



The Herald

Newsletter of St. Elizabeth
of Hungary Regional
Fraternity
Secular Franciscan Order
Winter 2023

**Canonical Establishment
Houlton, ME**

**Heart of Saint Francis Fraternity
October 23rd, 2022**



From our Regional Spiritual Assistant, Pamela O. Deres, OFS

Did you know: Another secular Franciscan Saint

God has such a sense of humor. I was struggling with which Secular Franciscan saint to write about this month. In case you weren't aware, there are a great many to choose from. Just Google Secular Franciscan Saints! I thought of Mother Francis Cabrini, the first canonized American saint. However, her journey so closely resembled the journey of Mother Rivier that it almost felt repetitive. I thought of St. Joan of Arc another phenomenal Secular Franciscan, but it just didn't feel right. I even thought of St. Thomas More. Then I had lunch with 2 amazing faith filled women and our conversation turned to the Franciscan charism of humility. Our Rule speaks of living in the gift and grace of Humility.

So, I looked up quotes on Humility.

"The Greater the Gifts we receive from God, the more humble we must be. Without Humility: No virtue is acceptable to God". (St Francis of Assisi) Wow, that is food for thought! No Virtue is acceptable to God without the virtue of humility !

"As gifts increase in you, let your humility grow, For you must consider that everything is given to you on loan". (St Padre Pio) When was the last time you considered that everything you have is here on loan. I must admit it's not a thought that crosses my mind often.

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Did you know: Another secular Franciscan Saint
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“Self-Knowledge puts us on our knees, and it is very necessary for love. For knowledge of God produces love and knowledge of self produces humility”: (Mother Teresa of Calcutta). Leave it to Mother Teresa to remind us of the importance of acknowledging who we are before God while on our knees !

“Humility is to the other virtues what the chain is to the Rosary. Take away the chain and the beads are scattered. Remove Humility and all the other virtues vanish.” (St John Vianney). I was struck by the visual image of all the beads from my Rosary rolling across the floor. I wanted to know more about this saint who regarded Humility as our anchor.

SO, intrigued, I started to research St John Vianney, the Cure of Ars, the Patron Saint of Parish Priests. John grew up in a poor farming family in France, amid the anti-religious time of the French Revolution. John knew he wanted to be a priest yet, his lack of formal education was an obstacle to his vocation. With the assistance of a Holy Bishop (inspired by the Holy Spirit) this humble man was ordained at age 30 and sent to the furthest outpost they could find, Ars. Near Lyons, Ars was a small town of about 300 people who were apathetic in their faith and less than thrilled to have a new priest joining their community. However, it wasn't long before the citizens realized the gift of the beautiful, humble priest in their midst. Spending 12, 14 and sometimes 16 hours a day in the confessional, many believed he had the gift of reading souls. This gentle soul, who struggled in school, brought thousands back to their faith. St John had a great devotion to the saints, trying to model his life on their lives.

What I didn't realize was the devotion he had to Saint Francis. St John was a truly Humble man who was so totally enamored with St Francis, and his love for the poor, that he wanted to emulate him. St John even considered becoming a Capuchin, but his local Bishop strongly urged him to remain at his post in his parish. So, to grow in Franciscan spirituality, he joined the Third Order of the Franciscans. That's right, St John Vianney was a Secular Franciscan, called to live out the same Rule that you and I are called to live out. “It is a Rule that challenges and guides us to understand love, humility, praise, penance, kenosis and kinship” (Benet Fonck OFM).

St John Vianney, following in the footsteps of our dear Father Francis, lived the gift of humility every day. How well do each of us live out this virtue? As we enter into 2023 may we each search our hearts and our actions, asking the question “Is Humility the Guiding Virtue in our lives?”

Minister's Message

Happy 2023! I want to take a moment to reflect on what was accomplished in 2022. All our fraternities were meeting in person at least part of the year and most for all of 2022. We truly missed our sisters and brothers and the privileged place that our local fraternities provide us. A place to grow spiritually and grow in our commitment to our Franciscan vocation.

In addition to our local fraternities coming alive with in-person meetings, the region had our Chapter, Retreat, Franciscan Day, and the Formation Conference at the Franciscan Guest House. They were joyous!

Another great event in our region was the Establishment of Heart of St. Francis Fraternity in Houlton, Maine on October 23, 2023. Their minister, Lynette Dobbs, OFS, will give you more information in her article.

We are also blessed to have a newly forming Korean group in Massachusetts. Our fraternity, St. Francis, Hyde Park, Massachusetts, is sponsoring this group. One of their members, Anna Wong attended our Formation Conference and her article is included here.

