

Communio

That All May Be One

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

Fall 2013

It is our joy to always praise the Lord

“When he washed his hands, he chose a place where the water would not be trampled underfoot after the washing. Whenever he had to walk over rocks, he would walk with fear and reverence out of love for Him who is called ‘The Rock.’ ...

“Moreover, he used to tell the brother gardener that he should make a beautiful flower bed in some part of the garden, planting and cultivating every variety of fragrant plants and those producing beautiful flowers. Thus, in their time they would invite all who saw the beautiful flowers to praise God, for every creature announces and proclaims: ‘God made me for you, o people!’

“We who were with him saw him always in such joy, inwardly and outwardly, over all creatures, touching and looking at them, so that it seemed his spirit was no longer on earth but in heaven. This was evident and true, because of the many consolations he had and continued to have in God’s creatures. Thus, shortly before his death, he composed the *Praises of the Lord* by His creatures to move the hearts of his listeners to the praise of God, and that in His creatures the Lord might be praised by everyone.”

From “The Assisi Compilation,”
Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume II, The Founder (p. 192)



The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

Spirituality



Formation

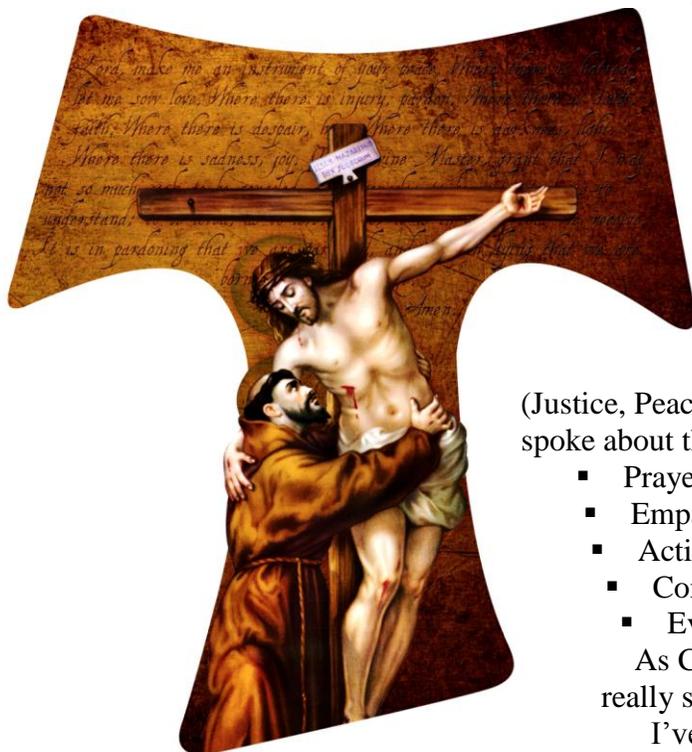


Fraternity



Apostolate





**Editor’s Journal:
Empathy: To feel, not fix**

By Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS

This wasn’t a new image for me.

I’d seen it over the years in pictures and statues, and I’d been looking at this picture all weekend, on the screen in the conference room at our Annual Regional Gathering in August.

It was up there when Carolyn Townes, OFS, our Region’s JPIC

(Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation) animator spoke about the principles of PEACE:

- Prayer
- Empathy
- Active listening
- Compassion
- Evangelical love.

As Carolyn described “Empathy,” that picture really struck me.

I’ve tended to be a “fixer.” I want to straighten things out, make everything right. But, Carolyn said, empathy is “not about sympathy or fixing but about being present, about letting me feel what you’re feeling.”

This picture shows me what empathy means. Francis isn’t trying to fix anything or make it better, get Jesus off the cross or take away his pain — or even say anything to him. The two are simply embracing each other and looking into each other’s eyes. The nails must have caused Jesus great pain, but his right arm is around Francis and the cause of the pain in his right hand has been left on the cross.

Perhaps that is the message for us. In empathy, we help take away the pain — not by doing anything but by simply being present.

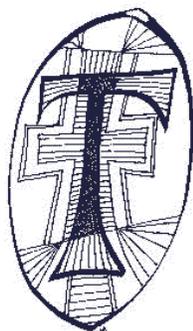
“The compassionate person identifies with the suffering of others in such a way that she or he makes a space within the heart to allow the suffering of another to enter, not to heal them or remove their pain but to be with them in solidarity,” Sister Ilia Delio, OSF, writes in *Compassion: Living in the Spirit of St. Francis*.

“Compassion needs space within one’s being because it is love reaching out and taking in. Compassion begins not with the will to love but with the recognition that one is loved. Hence, compassion begins with God.”

*Pace e bene
Joanita*

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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.



Minister's Message: "Be the Bridge — Accept all people as a gift from God"

That was the theme of the 2013 NAFRA chapter held at the Savior Pastoral Center in Kansas City, Kan., Oct. 15–20. Deacon Tom Bello, OFS, our national minister, opened the gathering with the words of Pope Francis's chosen motto "*Miserando atque Eligendo*," which, roughly translated, means "by having mercy, by choosing him."

He went on to explain that, through baptism, all of us have been chosen by God out of mercy.

Pope Francis's episcopal motto is based on the Gospel account of "the call of Matthew, the tax collector" (Mt 9: 9–13), in a homily given by St. Bede the Venerable, an English eighth-century Christian writer and doctor of the church. Jesus saw the tax collector, Matthew, sitting at a customs post and said to him, "Follow me." St. Bede explained in his homily: Jesus saw Matthew, not merely in the usual sense, but more significantly with his merciful understanding of men.

