



CNSA

News & Views

Franciscan Life in the 21st Century

Lester Bach OFM Cap

MEANDERINGS

I began to prophesy as I had been told, and as I prophesied there was a rattling sound and the bones all fitted themselves together. As I watched, sinews appeared upon them, flesh clothed them, and they were covered with skin, but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me: "Prophesy to the wind, prophesy, O man, and say to it: These are the words of the Lord God: Let winds come from every quarter and breathe into these slain, that they may come to life." I prophesied as I had been told; breath entered them, and they came to life and rose to their feet, a mighty company.

He said to me: "O man, these bones are the whole people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is gone, and we are cut off.' Prophesy, therefore, and say to them: 'My people, I shall open your graves and bring you up from them, and restore you to the land of Israel. You, my people, will know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and bring you up from them. Then I shall put my Spirit into you and you will come to life, and I shall settle you on your own soil, and you will know that I the Lord have spoken and I shall act!'"

Ezekiel - 37:7-14 (REB)

As I read these words I am aware of their truth. People felt hopeless in the face of many difficulties. They had no one to stimulate their spirit. They began to believe that their journey was over and everything was finished for them as a people. No hope. No faith. No strong people to show love since they were all dying. So God gave them a powerful message that was filled with hope and a clarity about God's concern for them. In fact, it is clear that GOD is the source of their hope and GOD breathed life into them and they became a great "company."

I suppose there are times when a fraternity might say. "We're all too old. We don't understand much about this way of life. Our numbers are dwindling. Lots of folks argue with one another but rarely dialogue. We set up commissions and committees and something happens for the better - for a while. Then we settle back into our normal spirit without much zip in our steps. We dare to call it the Franciscan way of life!



Not everyone feels this way. Many feel we are on the brink of new life, realizing that it requires a vibrant commitment. Our Church and our world need what we have to offer. At our profession we consecrated our lives to the Trinity to express the OFS Rule and make this life appear wherever we are. At least for a while we moved in a good

direction. It was not the time for mediocre dedication coupled with a bland spirit that attracts no one in particular. Rather, we remember how life came to a young lady in the Gospel who was actually already dead and people were mourning her passing as they gathered to support the

Fall - 2013



A look at coming events

People prepare for upcoming events. Therefore, here are two events being prepared for *spiritual assistants* (& others too!) in 2014.

Mark the dates on your calendar. You can get needed information from Cyl Maljan-Herbelin OFS. Cyl is executive Secretary of CNSA. Here is her name and address:

Cecilia Maljan-Herbelin OFS
1933 Tudor Drive
San Jacinto, CA 92583
cylmaljan@earthlink.net
cell: 412-513-9729

Programs for SAs in 2014

July 10 to 13th, 2014

*Summer Institute
at St Francis University
Loretto, PA
Focus on Spiritual Assistance*

September 24 & 25, 2014

**Wednesday & Thursday
Marytown
Libertyville, IL
(Fly to Chicago, IL)
Workshop for
Provincial and Regional
Spiritual Assistants**

family. Listen to this story of hope.

While he was still speaking, a messenger came from the president's house. "Your daughter has died, why trouble the teacher any more?" But Jesus, overhearing the message as it was delivered, said to the president of the synagogue. "Do not be afraid, simply have faith." Then he allowed no one to accompany him except Peter and James and James's brother, John. They came to the president's house where he found a great commotion with loud crying and wailing. So he went in and said to them. "Why this crying and commotion? The child is not dead; she is asleep;" and they laughed at him. After turning everyone out, he took the child's father and mother and his own companions into the room where the child was. Taking hold of her hand, he said to her, "Talitha cum" which means, Get up, my child." Immediately the girl got up and walked about - she was twelve years old. They were overcome with amazement!

Mark 5: 35-42 (REB)

A few questions to consider: How do we react to the dying of a fraternity? How do we deal with people who leave fraternity life for no apparent reason? How do we deal with one another when we disagree? What do we do when actions and attitudes ignore the Constitutions or people create their own interpretations and do whatever pleases them? How well do we listen to seculars who clearly state that faithfulness to the OFS Rule and Constitutions will bring new life to dry bones? What is the Spirit asking of us? How many members actually read the OFS documents? Or Vatican II documents? How do faithful secular Franciscans support a true Franciscan spirit? How faithful are the members to their responsibility to discover vocations to the OFS? How can we become a more vibrant and life-giving people? How helpful are the regular gatherings? How is the relationship between the SA and the council? When Jesus takes us by the hand, will we grasp the opportunity to bring new life to the OFS or simply follow the "We always did it this way." approach? How helpful are you in building the Kingdom of God through your Franciscan life?

Conversion is no easy process. Can we honestly say of ourselves that our *human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily!* .. and actually DO IT? (cf. OFS Rule #7). We can't ignore what we have professed to be. We will blossom and grow, attract and embrace others, when we are faithful to God's will as expressed in the OFS Rule and Constitutions and other helpful documents.

The Trinity is present and dwells within us. They accept our consecration to the OFS way of life. They are present to help us be what we find difficult to achieve. The Trinity takes us by the hand and gently but firmly invites us to "Get up, me lads and lassies - be faithful and live what you have professed to be!" Your lives will show the world what it is like when people show persistent love for the Trinity and one another. Love is fundamental to our Franciscan life.



The Lord's love is surely not exhausted, nor has his compassion failed; they are new every morning, so great is his constancy. "The Lord," I say, "is all I have, therefore I shall wait for him patiently."

Lamentations 3:22-24 (REB)

Another new biography of St. Francis



Francis of Assisi by Andre Vauchez, draws on a vast body of scholarship on Francis of Assisi. His research covers many years and is a comprehensive and authoritative version

of Francis' life.

The author is a professor emeritus at the University of Paris.

Schools for spiritual assistants are growing in many regions. These programs are encouraged to share a number of appropriate topics:

- ✦ SAs are people of faith, dedicated and faithful to the Church, the *People of God* and the *Community of love*.
- ✦ They learn about the responsibilities of a spiritual assistant at different levels.
- ✦ Attendees need knowledge of Franciscan spirituality and the role of the OFS and SAs as they work together.
- ✦ Attendees need skills in dealing with people and using effective ways to deal with conflict and differences of opinion.
- ✦ Attendees should be familiar with the Constitutions and various statutes that guide the OFS and the spiritual assistants. (cf. *Essential Documents of the OFS*)
- ✦ The program should help create a "community spirit" among the spiritual assistants in a region. SAs need to be comfortable in supporting one another, meeting together as frequently as possible.
- ✦ Attendees learn the limitations of a spiritual assistant so they don't act like "saviors" or "directors." SAs *collaborate* with councils and the members. It is a vital quality for SAs.
- ✦ Attendees learn to use the tool of dialogue in the interaction among OFS members as well as with others.
- ✦ Non-Franciscan attendees have a special need for learning about Franciscan theology and spirituality.
- ✦ SAs need to model the qualities of a Franciscan life.
- ✦ SAs keep in touch with their 1st Order/TOR connections. Mandated by the Church, SAs serve as a link between the 1st Order/TOR and the OFS.

Add your own ideas to help create programs that develop *suitable and well-prepared* spiritual assistants.

