

Communio

That All May Be One

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

Spring 2021



The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

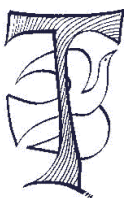
Wisdom
Understanding
Counsel
Fortitude
Knowledge
Piety
Fear of the Lord

“The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to us that we may do good works with zeal. Christ’s cross is the sign of God’s boundless grace because from the cross, that is, from Christ’s sufferings, flow all the gifts of grace. So, once again, we should expect to find the sign of the Son of man, the cross of Christ, on Saint Francis who was filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.”

St. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio,
“The Evening Sermon on Saint Francis, Preached at Paris, October 4, 1262,”
Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume II, The Founder, p. 729

The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

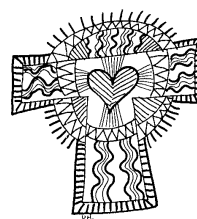
Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate



Editor’s Journal: St. Camilla Battista da Varano

After more than a year in the pandemic, people are being vaccinated, and things are beginning to improve in other ways, as well.

But it’s not too late to ask the intercession of a saint who can definitely relate to what we’ve been going through. St. Camilla Battista da Varano (April 9, 1458–May 31, 1524) died in a plague. Before that, she suffered the violent loss of her father and three of her brothers.

Her father, Giulio Cesare da Varano, was duke of Camerino in Italy’s Marches region. He loved Camilla deeply. Though illegitimate, she was raised at his court. He expected her to make a brilliant marriage and, at first, she was attracted by court life.

At age 23, she chose to become a Poor Clare, entering the monastery in Urbino, where she took the name Battista. To lure her back home, Duke Giulio Cesare built her a monastery in Camerino. She returned with several other nuns, and was abbess of the monastery.

In 1502, her father and three of her brothers, were imprisoned and strangled by rivals. She fled the city and did not return for several years.

Writer Silvia Guidi spoke with Mother Chiara Laura Serboli, OCS, and the other nuns of Camerino last year about St. Camilla Battista. They told Guidi:

“She died ‘alone on the bed of the cross,’ infected by the disease, and was buried in quicklime to avoid further contagion. Her farewell took place in the open because of the ban on gatherings. She certainly knows what those who have contracted the virus are going through, facing it in the solitude of a hospital. She knows the pain of family members and each of us. That is why we are certain that she intercedes for peace and health for everyone. She promised, ‘From heaven, I will never forget you’” (online and in *L’Osservatore Romano*, April 2, 2020).



Image on the banner that hung in St. Peter’s Square in Rome when Camilla Battista da Varano was canonized on Oct. 17, 2010.

In This Issue	
Minister’s Message	4
Regional Spiritual Assistant	4
Regional Calendar	6
Lenten Retreat	7
Regional Formation Director	8
JPIC	9
Fraternity Anniversary	11
OFS Websites	11
New Councils	12
Newly Professed	14
REC Recap	15
Secular Franciscan Beatified	17
REC Roster	17

During pilgrimages, I’ve had two delightful visits with the Poor Clares in Camerino. In the crypt, where her remains are kept, I picked up a prayer folder which included this, written by St. Camilla Battista: “Ask God for this wonderful revelation: May He reveal yourself to you, may He

make you know who you are, how much you can do, how much you know, and how much you are worth. Without this revelation, no one can become a saint." I pray it every day.

At right, is another prayer from that folder.



Prayer to the Trinity

Holy and blessed Trinity,
you granted Camilla Battista
the ability to live as a
true daughter of the Father,
to adhere to the Gospel of
our Lord Jesus Christ,
and to allow herself to be molded
by the fire of the Holy Spirit.

Give me the grace to
imitate her example,
and also to make of my life
a reflection of your beauty
and your sanctity.

Grant me,
through the intercession of
Saint Camilla Battista,
this grace that I ask.

Our Father ...

Hail Mary ...

Glory Be ...



The painting above, now in the Camerino art museum, is "The Annunciation, with Donors," which Giovanni Angelo d'Antonio painted around 1455. The donors, kneeling in the doorway at left and enlarged here, are Giulio Cesare da Varano, duke of Camerino, and his wife, Giovanna Malatesta, dressed in the habit of a Franciscan tertiary.

Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS, Communio editor, 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.

Communio

is published quarterly for the
Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region
of the Secular Franciscan Order
in the United States.



Minister's Message

“We suffer all kinds of afflictions and yet are not overcome” (2 Cor 4:8)

I've had much time to ponder and reflect on the many occurrences that have transpired in the past year during the isolation time caused by the pandemic, the reality of social and environmental issues, and my own physical challenges and setbacks because of an unexpected failed hip implant loosening.

