

Communio

That All May Be One

Newsletter of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region
Secular Franciscan Order

Spring 2013



Matins of Easter Sunday
Sing a new song to the Lord
for he has done wonderful things.
His right hand and holy arm
have sacrificed his beloved Son.
The Lord has made his salvation known;
has revealed his justice
in the sight of the nations.
On that day the Lord has sent his mercy,
and at night his song.
This is the day the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Blessed is the one who comes
in the name of the Lord,
the Lord is God, and has enlightened us.
Let the heavens rejoice and the earth exult
let the sea and all that is in it be moved
let the fields and all that is in them be glad.
Give to the Lord, you family of nations,
Give to the Lord glory and honor
Give to the Lord the glory due his name.

From "The Office of the Passion" by St. Francis of Assisi, in "The Undated Writings,"
Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint, p. 149

The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate



Editor's Journal

Habemus Papem. Hallelujah!

I was filled with joy at the election of our new pope — and by his choice of name: Francis. The first thing I thought of when I heard that name was how St. Francis was called to rebuild the Church.

Certainly, there are some things that need to be done along that line in our Church in the 21st century. Pope Francis has wasted no time in beginning that rebuilding. As one news story said, he's showing that his reign "will not be business as usual."

In this *Communio*, we span two papacies, with a reflection on Pope Benedict's proclamation of the Year of Faith and, from Father Linus DeSantis, thoughts on Pope Francis.

St. Francis, as we know, was a man of peace — an inner peace that came out of his confidence that God was always with him. As Carolyn Townes points out in her JPIC article, peace must be an "inside job" for us, as well. Peace is also important in our fraternities. Carole King offers

some ways for us to do that.

And as we immerse ourselves in spring, why not settle back with a book filled with writings and beautiful color photos of flowers, wildlife, and green scenes, described in our review of *The Natural World of St. Francis*?

*Pace e bene,
Joanita*

Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS, is Communio editor. She is a member of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity in Hendersonville, N.C., and spiritual assistant to Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity in Blairsville, Ga.

Sts. Francis and Clare and the Eucharist

By Donna Kaye Rock, OFS

Our holy father Francis nurtured a respect and great love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. As Franciscans, we should be encouraged to imitate St. Francis in this beautiful devotion.

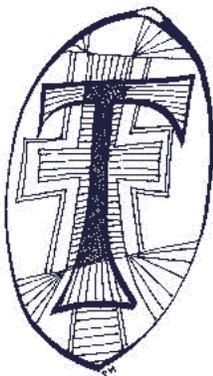
Holy mother Clare also loved Jesus in the holy Eucharist, and she knew and believed that he would always be with her and her sisters.

Jesus waits for us to come and visit him, and he is in this holy Sacrament — body, blood, soul, and divinity. We will grow in the grace of our Franciscan vocation if we cultivate this love for Jesus. To visit our eucharistic Lord. To just sit in his presence and tell him we love him first and foremost.

Adoring Jesus in the holy Eucharist is a most blessed way for us to grow in love for him and one another.

Donna Kaye Rocke, OFS, is vice leader of Our Lady Queen of Angels, Emerging Community, Columbia, S.C., and Area 2 prayer coordinator.

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Minister's Message: "Servant Leadership" (cont'd) — Chapter of Elections, BSSF Region

May the Peace of Christ rule in our hearts! My message for this issue revolves around our upcoming Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis (BSSF) Regional Chapter of Elections to be conducted on Aug. 3 at Ridgecrest, N.C. Since my message for the last issue was titled "Servant Leadership," I chose to add (cont'd) to this title.

The Regional Executive Council (REC) is the bond that connects all local fraternities in our Region with the broader Franciscan reality. Members of this council include the minister, vice minister, secretary, treasurer, formation director, and six area councilors (two from each Area of the Region). In addition, the Regional spiritual assistant is by right a member of the Council.

