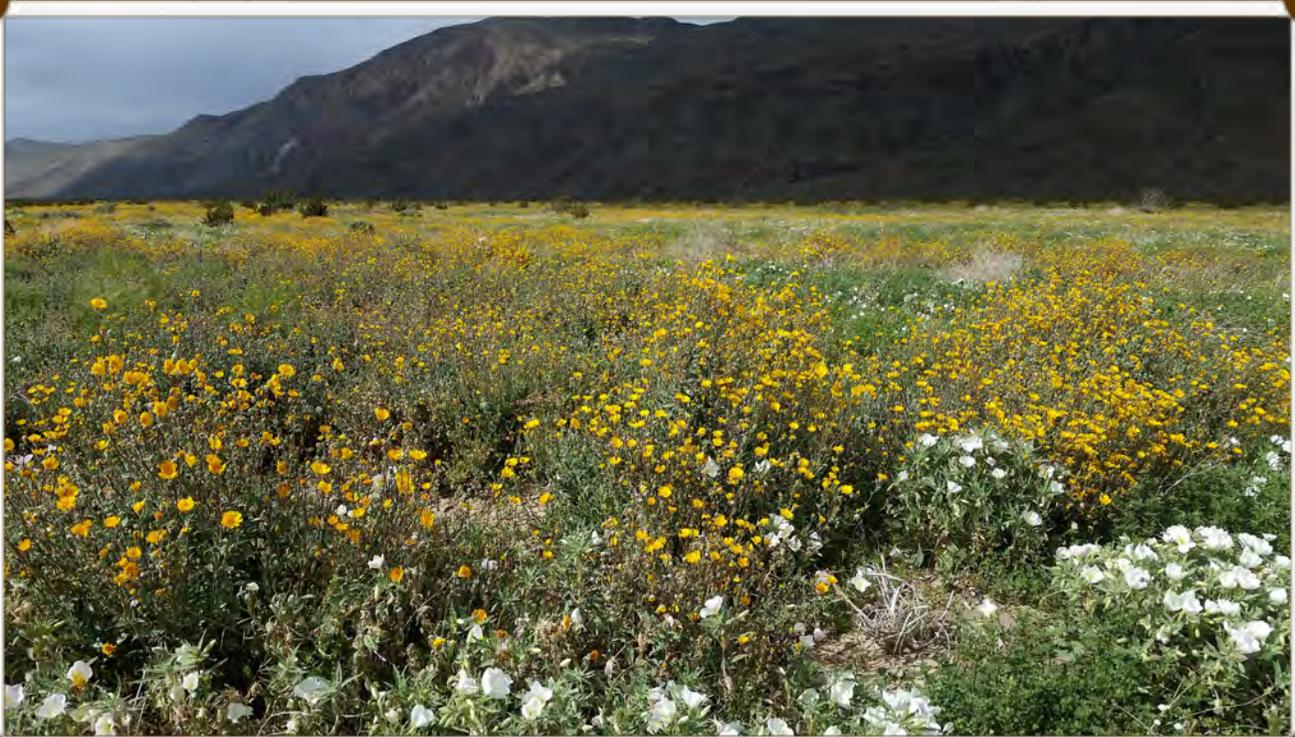


TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

Spring 2019 Issue 97

WILDFLOWER SUPER BLOOM 2019 ANZA-BORREGO DESERT, CALIFORNIA



*Praised be you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth,
who sustains us and directs us bringing forth all kinds of
fruits and colored flowers and herbs.*

St. Francis - Canticle of the Creatures

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANIEL WESLEY

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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Contents

Minister's Message	1
<i>by Jan Parker, OFS</i>	
Sharing the Vision	2
<i>by National Executive Council</i>	
Demographics 2018	4
<i>by Mary Bittner, OFS</i>	
Formation	5
<i>by Justin Carisio, OFS</i>	
CIOFS Report	6
<i>by Willie Guadalupe, OFS</i>	
Justice, Peace and Care for Creation	7
<i>by Carolyn Townes, OFS</i>	
Spiritual Assistance.	9
<i>by Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, T.O.R.</i>	
News and Views.	11
<i>by Lester Bach, OFM Cap.</i>	
Ecumenical/Interfaith Commission	13
<i>by Michael Carsten, OFS</i>	
Hatred Transformed	15
<i>by Kathy Taormina, OFS</i>	
Franciscan Living.	17
<i>by Francine Gikow, OFS</i>	
Youth and Young Adults Commission	18
<i>By Kathleen Molaro, OFS</i>	
Financial Report	19
<i>By Claudia Kauzlarich, OFS</i>	
Fraternal Communion	21
<i>By Mary Bittner, OFS</i>	
Quinquennial 2021.	22
Summar Seminar	23
Pilgrimages to Italy	24
Smoky Valley Publishing	25

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Note:

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



OFS-USA

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER-USA

NATIONAL MINISTER'S MESSAGE

by Jan Parker, OFS

THE RULE: REBAR FOR CONCRETE CHRISTIAN LIVES

Thirty-five years ago, a wise Capuchin friar handed me a copy of *The Ideals of St. Francis of Assisi*,¹ and suggested I read it. It was a pivotal moment. I can still picture the outdoor wooden stairway where I sat down, opened this book and read for hours. I remember the cool breeze as night fell, and how thankful I was for the porch light. I did not want to put this book down. Each chapter made my heart sing a joyful “yes!”

That book was my first study of Franciscan spirituality. Here I began to learn what distinguishes St. Francis, and what constitutes his individuality, his personality, his soul, his spirit, his genius – his ideals. This book explores these ideals one by one: “Francis and the Gospel,” “Francis and Christ,” “Francis and the Eucharist,” “Francis and the Church,” “Francis and His Love of Poverty,” continuing with chapters on Franciscan Livelihood, Humility, Obedience, Simplicity, Chastity, Penance, Joy, Brotherliness, Charity, Peace, Apostolate, Science (yes, science!), Piety, and Nature. It was during this time that I was beginning to learn, too, about the Franciscan Order. How delighted I was to discover that there was a Rule that incorporated these ideals! I embraced this Rule as a way to develop and live the ideals of St. Francis. I made my profession, and from that day

forward, the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order has been the rebar of my life. Rebar?

It was Cal Prewitt who introduced me to the importance of rebar. Cal was a great friend, a fellow parishioner, and an engineer who helped oversee the construction of our new church. One day, as we toured the newly-poured foundation, Cal explained that rebar (short for reinforcing bar) is a steel bar or mesh of steel wires used to increase the tensile strength of concrete. He went on to say that rebar greatly increases the amount of stress that concrete can withstand before breaking, then added, “You know, the values we hold onto in life are like rebar – like steel giving strength to concrete.” The image stuck.



Here is a reinforced concrete column, seen before and after the concrete has been cast in place around the rebar cage.

Rebar is a good image for how I see the Rule working in my life. The ideals embedded in our OFS Rule are very much like steel bars, encased deep in the center of my being. They give fundamental support to my life. They reinforce me, keep me from breaking away, and help me stay strong and true to my vocation, especially in times of stress. These Franciscan reinforcement bars guide and direct my actions.

This analogy of rebar returned to mind a few months ago when Pope Francis gave a homily

¹ *The Ideals of St. Francis of Assisi* by Hilarin Felder OFM Cap., translated by Berchmans Bittle OFM Cap., published by Benziger Brothers, Printers to the Holy Apostolic See, copyrighted 1925.

about how our Christian lives need to be **concrete**. He reflected on the different opposites stressed in Matthew 7:21-27, notably between “saying and doing”:

“To say is a way of believing, but very superficial, half-way: I say I’m a Christian, but I don’t act like a Christian. To say it simply, it’s a bit like making oneself up as a Christian: only to say it is to make oneself up, to say without doing.” **On the contrary, “Jesus’ proposal is concrete, always concrete.** When someone approaches you and asks for advice, it’s always for concrete things. **The works of mercy are concrete.”**

Another opposition: rock and sand. Sand is “a consequence of saying”; it leads to a life “without foundations.” The Lord is the rock, “He is the force. However, very often one who trusts in the Lord doesn’t seem to have success; he is hidden . . . **but he is solid.** He doesn’t have hope in words, in vanity, in pride, in the ephemeral powers of life,” but in the Lord, stressed the Pontiff. **“The concrete aspect of the Christian life makes us advance and build on that rock which is God, which is**

Jesus, on the divinity’s solidity — *not on appearances or vanity, pride, recommendations... no, on the truth.*”

Third opposition: the vain and the humble. The Holy Father quoted the Magnificat: **“The Lord raises the humble, who are in the concreteness of the everyday, and brings down the arrogant, those who build their life on vanity, pride . . . they don’t last.”**

Secular Franciscans should certainly exemplify this **concrete living** our Holy Father speaks of – living solid Christian lives on the foundation that is Christ. The rebar of our Rule is there to reinforce our efforts. As our sister St. Clare says, **“Hold fast.”**

As we close this Jubilee Year in celebration of the 40th Anniversary of our Rule, let’s make it a celebration not just of our Rule, but *of our lives* as Secular Franciscans. We must be resolute. There’s no point in celebrating the Rule unless we celebrate *how we are living it*. Let’s celebrate today and every day by living **concrete Christian lives**, grateful for the Rule and the rebar that it is.

