

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!

As this Spring 2018 issue of our Regional newsletter *The Portiuncula* arrives in your hands (or in your e-mail inbox), we as a Church will be immersed in the joy of celebrating the great Solemnity of the Lord's Resurrection - a happy and blessed Easter to everyone! Please remember, for us as Catholics, Easter is not just a one-day observance, but a 50-day liturgical season when so many aspects of the Lord's Paschal Mystery and our participation in it unfold for us. May this truly be a time of God's grace and favor poured out upon us in abundance! Alleluia! Alleluia!

The weekend of April 14-15, 2018 is also when our Regional Fraternity Council is meeting at the Chiara Center in Springfield, Illinois. A special feature of this annual Spring meeting of the Council is our opportunity to have with us our National Vice-Minister, **Mary Bittner, O.F.S.** and one of our National Spiritual Assistants, **Father Jerome Wolbert, O.F.M.** who are conducting the triennial Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation of our Regional Fraternity. As of the date I write my column (Good Friday, March 30, 2018), it looks as though our entire Regional Fraternity



Council plans to be in attendance at this meeting (i.e., the 8 local Fraternity Ministers [or their delegates] plus the 7 members of the Regional Executive Council) and also several of our Regional Appointees, our Regional Formation Team, and a number of our local Spiritual Assistants. I give thanks to the Lord for each and every one of these dedicated Franciscan servant leaders whom I am privileged to call "sister" or "brother"!

As it is for the local fraternity, the experience of a Fraternal and/or Pastoral Visitation is a

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time for our Region to take a step back from our normal activities and to assess with the help of our Visitors how well we are fulfilling our vocation to “observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi” (**OFS Rule**, article #4). From my somewhat unique vantage point as Minister of our Region for the past five years, I can see many areas of growth and development whereby we have collaboratively worked together to stabilize our Region, to provide reasonable governance structures, to support and develop our common formation efforts, to maintain dependable accountability of our Region to NAFRA and to our sisters and brothers at the local level of fraternity, and to encourage our members in the daily living out of their Franciscan vocations.

Our membership has remained fairly stable at about 200 Professed members at any given time, this being true despite Sister Death’s embrace of about 12 to 14 of our members each year. However, still ringing in my ears as I enter the final year of my term of service as Regional Minister is the question our late National Minister, Deacon Tom Bellow, O.F.S., our Fraternal Visitor in 2015, asked us: **“Why are there not more Franciscans of the Prairie sitting with us around the table?”** Why have there been no new fraternities established in our Region since 2009 - almost 10 years? Why in mid-2018 are there still no Newly Forming Groups or Emerging Fraternities of

Secular Franciscans among us? I can offer no definitive answer to these questions and I urge everyone to keep this intention in our prayers.

Our Regional Chapter of Elections is scheduled for the weekend of March 9-10, 2019. Now is not too soon to begin praying for a successful outcome to this Chapter, that the persons whom the Lord wishes to guide and animate our Regional Family for the next three years may allow their names to go into nomination for elective office and that they may, indeed, be chosen by the Electors.

In the absence of a Regional Spiritual Assistant, no Pastoral Visitations were conducted among the local fraternities of our Region during 2017. Father Ed McKenzie, O.F.M., Provincial Spiritual Assistant for Sacred Heart OFM Province, remains keenly aware of our need for someone to succeed our beloved Father John Sullivan, O.F.M. as our **Regional** Spiritual Assistant. However, this decision is not Father Ed’s alone to make even though 6 of our 8 local fraternities were established by and remain canonically bonded to his Province. We also have one fraternity bonded to St. John the Baptist OFM Province and one fraternity bonded to Saint Bonaventure Conventual Province; they must also be consulted and be in agreement with any eventual appointment. Please, please keep this special intention at the top of your prayer list!

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*Next
issue:
Jul 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.

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I want to remind everyone of the major events in the life of our Regional Fraternity currently on the Regional calendar for 2018 that include the Annual Formation Day of Reflection for Those in Initial Formation and Formation Workshop for Formation Directors and Team Members on **Saturday, July 21, 2018** at the Chiara Center; the Annual Regional Picnic at Southwind Park in Springfield on **Saturday, July 28, 2018** sponsored by Pope St. John XXIII Fraternity, Rock Island; and our annual Regional Retreat directed by Father Michael Higgins, T.O.R. the weekend of **September 28-30, 2018**, also at the Chiara Center. You will find more information about the Picnic and the Retreat elsewhere in this issue of *The Portiuncula*. **Please check to see that you have put these dates and events on your calendars and, if you haven't, PLEASE DO SO NOW!**

This year will also find three of our local fraternities having their triennial Fraternal Visitations and two of our local fraternities celebrating their Elective Chapters. I am very grateful to those members of the Regional Executive Council who have agreed to serve as my Delegates for these events; as I move into the final portion of my service as Regional Minister, I am committed to the task of mentoring those with whom I am serving and who will serve the Region after me.

