

T AU-USA

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NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
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Collage by Kathleen Molaro OFS

As a fraternity - be active, be visible, and be joyful.
Minister Tom Bello 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 ofo, 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

A "Trinity of Be-Attitudes" with an "Examination of Conscience" Concerning the Vitality of our Fraternities

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When my Mom's health really began to plummet after the death of her younger son, I needed to take her to her wonderful and wise General Practitioner, Doctor Leibowitz. I remember his asking her to the effect: "Jackie, do you know the number one positive thing you can do to maintain a high quality of life? I mean you know the negative things: Don't smoke. Don't drink or eat too much. Avoid stress. But I'm talking number one positive. Do you know?"

Neither Mom nor I had a quick answer.

He said in essence: "Be active! Get up! Show signs that you're still alive and kicking. Don't stay in bed all day. Don't lock yourself in the house. Get up and go out! Be seen! Don't mope around. Be joyful!"

And he added, "Check yourself at the end of each day, and ask yourself if you have done these things."

It was good advice for Mom and good advice for our fraternities.

Be-Attitude Number One for the Vitality of our Fraternities: Be active Spiritually, Formationally, Socially and Apostolically!

Examination of Conscience: If a stranger were to walk in off the street to attend your next fraternity meeting, how would he know that your fraternity was "alive and kicking"? What signs of life has your fraternity evidenced recently? When was the last time that your fraternity actually DID SOMETHING other than attend a dry business meeting?

The number one sign of life in a Secular Franciscan fraternity is spiritual vitality. How is the vitality of your fraternity's prayer life manifested? For example, do a variety of members share a variety of modes of prayer? Do you go to Mass as a fraternity? When you pray as a fraternity, are you truly praying as one or just repeating the words out of the Ritual?

Formationally, do ALL the members participate in Formation as is specified in the General Constitutions (GC)? "The journey of formation, which should develop throughout life, begins with entrance into the fraternity. Mindful that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of formation and always attentive to collaboration with Him, those responsible for formation are: the candidate, the entire fraternity, the council with the minister, the master of formation, and the assistant" (GC Article 37.2).

Please note that the entire fraternity is third only after the Holy Spirit and the candidate, and before the council, master of formation and spiritual assistant. Also note that Formation "should develop throughout life." At no time is an active fraternity excused from Formation.

Socially, do ALL the members take turns bringing snacks? Do you ever go to one another's places for a change of scenery? Is there some form of active social sharing at each meeting?

Finally, does your fraternity AS FRATERNITY have an apostolic action? This Apostolic Action could be 30 minutes writing letters at the meeting to missing homebound or hospitalized members. Each member could bring one item of food or clothing at an announced meeting to take to a local shelter. Have you ever gone as the entire fraternity, for example, to sing Christmas Carols at a local nursing home or to a homebound member's home?

Be-Attitude Number Two for the Vitality of our Fraternities: Be visible Spiritually, Formationally, Socially and Apostolically!

Examination of Conscience: Does anybody in your local parish, community or diocese, your local pastor, other local priests, the Bishop, know your fraternity exists or know when and where you meet or what you do? How many know? Who are they? How would they know? When was the last time public mention was made of your fraternity in the local media?

Spiritually, has your fraternity ever been seen OUT IN PUBLIC in prayer to God? Ever? For example, has your fraternity, as a fraternity, gone on a retreat together or made a pilgrimage together with the local parish or other fraternities? Has your fraternity ever not only attended Mass together, but actually sponsored a Mass with a local pastor or Franciscan friar on a Franciscan saint's day or feast day AND invited the whole parish or local Catholic community to attend? Has your fraternity ever organized a pilgrimage to Assisi, Rome or a local site? Has your fraternity ever organized a Greccio service, a Transitus or a Blessing of the Animals for your parish or community? Even once? Every year?

Formationally, has your fraternity ever invited a Franciscan speaker, like, say, Friar Kevin Queally, TOR, or Anne Mulqueen, OFS, to your area AND invited the whole parish or local community to learn with you? Has your local fraternity leadership ever held a "public" sharing on any aspect of Franciscan life?

Finally, does your fraternity, as a fraternity, have an active, visible apostolate in the parish or out in the community? For example, do you march as a fraternity, with a banner, in the March for Life or a Corpus Christi Procession? Do you work as a fraternity at the local soup kitchen or nursing home? Why not? How often? Why not?

Be-Attitude Number Three for the Vitality of our Fraternities: Be joyful Spiritually, Formationally, Socially and Apostolically!

Examination of Conscience: If a young person were invited to your next fraternity gathering, would she or he feel enough joy in your fraternity's walk with Sts.

Francis and Clare in the footsteps of Christ to want to come back and share that joy permanently?

As Brother Bill Short has said, in the Rule of 1221, St. Francis as much as mandates the spiritual practice of showing joy to all without exception. The Rule of 1221, Chapter 7, reads: "And all the friars, no matter where they are or in whatever situation they find themselves, should like spiritually minded men, diligently show reverence and honor to one another without murmuring (1 Peter 4:9). They should let it be seen that they are happy in God, cheerful and courteous, as is expected of them, and be careful not to appear gloomy or depressed like hypocrites."

"This may be the only Rule in the Catholic Church that has a positive command about being cheerful," Brother Bill has said.

How are we going to attract any new life by being an active, visible group of grumpy, grouchy old folks? I agree we have no control over our ages, but we can control our attitude and demeanor. Sure, the world may indeed be going to hell in a handbasket, but most of us have good, safe lives lacking none of life's necessities. We have so much to be thankful for. Show it! Smile. Actively, visibly evidence the Joy of the Gospel, the Joy of the Lord whenever we pray, teach, socialize or engage in apostolic action!

To recap:

Be active.

Be visible.

Be joyful.

As fraternity.

Spiritually, formationally, socially and apostolically.

As we live our lives.

In season and out of season.

Final Examination of Conscience:

- ❖ If I were to walk into your fraternity meeting, would I be able to share in any active visible joyful praying?
- ❖ Would I learn from any active visible joyful formation?
- ❖ Would I enjoy any active visible joyful socializing?
- ❖ Would I be able to participate in any active visible joyful apostolic outreach? If not, why not? If yes, how often? Is it more planned or unplanned? Shared or dictated?

Let us pray to God in Jesus' name that when we do what we can do, the Holy Spirit will do the rest.

Peace and love,
Tom

HOW ST. LOUIS BECAME MY PATRON... AND NOT JUST THE CITY WHERE I LIVE

By Jan Parker

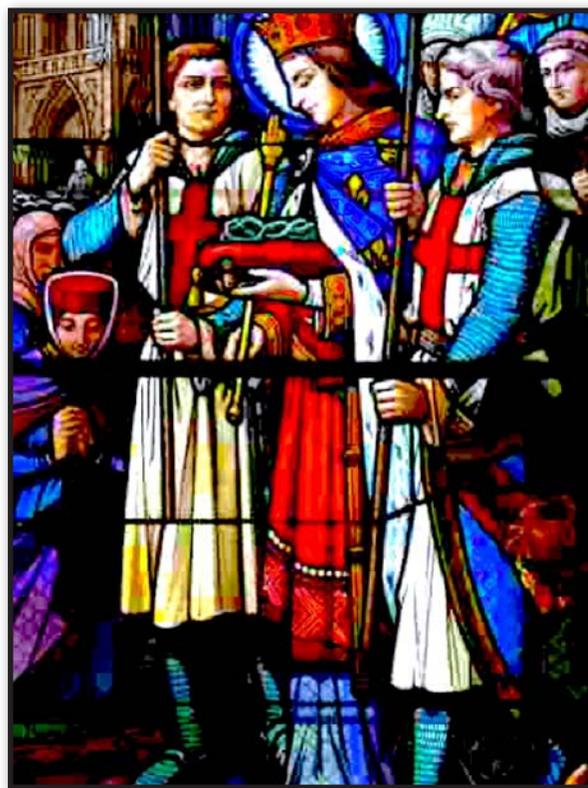
I am blessed to live in a city named for a saint, and yet for most of my adult life I tended to think of St. Louis only as a place, not as a person. I gave little thought to the man St. Louis, Missouri, was named for. As I began my Franciscan journey, it was interesting to learn that St. Louis IX, King of France, was the patron of the Secular Franciscan Order, but this made no immediate impact on me. I did not see, or feel, any Franciscan connection with St. Louis, certainly not in the way I felt connected to Francis, Clare and many other Franciscan saints. As I learned of other secular saints and blessed, Luchesius and Buonadonna, for example, the first tertiaries were close to my heart. They were laypersons I could relate to. But St. Louis? A king and crusader? The little I knew of him made me wonder how he even became our patron.

