

T AU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

SPRING 2014 - ISSUE 79



Pysanka - Traditional, wax resist, Easter egg decorating technique of eastern European countries.

*What does this invitation to poverty, a life
of evangelical poverty, mean for us today?*

Pope Francis

Mission to Share the Vision

The TAU-USA, a publication of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order of the United States, is a vital communication link between the NAFRA leadership and all professed Secular Franciscans throughout the United States. The articles within the publication, while sharing the Secular Franciscan charism and vision, are intended to inform, inspire, and challenge.



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Note:

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

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THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

MINISTER'S MESSAGE *National Minister, Tom Bello, OFS*



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Follow Me

May the Lord bring us Peace!

Permit me to offer in this article the "flip side" of the last article "Miserando atque Eligendo" (http://www.nafra-sfo.org/tau-usa/articles/winter13/minister_winter13.pdf). In that article, I focused on Christ's "looking with mercy" (miserando) on Levi, a tax collector, on our Holy Father Pope Francis and on all of us in "choosing" (eligendo) us to follow Him. In this article, I will focus on our response to our Lord's merciful choice or election of us to "Follow me." (Christ is on the right side of the great Caravaggio painting, The Calling of St. Matthew, above; now I will concentrate on Levi/Matthew on the left side of the painting.)

As you may recall, Miserando atque Eligendo is from a famous homily by St. Bede on the Call of St. Matthew in the Office of Readings for St. Matthew's Feast Day on September 21. St. Bede wrote what it meant for Matthew and for us to "follow" the Lord Jesus:

"By 'follow' he meant not so much the movement of feet as of the heart, the carrying out of a way of life. For one who says that he lives in Christ ought himself to walk just as he walked, not to aim at earthly things, not to pursue perishable gains, but to flee base praise, to embrace willingly the contempt of all that is worldly for the sake of heavenly glory, to do good to all, to inflict injuries upon no one in bitterness, to suffer patiently those injuries that come to oneself, to ask God's forgiveness for those who oppress, never to seek one's own glory but always God's, and to uphold whatever helps one love heavenly things. This is what is meant by following Christ. In this way, disregarding earthly gains, Matthew attached himself to the band of followers of One who had no riches. For the Lord himself, who outwardly called Matthew by a word, inwardly bestowed upon him the gift of an invisible impulse so that he was able to follow."

That "gift of an invisible impulse" is the gift of sanctifying grace, which Christ is ready, in His mercy, to bestow on all who, like Levi the tax collector, are ready to turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.

Thus, the call to "follow me" is a call to conversion. This call to conversion is truly the Lenten call, clearly the Christian call, clearly our call as Secular Franciscans. Christ is calling all of us every day. Every day. All of us. Our Secular Franciscan Rule 7 says "United by their vocation as 'brothers and sisters of penance' and motivated by the

dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel calls 'conversion.' Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily."

The very first words that Christ utters in the historically first written gospel are uttered to all, even before the call of the first disciples: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

And as we know from The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (LG), in its challenging Fifth Chapter, entitled "The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church," that call to all, that universal call to "follow me," is a call to holiness: "The Lord Jesus, the divine Teacher and Model of all perfection, preached holiness of life to each and every one of His disciples of every condition" (LG 40 Para 1.). "All are called to holiness" (Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 2013). "All the faithful of Christ are invited to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state. Indeed they have an obligation to so strive" (LG 42 Para 5.).

Okay, well, what is holiness? CCC 2028, quoting LG 40 Para. 2, reads "All Christians . . . are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity." Wow! The perfection of charity. To which a quote from St. Gregory of Nyssa, brother of St. Basil, is added: "Christian perfection has but one limit, that of having none."

There's a worthy goal to wrap ourselves around: the perfection of charity. Let's say it again: the perfection of charity! Now we know where we're headed. Now we know the way to get there. Now we surely know we can't do it on our own: be perfect in charity? We need God's great grace. We need the help of our brothers and sisters, the help of our great Franciscan family.

We should also now know what sin is. Quite simply, sin detracts or draws us away from that perfection of charity. We are not following God; we are following our own will, our desire for pleasure, the will of the world or, worst of all, the will of the devil: "sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life" (1 John 2:16). Thus, the three great works of conversion, the three great works of Lent: self-denial or fasting to combat sensual lust; charity or almsgiving to combat enticements for the eyes; and prayer or turning to God to combat the pretentious life. All lead to holiness, the perfection of charity.

If we are sincere about following Christ and committed to pursuing the perfection of charity, let us learn, almost by second nature, always to ask: Is this thought being thought in charity? Are these words being formed in charity? Will these words be spoken in charity? Is this contemplated action being contemplated in charity? Will this action thus be done in charity? Will I receive this person approaching me, sitting near me, driving beside me, in charity?

Of course, to some extent, we cannot control certain basic impulses or what other people may think about us or say or do to us. Nonetheless, we can try to control how we respond to those inner impulses and to what we receive or perceive from outside. That's when and where charity must kick in.

Again, Christ or Charity is the way. Christ or Charity is the goal. Christ or Charity should be the spark that fires our thoughts, words and deeds. If not, we run the risk of not following Christ. We run the risk of imperfection. We run the risk of sin.

One final note. A friendly Pastor once pulled me aside and gave in similar words the following "chiding" I offer to you:

"Tom, the Lord said, 'Follow me.' He didn't say 'Go out in front and show me how it should be done. I went into the desert to be tempted directly by the devil so that you would not have to go and seek the devil directly. I was hung on the Cross for the ransom of many so that you do not need to try single-handedly to sacrifice yourself for the ransom of many. I need to go first, not you. Okay?'"

Moreover, I said 'Follow me,' not 'Tom, walk beside me.' Yes, I may need to carry you from time to time, but you don't need to be beside me pointing out how you don't like how this or that is done or not done in My Church, by My bishops and priests. No, I'm not looking for an equal. I already have the Father and the Holy Spirit. I just need you to "follow me." Okay?"

Sisters and Brothers, let us pray for one another that we may be given the grace to follow wherever Christ chooses to lead us.

Peace and love,
Tom

Sharing The Vision

News from the National Executive Council (NEC)

by Jan Parker, National Secretary

Annual Report Improvements

When it comes to filling out reports, we're always open to making things easier. Earlier this year we worked to improve the demographics section of the Annual Report. One area that's always a little confusing is the list of categories describing the status of our members – whether active, excused, lapsed, etc. After much discussion, and some help from our National Database expert Bob Herbelin, we agreed to the list printed below.

Are these choices of categories now simpler and clearer? Well, here's a test. Let's say you were asked to put each of your local fraternity members into one of these categories. Could you do that fairly easily? Don't miss the three hints given below. (For more information, and some interesting reading, please refer to Article 18.7 in our National Statutes, and Articles 53-60 of our OFS General Constitutions.)

For your fraternity, as of December 31st of the previous year, please list the number each category

- ___ Active / Excused Professed
- ___ Candidates
- ___ Inquirers
- ___ Aspirants (Those in Orientation)
- ___ Affiliates

For your fraternity, please list the number occurring during previous year

- ___ Deaths
- ___ Lapsed (No longer participating in fraternity)
- ___ Temporary Withdrawal (Voluntary from fraternity)
- ___ Definitive Withdrawal (Voluntary from fraternity and the Order)
- ___ Suspended (Removed from fraternity)
- ___ Dismissed (Removed from fraternity and the Order)

Hints:

- (1) Professed members of your fraternity who are excused from attendance (homebound, etc.) are still counted in the category of Active Members. Please don't categorize them as lapsed.
- (2) Professed members of your fraternity who are unable to contribute financially are still Active Members. Please don't categorize them as suspended or lapsed.
- (3) Members who have transferred out of your fraternity during the calendar year are not included in your fraternity's count; they are counted by the fraternity to which they belong as of December 31st of the previous year.

To help determine more clearly the types of Spiritual Assistants who serve our local fraternities, these category choices were also revised as follows:

Spiritual Assistants

- ___ Franciscan Friars
- ___ Franciscan Sisters
- ___ Secular Franciscans (OFS, including OFS Priests and Deacons)
- ___ Others (Non-Franciscan)

Our hope is that these improvements will result in more accurate reporting and a better understanding of trends in membership and spiritual assistance from year to year.

National Guidelines on NAFRA Webpage – Coming Soon

In just the past month we received several requests for copies of the recently approved NAFRA Prison Ministry Guidelines. Did you know that “Prison Ministry” is just one of the topics addressed in our National Guidelines? Over the years the National Fraternity has approved guidelines on a variety of topics such as “Guidelines for Chapters”, “Fraternity Internal Controls and Treasury Guidelines”, “Use of National Fraternity Mailing List” and “Criteria for OFS Scholarships”. These guidelines and others are available by request from the National Secretary, but our goal is to make them more readily available for viewing or printout via the NAFRA website. We’ll be sure to announce when this happens.

Spanish Translations Update

It is now possible for individual OFS members to receive a Spanish translation of each issue of the TAU-USA *in the mail*. For information please see the inside front cover of this issue, just under the Table of Contents. A Spanish translation of *Franciscan Journey* is now being reviewed, and the NEC is exploring cost and publication options.

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Commission “How-to-Be” Guide

JPIC Commission Chair, Carolyn Townes has developed a handbook for Animators of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. In Carolyn’s words, “This handbook is a “how-to-BE” guide more than a “how-to-DO” guide. I believe most people know what to do, but need more guidance with how to BE as they are doing the work of peace and justice. Organized according to the Four Pillars of the Franciscan Way of Life: Spirituality, Formation, Fraternity and Apostolate, the Handbook will complement the JPIC Chapter in the FUN Manual and become a valuable resource for initial and ongoing formation.”

Honoring our Friars

The NEC agreed to a proposal that we honor deceased friars who have given significant service to the OFS by sending a note of appreciation, a Mass card and a \$100 donation to their province or designated charity. News of each friar’s passing and some history of their service will be shared with the National Fraternity.

Upcoming National Events

- **July 10-13, 2014 Summer Seminar** at St. Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania. This year’s topic is “Spiritual Assistance”
- **August 21-24, 2014 National Retreat** at Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois. Retreat will be directed by Br. Bill Short OFM, with a tentative theme of “Spirituality of Servant Leadership” (*Kenosis of Service*). This retreat is open to the following members and their spouses: National Fraternity Council (Regional Ministers, or delegates, and NEC), NAFRA Commission and Committee members, NAFRA Appointees, members of Regional Councils and NAFRA Alum. This retreat was planned by request of the National Fraternity Council, and has no NAFRA funding.
- **October 21-26 National Fraternity (NAFRA) Chapter** at Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House in Lake Dallas, Texas.

CIOFS Events

- August 17-21, 2014 - International Assembly of Franciscan Youth in Croatia
- November 1-7, 2014 - International Fraternity Elective Chapter



Formation Commission

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

by Bob Fitzsimmons, OFS
National Formation Commission Chair

Gospel to Life Are we making it real?

As my time of being your formation chair draws to a close, I have paused to reflect on my journey over the past six or so years. One thing speaks very strongly to me and will be my recommendation to the next NFC chair and commission. Transformation! Yes definitely, but transformation that brings the Gospel to Life. Perhaps I can call it the Gospel to life formation project or exercise for the Franciscan heart and soul.

