

T AU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

Summer 2015 ISSUE 84



Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains
and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs.

Canticle of the Creatures, in Francis of Assisi

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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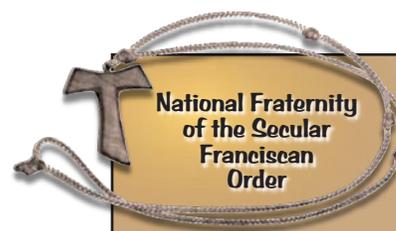
TAU-USA email

tauusa.ofs@gmail.com

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National Fraternity
of the Secular
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Order

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National Spiritual Assistant

Br. Robert Brady,
OFM

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THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

National Minister, Tom Bello, OFS

THE FINAL TEST OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP IN THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER IS LOVE



In the final extended exchange between our first “Minister,” St. Peter, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we read:

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He then said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

(John 21:15-17)

Most Biblical scholars agree that John is the last written of the four major Gospels, and this exchange is the final test the Lord gives Peter before His Ascension. I say “final” because it is clearly not the first test.

Perhaps the first test of Servant Leadership is one not very popular in American culture. Most Biblical scholars agree that Mark is the first written of the four major Gospels. Spoken directly to Simon (Peter) and his

brother Andrew in this first Gospel, our Lord’s first word is “Come.” “Come after me” (Mark 1:17).

Well, how can we respond to “Come”? For me, I either say, “Yes, I’m coming,” or “No, I’m not coming.” “Come” does not really sound like a call to dialogue or discussion.

Thus, the first test the Lord gives his first “Minister” is obedience. Simon Peter either follows the Lord’s summons or he doesn’t; he either obeys or he doesn’t. Simon comes, obediently, as do Andrew and the other disciples; note, please, not knowing what to expect in following the Lord. How could they?

How many of us would accept this “blind” test of obedience? I guess all of us who are permanently professed have accepted this test. I can honestly say that I did not know what lay ahead of me on June 12, 1983, when I made my permanent profession. Perhaps obedience is not a bad test to start with!

What might be the second test? Well, early on in most of the Gospels, Peter and the other disciples face some serious challenges: for Peter, the sickness of his mother-in-law at a time of no professional doctors or emergency rooms (Mark 1:30); a storm at sea (Mark 4:37-40); and the inability to drive out demons (Mark 5:1-20), to name just three. And as the Lord allows Peter and the others to experience these challenges or tests, He will often counsel to the effect, “Do not be afraid; just have faith” (Mark 5:36).

Thus, the second test brings us to faith, the first of the theological virtues, faith that is a gift of God and the practice of which helps lead us to God. According to Hebrews 11:1, “faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.” To me, this is not the same as obedience, and every Minister will be tested on her or his faith, I promise, as were Peter and the disciples. Let us pray that our tests as Servant Leaders will strengthen our faith, and with God’s grace, we can strengthen each other’s faith. As the Lord says to Peter: “I have prayed that your own faith may not fail; and

once you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers (Luke 22:32).”

This article cannot explore all the tests or challenges the Lord gives in the Gospels, but since we started with and will finish with Peter, let’s stay with Peter, as the Lord’s first “Fraternity Minister” a bit longer. What other tests did Peter need to face? How did the Lord prepare Peter for Servant Leadership?

Well, although I have written about it before, I continue to be attracted Peter’s effort to walk on the water (Matthew 14:28-31). The Lord again says to Peter that one word: “Come.” Yet to me the test here is not one of obedience or even faith, but rather a test of focus. Peter obeys, and he trusts in the Lord, but he cannot keep his focus exclusively on the Lord. As long as he keeps his eyes focused on Jesus, he’s fine. When he thinks about the power of the storm or his own sinfulness, he sinks like a stone.

Although I have not seen any Secular Franciscan Ministers trying to walk on water, I have seen some of us attempting more than we can really do with our own obviously limited human abilities. In every case, when we have allowed our attention and concentration to turn from the Lord to the circumstances and personalities involved, we, or at least I, have sunk.

Then there is that test of recognition (Matthew 16:13-20). Who do people say that I am? Who do you say that I am? Peter has to know. It is impossible to be Secular Franciscan leaders if we cannot recognize our Lord and Savior, if we cannot proclaim that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man.

Another great test of leadership in the Lord’s service is the test of forgiveness. Who else but Peter will ask how often he should forgive his brother who sins against him. Seven times? The test here is on the limits of forgiveness, and I have talked to Ministers who just cannot forgive. We say we are Christian leaders, but we can be vengeful or passive/aggressive. We just don’t like people for what they have done, or what we imagine they have done, and we fail this test of forgiveness, since our Lord tells Peter in essence, there are no limits on forgiveness.

We don’t just forgive our brother (or sister) who sins against us seven times, but seventy-seven times (or in some translations, seventy times seven times) (Matthew 18:21-22).

Then during the Passion, when Jesus has been taken captive, Peter is challenged to stand with the Lord, and of course, he denies the Lord three times (Matthew 26:69-75). The test here may be that test of

martyrdom. As a Servant Leader, could I remain faithful to the Lord even in the face of possible death?

I have never met this test, nor have I met anyone in the United States who has faced this test, but at the meeting of the International Fraternity in Assisi last November (and please forgive me for not publicly divulging names), I met good sisters from China, the Ukraine and Russia and good brothers from Bethlehem and Nigeria, for example, who gave me the sense that they might face this test sooner than later. Let us pray for all who have faced or will face this test!

Yet even this test of possible martyrdom is not the final test the Lord gives to Peter and to us. Again, that final test is the test of love.

Why does the Lord ask Peter three times if he loves Him? Of course neither the Lord nor Peter has forgotten Peter’s three-fold denial, but note that nowhere does the Lord blame or remonstrate with Peter for this denial. Rather, he wants Peter to practice from henceforth perhaps the greatest lesson that the Lord could teach him: Love.

Love is the answer to almost all our problems and failures as Servant Leaders; not our own limited, imperfect human love, but God’s love for us, which never stops and is always there. If we are open to the Lord’s love, that love will flow from the Lord through us to our sisters and brothers before returning to the Lord.

Without that love, all our Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership is more or less hypocritical. Without that love, even great faith and the willingness to die mean nothing. As wrote St. Paul: “If I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing (1 Corinthians 13:2b-3).”

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, Servant Leadership in the Secular Franciscan Order is not about us. It is never about us. Servant Leadership, finally, is about love. Love and service. If we are seeking anything else, fame, attention, escape from boredom, revenge on someone in the fraternity, whatever, we are wasting our time; and worse, the fraternity’s time; and the worst, Your graces and gifts. You test us in many different ways with different people and circumstances as we journey on this Franciscan Way to salvation. When we fail, lift us up. Help us to learn from our mistakes to trust Your love and mercy more and more by showing that love and mercy to all our sisters and brothers. We pray in Jesus’ name.

Sharing **T**he Vision

News from the National Executive Council (NEC)

by National Secretary, Jan Parker, OFS



*“I thank you,
Lord, with all
my heart,
Before the gods
to you I sing
I bow low
toward your
holy temple;
I praise your
name for your
fidelity and
love.”
(Psalm
138:1-2)*

of you who do not believe.”... “Master, to whom shall we go?” (John 6:63.68)

The wisdom of our Rule guides us: “Let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do.” (Rule, Art. 8). On Friday morning, before any business was conducted, before a single decision was made, we came together for 90 minutes of prayer and formation, and on Saturday morning, two hours. It was life-saving. In prayer we found our purpose and our refuge. In heartfelt sharing we were transformed.

From *The Journey and the Dream* to *The Joy of the Gospel* Franciscans walk the path to the sacred. We walk this path together. There’s no other way. It’s wonderful to plan our annual Chapter. It’s wonderful to have an updated Visitation and Election Schedule. But more than wonderful is our journey together on this path to the sacred.

Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’* begins with the phrase, “Praise be to you, my Lord”. In this same sentiment of praise and with the beautiful words of Psalm 138, we began the June 19-21, 2015, meeting of the National Executive Council (NEC). It was a momentous meeting.

“God says to you, do not be afraid of holiness; do not be afraid to aim high, to let yourself be loved and purified by God; do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit.” (Pope Francis, The Church of Mercy, p. 32)

Over the years that I have served as National Secretary, I have tried to share with you what “national” does. There seemed to be much interest in this, and so I have shared the vision and the news from the NEC as best I could. In this article, most likely my last as your National Secretary, I want to share with you something we did at our June NEC meeting. It is actually something that “national” does at every meeting, and is undoubtedly the most important thing we do as a Council.

