

Communio

That All May Be One

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

Fall 2019

A Thought for Thanksgiving

“All-powerful, most holy, Almighty and supreme God,
Holy and just Father, Lord King of heaven and earth
we thank You for Yourself

for through Your holy will and through Your only Son
with the Holy Spirit

You have created everything spiritual and corporal
and after making us in Your own image and likeness,
You placed us in paradise. ...



We thank You
for as through Your Son You created us,
so through Your holy love with which You loved us
You brought about His birth
as true God and true man
by the glorious, ever-virgin, most blessed, holy Mary
and You willed to redeem us captives
through His cross and blood and death. ...

[W]e humbly ask
our Lord Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son,
in Whom You were well pleased,
together with the Holy Spirit,
the Paraclete, to give You thanks for everything
as it pleases You and Him,
Who always satisfies You in everything,
through Whom You have done so much for us.
Alleluia!”

From “The Earlier Rule” of St. Francis
Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint
(pp. 81–83)

The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate





Editor’s Journal

While I was in Assisi in September, I visit the *Duomo Santa Maria Assunta* (Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption) in Spoleto.

Pope Innocent III consecrated the stunning cathedral in 1198, the same year that the 16-year-old future St. Francis and his fellow citizens stormed the Rocca Maggiore, the fortress above Assisi. Innocent III is also the pope who, in 1209, gave Francis permission for his way of life.

What I wanted to see during my visit, for some book research I’m doing, was an icon crucifix that looks quite similar to the San Damiano Crucifix.



Icon crucifixes were the norm in Francis’s time. This one was painted by a man named Alberto Sotio (or Sozio) in 1187. It was originally in the Church of Sts. John and Paul in Spoleto. At 9 feet by 6.8 feet, it’s larger than the San Damiano Crucifix, which measures 6.9 feet by 4.26 feet. It’s generally thought that a Syrian monk in Spoleto painted the Crucifix, perhaps around 1150.



Sotio’s crucifix is in a little chapel near the cathedral’s sanctuary. I spent time looking at the crucifix, which is called “*Christus Triumphans*” (“Christ Alive”). Christ’s eyes are open, looking out serenely as does Christ on the San Damiano Crucifix.

On the opposite side of the cathedral is the *Cappella de Reliquie* (Chapel of Relics), where there’s a letter that St. Francis wrote to Brother Leo. I’d had no idea that there was anything from St. Francis here, so it was a wonderful surprise to find it and to see St. Francis’s handwriting.

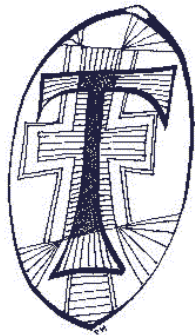
The relic is behind glass in a niche. An English-language translation is near the relic and I copied it:
 “To brother Leo, your brother Francis, greetings and peace. I tell you, dear son, as would a mother, that all we have discussed on the way, I will synthesize it briefly in one word of advice so that it will not be necessary for you to come to see me. Here is the advice that I give you: whatever way seems to you most pleasing to the Lord God in order to follow him and his poverty, do it. Be sure that by doing so you will receive the Lord God’s blessing and that you will be in obedience to me. However, if it is necessary for the consolation of your soul that you come back to see me, do come.”

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.

In This Issue

Minister’s Message	3
Fraternity of St. Clare Notes	3
New REC	4
RSA: Dismas and the Cross	6
Formation Director	8
Directions for Zoom Room	9
Fraternity in Procession	9
Transitus of St. Francis	10
OFS Websites	11
Three-Day Celebration	12
New Professed/New Candidate	12
JPIC	13
REC: Lazarus and the Rich Man	14
Fraternity Anniversary	16
Busy Season	17
Calendar	17
REC Roster	19
New Councils	19

Minister's Message



May the Lord give you peace!

October is one of my favorite months. The weather starts to get a little cooler, the leaves change color and begin to fall from the trees, the full moon seems bigger and brighter when it makes its appearance, squirrels are busy gathering acorns and making nests in the trees, and the daylight gets shorter by a minute or so each day.

It's the month of the rosary, Respect Life month, breast cancer awareness month, and the month in which I was married 45 years ago.

As Franciscans, we celebrate the Transitus of St. Francis and his feast day, coming together as family, grateful to be on this path of shared spirituality.

We Secular Franciscans are "called to make our own contribution, inspired by the person and message of St. Francis of Assisi, towards a civilization in which the dignity of the human person, shared responsibility, and love may be living realities" (General Constitutions, Art. 18.1).

Catholic social teaching focuses on the dignity of the human person in one of its foundational themes. Every person has value (dignity) because they are created in God's image and likeness. In our social environment today, it seems to me that we are seeing, hearing, and experiencing examples that do not value or dignify each and every person.

