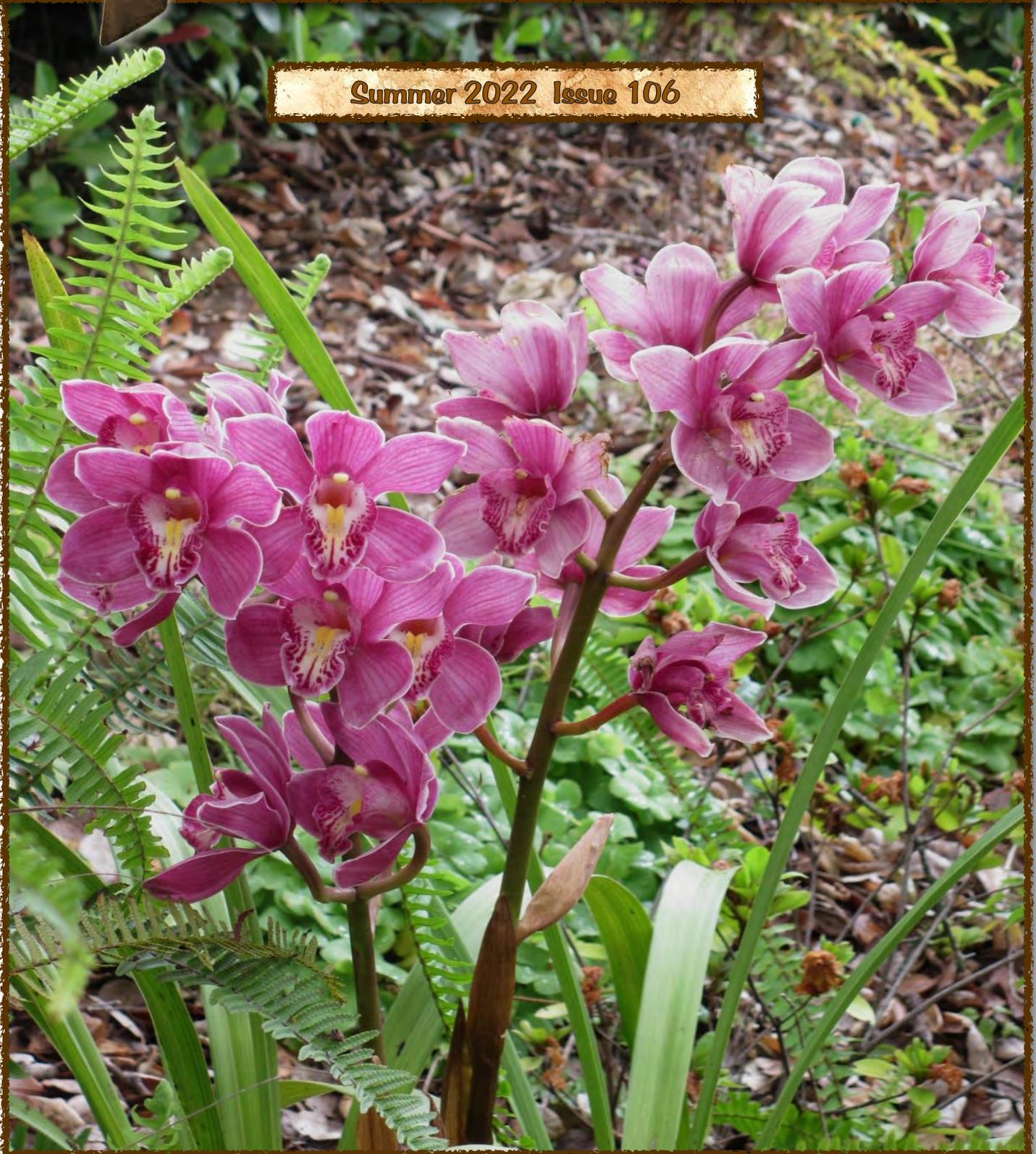


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TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE
SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

Summer 2022 Issue 106



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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Special Assignments Editors

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Mary Bittner, OFS
Mary Stronach, OFS

Database Administrator and Subscription Coordinator
Cecilia Maljan-Herbelin, OFS

Webmaster
James Thomas, OFS

TAU-USA email
tauusa.ofs@gmail.com

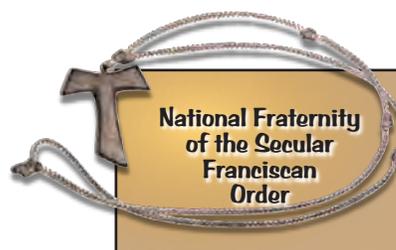
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Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, OFS, 540 W. Nelson Rd, Sequim, WA 98382-9503, or
cylmaljan@earthlink.net.

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National Executive Council

nec.ofs.usa@gmail.com

National Minister
Jan Parker, OFS

National Vice Minister
Mary Bittner, OFS

National Secretary
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OFM

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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.

FRANCISCAN JUBILEE

A message from Jan Parker, OFS, National Minister – OFS-USA



I will never forget my 50th birthday. My daughter, aware of the significance of this 50-year mark, made a sign that she hung on my mailbox. It simply said, “*It’s Jan’s Jubilee!*” I still have that sign. It now hangs on a wall in my garage as an important reminder to always turn to God, where I find joy and peace beyond all I could ask or imagine.

It was not my idea that the theme of the 2022 Quinquennial Congress would be “**Jubilee,**” but when Br. Bob Brady, OFM, suggested it, I was thrilled.

I celebrated a personal Jubilee when I turned 50 and found it to be a life-changing year-long experience of discovering again who I am called to be and the power of God’s love and mercy. My hope, and the hope of our entire Q Committee, is that this Jubilee Quinquennial will be a life-changing experience of conversion for everyone in our national fraternity, as well as each one who attends.

The history of Jubilee goes back to the law given to the Israelites in Leviticus 25: “*You will declare this fiftieth year to be sacred....You will keep this as a Jubilee....*” God called his people to an economic, cultural, environmental, and communal *reset*, when the land and people rest, and all those who are in slavery are set free to return to their communities. Jubilee law addresses the wellbeing of the community and calls God’s people to live in ways that reflect good relationships with God, with each other, and with creation.¹ Jubilee law tells us something about God’s intention for his people.

Fast forward to Luke’s gospel, and we see Jesus at the beginning of his ministry, declaring *a time of Jubilee*—“the year of the Lord’s favor”—but wait, there’s something more here. Jesus closes the scroll, looks at us, and says, “*Today this scripture has been fulfilled....*” Today! Not just every 50 years, not just every seventh year, but today, and every today! The kingdom is now—*JUBILEE is now.*

In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we see Jubilee’s objective: freedom and release from sin, restoration with God, a reset for all of creation. Have we realized this? Internalized it? We find a full description in 2 Corinthians 5, a passage that declares our new creation in Christ, and the call to be re-made to become that new creation. I look at this passage and rejoice in this *call to conversion*. God’s people—the church—are meant to be a foretaste of what God wants to do for the entire creation. Sisters and brothers, we are meant to not only live Jubilee for ourselves, but to *be Jubilee* for others. The love of God impels us.

God’s command for Jubilee says, “Stop. Step back. Look at what you are doing.” A Jubilee moment exposes human greed and brings to light the selfishness in society. The law didn’t have the capacity to change those things, it only showed them. But God said, *I will pour out my Spirit upon you and the law*

¹ See tearfund.org.au/stories/jubilee-in-the-bible Tearfund is a Christian agency working for a just and compassionate world.

*will be written in your heart.*² Jubilee is no longer just a law. Christ has fulfilled the law and has sent us his Spirit to implant this law *in our hearts*. As members of this Spirit-filled Church, to which we are bonded more closely by profession, we commit ourselves to a living discipleship that entails both generosity and sacrifice. We constantly call on the Spirit of God to empower and enable us to be a part of God’s mission to *reset all areas of life, bring release and restoration—to be Jubilee*.

As bearers of peace and messengers of joy and hope, we must announce the kingdom of God is *now*. How do we do this? By remembering “who we are”—**our identity as Franciscans**—and being who we are called to be. Our Quinquennial mission statement calls us to “***celebrate and renew our Franciscan calling in the spirit of conversion.***” At this Quinquennial moment, and every day going forward, we must live this, tending to our own daily conversion, as well as the conversion of society.

