

Communio

That All May Be One

Newsletter of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region
Secular Franciscan Order

Spring 2020

St. Roch: Secular Franciscan

“The Third Order of St. Francis has traditionally claimed St. Roch (pronounced Rock, CA.1348–CA. 1378) as a member, and his name appears in the calendar of Franciscan saints. ... While on a journey to Rome, he encountered a number of plague-stricken cities. There he courageously nursed the sick and effected many cures, supposedly by making the sign of the cross.

“Eventually, Roch himself was struck with the plague. Rather than seek help in a hospital, he dragged himself into the woods to die. There he was discovered by a dog who brought him food and cured him by licking his wounds. Upon recovering, he resumed his ministry, caring for the sick and curing many people, along with their livestock. ...

“For many centuries St. Roch was invoked as a protector against plague and pestilence. He is often depicted in the company of a dog — whose memory, some have argued, deserves equal veneration.”

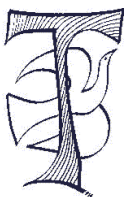
Robert Ellsberg,
The Franciscan Saints, p. 77



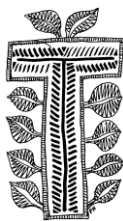
St. Roch: Detail from fresco in the Church of San Damiano, Assisi, Italy. As in other depictions, he is shown exposing the plague boil on his leg.

The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate



Editor's Journal: Basilica of Bl. Luchesio of Poggibonsi



trip to the area. And it was in this church that Lucchese (or Luchesio or Luchesius) and his wife, Buonadonna, received the habits of Franciscan tertiaries.

A booklet in the basilica notes: "It was on the occasion of the death of St. Francis (1226) that Brother Lucchese promoted among his fellow citizens the transformation of the small church of 'S. Maria in Camaldo' into a large church to be dedicated to San Francesco" (*San Lucchese da Poggibonsi: Storia del Santo e Guida alla Basilica e al Convento*; or, *St. Luchesio of Poggibonsi: History of the Saint and Guide to the Basilica and to the Convent*, p. 42).

In 1252, the architect "Maestro Niccoletto" transformed what was left of the old Romanesque church into the

Franciscan gothic structure I entered last September.

I spent hours wandering about the basilica, which is 164 feet long and 42 feet wide. Its beautiful art includes Giovanni della Robbia's polychrome terracotta altarpiece (above), on the left wall and just back of the pews. At first, I thought this was Mary (lady in blue) and Baby Jesus, but it's St. Ann, holding her infant daughter, the "Madonna Bambina."

No altar there now, just a sort of shelf under the artwork; but I can picture a priest raising the holy Eucharist there so many centuries ago.

The Cappella (Chapel) of San Lucchese is in the left transept. Two arches, one behind the other, at the chapel's entrance are covered with frescoes of saints, angels, and other designs.

Under the chapel's altar, a glass sarcophagus



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holds Luchesio's remains clothed in a brown penitent's habit.

Shortly before going to Italy, I read about Bl. Luchesio and learned that after his conversion from business concerns to caring for the poor, he began "taking care of those who fell ill with malaria in nearby swamps.

"On a donkey he would travel down the hills to the marshy swamps and find someone in need of care. He would then hoist them up on the donkey to travel back up the hill to healthy air and a better climate. Over and over, back and forth, Luchesio believed he was serving Christ by tending the sick" (Darleen Pryds, Ph.D., *Enduring Presence: Diversity and Authenticity Among the First Generations of Franciscan Laity*, pp. 35–36).

Frescoes on the chapel walls depict such events as Luchesio in ecstasy in a church doorway and he and Buonadonna receiving the penitent habit. And, yes, a barefoot Luchesio bringing a sick person to a hospital.

There are no chairs in the tiny chapel, so I sat on one out front and meditated on those first two, who formally embraced the way of life that has continued through 800 years.

I lighted a votive candle for each of them, asking their help in living my vocation as firmly as they did theirs.

Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS, Communio editor, is a member of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity in Hendersonville, N.C., and spiritual assistant to Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity in Blairsville, Ga.



Stained glass windows in the chapel depict Luchesio and Buonadonna. One of the chapel's frescoes shows him carrying a sick person to a hospital for treatment.

Newly Professed — Congratulations!

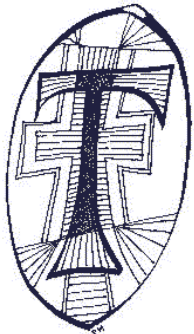
Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Fraternity, Burlington, N.C., welcomed with much joy three newly professed members at the Rite of Profession on Feb. 22, during evening Mass in Blessed Sacrament Church. The three new members are: Gail Carter, OFS (left); Joyce Patten, OFS; and Irene Crowder, OFS. A reception followed. Many guests were on hand to celebrate, including Ellen Ferrone, OFS, Area 3 councilor.



Minister's Message

“This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad, alleluia.

Responsory for readings, Octave of Easter, *Christian Prayer*, p. 432



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

While at my parish on Ash Wednesday, after listening to my pastor's homily, his words and insights inspired me to want to go into the desert with Jesus for the next 40 days; to hopefully experience my best Lent ever.

I've always enjoyed the Lenten readings, but this year I wanted to hear God speak to me more deeply in my daily praying and reading of the Liturgy of the Hours as I focused on his will for his son, Jesus. I also had daily Lenten reflections coming via email and my book, *Lent and Easter Wisdom from St.*

Francis and St. Clare of Assisi, compiled by John V. Kruse, Ph.D., which was next to my chair in the living room. All set, I thought.

Then, as you all know, during the second week of Lent we learned that a new, highly contagious virus was infecting people around the world. The coronavirus pandemic dramatically changed how we would all interact socially and care for each other. It caused fear and confronted us with our mortality, I feel. Truly a time to keep my eyes focused on Jesus and not this huge distraction!

As Lent progressed, there were daily changes and updates all over the world. I'm sure you kept up with these for your well-being and that of your loved ones. Each day brought news of uncertainty; life as I knew it was changing: the reality of a pandemic and all of the social distancing, stay-at-home orders, being in the over-65 age bracket, no toilet paper at my usual supermarket.

But wait, this is Lent, a time of sacrifice, isn't it? I wanted to go deeper into the desert this Lent. So, here I am, searching for God as always. Jesus, I trust in you!

During my Lenten journey with COVID-19 and now the Easter season, I have been asking God what he is trying to teach me through all of this. One thing I know is that I'm not alone; he is always with me, and I have nothing to fear. He is risen and lives! I continue to seek his sharing of wisdom and guidance daily as I live my Franciscan vocation more in social isolation/distancing than in togetherness/community: Stay in the current moment/day and don't worry about tomorrow.

I'm grateful for my dog, Phineas, for the physical aspect of touch and daily walks to see, hear, and smell the newness of spring in my neighborhood. I'm truly thankful for technology to be able to livestream Mass and "see" my fraternity brothers and sisters via a Zoom-room gathering.

