



The Herald

Newsletter of
St. Elizabeth of Hungary
Regional Fraternity
Secular Franciscan Order
Winter 2024



Gospel to Life, Life to Gospel

Fr. Sam Fuller, OFM, CAP

About a year and a half ago, I wrote about the expansion of the recently formed Capuchin Mobile Ministries (CMM) to which the Province of St Mary had assigned three friars, including myself. The article sketched out the unfolding of the ministry and how it was akin to what Pope Francis had desired for a church as a 'field hospital' to those on the streets of Boston as it offered basic food and supplies, but more importantly, a sense of accompaniment with prayers as requested. With the ministry firmly established, as of this past September, it was reconfigured with only the original friar remaining. Yet my two years with CMM were a privilege and a blessing, and they continue to resonate in rich and fruitful ways. More than anything, for me it was an insight into the unity of faith

and action expressed in a basic tenet of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order; from Gospel to Life, Life to Gospel. It is through this lens that I want to reflect in deeper ways on my experience with the ministry and outreach to those encountered on the streets.

First, some background. Prior to moving to Boston, I was part of a provincial effort to collaborate with another Franciscan community. It was a difficult year and despite best intentions, it did not work. However, the three of us who were part of the effort came away with the gift of a deeper appreciation of our Capuchin charism. (continued on page 2)

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We had decided early on that we would ‘claim’ our charism by grounding ourselves in our sense of fraternity, maintaining a consistent prayer schedule of not only morning, evening and night prayer but also daily Eucharist with a shared reflection on the readings in terms of what we were undergoing with all our hopes and struggles. It was telling that after a month or two, even the kitchen crew commented on our bonding and esprit de corps. Coming to Boston, I wanted to build on this sense of fraternity and community, and so decided to move into our house of studies with our formation team and student friars to continue to build on the sense of fraternity and community. At San Lorenzo friary, where I still live, there is a set daily schedule of prayer, both silence and with the breviary, in the morning and the evening. Mass is in the morning. With a contemplative bent, I have always been an early riser and enjoy an hour of prayer beforehand. We share a cooking schedule and list of chores of ‘all the above’. With different ministerial commitments, there is a full sense of engagement, experiences and demands outside the friary but ministry ideally is a witness to the faith-infused rhythm of self-giving and sharing of fraternal life. *Gospel to life, Life to Gospel.*

Capuchin Mobile Ministries, itself was an intentional effort by the Province to think outside the box, to get beyond buildings, and in effect, to claim our charism. I had my first meeting with my two other brothers who had started the ministry and was impressed with the discernment and planning that had already gone into it. I recall at the end saying somewhat in jest but with an underlying truth, “Maybe I will yet discover what it means to be Franciscan.” To become Franciscan is always a work in progress. Each of us had the sense ‘that we were doing what we were meant to be doing’. There was a galvanizing and unifying energy about this. We had our individual differences and disagreements but sensed that we were engaged in something tangibly Franciscan. It was not just simply doing ‘the right thing’ but also a freedom to let go of anything that might pull our attention away and to be fully present to the particular task at hand and to the specific person encountered. There was the sense of continual arrival and of coming home.

... To be continued in the next issue of the Herald.

The Herald

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©2024 St. Elizabeth of Hungary Regional Fraternity
Summer 2024 Issue—June 15, 2024
Winter 2025 Issue: December 15, 2024

Minister's Message

Theresa Pratt, OFS

Happy New Year. I wish all of you the best for 2024. May we continue to pray for our fraternities and our region.

It's with mixed emotions I write this final Minister's article for our St. Elizabeth of Hungary Region's newsletter. I want to thank everyone who expressed their sorrow at the passing of my mom. She was a faithful Secular Franciscan for 73 years. Obviously, the Christmas session was hard for me but knowing that you were praying for me, has helped me weather the storm of grief.

As I reflect on the last two terms as Regional Minister, I keep coming back to the importance of fraternity to our spiritual journey. As article 22 of our rule states: This should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members. We are all responsible for making our fraternity this privileged place; the place where we are excited to go each month; a place where we are refreshed and challenged to grow spiritually.

