



# TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE  
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF  
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN  
ORDER

Fall 2021 Issue 104

God knows the number of the stars,  
and calls them each by name.

Psalm 147:4-6

## The Season of Creation

*The time for individual believers and communities to reaffirm their personal vocation to be stewards of creation, to thank God for the wonderful handiwork which he has entrusted to our care, and to implore his help for the protection of creation as well as his pardon for the sins committed against the world in which we live.*

*Pope Francis*

## 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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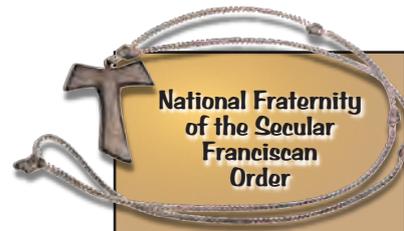
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# OFS-USA

## NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER-USA



### NATIONAL MINISTER'S MESSAGE

by Jan Parker OFS

## WHO WE ARE

Three years ago, I made a Visitation to Tau Cross Regional Fraternity. Something happened during that visit that made quite an impact, and I have remembered it ever since. Our ongoing formation topic that day was the OFS Rule. I was interested in what the Rule meant to those gathered, so I handed out blank postcards and asked everyone to write down three words – *just three words* – to describe the Rule. After a few moments, I collected the cards, and then chose some to share with the group.

As I looked through the cards, there were many good responses. One said:

**Gospel. Life. Penance.**

Someone else had an interesting take and wrote:

**Spiritual. Orderly. Concise.**

But one card stood out among all the others. In large letters it simply said,

**Who we are.**



I smiled, because to me those three words describe our Rule perfectly. Ever since that day, I have kept that card inside my little red Rule book as a reminder that this is my goal – to make the Rule “who I am.”

This year the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS) is celebrating a remarkable anniversary. The year 2021 marks the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Memoriale Propositi*, a document that was inspirational at the beginning of our way of life. We share this anniversary with our dear brothers and sisters of the Third Order Regular (TOR).

I must admit that when I first heard of the anniversary of *Memoriale Propositi*, I had to think twice. I recalled that it is mentioned in our Rule,<sup>1</sup> but what *is* this document? How do you even pronounce it? And what exactly does it have to do with our way of life? A brief search on the CIOFS website brought me to a collection of videos and articles that helped answer those questions. I invite you to view those videos and study the articles for yourself, as these resources have certainly deepened my appreciation of this anniversary.<sup>2</sup>

In the first CIOFS article I read, I learned the historical framework of *Memoriale Propositi*. It was in looking at that history that I realized anew the great debt of gratitude we owe to our founder. What led up to the birth of the first Franciscan order of penitents is interesting. Clearly, the penitential movement in the Church had existed since ancient times, but it was not without struggle. Prior to St. Francis, the movement underwent many reforms and renewals, often in reaction to difficult situations that existed within the Church. Sadly, penitent reformers tended to promote attitudes in opposition to the Church, at times even advocating heretical beliefs.

<sup>1</sup> OFS Rule: Article 3: “The present rule, succeeding “Memoriale Propositi” (1221) and the rules approved by the Supreme Pontiffs Nicholas IV and Leo XIII, adapts the Secular Franciscan Order to the needs and expectations of the Holy Church in the conditions of changing times...”

<sup>2</sup> To access the resources from the International Council, go to [www.ciofs.info](http://www.ciofs.info). Type “Memoriale” in the search bar, then click on *the photos*. You will need to return to the search results to access each offering.

St. Francis' approach was different and original. Laity were attracted to his example, and many came to embrace his "*propositum vitae*" – this new way of life, based on the exhortations summarized by Francis in his Letter to All the Faithful. They joined together, while not necessarily living together, to form fraternities of both genders, married or celibate, to support each other in living this life of conversion. The members of these penitential

### **A Most Luminous Proposal**

*It will be the extraordinary human and religious example of St. Francis of Assisi that will bring to an end the long process of renewal of the penitential state. "In him it is possible to grasp at the same time the summit of the most authentic human and Christian aspirations for the laity and the most luminous proposal for a solution..." (Fr. Prospero Rivi, OFM Cap., Francis of Assisi, p. 72.)*

From the CIOFS 1st Contribution on the *Memoriale Propositi*

groups did not exclude contact with the outside world, but, like Francis, they embraced the world, performed works of mercy, spread the joy of the Gospel, and delighted in the intimacy of relationships with the Lord and with each other.

The Church took notice and in 1221 issued the **Memoriale Propositi**, the name of which can mean "document for a project of life." Although this is a generic document that was given to penitents for all time, it truly is the inspirational document of our current OFS Rule. This document outlines the spiritual life of the first brothers and sisters of penance.

We need only look at the text of the *Memoriale Propositi* to find the similarity with our current Rule. The *Memoriale* describes what daily life should look like and how we should pray along with the Church and partake in the Sacraments. It describes the monthly meeting and calls all to practice works of mercy. It delineates the formation process and how one is to be received into the Order. Lastly, it has a section on the holding of offices, the correction of members, and dispensation of obligations. The parallels with our current Rule are amazing to be sure.<sup>3</sup>

### **How to Celebrate the 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Memoriale Propositi*?**

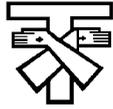
- (1) Read, study, and live the Rule. Begin with the Prologue, for there we hear from Francis himself. Francis was meticulous in avoiding distractions. Let's focus on who we are called to be and be careful about making excuses.
- (2) Ongoing formation. There are at least six different "ready to go" exercises on the OFS Rule posted on our website.<sup>4</sup> Check in with your Regional Formation Director (RFD) as well. The National Formation workshop, held in August 2021, focused on the Rule, and your RFD will have additional resources that were shared at that time.
- (3) Join with our worldwide Secular Franciscan Order in making this a year-long celebration. Join the OFS-USA as we gather for a grand finale of this anniversary at the 2022 Quinquennial Congress. You won't want to miss it!

*Memoriale Propositi* makes a connection between what motivated the earliest Brothers and Sisters of Penance and what should motivate us. Our rule today continues to propel us on this beautiful trajectory, a way of life that has flourished for 800 years. This truly is God's project. Our OFS Rule that we hold in our hands, and in our hearts, is our life. It is, as was shared on that postcard, "who we are."

It's been an amazing 800 years, but what is ahead for "who we are"? The future of the Secular Franciscan Order is in our hands.

<sup>3</sup> To see the text and analysis of the *Memoriale Propositi*, go to [www.ciofs.info](http://www.ciofs.info). Type in "Reflections on Memoriale," then click on the photo that appears, and scroll down to "Text and Analysis"

<sup>4</sup> Go to [www.secularfranciscansusa.org](http://www.secularfranciscansusa.org). On the home page, click on Resources, then Formation, then Ongoing Formation, then "OFS Rule Formation Materials." You might also check with your Regional Formation Director. The National Formation Director workshop held in August 2021, focused on the Rule, and additional resources were shared at that time.



## SHARING THE VISION NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL



### 2021 NAFRA Chapter and National Elections

The 2021 NAFRA Chapter will be held virtually October 26-31, 2021. Given the decision to hold the Chapter virtually, the National Elections needed to be rescheduled. The National Fraternity Council considered several choices, including spring or summer of 2022. A vote was taken, and our National Elections will now take place at our annual 2022 NAFRA Chapter, Oct. 11–16, in Detroit, Mich. Nominees currently on the slate will be notified of this decision. Nominations will reopen in the spring of 2022, and all those nominated for 2021 will again be contacted as part of the usual nominations process.

### 800 Year Anniversary of *Memoriale Propositi*

CIOFS announced 2021 as the year-long celebration of the 800th Anniversary of *Memoriale Propositi*. The OFS-USA will celebrate this anniversary throughout 2021 and, due to the postponement of the Quinquennial Congress, we will continue to celebrate this anniversary in 2022, closing with a grand finale at the Q in August of 2022.

### Guide to Canonical Establishment of a Secular Franciscan Fraternity

The Guide was issued *ad experimentum* earlier this year and can be found on our website. In July we held a national discussion to receive comments and answer questions. We are now working on a few edits, and will notify you when the updated version is posted.

### OFS-USA Website News

We have now added a news feed to the national website. From the main menu, click on News, and select Latest News. We are also happy to announce that Sharon Winzeler, OFS, is the new chair of the Website Committee. We recently added two new members to the Website Committee, bringing the total to seven members.

### Accessibility Committee

We welcome the members of our new Accessibility Committee! This committee's goal is to improve access for our members in all areas of communication, and at fraternity gatherings at every level, providing help with what is needed for those with hearing, vision, and mobility challenges. (See related article in this issue of TAU-USA).

### Quinquennial Congress – Registration is Open Now

Please do not wait to register for the 2022 Quinquennial Congress, the *Early Bird discount ends on December 31, 2021.*

As of August 30, there were more than 100 persons already registered. There's room for many, many more! For more information see the related article in this issue of *TAU-USA*. If you need assistance or have questions, just email the Q Committee at [ofsusa.qcongress@gmail.com](mailto:ofsusa.qcongress@gmail.com)

### New Initial Formation Texts: Project Update

Although the Formation Vision Team has been working hard on the new initial formation texts, this project has proved to be much larger and more involved than we first anticipated. There is currently no update on when these texts will be completed.

