

TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

FALL 2014 - ISSUE 81



Wall mural at Mission San Miguel, California by Br. Mateo Guerrero OFM

*If we are faithful to our profession as Secular Franciscans,
we must choose love.*

Anne Mulqueen, OFS

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 NAFRA leadership 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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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.

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THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

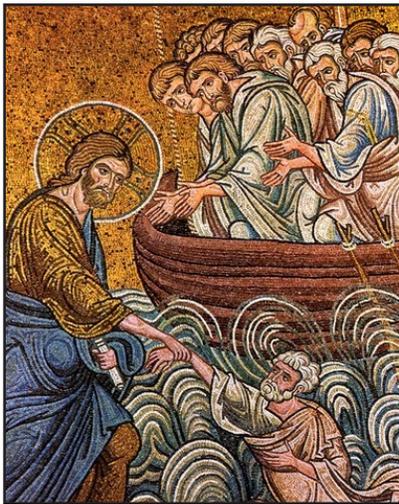
MINISTER'S MESSAGE

National Minister, Tom Bello, OFS

“Jesus Never Invites Us To Failure!”

Servant Leadership in the Secular Franciscan Order

This past August offered me the joyful opportunity to make a Visitation to the Divine Mercy Region with our National Spiritual Assistant Friar Stephen Gross, OFM Conventual. It was the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, and the Sunday Gospel included, in part, the famous story of Peter's walking on the water, found only in St. Matthew:



*When the disciples saw him walking on the sea
they were terrified.
“It is a ghost,” they said, and they cried out in fear.
At once Jesus spoke to them,
“Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.”
Peter said to him in reply,
“Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”
He said, “Come.”
Peter got out of the boat
and began to walk on the water toward Jesus.
But when he saw how strong the wind was
he became frightened;
and, beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!”
Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand
and caught Peter, and said to him,
“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”*

Matthew 14:26-31

It is a Gospel we all know well, and I have been blessed to preach on this Gospel on occasion. However, I have never explained or heard the Gospel explained as Friar Stephen did. With apologies that I do not have enough of his exact words, here is what I remember:

“Jesus never invites us to failure!” When Jesus called Matthew from being a tax-collector, He did not invite him to failure. When Jesus called Andrew and Peter, James and John to “Follow me!” He did not invite them to follow Him to failure. So when Jesus said to Peter, “Come,” He did not invite him to come and sink.

It always surprises me when I attend a fraternity election, and someone whom everybody else says will be the right person for the job, the right fit for the position, that person tells me, “I’m not ready.” Or “I’m not worthy.” Or, my favorite, “But I’m a sinner.”

Where’s our faith? Don’t we all know by now that Jesus really does have the love and the mercy to help and to save one more sinner like me or you? Doesn’t He? What have we not understood about “Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand” or the very last words of the same Gospel: “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

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Brothers and Sisters who say No! to Servant Leadership at fraternity elections do not give the rest of the fraternity, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, a chance to choose for themselves whether they would like a FELLOW SINNER to serve them. We do not give God Himself the chance, as the saying goes, not so much to call the qualified as to qualify those whom He is calling. Sisters and Brothers, please give the Holy Spirit, and your own fraternity family a chance to say No! Who knows? They may say Yes!

Now, I readily admit there are legitimate reasons why one may decline Servant Leadership, and we all have to answer to our own consciences; but as Friar Stephen went on to explain, all service to the Lord and to His people will be successful if only we can trust and love the Lord more. One of the great deceptions of the devil, the flesh and world is to trick us into convincing ourselves, for whatever reason, of our obvious sinfulness and unworthiness.

Of course we are all sinners and unworthy! But our hearts lack sufficient faith, hope and love of God and neighbor to keep out the self-doubts, fears and distrust. It's not really about us. We don't trust God enough. We think God doesn't love us enough, and thus we cannot trust Him or ourselves to step out into an admittedly new service to Him and neighbor. We will fail, we are sure, so we never try. We never accept Christ's invitation. We never say Yes!

Shame on us!

"Jesus never invites us to failure!" Let us hold Friar Stephen's words in our minds and examine our lives. It can be our Secular Franciscan life, our married and family life, our work life, whatever. What should we do when we feel called out of our comfort zone by the Lord?

I pray that we can say Yes! That's the answer Mary and all the saints gave sooner or later. We should surrender our wills to Christ and stay focused on Christ, never minding the storms and rough seas around us or the weaknesses and fears within us.

That's why I usually say at all elections, "If you have been nominated for Servant Leadership in the Secular Franciscan Order, the default position is Yes!" We have to trust that Jesus is not inviting us to failure.

Well, then, why do we fail? Why did Peter start by walking on water, and then begin sinking like a rock?

Again, I think Friar Stephen is correct. From my own personal experience and observation, our hearts are, my heart is, not full enough of the love of God and neighbor, and we, I, get easily distracted. Why shouldn't we be distracted? Like Peter on the sea, the storms do rage, water is always fluid, and the correct way often seems often uncertain and even dangerous. Internally – who wouldn't feel self-distrust? In fact, we are all sinners, we are all weak and we have all failed.

Will we fail again? Only when we don't trust the Lord enough, don't pray enough, and start focusing on ourselves or on the difficulties enough to take our eyes off of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Well, what about if the Lord really isn't calling us to service, what about if it's our own ego alone? Okay, if it's only about our egos, that's usually a sure indication of failure, but honestly, after over 30 years in the Secular Franciscan Order, I haven't seen many

Servant Leaders invited to service by their own egos! I mean, have you been misinformed? Being an officer in a Secular Franciscan Fraternity at any level is not about fame, power or fortune. If you are currently an officer at any level, how many people in the greater world know or care what you do? How many people in your own family know or care? How many people in your own fraternity kowtow to your every word and gesture? How much are you paid? Please!

Of the hundreds of elected and appointed officers that I have met in Local, Regional and National Fraternities and in the International Fraternity, the vast, vast majority of the people are holding office not out of ego, but out of service, out of love of the Order and out of accountability to their brothers and sisters, to God and to themselves.

That service is from the Lord, and that invitation is not one to failure. Now, will there be suffering? Indeed. Will that suffering give us pain on occasion? Hello! What have we not understood about the Cross? We are all called to follow Christ to the Cross. Do we have a Feast Day entitled "The Failure of the Cross"? No, every September 14, even if it falls, as happened this year, on a Sunday, we have the Feast Day entitled "The Triumph or Exaltation of the Holy Cross."

We do not fail when we suffer in doing the Lord's work. We do not fail when we carry our crosses yoked to the Lord. Deep down in our Christian faith, we must know that without the Cross there can be no Resurrection. Don't be afraid of suffering in service to God and neighbor. Don't be afraid of the Cross.

Be afraid of not doing what the Lord wants us to do. Be afraid of walking away from what we can do if we surrender to the Lord and fill our hearts with trust of Him, hope in Him, love with Him. How many times have we all missed opportunities to step out and serve our brothers and sisters and in doing so, missed serving the Lord Himself (see Matthew 25:45)?

Let us pray. God, why are we so afraid at times of Servant Leadership in the Secular Franciscan Order? Why do we say No! and turn our backs? Help us to trust more, to hope more and to love more. May we keep our eyes and minds and hearts always on You. May we not focus on the stormy waves outside or the raging fears inside. And even if we begin to sink, may we always remember and believe that You never invite us to failure, and we need only pray three simple words, "Lord, save me!" And immediately You will stretch out Your hand and catch us. We pray in Jesus' name.



Sharing The Vision

News from the National Executive Council (NEC)

by National Secretary, Jan Parker, OFS

Regional Visitations and Elections

(Or “How the Brothers and Sisters of the NEC Spent Their Summer Vocation”)

It is always a blessing to be present with Regional Fraternities for Visitations and Elections. This year NEC members have traveled to 16 Regions *and Guam* to conduct 9 Visitations and 8 Elections – that’s at least 40 days of one-on-one sharing with our brothers and sisters across the country! We are very grateful for our Spiritual Assistants, who equally devote time journeying with us in “life-giving union.”

Donations

Thanks to the generosity of the National Fraternity, \$1,600 was donated to our National Fraternity (NAFRA) Donor Fund in response to an appeal made in the Spring 2014 issue of the *TAU-USA*. Money from the Donor Fund is used for charitable giving both inside and outside the OFS and to support OFS activities that fall outside of budgeted funds. Our National Family also responded with a donation of \$1,080 to a special appeal from the International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order (CIOFS) this past spring.

New National Commission Chairs

Our National Fraternity (NAFRA) has three National Commissions: (1) Formation (NFC); (2) Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC); and (3) Franciscan Youth and Young Adults (FYYA). Two of our three commissions have newly appointed chairpersons. Mary Anne Lenzi was appointed incoming Formation Commission Chair in July, as former Chair Bob Fitzsimmons will conclude five years of service in October 2014. Mary Anne’s term begins officially at our 2014 NAFRA Chapter. In September, the NEC appointed Sue and Christy Nelson Co-Chairs of the Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission. We believe this is the first mother-daughter team to serve our National Family. Former FYYA Chair Rob Breen resigned in August 2014, due to new employment and increased demands on his time. JPIC Chair Carolyn Townes, appointed in October 2013, is completing her first year of service. We greatly appreciate the dedicated work of all who have served on our National Commissions and welcome with joy the “yes” of our newly-appointed Commission Chairs!

