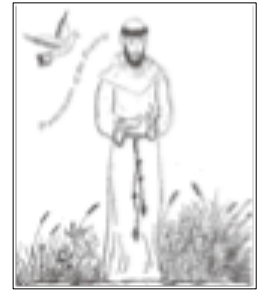


The Portiuncula

Franciscans of the Prairie Region

Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis



REGIONAL MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

One of my favorite verses in the Bible is a line spoken by Jesus and recorded in the Gospel of John chapter 6, verse 43. Jesus simply bids his audience. "Stop your murmuring." He does this in response to the people saying, "Is this not Jesus, the son on Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? How can he claim to have come down from heaven?" They murmured even after they have witnessed miracles. In response Jesus bids them, "Stop your murmuring," and explains, "I am the bread of Life." (John 6:48)

Those of us who professed a promise to live a gospel life conscientiously try to avoid the big sins: anything against the ten commandments, the seven deadly sins, uncharitable acts, etc., but, oh, that murmuring is something we can easily give in to. I sometimes experience dissatisfaction that makes me murmur, even when I take everything into account, and I see that things are going generally pretty well. It's just that I have ideas about how things can be even better. This is when I have to remind myself that my perspective is limited by space and time, by my own brain and body, but Jesus has the eternal perspective and I need to go back to his reassuring words. Jesus is the bread of life. It's my prompt for more trusting and less murmuring.

To start this letter, I was tempted to do some murmuring about the ongoing effect of the pandemic (how it made us postpone the planned regional elections), and about the weather (we have had a great amount of snow last week, making even universities and churches change their schedules for three days in a row), but I am going to return to Jesus's words, and remember that He is the one looking after all of us.

So it is with trust in God's providence that I remind you that our **regional elections** and fraternal and pastoral **visitations** from the National Executive Council, originally scheduled for March have been postponed to **July 23-24, 2022**. Please continue your discernment to see in what capacity you might be able to serve the regional fraternity. For some it will be prayerful support, for some it will be active service on the Regional Executive Council. Please help to identify people in your local fraternity who have the talent for serving, and kindly approach them with the invitation to consider a role. National Elections have also been postponed once. They are now scheduled to take place at the next National Chapter Meeting on October 15, 2022. Please also keep this in your prayers.

Speaking of elections, the International Council, CIOFS, held their elections in Rome. I am happy to announce that Tibor Kauser, OFS, of Hungary has been re-elected Minister General of the Secular Franciscan Order. He now begins his second six-year term. Also, our sister from the United States, Mary Stronach, OFS, is the new Vice-Minister General. Mary is from St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region. She is a former International Councilor who has been serving with the Order’s Presidency as an interpreter. She is a member of the International Formation Commission, as well as a member of our OFS-USA Formation Commission. Please keep the newly elected International Council in your prayers too, so that God may help them to animate and guide us.



Mary Stronach OFS & Tibor Kauser OFS

It is necessary that we have the councils on the various levels to have a structure to build upon. It can feel burdensome that we have this system that makes us file reports and arrange elections and visitations, when we have a great desire to be like St. Francis, to connect to people on a personal level and serve the poor. St. Francis had to acknowledge that organization was necessary to have our Order function in order. Don’t forget to thank your local council members, because it is hard work to compile these annual reports, to prepare them for a vote by the entire council and submit them in a timely manner together with the annual fair share. I have not yet met a minister who thought this was the fun part of the job. The local reports are put together into a regional report, that is voted on by the Regional Fraternity Council, to submit to the National Executive Council, who will then submit a report to the International Council. That’s how we keep in touch, and that’s how everyone participates.

To end my letter, I want to share the good news that our Regional Spiritual Assistant, Deacon Dave Ream, OFS and Therese Ream, OFS, member of the Regional Formation Team, recently edited and published a wonderful set of articles that were written by Father John Sullivan, OFM. They are available on the website secularfranciscansusa.org under “Formation and Spirituality.”

May God give us graciously all we need to live in contentment without murmuring, in gratitude for the many blessings He bestows on us.

Sincerely in Christ,

Emma Lozowski, OFS
Minister, Franciscans of the Prairie Regional Fraternity
Secular Franciscan Order

*Be strong, take courage, all you who hope in the Lord.
(Psalm 31:25)*

2021-2022 OFS-USA Theme

Keeping Our Focus on St. Francis of Assisi

**An Ongoing Formation Resource
for Secular Franciscans**

by Father John C. Sullivan, O.F.M.

