

# Communio

That All May Be One

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

Spring 2017

## Matins for Easter Sunday from St. Francis's "Office of the Passion"

(Note: Francis composed this from psalms 98, 42, 118, and 96.)

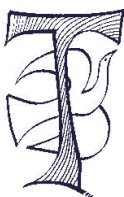


“Sing a new song to the Lord  
for he has done wonderful things.  
His right hand and holy arm  
have sacrificed his beloved Son.  
The Lord has made His salvation known;  
has revealed his justice in the sight  
of the nations.  
On that day the Lord has sent his mercy,  
and at night his song.  
This 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 families of nations,  
Give to the Lord glory and honor  
Give to the Lord the glory due His name.”

*Francis of Assisi, Early Document:  
Volume I, The Saint  
(149)*

### The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate





## Editor's Journal

"Every pilgrimage (to Assisi) reveals a different aspect of Francis's and Clare's lives because of our emotional and spiritual states at a given time. ... Of course, the places of these two saints in and around Assisi beckon us to change, to embrace the gospel, to remember what happened here to Francis and Clare and to us when first we came here on pilgrimage. We draw on these memories; we long to return."

Murray Bodo, OFM, *The Place We Call Home: Spiritual Pilgrimage as a Path to God*, (55–56)

I know what Father Murray means. Ever since I made my first pilgrimage, in 2005 with St. Francis Pilgrimages, I've longed to return, and I have — 10 times. After a number of pilgrimages with groups, I felt confident enough to go on my own.

On April 6, I leave for Assisi once again, but this will be different. I won't be staying in a hotel or religious house for a couple of weeks. I'm renting an apartment for three months. It's on Via Santa Maria delle Rose, St. Mary of the Roses, named for the church on that street.

My apartment is a few minutes away from the Cathedral of San Rufino, where, on Palm Sunday in 1212, Chiara di Favarone di Offreduccio received a palm branch and that night fled her home, next door to the cathedral, to embrace St. Francis's way of life.

Yes, I'll be immersed in the Palm Sunday Mass in the cathedral, but that day I'll also be remembering that on Palm Sunday night more than 800 years ago, Clare of Assisi embarked on a new way of life. Chiara, in Italian, means "clear, bright, light." It was dark as she walked through Assisi's streets and down through the Porta Moiano gate, but she clearly understood what God was calling her to. In embracing that, her life was forever changed.

Assisi beckons me to change, to deepen my Secular Franciscan vocation, to move to a new level in my writing life. I don't know what I'll have discovered by the time I return to North Carolina on June 30. Everything is open.

*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.*

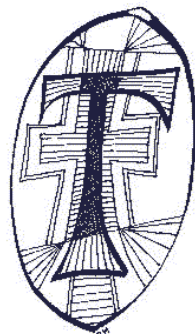
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### CORRECTION

In the winter 2017 *Communio*, the name of the person who took the picture on page 6 was inadvertently misspelled. It should have read Yolanda Fernandes instead of Yolanda Fernandez. The editor regrets the error.

## Minister's Message: Reflecting on our Lenten journey



Lenten greetings of hope and joy in the name of our Lord!

How has your Lenten journey been so far? Are you being transformed by God's grace as you seek to identify with his only begotten Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ? I trust in your conscious desire for your need to be closer to him as you follow the example of St. Francis as prompted by the Holy Spirit to be the person you were created to be.

Perhaps many of you have participated in your local parish Lenten mission or your fraternity day of reflection and are reading a book or two with Lenten reflections to move you forward in your nourishment of your spirit. Whatever you do, I pray that you will be a better instrument of peace and reflect God's love as you go about your daily life.

One book I'm reading each day is *Lent and Easter Wisdom from St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi*, compiled by John V. Kruse. One daily reflection about family from St. Francis's "Later Admonition and Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance," says: "We are spouses when the faithful soul is united by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are brothers, moreover, when we do *the will* of His *Father Who* is in heaven; mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through love and a pure and sincere conscience; and give Him birth through a holy activity, which must shine before others by example" (p. 49).