Jubilee was a recovery of identity, especially for the poor. It is not about simply correcting economic problems, which is very important; not even just caring for the poor because they’re poor; but it is restoring identity, which is a part of their history and very important for them.

— CB Samuel

Can we bring about the changes that are needed, both in ourselves and in our world? We have spoken a lot this year about prophetic creativity. Let’s align ourselves with the creativity of God who says, “I make all things new” and dare to be creative. Let us incarnate and enact the certain hope of this new creation, and be the change we long to see.

This is my hope—that what I celebrated in my 50th year will always remain with me, and that this new focus on Jubilee will be a time for all of us to once again celebrate God’s mercy and forgiveness, know God’s love in a new way, and to start again. To forgive others. To love all people and all creation as sister and brother. To accept our humanness. To rejoice in how God is working in our lives, and how he is working right now in this time of Jubilee. God truly is at work among us, making all things new!

I have often talked of the trajectory we are on. There is a new day ahead. New leaders will be called forth. There will be new opportunities to share God’s love. But let’s not just look ahead. Let’s look to today—to right now for *now is the acceptable time*.

Many will be drawn to the Quinquennial to experience Jubilee, but here’s the good news—you don’t have to be at the Q to experience it. Jubilee joy is ours whenever and wherever we pause to acknowledge God’s presence with us. Jubilee joy is in every Franciscan heart and is palpable in every experience of fraternity—in every moment of fraternal communion. The world needs this Jubilee joy. Let’s share it!

Jubilee Song of Restoration

Psalm 126

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we thought we were dreaming.

Our mouths were filled with laughter; our tongues sang for joy.

Then it was said among the nations, “The LORD had done great things for them.”

The LORD has done great things for us! We are filled with joy!

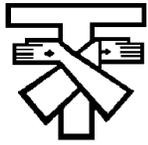
Restore again our fortunes, LORD, like the dry stream beds of the Negeb.

Those who sow in tears, will reap with cries of joy.

Those who go forth weeping, carrying sacks of seed,

Will return with cries of joy, carrying their bundled sheaves.

² Jeremiah 31:31



SHARING THE VISION

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL



Terms Extended for Commission and Committee Chairs

The appointments for National Commissions Chairs or Committees Chairs or individual positions typically are made until one year after a scheduled NEC election. The appointment terms are set in such a manner, so a new council won't have to appoint new commission or committee chairs immediately after being elected.

Due to the postponement of the October 2021 National Elections, the National Fraternity Council requested that the current NEC serve an additional year. The NEC agreed. In turn, the NEC asked the current Commission and Committee Chairs to also extend their appointments until Chapter 2023. The individuals agreed to serve for the additional year.

Commissions:

- National Formation Commission Chair: Diane Menditto, OFS (Our Lady of the Angels Region)
- National Youth/Young Adult Commission Chair: Kathleen Molaro, OFS (St. Junipero Serra Region)
- National Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission Chair: Carolyn Townes, OFS (Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region)

Committees:

- National Bequests/Endowment Committee Chair: Mary Frances Charsky, OFS (St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region)
- National Database Committee Chair: William Mussatto, OFS (St. Francis Region)
- National Website Committee Co-Chairs: Sharon Winzeler, OFS (Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region) and James Thomas, OFS (Blessed Solanus Casey Region)
- National Public Relations Committee Chair: Sharon Winzeler, OFS (Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region)

Individual Appointments:

- National Archivist: Sharon Dale, OFS (La Verna Region)
- National Historian: Tom McNamara, OFS (St. Thomas More Region)
- TAU-USA Editor: James Wesley, OFS (St. Junipero Serra Region)
- 1-800-Francis Coordinator: Theresa Leone, OFS (St. Katharine Drexel Region)

A Note About NEC Meetings

With the restrictions due to COVID, the NEC shifted to virtual meetings to conduct business. (See chart in Fall 2020 TAU-USA newsletter.) The NEC met virtually 42 times between November 29, 2019 and December 20, 2021. After a two-year period, the NEC met face-to-face in March 2022 and ratified those meeting minutes as required in National Statutes Article 5.6. The ratification was documented in the minutes for that face-to-face meeting. Although the provision is specific to the NEC, it is a good practice for regional and local fraternities to follow, should you have to resort to virtual meetings.



Secular Franciscan Order - USA Website

<https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/>

Website News and Did You Know...

RECENT BLOG POSTS



Franciscan Living - Take Delight in the Lord

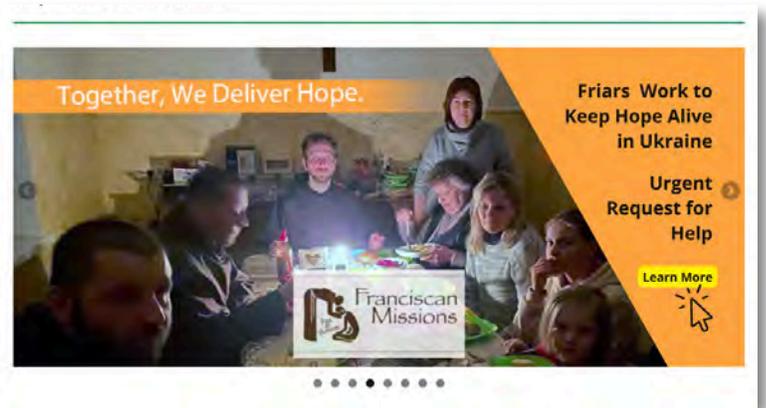
I remember when each of my children was placed in my arms for the first time! I examined each one, marveling over every finger and toe, with their eyes gazing upon me! My children heard my voice and were comforted. I delighted in them, and they delighted in me. Psalm 37, verse 4, tells us to "Take delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." If the desire we have is to love God, then we must learn to delight in Him. How then do we do this? [...]

You can view ALL the Blogs of a particular Category

If you wish to review the Newsletter Blogs, click on one of the Blogs of the Newsletter and scroll down to the bottom of the Blog. You will see the Date and the Category. Some blogs will have more than one category. Click on the Category, "From the Newsletter," and only the Newsletter Blogs will be shown in the order they were published.

How to use the slides on www.secularfranciscansusa.com

Have you noticed the new slides on our **Home Page**? We hope so. Our team is working hard to make the website easier to use. When you visit, please take a few moments to go through the slides in the "image carousel" to see what's new. Most slides are linked to another page. Just click anywhere on the slide to learn more or find resources. The "image carousel" moves along automatically and slowly. If you move your cursor over any slide, it stops, which is very helpful!



Franciscan Saints, Blesseds, & Holy Days



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Secular Franciscan Order - USA

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Check out the new Prayers, Prayer Services, & Ceremonies on our website by clicking on "PRAY WITH US" on our Menu. There are six Categories of prayers. You will find links to traditional Franciscan prayers, prayer services and other prayer resources all on one page. Feel free to download and use these for yourself or your fraternity. While you're there, check out "Franciscan Saints, Blesseds, and Feasts"– you'll be amazed at the Catalogue that is unique to our site! It opens up to 38 pages of images and links – don't miss it!

FRATERNITY LIFE

FRATERNITY: OUR SECULAR FRANCISCAN WITNESS

by Mary Bittner, OFS

Consider the following question, suggested as part of a recent discussion on synodality:

- What could be the *best contribution* we, as *Secular Franciscans*, can make to the life of the Catholic Church?

You might want to keep in mind that our Franciscan charism is a gift that is meant to be shared with the wider Church.

Got your answer? Here's what Pope St. John Paul II had to say in 2002:

“The Church expects from you, Secular Franciscans, a courageous and consistent testimony of Christian and Franciscan life, leaning towards the construction of a more fraternal and gospel world for the realization of the Kingdom of God.

You are called on to give your own contribution, inspired by the person and message of St. Francis of Assisi, in speeding up the advent of a civilization in which the dignity of the human person, co-responsibility and love will be a living reality (Cfr. *Gaudium et Spes* 31). You must deepen the true foundations of the worldwide Fraternity and create everywhere the spirit of welcome and the atmosphere of brotherliness. Commit yourselves firmly against all forms of exploitation, discrimination and marginalization, and against all attitudes of indifference towards others.

