

The Portiuncula

Franciscans of the Prairie Region

Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis



REGIONAL MINISTER’S LETTER

Greetings my Sisters & Brothers

May the Lord give you Peace!

The RFC will be meeting on February 24 & 25th at the Villa Maria in Springfield. Please know that all of you in our Regional Family will be lifted in prayer during special moments while we gather together to serve our Region.

As we are now in the beautiful season of Lent, let us pray we all may grow and stretch ourselves to be more open to the workings of the Holy Spirit in our lives and our Fraternity. Perhaps it is possible for your Fraternity to arrange a gathering to invite another Fraternity. Yes, we are each miles from another, but it could be via a Zoom, or inviting to an event. Let us be creative in ways we can gather.

I share a prayer that can be for yourself &/or Fraternity to pray. I hope you will join me in praying this daily for the remainder of Lent. (Note: you can find wonderful resources on the Regional Website-Formation Kit, and also on the National Website – search under *Pray with Us*.

Prayer for a Vibrant Franciscan Fraternity

Our family will be vibrant, if I(we) bring light and energy.

Our family will be friendly and welcoming, if I(we) am/are.

Our family will be holy, if I(we) continue to strive for holiness.

Its gatherings will be filled, if I(we) help fill them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS	
TOPIC	PAGE
Regional Minister	1
Reg. Spiritual Assistant	2
Regional Vice Minister	5
St. Francis of Assisi (T-town)	6
Centenary Nativity Display (K’ville)	7
Nativity Display at St. Mary (B’ton)	8
Sacred Heart (Peoria)	9
St. Margaret of Cortona (B’ton)	11
Pope St. John XXIII (Rock Island)	12
SAVE THE DATE (Retreat)	12
Upcoming Events	13
Portiuncula Dates – Spring	13

Our family will do great work for justice, peace, and creation, if I(we) do what I can for our world.

Our family will be prayerful, if I(we) pray.

It will thrive with a spirit of giving, if I(we) am a generous giver.

Our family will bring others to follow Christ, if I(we) witness a gospel life.

Our family will be a fraternity of love, joy, forgiveness, compassion, and charity if I(we) live these same virtues.

Our family will accomplish God’s will, If I(we) help carry the load by sharing my/our time, talent, and treasure.

With your help, dear Lord, and that of my/our Franciscan brothers and sisters, I renew my promise to “being” a Franciscan, and to practice all the things that I(we) want my/our Franciscan Family to be.

Amen

[from the Franciscan Family Forum]

May we each be open to the prompting of our Lord to build His Kingdom~ beginning with ourselves. God Bless ~

Pax,

Kathy ofs

Regional Minister



Listen Discern Go Forth

OFS-USA Theme



FROM OUR REGIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT

Dear Franciscan sisters and brothers,

May the Lord give you peace!

“From Wounds [to] New Life”

A happy and blessed New Year to everyone! Although we are now already a few weeks into 2024, many things carry over from one year to the next. One very central and important reality for the entire Franciscan Family that continues in this new year of God’s grace is the celebration of the Franciscan Centenaries, the 800th anniversaries of the significant events which occurred in the life of Saint Francis of Assisi as his earthly life was drawing to a close. Last year we observed the 800th anniversaries of the papal approval of the *Later Rule* of the Lesser Brothers [which is still the *Rule of Life* professed by the friars of the First Order] (November 29, 1223) and Francis’s reenactment of the first Christmas manger scene at Greccio (December 25, 1223).

On Friday, January 5, 2024, the Franciscan Family officially opened the 8th Centenary of the Stigmata of St. Francis at the Sanctuary of La Verna, with an event entitled “From the wounds to new life.” The following account of this special day is adapted largely from *Fraternitas*, the international newsletter of the Order of Friars Minor.



The day began at 7:00 a.m. with the Office of Readings, followed by Lauds [Morning Prayer] and the celebration of the Mass presided over by Father Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General of the Friars Minor. In his homily, Father Massimo recalled how the mystery of the Cross marked Francis’s entire life: “I like to think of Francis’s interior biography as a path of concentric circles that led him to the center, which is Jesus. We have just contemplated in Greccio at Christmas, where Francis wanted to see with his

own eyes the poverty and hardships in which Jesus wanted to be born, that poor and humble path that He chose to come to us, to reach even here in La Verna and from Greccio to La Verna the path is not exactly straight, but internally it is – where Francis allows himself to be attracted by the mystery of his Crucified and Risen Lord, because the Seraph both manifests pain and ineffable joy; indeed, the heart of Francis’s path is Jesus Christ. It seems so simple, and the Centenary that we open today can remind us of it, in fact, like the entire Centenary that we are celebrating.”

