

# Communio

*That All May Be One*

Newsletter of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region

Secular Franciscan Order

Spring 2022

## Minister's Message

DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS  
Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional Minister

I pray that your Lenten journey was fruitful and that you are truly deeply aware of what Christ did for us as he lived and fulfilled his mission and commitment to his Father's will during his short lifetime here on earth

Exactly what is commitment? The Oxford Dictionary says commitment is the state or quality of being dedicated to a cause, activity; a pledge or undertaking; an engagement or obligation that restricts freedom of action. Making a commitment involves dedicating oneself to something, like a person or a cause. Think carefully before you make a commitment, as it obligates you to do something.



DorothyAnn  
Rowland, OFS

Those of us who are professed members of the Secular Franciscan Order, can remember the solemn public promise made on our Profession Day—the permanent commitment when we renewed our baptismal promises, and promises to live a life more closely joined to the values of the Gospel. Profession is/was recorded and witnessed in these words: I promise to live all the days of my life the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Secular Franciscan Order by observing its rule of life.

As followers of St. Francis who made Christ the center and inspiration of his life, we must always seek Jesus, the model of Christian holiness. In Jesus' living and preaching of right relationship with God, self, others, and creation, we would be wise to allow his way of love, compassion, and forgiveness to guide our Franciscan way of living.

Chapter Two, The Way of Life of our Pauline Rule deals with one's individual Secular Franciscan commitment to live out the Gospel message in one's daily life in today's world. As I approach the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of making my Profession in May, I am aware and thankful for the many opportunities of dying to self over these years in learning, sharing, and serving my sisters and brothers; and how God has led and taught me during this time. **(continued on next page)**

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### The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

Spirituality



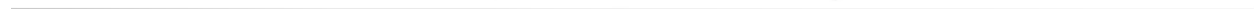
Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate



**Minister's Message from page 1**

As you know, the local fraternity is the building block and core of the Secular Franciscan Order. It's where we learn to focus on our Rule and over time, truly understand its content, meaning, and how we love one another; again, by following Jesus and remembering to love all persons as children of God. Sometimes there are disagreements, hurts, and misunderstandings among fraternity members. Sometimes we don't want to step out of our comfort zone or speak out against injustice. It is a normal happening because we are human, broken by sin, and inclined to only seeing a particular point of view. It seems that to abandon, either the fraternity or the person, is the answer to whatever is not quite right.

Article 19 of our Rule: Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon. Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others. Since they are immersed in the resurrection of Christ, which gives true meaning to Sister Death, let them serenely tend toward the ultimate encounter with the Father.

Jesus said we are to forgive others "seventy times seven" in response to Peter's question, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" (Matthew 18:21-22). Jesus' reply to Peter shows that there should not be a limit to the number of times that we forgive a person. God wants us to forgive ourselves and to forgive others.

As we celebrate the joy of our Lord's resurrection during this Easter Season, may you recognize the gifts you've received from God and share those gifts with all of God's people. God bless you and keep you and give you his peace!

*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.*

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**National Fraternity of the Secular**  
**Franciscan Order in the United States**  
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**Franciscanus Saecularis (CIOFS)**  
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[www.ciofs.org](http://www.ciofs.org)

# Reading, meditating, celebrating the Gospels

Deacon Thomas Shaver, OFS  
Regional Spiritual Assistant

A while ago I challenged us to read the four Gospels over time, starting with the Gospel of Luke continuing through to the end of the Acts of the Apostles (sometimes called 2<sup>nd</sup> Luke). As we concluded our Lenten season with the Triduum and Easter Sunday consider the challenge that our Sunday gospel reading will give us.



**Deacon Tom  
Shaver, OFS**

On Easter Sunday we read from the Gospel of John about Mary Magdalene going to the tomb in the dark and finding it opened. Based on her assumption that the body of Jesus had been moved, she ran to Peter and the beloved disciple to inform them of her findings. Both ran to the tomb, the beloved disciple first, followed by Peter. With respect to the “primacy of Peter” the beloved disciple did not go into the tomb but simply looked, allowing Peter to enter first.

To understand this passage more fully perhaps we need to know more about the literary style of the John the Evangelist. John uses a literary form called chiasms extensively. Simply stated, the chiasm is based on parallel phrases or statements throughout the passage which ultimately point to a single statement found in the middle of the parallels. The chiasm for this reading would look like this:

A (20:1-3) They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him. (20:2)

B (20:6-7) the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first. (20:2)

C (20:6-7) he went into the tomb and saw the burial clothes there (20:6)

B’ (20:8) the one who arrived at the tomb first (20:8)

A’ (20:9-10) For he did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead. (20:9)

Each parallel conveys a specific message: a lack of understanding, arrival at the tomb first, and clothes.

Thus, the central point of the passage was the state of the burial clothes found in the empty tomb.

The first parallel points to the lack of understanding by the disciples of the meaning of rising from the dead that Jesus mentioned so many times in the gospels.

If you recall, the burial clothes were found in two parts of the tomb in two different states of array. The body clothing was found on the floor in disarray, while the head covering was found folded up and neatly placed in a separate place.

Tradition suggests that this is a parable that indicates a message of completion that is not yet finished. A master at meal would either ball up his table napkin and place it on his plate as a sign that he is finished or fold it neatly placing it next to his plate indicating (continued on next page)

**GOSPELS, from page 3**

that he is not yet finished, even if he leaves the table. Did Jesus signal to the disciples that he was not finished? What a glorious statement if he did!

Over the next five Sundays the issue of doubt and challenged faith will progress from doubt to a message of full faith.

