

# 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!

What I share with you in this column is taken in part from the Annual Spring Chapter of Visitation on April 25, 2015. It is a summary of the Annual Report that I submitted to NAFRA.

For the year ending 2014 we had 563 active professed members of which 90 members were excused. We had 32 Candidates, 34 Inquirers, 17 in Orientation, and 12 affiliates. Twenty-one members were lapsed, and 18 members welcomed Sister Death.

Ninety-three percent of our members are English speaking, 7% are Spanish speaking predominately in Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Louis Fraternities. We have 17 Spiritual Assistants who assist 23 fraternities.

### Formation

About 1/3 of our Fraternities are using the FUN Manual for Initial Formation. This is being supplemented with the book, *The Franciscan Journey*. Judy has conducted workshops to unveil the myth about the FUN Manual and more workshops are planned in the fall. National is sponsoring a Formation Workshop this summer and hopefully Judy will bring back ideas for better implementation of the Manual. In addition the following formation texts are being used for initial and ongoing

formation: *Fully Mature with the Fullness of Christ, To Live as Francis Lived, Catch Me a Rainbow, OFS Rule and Constitution, The Journey and the Dream, Come and See, Reflections on the Peace Prayer, Share the Good News*, NAFRA and CIOFS websites

### Fraternal Life

Our Region sponsors an Annual Retreat thanks in large measure to Bob Campbell. Forty four of us attended the retreat at Cormaria. We were blessed to have Fr. Jim Gavin, ofm, Cap. return for a second year. Five other fraternities – St. Lawrence of Brindisi, New Pentecost, Our Lady of the Angels, Our Lady of the Atonement and Blessed Raymond Lull jointly sponsored 3 other days of recollection throughout the year; at Advent, in June and in August. Many of our members will attend FLIC at Mount Alvernia Retreat Center in Wappinger Falls. Some members gather weekly for Bible Study, some gather monthly for lunch at a local diner and some fraternities hold special Franciscan services such as Transitus, Greccio and Christmas Crib devotions. One of our fraternities – St. Lawrence of Brindisi - had an Anointing of the Sick Mass and transports homebound members to the Mass.

We are present in the Church and in the world through various ministries – we volunteer at homeless shelters, tutor children, donate to food pantries, raise money for overseas development projects, tend community gardens, a

prison ministry, letter writing to prisoners, right to life, soup kitchens, sponsor a refugee family, donate to babies and mothers in need, birthright and donation/support to many Franciscan Orders and ministries. The list is of spiritual and corporal works of mercy that we are involved in endless.

We stay in touch with our members through our quarterly newsletter – also through phone calls, cards, visits, bringing them the Eucharist, providing transportation to/from the monthly gathering

Our goals for the past two years have been to encourage youth, on-going formation and vocation promotion/ getting the word out. The REC has tried through presentations at both the Spring Chapter and Fall Gathering to bring speakers to inform, enlighten and perhaps challenge us all as we strive to achieve these goals. Although we still have a way to go, we feel we are on the right track and have made progress toward achieving these goals. We will continue to grow in these endeavors.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize and express my gratitude to the Regional Executive Council that meets several times a year to address issues and concerns regarding the Region – Fr. Matthias, Raymond, Alicia, Robert, Judy, Augusta and Jean - Thank you for your generosity and your willingness to serve so faithfully and loyally.

Peace and all good,  
Joan

## Fr. Matthias' Message

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

### Think Positively

Many of the fraternities in the Region are conducting elections this year. Elections can be an exciting moment in the life of a fraternity; new beginnings. But they can also be discouraging, as some fraternities cannot get a slate of members who are willing to serve on the local council. As a result, a number of them are considering deactivating or merging with others or encouraging members to find another fraternity. The same thing is happening in the First Order. It can be very discouraging as members age and as fraternities experience fewer vocations.

