

Communio

That All May Be One

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

Fall 2020



“Among them there was
no envy, no malice, no rancor,
no mocking, no suspicion, no bitterness.

Instead, there was
great harmony, constant calm,
thanksgiving, and songs of praise.

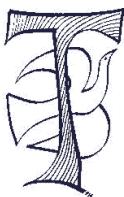
These are the lessons by which the devoted father
instructed his new sons
not so much in words and speech
but in deeds and truth. ...

“He always strove for holy simplicity, refusing to allow the narrow place to restrict the breadth of his heart. For this reason, he would write the names of the brothers on the beams of that little house so that each would know his place when he wished to pray or rest, and the confines of the place would not disturb the silence of the spirit.”

Thomas of Celano, “The Life of Saint Francis,”
Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint, pp. 220 & 221

The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

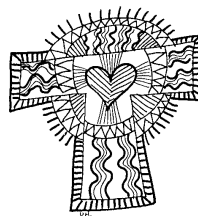
Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate





Statue of St. James of the March at the hermitage of Santa Maria di Valdisasso in Italy's March's region. The hermitage is staffed by friars of the OFM Province of San Giacomo della Marca. (Photo by Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS)

Editor's Journal

On Nov. 28, we celebrate the memorial of St. James of the March (San Giacomo della Marca, 1394–1476). Five weeks later, on Jan. 3, we will have the memorial of the Holy Name of Jesus.

Connection?

St. James, a Franciscan friar, helped spread devotion to Jesus's name. You can see this represented in this statue, as he holds a medallion with the letters IHS, surrounded by rays.

Along with three other Franciscan friars, all eminent preachers — St. Bernardine of Siena, St. John of Capistrano, and Alberto of Sarteano — they are remembered as the four pillars of the Observant movement: friars who wanted to observe Franciscan life as strictly as St. Francis had.

James, for example, “fasted nine months of the year” and “slept three hours a night. St. Bernardine ... told him to moderate his penances” (Pat McCloskey, OFM, *Day by Day with Followers of Francis & Clare*, p. 146).

He travelled through most of Italy and Europe, always spreading devotion to Jesus's name, and wrote a

treatise on the “Miracles of the Holy Name of Jesus.”

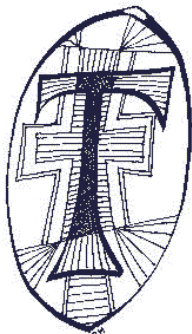
James died in Naples, and his body remained there for several centuries. A few years ago, friars brought him back to his hometown. His incorrupt body can be seen in a glass sarcophagus beneath a side altar in the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie in a complex that includes an OFM friars' convent.

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.

In This Issue

Minister's Message	3
Regional Spiritual Assistant	3
Transitus & Profession	5
Structural Racism	6
Professions/Commissionings	8
New Spiritual Assistants	9
Formation Director	10
JPIC	11
Calendar	12
Transitus Celebrations	13
REC/RFC Recaps	14
REC Roster	17

Minister's Message



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May the Lord give you peace!

October has always been my favorite month; some reasons being the change in the seasonal weather and color of the leaves, football, the month I was married 46 years ago, apple and pumpkin picking. October of 2020 for me has been a time of remembering and reflection and edification.

I have chosen to broaden my thought process and do what I can to continue to prayerfully form my conscience to be able to cast my vote in this upcoming election. Since I am a Secular Franciscan, it's important, I feel, to be an instrument of peace and to be able to dialogue respectfully; to be someone to share hope in these current times when there is so much that is trying to tear us apart.

As you all know, October is Respect Life Month, and we celebrate the Transitus and the Feast of St. Francis. As followers of St. Francis, we strive to live Gospel values, appreciate the dignity of the human person, work toward the common good, and strengthen our commitment to solidarity with all of God's creation. A Secular Franciscan does this daily by means of conversion (see Article 7 of our OFS Rule).

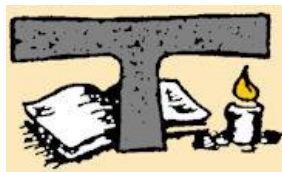
In the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' teaching document, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" (FCFC), the bishops state: "The Church calls for a different kind of political engagement: one shaped by the moral convictions of well-formed consciences and focused on the dignity of every human being, the pursuit of the common good, and the protection of the weak and vulnerable" (FCFC, no. 14).

I pray that the Holy Spirit and the spirit of St. Francis will guide you today and every day.

"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Phil 4:8).

Peace and all good,
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.



Regional Spiritual Assistant

A Reflection: I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.

By Deacon Tom Shaver, OFS

During the COVID-19 self-imposed quarantine, I have been doing a lot of thinking about life, friends, Church, and country.

