

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!

On this beautiful October 2nd Memorial in which the Church honors the Holy Guardian Angels, I find myself brimming over with gratitude to the Lord for His ever-present and never-failing providential care for us! As our Holy Guardian Angels watch over and protect each and every one of us throughout our lives from the very moment of our conception, so may we embrace anew our divinely-given vocation and duty to care for one another, especially the poor and the most vulnerable in our midst.

Therese and I just returned home yesterday from a weekend at the Chiara Center in Springfield which saw about 65 members of our Regional family gathered together for our annual Regional retreat. Three of our Secular Franciscan sisters from neighboring St. Clare Region also joined us, including our National Minister, **Jan Parker, O.F.S.** **Father Michael Higgins, T.O.R.**, President of the Franciscan School of Theology in Oceanside, California, served as our Retreat Director, sharing with us some profound and challenging insights about our Seraphic Father Saint Francis of Assisi as the “Master of Prayer.”



Our Regional Fraternity Council and Regional Executive Council met after the conclusion of the retreat for their semi-annual meetings. We had the privilege of welcoming two new members to the Regional Fraternity Council: **Candice Chaloupka, O.F.S.**, newly-elected Minister of Pope St. John XXIII Fraternity, Rock Island and **Phyllis Maxwell, O.F.S.**, newly-elected Minister of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Quincy. A featured highlight of the RFC meeting was the formal installation of **Father Giles Gilbert, O.F.M. Conv.** as our Regional Spiritual Assistant. To my knowledge, this was the first instance of this type of installation being celebrated in our Region. Father Giles then

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participated fully in the meetings of the two Regional Councils (RFC and REC) of which he is now a member. **Again - welcome, Father Giles!**

Since the last time I wrote to you, the Region has received the official Report of our triennial Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation as a Region held the weekend of April 13-15, 2018. Our National Vice-Minister, **Mary Bittner, O.F.S.** and our National Spiritual Assistant, **Father Jerome Wolbert, O.F.M.** assure us of their love, their encouragement and their support as they recognized our Region's significant accomplishments while offering us some suggestions for our continuing growth and development in our Franciscan way of life.

Other major events in the life of our Regional Fraternity included 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. Both events were very well planned and attended. In addition, Fraternal Visitations were conducted for three local fraternities: St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity, Bloomington, July 22nd; Our Lady of the Angels Fraternity, Edwardsville, September 8th; and Franciscans of the Tau Fraternity, Calhoun County, September 21st. A Chapter of Elections was

also held for St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Quincy, on September 16th. I am very grateful to those Regional Executive Council members who served as my Delegates for these events: **Kent Ferris, O.F.S., Mary Farrell-Diekemper, O.F.S., Kathy Adams, O.F.S. and Emma Lozowski, O.F.S.** Well done, good and faithful servants!

Finally, a reminder that our Regional Chapter of Elections is scheduled for the weekend of March 9-10, 2019. In accordance with our Regional Guidelines, our Nominations Co-Chairs have been appointed and are on schedule to begin the nomination process. They are Matt Eppel, O.F.S. of Sacred Heart Fraternity and Kevin Kaurin, O.F.S. of St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity. The members of the Regional Fraternity Council decided that, in addition to the five required offices (Minister, Vice-Minister, Formation Director, Secretary, and Treasurer), we will again be electing two additional Councilors to the Regional Executive Council, one for Database Management and the other for Vocations Promotion. Please continue 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 closing, I wish to repeat my invitation: please let me and the members of your Regional

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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.

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Executive Council know how we may be of service to you, and please let us always remember one another in our daily conversations with the Lord!

May this Fall season with its changing temperatures and changing colors help prepare us for all the changes God has planned for us in our own lives! May the warmth of God's ever-constant love expressed most perfectly in the Incarnation of His Son Jesus warm us through and through as Winter approaches!

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

Your brother and servant - with a brother's 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

SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT'S REFLECTION

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I'm happy that my first reflection for our Regional Family centers upon the Feast of our Seraphic Father Francis, a day of great joy and consolation for the entire Church.

Saint Francis loved the Life-Giving Cross of Christ, which was his book. And from this book Francis studied assiduously the science of charity and of compassion, internalizing its themes and finding himself invited to play a role in the drama of salvation. We, too, are invited to find ourselves and our own lives caught up in the process of redemption and as sharers in the Passion of the Lord, contributing by God's grace in the great work of salvation. There is a wonderful painting I remember hanging in the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi. Christ is bearing the Cross and looking back towards Francis. And Francis is carrying his cross in the footsteps of the Master. But the most beautiful part of the painting is a

very small detail: Francis is gazing into the eyes of Christ and Christ into the eyes of Francis. They have but a single gaze and this gaze is consoling both of them. This gaze of love captures perfectly how Francis' will was cooperating with divine grace. We, too, are invited to lose ourselves in the gaze of Christ.

All of this reminds us that, as Franciscans and followers of the "Little Poor Man of Assisi," we are never passive observers of the Cross, content with following the Lord at a distance. As friars, our religious habit is in the shape of the Tau. And, as Secular Franciscans, you wear the Tau as a symbol of your commitment and membership in the Order. Each of us is invited to renew in ourselves the awe and wonder of becoming "Tau-bearers" and not simply "Tau-wearers." Of course, wearing the Tau or the Cross is a wonderful expression of faith and we should continue to do so. But, our faith must grow deeper and we must continue to labor at the side of Saint Francis in helping to rebuild the Lord's Church through personal holiness of life, fidelity to prayer, and the total giving of ourselves in love. We must be happy and grateful to bear the tau in everything we say and do, in who we are and how we love.