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter – the story of

Thomas and his conversion to faith

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter – Peter’s apparent repentance for denial, via filial love to agape love

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter – the Shepherd’s voice and its recognition by the sheep

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter – the new covenant of Love, “As I have loved you, so too should you love one another.”

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter - Jesus’s promise of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit

If the early Church--namely the disciples--had to struggle with faith formation even though they lived with our Savior, how much more difficult is it for us. Faith formation is journey that doesn’t cease until Sister Death accompanies us to the presence of our Lord in Heaven.

If your personal schema of faith formation does not include meditations on our Sunday scripture readings, I recommend focusing on just the gospel passages. Spend time in them with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

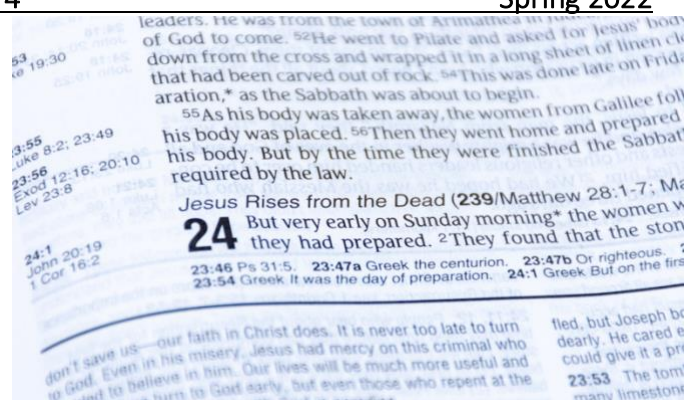
As our father St. Francis of Assisi recommended to his followers, the scriptures, and specifically the Gospels must be a part of our regular prayer and meditation.

For those who are following this guidance, in addition to reading and meditating, include a more advanced study of scripture.

For those who are lax in the reading and mediation of the gospels, start slow, but start reading and jotting down some “take aways” from your reading. With time you will desire more intimate knowledge and participation in the gospels. Remember our motto, “From Gospel to life, and life to Gospel.”

**An addendum:** As gospel people we are called to live in a fraternal way as instructed by our Fraternity Pillar. As our Order ages and we struggle to recruit younger members, more of us find it physically difficult to participate in fraternity activities as we once did. Recently the issue of active status vs. inactive status came up for discussion. Placing a fraternity member on inactive status does not remove them from the fraternity or the order. It simply acknowledges their inability, through age or physical limitations, to participate in the fraternal life of the fraternity as they once did.

By placing them on inactive status, the fraternity’s fair share contribution to the regional fraternity is reduced. **Remember:** they are still members of the fraternity and need to be kept in our hearts and minds and, if necessary, watched over by their brothers and sisters. Watched over means that we not only make regular phone calls and send cards, but also make visits, fraternal



**GOSPELS from page 4**

welfare visits if you will. As COVID-19 seems to be diminishing, face to face visits mean so much more than cards or phone calls—but those should also continue.

*Deacon Thomas Shaver, OFS, Brothers 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.*

## Prayers for Peace—in Lent and always

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS  
National & Regional JPIC Animator



**Carolyn Townes, OFS** For the Lenten journey this year, I wanted us to pray for peace, especially in light of what is going on in our world. I decided that we would pray a different way each week to fill our spiritual toolkit with different ways to pray. We prayed for one hour each of the six weeks and it was a spirit filled gathering which included prayers, listening, silence, music, imagination, and sharing. It was a powerful way to take one hour out of our busyness to pray for our world and all the violence that fills it.

The hour-long sessions were meant to give us a chance to step away and *fast* from the hostility and violence that plague our world, to *pray* for peace and reconciliation in our own hearts, in our families, in our fraternities, in our nation and in our world; and to give the *alms* of peace, joy and agapic love – the love of our Lord – to everyone we encounter. The sessions were meant to be a respite from the dark places in the Lenten wilderness, to sojourn with one another, to enlighten those dark places as we make our way to the cross of Christ, knowing that the crucifixion is not the final word, but we rise out of the tomb of darkness and despair to the resurrection of triumph and truth – the truth that is Jesus.

Each session began with the same opening prayer – a prayer of lament and forgiveness. For our first session, we prayed with Scripture; from the Prophet Isaiah (Is 58:1-9a), with the reflection questions: *What are you choosing NOT to see in your everyday life? And in not seeing, what are you avoiding and why?* There were powerful moments of sharing our truth and realizing that our “enemies” are also children of God and just as loved by God. This is a powerful truth.

Our second session we prayed with the poem called “*Walk, Don’t Run*” by Rob Bell. The reflection inquiry was, “*How is the Spirit of God speaking to me through this poem at this time? How are the words of this poem inviting me to seek peace at this time?*” I invite you to look up this poem and pray with it over the Easter season. I also was invited to read it as an opening prayer for one of the National Executive Council meetings. It speaks to slowing down in the midst of our busyness; to recognize what is already in front of us. One of my favorite lines from the poem says: “*Slow down, breathe deeply, and open your eyes because there’s a whole world right here within this one.*” How often do we need to hear those words?

In our third session, we did an imaginative meditation with the readings from the Book of Genesis ([Gn 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a](#)) and the Gospel of Matthew ([Mt 21:33-43, 45-46](#)). Both readings spoke of killing someone, a beloved son, for self-gain – a theme we (continued on next page).



## LENTEN PEACE PRAYERS, from page 5

see too often in our own times. We reflected on both stories of violence and placed ourselves in the stories. Who were we and why?

