

TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

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Calligraphy by
Fr. Franklin Fong, OFM

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 candidates 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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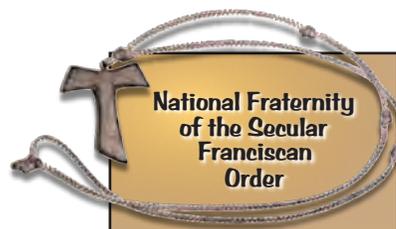
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THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

National Minister, Jan Parker, OFS

THE TAU, THE NAMETAG AND THE TOMBSTONE

Celebrating the life of Deacon Tom Bello, OFS

September 17, 1949 – March 29, 2016

Our brother Tom passed from this life to the next on March 29, but he is still speaking to us in ways that go beyond words. I was honored to be at his wake and funeral, and privileged to share some precious moments with Tom's wife, Judy, and their family. Some of what I saw and heard those two days I want to share with you.

Tom was buried wearing his deacon's alb, and in his hands was a light green plastic rosary. Tom also chose to wear two distinct signs of his membership in the Secular Franciscan Order.

First, a TAU cross.

The TAU cross he wore was prominent, very similar to the one pictured here, reflecting Tom's Franciscan heart and his 33 years as a professed Secular Franciscan. Tom lived the Gospel life fully. He greatly valued the privileged place of fraternity as he journeyed with us, daily embracing the call to ongoing conversion and bringing joy and hope to all.



The red stole, draped across the TAU, symbolizes Tom's ordination to the diaconate four years after his profession. Tom truly was among us as "one who serves" – a deacon of the Church, a wonderful

proclaimer of the Gospel and a dedicated servant leader — but I could not help seeing the color red and immediately thinking of God's mercy and love, shown by Tom to all, and thinking, too, of the Holy Spirit, so active in Tom's life.

Secondly, just below the TAU Cross, Tom wore his name tag from our 2015 NAFRA Chapter, bearing our theme, "Be the Joyful Face of Christ to All."



There it was, just as he had worn it when we last gathered with him in October. I looked at his nametag and then at Tom's face, which even in death seemed joyful, and then of course I thought of his laugh. What great times we have all shared with Tom! How easily we can picture him with us, as he was so often. Tom loved being a member of our national Franciscan family, and he had no problem showing this by being buried with his NAFRA nametag. Are you as struck by this as I am? I love it.

He held a rosary. Tom's devotion to Our Lady was so great! I asked Tom's wife Judy "why this particular rosary?" She replied, "Of course, as you may not be shocked to hear, Tom had more rosaries than I could ever count, all of which are special and many of which were given him by OFS folks at each of the regions he visited. I chose the green one in particular because he held it throughout the last months of his illness. Why? I believe because of: its Franciscan austerity (its value came from what it represented, not any worldly value of its materials); its color (green connoting peace to Tom, who as president of the student body at UNC had signed all his correspondence in green ink); and its simplicity (focusing the mind and heart on what is important, and pruning out what is not.)"

On the day of the wake, I heard about Tom's tombstone. As Tom's daughter Jackie shared on her Facebook page: "The burial coordinator said never in

her 17 years of experience had someone requested a tombstone without a name on it, but that was my dad's wish. He wanted just one verse on his tombstone: "Sin has increased, but grace has far surpassed it." (Romans 5:20). I think it represents his humility and his belief in God's mercy and love." How I marveled at this! Tom's name is written in the Book of Life; it doesn't need to be on his tombstone. His priority was to proclaim the Good News of God's mercy and love. Tom rejoiced in the grace shown to him, a sinner. How often he encouraged us to rejoice, as well, at how God "mercies us," and to "be the merciful presence of God" to all we meet. That his tombstone should proclaim God's mercy, and say nothing about Tom, is perfect.

Yes, Tom continues to speak to us, and I don't think he's done yet. Maybe there's a message for us in the Scriptures or in the songs he chose for his funeral? The Scriptures: Wisdom 3:1-6, Psalm 27, Colossians 3:12-17 and Matthew 5:1-12a. The songs: O God, Beyond All Praising; Here I Am, Lord; Amazing

Grace; On Eagle's Wings; Quietly Peacefully (Going Home); and Sing with All the Saints in Glory. As to the message, I'm listening carefully - Tom was always a teacher of second languages.

When Tom and I last visited on March 3, he asked me to speak at his funeral Mass. He whispered to me, "Do the Franciscan part." On the day of the funeral I did the best I could, but for those of us who knew and loved him, it was Tom who "did the Franciscan part." Tom was a Franciscan all the way to the end, but he would be the first to remind me, "There is no end." He's right. It's not over. Love endures forever.

Dear Franciscan brothers and sisters, as each of us remembers how Tom touched our lives let us resolve to "begin again" to live lives worthy of our call. May the love of God, and our love for our brother Tom, impel us.

Peace, love and every blessing!

Your sister,

Jan

EULOGY OF DEACON TOM BELLO OFS

by Jan Parker OFS

When Tom and I last visited on March 3, 2016, he asked me to speak at his funeral Mass. He whispered to me, "Do the Franciscan part." What I hope to do here today is share with you Tom's Franciscan heart.

Thirty-three years ago this June, when Tom was 33, he made this profession: "By the grace of God, I consecrate myself to the service of his kingdom, and I promise to live all the days of my life the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Secular Franciscan Order." On that day Tom made a lifelong commitment to the Franciscan Order.

The Secular Franciscan Order, formerly known as the Third Order of St. Francis, is a religious order for the lay members of the Church. We live with our families and work out in the world, but gather regularly with our Franciscan brothers and sisters in our local fraternities. It is there that we are formed and transformed, as we strive for ongoing daily conversion.

To live the Franciscan life is a call on our heart, and a true vocation; it is a call that Tom heard and followed. Tom offered himself as a servant of God, and by God's grace, he became a

wonderful gift to the Order, to the world and to each of us who knew him.

If you knew Tom, you knew a lot about being Franciscan. He was so joyful, bringing hope and joy to others; walking the path of peace; embracing the poor; and living a life of mercy and forgiveness. His arms were outreached to all. He lived simply, with profound humility. Tom rejoiced always in the total goodness of God and in all God's creation. He rejoiced in the overflowing love of a God who poured himself out for us by becoming one like us in the Incarnation — Jesus, suffering for us, emptying himself on the Cross, and

giving the gift of Himself always in the Eucharist, feeding us, uniting us. Tom lived this Franciscan life with a passionate love of God, and constant, constant prayer. Tom always said, "The focus is Christ. The end is salvation. The way is love."

Tom truly lived the Gospel life — and oh how he could proclaim the Gospel! He was a true servant — as a husband, a father, a Deacon, and our Franciscan brother. He was a servant in leadership at every level of fraternity — local, regional, and for



six years as the National Minister of our 12,000 brothers and sisters in our country. Tom knew hundreds of our brothers and sisters by name. Tom was known, loved and appreciated by those in our international fraternity as well.

Tom was a spiritual leader in every sense, and he taught us not just by words, but by actions. What a gift to our Order! He gave us such insights, making the Gospel real and personal, and did it with such joy! Tom encouraged us, and he walked with us. Our brother — our joyful, goofy, wonderful and holy brother Tom who said, “I’m a simple guy” — and he was. I know many members of our Franciscan family are here — and many more are here in spirit. Tom loved us, and referred to us as his beloved Franciscan family. He was always so present to each of us. It was a blessing to be with Tom, who truly lived in the present moment. How he blessed us! He would reach out and touch us, blessing us with the love of God. Such love!

Tom always said, “Love is *always* the source, the goal, the means and the measure.”

Tom found this love of God daily in the celebration of the Eucharist. His prayer of praise at each Mass, at the consecration and elevation of the Host and the Cup, was “My Love, my Light, my Life, my Lord and my God! My God and my All”

Tom and I always sang when we were together, and it seems right that I should sing again now the song we last sang together when he was here with us. In the words of St Francis: *Let us bless the Lord, the Living and true God! Let us always give back to God praise, glory, honor, blessing and every good! Amen, so be it! Amen!*

Oh, Tom, you did give back to God – you gave your heart, your soul, your love! Thank you for giving God so much, so that you could give *us* so much! I’ll see you soon.

Dear Wonderful Franciscans, Secular and Otherwise!

In the weeks since Tom was called Home by the Lord, the family and I have striven to thank earnestly each and every one of you who has written, texted, called, or emailed your prayers and sympathy. We are profoundly grateful to you all, especially since the Secular Franciscans are so near and dear to Tom's heart.