It seems that society has allowed itself to be split into factions of "I'm right, you're wrong." "No, you're wrong, I'm right." This polarization isn't just within the political arena. Every day we see, either in the news, depending on which network you follow or on social media outlets, the division and, unfortunately, anger and hatred expressed against the opposing party. Civil discourse is splitting our country.

At the same time, we are reading or hearing similar rhetoric within the Church from the highest-level cardinals down to those who sit in the pews. I've allowed myself to be sucked into

this divisiveness at times (mea culpa), but also to find myself returning to gospel teachings.

Sadly, I have heard some of this bickering within our Franciscan communities. Issues of abortion, same-sex marriage, immigration at our southern border, as well as support for militia and force against what some consider a socialist agenda within the political spectrum of society. I have heard members complain that the Church has become too liberal and needs to go back to the “Church I grew up in.” Again, more divisiveness!

In all of this division, society, and we, have let ourselves fall into the debate and forget about dialogue. We have lost respect for one another and the vitriol has flourished. Satan has won!

As I reflected on this disturbing trend in our society, several thoughts came to mind. The first was from the passage of St. Paul to the Corinthians:

“Whenever someone says, ‘I belong to Paul,’ and another, ‘I belong to Apollos,’ are you not merely human? What is Apollos, after all, and what is Paul? Ministers through whom you became believers, just as the Lord assigned each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth. Therefore, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who causes the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters are equal, and each will receive wages in proportion to his labor. For we are God’s co-workers; you are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Cor 3:4-9).

Have we forgotten who is in charge? Society certainly has, but we are called to set ourselves apart from that bickering and those arguments. As our Rule states in Article 19,

“Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they **should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.**

“Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others.

“Since they are immersed in the resurrection of Christ, which gives true meaning to Sister Death, let them serenely tend toward the ultimate encounter with the Father” (emphasis added).

I am not saying we shouldn’t participate, as our informed conscience dictates, within the process of faithful citizenship and support a particular candidate or proposed law; however, always within the spirit of dialogue, peace, and charity, our participation should never betray our Franciscan way of life or set of values.

Many times, from the pulpit, I have said that we are not called to be from the left or the right, liberal or conservative, Democrat or Republican; but we are called by virtue of our baptisms to be Christ-centered. As Franciscans, this Christocentric mentality and spirituality must always be the guiding force within our conscience and personal being.

As St. Paul wrote to St. Timothy, “I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith” (2 Tim 4:7). I ask myself, “Will I be able to say this when I stand before the Almighty?”

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.

Saturday Vigil Mass Includes Transitus and Rite of Profession

By Christine Lukesh, OFS

It was a first for St. Gregory the Great Catholic Church in Bluffton, S.C., and for most of the



Mary Houser, OFS (center) makes her permanent profession as Christine Lukesh, OFS, formation director, and Ronald DuBois, OFS, sponsor, take part in the ceremony.

members of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity: weaving the Transitus of St. Francis and the Rite of Profession into the vigil Mass for the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time!

But thanks to our pastor, Msgr. Ronald Cellini, Minister Angela Cavalluzzi, OFS, was given permission to plan just such a liturgy. She and Formation Director Christine Lukesh, OFS, put their heads together and consulted numerous sources to create a moving, traditional liturgy that was presented between monsignor's homily and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Several other fraternity sisters processed into the worship space to "Canticle of the Creatures," carrying symbols to represent Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Fire, Sister Water, and Brother Wind.

The Transitus script was lovingly narrated by fraternity member DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, and Treasurer Bill Trecartin, OFS. St. Gregory's music minister, Dr. Pamela Kane, who had agreed to perform the fraternity's music selections (different from those at the other Sunday Masses), played a softly tolling bell before and after the assembly prayed Psalm 142, as our Seraphic Father did in the moments before his death.

The solemnity of the Transitus was balanced with Mary Houser's joyous profession. Msgr. Cellini, Angela, and Christine proclaimed the appropriate prayers, with Mary making her responses into the microphone held by her sponsor, Robert DuBois, OFS.

Msgr. Cellini added a special prayer for Mary and the fraternity during the prayer of the faithful and administered the Eucharist to Mary alone at the customary point in the Mass (whereas communicants at St. Gregory currently receive the Eucharist in social-distancing style as they leave the church at the end of Mass). He also conferred the final blessing using a first-class relic from Assisi that he had recently acquired.

Mary and 16 of her fraternity brothers and sisters (members of six parishes in South Carolina and Georgia), were overjoyed by the blessing of gathering in person for the first time in several months. The Mass was live-streamed, enabling many who are sheltering in place to experience this special liturgy and extend the fraternity's visibility in the community. In Mary's words, it was "a night I hope never to forget."

Understanding Why Structural Racism is Accepted

By David V. Cruz-Urbe, OFS

This summer, the killing of George Floyd by four Minneapolis police officers galvanized a series of demonstrations, protest marches, and occasional riots across the United States.