So we look forward to even more exciting events this year. In closing, I'd ask fraternities to consider working with the NAFRA theme: *Listen, Discern, and Go Forth*. Each fraternity is different and has different on-going formation needs. Maybe your fraternity needs to work on dialogue skills, listening skills, discerning skills, or needs to work on a new active apostolate. If our fraternities are to be what we want them to be, we must challenge ourselves to *Listen, Discern, and Go Forth*. I know if you'd like help with on-going formation, our Regional Formation Team are able and willing to help.

God bless!
Theresa Pratt, OFS
Minister, St. Elizabeth of Hungary Region



Fall Formation Conference, 2022, Through the eyes of a Candidate.



Anna Nam Wong, OFS, left, with Pat Brandwein-Ball, OFS, Minister, Seven Joys of the B.V.M. Fraternity, Kennebunk ME

My name is Anna Nam Wong. I was born in South Korea. I grew up without a religion. I came to Boston in 2000 to attend Boston College Law school, and I converted to Catholicism and received baptism in 2019. I saw an advertisement for Secular Franciscans in a church website in 2020 and started

receiving Franciscan instructions in January 2022. The Korean Secular Franciscan group is an emerging group, and it is bonded to St. Francis of Assisi Milton Fraternity. The Milton Fraternity is very hospitable, and has helped the emerging Korean group immensely.

My parents had two daughters and one son. My parents were conservative Koreans, and they always said “once a girl is married, she belongs to the husband’s family.” In the summer, my parents took my brother and went to Italy. My sister and I were left in Korea with my grandmother. From a young age, I did not feel that I was welcome in my birth family. I felt that there would be a family who would accept me and welcome me somewhere.

The Franciscan Conference was a conference filled with good instructions and laughter. On the first day, Mr. Steve Shields gave us an introduction and explained the schedule. Everyone was introduced, and we had a good first day getting to know each other.

On the second day, I started my day with the morning prayer with 2 Lithuanian friars and Father Andrews. I met a lady named “Sarah.” In the mornings, Sarah and I took walks. Sarah told me the history of the Lithuanian refuges and the Franciscan Guest House. She and I talked a lot. She showed me a tree. A pine tree and oak tree were intertwined. They were tall, beautiful trees, and I fell in love with the trees. She showed me a spot where there were size 6 military boots with white roses one day. A soldier had died at Iraq war, and the boots were placed there. The boots slowly integrated into the soil with time. It was a poignant story and I remembered the story every time I passed by the spot.

Ms. Pat Brandwein-Ball gave a lecture on “Vocation, Charism and Mission.” She said that a vocation to be a Franciscan is irrevocable, and that it is for one’s entire life. She said that we should align ourselves with the Franciscan principles of purity and poverty. She also said that we are all “brothers and sisters,” and that we should carry each other’s burden. After the lecture we had group discussions. We had discussions about our life and how we can be a true brother and sister, a true family to each other.

Ms. Francine Gikow also gave a lecture on “intimacy, relationship in fraternity and the world.” After dinner we continually had the lecture. The lecture was very good, and I enjoyed talking with other Franciscans about how we can be a support for each other. On the last day, we had prayer and then breakfast. We had a discussion round table on how to have better formation. We attended Mass together and said “good bye” to each other.

As the pine tree and oak tree have become one, the Franciscan teaching was integrated into my life. I used to be afraid that people would look down on me because I am in a low paying job, but since being welcomed into Secular Franciscans, I have learned that Francis of Assisi did not look down on low income people. Also, the Secular Franciscans consider each other brothers and sisters, and want to help each other and carry each other’s burden. After attending the conference, I exchanged phone calls and emails with many people who asked me how I was doing and wanted to keep being a part of my life. I finally found a group of people where I am accepted; my Secular Franciscan family .



Joyful Franciscans at the Fall Conference: Above: Aida Longhi, OFS, Roberta Oliveira, OFS, Jack Sheridan, OFS, Karen Farrell, OFS and Anna Nam Wong, OFS. On previous page: Francine Gikow, OFS, Mary Hughes, OFS, Theresa Pratt, OFS and Anna Nam Wong, OFS.

Regional Formation Director's Message

Stephen Shields, OFS, Regional Formation Director

Hello Everyone - Last November's Formation Conference went really well, and was a blessing for all of us who attended. Our goal and topic was to begin re-energizing our fraternities, and I believe we made a start in the process.

What I loved so much about the conference was the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout the weekend. Each member of the Regional Formation team, along with the Regional Spiritual Assistants, brought different ideas, methods, and messages to the conference. The Holy Spirit then amplified those gifts to touch the hearts of those who attended in a way that was meant just for them. We "made room for the Holy Spirit" and the Holy Spirit went to work. This, by itself, was a wonderful reminder of how St Francis made room for the Holy Spirit in his embrace of Sister Poverty. Every step he took was a proclamation of faith and a willingness to let the Spirit guide his path. As Secular Franciscans, we continue our journey to follow Francis and give the Holy Spirit a chance to work through us as well.