What does our prayer and formation time look like? It is the Holy Spirit who leads us; we know only that we need it. We enter this time intentionally, gathered in a circle in a comfortable space. A prayer of “self-emptying” allows the Holy Spirit to enter the room. We pray in common the prayers of old; psalms that touch us where we are at.

The National Executive Council has had some tough times this year. The months leading up to our June meeting were particularly stressful. We felt at a loss in many ways. We came to this meeting with radical trust, longing for the way to become clear. As we gathered on Thursday evening there were hugs, of course, and an evening meal shared in joy and laughter. But the work before us was daunting.

Pursue what you should desire above all else, namely, to have the Spirit of God and God’s grace working in you, to pray always with purity of heart and to have humility, patience in persecution and in infirmity....” (cf. Earlier Rule XVII 15-16)

We listen and savor the Word of God in Scripture and other rich readings. We pause, opening our hearts to what the Holy Spirit is saying. After a time of silent prayer, we begin gently sharing.

“It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some

“To listen to a living word flowing from the heart of someone is not the same thing as to read the same message from a book. As we listen to a person, it is a life and spirit that are communicated. And God uses this living word to give life.” (Jean Vanier, Community and Growth, rev. ed. p. 175.)

We savor the words that flow from the heart of each brother and sister as a precious gift of our Lord; words that reflect individual experiences, but also speak of our common human experience. We feel the closeness of our oneness in Christ. How we need that unity!

United in Christ we become aware of each other's holiness as a beauty in itself. We see the gifts each member brings to our Council – gifts that will help us as we work together. Former JPIC Chair Kent Ferris spoke to us once of the “nourishment of human contact as we all reflect who God is.” And so it is. The Spirit is with us to lead and guide. With God's help we can do the work that is ours to do.

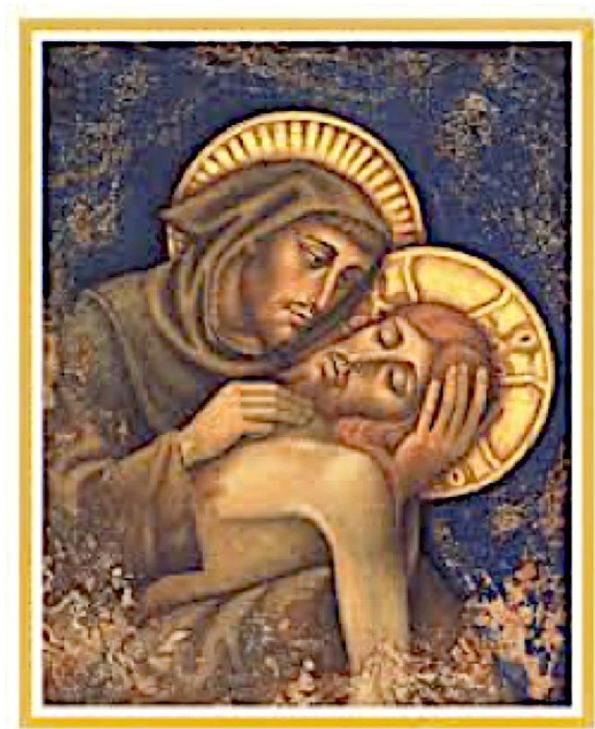
Prayer and faith sharing calls us back to who we are. From there comes honest dialogue that builds a transparent decision-making process; this leads to care in action and to active witness in the world. Blessedly aware of our communion in Christ, we move from self-centered concerns to a place where we can work together. It is a place where all is in God's time. There's no frantic hurry, no need to push our own ideas ahead. It is a place of trust and hope. Agenda items can be discussed without running over each other's feelings. It is where we know we have work to do but we don't become so serious that we lose our joy. We delight in the fact that God has brought us together for this purpose and trust that God does not invite us to failure. We remember we are Franciscans, but this is not our Order. It's God's Order. Our work is rooted in simplicity and littleness. It is not overbearing or complicated. Our individual concerns are caught up in God's great love for each and for all. God knows our needs. We come to see God's providential care for us as we become aware of our need for each other. We are bound together in love.

*“Spreading the Gospel means that we are the first to proclaim and live the reconciliation, forgiveness, peace, unity and love that the Holy Spirit gives us.” (Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy*)*

United by prayer and transformed into a community of love, we can walk with each other through the bitter valley and make it a place of springs; we can go from strength to strength as we make our way to God on this path to the sacred.

At our June NEC meeting, our Brother Francis was truly among us. He held us up to the Father as if holding a little sparrow named “Humility” in the palm of his hand. He coaxed the wolf named “Fear” from the shadows and invited us to befriend him. With the little sparrow and the tamed wolf we stood in a close circle, hearts united in a closing prayer, singing the

words that Jesus taught us. We then turned to our work, eager for the holy activity of the Spirit in our lives.



The quotes and images interspersed throughout this article were part of the formation material we used during our June NEC meeting. I am grateful to Mary Bittner and Br. Bob Brady, OFM, for their contributions. I appreciate all formators who prepare by asking the Holy Spirit, “What words will give life and light to us at this time?”

Prayerfully prepared material is only one part of formation. Just as important is the participation and contributions of those gathered. The heartfelt sharing, inspired insights and careful listening by each of the NEC and Commission Chair sisters and brothers during our time together shows their love and commitment to fraternity building. This love and commitment to fraternity is vital, especially in stressful and difficult times, to help us walk that path to the sacred. As Pope Francis says in *Laudato Si'*, “It is no coincidence that, in the canticle in which Saint Francis praises God for his creatures, he goes on to say: ‘Praised be you my Lord, through those who give pardon for your love.’ Everything is connected.” Praise be to you, my Lord, for how prayer and formation connect us in Love! May prayer and contemplation always be the soul of all we are and all we do.

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (NEC)

By Jan Parker OFS and Mary Bittner OFS

GUIDELINES ON STIPENDS

At our January meeting, the NEC, with input from the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA), discussed the issue of stipends. The following points were agreed upon, and may be incorporated into an update of our national guidelines on stipends. This update is in process, and will ultimately need the approval of the National Fraternity Council.

- (1) The cost of travel, room and board and other legitimate expenses should always be covered for those who are serving the Secular Franciscan Order in an official capacity.
- (2) Spiritual Assistants should receive reimbursement for the cost of travel, room and board and other legitimate expenses related to their ministry. Additionally, they should be offered a stipend over and above expenses (i.e., love offering) in an amount “appropriate to the journey made and the length of stay required” (NS 18.8 and 26.2). This stipend should always be offered for the regular meeting of the Fraternity, a meeting of the Fraternity Council, Pastoral Visitations, Elections or other events where their presence is requested.
- (3) Secular Franciscan Spiritual Assistants should be treated in the same manner as Friar Spiritual Assistants and other non-OFS Spiritual Assistants. Their expenses should be covered and a stipend offered, as above.
- (4) OFS Members who conduct a Fraternal Visitation or Election should be offered a stipend over and above expenses (i.e., love offering) in an amount “appropriate to the journey made and the length of stay required” (NS 18.8 and 26.2).
- (5) OFS Regions are free to suggest to their local fraternities the amount of the stipend offered over and above expenses.
- (6) OFS members who serve the Order in capacities other than Spiritual Assistance, such as presenting at a retreat or workshop, etc., should be offered a stipend over and above expenses.

It is important to note: OFS members who receive stipends, over and above expenses, may opt to donate back to the Region, or to NAFRA, or to a charity. It is recognized that all OFS members who volunteer time to serve the Order in a variety of ways, do so in a spirit of generosity and fraternal service. This expression of our charism is a gift to the Order.

Relationships with First Order and T.O.R. Provincials

During a joint meeting of the NEC and the members of the CNSA in January, we discussed ways to improve communications and OFS relationships with the Provincial Ministers of the First Order and T.O.R. The first step is to provide a way for the Provincial Ministers to easily identify the Regions to which local fraternities bonded to their Province belong, along with appropriate contact information. CNSA Secretary, Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, has produced a resource packet to distribute to each Provincial Minister, each Provincial Spiritual Assistant and the Presidents of each Friar Conference. The packet includes: (1) a cross directory listing the local fraternities bonded to each Province, grouped by Province and OFS Region; (2) a colored map to show the OFS Regions within the boundaries of each Province; (3) a copy of our National Directory. Regions and local fraternities are encouraged to also be conscious of good communication with the Provincial Ministers and Provincial Spiritual Assistants by sending

newsletters, rosters, notice of events, etc. The names and addresses of the Provincial Spiritual Assistants can be found in the National Directory.