Alas, in my all-too-human frailty, my energy is flagging to pen more individual thank-you notes. With apologies, I am resorting to what is more do-able: the mass (but still sincere!) thanks to all. (In this Year of Mercy, please try to think of it as a group Christmas or Easter letter.)

Tom was so special that, naturally, he leaves a churning wake behind him. The perpetual motion of that churning represents the energy with which he loved us all and which we reciprocated. Ours now is a renewed opportunity to apply such joyful energy in ways that would make Our Lord, St. Francis and Tom all rejoice and be glad.

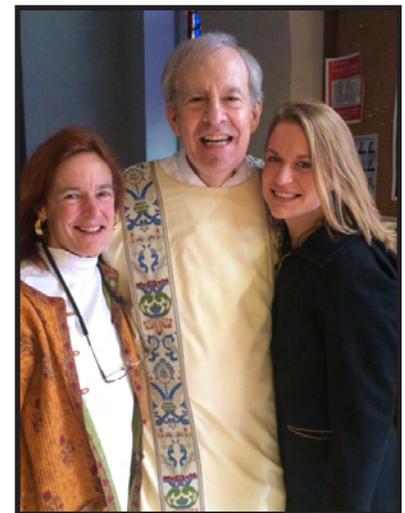
For example, one of my most immediate projects is to construct an All Souls Memorial Rose Garden in our backyard. I've cleared a large space of its turf and am now busily but carefully planting red, pink and yellow Knock-Out roses (which Tom preferred to call "ever-reblooming" roses). The kids, grandkids and I will make all-weather aluminum tags in loving memory of all those who have preceded us and remain in our hearts forever. Tom will beam down on us at our dedication ceremony!

In a more mundane but practically useful vein, I gathered all the OFS T-shirts Tom received when he visited so many regions, and am having a quilt made. On chilly winter nights (and even some warm summer evenings directly under a ceiling fan), the kids and I will snuggle under the Franciscan quilt.

Regarding options for longer-term commitments, I am in a period of discernment about the most meaningful ways to invest my time and energy going forward. Thank you for your prayers to help me understand how I best can offer service in a very needy world.

Most of all, thanks for your longtime support of Tom and his ministry — which is *your* ministry — and for all the service, prayers and love you have shared and inspired so widely.

Judy Bello
McLean, Virginia
May 17, 2016



Tom surrounded by wife, Judy Bello and daughter, Jackie Bello.

Sharing The Vision

News from the National Executive Council (NEC) to the National Fraternity (NAFRA)

Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee Chair - Application Process Open

The National Executive Council is seeking applicants for the position of Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee Chair. (See related article in this issue of the *TAU-USA*.) Those interested in this opportunity to serve may contact National Secretary Mattie Ward, OFS at mamamattie1@gmail.com. Application deadline is August 31, 2016. The appointment begins November 5, 2016, for a period of two years. Many thanks to our current Chair, Anne Mulqueen, who will continue to serve until the 2016 NAFRA Chapter.

Management of the Order Project

There was a tremendous response to the Management of the Order (MOTO) Survey, as more than 2,000 members of the Order completed the survey. The results of this survey will be published in a series of reports, the first of which can be found in this issue of *TAU-USA*. This first report gives an excellent overview of the survey and a wonderful analysis of the key questions posed by our International OFS Council ("CIOFS"). It is fascinating reading with much food for thought. Further analysis of the results of the survey will be an ongoing project, taking place in stages, and communicated to the National Fraternity in a number of ways. The results from this survey will be extremely helpful in guiding OFS leadership in the years to come.

In spite of great efforts to publicize the MOTO survey, the invitation to participate in the survey did not reach every member of our Order as we had hoped. Additionally, due to time constraints set by CIOFS, the survey was available only in English, making it difficult for our Spanish and Korean speaking members to respond. For these reasons, the NEC and the MOTO Committee plan a "second wave" effort. Steps forward include translation and reopening the survey for OFS members who did not

participate previously. The realization that some members had not even heard of the MOTO survey points to the fact that effective communication across the Order is an ongoing challenge. Improvement in communication structures is extremely important to the National Executive Council.

The National Fraternity is very grateful to the members of the MOTO Committee, whose ongoing work is a gift to the Order. Special thanks to Committee Chair Mary Stronach for organizing this effort and keeping it on schedule; to Pat Serotkin for setting up the mechanics of the survey; to Mary Bittner for summarizing thousands of responses and writing the report to CIOFS; and to the all the MOTO Committee members who gave of their time and made unique contributions: Mary Frances Charsky, DonnaMarie Kaminsky, Anne Mulqueen, Dawn Rusinko, Karen Szczesniak and Carolyn Townes. To think of the combined Franciscan life experience of the members of this Committee is amazing.

Guidelines for the National Commissions and Committees

The NEC has spent considerable time working to update the NEC Guidelines for National Commissions and Committees. These guidelines cover the responsibilities of the NEC in the selection and appointment process, as well as the meeting and reporting requirements for National Commissions and Committees. We greatly appreciate the suggestions we received from the National Fraternity Council. One very helpful change will be to adjust the timing of appointments, i.e., Commission and Committee Chair appointments will take place *one year after* the election of a new NEC. Note that the term for a Chair will remain three years, but will not be congruent with term of those elected to the NEC. This adjustment will give a newly elected council time

to form and “get their feet on the ground” without the stress of making these important decisions immediately after being elected. This also allows time for dialogue between the NEC and the brothers and sisters in these leadership positions. It will ensure continuity in the weeks immediately following an election and a smooth transition when new appointments are made. These guidelines will be finalized, approved and posted on the NAFRA website within the next few months.

Youth and Young Adult Commission Study

The NEC continues its year of study and discernment to come to a better understanding of YouFra and define the direction for our National Youth and Young Adult Commission. In May, the NEC compiled and reviewed current and past YouFra and FYAA documents and resources. In July, the NEC will meet with former International YouFra coordinator, Ana Fruk, OFS. Ana lives in Croatia and currently serves on the Order’s International Executive Council as a CIOFS Presidency councilor. We look forward to talking with Ana about youth outreach and to the guidance she will give us.

Formation Directors Workshop in 2017

Our National Formation Commission is planning a Regional Formation Directors Workshop to be held July 20-23, 2017, at Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Illinois. Financial assistance for attendees will be provided by the Duns Scotus Trust Fund.

The Franciscan Journey – now in Spanish and Korean

The Franciscan Journey by Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap., is now available in Spanish and Korean, and can be ordered from Smoky Valley Printing.

2016 Quinquennial

As of this writing 520+ Franciscans will very soon gather for the 19th OFS Quinquennial Congress. Approximately 15 percent of those registering for the Q received some scholarship assistance. Funds for these scholarships, in a total amount of \$14,400, came from NAFRA’s Restricted Funds for National Events and Regional Needs, set up from a bequest received in 2012.

We are blessed to have the following members of the International Council in attendance at the Q: General Minister Tibor Kauser, OFS, General Spiritual Assistant Fr. Martin Bitzer, OFM Conv., and Presidency Councilors Jennifer Harrington, OFS, and Ana Fruk, OFS.

Many thanks to our extraordinary Q Committee, ever joyful in their many preparations for this momentous event! God bless our Co-chairs Susan Simeone and Kate Kleinert, and Committee members Patsy Burgess, Judy Haupt, Barb Morgan and Kathy Wohnoutka. What a gift they are giving to our National Family!

2016 NAFRA Chapter Preparations Underway

Regional Minister Marie Thomas, OFS, Vice-Minister Jeane Swaynos, OFS, and the brothers and sisters of Five Franciscan Martyrs Regional Fraternity have been busily planning for our 2016 NAFRA, to be held Nov. 1-6, 2016, at San Pedro Retreat, Winter Park, Florida. Marie and Jeane assure us that Brother Sun will be there to welcome us! Chapter Registration and details will soon be sent to the National Fraternity Council members.

Holy Trinity Regional Fraternity to Host 2017 NAFRA Chapter

Regional Minister Steve White and the brothers and sisters of Holy Trinity Regional Fraternity have graciously offered to host the 2017 NAFRA Chapter, which will be held Sept. 26–Oct. 1, 2017, at Mount St. Francis Center for Spirituality, in Mt. St. Francis, Indiana.

Regional Spiritual Assistants added to NAFRA-L

Regional Spiritual Assistants are now included on communications that go out via our NAFRA-L list serv.

***To contact a member of the
National Executive Council please
send an email:***

OFS.National.Minister.USA@gmail.com



MEANDERINGS

One of the consequences of moving to a new place is the discovery of saved things that haven't been read in years. The question: *Why did I save this stuff in the first place?*

But some things I'm happy that I saved. So I thought I might share some poetry with you. It comes mostly from another century (Later 1900's) and still has some zing. Here goes - and I hope you enjoy these slightly revised poems.