Week Four, we spoke about being mindful, using mindfulness in our everyday lives. Mindfulness connects us with the present moment so that our brains can get unstuck from the same patterns of thinking. If you are in a creative rut, fall still. Take an intentional Franciscan pause: Stop, take a few deep breaths, and ask the Holy Spirit a question. Don't wait for or expect an answer right then. Just sit with the question. Sometimes the best results are simply in the questions. Use mindfulness as a tool to help you in your day-to-day life. When you pray – you are focused on the prayer, not on your laundry list of things to do. As we pray for peace, we focus on the peace because that is what we want. We don't focus on the war. We place our attention on what we want, not on what we don't want. Seems like common sense; but you'd be surprised how many of us tend to focus on the negative, on what we don't want in our lives.

Week Five, we prayed with the Psalms, especially psalms of lament and hope. I believe the great appeal of the Psalms is that they speak the language of God's own heart. They include songs of praise, cries for help, glad rejoicings, and humble offerings, just to name a few. The Psalms allow the pray-er to express all the emotions necessary in the moment – fear, anger, great joy, deep sorrow, even anxiety and confusion. No matter what you are feeling, you can open up to the Book of Psalms and find words that will match your feelings and pray those words – especially if you are at a loss for your own words in the moment.

And, for our final week, we prayed a Rosary for Peace. I must say, it was one of the most meditative rosaries I have ever experienced. The ladies in the group took their time with the meditations and the Hail Marys. We all felt the power of the Holy Spirit moving through us as we prayed for peace in our world. I was reminded of our dear Friar Linus DeSantis who always told us to “*pray and not say*” whatever we were praying. Don't just read the words or mouth the prayers; but to pray the words slowly and meditatively. The results will always reflect the movement of the Spirit.

Thank you to those of you who joined this year's Lenten Prayers for Peace. And may the Lord continue to give us peace.

*Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, a member of St. Clare of Assisi Fraternity in 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 Board of Directors of Franciscans International.*



**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**.



# Formation calls us to be collaborators with God

Ellen Ferrone, OFS

Regional Formation Director

Greetings Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Blessings this Easter Season! We are called to be disciples! What is a disciple?

There are three essential components to being a disciple:

1. Loyal follower of a leader perceived to be important
2. One who learns from a master.
3. One committed to conversion as a way of life.



**Ellen Ferrone,  
OFS**

*“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.’ Rule 7*

We are created in the image and likeness of God to be God’s collaborators for the redemption of the world by the witness of our lives. When we accept the invitation to be God’s collaborators, we take up the mission Dei (mission of God) to restore our world to its “blessedness.” We do this as disciples and missionaries by incarnating the beatitudes in our own lives and conforming our lives to the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus through our own lifelong dying and rising as individuals and as a community of believers.

We have just concluded the season of Lent and the celebration of the Risen Christ on Easter Sunday. As I reflect on this definition and components of being a disciple, I asked myself how I lived this discipleship and how can I live it better.

I have been blessed to be in a support role with the formation team of the Padre Pio Fraternity. We have two formation classes meeting at the same time-- candidacy and orientation.

This is a big commitment for our formators and for professed members of our fraternity. In my support role, I participate in the candidacy class’s small group discussions. I find this a gift in many ways. In preparation for the formation, I do all the readings. Life has changed in the six years since I originally read them, and the readings affect me differently.

Helping those in formation to understand our rule, charisms, and teachings as well as how to follow in the footsteps of St Francis is leading me to be a better disciple of Christ. In participating in the small group discussion, I’m building relationships with those in candidacy. We are a large and growing fraternity, and these relationships are critical to our call to fraternity. Getting to know the members helps me help them in their call to live the gospel and discover their gifts and charisms so that they may be better disciples.

It’s powerful to think that we are collaborators with God; it’s also humbling. These experiences are a reminder that formation, initial and ongoing are critical to the call to be disciples of the Risen Lord. (continued on next page)

**DISCIPLESHIP, from page 7**

*“Everything a baptized person does each day should be directly or indirectly related to the corporal or spiritual works of mercy.” Dorothy Day*

May the Lord bless us all.

*Ellen Ferrone, OFS, is vice-minister of the Padre Pio Fraternity in Raleigh, NC, and serves as the appointed formation director for the BSSF region.*

## Fraternity's Extraction Rite focuses on seeing

Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS

To dimmed lights and soft music, St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity members, one at a time, walked to the table for the Extraction of St. Francis's Spirit.

Decorated with a framed picture of Jesus healing a man of his blindness, the table held extraction folders in a neat row and three bowls with slips of paper: one bowl each for virtues, Scripture verses, and St. Francis's words.

The folders faced away from us. We could not see the Franciscan saints' names and fraternity members' names on the folders or what was on the folded slips of paper. The Holy Spirit, we've always felt, guides us to “extract — to draw out — what we need.

“A beautiful Franciscan tradition” Mark Taylor, OFS, said “that serves as a unique reminder of our call to holiness.”

Since we began this, in 2011, we've always had a special extra gathering for the Extraction, on the first Saturday in January, on or close to the feast of the Epiphany. Just as the Magi were told to return to their country by another way, what we draw in the Extraction helps us to journey through the year in new ways.

“I've never kept a New Year's resolution in my entire life,” Diane Salkewicz, OFS, said. “These extractions shape my life. From the very beginning, the Extraction has changed my life. I thought this was the best Extraction we've ever had. It was absolutely beautiful.”

Because of COVID restrictions, we didn't have an Extraction in 2021, though we had virtual monthly fraternity gatherings. There are ways to have virtual Extractions, such as one person drawing for everyone, but we wanted to wait until we could have it in person. So, we just continued with what we drew in 2020.