I think we all agree that we were founded by Francis directly, and not to be an Order of great teachers, apologists, preachers, etc. Not apostolic but evangelical, people called to become the hands, feet, and loving heart of Jesus, using the very Word of God (Jesus and the Gospel) to become little words of God, who do the will of the Father by being Christ-like and learning to be His active presence loving a world deeply in need of loving.

I also believe we have all spent much time studying the Gospels, but have we really entered into the Gospels to make them our own? I was drawn back to an older study back in grad school (Fordham – Jesuit) on something called the Lost Gospel of “Q” (from the German *quelle*, meaning source). “Q” is a lost document believed to be the sayings of Jesus, that echo today in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The evangelists used the sayings of Jesus and added the context needed for understanding and for speaking to the needs of specific early Christian communities. Matthew, in his Torah-style approach, speaks directly to the early Jewish Christians, while Luke addresses the needs of the ever-growing Gentile converts, with a special place for the women of his day and culture.

BUT

The Gospels are living documents, and the words of Jesus woven throughout the Gospels are eternal. I believe that for us Franciscans the ultimate spiritual discipline and hardest challenge is make the words of Jesus alive today and understandable in addressing the needs facing the Christian community today. To some degree, we need to be Gospel redactors, just like the blessed Evangelists, and apply the words of blessing,

healing, forgiveness and love to our communities, families and fraternities today.

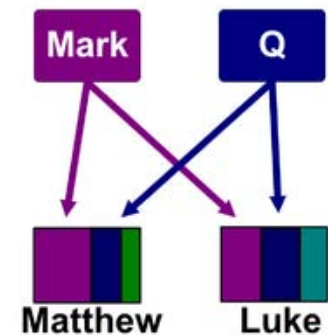
So the Formation Project. Many, many, many moons ago, back as a catechist for RCIA and a Parish DRE, I had the blessing of teaching Scripture. One thing I asked was that the candidates or students as part of their journaling was to begin writing their own gospel. The “Q” document was virtually unknown outside of theology schools, and there were not so many “red letter” New Testaments around, so at times it was a daunting assignment. It might be easier today, with all the new Scripture research, to discern the Words of

Jesus and to see how the Evangelists incorporated them to build up their communities and to continue to make Jesus known in future generations.

So how do we make the Gospel come alive, make Jesus jump off the pages of Scripture and through us feed the spiritual hunger that exists today?

To make Jesus come alive today, not the historical Jesus of 2,000 years ago, but the living Beloved Son the world needs today, we need to become the gospel. The gospel of Joe or Sally or Mike or Anne needs to be written. We need to weave the words of Jesus through our own stories, our own lives, our joys and sorrows, so the gospel becomes us and we become the gospel.

Two-source Hypothesis



The Gospels of Matthew and Luke were written independently, each using Mark and a second [hypothetical](#) document called “Q” as a source. “Q” has been conceived as the most likely explanation behind the common material (mostly sayings) found in the [Gospel of Matthew](#) and the [Gospel of Luke](#) but not in Mark.

No longer just the Gospel of Matthew or Luke, or for that matter, Mark and John, but our gospel too. The story of Jesus is the golden thread running throughout the New Testament; it's our golden thread too. We have set ourselves to this project at profession, when we echoed Francis' words by also proclaiming "This is what I want".

It takes time to write our gospels, a lifetime, but this is our calling as Franciscans, not to become great teachers, apologists, or preachers, but to be gospel and to infuse all of life with love of Christ.

We can begin by reading and reflecting on the sayings of Jesus; a re-creation of the lost "Q" or perhaps a red-letter New Testament might be a good starting point. Let the sayings of Jesus speak to your heart, then observe how the evangelists expanded and added the context needed for their communities. Then with a prayerful start you might begin writing your own gospel and how Jesus speaks to our needs now, with an eye on your own life's experiences, your family and your fraternity.

Gospel to life and life to Gospel must become the project of our lives if we are to speak Jesus to our world today.

Dear sisters and brothers, it has been a great honor to have served you these past years as your formation chair, and I pray that your desire for the Gospels and being transformed into the love of Jesus continues to enflame and bless each of you.

Peace and all good,
Fitz



A Call for Application

from Tom Bello OFS

Beloved National Family,
May the Lord give us Peace!

I write to ask for your possible application to and prayers for a new National Formation Chair or Co-Chairs for our National family.

As you all know, our beloved Bob "Fitz" Fitzsimmons has served long and well and was Chair when the National Formation Commission gave us our incredible FUN Manual and helped us implement it across the country.

Our National Executive Council (NEC) is tasked to search for his replacement, as difficult as that will be.

One, we are seeking someone thoroughly Secular Franciscan (see General Constitutions Article 31.3) who understands that proper Formation must flow directly into our living our Gospels, Rule and General Constitutions, not merely in "knowing" them.

Two, we want someone who has first-hand and, if possible, extensive experience with adult learning methods and techniques that are beneficial for adult faith formation.

Three, we need someone who has the time and the vigor, the organization and wisdom to serve and focus the whole National family on matters of Information, Formation and Transformation from Inquiry to Ongoing Formation within our Rule and the greater Gospel tradition.

We need your active prayers and help! Ask yourself: "Who has helped form Secular Franciscans the best in my lifetime?" Then ask that person or persons to apply. Please! We don't need recommendations; we need actual applications.

Our timetable is this: We would like to bring this person or persons to our NAFRA Chapter in October, with Fitz, so we can say Goodbye to one and Welcome to the other, in person.

The only time that the NEC will meet face to face before NAFRA will be just before the Summer Seminar in July. Thus, please submit your application, in private, to me or any member of the NEC by, say, Sunday, June 1.

An application need be no more than what you would do as National Formation Chair. What is your vision? What do you see is necessary or essential in a National Secular Franciscan Formation Program? You may submit a more formal resume or CV, not required, but you must give us some sense of your experience and interest in assisting both Regional and Local Fraternities in their Formation efforts.

Please do not hesitate to ask any questions to any member of the National Executive Council or the National Formation Commission.

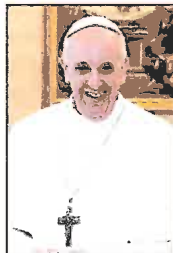
I ask all to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us to find and properly utilize the best Secular Franciscan person or persons to promote effective Secular Franciscan Formation throughout the United States.

Peace and love,
Tom



Reflection

The Trinity dwells in us. Our personal awareness of the indwelling of the Trinity in our lives makes a difference in how we live. The relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is strong, unique, powerful, gentle, and wise. It is their nature to love one another and us. Nothing we do can diminish their love for us. Our betrayals, indifference, or choosing ideas and opinions that go counter to Jesus' words and actions, do not change the Trinity's nature to show us their love. The Trinity is faithful to their nature - to love us ... *With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy. he (the Trinity) makes it possible to lift up our heads and to start anew.* (cf. Evangelii Gaudium - Pope Francis - Paragraph #3)



The Trinity empowers good choices as we respond to the Gospel. The Trinity's desires are revealed through Jesus' humanity. With gracious love the Trinity seeks our deliberate, reflective, personal, loving responses and not a robotic action that is thought-less.

From the beginning the Trinity established a relationship with creation, especially their human creation. The unity and loving interaction of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit reveal a relational mystery and offer us a model to imitate. They help us understand our call to glorify the Trinity by personal willingness to be united to and love one another. We are called by the Father, Jesus proclaims the message, and we are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

We respond to and are guided by the love revealed through Jesus' words and actions. Jesus' life illustrates the way we are called to deal with one another - in LOVE. The Trinity's love is a gift, given freely. Their actions challenge us to love one another, enemies and all, freely and unconditionally.



Franciscan love for others is a gift - given whether people deserve it or not. "How and why" we love one another, in multiple situations, offers a human model for people that is based on the Trinity's faithful love. The ways and means of our decisions follow the pattern given by Jesus in the Gospel. It builds the Kingdom of God, a *community of love*.

(con't)

Spring - 2014

An OFS Practice

Check your Franciscan way of responding to your life experiences. You might sense a need for *conversion*, (cf. OFS Rule #7). Faithfulness to the OFS way of life is the reason we model a Franciscan-Gospel way of dealing with issues and life situations.

Check your life-examples that call for personal conversion. The Trinity assists us when conversion is needed. Jeremiah addresses this issue:

I went down to the potter's house where I found him working at the wheel. Now and then a vessel he was making from the clay would be spoilt in his hands and he would remould it into another vessel to his liking. "... can I not deal with you as this potter deals with his clay?"

Jeremiah 18:3-4, 6

E.g. - 1. Some OFS people don't like the way groups, like FAN or JPIC or Formation etc, do things. Some folks separate themselves from the OFS rather than engage in dialogue which could lead to understanding and healthy change.

If people avoid dialogue, their actions often bring division rather than unity. Their example fails to reflect the Franciscan spirit.

How would you handle such situations? Is separation from the OFS a Franciscan solution? Does it reflect our OFS profession? Can people who ignore dialogue claim they are building up the Kingdom of God? Can OFS members separate from fraternity life and still claim to be building a *community of love*? Achieving separation is not a Franciscan goal. Working for unity is!

Dialogue would offer a better outcome if we gave it a chance. Perhaps we need guidance to settle things in a Franciscan spirit and maintain fraternal unity.

cf. *The Franciscan Journey* - page 158-161

We love freely, offering new life to people. People are not required to earn our love. We offer it freely in ways that fit the issue or situation we encounter in one another (or ourselves). What we say or do may require a single act of love or it may require years of love before achieving its goal. Love does not give up. Love finds ways to persist for the sake of the loved ones. *It avoids words and actions that would separate us from one another.* Franciscans are prompted by love to *achieve unity.* Disagreement should never be allowed to break up the *community of love.*

The individualism of our postmodern and globalized era fosters a lifestyle which weakens the development and stability of personal relationships and distorts family bonds. Pastoral activity needs to bring out more clearly the fact that our relationship with the Father demands and encourages a communion which heals, promotes and reinforces interpersonal bonds.

Evangelii Gaudium - Pope Francis - Paragraph #67

The Trinity acts with a love that never gives up. They seek unity no matter how long it takes. Franciscans imitate the persistent and freely-given love springing from a heart where the Holy Spirit dwells. We find direction in the words of the Father on the mount of Transfiguration: "***This is my beloved son; listen to him***" (Mark 9: 7). Franciscans commit themselves, 24/7, to listen to and imitate the spirit, words, and actions of Jesus. The Trinity empowers our faithfulness to the Gospel. It is "why" we work to build a *community of love.* Listen to these words of hope:

The memory of my distress and my wanderings is wormwood and gall. I remember them indeed and am filled with despondency. I shall wait patiently because I take this to heart: The Lord's love is surely not exhausted, nor has his compassion failed; they are new every morning, so great is his constancy. "The Lord," I say, "is all that I have; therefore I shall wait for him patiently." The Lord is good to those who look to him, to anyone who seeks him;

Lamentations 3:19-25 - REB

Goodness and joy are qualities we share with others. As they blossom within us we find fresh ways to express them. They become rooted in our hearts. Read paragraphs #9 and #10 in Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium.* As Franciscans we make love present in a world where hatred, violence, and revenge often find a home.



