

# The Communio

*Newsletter of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region  
Serving Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina & South Carolina*



**Join the Secular Franciscans  
in the Blue Ridge Mountains  
Aug. 9-11, 2024  
for the  
Annual Regional Gathering  
Register through your local fraternity.**

## Celebrating Franciscan Community at the Annual Regional Gathering

By David Cruze-Urbe, OFS

The time has come to gather together all the Secular Franciscans of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region for our Annual Regional Gathering (ARG) on Aug. 9-11 at the Ridgecrest Conference Center in Black Mountain, NC. It is a time for prayer, a time for fellowship, a time to learn, a time to share, and a time for joy.

This year we are marking two important anniversaries. First, with all Franciscans throughout the world we are celebrating the 800th anniversary of St. Francis receiving the stigmata. Locally we will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of the founding of our BSSF region.

This year we will also have our triennial visitation from the national fraternity. Our fraternal visitor is Josh Molidor, OFS, and our pastoral visitor is Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM.

This is not just a business meeting. We will be having a lot of fun and insightful activities.

There will be an audiovisual presentation on the history of our region, followed by a panel discussion with some of our old-timers who are all still young at heart. Fr. Bob Menard, OFM, our new regional spiritual assistant, will give a talk on the stigmata.

Becky Bresnahan, OFS, and Area 1 Councilor, will speak on “How do we ‘do’ social justice in today’s politically-charged world?” Both talks will be followed by break-out sessions.

(continued on next page)

### NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS:

**ARG T-Shirt Orders**  
[Page 2](#)

**Minister’s Message**  
[Page 4](#)

**Regional Spiritual Assistant**  
**Fr. Bob Menard, OFM**  
[Page 5](#)

**Statement on Racism**  
[Page 10](#)

**Local Fraternity Council  
Elections**  
[Pages 16-18](#)

- **Our Lady of Good Counsel**
- **Blessed Solanus Casey**
- **St. Elizabeth of Hungary**
- **Padre Pio of Raleigh**
- **St. Maximilian Kolbe**

## Annual Regional Gathering continued from page 1

There will be an open Q&A with the members of the regional executive council, plus special sessions with the JPIC and Multicultural Commission animators, the YouFra animator, and the regional formation director.

We will pray the liturgy of the hours daily in a variety of forms; we will have Mass and Eucharistic adoration, and on Saturday night we will celebrate the Transitus of St. Clare, whose feast day is Sunday, Aug. 11.

As an act of service, we will be tying mesh gleanng bags for the Society of St. Andrew, an organization that gathers food donations from farms and distributes it to soup kitchens and food pantries.

To continue to make our event more accessible to everyone, we will have the golf cart again this year.

Costs for the weekend depend on how many attendees are sharing a room: Single, \$347; Double, \$208; Triple, \$168.33; and Quad, \$148.50. All prices include meals. Payment will be due at check-in which begins at 4 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 9.

Ministers will coordinate registration for local fraternities. Contact your local fraternity to register. Ministers should forward registrations to the BSSF Region by July 12.

Rooms are limited this year, so fraternities should turn in their registration form to their area councilors as soon as possible.



Zubair Simonson, OFS, treasurer of the BSSF Region, once again will shuttle those who are physically challenged around the campus of the Ridgecrest Conference Center in the North Carolina mountains.

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**Sure to become a collector's item, the 2024 ARG T-Shirt is available for order \$20 each now through July 14!**  
Order at : <https://betti-pettinati-longinotti.square.site/>



**Ed Campbell Scholarship Fund Available for Annual Regional Gathering Costs**

The fund provides full and partial scholarships to the Annual Regional Gathering for a member of a fraternity who would otherwise be unable to attend. Requests for assistance from this fund should be made to the Regional Treasurer, Zubair Simonson, OFS.

Ideally, the local fraternity should provide the money needed for their members to attend and not request financial aid from the Region. That is one of the inherent purposes of the “Common Fund” which should exist in every local fraternity. See Guidelines below.

Donations to the fund are gladly accepted.

**Please contact Regional Treasurer, Zubair Simonson , OFS, for the “Request for Scholarship Form” to be returned to him by July 1, 2024**

Zubair Simonson, OFS  
6300 Creedmoor Rd, Ste 170  
Raleigh, NC 27612  
email: [zubair.simonson@gmail.com](mailto:zubair.simonson@gmail.com)

See guidelines for applications on the next page.

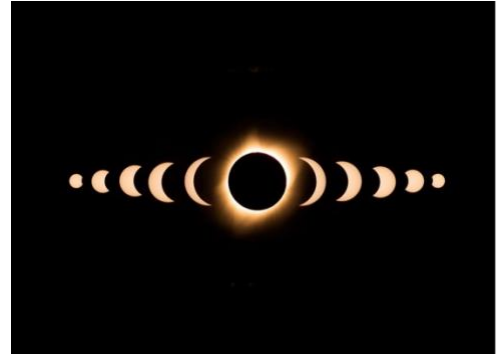
**Guidelines for the Ed Campbell Scholarship Fund:**

- 1- “Ed Campbell Fund” scholarships funds will be distributed up to the amount currently in the Fund as of July 1, 2024.
- 2- Requests should be made from the minister/leader of the fraternity to the Regional Treasurer, Zubair Simonson.
- 3- After the request deadline the scholarships will be awarded in the following priority:
  - a) for a member of a fraternity being sent to represent that fraternity - initial intent of the “Fund”
  - b) for a member of a fraternity already being represented whose “Common Fund” cannot totally support the local member’s desire to attend. Local fraternities are expected to defray at least part of the cost.
- 4- After the request deadline, the Regional Treasurer will notify the local fraternities regarding the outcome of their requests. Should a fraternity not be represented they will be encouraged to send a representative with the assistance of a regional “scholarship”.
- 5- Requests will be filled for double occupancy or more.