*A note from the National Minister:* "I believe the Holy Spirit has brought together a great team to work on these new formation texts. Like many servant leaders, the Visioning Team members wear many hats and have many responsibilities. The fact that members of this team are involved in so many other aspects of our Order is also a gift. The experience they bring to this project is so important. These new texts will be a wonderful step forward for our Order, and this project is near and dear to my heart. Please pray for the team and for the success of this project. During our National Visioning gatherings several years ago, it was noted, "*the vision will have its time.*" I truly believe that. We go forward, trusting in God's perfect timing."

*"Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint. If it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late."*  
*(Habakkuk 2:2-3)*

The Vision Team members are Mary Bittner, Justin Carisio, Francine Gikow, Layna Maher, Diane Menditto, Anne Mulqueen, Jan Parker, and Mary Stronach.

### TAU Publishing Update – Fraternity Registers and More

TAU Publishing is no longer able to publish hard cover books, and this includes our OFS Fraternity Registers. Currently, OFS Registers are not available, but we are looking for a new publisher. TAU Publishing is also no longer printing the Franciscan Federation's *Franciscan Morning and Evening Praise*. The Federation is looking at options to make this popular prayer book available. Lastly, *For All the Saints: St. Francis's Five Point Plan for Salvation* by Tom Bello is still available through TAU Publishing.

*Let us live a life worthy of our call.*



## *The Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Francis of Assisi*

*Fr. Chris Shorrocks, OFM Conv., CNSA*



During the months of September and October, we celebrate a number of significant Marian feast days – the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (8 September), Our Lady of Sorrows (15 September), Our Lady of the Rosary (7 October).

It should be self-evident that the Franciscan Order, with its tradition of devotion to the Blessed Mother of God, certainly received its love for Mary from Francis of Assisi.

This becomes more evident as scholars continually uncover, or establish with more certainty, texts relating to Francis and thus confirm that the “Poor man of Assisi” (the *poverello*) was not only the “herald of the great King” but also the faithful “Knight of the great Queen.”

Of course, we have to avoid the risk of unduly applying to Francis of Assisi everything that later generations would have liked to admire in him. For this reason, we will rely on Francis’ own writings and those of the earliest biographers such as Thomas of Celano, who wrote his first biography at the insistence of Pope Gregory IX for the canonization of Francis in 1228/29 and his “second life” in 1247.

There is also the tendency to view Francis’ devotion to Mary as somewhat of an isolated entity, unrelated to his spiritual life as a whole. Yet, Francis’ love for Mary was so much a part of him that it is almost impossible to separate his Marian devotion from his daily life.

I am sure we are all aware that Francis was not a theologian, particularly as we understand the term today, and therefore we should not expect to find in his writings a clearly-defined Marian doctrine.

Francis was a man of his time, and “with his childlike faith he absorbed the Church’s teaching on the Mother of God and nourished his Marian spirituality on it.”<sup>1</sup>

For Francis, prayer and meditation introduced him ever more deeply to the heart of the Marian mysteries and gave him a greater understanding of her pre-eminent role in God’s plan of salvation.

His words and writings show us the fruit of his prayer in a way so personal, so original, and so unique that they can still move us today, eight centuries later.

Franciscans of every time have valued the words of Bernardine de Bustis (d. about 1515), which offer some insight into this aspect of the Franciscan tradition:

*The seraphic father himself admonished his brethren that they should attribute to the blessed Mother of God every privilege which may be appropriate to her excellence, and that they should exalt her with all the praise that is appropriate for such a pure human creature.*<sup>2</sup>

Let us then turn to some rather general remarks about Francis and his love and devotion to Mary. Francis endeavored to follow Christ as closely as possible by surrendering his life into the hands of his loving Father and therefore could not help loving in a special way the pure and most holy Virgin who was chosen by the Father to be the mother of his divine Son.

Francis clearly perceived and presented Mary as the model of every Christian who responds to the presence of God in their lives.

<sup>1</sup> Cajetan Esser, *Repair My House*. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1963, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> Cited by Geoffrey Bridges, “Mary’s Mediation in the Franciscan Tradition,” *The Cord* IV (1954), 217.

According to St. Bonaventure (d. 1274), one of Francis' early biographers, Francis placed himself and his order under the protection and guidance of Mary for all time.



One noted Franciscan writer states that you would need to paint a two-fold scene if you were attempting to portray Francis' devotion to Mary:

*On one side we should show Mary in all her poverty of Bethlehem placing the most sweet son of God upon the rough straw of the manger. In the other half of our painting, we would portray Mary, the Immaculate Mother of God, and Queen of the Seraphic Order, in the chapel of Mary of the Angels stretching forth her arms in motherly protection over all her Franciscan sons and daughters.<sup>3</sup>*

From his earliest days, according to the biographer Thomas of Celano, Francis "burned with devotion toward the mother of all good." When Francis abandoned the world, he placed himself under the loving care and protection of his heavenly Mother. He asked her to be his guide and advocate in his new life of poverty after the pattern of her Son. Thomas of Celano tells us:

<sup>3</sup> Mark Sheehan, "Mary's Troubadour," *The Cord VII* (1957)

<sup>4</sup> Cel 198 (FA:ED 2:374)

<sup>5</sup> LM 9:3, FA:ED, 2:598

*He embraced the Mother of Jesus with inexpressible love, since she made the Lord of Majesty a brother to us. He honoured her with his own Praises, poured out prayers to her, and offered her his love in a way that no human tongue can express. But what gives us greatest joy is that he appointed her the Advocate of the Order and placed under her wings the sons he left behind, that she might protect and cherish them to the end.<sup>4</sup>*

*Recalling the words of Thomas of Celano, "he embraced the Mother of Jesus with an inexpressible love, since she made the Lord of Majesty a brother to us," Bonaventure adds "and, through her, we have obtained mercy."<sup>5</sup>*

In these simple words of the early biographers, we see the deepest foundation for the reverence Francis showed toward Mary. For him, the Incarnation was the basis of his whole spiritual life, and he would go out of his way to follow in every way the example of the *word made flesh*.

Therefore, it would seem only natural that he "owed" a special love to this unique woman, who brought God within our reach and "made *the Lord of Majesty* a brother to us."

***Antiphon from  
the Office of the Passion:***

<sup>1</sup>Holy Virgin Mary,  
among the women born into the world,  
there is no one like you.  
<sup>2</sup>Daughter and servant  
of the most high and supreme King  
and of the Father in heaven,  
Mother of our most holy Lord Jesus Christ,  
Spouse of the Holy Spirit,

<sup>3</sup>pray for us  
with Saint Michael the Archangel,  
all the powers of heaven  
and all the saints,  
at the side of your most holy beloved Son,  
our Lord and Teacher.  
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the  
Holy Spirit.  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be  
forever. Amen.

(FA:ED, 1:141)



## BREAKAWAY GROUP ACTIVELY SEEKS TO DRAW MEMBERS FROM OFS

by Fr. Jerome Wolbert, ofm, National Spiritual Assistant



**Each of our families** is touched by broken relationships. At least somewhere in the family tree, there is likely to be divorce, separation, or some kind of estrangement. Our national fraternity is similar in this way: there is a group of energetic former Secular Franciscans who have broken their fraternal relationships with us to form a separate group of Franciscan tertiaries. As is all too common with broken family relationships, these former members seek to draw other members into their group.

Informed of their departure last year, OFS General Minister Tibor Kauser first expressed his sorrow at the division. It is sad when members leave. But this goes beyond simply leaving the OFS. This group appears to be misrepresenting their situation in two ways: the nature of their group as a Franciscan Third Order, and the actions and decisions of Secular Franciscan members and leadership.

What this group is: a public association of the faithful sponsored by an individual friar province, which has taken the Leonine Rule from the OFS to guide the life of the members of this new group. Friar provinces have the right to establish such groups, and the groups can choose to live by whatever "rule" of life they want, as long as it's not sinful.

While Canon 303 permits groups to call themselves a "Third Order," canon law is using the term "Order" as a name, not a technical designation. It does not make the new group an "Order" in the church in the fuller sense in which the OFS is an Order. Following the Leonine Rule of 1883, which was abrogated (repealed) by the Church in 1978, does not make this group an "Order," nor do the papal comments delivered when this Rule was in force apply to them.

Leaving the OFS to join another Franciscan group is not a matter of simply changing fraternities. It means breaking a public commitment to the Church and to our fraternity that we made at profession. Typically, those who leave the OFS to join this new group are told not to discuss their decision with anyone. This gives us no opportunity to correct any misinformation. Those who have left usually ignore any messages or outreach from their local or regional ministers.

### What Can We Do If.....

***Someone shares information that may be untrue?***

When someone makes an accusation, ***we can listen to the other side*** and do research to confirm the accusation before making a serious decision. If you hear bad things about someone, or especially about our Order, even from a friend you trust, ***check the facts*** with someone in the know. Seek counsel from your local minister or someone at the national or regional level who might be aware of more information – relevant details omitted by the one spreading gossip and innuendo.

