

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 am writing this column on St. Patrick's Day – a day that I look forward to not only for wearin' the green but also seeing more green on mother earth. The sky is blue and the temperature has nicely warmed this slightly windy day. I am however, so looking forward to Friday, March 20th, the first day of spring. It has been a long winter of discontent.

Last Fall, the coordinator of my Parish R.C.I.A. Program asked if I would teach a lesson to our candidates. I was welcomed as a "catechist" and given the date April 15th and the topic Conversion – A Lifelong Process. As I've been preparing to teach this lesson, I couldn't help but recognize a similarity between the steps in the R.C.I.A. Program and the stages in our Franciscan Formation. We share similar steps, include formal instruction and ceremonies, and are completed over a specified period of time: R.C.I.A – Inquirer (Pre-catechumenate) → Catechumen (Rite of Acceptance) → Sacraments of Initiation (Easter Vigil) → Mystagogy (Period of post baptismal catechesis) and the OFS – Orientation (Introduction to the OFS) → Inquiry (Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming) → Candidacy (Rite of

Admission) → Profession (Rite of Profession or Permanent Commitment to the Gospel Life). There are also symbols connected with each step – R.C.I.A – name in the book of the elect, scrutinies, white garment, candle and the OFS – Biography of St. Francis, New Testament, Tau Cross, candle, San Damiano Cross. One of the first comments mention in my syllabus is "Now that I'm a full member of the Church, I don't understand why I still have to come to meetings with my group. I like the group but I have other things to do." All too frequently I hear this comment from Ministers who contact professed members who have been regularly absent from monthly Fraternity Gatherings. The Easter Vigil in the R.C.I.A. Program does not mark an end of the formation process but the beginning of commitment to a lifelong discovery and living out the Christian message. So too, after Profession, Secular Franciscans gather in fraternity to pray and explore the apostolic and social justice aspects of our Franciscan commitment. We are constantly in need of ongoing conversion – deepening our relationship with God and our Franciscan family through our Franciscan spirituality characterized especially by a very intense Eucharistic life, poverty, minority-humility, simplicity, obedience, chastity, and fraternity. In November, Teresa Baker gave us two OFS Anagrams – FRATERNITY and HEART. Teresa also shared with us that when there is a conflict between parish ministry and our monthly Fraternity Gathering, we

are called to choose the Gathering. It is second only to family and ordained ministry. Spring is a time of renewal and growth. Let it be a spiritual time for each of us to renew our commitment to our Franciscan family by regular attendance and participation in the monthly gathering.

On Saturday, April 25th, the Tau Cross Region will have a Pastoral and Fraternal Visitation. It will be conducted by Bro. Bob Brady, OFM and Mary Frances Charsky, OFS. This Spring Chapter will be held in the school cafeteria at Holy Family School, Fresh Meadows. Registration will begin at 9:30AM and the day will include Morning Prayer and anticipated Sunday Mass. The Chapter will conclude with supper at 5:00PM. All Ministers are required to attend. All members are invited to spend the day with your Franciscan brothers and sisters and our invited guests. I look forward to seeing you on April 25th.

Let us keep the newly initiated and those who have come into full communion with the Church in our prayers. I wish you a joyous and blessed Easter and a springtime of spiritual renewal and growth.

Peace and all good,
Joan



Fr. Matthias' Message

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

New Life

During the season of Lent I read a book by St. Thomas More, a Secular Franciscan, entitled "The Sadness of Christ" and basically it was a meditation on Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was the last book Thomas More wrote and it was written while he was in the Tower of London awaiting his execution. There was one section in which Thomas More writes of the passage from the Gospel of Mark that reads: "But a certain young man was following Him, having only a linen cloth wrapped around his naked body, and throwing it off he fled from them naked." (Mk 14:51-52) Thomas More writes a lengthy commentary on the passage and, at one point, speaks of resurrection: "But as I was saying, to avoid falling into grave sin we must throw off not

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Regarding the April Regional Chapter
This year our April Regional Chapter will be held in the school lunchroom of Holy Family Church, 175-20 74th Ave, Fresh Meadows. The date will be April 25.