With things reopening early in 2022, we set decided to devote our entire March 26 gathering to the Extraction. This was the day before Laetare Sunday, the fourth Sunday in Lent.

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**Illustration (1330–1340) from an antiphony, a book of antiphons used in various parts of the liturgy. The illustration is attributed to the Italian Master of the Antiphony of San Giovanni Fuorcivitas. Public Domain.**



**EXTRACTION, from page 8**

One of the Gospel readings that could be used was John 9:1–41, Jesus healing a blind man. The Extraction focused on seeing, for what we draw helps us to see in new ways as we each emulate our saint, pray for a living and for a deceased fraternity member, and internalize the virtue, Scripture, and words of Francis that we drew.

Sitting in a semicircle, we began with a prayer service, which concludes with the Extraction.

It seemed important to include thoughts on ways that St. Francis saw. After the opening hymn, “Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days,” which mentions seeing, we had this:

Leader: Words of wisdom from Father Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap.:

“When Francis looked back, he saw Christ; when we look back, we see Francis. The difference between him and us is all there, and it is enormous. Question: In what, then, does the Franciscan charism consist? Answer: Looking at Christ with the eyes of Francis! We do not cultivate the Franciscan charism by looking at Francis, but by looking at Christ through Francis’s eyes” (*FUN* manual, “Vocation: God’s Call,” p. 10).

Let us pray:

Lord, help us to keep our eyes open to always look at you with Francis’s eyes in every circumstance of our lives.

Joann Colini, OFS, read John 9:1–41.

In the past, a fraternity member has given a reflection after the Gospel reading. This time everyone offered their thoughts as Frank Colini, OFS, led us in breaking open the word, focusing on three questions I borrowed from my pastor, Father W. Becket Soule, OP, questions he’s used in some of his homilies:

What did I hear?

What does it mean?

What is the cost?

“I thought it was very spiritual that we had those questions and that interaction,” Brenda Harris, OFS, said. “That’s what we’re called to do, to share with our brothers and sisters and to grow together.

St. Francis’s “Salutation of the Virtues” came next, with members taking turns reading the various virtues.

Then this, because there is more than one way to see:

Near the end of his life, St. Francis, now blind, wrote the beautiful “Canticle of the Creatures,” revealing “a side of [his] vision of God, creation, and the human soul” (*Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Vol. I: The Saint*, p. 113).

As he wrote the canticle, he saw all creatures, not with his eyes but in his mind and heart. Let us offer this canticle that we, too, may always see one another, everyone we meet, and all creation not just with our eyes but with our hearts and minds, as well.

We alternated on the canticle’s verses, as our concluding prayer, then sang “Open My Eyes, Lord.”

(continued on next page)

**EXTRACTION, from page 9**

Margaret Cavagnaro, inquirer, had her first opportunity to participate in our Extraction service.

“I enjoyed it,” she said. “It was just a great experience for me.”

Margaret volunteers at The Good Samaritan Attic in Hendersonville, which provides, at no charge, donated furniture and household items to people in need.

She drew the virtue of charity, which, she said, “made me realize that I need to be even more charitable, not just to do charitable things but to be more charitable in my thoughts.”

Margaret also drew St. James of the March as her saint and was delighted to discover that her daughter, Florence, shares her birthday, Nov. 28, with St. James’s feast day.

It was a wonderful day of celebrating our Extraction and of getting reacquainted with each other after not being able to gather in person for so long. Oh, yes, and we also enjoyed the potluck lunch.

*Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS, is a member of the St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity, Hendersonville, N.C., and former editor of the Communio.*

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## **Blessing bags bring Franciscans closer in teamwork, service**

Betti P Longinotti, OFS

There has been much discussion about defining our apostolates within the region recently. What is an apostolate? Is it giving donations to a charity? Is it helping an organization or a group in need?

Our own fraternity’s main apostolate changed several years ago, in something we had done for a long time in serving a local ministry, that reframed its purpose and organization. When we lost this apostolate, we were floundering, searching for something else to fill this gap.

Since this change we have been assembling blessing bags, at first for Birthright and the Samaritan Inn. These were worthy causes, but we refocused our apostolate at the outset of COVID19. One of our members suggested the idea and it has developed and become stronger over the last two years.

Our apostolate requires teamwork. We begin by gathering donations that will be assembled in our blessing bags. We gather, assemble, and distribute 25 blessing bags to the homeless each season.

Each blessing bag (a Ziploc bag) contains: two disposable masks, a small hand sanitizer, a small bottle of water, a granola bar, a pair of socks, toothpaste and a toothbrush, a \$5 McDonald’s gift card and a St. Francis prayer card. In the winter we include a cap and gloves. Each season we revisit the types of items that will be included.

Ninety percent of our fraternity members participate in donating the items for these blessing bags which are delivered to my house, as the coordinator. When all the items are delivered, two of us  
**continued on next page**

**BLESSING BAGS, from page 10**

assemble the bags. The fraternity members are generous. It continues to amaze me. No monetary commitment comes directly from the fraternity funds.

Surplus items are donated to the Refuge House, a new ministry that has evolved, that one of our members brought to our attention.

