

# The Portiuncula

## Franciscans of the Prairie Region

*Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis*

### OUR MINISTER'S MESSAGE



Dear sisters and brothers in our Lord and His servant Saint Francis. May the Lord give you His peace!

Before beginning my usual writing about our Region, I want to issue a fervent request for everyone's **prayers for Father John Sullivan, O.F.M.**, our Regional Spiritual Assistant and local Spiritual Assistant of Our Lady of the Angels Fraternity, Decatur. Father John has been experiencing some very serious health-related issues that have caused him to be very much in need of our prayers. I beg you, sisters and brothers, to join me in storming Heaven with prayers for the health and well-being of our dear brother, Father John.

Wow! As a Regional family, we have covered a lot of ground since the June edition of our Regional newsletter was published! The June 18 **Regional Picnic** hosted by Our Lady of the Angels Fraternity, Edwardsville, was a great success enjoyed by many members of our Region. This event coincided with the observance of "International Picnic Day!" Special thanks to Minister Larry Ashlock, O.F.S. and all the members of the fraternity for your warm and gracious hospitality. (Just F.Y.I.: *nobody* flips burgers and grills brats like our brothers Dan Tolbert, O.F.S. and Richard Woloszyn, O.F.S. - thanks, guys!) As a sneak preview of coming attractions, please mark your calendars NOW for **Saturday, June 24, 2017** when St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity, Bloomington, will host our summer Regional get-together.



Approximately 25 members of our Region attended the **19th Quinquennial Congress** of the National Fraternity held in St. Louis June 30 through July 4. What a blessing to celebrate the gift of fraternity with our wider Franciscan Family! Over 650 Franciscans and friends of Francis from many different countries, including our Minister General, Tibor Kauser, O.F.S., gathered for these graced days of prayer, sharing and formation.

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**MINISTER**

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Everyone should be aware that the 20th Q will occur in the year 2021, marking the Centenary of the very first National Congress of Franciscan Tertiaries held in Chicago in 1921.

On Tuesday, July 19, I had the privilege of conducting the **Fraternal Visitation of St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity, Teutopolis**. I really treasure these opportunities to visit with the sisters and brothers of our local fraternities. I never fail to be inspired by the many ways we each strive to live our Franciscan vocations in all the varied circumstances and situations of our lives. With this Visitation, all the local fraternities in our Region have been visited since 2014 and each fraternity Council has received a written report of their Fraternal Visit. Father John Sullivan, O.F.M., our Regional Spiritual Assistant, has been diligent in conducting his Pastoral Visitations as well; the next round of triennial Pastoral Visitations is not due until 2018-2019. Thank you, Father John!

Our July 30 **Regional Day of Reflection** for those in Initial Formation & **Workshop** for Formation Directors & Formation Team members was well attended and well received by the participants. This year's program featured a two-track format: a workshop for local Formation Directors and Formation Team members directed by Thérèse Ream, O.F.S., our Regional Formation Director; and a concurrent day of reflection for our Inquirers and Candidates facilitated by yours truly. Special thanks go to Thérèse for organizing and planning this special day dedicated to formation which has become an annual event in the life of our Regional family.

The **Regional Executive Council (REC)** met at the Chiara Center for a full day of prayer, formation, study and work on Saturday, August 27th. In the June edition of *The Portiuncula* I wrote: "I believe we have reason to be grateful to God for the gift of the Executive Council elected on April 16, 2016. I have found them to be truly collaborative co-workers with me in our shared ministry of animating and guiding our Regional Fraternity over the next three years..." My subsequent experience up to the present moment has served only to confirm and deepen this assertion! Please continue to keep the REC in your prayers.

All these signs of the life and vitality of our Region have brought us to the September 9-11 **Regional retreat** entitled "Praise Be: The Communion of Creation" led by our dear friend Sister Renita Brummer, O.S.F. at the Chiara Center, Springfield. As of the time this article was written, approximately 60 people have registered for this year's retreat. The fall Regional Fraternity Council meeting (i.e., all our local Fraternity Ministers + the Regional Executive Council) is scheduled to take place immediately after the retreat on Sunday, September 11, followed by another Executive Council meeting. Please remember all these servant-leaders in your good prayers.

It continues to weigh heavily on my heart that approximately 80 of our brothers and sisters are listed as **lapsed members** of our fraternities (i.e., those who apparently lack a good reason for not participating in some way in the life of the fraternity and who have not been excused from their obligations by the local fraternity council; see our *National Statutes*, article #18.7.b).