I want to include a word of personal remembrance about the relationship Thérèse and I have been privileged to share over many years with this year's Retreat Director, Fr. Mike Higgins, T.O.R. Father Mike was among the many family members and special friends who attended my diaconal ordination in Jefferson City, Missouri on December 4, 1999. He then presided at my First Mass of Diaconal Service celebrated at the hotel where our guests were staying later that day. The picture below is a tribute to the place Mike has in the hearts of

Thérèse and me. I hope you will come to the Retreat and meet him in person yourself!



Please continue to keep the members of our Regional Executive Council and me in your prayers and please be assured of a special place in mine. May we never cease encouraging one another to live the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi!

Wishing you peace and every good, I remain

Your brother and servant - with fraternal love in Saints Francis and Clare,

Deacon Dave, O.F.S.,

Regional Minister

T *In Persona Christi Servi*

“Renewed and Confirmed: Live the Treasure”
Celebrating 40 years of our OFS Rule

National Secular Franciscan Fraternity Theme for 2018



HAVE OUR EYES BEEN OPENED? EASTER INVITATION FOR MIRACLES!



Two Formation invitations were given in the January 2018 Regional Newsletter. One concerned the utilization of the formational materials contained in the *Regional Formation Resource Kit* and the other was about reading or rereading a book about St. Francis of Assisi and/or St. Clare of Assisi and/or a Franciscan Saint. Now, I would like to extend an **Easter Invitation for Miracles!**

Miracle can be defined as: “an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs.” So, when we make it a point to open our eyes of faith, we can see God everywhere. Our heavenly Father is accompanying us on our journeys of life and we have the opportunities to consider that the simplest things in our lives are gifts from God and are therefore divine.

Opening our eyes of faith during the Easter Season affords us so many opportunities to experience a plethora of miracles! When we view the world through our eyes of faith, we have so many daily opportunities to see/feel/experience the presence of God in our lives.

Looking out on our property and watching the geese, turkeys and deer eating together, reminds me of the miracle of life and the relationship of God’s creatures with one another. I witness the miracle of selfless love when someone makes it a point to come to Mass to celebrate my birthday, a true miracle of God’s love being incarnated through another. The miracle of someone saying just the right words when I find myself discouraged and anxious. All of these are examples of how God blesses my life with miracles which reminds me of his presence and love in my life.

So, I am extending an **Easter Invitation for Miracles**. Please consider opening your eyes of faith daily and witnessing the many miracles that surround you! Then, go one step further

and share one of those miracles with someone else. Our Rule calls us to be witnesses and to proclaim Christ to others “...they have been united more intimately with the Church by profession. Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words.” (*The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order*, article #6)

Let us each pledge to tell another person about at least one Easter Miracle, so that we can all experience the awesomeness of our God!

Wishing everyone a most joyous **Easter Season** (50 days to celebrate, Alleluia!)

Thérèse, O.F.S.

Regional Formation Director

TREASURER’S REPORT

Last year was a good year for Franciscans of the Prairie Region from a financial standpoint. We ended the year with an operating deficit of only \$901, which was our lowest deficit in many years. Our expenses were very close to the budgeted amount of \$13,248, while our income was more than \$4,000 above the budgeted amount of \$8,465. This extra income was due to a combination of two unbudgeted items: an investment income from a full year of the Ave Maria Bond Fund and in-kind donations (mileage and supplies).

This year is off to a good start for the Region, with 77% of our Fair Share funds received from our local fraternities and the balance scheduled for later this year. We have paid “in full” the Region’s Fair Share to NAFRA, and have a strong balance sheet to cover our expenses for this year and for an extended time going forward.

John Grillot, O.F.S.

Regional Treasurer

VOCATION REPORT

My responsibilities for Vocations for our Regional Fraternity allows me to review a variety of resources. One I've watched recently is a Facebook video from Brother David who is part of the Postulancy Formation Team with the Midwest Capuchin Franciscan Vocation Office. If you are on Facebook, you can find them at Midwest Capuchin Franciscans Vocation Office. They have Brother David's reflection and others as well.