Secular Franciscan Books – Old and New

The NEC oversees the printing of books copyrighted by the National Fraternity. We make decisions on what to print, how many to print and what not to reprint. This is not an easy task. We welcome new formation books with updated material, but this often means retiring older titles. Cost is always a factor. Book sales cover the cost of printing, but if books are printed and not sold, we lose money. Most of our NAFRA copyrighted books are published by Smoky Valley Printing located in Lindsborg, Kansas, and these are listed on the inside back cover of each issue of the *TAU-USA*. At our July 2014 meeting, the NEC made a decision to discontinue printing some books that still have current information but that are older titles and have far less demand than when they were first printed. The NEC also agreed to set up a new budget category for printing translated editions of our books so we might better evaluate costs.

Fraternity Registers

We are happy to report the sale of more than 100 Fraternity Registers. This is encouraging, as proper record keeping of our membership is a serious obligation. Registers can be purchased via TAU Publishing's website at taupublishing.org.

CIOFS Elective Chapter – November 2014

At its July 2014 meeting the NEC nominated Tom Bello, Anne Mulqueen and Doug Clorey for the International Council (CIOFS). CIOFS meets in Elective Chapter Nov. 1-8 in Assisi, Italy.

Support for OFS Disaster Relief Team

In response to a request from Jim Flickinger the NEC voted to give \$4,000 from the special "Charitable Projects by Individual OFS Members Fund" as seed money for the "OFS Disaster Relief Project." In response to a generous bequest, the NEC established this special fund, which supports charitable outreach by individual Seculars. Any individual OFS member is welcome to submit a request to the NEC for such funding.

More on St. Louis IX

There were more than 20 requests for our Minister General's letter on the celebration of the 8th Centenary of St. Louis IX. (See the article "How St. Louis became my patron... and not just the city where I live" in the Summer 2014 issue of *TAU-USA*). One of our favorite responses was from Mary Ann Julian of St Michael Fraternity, Fr. Solanus Casey Region, who wrote, "What a great article on the transition from St. Louis, Mo., to St. Louis IX! You have piqued my interest and my heart. You have taken St Louis down off the shelf, dusted off his story, and shown us how wonderful, admirable, and imitable this brother saint of ours is! Please send me a copy of Encarnación del Pozo's letter, and I will also check out the monthly lessons on the CIOFS site." Thanks, Mary Ann and all who take such interest in what they read in the TAU-USA!

A note about communication ...and relationships

The *TAU-USA* is a wonderful way for us to communicate on a national level. It is our hope that each individual member of our Order feels connected to our national family as they read each issue. Another wonderful way for us to communicate nationally is by email. However, with no national email list, we rely on one another to "get the word out." Ideally, a national email sent to our 30 Regional Ministers is passed along to our 637 Local Fraternity Ministers, who share it with our 12,739 individual OFS members — *and*, all along the way, the "senders" also need to reach out to those with no email access. Thinking of it in these terms, achieving good communication seems next to impossible, given the challenges.

An email that doesn't seem important to one member could be very important to another brother or sister. What can we do to improve the chances of an email message being received by each individual brother and sister? There may never be a perfect solution when it comes to email, but one thing we do know — communication is vital to any relationship. In our efforts to build fraternity and build the Order, let's share our ideas on how to communicate more effectively. Let's care enough to make sure "everyone knows".

Praise God for the dedication and work of each and every individual OFS member who loves our Order and shows it by serving their fraternity in goodness, generosity, perseverance and prayer. Thank you for knowing the importance of your call, your role in fraternity life, your joy, your faith and your love!



CNSA

News & Views

Franciscan Life in the 21st Century
Lester Bach OFM Cap

Our Franciscan vision/spirit is needed in a world torn apart by violence of various kinds. Franciscans share gospel-oriented lives and stories of activities that spring from the OFS Rule, *especially their personal daily conversion* stories (Rule #7).

OUR FRANCISCAN LIFE



The 21st century brought some predictions of gloom and doom that wandered around seeking a home. I hope they didn't find a home with Franciscans. Franciscans enter this century seeking *personal conversion*, living a life filled with service, hope and joy.

It is about 788 years since the death of St. Francis on October 3, 1226. Throughout the centuries Francis' spirit sought to bring peace and reconciliation to conflicts in the Church; to wars among nations; to attempts at genocide and the holocaust; to ethnic cleansings; and to dealing with violence and the fear it produces. The violence of warfare and civil unrest call Franciscans to push for a spirit of dialogue, attempting to *bring people together through dialogue* (which seeks understanding and works to build relationships).

Our Franciscan profession, for example, calls us to work together for peace - *"unceasingly"* (OFS Rule #19); *to strive to purify our hearts from every tendency and yearning for possessions and power* (OFS Rule #11); *with a gentle and courteous spirit to accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ* (OFS Rule #13) etc. The OFS Rule requires us to *embrace personal conversion* on a daily basis (OFS Rule #7). People have a right to expect us to practice what we profess! We express the OFS Rule by the way we live. We are committed to proclaim the Franciscan spirit each day. We prayerfully rely on the inner strength that comes from the Holy Spirit. While others may lose hope, the Holy Spirit prompts us to personal conversion, implementing the spirit of hope and joy in daily life.

Gospel values and the *person of Christ* are focal goals for us. We model a gospel spirit in a frustrating world, enabling our creative and prophetic insights to blossom. People may question whether we can actually live this vision of a gospel life. Our lives should answer that question! Franciscan ideals, *gospel-oriented and Christ-centered*, influence people (Catholic and non-catholic alike) with a visible example of Franciscan life. As we fulfill our profession, we give a model of commitment to implementing gospel values.



Francis and Clare faced opposition and mis-understanding when living their ideals. Their lives and words are a model for us. The Church gives us the OFS Rule which expresses the way in which we fulfill God's will. We give flesh to gospel ideals. Grounded in the Gospel and Christ, we imitate Francis and Clare. We bring insights, liveliness and joy to a tired world and Church.

So what's the point? Franciscans push ahead in the Church and society with a spirit that is less condemning and more constructive. Our task is to renew the Church and society by providing gospel alternatives to problems in the Church and society. Condemnations and negative criticism are not too

Fall - 2014

HELPS & HINTS

Elections are important happenings. Some people in the OFS may be hesitant about being nominated for office.

If you are competent (Gifted by the Trinity) for an office, you are called to use those gifts. Using them as a servant leader (in some form) is an OFS expectation. Even if not elected to a particular office, the gifts need to find expression in fraternity life. Your gifts are at the service of the fraternity! Don't let the challenge deter you!

Ageing has needs that change during life. Seculars do not escape those needs. Getting older makes a difference and the Holy Spirit inspires us to do things within our ability. *Do what is possible!*

For younger people: *Do what is possible in collaboration with others Franciscans.*

Too often I looked at being relevant, popular, and powerful as ingredients of an effective ministry. The truth, however, is that these are not vocations but temptations. Jesus asks: "Do you love me?" Jesus sends us out to be shepherds, and Jesus promises a life in which we increasingly have to stretch out our hands and be led to places where we would rather not go. He asks us to move from a concern for relevance to a life of prayer, from worries about popularity to communal and mutual ministry, and from a leadership built on power to a leadership in which we critically discern where God is leading us and our people.

In the Name of Jesus - Henri Nouwen

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(con't)

helpful. We use critique and dialogue in ways that neither diminish friendships nor destroy relationships with people who may disagree with us. We move into uncharted waters without making fun of people who choose not to walk this way. We are not passive spectators in everyday life.



We do not ignore the Gospel because it offers "hard sayings." We are not fear-mongers, fearful of ideas that may conflict with our personal interpretations of life and faith. Fear tends to paralyze our ability to be creative. We do not ignore evil. But at the same time we do not give it power to hinder our ability to live a gospel and Spirit-powered life.

It is our responsibility to LIVE the Gospel, not just talk about it. We are not naive. We will not change everything in a hurry. But we will persist in bringing love-filled efforts to our lives *which will often require personal conversion*. We receive personal gifts from the Trinity. Whatever we receive freely from the Trinity we offer freely to others. We speak a 21st century language with a Franciscan brogue. Human needs remain consistent though situations may differ. Jesus' example is the mirror for developing Franciscan attitudes and actions. Our common sharing supports us in living a love-directed life.

We bring hope, not despair or fear. We bring imagination, not mental roadblocks. We offer compassion rather than indifference to human need. We recognize the wonder of scientific and technical discoveries but do not make them a substitute for the guidance of the Trinity. We work for social justice rather than fearing how people will respond to our ministries of peace and justice. Sharing our time, treasures and talents enables us bring human dignity to people. Our goal is not to "keep up with the Joneses" nor "beat out" someone in a spirit of competition. Our spirit of sharing reflects a Gospel-spirit. Instead of passive fraternity gatherings, we share stories and insights that offer refreshing ways to engage in Franciscan living. *We recognize the need for regular personal conversion* and offer community support for people who struggle with personal conversion. The Trinity is our inner guide.



We choose not to add to life's problems by arrogance or the presumption that our ideas are the only ones that make sense. We develop heartfelt ways to deal with life issues. Our community is known by how well we love one another. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never mastered it." (John 1:5) We bring light and friendship to people; we bring understanding and ways of learning; we bring compassion and forgiveness. Franciscan formation/conversion continues until Sister Death calls us to our resurrection to new life. Franciscan profession requires us to embrace ways that bring peace and joy to people. Our gospel-light will shine before people and give glory to the Trinity. To act otherwise diminishes our ability to do God's will through personal faithfulness to the OFS way of life.