Please keep in mind that fraternity attendance is especially important this year since we will have our regional fraternal and pastoral visitation on this date. All fraternity ministers or their appointed representatives must be present. A member from the National Executive Council and a representative from CSNA will be there to conduct the visitation.

Information has been sent to ministers and spiritual assistants, however, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact a council member. Emails and phone numbers available on page 3, R.E. Council

merely a cloak or gown or shirt, or any other such garment of the body, but even the garment of the soul, the body itself. For if we strive to save the body by sin, we destroy it and we also lose the soul. But if we patiently endure the loss of the body for the love of God, then just as the snake sloughs off its old skin, (called, I think, its 'senecta') by rubbing it against thorns and thistles and, leaving it behind in the thick hedges, the snake comes forth young and shining, so too those of us who follow Christ's advice and become wise as serpents (Mt 10:16) will leave behind on earth our old bodies, rubbed off like a snake's old skin among the thorns of tribulation suffered for the love of God, and will quickly be carried up to heaven, shining and young and never more to feel the effects of old age."

Thomas More writes long sentences. This section contains only three sentences, but there is so much packed into these three sentences. We recall that Thomas More is awaiting execution. He realizes it is better for him to lose his body rather than to fall into grave sin. He endures the thorns of tribulation knowing he will quickly be carried up to heaven. But his thoughts also help us in understanding and enduring the tribulation we suffer, particularly as we age. He presents us with the hope based on the Gospels and the words of Jesus, that one day we will be shining and young and never more feel the effects of old age. We too will rise with Jesus. One day we will celebrate our resurrection. But let us also consider some more practical applications. We just endured a very severe winter. For many of us, and our fraternities do have a number of aged members, in some cases all the members are aged, and we found this winter particularly difficult. In many instances our fraternity gatherings had to be cancelled. This decision of cancelling a monthly gathering was difficult especially for Minsters and members of their councils, but it was prudent. Many of our fraternities meet on Sundays and so many of the storms or effects of storms or anticipation of the storms

occurred on weekends. The sidewalks were slippery, parking was almost impossible and in some instances driving was dangerous. I know in taking my mother to the doctor's office I would lay out rugs all the way from the door of her house to the car, and at the doctor's office I again laid out rugs to the doorway of the doctor's office, so that she wouldn't slip. All of us endured the 'thorns of tribulation.'

But there were some fraternities who did not need to cancel. They were larger fraternities and in some cases their members were younger, or they had members who had sons and daughters who brought them to meetings.

Consequently, a further consideration is, once again, vocations. In a number of instances, larger fraternities did not cancel, because there would always be a quorum who would show up no matter the weather. Then there were times where the members were younger, and the monthly gathering was not cancelled. Younger people are more adventurous and not as affected by extreme weather conditions. If a fraternity has younger members, they can bring older members to the monthly gathering. Maybe, they can even lay out rugs for the older members.

But we must always strive for new members. This winter brought this issue once again to the forefront. Pray for vocations. Participate in the formation of new members. Invite people to the monthly gathering. Cultivate a welcoming atmosphere within the fraternity. Advertise your time and place of meeting. Ask the pastor if you can set up a table in the back of the Church after Masses and hand out leaflets and brochures on the Order, or ask if you could speak at all the Masses for a minute about the Secular Franciscan Order.

One day we will all slough off the old skin and become new and young once again. In the meantime, let us pass on our heritage to a new generation.

The Graces of the Franciscan Charism: Environmental Stewardship

Margaret Birth, ofs
St. Michael Fraternity

If there is any quality that most people associate with St. Francis of Assisi, and thus with Franciscans (secular or otherwise), it may be a love for Creation. Images of the saint surrounded by all types of animals abound. The fictional character of Dr. Doolittle is sometimes thought to be a sort of non-Christian St. Francis of Assisi. Franciscans are often given the label of “nature lovers”; I prefer to use the term “environmental stewards.”

