

# Tau Cross Region

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

## Minister's Message

Raymond Clarke, ofs, Minister  
Tau Cross Region

### The Beginning of Ordinary Time

Sisters and Brothers, we'll soon be in the liturgical period, of the Church year, known as Ordinary Time. So, I thought that I would take this opportunity to sort of talk about our Region and some of the *extraordinary* things that we've accomplished, over the past year or so. Much of what I'm about to say was reported in the Annual Activity Report, distributed at our Chapter, in April.

Going back to last year, we had a really great Fall Gathering at Queen of All Saints in Brooklyn. Brother Gregory Cellini, OFS gave the opening address, which focused on Secular Franciscans being the ones to carry the torch and keeping the order alive. Fr. Jim Gavin, OFM, Cap cracked open the gospels, enlightened us and invited us to see that "You Can Always Come Home" in his Reflections on Luke's Gospel from a Franciscan Vision. We also had very encouraging talk from Kelly Molten, on Franciscan Formation for Youth: A Spiritual and Ecological Imperative and the Franciscan work being done by the young (more on this later).

There were several other very good talks and that special

Franciscan fellowship that is anything but ordinary. We had seven(7) professions in 2016 and by the time you read this, we will have had six(6) more professions, in 2017. The Sr. Thea Bowman fraternity was reactivated last year and continues to thrive with professions scheduled for this month. Outstanding fraternity councils were elected in seven(7) fraternities last year and in four(4) fraternities, thus far, in 2017. These facts underscore the continued dedication to our order of our sisters and brothers. All of this was accomplished in spite of the loss of 20 of our sisters and brothers during 2016 and year to date 2017. Again, something of an *extraordinary* accomplishment.

We've had multiple other gatherings including our yearly picnic, Portiuncula Celebration, FLIC, Annual Retreat at Cormaria and a number of days of recollection. Our JPIC Animator, Franck Scotto and our YouFra & Young Adults Animator, Jean D'Onofrio, have been crisscrossing the region speaking the Franciscan word of social and environmental consciousness and the importance of youth (new blood) coming into the order. This, too, especially the outreach to the young, requires an *extraordinary* effort on the part Jean and others. The Region and a number of individual fraternities

managed to express our support and commitment to young people engaged in Franciscan activities, with a donation to Catholic Campus Ministries. Our donation helped 10 (ten) students from Stony Brook University join and travel with the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor on a pilgrimage to a number of locations in Cincinnati, OH and Kentucky, where they performed a variety of charitable works, including serving at soup kitchens, homes for developmentally disabled, senior housing, habitat for humanity projects and others.

We also have had a total revamping of our regional website completed by a team consisting of Judy Heffernan, Sylvia Murdolo and Robert Heslar. The team has done an *extraordinary* job of making the website more user friendly and packing it with loads of important and useful information. Much of the information is also available in Spanish. I encourage you all to visit the website.

The Region is in reasonably good financial condition, with approximately 524 active and professed members and lots of Franciscan activities scheduled throughout the remainder of this year and next year. These include an exciting *Identity and Mission Conference and Day of Prayer*, sponsored by the St.

continued on page 2, col 1

**from Minister's Message page 1**

Lawrence of Brindisi fraternity (refer to announcement in the newsletter). I'm especially proud of the work that our regional executive council has been doing, in reaching out to and visiting fraternities across region. We've been greeted so warmly and personally inspired by the fervor, passion and spirituality that we've encountered. You'll be seeing more us throughout the year and beyond.

The aforementioned are merely a sample of the *extraordinary* accomplishments that we've realized over the past year or so. As we enter into these summer months, let's not be ordinary! Let us continue our *extraordinary* efforts, in order to keep our fraternities vital and spiritually charged. Have safe, healthy and *extraordinary* summer.

God continue to bless you all!

## **Reflections on the Rule: Prologue**

Margaret Birth, ofs  
St. Michael Fraternity

This is the first in a new column in which we'll consider, article by article, the Secular Franciscan Rule by which we promise to live if we permanently profess as a member of the order. I am hoping this won't be just *my* column, but that others who feel led to contribute would do so. If interested, do contact our newsletter editor, Pete D'Amato, at [damato1@optonline.net](mailto:damato1@optonline.net).

The Prologue to our current OFS Rule (1978) is actually an ancient document in our Franciscan history: "The Exhortation of St. Francis to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance," also known as "The First Version of the Letter

to the Faithful," written by St. Francis of Assisi himself sometime during the first or second decade of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Space won't allow us to reprint it here, so summarization and commentary will have to suffice.