I firmly believe that all fraternity meetings should consist of four elements: prayer, on-going formation, social time, and a short business discussion. In addition, I have observed that our fraternities that are growing, have active apostolates. If we truly want to follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis, we need to step out of our comfort zones and serve the poor and marginalized around us.

I feel that my own Franciscan journey has been enhanced by being active at the Regional level and being exposed to National and International through the National Chapters I have attended. I've met some wonderful Franciscans at our local fraternities, the Regional fraternity, the National fraternity and the representatives from the International fraternity.

At Fraternal visitations, I have tried to share best practices I've learned from other fraternities and other regions. Yes, I needed to look at your documentation. If there have been issues, I've given recommendations on changes that would improve the situation. I hope and pray that these have helped the fraternities that I have had the privilege to visit. It's been a joy to visit so many of our fraternities over my tenure as Regional Minister. I pray for all of you, your fraternities, and our region. God bless!

Theresa Pratt, OFS

Minister, St. Elizabeth of Hungary Region

Formation Update

Over the past several years, our Regional Formation Conferences have focused on leveraging ongoing formation to develop mature servant leaders throughout our fraternities and REC. This approach recognizes that ongoing formation addresses spiritual and emotional growth as well as increasing our Franciscan knowledge. By doing this, we not only grow our future leadership but help all our members develop their talents and enrich our fraternities. Some of the topics we have addressed are:

- Fraternity and formation during a pandemic.
- A Franciscan approach to Peacemaking.
- Instrumentum Laboris.
- Vocation, Charism, and Mission.
- Intimacy with God, Fraternity, and the World.
- The importance of inter-fraternity relationships.
- Attributes of Servant Leadership.
- Making decisions together and with the Holy Spirit.
- A process for group discernment.
- An Emmaus walk and reflections.
- Real-world discussions and difficult conversations.
- Reflections on who will take my place in leadership positions.
- Mentoring within fraternities.
- Franciscan resources for formation.

As we enter 2024, we prepare for a Regional election and look for ways to stem our declining membership and limit fraternal deactivations. These are real problems that are impacting our order and will be a challenge to our incoming REC and councils. During these challenging times, I urge all our fraternities to leverage their formation teams, Spiritual Assistants, and District Formation contacts to continue to grow and enrich all our members to their full potential.

Peace and Blessings!

Steve Shields OFS, Regional Formation Director

800th anniversary of Francis Receiving the Stigmata

2024 is the second year of a four year celebration of significant events in the life of Francis.

2023 — Greccio—(1223)

2024 — The Stigmata (1224)

2025 — Canticle of the Creatures (1225)

2026 — Easter of St. Francis (1226)

Go to Franciscan Centenary Celebration – Secular Franciscan Order – USA (secularfranciscansusa.org) for materials for formation and celebration.

On our cover: *St Francis Receives the Stigmata*, by Giotto, 1295-1300; originally painted for the church of St Francis in Pisa, now in the Louvre. (Public domain image from Wikimedia Commons.)

Assisting the Franciscan Family Connections

Do you know a Secular Franciscan in your Fraternity or in the Region who you think would make an excellent Spiritual Assistant? Or perhaps the Holy Spirit has touched a nerve deep in your soul to go further.... further in a specific and different way...within the Secular Franciscan Order. Further....in being a calm, steadying reflection of His face gazing through the Franciscan charism. Further...in assisting others to maintain the dynamic unity of truth and love within the Fraternity and Franciscan Order. **Perhaps?!** Perhaps the Holy Spirit is nudging you or someone you know to explore becoming a Spiritual Assistant!

Our next Spiritual Assistant training and formation, using **Franciscan Family Connections** as our text, is an alternating combination of 19 monthly, in-person or correspondence sessions. It begins June 1, 2024 to train and form potential Spiritual Assistants. This specialized formation gives them the tools necessary for assisting fraternities and individuals in being 'their best Franciscan selves.' Please pray and discern whether this might be what the Holy Spirit is calling you or someone you know to become. Please call or email any of the RSA's with names of potential Spiritual Assistants, including yourself, as the Spirit guides.