Revised and Edited by
Therese and Deacon Dave Ream, O.F.S.
2022

Laudato Si' – "Be Praise, My Lord!"
a wood burning created by Fr. John Sullivan, O.F.M., 2015

MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT

Dear sisters and brothers in our Lord and His servant Saint Francis,

May the Lord give you His peace!

We continue to make our way through the first months of this new year of God’s grace, confident that His love will see us through! Our lived experience has taught us that each year of our lives brings its own unique set of blessings and challenges to us as individuals and as members of family/fraternity/society. The year 2022 will be no different.

As the coronavirus pandemic rages on around us, I continue to encourage all of us to remain resolute in our prayer and supportive of the efforts our regional and local fraternity servant leaders are making to keep us connected in fraternity (like via Skype, Facetime, Zoom or other virtual platforms, phone calls, e-mail messages, texts, social media, notes, cards, letters, etc.) until it is safer for us to gather together once again in person. May the Lord grant us the grace to resist succumbing to “pandemic fatigue” and to persevere in our prayer and in doing those things we know are beneficial for ourselves and the common good of those around us.

Tempus fugit – time flies! It seems like only a few days ago that we celebrating the great feast of the Nativity of our Lord, yet now we find ourselves rapidly approaching the beginning of the holy season of Lent on March 2, 2022! The essence of this time of grace is captured in both phrases either one of which will be prayed over us as the blessed ashes are placed on our foreheads in the sign of the Cross on Ash Wednesday (or perhaps, in this time of the continuing pandemic, sprinkled on the tops of our heads – Roman style!):

“Repent, and believe in the Gospel”

or

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

The first formula reminds us of our need for ongoing conversion. “What?” you say, “But I’m already a Catholic!” Yes, we are indeed already members of the Catholic Church. But we are always engaged in the process of what the Scriptures call *metanoia*, of turning away from the sinful attitudes and actions in our lives and turning more fully toward the Lord, becoming more Christ-like, living the Lord’s Gospel of love more faithfully and more consistently. For us as Franciscans, whose original name was the *Brothers and Sisters of Penance*, this understanding should be first-nature. In fact, I like to think that the *whole* Church is invited to join *us* in the Order of Penance for these forty days of Lent each year!



The second formula for the imposition of blessed ashes reminds us of a fundamental truth we often don’t like to face, that we are mortal and that our pilgrimage on this earth will eventually come to an end on a day and in a manner known only to God. This realization is not meant to frighten us or depress us, but it is the somber acknowledgement of the truth that each of us will die and come face to face with God, our just and merciful judge when we will render an account of our stewardship of the gifts He entrusted to us in this life.

So, given the Church’s renewed call to ongoing conversion and the reminder about our own mortality, we must ask ourselves, “**How will I engage in the Lenten season this year?**” The Church’s vision for Lent goes way beyond the simple giving up of something like candy or beer or a favorite TV show just for these 40 days. The deeper challenge is to commit ourselves to some form of prayer, penance, self-denial and charitable action that will lead us to a more permanent change of attitude or behavior in our lives, one that will help us become more Christ-like from this point forward, one that will enable us to be more faithful disciples of the One whose Resurrection we are preparing to celebrate anew this Easter Sunday, one that will show us to be true Brothers and Sisters of Penance after the manner of our Seraphic Father, St. Francis of Assisi.



May each of us be truly open to the inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit this Lenten season and always!

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

Deacon Dave, O.F.S.,



Deacon Dave Ream, O.F.S., Ph.D.
Regional Spiritual Assistant,
Franciscans of the Prairie Regional Fraternity
Secular Franciscan Order
T In Persona Christi Servi

SACRED HEART FRATERNITY - PEORIA

Our December project was Christmas Caroling at Sharon Wood Health Care. We gathered together on Saturday, December 11, 2021, and sang Christmas Carols.

LR: Scott Diestelkamp OFS, Pat Snell OFS, Debbie Weathers, Bob Gayhart OFS and Jim Stomberg OFS. Also singing with us was Jim’s wife, Kathy.

The residents joined in singing with us and requesting Christmas songs. The spirit of Christmas was had by all. It was so nice to see smiling faces and laughter from everyone.



We have been blessed with one new Inquirer since the last Portiuncula. At our Fraternity Gathering on Saturday, January 8, 2022 (via Zoom and phone), Matt Yee OFS, held a small Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming for Debbie Weathers.

