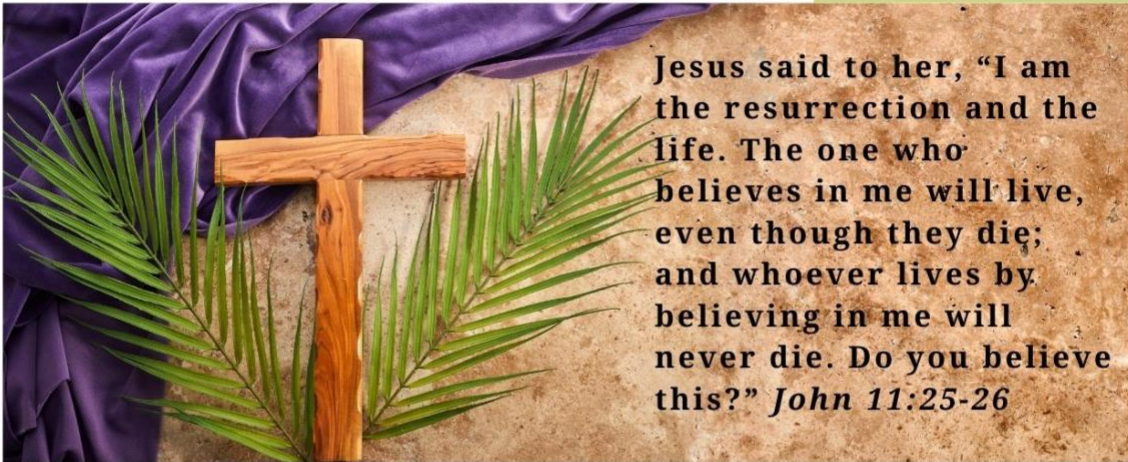


# The Communion

SPRING 2024



## Finding Franciscan Joy in Lent

By Ellen Ferrone, OFS  
Regional Minister

### The Joy of Lent!

As a child, and most of my adult life, Joy and Lent weren't words used together. As a child in my house, we gave up candy--my candy of choice was Kit Kat Bars. But we didn't have to abstain on Sunday – Yay for that Sunday treat of the Kit Kat Bar.

My adult years were also filled with the goal of abstaining. I don't remember if I followed the family guidelines and broke my abstinence. I probably did.

Life as a Franciscan has brought a new focus--transforming the Joy of the Gospel to the Joy of Lent.

Did you see it? Was there joy in the rainy days? The rain that nurtures the earth, that bathes the birds and animals, that fills the streams and rivers with drinking water.

Did you feel it? Was there joy in the cold days? Days that bring crisp blue skies. That allow the earth to sleep and rejuvenate herself. That draw me to a warm cup of tea, wrapped in a blanket rejuvenating myself.

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**Franciscan Joy in Lent (continued from p. 1)**

Did you hear it? Was there joy in the falling snow? In the quiet where I can hear God's whisper.

Did you experience it? Was there joy in preparing meals for the soup kitchen? Was there joy in serving with our Franciscan sisters and brothers? Was there joy in serving those meals to our sisters and brothers who have less. Was there joy in writing to someone in prison? Was there joy in taking the Eucharist to the homebound?

Where did you find Franciscan Joy this Lent?

My prayer is that you found an abundance of joy as we live our call "From Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel".

Peace, love and joy--

Ellen



*Ellen Ferrone, OFS, Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional minister, is a member of Padre Pio Fraternity, Raleigh, NC.*

# Save the Date

Get ready to enjoy prayer, fellowship and  
fresh mountain air!

**AUG. 9-11, 2024**

**Annual Regional Gathering**

of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region

**RIDGECREST CONFERENCE CENTER  
BLACK MOUNTAIN, NC**

# Building a Soft, Clay Heart

By Lynn Oeser, OFS  
Regional Formation Director

We find ourselves today in the last days of Lent. The Holy Season of repentance and turning. A season suitably fitted for Brothers and Sisters of Penance.

Article 7 of our Rule states, United by their vocation as “brothers and sisters of penance”<sup>11</sup>, and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls “conversion”. Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily<sup>12</sup>.