At 11:00 a.m., in the Basilica of the Sanctuary, the ceremony for the solemn opening of the Centenary was held, which ended in the Chapel of the Stigmata. Present among many others were the Ministers General of the Franciscan Family and representatives of all parts of the Franciscan world. During the celebration, each Minister General left his or her own message for the Franciscan Family.



Tibor Kauser, OFS, spoke of Francis as a probable “influencer” of today: “Many have wanted to follow him, imitate him. Everything he did and said had a great impact on the lives of his classmates. [...] God transformed Francis, maintaining many things in his style, without destroying his personality. This is the miracle, how God can transform a person by changing the things in life and turning bitter into sweet.”



Sister Frances Marie Duncan, CFI-TOR, underlined how Saint Francis is in all respects an *Alter Christus*, united with Him in the sign of the stigmata, which links love to the suffering experienced by Jesus on the Cross.





Father Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, focused on the profound bond between Francis and the Crucifix: from the church of San Damiano, where the Lord showed him the way to repair His Church, to Mount La Verna, where he beheld the wounds imprinted of Christ on his own body.

Father Carlos Trovarelli, OFM Conv, stated that “it is before the Crucifix and at the foot of the Cross that we are capable of fully understanding the perspective of the whole Gospel. In the Cross of Christ the community of the faithful is formed as a brotherhood/ sisterhood, in which the theological foundation is the Paschal sacrifice of Jesus. [...] Francis of Assisi, who said he was not a theologian, indicates to us a high Christ-centered spirituality, a source of love for all creatures.”



Father Massimo Fusarelli, OFM, recalled how the *Poverello*-the poor man went up to La Verna in a moment of crisis, due to the difficulties that the drafting of the Rule had entailed: “From the encounter with the crucifix at La Verna, the seal of his entire journey, Francesco does not leave so intimately withdrawn in himself. The biographies tell us how Francis became an even greater herald of the Gospel which marked him on his flesh. [...] Proclaim the Lord first with your life and then with your word. Francis lived this word of the Rule until the end. More than ever, mission was the fruit and transparency of the encounter with the Lord. Here is a living and permanent lesson of the Stigmata.”

Father Roberto Genuin, OFM Cap, highlighted how “the Cross of Jesus is at the center of the world and of human history. It stands as a double sign: a sign of the cruelty of humanity who, in his confusion, came to crucify the Author of life; sign of God’s free and infinite love that no violence, no refusal can stop. [...] Francis of Assisi experienced the love of God in his life and was ‘marked’ by it. In turn he has become a sign, a reminder, the proof of a God who loves infinitely and freely.”



Until September 17, 2024, the Franciscan Family of Tuscany and our own OFS International, National and Regional Fraternities will promote numerous initiatives to rediscover and actualize the message that comes from Francis’s experience on the sacred mountain: **what is wounded and defeated for the world can become an opportunity for a new life and reconciliation with humanity and creation.** Please be sure to visit the OFS-USA website: [secularfranciscans.org/Resources/Franciscan Centenary Celebration](http://secularfranciscans.org/Resources/Franciscan%20Centenary%20Celebration).



May each of us who have been inspired by the life of our Seraphic Father strive like him to conform ourselves ever more perfectly to our Lord Jesus Christ!

With a brother's love in Saints Francis and Clare,



Regional Spiritual Assistant
Franciscans of the Prairie Regional Fraternity
Secular Franciscan Order
T In Persona Christi Servi

FROM OUR REGIONAL VICE-MINISTER

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Peace and all good!

As we are in the season of Lent, we often want to give up and or moderate our habits and allow more time for prayer. In the last few years, the suggestion has also been made that we add something to our life that we have not considered. This seems more positive for some to help at the food pantries or “faith in action” activities. But it can even be so simple as calling a neighbor that you know lives alone, or a fraternity brother or sister that is unable to come to fraternity.

In our Shorter Christian Prayer book is the following from Sunday, Week 1, Evening Prayer II pp 52-53:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement, who encourages us in our every affliction, so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God.