The Black Lives Matter movement, founded in 2013 after the death of Trayvon Martin and

the acquittal of George Zimmerman, moved to the forefront: this slogan captured the heart of the demands of the Black community. While the movement has attracted widespread support from whites, it has also been criticized and rejected. There are many reasons for this, but often at the core there is a rejection of the claims by Blacks that American society is racist and needs to change.

One reason for this rejection is that there is often a fundamental misunderstanding of what is meant by racism. To many white people, racism is a strictly personal phenomena: a person is racist if he or she hates Blacks (and other minorities) and shows this through words or actions intended to hurt, demean, or mistreat them.

But for most Blacks, and for the majority of scholars who study racism, this is *personal racism* which is only a small part of racism. They instead believe that the core of racism is *structural racism*: social and cultural systems that maintain whites in a privileged position and relegate Blacks and other minorities to a lower position within society.

The two kinds of racism coexist, but it is structural racism that gives personal racism its power. Moreover, structural racism exists and has an impact even when overt, personal racism is not present.

In their pastoral, *Open Wide Our Hearts*, the American bishops are clear about the central role of structural racism: “The cumulative effects of personal sins of racism have led to social structures of injustice and violence that makes us all accomplices in racism” (p. 5).

Father Bryan Massingale, a Catholic theologian, explains how these social structures work:

“[R]acism functions as an ethos — as a pervasive symbol system of meaning, identity, and significance — much more than as a set of discrete, consciously motivated acts. Racism, understood as a pervasive symbol system of meaning, gives us a framework for comprehending the significance of personal acts of racial animus. It is a system of meaning that rests upon the fears and anxieties of white Americans and is expressed in the cultural symbols, social order, and public policies of the country. Racism is a cultural phenomenon, a way of interpreting human color differences that pervades the collective convictions, conventions, and practices of American life. It significantly forms the

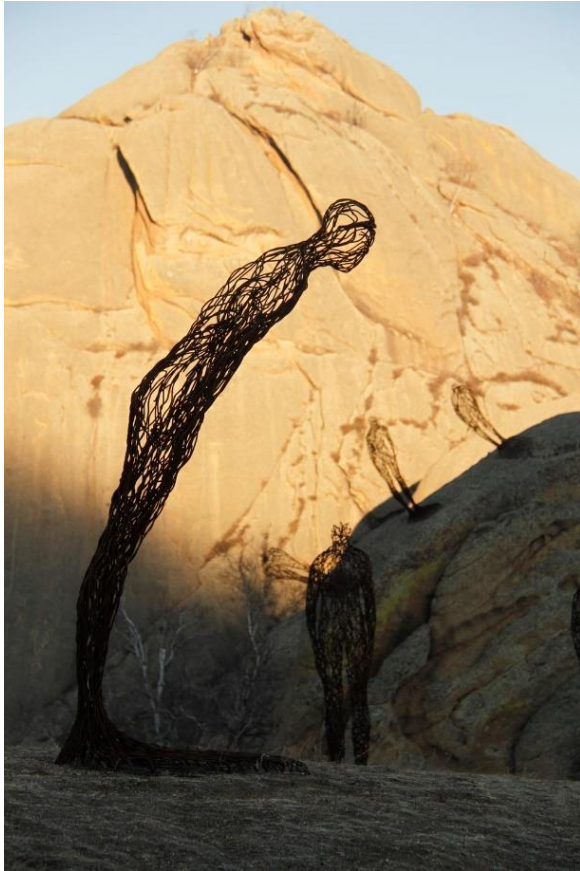


Photo: Deglee Degi

Image: "Consciousness" by Artist Ayurzana Ochirbold, the Winner of "Nord Art" visual art festival 2019.

<https://unsplash.com/photos/AZTc9bXx7ko>

identity of the dominant group” (*Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*, p. 33).

This passage is complicated but worth studying. Here is one way to unpack it: Racist structures exist in our society, but almost out of sight. They are part of our culture, and shape who we are and how we interact with others. Recognizing their presence helps us understand why so many Black men and women — George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Stephon Clark, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, Walter Scott, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Trayvon Martin, to name just a few — have been killed by the police or armed vigilantes, and why their deaths represent more than the actions of a “few bad apples.”

Structural racism better explains why “bad cops” do what they do, why “good cops” do little or nothing to stop them, and why the justice system often seems unable to respond effectively.

The concept of structural racism is often met with defensiveness. It is often confused with accusations of personal racism and so rejected outright. Even if it is not, it is still difficult for many white people to accept, since it requires accepting that they are “*accomplices in racism*.” It is hard for them to take responsibility for something so diffuse, so decentralized, so built into the way our culture and our society are set up that they are invisible to those who are not affected by or even benefit from it, despite the fact that they see the negative impact that it has on Blacks and other minorities.

How does this affect us, as Franciscans?