SHARING THE VISION

Report from the National Executive Council (NEC)

40th Anniversary of the Rule – Our Jubilee Year Continues!

Our national goal is that every local fraternity dedicate at least one formation session to the OFS Rule between now and June 24, 2019. Ready-made presentations on the Rule can be found on our OFS-USA website (secularfranciscansusa.org) under “Resources.” We would appreciate seeing photos of your celebration of the Rule, or any photos of your fraternity or regional happenings. Please send photos to ofsusasecretary@gmail.com

Formation “Visioning Initiatives” Workshop

The National Formation Commission, in collaboration with the NEC, has invited a number of qualified professed members and Spiritual Assistants to a Formation “Visioning Initiatives” Workshop on April 4-7, 2019. At this workshop we will further develop the ideas that came from the August 2018 Visioning Workshop and set up task force groups, each focusing on a particular aspect of formation. The proposed Task Force topics are:

1. The Rule and Constitutions
2. Sacred Scripture
3. Franciscan Sources
4. Fraternity
5. Franciscan Spirituality
6. Inclusivity and Special Needs
7. For Up to Now - Foundational Topics for Initial Formation (FUN Manual)

After this workshop, we will be reaching out to other professed members throughout the United States to ask them to offer their gifts and talents to assist with the task forces.

National Gathering of Regional Spiritual Assistants

The Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) will facilitate a National Gathering of Regional Spiritual Assistants, August 26-29, 2019, to be held at Mercy Retreat and Conference Center in St. Louis, MO. The keynote will be presented by Fr. Michael Higgins, T.O.R., President of Franciscan School of Theology, Oceanside, CA. Fr. Michael is a former T.O.R. General Minister who has worked with Secular Franciscans for 20 years. The following will be addressed:

- Guidelines for training suitable and competent Seculars for their role as Spiritual Assistants.
- Interpretation of Canon Law in appointing and delegating Spiritual Assistants with respect to the *Altius Moderamen*.
- Communication between CNSA and Regional Spiritual Assistants.
- Pastoral issues: “the signs of the times”; how to reach out by listening and dialoging; finding the road to mercy within the Rule in dealing with hate speech, incivility in discourse, same-sex orientation, invalid marriages, etc.
- How to maintain relationships while facing decreasing numbers of friars and increasing numbers of non-friar Spiritual Assistants

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) – National Gathering

Save the date for an upcoming National Gathering for JPIC Animators and other interested OFS members. The topic is “Handling Conflict with Lessons from St. Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio.” Place and Date: Marianist Retreat Center, St. Louis, MO., from Thursday evening, Aug 29, through Sunday, Sept. 1, 2019. For more information, contact Carolyn Townes at ctownes26@gmail.com.

OFS-USA Facebook Page – Photos Needed

Our new team of OFS-USA Facebook editors are Jane DeRose-Bamman, Diane Menditto, Lee Potts, and Cherryle Fruge. Randy Heinz continues as the administrator. The purpose of our OFS-USA Facebook page is to share inspirational messages and the good news of our Order. *Please send photos of your local and regional fraternity happenings to Jane DeRose-Bamman at ofsusasecretary@gmail.com.*

Vocations Tool Kit

A reminder that the OFS-USA Vocations Toolkit makes it very easy to present a “Come and See” event. All materials in the Toolkit are available in English, Spanish and Korean, and the prayer card is also available in Vietnamese. (For a copy of the Vocations Tool Kit go to <https://secularfranciscansusa.org/guidelines-forms-other-resources>.)



National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order - USA
Annual Demographics - 2018

<i>Number of Local/Regional Fraternities in National Fraternity</i>	January 1, 2018	December 31, 2018
Canonically established Local Fraternities:	593	586
Emerging Local Fraternities:	43	45
Canonically established but inactive Local Fraternities:	54	54
<i>In the National Fraternity</i>	January 1, 2018	December 31, 2018
Number of permanently professed members:	11,807	11,604
Number of inquirers and candidates in formation:	1,762	1,827
Number of OFS permanent deacons:	96	96
Number of OFS diocesan priests:	30	30
Number of OFS Bishops:	0	0
<i>Number of Local Spiritual Assistants in the National Fraternity</i>	January 1, 2018	December 31, 2018
OFS:	96	77
OFS Conv:	33	27
OFS Cap:	54	42
TOR:	17	14
Poor Clares:	7	6
3 rd Order Franciscan religious brothers and sisters:	64	46
Other religious brothers and sisters:	9	6
Diocesan priest/deacons:	46	49
Members of OFS:	95	75
TOTAL number of local spiritual assistants:	421	359*
Number of Local Fraternities without Spiritual Assistants:	151	147

*Note that many of our local spiritual assistants now serve more than one fraternity.

We have been working to find Spiritual Assistants for all our local fraternities. Although we have made some progress, 25% of local fraternities in the US (the same percentage as one year ago) still have no assigned Spiritual Assistant. The shortage of Spiritual Assistants is more acute in certain areas of the country. Eight of our 30 Regions report that eight or more of their local fraternities are without a Spiritual Assistant.

Prepared Spring 2019



FORMATION COMMISSION

THE PROLOGUE: LENS OF THE RULE

by Justin Carisio, OFS

When we speak of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, we tend to mean the 26 articles of the Rule of 1978 that describe the nature of the order, the way of life a Secular Franciscan commits to, and life in fraternity. Seldom do we have in mind the stunning document that precedes those articles, what we know as the “Prologue: Exhortation of St. Francis to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance.”¹ Yet careful consideration suggests that the Prologue should be the starting point for any study, discussion, or meditation on the Rule.

The Prologue is an original document written by St. Francis sometime between 1209 and 1215. The translation that accompanies English publications of the Rule is that of Marion A. Habig, OFM.² A translation more reflective of contemporary scholarship can be found in *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents, Vol. I*, where it is called the *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance*.³ (Historically, different titles have been assigned to the document, including the *First Version of the Letter to All the Faithful* and the “Volterra text.”)

The *Earlier Exhortation* has been referred to as the “primitive Rule.” Inasmuch as it is fundamentally an exhortation, it represents a “form of life” that Francis intended for the lay penitents associated with his movement.⁴ These men and women were living “more intensely their baptismal commitment through a life of penance.”⁵ How the *Earlier Exhortation* became the Prologue is a bit of a mystery. In his classic study of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, Robert Stewart, OFM, said it was inserted into our Rule without comment by the four Ministers General of the friar orders late in the process of approving the Rule, adding that, “the *Earlier Exhortation* remains the lens through which the Rule of 1978 must be understood and interpreted.”⁶

Physically, a lens is something that “forms an image by focusing rays of light.” Figuratively, it “facilitates and influences perception, comprehension, or evaluation.”⁷ The Prologue works both ways with respect to our Rule. It helps form an image of Secular Franciscan identity: We are to be “spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It reminds us that our way of life is Trinitarian, Christocentric, and Catholic. It also facilitates our self-perception as Franciscans by representing to us the founding charism of our order, which is *penance*. In another Franciscan early document, *The Legend of the Three Companions*, we read that Francis

and the first friars, when asked where they were from, “said simply that they were *penitents* [emphasis added] originally from the city of Assisi.”⁸ In his history of the Third Order, Raffaele Pazzelli, TOR, underscores that as time went on, “‘penance’ remained the primary characteristic of only the Order of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance.”⁹

That image is projected in Article 7 of the Rule, which describes our vocation as “brothers and sisters of penance.” In the modern Church, we are used to thinking of penance as something that occurs within our hearts. Indeed, Article 7 adds, “let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel calls ‘conversion.’” Lino Tempèrni, TOR, emphasizes that, “the term ‘penance’ in Franciscan spirituality is equivalent to the biblical meaning of *metanoia*, understood as an intimate conversion of the heart to God, as a continuous state of being. It is not a question of doing penance but of being penitent.”¹⁰ Or to refine further, “penance is not a state, but a journey that leads to God.”¹¹

