

Communio

That All May Be One

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

Summer 2014

Present to the Presence of God



“This loving awareness of the heart and its holy silence comprise the technique of being present to the Presence. ...

“Jean Baptiste Marie Vianney [a Secular Franciscan] was a remarkable nineteenth-century parish priest in the small town of Ars, France. When he first arrived in the town, he took notice of a villager who never passed the church without entering it. In the morning when he went to work and in the evening on his way home, this man left his spade and his pickaxe at the church’s door and entered it.

“Noticing the man never prayed with rosary beads or a prayer book, Vianney once asked him what he said to God during his long visits to the church. The man answered, ‘Oh, I don’t say anything to God, Monsieur le Curé. I look at God and God looks at me.’ ...

“The heart-centered, adoring gaze of lover and beloved is the essence of being present to the Presence. And, according to John of the Cross, this silent love is the language God hears best” (88–89).

Father Albert Haase, OFM,
*Coming Home to Your True Self:
Leaving the Emptiness of False Attractions*

The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate





Editor’s Journal

“I’d like to write something for *Communio*,” someone asks. “What’s the theme for the next issue?”

Actually, we don’t have any assigned themes, but they often emerge on their own. I was amazed when I read Carolyn Townes’ JPIC column and Jerry Rousseau’s Minister’s Message. The theme of presence was — well, present — in what each of them wrote for this issue.

In the spiritual assistant column, Father Linus DeSantis writes about the rich man who was too wrapped up in his own concerns to see Lazarus, the beggar at his door. The rich man wasn’t present to what was going on around him.

“Present to the Presence in the present moment,” is prominent in the writings of Father Albert Haase, OFM, our guest speaker at this year’s Annual Regional Gathering. In fact, his fourth talk is titled “The Sacrament of the Present Moment.” I won’t be surprised to hear about presence in his other talks: “The True Self: Becoming the Person God Calls Us to Be”; “Growth towards Freedom: Breaking the Stronghold of the False Self”; “The Agenda of the False Self: Getting Caught in the Trap.”

How often do we recognize God’s presence, including when he speaks through those we meet? Ever wonder, for instance, what the angel looked like who appeared to Mary to tell her she had been chosen as the mother of the Messiah? What if the angel didn’t have white wings and a golden halo but looked like an ordinary person? Father Albert Haase, OFM, takes a look at this in *Coming Home to Your True Self*:

“Hasidic Jews believe that angels enter our lives one hundred times a day. Each day, they say, each one of us experiences one hundred messengers of God. From this Hasidic point of view, the amazing thing is not that the angel Gabriel entered Mary’s life, but that Mary recognized this annunciation of God (see Luke 1:26–38).

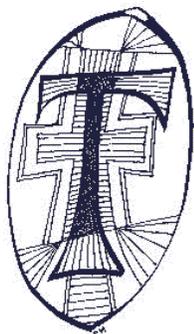
“Mary was a great contemplative, intensely focused on each individual who entered her life. She looked beyond the veil of human flesh and offered hospitality to each person as a messenger of the divine. She saw Thee in thee. She was a woman totally aware that everyone she encountered was a God-bearer. The eyes of her heart were wide open, and she was wide awake. She was living in the present, in the here and now, attuned to the Presence. From such a stance, she discovered the

annunciations of daily life, the epiphany of the now, the sacrament of the present moment and the tabernacle of her neighbor” (28).

*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.

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Minister's Message: Pope Francis's Words — Food for Thought

In his first encyclical, “*Lumen Fidei*,” Pope Francis spoke of “a massive amnesia in our contemporary world” (25). Modern man, he observed, often lacks awareness of transcendent truth and the fact that his identity is radically dependent on his relationship to God and others.

Many reasons could be given for this amnesia: a crisis of education; lack of catechesis in the Church; the breakdown of marriage and family; or the ever-present distractions of our modern technological era, which leave no room for contemplation or an appreciation of where we came from.

Like other Americans, Christians tend to see reality through the lens of the prevailing culture. A Gallup poll released on May 30 gives proof of that and should be a wake-up call for all Catholics in America.

In this most recent poll, Americans were asked to answer “how acceptable” to them were a list of 19 controversial issues. At the top of the list was contraception: 90 percent of respondents approved (i.e., highly acceptable).

