

Tau Cross Region

Secular Franciscan Order for The Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau and Suffolk

Minister's Message

Joan Geiger, ofs
Regional Minister

Dear Sisters and Brothers,
Peace be with you!

I write this as March 20th – the official day of spring, approaches. Although a touch of flurries is forecast for St. Patrick's Day, I am so looking forward to springtime and the arrival of sunnier skies, warmer weather and an abundance of nature's beauty. It has indeed been an unusually cold, snowy and seemingly long winter.

On March 13, 2013, just over a year ago, the Conclave of Cardinals elected Jorge Mario Bergoglio – Pope Francis. And while the Jesuits can rightly be proud of their brother who chose them for its missionary spirit, community and discipline, as Franciscans we, too, can take pride not just for his name selection to honor the poor man from Assisi, but for the principles St. Francis embraced – the poor and marginalized of society. In addition to last summer's *Life and Times* commemorative issues on Pope Francis, many of you have probably read Pope Francis' exclusive interview in the September 30, 2013 issue of *America* magazine, or the article in the December 23, 2013 issue of *Time* magazine where he was named "Person of the Year." The cover of *The New Yorker* magazine of

the same date pictured Pope Francis as a snow angel. James Carroll's profile article, "Who Am I to Judge – a Radical Pope's First Year" and the *Rolling Stone* February 13, 2014 issue – "Pope Francis: The Times They Are A-Changin'" – all tell of a man who indeed has been called to "Rebuild the Church."

I want to share with you excerpts from the October 26, 2013 issue of *The Tablet*, the Catholic Diocesan paper of Brooklyn and Queens. Carol Glantz, a reporter for Catholic News Services, shared Greg Burke, senior communications adviser to the Vatican Secretariat of State's, "Top-10 List of Words to Describe Pope Francis." Ms. Glantz writes: "No matter how some media may want to spin it, Pope Francis won't fit into the political categories of left or right and he will challenge everyone with the truth of the Gospel. Pope Francis is not a politically correct Pope, rather, he is a loyal son of the Church who represents the hard truths with a heavy dose of mercy."

Briefly outlined are Burke's take on decoding the pontiff with "10 Words:

Mercy – God never tires of forgiving and welcoming his lost children back home.

Courage – Get ready to be challenged by Pope Francis – especially people in developed nations.

Margins and missions – Pope Francis wants a united world, not one divided by haves and have-nots.

Prayer – Prayer is important in religious [and secular] life.

Encounter – Embrace an attitude of communion that starts at home with your family.

Joy – Show joy plainly. The biggest dangers and temptations in life are discouragement, discord, the doldrums and the devil. [Pope Francis' recent Apostolic Exhortation is entitled *Evangelii Gaudium – the Joy of the Gospel.*]

Service – It's not about power or privilege; if we are here, we are here to serve.

Simplicity and humility – Pope Francis' personal lifestyle and manner exemplify these. He is detached from things of the world.

Compassion – The Pope embraces people and is totally present one-on-one with an individual even in large crowds.

Energy – The 76- (now 77) year old pope has a lot of energy and we're going to be in for an interesting ride!

I think you would agree with me that in a short year, Mr. Burke's description of Pope Francis has become reality.

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In addition to the magazine articles that have been written about Pope Francis, numerous books already fill the shelves. I am reading *Through the Year with Pope Francis*. I would like to conclude with today's reflection entitled "Talk, Talk, Talk... No!" "My experience is what I feel in front of the tabernacle, when I go in the evening to pray before the Lord. Sometimes I nod off for a while; this is true, for the strain of the day more or less makes you fall asleep, but he understands. I feel great comfort when I think of the Lord looking at me. We think we have to pray and talk, talk, talk... No! Let the Lord look at you. When he looks at us, he gives us strength and helps us to bear witness to him." (Address May 18, 2013)

May our Shepherd, Pope Francis, the Vicar of Christ, Successor to St. Peter, continue to be an instrument of peace as he rebuilds the Church with courage, zeal and joy.

I wish you and your families a Blessed and Joy-filled Easter. I look forward to greeting you at the Spring Chapter on April 26th.

Peace and all good,
Joan

REMINDER

The Regional Chapter will be held on Saturday, April 26th 9:30-3:00 at:

Holy Family Church
175-20 74th Ave.
Flushing, NY

All fraternity ministers or their representatives are expected to attend.

A YouFra Update

Jean D'Onofrio, ofs
Blessed John XXIII Fraternity

Since the update in January...