Maybe you've experienced something that lends credence to the comments you hear. Do you allow the wheels of justice to turn slowly, or do you demand immediate action exactly as you think best in the moment? Which of those two options sounds more like St. Francis, who sought perfect joy and mercy for all his brothers, especially when they sinned? Sometimes the ***things that rile us up are challenges*** to grow more and improve how we follow in the footsteps of St. Francis.

When someone spreads "news" that we know is wrong, ***we can ask them to invite the informant who relayed the news to call us to***

**correct their information.** We understand that the person may not want to be corrected, and we keep the exchange brief but polite.

**When we have a troubling conversation with someone regarding our Order,** we can talk with our local and regional minister. We can ask for advice or simply inform them, so they are aware.

**Someone suggests that I might be happier in another group of Franciscans?**

If someone asks me to abandon my Secular Franciscan profession or suggests that the commitment I've made is not good enough, a good first step is to prayerfully remember why I professed in the first place and contemplate what my profession means. The commitment we all made has given us relationships – brothers and sisters – which means we cannot just “change our minds” and go to a different group.

If they invite me to join their group, but ask me **not to tell anyone about my decision, that is a warning sign, especially dangerous when they ask me to turn my back on relationships** that have meant a lot to me. Don't be swept into a culture of secrecy. Profession as Secular Franciscans is a life-long, public commitment that should not be abandoned lightly. Any decision to leave the OFS should be discussed with your local minister or spiritual assistant.

**Someone leaves my fraternity and refuses to speak to me?**

**This is, first of all, an experience of the Cross.** The humiliation and vulnerability we experience, often after damage is done; relationships ended without a chance to set the record straight—all of this reminds me of the story of Perfect



Joy<sup>1</sup> and also verses like those in Psalm 55:13-15:

For it is not an enemy that reviled me—that I could bear—

Not a foe who viewed me with contempt, from that I could hide.

But it was you, my other self, my comrade and friend,

You, whose company I enjoyed, at whose side I walked in the house of God.

For St. Francis to be rejected by his brothers after an arduous journey through rain and briars, for Jesus to be rejected by his own people, the Psalms testify to the fact that rejection is a common part of life where we can share God's grace through our loving and peaceable response.

Because this is an experience of the Cross, we are reminded by the very experience that we must first **turn to the Lord in prayer.**

Ultimately, we turn to our own hearts. Perhaps there is a **sacrifice** that we can make for our Secular brothers and sisters, a choice out of love to accept a penance for unity. Just as many Catholics keep Wednesday and Friday meatless—not only out of tradition, but with a special intention for an increase in respect for all human life—so each of us might look at some way we can make a sacrifice to endure as **an offering for the unity and health** of our Order, our fraternities, and all of our Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters. Even when *challenged* by brokenness and discord, **one of the beautiful**

**dimensions of our Franciscan life, at its best, is the relationship that we have with our brothers and sisters in the Franciscan Family, and our freedom to strengthen that bond in harmony with the Church and the Gospel.**

<sup>1</sup> **FAED 3:579-581**, online at <https://www.franciscantradition.org/francis-of-assis-early-documents/the-prophet/the-little-flowers-of-saint-francis/2480-fa-ed-3-page-579>



# JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



## BECOMING PRAYER FOR PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PART 2

by Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, National Animator

*As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, so let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do.*

*OFS Rule, Art. 8a*

In Part 1, I spoke about how we as Secular Franciscans are to fall on our faces in deep and fervent prayer of lament and hope as we live our daily lives. Prayer must be our first line of defense in all things and not a last resort. Prayer must be our default – like breathing.

Again, too many times I hear that prayer is not enough; we need to do more than ‘just pray,’ we must take action. Well, first and foremost, prayer is the greatest action we can take in any given situation. Before each and every major event in the life of Our Lord, he began in prayer. Jesus fell on his face before his heavenly Father for strength, for guidance, and for sustenance to persevere.

Sometimes, all we can do is pray for the situation, because there is nothing else we are able to do. Saint Monica, that praying mama of our beloved Saint Augustine, prayed for decades – for the conversion of her husband and her son. She constantly fell on her face that the Lord might turn their minds and hearts to him. This was all she could do, all she knew to do. God answered her prayers and we, Holy Mother Church, reap the benefit of those answered prayers with the words and wisdom of the great Doctor of the Church, Saint Augustine.

What would have happened if someone told Saint Monica that her prayers were futile and she had to do more than just pray? Only God knows, but she knew what she had to do; she knew what was before her – her ongoing daily conversation with God.



When Queen Esther learned of Haman’s evil plan to annihilate her people, what did she do? She knew she had to appeal to the King for the lives of her people; though to go unsummoned before the King meant death. So, before she went to the King, she and her staff fell on their faces, where for three days and three nights they fasted and prayed. This gave her the strength and the courage to go before the King to plead for the lives of her people. She did not do this as a last resort, but as the first line of defense. Queen Esther had a very difficult mission in front of her, a mission she knew she could not accomplish had she not begun in prayer and fasting.

*“But we cannot rise above ourselves  
unless a higher power lift us up.*

*No matter how much our interior progress is ordered,  
nothing will come of it unless accompanied by divine aid.  
Divine aid is available to those who seek it from their hearts,  
humbly and devoutly;  
and this means to sigh for it in this valley of tears, through fervent prayer.  
Prayer, then, is the mother and source of the ascent.”*



~ From ***The Soul's Journey Into God*** by St. Bonaventure, Chapter One: *On the Stages of the Ascent into God and on Contemplating Him Through His Vestiges in the Universe*

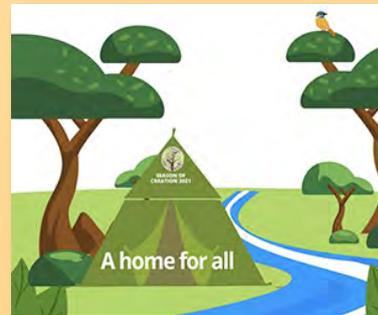
If we are to follow Christ in the footsteps Saint Francis (OFS Rule, Art. 1), then we are to become prayer as did our Seraphic Father; who like our Lord, withdrew frequently to pray. In ***The Life of Saint Francis***, Saint Bonaventure writes: “From that time on [Francis] withdrew from the bustle of public business and devoutly begged God in his goodness to show him what he should do. The flame of heavenly desire was fanned in him by his frequent prayer....

“After that he began to seek out solitary places, well suited for sorrow; and there he prayed incessantly with unutterable groanings (Rom. 8:26). After long and urgent prayer, he merited to be heard by the Lord.”

As our Holy Rule states, *let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do*. We are to become, as we are to do. Just as our friendships and relationships are sustained by constant dialogue and conversation, so too must our relationship with the Triune God be as urgent and important. Never allow prayer and contemplation become a back seat activity you do when you have a few extra minutes. Make it the priority, the source and summit of all you are and do.



## Season of Creation 2021



The Season of Creation is the annual Christian celebration of prayer and action for our common home. Together, the ecumenical family around the world unites to participate in prayer, sustainability projects, and advocacy to protect God's creation.

The theme for 2021 is “**A HOME FOR ALL? RENEWING THE OIKOS OF GOD.**”

Oikos is the Greek word for “home,” or “household.” By rooting the theme in the concept of oikos, we celebrate the integral web of relationships that sustain the well-being of the Earth.

This year's symbol, Abraham's tent, signifies our commitment to safeguard a place for all who share our common home, just as Abraham did in the Book of Genesis.

Individuals and communities are invited to participate through prayer, sustainability projects, or advocacy. It is hoped that this Season of Creation will renew our baptismal call to care and sustain an ecological turning so that life may thrive and all creatures may find their place to flourish within our common home.



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# FORMATION COMMISSION

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## MEMORIALE PROPOSITI

Going home. A Formation Project that renews us.

Mary Stronach, OFS

National Formation Commission



*The following formation project can be experienced individually, perhaps even in Eucharistic Adoration, or in small groups at a fraternity gathering. It will take you back in time—to our roots and our early family. The materials needed for this activity: the accompanying chart, a copy of *Memoriale Propositi* (<https://franciscan-archive.org/documenta.html>), a copy of our present rule (the Rule of 1978).*

### Step One: Preliminary Questions

At the beginning of the session, consider the following questions. (If this activity is done individually, you may want to write your thoughts in your journal. If it is done with a group, you may want to discuss these questions at the beginning of the session):

*Have you ever had the experience of finding old letters in the attic that our grandparents wrote? What treasures! To peek into the lives of those whose DNA we carry is a wonderful gift. Did you try to see yourself in that old picture of your great-grandmother or great-grandfather? How did you feel when you discovered them? Why did it mean so much when you found them?*

### Step Two: Background

As Secular Franciscans, our forefathers also left us some amazing treasures. Among them is the *Memoriale Propositi*, our inspirational document, which dates back to 1221. It was written by Cardinal Hugolino dei Conti di Segni at the request of St. Francis of Assisi. Cardinal Hugolino later became Pope Gregory IX, who canonized Francis of Assisi in 1228, two years after his death.

A quick review of the *Memoriale Propositi* of 1221 may give us a better perspective of who our early brothers and sisters were and how they lived. As importantly, it will connect us with them and, perhaps, even strengthen our focus on how we can live more completely in the footsteps of St. Francis.