On this road to renewal the sacrament of reconciliation is the privileged sign of the Father’s mercy and the source of grace<sup>13</sup>.<sup>11</sup> *Memoriale propositi* (Introduction, address).<sup>12</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 8; Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) 4; Apostolic Constitution “*Paenitemini*”, preamble. <sup>13</sup> Vatican II, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*) 18:b.

I have found that the first step of turning in Lent to be an inviting place of refreshment with the support of the church and my Franciscan brothers and sisters. That action is my choice. The challenge is the second step, the “taking up the yoke” part.

The submission requires relinquishing my desire to the new heart that is God’s will for me.

I need to challenge myself daily to receive the encounters, situations, and information that befall me, both the good and the bad, as graces that draw me nearer and more deeply into the love of our Lord.



*Lynn Oeser, OFS, is the formation director at the Fraternity of Brother Francis in Newton, NC, and regional formation director.*

I need to challenge myself daily to receive the encounters, situations, and information that befall me, both the good and the bad, as graces that draw me nearer and more deeply into the love of our Lord.

I ask for the grace of a soft clay heart that hears and sees and allows the potter to mold and form me according to His will. I am quite certain that the work of the Master is incomprehensibly superior to mine.

O Lord, you are our Father;  
we are the clay, and you are our potter;  
we are all the work of your hand. Isaiah 64:8  
Lord, mold me into your perfect charity.

Brothers and Sisters, may the holiness of the season touch your hearts.

## Formation News and Links

\* Information for Upcoming event In the Fullness of Christ April 20, 2024, Aiken, SC for Formators and JPIC Animators has been sent to Ministers and Formation Directors.

\* BSSF Regional Formation Guidelines for Formators is being reviewed with minor updates.

\* [Centenary Resources-Stigmata](#)

\* [CIOFS Thematic Guide for Formation Programs](#)

\* [Workshops From Annual Regional Formation Directors 2023 Workshops](#)

# Building justice, peace at home



By Allison Salerno, OFS  
Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis  
Regional JPIC Animator

*Allison Salerno, OFS, is a member of the Fraternity of the Stigmata of Saint Francis in Johns Creek, Georgia.*

I was on a weeklong hiking trip with a friend when the call came. We were on the Appalachian Trail in Maryland and staying at a hostel each night. A family member several states away needed help. Immediately. It became apparent during several frantic phone calls that I was the one in our family with enough psychological and spiritual strength to help someone who was emotionally and financially at risk .

I left the trail, prayed with my hiking partner, and packed my van. The next day, in the predawn darkness, I began the 10- hour drive home.

I didn't know how I would serve as a protector, so I prayed over and over a Psalm snippet from that morning's Liturgy of the Hours: "A clean heart create for me, God; renew within me a steadfast spirit." I called a locksmith, my husband, a dear friend who is a disabilities lawyer and so on.

Within 12 hours of arriving home, my husband and I were at the Atlanta airport, boarding a plane so we could intervene.

I've been feeling remiss with my formal Secular Franciscan duties, including missing a few in-person and zoom meetings to attend to the urgent tasks before me. A conversation with fellow Secular Franciscan made me realize: this is the work of justice and peace. I'm reading a dual memoir called "The Book of Rosy," about the journey of a Guatemalan refugee fleeing violence in her home country and the stranger in New York City who helps her reunite with her sons after they were separated in 2018 by the U.S. border agents.

Rosayra Pablo Cruz's words remind us of what it means to be family.

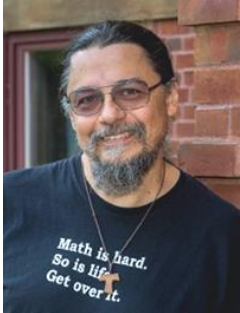
"The notion of extended family -- what it is and what our responsibilities are to one another -- is hard for Americans to understand. In the United States, children grow up and leave home. They move far away, they leave their parents behind, and they start a family somewhere else -- maybe even across the country. They see each other on occasion, maybe once a year, or twice, if they're lucky. In Guatemala, we grow up, we remain at home (or at least in the same town), we have children, and there is no 'extended family.' We are simply family, and the roles and responsibilities of who cares for whom are not as rigid as they are in the States. We are all responsible to and for one another."

Justice and peace sound like global, unattainable concepts. We can seek justice and create peace through simple actions.

