

160 Years

Utica, NY Fraternity Celebrates With Awards and Street Signs



Betty Frank, OFS, who was professed 70 years ago and is one of the longest living professed Secular Franciscans in the U.S., helped to unveil the "Welcome to Utica" sign for city officials during the 160th Anniversary Celebration of St. Joseph Fraternity. Founded in March 1859, the fraternity is the second oldest in the country. Photo by Alex Stronach.

By MARY STRONACH, OFS

"Welcome to Utica. The Home of St. Marianne Cope."

St. Joseph Fraternity and City of Utica officials unveiled a street sign sporting those words before a crowd of 100 people during the fraternity's 160th anniversary celebration Aug. 18 at the Irish Cultural Center in Utica, NY.

The fraternity donated four signs, which the city installed at the north, south, east and west entrances to Utica.

Marcus Phillips, the mayor's chief of staff, said the city was glad to work with the Secular Franciscan Order. "The reason is because the Catholic tradition, which St. Marianne Cope represents, is kind of what made the city what it is today" with "a spirit of giving" that propels the area's generosity in fundraising and being open to immigrants and refugees. He also singled out city sign department supervisor Mark Sokolowski for expediting the project.

Common Council President Michael Galime read a proclamation from Mayor Robert Palmieri, honoring the fraternity. The fraternity also received a proclamation from County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr., declaring Aug. 18 as St. Joseph Fraternity Day in Oneida County.

State Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon was on hand to present an Assembly proclamation, recognizing the

fraternity as the second oldest in the U.S. (founded in March, 1859), and joined in honoring several individuals for their charitable works.

Fraternity Minister Robert Stronach, OFS, presented the *Silent Giver Award* to **Jo Ginnity, OFS**, "for lifetime achievement for service to the Order, Church and Community." Since she was in a nursing and rehab facility at the time, Stronach surprised her via a cell phone, with the audience giving a loud ovation and singing "Happy Birthday" to her.

Stronach then presented the *St. Mother Marianne Cope Award* to three individuals:

- **Ed Morgan**, director of Mother Marianne's West Side Kitchen at St. Joseph-St. Patrick Parish, for coordinating the soup kitchen operation that served over 53,000 meals in the past year to the jobless, underemployed and homeless.
- **Marion "Duffy" Geary, OFS**, for her work with soup kitchens, food pantries and prison ministry. She is a member of Holy Family Fraternity in Vernon, NY.
- **Elizabeth "Betty" Frank, OFS**, for her ministries at St. Joseph-St. Patrick Church as a professed Secular Franciscan for 70 years. Among other things, she co-founded Perpetual Adoration at the parish (still going strong after 27 years with some 300 volunteers).

Stronach expressed his gratitude to a community of lay



Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, national spiritual assistant, addresses the 160th anniversary celebrants. Photo by Alex Stronach.

Carmelites from New Hartford, NY, which sent a congratulatory message citing “160 years of faithful service in the spirit and love of the Franciscan charism” and announcing a \$400 donation in the fraternity’s honor to Mother Marianne’s West Side Kitchen. The message was signed by Diana Evans, president of the Community of St. Joseph the Protector, Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites (OCDS).

Stronach also quoted from a congratulatory letter from Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS. Writing from Rome, Italy, he cited the fraternity’s “significant past” and “praiseworthy present” with its various ministries.

Fraternity Vice Minister Katie Koscinski, OFS, who serves on the St. Kateri Tekakwitha Regional Executive Council, presented a gift on behalf of Regional Minister Alfred Picogna, OFS – a framed collage of congratulatory messages from fraternities across the region.

Fr. Richard Dellos, pastor of St. Joseph-St. Patrick Church, offered the invocation at the afternoon banquet, citing the beginnings of the Franciscan charism when Francis of Assisi heard Christ’s call to “rebuild my church.”

The celebration began earlier in the day with Mass across the street at St. Joseph-St. Patrick Church, where National Spiritual Assistant Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, spoke of the fire of faith in a world that both subtly and overtly erodes Christian values and beliefs. He urged Christians to

stand up for what they believe.

In his banquet talk, Father Christopher referred to the polarization taking place in public discourse, where people of different viewpoints argue even to the point of hatred, rather than listen and communicate. Secular Franciscans have a role in bridging such division.

“The heart of Franciscan living is relationship. Relationship with God, with others, and with creation.”

He added: “For St. Francis, fraternity summarized his radical living in solidarity with all of humanity and creation... Francis’ starting point rested in the faithful recognition of his relationship to the other.”

He pointed to St. Joseph Fraternity’s 160 years of striving to live the Gospel not only in the footsteps of St. Francis, but also in the spirit of St. Marianne Cope, who grew up in the parish and who is believed to be one of the first fraternity members (before she became a Franciscan sister).

“You have been and still are responding to immediate needs and specific situations: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for and healing the sick, visiting those in hospitals and prisons; focusing on people’s distress, focusing with empathy.”

A video message from National Minister Jan Parker, OFS, brought the celebration to a close, with her singing the Blessing of St. Clare, “*May you always be with God wherever you may be and may God be with you always.*”



Silent Giver Award recipient Jo Ginnity, OFS.



Mother Marianne Cope Award recipients Duffy Geary, OFS, Ed Morgan, and Betty Frank, OFS, with New York State Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon. Photo by Alex Stronach.