Debbie said that she liked the simplicity and how peaceful the environment was here. Debbie said our Secular Franciscan way of life is appealing to her and she wanted to move to become an inquirer and to learn more about the Secular Franciscan way of life.

On behalf of the fraternity, Scott Diestelkamp OFS welcomed Debbie and noted her desire to move to inquirer into the Secular Franciscan way of life. Scott assured her in her search that she would have our support, encouragement, prayers, and example. Everyone welcomed Debbie with applause.



Epiphany Party

January 8, 2022. Our Epiphany Party was changed from in person to Zoom or phone, and to mailing the extraction of names to everyone. On Wednesday, January 5th, Jim Stomberg, OFS, mailed the extraction of names to everyone.

For those who are not familiar with this Franciscan tradition, a brief explanation of how our fraternity does this:

- Each member of the fraternity is given a Saint to go with them throughout the year. This saint will represent us in our prayers throughout the year. When we pray, we would ask: Saint ([our saints name](#)) be with me and pray for me.
- We then receive a member of the fraternity, a name to pray for. This is our secret prayer partner. We pray for them and support them in prayer without their knowing.
- We then receive a deceased member or members of the fraternity, depending on the numbers to pray for. Remembering that they are still part of the fraternity.
- Extraction is a saying, a quote of a Saint, or spiritual fervor, antidote, something that will be personal to you. The extraction was drawn at random for each person. He said since we have already prayed to the Holy Spirit, this saying will be in touch with our heart and soul.

These will be ours and go with us for the entire year.

Submitted by Jim Stomberg OFS, Secretary

Editor's Note: Further insight into the Franciscan tradition "Extraction of the Saints"

Each year, our Friars celebrate Epiphany Extractions. Franciscans hold great reverence for the saints. We customarily celebrate the Epiphany as a feast for promoting personal holiness. During the para-liturgical ceremony of the Extractions, each friar draws the name of a saint (who becomes his patron for the year) and a short spiritual exhortation (as a focus for spiritual refinement).

Early in Franciscan history, this tradition developed for our friars. We Franciscan Friars Conventual would like to share this cherished tradition with you. The ritual is simple. Pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance. Choose a card randomly. On the card will be the name of a saint, a mystery in the life of Jesus or perhaps a particular devotion. Announce your choice to the people praying with you. Some of them may have their own experience with your choice. Read up on it in Catholic literature or on the internet. With the help of the Holy Spirit, look for some direction in your life and spirituality from these "living words of God." You may be surprised how your choice touches your journey of faith.

Remember too, that we are all saints. Sinners too, but saints nonetheless. What can others see in us that reflects "the living word of God?" Your Epiphany patron may help you plan your resolutions or just be your companion in prayer, in the New Year. Look at this as just one more gift from God on Epiphany, the Feast of Gifts.

<https://www.olaprovince.org/2017/01/16/epiphany-extraction/>

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI FRATERNITY - TEUTOPOLIS

Greetings from St. Francis of Assisi-

Our fraternity has been able to meet in person following the CDC guidelines thru most of 2021. When it was not possible, we had Zoom meetings.

We have been blessed to have Deb Stone join with us who celebrated her Rite of Admission into candidacy on September 19, 2021. We are also so happy to have Lee Parker OFS, our formation director, who makes sure we receive our every Friday Formation per email that truly helps to “Feed the soul”.

The year 2021 saw Sister Death come for seven from our fraternity: Agnes Brummer OFS, Gloria Ellis OFS, Dorothy Schumacher OFS, Ellen Clark OFS, Jim Esker OFS, Shirley Willenborg OFS, and Michael Koeberlein OFS. Already this year, January 16, we lost Joan Eggers OFS. She had just professed on February 17, 2019. They will all be greatly missed.

We also need prayers for Gene Drees OFS, our minister, who had Quadruple Bypass Heart surgery on January 24, 2022.

BUT it is with great joy and the love of Jesus Christ our savior that we persevere on.

