

Tau Cross Region

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

Minister's Message

Eugene Keenan, ofs
Minister, Tau Cross Region

"Witnessing to the good yet to come and obliged to acquire purity of heart because of the vocation they have embraced, they should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters."

Article 12, the Rule.

If ever there was a time for us to fully embrace this article of our Rule, it is now! This COVID pandemic has made us realize how important our relationships with family and friends are and how much we missed contact with our brothers and sisters in our parishes. Now that we are once again able to attend Mass and to receive Our Lord in the Eucharist, we can be fed by His Word and by His precious Body and Blood! We can now be reunited with our parish community and hopefully able to gather soon in person with our fraternities.

During my conversations with several fraternity ministers, it was heartwarming to hear how they were in contact with their members via ZOOM and also teleconferencing. Virtual gatherings and council meetings took place as well as initial formation classes.

What a testament to perseverance and dedication to the Order and our Rule!

Our region has been blessed with dedicated ministers, councils and active members. I have been blessed with a loving, patient and dedicated council to serve our Region and to help keep me grounded during these difficult times. Once we are able to gather again in person and parishes make their meeting spaces available, we will begin making plans to hold our Regional Chapter. I will be meeting with the National Executive Council via ZOOM on June 27th to discuss issues affecting our Order on the national level. After our meeting, I will have more details concerning what was discussed and will advise all ministers on the outcome of these discussions.

The seasons are changing from Spring to Summer and with those changes is the promise of new life and growth. Let's prepare to become active once again and breathe new life into our fraternities. We have the opportunity to bring new apostolates and ways of serving our faith communities and neighborhoods. In service to our homebound members, Ray Clarke, former Regional Minister and Marianne Belucci, former minister of Blessed Josephine LeRoux fraternity are working on using ZOOM technology to keep our homebound members connected to their fraternities. Marianne has transferred to

Our Lady of the Angels Region and together with Ray will work collaboratively with that region to achieve a user friendly system. I have started discussions with the Regional Minister of Our Lady of the Angels and we both look forward to the fruits of this joint labor.

With great sadness, I announce the retirement of our Regional Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Matthias Wesnofske, OFM Cap. He will be moving to his new location of Middletown, CT during the month of August this year. Fr. Matthias has been a trusted and beloved guide to us and has become a close friend to me throughout my tenure on the regional Council. I will miss him greatly as I'm sure we all will and pray for his good health and happiness in this new chapter of his Capuchin life. I have asked both the Provincial Minister and Provincial Spiritual Assistant for the appointment of a new Regional Spiritual Assistant and am awaiting their reply. Whoever is selected will have some very big shoes to fill!

May Our Lord's peace be with you, Fr. Matt! We will always love you and keep you in our hearts!

PAX et BONUM

Fr. Matthias' Message

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

Final Message

After so many years of writing these messages I have finally arrived at that point where this is my final message. As many of you have already heard, the Capuchins are withdrawing from St. Joseph the Worker Parish in East Patchogue, Rockville Centre Diocese, and also from our parish in Manchester, New Hampshire. Because of the lack of vocations we are no longer able to staff these parishes. Consequently, the friars at these two parishes have to move and there are not many options. I will go to Middletown, CT, St. Pius X Friary, as a senior friar. I will no longer be engaged in full time ministry. At our last Regional Council meeting we discussed the possibilities of a replacement. Eugene Keenan, your Regional Minister, has been very attentive to the situation.

So in this last message, I just want to express my sincere thanks to all of you over these past 30 years. Actually, the first Secular Fraternity I served as local Spiritual Assistant was on the 4th of July 1976, the year of the Bicentennial, to the St. Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity. I have served as local SA, Provincial Spiritual Assistant, National Spiritual Assistant and Regional Spiritual Assistant for most of my priesthood. Recently, in packing, I have come across a letter to the Vicar Provincial of my Province concerning my ministry with the OFS and the letter was written in 1990!

I have found it an extremely

rewarding experience as a Spiritual Assistant because of all of you and your dedication to the life and following of St. Francis. When you think about it, almost all my reading, preaching and writing has been on the Rule, the Life and Constitutions of the Secular Order, the Saints within the Order, particularly the OFS Saints and Blesseds, and the wonderful experience a number of us had in travelling to Assisi, Viterbo, Foligno and Cortona. Almost all of my ministry and life concerned Franciscan matters.

But most of all, it was working, ministering and becoming friends with all of you who gave me the example of what Franciscanism means in these turbulent times. So, I just want to thank you for everything over these past years and just wish to encourage you all to continue of this wonderful journey as members of an Order, St. Francis himself established. I will never forget you and I will continue to pray for all of you, no matter how far apart we may be.