Other issues making the top 10 (i.e., largely acceptable) were: divorce, 69 percent; premarital sex, 66 percent; embryonic stem cell research, 65 percent; childbirth outside of marriage, 58 percent; same-sex unions, 58 percent; euthanasia, 52 percent; abortion, 42 percent.

These numbers indicate that this moral decay is prevalent throughout America. “This poll is an example of how the tyranny of moral relativism can impact our culture,” says Father Shenan Boquet, president of Human Life International. “Representatives of government, the mainstream media, academia, and the entertainment industry have pushed Americans away from God for decades and toward the acceptance of a ‘secular morality’ where individuals decide right and wrong based on how they feel.

“It’s highly probable that almost all of the people polled in this survey would admit that they belong to one of the major religions of the world. All of these faiths hold teachings against most of the issues on Gallup’s list. And yet these people are telling pollsters that they are OK with behavior that is absolutely immoral and sinful according to the teaching of the God they claim to worship.”

Americans have been steadily rejecting Judeo-Christian morality in favor of secular relativism for decades. Actually, what seems like a sudden explosion is really the outcome of hundreds of years of growing confusion about who we are as persons. The so-called sexual revolution of the late 1960s is just a more recent example of the mind/body dualism that is assumed by so many today.

The contraception mentality, so identified by the Church, is a perfect example of what happens when we embrace dualism. The idea of myself as a unity of body and soul is gone. That is why the world was so angered by “*Humane Vitae*,” which arrived right in the middle of the sexual revolution. In, soon-to-be Blessed, Pope Paul VI’s encyclical on human life, the Church clearly reaffirms the inseparability of the unitive and procreative meaning of the conjugal act.

To go against our true nature is to fracture our natural sense of responsibility toward one another and leaves us with quite a mess — as witnessed to by the results of this recent Gallup poll. If we are serious about strengthening the family, promoting the well-being of children, reversing the growing number of broken marriages in our nation, ending abortion, upholding the dignity of the aged and ill, and promoting purity and chastity, then let’s be honest about where the moral breakdown begins — “contraception” — the gateway to moral decay.

Back to Pope Francis.

In his apostolic exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel” (*Evangelii Gaudium*),

he focuses on seven areas that we are called as a Church to do and be. (*Italics are direct quotes from the encyclical*).

1. **We Must Be a Church on a Mission** (to do and be)
There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter (8). An evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral (10). The Eucharist ... is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak (47).
2. **We Can Overcome Challenges to Serve this Mission** (challenges such as working in a vacuum and “warring” with each other)
How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion (53). One of the most serious temptations which stifles boldness and zeal is a defeatism. (85).
3. **Everyone Needs to Proclaim the Good News** (everyone who has experienced God’s love)
It always pains me greatly to discover how some Christian communities, and even consecrated persons, can tolerate different forms of enmity, division, calumny, defamation, vendetta, jealousy, and the desire to impose certain ideas at all costs, even to persecutions which appear as veritable witch hunts. Whom are we going to evangelize if this is the way we act? (100) But we need to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church (103).
4. **We Need Better Homilies and a More Evangelizing Catechesis** (not lectures or entertainment)
We know that the faithful attach great importance to it, and that both they and their ordained ministers suffer because of homilies: the laity from having to listen to them and the clergy from having to preach them! It is sad that this is the case (135). A preacher who does not prepare is not “spiritual”; he is dishonest and irresponsible with the gifts he has received (145).
5. **Love of God Necessitates Love of Neighbor** (not simply “me and God” experiences)
This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor (198). None of us can think we are exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice (201).
6. **We Need to Work for a Peace Based on the Common Good of All** (engage in true dialogue)
I ask God to give us more politicians capable of sincere and effective dialogue aimed at healing the deepest roots — and not simply appearances — of the evils in our world! (205) Any Church community, if it thinks it can comfortably go its own way without creative concern and effective cooperation in helping the poor to live with dignity and reaching out to everyone, will also risk breaking down, however much it may talk about social issues or criticize governments. It will easily drift into a spiritual worldliness camouflaged by religious practices, unproductive meetings and empty talk (208).
7. **The Holy Spirit Must Fuel Our Evangelization Efforts** (be a people of prayer)
We know well that with Jesus life becomes richer and that with Him it is easier to find meaning in everything. This is why we evangelize (266). My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an “extra” or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth (273).