It is relatively easy for us to look back on American history and see racist structures: slavery and the slave trade before the Civil War, the lynchings and oppression of the Jim

Crow South, the blatant segregation and discrimination Blacks faced even from the Church.

But when we come to the present, a division emerges. For Franciscans who are Black or belong to other minority groups, the continuity between the past and the present is part of their lived experience. For white Franciscans, it is much more difficult for them to see the racist structures that continue to exist today: in housing, education, employment, policing, and criminal justice. These generally do not affect white people, and it is easy for them to discount what Blacks and other minorities, even their own brothers and sisters in Christ, say is happening in their lives.

The challenge then, for Franciscans, is to bridge this divide. Black and other minority Franciscans need to have the courage to tell their stories, but they also need their fraternities to be safe spaces in which they can speak and be heard. White Franciscans need to listen and accept stories other than their own:

“As Christians, we are called to listen and know the stories of our brothers and sisters.

We must create opportunities to hear, with open hearts, the tragic stories that are deeply



Photo: Christina Morillo

<https://stocksnap.io/photo/business-meeting-SKBXLJOILI>

imprinted on the lives of our brothers and sisters, if we are to be moved with empathy to promote justice” (*Open Wide Our Hearts*, p. 10).

Listening to these stories is hard for many white people, and Franciscans are no exception. It can make them uncomfortable, because it requires that they acknowledge, not what happened in the past, but what they, their families, their friends, their Church, their society, and their government, are doing now. They need to look around themselves and acknowledge the ways in which they have become accomplices in racism.

Our fraternities should be a privileged place for such openness:

“A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ” (from OFS Rule, Art. 13).

If we, as Franciscans, open our hearts to share, to listen, and to accept, then we will be able to see the structural racism that pervades our lives, and so take the first step toward racial justice.

Area 1 councilor David V. Cruz-Uribe, OFS, is also a councilor at large in St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity, Bessemer, Ala.

Service Combines OFS Profession, Spiritual Assistant Commissioning



Four Secular Franciscans make their perpetual profession. They are: Elizabeth, Coetzee, OFS (left); Margaret Williams, OFS; Sherry Kridle, OFS; and Dennis Kissel, OFS.

The Fraternity of Stigmata of St. Francis, Johns Creek, Ga., celebrated four perpetual professions and two spiritual-assistant commissionings on Aug. 1 in St. Benedict Catholic Church in Johns Creek.

The four members who were professed as Secular Franciscans during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at 12:30 p.m. were Elizabeth Coetzee, OFS; Sherry Kridle, OFS; Margaret Williams, OFS; and Dennis Kissel, OFS.

The celebrants of the Mass were Father Joseph Mullakkara, MSFS (Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales), and Father Tri Nguyen, assisted by Deacon Thomas Shaver, OFS, spiritual

assistant of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region.

Father Tri Nguyen, who is the vocations director of the Archdiocese of Atlanta, gave the homily, which focused on the life of St. Francis.

The organist was Sarah Loruso and the cantor was Michelle Hains.

Two spiritual assistants, Georgette Schraeder, OFS, and Jean Schneider, OFS, were commissioned into service.

After the Mass, Jack Farren, an inquirer, became a candidate in a separate ceremony.

New Spiritual Assistants Commissioned

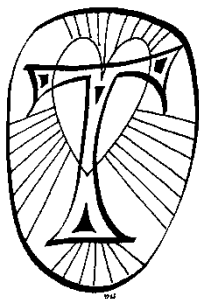


New spiritual assistants Georgette Schraeder, OFS (second from left) and Jean Schneider, OFS, with Deacon Tom Shaver, OFS, Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region spiritual assistant, and Ken Wessling, OFS, members of the teaching team.

After completing their training, Georgette Schraeder, OFS, and Jean Schneider, OFS, were commissioned as spiritual assistants on Aug. 1 at St. Benedict Catholic Church, Johns Creek, Ga., to serve as local SAs in the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region.

Georgette serves as formation director of Franciscan Family of Greensboro, Greensboro, N.C.; Jean is minister of Sts. Francis and Clare Fraternity, Knoxville, Tenn.

The SA training program is conducted on five weekends over a two-year period and with a several-day session prior to two annual regional gatherings. The most recent weekend sessions were held at Living Waters Catholic Reflection Center, Maggie Valley, N.C.



Formation Director

Dear Family,

I hope all are well and that you're finding peace during these chaotic times. I have missed gathering with all my brothers and sisters.

We resumed the formation director Zoom room on Oct. 29, at 7 p.m. EST. We will meet Nov. 19 and Dec. 17. Starting in January, we meet the fourth Thursday.

I introduced praying Evening Prayer together on Wednesday at 6 p.m. EST in our Zoom room on Oct. 21 and will continue weekly for all who wish to join.

You will need the Divine Office whether in the four-volume *Liturgy of the Hours*, one-volume *Christian Prayer*, or iBreviary app. If you wish to see a different time or day or to add Morning Prayer, please let me know. You may contact me if you wish to be added to the reminder email list.