He saw the tax collector and, **because he saw him through the eyes of mercy and chose him**, he said to him, "Follow me." This following meant imitating the pattern of his life — not just walking after him. St. John tells us, "Whoever says he abides in Christ ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." St. Bede continued: "This conversion of one tax collector gave many men, those from his own profession and other sinners, an example of repentance and pardon. Notice also the happy and true anticipation of his future status as apostle and teacher of the nations. No sooner was he converted than Matthew drew after him a whole crowd of sinners along the same road to salvation."

We too, like Matthew, need to go out into the world and be examples of mercy — focus on the person, not on the sin. All of us, sinners though we are, are created in God's image. Remember Sister Ilia Delio, OSF, asking us to look in the mirror each morning and say, "Good morning, image of God." What a difference that can make in our perspective as we begin the day.

Be the bridge — no matter what! "When you're a bridge, you may be walked on from both sides," says Father Richard Rohr, OFM. Persevere in bringing God's mercy to all whom you encounter as you answer Jesus's call, "Follow me." Bridges are made to connect. Relationship stands at the heart of the Gospel. God has disclosed himself through the prophets and through all of Creation. He enters into relationship with us. Through his Incarnation he becomes one of us! This is the "Good News."

What better place to practice this virtue of mercy than in our own local fraternities. I challenge you to strive for "kinship" among the members. Begin with "one-on-one" relationships where we can exercise attentive listening and have sacred conversations. Make time at each gathering for this life-affirming one-on-one with your brothers and sisters. We are called to move from "**formation**" to "**transformation**." Let us truly practice what we preach.

May the Lord grant you Peace!

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.

Meet Our New Regional Executive Council

What a wealth of talent and experience we have in our Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional Executive Council, elected on Aug. 3 during our Annual Regional Gathering. Deacon Tom Bello, OFS, our national minister, presided at the election, and Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv., our regional spiritual assistant, served as ecclesiastical witness.

Minister— Jerry Rousseau, OFS

BSSF Region: Minister, August 2010–2013.

Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity, Blairsville, Ga.: appointed leader of Emerging Community, June 2005–December 2007; fraternity canonically established, Aug. 11, 2007; minister, December 2007–August 2010; sponsor of inquirer/candidate 2009–2013; represented BSSF Region at foundation meeting for establishment of FAN (Franciscan Action Network) 2006.

Vice Minister — Paula Zanker, OFS

BSSF Region: Ecology Commission, 2001–2004; Formation Director, 2004–2007; Area 3 councilor, 2010–2013.

Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Fraternity, Burlington, N.C.: formation director, 2000–2005; minister, 2008 to present.

Secretary — Christine Washington, OFS,

BSSF Region: Secretary 2010–2013; formation director, 2001–2004; member of Work Commission, 1997–2001.

St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity, Bessemer, Ala.: Minister, 2 terms; vice minister, 1 term; secretary, 1 term; formation director, 5 separated terms.

Treasurer — Greg Savold, OFS

BSSF Region: Treasurer, 2010–2013.

St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity, Hendersonville, N.C.: Councilor, 2012–2013; appointed vice minister, 2013.

Formation Director — Sara Nell Boggs, OFS

BSSF Region: Area 2 councilor, 2007–2013

St. Michael the Archangel Fraternity, Spartanburg, S.C.: formation director, 2001–2007.

Area 1 Councilor — Barbara Garrison, OFS

Channel of Peace Fraternity, Chattanooga, Tenn.: Secretary, appointed 2010–2011; minister, 2011 to present; member of an apostolate team taking meals and socializing with residents of the Home Place, a home for persons with AIDS and who are HIV Positive; formation team member.

Area 1 Councilor — Julie Lorenz, OFS

San Damiano Fraternity, Athens, Ga.: Vice minister, 2012 to present.

Area 2 Councilor — Charles A Meyer Jr., OFS

BSSF Region: Area 2 councilor, 2010–2013.

St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Augusta, Ga.: Minister, 1 term; treasurer 1 term.

REC, from page 4

Area 2 Councillor — DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS

BSSF Region: Area 3 councillor (appointed), 2012–2013.

Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity, Hilton Head Island, S.C.:

Formation director, 2002–2005; minister, 2005–2011; formation team member, 2005 to present; prayer coordinator 2011 to present; JPIC liaison, 2011 to present.

Area 3 Councillor — M. Frank Massey, OFS

BSSF Region: Chair, Justice & Peace Commission, 1999–2002; vice minister, 2010–2013.

Franciscan Family of Greensboro Fraternity: Minister, 1996–2002 and 2005–2011.

Area 3 Councillor: Marie Stephan, OFS

BSSF Region: Area 3 prayer coordinator 2012 to present.

Father Solanus Casey Fraternity, Morehead City, N.C.: Secretary, 2003–2006; treasurer, 2007–2009; keeper of fraternity historical scrapbook and photo albums, 2000–present.

Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation

Greetings of peace, dear brothers and sisters!

I am honored and humbled to have been appointed as the national chair for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. By the grace of God and through the intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary, we will continue the good work begun by our dear brother, Kent Ferris, OFS.

I want to thank Kent for his dedication, commitment, and the work he began for the National Fraternity. I am pleased he will remain on the JPIC Commission helping to continue to move forward the efforts of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

By now, hopefully, you have all received Part 1 of the 12 Weeks of Franciscan Peace, which began on Oct. 3 and will go until the Nativity of the Lord. I wanted a way for us to pray, study, reflect, and take a small action during this busy time. This is my first initiative straight out of the gate. I want to remind you all that peace and justice is not just another thing you have to do, but it is who you are.