But it's not the same as being present to participate in Mass and share physical presence with my sisters and brothers; I miss receiving Eucharist and hugs. I am evolving into the person God wants me to be, but I am not there yet. I am grateful for the gift of each of you in my life. I hope you are each well and staying the course. Know you are not alone; be at peace and pray confidently to our Father.

Closing with three readings on St. Francis seeking solitude. The first is from Thomas of Celano, "The Life of Saint Francis":

“At one time the blessed and venerable father Francis, with worldly crowds gathering eagerly every day to hear and see him, sought out a place of rest and secret solitude. He desired to free himself for God and shake off any dust that clung to him from the time spent with the crowds. It was his custom to divide the time given him to merit grace and, as seemed best, to spend some of it to benefit his neighbors and use the rest in the blessed solitude of contemplation. He took

with him only a few companions—who knew his holy way of living better than others—so that they could shield him from the interruption and disturbance of people, respecting and protecting his silence in every way” (*Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint*, p. 261).

The next is from St. Bonaventure’s “The Major Legend of St. Francis”:

“And because [Francis] had learned in prayer
that the presence of the Holy Spirit for which he longed
was offered more intimately to those who invoked him.
the more It found them
far from the noise of worldly affairs.
Therefore seeking out solitary places, he used to go to deserted
and abandoned churches to pray at night.
(*Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume II, The Founder*, p. 606)

Here, St. Francis, as recorded in “The Assisi Compilation,” advises his friars that “wherever we are or wherever we travel, we have a cell with us. Brother Body is our cell, and the soul is the hermit who remains inside the cell to pray to God and meditate. So if the soul does not remain in quiet and solitude in its cell, a cell made by hands does little good to a religious” (*FA,ED: Volume II, The Founder*, p. 215).

Easter joy, love, and peace to you!
DorothyAnn

DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region’s minister, is a member of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity, Hilton Head Island, S.C.

Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation: Being Peace in a Time of Crisis

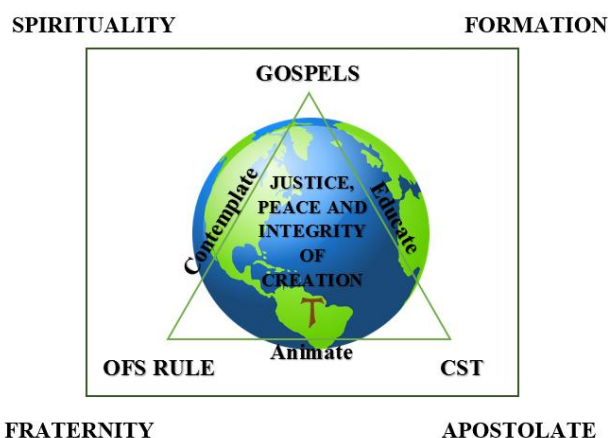
By Carolyn D. Townes, OFS
My dear brothers and sisters,

We are living in very uncertain times. The coronavirus pandemic has become the main focus of our living and moving from day to day.

We are living in a new normal. And when this pandemic ends — and it will end, they always do — we must learn to be and do life in creatively different ways.

One would think it is just good manners that we cover our sneezes and coughs; but we have to be told, again and again, to do this. Or, to thoroughly wash our hands. I heard the story of a man who deliberately coughed on someone just to see if her face mask worked. Can you imagine? Needless to say, that man was arrested. A year ago that was just bad manners. Today, it can be a death warrant.

Many things like that will change and take on new meaning. But one thing will never change: the love of the Lord. God’s love for us is the same yesterday, today, and forever. That is one



thing we can always count on: the love of God. And as Franciscans, that love should also radiate from each one of us. I am reminded of the Apostle Paul's letter to the church at Philippi. He too was isolated, through incarceration:

"If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others" (2:1-4).

It is all too easy to settle into fear, worry, and doubt; especially when there is so much uncertainty. But as someone once said, we don't have to be scary because we are scared. We share in the same Spirit of love, peace, and compassion. Yes, we will be afraid of what we don't know, but we are not to give in to that fear by acting as if we have never heard of Christ.

Living in a state of trust — childlike trust — is a must. When you are feeling the fear, take it to the cross of our Lord. Tell the Lord your fears and your worries and ask for the grace and the strength to come through it with zeal for peace and perfect joy.

We have all experienced a very different Lenten season and Holy Week. For most of Lent, our churches were closed and services were suspended. Holy Week, present to our fellow parishioners, was canceled this year. We watched Triduum services from our homes. There was no Communion and no community.

Fraternity meetings are virtual, if at all. We have to find creative ways to connect with one another. But we must not lose our sense of peace, our sense of calm, and our joy in all this. Those are the benchmarks that will get us through this global crisis. Email, text, or better still, call up a friend, a family or fraternity member and share a smile or a good word. You will be surprised how far that small act of sharing can go.

Stay strong, my brothers and sisters; stay safe and stay prayed up. God is in this with us and he is listening, especially since most of the noise has diminished. And, we now have more than enough time to listen to God. May the Lord continue to give you peace.

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, a member of St. Clare of Assisi Fraternity in Aiken, S.C., is the JPIC Animator for the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region, the National JPIC Animator, and a member of the International Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.



Regional Spiritual Assistant: Thoughts on quarantine and the impact of COVID-19

By Deacon Thomas Shaver OFS

As I reflect on the events of the last several months, specifically with respect to the coronavirus, the imposed sequestering at home, and my self-imposed no contacts outside the home, I have allowed myself much time to pray, read Scripture, and just allow myself quiet time with the Lord.

At COVID-19's first appearance in the area, our bishop-administrator met with his pastoral consultants. They decided that Holy Eucharist would be distributed only under the species of bread received in the hands. Only the priest and the deacon would share the cup, at the altar. The announcement resulted in a lot of confusion and questions that even today remain unanswered, as well they should be.

Personally, I felt and believe that the Lord is not going to make me ill by my giving him praise and glory and receiving him in the Blessed Sacrament. To this day, that is my faith

statement; no one is going to convince me of anything different. Still, when I was ordained I promised fidelity and obedience to my bishop and his successors. So, while I disagreed with the decision, in total obedience to my bishop I followed and practiced his mandate and instructions.

As a Secular Franciscan, I made a similar promise to the Church.

When gatherings for Mass were prohibited by the civil authority, the bishops concurred. From mid-March through today, our only access to Mass has been to watch it on our computers via streaming or on TV if it is available. Again, my faith said one thing but my promise of obedience said another, a genuine conflict of heart and mind.

While sequestered and staying home, books and the Scriptures have filled my time. Also, I spend a lot of time on the computer writing, reflecting, and participating in chatrooms or other social media such as Facebook. Facebook provided a lot of humor, many thought-provoking considerations, and, unfortunately, too much political bashing from both sides of the aisle.