+++

To Francis - with love

*So here we are,
you and I,
21st century,
and we're talking
about following
a 13th century friar.*

*Not that I'm against
the 13th century.
It is called
the "greatest" -
But I'm living now!*

*Gospel - "Good news."
The words are as
old as Jesus,
and people are
not so different.
So what's this
man in brown
trying to prove?
What's with this little
man from Assisi?
What's the buzz?*

*What's so special about
one man in a history
that contains thousands
of special people
who followed Jesus?*

*Francis believed the Gospel,
the whole thing -
Matthew, Mark, Luke
and especially John..
Jesus said: "Do not worry
over what to eat ..."
and Francis didn't.
"Whoever wishes
to follow me,
let him deny himself,"
and Francis did!
"Take nothing with you
on the way."
So Francis didn't.*

*It might sound simplistic,
even impossible, or
at least ridiculous,
wouldn't you say?
But it happens to be
the way Francis did things.*

*Jesus said: "I have
come among you
as one who serves ..."
You guessed it -
Francis did the same.*

*He even called his followers
"Friars minor"
His 'Little brothers'
because they were to
be servants of all."
"My brothers are called 'lesser'
so that they may not
presume to
become greater."*

*That's pretty neat when 'power'
seems helpless to deal with*

*many human problems.
We need little brothers
instead of 'big brother.'*

*So, gospel living,
according to St. Francis,
is simply taking the
whole thing seriously,
as it is!
Not watered down,
not interpreted away,
but just as it is revealed,
without gloss!*

+++

In union with Jesus

*The clenched fist
Unity?
The peace sign,
Unity?
The march together,
Unity?
Celebrating together,
Unity?
Syrian peace talks,
Unity?
Gang warfare,
Unity?
Indifference - apathy,
Unity?
Criticism - gossip,
Unity?
"Don't get involved."
Unity?
"Let George do it!"
Unity?*

*"May they all be one,
Father, may they
be one in us,
as you are in me
and I am in you.
So that the world
may believe it was
you who sent me."*

*This is the sign that
Christ is with us,
that we are
one with him
and one with each other;
Always!*

*Back to fundamentals,
Francis and the Gospel.
"Without me you
can do nothing."
True
or false?*

*Unity with Jesus
is all-important!
More important than -
the peace corps,
day-care centers,
political organizations,
big churches
well-knit fraternities,
two (four?)TV sets,
the latest I-phone,
sensitivity training,
A new hair-do,
A motorcycle.
A prom date,
A car.
Other friends.
A vacation.
The latest computer
A new apartment.
A sufficient bank account.
Health.*

*Franciscans have
to know, deep inside,
where it counts,
that Jesus is #1
in their lives.*

*Otherwise ..
- Disorder -
"Without me you
can do nothing"...
for you,
for your brother,
for your sister,
for anybody.*

*So what
is your answer about
who or what
is #1?
Honestly?*

Being a neighbor

*A man was going
from Jerusalem to
Jericho - and on
the way he was
attacked by robbers
and left half-dead.
That's Jesus' way of
exploring the question:
"Who is my neighbor?"*

*Participate - to have or
to share with others in some
activity, enterprise etc.
"Partake"*

*is described thus by Webster,
which isn't half bad.
But if you hate
working with people,
or sharing praise or
carrying part of the burden,
then it probably
gets you to turn the page
and skip this part ..
MAYBE!*

*But Franciscans
can't just 'tune out.'
They may want to,
and even start to,
but they can't be
true to their calling
and not participate!*

*Willy-nilly,
they must learn
to take part in,
and share with others
in good activities!
This goes beyond
personal, individual
efforts ... alone.
It means that we
group together
to tackle a problem,
present a program,
share a burden.
We are a family,
a fraternity - at work,
together.*

*So we offer the family:
ideas, suggestions,
building blocks,
brainstorms,*

*anything at all
that will make the family
do and be together
for Jesus,
the Trinity,
and the people
Jesus loves,
which is everyone!*

*So we learn together,
to work together,
to suffer together,
to celebrate together,
to recognize people
as people,
and respond with
sensitivity to needs.
These are ways
by which
we show our love.*

*All of us
working
TOGETHER!
Recognizing
the Samaritan who
is our neighbor!*

- Turtle talk -

*Behold the Turtle
who makes progress
only when he
sticks his neck out!*

- Says the Turtle: -

*Maybe I'm lucky
to be
going slowly,
because
I may be going
in the wrong direction.*

- Franciscan talk -

*Lord, make me
an instrument
of your peace.*

Please!

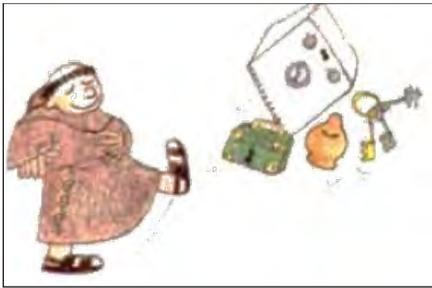


FORMATION COMMISSION

POVERTY

by Diane Menditto, OFS

During the last few months, the question of “*poverty*” has come up in discussions during formation classes, at visitations, at fraternity meetings and in some podcasts I have been listening to. Here are some thoughts I would like to share with our National Family.



Fr. Dan Horan, OFM, in his excellent series of lectures, *The Saint and the Pope: What the Spirituality of Two Men Named Francis Can Teach Us about Christian Living*, speaks of poverty in three different ways: **Abject or material poverty**: lacking the basic needs of life—poverty that is not experienced by choice; **Spiritual Poverty**: “...the surrender or letting go of those things that are non-material or internal—our pride, selfishness, self-centeredness, opinions, judgments, prejudices, etc.” (here he cautions us not to use “spiritual poverty” in a “self-justifying” way); and **Evangelical Poverty**, which is called for in our Rule and Constitutions. Evangelical poverty is a voluntary self-emptying—“*[it] demonstrates confidence in the Father, creates interior freedom, and disposes them [us] to promote a more just distribution of wealth.*” (GC 15.1) “...it requires a strong personal commitment and the stimulation of the fraternity in prayer and dialogue, communal review of life, and attentiveness to the instructions of the Church, and the demands of society.”(GC 15.2) [Refer to Rule Article 11 and Constitutions Article 15 quoted in full below.]

As I prayed about this and asked myself many of the questions you will read below, it came to me that the **fruit of Poverty is generosity**. Doesn't *that* sound strange! How can we be generous when we have

nothing? Give it some thought. Even the truly poor can be generous, because generosity, just like poverty, doesn't always have to do with material possessions. Spiritual Poverty and Evangelical Poverty have to do with **how we handle our state in life and our relationships**. A person might not have money or possessions—in that sense, yes, he or she is poor. However, that person might **not** be “poor” in the way that we are called to be poor. The poverty of Christ was a **voluntary** self-emptying. Francis and Clare were poor temporally and spiritually by choice. This is the poverty that we are asked to imitate.



When we embrace **Spiritual/Evangelical poverty**, **we are free** to share with others anything and everything that has been given to us. We are generous when we give our **full attention** to our brothers and sisters. When they speak to us, **we listen!** How often have we stopped listening to someone because we don't agree with him or her? Do we reject and judge others because what they say does not sound like what we are so sure is right? Could we be the one who is described as “not giving an inch” in challenging or difficult discussions? Listening also requires giving our **time** to another person. This might require us to put aside something we would rather be doing. This is a kind of **generosity that requires no material gift except the gift of ourselves**.



In fraternity are we willing to get out of our “comfort zone”? Do we fulfill our role as Franciscans, our call to follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis, in a way that **leaves room for others to suggest new ways** of achieving the same goal? When we gain **knowledge, do we share it** with others without forcing them to agree with us? Are we willing to let go of our own agendas and **collaborate** with others, or do we sulk and make things difficult for the group if things do not go our way? Do we look at our Rule and Constitutions, *not as RULES*, but as **a way of life** to be lived by the imperfect beings that we are? We must remember that we are called to **daily conversion**—that means that we are not perfect today and are not likely to be perfect tomorrow either. When we are poor enough to **empty ourselves** of our personal desires and biases, we have room in our hearts and minds to **generously accept the ideas of others** and to live the true **spirit of what we have professed**.



Evangelical Poverty also calls us to reach out to the materially poor and to work for causes that will help to make their lives better. As Franciscans we are not only called to a contemplative spirituality. We are also called to action. Do we get involved with our fraternity apostolates? Are we willing to give up our time to volunteer in a soup kitchen or to visit the sick? This Year of Mercy gives us ample encouragement to work for justice and peace in our communities.