The REC also appoints a Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) animator and Franciscan Youth/Young Adult (FYA) fraternal animator, as well as an editor for *Communio*, the regional newsletter. All of these are invited to attend the REC gatherings.

Is the Holy Spirit calling you to serve by accepting nomination (or placing yourself in nomination) for the BSSF Regional Executive Council?

(Nomination form, p. 8)

OFS Rule, Article 6 — "They have been made living members of the Church by being buried and raised with Christ in baptism; they have been united more intimately with the Church by profession. Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words."

This obedience makes ministry authentic without stifling creativity. We are called to encourage all members to be vital parts of fraternity life, and to challenge those who do not take part or offer themselves for the good of the Order.

"It seems that the early friars were caught up one day discussing the question, 'Who is the perfect Friar?' Francis put a stop to this seed of competition and comparison by looking around the room and pointing to each person present. Brother Angelo was the perfect friar for his courtesy, Francis said, and Brother Masseo for his natural good sense. Brother Leo was the perfect friar for his simplicity. Brother Bernard for his faith. Brother Juniper, for his patience. Brother John of Lauds for his sheer physical strength ... and so Francis continued, pointing to each friar in turn."

The Little Flowers of St. Francis

The message is clear. Each one of us possesses a unique gift to share with our brothers and sisters. The more completely we help each other offer our uniqueness to God, the more truly he is praised.

Won't you please consider offering your unique gift for the benefit of the Region and the Secular Franciscan Order?

OFS Rule, 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.

Secular Franciscans expend themselves by using their special talents, competence, and responsibility.

What will your offering be?

OFS Rule, Article 21 — "On various levels, each fraternity is animated and guided by a council and minister who are elected by the professed according to the constitutions. Their

service, which lasts for a definite period, is marked by a ready and willing spirit and is a duty of responsibility to each member and to the community.” This implies the importance of choosing available, competent, and willing leaders. The first step is to be placed in nomination.

To what is God calling you in this time and place?

OFS Rule, Article 24 — “To foster communion among members, the council should organize regular and frequent meetings of the community. ... It should ... encourage everyone to a life of fraternity.”

The fraternity derives much of its life from a vigorous council; hence, the council should meet regularly to take care of ordinary business, foster gospel living, and show concern for the growth of all its members.

Our Regional Executive Council typically meets four times a year (including at the Annual Regional Gathering). These meetings are centrally located in the Region and generally take place from 3 p.m. Friday until 4 p.m. Saturday (with a Friday night stay at the area hotel where the meeting is held). REC members are reimbursed for any expenses associated with serving on the Regional Executive Council. The REC is included in all correspondence sent to the local fraternity ministers/leaders. Any necessary business in between meetings is generally done via e-mail.

We come to pray together, laugh together, have a meal together, to be transformed, and to be instruments of his Peace in serving the members of the local fraternities.

Please consider being part of this REC for the next three years.

For detailed explanation of the Council duties and responsibilities see the “**Guidelines of the Regional Fraternity of Brothers and Sisters of Saint Francis of the Secular Franciscan Order**” (amended Aug. 4, 2012). These may be viewed on the Regional website www.bssfsfo.org by clicking on “About” at the top of the home page. Your local Fraternity council also has a copy.

May the Glory and Joy of the Risen Christ flower within us, bear much fruit in us, and bring us to a rich harvest for His Kingdom. Alleluia, Alleluia!

Jerry

“Very early when the sun had risen, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb, alleluia” (Mk 16:2).

Jerry Rousseau, OFS, minister of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region, is a member of Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity in Blairsville, Ga.

Wanted

Youth/Young Adult Fraternal Animator for BSSF Region

**Should be young of heart and mind
and capable of reaching out to
youth and young adults in our Region.**

Preferably under 39

and

Facebook/Twitter savvy.

