



THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY of the SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER – USA

March 5, 2025

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS
National Minister
ofsusaminister@gmail.com

Diane F. Menditto, OFS
National Vice Minister
Diane.menditto@gmail.com

Susan Ronan, OFS
National Secretary
ofsusasecretary@gmail.com

Claudia Kauzlarich, OFS
National Treasurer
ofsusatreasurer@gmail.com

Mary Frances Charsky, OFS
International Councilor
mfcharsky@gmail.com

Donna Hollis, OFS
National Councilor
donnadancerfeet@aol.com

Josh Molitor, OFS
National Councilor
joshuamolitor@yahoo.com

Cherryle Fruge, OFS
National Councilor
Cmfofs2@gmail.com

Fr. Marek Stybor, OFM Conv
CNSA President-In-Turn
ofs-national@olaprovince.org

Dear brothers and sisters,

For this Lenten season, let us focus our prayer and fasting and almsgiving on peace, in Ukraine, in the Middle East, in north and central Africa, in Myanmar and wherever the terror and grief of war enflame the earth. Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa OFM, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, has been a tireless advocate for the innocents who suffer in Israel, in Gaza, and the West Bank. In this excerpt from his [Lenten letter of March 4, 2025](#) he exhorts his flock to a focus on The Cross of Christ:

“This is the heart of Easter, this is the place where the great hope of the Church and the world is born and founded: The violent words of rancor and hatred, the presumptuous speeches of conflict and recrimination cannot prevent God from speaking the word of reconciliation in Christ: Ave Crux, spes unica! [Hail to the Cross, Our only Hope!]

May Lent, the sacramental sign of our reconciliation, be a new opportunity for us, a renewed gift of the Spirit who leads us into the desert with Christ so that together with him, we can listen, once again to the word of grace and forgiveness. Easter, which we will celebrate in forty days, is in fact not simply the memory of a past event, but the living and present memorial of God’s grace, which reconciles us with himself in the Cross of Christ and makes us new creatures. Through the power of God, we see a reversal of human criteria in the cross of Christ: from vengeance to forgiveness. It is the paschal transformation of death into life, it is the evangelical overcoming of condemnation through forgiveness: “He indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. So, whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.” (2 Cor. 5:15.17).

We need this new word, the word of the Cross, which may seem like foolishness to the powerful and wise of this world and of our time. It is the only word that can reopen paths of hope and peace, by overturning worldly criteria. The Way of the Cross, along which we learn with difficulty, but with joy, the new logic of gift and forgiveness, calls for men and women, young and old, families and children, who are ready to walk it, by renewing their way of

*thinking and their attitude. Only in this way can we hope for a future in peace. **Therefore, I would like all of us, individuals and communities, to find space and time during these holy days to contemplate the Cross of Christ, to read and meditate on the Passion narratives, to participate in the pious exercise of the Way of the Cross...***

It was the Cross, the indispensable mystery, that captured the heart of St Francis. Jesus spoke to him from it. When the innocent flee from violence, there are opportunities to accompany them. We can fast and pray, and we can also volunteer, advocate, make donations, or take other actions in direct support of those affected. What we must *not* do is look away. May we all have a fruitful and peaceful Lent.

With fraternal love,

Jane DeRose-Bamman
National Minister

Joe Makley
National Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation animator