# Eclipse reminds us of need for balance

By Ellen Ferrone, OFS  
BSSF Region Minister

What a stir there was around the recent total eclipse. Most of us have experienced an eclipse at some point in our lives whether recently or in the past. As a schoolgirl with the paper plate with a pin hole, casting that crescent shape on the ground, I did it again this year. Or maybe you made the trip to be in the path of totality.



For some people eclipses appear to be a random occurrences yet, they follow a complex pattern of physical and mathematical rules that make it possible to predict their occurrences. The sun, moon and earth all need to be in perfect alignment. Without this perfect balance there is no eclipse.

I was in a Franciscan discussion group with a reflection question: What is it that eclipses the Gospel? Our prayer life? Our relationship with God and others?

If I look at the Gospel (Gospel to life, life to Gospel), am I living this as our Father Francis taught? Do I read the Gospel every day and reflect on the passage, then go out and live it? Do I have a prayer life? Do I set aside time every day for morning prayer, evening prayer and reflection?

Having a rhythm is key for me. Every morning before the day starts, a cup of tea, at my prayer desk, looking out the window as the world unfolds, darkness to sunrise. My prayer books ready. My relationships with family, sisters, and brothers. If these three components aren't in alignment, my life is out of balance. Predicting how my day, week, month will go is easy, it can be chaos.

God gave me these guideposts; Gospel, prayer, and relationships to keep me in balance. Relationships are a two-way street, a give and take. I'm much better at reading the needs of others and trying to be there for them. Key for me is learning to ask for help. Whether it's my family relationships or as regional minister, the Lord gave me sisters and brothers, and they are key to maintaining the balance and a life that is predictably calm.

The Holy Spirit has blessed me, blessed all of us with the gift of always being with us. Always guiding to that balance in my life. I can trust that in following the Gospel, having a strong prayer life and solid relationships with my sisters and brothers, I will be on the path that God has chosen for me.

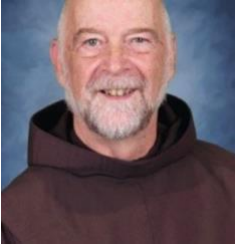
May the Holy Spirit bless us all

*Ellen*



*Ellen Ferrone, OFS, Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional minister, is a member of Padre Pio Fraternity, in Raleigh, NC*

## BSSF Region welcomes spiritual assistant



Fr. Bob Menard, OFM, is the new spiritual of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region. A familiar face up and down the East Coast, Fr. Bob is the friar-in-residence at the St. Francis Springs Prayer Center in Stoneville, NC.

He has worked with Secular Franciscans throughout his career which began in 1967. “I’ve been engaged in the Secular Franciscan community wherever I’ve been,” he said.

He also has been involved in campus ministries at Clemson and Duke universities, the University of Georgia, Suffolk College in Boston, and Holy Name College in Washington DC.

“We are grateful to have Fr Bob Menard, OFM as our Regional Spiritual Assistant. Fr. Bob has a long and rich history of working with and supporting Secular Franciscan Fraternities and brings his wisdom and guidance. Please make sure to welcome Fr Bob when you see him at ARG,” said Ellen Ferrone, OFS, BSSF regional minister.

## New Life for the Diocese of Charlotte

By Fr. Bob Menard, OFM  
BSSF Region Spiritual Assistant

I was privileged to be one of several hundreds who participated in the episcopal ordination of our Franciscan brother, Michael J. Martin, OFM Conv.

I first met Michael when I was a campus minister at Clemson University. At same time, he was the Director of Catholic Campus Ministry at Duke University. Neither of us foresaw where the Spirit has now led us. He is the fifth bishop of Charlotte, NC, and I am spiritual assistant to Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region.

The Liturgy of Episcopal Ordination on May 29 was infused with Franciscan spirituality. From the opening hymn, “All Creatures of Our God and King,” to the recessional hymn, “Lord You Give the Great Commission,” the Franciscan spirit was on display.

A ritual at its best communicates beyond words. The setting, the actions, the music, the material objects, the movement of participants, the rhythm of sound and silence, ...All of this woven into the telling of the Story...enables the Gospel to live again!

The image that remains in my mind is when the opened Book of the Gospels was placed over the head and shoulders of Brother Michael as the prayer of ordination was offered by the consecrating bishops. This powerful prayer admonished the bishop that his primary mission was to preach the Gospel by his example and his words.