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*Next  
issue:  
Jan 15*

**Deadline:** Article and photo submissions are due on January 1st, April 1st, July 1st and October 1st.

**Deacon Neil Suermann, OFS**  
Editor  
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**The Portiuncula  
MISSION STATEMENT**

The Portiuncula publishes the newsletter to inform, serve and inspire the Secular Franciscans of the Franciscans of the Prairie regional fraternity.

## MINISTER

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I repeat the challenge I extended to everyone in the June edition of our Regional newsletter: "Especially during this Jubilee Year of Mercy, I implore everyone - not just our Local Ministers - to make reaching out to our lapsed members a real and fraternal priority. They need to be personally and repeatedly invited to return to active involvement in fraternity life. Our family is not complete without them!" Depending on circumstances, our local Councils may need to re-classify some of these brothers and sisters as "active/excused"; others may need our assistance with the process of formally withdrawing from the Secular Franciscan Order if that is their intention.

As a way to involve everyone in this process, a Regional ***Prayer to Inspire Our Outreach Efforts to Our Lapsed Members*** was composed, copies of which were made for every member of our Regional Fraternity and distributed to every fraternity at the July 30 Formation Day. It has also been published in this edition of *The Portiuncula*. Please pray this prayer often and please allow it to inspire your efforts to "reach out and touch someone!"

In closing, I repeat my oft-stated invitation: please let me and the members of your Regional Executive Council know how we may be of service to you, and please let us always remember one another in our prayers! May the Lord of the Harvest cause all our efforts to live the Gospel to bear abundant fruit for His honor and glory!

Wishing a safe and enjoyable remainder of the year to everyone, I remain

With a brother's love in Saints Francis and Clare,

*Deacon Dave, O.F.S.,*

Regional Minister

**T** *Ministrare, non ministrari*

***"Bring God's Love to All!"***  
***(NAFRA theme for 2016)***

## ONGOING FORMATION



My dear brothers and sisters,

The Lord give you peace!

It was a great privilege for me to spend July 30, 2016 at the Chiara Center during the Regional Day of Reflection for those in Initial Formation and

Workshop for the Formation People. Deacon Dave, O.F.S. met with the Inquirers and Candidates and I met with the local Formation Directors and Formation Team Members. Even though I met with the formation members, I want to stress the importance of article #37.2 of the *General Constitutions* which states: "Mindful that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of formation and always attentive to collaboration with Him, those responsible for formation are: the candidate, **the entire fraternity**, the council with the minister, the master of formation, and the assistant." I added the bold for emphasis and the reference to assistant is to the Spiritual Assistant. I believe that all of us need to be responsible for formation in various ways and that is why I have decided to provide the following information for your knowledge and prayerful reflection. All of us can ask ourselves how we are individually involved in the Fraternity's formation and how we individually support our aspirants, inquirers, candidates and newly professed. Formation is a communal and collaborative ministry for all of the brothers and sisters of our Order.

Therefore, I want to share with all of you a handout that was given at the workshop. It shows one way to incorporate the sessions from the *FUN Manual* with a particular text, in this case, *The Franciscan Journey*. The chapters from 1 - 33 of *The Franciscan Journey* are numbered and the sessions from the *FUN Manual* are underlined. The notation about the DVDs is the 5 DVD set which was given to each Fraternity at the April 27, 2014 Regional Fraternity Council Meeting.

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**FORMATION**

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**ORIENTATION FORMATION PHASE**

- 1. **Orientation in the SFO (OFS)**  
The Franciscan Family, A Brief Introduction (12 pages)
- 2. **Three Orders - Structures - Discernment**  
The Nature of the Secular Franciscan Order (18 pages)
- 3. **Francis - Clare - Catholic Doctrine**  
Basic Catholic Doctrine (24 pages)  
St. Clare of Assisi (24 pages)

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**INQUIRY FORMATION PHASE**

- 4. **Inquiry in the SFO (OFS)**  
Vocation - God's Call (18 pages)
- 5. **Lay Secular Spirituality**  
Elements of Ecclesiology and Theology of the Laity (14 pages)[DVD #2]  
Our Identity as a Secular Franciscan (24 pages)
- 6. **Writings and stories of St. Francis / St. Clare**
- 7. **SFO (OFS) History - Development of the SFO (OFS) Rule**  
A Brief History of the SFO and Its Rules (34 pages)
- 8. **Scripture in SFO (OFS) Life**  
Franciscan Movement (10 pages)
- 9. **Vatican II - SFO (OFS) Rule & Constitutions**



A biography of St. Francis

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**CANDIDACY FORMATION PHASE**

