

Communio

That All May Be One

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

Fall 2012

Oct. 19 Statement of the U.S. Secular Franciscan Order, in a national gathering from Oct. 16 to Oct. 21, 2012, in Denver, Colorado, addressed to the U.S. Presidential Candidates, President Barack Obama and Gov. Mitt Romney.

We encourage the winner of the presidential election, as well as other leaders of government and business, to approach politics and the marketplace with the foundational premise that all of creation, especially human life, has dignity and value.

That sets the stage for recognizing that: people with disabilities have value, disabilities are a normal part of life, we should assume people with disabilities want to be meaningfully engaged in society, and that their participation contributes significantly to the fabric of society.

Further, this vision seeks to preserve the dignity of a wide range of people — persons such as those with Down syndrome or other disabilities, victims of human trafficking, elderly persons in declining health, the poor among us, refugees who come across the border, homeless children everywhere.

Recognizing the value of people is not just an issue of charity. It is an issue of justice. This is

In This Issue

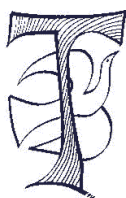
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counter to today's cultural notion that some people are disposable — are despised because they're costly, inconvenient, or require too much time. This involves everything from aborting babies thought to be less than perfect, to organ donation pressure, to so-called "compassionate" death.

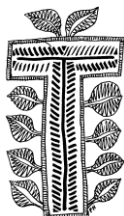
The national body of the U.S. Secular Franciscan Order, gathered in Denver, Colorado, and representing 13,400 members, is committing the Order to prayer and activity around the issues confronting our national leaders in 2013 and beyond (especially during the American Catholic Church's Year of Faith). Our National Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission will coordinate action items for the 30 Secular Franciscan regions across the United States.

The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate





Editor's Journal: Living the OFS life

There we were in a chapel at San Damiano on Oct. 3. Half the 22 pilgrims in our group from St. Francis Pilgrimages were Secular Franciscans, some from our Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region.

Before Mass began that morning, Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv., our regional spiritual assistant, said that the Secular Franciscans would be renewing their commitment. He read the account of Francis telling the priest at San Damiano that he (Francis) would keep giving donations to the church so that the lamp could be kept burning all the time.

In his homily Father Linus said that our commitment was a light kept burning before the San Damiano Crucifix. After the homily, we stood and renewed our commitment:

"I (we all said our names), by the grace of God, renew my baptismal promises and consecrate myself to the service of his Kingdom. Therefore, in my secular state I promise to live all the days of my life the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Secular Franciscan Order by observing its rule of life. May the grace of the Holy Spirit, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and our holy father St. Francis, and the fraternal bonds of community always be my help, so that I may reach the goal of perfect Christian love."

"If you truly live all that, you will inherit eternal life," Father Linus said when he blessed us after our recommitment.

You'll find a lot in this issue about living Secular Franciscan life. Jerry Rousseau's Minister's Message (p. 3) looks at our call in light of the Year of Faith. There's a prayer (p. 5) to help us live our vocation. Kathy Taormina's article (p. 8) challenges us to make choices that ensure OFS is always our priority. In the special section on our Annual Regional Gathering (pp. 12-19), you'll read comments from our fraternal and pastoral visitors and our regional spiritual assistant that call us to accountability for what we do with this wonderful vocation to which the Holy Spirit has called us.

In the Gospel reading for Nov. 4, a scribe asks Jesus, "Which is the first of all the commandments?"

"Hear, O Israel!" Jesus replies. "The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these."

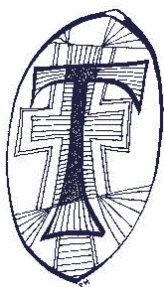
"What's the most important word in that reading?" my pastor, Father Richard Benonis, asked.

"Love," several people called out.

"I think the most important word is 'hear,'" Father said, "because we must take the time to hear what God is saying to us."

It occurred to me then that if you add the letter "t" to "hear" it becomes "heart." When we hear something and take it to heart, it becomes part of who we are. In what way will we hear what is written in this issue?

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: Preparing for Year of Faith

The Year of Faith, declared by Pope Benedict XVI, began on Oct. 11 and concludes on Nov. 24, 2013, the solemnity of Christ the King. Pope Benedict calls the Year of Faith “a summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord.”

He further states that “our task during the Year of Faith is to discover anew the content of the faith that is professed, celebrated, lived, and prayed. ... In this way, members of the Church will be credible and joy-filled witnesses, capable of leading those many people who are seeking it to the door of faith.”

In reflecting on this call to be a credible and joy-filled witness, I am reminded of St. Paul's words to the Church at Ephesus: “I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph 4: 1–3). St. James tells us: “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice” (Jas 3:16).

Each of us has received a call to this vocation and has professed to live this way all the days of our lives. What type of disciples are we called to be? “They have been made living members of the Church by being buried and raised with Christ in baptism; they have been united more intimately with the Church by profession. Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words” (Rule, Art. 6).

In the 10 days leading to and including the feast of the Guardian Angels, we have heard from three of the authors the story of Jesus placing a child in the midst of the disciples (Mark 9: 34–37, Luke 9: 46–48, Matthew 18: 1–5). This child that Jesus sets before the disciples is a teacher for us. “Disciple” comes from a Latin verb that means “to learn.” Like a child, those called to discipleship are always learners. We study Jesus' life and words: “Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel” (Rule, Art. 4).

We seek to follow his ways, especially the incomprehensible way of the cross (it would take the first disciples a long time to understand that Jesus' fundamental service was to choose the humiliation of his Passion and shameful death in order to deliver us to life eternal). “Let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to him even in difficulties and persecutions” (Rule, Art. 10).