**Candidate should be a Secular Franciscan
with experience in leading youth and
young adult ministry**

**and want to help YouFra fraternities
become a reality in the Region.**

**Should be willing to attend the upcoming
“Franciscan Summer Confab”**

July 25-28

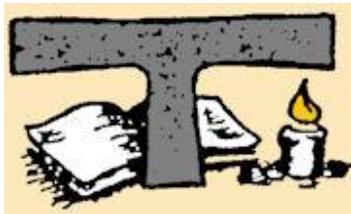
in Belleville, Ill. (Our Lady of the Snows).

Interested parties should contact

Jerry Rousseau

jrsfo2004@windstream.net

Regional Spiritual Assistant's Words of Wisdom: Thoughts on Pope Francis



I am amazed by the degree of interest the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI and the election of Pope Francis have generated.

After the pope's election, I received an email from a computer consultant I worked with in 1976. He remembered the friars and how he enjoyed the hospitality extended him by our friars at Archbishop Curley High School in Baltimore, Md., while he worked on the computer project with me. We were the only Franciscans with whom he'd interacted. He called me to congratulate us on the newly elected pope taking the name Francis. "If Pope Francis is anything like the Franciscans I know," he said, "the Catholic Church is in for a great experience."

The name says so much. With all due respect it is not St. Francis Xavier, a noted missionary and Jesuit saint. It is the simple, humble man of the poor, Francis of Assisi. In simple conversation after the election, a few of the new pope's peers reminded him to not forget the poor. Already he confirms his remembrance of them at the Holy Thursday liturgy at the washing of the feet. Among those washed were women's feet, including those of a Muslim woman.

A man in simple vestments, asking the people to bless him, hearing the call of the moment, aware of the mutuality of concern — the sheep for the shepherd and the shepherd for the sheep. Public transport or bicycling or an ordinary compact model of car moving from place to place as he ministers: "How I would like a Church which is poor and is for the poor!"

A non-European from a Third World country, comfortable to be there to minister but saddened to know the degree of pain and need of the people. Sensitive and insightful, he recognizes the challenge of his brother bishops who are thwarted by officials who obfuscate rather than obviate the bureaucratic maze of Vatican policy and practice.

Pope Francis is a man of decision who explores, investigates, and determines what needs to be employed in order to minister to the needs of the community. In his own quiet way, he already is leading by example. He more readily embraces his ministry of shepherd of the Diocese of Rome. It seems that his ministry to his diocese will serve as a model for bishops to serve their dioceses.

In the near future, his homilies, presentations, and writings will be commented on, reviewed, and studied. My sense is this will be a small part of coming to know Francis, the pope. I believe so much more will be realized and revealed in his ministry. "The Catholic Church," as my friend Phil said, "is in for a great experience."

*Blessings and All Good,
Father Linus*

Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv., is a member of St. Anthony of Padua Province, USA, which has its headquarters in Ellicott City, Md. He is Catholic chaplain at Syracuse University in Syracuse, N.Y.

New Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region Hispanic Commission

Due to myriad socioeconomic reasons the demographics in the Southeast are rapidly changing and the Hispanic populations have been growing exponentially. On March 2, the BSSF Regional Executive Council voted to form a Regional Hispanic Commission. The commission will assess outreach needs of the Hispanic communities to develop effective strategies to attract, evangelize, and form potential candidates to the OFS.

Willie Guadalupe, OFS, Regional Hispanic Commission Chair

Looking at the Year of Faith Through Franciscan Eyes



YEAR OF FAITH²⁰¹²₂₀₁₃

By Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS

Halfway through the Year of Faith.

Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed this special time, which began last Oct. 11 and will end on Nov. 24, Solemnity of Christ the King.

Oct. 11 is significant for Secular Franciscans because it was the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, convened by Pope John XXIII, a Secular Franciscan. The current iteration of our Rule, approved in 1978, is y influenced by that council.

As I read Pope Benedict's "Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei* for the Indiction of the Year of Faith" (www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/motu proprio), I saw ways to deepen my Catholic faith — and my Secular Franciscan commitment, at well.