Each of us has family members who need our assistance; that work is unpaid and often invisible, but it is essential to our charism.

# Diversity in Our Fraternities

By David Cruz-Uribe, OFS  
Regional Multicultural Commission Animator



David Cruz-Uribe, OFS, is a member of St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity in Bessemer, AL, and serves as the BSSF Regional Multi-Cultural Commission Chair.

A few years ago a Latina student at the University of Alabama where I teach asked me where I was from. Since you can tell from my accent that I am not from Alabama, I told her that I was from Wisconsin.

*“No, I meant where are you from from?”*

I laughed and explained that my father was from Mexico who had ended up in Wisconsin (itself a long story) and married a local woman of German and Norwegian descent.

What was important to this student was not where I was born, but where my family and I came from. She was looking for a point of connection to her own background and hoped to find one in a professor.

I was thinking about this story because I meet so many Secular Franciscans who are not originally from the South, but have immigrated here from New England, the Atlantic states, or the Midwest (as well as a few folks from California). But beyond this, they (or their ancestors) hail from around the globe. Where we are from is always complicated, and no two people have identical stories.

Growing up, the story I heard in school made it seem so straightforward: all our ancestors came from Europe via Ellis Island and then fanned out across the US. While millions of people came through this route, millions of others came in different ways.

My father, like so many people from Mexico and Central America, crossed the US border in Texas. On the other hand, I worked with a Mexican-American woman from New Mexico who, when asked when her family came to the US, always responded, *“We didn’t: the US came to us.”*

Her family had settled in the Southwest in the late 1700s when this area was still part of Mexico. They only became Americans when this territory was taken by the US during the Mexican-American war. My wife’s grandfather was Ukrainian; he immigrated to Canada and later moved south to the US (without a visa) and settled in Chicago.

The Chinese and Japanese mostly came through the West Coast. But I worked with another woman, descended from Russian Jews, who told me her ancestors wanted to go to America but got on the train going the wrong direction. Rather than a Baltic sea port, they ended up in Vladivostok and took a ship across the Pacific to San Francisco. And of course, tragically, most African-Americans came to the US in the holds of slave ships making the Atlantic crossing.

Once our ancestors got here, they had very different experiences. My mother’s German and Norwegian ancestors quickly settled as farmers, part of large national communities. Indeed, both Norwegian and German were semi-official languages in Wisconsin until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century—when the state fathers were preparing for a vote on the state constitution in 1848, they had it published in these languages as well as English (and other languages).

**Continued on next page**

### Diversity continued from page 5

The Catholic Church in the US worked to meet the needs of these ethnic groups, organizing “national churches” that persisted late into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Other groups, ranging from the Irish and Italians in the East to the Chinese and Japanese in the West, to Mexicans across the Southwest, experienced all kinds of prejudice and bigotry, ranging from the mild (as a child and teenager I was referred to occasionally as a “spic” or “beaner”) to the extreme: lynchings, mob violence, and the horror of the Japanese internment during WW II.

For all groups, the pressure to assimilate and become “Americans” was constant. Sometimes it had benefits, as repressive customs of the old world (like arranged marriages) were dropped. For others, it meant a loss of identity as languages and customs were lost. Even though my mother also spoke fluent Spanish, my parents did not teach any of their children to speak Spanish—my generation grew up speaking English. It was my kids, and my nieces and nephews who made an effort to learn to speak Spanish.

Dorsey Price Salerno, mother of our regional JPIC coordinator, Allison Salerno, has written a beautiful essay, [\*The Shadow Wife\*](#), about her own mother and grandmother who moved to the United States from Argentina and the consequences of their assimilation.

Despite this, ethnic identities persisted and, in some cases, thrived. Many people take pride in the things that have survived: traditional foods, family customs, even ties to distant relatives in their home countries. I encourage local fraternities to take time to explore the ethnic backgrounds of their members, sharing stories of their families and their experiences in America. Our fraternities are enriched by our diversity. Such stories will help us to see the good and bad in our nation’s history, and to better appreciate who our fellow Secular Franciscans are. It will also, I hope, give us a new appreciation for the injunction God gave to the Israelites, and to us, to care for the new immigrants to our nation:

*You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 23:9)*



Medical inspection of immigrants at Ellis Island  
(Wikimedia Commons, photo in the public domain)



The newly forming St. Padre Pio fraternity in Lancaster, SC, held the ceremony of welcoming for five new inquirers. Father Jeffrey Kirby blessed each new inquirer with a relic of Padre Pio.

