Francis of Assisi’s way of life and his depth of love for God and his people, no matter where he was. He was a lover of animals and nature. He built a strong Church by the power of God through his weakness

and great love and trust in Him.”

It was our Dorothy who, now 91 years old, remained faithfully with her community and welcomed five new candidates who were eventually professed. Around 2004, in prayer and with hope, Dorothy reached out to Janice Benton, OFS, who is currently the Minister of St Francis Fraternity in Washington, D.C., and part of the St. Margaret of Cortona Region. Together, Fr. Hugh MacSherry, OFM, (a friar at that time and spiritual assistant) and Janice worked with Mary O’Meara as interpreter to guide the formation of the current candidates. On December 14, 2008, the following made their profession: David Koch, Eleanor Culas Ward, Godwin Ofodu, Peter Noyes, Janet Noyes, and Sally Mooney. It was our sister-in-Christ Dorothy who, persevering in her Franciscan vows, once again brought the fraternity to life.

While several of the members have moved, the fraternity continues, with God’s grace, to learn and flourish. Two additional members, Paul Sweeney and Consuelo Wild, were in Formation in 2011 and professed on April 19, 2015. Peter Noyes was elected to the Regional Council around six years ago as treasurer. Peter shares that he became a Franciscan because “God knows how difficult it was for me to be deaf in a



2003 Thank You Dinner

Left to right: Joe Jarboe, Lucia Equiguen, Patricia Porreca, Dorothy Steffanic, Alan Porreca, Henry Beckert and Verta Beckert

hearing world. I met every challenge thrown in my life.... I looked for a way to deepen the intimacy between myself and God. A friar suggested that I might be looking for ways to improve my prayer life"... and so "the most important thing about being a Franciscan is serving others through servant leadership. We Franciscans are formed to serve one another in a big or little way."

While we do not currently have a Spiritual Assistant, we have been blessed with our "nurturing mother" sister-in-Christ, Janice Benton, who has continued to walk with us through every blessing and challenge. In many ways she is the glue that teaches and supports us. We currently have seven professed and two Inquirers meeting monthly. We have been in a 'transition mode' since I became Minister last April. We are all learning together; as deaf individuals our challenges are many. We are learning to be "understood and to understand"... our culture, our language, our diversified ways of communication, our education (not only schooling but religious upbringing or lack of it) and personal experiences with and among Deaf and Hearing.

But it goes beyond that now. Half of us live in other states, and so we cannot always see each other or do things together as Franciscans. How to solve the problem? Technology has helped. As deaf individuals, we use a system such as you would for video conferencing. In this way we bring all our members together for monthly meetings. We see each other and can use our ASL (American Sign Language) to communicate. We pray the Divine Office and have formation and business meetings. In order to spend more time together, we have another optional meeting every Thursday afternoon. We share reflections and prayer intentions and support each other on our life journey. We also encourage each other and share ways to be Franciscan in our local communities. It is through God's wisdom and power that we bond. Janet

Noyes shares "I like the Franciscan way of life and the beautiful prayers." And Paul Sommer, an inquirer, says "Right now I am in discernment. I love the simplicity of Francis' spirituality. I want to learn more. Francis seems to keep his focus on God and how God reveals Himself in the scripture, which helps us know how to live our lives."

Together with our sister fraternity, St. Francis, in Washington D.C., we have fed the homeless and joined in special Masses and prayers. With our Regional Fraternity of St. Margaret of Cortona, we share in their retreats and days of recollection, as well as other special events that arise. This is all possible through the hiring of interpreters some of which are paid by our Regional Council and others by donations to our fraternity. "To love as to love"... a very positive perspective of being Franciscan is that among other Franciscans we are so warmly accepted and loved. It is such a blessing to be greeted and feel welcomed and to have a voice with our hearing peers. God is Good, ALL the TIME.

