

# 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!

Once again as your brother and your Minister, I wish each of you a happy, holy, joyful and blessed New Year! I pray fervently that this may be for all of us a year on continued growth in God's grace and the awareness of His infinite love for us which we, in turn, must express to others through our lives of loving Franciscan service.

As we begin 2018, I am keenly aware that this is the final full year of servant leadership to be provided to our Region by the current Executive Council; our Elective Chapter will take place in March 2019. I want to express my continuing gratitude to the members of our Regional Executive Council, each of whom has served as a wonderful collaborator with me in serving our Regional family. It is not too soon to be giving some serious thought and prayer to the issue of which sisters and brothers can best serve us on the Executive Council that will be elected in March 2019. Perhaps one of those persons is YOU!!

As has been my custom in writing for the January edition of our Regional newsletter, please allow me to share some of our Regional highlights from 2017. Four local fraternities in our Region celebrated their triennial Elective Chapters that resulted in the election of two new Local Ministers and the re-election of two Ministers to a second term. In addition, two fraternities had



Fraternal Visitations intended to renew and strengthen the Franciscan spirit and life of the sisters and brothers. All six of these events were carried out by members of the Regional Executive Council other than me as Minister who very graciously agreed to serve as my Delegates for presiding at the Elections and conducting the Visitations. In the absence of a Regional Spiritual Assistant, there were no Pastoral Visitations conducted in 2017.

The weekend of March 11-12, 2017 was very significant for our Region. Our Regional Fraternity Council (i.e., the local Fraternity

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Ministers plus the current Regional Executive Council) gathered at the Chiara Center for our Spring meeting. The major item on the agenda for discussion and votation was the major revision of our *Regional Guidelines* which were approved and adopted by unanimous vote of the Council. This action brought a several-year collaborative process to a successful and happy conclusion.

St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity, Bloomington, hosted our Regional Picnic on Saturday, June 24, 2017 to the delight of all the participants. Our fourth Annual Regional Formation Day was held at the Chiara Center on Saturday, July 29, 2017. This event has blossomed into a two-track opportunity consisting of a Day of Reflection for all those in initial formation from throughout the Region and a separate Workshop for local fraternity Formation Directors and Formation Team members. This event saw the rollout of the much-anticipated **Regional Formation Resource Kit**. Profound thanks to **Therese Ream, O.F.S.**, our Regional Formation Director, and to the members of her Regional Formation Team - **Matt Eppel, O.F.S.**, Peoria; **Cyndy Garwood, O.F.S.**, Bloomington; and **Pat DeLuca, O.F.S.**, Rock Island - for your vision and leadership in developing and publishing this resource for the benefit not only for our Region, but all of NAFRA!

Our annual Regional Retreat at the Chiara Center held the weekend of September 29-October 1, 2017 was directed by our dear brother **Father Paul Joseph Langevin, O.F.M. Conv.** who guided us to a new and deeper appreciation of the *Admonitions of Saint Francis of Assisi* with a special emphasis on their practical application in our daily lives as

Franciscans in the contemporary world. We were greatly enriched by his teaching and the example of his own lived Franciscan life that he shared so copiously with us. Father Paul Joseph made the commitment to direct our annual Retreat while he was still stationed at Holy Family Church in Peoria and serving as Sacred Heart Fraternity's Spiritual Assistant. We are so grateful to Father that he was able to keep this commitment to us even after he was transferred to Milwaukee, Wisconsin!

As of December 31, 2017, our Region continued to number 8 active local fraternities with 202 active and active/excused Professed members, 14 Candidates, 7 Inquirers, 4 Aspirants and 2 Affiliates. We were particularly blessed this year with the Professions of 12 new Secular Franciscans from three different fraternities! Our Sister Bodily Death embraced 13 of our sisters and brothers and commended them into the loving and merciful arms of the Lord this year. We still grieve the death of our beloved Regional Spiritual Assistant, the late **Father John Sullivan, O.F.M.** even as we continue to pray earnestly for his successor to be appointed for the pastoral care of our Region.