On the last day of the conference, we had a round-table discussion, and one of the topics was how formation teams could help build up their fraternities to be able to hold successful elections. This seems like such a dry, administrative subject, but the reality is quite different. A successful election requires professed members who have grown as servant leaders, and have a willingness to accept the work that comes with being on a council. One way to achieve this is for Formation teams to partner with their Spiritual Assistants to implement ongoing formation to enrich the spiritual health of the fraternity, and help members grow in servant leadership. This is truly on-going work that provides the foundation for the Spirit to work and open members' hearts to service.

One of our attendees, Anna Wong, wrote a wonderful article about her experience at the conference, which is published in this newsletter as well. I urge everyone to read it to see the experience through the fresh eyes of someone new.

Finally, as we enter 2023, I ask all of us to pray for the health of the fraternities in St Elizabeth of Hungary Region. We need to share with each other, care for each other, and pray for each other always.

District I Gathering Corporal Works of Mercy



On August 6, 2022, 13 members and two guests of the three fraternities of District I gathered in St Albans VT for a day of singing, Franciscan readings, food and fellowship. Our theme of the day was the Corporal Works of Mercy. Bob Begley, OFS, hosted the group at his home church, Holy Angels, and played piano, chose and lead the hymns. Jane Hosmer, OFS, District I Councilor, served as facilitator for the program which was inspired by the regional formation program and the reminder that fraternities who do things together tend to thrive.

In the morning, we met in small groups, then shared ways in which we individually and collectively feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, and shelter homeless. We moved a short distance up the street for our lunch and afternoon session at Martha's Community Kitchen. Bob Begley is the director of "the kitchen", and he arranged for a yummy lunch for the group. Martha's Community Kitchen serves hot food daily from 11-1. It receives support from the community to serve those who need help with food security. We got to rub elbows with a few folks as they finished their meals, and enjoyed meeting the hard working staff.

After lunch, we finished our program with a full group discussion of visiting the sick and burying the dead. After being unable to have a district gathering for two pandemic years, it was a wonderful day of socialization, worship and learning.



2023-2026 Franciscan Centenaries
A four-year celebration of the 800th anniversary of events in the life of Francis. For more information, please go to: www.centenarifrancescani.org/

2023 — The Later Rule & Christmas at Greccio (1223)
2024 — The Stigmata (1224)
2025 — Canticle of the Creatures (1225)
2026 — Easter of St. Francis (1226)

Congratulations to the New Fraternity Councils

St. Francis, Medford MA —

Rita Ferullo, Vice Minister;
 Ginny Del Signore, Minister;
 Andrew Genovese, Secretary;
 Jerri DiClemente, Treasurer;
 Deacon Phil Hardcastle;
 Formation Director/Spiritual
 Assistant



St. Maximilian Kolbe, Fair Haven VT —

Karleen Carlson Ponto, OFS,
 Vice Minister;
 John Nassivera, OFS,
 Treasurer;
 John T. Giblin, OFS, Formation
 Director
 Peter Patten, OFS, Secretary;
 Phyllis Burlette, OFS, Minister



St. Francis, Littleton ME —

Paul Rowland, Treasurer;
 Patrick Akerley, Councilor;
 Irene Nicki Frye, Minister;
 Joan Potvin, Vice Minister;
 Louise Leavitt, Secretary;
 Lorraine Luce, Formation Director



Holy Family, Norway, ME —

Barbara Bourque, Vice-Minister;
 Eugene Bourque, Treasurer ;
 Elizabeth Gallagher, Council-at-
 Large; Sandra Thompson, Minister;
 Linda Freese, Formation Director;
 Margaret Templeton, Secretary;
 Deacon Lawrence Guertin, Spiritual
 Assistant.



Heart of St. Francis Fraternity's Canonical Establishment—October 23rd, 2022

Lynette Dobbs, OFS

The Heart of St. Francis fraternity was Canonically Established on October 23, 2022 at St. Mary of the Visitation Catholic Church in Houlton, Maine as part of the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Region of the Secular Franciscan Order USA.



What a beautiful day! So many people traveled from around the state of Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire to witness the beginnings of our fraternity. Several even helped with the establishment itself. We thank all that joined us and made this day special for us. One comment heard from several following the establishment, was how deeply this hit them. For several, it was much more than they had expected. For almost all, the atmosphere of family really hit home. Living in an area so remote from other fraternities can sometimes feel like you are all alone even though others are just a phone call or zoom away. To have Fr. Sam Fuller OFM Cap and 15 Secular Franciscans from Brockton, MA, come to Waterville, ME, to join us really showed what love and family is all about.