For as Christ's sufferings overflow to us, so through Christ does our encouragement also overflow. If we are afflicted it is for your encouragement and salvation; if we are encouraged, it is for your encouragement, which enables you to endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is firm, for we know that as you share in the sufferings, you also share in the encouragement,” 2 Cor 1:3-7

This reading has much to attend to and meditate on. In other translations, the words comfort and consolation are used for “encouragement”.

There are many takeaways to apply to our daily life and our meditations. The one that occurs to me is that, as Secular Franciscans we need to be “present” for each other, our Church and to give witness in our daily life to the love and compassion of Jesus Christ. The ways and manner in which you do that is individual and based on your state in life.

What does it mean to be “present” for another? It may be obvious but also sometimes, subtle. The obvious is when someone calls and writes and you respond, or if they are talking with you, that eye contact is made and “multi-tasking is not occurring, e.g. use of a cell phone or another activity that is distracting. The “subtle” signs mean paying attention to cues in the person’s voice or behavior, or the difficulty of their situation. The art of listening to the other is sometimes lost today in the demands on our time and attention and the many distractions in the world.

However, it is worth the effort, and thinking of the famous direction from Jesus “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Luke 6:31

As we walk the Lenten journey and remember the suffering and ultimate sacrifice of Jesus for all of us, we pray that the Love of Jesus that “overflows” in us can be shared with all our brothers and sisters.

Linda Howley-Skuby, ofs
Regional Vice Minister

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI FRATERNITY - TEUTOPOLIS

A memorial Mass was held on Sunday, November 19, 2023, for our departed sisters, Delores Esker, Stella Esker, Adele Krueger, and Dorothy Weber. Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Dennis Koopman, OFM, presided at the 2:00 p.m. celebration. Invitations were extended to the deceased family members and approximately 40 were there to join in the celebration. A gathering for refreshments and fellowship took place after the Mass at the St. Clare of Assisi Hall.

The annual Christmas party hosted by the friars was held on Sunday, January 7, 2024, at the St. Francis rectory. A special appearance was made by the Three Kings. The Three Kings is a local, German tradition made up of a group of young men who travel house to house on the weekend of the Epiphany singing in German about the coming of the Lord. The tradition has been around the Teutopolis area for nearly 100 years.



The Three Kings and a shepherd are shown along with Pat Niemerg, OFS, and the friars Fr. Juan Carlos Ruiz, OFM, Fr. Joe Carlos, OFS, and Fr. Dat Hoang, OFM.

Submitted by:
Pat Niemerg, OFS
Minister

CENTENARY NATIVITY DISPLAY AT MARY IMMACULATE CHURCH IN KIRKSVILLE, MO

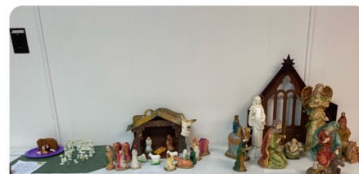
HOSTED BY THE ST. CLARE CELL OF ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY FRATERNITY



Local Secular Franciscans from the St. Clare cell of St. Elizabeth of Hungary fraternity in Quincy: Deacon Dave & Thérèse Ream, OFSs, and Lynn Carter, OFS with a selection of particularly Franciscan nativity sets.



Parishioners shared a wide variety of creches from as far away as Italy, Central America, and Burma.



800 years of nativity scenes, from St. Francis at Greccio in 1223 until now



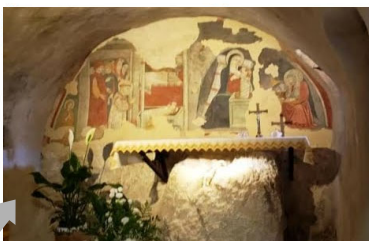
We had several creches that were suitable for children to play with.



Msgr. Marion Makarewicz, pastor at Mary Immaculate in Kirksville, blessed the cribs, assisted by Deacon Dave OFS. (below right)



The Chapel of the Crèche, built at the cave where St. Francis enacted the first nativity scene, with live animals.



On December 17, 2023, the Secular Franciscans at Mary Immaculate parish in Kirksville, Missouri, hosted a celebration of the 800th anniversary of the very first manger scene.