We express love and show mercy as a way of evangelization. The Trinity's love and mercy accomplish things we could not do alone. At times it may be difficult to express love and show mercy. But we get support from the *community of love,* (both Church and fraternity). Franciscans help us be confident in practicing love and showing mercy through their shared support.

+++

Picture - Encarnacion del Pozo - OFS General Minister

2. *We always recite the Franciscan Crown (or some other form of prayer) at our gatherings. We can't understand why the council keeps changing our prayer forms when we always did it this way! Why should we change?*

Behind this opinion is the idea that if we repeat a thing often enough it becomes THEE way it should be done. Using the same devotions all the time only proves that we use the same devotions all the time. E.g. If we always used garlic when we prepare a meal it does not prove that garlic must always be used whenever we prepare a meal. Some folks might not like garlic! Repeating devotions is no guarantee of their effectiveness unless the members give clear evidence of regular 'conversion.'

Most devotions result from private revelations. The USA Bishops offer the following advice:

"The criterion for the truth and value of a private revelation is therefore its orientation to Christ himself. When it leads us away from him, when it becomes independent of him or even presents itself as another and better plan of salvation, more important than the Gospel, then it certainly does not come from the Holy Spirit, who guides us more deeply into the Gospel and not away from it.



Popular Devotional Practices - USCCB - Page 15

Conversion is part of Franciscan life. Even when it touches something we treasure, we **dialogue with an open mind and heart.** There is more than one way to bring change to fraternity-community life. Dialogue makes a difference. Article 19 of the OFS Rule is clear: ... *they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue ..."*

Issues may require dialogue and/or research. Practically, it should be unknown that issues cause separation in fraternal life.

Franciscans seek unity! Otherwise we may simply imitate the divisions that wreak havoc in society. Franciscans must offer an alternative, a Franciscan solution flowing from their profession = UNITY.

Shalom



Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Walking Together

by Anne Mulqueen, OFS

It has been said that the existence of the Secular Franciscan Order is one of the *best-kept secrets* among Catholics. I submit that the ecumenical and interfaith teachings of the Church are as much of an undiscovered treasure as the existence of the Secular Franciscan Order. According to my recent survey, these documents remain unknown and unread.

In a recent issue of *U.S. Catholic*¹, the question was asked, “Will Pope Francis revitalize ecumenism and interfaith dialogue?” In answer to that question, I did a little research and came upon a book entitled, *Sobre el Cielo y la Tierra*², *On Heaven and Earth*,³ co-authored by Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio and Argentine Rabbi Abraham Skorka. I downloaded the kindle edition and found the following translation from the Spanish in which Pope Francis, then Cardinal Bergoglio, states:

*Dialogue is born from a respectful attitude toward the other person, from a conviction that the other person has something good to say. It supposes that we can make room in our heart for their point of view, their opinion and their proposals. Dialogue entails a warm reception and not a preemptive condemnation. To dialogue, one must know how to lower the defenses, to open the doors of one’s home and to offer warmth.*⁴

Pope Francis asks us to become aware of God’s goodness present in all people. Perhaps if we listen with the ear of faith we will find common ground to worship God, while adhering to our own faith tradition and respecting the faith traditions of others.

Further, Pope Francis states in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*:

The credibility of the Christian message would be much

greater if Christians could overcome their divisions and the Church could realize “the fullness of catholicity proper to her in those of her children who, though joined to her by baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her.”⁵ We must never forget that we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another. This means that we must have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust, and turn our gaze to what we are all seeking: the radiant peace of God’s face.

As I travel around the country presenting workshops with my fellow Franciscan Joint Committee Members on elements of Franciscan unity, I see evidence of Franciscan collaboration taking place. I see steps being taken toward fulfilling the supplication of Jesus’ prayer to the Father, *that all may be one... so that the world may believe that You sent me* (John 17:21). And this sense of hope makes my heart sing!

I would like to reword the question posed by *U.S. Catholic* at the beginning of this article. This time let me ask you, *Are Secular Franciscans, along with Franciscans of other faith traditions, willing to revitalize ecumenism and interfaith dialogue?* Judging from the responses I have received, it seems we are willing to enter into dialogue.

In my last articles, I asked you to let me know if you, your local or regional fraternities, your parishes, or your community churches participate in ecumenical-interfaith activities and, should there be participation, I asked for details.⁶ To my delight quite a few of you responded. I am summarizing the responses from both those who are actively involved in ecumenism and interfaith dialogue *and* those who have not yet dipped their feet in the *ecumenical-interfaith* waters. Some responses urged me to “set out into the deep” (Luke 5:4) and others were cautionary. Please be aware that

¹ <http://www.uscatholic.org>

² Published in Spanish 2010 by Editorial Sudamericana S.A., a division of Random House

³ Translation 2013, Image, division of Random House, Inc.

⁴ Location 103 Kindle edition [no page numbers on my Kindle]

⁵ Referring to Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 4.

⁶ Fall 2013 Issue-77

for me, this is simply the beginning of a dialogue—not the end, and you can still respond to me at Amulqueensfo@gmail.com.

What follows below is an abridged version of the survey responses I received. Bear in mind that although many Secular Franciscans responded to the survey, these comments are a partial snapshot of what is actually happening in our Order nationwide.

- First, only one fraternity devoted a gathering once a year to ecumenical prayer and dialogue. About a third of the respondents engage in ecumenical-interfaith (“E-I”) activities apart from their fraternities. These actively engaged respondents seem to function on their own initiative or in conjunction with organizations such as Franciscan Action Network. However, for the majority of the respondents, there is no participation in E-I outreach, education or dialogue in their local fraternities, their regions, or their parishes. And most were not aware of any collective gatherings in the community.
- Second, from the responses received, E-I awareness does not seem to be a part of the formation process—initial or ongoing. Also, very few respondents were familiar with the two Second Vatican Council documents that speak to ecumenical and interfaith issues *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Christian Unity) and *Nostra Aetate* (non-Christian religions).
- Third, it is obvious from the responses that E-I involvement is not perceived as important in fraternal life.

Does this discourage me? No, it doesn’t discourage me, because along with the not so encouraging responses to my specific questions, these initial responders offered comments that pointed to a direction to follow in raising awareness of the importance of ecumenical and interfaith issues. I will share some of their comments with you.

- “... Begin to encourage the faithful in the Roman Rite Church to become familiar with the other Rites in the Catholic Church... we forget that in our own back yard there are Catholics... who acknowledge the Pope as their Head, and about whom we know nothing.”
- “I believe we have to make sure that Catholics exposed to other religions have sufficient knowledge and conviction of the Catholic faith,

and have [a] firm commitment to obey Catholic teaching even on sensitive issues.”

- “I am frankly embarrassed by [my] responses and thank you for taking on this work. I pray that we are able to move in a more ecumenical direction!”
- “... There are three of us who actively work in prison ministry in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Ecumenism and interfaith issues are HUGE in this ministry.”
- “Our ability to communicate meaningfully regarding our faith is compromised when we do not have a basic understanding of what others believe and what our Church teaches regarding ecumenism and interfaith relations.”
- “I believe I am the only one officially involved in this capacity. However many of the apostolates our members are engaged in require working side-by-side with people of various faith traditions (food pantries, meal programs, pro-life ministry, Walk for the Hungry, etc.”
- “... I and my late fraternity am/was Byzantine Catholic. We sit so close to the Tiber that our socks are always soggy. You can’t be any kind of Eastern Catholic in the U.S. without knowing about, and usually knowing lots of Latin Rite Catholics, and many of us have friends or family on the other side of the river, among the Orthodox who—unlike us—are not currently in union with Rome. (Not to mention a sea of Protestants.) They are FAMILY, and it profits none of us to debate which of us is the black sheep.”
- “I would rate ecumenical and interfaith outreach as a ‘9.’ I don’t know what my fraternity’s posture is but my guess is that it is not very important to them.”
- “I will be very candid, if we really want to walk together as Secular Franciscans, it must be more than just committees, gatherings, statements, (all of which are necessary). It must be prayer and real action for peace and justice.”

If you have reached the end of this fairly long article, I commend you and praise God for your perseverance. Remember, the dialogue has just begun. My thanks go to you who took the time to write. The Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee owes you a debt of gratitude for illuminating a path for us to follow.



A Lenten Message from our General Minister

Editor's Note: It will be the Easter season when this issue of the

TAU-USA and this Lenten message from our General Minister reaches you, but as we embrace conversion and charity in *every* season, please take this message to heart now, in this season of Life and Light. May we be the Light and Life of Christ to our brothers and sisters throughout the world!

March 31, 2014

Beloved National Family,

I forward to you this Lenten Message from our sister and Minister General Encarnita del Pozo. It is a powerful message. This was the first that I have heard of the 25 killed in the Central African Republic. How horrible. That fraternity is part of all our fraternities.

Peace, Love and Prayers,
Tom Bello

LENT 2014

Dear brothers and sisters,

We are just in the middle of our Lenten journey which will lead us to the great joy of the Easter of our Lord Jesus Christ. During the past three Sundays, we have heard and meditated upon what was proposed to us in the Gospels: the Temptations, the Transfiguration, and the Samaritan Woman at the Well. These are three passages in the Gospels that provide a strong invitation to conversion:

- Resisting the many temptations that arise daily and which we find difficult to resist;
- Being transformed into new people, invited by Jesus to descend from Mount Tabor and to immerse ourselves in everyday life to rebuild, with our hands and with the witness of our lives, his Church and the world in which we live, by engaging ourselves with courage and in a concrete way to repair what is "broken" around us.
- Asking Jesus, as the Samaritan woman did at Sychar, for the Living Water that the Lord offers, since He is "*a spring of water welling up to eternal life*".

During this Lenten season, we must make an effort to restore the rhythm and the style of who we are: true believers and true Franciscans who commit themselves to live as the children of God.

The theme chosen by Pope Francis for this Lenten Season is: "... though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." (2 Cor 8,9). And, in his Lenten message, the Pope continues by stating: "The Apostle was writing to the Christians of Corinth to encourage them

to be generous in helping the faithful in Jerusalem who were in need. What do these words of Saint Paul mean for us Christians today? What does this invitation to poverty, a life of evangelical poverty, mean for us today?"

Brothers and sisters, what does this invitation to poverty, in the evangelical sense, mean for us, Secular Franciscans, youth and adults? Today, we live in a time of distressing poverty, violence and war. How can we become transformed in order to have "a heartfelt compassion" (Col 3,12) ?

I strongly invite you to think about, to pray for, and to be close to those brothers and sisters of the OFS:

- ❖ *Who can only eat once every two days and are absolutely without everything but the joy that comes from their faith and their hope;*
- ❖ *Who, because of lack of means, are forced to have their children abandon their schooling;*
- ❖ *Who do not have a place to live, as happens in Haiti and in the Philippines, where hundreds of thousands of people still live the consequences of the earthquake and of the cyclone;*
- ❖ *Who are suffering from violence and from war, as in Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and in many other countries;*
- ❖ *Who are killed, as were the 25 Secular Franciscans of the Central African Republic, all belonging to the same fraternity ...*

Can you help?