It was good to read people joking about the situation we find ourselves in. Some of the memes were hilarious. For example, the picture of the golden retriever looking out the front window and saying, "Why are all the humans wearing muzzles, did they bite someone?" Or, the memes of the children being homeschooled for the first time and the parents jokingly asking that they be transferred to another school. For sure there were funnier ones and some just not funny, as well. It is good that we can laugh.

One of the sites that I follow on Facebook is the National Shrine of St. Maximillian Kolbe at Marytown, Ill. Conventual Franciscan friars give me great comfort in observing how they cope with the COVID-19 situation. Their streamed Masses and rosaries help me to cope. The friars give me hope. Throughout the balance of our Lenten experience, and now our Easter season of Resurrection and hope, I take solace that my journey with the Lord has had many blessings. We are, of course, Easter people; we should never lose sight of that. The Resurrection and the resurrected Christ is our total source of hope.

The political nonsense, however, just has to be ignored. As a Franciscan secular living in the world, I find myself conflicted by both the left and the right. Obviously for me there is both good and bad on both sides. I seek the good, and do what I can to impact the bad. That is all I can do.

The sequestration/quarantine has impacted our lives in so many ways: spiritually, physically, and emotionally. While stay-at-home orders have limited our travel, visits, and just general freedom, we have adapted to life and allowed it to occur around us. Spiritually, we have been given the opportunity to talk with God, I hope, in peace and quiet, without distraction and thus have a meaningful dialogue with him.

From the sacramental aspect, while we cannot go to Mass and receive the Eucharist, perhaps this absence might help us to reflect on their personal importance to us. Have we taken the sacraments for granted since, up to now, they have been so available to us?

I have been reflecting on the early Church during the Roman persecutions and how our ancestors in faith put their lives at risk to avail themselves of these sacraments. St. Tarcisius, a third century martyr of the Church, keeps coming to me in prayer. He was a 12-year-old acolyte of the Church during the Emperor Valerian's violent reign and his persecution of Christians.

Tarcisius was entrusted with bringing Holy Eucharist to condemned Christians imprisoned and awaiting execution. A mob caught him and demanded that he turn the Eucharist over to them, which would have resulted in the desecration of the sacrament. He refused and was beaten to death. Legend has it that when he died and the mob tried to get the Eucharist from his body, the sacrament was no longer there.

I think the point of this story and the thoughts and messages from prayer regarding Tarcisius are that we have it so much better than the early Christians who were also denied the Eucharist. We have God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — in our lives and will survive with temporary

absence of the physical presence of Christ. As the early persecuted Church perhaps teaches, we make the best of what we have.

Frequent reception of Communion is recommended by the theologians. Fact of the matter is, though, that during the Middle Ages, “the Age of Faith,” reception was so infrequent that the Fourth Lateran Council compelled the faithful, under pain of excommunication, to receive at least once a year. The Poor Clares, by rule, communicated six times a year. Even saints received rarely: our Order’s patron and patroness limited reception of communion: St. Louis IX, six times a year; St. Elizabeth of Hungary, only three times.

So, let us be ruled in these times by the adage, “Absence makes the heart grow fonder.”

Instead of seeing these times as burdensome, let us use them to grow closer to God and family. Given the serious economic impact that the shutdown has had on families, and despite the “economic bailout” and personal assistance from the government, families and individuals have lost their ability to support their families with shelter, clothing, and food.

We as Franciscans should see this as a call from God to do all that we can to help. I am particularly concerned about the homeless and “street people” who have nowhere to shelter, seek sustenance, find clothing. We should see this as a challenge to help in accordance with the Gospel of Jesus Christ: “Whatever you did (or didn’t do) for one of these the least of my brothers or sisters, you did (or didn’t do) for me” (Mt 25:40).

Once the quarantines and sequestering ease, there will still be needs of those less fortunate than us. We have an opportunity to be more Christian and gospel-centered people. As St. Paul writes, “I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20). Do we echo these words by our actions?

Deacon Thomas Shaver, OFS, Brother and Sisters of St. Francis Region’s spiritual assistant, is a member of Stigmata of St. Francis Fraternity in Johns Creek, Ga. He serves at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Marietta, Ga.

A Fraternity Council Prayer

Be with us Holy Spirit as we go forth into the world
To follow in the footprints of Jesus Christ.
Give us light and strength to know your holy and true commands,
To make your will our own, and to live it in our everyday lives.
Guide us by your wisdom, support us in your power,
For you are God, sharing the glory of the Father and the Son.
May we become spouses, mothers, brothers, and sisters of Christ
As we cooperate with his holy manner of working within us and among us.
May we work to fulfill your desire for a world filled with justice and peace:
Enable us to uphold the dignity of all creation,
Unite us to yourself in the bond of love
So that mercy triumphs over judgment.
May we hold fast to our desire to walk in the footprints of Christ,
So that all our decisions, actions, and words may be pleasing to you.
Empower us to live out our baptismal identity and mission
through our profession as Secular Franciscans.
And when we come to the end of our pilgrimage on earth,
May we join together with Saint Francis, and Saint Clare, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary,
and Saint Louis of France, and all of the saints and angels
In praising you forever. Amen.

Father Steve Kluge, OFM, spiritual assistant,
Padre Pio Fraternity, Raleigh, N.C.

Congratulations, New Councils!



Elected Feb. 15, council of Blessed John Duns Scotus Fraternity, Garden City, S.C.: Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS, (left) ecclesial witness; Kathleen Barnes, OFS, treasurer; Paul DiStefano, OFS, vice minister; Barbara Umpleby, OFS, minister; Patricia McGrath, OFS, councilor; Martha Roman, OFS, councilor; DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, presider; David Roman, OFS, formation director. Mary Sacavage, OFS, secretary, not shown.



Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity, Hilton Head Island, S.C., held its election on March 7: Christine Lukesh, OFS, formation director (left); Betti Longinotti, OFS, presider; Maureen Cronin, OFS, vice minister; Angela Cavalluzzi, OFS, minister; Dian McCarthy, OFS, councilor; Peggy Cleary, OFS, councilor; Bill Trecartin, OFS, treasurer; Kathy Sheehan, OFS, secretary; Ken Wessling, OFS, ecclesial witness. Diane holds the artwork she created, which shows the fraternity's emblem.

Ecumenical Advocacy Days speak of God's earth and people

Introduction by DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS

On April 24, I virtually attended the Franciscan Action Network's Ecumenical Advocacy Day (EAD) gathering.

Usually the EAD is held annually in Washington, D.C. I know our sister Carolyn Townes, OFS, our regional Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation animator, has attended. This year, though, it had to be virtual because of COVID-19.

The EAD, as its website notes is "an annual gathering of Christian advocates and activists. We worship, delve deeply into the pressing issues of the day, and lift our voices by speaking truth to power on Capitol Hill."

I am very touched by this prayer (below). We were given the OK to share.