The fraternity has 12 inquirers in different stages of formation.

They also have an acting secretary and treasurer. Professed members are teaching Orientation and Inquiry, using *The Franciscan Journey*.

They remain eager, engaged and enthusiastic regarding everything Franciscan.

Submitted by Carole King, OFS  
Vice minister of St. Clare Fraternity, Aiken, SC

# Franciscan Young Adult Groups Gaining Traction in Region

By Robert Dorsch, OFS  
You-Fra Animator



*Bob Dorsch, OFS, is a member of the Fraternity of St. Clare in Winston-Salem BSSF Regional You-Fra Animator.*

It is so exciting to see all the activities in and around our region on the FYYA front. It feels like the spirit is moving in our young adults. Young people consistently express a need for spiritual enrichment beyond confirmation and traditional faith formation. Their hearts are hungry, their minds open and their spirits strong.

Elizabeth Sandy, OFS, with the Fraternity of St. Clare in Winston-Salem continues her work with Wake Forest University and their quarterly dinners. She works closely with the Catholic campus minister to select a Wednesday evening to serve a meal.

Her fraternity members show up with homemade lasagna (meat and vegetarian), lots of garlic bread, salad, and gooey chocolate brownies. Early on they had presentations about Franciscan charisms. At Christmas they did a skit on the creche. All this has created a Franciscan presence and allowed for dialogue with the students.

Fr. Marcel Amadi heads up Catholic campus ministry and Wake Forest and NC A&T State. He reached out to Georgette Schraeder, OFS, with the Franciscan Family of Greensboro to see about the possibility of a similar endeavor at NC A&T State. Her fraternity sponsored a dinner there with great success.

J.C. Liu, OFS, minister of St. Maximilian Kobe in Charlotte shared that Kristen Wood coordinated a similar event at UNC-Charlotte. The students were super surprised with all the home-made comfort food and goodies. In all cases the Franciscan life and discourse were welcome.

In breaking news, the Padre Pio Fraternity in Raleigh, NC, had a welcome surprise. Sharon Winzeler, OFS, minister said during their February gathering their spiritual assistant Father Hugh Macsherry, OFM, showed up with about 10 smiling young adults with hungry hearts.

They had completed their confirmation formation and wanted more. On their own they searched out and discovered YouFra.

With a strong desire to pursue the Franciscan way of life and their leader Mariza Mandujano-Ortiz, director of Youth Ministry at Immaculate Conception Church in Durham, NC, they met with Ellen Ferrone, OFS, Lee Cunningham, OFS, and Sharon several times and are well on their way with an organized and energetic group.

Praise God for the sparks of the Holy Spirit beginning to show up in many places. My challenge to you is where in your community are these sparks and what is your fraternity planning to fan the flames of faith and evangelize?

## Recent Local Fraternity Elections in the BSSF Region



The **Sts. Francis and Clare Fraternity of Knoxville, TN**, recently elected a new council.