This year St. Louis IX is being celebrated in St. Louis, Mo., in a big way. The year 2014 not only marks the 800th anniversary of the birth of St. Louis IX, King of France, it is also the 250th anniversary of the founding of St. Louis, Mo., a city with deep Catholic roots. To honor these anniversaries, both the Archdiocese of St. Louis and the city of St. Louis are offering a variety of historical, educational and liturgical events. Opportunities to learn about St. Louis abound! My heart told me to give our patron a chance. If ever in my lifetime St. Louis IX was to become more meaningful to me, this was the year! I made a commitment to learn more about him.

This spring I attended a lecture on St. Louis IX given by Dr. Thomas Madden, Director of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Saint Louis University. Dr. Madden's talk was fascinating. His presentation included slides of beautiful artwork depicting Louis IX, his family, his surroundings and events in his life. As the months went on, I continued to learn, listening to local radio discussions and reading various articles about the man our city and archdiocese were named for. I began to connect with St. Louis as someone very real as I learned the details of his life.

The celebration of the 8th centennial of the birth of St. Louis IX is far from just a local "St. Louis" event — he is being celebrated around the world, most

notably by our Franciscan family. In a letter this past May, Encarnación del Pozo, Minister General of the OFS, announced various international gatherings in his honor. She presented a specially written prayer and a newly composed "Hymn to St. Louis." Her letter continued with a beautifully written section describing the spirituality of St. Louis and directed us to the CIOFS website for a series of eight monthly lessons on the life of St. Louis. She concluded by asking that we "immerse ourselves enthusiastically" in these formation topics.



At this point I needed little encouragement — I was captivated. I reread the section of her letter describing St. Louis' spirituality and was totally inspired. I then went directly to the CIOFS website, found the formation lessons on the life of St. Louis and studied the first two — "The Spirituality of St. Louis" and "St. Louis and Christian Public Commitment." These excellent resources helped me to see St. Louis — *the Franciscan*.



There is so much now that I would like to share with you about our patron St. Louis! Here was a man who did what he was called to do — and he always put first things first. He accepted his vocation as king, not questioning how he could acquire holiness in his state in life. He remained humble and teachable. He sought out the company of men such as St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure and Brother Giles to help him learn more about God, and he put what he learned into practice in his life.

Louis rejoiced in his baptism, and once said, "I think more of the place where I was baptized than of Rheims Cathedral where I was crowned." Though king, his signature was always "Louis of Poissy," not Louis IX, King of France, explaining, "Poissy is the place where I was baptized." He attended daily Mass and spent much time in prayer, often going to monasteries to attend liturgical ceremonies. He was a faithful husband and a dedicated father. He gave alms and cared for the poor, serving them personally at his table. He was a benevolent ruler, often sitting on the floor to listen carefully to those who came to him seeking justice. He wrote letters to other monarchs to build relationships and maintain peace. He trusted completely in God's providence as he dealt with difficult choices and made great sacrifices.

St. Louis treasured holy places, making numerous pilgrimages, and especially valued the shrines of the Holy Land. He built the magnificent Sainte-Chapelle with its famous stained glass windows within the royal palace complex. This chapel was erected as a shrine for the Crown of Thorns and a fragment of the True Cross, precious relics of the Passion of Jesus. He had a strong devotion to Christ's Passion. (I can just imagine Louis, guardian of the Crown of Thorns,

meditating upon this crown worn by Jesus and considering his own royal crown.)

His love of God overflowed into his life. He could say with all sincerity, "My God and my all!" as he lived in his own way the Gospel values of St. Francis.

Yes, amazingly, this saint has come alive for me. His Franciscan spirituality touches my heart and challenges me personally. Now when I hear the words "St. Louis" I no longer think first of my hometown — I think immediately of my Franciscan brother and a saint. St. Louis has truly become a companion, intercessor and patron whose life inspires me to deepen my own commitment to live the Gospel in the manner of St. Francis.



A note from Jan: I would be happy to send you a copy of our Minister General's inspiring letter regarding the celebration of the 8th Centenary of St. Louis IX, which was distributed this past May to the National Fraternity. Send your request by email to jansfo@yahoo.com. Please also visit the CIOFS website during this centennial year and take advantage of the wonderful formation material on St. Louis, offered once each month, on the following eight themes. (A sample lesson is included on pages 5 and 6 of this issue of the *TAU-USA*.)

1. The Spirituality of St. Louis
2. St. Louis and Christian Public Commitment
3. St. Louis and Marriage
4. St. Louis , the Educator
5. St. Louis, Social Justice and Evangelization
6. St. Louis and the Poor
7. St. Louis and the Interfaith Dialogue
8. St. Louis and Sister Death

2104 CIOFS ONGOING FORMATION PROGRAM

Theme II: St. Louis and His Public Commitment as a Christian

Editor's Note: Our International Council (CIOFS) is offering a new ongoing formation program on the spirituality of St. Louis. We have reproduced below the second theme in this eight part series. This entire series along with other ongoing formation topics and resources can be found and easily downloaded from the CIOFS website. We encourage you to use these excellent materials in your fraternity or on your own.

“How great was his justice! One could touch it with one’s finger. He would sit almost continuously on the floor or on a rug to listen to judicial matters, especially those that had to do with the poor or orphans. He would make sure they had justice.” (*Pope Boniface VIII*)



“If it pleased Our Lord that you received the anointing with which the French Kings are consecrated as such, be mindful to have the qualities that belong to Kings, that is, that you never separate yourself from justice (...) Sustain more voluntarily the poor against the rich until the truth is known and when you know it, do Justice.” (*St. Louis to his son Philip*)

HISTORICAL VISION: “ST. LOUIS CONFORMS TO THE MODEL OF THE CHRISTIAN KING”

St. Louis endeavored to complete as well as possible all the responsibilities of a Christian King. He considered himself responsible, not only for the material well-being, but also for the spiritual well-being of his people. He repressed the abuses of the Royal Administration and the demands of nobility, seeking to enforce and make justice accessible to all and equal for all. He particularly showed great concern for the poor. (*GC 22*).

St. Louis was “peacemaker” within the French Kingdom. Acting various times as mediator in conflicts among foreign sovereigns, he was the messenger of peace outside his reign as well. (*Rule 19, GC 23*).

In order to improve the customs of his citizens, he strongly sanctioned blasphemy; he prohibited gambling and prostitution in the center of the city.

PASTORAL VISION: “DARE TO MAKE A PUBLIC COMMITMENT”

St. Louis is a model for contemporary politicians. (*GC 20.2*) Because of his example, many Secular Franciscans have become involved in politics, like Thomas More, Garcia Moreno, Giorgio La Pira, Frank Nosek, Konrad Adenauer, Alcides de Gasperi, etc. Christians sometimes show a resistance to becoming involved in politics, and Christian politicians venture little into defending Church positions. What do our Rule and Constitutions say about this?

FROM ST. LOUIS TO TODAY...

Following Christ

Throughout his public life, Jesus was committed, exposed himself even risking not being understood by the people or his own disciples. What Gospel passages make us think about the “commitment of Jesus”?

Spiritual Life

We Christians have received from God the mission of participating in the coming of His Kingdom of Justice and Peace. Does this mission mobilize us? What are our real commitments, in this regard, today? Shall we reread together Rule 15 (*GC 12.2; GC 22.23*)?

Which of our commitments (in associations, professionally, in politics, interest groups) have transformed us up to the present?

How do our diverse commitments (associations, professional, political, etc.) nourish our spiritual life and, vice-versa, how does our spiritual life push us to make a commitment?



Being in the world

What is mobilizing us to make a commitment on a timely basis or particularly in our contemporary

society? Where would we like to invest our energy primarily and why?