Brother David's two-minute video focuses on discernment and "goods." He contends that when discerning, one never discerns merely one thing. "Discernment must always be between two things that are good," brother states.

He continues. Brother notes that if you feel there is only one option, you will enter into discernment feeling trapped, and that is not optimal, doesn't allow a person to make a good decision. Brother David states that whether one is discerning between single or married, single or religious, or married or religious, for example, one can list the goods that come from each option in order to make decisions that are healthy and allow us to grow into a better person.

Brother David stresses that discerning goods is incredibly important for "whatever vocation God is calling you to."

As we welcome folks to Come and See events or other fraternity gatherings, what might be the particular "good" they seek as a Secular Franciscan? Might they be comparing it to being a more faithful member of their parish, being a Benedictine Oblate, Secular Carmelite, for example?

As we walk with folks through formation, are we helping folks learn more and at a deeper level about the "goods?"

Finally, there are indeed lots of ways to intentionally live a Catholic way of life. Are we mindful of our responsibility to "fraternity" as

not only being "good," but also as the "privileged place" for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation?

Kent Ferris, O.F.S.

Regional Councilor for Vocations Promotion

JUSTICE, PEACE & INTEGRITY OF CREATION



Peace

In the last issue we looked at the Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation (JPIC). Here are some relevant quotes from a variety of sources over the years that will help focus our discussion of the second part of JPIC - PEACE.

"Finally, it is to be hoped that, in carrying out their responsibilities in the international community, Catholics will seek to cooperate actively and constructively with other Christians, who profess the same Gospel of love, and with all men who hunger and thirst for true peace." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 90)

"Peace begins within each of us. It is a process of repeatedly showing mercy to ourselves, forgiving ourselves, befriending ourselves, accepting ourselves, and loving ourselves. As we learn to appreciate ourselves and accept God's gift of peace, we begin to radiate peace and love to others." (*Reverend John Dear*)

"Peace concerns the human person as a whole, and it involves complete commitment. It is peace with God through a life lived according to his will. It is interior peace with oneself, and exterior peace with our neighbors and all creation." (*Pope Benedict XVI, World Day of Peace, 2013*)

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My peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give to you. A peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. (*Jn 14:27*)

In his Testament, Francis tells us that “the Lord revealed a greeting to me that we should say: ‘May the Lord give you peace.’” Saint Bonaventure recalls, “At the beginning and end of every sermon [Francis] announced peace; in every greeting he wished for peace.” Both Francis and Clare greeted the people of Assisi with “*Pace e Bene!*” (Peace and Good!). As Franciscans, peace must be at the center of all our comings and goings. (*Handbook for Animators of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation [JPIC].*)

Many people believe that peace is just the absence of conflict - you know, no battles or disagreements. Blessed Paul VI reminds us that “If you want Peace, work for Justice.” (*Bl. Paul VI, World Day of Peace, 1972.*)

“A Peace that is not the result of true respect for man is not true Peace. And what do we call this sincere feeling for man? We call it Justice.” (*Bl. Paul VI, World Day of Peace, 1972.*)

Franciscans understand that peace is much more than the absence of conflict, whether it be war between nations or disagreements between people. The underlying nature of true peace, the kind that Jesus gives, is rooted in our understanding and acceptance of God’s love for us and our care and concern for others - how we treat them - how we think about them. To paraphrase an old saying, “*Peace begins at home.*”

However, sometimes the appearance of peace can be deceiving. In the person, like in nations, a seemingly quiet exterior betrays what lies underneath. I live near the Mississippi River. On a quiet, calm summer day, the surface of the river looks tranquil as it flows from 1.2 to 3 miles an hour; but we know that beneath that quiet surface lurks a current that is extremely strong with dangerous eddies and submerged obstacles, all of which can cause a disaster for

one who has wandered too far into the stream. Just so, the quiet calm of a person’s visage and the lack of fighting between nations betray the violent tendencies that may lie beneath the surface. That violence in a person makes it easier to accept violence between nations as a solution to conflicts and problems.

“Violence has many faces: oppression of the poor, deprivation of basic human rights, economic exploitation, sexual exploitation and pornography, neglect or abuse of the aged and the helpless, and innumerable other acts of inhumanity. Abortion, in particular, blunts a sense of the sacredness of human life.” (*The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response; USCCB, 1983; 285.*)

These attitudes are not just societal or community issues; they begin in the heart of individual persons. “*For out of the heart come evil thoughts - murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.*” (*Mt 15:19; NIB*). Consequently, we recognize that our inter-relationships can be the root of many other problems - our individual attitudes about others may create a “violence” that may even be unknown to us.