As learners we are called to be essentially humble, aware of how much we do not yet know and how much those around us have to teach us (especially our brothers and sisters in fraternity). “Witnessing to the good yet to come and obliged to acquire purity of heart because of the vocation they have embraced, they should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters” (Rule, Art. 12).

In the Eucharist, let us empty ourselves of pride, ambition, and all self-seeking, that we may be filled with the life Christ won for us through the cross. “The faith of Saint Francis, who often said ‘I see nothing bodily of the Most High Son of God in this world except His most holy body and blood,’ should be the inspiration and pattern of their eucharistic life” (Rule, Art. 5).

During this Year of Faith, may the Lord increase our faith, enable us always to live by faith, and make us radiant witnesses of faith to the world. “Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others” (Rule, Art. 19).

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.



REC election scheduled for 2013 Annual Regional Gathering

By Nancy Brochu, OFS, and DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS
Nominating Committee co-chairpersons

Once again, as we do every three years, our Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region will hold elections for members of our Regional Executive Council at our Annual Regional Gathering. The next ARG is set for Aug. 2–4.

Watch for the official Notice of Elections and Call for Nominations in the winter 2013 issue of *Communio*, to be published in mid-January.

It was given
to St. Francis by
God ever to
aspire to what

was great and best as St. Francis saw it at the time. As we walk our Franciscan journey, may the Holy Spirit and the example of St. Francis help and guide us to be open to serving our brothers and sisters as servant leaders when God speaks to us in the quiet repose of our prayer and contemplation.

Our heavenly Father is still molding us into the creations he wants us to be. Trust in his guidance and promptings. Listen to the voice within speaking to you. Do not be afraid! Our Trinitarian God provides us with what we need to accomplish his will through us since we are open to daily conversion.

As we “begin to do good,” as St. Francis would say, we can ask God to ready our hearts and minds for the process of electing the servant leaders *he* wants. The servant leader God wants may be you. “Just so, the Son of man did not come to be served but to serve ...” (Matthew 20:28)

We pray God’s blessings of peace, love, and joy for each of you.

Nancy Brochu, OFS, is spiritual assistant to and a member of St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity, Bessemer, Ala.

DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, is an Area 3 councilor and a member of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity, Hilton Head Island, S.C.

Prayer for Selection of a New Council

O my dear GOD,
we pray for the guidance of
your most Holy Spirit
as we review in our minds
the personal attributes
required by the various
council positions.

Illumine for us our own strengths,
and those of our fellow members,
that YOU may inspire us to
recognize who it is YOU desire
to serve YOUR fraternity.

Dear Francis, we also ask for
your guidance

as we seek a new council.

Lead us to those who will help us
to grow in your virtues — humble,
polite, peacemakers, and
ardent lovers of
our crucified Lord.

Help each of us to discover
“what is ours to do.”

Not our will, Lord,
but your will be done.

Amen.



Formation of Self is Both Communal and Personal

By Faye Martin, OFS

As John and I were getting ready for an extended vacation, our oldest granddaughter asked us what we were going to do all that time by ourselves. It was the first vacation in a long time without children or grandchildren. Even though it did seem a bit selfish, we knew we were going to spend the much-needed time for ourselves.

I packed a couple of Franciscan books along with my Bible, *Liturgy of the Hours*, Rosary, and *Magnificat*. Besides having uninterrupted time together, we decided it would be a perfect time for each of us to do a personal retreat. Instead of setting an agenda, I just decided to begin as usual and see what the Holy Spirit had in mind for me. Best decision I made.

The only item on my to-do list was to complete a homework assignment for the OFS Spiritual Assistant's Course that I am taking. Some of the questions which seemed difficult became an opportunity to reflect upon what I thought and what I would do with the knowledge. There were no distractions in my life with plenty of time.

While we were in Hilton Head, we attended the Transitus with the members of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity. As we were leaving the Transitus, there was a young family praying in the last row. They had five sons. We could not help but stop and visit with them. The youngest were twins who were in "cradles" on the floor next to them. The children were beautiful. I know it must be a struggle for them, but all I could think is how truly blessed they are. They became the "face" for young couples with children in our society who are in my prayers.

My extended time spent in prayer, reflection, and my response to what the Holy Spirit is placing on my heart renewed my spirituality and strengthened our relationship. My heart was overwhelmed with gratefulness to God and for our Catholic Church, People (especially my brothers and sisters in the OFS), and Creation. Such times away can remind us that our Franciscan way of life may have become more pharisaical than spiritual. I found I was lacking our Spirituality Pillar — by trying to get through my day without spending adequate time in prayer and communion with God — *to make strong the Spirit of God within me*.

There is no way that we can attain the holiness we seek through our vocation without the personal, daily attention to our own soul and our intimate relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. As Franciscans, we seek to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit and allow him to conform us into the image of Jesus

Prayer for Living the Call The Secular Franciscan Way of Life

God of All Good,
you have blessed us with the gift of Francis
and our call to the Franciscan way of Life.

But we are frail
and often lacking in understanding
of what this truly means to our life.
We pray, good and gracious Lord,
that you will guide us in how to live our call
in our interior life,
our family life,
our fraternal life,
our Church life,
in the marketplace,
the workplace,
and the quiet places of our hearts,
in your will, not our own,
always in the footsteps of your servant
Francis
toward Christ, the Son,
praying to be Spirit-filled.
Amen!

Christ through daily penance, amending our lives to that of Christ and reconciling ourselves to Christ. May we love God, show it by the way we love one another, and walk humbly with our Lord daily.

