



COMMUNIO

Newsletter of the Brothers and Sisters
of St. Francis Region

Special Annual Regional Gathering 2023 Edition

BSSF Annual Regional Gathering Registration Deadline July 7, 2023 Celebrating the Rule: 800 Years of Peacemakers in Christ thru Nonviolence

By Lynn Oeser
Regional Formation Director

Our Annual Regional Gathering on Aug. 11-13 this year falls in the midst of the first year of the Franciscan centenaries being celebrated by the entire Franciscan family. In Celebrating the Rule, we have much to rejoice in and be grateful for:

- An 800-year tradition of Franciscan vocations; penitents who choose minority, embrace the poverty of the Incarnation and humility of the Cross and profess to live the Rule.
- An 800-year tradition of living in relationship with our Creator, in fraternity with Creation and brothers and sisters both living and deceased.
- An 800-year tradition of peacemakers who communicate by grace with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

This year we will celebrate **Our being in Christ** by assessing the impact of the Gospel and the Rule in our daily lives. We will pray and worship together through the Holy Mass, Adoration and some different Franciscan prayer traditions.

We will Celebrate **Our being brothers and sisters** by forming new relationships and rekindling old with secular Franciscans of our region, leaving no one a stranger.

We will celebrate **Our being in communion** through our celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, renewal of our Profession promises, and fraternal apostolic activities.

We will celebrate **Our being in the world** by listening to a voice give witness to her work in nonviolence. We will consider the message that is intended for our heart and discern what is ours to take away.

When the time comes to depart, we will leave our gathering space blessed for the next occupants and we will go forth into our secular lives with peace and joy to do what is ours to do.

Items you may wish to bring are: a Bible, Breviary, crown rosary, Secular Franciscan Companion (if you have one), and prayer journal. We will provide the cake for the centenary celebration!

ED Campbell Scholarship Funds Available

The Ed Campbell Fund is a fund to assist brothers and sisters who may need financial assistance in order to attend ARG. Information can be found on the ARG registration form. Requests for funds should be made by the fraternity minister or leader.

Please contact Regional Treasurer, Zubair Simonson , OFS, for the “Request for Scholarship Form” to be returned to him by July 1, 2023
Mr. Zubair Simonson, OFS
6300 Creedmoor Rd, Ste 170
Raleigh, NC 27612
email: zubair.simonson@gmail.com

Award-winning nonviolence leader Key speaker at ARG



Marie Dennis, OFS

By Carolyn Townes, OFS
Regional Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Animator

Marie Dennis, OFS, is senior program director of Pax Christi International’s Catholic Nonviolence Initiative. She will be the key presenter at this year’s ARG in at the Ridgecrest Conference Center in Black Mountain, NC.

From 2007 to 2019 she was co-president of Pax Christi International and was named a Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace in 2022. Marie worked for the Maryknoll Missioners for 23 years, including 15 years as director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. She is author or co-author of seven books, editor of *Choosing Peace: The Catholic Church Returns to Gospel Nonviolence* (Orbis Books, 2017) and co-editor of *Advancing Nonviolence in the Church and the World* (Pax Christi International 2020).

For Pax Christi and Maryknoll, Marie has visited many countries around the world – most recently, Palestine and South Sudan. In 2022, Marie received the Robert M. Holstein Faith Doing Justice Award from the Ignatian Solidarity Network and the Peter Hinde Peace Award from CRISPAZ. She is a board member of the Maryknoll Lay Missioners and was the *National Catholic Reporter’s* Person of the Year in 2016. She has previously served on the Vatican’s COVID 19 Commission, the steering committee of the Catholic Peacebuilding Network, and the national boards of JustFaith Ministries, the Alliance for Peacebuilding, Sojourners magazine, and NETWORK, just to name a few.

Marie was a founder of the ecumenical Center for New Creation, dedicated to education and action for social justice and peace; the Washington (DC) Area Community Investment Fund, which makes loans for affordable housing and small businesses in low-income communities; the Jubilee USA campaign for cancellation of overwhelming and unjust debt of impoverished countries; and Assisi Community, a small, intentional Catholic community in Washington DC

A professed Secular Franciscan, Marie is the mother of six and the grandmother of nine. She strives to practice nonviolence, to live simply and lightly on the earth, and to work for social transformation. Before moving to Assisi Community in 1987, where she continues to live, Marie and her family lived and worked on a 65-acre organic farm in Virginia.

Pray unceasingly—and try different formats at ARG

By Theresa Christie, OFS
St. Elizabeth of. Hungary Councilor
Augusta, GA

As Secular Franciscans we have promised to adhere to the Rule of St. Francis for Seculars. An important part of our promise is our prayer life (Rule 8). During initial formation we are instructed on praying the Liturgy of the Hours - Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer.

Did you know that for a more varied prayer life it is acceptable to substitute other forms of prayer? These substitutions, however, do need to be liturgical in nature.