Part of our goal, then, is to eliminate where possible, at least reduce, the “eddies and obstacles” that lie beneath the surface of our personal demeanor - attitudes that include not just the list from the Bishops but more personal ones like snarky comments, impatience, anger, pride, gossip, and so on - anything that demeans the other person. We must address our own individual biases, prejudices, and improperly formed consciences that can lead to thoughtless actions towards others.

“All of the values we are promoting in this letter rest ultimately in the disarmament of the human heart and the conversion of the human spirit to God who alone can give authentic peace. Indeed, to have peace in our world, we

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must first have peace within ourselves. As Pope John Paul II reminded us in his 1982 World Day of Peace message, world peace will always elude us until peace becomes a reality for each of us personally. "It springs from the dynamism of free wills guided by reason towards the common good that is to be attained in truth, justice, and love." Interior peace becomes possible only when we have a conversion of spirit. We cannot have peace with hate in our hearts." (*Challenge of Peace; op. cit.; 284.*)

To find the peace that eludes the world, we are challenged to begin within our own sphere of influence by reducing and eliminating those areas that cause bitterness, estrangement, and even violence between us and the people whom we encounter every day.

We must believe in the sacredness of all human life!

Especially as Franciscans, we see in the other person the image of poor Christ. We treat the other person with great respect, love, joy, and humility. Most certainly, we protect the most vulnerable among us - the preborn, the disabled, the elderly, the poor, the homeless, the dying.

We must pray!

A conversion of our hearts and minds make it possible for us to enter into a closer communion with our Lord. We nourish that communion by personal and communal prayer, for it is in prayer that we encounter Jesus who is our peace and learn from him the way to peace. (*Challenge of Peace; op. cit.; 290.*)

We must make sincere and good acts of penance!

Prayer by itself is incomplete without penance. Penance directs us toward our goal of putting on the attitudes of Jesus himself. Because we are all capable of violence, we are never totally

conformed to Christ and are always in need of conversion. (*Challenge of Peace; op. cit.; 297.*)

Not only must we work on individual violence, we must find ways to deal with our community conflicts as well. The practice of non-violence is an effective means to resolve conflicts. This does not mean that one becomes namby-pamby in addressing injustice or conflict. "Non-violence is not the way of the weak, the cowardly, or the impatient." (*Challenge of Peace; op. cit.; 222.*). Gandhi & King are modern examples of non-violent approaches to grave injustice in their societies. So, we participate in non-violent expressions of concern, maybe even outrage, over the injustices that our society contains.

But the same approach works in personal relationships as well. "[The] arts of diplomacy, negotiation, and compromise must be developed and fully exercised." (*Challenge of Peace; op. cit.; 222.*) For example, instead of arguing with the other person trying to prove how right we are, we listen actively to their concerns and then enter into a dialogue with them to resolve the issues between us.

Our Rule reminds us, in many ways, of our Franciscan responsibility to reach for these goals:

5. Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity.
7. 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 calls "conversion." Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily. On this road to renewal the sacrament of reconciliation is the

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privileged sign of the Father's mercy and the source of grace.

12. Witnessing to the good yet to come and obligated to acquire purity of heart because of the vocation they have embraced, they should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters.

14. Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. Mindful that anyone "who follows Christ, the perfect man, becomes more a man himself," let them exercise their responsibilities competently in the Christian spirit of service.

15. Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.

19. 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.

After meditating on these ideas, we readily understand why we Franciscans pair up the ideas of Justice and Peace; because one without the other is not possible. As we journey in Francis' footsteps, we realize that our individual attitudes and responses toward others can create violence at the personal level. So, we work individually and fraternally to overcome

Calendar

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

July 22, 2018

St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity, Bloomington - Fraternal Visitation.

July 28, 2018

Regional Picnic, Southwind Park, Springfield, IL.

August 5, 2018

Pope St. John XXIII Fraternity, Rock Island - Elective Chapter.

September 8, 2018

Our Lady of the Angels Fraternity, Edwardsville - Fraternal Visitation.

September 16, 2018

St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Quincy - Elective Chapter.

September 28-30, 2018

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

October 9-14, 2018

National Fraternity Council meeting and Elective Chapter, St. Louis, MO.

October 26, 2018

Franciscans of the Tau Fraternity, Calhoun County - Fraternal Visitation.