“From the Gospel To Life and From Life To the Gospel.” Isn’t this movement what we Franciscans have pledged to do? By our baptismal consecration we are also called to live and proclaim the joy of the Gospel to those we encounter daily. In the words of the recessional hymn sung that day, I pray that the Holy Spirit “Give us all new fervor draw us closer in community.”



# How am I Being and Living in Communion?

by Lynn Oeser, OFS  
BSSF Formation Director

Peace to you, brothers and sisters, in this living season of Ordinary Time.

As we honor the Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, and Eucharistic Congresses are being held all over the country. It seems to be a good time to reflect on and nurture the Communion aspect of our Franciscan Spirituality and make present our charism in the church and in the world.

In her talk , [SPIRITUAL FEATURES OF THE NEW OFS RULE](#) , Michèle Altmeyer, OFS says this about our Spirituality of Communion:

*SPIRITUALITY OF COMMUNION The Rule is profoundly ecclesial, pervaded by a strong spirituality of communion, in the wake of the ecclesiology of communion rediscovered by the Second Vatican Council, and presented by Pope John Paul II in the Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte (art.43). The spirituality of communion is also expressed in article 6 where the Profession is emphasized as a fruitful baptism that unites us more deeply with the Church Bride of Christ and the people of God, and with its evangelizing mission in full communion with the Pope, bishops and priests, in a trusting and open dialogue of apostolic creativity (art.6). The path is a communion and union with Jesus "If you remain in me and I in you" (Jn15: 5), with Jesus living and working in the concreteness of the brothers (art.5) especially the youngest ones (art.13), in the Word of Scripture, in the Church, Body of Christ (Article 6), in liturgical actions and in a particular way in the Eucharistic communion. Eucharistic spirituality means that I participate to the body of Christ: I live through him, in him, and with him, but not only with Him, but with my brothers, because if we receive the same bread, we become the same thing, a fraternity because Christ he is the Firstborn of a multitude of brothers (Rm 8,19) The Order is divided into Fraternities and is, par excellence and by definition, an Order of brothers and sisters. The spirituality of communion is underlined by the first article "in vital reciprocal communion" to the last article of the Rule "In concrete sign of communion and co-responsibility". The fraternity must become a "school" of communion (art.24), where to learn to live the spirituality of communion and witness it in the world (art.13).*

If we desire conversion and growth in our charism, we need to look at Christ and ask ourselves “How am I *being and living* in communion?”

Consider as a fraternity participating in the Eucharistic Congress of your diocese and in the Eucharistic activities of your parishes. The BSSF Region offers grants for Apostolic Activities- find details here: [Regional Grants for Fraternity Apostolates | Brothers and Sisters of Saint Francis \(bssfsfo.org\)](http://bssfsfo.org)

May the Lord bless and keep you always.



Lynn Oeser, OFS, is the formation director at the Fraternity of Brother Francis in Newton, NC, and regional formation director.

## Formation Opportunities

**June 1, 8, 15:** 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Zoom conference for Secular Franciscans. *Francis of Assisi 1224-1226: A Spirituality of Decline and True Joy* Sign up by following the link <https://www.sbu.edu/academics/academic-resources/franciscan-institute/programs-conferences>

**June 27:** Franciscan Zoom Lecture St Francis 'Lived the Scriptures'

[Upcoming Events | Franciscan School of Theology \(fst.edu\)](#)

**August 9-11-** Area Regional Gathering at Ridgecrest

## Reader's Corner

Are you familiar with the St Anthony Messenger Magazine?

It has wonderful articles, areas of interest to Seculars and great human interest stories. It comes out monthly and you can receive hard copy or digital. Check out the details at:

<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/st-anthony-messenger/may-2024/>

--Ellen Ferrone, OFS

Do you have Franciscan-related reading to suggest? Send it to [communioeditor@gmail.com](mailto:communioeditor@gmail.com) for inclusion in the next issue.



# Care for earth begins locally

By Allison Salerno  
BSSF Region JPIC Animator

“*The trail provides*” is a saying common among Appalachian Trail (AT) hikers. One morning in early May, the trail - or I would say God - provided me with just the right encounter so I could encourage you. As the regional JPIC animator, I’d been mulling a care of creation project I’d like to inspire each fraternity to do this fall.

That morning, a shuttle driver dropped me off at a place along the AT called Indian Grave Gap. It’s about nine miles by trail from Erwin in eastern Tennessee. I was on a day hike.

At the small pull-off parking spot, an older man sat in a folding chair beside his white pickup truck, with a bulldog in a crate beside him. I stopped to chat before heading onto the trail.

He asked me my trail name, which is the nickname AT hikers use to describe themselves. (Mine is Quill, because I’m a writer.) He told me his trail name is B.T. and his dog’s name is Moses.



Trail angel B.T. and his dog Moses.

B.T. is a trail angel, which the Appalachian Trail Conservancy describes as “people who have provided trail magic in the form of direct kindness and generosity to hikers. “ B.T. was offering folding chairs where hikers could rest, as well as cups of hot coffee, homemade goodies and a trash bag so hikers could empty out garbage from their backpacks. He also had a guestbook for hikers to sign, with their trail names and hometowns.