- ***Porta Fidei*: "We want this Year to arouse in every believer the aspiration to profess the faith in fullness and with renewed conviction."**

As Secular Franciscans, we can celebrate the anniversary of our Profession by re-reading the Rite of Profession or Permanent Commitment to the Gospel Life in the *Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order* on our Profession anniversary. Reading it slowly and prayerfully, and not saying "Yes, this is what I want," unless we really mean it.

- ***Porta Fidei*: "A Christian may never think of belief as a private act. ... Faith, precisely because it is a free act, also demands social responsibility for what one believes. ... Profession of faith is an act both personal and communitarian."**

Likewise, we can never think of Secular Franciscan Profession as a private act, solely for our personal benefit. Rather, we are called into a communal way of life in which we have responsibilities to our brothers and sisters in Fraternity — at the local, regional, national, and even international levels.

- ***Porta Fidei*: "[W]e choose to entrust ourselves fully to God, in complete freedom."**

We can reflect on what Father Felice Cangelosi, OFM Cap., said in his the talk to the OFS General Chapter in 2008: Secular Franciscans "are the ones who must offer themselves to God with full freedom and awareness."

"From this point of view," Father Felice continues, "Profession is the act by which a person places him/herself into the hands of God, enabling God to take hold of him, with the result that from the precise moment of Profession, the person no longer belongs to him/herself, but is considered as totally 'expropriated' and at God's entire disposal. By virtue of Profession, the person becomes God's property, and therefore 'sacred.'"

- ***Porta Fidei*: "By faith, the martyrs gave their lives, bearing witness to the truth of the Gospel that had transformed them and made them capable of attaining the greatest gift of love: the forgiveness of their persecutors."**

Read the accounts of Franciscans martyred for the faith. We're familiar with St. Thomas More and St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe, OFM Conv., but there are others. The Japanese martyrs included St. Paul Miki, a Jesuit, but also St. Peter Baptist, other Franciscan friars, and 15 (or 17, depending on the account) Secular Franciscans.

If your fraternity does the Extraction of St. Francis's Spirit each year, learn about the saint you chose but focus mainly on what that saint's life is teaching you.

In reading *Porta Fidei*, you may see other ways to celebrate the Year of Faith from a Franciscan perspective.

Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS, is Communio editor. She is a member of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity in Hendersonville, N.C., and spiritual assistant to Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity in Blairsville, Ga.

Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC): Peace Is An Inside Job

By Caroline D. Townes, OFS

Inside and outside of the peace and social justice circles, I often hear, “When such and such happens, then there will be peace.” Or, closer to home, “When this happens in my life, then I can finally have peace.” This attitude only sets us up for failure. If we wait for something outside of ourselves to change before we can have or exercise peace, then we are at the mercy of an outside agent that may never change. And then what? We never have peace.

Peace is an inside job because as the classic hymn states, “Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.” This wise hymn denotes that I am the source of my peace, through the power of the Holy Spirit guiding and animating. At times, there is a war raging inside causing stress and unrest. One of the Church Fathers, Gregory of Nyssa (330–395), writes, “When we end that civil war within our nature and cultivate peace within ourselves, we become peace. By this peace we demonstrate that the name of Christ, which we bear, is authentic and appropriate.”

Many centuries ago, the Apostle Paul admonished in his “Letter to the Romans”: If possible and as much as depends on you, live peaceably with everyone (Rom 12:18). Notice he did not say to live peaceably only if the other is peaceful as well. Knowing the peace begins within, Paul expressly says “as much as depends on you.” This means that your peace is your responsibility. There is a global tendency to point the finger of blame when there is a lack of peace. We blame our government, our nation, our enemies, our relatives, our bosses, and even our God. Again, this behavior takes the ownership off of ourselves and places it outside of ourselves where we are powerless to do anything about it.