My dear brothers, what will give us true freedom, true happiness and true salvation is a love full of compassion and tenderness, that is shared with generosity and with a spirit of doing without - not only without that which is part of our excess but also without that which is part of our essential - so as to alleviate some of the injustices that are suffered by so many of God's children.

We are confident that you will offer the fruit of your Lenten sacrifices to your National Councils so that they can send your contributions to CIOFS who will in turn offer these fruits of conversion to all those brothers and sisters of the OFS and YouFra who are in need.

I think that, with this spirit of conversion and penance, of transformation of individuals and fraternities, we will be able to arrive at Easter in a way that is both serene and joyful, and which bears witness to those around us of the joy of having found the source of living water that quenches us eternally.

On behalf of all the brothers and sisters of the CIOFS Presidency, I greet you with great confidence and fraternal love, and I wish you a Happy Easter of Resurrection.

Your sister and minister,
Encarnación del Pozo
Minister General OFS



Campaign Nonviolence: Be the Merciful Presence of God

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

This year, our National Fraternity has chosen the theme “*Be the merciful presence of God.*” In his Sermon on the Mount, our Lord Jesus exhorted that those who are merciful are blessed and highly favored. He went on to say that the merciful will also be shown mercy. Mercy begets mercy; just as love begets love. But the task is the same for fear and violence. It too begets more of the same.

Each one of us has the capacity to create a culture of violence or a realm of peace. It is merely a decision away. Peace is not the absence of war or conflict. Peace is a way of being in the midst of war and conflict. We must exact justice when an injustice happens. We are not called to fight fire with fire, because that only causes a bigger fire! We must quench fire with water, just as we must quench violence with the loving hand of compassion and mercy.



Being a merciful presence means we are to mindfully BE peace and mindfully DO love. As Franciscans, we are called to “go from gospel to life and life to gospel” (OFS Rule, Art. 4), as witnesses and instruments of the Church’s mission, proclaiming Christ by our life and words (Art. 6). Our life, our words and our deeds must radiate love and mercy at all times — not just when it is convenient or reciprocated. In the spirit of the Beatitudes (Art 11), we are called to be the merciful presence of God. When we extend mercy, mercy will be shown to us.

Your National Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission invites you to actively participate in creating a culture of compassion and mercy by practicing intentional acts of nonviolence. **Campaign Nonviolence** is a new movement that takes a stand against the widespread violence and injustice we face in our world today by promoting and activating the power of nonviolence in our lives, our communities and our world.

As Franciscans, we are called to be people of nonviolence working to transform our world of violence into a culture where people everywhere practice nonviolence toward themselves, one another, and the earth and its inhabitants. To support this long-term goal, Campaign Nonviolence is launching a movement integrating education, action and networking for nonviolent change. Please visit the Campaign Nonviolence website (www.campaignnonviolence.org), sign the pledge, and give your support to creating a culture of compassion and mercy. By practicing acts of nonviolence, we become the merciful presence of God in the world.

Prayer of Merciful Presence

Good and gracious Lord, grant me the strength and the courage

To be the merciful presence of Your love;

That I may show unfailing love to all those I meet
And overcome the darkness of indifference.

Grant me the strength and the courage
To be the merciful presence of Your peace;
That I may be peace to all those I meet
And overcome the darkness of violence.

Grant me the strength and the courage
To be the merciful presence of Your light;
That I may be light to those who walk in the darkness
of doubt and fear.

Lord, grant me the strength and the courage
To be the merciful presence of Your Son;
That I may bring the love, the peace and the light of
Jesus to a world in need.

Dear Lord, I humbly pray. So be it. Amen.



The YouFra Strategy

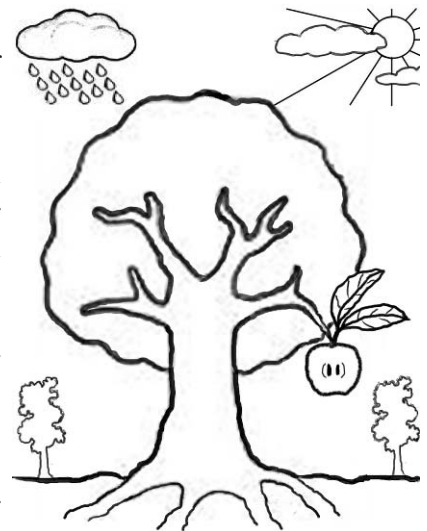
Ríobart (Rob) Breen, OFS
Chair, Franciscan Youth and
Young Adult (YouFra) Commission
riobart.breen@anamduan.org

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you.” “Ah, Lord God!” I said, “I know not how to speak; I am too young.” But the Lord answered me, “Say not, ‘I am too young.’ To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak.” [Jeremiah 1:5-7]

We begin with this quote from Jeremiah, because it captures so well the relationship between God and the young people God is calling to the Franciscan Charism. Throughout history, God has chosen and called forth people from every walk of life to be Gospel people. This has always included young people: Jeremiah the prophet, Josiah the eight year old king, Mary the pregnant young adult, and of course, Clare and Francis of Assisi. The whole Franciscan movement began primarily as a youth movement; it was young people who were most open to the radical Gospel life modeled by Francis and Clare, and it was these young people that God called to the Franciscan orders.

In the same way, young people are already flocking to the Gospel life as it needs to be lived today through commitments to the Franciscan Volunteer Ministry, Franciscan Mission Service, Francis Corps, YouFra, and now the Franciscan Earth Corps. Young people are also seeking out secular opportunities to serve and make a difference through work with immigrants, poor people, peace and justice advocacy, and youth conservation corps that engage in environmental conservation work. It is through these secular opportunities that they often live out their Call, but they miss out on the explicit experience of coming to know the One who Calls. It is our Franciscan responsibility to reach out to and engage these young people whom God is calling to Franciscan life. Now is the moment. Now is the time.

At last summer’s Confab, we shared the image of a tree producing fruit. This is the image for the YouFra Movement. The trees surrounding our tree are the current needs and challenges of our world and our young people. The roots of the tree include our Catholic and Franciscan heritage, our YouFra documents, and even our knowledge of human development. We are deeply rooted in these, and we draw on them to give us vision, meaning, understanding, and wisdom. The trunk is all our capacities as a Secular Franciscan Order: our people with their training/ skills/talents/education, our support network and structure, our financial and other resources, our time, our labor and prayers, and our fraternal communities. The branches are our initiatives, formation experiences and activities that we bring to youth to draw them into our Franciscan life. The sun and rain are the constant nurturing and graces of the Holy Spirit. The clusters of leaves are the young people we engage, and many of them will blossom into flowers. The fruit that grows is the service to the world, the “fruits of our labor,” the impact young people (with Secular Franciscans) have in the world. These impacts will always generate new seeds, new life, new hope, new possibilities, including the *next* generation whom God will call.



And now for some Good News! The draft of the national YouFra strategy has now been completed. The framework was initially drafted by participants at the Franciscan Summer Confab in 2013, and was revised and

edited by the National Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission. The draft was recently disseminated through the Franciscan Young Adults member webspace on BigTent and through the NAFRA-L email listserv to get comments. (If you are a regional or local Franciscan Youth Committee Chair, you should already be active on the Franciscan Young Adults webspace. If not, email Rob Breen and ask to join). All interested Secular Franciscans are now invited to provide feedback or suggestions for revisions to this draft YouFra strategic plan. A final edited version will be submitted to the National Council in the fall of October 2014 for approval. If approved, we will begin implementation, and will need to identify Secular Franciscan leaders to assume responsibility for components of the strategy. To comment on or provide feedback for revisions to the draft national YouFra strategy, send comments in an email to Ríobart (Rob) Breen, OFS, at fec@anamduan.org. (If you did not receive a copy of the full text, you can request an electronic copy at this same email address). Comments on the draft strategic plan should be submitted by **June 1, 2014**. An outline of the strategy is printed below. (This is only an excerpt and NOT the full draft).

The National Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission has also been drafting the YouFra Handbook and the initial formation process for YouFra members, and both of these documents now are in rough drafts. The intent is to have final drafts done by the fall of 2014.

Outline of the Draft Strategic Plan for Franciscan Youth in the U.S.

Vision: The Secular Franciscan Order in the United States will rebuild a Franciscan Youth (YouFra) movement throughout the United States. This will be done primarily by regional fraternities and councils working with local fraternities.... The initial YouFra focus will be on young adults (ages 18 to approximately 28)....

Long Term Goal: Within the decade, there is a national YouFra movement and network of young adults in YouFra fraternities...

National Short Term Goals: Train regional and local Secular Franciscans to create, animate, and mentor YouFra fraternities; Train YouFra leaders to eventually take over responsibility for building the basic YouFra organizational infrastructure; Develop a YouFra Fraternity Handbook; Develop new YouFra initial formation and ongoing formation curricula

Goals for Regional and Local Franciscan Youth Commissions

YouFra Communication and Outreach: Establish a YouFra social marketing and web committee; Develop a YouFra website; Create a directory of contact information of existing YouFra groups and member contact information; Reach out to young adults, especially in the Hispanic (Spanish speaking), black and African, Native American, Asian and new immigrant communities

YouFra Formation: Train OFS animators, YouFra leaders, and Spiritual assistant in how to use YouFra Handbook and Initial Formation Guide; Develop YouFra Servant Leadership Manual; Develop additional YouFra ongoing formation materials

YouFra Structure and Capacity Building: Recruit and train OFS members as YouFra Animators; Develop general OFS local fraternity training for supporting and promoting YouFra fraternities; Recruit and train Spiritual Assistants for YouFra; Develop a financial strategy for funding YouFra

YouFra Events and Activities: Create a calendar of seasonal and annual local, regional and national events; Plan and implement YouFra activities (in collaboration with YouFra leaders) including: Retreats; Service projects; Pilgrimages; Nature hikes/camping; Gardening; Overseas and domestic mission work experiences; Music concerts; Online journal/blogs

National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order - USA
Quarterly General Fund Reports for Calendar Year 2013 as of December 31, 2013