The guest speaker was Sister Joan Brown, OSF, executive director of New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light. She is a Franciscan Sister of Rochester, Minn.

Sister Joan connected the virtual attendees with the theme of the EAD weekend, which was "Imagine! God's Earth and People Restored."

The prayer comes from Sister Joan; I'm not sure if she is the author; that's all of the info I have.



Reflection and Prayer

by Sister Joan Brown, OSF

Today we understand the meaning of interconnections. We know one earth, one world, coronavirus, economic collapse and economic disparity and climate systems change — they are all teachers.

While technology can assist, it is not the answer.

While public policy changes can assist, they are not the answer.

There is not one answer. There is not one problem. There is no enemy though (there are those who) try to convince us it is the virus or oil companies or politicians or anyone other than ourselves.

Our challenges are soul-sized. The deepest change required is perception. Our strongest tools are: the soul force of Gandhi, the dream of Martin Luther King Jr., the courage of Berta Caceras and Sister

Dorothy Stang; the fortitude of Jane Goodall and Wangari Maathai, and the contemplative vision of mystics and saints like Buddhist teacher Joanna Macy, who said:

"Out of the darkness a New World can arise. This is a dark time, filled with suffering and uncertainty. Like living cells in a larger body, it is natural that we feel the trauma of our world. So don't be afraid of the anguish you feel, or the anger or fear, because these responses arise from the depth of your caring and the truth of your interconnectedness with all beings.

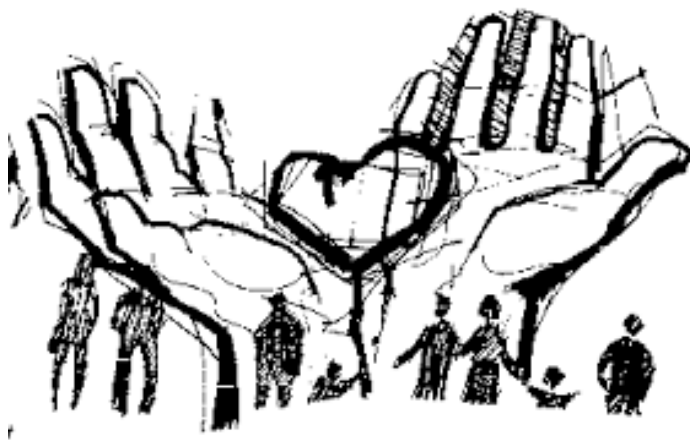
You don't need to do everything. Do what calls your heart; effective action comes from love. It is unstoppable, and it is enough.

The biggest gift you can give is to be absolutely present, and when you're worrying about whether you're hopeful, or hopeless, or pessimistic, or optimistic, who cares? The main thing is that you're showing up, that you're here and that you're finding ever more capacity to love this world because it will not be healed without

that. That was what is going to unleash our intelligence and our ingenuity and our solidarity for the healing of our world.”

Alone and together Love made visible for our world flows through our bodies. We are the ones called into this amazing, painful, and miraculous moment. Please join me in a reflective prayer. Take your eyes off the screen. Open your hands and gaze at them together.

These hands are formed from carbon elements of the first flaring forth of the universe 14.3 billion years ago.



These hands carry the memory of evolution of the arboreal tree shrew that lived about 60 million years ago, who tirelessly climbed trees heavenward, forming bones and flesh to grow, and strengthen over eons.

These hands speak of genetic ancestry from saints, grandmothers, farmers, bakers, construction workers, immigrants, social workers, change agents, and scientists.

The palms and lines of these hands sing as a fractal of mountains and streams of Sister Mother Earth.

These hands have clenched in fear and pain and opened to give and receive.

These hands have kissed with a touch the foreheads of sick or dying parents, grandparents, children, loved ones, and even strangers.

These hands have wrapped around and around during thousands of washings with Sister Water over the months out of love to heal and protect family and community.

These hands, concerned with climate justice, make phone calls, sign petitions, and write letters to care for our sacred, land, water, air, vulnerable communities and children and then wonder what else they might they do.

These hands bake bread, plant seeds, pray and perform rituals, cook dinner, open acequia (historically engineered canal) water gates, pull weeds, change diapers, construct homes with hammers, give shots in hospitals, clean schools, stock grocery shelves, play ball with 6-year-olds, rest open in meditation, type letters to editors, and harvest food for the community.

These hands take plans of the mind and heart to create solar panels, to compose cello music, to advocate for climate refugees, to organize communities, to teach school, and to make visible new paradigms for life.

These hands join with human hands around Sister Mother Earth, and with the winged, two legged, four legged, leafy, flowering, and finned ones forming one sacred earth community.

There are no simplistic answers.

There are only these hands.

These hands hold Sister Mother Earth. We are the holy flesh of her body. We are the visible expressions of sorrow, conversion, transformation, tears, imagination, suffering, solidarity, gratitude, equity, beauty, justice, and love as one holy earth community.

In gratitude to the Holy One of All Names and Beyond All Names.

Blessed Be, Amen, Amen.

DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region's minister, is a member of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity, Hilton Head Island, S.C.



Pope Francis leads a prayer service in an empty St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on March 27. This was the service in which he gave the blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world). (Foto ©Vatican Media)

Faith in the time of the Coronavirus

By Bret Thoman, OFS

Today, there is no lack of spirituality despite the scourge of coronavirus. On the contrary, the Internet is booming with articles, blogs, and YouTube videos offering spiritual guidance or purporting to explain the pandemic.

I know because I've been there myself. Frequently. I've also reached out to spiritual directors, attentively followed the homilies and reflections during the extraordinary papal events, and fervently prayed to God — all to make sense of what's happening right now. But, to be honest, I don't have much clarity.

Italy, where I live with my family, was hit early and hard. When we went into lockdown on March 9, we were the first country in the western world to do so. All businesses, factories, and shops were shut down, except for a narrow range of "sectors" considered vital for food or medicine production or distribution. Most Italians are forbidden to leave their homes, with only a few exceptions, such as grocery shopping or the pharmacy. Violating the decree can result in a steep 5,000-euro fine (\$5,500), confiscation of vehicle, and up to 90 days in prison.

Perhaps the most dramatic parts of the decree — for those of us accustomed to an active faith life — are the restrictions on the Church. Church doors can remain open, but the ban on "assembly of persons" necessitates the suspension of all Masses and the reception of sacraments in any form. There is no exception even for baptisms, weddings, or funerals.

The lockdown that was initially supposed to last just two weeks — the time of the incubation

period to reveal who had the virus — is now ongoing for close to two months. And there is no end in sight.

While most people around the world have seen freedoms severely curtailed, we are living under virtual house arrest. I'm spending this time with the people I love the most, but it's not easy being shut in a small apartment with two teenagers, a toddler, and spouse.