As Secular Franciscans living in the world, we are called to be **poor enough to be generous**. Through our Baptism, we are called to **make ourselves available** to bring others to God. As professed Franciscans, this commitment is strengthened. We see Christ through the eyes of St. Francis who said, “*So, let us go out into the world and remind everybody by example as well as word to turn to God.*” (*Legend of the Three Companions*)

Diane F. Menditto, OFS
Minister, Our Lady of the Angels Region
Member, National Formation Commission

References:

Rule 11: “*Trusting in the Father, Christ chose for himself and his mother a poor and humble life, even though he valued created things attentively and lovingly. 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. Thus, 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.*”

Constitutions 15

1. *Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to live the spirit of the Beatitudes and, in a special way, the spirit of poverty. Evangelical poverty demonstrates confidence in the Father, creates interior freedom, and disposes them to promote a more just distribution of wealth*
2. *Secular Franciscans, who must provide for their own families and serve society by means of their work and material goods, have a particular manner of living evangelical poverty. To understand and achieve it requires a strong personal commitment and the stimulation of the fraternity in prayer and dialogue, communal review of life, and attentiveness to the instructions of the Church, and the demands of society.*
3. *Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to reduce their own personal needs so as to be better able to share spiritual and material goods with their brothers and sisters, especially those most in need. They should give thanks to God for the goods they have received, using them as good stewards and not as owners. They should take a firm position against consumerism and against ideologies and practices which prefer riches over human and religious values and which permit the exploitation of the human person.*
4. *They should love and practice purity of heart, the source of true fraternity.*

Fr. Daniel P. Horan, OFM,
The Saint and the Pope: What the Spirituality of Two Men Named Francis Can Teach Us about Christian Living
(Lecture series available through *Now You Know Media*).



Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Walking Together

by Anne Mulqueen, OFS

In this issue of *TAU USA*, I have the privilege of introducing to you our newest member of the Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee, Patrick Martin, who also serves as Regional Minister of St. Margaret of Cortona Region—a region which encompasses the mid-Atlantic portion of the USA.

When my good friend and co-worker in the ecumenical-interfaith vineyard, Mike Carsten, resigned from the committee, I was faced with a daunting discernment process. The person chosen to fill the open position would be expected to jump into a process and ministry already in motion. That person would need the background and desire to espouse the committee's vision and goal, which is to advance ecumenical-interfaith awareness within the Secular Franciscan Order and ecumenical-interfaith involvement in secular society. And to do this, that person would have to have a solid grounding in his or her own Catholic faith while remaining open and committed to respectful and fruitful dialogue with other Christian denominations and faith expressions. And then I thought of Patrick.

Now I will let Patrick introduce himself to you.

I was ecumenical before I even knew the word.

Growing up Catholic in the South during the 60s was different from some other places. I vividly remember one Sunday when a visiting priest was making a mission call to our parish and delivering the homily at each Mass. He started by rattling off some statistics: Nigeria: 10 percent Catholic. Korea: 6 percent Catholic. Then, he added, Georgia (my home State) 2 percent Catholic.

Really? The entire State of Georgia was just 2 percent Catholic? That might explain why my family drove 30 minutes to and from church, even though we lived in Atlanta. That might also explain why I was the only Catholic Boy Scout in Troop 84, sponsored by Haygood Memorial Methodist Church. (I learned a lot about the Bible from attending Scout Sunday events at that church.)

I grew up being very comfortable with our Protestant brothers and sisters.

As Franciscans, we learn about Francis and his interfaith encounter with the Sultan of Egypt, Malik al-Kamil, during the Fifth Crusade. There's a history of Franciscan dialogue with Islam. We Franciscans seem to understand this reach across the religious divide. We reach out to our Protestant friends as well. Our Church calls us to respectful and ongoing relations with other Christians.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church cites two important Church documents as guides for understanding the relationship of Catholics with other Christians.

Lumen Gentium, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, teaches us that:

15. The Church recognizes that in many ways she is linked with those who, being baptized, are honored with the name of Christian, though they do not profess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve unity of communion with the successor of Peter. For there are many who honor Sacred Scripture, taking it as a norm of belief and a

pattern of life, and who show a sincere zeal. They lovingly believe in God the Father Almighty and in Christ, the Son of God and Saviour. They are consecrated by baptism, in which they are united with Christ. They also recognize and accept other sacraments within their own Churches or ecclesiastical communities. Many of them rejoice in the episcopate, celebrate the Holy Eucharist and cultivate devotion toward the Virgin Mother of God. They also share with us in prayer and other spiritual benefits. Likewise we can say that in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit, for to them too He gives His gifts and graces whereby He is operative among them with His sanctifying power. Some indeed He has strengthened to the extent of the shedding of their blood. In all of Christ's disciples the Spirit arouses the desire to be peacefully united, in the manner determined by Christ, as one flock under one shepherd, and He prompts them to pursue this end. Mother Church never ceases to pray, hope and work that this may come about. She exhorts her children to purification and renewal so that the sign of Christ may shine more brightly over the face of the earth.

And, again, in *Unitatis Redintegratio*, *The Decree on Ecumenism*, our Church says:

3. Even in the beginnings of this one and only Church of God there arose certain rifts, which the Apostle strongly condemned. But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions made their appearance and quite large communities came to be separated from full communion with the Catholic Church — for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame. The children who are born into these Communities and who grow up believing in Christ cannot be accused of the sin involved in the separation, and the Catholic Church embraces upon them as brothers, with respect and affection. For men who believe in Christ and have been truly baptized are in communion with the Catholic Church even though this communion is imperfect. The differences that exist in varying degrees between them and the Catholic Church — whether in doctrine and

sometimes in discipline, or concerning the structure of the Church — do indeed create many obstacles, sometimes serious ones, to full ecclesiastical communion. The ecumenical movement is striving to overcome these obstacles. But even in spite of them it remains true that all who have been justified by faith in Baptism are members of Christ's body, and have a right to be called Christian, and so are correctly accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church.

The spirit of Francis is not limited to the Catholic Church. We find professed Franciscans in many Protestant denominations. The Secular Franciscan Order, through our Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee, continues to reach out to our brother and sister Franciscans in the Third Order Society of Saint Francis, the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, and all Franciscans throughout the Christian world. Pray for ALL Franciscans so that, some day, as Jesus prayed, “They may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us, so that the world may know that you have sent me.” (John 17:21)

May the Spirit of God awaken in us the desire to work together to build God's kingdom as we strive for unity within the Body of Christ.

Your sister and brother, Anne Mulqueen and Patrick Martin





JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



STANDING AT THE POOL OF APATHY

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, National JPIC Animator

As I was praying about what to share with you, the Spirit whispered the story of the infirm man in the fifth chapter of John's Gospel. He had been infirm for 38 years and sat at the pool of Bethesda waiting for someone to put him in when the angel came to stir the waters. Jesus simply asks the man a question. "Do you really want to get well?" I mean, 38 years? By now, he could have wiggled his way down to that pool. Instead of answering the question, he made excuses. He placed his blessings in the hands of someone else; as if it had nothing to do with him.

So, my brothers and sisters, are you sitting at the pool waiting? You say you are a Christian. You say you are a Franciscan. You say you have faith and trust in our merciful God. Then, why are you sitting at the pool waiting for someone else to do what God has called you to do? If our Lord came to you and asked if you were serious about serving him, what would your answer be? Would you make excuses like the infirm man at the pool? It is so easy to blame the next person because he or she did not do his or her part. It is so easy to pass the buck and not take responsibility for what is ours to do. Our Seraphic Father Francis prayed, May the Lord show us what is ours to do; not what is ours to avoid or what is ours to pass by and let someone else do.

Where in your life are you making excuses for not doing what is yours to do? Being a follower of Jesus and Francis is living a nonviolent, merciful life. This, I believe, is the bare minimum. We are called to show compassion and mercy to all those we come in contact with – whether we think they deserve it or not. We are also called to show mercy and compassion to our Sister Mother Earth. That means caring for creation and treating this global home of ours with love and respect. In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis writes: "The human environment and the natural environment deteriorates together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation." Are you caring for creation or are you making excuses –

blaming it on the government, big corporations, or your next door neighbor? What is yours to do? Are you doing what is yours to do? Or, are you standing at the pool of apathy and complacency?