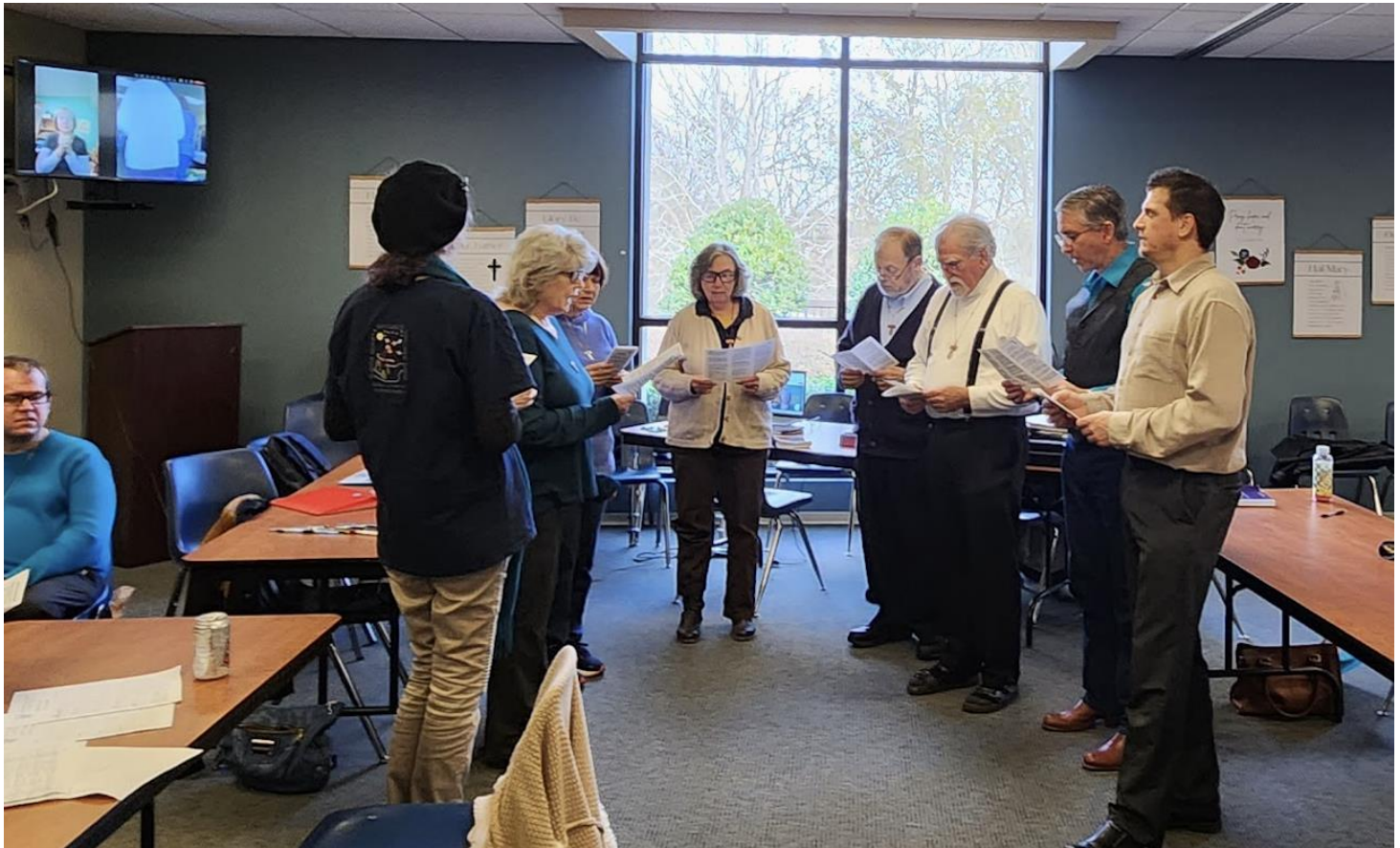
Pictured here from left to right are: Treasurer, Kristen Von Clef, OFS; councilor Colleen Masserang, OFS; minister Terry Paradis, OFS; councilor Jessica Trentham, OFS; formation director Jean Schneider, OFS; secretary Lindy Crace, OFS; and councilor Paul Carter, OFS. Ecclesial witness Deacon Tom Shaver is in the forefront. Not pictured is newly elected vice minister Paulette Croteau.



**St. Elizabeth of Hungary of Athens, GA**, has elected a new council. Pictured above, from left to right, are Treasurer: Renee Strunk, OFS; Councilor: Cindy Craig, OFS; Minister: Susan McArthur, OFS; Councilor: Janet Hulshof, OFS; Vice-Minister: Nora Wessling, OFS; Formation Director, Theresa Christie, OFS; Councilor: Maria Smith, OFS; and Secretary: Martha Jurgensen, OFS.



## Recent Local Fraternity Elections in the BSSF Region



**The Fraternity of the Stigmata in John's Creek, GA**, elected a new council on Jan. 14. Pictured from left to right are fraternal president Gabrielle Cruz-Uribe OFS; councilor Christine Reynolds OFS; secretary Sherry Kridle OFS; minister Margi Williams OFS; formation director Deacon Tom Shaver OFS, councilor David Rohr OFS; treasurer Danny Navarro OFS; and vice minister Jan Murina OFS. Tams Nicholson, OFS, on the TV monitor in the upper right was also elected councilor. Seated at the computer at the lower left is Drew Bogda who served as teller for the election.