It seems that life will not return to normal until a vaccine is developed, which could be well into 2021. In the meantime, we will have to learn to cohabitate with the virus. During that time, nonessential businesses (such as hotels and transportation) will likely remain shut.

This, too, is forcing me to reach out and seek God in this: there is the real likelihood that travel (and as a consequence, our livelihood) will be shut for the next year or more.

I would like to report that I am joyfully embracing the opportunities during this trial: to practice more authentic Franciscan "simplicity," to offer this up as co-redemptive suffering, to channel my inner Mary and relinquish my innate tendency toward Martha busyness, to practice more charity toward Katia and the kids as well as elderly neighbors who cannot go out, to look to the example of Sts. Francis and Clare in contemplation, to pray more.

But the truth is that I do not have peace. Or perhaps I should say it comes and goes.

Despite the difficulties and uncertainties, I can say, however, with absolute conviction that I trust with all my heart in the abiding presence of the Lord. I am, as our Rule tells us, trying to "follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to him even in [these] difficulties ... (from Art. 10).

In this, I have felt a particular closeness to the psalms. Though I have in the past sometimes judged the psalmist's emotional oscillations as melodramatic, today I find them particularly resonant.

During this Easter season, Psalm 22 has been a source of consolation in particular. What begins with an anguished lament, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me" (v. 2) opens to praises (vv. 23-24; 26-27) midway and concludes with recollections of past deliverance and hope for the future generation.

Pope Benedict, in his writings and talks, related this psalm to Christ's crucifixion and glory. As is well-known, Christ's words on the cross, repeated this same phrase from Psalm 22. In the Jewish custom, by citing the first words of a Psalm was a reference to the entirety of it.

Though in the most acute moment of his Passion, Christ's expression of forsakenness was a sign of the praise to come, or, more specifically, his glorification; for in Luke's Gospel, Jesus expresses his total surrender: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (23:46). The desolation on Good Friday would be soon followed by the Easter Resurrection.

During this time of uncertainty, may the journey of Christ from his Passion on Golgotha to the Easter glorification be our hope. Even if we feel that the Lord is absent, may we continue to praise him all the more and always be mindful of the joy and glory that awaits us when we put our faith and hope in him.

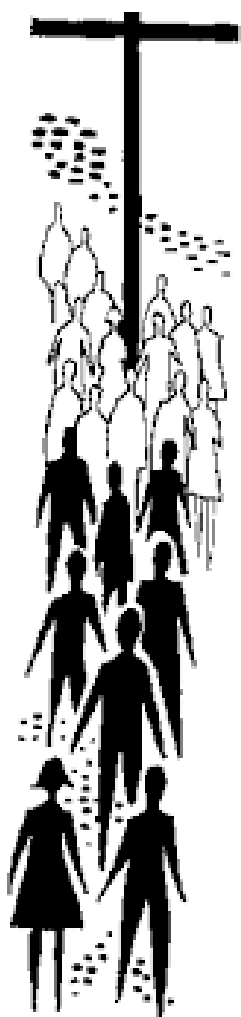
Bret Thoman, OFS, is director of St. Francis Pilgrimages and author of St. Francis of Assisi: Passion, Poverty, and the Man who transformed the Catholic Church and St. Clare of Assisi: Light from the Cloister.

"For Saint Francis prayer is the indispensable foundation of our life with God because it was through prayer that he was able to let God change his heart; it was through prayer that he was able to meet Christ in the leper; it was through prayer that he learned what he was to do to restore God's house."

Murray Bodo, OFM, *The Simple Way: Meditations on the Words of Saint Francis*, p. 111

ARG: Biggest fraternity gathering of the year

By Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS



When did you first attend our Annual Regional Gathering (ARG)?

My first time was in 2001.

Having outgrown Living Waters Catholic Reflection Center in Maggie Valley, N.C., we had the ARG at the Catholic Conference Center in Hickory, N.C. That year we were electing a new Regional Executive Council.

My fraternity's minister was unable to attend and asked me, the secretary, to serve as her delegate. I'd been professed only since December 1998 and knew almost nothing about the ARG. Honestly, at that time I didn't even know that much about Secular Franciscan in general.

I had a great time at that ARG, absolutely loved meeting people from all over the region. Haven't missed an ARG since.

While I didn't initially understand that the region is a fraternity, going to the ARG every year has really helped me to experience that. At our monthly gatherings in our local fraternities, we deepen our Secular Franciscan vocations as we pray together, learn more about Franciscanism during ongoing formation, have some social time in which we reconnect since the last time we saw each other.

Same is true at the ARG, when our regional fraternity gathers. We reconnect with the people we already know and we meet new friends, we pray with many more of our members, learn through the various presentations, and honor those who are no longer with us because they've been born into eternal life since our previous gathering.

I've enjoyed all of our guest speakers, and this year I'm certainly looking forward to hearing Father Daniel Horan, OFM. But I don't go to the ARG just because we're having a guest speaker, and I can't imagine staying away from future ARGs if I didn't like a particular guest speaker.

I want to be with my brothers and sisters in our regional fraternity, many of whom I get together with only at the ARG.

And the ARG takes me, for a little while, on a pilgrimage into the wider Secular Franciscan world. It's been a great trip every year.

Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS, is Communio editor. She is a member of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity in Hendersonville, N.C., and spiritual assistant to Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity in Blairsville, Ga.

Directions for Zoom Room

So, you ask yourself, what is a Zoom Communication Room?

Zoom is a cloud video conferencing tool where participants can see and hear each other in real time. It can be used on Windows, Mac, iOS, and Android. You can access it on a desktop, laptop, smartphone, or tablet.

There's no special software to download, and it is very user friendly. Whatever device you are using you will need to have a web camera and audio. Most devices have these built into them. If you do not have access to a "smart" device, you can also call in and hear and talk but

cannot be seen by or see the other participants. Optimum usage is by having the audio and video access.

The first thing you need to do if you are on a PC or Mac is to log on to <https://zoom.us> and click **Sign Up for Free**. Enter the email you wish to use and then click **Sign Up**. You will receive a confirmation email; click on the link to activate your account. Enter your name and password. Remember to keep your password handy so you will have it to sign on for meetings. Click Activate to activate your Zoom account.

If you are on a tablet or smartphone, go to your APP store on IOS, visit the Apple Store and search Zoom and click to download. For Android visit your Google Play and search Zoom, Click Install. You will sign up for an account the same way as above.

The account and usage is free.

If you do not have access to any of these devices and only have a phone landline or cell, you can call in to the meeting.

A week before each meeting you will receive an invite from me. It will have a link for you to click onto that will take you to the room or further down in the message will be the phone number. You will then receive a reminder invite the day before our meeting.

We have a permanent room. Our meeting room id # is 6421174193. If you access by phone to call in, dial 1-614-558-8656 and use the meeting ID 642 -117-4193.

Further Questions: Contact Dianne Ambrose, OFS, BSSF regional formation director, at Ambrosedianne6@gmail.com or at 706-338-2402.