We are eager to hear from you by **MARCH 1st for suggested names.** We will contact the people and do the rest! Thank you for your help!

Peace and all good,

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Upcoming Events

2024 Regional Elective Chapter

4/12-14/2024

St. Basil's, Methuen, MA

Regional Retreat 2024

5/17-19/2024

Franciscan Guest House, Kennebunk, ME

Franciscan Day 2024

8/24/2024

Franciscan Guest House Grounds, Kennebunk, ME

Formation Conference 2024

Planned for 11/1-3/2024

Location to be determined

To Weep with Those Who Weep . . . And See Oneself in Others

Ron Lacey, OFS

Chair of the National Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee

Do you ever feel overwhelmed? Overcome with grief?

I'm writing this as 2023 comes to an end, and 2024 begins; and to be honest with you, I find it hard to celebrate this New Year. My heart is still with friends who died in the past year, and my mind is on ailing family members. I look around and find little consolation. On a global level, we are approaching the second anniversary of Russia's bloody invasion of Ukraine, and the Holy Land has suffered three months of violence following Hamas's savage terrorist attacks. Global antisemitic attacks have increased 500%, and we have also witnessed appalling acts of Islamophobia, including the stabbing murder of a 6-year-old Palestinian boy, Wadea Al-Fayoume, in Chicago.

No doubt you have had similar experiences and thoughts. What do you do? Pray? But what do you do when the sadness is so great, and the bad news so overwhelming, that you just can't pray? Maybe all you can do is cry.

The Jewish sages tell us that our weeping is ALWAYS heard by God, even when prayer seems impossible. When Adam and Eve were banished from Eden, they couldn't stop asking themselves why they had done what they had done. God, always merciful, promised to give them something to relieve their suffering. They wondered if it would be something from the Garden, but instead it was something new, something they had never seen before – tears. As the tears flowed, their hearts became just a little lighter. It is said that even God wept, many ages later, when the Temple was destroyed. That's how good tears are at helping you through your grief – even God has shed them!

As a Christian, I am grateful that this lesson has called me back to the disarming simplicity of the Bible's shortest verse, John 11:35: "Jesus wept." There's consolation in knowing that the Son of God felt what we feel, and responded just as we do. Before any mighty acts, even before prayer, there are often tears. Looked at the other way, once we have a good cry – itself God's gift – maybe we can pray and bring a little bit of God's love and healing into the world.

I really love what the Buddha said: "All beings tremble before violence. All fear death. All love life. See yourself in others. Then whom can you hurt? What harm can you do?" It sounds a lot like the Golden Rule, doesn't it? And maybe that's the answer – what one should do when feeling sad or overwhelmed. Just feel it. Shed a tear. Know that everyone, even Jesus, has done the same. And so, be kind.

District I Gathering The Eucharist, and Chapter of Mats

A gathering of District One fraternities was held on August 5, 2023 at The UVM Catholic Center, Burlington, VT. Deacon Bob Begley, OFS, Marie Clardy, OFS, and Jane Hosmer, OFS, coordinated the event which was attended by twenty members of Maximillian Kolbe, Sacred Heart, and St Mary of the Angels fraternities.

Deacon Bob Begley, OFS, lead us in music and prayer at the beginning, during transitions, and in giving a final blessing.



Our special guest, Sister Paul Mary Dreger, TOR, of the Sisters of the Eucharist, spoke to us in the chapel on the theme of The Eucharist, The Bread of Life. We were reminded that Jesus in several instances took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it. We learned how we could

imitate this in our lives, service and evangelization. Sister Paul Mary joined us for the entire program, so we had time to fully enjoy being with a dynamic, Franciscan Religious.

Our lunchtime was facilitated by Marie Clardy, OFS, and her husband Tom, as we shared readings and a meal in the style of a Chapter of Mats. This was an introduction to the Chapter of Mats for many of us. We informally shared a simple meal of hard boiled eggs, nuts, bread, olives, and fruit, similar to what would have been available in thirteenth century Italy. After each reading, which recalled the original Chapter of Mats with St Francis, participants rotated tables and enjoyed related discussions over the meal. This resulted in a very intimate and uniquely Franciscan experience.