**Step Three:**

**Activity:** Read *Memoriale Propositi* and reflect on its message. How does it speak to us? What does it tell us about our forefathers? How is it different and how is it similar to our present Rule? Are there some parts of it on which we too can act? (Note: You may want to use the following chart to help organize your thoughts and to compare our present Rule with *Memoriale Propositi*.)

**(Note for Formation Leaders:** This activity can also be used at your Fraternity Gathering—in small groups or the large group. You may want to give each group about 30 minutes to discuss two or three topics and then invite each group to summarize its discussion in the large group):

*Summary statement: While our brothers and sisters of 1221 lived different lives, the essence of who we are as Secular Franciscans has never changed. We follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis... from Gospel to life and life to Gospel. The Rule of 1978 reflects our foundational and inspirational document and reminds us of the gift and treasure Francis gave us when he asked Cardinal Hugolino to write the first Franciscan guide for the “Brothers and Sisters of Penance.”*

Considering the topics in parentheses, how is *Memoriale Propositi* similar to the Rule of 1978 and how is it different? (simplicity, prayer, family, reconciliation, sister Death, fraternity, peace, contributions, commitment, admissions, professions, other...)

Similarities	Differences



**OFS-USA 20<sup>th</sup> Quinquennial Congress**

**JUBILEE**

The theme for the **World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation** in 2020 was “Jubilee.” Since the theme for the 20th Quinquennial Congress is also “Jubilee,” it seems that the words of Pope Francis’ equally apply to the upcoming event.

Pope Francis referred to a Jubilee as “a sacred time when people come together . . . in relationships: with God the Creator, with our brothers and sisters as members of a common family, and with all of God’s creatures within our common home.”

**A time to Remember - A time to Restore - A time to Rejoice**

He also reminds us that, “In the biblical tradition, a Jubilee was a joyous occasion, inaugurated by a trumpet blast resounding throughout the land . . . we witness how the Holy Spirit is inspiring individuals and communities . . . to come together to rebuild our common home and defend the most vulnerable in our midst. We see . . . people working for the protection of the land and for the poor. We rejoice to see how young people and communities . . . are on the frontlines in responding to the ecological crisis.”

**LET US COME TOGETHER  
IN THIS SEASON OF CREATION AND AT OUR 20TH QUINQUENNIAL  
TO REMEMBER, RESTORE AND REJOICE!**



# THE SPIRIT IS A MOVIN'

by Kathleen Molaro, OFS

National Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission Chair

“The Spirit is a movin’ all o-o-ver, all o-o-ver this land.” Remember that lovely song from back in the day? Admitting this will give evidence to the age of most of us—but it’s still a great song, and very appropriate for our times.

The Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission (FYA) has spent this past year and a half introducing Regional FYA Animators to the whys, ways, and means of reaching out to young people. Eleven virtual training sessions and monthly follow-up presentations have strengthened regions and fraternities in their understanding of what is necessary to fulfill our responsibility in spreading the Gospel to our younger Catholics. The Spirit is definitely moving us in the right direction.

Many have shared, however, that they simply don’t know what they should do next with all the information. We claim formation is a process — we start with information; tackle the task of formation, in the hopes of experiencing transformation. That transformation cannot happen if we don’t invite the Holy Spirit for help and guidance. We’ve shared a basic sequence of stages in stepping into the world of youth and young adults, but a sense of fear and a lack of confidence still linger. Perhaps what’s missing is a dependence on the Holy Spirit as our navigator in this adventure!

Living a Gospel life is not easy. We pray the words from Francis in our fraternity gatherings, that we be “cleansed and enlightened interiorly, and fired with the flame of the Holy Spirit.” I’m sure that was the goal of the *Memoriale Propositi* 800 years ago. Penitents were expected to follow a detailed list of rules to take the desire for holiness and gospel living seriously. Upon reflection, we can relate what is found in the antiquated list of instructions to the essentials from our 1978 Rule. Perhaps the clothing rules apply to the call

for humility and detachment; rules about fasting, partaking of the Sacraments, and stringent prayer point us to the need for a deep relationship with God; and instructions relating to care of the sick and burying the dead, even in our times, lead us to an understanding of service and the love of neighbor.

We can especially appreciate nowadays this plea to the Holy Spirit in our endeavors toward living our vocation and sharing it with young people. Pope Francis encourages us in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Christus Vivit*, addressed to young people and the entire people of God, to ask the Holy Spirit for guidance every day. He reminds us that what we need will come, if we let ourselves be prompted by the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>



The theme of calling on the Spirit is also evident for our young people preparing for the YouFra International Gathering and World Youth Day in Portugal in August 2023. The theme is “Mary rose up and went with haste” (Lk 1:39), which recalls the “yes” of Our Lady and her rush to meet her cousin Elizabeth. “*Há Pressa no Ar*” the event’s theme song, means “There’s a rush in the air,” and the lyrics express the joy we experience in allowing God’s Spirit to lead the way.

Pope Francis says of the theme chosen that the words and the truths of faith grow “under the action of the Holy Spirit. Mary’s “yes” led her to total availability to receive the Son of God in her life, which allowed her to be transformed. “Our simple prayer should be, ‘Lord, what you want, when you want, how you want.’”<sup>2</sup>

We are called to answer “yes” in reaching out to young people. Those who rely on the Lord “Shall renew their strength...shall run and not be weary...” (Is 40:31) In your endeavors, “may the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.” (Rev. 22: 21

<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, To Young People and the Entire People of God, (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019)

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, General Audience, Nov. 18, 2020

# Ecumenical Interfaith Committee Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity



## NEW BEGINNINGS WITH A HOPEFUL VISION OF UNITY AMONG ALL PEOPLE

by Mike Carsten, OFS, Committee Chairman

*“Gaining inspiration from the example and the writings of Francis and, above all, filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, each day the brothers and sisters faithfully live the great gift which Christ has given: the revelation of the Father. They should bear witness to this faith before all:.... – in their associations with all men and women, brothers and sisters of the same Father;”<sup>1</sup>*

*“The Presidency entrust one of its members with the duty to closely follow up the field of justice, peace and safeguard of creation, the ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and all those situations which require immediate intervention.”<sup>2</sup>*

These two quotes are the point of beginning for the Ecumenical and Interfaith Committee (EIC) in our legislative documents. Many years ago, the International Presidency recommended to the OFS-USA during a National Visitation that some form of work with our protestant brothers and sisters needed to begin. As a result of that Visitation, the Ecumenical Committee was formed. Eventually this was expanded to include the field of Interfaith work; thus, the Ecumenical and Interfaith Committee was created in its current form.

Early on within the OFS, the Ecumenical work was given expression by sharing invitations and attending each other’s chapters with the National Ministers and Ministers General of the Franciscan Orders that existed outside of Catholicism. This included the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS), The Third Order Society of St. Francis (TSSF) and the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (OEF).

In the early 2000s, the Ecumenical Committee met with these branches of the Franciscan Family and discussed the possibility of dialogue. After consulting the Executive Councils of the respective Orders, The Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity the (JCFU) was formed.

Since that time, the JCFU has met and worked together as a committee supported organizationally and financially by the Member Orders. Since its beginning, the JCFU has offered educational workshops based on the “Elements of Franciscan Unity” to member orders’ leadership across the United States and has filed Annual Reports to the Member Orders on our efforts. A few years ago, the Order of Lutheran Franciscans was invited to join the committee, and we have all been blessed by their presence. Why do we do this? Why bother to put time and treasure into this effort?

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis speaks to us on this very issue. His words are prophetic.

*134. Indeed, when we open our hearts to those who are different, this enables them, while continuing to be themselves, to develop in new ways. The different cultures that have flourished over the centuries need to be preserved, lest our world be impoverished. At the same time, those cultures should be encouraged to be open to new experiences through their encounter with other realities, for the risk of succumbing to cultural sclerosis is always present. That is why “we need to communicate with each other, to discover the gifts of each person, to promote that which unites us, and to regard our differences as an opportunity to grow in mutual respect. Patience and trust are called for in such dialogue, permitting individuals, families and communities*

<sup>1</sup> OFS General Constitutions Article 12.1

<sup>2</sup> Statutes of the International Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order. Article 13.2

*to hand on the values of their own culture and welcome the good that comes from others' experiences".[117]*

In this writing, I want to share with you that I have been given a great opportunity to serve the Ecumenical and Interfaith Committee as Chairperson for six years. More recently, I have also served as the Chair of the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity, and prior to those six years as a member of the OFS-USA-EIC, serving with Anne Mulqueen, OFS.

At the same time, I also oversee two full-time ministries on the streets of Detroit serving the poor, the disenfranchised, and displaced: St. Aloysius Neighborhood Services and Franciscan Ministries. This labor of love and fulfillment of my vocation as a Secular Franciscan has been especially challenging during the current Covid-19 pandemic and has taken a toll on my body, mind, and spirit. At this writing, the vaccinated in the City of Detroit stands at just

over 41 percent, and the next six to eight months will be even more challenging for those serving on the front lines.

Because of what I have already experienced and what yet lies ahead, I find myself no longer able to serve both the OFS as chairperson of two committees and serve those most in need in southeast Michigan. As a result, I have resigned as Chairperson of the OFS-USA Ecumenical and Interfaith Committee to the OFS-USA Executive Council through our National Minister. I have also resigned as Chairperson of the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity. Each are effective as of the end of Chapter 2021.