You Secular Franciscans, by vocation, live belonging to the Church and to society as inseparable realities. Therefore, you are asked, above all else, to bear personal witness before all in the environment in which you live: ...in your associations with all men and women, brothers and sisters of the same Father; in your presence and participation in the life of society; in your fraternal relationships with all creatures.”¹

You can probably see where the Pope's call for fraternity was coming from. The “spirit of welcome and atmosphere of brotherliness” he cited 20¹ years ago is even more sorely lacking in society today. Instead we see polarization, politically and even within the Church. “Brotherliness” is apparently irrelevant.

—

“Our society is very unchristian in this matter of brotherliness. We often condemn our society as being unchristian because of immodesty or sexual license, but it is equally unchristian because it has no place for brotherliness in public affairs. Public life is a matter of rights and duties, and society saves itself from collapse by balancing them. But if anyone should suggest that we must think of the needs of others and give up our rights in order to serve them, he would be laughed out of court. Yet this is the actual Gospel challenge. When we view our relationship with another from the angle of his duties and our rights, we actually move away from the Gospel spirit.”²

I think Pope St. John Paul II would agree.

Questions for Discussion

1. Is our public life simply a matter of rights and duties? Should it be?
2. Is thinking of the needs of others and giving up our rights to serve them the actual Gospel challenge, or part of it? What would happen if we began to do that publicly? How might people respond? Are you willing to try it?
3. Which articles of our Rule address *fraternity* in the sense of brotherliness?
4. This article has highlighted *fraternity* as something the OFS has to offer the Church. There are certainly other possibilities. What elements of the Franciscan charism would *you* choose?

¹ Address to the 10th General Chapter of the OFS 2002

² Finbarr Connolly, C.S.S.R. *God and Man in Modern Spirituality* (Christian Classics, Inc., Westminster, MD 1984)



Our freedom, our choice, is to live as Christ lived

Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM

Fourth of July is a civil celebration, but for us Franciscans—indeed for all Christians—any commemoration is infused with a sense of God’s presence. While many of the Founding Fathers of our nation did not believe in the kind of God we believe in as Catholic Christians, several were Christian, and others acknowledged some kind of godly presence worthy of giving direction to our lives and our common project of national government.

But what kind of freedom do we celebrate?

We no longer remember what it is like to be taxed without representation in the sense that the colonies were taxed by England. (Although, now that I live in the District of Columbia, there are some echoes of those feelings.)

The tyrannies that oppress us are most often those that result from our own choices: whether we discipline our tongues and typing, how much we succumb to the “demand” technology makes that we be ever-accessible and immediately respond to every notification, as well as other choices we make about money and food and where we will live, how well we might insulate ourselves from our “leper.”

By the time this article goes to print, I will have given a day of recollection on *Fratelli tutti*. You might remember Pope Francis’ letter, which begins with those words of St. Francis addressing all the brothers and sisters. The words are taken from his *Admonitions*, which we need to remember are intended as an encouragement rather than a scold, so rarely are we “admonished” as the word should properly be used.

As a boy, playing music from *Fiddler on the Roof*, I could relate to Tevye’s yearning to be a rich man. It’s so easy to fall into the trap of thinking that generosity is the realm of the affluent. Yet I have often found those struggling to be far more generous—even sometimes by objective measures—than many affluent people.

What prompts us to be more generous? Sometimes we give more to a person we like, someone who pleases us in some way. Maybe we recognize that we have so much, and the person in front of us has so little. We choose to be generous. As Christians, we are free to be as Christ, yet more generous than anyone could imagine.

I’m writing this article on the feast of St Anthony of Padua. In the Gospel at Mass, Jesus tells us that if someone demands our shirt to give that person our cloak as well. These words are more difficult to hear this year than ever, with one nation’s ruler demanding territory and subservience from another independent nation. What kind of freedom do you think Jesus is admonishing or encouraging in us?

Certainly at the least, Jesus is reminding us to be gracious and generous even in the face of demanding, ungenerous persons. Is there a situation in your life where this freedom is a challenge? May our Franciscan fraternity and the fraternal admonishment and encouragement we owe each other help us to answer these challenges well!

Pope Francis explains gratuitousness: “the ability to do some things simply because they are good in themselves, without concern for personal gain or recompense” (*Fratelli tutti*, 139). We have a choice, a freedom, to do things because they help us, or to do things because they are good in and of themselves.

Our freedom, our choice, is to live as Jesus Christ lived while he dwelt among us. We have reason to trust, to have faith, because the Church has experienced the Resurrection of Jesus, even if we have not personally felt that Power greater than the power of Death. *Blessed are those who have not seen and still believe*. And the living out of our faith is fed by the Holy Spirit we have received in Confirmation or Chrismation, the gift of the seal of the Holy Spirit.



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



WHEN VIOLENCE IS THE WAY, WE MUST CHOOSE AND SHOW ANOTHER WAY

by Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, National Animator

“Mindful that we are bearers of peace, which must be built up unceasingly, we should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon. Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, we should strive to bring joy and hope to others.” OFS Rule, Art. 19

This year has been a year of unspeakable violence – mass shootings, bombings and war, divisions in hearts, minds, and speech. Where has civility gone? What has become of compassion and respect? What has happened to protecting the young, the innocent, the poor, and the marginalized? When did we become so desensitized to the plight of those who are suffering or abandoned? When has caring for our fellow human beings become a political statement instead of an act of good will? And more importantly, why have we allowed this to become the norm?

Once upon a time, a person’s word was their bond, their pledge of honor. It was all that was needed for many transactions in this world – a handshake, a knowing smile, a heartfelt agreement. Those were also the days when everyone looked out for the children – all the children, anyone’s children. And the children knew other eyes were on them – looking out for them, protecting them, watching over them. Except in certain remote places, this is no longer the case. Today, children do not honor mother or father, let alone other elders. And the elders? They are too busy doing what they need to do to survive themselves, so they have no time to look after their own children, let alone someone else’s children.

In those days when a person’s word meant something, there was also more conversation, less debate, and more dialogue. Debate is more about winning and making the other person wrong than about having a healthy dialogue and sharing ideas. Where have those days gone? Why do I need to make you wrong rather than just understand your point of view? When we make others wrong, we do violence to them. We also do ourselves a disservice, because we lose out on the opportunity to learn from them, and thus to grow.

As a grief counselor and a full-time caregiver, I have learned the importance of listening to understand, instead of listening to respond or rebut. The most important thing we can do is listen to another person. We don’t have to have the answers. In fact, more often than not, they already know the answer. They just need to get out of their own heads and talk it out with an empathetic, listening soul. If that is all we give someone who is suffering, we have given the greatest of gifts.

One of my favorite stories about Saint Francis was when he and his brother friar were going to a neighboring town to preach. They walked through the town greeting the people, listening to their stories and hardships, sharing thoughtful words and prayers. By the time they got to the edge of town, the friar questioned Father Francis about preaching. He thought they were going to preach to the townspeople. Father Francis assured his brother that they did – by their actions. The words often attributed to Francis, “Preach the Gospel at all times; and if necessary, use words,” speak to this little story beautifully.

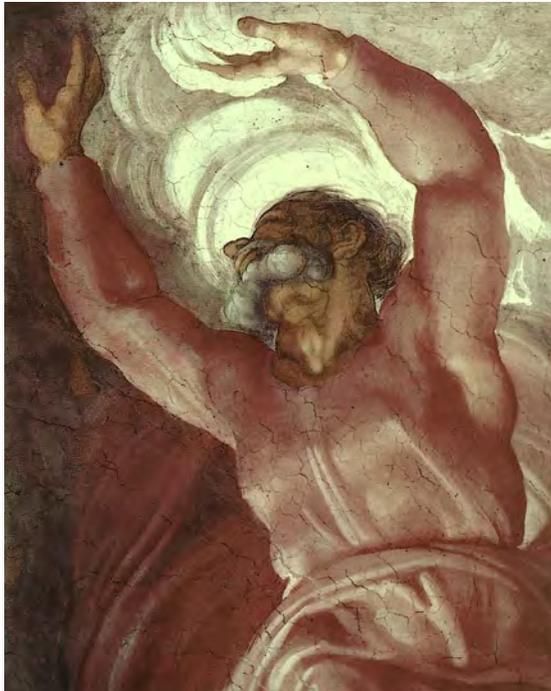
As Franciscans, we are not called to fix our brothers and sisters, but to love and listen to them. When we can love and listen, we allow the Holy Spirit to do whatever fixing is needed. We do not know the heart and mind of another, but the Holy Spirit does. We must be humble enough to allow the space for the Holy Spirit to do the work. That is not our responsibility. This is a liberating feeling. Imagine! I don’t have to have all the answers. I don’t have to fix my brothers and sisters. I don’t have to do the job of the Holy Spirit. All that is mine to do is to love and to listen. May the Lord continue to grant you peace as you be peace to others.