Were you aware that other acceptable forms of prayer can be found in that little brown book titled “Secular Franciscan Companion”? In the companion book you will find instructions on how to prayer the Office of the Twelve Our Fathers and the Office of the Passion.

The crown rosary can be prayed using scriptural meditations. I have found a book written by a Secular Franciscan - Lucas Amato, OFS. The title of this booklet is “Scriptural Meditations.”

In addition, Lectio Divina can be used. This method of prayer focuses on scriptural reading and the meditation of how the Lord may be trying to speak to you through that scripture.

This year the ARG will provide opportunities for us to explore some of these alternative forms of prayer. We will have a number of these forms available at each morning and evening prayer time, as well as leaders to help navigate these alternative forms of prayer.

So, let’s get out there and enhance our prayer life with some variation, but don’t forget Morning and Evening Prayer.

Things to remember for the ARG:

- **Fraternities, bring your banners.**
- **There will be tables for fraternities to display their activities if they wish.**
- **Sign-up sheets will be on a table in the main gathering room for lectors, eucharistic ministers and roles in Liturgy of the hours, and for a Holy Hour in the adoration chapel.**
- **A link to the ARG program will be posted on the BSSF website prior to ARG.**



Golf Cart Shuttle Service Available

A six-passenger golf cart will help transport fraternity members needing assistance to and from the dining hall.

Because Ridgecrest Conference Center is located in the mountains, there is a hilly area between the meeting rooms and the dining room. Information about golf cart stops will be available at registration.

At left, David Cruize-Urbe, OFS, multicultural commission chair, demonstrates the availability of the shuttle.

Music Brings Us Together

By Rebecca Bresnahan, OFS
Area 2 Councilor

Theresa Christie, OFS
St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity

If you've ever attended the ARG, you've seen us. We are the ARG choir. We provide all the music for the weekend, including Mass and Liturgy of the Hours.

If you've ever wondered about us, here is the official FAQ:

Question: Who leads the choir?

Answer: Theresa Christie plans and leads the choir. She is a member of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity of Augusta, GA.

Question: What is the audition procedure to get into the choir?

Answer: You walk up and say, "Can I sing?", to which you will immediately be handed a packet of music and a place will be made for you.

Question: What if I play an instrument?

Answer: Bring it along; we'll try to accommodate.

Question: When does the choir rehearse?

Answer: Our only official rehearsal will be Friday night during social time. However, we usually find time before the day's events begin to get pick-up rehearsals in.

Question: Do you have to know how to read music?

Answer: It helps, but so much of the music is familiar that it shouldn't matter too much if you don't.

Question: What if I want to sing but won't arrive until Saturday?

Answer: Walk up on Saturday and say, "Can I sing?", to which you will immediately be handed a packet of music and a place will be made for you.

Question: What if I can't sing?

Answer: Well, then you can still join us and get even with God. 😊

Caring for Creation: Carbon Offsets for the ARG

David Cruz-Urbe, OFS
REC Multicultural Committee Chair

As Secular Franciscans, we are called to care for creation every day. Pope Francis framed his encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*, using the spiritual insights of St. Francis:

If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously. The poverty and austerity of Saint Francis were no mere veneer of asceticism, but something much more radical: a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled. --Laudato Si', 11.

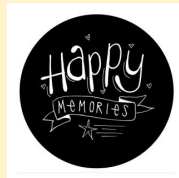
A pressing issue facing our world is climate change, caused by the increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. While the best long-term solution is to reduce the amount of carbon that we, as individuals and as a society, produce, we can also offset our CO₂ production by donating money to projects that reduce carbon dioxide by planting trees or developing renewable energy resources. These are called **carbon offsets**.

If you are planning to drive to the ARG, then your trip will produce CO₂ and you should consider purchasing carbon offsets to compensate for your trip. A carbon offset typically costs \$10-15 per ton of CO₂. There are many places where you can purchase them. For smaller offsets (starting at 1/2 ton), you can go to <https://terrapass.com/>. For larger offsets (starting at 3 tons) there is <https://cotap.org/>; they are a charitable organization which uses the money to fund certified forestry projects in rural communities.

Carbon offsets are not expensive to purchase. The table at right shows the amount of CO₂ produced by a 100-mile trip for a range of mileages.	Miles per gallon (mpg)	Tons of Carbon per 100 miles
	20	0.04
	25	0.035
	30	0.03
	35	0.025
	40	0.02

For example, my car gets just over 40 mpg, and I will be driving 850 miles round-trip to get to the ARG. Therefore, I will produce roughly $850/100 * 0.02 = 0.17$ tons of carbon. If I offset this at the cost of \$15/per ton, it will cost me just $0.17 * \$15 = \2.55 . One approach might be to purchase offsets as a fraternity. Determine the total miles driven by all your fraternity members who attend the ARG, and then have the fraternity purchase the offsets.

Take only
memories



And friendships



Leave only
footprints



and blessings