In preparing for this article, some members were requested to write a personal reflection on their experience with this apostolate:

*During the past three years, I have been part of the St. Clare Apostolate mission that involves the distribution of blessing bags to the poor and homeless people in the surrounding Winston-Salem areas of North Carolina. This apostolate work has been a humbling and emotional experience for me because I have the chance to witness the poor and suffering people and to recognize the life and dignity of each person that I encounter along the way.*

*As Secular Franciscans, we are called to follow the Gospel message of Jesus and His example to love and treat others with love and respect. The people that I have encountered through the apostolate of the blessing bag distribution have included an older woman along the road, a young man in a wheelchair with amputated legs located on the entrance to the highway, a mother holding a sign for assistance. A couple with a dog accepting donations along the highway, an older man with one arm and holding a cane for balance, standing along the road as people leave the shopping malls. All these people who live on the fringes of society must be treated with respect and kindness, just as Jesus treated the poor, the lepers, and the crippled people during His ministry. Through the apostolate work of our fraternity, we are modeling the teachings of Jesus by the actions of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.*

Elizabeth S., Candidate

*When I encounter a homeless person, I experience humility and love. I ask their name and listen to what they say. I explain the items in the bag. I pray for each one of them.* Jerry G., OFS

*Yesterday we met Travis, a senior citizen asking for help in a busy traffic intersection. He has suffered a broken arm and had lost several toes to frostbite. We asked about shelter, and he did have a place a place to stay and sleep. He asked for our prayers, was glad to receive the "blessing bag" and that we stopped to chat with him. (Thankfully the traffic light was red, so we had time to stop and share with him).*

Elsa and Hernan S., Inquirers

*It is with profound humility I distribute the blessing bags. The faces are different, but the expression of gratitude is similar. If it be a fella 80 years old, asleep sitting on a shopping cart leaning on a light pole in the baking sun. Or a Mom and Dad working different lanes of the same intersection with two kids hidden in the bushes in the rain. An attitude of gratitude prevails in such profound manners it cannot be forgot. Thank God for the opportunity!* Bob D., OFS

**Continued on next page**



**People experiencing homelessness receive blessing bags each season from the members of the Fraternity of St. Clare in Winston-Salem, NC.**

**BLESSING BAGS, from page 11**

*This past season I participated in distributing blessing bags. I prayed for the Lord to show me those to receive the bags, I looked in places I normally see the homeless, and they were not there. I went across town, near a Sam's Club entrance/ exit. There was a woman holding a sign that read "Struggling Mom". She looked rough. I rolled down my window and asked how many children she has. She said four. She was so elated to receive these blessing bags. I gave her the three I had left. She said, "God Bless You." Thank you! Upon leaving I contemplated what life what must be like for her, trying to take care of her family, her children. Did she/ they live in a shelter? I was moved to tears and cried all the way home. Betti PL, OFS*

Regarding giving the surplus items each season:

*The Refuge House is a safe place for people going to the Emergency Department at our local hospital with mental health challenges. These folks do not need hospitalization, but instead are taken to Refuge House to spend the next 24 hours with trained behavioral health peer support staff who offer them support in a comfortable, peaceful environment.*  
Mary M. OFS, and Kris J. OFS

We have additional apostolates as well through the year, but the "blessing bags" have proven to be a sincere blessing for us, as well as to those that receive these.

*Betti P Longinotti, OFS, is Blessing Bags Apostolate Coordinator for the Fraternity of St. Clare, Winston Salem, NC.*

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# All are welcome!

The national Secular Franciscan Quinquennial is coming up Aug. 3-7 in Phoenix. All members of the Franciscan family (1st, 2nd and 3rd orders), friends and families of Franciscans, and anyone interested in celebrating our Jubilee are welcome to attend. Registration ends July 1. [Click on the image below for more information.](#)

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Phoenix, AZ

Celebrate & renew our Franciscan calling  
in the spirit of conversion

Secular Franciscan Order



## Icon retreat provides valuable research experience

Story and Photos by Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS

I got the last available spot for the icon retreat.

Held Jan. 10–14 at St. Francis Springs Prayer Center, near Greensboro, N.C., it was an opportunity to learn more about icons. This would be hands-on research since I want to write about that beloved icon, the San Damiano Crucifix. St. Francis heard a voice from this crucifix as he prayed in the dilapidated church of San Damiano at Assisi.

Icons are said to be written because they communicate biblical truths, but St. Francis heard a voice from that crucifix. “Francis, Francis,” it said, “go and repair my house, which you see is falling into ruin.”

Father Damian Higgins has conducted these retreats for a number of years. Abbot of Most Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Redwood Valley, Calif., he has been painting icons for 30 years. Holy Transfiguration, an Eastern Catholic monastery, is part of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, in line with Rome.

Bob Higgins (no relation to Father Damian), a professional iconographer, assisted in the teaching.

Father Damian led us in prayer before dinner each evening. In addition to praying to the saint whose icon we were creating, “Rules for Icon Painters” included: “Before starting work, make the Sign of the Cross; pray in silence and pardon your enemies.... When your icon is finished, thank God that his mercy granted you the grace to paint the holy images.”

My first task: choosing my icon. This icon retreat was dedicated to St. Lydia, so most of us made her icon.

We meet St. Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, in “Acts of the Apostles,” Chapter 16, where it’s recorded that “she and her family were baptized” and she invited Paul and Luke to stay in her home. She was added to the Church’s official list of saints at the time of the Council of Trent (1545–1563); her feast day is Aug. 3.

Father Damian had made two templates of Lydia. With no icon-making experience, I chose the template that seemed less detailed.

Bob handed me my template, thick black carbon paper, full-color picture of what the finished icon should look like, and the three-quarter-inch thick 7½ by 10½ inch locust wood board on which I would create the icon. A ballpoint pen and a sharp-pointed metal etcher were on my worktable.

Later, Bob explained that he covers the boards with thin linen, which is then soaked in glue. After the glue dries, he applies 11 coats of gesso, an absorbent primer.