As Franciscans, we are called to be people of prayer and contemplation but also people of courageous and inspiring action. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, reminds us of this daily. He tells us, “Do not be afraid to go and to bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away, most indifferent.” This is very encouraging. It is our Rule in action.

“Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of



love and pardon. Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others” (OFS Rule, Article 19).

For me, this part of Article 19 is our clarion call. It is a call to live the Gospel; going from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel. As I have been reappointed as your Regional JPIC animator by the newly elected council, I will work to bring you resources to guide and animate your journey towards being instruments of peace and justice.

Remember the first principle of the PEACE Principles: PRAYER. Continue to pray for your elected and appointed council members — locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally — as they work for the betterment of the Order. Pray for Pope Francis as he continues to champion the cause for living the Gospel and being true followers of Christ. And pray for each brother and sister in the Order. These are trying times, but the Holy Spirit is doing a mighty work within the hearts and souls of each and every one of us. We need to remain steadfast in faith and trust.

Finally, I ask you to join with me to help create a culture of peace and compassion. This is an enormous task but a task that begins with each one of us taking small actions; remembering that violence begins within and radiates out. But, so too do peace and compassion begin within and radiate out. It is about making conscious and mindful choices. When a conflict arises, make prayer your first line of defense and not your last resort. And when in doubt, just stop, take a breath and ask, “What would Jesus do in this situation?” What would St. Francis do in this situation? Then, ask your opponent, “What do you need me to understand right now?”

As the Apostle Paul states in his Letter to the Romans, “If at all possible and as much as it depends on you, live peaceably with everyone. . . . Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Replace the acts of violence and fear with acts of compassion and joy. This is how we are to live as followers of Jesus in the footsteps of St. Francis. This is our call and this is our journey. I will meet you on the road.

May the Lord give you peace.
Carolyn

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region’s JPIC animator, is national JPIC chair. She is a member of Our Lady Queen of Angels, Emerging Community, in Columbia, S.C., and the Franciscan Action Network Commission.

Newly Professed Congratulations!

Channel of Peace Fraternity

Chattanooga, Tenn.,

June 9

Karen Ferraraccio, OFS

Ann Hammers, OFS

T

New Council Congratulations!

Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki

Brijeg Fraternity

Blairsville, Ga.,

Sept. 14

Minister: Caroline Richbourg,

OFS

Vice Minister: Pat Tomczyk, OFS

Secretary: Pat Tomlinson, OFS

Treasurer: Ron Tomczyk, OFS

Formation Director: Madeline

Rousseau, OFS

Councilor: Ray Crock, OFS

Councilor: Steve Smith, OFS

Regional Executive Council & Regional Fraternity Council

By Christine Washington, OFS

Our Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis (BSSF) Regional Executive Council (REC) and the Regional Fraternity Council (RFC) have been very active in the last few months. In an effort to keep you abreast of what has been going on at our meetings, I'd like to give you a summary of what went on at each of our four meetings.

The RFC comprises the Regional Executive Council and the ministers of all the canonically established fraternities in the BSSF Region. It meets once a year during the Annual Regional Gathering. The REC meets four times a year, including a meeting during the ARG.

REC meeting Aug. 2: This meeting was held at LifeWay Ridgecrest Conference Center, near Asheville, N.C., Friday afternoon of the Annual Regional Gathering.

- The Spiritual Assistant (SA) Course was discussed. Area 3 has the greatest need for spiritual assistants. The next course will span a two-year period, and its members will be involved in an internship to observe the role of the SA. A financial appeal will be made to help defray part of the cost the participants have in the next class.
- In the treasurer's report, Greg Savold, OFS, reported that we had a successful outside audit of our books.
- Deacon Tom Bello, OFS, national minister, told us that in we have a cohesive council and good communication within our region. He also told us that we are one of a few councils in the country with a retreat for new councils.

RFC meeting Aug. 3: This meeting was held at Ridgecrest Saturday afternoon, Aug 3, at the ARG.

- In his treasurer's report, Greg said that the region kept well within its budget for 2012–2013. The BSSF Region 2014 Budget was approved.
- In the open forum, the following issues were discussed:
 - Fair share contributions — Jerry Rousseau, OFS, BSSF Region minister, stressed the importance of the fair share coming from a common fund and the minister and the treasurer getting together to develop a budget with the \$45 fair share as part of the budget. He advised us that there is a work sheet available that will assist fraternities in making a budget.
 - Temporary withdrawal of members — This category is for members who can't show up for gatherings and who, after a dialogue with them, still can't participate. They do not withdraw from the Order, only from the fraternity. A written request should be made to the council for return to active status. Temporary or permanently withdrawn members are shown on the database as withdrawn, but are not shown on the fraternity's roster. Fair share is not paid for a withdrawn member.
 - Lapsed members — We were told that lapsed members need to either come back to the fraternity and contribute or to withdraw. If a person does not respond to letters of invitation from the council to return or to talk about withdrawal, the council needs to make a decision to suspend the person. This is still a temporary withdrawal. The council always communicates its decision to the member.
 - International Fraternity — Local fraternities contribute to the Region; the Region contributes to National and National contributes to International.

Deacon Tom Bello advised us that the International Fraternity meets only once every three years. They take the number of Professed that a nation sends in to them and the nation is billed the same amount for three years. International bills for

Candidates since they are received into the order at the Rite of Admission. Jerry encouraged us to focus on the spirit, not to focus on the dollar.