It has been my highest honor to serve the OFS-USA in this capacity, and I thank the OFS-USA Executive Council, our National Minister, Jan Parker, OFS, and each of you my OFS sisters and brothers for giving me this opportunity to serve.

## FEAST DAY OF ST. CLARE OF ASSISI

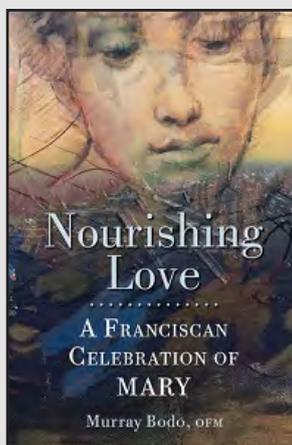
by Beatrice Sanford, OFS

The St. Clare Secular Franciscan Fraternity of Ave Maria, Florida, celebrated the Feast Day of St. Clare of Assisi by inviting Father Murray Bodo, OFM, to speak about the Blessed Mother on August 7. The topic was of great interest to all, as St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Secular Franciscan Order, honored Mary as a mother and as an advocate in his own prayers.

A total of 60 professed men and women from Florida, California, Colorado, Maryland, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Virginia participated in the 22nd annual commemoration of St. Clare, who more than 800 years ago established the Poor Clares Religious Community.

Father Murray opened his talk discussing ***Nourishing Love: A Franciscan Celebration of Mary***. His book, written during his confinement due to the pandemic, is a collection of his meditations, poems, reflections, and prayers from the Franciscan point of view.

Father Murray discussed three events that highlight his lifelong devotion to Our



Lady. Attendees listened intently as they learned of his dedication to the Blessed Mother shortly after he was born in St. Mary's Hospital, a facility managed by the Franciscan Sisters in Gallup, New Mexico. Father Bodo shared how the Blessed Mother answered his prayers in 2017 when Hurricane Dorian was going to make a direct hit on his hermitage but veered to spare Florida the wrath of this Category 5 hurricane. In the last story, Father Murray related his mystical experience at the age of 80 while visiting the Basilica Della Santa Casa in Loreto, Italy. Father Murray explained that this personal encounter with Mary was something he had prayed for since he was a young boy. Tradition holds that the sanctuary of Our Lady of

Loreto contains three of the four walls from Mary's childhood home in Nazareth. Father Murray joked that he was in good company since the Marian shrine has been visited by a number of popes, including Pope Saint John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis. As part of the closing of the St. Clare celebration, attendees participated in the Franciscan Crown Rosary led by Carol Bart, minister of the St. Clare Secular Franciscan Fraternity.

# OFS-USA ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE HAS BEEN BORN!

by Janice Benton, OFS, and Susan Tabor, OFS

It all started when Susan Tabor, OFS, and Janice Benton, OFS, shared a dream with each other. That dream, based on their shared vision of fully accessible events and materials, such as Braille and large print, and inspired by our call to value the inherent dignity of every person, led to an idea of how we might help others in this area.

Susan and Janice met at a book study led by Carolyn Townes, chair of the national JPIC Commission. They were on the phone discussing an inquiry they were working on concerning accessible materials for someone in formation. As they talked, their shared vision was born. The vision was offered to our National Minister, Jan Parker, who shared it with the National Executive Council (NEC), which immediately voted to make the OFS-USA Accessibility Committee a standing committee.

In the meantime, Mark Banschbach, OFS, was busy working on developing resources for the Five Franciscan Martyrs Regional website in different languages, and in Braille, in response to a new inquirer who was blind. He reached out to Multicultural Councilor Willie Guadalupe, and then to Connie Wild, OFS, Janice, and then Susan. Calls were made and fellowship soared.

A virtual Meet and Greet for the new committee was held on Friday evening, August 20, 2021, so the NEC could officially welcome and talk with the members. The response of the NEC to the formation of this committee has been very warm and enthusiastic.

Janice and Susan are co-chairs of this newly-formed committee. The other committee members are: Consuelo Wild, OFS, of St. Margaret of Cortona Region; Mark Banschbach, OFS, of the Five Franciscan Martyrs Region; and Mike Freeman, OFS, of the St. Joan of Arc Region.

Janice, Susan, Connie, and Mike have had many years of experience working in the disability access field: Janice as a long-time director of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability, retiring in 2019; Susan as a social worker; Connie working with the deaf community; and Mike as a special education teacher and special education program specialist. Mike served

as Minister of St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity in Houston for six years, is a member of the local Council, and also serves as the JPIC animator for his region. Susan lives with blindness due to a congenital condition; namely retinopathy on prematurity. She is a member of the National JPIC Commission and serves as JPIC animator for the Juan De Padilla Region. Mark is relatively new to the field of accessibility but brings experience in areas of technology and in software development. He serves as Minister of St. John Capistrano Fraternity, as Area/Family Councilor in the Five Franciscan Martyrs Region, Spiritual Assistant for The Encounter Fraternity in Lake Wales, Florida, and Regional Webmaster. His enthusiasm is inspiring and contagious! Connie lives with profound deafness and serves as Minister of her local fraternity, St. Francis of Assisi Deaf Fraternity in the St. Margaret of Cortona Region. It is the only known all-deaf OFS fraternity in the world. Connie is also a former director of the National Catholic Office for the Deaf. Janice serves as Minister of the St. Francis Fraternity in Washington, DC, and is an area councilor for the St. Margaret of Cortona Region.

As local and regional fraternities encounter access issues and questions pertaining to any disability, we want to hear from you! We will help you find resources and provide guidance concerning any other accessibility-related questions you may have.

In time, we will be reaching out to each region, to help develop resources at the regional level, including an accessibility contact person who can work with your region to ensure that your websites, forms, documents, and events are accessible for all our brothers and sisters throughout the entire NAFRA area.

As one of the first projects, this committee will be working with the 2022 Quinquennial (Q) Committee, to ensure that the Q is accessible to all participants.

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*We would like to hear from you!*

*The email addresses for the co-chairs are:*

Janice Benton [jbentonsfo@gmail.com](mailto:jbentonsfo@gmail.com)

Susan Taborsouljourner@sbcbglobal.net

*We are here to serve you!*

**Note from the National Executive Council:** We recognize that for many years local and Regional fraternities have made efforts to assist those who have accessibility challenges. What a joy and blessing to now have a national committee to serve as an umbrella and a source for all such efforts. We warmly welcome the OFS-USA Accessibility Committee members and look forward to the many ways they will serve our national OFS family.

## **INTRODUCING ELFO** **EXECUTIVE LEADERS OF FRANCISCAN ORGANIZATIONS**

By Sharon Winzeler, OFS

### **Executive Leaders of Franciscan Organizations Members**

- Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities
- Commission on Franciscan Intellectual Tradition
- Federation of Sisters and Brothers of the Third Order Regular
- Franciscan Action Network
- Franciscans International
- Franciscan Media
- Franciscan Mission Service
- Franciscan Pilgrimage Program
- Lutheran Franciscan Order
- Secular Franciscan Order USA

We'd like to introduce you to a group called ELFO - Executive Leaders of Franciscan Organizations. This group consists of leaders of 10 national Franciscan organizations who come together each month for a virtual meeting. The idea of ELFO originated with the Franciscan Federation, most notably Sr. Margaret Carney. The inaugural meeting was in August 2020, and meetings continue on a regular basis.

During their meetings, ELFO participants have built strong relationships. They share about the unique mission of their organizations, as well as news of their organizations' programming and significant events. During this past year, participants have identified common themes and challenges, including finances, technical support, public relations and communications, fund-raising, and demographic changes in Franciscan provinces and congregations.

"Sharing information and insights on a monthly basis among Franciscan organizations provides a space to create options and an opportunity help each other," said Layna Maher, OFS, a member of the National Formation Commission and Regional Formation Director for the St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region. She is the OFS representative on ELFO.

Layna said the organization will be helpful to the Secular Franciscans because of the skills each group is able to share. National Minister Jan Parker, OFS, stated, "We are already benefitting from this collaboration. These relationships have opened doors to new possibilities. One example is our collaboration with Franciscan Media, which has provided expertise on several OFS-USA publication projects, and is helping us navigate copyright issues. Another example is the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program, which worked with the OFS to offer our members a virtual pilgrimage."

ELFO members are committed to ongoing collaboration. Each of these organizations share the charism of living a Gospel life. Working together, they hope to find new ways to further the mission of the wider Franciscan family through their presence in the world.

# Franciscan Living

## See, Hear, Become

by Francine Gikow, OFS

I love St. Francis' ability to find joy in everything! Francis used his senses to experience God's love. He looked at a bird and understood; he heard the bird's call and experienced the handiwork of God through the bird. What joy!

Being quite sensual, Francis had a unique way of seeing and hearing. Francis saw and heard God's beauty in creation—but to Francis, it was not *just* creation, rather it bore “*the imprint of the Most High...*” (Art. 18). Francis experienced LOVE incarnate in the everyday. For Francis, nothing was observed, heard, or experienced apart from God.