In the *Earlier Exhortation*, Francis is indeed concerned with being penitent. Yet he is also committed to *doing* penance. He exhorts us to no fewer than five actions: love God totally; love our neighbor as ourselves; hate our sinful tendencies; receive the Body and Blood of Christ in a worthy manner; produce good fruits of penance.¹² That he intends something visible and concrete about being a penitent is unmistakable, because our lives “must give life to others by example.” Thus, when we view our Rule through the lens of the Prologue, we experience Francis teaching us “that the embrace of penance brings about a profound change in our relationships with God, a change that we can understand only in light of the revelation of Jesus.”¹³

With the passage of more than 40 years, it appears that the inclusion of the *Earlier Exhortation* as the Prologue to the Secular Franciscan Rule of 1978 was providential. The Prologue enables us to reach across the centuries to touch our earliest brother and sister secular Franciscans. It announces our call to conversion and holiness. It warns us that a refusal to do penance “makes us slaves to the world” and has consequences in this life and the next. Above all, it makes manifest in our present-day fraternities the authentic voice and mind of Francis, penitent from Assisi.

¹All citations from the Rule of 1978 are from <https://secularfranciscansusa.org/the-rule-of-the-secular-franciscan-order> (accessed February 28, 2019).

²Robert M. Stewart, OFM, “*De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam*” *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation*, Istituto Storico Dei Cappuccini, 1991, 31.

³Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., et al., editors, *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents, Volume I, The Saint*, New City Press, 1999, 41.

⁴Stewart, 85

⁵Ibid., 137.

⁶Ibid., 311.

⁷<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lens> (accessed February 23, 2019).

⁸Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., et al., editors, *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents, Volume II, The Founder*, New City Press, 1999, 90

⁹Raffaele Pazzelli, TOR, *St. Francis and the Third Order, The Franciscan and pre-Franciscan Penitential Movement*, Franciscan Herald Press, 1989, 125, 127.

¹⁰Lino Temperini, TOR, *Penitential Spirituality in the Franciscan Sources*, Franciscan Publications, 1983, 41.

¹¹Pazzelli, 120.

¹²For a Secular Franciscan perspective on these exhortations see Ed Zablocki, SFO, “Our Work as a Means of Doing Penance,” https://www.nafra-sfo.org/work_commission_resources/Work%20Commission%20Manual/Sec_C_No.16%20work%20as%20penance.pdf (accessed February 27, 2019).

¹³Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., *St. Francis of Assisi, Writings for a Gospel Life*, Crossroad Publishing, 1994, 40.



ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS Concilium Internationale (CIOFS) Initiatives

by Awilda Guadalupe, OFS, International Councilor

Family Commission

On February 11, 2019, the International Family Commission sent a letter to all OFS and Franciscan Youth International Councilors that addressed the annual theme for the year 2019 of the Family Commission. They continue to focus on what was assumed as a priority in the 2014 General Chapter, which invites us "to include the meaning of sexuality and the sacrament of marriage in all formation programs of the OFS and YouFra."

The theme for the 2019 Family Commission, which is meant as a guide is:

“The family in the different encyclicals and the Catechism of the Catholic Church”

Each fraternity should evaluate and reflect on the material found on <http://ciofs.org/portal/index.php/en/>. The Family Commission is inviting fraternities that would like to share their training materials with other national fraternities to send them to the Family Commission through the CIOFS Secretariat.

International Secretariat, Segreteria CIOFS
Via Vittorio Putti, 4, Int. 6, 00152 Rome, Italia
Tel. 0039 06 45471722 - Fax. 0039 06 45473094
E-mail: ciofs@ciofs.org

Presidency Meeting (March 16-23, 2019)

“The members of the CIOFS Presidency, meeting in Rome in November, discussed the progress of work on implementing the decisions of the 2017 General Chapter, particularly establishing permanent offices; namely, a Formation Office, a Communications Office,

and a Secretariat for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC). Several considerations arose, such as physical vs. virtual offices, and the challenge of people from different parts of the globe working together on the various teams. They worked on guidelines and job descriptions, and they noted that some countries have submitted names of qualified and interested Secular Franciscans for the various areas. They gave approvals to moving ahead with strategic planning and organizing of each of the permanent offices. In addition to continuing to develop and refine formation materials, the Formation Commission was encouraged to flesh out and develop a program on Franciscans and their finances.”

This year CIOFS Presidency meeting took place from 16-23 March in San Giovanni Rotondo. The 7-day work began with the celebration of the Eucharist and the discussion of different issues regarding the Fraternal life of our Order. The Presidency members, in addition to tackling a host of business items and topical issues, scheduled a robust series of visits to national fraternities around the globe for 2019.

A Franciscan life well lived

On March 18, 2019, brother Paulo Machado da Costa and Silva passed away at the aged 101, his life marked by his fraternal presence and a dedication to the Franciscan charism in a special way to the OFS, with consistency and love. He was the National Minister of the OFS Brazil and the international councilor. He was a collaborator in the drafting of the Rule of the OFS, approved by Pope Paul VI in June 1978, and in the drafting of the General Constitutions *ad experimentum*.

“Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death, from whom no one living can escape. (...) Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will, for the second death shall do them no harm.” (The Canticle of the Creatures)



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND FRATERNAL LIFE

By Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, National JPIC Animator

A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ. (OFS Rule, Art. 13b)

When we think about Catholic Social Teaching (CST), we tend to think of musty old volumes of writings dating back three centuries that have no impact or effect on our lives today. Nothing could be further from the truth. Catholic Social Teaching is a body of work that affects us today just as much as it did three centuries ago; perhaps even more so. In the simplest terms, CST is an invitation to a relationship with God and with all of God's creation – God's people and God's world. God has always desired a relationship with His people; but He wants us to return the favor. Catholic Social Teaching is the expression of that relationship. It helps us have a right and just relationship with God and God's creation.

relationships, you must spend quality time with the people in those relationships. During this quality time, you dialogue, you listen, and you get to know the other person. In the same way, we must spend time with God to get to know Him. From that relationship, we are better able to be with our brothers and sisters – in family, in community, and in fraternity. Catholic Social Teaching is about being in relationship and making sure that relationship is vibrant, healthy and strong.

“Our culture is tempted to turn inward, becoming indifferent and sometimes isolationist in the face of international responsibilities. Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences.” (US Catholic Bishops)



I am reminded of the line from the song from the movie *Funny Girl* starring Barbra Streisand: “*People who need people are the luckiest people in the world.*” And yet I know that some people don't feel so lucky.

Think about all the relationships you have in your life. In order to strengthen and nurture those

Today, more than ever, we need our communities and fraternities. Biological families are either quite spread apart or dwindling. Loneliness has heightened, and more and more people are hiding behind the screens of their online devices. Research has shown that more people would rather text another person than to sit and talk with them face to face. I know from experience the danger of trying to communicate via texts and emails. Words get misinterpreted and meaning is misunderstood. You cannot convey

tone, and there is no eye contact or body language to gauge.

Building fraternal life in our isolationist society is more important than ever before. How we encounter one another is an essential part of building fraternal or community life. The social doctrine of the Catholic Church teaches us how to be in communion with one another, especially with those who are more vulnerable and on the margins of society. Is someone in your fraternity on the margins of society? Are they more vulnerable because of their socio-economic status? Dialoguing with them will uncover new ways of assisting them to become more vibrant in their lives and in the fraternity. Could this be part of your ongoing formation? Forgo the books for a month or two, and just have some good old-fashioned dialogue. It is said that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. This builds community, and community builds vibrant, healthy fraternal life.