- In the Chapter of Elections the following were elected to serve the BSSF Region: Minister: Jerry Rousseau, OFS; Vice Minister: Paula Zanker, OFS; Secretary: Christine Washington, OFS; Treasurer: Greg Savold, OFS; Formation Director: Sara Nell Boggs, OFS; Area One Councilors: Barbara Garrison, OFS, and Julie Lorenz, OFS; Area Two Councilors: Dr. Charles Meyer Jr., OFS, and DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS; Area Three Councilors: Frank Massey, OFS, and Marie Stephan, OFS
 - Congratulations, especially to Barbara Garrison, Julie Lorenz, and Marie Stephan who are new to the Regional Executive Council.

REC meeting of the Old and New Regional Executive Councils: This short meeting was held at Ridgecrest Sunday afternoon, Aug. 4, at the conclusion of the ARG.

- A retreat for the new executive council was scheduled the weekend of Oct. 4.
- Reappointed to the REC:
 - Carolyn Townes, OFS, Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation animator.
 - Awilda Guadalupe, OFS, Hispanic Commission chair.
 - Joanita Nellenbach, OFS, *Communio* editor.
- A new BSSF Region Roster was to be sent out by Christine.
- A suggestion was made to take a picture of all the attendees at our next ARG. The picture could then be put on our regional website.

REC meeting Oct. 5: This first meeting of the new REC was held in conjunction with a retreat led by Cricket Aull, OFS, and Jerry Aull at Ridgecrest.

- The provincial of St. Anthony of Padua Province accepted the proposed *altius moderamen* for the bilingual St. John Vianney Newly Forming Group in Lithia Springs, Ga. Its sponsoring fraternity is Immaculate Conception Fraternity, Jonesboro, Ga. “The purpose of the *altius moderamen* is to guarantee the fidelity of the OFS to the Franciscan charism, communion with the Church and union with the Franciscan family, values which represent a vital commitment for the Secular Franciscans” (General Constitutions, Art. 85.2). Congratulations St. John Vianney, NFG! Welcome to our Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region.
- Carolyn Townes was congratulated for being appointed our national JPIC chair. We were encouraged to use as a meditation, “12 Weeks of Franciscan Peace, October 3 – December 2” which Carolyn authored. She was thanked for this wonderful effort.
- We discussed developing a format for visitations for our region.
- JPIC Commission Report:
 - Carolyn created the Animate Peace Website (<http://animatepeace.blog.com>). On it we will be able to find “Animator Notes,” news, and happenings in the JPIC world.
 - Carolyn also created an Internet radio show called “Animate Peace” and a Facebook page.
 - The “12 Weeks of Franciscan Peace, October 3 – December 2” has gone out to local JPIC animators.
- Hispanic Commission Report:
 - Awilda Guadalupe has completed the Mission Statement for the Hispanic Commission.
 - She has completed the final draft of the video “Ven a Ver,” the Spanish edition of “Come and See.”

- *The Franciscan Journey* is being translated into Spanish.
- Formation Commission Report:
 - The plans for the On-the-Road Area Workshops for 2014 focus on the Rule and its coordination with JPIC. These workshops will be opened up to anyone in the local fraternities.
- Report on the Spiritual Assistant Course:
 - The new SA course will involve a two-year commitment
 - There are developing plans for an ongoing formation program for the classes of 2009 and 2013
 - There are plans to focus on internships for newly commissioned spiritual assistants.

Our Regional Executive Council thanks God for the opportunity to serve our Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region. We hope this recap gives you some idea of what we've been up to.

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.

Regional Notes

Channel of Peace Fraternity, Chattanooga, Tenn., celebrated the Transitus of St. Francis at Shepherd of the Valley Catholic Church in Dunlap, Tenn. Father Mark Scholz, our spiritual assistant, is this church's pastor. We began with a Holy Hour and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The Transitus service was during the Holy Hour. Mass followed and was in Spanish. After Mass we renewed our commitment to the Secular Franciscan Order. We then went to a Mexican restaurant in Dunlap for supper and fellowship.

Barbara Garrison, OFS, minister

T

Twelve members of **St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Elizabeth City, N.C.**, attended a weekend retreat at Avila Retreat Center in Durham, N.C., Oct. 11–13, presented by Sister Bernadette Marie Cappola, OSC. Her topic was "Letters from Assisi: St. Clare's Letters to Agnes."

Eileen Chaney, OFS, minister

T

St. Clare of Assisi Fraternity, Aiken, S.C., hosted the Ninth Annual Clergy Appreciation Dinner, Oct. 21, at St. Mary Help of Christians Church in Aiken. The theme for this year's celebration was "Man of God." We had the opportunity to honor Father Gregory Wilson, Father Ernie Hepner, Father Hugo Ruiz, Deacon Bob Waters, and Deacon Bob Pierce. Father Jeffrey Kirby and Father Don Abbott were not able to attend. The evening began with Mass in the church, celebrated by Father Hepner. Dinner in St. Angela Hall followed. The evening of food, fun, and fellowship is a great way to foster vocations while giving parishioners the chance to show our clergy they are appreciated and that what they are doing works. The men were given shirts and coffee mugs with "Man of God" logos, and other gifts.