Fr. Sam concelebrated the Mass prior to the establishment with our parish priest, Fr. Kevin Martin, and a priest visiting us for the establishment. During the establishment, he mentioned the fraternity name we had chosen and how special it was. I couldn't help but reflect on the slide in the National Formation sites Come and See presentation that is shown here:

We are all part of local fraternities and local fraternities ARE at the HEART of the Order. Without each fraternity doing what is theirs to do in bringing about the Gospel life in their privileged place of fraternity, their families, communities and beyond, there would be no Order. Living this Way of Life in fraternity strengthens us to grow

more deeply in relationship with God and share His Gospel.

Our fraternity is still few in numbers, but we are growing. As Francis once shared a vision with his brothers, he said with joy to them, "Be strengthened, dear brothers, and rejoice in the Lord, and do not be sad because you seem so few; and do not let either my simplicity or your own dismay you, for, as it has been shown me in truth by the Lord, God will make us grow into a very great multitude and will make us increase to the ends of the world..." Celano, First Life Chapter XI 27.

We may not reach the ends of the world, but we are on our way to reaching the ends of Northern Maine.

Thank you to everyone and especially to Robert Thompson, OFS, who is our Spiritual Assistant and puts many miles on his car and time on his phone to be with us, St. John the Baptist fraternity and the Region for sponsoring us these past 8 years!

Pictured at left at the Establishment Mass: Dan and Kay Spofford, OFS, Lynette Dobbs, OFS, and Sue Hardy, OFS.



Above: Lynette Dobbs, OFS, Minister, signing the establishment document as Fr. Sam Fuller OFM Cap., looks on.

Names of those pictured at the Canonical Establishment of The Heart of Saint Francis Fraternity (front cover)

Front row:

Fr. James Albert (diocesan priest), Kay Spofford, OFS, Sue Guertin, OFS, Kathy Ennis (Orientee), Lynette Dobbs, OFS, Kathy Klein, OFS, Sue Hardy, OFS, Bernadette Willette (Inquirer), Pam Dorta (Inquirer), Theresa Pratt, OFS, (Regional Minister), Irene 'Nicki' Frye, OFS, Kathy Swegart, OFS

Back row:

Mary Hughes, OFS, Fr. Kevin Martin (cluster priest), Fr. Jean-Paul Labrie (diocesan priest), Deacon Larry Guertin, OFS, Fr. Sam Fuller, OFM Cap, (Pastoral Spiritual Assistant), Deacon Al Burleigh, OFS, Mary McCready, OFS, Sonja Burleigh, OFS, Joanne MacGillivray, OFS, Dan Spofford, OFS, Bob Thompson, OFS, Sandra Thompson, OFS, Bob Swegart, OFS, Susan Ronan, OFS, Deb Bernier, OFS, Elizabeth Gallagher, OFS, Peter Bernier, OFS

**Local JPIC Award
St. Mary of the Angels, St. Johnsbury VT**



St. Mary of the Angels fraternity of St. Johnsbury, Vermont presented a local JPIC award at our monthly gathering on October 6, 2022. Lynn Welch (pictured at left with Jane Hosmer, OFS) was chosen by a majority of members because of her many works of

mercy, quietly and humbly carried out in the community. Lynn is an active member of Corpus Christi Parish and a Eucharistic minister at St Elizabeth Church, Lyndonville. She is the President of the St Elizabeth Women’s Group and an active member of St Vincent dePaul Society. Lynn is a faithful supporter of The Good Shepherd Catholic School in St Johnsbury. Lynn also coordinates a monthly supper program at St John the Evangelist Church, St Johnsbury; six local organizations, including St Mary of the Angels fraternity, each provide and staff the meal twice annually.

In addition to her many Catholic activities, Lynn is a board member and volunteer at the West Burke senior meal site and Meals on Wheels. These programs provide meals to area senior citizens and homebound. Lynn also coordinates the “Hand to Hand” initiative which provides holiday meals and gifts annually to needy families in four towns. In her “spare time”, Lynn walks daily and picks up trash as she goes, helps her brother with his maple sugaring operation each spring, and hosts an extended family dinner on Sunday evenings. Lynn is a selfless servant, who feels blessed in her life and gives back to God through countless acts which promote justice and peace by feeding the hungry, serving the needy, the elderly and children, and caring for the creation.

**St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity
Lewiston ME donates Spanish Bibles**

Irene Frye, OFS, Minister
St. Francis of Assisi, Lewiston ME

Every Catholic family should have a Catholic Bible! Don’t we think of this as a given? Yet many Catholic families don’t have Bibles, especially the Spanish population in the State of Maine which numbers around 23,000.