God was Francis' context. Every sound, every image, and every thought brought him into God's presence. Francis' profound relationship with God colored everything he viewed, heard, and experienced. Francis was able to remain in the presence of God throughout the day, night, and at all times.

So how can we live in the presence of God with everything that we see, hear, and experience? How can we bring this Presence into the commonplace? How do we “see deeply, hear deeply, and experience deeply” through the eyes of God?

As always, prayer is essential to retain God's presence in our lives—particularly praying with scriptures. As St. Clare instructs us, consider how Jesus gazed upon creation and other people. He saw past the outer trappings and peered into their eyes with His mercy, kindness, and love. Meditate on how Jesus listened intently to sinners, lepers, and even to the needs of the little children in scripture. Enter into each scene—when Jesus encountered the rich young man, (Matt 19:16-30) when he calls Mary Magdalene by name after the resurrection, (Jn 20:16), or looked into the eyes of Zacchaeus (Lk19: 1-10). See how Jesus loved them with his eyes and with his voice. See how he touched their hearts with compassion.

Then, as St. Clare continues her instruction: “contemplate Him!” Stay with God and rest in Him. Allow Him to heal you, to comfort you, and live in your soul.

Ask God to mold your heart and guide you as you interact with others so God's “Presence” can overtake you as you look, hear, and become a vessel of God for others. Allow God to empty yourself so that you become lesser and He becomes greater. As you finish your prayer time, pray that you may imitate what you have seen and heard so your heart might soften and be attuned to what you see and hear. Finally, at the end of each day, review your seeing, listening, and “being” in the Presence of the Holy One.

Being contemplative and mindful as we go through our day is bringing Christ into the world through our very lives. We *become* an instrument of God's love. This is what our Rule describes as “trusting in the Divine Seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.” (Art. 19)

I have often heard Secular Franciscans describe our way of life as “it is who we are and be” —understanding that we do not have a unifying apostolate or “work.” Rather, we use ourselves and our lives to rebuild the church by bringing Christ into the world.

We bring Christ to the world if we *see, hear, and become* Christ bearers so others can experience God through us and give glory to God. As Secular Franciscans, we evangelize from the “bottom up,” meaning we evangelize not by preaching or apologetics but from our very “being,” which proclaims Christ personally to a hurting world.

Jan Novotka's song, “Presence,” sums up what our lives as Secular Franciscans should *become* by bringing Christ to others:

*It's not what you do, but how you do it.*

*It's not what you see, but how you see.*

*It's not what you say, what you know or achieve*

*It's the Presence, the Presence you are!*

**“...that we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us...that our joy may be complete.” 1Jn: 3-4.**

## The Cross, La Verna, and the Stigmata

by Bret Thoman, OFS

The month of September is replete with Franciscan feasts and memories of the cross. On September 17, 1224, something extraordinary took place, leading to the Feast of the Stigmata.

It happened on the mountain of La Verna, sometimes referred to as Alverna, in southern Tuscany. Those who visit the hermitage today are often struck by the rugged harshness and austere beauty of the mountain. St. Francis felt the same way.



The one with the steps is a cave where Francis used to pray.

Some years earlier, while Francis was preaching at a banquet, a nobleman named Count Orlando was so enflamed by Francis' words that he was inspired to offer him part of the mountain towering over his fiefdom of Chiusi. Francis went and knew immediately that it would be the perfect place for penance, prayer, and contemplation.

Francis came here six times in his life. It was the last time, in 1224, two years before his death, when the event took place. He was in La Verna fasting and praying a forty-day Lent in honor of the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14) and St. Michael the Archangel (September 29).

Francis was deeply devoted to the cross his entire life, beginning when the crucifix of San

Damiano spoke to him telling him to "Rebuild My House."

The Legend of the Three Companions said:

From that hour [after the locution at San Damiano], therefore, his heart was wounded, and it melted when remembering the Lord's passion. While he lived, he always carried the wounds of the Lord Jesus in his heart. [...]. From then on, he inflicted his flesh with such fasting that, whether healthy or sick, the excessively austere man hardly ever or never wanted to indulge his body. Because of this he confessed on his death bed that he had greatly sinned against "Brother Body.".... We have told these things about his crying and abstinence in an incidental way to show that, after that vision and the message of the image of the Crucified, he was always conformed to the passion of Christ until his death. (5: 14-15)

Thomas of Celano said that the cross that was imprinted internally on his soul at San Damiano would manifest itself externally on his body: "From that time on, compassion for the Crucified was impressed into his holy soul. And we honestly believe the wounds of the sacred Passion were impressed deep in his heart, though not yet on his flesh." (2 Celano 10: Book II: 249)

With this deep devotion to the cross, St. Francis was in La Verna.

According to the Third Consideration on the Stigmata, in the *Little Flowers of St. Francis*, Francis prayed for two graces: to feel in his body the pain that Jesus felt during his Passion and to know in his heart the love which Jesus felt for all humanity.



The chapel where the stigmata took place

Then the following took place:

On a certain morning about the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, while Francis was praying on the mountainside, he saw a Seraph having six wings, fiery as well as brilliant, descend from the grandeur of heaven. And when in swift flight, it had arrived at a spot in the air near the man of God, there appeared between the wings the likeness of a man crucified, with his hands and feet extended in the form of a cross and fastened to a cross.... As the vision was disappearing, it left in his heart a marvelous fire and imprinted in his flesh a likeness of signs no less marvelous. For immediately the marks of nails began to appear in his hands and feet just as he had seen a little before in the figure of the man crucified. (Bonaventure, *Major Life*, chapter 13)

After La Verna, the life of Francis was inexplicably and mysteriously united to that of Christ. The Incarnation of Christ, the “masterpiece” of God’s creation, indeed, the whole purpose of creation (in the words of later theologian, John Duns Scotus) culminated in the Passion

and crucifixion as the highest expression of God’s love, charity, and mission: “When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, ‘*It is finished.*’ And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit” (John 19:30).

Thus, the life, love, and mission of Christ were marked by the two great feasts of Christmas and Easter. Similarly, Francis’s life and devotion to Christ were defined by the two great events of the nativity scene in Greccio (incarnation) and the stigmata at La Verna (crucifixion).

The mystery of what happened on Mt. La Verna is something for us to reflect and meditate on. Ultimately, there is something greater than the wounds of Christ, which St. Francis shared in; for the cross is merely the pathway to the Resurrection. Without the cross there is no Resurrection; unless Christ comes down in the world, there is no way to go up to Heaven.

In the end, then, suffering does not have the final word: the Resurrection does. By embracing the cross, Christ shows us the way. And Francis, in receiving his wounds, give us an example to follow.



The one of the complex shows the original church and cloister in La Verna.



## A VISIT TO PLANET EARTH

by Jim Wesley, OFS

At the time of this writing, I am one individual of the 7.8 billion human beings currently inhabiting this small planet somewhere in the vast universe, and because I speak English, I refer to my home planet as Earth. This planetary home is approximately 4.5 billion years old, and life has existed on its surface for the past 3.5 billion years. Modern humans, *Homo sapiens*, are a very recent life form, having been present on the planet for only 200,000 years. An interesting comparison is that the dinosaurs began roaming the earth 245 million years ago and disappeared from the earth about 66 million years ago. They were the dominant terrestrial life form for approximately 179 million years.

When considering the age of the earth and the length of time that the dinosaurs existed, a human's life span with an average age of about 80 years is really an infinitesimal amount of time. To help put this into perspective, imagine all the earth's geologic time transposed to an annual calendar of 365 days (31,536,000 seconds). All of human history, since the last ice-age, would have occurred in the final 82.2 seconds of a calendar year; the existence of an individual person would be about half a second. This humbling reality means that that my entire life on this planet is really only a visit — a very short visit.

The earth is in orbit around a yellow dwarf star that we humans refer to as the Sun. This star, along with its eight orbiting planets, some moons, asteroids, comet material, rocks, and dust, comprises our solar system. Another humbling fact is that our Sun is just one star among hundreds of billions of stars in our Milky Way Galaxy, and our galaxy is one of the billions of galaxies that make up the universe. When viewed in this context, Earth is simply a mere speck in the immense Universe.

While writing this, I began to think that, if we are individually only temporary visitors on Earth, what kind of experience are we entitled to, how do we conduct ourselves during our visit, and how do we leave the planet after we are gone?

One of my favorite places to spend some of my Earth time is Yosemite National Park. Each time I visit the park, I go there knowing that I am a visitor and that I need to abide by certain rules and standards of behavior. The mission statement of the National Park Service is clear and concise: "*The National Park Service is dedicated to conserving unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the various parks for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.*"

My closing thought is really a question. Is there a mission statement for living on the planet Earth? During our short visit on the planet, do we follow the wisdom of basic guidelines that ensure our enjoyable, informative, and inspiring life experience, and will this experience be available to all future generations?

# OFS-USA FUNDS FORMATION WORKSHOP IN ETHIOPIA

by Sharon Winzeler, OFS

A grant from the Duns Scotus Formation Fund helped sow Franciscan seeds in the soil of Ethiopia, according to project leader Fr. Mathewos Ajaba, OFM Cap. Fr. Ajaba is the National Secular Franciscan Spiritual and Pastoral Assistant and Vocation Animator at the Capuchin Post Novitiate Formation House in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.



