

TAU-USA

A PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
ORDER

Fall 2018 Issue 95

STUDY.

LOVE.

LIVE THE RULE.

40 Years of the New Rule: A Treasure for the OFS - YouTube Video



Legend of St. Francis, Confirmation of the Rule by Giotto di Bondone

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 OFS-USA 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.



Editorial Staff

Editor-in-Chief
Jim Wesley, OFS

Spanish Editor
Cindy Wesley, OFS

Copy Editor
Mary Lou Coffman,
OFS

Special Assignments Editors

Mary and Bob
Stronach, OFS

NEC Consultants
Jan Parker, OFS
Mary Bittner, OFS
Mary Stronach, OFS

CNSA Contributor
Fr. Lester Bach,
OFM Cap

Database Administrator and

Subscription Coordinator
Cecilia Maljan-Herbelin, OFS

Webmaster
Dan Mulholland, OFS

TAU-USA email
tauusa.ofs@gmail.com

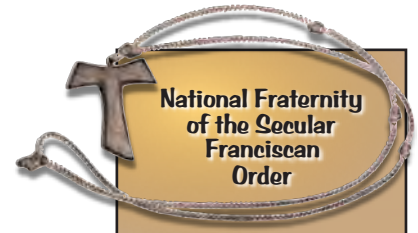
Contents

Minister's Message	1
<i>by Jan Parker, OFS</i>	
General Minister's Letter	1
<i>by Tibor Kauser, OFS</i>	
Living Our Rule	
<i>by Jan Parker, OFS</i>	
❖ Part I Introduction	5
❖ Part II Walking With Both Feet . . .	7
❖ Part III A Gentle and Courteous Spirit	11
❖ Part IV Peacemaking	12
❖ Part V Goals of JPIC	13
Justice, Peace and Care for Creation . . .	14
<i>by Carolyn Townes, OFS</i>	
Sharing the Vision	15
<i>by Jan Parker, OFS and Mary Bittner, OFS</i>	
Spiritual Assistance	17
<i>by Lester Bach, OFM Cap.</i>	
Youth and Young Adults Commission . . .	19
<i>By Kathleen Molaro, OFS</i>	
Ecumenical/Interfaith Commission	20
<i>by David Seitz, OFS</i>	
Franciscan Living	22
<i>by Francine Gikow, OFS</i>	
Venezuelan Crisis	23
<i>by Mary Stronach, OFS</i>	
Franciscan Institute OFS Conference . . .	24
<i>by Patricia Serotkin, OFS</i>	
Quinquennial Congress 2021	25

TAU-USA is published quarterly. All candidates and professed Secular Franciscans receive the newsletter without charge. For subscription or change of address information, write to:

Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, OFS, 540 W. Nelson Rd, Sequim, WA 98382-9503, or cylmaljan@earthlink.net.

Subscriptions per year cost \$4.00 for U. S., \$6.00 for Canadian, \$15.00 for Overseas.



National Executive Council

nec.ofs.usa@gmail.com

National Minister
Jan Parker, OFS

National Vice Minister
Mary Bittner, OFS

National Secretary
Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS

National Treasurer
Jerry Rousseau, OFS

National Councillor
Mary Frances Charsky, OFS

National Councillor
Awilda (Willie) Guadalupe, OFS

National Councillor
Joan Geiger, OFS

International Councillor
Mary Stronach, OFS

National Spiritual Assistant
Br. Alexander Escalera, OFM Cap

Request to receive the TAU-USA as only a digital version, or general database questions, contact the Database Administrator, Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, OFS
cylmaljan@earthlink.net.

Note:

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



OFS-USA

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER-USA

National Minister's Message

by Jan Parker, OFS

The OFS Rule: A Gift, a Call, an Inspiration, a Tool

Our General Minister Tibor Kauser has written a letter addressed “*To my sisters and brothers in the Secular Franciscan Order, all over the world*” and “*To all YouFra members, all over the world.*” Tibor’s letter was written in celebration of the 40th Anniversary of our Rule. We share his letter with great joy, and agree with our sister Mary Stronach, who translated it into Spanish: “*Every word, every thought touched me and helped me strengthen my vocation.*”

May our study and reflection on this letter bring us a deeper understanding of our Rule and renew our dedication to live what we have professed.



Prot. n. 3080

Rome, June 24, 2018

Nativity of Saint John the Baptist

To all my sisters and brothers in the Secular Franciscan Order, all over the world

To all the Youfra members all over the world

My dear Sisters and Brothers!

May the Lord give you his peace!

This year we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, approved by Pope Blessed Paul VI on June 24th 1978, with his letter 'Seraphicus Patriarcha'. It is the right time to set the question: what is the Rule for me, in my personal life? What is the Rule for us, as an International Fraternity, on its all levels? What does it mean for us to 'celebrate this anniversary', to celebrate the Rule?

The Rule is a norm of life for us, Secular Franciscans, but it is an inspirational document also for the Youfra members, who want to follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis. Therefore I address this letter not only to my sisters and brothers of the Secular Franciscan Order, but also to our young sisters and brothers in the Youfra.

I ask you to let me begin with a personal reflection: for me the Rule is a gift, a call, an inspiration and a tool.

A gift

Before all, the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order is a treasure, a gift of God, that shows how much God and the Church loves the Secular Franciscan Order. It is something that cannot be bought, cannot be merited. As Pope Saint John Paul II told us: "It is a real treasure in your hands, it is in accord with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, and it responds to what the Church expects of you"¹. Therefore we have to give thanks for this gift; give thanks to God and give thanks to the Church.

Like every gift, it is somehow bearing the imprint of the giver, showing us how beautiful and rich life God wants us to live. Each and every article of the Rule reflects on the infinite richness of God, and is like a gemstone that puts light on various aspects of our identity and of our life. When we now celebrate the 40th anniversary of our Rule,

¹ Discourse of Pope Saint John Paul II to the members of the General Council of the OFS, September 27th 1982.

we have to remember, that it is not the gift itself, what we celebrate, but the giver, who is God himself. Let us live therefore this celebration by being grateful to Him and by giving thanks to Him with our prayer, with our love, with our entire life.

A call, an invitation

"The Lord continues to call others to live with him and to follow him in a relationship of particular closeness. He continues to call others to serve him directly. If he lets us realize that he is calling us to consecrate ourselves totally to his kingdom, then we should have no fear! It is beautiful – and a great grace – to be completely and forever consecrated to God and the service of our brothers and sisters."²

This call is echoing in the Rule, and we have to respond to this call with generosity, without fear. God is calling us as we are. We are imperfect and weak, never mind, but we shall not be deaf and blind! We know, how "the glorious confessor of Christ, Blessed Francis, the institutor of this order, showing the way to ascend to the Lord both in word and example, instructed his own sons in the sincerity of his own faith, and he wanted them also to acknowledge it themselves, to hold it constantly, and to fulfill it similarly with work, so that walking soberly by means of its path, they may, after the workhouse of the present life, merit to be possessors of eternal beatitude."³

This call of God has been put in a form in our Rule: Be "possessors of the eternal beatitude", so, be Holy! Live in a manner that leads you to holiness! Observe the Rule, that helps you to follow Christ in every moment of your life, in all the aspects of your life! "We come to a full sense of the dignity of the lay faithful if we consider the prime and fundamental vocation that the Father assigns to each of them in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit: the vocation to holiness, that is, the perfection of charity. ... It is ever more urgent that today all Christians take up again the way of gospel renewal, welcoming in a spirit of generosity the invitation expressed by the apostle Peter "to be holy in all conduct" (1Pt 1:15). ... The vocation of the lay faithful to holiness implies that life according to the Spirit expresses itself in a particular way in their involvement in temporal affairs and in their participation in earthly activities."⁴ This call to holiness obliges us to respond affirmatively. The very positive call of God needs our very positive response. Let us be those who will transmit this call of God to others, let us call others to God, so that "as many as possible be called back to the praise of Christian sanctity by Our timely invitation"⁵.

A document of inspiration

Our Rule is not only a normative or legislative text, but also (and mostly) a spiritual text. It is to be read often not only because we have to keep some norms or do some pre-written prayers, but also and mostly because it is our treasure, that helps us to fulfill our vocation. It has to inspire us! We, Secular Franciscans, have everything in our Rule, that can give us enough inspiration to walk along the way of our vocational journey.

To celebrate our Rule is to make it live, only this way will we be faithful to the proposal of Jesus, who invites us to love one another as brothers. Francis of Assisi has given us the example of the grace of conversion as a great gift, which commits us to continue to follow the Franciscan path with courage and love. Our Rule, a truly Franciscan one, helps us to discover, how shall we live our vocation on a daily basis, what should our everyday life be like. We are not 'Sunday Franciscans' or 'afternoon Franciscans'. The Rule has to inspire each moment of our life, so that we get to a kind of behavior, a habit.

As the religious brothers and sisters wear a habit, we also shall have a habit that characterizes us, that makes us visible and recognizable. But this habit is not visible in that sense. We do not have a sewn and tailored habit. We have a habit of our behavior, of the way we live our life in the family, in the Church, in the fraternity, at work, or in our free time. Our habit shall be our kindness, our visible love to God and to one another, our readiness to serve, our simple manner of life, our real freedom of the children of God. Our habit is our prayer, our sacramental life, our commitment to the Order, and thus to the fraternity. Our habit is our Franciscan way of life, that we live "going from gospel to life and life to the gospel"⁶.

² Message of Pope Francis for the 55th World Day of prayer for vocations 2018

³ Supra Montem, Pope Nicholas IV., August 18th 1289.

⁴ Christifideles Laici 16-17

⁵ Misericors Dei Filius, Pope Leo XIII., May 30th 1883.

⁶ OFS Rule 4

The life of a secular Franciscan is not a uniform life. We are different. We have to raise our heads, open our eyes, and look around: how beautiful and rich this life is, that God offers us to live according to our vocation! I invite all of you to discover your talents and find inspiration from the Rule, how your daily life should be lived. Discover the richness of God, the richness of our vocation! Some of us feel certain articles of the Rule closer to him, while others feel others. For some of us certain articles seem to be easier to live than others. Yes, the Rule does not want to uniform us but to unite us in the diversity.