Even though Chattanooga has a Catholic Church with a beloved pastor, the Channel of Peace Fraternity, family, friends, new people to meet, and my favorite place in the world, my back porch, it was hard to leave such an undisturbed, peaceful life. But, I knew in my heart that home is where we fully engage our Franciscan way of life.

The Four Pillars of the BSSF Region embodies our OFS Rule. As a professed Secular Franciscan, reflect upon The Four Pillars: Spirituality, Formation, Fraternity, Apostolate. Which of these Pillars is lacking in your life and in need of your nurturing?

Faye Martin, OFS, is regional formation director for the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region; she is a member of Channel of Peace Fraternity in Chattanooga, Tenn.

Fraternity, parish celebrate Transitus of St. Francis

By Patricia Paton, OFS

Down the center aisle of the darkened church, Francis's friars carried him on a litter. It was Oct. 3 and Francis was dying.

The friars placed the litter, surrounded by lighted candles, in front of the altar and a large backdrop of the Porziuncola as some 350 Anglo and Hispanic parishioners in Immaculate Conception Church in Hendersonville, N.C., watched.

Accompanied by narration, the friars, played by Randy Hair, OFS, minister of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity, and members of the parish youth group, mimed the passing of St. Francis, portrayed by youth-group member Reece Kelsch. Lady Jacoba and her attendant arrived with almond sweets, candles, and a shroud.



At the moment of Francis's death, one of the friars knelt and raised the saint's hand. The congregation gasped to see the wound of the stigmata.

Diane Salkewicz, OFS, read a meditation in English; Brother Lombardo D'Auria, OFM Cap., presented a meditation in Spanish. Then, as the "Canticle of the Creatures" was read, photos of Brother Sun, Sister Moon and the other elements of creation flashed on the sanctuary walls.

Immaculate Conception's Capuchin Franciscan friars — Father Martin Schratz, pastor; Father Robert Williams, parochial vicar; and Brother Lombardo D'Auria, pastoral associate — renewed their vows. Members of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity renewed their commitment.

The service, which had been directed by Father Robert with assistance from Randy Hair, concluded with everyone singing the "Salve Regina" in Latin.

Following the Transitus, St. Francis of the Hills hosted a reception in the church's St. Francis Gathering Room. Light refreshments were offered, including almond cookies reminiscent of St. Francis's favorite almond sweet.

Patricia Paton, OFS, is treasurer of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity.



Canonical Establishment
The Spirit of Francis and Clare Fraternity
September 9, 2012
at
St. Pius X Church, Conyers, Ga.

Father John Koziol, OFM Conv., pastor of St. Philip Benizi Church in Jonesboro was celebrant at the Mass and presider for the canonical establishment. Father John Kieran, pastor of St. Pius X Church welcomed the new Fraternity.

Jerry Rousseau, OFS, minister of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region, assisted in ceremony.

Eight of the Fraternity's founding members were present:
Charlotte Alesi, OFS; Joel Alesi, OFS; Karen Corsetti, OFS;
Janie McIsaac, OFS; Carol Taken, OFS; Mickie Wescott, OFS;
Phil Wescott, OFS; Patti Wilson, OFS.

Also attending:
Cricket Aull, OFS, spiritual assistant to the Fraternity;
Paul Jewel, inquirer;
Olivia McEachren, youth and honorary Franciscan.
More than 40 Secular Franciscans
from fraternities in Georgia and South Carolina also attended.

A reception was held after the Mass.
Rose Campbell, OFS, representing the minister of Immaculate Conception, the sponsoring Fraternity, presented a beautiful picture of St. Francis and St. Clare to the new Fraternity.



“YES, THIS IS WHAT I WANT!”

By Kathy Taormina, OFS

*This [the Fraternity] should be the **privileged place** for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members” (OFS Rule, Article 22, emphasis).*

*“Insertion into a local fraternity and **participation in fraternal life is essential** for belonging to the Secular Franciscan Order” (OFS General Constitutions, Article 53.3).*

*There is no doubt here that Profession **will be a sacrifice if it is taken seriously**. ... These are the things that should make a Secular Franciscan think twice before absents themselves from Fraternity gatherings, Regional events, not accepting nominations for various offices, etc. Lest we are left to our own devices in living out the*

Profession, we should remember that in the act of making those promises, we hold out our hands so that the Lord may take hold of them. We will never be alone on that journey. (For Up To Now: Foundational Topics for Initial Formation [FUN], “Profession and the Secular Franciscan, pp. 11–12).

Editor’s Note: Emphasis added by author in above quotes.

Whether we were professed under the Pauline OFS Rule of 1978, or earlier under the Leonine Rule, one thing is constant: **we were professed into a fraternity** to live out our Secular Franciscan vocation. We were not professed to live our lives on our own, but by our Profession we have joined a Fraternity, a family, who will always be there to journey with us on our path to God.

From the quotes above, most of you can guess what my topic for writing is today! I would like to discuss fraternal life. Do you believe that your Fraternity is a “**privileged place**” where you gather with your Fraternity members to build the Kingdom of God? Do you believe your “**participation in fraternal life is essential**”?

In this day of speed and technology, our Profession calls us to a more meaningful way of life. A life full of employment, children or grandchildren, commitments to others, and promises to keep. Because we Secular Franciscans live out our vocations in the secular world where God placed us, we are forever into the nitty-gritty of life circumstances and we are faced with never-ending choices of happenings that take up, and make up, our world. As I have heard before, we live in the messiness of the world.

But that’s just it, isn’t it? CHOICES. We prioritize, shift, arrange and rearrange the choices in our lives to suit us best. Where is the priority of your Profession, and your Fraternity? Is it on the bottom of the “when I have time” list, or is it near the top of the “in your will, Father” list?