Christine Lukesh, Area 2 councilor, and I attended the National Formation Commission Workshop for regional formation directors in August. The National Formation Commission (NFC) members are Diane Menditto, OFS, chair; Francine Gikow, OFS; Layna Maher, OFS; Mary Stronach, OFS; Justin Carisio, OFS; Father Christopher Panagoplos, TOR; and Anne Mulqueen, OFS, spiritual assistant.

Father Christopher, president-in-turn, Conference of National Spiritual Assistants, addressed the topic of "Initial Formation," with three subtopics: "Discernment of God's Call"; "Openness to the Life of the Gospel"; and "The Journey of Conversion."

The **first plenary session**, an update on the Formation Materials Project, was given and a preview of the materials was presented. The FUN (*For Up to Now: Foundational Topics for Initial Formation*) manual is being reworked with additional chapters. New texts will be used: "Let Us Begin," for orientation and inquiry; "For This You Are Called," for candidacy. I discussed this in more detail at the October formation directors' Zoom meeting and will keep you informed about the manual's release date, which isn't expected for at least a year.

"Are You Called to Be Franciscan?", a new trifold brochure for possible nationwide use, was presented. It explains Franciscan spirituality and discernment, as well as the lifelong commitment made at profession. The team showed an outline/template for formation lessons (with "homework" and the assigned readings for the following lesson), and a companion guide for formators. They are also changing the idea of interviews and retreats. Sponsorship of the inquirer by a professed member was strongly stressed.

The **second plenary session**, was called "How to Talk Like a Franciscan." Mediation techniques were discussed and ways to improve communication, immersing ourselves in a Franciscan perspective and stressing insight, acceptance, and love. We follow Christ's example in building fraternal and evangelical relationships, as stated in our Rule and the Constitutions.

The **third plenary session** was an hour-long panel discussion in which members of the NFC team took turns responding to questions that regional formation directors submitted in January.

As an ongoing means of communication and assistance across the Franciscan family — whether in an Order or congregation — the Franciscan Family Forum is a means to accomplish closer cooperation in pursuit of the following: Vision, Mission, The Gathering Place, the Core Group and the Grand Chapter of Mats. The two initiatives they now have in process are to make videos to understand the process by which members of the Franciscan Family are formed and a "Yellow Pages" of talents among the Franciscan Family to be shared among all Franciscans. Please let your ministers know any talents or ideas you would like to share with the Franciscan Family Forum.

The Franciscan School of Theology at the University of San Diego is offering a series of

lectures on Franciscan topics. A library of past lectures is available on YouTube at “FST EDU1.” To find more information or to register for live lectures, please go to their website fst.edu. The live lectures for fall are offered on Thursdays at 7 p.m. PST, so you might want to watch them on YouTube. You may find these good for ongoing formation since they are presented by well-known Franciscans.

Please contact me with any ideas or assistance that you may need.

Email: ambrosedianne6@gmail.com

Voice or Text: 706-338-2402

I look forward to serving you and joining you on our journey in constant conversion.

Dianne Ambrose, OFS, is the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis regional formation director. She is a member of San Damiano Fraternity in Athens, Ga.

Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation: Franciscan Pauses in Mindful Dialogues

By Carolyn D. Townes, OFS

This past May, the National Commission of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States held the second part of the Visioning Workshop.

The Visioning Workshop, which began in August 2019, sought to envision the future of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation in the United States. The first workshop brought forth more questions than answers — which, I believe, is a good thing. From the second Visioning Workshop, we wanted to begin concrete, actionable steps that local and regional JPIC animators could implement within their own local or regional fraternities.

Out of the visioning, came a series of focus groups designed to educate, equip, and empower our members to facilitate discussions and actions around some of the more controversial social justice topics. The three topics chosen were Care for Creation, Immigration and Spirituality, and JPIC.

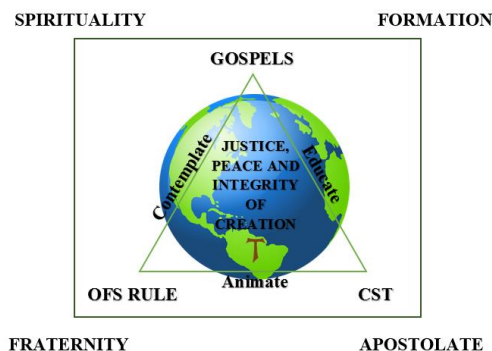
After the killing of George Floyd a few weeks later, there was an outcry from members around the country as to what is ours to do. My first response was to listen and dialogue. In situations where there are marginalized and oppressed people, the majority tends to think for them, instead of asking them what they need and listening for the answers.

That led to a fourth focus group: Mindful Dialogues. I wanted a forum where members could learn about their own biases and obstacles to engaging in meaningful dialogues; especially dialogues that can be difficult — like racial justice and politics.