Looking ahead to the year we have just begun, the first major event impacting the life of our Regional Fraternity will occur the weekend of April 14-15, 2018 when we will have our triennial Fraternal and Pastoral Visitor will be Mary Bittner, O.F.S., our National Vice-Minister; we are still awaiting work on who our Pastoral Visitor will be from the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants. While all the members of the Regional Fraternity Council (i.e., local Ministers or their delegates and the current Regional Executive Council) are required

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*Next  
issue:  
Apr 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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and expected to be present for this meeting, everyone else from throughout the Region is invited to attend this significant event as an Observer. (Observers attend at their own expense.) Saturday overnight lodging is available at the Chiara Center for anyone wishing it. **Anyone interested in attending as an Observer should be in touch with me as soon as possible** and I will provide you with further details. All our Local Spiritual Assistants are invited to attend all or any portion of the weekend as guests of the Region; again, please just let me know of your plans.

In addition to two local fraternity Elective Chapters and three Fraternal Visitations of local fraternities, other major Regional events currently firm on the calendar for 2018 include the Annual Formation Day for all those in initial formation and local fraternity Formation Team members on Saturday, July 21, 2018 at the Chiara Center 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; our retreat topic: "Saint Francis, Master of Prayer." **Please mark all of these events on your personal calendars NOW so that you can participate either in person or by your prayers!**

In closing, please let me and the members of the Regional Executive Council know how we may be of service to you, and please let us always hold one another close in prayer!

Wishing a joyful, healthy and grace-filled year to one and all, 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

## TWO FORMATION INVITATIONS FOR 2018!



**T** The Formation Directors at the Regional Formation Workshop, July 29, 2017 were asked to mark the *Table of Contents* of the *Regional Formation Resource Kit* with the date when the information from the *Kit* was shared and the audience ("Come and See" people; initial, ongoing, newly professed formation, etc.). An extra copy of the *Table of Contents* was stapled together and placed in the outside back sleeve of the *Kit* binder. The Fraternity which uses/ incorporates the most topics from the *Kit* will receive a Franciscan item for the Fraternity! This presentation of the item will occur at the *Regional Formation Workshop* on July 21, 2018.

Every Fraternity member can be involved because I asked all of the Formation Directors to please resent the contents of the *Regional Formation Resource Kit* to everyone at one of their Gatherings prior to December so everyone is in the know. Therefore, every Fraternity member has the opportunity to know what is in the *Kit*. Then each member can request that the Formation Director address certain topics according to interest and appropriateness to a particular month. The actual presentation could be made by any of the following: Formation Director, Formation Team Member or any other member of the Fraternity.

**T** Read or reread a book about St. Francis of Assisi and/or St. Claire of Assisi and/or a Franciscan Saint. I have been personally remiss for not doing this each year and I have already started a book on St. Francis so that reading this book can be one way that I continue my own Franciscan formation.

I am hoping that each one of us will say YES to these Invitations!

*Thérèse, O.F.S.*

Regional Formation Director

**Regional Formation Director's Preparation for the Fraternal and Pastoral  
Visitation which will occur April 14-15, 2018**



On October 13, 2017, I sent each Council member of each Fraternity who has email a survey with six questions concerning ongoing formation for the Fraternity. I asked that all surveys be completed and returned to me by November 17, 2017. Some of the statistics are as follows:

- \* All 8 Fraternities participated
- \* 7 out of 8 Ministers participated
- \* 6 out of 7 Vice-Ministers participated
- \* 5 out of 8 Treasurers participated
- \* 4 out of 8 Secretaries participated
- \* 8 out of 8 Formation Directors participated
- \* 1 of our 7 Spiritual Assistants participated
- \* 4 out of 7 Councilors participated
- \* 0 out of 3 Councilors (Appointed)

The following statistics are based on persons elected to Council (which does not include the Appointed and Spiritual Assistants):

- \* 2 Fraternities had participation from all of the Council members
- \* 4 Fraternities had all but 1 Council member participate
- \* 1 Fraternity had 43% participation
- \* 1 Fraternity had 33% participation

There are 10 observations that I would like to bring to your attention from the information I gleaned from the surveys.

1. **One Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, 26 articles:** It was mentioned that people study the Rules of the Order. Just for clarification's sake, we have only one Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, which is comprised of 26 articles.

2. **Placement of Ongoing Formation:** It was noted that having ongoing formation at the end of the Gathering was not working out real well. Therefore, I would like to suggest having formation at the beginning of the time together and have business (which is to be brief and an overview of the Council's meeting) at the end of the Gathering. Priority is always to be given to Formation.