Go out, and find how can you live your vocation in the Church, in the society, among the poor, among the needy, among our neighbors in the family, at work, in the fraternity, in free time, in different ways reflecting on the same charism and the same vocation. Be inspired, so that you can inspire others!

A helping tool in the everyday

The Rule is an empty text if we do not turn it into life. We have to use it. "Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey"⁷. Certainly, the Rule has very concrete regulations, since we are facing very concrete situations in our everyday life, so that we may keep to the right direction of our life. "The Church consigns it to you as a norm of life."⁸

In the English language the word 'rule' is the root of the word 'ruler', a tool for schoolboys, schoolgirls, teachers, engineers, architects, draftsmen. Let me bring this example to you: Rule is like a ruler, you can draw a straight line only with a ruler. But the goal is not to draw a nice straight line. The goal is to have a drawing, a plan of a house, that will be built and will be a home for someone.

The Rule is not a goal by itself, knowing the Rule is not a goal, the letter-by-letter application of the articles of the Rule is not a goal by itself either. The goal is to become holy, to show God's love to the world, to make the life of others better, to get closer to God and to bring others closer to God. The Rule is like ruler, an instrument for us, that helps us to become holy, that helps us to keep the straight line, also whenever we have difficulties in life, when we lose the horizon from our sight. In this sense, the Rule is a tool. It is something that is always at hand, what we can always turn to.

The words of the Rule have to be put in practice, and our practice has to be controlled, evaluated in the light of the Rule. We have to use it by often and careful reading, by talking about it among ourselves and with others, by living according to its values, "because the values contained in it are eminently evangelical"⁹. Similarly, we also have to be good tools in the hands of God. We have to make us available so that God can use us as tools, instruments of peace, joy, and the love of God.

Beauty and joy

Like a spring in a green forest, the Rule is always fresh and ready to give new life. It has been so for centuries. Yet years are coming and going by, the Franciscan charism is still the same, it is still valid, and has to be lived more than ever. As Pope Blessed Paul VI wrote: "We are happy that the "Franciscan Charism" today is still a force for the good of the Church and the human community, despite the infiltration of doctrines and tendencies that alienate people from God and from the supernatural. With praiseworthy initiative and with common accord the four Franciscan families have striven for ten years to prepare a new Rule for the Franciscan Third Order Secular, or as it is now called, the Secular Franciscan Order. This was necessary because of the changed conditions of the times and because of the teaching and encouragement given them by the Second Vatican Council."¹⁰

More than 800 years have passed but the beauty and the joy of the Franciscan life is still the same. 40 years have passed since these sentences of Pope Paul VI, but the beauty and the joy of the Rule have not faded. We can speak about the beauty, because the life we are called to and inspired by the Rule is beautiful. All the aspects - prayer, contemplation, gospel reading, family life, work, and many others - reflect on the beauty of the life inspired by God, and lived by Saint Francis, giving us an example. And we can speak about joy, too, because the virtues in the Rule, like simplicity, obedience, justice, fraternal spirit, give us a joyful life. If we put these virtues into our daily practice, we will experience the joy of the Gospel.

⁷ Evangelii Gaudium 127

⁸ Letter of the four Ministers General on the occasion of the approval of the Rule

⁹ Discourse of Pope Saint John Paul II to the members of the General Council of the OFS, September 27, 1982.

¹⁰ Seraphicus Patriarcha, Pope Paul VI, June 24, 1978

The Rule shall be a spring that refreshes the life in our fraternities, which also have a role "that the Christian life be more diligently exercised in them, as in a certain gymnasium".¹¹ These fraternities are a home and a primary place for us to study, love and live the Rule.¹² Both living our vocation here, and also fulfilling our missionary call to go out to the world, can be fostered by experiencing the beauty and joy of our vocation, reflected to in our Rule, and we have to share this beauty and joy. I invite and encourage all of you: go out, and share this beauty and joy! The authentic Christian message is not coming from books. It goes from person to person. Your testimony, our testimony is essential to the renewal of our Order and of the entire Church. Every time you read the Rule and decide to live or act accordingly, you make one more step ahead to fulfill this vocation and mission.

Credits

We have to remember those, who had worked so much for this renewal of the Rule, which meant also a renewal of the Order. Those sisters and brothers, who have initiated this renewal, first of all Manuela Mattioli, who was the first General Minister of the OFS, those Ministers General of the Franciscan First and Third Orders, who had always been supporting this work with prayer, dedication, time and resources. We have to give thanks to those sisters and brothers who worked on the text of the Rule and also those who helped to make it arrive to all the sisters and brothers: the translators, the secretaries, the ministers of the different levels of the Order. We have to keep the awareness of how they intended to "seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue."¹³ This dialogue has been developed into a wonderful text, full of inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

In the Bible, forty years meant often a time period that separated two distinct epochs. I pray these forty years behind us will serve as a time of renewal, as a beginning of a period of time when both the Order as a unique one as also the individual sisters and brothers will live their identity more sincerely, follow their vocation more committed, and accomplish their mission in the Church and in the world more visibly, day by day with "that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls conversion."¹⁴ May this year be a year of renewal, and may this celebration help us all to a better understanding of our Rule, so that we can live our vocation more authentically and more faithfully.

And I entreat God, that He, who is Omnipotent, Triune and One, bless all those teaching, learning, having, remembering and putting these things into practice as often as they return to and do those things which have been written here for the salvation of our soul, - and I beseech all with a kiss on the foot, to love much, guard and remember these things.¹⁵

With my deepest fraternal love to all of you. Your minister and your brother

Tibor Kauser
CIOFS Minister General



¹¹ Misericors Dei Filius, Pope Leo XIII., May 30, 1888.

¹² Discourse of Pope Saint John Paul II to the members of the General Council of the OFS, September 27, 1982.

¹³ OFS Rule 19.

¹⁴ OFS Rule 7.

¹⁵ RNB XXIV



LIVING OUR RULE JUSTICE, PEACE AND CARE FOR CREATION

By Jan Parker, OFS



❖ PART I: INTRODUCTION ❖

I recently asked a room full of Secular Franciscans to write three words to describe the OFS Rule. There were some wonderful replies including “conversion, prayer, humility” and “Gospel to Life,” but the response that sticks in my mind is “*who we are.*” What a profound answer!

In reflecting on the Rule we have professed, we must always ask ourselves, “*Is this who I am?*” Why? Because in any matter that comes before us, who we are — our identity — must drive what we do. In his June 2017 Pentecost letter to the entire Order, Minister General Tibor Kauser stated: “*We must have a clear vision about our identity... Our identity is whom God wants us to see. Without knowing who we are we will never know what we shall do, and will make lots of mistakes, also if with a good intention.*”

As Secular Franciscans, we must truly reflect what it means to be Catholic, to be Franciscan and, as Seculars, how to live out our call in the world. We must reflect our identity — we must “be who we are”. If we know who we are, we will know what we are to do.

This brings us to the topic of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC). When the National Fraternity established JPIC as a national priority in 2012, all agreed that incorporating the word “outreach” within the priority would help define it. JPIC is a priority *outward* — our OFS Rule in action. It is “who we are” as Franciscans.

Overall, our JPIC outreach is tremendous, much of it likely unseen. Many OFS sisters and brothers are wholeheartedly engaged in both advocacy and charitable outreach. But sadly, apathy, willful ignorance, reticence, confusion, and at times, resistance exist in our Order. It is clear that formation in JPIC must be ongoing.

At its heart, JPIC is about loving. It is a participation in the life of Christ and the embodiment of the Gospel in response to God’s love. One Secular Franciscan, expressing the importance of JPIC, states, “If we push JPIC aside, we reject the fullness of Christ’s teaching and deprive ourselves of the understanding of how to live our ‘Life in Christ’ — the third pillar of the Church’s teaching.”¹ JPIC is not about only one or two articles of our Rule, but *it is the entire Rule in action*. JPIC is about living each day *aware of how we treat others* in our families, our community and our world, and *being good stewards* of this world God created. JPIC actions include both charitable giving and work for social justice.

It is extremely important that our JPIC efforts be rooted in both prayer and catechesis. Without a strong spiritual life, without daily ongoing conversion, and without knowledge of the Church’s teaching, we quickly become a “resounding gong or a clashing cymbal,”² a stumbling block to faith, and a source of exasperation instead of inspiration. The *Handbook for Animators of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation*³ stresses the importance of the interior life and proper catechesis for JPIC Animators:

“...everything begins in prayer! Not merely passing or casual prayer; but deep discernment and contemplation. Our discernment should begin with the question: “Who am I?” Not merely what are my roles and responsibilities; but *who am I* when roles and responsibilities no longer define. After your period of discernment and the Holy Spirit reveals what is yours to do, then you need to educate yourself on the issues that speak to you. Education is

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, #13, and Part Three: Life in Christ

² 1 Corinthians 13:1

³ For a copy of the Handbook for Animators of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, contact your Regional JPIC Animator

not just reading a lot of books. It includes active listening—listening to stories of those affected by the plight you feel called to learn about. After prayerful study and reflection, then and only then, are you prepared to animate others.”

Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap., is quick to agree, “Social action needs to be accompanied by presence and prayerfulness, together with conversion, enriching our ability to love one another. In difficult situations, we need to dialogue with one another. To work and pray together is a treasured goal in serving people’s needs.”⁴ Dialogue as a tool for peacemaking and growth requires that we listen not only to those with whom we agree, but to those with whom we disagree as well, attentive always to the Holy Spirit who guides us in our Franciscan formation.

The need for social action and charitable outreach is as great as ever. The following quotes call us to give serious thought to our JPIC efforts:

“In the face of the present-day situation of the world, marked as it is by the grave sin of injustice, we recognize both our

*responsibility and our inability to overcome it by our own strength. Such a situation urges us to listen with a humble and open heart to the word of God, as he shows us new paths towards action in the cause of justice in the world.”*⁵

“As far as the Church is concerned, the social message of the Gospel must not be considered a theory, but above all else a basis and a motivation for action.” ~ Centesimus Annus, 57

*“You have been called to give witness to the Kingdom of God and to build a more fraternal world based on the gospel, together with all people of good will. Do you wish to be faithful to this vocation and to practice the spirit of service proper to Secular Franciscans?”*⁶

It is my hope and prayer that all of us will redouble our efforts to fully live our charism and *be who we are*. With Mary, our Blessed Mother as our model, may our lives reflect her joyful song in praise of the God of justice, peace and love.