“What does B.T. stand for?” I asked him. “Brother Tom,” he answered. It turns out Brother Tom, who is 70 and grew up in Ohio, is a Glenmary Home Missionary and lives in community in Erwin. As its website explains: “Glenmary is a Catholic society of priests, brothers and lay missionaries who serve primarily in Appalachia and the deep South.... Our missions are in counties where less than 1% of the population is Catholic, as high as 75% claim no faith affiliation at all. Poverty averages 20%, almost two times the national average.” One of Brother Tom’s missions [during the past 11 hiking seasons](#) has been to serve the needs of hikers passing by this spot.

**(continued on next page)**



Continued from page 8

I told Brother Tom I am a Secular Franciscan and the regional JPIC animator. I started to explain what JPIC stood for and he said “Oh, we have JPIC too.” I told him I wanted to encourage our local fraternities to come up with a project in the coming months to clean up public lands.

“Oh, we do that,” he said, explaining that the local Glenmary missionaries work with a nonprofit called Keeping the Valley Beautiful on litter cleanups and that he also tidies up this little parking spot while offering respite to hikers.

I long ago stopped believing in coincidences. I encountered this man just as I was pondering a proposal that each fraternity in our region participate in a litter clean up of public lands.

My invitation to each fraternity is to do a litter cleanup this fall. This is not a complicated task. I did a quick Google search in my home county and the local parks department is all set up for folks to do a cleanup.

If your fraternity is geographically scattered, as many are, do more than one cleanup. Because our beloved Saint Francis did not confine his life to people who shared his faith or his path, I encourage you to partner with a local community group - the Rotarians, the Boy Scouts or whomever - or with a group in your home parish, such as Comfirmandi or the Knights of Columbus. Invite friends outside the fraternity to join in so more folks can see and understand our charism.

If a fraternity member is physically not able to participate, invite them to show up and share refreshments for those who are able to gather trash.

This is a great way to care for the earth and to let people know about the spiritual works of Secular Franciscans, much as the Glenmary Missionary work does.

As Pope Francis reminds us in [Laudate Si](#) “In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the word “creation” has a broader meaning than “nature”, for it has to do with God’s loving plan in which every creature has its own value and significance. Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion.”

When your fraternity does a litter cleanup, take photos - including all the trash you collect. You can share them in your newsletter and then please send them and some details to me at [allisonbsalerno@gmail.com](mailto:allisonbsalerno@gmail.com) so I can celebrate your work in a future Communio issue.



*Allison Salerno, OFS, is a member of the Fraternity of the Stigmata of St. Francis in Johns Creek, Georgia.*

# Introduction to the BSSF Statement on Racism

by David Cruz-Uribe, OFS, Regional Multicultural Animator  
and Allison Salerno, OFS, Regional JPIC Animator

At its last meeting on April 4, 2024, the Regional Executive Council approved a statement on racism. The full text of the statement is given below. In this introduction we want to explain the origin of the document, what it is trying to accomplish, and offer some suggestions for how your local fraternity might use it.

The idea for this statement originally arose last summer, after our regional minister, Ellen Ferrone, experienced a racist incident directed at a member of our region. Her letter to all the members of the region and the ensuing discussion brought to light some other disturbing incidents, and in discussions with members of the Regional Executive Council (REC), Ellen proposed drafting a broader, more encompassing statement that laid out our opposition to racism in light of Catholic teaching and our own Franciscan charism.

Working together, we wrote a first draft; this led to a series of draft statements being discussed and revised by the REC, resulting in the final statement adopted.

In writing the statement, the REC wanted to do more than simply say "racism is bad." We wanted to draw attention to the ways in which it impacts our region, our local fraternities, our parishes, and our communities.

We wanted to show that addressing this issue is deeply tied into our identity as Secular Franciscans. Again and again, as we worked on this document, we came back to our Rule, which calls on all Seculars to "*be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives*" (Article 15). In making this statement we are not claiming that racism is the only injustice we as Seculars must confront, but we want to remind everyone that in our time and place, it is one which we are called to face.

The REC wants this statement to be more than a one-time event. By making this statement the REC is committing itself to address racism on a regional level in our programming and in our actions. We have already shared the statement with our national minister, the other regional ministers, the national JPIC animator, and the national spiritual assistants.

The feedback we have gotten has been uniformly positive, and the provincial spiritual assistant for the Conventual Franciscans has asked if he can share our statement in their provincial newsletter. Our goal is to further incorporate this issue into our regional activities, including our formation programs and spiritual assistant formation.

We encourage you in your local fraternities to read and reflect on this statement and figure out for yourselves how you can use it to inform your actions and address racism in all the many ways it can appear and impact you and your members.

**(continued on next page)**

**Continued from page 10**

You might want to think about what connections there are between your apostolate and racism in the broader community: how have the people you serve with your apostolates been affected? If you have a good relationship with the pastor of your local church, you might consider sharing it with him and encourage him to bring this issue up in his homilies and religious education programs. This can be a difficult topic to address, and you may be unsure of where to start. Your spiritual assistant, your area councilors, and the other members of the REC are available to help you locally, and to bring your experiences into the ongoing dialogue between the region and the local fraternities.