No one forced us to make those promises during our Profession. We clearly stated when asked, “This is what I want!” We asked our Lord to accept us as a sacrifice, we asked our Church to accept our promises, and we asked our Fraternity to accept us as fellow journeyers on the road to God’s Kingdom.

If this is all true, then why are we too busy to attend Fraternity gatherings? Or we attend, but leave early? Why do we not prepare for the ongoing-formation session and think that we can “just wing it”? Or why are we too involved with other groups to prepare for our gathering by doing the readings or questions for the formation session? Why are we too inexperienced to run

for office when asked? Why is it so easy for us to come up with excuses for not fulfilling our duties and obligations as Secular Franciscans?

We as a Fraternity, and as an Order, need to refocus. We need to refocus on why we Professed into the Secular Franciscan Order, what that Profession means to us, and how we are going to live out that Profession in our lives.

It is not an easy task. It is certainly not a one-time task! We need to refocus and re-prioritize over and over throughout our lives. But the one steady thing in our lives is our Profession. We cannot continue to put it last on our list, nor can we put it low on our priority list.

What does this mean? It means that there may be times that you have to tell your family or friends that you cannot attend their activities, or that you may be late, because their activity is on the day of your OFS Fraternity meeting. It means that you will have to be upfront about being a Secular Franciscan and its obligations when you are planning your calendar. Our Fraternity meeting is not the only gathering that we are obligated to attend. We also need to make a concerted effort to attend the OFS special gatherings and feasts through the year. They are another way of showing solidarity with the larger Regional Fraternity.

In today's world, we acknowledge our marital status, our place of employment, our religion and Church of choice, our political parties, and even our hobbies. We need to acknowledge our Franciscan charism and our *belonging* to an International Order in the Catholic Church!

As you read this article, forgive me for "preaching to the choir." Maybe this article will be a way to approach the subject of attendance and participation at your Fraternity. Maybe this article will renew and refocus your own participation in Fraternity events. Either way, remember, whatever you may experience or gain from attending, it is a grace from God to enable us to live out our Profession.

You are not attending only for your benefit but for those with whom you gather!

Kathy Taormina, OFS, is regional formation director for Queen of Peace Region and a commissioned spiritual assistant.

Fraternities celebrate the Transitus St. Clare

Members of **Our Lady of Good Counsel Fraternity** in Greenville, S.C., attended the Transitus of St. Clare in the Poor Clare Monastery in Travelers Rest, S.C., on Aug. 10.

On Aug. 11, fraternity members attended Mass at the monastery. Bishop Robert E. Guglielmone, bishop of the Diocese of Charleston, S.C., was celebrant. A reception followed the Mass.

In Hendersonville, N.C., **St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity** held a Transitus service on the afternoon of Aug. 10, with a candlelight procession in Immaculate Conception Church's Chapel of Our Lady of the Angels. They placed their candles around a statue of St. Clare in front of the altar, then readers told the story of Clare's passing from this life. Capuchin friars who staff the parish joined the fraternity for the service and for dinner at a local restaurant afterward.

On Aug. 11, **Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity** in Blairsville, Ga., held a Transitus service in St. Francis of Assisi Church there. T



BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS REGION
SCHEDULE OF VISITATIONS AND ELECTIONS (PROPOSED)

* confirmed

V+ follow-up visit

DATE LOCATION V/E FRATERNAL / PASTORAL VISITOR

ARG August 3-5, 2012 (National Visitors)

2012

*Sep. 15	Garden City, SC	E	Jerry Rousseau, OFS/ Sr. Noreen Buttimer, OSF
*Sep. 23	Athens, GA	E	John Knippel, OFS/Fr. David Hyman, OFM
*Oct. 6	Decatur, AL	E	Willie Guadalupe, OFS/Nancy Brochu, OFS
*Oct. 21	Nashville, TN	V	Willie/Kathy Taormina, OFS
*Oct. 28	Hendersonville, NC	E	Sara Nell Boggs, OFS/ Fr. Martin Schratz, OFM Cap.
*Nov 17-18	Raleigh, NC	V	Jerry/Joanita Nellenbach, OFS
*Nov. 18	Wilmington, NC	V	DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS/ Audrey Binet, OFS

NAFRA Annual Gathering – Denver – Oct. 16–21

2013

*Jan. 6	Duluth, GA	V	Jerry Rousseau, OFS/Cricket Aull, OFS
*Jan. 12	Augusta, GA	V	Sara Nell/Joanita
*Jan. 20	Conyers, GA	E	John/Laura Haukaas, OFS
?*Feb. 16	Greenville, SC	V	Jerry/Audrey
Mar. 7	Morehead City, NC	V	Jerry/Fr. Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv.
Mar. 9	Burlington, NC	V	Jerry/Fr. Linus
Mar. 10	Elizabeth City, NC	V	Jerry/Fr. Linus
Apr. 6	Franklin, NC	V	Willie/Audrey
Apr. 14	St. Simons, GA	E	Charles Meyer, OFS/ Fr. Wilfred Logsdon, OFM Conv.
May 5	Aiken, SC	E	Jerry/Audrey Binet, OFS
May 11	Jonesboro, GA	V	Sara Nell/Laura
May 14	Winston Salem, NC	E	Jerry/Sr. Kathleen Ganiel, OSF
June 2	Charlotte, NC	V	Willie/Kathy
June 9	Hickory, NC	E	Sara Nell/Joanita
July 11	Asheville, NC	E	Jerry/Joanita

ARG August 2-4, 2013 (chapter of Elections)