Do we really know the conditions of those who live marginalized in society...at the periphery? What is our capacity for outrage and resistance in the face of the unacceptable? (GC 19.2)

What criteria do we use when we vote in elections? Moreover, how do we scrutinize those men and women on the ballots?

Formation

An involved Christian is invited to know the Social Doctrine of the Church in depth and to form himself/herself in order to take positions in complex debates (bioethical, etc.) Is this our situation? Through which means are we driving our thinking: Reading (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, etc.)? Participating in conferences or sessions? On the CIOFS website <http://www.ciofs.org> portal?

Questioning

On Friday, June 7, 2013, Pope Francis exhorted Christians to make a commitment to politics. "Involvement in politics is an obligation for a Christian. We Christians cannot "play the role of Pilate", washing our hands of it; we cannot. We must be involved in politics because politics is one of the highest forms of charity for it seeks the common good". He added, following St. Thomas Aquinas: "Christian lay people must work in politics [...] politics has become too dirty: but I ask myself: Why has it become dirty? Why aren't Christians involved in politics with an evangelical spirit?"¹ How does this make me react?



LIVING THE VATICAN COUNCIL II

Coming down to practical and particularly urgent consequences, this council lays stress on reverence for man; everyone must consider his every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all His life and the means necessary to living it with dignity, so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus.

¹ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/june/documents/papa-francesco_20130607_scuole-gesuiti.html

² *Constitution on the Church in the Present World "Gaudium et spes", § 27.*

In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of every person without exception and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a refugee, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person who disturbs our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord, "As long as you did it for one of these the least of my brethren, you did it for me" (Matt. 25:40).

Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are supreme dishonor to the Creator.²



LIVING THE GOSPEL (Mt 5, 1-2, 13-16)

When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: [...] "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."



Secular Franciscan Order
Ordo Franciscanus Sæcularis



A Glimpse of the OFS in Other Countries

by Mary Stronach, OFS
International Councilor

We all wear the Tau cross. That's a tangible, visible link uniting Secular Franciscans worldwide.

Just as your national leaders have been conducting regional visitations and elections, the order's international leaders so far this year (as of June) have presided at national elective chapters in The Netherlands, Flanders/Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Peru, and Columbia.



Chapter of Election in Bosnia and Herzegovina



Chapter of Election in The Netherlands

Secular Franciscans in other countries are tuned in to the plight of the poor and suffering children and families.

In Venezuela, for example, Secular Franciscans responded to extreme poverty by organizing a series of roving soup kitchens for children, with the OFS brothers and sisters cooking and bringing food directly to the hungry children in hard-hit communities.

Secular Franciscans in Mexico decided to "adopt" the children of Tarahumara Colony at the foot of Mount Bola by visiting them three times a year (Christmas, Children's Day, and at the beginning of the school year) to share gifts of food, toys and school supplies.

Further north, Secular Franciscans run the Canadian Food for Children project, which twice a year ships huge containers of food, medicine, clothes and household items to developing countries worldwide.

Across the "pond", Secular Franciscans in Spain set up the Road to Emmaus Association as a spiritual outreach to the poor and marginalized; and those in France started the Circle of Silence at Versailles to raise awareness about the plight of undocumented immigrants and treat them with dignity.

Further east in Hungary, Secular Franciscans founded the Franciscan Missionary Foundation for the Lower Carpathian Region, where they assist the disadvantaged and poor among Hungarian immigrant communities.

And in the Pacific island country of New Zealand, Secular Franciscans provide food and money for the Monte Cecilia Housing Trust, which helps homeless families rebuild their lives by providing housing and services such as adult education classes, budgeting, household management, and child care.



Formation Commission

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

by Bob Fitzsimmons, OFS
National Formation Commission Chair

Gospel to Life Part 2 – The Word of God

In the last article I mentioned that our Profession is to live our lives from Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel. As the final piece of the puzzle, I want to reflect on the Word of God, especially important for us as Franciscans.

The best place to start is at the very beginning:

^{1†} In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God.

We know that this Word of God, the one who was also from the beginning, was with God and is God. We know He is the Beloved Son, Jesus. So when we speak of the Gospels, we are speaking about the words uttered by Jesus; we are speaking about the words of the Word, the very Word of God. OK, enough of the confusing theology. How does the Word ring true in our understanding of Gospel to Life?

³ All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be.

God utters a word and it becomes, it enters into being through and for the beloved Son. All that ever existed and ever will exist comes to be through the Word. To expand some on Bonaventure, God continually utters words that create, because our Triune God is love overflowing, always total, complete, and fertile, and in this unbounded love expressed within and overflowing from the Trinity, creation happens.

Through Jesus as the eternally begotten Word of God, we, yes, you and me, are uttered and become “little” words of God, little, but still words spoken into existence by the Father, uttered in love and filled with grace.

¹² But to those who did accept him, he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, ¹³ who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man’s decision but of God.

¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace,

The prologue to John’s Gospel challenges those who truly accept God to recognize the reality that we also are ultimately from God. We came into being because we are unique words uttered by God. Here is the foundation for each of us becoming the Gospel; we are all the little words of God. AND the words of God are “Good News.”

At Profession we also spoke words, the words where we offered ourselves, our lives, as our gifts back to the Father who first uttered us into being. Exercising our office as priest, we became the Eucharistic oblation and sacrificed ourselves to return love for love. In words and in action we make known the secrets of our hearts, as the Father reveals His heart through Jesus, who is love incarnate.

The injustice we do, in my opinion, is to look at the Gospels, the words of the Word, as a third party story to witness to faith. It’s not a wrong approach; it just

[†]Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Board of Trustees, Catholic Church. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, & United States Catholic Conference. Administrative Board. (1996). *The New American Bible: Translated from the original languages with critical use of all the ancient sources and the revised New Testament* (Jn 1:1–16). Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.

does not go far enough. It allows us to detach from the Gospel and hear it as an example and not the book of life itself.

We are called to enter the Gospel, it's not just a story for or about us, IT IS US! Jesus' unique Word unites with our unique word and then the Gospel of life, this good news happens yet again, and over and over, always breathing new life into the world.

Yes, dear brothers and sisters, we are each a word uttered by our very loving God, a word that can blossom into a living gospel, countless numbers of gospels all aimed at allowing God to breathe through us, to heal through us, to give a kindness for a hurt, and to allow God to love through us.

We are called to co-create with God, and through our words united with His Word, to call into being a space and place where God's love can be freely experienced and in this place, a people can be free and safe to begin to transform and recreate themselves into the gospels they are meant to become.

Every word uttered by God is a word of love and beauty, and every word creates. This understanding was expressed by Francis in his consuming love for everything, animate and inanimate, that was created. Everything expressed the dynamic love of the Trinity. Seeing everything in terms of love and beauty meant everything has value and worth because it exists as a sign of the love of God. Creation, all of it, is to be loved and shepherded, valued and preserved, simply because it is of God, and given for our use, not abuse.

As my last "official" article as your formation chair, I want to thank you for your love and support over these years, and for allowing me the honor of serving you. My prayers and blessings are on each one of you and on our Order, that through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will all be transformed and the world will once again know we follow Jesus by the great love we show for all of God's creation.

May the Lord always hold you in His peace

fitz

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THE POPE FRANCIS RIPPLE EFFECT

by Brother Bob Brady, OFM



With our National Minister, Deacon Tom Bello in his fine article in the *TAU/USA* Spring 2014 issue on Pope Francis, I am finding myself moved to share with our TAU readers, yet another angle or two, along with the challenges that come from the ripple-effects of the wonderfully provocative and challenging papacy our Holy Father sets before each one of the sisters and brothers, particularly, in our Franciscan Family!

In the most recent issue of another Franciscan publication, the editor, Fr. Tom Washburn, OFM, wrote about the visit our standing OFM English-Speaking Ministers Provincial were able to have with His Eminence, Oscar Andrés Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga, S.D.B., Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras who is also the Chair of Pope Francis' Council of Eight Cardinals from around the globe. The visit, which took place in Florida, was marked by the kind and frank openness of His Eminence:

(From the Conclusion to his reflection with the friar-Provincials)

All this represents a magnificent example and a great stimulus to all if we wish to feel committed, in a Franciscan way, to the mission of Jesus in our world of today, and if we wish to lead others to an encounter with the mystery of God, as the little man of Assisi did.