	Quarter Ending On:	3/31/13	6/30/13	9/30/13	12/31/13	TOTAL FOR	BUDGET
Acct #	INCOME					YEAR	for 2013
6110	PER CAPITA	\$4114.00	\$127134.50	87575	\$1806.25	220629.75	\$227800.00
6120	INTEREST	\$38.18	\$38.77	39.28	\$37.69	153.92	\$1000.00
6200	FORMATION SALES	\$8022.15	\$10272.60	11602.35	\$12389.90	42287	\$40000.00
6140	MISCELLANEOUS	\$3377.98			\$370.00	\$3747.98	
	TOTAL INCOME	\$15552.31	\$137445.87	99216.63	\$14603.84	266818.65	\$268800.00
	EXPENSES						
7110	CIOFS PER CAPITA		-\$36811.05		\$0.00	-\$36811.05	\$22000.00
7115	FAN Fran. Action Network	\$25.00		-13,110	-\$25.00	-13110	\$13400.00
7120	NEWSLETTER	-\$4000.00	-\$6402.46	-11,600.35	-\$9754.69	-31757.5	\$40000.00
7130	ANNUAL MEETING			-6,771.27	-\$19402.12	-26173.39	\$50000.00
7135	QUINQUENNIAL CONGRESS					0	\$5000.00
7140	COUNCIL OFFICERS	-\$891.95	-\$1996.14	-273.51	-\$690.19	-3851.79	\$4000.00
7145	CIOFS MEETING					0	
7150	COUNCIL MEETINGS	-\$4621.89	-\$4093.67	-4,891.46	-\$1716.10	-15323.12	\$19000.00
7155	LIABILITY INSURANCE		-\$3799.00			-\$3799.00	\$3800.00
7160	CIOFS VISITATION					0	
7172	JPIC AWARD COMMTEE			-515.6	-\$2126.52	-2642.12	\$3000.00
7173	NATIONAL ARCHIVES			-3,701.97		-3,701.97	\$4000.00
7176	COMPUTER COMMITTEE	-\$600.00	-\$600.00	-600	-\$4456.01	-6256.01	\$6640.00
7180	FORMATION-PRINTING	-\$7551.75	-\$6065.76	-2,059.55	-\$2415.74	-18092.8	\$20000.00
7181	FORMATION	-\$1434.48	-\$2603.16	-642.94	-\$7760.46	-12441.04	\$18100.00
7182	S A DEVELOPMENT			-78.7	-\$78.90	-157.6	\$4000.00
7186	J P I C	-\$77.09	\$1968.70	-5,358.02	-\$55.00	-3521.41	\$6000.00
7187	YOUTH		\$2187.90	-3,220.52	-\$2165.64	-3198.26	\$6000.00
7188	ECUMENICAL COMMITTEE	-\$1186.26	-\$1760.26	-895.4		-3841.92	\$6000.00
7198	COMMUNICATIONS				-\$465.00	-\$465.00	\$4000.00
7199	CNSA		-\$8000.00			-\$8000.00	\$8000.00
7200	OTHER EXPENSES		-\$493.84		-\$560.00	-\$1053.84	
	TOTAL EXPENSES	-\$20338.42	-\$68468.74	-53,719.29	-\$51671.37	-194197.82	\$242940.00
	NET INCOME(EXPENSE)	-\$4786.11	\$68977.13	45497.34	-\$37067.53	72620.83	\$25860.00
Bank Balances of General Funds:							
	Beginning: CHECKING	\$67283.56	\$60952.96	\$157372.16	\$199023.30		
	SAVINGS	\$186557.08	\$186595.26	\$186634.03	\$186673.31		
	TOTAL - Beginning Bal.	\$253840.64	\$247548.22	\$344006.19	\$385696.61		
	Less Restricted Funds	-\$69808.01	-\$68301.70	-\$95782.54	-\$91975.62		
	TOTAL - Available Funds	\$184032.63	\$247548.22	\$248223.65	\$293720.99		
	Ending: CHECKING	\$60952.96	\$157372.16	\$199023.30	\$140891.63		
	SAVINGS (combined)	\$186595.26	\$186634.03	\$186673.31	\$173815.22 *		
	TOTAL - Ending Balance	\$247548.22	\$344006.19	\$385696.61	\$314706.85		
	Less Restricted Funds	-\$68301.70	-\$95782.54	-\$91975.62	-\$70948.92		
	TOTAL - Available Funds	\$247548.22	\$248223.65	\$293720.99	\$243757.93		
Total does not reflect pending IRS refund due to Brokerage error:					\$12895.53 *		
Respectfully submitted by Cecilia Maljan-Herbelin, OFS, National Treasurer							

National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order - USA

Quarterly Financial Report for Calendar Year 2013

RESTRICTED FUNDS REPORT

Acct#	RESTRICTED FUNDS	BEGINNING BALANCE	Quarter Ending On:				YEAR TOTAL	ENDING BALANCE
			3/31/13	6/30/13	9/30/13	12/31/13		
7303	REGIONAL NEEDS	\$10,000.00					\$ -00	\$ 10,000.00
7304	EMERGENCY FUND	\$10,000.00					\$ -00	\$ 10,000.00
7305	CHARITABLE PROJECTS	\$10,000.00				\$(3,000.00)	\$ (3,000.00)	\$ 7,000.00
7306	NATIONAL EVENTS	\$10,000.00		\$(25.00)	(4,065.4		\$ (4,090.48)	\$ 5,909.52
7307	DONOR FUND	\$13,141.68	(1,800.31	\$(1,161.3	75.00	\$(6,925.00)	\$ (9,811.61)	\$ 3,330.07
7310	CIOFS OFFICE FUND	\$ -00	100.00			\$(100.00)	\$ -00	\$ -00
7314	FORMATION COMM FUND	\$1,317.10					\$ -00	\$ 1,317.10
7315	ECUMENICAL COMM FUND	\$1,138.20					\$ -00	\$ 1,138.20
7316	YOUTH H2O COLLECTIONS	\$ 778.70	194.00	\$6,226.00	283.00	\$(7,481.70)	\$ (778.70)	\$ -00
7317	Y/YA YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP	\$2,488.05		\$(398.30)	398.30		\$ (0.00)	\$ 2,488.05
7319	GIFT FUND	\$ -00					\$ -00	\$ -00
7335	QUINQUENNIAL FUND	\$7,496.91				\$(5,000.00)	\$ (5,000.00)	\$ 2,496.91
7375	HISTORY BOOKS print, sales	\$(9,277.70)				\$1,480.00	\$ 1,480.00	\$ (7,797.70)
DUNS SCOTUS GRANT							\$ -00	
8110	AVAILABLE FOR GRANTS	\$12,543.00		\$18,250.0			\$ 18,250.00	\$ 30,793.00
8220	LEGAL & OTHER EXPENSES	\$ 182.07		\$4,589.44	(497.74)		\$ 4,091.70	\$ 4,273.77
		0.00					\$ -00	\$ -00
		0.00					\$ -00	\$ -00
	TOTALS	69,808.01	(1,506.31	27,480.84	(3,806.9	(21,026.70	70,948.92	70,948.92

DUNS SCOTUS SECULAR FRANCISCAN FORMATION TRUST FUND		Investment Account	Total Value
12/31/06	Trust Fund Balance		\$615,286.3
12/31/07	Trust Fund Balance		\$656,513.3
	Grant to SALT TEAM 3/25/08		(\$5,000.00)
12/31/08	Trust Fund Balance end of 2008		\$426,423.3
12/31/09	Trust Fund Balance end of 2009		\$543,308.8
12/31/10	Trust Fund Balance end of 2010		\$660,194.2
	Duns Scotus Withdrawal		(\$24,000.0
12/31/11	Trust Fund Balance end of 2011		\$591,675.0
12/31/12	Investment gains/losses: during 2012		\$66,891.00
	Trust Fund Balance end of 2012		\$658,566.0
3/31/13	Investment gains/losses: First Quarter		\$66,114.24
	Trust Fund Balance		\$724,680.2
6/30/13	Duns Scotus Redemption		(\$25,000.0
	Investment gains/losses: Second Quarter		\$12,682.95
	Trust Fund Balance		\$712,363.1
9/30/13	Investment gains/losses: Third Quarter		\$46,144.25
	Trust Fund Balance		\$758,507.4
12/31/13	Investment gains/losses: Fourth Quarter		61,505.72
	Trust Fund Balance		\$820,013.1

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA
Report of Contributions and Charitable Donations through NAFRA during 2013

Account	Description of Activity	Amount of Received Donations	Amount Donated by NAFRA	Amount Paid	Balance
7305	CHARITABLE PROJECTS				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2013				\$ 10,000.00
	Contribution to Amazon Relief		\$ 2,000.00	\$ (2,000.00)	
	Contribution to Franciscan Family Apostolate		\$ 1,000.00	\$ (1,000.00)	
	Balance on December 31, 2013				\$ 7,000.00
7306	NATIONAL EVENTS				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2013				\$ 10,000.00
	Confab Expenses		\$ 4,090.78	\$ (4,090.78)	
	Balance on December 31, 2013				\$ 5,909.22
7307	DONOR FUND				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2013				\$ 13,141.68
	General (Unspecified) Contributions	\$ 1,650.00			\$ 1,650.00
	Franciscan International	\$ 2,477.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ (4,477.00)	
	CRS:				
	Hurricane Sandy Relief (2013 contributions)	\$ 83.00		\$ (83.00)	
	Syria Relief	\$ 1,550.00		\$ (1,550.00)	
	Philippine Typhoon Relief	\$ 14,718.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ (15,718.00)	
	Catholic Charities:				
	Hurricane Sandy Relief (2013 contributions)	\$ 83.00		\$ (83.00)	
	US Tornado Relief		\$ 1,000.00	\$ (1,000.00)	
	USCCB: US Tornado Relief		\$ 1,000.00	\$ (1,000.00)	
	Holy Land (Special Appeal)	\$ 100.00		\$ (100.00)	
	World Youth Day		\$ 2,461.61	\$ (2,461.61)	
	Franciscan Mission Services		\$ 4,000.00	\$ (4,000.00)	
		\$ 19,011.00	\$ 11,461.61	\$ (30,472.61)	\$ (11,461.61)
	Balance on December 31, 2013				\$ 3,330.07
7310	CIOFS OFFICE FUND				
	Donations received in 2013 & paid to CIOFS	\$ 100.00		\$ (100.00)	
	Balance on December 31, 2013				\$0.00
7316	H₂O COLLECTIONS				
	Balance at Jan 1, 2013				\$ 778.70
	Donations received in 2013	\$ 6,743.00			
	Amount paid to CRS Water & Sanitation Program			\$ (7,521.70)	
	Balance on December 31, 2013				\$0.00
	TOTALS	\$ 27,504.00	\$ 18,552.39	\$ (45,185.09)	
		Amount of	NAFRA	Amount	
		Received	Contributions	Distributed	
		Donations			

**NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA
BUDGET FOR 2014
AS APPROVED BY THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY COUNCIL
ON OCTOBER 19, 2013.**

Acct #	--- INCOME -----		Amount
6110	PER CAPITA @ \$17 (13,110 members)		\$ 222,870.00
6120	INTEREST		\$ 250.00
6200	FORMATION BOOK SALES		\$ 46,680.00
6140	MISCELLANEOUS		
	TOTAL INCOME		\$ 269,800
	--- EXPENSES -----		
7110	CIOFS PER CAPITA	CIOFS	\$ 22,000
7115	FAN	Dcn. Tom Bello	\$ 13,110
7120	NEWSLETTER	Jim Wesley	\$ 47,500
7130	ANNUAL MEETING		\$ 60,000
7135	QUINQUENNIAL CONGRESS	Mary Anne Lenzi	\$ 5,000
7140	COUNCIL OFFICERS		\$ 3,000
7145	CIOFS MEETING		\$ 5,000
7150	COUNCIL MEETINGS		\$ 19,000
7155	LIABILITY INSURANCE	Actual cost	\$ 3,800
7160	CIOFS VISITATION		
7172	JPIC AWARD	Carolyn Townes	\$ 3,000
7173	ARCHIVE	Sharon Deveaux	\$ 3,500
7176	COMPUTER COMMITTEE	Dan Mulholland	\$ 6,540
7180	FORMATION - PRINTING		\$ 20,000
7181	FORMATION	Bob Fitzsimmons	\$ 12,200
7182	S A DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE	Cyl Maljan	\$ 4,000
7183	VOCATIONS (Expenses from #7140 + Vocations Committee)		\$ 3,150
7186	JPIC	Carolyn Townes	\$ 6,000
7187	YOUTH	Rob Breen	\$ 12,000
7188	ECUMENICAL - INTERFAITH COMMITTEE	Anne Mulqueen	\$ 8,000
7198	COMMUNICATIONS	Cindy Wesley	\$ 5,000
7199	CONF NAT SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS	John Sanborn	\$ 8,000
7200	OTHER EXPENSES		
	TOTAL EXPENSES		\$ 269,800
	NET INCOME (DEFICIT)		\$ -00

Donations to Donor Fund Needed NOW!