After reading through the pages of this special section on JPIC, reflect on and discuss the following:

1. How can we, as individuals or a fraternity, discern new paths toward action?
2. What is the “spirit of service proper to Secular Franciscans,” and in what OFS document can this phrase be found?
3. Why is it important to have a JPIC animator in each fraternity?
4. What are the four goals of JPIC according to the *For Up to Now* formation manual?
5. Describe the “two feet of love in action.”
6. Read Matthew 5:1-10 and discuss the gift of power promised in each Beatitude. How do these blessings apply to JPIC?
7. Reflect on the role of advocates as peacemakers. What is a Franciscan prophetic voice?

For further growth:

Request the assistance of the National JPIC Commission to provide formation resources or to help direct a JPIC workshop or retreat.

⁴ TAU-USA, Issue 94, CNSA News and Views

⁵ Synod of Bishops, Justice in the World, 1971:29

⁶ Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order, Rite of Profession, pg. 21

✧ PART II: WALKING WITH BOTH FEET ✧

There are several areas where we, the National OFS-USA family, need to grow in the area of JPIC. We need a greater appreciation of the diversity of our efforts; not all are called to the same ministry. We also see a great need for OFS members to recognize and address social sin. Fr. Dan Horan, OFM, called our attention to this at our 2016 Q, and some found it a difficult challenge. Lastly, we need to learn more about walking with two feet.

Some years ago, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) developed the campaign “Two Feet of Love in Action.” As described on the USCCB web site: “This foundational tool describes two distinct, but complementary, ways we can put the Gospel in action in response to God’s love: *social justice* (addressing systemic, root causes of problems that affect many people) and *charitable works* (short-term, emergency assistance for individuals).”

It is clear that we do much better with the “foot of charitable works” than we do with the “foot of social justice.” We are comfortable with charity, but find it challenging to, as the U.S. bishops put it, “work to address the *root causes* of problems facing our communities by advocating for just public policies and helping to change the social structures that contribute to suffering and injustice at home and around the world.” Yes, this means political activity. Consider our responsibility in this area:

“The Church’s obligation to participate in shaping the moral character of society is a requirement of our faith. It is a basic part of the mission we have received from Jesus Christ.” Faith helps us see more clearly the truth about human life and dignity that we also understand through human reason. As people of both faith and reason, Catholics are called to bring truth to political life and to practice Christ’s commandment to “love one another” (John 13:34). According to Pope Benedict XVI, “*charity must animate the entire lives of the lay faithful and therefore also their political activity, lived as ‘social charity’*”⁷

The Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order further develop this responsibility:

The Constitutions of the OFS call us to “be in the forefront ... in the field of public life” and “collaborate as much as possible for the passage of just laws and ordinances.” We are called to “build the Kingdom of God in temporal situations and activities, [and] live our membership both in the Church and in society as an inseparable reality.” They also urge us to “promote common initiatives or participate in them with the religious of the First, Second and Third Orders, with Secular Institutes, and with other lay ecclesial groups that recognize Francis as a model and inspiration in order to work together to spread the Gospel, remove the causes of marginalization, and serve the cause of peace.”

As individuals, we’re all free to choose the ways in which we show love in action. One of us might emphasize charitable works; another might focus on structural change. Each person contributes according to their own gifts. As a body — as an Order — though, we don’t pick and choose — we walk with both feet. Each year the OFS-USA, as a body, donates substantial amounts to various charities (one foot.) Within the Franciscan family there are two organizations that help us fulfill our obligation to work for social justice (the other foot) — the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) and Franciscans International (FI).

The core business of both FAN and FI is advocacy — actions to bring the voice of the voiceless to the attention of decision makers. As advocates, FI and FAN bring a distinct gift: they are in contact with international and national authorities, and also network with those Franciscans who work “on the ground,” close to the most disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups, to bring direct experience to the issues at hand. FAN and FI provide awareness, background information and “calls to action” to the wider Franciscan family, uniting us to address the injustice that exists in our world. Individual OFS members are encouraged to support and participate in the work of both FAN and FI.

⁷ See the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on Faithful Citizenship and “Deus Caritas Est”, no. 29



For the past ten years, the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) has been a Franciscan voice of advocacy and education in the field of social justice. The three words that make up its name – Franciscan, Action and Network—are a good description of what FAN is all about.

FAN is Franciscan in its history and vision. It was through the Franciscan family that the idea for FAN was conceived, and as one who witnessed FAN's beginning, I marvel at how the various branches of our family worked together to bring it about. A group of Franciscan leaders in Rome, each representing one of the six branches of the Franciscan family, in consultation with Franciscans International, dared to dream that Franciscans in the United States would unite in support of a new endeavor for Justice, Peace and Care for Creation. In 2007, with the support of Holy Name Province, an invitation went out to the entire Franciscan family in the United States to gather in Baltimore. More than 150 Franciscans answered the call.

I have vivid memories of this Franciscan chapter that marked the beginning of FAN. We prayed, listened and engaged in lively discussions. In the end the gathered community wrote and unanimously confirmed “a statement of unity that called themselves and the Franciscan family in the U.S. to establish a structure to bring the humble force of our charism to bear on social transformation.”⁸ From there, the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) was created.

FAN continues to bring the Gospel to life under the direction of its Board of Directors, who are members of the various branches of the Franciscan Order, along with the support and endorsement of numerous congregations of Franciscans. From the very beginning, our National Fraternity (OFS-USA) has been an institutional member of FAN. Individual Seculars have served on the original steering committee, on the Action Commission, and as members of the Board of Directors. FAN's website provides an extensive overview of their work.

FAN is about action, but it does not act alone. Networking is key. FAN welcomes and includes Franciscans of other Christian denominations, those of other faith traditions and all people of good will in its work. In doing so, FAN follows the directives of the Catholic Church to work with all, without exception.

“In these days when cooperation in social matters is so widespread, all men without exception are called to work together, with much greater reason all those who believe in God, but most of all, all Christians in that they bear the name of Christ.”⁹

As members of FAN, we are part of this network. We partner with FAN to bring a united Franciscan voice to the public arena. Our participation in FAN helps us express our identity, affords us the opportunity to partner with the other five branches of the one Franciscan family, and unites us in action. Our efforts in the area of justice and peace are certainly not limited to our membership in FAN, but our participation in FAN is an important way for us to bring the Gospel to Life.

New OFS Representative on the FAN Board of Directors



This past August, the National Executive Council appointed David Seitz, OFS, as our representative on the FAN Board of Directors. David previously served as Minister of Divine Mercy Region. During his tenure as Minister, the number one priority was: *Transition the OFS to become the “Visible Face of the Church” as called for in the Rite of Profession, the OFS Rule of Life and in accordance with the desire of Pope Francis that the order become more visible.* With this priority as the common theme at every regional gathering and fraternal visitation, the members of the Region united in action. Three fraternities began ministries to the homeless. Another implemented a serious effort to change the culture of the fraternity from a pious group who meet in the Church basement to a group active in seeking social justice. After attending a region-sponsored formal training on evangelization based on Bishop Vigneron's Pastoral Letter, “Unleash the Gospel,” one

⁸ FAN Steering Committee, Introduction to the 2007 Draft Strategic Plan

⁹ Unitatis Redintegratio / Decree on Ecumenism #12

fraternity began a street evangelization ministry inspired by the training. The largest fraternity in the region created several community service projects and is now incorporating “Visible Community Service” as an element of initial formation.

When David was asked about his experiences as a servant leader, he answered in part: “*I have learned how to put the individual before the task. As a hospice chaplain, I learned to see each person as a precious creature with great dignity. The humility I learned while serving those meeting Sister Death*

changed my entire outlook on the human person. This experience was a catalyst for changing me from being self-centered to other-centered. As a 16-year professed Secular Franciscan, I have had a chance to study and reflect on Franciscan Spirituality lived in the cloister of the world. This spirituality informs my relationship with God, family, community and work; it is ever evolving and has led me out of my comfort zone on many occasions. This ongoing transformation of self is being reflected in the OFS as the Holy Spirit is guiding it to rise out of the Church basement and out into the light of the every-day-world.

Moving Forward with FAN

In his own words, here are David’s goals as our representative on the FAN Board of Directors:

- Provide consistent and timely **communication** to the OFS regarding the activities and initiatives of FAN. There is much misunderstanding based on communications from sources other than FAN official communications, which has caused some division regarding the OFS support of FAN. The OFS and FAN have similar missions. I believe consistent and constant communication will be key to strengthening the support and understanding of FAN by the OFS membership at large.
- Be a **goodwill ambassador for FAN** to the OFS, local dioceses and parishes and other like-minded groups who follow Francis in other faith traditions.
- **Involvement** leads to acceptance and support. **Drive grassroots activity** in local fraternities to support FAN initiatives. I believe getting the OFS involved in being visible in the public square will lead to greater support and acceptance. FAN has the experience and communications that can be leveraged by the OFS to use as templates for activism at the local level, driving support for national issues. The OFS Rule of Life calls us to promote justice in the public square.
- Engage in the time-honored Franciscan charism of **begging for money**— generating financial support for FAN.

- **Educate** the OFS at the national, regional and local levels regarding the social justice issues being pursued by FAN and how they relate to the JPIC initiatives of the OFS
- Develop a relationship with the **regional JPIC coordinators** to promote a unified voice
- Work with the OFS national **ecumenical chair** to engage all people with Franciscan hearts to work together to promote the initiatives of FAN
- Continue my **personal formation** on the social teaching of the bishops and share with the OFS
- **Pray**, Pray and then Pray again

One of the questions David was asked by the FAN Board was, “What personal qualities and traits do you consider essential to possess?” I was struck by his “Gospel to life” answer:

I think I can best respond to this question with my favorite passage from the book of Tobit: “*Watch yourself, my son, in everything you do, and be disciplined in all your conduct. And what you hate, do not do to anyone.... Give of your bread to the hungry, and of your clothing to the naked. Give all your surplus to charity and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Seek advice from every wise man, and do not despise any useful counsel. Bless the Lord God on every occasion; ask him that your ways may be made straight and that all your paths and plans may prosper.... [T]he Lord himself gives all good things, and according to his will he humbles whomever he wishes.*” (Tobit 4:14-19, RSV)

Franciscans International (FI) is a non-profit, international non-governmental human rights



Franciscans International

A voice at the United Nations

organization with General Consultative Status. FI's vision is a global community in which the dignity of every person is respected, resources are shared equitably, the environment is sustained, and nations and peoples live in peace. FI brings our large and diverse Franciscan family together around a common cause and is the only common project of the Conference of the Franciscan Family, which appoints FI's International Board of Directors. Today, much as St. Francis did in his Letter to the *Rulers of the Peoples*, FI encourages national and international "civil authorities to be mindful of the Gospel's values" in policy-making.