Here was a connection to the San Damiano Crucifix. That icon is painted on canvas glued to the wood.

**(continued on next page)**

**ICON RETREAT, from page 13**

“What makes an icon an icon?” Father Damian asked, in his presentation after dinner. “It has no external light. The light is within the figures. It is an eternal light that we become. There is no darkness, there is no death in heaven. If there is a dark area (in the icon) it is simply less light. The icon primarily communicates light. The figures are taken out of time and place and are present to us now.”

Light, of course, comes through windows.

“An icon is a window,” Father Damian said. “Everything we paint in the natural world is living and will die, though these things may generate new life. They become smaller as they recede in the picture and as they do when we look at them in real life. Icons have a different perspective. The figures become larger as they come near us. They invite us in.”

Now I understood why, on the San Damiano Crucifix, Jesus stands out from the background. He approaches us.

After the presentation, I placed the template on the board, taped down one side with blue painter’s tape, then slid the carbon paper between template and board. Bearing down hard with the ballpoint pen, I traced every template line, glad that I hadn’t chosen the more-detailed icon.

Tape, template, and carbon removed — design on board.

I pressed with the etcher hard, deepening all those lines. This would keep the paint from spreading all over the board.

By now it was around 9 p.m.; I was ready to quit for the night. Missie, my tablemate, advised me to complete the next step: applying red liquid clay as a base for the gold leaf on Lydia’s halo.

“It takes a long time to dry,” Missie said.

Applying the clay was tricky. Painting it onto the board leaves air bubbles or white patches. With a brush, I dropped a blob of clay onto the board, then used the brush to pull the clay across the surface. No white space. I sanded away the few air bubbles the next morning.

After that, Bob brought me the gold leaf: delicate strips on semitransparent paper wider than the gold leaf. Holding down one end of the paper, Bob rubbed in the opposite direction with his other hand, then lifted the paper. Gold leaf covered red clay. I followed suit and Lydia soon had a golden halo.

Carefully, I lifted gold that had overlapped the halo edges and used that to fill in gaps on the halo.

For that day and the next two I added and refined colors: red on Lydia’s veil, blue basecoat on her scarf, brown hair, yellow on her dress. Bob showed me how to streak white over the yellow so that the dress looked like real fabric. **(continued on next page)**



**Father Damian Higgins and retreatants look at the completed icons in St. Francis Springs Prayer Center’s chapel before the blessing ceremony.**

**ICON RETREAT, from page 14**

Father Damian and Bob were so patient with all 24 of us in giving us tips and repairing our errors. Bob had said he could correct anything, and he and Father Damian did. This wasn't Missie's first icon retreat. She gave me pointers and loaned me a couple of her special brushes.

Wednesday evening and my Lydia's face looked like a Halloween mask, but Bob knew how to blend the colors. Now she's beautiful. He also showed me how to apply purple over the blue on her scarf. Purple cloth was Lydia's business; it's likely she would have worn that color.

Earlier in the week, I told Father Damian that I was worried about how my icon would look.

"Trust the process," he told me, and he was right.



Joanita's icon of St. Lydia.

By Thursday afternoon, I was decorating Lydia's scarf with a gold-painted design, according to the example on the full-color picture. More confident now, I turned my mistakes into design innovations: draping Lydia's veil differently and embellishing her scarf with little gold circles, which Father Damian praised, and Missie said echoed Lydia's halo.

"Which way do you want her to look," Bob asked, "at you or off in the distance?"

I decided she should look contemplative, so he put the white in the left side of her eyes.

On Friday morning we placed our icons on a table in front of the altar in the chapel.

After giving a talk, Father Damian blessed each icon and then each of us with incense. Then he made the Sign of the Cross with holy oil on the top of each icon board. We all stood, and he came to each of us to make the sign of the cross on our foreheads and the palms of our hands.

The next workshop at St. Francis Springs Prayer Center near Greensboro, NC, is scheduled for July 18-22. The event fills up quickly. Information is available at the [St. Francis Springs Prayer Center website](#).

*Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS, is a member of the St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity, Hendersonville, N.C., and former editor of the Communio.*

**The Communio is a quarterly publication of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States.**

**BSSF REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL RECAP****By Nora Wessling, OFS**

God's blessings of peace, love, and goodness as we begin His gift of Spring!

The Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional Executive Council met via Zoom on January 29, 2022. The following are the highlights of that meeting.

