



TAU-USA

Winter 2025 Issue 114

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE
SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

Vocations





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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Are You Filled With Hope?

by Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS
National Minister

It's the beginning of 2025, and we are in the Jubilee Year of Hope. "Pilgrims of hope" is the theme. We are people of hope – never despairing. That is great news, and it is worth sharing.

Brian (co-minister) and I recently focused on ways to increase the number of people we serve with our business. The effort resulted in setting goals for reaching out daily to various clients, business partners, and individuals to see who we could assist with attaining the dream of home ownership. Next, we planted seeds by sharing our ideas with the various partners. Over the years, we have come to learn that the seeds we plant do not sprout immediately. We may not see results until months down the road, however we must sow seeds now to reap a harvest later.

Can we apply this approach to the Order as well? This is a great time to set goals for promoting vocations. Reach out to potential vocations or those who can spread the word.

Think about the last thing you shared with someone: maybe a joke, exciting news, or a fun fact – information you thought was interesting or

useful. It was easy. Are you passionate about your Franciscan vocation? In this TAU-USA issue you'll find practical ideas for spreading the word about our vocation. My challenge to you is to consider one thing you could do within 30 days of reading it. Be prepared because the opportunity can arise without much warning. Think about how you learned about the Order and follow that process. Do what is most comfortable to you depending on your gifts. Once you decide on your method, translating it to vocation seed planting should be easy.

My favorite is responding when someone asks, "What's that 'T' around your neck?" I ask whether they have heard about the Secular Franciscan Order. If time permits, I have my elevator speech ready (one minute or less) and my business card.

The Jubilee Year of Hope may be a great starter for conversations. Our efforts to plant seeds now with periodic watering allow the Master Gardener to reap the harvest in due time.

We are pilgrims of hope. Go forth filled with hope to attract new vocations.



Jubilee Year of Hope: Not To Lose Heart

by Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, T.O.R.
National Spiritual Assistant

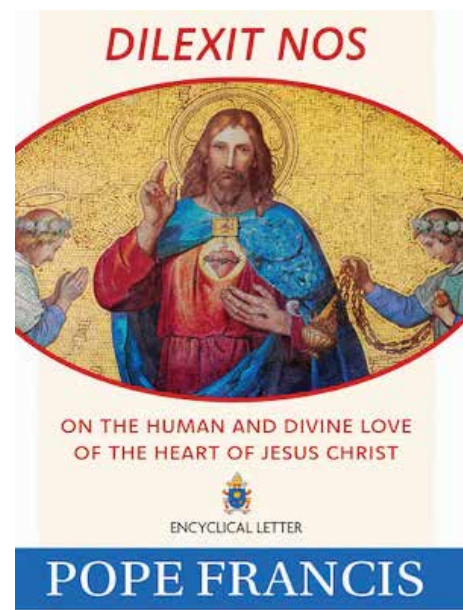
A Jubilee Year is a particular year in the life of the Church to encourage the faithful to deepen their spiritual life, repenting their sins, and forgiving the sins of others—the full expression of the mercy of God. In a letter announcing the Jubilee Year of Hope, Pope Francis stated, “As pilgrims of hope, we must fan the flame of hope that has been given us and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that hope, as a theological virtue, is a desire for the happiness of the kingdom of heaven and eternal life, by placing our trust in Christ’s promises with the help and the grace of the Holy Spirit (1817). Hope motivates us to pursue the good, to exercise God’s mercy of healing and restoration for renewal and rebirth so urgently needed. Christ Jesus is our hope.

The purpose of the Jubilee Year of Hope is to restore hope and trust, to recover a sense of universal fraternity, to care for the environment, and to contemplate the beauty of creation. Hope is the virtue and instrument enabling us to trust that our action makes sense, even if the results of this action are not immediately seen (Rom 8, 24). Hope is given to us by God as a protection and guard against futility.

We are reminded that the themes of our Holy Father’s three previous encyclicals are related: *Laudato Si’*: global dialogue about how we are shaping the future through actions and decisions; *Fratelli Tutti*: a fraternal openness that allows us to acknowledge, appreciate, and love each person; *Laudate Deum*: a prophetic call to conversion, admonishing the human family that it has neglected its relationships with creation, one another, and above all, God.