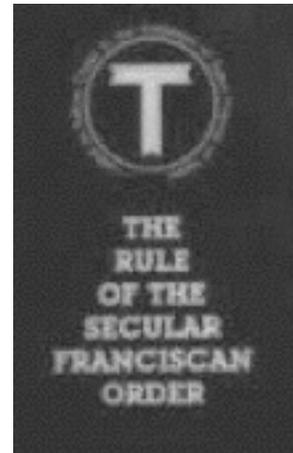
- 10. **Candidacy in the SFO (OFS)**  
The Vocation, Charism and Mission of Secular Franciscans (20 pages)[DVD #2]
- 11. **The SFO (OFS) Rule**  
The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order (46 pages)
- 12. **A focus on Jesus**
- 13. **Encounters with Christ**
- 14. **A Rebuilding Task**  
Profession (18 pages) [DVD #3]
- 15. **Gospel, Conversion, & Reconciliation**  
Penitence and Conversion (18 pages)
- 16. **When you pray**  
St. Francis and His Approach to Divinity (16 pages)



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## FORMATION

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**17. The Mother of God & our Mother**Francis and the Blessed Virgin Mary (16 pages)**18. Being Faithful****19. A Simple way to Live**Understanding Franciscan Theology, Tradition and Spirituality (30 pages)[DVD #4 & #5]**20. Freedom to Love****21. How to Love People****22. Foundations for the Kingdom****23. Justice in Franciscan Life**Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (28 pages)**24. The Gift of Work****25. In their Family****26. Universal Kinship****27. Bearers of Peace****28. Fraternities: Gathering as One**Fraternity and Francis (22 pages)**29. Servant Leadership****30. Fraternity Life****31. Membership in the SFO (OFS)****32. Enriching the Franciscan spirit****33. Franciscan Family Connections***[developed by Sue Caldwell, Deacon Dave, O.F.S. and Thérèse, O.F.S., July 2016]*

In order for each Fraternity to be engaged in both collaborative and interactive formation, the Regional Fraternity has provided the following materials.

**2014** April 27, 2014: Every REC member and each Fraternity received:  
***Forming the Formators, 5 DVD set*** which dealt with the *FUN Manual*

September 21, 2014: Every REC member and every Fraternity received:  
**DVD entitled *Saint Francis: Troubadour of God's peace***

**2015** April 18, 2015: Each Fraternity received:  
***Essential Documents of the Secular Franciscan Order*** and ***Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership*** (revised 2010), each Fraternity Minister received **2 folders (one for self and one for the Formation Director)** with handouts + **thumb drive** which contained handouts and PowerPoint presentation

**2016** July 30, 2016: Regional Sponsored Formation Workshop for Formation Directors and Team members Each Fraternity via the Formation Director received:  
***The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order*** (Presentation copy); ***Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership***; ***The Franciscan Journey*** (updated version); ***Essential Documents***; and ***What It Takes***

If I may be of any service to you and/or your Fraternity, please feel free to e-mail met at [umbria2@earthlink.net](mailto:umbria2@earthlink.net)!

May we enjoy the spectacular colors knowing that God has shined his face upon us, been gracious to us, and looked upon us with kindness and peace! Amen! Alleluia!

*Thérèse, O.F.S.* Regional Formation Director

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**Prayer to Inspire Our Outreach Efforts  
to Our Lapsed Members**

Good and Gracious God, it is your will to gather all people to yourself through Jesus, your Son. Guide us in our efforts to reach out to our brothers and sisters who have been one with us and now are separated from us through discouragement, anger, indifference, hurtful actions, or any other reason. Help us to be sensitive, hospitable, joyful, and courageous as we invite and encourage them to return to active membership in our Fraternity and in our Order. Strengthen our own commitment to our Franciscan vocation, and deepen our trust that You will work through us to bring your loving, healing presence to those to whom we reach out in service to You. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi, pray for us!



**NEWS FROM AROUND THE REGION**

**St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Quincy**  
 Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming

Becky Goodwin from Palmyra, Missouri became an Inquirer after she experienced the *Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming* at St. Elizabeth's monthly Gathering on June 19, 2016. Dwayne, Becky's husband, introduced her as outlined on page 9 of the *Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order*.



Pictured (l-r): Dwayne Goodwin, O.F.S., Becky Goodwin, Fraternity Minister Rosanne Roy, O.F.S., and Spiritual Assistant, Deacon Dave, O.F.S.