Today, the Church finds herself in a state of deep sadness, but also in a season of hope for renewal and new growth. I'm comforted by the words and example of Cardinal Sean O'Malley, O.F.M. Cap., who recently said, "We believe in a God that is so good, so loving, so powerful, that he can bring good out of evil. Out of all this pain, I hope will emerge a better presbyterate, a better hierarchy, holier, more generous, more fraternal, close to our people to each other. It's a clarion call to overcome any mediocrity that weighs us down...We need all hands on deck and everyone rowing in the same direction. We need to support each other, set aside our personal differences." Our collaboration is essential.

Francis has so much to tell us today. Bearing the wounds of Love, he reminds us that there is only one truly authentic and successful reform: Personal holiness of life. By cooperating with the Holy Spirit and allowing Him to sanctify us through "Tau-bearing" we collaborate with Christ in the great work of redemption and in the Church's upbuilding in charity and truth.

May God and Mary bless us on the Feast of our Seraphic Father, dispel all mediocrity from our hearts, and make us always "wholly burning with seraphic love." Please remember me in your prayers, as I remember you.

Fraternally,

Friar Giles, O.F.M. Conv.

Regional Spiritual Assistant

Part II in Preparation for the Regional Elective Chapter: March 9-10, 2019



In our July Regional Newsletter, I began looking at the Discernment Process in respect to our Elective Chapter which will occur on March 9, 2019 during the Spring Regional

Fraternity Council meeting. My reference was and is *Aspects of the Discernment Process* which is a handout from the *Regional Formation Resource Kit*. I believe discernment is essential while we prayerfully consider whom God is calling forth to become our elected servant leaders. Yes, God may be calling YOU!

In July, I addressed **Relationship**. A person must be in relationship with God to be able to discern His will.



While reflecting upon our relationship with God, the first step in the Discernment Process is **self-awareness**. That means we prayerfully consider who we are before God. This is when we look into the mirror and see the person whom God has created. It is imperative that we ask ourselves the following questions:

- ◆ Who am I?
- ◆ Do I understand my Baptismal call?

- ◆ Do I understand the call to be a Secular Franciscan?
- ◆ What are my gifts and talents?
- ◆ How can I best serve others?
- ◆ What is God asking of me?
- ◆ What am I willing to do to follow God's will?

Let us consider these questions first and then explore our self-awareness in tandem with dialoguing with others.

The next step is to explore our self-awareness in tandem with **dialoguing with others**. Now that we have prayerfully considered who we are before God, we need to dialogue with others about our own self-observations. We would choose those who are closest to us, have a conversation with them about our discoveries during the self-awareness phase of this process, and then listen to their comments. This process will assist us in making sure that our self-perceptions are, indeed, what others are experiencing. Therefore, here are a few examples of those with whom we could dialogue:

- ◆ Spouse
- ◆ Best Friend
- ◆ Family Member(s)
- ◆ Fraternity Member(s)
- ◆ Spiritual Guide

I am wishing you a joyful experience when talking with others!

So, self-awareness, dialoguing with others and now **confirmation** is the last step. In this process of **Discernment**, seeking confirmation from others means that we reflect upon the conversations we had with those with whom we dialogued and ask ourselves if others concur with our perceptions and what we learned about ourselves. We can talk with family members, our fraternity brothers and

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FORMATION

sisters and those from the broader Church community who know us. This process is to assist us with recognizing our God-given gifts and talents, dialoguing with others concerning our own awareness and then confirming any conclusions with others. The goal is to involve others in our discernment process so that through prayer we can be open to doing God's will. May confirming with others bring you peace and joy!

Please pray on a regular basis, A Prayer for Regional Elections, which can be found in this Newsletter. We can join our prayers with all of the brothers and sisters in our Region to be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

May we experience a deeper relationship with God as we discern God's will for us and the March 2019 Regional Elective Chapter and may all of us ask the "Minister General," the Holy Spirit, to guide our discernment for genuine servant leaders!

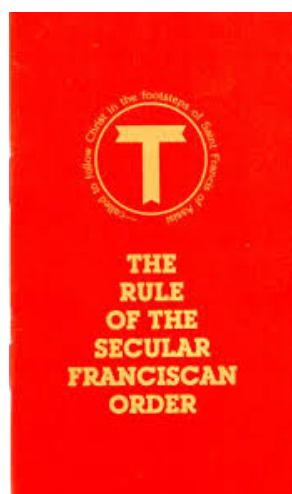
May God's will be done,

Thérèse, O.F.S.

Regional Formation Director

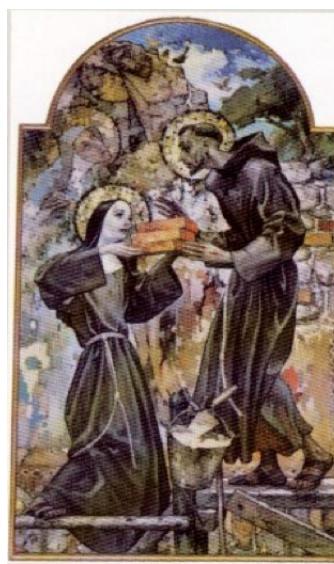
40th Anniversary of the Rule

The International Presidency (CIOFS) has asked that all Secular Franciscans celebrate the 40th Anniversary of our *Rule of Life*, which was promulgated by Pope St. Paul VI on June 24, 1978. So, how is each of our 8 Fraternities going to celebrate by June 24, 2019 the anniversary of our wonderful *Rule of the Secular Franciscan*



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Order? Please discuss this with your Fraternity and then have someone write an article for *The Portiuncula* after your Fraternity's Anniversary celebration. Share with our Region the ways in which the *Rule* has become such a vital part of your Fraternity's journey!

