

Tau Cross Region

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

Minister's Message

Eugene Keenan, ofs
Minister, Tau Cross Region

“As a concrete sign of communion and co-responsibility, the councils on various levels, in keeping with the constitutions, shall ask for suitable and well prepared religious for spiritual assistance. They should make this request to the superiors of the four religious Franciscan families, to whom the Secular Fraternity has been united for centuries...Article 26, the Rule

In the last issue of this newsletter I reported on the retirement of Fr. Matthias, our Regional Spiritual Assistant for many years. The Region can now rejoice that one of our own Seculars, Joan Geiger, has been appointed as our new Regional Spiritual Assistant.

Joan has served our Region in a variety of council offices including two terms as our Regional Minister. She has also served our National Fraternity through her service as a National Councilor. She has always been to me an example of what a Secular Franciscan should be. A person who listens with empathy, one who takes her responsibilities seriously and gives her entire effort for the good of the Order, and one who shows us an example of one who prays.

The entire REC looks forward to receiving Joan's advice and counsel as we continue our service to the Region. For me, she will be a mentor and guide in my role as Regional Minister. Our Region is truly blessed to have Joan as our Regional Spiritual Assistant.

I recently sent out letters via email and snail mail to all ministers on behalf of the REC to see how you and the members of your fraternities were getting along during these difficult times. I had asked for a “read reply” to confirm that you received the letter and the additional attached documents. I was disappointed that only 10 ministers replied. Please understand, I know that we are all experiencing difficulties during these times, but I need your assistance in the service of our Order.

Our Order, as a whole, is encountering many similar problems across our nation. Vocations are an issue, members experiencing financial and health issues and the suspension of elections and visitations during these times. These are some of the crosses that we, as Servant Leaders, have been asked to carry during these times. Let's bear them cheerfully and with great joy as Francis bore his crosses!

For the good of our Church and our Order, I exhort you to wear your TAU Crosses, pray your daily office and the Rule, attend daily mass, if possible, and make frequent visits to the Blessed

Sacrament.

In addition, perform an act of charity for someone every day. Your example to others will be noticed as Christian behavior and will be a source of evangelization in our upside down world. Let us each do what is ours to do!

My message this issue is shorter than usual. Not because I didn't have more to say but sometimes silence speaks louder than words. I ask you to take some time to be silent and listen to Our Lord speak to us in our hearts. Take the time to listen to our family members and others who need our help. And, be silent when you've some choice words that you'd love to say but won't for the sake of charity.

Remember what you professed and live it!

PAX ET BONUM



“Let us begin, brothers [and sisters], to serve the Lord, God,
For up until now we have done little or nothing.”

S.A. Reflections

Fr. Norbert D'Sousa, ofm., Cap.
Spiritual Assistant for 2 Fraternities

I share these reflections at the invitation of our Fraternity Minister, **Louise Sandberg, ofm**, on March 25th, the day we celebrate the **Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord**. At a time when most of us and the whole world is in a locked down or in self-quarantined state I hope that this will inspire you.

Quite a few times in my life I have felt weighed down by the Yes I have said to the Lord. During my missionary experience as a priest, the ethnic war and the tsunami were the major events which really challenged me to stand for that 'Yes'. Once again here comes a moment in my life where I had to renew my commitment to the Lord.

First of all I had to battle with my own fears and the loud voices that echoed within and around me. "You are sick, with heart disease; you are diabetic and we cannot afford to lose you". My friends, my family, and all those who said that they love me voiced their emotions and feelings. At the organizational level many priests who are chaplains who understand the fear of getting infected were suggesting "it is only the front-line workers, the doctors and nurses whose services are required at this moment. Others can distance themselves lest we become the agents for the quicker spread of the disease." When I took all that to my heart it was a nightmare to me. My refurbished heart began to palpitate more than it should. Then I prayed over in silence and came to the conclusion that if not this time then there is never a time where my services are required. I have to be there to

support the care team and to address the spiritual needs of the patients who go through critical times in their life more than any one of us does.