**St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Quincy**  
 Rite of Admission

On July 17, 2016, Sherri Ray, O.F.S., a member of Mary Immaculate Church in Kirksville, Missouri became a Candidate in the Secular Franciscan Order through the *Rite of Admission*. The *Rite* was celebrated at the monthly Gathering of the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Quincy, Illinois. Celebrant for the service was Spiritual Assistant Deacon Dave Ream, O.F.S. The *Rite* began with a Liturgy of the Word with Stan Bartley, O.F.S. and Sylvia Collins, O.F.S., both from St. Francis Solanus, Quincy, participating as readers. Sherri's request to be admitted into Candidacy was accepted by Fraternity Minister Rosanne Roy, O.F.S. Sherri received a Tau cross which is the official "habit" of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States. The period of Candidacy lasts a minimum of 18 months of continued discernment and Franciscan formation before the Candidate may petition the Fraternity Council for permanent Profession into the Order.



Pictured (l-r): Fraternity Minister Rosanne Roy, O.F.S., with Sherri Ray, O.F.S., the newest Candidate of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Quincy, IL

**St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Quincy**



Pictured (l-r): Candidate Sherri Ray, O.F.S. shown with her Sponsor Sylvia Collins, O.F.S.



Pictured (l-r): Roseann Gosnell, O.F.S. Sponsor of Inquirer Becky Goodwin

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Pictured (l-r): Phyllis Maxwell, O.F.S. Sponsor of Inquirer Robie Orf

See the duties of an Inquirer/Candidate Sponsor on page 9.

**REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (REC) MEETING**

Members of the REC met at the Chiara Center on Saturday, August 27, 2016 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The day started with REC joining the Sisters in their chapel for Morning Prayer. The ongoing formation segment of the Council's meeting invited the brothers and sisters to reflect upon several questions: What drew you to St. Francis and the Secular Franciscan Order? What do you find most rewarding about life in your Fraternity? What do you find most challenging in your Fraternity? The purpose of the ongoing formation segment was for the members to get to know one another on a personal level so that discussions concerning Regional issues would be enhanced because of the information shared. The meeting following the ongoing formation segment. All of the participants worked very diligently preparing for the September 11, 2016 Regional Fraternity Council meeting which will be held immediately after the Regional Retreat. The time together was concluded at 4:00 p.m. with the praying of the prayer from *The Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order*.

**Calendar**

**October 8, 2016**

Fraternal Visitation, Sacred Heart Fraternity, Peoria

**October 23, 2016**

Elective Chapter, Franciscans of the Tau, Calhoun Co.

**November 1-6, 2016**

NAFRA Council Meeting, Winter Park, Florida

**March 11-12, 2017**

Regional Fraternity Council meeting and Regional Executive Council, Chiara Center, Springfield

**June 24, 2017**

Regional Picnic hosted by Bloomington

**July 29, 2017**

Regional Day of Reflection for those in Initial Formation and Workshop for Formation Directors & Team Members.

**August 12, 2017**

Elective Chapter, Sacred Heart Fraternity, Peoria

**August 27, 2017**

Elective Chapter, St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity, Bloomington

**September 17, 2017**

Fraternal Visitation, St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Quincy

**September 26 - October 1, 2017**

National Fraternity Council Meeting, Mt. St. Francis, IN

**September 29 - October 1, 2017**

Regional Retreat, followed by a Regional Fraternity Council meeting and Regional Executive Council meeting, Chiara Center, Springfield

**April 13-15, 2018**

Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation, Franciscans of the Prairie Regional Executive Council and Regional Fraternity Council, Chiara Center, Springfield

**July 21, 2018**

Regional Day of Reflection for those in Initial Formation & Workshop for Formation Directors & Formation Team Members

### Duties of an Inquirer/Candidate Sponsor

[updated 5/31/2016]

A sponsor is an active professed member of the fraternity serving as a companion who journeys with the Inquirer/Candidate

From the earliest days of the Order, Francis sent the brothers out two by two to preach the Good News of repentance to any and all they met. As with other things in life, Francis' choice of two by two was Gospel-based. In his wisdom, he would probably have paired up an older member of the fraternity with a newer member. In time, the pairs would all return and share the bounty and/or the sorrows of their missionary adventures.

An active professed member of the Fraternity will be assigned to each Inquirer/Candidate during the process of Initial Formation. This should not normally be a member of the Fraternity Council. The purpose is for the Fraternity to provide both a secular and spiritual friend during the formation process. The duties are simple but important to the long-term development of the Franciscan charism.