A Prayer for Regional Elections

Almighty, most high and supreme God,
Father, holy and just,
Lord, King of heaven and earth:
we give you thanks for yourself.
Of your own will
you created all things spiritual and physical,
made us in your own image and likeness,

and gave us a place in Paradise,
through your only Son,
in the Holy Spirit.

We trust in you and we ask for your light
so that we may choose those
who will properly serve our fraternity
through their servant leadership.
Help us to select those who are able
to animate and guide us
by their example, their virtues and prudent
decisions,
so that the Gospel of Jesus in the spirit of St.
Francis
may come alive in our Franciscans of the Prairie
Region.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen!

Vocations and FY/YA

As I write this article, it is in the middle of a busy week as a Secular Franciscan! My wife, Lori, and I have returned from the wonderful Regional Fraternity Retreat at the Chiara Center this past weekend. Tonight our local fraternity will host a Transitus Prayer Service and presentation on the Season of Creation at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Davenport, Iowa. Tomorrow is the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi. And Sunday we will attend our regularly scheduled Pope John XXIII fraternity meeting in Rock Island, IL. The week is busy, but blessed as well!

Both Lori and I are Secular Franciscans. We each have responsibilities to the regional fraternity, Lori helping with efforts relating to Franciscan youth and young adults, while I am to promote vocations as a regional fraternity councilor. I want to share news from the global church that speak to both vocations and young adults.

Today, October 3rd at 10:00 am this morning, Pope Francis celebrated Mass in St. Peter's Square on the occasion of the opening of the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, that has as its theme: "Youth, faith and vocational discernment."

What exactly is the Synod of Bishops? From the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, USCCB webpage: The Synod of Bishops is a permanent institution of the Catholic Church. It was established by Pope Paul VI in 1965, shortly after the close of the Second Vatican Council, to continue the spirit of collegiality and communion that was present at the Council. The Synod is an assembly of bishops from around the world who assist the Holy Father by providing counsel on important questions facing the Church in a manner that

preserves the Church's teaching and strengthens her internal discipline.

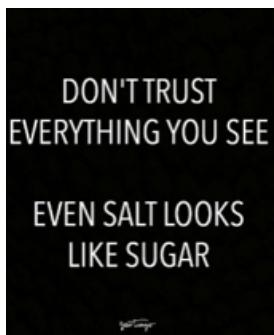
What is special about this particular assembly? Again, from information provided by USCCB: The Preparatory Document describes the purpose of the 15th Ordinary General Assembly as an opportunity for the Church "to examine herself on how she can lead young people to recognize and accept the call to the fullness of life and love, and to ask young people to help her in identifying the most effective way to announce the Good News today." (To check out all the Synod related resources, including the intro videos, please go to: <http://www.usccb.org/about/bishops-and-dioceses/synod-of-bishops/synod-2018/index.cfm>

In addition to explanations provided by USCCB, there are also two, hour-long YouTube video presentations by Father Dan Horan, O.F.M., at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago that speak to the importance of this Synod Assembly and our responsibility to the needs of young adults. The titles of the talks are: Authenticity, Vocation and the Risk of Faith and can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGKfUdk8oeU&t=1800s>

I realize that I am sharing information and resources in advance of the Synod and their subsequent conclusions. But, I think that reading the Synod's preparatory document and listening to Father Dan speak about the importance of the Church attending to the needs of young adults and their vocations, can help us prepare to have greater clarity as we undertake similar efforts for the good of the Order.

Peace and all good,
Kent Ferris, O.F.S. and Lori Ferris, O.F.S.

Election and Voting



Although this mime is somewhat cynical, it does express a certain amount of caution as we move toward the November elections. Undoubtedly, we have already seen many political advertisements in the media. We know that

none of them depict the reality of our societal conditions right now nor the candidates they pander. Oh, yes, each one has a small element of truth, usually just enough to make us think the entire ad is correct. But, really - if all the candidates are a bad as their opponents make them out to be, we are really in trouble. (*Well, we may be anyway.*)

Our US Bishops have distributed a document entitled, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility*. The USCCB re-issues this document prior to each election cycle. The Bishops address such questions as,

- Why does the Church Teach About Issues Affecting Public Policy?
- Who in the Church Should Participate in Political Life?
- How Does the Church Help the Catholic Faithful to Speak About Political and Social Questions?
- What does the Church Say About Catholic Social Teaching in the Public Square? - Four Principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

With a well-reasoned discussion and many citations from Church documents, we understand why the Church should be involved in the life of our society and not relegated to Sunday liturgy, as many have suggested; and why each of us has a responsibility to

participate in our community's political life, especially through our vote.

The other parts of the document are instructive about where the Church stands on many of the important issues of the day.

- Part II - Applying Catholic Teaching to Major Issues: A Summary of Policy Positions of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Part III - Goals for Political Life: Challenges for Citizens, Candidates, and Public Officials
- Notes and References
- Major Catholic Statements on Public Moral Issues

The Bishops publish this well written guide to assist us in making the very difficult choices we face before we cast our ballot in each election cycle. The important thing to remember is that we **do** have a right to vote - but each right has an accompanying responsibility: ***we have the responsibility to vote.*** A right is of little value if we don't accept and act on the commensurate responsibility.