On the first day of the week, the disciples were shut away behind locked doors for fear of being arrested. The risen Jesus appeared in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you” (Jn 20:19). Of course, Jesus knew there was no peace in that closed room. There was fear, uncertainty, and perhaps even anger. The disciples knew there was the chance of them all being executed as well. There certainly was no peace. Yet, the first utterance of Jesus was the greeting of Shalom, of peace. Before the disciples could go out to the world and carry the Good News, Jesus blessed them with his peace and breathed on them the Holy Spirit, who will be their Comforter.

In my own life, I have noticed the times when there is chaos and fear, I have forgotten that I have the power of the Holy Spirit to calm my storm and ease my fear. This “forgetting” is when daily conversion comes into play. Each and every day we are faced with something that can cause us to lose touch with our Comforter. It is not until we fall on our knees that we can once again put first things first. As it states in our Rule: “Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily” (Art. 7).

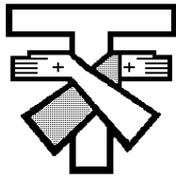
Remember, when the storms are raging all around you, you have the peace of Christ within you. All you have to do is be still and know, saying, “Peace, be still.”

Excerpt from “Animate Peace,” a 12-week immersion program in peacebuilding



Caroline D. Townes, OFS, the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region's JPIC animator, is a member of Our Lady Queen of Angels, Emerging Community, in Columbia, S.C., and the National JPIC and the Franciscan Action Network commissions.

NOMINATION DEADLINE: APRIL 30, 2013



Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region Secular Franciscan Order

Alabama Georgia North Carolina South Carolina Tennessee

NOMINATION FORM Chapter of Elections: August 3, 2013

I nominate _____

FOR: MINISTER - VICE MINISTER - SECRETARY - TREASURER - FORMATION DIRECTOR -
AREA ONE COUNCILOR - AREA TWO COUNCILOR - AREA THREE COUNCILOR

Please underline office(s). You may nominate the professed member for more than one office.

Address _____

City and State _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Fraternity, Emerging Community or Newly Forming Group _____

City and State _____

Nominated by _____

Address _____

City and State _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Fraternity, Emerging Community or Newly Forming Group _____

City and State _____

E-mail or mail one copy to both: _____

Nancy Brochu, OFS
1110 Morrow Lane
Adamsville, AL 35005
E-mail: brochunancy@yahoo.com
Phone: 205-447-0983 (home)
205-427-8093 (cell)

DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS
PO Box 258
Seabrook, SC 29940
E-mail: darsfo@embarqmail.com
Phone: 843-466-9867 (home)

Fraternity: A Reflection on Community

by Carole King, OFS

In this country, we prize our individuality. We prize our “freedom” to do, say, and be whatever we want. This attitude tends to bleed into our faith and its practice. We focus on “me and Jesus” — our individual relationship with him, our individual prayer life. Well, I’ve got some good news:

Christianity — and Fraternity — are *not* about individuality!

Think about it. God himself is the perfect community— Father, Son, and Spirit united in the deep intimacy of perfect love. The Church was never meant to be a building of worship. It is a body of individuals, joined by the Holy Spirit, who have become the body of Christ on earth. That’s us!

So the model for our own Franciscan community is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our Fraternity should be a living reflection of the Trinity.

Remember the three promises that Jesus made before he left this earth: I will be with you; I will feed you; I will come again. Now, until he comes again, how is he with us? We know he feeds us with his word and the sacraments, particularly in the Eucharist. But how else is he with us?

If I want to find Jesus, where do I look? After the resurrection, Jesus, in his glorified physical body, left the earth. In his place, he sent his Spirit and built a new body — his body — the Church. So, if I want to find Jesus, all I need do is look around. He is here in my brothers and sisters.

His love for us is unconditional. Dare ours be any less? In the sacred Scriptures, the Father commanded love: “Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Dt 6:5). “I give you a new commandment: love one another,” Jesus says. “As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:34–35).

Even in close-knit fraternities, breaks in relationships can happen. These breaks, if not quickly addressed, can cause divisions, injuring the whole community. “[I]f a house is divided against itself,” Jesus says, “that house will not be able to stand” (Mk 3:25). So it is in our Fraternity. Repressed anger and hurt over disagreements keep us apart; giving in to our feelings can fuel fires. Hidden feelings fester and cause great damage. When disagreements, hurt, and anger come up in Fraternity, they *must be addressed*.