FORMATION COMMISSION

The Light of the World: We Are Called to See It and Be It

Layna Maher, OFS
National Formation Commission



Michelangelo, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth—and the earth was without form or shape, with darkness over the abyss and a mighty wind sweeping over the waters—Then God said: Let there be light, and there was light. God saw that the light was good (Genesis 1:1-4).

The creation story begins with the goodness of light. Light was God's first gift to each of us. The birth of Jesus was announced to us with the light of a star. We read of light in many stories in scripture, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In fact, if you looked for the the word light in the Bible, you would see the word light mentioned well over 200 times. Light surely is something important for us to recognize, study, and ponder.

Light symbolizes the many wonderful characteristics of God. Light is also a symbol for awareness, knowledge, goodness, and understanding. *We are each called by name (Isaiah 43:1) into the light and to shine the light from God into the world. We are called to be witnesses (Isaiah 43:10) to the world.*

Our Rule clearly outlines our Secular Franciscan way of life to do just that. The three chapters in our OFS Rule clearly guide us on understanding the Secular Franciscan Order, our Way of Life, and our Life in Fraternity. We hear St. Francis speak of light in his Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance (The first version of the Letter to the Faithful), the Prologue to our OFS Rule. St. Francis advises us in the words “All those, however, who are not living in penance.... They are blind because they do not see the true light, our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 FA:ED, pg. 50). We are called to see the true light and to live in the light. We have been given the gift of our Franciscan vocation and the love and support of our Franciscan family to assist us as we live our Rule. Let us recall these words said at profession, “Therefore, in my secular state I promise to live all the days of my life the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Secular Franciscan Order by observing its rule of life.” The Rule lights the path for us as we strive to live out the promise we make.



Rabe!, CC BY-SA 4.0, via
Wikimedia Commons

We can each light the way for others with our actions by living the gospel. To live the gospel, we must know the gospel. OFS Rule, Article 4 states “The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people. Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly. Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel.” Christ is the Light of the world. The Gospel gives us so many wonderful examples of how to reflect the light and love of Christ into the world.

We look to the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew 5:13-16, the Similes of Salt and Light. ¹³“*You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.* ¹⁴*You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden.* ¹⁵*Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house.* ¹⁶*Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.*” We then ask ourselves, what flavor am I bringing into the world? Am I bringing the light and love or darkness and condemnation?

We can turn to the Parable of the Lamp in Mark 4:21, where we again hear Jesus talk about a lamp, saying “*Is a lamp brought in to be placed under a bushel basket or under a bed, and not to be placed on a lampstand?*” We see the Parable of the Lamp again in Luke 8:16 “*No one who lights a lamp conceals it with a vessel or sets it under a bed; rather, he places it on a lampstand so that those who enter may see the light.*” Jesus shared this parable with us to tell us that because we have received the Gospel, we have an obligation to live it and share it with others.

In the Gospel of John, we hear these words from Jesus: “*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life*” John 8:12, and “*I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness*” John 12:46.

We are blessed with many more recent words of guidance and goodness. In *Lumen Gentium, Light of the Nations*, Chapter IV, The Laity, we read we are called by God...”led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity. Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer.” We ask ourselves, are our lives bringing God’s love and compassion into the affairs of our lives? Or are we bringing darkness and condemnation?

In *Caritas In Veritate, In Charity and Truth*, Benedict XVI, expanded on charity as he wrote “Truth is the light that gives meaning and value to charity. That light is both the light of reason and the light of faith....” Coherence... means dynamic faithfulness to a light received. The Church's social doctrine illuminates with an unchanging light the new problems that are constantly emerging.” We then ask ourselves, are we bringing the truth of God’s love and compassion into charitable works with problems we see appearing? Or are we bringing darkness and condemnation?

Pope Francis tells us in chapter III of his encyclical *Laudato Si, On Care for Our Common Home*, “May the power and the light of the grace we have received also be evident in our relationship to other creatures and to the world around us. In this way, we will help nurture that sublime fraternity with all creation which Saint Francis of Assisi so radiantly embodied.” We are challenged again, and ask ourselves are we living in a way brings love and compassion to care for God’s creation? Or are we bringing darkness and condemnation?



Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Public domain,
via Wikimedia Commons

We can turn to the Holy Spirit, our advocate, to light the way, to inflame and light our heart on fire with the love of God. As believers, we trust we are *“a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises”* of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” 1 Peter 2:9.

We can choose to be the light in the way we live and respond to others, our fraternity, and all of creation. We can choose love and compassion or darkness and condemnation. When we choose to look and listen with empathy and understanding, offering compassion instead of condemnation, we can be the light. As we submit ourselves as servants of Christ, we can allow the light from the love of God, our creator, to illumine our eyes to see the beauty of creation and the goodness that God created in the world. As disciples of Jesus, following in the footsteps of St. Francis, we can shine that light into the world and illuminate everywhere we go and everything we do with the love and compassion of God. We can study our Rule article by article to examine our lives and ask what we are bringing. A few years ago, our national theme was *“See Christ! Be Christ!”* Today we are challenged to *“See the Light and Be the Light”* until our last day, when *Night will be no more, nor will they need light from lamp or sun, for the Lord God shall give them light, and they shall reign forever and ever* Revelation 23:5.



Anonymous Unknown artist, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Ecumenical Interfaith Committee Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity



“HUMAN FRATERNITY” CAN WE DARE TO WALK ITS PATH?

by Marie Bianca, OFS

What do you know about our brothers and sisters of the Jewish tradition? What of our Muslim brothers and sisters? Or any other faith tradition?

My work on the Interfaith Alliance of the Southwest and the Interfaith/Ecumenical Committee has challenged me to SEE – to see deeply beyond borders, beyond faith traditions, and to learn to celebrate the differences that mark our uniqueness. I have found that when we examine the faith of others, we embark on a journey that reveals just how much we have in common. To embark on this path, however, takes courage.

As you may know, Our Holy Father has taken courageous steps in building unity and peace throughout the world. His travels have taken him to war-torn nations, to countries devastated by natural disasters. He has walked the streets of Argentina, bringing comfort and love, taking food and aid to those who struggle to get by, those in need of shelter, those whose lives are fraught with danger and violence. He has met with world leaders seeking to arbitrate peace and dialogue between fractured communities. He has also shown us an example of how to see beyond faith traditions – to examine where we find common bonds with our brothers and sisters of other faiths.

On February 3-5, 2019, Pope Francis met with Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in Abu Dhabi. Together they crafted a document that poignantly revealed just how much we work for the same goals. This document “invites all persons who have faith in God and faith in *human fraternity* to unite and work together so that it may serve as a guide for future generations to advance a culture of mutual respect in the awareness of the great divine grace that makes all human beings brothers and sisters.”¹ This document prescribes a way forward for all to follow: “a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard.” It concludes by stating: “this declaration may constitute an invitation to reconciliation and fraternity among all believers, indeed among believers and non-believers, and among all peoples of good will.” A very powerful document.

It took courage, dialogue, negotiating, prayer, faith, and wisdom to make this apostolic journey to the United Arab Emirates, to meet with the Grand Imam, and to create this message of unity of Spirit. Yet we need only to look at the results of this meeting to see how the Holy Spirit was at work. This meeting, and the resulting document, inspired the United Nations in 2021 to establish February 4 as the **International**

¹ Document on Human Fraternity, Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019, His Holiness Pope Francis / The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb

Day of Human Fraternity.² It also inspired Pope Francis in the writing of *Fratelli Tutti*³, where he speaks of that journey and his meeting with Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, stating it "...was no mere diplomatic gesture, but a reflection born of dialogue and common commitment."

Time and time again we see St. Francis taking steps of courage. It took courage to stand in front of the bishop and abandon a way of life that no longer had meaning for him. It took courage to choose to lead a life of service and simplicity. It took courage to follow ever more closely the way of the Gospel.