As Secular Franciscans, we are being challenged to live the “joy of the Gospel,” and we can learn a great deal from Pope Francis’s exhortations. I encourage everyone to join in prayer for the coming Synod on the Family. This, I believe, could stem the tide of moral decay that has

taken root in our beloved country. By announcing a new synod, Pope Francis has again called on the Church to confront the challenges facing families today.

This, so far, is one of the pope's most important actions: scheduling a synod of bishops in 2015 for the pastoral care of the family. He has already captured the world's attention not by great gestures but by simple ones: riding a bus, kissing persons with disabilities, washing the feet of poor women, embracing prisoners, and meeting with penniless immigrants.

As Pope Francis reminds us of areas where we can do better as Christians, both as individuals and as a community, I look forward to his convening of the Synod on the Family so that we may reclaim the dignity of the family and of all human life, and, reclaim our identity as a truly universal Church. Let us pray for Pope Francis that his efforts may bear fruit as did those of his two saintly predecessors St. John XXIII and St. John Paul II.

Peace and All Good,
Jerry

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.

**Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region
20th Anniversary of Region's Canonical Establishment:
on Oct. 20, 1994
&
10th Anniversary of the Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life
introduced at the ARG in 1994**

**Celebrate at our Annual Regional Gathering — Aug. 1–3
LifeWay Ridgecrest Conference Center (near Asheville, N.C.)**

Theme: Awakening Your True Self

Featured Speaker: Father Albert Haase, OFM,

Popular preacher, teacher, spiritual director, radio personality.

A former missionary to mainland China for more than 11 years,

and the author of eight books on popular spirituality,

he trains spiritual directors in the diocese of Springfield, Ill.

Co-host of "Spirit and Life," a radio show every weekend on the Relevant Radio Network.

Website: www.AlbertOFM.org

Every fraternity: Plan to display your history and highlights
(and any other info you wish to share) throughout the weekend.

Each fraternity will have a dedicated table for this event.

AND — please bring your fraternity banner for our banner procession.

If you don't yet have a banner, now is a good time to make one (great one-time apostolate).

Come and celebrate with your brothers and sisters from throughout our Region.

ITS GOING TO BE A JOYOUS REUNION!

Celebrating with Poor Clares and Hispanic Youth

By Peake Dana, OFS

Helping a Poor Clare celebrate her solemn profession and providing breakfast for a Hispanic youth retreat were on the agenda for St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity, Hendersonville, N.C.

On June 19, 12 fraternity members shared a beautiful, spiritual day with Sister Sharon Ratteree, OSC, as she made her solemn profession in the Order of St. Clare in the Monastery of St. Clare, Travelers Rest, S.C. It was an absolutely wonderful, deeply spiritual experience for all of us.

More than 115 people attended, a record number of visitors at one time at the monastery. Four Capuchin friars attended, including Father Nick Mormando, provincial of the Province of the Stigmata of St. Francis and former pastor of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Hendersonville.

The rite included a half hour of beautiful music that Sister Sharon herself sang for us, followed by Mass and the profession. Father Martin Schratz, OFM Cap., our pastor at Immaculate Conception, prayed a special blessing for Sister Sharon during the rite. It turns out that Father Martin was pastor at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Charlotte when Sister Sharon was received into the Church. St. Francis makes connections, doesn't he?

It was a joyous day for our Poor Clare Sisters. And, oh, what a special day it was for Sister Sharon. Looking into her eyes, we saw a soul brimming with joy, peace, and love. Her testimony during the rite was filled with a deep sense of the Franciscan spirit. She spoke of contemplation, love, peace, joy, and of community. She was an absolute reflection of St. Clare — and now she is a Poor Clare, thanks be to God. Let us keep Sister Sharon and our Poor Clare sisters in our prayers.

Then, on June 28, St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity members helped our Hispanic youths celebrate St. Francis, St. Clare, and Jesus at Immaculate Conception.