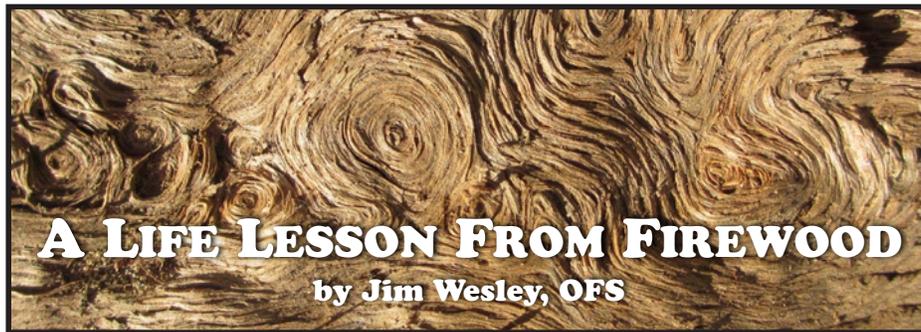
Just like the infirm man, you have been equipped with whatever you need to do what God has called you to do. But are you serious about living out that call? Do you really want to follow Jesus and do what is yours to do? Are you contributing to the violence in our world? Are you gossiping about someone in your church or fraternity? When the waters are stirred up, do you mobilize your fraternity members to work for justice? Or, are you waiting for someone to come along and do it for you?

This year's Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C., was entitled "Lift Every Voice! Racism, Class and Power" and in the program it was stated: "In this country, communities of color are under siege: named and unnamed black lives are killed each year by police; immigrants are detained and scapegoated; and public displays of discontent and calls for solidarity have too often been met with disregard, suppression or violence."

Are you standing at the pool of apathy – disregard, suppression, or violence? I hear so often, "I will continue to pray!" And yes, prayer is the first step, but it isn't the only step. Prayer should move your feet to action. Don't ask God to guide your steps if you are not willing to move your feet! Taking one small step is still a step. Action breeds momentum. Your one small step can be to notice where you are gossiping during the day; to notice when you are referring to "them" or "those people" instead of brothers and sisters; or to notice your language of separation and division as opposed to language of unity and inquiry. Do you bad-mouth presidential candidates or other public figures, especially on social media? Is that the Franciscan stance to take? How are you setting yourself apart from those who are speaking violence?

My challenge for us all: Watch as well as pray! Watch where you use language of violence, disregard and apathy. Pray that the Holy Spirit will replace this language with language of compassion and mercy. Then, take one small step to act on that compassion and mercy – be it towards a person or the environment. Replace “third world country” with “under-developed country.” God made one world and we are called to care for this one world. So let us do it with compassion, empathy and mercy. May the Lord give you His peace.

Animatee
Peace
Justice
Season
Creation
Prayer
Feast
Francis
Listen
Lent
Fast
Jesus
Nonviolence
Compassion
Empathy
Love
Franciscan



I am always humbled by the lessons that can be learned by simply paying attention to the natural world around us. One day while stacking firewood, I picked up a piece of oak and while getting ready to put it in the wood shed, I noticed some imperfections in the wood’s grain. Instead of the normal straight grain, there were swirls, twists, and concentric rings. As I admired the imperfect wood grain pattern, I wondered what the pattern was like throughout the piece of wood, if this unique pattern was visible on the outside.

So it was off to my workshop.

After cutting the wood into strips 3/8 inch thick by two inches wide, I realized that, with each pass of the saw, I was exposing the extraordinary hidden beauty within the chunk of wood, another example of the hand of God, ever-present in creation.

With the help of the internet, I learned that as the oak tree grows it receives light from the sun, nutrients from the soil and rain from the atmosphere – the essential requirements for normal, healthy growth. But like all living things, trees also experience stress. In the case of an oak tree, this could be in the form of fungal growth or insect damage. When this occurs, the wood fibers respond to the stress and arrange themselves in a kaleidoscope of twists, swirls, and knots. This beautiful natural phenomenon is known as an oak burl, and this "wild grain" makes burl wood extremely dense and resistant to splitting.



This Tau Cross, the symbol of Franciscans and the official habit of the Secular Franciscan Order, was fashioned from the wood of an oak burl. When wearing this, I am reminded that stress is a part of life, and that with the help of God, the fiber of my being can be transformed in a way I could never imagine.

Think about it! Imperfections resulting from dealing with stress can ultimately be the source of strength and great beauty.

Even in the worst situation in life, God waits for me, God wants to embrace me, God expects me.
 Pope Francis

SERMON ON THE AMOUNT

What I learned in my first six months as National Treasurer

By Jerry Rousseau, OFS

We recently celebrated the wonderful Easter Season and have been reminded that Christ is Risen, has Ascended to the Father, and has sent the Holy Spirit to be with us and guide us in all that we say and do (if we will allow ourselves to be open to His promptings). May the Father's will be done in our lives!

I now share with you what, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, I have learned these past six months. For followers of Francis, who accepted no money and possessed nothing, we sure have a different mode of being and living — checking and savings accounts, trust funds, restricted funds, income, expenses, etc.

1. Are we solvent? Emphatically, Yes.
2. What is the answer to the \$64,000 question? This is the total amount expended over the past two years for the cancelled venue for the 2016 Q. These funds came directly from our checking/savings account and represent the accumulation of “net income” during 2013 and 2014. In other words, we were substantially under budget during this time (+ \$99,000). Therefore, the impact was not as great as it might have been. We were also blessed with a substantial bequest during calendar year 2015 that affirmed God's providence.
3. How to avoid a similar problem? No contracts will be signed without full discussion and approval of the entire NEC (and, if warranted, of the National Fraternity Council).
4. Will the 2016 Q be a success (financially and otherwise)? A momentous event is anticipated for all who are fortunate enough to attend. Expected to be self-sustaining financially and possibly show some positive income. 505 registered as of this writing.
5. Was NAFRA able to assist with Q scholarships? 15% of those attending are receiving scholarships awarded by NAFRA. Also, several Regions have provided financial support directly to their members.
6. What success did our H2O Lenten Appeal enjoy? To date, \$3,732 has been received from fraternities, Regions, and individuals.
7. What is required of the Treasurer? As an elected Councilor on the NEC — to be available and responsible, help animate and guide the National Fraternity, attend meetings, preside at elections,

serve as fraternal visitor, and represent NEC at other gatherings. In the role of Treasurer — assist with preparation of the budgets (NAFRA, the Q, National Events, etc.), deposit all received checks and keep records of same, reimburse members for expenses incurred for the good of the Order, pay all bills received, keep accurate records of all expenditures by account and serve on the Duns Scotus Trust Fund Board. Respond to inquiries from members. Prepare quarterly and annual reports. Maintain accurate records of all donations and bequests. Review quarterly financial reports from Trust Fund providers and reconcile monthly bank statements. Record sales of formation books and calculate royalties paid quarterly.

8. Any surprises? Yes, it appears that some of our members procrastinate when it comes to paying for formation books from Smoky Valley Printing. I have uncovered a number of delinquent accounts dating back to 2012.
9. What, if anything, is being done regarding this? I have acquired copies of all delinquent invoices from Smoky Valley and have sent out requests for payment to all those still outstanding for calendar year 2015. Once this is complete, I intend to send out requests for payment for delinquent accounts in 2014, 2013, and 2012.
10. How much time is required to accomplish all requirements of the National Treasurer? For the past six months, 20–30 hours a week. No complaints — it is a joy to serve the Order and utilize the gifts that God has given me.

A final note, the Fair Share contributions from the Regions are beginning to trickle in. These funds (81 percent of our income) are the basis for much of the work being accomplished in the Order. May I remind all Regional Fraternities that you do not have an option to send in less than the \$17 per professed and candidate upon which the budget was constructed and approved. In other words, you cannot pick and choose what parts of the National Fraternity Budget you will support. The National Fraternity Council, which consists of all Regional Ministers (or delegates) along with the NEC members, voted (October 16, 2015) to approve this budget including the amount for Fair Share.



Management of the Order Committee Submits Report to CIOFS

More than 2000 OFS from Across U.S. Respond to Survey

Editor's Note:

The following is a report the Management of the Order Committee submitted to CIOFS. This is the first in a series of articles based on the national survey conducted by the committee. Subsequent articles will cover specific facets of the survey. Those who have not submitted their responses yet will be provided another opportunity in the near future. Spanish and Korean versions of the survey will become available as well.

This report was written by NAFRA Vice Minister Mary Bittner with the support and input of the Management of the Order Committee.