Finally, we see this as an opportunity for prayer. In our statement we ask for the intercession of three African-American men and women---Fr. Augustus Tolton, Secular Franciscan Julia Greeley, and Sister Thea Bowman---whose lives and virtues have placed them on the path to sainthood. May all of us, through the grace and mercy of God, find the strength to help our Church and our nation move forward.



Servant of God  
Julia Greeley, OFS



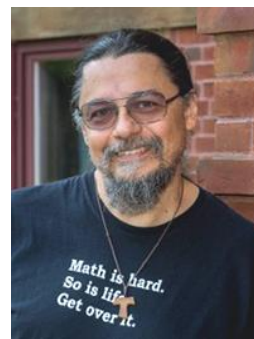
Venerable  
Father Augustus Tolton



Servant of God  
Thea Bowman, FSPA



Allison Salerno, OFS, is a member of the Fraternity of the Stigmata of St. Francis in Johns Creek, Georgia. She is the regional JPIC animator.



David Cruz-Uribe, OFS, is a member of St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity in Bessemer, AL, and serves as the BSSF Regional Multi-Cultural Commission Chair.

# Statement on racism

## Brothers and Sisters of Saint Francis region

Adopted by the Regional Executive Council  
April 5, 2024

As Secular Franciscans living in the United States, we are confronted by the continuing presence of racism in our nation. And, motivated by the love of God and neighbor which is the heart of our Franciscan charism, we are called to help address it. As our bishops have said, "*racism still profoundly affects our culture, and it has no place in the Christian heart. This evil causes great harm to its victims, and it corrupts the souls of those who harbor racist or prejudicial thoughts.*"<sup>1</sup> Moreover, we acknowledge that, because we are frail human beings in need of conversion, racism exists within our Order, and, regrettably, racist acts by a few of our members have hurt our brothers and sisters who are people of color.

With our bishops, the Brothers and Sisters of Saint Francis region affirms that the evil of racism should have no place in our nation, in our Church, in our Order, or in our hearts. As Secular Franciscans we are called by our Rule to "*strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.*"<sup>2</sup> We believe this passage applies to the reality of racism and that we are called to support all people affected by racism, whether through personal encounters or through "*social structures of injustice and violence.*"<sup>3</sup> Our Holy Father reminds us: "*We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life.*"<sup>4</sup>

Our bishops have committed themselves to taking concrete action and call upon all Catholics in the US to do likewise.<sup>5</sup> Our national fraternity has asked us, as Secular Franciscans, to "*Listen, discern, and go forth.*"<sup>6</sup> Applying this to the call of our bishops, we urge one another to make every effort to listen to our brothers and sisters--Black, Hispanic, Native American, Asian<sup>7</sup>--who continue to experience racism. Let us discern the ways in which racism has wounded our Church and our fraternities, and go forth to take concrete steps to heal the wounds that it has caused.

As a regional fraternity, we pledge to take these steps and to work with local fraternities to advance the cause of justice. Through our director of formation and our JPIC and multicultural animators, we will provide opportunities to reflect on racism and its impacts. We will ask our fraternal and pastoral visitors to accompany local fraternities as they engage in the often difficult conversations on this subject. And we invite local fraternities and individual Secular Franciscans to find ways to act in their parishes and communities to address racism and its legacy.

Knowing our own frailty and our need for daily conversion in all things, we ask the intercession of the Venerable Augustus Tolton, the first African-American priest in the United States, Servant of God Julia Greeley, OFS, and Servant of God Thea Bowman, FSPA. By their prayers may we receive the grace to "*accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ*"<sup>8</sup> and to "*resolve to work for justice.*"<sup>9</sup>

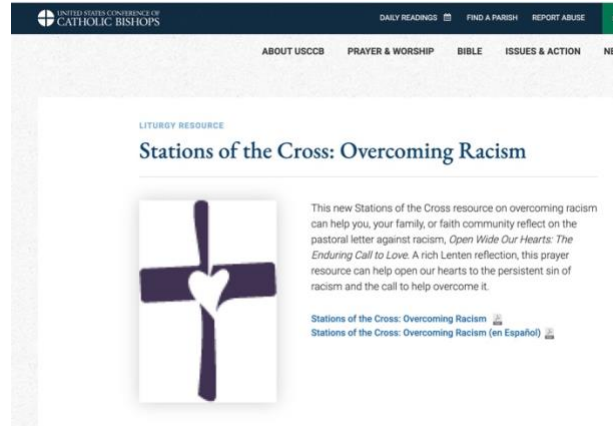
***Refer to website posting for complete footnotes in statement.***



# Do We Have To Talk About This?

By Christine Washington, OFS  
Minister, St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity

“Do we have to talk about this? Can’t we talk about something else?” In retrospect I think this was a thought that a number of us in our fraternity had last summer as we embarked on a journey reflecting on the [USCCB’s \*Stations of the Cross: Overcoming Racism\*](#).



We started this journey at our July 2023 gathering. We read Ellen Ferrone’s letter on racism and then reflected on the first station for 15 minutes. This was followed by our ongoing formation, a study of *The Gospel Life of St. Francis – An Introduction to His Writings Through the Earlier Rule*. We looked at Article 5 of the Earlier Rule on *Obedience and Correction* for about an hour.