Our Trinitarian God is relational; and because we are created in God's image, we, too, are meant to be in relationship. Article 13 of our Rule guides us in our Franciscan way of relating to people. Two key points, I feel, are accepting people both as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ. It is quite a challenge to live and apply our Rule, in case you haven't noticed since you began your Franciscan journey.

As this month of October continues, I ask you to reflect upon "Who are my brother and my sister?" and "What steps can I take to accept people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ?"

May God help us to grow and abound in love for Jesus and for one another by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Thank you, dear brothers and sisters, for your prayers offered for my recovery from hip replacement surgery; because of God's will and your prayers, I'm doing very well. Thank you for re-electing me as your regional minister to serve you for a second term. I am humbled and grateful for your loving support. God bless you and keep you!

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.

Fraternity of St. Clare News Notes

The Fraternity of St. Clare, Winston-Salem, N.C. has two new apostolates:

- Funeral and Bereavement — those who choose to attend funerals at local Catholic churches, the corporal work of mercy to bury the dead;
- Samaritan Inn of Winston-Salem where fraternity members volunteer quarterly at the local shelter with food preparation or overnight stays.

The fraternity celebrated the Transitus of St. Francis, joined by Martha and David Roman, OFS, from Blessed John Duns Scotus fraternity, Garden City, S.C., on Oct. 3, at Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church in Winston-Salem. They also came to the profession for Bob Dorsch, OFS.

Introducing the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis (BSSF) Regional Executive Council



The Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region's new Regional Executive Council, elected Aug. 10, in the Chapter of Elections during the Annual Regional Gathering: Ellen Ferrone, OFS (left), Area 3 councilor; Betti Pettinati-Longinotti, OFS, Area 2 councilor; Sharon Loiselle, OFS, Area 1 councilor; Ken Brooke, OFS, treasurer; Carmen Madero, OFS, vice minister; Nora Wessling, OFS, secretary; Dianne Ambrose, OFS, formation director; Christine Lukesh, OFS, Area 2 councilor; Martha Roman, OFS, Area 3 councilor. Joshua Molitor, OFS (seated), national councilor, election president. Not shown: DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, minister; David Cruz-Urbe, OFS, Area 1 councilor. (Photo by Carolyn D. Townes, OFS)

Minister: DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS

Professed: May 7, 1999, Pax et Bonum Fraternity, Camden, N.J.

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

- minister, 2005–2011
- formation director, 2002–2005

BSSF Region:

- elected minister Aug. 13, 2016
- appointed minister, November 2015–August 2016
- elected Area 2 councilor, August 2013–November 2015
- appointed Area 3 councilor, April 2012–August 2013

Vice Minister: Carmen Madero, OFS

Professed: Oct. 5, 2005, Immaculate Conception Fraternity, Jonesboro, Ga.

- Served as vice minister

Transferred to St. Anthony of Padua, Fayetteville, N.C.

- formation director, 2018 – 2019

- minister, 2012–2018
- secretary, 2009–2012

Current fraternity: Immaculate Conception, Jonesboro, Ga.

BSSF Region:

- appointed vice minister early 2016
- appointed Area 3 councilor, 2014–2016

Secretary: Nora Wessling, OFS

Professed: July 13, 2008, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Augusta, Ga.

Current fraternity: St. Elizabeth of Hungary

- vice minister, 2018 to present
- secretary, two terms (six years)
- spirituality councilor, one term—three years

BSSF Region

- First term on council

Treasurer: Kenneth Brooke, OFS

Professed: June 23, 2012, Stigmata of St. Francis Fraternity, Duluth, Ga.

Current fraternity: Stigmata of St. Francis

- minister, 2015–present

BSSF Region

- elected to first term as treasurer, Aug. 13, 2016

Formation Director: Dianne Ambrose, OFS

Professed: Dec. 9, 2007, in San Damiano Fraternity, Athens, Ga.

Current Fraternity: San Damiano

- vice minister, 2015–2018
- formation director, 2012–2015

BSSF Region:

- Elected to first term as formation director, Aug. 13, 2016

Area 1 Councilor: David Cruz-Uribe, OFS

Professed: May 19, 1991, Thomas More Fraternity, Berkeley, Calif.

Current Fraternity: St. Joseph Cupertino, Bessemer, Ala.

- council member, June 2017 to present

BSSF Region:

- First term on council

Area 1 Councilor: Sharon Loiselle, OFS

Professed: Dec. 8, 2007, Immaculate Conception Fraternity, Jonesboro, Ga.

- minister, 2010–2013

Current Fraternity: St. John Vianney, Emerging Community, Lithia Springs, Ga.

- treasurer, 2016 to present
- leader 2013-2016

BSSF Region:

- First term on council

Area 2 Councilor: Betti Pettinati-Longinotti, OFS

Professed: Aug. 10, 2003, Fraternity of St. Clare, Winston Salem, N.C.