About 140 boys and girls, ages 13 to 17, from all parishes in the Asheville Vicariate, came to the "Retreat of Evangelization" to be inspired by the examples of St. Francis and St. Clare. It was a joyous three days of song, rosaries, prayer, and drama, plus talks and presentations on the great saints, the Church, and Jesus.

"We had this retreat to promote Christian values to help young people discern and discover God's call in their lives," said Antonio Garcia, the vicariate's Hispanic Ministry coordinator. "We want them to want to give back to the Church. And we think they will."

Father Robert Williams, OFM Cap, parochial vicar at Immaculate Conception and spiritual assistant for St. Francis of the Hills, helped organize the retreat and was one of the main speakers. He led discussions on St. Francis and St. Clare and the spirit of St. Francis and his followers.

It was our fraternity's privilege to be able to serve them breakfast. Some of us gathered on Friday evening to prepare pans of a special breakfast called "baked French toast" — a tasty combination of bread, eggs, fruit, and cream cheese. Saturday morning, the toast was baked, then topped with berry syrup and whipped cream, and served with sausage patties and fruit juice.

It was an absolute joy to be with our young Hispanic friends and help them celebrate the Franciscan way to Jesus.

After serving the breakfast, we got together for our monthly fraternity gathering.

Newly Professed Congratulations!

**Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki
Brijeg Fraternity**

Blairsville, Ga.

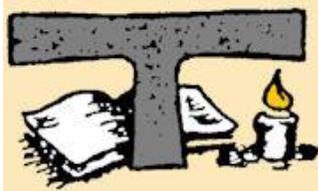
April 27

Deacon Lawrence Casey, OFS

Rita Casey, OFS

Gerard Gerbig, OFS

Peake Dana, OFS, is minister of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity in Hendersonville, N.C.



Spiritual Assistant's Words of Wisdom

By Fr. Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv.

By the grace of God alone ...

I find it very interesting that, considering the number of times I have read the Scriptures at Mass, I very seldom operate out of a mindset of, "Oh, yes, Lazarus the beggar ..." and proceed to remember what I have said about him.

In preparation for Mass, reading the Scriptures, I allow time to view the particular Scripture from another vantage point. It stretches me, and there is benefit to the stretch. I am able to see a little more deeply, broadly, and clearly. I find it rewarding to not consign myself to a mindset of, "Oh, yes, I know that passage well" and begin to reconstitute a past. What does it say about my growth, willingness to learn, to explore, to view from another perspective?

As I consider the passage, I look to comparable situations. In the recent reflection on the man who dined daily sumptuously, I stated that he didn't see Lazarus. It was not that he didn't want to; it was more that he was preoccupied with his comfort, his wealth, his pleasure. This occupied his time and energy. He didn't take the time to look around to see others!

Two facets of our Franciscan life readily come to mind.

When I read the stories of Francis and how he "sees" the friars, the way in which he enumerates the virtues of each of the friars: His concern for the friars is most noteworthy. Even though we are flawed and broken, he finds value in each of us.

The other facet is the way in which we prescribe the Apostolate Pillar. We are directed to share in, participate in, but not seek to direct or control by way of experience or skill. We are exhorted to surrender leadership and allow the less skilled and experienced take the leadership role. We are encouraged to afford the less talented the opportunity to guide the apostolate for the project.

Oftentimes, we learn something new about the individual who is directing. Here we recognize a joy of service. Our brother or sister appreciates the opportunity to lead the group in service. And, as we know, it all gets done and done well because of the care and concern of the members of the fraternity.

Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv., BSSF Region spiritual assistant, is a member of Our Lady of the Angels Province, USA, which has its headquarters in Ellicott City, Md. He is Catholic chaplain at Syracuse University in Syracuse, N.Y.

From the Secular Franciscan Order in Italy
Prayer Intention for July

FOR SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS

that they may be joyful witnesses and generous spirit of the Gospel and of St. Francis and exercise with fraternal affection and responsibility their spiritual and pastoral service to the SFO and the Franciscan Youth.