Spiritual Assistant Formation Guidelines

The Conference of General Spiritual Assistants has outlined five vital components of formation programs specifically for the preparation of Spiritual Assistants not belonging to the First Order or T.O.R. *Franciscan Family Connections* — the text developed by the CNSA for our current formation program in the United States — covers the five elements suggested. The NEC agreed on the need to establish national guidelines for Spiritual Assistant training to be approved by both the CNSA and the National Fraternity Council. These guidelines would cover the minimum requirements; however, Regions could decide what to do above and beyond the “basics.” The NEC recommends that in addition to the guidelines, we offer 2-3 model curricula.

2016 Quinquennial (Q)

As noted in the last issue of *TAU-USA*, the 2016 Quinquennial Congress will be held in St. Louis, Missouri, June 30–July 4. See the related article in this issue of the *TAU-USA* for more information on this exciting and important event. Our Q Chair is Susan Simeone, and Q Core Committee members are Judy Haupt, Kate Kleinert, Barb Morgan and Kathy Wohnoutka. The National Formation Commission Chair serves as a consultant to the Q Committee.

Formation

Our NAFRA Formation Commission, led by Chair Mary Anne Lenzi, will host a national gathering for Regional Formation Directors, August 28–30, 2015, in Independence, Missouri. This fraternity-building event will encourage all to “be who we are called to be.” *For Up to Now: Foundational Topics for Initial Formation* (the *FUN Manual*) remains the basis and vision for OFS formation.

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

A National JPIC Peace Retreat will be held August 20–23 at Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville, Illinois. JPIC Chair Carolyn Townes reminds us all that JPIC is our “*presence in the world*” and is at the heart of our Rule: “We need to refrain from saying JPIC is something ‘out there.’ It’s not an extra thing we do — JPIC is part of *every single thing* we do.”

Youth/Promotion of OFS

Our National Youth Commission Chairs, Sue Nelson and Christy Nelson, are close to completing a SHINE tool kit/operations manual for OFS Youth Directors. In September, our NAFRA Youth Commission and St. Katherine Drexel Regional Fraternity will each sponsor a booth at the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, giving us two opportunities to promote Franciscan spirituality at this well-attended event.

Our Brothers and Sisters in Guam

Padre Pio Emerging Community in Guam is under the sponsorship of the National Fraternity Council of the United States. Their Minister, Violeta Manibusan, OFS, has been added to our National Fraternity email list. Violeta will be present for our 2015 NAFRA Chapter in Clinton, New Jersey, this October.



*A meaning of hope.
 The journey of conversion.*

HOPE

For some people *hope* is an orphan and *conversion* is talked about but not always achieved. Our age has seen many ways that diminish hope. Destructive tools like sexual slavery, threats of death, or other ways of domination are used to win control over others. With modern armaments hundreds of people can be wiped out at once. This is no way to develop hope! Groups can be misled by half-truths; negative personal experiences; the power of money; or even the development of technology. People find ways to dominate others both individually and collectively.



Franciscans, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, deal gently with people (even themselves). Personal reflection helps them discover what will build Franciscan and local communities. *Hope* builds on relationships with the Trinity - *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* - and - *with each other*.

Vaclav Havel, a leader who spent time in prison under communist rule, offers some reflections about hope.

I should probably say first that the kind of hope I often think about (especially in situations that are particularly hopeless, such as prison). I understand it above all as a state of mind, not a state of the world. Either we have hope within us or we don't; it is a dimension of the soul, and it's not essentially dependent on some particular observation of the world or estimate of the situation. Hope is not prognostication. It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons.

Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously headed for early success, but rather, on ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed. The more unpropitious the situation in which we demonstrate hope, the deeper the hope is.

Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the sense that something makes sense regardless of how it turns out. In short, I think that the deepest and most

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important form of hope, the only one that can keep us above water and urge us to good works, and the only true source of the breathtaking dimensions of the human spirit and its efforts, is something we get, as it were, from "elsewhere." It is also this hope, above all, which gives us the strength to live and continually try new things, even in conditions that seem as hopeless as ours do, here and now.

Disturbing the Peace - Vaclav Havel

Hope is a spirit within us. It does not require that everything turns out well. *We do what is good* whether it turns out well or not. We believe that *choosing what is good* is vital. When things turn out well it's wonderful, but not essential for having *hope*. The source of persistent *hope* is the indwelling Trinity. The Trinity dwells in us whether our particular *hope* finds success or not. We do not lose *hope* if things fail to turn out "our" way. Our trust in the Trinity remains and we seek other ways and means that God prompts us to seek. Check the "good things" we persistently seek - *justice; compassion; unity; charity; peace; forgiveness; reasonable compromise; understanding; friendship; love; generosity; etc.*

These words of the Appalachian Bishops, can add to our understanding:

Our human dignity can never be separated from community with our sisters and brothers, nor from our community with the rest of creation. We are never solely individuals, devoted only to competition or selfishness. Rather we are always members of the community, truly responsible for our sisters and brothers, and also for God's sacred Earth.

*At Home in the Web of Life
 Appalachian Bishops - Page 74*



We may still be uncertain about how to practice *hope*. It may call for a contemplative spirit that allows us to let the Trinity draw us to trust them.

♦♦

The ultimate aim of the quest must be neither release nor ecstasy for oneself, but the wisdom and the power to serve others. One of the many distinctions between the celebrity and the hero is that one lives only for self, while the other acts to redeem society.

The Power of Myth - Joseph Campbell & Bill Moyers - Page XV

CONVERSION

As we begin this topic, *let us pray*. (I don't know the author of this prayer, but it is appropriate):

Dear Lord: So far today, God, I've done all right. I haven't gossiped, haven't lost my temper, haven't been greedy or grumpy, nasty, selfish or over-indulgent. I'm really glad about that! But in a few minutes, God, I'm going to get out of bed and from then on I'm probably going to need all the help I can get. Thank you, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Having prayed, examine whether you are gossipy, lose your temper, are greedy and grumpy, nasty, selfish, over-indulgent, arrogant, unforgiving, or whatever. If these things ring a bell for you, you have a head start on naming things in your life that need *conversion*.



Most of us sense the meaning of *conversion*. We check on things that we need to change as new information or experiences become available. We honestly recognize the need to change some previously held ideas, opinions or relationships. In some cases we assumed we were "right" and the other person was "wrong." *Conversion* invites us to listen to the

Trinity calling us to an honest dialogue with that particular *neighbor* (or neighbors). Loving our neighbor, whenever opportunities spring up, allows us to build relationships through personal *conversion*, that is, our change of heart.

Vinal Van Benthem OFS, wrote the following article in her weekly article, "*Working with the Scriptures*" for the *Compass*, the diocesan newspaper of the Green Bay, WI Diocese - March 29, 2015. She reflects on *Isa. 50:4-7*; *Phil. 2:6-11*. Take time to notice ways in which *conversion* develops in Tess's everyday experiences.

I suppose we should have seen it coming. A star athlete in high school, Tess quit the team when it became evident that the school was more focused on winning than encouraging students to enjoy the sport. Her coach was not happy but Tess was more interested in the integrity of the sport than in how much money it could make for the school. And so the die was cast.

Graduating at the top of her class, Tess went to college, choosing a school where social concern and a concentration on the values of citizenship were integral to its mission. Tess blossomed and, again, graduated at the top of her class. Her family was delighted. They looked forward to their daughter embarking on a career that would bring her both financial success and personal satisfaction. For the next few years Tess did her best to fulfill their expectations. She took a job that required passing exacting exams - and she passed them with flying colors. But something was missing. Her training and education had prepared Tess for service. She felt isolated and alone in her tiny cubicle, trapped by a system focused on financial success, while in

her heart she felt certain she was being called to serve.

And so Tess moved on again, eventually taking a job defending the rights of workers and minorities who had no one else to speak for them. Here, too, Tess rose quickly to the top of her field. But this time it was different. Now the girl who had previously been the star money-maker and recipient of much praise, found herself despised and rejected - often by the same people who had previously supported her! Tess had become the antithesis of what much of the consumerist society around her believed in and it wasn't winning her any popularity contests.

God had given Tess a "well-trained tongue" that she might "speak to the weary," but as often happens to those who follow this path, Tess, too, now found herself "buffeted and spit upon." Tess had found her voice. I suppose we should have seen this coming!