After 788 years of Franciscan history we continue to be prophetic and creative in living the OFS Rule.

The Rule offers a model for bringing joy, sensitivity, compassion, peace, forgiveness, caring, justice, reconciliation, prayerfulness and service to people.

We embrace opportunities that help us bring a Franciscan flavor to our Church and the world.

To those who follow us we will pass on a life of Franciscan integrity that continues to bring light to people as did Francis and Clare. *Amen.*

The Trinity calls us to share energy and activity that reflects the Franciscan spirit. People of a fraternity-community help us deal with conversion issues. *Conversion is a regular expectation for Franciscans.* The Church gave us the OFS Rule to guide us in the way we accomplish God's will in daily life.

What makes a Franciscan gathering click?



Probably a lot of things. Variety is one of them. The "same old, same old" will obviously not stimulate the heart. Four elements need to be considered. But each one need not use the same amount of time at each gathering. *Prayer, ongoing formation, business, and socializing* are the generic needs. The time spent on each element can differ at each gathering.

Prayer includes contemplative time. The same prayers each time do not always open everyone to intimacy with the Trinity. *A variety of prayerful forms* can open the door to different ways to pray.

Ongoing formation deals with issues in the Church, the OFS, and the world. To dialogue on how to address them is a healthy learning experience. Sharing stories that apply the OFS Rule to daily life can present fresh ways to "be Franciscan." Inter-action brings us to the reality that expresses our Franciscan life.

The council can share **business issues** from local council meetings as well as information from higher councils. Informing members keeps them *in the loop* of our world-wide fraternal life. (Keep it brief and to the point!)

Enjoy the **social** - which can occasionally fill a whole gathering with joyful community time. We need one another's support and shared joy!

INCIDENT AT THE SACRO CONVENTO

By Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR



The Saint Bonaventure Fraternity in Loretto, Pennsylvania, celebrated its 50th Anniversary by arranging a pilgrimage to Assisi for its members. It had been years in the planning, but it was only a few weeks before the actual departure date (March 1) when enough people signed up to make the pilgrimage a “go.” I had agreed about two years ago

to accompany the members on the pilgrimage.

During our time in Assisi, I went with the fraternity members and their friends as they visited all the holy places in the city which is, in a way, home for us all. Our group stayed at Casa Papa Giovanni and enjoyed all the amenities of home. The meals were especially grand.

One of our stops was a tour of the Sacro Convento, the Basilica of Saint Francis. The guide was a Conventual friar from Africa. He was very affable and he related well with the entire group. He explained the various frescoes beautifully. Everyone enjoyed the time with the friar.

At the end of our tour of the Basilica, I asked the friar if it would be possible for me to have an early morning Mass at the Tomb of Saint Francis. He told me that it would be absolutely impossible. He

mentioned that with the upcoming canonizations of Saint John Paul and Saint John XXIII, many people were coming to Assisi. He said the tomb was reserved for months in advance and that I should have written ahead.



While he was speaking, he seemed to realize that there might be another alternative. He said we might be able to join another group if there were a small group scheduled. Thus we went to the office where the Masses are scheduled.

As the Conventual friar conversed with the person in the office, he looked quite shocked. He turned to me and asked, “How would tomorrow morning be?” I **immediately** agreed with the biggest smile on my face!! I was given a small *biglietto* (ticket) indicating our time for entering.

What a beautiful Mass we had at the tomb of Saint Francis! How tremendous a privilege to celebrate the Eucharist in that sacred location! A fraternity pilgrimage is an especially wonderful way to celebrate an anniversary.

New Statements from NEC and CNSA

In their meetings in June and July, the National Executive Council (NEC) and Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) have agreed to issue the following two statements. Both are in response to situations arising within the OFS in the United States.

In the first of these two statements, the national leadership has spoken with one voice about the possibility of persons with a homosexual orientation being admitted to the Order.

In accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church as expressed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the members of the National Executive Council and the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants state the following:

A person who has a homosexual orientation but is living a chaste life can be a member of the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS). There must be an understanding that as a Church organization, a Public Association of the Faithful, our Order obeys the Church's teaching. The Catholic Catechism itself says that “they (homosexuals) must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should

be avoided.” (#2358) The Catechism states that homosexual acts are not acceptable and the Catechism encourages chastity. The Catechism goes on to say that homosexuality’s “psychological genesis remains largely unexplained.” (#2357)

Secondly, both entities agreed on the following statement concerning use of acronyms in the Secular Franciscan Order.

In the Secular Franciscan Order, the only personal acronym after professed members’ names is to be “O.F.S.” the use of additional initials regarding internal positions in the Order, such as “S.A.” for “Spiritual Assistant” or “R.S.A.” for “Regional Spiritual Assistant” is not acceptable.

“S.A. actually indicates another religious Order in the Franciscan Family, that is, the Society of the Atonement. The Conference of National Spiritual Assistants along with the National Executive Council of the OFS therefore states that such acronyms are not to be used.



Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Walking Together

by Anne Mulqueen, OFS

Dear sisters and brothers,

I am writing this article in mid-September, and God alone knows what will be happening in the world when you read this article in TAU-USA.

A sampling of the news headlines today reads as follows:

- UN chief urges nations to “act decisively” on Islamic State
- Chief rabbi says French society has turned indifferent to anti-Semitism
- Suicide car bomber kills three foreign troops in Afghanistan capital
- Israel says mortar fired from Gaza is the first since August 26 truce
- Coptic Christians clash with police in Egypt

Although this may sound like a JPIC article it is, in fact, an Ecumenical-INTERFAITH plea and a prayer for understanding and respect for people of all faiths, in the hope that a society will emerge in which everyone is safe and free from violence in the name of religion. These headlines show alarming breakdowns in relationships among the three major Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Because we believe *nothing is impossible for God*, we pray for an end to violence and hatred in the name of religion.

Since times are so uncertain and greatly in need of God’s intervention, I feel it is appropriate to reproduce the *Assisi Decalogue for Peace* in this article. In the year 2002, 200 faith representatives took part in an interfaith prayer service in Assisi. Each representative read the following ten commitments—not commandments—in his or her native tongue. Thereafter, a copy of the *Decalogue* was sent to all heads of state throughout the world. Pope John Paul II—now St. John Paul II—stated in his letter that humanity must choose between love and hatred. Twelve years have passed and the choice remains—love or hate. In Article 4 of the OFS Rule, Secular Franciscans profess to ... *observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, following the example of St. Francis of Assisi who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people*. If we are faithful to our profession as Secular Franciscans, we must choose love.

Decalogue of Assisi for Peace

1. We commit ourselves to proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic spirit of religion, and, as we condemn every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or of religion, we commit ourselves to doing everything possible to eliminate the root causes of terrorism.
2. We commit ourselves to educating people to mutual respect and esteem, in order to help bring about a peaceful and fraternal coexistence between people of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions.

3. We commit ourselves to fostering the culture of dialogue, so that there will be an increase of understanding and mutual trust between individuals and among peoples, for these are the premise of authentic peace.
4. We commit ourselves to defending the right of everyone to live a decent life in accordance with their own cultural identity, and to form freely a family of his own.
5. We commit ourselves to frank and patient dialogue refusing to consider our differences as an insurmountable barrier, but recognizing instead that to encounter the diversity of others can become an opportunity for greater reciprocal understanding.
6. We commit ourselves to forgiving one another for past and present errors and prejudices, and to supporting one another in a common effort both to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence, and to learn from the past that peace without justice is no true peace.
7. We commit ourselves to taking the side of the poor and the helpless, to speaking out for those who have no voice and to working effectively to change these situations, out of the conviction that no one can be happy alone.
8. We commit ourselves to taking up the cry of those who refuse to be resigned to violence and evil, and we desire to make every effort possible to offer the men and women of our time real hope for justice and peace.
9. We commit ourselves to encouraging all efforts to promote friendship between peoples, for we are convinced that, in the absence of solidarity and understanding between peoples, technological progress exposes the world to a growing risk of destruction and death.
10. We commit ourselves to urging leaders of nations to make every effort to create and consolidate, on the national and international levels, a world of solidarity and peace based on justice.

As Franciscans, we are called to live among people of other faiths without fear or suspicion. It is our charism, our gift from God to be instruments of peace. Now is the time to remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid* [John 14:27].



The Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee is dedicated to intercessory prayer for peaceful resolutions to all faith-generated conflicts that inflict pain and suffering on people throughout the world. We invite you to join us.

Wishing you peace and all that is good,
 Anne Mulqueen, OFS
 Chair, Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



HONORING YOUR SACRED THREE

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, National JPIC Animator

I have been a professed Secular Franciscan for nearly 15 years, and yet I still need ongoing formation, continuing education. I am not done yet. This is not just as a Secular Franciscan, but also as a human who lives and moves and have my being in Christ. Our Holy Rule states that we must conform our thoughts and deeds to those of Christ; but because of human frailty, we must renew our minds and hearts daily (cf. Article 7). Personally, I have not met anyone who knows everything there is to know or who has arrived. I have found that the more one learns, the more you realize all that one doesn't know.

Ongoing formation is vital to us as Secular Franciscans. I believe it to be more vital than initial formation. When we heed the call from the Holy Spirit to pursue this way of life, we know we are new and need to learn all we can. So we take the formation "classes" and learn all about Saints Francis and Clare and the gospel life. Then after a couple of years of these classes, we are professed. But profession does not equal graduation. It is not the end of formation, of learning the gospel life. It is a new beginning; a new season of formation and learning.