~ SAVE THE DATE ~

**National Gathering of
Justice, Peace and Integrity
of Creation Animators**

**"Handling Conflict with Lessons from
St. Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio"**

**Thursday 29 August -
Sunday 1 September 2019**

**Marianist Retreat and
Conference Center in St.
Louis, MO**

For more information
email Carolyn Townes OFS
ctownes26@gmail.com

The Gift

By Kathleen Collins, OFS

Francis, did you worry as I do
About the journey, the meaning of it all
As you wandered through the woods
Enthralled by beauty, overwhelmed with awe
At the hand of the Creator in the smallest flower?
Was your heart brought to tears
At the sight of the nursing fawn
Or the devotion of the nesting birds?
What did you do with all this wonder
All this beauty that the Lord sent you
Each moment of your life?
Why, of course! You sent it out into the world
A kiss to the leper, a song to the tired, a sign to
the world
And down through the ages to me
A poor pilgrim like yourself
Separated by time but not by love

OFS Conference at St. Bonaventure University in New York

"Enduring Presence: Franciscan Laity, Their Relevance Today"

July 12-14, 2019 - Led by Darleen Pryds, Ph.D., associate professor of spirituality and history, Franciscan School of Theology, Oceanside, CA. Conference Fee: \$400. This workshop/retreat examines the unique roles of lay women and lay men in the early years of Franciscan life and explores their relevance for lay practitioners today. Contact Pat Serotkin at pserotkin@francis.edu



Recognize Fraternal Life: Relationship

Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, T.O.R.

We live in a world of change. We witness a significant re-ordering of our social fabric almost at the blink of an eye. The cultural, moral, and spiritual framework in which we live is evolving dramatically. This is the context where our Franciscan witness to the Rule is challenged. Fraternity members are immersed in society. We are acutely aware of the power and influence of many streams of thought and prevailing attitudes on the lives of people.

The discussions and the sharing of experiences in our formation gatherings, in order to “*exercise our responsibilities competently in the Christian spirit of service, we together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively*” (Rule 14).

The heart of our Franciscan living is the reality of relationship. It is this bond of mutual love that forms the center of Franciscan evangelical life. To live the Gospel and to follow in the footsteps of Jesus means to build up the kingdom by living in loving relationships (*RegB III: 10-14*). For Francis, the word “fraternity” identifies this relationship that each of us has with Jesus our brother.

For St Francis, fraternity is his radical living in solidarity with all of humanity and creation. From the poetry and prayer of the *Canticle of the Creatures* to the *Story of the Wolf of Gubbio* and exemplified in the *Encounter with the Sultan*, Francis’ heart rests in the faithful recognition of his relationship with the other. “The strongest and most demanding love is

that which is required with regard to those to whom we have committed our lives” (*Thaddee Matura, “Fraternity,” 112*). Such love is an active self-emptying love that frees our hearts from self-interest, in a daily conversion, which builds up the bonds of fraternity. Its absence undermines and breaks this bond.

When ruptures inevitably occur despite the best of intentions, the remedy of reconciliation becomes essential in fraternity life, to ask for forgiveness and to receive forgiveness (*EpMin 9-12*). We make peace with one another in a spirit of kindness and humility, accepting one another without preconditions, being realistic and merciful, and exercised in fraternal equality, blended together with our love of God, is the central value of our Franciscan vocation (*Matura, “Fraternity,” 117*). The Kingdom of God is realized when we live in loving relationships.

Living the Gospel means accepting to live with our sisters and brothers -- all of them -- bearing witness of God’s infinite patience, His inexhaustible forgiveness, His constantly renewed grace. To have the heart of God in our hearts. “Thy Kingdom come.” Is this not the kind of witness to be given for the light of the Gospel to shine in a murky world in which we serve? -- in peace, justice, and in love. Fraternity becomes the place, and increasingly, the place of compassion and relationship.



National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order – USA
CONFERENCE OF SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS

The Conference of Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) is comprised of appointed members of the four obediences (Orders) of the First Order and Third Order Regular. They serve the National Fraternity in the same way that Regional Spiritual Assistants serve their Regions, and local Spiritual Assistants serve their Fraternities, to strengthen the bond of the Franciscan Family.



Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, T.O.R

President-in-Turn

Provincial Spiritual Assistant, Immaculate Conception Province, T.O.R.

Regional Spiritual Assistant, Lady Poverty Region

Priest Chaplain at Altoona Regional Health System

St. Joseph Friary, Hollidaysburg, PA



Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM

Provincial Spiritual Assistant, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (OFM) Province

Guardian, Holy Dormition Byzantine Franciscan Friary, Sybertsville, PA

Pastor, St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church, Hazelton, PA



Br. Alexander Escalera, OFM Cap.

Provincial Spiritual Assistant, Western America OFM Capuchin Province, Burlingame, CA

Regional Spiritual Assistant, St. Junipero Serra Region



Fr. Giles Gilbert, OFM Conv.

St. Bonaventure Province, OFM Conventual

Regional Spiritual Assistant, Franciscans of the Prairie Region, OFS

Parochial Vicar, Holy Family Catholic Church, Peoria, IL



The Franciscan family, as one among many spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church, unites all members of the people of God - laity, religious, and priests - who recognize that they are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi.

In various ways and forms, but in life-giving union with each other, they intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church. OFS Rule #1.

Reading the TAU-USA helps increase our awareness of important Franciscan issues. The TAU articles both support and challenge us. Individually we are limited. But prompted by the Holy Spirit and practicing good dialogue, Franciscan fraternities can accomplish much.

We Franciscans face decisions that need gospel reflection. We initiate programs and changes that flow from the gospel-spirit of St Francis of Assisi. We have many choices. Personal gospel experiences, shared with one another, offer opportunities and practical decisions to implement Franciscan values and practices. The OFS Rule and Constitutions point out ways to bring about changes - slowly but surely.

Religious, political and economic skills help us deal with many issues, whether personal or social. Positions, power and money push many people to act like gods - (Don't!). The gospel goal of loving one another, forgiving self and others etc, requires that we engage in *ongoing formation* (conversion) in our Franciscan way of life.

We deal with many physical or psychological issues; normal daily living and accidents bring problems. Destructive attitudes isolate people. Addictions plus health-care expenses require more than we can afford. Many social issues create hopelessness or separation. As Franciscans we choose to be people who show compassion and concern for people in need.

A reasonable income is required for life in the USA. Marriage and the birth of babies bring a need for new love as well as expenses that are not always easy to pay. Practical help can be sought through our Franciscan community. When old age arrives or Sister Death shows up, we offer help through concern and compassion. Our ongoing faith-growth can be helped by Michael Carsten's recommendation of the 3-volume series called: Vatican II in Plain English by Bill Huebsch - Ave Maria Press. (Cf: Page 24 of TAU-USA - Winter 2018-19) * *It is good reading for ongoing faith-formation.* *

Human needs are all around us. Some needs develop from a lack of skills. Our skills do not always fit present needs. Folks who retire find that costs don't go away and bills keep coming to their home address. Politics often create programs that are more destructive than loving, and which ignore gospel values - something we cannot ignore!

Franciscans need nourishment. Franciscans invest time, skills, prayer and/or money (Often all four) when called upon for assistance. We place our personal gifts at the disposal of people in need and in the development of a vibrant fraternal life. Sharing time, personal presence or skills are important. Sometimes we listen or share time with people who feel trapped and need a listening ear. A solution for issues may take time to find. We may need to find people who can help. As Franciscans we feel free to seek each others' help. People skills offer help in dealing with problem issues within and beyond fraternity life.

We recognize our personal need for help to understand and deal with specific problems. Sharing our skills helps us deal with many issues. Living the Gospel, loving neighbors, trying to love enemies, getting help when I don't know what to do, is part of our community love-in-action.

"In various ways and forms, but in life-giving union with each other, they intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father (Francis of Assisi) in the life and mission of the Church." OFS Rule -Article #1

Dialogue teaches us and moves us in a good direction. We initiate *ongoing formation when we're together* at fraternity gatherings or at other times when we dialogue with one another. Our common spirit brings deepened relationships, plus a concerned, loving spirit to situations of need -OR- we celebrate our joyful times together - strengthening our bonds of love.

Secular Franciscans, ... are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the Kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. OFS Rule #14

We who claim to be the Church, we who claim to be the Body of Christ, must resemble Christ as much as possible. We must take the part of the poor whenever we can; we must defend those without power; we must avoid seeking our own glory and act with humility and self-sacrifice for the good of all. ... The Church itself, like its members, is always in need of being renewed and forgiven, purified for its mission, ...
Vatican II in Plain English - Vol 2 - Page 30

The Trinity

The Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
- Their nature is to Love -
Their precious gift is to love all of creation,
especially the human creation.
It flows from their nature
as Trinity - which is 'LOVE.'

The "Word" is made flesh
in a silent night. His name is 'Jesus.'
Jesus teaches us about
love in action,
touching us through his human nature.
His divine nature gives him
a Trinitarian focus -
one with the Trinity - which is Love.

The Trinity shares
words, actions, healing,
forgiveness, compassion,
actions and words that flow from love
as lived and taught by Jesus
through his humanity.