Question: How do you feel about Tess' choices? Do they match choices you make? How do you deal with choices that change things in your life? Need help? Need faith? need courage? What? Isaiah offers some help:

The Lord God has given me the tongue of one who has been instructed to console the weary with a timely word; he made my hearing sharp every morning that I might listen like one under instruction. The Lord God opened my ears and I did not disobey or turn back in defiance

Isaiah 50: 4-5

Listen to God's call in the various articles of the OFS Rule. For example, **Article 11**.

... Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the Gospel, they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children. ... in the spirit of "the beatitudes," and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.

The OFS Rule invites *conversion* of the heart.

Parents take time for prayer and dialogue to implement, in family life, the ideas of this article. Young people decide on their attitudes toward minorities and other people, offering them friendship. Older folks can dialogue, searching for ways to continue a loving concern as age diminishes physical or psychic energy. We are called to implement God's call in the Gospel, and the OFS Rule. A Franciscan community dialogues about ways to model love and its consequences for others to see. *This is what Franciscans do!* Your response to God's call will invite *conversion* in your life. *Remain faithful to God's call - and conversion happens!*



*
The world needs to see such example and we are called to provide it.



Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Walking Together

by Anne Mulqueen, OFS

This edition of the TAU-USA is dedicated to Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si*, and relates to caring for our common home — our sister, Mother Earth. This theme presents a rather daunting challenge for the chair of the Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee. There is no obvious **direct link** between care for creation and ecumenical-interfaith dialogue. So I prayed, and, as always, God hears the cry of the poor, whether they be the materially poor or, in my case, the inspirationally poor. My answer came at Mass in the form of the offertory hymn entitled, *This Is My Song* — sometimes called *A Song of Peace*. With tears of gratitude in my eyes, I joined the congregation and sang out!

The hymn is sung to the melody of *Finlandia*, and the lyrics of the first two stanzas were written by Lloyd Stone at a time between World War I and World War II. If you have a hymnal or access to the internet, I suggest you read the actual lyrics of this hymn since I do not have permission to reprint them here. I will paraphrase the hymn's message and then offer a simple reflection on the connection between Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* and the hopes and dreams of the Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee as we, too, commit to caring for creation. You can listen to this beautiful hymn at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6OxSYe8_e4Y.

Basically, this hymn is a prayer to the one Creator God of all the nations—the Christian nations, the Jewish nations, the Islamic nations — calling us to live as one. It is a plea to the Almighty for unity among us to work for the common good. To do this we need to build bridges of respect and dialogue, and break down barriers of

mistrust and competition. If we can come to a stance of mutual respect and understanding, then we can work cooperatively toward positive global environmental goals. In Paragraph 3, Pope Francis lays the foundation for the connection between care for creation and dialogue among the various faith dimensions when he says, “...**I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home.**”

The lyrics continue with a prayer for **truth, freedom and unity** for all the people of every nation and asks that **peace** may come where “... strife has raged so long. ...” Similarly, in Paragraph 10, Pope Francis draws the connection between these values and environmental concerns. He writes, “[Francis] was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.”



As the hymn continues, we sing of our hopes and our dreams for our beloved country. But wait! The next stanza informs us there are other hearts in other countries beating "... with hope and dreams as true and high as mine." The lyrics soar with rejoicing and praising God for our natural wonders, while reminding us again that we are not the only ones to whom God has given natural wonders. The beauty of creation comes from God and is given to us to enjoy, and to serve and preserve. In paragraph 23, Pope Francis states, **"The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. At the global level, it is a complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life."**

As we continue singing and praising God for the beauty of our surroundings—our blue skies, our oceans, our pines—the next line tells us that "... other lands have skies as blue as mine." God showers us with beauty not because we are good, but because God is good. Because we share the earth with all manner of creatures and creation, we have a responsibility to preserve and protect it. In his Prayer for the Earth at the end of the Encyclical Letter, Pope Francis prays that God will **"Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live."** This is a strong call to conversion for all of us.

The hymn's culmination is a resounding plea to Almighty God that **all** hearts be united and learn to live as one. To be of one ecological mind in a world that is divided by national boundaries,

national interests, and diverse belief systems will take good listening skills, patience, sensitivity, respect, love and lots of prayer. It is a cooperative effort and we must work with others who may not have the same value system or faith dimension that we have. But the fact remains, we share the one earth and we travel around the same sun—the sun shines on all and the rain falls on all. Nature doesn't seem to be aware of our differences.



I will end with a quote attributed to Adlai Stevenson in which he says: "We travel together, passengers on a little spaceship, dependent on its vulnerable reserves of air and soil; all committed for our safety to its security and peace; preserved from annihilation only by the care, the work and the love we give our fragile craft."

May God protect our fragile craft and bring us safely into that heavenly harbor where we will hear our Father say, "Well done, good and faithful servants!" [Mt 25:23].





FORMATION COMMISSION

PRAISE BE YOU, MY LORD

by Diane Menditto, OFS

For the last week, I have been traveling in the Canadian Rockies. As we drove through majestic mountains sculpted by glaciers, my heart was filled with gratitude to the Lord for this spectacular gift. The lakes and rivers are turquoise — as if they were filled with the most brilliant waters of the Caribbean. While walking to a summit at the tree line of a high mountain, we shared the path with towering pines and colorful wildflowers that can flourish only a few months of the year. These flowers have adapted so they are able to "hibernate" when unrelenting snow storms blanket the summit each winter.

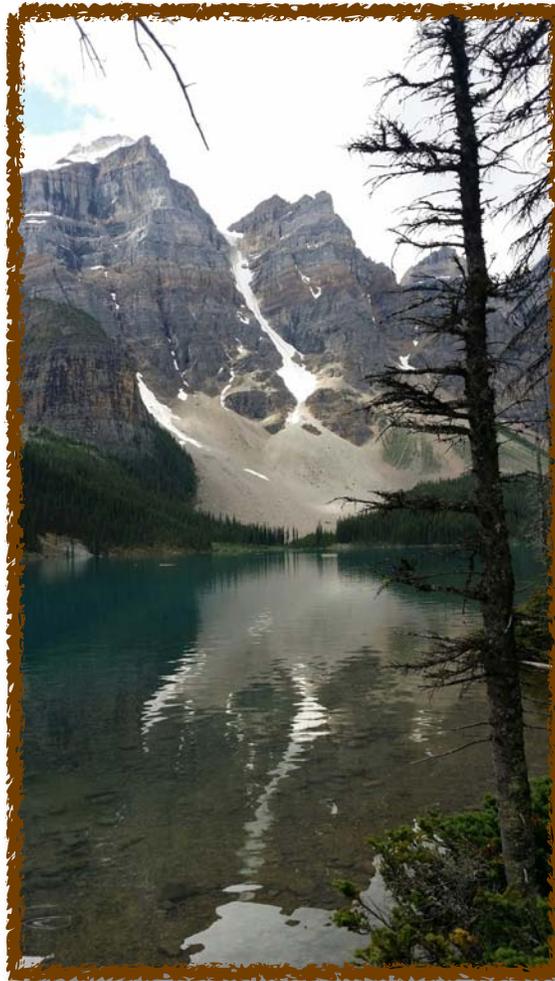
We were also reminded of how fragile this beauty is. Thousands of acres of Jasper National Park (and other Canadian national parks) are closed due to wildfires caused by recent drought conditions. As we drove through endless pine forests, I prayed that God will protect the trees and the creatures who live there.

In *Laudato Si* Pope Francis has begged us to take care of the environment in the manner of our Seraphic Father:

"Saint Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness." (12 Laudato Si)

A trip like this serves to remind us of the greatness of the Divine Artist and the marvels he has given us. St. Bonaventure, whose feast we celebrate as I write this, speaks of nature as the "vestiges" or footprints of the Lord.

"The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also



to discover God in all things. Saint Bonaventure teaches us that 'contemplation deepens the more we feel the working of God's grace within our hearts, and the better we learn to encounter God in creatures outside ourselves.'" (233 Laudato Si)

Let us look into our hearts with gratitude and great humility to be sure we are caring properly for all the gifts of God's creation as we pray:

"Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love, teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.
Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined
to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth, for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.

Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live."

May our Lord bless and keep each one of you.

(Portion of "A Christian prayer in union with creation" found at the end of Laudato Si)

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



THE CRIES OF SISTER MOTHER EARTH

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, National JPIC Animator

“The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life.... I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.” (Laudato Si, 2 and 14)

We hear the Psalmist proclaim, “*The earth is the Lord’s and all it holds; the world and those who dwell in it.*” Our Holy Rule exhorts us to respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which “bear the imprint of the Most High,” and strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship (OFS Rule, Art. 18). I believe that universal kinship has a three-step approach – ourselves, others and God.