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RFD

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3. **Regional Formation Resource Kit Participation**: Some comments lead me to give caution about the *Kit*. The Fraternity's ongoing formation should not just be the pages from the *Kit* being copies, passed out and no participation. The pages from the *Kit* are to be discussed, prayed and/or used in an interactive manner.
4. **Formation Teams**: It was very interesting to note that 3 of the 8 Fraternities have only the Formation Director presenting topics. Please ask the Formation Director to review the **Introductory Materials** from the *Regional Formation Resource Kit* concerning Formation Teams and present it as a topic at one of your Gatherings. Using a Formation Team is relevant for Initial Formation, Newly Professed Formation and Ongoing Formation.
5. **Presentations**: Anyone who is going to make a presentation should be well prepared. There is a handout in the *Kit*, **Introductory Materials**, *Suggestions for Preparing Presentations* which can be shared with anyone preparing a presentation. Almost every Fraternity mentioned that discussion is a vital part of ongoing formation because it gets everyone involved. We can definitely learn from one another!
6. **Relationships**: We are brothers and sisters in Fraternity so that means that we need to share not only our intellect/knowledge with others, but also our hearts. We are family and we cannot function as a supportive member of the family if we are not willing to open our hearts toward one another.
7. **Advance Preparation**: The question was asked about the time frame for sending out materials to be read prior to a meeting. It seems that those who send out materials usually do it just 1 week in advance. I would like to suggest that, if at all possible, materials be sent out 2 weekends in advance.
8. **Daily Conversion**: Our Gatherings are usually only a few hours, one day per month. So, we need to build into our Gatherings a time when all of us can discuss how each one of us is going to put into practice something gained from the ongoing formation segment of the Gathering. This would be a prime example of engaging one of the Formation Team Members to facilitate discussion with the members' commitment "I will do \_\_\_\_\_ during the days until the next Gathering."
9. **Resources**: There were some questions about specific topics. This was the precise reason the *Regional Formation Resource Kit* was developed. I have asked the Formation Directors to share the *Table of Contents* with the Fraternity so that each member knows what the *Kit* contains. The purpose is so that any brother and sister could request/suggest a particular topic for consideration for ongoing formation. Also, do not forget that the materials can also be found at the Regional website: **[prairiestfrancis.org](http://prairiestfrancis.org)**.
10. **Terminology**: Our Fraternities have Spiritual Assistants NOT Directors/Advisors/etc.

It seems that one of our New Year's resolutions could be for all of us in our individual Fraternities to celebrate all that we are doing so well with Formation and to challenge ourselves and make some changes to enhance the way Formation is experienced in our Fraternities.

Wishing all of you a most blessed, 2018,

*Thérèse, O.F.S.*

Regional Formation Director

### What Goes Into Preparing for a Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation?

Our Order's governing documents specify that each local and regional fraternity is to be visited by representatives of the next higher level of fraternity every three years. I believe that it is important that all of the members of our Region are familiar with the procedures followed in preparing for our NAFRA Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation. Our current Regional Executive Council (REC) members had the 2015 *Pre-Visitation Questionnaire* and the 2015 Fraternal (from Deacon Tom Bello, O.F.S., NAFRA Minister) and Pastoral (from Fr. Kevin Queally, T.O.R., CNSA member) Visitation Reports as background reading in preparation for the April 14-15, 2018 NAFRA Visitation.

The spiritual element of preparing for the 2018 NAFRA Visitation was the request published in the Fall 2017 edition of our Regional Newsletter, *The Portiuncula*, to pray the *Prayer for the Pastoral and Fraternal Visit* (pp. 50-51, *Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order*).

I emailed the 2018 *Pre-Visitation Questionnaire* to the REC members on August 16, 2017 stating, "I am respectfully that each one of us answer the questions on the Questionnaire and bring out responses to the October 1, 2017 REC meeting." At the REC meeting on October 1st, each item was discussed while Therese, O.F.S. took notes on the computer and read them back to everyone after each question/statement.

Following the meeting, Therese formatted the responses and put everything together as a final draft. The final draft was sent to all the REC members on October 10, 2017 for their review with a deadline of October 24, 2017 to send any corrections or suggestions. After the deadline, Therese made the necessary additions, corrections, etc. and sent the final copy of the *Pre-Visitation Questionnaire* to me as Regional Minister on January 1, 2018. I in turn will email the following items to our NAFRA Visitors and REC well in advance of the April 14-15, 2018 meeting: 2018 *Pre-Visitation Questionnaire*; 2015 Reports from Deacon Tom, O.F.S. and Fr. Kevin, T.O.R.; the 2017 Annual Report; and the revised *Regional Guidelines*.