Alex(andra), Br. Padraic and I met at my parish for an Advent Prayer Service, based on the book, *The Stations of the Crib*. Alex and I also got to attend a Peace and Justice lecture given by Dr. Tom Petriano at SS Philip and James RC Church. While the lecture about our new Pope was fascinating, it also gave Alex an opportunity to meet several of my fraternity members. We have been invited to give a presentation to some students at the St. Joseph's College, Patchogue, and are in the process of working out those details.

Meanwhile, Kelly and Andre continue to collaborate with Fay Muir and David Burger at Immaculate Conception Fraternity in the Bronx with various Franciscan Earth Corps projects which involve more young adults. Kelly has also decided to explore a vocation calling to our Order.

We continue to realize the importance of engaging our young adults here and now. We give thanks that the Spirit is moving among young adults. Let us continue to pray for Kelly, Andre, Alexandria and Caroline. Let us pray for Fay and her fraternity who are helping to establish a YouFra in the Bronx. And we pray for more young adults to answer the call to a Franciscan way of life, going Gospel to life and life to Gospel.

Jean

Fr. Matthias' Message

Fr. Matthias Wesnofske, ofm, Cap.
Regional Spiritual Assistant

Be the Merciful Presence of God

The theme, presented to us at the last National Chapter for the year 2014, was based on the motto of Pope Francis, which is found on his coat of arms. It also seems to be the desire and hope of Our Holy Father's pontificate. In the latest issue of the TAU-USA, Tom Bello, the National Minister, writes his article on this theme. His article is excellent in describing the origins of this theme coming from Pope Francis and the connection with the call of St. Matthew as found in the Gospels. Tom Bello writes most of the article on the origin of the motto and how we have been recipients of the mercy of God. Whether it was through our Baptism, through the sacrament of the Eucharist or the sacrament of Reconciliation or even through the gift of our vocations as Franciscans, we have been recipients of the mercy of God. God continues to show us his mercy and continues to pour out his mercy on the world. For this we must always be grateful. However, the theme for the Secular Franciscans for this year, is not only to meditate on the mercy of God towards us, but perhaps, more importantly for us at this particular time of the New Evangelization to consider honestly, how can we **BE** the merciful presence of God. How can we make this theme concrete in our real, everyday lives?

The dictionary offers a number of

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Fr. Matthias

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definitions for the word, *mercy*. First of all it can be a kind and gentle treatment of someone having no right to it. It can be a blessing, as an act of divine love, which Tom Bello speaks of, and which we celebrate on Divine Mercy Sunday. It can be kindness shown to victims of misfortune. Mercy suggests feeling pity and withholding punishment even when justice demands it, e.g. he pleaded guilty and asked for mercy from the court. Clemency is a synonym for mercy, which suggests a mild or merciful disposition in the person having the power to punish. Another synonym is leniency, which suggests the repeated overlooking of mistakes by one not inclined to be severe, as for instance, some parents towards their children, as exemplified in the story of the Prodigal Son, or in Jesus offering the 5 times divorced Samaritan woman living water.

So on a practical level, to be the merciful presence of God in our world today, we might consider whether we can be kinder and gentler towards those who have no right to it; perhaps those in our families, at work, the rude waitress or pharmacist, the driver who cut us off on the parkway, the person we disagree with in discussions, when considering politics, or people who disagree with us about religion or the Church, or the person who hurt us with cruel remarks, the liar, the gossip, the cheater.

Clemency is something we should also consider in our opinions about capital punishment, in voting, in immigration reform, and in the fraternity in being critical of one another or opinions expressed. As brothers and sisters perhaps we could also grow in an attitude of leniency in certain instances and not be harsh in our expectations or clinging to strict interpretations of the Rule, the Constitutions and Statutes, which are given to us as helps and guides in living our Franciscan vocation.

The phrase, 'to be merciful' can also be abused or misunderstood. We know that euthanasia is oftentimes called 'mercy killing.' That is why it is also important to remember and consider that the theme for this year is, "Be the merciful presence of **God.**" We do not just perform acts of mercy, but we are called to be the merciful presence of God, to give mercy as God gives mercy. To act God-like in giving mercy. "Be merciful just as your heavenly Father is merciful" Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy." **Be** the merciful presence of God.

Around the Region

Admissions:

Feb. 7: Patricia Mayle, Blessed Raymond Lull Fraternity.

March 2: Gary Duryee, St Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity

Deaths

Jan. 17: Dorothy Corbett, ofs, Holy Child Jesus Fraternity

Jan 17: Gerard Walsh, ofs, St. Lawrence of Brindisi

Jan. 25: Kay Mckeever, ofs, St. Thomas More Fraternity

Feb. 1: Lenny Battifarano, ofs, Bl. John XXIII

Activities

Jan 12: Epiphany Party, New Pentecost Fraternity at St. Matthew Parish Hall, Dix Hills.