It is not difficult to understand the violence we humans do to our earth, because it is very much played out in the violence we do to one another. The senseless killings in a Charleston, S.C., church are indicative of the violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin. How we do one thing is how we do everything. If we cannot honor and respect ourselves, then it follows that we cannot honor and respect the rest of God’s creatures.

The much anticipated papal encyclical, *Laudato Si*, is a call to stop, pause and ask ourselves some difficult questions: How are we *BE*-ing with ourselves? With others? With God’s creation? With all creatures, animate and inanimate? Pope Francis shines light on how we show up in the world as we relate to our Sister Mother Earth. First, we must realize that we are all human

beings, created by God, and not a product of use. This is the first principle of our Catholic Social Teaching – the life and dignity of the human person. Violence done to our brothers and sisters is reflected in the violence done in our earth home. If we do not care about one another, then how can we care about the earth? When we do violence to Sister Mother Earth, the poor and the vulnerable are the first to feel its effects. As the poor cry out for safe drinking water, fertile vegetation, and clean air, we turn a deaf ear. The Psalmist laments “the Lord hears the cry of the poor,” while the author of Proverbs tells us whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, will also cry himself and not be heard.

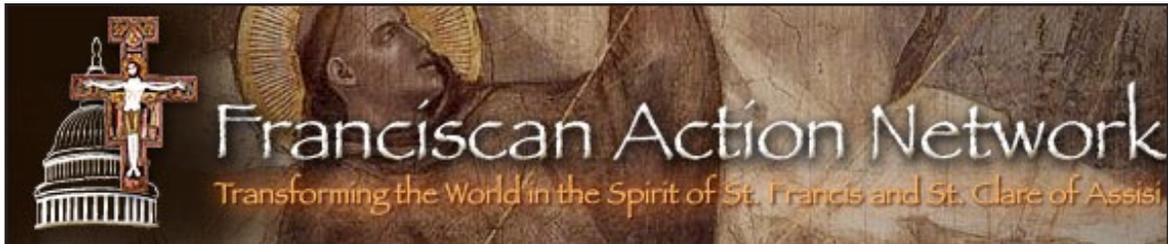
Pope Francis speaks of the Trinitarian relationship with all creatures in that “the world was created by the three Persons acting as a single divine principle, but each one of them performed this common work in accordance with his own personal property. Consequently, ‘when we contemplate with wonder the universe in all its grandeur and beauty, we must praise the whole Trinity.’” This is our Franciscan call to praise and honor all of creation – to contemplate with wonder. It is in the contemplation that we are mindful of God’s grandeur, thus we do not take it for granted. We notice and recognize what we have before us and what we have been so benevolently entrusted to care for; we do not dominate and destroy.

We are called to trust the presence of the divine seed in everyone (OFS Rule, Art 19). Everything created by God is good and has an inherent nature or divine seed. The inherent nature of an oak tree is to grow tall and strong, giving shade and sustenance to creatures, thus giving honor and glory to the Creator. We must be mindful of

the presence of the divine seed in everyone. We must be mindful of the inherent nature of all of God's created.

Pope Francis calls us to recognize our place in the world as stewards of the created world. We cannot hear the cry of the world without hearing the cry of the poor and vulnerable. Stop and

notice the violence we do to ourselves, then to each other, and then to our earth home. Then hear the words of the Psalmist as he laments for the poor who are gravely affected by the violence we have wrought. That must also be our lament; for one day we too will cry out and there will be no one left to hear us.



FAN Urges Signatures to the GCCM Climate Petition

FAN's and the Global Catholic Climate Movement's recent participation in a rally in Rome thanking Pope Francis for the release of his encyclical is a first step toward action called for by His Holiness. As a second step, FAN urges all members to sign the GCCM Climate Petition.

At current levels of deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions, average global temperatures are likely to rise 4 degrees Celsius or more by 2100, unleashing catastrophic climate change. Nations have begun submitting plans to the United Nations for how they intend to cut oil and coal use, increase renewable energy, and conserve forests. But so far it's not clear that their commitments will pull that number down significantly; nor are these targets legally binding. The GCCM believe this petition may help spur political leaders to act more effectively.

In the Philippines, Catholics have mobilized behind their leader, Cardinal Tagle who announced the official launch of the GCCM petition to an audience of over 1,000 priests, religious and lay leaders during a General Assembly of the Manila Archdiocese. He then



encouraged Catholic Filipinos to take action and signed the petition himself. This direct response to the call to action in "Laudato Si'" is a beautiful example of what Catholics all over the world should be doing.

Please take one minute to sign the petition and then share it with your family, friends and community. Together we can create a joyful noise to show world leaders we mean business when it comes to reversing the effects of climate change.

Franciscan Action Network Website:
franciscanaction.org

Global Catholic Climate Movement
<http://catholicclimatemovement.global/>



SHINE/Youth & Young Adults Commission

Christy & Sue Nelson, OFS

"Go, Rebuild My Church!"

With great joy we are busy preparing the **SHINE** Fraternal Guide. Thank you to those across the country who are guiding our efforts and contributing to this toolkit to help our fraternities reach out to bring the next generation of Catholics closer to Christ! The guide has been expanded in several key areas in response to requests and contributions from our regional and local SHINE/Youth & Young Adult Directors. The guide will now include a SHINE/YYA Director's job description, additional formation materials, and an expanded prayer section.

We are grateful to those of you who have completed Franciscan SHINE/YYA Activity Trackers! This will become a great resource for us to connect across the United States to share success stories and support each other in our endeavors. The Activity Tracker is available on the NAFRA website, and we continue to welcome contributions.

We continue partnering with the Q Committee and the National Executive Council as we

develop programming for young adults on Saturday during the Q. More details will be forthcoming this fall.

SHINE is striving to create local, regional and national experiences for Catholics under 35 in the United States to explore their spirituality and to experience the Franciscan charism. Through interactions with OFS/Secular Franciscans while participating in fun and interactive community activities, dialogue, prayer and religious formation (in person and online), young Catholics will observe Franciscans modeling our charism.



Shared Goals for Each Fraternity at the Local, Regional and National Level

- **Pray for our SHINE Leaders and Young Catholics across the country**
- **Conduct two SHINE activities**
- **Select two young adult SHINE Ambassadors to participate in at least two meetings per year to interact with and advise the fraternity council**
- **Help build our fraternal "Welcome Mat" by guiding our fraternities toward a spirit of acceptance and inclusion for our younger friends of St. Francis**

PLEASE HELP US...

Fraternal Guide Contest!

Entries are due by September 15th

We are requesting prayers, songs, short stories, quotes or artwork to be included in the upcoming release of the SHINE/Youth & Young Adults Fraternal Guide.

Are you passionate about bringing the next generation of Catholics closer to Christ and inspired to share your talents?

Entries should be submitted on 8½” x 11” portrait format. Please include the following information with the entry: your name, local fraternity name, address, phone and email. If entry is being submitted by someone under 35, please include age.

If submission is being made by someone who is not a professed Secular Franciscan, please include the name of the Secular Franciscan who is sponsoring the entry (so that awards can be distributed). Winners will be announced at the October Chapter. All entries become the property of NAFRA.

Entries should be sent via email to ShineYourSpiritualLight@yahoo.com

or

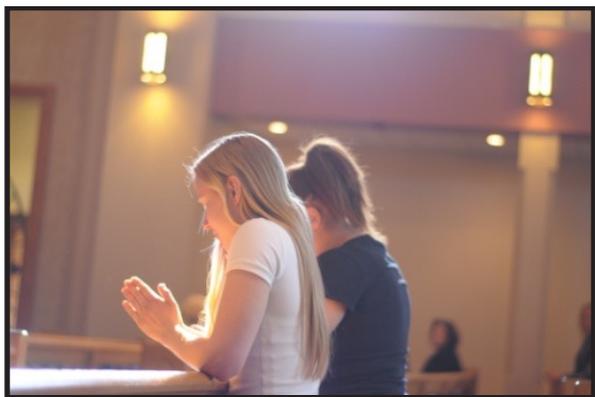
mailed to SHINE/YYA, 114 Barnett Drive, Edwardsville, IL 62025 by September 15th.



8th World Meeting of Families

Plans are being finalized for our SHINE/YYA booth at the 8th World Meeting of Families (WMOF) in September in Philadelphia.

