

Communio

That All May Be One

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

Winter 2022

Dialogue as a Way to Peace

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS
National & Regional JPIC Animator

A very blessed and happy New Year to you!

As the awful grace of the pandemic rages on in various strains, our Holy Father, Pope Francis focused the 55th World Day of Peace message on **Dialogue Between Generations, Education and Work:**

Tools for Building Lasting Peace. Dialogue is always a fitting topic to begin a new year. Pope Francis opens his message with the beautiful passage from the Prophet Isaiah:



“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace.” (Is 52:7)

It has always been my opinion that if we want lasting peace, we must learn how to dialogue with one another. Dialogue is the key to building and maintaining peace within families, fraternities and faith communities. From these, there will be constant peace in this world. Pope Francis tells us: *“Dialogue entails listening to one another, sharing different views, coming to agreement and walking together. Promoting such dialogue between generations involves breaking up the hard and barren soil of conflict and indifference in order to sow the seeds of a lasting and shared peace.”*

I have found that dialogue is part of a three-legged stool – dialogue, listening and silence. It is not enough to talk all the time; we must also learn to listen. Then, the pause, the silence, helps to process what was said and heard. Engaging in this process on a consistent basis can aid in having and participating in rich conversations as well as creating a spiritual practice of mindful dialogue. This is the means of building paths to peace.

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The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate



Dialogue continued from page 1

My favorite article of our Holy Rule, Article 19 – which calls us “bearers of peace” and “messengers of perfect joy” – exhorts us to *seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue*. We cannot be bearers of peace or messengers of perfect joy if we do not engage in constructive and intentional dialogue. Our conversations are the means to our conversion. Conversion, or *metanoia*, is a constant turning, turning from something to something else. Turning from the darkness of sin and turning toward the light of Christ. When we engage in conversation, it is the same process – turning from one way of being to another way of being. That is, if the conversation is fruitful and Spirit-filled.

Think about your dialogues and conversations. Are they the means to leading someone to a conversion experience, thus creating the path to peace? Or are they the means to destructive disagreements and arguments? As our Holy Rule states, we are to seek out ways of unity – not separation, and fraternal harmony – not discord.

*“Where there is discord, may I bring harmony;
where there is error, may I bring truth...”*

May the Lord continue to grant you peace in this new year.

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Secular Franciscan Websites
Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis
Region
www.bssfsfo.org
National Fraternity of the Secular
Franciscan Order in the United States
(NAFRA)
www.secularfranciscansusa.org
Consilium Internationale Ordo
Franciscanus Saecularis (CIOFS)
International Council of the Secular
Franciscan Order
www.ciofs.org

Minister's Message



DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS

Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional Minister

New Year of 2022 greetings of love, hope, and joy in the name of the Lord!

This Christmas season moved too quickly for me – celebrating Christmas one day, then the Holy Family the next day, then Mary, Mother of God; and on to the Epiphany and lastly, the Baptism of our Lord. I'd been focusing my meditations on the Incarnation and the Word becoming flesh to dwell among us as a human being, one of us, to show us the way; but always divine, this God-child and man.

Each Sunday I listen to Fr. Christopher Panagoplos's reflection on the Sunday gospel on the Secular Franciscan Order Facebook page. As Fr. Christopher shared his reflection words and insights on the Baptism of the Lord, it became clear to me the connection between my Baptism and Jesus', and the role Baptism plays in my life.

As I recalled my OFS Profession and the photos of my Baptism as an infant, I became aware of how God has prepared me for life from the very beginning at my Baptism. The connection between Baptism and Profession is profound. The grace of Profession helps one to live out their baptismal commitment. As it says in part in the FUN Manual, in the chapter titled "Profession and the Secular Franciscan" by Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM—Profession memorializes Baptism and an effect of Baptism is that it configures us to Christ's passion, death and resurrection. Profession aids us in our faithfulness in being persons made similar to Jesus – configured to Him.

A quote from Fr. Felice Cangelosi, OFM Cap, in the same chapter—"Profession acts upon Baptism, impacts upon it, seals and develops it, founds a new entity and produces a new outpouring of the Spirit."

How fortunate are we to have this vocation chosen for us by our Triune God! I pray that the Father is pleased with each of us as we continue our Franciscan journey together in this new year of 2022.

As always, you are remembered in my prayers. Know that you are loved. Be well and joy-filled!

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.

Liturgical Year of Luke Readings in the Life of a Secular Franciscan

Deacon Thomas Shaver OFS
Regional Spiritual Assistant
Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region

We began the new liturgical year on the first Sunday in Advent with a year of readings from the Gospel of Luke.

As I read Luke's Gospel and compare it with the other synoptic gospels, several key points or elements stand out. Luke's Gospel might be read with two parts, the gospel narrative and the Acts of the Apostles. Or, said a little differently, the first is the life of Christ and the second is the life of the Church. If we take the two works and combine them as one work, we start with the annunciation of the birth of John the Baptist and conclude with Paul's final imprisonment in Rome.



Some key points to consider include the extensive infancy narrative found in Luke, which some might consider a supplement to some missing elements in Matthew's Gospel. The three canticles that we use during prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours are all found in Luke (Morning Prayer, Benedictus, Evening Prayer Luke 1:68-79; Magnificat – Lk 1: 46-55; Night Prayer, Nunc Dimittis – Lk 2: 29-32.)

When we compare the genealogy given in Matthew to the one found in Luke, we see two different approaches. Matthew begins with Abraham and continues the lineage through to Joseph the husband of Mary (Matthew 1:1 ff.) Luke, on the other hand, reversing the order, begins with Jesus of Nazareth, and goes back through his ancestors to Adam, the first man (Luke 3:33-38).

Matthew gives the lineage of Judaism, while Luke gives a lineage of all mankind, thus a more inclusive approach to evangelization that is expanded when we read the Acts of the Apostles.