- Minister DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, presided.
- The November 6, 2022 meeting minutes were approved as corrected.
- The BSSF Region Rosters continue to be updated and recent copies were sent to the REC members and local Ministers in the Region.
- The NAFRA Database also continues to be updated and the Minister mentioned the Directives from National, regarding presence of Profession and Birth Dates. Reminders have been sent out to the local fraternity Ministers and NAFRA Database Managers in the Region more than once regarding these directives.
- All were reminded that Carmen Madero, OFS, and Sharon Loiselle, OFS are the Nomination Committee. The Nomination Documents were to go out January 31, 2022.
- As Chairperson of the Charitable Donations Committee, Carmen also reported there were no new requests for the Fraternity Charitable Donations. The requesting forms for the Charitable Donations application, with the application instructions, and the names and email addresses to whom applications are sent, are on the Regional website.
- Treasurer Ken Brooke, OFS, reviewed the end of the 2021 financials, reporting on the end of the year account, income and expenses. Since there were some reserve monies in the budget, discussion by some members of the Council will be done to explore what alternate changes may be needed.
- Minister DorothyAnn Rowland, mentioned two of the four recommendations made to the REC in the August 13-15, 2021 Visitation Report. The first recommendation has been initiated and that was the process of identifying willing/able members who would serve the region in preparation of the elective chapter. The second was to prepare an audit of the Region's finances, which needs to be done prior to the chapter of elections in August 2022.
- Later in the meeting, there was further discussion regarding the Visitation Report. It was interpreted that the report was very positive. All agreed that the REC is to continue with their hard work and to do what we are called to do.
- Deacon Tom Shaver, OFS, Regional Spiritual Assistant gave the Spiritual Assistant Report, reporting that the initial session of the local Spiritual Assistant training program, involving six candidates, occurred at the Maggie Valley Reflection Center. The training program involves two years and the candidates will be commissioned at the 2023 ARG.
- Sharon Winzeler, OFS, editor of the *Communio* shared that there is a four-month schedule of the *Communio* newsletter and it will be coming out at the end of the month.
- The JPIC Animator, Carolyn Townes, OFS, gave her report that included a brief summary of programs she is involved with. She has been nominated as the OFS member of the International Board of Directors For Franciscan International. She also stressed the importance of receiving the contact person's name of the local JPIC Animators in the local fraternity in order that she can include them in her distribution list.
- The Formation Director report was given by Minister DorothyAnn Rowland. She shared that the former Formation Director, Dianne Ambrose, OFS, needed to resign her position due to several health issues. DorothyAnn asked all of the Regional Counselors to  
(continued on next page)



**BSSF COUNCIL RECAP, from page 16**

- consider filling in the remainder of Dianne's term. Regional Councilor Ellen Ferrone, OFS, has agreed to step into the Formation Director position for the remainder of the term.
- The Regional Formation Director's Open Forum put on by National was attended by Councilor Christine Lukesh, OFS, JPIC Animator Carolyn Townes, OFS, and Minister DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS.
- The Fun Manual is in the process of being revamped. Sometime later this year there may be a revised Fun Manual.
- There was mentioned that Formation is the building block of the Order, and the members need to be properly formed in the way of the Order.
- Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Report was given in Joe Vodenichar's, OFS excused absence.
- Reports from the six Councilors were given. Their reports basically shared what activities were occurring in their areas and what they were involved in their Areas, as well as any discussions that were needed for each Area. A couple of the Councilors—Christine Lukesh, Area Two, and Ellen Ferrone, Area Three, are attending the 2022 Quinquennial the first weekend in August 2022.
- The Committee studying possible alternate sites for the ARG, consists of members: Ellen Ferrone, David Cruz-Urbe, Sharon Loiselle, and DorothyAnn Rowland. They have a list of requirements that a site would need to fulfill. They are also checking to see if anyone knows of a professional meeting planner.
- The Regional Minister has signed a contract for the 2023 ARG at Ridgecrest, NC. The year, 2024, would be the earliest date for a new site, if it is determined a site meets all the requirements needed, and would qualify for having the ARG.
- The proposed schedule of Visitations, Elections, and Events for the January 2022-October 2022 time frame was reviewed with assignments done for the various open positions up to the scheduled ARG in August 2022.
- This REC is not able to schedule the Presider for Elections, nor Fraternal Visitor for Visitations after the 2022 ARG, because those persons will be newly elected and may be new to that position. The newly elected REC will schedule those persons after the 2022 ARG.
- All Visitation and Election Documents needed for these events are now posted on the Regional website thanks to the webmaster and Regional Minister.
- The ARG in 2022 is scheduled for the 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend in August, because the Quinquennial Congress(Q) is being held the first weekend in August, and it was felt that members in the Region may find it easier to attend the ARG during the 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend.
- Consequently, the ARG will occur August 19-21, 2022. The **Theme** will be Servant Leadership.
- In addition, this year at the ARG, the Chapter of Elections for the Region will occur, with a new Regional Executive Council elected.
- The REC after discussion, voted to presently raise the reimbursement for travel for Regional Fraternity business to .45 per mile.
- It was noted that our JPIC Animator, Carolyn Townes, OFS, has an article about her in the recent St. Anthony Messenger magazine.

These are highlights of our last REC meeting, and we hope it helps you to see how the REC is actively involved in serving your needs in the Region. We are thankful for this opportunity to  
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**BSSF COUNCIL RECAP, from page 17**

serve and as always, we ask for your prayers as we continue in our role as servant leaders. All of you are in our prayers and we wish God's love, peace, and goodness to everyone.

- Next REC Zoom Meeting is scheduled for May 28, 2022.

*Nora Wessling, OFS, is a member of the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Augusta, Georgia, and BSSF Region secretary.*

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## Newly Professed at Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Franklin, TN



Tinuviel Kruse, OFS, front row left, made her permanent profession to the Secular Franciscan Order on April 2 at St. Catherine Church in McMinnville, TN. Others pictured are left to right in back row: minister Stephen Brace, OFS; and Ellen and George Tutaj (Candidates). Front row, left to right, Tinuviel Kruse, OFS; Ann Panagotos, OFS; Fr. Bala Showraiah, OFM; and Deacon Simeon Panagatos. The Franciscans are members of the Seven Dolors Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Franklin, TN.