Current Fraternity: Fraternity of St. Clare

- vice minister, elected May 2019
- minister, secretary, 2004–2026
- councilor, two terms

BSSF Region:

- Appointed youth and young adult animator, 2004-2010 (I took a year off, 2008-09). World Youth Day, Cologne, 2005; Led youth mission trips for BSSF to St. Francis Inn, Philadelphia, summers 2007 and 2009

Area 2 Councilor: Christine Lukesh, OFS

Professed: Dec. 3, 1999, St. Francis of the Gospel Fraternity, Hewitt, N.J.

- Served two terms as treasurer

Transferred to St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity, Butler, N.J.

- Served as formation director

Current fraternity: Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, since 2017

BSSF Region:

- First term on council

Area 3 Councilor: Ellen Ferrone, OFS

Professed: Dec 2, 2017, Padre Pio Fraternity, Raleigh, N.C.

Current Fraternity: Padre Pio

- councilor, 2018 to present
- JPIC animator, 1/2015 to current

BSSF Region:

- First term on council

Area 3 Councilor: Martha Roman, OFS

Professed: June 13, 2009, St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity, Charlotte, N.C.

- minister, 2015–2018
- secretary, 2012–2015

Current fraternity: Blessed John Duns Scotus, Garden City, S.C.

- Appointed formation director, early 2019 to present



Regional Spiritual Assistant: Brother Dismas and the Cross

By Rev. Mr. Thomas R. Shaver, OFS

When I was professed in 1967, we followed the Leonine Rule of Pope Leo XIII.

As part of the Profession, we chose names; the name I chose was Brother Dismas. I chose that name because in my young way of thinking Dismas, the good thief, acknowledged his sinfulness before God to his companion on the cross, Jesus Christ. This “confession” resulted, for me, in the first canonization of a saint by virtue of the words spoken by the thief: “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus’s response, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:42–43 NAB)

Now, after almost 52 years, I find myself revisiting the above cited passage and perhaps looking at my life in retrospect. Over the years, I have considered my Profession and choice of name. I have visited several Scripture passages. Two passages that I often go back to in addition to the reference above are the stories of Isaiah, chapter 6, and Peter found in Luke, chapter 5.

In Isaiah, we hear him repent of his sins:

“Then I said, ‘Woe is me; I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!’ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, holding an ember which he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with it. ‘See,’ he said, ‘now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed, your sin purged.’ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?’ ‘Here I am,’ I said; ‘send me!’ (Isaiah 6: 5-8)

With Isaiah’s words, I am a liar from a nation of liars (paraphrase), God acknowledged Isaiah’s conversion, purified his heart, and sent him out to proclaim God’s message to the Hebrew people.

In the second Scripture passage, from Luke, Peter acknowledges his sins in a similar way, a conversion moment, and receives the commission to save souls:

“When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, ‘Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.’ For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.’ When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him” (Luke 5:8-11).

These three Scripture passages — the conversion of Isaiah, Peter, and Dismas (the good thief) — illustrate for me the great graces available to us/me as we/I journey through life. Certainly, I must avail myself of them and accept these gifts given freely but conditioned by repentance. I must from time to time look inwardly to my soul and ask myself whether my heart is truly where it needs to be in respect to my relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This is the message given to us by our Seraphic Father Francis and interpreted by Holy Mother Church through our Secular Franciscan Rule of 1978.

Article 7 of our Rule states:

“United by their vocation as ‘brothers and sisters of penance’ 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.’ Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily.

On this road to renewal the sacrament of reconciliation is the privileged sign of the Father’s mercy and the source of grace.”

One of the misconceptions about conversion is that it is a once-in-a-lifetime event. The reality is that conversion (metanoia) is an ongoing process. Daily we must search our hearts and make choices. Do our choices ring true to the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Sometimes yes, more times, I suspect, no.

Between my baptismal name, Thomas, and Dismas, my name taken so long ago, I have to revisit daily my walk with the Christ. Both Thomas, “My Lord and My God,” and Dismas, “Remember me when you come into your Kingdom,” had significant conversion moments. These words I mutter under my breath whenever I gaze upon the cross of my risen Savior. May we all acknowledge him in our daily lives and seek forgiveness for our shortcomings.

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.



Regional Formation Director

Greetings, Brothers and Sisters.

First, I would like to thank you for allowing me to serve you for another three years as regional formation director. I'm very honored and humbled that you and the Holy Spirit would allow me to continue to serve.

I hope everyone had a wonderful feast day of St Francis.