Canonical Establishments in 2012

Athens, Ga., Feb. 13, Fr. David Hyman, OFM, delegate (**established**)
Decatur, Ala., March 10, Fr. Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv., delegate (**established**)
Conyers, Ga., Sept. 9, Fr. John Koziol, OFM Conv., delegate (**established**)

Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional Executive Council Roster

Minister: Jerry Rousseau, OFS

Vice Minister: Frank Massey, OFS

Secretary: Christine Washington, OFS

Treasurer: Greg Savold, OFS

Formation Director: Faye Martin, OFS

**Spiritual Assistant:
Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv.**

Area 1 Councilors

Willie Guadalupe, OFS; John Knippel, OFS

AL: Bessemer, Decatur;

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

TN: Chattanooga, Knoxville, Nashville

Area 2 Councilors

Sara Nell Boggs, OFS; Charles A. Meyer Jr., OFS

GA: Augusta, St. Simons Island;

NC: Asheville, Charlotte, Hendersonville, Newton;

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

Area 3 Councilors

DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS; Paula Zanker, 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.

Congratulations New Councils

Blessed John Duns Scotus Fraternity Garden City, S.C., Sept. 17

Minister: Ellen V. Dekleva, OFS

Vice Minister: Paul V. Distefano, OFS

Secretary: Karen Poirier, OFS

Treasurer: Kathleen W. Barnes, OFS

Formation Director:

Marguerite O'Brien, OFS

Councilor: Elizabeth Calley, OFS

San Damiano Fraternity Athens, Ga., Sept. 23

Minister: Sue Stephens, OFS

Vice Minister: Julie Lorenz, OFS

Secretary: Barbara Smith, OFS

Treasurer: Howard Sligh, OFS

Formation Director:

Dianne Ambrose, OFS

Councilor: Nat Seney, OFS

St. Pio Pietrelcina Fraternity Decatur, Ala., Oct. 6

Minister: Beth Ryan, OFS

Vice Minister: Margaret Zink, OFS

Secretary: Jeanne Wozny, OFS

Treasurer: Remedios Mediona, OFS

Formation Director: Ada Winters, OFS

St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity Hendersonville, N.C., Oct. 28

Minister: Randy Hair, OFS

Vice Minister: Peake Dana, OFS

Secretary: Tim Gibson, OFS

Treasurer: Patricia Paton, OFS

Formation Director:

Diane Salkewicz, OFS

Councilor: Lucy Nordlund, OFS

Councilor: Greg Savold, OFS

Special Section

Annual Regional Gathering, Aug. 3–5 2012

ARG Theme: “Celebrating Family — Remembering Clare: A Clear Light for the Franciscan Family”

By Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS

As the eighth centenary (April 16, 2011–Aug. 11, 2012) of St. Clare’s consecration neared its end, speakers at our Annual Regional Gathering focused on her influence on the Friars Minor, the Poor Clares, and Secular Franciscans.



St. Clare: A Light for the Friars Minor

Francis and Clare sought inspiration from each other, were spiritual directors for each other, said Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv., spiritual assistant to the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region.

“Francis and Clare used the tools of their time,” Father Linus said. “We use the tools we have. They inspired each other. Do we in fraternity inspire each other or are we just going through the motions?”

For both of them, “Poverty was a pivotal piece. Where does *our* treasure lie?”

“Money,” Father Linus said, can be used “to

influence, to get our way: I love *me*. Money gives us the power to manipulate, to control, to make me more comfortable. Clare saw poverty as a privilege because she saw what money could do, how it could damage.”

“She experienced poverty, rejection, hard work,” he continued. “She suffered because she had a vision. Francis and Clare knew what they were called to do. You are as gifted as they, as holy as they. It took her a lifetime to see that the privilege of poverty would be maintained. She recognized what God called her to do.”

Clare’s influence on the friars, Father Linus said, came from her purity of intention, her commitment to her way of life. She gave an example of a life so holy that the friars were embarrassed by her holiness, poverty, humility, and simplicity.

Francis wanted to mirror Christ, so he was awarded the wounds (of the stigmata), and it was not just to have the wounds but to experience the wounds, the pain. He was joyful even though blind and in pain, suffering but focused on what God had provided: all the creatures he mentions in the canticle.

During this time of suffering, Francis joyfully wrote “The Cantic of the Creatures” while living in a little hut behind the Monastery of San Damiano, where Clare and her sisters cared for him. They were in apostolic solidarity with the friars. Clare saw Francis’s vision and was able to articulate that vision.

“We have to get over the idea that Clare is for women and Francis is for men,” Father Linus said. “May we embrace the love, perseverance, vision, energy (that Clare embraced). May we

embrace the vision that she saw.”

“Chastity means that we choose God to be our life companion,” he added. “Poverty becomes holy when it is a means to an end, not an end in itself.”

St. Clare: A Light for Modern Day Poor Clares

“Can Clare be telling us to look anew at our communities?” Sister Bernadette Marie Cappola, OSC, asked during her presentation.

The Poor Clares have a life of prayer, silence, and work, said Sister Bernadette, who lives in the Poor Clare Monastery in Travelers Rest, S.C.

Clare influences modern Poor Clares as they imitate her example. Clare goes beyond:

- ❖ The abbess is mother *and* servant.
 - ❖ Silence is communication *and* openness to the world; when we do speak it is for the good of the other;
 - ❖ Work is an expression of minority *and* lesserness.
- Poverty is a way of being, a form of life.

St. Clare: A Light for Secular Franciscans

A light for Secular Franciscans?

“Maybe she was, maybe she wasn’t, *maybe she can be*,” Father Steve Gross, OFM Conv., said.