Of interest is that less than 60% of the electorate has voted in the last four US Presidential elections; and, it is much less for the midterm elections, e.g., less than 40% (*Pew Research, 2014*) and a whole lot less for city, county, and school board elections. [Illinois, ranking seventh in an M.I.T. study, had a vote turnout in 2016 of 63.36% (elections.mit.edu). Denmark & Sweden have around 85% (IDEA website)].

Between understanding our choices and the historical performance in elections, we have an important obligation to be certain to vote and encourage all of our friends to do the same. As the Bishops point out,

In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral

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obligation, “People in every nation enhance the social dimension of their lives by acting as committed and responsible citizens” (Evangelii Gaudium, no. 220). The obligation to participate in political life is rooted in our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all we do. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, “it is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person...As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life” (nos. 1913-1915). (“Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility”, no. 13).

So - we need to consider what kind of society we wish to have, based upon the teachings of our Catholic Magisterium. We need to find candidates who conform to that ideal as closely as possible. Then, we need to express our opinion at the ballot box in November. Get the sugar you want instead of the salt you don't.

To prepare our consciences properly for this important responsibility, we should read Forming Consciences - go to the USCCB website and look for **Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship**.

Above all, **VOTE!!**

Pace e bene
Dennis Dowell, O.F.S.
Regional JPIC Animator

Fifth Annual Regional Formation Workshop Meets at Chiara Center

On July 21st the fifth annual Regional Formation Workshop was held at the Chiara Center in Springfield, IL. It was a bright and sunny day, and all 23 attendees were excited to learn more about formation from both the workshop and each other. No one was disappointed! The 2018 Formation Workshop

Calendar

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)

July 20, 2019

Regional Day of Reflection for those in Initial Formation & Workshop for Formation Directors & Formation Team Members, also Newly Professed.

September 27-29, 2019

Franciscans of the Prairie Region's Silver Jubilee Celebration. Regional Executive Council and Regional Fraternity Council, Chiara Center, Springfield.

was a great day or learning, sharing, community, and Franciscan JOY.

After registration from 8-8:45, the workshop officially commenced with 9 o'clock Mass at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, Chiara Center's beautiful church. Our new Regional Spiritual Assistant, Father Giles Gilbert O.F.M. Conv., was the Mass celebrant, with our Regional Minister Deacon David Ream, O.F.S. assisting. Once again, the day long workshop that followed was divided into two tracks. Track 1, led by Regional Minister Deacon David, was for those in Initial Formation. Track 2, led by Regional Formation Director Therese Ream, O.F.S., was for Formation Directors and formation team members. Both Teams enjoyed the workshop content, as well as learning from each other. Just being together to enjoy each other in "privileged community," as Secular Franciscan family, was pure gift. The workshop included presentations as well as open forums for question and answers. Track 2 even had a fun and informative contest, where

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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.

WORKSHOP

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Formation Directors shared what pages they have used from the Regional Formation Resource Kit. The three fraternities using the most Formation Kit pages received an audiocassette drama on Brother Francis: The Barefoot Saint of Assisi, but all were winners as we shared our ideas with each other. The last hour of the workshop the two presenters switched tracks, with Deacon Dave moving to Track 2 and Therese moving to Track 1. there was more discussion and sharing on the topic of formation, and then the day ended with prayer.

We are so grateful for our Regional Minister Deacon Dave and his wife, Regional Formation Director Therese, who both worked so hard to make our Formation Workshops happen. As always, their above and beyond efforts for the Franciscans of the Prairie Region are labors of great love. They model for us the humble and generous service of St. Francis, who cared for his friars "like a mother." We are also grateful for our new Regional Spiritual Assistant's active attendance at the Formation workshop. Father enriched our workshop day in so many ways.

Pax et bonum!

Jan Emmert, O.F.S.

Vice-Minister, St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity

**Reflection on Regional Formation Day
Notes from Track I**

It was joy to share the day with our fellow Secular Franciscans, and especially for those of us in the early stages of formation and the newly professed. Deacon Dave led the track for most of the day and after a good period of introductions so we could get to know each other better, he walked us through the most relevant aspects of the Rule and encouraged us

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REFLECTION

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to think deeply about our discernment process as well as about our own walk with Christ. Therese joined us later in the afternoon and truly impressed us with the importance of becoming a Secular Franciscan. It is a beautiful process but also one that requires work and prayer and service. We are to look for ways to balance our lives between action and contemplation and to find the best way to discern how we too may be called to a life in love with Christ following in the footsteps of our Seraphic Father.

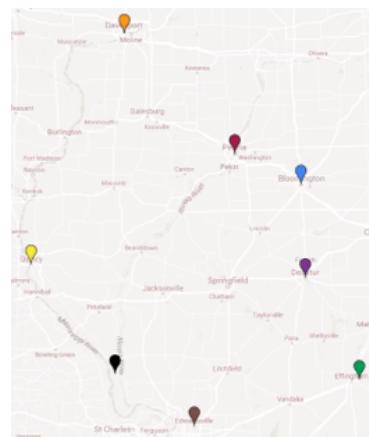
Getting to know our new Regional Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Giles was a blessing. His presentation after lunch was an inspired and in-depth look at Franciscan prayer. Everyone at the table where I sat was mesmerized by Fr. Giles' shining face, which positively glowed with a love for Christ and Christian community.