To Rebuild the Church, We Must First Rebuild Ourselves

By: Carole L. King, OFS



“[Admonition XXVII: Virtue Puts Vice to Flight]

Where there is charity and wisdom,

there is neither fear nor ignorance.

Where there is patience and humility,

there is neither anger nor disturbance.

Where there is poverty with joy,

there is neither greed nor avarice.

Where there is rest and meditation,

there is neither anxiety nor restlessness.

Where there is fear of the Lord to guard an entrance,

there the enemy cannot have a place to enter.

Where there is a heart full of mercy and discernment,

there is neither excess nor hardness of heart.”

Francis of Assisi: “The Admonitions,”

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents:

Volume I, The Saint, pp. 136–137

How well do we communicate with one another?

In Franciscan formation, both initial and ongoing, we learn many concepts such as spiritual poverty, simplicity, peace, Franciscan joy, love, and humility, among others. We study the Gospels in hopes of imitating Christ as did St. Francis (OFS Rule, Art. 4).

And yet, how do we treat one another? Have meetings ever become arenas of warfare? Do conversations sometimes become points of contention? Is our fraternity a place of loving welcome or power struggle?

As you read this, are you thinking of anyone other than yourself? If so, I ask you to pause for a moment, take an honest look *into your own heart*, and ask some serious questions: Have you

had conflict with others and blamed them? Do you ever leave fraternity or council meetings with anger in your heart? When have you been a “right fighter,” wanting to be right rather than looking for a solution or compromise?

Is being right more important than our fraternal relationships?

When Francis, in 1209, sought the Church’s approval for his way of life, he wrote a simple rule containing mainly quotes from the Gospels.

Pope Innocent III approved the rule but was hesitant because, as St. Bonaventure writes in “The Major Legend of Saint Francis,” “it seemed to some of the cardinals to be something novel and difficult beyond human powers.”

But Cardinal John of St. Paul, bishop of Sabina, thought differently: “If we refuse the request of this poor man as novel or too difficult, when all he asks is to be allowed to lead the Gospel life, we must be on our guard lest we commit an offense against Christ’s Gospel” (both quotes, *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume II, The Founder*, p. 547).

Indeed, the Gospels are demanding. In all three synoptic Gospels, the Lord Jesus admonishes that if we wish to follow him, we must deny ourselves and take up our cross. Hard? You bet it is! Our own rule tells us that we are to go “from gospel to life and life to the gospel” (Art. 4).

Our father Francis was a peacemaker. His Gospel way of life called his followers to humility, perfect joy, and peace. He shared the love of God with each person he met, regardless of differences, *and* whether or not, as in his encounter with the leper, they were considered loveable.

The Gospel “demand” is a difficult concept to accept! In our beloved country, we learn autonomy at a very young age. Consequently, some bristle at anyone or anything that might make a “demand” on them. This is a challenge to obedience, one of the promises that we make as Secular Franciscans. Obedience as a promise becomes a demand, and it takes great humility to accept that.

Francis taught that our perfect joy is found, not in insulting and attacking others, but in living out our promise of obedience with humble docility, even in the midst of trials, insult, and injury. This is the “yoke” of meekness and humility that Jesus speaks of: “For my yoke is easy, and my burden light” (Mt 11:30). His “yoke” results in our perfect joy.

Many years ago, in another place and time, I was the formation director of a newly forming group. We were so excited to be able to meet in our own parish! Sadly, the minister of our sponsoring fraternity did not like my “strong willed” personality (*mea culpa!*), developed an anger toward me, became suspicious, and accused me of un-Franciscan formation, among other things. Consequently, our region’s executive council decided that we needed to go back to formation within our sponsoring fraternity. After great struggles with our own anger, offended pride, and a lot of prayer, we obediently went back.

At that first meeting, the professed went upstairs for prayer. I stayed to observe initial formation, to perhaps see what I had been doing wrong. Suddenly, the minister appeared in the room, pointed a finger at me, summoning me to leave. Embarrassed, I tried to explain my reason for wanting to observe, but she interrupted: “You come with me — now.”

In that *eternity* of a moment, many things went through my mind other than obedience. Yet, as humiliated as I was, I literally felt a still, small voice within me that said “*go*.” I breathed a little prayer, bowed my head, and left the room with her.

Later, as I complained to God in prayer about our “unfair” treatment, the Lord spoke very



clearly to me: “This is *not* your fraternity. It is *mine*. I will form it according to my will.”

And, so, he did — clearly not by any wave of his hand. It was years of hard work for all of us, through obedience and a *lot* of pride-swallowing. But God’s will is always accomplished through those who love and obey him.

Editor’s Note: Some years ago, Patricia Cowan, OFS, a member of my fraternity, St. Francis of the Hills, gave us this prayer. She said she didn’t remember where she got it. I added the artwork.

A Prayer for Hope Beyond Unfairness



Dear Lord, find within me a yielded and quiet spirit of submission. To make that happen, I need you to come in like a flood. Occupy me as water finding empty spaces. Occupy reserved portions of my life where anger is festering and the secret places where grudges are being stored. Sweep through my house — don’t miss a single area — cleanse every dark closet, look under every rug. Let nothing go unnoticed as you take full control of my motives as well as my actions. Deep within my heart I pray that you sweep me clean of blame and revenge, of self-pity and keeping score. Enable me to be big enough to press on regardless of what unfair treatment I’ve had to endure. Take away the scars of ugly treatment and harsh words. Forgiveness comes hard — but it’s essential. Help me to forgive even those who never acknowledge their wronging and hurting me! Give me peace in place of turmoil. Erase the memories that keep me offended. I need fresh hope to go on! I ask this in the name of him who had no sin and did no wrong, but died, the just for the unjust: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

prayer that we open ourselves to the grace we need to truly begin to rebuild — first ourselves, then our fraternities, and finally the Church (OFS Rule, Arts. 8, 9).

Several years later, at a large gathering, this beloved woman approached, apologized for how she had treated me, and asked for my forgiveness. Amid tears and hugs, I asked for her to forgive me. It was a joy-filled reconciliation.

Perfect joy may not always be discerned in the difficult times, but it is there! In dying to self through the demands of humility and by making peace, despite hard feelings, the time will come when perfect joy will permeate all we say and do. This is the light of Christ that shines through his Gospel into our life!

Rebuilding the Church *must* begin with us, and it starts in fraternity. The fraternity is at the core of our spirituality — it is in community that we find our strength (cf. Acts 2:42). We are called as brothers and sisters of penance to detach ourselves from the ego that pridefully focuses our attention to our own desires rather than to what is best for all. We are called to a purity of heart in the spirit of the Beatitudes that will allow us to live and work peaceably in community with one another, realizing that we are all an image of Christ and equally loved by the Father (Rule, Arts. 11, 12, 13, 14).