Father Steve, a member of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants, served as pastoral visitor during the visitation from the National Fraternity at our ARG this year.

He began by giving an overview of Franciscan history and explained that the reason so much is known about the first two Orders, and so little is known about the Order of Penitents (now the Secular Franciscan Order), is that the first two Orders kept better records than did the Third Order.

“There is very little information about the development of the Order of Penitents because they had no place to keep any documentation,” he said. “It’s very important to keep good notes and records. All this documentation ultimately belongs to the Church. Date pages (of everything, including minutes of meetings). Use full names. Violence was done to OFS history because of the inability to keep good records. We know about the development of the other Orders because they kept good notes.”

Father Steve noted that we Secular Franciscans are being called back to recognition of who we are as an autonomous, independent Order. “The world needs to know us as credible laity,” he said. “You represent what Franciscan laity in the Church is all about.”

Who is Clare as a light to the OFS? It’s not because of her poverty. “What is lay poverty about?” Father Steve asked.

It is in obedience: listen to the directives of the minister and council, listen to the Gospel, the Holy Spirit. “We elected the council leading us. How is this group opening us to follow the Gospel in the Franciscan Spirit?”

Poverty, he noted, is also found in chastity: “How do I respect my body? The bodies of others? Am I really clear about who I’ve dedicated my life to?”

We are not to be Clare or Francis. Quoting the writer Oscar Wilde, who advised, “Be yourself. Everyone else is taken,” Father Steve stressed that finding *our* OFS charism means finding out what motivated the original Order of Penitents. These are our models, he said, so we are to learn about Secular Franciscan saints and blessed; and we should name fraternities after them.

OFSs are to become more than we’ve allowed ourselves to be, he added.

“Stop standing on the edge,” he said. “Make the decision to truly embrace this life. You must be grounded in Franciscan spirituality. Part of ongoing formation should be how we are able to

articulate how God's grace acts in our daily lives. You are called to be shepherds. Use your experience of life."

"Come of age," he said. "It's *your* order."



Regional Spiritual Assistant's Words of Wisdom on Ecclesiology and Theology of the Laity

By Joanita M. Nellenbach

Lay spirituality has consistently been overlooked and unappreciated. Lay spirituality has been an essential and fundamental aspect of Christianity from the beginning, although lay people themselves have frequently been portrayed by Church leaders as incompetent in religious matters and lacking in leadership abilities. In the earliest Christian communities, however, there was no separating lay people and ordained ministers. All lived in equality, for according to St. Paul, among the baptized "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

The particularity of lay people is made clear in an original and fruitful way not only at the level of the apostolate but at that of spirituality, one no longer borrowed from religious.

From "Elements of Ecclesiology and Theology of the Laity,"

For Up to Now: Foundational Topics for Initial Formation

"We (have tended to) believe that the clergy are the only ones who can make pronouncements regarding religion; that's the sad part. You have power beyond what you believe you have," said Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv., spiritual assistant to the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region, in his talk on Saturday evening.

"We hesitatingly approach God in prayer, without the confidence we should have. He outfits us for this life and we need to own that. Each of us in a conduit of grace — God's grace."

In that grace, he said, "We are to respect all people. We are co-creators with God. There are people out there you are scheduled to teach."

Clare and Francis understood who they were and what God had called them to do. Thus, they were able to unwaveringly follow that course, even when people thought they were crazy (especially in Francis's case) and in spite of opposition from Church leadership, in the case of Clare, who fought for the "privilege of poverty," for 40 years.

"Clare stood her ground," Father Linus said. "She believed God was calling her to write a rule for her Order." St. Clare was the first woman in the Catholic Church to write a rule for an Order.

"Francis opened the Scriptures and found three telling passages," he said. These, Francis believed, told him what God wanted him to do and he never deviated from their guidance.

He also had the support of his community in his way of life, Father Linus pointed out: "Francis would preach, heal and teach and then go off and pray, his peers supporting him. This is a model for us."

This is an "opportunity you and I have, to be in the midst of the fire of God," Father Linus said. "You're the experience of God for me. You're the experience of God for one another."

Sacramental life is both vertical and horizontal, he pointed out: Vertical — we and God; horizontal — we and Church.

"All people are called to union with Christ," he said. "The whole world is to become the people of God. You say it's unattainable. Did I ask you to be successful? I ask you to be faithful. By your baptism you are set apart to do God's work. "You don't know the power you have. If

you would step up to the plate, this world would change in no time.”

On a more personal note, Father Linus spoke of how moved he is by what he reads on our regional prayer chain: “I receive all the prayer petitions of the Region, and sometimes I say, ‘I don’t know if I could handle that.’ My heart breaks, but I pray. I pray for all the sick who are lifted up and for the families of those who are suffering.

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.

Words to challenge and inspire from three ARG speakers

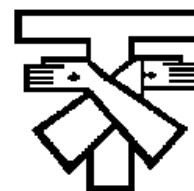
Deacon Tom Bello, OFS, national minister, fraternal visitor



- ❖ Know the power of prayer.
- ❖ Care for your own.
- ❖ Focus on Franciscan spirituality.
- ❖ Generate excuses to meet more often.

Father Steve Gross, OFM Conv., pastoral visitor

- ❖ The disciples followed Christ. You are those disciples. Jesus was modeling “don’t be selfish”; he modeled sharing with one another.
- ❖ What have you got to feed other people with? Use your successes and failures.
- ❖ Simeon and Anna are in the scriptures because in their old age they have learned to simplify, to leave what can be left. These are wisdom figures. You are wisdom figures.
- ❖ Dialogue: Bring wisdom to deal with issues.
- ❖ Let prayer inform your lives.
- ❖ The Holy Spirit sets hearts on fire.
- ❖ If you’re too busy to allow God into your life for the sake of others, something is wrong.