As I think about St. Hedwig and St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (shared feast day, Oct. 16), I'm reminded of two things: First, we all can help the poor no matter our station in life, and as our lives change so can we change how we assist the poor and needy in our communities. Second, I'm reminded that we all strive for a life of perfection, and though we might not have mystical revelations the Lord still talks to us and guides us. We just have to be quiet and listen.

I have sent out a survey on the Zoom Room to Regional Executive Council (REC), local formation directors, and local ministers.

We will stay with the third Tuesday at 7 p.m. EST until January 2020. Catholic Social Teaching will run through December 2019. I have had only three responses; all preferred the third Tuesday. So, if you cannot make that day and would like another day of the month, I **NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU**. I cannot serve your formation needs if I do not know what they are.

The Zoom Room is open to all REC members, local formation directors, formation team members, local council members, spiritual assistants, and all professed members. If you can't participate, ask someone from your fraternity to represent you and bring the information back to your fraternity. We also record the sessions and put them on the BSSF website (bssfsfo.org) thanks to Sharon Winzeler, OFS, our webmaster.

I'm also planning spring workshops. Tentative subjects: How to pray the liturgical hours, ongoing-formation topics, and St Clare. As a region, we have done little study on St Clare.

Please let me know if any **area retreats** have been planned, as well as their dates and locations. I have not received that information from anyone, and I do not want to conflict with anything else going on in an area.

Some of the emails I am sending out will be repeats, but we have some new formation directors and a little refresher is always helpful. New topics will also be addressed, so please look at all of them. In addition, do not forget our national website secularfranciscansusa.org.

Coming soon: a questionnaire on what you have enjoyed about how I've delivered information and past topics. I will also be asking how I can better communicate with you and what topics you would like to see addressed.

You will find the directions on how to get on a Zoom Room on page 9 of this issue. Region pays for the room, so there is no cost to you. We can accommodate up to 100 people, so we have plenty of space.

In November, I will start a monthly round-table discussion in which we all can participate through email. I also have started offering to newly elected councils a course on council duties, how to work together as a council, and ideas of conflict resolution within the fraternity.

I NEED and WANT your feedback so that I can assist you more effectively.

Thank you for all your calls and emails of encouragement and love.

Peace and Love to you all.

Dianne Ambrose, OFS

ambrosedianne6@gmail.com or Talk or Text # 706-338-2402

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

Directions for Zoom Room

So, you ask yourself, what is a Zoom Communication Room?

Zoom is a cloud video conferencing tool where participants can see and hear each other in real time. It can be used on Windows, Mac, iOS, and Android. You can access it on a desktop, laptop, smartphone, or tablet.

There's no special software to download, and it is very user friendly. Whatever device you are using, you will need to have a web camera and audio. Most devices have these built into them. If you do not have access to a "smart" device, you can also call in and hear and talk but cannot see or be seen by the other participants. Optimum usage is by having the audio and video access.

The first thing you need to do if you are on a PC or Mac is to log on to <https://zoom.us> and click **Sign Up for Free**. Enter the email you wish to use and then click **Sign Up**. You will receive a confirmation email; click on the link to activate your account. Enter your name and password. Remember to keep your password handy so you will have it to sign on for meetings. Click Activate to activate your Zoom account.

If you are on a tablet or smartphone, go to your APP store on IOS, visit the Apple Store and search Zoom and click to download. For Android visit your Google Play and search Zoom, Click Install. You will sign up for an account the same way as above.

The account and usage are free.

If you do not have access to any of these devices and only have a phone landline or cell, you can call in to the meeting.

A week before each meeting you will receive an invite from me. It will have a link for you to click onto that will take you to the room or further down in the message will be the phone number. You will then receive a reminder invite the day before our meeting.

We have a permanent room. Our meeting room ID # is 6421174193. If you access by phone to call in, dial 1-614-558-8656 and use the meeting ID 642 -117-4193.

Further Questions: Contact Dianne Ambrose, OFS, BSSF regional formation director, at ambrosedianne6@gmail.com or at 706-338-2402.



Members of St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity marched in the procession during the Diocese of Charlotte, N.C.'s Eucharistic Congress in September.

Oct. 3: Transitus of St. Francis Commemorated in the Region

St. Thomas More Fraternity, Wilmington, N.C., celebrated the Transitus in the chapel at St. Mark Catholic Church in Wilmington on October 3.

Music was lead by the St. Mark choir director. At the conclusion of the service all professed members of the fraternity renewed their Profession promises.

Then we gathered with our guests for dinner at our most favorite local restaurant, The Harp, owned by one of our professed members. (Photo courtesy of Joe Wells)



St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity, Hendersonville, N.C., celebrated the Transitus in Our Lady of the Angels Chapel at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Hendersonville.

Several parishioners joined the fraternity for the service, which tells of St. Francis of Assisi's transitus (Latin for "Passing") from earthly to eternal life.