What I've learned is that I must be present to the current moment and not worry about the past or the future. God has it all planned. I need to be open to recognize and accept what is and allow the Holy Spirit to work with me as I move forward in my life. I am not in control, God is.

This past year has not been an easy one for any of us, I feel; but just as Jesus is resurrected from the tomb and has overcome death, we, too, can arise to a new beginning and be extremely hopeful for the future of our fraternities. Many fraternities are beginning to be able to gather in person as restrictions are lifted at our gathering places, and many of us have chosen to receive the vaccines offered to help our brothers and sisters, our families and neighbors, and all of society as we emerge from our imposed exile.

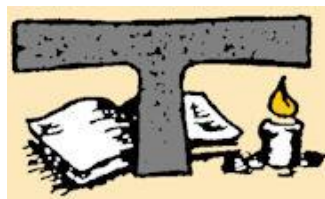
It is so important to place our emphasis on Gospel values and follow our vocation to bring Franciscan values and spirituality to all, to love and forgive as Jesus does, to make ourselves new so we can evangelize. So many are in need of hearing about and knowing Jesus' love.

How can each of us bring the example of St. Francis and make it relevant to today? One relationship at a time and be open to love and respectful dialogue. May this year be brighter for each of us as we truly embrace our Franciscan calling!

“Let your love for one another be constant, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be mutually hospitable without complaining. As generous distributors of God's manifold grace, put your gifts at the service of one another, each in the measure he has received. The one who speaks is to deliver God's message. The one who serves is to do it with the strength provided by God. Thus, in all of you God is to be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Pt 4:8–11a).

May God bless you and keep you and give you peace!

BSSF Region Minister DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, is a member of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity, Bluffton, S.C.



Regional Spiritual Assistant: A Simpler Life.

By Deacon Tom Shaver OFS

One of the books that I have in my library is John Michael Talbot's *Simplicity* that talks about the concept of detachment in layman's terms. Most of us know about John Michael's life journey from Grammy award winning recording artist to founder of a community.

This community is based on Franciscan teaching and is named the Brothers and Sisters of Charity. They live as community at The Little Portion, a monastery just outside Eureka Springs, Ark. I am going to be referencing this book as well as a recent article from Franciscan Media that dealt with materialism, titled “The Spirituality of Subtraction.”

I bring this topic up because as I try to whittle down my office, library, and bedroom closet and dressers, I find it difficult to just let go. I share these thoughts perhaps as a catharsis

for me and encouragement for you.

In Talbot's book there are two specific chapters that I found especially helpful: Chapter 1, "Humbling Ourselves before God and Others"; Chapter 5, "The Challenge of Countering Materialism with Gospel Poverty." You might ask me how humility and gospel poverty go together, and it would be a fair question.

Father Casey Cole, OFM, writes in Franciscan Media: "When we as Christians seek to be poor as Jesus taught us, we do so not for its own sake and not because dehumanizing conditions are virtuous, but because it strips away our temptation to be our own saviors and instead points us to the only one who can save us. That is the Gospel poverty Saint Francis lived. **Gospel poverty is a state in which we are stripped of all that prevents us from following him with complete abandon and without counting the cost**" (emphasis added).

Anything that becomes so important to us that it keeps us from a full and honest relationship with God, family, and neighbors becomes a false god and an idol, so to speak.

In 2019, the U.S. population represented 4.43 percent of the world's population but controlled 26.7 percent of the world's wealth. At the same time, 10 percent of the families in the USA controlled 76 percent of U.S. wealth. Frankly, something is wrong here.

While you and I as Franciscans should not concern ourselves with material wealth, sometimes we need to step back and ask ourselves whether we are contributing to this serious maldistribution of wealth in the world. I am not advocating an attack on capitalism or advocating a "redistribution of wealth" at this time; I am calling us to reconsider our thinking, to reflect on whether we are contributing to the problem or are the problem.

"I might need it!" Is this a common response to items that we are attempting to weed out of our lives? "Weeding" is a term I picked up when I worked at the library. The librarians would periodically get a list of books that had not circulated in quite some time, and their job would be to remove them from the shelves to allow space for newer books and acquisitions. They used the term "weeding" to describe this activity.

How often do we go to our closets or bureaus or dressers and ask ourselves whether someone in need might be able to use a garment(s) that we have not worn in years? Have we accumulated "stuff" that just sits on shelves or in boxes (my favorite hiding place) collecting dust or rusting in the garage?