Kruse includes a reading, Ephesians 3:14–21, which speaks about the love of Christ in God's family. The prayer thanks our Lord for the gift of earthly family and also asks for a deepening relationship with the Holy Spirit. The Lenten action is to examine our consciences as regards relationships with family members (we can include our brothers and sisters in fraternity) and work at improving or healing a relationship.

I hope you have seen the winter 2016 issue of *TAU-USA*, our national publication of our Order. The 2017 NAFRA rheme is "O Breath of God, unite us in action!" Jan Parker, OFS, national minister's article on this theme is a good read to assist us as we all journey together. Plus, there are many other articles to help us in our being Secular Franciscans. If you didn't receive a copy in the mail, you can find it on the website [www.nafra-sfo.org](http://www.nafra-sfo.org).

Save the dates of Aug. 11, 12, and 13 for our Annual Regional Gathering at Ridgecrest Conference Center, N. C. Our guest speaker is Brother Bill Short, OFM, professor of spirituality at the Franciscan School of Theology in Oceanside, Calif. Brother Bill has some great presentations on YouTube; you might want to check his videos there, one being "Spirituality of Francis and Clare."

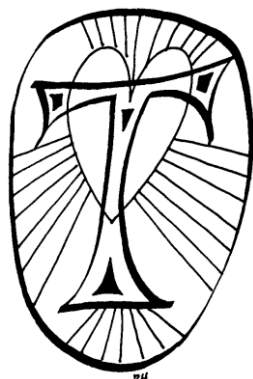
May the rest of your Lenten journey be fruitful and spirit-filled! May the Holy Spirit breathe in you as you seek to do his will! I wish you Easter joy, love, and peace in the name of our Risen Lord!

Peace and all good,  
DorothyAnn

*DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region's minister, is a member of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity, Hilton Head Island, S.C.*

**St. John Vianney, Emerging Fraternity, Lithia Springs, Ga.,  
now meets the first Saturday of each month — 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.  
Meetings are held at St. John Vianney Church,  
beginning in Lyke Chapel, then moving to the St. John Room.**

## From the Heart of the Regional Formation Director



Greetings, Brothers and Sisters.

We are so lucky to have Brother William Short, OFM, as our speaker at this year's Annual Regional Gathering. Aug. 11–13.

I strongly suggest that as a fraternity or individually you take a look at his book *Poverty and Joy: The Franciscan Tradition* which can be obtained through Orbis Books or on amazon.com.

You may also access his video talks on YouTube. Just type "YouTube Bill Short Spirituality of Francis and Clare" into your search engine and several talks will come up.

In addition you can buy CDs or podcasts (each with a study guide) from Now You Know Media, with Brother Bill discussing a variety of topics:

- "Saint Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God,"
- "The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition,"
- "A Franciscan Retreat with Br. Bill Short,"
- "Saints and Animals,"
- "St. Francis of Assisi: A New Way of Being Christian,"
- "The Treasure of a Poor Man: St. Francis of Assisi and Franciscan Spirituality."

I am very excited that Brother Bill is coming to speak to us.

Also, if you haven't already read the *TAU-USA* winter 2016 issue, please do so. The article by Jan Parker, OFS, national minister, discusses NAFRA's (National Fraternity) 2017 theme: "O Breath of God, Unite Us in Action." She stresses that not only should we be reunited as Secular Franciscans but also to contemplate a wider unity of communion.

In addition, the Formation Commission's column, "We Are Called to live the Gospel in Fraternity," would be excellent study for ongoing formation and to lead a discussion in your fraternities on how you can serve God, each other and the community.

If you are not receiving *TAU-USA* for some reason, you can access it on our national website ([www.nafra-sfo.org](http://www.nafra-sfo.org)). Professed and candidates receive it automatically; others can subscribe for \$4.00 per year.

One of my major goals as your regional formation director is for the formation directors to get to know each other, to have a free flow of ideas and support, and to make sure we are all using the same current information for formation from national and the region.

To that end, I set up is a semimonthly ZOOM Communication Room, during which I lead discussions with all local formation directors or their representatives if they cannot attend. Spiritual assistants and members of the regional executive council also attend. Those brothers and sisters who are participating in the ZOOM Rooms have found the talks quite helpful to them and their fraternities.

Our topics so far have been on:

- materials required for a formation director,
- the Regional Multicultural Commission,
- ideas for ongoing formation,
- ideas for "Come and Sees" and for attracting new brothers and sisters.