FI is built around the collaboration with its partners at the grassroots who experience human rights violations every day. To support them, FI organizes capacity-building workshops at national, regional and international levels. It also encourages and enables its grassroots partners to build partnerships at the national level, with the view of strengthening national lobbying.

Sandra Ascencio OFS, who serves as the JPIC Coordinator from El Salvador, is one such partner. In July 2018 Sandra participated in the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York City. Previously, she had spoken at Ecumenical Advocacy Days in 2013, when she was interviewed by Jennifer Lentfer of Oxfam (excerpts below).

Lentfer: *What will you remember most from your time in the US and Canada?*

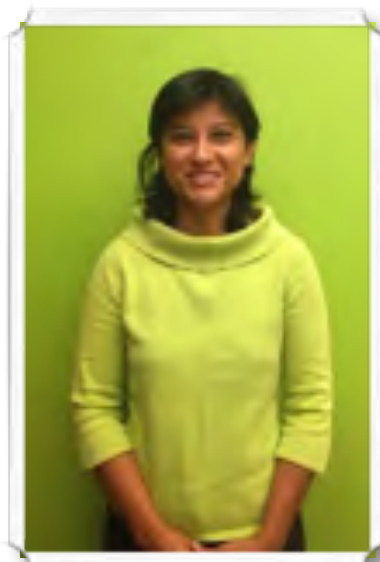
Ascencio: When I shared my experiences with the faith-based community at Ecumenical Advocacy Days [in Washington, DC] I saw how people got inspired and how they demonstrated their solidarity with us. It's important to transmit those emotions into the work. For us, promoting everybody's well-being remains the center of faith. Only that way, people can keep in mind that the most important things for humans to survive are water, air, and land.

Lentfer: *So many people who have been fighting to protect their communities in El Salvador have been threatened, and even killed. Despite these risks, what drives you to continue?*

Ascencio: A total commitment. My work is primarily spiritual and by conviction. God gives us each abilities to use according to our faith. When I die, I don't want to go [up] there and think I didn't do anything. I'm preparing my two children to know that my work is for God. They also need to learn the values of service and discernment. I tell them that if something happens to me, then they know that it was worthwhile. But it's better not to think of those things otherwise you could lose your energy and motivation.

Lentfer: *What gives you hope for the future?*

Ascencio: I think that every person is good, in their essence. My work is not because I'm a lawyer or a scientist, but because I believe in solidarity and harmony as the principles of life. We all are on a journey to encounter our common well-being.



❁ PART III: A GENTLE AND COURTEOUS SPIRIT ❁

“Let the sisters and brothers be gentle, peaceful and unassuming, mild and humble, speaking respectfully to all in accord with their vocation. Wherever they are, or wherever they go throughout the world they should not be quarrelsome, contentious, or judgmental towards others. Rather, it should be obvious that they are ‘joyful, good-humored,’ and happy ‘in the Lord’ as they ought to be (cf. Phil. 4:4). And in greeting others, let them say, ‘The Lord give you peace.’”¹⁰

Whenever I read the above quote I have two reactions. One is that I just smile, thinking of so many Franciscan gatherings where love and joy are so evident. The other is serious concern over the lack of “a gentle and courteous spirit”¹¹ in some Franciscan conversations, especially in the arena of social media.

To guard the tongue is not an easy thing. We often speak too quickly, and cringe when our words “come out wrong” and cause hurt. However, with the rise of social media, it is more often what Franciscans write that causes concern. In their zeal, even good-hearted advocates can easily slip into the harsh vernacular that is all too common today, spewing words that create a divisive “us and them” mentality, sadly taking the focus off the issue at hand. Folks react quickly, and it seems that some would rather be outraged than informed. Instead of questions, there are rash judgements and accusations. Conversation quickly turns from “what is right?” to “who is right?” Misinformation and twisted truth are put forth as facts, adding to the fire.

When Secular Franciscans are the authors of disparaging remarks and misinformation, stooping even to defamation of character, we must ask, “Is this who we are?” Are we not called to be “gentle, peaceful and unassuming, mild and humble, speaking respectfully to all in accord with our vocation?” Why are we so quarrelsome, contentious, and judgmental towards others? All of this is of great concern.

My sisters and brothers, how can we bring light to this darkness? What is ours to do? I have a few suggestions. First, we must look at each other with mercy. We are all in need of forgiveness. Second, let us “encourage one another for the good”¹² and address this behavior when it occurs in our midst. It is incumbent upon all servant leaders of the Order at every level, with the support and assistance of the wider Franciscan family, to ensure

fidelity to the charism. Next, let us engage in formation on this topic; good material is readily available. A reflection on the use of the tongue might begin with reading the book of James, Chapter 3, followed by a study of bearing witness to the truth, as found in the Catechism.¹³ In the *Decree on the Media of Social Communications*, issued in 1963, our Church speaks of the wonders of technology, recognizing the great good, but also that “men can employ these media contrary to the plan of the Creator and to their own loss.”¹⁴ Although technology has progressed greatly since 1963, this decree opens the door to an examination of our use of social media. Sometimes the simplest tools are the best, and the word THINK can help us remember to THINK before we speak or write. T-H-I-N-K: Is it **T**True? Is it **H**elpful? Is it **I**nspired? Is it **N**ecessary? Is it **K**ind?

Most importantly, let us pray. In prayer we receive power. In our words and actions, we give it away. As we breathe in the Spirit, let us remember that our very breath is a gift from God. Let us breathe out—in our very words and actions—that which is holy. Let us be mindful of the sacredness of language, the holiness of truth, and the prayer Christ has prayed for us: “*I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you, Holy Father. Keep those you have given me true to your name, so they may be one like us.... I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the Evil One.... Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth.*” John 17: 11-19



¹⁰ The Rule and Life of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, Chapter 5 “The Way to Serve and Work”, Art.20

¹¹ Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, Art. 13

¹² OFS General Constitutions, 26:2

¹³ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2464-2513, “Respect for the Truth” and “The Use of Social Communications Media.”

¹⁴ Inter Mirifica, Decree on the Media of Social Communication, p.2

✧ PART IV: PEACEMAKING ✧

By David Foster, OSB¹⁵

Making peace with one's enemy before sundown

This is where we move from learning to make peace in our own hearts to making peace in the world. The starting point is recognizing that whatever problems other people cause, we are in exactly the same position as they are, and we need to acknowledge our solidarity with them to that extent. Then we may be able to take initiatives in facilitating the desirable changes. It is not that we have no right to judge others, but it is too easy to judge them as though we were not implicated ourselves in the difficulties underlying their faults. It is too easy for us to play the part of Pilate. It is a good way of trying to make ourselves feel better.

Jesus said “do not judge.” I think the point is not that we cannot or should not judge, but that it will not really address the problem, which can only be addressed by recognizing our solidarity with others, rather than our superiority over them. To be sure, none of us can claim the righteousness needed to “sort things out” on our own account. And Jesus, the only righteous human being, actually shows us someone whose approach, while including forthright words and actions, was fundamentally the path of solidarity with people who cannot help themselves, even to the extent of accepting the role of innocent victim. This is profoundly paradoxical, but we need to learn from it if we are to understand the truth about peacemaking: Peacemaking depends not on an assertion of rights, but on acceptance of solidarity, and on the fact that I may be in a position to take initiatives towards change that another person cannot yet make.

Peacemaking involves setting others free to change, and by putting oneself alongside them, by not asserting oneself over them, trying to create the possibility of change in the human relationships



that need healing. We cannot make friends with enemies just like that, in one step, but we can love them like that, and by playing out the possibility of friendship, offer them the chance of change. This certainly means taking risks and putting our trust in others. If we take initiatives with trust, we will always find ourselves let down in the end; but life would be unbearable if people did not trust each other. Without it there is no possibility of change.

Peacemaking means restraint in asserting oneself, but we do have to assert the truth. However, we need to strive for a truth that can be spoken with love and compassion, a truth that is not being used as a weapon in a contest of strength, a truth that subverts the other person's defensiveness (which is what underlies their violence) and gives them a chance to recognize our own point of view. It does not mean making ourselves a mat to be walked over. This calls for real courage, as well as for self-sacrifice for the sake of the good of the other person. But it is through such Christ-like responses to wrong that the Spirit of new life can work through us in the hearts of others. It is learning to care for others.

¹⁵ David Foster OSB in *Deep Calls to Deep* - Going further in prayer pp.125-127. (Continuum 2007)

❄️ PART V: GOALS OF JPIC ❄️

The chapter on Justice, Peace and Care for Creation in the *For Up to Now Manual* provides the foundation for OFS formation on JPIC. This excellent resource was written by Pat Brandwein-Ball, OFS.