When we enter into a new season of life, we need to learn how to navigate that new season. We become different with each passing season, and the way we got through life in the past season won't necessarily work in the new one. Having worked with the dying and the bereaved, we know all too well that the next season will not act like the one that just passed. It will be totally different. But the hardest part of it is that everything will look very similar or the same as before. This similarity will cause us to behave the same as before. Soon we will feel strange in this new existence – like wearing shoes on the wrong foot. They are our shoes and they do fit, but something is not quite right. We need to adjust your way of being.

So now we have a baptismal certificate, a confirmation certificate and a piece of paper that says

you are a professed Secular Franciscan — three pieces of paper that we tend to bury in a drawer or in a box of other important papers. We know they are there, but out of sight often means out of mind. Those three sacred pieces of paper say that we are members of a very elite family with a very specific call. We get a degree or a doctorate and we proudly display that piece of paper in a frame on a wall for all to see and admire. Yet our sacred three remain in the drawer – forgotten and ignored.

Okay, so what does all this have to do with peace and justice? Everything! Ignoring those sacred pieces of paper tends to give way to ignoring the call to the gospel life. Those three pieces of paper explicitly say that we will follow the nonviolent and compassionate Jesus. One definition of *follow* is "to be or act in accordance with." Most of us have no problem worshipping Jesus. We are praying warriors, and that is wonderful. But Jesus never told us to worship him; he did tell us to *follow* him. Having those sacred three pieces of paper means that we are following; and our following becomes our worship. One aspect of following Jesus is to become like Jesus. To become like Jesus means we are willing to live the gospel life, working for peace and justice. It means obeying the call the Holy Spirit has placed deep within us to live a compassionate, nonviolent life.

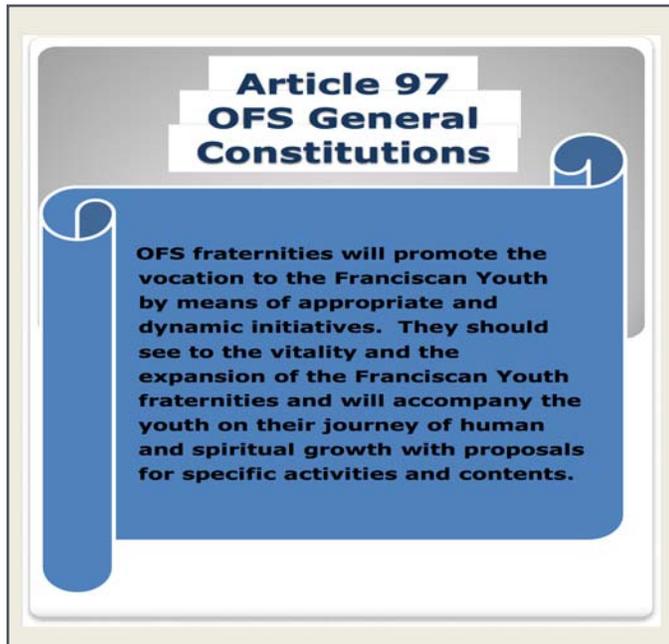
So, here is your challenge (if you choose to accept it): Go and dig out your sacred three pieces of paper: your baptismal, confirmation and profession certificates. Place them on a table in front of you. Contemplate the meaning of those three pieces of paper. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart. Based on what the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart, ask what are you to do for the work of justice in the Kingdom of God. Then go and do it! And share your stories with me at ctownes26@hotmail.com.

May the Lord give you His peace.

Youth & Young Adults Commission – Christy & Sue Nelson, OFS
“Promoting the vocation by means of appropriate and dynamic initiatives!”

Greetings to our dear Franciscan Brothers and Sisters from your new Youth & Young Adults (YYA) Commission Co-Chairs, Sue and Christy Nelson, OFS. We are excited to partner with you on your Franciscan outreach efforts to young Catholics! We welcome your ideas as we work with the National Council to facilitate a robust YYA initiative.

tremendously challenging at times, they are also spiritually enriching and fraternally energizing. Special thanks to all who helped us on this journey so far – you know who you are! *An extraordinary thank you to Kathy Adams, OFS, Cyndy Garwood, OFS, and our new YouFra friends in the United States and abroad who have helped guide our efforts and generously shared their unique talents.*



As a mother-daughter team, we are hopeful about reaching across generational boundaries. We are forever grateful to the young Catholics in our family and inner circle who have continuously re-focused our efforts. These young, future Franciscans will someday come to realize how critical they have been in leading/steering our calling. As a Franciscan, the daily presence of the young people in our lives is a constant reminder that we are being called to ensure this next generation is exposed to Franciscan spirituality.



Sue Nelson, OFS

As we were considering this new role, we did significant research, but it was the counsel of the precious priests in our lives that was a beacon for our path. One priest said, *“Sue and Christy this isn’t a matter of ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ but a question of ‘are you being called to do this?’ and clearly you are!”* We share this personal conversation with you in our first communication in the *TAU* as we pray that those of you who are also being called by the Holy Spirit for this vital work in our Order will join us on this journey. We request your prayers for the YYA efforts across our country. We’ll be happy to share information regarding our backgrounds/bios in future correspondence to help you get to know us better, but right now we are anxious to GET STARTED.



Christy Nelson, OFS

A Special Thank You

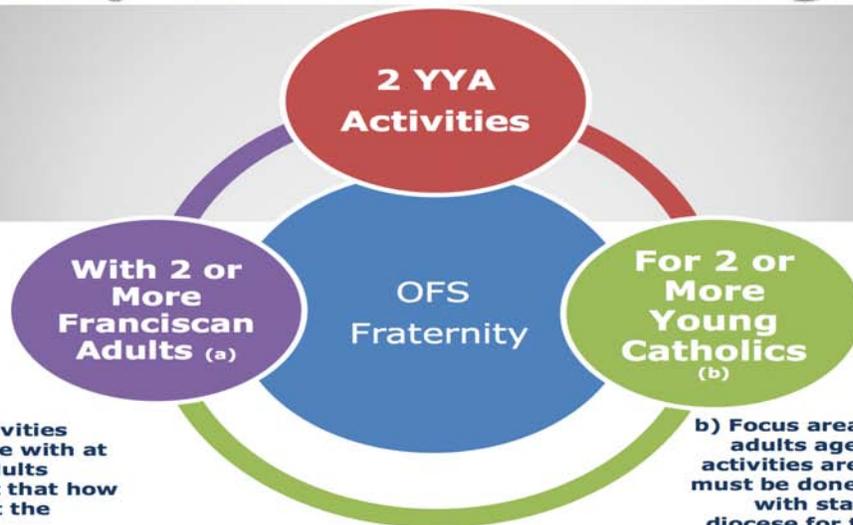
First of all, please allow us to express our gratitude to Our Lady of the Angels local fraternity in Edwardsville, Illinois, and the Franciscans of the Prairie regional fraternity for their support and prayers in our efforts over the last few years. As we attended the Q and the JPIC/YouFra Confab, our interest in supporting the spiritual growth of young Catholics has evolved into a passion for expanding Franciscan activities to this critical demographic. With the many challenges facing our fraternity leadership, we’d like to extend our deepest appreciation to those who said *“Yes!”* or *“Ok, Let’s go ahead and try it,”* when we requested fraternal support on the local, regional and national levels.

We certainly have grown to better understand that supporting OFS YYA initiatives can be controversial and even unpopular. Together, we must strive to look beyond our own needs and encourage and engage those who are the future of our Order. We are reminded constantly that although our efforts for YYA are



Youth & Young Adults Commission – Christy & Sue Nelson, OFS
 “Go, Rebuild My Church”

**YYA (Youth & Young Adults)
 “2 By 2 Fraternal Challenge”**



YYA (Youth & Young Adults) Activities!

Partner with young Catholics to collect Hoodies before & after masses and distribute to local charity

Invite young Catholics to the Children's Hospital ward with Franciscans and wear costumes to entertain young patients (conducted by one fraternity and ranked as one of their most fun events!).

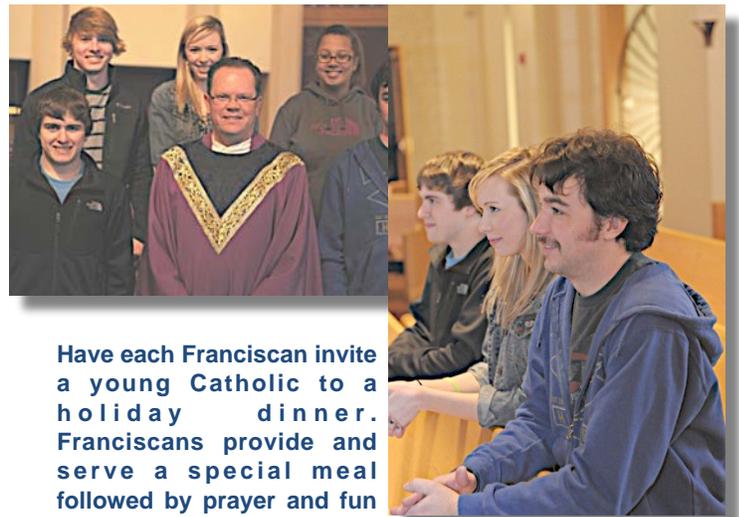
Invite young Catholics to help prepare the local fraternity's baskets for the needy for Thanksgiving

Provide a one-day event on Franciscan spirituality for young Catholics including guest speakers and thought-enriching activities



Partner with local catholic schools to distribute books on St Francis to all 4th graders and include a sticker inside the cover with fraternity contact info

(suggested and sponsored by an OFS Candidate and repeated by other fraternities)



Have each Franciscan invite a young Catholic to a holiday dinner. Franciscans provide and serve a special meal followed by prayer and fun activities

Two Franciscans gather with two young Catholics for coffee and discuss a chapter of Francis of Assisi, by Thaddee Matura, OFS. “To be understood, we must first strive to understand.” Begin by asking for their observations and questions – it’s about them!