Although it may have been more expedient to deal with this quickly, I felt compelled to have the fraternity take the stations one at a time instead of covering all 14 stations during one or two gatherings. As we embarked on this journey, I think that this was a difficult issue for us to address. This was although our fraternity’s members have a history of getting along well with each other.

I’d like to share with you my take on how this has affected our fraternity’s sense of community. After our opening prayers we’ve continued to read/pray, reflect and share on one station. We follow this up with our ongoing formation on the Earlier Rule.

One of the things I’ve noticed is how almost invariably there’s some kind of connection between the station we are covering and the article of the Earlier Rule that we are covering. This has helped us look at how to take this issue that is so current and apply it to the Way of Life St. Francis laid out for us 800 years ago.

In this journey we’ve also covered more issues than black/white racism. Among other issues, we’ve looked at things like sex discrimination, We’ve also discussed difficulties communicating with family members who have radically different views than we strive for as Franciscans.

I’ve noticed some internal changes in myself in this process. I used to think that I was open minded and a good listener. But during these past 10 months I’ve realized how far I need to go to actively listen to others, to be receptive to them and not quietly judgmental. I’m trying to hear what my brothers and sisters are saying instead of just listening to their words. This has helped me feel closer to them.

Our fraternity still gets along well with each other. I said that we had a difficult time dealing with this at first. But now we are much more spontaneous in sharing with each other than we were then. I think we are listening to each other more and accepting each other on a different level.

**Continued on next page**

**Continued from page 13**

As we go along further on our Franciscan journey, I think the USCCB's Stations have helped our fraternity develop an even greater sense of community than we had and that's helped us as a spiritual family. Of course we'll always have a way to go; but as Ed Campbell used to say, "Our formation doesn't end until 10 minutes after we get to heaven." (Ed Campbell was the first formation director of our BSSF Region.). So, we continue to strive to become the Franciscan men and women of God toward which the Holy Spirit has called each of us.

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## Are all moral issues equal?

By Margie Williams, OFS  
Area 1 BSSF Regional Councilor

Decisions; decisions!! We all need to make them. Decisions are easy when good and bad are clear cut. Sometimes moral issues are not clear.

How, as Secular Franciscans, do we make decisions? Let's look to the Rule, to Ethics, to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), and to the Virtue of Prudence for guidance.

According to our Rule, Secular Franciscans "*observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*" ... "*going from gospel to life and life to the gospel*", "*proclaiming Christ by the testimony our human life and words*". As Franciscans are in the "*forefront in promoting justice*". "*Especially in the field of public life, we should make definite choices in harmony with their faith*".

Ethics deals with concepts of right and wrong conduct. Basic ethical principles include 1) Respect for Person (autonomy, protection of persons), 2) Beneficence (maximize benefits; minimize harms), 3) Non-maleficence (do no harm) and 4) Justice (obligation to distribute benefits and burdens fairly). Social justice is linked to the common good, which can be defined only in reference to the individual human person. (CCC 1905, 1928)

Next let's look to one of the Cardinal Virtues: Prudence. Prudence helps us make good decisions "in every circumstance", (CCC 1806), whether personal circumstances or in our public life. Prudence incorporates counsel, judgment and decisiveness. Counsel is assessing the situation and gathering information. Judgment is weighing the information, taking into consideration who will be affected by our decisions. Decisiveness is the courage to act. Thoughtful prayer and asking the Holy Spirit for Wisdom are keys to prudence.

In our public life, we are currently faced with decisions related to the upcoming elections. Unfortunately, there is so much anger, negativity and hatred, which thwart prudent decision making. And there are many moral issues to consider.

**Continued on next page**

Continued from page 14

How do we make decisions? Do we make decisions based on our emotions? Or, do our Rule, Ethics, the Virtues and the Catechism of the Catholic Church inform our decisions?

How do we weigh our choices? What are our moral priorities? Are the good and the bad equal? To what extent do they balance or don't balance each other out? How do we choose between bad and worse if needed? Can any good come about from our decision? Or could more harm result? Can helping one group harm another group?

As Secular Franciscans we should be messengers of perfect joy, peace and respect for life as we live Gospel to Life; Life to Gospel.

## Regional Events Calendar

Date	Minister	Fraternity	Event
June 8	Irene Crowder	Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Burlington, NC	Election
June 8	Esther Kelly	Fraternity of Brother Francis Newton, NC	Visitation
June 23	Christine Washington	St. Joseph of Cupertino Bessemer, AL	Election
<b>Aug. 9-11 Annual Regional Gathering</b>			
Sept. 14	Laura Cleary	Immaculate Conception Jonesboro, GA	Election
Nov. 17-18	Cathy Champon	St. Clare Asheville, NC	Visitation
Nov. 23	Brenda Harris	St. Francis of the Hill Hendersonville, NC	Election



## Recent local fraternity elections in the BSSF Region



**Our Lady of Good Counsel in Greenville, SC**, elected a new council on April 20. They are, from left to right, spiritual assistant Charlie Comberrel, OFS; treasurer Sheila Dartez, OFS; vice minister Alice Ramos, OFS; Alice Baird, OFS; formation director Eric Best, OFS; secretary Marsha Wiggins, OFS; and minister Valerie Baronkin, OFS.