Congratulations — New Councils

St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity

Bessemer, Ala., June 8

Minister: Richard Taylor, OFS

Vice Minister: Christine Washington, OFS

Secretary: Earnestine Braxton, OFS

Treasurer: Karen Thorne, OFS

Formation Director: Janet Waters, OFS

Councilor: Jane Cusick, OFS

Councilor: Boyd Mackey, OFS

Councilor: Lannie Newman, OSF

Crucified Christ Fraternity

North Charleston, S.C., June 14

Minister: Cindy Bryan, OFS

Vice Minister: Donna Miller, OFS

Secretary: Carolyn Reuther, OFS

Treasurer: Ann McAdams, OFS

Formation Director: Diane Curran, OFS

Councilor: Libby Conway, OFS

Councilor: Linda Long, OFS

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation: Who Am I? The Key to Nonviolence (Part 1 of 3)

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS

“Living nonviolence requires daily meditation, contemplation, study, concentration and mindfulness. Just as mindlessness leads to violence, steady mindfulness and conscious awareness of our true identities lead to nonviolence and peace. The deeper we go into mindful nonviolence, the more we live the truth of our identities as sisters and brothers of one another, and sons and daughters of the God of peace.”

John Dear, *The Nonviolent Life*

In the retreats I’ve directed, the classes I’ve taught, the workshops I’ve facilitated, and in meeting with one-on-one clients, I’ve always asked one basic and foundational question: “Who are you?” After a few uncomfortable moments of silence and blank stares, I get the usual fare. Answers like, a teacher, a mother, a secretary, or a daughter. These are your roles and responsibilities, but this is not who you are. If those roles and responsibilities were stripped away from you then, who are you? Again, silence and blank stares.

Who are you?

Simply put, you are a wonderfully and uniquely made child of God. The Psalmist tells us that we are “wonderfully and fearfully made” (cf. Psalm 139). This is something no one can take away from you. All other roles and responsibilities may disappear or be stripped away, but you will always be a wonderfully and uniquely made child of God. You can deny it, ignore it, or even not believe it.

One woman in a workshop shared that she had a hard time believing, so she could not live it. Whatever the reason, many people have forgotten who they truly are. If you have forgotten that you are a child of God, you tend to behave from that belief. This has become a mindlessness state of being that so many walk in on a daily basis. Each day is lived on autopilot and by default. This mindless state, as Father John Dear wrote, leads to violence — violence against self and violence against others.

In this mindless state, there is a kind of apathy that leads to “don’t care” mind. Unfortunately, this is not a conscious state, so we are not even aware of it. Think about a drive you take on a regular basis. You can get from Point A to Point B without any awareness of what went on in between. This is known as highway hypnosis. Unless something out of the ordinary happens, you are unaware of the actual drive.

Becoming more mindful of your daily activities can greatly increase your remembering who you truly are and who you were created to be. “If we are sons and daughters of a loving Creator,” Father John states, “then every human being is our sister and brother, and we can never hurt another on earth ever again, much less be silent in the face of war, starvation, racism, sexism, nuclear weapons, systemic injustice, and environmental destruction.”

In our holy Rule, the word *mindful* appears three times: in **Articles 11, 14, and 19**; and I believe this is no accident. In the context of the Rule, *mindful* means to be aware, to be attentive to, and to heed. Yet, mindfulness has another meaning for us to consider. Mindfulness means paying attention to present-moment experiences without resistance or judgment, accepting what is. So, paying attention to what is happening right now — not last week or last month or five



years ago — right in this present moment. Without resistance — without struggle, conflict or opposition. Without judgment — without an opinion about it or a verdict of its outcome. Accepting what is — allowing it to be as it truly is, not changing it or wanting it to change.

When we can live in the present moment, paying attention to what is happening right now, accepting it without resistance or judgment, then we are on our way to a state of peace and nonviolence.

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, is a member of the Our Lady Queen of Angels, Emerging Community, in Columbia, S.C. She is the regional and national animator for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, an action commissioner for the Franciscan Action Network, and a promoter for Peace Bene's Campaign Nonviolence.

Day of recollection makes point about relationships

By Ellen DeKleva, OFS

Blessed John Duns Scotus Fraternity, Garden City, S.C., reflected on peace and justice during its day of reflection on June 21.

Carolyn Townes, OFS, national and regional JPIC animator, presented “Doing Love to Animate Peace.”

Members of St. Thomas More and Crucified Christ fraternities joined us in this most rewarding day of love, reflection, and fellowship.