The St Francis of Assisi Secular Franciscan Fraternity in Lewiston, Maine learned about this situation after one of our members professed June 11, 2022. We were blessed to have Father Michael Sevigny, OFM Cap, as the celebrant for this Mass. Father Sevigny is the Director of Hispanic Ministry in Maine.

Father Sevigny travels hundreds of miles every weekend saying Spanish Masses. He travels from Skohegan to Saco and anywhere in between and around there. The fraternity asked him is there was any way we could assist him in the Spanish ministry and learned of the need for Spanish Bibles.

All of the ministers in Maine were contacted and asked if their fraternities would be in a position to help. The responses have been so encouraging and helpful.

Father recently spoke about a group of people from Venezuela who have come to Madison, Maine, and are working in a tomato hot house which is open 24/7, 365 days a year. The tomato company houses these folks in a company-owned hotel. There is no van available to take them to Sunday Mass so Father has been saying Mass for them where they live. He brought them some Spanish Bibles and reports they were so grateful saying ‘no one has ever done anything for them before.’

Such a blessing that they can read the Word of God in their own language.

That is only one situation. Much more help is needed. If anyone is interested in learning more, please contact me for more information. My email is: ifrye9979@gmail.com.

In closing, here is a quotation from St. Paul to the Romans (15:4-5): “Brothers and Sisters: Whatever was written previously was written for our instruction, that by endurance and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

The Herald
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St. Elizabeth of Hungary Regional Website
Webmaster—Stephen Shields, OFS, sms.sfo@gmail.com
The website address is: <http://stelizabethOFS.org>

Advent Celebrations at the Portiuncula National Shrine, Hanover MA



To celebrate the Advent season, the St. Mary of the Portiuncula fraternity in Hanover held a beautiful weekly prayer service at the National Shrine of the Portiuncula Chapel in Hanover, each Sunday morning of Advent. As those in attendance circled around the Advent wreath, lighting the candles, they prayed a special Advent prayer. The group then prayed the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary remembering the birth of Jesus. A small Christmas tree was adorned with paper Christmas trees that people could take home and perform the service written on the ornament. People might bake something for a neighbor, say a prayer for someone, or make a phone call to someone who lived alone, among other acts of kindness.

The first group in attendance (pictured above) was (l to r) Margaret Jankins OFS, Clare True, Claire Noonan OFS, Denise Quirk, and Clare Urbanowitz OFS.

The committee of the Shrine of the Portiuncula Chapel, with members from Mary Queen of Peace fraternity, Plymouth and St. Mary of the Portiuncula fraternity, Hanover, hope to make this an annual event. Currently, the committee sponsors First Fridays and Fatima Rosary on the 13th, from April to October. The Transitus is celebrated with a reenactment of St. Francis death in October, and an annual mass celebrating the Feast Day of Our Lady of the Angels is celebrated each August. The committee is working to increase the hours that the Shrine is open to the public.

The Portiuncula was the place from which the friars were sent on mission to the world. It is also the place St. Francis asked to be taken when he knew his death was near. From the records of Thomas of Celano, "...For he wanted to give back his soul to God in that place where

he first came to know perfectly the way of truth...After he had rested a few days in that place he so longed for, knowing the time of his death was close at hand, he called to him two brothers, his special sons, and told them to sing The Praises of the Lord with a loud voice and joyful spirit, rejoicing at his approaching death, or rather at the life that was so near."

The Shrine is on the grounds of the Cardinal Cushing Center, which has opened a new bakery with rest rooms, a thrift shop, and a garden center. The Cardinal Cushing Center is a school for individuals with cognitive developmental issues. Housing for students and adults is provided on the grounds, as well.

Visiting La Valle: A Franciscan Mission

Fr. Joe Powell, OFM

"Mission" is from "missio" - to go, to be sent to be with others. A YOUFRA heart is a mission heart. Missions can come in all shapes and sizes - but it always means to go among others wherever God sends.

This August I went with a parishioner to our Franciscan Mission of La Valle de Los Angeles in Guatemala. Tom had fundraised and shipped backpacks of supplies there, and we wanted to see the place for ourselves.

Our plane landed in Guatemala City on Monday morning. Fr. Joaquin Mejía and an aspiring seminarian, Manuel Chavarría Blanco, met us in the thronging crowds outside the airport. Manuel drove us through the winding hilly streets beyond the city limits, half-an-hour to La Valle gates. Motorcycles were everywhere, some with three or four people packed on. We were grateful for our expert driver!

As we drove the tree-lined roads around the property, gazing at the big brick church in the main plaza and the other brick buildings spread out on the hillside, Fr. Joaquin spoke about The Valley's mission. "Every since Fr. Rocco founded it in 1993, it's been a place of safety and opportunity," he told us.