I walked away with a deep awareness of love and prayer, as well as a defined commitment to this time of discernment. It is a time of heightened listening in prayer and listening to the voice of our call from our beloved community in the Franciscan family. I am grateful to the Regional Council and to Fr. Giles, Deacon Dave, and Therese for their time and commitment to those of us in the early stages of formation as well as to all our brothers and sisters.

Submitted by:
Amy Penne, Inquirer

Inter-Fraternity Get-Together at Regional Retreat

On September 29, 2018 after the 7:00 pm Regional Prayer Service, the Regional Formation Director met with those in Initial Formation (Inquirers and Candidates) and those Newly Professed. Five different fraternities (Pope St. John XXIII, Rock Island;



St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Quincy; Sacred Heart, Peoria; St. Margaret of Cortona, Bloomington; and Our Lady of the Angels, Decatur) were represented by nine brothers and sisters.

There were 5 Inquirers; 1 Candidate; 3 Newly Professed and Therese, RFD. There were 8 out of the 9 participants who attended the July 21, 2018 Regional Day of Reflection for those in Initial Formation & Workshop for Formation Directors and Formation Team Members. Therefore, this opportunity to meet during the Retreat was an excellent way for them to renew their Franciscan family ties from July.

It was an informal time for people to ask questions, get to know one another better and share their own experiences to assist others in their discernment process. The participants seemed genuinely appreciative of the opportunity to gather and reflect upon their Franciscan journey. The Newly Professed gave great encouragement to look at priorities, to be gentle with oneself when feeling overwhelmed and to always know that the Franciscan family is comprised of loving brothers and sisters at the local, regional, national, and international levels.

May all of us strive to be living examples of the Franciscan charism which embody our Seraphic Father, St. Francis.

Submitted by:
Therese Ream, O.F.S.
Regional Formation Director

Regional Retreat
September 28-30, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Peace!

What an inspiring weekend we enjoyed with the Regional Fraternity! Fr. Michael Higgins, T.O.R., author and presenter for the 3 day retreat offered five talks on the topic: "St. Francis: Master of Prayer."

Each day held a key to unlock the depth of St. Francis' inner life. Fr. Michael was able reveal the struggle and the joy of Francis through reflecting on one of his earliest prayers to one of his last prayers.

Some take away gems from Friday evening's opening introduction:

- "Pay attention to the prayers you say, especially the routine prayers. Try not to rush through, rattle them off mindlessly."
- The initial prayer, "Prayer before the Crucifix of San Damiano" is such a prayer, that we paused to reflect on and study. Fr. Michael posed the question: "Was God asking Francis to rebuild his church physically or spiritually?" We know that Francis responded by physically rebuilding the little church of San Damiano, and then, reflected deeper to hear God's direction to rebuild the Church spiritually.
- Often we think that there is a difference between action vs. contemplation, but with Francis we see a new dimension of "contemplation in action."
- Contemplation is central to a Franciscan way of life.
- "Active" translates into all our activities of life.
- "Contemplation" is the capacity within every person to enter into our relationship with God and the mystery of all creation.
- St. Francis added contemplation to the Rule of the Order (Article 6). This is what we

strive to understand and live by in our Rule of the Order.

- St. Francis regarded San Damiano where the Poor Clares lived to be a place of contemplation.
- Francis was able to "see" the presence of God all around him and respond to it.
- Admonition XVI: "Blessed are the pure of heart." Francis prayed to be able to love the leper, when he approached the leper and embraced him; Francis was transformed, (the scales fell away from his eyes) and he was no longer blinded by his sin. The leper did not change, but Francis did.
- "See your life against the horizon of God's love."
- "Every moment is filled with God's love"
- "See everyone as the image and likeness of God."
- "Thank God for His Incarnation."

Finally, Fr. Michael offered an exercise to reflect on: "Over the last few years, list 10 occasions when you experienced God in your life."

Summary of Day 2 and 3: Session 2, 3, 4 and 5

Now if the Friday evening session was not enough to mull over for a lifetime, Fr. Michael continued with his study and review of "Francis the Master of Prayer."

In Session 2, he focused on the "when" of prayer and especially "when" we don't feel like it.

- "There are hard times, but it is in the hard times that we can experience God in a special way."
- Thomas of Celano writes that "**Francis' safest haven was prayer - a prayer that was prolonged - he overcame his soul's many fears and anxieties.**"
- "We should pray always, with the Church, with our brothers and sisters. There is a

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RETREAT

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- danger though, **because prayer changes us.**"
- **Pray always:** from our Catechism, we learn our purpose is: to serve, love, honor and adore the Lord our God.
 - **Francis integrated** into the 1223 Rule, "because the Lord says, 'Love Your Enemies, and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you."
 - **Pray with the Church** - Francis and his brothers prayed together "The Our Father." Most were illiterate at the time. Francis used a prayer that they knew by heart.
 - We have the "Book of the Gospel," "the Book of Nature," and the "Book of the Cross."
 - "Advised" not to concentrate on the melody of the voice, but the harmony of the mind.
 - Please God by the purity of the heart.

In Session 3 and 4 we continued to lean into the journey with Francis and as Fr. Michael describes, from the beginning Francis prayed the San Damiano prayer when he was at his very lowest, his pleading to the Lord to perfect him - "**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 reflected himself about his state of mind and spirit, "**when I was in sin, it was far too bitter for me to see lepers, but the Lord showed me that by leading me among them and I showed them mercy.**" By showing mercy, Francis overcame the obstacle which kept him from loving all God's creation, and freed him from his sin.