Cecilia Maljan-Herbelin, OFS
Treasurer, Secular Franciscan Order – USA

As you saw in both the *Restricted Fund Report* page of the 2013 Annual Financial Report and the *Report on Activity in the Donor Funds*, the beginning balance of our general Donor Fund is less than \$3,500. You can also see that donations not restricted to a specific cause (such as Sandy Relief, Philippine typhoon relief, or the H₂O Project) are not very common (only \$1,650 in 2013). If we want to continue to be able to support charitable causes in the name of our National Fraternity as we have in the past, we need to generate some additional funds NOW!

For many of us, while we would like to make a contribution to the Donor Fund, we often think that if we can't give \$100 or \$1,000 that's the use. Or we promise ourselves that we will make a contribution when we have a few extra dollars, which usually never happens! I want to assure you that **any contribution in any amount** is greatly appreciated! It is not necessarily the amount that you give, but the number of people who also contribute. Look at the amount generated for the Philippine Typhoon Relief – almost \$20,000 (another \$4,650 has been received so far this year) from **many** smaller contributions. Just think if every professed member contributed \$1 to the Donor Fund, over \$13,000 would be raised. If every local fraternity contributed \$10 that would be another \$6,500; if every region gave \$100, we would have an additional \$3,000! So you can see, even your small donation can be meaningful.



It is easy to contribute to the Donor Fund. Just send me a check (Cecilia Maljan-Herbelin, OFS, 1933 Tudor Drive, San Jacinto, CA 92583-6035) payable to **NAFRA** in any amount with a note on the memo line of your check that it is to go to the “General Donor Fund.” You can also be more specific in your contribution. For example, if you received a scholarship to either the 2012 Q or the Confab in 2013, maybe you want to help someone else attend another National Event (such as the 2016 Q), simply put “National Events Fund” on the memo line of your check, or if you want the funds to go specifically for youth scholarships, put “Youth Scholarship” on your check. The same for any other fund listed in the Restricted Funds Report.

Another way you might want to consider donating is making a contribution to the Donor Fund “In Memory Of” someone in your fraternity or region who has died or “In Honor Of” someone who was recently professed. If you choose this option, please be sure to include contact information for whomever you want notified of the contribution with your check.

Thank you for all that you have already contributed to charitable causes through our Donor Fund. Of course, I would be negligent, if I did not also remind you to remember your local fraternity, your region, and/or NAFRA in your wills. Contact me for more information on how to do this, or if you have any other questions about donating, at cylmaljan@earthlink.net.

SAINT JOHN XXIII, SECULAR FRANCISCAN

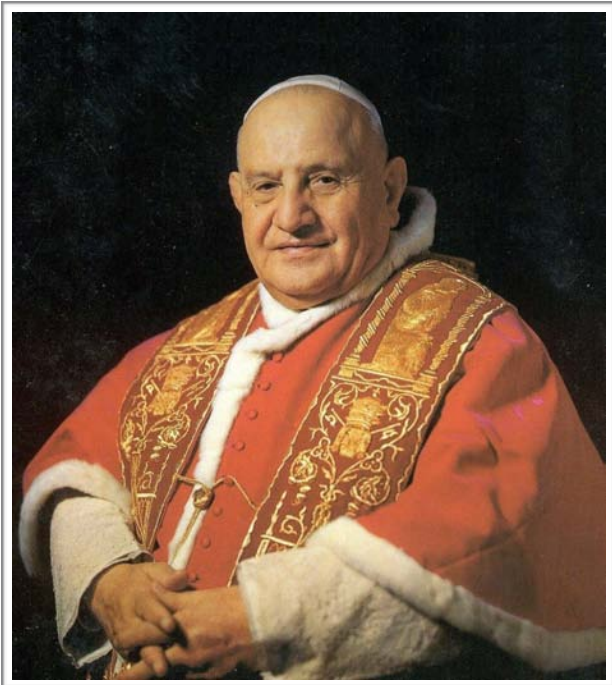
by André Cirino OFM

I once came across a book in Italian that I no longer have in my possession, and although I cannot remember the exact name of the book, it concentrated exclusively on Pope John XXIII and his ties to Franciscan Order.

When I had the opportunity to take a Franciscan Pilgrimage to Pope John XXIII's birthhome, Sotto Il Monte near Bergamo in northern Italy, I translated sections of this little book that show Angelo Roncalli's love for and connection with the Franciscan family. As his canonization draws near, 27 April 2014, I thought it might be helpful for Franciscans to hear a bit more about the Franciscan dimension of this great pope and saint whose short papacy opened the path to *aggiornamento*—to update the church by convoking the Second Vatican Council.

Pope John seemed to be captivated by the Franciscan Order and charism, for he once exclaimed: "What a mystery! What a mystery this Franciscanism!"

In what follows, I share some of his thoughts and memories about the Order's presence in the friary of Baccanello close to his home, about his contact with members of the Franciscan Order, and his love for Franciscan saints and sanctuaries.



Friary at Baccanello near his home A friar minor of the twentieth century by the name of Agostino Gemelli is credited with having said that people don't become Franciscans; they are born Franciscan. And

this seems to be the case for Angelo Roncalli, Pope John XXIII. His family lived nearby the friary at Baccanello. The Franciscan influence of this friary remained with him throughout his entire life.

Speaking to a group of Franciscans in 1961 he said: "The friars minor are the closest to my life, because I also am a Franciscan for a long time! In my family home, when the window was opened in the morning, the first church I saw was yours (Baccanello), down there."

Pope John explained the origin of his vocation as a Secular Franciscan¹ when he was still very young: "I would see the humble and modest friars who edified me very much passing nearby my house. They often invited me to the Franciscan friary of Baccanello to pray in solitude and recollection." He called them a family and compared them to a large tree.

While a young adolescent, he was received as a Secular Franciscan. The guardian of Baccanello said: "He (Roncalli) once reminded me that I am a poor cardinal before being your protector; but also I enjoy the heartfelt sentiments of a humble and faithful Secular Franciscan."

Pope John XXIII recalled that when the bells of Baccanello invited the friars to choir to pray the Divine Office of Sext and None towards the hour of 11:30, his good Mother came to the door of the house and called: "Angelino, Angelino, come because it's time to light the fire to cook the polenta!"

Pope John told us that after a long journey through the world, "nothing was sweeter and more delicious to my soul than to return to the friary of Baccanello. . . especially for the feast of *Il Perdono*," The Pardon of St. Francis. He often preached on the feast of *Il Perdono d'Assisi* at Baccanello.

He wrote to the guardian of the friary of Baccanello in 1956: "Fraternizing with the sons of St. Francis accompanies and sweetens my spirit for the whole year." During a visit as pope to Bellegra friary in the Franciscan province of Rome on 25 August 1959, he told the friars: "At one time I thought of following the humble friars of Baccanello, but then a stronger wind blew me on to another road." And on departure from Bellegra friary, he said: "Too bad that I must go! When I am here with my brothers, I do not think of time constrictions."

On 12 April 1959, Pope John canonized the first saint of his pontificate, a son of St. Francis of Assisi, a poor shepherd of the Pontine Marshes who innately knew

¹ Pope John XXIII referred to himself as a Tertiary or Tertiary Franciscan. I used the more recognizable name today because Tertiary may carry overtones to what today we call the Third Order Regular.

the ways of a mystic, Charles of Sezze, friar minor and lay brother. After the canonization of St. Charles, the pope thought of the friary at Baccanello and sent “the reliquary of St. Charles of Sezze, gift of Pope John XXIII, Secular Franciscan from Sotto Il Monte, to the friary of Baccanello, most dear to him from his childhood.” Dated June 12, 1959.

Contact with members of the Franciscan Order

Every time that he would meet the sons of the Poverello of Assisi, he would call them, with extraordinary and amiable simplicity, *fratelli*, brothers. An entry in his *Journal of a Soul* 30 January 1919 reads: “I have come here to visit Padre Agostino Gemelli of the friars minor, friar and medical doctor.” When he once addressed the Capuchins of Assisi, he said: “Beloved sons, I willingly give you this brief word: when I was fourteen years old, I became a Secular Franciscan in the Seminary of Bergamo.” On 13 July 1958, to a group of Franciscans he said: “I am also a Secular Franciscan; so we are of the same spirit.”

He did not forget the Poor Clares in Paris, Rome, or Venice. He would say that he loved St. Clare and her sisters very much. He described St. Clare as “on fire with love.” When visiting a monastery where there was adoration day and night, he asked which sister did her adoration at two in the morning, and when they told him, he joyfully exclaimed to her: “I too will be in prayer with you.” And he explained that he arose at that hour to pray and work because of the silence and peace.

On 16 April 1959, in the Cathedral of St. John Lateran in Rome, the general ministers of the Franciscan family, in commemoration of the 750th anniversary of the *Rule* of St. Francis, solemnly renewed their religious profession in the hands of John XXIII. It was then that the pontiff opened himself to them saying: “I am Joseph, your brother.”

At the conclusion of an audience with a Franciscan bishop the pope said: “Bishop, now give me the blessing of St. Francis because I am a Secular Franciscan.” And after a personal audience with a friar, he invited him to his next audience telling the people: “Today I bring you two blessings, that of the Pope and that of St. Francis.” And at a papal audience with the general council of the Order of Friars Minor, he said: “I wanted to put the friars minor last on my audience list to be able to enjoy their presence a bit longer.

Franciscan Saints and Holy Places

In a letter to his mother in September 1936, he wrote: On the way home I intend to visit holy LaVerna, the mountain of St. Francis.” As Patriarch of Venice, he led a pilgrimage from Venice to Assisi on 4 October 1953 to offer to the people of Assisi the traditional gift of oil to light the votive lamp at the tomb of St. Francis.

“I have loved St. Francis and his sons from my childhood. I am a Secular Franciscan since age 14 when I received the sacred tonsure. . . .St. Francis was the most intimate of my Saints.” On 6 March 1960 he said: “Let us take St. Francis, the great friend of the Lord, as our model. St. Francis replicated him in his spirit by carrying Christ.”

Pope John also wrote: “The pious and noble Roman woman, Jacoba of Settesoli, was considered one of the first Secular Franciscans who helped the growing Order with all the means at her disposal, especially with the poor and suffering.”