This has to happen through great experiences of love that open the heart and not only transmits ideas or knowledge about him but lead us to Him. As in Bethlehem, as in the Porziuncola, as it was in the beginning

The Cardinal went on to respond to various questions and other comments during his dialogue with the OFM English-Speaking Ministers Provincial.

Some American periodicals have addressed the recent April 2014 dialogue at the Vatican between the U.S. Leadership Conference of Religious Women (LCWR) and the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. Some reports have been confusing in their references to their ongoing dialogue. What I am hearing from various Religious women that speaks to me of this example of connectivity to one another as it finds an ability for these continuing dialogues to be marked by the continued expression of directness and respect for each participant within this on-going dialogue.

Recently, the Vatican has marked the fiftieth anniversary of the beginnings of what is now known as the Vatican's 'Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue,' an outgrowth of the Second Vatican Council. A committee of that council has been laboring recently in South Africa over keeping the efforts of dialogue and communication clear and open. In a recent interview with Vatican Radio, Philippa Hitchens and the Archbishop of Birmingham, U.K., a committee member, spoke of the extent of the efforts towards maintaining open channels of communication.

Each of these examples of leadership, communications and dialogue serves to challenge the reader (as well as the author). An overriding theme seen in each of these situations is that the Pope's priorities are (1) to recognize the other, as our sister and our brother—we are of the same genealogy of family in faith! When we are able to first recognize the gift of the other, (2) we should be well on our way towards achieving a glimpse of the Divine being present in the other, and (3) to honor and to respect the wondrous beauty we behold within all of God's creation!



CNSA

News & Views

Franciscan Life in the 21st Century
Lester Bach OFM Cap

And then ...

It seems to me that we Franciscans need to integrate a few things in our Franciscan lives. Sometimes our fraternal life can be more about devotions than sharing lived experiences. We occasionally excuse ourselves from action by making prayer our only action. That is certainly not a bad thing since prayerfulness is vital to Franciscan life. But it can sometimes seem that we use prayer as a way to avoid personal action among people who face a variety of needs. Some fraternity bulletins mention prayer intentions and the sources of devotional practices, which is fine. But the balance of calling for action within the Church and society is missing. A *both/and* attitude is needed to engage in human-dignity issues beyond prayerfulness, moving to personal involvement of concern and compassion.

Our Franciscan spirit is tested in these days of violence. "Loners or prejudiced persons" use violence as do groups or nations moved by hatred, anger or revenge. Violence becomes a tool for people who seek to silence other people whose ideas and attitudes they find offensive. Lies, injustice, half-truths, misinterpretations and arrogant claims, with neither truth nor reality on their side, trigger some of these actions. Without attentive listening people are judged, condemned and disposed of - sometimes through violence, death, or suicide; by false stories meant to make the victim look bad and the purveyors look good.

On the other hand, Pope Francis seeks to draw people together. Drawing close to Orthodox church leaders; seeking dialogue with Palestinians and Israelis, inviting them to common prayer instead of common violence; seeking to achieve the value of relationships instead of enmity; recognizing prayer and action as normal partners in response to people problems. He invites us to evaluate the support we give to various issues, groups, or individuals to see if our actions and ideas reflect a gospel commitment and provides gospel-oriented action.

Pope Francis chooses to walk at the side of the poor. He invites honest dialogue about our reasons for acting as we do. He invites us to see if we are protecting personal comfort/safety or if we choose to share in the lives of people in need or who hurt from

lack of compassion. He asks us not to ignore the harsh realities of people suffering from the consequences of political and social ideas and practices. He invites us to *evangelize with joy* in the Gospel through his words in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Franciscans cannot only be "nice folks" who pray about hunger, lack of friends (loners), homeless people, parentless children, isolated young people or seniors, families in need of education, unemployed needing training, and all the people who face societal fears and frustrations. Some people are immersed in animosity, hatred, fear, without hope, and give up on being able to have a peaceful and hope-filled life. We Franciscans claim to have compassionate hearts, the ability to listen attentively and create understanding, committed to offer loving and unifying action initiated by Francis of Assisi. People sometimes find little expression of love even within the *community of love* (Church) or in the people claiming to have a Franciscan spirit. The OFS Rule (Article 7) calls for *daily conversion* because of our human frailty!



Do we promote a positive Franciscan solution or are we part of the problem? The *partnership of prayer and action* moves us to engage life-issues through the way we live our Franciscan lives! The Gospel does not seem to allow for any exceptions when it requires us to love our neighbor.

You have heard that they were told, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But what I tell you is this: "Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors; only so can you be children of your heavenly Father, who causes the sun to rise on good and bad alike, and sends rain on the innocent and the wicked. If you love only those who love you, what reward can you expect? Even the tax-collectors do as much as that. If you greet only your brothers, what is there extraordinary about that? Even the heathen do as much. There must be no limit to your goodness, as your heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds!

Matthew 5:43-48 (REB)

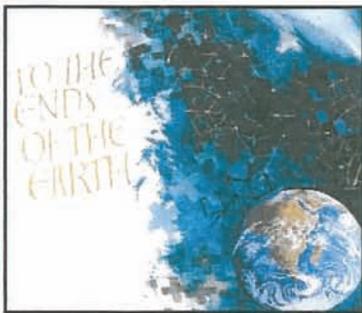
Understanding these words is not difficult. But they stretch love beyond where we might wish to go.

Summer - 2014

It would be sad if fraternity life fails to support us to act in ways described in the text from Matthew. It is a text that comes from the heart of Jesus in the Gospel. The OFS Rule addresses these same issues:

Article 12: ... *they should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters.*

Article 13: ... *Secular Franciscans, with a gentle and courteous spirit, accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ. ... 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.*



Article 14: *Secular Franciscans, 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.*

Article 19: *Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon!*

Article 8: ... *let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do.*

Article 9 ... *The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her (Mary) by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.*

This article is a clear implementation of both prayerfulness and action, a **both / and** way of living. Article #9 clearly indicates what devotion to the Blessed Virgin should accomplish in us - a **giving of self** in the same way that Mary responded to God - with a daily spirit of self-giving.

Soooo - How does this look in ordinary Franciscan life? How do people concerned about the integrity of creation find ways to link their ministry to programs that support life in all its stages? How do people dedicated to protect life in the womb find ways to support the human dignity of the unemployed or those in prison? How do formators find ways to help people recognize their personal ministries? How do people dedicated to contemplation find ways to support Franciscans working for human dignity in society? How do Franciscans confined to their home or a nursing home support the people working for

peace and justice - or - How do peace and justice ministers support Franciscans confined to their home or in a nursing home? Etc, etc.

What about Spiritual Assistants?

The purpose of spiritual assistance is to foster communion with the Church and the Franciscan family through witness and sharing of Franciscan spirituality, to co-operate in initial and on-going formation of secular Franciscans and to express the fraternal affection of the Religious towards the OFS.

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral assistance to the OFS - Article 2.3

Spiritual assistants collaborate with local, regional and national councils in accomplishing the things we addressed in this article. SAs offer insights to support the OFS councils and members in being faithful to the entire OFS Rule and Constitutions.

SAs help to link prayer and action in fraternity life and among individual Franciscans. They assure that the devotional life of the fraternity leads to Christ. In turn the Holy Spirit sends the members to serve the needs of his people. SAs guide the rituals used in fraternity life and help avoid extremes of religion that could separate us because of religious (mis)understanding. They support ways of seeking unity in the Church, the world and the fraternal life of OFS members.

Spiritual assistants support councils and fraternity members in showing respect and courtesy to all people - even when they disagree with one another. Dialogue should come naturally to SAs so that all sides of an issue can be understood and handled with respect.

SAs' words and actions should draw people to a relationship that allows us to maintain a healthy dialogue with one another. SAs share the work of well planned and understandable initial and ongoing formation. SAs encourage openness in the hearts of the members when dealing with people in their daily life.