*They say one picture is worth...
So Sorry you are leaving us...*



THANK YOU!

Fr. Matthias

A Personal Reflection at your Retirement

My first encounter with Fr. Matthias was in late 2001 when I began attending monthly gatherings at St. Michael Fraternity. Every month for the next nineteen years, traveling from Manhattan or East Patchogue to Ozone Park, Fr. Matthias gave a spiritual reflection. Along with his quarterly articles in the *Tau Cross Newsletter*, his words were always informative, enlightening, relevant and Franciscan. As Regional Minister (April 2010-October, 2015) Fr. Matthias was always available for Council Meetings, Regional Gatherings, Days of Recollection, Picnics, and Elections and Visitations. He was omnipresent! He mentored me as I undertook and completed course work to be a Spiritual Assistant. He guided and encouraged me through the *Franciscan Family Connections* in a positive and practical manner. His comments were always insightful and right on target. Fr. Matthias' fidelity, understanding, availability, and knowledge of all things "Franciscan" in particular, of the Secular Franciscan Order at the Local, Regional and National Levels are commendable. When in doubt, I pray he will be available as a "go to" Friar in his retiring years.

Thank you, Fr. Matthias for your untiring dedication and devotion to the Tau Cross Region and to me personally. I wish you a long, happy and healthy retirement. *"May the Lord bless you and keep you. May He show His face to you and have mercy. May He turn His countenance to you and give you peace. The Lord bless you!"*

Joan Geiger, St. Michael Frat

“Journey Together in Love and... Compassion”

(National OFS theme for the year)

Louise Sandberg, ofs,
Regional JPIC Animaor,
Minister Bl. Raymond Lull Frat.

One of my Franciscan fraternity sisters who is white called me to confess her experience of racism in her own heart. She asked me “What can we do?” The question won’t go away. A dark-skinned friend is speaking to her grandsons about the racism they are experiencing. “I am going to be with my eldest grandkids, 18 and 21 years old, during this difficult time to comfort and pray for justice. For them it’s hard to understand why they are treated differently because of the color of their skin. Love you, Louise.”

All of us are learning how to love or how to hate at all times. One thing we can do is choose to love in every circumstance, to follow Jesus in love and peace instead of reacting in fear and hatred. One of my Jewish pediatric patients, now a college graduate, said she is going to use her white privilege for good. She is selling t-shirts proclaiming “Together We Rise We Stand We Change The World”, all profits going towards legal fees for protesters who have been arrested. She is doing what she can.

My fraternity Blessed Raymond Lull, is very diverse, many colors and nationalities. I have never seen racism in my brothers and sisters. That does not mean that we have not experienced it and been hurt by it. Carolyn Townes, OFS, the National Animator for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, is a woman of color and was a victim of mistaken identity mistreated by police.

She writes about her terrifying experience in this month’s Animator Notes on Racism. When she talks about how tight the cuffs were and how they hurt, I was transported back to my own arrest, protesting the US funding of the war in El Salvador in 1991. In my white privilege, my cuffs were on so loosely that when it came time to fingerprint, I slipped my hand back in easily.

I read about the courage of Chinese people who risked their lives to get the word out to the world about the Coronavirus. Many were arrested by the Chinese Communist Party, never to be seen again. One said “Someone has to stand up and tell the truth”. The next morning, I prayed in gratitude for their courage, asking them to keep blowing the whistles. They laid down their lives to tell us the truth. Minutes after I prayed, my phone rang with alerts from my friends in Uganda about contaminated water making people sick and killing an 81-year-old man called John. I spoke to a Ugandan teacher, Miss Jane, who had 2 young students come to tell her they had no food. She went with them and collected names of 200 families of her students with hunger problems. I couldn’t visit them this year, but I have not stopped serving them. That is what I can do.

I watched English Premier League Football with my husband, just restarting after Corona. They had a moment of silence for those who died of Corona. They took a knee and wore “Black Lives Matter” on their jerseys in place of their names to honor their brothers and sisters. It is what they could do. In this 5th year celebration of Laudato Si, we need a similar wave of change toward our world’s environment. What can we do?

Let’s start with prayer. Holy Spirit, you filled the apostles to speak in every tongue, to sing your praises. Help us to sing out your love in the face of racism, hatred, violence and injustice. Thank you for Franciscans who have led the way before us. Please lead us to be where you want us to be, doing what you are calling us to do.