Perhaps we need to do some spring cleaning based on this concept of simplicity and detachment and contribute our excesses to some of our brothers and sisters who have greater needs than we do. Our failure to help the poor from our excesses is the greater sin.

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you gave me no food, I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me. Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?'

"He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life" (Mt 25: 41-46).

We Secular Franciscans live in the world, and the world has placed certain expectations on us. I was a certified public accountant with a large international CPA firm. I was expected to dress in a particular way. When meeting clients it was a navy-blue suit, white shirt, conservative red or blue tie, and black oxfords, no exceptions. Of course, I followed these requirements as I had a family dependent on my ability to feed, clothe, and house them. I had two suits, several white and blue shirts, and half a dozen ties. As I said, it was expected of me. We tried to live a simple life without extravagance, yet comfortably. I believe I was living the life of Gospel

poverty as best as I could. Only you can evaluate whether you are living Gospel poverty in accordance with our Rule:

“Article 11. Trusting the Father, Christ chose for himself and his mother a poor and humble life, even though he valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children.

“Thus, in the spirit of the Beatitudes, and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.”

May the Lord guide you to live the simple life, in accordance with your current state in life, and the courage to change your lifestyle as your life changes.

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.

**BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS REGION CALENDAR
SCHEDULE OF VISITATIONS (V) AND ELECTIONS (E)
June through November 2021**

* confirmed	V+ follow-up visit	(observers in parentheses)
Date	Fraternity/Group & Location	V Fraternal/Pastoral Visitors E Presider/Ecclesial Witness
May 22: Regional Executive Council Meeting via Zoom		
June 5	St. Maximilian Kolbe, Charlotte, NC	E Betti Longinotti/?
June 11–12*	Fraternity of Brother Francis, Newton, NC	V Betti Longinotti/Georgette Schraeder
June 27*	St. Joseph Cupertino, Bessemer, AL	E Sharon Loiselle/Dcn. Tom Shaver
July 7–8	Fraternity of St. Clare, Asheville, NC	V Betti Longinotti/Ken Wessling
July 10	Crucified Christ, North Charleston, SC	E ?/Dcn. Tom Shaver
Aug. 13–15: Annual Regional Gathering, Ridgecrest, NC		
Nov. 20	St. Francis of the Hills, Hendersonville, NC	E ?/?

Lenten Zoom Retreat Highlights San Damiano Crucifix

By Linda Keir, OFS

Even though March 21 wasn't the first day of spring this year, it marked a *first* for Saint Thomas More Fraternity in Wilmington, N.C. We celebrated our first-ever Zoom retreat.

Patricia Wilkerson, OFS, a commissioned spiritual assistant, was our retreat director. Pat was perfect for Zoom. Her warm personality created a peaceful, Spirit-filled environment. The title she chose was "Celebration of the Lord's Love." The vehicle she chose was the San Damiano Crucifix.

Our retreat began with a greeting from our minister, Mike Yamat, OFS, who welcomed our guests. We opened with the song "Open My Eyes, Lord," by John Michael Talbot. Marie Mallon, OFS, read from the Gospel of John 15:7–12. Then there was quiet time for reflection and soft meditative music.

After that, Pat explained the difference between an icon and a piece of religious art. All icons are meant to be "read" as a Spirit-filled prayer, not viewed as a work of art. The icon is a holy tool. You pray it and you meditate on it.