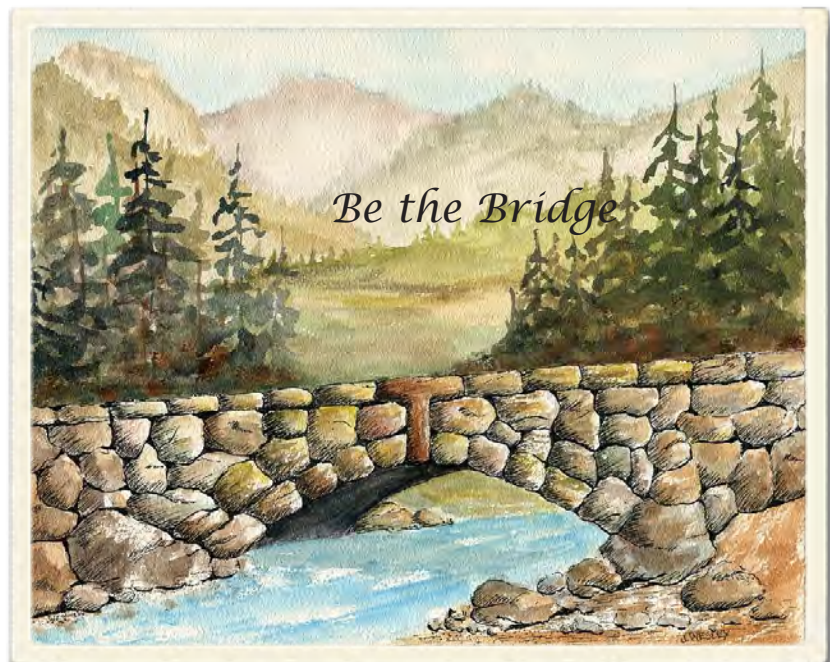
Here are the *Goals of JPIC* and some ideas for *Being and Doing*:

Goals of JPIC

1. To foster an atmosphere in fraternity, the privileged place, where with openness and trust we may share with each other the manner in which our personal conversions are shaping our Franciscan lives.
2. To reinforce the appreciation of the dignity of the human person in the choices made in our professed lives by responding in charity and patience to all we meet and to respond as Franciscans to anything which would denigrate the dignity of the human person, beginning with our own personal communications with one another;
3. To assist in the living out of obedience to the common good as intended by God so that the professed Secular Franciscan builds up all that is good for all of Creation and does nothing which would damage the fabric of communal interdependence;
4. To strengthen the professed Secular Franciscans' commitment to solidarity with all of Creation enabling them to make those choices in life that would bring about a more fraternal and evangelical world. (*Build up the world fraternity*)

Being and Doing

- Read & pray the Prologue and Chapter 2 of the Rule. Pay close attention to the phrasing and the strength of the verbs. Read chapter 2 two to three times per week, then weekly. Each time listen for something new, tie together the articles, one moving into the next rather than one at time in isolation. Be sure to read the corresponding articles of the General Constitutions especially Articles 17 – 27.
- What is the Church asking of me as my part in her mission? How does my daily conversion reflect upon this?
- What one new way can I find to energize my life in the Church?
- What one new way can I find to energize my life in Fraternity?





JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



OUR HOLY RULE: A DOCUMENT OF LOVE AND PEACE

By Carolyn D. Townes, OFS,
National JPIC Animator

“Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. Mindful that anyone “who follows Christ, the perfect man, becomes more of a man himself,” let them exercise their responsibilities competently in the Christian spirit of service.” (Article 14)

As I reflect on my 18 years as a professed Secular Franciscan, one of the most beloved aspects of this way of life, constant and faithful, is the Holy Rule I professed. It is the one thing that truly binds us all as we journey through this way of life.

There are many different paths to this Order; there are many different formation processes, many different ministries and apostolates within the Order. Yet the one thing that truly binds us all is our Holy Rule of Life. Like the liturgies of Mother Church, it is the constant we can be sure that hundreds of thousands of people are praying and worshipping each and every day – Word, Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours.

As we profess to this Rule, we must continue to live out the precepts laid out in the Rule. As our brother and Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, states in his Jubilee Letter: *“The Rule is an empty text if we do not turn it into life. We have to use it.”* Some days we will slip up, but as Article 7 clearly tells us, it is about daily conversion. We have not arrived, but are still on the journey.

“Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon. Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others.” (Art. 19)

What I especially love and appreciate about Article 19 is that it states emphatically in the opening that we “are bearers of peace...” not that we strive to become, or we will be someday – but that we already are. And as such, we must bring that bold statement to life, into action – every moment of our lives. Not someday. Not when we are ready, but right this very moment. What a great grace that God has bestowed upon us – a grace we must all live up to and into.

And how do we live out this gift of grace? By doing it in love. Not the love of feeling as we wait until we feel something. But the love of doing, making the decision every single moment to will the good of the other; to wish the other “peace and all good,” and to truly mean it. When Saint Francis set about wishing his fellow countrymen *“Pace e bene,”* he truly meant it. This is evident in his addressing all creatures as brother and sister. Francis saw all creatures as family; born of the same loving and benevolent God; a God who is all love, slow to anger and abounding in mercy. This is our call – a call to mercy.

Our Holy Rule not only lays out a path to holiness, but also gives us a blueprint for mercy. It calls us to trust. Trust is a sacred action, and most times a very difficult action. It can be difficult to trust, especially if our trust has been compromised or betrayed. We then retreat into mistrust and suspicion. This leads to judgment and criticism. There is no room for trust in a heart that judges and criticizes. We are called to *trust in the presence of the divine seed in everyone.* And yes, sometimes it takes an especially strong pair of glasses to see that divine seed in some folks. But if we are truly living and loving our Rule of Life, the Rule we professed and said, “Yes, this is what I want,” then by God’s grace and mercy, it becomes perfect joy!

Sharing The Vision

News from the National Executive Council

by Jan Parker and Mary Bittner

Jubilee Year – Living Your Vocation

In June, we kicked off the Jubilee Celebration (40th Anniversary) of the New Rule. Our General Minister gave us a beautiful gift with his June 24, 2018 letter. CIOFS issued nine “Celebrating the Rule” cards with messages and questions to help us reflect on how well we are living the Rule. Many regional and local fraternities have been celebrating with retreats, gatherings, special liturgies, special prayer cards and gifts of the Little Red Rule Book. The following formation resources can be downloaded from our website.

Direct Link: <https://secularfranciscansusa.org/ministers-message-june-2018-our-jubilee-begins/>

OFS Holy Half Hours on the Rule

Kathy Taormina, OFS

Formation on the Rule/Gospel to Life

Mary Bittner, OFS

Being Franciscan Today! Sharing Your Dream: Communal Visioning

LaVerna Region

Ongoing Formation on the Rule

Lady Poverty Region

The Words of Our OFS Rule

Kathy Taormina, OFS

The OFS Rule – We Hold a Treasure

Troubadours of Peace Region

National Executive Council Election Slate

The Secular Franciscan Order in the United States will elect a new Executive Council on Saturday, October 13, 2018, during the annual Chapter in St. Louis, Missouri. The new Council will serve the Order from 2018-2021. The slate of nominees is:

Minister:

Jan Parker, OFS

Vice Minister:

Mary Bittner, OFS; Jane DeRose Bamman, OFS;
Donna Hollis, OFS

Secretary:

Jane DeRose Bamman, OFS; Francine Gikow, OFS; Kate Kleinert, OFS

Treasurer:

Claudia Kauzlarich, OFS; Richard Spana, OFS

International Councilor:

Mary Frances Charsky, OFS; Awilda Guadalupe, OFS; Mary Stronach, OFS

Councilor(s) at Large:

Justin Carisio, OFS; Mary Frances Charsky, OFS; Awilda Guadalupe, OFS; Donna Hollis, OFS; Kate Kleinert, OFS; Josh Molidor, OFS; Carmen Montanez, OFS; Frank Scotto, OFS

Novena Prayer for the National Chapter of Elections

Most High Glorious God, we praise You for Your presence in the world and for the tremendous gift of our Franciscan vocation. We beseech You to inspire every brother and sister of The National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order of the United States as we prepare for our National Chapter of Elections in October, 2018. Grant each of us the necessary wisdom to elect those You want to animate and guide our National Fraternity. Guide and direct us so that we may follow the Gospel and our Rule more closely and be coworkers with You in the rebuilding of the Church and the World. We ask this through Christ our Lord and through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Francis, St. Clare, and our holy patrons St. Elizabeth and St. Louis. Amen.

JPIC – Together on the Journey of Hope/ Justice for Immigrants

This past July, Carolyn Townes, National JPIC Chair, emailed all Regional Ministers asking in what ways local OFS members were engaged in outreach to immigrants or in assisting to reunite separated families. The response was amazing. Our brothers and sisters are working individually, and as fraternities in conjunction with their parishes, Franciscan Friars and Sisters, civic organizations and other faith groups, reaching out in numerous ways – providing meals and shelter, legal assistance, transportation to reunite families, teaching English as a second language, advocacy, donations of money and supplies, prayer rallies, and immigrant support groups. All this is

consistent with the Bishops' pastoral letter, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, and the subsequent *Justice for Immigrants Campaign*.

Regional Spiritual Assistant Workshop and Formation Visioning Workshop

Two important National Workshops were held consecutively from August 29-September 1 at the Savior Pastoral Center in Kansas City, Kansas. The Conference of National Spiritual Assistants met with the Regional Spiritual Assistants for ongoing formation and to provide answers to the many questions that arise on a day-to-day basis. The National Executive Council members and National Formation Team met with the Regional Formation Directors and Regional Spiritual Assistants for a Formation Visioning Workshop with the purpose of seeking God's direction for our Order in the area of formation. A full report will be included in the next issue of *TAU-USA*.

Secular Franciscan USA Website

The "Contact Us" feature of our new website receives numerous inquiries – *an average of eight weekly* – with the most frequent request being how to join the Order. These requests are forwarded to regional OFS contacts. A good number of our OFS documents will be moved to the new site as they are updated, but are still available on the old website. If you have questions or need resources, you are welcome to submit an inquiry on the new site. <https://secularfranciscansusa.org/send-us-a-message/> Your

response will come from our email address: ncc.ofs.usa@gmail.com

What's in a name? NAFRA vs. OFS-USA

The acronym "NAFRA" has been used for years to refer to the National Fraternity. However, it isn't unique to the United States. So to provide certainty we are shifting to the use of "OFS-USA." You'll see email addresses, the website, our Facebook page address, and Twitter account change to the OFS-USA. Of course, we will still use the term "National Fraternity" in speaking of all OFS in the United States but we will limit the use of "NAFRA." Remember that all of us belong to four fraternities: local, regional, national and international. (Someday we need a list of acronyms listed on the website!)