### Regional Visitation Prayer



We praise and thank you, O Lord our God, for through your love and wisdom you have called us to holiness through the Franciscan way of life. Through your grace and inspiration, you have provided for us the means to promote fidelity to the Franciscan charism, to observe the

*Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order*, and to receive greater support in the life of the fraternity. By the power of your Holy Spirit we will come together soon for the fraternal and pastoral visitation of our Region, in order to evaluate our efforts and to renew our dedication to live the holy Gospel of your Son in the footsteps of St. Francis. We ask for your blessing and guidance so that this occasion may help us to appreciate our vocation more deeply, to embrace it more enthusiastically, and to share it more fully with one another and with all people.

Give us the fullness of your Spirit. Take full possession of our hearts; root out of them attitudes of selfishness and false fear. Give us the will to persevere, as followers of St. Francis in the contemporary world, in rebuilding the Church and in proclaiming the Good News of salvation. Where we have faltered or even failed, give us the strength to begin anew, the light to discover our true meaning and purpose, and the courage to move forward with conviction and humility. "May the power of your love, O Lord, fiery and sweet as honey, wean our hearts from all that is under heaven, so that we may die for love of Jesus' love, who was so good as to die for love of our love." This we ask through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Observers Welcome at April 14-15, 2018 Regional Visitation**

As we continue our plans and preparations for the Spring meeting of the Regional Fraternity Council during which our triennial Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation by the National Executive Council and the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants will occur, I want to remind you that **Observers are always welcome at our Regional events. This invitation is NOT limited to Professed members of the Order only!**

Observers are responsible for their own expenses. Our Regional Treasurer John Grillot, O.F.S. has advised us that costs for Observers to attend the meeting at the Chiara Center in Springfield will be as follows:

\$97.00 for one person, including meals from Saturday lunch through Sunday lunch plus double occupancy overnight stay at the Chiara Center;

\$38.00 for meals only, Saturday lunch and dinner; Sunday lunch;

\$26.00 for meals only, Saturday lunch and dinner;

\$12.00 Sunday lunch only.

Some may choose to come just for the day on Saturday, others may want to be present for both Saturday and Sunday. Please be advised that we have all 30 bedrooms reserved for our Saturday overnight use at the Chiara Center, so a Saturday overnight should be available for anyone who wants it!

Observers should let John and me know **as soon as possible, but no later than Easter Sunday, April 1st - two weeks prior to the RFC meeting! This is especially true of anyone wishing to stay overnight Saturday night.** Thank you!

Please note that, as is our established practice, the Region will cover the costs for all Regional Fraternity Council members (i.e., local Fraternity Ministers or their Delegate and Regional Executive Council members), our Regional appointees, and our Local Spiritual Assistants to attend this meeting, including meals, overnight accommodations and mileage reimbursement.

I hope many of you will choose to come to the Chiara Center in April to join us in meeting and greeting and sharing the gift of fraternity with our Visitors from NAFRA.

Peace and blessing,

Deacon Dave, O.F.S.

Regional Minister

### **St. Francis, the Master of Prayer**



All of us have been invited by God to delve deeper into our Franciscan way of life and our commitment to prayer. One way to prepare to learn about Francis' prayer life is to immerse ourselves into deeper prayer experiences. The season of Lent is a prime time to do this. Just imagine, being invited into the

premier penitential life of the Church on St. Valentine's Day, February 14, 2018, **Ash Wednesday**. The love that is expressed with cards, sentiments and actions is manifested in God's invitation to embrace our roots as Brothers and Sisters of Penance.

Since the theme of our Regional Retreat is: **St. Francis, the Master of Prayer**, we may choose to focus during Lent on our own prayer life and this would be a fantastic way to prepare for our Regional Retreat. The Retreat will be **September 28-30, 2018** with our Retreat Director, **Fr. Michael Higgins, T.O.R.**



**TREASURER REPORT**

While all the numbers are not yet “in” for 2017 (awaiting final bank statement), it is clear that the Region’s bottom line was substantially better than Budget. A more comprehensive report will be provided in the next issue of *The Portiuncula*.