We meditated on the "Our Father" as Francis wrote it, both forward and in reverse! What an intense and total prayer is the "Our Father!" Francis wrote this meditation on each line of

the "Our Father" **after** his detachment from his father and his family's wealth so he writes with a personal and emotional connection.

On Sunday, we were nearly saturated with Francis' prayer life, but Fr. Michael in some special way, "saved the best for last" as he presented "Mary in the Writings and Devotion of St. Francis."

In both painting and sculpture, Mary is revealed as the holy, humble and pure Virgin chosen by God to be the Mother of God. Francis shares his love for the Mother of God in the Antiphon of the Office of the Passion: beginning "Holy Virgin Mary, among the women born into the world, there is no one like you." And Francis writes in the "Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary": Hail, O Lady, Holy Queen, Mary Mother of God, Who are the Virgin made Church..."

Fr. Michael then detailed the ways in which Francis viewed Mary in various relationships:

1. Greatness of Mary
2. Mary in the Light of Christ
3. Mary in the Light of the Trinity
4. Mary's role in the Church

And the challenge of Francis to all of us: "Be more like her."

Fr. Michael to us: Are we ready to give the radical YES to God and follow Jesus?

* This summary could not possibly capture the depth and quality of Fr. Michael's presentation and insight or his humor and humility in sharing his knowledge of our Father Francis. We are in his debt as this leads us to be better Franciscans and thereby more pleasing to God.

Submitted by:

Linda Howley-Skuby, O.F.S.

Minister, St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity,
Bloomington

More on the Regional Retreat

On Saturday those who could not attend for the whole weekend were so happy to come to the annual Regional Retreat for one day. We began our day with greetings to all the brothers and sisters present, from all around the region. It is always like a happy homecoming, to see our Regional Franciscan Family from throughout the state!

The day included presentations from our wonderful speaker, Father Michael, T.O.R. Interspersed between the talks, we had delicious meals, Mass, and community prayer. New to the retreat this year, we also had an hour and a half in the afternoon for private prayer, reflection, and rest, as well as the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The beautiful walking trails on the Chiara Center grounds were also available for us to enjoy.

Throughout the day, in between scheduled events, we also enjoyed looking at our ever popular silent auction items. The items in the silent auction are donated by the brothers and sisters attending the retreat. The silent auction helps defray the retreat costs and make our retreat more affordable. This year the silent auction netted over \$1,100 profit! Our regional Franciscan family is very grateful once again to St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity who organized and set up the auction.

The day ended in the beautiful Chiara Center St. Francis of Assisi Church, where we remembered the deceased brothers and sisters of our region in a special way and renewed our Secular Franciscan profession. May all present take what they have been given at our annual retreat, and do what is theirs to do! A special thanks must be given to our Regional Minister Dave, O.F.S. and our Regional Formation Director Therese, O.F.S., who worked so hard to make our retreat happen. This was their last time to plan, organize, and direct our annual retreat, as their time of service in their

leadership roles will be ending next year. Thanks also to all who helped in any way to make our annual retreat one to remember!

Submitted by:

Jan Emmert, O.F.S.

Vice-Minister, St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity, Bloomington

**Regional Fraternity Council Meeting
September 30, 2018**

Often we think of meetings as dull and routine affairs, but as Franciscans we are far from dull and routine! At this Council we welcomed Fr. Giles Gilbert, O.F.M Conv. to our Region as he was officially installed as our Spiritual Assistant. We are blessed to have Fr. Giles after the passing of our Spiritual Assistant, Fr. John Sullivan, O.F.M. Fr. Michael Higgins, T.O.R. assisted in the official installation of Fr. Giles with Deacon David Ream, O.F.S.

Fr. Giles asked for prayers for himself to be a good priest and for his continued recovery of his father who is suffering with serious illness. (Fr. Giles himself is still in recovery from his medical procedure).

The initial business of the Region covers all areas of practical functioning for the 8 fraternities that make up the Franciscans of the Prairie Region. John Grillot, O.F.S. reviewed the finances and discussed budget concerns going forward. It is noted that the reserves for the fraternity will be exhausted by 2033 if there are no changes in income/expense. There is a minimalist plan for meetings set at two a year. However, areas of possible income would be increasing the fair share, decreasing mileage reimbursement, and of course, other types of adjustments. There is open dialogue and prayers to the Holy Spirit to lead us to make useful decisions.

Written reports by Appointees were submitted and accepted - Deacon Neil (Newsletter), Jason

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 Deavers (Webservant), Dennis Dowell, O.F.S. (JPIC), and Lori Ferris, O.F.S. (FY/YA).

Emma Lozowski, O.F.S. as Database Councilor shared a very touching experience on her family's trip home to Hungary and Poland, where she witnessed a gathering and how very much she felt "at home" with the fraternity. She commented on the ease with which they prayed the Liturgy. The message sent to us, as a fraternity: "to be leaven and salt in the world. To engage in dialogue and be good listeners."

Other points covered:

Pray for the coming elections in March 9-10, 2019 - Ministers must be present and/or delegate sent.

Silver Jubilee celebration will be on Saturday of the September 27-29, 2019 retreat. Budget created includes a more complete dinner - banquet style with table settings, decorations, cake, wine at dinner. Kathy Adams, O.F.S. is the coordinator for these activities.