Have young Catholics volunteer their time with Franciscans to help with the Special Olympics

Youth & Young Adults Commission – Christy & Sue Nelson, OFS
 “Accompany the Youth on Their Journey of Human & Spiritual Growth”

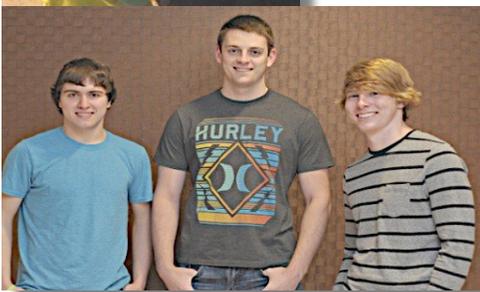


YYA (Youth & Young Adults) Activities!

Two Franciscans request a special meeting with the young leaders of the local Catholic youth group to explain who we are and ask for suggestions of ways to build a partnership



Offer to provide the Catholic grade school principal gift cards for an essay or poster contest on St. Francis & St. Clare. Have the fraternity read and judge the entries at a gathering



Establish an annual Franciscan visit with a local Catholic Youth Group for Pizza &

Prayer. Fraternity purchases the pizza and leads the evening Liturgy of the Hours.

Invite two local young Catholic leaders to meet with the local fraternity council each quarter to discuss the fraternity’s upcoming calendar of events and the best opportunities to invite young Catholics OR ask for suggestions of what we might do that would appeal to them (and their friends!)

**YouFra Groups
 In the United States**

If you are an emerging or existing YouFra Group in the US, contact us directly to enable us to get you updated information to help you network with peer fraternities:
suenelsonofs@yahoo.com &
christynelsonofs@yahoo.com

Please send us news of your YYA Activity successes and include pictures/videos.

One region will be recognized for Outstanding YYA Outreach!



Second YouFra International Assembly – Croatia 2014

Note: For those under 18, obtain notarized parent/guardian signed authorization for unlimited photo use by OFS.



Secular Franciscan Order
Ordo Franciscanus Sæcularis



Africa – A Land of Contrasts

by Mary Stronach, OFS
International Councilor

Africa... a place of violence and fear...where Christian Genocide is occurring in the Central African Republic, where 25 Secular Franciscans were killed in the Congo, where 200 Christian and Muslim girls were kidnapped in Nigeria.

Africa ... a place of hope, where youth are taking action for peace, for harmony, where YouFra is alive and well.

During the 2nd International Assembly of Franciscan Youth in Samobor-Croatia in August, Nicholas Kugonza Krigwajjo shared the good news of what is happening in Uganda. In 11 of 19 dioceses, youth have embraced evangelization in the footsteps of St. Francis. They participate in acts of charity to help the needy; they are challenging social injustices, engaging in environmentally sustaining activities, and implementing new ideas on how to sustain their faith. In collaboration with the Secular Franciscan Order, members of YouFra are volunteering in prison ministry and implementing youth and children ministry. All this is taking place in the absence of a National OFS Council. The Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Franciscans of Africa (JPICFA) has been their inspiration.

Their initiatives include:

- Turning the Other Cheek: To create awareness and to promote justice, peace and integrity of creation.



- Children Rights in Education: Advocating for children's rights, they partner with schools, produce a quarterly newsletter, sponsor special children's days and have a monthly radio show.

- Clean Water for Life (CW4L): To advocate for clean and safe water for domestic use, with emphasis on good sanitation and hygiene in and around water sources and in communities as a whole.

- Sports for Development (S4D): Promoting the talents of the individual members in sports such as soccer, netball, and volleyball.

- Technology onto the Young (TOTY):

Understanding that access to information and imparting skill hold the key to the empowerment of people, particularly youth and women, YouFra in Uganda is trying to develop entrepreneurial activities in technology, jewelry, candle wax and bark cloth.

- Teaching the Young to Save (TYTS): Equipping members with basic financial skills to help them become better savers for the future. This project is also meant to promote a culture of volunteerism among YouFra.

- Tree Planting: In conjunction with JPICFA and the Little Sisters of St. Francis, they began a project of planting indigenous trees and bananas at Kitotole-Busunju, Kiyinda Mityana Diocese.



To make their programs sustainable, YouFra tries to retain its members by providing fun-filled activities like camping, singing in church choirs, singing seasonal and Franciscan carols, delving into secular music with a purpose of “edu-tainment”, celebrating Franciscan feasts, organizing talent search competitions, etc.

Ugandan YouFra faces challenges. There is no National OFS; thus they have to justify their legality as YouFra. They have little funding, but this does not deter them from their ultimate goal, to walk in the footsteps of St. Francis.

Indeed, despite all the horrors our Christian brothers and sisters are facing on the African continent, there are many hopeful signs and among them is this wonderful light that shines brightly in Uganda — reminding us all that Francis lives in the lives of our youth.



What an inspiration for all Secular Franciscans! Can we take their passion, their hands-on attitudes and apply them? Where should we begin?

For more information, go to: www.youfrauganda.wordpress.com



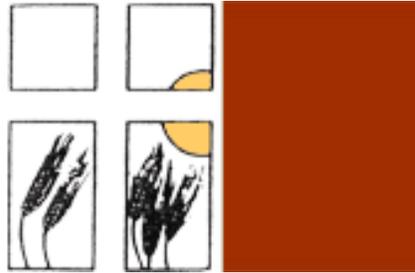
Clean Water for Life (CW4L)



This programme was inspired after participating in Franciscan International’s water & Sanitation advocacy workshop in 2012 and is meant to advocate for clean and safe water for domestic use with emphasis on good sanitation and hygiene in and around water sources and in our communities as a whole.



FRANCISCAN FAMILY APOSTOLATE



The Poor and the Franciscan Family Apostolate

SMALL THINGS

DONE IN GREAT LOVE AND PEACE

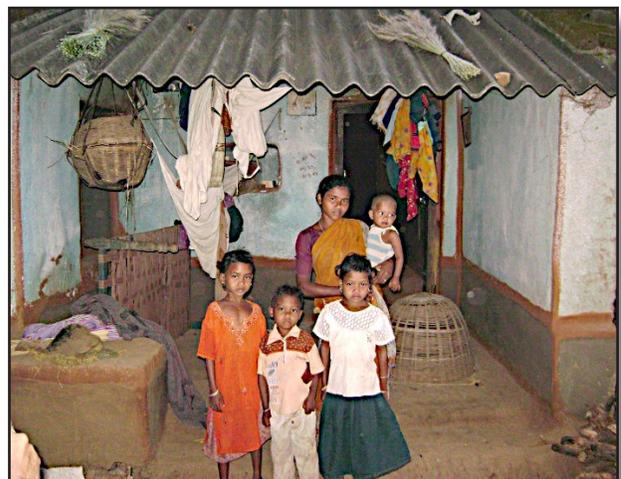
by Alan J. Ouimet O.F.S.

The Franciscan Family Apostolate has been around a long time — 43 years. Founded in 1971 and designed to assist American Secular Franciscans in their outreach to care for the poor and oppressed, it has helped thousands of families. Recently, the Apostolate has commenced assisting HIV/AIDS widows and their children in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Our families here are tribal families that have been ostracized because of their disease. In a word, they have been abandoned due to fear of contagion. To best show the progress of the Franciscan Family Apostolate, I am setting forth a letter I received from Sister Carmel Paul, our partner and director of our project there. She wrote as follows:

What Franciscan Family Apostolate means for the mission of South East Region of Andhra Pradesh is difficult to verbalize. As I just recall how the miracles of love transferred the life of Arika Gangamma who resides at Gopalapuram. She belongs to Savara Tribal tribe and lost her husband all of a sudden with four kids last aged 4 months. All I experienced in my first visits was that she was an incapable illiterate woman who never moved from her mountain where she resides. Now I understand that she became a women leader of her village; she manages her finances ; she sends her children to school. She is aware of many of her rights and how and where to go about and get her needs met. She raises animals and manages field work in association with the villagers.

How and when this transformation took place I really do not know. It was decided by the Franciscan Family Apostolate in collaboration with the Canossian sisters to assist a family for three years and help the family to reach

the goal of self- reliance. The Apostolate provided her with \$ 75 per quarter for three years and an asset to work with to earn a better livelihood. We were asked to guide and motivate the family, above all to follow them with their speed to capture their heart to free them from the clutches of ignorance and superstitions which are their guiding forces. Being animists they believe in the supernatural powers and in the spirits of the dead. Persevering under the love of the Canossian sisters, and mingled with the generous heart of her sponsor from the Apostolate, Gangamma found meaning in life and illumined her mind that if she cooperate with the scheme she too can become someone in the society. Her daughter, Vasantha and her brother Santhosh were first enrolled in the Montfort Brothers Tribal welfare residential school. Santhosh, who is a victim of sickle cell anemia, had to leave his education there after a year, being often in need of hospitalization. Both of Gangamma's sons are victims of sickle cell anemia which is hereditary but her girls are



healthy and ambitious. Now three of Gangamma's children are going to the village school and her 2nd daughter is doing her studies in Montfort residential school.