NOTE WELL:

“Racism is a sin...that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family, and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father. Racism is the sin that says some human beings are inherently superior and others ...inferior...It is the sin that makes racial characteristics the determining factor for the exercise of human rights. It mocks the words of Jesus: *‘Treat others the way you would have them treat you.’*” ~ Brothers and Sisters to Us, U.S. Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism, 1979

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 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.

Formation Corner

Judy Heffernan, ofs
Regional Formation Director

We all came to be from the
one who created us

One Human Race

There are so many things happening in our lives today that are unfamiliar to us which are causing us much uncertainty. Our lives have been divided. We have been locked in our houses, separated from our loved ones, curfews, set, new laws and procedures, put into place. The home of our God was locked and we weren't allowed to go into the Church, to partake of the Mass and receive the Holy Eucharist. We were taken from our jobs and other activities where we interacted with others. But if it was essential, if it was life threatening, allowances were made, but only with our faces covered, gloves worn and a 6ft distance from each other was put into place. Food had to be delivered and left at our doors and for some reason people were afraid they were going to run out of toilet paper. Until the Pandemic came close to home and effected those in our inner circle we were struggling with the decisions of the authority of Government and Church. We became divided. BUT the Pandemic is not what has separated us. The Pandemic has not separated the Created from the Creator. We have separated Us. With all this separation, as when we were young and we were fighting we would be separated to our corners, you would think there would be less chaos in the world. But there is not. The lines of who we are and who we were created

to be became blurred, marred, wiped out. Jesus Christ who came to bring harmony and salvation has been forgotten. We don't know who or even now what we are! Our genders have grown from 2 to 202. People are trying to rewrite history to bring peace among all people. Is this what we need? Is this how peace will be found? Over the news, they are calling it the new normal. I am calling it the new disconnect; the Pandemic of many phases.

In the book of Genesis God Created all the Universe and said each day "that it was Good" but there was only one time where God said "this is Not Good."...."It is not good for man to be alone." God created us to be in relationship with the Divine, others, and all of creation. We have lost our way, our relationships have been divided, and harmony is becoming disordered again.

As Franciscans, we are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world. We are one human race with all the same Father. There should be no divide in who we are or whom we are meant to be and where we are going. It is necessary:

- To become more learned in the signs of the times to reach out to those who are lost.
- To be reminded of history of where we came from, of the Good News of Salvation that Jesus Christ has gained for us.
- And finally, to ask for the Wisdom that is the spirit and truth of to whom and where we are meant to go. Let us be an instrument of His peace.

Open the following scripture passages and read the full text:
Luke 25,27,29, and 37

Isaiah 51 "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug"

How do you apply these to your lives?

Rule 4 *Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly. Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel.*

Rule 11 *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*

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Fr. Matthias

Prayers & Best Wishes on Your Retirement

My first experience of Fr Matt was when he was the SA of BRL. He celebrated mass at every gathering. I also remember him leading us at the regional retreat. I particularly remember one retreat on Secular Franciscan saints. I felt Father's love for them which made them very real for me. His insights into their lives and characters helped me know in my formation what it means to be Franciscan. In fact, whenever he spoke of Francis or Clare, I felt like he knew them personally and has a real relationship with them. I also watched him care for his mother as a good and loving son. I enjoyed hanging out with him at FLIC and as a member of my fraternity council. I am forever grateful for his willingness and ability to bring me closer to God through our Franciscan saints and life. Thank you, Father Matt. I will continue to pray for you.

Louise Sandberg, BRL

I first met Father Matt in the early 1990's when I transferred to Blessed Raymond Lull Fraternity. Father was the Spiritual Assistant. In those days, we were not yet "regionalized" so the 1st Order Province to which we were bonded (in our case, St Mary's Capuchin Province) mostly "ran the show" - at least on paper. But that was never the way Father Matt approached his role. One of the first things that impressed me was his use of pronouns; he always said "us", never "you". He shared his Franciscan vocation with us as part of one family. We regionalized in 1998 and became

regionalized in 1998 and became the Tau Cross Region. The SFO was now totally responsible for its own governance, with a Spiritual Assistant to guide - not govern - it. Father Matt was appointed SA for Tau Cross and also our neighboring Region, Solanus Casey.

I was elected Regional Secretary and served for 12 years (the last 3 as Regional Formation Director.) So in addition to connecting with Father at BRL, I also sat at table with him at monthly Regional Council meetings. At Regional gatherings (Chapter and FRG), we became kind of like "The Lone Ranger and Tonto" at the Masses. It was a joy to serve with Father.