OFS-USA Statement on the Clergy Sexual Abuse Scandal

With sadness, hope for healing, and the pursuit of accountability for the abusers and those in authority who allowed it to continue, the National Executive Council (NEC) issued a statement calling us to double our efforts to live our Rule by helping to rebuild the Church. Most especially, the NEC requests prayers for healing, forgiveness, peace, and reconciliation. For the full statement view: <https://secularfranciscansusa.org/2018/08/26/a-message-to-secular-franciscans-regarding-the-recent-scandal-in-the-churches-of-pennsylvania/>

Secular Franciscan Order

Fraternity Register

\$39.00 each
+ \$3.99 Shipping

978-1-61956-219-6
Ledger Style
Multiple Entries per Page (425 Entries)

978-1-61956-220-2
One-per-Page Style (100 Entries)

Order online at
TauPublishing.com
Words of Inspiration

4727 N. 12th Street | Phoenix, AZ 85014 | 602.651.1873 or 602.625.6183 | TauPublishing.com

NEWS & VIEWS



CNSA

TAU USA - Summer, 2018 - Lester Bach OFM Cap - CNSA Emeritus

Some Considerations

We are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the 1978 OFS Rule, and prepare for the 800th anniversary of the establishment of the OFS. Take some time to reflect on the following questions. They can help to enrich ways to fulfill your profession of the **OFS Rule and Constitutions**.

*

1. **From a Franciscan perspective, evaluate political attitudes in our country?** What changes in your political opinions or convictions would better reflect the Gospel?

Cfr: Constitutions - Article 8.2

2. **How do ideas or issues in society reflect or not reflect the Gospel?** What, in your response as a Franciscan, needs change and/or conversion, both personally and as a fraternity, without creating enemies?

Cfr: OFS Constitutions - Article 11

3. **How does the Franciscan spirit call for welcoming strangers and foreigners to our country, neighborhoods and fraternity?**

Cfr: Rule #13 and OFS Constitutions - Article 18.2

4. **Do your fraternity-gatherings share personal stories about the way we live the OFS Rule and Constitutions?** How could such sharing help your personal growth?

Cfr: OFS Constitutions - Article 24.2

5. Describe how you **work together** and show the **personal witness** called for in:

Article 17.1 of the Constitutions

6. How do you (and the fraternity) fulfill **Article 18.2 & Article 18.3 of the OFS Constitutions?** How would *conversion* help to 'give personal witness' in living these articles?

7. **How does your Franciscan spirit show itself:** in family relationships? In groups you support? In contemplative prayer? In your workplace? In fraternity life? In parish life?

*

Re: Devotions: *The Synod Fathers stressed the urgency of discovering the true spiritual values present in popular religiosity, so that, enriched by genuine Catholic doctrine, it might lead to a sincere conversion and a practical exercise of charity. ...*

Popular Devotional Practices - USCCB - Page 18

Cfr: OFS Rule #9

Quotes from the OFS Constitutions

Cfr: *Essential Documents of the Secular Franciscan Order*

Article 3.3 *The vocation to the OFS is a vocation to live the Gospel in fraternal communion. For this purpose the members of the OFS gather in ecclesial communities which are called fraternities.*

Article 8.2 *They seek to deepen, in the light of faith, the values and choices of the evangelical life according to the Rule of the OFS:*

- + Rule 7 in a continually renewed journey of conversion and of formation.
- + Rule 4 open to the challenges that come from society and from the Church's life situation, "going from Gospel to life and from life to Gospel."
- + in the personal and communal dimensions of this journey.

Article 11 *Mindful that the Holy Spirit is the source of their vocation and the animator of fraternal life and mission, Secular Franciscans should seek to imitate the faithfulness of Francis to his inspiration. They should listen to the exhortation of the Saint to desire above all things "the Spirit of God at work within them."*

Article 17.1 *Rule 6 Called to work together in building up the Church as the sacrament of salvation for all and, through their baptism and profession, made "witnesses and instruments of her mission," Secular Franciscans proclaim Christ by their life and words. Their preferred apostolate is personal witness in the environment in which they live and service for building up the Kingdom of God within the situations of this world.*

Article 18.2 *Rule 13 They should deepen the true foundations of universal kinship and create a spirit of welcome and an atmosphere of fraternity everywhere. They should firmly commit themselves to oppose every form of exploitation, discrimination, and exclusion and against every attitude of indifference in relation to others.*

Article 18.3 *Rule 13 They should work together with movements which promote the building of fraternity among peoples: they should be committed to "create worthy conditions of life" for all and to work for the freedom of all people.*

Article 18.4 *Following the example of Francis, patron of ecologists, they should actively put forward initiatives that care for creation and should work with others in efforts*



that both put a stop to polluting and degrading nature and also establish circumstances of living and environment which would not be a threat to the human person. Cfr: *Laudate Si* - #9

Article 21.2 *Leisure and recreation have their own value and are necessary for personal development. Secular Franciscans should maintain a balance between work and rest and should strive to create meaningful forms of using leisure time.*

Article 23.1 *Rule 19 Peace is the work of justice and the fruit of reconciliation and of fraternal love. Secular Franciscans are called to be bearers of peace in their families and in society:*

- + they should see to the proposal and spreading of peaceful ideas and attitudes;
- + they should develop their own initiatives and should collaborate, **individually and as a fraternity**, with initiatives of the Pope, the local churches, and the Franciscan Family;
- + they should collaborate with those movements and its institutions which promote peace while respecting its authentic foundations.

Article 24.2 *In the fraternity:*

- + the spirituality of the family and of marriage and the Christian attitude towards family problems should be a theme for **dialogue and for the sharing of experiences**.
- + they should share the important moments of the family life of their Franciscan brothers and sisters and they should give fraternal attention to those - single - widows - single parents - separated - divorced - who are living difficult situations;
- + Rule 19 they should create conditions suitable for **dialogue between generations**;
- + The formation of groups of married couples and of family groups should be fostered.

Article 27.1 *Rule 29 The brothers and sisters, progressing in age, should learn to accept illness and increasing difficulties and to give a deeper sense to their life. This should be undertaken with increasing detachment as they set out for the Promised Land. They should be firmly convinced that the community of those who believe in Christ and who love one another in Him will go forward into eternal life as the "communion of Saints."*

Article 30.1 *The brothers and sisters are co-responsible for the life of the fraternity to which they belong and to the OFS as the organic union of all fraternities throughout the world.*



Article 30.2 *The sense of co-responsibility of the members requires personal presence, witness, prayer, and active collaboration, in accordance with each one's situation and possible obligations for the animation of the fraternity.*

Two theologies in the Church reflect reasons for Jesus coming among us.

1. Jesus came as a result of the sin of human beings. Sin prompted the Trinity to bring us salvation by sending Jesus as our savior. In this theology, our human sinfulness is the reason for Jesus' coming among us. It is a common Church teaching.

2. Franciscan theology, an approved theology, looks at it differently. Franciscan theology believes that the Trinity's decision to send Jesus **springs from the Trinity's love** for us. St. John puts it this way in his 1st letter:

+

*My dear friends, let us love one another, because the source of love is God. Everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God, but the unloving know nothing of God, for God is love. **This is how he showed his love among us; He sent his only Son into the world that we might have life through Him.***

1 John 4: 7-9

*This is how we know that we dwell in him and he dwells in us; he has imparted his Spirit to us. Moreover, we have seen for ourselves, and we are witnesses, that the Father has sent his Son to be the savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is God's Son, God dwells in him and he in God. **Thus we have come to know and believe in the love which God has for us.***

1 John 4:13-16

+

Franciscans believe that the reason God sent Jesus to us is because God is love and acts out of love for us. We believe that love prompts the actions of the Trinity. St. Francis put it this way in his earlier Rule:

... We thank you for as through Your Son You created us, so through Your holy love with which You loved us You brought about his birth as true God and true man ...

*The Earlier Rule - Francis of Assisi, the saint
Vol 1 - Page 8*

+++

Hope is a gift of the Trinity. Love overcomes sin in our lives. In turn, we share God's love with others. We express love, empowered by the Holy Spirit, in imitation of the words and actions of Jesus - God-among-us!

We follow St. Francis' spirit by living the OFS Rule and Constitutions.



+

The picture in the lower left column, was taken at a Korean fraternity in southern California. South Korea has about 15,000 Secular Franciscans.



SERVANT LEADERSHIP WITH FRANCISCAN YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS: WHAT IS YOURS TO DO?

Kathleen Molaro, OFS, National FY/YA Commission Chair

In an earlier article, the FY/YA Commission suggested that the OFS in our nation need to first UNITE our efforts, then IGNITE each other by sharing inspirational ideas, and finally INVITE young people to join us in our desire to live a gospel life. We see this happening, and share the following.

How are we uniting?

We have 14 regions that have appointed FY/YA Animators. We trust the rest of the regions are still educating and inspiring their brothers and sisters to take some action in the area of youth, and are seriously seeking Animators, on the regional level and eventually within each fraternity. The goal is to provide a network for sharing ideas, information, concerns and successes. We hope regional councils are also studying the FY/YA documents so we are united nationally in our understanding of the expectations and processes required for establishing Franciscan Youth and Young Adult groups.

How are we igniting?

For many regions and fraternities, this might be a time to listen only... a time to observe and reflect on how best to enter into the world of youth with a humble and helpful attitude. It is tempting to want to swoop in and try to fix what's been missing or broken. Coercing young people into believing that being Franciscan is what they need will send the wrong message and eventually backfire. Instead, we need to grow into an understanding of who our young people are and how we can serve them. Each little spark lends itself to an eventual flame! The goal, remember, is to ignite their desire for holiness and to offer them an opportunity to learn more about Franciscan spirituality. There are many ways to do this. Hopefully, we can share our ideas.

How are we inviting?

In the recently published book, *Called: What Happens After Saying Yes to God*, Brother Casey Cole, OFM, states, "If we are to be followers and imitators of St. Francis—then the thing we need above all is the humility to know that people do not need us: They need Jesus. Francis never wanted anyone to follow him, he wanted them to follow the one he followed." It's Jesus the world needs, and our responsibility as Secular Franciscans is to bring the light of Jesus to others, especially our younger Catholics, and even their non-Catholic friends. We do this by being ourselves, and by witnessing the joy of the Gospel

everywhere we go, especially when spending time with young people.

Seek what is yours to do.