Two key items contributed substantially to our better-than-budgeted results. First, many of the Regional Council members were generous in their donations of supplies and mileage. The second item was a successful year of investment income for our Ave Maria Bond Fund, which was higher than budgeted. We had budgeted a 3% gain, and ended the year at 4.2% gain (for a total gain of just over \$2,700).

Another bright spot for our Region was the successful offering of need-based scholarships to provide financial assistance to members to attend the 2017 Regional Retreat at the Chiara Center. At our March 2017 meeting, the Regional Fraternity Council set aside \$2,000 for Scholarships in memory of Fr. John Sullivan, O.F.M., and Fr. Benet Fonck, O.F.M. A total of 13 members from throughout the region benefited from these scholarships. We were blessed to have them in attendance whereas they might not have been able to otherwise.

At our October 2017 meeting, the Regional Fraternity Council voted to establish a permanent ongoing scholarship: Fr. John Sullivan, O.F.M. Memorial Retreat Scholarship. Over the years this scholarship will continue Fr. John’s impact on our Region overall and on many members. The Council budgeted \$2,000 for this scholarship for 2018. It was with much pleasure (and a little bit of a surprise) that I received a \$240 donation to this scholarship fund from one of our fraternity. If other local fraternities (or even individual members) would like to contribute to the Fr. John scholarship, please send donations to me at 1600 Fayette Ave., Washington, IL 61571. I have established a special account to capture these funds.

John Grillot, O.F.S.  
Regional Treasurer

**NEWS FROM AROUND THE REGION**

**St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity,  
Bloomington  
November Gathering**

The November Gathering was full of prayer and charitable activity and an informative Ongoing Formation presented by Jim Alstrum, O.F.S. and Bill Ducett, O.F.S.

Over 70 Blessing Bags were packed with an overflow of donations for a least 10 more bags. Also during November, the collection for the Logan Correction Center was completed through donations from St. Mary’s Church. Todd Lanzotti was able to take down a very full van to Logan Correction Center. The women who are discharged from Logan, no matter what the weather, are only given pair of sweatpants and a sweat shirt when they leave. They now have access to a clothing closet where they can shop and get a coat or jacket and shoes.

In Jim and Bill’s presentation, we learned that women who are incarcerated are treated with less overall, it was noted that they do not receive milk at their meals but have some form of Kool-aid drink, whereas in the men’s prison they are given milk at meals. There are 2,000 women housed in a prison designed for men and remodeled to accommodate women. However, the prison was only to hold 1,200 men or less.

There are many differences, but overall the incarceration in the U.S. is higher than anywhere in the world. In Illinois alone, there are 47,000+ people incarcerated.

In our Secular Franciscan Rule, there are references to many issues of peace, and justice and evangelization. Bill and Jim pointed out Rule #4 which talks about bringing the Gospel to life, and Rule #15 refers to being in the forefront of peace and justice.

In carrying God’s word to those who are incarcerated, the service is to serve those who the world has forgotten or wishes to forget. Jim and Bill provide outreach in the form of Cursillo and Bible Study and since Jim is bi-lingual, he has been able to reach out and enable more understanding of the Bible. A program that is used in some prisons is

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Bible. A program that is used in some prisons is Residents Encounter Christ.

Diana Ducett also provided insight into a program called Mom and Me, that she and Bill have participated in, which teaches parenting skills and help women returning to their families reunite with their children. There is also a parallel program with the children and moms attending a camp to renew their relationship. Diana, Jim and Bill added personal stories and insights which allowed them to experience the humanity of the prisoners and shared their stories of the acts of mercy among the residents. One can understand how important it is to be present for those who are “forgotten” and to understand that spiritual growth is a two-way street. All those who volunteer come back with a deeper understanding of the message of Jesus Christ because they have encountered Jesus behind the walls of the prison.

*Submitted by:*

*Linda Howley-Skuby, O.F.S.*

*Minister of St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity, Bloomington*

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



November is the month when we remember our family, friends, and our Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters who were called home to the Lord. So, the Fraternity celebrated the *Transitus of St. Francis of Assisi “passing over” from this life to the glory of heaven*, as found in the *Regional Formation Resource Kit*. Those who had parts were: Jim Smith, Inquirer; Becky Goodwin, O.F.S., Candidate; Robie Orf,

O.F.S., Candidate and Dwayne Goodwin, O.F.S., Formation Team Member.