My message here is that we, particularly as Franciscans, need to expand our consideration of all men and women regardless of their heritage or socio-economic status. The gospel doesn't consider these issues. It calls each of us to live as Christ lived.

Our motto of "from gospel to life and life to gospel" should encourage us to read the gospels thoroughly, gaining a better understanding of each.

Whether we practice Lectio Divina or St. Clare's method of contemplation as we read and pray the gospel, our understanding and knowledge of the gospels is critical to our lives as Franciscan Seculars.

A Passionist priest friend of mine, Fr. Eugene Bonacci, CP, would often say, "there are not four gospels, there is only one! Jesus Christ."

Continued on next page

Year of Luke continued from page 4

In addition to our prayer life, we need to know Jesus more fully. I suggest a schema that includes reading and studying each gospel at a rate of one chapter per week. Over the course of a year, I can read the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles for a total of 52 chapters. If I am going to live the gospel, I must know the gospel.

You and I are called to a radical conversion of the heart, or in gospel terms, a metanoia. Sadly, as the regional spiritual assistant I have observed some situations within fraternities that frankly do not live up to what we as Franciscans are called to emulate as we live our Rule as stated in Articles 4 and 5.

“The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: 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.

“Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly. Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel.” Article 4

“Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity. 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.” Article 5

To live the gospel, we need to read it, study it, then work to put into practice the teachings of the gospel. We as members of the Catholic Church and influenced by our lives as Secular Franciscans are called to be “Gospel People.” The most significant message of the gospel is the call to love one another.

A word search of the New Testament (NT) indicates that the term “love one another” occurs 100 times in the NT. Let's make 2022 our “gospel year” where we commit to reading and studying the gospel of Luke with a relatively good commentary. (I have listed a few that might be useful.) God bless the new year and may your gospel journey with St. Francis and his secular companions be spiritually gratifying and lead you to a deeper love of Jesus Christ.

Some Commentaries to consider:

Johnson, Luke Timothy. 1991. *Sacra Pagina The Gospel of Luke*, Edited by Harrington SJ, Daniel J. vol 3. 16 vols. Collegeville MN: Michael Glazer Book Liturgical Press. (Can be academic and deep.)

Patella, Michael F. *New Collegeville Biblical Commentary, The Gospel According to Luke*. Collegeville: MN. Liturgical Press, 2005.

Karris OFM, Robert J., General Editor, *The Collegeville Biblical Commentary, New Testament*, General Editor, Collegeville MN Liturgical Press, 1992.

Senior, Donald, General Editor, *The Catholic Study Bible (New American Bible)*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Deacon Thomas Shaver, OFS, Brother and Sisters of St. Francis Region's spiritual assistant, is a member of Stigmata of St. Francis Fraternity in Johns Creek, Ga. He serves at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Marietta, Ga.

Finding Metanoia in All the Right Places

Sharon Winzeler, OFS
Communio editor

“United by their vocation as “brothers and sisters of penance” 11, and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls “conversion.” The Rule, Article 7

Little did I realize that editing the Communio would lead me deeper into my own journey as a Franciscan who is seeking Christ daily.

Inspired by this issue’s columns by Carolyn Townes, OFS, and Deacon Tom Shaver, OFS, I sought more study of the meaning of metanoia as the ongoing conversion in which we die to self and let the Holy Spirit work in our lives. The search brought me to a wonderful resource that I would like to share.

The Greek word metanoia literally means to change one’s way of life because of penitence or spiritual conversion.

Since it’s easier to live in a one-size-fits-all world that provides immediate answers, I always find it difficult and humbling to understand that metanoia is continuous. Ongoing. Every day.

Metanoia begins by realizing who God is and who Jesus Christ of the Gospel is, not who we want them to be.

Maybe that is why the process is life-long. An important aspect includes discovering who Jesus is through the Gospel. That’s why I appreciated Deacon Shaver’s encouragement to spend the year reading the Gospel of Luke as well as the Acts of the Apostles. As he so aptly says, we need to know about what we are talking.

Carolyn Townes’ admonishment to think about our dialogues and conversations as ways to conversion experiences for ourselves and others leads me to consider my interactions with all of God’s family on a daily basis. This includes the loved and the unloved, the popular and the marginalized, the sinners and the saints, the people who annoy me and those whom I annoy. Our search for metanoia redirects us to center ourselves on the person of Christ himself.

“Who do you say I am?” Jesus asks his disciples—and us.

All these thoughts led me to the [Metanoia series on Wildgoose.TV](#), a video series by Father Dave Pivonka, TOR.

The series is filmed on location near the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem and is offered in 30-minute segments. Father Pivonka talks about how self-denial is at the core of ongoing conversion.

His talks led me to more thoughts. He points out that in a society focused on consuming, we lose sight of the importance of fasting and abstinence. We no longer have a sense of the value of denying ourselves.

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Metanoia continued from page 6

We also fall to false idols like power and prestige.

Metanoia—or ongoing conversion—brings us closer to whom we are and the fact that nothing is more important in our lives than our relationship with God. Metanoia becomes an act of God’s love that helps redirect and center our focus on Christ.

Father Pivonka encourages us to recognize that there may be something in fasting and self-denial that will change me and not the Lord. It’s not a bribe for the Lord, it’s a simple sacrifice.

Difficulty and pain are a part of the human condition, according to Father Pivonka. “No one escapes this world without a struggle,” he said. But the answer is there, “Pick up your cross and follow me,” Jesus tells us.

All these ideas, Father Pivonka said, are counter cultural. So, he pointed out, is being a Christian.

Make sure you read the columns by Deacon Shaver and Carolyn Townes. If you want to explore metanoia, watch Father Pivonka’s videos online. There also is a study guide if you want to use any of the videos for formation.

You must sign up [to watch the series](#). Access is free but you can donate to the Wild Goose program.