It is divided into two chapters: Chapter One, titled "Those Who Do Penance"; and Chapter Two, titled "Those Who Do Not Do Penance." This old letter of St. Francis has become a part of our present OFS Rule in part because it is believed to be among the earliest forms of life given to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, or the Brothers and Sisters of Continence, as the first members of the Franciscan Third Order were known. Another reason it's part of our current Rule is that this letter gets at the heart of how St. Francis of Assisi himself regarded issues of penance (the effort to reject a sinful or idle life and embrace God's ways) and continence (the desire to refrain from worldly things and behaviors in favor of godly ones).

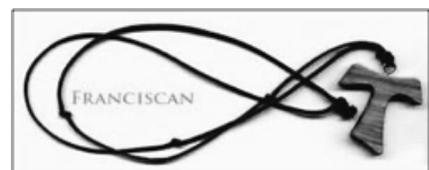
Love is the preeminent theme of "Those Who Do Penance": Love is all-consuming—heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30); love values others as oneself (Matt. 22:39), has the humility to acknowledge and detest one's own sins, and desires to live in a manner that reflects penance for those sins; love eagerly receives Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, and joins itself to Father and Son and Holy Spirit as child (Matt. 5:45), sibling (Matt. 12:46-50), and mother when we glorify Him in our own body (I Cor. 6:20). Love gives the Holy Spirit free reign in our life; this is what St. Francis meant when he so frequently used the phrase *sancta operatio* in his writing: that we allow the Holy Spirit to

*work* through us. "Those Who Do Penance" live in the love of God, in every way possible.

We can see an attitude of penance in how love is God-centered and other-person-centered (as opposed to the self-centered preoccupation of sin), as well as in the fruits one bears. Fruits are "worthy fruits of penance" when they reflect the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

"Those Who Do Not Do Penance," on the other hand, succumb to sin and earthly desires and anxieties with no sense of penance and no wish to internalize Christ's character through the Eucharist. If *love* characterizes "Those Who Do Penance," then *apostasy*—the knowing, voluntary rejection of God—is the hallmark of "Those Who Do Not Do Penance." Such people "knowingly...lose their souls"; they are "blind ones...who are deceived by...enemies, by the flesh, the world, and the devil..."

Even if a prospective or professed Secular Franciscan feels unworthy of, or unequal to, the high calling of "Those Who Do Penance," though, one can take comfort that—as Christ assured the criminal crucified next to Him who begged, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:39-43)—there is always room for conversion. We're not called to ongoing perfection. That isn't humanly possible. Instead, we're called to ongoing conversion, and becoming a faith-filled person of continence and penance is the ultimate goal.



## Fr. Matthias' Message

Fr. Matthias Wesnofske, ofm, Cap  
Regional Spiritual Assistant

### A Secular Spirituality

You can imagine the excitement and thrill the members of my Province experienced when we learned of the coming beatification of Fr. **Solanus Casey**. After 60 years of praying for his cause, at last he is to be beatified. He has special meaning for all of us **Capuchins**, especially since he was a member of our Province.

Fr. Solanus lived in Brooklyn, Harlem, on the lower east side of Manhattan, and in Yonkers. He died in 1957. I slept in his room, celebrated Mass at the same altar he did, handled the same sacred vessels, tried on his skull cap, held his rosary, and his bowl for eating. In a sense he is close to us. But more importantly, his beatification also gives hope to us Capuchins, since he lived the same Rule, basically the same Constitutions, prayed in the same chapel, and served as an example of how Franciscan spirituality can be lived in the United States, even during times of war and during the economic depression of the '30s. He shows that it is possible.

**"Magnificat** is a monthly publication which gives daily Mass texts, prayers, meditations and Saints' lives. This month, June, the saints discussed are 'Saints Who Were Married to Saints.' A quick glance through the various saints listed, shows that almost all of them lived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century. They were mostly martyrs, with rare exceptions, e.g. Saints Louis and Zelig Martin, the parents of St. Theresa of Lisieux.

But in this article, I would like to

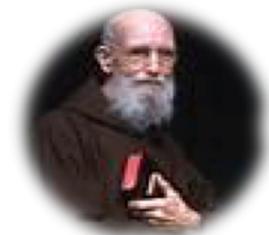
write of '**secular spirituality**'. Over the years we have read and learned of the spirituality of so many of the saints given to us as models, and often they were popes, priests, and religious. If we also consider the fact that in our lifetimes, seculars, lay people in particular, began to distribute Holy Communion, to touch the Body and Blood of Christ, to distribute Holy Communion to the homebound, the sick, to read the Scriptures at Mass, give talks on religious subjects, teach children the catechism, a job reserved in the past to religious; to lead prayer services or communion services. The role of the priest today has mostly become sacramental; even though we were ordained to be lectors, a distinct order, given the power to preach; these orders, or more correctly, these ministries, are now open to all. As I might have mentioned in the past, seculars or lay people, have become more active in the Church, but has a lay spirituality, a secular spirituality, kept up with it?