SAs do what is possible to keep the OFS connected to all the members of the Franciscan family in their relationship with the 1st Order, 2nd Order, and TOR members and vice-versa. As a Franciscan family we find ways to work together to make our Franciscan spirit influential in **both** the Church **and** the world.

... The purpose of altius moderamen is to guarantee the fidelity of the OFS to the Franciscan charism, communion with the Church and union with the Franciscan family, values which represent a vital commitment for the Secular Franciscans.

OFS Constitutions - Article 85.2

Like the lamp, you must shed light among your fellows, so that, when they see the good you do, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16 (REB)





Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Walking Together

by Anne Mulqueen, OFS

I begin this article with a quote from Trappist monk Thomas Merton, whose roots were dug deep in the soil of Franciscan spirituality. This is what Merton had to say about ecumenism and our relationship with other faiths.

If I can unite in myself the thought and devotion of Eastern and Western Christendom, the Greek and the Latin fathers, the Russian with the Spanish mystics, I can prepare in myself the reunion of divided Christians.... If we want to bring together what is divided, we cannot do so by imposing one division upon the other. If we do this, the union is not Christian. It is political and doomed to further conflict. We must contain all the divided worlds in ourselves and transcend them in Christ.

But Merton did not attain this insight solely through intellectual prowess — which, of course, he had — but in conjunction with the grace of God. In a mystical experience in Louisville, Kentucky, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut Merton said:

... in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers.... There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun.

Not one of these people wore captions that told Merton their race, religion or nationality. He simply loved them all and was connected to all by the same God that created and sustained him. Therefore, I suggest that the central premise of Merton's quotes and this article is that there exists in all God's creation, a familial, inter-dependent relationship.

Our country is a country of diversity, and as citizens we accept people of different faiths and cultures with an attitude of respect and peaceful coexistence. As Catholic Christians and Secular Franciscans, we take this attitude a step further. We believe it is God who

calls us to proclaim our charism of peacemaking through acts of *bridge building* and — when necessary — by becoming the bridge itself. We sign our correspondence and emails with Peace and all Good, and we witness to that wish of peace by our actions. Our encounters with people of other faiths and other Christian denominations must be built on mutuality, respect and trust in a spirit of dialogue. Since dialogue is not one-sided, the desired result is relationship — perhaps even friendship.

And speaking of familial and inter-dependent relationships, I would like to introduce you to the people who make it possible for me to do what I do as Chair of the Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee. They are my support system and my friends, and I hope I am theirs. Alphabetically they are Delia Banchs, OFS, Michael Carsten, OFS, Mary Lou Kreider, OFS, and John Szczepanski, OFS.

Delia Banchs, OFS: Delia and her husband Wil have been married for 48 years, have four adult sons, 12 grandchildren and one great-grandson. Professed in 1979, she has served at the local and regional levels in Texas and Hawaii. Delia was Regional Minister of Los Tres Companeros/The Three Companions Region during 2003-2009. As a student in NYC, Delia formed lasting relationships with Jewish friends. The multicultural milieu of NYC and later living and traveling through Europe, the Middle East and Asia afforded her opportunities to explore and learn many languages, cultures and religious beliefs. Delia organized “World Day of Prayer” and “Agape” events for both the Military Council of Catholic Women (MCCW) and the Protestant Women of the Chapel (PWOC) and hosted interfaith dinners from 1974 to 1980. Since 1987, she has promoted the “Week of Prayer for Christian Unity” through her mailings. Delia said, “I rejoiced when the Ecumenical Committee was expanded to include Interfaith and to be serving on it.” And we rejoice with her and for her membership on the committee.

Michael Carsten, OFS: Personally, I know Mike to be a loving and involved father of three and grandfather of six, who carries all their pictures with him and always takes their calls. His career began as a carpenter, and he retired as a Construction Superintendent/Manager, whereupon he began another career as Director of Neighborhood Services at St. Aloysius Catholic Church. The image that pops into my mind when I think of Mike is a man always on the move and totally committed to the marginalized people he serves. He is a man with a cause. Mike was professed in 1993 and has served in local community and local, regional and national OFS positions. Mike was Regional Minister for Divine Mercy Region from 2001 to 2004, elected National Counselor 2004-2010 and currently serves with me on the Joint Committee for Franciscan Unity. The topic Mike speaks on at our workshops is “Prophetic Voice.” Without a doubt, Mike is a credible witness. Mike’s ecumenical/interfaith commitment is expressed daily as he ministers to the poor and homeless of all faiths in downtown Detroit.

Mary Lou Kreider, OFS: Mary Lou lost her beloved husband Art Kreider in 2005. She has five adult children and three grandchildren. If you know Mary Lou, the one thing you know about her is she loves to dance, and she exudes joy wherever she goes. She was professed in 1982 and has served in many local and regional positions. Mary Lou was Regional Minister for Lady Poverty Region from 2004 to 2010. Her ecumenical/interfaith journey began when her pastor delegated her to attend a meeting of ministers in her small community in Waterford, Pennsylvania. Mary Lou participates annually in a Lenten Soup/Bread and Service ecumenical activity. In addition to local ecumenical activity, Mary Lou immerses herself in whatever ecumenical and interfaith activities come her way. In fact, she persuaded her daughter Nora to attend a Sacred Dance retreat at a Catholic retreat center that to her surprise turned out to be dancing in honor of the Buddhist Goddess Tara. Mary Lou mentioned to me that her heart had always hoped to serve on this committee and now she does and we reap the benefit of her presence.

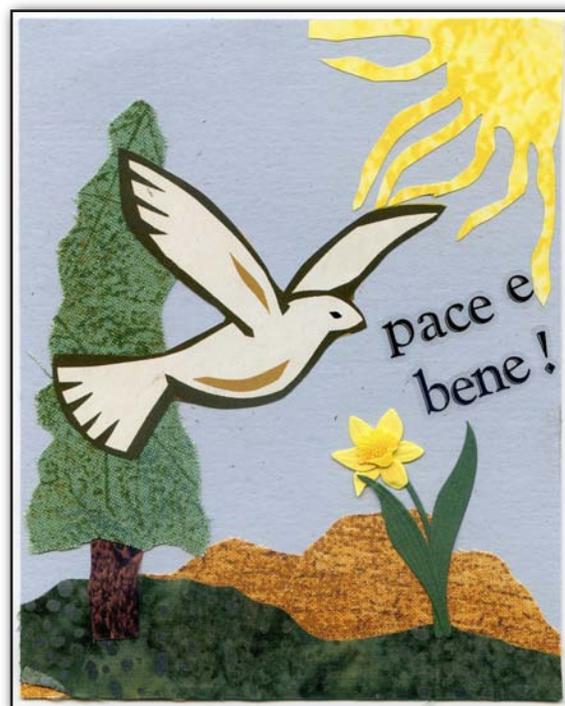
John Szczepanski, OFS: John is married to Maria Dolores Lucia (Castro) Szczepanski — don’t you just love that name — for 40 years. They have one son, Jonathan Matthew, and in June of this year, Jonathan and his wife Leanne delivered their first grandchild, Spencer Jonathan, to the Szczepanskis. John served his country in Vietnam as an infantryman and thereafter

worked in Human Resources with the hotel industry for 30 years. John made his profession 10 years ago and served as vice-minister for three years and minister for six years of Little Portion of St. Francis Fraternity in Our Lady of Indiana Region. Other than myself, John is the only person who served on this committee when my predecessor Ed Shirley was Chair—may Ed’s gentle soul rest in peace. Ed depended on John to keep us informed of current trends and events that impacted the committee. John grew up in East Chicago, Ind., a multi-racial/multi-ethnic/multi-faith city where “We lived together; we ate together; we had fun together; we prayed together and we worked out our differences together. In a way, I was living an ecumenical life. So Ecumenical Interfaith is natural.”

So now you know the people who serve you. We wish you would continue to write to us. If you would like to correspond with a particular member of the committee who you feel resonates with your spirit, please write to me at amulqueenso@gmail.com and I will forward your email to that member.

So let us go forth as sisters and brothers to share Shalom — that is to exchange greetings of peace, tranquility and harmony with all that God has created, both animate and inanimate.