Prayer for our Regional Elections April 12—14, 2024

Almighty, most high and supreme God, Father, holy and just, Lord, King of heaven and earth: We trust in you and we ask for your light, so that we may choose those who will properly serve our Region through their leadership. Help us to select those who are able to animate and guide us by their example, their virtues and prudent decisions so that the gospel of Jesus in the spirit of St. Francis may come alive in our Region. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Update on the Sudanese Family Rescue

My name is Bakhita Saabino. I am a United States citizen since 2004. I raised my four children in Portland, Maine, and have as my family's sponsor one of you, Kim Tison, who helped me navigate the visa process that brought so far my mother Mary and my younger brother Augustino, to the United States. They now live with me in Portland, Maine.

I have been trying since before COVID to bring also my older brother Francis, my sister Severign, and my surviving niece Gloria to safety in the U.S. from our homeland of South Sudan. They are refugees in line with National Visa Center waiting to be notified about the timing of their COVID-postponed visa interviews, stranded in Cairo where they are safer than in war-torn South Sudan. My little niece Christina, died in Cairo at the age of six years from complications of spina bifida as my family waited to be notified that the NVC had scheduled their interview. We were notified in early 2020 that the final visa interview was to be scheduled soon in Kenya. But pandemic happened in March of 2020 and Immigration shut down worldwide for the next 3 years. Due to backlog of interviews caused by this, we are still waiting to be notified again so the interview can be completed. So my family is not able to come to America until then.

Kim and I are writing in thanksgiving for your generosity. We thank the Council for their offer to fly my two brothers, sister and nieces to more survivable Cairo. To us, you were like angels reaching down and saving their lives, lifting them away from fate equally as awful as Israel and Ukraine.

May our Lord bless each of you more and more for the love you have shown like the parable of the helpless stranger by the side of the road. And we read about Mary and Joseph escaping to Egypt with Jesus until it was time to go.

My entire family prays for St. Elizabeth of Hungary Region, for your health, happiness and safety in this new year of 2024,

Bakhita, Mary, Augustino, Francis, Severign, Gloria, especially little Christina in Heaven, and Kim

Congratulations to our Newly Elected Councils

Sowers of the Word Fraternity Windham, ME—August 8, 2023

New council from left to right: Joe Mathew, OFS, Treasurer; Susan Guertin, OFS, Secretary; Shauna'h Fuegen, OFS, Formation Director; Deacon Larry Guertin, OFS, Minister; Debra Bernier, OFS, Vice Minister



Saint Anthony—Nashua, NH—January 14, 2024

New council from left to right: Brian Conroy, OFS, Treasurer; Mary Beth Distasio, OFS, Councilor; Mary Ann Distasio, OFS, Secretary; Betty Antocci, OFS, Formation Director; Francis Moore, OFS, Vice Minister; Mark Koski, OFS, Minister.



Elizabeth of Hungary Region Executive Council

Theresa Pratt, OFS—Regional Minister
Joe Makley, OFS—Regional Vice Minister
Margaret Jenkins, 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—Regional Spiritual Assistant
Pamela Deres, OFS—Regional Spiritual Assistant
Alice Aubuchon, OFS—Regional Spiritual Assistant

Sharing the Gospel in Today's World

Lynette Dobbs, OFS

Over the past several years, our communities, nation and world have become increasingly polarized in areas of racial equality, economic and gender equality, religious and spiritual difference, abortion, immigration, gender ideology, politics, climate change and many other areas. This has reminded me of how isolated many of us have become. We no longer sit on the front porch and discuss important topics with family and friends or even sit at the table together each evening. We no longer take the time to properly research issues. In fact, most people seem to depend on the internet, television and social media to form opinions. Many of these forms of information are biased. Isolation and misinformation have resulted in polarization on most topics throughout the world.

While facing this, many people have resolved to not talk about politics or other issues impacting our world. Article 15 of our Rule of Life states: "Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith". We are called to share the Good News. This is not an easy task with current world events and various ideologies many people embrace, especially with such polarization of most issues.

