



Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Walking Together

by Anne Mulqueen, OFS

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This will be a rather brief explanation of the composition and activities of the Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee. The Secular Franciscan involvement in ecumenical/interfaith activities is twofold. One is solely within the Secular Franciscan Order, and the other is in cooperation with Franciscans of other denominations.

The members of the first category, the National Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee, are: Delia Banchs from Harker Heights, TX, Mike Carsten from Detroit, MI, Mary Lou Kreider from Erie, PA, John Szczepanski from Valparaiso, IN, and Anne Mulqueen from Kingsville, MD. So you see, the committee gathers Secular Franciscans from many areas of the country.

The second category, the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity, is our other significant ecumenical/interfaith involvement. Currently it is composed of three denominations. Mike Carsten and I represent the Catholic Church, both Eastern and Roman rites. The Rev. Masud Ibn Syedullah and Deacon Joan Verret represent the Third Order Society of St. Francis (TSSF), an Anglican/Episcopal Order. Louis Canter and Richard LeFevre represent the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (OEF), which is comprised of many different Christian denominations.

Now that you know who we are, let me tell you what we do. Last year, both committees, the OFS Committee and the Joint Committee, gathered together for an interfaith conference to celebrate the unity and common life we share in our **One**

God. The conference presenters were drawn from the three Abrahamic religions; Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The participants also were drawn from all three religions. After the presentations, we asked the participants how the conference was beneficial to them. In essence, the participants said, "it broadened my horizon about other faiths..." "...the Conference left me filled with hope that we might actually achieve peace in the world..." "...it helped me to have a better understanding of the connectedness between the Abrahamic religions."

In September 2015, the Joint Committee met at the Franciscan Retreat Center in Aston, PA. Our primary task was to focus on what we would do for the coming year. After much silent and communal prayer, we arrived at a consensus that we would use Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato si'* as our resource and apply it to the Elements of Franciscan Unity, which are Baptism in Christ, Vocation, Charism, Christ-Centered and Prophetic Voice.



If you have a copy of *Laudato si'* and are willing to join with me in applying the five elements of Franciscan unity to the Encyclical, please send your comments to me at:

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Wishing you peace and all that is good,
Your sister Anne Mulqueen, OFS