Article 18 of the 1978 Rule of the Secular Franciscan order (our current Rule) states: “Moreover they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which bear the imprint of the Most High, and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.” This is the first mention specifically made of respect for God’s Creation within any version of the Rule for the order

(1221, 1289 and 1883 having been previous versions); it is not, however, a mention that appeared there from out of the blue.

St. Francis of Assisi’s “Canticle of Creation” was his own expression of love for God’s Creation. Stories about St. Francis of Assisi include the famous ones about his taming of the wolf of Gubbio and about his preaching to the birds.

The saint’s love for nature is also not a Franciscan value that came from nowhere. Remember: Franciscanism is all about going “from gospel to life and from life to the gospel”—that’s Article 4 of our Rule. Environmental stewardship is more than a Franciscan value; it is a Biblical value. The Bible starts with the Creation story; “God saw that it was good” (or some version of this phrase) appears in Genesis 1: 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and 31—seven times. Our human stewardship over this “good” Creation is also first mentioned in Genesis—verse 26. These are the first, but not the final, mentions of God’s making of and love for this universe in which we live, or of us human beings whom He calls to be caretakers of His Creation.

franciscansinternational.org/Environment.103.0.html) as one focus among several; they particularly work in the area of climate change and the poor. There are other Franciscan groups that do work in the field of environmental stewardship, as well, such as Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), which provides ways to inform oneself and to get involved. We can become politically active advocates for God’s Earth and its inhabitants.

We can also, however, look for simple changes we can make in our own lives:

READ – Make informed choices. (Hybrid car or standard 4-cylinder? Cloth diapers or disposable?)

REDUCE – This isn’t just about buying less; it’s also about reducing use of Earth’s resources—refilling water bottles, turning off lights and appliances when not in use (including turning off computers overnight).

REUSE/RECYCLE – Donate unused clothes and household items to charity. Aim to put out more bags of recyclables than of trash. “One man’s trash is another man’s treasure,” as the saying goes; and recycling is another way of avoiding simply adding to this world’s trash.

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How can we live out this charism of environmental stewardship in our daily lives as Secular Franciscans? Our expressions of this charism can be as individual as we are.

We can inform ourselves and see what others are doing. The Franciscan Action Network has, among its several foci, one on “climate justice” (<https://franciscanaction.org/issues/climate-justice>); the Franciscan Earth Corps is an offshoot of FAN for young adults who wish to put action to their ideals (<https://franciscanaction.org/earthcorps/about>). Franciscans International also includes environment (<http://>

St. Boniface Fraternity... 25th Anniversary Celebration

will celebrate its 25th Anniversary on June 28, 2015 beginning with Mass at 1 PM at St. Boniface Church, 631 Elmton Road, Elmton. Immediately following they will serve some light refreshments downstairs in the rectory.

If you are interested in celebrating with the fraternity, please contact Minister Linda Notarnicola at 1-516-825-3231 by no later than Saturday, June 14.

All are welcome to attend

Formation Corner

Judy Heffernan, ofs
Regional Formation Director

“FUN” Workshop

Coming this Fall!
Look for the date in the next
Newsletter



Did you Know?

There will be 4 places where you
look for the answers to these
questions

Constitutions, The Rule, National Statutes and the “FUN” book

On “Admission” into the Order of
Franciscan Secular

Constitutions:

1. There are 4 conditions for
Admission to the Order, can you
name them?

The Rule:

2. Who is engaged in this process of
Formation and Admission?

National Statutes:

3. What is the minimum age that we
can accept someone into Initial
Formation in the USA?

4. What is the necessary requirement
or presupposition for a person in
Initial Formation to do?

“FUN” book

Under the steps of Formation

5. What are the minimum
requirements for Admission? (Clue
there are 3)

Look for the answers on
page 5, column 3.