Greg Savold, OFS, Diane Salkewicz, OFS, and Joanita Nellenbach, OFS, narrated the story of that special night.

A basket with pieces of bread was passed among the attendees as this part of the story was read: "On Friday, the 2nd of October, Francis asked for bread, and he blessed it and, like Christ at the Last Supper, distributed it to all present, while the Gospel of St. John was read beginning at the Passion (John 13:1–17)."

The service concluded with fraternity members renewing their permanent commitment to the Gospel

life. Nancy Torres, OFS, minister, received the renewal of commitment. (Photo by Doug Salkewicz)

TRANSITUS, from page 10

In Jonesboro, Ga.,
**Immaculate
 Conception
 Fraternity and OFM
 Conventual Friars**
 celebrated the Transitus in
 St. Philip Benizi Church.

Carrying the Franciscan
 habit and placing it at the
 altar were Father Luis
 Palacios Rodriguez, OFM
 Conv.; Father Thomas
 Reist, OFM Conv.; Laura
 Cleary, OFS; and Sandra
 Bailey, inquirer.

This was a bi-lingual
 service, with readings,
 songs, and the homily,
 offered by Father Santo
 Chricchio, OFM Conv., in
 both Spanish and English.

At the end of the
 service, the friars stood in
 front of the altar, and raised
 their hands to give a
 Franciscan blessing to all
 present: “The Lord bless
 you and keep you. The
 Lord make his face shine
 on you and be gracious to
 you. The Lord turn his face
 toward you and give you
 peace.”

Father Santo held up a
 San Damiano cross
 containing a relic of St.
 Francis. Inspired by St.

Francis’s life of love and service, the friars, seculars, and congregation concluded with a song of commitment to “Build the City of God” in English and in Spanish. Reception followed.



Friars give a blessing during the Transitus: Father Thomas Reist, OFM Conv. (left), parochial vicar, Holy Cross Church, Atlanta; Father John Koziol, OFM Conv., pastor of St. Philip Benizi Church; Father Santo Cricchio, OFM Conv.; and Father Luis Palacios Rodriguez, OFM Conv., parochial vicar, St. Philip Benizi.

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



Emerging Community holds three-day St. Francis celebration

By Nanette Perron, OFS

The members of Mother Cabrini, Emerging Community, experienced a most joyful three days together!

It all began with the celebration of the Transitus of our holy father Francis on Oct. 3. Our Franciscan family of Friars Minor and Secular Franciscans and members of our new YouFra group, participated.

Mother Cabrini sponsored a reception afterward to continue the celebration, as well as providing an opportunity for visitors to witness what being a Franciscan is all about.

On the evening St. Francis's feast day, Oct. 4, we and the friars, along with our Franciscan youth, had a potluck dinner. As is the case with ALL Franciscan gatherings, there was plenty of food, joy, and laughter!

The next day we had the blessing of the animals. As an apostolate Mother Cabrini, EC, sponsored a donation of cat and dog pet supplies to benefit a local organization: Meow Manor, Wag Shack, and Freedom Fences. Approximately 25 dogs and one cat (brave soul!).

I look forward to this time we get to spend together, it really drives home the meaning of fraternity!

Nanette Perron, OFS, is leader of Mother Cabrini, Emerging Community, in Anderson, S.C.

Congratulations!

Newly Professed

Fraternity of St. Clare

Winston-Salem, N.C., Oct. 4
Robert Dorsch, OFS

Congratulations!

New Candidate

Fraternity of St. Clare

Winston-Salem, Aug. 13
Elizabeth Sandy, OFS

Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation: Franciscan Peace and our Unconscious Biases – Part One

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS

“[Jesus] came to his hometown and began to teach the people in their synagogue, so that they were astounded and said, ‘Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this?’ And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, ‘Prophets are not without honor except in their own country and in their own house.’ And he did not do many deeds of power there, because of their unbelief. (Matthew 13:54-58)

The “people” who Jesus came to teach thought they knew this man Jesus. They were with him as he grew up and they knew his family members. They had a picture of the Jesus they thought they knew.

One of my favorite quotes is by George Bernard Shaw: “The only man I know who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measurements anew each time he sees me. The rest go on with their old measurements and expect me to fit them.”

Jesus grew beyond the boy or young man those people once knew. He grew in age and wisdom, the Scriptures tell us. But the image of the Jesus who taught in the synagogue, didn’t fit the image of the Jesus they had in their heads. Because of that, they took offense at him, as the text tells us.

Why would they take offense if he was teaching the wisdom of the Scriptures? It’s like those religious leaders who were ready to hurl Jesus off the cliff after he read the Isaiah passage. First, they were amazed, then their amazement turned to anger when Jesus said he was the fulfillment of that passage. Why did they become angry enough to want to kill him? Because the image in their minds did not match the person standing before them.