Method of Joint Reflection and Collection of Proposals

In response to CIOFS' request, we surveyed our membership regarding the proposals by CIOFS, asking members to rate their degree of agreement or disagreement with each proposal, with space for any comments. We also asked the following open-ended questions: Do you think these proposed changes will be effective? Are the anticipated costs a concern? Can you suggest another solution? Is there something not mentioned in the survey that you think is needed to fully develop the Order? What can we do as an Order to bring about this development? What, if anything, would you change? Also included in the survey were questions on our members' experience of leadership (7), formation (3), fraternal life (6), spiritual assistance/visitations (4), communications (2), vocations (1), and what is needed to enhance their fraternity's relationship with the Church (1) and the various levels of the Order (1), and their JPIC (1) and Franciscan Youth (1) programs, as well as demographic indicators (3). The survey was done electronically, with hard copies distributed to members without ready access to a computer. All professed members, spiritual assistants and people in formation were invited to complete the survey. There were 2,009 responses (of a total of 13,500 professed + candidates) for a 15 percent response rate.

A Perspective on the OFS in the United States

The survey revealed that our membership is mature and rich in life experience, but virtually half have

come very recently to their Franciscan vocation. Barely half (51 percent) of those who responded had been professed for more than 10 years, while 41 percent had been professed less than 10 years and 8 percent were in formation. Two-thirds of our professed members are between the ages of 56 and 75, with an additional 21 percent aged 76 or older. Only 2.6 percent of us are under the age of 45. An even more telling statistic is the age distribution of those in formation and the newly professed. Again, 65 percent of our newly professed (less than 5 years) are between 56 and 75 years of age, and 15 percent are 76 or older, meaning 80 percent of the newly professed are over the age of 55. Only 5.6 percent are younger than 45 years old. Of those in formation, 74 percent are over the age of 55, and fully 90 percent are over 45.

National OFS Priorities

The priorities of our national family were reflected in people's reactions to the CIOFS proposals. When responses to the open-ended survey questions were categorized by theme, the most frequently mentioned topics were: the need for more vocations and more visibility in the wider Church (25 percent), along with more care in vocational discernment and stressing the depth of commitment required; a concern for simplicity and an emphasis on the basics (18 percent); a desire to strengthen formation (16 percent); improving the quality of fraternal life (15 percent); prioritization of goals while minimizing bureaucracy (15 percent); and more communication between all levels of the Order (11 percent).

Overview of Responses to the CIOFS Proposals

All the ten permanent structures proposed by CIOFS garnered substantial agreement on an individual basis. In general, those proposals dealing with formation and preparation issues were viewed most favorably, with people appreciating the importance of a unified and coherent formation and the need to prepare newly elected leaders for their responsibilities. Proposals that were perceived as unnecessary, or as setting up layers of bureaucracy, were viewed less positively. The three most strongly favored were (in descending order, with percent of responses that agreed and strongly agreed): Annual Courses of Formation for Recently Elected Ministers and International Council Members (91 percent), Pool of

Persons of Great Experience in the Order (89 percent), International Formation Office (89 percent). The least favored proposals were International Area Coordination Organisms (78 percent), Office for Financial Matters with Stable Personnel (77 percent) and Office for the Postulation of the Causes of Saints (74 percent).

General Concerns Regarding the CIOFS Proposals

The cumulative effect of listing the ten recommended proposals may have skewed peoples' impression that every problem in the Order is being addressed by adding more structure to the upper levels of the Order. Many respondents viewed the newly conceived structures as a bureaucracy that may concentrate power in the hands of a few while not really addressing issues of primary interest to them, besides being costly to maintain. People missed an emphasis on prayer and reliance on the direction of the Holy Spirit. It seems to many that what is most needed to develop the Order is more members who understand in depth what it means to be professed in the OFS, and who commit to it fully. Adding more structural components (except possibly those for formation) does not seem likely to be effective in promoting this, nor does it fit their image of the Order being a family of simple followers of St. Francis. Even with projects that most people supported e.g., a Formation Office, their enthusiasm was tempered by concerns that we may lose the flexibility to tailor formation to particular fraternity or cultural needs. However, despite their concerns about the advisability and efficacy of some of these "structural" solutions, people were generally in favor of the Presidency getting the help and support they need. Delegating some elections, visitations and the performance of *ad hoc* studies to capable OFS members seems to be a reasonable way to reduce the workload of the Presidency.

Possible Projects

Very few concrete projects were suggested for international consideration. They included

- production of videos (or other materials) to be used for promotion of the Order. [vocations/visibility]
- better use of technology, including a way for individual Seculars to communicate directly with other Seculars around the world, share ideas, and inspire other ministries. [communications]
- international gatherings like the NAFRA Quinquennial Congresses that would be open to all Seculars [fraternity]

- a joint disaster relief program similar to the one that NAFRA is beginning in the United States, only for Seculars in all parts of the world. [service/outreach]
- development of retirement communities for Seculars. [fraternity]

A Final Recommendation

CIOFS (the Presidency) seems to be saying that our current structure is not working well for them, so we should incorporate some additional structural elements, hoping that this will relieve some of the pressure on the leadership, unify our formation activities, and improve communications both within and outside the Order. We suspect that the real issue is more fundamental than that.

Perhaps we all need to consider the situation of our Order a bit differently. The truth is we are a huge Order, vastly larger than any of the individual Orders of friars and sisters. Due to our very recent unification after a long history of being divided along the lines of the Friar Provinces, we haven't had much time to consider how best to organize ourselves, but have attempted to work from models which have been successful for much smaller groups of vowed religious. We haven't directly addressed the issue of whether our size—not to mention our language, national and cultural differences—renders those models somewhat impracticable (although CIOFS proposals suggest that this might be the case).

There are other indicators of our fundamental differences from other orders. Because we do not take vows nor do we live in community in the same way as the vowed religious do, our current structure is necessarily much more loosely organized than theirs. We more closely resemble a 'movement' rather than a more rigorously organized 'order'—a movement that recalls the early days of the Order of Penance.

We all recognize the necessity and the advantages of having a firm and sufficient structure: it organizes, maintains, facilitates, focuses, unifies. But it can also limit flexibility and perhaps tend to hamper the action of the Holy Spirit. Maybe it's time to consider and work with the advantages of having a very minimal structure. Maybe we should wonder why, after so many centuries, our Order has successfully become one. Might it be because God sees a need for a very large multicultural brotherhood spanning the globe, all living the gospel in fraternal communion? Maybe we should be thinking of how best to facilitate a group like that, looking at our size, our multicultural identity, our loose structure and our flexibility as distinct advantages willed by God for his purpose.



OFS Vocation Planted in Your Heart

by Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS

In most of the country this time of year, our gardens are starting to bear fruit (and vegetables). It didn't happen by magic. You took time to prepare the soil and plant the seeds. Then you continued with the cycle of watering and weeding. Now you are starting to benefit from your efforts. How wonderful!

God has been working on us. He has planted a seed (our vocation) in our hearts. How has your vocation blossomed? Have you borne much fruit? Are you allowing the water (daily prayer, spiritual reading, fraternity) to permeate? Do you allow the weeds (distractions, sin, the lack of discipline) to be pulled?

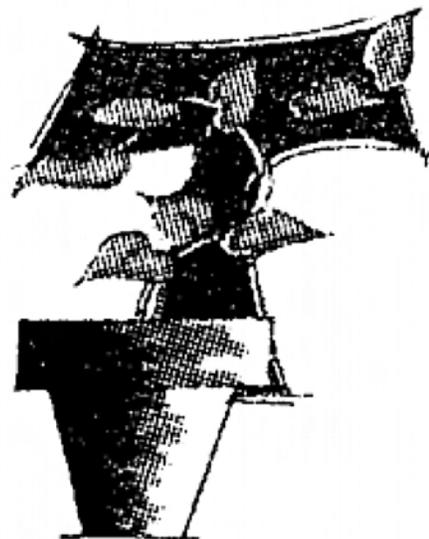
"You are the ones that I have chosen, that people may know and believe me and understand that it is I." Is 43:10 If we are chosen, we should be sharing and inviting others to the experience also – planting the seeds in their hearts just as the seed was planted in ours. What are some ways you've planted the seed in others hearts this summer? Use the Q (whether you attended or not), *Laudato Si*, Joy of the Gospel: *Evangelii Gaudium* and other current events, as opportunities to share about your vocation. Allow those seeds to grow in your heart first and then once they burst into bloom, share with others.

Vocation Tip: Create a bookmark with the information about your fraternity on the back (and general information about how to find a local fraternity such as the 1-800-Francis

number). The bookmark can be used during Mass to mark pages in the missalette. Leave at the back of Church. Also, get listed in the parish bulletin if appropriate. (Michael Morley, OFS, St. Mary's of the Angels Fraternity, St. Johnsbury VT)

Send your comments to:
OFSVocationsCommittee@gmail.com.

"...as we live our lives today in the model of St. Francis, choosing daily to live the Gospel life, help us to help others... recognize their vocation as a Secular Franciscan that You have already planted in their heart." National Vocations Prayer, Marian Crosby.