The format is an opening prayer, introductions, topic and discussion, time for any other

### Zoom Room Meetings

7 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Eastern Time

Second and Fourth

Tuesdays

April 11 and 25

May 9 and 23

June 13 and 27

July 11 and 25

questions on your mind, and closing prayer.

My email is [ambrosedianne6@gmail.com](mailto:ambrosedianne6@gmail.com), and my phone number is 706-338-2402. If you want help in setting up ZOOM, I will walk you through it step by step. Or if you have any questions or comments about anything concerning formation from any brother or sister in the region, feel free to contact me.

I look forward to seeing and hearing from you.

Peace,  
Dianne

*Dianne Ambrose, OFS, is the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis regional formation director. She is a member of San Damiano Fraternity in Athens, Ga.*

**Congratulations!**  
**New Candidate**  
**Fraternity of Brother Francis**  
Newton, N.C.  
Feb. 11  
Paula Coleman, OFS

## Fraternity Celebrates Extraction of St. Francis's Spirit

By Frank Peluso, OFS

“Let us pray. O God, you have raised up men and women outstanding in holiness as examples to your people in following in your footsteps. Grant that we may ever look to the example and teaching of your saints, imitating their virtue, and thus merit to arrive at your heavenly banquet. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

With that prayer on Feb. 26, Padre Pio Fraternity in Raleigh, N.C., began its Extraction of the Spirit of St. Francis.

Ellen Ferrone, OFS; Theresa Flynn, OFS; and Chris Peffley, OFS, guided by the Holy Spirit, drew cards for members of the fraternity: the name of a Franciscan saint, a Franciscan virtue, and a spiritual passage.

The fraternity members present prayed for the Holy Spirit to guide them. Lynn Oeser, OFS, led the fraternity in two songs, with Ralph Benedetto, OFS, playing the guitar.

As each slip was drawn, it was read aloud to the fraternity and then presented to the person whose name the minister called. Thus, we chose these saints as our patrons for this year, with a virtue to imitate and a spiritual passage to meditate upon.

I believe nothing is an accident. All things come to us for a purpose — even the names of saints, sayings, and virtues. The saints have most unusual patronages.

A virtue is a “habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of [one’s] self. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all ... sensory and spiritual powers; [one] pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 1803).

St. Jose Maria Escriva said: “To meditate for a while each day and be united in friendship with God is something that makes sense to people who know how to make good use of their lives. It befits conscientious Christians who live up to their convictions.”

Both St. Francis and St. Clare meditated daily and are our models to emulate.

Finally, it is appropriate for us to imitate the saints, who made it into the kingdom. We thank God for such blessings.

*Frank Peluso, OFS, is vice minister of Padre Pio Fraternity.*

## Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation

### JPIC Happenings for 2017

By Carolyn D. Townes, OFS

#### 2017 Animate Peace Gathering

July 27-30, Renaissance Hotel, St. Louis, Mo.

The gathering begins Thursday evening with 5 p.m. dinner and ends on Sunday at 11 a.m.

In his opening statement of the 2017 World Day of Peace Message, Pope Francis prays that, “especially in situations of conflict, let us respect this, our deepest dignity, and make active nonviolence our way of life.”

Our holy Rule tells us to be mindful that we are all bearers of peace, and as such, we are called to continual conversion of heart and mind.

During our Animate Peace Gathering, we will learn the art of nonviolent communication and mindful listening as paths to conflict resolution and nonviolent living.

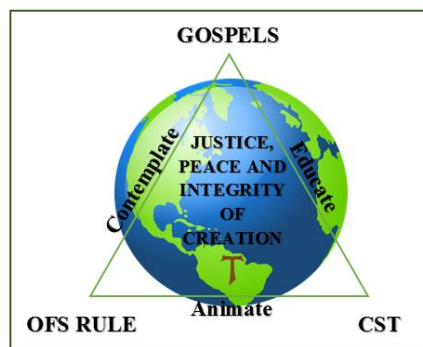
The cost for conference, hotel, and meals is \$325 for a shared room, \$480 for a private room, for those registering by May 15. Commuter cost is \$165 for conference and meals. Costs will increase by \$40 after the May 15 deadline. A \$100 deposit is due at time of registration. Full payment due by June 15, 2017

All are welcome but space is limited.