In 1998 I attended my first SELF (later renamed FLIC). Once again Father Matthias was there at all events and meetings as Spiritual Advisor. Was there no end to this man's energy and enthusiasm?

In 2013, Father was named a National Spiritual Assistant, representing the Capuchins. This new assignment entailed a lot of travel around the country and internationally. It became evident that Father could not keep up with his many assignments as local SA and, so sadly for BRL, he had to leave us. Father Matt always stressed the interconnectedness of the Franciscan family, that is, the 1st, 2nd, 3rd Religious and 3rd Secular. He reached out to the Poor Clares and to the Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn to serve as SA's for local fraternities. I will always appreciate the many things Father Matt taught me over the years. He is a true Franciscan.

Our prayers go with you.

Deacon Bob Campbell, BRL

A YouFra Update

Jean Donofrio, ofs
Regional Young & Young
Adult Commission Chair

Peace and good! In our region I have no news to report; however, Nationally, the NAFRA Committee for Youth and Young Adults has been working diligently to put together a Zoom conference training for Regional YYA animators that will commence in July. It was been a pleasure to work on this committee with members across the States. It is very exciting to hear about young adults who are engaging in YouFra formation!

I would also like to thank Fr. Matthias for his support of YYA ministry over the years in our region. Fr. Matthias has been such a steadfast "rock" in our region that it will be hard to envision it without his support, guidance, and dedication. May God bless him with many happy years of retirement in good health!

Note worth Reading:

Christian figures and symbols have become the target of hate and vandalism by protesters a-cross the nation. Latest are St. Junipero Serra as well OFS Patron, Louis IX of France. Churches are also being vandalized.

Rather than working to make positive changes to our nation's laws, some protesters & activists want to eradicate our history as a nation, changing names of cities, eradicating historical figures, as well as figures in our faith. We cannot change the past, but we can change the future - not with violence.

Please pray that people's hearts may be opened to dialogue and work together in peace for the good of all. And pray for the Church, which is also under persecution at this time.

Constance Watz, St. Adalbert

Father Matthias, (cont)

Thank you, Fr. Matthias, for accompanying us Seculars through the Regionalization process with Barbara and Jim O'Neil. Thank you for walking with us as a Franciscan Friar, guiding us to stay true to our "new" Rule. And thank you for all the ways you encouraged us in our vocation, in big and small ways, by your sharing your life's journey and through your ministry at the local, regional and national levels. Additionally, I would like to thank Fr. Matthias for his support of YYA ministry. It will be hard to envision it without his presence. May God bless him with many happy years of retirement in good health!

**Jean Donofrio,
Holy Poverty Fraternity**

Thank you, Fr. Matthias, for your many years of loving service, not only to the Secular Franciscan Order but also to the Good Shepherd Congregation! I first met you a little over 40 years ago, while preparing to enter the Good Shepherd Order. Your homilies were a spiritual help to me. As the direction in my life changed, I later joined the Secular Franciscans 26 years ago, where I met you again. Your presence was a welcome connection to my years as a Good Shepherd Contemplative, where I also took the name "Francis" at my first profession. I was able to use what I learned and experienced there in service to my fraternity. You have been an inspiration to me, as I'm sure to many others over the years. May God reward you with His peace and many blessings in bringing others closer to God! Again, thank you, Father Matthias and....

*May God Bless You
Lovingly and Prayerfully,
Constance Watz
St. Adalbert Fraternity*

Fr. Matt and I go back to 1996 when I visited a Fran. Gathering with a friend, Richie Archer. After I was professed in 1998, I served on the council a couple of times and we met at my home. Fr. Matt attended almost all the Gatherings and Council meetings that we shared for 9 years.

He was pleasant to be with, his huge back round knowledge of the secular order guided our council as we prepared for the monthly Gatherings. Fr. Matt is quiet, knowledgeable, dependable, and the model of a Franciscan Friar in his way of life. He will leave a place in our Fraternity's heart that will be impossible to fill.

Good Bye, Fr. Matt
We'll Miss You
Pax et Bonum

**Bob.Metz
St. Lawrence of Brindisi Frat**

Dear Father Matt,

Many thanks for all your words of encouragement that you gave me throughout the years.

When I first met you, I was a Sister of the Cross of the Good Shepherd, and you gave us a retreat that I have never forgotten.

I will always keep you in my prayers and wish you good health and happiness as you continue to serve others in God's service.