As Franciscans, we must do as Francis did: be simple, humble, open, and honest. Take the feelings and bring them out into the open. The family circle of our Fraternity *must* be a place where we can talk openly and honestly to work through our differences and disagreements. It must be a place well-lit by God’s love, especially when strong feelings are involved. It must be a place where the Spirit of God can recreate unity through forgiveness and compromise, which comes from great humility, following the example of our father Francis.

We may let each other down sometimes, but if we open wide our hearts and souls, God in his love and compassion will fill us until we can’t help but overflow with that love. And it’s contagious!

Unconditional love is accepting people at face value; loving them as they are: Love, don’t criticize. Love, don’t judge. Love, don’t try to straighten them out. Why should our eyes be focused on the flaws of others when they should be focused upon our Lord Jesus who loves each one of us equally?

“We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak”, said the Greek sage Epictetus (55–135 A.D.). When we listen to what people are saying, without



interrupting with our own thoughts, it is amazing what we can learn about that person. The more we learn about someone, the more the barriers of misunderstanding begin to fall away. The more that happens, the deeper the relationship will become.

If we all begin to listen to one another and come to know one another, we will create a vibrant and close-knit Fraternity that is a living reflection of that perfect community: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Carole King, OFS, is formation director of St. Clare of Assisi Fraternity in Aiken, S.C.

Regional Executive Council Recap

By Christine Washington, OFS

Our Regional Executive Council (REC) servant leaders met in Greenville, S.C., March 1–2. Here are some of the important issues discussed and decided:

- A bilingual Newly Forming Group is starting at St. John Vianney Church in Lithia Springs, Ga. Sharon Loiselle, OFS, and Willie Guadalupe, OFS, from the NFG’s sponsor, Immaculate Conception Fraternity in Jonesboro, Ga., are assisting them. Let us keep them in prayer and praise God for this new life for our region.
- JoAnn Rademacher, OFS, has agreed to be our Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis (BSSF) Region liturgical coordinator for the ARG. We thank God for JoAnn’s “yes.” We pray that the Holy Spirit will use JoAnn in this position to help enhance our liturgies to be the liturgies he wants for us.
- The REC approved new wording for “Guidelines for Visitation and Election Stipends.” We hope this will assist the local fraternities in providing compensation for the service rendered by their pastoral and fraternal visitors.
- Greg Savold, OFS, BSSF Region treasurer, reported the good news that at the end of 2012 our Region had almost the same balance as at the end of 2011.
- A group in Lake Wiley, S.C., is initiating the process to become a Newly Forming Group. St. Michael the Archangel Fraternity in Spartanburg, S.C., will be the sponsor. Let us keep all of them in prayer and praise God for yet another sign of new life for our region.
- In her Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) report, Carolyn Townes, OFS, had much to share:
 - she is introducing the “Season of Peace” to our region;
 - she sends us the National JPIC monthly statements;
 - a new National JPIC website (<http://JPIC4ofs@catholicweb.com>);
 - the national JPIC gathering is set for July 25–28 at Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Ill., and will include the National Youth Commission.
- Jerry Rousseau, OFS, announced that we are looking for a BSSF Region youth/young adult fraternal animator (see page 4 of this issue):
 - We are looking for a youthful Franciscan to talk to youth groups.
 - Do you, or someone you know, have a passion for working with young people? Maybe you could serve our Order in this capacity.
- The theme for our upcoming Annual Regional Gathering (ARG), Aug. 2–4, will be “Be the Bridge — Animate Peace.” We pray that this ARG will help us go beyond working for peace to “being peace” for our brothers and sisters.
- Our REC approved the establishment of a Hispanic Commission for our Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region. This commission will let us do several things:
 - formally address the needs of the growing numbers of our Hispanic brothers and sisters in fraternity;