Please connect with us via email to ShineYourSpiritualLight@yahoo.com if you are planning to attend the event and would like to help out at our booth or would like details for the special gathering of Franciscans on Friday presented by the SHINE/YYA National Commission!



FRANCISCAN LIVING

LAUDATO SÍ: WHAT CAN I DO?

By Francine Gikow, OFS

Pope Francis recently described crucial ecological issues in his encyclical, *Laudato Sí*. He identified problems, brought a theological understanding of the issues and implored us to do something about it. Hopefully, world societies will mobilize to raise consciousness of the issues, develop consensus, make plans, offer solutions and pass laws. Whew! This will take a lot of work!

Sometimes I wonder how the world got into this mess in the first place! It starts with us, however. We tend to think about “now” rather than the impact of our actions on the future. We see ourselves for what we “do” and not who we “are.” Unfortunately, this belief trickles down to how we view nature. How can we use nature to make our lives easier or better? What can we “do” with nature, rather than appreciating it for what it *is*? This exploitation mentality has brought us to an ecological crisis, which is no longer working for us, the animals, plants or for our environment.

But how do we change this? How do people change their beliefs, worldview and behaviors? As the Australian Bishops said: “To achieve such reconciliation [with creation], we must examine our lives and acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God’s creation through our actions and our failure to act. We need to experience a conversion, or change of heart.”

However the real unanswered question is how we can encourage this conversion. Unless we *change* people’s belief systems, values and ethics, all these efforts are doomed to failure. So we need to back up a few paces to address the underlying thoughts, beliefs and attitudes so there *is* a possibility of conversion.

Because I am not good with debates and quick thinking, I tend toward seeking interpersonal and relational solutions to problems. I have found that trying to change people’s behavior through reasoning or facts simply does not work. Truth be told, debates do not change peoples’ ideas or behaviors. In fact, debates can actually harden a person’s stance on an issue! People do not necessarily follow reason: they follow their emotions. While respecting a person’s integrity and self-determination, an honest but loving encounter can make a difference . . . a conversion.

We have all encountered the wonders of nature, I am sure, at one time or another. People describe how they encounter God when they see the grandeur of a sunset or a beautiful rainbow, or an experience with birds. These experiences can be life changing and a way to introduce us to the Almighty. As Pope Francis says: “If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer

speaking the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously.” (*Laudato Sí*, 11)

However, this type of meaningful personal encounter is just the beginning of what I am talking about. If we go deeper into a relationship with nature, be it a common rock or insect rather than the extraordinarily beautiful, we can become aware of what is called, “essential individuation” or John Scotus’ “thisness.” It is seeing each individual piece of creation perfect and complete in its own right. Creation does not need to have a “use” or “value” for society. It is whole in itself and has an innate beauty simply because it was created by God and reflects His love. God loved it into being and because of that, it has value far surpassing anything we could want to attribute to it! It is our brother in creation since the same Father created us.

A tangible encounter with a rock or “ordinary” piece of nature can be the doorway to the universal. By using our senses, (eyes, touch, smell, hearing) we can tap into the core of our very being. It is not so much an intellectual or knowledge exercise, but a reflection on an individual piece of creation. It is designed to affect our “heart.” We have to avoid making judgments of the rock or piece of creation because then we are not seeing it as God sees it. We have to learn to appreciate and respect things for what they are...not for what they do, or how we can use them (for that is exploitation behavior all over again!)

We can *see* the patterns on the rock; the color, the reflections. *Feel* it: the heft, roughness, coolness, warmth or craggy of the rock. *Smell* it: is it moist, does it smell of the forest or the beach? *Hear* it when it drops or in the silence of its being? Does it speak to you in a personal way? In modern terms, many call this “mindfulness.” We call it meditation. In this way, we encounter nature as individual and unique. We become aware that no two things in nature are exactly the same. God not only loved the rock into being but also loved it personally, individually, and specifically into being.

By sharing this meditation, we can help others to be in touch with the sacred. For “when we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them.” (*Laudato Sí*, 87) From this heart knowledge we can act accordingly. We can become the seed sown on good ground that yields a hundred fold.

1. Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. “A New Earth-The Environmental Challenge,” 2002.

THE TAU ROCK

Kenton S. Miller, PhD, OFS

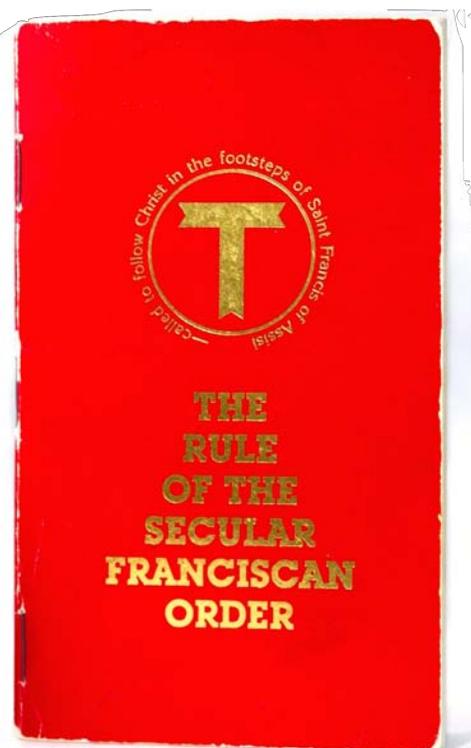
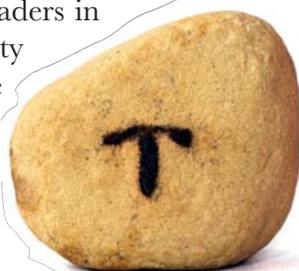
I want to share with the readers of Tau a story that, at least to me as a scientist, is almost unbelievable. I am still trying to understand its significance. When I was a Regional Formation Director, I shared my story during a National Visitation as a way to encourage Regional interest in the OFS role in promoting care of the environment and to enhance enthusiasm for taking the St. Francis Pledge. I must admit, it was received with very limited excitement — perhaps because many of us have become rather used to hearing stories of people seeing “Mother Mary in a pancake,” or perhaps because they, like me, just didn’t know what to think about it. Nonetheless, given Pope Francis’ latest encyclical, I feel I have an obligation to pass this along to my brothers and sisters, no matter how odd they might think it.

I am an ardent hiker and backpacker, and over the last 50 years I have hiked many a trail in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Not too ago I was hiking in the Madison Range with a long-time friend. We had been out all day, and having climbed up and down several thousand feet of mountain trails, we were on our way back to camp. We had one last creek to ford, and to tell the truth, I was really tired. Sitting on the creek bank unlacing my boots and rolling up my pants, my mind was drifting as I stared at the rushing water. Then I saw something I just couldn’t believe. A Tau was shining up at me from the bottom of the creek. Reaching down I picked up what was for me as a Franciscan the most incredible stone I have ever seen.

The picture below shows the rock I found next to our Rule, to give a sense of size. The Tau is an integral part of the rock, not something drawn on it or somehow added to it. It’s exactly as I picked it up from the stream.

I have struggled to understand the significance of this find. As a scientist (I have a PhD in biochemistry and biophysics), it is not clear to me how such a rock could have been formed. The rock is very rounded on the edges, and therefore had tumbled in creek for at least decades to centuries before I found it. The Tau is raised, thus it must be of harder material than the brown rock itself.

Initially, in my lack of humility, I took this personally as a sign of my individual vocation. I no longer believe that this so. Although I am “organically” Franciscan, I think this stone has a deeper meaning for all Franciscans. It lay in that stream for who knows for how many eons waiting for a Franciscan to find it, for only a Franciscan could see and understand the deeper meaning of its sign. Pope Francis has called on all humanity to reestablish an authentic relationship with our First Mother, the Earth, before it is too late. We, as Franciscans, have a very direct responsibility to lead the way, to be leaders in the struggle to reestablish the humility and self-restraint necessary to save ourselves, and our brother and sister species on this planet, from extinction. We **MUST ACT NOW** before it is too late for us all.





Servant Leadership

St. Francis University Summer Seminar

By Denise McCarthy, OFS, Patricia Serotkin, OFS, and Jan Parker, OFS

The annual summer seminar at St. Francis University, held this year from July 9 to July 12 was attended by more than sixty participants from thirteen regions, and friars representing the OFM, TOR and OFM Conventual congregations. The seminar was comprised of eight sessions presented by Fr. Michael Higgins, TOR, and Mary Frances Charsky, OFS.

