

Tau Cross Region

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

Minister's Message, Eugene Keenan, ofs, Regional Minister

REBUILD OUR ORDER

"The open eyes of Jesus on the cross seemed to lock him in a stare that was both intimidating and beckoning at the same time. He couldn't look away as feelings of doubt and fear, guilt and desire welled up in him. "Lord, what do you want me to do?" He asked, "Show me what you want me to do with my life." And the Lord answered, a voice as clear as day, responded: "Francis, go and rebuild my church which, as you see, is falling down".

My dear brothers and sisters, the message of Christ to Francis at San Damiano is the same message that He gives to each of us as Secular Franciscans. Rebuild My Church! My appeal to you is to meditate on the vision of Francis and the impact it had on his life. After your meditation, I ask that you read and pray Article 4 of our Rule. When you, once again, recognize the vocation to which we have all been called, I call on you to act on your vocation and to begin the process of "rebuilding our order" here in the TAU Cross Region within your own individual fraternities.

We have endured the Good Friday of Covid and lockdown and are now called to live the Resurrection of vaccines and masks. It is now time for us to, once again, begin the process of meeting face to face by observing the guidelines of the CDC for masking safety.

This process will begin at our Regional Fall Gathering to be held on Saturday November 6 at Our Lady of the Snows in Floral Park, NY. We ask that all fraternity ministers or vice ministers attend with one other member from your fraternity. Our vocation calls for us to gather as a community and to socialize as part of the duties of our Order. I understand the need for safety and the comfort we have all become accustomed to through teleconferencing and ZOOM. Franciscans are meant to be in the physical company of other Franciscans. Let's be brave enough to take the first step together.

On another note, please let's be charitable to each other. I have recently spent time on the phone with a few fraternities where behavior was anything but Franciscan. We need to treat each other with respect and dignity and speak with charity towards one another. When you feel anger building, grab on to your TAU Cross and remember who you are and what you professed. Say a Hail Mary and ask St. Michael the Archangel to be with you. Our Rule tells us what we are to do. Let's remember it and do it together.

My prayers and affection and that of the entire REC go out to each and every one of you and may Our Lord's peace be upon you and all the fraternities in our Region.

PAX ET BONUM!

"Francis go and repair my house which, as you see, is all falling down," Francis at first responded by "Repairing the material church," in which the San Damiano Cross was, but in fact the "Principal intention of the words referred to that which Christ purchased with his own blood" (from The Major Legend of Saint Francis by St. Bonaventure, ch. 2).



Courtesy of Franciscan University, Steubenville, website, <https://chapel.franciscan.edu/pray/the-portiuncula/>

Spiritual Assistant's Message Joan Geiger, ofs Regional Spiritual Assistant, St. Michael Fraternity

This past Wednesday, September 15th, I returned from a 10 day pilgrimage to Italy – to Rome and Assisi. This pilgrimage had been scheduled over 2 years ago and rescheduled many times in the interim due to the pandemic. I was most familiar with these places having been there a few times. The first time was as a tourist but since then, only as a pilgrim. As a gift to myself the year after my retirement, I traveled to Rome with Franciscan Pilgrimages on a 28 days journey – following the footsteps of St. Francis in Rome, the Rieti Valley, Greccio, RivoTorto, Lago Trasimeno, La Verna, and of course the holy site in Assisi – the Basilicas of Sts. Francis and Clare, St. Rufino, St. Mary of the Angels and the Porziuncola, and San Damiano. Although this pilgrimage was not as extensive, being familiar with the sites and sights was a plus.

One of the things on my bucket list was to visit the Scavi in Rome. This is the Necropolis under the Basilica of St. Peter. Here the bones of St. Peter are buried. A reservation is required and again, I was able to reschedule it as necessitated by the virus. The building of St. Peter's Basilica was begun during the reign of Constantine about 330AD but has undergone many excavations and changes since then including tearing down and building the current one in the classical style of the Renaissance. The new Church took more than a century to complete and was consecrated by Pope Urban VIII 1626. The work on the new building led to many discoveries under the foundation. It wasn't until 1942 that St. Peter's relics were discovered but this was only confirmed with absolute certainty in 1968. Masks and gloves were worn throughout the 1½ hour walking tour. Mosaics, sarcophagi, tomb stones, epitaph, drawings, pictures, art and diagrams and scenes on the guide's I-pad brought a spiritual element to the necropolis of Christian tombs.

Our tour outside of Assisi, brought us to Gubbio and La Verna. I had not been to Gubbio before, but much like Assisi it is hilly and with cobblestones. A large statue of St. Francis and the wolf greet you as you enter this medieval town. As it was Tuesday, vendors were in the marketplace selling their wares – everything from fruits and vegetables to tools and shoes. Mass was celebrated in the Church of St. Francis.