We passed a smaller, newer building, its walls all windows. Inside the high school girls were listening to an instructor. Everyone had aprons and masks. It was a bakery, another example of the expanding opportunities available for the kids of La Valle.

The kids were eating lunch. We walked around and Fr. Joaquin chatted and laughed with them. We went into the kitchen to watch the cooks stirring giant pots of rice and beans. Then we met the administrative staff – Luisa Fernanda and her team.

Luisa gave us a walking tour and spoke about the programs. Education, counseling, English classes, music.

She showed us the medical building with new dentist chairs, and explained how they got through the Covid pandemic. It was amazing to see and hear.

Later that night we were hosted by one of the Board of Directors, his house overlooking the chaotic galaxy of Guatemala City streetlights. Other members of the Board joined the dinner. They spoke about supporting La Valle and its project. Our host excitedly described how they were taking the kids to an amusement park. "They haven't been able to go since Covid," he said, grinning. "They can't talk about anything else!" We found out later that it had rained that day, but they still went and had a great time.

During the week Tom and I heard music from the main hall. The kids were practicing. On Friday, we gathered there and they performed a small concert on marimbas for us. The students of La Valle beat out fiesta tunes on the giant wood xylophones. They thanked us for the donations of backpacks and supplies. Hugs and smiles. One girl sang a worship song, her voice swelling the wide spaces of the hall.

We ended our stay with Sunday Mass. The high schoolers from the bakery were selling their pastries outside the door. There were familiar faces of people we had met during the week. Newly ordained Fr. Victor, who had lived and ministered at La Valle for about a year, celebrated and preached on Hoping in Christ. Carmelite sisters sang and played guitar. After, we visited the crypt below where Fr. Rocco lay at rest.

Fr. Rocco Famiglietti had a simple motto: "Give the poor the best – not the leftovers." At La Valle, Tom and I saw kids encouraged to be their best, by people willing to give their best. We left with memories, hope -- and an echo of marimbas playing. Christ is alive in La Valle!

The Letter : A Message for Our Earth

Lynette Dobbs, OFS

Regional JPIC Animator

October 4, 2022 was a special day. The Holy See became the latest nation to enter into the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, it was the last day of the Season of Creation 2022, it was the Feast of St. Francis and the Laudato Si Movement released its new film, *The Letter*.

The Letter follows five people from around the world who have been active in environmental issues. What makes this film unique, is that they are from different countries, religions and represent different aspects of those on the fringes of society. One is a young man from Senegal who represents those living in poverty. Another is a 13-year-old girl from India representing youth. Third is a chief from the Amazon representing Indigenous people. Lastly are two scientists from Hawaii representing nature and wildlife. The film showcases different aspects discussed in the moral document by Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*.

The group of five are invited to the Vatican to share their stories personally with Pope Francis. Later they visit Assisi and in the end they find hope in each other's stories.

Article 18 of the Rule of 1978 of the OFS states, "Moreover, they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which 'bear the imprint of the Most High,' and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship."

Entering into dialogue and sharing our stories can give us the motivation to take action. This can be very difficult though. Some believe the climate changes we are experiencing now are caused by human activity and are reversible. Others believe they are part of the natural evolution of the earth. Of course, there are many with views between the two.

One way to become more comfortable sharing your thoughts is to learn why you believe what it is you believe. However, you must also listen and learn what the other person believes if it is different from your beliefs. Take the time to listen and ask why they believe as they do and where do they get that from. Be ready to answer the same type of question when it comes to what you believe. Stay open and be honest. It is okay to say I don't know or to agree to disagree. Hopefully, what you find are commonalities that you can both build on.

Consider hosting a showing of *The Letter* to a local youth group or perhaps your local parish. You can find it at <https://www.theletterfilm.org/>.

Congratulations to the Newly Professed

St. Anthony, Manchester NH

Bruce Donovan (7/31/2022)

Nancee Donovan (7/31/2022)

John Proulx (7/31/2022)

Keam Vallee (7/31/2022)

Joanne Zemotel (7/31/2022)

Greccio, Derry NH

Carol Noel (8/11/2022)

Saint Mary Portiuncula, Hanover MA

Clare Noonan (11/12/2022)

Saint Michael & the Nine Choirs of Angels Rochester, NH

Bob Barcelona (11/19/2022)

Peter O'Rourke (11/19/2022)

Our Fraternity Gathering: Our Life!