Sharon Winzeler is Communio editor and serves as local minister of the Padre Pio fraternity in Raleigh, NC



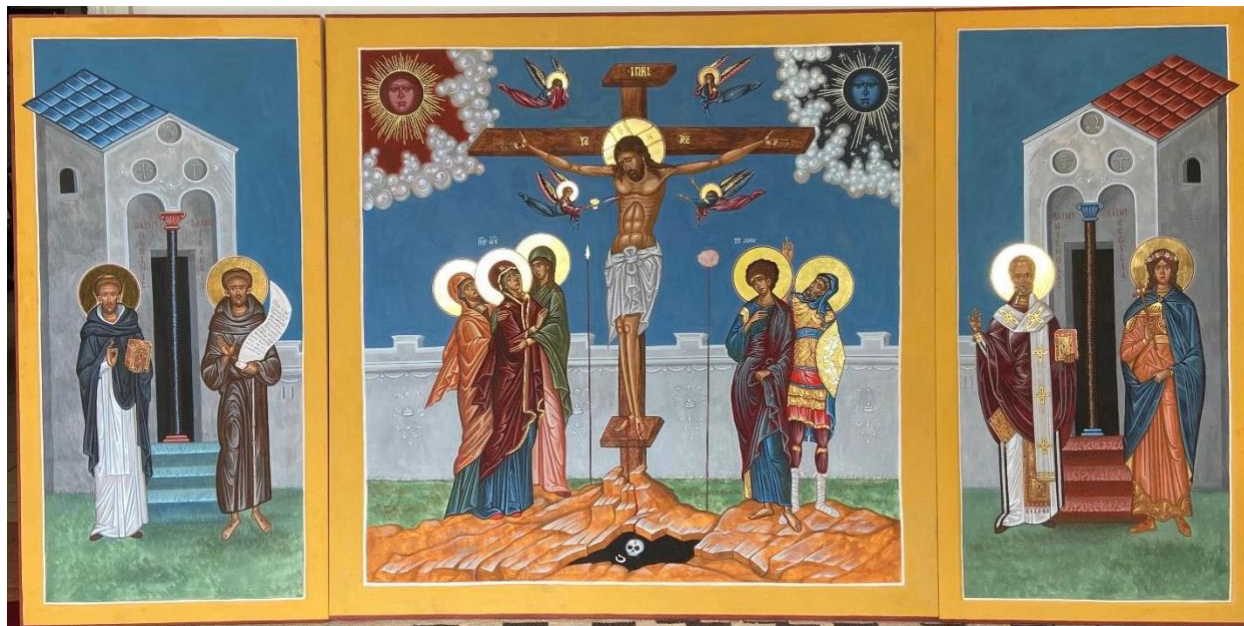
Triptych honors sacred stories, saints

Stephen Brace, OFS

Minister, Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin Mary Fraternity

*"We must then, reverently enter within the sacred symbols, and not dishonour them, being as they are, products and moulds of the Divine characteristics, and manifest images of the unutterable and supernatural visions."*¹

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.¹



This triptych commissioned by a member of the Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin Mary Fraternity contains saints representing various orders in the greater Nashville area. Saints include St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, St. Cecilia, and St. Nicholas of Myra.

What started off as a dream of a modern-day triptych in the mind of a Secular Franciscan is now a 3.2 ft. by 6.5 ft. reality in the Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin Mary Fraternity in Franklin, TN.

Triptychs are three panels of icons connected by hinges. Since they contain a sacred story, triptychs are “written” by the artist and “read” by the audience. These icons are regarded as sacred art showing devotion to God and appeared in early Christianity.

The decision to create a triptych began in December 2016 when a Secular Franciscan pitched an idea to the lay Dominican St. Cecilia Chapter Councils in Nashville. The idea was to produce a large triptych icon to promote the Secular/Third orders in the greater Nashville area.

Continued on next page

¹ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. (1897). *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*. (J. Parker, Trans.) (Vol. 1, p. 172). London; Oxford: James Parker and Co.

Triptych continued from page 8

The following saints were selected for inclusion on the triptych side panels to represent patrons of various juristic persons in Middle Tennessee.

- St. Francis represents the Secular Franciscan Order Seven Dolors of the BVM fraternity
- Sts. Dominic and Cecilia represent both the Lay Dominican chapter and the Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia Congregation of Nashville, TN,
- St. Nicholas of Myra represents the mission of the Ukrainian Catholic Church under the Eparchy of St Josaphat that meets once a month at St Philip Catholic Church in Franklin, TN.

The first challenge was finding an iconographer who could write Post Great Schism of 1054 A.D. Western Saints in Byzantine style. The second was a lack of patrons to support it financially.

Iconographer Peter Murphy of Kent, United Kingdom was commissioned to create the triptych slightly in excess of \$5,000. The lack of benefactors led one Secular Franciscan to fund it on his own. In retrospect, this was a positive solution because it prevented creative differences and the possibility of creating complicated policies on use of the triptych.

Once an image of an icon of St. Francis of Assisi was found with the crucifixion as a centerpiece, the donor contacted Murphy and the work began. First the panels were constructed and gessoed in in Miroslav Zivanovic's workshop in Serbia (ubmiroslav.iconboards@gmail.com) and then shipped to Murphy. They weighted 77 pounds.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SAN DAMIANO CRUCIFIX: A 1610 A.D. RECONSTRUCTION

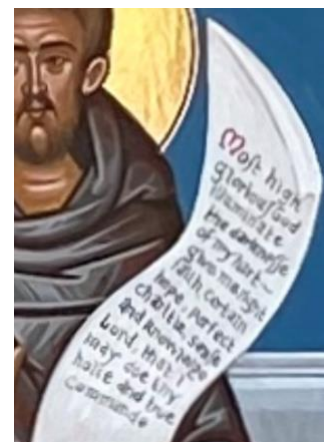
Other concepts included the addition of a unique cross that closely resembled each saint and a cross for St. Francis containing the Prayer before the San Damiano cross. Two unique concepts included in this triptych is the addition of both the Prayer of St. Francis before the San Damiano cross in early modern English spelling and unique crosses associated with each saint depicted above them.