The 2019 picnic was not designated this coming year due to the celebration for the Jubilee.

Formation Workshop will be held on July 20, 2019.

The meeting was ended with prayer and safe travels to all.

Submitted by:

Linda Howley-Skuby, O.F.S.
 Minister, St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity,
 Bloomington

**NEWS FROM AROUND THE REGION**

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

Robie Orf, O.F.S. from St. Clement Parish in Bowling Green, MO and Becky Goodwin, O.F.S. from St. Joseph Parish in Palmyra, MO made their permanent Profession into the

Secular Franciscan Order. The Secular Franciscan Order, formerly known as the Third Order of St. Francis, is an official Order within the Catholic Church, established by St. Francis of Assisi early in the thirteenth century.



There are approximately 12,000 members of the O.F.S. in the United States. Robie and Becky promised to follow the *Rule of Life of the Secular Franciscan Order*, pledging themselves to live the Gospel in the manner of St. Francis by means of this *Rule*. St. Francis himself wrote the first *Rule of Life* for members of the Secular Franciscan Order. Since Vatican II, that *Rule* has been updated but remains true to the vision of St. Francis of Assisi. This *Rule* calls Secular Franciscans to live out their calling to the Franciscan life in a particular way in their homes and families, at work, in their parishes, and in the world.

The Profession celebration took place during the 11:00 am Mass at St. Francis Solanus Church, Quincy, Illinois on Sunday, July 15, 2018. Robie and Becky's Profession was the culmination of almost three years of initial formation and study about the Franciscan way of life. The Fraternity's Minister, Rosanne Roy,

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O.F.S. in the name of the Church and the Secular Franciscan Order received their Profession into St. Elizabeth of Hungary Secular Franciscan Fraternity. Fr. Don Blaeser, O.F.M. served as the Ecclesial Witness. Robie and Becky join the approximately 30 active Professed members of St. Elizabeth Fraternity located in Quincy, Illinois.

Members of the Secular Franciscan Order live their everyday lives in the world as single or married laypersons. The Order is also open to diocesan clergy. The brothers and sisters of the O.F.S., led by the Spirit, strive for perfect charity in their own secular state. They gather together on a regular basis for prayer, ongoing formation, ministry and fellowship. Secular Franciscans join a local fraternity - a living active Christian community - and truly become a spiritual family. As brothers and sisters they help one another in living out their call to the Gospel life. Secular Franciscans are not expected to be perfect imitators of Christ in order to qualify for admission. Rather, conversion and conformity to Christ is a lifelong process, carried out daily because of our human frailty. The *Rule of Life* and the support of the fraternity are great helps as Secular Franciscans seek daily to follow Christ and live out their Franciscan vocation.

St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity was canonically established in 1861 and welcomes your inquiries about the Secular Franciscan Order. If you would like more information or would like to explore a possible vocation to the O.F.S., please contact our Formation Director, Therese Ream, O.F.S.,

FormationDirector@prairiestfrancis.org

**St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity,
Quincy, IL
Chapter of Elections**

The St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity in Quincy, Illinois, held its Celebration of the Fraternity's Chapter of Elections on Sunday, September 16, 2018. Emma Lozowski, O.F.S., Regional Councilor for Database Management for the Franciscans of the Prairie Regional Fraternity conducted the elections on behalf of the Regional Minister, Deacon Dave Ream, O.F.S. who served as the ecclesial witness. Members of the Fraternity served as assistants to Emma in conducting the election:

- Becky Goodwin, O.F.S. - Election Secretary
- Robie Orf, O.F.S. - Teller
- Rosanne Roy, O.F.S. - Teller

After reading a short passage from the Gospel of Mark, she reflected on the Scripture: "What a wonderful gift is our Franciscan charism. Jesus has asked us to follow him and then to go out and spread his Word." Then, she proceeded with conducting the elections.

The newly elected officers are:

- Minister - Phyllis Maxwell, O.F.S.
- Vice-Minister - Deborah Moffitt, O.F.S.
- Formation Director - Dwayne Goodwin, O.F.S.
- Secretary - Robie Orf, O.F.S.
- Treasurer - Vicki Kurtz, O.F.S.

Deacon Dave continues to serve on the Council as the Fraternity's Spiritual Assistant. The new Council was installed during Evening Prayer and immediately began making the transition from the previous Council and making plans for the future. They will hold their first Council meeting on October 20, 2018.

The Fraternity pledges its full support to our new Council and wish them the very best success in helping us continue our growth in

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membership and service to the greater community.

The Fraternity thanks Robie Orf, O.F.S. for her efforts as Chair of the Nominations Committee. She worked diligently to secure candidates for these offices. Thanks again to Emma for presiding at our triennial Chapter of Elections.

Afterwards, the Fraternity enjoyed a celebratory meal at the Coach House in Quincy.

Submitted by:

Deborah Moffitt, O.F.S.

Vice-Minister, St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Quincy

**Pope St. John XXIII Fraternity,
Rock Island, IL
Chapter of Elections**

The Pope St. John XXIII Fraternity, Rock Island, held an elective chapter on Sunday, August 5, 2018 at Trinity Medical Center, Rock Island, Illinois. Fraternity members Kent Ferris, O.F.S. and Candice Chaloupka, O.F.S. chaired the nominations process for this election. Regional Minister, Deacon Dave Ream, O.F.S., officiated and was assisted by the Regional Formation Director, Therese Ream, O.F.S., who served as Secretary of the Elections. Our Regional Treasurer, John Grillot, O.F.S. and fraternity Candidate, Andrew Reif, O.F.S. served as Tellers. The fraternity's Spiritual Assistant, Deacon Al Angelo, O.F.S. served as the Ecclesial Witness, having been delegated by Father Giles Gilbert, O.F.M. Conv., our Regional Spiritual Assistant.