- provide an avenue of communication between our bilingual fraternities and the Regional Executive Council;
 - Willie Guadalupe, OFS, the chairperson of this new commission, told us that it is not enough to speak the language; we need also to understand the culture of our brothers and sisters;
 - We pray for this commission and the blessing it will be for our region.
 - We discussed in detail the upcoming “On the Road Formation Workshops.” This year they will focus on the role of the local fraternity council.
 - They will be held in Spartanburg, S.C., April 20; Chattanooga, Tenn., May 4; and Burlington, N.C., June 1.
 - We pray that each fraternity’s and group’s entire council will attend and be blessed in their servant leadership roles.
 - DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, reported on the election committee for our upcoming BSSF Region elections at the ARG. The deadline for receiving nominations is now April 30. She told us that it is a sign of humility to respond to a call to serve.
 - The “Training for Spiritual Assistants” course is starting again. This class will include, among other things, an internship program as well as ongoing formation for commissioned spiritual assistants. Let us keep them in prayer as we provide the necessary pastoral guidance for our fraternities.
 - It was announced that the following website can give us all the academic information we need on Franciscan sources: www.franciscantradition.org.
 - We are looking at getting new BSSF Region T-shirts. Look for more news as it develops.
- These are just the highlights of our REC Gathering! As you can see, we are very active in our quest to serve the needs of our Region.

May we all pray that God will give the grace to do what he has for each of us to do and the strength to do it.

May our precious Lord bless each of us abundantly with his peace and all good.

Christine Washington, OFS, is the secretary of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional Executive Council and a member of St. Joseph of Cupertino Fraternity in Bessemer, Ala.

**Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis
2013 ANNUAL REGIONAL GATHERING
Theme: “Be the Bridge — Animate Peace”
Chapter of Elections**

Aug. 2–4

LifeWay Ridgecrest Conference Center, near Asheville, N.C.

We anticipate these presenters:

Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv.;

Carolyn Townes, OFS; Father David Hyman, OFM;

Sister Bernadette Cappola, OSC; Father Louis Canino, OFM

**BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS REGION CALENDAR
SCHEDULE OF VISITATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

* confirmed

V+ follow-up visit

<u>2013</u> <u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>V/E</u>	<u>FRATERNAL / PASTORAL VISITOR</u>
*Jan. 6	Duluth, Ga.	V	Jerry Rouseau, OFS/Cricket Aull, OFS
*Jan. 12	Augusta, Ga.	V	Sara Nell Boggs, OFS/ Joanita Nelllenbach, OFS
*March 7	Morehead City, N.C.	V	Jerry/Fr. Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv.
*March 9	Burlington, N.C.	V	Jerry/Fr. Linus
*March 10	Elizabeth City, N.C.	V	Jerry/Fr. Linus
*March 17	Conyers, Ga.	E	Willie Guadalupe, OFS/Laura Haukaas, OFS
*April 13	Franklin, N.C.	V	Willie/Audrey Binet, OFS
*April 14	St. Simons, Ga	E	Charles Meyer, OFS/Fr. Wilfred Logsdon, OFM Conv
? April-May	Nashville, TN	V+	Willie/Kathy Taormina, OFS

April 20: Area 2 — On-the-Road Formation Workshop, Spartanburg, S.C.

May 4: Area 1 — On-the-Road Formation Workshop, Chattanooga, Tenn.

*May 5	Aiken, S.C.	E	Jerry/Audrey
*May 11	Jonesboro, Ga.	V	Charles/Laura
*May 14	Winston Salem, N.C.	E	Jerry/Sr. Kathleen Ganiel, OSF
*May 18	Greenville, SC	V	Frank Massey, OFS/Audrey

June 1: Area 3 — On-the-Road Formation Workshop, Burlington, N.C.