During a difficult conversation with someone, there is the tendency for one or the other person to say something incendiary; thus, inciting a heated argument. Accusations, assumptions, or judgments are thrown around, and no one is listening anymore. The parties involved leave feeling hurt, angry, resentful, and unheard. The next time those people come together, there is avoidance, very little civil discourse or eye contact, and festering resentments.

So, how do you overcome these hurtful situations and get on with having loving and peaceful dialogues? How do you circumvent these difficult dialogues and resolve to have peaceful and mindful dialogues?

Well, first, you must make the conscious effort to have dialogues that are life-giving instead



of soul-leeching. Realize that you are engaging the other person in a dialogue and not a debate. Debates have winners and losers, while dialogues build and enhance relationships. Dialogues build bridges, while debates can tear them down. Dialogues are about understanding the other person, not about proving or making them wrong.

Every dialogue, whether difficult or not, needs to begin and end in prayer. The Holy Spirit must always be the silent partner in your discussions. Make an agreement that the conversation will be Spirit-filled and Spirit-led; as well as an agreement to communicate civilly and peacefully.

Also, utilize sacred pauses, what I like to call “Franciscan pauses.” When the conversation is getting a bit too heated and tempers are flaring, take a five-minute Franciscan pause. In those five minutes, call upon the Holy Spirit to enkindle the conversation with wisdom and peace. I have found that when things start to heat up, just falling still and entering into prayer can diffuse the situation and douse the heat.

Again, this falling still must be intentional, and all the parties involved must be willing to take the sacred pause. If the dialogue is with someone who is becoming verbally violent, then take your sacred pause in another location — for example, the restroom. It is a safe place to collect yourself and think a moment, without allowing the violent exchange to continue. After a few moments, if you find that you want to or even need to continue the conversation, then you can continue with a clearer and cooler head and heart.

If you are interested in learning about mindful dialogues, please contact me about joining a series of Zoom workshops. Until then, let your dialogues be meaningful and mindful and remember to take a Franciscan pause when you need one.

May the Lord continue to grant 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.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS REGION CALENDAR SCHEDULE OF VISITATIONS (V) AND ELECTIONS (E) November 2020 through January 2021

* confirmed	V+ follow-up visit	(observers in parentheses)
Date	Fraternity/Group & Location	V Fraternal/Pastoral Visitors E Presider/Ecclesial Witness
Nov. 7: Regional Executive Council Meeting via Zoom		
Nov. 15	St. Thomas More, Wilmington, NC	E Martha Roman/Pat Wilkerson
Dec. 10*	Five Georgia Martyrs, St. Simons Island, GA	E Christine Lukesh/Dcn. Tom Shaver (DorothyAnnRowland)
2021		
Jan. 9	St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Augusta, GA	E Christine Lukesh/Dcn. Tom Shaver
Jan. 10	Stigmata of St. Francis, Johns Creek, GA	E
Jan. 24	Padre Pio, Raleigh, NC	E

North Carolina Fraternities Celebrate St. Francis's Transitus

The **Fraternity of St. Clare**, Winston-Salem, was delighted to celebrate in a very new and different way the Transitus and renewal of promises this Franciscan season on Oct. 3 at 7 p.m. It was celebrated remotely!

Due to concerns with COVID-19, the fraternity prayed about how best to celebrate in the spirit of the Transitus, despite the challenges of social distancing — and the Holy Spirit prevailed. The fraternity journeyed with hearts, minds, and spirit in a Google slides presentation along the bucolic roads of Assisi, stopping to read, with lighted candle, the Transitus in the virtual Portiuncula.

This was a fraternal celebration as most everyone in the fraternity was present via Zoom to read, sing, or light the candle. All blessed and broke bread, re-enacting their part as brothers and sisters in the Transitus.



Valerio Castello, Genoa, Italy,
c. 1648–1649, "The Angelic
Consolation of Saint Francis,"
Blanton Museum of Art,
Austin, Texas;
commons.wikimwsi.org

After the Transitus, when the slides of the journey and chapel were dimmed, the fraternity journeyed in hearts, minds, and spirit to San Damiano to profess their renewal of promises as Secular Franciscans. The Fraternity of St. Clare brought the spirit of the Transitus and renewal of promises to Zoom and the Franciscan season despite any challenges the world brings! God is good!

Barb Robless, OFS, Minister

The **Franciscan Family of Greensboro** had a beautiful two-day Transitus celebration. It was held in the chapel of the St. Francis Springs Prayer Center and began Saturday evening, with 24 fraternity members participating. Father Louis Canino, OFM, conducted the service.

Sunday, we ate breakfast together. Father David Hyman, OFM, celebrated Mass.