However, I have tried to think positive and look for some encouraging signs. This spring there have been a number of professions in the Region. One fraternity in the Bronx had two professions and one Investiture. Another fraternity on Long Island three professed. At least three fraternities have professions scheduled for September and October. These are fraternities that have actively pursued vocations and made it a priority.

One of the most encouraging experiences for me this spring was attending a council meeting of newly elected members. It was their first meeting. It was the best council meeting I have ever attended. The average age of the members was 57 years old. The agenda was very well prepared. The meeting began with a consideration of art. 17 and art. 31 of the Constitutions, describing the vocation and the duty of leaders of the fraternity. Then art. 50 of the Constitutions was discussed and each position of the council and what was expected of the person in that position,

in detail. For example, the Vice Minister was not just to assume the Minister's responsibilities if needed, or attend Regional events in lieu of the Minister; but he/she was to be the Vocation Director, and the Liturgical and Apostolic Activity coordinator. The keeping of records, the website, a phone list for a prayer chain of sick or ailing members, fund raising activities, were all discussed. A calendar was distributed of all the activities, events, and special meetings that would take place during the coming year; the dates for anticipated Professions, the Day of Recollection, Mass of Anointing for the sick and excused members, Mass and supper for the feast of St. Francis, etc. This was followed by a lively discussion of apostolic activities; the Spiritual Adoption Prayer Program; helping in a food pantry and whether the fraternity's involvement could be expanded; speaking at all the Sunday Masses in local parishes and setting up tables at the doors of the church, distributing leaflets on the Order and answering questions; youth activities and what we can do to expand this activity; discussing how the fraternity could be of help to the financially strapped parish where they meet; how they could be more attentive to sick, excused and absent members.

Needless to say this first meeting of the newly elected council was a little longer than the usual monthly meeting, but the minister apologized and said future meetings would be shorter but it was important to do these things now to get off to a good beginning.

It was an excellent meeting and was encouraging. It gave you a positive and hopeful outlook for the future; at least of that particular fraternity.

There are healthy and hopeful happenings in the Region. However, it must happen in all our fraternities.

## What's in A Name?

Frank Scotto, ofm  
St. Helen Fraternity

How many times do we use the word 'Secular', in referring to our way of life as Franciscans of the Third Order but never really knew from whence the name 'Secular Franciscan' arose?

Strange but true!

There are many in the order who are still of the assumption our patriarch, Saint Francis of Assisi, gave us this title. The truth of the matter is he did not. What confuses many of us is Chapter 7, paragraph 2 of the rule approved by Pope Pius VI in which it states: "united in the vocation as Brothers and Sisters of Penance ....."

What! You mean we are not Seculars? Of course we are!

Ok, how did we jump from being Brothers and Sisters of Penance to Seculars? Believe me, it was a long road of change, and a very interesting one. Let's travel along that road together, shall we?

Firstly, how is 'secular' defined in our world today? Get ready for this one!

1. Relating to worldly things or to things that are not regarded as religious, spiritual, or sacred.
2. Not pertaining to or connected with religion (opposed to sacred )
3. Concerned with nonreligious subjects.
4. (Of members of the clergy) Not belonging to a religious order; not bound by monastic vows (opposed to regular ). (Well, they got this one right!)

It seems confusing as to why we were given the name 'Secular Franciscans', when the term has become demeaning in our socially driven world, and clouding the very holy vocation we

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have chosen. In earlier times, 'secular' did not carry the non-religious connotation it does today, and seldom, if at all, used or overshadowed by the more common term 'laity'. Luckily, we live our Franciscan lives by a rule, not by a dictionary. If the term 'secular' describes everything we are not, then why are we called Secular Franciscans? In order for us to see why we are referred to as Seculars, we need to start back centuries before St. Francis.