How we connect with the younger generation is going to look different with each individual, fraternity, and region. Jesus said "Do not be afraid" (Mk 6:50) and "I am with you always, to the end of the world" (Mt 28:20). Pope Francis reminds us in *Gaudete et Exsultate*, that those words enable us "to go forth and serve with the same courage that the Holy Spirit stirred up in the Apostles" (#129). He warned us that our lack of fervor tempts us to keep close to the shore! Yet the Lord calls us to put out into the deep and let down our nets. We may be called to serve in very simple ways, one little gesture at a time close to the edge of the water. That's certainly acceptable, as long as it's not apathy that's keeping us there. If others are being asked to go deeper and let down their net, we can be there to support them. Perhaps eventually we'll have the resources and courage to venture deeper ourselves.

As Servant Leaders in the area of Franciscan Youth and Young Adults, there are many who have accepted the challenge to unite, ignite, and invite, and have taken that first plunge (or at least have put their toes in the water!). At least five regions are now actually working with young adults on a regular basis. Some individuals have shared formation-type materials they've created for presenting to youth or young adults. A few have mentioned activities they've invited young people to attend (movie nights, special prayer services, JPIC projects) and several folks have offered to help the commission design specific retreats that can be shared. The Spirit is moving across the country!

There are also those who are anxious to be Servant Leaders in the area of FY/YA but who are laying the groundwork first. They're creating teams, searching for the age and availability of youth in their areas, and brainstorming ways to draw them into the Franciscan family fold.

We are all a part of the FY/YA Commission. If we remain united in our purpose, share our ideas and successes in order to ignite others to action, and invite young people to experience a life in Franciscan fraternity, we can in all honesty say we've done what we were called to do. Blessings on your journey, and thank you for your prayers and hard work.



Ecumenical Interfaith Committee Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity

Servant Leadership and Ecumenism

by David Seitz, OFS, Former Regional Minister, Divine Mercy Region

Divine Mercy Region, at its April 2018 regional gathering, announced the appointment of Ms. Cami Mann, OFS to the position of regional chair for ecumenical outreach. Cami is a member of Our Mother of Sorrows Fraternity, Grand Rapids, Mich. She brings a wealth of experience in ecumenism to the position, having worked in ecumenical and interfaith outreach ministry for many years. Mike Carsten, OFS, National Fraternity as Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Chair, informed us that Divine Mercy is the first region to officially establish such a position. We are certainly looking forward to having Cami lead us in this effort.



Cami has said yes to the invitation to enter a position of leadership in the Order. Admittedly, because this is a new position, she will have the opportunity to mold and create the role, the expectations, communications, and implementation of an ecumenical outreach program in the region. This will undoubtedly come with some risk, opposition, leaps of faith, and blazing new trails in the face of both internal support and challenges to the need or usefulness of such a ministry in the Order. She has

said yes, knowing that the region currently has no funds to support her new ministry, no instructions, and no formal job description.

I believe that as Secular Franciscans, we all need to take that leap of faith into servant leadership. St. Francis believed that all in the order have equal dignity, and the one in leadership is to serve his sisters and brothers. Cami is no stranger to serving the Order. In her home fraternity, she is leading a multi-year effort aimed at changing its culture from one of passive to active involvement in the community. She is no stranger to encountering opposition, as the journey Our Mother of Sorrows fraternity has embarked upon has come with its joys, sorrows, disagreements, and painful growth. Yet, through prayer, discernment, and openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit, is bearing fruit.

Often, we shy away from taking the leap of faith into servant leadership because we fear we will not be able to please everyone, or that we may not do a good job, or that it will consume too much of our time. It has been my experience that those who have taken that leap of faith to serve have expressed how many more blessings than hardships they receive. Embarking on the “yes” of serving the Order really does enrich one’s vocation and commitment and love of this living body we call Secular Franciscans.

Prior to Cami’s introducing herself, Mike Carsten presented information on his role serving the National Fraternity as Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Chair. He shared with us a video presentation with participants from several Franciscan faith traditions.

When Cami introduced herself, she was immediately challenged by a member attending the gathering. Cami was addressing the desire to reach out and dialogue and connect with Franciscans of other faith traditions. “If we are inviting them into our circle, then why does it matter to be Catholic?” was one

such challenge. This generated a bit of debate among our sisters and brothers. Viewpoints offered included, “You must be Catholic to really be Franciscan,” to “You can be Franciscan regardless of faith,” or even “if you have no faith at all.” We had labels tossed about: Conservative. Liberal. Traditional. The discussion was getting a little heated with some apologetics, history, tradition, and personal testimony; emotions were starting to run high and some were digging in their heels. As the minister, I let this discussion continue for a little bit, fully aware that it was making the room uncomfortable. When I felt it was time, I interjected and took the floor. “This discussion,” I submitted to the body assembled, “is proof that the position of ecumenical chair is needed —why we need dialogue, education and understanding.” While it is true that to be a member of the Secular Franciscan Order you must be Catholic, that does not preclude others who wish to follow the values and life of St. Francis from forming groups of like-minded people.

With the focus on the 40th anniversary of the Rule we profess as Secular Franciscans, I’d like to share a couple of thoughts regarding how reaching out in ecumenical dialogue is living the rule.

Article 13: “*As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son,...* so the Secular Franciscans with a **gentle and courteous** spirit accept all people as a **gift of the Lord and an image of Christ.**”

Article 14: “*Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively.*”

Article 19: “...[T]hey should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony **through dialogue**, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the **transforming power of love.** . . .”

Pope Saint John Paul II set an example for all of us, bringing representatives from many faith traditions to Assisi to pray together, acknowledging the divine seed in all. Pope Francis has said that you first lead a person to a relationship with Jesus, then let the Holy Spirit do His work, and perhaps they will come into communion with the Church. We must also keep in mind that St. Francis lived in a “pre-reformation” world. In his day, there were no Lutherans, Anglicans or Unitarians. Five hundred years after the

Reformation, we have to bear in mind that there are other faith traditions of people who are inspired by St. Francis to live simply, serve the poor and underprivileged, and who strive to bring about “conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.” *Article 13*

Let me end with a few thoughts of my own regarding ecumenism. For me, the best way to explain ecumenism is to describe what it is not. Ecumenism is not beating someone over the head with scripture quotes and apologetics. Ecumenism is not compromising your belief system so as not to offend. Ecumenism is not agreeing that another’s beliefs are equally true regarding issues of morals and faith. I believe from my personal experience that some object to ecumenical dialogue because they feel that if you accept someone with differing values or views, that means that you relinquish your own. That is not the case. True ecumenical dialogue begins by acknowledging the other, hearing their views, sharing their stories and our stories, discovering wonderfully how much we have in common outweighs our differences, and working together to bring more souls to Jesus.

Finally, let me answer the question, for me, that was raised at our gathering. Why does it matter, then, to be Catholic? I am Catholic because I love the Church, the Sacraments, the Liturgy, the rich tradition, the history (the good, the bad, and the ugly), and the people I have had the pleasure to meet who support me in my journey and walk in this pilgrimage here on Earth. I am Catholic because I believe this is where God has called me to be. Perhaps the Holy Spirit will inspire others to investigate the Church I love, but I can guarantee this: Unless I am loving, accepting, engaged in courteous dialogue, bearing peace and joy, seeing the divine image in all people regardless of creed and faith tradition, I will only be exclusive, judgmental and unwelcoming to those very people God sends to cross my path.

Sisters and brothers, I can think of no greater service to our Order and the Church than to reach out in ecumenical dialogue with our brothers and sisters who strive to follow St. Francis as we do. Leading souls to Jesus and living the Gospel is an inclusive mission. Don’t let labels get in the way of bringing souls to Jesus.

FRANCISCAN LIVING

The RULE: Our Ministry, Our Mission

By Francine Gikow, OFS

*“Oh, 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’ and he will make ‘his home and dwelling place among them’...”*¹

Our Rule! Our life! Our call to holiness through community and prayer. Our mission: to bring Christ to others by our life and our words.

In his encyclical letter *Gaudete et Exsultate* Pope Francis states “At its core, holiness is experiencing, in union with Christ, the mysteries of his life... our holiness stems from the stature that Christ achieves in us, to the extent that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we model our life on his.”² As we go “from gospel to life and from life to the gospel,”³ we model our life on His as well. That is our ministry.

Our Secular Franciscan Rule is our guide for holiness and ministry. Through the elements of our Rule and our own perseverance in living it, we slowly turn toward Christ and allow, by meditating on His life, union with Him and His Way of living. By penance (or conversion) we turn our focus to God alone by stripping from our life that which restrains us from more perfectly following Christ. By humility, we know who we are as children of God: no more, no less. Poverty allows us to become aware that everything we have has been given by God for His use and that we do not “own” anything by ourselves. We open ourselves to holiness.

Pope Francis states: “Do not be afraid to let yourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit. Holiness does not make you less human, since it is an encounter between your weakness and the power of God’s grace.”⁴ I think we all hesitate to let go of our will and allow the Holy Spirit to work through us. Does God really want *me* to do this? Why me? Pope Francis continues: “...though it may seem obvious, we should remember that holiness consists in a habitual openness to the transcendent, expressed in prayer and adoration.”⁵ When guided by the Holy Spirit, discernment comes in handy. Discernment is a grace.⁶ It “must be born of a readiness to listen: to the Lord and to others, and to

reality itself, which always challenges us in new ways.”⁷ Prayer, listening, and discernment should be the core of ministry.

As Franciscans, however, we are not called to be alone; we are called to live this life in community (or in Franciscan terms: fraternity). Pope Francis describes this well when he says, “Growth in holiness is a journey in community, side by side with others.”⁸ “Each community is called to create a ‘God enlightened space in which to experience the hidden presence of the risen Lord.’”⁹ “A community that cherishes the little details of love, whose members care for one another and create an open and evangelizing environment, is a place where the risen Lord is present, sanctifying it in accordance with the Father’s plan.”¹⁰ Does this sound like your fraternity?

Our Rule is our “handbook” in living the Secular Franciscan spiritual journey. Secular Franciscan living is not about “me,” however. It is evangelical in nature, reaching out to the world to influence and encourage others in the ways of Christ. Like Francis, are we also rebuilding God’s church by our ministry?¹¹

Pope Francis encourages us by saying: “You too need to see the entirety of your life *as mission*. Try to do so by listening to God in prayer and recognizing the signs he gives you.... May you come to realize what that word is, the message of Jesus that God wants to speak to the world by your life. Let yourself be transformed. Let yourself be renewed by the Spirit, so that this can happen, lest you fail in your precious mission.”¹²



We are called by our Rule to ministry.