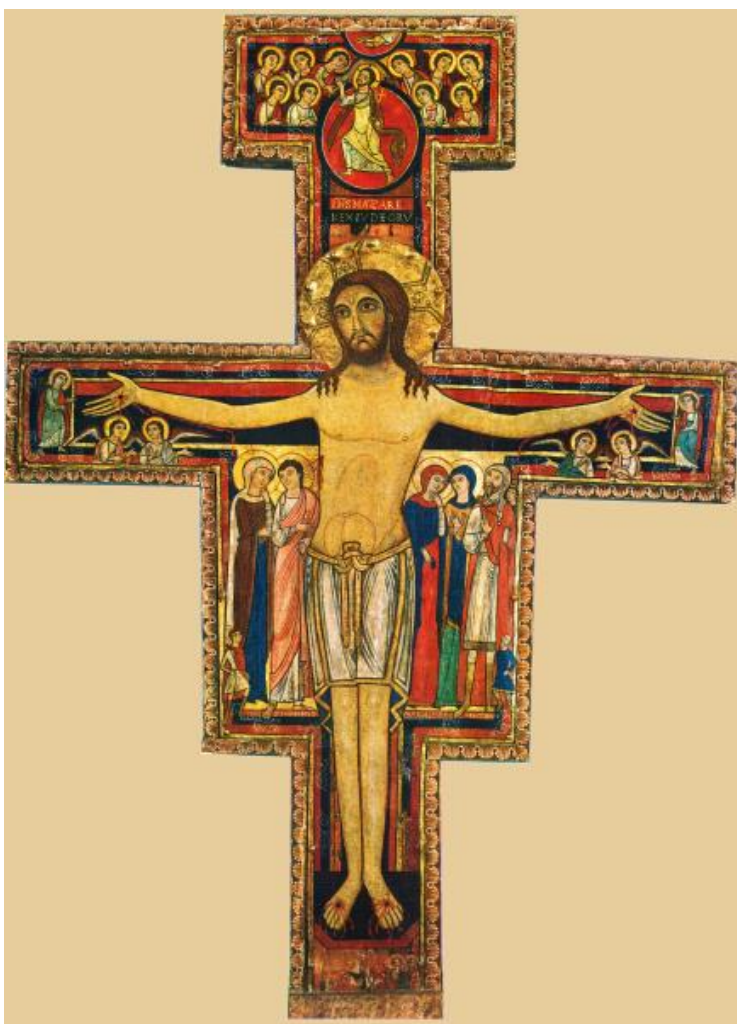
Next, Pat led us in a form of *lectio divina*. We listened in silence to the reading of the icon three times. Then with the Holy Spirit guiding all of us we meditated. This was followed by a period of verbal sharing. After a little break, Pat related how Francis encountered Jesus in the icon. A fraternity member prayed the "Prayer of St. Francis at the Cross." This was followed by a period of journaling with four wonderful questions Pat provided to guide us: (1) Where do you meet Jesus? (2) What is Jesus telling you to do? (3) Are you being faithful to your life as a Secular Franciscan? (4) What would Jesus tell the fraternity to do?

Mary Hellman, OFS, our formation director, led us in renewing our profession promises by saying our monthly pledge. After that several fraternity members, who had each been assigned one of the characters written on the icon, prayed the "Celebration of the Lord's Love." We closed the retreat with a blessing by Pat and "The Prayer of St. Francis" song.

I enjoyed this Lenten retreat very much! There was no doubt in my mind that the Holy Spirit was leading and guiding us through the whole beautifully presented retreat.

Thank you, Pat.

Linda Keir, OFS, is secretary of Saint Thomas More Fraternity, Wilmington, N.C.



**The San Damiano Crucifix
(Image from Wikimedia Commons)**



Regional Formation Director

By Dianne Ambrose, OFS

Happy Easter Season, My Brothers and Sisters

On the Saturdays during Lent this year, Regional JPIC Animator Carolyn Townes, OFS, and I, with special guest BSSF Area 1 Councilor David Cruz-Uribe, OFS, offered a series called “Racial Justice and Our Franciscan Witness.”

The six-session series will be available to you to use with videos and PowerPoint slides, Pope Francis’s encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, YouTube videos, and written resources. We will be sending this out in a digital format so you will have access to these resources to use in your fraternity discussions on racial justice.

I would like to bring your attention to *Fratelli tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*. In our series, the discussion focused on Chapter Two: “A Stranger on the Road,” which centers on the Gospel story of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25–37). In this chapter, Pope Francis points particularly to issues of human relationships. That translates to our daily life as Franciscans. We are encouraged to create a different culture in which we resolve our conflicts and care for one another (57) Mt 7:17. This Scripture focuses on our shared humanity (60). It also points to the importance of giving our time to help others.

In the winter 2020 issue of *Franciscan Connections — The Cord: A Spiritual Review*, Dr. Krijin Pansters explains the “Rules of Fraternal Living in *Fratelli tutti*”: Nourish goodness in your heart; make known the values of goodness, love, and peace; be committed to living and teaching the values of respect for others; care for the needs of every man and woman; promote truthfulness; and be open to faith hope and love.

There are several study guides on the www.secularfranciscansusa.org under resources and ongoing formation.

Spring formation workshops will not be held this year. Instead, we will have fall workshops: at least one on Zoom and one in person.

I wish to thank all of you for your prayers, cards, emails, and phone calls as I go through what has now become a five-month event, which I hope I will be able to move on from in the near future. My ankle has healed. My knee is healed; however, the tendon is still not improving. I recently had a visit with my surgeon, and he stated it will just take time

Formation Zoom Schedule:

- Evening Prayer — Mondays, 6 p.m. EDT, beginning May 3.
- Zoom Formators Monthly, second Tuesdays, 7 p.m. EDT, beginning May 11. We will be discussing short versions of topics that will be presented in fall workshops.
- Formators sharing formation ideas and solutions, fourth Thursdays, 7 p.m. EDT, beginning May 27

Peace
Dianne

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

OFS

It’s our Order’s abbreviation after our names or in other writing and refers to Ordo Franciscanus Sæcularis, the official — Latin — name of our Order.