For more information, please contact Carolyn Townes at ctownes26 @ hotmail.com.

SPIRITUALITY

FORMATION



FRATERNITY

APOSTOLATE

#### The 2017 H2O Project

Article 15 of our holy Rule states: “Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.”

One such courageous initiative is our annual Lenten H2O Project, an international project to promote Christian solidarity, advocacy, and financial support for poor communities in developing nations who have no access to clean drinking water.

In solidarity with our brothers and sisters who do not even have clean water to drink, we increase our connections and responsibility to poor communities and God’s Creation. You can choose to give individually or collectively with your families, fraternities or faith communities.

Please send all contributions to the H2O Project 2017, in care of Jerry Rousseau, 82 Kim St., Blairsville, Ga. 30512-2345. **Make the check payable to NAFRA**, with H2O Project in the memo.

The recipient of the H2O Project 2016 donations was To The Nations, a missionary project by our brother Stephen Smith, OFS, of Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity, Blairsville, Ga. Stephen leads mission trips to Africa and Latin America to perform spiritual works of mercy; other Secular Franciscans in our Region have joined him on some of the mission trips. His mission serves a three-fold purpose: Secular Franciscans in a twinning project to provide clean water to those who do not have it.

How great is our God!

*Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region’s JPIC animator, is a member of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity, Hilton Head Island, S.C.; the National JPIC Commission; the International Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation; and the Franciscan Action Network Commission.*



## Congratulations — New Councils



**Sacred Hearts of  
Jesus and Mary Fraternity,**  
Hilton Head Island, S.C., Feb. 11  
Treasurer: Bill Trecartin, OFS (left)  
Formation Director:  
Judy Haupt, OFS;  
Minister: Angela Cavalluzzi, OFS;  
Vice Minister:  
Virginia MacKenzie, OFS;  
Secretary: Daly Gutierrez, OFS;  
Councilor: Maureen Cronin, OFS;  
Councilor: Robert Rosa-Cruz, OFS  
(Photo by Dian McCarthy, OFS)

### **Bl. John Duns Scotus Fraternity**

Garden City, S.C., Feb. 18  
Minister: Barbara Umpleby, OFS  
Vice Minister: Paul Di Stefano, OFS  
Secretary: Karen Poirier, OFS  
Treasurer: Kathleen Barnes, OFS  
Formation Director: Marguerite O'Brien, OFS  
Councilor: Betty Lou Calley, OFS  
Councilor: Dottie Evans, OFS

### **Channel of Peace Fraternity**

Chattanooga, Tenn., March 12  
Minister: Gerri Toeller, OFS  
Vice Minister: Gail Campbell, OFS  
Secretary: Mechtild Boles, OFS  
Treasurer: Anne Hammers, OFS  
Formation Director: Alice Lenning, OFS  
Councilor: Karen Ferraraccio, OFS  
Councilor: Barbara Garrison, OFS  
Councilor: Faye Martin, OFS

## Newly Professed — Congratulations!

### **The Five Georgia Martyrs Fraternity**

St. Simons Island, Ga., Nov. 10  
Patty Bergeron, OFS; Larry Lynch, OFS; Georgia Ann Markley, OFS



### **Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Fraternity**

Burlington, N.C., Jan. 28  
Maria Pimentel, OFS, and Bill Walker, OFS, with  
Father Paul Lininger, OFM Conv., pastor of Our  
Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church  
in Burlington and celebrant for the Rite of  
Profession.

## Making Our Mark!

By Carole King, OFS

Have you ever noticed that animals will mark what they consider their territory?

When I take my little dog out for her walk, I have noticed how (as all dogs do) she will sniff around here and there, being in my opinion, very particular as to where she chooses to “make her mark.”

“OK, Pippy, you own that twig,” I sometimes jokingly say. Or, “That’s your mailbox now.”

For some reason as we were walking one morning, going through our same routine, it occurred to me that in life, we *all* leave a mark; not only in the physical world but in our spiritual life as well.