Shalom Aleikhem, peace be upon you brothers and sisters!





JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



Franciscan Compassion in Action

Carolyn D. Townes, O.F.S., National JPIC Animator



One question that I am most frequently asked is, “*What is the job description of a JPIC Animator?*” This question tickles me as I think back about ten years ago. As a new Animator for **Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation** for the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in New York City, I asked that very same question. With the help of the Master Animator, the Holy Spirit, I discovered an answer. Perhaps it is not a definitive answer, but it was an answer that became my mission for the next ten years. An animator is one who brings life to something; in this case, that something would be the issues of peace and social justice. This is my “job description” for a JPIC Animator – one who, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, brings life to the issues of peace and justice in our world, inviting others to take action on those issues.

So, how do we “bring life” to the issues? First, through contemplation. More than prayer, this is a deeper reflection, where we fall still and quiet and question our inner soul about what is ours to do. Second, awareness and education. We cannot

change what you are not aware of. After contemplating about what is ours to do, we educate ourselves. Education is not merely picking up a few books and reading them. It also includes stepping outside of ourselves to ask questions of those involved and affected by the issues. This is about listening to stories and sharing life experiences. If the Spirit led us to a particular issue, it is because somewhere deep within, we have been touched by that issue. How have we been touched? This is where contemplation comes around again. These principles are not linear; they are circular. When we are broken open and emptied, the Spirit moves in to fill us with exactly what we need.

After we have deeply reflected and questioned, after we have educated ourselves through stories and dialogue, then we animate. We bring all of this experience to life by taking action inspired by the power and the grace of the Holy Spirit. Not my will, but the will of the One who calls me to this action.

Allow me to share two such examples from members of our National JPIC Commission. The first is a moving reflection by **Sandra Thompson, OFS**, from the Saint Elizabeth of Hungary Region in Maine. The second is an inspired action by **Roger Yockey, OFS**, from the Troubadours of Peace Region in Washington State. Our National JPIC Commission is an extraordinary group of Seculars doing amazing work across this nation. Over the coming issues, I hope to share their hearts and souls through contemplation, education and animation.

May the Lord bless you and give you peace.



A reflection of God’s love for us for the world

Sandra Thompson, OFS

“Am I open to new ways of loving and being loved?”

This was one of the heart-searching questions asked at our May retreat.

Mary’s visit to Elizabeth provided me with an opportunity to make the connection between JPIC and this question. A reflection on the visitation in the publication *Word Among Us* (5/31/14), describes this meeting between Mary and Elizabeth both as unique and as something that we can all experience. “As baptized believers, each of us is capable of bearing Christ to the world. If our eyes were open to the truth we too would rejoice and be humbled in the presence of so holy a vessel as a sister or brother in Christ.”

Like Mary, I carry Christ to those who come into my life each day. The cashier, the person that just cut me off, the person asking for money at the intersection, the immigrant, the homeless, my boss, parents and friends. Like Elizabeth, if I am truly open to new ways of being loved, my heart would skip a beat when these people come into my day. If I were truly open to new ways of loving I would be humbled by the very presence of Christ in them visiting with me.

Article 13 of our Rule calls us to see Christ in our brothers and sisters, to accept all people as gifts from the Lord and to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ. I believe that when we open ourselves up to love and to be loved, we are stirred to action. Like Mary’s journey to Elizabeth, our love should stir a deep desire to “create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.”

As we open ourselves to loving in new ways, what initiatives call us to action: Immigration reform, dignity of life, human trafficking,

working conditions, homelessness...? Charity and Justice, a new way to love and be loved, in action: pray about it.

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Mother’s Day Vigil at Tacoma Detention Center

Roger Yockey, OFS

Secular Franciscans were among the estimated 200 people who gathered outside the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Washington, on Saturday, May 10, for a **Mother's Day Vigil**. The messages were clear: "Stop the Detentions," "Stop the Deportations" and "Keep Families Together."

This was one of many demonstrations at the detention center, where more than 1,000 immigrants are detained in this for-profit prison. The Secular Franciscans, together with many from the faith and immigrant communities, walk in solidarity with the detainees, their families, and all immigrants.

In the photo, left to right, Dianne Aid, TSSF, Marilyn Yockey, OFS, Roger Yockey, OFS, Mary Powell, OFS, and Inquirer Makalina Langi. Both Dianne and Roger are also Action Commissioners on the **Franciscan Action Network**.



YOUFRA: IF WE BUILD IT, WILL THEY COME?

Rob Breen, OFS
Chairman YouFra Commission

We are Franciscans. When others encounter us, they should see and hear something different than they see and hear anywhere else. In being Franciscan, we do two things: we are being the presence of the Christian Gospel in a world that needs to experience God's hope and joy and love. At the same time, we are also a beacon to others whom God is calling to our Franciscan life of the Gospel, saying, "Come and see." This second role as beacon--the light on a hill--to the next generation of disciples and Franciscan leaders will be the essential role for Secular Franciscans to connect with young people in the world today.

Let us be real about the world in which young people are being raised. There are real challenges--and also opportunities--for us in reaching out to those young people the Holy Spirit may be calling to explore our Franciscan charism. While we Secular Franciscans help young people build a new YouFra (Franciscan Youth) organization in the United States, we are also helping ourselves to re-think and re-build our own existing Secular Franciscan fraternities to better respond to the needs of young people today. *We* are also transformed in the process of building YouFra.

We are assuming that if we build it (YouFra) in the right place, at the right time, with the right processes, "They will come." And we *are* building: we have a YouFra Strategic Plan, we will soon have a YouFra Fraternity Handbook, and we will have a YouFra initial formation manual. We also need to *build on the inside*, too... in our hearts, in our spirituality, in our relationships, in our prayer life. This is what all Secular Franciscans can do now to build YouFra. We can also build our fraternities up to make sure they are ready for YouFra. Here are some challenging thought questions for Secular Franciscan fraternities. Try answering and discussing these questions together as an activity for your fraternity.

- T When we build for YouFra, how will it be relevant to them?
- T How will it be attractive and meaningful and feed their hunger?

- T How will we offer a vision for Franciscan life that will inspire and energize?
- T How will we show them our balance of contemplation and action that transforms ourselves and the world?
- T How will we live out our fraternity life that models Christian discipleship and love?
- T How will we engage and sustain, rather than just dazzle, attract and release?
- T Why will they want to join us?

Keep in mind that when it comes to successfully reaching out to young people, *what your fraternity is to YouFra...is what your fraternity is.*

How you can build internally in preparation for YouFra? Identify who in your fraternity has the background and experience to work effectively with young people. It doesn't have to be the youngest person in the fraternity; sometimes a wise elderly mentor can be the best person to serve as a YouFra Animator. Get that person or those people up to speed on working with young people by sending them to diocesan training, reading up on youth and young adult issues, and becoming active on our national Franciscan Young Adults webpage and network. If you have no one capable in your fraternity, seek out other area fraternities and partner up. Perhaps a special effort to reach out to potential new Secular Franciscans can target the college professors, coaches, youth ministers, campus ministers, and other professionals who work with youth and young adults.

A YouFra ministry is not for everyone and is not for every OFS fraternity, but it is our responsibility as an order to engage the next generation and to prepare for our order's future and young people's future in the Franciscan life of the Gospel. When we do this right, we can say in confidence as the Holy Spirit invites young people: "If we build it, they *will* come."

FRANCISCAN LIVING

Don't Just Leave, Opt In!

By Francine Gikow, OFS, Staff Editor

In the last issue of the *TAU-USA*, Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap., one of our National Spiritual Assistants, touched on an area that is sensitive to life in fraternity. In it, he wrote, “some folks separate themselves from the OFS rather than engage in dialogue which could lead to understanding and healthy change.”

I am sure anyone who has spent time in fraternity has seen brothers and sisters either transfer to another fraternity or leave active participation in fraternity life because of some issue he or she did not like. It might be someone's personality, or how something was handled or run, or even the direction of the fraternity's expression of their vocation.