The Sanctuary of La Verna was our final stop. We arrived shortly after 2:00PM and were able to visit the Chapel of the Stigmata before the Friars, chanting the Office, entered. It was here that St. Francis went to this mountain top six times for solitude and prayer. For Francis and his brothers, La Verna was a place of retreat. It was here that Francis wanted to experience Christ completely. It was here that he composed *The Praises of God*. It was providence that we were at La Verna on the Feast of the Exultation of the Cross, September 14th, as a huge cross is mounted overlooking the valley and it is on this date that it is believed that Francis' body was marked with the wounds of Jesus Christ crucified and received the gift of the Stigmata, two years before his death. (The Feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis is celebrated on September 17th). St. Bonaventure also began his work, *The Journey of the Human Person into God* on this mountain. La Verna is truly a place where one feels and experiences God's love and mercy and the blessing of peace.

Please know that I remembered you and your intentions in every Church and holy place I visited. ...Joan



Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio



Site of Francis' stigmatization on Alverna

Living the Gospel of Life within our Fraternities

(some excerpts from commentary of our Rule by Benet Fonck ofm)

“Sharing Christ’s mission through life in the Church, Fraternities, and Families calls us by word and example to become a living Gospel for all to read.”

I pray that our living the Gospel is not our version but the reality of the Holy Spirit within us. If we are to share in the mission of Christ, we must also share in the selfless service and obedience of Christ. In the Rule #10, Francis invites us to “[Unify]” ourselves to the redemptive obedience of Jesus, who placed His will into the Fathers hands... We have a part in this redemption because of Christ’s Incarnation and Paschal Mystery.

There has been much confusion, troubles, misunderstandings, and hurts happening within our Fraternities that I wonder if we are living the Gospel at all. Why are we not united ? What is breaking us apart? Are we afraid to put our trust in the authorities around us? Does the society way of thinking that ‘We have a right to do what we think is best and not look to what is best for the whole,’ part of the way we think?

In James’ Epistle, he writes:

Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show his works by a good life in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. Wisdom of this kind does not come down from above but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice. But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without inconstancy or insincerity. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace.

Peace and understanding does not come with the absence of disorder but from within, a Grace given to us by God. I pray we find unity and solidarity in Living the Gospel and become the living presence of Christ. May the Lord give you peace.

Upcoming events: The *Joyful Disciple School* will be held this Fall. I will try to have another one in late winter.

Formation Directors: Please keep an eye and ear open for an invitation to a formation workshop on Zoom in February. RSVP to jmblessings@optonline.net when the date is set.

4 October

A reading from ‘The Life of Saint Francis,’ by Thomas of Celano

“Francis’ brothers and sons had assembled with the whole multitude of people from the neighboring cities, rejoicing to take part in such solemn rites. They spent that entire night of the holy father’s death in the praises of God. The sweet sound of jubilation and the brightness of the lights made it seem that angels were keeping vigil.

When day was breaking, the multitude of the city of Assisi gathered with all the clergy. They lifted his sacred body from the place where he had died and carried it with great honor to the city singing hymns and praises with trumpets blaring. They all took branches of olive and other trees and solemnly followed the funeral procession bringing even more candles as they sang songs of praise in loud voices.

With the sons carrying their father and the flock following the shepherd who was hastening to the Shepherd of them all, he arrived at the place where he first planted the Order of Poor Ladies. They laid him out in the church of San Damiano, home to those daughters he gained for the Lord. The small window was opened, the one used by the servants of Christ to receive the sacrament of the Lord’s Body. The coffin was also opened : in it lay hidden the treasure of supercelestial powers; in it he who had carried many was now carried by a few.”

Uganda Update: A Virtual Missionary Report, Louise Sandberg, ofs, JPIC Animator

For the last few years I have been blessed to be called by God to go on mission to Uganda. However, lately, because of COVID, no journey was possible. I have kept contact with some Ugandan missionaries who have been serving their own people. Lack of clean water causing disease and death remain a huge problem as well as hunger. When COVID caused lockdown, the problem was intensified, Mulando Rogers, a missionary who also is raising about 40 orphans, told me how overwhelming the hunger is. Lillian was providing for the starving people in her community with her own resources until she ran out. She went to Rogers and, now, we have been feeding the most vulnerable throughout the crisis.

Because of their missionary zeal and reputation for helping others, both Nalubulwa Lillian and Rogers have been approached by the local chairmen or community members when the outbreak of water borne illness struck a community. We have helped construct 35 protected springs and 2 boreholes providing clean water for the first time to thousands of people. We continue feeding the hungry and providing clean water sources, following the request of three other missionaries and Jesus invitation to feed the hungry and give drink to those who thirst.