There are many other stories of courage to inspire us. In August, at the OFS-USA Quinquennial Congress, we will be screening a documentary film called *Stranger/Sister*. It is the chronical of two brave women, one Muslim and one Jewish, wanting to establish bridges of peace. They realized that by planting the seeds of unity and peace, maybe they could be a small piece of changing the hatred in the world. They never dreamed it would start an international movement of small fraternities sharing their lives and their dreams. In these gatherings, peace organically blossoms and emanates. They pray together, they break bread together, laugh, and share the pain of their lives. Sound familiar?

Sisters and brothers, we too must be courageous. We too, can taste the experience of building bridges of peace. We need to seek out opportunities to engage with those of other faith traditions, and as we do so, let us remember those three vital components of unity prescribed in the Document on Human Fraternity: "a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard."

When we look at other faiths, what is it we share? **We share a belief in love, courage, hope, forgiveness, the dignity of every human being, and so much more.** My friends, we must take the courageous walk with our brothers and sisters, and risk loving deeply those who may have offended us. Let's not back away. We are called to die to our own self-centeredness, to self-righteousness and judgmental attitudes. Let us put aside that part of ourselves that seeks to avoid courageous steps of action in community and in fraternity. Let's reach out to those of other faiths and celebrate with joy our common bonds of faith, hope, forgiveness, compassion, and love. Go in peace, chew on the message, continue the discussions and pray.

Those wishing to explore this topic further might do an internet search on the following, all from the Vatican, or Vatican News:

- Document on Human Fraternity
- Cardinal Ravasi: Dialogue is the Root and Heritage of all Faiths
- Grand Imam pledges support for Human Fraternity Efforts
- Al-Duwaini: Human Fraternity Values Need to be "Rediscovered"
- Expo Dubai Celebration of Human Fraternity
- Pope Francis: Embrace Human Fraternity to Stop Endless Destruction

² As stated by the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, on different occasions.

³ "In this case, I have felt particularly encouraged by the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, with whom I met in Abu Dhabi ...(this) present Encyclical takes up and develops some of the great themes raised in the Document that we both signed." Introduction to *Fratelli Tutti*

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERS PRESENCE

by Willie Guadalupe, OFS

This is an article that I have been thinking about for several months. I felt I needed to relate to our leaders the importance of their “Presence.” I would like to share observations I made and complaints I heard in my role as your Multicultural and Diversity Councilor and to provide suggestions on how to make the best of your presence as regional leaders of diverse fraternities.

The complaints I heard were either from local ministers or fraternity members. On more than one occasion, members of fraternities who are from other cultures would mention how they feel isolated from their regions because of the language barrier.

At the regional level, leaders would express guilt because they were not visiting those fraternities as often, for the same reason.

The intent of this article is not to address this challenge, but to use the challenge as an opportunity in a more positive way.

Quite simply, be Present to each other.

Some regions have fraternities whose members’ first language is not English. Communicating with them is not an easy challenge and will require humility and patience, but it can be done. Leaders will need to exhibit these virtues when dealing with all fraternities, but especially those that are culturally diverse.

Spend time with members of the fraternities. Learn to speak greetings in their vernacular

language. ‘God bless you’ and ‘good morning’ are good places to start. Fraternity members will appreciate your presence and willingness to try to communicate and will feel welcome rather than isolated.

Remember, language is not always verbal. Body language spoken in smiles and nods of the head can convey love and warmth.

Your presence as a leader alone without speaking their language is a way that you can show sincerity in learning more about another culture, and that can be an asset that may help to overcome cultural barriers. When communicating, remember that someone’s lack of proficiency in English does not reflect their level of intellect. Both sides should speak slowly and try to have someone who can translate if possible but this is not necessary.

Even though you may not speak their native language, our Franciscan kinship contains the language of love and affirmation. The presence of your leadership will give you the ability to connect authentically, build confidence, trust, and inspire and motivate members into action.

As we pursue our multicultural interactions, remember the words of St. Francis: “Preach the Gospel at all times, when necessary, use words.”

This quote embodies how St Francis understood the ministry of presence. It is less about the words you speak and more about simply walking the journey with people.

Article 31 (General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order - 2000)

2. The office of Minister or Councillor is a fraternal service, a commitment to hold oneself available and responsible in relation to each brother and sister and to the Fraternity so that each one may realize his or her own vocation and each Fraternity may be a true community, ecclesial and Franciscan, actively present in the Church and in society.

THE FRUIT OF SERVICE IS JOY

by Emma Lozowsky, OFS

If we are truly seeking what the Lord wants for us, we will come to the conclusion that Joy is His dream for His followers. Not fleeting happiness, not momentary bliss, but something deeper, more profound, more lasting. Of course, Eternal Joy is only going to be ours once we enter His Kingdom, but joy is available to us already. St. Francis taught us about "perfect joy," what we can attain by conquering ourselves, subjugating our egos to a higher good. This is a difficult task for many of us, but with practice and discipline and profound faith in God, it can be attained. Something that is more immediately available is the joy experienced as the fruit of service. The Psalmist exhorts us to, "Serve the Lord with Gladness! Come into his presence with singing!" (Psalm 100: 2) If service were all drudgery and hard work, nobody would be singing while serving.

The parable of the Talents in Matthew's Gospel is another source where we can hear about how joy and service are related. A man going on a long journey gave some talents to his servants. When he returned, he settled accounts with each. "And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.'" (Matthew 25:20-21) The reward of this servant's faithful service was entering into his Master's Joy.

The word talent has two different meanings. In the old days, talents were coins. Now we also understand talent as "charism," some gift of personality, disposition, or ability that is given to a person so they can use it for the good of all. The work of the servant in the parable was not forced upon him; he voluntarily used what he had—his ability to trade with the coins. He produced a profit for his Master and, as a result, joy for himself.

Discernment is at the heart of the action of this servant. He knew what he could do, and he confidently made profitable trades. We might look at his example and say, "I would have never been able to trade and produce a profit!" I say this when I look at my retirement account, which I entrusted to an ethical financial professional. Maybe trading at the stock market is not for me, but there are other things I can do. As Secular Franciscans, it's a daily call for us to continue to discern and confidently walk forward, converted. Daily we are to turn farther and

farther away from our sins and bad habits and to turn closer and closer to God. Choosing a new opportunity to serve might be a great way to draw closer to God.

The National Executive Council is composed of brothers and sisters who have been given certain talents that they willingly put at the service of others. They have somehow balanced in their lives service to the Order with other responsibilities they have. Tibor Kauser, Minister General of the OFS, remarked,

"Grace and sacrifice go hand in hand. Each sacrifice will bring fruits of grace. As we are serving not only on Sunday afternoon, but every day, family life, professional work and service in the OFS have to be brought together. I have experienced both the sacrifice and also the grace in all these three, receiving the grace from the hands of God in one of these, when I had to experience the sacrifice in others. This is the holy balance of God, which has been nourishing me and enriching me every day, day by day."

The nourishment and enrichment Tibor talks about is the joy that is the fruit of service. May we open our minds and hearts, discern, and courageously walk forward and accept the call to the service that we have talents for.

National Elective Chapter date and location:
Saturday, October 15, 2022,
Detroit, Michigan

Positions to be filled are:

National Minister **National Vice Minister**
National Secretary **National Treasurer**
National Councilor 1 **National Councilor 2**
National Councilor 3
International Councilor

Please send your nomination (NAME, ADDRESS, ZIP CODE, EMAIL ADDRESS) either via electronic e-mail or via snail-mail to **both:**

Joan Geiger, OFS
E-mail: geigerjmm@hotmail.com

AND

Emma Lozowsky, OFS
E-mail: ofs.minister.prairie@gmail.com

All professed members may make nominations.

2022 OFS-USA Chapter of Elections

The OFS-USA (National Fraternity) will hold its Chapter Oct. 11-16, 2022 in Detroit, Michigan.

This Chapter will also be a Chapter of Elections for the next National Executive Council.

There is room for observers.

Observers are responsible for paying for lodging, meals and transportation.

If you would like to attend as an observer, please contact Jane DeRose-Bamman OFS, National Secretary, at ofsusasecretary@gmail.com or 505-228-6851 for information on registering.

The registration deadline is August 29, 2022.



St. Francis



St. Clare



Mother Magdalen Damen

THE FRANCISCAN SPIRIT SERVING THE COMMUNITY

This Tau Cross Monument is located at the entrance of the Marian Regional Medical Center in Santa Maria, California, and is quite visible to the surround community. The hospital's history began in 1940 when, in response to a call for health care services in the community of Santa Maria, the Sisters of St. Francis founded Our Lady of Perpetual Help Hospital. It was their unwavering mission to further the healing ministry of Jesus that guided the Sisters to serve their community.