I often ask these questions: “Would you leave your family for this? Would you leave your marriage for this?” If we compare our involvement in the Order and in our particular fraternity as a family/marital union, things can be put in perspective. Have you unconsciously come into the Order with less of a commitment to it than you have toward your family or marriage? A family takes the good with the bad. It works things out. You may never see “eye to eye,” but you are there for each other. In a marriage, because you made that commitment, there is no turning back! You are forced to work things out, even if it means getting help! We need to have the same mindset in our Secular Franciscan life as we have toward our family and marital life. Too often this is lacking. When we leave ourselves with no choice but to stay in fraternity, then we are willing to do the “work” of dialogue...and I do mean, “work”! It is *not* easy or quick, and sometimes it can be excruciatingly painful. But we learn from it each and every time! We mature as spiritual individuals capable of showing great love as we persevere. A Spiritual Director is extremely important to assist you in discerning your thoughts and helping to grow in self-knowledge.

Each of us, also, has a special responsibility to privately discuss with the person involved or a member of the fraternity's Council, our concerns for the well being of the fraternity. They need to hear from us! In the same way, we need to be open and receptive to their concerns as well. Things cannot change unless people hear about things. This is called dialogue. If we feel uncomfortable discussing our feelings or concerns, we should bring along a spiritual friend who understands and can help us express our feelings and concerns, using nonjudgmental “I” statements such as: “When this happens, I feel this way...”

Every time I see someone leave, either a particular fraternity or the Order, I am left with great sadness, because an opportunity for spiritual growth has been denied. We have simply said “no” to God. We have decided it was *our* wants, *our* needs and *our* desires rather than His. After all, it is *His* will that we experience unity, love, spiritual growth and maturity. For as Francis said:

*“All my brothers [and sisters]: let us pay attention to what the Lord says: Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you for our Lord Jesus Christ, whose footprints we must follow, called His betrayer a friend and willingly offered Himself to His executioners. Our friends, therefore, are all those who unjustly inflict upon us distress and anguish, shame and injury, sorrow and punishment, martyrdom and death. **We must love them greatly for we shall possess eternal life because of what they bring us.**” (Early Rule 22: 1-4)*

So what *does* this martyrdom bring us? What *are* the fruits of perseverance in fraternity life? We can expect a greater awareness and knowledge of our own sinfulness, greater sensitivity and patience toward others, an increase of charity or love toward others, and eventually a building up of the Kingdom of God here on earth in the form of our fraternity. As Fr. Bach stated: “*If people avoid dialogue, their actions often bring division rather than unity. Their example fails to reflect the Franciscan spirit...achieving separation is not a Franciscan goal. Working for unity is!*”

VOCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Here Fishy, Fishy, Fishy.....

By Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS

My husband started fishing a few years ago. Terms like “lure,” “sinker,” “snagging hook,” etc. were added to the household vocabulary. What I’ve learned is that when one is fishing it takes some time to figure out the best lure. I don’t go fishing with him much, but I have come to learn that the ways of attracting fish have some application with our efforts to expand the Order – looking for vocations. "Being fishers of persons called to the OFS."

The National Executive Council recently created a vocations committee. The Vocation Committee Mission:

To foster and sustain vocation consciousness among all people of the Universal Church by our Profession to the Gospel Way of Life. To initiate, encourage and support the efforts of the national OFS Family to promote the Secular Franciscan Order, with particular emphasis on nurturing individuals who desire, seek and commit to our way of life. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, this objective will be accomplished through prayer, development of promotional materials, sharing of ideas and maintaining national awareness.

The committee is focusing on the following tasks:

1. Creating a National Vocation Campaign based on both Prayer and Action
2. Creating Parish/Diocesan Awareness of the OFS
3. Compiling ways to initiate Personal Invitation



Our own personal witness is the strongest means of attracting others... do we walk the talk? Personal invitation is key in helping others know about the OFS and learn that it isn't some exclusive group.

Focusing on #3, many Secular are already successful. Because of this, the committee wants to compile what has worked well for you – “best practices.”

- Brochures/Handouts /Bulletin announcements
- Elevator speeches (1-2 minutes in length)
- Slogans/”One liners” to hook a person’s interest in learning more
- Social Media sites for you to reference or “Like”

What else do you use? Do you have a neat catchy phrase to respond when someone asks:

- What is that “T” around your neck?
- Secular what???

The OFS isn't a secret society. There are opportunities to reach out to persons young and old, social media savvy and not so connected. The tools will be shared to help us reach out to family, friends, parishioners, co-workers, people we encounter in our daily journeys.

Please email your ideas to: OFSVocationsCommittee@gmail.com or mail ideas to: Vocations Committee, c/o Secular Franciscan Order, 1615 Vine Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202-6492 by August 31, 2014.

Thanks in advance for taking the time to respond. May the Holy Spirit lead us in sharing the news about the OFS and attracting people to the Order.

NAFRA CHAPTER

October 21-26, 2014

“Be the Merciful Presence of God”



Our National Fraternity (NAFRA) will gather in Chapter from October 21-26, 2014 at Montserrat Retreat House in Lake Dallas, Texas. Our co-hosts for this Chapter are Our Lady of Guadalupe and Los Tres Compañeros Regional Fraternities. We are most grateful for all they are doing to prepare for this major event!

The International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order (CIOFS) has produced a wonderful document entitled Guidelines for the Celebration of OFS Fraternity Chapters. It describes the history and importance of a Chapter in the life of our Order and defines specific guidelines to follow when planning a Chapter. Our NAFRA Chapter this coming October will be planned in accordance with these guidelines.

This document does not only apply to our NAFRA Chapter – it is applicable for local and regional gatherings as well. We have reprinted this document here in part. In a future issue of the TAU we hope to include the remaining sections that deal specifically with Elective Chapters.

GUIDELINES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF OFS FRATERNITY CHAPTERS

From the CIOFS Presidency, issued in Rome on April 26, 2008

1. INTRODUCTION

Among the different structures which the religious community life has created to express and promote the spiritual values of its charism, a particularly important one is the gathering of the components of the community convoked to deal with issues regarding their professed form of life, an assembly which is generally called *Chapter*.

The name, originating in the monastic environment, referred to the assembly of religious members of a community for the purpose of reading and discussing one of the “chapters” of the Rule. From here the use of the term *Chapter* also when referring to both the location and meeting itself.

The Franciscan family, from its origins, has instead conferred a particular connotation to the term Chapter, the expression for its very reason of existing: the *fraternity*. Thomas of Celano, faithful witness to the way of thinking of Francis of Assisi, emphasized the fraternal value of the Chapter when he reminded us that the friars “were committed to even donating themselves to meet the needs of the brothers. They were happy when they could meet, happier when they were together” (Franciscan Sources, 1C XV, 39).

For Saint Francis the Chapters were of extreme importance in the life of his friars. They were gatherings of brothers in the name of the Lord. They constituted true celebrations of life in fraternity, animated by the Holy Spirit. In the *Regula non bullata*, Francis asks that the friars gather together in the Chapter to discuss matters pertaining to God (Chapter 18).

According to Saint Clare, “*the Chapter is important to consult with all the sisters concerning whatever pertains to the welfare and good of the monastery; for the Lord frequently reveals what is best to the least* (Rule. St. Clare 4,16-18).

Francis himself, fully aware of the gift and the calling to be brothers in an evangelic fraternity, often invites his friars to become more aware of the action of God, who brought them together through his grace: “*And, wherever the friars are and have come upon one another, let them mutually show themselves to be members of each other’s family. And let one without fear manifest to the other his own need, since, if a mother nourishes and loves her own son according to the flesh, how much more diligently ought he love and nourish his own spiritual brother?*” (Franciscan Sources, LR VI, 7, Regula bullata VI, 8).

If we consult the writings of Saint Francis and his biographies, we realize that the Chapter was a gathering of brothers at different levels, where the spiritual life of the friars was dealt with. We could point out some aspects: the proclamation of the Word of God, prayer, exhortations and admonitions for living the Rule at best, the promulgation of regulations, the election of ministers, fraternal sharing and the revision of life, confession of personal sins, common prayer, fraternization, sending to the mission, reciprocal consolation...

In the present OFS legislation there is a distinction between the various types of chapters according to the level of the Fraternity that is celebrating it and according to their purpose. From the purpose point of view, we can distinguish the deliberative Chapters from the elective ones; from the point of view of level, we find the local Chapter (or Assembly), (G.C. art.49.2), the regional one (G.C. art. 64), the national one (G.C. art. 68) as well as the General Chapter (art. 70.3 and 4).