His fourth encyclical titled, “*Dilexit Nos*” (DN), “He loved us,” is an invitation to rediscover the importance of the heart, both in our spiritual life and in our human and social relationships. Pope Francis tells us that it is the effectual love of God that first changes our hearts in order to make us capable of love. It is Jesus’ example of love that reminds us again and again of our need to love others. The Heart of Jesus is presented as the perfect model of unconditional and total love, which calls us to live an authentic and full life, in communion with God and with others.



Divided into five chapters, the encyclical’s first chapter explores the heart in times of crisis. Pope Francis intends to explain why the symbol of the heart is relevant today to express the love of Jesus (DN 2). The heart is the place where important decisions take shape, uniting the rational and instinctive aspects of the person (DN 3). As a place of sincerity, the heart indicates our true intentions (DN 5). And as a place of love, it is in the heart that people become who they are meant to be (DN 21), since the human being is created to love and be loved.

Pope Francis is concerned that men and women of our time find themselves confused and torn apart and risk losing “heart.” One’s interior life requires a return to the core place of strength, conviction, passion and decisions (DN 9). Individualism, consumerism and fragmentation devalue the heart. It is the heart that makes all authentic bonding possible. Only love can unify diverse minds and wills for people to come together as sisters and brothers. Hope brings harmony, making sense of what may seem hopelessly shattered (DN 17-19). In the second chapter, the Pope reflects on the closeness and compassion of Jesus’ gestures and words of love. Encounters with people focus on their concerns and sufferings. The most powerful testimony of Jesus’ love is poured out on the cross. The transformation of the world begins in the heart.

In the third chapter, a heart that loves deeply is a divine and human heart that unites us and sends us into action.

“To love for love.” It is important to remember that Pope Francis speaks as a Jesuit, grounded in the Ignatian Exercises, where the heart is the soul and the core of inner reform that goes beyond the superficial. Reform comes from within, from the heart, not solely from external changes. Mercy and hope are two central themes of Pope Francis’ jubilees: Mercy 2016, Hope 2025. “Dilexit Nos” reminds us that mercy and hope are not distinct dimensions in the Heart of Jesus, but an undivided expression of an infinite love that embraces all humanity.



There is no time given us to embrace this encyclical other than this time of Jubilee: December 2024—December 2025. What is required is faithful confidence that strains forward in long endurance.

Our society is broken, pretty much. The time is now when these times can be made right. The hope of divine assistance is behind this of making things right. Hope cannot be overcome by powers present or things to come. Matthew 25 directs our attention: that these times made right will be infused by the help of God’s grace.

As pilgrims of hope we can greatly contribute to restore a climate of hope and trust by recovering a sense of universal fraternity and refusing to turn a blind eye to the tragedy of rampant poverty that prevents many men, women, young people and children from living in a manner worthy of human dignity. Let us not be deaf to the voices of refugees forced to abandon their native homeland. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings: trust lost to apprehensiveness, serenity to anxiety, conviction to hesitation and doubt.

Let us pray for all people, our sisters and brothers, especially those who are discouraged, pessimistic, and cynical, these also are our sisters and brothers:

“St Francis, stigmatized on La Verna, the world longs for you, that icon of the crucified Jesus. Reopen the doors of hope. It has need of your heart, open to God and to others; of your bare, wounded feet, of your pierced hands raised in supplication. It longs for your voice so frail yet forceful with the power of the Gospel. Francis, help the people of this age to recognize the evil of sin and to seek purification from it in penance. Help them to become free from every structure of sin that oppresses today’s society. Rekindle in the consciousness of those in government an urgent need for peace between nations and peoples. Instill in young people your freshness of life that is capable of withstanding the snares of the many cultures of death. To those injured by every type of evil, teach O Francis, the joy of being able to forgive. To all those crucified by suffering, hunger and war, reopen the doors of hope. Amen.”

(Prayer of Pope John Paul II, Mass at La Verna, 17 September 1993)

Hope Built on Faith Results in an Increase in Vocations

by Anne Mulqueen, OFS
National Formation Commission

Hope is a special virtue to me because it is my middle name. I was born the ninth child to older parents, a girl after a string of boys. My father, a dreamer, added Hope to my name because he believed I would be their hope for the future. I hope I fulfilled his dream. He died when I was 15.

Alexander Pope wrote, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." People, especially Franciscans, always hold on to hope, even in difficult times. It is part of human nature and a virtue. These lovely words speak the truth that it is God who plants hope in the human heart.

St. Thomas Aquinas speaks directly to our hope and desire for an abundant harvest of Secular Franciscan vocations.