- First and foremost, be a friend. There will be many members of the Fraternity watching and evaluating the progress of the Inquirer/Candidate during the formation process. You should not add to that process but, instead, practice being a good listener and a supportive friend.
- Maintain contact with the Inquirer/Candidate at the regular Fraternity Gatherings and any special events. Try to see the Inquirer/Candidate at Mass if it fits your mutual schedules.
- Try to talk with the Inquirer/Candidate at least once a month outside of the regular Fraternity functions. Determine how the Inquirer/Candidate is doing with her/his assignments each month and if the Inquirer/Candidate has any questions.
- Do not attempt to encourage the Inquirer/Candidate to adopt any of your personal Franciscan or Catholic practices. Let the Inquirer/Candidate develop spiritually in his/her own personal manner and pace.
- If in the course of your interactions with the Inquirer/Candidate you find there may be a problem with the person's vocation, notify the Formation Director immediately. Do not attempt to work through the problem with the Inquirer/Candidate. At that point, your listening friendship may be the most important part of assisting the Inquirer/Candidate through the difficulty.

The Council appreciates you accepting the invitation to journey as the Sponsor with this Inquirer/Candidate, following our Lord Jesus Christ in the example set forth by St. Francis himself.

Signature of Inquirer\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Sponsor\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

**OFS REGIONAL FORMATION WORKSHOP**

On Saturday, July 30, 2016, a Franciscans of the Prairie Regional Formation Workshop was held at the Chiara Center in Springfield, IL. Workshop participants included Fraternity Formation Directors and Formation Team members with a total of 15 participants from 7 of the 8 local



Thérèse Ream, O.F.S.  
Regional Director of Formation

Fraternities in the Region. Additionally, 22 Inquirers and Candidates from throughout the Region participated in a Day of Reflection in another room

(See article elsewhere in this issue of *The Portiuncula*). The Day began by celebrating Mass as guests in the Sisters' Adoration Chapel.

After general introductions, the Workshop's facilitator, Thérèse Ream, O.F.S., explained the Phases of Formation. The first part of the presentation was clarifying the terminology of the stages of Initial Formation, prior to becoming a Perpetually Professed Franciscan. The stages are:

- Visitor - a person who attends a Gathering and is interested in learning more about the Order.
- Aspirant - a person who enters the Orientation phase of Initial Formation (a period of at least 3 months).
- Inquirer - a person who has participated in the *Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming* and studies for at least 6 more months.
- Candidate - a person who has decided to proceed and accepts the *Rite of Admission* and continues Initial Formation for at least 18 additional months.
- Perpetually Professed - a person who celebrates the *Rite of Profession* in the Secular Franciscan Order.

At each stage of the process, the person receives an item appropriate for their stage in Initial Formation, e.g., short life of Francis for the Inquirer. The group spent quite a bit of time

reviewing each of these stages of development in the Initial Formation process, including the time requirements for study, the ceremonies for moving from one stage to another, the presentation of "symbols" at each stage, and the need for care in reviewing each person's progress by the formation team and the Fraternity Council.



A sponsor is normally selected as a person progresses into the Inquiry Stage. The recommended process for selecting a sponsor is for the Aspirant to select two Professed members of the Fraternity who, ideally, are not on the council. Those names are submitted to the Director of Formation who reviews them with the Council. After discussion, a potential sponsor is asked if they will do the job and, if they agree, the selected



Sponsor Candidate is assigned to the Inquirer. A list of responsibilities of the Sponsor was shared with the group.

Thérèse reviewed many forms and letters that can be used in the Initial Formation Process all of which are designed to facilitate each step of the person's progress toward Profession. Times were noted for



providing information to the Regional Councilor for Database Management. Timely transmission of data will ensure that NAFRA has the correct information on each person participating in Initial Formation and the date of their ultimate profession. The Fraternity should be certain that all required documentation certifying the

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**WORKSHOP**

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Inquirer's status in the Church is verified prior to the transition into Candidacy. This step eliminates embarrassing mistakes later on.

Finally, Thérèse emphasized the importance of the "probationary" nature of Candidacy. During this time, both the Candidate and the Council discerns the viability of the person's vocation to become a Perpetually professed member of the Order. This process should not be a rushed affair nor should it be an automatic approval. Serious discernment on the part of both the Candidate and the Fraternity Council must occur before the approval for profession takes place. *"It is extremely important to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as [a Fraternity Council makes] these decisions about the profession of a Candidate."* Once the Candidate is approved for profession, Fraternities are reminded that the *Rite of Profession* is properly designed to be celebrated during a Mass, preferably a regular Mass of the Parish Church. When a Profession is scheduled, Fraternities are reminded to please notify other Fraternities of the Region so that they can participate in the renewing of the life of the Fraternity with a new Profession.



The approved text for all of the Initial Formation process is the *FUN Manual*. Every section in the manual needs to be covered during the Initial Formation Process. Some suggestions were made on how to coordinate these topics with other texts written by reputable authors.