In English, we’re still the
Secular Franciscan Order.

Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation: A Franciscan Call to Lament and Hope

By Carolyn D. Townes, OFS

After an unprecedented year — a year of racial divide, political tension, economic unrest, all in the midst of a global pandemic — I am sure we thought this new year couldn't be any worse.

Then, the attack on the U.S. Capitol proved that it could be worse.

I wanted to build us Franciscans up with a bit of hope. But first, we needed to fall on our faces in prayer and lament. Just as the psalmists of old would lament and cry out to God when life was less than rosy, I wanted Franciscans across this country to do the same.

In his book *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*, Father Bryan Massingale writes: “One such language present in our faith tradition is that of lament. Lament is a profound response to suffering, one that stems from acknowledging its harsh reality and entails simply being truthful, avoiding denial, and admitting the pain and horror of the suffering ... We express our pain in lament by crying out which allows us to grieve.”

Laments are cries of anguish and outrage, groans of deep pain and grief, utterances of profound protest and righteous indignation over injustice, wails of mourning and sorrow in the face of unbearable suffering. Lamentation is a cry of utter anguish and passionate protest at the state of the world and its brokenness.

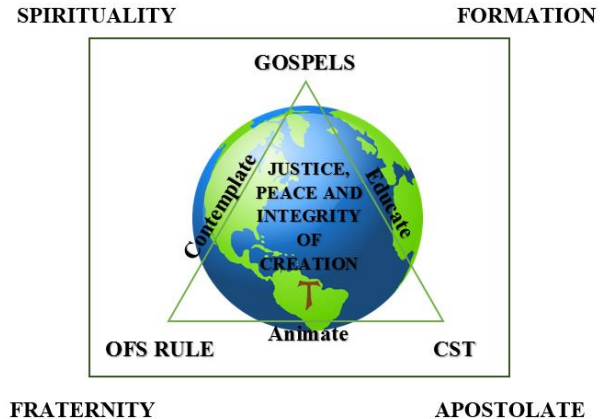
In *Evangelium vitae*, St. Pope John Paul II said: “A great prayer for life is urgently needed, a prayer which will rise up throughout the world. Through special initiatives and in daily prayer, may an impassioned plea rise to God, the Creator and lover of life, from every Christian community, from every group and association, from every family and from the heart of every believer.”

On two separate occasions, at the end of January and on the first Sunday of Lent, I invited Franciscans from around the world to join in an evening of prayer of lamentation and hope. The gatherings, of about 150 Franciscans from across the United States and Guam, led with the seminal Scripture passage from “The Second Book of Chronicles” (7:14):

“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves,
and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways,
then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

Guided by the Spirit of the Lord, I led evenings of prayers of lament, poems of lament and songs of lament, including time for contemplation and silence, culminating in prayers of hope for healing in our land. I want to share the poem that the Lord shared with me that was the impetus for these evenings of prayer. The feedback has been wonderful, and I pray that this poem (on page 10) continues to bless you throughout these challenging times.

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



Imagine A World: A Poem of Lament

Imagine a world where there is no violence
where there is only compassion and care

Imagine a world where there is no despair
where we thrive on hope, for ourselves and one another

Imagine a world where there is no division
where we know that our neighbor is for us and we are always about the business of unity

Imagine a world where there are no wars, no injustice, no oppression, and no divisions

Imagine a world where children can flourish and grow and are not thrown away before they have seen the light of day

Imagine a world where compassion and empathy and care are the norm and we rise up and reach out to any who are not under the mantle of mercy and peace

Can you imagine this world? Can you take just one moment, the time it takes to breathe a breath, to imagine this world?

Breathe it; feel it; see it; be it — just because you truly need it.

We all need this world. We all need to be reminded that this is not our world, that this world belongs to God our Creator, God our Redeemer, God our Comforter.

God gave us this world to keep and care and love and honor. God gave us this world to love our neighbors and have no enemies. God gave us this world to cultivate and till and sow to reap.

And what have we done in return?
Oh, look what we have done in return?

Oh God, please forgive us! God, please hear us!
As we cry out to You with our heads bowed low in mourning and grief.

But You are a God of second chances.
You are a God of sweet forgiveness.
You are a God who does not give up on His children —
especially when we have not heeded Your will.