"First, hope is triggered by a future good — a good not yet obtained. Second, by a possible good — a good that can be obtained. Third, by a difficult good — a good that, while possible, can only be obtained through difficulty." [Summa Theologica]

All three aspects of hope speak to our current situation: a future good, a possible good, and a good obtained through overcoming obstacles.

I am a regional spiritual assistant and conduct pastoral visitations. When I ask, "What is your current challenge?" I invariably hear, "We need more vocations."

If we hope for an increase in vocations, what should we do? I don't have all the answers, but I will share some of my hopes, thoughts, and dreams for a vibrant, growing Secular Franciscan Order that

gives praise, honor, and glory to God through its many members.

Pray: The best way to start is with prayer. If a Secular Franciscan vocation is a call from God, who better to get inspiration from than the Almighty? God calls, the person responds, and we assist. Hope and vocations are gifts from God and lead us back to God more intimately and profoundly. Prayer coupled with hope sustains us in times when we see little progress.

Invite: I never heard of the "Third Order of St. Francis" until Maryellen Hickey invited me to a fraternity gathering. She was persistent. She never gave up and continued to invite me. How many of us discovered our vocation because of an invitation? Remember what Andrew said to his brother Simon Peter: Come and See!

Be an Authentic Witness: We live in an anxious age, and our need for meaning and purpose is great. Many people we meet daily hunger for a deeper connection to God and may not know what that hunger is or how to satisfy it. They need to see in us what they are looking for. As Aquinas said, hope prevails despite difficulties. And we, like Francis and Clare, cling to that hope. Francis' followers found solace and purpose in the gospel way of life. If we live our charism as Francis did, the people God has called to be Secular Franciscans will flock to us.

Maya Angelou said: "At the end of the day, people won't remember what you said or did; they will remember how you made them feel." Your witness of gospel peace, acceptance, and joy may help them discern a call to something deeper, to a Secular Franciscan way of life.

Hope is the assurance of things not seen. [Hebrews 11:2] In the words of Pope Francis, hope is not "...a passive virtue that merely waits for things to happen." We must step out in faith and be that gospel salt, leaven, and light illuminating the path for those God has called to be one with us.



Vocations: Interviews With Regional Ministers

by Sharon Winzeler, OFS
Communications Committee Chair

Think about the invitation you received to attend your first Secular Franciscan gathering. Did it come from a friend? Perhaps a fellow parishioner suggested you attend. Maybe you saw an announcement in the church bulletin. Or did your spiritual director suggest you check out the Franciscans? However it happened, that invitation led to your discernment to become a Secular Franciscan.

As we seek to expand vocations in the Order, we can reflect on our own calling for ways to engage others.

“We once had a spiritual assistant who said it’s all about the personal invitation – holding the door open and inviting people in,” said Ellen Ferrone, OFS, minister of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region. “He stressed guiding them to a place where their spirit might grow,” said Ellen.

She was talking about Fr. Steve Kluge, OFM, former spiritual assistant at the Padre Pio Fraternity in Raleigh, NC. His time as spiritual assistant led to the profession of 15 Secular Franciscans in 2023. Interest in the fraternity continues to grow with 12 candidates and a 15-member orientation class.

Brenda Schmitt, treasurer of Queen of Peace Region, said invitations contribute to the growth at the St. Mary Fraternity in Cedar Falls, IA. “Before 2016, there were only five active members in the St. Mary Fraternity. Since then, they’ve had 13 people profess. Now there are four candidates who will profess in June and two more are in their fifth month of formation,” said Brenda.

How did the fraternity interest so many? They shared their experiences at a Christian Experiences Weekend <https://crcew.org>. From that presentation, seven people visited the next monthly gathering and four eventually professed.

In addition, members of St. Mary Frances Fraternity in Bristol, CT, shared their experiences with prayer groups, Bible studies, priests, and deacons. Invitations were sent to members of social action committees in the surrounding parishes and announcements were placed in church bulletins. The fraternity also sponsored a retreat that was open to everyone. They are part of the Blessed Solanus Casey Region.

Janet Angelillo, OFS, regional minister of the Blessed Solanus Casey Region, said the Portiuncula Fraternity in Shrub Oak, NY, professed eight new members in 2022, and have five candidates preparing for profession this year.

“The reason for these vocations is that the fraternity meets in a very large parish and members are active in the parish. Members pray to discern who exhibits a Franciscan spirit and invite those people to their meetings. In addition, the fraternity holds other events open to surrounding parishes like a Sunday movie night featuring St. Francis, a crèche service, a midnight run, blessing of the animals, and a monthly Sunday Mass said for the intention of the fraternity.