Feb. 7: Epiphany Party, Blessed Raymond Lull Fraternity held at St. Joseph Church Basement, Hewlett.

Upcoming Events:

April 26: Tau Cross Regional Chapter to be held at Mahoney Hall, Holy Family Church, Fresh Meadows, Queens

May 6-8: Regional Retreat at Cor Maria Retreat Center, Sag Harbor \$180. Contact: Bob Campbell, ofs, 516-599-4256; arcyc@aol.com

August 11-14: F.L.I.C. to be held at Mt. Alvernia Retreat Center, Wappingers Falls, NY, \$275. contact Bob Campbell at above numbers.

Regional Executive Council:

Joan Geiger, Minister, (718) 347-4470; jgeiger.ofs@gmail.com

Raymond Clarke: Vice Minister: (516) 374-1521;

Raymond.Clarker@verizon.net

Alicia D'Amato, Secretary: (631) 331-7680; damator@optonline.net

Robert Messa: Treasurer: (516) 458-5243; rlmessa826@gmail.com

Judy Heffernan, Formation Director (631) 395-5442;

JMhblessings@optimum.net

Augusta Van Duzen, Councilor: (917) 539-0385; amvand@verizon.net

Lorraine Arcella, Councilor: (718) 843-1712; LorraineArcella@msn.com

Fr. Matthias Wesnofske, ofm, Cap. Spiritual Assistant: (212) 564-9070 ext 244; mwesnof@aol.com

The Graces of the Franciscan Charism: Poverty and Simplicity, Part One

by Margaret Birth, ofs
St. Michael Fraternity

Section 11 of our Secular Franciscan Rule reads as follows: “Trusting the Father, Christ chose for Himself and His mother a poor and humble life, even though He valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God’s children.

“Thus, in the spirit of the Beatitudes, and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.”

Section 25 states: “Regarding expenses necessary for the life of the fraternity and the needs of worship, of the apostolate, and of charity, all the brothers and sisters should offer a contribution according to their means. Local fraternities should contribute toward the expenses of the higher fraternity councils.”

Section 9 encourages us to imitate the Blessed Virgin “by imitating her complete self-giving”—although this is not specifically about the giving of material goods.

These are parts of our current Rule that address issues of poverty and

simplicity—two closely related practices that are part of our charism as Franciscans living a life within the secular world.

Previous Rules of the Secular Franciscan Order—the original Rule of 1221, also known as “Memoriale Propositi”; the Rule of 1289 put forth by Pope Nicholas IV; and the Rule of 1883 put forth by Pope Leo (“Misericors Dei Filius”)—spelled out some of the ways in which members of the order should live in poverty and simplicity; however, when Pope Paul VI put forth his own version of the Rule in 1978, he wrote it in such a way as to leave flexibility and some openness to interpretation.

This progression of thinking about how much to dictate, or not, about what should constitute poverty and simplicity for the Secular Franciscan is complex enough that I’ll be splitting this article into two parts; Part Two will run in our next *Tau Cross Newsletter*.

The Rule of 1221 specified: “1. The men belonging to this brotherhood shall dress in humble, undyed cloth, the price of which is not to exceed six Ravenna soldi an ell . . . 2. They shall wear their outer garments and furred coats without open throat, sewed shut or uncut but certainly laced up, not open as secular people wear them; and they shall wear their sleeves closed. 3. The sisters in turn shall wear an outer garment and tunic made of cloth of the same price and humble quality; or at least they are to have with the outer garment a white or black underwrap or petticoat, or an ample linen gown without gathers, the

price of an ell of which is not to exceed twelve Pisa denars. As to this price, however, and the fur cloaks they wear a dispensation may be given according to the estate of the woman and the custom of the place. They are not to wear silken or dyed veils and ribbons. 4. And both the brothers and the sisters shall have their fur garments of lamb’s wool only. They are permitted to have leather purses and belts sewed in simple fashion without silken thread, and no other kind. Also other vain adornments they shall lay aside at the bidding of the Visitor.”

Those who wished to join the order needed to pay off any debts they owed and be (or become) up-to-date with their tithes. They were “not to go to unseemly parties or to shows or dances,” as well as “not donate to actors, and shall forbid their household to donate.”

They were, in addition, required to contribute “one ordinary denar” to the common welfare of the fraternity, and within three months of professing, they were required to make out a will, so as to avoid survivors squabbling over possessions.