March 8-10, 2019

Regional Meeting with Elective Chapter
 March 8 (Fri) Outgoing REC Meeting
 March 9 & 10 (Sat & Sun) Regional Fraternity Council Meeting & Elective Chapter
 March 10 (Sun) REC Meeting (old & new)

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REGIONAL MISSION STATEMENT



We, the Secular Franciscans of Franciscans of the Prairie Regional Fraternity, are called by the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation to holiness. We are committed by profession to living the Gospel values of our Lord Jesus Christ in our time according to the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi for the rebuilding of the Church. With the Holy Spirit as our guide, and by following the simple example of St. Francis of Assisi, we intend to spread, like the prairie fire of old, cleansing the earth and nourishing the land with His Word. The Regional Fraternity Council will provide direction and resources to local fraternities for understanding and implementing the Rule, the General Constitutions, and the National Statutes of the Secular Franciscan Order.

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these weaknesses in our character and behaviors. We embrace the other person with love and joy. We look for the lepers in our lives and find ways to help them grow, improve and become whole. We bring them the joy, hope, and peace of Jesus!

And in this action - this way of living - we find, for ourselves, that same peace that Jesus gives - the inner peace that allows us to confront the world with the calm joy, assurance, and resolve that Francis emulates.

We must pray!

Dennis R. Dowell, O.F.S.

Regional JPIC Animator

Dennis R. Dowell, O.F.S.

Regional JPIC Animator

Mr. Dowell has recently been appointed as the Animator for Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation for the Franciscans of the Prairie Region by the Regional Executive Council. As an active Secular Franciscan since 1989, he continues to serve as Treasurer, Newsletter Editor, and Formation Team Member of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity in Quincy, Illinois. Previous servant-leader roles have included Formation Director (including initial formation for Our Lady of the Angels Fraternity, Edwardsville with Fr. Benet Fonck, O.F.M.), Minister of the organizing council for Franciscans of the Prairie Regional Fraternity, and Councilor of the O.F.S. Sacred Heart Provincial Council.

His past service to his parishes includes formation commission (both youth and adult catechesis), liturgy. Commission (serving in various liturgical roles), Sacristan, Chair of Pastoral Councils, Chair of Ministry of Care, Extraordinary Ministry of Holy Communion & Pastoral Care, and Lay Director of a Christian Experience Weekend.

His service to the Diocese includes Assistant Chair of the Pastoral Council, co-chair of the see **DOWELL** page 10

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Diocesan Priorities Task Force, and Boy Scout Catholic Chaplain.

Prior to his retirement in 2012, he worked as a music teacher for 20 years in Des Moines, Iowa, The University of Iowa, and Nauvoo, Illinois. He also worked as a Purchasing & Materials Manager for 22 years for Staley Manufacturing, Fruehauf Trailer, Walker Muffler, Featherlite Trailer, and Shaeffer Pen. As a volunteer, he served in the Boy Scouts of America in various leadership positions including Council Commissioner. He holds the Eagle Scout Award, Vigil Honor in the Order of the Arrow, the God & Country Award, and the Silver Beaver Award. His education includes a Bachelor's, Master's and Ph.D. (abd) in Music Performance and Education from the University of Iowa and a Lay Ministry Certificate in Clinical Pastoral Care from the University of Illinois, Springfield & the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. He and Sue have been married for over 47 years and their son lives in Urbandale, Iowa.

Fr. Mike Higgins

Fr. Mike Higgins, friar of the Third Order Regular (T.O.R.), has been a wonderful friend, brother and Franciscan companion to us for a very long time. The picture of Deacon Dave, Fr. Mike and me was taken in 1998! Wow, 20



years ago! All of us have been adult learners and educators. Also, we have been united deeply through our Franciscan vocations. Fr. Mike is a prayerful person and approaches life situations by turning to God for guidance. Just as our Seraphic Father Francis taught us: Most High, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me true faith, certain hope, and perfect charity, sense and knowledge, Lord, that I may carry out Your holy and true command. [*Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (Vol. 1: *The Saint*), Editors: Regis Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap.; J.A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. Conv.; and William J. Short, O.F.M., 1999.]

So, please mark your calendars to join with your brothers and sisters from the *Franciscans of the Prairie* Region on September 28-30, 2018 for our annual retreat. Fr. Mike will assist us in embracing St. Francis, the Master of Prayer.