We are called by our Rule to mission.

Do we listen?

*Can you see ministry in what you do
and how you act?*

*Can you envision your life as "mission"
and as sent by God to the world?*

*For as Jesus prayed to the Father: “As
you sent me into the world, so I send
them into the world.” (Jn 17:18)*

Live in His love!



¹ Letter to All the Faithful: 5.

² *Gaudate et Exsultate*, 20-21.

³ OFS Rule II, 4

⁴ *Gaudate et Exsultate*, 34.

⁵ *op. cit.*, 147.

⁶ *op. cit.*, 170.

⁷ *op. cit.*, 172.

⁸ *op. cit.*, 141

⁹ *op. cit.*, 142

¹⁰ *op. cit.*, 145.

¹¹ OFS Rule, II.6.

¹² *Gaudate et Exsultate*, 23-24, emphasis added.

Venezuelan Brothers and Sisters Struggling to Help Their Communities

by Mary Stronach, OFS, International Councilor

The situation in Venezuela is critical! With a government that is at best dysfunctional and at worst corrupt, the country is in turmoil. The cost of living has increased to unbelievable proportions. The latest reports say that it has gone up 18,000% in the last 20 years. This has had an impact in all segments of their society – medicines and medical supplies are scarce, if available at all; the food shelves at grocery stores are bare (there are shortages of all the basic products, even toilet paper); blackouts are the rule rather than the exception; the military is in conflict with the government... More than half a million Venezuelans have left the country, hoping to find a safe place to call home in neighboring countries.



The **Atlantic Magazine** describes the situation like this: “In the last two years Venezuela has experienced the kind of implosion that hardly ever occurs in a middle-income country like it outside of war. Mortality rates are skyrocketing; one public service after another is collapsing; triple-digit inflation has left more than 70 percent of the population in poverty; an unmanageable crime wave keeps people locked indoors at night; shoppers have to stand in lines for hours to buy food; babies die in large numbers for lack of simple, inexpensive medicines and equipment in hospitals, as do the elderly and those suffering from chronic illnesses.”

In the midst of all this chaos, our Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters are doing all they can to support their communities, the elderly and the children. Our sister and vice-minister of the order, María (Chelito) Consuelo Nuñez shared some of the horror stories at our National Chapter two years ago. But she also shared how our brothers and sisters from around the world and the United States are making a difference and bringing hope to their community. Thanks to the local efforts of Secular Franciscans and donations from Secular Franciscans from around the world and

the United States, children are getting a wholesome breakfast every day at their local school and hundreds of people are getting their medicines and medical supplies at the local church where our Seculars have their gathering.

Chelito sends us letters regularly thanking our Seculars for caring, but she explains that resources keep dwindling, more people ask for help, more children are hungry.

Article 11 of the Rule reminds us: “Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the good things received for the benefit of God’s children.” Article 25 continues: “Regarding

expenses necessary for the life of the fraternity and the needs of worship, of the apostolate, and of charity, all the brothers and sisters should offer a contribution according to their means.”

The Bible is just as direct: “Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Cor 9:7) And again, “Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you.” (Deut 16:17).

We all have a favorite charity. Please consider our Venezuelan family as one of these.

If you would like to send a donation, please make your check out to **NAFRA** and send it to our National Treasurer with the notation “Venezuela”:

Jerry Rousseau, OFS
82 Kim Street
Blairsville, GA 30512

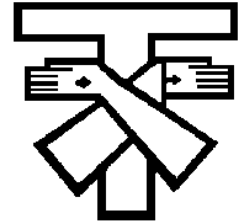
Or, you may send medical supplies to the following address:

OFS de la Chiquinquirá
a/c María Consuelo Nuñez (Chelito)
Iglesia de la Chiquinquirá
Final Avenida Andres Bello
Parroquia El Recreo, Urb. La Florida
Caracas 1050 VENEZUELA



9th Summer Seminar for Secular Franciscans: From the Chivalry of Knighthood to God’s Servant

by
Anna Rzewnicki, OFS, Padre Pio Fraternity, Raleigh, NC and
Patricia Serotkin, OFS, St. Bonaventure Fraternity, Loretto, PA



One wouldn’t think the first song at a gathering of secular Franciscans would be “Camelot,” the theme song from the 1960’s musical play and movie about the legend of King Arthur, based on the book, “The Once and Future King.” But that is how the three presenters of the [2018 Secular Franciscan Summer Seminar](#), held July 12-15 at [Saint Francis University](#) in Loretto, PA, opened their first session.

The song fit with the title and theme of the seminar – “Francis the Troubadour – How Can I Keep from Singing.” It also provided some historical context for St. Francis’ conversion journey, from worldly troubadour and wannabe knight to a sacred singer, minister to the poor and outcast, and founder of the Franciscan order. (You can read more about St. Francis and his music in this National Catholic Register article. Link to: <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/revealing-the-real-music-of-st.-francis-of-assisi>)

The musical opening also was fitting, as two of the three presenters – Jerry Aull and Brother Bob Herrick, OFM Cap. – are highly regarded musicians. The third presenter, Cricket Aull, OFS – Jerry’s wife – is known for her spiritual writing.



St. Francis and Music

Brother Bob and the other presenters tapped into St. Francis’s love of music to provide a platform for conveying the story of his conversion during an age of chivalry and knighthood, with ongoing wars among the city states and elsewhere. “Life (then) was brutal and short,” Brother Bob said, and the music of the troubadours – of which Francis was one – reflected and responded to that.

While Francis aspired to knighthood and to join the battles of his time, he responded to God’s call to a different life. In doing so, Brother Bob said, he “reinvented chivalry” – borrowing from the troubadour’s traditional style to create new songs of praise for God’s creation and turning the militaristic fervor of the time into a passion for serving “the least, the powerless.” All the while, St. Francis retained the joyful attitude of the troubadour.



Brother Bob said he and other friars in his community follow Francis’ example when they bring contemporary music and prayer in coffeehouse-style programs to different churches in their communities, something that has proven popular, especially among families with young children.

“Francis filtered down to the reality of life, what was happening; that joy can be part of bringing people back to the church,” Brother Bob said, adding that it’s “all about attitude. A joyful attitude can help bring people back to the church. Francis would not appreciate the grumpy ones... nor would he like a fretful friar.”

Freedom to Choose

In her talk, “What Does Francis Know that We Need to Know?” Cricket Aull started with the phrase, “Love is completely other-oriented, and this is how God is calling us to be. And He gives us the grace to do that. We need to stop and ask for God’s help,” she said.

“We [also] have every reason to not give up,” she said, “but need also to keep our eyes on the Lord and to surrender to what God is calling us to do. He is always working for the good in every situation.”

Surrendering to God, she said, is an invitation to imitate Christ in everything. “We are called and able to choose. I can choose what God wants or what the world wants.”

She cited three D’s: “Desire, Discipline and Determination to grow in holiness. Each of us has a special calling and the more we call, the more we’ll hear His response.” She suggested setting aside 40 minutes a day to give complete attention to God. Also, “Gatherings of Franciscan communities are times that encourage us,” she said.

Being open to hearing from the Holy Spirit, replacing negative thinking with the Word of God, stopping to pray throughout the day, and thanking God in all circumstances are among the suggestions she offered for those seeking a closer relationship with God.



*By breaking bread together we open our hearts and listen to the stories of each other,
rejoicing in our life and who we are*

Just as our Arizona sunny morning is heating up our desert area, so our hearts are warming with the Holy Spirit sending forth its light to show us the truthful and compassionate Franciscan approach in development and formulating the Q 2021 Congress. We pray the Holy Spirit will help us burn our pride and guide us to always be open to new ideas, presenters, schedules, activities, and approaches to planning and preparing. We, as Secular Franciscans, are called to help rebuild the Church and to renew and refresh our relationships with God our Father and all creation. In serving one another we have the opportunity for conversion of heart. May we join together in prayer in our own hearts as we prepare for the Q 2021. Thank you for all those who have already responded to help the Q Committee.

Place and Dates

We are holding the 20th OFS Quinquennial Congress at the **Sheraton Phoenix Downtown Hotel**, 340 North Third Street, Phoenix, AZ 85004. Check out the sheratonphoenixdowntown.com website. The hotel can hold 1000 people as guests. It is across the street from the Franciscan Saint Mary's Basilica.

We will commence on **Wednesday, August 18, 2021 and meet through August 21. Travel day will be Sunday, August 22.** Plan to come a few days early or stay a few days later to enjoy the downtown Phoenix area with its activities and sites or travel to the cool mountain areas.

Logo Design Contest

Thank you for submitting your logo designs for the **JUBILEE** theme. Everyone was very ingenious in interpreting the **JUBILEE** theme. The Q Committee plans to decide on the logo design within the next month. You will be notified if your design is selected.

Tee Shirt Collection

So, have you been gathering all those tee shirts since the last Tau newsletter? We now have an address where we are collecting those Franciscan tee shirts. **Please send tee shirts to:**

J & J Window Sales c/o Jan Parker OFS 600 Cepi Dr. Chesterfield, MO 63005

Our strategy is find quilters who would use the Franciscan-themed tee-shirts to create quilts. Perhaps the quilt would be used as a banner or wall hanging at a region or local fraternity.

Quilters

Most of us enjoy the comfort of a quilt sometime during the year, and therefore we are seeking people who enjoy quilting with different type fabrics. We will use the donated Franciscan themed tee-shirts to create the quilt.

Region Banner Photos Still Needed

Donna Hollis, is still seeking photos. Please let Donna know if you are sending them to her. Due to the fact that not all Regions have a specific banner that represents the Region, you can send local Fraternities' banners if you have them. Her email: donnadancerfeet@aol.com

Peace to each of you. May the Holy Spirit help you in your daily conversion. On behalf of the 2021 Quinquennial Committee we keep you in prayer as we continue planning and preparing JUBILEE!

Susan Simeone, OFS, Chair

TAU-USA Publication
1615 Vine St.
Cincinnati, OH
45202-6400