## Mark Your Calendars for Annual Regional Gathering in August

The Annual Regional Gathering (ARG) of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region will be Friday, Aug. 9-11 at the Ridgecrest Conference Center in Black Mountain, NC.

The cost, including meals, is \$347 for a single or double, \$367 for a triple and \$387 for a quad.

Check-in will be at 4 p.m., Friday, Aug. 9, and checkout at 10 a.m., Sunday, Aug. 11.

All registrations will be coordinated through your local fraternities. Ministers will receive more information about registering. All fraternity members are welcome to share in this weekend of formation, fraternity, prayer and service.

# Fraternity 'Plays in the Dirt' for Its Garden Apostolate

By Margi Williams, OFS  
BSSF Area 1 Councilor

It was a bright sunny, yet cool day, on November 18, 2023, when members of Stigmata of St. Francis Fraternity, Johns Creek, GA, joined to “play in the dirt” at a community garden. Henderson Park Community Garden, Tucker, GA, was established in 2010. Its mission is to “strengthen community; enable the cultivation and consumption of wholesome, homegrown food; provide an environment for hands-on education in organic gardening; foster an intergenerational gardening experience; and enhance the beauty of neighborhood green space.” Organic gardening also helps the environment as organic fertilizers and pest control methods are used. And, green plants remove carbon dioxide from the air and convert it to oxygen.

One of our members, Dennis Kissel OFS, cares for several garden beds in this community garden. Dennis is also a volunteer and on the board at St. Martin dePorres food pantry at Holy Cross Catholic Church, Atlanta, GA. Holy Cross Catholic Church is administered by the Order of Friars Minor Conventual. The Friends of St. Martin de Porres at Holy Cross operate a large food pantry, which “feeds families in crisis, the homeless, and provides nutritious food items to school children in need”.

Members who joined Dennis on that sunny cool day were Jan Murina, OFS, Sherry Kridle, OFS, Tabitha Whang OFS and her husband Jerome, and Margi Williams, OFS and her husband Mike. Together they harvested 40 lbs of kale, turnips, beets, radish, lettuce, and a variety of Asian greens to donate to the food pantry.

As Secular Franciscans we endeavor to live “Gospel to life and life to Gospel.” We have a special love and reverence for the Gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Thus, we are called to an apostolate and to evangelize. “The Christian vocation is, of its nature, a vocation to the apostolate as well.” Indeed, we call an apostolate “every activity of the Mystical Body” that aims “to spread the Kingdom of Christ over all the earth.” (CCC 863) Secular institutes “share in the Church’s role of evangelization, ‘in the world and from within the world’.” (CCC 929)

Thus, it was with a very special Franciscan joy that we gathered a few days before Thanksgiving to “play in the dirt” as a group apostolate. What we harvested helped provide organically grown vegetables to a food pantry that serves those in need. This food pantry aligned with a Catholic Church administered by the Franciscan Order of the Friars Minor Conventual.

It was also a special joy to provide fresh vegetables to the needy for their Thanksgiving table as we are to “in all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18)



**Tending the garden from left to right  
Sherry Kridle OFS, Tabitha Whang OFS  
and Jerome Whang.**

## Leap Day Observance at St. Francis Springs Prayer Center



Franciscan Family of Greensboro, NC, took advantage of the extra day of Feb. 29 to “Take a Leap for Peace Day” in conjunction with Pax Christi. Events at the Franciscan Springs Prayer Center in Stoneville, NC, included prayer, a letter-writing campaign and screening of the movie about Secular Franciscan Franz Jagersutter, who was a conscientious objector in World War II. Franz was beatified in 2007 and is in line for canonization, according to Jeanne Kiley, OFS, formation director for the Franciscan Family of Greensboro.

## BSSF Regional Council Updates

By Mary Sacavage, OFS  
BSSF Regional Secretary

Both the Regional Executive and Regional Fraternity Councils met in August 2023 at ARG. Additionally the REC has met regularly via ZOOM and the RFC met in October via ZOOM to approve the budget. An in-person REC meeting is scheduled for April 4-7, with a retreat and meeting with the fraternity Mministers.