Jesus tells us that he shares
with us what he hears from the Father.
Dealing with
the human family,
the Trinity knows the importance
of the Holy Spirit.
The Holy Spirit is sent
to enable us to live the life
and spirit that Jesus shares with us.

The Holy Spirit helps us
to love everyone - family, neighbors,
enemies, strangers, rich and poor people,
friends, soldiers, mean people, people who
do not believe in God, sinners of all kinds
(Who may even be us or people in our family.)
or politicians, employers and employees,
power people, media people, children,
cowards, bullies, and many people who
either don't know Jesus or ignore him,
or the people who are called to
follow Jesus' words and actions -
in the footsteps of St. Francis
and St. Clare.

As Jesus puts it, the Father
sends the Holy Spirit:
*"but the advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the
Father will send in my name, will teach you
everything and remind you of all that
I have told you."*
John 14:26 (REB)

Sometimes we find it difficult to live
according to the Trinitarian tradition.
But fear not! Jesus, his Father
and the Holy Spirit
enable us to follow the path
that Jesus reveals to us
in the Gospel.

Jesus teaches, by word and example,
how to walk through daily life,
learning how to love one another.

The Trinity relates to us
in all kinds of situations.
They were with me
when cutting hay on the farm,
through people I meet,
through cabinets I made,
through talks I have given,
or books I have written,
or ministries I engaged in,
or letters I have written,
through surgeries, or raking leaves,
or driving a bulldozer
or taking quiet reflective time.

*"This faith becomes clearer,
more meaningful, more
believable to others
when believers practice it
in every aspect of their daily lives.
The same Spirit likewise sanctifies
the whole world, which means
that through the Spirit
every aspect of the world
will eventually be brought
to goodness and holiness.
This will happen because the Spirit
gives gifts to each person and assists
each in using them well."*

Vatican II in Plain English - Vol 2 - Page 35

The Trinity always loves us,
asking us to pray and work so that:
*"Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven" (Mathew 6:10)*
(And we work to make it happen)

Jesus, heal our human weakness,
open us to your love and light.
Make us prayerful people
who find ways to thank you
and follow Jesus' example
in our personal lives.

We accomplish this by following the
spirit and example of St. Francis
and St. Clare of Assisi.

AMEN



Ecumenical Interfaith Committee Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity

ACCEPTING ALL PEOPLE AS A GIFT OF THE LORD

FROM: VATICAN II IN PLAIN ENGLISH

By Michael Carsten, OFS

www.ofsusaecumenicalinterfaith.org

With Pope Francis, the Franciscan Family celebrates the 800th anniversary of the meeting of Br. Francis and Br. Illuminato with Sultan Malek al Kamil. Considering the Pope's efforts, let's take a moment to reflect on what the Church has to say regarding our active involvement with non-Christian religions.

The following excerpts are from Book 3 of *Vatican II in Plain English*

Book 3 – The Decrees and Declarations

Chapter 4, The Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non- Christian Religions

(Although the “verses” below are written in psalm-scripture style in the book, I present them in paragraph form to save space.)

1. In our day and age, people everywhere are growing closer together, and their ties are becoming more profound, even when they are socially diverse. Because of this reality, the Church is giving more attention to its relationship with non-Christian religions and, toward that end, gives primary consideration in this document to what unites all people and to what people have in common.

This furthers the Church's task of fostering unity and love among people and even among various nations. For we believe and teach that all men and women form one human family, have a common origin and God, and share a common destiny in divine Providence. People naturally look to various religions to answer profound human questions:

- What does it mean to be human?
- What is goodness? What is sin?
- What makes us sad?
- What is the path to happiness?
- What does death mean?
- What is beyond the grave?
- What, in short, is the mystery of life?

2. People have long sensed the presence of the divine, however that is understood or defined. It seems to hover near us, mysteriously present in the events of life. We have variously known this as a supreme being — a divinity or heavenly sort of parent — and this has given people a religious sense.

In Hinduism for example, people contemplate this divine mystery and speak of it through myths and penetrating enquiry, seeking relief of human struggle through aesthetical practice, meditation, or movement toward God.

In various forms of Buddhism, too, people understand that the current situation is not

sufficient and that there is a path for life on which people can reach greater freedom or enlightenment.

In many other religions around the world as well, people strive to relieve the restless hearts through religious practices and lifestyles that consist of teachings, rules of life, and sacred rights.

The Catholic Church does not reject anything that is true and holy in any of these religions and, in fact, looks upon them with sincere respect. Even though they differ from us, their way of life and doctrines often reflect the truth that we all seek.

The church of course, continues to proclaim Christ as “the way, the truth, and the life,”but we all exhort all our members to be prudent and loving and open to dialogue with others.

We urge Christians to defend and promote the spiritual and moral benefits found among other world religions, including the values found in their cultures.

3. We also appreciate the Muslims, who adore one God who, they believe, acts with mercy and power, who is our creator and sustainer. They seek to obey God in the spirit of Abraham and Sarah, even when the divine decrees seem inscrutable. Even though they do not believe in the divinity of Jesus, nonetheless they revere him as a prophet, and they honor Mary, his mother. They wait with us for the judgment day, when God will give all their due, and therefore, they value a moral life and practice prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Even though we have had many hostilities between Christians and Muslims, we now urge all to forget the past and work for mutual understanding and peace.

4. This council also recalls the spiritual bonds that unite Christians and Jews: our common heritage in Sarah and Abraham. We are the Church of Christ, but we acknowledge that the roots of our faith are in the spiritual ancestors, Moses, and the prophets whom we hold in common.

The very story of Christianity — that God is leading us to freedom — was foreshadowed by the

journey of the Jews from bondage to freedom through the desert.

We cannot forget, therefore, that we receive divine revelation through the Jews....

As Christians, we are rooted in Judaism, and we even believe that in Christ, Jew and Gentile were reconciled once and for all.

Mary herself was a Jew, of course, as we're all the apostles, not to mention Christ himself — a faithful Jew. ...

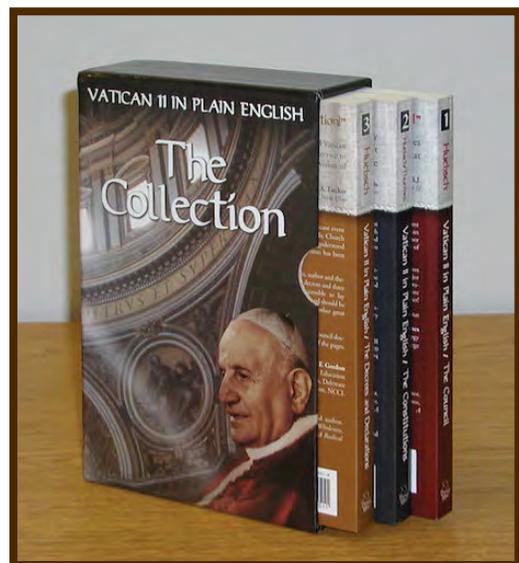
5. It is really not possible to call upon God, the creator and sustainer of all, if we treat anyone less than lovingly. The scriptures themselves say as much when they remind us that whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Hence, one's relationship to God is intimately linked to one's relationship to those around him or her. There is absolutely no ground, then, to offer anyone less than full dignity and respect.

Therefore, we outrightly reject and abhor any discrimination against anyone based on race, color, condition of life, or religion.

We beg all Christians to be at peace and to maintain good relations with all peoples.

The Word of the Church



Hatred Can Be Transformed by Love

Kathy Taormina, OFS
Queen of Peace Regional Spiritual Assistant

I woke up this morning thinking about my world.

A person doesn't wake up one morning with a hatred of a person, a place, a political agenda, a race, a gender, or a religion that is so all-consuming that they feel compelled to do something about it. A person doesn't wake up one morning and decide to go out and kill a multitude of unsuspecting people. They don't wake up one morning and decide to kill a group of students, a gathering of concert goers, a nightclub full of people, or a religious congregation.

But sadly, that is exactly what they do.

This hatred of others began long before the final act of murder. As we discover more about the shooter (or bomber or knife-wielding person), we usually discover years, or even decades, of the indoctrination of hatred. This is the environment they are exposed to. This indoctrination is controlled by parents, families, peer groups (including bullies), religious leaders, and leaders of countries; most times on purpose, but sometimes as a result of the history or life experiences of those "teaching" the next generation.