**Blessed Solanus Casey Fraternity in Morehead City** elected a new council on April 14. From left to right they are: treasurer, Kevin Mumford, OFS; Mary Hudak, OFS (Stand in for Pat Kasprzyk – Formation Director); secretary Bob Sabisch, OFS; minister Joan Rogers, OFS; counselors Pat Boni, OFS, and Sylvia Jackson, OFS; and vice minister Barbara Zalk.



## Recent local fraternity elections in the BSSF Region (con't)



**St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity in Elizabeth City** elected a new council on May 19. From left to right, they are Doreen Warren, OFS, councilor; Cee Cee Patricio, OFS, treasurer; Janet Norfleet, OFS, councilor; Lee Norfleet, OFS, secretary; Dory Davis, OFS, minister; Eileen Chaney, OFS, vice minister; and Pam Barber, OFS, formation director.



**Padre Pio fraternity in Raleigh, NC**, elected a new council on March 26. From left to right they are: Travis Bongiorno, OFS, councilor; Sharon Winzeler, OFS, minister; Gladys Whitehouse, OFS, formation director; Mary Cockrill, OFS, secretary; Janette Perez, OFS, treasurer; Rachel Bongiorno, OFS, vice minister; Anne Evangelista, OFS, councilor; and Richard Hammer, OFS, councilor.



## Recent local fraternity elections in the BSSF Region (con't)



**St. Maximillian Kolbe in Charlotte, NC**, elected a new council on June 1. From left to right they are: Kristen Wood, OFS, councilor; Kate McElveen, OFS, secretary; Linda Beauregard, OFS, formation director; Jerome Wagner, OFS, treasurer; Frances Acosta, OFS, vice Minister; Jennye Taylor Johnson, OFS, councilor; and JC Liu, OFS, minister.

## Retreat at St. Francis Springs



**Padre Pio Fraternity from Raleigh, NC**, had a record turnout at its May 10-12 spring retreat at St. Francis Springs Prayer Center in Stoneville, NC. Fr. Steve Kluge, OFM, and former spiritual assistant at Padre Pio, presented the retreat on living the Secular Franciscan life in today's world. Padre Pio was joined by four members of **Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament fraternity in Burlington, NC**. It was a weekend of prayer discernment, fellowship and good weather.

## Fraternity forms new apostolate, continues to serve youth

By Irene Crowder  
Blessed Sacrament Fraternity Minister

As we have been discerning new apostolates for Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Fraternity in Burlington, NC, we were invited to participate in a newly forming confirmation/youth ministry program (retiring the previous format) within Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in 2023.



It was appropriate to accept this invitation as we were letting go of a previous apostolate (making rosaries for the confirmands). As the school year is concluding, so has the confirmation class/youth ministry for the summer.



All table facilitators gathered recently for discussion of the program and for a delicious “thank you” dinner prepared by Fr Vincent Rubino.

When asked to serve as table facilitators, leading discussions after videos and lectures, it was explained to us that most important was our presence, being a Christian witness for the youth. The program was organized so that small groups travelled together each Sunday to different stations (Scripture, Kerygma, Theology of the Body and Relational Ministry).

Q&A after the first three was around what they learned. The Relational Ministry station was filled with food, drinks, games, prizes and fun as they had more time to get to know one another.



Of significant importance to Fr. Vincent was that each of the almost 300 youth in this program, had at least one adult who could recognize them in the sea of people at Mass and or other parish events and be a welcoming presence for them.

It was in this way that, we did, as followers of St Francis “what was ours to do.” Not only could our table facilitators recognize the youth of their small groups in the end, I am sure that the youth will recognize their table facilitators as well, at future Secular Franciscan events and parish activities. Valuable bonds were developed and treasured.

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A man who works with his hands is a laborer. A man who works with his hands and his head is a craftsman. A man who works with his hands, his head, and his heart is an artist.—  
St. Francis of Assisi



# Retreat unites fraternities with joy, love, holiness

St. John Vianney and Immaculate Conception fraternities of Georgia held a joint retreat last Oct. 20-22 at the Blessed Trinity Shrine Retreat Center in Fort Mitchell, AL.

Comments from attendees below were collected by Laura Cleary, minister of St. John Vianney Fraternity, in Jonesboro, GA.



I would like to share my experience at the annual retreat with the Immaculate Conception Fraternity, which took place in October 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> 2023 at the Blessed Trinity Shrine Retreat Center in Alabama.

It is always a joy to connect with our Brothers and Sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO), in this occasion was particularly special as our 15-year-old son joined us. This retreat has been an immense blessing for me, not only because they warmly welcomed our son, but also due to the meaningful events that unfolded throughout the weekend.

The dedication and organization displayed by the Brothers and Sisters from both fraternities in creating a bilingual retreat where we felt embraced and accepted was truly remarkable. Being able to pray, sing and celebrate the Holy Eucharist all together fills us with fraternal joy that only God can give.