We heard the parable of the porcupine, which made us consider our lives as Franciscans. Doing love requires patience, kindness, humility, respectfulness, and forgiveness. Carolyn gave us concrete way of implementing these qualities in our everyday lives.

During breaks and at lunch Carolyn spent time talking to our brothers and sisters. The last session of the day she answered questions on current peace and justice issues.

Ellen DeKelva, OFS, is minister of Blessed John Duns Scotus Fraternity.

The Parable of the Porcupine

It was the coldest winter ever. Many animals died because of the cold.

The porcupines, realizing the situation, decided to group together to keep warm. This way they covered and protected themselves; but the quills of each one wounded their closest companions.

After a while, they decided to distance themselves, one from the other, and they began to die, alone and frozen. So, they had to make a choice: either accept the quills of their companions or disappear from the earth.

Wisely, they decided to go back to being together. They learned to live with the little wounds caused by the close relationship with their companions in order to receive the warmth that came from the others. This way they were able to survive.

Moral of the story

The best relationship is not the one that brings together perfect people, but when each individual learns to live with the imperfections of others and can admire the other person's good qualities.

Communio

is published four times a year for the members of the
Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region of the Secular Franciscan Order
in the United States of America.

BSSF Regional Executive Council Recap

By Christine Washington, OFS

The Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional Executive Council met April 25–26 in Greenville, S.C. Here are highlights of the meeting:

- St. Maximillian Kolbe Fraternity in Charlotte, N.C., has agreed to take responsibility for selling the remainder of last year's order of BSSF Region T-shirts. The order form is available on our BSSF website (www.bssfsfo.org). Thank you, St. Maximillian Kolbe Fraternity.
- Sts. Francis and Clare, Emerging Community, Knoxville, Tenn., has been given July 27 as a tentative date for its canonical establishment, which will be held at Sacred Heart cathedral in Knoxville. Congratulations, Sts. Francis and Clare Fraternity!
- In the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission report, Carolyn Townes, OFS, regional JPIC animator, updated us on the JPIC Formation Team for our region. Team members and their fraternities are:
 - Paula Zanker, OFS, Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, Burlington, N.C.;
 - Julie Lorenz, OFS, San Damiano, Athens, Ga.;
 - DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Hilton Head Island, S.C.;
 - Jenny Taylor Johnson, OFS, St. Maximilian Kolbe, Charlotte, N.C.;
 - Frank Massey, OFS, Franciscan Family of Greensboro, Greensboro, N.C.;
 - Patricia Tomczyk, OFS, Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg, Blairsville, Ga.;
 - Peake Dana, OFS, St. Francis of the Hills, Hendersonville, N.C.;
 - Willie Guadalupe, OFS, Immaculate Conception, Jonesboro, Ga. Willie was assigned the team's spiritual assistant.
- Carolyn also told us that this November we will commemorate the 35th anniversary of St. Francis being named the patron saint of ecology.
- In the Hispanic Commission report, Willie, Hispanic Commission chairperson, stressed that Spanish-language formation materials need to be professionally printed so that Spanish- and English-language materials are of equal quality.
- Area councilors reported on visitations and elections in which they had been involved, as well as efforts to introduce themselves to fraternities.
- During the open forum, Jerry Rousseau, OFS, regional minister, suggested that local fraternity ministers should be encouraged to look at our BSSF website and share its content with their fraternity members. He reminded us that on the website we have the 2013 Annual Regional Gathering (ARG) audio tapes, the order form for the BSSF T-shirts, and all issues of *Communio*, spring 2005 to the present.
- He also told us that Jason Morrow, OFS, our webmaster, needs notice on retreats to be held throughout the region to be added to the BSSF Website. We encourage local fraternities to make use of this way to publicize retreats.
- We reviewed the schedule of the upcoming ARG to be held Aug. 1–3

As you can see we are still hard at work in serving the needs of our brothers and sisters throughout the region. We thank you for this opportunity to serve you.

May our precious Lord bless each one of you 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 REGION CALENDAR

*confirmed V=Visitation E=Election V+=follow-up visit

Names in parentheses are observers. Regional Executive Council members preparing to serve as fraternal visitors and election presiders, and spiritual assistants preparing to serve as pastoral visitors and ecclesiastical witnesses at elections, first observe those experience in these duties and are then observed by them as they perform the duties.