Upon the recommendations of the Formation Director, Fraternity Councils should prepare a regular schedule of Ongoing Formation topics that are covered during each of the Monthly Gatherings. A "four-pronged" approach to Ongoing Formation was suggested:

- Franciscan Emphasis - topics include the Rule, biographies of Franciscan Founders and Saints, etc. (Formation Team).

- Contemporary topics - how to live our Secular Franciscan vocation in the modern world (Formation Team).
- Catholic Church - teaching about our Faith (Spiritual Assistant)
- Prayer - Liturgy of the Hours or other communal prayers (facilitated by Formation Team, but including other Fraternity members).

The approach to Ongoing formation breaks up the 60 to 90 minute period with a variety of presenters, topics, and activities.



Also, all of the participants in both sessions joined together for two prayer experiences: A Franciscan Litany of the Saints led by D w a y n e

Goodwin, O.F.S. after lunch and a concluding experience in Conversational Prayer led by Dennis Dowell, O.F.S.



*[Article written by Dennis R. Dowell, O.F.S., Formation Team member from St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Quincy who participated in the Workshop]*

## FORMATION DAY OF REFLECTION

It began as a wondrous day with the pleasure of seeing many like-minded souls all around at this place known to many as the Chiara Center, a place of quiet and peace yet bright, aglow with a spirit of sweet joy to be in this place together. The privilege to have been allowed to attend the normally private Mass with the sisters in their private chapel was truly a wonderful way for all of us to come together in preparation for the day ahead. It was a generous gift which allowed us to listen, to be and to receive God's Word and His nourishment to our souls in the Most Holy Eucharist in communion with the sisters who joined those of us who had accepted this invitation to be present for any and all graces and blessings the Lord wished to lavish upon us.

While there was a pre-planned agenda, this gathering provided time for each of us to share the how and why as to our having come together on this day in July. We came to in a "quick" but yet open and sincere dialogue allowed ourselves to give thought and reflection as to the basis for our having responded to the invitation we had received, the place we were in our respective journeys.

Our lunch break allowed for time to explore the Chiara Center and the beautiful grounds filled with incredible flowers and plants on the outside and just as incredible and uplifting artwork all throughout the inside including but not limited to quiet time in the St. Francis of Assisi Church. Myself, being a fresh flower arranger and a photo aficionado, I was able to immerse myself in the beauty of these two aspects so very much present; the beauty of nature and the sacred beauty within the walls of the Chiara Center, its chapel and the St. Francis of Assisi Church.

We all received a folder of well thought out/planned contents which readily could speak to our heart, mind and/or spirit during our time there on that given day and well beyond after our departure. The prayerful gatherings after lunch and then the concluding prayers were unquestionably very moving and spirit filled moments. We were also gifted with rosaries and reading materials made available at the generosity of current O.F.S. members.

All who were gathered and present for this day.. having listened and chosen to accept the invitation to come, were clearly reminded as to the hope that is in our Good God which can be found through our participation in the Secular Franciscan Order. I am so very thankful to have been the recipient of this kind invitation, which allowed me to share in an abundance of graces and blessings during this day given in the spirit of the love of St. Francis, that is the OFS, on this 30th of July 2016.

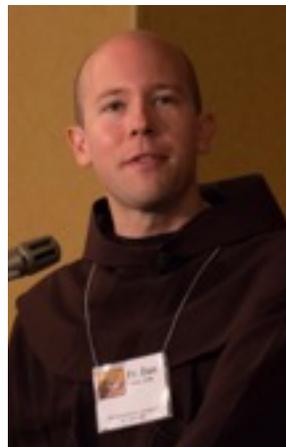
I extend to one and all who took part in big ways and small ways a most sincere "Thank You" for having made this gathering a day to enjoy which allowed us to appreciate...reflect...pray...listen and draw on the spirit that is the O.F.S.; clearly reflective of the spirit of St. Francis. A very blessed day it was; indeed, indeed!

*[Article written by Maria C. Serrano, Sacred Heart Fraternity, Peoria]*

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## MERCY AND MINORITY IN THE FRANCISCAN TRADITION

I had the privilege to attend the Quinquennial Congress XIX of the Secular Franciscan Order-USA. The Congress was held in St. Louis, MO from June 30 to July 4, 2016. The Keynote Speaker was **Father Daniel (Dan) Horan, O.F.M.** from Holy Name Province in New York. He is a respected writer and popular speaker in the United States and Europe.



Fr. Dan presented each day with the overall theme of "**Mercy & Minority in the Franciscan Tradition.**" His specific topics were: Creation & Poverty, Violence & Peacemaking and Racism & Xenophobia. This article presents his thought-provoking information and insightful thinking

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**MERCY**

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regarding Mercy, Minority, Poverty, Peacemaking and Racism, and my humbly offered suggested reflections as a result of his presentations. His slide presentations can be found at [www.nafra-sfo.org](http://www.nafra-sfo.org).