During this Easter Season, let us be aware of the blessing this Regional Retreat offers us to grow closer to St. Francis and unite ourselves more closely with the Trinity! He is risen, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Submitted by:

Thérèse Ream, O.F.S.,

Regional Formation Director

**Franciscans of the Prairie
Annual Retreat**

St. Francis, the Master of Prayer

The *Franciscans of the Prairie Region* is truly pleased to have **Fr. Michael Higgins, T.O.R.**, a friar of the Sacred Heart Province of the Third Order Regular, lead the Region's **September 28-30, 2018** Retreat! The theme is: **St. Francis, the Master of Prayer.**

Regional Minister Deacon Dave, O.F.S.'s vision of celebrating all of the unique gifts which each branch of the Franciscan family embodies was brought to fruition when Fr. Mike graciously accepted the invitation to be our Retreat Facilitator in 2018. Since the Region's see **RETREAT** page 11

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establishment in 1994, our Regional Retreats have featured members from the different branches of the Franciscan family: O.F.M. friars, O.F.M. Capuchin friars, an O.F.M. Conventual friar, Poor Clare nuns, a sister who follows the Third Order Regular Rule of life, Secular Franciscans and now a Third Order Regular friar.



After service with the U.S. Army Signal Corps in Vietnam, Michael entered the Sacred Heart Province of the Third Order Regular in 1978 in Loretto, PA. He received a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree from St. Michael's College, a

Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.) from Regis College, both member schools of the University of Toronto, and a Master of Arts (M.A.) in formative spirituality from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA. His ordination to the priesthood in 1985 was followed by service in collegiate education and religious formation for both friars and secular members of the Franciscan family.

Fr. Mike received a Doctor of Sacred Theology (S.Th.D.) with a specialization in Franciscan spirituality from the Antonianum in Rome in 1999. This was later complemented in 2007 by a Ph.D. in Higher Educational Administration through Capella University. From 2001 to 2007, Fr. Mike served in Rome as Vicar General of the Franciscan Third Order Regular friars and

as the Minister General of the Order from 2007 to 2013.

In 2014, he served at the Franciscan School of Theology in Oceanside, California as Special Assistant to the President and Dean and assumed the position of Vice President for Academic Affairs in 2015. Rev. Michael Joseph Higgins, T.O.R., was then appointed in August 2016 as the eighth President of the Franciscan School of Theology. Fr. Mike is a distinguished Franciscan friar, scholar, educational administrator, and global churchman.

Please mark your calendars now so that we, the brothers and sisters of the *Franciscans of the Prairie Region*, will welcome our dear brother, Fr. Mike, with open arms, smiling faces and Franciscan joy!

NEWS FROM AROUND THE REGION

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

On January 21, 2018, Jim Smith, O.F.S. became a Candidate in the Secular Franciscan Order through the *Rite of Admission* during the Fraternity's monthly Gathering. The Celebrant for the service was the Fraternity's Spiritual Assistant Deacon Dave Ream, O.F.S. and the *Rite* began with a Liturgy of the Word. Jim's request to be admitted into Candidacy was accepted by Fraternity Minister Rosanne Roy, O.F.S. Jim received a copy of *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order* and a Tau cross which is the official "habit" of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States. In addition to wearing the Tau cross, Jim has chosen to begin using the initials **O.F.S.** after his name as a public witness to his membership in the Secular Franciscan Order.

Jim is involved in a variety of formational experiences with different members of the Fraternity's Formation Team. He is covering

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the *General Constitutions* via SKYPE with Dennis Dowell, O.F.S. (Formation Team Member); he answers questions from *The Franciscan Journey* via e-mail with Thérèse Ream, O.F.S. (Formation Director); Jim attends *FUN Manual* sessions with others in Initial Formation which occur after the regular Fraternity monthly Gatherings and are facilitated by Deacon Dave, O.F.S. and Thérèse, O.F.S. (2 members of the Formation Team); and he writes synopses of the *FUN Manual* sessions, nine Franciscan *Digests*, and the *FUN Manual* DVDs. Handouts from the *Regional Formation Resource Kit* are shared and discussed in conjunction with the materials used. Jim also participates in the monthly Fraternity Gatherings which include Ongoing Formation.



(l-r): Spiritual Assistant Deacon Dave Ream, O.F.S., Formation Director Thérèse Ream, O.F.S., Candidate Jim Smith, O.F.S. and Fraternity Minister Rosanne Roy, O.F.S.