Each day, as I “walk” through this life, I must become aware and ask myself where am I leaving my mark? What am I owning with that mark? If I participate in gossip — hurting or listening to another hurt someone’s reputation — I have left my mark and now “own” it. Am I willing to leave my mark in dishonesty, maybe a little white lie to cover my mistake? Do I want to own the uncharitable spirit by being unkind? Each mark we make in our spiritual life is reflected in our souls.

Negative marks leave a negative imprint and, if practiced consistently, that imprint becomes part of one’s character. Conversely, positive marks will create a positive imprint, and also become a part of one’s character. So perhaps, like Pippy, I need to be very particular about where I want to leave my mark.

When it comes to daily choices, take a pause in the heat of the moment before responding and decide if you want to leave your mark through virtue or through a worldly spirit that cries out in anger: “An eye for an eye!” Difficult? You bet! Impossible? Of course not, for with God, all things are possible.

The prologue to our Rule tells us: “Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, because ‘the spirit of the Lord will rest upon them....’”

This is where we find the strength to practice the virtue that the Gospel demands. Our Rule emphasizes that, as Secular Franciscans, we are “to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people”(Art. 4). We are told to study the Gospel, learn how to translate it into our own lived experience.

We accomplish this daunting task within our union with the Church (Art. 6), as we “let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all [we] are and do” (Art. 8), and in imitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, our mother, protectress, and advocate (Art. 9).

When that awesome day comes and I stand face to face with my Beloved in heaven, will I want him to see where I left my mark?

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





**BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS REGION CALENDAR  
SCHEDULE OF VISITATIONS (V) AND ELECTIONS (E)  
April 2017 through January 2018**

\* confirmed                      V+ follow-up visit                      (observers in parentheses)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Fraternity/Group &amp; Location</b>	<b>V   Fraternal/Pastoral Visitors E   Presider/Ecclesial Witness</b>
Apr. 19–20	Five Georgia Martyrs, St. Simons Island, GA	V Janet Hulshof (DorothyAnn Rowland)/Audrey Binet
May 5–6	St. Clare of Assisi, Aiken, SC	V Janet Hulshof (Lori Moran)/Willie Guadalupe
May 8–9	Fraternity of St. Clare, Winston-Salem, NC	V DorothyAnn Rowland (Bob Pearson)/Pat Wilkerson

**May 19–20: Regional Executive Council Meeting, Spartanburg, SC**

June 10	Crucified Christ, N. Charleston, SC	E Janet Hulshof/Margaret Horan
June 10–11	Fraternity of Brother Francis, Newton, NC	V Sara Nell Boggs/Audrey Binet
June 11	St. Joseph Cupertino, Bessemer, AL	E Barbara Garrison/Willie Guadalupe
June 24	St. Michael the Archangel, Spartanburg, SC	E Janet Hulshof/Audrey Binet

**Aug. 11–13: Annual Regional Gathering, Ridgecrest, NC  
Br. William Short, OFM, featured speaker**

Sept. 8–9	Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg, Blairsville, GA	V /Willie Guadalupe
Sept. 9	Blessed Sacrament, Burlington, NC	E Carmen Madero (Bob Pearson)/Pat Wilkerson
Sept. 9	St. Clare of Assisi, Aiken, SC	E Janet Hulshof/Audrey Binet
Sept. 19–20	St. Anthony of Padua, Fayetteville, NC	V (Carolyn Peduzzi)/Pat Wilkerson

**Sept. 26–Oct. 1: National Executive Council Chapter, Mount St. Francis, Ind.  
Host: Holy Trinity Region**

Oct. 11–12	St. Clare, Asheville, NC	V Sara Nell Boggs/Joanita Nellenbach
Oct. 14–15	Spirit of Francis and Clare, Conyers, GA	V /Willie Guadalupe

**See CALENDAR, page 10**

## CALENDAR, from page 9

Nov. 12 St. Thomas More, Wilmington, NC

V Carolyn Peduzzi/Pat  
Wilkerson

## 2018

Jan. Date TBD Padre Pio, Raleigh, N.C.