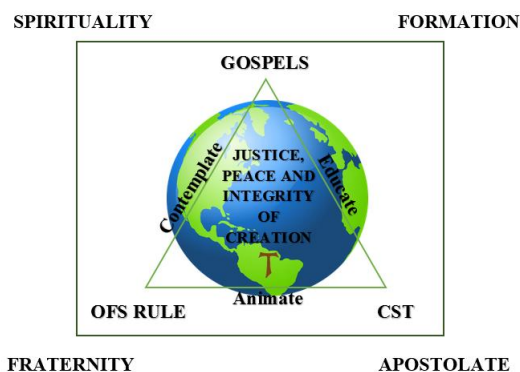
We tend to get very indignant when our image of the world is challenged or compromised in any way. These images are based on a thought that the mind wants to preserve so it can feel in mental harmony. But that harmony triggers our selective perception which makes our minds miss all the contradictory information. These images become the construct of what is known as bias.

What is a bias? A bias is a preference for or against an individual or group that interferes with or influences fair judgment. Bias can be positive or negative, conscious or unconscious.

Unconscious Biases are the assumptions, stereotypes, and unintentional actions (positive or negative) we make toward others based on identity labels like skin color, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, or ability. Because our unconscious associations are stored in our subconscious, we may act on our biases without even realizing it.

Unconscious bias is far more prevalent than conscious prejudice and often incompatible with one’s conscious values. Certain scenarios can activate unconscious attitudes and beliefs. For example, biases may be more prevalent when multitasking or working under time pressure, or in a perceived threatening situation.

Though unconscious biases live in our subconscious, they can be hard to spot — but sometimes all we need is a moment to pause and reflect honestly on our thoughts and behaviors. Big or small, our actions shape the world around us.



According to research, out of the 11 million pieces of information coming to you at any one time, the conscious components of the human brain can process 40 frames of information in a single second; while the subconscious components of the human brain can process 1.2 million frames of information in that same single second. So guess who's driving the bus? Part of that 1.2 million in the background drives our decision making and part of that 40 in the foreground is what we use to rationalize those decisions — to make ourselves feel better.

Because of all that data processing around in our minds, we need shortcuts for ordinary, everyday tasks and situations. So our mind has formulated these shortcuts or pictures that can make it easier and faster to make decisions and judgments. These pictures have been programmed through family, school, authority figures, cultural upbringing, media, and the like.

How do we reverse our long-held pictures and beliefs, especially the potentially harmful ones? We must be willing to question our beliefs, especially when they affect the livelihood of another person. If we are using those beliefs, those biases, to slander or malign another person, we must stop and ask ourselves some hard questions. Why am I so dead set on maligning this person? What if I took the opposite view?

Unconscious biases are difficult to change — but not impossible. They are not permanent. In fact, they are malleable and steps can be taken to limit and disrupt their impact on our thoughts and behaviors. There are actions we can take and techniques we can use to minimize the impact of unconscious bias on our thoughts and behaviors.

First and foremost, as Franciscans we are called to pray — pray for right judgment and right action. Before you make a judgment based on that subconscious image in your head, take a Franciscan pause....

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, St. Clare of Assisi Fraternity, Aiken, S.C., is the JPIC Animator for the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region, the National JPIC Animator, and a member of the International Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.



Regional Spiritual Assistant: Lazarus and the Rich Man: We vs. They?

By Rev. Mr. Thomas R. Shaver OFS

I recently had the opportunity to give a homily on the story of Lazarus and the rich man from the Gospel of Luke (Lk 16: 19–31 NAB).

As I prepared the homily, I found myself implementing the process of Gaze, Consider, Contemplate, and Imitate that St. Clare recommended to her friend St. Agnes of Hungary when contemplating the mirror of the cross.

While my process wasn't *exactly* what St. Clare wrote to Agnes, it was probably closer to the process of *lectio divina*; but the results were the same and I think these processes aren't all that different. I'd like to share a few of my thoughts on this reflection.

St. Luke used as one of his major themes the "great reversal." Essentially this literary approach looked at certain situations of the Gospel narrative and compared them, then illustrated how God works in wonderful ways. For example, Mary's prayer, the Magnificat, found in Luke, chapter 1, is one of his reversals messages.

Other examples of the great reversal include the Sermon on the Mount, where Luke includes the Blessings and Woes as the beatitudes are spoken, compared to Matthew's eight beatitudes which do not include woes. Overriding message of the great reversals is that God watches over the poor and disenfranchised, while punishing those who ignore the plight of these little ones.