The Duns Scotus Board recently received a report on the success of a four-day formation workshop in Ethiopia, January 14-17, 2021, that was financed by the Duns Scotus Fund. “The workshop became a place of real encounter through learning and sharing different views and ideas,” Fr. Ajaba said.

Fifty-one participants from five fraternities and YouFra members throughout Ethiopia attended the workshop. Attendees were expected to return to their fraternities and share the information. Most of the \$5,000 workshop cost was covered by the grant from

the Duns Scotus Formation Fund. The project was approved in 2020 but delayed until January 2021 because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The workshop was a time of sharing and growth. “One of the key moments of the event was the Zoom meeting all the participants had with General Minister Tibor Kauser. The presentation given by Jenny Harrington, OFS, General Councilor, was also a highlight,” Fr. Ajaba said.

Ethiopia currently has five local fraternities with a total of 81 members. Since none of the fraternities was canonically established, that is the immediate goal, according to Fr. Ajaba. All the procedures to establish the fraternities are in place. Other goals include emphasis on formation in both conversion to Christ and a deepening in the Secular Franciscan vocation.

“The lack of authentic conversion is, by far, considered one of the most serious problems in the Order. At the moment, authentic initial formation needs to be our top priority. To accomplish this, we would like to put much effort into translation work so that all the essential documents are accessible to everyone, and national fraternities should engage in this uppermost priority,” Fr. Ajaba said. Other priorities include continued animation of YouFra and a method of financially supporting the fraternities.



# OFS BANKING AND INSURANCE ISSUES

## TIPS FROM THE NATIONAL TREASURER

by Claudia Kauzlarich, OFS

*In this article, National Treasurer Claudia Kauzlarich addresses some of the frequently asked questions concerning insurance, Employer Identification Numbers, and other banking issues.*

### **How do I provide proof of liability insurance?**

The National Fraternity maintains a general liability insurance policy with Christian Brothers that covers all fraternities – local, regional, and national. Many retreat centers, parishes, and dioceses require proof of such insurance before allowing our members to use their facilities. Some may require proof of insurance, while other facilities require that they be named as an additional insured. In this case, some parishes and dioceses are very specific about how the additional insured clause must be worded.

To make the request for an insurance certificate, you need to fill out the form “Request for Insurance Certificate,” which can be found on the National website [www.secularfranciscansusa.org](http://www.secularfranciscansusa.org). (From the main menu select Resources, then select Guidelines Forms and Other Resources, and then choose Treasurer Forms and Guidelines.)

Please complete the form and email it to the National Treasurer ([claudiakauz.sfo@gmail.com](mailto:claudiakauz.sfo@gmail.com)), who will submit the request to Christian Brothers. The certificate of insurance will then be sent directly to the parish, diocese, or retreat center. A copy is sent to the National Treasurer, who will forward a copy to the contact person for the fraternity making the request.

When a venue requires that they be named as an additional insured, Christian Brothers requests a copy of your proposed agreement or contract with the venue. (It is preferable, although not required, that you acquire the certificate of insurance prior to signing or entering into an agreement with a venue.) You will need to provide a copy of that agreement to the National Treasurer (you may attach it to an email), or, if you do not have a written agreement, you can provide a copy of the correspondence from the venue in which they requested the additional insured clause. The

National Treasurer will follow through with Christian Brothers to obtain what is needed.

If you have difficulty completing the form, you may provide all the information requested in the form and send it by email to [claudiakauz.sfo@gmail.com](mailto:claudiakauz.sfo@gmail.com). Any other questions concerning insurance can also be sent to this email address.

### **Federal Identification Numbers (EIN):**

I have received many requests for assistance with EIN numbers. First, I will give some information about EIN numbers. In the next section, I will explain how to obtain one.

For new accounts, banks require a copy of the federal letter from the IRS assigning the Employer Federal Identification Number (EIN). You may also need to provide this letter when changing signers on bank accounts if the name on the account doesn't match the EIN number on file.

In the past, groups of fraternities would share an EIN number, but this should no longer happen. Each local fraternity and each regional fraternity *must* have its own Federal Identification Number. We currently have local fraternities and some regions that do not have an EIN number, or they had a number, but they no longer have the IRS letter which assigned the EIN. It is important to get this resolved.

NOTE: The letter from the IRS assigning the EIN number is a valuable piece of paper and should be kept in the permanent files of the fraternity along with a copy of your application (SS-4.) Until now, most Regions have not had a policy of maintaining copies of the IRS letter of local fraternities. However, after hearing of numerous incidents when these letters have been lost, I believe it would be a good policy for each Region to keep a copy of the IRS letter for each of their local fraternities in the permanent files.

## How to apply for an EIN?

The Federal form SS-4 Application for Federal Employer Identification number (EIN) and instructions on applying for the EIN number have been on the National website for some time, along with a Q & A sheet. You can also go directly to [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov) to find the form and apply online. It is a FREE service. There is never a cost for receiving an EIN number, so beware of websites that want to assist you and then charge for the assistance. Applying for an EIN is an easy process.

On the SS-4 form, questions 7a and 7b ask for the name of the responsible person and their social security number. Some have expressed concern about providing this information, however, General Constitution Article 51(2)(c) states a duty of the minister is to represent the fraternity in all its relations with ecclesiastical and civil authorities. This information gives the IRS a contact should it be needed for any reason. This information can be updated with the IRS in the event the person is no longer a member of the fraternity. However, I would not suggest updating this information with each election as long as the listed member can be counted on to pass on any correspondence to the fraternity minister in a timely manner.

## Opening a New Bank Account or Updating Signatories on Accounts

When someone wants to open a new bank account, I advise them to call the branch where they plan to open the account and find out exactly what is necessary from that banking location. Some banks and/or locations are much easier to work with than others. I have found Catholic credit unions to be most accommodating.

As you gather the necessary paperwork, please contact the National Treasurer to request a letter explaining how the OFS is formed as a legal entity. The National Treasurer will send you a customized letter, signed by the National Treasurer. This letter will eliminate much confusion. (Note: this letter explains that local and regional fraternities are not legal entities, but

rather fall under the National Fraternity, which is the legal entity. The letter also references the Official Catholic Directory, which shows our tax-exempt status through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

When you open a new bank account or update signatories, most banks require at least the following:

1. Letter from IRS assigning the EIN number that matches the name on the bank account.
2. Copy of the certification of the last election of officers.
3. Minutes from the particular Council meeting, signed by the Council Secretary, giving authority to open an account at the specific bank, and listing the authorized signers on the account. In lieu of minutes, a letter from the Secretary, printed on the fraternity letterhead and ideally signed by both the Secretary and the Minister, which gives the authorization for the account and lists the authorized signers may also work.
4. Letter from the OFS National Treasurer stating the fraternity is part of the National Fraternity, which is tax-exempt under the USCCB.
5. The presence of all individuals that will be signing on the account. (Note: physical presence of ALL signers is usually required any time an account is opened or for a change of signatories.) Each of these individuals should be prepared to show their driver's license. If a member does not have a driver's license, then check with the bank about what other form of identification they will accept.

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I'm happy to help you with any other questions you may have, so feel free to contact me at [claudiakauz.sfo@gmail.com](mailto:claudiakauz.sfo@gmail.com)



# 11<sup>th</sup> Summer Seminar for Secular Franciscans Focuses on Catholic Social Teaching

by Patricia Serotkin, OFS

The 11th Summer Seminar for Secular Franciscans sponsored by Saint Francis University, **“When Justice and Peace Kiss,”** was presented on July 8-10 via ZOOM. The presenters were **Father Christopher Panagoplos, TOR**, a Franciscan Friar of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis of Penance, [Province of the Immaculate Conception](http://Province of the Immaculate Conception); and **David Seitz, OFS**, who has served the order at all levels in various offices, and who currently offers programs on Franciscan spirituality and social justice. Information about David’s programs can be found at: <https://tauministries.com/>



Layna Maher OFS, formation director for St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region, provided technical support for the Seminar; and Pat Serotkin, OFS, minister of Lady Poverty Region and Seminar host on behalf of Saint Francis University, provided general information.



The Seminar consisted of six sessions, discussions, with breaks between sessions. Approximately 40 attendees participated over the duration of the Seminar.