2014	Fraternity	V	Fraternal/Pastoral Visitors
		E	Presider/Ecclesiastical Witness
*Jan. 17-18	San Damiano	V	Jerry Rousseau (Julie Lorenz)/ Joanita Nellenbach (Dcn. Tom Shaver)
*Feb. 8	Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary,	E	Charles Meyer/Audrey Binet
*Feb. 14-15	Bd. John Duns Scotus	V	Frank Massey (Marie Stephan)/ Joanita
*Mar. 9	Channel of Peace	E	Jerry/Fr. Mark Scholz (Faye Martin)
*Mar. 15-16	Sts. Francis & Clare (EC)	V	Jerry (Barbara Garrison)/Audrey (Faye)
*Apr. 12-13	Five Georgia Martyrs	V	DorothyAnn Rowland/Joanita
*Apr. 13	Franciscan Family of Greensboro	E	Marie (Frank)/Faye (Audrey)
*May 3-4	St. Clare of Assisi	V	Jerry/Faye (Joanita)
*May 13	Fraternity of St. Clare	V	Frank/Pat Wilkerson
*June 7-8	Fraternity of Brother Francis	V	Paula Zanker/Tom (Audrey)
*June 8	St. Joseph Cupertino	E	Jerry (Barbara)/Lori Moran (Willie Guadalupe)
*June 14	Crucified Christ, N. Charleston	E	DorothyAnn/Joanita (Dcn. Tom)
*June 28	St. Michael the Archangel	E	Charles/Tom (Audrey)

ARG August 1-3, 2014 (Fr. Albert Haase, OFM, featured speaker)

*Sept. 5-6	Our Lady Queen of Angels	V	DorothyAnn/Faye
*Sept. 11	St. Clare, Asheville	V	Barbara (Jerry)/Tom
*Sept. 13	Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament	E	Frank/Fr. Paul Gabriel, OFM Conv.
*Sept. 12-13	Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg	V	Julie/Audrey
*Sept. 17	St. Anthony of Padua	V	Jerry/Willie
*Sept. 28	Padre Pio	E	Marie/Fr. Doug Reid
*Oct. 18-19	The Spirit of Francis & Clare	V	Julie/Willie
*Oct. 19	Seven Dolours of the Bd Virgin Mary	E	Barbara G./Barbara Smith

NAFRA Chapter, Oct. 21-26, 2014 (Lake Dallas, Texas)

*Nov. 2-3	St. John Vianney (NFG)	V	Jerry/Lori (Willie)
*Nov. 16	St. Thomas More	E	Jerry/Barbara S.

Writing Franciscan

Looking at St. Francis in the context of medieval Italy

***Francis of Assisi and His World* by Mark Galli. InterVarsity Press (Downers Grove, Ill, 2002), 190 pp.; paperback, \$12.80.**

By Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS

My first course from ICFL, the Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life (distance-learning program from St. Francis University, Loretto, Penn.), was “Franciscan Spirituality.” There was a lot more to it than just what we usually think of as “spiritual.”

“An individual’s spirituality is meaningless without an appreciation of his or her social historical context,” wrote Brother Keith Warner, OFM, in his introduction to the course, “so the student will need some willingness to imaginatively enter Francis’ world.”

That’s the premise of Mark Galli’s lively *Francis of Assisi and His World*. We can’t understand Francis unless we understand the world in which he lived. I discovered this book because it’s one of the texts for ICFL’s “The Franciscans: A Family History,” which I’m taking now.

Galli, editor of *Christianity Today* magazine, has produced a book that helps us to know Francis better and draws us into everyday life in the 13th century.

“Writing with lively and engaging style, Galli traces the fascinating adventure of Francis’s life, from his hedonistic youth to his emergence as a Christian leader of outstanding influence and passion,” says a note on the inside front cover.

“The saint revealed here is not the bland, romanticized free spirit of popular misconception, but a complex and contentious man who combined an irradiated mysticism with a very practical Christian commitment and, above all, sought to glorify God as Creator.”