Oh Lord, help us do better. Help us be better. Help us to see what You see in us and for us.

Oh Lord, we are the people who are called by Your name, we do humble ourselves, and we do pray and seek Your face, Oh Lord, please hear us, please forgive us and please heal our land.

In Admonition 27, St. Francis exhorted: “Where there is a heart full of mercy and discernment, there is neither excess nor hardness of heart” (*Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint*, p. 137)

Our Lord hears our cries of lament which will move us to a place of peace and hope. It is my prayer that we as Franciscans continue to seek the Lord, humble ourselves, and pray, that the Lord may hear us, forgive us, and heal our troubled land.

Fraternity Celebrates Anniversary of Canonical Establishment

By Barbara St. John Shea, OFS
St. Francis of the Hills
fraternity, Hendersonville, N.C.,
gathered in a Zoom online room
at 6:30 p.m. on April 5 to
celebrate its 34th anniversary of
canonical establishment. Nine

fraternity members and two visitors, Howard Shea and Regional Minister DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, attended.

Easter Monday Evening Prayer in *Christian Prayer*, pp. 434-436, was chosen as the framework for the celebration. Three to five fraternity members had been gathering weekly by Zoom for Evening Prayer for several months, so a core number of the membership was familiar with the process.

A slightly adapted version of the “Ceremony on the Anniversary of Profession” (*Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order*, pp. 30–32) was inserted between the Gospel canticle and intercessions of the Evening Prayer. The adaptation was done by Joanita Nellenbach, OFS, fraternity member and acting spiritual assistant. The whole celebration pamphlet was made available to all by email.

Filling the positions for the prayers were the following members: Leader, Gene Ray MaGruder, OFS; Antiphonarian, Margaret Cavagnaro, orientee; Side 1, DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS; Side 2, Brenda Harris, OFS; Reader, Nancy Torres OFS. Nancy and DorothyAnn led the anniversary ceremony.

The fraternity council had hoped that the celebration would have positive outcomes. The most important were fellowship and group prayer, which were met. Also, the process of doing the Evening Prayer by Zoom was demonstrated to a larger number of fraternity members, and, hopefully, will lead to higher attendance at the weekly prayers. For some attendees, this was a welcome refresher in praying the Liturgy of the Hours as a group after a year without face-to-face gatherings.

Barbara St. John Shea, OFS, is secretary of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity, Hendersonville, N.C.



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

Congratulations, New Councils



Sts. Francis & Clare Fraternity, Knoxville, Tenn., Feb. 21: Formation Director Jean Schneider, OFS (left); Secretary Lindy Crace; Councilor at Large Vonnie Spicer, OFS; Minister Paul Rock, OFS; Councilor-at-Large Bonnie Ameche, OFS. Absent: Vice Minister Terry Paradis, OFS; Treasurer Deborah Stevens, OFS.



Our Lady of Good Counsel Fraternity, Greenville, S.C., April 24: Formation Director Sheila Dartez, OFS (left); Councilor at Large Elizabeth Oughton, OFS; Treasurer Leslie Owens, OFS; Minister Valerie Baronkin, OFS; Secretary Marsha Wiggins, OFS; Vice Minister Alice Ramos, OFS; Councilor at Large LaDonna Sexton, OFS.

See **COUNCILS**, p. 13

COUNCILS, from p. 12

**Saint Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity,**

Elizabeth City, N.C., April 11: Secretary Janet Norfleet, OFS (left); Minister Dory Davis, OFS; Councilor at Large Eileen Chaney, OFS; Formation Director Mary Gilbert, OFS; Counselor at Large Lee Norfleet, OFS; Vice Minister Pam Barber, OFS; Treasurer Doreen Warren, OFS.

Area 3 Councilor Ellen Ferrone, OFS, presided; Georgette Schraeder, OFS, commissioned spiritual assistant, served as ecclesiastical witness.



Padre Pio Fraternity, Raleigh, N.C., March 28: Secretary Anna Rzewnicki, OFS (left); Vice Minister Ellen Ferrone, OFS; Formation Director Char Whitosky, OFS; Councilor-at-Large Jeanne Casciere, OFS; Councilor-at-Large Joan Monte, OFS; Minister Sharon Winzeler, OFS; Treasurer Zubair Simonson, OFS; Father Hugh Macsherry, OFM, spiritual assistant. Not pictured is Councilor-at-Large David Shick, OFS. Area 2 Councilor Betti Longinotti, OFS, served as presider; Deacon Thomas Shaver, OFS, was ecclesiastical witness.