Friday, July 9

**Who Are We: Who Are These People Called Secular Franciscans?** by David Seitz

**The Church's Mission and Social Doctrine.** Father Christopher

**What Are We Called to Do?** by David Seitz

Saturday, July 10

**Social Doctrine and Commitment of the Lay Faithful.** by Father Christopher

**Pathways Forward** by David Seitz

**Personal and Societal Commitment: Love in Action** by Father Christopher

The Seminar attendees were fully engaged in the seminar topics, evidenced by lively discussions in both the small breakouts and the large group. Of course, as with any Franciscan gathering, there was also quite a bit of socializing between the sessions. During the last small group discussion time, participants were asked to formulate a list of action items they would like to work on moving forward in their fraternities and regions. The list includes:

- Immigration work
- Race equity
- "Pray" *Fratelli Tutti*
- Help out homeless neighbors
- Help the housing crisis
- Become more inclusive
- Support a peace pole as a healing effort for our Native Americans and all involved
- Service, peace, and justice
- More service for those in prison
- Continue with formation and CST to be professed
- Help with food insecurity in our area and in the world
- Respect rights of all peoples
- Anti-racism work
- Inform citizens about the lack of reliable emergency medicine in small towns

The 2021 Summer Seminar planning team thanks all who attended this year's event, as well as those who contributed to its success. The Seminar presentations and prayer services are posted at the [Saint Francis University Office of the President](#) website. One final note: there will not be a Summer Seminar in 2022, because we will be attending the [Quinquennial Congress in Phoenix!](#)



***May the Lord Bless Us and Give Us His Peace!***



# 20<sup>th</sup> Quinquennial Congress Jubilee!



**August 3-7, 2022 Phoenix, Arizona**

The 20<sup>th</sup> Quinquennial Congress in Phoenix, Arizona will be a time to join a large gathering of Franciscan brothers and sisters to celebrate and renew our Franciscan calling in the spirit of conversion. You will not want to miss it! The theme for this Quinquennial is **JUBILEE**, to commemorate the 800th anniversary of *Memoriale Propositi*, as well as to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first Quinquennial Congress held in the United States. Given these two anniversaries, it will be a joyful event.

Secular Franciscans from around the country will come together in song, prayer, and community. There will be opportunities for small group gatherings to share new insights and understandings regarding various matters within the Order. For 100 years the Quinquennial Congress is where Secular Franciscans gathered in the wonderful sanctuary of God's Grace. Together we will dialogue about various matters within the Order and within the world, while maintaining dignity and respect for all participants by recognizing and celebrating our differences.

During the congress you will have an opportunity to hear from servant-oriented Young Franciscans (YouFra members) and other young adults in attendance. They will lead us in a simple, fun, and purposeful service project aimed at helping immigrants and local elderly citizens.

## Celebrate With Our Franciscan Family

- \* Come together for Eucharist Celebration every day
- \* Select from a wide selection of motivating Breakout Sessions
- \* Join a "little fraternity" and make lasting connections
- \* Meet and mingle with Franciscans from across the USA and with international guests
- \* Participate in a charitable hands-on service project
- \* Attend Saturday night closing concert performed by Jesse Manibusan
- \* Get a chance to win amazing raffle drawing prizes and bid on a beautiful Quinquennial Quilt
- \* And much more. . . .



One of our raffle prizes is this lovely queen size t-shirt blanket.

## Additional Activities

Discover our past and learn our history in the "museum" room

Visit and support our many vendors

Our tapestry of Franciscan tee-shirts from past Quinquennials and other Franciscan celebratory events forms a beautiful blanket of warm and joyful memories that wraps us in love and comfort. We want you to feel that love and kindness throughout your Quinquennial experience. Do you recognize any from years the past? Maybe you donated a couple of tee-shirts so the project was able to be completed.

***Please take advantage of the early Registration through the end of December.***

*We are striving to make this Quinquennial as affordable as possible so we can be together as brothers and sisters of Francis in next year's historic celebration!*

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS

The quinquennial committee has taken note of suggestions and recommendations, and has earnestly prayed to capture some of those recommendations in the Breakout Session offerings. Each session is designed be a concise, spiritual, and enlightening presentation that will touch your hearts and help integrate the spirit St. Francis into your life. There are a plethora of topics from which to choose. The Lord spoke to the presenters as they organized their presentations. Now the question is — how does the Lord speak to your heart through the titles? What does He want you to do? May you be open to the Holy Spirit gently whispering to you as you select the Breakout Sessions.

***For the schedule, name, short bio of presenters and description of the breakout sessions, please go to the Secular Franciscan Order-USA website and click on the Quinquennial tab and Breakout sessions.***

- Q & A session - Fr. David Couturier, OFM Cap.
- Q & A session - Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv.
- Q & A session - Marion & Doug Clorey, OFS/Kathy & Tim Taormina, OFS/Lori Hinker, OFS
- Spiritual Assistants - CNSA - A time for all Spiritual Assistants to gather, pray and discuss.
- How do I become a Spiritual Assistant? - CNSA
- Gathering of Provincials, Provincials Spiritual Assistants and Regional Spiritual Assistants - CNSA
- National Formation Commission Panel
- Young People: A Treasure to Cherish - FY/YA Commission
- Get Your Fraternity Ready for YouFra!
- Strength for the Journey: The Prayer Before the Crucifix - FY/YA Commission
- Christus Vivit - “to young people and to the entire people of God” - Pope Francis
- And I Showed Mercy to Them: A Franciscan Response to Migrants and Refugees (Panel discussion)
- The Gubbio Process: A Franciscan Approach to Handling Conflict
- The Leper in Me Sees the Leper in You: Understanding Unconscious Bias
- The Spirituality of Justice, Peace, and Care for Creation
- Conversion and the Memoriale Propositi
- Art as a Form of Prayer
- Liturgical Movement
- Andiamo, Walk to Assisi
- Praying with St. Clare of Assisi
- The Importance of Franciscan Tradition in the Formation of Modern Culture
- Revitalizing Our Lives as Franciscans: Ethical Challenges and Leadership
- Ser franciscano en la era digital
- Convertirse en coautores en oración con Francis
- Becoming Co-Authors in Prayer with Francis
- Inspiraciones del Espíritu Santo en un proceso de conversión
- Reza siempre
- Un viaje franciscano hasta ahora
- 세인트 프랜시스즈의 추종자 (Followers of St. Francis)
- Bread Making Prayer with Blessed Virgin Mary
- The Loom of God
- God’s Gift of Difference

### \* In the spirit of celebration of our 2022 Franciscan JUBILEE \*

We invite you to share your business or personal message in the 2022 Quinquennial program booklet!



#### Inside Pages

Full Page-\$200      Half Page-\$120  
 Quarter Page-\$65      Business Card-\$35  
 Patron-\$25 (name appears in list)

Book size: 8.5" x 11"

Ad sizes:

Full Page: 7.5 x 10      Half Page: 7.5 x 5  
 Quarter Page 5 x 5      Business Card Size



*Be a part of acknowledging our blessings and our praising of their origins:*  
 For more information, please contact Kim at 831.277.3994 or [rdrbee@gmail.com](mailto:rdrbee@gmail.com)

# QUINQUENNIAL CONGRESS SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

	Wednesday 8/3	Thursday 8/4	Friday 8/5	Saturday 8/6	Sunday 8/7	
7:30 - 8:00 am	Set up	<b>Opening Prayer</b> Liturgy of the Hours	<b>Opening Prayer</b> Office of the Passion of St. Francis	<b>Opening Prayer</b> Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Travel	
8:00 - 9:00 am		<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Breakfast</b>		
9:00 - 10:30 am	Registration	Keynote Speaker Fr. Couturier, OFM Cap.	Keynote Speaker Bishop Stowe, OFM Conv.	Keynote Speakers Kathy and Tim Taormina, OFS Lori Hinker, OFS Doug and Marion Clorey, OFS		
10:30 - 11:00 am		<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>		
11:00 am - Noon		Little Fraternities	Little Fraternities	<b>Lunch</b>		
Noon - 1:00 pm	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	Little Fraternities		
1:00 - 1:30 pm				<i>Break</i>		
1:30 - 2:30 pm	Registration	<b>Breakout Sessions</b>	<b>Breakout Sessions</b>	<b>Breakout Sessions</b>		
2:30 - 3:00 pm		<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>	<b>Service Project</b>		
3:00 - 4:00 pm		<b>Breakout Sessions</b>	CIOFS			
4:00 - 4:30 pm		<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>			
4:30 - 5:00 pm	<b>4:45 pm Dinner</b> sit w/Little Fraternities			<i>Break</i>		
5:00 - 5:30 pm		<b>MASS</b>	<b>MASS</b>	<b>5:30 - 6:30 pm Dinner</b>		
5:30 - 6:00 pm	Registration					
6:00 - 6:30 pm						
6:30 - 7:00 pm						
7:00 - 8:00 pm	<b>Welcome and MASS</b>	<b>Dinner</b>	<b>Dinner</b>	<b>MASS and Closing</b>		
8:00 - 9:00 pm	Registration	<b>Evening Prayer</b> Taizé led by St. Mary's YouFra	Prayer Experience Movement	Jesse Manibusan Concert		Travel

# SECULAR FRANCISCAN BOOKS

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:**  
*Our policies have changed*

**PAYMENT MUST ACCOMPANY ORDER.**  
Please send check or money order; we do not take any cards.  
If necessary, pre-payment can be waived on bulk orders.  
Please consult OFS-USA Treasurer Claudia Kauzlarich  
at [claudiakauz.sfo@gmail.com](mailto:claudiakauz.sfo@gmail.com)

**Franciscan Journey #501E**  
By Lester Bach, O.F.M. CAP. A new SFO formation book for use in the USA, covering Orientation, Inquiry and Candidacy. English, 5½ x 8½ in., 375 pgs.  
#501E 1-9 copies . . . . . \$18.00 ea + S/H  
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Spanish language version. 5½ x 8½ in., 400 pgs.  
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**Waiting for LOVE #550**  
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**Rule Book (Spanish) #111S**  
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**English Language:**  
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#107S same prices as above

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