This engaging small book (4 7/8 x 7 inches) is a delight to read and packed with details that give us a clear picture of many aspects of life in Assisi and the medieval world. We learn some things about St. Rufino, the martyred bishop of Assisi, for whom its cathedral (Francis preached there) is named. We see the beginning of the First Order, how it spread “beyond the Alps,” and problems that arose as the number of friars increased and the Order began to differ from their founder’s concept. The book can be read straight through, or browsed, as there are many sidebars that add insights about the chapters’ topics. Chapter 2, “The Hedonist,” for instance, has a sidebar on medieval business practices.

We know the story about Francis’s father locking him up in the cellar. A sidebar explains that family prisons were common — and legal. A father, or any two relatives, could have the miscreant thrown into the commune’s prison: “Even without proof of charges, communal magistrates had to carry out a father’s will in this regard. If a father preferred, he could take care



Detail from “Maestà (Majesty),” a painting of the Virgin and Child with angels, by Giovanni Cimabue. Lower Basilica of St. Francis, Assisi. “This portrait,” Galli says, “is considered by many to be the most accurate of Francis.”

of the matter himself, bind his son in chains and imprison him at home. The records of Assisi suggest that many families had private prisons.”

Other sidebars describe becoming a knight, what a medieval town was like, how lepers were treated, people’s love of music, medieval medicine, and the crusades. We also learn about the founding of the Order of St. Dominic; St. Anthony, “hammer of the heretics”; Clare and Francis’s “transcendent friendship; and how Clare repulsed an army.

A sidebar notes that the Third Order was a “potent force for social change”: “Tertiaries were to will their estate to the poor or to the Church,” which “created a significant social welfare system.” They “were forbidden from carrying arms”; this “cut down on the incessant violence of the era.”

And “they were only permitted to make oaths to God or the pope. This freed the tertiary from many feudal obligations, for since he had given his allegiance to the pope, he was now not subject to secular courts, but to church courts. The popes used this allegiance to thwart the aggression of the Holy Roman Empire; instead of serving the emperor in battle, the tertiaries could serve the Church. Overall, this vow helped bring more peace to an era characterized by incessant ‘gang warfare.’”

This book is a feast for the eyes — filled with beautiful artwork, including photographs of Assisi and paintings from the period.

A chronology of St. Francis’s life and suggestions for further reading will add to your enjoyment of this excellent book.

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.

"A Little Portion in Time: Weekend With St. Francis at the Portiuncula"

Oct. 3–5, 2014

Presenter: Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS

Avila Retreat Center

711 Mason Rd., Durham, NC 27712

919-477-1285

www.avila-retreat-center.com

email: avila1983@nc.rr.com

Donation: \$160.00 double-occupancy room.

Limited number of single rooms available on 1st-come, 1st-served basis

Celebration of Transitus of St. Francis Friday evening
with renewal of OFS commitment

The Portiuncula, on the plain below Assisi, is one of the most significant Franciscan places.

We'll spend time this weekend exploring Francis's response to the Gospel,
his devotion to Mary, and his final words to his followers.

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Area 2: Donna Kaye Rock, OFS

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Fraternity prayer coordinators
submit prayer requests to Area coordinators.

The Franciscan Spiritual Tradition

“The Franciscan Spiritual tradition, though one of many in the Church, is focused on encouraging all Franciscans, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Orders to move beyond a “Me and God” faith that truly lives the great commandments of Love. The essence of the Rule of all the branches of the Franciscan Family is simple: “To observe the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

“Until we can see God instead of ourselves and our own wants as the center of the universe, we cannot fully understand what the Father is offering us in Jesus. Until we decide to begin the difficult journey inward, to become fully mature in Christ, to become Eucharist blessed, broken, and given for others, we cannot break out of the consumer-oriented, performance-based spirituality of ascent (‘upward spiritual mobility’) and embrace the path of descent or littleness walked by Jesus and later by Francis.

“Until we understand that we stand alone and naked before God, without any accomplishments and without any successes, and understand/experience that God is totally consumed with love for each of us, we cannot fathom the depth and passion of God’s love and his desire to share this love with us” (15).

Robert L. Fitzsimmons, OFS,
“Understanding Franciscan
Theology, Tradition, and Spirituality,”
*For Up to Now: Foundational
Topics for Initial Formation*