This is a hatred presented and learned. Day after day, year after year, they learn by hearing and seeing those around them judging others with their own warped sense of superiority. Bad-mouthing others, protesting other's rights and freedoms, mud-slinging politicians, bullies who are allowed to continue to bully, and even our gossiping about others have a share in this learning to hate.

There are times when the mentally ill, or those we deem to "be a little off," are pushed to extreme behavior by those around them; but even then, there seems to be an undercurrent of hatred or misunderstanding. They have no safe place to release the ever-present thoughts of destruction in their minds, nor a place to be taken in and to be healed.

As these so-called senseless acts of violence continue, we as a people are learning to be initially shocked, outraged, and saddened, but then we go on with our lives until the next violent act.

As people of this world, as Christians, as Catholics, and as Franciscans, what should our response be?

We immediately pray for those affected and then we offer up thanksgiving to God that it was not in our state, or our neighborhood or our Church. We offer condolences on Facebook or through emails, prayers against the murderers and for those affected, but do we pray and work for a true change in our world?

New Zealand has given us another reason to pray. Fifty people were massacred, and another fifty were wounded, as they attended services at the Al Noor mosque and the Linwood Islamic Center. They were killed because of what they believed and where they worshiped. Hatred motivated the gunman and hatred reigned as they died.

I was in Pittsburgh when the Tree of Life Synagogue killings occurred. But this mass killing was in *my* home state, and it was in *my* daughters' neighborhood. It happened so close to home that my daughter, who works at Pittsburgh Children's Hospital, was notified to start emergency procedures because of a weapon in the area. A young man who was in my youth group, now a Pittsburgh S.W.A.T. officer, was called to the scene.

How did this hatred begin in these men? Hatred so deep and so engrossing that they thought they had no choice but to act upon their impulses. How were we as a country, a community, and a family co-responsible for this act of violence? What part do we "own" in this hatred? As Franciscans who profess that we "with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and as an image of Christ,"¹ we must take ownership and work together with all people to end these acts of violence. We must "seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony

¹ OFS Rule, Article #13.

though dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.”²

How many times in our lives do we hear disparaging or hateful discussions or gossiping? Do we kindly offer a way to end these discussions? Either by changing the subject, or bravely pointing out the need to steer away from these judgmental attitudes towards each other?

When we witness bullying, even in our own fraternities, do we stand up for the rights of others and offer alternative ways of stopping the bullying through dialogue or mediation? Do we let certain people always talk so much to the point of not hearing from the other smaller voices around us?

Do we allow others to use prejudicial words about other religions, peoples, or political views in our midst without challenging them to a change of heart, or at least to a change to openness and dialogue?

Do we need to reflect, contemplate and pray for *our* attitudes towards those around us, especially in our fraternities?

These shooters had years of learning hate that finally surfaced in these horrific acts of violence, as has happened with all participants in hate acts. We need to stop being unsuspecting teachers of hatred. We need to be teachers of love, teachers of acceptance of our brothers and sisters, teachers of forgiveness, and teachers of justice and peace. To only “tolerate” as the bumper sticker suggests is not enough. As Franciscans we are not called to tolerate, we are called to *love* today, tomorrow and forever.

To the people affected by violent acts around the world, I am so sorry for my part in the hatred.

Lord, Make Us Instruments of Your Peace

by Pope Francis

World Communications Day January 24, 2018

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Help us to recognize the evil concealed in a communication that does not build communion.

Help us to remove the venom from our judgements.

Help us to speak about others as our brothers and sisters.

You are faithful and trustworthy;
May our words be seeds of goodness for the world:

Where there is shouting,
let us practice listening;

Where there is confusion,
let us inspire harmony;

Where there is ambiguity,
let us bring clarity;

Where there is exclusion,
let us offer solidarity;

Where there is sensationalism,
let us bring sobriety;

Where there is superficiality,
let us raise real questions;

Where there is prejudice,
let us awaken trust;

Where there is hostility,
let us bring respect;

Where there is falsehood,
let us bring truth.

Amen

² OFS Rule, Article #19.

FRANCISCAN LIVING

God's Love

By Francine Gikow, OFS

Once I was asked by a priest:

Does God love you?

Does He *really* love you?

Does He *really, really* love you?

So I also ask you: How do you know this?

How much does He love you?

Do you “know” His love?

Do you feel this love?

What makes you realize His love?

How have you experienced His Love?

What is your image of His love?

For the longest time, I felt have I have always loved God. It was something I was taught from childhood—to love God. I knew the *Baltimore Catechism* by rote. The first question was: “Why did God make you? Answer: God made me to know, love and serve Him in this world and to be happy with Him in the next.”

But there wasn't a lot about *Him loving me* in the pre-Vatican Church. Notice the *Catechism* answer doesn't even mention God's love for me. The effort to love God seemed one-sided. It was my duty as a Catholic to serve God and so I did. I grew up with the idea that I was to love God (and in the words of the Catechism again) “with all my strength.” Since I was a good Catholic girl, I tried to do so.

Yes, there were times when I was told about God's love for me—especially when He died for me on the cross. But at the time, this love seemed to me to be universal for everyone and not specifically for me. I had book knowledge of “God's love,” but no personal experience of it.

Eventually, this wasn't enough. Entering my early teen years, a family crisis shoved me into prayer. I was looking for a God who loved me, just for myself- and not for what I could do for my family. I cried out to God. I shared with Him my hurts, my aspirations and my sacrifices for my family and He (the image of God as I was taught) was

largely silent. It was a spiritual crisis, and it felt like I was alone.

This painful time, however, nurtured in me an appreciation of silence—of being alone but crying out my anguish to something or someone unknown and unfathomable. This Presence consoled. This Presence healed. This Presence companioned me in love.

I eventually realized that my image of God was not what I had been given in school. Popular images of Jesus holding lambs or sitting with school aged children did nothing for me at the time. It was that sense of Presence that held me as my image of a loving God. This “sense” of God's Presence is what has driven my yearning for Him the rest of my life.

Francis “knew” God's love for him. He met God in the leper. He met Him in his companions. He met Him in prayer. God was real. God was ever-present. But for Francis, yearning for God never ended. That is why Francis was tempted to leave his apostolate and enter a life of contemplation.

Our yearning for God also never ends. So many times, people come to me complaining of dryness in prayer. They have previously discovered God in prayer, but now God seems absent. Consolations are gone. They pray but it seems pointless.

Unfortunately, dryness in prayer is to be expected. I think God gives His love to us so that we yearn for Him more. Do you realize that in the great love story of the Bride and her Lover in the “Song of Solomon” the yearning is never consummated? This is the last verse:

“Make haste, my beloved,
and be like a gazelle or a young stag
upon the mountain of spices!”¹

It is in the yearning that I find God's love. It will never be totally fulfilled until I am in heaven with Him...for my God is such a greedy lover!

¹ NRV, Song of Solomon 8:14.



LIVE YOUR MISSION: INVITE YOUNG PEOPLE ALONG

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

When reflecting on youth and young adults and the characteristics of their age group, their challenges, and the changes they face, certain needs are consistently mentioned. Young people need:

Friendship and a like-minded community that offers opportunity for relationships.

Meaningful work and ways to serve and help in discerning both.

A close relationship with God and an avenue in which to grow in their faith.

A church family that is vibrant and authentic.

Independence, but also sometimes support and help.

Someone who will listen, and a safe place to freely express themselves.

Hmm. Don't we older folks want the same things? Those of us who are aging face many changes and challenges. We also need friends, meaningful "work," and a strong faith life. We need someone to listen and help us when necessary, but also to allow us our independence. It seems there are a lot of needs both generations share.

There are also a few obvious differences, of course:

Young people are usually blessed with a high energy level and healthy young bodies.

They are often highly motivated to change the world and eager to get involved in hands-on activities that we sometimes shy away from due to age and infirmity.

They are globally aware and connected to the world in a way that is often a mystery to us older folks. Their skills in the area of technology are a much-needed asset in today's world, and yet, they aren't always as able to connect socially and build relationships. For some, the digital age has robbed them of the traditional ways of getting to know others—through face-to-face dialogue and interactions.

So what can we do to bridge the gap between generations?

Pray

At a recent Visitation Chapter, our Region was gifted with the presence of Father Giles Gilbert, OFM Conventual. He shared a quote from Maximilian Kolbe. "Those who have been forced into inactivity are our greatest asset." Father Giles suggested that "Our home- and hospital-bound folks have the opportunity to pray for us. They can truly offer their sufferings for the good of the Order. When we offer our sufferings up for others with good intention, it becomes a powerful tool." So, pray for our young people and those who are able to serve them.