## ***SCHEDULE OF VISITATIONS AND ELECTIONS AND EVENTS***

**April 2022 to May 2023**

\* confirmed

V+ follow-up visit (observers in parentheses)

**By DorothyAnn Rowland  
BSSF Regional Minister**

<b>2022</b>				
April 9-10 *	Franciscan Family of Greensboro/Greensboro, NC	<b>V</b>	Ellen Ferrone	Deacon Tom
April 22-24	Secular Franciscan Spiritual Assistant Training/Maggie Valley, NC		Deacon Tom and team	
April 30 * Canceled by Region 4/27/22	Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin Mary/Franklin, TN	<b>E</b>	David Cruz-Uribe	Jean Schneider
May 7 *	Mother Cabrini/Anderson, SC	<b>E</b>	Christine Lukesh	Fr. Bob Menard, OFM
May 14 *	St. Clare of Assisi/Aiken, SC	<b>E</b>	Christine Lukesh	Ken Wessling
May 14-15 *	Sts. Francis and Clare/Knoxville, TN	<b>V</b>	Carmen Madero	Deacon Tom
May 21-22	Blessed Solanus Casey/Morehead City, NC	<b>V</b>	Martha Roman	Deacon Tom
May 28	BSSF Regional Executive Council (REC) meeting Zoom			
June 10-12	Secular Franciscan Spiritual Assistant Training/Maggie Valley, NC		Deacon Tom and team	
June 11-12	St. Elizabeth of Hungary/Elizabeth City, NC	<b>V</b>	Martha Roman	Georgette Schraeder
June 25-26	St. Joseph Cupertino/Bessemer, AL	<b>V</b>	Sharon Loiselle	Jean Schneider
July 8-9	St. Elizabeth of Hungary/Augusta, GA	<b>V</b>	Christine Lukesh	
July 9	Fraternity of Brother Francis/Newton, NC	<b>E</b>	Betti Longinotti	
July 11	St. Clare/Asheville, NC	<b>E</b>	Betti Longinotti	Jean Schneider
<b>August 3-7</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> Quinquennial Congress "Q"</b> <b>Sheraton Hotel Phoenix, Arizona</b>			

<b>August 19-21</b>	<b>Annual Regional Gathering Ridgecrest Conference Center</b>	<b>E</b>		
Sept 30-Oct 1	Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary/Bluffton, SC	<b>V</b>		
October 7-8	Crucified Christ/North Charleston	<b>V</b>		
October 15-16	St. Thomas More/Wilmington, NC	<b>V</b>		Georgette Schraeder
November 9-10	Five Georgia Martyrs/St. Simons Island, GA	<b>V</b>		
November 11-12	Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament/Burlington, NC	<b>V</b>		

**2023**

February 18	Blessed John Duns Scotus/Murrells Inlet, SC	<b>E</b>		
May 12-13	Immaculate Conception/Jonesboro, GA	<b>V</b>		





## Two professed and one affiliate welcomed to Immaculate Conception Fraternity



Immaculate Conception Fraternity welcomed two newly professed sisters and one affiliate at St. Philip Benizi Church in Jonesboro, GA. They are from left to right, Sandra Bailey, OFS; James West, affiliate; and Sherry-Ann Jenkins, OFS.

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## New council elected at the Fraternity of St. Clare



The Fraternity of St. Clare in Winston-Salem, NC, elected a new council on March 8.

Left to right are, Ecclesiastical Witness Georgette Schraeder, OFS; Treasurer, Anne Modrow, OFS; Councilor 1, Mary Miller, OFS; Councilor 2, Janice Safrit, OFS; Minister, Betti Longinotti, OFS; Vice-Minister, Kris Jonczak, OFS; Fraternal Presider, Martha Roman, OFS; Formation Director, Bob Dorsch, OFS. Secretary Janice Howell, OFS, was recovering from COVID and unable to attend.

## St. Francis of the Hills welcomes new candidate for profession



St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity, Hendersonville, N.C., held the Rite of Admission during its April 23 gathering, receiving Margaret Cavagnaro (center) into the Secular Franciscan Order as a candidate for permanent profession. With her after the Rite are Father Bob Menard, OFM, spiritual assistant (left); Brenda Harris, OFS, minister; Mark Taylor, OFS, formation director; Diane Salkewicz, OFS, vice minister and Margaret's sponsor.

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“Therefore,  
Let us desire nothing else,  
Let us want nothing else,  
Let nothing else please us and cause us delight except our Creator,  
Redeemer, and Savior, the one true God. . .”  
(St. Francis of Assisi, ER: 23:9)

## **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:**

Nominations are now being accepted for all offices on the BSSF Regional Executive Council. Please send your nominations as soon as possible.

Nominees will be contacted by the nominating committee.

Other items on the election calendar are:

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](mailto:ucougar2@comcast.net)

515 Terra Verte, Peachtree City, GA 30269

2. Sharon Loiselle, OFS [sharonloiselle@gmail.com](mailto: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-Urbe, 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**

## Summer Formation Opportunities on Zoom

St. Bonaventure University has announced its summer line-up of formation offerings.

Many will be offered through Zoom. A detailed description of all the courses is available on the [St. Bonaventure conference website](#).

“The Crib, the Cross, the Eucharist: A Secular Franciscan Spirituality” is one of several courses available. Beginning Saturday, May 14, this series of sessions will be presented monthly on Zoom.

Attendees will learn how these three great mysteries of Christ’s life became the foundational mysteries of the Franciscan movement. Other sessions will be held on June 11 and July 9. Each will be held from noon to 2 p.m. EST.

The Franciscan Connections Conference will feature “Trust and the Franciscan Tradition” will be presented on Zoom from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. on June 23 and 24.

The conference will seek to provide fresh resources for conceiving of and developing trust.

Other featured programs include:

- **Ignatius Brady Lecture Series:** Last series lecture: April 20. All are available on website
- **Summer of 2022 Master Class:** Bonaventure’s Itinerarium: June 21-23, June 28-30, July 5-7
- **Rule of 1221 Conference:** July 13-15