No cheating.

Try to find the answers
and then see if you are
right.



Around the Region

Admissions:

Feb. 20: Mary Ramos, St. John XXIII

Deaths:

Jan 13: Bridget Gavin, ofs, St. Barnabas

Activities:

March 17: Monthly OFS luncheon at
the Candlelight Diner, Rte. 454,
Commack.

March 21: Lenten Day of Recollection,
Immaculate Conception Fraternity, the
Presenter, Rev. Nick Mormondo, ofm,
Cap. Topic: Charism of St. Francis and
the Secular Franciscan Order.

Upcoming Events:

April 25: Tau Cross Region Chapter to
be held at Holy Family Church, 175-20
74th Ave., Fresh Meadows, NY. All
ministers or reps required to attend.

April 28-30: Regional Retreat at
Cormaria, Sag Harbor.

August 17-20 F.L.I.C. to be held at
Mount Alvernia Retreat Center,
Wappinger's Falls, NY. For more info
contact Dcn. Bob Campbell at 1-516-
599-4256 or at Arcyc@aol.com

August 22, Saturday: Annual Day of
Recollection offered by St. Lawrence of
Brindisi Fraternity at Our lady of the
Island Shrine, Manorville. Registration:
9:30-10, stipend \$10. For info, call
631-698-5403

August 29, Saturday: New Pentecost
Fraternity will hold it's annual HELP of
Suffolk County picnic for undomiciled
families living at the shelter. Donations
and volunteers are welcome. For more
info, contact Frank Harnos at fharnos@
aol.com or call 631-834-1549.

An Early Reminder Picnic! Save the Date!

We will have our annual regional
picnic on Saturday, June 28. It will be,
as usual, held at Elwood Park, 309
Cuba Hill Road in the town of
Huntington. Time is 10-4

All are invited; no charge.

Questions: call Frank Harnos at (631)
834-1549; email fharnos@aol.com or
Pete D'Amato at (631) 331-7680;
email at damato1@optonline.net



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
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damato1@optonline.net.

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631-331-7680

Fraternity Apostolate – Communication with Prisoners

Various contributors

Several years ago, at FLIC, one of the guest speakers was Otto Schaefer, the Regional Formation Director for Solanus Casey Region SFO. Otto told us about his ministry to men in up-state New York prisons, to teach them about Franciscan spirituality. They formed a group named Friends of Francis and even published a Franciscan Newsletter! One of their “apostolates” is to pray for fellow Franciscans. Otto and another SFO, Dave Palmer, have continued their monthly lessons with these men.

At FLIC 2014, Otto paid another visit and as a result (see message from Grace Callahan below) Blessed Raymond Lull Fraternity has taken on a new apostolate: writing to – and praying with and for - prisoners, especially (but not limited to) the Friends of Francis. We have been joined by several members of other fraternities in Tau Cross Region. As you will see by some comments below, God has taken charge.

From Grace Callahan: God is full of surprises. You never know where He is going to pop up. It was the last night of FLIC 2014 and one of God’s messengers showed up at our table. Otto Schaefer is his name. We were all touched by his involvement in the Prison Ministry. And so, I took the bit, and ran with it. The communication that I have with the people who have not had mail in a long time is a rewarding experience. Now I have Anthony, Moss and Tony praying for my nephew, Timmy who is dealing with a life sentence without parole. I, in turn pray for each one of them. One person is having a meeting with his parole board which is coming up pretty soon. Another is looking forward to getting out in the near

future and another man asks for surgery coming up.

Through their connection with "Friends of Francis" they realize that God is still with them. Some of the comments they have made are:

"I feel like a child of an awesome God"

"I feel the need for someone to be there for me"

"I'm looking for the day I will be free."

"No matter where you are, God knows your situation."

I find my faith in God increasing as a result of the connection with these brothers.