Val Cadarr, OFS

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

* confirmed

V+ follow-up visit

Aug. 2-4, 2013 - ARG (chapter of Elections)

2013	Fraternity/Location	V/E	Frat/Pastoral Visitor
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*Sep 14	Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg	E	Julie Lorenz/Willie Guadalupe
*Oct. 9	St. Anthony of Padua	V	Frank Massey/Paula Zanker

REC Retreat, Oct. 4–6, Ridgecrest, NC

NAFRA ,Oct. 15-20, Kansas City, KS

*Nov. 11	Saint Francis of the Living Waters	V	Jerry Rousseau/Joanita Nellenbach
*Nov. 22–23	Saint Francis of the Hills	V	DorothyAnn Rowland/Audrey Binet
*Dec. 6–7	St. Pio of Pietrelcina	V	Jerry/

2014

*Jan. 17–18	San Damiano	V	Jerry (Julie)/
*Feb. 8	Sacred Hearts of Jesus/Mary,	E	Charles Meyer/
*Feb. 14-15	Blessed John Duns Scotus	V	Frank (Marie Stephan)/
*Mar. 9	Channel of Peace	E	Jerry/Fr. Mark Scholz
*Mar. 15-16	Sts. Francis and Clare(EC)	V	Jerry (Barbara Garrison)/Faye
Mar. 15-16	The Spirit of Francis and Clare	V	Julie/Willie
Apr. 12-13	Five Georgia Martyrs	V	DorothyAnn/
Apr. 13	Franciscan Family of Greensboro	E	Marie (Frank) /
May 13	Fraternity of St. Clare	V	Frank/
May 3-4	Saint Clare of Assisi	V	Jerry/
*June 7-8	Fraternity of Brother Francis	V	Charles/
June 8	St. Joseph Cupertino	E	Jerry (Barbara)/Willie
June 14	Crucified Christ	E	DorothyAnn/
*June 28	St. Michael the Archangel	E	Charles/

ARG, Aug. 1–3 (Fr. Albert Haase, OFM, featured speaker)

Sep. 5–6	Our Lady Queen of Angels(EC)	V	DorothyAnn/
Sep. 11	Saint Clare	V	Barbara (Jerry)/
Sep. 13	Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament	E	Frank/Fr. Paul Gabriel
Sep. 12–13	Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg	V	Julie/
Sep. 28	Padre Pio	E	Marie/Fr. Doug Reed
Oct. 19	St. Thomas More	E	Jerry (Marie)/
Oct. 19	Seven Dolours of the BVM	E	Barbara/

NAFRA Oct. 21–26, Lake Dallas, TX

Nov. 2-3	Saint John Vianney (NFG)	V	Jerry
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Writing Franciscan

Exploring a Beloved Icon

***The Franciscan Vision and the Gospel of John: The San Damiano Cross* (Franciscan Heritage Series) by Michael D. Guinan, OFM. Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure University (St. Bonaventure, N.Y., 2006). 76 pp.; paperback, \$12.**

By Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS

Who among Franciscans does not love this icon — the San Damiano Crucifix? We look at it, study it, ponder Christ and the various figures that surround him.

No one knows the identity of the iconographer who created the San Damiano Crucifix, but in *The Franciscan Vision and the Gospel of John*, Father Michael D. Guinan, OFM, shows us how the Gospel of John influenced the artist, who may have been a Syrian monk:

“The painting on the San Damiano Cross, generally placed around 1100 A.D., reflects a Syro-Byzantine style. Byzantine influence had been felt in Italy at least since the 550s when under the emperor Justinian, Ravenna became part of the Byzantine empire; but Syrian monasteries were found in the Umbrian valley (where Assisi is located) in the centuries just before St. Francis. . . . Almost all commentators on the San Damiano Crucifix agree that the key to interpreting its details lies in the Gospel of John.”



The book’s five parts include “The San Damiano Crucifix,” “Francis and the Gospel of John,” and “Creation and the Gospel of John.” It’s helpful to read this book with a San Damiano Crucifix on hand. Readers can also use the CD that comes with the book, and which contains a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation with animation and a PDF file for those who do not have PowerPoint.

The Franciscan Vision can help us to understand and appreciate the San Damiano Crucifix more deeply, for as Father Guinan says:

“In the Eastern Christian tradition, icons are not just decorative art, but have a sacramental function. They are doors opening onto sacred space and time. God is experienced not only as truth and love, but also as beauty. Icons belong to the tradition of

cataphatic prayer, in which a full use of the imagination and senses is put at the service of prayer. An icon is theology in a visually dense way in which everything counts. Each detail can and must be meditated on and prayed over.”

**Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis
Regional Executive Council Roster**

Minister: Jerry Rousseau, OFS

Vice Minister: Paula Zanker, OFS

Secretary: Christine Washington, OFS

Treasurer: Greg Savold, OFS

Formation Director: Sara Nell Boggs, OFS

Spiritual Assistant:

Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv.

Area 1 Councilors

Barbara Garrison, OFS; Julie Lorenz, OFS

AL: Bessemer, Decatur;

GA: Athens, Blairsville, Conyers, Duluth,
Jonesboro; **NC:** Franklin;

TN: Chattanooga, Knoxville, Nashville

Area 2 Councilors

Charles A. Meyer Jr., OFS

DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS

GA: Augusta, St. Simons Island;

NC: Asheville, Charlotte, Hendersonville, Newton;

SC: Aiken, Charleston, Columbia, Greenville,
Hilton Head Island, Spartanburg

Area 3 Councilors

Frank Massey, OFS; Marie Stephan, OFS

NC: Burlington, Elizabeth City, Fayetteville,
Greensboro, Morehead City, Raleigh, Wilmington,
Winston Salem; **SC:** Garden City

Appointed Positions:

Archivist: Sara Nell Boggs, OFS

Communio Editor

Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS

Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation Coordinator

Carolyn Townes, OFS

Youth/Young Adult Fraternal Animator

Vacant

Prayer Ministry (online prayer requests)

Area 1: Ada Winters, OFS

Area 2: Donna Kaye Rock, OFS

Area 3: Marie Stephan, OFS

Fraternity prayer coordinators
submit prayer requests to Area coordinators.