**St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity,
Quincy, IL
Rite of Profession**

St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Quincy, IL of the Secular Franciscan Order (O.F.S.) happily shares the news that **Becky Goodwin, O.F.S.** and **Robie Orf, O.F.S.** wrote letters to the Minister and Council requesting to be Professed into the Secular Franciscan Order. The members of the Council on March 18, 2018, after the Fraternity’s monthly Gathering, voted by secret ballot to accept their requests (*General Constitutions*, article 41.1 “Having completed the time of initial formation, the candidate submits to the minister of the local fraternity a request to

make his or her profession. Having heard the master of formation and the assistant, the fraternity council decides by secret ballot on the admission to profession, gives its reply to the candidate, and informs the fraternity.”). Therefore, they will make a permanent commitment to the Gospel Life as they profess into the Secular Franciscan Order during the Rite of Profession which will take place during the 11:00 a.m. Mass on July 15, 2018 at St. Francis Solanus Church, Quincy.



Rosanne Roy, O.F.S., Minister of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity presented both Becky and Robie with an Acceptance Letter for Rite of Profession. The letters have been combined into one for purposes of this Newsletter.

Acceptance Letter for Rite of Profession

March 18, 2018

Dear Becky & Robie,

The Lord give you peace!

“The period of Candidacy, which begins with the Rite of Admission [cf. *Ritual*, page 11], shall consist of not less than eighteen (18) months and not more than thirty-six (36) months.” (*National Statutes*, Article 19.2b.) St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity celebrated your *Rite of Admission* on December 11, 2016.

“To be admitted to the SFO [O.F.S.] in the United States, a person must be a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church (i.e., having

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received the Sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation/Confirmation and Holy Eucharist) in addition to being an actively practicing Catholic.” (*National Statutes*, Article 19.2d.)

“Having completed the time of initial formation, the candidate submits to the minister of the local fraternity a request to make his or her profession. Having heard the master of formation and the assistant, the fraternity council decides by secret ballot on the admission to profession, gives its reply to the candidate, and informs the fraternity.” (*General Constitutions*, Article 41.1)

Thank you for your letters requesting Profession which you submitted on March 12, 2018 (Becky) and February 21, 2018 (Robie). The Council reviewed the pertinent information concerning your eligibility for Profession. A secret ballot was conducted on March 18, 2018. The Fraternity Council is pleased to inform you that your request for Profession has been accepted and the date is set for July 15, 2018.

“Profession by its nature is a permanent commitment. (*The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order*, Article #23) “The act of profession is registered and preserved in the records of the fraternity.” (*General Constitutions*, Article 42.5)

“The fraternity accepts your petition and is united with you in your prayer. May the Holy Spirit confirm in you the work he has begun.” (*Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order*, p. 21)

Fraternally yours,

Minister

St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Quincy

[Acceptance Letter for Rite of Profession was taken from the Regional Formation Resource Kit]

Sacred Heart Fraternity, Peoria, IL
Sister Michael M. Fox Speaks on St. Francis



On February 10, 2018 Sister Michael M. Fox, D.S.F. spoke at the fraternity gathering. Sister Michael showed a painting that is the only known painting that St. Francis posed for and it occurred while he was staying with the Benedictines in their monastery on Mount Subiaco, north of Rome.

Compared to the more famous paintings, it has less bright colors, no stigmata, and no halo (which ordinarily is added after he dies). Sister says the original is still encased in glass and is life size. St. Francis is holding a parchment which reads “Peace to this house.”



Notes from talk by Sister Michael include two categories of graces:

- i. Special grace from God, given to a few prophets, popes, religious founders (such as Francis); which was received by
 - a. Mother Teresa in Darjeeling (a desire to “quench the thirst of Christ”); by 2012 there were 4,000 sisters in her order.
 - b. John Cardinal O’Connor at Dachau placed his hand in the ashes of the

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crematorium; led to proclaim sanctity of life. He founded Sisters of Life.

- c. St. Francis, in prison after fighting in war against Perugia, is injured and in recuperation; later founds the largest order in the Church. Franciscans all called to “love like Francis.”
- 2. To obtain salvation (this grace is received by all Franciscans; Christ stirs up graces from baptism; we all are called to be a witness for Truth (for Christ). Remember that when you leave church, we are entering mission territory. We should strive to deepen and make more intimate our relationship to Christ. Remember that Christ is (in) the poor. Remember that fallen-away Catholics want to hear “I miss you.”

Sr. Michael M. Fox, D.S.F. is on staff at St. Joseph Nursing Home in Lacon, Illinois.

Recommended book: Rock Niemier, O.F.M., In the Footsteps of Francis and Clare, St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, OH, 2006.