As I was on the floor the next day there was this patient who was eighty years old. Initially she was diagnosed for the COVID-19 but was cleared later. However she succumbed to death due to other complications. As I entered the room the patient's family expressed sorrow that the patient is not going to have either a burial Mass or a Wake Service. They have to take their loved one to the cemetery and bury straightaway. I allowed space and time for the family to express their grief and sorrow. Later I conducted a Wake Service in the room. The family was so comforted that the very little that was offered meant so much to them. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (2 C. 1:3-4)

A mother of a nurse, 91 years, died during this week. The deceased was a strong woman of faith and she held on to her breath for almost two weeks at the hospice. She had 12 children; some were in this country and others overseas. Originally they were planning for a grand Wake Service and then to take the body overseas for burial. They would have had a large gathering if there was a Wake or a Funeral Mass. But due to civil restrictions during this pandemic, the Funeral Director allowed only ten members of the family to view the body at a time. Finally to make place for me they agreed to remain nine and I was called into the Funeral Parlor. When I went there I could see the sorrow but could not offer a gesture of peace.

I had to withhold my emotions as I perceived what they were going through in the depths of their being. As we began the Wake Service the cellphones came alive as each one was trying to connect with their families over the phone. It was a virtual Wake Service during which the large family remained connected. Once again here they were very grateful to God for what was made possible as we sang the songs "How great thou art" and "Amazing grace".

God is great in small and big ways. This pandemic has brought the big and small together, to be one in heart and mind, in purpose and in action. I reflect the amazing grace that has saved the front liners and a person like me. It's a time for us to realize the greater importance of our spiritual life and to change the satisfaction pyramid from food, emotions and prayer to prayer, emotions and food. Mary's "Yes" brought salvation to the world. How powerful that yes is and could be when we all emulate her example and follow the way of our Lord Jesus Christ. May the spirit of the Lord who walked on this earth bring healing to all humanity. Amen.

+In Memory

Of our brother in St. Francis, Walter Sturchowski, of late a member of Cure of Ars Fraternity, who went to his reward May 15. Walter, 93, was a Secular Franciscan for 51 years & a member of St. Aidan's Parish, Williston Park. He was a regular at daily Mass. He also served in the military during WWII during which he was taken prisoner. He was very popular in the fraternity and at Church.

Walter died of Covid19 and is appropriately remembered in this issue of our newsletter.

Let's remember him in our prayers

You Fra Update

Jean A. D'Onofrio, ofs
Regional Animator, FYYA
Member of NAFra, FYYA
Commission

Peace and good ! YouFra across our nation has been busy! Praise God! The Nafra FYYA commission has been doing our animator training via Zoom on 11 consecutive Monday evenings for 90 minute each session. The Sessions have been a mix of webinar/ presentation style and also Q& A/ sharing sessions. Each week we have had an average of 35-40 participants representing all but 4 OFS Regions of the US! The presenters are spread across our wonderful nation and include dedicated Seculars and a Franciscan Brother who work in the field of youth/young adult ministry. Having 3 out of the 6 commission members be very well versed in Zoom and computer technology has been a huge help!! It's been a real honor and privilege to work with them! The Commission's Spiritual Assistant, Kathy Taormina, had been the person nationally who did most of the youth ministry back in the 1990's and one of her daughters is now a Regional FYYA Animator! Eventually, all of the presentations will be on the web either on the NAFRA website or possibly on our own NAFRA FYYA webpage. Then you can check them all out (including one from yours truly on listening ---God does have a sense of humor!) Brother Scott has an official YOUFRA in Arizona and there is also another practically Youfra in another part of our country as

well. There are fraternities who are exploring ways to connect with young adults in their areas. Being a Commission reminds us all that as Seculars, we are Commissioned by our Rule to be present in a way to represent Christ to the youth and young adults we encounter. This is not a suggestion like a committee's request; rather, it is a reminder that we are to engage with youth/young adults as Christ would? The National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministers summed it up in this way : Listen, Honor and Connect. In being present to them, then listening to their stories and honoring them, we connect with them ! Br. Scott continually reminds us of the Emmaus Model which is being used by the Catholic Bishops in Sons and Daughters of the Light: The Risen Christ walk with the two disciples on the journey, listens to them, helps them break open the Scriptures and breaks bread with them. Were that our hearts continue to beat in love and unity with our Risen Lord as we also walk with them along our Franciscan Journey!
In His Joy,
Jean A D'Onofrio, OFS

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 15th of the month prior to publication. Please send items of interest: elections, professions, anniversaries, & all others to Peter D'Amato at P.O. Box 447, Miller Place, NY 11764 or email at:
damato1@optonline.net.