The newly elected officers are:

- Minister - Candice Chaloupka, O.F.S.
- Vice-Minister - Pat DeLuca, O.F.S.
- Formation Director - Roxanne Miner, O.F.S.
- Secretary - Patrick Miner, O.F.S.

- Treasurer - Kent Ferris, O.F.S.



(l-r): Deacon Al Angelo, O.F.S., Spiritual Assistant, Candice Chaloupka, O.F.S., Minister, Pascal "Pat" DeLuca, O.F.S., Vice-Minister, Roxanne Miner, O.F.S., Formation Director, Patrick Miner, O.F.S., Secretary, Kent Ferris, O.F.S., Treasurer.

**Regional Picnic
July 28, 2018**

The Annual Regional Picnic was hosted by Pope St. John XXIII Fraternity on July 28, 2018 at Southwind Park, Springfield, Illinois.



Fraternities in attendance: Pope St. John XXIII, Rock Island; Our Lady of the Angels, Decatur; Our Lady of the Angels, Edwardsville; Sacred Heart, Peoria; St. Margaret of Cortona, Bloomington; Franciscans of the TAU, Calhoun County; St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Quincy; and St. Francis of Assisi, Teutopolis.

Good fellowship, good food and games were enjoyed by everyone. The TAU game was a good way to get to know everyone as we tried to complete all 16 items on the card.

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**Sacred Heart Fraternity,
Peoria, IL
Project for the Needy**

Project for the Needy in July was to prep, cook the meal and serve the poor who came to the South Side Mission. It was a blessing to be able to be a part of this project under the direction of Robert Righi, head cook.



Front Row (l-r): Vera Yee, Jeri Yee, Kathy Christy, Sharon Knapp, Gareth Casady.
Back Row (l-r): Matt Yee, Matt Jennette, Robert Righi, head cook, and Jim Stomberg.

**Sacred Heart Fraternity,
Peoria, IL
Transitus**

On Wednesday, October 3, 2018, Sacred Heart Fraternity gathered for the Transitus of St. Francis of Assisi, the anniversary of his death in solemn vigil to commemorate his passing from this life to the Father.



Front Row (l-r): Mary Farell-Diekemper, O.F.S., Marci McCann, O.F.S., Colleen Mattern, O.F.S., Sondra McEnroe, O.F.S., Kathy Christy, O.F.S., Sharon Knapp, O.F.S.
Back Row (l-R): Matt Yee, O.F.S., Jim Stomberg, O.F.S., Scott Diestelkamp, O.F.S., Matt Eppel, O.F.S., Pat Snell, O.F.S., Theresa Jennett, O.F.S.
Third Row: Fr. Giles, O.F.M. Conv.

Prayer of Thanksgiving: A Meditation on Colossians 1:9b-13**May you be filled**

You do not have to fill yourself. Just open up and be ready to receive.

with the knowledge of His will

Discernment is a process by which we find God's will. St. Francis had to discern what God meant by "Go, rebuild my church."

through all spiritual wisdom

There are many ways to be wise. It's possible to be smart but not wise. St. Francis called Wisdom the queen of virtues, who is sister to holy pure Simplicity.

and understanding

When we understand each other, we show empathy and compassion.

to live in a manner worthy of the Lord

Who among us could even imagine we can be worthy of the Lord, if it was not for the Holy Spirit who lives in us from baptism?

so as to be fully pleasing,

Not just "okay" or "good enough," but fully pleasing! God is merciful. He is pleased even with our feeble efforts as we try to turn to Him. God, teach us to love you!

in every good work,

There are many good works we participate in: serving in soup kitchens, fund raisers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, committee members, or volunteers. For us, Secular Franciscans, what is our top priority?

bearing fruit

What do we have to show for our efforts? There has to be something we can point to, even spiritually, if not in a tangible way. Otherwise, are we just wasting our time?

and growing in the knowledge of God

Knowledge of a person implies familiarity. If I know someone well, there is an element of predictability about them: I can guess what they would say, how they would act, what they would do. This helps us not to be surprised. God sometimes allows his most beloved souls to experience the worst suffering. But, they are never alone, and they know this, because they know Him.

strengthened with every power

Nothing you need is held back from you!

in accord with His glorious might

Who is stronger than God? God is the source of our strength. He will never run out. You will always get what you need.

for all endurance and patience

When you need to be propped up, help will be sent. Guaranteed, when you most need endurance and patience. Otherwise, how are we ever to experience the Perfect Joy, that St. Francis taught us about?

with joy giving thanks to the Father.

A thankful heart is a happy heart. When I write down three things I am grateful for each day, I help my mind to retain the pattern of looking for the positives.

who as made you fit

Jesus was the blueprint, and we were created in His image. Therefore, we are fit.

to share in the inheritance

We receive a gift that we did not have to earn.

of the holy ones in light.

Upon St. Francis' death, a brother saw his soul rise up as a bright light. He was holy and appeared as visible light. He shines and illuminates the way for us. We will not trip and fall by his light.

Submitted by:

Emma Lozowski, O.F.S.

Regional Councilor for Database Management

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