“Personal invitation does seem to be the most successful way to attract new members,” Janet said.

The Blessed Solanus Casey Region has also established a “Vocations and Visibility” committee whose work is to meet with deaneries and dioceses to acquaint them with members of the Secular Franciscan Order.

What has your fraternity done to attract new vocations? Start with prayer, and then you may want to try some of the approaches that have worked in other fraternities, like those mentioned above. And check out the “Vocations Tool Kit” at https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/wp-content/uploads/Vocations_Tool_Kit-Introduction.pdf



JPIC: Sharing the Joy and the Hope

by Joe Makley, OFS
National JPIC Animator



We can probably agree that “the Church’s best kept secret” is not the most desirable nickname for the Secular Franciscan Order. As a regional vice minister, I was asked to initiate a “vocations ministry” a few years ago. This resulted in a handbook which referenced the national Vocations Toolkit along with best practices from around St. Elizabeth of Hungary region. It can be found at <https://stelizabethofs.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/SEHRegionVocations-Handbook.2023.pdf> That work was to address primarily the challenge of getting people to know we exist. Individual best practices include: 1. Wear the Tau consistently and be ready to speak when asked about it. 2. When meeting with someone who might be interested, invite them to a fraternity meeting. 3. Be recognizable in tone and demeanor, as a Franciscan, especially on social media. (OFS Rule, Art. 19)

OFS General Constitutions, Article 45:

“... Although nothing can substitute for the witness of each member and of the fraternity, the councils must adopt appropriate means to promote the Secular Franciscan vocation.”

Council best practices include: 1. Organize a “Come and See” event once a year. 2. Develop contacts with pastors at surrounding parishes and arrange to send pulpit speakers to talk to the congregations after Mass, or in another forum. 3. Propose activities to increase visibility in the home parish which can include Franciscan celebrations, Transitus services, animal blessings, anniversaries of profession, shared ministries, and volunteering as a group. 4. Propose activities to take the fraternity outside the parish hall, such as public good works, social action, diocesan events, etc. Be the public face of the Church in the marketplace.

So, let’s say we’ve done all these things, and visitors show up at our meeting. They experience sincere prayer that is liturgical and shows a strong

love for the Church. They hopefully catch our non-judgmental love for one another, our tendency toward social interaction, and the presence of shared food. They will learn something new about our Franciscan charism and theology. If it is a planned “Come and see,” they will hear testimonials, and get a sense of the “radical interior change” from personal witness. At the meeting level, we have exercised due diligence in the basics of promoting vocations.

The next level would be the apostolate - our collective courageous action for peace, justice, human dignity, or care for creation that takes us outside the meeting room to fill a need in the community. A visitor invited to participate in an active apostolate will get a much richer look at who we are. The JPIC animators’ handbook explains it this way: by “working with fellow Franciscans in a cooperative, collaborative, manner respecting the gifts and person of each member,” we communicate “an example of the early Christian community... simultaneously ministering not only to the needs of others but also witnessing to the Franciscan identity by the manner in which the ministry is dispensed.” (Adapted from Formators’ guidelines from the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region, 2010.) One way to give life to the apostolate would be to appoint a fraternity contact for Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation, who can be given the time, the responsibility, and the learning opportunities to assist the members in developing this active level of fraternity.

This beloved life of ours, this transformative journey with Christ in Francis’ footsteps, is worth sharing, and we share it best by living it with intensity, joy, and hope.

1 Peter 3:15: “... in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...”



Helping Young People Find Hope

by Kathleen Molaro, OFS
National FY/YA Commission Chair

I'm writing this article in the wake of another school shooting, this time in Wisconsin. On the morning after, I heard one young woman outside of Mass say to her mom, "I thought we were supposed to 'Do what's right and just.'" Her mom simply put an arm around her shoulders and continued walking to their car. I didn't hear her response, but said a quick prayer that the mother would know what words would comfort her daughter and give her hope.

Young people in our midst have experienced difficult events during their lives: scandals in the Church, a global pandemic, financial struggles, acts of racism and violence, not only abroad but in our own neighborhoods. Depression and anxiety are prevalent even in our youngest children. We are called by our Franciscan Rule to bring "joy and hope to others." (Art. 19) So the question is how do we accomplish this goal?