Nalubulwa Lillian’s Prayer

Thank you for your great love and blessing over our lives. Thank you that your favor has no end, but it lasts for our entire lifetime. Forgive us for sometimes forgetting that you are intimately acquainted with all of our ways, that you know what concerns us, and you cover us, as with a shield. We ask for your guidance so that we might walk fully in your blessing and goodness today. We ask that your face would shine on us; that you would open the right doors for our lives and for our loved ones, that you would close the wrong doors and protect us from those we need to walk away from. Establish the work of our hands and bring to fulfillment all that you have given us to do in these days. We pray that you would make our way purposeful and our footsteps firm out of your goodness and live. I am sending pictures of some of the people we feed and one of the dirty water sources.

As God continues to use virtual mission to call front line missionaries, our missionaries continue feeding the hungry and providing clean water sources, Following the invitation of Jesus to feed the hungry and give drink to those who thirst, join us virtually in prayer, monetary donations, and support in any way God is calling. If you would like to help, you can send a donation to me (Louise) and I will send it directly to Rogers and Lillian. If you itemize your taxes, send your check to: **To The Nation** which has agreed to act as an agent.

Please send donations to me at:

Louise Sandberg
164 Genova Ct.
Farmingdale, NY 11735
Call or text questions to:
51 6 318 7798
Send checks to: Louise Sandberg
If you need a receipt for tax purposes,
address the check to: **To The Nations** If
you have zelle, venmo or a cash app,
my email is:
..... louisсандберг54@gmail.com



Alex Muzingu is a seminarian who is developing a heart for those in need including an elderly woman, Nayiga Bernadette, with the care of 3 grandchildren. and a younger woman feeding 10 orphans also in need of water.



Digging Boreholes

YOUFRA Update, Jean D'Onofrio, ofs, Regional FY/YA Animator, Member NAFRA FY/YA Commission

As we enter, cautiously, into the world again and into more interactions with youth and young adults, let us remember that every conversation, every interaction, is an opportunity to share the God within us! Whether we are called to support, listen or assist a younger person, we are the "face of God" at that moment for that youth or adult!

Just to share with all in our region, I have not received any names of those members who are Virtus trained, nor any fraternities who have Youth and Young Adult animators. Such being the situation in our Region, I would like to propose a way for us to continue to live our Rule and Constitutions which mandate us to be a presence for these ages. Please pray about helping to fund young adults across our nation who are in YOUFRA groups to attend the Quinquennial next year. There will be opportunities for us to "invest" in our young adults thru our financial support which will translate directly to making it possible for these young adults to learn and share with us at the Quinquennial. Stay tuned. And keep praying for our fraternities to be open to being present to youth and adults.

On a local level, there is a new Diocesan Chaplain at SUNY Stony Brook Newman Club. I would like to extend an offer to assist the club as we have in the past, with funds for retreats/ or their spring Mission trip. Please contact me if your fraternity is interested in assisting in this endeavor. Jean D'Onofrio, OFS, jld1075@optonline.net Put OFS in the RE: line. Leave message at (631)928-7894 and I will call you back. Thanks so much. Stay well!!!

In His joy,
Jean D'Onofrio, OFS

3 October

A Reading from "The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul", by Thomas of Celano

"As the brothers shed bitter tears and wept inconsolably, the holy father had bread brought to him. Francis blessed and broke it, and gave each of them a piece to eat. He also ordered a book of the Gospels to be brought and asked that the Gospel according to St. John to be read to him starting from that place which begins, 'Before the feast of the Passover.' He was remembering that most sacred Supper, the last one the Lord celebrated with his disciples. In reverent memory of this, to show he loved them, he did all of this.

The time that remained to him before his passing he spent in praise of God, teaching his beloved companions how to praise Christ with him. As best he could, he broke out into this psalm: "With my voice I cried to the Lord. With my voice I beseeched the Lord." He also invited all creatures to the praise of God, and exhorted them to love, by some words which he had composed earlier. Even in death itself, terrible and hateful to everyone, he exhorted to praise, and going to meet her joyfully, invited her to be his guest, saying, 'Welcome my Sister Death!' And to the doctor he said, 'Be bold, brother Doctor, foretell death is near; for to she will be the gate of Life!' But to the brothers he said, 'When you see I have come to my end put me out naked on the ground as you saw me naked before, and once I am dead, allow me to lie there for as long as it takes to walk a leisurely mile.'

That evening before nightfall, after Vespers, when blessed Francis passed to the Lord, many birds called larks flew above the roof of the house where blessed Francis lay, wheeling in a circle and singing.'