The message of the Gospel passage of Lazarus and the rich man, simply stated, is concern for the poor and for justice. Lazarus seeks simply to eat the crumbs from the rich man's table, while

the rich man ignores the poor beggar. We know that the rich man is aware of Lazarus because he mentions his name to Abraham in his plea for help from the netherworld. Several key “take aways” from this passage are:

1. Social injustice and the plight of the poor, simply stated, is a comparison of the rich man’s excessive wealth and total disregard for the poor beggar.
2. The consequences of the injustice, hell (netherworld) for the rich man, heaven (bosom of Abraham) for the poor man. Perhaps another way of saying this is “salvation vs. damnation,” neither of which is predetermined. They are our choice.
3. The implication of the failure to listen to the prophets suggests the failure to listen to Jesus Christ: “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead” (Lk16: 31).

As I read various commentaries on this Gospel and reflected on its meaning, I was reminded of an event that occurred at our Annual Regional Gathering in August. After a presentation on justice and peace with respect to the immigration issues plaguing our country, a small group of brothers and sisters were overheard commenting on the presentation with rather disparaging comments regarding the plight of the immigrants at our southern border. Unbeknownst to them, a Franciscan friar overheard the conversation and commented on it during his homily the next morning at Mass. Thank you, Father Mike. You called us out for our lack of empathy and respect for human dignity.

We all have choices to make which reach from simple consideration to action. These choices all have consequences.

A little acronym that I picked up in counseling was “SOC”: situations, options, consequences. For the unnamed rich man, the situation was his lack of empathy for the poor man. His options were twofold, change or continue his failure to live the message of the prophets. The consequences of his choice were hell. From the movie, “Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade,” the words of the knight in the cave ring true, “He chose poorly.”

My brothers and sisters, we have choices to make. How are we approaching them? Do we see Jesus Christ and seek the counsel of the Gospel, or do we seek our own failed counsel?

Articles 4 and 5 of our Rule direct us to the Gospel:

Article 4: “The rule and life of the Secular Franciscan 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 5: “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.”

In the Book of Wisdom, chapter 1, verse 1, the author states, “Seek righteousness.” We can change the word “righteousness” to “justice” without changing the meaning of the

message and then join verses 1 and 15 “Seek justice ... for justice is immortal.”

The message here is simple, only God is immortal. Thus, justice or righteousness is God. Do we seek justice or do we let “political correctness,” as failed as that concept is, rule our thinking? Psalm 24, verses 3 through 5 might be appropriate for this issue of Franciscan life:

“Who may go up the mountain of the LORD? Who can stand in his holy place?
The clean of hand and pure of heart, who has not given his soul to useless things,
what is vain. He will receive blessings from the LORD, and justice from his
saving God.”

You and I are faced with the same concern and responsibility that the rich man chose to ignore; namely, the injustice of the plight of the poor and disenfranchised. We are called to see the face of Jesus Christ in everyone we meet — rich, poor, or in between. Do we see him or turn our gaze away? Are we like the rich man’s brothers who are mentioned at the end of this gospel passage:

“Then Abraham said, ‘If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead?’” (16:31)

Are we listening to the right message?

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.



St. Michael the Archangel Fraternity, Spartanburg, S.C., recently celebrated its 15th anniversary. Since its canonical establishment on Aug. 5, 2004, the fraternity has grown to include members from St. Paul the Apostle Church and Jesus Our Risen Savior Church in Spartanburg; All Saints Church in Lake Wylie, S.C.; and St. John the Baptist Church in Tryon, N.C. (Photo by Michaeleen Davis, OFS)

Fraternity has busy fall season

Blessed John Duns Scotus Fraternity, Garden City, S.C., is very happy to be greeting three new, already professed members, transferring to our community.

They are Kathy Lapsovich, OFS, from Pennsylvania; Patricia McGrath, OFS, from Virginia; and Francis Friedman, OFS, from Hilton Head, S.C. Welcome Sisters!



Members of Blessed John Duns Scotus Fraternity prepare meals for New Directions and Homeless.

Congratulations to Martha Roman, OFS, our formation director, who was elected as an Area 3 councilor during the Regional Executive Council election at our Annual Regional Gathering in August.

The residents of New Directions and Homeless appeared to enjoy the trays filled with our homemade Franciscan chicken pot pie!

We spent an enjoyable evening singing and praying, as we celebrated the St. Francis Transitus, prepared for us by our sister, Kathleen Barnes, OFS, our treasurer. Thank you, Kathleen!

Our council is very busy now preparing for Christmas when we will make breakfast for the youth at Seacoast Academy, and Santa will be giving out gifts for the residents placed there by the South Carolina Department of Social Services or the courts.