Carolyn Townes, OFS, BSSF Region JPIC animator



- ❖ Justice, peace, and integrity of creation is prayer.
- ❖ Caring for your own is your first apostolate — in your families and in your fraternities — doing love, not just feeling it.
- ❖ We make the choice to love. That is justice, peace, and integrity of creation.
- ❖ We do love by picking up the phone and calling our members, or by e-mailing if that’s an option. T

Councils meet with national visitation team

By Christine Washington, OFS

Regional Executive Council/Commissions Gathering, Aug. 3

- The National Pastoral and Fraternal Visitation was the main focus of the Regional Executive Council (REC) meeting. Here are some highlights of the meeting:

- Jerry Rousseau, OFS, regional minister, introduced DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, as our new Area Three councilor, replacing Jane Sullivan-Farris, OFS, who passed away earlier this year.
- The five-DVD set, “Forming the Formators” would be given to the minister of each fraternity at the Regional Council Meeting on Aug 4.
- Father Steve Gross, OFM Conv., our pastoral visitor from the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants, told us that a visitation is always about care of souls; we are the agents of the Holy Spirit so that others can grow in sanctity.
- He also spoke of formation by telling us that spiritual assistants are good formators; good formators are usually good spiritual assistants.
- Deacon Tom Bello, OFS, national minister, our fraternal visitor, told us that fraternity is *the* characteristic of all Secular Franciscan groupings, whether local, regional, provincial, national or international.
- He gave us the reason for the visitation: This visitation is to build the community of love at this regional level. He also told us that the purpose of the visitation is to revive the evangelical Franciscan spirit, assure fidelity to the Franciscan charism and to the Rule, to offer help to fraternity life, and to reinforce the bond of unity of our order.
- The council was asked to give Deacon Tom some “Praise the Lord” and “Beg the Lord” comments about the council. He received many praise comments: the REC working well together, the success of our formation workshops, communication with the local fraternities, and growth of our region in establishing four fraternities within the last year. He heard of concerns, including losing touch with the Franciscan family in some areas, continuity of leadership training within fraternities, getting more formation materials in Spanish, the difficulty of having to say “no” to someone who wants to enter a fraternity, distance issues within fraternities with the idea of fraternity cells to deal with this distance.
- Deacon Tom made the following comments on our praises and concerns: In October two training models will be given to each regional minister on local fraternity leadership, a DVD and a packet based on “The Care and Feeding of Local Fraternity Councils”; he likes the leadership training model of all of our REC members doing visitations and elections, with everyone being responsible for the Region; area workshops will include servant-leadership formation.

He told us to keep in mind that every single workshop is ongoing formation; every single formation workshop is servant-leadership training and focused on the local fraternity and the continuity of leadership. He told us to have more charism and less structure, especially regarding the concept of forming fraternity cells; he doesn’t know of any other region who has had the growth that our region has.
- We are very grateful to the Holy Spirit that Deacon Tom’s reason for the visitation of building a community of love was achieved in this meeting.

Regional Fraternity Council Gathering, Aug. 4

The Regional Fraternity Council is composed of the Regional Executive Council (minister, vice minister, secretary, treasurer, formation director, spiritual assistant, and area councilors) and the ministers of all canonically established fraternities in the Region. There were many highlights of the Regional Fraternity Council Gathering at our ARG this year.

- Greg Savold, OFS, gave new treasurer guidelines: All checks should be made out to *BSSF*, not to Greg as the regional treasurer. All the finances for each fraternity should go through the fraternity’s *treasurer*; treasurers are encouraged to keep track of monies in a *category*; treasurers need to be able to trace how monies are spent –

- traceability. He reported that this year our regional fraternity contributed, 100 percent, to the fair share contributions.
- The Regional Council approved the BSSF Budget for 2013 and passed four amendments to the BSSF Regional Guidelines (see page 18 for full text of amendments):
 - o The amendment to Article 10 is a rewording of the JPIC animator's responsibilities.
 - o Article 9.19 gives the local fraternities guidelines on how to deal with transfers from other fraternities or other regions.
 - o Amendment Article 9.20 deals with the return of inactive members who are voluntarily withdrawn, suspended, or inactive transfers.
 - o Amendment 9.21 deals with affiliates with a local fraternity, with an orientation phase recommended for affiliates. The National Formation Commission has an Affiliate Orientation Plan for this. Our pastoral visitor, Father Steve Gross, OFM Conv., told us that affiliates can be non-Christian, non-Catholic.
 - Our fraternal visitor, Deacon Tom Bello, OFS, told us that the purpose of the visitation is to revive, intensify, stimulate, encourage, animate; there is no aspect of Secular Franciscan life more important than the vitality of our fraternities, be they local, regional, national or international. He gave us four marks of every fraternity gathering:
 1. **Spirituality.** Every single meeting should start with prayer. Spirituality is most important.
 2. **Formation.** Formation is always necessary. It is a journey that's never finished. There must be ongoing formation at every meeting. We should always be forming and reforming ourselves.
 3. **Socializing.** Never ever apologize for socializing! Look for excuses to get together. Call it the vitality of the fraternity. We have to know each other before we can love each other. Conduct business as necessary *after* the socializing.
 4. **Apostolate.** We have to get out and share the love.
 - The council was asked to give Deacon Tom some "Praise the Lord" and "Beg the Lord" comments about their local fraternities. He received many praise comments including strong spirituality and formation; active apostolates; looking at issues among fraternity members like diversity, prayerful leadership, and gatherings with no time constraints.