Francine Gikow, OFS

Why is being in a fraternity so important? Short answer: because it is our brothers and sisters who support and challenge us to *live* the LIFE of a Secular Franciscan. We cannot do it alone! We learn about ourselves and our charism by living in fraternity. Living with the same people in fraternity for the rest of our lives (unless we relocate) challenges us to an ever deepening relationship with others in a new family of faith. As family, our Constitutions outline this responsibility when it states: **“The brothers and sisters are co-responsible for the life of the fraternity to which they belong...The sense of co-responsibility of the members requires personal presence, witness, prayer, and active collaboration....” (GC 30, 1-2-)** Therefore, fraternity is all about *relationship and responsibility*. Without relationship, we do not have fraternity. Without responsibility, we do not have fraternity. We are co-responsible and co-accountable for our fraternity life. We *have* to be participating “in fraternity” as Secular Franciscans. It is what we signed up to do at profession. We owe our brothers and sisters, our presence. It is VITAL to our vocation.

Our fraternity is canonically established which means that we are officially an arm of the Catholic Church- so we should be a role model or example of a “little church.” Fraternity is not a prayer group, a business meeting, or a sodality. We are an Order in the Church and have a different goal than any other parish group: our goal is to *grow in holiness* through living the Secular Franciscan life in fraternity. To grow in holiness means we need a stable, committed (permanently professed) community of like minded brothers and sisters to encourage us in our journey, challenge us to conversion and to accompany us in our sorrows and joys. In other words, we need a family! Since fraternity, and the ongoing Franciscan formation which it provides, is crucial in our Secular Franciscan journey, we *prioritize* our attendance at gatherings before parish or other commitments.

There are four essential elements (or parts) that make up a Fraternity Gathering. They are:

- **A Communal Prayer Experience**
- **Business** (very short in length)
- **Ongoing Formation** (This is the most important

part of the gathering and should be given the longest time allotment,) and a

▪ Social

(Please note: All four elements/parts should be present for most meetings except for an occasional celebration or feast.) In addition, a time schedule for the fraternity gathering ensures that all four elements are addressed and given its due. There should also be a balance between the times for prayer, ongoing formation, business, and social interaction within the fraternity gathering. The Fraternity Council is responsible for developing a yearly plan or calendar of formation topics for each fraternity gathering. Topics and ideas can come from the CIOFS website, Papal encyclicals, Franciscan Fridays, TAU articles, books and the identified needs of the fraternity seen by the Council. The regional formation team can be invaluable in helping to locate resources/materials for a particular theme.

Let’s look at each element individually.

The suggested time schedule identified in each section is for a two hour gathering. Of course, if there is additional time available, times can be lengthened accordingly. Ultimately, the fraternity council is responsible for developing an appropriate schedule for the gathering and adhering to it.

Ongoing Formation:
(aprox. 30-40 minutes).

Ongoing formation is considered *the most important part* of a fraternity gathering and is *the only place* where we are fed Franciscan spirituality and its charism. Ongoing formation offers study and practice in the Secular Franciscan Way of Life and through its discussions, reflections and the sharing of relationships, we develop a cohesiveness of mission through discussion and dialog in the fraternity’s ongoing formation. Attendance is crucial for each and every gathering because we are, in a sense, feeding ourselves and others with “Franciscan food” in ongoing formation. When it lacks, we starve!

Communal Prayer Time: (commonly about 15-20 minutes)

Communal prayer times should be Franciscan in focus and could be taken from a selection of the Liturgy of the Hours or the Office of the Passion, intercessory prayer, a decade of the Crown rosary, Stations of the Cross, gospel meditation, words of St. Francis or Clare and many others. Prayer time is NOT a time for private devotions, or the latest trend in pious practices/activities. **Please note:** Attending mass as a fraternity is

“The brothers and sisters are co-responsible for the life of the fraternity to which they belong...The sense of co-responsibility of the members requires personal presence, witness, prayer, and active collaboration....” (GC 30, 1-2-)

nice, but it is *not* a mandatory part of a fraternity's prayer time.

Business: (usually 10 minutes or less)

Fraternity Business should be the shortest portion of the fraternity gathering. Announcements of retreats, upcoming events, anniversaries, and deaths can be highlighted in the newsletter with a short mention at the gathering. Fraternity Apostolates and volunteer needs could be discussed with sign-up sheets available. CIOFS/ NAFRA/Regional News can be listed in the fraternity newsletter and briefly mentioned at the gathering.

The Social: (usually around 30 minutes)

This, too, is an essential part of the gathering. It provides a way to deepen relationships through sharing of personal news within the fraternity in a casual but caring environment. Every gathering should include time for the brothers and sisters to informally share among themselves and encounter each other. From experience, I realize that this element of the fraternity gathering is the most likely of all the elements to extend past its allotted time. It is important, however, that someone is assigned to monitor the time and announce the ending of the social in order to clean up and progress to another part of the gathering. Continued eating during prayer time and/or ongoing formation should be discouraged since it distracts from prayer and the content of the ongoing formation.