Because of the generous heart of her sponsor, in collaborations with the partial assistance from Tribal housing government scheme, Gangamma succeeded to build a decent house of her own. A portion of her house she floored in beautiful tiles; she made a small little garden on the roof of her concrete house. It is to be wondered, among the many houses sanctioned to build, only her house is completed. I visited the family in an unexpected moment and found house is kept clean and tidy.

Following a family with a specific vision to free themselves from the clutches of poverty and leading them to self-

reliance, unknowingly, we gave them the ambition to grow and stand on their feet. Now all Gangamma's children are going to school. She learned to write her name and set her goals and knows how to manage her family. It is a wonder!

All things are becoming possible because of the joint effort of the Franciscan Family Apostolate holding hands and collaborating with the Canossian sisters assisted with generous hearts of Secular Franciscan sponsors. It is vividly clear that money alone cannot change a poor person but without money we can never assist a family to reach the goal of such transformation. Gangamma was sponsored until last year. Why some sponsors come forth from so far away is a marvel.

In every age O Lord, You have been our refuge.

Ps 90



Many families are in need of assistance. Caring for the poor costs less than the purchase of a daily cup of coffee, \$25.00 per month. Please consider sponsoring a family. We have many, many waiting for assistance. For further information please visit our website, www.openhearts.org or contact Alan Ouimet, OFS at 203-915-2837 or email ffaindia@att.net.

Franciscan Family Apostolate Mission Statement

The Franciscan Family Apostolate was founded as response of the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) to the plight of the poor in the Third World. Following its founder, Saint Francis of Assisi, the poor Christ is found in the faces and lives of the poor and oppressed of the world. The Franciscan Family Apostolate's mission is to encourage a witness to the Gospel life preached by Jesus – the care and concern for the stranger in need regardless of race, color, religion or country of origin.

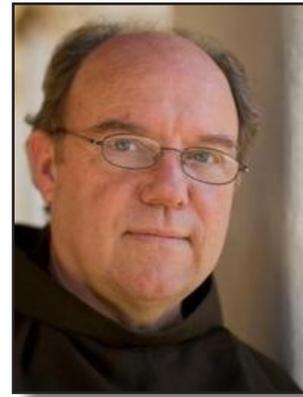
In 1987 the Franciscan Family Apostolate became an independent 501(c)3 charity upon receipt of its tax exempt status from the IRS with the following stated goals:

- To alleviate poverty, provide financial support and assistance to needy individuals and families in the Third World through outreach programs and related activities;
- To develop and implement similar outreach programs in the United States;
- Lastly, to develop and implement educational programs in Third World countries and in the United States to provide occupational training.

Reflections from the 2014 National Retreat
with Br. Bill Short, OFM

SEIZING THE FRANCISCAN MOMENT IN THE CHURCH TODAY

by Marie Thomas, OFS



PART I - Introduction

We are in a unique Franciscan moment in history — why? We are living at a time when we have... a Jesuit Pope taking the name of Francis and living a very Franciscan life style, and the world loves him! Think about it! Why do they love him? He doesn't just talk the talk; he actually walks the walk. Don't just listen to him, although his talks are tremendous, WATCH HIM! Watch where he goes, who he goes out of his way to embrace, what he wears, etc.



One of the first places Pope Francis visited was San Damiano, where St. Francis heard the voice of God. Now, why would he want to do that? It was a private visit. He told no one and saw only the Franciscan friars who lived there — why? Because it was in this place that God said to St. Francis, “Repair my church.” Pope Francis realizes that he also needs to repair the church. You know the reasons; they’ve been all over the news: the reputation of the church damaged by the sex scandals, financial scandals right within the Vatican, etc.

Ponder in your heart and discuss the meaning of this with your friends: From the signs of the times — to the time of the signs! Images and gestures speak more loudly than words.

Today's challenge for the Secular Franciscan Order is to find ways to be visible and recognizable by our image. We need a consistent message. How can the members of the Secular Franciscans be recognized in the grocery? In church? In the restaurant?

Most people like to be in the center, the center of attention, in the center of things happening so they

are fully informed. They are the “in” group. But Pope Francis and St. Francis always go “to the edge.” That's strange, isn't it? Why be on the outskirts? What can you accomplish from out there? It is on the edge of society where you find the poor, the overlooked, the outcast, the shunned, etc. Now you step out on the edge and from that viewpoint, look toward the acclaimed “inner circle” of hierarchy. Find the edge... and look at the center. It looks different! You see things differently. You see things from that point of view.

To conclude Part I, I will leave you with one thought: *Make all people feel important, including your pastor and priests, your family members, all Franciscans, all strangers, every single person who crosses your path!*

PART II - Peace and Relationship

We are an order of peace! That is not an option!

This part will be about Peace! But Br. Bill made it quite clear that we should preach PEACE by our deeds! Watch the facial reactions, the movements of the hands and feet, etc. People no longer trust language (maybe because of all the electronic communication that exists), but gestures are trusted because they do not lie and they are not hidden. How do you show peace with your gestures? Try smiling an honest smile. Your eyes light up! You are honestly loving that person and not just pretending to like him or her. It is not a polite “I must be nice to you,” it is an honest-to-goodness loving smile. If it's not inside; it won't show outside!

Joy speaks eloquently! Ponder that for a while!

True peace will always choose the person who is overlooked. Again, go to the edge as Francis did. If you cannot do this — you do not have Christ's true inner peace!

God's name is... RELATIONSHIP! He is not counting your good deeds, or the number of rosaries

you say, or whether you remembered to say the Divine Mercy novena, etc. No. He wants a relationship with you! How do you accomplish this? The same as with any person. Spend time with Him, talk to Him honestly, be with Him all the time! How? By being in His presence. If you have inner peace, you are in His presence. If you are upset, angry, annoyed or worried, He is not with you, because you pushed Him out. Take a deep breath and ask Him to return.

Pope Francis, as busy as he is, always saves time for prayer from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. daily. You can be sure he is not just saying a rosary or the Liturgy of the Hours! Prayer is a relationship! The Pope and God are communicating... probably without using words!

Love drives out fear. I'm sure you've heard this before, but have you tried it? Are you afraid of a Franciscan brother or sister because she or he may verbally abuse you? Have you tried hugging them with an honest smile? Do it often! It may not change them, but it will certainly change you.

We are often quick to see the faults in others, but we fail to see our own. If we criticize others, we may actually possess that fault, because we tend to notice the things that are a priority in ourselves. If we criticize someone for being greedy, it may be that you yourself are greedy, or you would never have noticed it!

Fraternity Ministers are actually pastors —they must care for their flock. In your fraternity, put the people who are on the periphery into the center. Give every single member of the fraternity something to do: write birthday cards, start the meeting song, distribute the prayers, etc. Every single member in the fraternity has a talent that must be utilized and not put under a bushel just because they can't accomplish it "the way you would do it."

Sheep are not dumb. They recognize the Master's voice and follow it. Christ left the 99 and went after the one who strayed because He loves each one, and each and everyone is important to Him. Ministers, do not leave any of your members stranded and alone. Love them!

I will end Part II with the saying, "Love with an open heart at the center of unbearable tension." React ... with LOVE!

PART III - Poverty and Prayer

Being spiritual does not mean we must accumulate virtues. It is just the opposite. Being spiritual means

we must be in a **PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP** with Christ —big difference! If we are concerned with accumulating virtues, we are looking at ourselves and patting ourselves on the back, or looking at ourselves and getting discouraged because we seem to be getting nowhere.

Poverty is not just giving stuff up. Just giving up stuff leads to puffing ourselves up into thinking we are "good." Oh look how good I am. I have nothing. I gave it all away. This, my brothers and sisters, is not poverty; it is Spiritual Pride and is worse than doing nothing at all.

We don't just give UP —we need to give TO... someone who needs it. The measure of our generosity is not what we give up but "What is the need of my neighbor and how do I fulfill it?" We should have what we need and avoid excess.

1. St. Francis went through three stages in his spiritual life, which are reflected in the prayers he composed:
 - 1) One of his first prayers at San Damiano was his prayer before the crucifix: "Most high, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart, and give me correct faith, certain hope, a perfect charity, etc...." You all know it. We always say it at the beginning of Initial Formation. It is a "gimme" prayer.
 2. Later his Paraphrase of the Our Father reflects his thinking more widely of others, of community: "...enlighten them, enflame them, fill them with happiness, etc."
 3. In his final stage, St. Francis composed "The Canticle of Brother Sun," which is a prayer of praise and thanksgiving, because he knows God knows everything, loves everyone, and he trusts God totally to be in control of his life. Francis gives up control of his life and gives that control to God.

Similarly, we should go through three stages:

1. Look at Christ crucified.
2. Let Jesus look at you!
3. Christ will draw you into Himself.

Begin by gazing at the Crucified. His eyes are open. Look at Him. Just spend time looking at Him.

We don't go through these three stages simply because we want to go through them. God is in charge of all of this, but He can only do what we allow. If we are

not open to Him, He will not force Himself on us. We must go to Him with open minds and open hearts!