**MERCY**

Fr. Dan espoused that **Mercy** is the core of the Franciscan Charism, “Where there is a **heart full of mercy and discernment**, there is neither excess nor hardness of heart” (*Admonition XXVII*). he highlighted one of St. Francis’ conversion experiences. In 1226, St. Francis in his *Testament* stated, “And the Lord Himself led me among them (lepers) and I showed mercy to them...what had seemed bitter to me was turned into **sweetness of the soul and body**.” Pope Francis has asked us to review the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Perhaps we can reflect upon these Works and determine what we can provide to Christ’s “little ones,” who may have been bitter to us and will bring sweetness to our souls and bodies.

**MINORITY**

Fr. Dan spoke of “**Minority**” in the Franciscan Tradition and stated that to follow Jesus in the footsteps of St. Francis, we must continually strive to become **Lesser** sisters and brothers. He suggested to accomplish this, we should serve the poor, preserve God’s Creation and treat all people with love and respect. He mentioned *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, article 2*, that to “Live the Gospel” as a lesser or minority is a challenge for all of us. Perhaps we can reflect upon the needs of the poor, preserving Creation and loving others, and then determine what we can do in these areas to advance in our never-ending journey to serve as minority/lesser sisters and brothers.

**POVERTY**

Fr. Dan noted that we should embrace **Franciscan Poverty**. He discussed **Material** Poverty, in which people do not have access to things required for basic human needs, and **Spiritual** Poverty by referring to Matthew 5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.” He stated that **Evangelical** Poverty is Franciscan Poverty, characterized by the surrender or

divestment of possessions, and should be utilized as a means to practice solidarity with the poor and marginalized. Fr. Dan concluded that this could only truly take place for St. Francis, when he divested himself of all things that **got in the way of relationships with others**: material goods, social status, and even internal judgments, prejudices and opinions. The same is true for Franciscans today. Perhaps we can reflect upon things that get in our way of practicing Franciscan Poverty, and if so, discern what changes we should make to enhance our daily conversion.

**PEACEMAKING**

Fr. Dan referred to the “*Canticle of the Creatures*.” He related that all creation except humans naturally return praise to our Creator as they serve their intended purpose. We as humans, with free will, have sinned, “...no human is worthy to mention your name” (*v.1*). In the Franciscan Tradition he related that we must give praise to our Creator by becoming **peacemakers, forgivers** and **reconcilers**. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” Those people are truly peacemakers who, regardless of what they suffer in this world, preserve peace of spirit and body out of love for our Lord Jesus Christ” (*Admonition XV*).

Fr. Dan believes that the root of all war is **fear**, and presented alarming facts and statistics regarding gun violence and capital punishment. He cited noted author Thomas Merton who began his journey as a Secular Franciscan prior to becoming a Trappist Monk, (*New Seeds of Contemplation*) writing about **violence in our own hearts**, “...For it is this (hatred of ourselves which is too deep and powerful to be consciously faced) which makes us see the evil in others and unable to see it in ourselves.” Fr. Dan emphasized, “Minority is the willingness to **admit to the (our) faults and failings**.” He suggested that we reflect on the question, Do my actions or behaviors reflect a woman or man striving to be an “instrument of God’s peace” or one only interested in taking care of myself?

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MERCY

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RACISM

Fr. Dan emphasized that discussion regarding racism is a **“difficult conversation”** and for us it brings about grief and anxiety due to recent racial violence. Also, addressing racism is difficult because of its deeply rooted cultural and political history in our country. Saints Francis and Clare’s embrace of evangelical poverty involved breaking down **barriers to relationships** and **resisting and rejecting systems of injustice**.



Franciscans of the Prairie at the 19th Quinquennial Congress, St. Louis, MO, June 30-July 4, 2016

Fr. Dan provided examples and definitions of racism by both secular and religious respected authors. He provided a Franciscan response to racism: An obligation to open our eyes, minds and hearts to see the world as it really is; listen to one another’s experiences; and avoid the fear of addressing injustices in the world around us. He emphatically stated, “...but we are all called to **stand up against injustices** like Francis and Clare, and **renounce the power structures** that perpetuate these injustices.” His words on this topic were revealing, powerful and thought-provoking. Perhaps we should reflect upon the way we view the world through our eyes, minds and hearts, determine our willingness to develop relationships with victims of racism and contemplate a variety of ways to stand-up to social injustices.