The Fraternity’s Spiritual Assistant, Deacon Dave, O.F.S. discussed the appropriateness of all of us renewing our commitment to our Franciscan way of life.

Margie Benz, O.F.S. who celebrated 25 years as a Secular Franciscan led the Fraternity in this *Renewal of Commitment*.



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

St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Quincy, IL remembered the five Secular Franciscans from the Fraternity who were embraced by Sister Death during 2017. They were: Charles Briddle, O.F.S.; Marian Jochem, O.F.S.; Dorothy Schutte, O.F.S.; Joan Carlyle, O.F.S.; and Betty Wright, O.F.S. The Minister of the Fraternity, Roseanne Roy, O.F.S. called each name and a candle was lighted by Dwayne Goodwin, O.F.S., Vice-Minister of the Fraternity. Fr. Don Blaeser, O.F.M. was the celebrant of the 11:00am Mass, which was the regularly scheduled Mass for St. Francis Solanus Parish, Quincy, IL.



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## NEWS

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## St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity, Bloomington

St. Mary's Parish Sesquicentennial



St. Mary's parish in Bloomington, Illinois celebrated its Sesquicentennial year in 2017. St. Mary's is the home of the St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity. A logo contest was held by the Sesquicentennial Committee. Many parishioners participated. The winning logo was a design submitted by Donna M. Williams, O.F.S., a graduate of St. Mary's School, as well as part of the Formation class that made their profession as a Secular Franciscan in 2017.

The logo incorporates the steeple of the historic church structure, as well as two images taken from the second historic set of windows from the church structure. One image is of St. Francis, representing the long history of the Franciscans at St. Mary's which ended in 2016. The other image is of the Blessed Mother reflecting the title of St. Mary's parish, as well as a reminder of the patroness of the parish, Our Lady of Sorrows. The colors blue and gold connect to the school colors, as well as the patroness of the parish. The circle contains the title of the parish in three different languages. First on the left is St. Mary's church in German connecting to the founding roots and traditions of the parish.

Then the title in the center in English and to the right in Spanish connecting to our strong hispanic community and traditions. A journey through time.

The logo itself was inspired by the Holy Spirit and a logo design submitted by the designer's father who is deaf and had attended St. Mary's School and comes from a long line of parish family members dating back to the 1870's. In the words of the designer, "the logo is not one person's logo, but belongs to St. Mary's parish and the Holy Spirit."

## 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.

### 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.

## 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.*

## Justice, Peace &amp; Integrity of Creation



Justice



Peace

Integrity of  
Creation

Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation (JPIC). These are important words in our Franciscan charism - important words that outline our outreach to others and the whole world. Years ago, these areas were managed by different Apostolic Commissions - Work, Family, Justice & Peace, and Ecology. In October 2007, these four commissions were consolidated into the Committee that we have today: JPIC (*History of the SFO and Its Rules, William Wicks, 23 Mar 2011*). The leader of the JPIC Committee at each Fraternity level is called an Animator. Carolyn D. Townes, O.F.S. is the NAFRA JPIC Animator. The Franciscans of the Prairie JPIC Animator position remains vacant. Each local Fraternity should have its own JPIC Animator. I hold that position for St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity in Quincy, IL.

I thought that we could learn a little more about JPIC in our Order by reflecting upon the three elements of its title over the course of the next issues of *The Portiuncula*. As a framework for this discussion, we should understand what the NAFRA JPIC Mission Statement is:

*The mission of JPIC is to assist the Professed Secular Franciscans as they reflect on their relationship with God as manifested in the fruits of conversion in their lives. The [mission is engaged] with special regard to the daily choices [they make] in the areas of justice, peace-making and respect for all created things and people; as brothers and sisters of penance, bringing life to the Gospel and the Gospel to Life (<https://sites.google.com/site/jpic4ofs/about>).*

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## JPIC

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Our Rule reminds us:

*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. (Article #19).*

First, we reflect on Justice.