**St. Francis DeSales**, who was not a Franciscan, nonetheless wrote and preached on the development of True Devotion, particularly for lay people, and in the office of readings on his feast day, in January, we read a selection from his writings. He wrote: "Tell me, please, my Philothea, whether it is proper for a bishop to want to lead a solitary life like a Carthusian; or for married people to be more concerned than a Capuchin about increasing their income; or for a working man to spend his whole day in church like a religious." Francis DeSales was showing that we all have callings, but the vocation can be different and expressed in different ways.

Every Christian has the same Gospel, the same teachings of

Jesus, but unlike many people, Secular Franciscans have so many helps, particularly the Rule and Constitutions which give a distinct path. Lay Spirituality, a secular spirituality, is comparatively new and is distinct. You have been called to live this spirituality and to give to the world its meaning, how it can be lived, today, in 2017. Lay people are more active, more visible in the Church today, and it is easier to demonstrate this spirituality by living it. The Church needs the work, the activity of lay people today, especially here in the United States, and in the western world, because of the shortage of priests and religious today. But just as important, the Church today needs lay people living a distinct spirituality and showing that the lay person can live the Gospel today while being married or single, working 9 to 5, raising a family, supporting their family and raising the family in the Church, being present in the workplace, being present in the world.

We are all called to live the Gospel, the same gospel, but the application can be different. Secular Franciscans are not called to be 'wannabes', 'wannabe religious'. **Your vocation** is given to you as a secular. Tell us that this is possible. Tell us the Gospel can be lived by lay people. Show us that lay people too are canonized and can be saints. Show us this distinct path of living the Gospel.



## A JPIC Moment

Mark Crean, ofs, Minister  
St. Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity

Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) is the term our Secular Franciscan Order uses to refer to how we live out Catholic Social Teaching (CST). I know this is a topic many people don't care for too much. For many, it's too political – are we going to talk about refugees and the welfare state? For others it's too impersonal and impractical – is there really anything I can do to save the endangered species or the environment? And yet, JPIC is part of our calling. It's the idea that the way we live our faith in action is meant to influence the world around us. So, let's look at how it can be a practical part of our lives.

I think the three terms: Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation is a beautiful way to express the heart of CST. Each term has 3 points of focus: personal, family and society. We tend to skip right to the focus on society and get tripped up. We miss the importance JPIC must have first to us and our families. In fact, JPIC needs to start with our own conversion, then grow out from us into our family and then to the world. It's meant to be a progressive process. So how do we begin to personalize it? Here are some suggestions as a start:

Justice is the belief that every person is given life and dignity by God regardless of age (conception to natural death), disability, national origin, economic status, etc. Justice demands an obligation from us to care for all human beings with charity. To love like Jesus and wash each other's feet; to bear the cross and risk our own lives

for our neighbor out of love. This is a personal challenge. It is a challenge for us to live in our families. If it is genuine in us, it will affect our attitudes and the way we speak about the refugee and those on welfare. We would want to reach out to them, and if we couldn't, it would affect how we pray and offer sacrifice.

Peace is found when everything has its proper priority in our life. When we are rightly ordered towards God rather than ourselves, we find personal peace. When the lives of those in our family are rightly ordered and pride does not rule the day, but rather love, humility and forgiveness, peace can be found in the home. Jesus taught us He is the ultimate peacemaker and we are called to be His children. If we are people of peace first in our lives and in our homes, we will strive to work towards peace in the world.

Integrity of Creation is understanding that God created all things in order to reveal Himself to us. Humans, made in His image, are part of His creation and are given the work of caring for creation as His expression of love. Do we personally respect creation as an image of God? Do we foster in our families respect for creation? Do we see how a broken creation affects the poor?

JPIC challenges us to progress out from self-centeredness to generous love. Remember, we were not called to be Franciscan for our sake alone. Our call is to be instruments of Christ's love to the world.