THE TAU MONUMENT

As a symbol of faith, love and hope, the Tau Cross Monument will remain a significant symbol in the architecture and landscape of Marian Regional Medical Center.

The Tau Cross, which serves as a tribute to the healing ministry and presence of the Sisters of Saint Francis, the founders of Marian, is located on each of the three sides at the top of the Monument. At the base of the Tau Monument are three statues: Saint Francis, the founder of the Franciscan Order; Saint Clare, who followed and continued the ministry of Saint Francis; and Mother Magdalen Damen, the Foundress of the Sisters of Saint Francis of Penance and Christian Charity.

The Tau Monument will forever serve as a symbol of gratitude to the Sisters of Saint Francis for their visionary leadership, dedication, and service to the people of the Santa Maria Valley.



Let Me Tell You a Story

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

We spent our fifth and last evening gathered around the campfire at the beach with the 20 or so youth at our annual trip to Santa Cruz. Each night had ended with a special prayer service. As I handed out the prayer aid, one of the young people turned to me and blurted out, “Another prayer? Have you always been this holy?” The comment elicited a laugh from all of us.

“Actually, no,” I answered. “Let me tell you a story.” I admitted to the rapt group that in college I had left the Church for several years. I told the shocked teens that there were many reasons I’d stopped attending Mass, including disillusionment, a busy college life, and lack of a faith community.

I finished the story about how after I graduated, I returned home for a while. I befriended a priest who had started a Bible group for young adults. We enjoyed many lively discussions. One day I spoke of my loneliness and desire to return to my college friends in San Diego. Father suggested, “It’s not your friends you long for, it’s a relationship with God. Only God can fill that emptiness you feel.” With his encouragement, I went to reconciliation the next day and with several of my new friends attended Mass for the first time in three years.

The casual setting around the crackling fire and my honest sharing, surrounded by darkness and trees, invited the youth to open up. We talked about what holiness meant. Many of them felt going to Church was simply an obligation. Others told stories of faith reflecting their deep understanding of Eucharist. A few admitted to feeling an emptiness just as I had. We ended our prayer that night with joy, knowing our youth group was a safe community of love in which all of us could grow spiritually.

Telling stories (parables) was Jesus’ favorite way to teach and draw others into his fold. People gathered in throngs to hear what he had to say and to speak to him. Churches too should be places where people come to hear the story of God and to tell their own. That’s how we discover what it means to live gospel lives.

Pope Francis spoke of the need for sharing stories at the opening of the recent Synod. “Each encounter requires openness, courage, and a willingness to let ourselves be challenged by the presence and the stories of others,” he stated. “Whenever we listen with the heart, people feel that they are being heard, not judged; they feel free to recount their own experiences and spiritual journey”

(Pope Francis, Homily at opening Mass of Synod 2021-2023).

Each one of us has a unique story, just as each one of us is on a journey of faith, no matter what our age. God is active in our lives, and we, along with our younger Catholic brothers and sisters, can deepen our faith through these journey stories. People love stories, especially those that are meaningful and true. Our stories matter.

Recognizing and respecting the need for good listening is equally important. In *Sons and Daughters of Light*, our bishops explain, “We are called to hear their pain... and to be open to learn from their experiences, anxieties, uncertainties, and honest constructive questioning. Young adults need opportunities to share their stories and be affirmed in the importance of their lives within the Church.”

Pope Francis encourages us with this same sentiment. “We must remember that prayerful discernment must be born of a readiness to listen to the Lord and to others, and to reality itself, which always challenges us in new ways” (Pope Francis’ Encyclical, *Gaudete et Exultate*, 172).

Sounds a bit scary, right? But the benefits far outweigh the fear we may feel. The commission urges you to open your hearts and pray for the courage to introduce yourself to a young person. Spend time getting to know them. Be loving. Be authentic. Hear their story and be willing to share your own. Isn’t that the kind of Church we want to belong to?



The encounter with the living Jesus Christ” is “the path to conversion, communion, and solidarity” (Ecclesia in America, 1999, John Paul II).

FRANCIS AND CLARE AND PEACE

by Bret Thoman, OFS

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. (Matthew 5:9)

As the war in Eastern Europe continues, Secular Franciscans – like everyone else – are looking for answers. Perhaps we can turn to Sts. Francis and Clare, as their lives were also affected by the tragedies of war and violence.

In 1215, Pope Innocent III launched the Fourth Lateran Council, at which he called for a fifth crusade. St. Francis was likely present at the council, and he heard the call. After two failed attempts, in 1219, he arrived in the Holy Land. However, he was there as a different sort of crusader. He did not arrive with arms; he had a different plan.

The earliest account of this well-known encounter comes from the first biography of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano. Written in 1228, just two years after the saint's death, it was commissioned by the pope as the first official life story of St. Francis.

According to Thomas, Francis “would not rest from carrying out fervently the holy impulse of his spirit” – that is, martyrdom. Therefore, in the “thirteenth year of his conversion” (1219), he journeyed to Syria by ship and walked courageously with an unnamed companion across the battle lines to confront the “Sultan of the Saracens.”

While details of the exchange are not recorded, Thomas indicates that the sultan was struck by Francis's witness, demeanor, and disdain for wealth, and he recognized that there was something unique about him. The account concludes with a statement that Francis did not receive his sought-after martyrdom, though he suggests that God was saving the moment for his later reception of the stigmata.

St. Bonaventure, a Franciscan theologian, and later Minister General of the order, also wrote a biography of St. Francis, in 1263. Bonaventure's account mirrors Thomas's almost verbatim but differs primarily in the addition of Francis



challenging the sultan's priests to a trial by fire: “so that [the sultan] will recognize which faith deserves to be held as the holier and more certain.”

While Francis's desire for martyrdom may strike some today as antiquated, it is consistent with the historic person of St. Francis. St. Francis was so devoted to Christ crucified on the cross that he sought to imitate him in every way – even going to the “cross” of martyrdom.

When Francis converted to the life of a penitent and signed his tunic with a cross, he became a “cross bearer” like the crusaders, who also wore a cross over their armor. He had laid down his own arms, but he was still a warrior at heart, though he was fighting a spiritual crusade. His arms were now the Word and the cross, his armor the penitential tunic.

It is not likely that Francis supported the crusades, as he never mentioned them in any of his writings. Moreover, his own experience in battle before his conversion and his renunciation of arms is telling. His life trajectory makes it clear that he had rejected every form of violence. He had become fully nonviolent.

Though the sultan did not convert, and Francis was not martyred, the encounter led to a significant breakthrough. According to Thomas, Francis was received “very graciously” by the sultan, who “honored him as much as he could, offering him many gifts.” Two of those gifts – an ivory horn and an Islamic prayer mat – are preserved in the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi to this day.

More importantly, after the encounter, the witness of Francis led the sultan to turn over the administration of the Christian sites in his territory to Francis and his order. This was an extraordinary gesture, in that safe passage for Christians in the Holy Land was one of the primary motives the crusades had been launched in the first place.

St. Clare of Assisi also came of age in a milieu marked by violence. After an uprising in 1199, Clare, just eight years old, was exiled to Perugia with the other noble families of Assisi. Her father, uncles, and cousins were all knights. It is likely they had experience in battle. When they went out, they would have been armed with swords and scabbards on their hips. Weaponry including lances, shields, and battle axes would have been fixtures within the castle where Clare grew up.

When she was 18 years old, Clare had an experience with Jesus Christ. She, too, posed the same question to the Lord as the rich young man who inquired how to inherit eternal life. But she listened and did what He said, “Go, sell what you have, give the money to the poor, and come and follow me” (see Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30).

Throughout her life, Clare reflected and meditated on the crucifixion and what her Lord had sacrificed for her. She yearned to imitate the crucified Christ and to offer herself, like Him, as a sacrifice to save others. In the Process of Canonization, three sisters testified that Clare had a desire to be a martyr in the Holy Land.

Clare had her opportunity toward the end of her life, in Assisi, when an army of Saracen soldiers tried to attack San Damiano.

The year was 1240, the hour tierce (9:00 AM), when they appeared suddenly “swarming like bees.” Though the sisters were terrified, Clare told them not to fear and to have confidence in Christ, because he would defend them.