*The secular world has its definition of justice:*

*The maintenance or administration of what is just especially by the impartial adjustment of conflicting claims or the assignment of merited rewards or punishments - meting out justice - social justice (Merriam-Webster).*

Generally, this means that someone who has committed a crime is tried and convicted or acquitted. Even the concept of "social justice" in this framework leaves winners and losers, the concept being that "you may not merit" a reward because of who or what you are.

The Church has a different view on "justice." Here is what Pope Francis said on May 12, 2015:

*"We are all equal - all of us - but this truth is not recognized, this equality is not recognized, and for this reason some people are, we can say, happier than others. But this is not right! We all have the same rights. When we do not see this, society is unjust. It does not follow the rule of justice, and where there is no justice, there cannot be peace. I would like to repeat this with you: where there is no justice, there is no peace!" (Audience with children of the Peace Factory)*

The ultimate justice, in God's view, is the salvation of people - returning all people to the fold, as it were, where God's Grace and Love will have their complete and full effect - where we, everyone in the whole world, return to the original state of grace found in the Garden of Eden.

*The salvation offered in its fullness to men in Jesus Christ by God the Father's initiative, and brought about and transmitted by the work of the Holy Spirit, is salvation for all people and of the whole person: it is universal and integral salvation. It concerns the human person in all his dimensions: personal and social, spiritual and corporeal, historical and transcendent. (Compendium of the*

Social Doctrine of the Church, Part 1, Chapter 1, III.b)

Even though this ultimate condition will be realized at the end of time, we have an obligation to work toward its fulfillment in our lives today. So, in a parlance known well in this country, not only are "all [people] created equal," but all people should be treated equally as well. When we Franciscans talk about justice, we incorporate the understanding that God loves us so completely that he wants us only to return to him. Our response to this great love is:

- \* to seek justice in our interactions with all others;
- \* to treat them as we wish to be treated;
- \* to look for ways to serve them and make their lives better;
- \* to follow so closely in Francis' footsteps that we mirror Christ, just like he did.

How do we do this?

*Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us. (1 John 4:7-12)*

*We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. (1 John 4:19-21)*

When we reflect upon the words of St. Paul about charity (love), we realize the immensity of our obligation (1 Corinthians 13:4-6). For treating all people with patience, kindness, without jealousy, without being pompous & inflated, not seeking our own interests, nor being quick tempered, nor brooding over injury, nor rejoicing over wrongdoing, but rejoicing with the truth becomes a major

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challenge for us. Harkening back to the Rule, Article #15, we are to just to do these things but must “be in the forefront” of doing them. In other words, we take the lead in promoting these qualities - we become the models - the examples - a people so imbued with these qualities that our quiet lives of service display a character quite opposed to the ways of this world and show to all peoples Jesus actively living and working today.

When taken from the larger view, this call appears to be such a gargantuan task that it must be impossible to achieve. But, we Franciscans know that the way to eat an elephant is take one small bite at a time. So, our approach to this challenge is to look at our own lives and determine each day how we can live and promote justice in our own sphere. We ask ourselves questions like, “How do I treat all people I meet today with patience?” (*Yes, even the guy who pulls out in front of me causing me to jam on my brakes - and then turns at the next corner without a turn signal - causing me to jam on my brakes again!*); or, “How do I treat all people I meet today with kindness?” (*Yes, even the lady with three unruly kids in the grocery store aisle!*) Well, you get the idea.

St. Paul’s list is an excellent measuring stick for our daily reconciliation. When we approach our daily lives like this,

- \* we enable others to see what the Franciscan charism is all about;
- \* we show them the justice of the church and how it is so much different that the justice of society;
- \* we exemplify the good life of a Franciscan and preach with an example that speaks so loudly that no one can hear what we are saying.

Then, in our Fraternities, we join with like-minded Franciscans and branch out to the greater community performing works of service and charity to all of those in need, whether physical, social, community, or spiritual. To make an even greater impact, our Fraternities join with others in the Region. Like the Franciscans of the Prairie Region Mission Statement says, “...we intend to spread, like the prairie fire of old, cleansing the earth and nourishing the land with His Word.” Then, all the Regions and National Fraternities unite in service to increase the witness to our country and to the world.

When we follow St. Paul’s ideas at the personal level, we transform our corner of the world into a place where all people are valued and cared for! When we profess to live this Franciscan life, we accept our Rule in its entirety so that we live out this small phrase: “*Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives.*” As we approach each day of our lives with this challenge foremost in our minds, we do make a difference and change the world.

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