Pope John spoke to people about St. Francis of Assisi and his followers: St. Anthony, St. Bernardine, St. Bonaventure, St. Clare, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Francis Solano, St. Charles of Sezze, St. Francis Marie of Camporosso, the poet Jacopone da Todi, Thomas of Celano, and Luke Wadding. He began one talk with the expression: “In the sayings of Brother Giles and in all Franciscan poetry. . . .” Speaking about St. Bernardine, he noted: “St. Bernardine is now deceased for five centuries, since 1444. And for five centuries, my humble family has lived at Sotto Il Monte.”

Among his books in his library at his home in Camaitino there were many Franciscan works. In the same place, there was a painting of St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas, depicting the following:

- *Thomas to Bonaventure:*
- “Where have you found such powerful and rich thoughts to fill so many volumes?”
- *Bonaventure showing Thomas a crucifix:*
- “Here is my Teacher!”

John frequently quoted the mystical works of St. Bonaventure, especially his meditations on the life of Christ, the *Tree of Life*. On 20 May 1963 while on deathbed: John had read to him *The Flame of Love*, a work by a certain Friar Thomas (1631).

Conclusion

Bishop Righi who worked with Pope John in Istanbul said of him: “Bishop Roncalli, from the beginning, never had nor wished to have money in his pocket. He lived nine years in Istanbul without having transport for his personal use. He used the tram or taxi.”

I close with Bishop Righi’s comment above because of the overtones it has to our present Pope Francis who seems to be unwittingly evoking images and memories of Pope John XXIII. Angelo Roncalli came from poverty and obviously lived with a sense of the evangelical counsel of poverty, both economically and spiritually. May Secular Franciscan Pope John, and his love for Saints Francis and Clare and the Franciscan way of life, set us afire as we Franciscans continue to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ!



As Americans, when we speak of living out the Gospel while in the midst of an ecological crisis, we must see that something more radical than recycling and something more profound than a social media post is required. Elizabeth Anne Seton, a formerly wealthy New York socialite, summed up this profound and radical something when she spoke, “Live simply so that others may simply live.” These words were spoken nearly half a century before the American Industrial Revolution began in earnest. However, they resonate even more today because American society is only beginning to come to terms with the costly externalities of our addictive consumption.

How is my consumption addictive? How do my inner thoughts affect my external environment? How can a change in behavior toward created things manage to change core beliefs? How can the conversion of one life stem the overwhelming tide of climate change? How can an 800 year old Franciscan Christian tradition address the dilemmas of a 21st century individual? How?

Of all the profound and subtle distinctions of St. Francis of Assisi, it is this key distinction that is fundamental to an understanding of the Franciscan lifestyle: Francis was a mystic AND a Gospel literalist. In the Gospel, when Jesus commissioned his disciples, Jesus said

“As you go, make this proclamation: ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give. Do not take gold or silver or copper for your belts; no sack for

the journey, or a second tunic, or sandals, or walking stick. The laborer deserves his keep. Whatever town or village you enter, look for a worthy person in it, and stay there until you leave. As you enter a house, wish it peace. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; if not, let your peace return to you” (Mt 10:7-10).

In a Franciscan reading of just this passage, Jesus is literally giving directions to his disciple about how to live the simplest life, a life dependent upon the Gospel. In our lives steeped in 21st century secular culture, it may be difficult to imagine how we could follow this commission to the letter, and that is understandable. However, Francis had a special imagination, and that is why many believe he is the saint whose life most closely imitated Jesus’.

This is the essence of Franciscan simple living: Imagining how our life can imitate Jesus’ life in our day and age and living it with a minimal dependence upon material things and a maximal interdependence upon each other. Here are some key simple living elements from the passage:

1. All creatures bear the imprint of God – The radical reorientation that comes from seeing God in all of creation is fundamental to Franciscan simple living. When Jesus said “The kingdom of God is at hand” Francis saw God’s kingdom as a tangible reality in the here and now, and not some abstract or otherworldly realm. In fact, this is evidenced by the affection he expressed toward animate and inanimate creatures in his Cantic of the Creatures. When we revere our environment, we consider every act of harm we do to

the environment as an affront to God and every act of care towards the environment as a sharing in the love between God (the Creator) and us (the creatures).

2. A proper spirit of detachment from material possessions – Franciscan simple living is an experience of what happens when we reprioritize means and ends in our lives. When Jesus tells his disciples to forsake all the possessions they have come to see as means to survival, he is not telling them to ascetically give up care for themselves as an end in itself. The Grace of God is the end that Jesus is asking them to seek instead. The message is that the Grace of God may be received by means of miraculous healings or sustaining comforts. If God's Grace comes at no cost, what cost is fair to charge for it? Addictive consumption says that one's possessions are ends in themselves. It is this unconscious desire for created means that fuels overproduction and a costly depletion of the Earth's resources. When we desire God above all else, we need consume no more Grace (by whatever means) than is necessary. We share abundance; we do not hoard it.

3. Solidarity with the poor – In order to experience the life of the poor, Francis gave up his wealthy inheritance and sought the virtue of living at a level equal to the poor. A life of poverty need not be a life of impoverishment, as Jesus reflects in his statement, "The laborer deserves his keep." Although God's grace is and has always been free, many believe that only material wealth distribution ought to be merit based. Living the Gospel in the 21st century requires us to consider whether our actions encourage material wealth to be distributed with justice. If we believe that slave labor is unjust, we must consider, for example, whether it is just to purchase additional cheap goods from companies that we suspect do not implement fair labor practices. Living in solidarity with the poor requires us to reexamine how our competition for material wealth has left our poor brothers and sisters impoverished. It seems necessary to mention that for Francis, the poor likely extended to animate AND inanimate creatures. Trees labor tirelessly to give us the oxygen we need to survive. Living a simple life is living a life of universal kinship.

4. Living in a house of peace – God gave Francis his own commission, "Go repair my house, which as you see has fallen into ruin." Amid the rampant corruption of the medieval institutional Church, Francis saw the Church as a worthy house. To his credit at the time, Pope Innocent III was able to see that a small peasant from Assisi might have been the only person in Italy capable of preventing the house from collapsing. In 800 years, the three Franciscan Orders have never left the housing of the institutional Church. It is important to remember, when reflecting on the Gospel, that Jesus taught that the inhabitant

and the enclosure are both houses of peace. Throughout his short life, Francis sought to become an instrument of peace, yet he never quite came to full realization of the Wisdom of the teaching until he was blind and broken down. Cultivating an interior and exterior house of peace is a daily dance of coming upon and returning, repairing and ruining, inhaling wisdom and then exhaling compassion. The peace of God's kingdom is already at hand, flowing out of us as a gift and surrounding us if we wish it in our midst. Twenty-first century living often seems to encourage the accumulation of so many intellectual and material possessions. We attach our identity to them and in time they come to possess us, polluting our environment from within and from without. This is the spirit of the Beatitudes. If we only make space, God's Spirit passes through us, making all things new.

5. Worthiness is not earned, it is experienced – Francis once stated, "I have been all things unholy; if God can work through me, He can work through anyone." He admitted to trying on all manner of unholy identities to rid himself of worthiness in the eyes of God. He realized that it didn't matter for him or anyone else — God could still use him. Simple living can indeed be quite simple, especially when we come to understand that God is the one doing good work through us. The worthy people Jesus is referring to in the Gospel are none other than those humble few who have experienced their own self-worth. These are the ones who know what abundance they still have when all their material possessions have been given away. This is what Jesus means when he instructs his disciples to give from their poverty and not from their wealth (Mk 12:44). Franciscan simple living is above all an exercise in gratefulness for the simple gifts we have received in life and the capacity to take part in the experience of giving to others. We believe we are all gifts from God, so debating which of God's gifts is more worthy of His esteem seems quite silly. Humility (i.e., experiencing all that one is and all that one is not) is perhaps then the key to simple living and frees us of the need to compete with each other for anything. Gradually, through prayer and life experience, we will realize that all excessive consumption is profoundly rooted in a blind sense of unworthiness.

For more information:

Franciscan Action Network and Franciscan Earth Corps
<http://franciscanaction.org/earthcorps>



FRANCISCAN LIVING

Suffering

By Francine Gikow, SFO

My darkest hour was when I just turned 22 years old after both my parents had died from long illnesses leaving me homeless and bereft. My only sister was an 8-hour plane ride away and my boyfriend (later husband) had been sent to Europe indefinitely. I was completely alone and feeling abandoned, but, boy, was I angry with God for leaving me in this situation!

Later, I revisited suffering when my husband and I experienced infertility. It reawakened all those old feelings of abandonment, as well as new ones of grief. In my suffering, I asked God why was He “doing this to me? Didn’t I suffer enough?”¹

Eventually, I came to understand through prayer that I was to unite myself with God in His passion. Because of His sharing in my “passion” and my sharing in His, I felt his deep love for me, and I no longer felt alone. This sharing and “oneness” gave me great peace and healing during this time of sorrow. Like Francis, I fell in love with my great and compassionate God!

As a Franciscan, however, I admit discounting stories of St. Francis actually *welcoming* suffering with joy as an idealized image (hagiography) of a saint, which I felt was meaningless in the real world of today. Isn’t it hard enough to *accept* the suffering we are given without asking for more?

Bonaventure described Francis calling his agonizing pain and his cruel sufferings “his sisters”... who he bore joyfully and praised God, thanking Him for everything.² How could Francis get to that place where he no longer only accepted suffering but actually welcomed it?

I believe the jump from accepting to welcoming suffering was not an overnight process for Francis. It must have taken long nights in prayer, wrestling with his soul, and finally surrender. I realized that Francis was able to grow from merely accepting suffering toward welcoming it because he experienced God’s overwhelming love. When Francis could no longer contain the overflowing Love he experienced, he was compelled to share it with others. For as scripture says:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God.”³

In other words, we as Franciscans are not to hoard the experience of God’s love and consolation for ourselves but are to share this consolation with others when we see their woundedness and suffering. By sharing, we open the door for others to experience God’s love during a time when they are most open to hearing His Word. This companionship on the spiritual journey is indeed a privileged place in healing as we build up the Body of Christ.

However, it doesn’t just stop there. Like any sharing, we are changed in the process as we accept another’s burdens. For if we can look beyond our own pain to touch others who are suffering, our own love expands and is enriched by others, and ultimately we find ourselves as the Beloved of God. The Love we gave comes back to us, outpouring and overflowing.

It no longer seems to me that Francis took pleasure in suffering at all. In fact, I believe he was not welcoming suffering so much as actually welcoming Love Incarnate. He also welcomed the shared companionship and opportunity to live in a community embraced by God. It is Love Itself surrounding us—a wonderful place to be! Actually, it is a little bit of heaven here on earth!

¹ For a complete description of my spiritual journey during this time, please see “Who Is In Control? Infertility: and The Mystery of Suffering” in *The Word Among Us*, Sept. 2005, 57-59 or online at: http://wau.org/archives/article/who_is_in_control/

² Bonaventure, *Minor Life of St. Francis*, Ch. 7,2.

³ 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

1-800-FRANCIS

“Who ya gonna call?”

Who do you call when you need information about the Secular Franciscan Order? How about calling a toll free number answered by a nationally appointed Secular Franciscan? For the past 19 years our Order has publicized the use of 1-800-FRANCIS as a way to help those who feel a call to the Franciscan life. For these many years those calling 1-800-FRANCIS have been greeted by the gracious voice of Marie Amore.