Be Ourselves

"Ourselves" might be vulnerable to the disappointments and challenges of aging. We may feel overwhelmed and burdened by our physical limitations, loneliness, or a need to find purpose now that our life career is over. It's okay to be honest with our younger folks. They are willing to hear our challenges also, which gives them permission to be imperfect, to be free to share their own challenges, and invites them to practice listening skills and charity. (Note: Be careful not to burden them with constant stories of ailments and grandchildren! Remember, we should be seeking "not to be understood, but to understand.")

Young people often don't have a concept of "interdependence," or "vital reciprocity." To build a relationship of trust and love with another person, to bridge the gap, we may be required to be our true selves, not someone we think the young people want us to be. They want us to be authentic! To share the wisdom of our experiences. To be the Church they crave. They want to be treated as equals, not as honored guests or a side group to cater to. They want to be as important to us as we are to them.

Listen, listen, listen!

In Phoenix, Ariz., Brother Scott Slattum, OFM, has been working alongside young adults for a while now, and is helping the twenty-somethings start a YouFra group. One thing he discovered was the simple need for young adults to know that someone is willing to listen. They want to be able to share their stories, pain, joys, and struggles with people who are not there to judge, criticize, or give unsolicited advice. They simply need us to listen.

Brother Scott found that one of the older adults who had been helping him, an elderly gentleman who simply attended their gatherings in the background, had eventually built a trusting relationship with the young people. He is now the one they call when they need to talk! Perhaps this is the only gift he has been able to give, but it is one that is cherished and utilized, in spite of (or perhaps because of) his age.

Live our Mission

We are called to live from Gospel to life and from life to the Gospel, with a joyful and willing heart. Young people will be naturally drawn to us if they see that in action. So live your mission, and invite young people along for the ride! Offer your help, your ear, your prayers, or whatever you are able to give. Our Order might be aging, but we're still able to encourage each other daily and lift one another up in spiritual joy, no matter how old we are. Different age groups may live our missions in different ways, but there is beauty in who we are, and we shouldn't be afraid to share that, no matter which generation we grace.

National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order - USA
Statement of Income and Expenses Actual vs Budget - Cash Basis - General Fund
For the Year Ending December 2018

	ACTUAL Jan - Dec 2018	BUDGET Jan - Dec 2018	\$ Over/Under Budget	Budget Jan - Dec 2019
Income				
Fair Share	\$ 215,580.00	\$ 220,218.00	\$ (4,638.00)	\$ 218,688.00
Formation Sales	41,237.87	45,000.00	(3,762.13)	45,000.00
Interest Income	3,699.51	300.00	3,399.51	3,800.00
Miscellaneous Income	2,547.00	41,264.00	(38,717.00) (1)	75,253.00
Total Income	\$ 263,064.38	\$ 306,782.00	\$ (43,717.62)	\$ 342,741.00
Expenses				
CIOFS Fair Share	26,300.00	23,000.00	3,300.00	25,241.00
TAU-USA Newsletter	27,909.89	55,700.00	(27,790.11) (2)	55,700.00
CNSA -Conf Nat'l Spiritual Assistant	8,000.00	8,000.00	0.00	8,000.00
Annual Chapter	47,047.30	37,500.00	9,547.30 (3)	41,000.00
National Executive Council	27,808.43	30,500.00	(2,691.57)	30,000.00
CIOFS Meetings	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Commissions & Committees				
Communications Committee	0.00	1,000.00	(1,000.00)	2,000.00
Computer Committee	4,319.67	33,000.00	(28,680.33) (4)	29,430.00
Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee	7,045.87	9,212.00	(2,166.13)	8,600.00
Formation Commission	12,017.81	16,290.00	(4,272.19)	20,000.00
Historian	238.80	1,940.00	(1,701.20)	1,940.00
JPIC Commission	6,664.58	9,000.00	(2,335.42)	10,000.00
Multi-Cultural Committee	332.48	2,500.00	(2,167.52)	2,000.00
National Archives	0.00	1,840.00	(1,840.00)	2,000.00
Public Relations	798.41	1,500.00	(701.59)	2,000.00
Vocations Committee	1,855.84	2,500.00	(644.16)	3,030.00
Youth & Young Adult (FYA) Comm	6,444.86	7,500.00	(1,055.14)	15,000.00
Quinquennial Planning	6,026.09	8,000.00	(1,973.91)	10,000.00
Total - Commissions & Committees	45,744.41	94,282.00	(48,537.59)	106,000.00
CIOFS -Election Year	6,338.76	6,000.00	338.76	0.00
CIOFS-Moto Implementation	0.00	0.00	0.00	20,000.00
Formation Sales Expenses	21,155.86	28,000.00	(6,844.14)	32,000.00
JPIC Outreach - FAN/Franciscans Int'l	12,000.00	12,000.00	0.00	13,000.00
JPIC Award	3,000.00	3,000.00	0.00	3,000.00
Liability Insurance	3,799.00	3,800.00	(1.00)	3,800.00
Other Expenses	435.25	5,000.00	(4,564.75)	5,000.00
Total Expenses	229,538.90	306,782.00	(77,243.10)	342,741.00
Net Income	\$ 33,525.48	\$ -	\$ 33,525.48	\$ -

Note 1: Variance explanations

- (1) Projected amount from savings to be used if necessary
- (2) 4 issues of the TAU-USA were not released in 2018
- (3) Budget exceeded due to change in location from a retreat center to a hotel
- (4) Purchase of system software not completed as expected

GENERAL FUND CASH BALANCES

	12/31/2018	12/31/2017
Checking Accounts	\$ 258,094.99	\$ 251,172.60
Savings - Money Market	153,516.42	102,730.57
Savings - Certificates of Deposit	123,401.23	120,481.18
	535,012.64	474,384.35
Less Restricted Funds	(175,371.65)	(144,465.83)
Total Funds Available	\$ 359,640.99	\$ 329,918.52

**NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA
RESTRICTED FUNDS REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2018**

RESTRICTED FUND ACCOUNTS	Beginning Balance 12/31/2017	2018 Contributions	2018 Disbursements	Ending Balance 12/31/2018
	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,000.00
(1) Charitable Donations	-	1,550.00	-	1,550.00
(1) CIOFS Solidarity Fund	1,138.20	-	-	1,138.20
Ecumenical - Interfaith	11,045.70	8,292.50	(10,820.70)	8,517.50
(2) Emergency Aid	-	26,807.00	-	26,807.00
(3) Emergency Aid-Fire Victims	1,317.10	26,700.00	(28,017.10)	-
(4) Formation	770.62	5,018.92	(5,000.00)	789.54
(5) H2O Lenten Project	(5,542.70)	5,542.70	-	-
History Books - print, sales	2,209.52	-	-	2,209.52
National Events	50,420.35	-	-	50,420.35
Quinquennial Congress	12,537.91	-	(4,907.50)	7,630.41
(6) Regional Needs	16,023.29	1,100.00	(12,000.00)	5,123.29
(7) Undesignated Contributions	2,488.05	400.00	(2,445.00)	443.05
(8) Youth Scholarships	DUNS SCOTUS GRANT FUNDS			
(9) Available for Grants	49,803.00	50,000.00	(31,315.00)	68,488.00
Expenses	1,254.79	-	-	1,254.79
TOTALS	\$ 144,465.83	\$ 125,411.12	\$ (94,505.30)	\$ 175,371.65

NOTES:

- (1) CIOFS Solidarity contributions were from the Franciscan Friars and a Local Fraternity. They were wired to CIOFS March 2019 with our Fair Share.
- (2) Emergency Aid contributions were for hurricane relief, Venezuela & India. Distributions were for the same.
- (3) Emergency Aid for the fire victims in Paradise, CA were disbursed in 2019 which was after the 12/31/2018 cut-off date of this report.
- (4) Formation received a contribution from CNSA toward the Visioning I Workshop as well as a grant from Duns Scotus. Disbursement for same.
- (5) H2O Project contributions funded the construction of a well in Uganda
- (6) Regional Needs Funds were used to assist developing fraternities in Hawaii and Guam
- (7) Undesignated Contributions are contributions received where donor has not designated a specific charitable cause. This fund also includes monies restricted by the NEC for charitable giving. In 2018 the Charitable Giving Task Force selected 11 charities nominated by members to receive a one time donation between \$1,000-\$1500.
- (8) Youth Scholarships: These funds were contributions for and sent to CIOFS to assist world youth in attending Panama World Youth Day.
- (9) Duns Scotus Board grant awards in 2018 were to the National Formation for Visioning I Workshop and 3 Regional Fraternities.