Brother Bill Short, OFM, has mentioned in his writings that Franciscan spirituality is a pre-Pentecost spirituality, which focuses on Jesus and his disciples rather than on the settled community of disciples in Jerusalem after Christ's Resurrection and Ascension. And the San Damiano Crucifix shows us people who were part of Jesus's life. The five figures below Jesus's arms are the Virgin Mary (left), John, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and the centurion.

“An indication exists that our artist, in fact, had in mind the version of the Gospel of John,” Father Guinan writes, for the story of the centurion whose son Jesus cured is found only in the Gospel of John. “Looking over the shoulder of the centurion, we find the face of a young man, his son”

We can also see John's Gospel in how Jesus himself is portrayed on the Crucifix. He is crucified and blood flows down his arms and from his feet. The wound in his side is mentioned only in John's Gospel (John 19:34).

But Jesus is also triumphant. He wears, not a loincloth or a rag, but, Father Guinan notes, “an elegant garment of white with gold trim. Thus we have here a priestly vestment. ... In John 17, just before Jesus and the disciples left the last supper room, Jesus offered one last prayer: ‘And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth’ (John 17:19).” Father Guinan notes that “sanctification (or, as sometimes translated, consecration) is a priestly activity. ... Thus the Jesus of John's Gospel was seen not only as king but also as priest.”

The San Damiano Crucifix also

depicts, at the top, Jesus's ascension. As Father Guinan says, referencing Father Raymond Brown, SS:

“When we think of Jesus' ascension to the Father, we are usually influenced by the approach to this that we find in the Acts of the Apostles, reflected in the liturgy, where the ascension is separated from the resurrection by forty days (Acts 1:3). But this is not the approach of the Gospel of John. In Acts, the ascension is the ‘levitation symbolizing the terminus of the appearances of the risen Jesus.’ For John, the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus are all together, part of one great moment—“the glorification of Jesus in the Father's presence.””

John's Gospel opens with, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Father Guinan helps us to see John's words brought vibrantly and colorfully alive in the San Damiano Crucifix.

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**Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation Report
Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region
Aug. 3–5, 2012
Ridgecrest, North Carolina**

Fraternal Visitation Report

National Spiritual Assistant Friar Stephen Gross, OFM Conv., and National Minister Tom Bello, OFS, conducted the Pastoral and Fraternal Visitation concurrently. All first-person references in the (Fraternal Visitation) report belong to Tom Bello.

Preparatory Information:

The Regional Executive Council (REC) dutifully completed the Pre-Visitation Questionnaire and sent it electronically to the Visitors well before the Visitation. I thank all the members of the REC for their diligent work.

Demographics:

Canonically established fraternities:	29 (+4 from August 2009, the previous Visitation)
Emerging Communities:	3 (-2 from August 2009)
Newly Forming Groups:	0 (-2 from August 2009)
Active Professed brothers and sisters:	462 (+2 from August 2009)
Excused Members:	45
Candidates:	51 (-30 from August 2009)
Inquirers:	56 (+21 from August 2009)
Local Spiritual Assistants:	18 (+1 from August 2009)

Documentation Review:

I reviewed the Minister's Notebook, Secretary's Minutes and Treasurer's Documents with the respective officers. The records that I saw reflected careful stewardship. I give thanks to Jerry Rousseau, Minister; Christine Washington, Secretary; and Greg Savold, Treasurer, for their assistance and hard work.

Spirituality:

In any fraternity at any level, no single aspect can be of more importance than the spiritual vitality of that fraternity. The Pre-Visitation Questionnaire, reflected in the Demographics above, denotes 18 Spiritual Assistants for 29 Canonically established fraternities and 3 Emerging Communities. Thus, almost half have no official Spiritual Assistance: 15 of 33.

The Regional Fraternity itself has only one Spiritual Assistant, a great one, who must journey from Syracuse, New York, to be with the Region.

Persevering effort and prayer must go toward finding "suitable and well-prepared religious for spiritual assistance" for every fraternity or emerging community or newly forming group in the Region (Secular Franciscan Rule, Art. 26). I commend the REC for completing two classes of Spiritual Assistance Training.

I also commend the REC for any efforts to model the importance of their own Regional Fraternity's spiritual vitality; for example, when the REC starts and ends all gatherings with Morning and Evening Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours or when the REC has a retreat after elections for the newly elected or re-elected REC. Would that every local fraternity had a retreat after each election! Finally, I commend the REC for the variety of prayer possibilities offered at the Annual Chapter: Mass, Memorial for Deceased Members, Liturgy of the Hours, and very importantly, silent prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

Formation:

The Pre-Visitation Questionnaire notes that "REC members led the effort to introduce all of our fraternities to the new FUN Manual. The Minister, Formation Director, and the Minister's wife (a local formation director) attended the (initial FUN Manual) workshops in Belleville, Ill. They, along with the Regional Spiritual Assistant, then replicated the material to the REC Members and the commissioned SAs. These then became the core team to go out to the three Areas and replicate the program for all ministers and formation directors in the Region.

We have just completed presenting to all of our fraternities and have personally delivered the message to over 150 of our members (primarily REC, ministers, formation directors, and those with a passion for formation). The local fraternities are now rolling out the program to their local members." I commend this hands-on participation by the REC. It models a positive example to local fraternities' Executive Councils for their hands-on participation in the FUN Manual materials.

Of course, all initial efforts need to be followed up. The FUN Manual is simply too massive to become familiar and comfortable in a single sitting. I also commend the REC for stressing ongoing formation at its Annual Chapter. This also models a positive example to local fraternity servant-leaders who might be tempted to stress "business" over spirituality, formation, and socializing.