June 2	Charlotte, NC	V	Willie/Joanita
June 9	Newton, NC	E	Sara Nell/Joanita
July 11	Asheville, NC	E	Jerry/Joanita

**Aug. 2-4: ARG — Chapter of Elections,
Ridgecrest, N.C.**

*Sept. 14	Blairsville, Ga.	E	
Sept. 21	Garden City, S.C.	V	
? Sept.-Oct.	Fayetteville, N.C.	V	
Oct. 5	Athens, Ga.	V	

Oct. 15-20: NAFRA Chapter, Kansas City, Kan.

*Oct. 26	Hendersonville, N.C.	V	
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<p>Congratulations to the Newly Chosen Leaders Our Lady Queen of Angels, Emerging Community Columbia, S.C. Leader: Charles Hood, OFS Vice Leader: Donna Kaye Rock, OFS Secretary: Doris Kowalski, OFS Treasurer: Catherine Hood, OFS Formation Director: Ron Evans, OFS</p>
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Writing Franciscan

In the green hills and valleys where St. Francis walked

***The Natural World of St. Francis of Assisi: Landscapes, Plants, & Animals that Saint Francis Knew & Loved*; text by Susan Lamb, photography by Tom Bean; Foreword by Keith Douglass Warner, OFM. Available from Tau Publishing (Phoenix, Ariz., 2009). 80 pp.; paperback, \$15.95.**

By Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS

I love pilgrimages to Assisi and our day trips to places like Mount La Verna and the Marches. We travel in an air conditioned bus from which I enjoy the beauty of the passing countryside.

On my first pilgrimage, I also gained a real respect for St. Francis's strength and stamina. After all, the places to which we traveled in a couple of hours, he spent days walking to.

When we go to the Carceri, the hermitage above Assisi, I walk among the trees and enjoy being in nature. Francis, though, was in nature all the time — and he had to climb, on foot, that steep hill to get to the hermitage.

In this book we can visit those places.

“Susan and Tom's book helps us to see what Francis saw,” writes Brother Keith Douglass Warner, OFM, in his Foreword, “and thus with a bit of imagination, offers insight into his experience of the landscape of creation.”

The text and more than 80 color photos take us into Francis's world. I can just picture him ambling through a field of red poppies, listening to the tap-tapping of a green woodpecker. I can see him drinking from a spring near La Verna, bending to sniff the perfume of a wildflower, resting beneath spreading tree branches.

Pictured are one of the caves where he prayed on Mount La Verna and another at the Hermitage of Sant' Urbano.

“Francis loved caves, and spent time praying in Sister Mother Earth,” Brother Keith, co-author of *Care for Creation*, continues. “This was true as he was beginning his spiritual pilgrimage, and at the end of his life. The pictures and stories here prompt us to ask: how do we enter into the Earth? Do we pray the Earth? How might we? When singing of Sister Water, Francis saw the waters presented in this book. This shows us, tells us the story, of the waters of the central Italian Peninsula, and the beautiful array of plant and animal brothers and sisters who depend on them.”

Francis sang of nature in “The Canticle of the Creatures,” but this book describes nature itself as being Franciscan, in that plants help each other.

“Phytosociology (the science of plant relationships) is Franciscan in spirit,” the book points out. “Plants with the same requirements tend to develop communities and often assist one another in mutually beneficial relationships. Showy flowers attract insects that also pollinate



their dowdy neighbors. Threadlike fungi called *mycorrhizae* transfer nutrients between plants underground, taking just what they need for themselves on the way. Healthy plant communities are dynamic and ever-changing, never static.”

Also included are a timeline of St. Francis’s life, sidebar quotes from such authors as Thomas of Celano and St. Bonaventure, and pictures of Assisi, Greccio, and other places Francis knew. A

map of Umbria, accompanied by a description of various vegetation zones, shows the distances Francis walked. A bibliography offers suggestions for further reading.

Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS, is Communio editor. She is a member of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity in Hendersonville, N.C., and spiritual assistant to Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity in Blairsville, Ga.

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Fraternity prayer coordinators
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