Mary Frances set the atmosphere for the seminar with prayer selections, hymn recommendations, and a display of posters and TAU crosses from Assisi. She designed the group work, role-playing scenario and “best practices” sessions to exemplify the concept of servant leadership. The formal sessions began with a call to the participants to take an inventory of their own leadership styles. The inventory was taken from the [*Handbook for Secular Franciscan Leadership*](#), pages 121-126. The inventory is a useful tool for assisting leaders to identify their strengths and areas for growth in leadership abilities. Everyone has specific gifts, and a good leader will be able to recognize the gifts in others and develop them so as to empower them.

Fr. Michael Higgins, TOR, spoke first about the principles of servant leadership. He referenced both Robert K. Greenleaf, a Quaker who lived from 1904-1990, and Max DePree, a current expert on artful leadership. Both uphold leadership in the light of Christianity.

The ten characteristics of servant leadership, as noted by Greenleaf were reviewed. They include: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of the people and building community. The four characteristics of artful leadership identified by DePree were also discussed, and include integrity, building and nurturing relationships, community building, and fostering and preparing future leaders.

Character traits that can contribute to dysfunctional leadership were discussed in a later session. These include: loneliness of command, addiction to power, fear of envy, fear of success, narcissism, transference, and psychopathic personality disorder. This presentation left us feeling somewhat “down,” but also with an understanding of the reality that some leaders are not leading to serve.

On Saturday, the leadership of St. Francis, St. Clare and Pope Francis were the topic of the fifth session, presented by Fr. Higgins. Francis did not want anyone in the Order to have a title; the leaders were not to be called priors, but rather, ministers. The minister was the one to wash the feet of the brothers or sisters.

Francis encouraged the brothers to love their brothers as a mother loves her son, and established an atmosphere of forgiveness and charity. St. Francis did not write specifically about leadership, but there are many references to his ideals on leadership reflected in the Rule, letters and Admonitions.

St. Clare’s life in her community was that of a servant leader. She washed the feet of the sisters when they came back to the convent from walking the streets and begging for food. She lived to meet the physical, psychological and spiritual needs of her community. Clare conveyed the Franciscan Spirit as a way of life to her household, and we are encouraged by her example to do the same for our fraternities.

Pope Francis is a Pope who is not only thinking, but doing things outside the box! Fr. Higgins highlighted the leadership style of Pope Francis s taken from the book *Pope Francis: Why He Leads the Way He Leads.*: Lowney, 2013, Loyola Press.

- 1) Live fully - be who you are
- 2) Wash feet - authentic power is service
- 3) Dusty shoes - immerse yourself in the worlds joys and sufferings.
- 4) Kneeling alone - commit to a regimen of reflection in order to survive
- 5) Build on stones - live in the present, reverence tradition
- 6) Create the future -take up the challenge of leading through change
- 7) Don't be afraid of the journey

Fr. Higgins shared the following success story based on principles of Franciscan servant leadership. Sr. Margaret Carney, OSF, was named the first female president of St. Bonaventure University in 2003. Her journey began after a scandal at the university occurred in 2002. She was first named interim president, then inaugurated to the office in 2003. Her *modus operandi* was that of a servant leader. After several days of interviewing her, Fr. Higgins found recurrent themes emerging in her leadership style. Sr. Margaret has a deep respect for all individuals, seeing them as created in the Divine image as a son or daughter of God. She strove to empower and collaborate with others, knowing she did not have to do everything herself, and invited others to assist in decision making. Communication was open; she listened to the thoughts and needs of others including faculty, staff and students. Lastly, she approached all actions from an ethical world view. Over time, her servant leadership style transformed a once-disgraced institution into a success story.



CIOFS Call to Action to ALL OFS: Participate in Animating the Order

by Mary Stronach, OFS, International Councilor

The General Chapter in Assisi last November challenged all OFS members to look at our Order in a new light — to discuss and to determine where we are going as an Order and how we are going to get there.

In preparation for this major project, our National Fraternity has convened a National Committee for the Management of the Order. The members include: **Stan Bartley**, a recently professed OFS in Franciscans of the Prairie Region, **Deacon Tom Bello**, National Minister, **Mary Bittner**, National Councilor, **Mary Frances Charsky**, National Councilor, **Donna Maria Flanagan Kaminsky**, Spiritual Assistant in Lady Poverty Region, **Dawn Rusinko**, YOUFRA chair for Our Lady of the Angels Region, **Karen Szczecnsniak**, Spiritual Assistant in Five Franciscan Martyrs Region, **Pat Serotkin**, Regional Minister of Lady Poverty Region, **Bob Stronach**, National PR Co-chair, and **Carolyn Townes**, National JPIC Chair. International Councilor **Mary Stronach** will chair this committee. The **Holy Spirit** will be our inspiration and our guide.

The committee's task will be to respond to a report presented to the General Chapter in November and to address a series of questions based on the documents of the 2014 Chapter's main theme, "How Should an Order Like the OFS Be Managed at All Its Levels?" An additional document should also be reviewed, the 2014 Conclusions from the Chapter. The committee's responses will also be based on a general analysis and a review of all responses of surveys sent out to all OFS in the USA.

The questions that will be included in the surveys are:

1. What are the main strengths of our National Fraternity in terms of managing the Order?
2. What are the main weaknesses/challenges of our National Fraternity in terms of managing the Order?
3. What are the five priorities (most important and urgent aspects or areas) that our National Fraternity should work on to improve the management of the Order, and what are the concrete goals that you propose in order to carry out those five priorities?
4. What are the three main **strengths** in the management of the OFS at the International level?
5. What are the three main **challenges** in the management of the OFS at the International level?
6. What do you think the three priorities for the improvement of the management of the Order at the International level should be, and what specific proposals do you have for each one of those?

The committee will develop the survey, using these questions as a guideline. The survey will be sent to all our fraternities and, hopefully, will reach our individual fraternity brothers and sisters around the United States.

At the National Chapter this October, the committee will also have focus groups with our regional ministers based on the above questions.

The committee will compile the responses and develop a report that will be sent to CIOFS. Our report will then be incorporated with all the responses from around the world. Based on all the input, the Presidency will prepare a report to present at the next General Chapter, where the councilors will vote on a final document that will determine the direction and priorities for the Order.

As we move ahead in this endeavor, we ask all OFS members to make sure your voice is heard. Take the opportunity to respond to the survey when you receive it, or, if it would be easier, respond to the questions listed above and send them to Mary Stronach.

For copies of the reports on the "Management of the Order," go to the NAFRA website.
http://nafra-sfo.org/meetings_and_resources.html

ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
LAUDATO SÍ:
ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME
RESOURCES



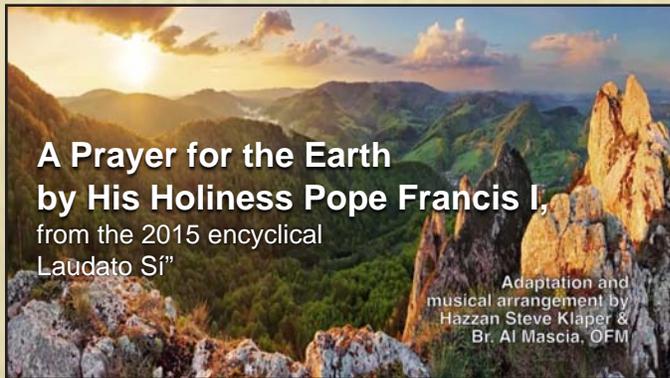
**LAUDATO SÍ: ON CARE FOR OUR
COMMON HOME
DISCUSSION GUIDE**



OVERVIEW

This discussion guide, for use with Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, can help small groups explore and dialogue with this important document. The guide includes materials for prayer, reflection and discussion, as well as ideas to help Catholics respond to Pope Francis' message. The discussion section of the guide includes quotes and discussion questions on a variety of themes highlighted in *Laudato Si'*. The facilitator should decide in advance which topics will be covered during this session. Given the number of rich themes on which Pope Francis focuses in *Laudato Si'*, you may wish to spread the topics among several sessions.

**Available as a PDF document on the USCCB Website.
Search: "Laudato Si Discussion Guide"**



A lively musical adaptation of *A Prayer for the Earth*, one of the prayers found at the end of the *Laudato Si* encyclical, can be viewed on the *Song and Spirit Institute for Peace* website below.

<http://www.songandspirit.org/>



THE MISSION

Song and Spirit promotes greater understanding among people of diverse religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds through music, art, cultural programs, dialogue, study, organic farming, and compassionate acts of community service. This cultural and spiritual exchange advances the realization of Justice and World Peace.