In conclusion, Fr. Dan noted that the “Joy of the Gospel” will make us face life’s challenges. His presentations were both inspirational and contained positive examples of taking the “Word of the Gospel” and living it in our daily lives. Our responsibilities as Secular Franciscans challenge us daily to open our eyes to see Christ’s face in all people, **hear His guiding voice** to serve others and to **love like Him** all whom we encounter.

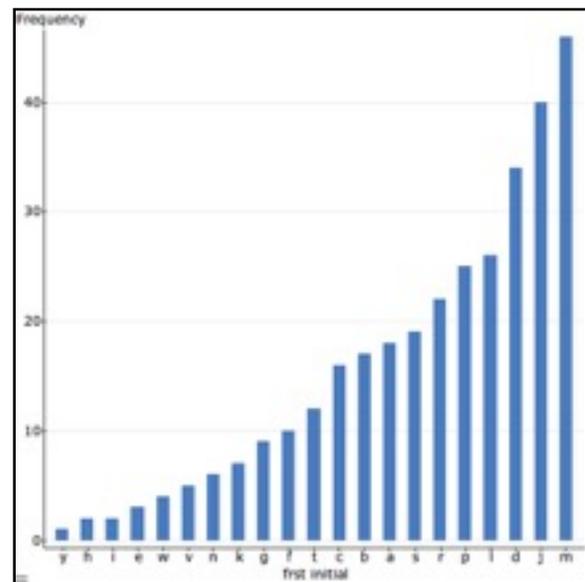
*[Article written by Pat DeLuca, Inquirer, Pope St. John XXIII Fraternity, Rock Island, IL]*

NAME STATISTICS TRIVIA

Among the people in our regional database (234 total), 46 people have a first name starting with M (representing 14.1% of the total). The next most popular initial is J with 40 individuals (12.3%), followed by the D’s of which we have 34 people (about 10.5%).

The M’s popularity is bolstered by our 9 Marys plus the 7 “double-barrelled” first names starting with Mary, such as Mary Ann. The J’s are made popular by our 8 Johns and 4 Josephs, whereas the D’s are supported by 6 Dorotheys and 4 Davids.

We don’t have anyone whose first name starts with O, Q, U, X, Z. Vocations teams, please take note, we would like an Olivia, a Quincy, a Uriel, a Xavier and a Zachary to join the Franciscans of the Prairie. All of these names increased in popularity in the United States after 1980, so likely people with these first names will be young.



### Neil Suermann, O.F.S. Ordained a Deacon on June 25, 2016

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception was filled on the morning on June 25 when Bishop Thomas John Paprocki ordained 11 men to the permanent diaconate for the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. Among the eleven was our brother, Neil Wayne Suermann, O.F.S.

of Our Lady of the Angels Fraternity, Edwardsville. Visitors came to the Cathedral from all across the diocese, and from other states such as California, Arkansas, Tennessee and Missouri (including our Regional Minister, Deacon Dave Ream, O.F.S. and our Regional Formation Director, Thérèse, O.F.S.) to watch as the men were ordained, vested and welcomed to the diaconate. Deacon Neil chose to be vested by Fr. Jeff Holtman, O.F.S. who is the Spiritual Assistant for Our Lady of the Angels Fraternity and pastor of Holy Family Catholic Church, Granite City, Illinois.

In his homily, Bishop Paprocki reminded the men that they are chosen by God. "This is something of which all Christians, especially those in ordained ministry, need to be reminded. God always takes the initiative in calling us to be of service to one another and to his church," he said. "You have worked hard for the past five years to prepare for this day, but you must not view your reception of this sacrament as something you have earned, strictly speaking. Ordained ministry is a privilege and not a right that any of us can claim. "I remind you of this because your awareness of this should remain with you throughout all your lives as deacons," he said. "Realizing that you have been chosen by God to fulfill this ministry should leave you in a constant attitude of awe and humility..." Bishop Paprocki offered his thanks to the 11 men for their willingness to say "yes" to the call to serve as a deacon in the church. "It is my sincere prayer that you will receive this gift with gratitude and humility, knowing that who you are called to be and what you are called to do are all dependent on God," he said. "He is the vine, you are, in a sense, new branches just sprouting..."

Deacon Neil has served as the Minister of his local fraternity and also, from 2013 - 2016, as Regional Councilor for the Newsletter. In addition to his diocesan assignment to diaconal ministry, Deacon Neil continues to serve our Franciscans of the Prairie Region as editor of our quarterly newsletter, *The Portiuncula*. He now becomes the ninth active Secular Franciscan permanent deacon in our Franciscans of the Prairie Regional Fraternity. Prayerful congratulations and best wishes to Deacon Neil and his wife Mary!



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