Let us be forgiven and be recreated in God. Like St. Francis and Pope Francis... let your attitude remain peaceful. Stay in God's loving presence so you will always react with love.

PART IV - Care for Creation

Many saints performed miracles with animals, but it was always to benefit someone. St. Francis was different. St. Francis treated animals with respect, without performing any kind of miracle. The animals did not benefit anyone; for example, the Sermon to the birds — they did nothing but sit.

Most of the world's creatures obey the will of God. The birds fly and chirp, the fish swim, the bears growl, all of creation obeys God's will — man is the only exception!

Nature's inherent value is related to the first born — Christ. Since Christ is God's son and we are God's children, we are all brothers and sisters of Christ.

On the Feast of St. Joseph in 2013, Pope Francis prayed that St. Joseph protect all creation as he did Jesus and Mary, and bring the warmth of hope to all of creation.



We sin against creation when we hurt it or destroy it because creation is good! I repeat— we are hurting something good, just like the criminals we see on the TV or read about in the papers!

Let me leave you with this final thought ... Become agents of His love and mercy. Be a guardian of creation, because people can sometimes forgive — nature never can. Like Pope Francis and St. Francis: React with love!

FRANCISCAN LIVING

“Witnesses of the Church’s Mission”

By Francine Gikow, OFS

“Do you wish to bind yourself more closely to the Church and to work more intently to rebuild the ecclesial community and fulfill its mission among all people?”

This question is asked at the time of our permanent profession. We respond, “Yes, this is what I want.” It unites us more closely to the Catholic Church as we voluntarily offer to bear witness to the Church’s mission. But what does it really mean to bind myself more closely to the Church? What are my responsibilities as a witness to the Church’s mission? What difference does it make?

Since this is a two-pronged promise, let’s take a look at the first issue: how we bind ourselves more closely to the Church.

When we are professed, we promise to voluntarily become closer to the Church, our Mother. As you know, in order to be accepted into the Order, we must first be “a member in good standing” in the Catholic Church. That means that we must be *fully initiated* into the life of the Church (having received the sacraments of Baptism, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation) and be able to *participate fully* in the sacramental life of the Church. Any condition that impedes our full participation in the church (such as being in a second marriage without the benefit of annulment) would prohibit admission into the Order.

Francis insisted on always having a close relationship to the Church. Although he was aware of major problems in the church of his time, Francis knew that Jesus’ promise to Peter was still valid: “...you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it”(Matt. 16:18). Remember how Francis went to Rome to obtain the blessing of the Church for his small community? The humble Francis wanted his Order to always cleave to God and His Church. He saw the Mother Church as his larger fraternity even with her faults!

Francis also knew that the Church is our lifeblood! We are nourished in the sacraments in order to bear witness! Those who cannot fully participate in the sacraments cannot bind themselves more closely to

the Church and ultimately bear witness for the Church.

The second issue is this:

We are professed, not for ourselves, but for others. We are called (and we accept with our promises) to rebuild the ecclesial community. By our profession and by binding ourselves closer to the Church and ecclesial community, we voluntarily promise to live to a higher standard of conduct than other Catholics. We promise to be a role model in Catholic life. In other words, we “must walk the walk,” if we “talk the talk.”

Yes, what we do, matters! When we call ourselves “Secular Franciscans” and are members of an Order within the Church, people look at us and how we live. In fact, isn’t this what we are charged to do? We preach the gospel at all times through our lives. If our lives are not consistent with what we profess, then we are tearing down the Church, rather than building it up. We are committing scandal.

Since we are all sinners, sometimes Secular Franciscans fall short of the promises we make. Perhaps there is a re-marriage without annulment. Perhaps there is a lifestyle of living with a partner without a Church marriage. Perhaps there is a political pro-choice stand. The fraternity council must address these issues for the benefit of the fraternity and the Church community as a whole. For if a Secular Franciscan witnesses to a lifestyle counter to the laws of the Church without discussion, then it may seem right for others to do likewise. The fraternity’s and Church’s witness is impaired, and we fail in our promises of profession. Ultimately, we fail in our promise to God.

These thoughts of living to a higher standard, of being a role model, convict us whenever our behavior does not reflect Francis’ and gospel values. Yes, we are held to a higher standard because we said: “this is what I want!” It was a voluntary promise, one that no one coerced us into making.

Remembering our promises in profession, we do not want to disappoint our God. We want to continue my “yes” to God for the rest of our life and become living witnesses to the Church and to God.

¹ Rite of Profession or Permanent Commitment to the Gospel Life Within the Mass, as found in The Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1985, p. 22.

FRANCISCAN CELEBRATION OF ST. LOUIS IN ST. LOUIS

In honor of the 800th anniversary of the birth of St. Louis IX, King of France, a "Franciscan Celebration of St. Louis" was held on August 24, 2014, at St. Anthony Parish in St. Louis, Missouri. The National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order (NAFRA) sponsored this gathering, which was organized and hosted by several local fraternities in St. Clare Region. The initial idea for such a celebration was planted at the 2012 NAFRA Chapter when International Vice-Minister Doug Clorey approached National Secretary Jan Parker and asked, "Wouldn't it be great to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the birth of our patron, St. Louis IX, in the city of St. Louis?" Jan took this idea home to St. Louis, Mo., and to her Region. The idea received enthusiastic support from St. Clare Regional Fraternity Minister Barb Morgan, who helped plan the event. Two local fraternities, St. Anthony of St. Louis, Mo., and San Damiano of O'Fallon, Mo., were instrumental in "making it happen."

The date for the "Franciscan Celebration of St. Louis" was chosen to coincide with the St. Louis Archdiocese's own celebration of their patronal feast on Sunday August 24, 2014. Providentially, this date also coincided with the National OFS Retreat. Secular Franciscans attending the National Retreat were invited to extend their stay and attend the celebration. Publicity included an article in the *St. Louis Review* (the diocesan newspaper) and a ten minute interview with Jan Parker, which aired several times on local Catholic radio stations. Seventy persons attended this celebration with good representation from First Order Friars, Third Order Religious Sisters, and OFS brothers and sisters. A dozen "non-Franciscans" came to learn about St. Louis, patron of their city, and they had the opportunity to learn a little more about the Franciscan Order as well.

The celebration began with a welcome from National Minister Deacon Tom Bello, OFS, and the beautiful prayer to St. Louis composed by our International OFS Council (CIOFS). The day included a meal "fit for a King," a presentation on the Franciscan spirituality of St. Louis IX, Evening Prayer and the singing of "St. Louis King" — a hymn composed in honor of the Jubilee year by Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, General Assistant, TOR. Attendees received a specially designed holy card of St. Louis, a formation packet with copies of the CIOFS' ongoing formation lessons on St. Louis and information on the Secular Franciscan Order. The day was topped off with a delightful skit presented by the "Little Flower Players," who reenacted an episode from the Little Flowers of St. Francis entitled "How King Louis IX met Brother Giles." The Little Flower Players — Barb Morgan, Lou Helleny, and Deacon John Wainscott, all members of St. Clare Region — enlisted the talents of NAFRA Councilor Mary Frances Charsky of Binghamton, N.Y., and former Regional Minister Judy Haupt of Hilton Head, N.C.



Left to right: Barb Morgan, Lou Helleny, Jan Parker, Mary Frances Charsky, Deacon John Wainscott, Judy Haupt



Prince Louis de Bourbon and his wife, Princess Marie-Marguerite

Following the celebration, many of our OFS brothers and sisters attended the glorious Feast Day Mass celebrated by Archbishop Robert J. Carlson at the St. Louis Cathedral Basilica. Guests included Prince Louis de Bourbon, a descendant of St. Louis IX, King of France; Archbishop Thierry Jordan of Reims, France; Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, apostolic nuncio to the United States; and Cardinal Justin Rigali, former archbishop of St. Louis. Many other civic and religious dignitaries were in attendance, including those of other faith traditions. Among the many highlights of the Mass was a wonderful address by Archbishop Jordan, who warmed hearts with his joyful spirit and sincere love of God and God's people.



A SUMMER SEMINAR ON SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE

By Cecilia Maljan-Herbelin, OFS, Anne Mulqueen OFS, Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR,
and Sylvia Paoli, OFS

The **6th Summer Seminar for Secular Franciscans**, sponsored by the Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life and Saint Francis University in Loretto, Penn., was held July 10 to 13, 2014. It focused on the topic of *Spiritual Assistance* at the special request of the National Executive Council's Spiritual Assistance Development Task Force (SADTF). More than 80 participants from 20 of our 30 regions attended the seminar to increase their understanding of spiritual assistance and the training of spiritual assistants. The Summer Seminar attempted to address the two major task force concerns. There were two separate "tracks," for the distinct issues as well as some quality time together. One track was for anyone wanting to understand Spiritual Assistance and the role of the Spiritual Assistant in all levels of fraternity. The other track was for those who wanted to know more about specific types of training programs.

Track A, referred to as "*Spiritual Assistance 101*," was led by Anne Mulqueen, OFS, and Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR.

They were asked to present an overview of spiritual assistance to participants who were not currently in spiritual assistant training programs and those who simply had an interest in learning more about the role and duties of a spiritual assistant.

The sessions were composed of a blended approach to each topic—*delivering the information* and group work. Initially either Fr. Kevin or Anne would take the lead. It was not a strict lecture.