How often do we hear someone say, "I'm not going to talk about politics. It just too much to deal with and no one is listening anyway". This would be fine if we weren't called to be instruments of peace and God's light in the world, but we are. If we don't share what we know to be true, then all people have is what they hear from the rest of the world.

True, our actions can speak loudly; however, words are often necessary to go along with those actions or when we are in situations where only our voice is heard and actions aren't seen, such as on social media.

So how do we help others understand the Gospel way of life when they are closed off to hearing it?

LISTEN: First, we must listen and ask questions. This not only helps us to understand why they feel as they do, but also affords them dignity, respect and shows our true concern for them as children of God. One good question may be, "Where did you learn that? Can you show me?" Open ended questions help people to think. Our Lord Jesus Christ used questions at times to help people think deeper about the parables he shared.

Our tone can make a huge difference as well. In Bonaventure, Major Life IX:8, Francis stuck to the basics when he replied to the sultan's question of who he was

and why he had come. He said, they had been "sent by God, not by man, to show him and his subjects the way of salvation and proclaim the truth of the Gospel message". To say he had come from the opposing side of the Crusades, would have probably ended the conversation right then. As a result, he and the Sultan spent days sharing their faith, resulting in Francis leaving with a peace offer and a new friend in the Sultan.

DISCERN: Think of what you have in common with the other person on the subject. Often there are more things to agree on than to disagree on. In the legend of Gubbio and the Wolf, Francis speaks to both the wolf who had been terrorizing the town and the people of the town. One was hungry and the other wanted their children to live. Are we looking for solutions or are we simply trying to satisfy our own needs? Are we trying to prove our point without listening to where the other person is coming from? Perhaps, they have shared something we never thought of. How knowledgeable are we on the subject; do we need to do some research of our own? What does Church scripture, tradition and doctrine say on the subject? How would our Lord Jesus handle the conversation? How would St. Francis and the early Franciscan family handle it? We have a lot to learn from those who have gone before us.

GO FORTH: As we continue to dialogue with the person, there are a few things to remember:

- Be open to what others share.
- Sometimes planting seeds is all that is needed. We don't have to prove everything. It is okay to disagree.
- We are not perfect and do not have all the answers.
- Article 19 of our Rule of Life states: 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. Keep the dialogue going!
- Respect, dignity, and love shown to others will go much further than telling them they are wrong.
- Praying for God's guidance, courage, and wisdom, and trusting in God will help us in ways we never imagined.

We may not be in the forefront of many of today's problems in the world; yet, when we have the opportunity to speak out, our message will be heard much more clearly when we've let the light and love of Christ shine through our actions and our **words!**

Congratulations to the Newly Professed



San Damiano Newly Forming Group—November 4, 2023

From left to right: (holding certificates) Minkyung Choo, OFS, Eunjung Alice Lee, OFS, Seungchan Victor Yang, OFS, Lucy Yunhyung Cho, OFS, Myongsuk Cecilia Lim, OFS, Susanna Yunsun Yun, OFS, Veronica Kyongnan Kwak, OFS. Also pictured are Roberta Oliveira, OFS, Minister of St. Francis Fraternity in Milton, MA. St. Francis is the group. In the back row are St. Francis Fraternity's Formation Director, John Barresi, OFS, (St. Francis Fraternity's Formation Director), Gregory Lee, OFS, and Theresa Ki Nam Han, OFS.



Francis and Clare Fraternity January 5th, 2024

From left to right: Francisca Marques, OFS, Alice Gomes, OFS, Jose de Pina, OFS, and Celeste Pina, OFS.