This past March our National Minister Tom Bello sent a letter to the National Fraternity with news about our 1-800-FRANCIS number. A day later our former National Minister Dick Morton shared the story of how 1-800-FRANCIS came to be *the* information line for the OFS. Their letters follow.

March 26, 2014

To: National OFS Fraternity

From: Tom Bello, National Minister

Beloved National Family,

May the Lord give us Peace!

One of the best people in the world is passing responsibilities for the 1-800-FRANCIS Vocations "Hotline" over to one of the best people in the world, and this is a cause for rejoicing, prayers and thanks all around!

Since 1995, I think, Marie has answered the calls on the 1-800-FRANCIS line, an amazing service to our need for Vocations. In her 2013 Report to our NAFRA Chapter, Marie wrote, "the total inquiries for the year (was) about 900, bringing the grand total from 1995 to 2013 to 18,223 as of this writing." Wow!

As we pray for you, I want to thank you, Marie, on behalf of the whole National Family, for all the phone calls answered and for all the people sent in the right direction.

And thank you, Carol Gentile, our former National Minister, for stepping forward to give Marie a well-earned respite. I really feel that the best way to "recruit" new members into our aging Order is by personal invitation. I also know that for more than a few people that personal invitation began by calling the 1-800-FRANCIS number, and I cannot think, Carol, of anyone better than you to be that first person they meet to find out about our Secular Franciscan life.

Marie and Carol, you both have been heroes of mine practically since I've known there was a National fraternity. May God always bless you for your love of and service to our great Franciscan family.

Carol, you are now "officially" a member of our Vocations Committee, which includes, among others, Jeff Ramirez as Chair and Jane DeRose Bamman as a member, two special people you might possibly remember from glorious All-Commission days. I hope you can do whatever you can, with the Holy Spirit, to help us keep our Order going for another few years, God willing! Thanks to all of you.

Permit me to close with our prayer for Vocations:

NATIONAL PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS to the SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

O, Good and Gracious God,
God of mercy, compassion, generosity, and love,
As we live our lives today in the model of St. Francis,
choosing daily to live the Gospel life,
Help us to help others hear Your call.

Help us to help others to recognize
their vocation as a Secular Franciscan
that You have already planted in their heart.
Help us, so that together we all may work
to bring the Gospel to life.
Amen!

*Prayer composed by Marian R. Crosby, OFS
NAFRA Chapter 2010 / Scottsdale AZ*

March 27, 2014

To: National OFS Fraternity

From: Dick Morton, Former National Minister

As an era passes, so a new era begins. A summary of life itself as well as the passing of the 1-800-Francis phone number from Marie to Carol. Here is, "The Beginning of the Story."

Several months before Marie began answering the 1-800-Francis phone line, I started to follow through on an idea that came to mind one night. I thought, "Why not set up a 1-800-Francis phone number for the Secular Franciscans so anyone could be given authentic information on the Order from an authorized person from the National Fraternity."

I made contact with the AT&T 1-800 number people and found that the number, 1-800-Francis, had been abandoned earlier by a business and also learned that before an 1-800 number can be transferred to a new owner, the number must lay dormant for at least six months.

During the wait time, I called ATT every once in a while to make sure the number was still available. One time, when I explained to the operator why I wanted the number, I suddenly gained an advocate who gave me her AT&T direct line phone number so I could call her directly. That turned out to be critical in the success of getting the number.

I called that operator on the Friday afternoon, the day before the number was to be released. She said she would set the number transfer up so that it would automatically go to my office number at midnight, Friday, effective Saturday, the transfer date. She stated that this was definitely not the normal process but would do it "for your organization."

Early the Saturday morning, I called 1-800-Francis and my office phone rang to verify that the transfer was successful.

Around ten o'clock that morning, my office phone rang again and it was a member of the Board of Directors of the Franciscan University of Steubenville, OH. He was very upset because he had been given the objective by the board to get the 1-800-Francis number for the university. He said that he was very embarrassed to return to the board meeting to tell the entire board that he had failed in his assignment to get the number because the Secular Franciscans got it before he did. He wanted to know what it would take for us to give the number to the university. I definitely remember saying a million dollars might be considered.

I answered the 1-800 number for several months and found the experience rather interesting, to say the least. Many of calls were in the middle of the night by people playing "Russian Roulette" with the 1-800 number. I think they dialed 1-800 and just randomly dialed in last seven digits with their eyes closed, not caring what numbers they hit. I was propositioned more than once.

I kept the number for the short time to get a feel for how it might work best for the Order. I soon concluded that there was no one better prepared to take over the responsibility for the number than Marie Amore. Fortunately, she agreed and I transferred the number to her home, and the rest is history.

And now you know "The Beginning of the story."

Marie, thank you so much for being such a dedicated guiding light for our National Fraternity, not only for answering 1-800-Francis for those many years, but also for all the wisdom, leadership, and energy you have so graciously given from your initial entrance into the Order as a Franciscan Youth and continue to give today. May the Lord bless you!

Peace,
Dick Morton, ofs



New Fraternity Register Available

We are happy to announce the arrival of our newly designed Secular Franciscan Fraternity Register, available for purchase beginning May 1, 2014. From its inception in 2011 to its final design and production in early 2014, this little book has had quite a journey!

The idea for a new register began at our October 2011 National Fraternity (NAFRA) Chapter. Regional Minister Jerry Rousseau raised the topic of fraternity registers. For those of you who are unfamiliar with this very important book in the life of a fraternity, the *General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order* states in Article 52.2 that the secretary has the duty “to see to the updating and preservation of the records and the registers, noting admissions, professions, deaths, withdrawals, and transfers from the fraternity”. A footnote elaborates this point stating, “Each local fraternity is to have at least a register of enrollments (admission, profession, transfers, deaths, and every other important annotation relative to the individual members)”. The fraternity register also includes information regarding the canonical establishment and subsequent visitations of the local fraternity. Visitation reports are appended to the register by way of a note or official stamp in the register which records the visit. (See Art. 93.2 of the Constitution).

During the ensuing discussion at our 2011 NAFRA Chapter it became clear that a variety of registers were in use throughout the country. It also came to light that many fraternities were using outdated or inadequate registers. What became most clear is that fraternities in need of a register had no source for an up-to-date, permanently bound, hardcover fraternity register.

As the discussion concluded, Regional Minister Hans Huemmer, along with others, requested that the National Executive Council (NEC) look into designing and producing a standardized register and report back to NAFRA. The body agreed by consensus and National Minister Tom Bello accepted this request.

Research began, and in October 2012 the NEC reported on its progress. It was determined that our best option, given the parameters of interest, cost and the relatively small quantity of books needed, would be to ask TAU Publishing in Phoenix, Ariz., to take on this project.

TAU Publishing proved to be a great choice. They set to work on the design and layout, and in October 2013 they presented a sample register to the National Fraternity. This sample register had a unique design allowing “one entry per page” as opposed to a ledger-style register. The members of the National Fraternity were in agreement as to the wonderful quality and suitability of this sample register, but then came the question, “Which style of register do you prefer?” Exactly half of the Regional Ministers preferred a ledger style and the other half preferred the “one per page” style! What to do? We took this dilemma to our friends at TAU Publishing and they offered to produce registers in *both* styles!

In March 2014 the NEC approved the final drafts, and production is now underway. As of May 1, 2014, fraternities will be able to purchase a beautiful up-to-date, hardcover, permanently bound fraternity register *in their choice of styles*. To see a full description of each style and place an order, see the information on the back cover of this issue of the *TAU-USA*, or go to TAU Publishing’s website at <http://www.tau-publishing.com/>.

6th Summer Seminar for the OFS

Endorsed by the National Executive Council of the Secular Franciscan Order – USA

July 10, 2014 – July 13, 2014

Spiritual Assistance

with

Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR
Sylvia Paoli, OFS
Anne Mulqueen, OFS

Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, OFS
Fr. Matthias Wesnofske, OFM Cap
Faye Martin, OFS

**Saint Francis
University
Loretto, PA**



The 2014 Summer Seminar will focus on the subject of *Spiritual Assistance*. The general audience will learn what Spiritual Assistance is all about – who is responsible for it and the role of the Spiritual Assistant within each fraternity. For those involved in Spiritual Assistance training, key elements of a successful training program will be identified and discussed.

Since these are two distinct issues, each with different audiences, the seminar will present two separate “tracks,” as well as a joint session.

Track A is for anyone, including those currently enrolled in spiritual assistance training programs.

Track A will be led by **Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR**, President-in-Turn of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) and Regional Spiritual Assistant, Five Franciscan Martyrs; **Anne Mulqueen, OFS**, Spiritual Assistant to the National Formation Commission; and **Cecilia Maljan-Herbelin, OFS**, CNSA Executive Secretary and Chair of the Spiritual Assistance Development Task Force (SADTF).

Track B is *restricted* only to those *directly* involved in the design, planning, and implementation of a regional training program for spiritual assistants. This track will identify the “best practices” of various styles of training programs across the country and develop some general guidelines, in accordance with the *Formation Program for Spiritual Assistants* by our International Conference of General Spiritual and Pastoral Assistants to the OFS. Track B will be led by **Sylvia Paoli, OFS**, Minister of St. Francis Region and one of the Facilitators for St. Francis Region’s Training Program for Spiritual Assistants and Formators; **Fr. Matthias Wesnofske, OFM Cap.**, member of the CNSA, Provincial Spiritual Assistant, Regional Spiritual Assistant for both Father Solanus Casey Region and Tau Cross Region and facilitator of their spiritual assistant training programs; and **Faye Martin, OFS**, facilitator for Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region’s Spiritual Assistant Training Program.

The seminar will begin with a general overview for everyone; both groups will join daily for review and discussion; and the seminar will close with a joint session.

A complete copy of the program brochure with registration form is available at:

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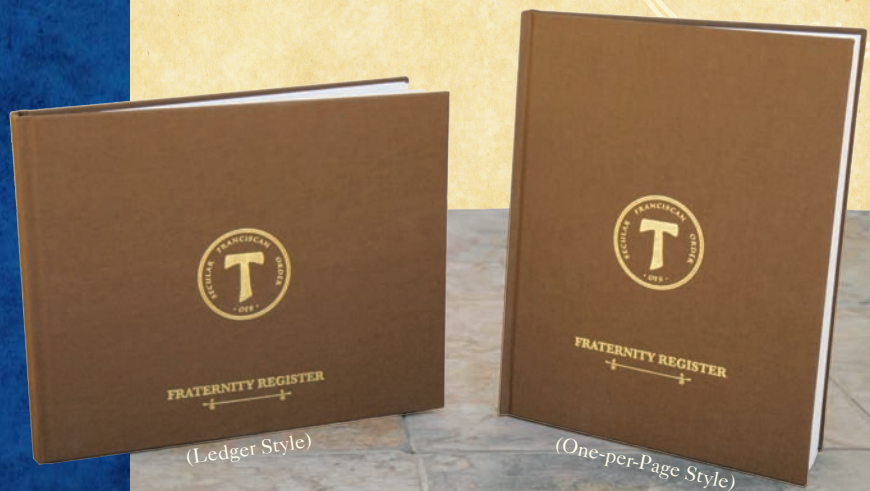
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