The highlights for the meetings include:

- Approval of the 2024 Regional budget.
- Preparations for the 2024 Annual Regional Gathering.
- Several Grants were awarded for fraternity Apostolates.
- Several Grants were awarded for joint activities between fraternities.
- A retreat for JPIC and Formation Directors is scheduled for April 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Annual reports were submitted from the local fraternities and the Regional report was submitted.
- Area Councilors were busy visiting fraternities and conducting elections.
- The National Database transitioned to a new user-friendly version.
- Allison Salerno was appointed as our Regional JPIC Animator.
- The processes for both grant applications are being streamlined.
- The REC has met with newly elected councils via ZOOM for “Meet and Greet” sessions.
- Our four new Spiritual Assistants were appointed to local fraternities.

<b>Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region 2024 Calendar</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Minister</b>	<b>Fraternity</b>	<b>Event</b>
March 24	Sharon Winzeler	Padre Pio Raleigh, NC	Election
April 5-7	All local ministers at Regional Ministers Gathering at Anderson, SC		
April 14	Joan Rogers	Blessed Solanus Casey Morehead, NC	Election
April 20	Valorie Baronkin	Our Lady of Good Counsel Greenville, SC	Election
April 20	Formation and JPIC formation at Aiken, SC		
May 3-4	Nannette Perrone	Mother Cabrini Anderson, SC	Visitation
May 19	Dory Davis	St. Elizabeth of Hungary Elizabeth City, NC	Election
June 1	JC Liu	St. Maximillian Kolbe Charlotte, NC	Election
June 8	Irene Crowder	Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Burlington, NC	Election
June 8	Esther Kelly	Fraternity of Brother Francis Newton, NC	Visitation
June 23	Christine Washington	St. Joseph of Cupertino Bessemer, AL	Election
Aug. 9-11	Annual Regional Gathering Ridgecrest Retreat Center Black Mountain, NC		
Sept. 14	Laura Cleary	Immaculate Conception Jonesboro, GA	Election
Nov. 17-18	Cathy Champon	St. Clare Asheville, NC	Visitation
Nov. 23	Brenda Harris	St. Francis of the Hills Henderson, NC	Election

**Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis  
Regional Executive Council Roster**

**Minister: Ellen Ferrone, OFS**  
**Vice Minister: Martha Roman, OFS**  
**Secretary: Mary Sacavage, OFS**  
**Treasurer: Zubair Simonson, OFS**  
**Formation Director: Lynn Oeser, OFS**  
**Spiritual Assistant:**  
**Position Open**

**Area Councilors**

**Area 1**

**Margi Williams, OFS; Gabrielle Cruz-Uribe, OFS**  
 AL: Bessemer;  
**GA:** Athens, Blairsville, Conyers, Duluth, Jonesboro;  
**TN:** Chattanooga, Knoxville, Nashville

**Area 2**

**Becky Bresnahan, OFS; JC Liu, OFS**  
**GA:** Augusta, St. Simons Island;  
**NC:** Asheville, Charlotte, Hendersonville, Newton;  
**SC:** Aiken, Charleston, Columbia, Greenville,  
 Hilton Head Island, Spartanburg

**Area 3**

**Lee Cunningham, OFS; Betti Pettinati-Longinotti, 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**  
**Allisen Salerno, OFS**

**Multicultural Commission Chair**  
**David Cruz-Uribe, OFS**

**Youth/Young Adult Fraternal Animator**  
**Robert Dorsch, 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**

**Prayer for the Synod**

**As we embrace this Synodal Process, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to be at work in us so that we may be a community and a people of grace.**

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts; Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful;  
do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity  
so that we may journey together to eternal life  
and not stray from the way of truth  
and what is right.

All this we ask of You,  
who are at work in every place and time, in the  
communion of the Father and the Son, forever  
and ever.  
Amen.



The Communio is the quarterly publication of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region of the Secular Franciscan Order. We welcome stories and photos from your fraternities. Send them to [communioeditor@gmail.com](mailto:communioeditor@gmail.com) Deadline for the next issue is May 15. Please identify all individuals in photographs. Peace and all good!