In the very beginning of the newly published book by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, called *Listen, Teach, Send: A National Pastoral Framework for Ministries with Youth and Young Adults*, the bishops explain, "the purpose of the framework we offer to the Church is to empower the entire Catholic community to be conduits of the Holy Spirit in sharing the Gospel with all young people to transform the world by Jesus' love." A quote by Servant of God, Sr. Thea Bowman, FSPA, is included: "It takes a whole Church to raise a child."

Parents can't be the only ones concerned about the mental, spiritual, and physical health of their children, adolescents, and young adults. How can we help? What is our responsibility as Secular Franciscans in this important work? Here are several suggestions.

Live the Rule. Take seriously our vocation, and be a witness to the joy that comes from living a gospel life, which is the main source of our joy. Draw young people into your vocation by letting them not

only see you work, pray, and even play, but invite them to join you. The Lord gives us hope and joy to balance our afflictions. Some people—especially our youth—have trouble seeing that. The world may seem all bad. An evening of Adoration or a hike in the woods may offer a different perspective.

Serve Others. Young people might feel overwhelmed and powerless. Empowerment often comes through action, so another thing we can do is connect our younger Catholics to causes they care about. Encourage active participation in an area of service that touches them the most. Show them that helping to alleviate pain and suffering in others gives us hope, purpose, confidence, and joy.

Listen. One of the best ways to connect with youth is to listen. Share your story of resilience, but also listen to theirs. Be an ear or a shoulder. Careful reflection and discernment can help them recognize their own advantages and gifts, which leads to gratitude, but also to active planning in making changes.

Start a Conversation. Many of you have shared how difficult it is to even begin a conversation with a young person. It helps to plan a few questions in the anticipation of an opportunity. Instead of avoiding a connection with a young person, ask the Holy Spirit for courage, introduce yourself, show genuine interest when you strike up a conversation. "It's good to see you." "What are you doing these days?" "Have you met new friends?" "What do you like to do on your day off?"



Image by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay

Our attention and care can help them learn how to find hope and to be messengers of that hope in the world.

21st Quinquennial Congress

Secular Franciscan Order of the USA



**Your Quinquennial Planning Committee
is hard at work preparing
for an awesome national gathering
to be held**



**JULY 29 – AUGUST 2, 2026
LEXINGTON, KY**

We need everyone's help to get ready...

For this TAU-USA issue, we were asked to share useful ideas for spreading the word about our vocation.

What a wonderful opportunity to promote the Q!

In the article from our National Minister, Jane DeRose-Bamman, we were asked to consider one thing we could do to promote vocations within 30 days of reading it. With that in mind, the Q Core Planning Committee offers this challenge! Please pick one or several initiatives below that you could do to promote our Quinquennial Congress.

Ask yourself:

- **Does everyone in my fraternity know about the Q and plan to attend?**
Remind all to visit our National Website often and read the TAU-USA for updates.
Mention the Q in your local or regional newsletter.
Mention the Q during your gatherings, find out who plans on attending and encourage room sharing, carpooling (or "bus pooling"), etc.
- **Is our local or regional fraternity setting aside special funds to offer scholarships to members who want to attend but may need some financial help?**
(Your Q Core Committee is hard at work to find corporate sponsors to help as well.)
- **If I am not able to attend the Q myself, can I sponsor someone else by covering some of their expenses?**
- **Will my regional, local fraternity or I consider sponsoring the Q by sharing an ad or message in the Official Program Booklet?**

Your Quinquennial Planning Committee genuinely appreciates your support
in helping make our congress the best one ever!

Br. Bob Brady, OFM
Jim Graczyk, OFS and Cathy Roszhart, OFS (Co-Chairs)
Joe Edwards, OFS Claudia Kauzlarich, OFS
Diane Menditto, OFS Susan Ronan, OFS

Remember:

ALL (professed members, members in initial formation, guests) ARE INVITED
TO THE 21st QUINQUENNIAL CONGRESS



17th OFS General Chapter Rome, November 7-17, 2024

by Mary Frances Charsky, OFS
International Councilor

“You are love” was the theme of the 17th General Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order held in Rome in November of 2024 during the 8th Centenary of the Stigmata. This idea was expanded upon by fellow Franciscans with explanations that God loved us *first*. Our Franciscan way of life begins with love. Love of God, love of self, and love of neighbors and our families. Testimonies and examples were shared. Our level of concern was elevated for struggling fraternities and for marginalized people throughout the world.