Taking to heart the words of Jesus, “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13), she said to her sisters, “I wish to be your ransom; if it should happen that the enemies come into [San Damiano], place me before them.”

Clare did not know what would happen to her as she asked the friars to bring to her the Holy



Eucharist reposed in a silver pyx inside an ivory box. Before the door to the refectory, Clare lay prostrate before the Lord in the Eucharist while awaiting what she believed would be her martyrdom.

When the Saracens broke through the gate and entered the enclosure, they stopped in their tracks. They were disarmed by this mysterious, veiled woman. She was not afraid of them. Clare possessed a strength infinitely more powerful than they with their weapons and physical force.

St. Clare was practicing perhaps the most challenging imperative of the

Gospel: “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt” (Luke 6:27-29).

The Saracens were so disoriented that they fled. There was no violence that day.

In their approach to peacemaking and peace, Sts. Francis and Clare did not counter violence with more violence. Instead, they sought to imitate Christ.

When Christ was being arrested, he rebuked Peter, who sought to defend him, saying, “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52).

Later, during his interrogation with Pontius Pilate, he said, “My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world” (John 18:36).

Christ makes it clear that his Kingdom is heavenly, beyond the world. Though the Catholic Church allows legitimate defense (see CCC 2263-2267) and “just war” under some circumstances (see CCC 2307-2317), the way Saints Francis and Clare sought to imitate Christ shows a radical way of confronting war.

In Bret Thoman’s book, [A Knight and a Lady: A Journey into the Spirituality of Saints Francis and Clare](#), he writes about peace and peacemaking and other elements of Franciscan spirituality.



Franciscan Living

Why After You?

by Francine Gikow, OFS

“Brother Masseo, wanting to test how humble he [Francis] was, went up to him and, as if joking, said, ‘Why after you, why after you, why after you?’ Masseo goes on to say in clarification: ‘I’m saying why does the whole world come after you, and everyone seems to desire to see you and hear you? You aren’t a handsome man in body, you aren’t someone of great learning, you’re not noble; so why does the whole world come after you?’”¹

Francis’ response to Masseo may not seem to shed much light on this question, however. In fact, Francis states that God has chosen him *because of his vileness and insufficiency*. Francis expands this thought when he continues, saying: “...so that it may be known that every virtue and every good is from Him, and not from the creature, and no person may boast in his sight. But whoever boasts must boast in the Lord to whom is every honor and glory forever.”

God gave Francis great gifts. He gave Francis, an ordinary person born in the middle ages, great gifts of preaching, humility, and courage, not only because Francis made use of them, but also because Francis became a conduit for God’s love for us: The Lord and Creator shone through his creation of Francis. Truly, Francis became an “instrument” for God to work through so He could reach out and touch others through the human face of Francis.

God can work through us as well when he gives us “gifts” to use so that we can attract others to Christ. Thaddée Matura, OFM, warns us, however; “What one must beware of above all is the temptation to appropriate for oneself the good that belongs to God... one must acknowledge the origin of these gifts, rejoice over them, promote them; but once this is done, one

must ‘render’ them, restore them to the One to whom they belong in an act of praise and thanksgiving.”²

Perhaps one of us has been given the grace to actually “see” God working through us, but detachment from personal ownership of our gifts is needed. We must be fully aware that we have been given *everything* by our loving God. We cannot appropriate that which is God’s, and we “own” nothing apart from Him.

We can still rejoice over these gifts we have used for God’s benefit, mindful that their Source is our loving God and not ourselves. These gifts are reminders of the intimate care and love of the Father who gives us all good things. He loves us!

We should also promote and use the gifts God has given and not “hide them under a bushel basket,” because it is by these gifts that people can come to know Christ through us. Like Francis, we can become a conduit to God, since these gifts are really God’s gifts, not our own. We can become the “face” of God to others and evangelize by our actions.

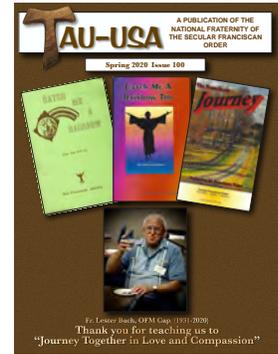
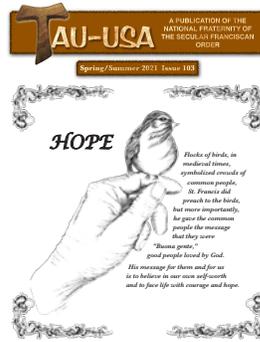
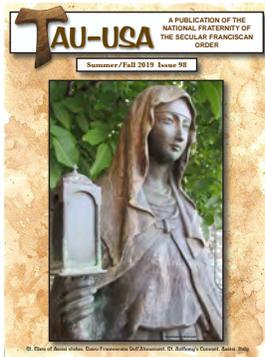
Acknowledging the true Source of any of the gifts we “appear” to own, we should return all praise and thanksgiving to the One who is GIFT Himself and the Source of any gift He has given us to use. Instead of accepting accolades for ourselves, we refer to the true Giver of Gifts in rejoicing and praise! Franciscan joy!

People were attracted to Francis because they were attracted to God’s gifts that they saw in Francis. Francis was well aware that he was not the owner of the gifts, but “He [God] has chosen me to confound the nobility and the greatness and the strength and beauty and wisdom of the world...”³ Do likewise with joy!

¹ LFl:10 in FA:ED II, p. 583.

² Thaddée Matura, OFM. *Francis of Assisi: Writer and Spiritual Master*. transl. Paul Lachance, OFM. (Cincinnati OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), 49.

³ LFl:10 in FA:ED II, 0.583.



THE GIFT OF TAU-USA

A Testimonial by Thomas McNamara, OFS

It is 7pm Sunday evening. A few hours ago, we got home from our first fraternity meeting after being on hiatus for about half a year. Currently, our fraternity is awaiting visitation from our Region. At that visit, our Regional leadership will determine whether we have successfully regrouped after experiencing the most difficult challenge to our fraternity since its formation. While there have been several challenges over our century of fraternity life, what we experienced a few years ago was truly unique, difficult, and formative. It has been a time of much prayer, discernment, mutuality, and work. We have a new council who have individually and as a team responded well and helped us in more ways than anyone can list.

In our difficulties, we lost about two-thirds of our active membership. Many of our Inquirers decided to look elsewhere for their needs. Back then, no one seemed at all certain whether we had a future as a fraternity. We seemed to be “catching it” from every direction.

But we kept moving forward, driven by something none of us could see but all of us could feel—a sense of purpose that eludes description and a sense of positive learning and growth. Maybe this is the spirit of fraternity. Maybe we found we truly care for each other.

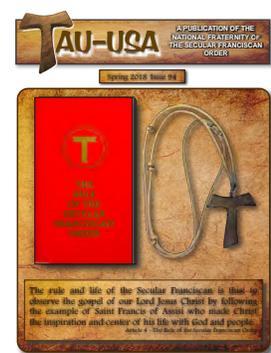
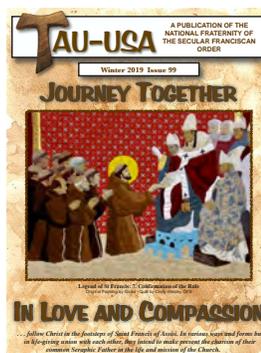
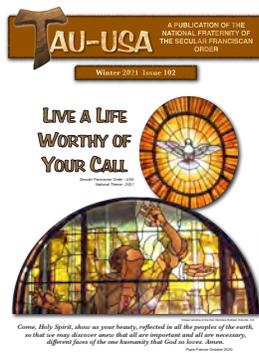
At today’s meeting, we were joined by nearly a dozen newcomers sharing our prayers, instructions and formation. By the end of our

fraternity meeting, we were mixing very well, sharing a spirit of community, and demonstrating how, with enough motivation, strangers can always find things to talk about. It was a very wonderful feeling.

What I am most thankful for, however, is the most recent issue of *TAU-USA*. We received our copies just as we were finalizing plans for our “comeback meeting.” We chose to use the “Fraternity Life” article, which included a letter from Pope Francis, as our focus for our gathering. As we discussed his article, he seemed to be saying exactly what we needed to hear and talk about. We went through half of the reflection questions today and will finish the second half at our next fraternity meeting. We talked about how our vocation to fraternity is a gift. We recalled the Gospel where we hear about the Master giving each of us a gold coin... and expecting us to use it well. Fraternity is that kind of gift.