Many years prior to St. Francis, one of the penitential movements prevalent among many of the laity was commonly known as "Ordo Poenitentium", who believed that being penitential was to honor God and lead a good, holy life. In these earlier days of the Church, those that sinned confessed before a bishop and were given 'penance', thus the name Penitents arose. This group was not recognized by the Church or

sanctioned by any religious order but none the less widespread within the laity. The non-conformity of these penitents and the growing fundamental life of eremitism, gave way to false beliefs and in some cases heresy with such wide spread groups as the Waldenses, and the radical Cathars with their dualistic view. The Popes in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century realized that this situation needed to be corrected, and promulgated great reform in the Church to insure the conformity of these penitents and their movement to the beliefs and practices of the Christian church.

In the late 1100s, a lay penitential group, "Humiliati" was established in northern Italy. In 1201, Pope Innocent III approved their way of life in "Propositum", which permitted two separate orders for men and women, plus a third order called Tertiaries (lay people living under vows). Following in the years 1208 and 1210, with the "Propositum Vitae", two additional religious groups were approved and given an oral papal blessing. Propositum Vitae approved the creation of the Friars Minor as well.

The alacrity of the laity in seeking an autonomous persona finally gained momentum, and the Church's eyes were drawn to it, realizing the spiritual and holy nature of those wishing to live the apostolic life the 'vita apostolica' : in simplicity, in poverty, in prayer and in service to God.

In the next issue of the Tau, Part II will continue to trace our journey in discovering the origin of our name heritage- Secular Franciscans.

Altissimu, onnipotente bon Signore,  
from 'Canticle in the original Umbrian

**Around the Region**

**Admissions**

- 3/10:** Jane Magna-D'Anna  
Kathleen Paul  
O.L of the Atonement
- 4/18:** Rosa Pessolano  
Poor Clare

**Professions**

- 4/18:** Rosemarie Beitz; Mary Walsh  
Poor Clare
- 5/31:** Michael Brennan  
Anthony DaVino  
New Pentecost
- 6/6:** Stacie & Gregory Baltrusitis,  
Maria Sarra  
Holy Poverty

**Deaths**

- 2/13:** Joseph Di Rosse
- 3/4:** Madeline Nolan  
O.L. of the Atonement
- 4/24:** Patricia Leptak  
St. Monica
- 5/13:** Alice Gremillot  
St. Mary Queen of Angels
- 5/19:** Marie Erker  
Cure of Ars
- 5/23:** Gracemarie Tracz  
Poor Clare
- 5/31:** Dorothy McNamee  
St. Monica

**Anniversaries**

- 26 Years:** Dan Volpe,  
St. Agnes of Assisi
- 20 Years:** Barbara Hansen  
O.L. Queen of Angels

**Upcoming Events**

- 8/17-8/20:** FLIC at Mt. Alvernia Retreat Center, Wappinger Falls, NY, See box on Page 5
- 8/29:** Annual Day of Recollection sponsored by St. Lawrence of Brindisi Frat. See box on Page 5
- 8/29:** Annual Help Suffolk Picnic sponsored by New Pentecost Frat. for info, contact Frank Harnos at 631-834-1549 or fharnos@aol.com

**Regional Executive Council:**

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Spiritual Assistant: (631) 286-7921 ext 28; [mwesnofr@aol.com](mailto:mwesnofr@aol.com)

## Formation Corner

Judy Heffernan, ofs  
Regional Formation Director

### Our Identity

Our identity is: Who we are,  
to whom do we belong,  
and what is our mission or  
purpose.



Before we can look at our identity as Franciscans we need to be reminded of whom we are as humans, then as Christians, then as Franciscans. We need to ask ourselves why & how we were created? What is our purpose? If you go back to the Baltimore Catechism days the answer or goal would be and still is today, to know, love, and serve God in this world so we can be with Him in the next.

We are made in His image and likeness. We are made by God for God. If the Creator made us one way and we stray from this design we will never become our full authentic self. Everything has its meaning in relationship to this. When we stray and forget the goal, nothing makes sense. We become confused, distracted, anxious, depressed, and many other idioms when our navigation compass is off kilter.