Welcome to Rome

Our day trip to La Verna, visiting the place where St. Francis received the stigmata, enabled us to meditate on the deep love that Francis had for the poor and crucified Jesus. We reflected on the love and passion that St. Francis had for the Lord Jesus and how we can learn to love all our brothers and sisters.



La Verna

The most enjoyable part of the General Chapter for me was being with brothers, sisters, and friars from 65 countries around the world. There were 103 brothers and sisters in total which included the voting members, observers, and others who served the Chapter. Many relationships were renewed and precious new ones developed. Participants shared throughout the week, especially in small working groups, at meals, and during the fraternal evenings of songs, dances, and stories that demonstrated

their culture, country, and belonging to the Order and to each other. Unity was established among participants and was demonstrated in the approval of the priorities, Statutes, and the budget. This unity was the result of the OFS Presidency members, presentations, and working groups. Stay tuned for future updates!

An essential part of the General Chapter was daily celebration of Holy Mass which gave us the spiritual strength to accomplish our work throughout the day. Mass was alternately presided over by the General Ministers of the First Order and TOR and the four General Spiritual Assistants, reminding us of the *life-giving union* between the OFS and the rest of the Franciscan Family. The homilies were provided ahead of time in the four languages so that we could follow along.

Three priorities emerged from the week of reflections, discussions and deliberations:

Formation should help us live our Franciscan spirituality in a way that deepens our relationship with God who *is* love and leads *us* to become a community of love.

Family life is the essence of our human life. As Secular Franciscans, we are called to live the love of God in the family, either as single or married persons. Family life should help us see the important role that family plays in our Franciscan life. We belong to another family - the Franciscan Family.

Promotion of vocations is the third priority. Article 45 in our General Constitutions states that promoting vocations to the Order is the duty of all the brothers and sisters. It is a sign of vitality in fraternities. We need to promote the OFS vocation with courage, creativity, and validity of the Franciscan way of life.

For more articles and to view photo and video galleries, go to the CIOFS website:

www.ciofs.info/news/gen-chapter/2024-general-chapter/

The 2025 Jubilee: “Pilgrims of Hope”

by Bret Thoman, OFS

A Jubilee is an occasion in which Catholics can seek grace and holiness in a particular way. The name derives from the instrument used to mark its launch—the yobel, or ram’s horn—and proclaim the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) by the ancient Jewish people. Today, Jews celebrate the feast every year, though in the Bible, a Jubilee was to be observed every 50 years. (See Leviticus 25:8-13.)

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus makes clear his own mission to bring “Jubilee.” In the synagogue at Nazareth, he reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, proclaiming a year of the Lord’s favor. (See Luke 4:18-19; 21.)

Thus, a Jubilee is seen as an occasion to make reparation for sin and to renew one’s commitment to conversion of life. It is an invitation to return to a right relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation.

Jubilees in Rome began in 1300 A.D. when Pope Boniface VIII called for the first Holy Year, granting a plenary indulgence to all pilgrims who visited the Roman basilicas. He intended future Jubilees to be observed every century, though the frequency has changed over time. Today, Jubilees take place every 25 years, though extraordinary Jubilees can be observed during the intervals.

The title of Pope Francis’ Bull of Indiction (published to launch the Jubilee year) is *Spes non Confundit* (SNC) (“Hope does not disappoint”), a quote from Romans 5:5.

As Paul was encouraging the Christian community of Rome, Pope Francis is inviting the faithful to come to Rome to experience a “personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the ‘door’ (cf. Jn 10:7-9) of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as ‘our hope’ (1 Tim 1:1) ... May the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope. ... Let us return to the message

that the Apostle Paul wished to communicate to the Christians of Rome.” (SNC para.1) “The coming Jubilee will thus be a Holy Year marked by the hope that does not fade, our hope in God. May it help us to recover the confident trust that we require.” (SNC para. 25)

Quotes about Hope by Franciscans

“The saints are like the stars, who, in His providence, Christ hides in a different place in the sky to guide the travelers of all times. Let us fix our eyes on the light of these stars, so that we may not be swamped by the waves of pride or fear but may keep safe and confident in the harbor of hope.” St. Anthony of Padua

“Do not despair, for the mercy of God is infinite. Trust in His goodness, and with the help of His grace, rise again from your fall. Hope in the Lord, for He does not abandon those who seek Him.” St. Bernardine of Siena