Our discussions were just what we needed, a blend of hearing each other's perspectives and of building a common idea about what Pope Francis taught about fraternity life. The *TAU-USA* couldn't have come at a better time. We went home with renewed hope and real gratefulness.

TAU-USA is a physical expression of our combined blessings of vocation, fraternity, and conversion. I am very thankful for this wonderful tool from our National Fraternity. Please keep publishing *TAU-USA*—it works!



QUINQUENNIAL QUILTS THROUGH THE YEARS

by Cindy Wesley, OFS



HOLY GROUND

By Kathleen Collins, OFS



Surrounded in beauty
I walk gently
My foot light
Upon the earth

Others have stepped upon this grass
Like me they were lost
In time
In wonder
At the sheer magnificence
Of creation

That I should also stand
Where they have
Is a mystery
This invitation gift
This shared experience grace

Tread softly
You who follow me
Surrounded in beauty
For this is holy ground

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

General Fund Assets

December 31, 2021

	12/31/2020	General Fund Income	12/31/2021
Bank Accounts - Checking & Savings	\$ 319,992.52		\$ 573,939.04
Certificate of Deposit	142,722.38		50,696.29
Deposits on Future Events	99,603.68		94,183.68
	<u>562,318.58</u>		<u>718,819.01</u>
Less Restricted Funds	(116,164.13)		(176,582.83)
Total Funds Available	<u><u>\$ 446,154.45</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 96,081.73 (a)</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 542,236.18</u></u>

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

Statement of Revenue and Expenses - Actual vs Budget - General Fund

For the Year Ended December 31, 2021

	ACTUAL Jan - Dec 2021	BUDGET Jan - Dec 2021	\$ Over/Under Budget
Income			
4000 · Fair Share	\$ 206,006.00	\$ 201,000.00	\$ 5,006.00
4100 · Formation Sales	23,662.75	13,300.00	10,362.75
4210 · Interest Income	1,988.29	2,200.00	(211.71)
4400 · Miscellaneous Income	1,855.17	500.00	1,355.17
Total Income	<u><u>\$ 233,512.21</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 217,000.00</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 16,512.21</u></u>
Expense			
5100 · CIOFS Fair Share	\$ 28,020.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ (1,980.00)
5102 · CIOFS Chapter	12,878.86	-	12,878.86 (1)
5120 · TAU-USA Newsletter	43,461.76	55,700.00	(12,238.24) (2)
5130 · CNSA -Conference of National Spiritual Asst	8,000.00	8,000.00	-
5200 · Annual Chapter	1,540.00	70,000.00	(68,460.00) (3)
5300 · National Executive Council	3,169.09	20,000.00	(16,830.91) (4)
5505 - Communications Committee	6,830.75	8,000.00	(1,169.25)
5515 - Ecumenical Interfaith Committee	3,200.80	7,000.00	(3,799.20)
5520 - Formation Commission	150.00	22,650.00	(22,500.00) (4)
5530 - Historian	-	2,500.00	(2,500.00)
5535 - Justice, Peace, Integrity Creation Commission	3,635.34	15,000.00	(11,364.66) (4)
5545 - Multi-Cultural Committee	300.00	2,000.00	(1,700.00)
5555 - National Archives	2,101.11	4,000.00	(1,898.89)
5560 - Public Relations	-	2,000.00	(2,000.00)
5570 - Vocations Committee	449.37	1,000.00	(550.63)
5675 - Youth & Young Adult (FYA) Commission	350.00	7,550.00	(7,200.00) (4)
5598 - Quinquennial Planning	512.67	9,500.00	(8,987.33) (4)
6155 - Formation Printing	8,808.50	14,000.00	(5,191.50)
6158 - Formation Printing - Languages	-	12,000.00	(12,000.00)
6160 - Royalties Paid	913.80	2,000.00	(1,086.20)
6310 · JPIC Outreach - Franciscan Intl	2,000.00	2,000.00	-
6320 · JPIC Award	3,000.00	3,000.00	-
6400 · Liability Insurance	5,178.00	5,000.00	178.00
7200 · Other Expenses	2,930.43	3,000.00	(69.57)
Total Expense	<u><u>\$ 137,430.48</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 305,900.00</u></u>	<u><u>\$ (168,469.52)</u></u>
Net Income (Loss) General Fund	<u><u>\$ 96,081.73 (a)</u></u>	<u><u>\$ (88,900.00)</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 184,981.73</u></u>
Projected loss to be covered by money in savings		88,900.00	
		<u><u>\$ -</u></u>	

Note 1: Variance explanation

- (1) The expense for our International Councilor to attend the 2021 International Chapter in Rome was omitted from the final 2021 budget. CIOFS also requested financial assistance for some national fraternities that could not afford to send a representative. We approved the expenses for our delegate to attend plus an additional \$600 (wire transfer and international exchange fees were included).
- (2) There were 3 issues of the TAU-USA instead of the 4 budgeted
- (3) The annual chapter was Zoom and not in-person because of the pandemic
- (4) No in-person meetings and travel because of the pandemic

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

Restricted Funds Report

For the Year Ended December 31, 2021

RESTRICTED FUND ACCOUNTS	Beginning Balance 12/31/2020	2021 Contributions	2021 Disbursements	Ending Balance 12/31/2021
(1) 2105 Charitable Donations	\$ 1,250.00	\$ 2,250.00	\$ (3,500.00)	\$ -
2110 CIOFS Solidarity Fund	-			-
(2) 2120 Emergency Aid	4,735.00	4,936.00	(6,005.14)	3,665.86
2125 Ecumenical - Interfaith	1,138.20	-	-	1,138.20
2130 Formation	200.00	-	-	200.00
(3) 2140 H2O Lenten Project	1,868.03	8,824.50	(4,000.00)	6,692.53
2147 MOTO	20,000.00	-	-	20,000.00
2150 National Events	1,225.84	-	-	1,225.84
(4) 2155 Quinquennial Congress	50,520.35	62,328.00	(4,389.01)	108,459.34
2160 Regional Needs	868.61	-	-	868.61
(5) 2162 Regions Helping Regions	2,490.00	1,250.00	-	3,740.00
(6) 2165 Undesignated Contributions	12,041.33	133.00	(825.00)	11,349.33
2170 Youth Scholarships	453.05	-	-	453.05
(7) 2260 Grant and Expense Fund	19,373.72	-	(583.65)	18,790.07
Total Restricted Funds	116,164.13	79,721.50	(19,302.80)	176,582.83

NOTES:

- (1) Contributions consisted of member donation of \$25, Account 7200 Other Expenses \$1,400. and \$825 from Undesignated Contributions to cover the Charitable Giving for 2021. Disbursements are the charitable giving donations RM's approved during the October 2021 Chapter.
- (2) Contributions were for emergency aid for Hurricane Laura, Lebanon, Venezuela, Border OTC Meds. Disbursements were for same.
- (3) Contributions from members, local fraternities & regional fraternities to provide clean drinking water to those in need. Donations were made to Br. David Buer, OFS and Holy Family Vocational Orphanage Fund.
- (4) Contributions are for 2022 Quinquennial registrations, merchandise ordered, scholarship fund and service project. Disbursements were Quinquennial related expenses
- (5) Donations by regions for struggling regions made with their annual fair share report.
- (6) Contributions were 2 member donations. Disbursement was transfer to Charitable Giving as noted in (1) above.
- (7) In 2021 the Duns Scotus Board granted an award to Margaret of Cortona Region.

Respectfully submitted by Claudia Kauzlarich, OFS, National Treasurer - June 13, 2022

Article 30 (GENERAL CONSTITUTIONS OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - 2000)

1. The brothers and sisters are co-responsible for the life of the Fraternity to which they belong and for the OFS as the organic union of all Fraternities throughout the world.
2. The sense of co-responsibility of the members requires personal presence, witness, prayer, and active collaboration, in accordance with each one's situation and possible obligations for the animation of the Fraternity.
3. Rule 25. In a family spirit, each brother and sister should make a contribution to the Fraternity fund, according to each one's means, to provide the financial means needed for the life of the Fraternity and for its religious, apostolic, and charitable works. The brothers and sisters will also provide the means necessary for supporting the activities and the operations of the Fraternities at higher levels, both by their financial assistance and by their contributions in other areas as well.

SECULAR FRANCISCAN BOOKS

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