A thorough search of the Prayer before the San Damiano cross failed to locate the original English format.

As a result, the prayer was reconstructed from Latin to the spelling of English used in 1610 around the time of the Douay-Rheims translation.

The following Middle English translation was the result of comparing the Vulgate Scriptures with the facsimile of the Douay-Rheims translation:

- *Moft high glorious God illuminate the darkeneffe of my hart giue me right faith certain hope, perfect charitie, fenfe and knowvledge, Lord, that I may doe thy holie and true commaunde.*



Above is a close-up of Francis holding the Prayer before the San Damiano cross as it appears on the triptych.

Triptych continued from page 9

Those who wish to download the Douay-Rheims facsimile for their own projects or reference can download the PDF file by visit the following URL:

https://archive.org/details/1610A.d.DouayOldTestament1582A.d.RheimsNewTestament_176

THE BLESSING:

Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM, of Dormition Byzantine Franciscan Friary of Sybertsville, PA on September 18, agreed to bless the triptych in the Greek form for 40 days. Fr. Wolbert is president-in-turn of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants who work closely with the Secular Franciscan Order.

The significance of the blessing of an icon either through the Slavic tradition by anointing with holy chrism or by the Greek tradition holding it behind the iconostasis in the sanctuary for 40 days is a relatively new phenomenon. The icon by its representation is already considered “holy” or “blessed.” The significance of the blessing is understood as “unveiling,” such as after Christ was in the wilderness for 40 days and then was baptized by John the Baptist with the descending of the Holy Spirit as a dove and God the Father proclaiming Jesus Christ as his Son, whom He is well pleased.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS:

The intentions of the Secular Franciscan who commissioned the triptych is to draft an on-loan agreement policy amongst multiple juristic persons in the greater Nashville, TN, area to include the Diocese of Nashville, the Eparchy of St. Josaphat of Parma and the St Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Mission, the local Secular Franciscan Order fraternity, the St. Cecilia Lay Dominican Chapter, Catholic Charities, other ecclesial communities, and either a Catholic Bookstore or a Catholic craftsman as a vendors for the month of May’s Renfest in Arrington, TN with, eventually, a Gospel-Centric Renaissance Anachronistic guild.

In the meantime, while a policy is being drafted, the triptych will be used in conjunction with the BSSF Area I retreats, parish fairs, and other events as deemed appropriate by the local OFS fraternity.

Stephen Brace, OFS, is minister of the Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin Mary Fraternity in Manchester, TN.

Interim Regional Formation Director Named

Ellen Ferrone, OFS, will serve as interim regional formation director until the Chapter of Elections in August. DorothyAnn Rowland, BSSF regional minister, appointed her to fill the term of Dianne Ambrose, OFS, who recently resigned because of health reasons.

Ferrone has served as an Area 3 councilor since her election in 2019. She is vice-minister of the Padre Pio fraternity in Raleigh, NC.

The Chapter of Elections will be held during the Annual Regional Gathering Aug. 13-15, 2022. See page 22 for details on nominations.



Ellen Ferrone, OFS

Five Georgia Martyrs Monument Dedicated

By Lawrence Lynch, OFS

On October 9, 2021, His Excellency, the Most Reverend Bishop Stephen D. Parkes of the Diocese of Savannah, Georgia, dedicated the sculpture of the Five Franciscan Georgia Martyrs at the Nativity of Our Lady Catholic Church in Darien, GA.

Two former bishops of the Diocese of Savannah also attended the dedication. They are the Most Reverend Gregory John Hartmayer, OFM, Conv., Archbishop of Atlanta, and His Excellency John Kevin Boland, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Savannah, Georgia.

Numerous clergy from the Diocese of Savannah as well as clergy from other dioceses and seminaries in Georgia and outside of Georgia as well as many laypersons also attended the event.

Ponce de Leon founded the Spanish territory of "La Florida" in 1513. That territory encompasses the present state of Florida and parts of the states of Georgia, North and South Carolina and part of Tennessee. The Spanish started to evangelize the natives in that area in 1526. The Jesuits missionaries came first but were not successful and left one year later. The Spanish friars followed soon thereafter, establishing numerous successful missions and evangelizing thousands of natives in La Florida.

The Franciscan friars preached the Gospel and lived peacefully among the Guale natives in coastal Georgia. When the friars pledged fidelity to the Christian rule on marriage and would not allow a baptized Guale leader to take a second wife, the martyrdom began.

On September 14, 1597, the first friar martyred was Pedro de Corpa, the priest assigned to Nuestra Señora Guadalupe church on the Tolomato Mission. That 16th century mission site is where the present-day church the Nativity of Our Lady Catholic Church is located. The Cause for Canonization lists Pedro de Corpa's name in representing all five of the Georgia martyrs.

At right, sculpture of the Five Franciscan Georgia Martyrs at the Nativity of Our Lady Catholic Church in Darien, GA.

Photo by Lawrence Lynch, OFS



From left to right: Bishop John Kevin Boland, Bishop Stephen D. Parkes and Archbishop Gregory John Hartmayer preside over the dedication of the sculpture of the Five Franciscan Georgia Martyrs in Darien, GA.

Photo by Lawrence Lynch OFS



(Continued on next page)

Five George Martyrs continued

Because of this historic connection, it is fitting that the location of the martyrs' monument was constructed at the Nativity of Our Lady Catholic Church. Its placement in front of the church facing U.S. Highway 17 is also fitting to the mission of the friars to evangelize. That carries over to the present day as pedestrians and motorists can easily see the monument and be drawn in to revere the beautiful sculpture of the martyrs.

It is an unexpected sight to see, not only because of its location, but also because of its content...a grand spiritual message of the Love of God represented in a bronze sculpture of five holy men who lived the love of God and love of others, especially bringing the Word of God to the native people who did not yet know God.

After blessing and dedicating the Franciscan monument, Bishop Parks spoke about the 16th century Spanish Friars who were called by God to evangelize the natives in the New World. He also spoke of the strong faith and courage of the friars who knew that they could face death at the hands of the natives.