“Hope is that virtue by which we firmly trust that God, who is all-powerful and all-merciful, will bring us to eternal happiness and provide the necessary means to attain it.” Bl. Duns Scotus

“Hope is the confident expectation of the divine assistance by which we trust that, through the merits of Christ and the mercy of God, we shall attain eternal happiness and the means to obtain it.” St. Bonaventure

“Go forward securely, joyfully, and swiftly, on the path of prudent happiness, believing nothing, agreeing with nothing, which would dissuade you from this resolution or place a stumbling block for you on the way.” St. Clare

“Most High, Glorious God, enlighten the darkness of our minds. Give us a right faith, a firm hope, and a perfect charity, so that we may always and in all things act according to Your Holy Will.” St. Francis

OFS-USA Archives at St. Bonaventure University

by Susan Ronan, OFS
National Secretary

It has been said that our Secular Franciscan Order is one of the “best kept secrets” of the Church. Well, another “best kept secret” is where all our very important and valuable documents are stored . . . and who stores them.

Shortly after being elected to this most humble position of National Secretary, I learned that one of my responsibilities was to forward any important documents to our extremely capable and enthusiastic Archivist, Sharon Dale, OFS, who is also the La Verna Regional Minister!



Sharon Dale, OFS, Archivist for OFS-USA.

St. Bonaventure University has graciously allowed us to store our files, along with theirs, in the basement of one of their buildings in Olean, New York. Each June since Sharon was appointed Archivist, she and her friend Teri Doughty, OFS, visit St. Bonaventure (by car. . . from Wisconsin!) to organize and sort the many documents of the OFS-USA kept since the early 1900's. They have now completed boxing up and filing 247 boxes of paper documents into mold-proof folders and transfer boxes. Every document is scanned and numbered on a hard drive for easy access. Miscellaneous items collected over the years are still to be researched and labeled.

For the past two years, Mary Frances Charsky, OFS, who is our International Councilor, and I have

visited Sharon and Teri while they were doing their “hands on” work at St. Bonaventure. It is amazing to see what these ladies have accomplished. Although Sharon says it is a labor of love, it is most certainly a time-consuming and difficult one.



Mary Frances Charsky, OFS.



Well organized storage boxes.



Sharon Dale, OFS; Mary Frances Charsky, OFS; Susan Ronan, OFS; and Teri Doughty, OFS. (l-r).

NATIONAL ELECTIVE CHAPTER

September 9 – 14, 2025

WE NEED YOU. . .

Take a little time to think about each professed sister and brother you know.

- What are their gifts and talents?
- Do they strive to use them according to our Franciscan charism imitating St. Francis' mission to go from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel?

Are you a Franciscan servant leader?
What are your gifts and talents?

Prayerfully and lovingly reflect on who you feel would represent you and your fraternity at the national level.

The offices on the National Executive Council to be elected are:

- National Minister
- National Vice Minister
- National Secretary
- National Treasurer
- International Councilor
- National Councilors (3)

The following link is available for your convenience to submit your nominations through April 30, 2025.

[2025 Nomination Form](#)

Peace and love,

Theresa and Gigi

Theresa Pratt, OFS and Gigi Gregory, OFS
Nomination Committee Co-Chairs

REGIONAL ROUNDUP

In this issue, five of the 30 regions are highlighted.

St. Thomas More Region

The Region of St. Thomas More covers all of Arizona and Las Vegas, Nevada, and includes 11 active fraternities. The region's name was chosen after proposals were requested from OFS members. A short list was created and sent to the fraternities for their vote. Thomas More was the favorite and became the name of the region in 1994.

A few years after Arizona became a state in 1912, Secular Provinces banded together to form the North American Federation, which sponsored its first Quinquennial in 1921. When invitations went out to disband the Provincial Councils and form new Regional Councils, St. Thomas More Region, which had begun groundwork ten years earlier, was ready with skilled leaders and an inspiring patron. While it took nine months for the Document of Establishment to travel from Rome and across the U.S. gathering the necessary signatures along the way, the transformation from Provincial to Regional Fraternity was completed in a single year.