### Advent Day of Recollection Early Reminder

Saturday, December 2: 9am-3pm  
At St. Anthony High School  
Further Info to Follow

## Around the Region

### Admissions

3/18: Fran Gucciardo, St. Helen  
4/24: Maureen Boyle,  
4/24: Joan Difina  
4/24: Jerome Hendrix  
4/24: Robert Noelsch  
Holy Poverty Fraternity

### Professions

3/23: Clara Sanders, St. Adalbert  
4/11: Jane Mango-D'Anna  
4/11: Kathleen Paul  
Our Lady of the Atonement  
4/21: Azucena Basin, St. Helen  
4/21: Ann Castellano, St. Helen  
4/24: William Miller, St. Adalbert  
6/17: Maura Chisim  
6/17: Delcita Daniels  
6/17: Marva Richardson  
6/17: Aneesah Saleem  
Last 4 at Sr. Thea Bowman

### Deaths

3/24: Clara Sanders, St. Adalbert  
3/27: Anthony Picorelli  
Poor Clare Fraternity  
4/26: Miriam Americo, St. Helen  
6/14: Katherine Smith,  
Imac. Conception

### Election

4/09: Ernest De Stephano  
New Pentecost

### Anniversaries

20 yrs: Jean D'Onofrio,  
Holy Poverty Fraternity

### Upcoming Events

8/07-10: F.L.I.C. see ad on p.5  
8/26: HELP Suffolk see ad, p5  
8/26: OFS Identity & Mission  
Day of Recollection, see p5  
11/04: Regional Fall Gathering  
O.L. of Loretto Church  
Hempstead, NY

## A YouFra Update

Jean D'Onofrio, ofs  
Regional Young & Young Adult  
Animator

Peace and Good !

I had found out too late for printing in the Spring newsletter column, however, I would like to thank the members of St. Thomas Moore Fraternity, both collectively and individually for their participation in the SUNY@Stony Brook Newman Club's spring Break mission trip with the Franciscan Sister of the Poor in Cincinnati. A quiet group but young at heart they look forward to supporting further young adults to enliven the Gospel through their generous donation of time, talent and treasure.

It was a pleasure to share with those who attended the Regional Chapter about the connection we have with the Stony Brook University Newman Club students! They are a great group, and Alicia Damato and I were warmly welcomed on behalf of the Region at their meeting following the Mission Trip. Then at another gathering, the photographer had to take a photo of the students with "The Franciscan" ! Wow !!

One of the students has stayed in touch with me, and surprisingly my hubby, a "4th Order" sometimes encounters one of the members in his travels on the University campus!

Finally, I am very excited that the St. Lawrence Brindisi Fraternity has decided to invite young adults to their Mission

Day Sat. 8/26, at the Bay Shore Montfort Retreat Center! They took effort to design a program with emphasis to engage young adults who might be interested in our way of life and spirituality and then also asked for ideas as to how to get the word out to them. Most important of all, may I ask your prayers for the success of their efforts on our behalf-- that the Holy Spirit may inspire those already called that they may discern the vocation already placed in their hearts. Amen !!

**SECULAR FRANCISCAN  
Identity and Mission  
Day of Reflection, Discussion  
and Prayer  
sponsored by  
St. Lawrence of Brindisi  
Fraternity  
August 26, 2017**

**9:00 ending with Mass at 3:15  
at the  
Montfort Retreat Center  
Bay Shore  
Cost: \$25.00 per person  
Bring Lunch**

**For Info: contact Mark Crean, ofs  
at markcrean@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 Councilor Alicia D'Amato at P.O. Box 447, Miller Place, NY 11764 or email at: damato1@optonline.net.

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

**F.L.I.C.  
Franciscans Living In  
Community  
August 7-10  
St. Francis Retreat House  
Wappingers Falls, NY  
Speaker  
Brother Richard Contino, ofs  
Cost per: \$300.00  
Four Days of Socializing,  
Relaxing and Praying!  
For Info: Dcn Bob Campbell  
at  
516-599-4256 or arcyc@aol.com**

**HELP Suffolk PICNIC  
at Facility in N. Bellport  
by: New Pentecost Frat.  
Food, Items of Need for  
Homeless Families  
contact: fharnos@aol.com**

## Regional Executive Council:

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Retreatants at Cormaria Regional Retreat, April, 18-20, 2017



R.M. Ray Clarke (L) and RVM, (R) Frank Scotto with newly professed members of St. Helen Frat. (L) Ann Castellano and (R) Zena Basin, April 29.



Fr. Jerome Wolbert, ofm at the Regional Retreat



Profession at St. Adalbert Fraternity April 24, 2017  
L-R: Carolyn Talento, Minister, Teresa Ornas, William MFr. Raphaeliller, (Both Professed) Ray Clarke, RM, Marie Casalapro, Fr. Raphael Zwolenkiewicz, ofm, Conv.



Jack Hack of New Pentecost Wherever he may be ☺



Jean D'Onofrio, of Holy Poverty at the Regional Chapter, April



Card Players...? No. REC members at the Regional Chapter, April 22: Bottom L-R: Bottom left, Fr. Matthias, SA, John Barry, Treasurer, Augusta Van Duzen, Secretary, Alicia D'Amato, Councilor, Gene Keenan, Formation Director, Frank Scotto, Vice Minister.



Jeannette Borowicz, Audrey Lavin, Charlene Bass