As bearers of peace, we have the obligation through our Franciscan vocation to make our fraternity an oasis of God’s holy peace, where each member feels at home, respected, and truly loved (Rule, Art. 19). We must ask: What can I do to contribute to the building up of the members in my community?

Finally, it is through our life of

Carole L. King, OFS, is a member of St. Clare of Assisi Fraternity, Aiken, S.C.

**BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS REGION CALENDAR
SCHEDULE OF VISITATIONS (V) AND ELECTIONS (E)
February through December 2020**

* confirmed V+ follow-up visit (observers in parentheses)

Date	Fraternity/Group & Location	V	Fraternal/Pastoral Visitors
		E	Presider/Ecclesial Witness

April 25: Area 3 Formation Workshop, Raleigh, N.C.

May 2: Area 1 Formation Workshop, Jonesboro, Ga.

May 11–12	Fraternity of St. Clare, Winston-Salem, NC	V	Martha Roman/Dcn. Tom Shaver
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May 16: Area 2 Formation Workshop, Aiken, S.C.

May 22–23: Regional Executive Council Meeting via Zoom

June 19–20	Fraternity of Brother Francis, Newton, NC	V	Betti Longinotti/Joanita Nellenbach
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June 27	St. Michael the Archangel, Spartanburg, SC	E	Christine Lukesh/Joanita Nellenbach
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June 28	St. Joseph Cupertino, Bessemer, AL	E	Carmen Madero/Willie Guadalupe
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Aug. 7–9, Annual Regional Gathering, Ridgecrest, N.C.

Guest Speaker: Father Daniel Horan, OFM

Sept. 8–9	St. Anthony of Padua, Fayetteville, NC	V	
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Sept. 11–12	Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg, Blairsville, GA	V	Carmen Madero/Willie Guadalupe
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Sept. 12	Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, Burlington, NC	E	
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Sept. 12	St. Clare of Assisi, Aiken, SC	E	
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Nov. 15	St. Thomas More, Wilmington, NC	E	/Pat Wilkerson
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Dec. 10*	Five Georgia Martyrs, St. Simons Island, GA	E	
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“As we go about in our world, let us follow Clare’s advice to bless God for every tree, every flower, every creature, every neighbor, and, yes, God’s very presence within our own souls.”

Joan Mueller, OSC,
St. Clare (a short biography), p. 55

A Guide to the NAFRA Database

By Nora Wessling, OFS

Hi, Brothers and Sisters.

May the Lord give you peace.

As your new regional secretary, elected at the Annual Regional Gathering last August, I have learned one of my responsibilities is to oversee the maintenance of the National Fraternity (NAFRA) Database for our Region. So, the Regional Executive Council asked me to write an article that will help our fraternities to use the database more easily.

To find the NAFRA database, go to the NAFRA website (secularfranciscansusa.org) and scroll down the homepage to “NAFRA Database” hyperlink on the right.

The database is actually the NAFRA Internet Database. It assists the National Fraternity in collecting and maintaining a list of members of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States. For our region, that’s all the members of our 29 established fraternities and two emerging communities.

NAFRA receives several benefits from this system, and their importance will be mentioned towards the end of this article. The national database assists regional and local fraternities in keeping a record of local-fraternity information, including membership information.

Each local fraternity has its own NAFRA Internet Database account. The fraternity’s database manager, who maintains this account, has a login identification number (usually the person’s email address) and a password that gives him or her access to the database. Managers can access only their own fraternity’s database page, the homepage mentioned above.

When there is a fraternity election, the council usually designates one of its members as the new database manager. The manager’s name will be sent to our regional minister, along with the email address and the reason for requesting access to the system. Our minister contacts the NAFRA Database administrator, who approves the new local database manager. The administrator informs the local manager that he or she now has access and provides the initial password to be used.

For security reasons, the password automatically expires every 90 days. Once that happens, the manager will not have access to the database until he or she enters a new password.

This can be done in one of two ways;

1. The login will tell you to “Please Reset Password.” On the “Change Your Password” page, you’ll be asked to enter your old password, create a new password, and confirm the new password. Follow the cues to do this.
2. You can mark on your calendar when the password will expire. That way, you can change the password before the expiration date and never lose access to the database. Changing the password is done by clicking on “Change Password” at the top of the fraternity’s profile page. This will take you to the “Change Your Password” page, where you’ll do as described above.

The *NAFRA Database Users Manual* may be very helpful. I suggest that database managers make copies of it for their information.

On the database users’ login page, click on the “NAFRA Database Users’ Manual” hyperlink under the login box. A copy of the manual will be available for viewing. I suggest copying pages 1–7, and 16–18 and placing them in a small binder for reference. The pages may be read or scanned and may give the manager a type of orientation, or can be referred to as needed.

See DATABASE, p. 20

Fraternity Database Page

Local Fraternity Details:

- Fraternity's name, address, and NAFRA identification number;
- Member Statistics — Number of active professed, candidates, inquirers, inactive, and deceased; totals are automatically adjusted when the manager changes a member's status;
- National fraternity and regional fraternity to which the local fraternity belongs;
- Fraternity's meeting date and time;
- Diocese in which fraternity is located;
- Name of bishop when fraternity was established;
- Status of the fraternity — established or emerging;
- Name of friar province to which fraternity is bonded and name of establishing province;
- Date of canonical establishment;
- Dates of last election and last pastoral and fraternal visitation

Membership Information:

- Local Officer/Appointees — names of all elected and appointed council members;
- Local Spiritual Assistant (It's super if the SA's appointment date and any other documentation is entered on the fraternity's database. To do this, follow the same procedure you use in making changes to a fraternity member's page.)
- Active Professed Members — names and profession dates of all active professed members;
- Active Candidates — names and dates of admission to the Order;
- Active Inquirers, — names and dates of acceptance as inquirers;
- Inactive — names, status (temporary withdrawal, definitive withdrawal, suspended, dismissed) and dates when these actions were taken; (See "BSSF Instructions For Database Status Choices, With Explanations" at the end of this article.)
- Deceased Members — names and dates of death. (If an error has occurred in listing the date of death, please contact me so that I can send the correct date to the NAFRA database administrator.)

Each member has an individual database page. To make changes on the individual's personal page, click on the person's name. Their personal page will come up. At the top of that page, click on the hyperlink for the change you want to make, such as "Edit Profile," Edit Address," and so on. A page will come up with boxes in which to make the change(s).

Use the note section for recording such things as the SA's appointment date, if a council member assumes a new position outside of elections, why the person's status changed (such as the reason for temporary or definitive withdrawal, suspension or dismissal), if a member of the fraternity was appointed SA to another fraternity, and so on.

NOTE: You must click on "Submit" at the bottom of the page or the change will not be retained on the database.

A local fraternity's membership roster would be a terrific resource for the database manager in keeping the membership updated on the database. Much of the personal information may be available if the local fraternity keeps its roster updated and it is accessible to the manager.