St. Thomas More Region has the honor of sending the first woman to serve on the National Directive Board (the precursor of NAFRA). Clyda Markham, OFS, lived all her life in Phoenix and served for almost two years on the National Board before being dismissed for being "the wrong gender." She returned to Arizona to serve on both fraternity and provincial councils. She had many friends from the days when Arizona was a new state and was asked to write an article about the role of Franciscan friars in the exploration and development of Arizona Territory. Many historical sites have names given by friars, and Secular Franciscan values are woven into Arizona lifestyles. Clyda's story, published around 1939, was entered into the Congressional Record and can be obtained online from the Library of Congress.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region

St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region covers Eastern, Central and Western New York State, and Erie, Pennsylvania, and includes 18 fraternities. The name was chosen because New York State is known for the Native American tribes that were living there. There is still one active reservation – The Seneca Nation of Indians reservation – in Cattaraugus County.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha was a Mohawk Indian born near Auriesville, NY. She developed smallpox at the age of four, which left her with a scarred face and very low vision. The translation of the Native American word “Tekakwitha” is “she who bumps into things.” Kateri is a form of Catherine, and she was given this name when she converted to Christianity. She was educated by the Jesuit missionaries and is



St. Kateri

the patron saint of traditional ecology, Indigenous Peoples, and care for creation. She was not a Secular Franciscan. . . but members like to think she would have been if she had the chance.

There are several other saints that lived in the state of New York including St. Marianne Cope, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, and St. John Neumann. Blessed Solanus Casey also resided and served in New York State for 20 years.

Troubadours of Peace Region

The states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Alaska are all part of the Troubadours of Peace Region. It includes 13 fraternities, two newly forming groups, and one satellite group.

In 2024 they had a regional retreat which was both live-streamed and recorded. One of our National Spiritual Assistants, Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, gave the presentations. The topic is “The Stigmata of St. Francis.” There are five sessions of varying lengths which are available on the region’s website. To view the presentations, go to:

<https://www.secularfranciscanspacificnorthwest.com/stigmata-retreat-august-2024>

“Stigmata Retreat.”

St. Joan of Arc Region

Mississippi, Louisiana, the southern part of Arkansas and the eastern part of Texas make up the St. Joan of Arc Region, which includes 15 fraternities.

The region’s name was chosen because St. Joan of Arc fought for Orleans, France, and the United States purchased the Louisiana Purchase from France with New Orleans having the first fraternity in the region.

They are a hospitable group that meets as a region four times a year with two on Zoom and two in person. They represent the diversity of five continents. They also have an annual regional retreat where they bond more with one another.

St. Junipero Serra Region

St. Junipero Serra Region consists of Northern California from the Oregon border at the north to Bakersfield in the south, and one fraternity in Reno, Nevada. They have 25 established fraternities and two emerging groups.

The name for the region was chosen because St. Junipero Serra is the patron saint of California. He founded many of the California missions for the Franciscans.

Within the region there are seven National Parks, a large number of State Parks, and many County Parks in various counties. California spans four climate zones including coastal, inland valley, mountain and desert.

The region is culturally diverse with four Hispanic fraternities, two Korean fraternities, and one Chinese fraternity, which is the only one in the nation.



St. Junipero Serra
Apostle of California

CALENDAR

MONTH	DAY	EVENT/MEETING
February/March	2/1	Nominations open for NEC Election
	2/6	NAFRA Council Meeting
	2/8	St. Thomas More Region Election
	2/12	Virtual workshop - NEC office duties - OPEN TO ALL
	2/27–3/3	NEC/CNSA Meeting – in person – Albuquerque, NM
April	4-6	St. Katherine Drexel Region Visitation
	26	Tau Cross Region Election
	25-27	Our Lady of the Rockies Region Visitation and Election
	30	NEC Nominations Close
May/June	5/8-11	JPIC Retreat – Mesilla Park, NM (Contact Joe Makley for registration)
	5/16-18	Five Franciscan Martyrs Region Visitation
	5/28-6/1	Ohana 'O Ke Anuenue Region Visitation and Election
	5/30-6/1	Queen of Peace Region Visitation
	5/30-6/1	Lady Poverty Region Election

Please pray for the success of the events.

REC – Regional Executive Council
 NAFRA – National Fraternity
 NEC – National Executive Council

CNSA – Conference of National Spiritual Assistants
 JPIC – Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation



Gospel to Life Bookstore

The revised Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order is available, in English, for order from the National Fraternity's online bookstore.

Access the bookstore for the Ritual, Rule and other offerings at:
<https://gospel-to-life-bookstore.square.site/>

Email questions to: GospelToLifeBookstore@gmail.com

For Additional formation materials - see Smoky Valley order form
<https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/wp-content/uploads/Smoky-Valley-update-Dec2023.pdf>