The Five Georgia Martyrs monument is a large, life-size cast bronze sculpture in a bas-relief form depicting imagined portraits of the five 16th century Franciscan martyrs. The monument was created by the well-known international sculptor, Timothy Schmalz. Quoting from his website: "For more than thirty years, Tim has been 'visually translating' sacred scripture and bringing forth spiritual artwork that presents authentic representations."

In the monument, Schmalz sculpted five friars standing in front of an enlarged backdrop of a palmetto frond. Each portrait of the martyrs' faces evokes an emotional response of piety from the observer. Several martyrs look upward toward God in anticipation of seeing Him in his heavenly abode. The gestures created in the Franciscan figures portray an aura of peace, serenity, and an acceptance of the will of God.

The center friar holds a small green palm leaf which draws one's attention to the focal point in the large bronze monument. Since the time of the Old Testament, the palm leaf has been represented as a symbol of peace and eternal life. A hallmark of Schmalz's sculptures is his ability to portray intense emotional expression of spirituality in his work.

We hope and pray that this beautiful monument dedicated to the Five Georgia Martyrs draws in many of those who do not yet know the love and Word of God. You may read more about the Five Georgia Martyrs and sculptor Timothy Schmalz on these websites:

southerncross.diosav.org — Website for The Southern Cross, the newspaper for the Diocese of Savannah, Ga. Type "Five Georgia Martyrs" into the search engine and links to various news articles on the martyrs will come up.

thegeorgiamartyrs.org/en — click on "Watch a video about the "Georgia Martyrs"

digitallibrary.amnh.org — American Museum of Natural History digital repository. Type into the search block Murder and Martyrdom in Spanish Florida and hyperlink for this book will come up.

timothypaulschmalz.com — Sculptor Timothy Schmalz's webpage

Lawrence Lynch, OFS, is a member of the Five Georgia Martyrs Fraternity.

Strengthening Franciscan Community in an Isolating Pandemic World

By Georgia Edwards, OFS

To retreat – or not to retreat in autumn 2021? How many plans have we all made since the pandemic began, only to have them canceled at the last minute? Nothing in the last two years seemed exempt from the touch of Covid – including fraternity life - which was transformed from a hearty, physical gathering into a Zoom encounter.

Although we are grateful for a technology that kept us connected, our charism thrives on presence. Zoom could only be a temporary solution. The 2020 retreat was another casualty of pandemic protocols, and we grieved that loss deeply because our annual time away together fed us both spiritually and fraternally

In the fall of 2021, the virus was still directing our lives and we had to wonder – could we risk an in-person retreat? Should we risk it? How could we know? For the Immaculate Conception Fraternity in Jonesboro, GA, the answers to these questions lay in prayer and consideration of St. Francis himself. Francis treasured his community, and Francis had faith.

“We knew there would be challenges,” Laura Cleary, OFS, newly elected fraternity minister, said. “Members were uneasy, the retreat center had strict protocols and because of a shortage of priests, our beloved Father John Koziol would not be available to serve as retreat master. If we wanted a retreat, we would have to seek the aid of the Holy Spirit and do it ourselves - and we had no experience for that. But relationships run deep in this fraternity: the desire to gather is strong. If even a small number of members felt inspired to assemble for a reflective weekend, we wanted to give them the opportunity. It seemed better to try than to yield and wait another year. We leaned on faith,” she said.

The retreat’s focus was clear from the beginning - how to honor our Franciscan calling within the chaos of the pandemic. The weekend gave undistracted time in a beautiful place to ask God what he wanted of us *now* – individually and as a fraternity – and to consider with fresh eyes a new expression of our vocation. “What Now, Lord?” was the question on our lips both in prayer and conversation.

This query became our weekend’s theme, and the film “A Sign of Contradiction” became our means of exploring it. This recent production of The Wild Goose is Loose, is a gorgeously crafted unfolding of St. Francis’s conversion from hopeful knight to God’s own Poverello. In the 77- minute film, presenter Father Dave Pivonka, TOR, winds all over Assisi, guiding the viewer to an understanding of Francis’s spiritual awakening, and through his – to our own. Father explores deep Franciscan concepts such as the path to God, knowing what’s enough, penance for the world, and trust to conform our hearts to the Lord. He traces the Seraphic Father’s meandering way to the joy of surrender that ignites a lifelong mission of love and transforms Francis into a sign of contradiction.

By our calling, Francis’s story is our story too; his mission inspires our mission. The chaos we experience is different, of course. Chaos thrived then as it does now because chaos is a given of life. St. Francis, by the grace of God, worked with it, endured it, pushed through it, and by

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Strengthening Community continued from page 13

example, taught us, his spiritual family for the ages, not to be paralyzed by it.

Nineteen Franciscans prayed and walked together at Blessed Trinity Shrine Retreat House in Ft. Mitchell, Alabama. We watched “The Sign of Contradiction” in segments as a family, took time for private reflection, and in unrushed small group sessions, shared our understanding of God’s desire for us in these times. The intimacy of eyes connecting, ears hearing, and hearts offering companionship, nourished our sense of family and fraternal belonging. We certainly didn’t complete our answers to the question, “What now, Lord?” but we made progress and found our support team.

“We chose a simpler path,” Cleary said. “We were willing to welcome a few people – or a large group – it was in the hands of the Holy Spirit. We didn’t worry as long as we made an offering. And already the fruits of the retreat are unfolding... attendance at gatherings has strengthened the last few months. And we have momentum to plan a Franciscan Day of Spirituality in the spring for members of local parishes who live in the stress of the pandemic just like we do. The love of Christ, which is at the heart of the Franciscan charism, could be a balm for them. That’s our immediate call ... sharing Francis’s heart for God with a sick and sore world. Truly – the mission is right in front of us.”

Georgia Edwards, OFS, is a member of the Immaculate Conception Fraternity in Jonesboro, GA.