Fraternity:

There really can be no fraternity without communication: spirituality focuses on communication with God; formation focuses on transmission of the original Franciscan charism; socializing or community building focuses on interchange between and among individual members. In a Region that encompasses five states, essentially the American Southeast, communication must always be a priority. The Region has an excellent newsletter entitled

“Communio,” which is available electronically and by hard copy. The Region also has an excellent, up-to-date, user-friendly website that presents very well: <http://www.bssfsfo.org/>. The Region is to be commended for its **three-day** Annual Chapter, which is well-planned with ample time for prayer, on-going formation and socializing or community building with fellow sisters and brothers.

Apostolic Activities:

I am not aware that the Regional Fraternity itself has an active, hands-on Regional Apostolate, which the Region is encouraged to consider, but the Region did report in its Pre-Visitation Questionnaire contributions “to the support of children in El Salvador Honduras, Peru (Villa la Paz — operated by Dr. Tony Lazarro, OFS) and sponsor children in the CFCA (Bogota, Columbia).” For all Franciscans, sharing of gifts and talents must be an essential element of who we are.

Final Thoughts, Suggestions and Thanks:

Blessed, soon to be Saint, John Paul II’s Message to the Secular Franciscan Order at the General Chapter on November 22, 2002, bears repeating: “The Church expects from the Secular Franciscan Order, one and only, a great service in the cause of the Kingdom of God in the world of today. The Church desires that your Order should be a model of organic, structural and charismatic unity on all levels, so as to present itself to the world as a community of love.”

We are called to lead, to serve, to nourish, to correct when necessary, the brothers and sisters who depend on us. We can only do this through the grace of God, the grace of our vocations and our understanding of our unique Secular Franciscan call. In Baptism, being born in the Spirit, we are all called to holiness; by our Secular Franciscan profession and our call, in fraternity, to life in the world, we must make Christ present everywhere and every way.

Thus, ours is a collaborative ministry: Regional Minister, REC and the whole Regional Fraternity share individual and collective gifts for the good of all. We all have the responsibility to learn, grow and mature in our Secular Franciscan call so that we might indeed present ourselves to the world as a community of love on the human level as we see reflected in the Blessed Trinity on the divine level.

In God’s great grace, the strength of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region, as in any Region, lies in its good people, their commitment to their vocation, guided by the Holy Spirit, along the footsteps of Sts. Francis and Clare, closer to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In particular, this Region is blessed in having so many good people attend its three-day (Friday to Sunday) Annual Chapter or Regional Gathering. The excellent Gathering Program announced AND NAMED by fraternity the 276 attendees, including 35 commuters. By contrast, several Regions have only one-day Annual Regional Gatherings, and few Regions gather so many members to its Annual Gathering. This added time and large attendance help build the vitality of the Regional Fraternity, and I commend both of these aspects.

The Regional and fraternity leadership that I saw on display at the Visitation Chapter/REC meeting last year was excellent, and I hope they will always support and pray for one another. I further commend the Regional Spiritual Assistant’s dedication to the Secular Franciscan family as a present from God at a significant cost of his time and travel to secure his active presence. Thank you.

The Regional Minister said in conversation that the REC “looks for excuses to gather!” I applaud that spirit and challenge all servant leadership to find ways to increase the frequency of gatherings and stimulate family feeling between and among the individual fraternities. Some ways for local fraternities to share, pray and bond closer include:

1. Shared retreats open to the whole Region and other shared “Franciscan Days” within your areas.

2. Even greater participation at Regional Gatherings (if possible), maybe even Biannual Regional Gatherings including an Annual Regional Retreat, where there is no “business” at all except prayer, formation, and socializing.
3. Sharing of Newsletters.
4. Shared apostolates.

By increased communication and contact, we can all learn from one another and improve our service to each other and to those most in need. This is why I challenge the REC to expand “the community of love” they feel in the REC to all the local fraternities in the Region. I stress this challenge of sharing between and among local fraternities because of the immense talent and generosity I saw displayed at the Annual Chapter. Various individuals and fraternities reported a great sense of community, of outreach, and a rich spiritual life in their local fraternities that did not seem shared by all. I commend and encourage all efforts to share Franciscan charism and spirituality between and among our fraternities, in our local parishes and in the greater world.

Another major challenge to this great Region, as to our great Order, is the aging membership. Concerning this challenge, there is no need to apologize for getting older, as we all are, but we need to find ways not to burn ourselves out and also not to lose any of those who are sick and unable to attend. This challenge can only be met by the continued good will of many good people and by the increased use of social media. Let us never turn our backs on our own, but let’s try to attract more and possibly younger people.

To renew aging membership, we need greater visibility and more vocations. If young and not so young people can see, feel, and hear our “community of love” that we live with brother and sister Secular Franciscans, then we will both make ourselves more visible and will attract new people.

Ways to be more visible include:

1. Continued individual and local fraternity activity in the local parish and local community.
2. Local fraternities might organize a special Franciscan event, like a Greccio Celebration or a Transitus Service, and invite the parish and community.
3. Announced get-togethers for all Secular Franciscans or “Franciscans at heart” in a metropolitan area, like Raleigh, Nashville, or Athens for lunch, say, at noon on every third Tuesday and say all are welcome.
4. Announcements of Open Houses, Open Meetings, or Days of Recollection in parish and diocesan publications and websites.

To avoid burnout and anyone feeling left out, each fraternity, with Regional encouragement, should try to get ALL of its active members more involved. This way leadership and service come from and extend to all.