Congratulations, Newly Professed

St. John Vianney, Emerging Fraternity, Lithia Springs, Ga., on Nov. 7, celebrated the professions of Bill Sadler, OFS, and Kate Kasmier, OFS (far left and third from left), with Father Vincent Gluc, OFM Conv., presiding, assisted by Deacon Greg Smilski, OFS, formation director, and Sharon Loiselle, OFS, leader. Members of Immaculate Conception Fraternity, the sponsoring fraternity, joined in the celebration, along with Deacon Tom Shaver, OFS, regional spiritual assistant.



From “Profession in the SFO: Gift and Commitment” By Father Felice Cangelosi, OFM Cap.

Section 10. Consecration

The formula of Profession in the Secular Franciscan Order reads: “I, N.N., by the grace of God, renew my baptismal promises and *consecrate myself to the service of his Kingdom*” (*Ritual*, p. 23).

Prior to that, the “Preface” to the *Ritual* states: “The nature of commitment to the gospel life is: the renewal of one’s consecration and promises made at baptism and confirmation. This means *dedicating oneself to God* through his people with all the consequences flowing from it, up to the present moment, in order to live in union with God and to hold firm to his plan of salvation, *by means of a consecration that is to be lived in the world*” (3.32.a., p. 5).

The *Ritual* uses the verb *to consecrate*, giving it the meaning of *to devote*, in other words to dedicate, reserve and destine a thing or a person for God and his exclusive service. It goes without saying that in the specific context of the *Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order* it is persons who are involved; consequently, they are the ones who must offer themselves to God with full freedom and awareness.

From this point of view Profession is the act by which a person places him/herself into the hands of God, enabling God to take hold of him, with the result that from the precise moment of Profession, **the person no longer belongs to him/herself**, but is considered as totally “expropriated” and at God’s entire disposal. By virtue of Profession, **the person becomes God’s property**, and therefore “sacred.” In reality however, the verb *consecrate* and its corresponding noun *consecration*, properly indicate the act by which God takes possession of the person (who is enabled to give him/herself totally by the gift of the Spirit who draws him/her), placing his seal upon the person and making him/her his own exclusive property. In itself the value of consecration lies in its descending dimension: the person *is consecrated*, *receives consecration from God*, who draws him/her to himself and transforms him inwardly so that he/she is able to live the demands of a superior world.

BSSF Regional Executive Council Recap

By Nora Wessling, OFS

Blessings to all in this Joyous Easter season!

The Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional Executive Council (REC) has continued to serve as your regional servant leaders. The council met via Zoom on Jan. 30. Meeting highlights are as follows:

- It was announced that Father Hugh Macsherry, OFM, has been appointed as the spiritual assistant for Padre Pio Fraternity, Raleigh, N.C.
- Secretary Nora Wessling, OFS, continues to enter documentation in local fraternities' National Fraternity (NAFRA) database pages, when a fraternity has a cancellation of its election/visitation due to the pandemic or other causes. Rescheduling dates are also documented.
- Vice Minister Carmen Madero, OFS, reported on the Jan. 10 council election in Stigmata of St. Francis Fraternity, Johns Creek, Ga. She was the presider and Jean Schneider, OFS, was the ecclesiastical witness. Carmen announced the cancellation of the election scheduled for Jan. 17 for Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin Mary Fraternity, Franklin, Tenn., and announced that the election for St. Francis and Clare Fraternity, Knoxville, Tenn., is scheduled for Feb. 21.
- Treasurer Ken Brooke, OFS, reported the 2020 end-of-the-year total income and total expenses. He said there was nothing remarkable about last year since we were not meeting face to face and the 2020 Annual Regional Gathering did not take place.
- Deacon Tom Shaver, OFS, regional spiritual assistant, reported that our region has 31 fraternities (one is an emerging community) but only 12 have spiritual assistants; thus, we have a great need for spiritual assistants in our region. He added that friars who are spiritual assistants and are staffing parishes are unable to spend weekends doing pastoral visitations or serving as ecclesiastical witnesses for elections because of their parish responsibilities. Consequently, he is pondering what options there may be in recruiting for the spiritual assistant program.

He had a question regarding one of the OFM spiritual assistant's appointment status since a letter of appointment has not been found. Deacon Tom will pursue a letter from the provincial minister to learn of the status.