From Vi Pultorak: I received a letter from Felipe (one of the founding members of the Friends of Francis). He thanked me for sending him a spiritual healing card for his recent surgery. At the end of his note he said “I also would like to send my most humble and sincere blessings to all our Franciscan brothers and sisters. Let us continue to elevate each other in prayer and supplication. It is always a blessing to hear from our Franciscan brothers and sisters!”

From Jean D’Onofrio (St John XXIII Fraternity): This is a most humbling ministry as we together pray for healing from our hurts, illnesses and hidden wounds, knowing that we meet the suffering Christ in each other.

From Otto Schaefer: One of the men came to me Sunday while we were in Sullivan Correctional Facility and asked me to pass along his thanks for the letters from your Fraternity. At first he didn't realize how you knew about him because he has not been coming to our Franciscan gatherings in recent years. Then he realized that you were part of the Friends of Francis. He asked that I pass along his gratitude to all who have written him and what a positive difference the letters have made in his life. continued on page 6, column 1

SECULAR FRANCISCAN DAY OF RECOLLECTION

DATE: Saturday, Aug. 22

TIME: 9:30 A.M., until 3 P.M.

WHERE: Shrine of Our Lady of the Island, Eastport, NY

DIRECTOR

Fr. Matthias Wesnofske, ofm, Cap.

Presented by St. Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity

Sign-In: 9:30-10:00

For additional information call

631-698-5403

Stipend: \$10.00

Formation Corner Answers

Constitutions:

1. to profess the Catholic Faith
2. to Live in Communion with the Church
3. to be in good moral standings
4. to show clear signs of a vocation

The Rule:

2. Entire fraternity

National Statutes:

3. 17 yrs old because they can be temporarily professed until they turn the requirement age of 21 years old to be Professed
- Remember this is the age of entering into “INITIAL FORMATION” Not the “ORDER”
4. To participate in the life of the Local fraternity

#5 “FUN” book

*Formation Section
Steps of Formation pg8*

5. Time of Initiation
6. Time of Formation
7. Time of the Profession of the Rule

Fraternity Apostolate-

continued from page 5, col. 2:

Portion of the Easter letter which was mailed to each Friend of Francis (with our Fraternity Newsletter enclosed):

Our writing to you in prison has changed us. We have seen your goodness and how Jesus is working through you. We have received new life and new purpose through sharing with you. We thank you and wish you a blessed Easter season.



Day of Reflection:

sponsored by
Blessed Raymond Lull
and
Our Lady of the Atonement
Fraternities

Saturday, June 20
at
Tabor Retreat Center, Oceanside
Cost \$25.00; bring brown bag lunch

For information contact:
Augusta VanDuzen
917-539-0384 or
amyand@verizon.net or
Mary Cammarato
at 516-432-4370

F.L.I.C.

(Franciscans Living In Community)

August 17-20

at

Mount Alvernia Retreat Center
Wappinger Falls, NY

Main Speaker:
Teresa Baker, ofs
Cost is \$275.00

For information please contact:
Dcn Bob Campbell, ofs
516-599-4256 or
arcyc@aol.com

Rite of Admission- Fraternities: Left, St. Lawrence of Brindisi, Right, St. John XXIII "Daisy the Clown"?...



Sylvia Murdolo (instructor), Michael Rocco, Camille Puozzi, Migdalia Vaca, (spiritual assistant) Father Matthias Wesnofske ofm. Cap.
Date: February 1, 2015



L-R Miriam McDade (welcomed); Pat Consorte, Minister; Jean D'Onofrio, Director of Formation; Mary Ramos (Rite of Admission); and Br. Richard Contino, OSF Spiritual Assistant.
Date: February 20, 2015



..Or Louise Sandberg?
Guess Epiphany 1/9/15



Ronald Chirco (formation Director), Camille Puozzi, Michael Rocco, Robert Metz (minister), Migdalia Vaca, (spiritual assistant) Father Matthias Wesnofske ofm cap



Let's celebrate Epiphany. Bl. Raymond Lull Fraternity
January 9, 2015

Happy



Easter