Fraternity retreat attendees are front row seated left to right: Sharron Schreer, OFS; Father. Noel Danielewicz, OFM Conv.; Bernadette LaSorsa OFS, Cathy Arcand OFS. Back row left to right: Javier Cortez, OFS; Jeanne Starr, OFS; Roxanne Turner OFS Eugenia West OFS. Behind Eugenia - James West, affiliate, Jan Pitts, OFS; Georgia Edwards, OFS; Deacon Dennis Arcand, OFS; Sylvan Thuente, OFS; Carmen Madero, OFS; Sharon Loiselle, OFS; Ashe Griffin, inquirer; Sheila Geist, OFS; Sandra Bailey, OFS, and Laura Cleary, OFS - Minister

BSSF Grants Help Fraternities Share Time, Talent, Treasure with Those in Need

This article was compiled from reports by Jeanne Carter, OFS, Franciscan Family of Greensboro; Barbara Robless, OFS, Fraternity of St. Clare, Winston-Salem, NC; Ellen Ferrone, OFS, Padre Pio Fraternity of Raleigh, NC; and Sharon Loiselle, OFS, St. John Vianney Emerging Fraternity of Lithia Springs, GA.

Following in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi, four local fraternities have used \$250 grants to meet the corporal and spiritual needs of homelessness, hunger, thirst, clothing, prayer, and daily life among those in the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region.

A number of fraternities responded to a call from the BSSF Regional Executive Council's open application for \$250 grants to assist with funding their apostolates.

The grants are awarded on a rolling basis by the BSSF Regional Executive Council. Fraternities can find the application materials on the website at <https://www.bssfsfo.org/>.

The following fraternities provided reports on how they spent their funds.

The Franciscan Family of Greensboro, NC, fraternity was given a \$250 grant to purchase educational videos for their apostolate--[Pathways, the Greensboro Family Homeless Shelter](#). They purchased 16 videos that covered preschool to upper grades, including videos on math and science, learning kindness, sight words, writing strategies, and several videos demonstrating the importance of working together.

The Franciscan Family also held its Annual Christmas Celebration for the Pathways families on Dec. 9. They were given lots of gifts for their room, including a warm throw, socks, treats and a light up little Christmas tree. Each family received a gift card from Wal-Mart to help the parents buy gifts for their children or other necessities.

Each child received a gift bag with his/her name on it that contained books, toys, a pair of gloves and a stuffed animal. They also received a delicious dinner prepared by fraternity members. The families were all so grateful for their gifts. The smiles of gratitude were our gift from them, said Jeanne Carter, OFS, minister.

The Fraternity of St. Clare, Winston-Salem, NC, was blessed to receive a matching grant donation of \$250. In the past, Fraternity of St. Clare members gathered donated items in Ziploc bags, creating "Blessing Bags" for distribution to the on the streets of our community. The Blessing Bag Apostolate unites the fraternity with the poor and marginalized. In the past four years, the fraternity, had also created blessing bags to be distributed to BirthRight and Samaritan's Inn.

Due to Covid however, the Fraternity decided to serve the needs of the community

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by collecting blessing bag items in Ziploc bags and dropping them off to homeless people that members encountered in their community each day. Each Ziploc Blessing bag included: A St. Francis Holy Card, a \$5 McDonald's Gift card, a personal size bottle of hand sanitizer, a small bottle of water, a disposable face mask and a pair of socks. The McDonald's gift cards were bought with the \$250 donation from the Region and were used for another scheduled blessing bag collection of gathered items in the Fall 2021.

Leftover items were delivered to Refuge House, a Baptist Hospital Department and ER care unit for mentally ill people who go to the ER but are not admitted to the hospital.

The Padre Pio Fraternity of Raleigh, NC, and its members have been assisting with donating food and serving the homeless at the [Oak City Cares](#) multi-service center in downtown Raleigh. Padre Pio members have helped provide dinner once a month for the past eight years, serving hot and cold side dishes (salads, pasta, bread) along with our partner church, St Mary Mother of the Church in Garner.

Prior to the pandemic we would feed between 100-150 people. In addition to serving the meal we would sit with guests and visit. Although we had to package 'grab and go' type meals for parts of the pandemic, restrictions are currently easing up. We are now able to provide hot, fresh food and visit with our guests who are our sisters and brothers, the face of Christ.

The Padre Pio Fraternity has also been involved with the Catholic Charities Catholic Parish Outreach Pantry (CPO) for over eight years. The mission of CPO is to serve those in need in the community by feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. This is done while treating all clients with the dignity and respect that each person deserves.

CPO is celebrating 41 years of serving the Triangle community. They provide emergency food assistance and, when possible, small children's clothing and baby items, such as formula and diapers.

For years we have been sending them boxes of diapers each month. We also have members who help at the site with food and clothing distribution. We are blessed to be able to serve in this capacity and CPO is grateful for our volunteers and monetary assistance.

St. John Vianney Emerging Fraternity, Lithia Springs, GA, brought Christmas cheer in blessing boxes delivered through the Queen of the Angels friary in Atlanta.



From left to right are Bob Marge, Inquirer; Lee Cunningham, OFS; Maureen McFadden, OFS, Marylou Holloway, OFS, and Joan Monte, OFS.

(continued on next page)

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The gifts for the needy in the area contained gloves, toiletries, snacks, and socks. The fraternity supports the friars who work on the streets and focus on a renewal of Capuchin values—prayer, brotherhood lived in simplicity and ministering to the poor, especially immigrants.

Fraternity members gathered and wrapped the items and delivered them to the friars who distributed them to the people whom they encountered in their work.



Pictured above are members of the St. John Vianney Emerging Fraternity preparing blessing boxes for the friars at the Queen of the Angels Friary to deliver to the needy in Atlanta. At right is a carload of gifts delivered to the friars at the Queen of Angels Friary in Atlanta for distribution to the needy. Pictured is Brother Robert Perez, OFM Cap.