The retreat's theme, "From the Gospel to Life and from Life to the Gospel," was eloquently presented by Fr. Paul Pantiru, OFM Conv. He guided us in a simple yet inspiring manner, encouraging personal reflection and fostering dialogue with our Brothers and Sisters about our lives in the fraternity. We contemplated the needs and circumstances of the modern world, drawing from the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order.

Through this, I gained a deeper understanding of myself as an individual and as part of a fraternity. It allowed me to reflect on our present and future, and how we can live the Gospel in our daily lives. Letting other know that it is indeed possible to live the Gospel as laypeople.

I can only express my gratitude to God for His kindness towards me and my family, and for the privilege of being a part of the Secular Franciscan Order.

Paz y bien.

Mi nombre es Evelyn Genao-Solano, Dominicana residente en Lawrenceville, Ga. Junto a mi esposo, Ivan Solano, pertenezco a la fraternidad bilingüe emergente en St. John Vianney, Lithia Spring, GA.

Les quiero compartir mi experiencia en nuestro retiro anual junto a la Fraternidad Immaculate Conception, en octubre 20-22 del 2023, en el centro de retiro Blessed Trinity Shrine de Alabama.

Siempre es un gozo poder compartir con nuestros hermanos y hermanas de la OFS, en esta ocasión de manera especial porque nos acompañó nuestro hijo de 15 años.

Este retiro ha sido una gran bendición para mí, no solo porque acogieron a nuestro hijo, sino por todo lo ocurrido en ese fin de semana.

La organización y esfuerzo de los Hermanos de ambas fraternidades, por hacer un retiro bilingüe donde nos sentimos acogidos y aceptados. El poder orar, cantar y celebrar la Eucaristía juntos, nos llena de gozo fraterno que solo Dios puede dar.

El tema del retiro: "Del Evangelio a la vida y de la vida al Evangelio" que impartió Fr. Paul Pantiru, quien nos guio de forma simple y motivadora para la reflexión personal y dialogar entre hermanos sobre nuestra vida en la fraternidad, siendo seglares con las

I opened Facebook this morning to a memory video from seven years ago. It is a video of trees swaying, draped in lace of Spanish moss, on the grounds of Blessed Trinity Shrine Retreat Center in Ft. Mitchell, Alabama. It is a reminder that Immaculate Conception Fraternity has journeyed there the last seven years for our annual retreat. I write this the day after returning from our annual 2023 retreat, themed "From Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel." We always book the same weekend in October and have been blessed with wonderful weather and the seasons transition of warm days and crisp nights.

This years retreat was special for two reasons. First, after being our guests for past retreats, the St. John Vianney Emerging Fraternity in Lithia Springs, GA fully participated in retreat planning this year. St John Vianney has the distinction of being a Spanish speaking bilingual fraternity. Our handouts and liturgy aids were provided in both English and Spanish. Second, this was our first retreat with our new Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Paul Pantiru, OFM, Conv. We had the privilege of being Fr. Paul's first retreat as well and we really enjoyed the time away in retreat to learn more about each other. In tribute to the 800th anniversary of The Rule, our sessions were organized around St. Francis and the Rule, Living the Joy of the Gospel Life, and Community and Life in Fraternity. Following the presentations, we went into small group breakout sessions where we had the opportunity to share and explore our thoughts about the topic and discussion questions. My small group of seven included members of both fraternities as well as Candidates and long professed members. We shared our journeys in what drew us to St. Francis and the Order. Our time together flies by until we are saying our goodbyes at lunch on Sunday. We have secured our reservation for next October 2024.



## **BSSF Regional Executive Council Roster**

**Minister:** Ellen Ferrone, OFS

**Vice Minister:** Martha Roman, OFS

**Secretary:** Mary Sacavage, OFS

**Treasurer:** Zubair Simonson, OFS

**Formation Director:** Lynn Oeser, OFS

**Spiritual Assistant:** Fr. Bob Menard, OFM

## **Area Councilors**

**Area 1:** Margi Williams, OFS; Gabrielle Cruz-Uribe, OFS  
**AL:** Bessemer; **GA:** Athens, Blairsville, Conyers, Duluth, Jonesboro;  
**TN:** Chattanooga, Knoxville, Nashville

**Area 2:** Becky Bresnahan, OFS; JC Liu, OFS  
**GA:** Augusta, St. Simons Island; **NC:** Asheville, Charlotte, Hendersonville, Newton; **SC:** Aiken, Charleston, Columbia, Greenville, Hilton Head Island, Spartanburg

**Area 3:** Lee Cunningham, OFS; Betti Pettinati-Longinotti OFS  
**NC:** Burlington, Elizabeth City, Fayetteville, Greensboro, Morehead City, Raleigh, Wilmington, Winston-Salem;  
**SC:** Garden City

**Archivist:** Sara Nell Boggs, OFS

**Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation Animator:** Allisen Salerno, OFS

**Multicultural Commission Chair:** David Cruze-Uribe, OFS

**Youth/Young Adult Fraternal Animator:** Bob Dorsch, OFS

### **Prayer Ministry (online prayer requests)**

**Area 1:** John Martin, OFS

**Area 2:** Dorothy Huebner, OFS

**Area 3:** Bob Sabisch, OFS

**Communio editor:** Sharon Winzeler, OFS