He also received comments on challenges of local fraternities including distance issues, growth of membership, aging membership with its physical problems, people in different stages of formation, finding new apostolates, and lack of a spiritual assistant.

As you can see, we had a wonderful Regional Fraternity Council Meeting this year. We will look forward to meeting again Aug. 2–4, 2013, at Ridgecrest when we will have our Chapter of Elections. Let us keep each other in prayer.

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.

Guidelines for transfers, returnees, affiliates, JPIC animator

The Regional Fraternity Council has approved amendments to Articles 9 and 10 of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional Guidelines.

The Regional Fraternity Council is composed of the Regional Executive Council (minister, vice minister, secretary, treasurer, formation director, spiritual assistant, and area councilors) and the ministers of all canonically established fraternities in the Region.

At its meeting, held Aug. 4 during the Annual Regional Gathering, the council added paragraphs 19–21 to Article 9, “Local Fraternity and Group Responsibilities.” These paragraphs provide procedures for fraternities/groups to use for those wishing to transfer to a fraternity in this Region (whether transferring from a fraternity in this or another region), for inactive members desiring to return to active fraternity life, and for individuals asking for affiliation with OFS fraternities.

Article 10 describes the Region’s two commissions: the Regional Formation Commission and the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Commission. The council reworded the description of the JPIC animator’s responsibilities.

The amendments are as follows:

Article 9: Local Fraternity and Group Responsibilities

9.19 – Dealing with transfers from another fraternity (active members)

- a) The fraternity receiving the transfer request first seeks the necessary information from the previous fraternity in accordance with Article 55 of the General Constitutions.
- b) Prior to accepting the transfer of a member from another fraternity, the local fraternity will exercise a period of discernment (recommended 3–6 months) during which time the member requesting transfer faithfully attends all fraternity gatherings and participates in fraternity life. To determine if this candidate or professed member is in harmony with the fraternity, the Spiritual Assistant, if applicable, and/or the fraternity council meets with this member after a few months. At a later time, the Spiritual Assistant and/or fraternity council meet with the member for a second time to determine if the member is harmonious with the fraternity. After a secret vote by the council, the transfer will be approved or declined. The specific reasons for the decision of the council must be clearly documented.

9.20 – Dealing with the return of inactive members (voluntarily withdrawn, suspended, or inactive transferees)

- a) Voluntarily withdrawn or suspended members must make a written request to be readmitted in accordance with Article 57 of the General Constitutions. The council shall then make a decision based on the relevant facts.
- b) Prior to accepting the return of an inactive professed member (including transferees), or one who had voluntarily withdrawn or had been suspended, the local fraternity will exercise a period of discernment (recommended 9–12 months) during which time the member faithfully attends all fraternity gatherings and participates in fraternity life. The local formation team and fraternity council will determine the necessary formation for the member using the current formation materials of BSSF Region. After the formation deemed necessary for this member and a secret vote by the council, the return/transfer will be approved or declined. The specific reasons for the decision of the council must be clearly documented.

9.21 – Affiliates with a Local Fraternity

Affiliation is “a special form of association with a fraternity, for Catholic or non-Catholic individuals who, without becoming members of the OFS, want to participate in its life and

activities” (**GC Art. 53:5**). Our association with the affiliates is a more formal recognition of the individual’s desire to share our Franciscan fraternal life.

The interested individual is encouraged to attend gatherings for six months prior to requesting affiliate status to allow for proper discernment by both the individual and the community as to the benefit of the relationship.

The BSSF Region recommends that “The affiliate will have his [her] own orientation phase to help develop an understanding of who we are as Secular Franciscans and to more fully experience and embrace the charism and priorities of St. Francis.” (**OFS Affiliate Orientation Plan**). It is the responsibility of the formation director to provide guidance during the orientation phase.

It is the local council’s responsibility to discern the affiliate’s Ongoing Process of Affiliation with the fraternity (**requires written request for renewal every two years**).

It would be judicious for the local council to: thoughtfully read all referenced documents, understand, dialogue with membership, and be in agreement with each other when considering someone for association as an affiliate in your fraternity.

References: (1) *General Constitution*, Art. #53.5 and #103.1
(2) *National Statutes*, Article 18:13
(3) *OFS Affiliate Orientation Plan* prepared by the National Formation Commission (NAFRA website)

Article 10: Regional Commissions

The Regional JPIC Animator serves the Region by concentrating on the areas of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation by calling forth the passion of the members so that they may develop, embrace and enhance our Franciscan spirituality. To animate and challenge the members in their efforts to re-explore and re-think the basics of justice, peace and integrity of creation from the perspective of the four pillars – Spirituality, Formation, Fraternity and Apostolate.

The Animator serves the region as a liaison to the Regional Executive Council by periodically reporting JPIC activities to them and attending council meetings when invited and when deemed necessary. In addition s/he acts as a liaison between the National Fraternity by forwarding information from the National JPIC Animator.

The Regional JPIC Animator assumes the following responsibilities:

- a. To develop a vision and common guidelines for the regional JPIC activities.
- b. To promote the apostolic expression of justice, peace and integrity of creation in accordance with Articles 12–19 of the Rule and Articles 15–23 of the General Constitutions.
- c. To animate by giving encouragement, guidance and information to the local fraternities and groups to enhance the spirit and life of their JPIC programs.
- d. To communicate with National JPIC Animator(s) and distribute information to local JPIC contacts, members of the Regional Council, and local leaders.
- e. To affirm and challenge the members to recognize, understand and embrace peace and justice ministry as an essential element of their Franciscan evangelical vocation through the process of initial and ongoing formation. T

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