- Minister DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, complimented *Communio* editor Joanita Nellenbach, OFS, about the excellent articles in the winter issue, to which several council members had contributed. Deacon Tom commented how the Holy Spirit brought all of the articles together, especially since the authors worked independently from each other.
- Joanita encouraged the council members to have anyone in their fraternities who like to write to submit an article — as long as the article has a Franciscan focus/orientation.
- Formation Director Dianne Ambrose, OFS, reported that Regional Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Animator Carolyn Townes, OFS; Area 1 Councilor David Cruz-Uribe, OFS, and she were working on a Lenten series on "Racial Equality" to be presented via Zoom during the six Saturdays of Lent. The series will be recorded, and it is planned that a manual will be developed for each session. She and the regional webmaster, Sharon Winzeler, OFS, are looking into setting up a regional YouTube channel on the region's website.
- Regional JPIC Animator Carolyn Townes, OFS, updated us regarding her involvement in many programs and projects. She continues to conduct and participate in the NAFRA JPIC focus groups mentioned in the last issue.

She mentioned that the focus group, Mindful Dialogues, which she facilitates, met after the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, with the discussion topic being "Anger." She

concluded the Zoom book discussion that continued the dialogue around racial equality with the book *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson. Carolyn mentioned that the book being considered for the next Zoom book discussion is entitled *Walking with Francis of Assisi: From Privilege to Activism* by Bruce Epperly.

She reported on the conclusion of the four-week “Advent Meditations,” which she conducted, and she introduced a future six-week Lenten meditation series that she will conduct. Carolyn has attended virtual prayer vigils for capital punishment, a nonviolence retreat, a nonviolent communication and anger workshop, and a migrants novena that she authored. She also attended prayers for a peaceful inauguration and transfer of office, and contributed articles in the regional newsletter, *Communio*, and in the NAFRA newsletter, *TAU-USA*.

- Youth and Young Adult Animator Joe Vodenichar, OFS, will be putting together a manual to give to local animators with the topic on how to start a Franciscan Youth (YouFra) group. He also submitted an article for *Communio*, and had signed up for a three-week Zoom course on anti-racism.
- Area councilors reported on their activities, which included: keeping in touch with fraternities in their areas, offering assistance as needed, attending a lecture, and a profession, submitting an article to *Communio*, welcoming two Hispanic persons to a fraternity, participating with others regarding anti-racism, nonviolence, and structural racism by sharing information, planning for leading a future workshop on structural racism and possible programming of a formation program, involvement with the committee pertaining to the BSSF Bequest Fund, and presiding at elections or serving as fraternal visitor for elections/visitations.
- The final decision regarding the disbursal of bequest funds is as follows: 1) The chairperson of the Bequest Funds Committee, Carmen Madero, OFS, will send an email with attached forms to the fraternity ministers regarding the availability of funds for charitable programs and information on the application process. 2) The committee will consider any fund requests they receive from the fraternities. 3) The committee’s recommendations will then be sent to all REC members at the same time. 4) Each REC member will send their vote, to approve or deny, to the regional minister, DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS.
- During the area councilor reports, the REC also discussed various fraternities where there were concerns or questions, so that the REC could better serve the fraternities in their situations.
- The visitations-and-elections schedule for January–July 2021 was reviewed and adjusted. Due to the presence of the Covid-19 pandemic, cancellations and reschedules continued to occur with this list. The regional minister has continued to update the list of reschedules and keep the REC informed. REC members volunteered to serve as fraternal visitors and election presiders.
- The Annual Regional Gathering, which will include the triennial visitation from NAFRA, is scheduled for Aug. 13–15. This year’s ARG theme is “And Who Is My Neighbor?”

As always, we thank you for the opportunity to serve you, and ask for your prayers as we continue our servant leadership. We in turn pray for all in our region and fondly wish blessings to all filled with his peace and goodness.

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

**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

Position Available

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.



Secular Franciscan Beatified

The beatification of Dr. José Gregorio Hernández, a Venezuelan physician (1864–1919), who became a member of the Secular Franciscan Order in 1899, took place on April 30.

José Gregorio Hernandez is widely known, respected, and venerated in many countries, a witness of holiness as a layman, a man full of virtues with a profound experience of his Catholic faith.

He was an exemplary physician, serving patients from all walks of life. It is also worth mentioning his contributions in the field of medical science and in his career as a distinguished university professor. In the Secular Franciscan Order, he quenched his thirst for the charism of St. Francis of Assisi, and thus, little by little, he deepened his commitment to serve Christ in his suffering brothers and sisters.

Dr. Hernandez died at the age of 55 in a car accident, while he was going to buy medicines for a poor sick patient.

For his beatification, a cure was attested in the girl Yaxuri Solórzano, who was shot in the head, victim of an assault in 2017, and miraculously recovered.

A portion of the beatification is available on the YouTube channel of the Archdioceses of Caracas. **T**