FRANCISCAN LIVING

Meditation Must Give Rise to Action

By Francine Gikow, OFS

As Secular Franciscans, we are called to follow Christ the same way as the Gerasene demoniac did in Mark 5:18-20:

“...the man who had been possessed by demons begged him [Jesus] that he might be with him. But Jesus refused, and said to him, “Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown to you.”

Like the Gerasene demoniac, we are not meant to leave everything to follow Jesus; we are to stay where we are and share what we have with our family and friends. This is the vocation of a Secular Franciscan: to bring Christ to others or as in the words of our profession, “to go from gospel to life and from life to the gospel.” It directs us towards a life of action and apostolate.

St. Clare, in her letter to Agnes, outlined a program for her sisters in their way of life when she said: “Gaze [on Him], Consider [Him], Contemplate [Him], as you desire to Imitate Him.”¹ This is not just a method of meditation or contemplation; rather it is a *way of living* for Franciscans. It is a way of “*Being*” in the world and changing the world through our interaction with it. We are to bring Christ to others by being tabernacles of Him.

Franciscans have always been “doing” people. We are not a contemplative order such as the Carmelites or Cistercians. Rather, our contemplation leads to action. As Francisco de Osuna, OFM, the Spiritual Director of St. Theresa of Avila states: “Do not think it sufficient to follow him with your imagination by meditating on his life and the mysteries, for if your actions do not correspond to your thoughts, you are not a true follower of Him.”²

We must not be hypocrites by speaking of Him but not actually following Him. Love begets action, then action in turn begets love. As St. Catherine of Siena stated: “You are rewarded not according to your work or your time, but according to the measure of your love.”

This service for others always entails sacrifice. We are to offer ourselves as living oblations for others. As de Osuna continues: “There are many who follow Christ

in interior consolation but refuse to follow him in suffering”³ ...and we must follow Him with joy, as Francis illustrates in his story of True and Perfect Joy.⁴

Then *how* do we act? Francis gave quite specific instructions for living with others.⁵ These instructions however, are not just for those missionaries who go to foreign lands, for we also are missioners for the domestic church. Firstly, we are to accompany others on their journeys and profess that we are Christians. Our lives must reflect Jesus. I know what I do is not nearly as important as how I do it, but I forget this fact all the time! Our whole lives should become small “sacraments,” where we bring the love and mercy of Jesus to those around us. We may not be called to do great things, but we are surely called to do all things with great love! Think for a moment and reflect on this today: “Did I show love to *every* person in *every* moment?”

Francis goes on to say there is a second way of living among others: it is to use words when the Spirit inspires us to do so. We fertilize our spiritual lives through prayer, fasting and the sacraments so we can actually hear the voice of God, rather than our own. Francis trusted the Holy Spirit to lead him in what he was to do. and it was one of his last prayers for his followers that the Holy Spirit teach us what each one of us must do as well.⁶

I find in my life as a Secular Franciscan however, that going from gospel to life and life to the gospel, when taken seriously, is difficult. I love to meditate on scripture, but I have great difficulty allowing my meditations lead to action. I take the easy way out and tend to leave things where they are. Call it being spiritually lazy or inertia, but I am also sure there is an element of fear. I fear change at times, especially when it means taking a risk in doing something new or visible or difficult. I am not always free enough of my self-centeredness that I can unreservedly respond to God’s call to action. I pray to God that I can act when I discern a better way of being and doing...and loving!

¹ 2LAg 20

² Francisco de Osuna, OFM *The Third Spiritual Alphabet* transl. By Mary E. Giles from the Classics of Western Spirituality Series, Mahwah N.J.: Paulist Press, 1981. p. 462.

³ Francisco de Osuna, 463.

⁴ FA/ED I: p. 166

⁵ FA/ED I: Early Rule 5-7

⁶ FA/ED II: 2Cel. 214

MOMENTS OF MERCY

To my Brothers and Sisters in Saint Francis

Saint Francis was a remarkable saint. I do not think that anyone in our world today would live the life and do the things that he did, both him and Saint Clare.

They did exactly what Jesus said:
Leave everything and follow me.
Saint Francis was remarkable in the way he appreciated all living things.

He worshiped and appreciated everything:

The Sun,
The Moon,
The Water,
The Animals,
He appreciated Life,
He appreciated Death,
And preached Peace.
(Canticle of the Sun)

I am always looking to read and to know more about the life of Saint Francis and Saint Clare.

In this Year of Mercy,
Let us pray for Peace and Mercy
for all of us.

Anthony Michael D'Angelico, OFS
Saint Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity
Staten Island, New York

The Year of Divine Mercy

As Franciscans, we are frequently reminded of going from Gospel to life, and in considering this year of Divine Mercy, Pope Francis' words in proclaiming this year in *Misericordiae Vultus*, are particularly relevant for us as Franciscans. The Holy Father writes, "As we can see in Sacred Scripture, mercy is a key word that indicates God's action toward us." And the

Holy Father continues, "In order to be capable of mercy, therefore, we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God. This means rediscovering the value of silence in order to meditate on the Word that comes to us. In this way, it would be possible to contemplate God's mercy and adopt it as our lifestyle." So, as Franciscans, we can grow in an appreciation of not only our vocation, but in the mercy of God, by constantly going back to Scripture, to meditating and praying with the Scriptures, particularly the Gospels.

Fr. Matthias' Message
Rev. Matthias Wesnofske, OFM, Cap.
Regional Spiritual Assistant

Moments of Mercy

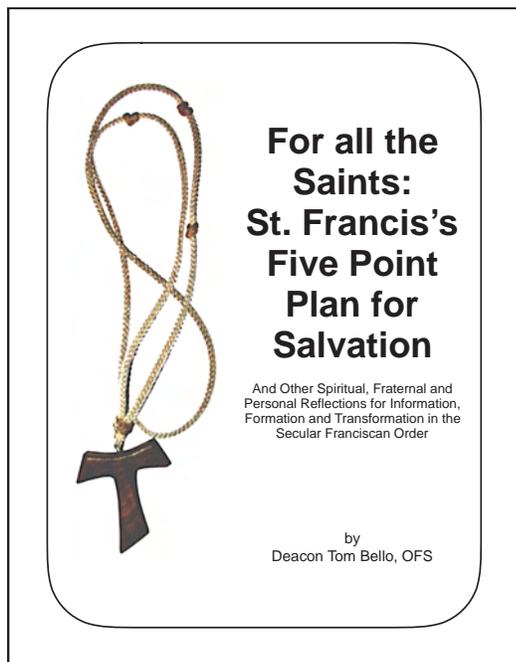
What is the opposite of indifference? After reading through *Misericordiae Vultus*, we see that being compassionate is the opposite of indifference. Pope Francis encourages us not to "fall into humiliating indifference or a monotonous routine that prevents us from discovering what is new! Let us ward off destructive cynicism! Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help!" (MV, no. 15). How easy it is in today's society to ignore the cries of those in need and to become cynical about the state of the world around us. We might feel that our small acts of mercy cannot really change anything. But the indifference of the world will not change until we start showing the compassionate love and mercy of God toward everyone we meet and become more involved in our communities.

US Conference of Catholic Bishops
June 2016

To contribute to the Moments of Mercy page, please send your contribution to:
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BOOKS BY DEACON TOM BELLO OFS

GIFTS FROM OUR FORMER NATIONAL MINISTER!



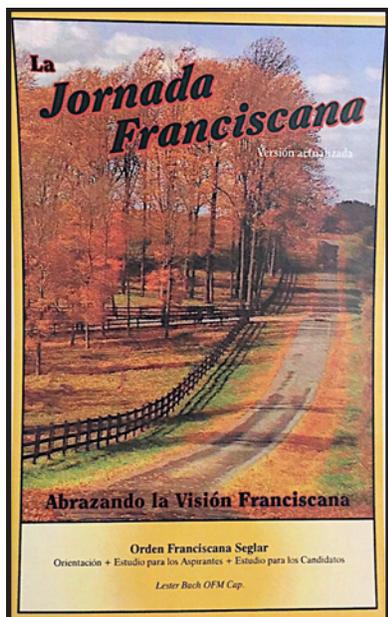
Great news! Deacon Tom Bello OFS has written two books for us. The first is titled **For all the Saints: St. Francis's Five Point Plan for Salvation and Other Spiritual, Fraternal and Personal Reflections for Information, Formation and Transformation in the Secular Franciscan Order.**

This book features many of Tom's writings during his six years as National Minister, and includes reflection questions and some great photos. Tom was ever a teacher, and this first book is truly a Franciscan "text book" that he wanted us to have.