Ok so how do we do this?  
We must look at ourselves as Secular Franciscan Christian human beings. They should all tie together and make up one being. We should not be one person in one situation and someone else in another. Keeping the goal in mind I want to ask you these questions?  
The answers can be found in the Rule, The General Constitutions (GC), The National Statutes (NS), and The FUN book FUN.

#### In the Rule

What is our Identity as Secular Franciscans?

\*St Francis addressed our Identity right in the Prologue

Can you name the Identity of the 1<sup>st</sup> order and the 2<sup>nd</sup> order?

#### In the GC

How do we carry out and cultivate our Identity?

\*Look under Section The Form of Life Article 13 1-3

#### In the NS

Can you name the external sign that Identifies us as Secular Franciscans?

\*Look under Article 16 Fraternal Life.

#### In the FUN

Our Identity is not just what we do but who we become.

Who are we? To whom do we belong? What is our Mission as a Franciscan?

\*Look under the chapter Our Identity in the Introduction and under the section Franciscan dimension

Talk about it at your next Fraternity gathering. Review it. Share it. Live it.

God Bless you  
Judy Heffernan ofs  
Formation Director

## Worthwhile Thoughts

Grace Calahan  
Blessed Raymond Lull Fraternity

### On...

#### A Day of Recollection at Tabor

On Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, 42 Franciscans (including 7 Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal) gathered at Tabor Retreat Center, in Oceanside NY, for a Day of Recollection. The day was co-sponsored by Our Lady of the Atonement and Blessed Raymond Lull Fraternities. The theme of the day was The Joy of the Gospel (based on Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium)

Sr. Agnes, a Franciscan Sister of the Renewal was the presenter for the Day of Recollection at Tabor. Those who went to it were in for a real treat. Sr. Agnes is the epitome of joy. We were introduced to her postulants and that was good getting to know where they came from. One of them said "I wanted to be a lawyer until I fell in love with Jesus." Sister Agnes said that the joy of the Gospel comes from our encounter with Christ. She has found that the more she reads the Bible, the more her joy comes to her. The joy comes from the personal relationship with Him. The road to peace starts with a smile. Joy is a choice! The Holy Spirit is the Lord speaking to us. The Bad Spirit gives immediate joy but turns into emptiness - a void. It discourages us, gives us a feeling of sadness. Be aware. Reject it. The Good Spirit encourages us and we feel filled not empty. We are thankful for the gifts God has given us, resulting in spiritual consolation.

An acronym to remember:  
G-----Be aware and grateful.  
R-----Request the Holy Spirit to look at me.  
A----Attitude - How do I respond?  
C.....Contrition - Chart your

continued on next page

### NOTICE

HELP Suffolk Picnic  
for undomiciled families  
Sponsored by New Pentecost  
Fraternity  
HELP Suffolk Facility  
685 Brookhaven Ave.  
Bellport, NY

Saturday, August 29; 9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Franks, Soda, Gifts for Children  
Do You Want to HELP?  
contact

Frank Harnos, ofs at:  
631-834-1549 or [fharnos@aol.com](mailto:fharnos@aol.com)  
for additional information

continued from previous page

course – Action  
E-----Energy – Enthusiasm

Prayer is simply a conversation with Jesus. The highest form of prayer is the Mass.

Recommended Reading: The Ideals of St. Francis by Hilarin Felder and The Examen Prayer by Timothy Gallagher

and Offered By...

FAN

Patrick Carolan from Franciscan Action Network spoke recently at a meeting attended by many Secular Franciscans. He and 50 other members had met with Pope Francis recently. The aim was to "move beyond the ways of war". The focus was on Climate Change. He made it clear that God sees one earth with no boundaries. God is expressed in all creation. St Francis actually talked to the birds. He had a relationship with the Creator. Mr. Carolan posed some thought provoking questions. "Are we in a right relationship with God? Are we living in a world of separation?" People in the Congo are working so we can have cell phones. Consumerism is one of the causes of climate crisis. Every piece of earth is our church, our tabernacle. "How do we live the gospel every day? Are we trying to transform into that mode of living - a relationship with creation? We are controlled by a corporate America. It's all about making money. There is a need to transform society. The encyclical by Pope Francis (*Laudato Si*) is available.