Submitted by Nancy Roley OFS, Treasurer

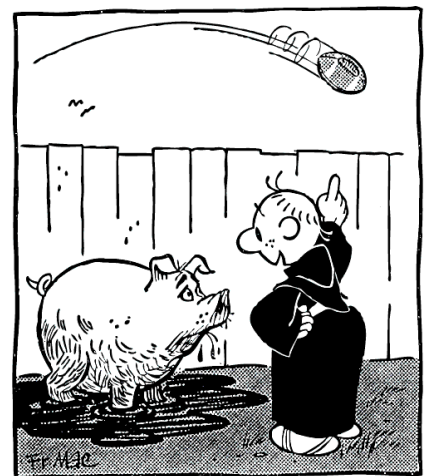
OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS FRATERNITY – DECATUR

I’ve been asked to write a few words about Our Lady of the Angels Fraternity, Decatur. First let me say we no longer meet in Decatur. Our current meeting location is in the parish hall of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit, in Mt. Zion. We’re one of the smallest fraternities with ten active members. While three members call Decatur home the rest of us live more than 25 miles from our meeting location. One member, Gloria Guy OFS, recently moved out of state yet keeps close to us via ZOOM. Actually, Gloria hosts our ZOOM meetings.

We all attend Mass in different Parishes. Sometimes this makes it difficult to maintain a sense of fraternity and community yet when we gather together monthly in person or via ZOOM we’re able to smile and enjoy each other’s company and share our common interest in St. Francis and Franciscan Spirituality.

Our December gathering was very informal as we came together with guests to a restaurant in Mt. Zion for Christmas cheer and fellowship. As it so happened several fraternity members were ill that day and unable to attend. Those present enjoyed prayer, food, laughter, and a gift exchange.

Submitted by George Menard OFS, Minister



"There, but for the grace of God, go you!"

www.brotherjuniper.com

ST. MARGARET OF CORTONA FRATERNITY - BLOOMINGTON



After a delay of more than a year, the fraternity was pleased to accept eight brothers and sisters as newly professed on August 15, 2021. The joyous event was commemorated with Mass celebrated by Father Greg Nelson of St. Mary’s Parish assisted by Fraternity member, Deacon Gayle Cyrulik OFS. As Sister Betty Jean Haverback OSF, our local Spiritual Assistant, wrote to them, “We thank you, dear sisters and brothers, for this witness to join our Secular Franciscan fraternity of St. Margaret of Cortona and thus expand the family of all our Secular Franciscans throughout the world.”

Back Row: Fr. Greg Nelson, Maria Garcia OFS, Leann Lanzotti OFS, Paul Prabhu OFS, Sr. Betty Jean Haverbeck OSF, Sr. Linda Burkitt OSF, Marlene Mertes OFS (Formation Director)

Front Row: Vicki Schultz OFS, Loreto Xavier OFS, Ken Guernsey OFS, Leslie Fahners OFS, Patricia Ostaszewski OFS, Linda Howley-Skuby OFS



The following weekend we were finally able to gather in person to hold the long overdue Council election. With much gratitude to the outgoing Council for serving an extended term due to the pandemic, the election and installation of the new Council was presided over by our Franciscans of the Prairie Regional Minister, Emma Lozowski OFS. We thank her.

The new Council hit the ground running as they planned for a return to in-person gatherings. It was a blessing to be able to meet for prayer, ongoing formation, business, and social time after being virtual for so long. At the November meeting, we enjoyed the new round tables in the St. Mary’s Parish Hall as we shared ongoing formation together. The group decided to remember the patrons of the Loaves and Fishes Soup Kitchen with Family Dollar store gift cards once again for Christmas. The generosity of the fraternity members allowed us to purchase these cards and make a sizable donation to Sister Michelle’s St. Nicholas Charity on Wheels van that visits many communities throughout the Peoria Diocese. The grotto at St. Mary’s is packed with donated items for this mobile pantry.





Unfortunately, due to an uptick in COVID infections across the state, the Council made the tough decision to cancel our annual “Little Christmas” celebration in January. We all missed the fun of our “White Wolf” (aka: White Elephant) gift exchange. God willing in February, we’ll be able to return to an in-person gathering. Wishing everyone good health and blessed days.

*“I have done what is mine to do.
May Christ show you what is yours.”*

St. Francis

Submitted by Carol Burroughs OFS, Minister

OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS - EDWARDSVILLE

There have been significant changes occurring in the Our Lady of the Angels Fraternity. Last summer over half of our members withdrew from the fraternity, including nearly all the council. As per our Order’s governing documents, the Regional Executive Council took on the interim role as the sponsoring council for our fraternity.

The remaining six brothers and sisters decided as a fraternity to look at the challenges ahead much the same way St. Francis did when instructed by God “to rebuild his church.” We enthusiastically embraced this metaphorical rebuilding. First, we moved our meeting site from St. Boniface Church in Edwardsville to St. Cecilia Church in Glen Carbon, IL. St Cecilia’s pastor Fr. Gibbons graciously welcomed us to gather monthly in his meeting room. This relocation was greatly facilitated by our new inquirer Carol Kleinert, a member of the parish.