The Rule of 1289 spelled out the Rule of 1221 yet more clearly. This was all consciously decided to be in line, as closely as possible, with Gospel teachings. For a few examples of the genesis of Franciscan values within the New Testament, see Matthew 5:3-12 (the Beatitudes), 6:19-21 (earthly versus heavenly treasures) and 24-33 (inability to serve God and Mammon, trusting in God’s provision); Luke 10:3-5 (Jesus’

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Franciscan Charism continued

instructions to the 70); and Acts 4:32-35 (believers sharing possessions).

In Part Two, I will address the continuing evolution of our Rule with regard to issues of poverty and simplicity, and how we express these elements of our charism.

REMEMBER!

The annual regional retreat will, once again, be at Cormaria Retreat House, Sag Harbor, NY. The dates are Tues-Thurs, May 6-8. Stipend is \$180.00

If you are interested, please contact Dcn Robert Campbell at 516-599-4256 or at arcyc@aol.com

TAU CROSS REGION

The TAU CROSS REGION is published quarterly in January, April, July and in October. Articles by fraternity members are welcome. If accepted, they may be edited. Please submit copies by the 10th of the month prior to publication.

Please send items of interest (elections, professions, anniversaries, events, etc. to Regional Secretary Alicia D'Amato at P.O. Box 447, Miller Place, NY 11774 or email at: [damato1@optonline.net](mailto:damoto1@optonline.net).

Address correspondence to editor, Peter D'Amato, P.O. Box 447, Miller Place, NY 11764 or email: [damato1@optonline.net](mailto:damoto1@optonline.net). TEL: 631-331-7680

The Formation Corner

Judy Heffernan, ofs
Regional Formation Director



Hear Ye! Hear Ye!
Read All about It!
WE ARE IN GREAT DANGER!

We are on our way to a mass extinction. People are running to their homes, closing their doors and windows, and keeping all their supplies to themselves. They are hoping they will have enough until they reach their next destination. Some are saying they have done all they can and it is up to others! Some are saying what can I do? Others are not even aware that there is a problem. Our houses are getting old and are growing tired. If we don't stick together and come up with some ideas in ten years there will be a big change and we won't know what hit us.

Seriously what am I talking about... Vocations, Vocations, Vocations! Our fraternities are not getting any younger and we are not getting as many newcomers as it would take to prevent our order not just in our Region but all over the United States to become obsolete.

First we must look to see what is the problem. Is it the *World* or is it *Us*? Do we blame others or do we look inward? Is the Spirit alive and growing in our fraternities? We do know that all things are possible with God so if our houses are in disrepair

we must lend a hand and see what needs to be fixed. We must make our foundations strong.

Then we must come up with some ideas to facilitate a solution. Don't just think others will do it; there are many ways you can help. We need a Plan, Ideas, Speakers, Doers, Prayers, Prayers and more Prayers.

Last we must do it together. It is not just about MY fraternity. It is about OUR fraternity. We cannot do it alone. You can work with another fraternity in your area. Write into the Region. Attend retreats, Regional/ Fraternity gatherings, workshops etc. Don't just sit there. You are still alive! Aren't you? Use your talents. Your purpose is not done. Our Vocation was not just for *Ourselves*, it was also to help *Others* get to heaven. If St Francis thought that way where would we be now?

I will leave you with this... A man went to heaven and met St. Peter at the pearly gates. Before St Peter would open the gates for this man he told him he would like to show him something. So the man said ok and followed St Peter to this room, which was lined with many shelves. Upon the shelves were many packages tied with beautiful bows. The man looked at St. Peter and said what is all this? St Peter replied these are the gifts that our Lord gave to you that you never opened. Are you going to have the same experience or are you going to use all the gifts that God has given to you. Please Help!

May God give you His peace and inspiration!
Judy



On February 7, Patricia Mayle (center) was admitted to Bl. Raymond Lull Fraternity. Pictured with Patricia are L-R: Louise Sandberg, Formation Director, Patricia and Augusta Van Duzen, Minister



Not just a 'Face in the Crowd':
Ralph Goodwin, O.L.Q.A.
Fraternity, Rocky Point



Admission to St. Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity of Gary Duryee on Sunday March 2nd 2014. L-R: Bob Metz, Minister, Ron Chirco, Formation Director, Gary Duryee and Spiritual Assistant Fr. Matthias



March 15 day of recollection with Brother Tom Barton, ofc (2nd upper left) at Immaculate Conception Fraternity, The Bronx



A few short weeks to:
a warm spring day and
Cormaria

And do not forget...



Our Picnic on June 28th at Elwood Park,
Huntington