E /Joanita Nellenbach

## The St. Francis Option: Prayer *and* Active Ministry

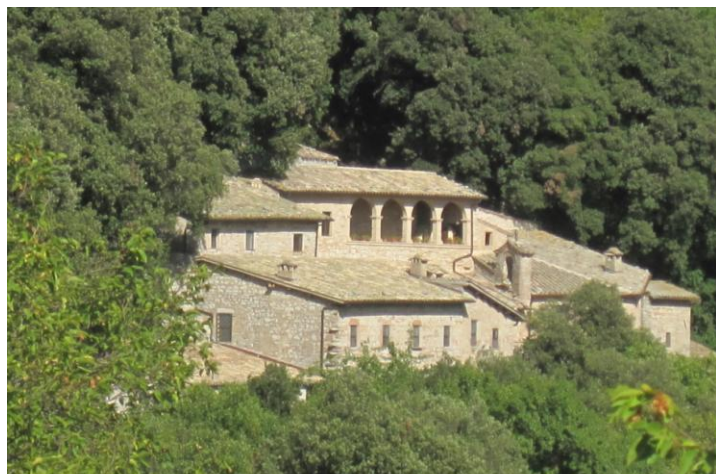
By Bret Thoman, OFS

You may have heard about a new book just released: *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* by Rod Dreher. It draws on the example of St. Benedict, who fled the licentiousness and decadence of Rome in the early sixth century to live in the caves as a hermit. He later began guiding others in the monastic life, wrote a rule, and founded numerous monasteries. While western society entered into a centuries-long period of decline, religious life flourished within the monasteries as later Benedictine monks safeguarded not only the Christian life but also culture.

In his book, Dreher calls on today's Christians to similarly retreat from society. As our own culture has deviated ever more from Judeo-Christian values and is increasingly hostile to the Church, he argues, now is, once again, the time for Christians to withdraw from society and form strong, faith-based communities. This would "safeguard" the faith and eventually lead to a Christian renaissance and a re-evangelization of our culture.

But does God really want Christians to withdraw from the world? Is there another way? What about a "St. Francis Option"?

Francis, early in his conversion, also felt the need to leave Assisi and retreat from society.



**The Carceri, above Assisi on Mount Subasio, looks different than it did when St. Francis prayed there but still invites everyone to spend time in prayer and contemplation. (Photo by Bret Thoman, OFS)**

According to Thomas of Celano, Francis's first biographer, Assisi was no less decadent than ancient Rome. Thomas described medieval Assisian society with words like: "shameful and detestable; lust and wantonness; every kind of debauchery; wickedness; sin" (*First Life*, chapter 1).

Therefore, with a companion, Francis retreated to a cave on the outskirts of Assisi, probably to the hermitage of the Carceri, or possibly near the ruined church of San Damiano.

Up in the mountains, at the Carceri, Francis found great solace away from the vices of the people. On the mountaintop, Francis surely felt freedom, as well as the power and

strength of God — the God who revealed himself as sacred, the Creator, lawgiver, mysterious, omniscient, and almighty. For Francis, the mountains were like the vertical beam of the cross — the part that pointed up: transcendence.

It is clear how much Francis loved the mountain hermitages. Later, Thomas of Celano would write that Francis frequently chose solitary places in the caves, where he could direct his mind

completely to God: “Thus he would direct all his attention and affection toward the one thing he asked of the Lord, not so much praying as becoming totally prayer” (Celano, *Second Life*, 95). The hermitages were so important to Francis that he even wrote a rule describing how the friars should live while there.

In the mountain hermitages, Francis appears to have exercised the “Benedict Option.”

However, like Peter — who wished to build “three tents” and stay on the mountaintop of Tabor (cf. Matthew 17:4) — Francis was not to remain in permanent retreat. And here the Benedict Option for Francis ends. Francis, like Peter, had to descend, once again, back down to the “valley,” where his work would be carried out. God had another mission for Francis.

After Francis returned from the mountain, God revealed how he wished him to live. Francis soon took on life as a penitent: he renounced his possessions, rebuilt churches, and begged for alms. His conversion (referred to as his “penance” in his “Testament,” 4) fully took place, however, when he embraced a leper, the most marginalized of medieval society.

Soon others began following him. They slept in animal sheds and did odd jobs during the day. When there were 12, they went to Rome, where Pope Innocent III granted approval for their way of life. Thus, they began traveling, preaching, and begging for alms; those among them who were priests heard confessions and celebrated Mass. All the while, they continued serving lepers and other marginalized people.