Second, we obtained the appointment of a full-time spiritual assistant. Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM, agreed to join us and provide much needed spiritual guidance for our group. Fr. Paul lives with five other Friars in East St. Louis and has a background in Franciscan Spirituality. We feel that Fr. Paul joining us is our most important metaphorical brick: a cornerstone in our rebuilding.

Third, we restated our fraternal mission. We hold monthly fraternity meetings to pray, hold ongoing formation, and plan together. Emma Lozowski, OFS has been our facilitator in this process. We also have monthly apostolates to demonstrate our Franciscan charism. These have included prayer gatherings at the abortion clinic in Granite City, volunteering at St. Cecilia’s food pantry, and attending Sunday Masses together at historically recognized churches in the St. Louis area. These gatherings for Mass are generally followed by joining together for brunch. This demonstrates our fourth fraternal activity (alongside of prayer, formation, and business): socializing together. Meals together, attending arts and crafts shows together, and gatherings at member’s homes are the mortar solidifying our rebuilding bricks.



Fourth, Kathy Ward, OFS, has assumed responsibilities for formation planning and implementation. Kathy is the Formation Coordinator brick in our group and is helped by Emma.

Fifth, we have three individuals in initial formation. As of February 6th, Carol Kleinert and Alicia Halpin are Inquirers, and Dawna Tatum has joined as an Aspirant. We warmly welcome them as they discern their vocation to join us in our following St. Francis’ path.

We look forward to our continued progress in rebuilding our fraternity. We are deeply appreciative to the Regional Executive Council, foremost for their prayers, their helpful guidance, and patience. Without them we would not be successful in our rebuilding process. We look forward to the time when we can have elections, and we eagerly anticipate the formation of a new guiding and animating local council.

Submitted by Dan Tolbert OFS, Fraternity Correspondent

REGIONAL FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Our region continues to have a strong financial position, helped immensely by a generous bequest of over \$100,000 back in 2004. As we struggle with many limitations resulting from the Covid pandemic, we reduced our expenses the last two years due to the near-total lack of in-person regional meetings (including the annual retreat, regional picnic, regional council meetings, formation workshops, and hosting visitors from the National Executive Council). Our income has exceeded expenses the last two years, as we have been blessed by continued support of local fraternities through their Fair Share payments, and by solid returns on our investment in the Ave Maria Bond Fund. Our total assets were \$80,288.93 as of the end of 2021.

Submitted by John Grillot OFS, Regional Treasurer



"Y'know, when you come right down to it, our church is COIN-operated!"

THE QUINQUENNIAL ... THIS SUMMER IN PHOENIX, AZ !

The Quinquennial, often referred to as the “Q”, is an every-5-year gathering of Secular Franciscans from throughout the United States. Attending the “Q” is a marvelous opportunity to grow in your Franciscan vocation, to build relationships, and to start new relationships with fellow Franciscans. All Secular Franciscans (and guests) are invited to attend, either for the full event or for some portion thereof.

The “Q” is scheduled for August 3-7, 2022, at the Sheraton Hotel in downtown Phoenix (most events are Aug 4-6). Heavily discounted room rates are available. See the flyer below; full information is available on the NAFRA website under the tab “Quinquennial”.

Secular Franciscan Order - USA



Come celebrate with your Franciscan family
 the JUBILEE of our Order's
 800th anniversary of Memoriale Propositi,
 and the 100th anniversary
 of our National Quinquennial Congress!



The Q Committee invites you to pray the Quinquennial prayer!

20th Quinquennial Prayer

Lord God, Heavenly Father,
 we come before you in awe of your love for us.
 We acknowledge Your divine seed in everyone.
 Through your merciful compassion
 help us to see our need for conversion.
 In our service to each other
 let us experience this time of
 JUBILEE!
 We walk the path before us upon
 foundations built by our brothers and sisters.
 We are thankful for our present
 and excited for our future,
 always believing that You, O Lord,
 guide our journey.
 AMEN

For more information and to register go to: secularfranciscansusa.org

And lastly ... please contact me if you have any questions, comments, corrections, etc.

John Grillot OFS
Temporary/Interim Newsletter Editor
 grilljw@gmail.com 309-696-4846