Pope Francis' Prayer during the Pandemic

O Mary, you shine continuously on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope. We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick. At the foot of the Cross you participated in Jesus' pain, with steadfast faith.

You, Salvation of all People, know what we need. We are certain that you will provide, so that, as you did at Cana of Galilee, joy and feasting might return after this moment of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform ourselves to the Father's will and to do what Jesus tells us: He who took our sufferings upon Himself, and bore our sorrows to bring us, through the Cross, to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.

We seek refuge under your protection, O Holy Mother of God. Do not despise our pleas – we who are put to the test – and deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

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Staying Connected to Grow in Holiness

Judy Heffernan, ofs
Regional Formation Director

Community is God's desire for us! God said it is not good for man to be alone. God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. So, that this call should resound throughout the world, Christ sent forth the apostles he had chosen, commissioning them to proclaim the gospel: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; All Christ's faithful are called to hand it on from generation to generation, by professing the faith, by living it in fraternal sharing, and by celebrating it in liturgy and prayer.

Ccc I 123

Testament of St. Francis.

"And after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel"

And whoever shall have observed these things...

May he be filled in heaven with the blessing of the most high Father and on earth with the blessing of His Beloved Son with the most Holy Spirit the Paraclete and with all the powers of heaven and all the saints.

Acts 4:32-35 "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had

Heb. 10:24-25 "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and

good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another all the more as you see the Day
Prov 17:17 "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

A brother born for adversity *ref. Barnes, Albert. "Commentary on Proverbs 17:17".*

I. Adversity is the common lot of brotherhood. It comes sooner or later to all of us. It is a necessity of our nature. It is a wise appointment of God.

II. The ties of brotherhood are formed for adversity. We are united in families for purposes of mutual assistance.

III. Adversity tends to sanctify the relationship of the brotherhood. Some of the most valuable of our lessons are taught us in our interactions with one another.

IV. In adversity we are led to know, in a particular manner, the presence of the elder brother with the brotherhood. Jesus became our brother in adversity. His sufferings and sorrows enabled Him to sympathize with us in all our struggle and troubles.

V. It is by adversity that the whole brotherhood are gathered at last into our Father's house above
So, my questions to all of you is this, in times of adversity: How do we stay connected in the sanctification of our members? 1.) Do we accept correction or do we give up? 2.) Do we see our fraternities as a necessity and a gift? 3.) Where do we seek guidance and approach "the Day to come"

How We Stayed Connected Around the Region?

On August 19, 2020, we gathered through the Virtual platform of ZOOM. We had 65 in attendance though video and audio. Brother Richard Contino, ofs presented to us on "The Signs of the Times as Mystics and Prophets". I would like to thank Brother Richard for all he is doing

to help in the growth and sanctification of ALL our fraternity brothers and sisters. He has personally challenged me been a rock, a sounding board, , and a great friend to me.

Thankyou!Thankyou!Thankyou!

The Power.Point presentation and Notes are on our website at: <http://www.taucrossregion.org>

Around the United States

On August 22 & 23rd 2020 the Formation Commission presented a workshop for all Formation directors and delegates. Sylvia Murdolo ofs & Patricia Mayle ofs were able to attend with me.

The Main event was the **NEW Initial Formation Material**. As the material was presented we all became very excited with anticipation of when it will arrive. This will not be for a while but the hopes will be in the next couple of years.

The material is beautifully laid out containing within each chapter graphics, Franciscan resources, prayers, goals, early documents, saints and blessed, lesson plans, questions for discussions, actions to live and practice, outlines and goals, etc. etc. etc.

They are leaving no stone unturned. It is a user-friendly manual that will be available for all fraternities online. Each fraternity members and Inquirers can print the material needed.

They will also be supplying the formation directors and their teams with a beautiful Manual that parallels with the Inquirers manual. With permission, I hope to post a draft to our Tau Cross Region website.

Upcoming Events

January 2021

Joyful Disciple School.
Franciscan Spirituality.
2 hr class for a 7 week course.

February 2021

Formation Directors Meeting
On new Initial Formation
Manual

+ 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

From 2019:

Previously Unreported

11/7/19: Angela Signa, ofs
Cure of Ars