**DUNS SCOTUS SECULAR FRANCISCAN FORMATION TRUST FUND
December 31, 2018**

	<u>Market Value</u>
12/31/2017 Beginning Balance	\$ 1,030,452.72
Transferred to Restricted for Grants in 2019	(50,000.00)
Change in account value	<u>(24,079.49)</u>
12/31/218 Ending Balance	<u>956,373.23</u>

NOTE 1: The funds designated as the Duns Scotus Trust Fund are held in two investments accounts. Dividends and realized capital gains are reinvested back into the investments held. The NEC reviews the investments with the fund advisers and an impartial investment adviser as necessary.

NOTE 3: The cost basis of the investment portfolio at 12/31/218 is \$951,703.15.

Respectfully submitted by Claudia Kauzlarich, OFS, National Treasurer - Mach 25, 2019

2018-2021 National Priority: Fraternity Life

THE CALL TO FRATERNAL COMMUNION

At the close of the Church's great Jubilee celebration, Pope St. John Paul II released his apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. In it, he described "the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning," which we must accept "if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings." What did the Pope view as our "great challenge"? It is "to make the Church *the home and the school of communion*."

This call to communion has a special meaning for us as Franciscans. After all, our own General Constitutions remind us that "The vocation to the OFS is a vocation to live the Gospel *in fraternal communion*." (Article 3, General Constitutions) What does "fraternal communion" mean, exactly?

Let's step back and look at what the Pope had to say. He begins by warning us that our natural impulse to action is "not the right impulse to follow. Before making practical plans, we need *to promote a spirituality of communion*, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons, and pastoral workers are trained, wherever families and communities are being built up." Rather than immediately springing into action, we need to get our foundation right, and this foundation is necessary throughout the entire Church.

John Paul II goes on to describe what he sees as the basis of such a spirituality. "A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of *the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us*, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us [emphasis mine]." So the communion we share by virtue of our Baptism is based on the Trinity and manifested in our brothers and sisters.

Lest this reference to 'brothers and sisters' be lost on us, the Pope proceeds to explain what he means more fully. He gives us a beautiful

vision of life within the Mystical Body, the same life that should be expressed in our fraternities. "A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as 'those who are a part of me'. This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship.

"A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a 'gift for me.' A spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to 'make room' for our brothers and sisters, bearing 'each other's burdens' (Gal 6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy." He concludes with a solemn warning. "Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, 'masks' of communion rather than its means of expression and growth."

Where does the Pope see this leading? John Paul II envisions a natural progression: our union with Christ leads to our communion in the Mystical Body, and this union bears fruit in our sharing in Christ's mission. As members of the Franciscan family entrusted with Francis' mission to rebuild the Church, as Secular Franciscans, we are called in a special way to "fraternal communion" in order to support our brothers and sisters in living the Gospel and to become a sign of Christ's presence in the world.

Points to ponder:

- ❖ **Has the Church succeeded in following the spiritual path recommended by St. John Paul II?**
- ❖ **How is communion expressed in your fraternity?**
- ❖ **How might it be fostered?**



20th OFS Quinquennial Congress 2021

JUBILEE

*By breaking bread together we open our hearts
and listen to the stories of each other,
rejoicing in our life and who we are*

Phoenix Arizona

Sheraton Phoenix Downtown Hotel

340 North Third Street, Phoenix, AZ 85004.

Across the street from the Franciscan Saint Mary's Basilica

August 18, 2021 through August 21
Travel day will be **Sunday, August 22**

The Quinquennial Committee met the first week of Lent in Phoenix among orange blossoms and budding spring flowers to accomplish tasks in preparation for the 2021 Q. We invoked the Holy Spirit to be with us and guide us through the steps. Our Liturgy Committee members for the Q were charged to create a Prayer for the Q – to be used now and during the Q. We ask you to share the prayer with one another to help prepare for this 100th anniversary of Quinquennial in the United States and 800th anniversary of the Secular Franciscan Rule.

20th OFS Quinquennial 2021 Prayer

Lord God, Heavenly Father,
we come before you
in awe of your love for us.
We acknowledge Your divine seed
in everyone.
Through your merciful compassion
help us to see our need for
conversion.
In our service to each other

let us experience this time of
JUBILEE!
We walk the path before us
upon foundations built by
our brothers and sisters.
We are thankful for our present
and excited for our future,
always believing that You, O Lord,
guide our journey
AMEN

“Q” is an experience of a lifetime, with OFS brothers and sisters, to celebrate JUBILEE of our Eighth Centenary of our OFS, and our One-hundredth Anniversary of our National Quinquennial Congresses! We want you to help in preparation. So please let us know how you want to help.



10th Summer Seminar for Secular Franciscans July 11-14, 2019



“Clare of God: A Spirituality for Our Time”

Location: [Saint Francis University, Loretto, PA](#)

Presenters



Sr. Loretta Schaff, OSF, is a Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia ministering in Portland, OR. She has been a member of her community for over 50 years. She has served the Secular Franciscan Order since 2011. She is presently a Regional Spiritual Assistant for Troubadours of Peace Region in the Pacific Northwest.



Fr. John Petrikovic, OFM Cap., offers workshops and retreats on Franciscan topics, mission formation for Franciscan Health Systems and retreats for Religious Men and Women and clergy in the English-speaking world. He has preached parish missions & parish retreats throughout the United States.

General Information

- Register online at: <https://my.francis.edu/sfubus/ICFL/ICFLseminar.asp>
- Or, print online form and mail with payment to: Office of Mission Integration, Saint Francis University, P.O. Box 600, Loretto, PA 15940-0600.
- **RESIDENT** registration fees are **\$245 DBL/\$305 SINGLE before June 1**; includes residence hall room and all meals. **After June 1**, registration fees are **\$270 DBL/\$330 SINGLE**.
- **COMMUTER** registration fee (**\$75**) does not include room/meals – meals are paid at the dining hall.
- **Payment must accompany registration** and is **NON-REFUNDABLE after June 15**.
- **Absolutely no registrations accepted after Monday, June 24th**.
- Room check-in begins at 12:00 noon, July 11; check out time is 10 a.m., July 14.
- On-campus shuttle service is provided to/from residence hall, dining hall, and conference center.
- Transportation to campus from local airports is not provided. Recommended airports: Johnstown Regional (JST), Altoona-Blair County (AOO), State College (SCE), or Pittsburgh International (PIT).
- Seminar is endorsed by the National Executive Council of the Secular Franciscan Order – USA.
- **Questions? Contact Fr. Joe Lehman, TOR, (814) 472-3054 (daytime) or e-mail jlehman@francis.edu**

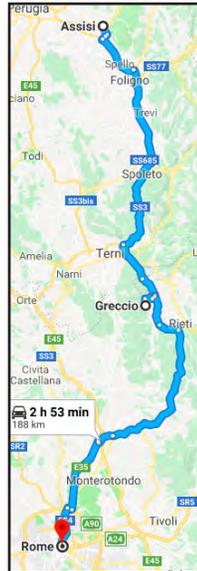
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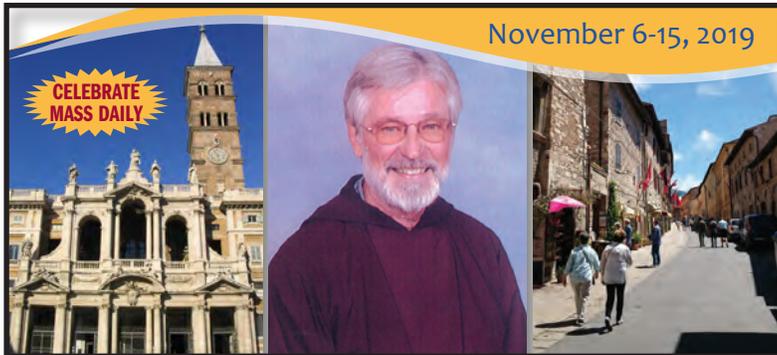
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All-inclusive cost from Colorado Springs \$3,696, (adjusted fare from other airports) includes air travel, first-class hotel, deluxe motor coaches, entrance fees, breakfast and dinner daily, taxes, tips, administrative fees. For a colorful brochure, on-line or printed, contact Fr Cyrus at [719-661-1145](tel:719-661-1145) or cyrusgallagher38@gmail.com



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