Then we gathered with Father Louis in a conference room. There we were given an assignment. Each person selected an envelope with questions for meditation and instructions to go to a certain spot on the grounds, such as the outdoor chapel with its huge windows, outdoor Stations of the Cross, the Celestial Waterfall Garden, the labyrinth, or the Peace Garden.

We were to pray at our assigned spots and write our thoughts about the questions, then return to share our observations and thoughts. So much beautiful insight given by so many people!

We are conducting our council meetings and monthly gatherings via Zoom on the second Sunday of the month. Though we are not physically together, it is wonderful to see each other.

Since the pandemic began, we have started publishing a monthly newsletter that is sent via email to our members. It is put together by our very talented secretary, Susan Russell, OFS. Everyone looks forward to receiving it! It contains prayers, articles about our members, some instructions for our Zoom meetings, and lots of pictures!

Jeanne Carter, OFS, Minister

St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity, Hendersonville, Zoomed in for its Transitus of St. Francis celebration and renewal of commitment. Though we celebrate these traditions every year, I venture to say that this is one we'll never forget. This was not only because it was our first

time together after not gathering since February, but also because we did it in spite of COVID-19.

Days later we were still basking in that warm Transitus afterglow.

Eleven of our 16 members were present, 10 on our computer screens and Joyce Wagner, OFS, joining by phone. We also had an on-screen visitor, Margaret Cavagnaro, who had already attended a gathering. After attending our October gathering, she's starting orientation.

We prayed together, and since the prayers were short it didn't matter that our voices didn't all come together at exactly the same moment. But we dissolved into gales of laughter when we tried to sing the first verse of "All Creatures of Our God and King." Barbara St. John Shea, OFS, and Margarita Melendez, OFS, came to our rescue and sang the rest of the verses as they came up throughout the service. Barbara accompanied on her keyboard.



**Fra Angelico, "The Lamentation Over St. Francis,"
Staatliche Museen, Berlin; commons.wikimedia.org**

Nancy Torres, OFS, Brenda Harris, OFS, and GeneRay MaGruder, OFS, were the readers for the story of St. Francis's transitus from earthly to eternal life. Mark Taylor, OFS, read the reflection from St. Francis's "Letter to the Faithful." I read from John's Gospel, 13:1–17.

Members who also participated: Joann Colini, OFS, and Frank Colini, OFS, from their home in Rutherfordton; and Patricia Paton, OFS, social-distancing and seated near an open window in Nancy's house.

We all stood for our renewal of our commitment.

Margarita's brother, Elias Conbento, closed the service with a beautiful rendition of "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace," accompanying himself on his guitar."

We continue having council meetings and fraternity gatherings via Zoom.

Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS

Regional Executive Council & Regional Fraternity Council Meetings Recap

By Nora Wessling, OFS

The Regional Executive Council (REC) and the Regional Fraternity Council (RFC) have been busy serving the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region for the last year.

The RFC, at the 2019 Annual Regional Gathering (ARG), elected the following to serve the BSSF Region:

- Minister: DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS;
- Vice Minister: Carmen Madero, OFS;
- Secretary: Nora Wessling, OFS;
- Treasurer: Ken Brooke, OFS;
- Formation Director: Dianne Ambrose, OFS;

- Area 1 Councilors: David Cruz-Uribe, OFS; Sharon Loiselle, OFS;
- Area 2 Councilors: Christine Lukesh, OFS; Betti Longinotti, OFS;
- Area 3 Councilors: Martha Roman, OFS; Ellen Ferrone, OFS.

Appointed by the Franciscan friar provinces to which our region's fraternities are bonded:

- Regional Spiritual Assistant: Deacon Tom Shaver, OFS, The SA can vote in all council business except financial matters and elections.

REC appointments (serve on the council but without a vote):

- Youth and Young Adult Commission Chair: Joe Vodenichar, OFS;
- Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Animator: Carolyn D. Townes, OFS;
- Multicultural Commission Chair: Until July 2020, Willie Guadalupe, OFS, filled this position, but it became vacant when she relocated to Florida.
- *Communio* Editor: Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS.

Even though the 2020 ARG was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic and our concern for everyone's safety, the REC and the RFC still met virtually. The REC met on July 31; the RFC met on Aug. 8. The RFC comprises the REC and the ministers of all the canonically established fraternities in the BSSF Region. It meets once a year, usually during the ARG. The REC meets four times a year, including the meeting usually held at the ARG.

I would like to give you a recap of the July and August virtual meetings, to keep you abreast of the recent happenings of these two regional councils. Henceforth, I hope to provide a recap, in *Communio*, of future REC meetings.