In his work with the people, Francis embraced that other aspect of Christian spirituality: immanence. For the cross has two beams — vertical, as well as horizontal. Down in the valley, Francis would live out the horizontal imperative of serving others.

The charism given to Francis was one of direct interaction with the people; it was not one of retreat or flight. However — and this is very important — Francis continued to return to and withdraw in the mountains for retreat and prayer throughout his life.

Prayer was his connection to God to give him that energy necessary to rededicating himself to the active life. Like Jesus, Francis would leave his retreat and go back down to the valley to serve the lepers, the community, the Church.

In this alternating back and forth between the mountains and valley, Francis was really walking in the pathway of much bigger footsteps. For it was Christ himself who alternated between praying in solitude and serving people. Although Christ “often withdrew to the wilderness to pray” (Luke 5:16), he always returned to the valley, where he preached, healed, performed miracles, and taught.

Francis’s life would not be prayer alone or ministry alone; it would be both the contemplative and active life, alternating between the mountains and the valleys. It was transcendent, as well as immanent. Francis’s mountains would be Mount Sinai as well as the Mount of Beatitudes. Never the first or the second but both; one in fulfillment of the other.

And this is what I call the “St. Francis Option.”

The “St. Francis Option” involves going up: being on the mountaintop alone with the transcendent God in prayer and hermitage to receive strength. As well as going down: being in the valley to serve the lepers and preach in the cities. It challenges us to discern the delicate



**This statue of Francis washing a lepers foot stands beside the Santuario (Sanctuary) di Rivo Torto, the church on the site of the first home of Francis and his disciples. The church is near the leper colony where Francis and his brothers ministered.**

balance between the contemplative life and the active life. It keeps our gaze fixed on God above without neglecting our feet and hands in this world below. It places us in the roles of both

Martha and Mary. It gives us hope in eternal life without neglecting the Gospel call to those suffering and in need of the Good News we have received. It allows for receiving as well as giving.

During these uncertain times in our culture, may the St. Francis Option offer us guidance, as well as hope.

*Bret Thoman, OFS, is a member of Immaculate Conception Fraternity in Jonesboro, Ga., and director of St. Francis Pilgrimages.*

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

**Minister:** DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS

**Vice Minister:** Carmen Madero, OFS

**Secretary:** Barbara Garrison, OFS

**Treasurer:** Ken Brooke, OFS

**Formation Director:** Dianne Ambrose, OFS

**Spiritual Assistant:**  
Search In Progress

**Area Councilors**

**Area 1**

**Lori Moran, OFS; Lannie Newman, OFS**

**AL:** Bessemer;

**GA:** Athens, Blairsville, Conyers, Duluth, Jonesboro, Lithia Springs; **TN:** Chattanooga, Knoxville, Nashville

**Area 2**

**Sara Nell Boggs, OFS; Janet Hulshof, OFS**

**GA:** Augusta, St. Simons Island;

**NC:** Asheville, Charlotte, Hendersonville, Newton;

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

**Area 3**

**Bob Pearson, OFS; Carolyn Peduzzi, OFS**

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

**SC:** Garden City

**Archivist:** Sara Nell Boggs, OFS

**Communio Editor**

**Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS**

**Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation Animator**

**Carolyn D. Townes, OFS**

**Multicultural Commission Chair**

**Willie Guadalupe, OFS**

**Youth/Young Adult Fraternal Animator**

**Position Available**

**Prayer Ministry (online prayer requests)**

**Area 1:** Lori Moran, OFS

**Area 2:** Dorothy Huebner, OFS

**Area 3:** Bob Pearson, OFS

Fraternity prayer coordinators submit prayer requests.

**Secular Franciscan Websites**

Brothers and Sisters of  
St. Francis Region — [www.bssfsfo.org](http://www.bssfsfo.org)

National Fraternity of the Secular  
Franciscan Order in the United States  
(NAFRA)

[www.nafra-sfo.org](http://www.nafra-sfo.org)

Consilium Internationale Ordo  
Franciscanus Saecularis (CIOFS)  
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Franciscan Order  
[www.ciofs.org](http://www.ciofs.org)

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