Requiescat in Pace

Blessed Lucius—Brockton, MA

Jean Capobianco, OFS—10/19/2023
Mary (Maureen) Pratt, OFS—10-12-2023

Sacred Heart—Plattsburgh NY

Jean Baker, OFS—10-9-2023

Saint Ann—Southborough, MA

Marie Calderone, OFS—12/20/2023

Saint Anthony—Boston, MA

Mary O. Eichenlaub, OFS—8/23/2023

Saint Anthony—Manchester, NH

Patricia Sullivan, OFS—11/11/2023

Saint Anthony—Nashua, NH

Constance Polero, OFS—12/7/2023
Robert Constant—10/24/2023

Saint Francis of Assisi—Lynn, MA

Bernadine DeRosa, OFS—12/20/2023

Saint Francis of the Cape—Wareham, MA

Marie Czametzki, OFS—9/18/2023

Saint Francis—Tewksbury, MA

Jennie Podbielski—12/28/2023
John Griffith, OFS—11/19/2023

Saint Michael & the 9 Choirs of Angels— Rochester, MH

Ronald Couture, OFS—10/3/2023

Seven Joys of the BVM—Kennebunk, ME

Patricia Mountain, OFS—10/8/2023

Saint Mary of the Angels—St. Johnsbury, VT

Leo Greenwood, OFS—11/15/2023



Pictured above, at the renewal of their profession during a Sunday Mass, are Anne Cote, OFS, Marie Clardy, OFS, Michael Morley, OFS, Regina Fournier, OFS, Bob Begley, OFS, Jane Hosmer, OFS, Anita Wellman, OFS, Frances Rawden, OFS .

Sharing the Gift of our Secular Franciscan Vocation

Sarah Anderson, OFS

It all started when our new pastor, Fr. Lance Harlow, arrived and began putting a quote of St. Francis' in our weekly parish bulletins along with a picture of him. What a great idea!

Our members began sending me their favorite St. Francis quote and I took over sending them in to be printed in our bulletins along with contact information for anyone interested in finding out more about our Order. A parish north of us also printed everything I sent to the pastor.

Then at one of our monthly Regional Minister Zooms we had a special guest, Carolyn Townes, our National JPIC Animator, who shared how they promoted vocations with their member testimonials and were drawing many people to their fraternity.

So, our members sent me their testimonials, and those were sent to the two parishes to be included in the bulletins. The testimonials were as varied as the personalities and spiritual life of our members.

Deacon Bob Begley, OFS wrote: As a Franciscan, I am encouraged by our focus on ongoing conversion of heart and mind. I am reminded not to dwell on my failures and falls, but to rely on the grace of the Holy Spirit to start again and again. I remain confident that through my Father's mercy, I will remain sensitive to His love and compassion. Then in turn, I will strive to *BE* for Him in all I say and do.

Michael Morley, OFS, wrote: The first time I attended a 3rd order (Secular) Franciscan gathering (meeting) at St. John's, I was told becoming a Franciscan would change my life. It has.

After each testimonial, we would add something like: "We invite you to visit us at a monthly gathering and see what we're all about!" or "Could the Holy Spirit have a surprise answer to prayer in mind for you? Come and see!"

To celebrate the 800th anniversary of St. Francis' Later Rule we liked the idea we had read about in an article in the TAU-USA. Working with our pastor, we had a public renewal of our profession at a Sunday Mass. Invitations to it were put in the bulletin and programs were handed out before Mass. Both invited Mass attendees to join us downstairs after Mass to learn more about our Order. Publicly renewing our profession was a very moving experience.

Especially after the publication of our testimonials and the public renewal of our professions, we began receiving inquiry after inquiry about our beloved Order. The Holy Spirit has been moving and we wait expectantly for those seeking more in their spiritual life to come to us. We will welcome them with open hearts and minds.

Essay Winner!

The St. John the Baptist fraternity in Winslow, Maine is pleased to announce the winner of its essay contest, opened to high school and college students in Maine.

The winner is Jordan Smith, a student at Colby College in Waterville, Maine. He is a member of Corpus Christi Parish in Waterville and is active in Colby Catholics. Jordan is from Severna Park, Maryland.

With brilliance and insight, Jordan weaves a philosophical connection between beauty and God as proclaimed by St. Francis in the *Canticle of the Sun*.

Jordan will receive a \$100 prize and a Word of Fire Bible. His essay will also be published in *The Tau*, national publication of the Secular Franciscans.