Sacred Heart Fraternity Peoria, IL
Rite of Profession



(l-r): Robert (Bob) Polizzi, O.F.S., Scott Diestelkamp, O.F.S., Minister, and Matthew (Matt) Yee, O.F.S.

On March 10, 2018 the Sacred Heart Fraternity of Peoria, IL celebrated the Rite of Profession,

during Mass at Holy Family Church, for Robert Polizzi, O.F.S. and Matthew Yee, O.F.S.

Articles Submitted by:

Jim Stomberg, O.F.S.

Secretary of Sacred Heart Fraternity, Peoria, IL

Our Lady of the Angels Fraternity
Decatur, IL
Rite of Welcoming



(l-r): Chris Kirk and his sponsor, John Shiels, O.F.S.

On January 28, 2018 Chris Kirk was welcomed into the Inquiry stage of initial formation by the members of the Our Lady of the Angels Fraternity, Decatur, IL.

The Journey of a Tau Crucifix
Uganda Background

For the last couple of years, St. Margaret of Cortona fraternity has been developing a “twinning” relationship with St. Francis of Assisi fraternity near Mbarara, Uganda. This relationship started following my visit to Uganda in June 2015. We have exchanged messages, photos, and prayers since that time, and St. Margaret of Cortona fraternity sent over a couple of boxes of Franciscan-related books in 2017. My contact in their local fraternity, Gilbert Muhumuza, O.F.S., was last year elected to be the YouFra International Councilor for Africa. In his new role, he attended the CIOFS Chapter in Rome (his first plane ride) in November 2017.

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The Tau Crucifix



During my trip to the Holy Land in October 2016, I purchased a large beautiful Tau crucifix made of olive wood. This was bought specifically to be donated to the silent auction at our September 2017 retreat. I was unable to be at our retreat

during the silent auction because I was attending the NAFRA Chapter as a delegate for Deacon Dave. However, I pre-submitted an opening bid on the crucifix merely as a way to set a minimum starting bid. Some understood this as a sign that I wanted the crucifix for myself and thus a fellow Secular purchased the crucifix and then later gave it to me. What a lovely gift...full of love and joy!

The Tau Crucifix in Uganda

I subsequently decided to give the Tau Crucifix to the fraternity in Uganda, and had my good

friend, Fr. Julius Turyatoranwa, carry the crucifix to Uganada in December 2017 and arrange for it to get to Gilbert. Upon receipt, Gilbert wrote: *"Hallo Br. John. Am very praised to share my joy and thanks to you for thinking about me and sending me this gift. On this note, when I went to Rome, I wanted to buy one Crucifix for my fraternity but I never had enough money. Now God had my prayers and you bought it for me from Holy Land. This is great. Again, I thank you for this letter you sent to me and thank you for remembering and supporting fraternity of Uganda and community at large. Peace and joy in 2018. Mubumuza Gilbert."*

Epilogue

Exactly as I was sharing this story during our fraternity's January Gathering with brothers and sisters from our fraternity, my phone buzzed with an email from Gilbert with pictures and a message: "Everybody was happy to see Tau Crucifix since it is so not common in our fraternities and even in most Catholic Shops. We are the luckiest fraternity to have this. Although every fraternity wished to have one."

God truly works in mysterious ways! This Tau Crucifix is exactly where it was meant to be.

Submitted by

John Grillot, O.F.S.

St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity



Franciscans of the Prairie



Regional Picnic



Saturday, July 28th, 2017

11:00am – 2:00pm Lunch at noon

Pope St. John XXIII Fraternity welcomes you to the 2018 Fraternity Summer Picnic!

**Southwind Park
Hope Pavilion #2**
4965 South Second Street
Springfield, IL 62703

As host local fraternity, we will provide fried chicken as the main dish, as well as lemonade and water, and paper supplies (plates, napkins, plastic wear, cups).

Please join our members in bringing potluck items to fill out the meal. Veggies, salads and desserts would be great!

Our members will also be responsible for hospitality, including games and activities, though you can also bring your own games.

Pavilion #2 has been reserved from 9am-3pm that day, though realizing we will all travel some distance, the actual event is 11am-2pm.

Park regulations restrict glass bottles and alcohol.

For a map of the park, see the second page of the Park PDF:
<http://www.springfieldparks.org/rentals/pdf/2017Prates.pdf>

We welcome you, your family and invited friends! The more, the merrier! Please let your local minister know how many will attend in order that they can in turn let Kent Ferris, O.F.S. know by Monday, July 23rd at ferris@davenportdiocese.org.

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