Laudato sie, mi Signore cum  
tucte le Tue creature,  
from 'Canticle' in the original Umbrian

### FORMATION NOTICE

**1<sup>st</sup> "FUN" Workshop**  
September 19 2015

**To all Formation Directors and Instructors**

**Place:**

St Lawrence the Martyr Church  
Sayville, NY 11782  
Bethany Center entrance on west side of Church

**Time:**

1pm to 4 pm

**Materials needed:**

1. FUN manual
2. Pen and paper
3. Formation manual used for Initial Or Ongoing Formation

**RSVP**

Judy Heffernan ofs  
631-395-5442 or by email  
[jmh blessings@optimum.net](mailto:jmh blessings@optimum.net)

### A Day of Recollection at Alvernia, Centerport

To prayerfully reflect on St. Francis' Canticle of the Creatures within the context of Ilia Delio's Compassion: Living in the Spirit of St. Francis and Pope Francis Encyclical: *Praise be*

th  
Saturday, July 25 at Alvernia  
(Centerport) - 9:30 am to 2:00 pm  
Presented by Bro. Richard Contino,  
OSF

Sponsor: Holy Poverty Fraternity  
Suggested donation: \$15  
Coffee provided; Bring lunch.

th  
RSVP by Monday, July 20  
contact (Dcn) Joe Peralta, ofs:  
[jperalta@stpatrikbayshore.org](mailto:jperalta@stpatrikbayshore.org).  
631-665-4911 x 152 (office).  
631-662-6063 (cell)

LATE INQUIRIES. (after July 20<sup>th</sup>)  
631-365-3422

### SECULAR FRANCISCAN DAY OF RECOLLECTION

DATE: Saturday, Aug. 29  
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

### F.L.I.C.

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](mailto: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 11764 or email at: [damato1@optonline.net](mailto:damato1@optonline.net).



June 20, Day of Recollection at Tabor Retreat Center sponsored by O. L. of the Atonement & Bl. Raymond Lull



Sr. Mary Agnes, of the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal-Presenter, June 20 Day of Recollection



Profession: Holy Poverty Fraternity  
Front - Maria Sarra, Gregory and Stacie Baltrusitis (Newly Professed) flanked by Pauline & Ralph DiCicco.  
Back - Dcn. Richard Portuese, ofs (member of Holy Poverty Fraternity), Rev. Nicholas Onyach, fmh, (Associate Pastor - St. Patrick's Bay Shore), and Fr. Matthias Wesnofske, ofm, Cap.



San Damiano Fraternity at the Regional Retreat at Cormaria, Sag Harbor. "Behold, how good and wonderful it is..."



Fr. Jim Gavin, ofm, Cap. & Dcn Bob Campbell at Cormaria



A shot such as this comes along but once: Frank Harnos CAUGHT in flagrante delicto:-)! Remember, Sir; "Those who indulge...BULGE!"

Thank you, Frank, for this day and all of your time, treasure & work for the Region and the fraternity. You earned it. ENJOY!



O.L. of the Atonement Fraternity election, June 9, 2015. Council members, L-R Mary Cammarato, Elizabeth Donnelly, Mary Mauceri, Eileen Ostendorf, Andrew Clarke  
 Congratulations!



Mary Walsh, Rosa Pessolano, Fr. Matthias and Rosemarie Beitz on 4/18/15. Poor Clare Fraternity at Jeanne Jugan Residence. Mary(L) and Rosemarie (R) were professed while Rosa was admitted.

Laudate et benedicite mi Signore et rengratiate e seruiteli cum grande humilitate.  
 from 'Canticle' in the original Umbrian



Frank Harnos and Bob Metz at the Regional Picnic, June 27