Ways to involve all include:

1. Have one person in the fraternity act as Communicator or Infirmarian to contact those who haven’t been to recent meetings.
2. Have a shared Mass and/or shared meal, not necessarily at the monthly meeting, where all can break bread together.
3. Have a common Day of Prayer, or common prayers such as for the fraternity or for the sick of the fraternity or for new members that all might pray individually or in community.
4. Have each member of the fraternity take responsibility for an ongoing formation session on a rotating basis.
5. Generate a Family Album of each member of the fraternity so that each one could get to know each other better.

Yes, as with many fraternities across the country, getting our brothers and sisters to put their gifts at the service of the local or Regional fraternity in an elective position remains a constant challenge. Perhaps Ministers and Councils could do role modeling/mentoring by inviting interested brothers and sisters to attend an REC or local fraternity council meeting on occasion.

As the REC is already doing, I urge you to continue to be mindful of the importance of spirituality, formation, leadership development, and fraternal life. When was the last time the Region had a special retreat, workshop, presentation, newsletter, CD, podcast on Secular Franciscan spirituality? On formation? On leadership development? On fraternal life? These are challenges we all face at every level of fraternity. As we share challenges, let us also share suggestions and solutions. Most importantly, let us pray for one another and for all.

Please request your next Pastoral and Fraternal Visitation some time in 2014 so that it might take place in 2015 on your regular three-year cycle. With Friar Stephen Gross, I express my sincere thanks to the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region and their Regional Executive Council for your warm welcome, hospitality, and complete cooperation. I truly appreciate and enjoy being a part of the life of your vibrant and Spirit-filled Region. A special thanks to Friar Stephen Gross for his remarks during this Regional Gathering. I submit this report with him, but its tardiness can only be laid at my feet.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Bello, OFS
National Minister
Fraternal Visitor

Pastoral Visitation Report

The Pastoral Visitor was Stephen Gross, OFM Conv., of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA). The Pre-Visitation Questionnaire and the previous Visitation Report (2009) were made available to the Visitor well in advance of the 2012 Visitation to this Region and both were complete and very helpful to the Visitor. For this the Visitor is very grateful to the Regional Minister Jerry Rousseau, OFS, whose assistance throughout the days of the Regional Chapter was most gracious and hospitable.

The LifeWay Conference Center has been the site for this annual gathering of the Regional leadership for a number of years. It is a most suitable site and it accommodates the fraternal experience of the Brothers and Sisters very well. The schedule for the weekend was very good and the site afforded those gathered with every accommodation for leisure, communal and personal prayer, large and small gathering-sites for presentations and showrooms for displays and sales of Franciscan resources.

The Visitor was present for the meeting of the Regional Executive Council and the gathering of the spiritual assistants. In both cases the Visitor was impressed with the quality of insights shared on every level and offered commentary on the quality of pastoral care which servant-leaders and spiritual assistants are expected to evidence in their service to the Brothers and Sisters. This service/ministry is expected by the Church and is brought to a greater expertise through education, reflections, and insight gained through mutual dialogue and experience. Personal and communal reflection on the sacred scriptures, the OFS Rule and Constitutions and Ritual are regularly necessary in order for the work of the Spirit to use enlightened minds and hearts in the service of the Order, Region and the Church.

Formation, initial and ongoing, is always the means to attain such expertise. The Visitor spoke with the Regional Formation Director, Faye Martin, and was pleased to hear about progress being made, challenges still ever-present, and slow-but-sure recognition of the great

resourcefulness of the FUN Manual for the Region. Faye's dedication to the Order and formation-ministry is evident.

The resource material in the FUN Manual well-serves the formation of those who seek to engage themselves in training to become spiritual assistants. The Visitor welcomed the experience of those who spoke from their internship as newly appointed spiritual assistants. They have discovered inadequacies in their training and addressed themselves to the able service of the Regional Spiritual Assistant, Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv. He and his team will re-found the course for training spiritual assistants with needed supplemental material and perhaps find ways to gather those newly assigned as spiritual assistants to dialogue on specific issues and so to improve the quality of ministry these brothers and sisters must have if they are to serve well the challenging and formative way to transformation through conversion and adult Franciscan living for all the professed of the region.

By way of further recommendation, the Visitor invites the Regional Leadership to consider appointing a regional liturgical coordinator, who, with an assistant or two, would care for the fine coordination and execution of the celebrations of the Liturgy of the Hours and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Good liturgical modeling on the regional level goes a long way to improve liturgy on the local fraternity levels.

The Visitor was very pleased with the progress the Region has experienced through the capable leadership of the Regional Executive Council. Their gratitude for the quality of spiritual assistance which is shared with them by Fr. Linus, OFM Conv., is admirable and truly warranted.

The Region of the Brothers and Sisters of Saint Francis will be soon preparing for their Chapter of Elections next year (2013). The Visitor recommends that the executive council initiates a review of all projects begun at the inception of the term and that they work together to complete those projects this last year of the term. Most importantly is the organization of all books and records to be handed over to the newly elected leadership and the securing of a qualified person who will attend to the financial audit as required by the Constitutions and National Statutes.

Special thanks are offered to Jerry and Madeline Rousseau and Father Linus for their most kind, generous, and fraternal assistance to me as brother and Visitor.

The Visitor asks that copies of this Visitation Report be distributed to all the members of the Executive Regional Council and be discussed.

It was a particular joy for me to be with all of you! May you know the gracious ++Blessings of the Most High!

Fr. Stephen Gross, OFM Conv.
Pastoral Visitor – CNSA

Cc: REC, CNSA, Fraternal Visitor, and NEC (National Executive Council)

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