REC Zoom meeting, July 31:

- Spiritual assistant commissioning: It was announced that the region was increasing the number of spiritual assistants with the Commissioning of Jean Schneider, OFS, from St. Francis and Clare Fraternity, Knoxville, Tenn.; and Georgette Schraeder, OFS, from Franciscan Family of Greensboro, Greensboro, N.C. The commissioning ceremony was scheduled to be led by Deacon Tom Shaver, OFS, on Aug 1.
- The next spiritual assistant course will occur in the future. All were encouraged to check who may want to be a local spiritual assistant and to let Deacon Tom know if anyone is interested.
- Several REC members attended virtual workshops on various topics and will be putting together presentations for future Regional workshops.
- A committee had been formed to make recommendations regarding use of a bequest given to the region. Vice Minister Carmen Madero, OFS, committee chairperson, presented the Committee's report on recommendations. All REC members were to read the recommendations, make a motion, and vote on the motion before the RFC meeting.
- Secretary Nora Wessling, OFS, reported on the July 16 Zoom Database Workshop, which she designed and conducted for the region's database managers and ministers. There were 26 participants. The workshop was recorded and the video is available on the region's website.
- Ken Brooke, OFS, provided the second-quarter treasurer's report. The 2021 draft budget was reviewed, discussed, and minor adjustments suggested. The revised 2021 draft Budget was sent to all the ministers prior to the RFC meeting.
- Joe Vodenichar, OFS, Youth and Young Adult Commission chair, and Minister Dorothy Ann Rowland, OFS, were to a National Fraternity (NAFRA) Franciscan

Youth/Young Adult Zoom webinar from July 13–Sept. 21, 2020.

- Carolyn Townes, OFS, JPIC animator, presented on her participation in a Justice and Faith Course, National Visioning Workshop. She has written a couple of Creation 3-2-1 issues, as well as an article for summer *Communio*, and has been involved in Zoom meetings re: JPIC topics for region and our National, and tallying the nominations for the 2020 JPIC Award.
- Joanita Nellenbach OFS, *Communio* editor, reminded all REC members regarding the deadlines for articles to be sent for the fall *Communio* and expressed appreciation for recent submissions to the summer issue.
- Area councilors reported on their activities with the fraternities that they serve, including any visitations and elections at which they presided or attended.
- Minister DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, shared that she had finalized the REC members' suggested changes to the BSSF Regional Guidelines; the RFC will vote on these at its Aug. 8 meeting.
- She then reviewed the visitations and elections calendar for the remainder of the year and for 2021.

RFC Zoom meeting, Aug. 8:

- Announcements by Minister DorothyAnn Rowland:
 - Joe Vodenichar, OFS: Appointed Region Youth and Young Adult Coordinator
 - Multicultural Commission Chair: Vacant, with the relocation of former chairperson, Willie Guadalupe, OFS, to Florida.
 - Commissioning, Aug. 1, of two local spiritual assistants.
 - There will be a new spiritual assistant course in the future.
 - The region's minister and youth and young adult coordinator are attending a weekly webinar given by the National Formation Commission on Youth and Young Adult.
 - Prior to this meeting, the REC had read the recommendations provided by the committee chaired by Vice Minister Carmen Madero, OFS, regarding a \$15,000 bequest to the region. A motion was made and accepted on the committee's recommendations. The recommendations:
 - The donated funds would be used over the next three years
 - 50 percent of the reserved funds to be used for matching funds for local fraternities for acceptable charity requests.
 - 50 percent of the reserved funds to be used by the Regional Council for acceptable charity activities — possibly for antiracism and multicultural activities.
 - The REC would verify the charitable requests — the activities for charities — and account for the distribution of the funds. They would distribute monies on a quarterly basis scheduled each year.
 - Those local fraternities provided with the matching funds would report on the charity and the use of the funds by providing an article to *Communio* and making a report at the ARG.
 - Proposed 2021 Budget approved.
- Revised BSSF Regional Guidelines: Vote taken and new guidelines approved. Old guidelines will be removed from the BSSF Region's website and newly approved

**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

Vacant

Youth/Young Adult Fraternal Animator

Joe Vodenichar, OFS

Prayer Ministry (online prayer requests)

Area 1: John Martin, OFS

Area 2: Dorothy Huebner, OFS

Area 3: Bob Sabisch, OFS

Fraternity prayer coordinators submit prayer requests.

guidelines will be posted in their place.

- Next ARG scheduled for Aug. 13-15, 2021, at Ridgecrest, N.C. Region is scheduled for the national visitation.
- Open forum followed where RFC members asked questions and discussed issues and concerns on various topics.

We hope this recap summary for the July–August meetings will give you some idea of our recent ongoing activities. The members of the Regional Executive Council and the Regional Fraternity Council are thankful for the opportunity to serve the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region.

We ask for your prayers as we serve the region, and we keep all of you in our prayers, as well. We wish blessings to all, filled with his peace and goodness.

BSSF Region Secretary Nora Wessling, OFS, is vice minister of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Augusta, Ga.

**Communio
is published quarterly
for the
Brothers and Sisters of
St. Francis Region
of the
Secular Franciscan
Order in
the United States.**