Tom's second book is entitled **Every Day Praise!** Ever the pray-er, Tom call us to not only "rejoice always" but to "pray always" as well. This book of daily meditations will lead us to quiet moments with God. The first book should be available by the end of 2016, with the second book to follow in 2017. Thank you, Tom, for these wonderful gifts! May Tom rest in peace and may the perpetual light always shine upon him. Amen.

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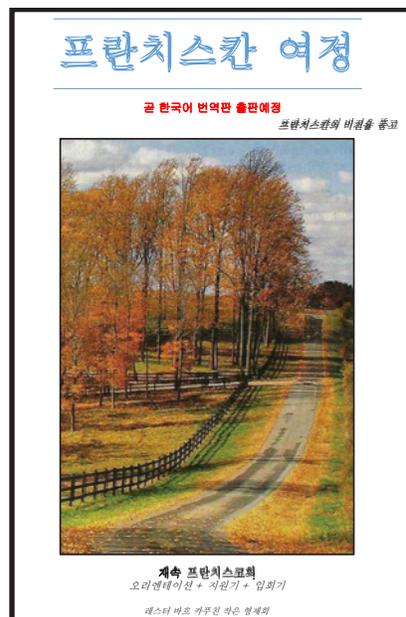
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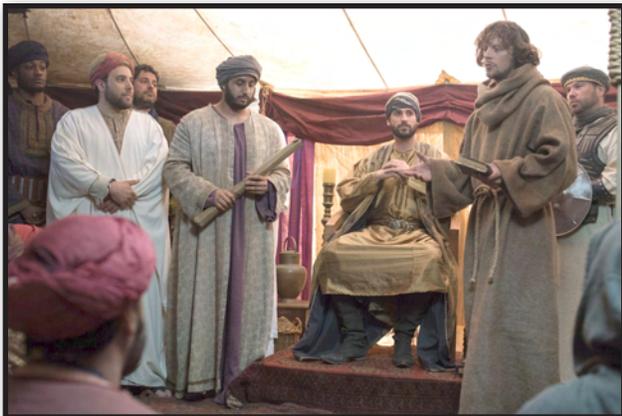
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Coming Soon!

The Sultan and the Saint Docudrama Film



Unity Productions Foundation, a producer for PBS, is completing *The Sultan and the Saint*, a 60-minute docudrama film with reenactments, about Saint Francis of Assisi and Sultan Malik al-Kamil, and their meeting on a bloody battlefield during the period of Christian-Muslim conflict known as the Crusades. *“It is a film about two men of faith, one an itinerant Christian preacher, the other the ruler of a Muslim Empire,”* said Director Alex Kronemer, *“who bucked a century of war, distrust, and insidious propaganda in a search for mutual respect and common ground. With the violence we see in the modern world, it is history in the present tense.”*

Many people reference the Crusades in various ways, but few know the most important facts:

- That the Crusades began with dehumanizing rhetoric that tapped into

something primal and dangerous and violent in the human mind.

- That it resulted in four generations of escalating conflict that was directed not only at Muslims, but also Jews, Orthodox Christians in the East, and eventually other Europeans.
- And that it seemed to have no end. But then — while sliding on the evermore slippery road to apocalypse — Francis of Assisi undertook one of the bravest risks in the history of peacemaking by crossing enemy lines to meet with the Sultan of a supposedly cruel and Satanic enemy and that Sultan responded with one of the greatest humanitarian acts in the history of warfare by saving the hated Crusaders from starvation when the flooding of the Nile trapped their army of 50,000.
- And finally, that this little known encounter between these two men helped suck the venom out of the conflict and ultimately ended this seemingly endless war.

The film will feature large-scale reenactments and visual effects, as well as commentary scholars including Fr. Michael Cusato, St. Bonaventure U., Sr. Kathy Warren, *In the Footprints of Francis and the Sultan*, Suleiman Mourad, Smith College, and others.

UPF seeks funding to complete the film and to launch premieres in November 2016. Underwriting opportunities are available to groups and individuals wanting to get their names in the film credits. To learn more about this opportunity contact Jawaad Abdul Rahman, jar@upf.tv.

To bring the film to your city visit:
www.sultanandthesaintfilm.com/

Updating the NAFRA Database

The mailing list for the TAU-USA comes directly from the national database. If members are not receiving the publication then it means that their information has not been added to the database or that the information is incorrect. Updating the database is the responsibility of each region. Usually there is a designated person from the region that enters the data. The local fraternity minister should know who that person is. If not, they need to contact someone from the Regional Executive Council.

If this doesn't work, send me an email at: tauusa.ofs@gmail.com

Opportunity to Serve **Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee Chair** **Application Process Open**

The National Executive Council is seeking applications for the position of Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee Chair. This appointment begins November 5, 2016, and runs for a period of two years. A description of the mission and responsibilities of this committee follows.

To apply please email National Secretary Mattie Ward at mamamattie1@gmail.com. Application deadline is August 15, 2016.

The Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee

That they all may be one; ... John 17:21

The Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee exists to inform and engage our membership in working collaboratively with people of all faiths. The committee's activities are relational and action-oriented with a goal of developing relationships of respect and trust with those of different faith expressions. The committee strives to promote dialogue and an understanding of other faith expressions and to initiate and engage in activities and events that promote unity and peace.

The challenge is to foster relationships and participate in activities despite theological differences. This takes more than cooperation; it takes commitment. How to do this? That is the challenge each new committee faces in discerning its own unique path. Below are some committee responsibilities to consider:

- The chair chooses and invites OFS members to serve on the committee. The present committee has four members in addition to the chair. The committee will meet at least once each year.
- The chair attends the National Fraternity Chapter, submits a report of the committee's activities for the year, and draws up a budget for the next fiscal year.

- The chair is a member of the Joint Committee for Franciscan Unity, which consists of two Secular Franciscans, two TSSF [Episcopal] Franciscans, and two OEF [Ecumenical] Franciscans. The Joint Committee meets annually, and in past years has conducted one or two workshops.
- The chair may be asked to attend the Chapters of TSSF and OEF.
- The chair or a designee writes an article for each issue of TAU-USA.
- The chair exercises a leadership role and endeavors to bring forth the gifts of not only the committee members, but also the OFS.

Consider Pope Francis' statement in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

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 all seeking: the radiant peace of God's face. Trusting others is an art and peace is an art. (n.244)



2016 Quinquennial Congress - Reviving Our Spirit

By Jan Parker, ofs

At the time this issue of TAU-USA went to press, we were busily preparing for the 19th Quinquennial Congress of Secular Franciscans in the United States (the “Q”), to be held June 30 – July 4, 2016, in St. Louis, Missouri. Our Q Committee was in the home stretch of endless hours given to organize and present us with a wonderful program, and I take this opportunity to thank them once again for their tremendous contributions. We can look forward to photos and coverage of the Q in the next issue of TAU-USA, but one thing I can say with certainty even now—in those photos you will see a joy that is reviving!

Our Franciscan joy is truly the joy of living the Gospel. It is a gift that revives us, and a gift we treasure, but from the very beginning this charism was never given for ourselves alone. We recall Christ’s words “go rebuild my Church,” as well as Pope Innocent’s dream of Francis coming from the shadows to support on his own shoulders the Church of St. John Lateran, which was leaning and about to topple. When we truly live our Franciscan call we rebuild and revive the Church. In the process we ourselves are revived in that same joy.

Our Minister General Tibor Kauser shared about this in his letter of welcome in the Q program, “...let us remember the theme of the “Q” —Reviving Our Spirit. *If you reach out to a new Franciscan friend and try to revive his or her spirit, your own (spirit) will be blessed abundantly.*” It is so true. As it is said, and attributed to our brother Francis, “It is in giving that we receive.” Thinking about the experience of the Q, I will say it this way, “It is in reviving others that we are revived.”

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*, our Holy Father Pope Francis talks about the delightful and comforting joy of “reviving others.” He encourages us by quoting Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: “Let us recover and deepen our enthusiasm, that delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow... And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ.” (*Evangelii Gaudium* #10)

My brothers and sisters, we have received the joy of Christ, so let us be instruments of revival by sharing this joy with everyone we meet.

Renew, rebuild, and revive! “*O how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, because ‘the spirit of the Lord will rest upon them’*” (cf. Is 11:2).



**FOR SECULAR FRANCISCANS AND
THOSE WHO ACCOMPANY THEM...**

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Julie McElmurry, MS and MA in Franciscan Studies



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This course will be led by Julie McElmurry. She is the editor of a new book, *Living and Serving in the Way of St. Francis* (2015).

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