Because of its peculiarity, the general Chapter, requires regulations of its own. Here we will deal with the national Chapter and the local and regional Chapters, starting with a fervent recommendation: that the participants adequately prepare themselves by praying and reading (or re-reading) the dispositions that regulated them: General Constitutions, Ritual and Statutes.

2. GENERAL CRITERIA

2.1 – Celebratory character of the Chapter of the OFS Fraternity

The Fraternity Chapter is not an ordinary meeting, like civil or secular meetings. The Chapter is also a feast. To celebrate is to “make present”. To make what present? In the first place the Capitular assembly makes Christ himself present. Jesus Christ who teaches, Jesus Christ who serves, Jesus Christ who prays. Jesus Christ is present “...*where one or two people are gathered in my name...*”. Furthermore, the Capitular assembly evokes the Church and renders it present. It constitutes the Church assembled in faith, hope and charity.

The Chapter is to be always celebrated in an attitude of conversion, since there is a search for greater perfection in life according to the Rule, in fraternity. In the Chapter all personal interests and ambitions of power must be excluded. Everything must be done according to the example of Jesus Christ, in the spirit of service.

Therefore, the essential aspects of a Chapter are:

- ❖ The proclamation of the Word of God, which enlightens the themes to be discussed;
- ❖ Prayer;
- ❖ The search for what is best for the life of the Fraternity.

It goes without saying that since the group exists because of a project which has God as its inspiration and goal, **it is God who must be at the heart of the thoughts of the group and of each one.** Only in Him will we find inspiration to conform to His authentic will. “*Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it*” (Sal. 126 (127), 1).

In our life, we must always recognize the primacy of the Spirit. If we are secular Franciscans it is because the Lord called us to be so, because He has a project for us. His project, not ours. We must, therefore, listen, in the best possible way so that we can hear well and render our vocation more firm, as Saint Peter taught us. (2Pt 1,10).

We, therefore, must:

- ❖ allow, above all, sufficient time for individual and community prayer, so that God may talk to our heart,
- ❖ dedicate some time for shared reading and meditation of some appropriate passages of the Word of God so that it will tune us up on the God’s “wavelength”,
- ❖ read some appropriate passages of the writings of Saint Francis so that we are inspired by the catalyst and model of our specific vocation.

In all this, however, a sense of measure is needed, because talking in continuation is not productive.

2.2 –Development of the Chapter

Needless to say, the implementation of the Chapter will be very different depending on whether it is a study Chapter or a deliberative Chapter, or an elective Chapter. In any of these cases, works will be introduced by one or more reports, which in any case must respond to the needs to strengthen, with renewed commitment, the values that derive from following Christ, to which we have voluntarily adhered under the loving care of the Saint of Assisi; to the need to do it together, as a Fraternity assembled by the Holy Spirit and called to grow in faith, in listening and welcoming.

Naturally, the introductory report will have an important space and will have to receive the attention it deserves from the members of the Chapter. It would be opportune also to prepare a brief outline of the essential points, which could be of use to the capitulars for study, reflection and subsequent debates.

The participants will then have to have enough time to intervene (have the “right of voice in the Chapter”). It is important that this point be fully elaborated taking all the time necessary: it is from a careful analysis of the state of the Fraternity that a project can emerge to enable its progress. The person who will preside or moderate, must see that interventions are concise and above all, kept to the subject.

The celebration of the Chapter thus becomes a **privileged moment of personal and community formation**, in the style of the most authentic Franciscan tradition: “*At Pentecost all the friars assembled unto St. Mary and consulted how best they might observe the Rule..... St. Francis gave unto them admonition, rebukes, and precepts, according as seemed good unto him by the counsel of the Lord... He was untiring in exhorting the brethren to observe the Gospel and the Rule ...*” (Franciscan Sources L3C XIV, 57).



See and hear JPIC Award recipient Dr. Margie Sweeney

See and hear Dr. Margie Sweeney, recipient of the 2013 national JPIC Award, talk about her Franciscan journeys to Africa and Haiti. View a two-part video interview, *Peace Chats*, at youtube.com/SecularFranciscans.

A visit to East Africa in 2001 changed Dr. Margie's life. The poverty she saw, and the realization that God was calling her, led the family physician to found the nonprofit charity, Helping Hands Healing Ministries, to help alleviate poverty in developing countries. Her trip to Africa was

memorable for another reason. She landed at Nairobi, Kenya on Sept. 11, 2001. She didn't know about the terrorist attacks back in America until a nun came up to her at the airport and told her.

The Franciscan Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Award (formerly known as the Peace Award) has been awarded by the U.S. Secular Franciscan Order (formerly Third Order) since 1950. Among the more notable recipients are Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. (1963), Maryknoll Bishop

James Walsh (1970), Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1974), and Pope John Paul II (1986). More recent recipients include:

- 2000 - James Flickinger, OFS
- 2001 - Hal Sieber, OFS
- 2002 - Ona Harris, OFS
- 2003 - 2006 (no awards)
- 2007 - Dr. Anthony Lazzara, OFS
- 2008 - Marie Dennis, OFS
- 2009 - Don Ryder, OFS
- 2010 - Brother David Buer, OFM
- 2011 - Father Louie Vitale, OFM
- 2012 - Janice Benton, OFS
- 2013 - Dr. Margie Sweeney, MD, OFS

You can help join the discussion at the General Chapter in Assisi

With a theme of "How to Manage a World Order," the OFS General Chapter in Assisi, Italy this November will attempt to answer that question with a series of discussions. The OFS International Presidency (CIOFS) is asking delegates from each country to come prepared.

With that in mind, U.S. International Councilor Mary Stronach, OFS, is seeking your input. If interested, please

send your thoughts to her at stonach@kateriregion.org.

Discussion areas:

1. Historical reasons that, up to now, have not allowed us to manage, guide and animate the Order in the most effective and productive way.

2. Major problems encountered since the promulgation of the Rule approved by Pope Paul VI, in order to implement faithfully the letter and the spirit of the

Rule and General Constitutions.

3. The behaviors and more common and widespread misconceptions that hinder the development of a truly fraternal life in the Franciscan spirit.

4. Suggestions on possible directions upon which national fraternities should reflect to determine structures, modus operandi and the faithful application of the spirit and practice of the Rule and General Constitutions.

Denver, Colorado



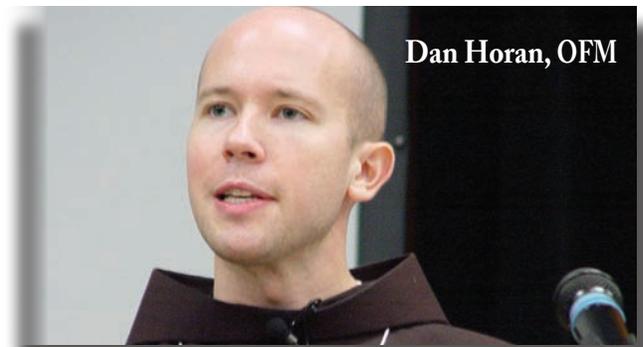
2016 Quinquennial Congress Denver, CO - July 1-6, 2016

“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
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The ‘Q’ takes place at the
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Denver suburb of Englewood.



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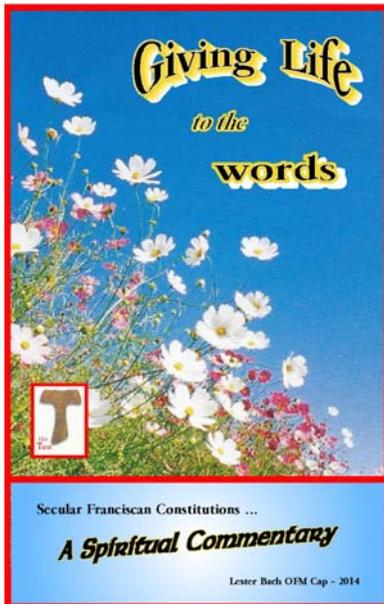
Giving Life to the words

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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