THE VISION

When we experience another's culture, their music, rituals, beliefs — we come to understand that there are no "others" — we are all one people seeking the same

human relationships, grappling with the same divine mysteries.

Song and Spirit provides a focus for creating a deep and meaningful connection between peace-making, compassionate action, social justice, the arts, care for creation and the advancement of human rights. In doing so, Maggid Steve, Brother Al and Mary link a Christian commitment to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) with the Franciscan charism of serving the poor, marginalized and outcast. This is expressed Jewishly as *astikkun olam*, the repair of the world; by Muslims as *zakat*, one of the Five Pillars of Islam; and by Hindus as *daan*, care of creation.

The following two prayers are from the encyclical letter,
LAUDATO SÍ: ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

A PRAYER FOR OUR EARTH

All-powerful God, you are present in the
whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned
and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world
and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty,
not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray,
in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

A CHRISTIAN PRAYER IN UNION WITH CREATION

Father, we praise you with all your creatures. They
came forth from your all-powerful hand; they are
yours, filled with your presence and your tender love.

Praise be to you!

Son of God, Jesus, through you all things were made.
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,
you became part of this earth, and you gazed upon
this world with human eyes. Today you are alive in
every creature in your risen glory.

Praise be to you!

Holy Spirit, by your light you guide this world towards
the Father's love and accompany creation as it groans
in travail. You also dwell in our hearts
and you inspire us to do what is good.

Praise be to you!

Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,
teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe, for all things speak of
you. Awaken our praise and thankfulness for every
being that you have made. Give us the grace to feel
profoundly joined to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world as
channels of your love for all the creatures of this
earth, for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.

Enlighten those who possess power and money that
they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may
love the common good, advance the weak, and care
for this world in which we live.

The poor and the earth are crying out.

O Lord, seize us with your power and light, help us to
protect all life, to prepare for a better future, for the
coming of your Kingdom of justice, peace, love and
beauty.

Praise be to you!

Amen.

*Given in Rome at Saint Peter's on 24 May, the Solemnity of
Pentecost, in the year 2015, the third of my Pontificate.*





Secular Franciscan Quinquennial Gathering

The

June 30-July 4, 2016 St. Louis, Missouri



*Reviving
Our
Spirit*

As St. Francis gathered the friars for a Chapter of Mats, the Secular Franciscan Order gathers every five years in a National Congress called the Quinquennial ("Q" for short!)

Join your brothers and sisters!

Rediscover the Franciscan charism and enjoy new growth and fruitfulness in your vocation.

Share your joys and your insights as we look forward to future endeavors as a National Family.

*Prayer
Celebration*

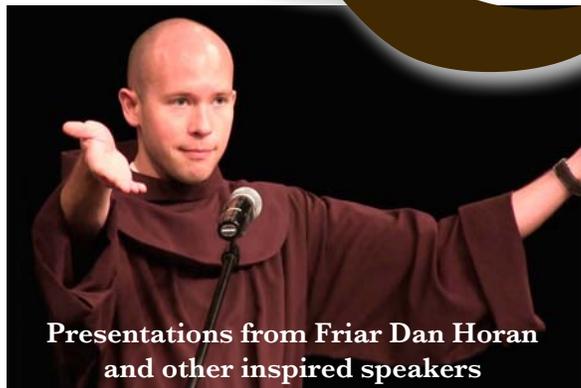
Renewal

Growth

Learning

Fraternity building

A rebirth of joy in your vocation



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and other inspired speakers**

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Opening Mass and Dinner on Thursday Evening, June 30, 2016

Closing Mass on Sunday Evening, July 3, 2016

Departure on July 4, 2016

*Under the patronage of Sts. Francis and Clare
and Sts. Louis and Elizabeth*

Registration and other details coming soon!



SECULAR FRANCISCAN QUINQUENNIAL GATHERING JUNE 30-JULY 4, 2016 ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

The



The Q is a spirit-filled and intentional congress to rejoice in the gifts we have been given to serve one another with our brothers and sisters of Francis. It is a time to meet and learn from both young and older adults from all walks

of life and varied cultures who reside throughout the United States and beyond our geographic borders. It is a Chapter of Mats, as our dear St. Francis called it 800 years ago. Inspiring presentations by nationally and locally recognized Franciscans, formation, prayer, contemplation, Mass, fraternity, discernment, reflection, involvement, merriment, and compassion, are a few of the activities you will experience during the Q.

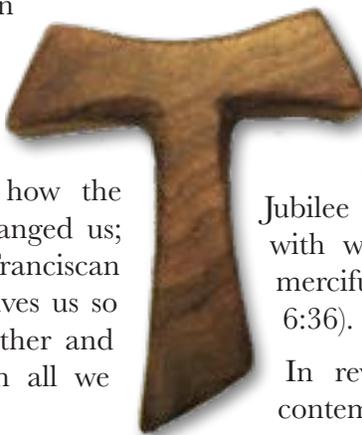
The purpose of the Q is to revive the spirit within us and to share the gifts we have been given in order to animate them better in our Franciscan way of life. In unity, through our profession and the Rule, we are *called* to be evangelical people to bring Christ to others, to protect all creation and to live a Gospel life. Following Jesus's example, Francis sent his brothers out two by two. We also are to go out to the world and preach the Gospel through our way of life, using words when necessary, and then to return in fraternity at least every five years to celebrate in community and Communion our Franciscan family; to discuss what we have spiritually and cognitively learned; to share how the experiences and knowledge have changed us; and to seek better ways to live our Franciscan way of life. Being spiritually fed revives us so we are better able to serve one another and thus build the Body of Christ with all we meet.

The theme for the Q 2016 is Reviving Our Spirit. We are given gifts to share, and one way to revive our spirit is to be in community where the environment fosters open dialogue, different perspectives and opportunities to witness one another's gifts expressed in diverse ways.

The rule and life of the Secular Franciscan order is "to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." How can we revive ourselves to grow deeper in our relationship with Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Father, and therefore with one another? We comprehend and appreciate that all we have is a gift from God. We have answered His call to follow Him. In doing so, we were given the grace of being called to the Secular Franciscan Order, to grow deeper in our relationship with the Trinity and thus with all creation. As we live the life of Penance, we grow in the understanding of the meaning of daily conversion. It takes effort to surrender completely to God's will and to open our hearts to and for one another. We want this Q to stir our hearts spiritually so we can be better Franciscans in our mission to build the Body of Christ.

Pope Francis has named 2016 the Year of Mercy. In solidarity with the Pope, we want to revive our hearts to be more merciful in all we do, say and think. In doing so, we must peacefully practice open dialogue and recognize the dignity of all creation. As members of the Franciscan Family, our journey begins, as St. Francis has shown us, with spiritual conversion. Mercy is part of who we are, yet we can always seek better ways to improve how we show mercy. Pope Francis calls us to prayer, which opens the door to experience God's mercy. We live this Jubilee year with God's mercy at the center with words of our Lord in our lives, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." (Lk 6:36).

In reviving our spirit, we invite you to contemplate on other distinguishing words



Franciscans strive to practice in your daily lives: poverty, humility, simplicity, compassion, joy, prayer, contemplation, Eucharist, penance, Mary, peace, unity, creation are only a few illustrations. What pictures do these words paint for you? How do you currently use your gifts to practice them in your life, and what do you see that needs improvement?

So during the next 11 months, we humbly ask for your prayers, and we ask the Holy Spirit to guide us continuously as we plan and prepare for our Franciscan family's five-year gathering — our Chapter of Mats.

The following reflection questions are to begin the journey to the Q 2016. These reflections can

be considered individually or in a local fraternity gathering.

Reflection Questions in Preparation for the Q 2016

- ❖ How can you revive the spirit in your life to bring about God's design to others as we live the Franciscan way of life?
- ❖ How do you live the Gospel in mercy with all you meet and know?
- ❖ How do you imitate St. Francis's love for all creation?
- ❖ How are you the voice for those who have no voice?

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Q 2016 Committee Core members:

- Judy Haupt
- Kate Kleinert
- Barbara Morgan
- Susan Simeone
- Kathryn Wohnoutka

Plan to attend the Q 2016 with open hearts and enthusiasm to grow deeper with our Franciscan spirituality while witnessing how God works through each of us in special ways. We want YOU to meet us in Saint Louis!

We all need to go back to the well, to be refreshed, to be revived.

Look for detailed registration information this fall.

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