Needless to say, having a loving, active, joyful fraternity does not simply happen. It takes a lot of work! Because we are a "gathering" not a meeting, we rely on the Holy Spirit guiding us. We are not a business nor are we "run" like a business, but rather we lead by consensus and by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is known as "servant leadership" in the Secular Franciscan Order. To be a servant leader in the order is to first serve and animate (inspire) a fraternity. It is sacrificial in nature because it is a gift freely given to the fraternity with a generous spirit of service.

The elected Council's style of servant leadership:

- It is NOT directing, but rather listening deeply and with compassion.
- It is NOT "My way or the highway" but rather being open to new ideas/concepts.
- It is NOT power and control but rather valuing and encouraging the growth of others.

The "Ideal" Fraternity has:

- the "anima" (or spirit) of the Franciscan Charism which is JOY,

- a cohesiveness of fraternal spirit and sharing,
- a sincere love witnessed in personal interactions,
- acceptance and warmth,
- and unity of purpose while accepting diversity in expression.

At our profession, we promised to "make the fraternity a genuine ecclesial assembly and a living Franciscan community."(OFS Ritual, p.22)

Let us do what we have promised to do!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What inspired you in this article? Describe what inspired you and why.
2. What are some "take aways" or ideas you want to remember?
3. What idea or thought challenges you the most and why?
4. What will you change in your Secular Franciscan life as a result of this article?

South Sudanese Apostolate

Kim Tison, OFS

Francis, Severeign, and Gloria are still in Egypt. It is becoming more and more dangerous in Egypt for Christians.. Muslims are going door to door shooting Christians as they encounter them on sidewalks, in markets, churches, etc.

Bakhita is very grateful for the Region's continued prayers and financial help. In addition, Bakhita is dealing with her mother, Mary, being hospitalized last week due to very high blood pressure. Mary was shaking and could not stop. It turned out one of her medications was the cause so her doctor switched medicines. Unfortunately, Mary's dementia is worsening and she talks to herself constantly about her children she left behind. She is home now. She is extremely depressed and incoherent at times.

Bakhita has used many of her sick days thus far for Dr appointments, emergency room visits, and hospital visits. You may have heard of the difficulty in the Portland, Maine, school system where 400+ teachers have not been paid on time, paid incorrectly, and some not paid at all since September. Their finance department is trying to correct the errors. Bakhita is teaching in spite of this, with no money forthcoming.

Please continue to pray for Bakhita and her family. Please ask God to keep them safe and allow Francis, Severeign, and Gloria to be united in the United States with their family here as soon as possible.

Upcoming Events

2023 Regional Chapter

4/14-16/2023

St. Basil's Salvatorian Center
Methuen, Massachusetts

2023 Regional Retreat

5/19-21/2023

St. Basil's Salvatorian Center
Methuen, Massachusetts

2023 Fall Formation Conference

November 2023

Location to be determined

Requiescat in Pace

Saint Francis of Assisi—Medford MA

Carol Stamm, OFS—4/20/2022

Our Lady—Bedford MA

Katie Sacco, OFS—5/22/2022

Saint Anthony—Roxbury MA

Elizabeth Kelly, OFS—8/7/2022

Nora Healy—8/9/2022

Steve Conley—12/21/2022

St. Anthony—Manchester NH

Deb Champagne, OFS—8/29/2022

Saint Margaret of Cortona—Roxbury MA

Claire Desmarais, OFS—1/23/2022

St. Anthony—Manchester NH

Lillian Pepin, OFS—10/2/2022

St. Francis—Tewksbury MA

Cecelia Barrett, OFS—10/31/2022

St. Bernard—Leominster MA

Ruth Dube, OFS—11/10/2022

Seven Joys of the BVM—Kennebunk ME

Regina Carpentier, OFS—11/17/2022

Saint Francis—Milton MA

Abraham L. Heck, OFS—11/22/2022

Find news and resources for the Centenaries at:
www.centenarfrancescani.org/



2023 | A Multifaceted Centenary
2026 | in Which Several Centenaries
Will Be Celebrated

Elizabeth of Hungary Region Executive Council

Theresa Pratt, OFS— Regional Minister

Joe Makley, OFS-Regional Vice Minister

Margaret Jankins, OFS-Regional Secretary

Bob Swegart, OFS-Regional Treasurer

Jane Hosmer, OFS-District 1 Councilor

Mary Stavro, OFS-District 2 Councilor

Dan Spofford, OFS-District 3 Councilor

Ronald Lacey, OFS-District 5 Councilor

Donna Sullivan, OFS— District 6 Councilor

Steve Shields, OFS—Formation Director

Sarah Anderson, OFS, Pamela Deres, OFS, and

Alice Aubuchon, OFS, - Regional Spiritual
Assistants