There is so much that we would love to share with you about our deaf fraternity. It is in prayer that we hope what you read here gives you a glimpse of how much deaf people, just like you, want to know and love God and see Him in everything as did our Brother St. Francis. Pray for us! Pray that we can persevere faithfully in our vocation as Franciscans and help open many doors for more of our deaf brothers and sisters to experience the Franciscan life. It's a true and perfect fit for us to know and serve God. Humbly we thank St. Francis and you for opening the first door. "Lord, help me to live this day quietly, easily. To lean upon Thy great strength, trustfully, restfully. To wait for the unfolding of Thy Will, patiently, serenely. To meet others, peacefully, joyously. To face tomorrow, confidently, courageously." St. Francis

❖ Resources: NCOD's Vision magazine on OFS early history, 2003





Letter from the Minister General On the Fifth Anniversary of Laudato Si'

Rome, January 14, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This coming 24 May will mark the 5th anniversary of Pope Francis' Encyclical, "Laudato Si'". In it the Holy Father, moved by the concern generated by "the cracks in the planet that we inhabit as well as... the profoundly human causes of environmental degradation" (LS 163), expressed his desire for the opening of a dialogue among all the inhabitants of our planet with a goal of setting in motion global action for the good of our common home.

The publication of this Encyclical was enthusiastically hailed by the whole global scientific community, so much so that at COP 21, the world climate conference held in Paris in December of that same year, which produced the Paris Climate Accord, the Encyclical served as a constant reference point, to the degree that it was referred to as the "Magna Carta" on the environment.

The spirituality at the base of this Encyclical is profoundly Franciscan and, at its presentation, the Conference of the Franciscan Family (CFF),

composed of the Ministers of the OFM, OFM Conv, OFM Cap, TOR, OFS and the President of the IFC/TOR, thought it important to highlight its significance, inviting the Franciscan universities throughout the world to organize university courses on this document and not let it "sleep" on some library shelf. In this regard, the CFF charged the Interfranciscan Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (more commonly known as Romans 6), to which the OFS belongs, to prepare a Study Guide.

This guide was published on the occasion of the first anniversary of the publication of the Encyclical on the Commission's website. We think it is opportune to call it to your attention once again, attaching it to this circular letter so that at the local level the fraternities can reread and study the document so that what is contained in it can become the source of concrete action on behalf of our common home.

With a fraternal embrace,

Tibor Kauser, OFS
Minister General

Laudato Si Study Guide

Prepared by the Interfranciscan Commission for Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation

http://www.ciofs.org/portal/images/Presence_In_The_World/PDF/Laudato-Si-Study-Guide.pdf

Pope Francis invites us to celebrate Laudato Si' Week

Vatican-sponsored initiative unites the faithful in ambitious action for Creation

To celebrate the fifth anniversary of Laudato Si', Pope Francis invites us to participate in Laudato Si' Week, from 16 to 24 May. This video invitation can be viewed here: <https://laudatosiweek.org/>

* Ecumenical-Interfaith Video Conference *

The OFS Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee invites interested Secular Franciscans to participate in a video conference to learn more about ecumenism and interfaith relations, and to hear how building relationships with people of different denominations and faiths can help to build the Kingdom of God.

Date: Tuesday, July 21, 2020 Time: 6:00-7:30 pm CDT

Link: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/942076501>

Phone: +1 (571) 317-3122, Access code: 942-076-501

Facilitators / Topics

- ❖ Mike Carsten, OFS: Introduction to the Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee and the Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers (CADEIO)
- ❖ Kent Ferris, OFS: Ecumenical/Interfaith experience and Catholic responsibility outlined in *Nostra aetate*
- ❖ Donna Hollis, OFS: Ecumenical/Interfaith experience in Las Cruces / El Paso
- ❖ Kelly Moltzen, OFS: Opportunities that Ecumenical-Interfaith Engagement provides
- ❖ Open discussion and sharing

For further information, contact: Kelly Moltzen, OFS kellym41122@yahoo.com



IT'S A CELEBRATION!

20th Quinquennial Congress

August 18-22, 2021

Phoenix, AZ

*“To celebrate and renew our Franciscan calling
in the spirit of conversion”*

Registration opens August 18, 2020

Go to our OFS-USA website secularfranciscansusa.org

Click on “20th Quinquennial Congress Information and Registration”

Q Registration Cost (includes meal plan)

Early Bird	\$350	August 18 - Dec. 31, 2020
Regular	\$410	January 1 - May 27, 2021
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Friday	Aug. 20	Bishop John Stowe, O.F.M. Conv.
Saturday	Aug. 21	Doug and Marion Clorey, OFS / Tim and Kathy Taormina, OFS / Lori Hinker, OFS



The Q Committee is looking forward to seeing you at the Q!

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