Prayerfully,
**Carolyn Talento
St. Adalbert Fraternity**

Father Matt June 30, 12020

A mixture of sadness and joy washed over me when I heard that Father Matt will be retiring. It brought me back to the days just before my own retirement when these feelings occupied my thoughts in almost equal measure. Soon enough, it became clear that retirement doesn't change who you are, it just changes what you do and the opportunity to serve others differently. Often more cerebral, less physically and mentally exhausting, but no less important and valuable.

While he certainly deserves a peaceful rest after a lifetime of service to his God and Church, we will really miss his smiling face Both Gale and I have had the pleasure of his company as a traveling companion, as a retreat master and as a spiritual advisor since bringing us into the Franciscan family many years ago and whose guidance has been invaluable to our lives. And it is as a friend that he will have a presence in our minds and hearts no matter where he lays his head. Peace. Good. ..And don't be a stranger because we all love you very much. **Gene & Gale Durney,
OLQA Fraternity**



The Last Word!

...Belongs to Fr. Matthias

A New Evangelization A local fraternity newsletter, "The Fidelian" from the St. Fidelis Fraternity in Beacon, N.Y., has a column in its December issue, entitled, 'Just a word from your Spiritual Assistant' written by Fr. Jude Duffy, OFM.Cap. The column is brief, but particularly thought provoking. Fr. Jude starts by writing, 'Francis is widely acknowledged as the contemporary saint. But a key question remains: are his followers, you and I, also contemporary?' Francis lived over 800 years ago, yet even today, people, looking for someone who lived an authentic Gospel life, can still look at the life of Francis and see here someone who actually lived that life, as literally and as authentically, as humanly possible. How do we make the Gospel contemporary today? How do we make the Gospel life credible, authentic, possible, visible, today, as Francis did?

Fr. Jude goes on by writing: 'If today is indeed a Franciscan moment in the history of salvation – a point in time when Franciscanism past and future intersect – then this is our special time for building...' We might consider whether we feel or believe that this is a Franciscan moment, that this is our moment. What difference are we making? What are we passing on to the next generation? What will be said 800 years from now about how the Franciscans made a difference in 2013?

On November 15th, 2012, people made profession in an emerging fraternity in Flushing,

Queens. 15 people!! Apparently, the call to live the Gospel life following in the footsteps of St. Francis continues to be given. The call is contemporary. People continue to respond and commit themselves to this call. And as Fr. Jude writes: '*...we remain convinced and reassured by the opinion of many, that a specific antidote for many current human ills is believing, loving and witnessing to the Gospel in our traditional Franciscan style.*' We frequently hear expressed and listed the many current ills we find in our world today. Do we believe that the Franciscan lifestyle is the antidote? Do we have some answers against the consumerism, greed, materialism, the lack of kindness and gentleness, the disrespect for the human body, for marriage and for life, the abuse of creation, the injustice and the violence, that we find prevalent in contemporary society today?

As some have expressed it, 'If we are not part of the solution, we are part of the problem?'

Fr. Jude says one of the important elements in helping to bring about a New Evangelization, the specific antidote for many current human ills, is believing, loving and witnessing to the Gospel in our traditional Franciscan style. Do we really believe, do we love and do we give witness to the Gospel in our traditional Franciscan lifestyle? Let us examine our lifestyle. Does it ring true? Is it genuinely Franciscan? Is it recognizable as Franciscan? According to Fr. Jude, '*It can only be done if we gather together as a fraternity monthly to strengthen and encourage one another and be*

+ Memento +

Let us remember those Seculars, once among us, who have recently passed to their eternal reward.

*Eternal Rest Grant unto Them
O Lord*

03/15/20: Frances McCarthy, ofs
St. Lawrence of Brindisi

04/02/20: Ann Castellano, ofs
St. Helen Fraternity

04/13: Gloria Powell,
St. Adalbert Frat.

04/14/20: Margaret Henry, ofs
Covid-19 victim
St. Lawrence of Brindisi

04/16/20: Natalie Foster, ofs
former Spiritual Assistant
for deactivated Immaculate
Conception Fraternity

04/17/20: Pamela Seagroatt, ofs
St. Lawrence of Brindisi Frat

05/04: Benjamin Schiff,
St. Adalbert Frat

05/30/20: Miriam Baskin, ofs
Thomas More Fraternity

committed to each other as close partners.' We are not alone in this endeavor. We have each other. 'We must become a permanent part of each other and help each other in the sometime struggle that life brings us. It is the only way that we can preserve and spread the Good News that has been entrusted to us and to which we are called when we became members.'

(Reprinted from Father's article in the January, 2013 issue entitled: **The Year of Faith**; part 2 and still is very timely! Truth does not change!)