Updating council information

When a new council is elected or a council member is replaced in between elections, names

of the newly elected are to be entered.

DO NOT REMOVE THE OUTGOING PERSON'S NAME FIRST. ENTER THE NEWLY ELECTED PERSON'S NAME FIRST. Then remove the outgoing person's name. If you remove the outgoing person's name first, the position will be deleted, along with the person's name. Example: Fraternity elects a new minister. The name of the outgoing minister is removed first. The minister position is no longer listed. The same applies to all other council positions. Loss of a council position is avoided if the incoming person is entered first and the outgoing council member is then removed.

The local or regional database manager cannot reinstate deleted council positions. The only person who is able to reassign the missing position is the NAFRA database administrator.

However, I can assist in this process and have a suggestion. Email me (norafwes@knology.net) to let me know that the position has been deleted. Having received the appropriate information from you, I will then contact the NAFRA database administrator, request that the position be reassigned, and give her the necessary information.

Another time that we need to contact the database administrator is to assign a position that may not be listed, such as when the fraternity has one or two councilors at large listed on the database page, but an additional councilor is elected or appointed. Please contact me and I will assist you with this situation.

Importance of Keeping Things Updated

All database information should be regularly reviewed and updated as needed.

Any time something in an individual's profile changes — makes profession, becomes a candidate or inquirer, changes their address or contact information, and so on —the database manager records these changes. Even if nothing has changed, the monitoring should still be done, at least every two months.

The information is relevant nationally, regionally, and locally, and the need for the information may occur at anytime during the year. Also, if the data is current, the needs of the membership are better met, on all three levels.

Keeping the fraternity's database information current helps for administrative and historical purposes. For example, every region's fair-share assessment is based on the number of active professed and candidates on the fraternity's database page as of Dec. 31 each year. When a fraternity has an election, the database page is used to help the election presider know what the quorum of voters is.

NAFRA needs correct postal addresses so that all of our professed and candidates receive *TAU-USA*, our national newsletter. If documentation regarding the profession information is lost, the database would help members to verify the missing information.

If help is needed, or if you do not understand something about the Database, please seek and ask for the help. You might review the manual mentioned earlier or confer with fraternity members who have had experience with the database in the past.

I hope to reach out to all the database managers in the future, and provide further information or assist if you have questions or do not understand something about the database. You can contact me at norafwes@knology.net.

Please accept my thanks and appreciation, and that of the Regional Executive Council, to all who are keeping their database pages updated. I encourage any who have not monitored or updated the information as often as needed, to please do so.

We are blessed by the good Lord to be in a great region. He is with us always in all we do. In Jesus's name and as a follower of St. Francis, I wish everyone love, peace, and all good.

Nora Wessling, OFS, is the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional Executive Council secretary and is vice minister of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Augusta, Ga.

Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region
Instructions For Database Status Choices, With Explanations
(April 17, 2015)

Active: An **active** fraternity member is one who participates both by attending fraternity meetings and by providing financial support to the community.

****Excused:** Remains a part of active roster. An **excused** fraternity member is one whom the fraternity council has excused from such obligations. (See note below.)

Deaths: Self-explanatory (enter date of death in database)

Lapsed: No longer participating in fraternity — provides no notice to council. NAFRA Statutes, Article 18.7.b: “Those brothers and sisters who neither attend meetings, support the community financially, nor have valid reasons due to health, family, work or distance, and who, after personal invitations to return to fraternity, consciously and deliberately reject or ignore the invitation, will be termed **“lapsed”** and will not be carried on the fraternity membership roll nor be reported as a member to higher fraternity Councils [cf. General Constitutions, article #53.3].”

Temporary Withdrawal: Voluntary withdrawal from the fraternity — notifies council of such.

Definitive Withdrawal: Voluntary withdrawal from the fraternity and the Order — notifies council.

Suspended: Removed from the fraternity by decision of the council

Dismissed: Removed from the fraternity and the Order by decision of the council

****Note:** The Excused are **STILL ACTIVE MEMBERS**. The fraternity is not excused from considering them in the Fair Share Count, but the actual member is excused from active attendance and/or financial contribution. (National Statutes Article 18.7.a)

In all situations, the council should exercise good judgment and compassion for the members voluntarily requesting a change of status and for those whom the council deems to mark as suspended or dismissed. All decisions must be communicated to the individual member involved in the action. Personal contact by phone is the preferred method with appropriate decisions noted in the council minutes of the action decided upon.

**All council members should familiarize themselves with
General Constitutions Articles 55 thru 59.**

Secular Franciscan Websites

Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region

www.bssfsfo.org

National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States (NAFRA)

www.secularfranciscansusa.org

Consilium Internationale Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis (CIOFS)

International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order

www.ciofs.org

**Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis
Regional Executive Council Roster**

Minister: DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS

Vice Minister: Carmen Madero, OFS

Secretary: Nora Wessling, OFS

Treasurer: Ken Brooke, OFS

Formation Director: Dianne Ambrose, OFS

**Spiritual Assistant:
Deacon Tom Shaver, OFS**

Area Councilors

Area 1

David Cruz-Urbe, OFS; Sharon Loiselle, OFS

AL: Bessemer;

GA: Athens, Blairsville, Conyers, Duluth, Jonesboro;

TN: Chattanooga, Knoxville, Nashville

Area 2

Betti Pettinati-Longinotti, OFS; Christine Lukesh, OFS

GA: Augusta, St. Simons Island;

NC: Asheville, Charlotte, Hendersonville, Newton;

SC: Aiken, Charleston, Columbia, Greenville,
Hilton Head Island, Spartanburg

Area 3

Ellen Ferrone, OFS; Martha Roman, OFS

NC: Burlington, Elizabeth City, Fayetteville, Greensboro,
Morehead City, Raleigh, Wilmington, Winston Salem;

SC: Garden City

Archivist: Sara Nell Boggs, OFS

**Communio Editor
Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS**

**Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation Animator
Carolyn D. Townes, OFS**

**Multicultural Commission Chair
Willie Guadalupe, OFS**

**Youth/Young Adult Fraternal Animator
Joe Vodenichar, OFS**

Prayer Ministry (online prayer requests)

Area 1: Lori Moran, OFS

Area 2: Dorothy Huebner, OFS

Area 3: Bob Sabisch, OFS

Fraternity prayer coordinators submit prayer requests.

On Contemplation

“The purpose of contemplation is to change who we are by allowing God to shape and influence the way we see reality. This is something that Christians need to embrace and live out every day, not just on this or that occasion or in this or that way. The more we become contemplatives in the Franciscan tradition, the more we can recognize those special moments of mystical encounter with our Creator. The result of living this way is, to quote the prayer that is so often associated with St. Francis, although he did not write it himself, that we are able to become ambassadors of God’s peace.”

Father Daniel Horan, OFM,
*Dating God: Live and Love in
the Way of St. Francis*, p. 76

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