Thank you to our vice minister, Paul Di Stefano, OFS; secretary, Mary Sacavage, OFS, along with Martha and Kathleen, who help keep us focused with our monthly agendas, ongoing formation, apostolates, study of our Rule, and prayer. And thank you to all of our fraternity members. Thank you, Lord. T

BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS REGION CALENDAR SCHEDULE OF VISITATIONS (V) AND ELECTIONS (E) October 2019 through December 2020

* confirmed	V+ follow-up visit	(observers in parentheses)
Date	Fraternity/Group & Location	V Fraternal/Pastoral Visitors E Presider/Ecclesial Witness
Oct. 26–27*	Padre Pio, Raleigh, NC	V DorothyAnn Rowland (Martha Roman)/Joanita Nellenbach
Nov. 1–2*	St. John Vianney, EC, Lithia Springs, GA	V Carmen Madero/Faye Martin

CALENDAR, from page 17

Nov. 8–9*	Crucified Christ, N. Charleston, SC	V	DorothyAnn Rowland (Christine Lukesh)/Dcn. Tom Shaver
Nov. 22–23*	St. Francis of the Hills, Hendersonville, NC	V	DorothyAnn Rowland/Ken Wessling
Dec. 6–7	Mother Cabrini, EC, Anderson, SC	V	DorothyAnn Rowland/ Joanita Nellenbach

2020

Jan. 17–18	Our Lady of Good Counsel, Greenville, SC	V	/Joanita Nellenbach
Jan. 18–19	Seven Dolors of the BVM, Franklin, TN	V	David Cruz-Uribe/Dcn. Tom Shaver
Feb. 15	Bl. John Duns Scotus, Garden City, SC	E	

Feb. 21–22: Regional Executive Council Meeting, Spartanburg, S.C.

March 7	Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Hilton Head Island, SC	E	/Ken Wessling
March 8	Channel of Peace, Chattanooga, TN	E	Sharon Loiselle/
March 8	Franciscan Family of Greensboro, Greensboro, NC	E	/Dcn. Tom Shaver
May 11–12	Fraternity of St. Clare, Winston-Salem, NC	V	/Dcn. Tom Shaver
June 19–20	Fraternity of Brother Francis, Newton, NC	V	
June 27	St. Michael the Archangel, Spartanburg, SC	E	/Joanita Nellenbach
June 28	St. Joseph Cupertino, Bessemer, AL	E	/Willie Guadalupe

Aug. 7–9, Annual Regional Gathering, Ridgecrest, N.C.**Guest Speaker: Father Daniel Horan, OFM**

Sept. 8–9	St. Anthony of Padua, Fayetteville, NC	V	
Sept. 11–12	Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg, Blairsville, GA	V	/Willie Guadalupe
Sept. 12	Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, Burlington, NC	E	
Sept. 12	St. Clare of Assisi, Aiken, SC	E	
Nov. 15	St. Thomas More, Wilmington, NC	E	
Dec. 10*	Five Georgia Martyrs, St. Simons Island, GA	E	

**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

Formation Director: Dianne Ambrose, OFS

**Spiritual Assistant:
Deacon Tom Shaver, OFS**

Area Councilors

Area 1

David Cruz-Uribe, OFS; Sharon Loiselle, 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

Ellen Ferrone, OFS; Martha Roman, OFS

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

SC: Garden City

Archivist: Sara Nell Boggs, OFS

Communio Editor

Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS

Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation Animator

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS

Multicultural Commission Chair

Willie Guadalupe, OFS

Youth/Young Adult Fraternal Animator

Position Available

Prayer Ministry (online prayer requests)

Area 1: Lori Moran, OFS

Area 2: Dorothy Huebner, OFS

Area 3: Bob Sabisch, OFS

Fraternity prayer coordinators submit prayer requests.

**Congratulations!
New Councils**

Fraternity of St. Clare

Winston-Salem, N.C., May 14

Minister: Barb Robless, OFS

Vice Minister:

Betti Pettinati-Longinotti, OFS

Secretary: Laura Gurnee, OFS

Treasurer: Ray Fleming, OFS

Formation Director:

Irene Hamblen, OFS

Councilor: Kris Jonczak, OFS

St. Clare Fraternity

Asheville, N.C., July 11

Minister: Jill Varney, OFS

Vice Minister:

Cathy Champon, OFS

Secretary: Monica Lester, OFS

Treasurer: Robert C. Martin, OFS

Formation Director:

Lisena M. Moss, OFS

Councilor: Gail Carrol, OFS

**Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg
Fraternity**

Blairsville, Ga., Sept. 14

Minister: Stephen Smith, OFS

Vice Minister: Kathi Traywick, OFS

Secretary: Patricia Tomczyk, OFS

Treasurer: Joan Furst, OFS

Formation Director:

Jerry Rousseau, OFS

Councilor: Doreen Dunlap, OFS

Councilor: Dcn. John Paul

McGuire, OFS

Councilor: Patricia Romejko, OFS

Communio

is published quarterly

for the

Brothers and Sisters of St.

Francis Region of the

Secular Franciscan Order

in the United States.