OFS



It's our Order's abbreviation after our names or in other writing and refers to *Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis*, the official—Latin—name of our Order. In English, we're still the **Secular Franciscan Order**.

BSSF Regional Executive Council Recap

By Nora Wessling, OFS
BSSF Secretary

God's blessings and well wishes to all as we start a New Year!

The Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional Executive Council met via Zoom on November 6, 2021. The following are the highlights of that meeting.

- Minister DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, presided.
- The minutes for the August 13, 2021 REC meeting, held at Ridgecrest during the 2021 Area Regional Gathering, were approved as written.
- Due to frequent changes, Secretary Nora continues to update the BSSF Rosters and Local Officers List. She continues to communicate with the various local fraternities regarding the NAFRA database and encourages all to keep the info updated.
- Per Minister DorothyAnn, the National Chapter has stressed that all of the fraternities' databases need to be updated 100% at the end of the year, since our Fair Share Contributions for National, for Candidates and Professed Members, will be based on what we have listed in the database.
- The presence of birth dates and profession dates of our members on the databases, as directed by National, were also discussed.
- The Nomination Committee for the BSSF Region Chapter of Elections at the August 2022 ARG will be Carmen Madero, OFS, and Sharon Loiselle, OFS. Carmen again explained the process and duties of the Committee.
- Carmen Madero, OFS, also gave an update on the Fraternity Charitable Fund Requests. Five fraternities, thus far, have received funds that they requested and each are to write an article for the *Communio*. Carmen is to put on the Regional website, what needs to be done to make a request— application forms to be used, requirements, etc.
- Treasurer Ken Brooke, OFS, reported on the third quarter total income and total expenses and said that all is going well. He also informed the REC that the 2022 Budget was approved on August 14, 2021 by the Regional Fraternity Council.
- The Spiritual Assistant Training Program will begin in January 2022 and go through August 2023 as reported by Regional Spiritual Assistant Deacon Tom Shaver, OFS. Classes will be face to face-no Zoom classes, and the only cost to the applicants will be travel and books. At that time, there were eight applications. Deacon Tom and Ken Wessling, OFS, will be the instructors
- *Communio* editor, Sharon Winzeler, OFS, stated the deadline for submitting articles for the Winter 2022 edition. The edition should be coming out at the end of January 2022.
- Other reports followed:
 1. JPIC Animator Report-Carolyn Townes OFS: Summary:
 - Included a list of activities in which she has been involved in, such as co-facilitated a prayer service, conducted a book study, participated in a Virtual Annual Gathering, convened a Racial Equity Task Force every two weeks, etc.
 - She asked Area Councilors to give her a list of the Animators in the local fraternities so she can have a contact person, in addition to the Minister, who she can give JPIC information to them. These persons in turn can disburse the info to the rest of the fraternity.

- She stressed the importance of a virtual platform she has, and asked for members' ideas or suggestions for sharing, to include not only JPIC topics, but also anything members can participate in and not be isolated or unaware.
- 2. Formation Director Report: Dianne Ambrose, OFS: Summary:
 - She discussed programs that could be provided virtually and asked for feedback. Definite decisions regarding Regional Formation programs are to follow.
- 3. Youth and Young Adult Commission Report: Joe Vodenichar, OFS. His report was discussed.
- 4. Councilor Reports from all area councilors. Summary:
 - Each Area Councilor presented either Visitations/Elections they participated in, and any other information they had learned from, or info they gave to their respective fraternities.
 - Questions and discussions occurred during their reporting, as were needed.
- Other discussions or actions by REC:
 1. Per a recommendation from the Regional Fraternity Council on August 14, 2021 at ARG, a Committee of two REC members was formed to investigate other establishments as possible options for future Area Regional Gatherings. The committee is to report back the findings at next year's RFC meeting at the ARG.
 2. Definition of apostolates and existing challenges discussed. Definition: An apostolate is to build fraternity/community—it is the majority of the members participating in an apostolate so there is fraternity bonding—a physically coming together during an apostolate. Existing challenges: distance, or Covid—not getting together. REC discussed a solution that can meet the definition of an apostolate and have fraternity bonding.
 3. A lengthy discussion regarding a group asking to be a newly forming group occurred. After much discussion and consulting Guidelines, a decision was made.
 4. The REC had other discussions regarding struggling fraternities in the Region as well as other local fraternities in the Region.

All discussions are ways the Regional Executive Council is being aware of our fraternities in the Region, and help us to make decisions on how we can provide the assist and guidance to support and help all, in these very trying times.

- The REC reviewed the schedule of the proposed Elections and Visitations, (November-May 2022) with some REC members volunteering for, and being assigned vacant Visitors positions.
- Minister DorothyAnn presented several topics, forms etc., that should be on the Regional website.
- The Minister also shared some of the topics discussed at the NAFRA Chapter.
- The REC learned that the Quinquennial is scheduled for August 3-7, 2022. There is early registration and one can go to the National website for registration information. The Q will be held in Phoenix, Arizona.
- The Minister will be sending out Annual Reports to the local fraternities, so they will get them filled out in a timely manner for her to send the National Regional Fraternity Report on the March 1 due date.
- Next REC meeting will be a Zoom meeting and is scheduled for January 29, 2022.

We thank you for this opportunity to serve and ask for your prayers as we continue in our roles as servant leaders.