Whenever one of them had something essential to add to the topic, they would just commandeer the microphone and the other would acquiesce with grace! The participants also gathered in small groups to mull over and respond to pertinent questions posed concerning the material they had just heard. Animated large group discussions followed the small group reports.

[Anne and I have known each other for many years, and we have worked together before, though not as presenters, in a situation like the Summer Seminar. We have always worked well together. Fr. Kevin calls the presentations a work of "vital reciprocity"! We both prepared slide presentations. The printed text of these presentations were available to the participants after the sessions.]



The sessions, were carried out in a relaxed, relational, dialogical and, informative style. The intention was to limit the "information" segment to 20 minutes; however, when mixing Fr. Kevin and Anne, minutes expand. Yet the lion's share of each session was allotted to group discussion and group reporting.

Track A, was a participant-centered event with the intention of providing information, eliciting feedback, sparking enthusiasm and interest and having fun. It

was never boring. We may even take our show on the road.

[Anne and Fr. Kevin are collaborating to use some of the information collected from the small group discussions feedback. This will insure that something will come out of the hard work and discussions of the participants. They are hoping to produce something useful in terms of a deeper understanding of spiritual assistance.]

Track B was led by Sylvia Paoli, OFS, Fr. Matthias Wesnofske, OFM Cap., and Faye Martin, OFS. Sylvia shared her impressions of the Summer Seminar:

The make-up of the facilitator team was chosen for the following reasons: Fr. Matthias basically uses only the book, *Franciscan Family Connections*, a correspondence course handled one-on-one, and he meets one time or more with each student. Faye and her regional team conduct six weekend classes where all the students gather in one location, and they handle the remainder of the course by correspondence. Her course lasts about two years. The St. Francis Region team in California has only classes, which every student attends. It meets all day on one Saturday per month. Also, unlike the other two programs, the St. Francis Region program includes both potential spiritual assistants and formators, and lasts for three years. It also has an intern program for those designated at the end of the class as possible spiritual assistants, and no one is certified until successfully completing the internship program.

The Loretto program began on a Thursday evening and was completed Sunday morning. There were about 25 people in the Track B portion of the Summer Seminar. Throughout the presentations by all three facilitators, there was a lively interchange among the class members and the facilitators with

questions, comments, explanations and other sharing, all of which added substantially to the content of the program.

The goal of the facilitators was to give the participants enough information to be able to adopt and adapt from the three types of preparation for becoming a Spiritual Assistant currently being conducted and form their own training program. The regions have very different concerns: some have a major distance problem; some have weather issues; some do not yet have a team equipped to conduct such training programs; and there are other issues each region has to deal with. The feedback from the participants was very favorable, and it is hoped that, from this, all regions will be able to start their own training programs for spiritual assistants, who are so badly needed in our Order.”

These Summer Seminar participants are part of the foundation on which the Spiritual Assistance Development Task Force and all the concerned entities (i.e., NEC, CNSA, National Formation Commission and NAFRA) will continue to work on meeting its goals: *to articulate the role of spiritual assistants and to educate the various constituencies about Spiritual Assistance – what it is, who is responsible for it, and the purpose and role of the Spiritual Assistant within each fraternity; and to work together to develop a standardized program for the implementation of a Franciscan Family Connections program in the United States for training “suitable and well-qualified” Secular Spiritual Assistants by identifying the key elements of successful Spiritual Assistant training programs that can be used in all types of programs across the country.*





2016 Quinquennial Congress Denver, CO - July 1-6, 2016

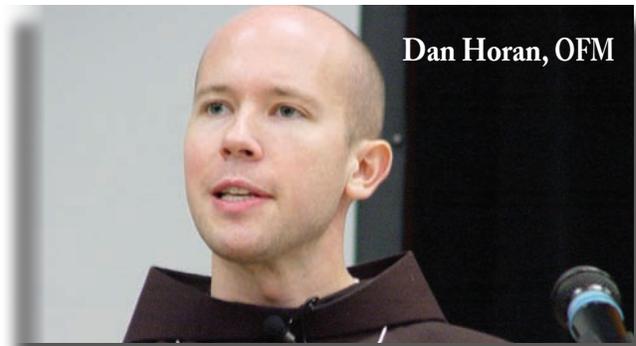
“Save the date, make plans, and come journey with your brothers and sisters in the Mile-High City,” urges Quinquennial Committee Co-chair Mary Anne Lenzi.

“The ‘Q’ will focus on ‘relationship,’” she says, and will feature “Dating God” author Fr. Dan Horan, OFM, as a keynote speaker. Father Dan was ordained in 2012 and is already a prolific author with six books published and two more due out this year.

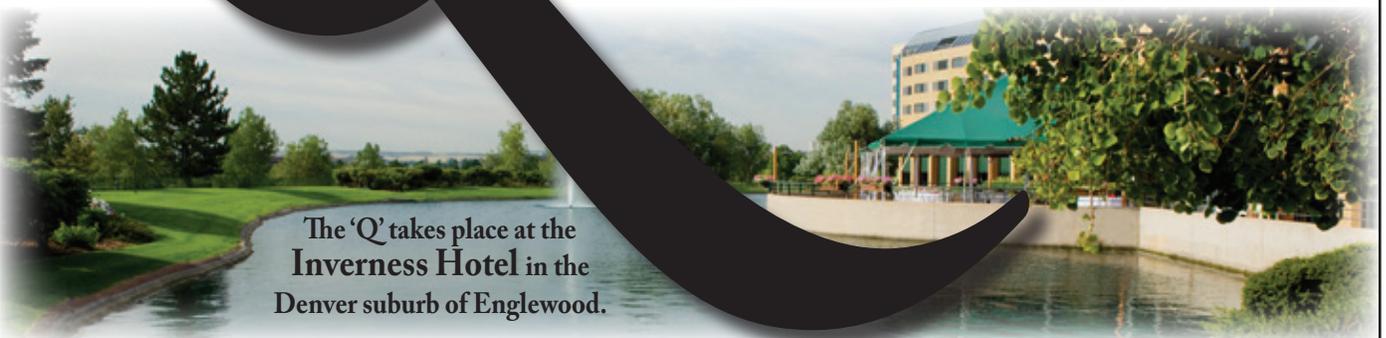
Not only will the ‘Q’ help you journey in the footsteps of St. Francis, Mary Anne adds, but also in the footsteps of Saint John Paul II -- who visited Denver for World Youth Day in 1993 and confirmed Francis of Assisi as patron saint of Colorado in 2000.



the
mile
high



Dan Horan, OFM



The ‘Q’ takes place at the
Inverness Hotel in the
Denver suburb of Englewood.



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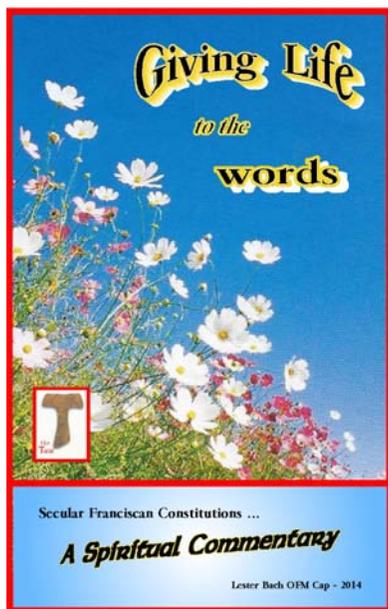
Giving Life to the words

Secular Franciscan Constitutions . . . A Spiritual Commentary
by Lester Bach OFM Cap.

Fr. Lester Bach, OFM, Cap. has released a new book, *Giving Life to the words*, a spiritual commentary on the OFS General Constitutions. The suggestion for this book came at the persuasion of certain Secular Franciscans who knew the value of his original work, *Called to Rebuild the Church*, based on the constitutions of 1990, and that it needed updating to reflect changes in the General Constitutions of 2000. All of us who know Fr. Lester, and have read his books or attended his retreats and workshops, owe him a debt of gratitude for his continuous loving service to the Secular Franciscans. Now he has given us another opportunity to grow –this time in spiritual understanding of the importance of this quite essential document.

As one of those who coaxed Fr. Lester to update his original book, I must say that the information contained in the General Constitutions, which is its subject, is essential if we are to live the nature, purpose and spirit of the Rule concretely in our lives and our fraternities. Thank you, Fr. Lester, for all you have given us.

Anne Mulqueen, OFS



Secular Franciscans have a rather short Rule of Life: three chapters and 26 articles. Yet the Constitutions written for and by Seculars contains 103 articles. As a member of the International Fraternity, I was one of those privileged to be present at the General Chapter in Madrid in October 1999. The six-year trial period of the Constitutions was discussed and voted on article by article and amendment by amendment. It was approved on December 8, 2000. I could not help wondering how the words of these Constitutions would become part of our way of being Franciscan. Fr. Lester Bach, OFM, Cap. grasps these words and gives them life.

Constitutions are defined as a system of fundamental principles according to which nation, state or the like is governed. The definition makes the words sound like legalistic “stuff.” Government does require some legalistic words. However, Fr. Lester’s book puts it in plain words so the Constitutions are not so much about governing but help the reader develop a better understanding of the Rule and the Constitutions that govern them. Through his words and many quotes from the documents of Popes, other authors and authentic texts, the articles of the Constitutions become life-giving.

If you want a good examination of your Franciscan conscience, read the last chapters on *Franciscan Theology* and the *Closing Remarks*. These are WORDS THAT CHALLENGE!

Marie Amore, OFS

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