BSSF Region Secretary Nora Wessling, OFS, is a member of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Augusta, GA.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS
SCHEDULE OF VISITATIONS AND ELECTIONS AND EVENTS
January 2022 to October 2022

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

2022				
Jan 7-8 * Cancelled	St. Elizabeth of Hungary/Augusta, GA	V	Christine Lukesh	Georgette Schraeder
Jan 8-9 * Cancelled Rescheduled March 12-13	Stigmata of St. Francis/Johns Creek, GA	V	David Cruz-Uribe	Jean Schneider
Jan 21-23	Secular Franciscan Spiritual Assistant Training/Maggie Valley, NC		Deacon Tom and team	
Jan 29	REC meeting Zoom 9am eastern time			
Feb 5 *	Mother Cabrini/Anderson, SC	E	Christine Lukesh	Fr. Bob Menard, OFM
Feb 12-13	Channel of Peace/Chattanooga, TN	V	Sharon Loiselle	Jean Schneider
March 8	Fraternity of St. Clare/Winston-Salem, NC	E	Martha Roman	Georgette Schraeder
March 12-13	Stigmata of St. Francis/Johns Creek, GA	V	David Cruz-Uribe	Jean Schneider
April 9-10 *	Franciscan Family of Greensboro/Greensboro, NC	V	Ellen Ferrone	Deacon Tom
April 22-24	Secular Franciscan Spiritual Assistant Training/Maggie Valley, NC		Deacon Tom and team	
April 30	Seven Dolours of the Blessed Virgin Mary/Franklin, TN	E		
May 14	St. Clare of Assisi/Aiken, SC	E		
May 14-15 *	Sts. Francis and Clare/Knoxville, TN	V		
June 10-12	Secular Franciscan Spiritual Assistant Training/Maggie Valley, NC		Deacon Tom and team	
June 25-26	St. Joseph Cupertino/Bessemer, AL	V		
July 14	St. Clare/Asheville, NC	E		
August 3-7	20th Quinquennial Congress "Q" Sheraton Hotel Phoenix, Arizona			

Aug. 19-21 Annual Regional Gathering, Ridgecrest, NC

Five Georgia Martyrs Fraternity Hosts “Fatima Rosary Rally”

By Lawrence Lynch, OFS



Members of the Five Georgia Fraternity, St. Simons Island, GA, held a “Fatima Rosary Rally” on October 16, 2021, on the grounds of their parish, St. William Catholic Church. The Rosary was intentionally said at a location near a main road so that the participants and the large Fatima Rosary Banner would be seen by walkers and persons driving by our church.

The words written on the banner were an invitation for onlookers to pray with us: “Praying the Rosary for America. Please join us.”

About 25 parishioners and fraternity members attended the event which celebrated the 104th anniversary of the Miracle of the Sun and the final Fatima Apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the shepherd children.

The purpose of the rally was to pray the rosary for our Church, our country and our world. The fraternity members led the prayers and were joined by the responses of parishioners asking Our Lady’s intercession to God for Peace on Earth. Fraternity members who attended the event were: Lois Cutia OFS; Mary Jane Marsh, OFS; Patty Bergeron OFS; Ann Mallon OFS; Georgia Ann Markley OFS; Larry Lynch, OFS, Colette Jackson, Candidate; George and Maggie Hodges, Inquirer; and Damian Fedorko, Inquirer.

Lawrence Lynch, OFS, is a member of the Five Georgia Martyrs Fraternity.

**The Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region
Triennial Election** is scheduled for August 20, 2022,
at the Annual Regional Gathering.

All Secular Franciscans are eligible to nominate someone professed for the Regional Executive Council.

TIMELINE:

January- Notice of Election published; Call for Nominations

March 25- Nominations close

April- Nominations Committee contacts nominees

June 10 - Deadline for nomination forms returned from nominees to accept or decline nomination

June 16 - Start nine-day novena of prayer for Spirit-led election

June 24 - Resumes of nominees sent to voting members of Regional Council

July 29 - Start nine-day novena of prayer for Spirit-led election

PROCEDURE:

For the office of Minister, Vice Minister, Secretary, Treasurer, Formation Director, Area One Councilor, Area Two Councilor, Area Three Councilor

email or mail Nomination Form to both members of Nominating Committee

1. Carmen Madero, OFS ucougar2@comcast.net

515 Terra Verte, Peachtree City, GA 30269

2. Sharon Loiselle, OFS sharonloiselle@gmail.com

75 Cottage Walk, Dallas, GA 30157

(Nominations are sent to both committee members to avoid a nomination being lost. Committee members will continually cross reference nominations.)

DO NOT send nominations to the REC. Nominations are **confidential**.

Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional Executive Council Roster

Minister: DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS

Vice Minister: Carmen Madero, OFS

Secretary: Nora Wessling, OFS

Treasurer: Ken Brooke, OFS

Appointed Formation Director: Ellen Ferrone, OFS

Spiritual Assistant:
Deacon Tom Shaver, OFS

Area Councilors

Area 1

David Cruz-Uribe, OFS; Sharon Loisselle, OFS

AL: Bessemer;

GA: Athens, Blairsville, Conyers, Duluth, Jonesboro;

TN: Chattanooga, Knoxville, Nashville

Area 2

Betti Pettinati-Longinotti, OFS; Christine Lukesh, OFS

GA: Augusta, St. Simons Island;

NC: Asheville, Charlotte, Hendersonville, Newton;

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

Area 3

Martha Roman, OFS

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

SC: Garden City

Archivist: Sara Nell Boggs, OFS

Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation Animator
Carolyn D. Townes, OFS

Multicultural Commission Chair
Position Vacant

Youth/Young Adult Fraternal Animator
Joe Vodenichar, OFS

Prayer Ministry (online prayer requests)

Area 1: John Martin, OFS

Area 2: Dorothy Huebner, OFS

Area 3: Bob Sabisch, OFS

Fraternity prayer coordinators submit prayer requests.

Communio Editor
Sharon Winzeler, OFS

The Praises of God

By St. Francis of Assisi

You are love, charity; you are wisdom,
You are humility, You are patience,
You are beauty, You are meekness,
You are security, You are rest,
You are gladness and joy,
You are our hope,
You are justice,
You are moderation,
You are all our riches to sufficiency.

You are beauty, You are meekness,
You are the protector, You are our
custodian and defender,
You are strength, You are refreshment,
You are our hope,
You are our faith, You are our charity,
You are all our sweetness, You are our
eternal life:

Great and wonderful Lord, Almighty
God, Merciful Savior.

Amen