NATIVITY DISPLAY AT ST. MARY CHURCH, BLOOMINGTON HOSTED BY ST. MARGARET OF CORTONA FRATERNITY

The Secular Franciscan Fraternity of St. Margaret of Cortona hosted the first display of Nativity sets in the St. Mary's Parish Hall on Dec 2-3 to welcome the Advent season. Carol Burroughs, ofs, Minister of St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity, invited St. Mary's parishioners and Secular Franciscans to share their Nativity sets. Many were handmade from various materials of cloth, wood, metal, and from around the globe. Several were simple scenes featured in framed art. A very special entry from Letitia Pence comes from Mexico and has many details of a rural Nativity set.



Christine McDowell, ofs, joins Kay and John Grillot, ofs, as they stand by their cherished Nativity made by Christians in the Holy Land.



Sr. Betty Jean Haverford, OSF, Spiritual Assistant, for the fraternity, shared several pieces from her Convent.



Fr Greg Nelson, pastor of St. Mary's Church admires an unusual nativity set.

(Gail Cady, Aspirant in the background)

Original Franciscan Set from when Fr. Ric, OFM, was pastor at St. Mary's (will be in the chapel)



*Submitted by:
Linda Howley-Skuby, OFS
and Leo Grimes, OFS*

I was very impressed by the presentation of nativities you all put together this weekend. Thank you very much for providing this for the parish! Many people were quite impressed by the variety of nativities, and it offered us a wonderful beginning meditation for Advent. God bless you for this witness, and may God bless the remainder of your Advent!

Peace, Fr. Greg

SACRED HEART FRATERNITY, PEORIA

We have a different service project each month. For December our project was serving at Sophia's Kitchen. Sophia's Kitchen serves the homeless, unemployed, and underemployed hungry of Peoria."



L-R: Pat Snell, OFS, Bob Polizzi, OFS, and Theresa Jennett, OFS, were plating deserts. Also attending were Jim and Kathy Stomberg.

On **Saturday**, December 16, 2023, we gathered and sang Christmas Carols at Liberty Village of Peoria. Greg Speck lives there and he joined us in singing. The residents joined in singing with us. The spirit of Christmas was had by all.



L-R: Jeff Mattern, Colleen Mattern, OFS, Scott Diestlekamp, OFS, Bob Gayhart, OFS, Greg Speck, OFS, Kathy Stomberg



On Tuesday, December 5, 2023, we gathered and sang Christmas Carols at River Crossing of Peoria. The residents joined in singing with us. The spirit of Christmas was had by all. It was nice seeing a smile on everyone.

Sondra McEnroe, OFS, Pat Snell, OFS, Jim Stomberg, OFS, Theresa Jennett, OFS and friends, Terri Davis, Kathleen Abel, and Kay Robison

Sacred Heart Fraternity Council Formation

At our January 15th, 2024, Council Meeting, for council formation we began reviewing the CIOFS Document: Guidelines for OFS Council Members. This Document is a great resource for learning about:

- The Meaning of Service Office and Role of Councilors
- How to Carry Out a Service Office
- Life in the Council, in particular, the Duties of the Local Council
- Practical Tips for Council Members

This CIOFS Document was used by the Regional Formation Team in one of the workshops that was conducted for council training of the Our Lady of the Angels - Edwardsville Fraternity in September of 2023. For that workshop, this Document was divided into ten sections for presentation purposes.

At our Council Meeting, we covered the first section and had a good discussion among the council members. Going forward, we will continue to learn from and discuss the rich contents within this Document, in order to become a better Council.

*Matt Yee, O.F.S.
Formation Director*

Sincerely in Christ,

*Jim Stomberg, OFS
Sacred Heart Fraternity
Secretary*

ST. MARGARET OF CORTONA FRATERNITY, BLOOMINGTON

When a Secular Franciscan brother or sister dies, by virtue of our profession, we come together to serve as witnesses to the Lord’s triumph over death. Our memorial service can serve as a time of prayer and celebration remembering with joy the life of the deceased member.

During 2023, three members of the St. Margaret of Cortona Fraternity died. We were able to have a memorial service for all three at our January, 2024 Gathering. We welcomed the daughter of Rosalie Phalen, OFS. She was the only family member able to attend.

We were told by the biographer Thomas of Celano that Frances “... went into Eternity singing.” So, we began the celebration by singing, *Prayer of St. Francis*. We used the Celebration of a Secular Franciscan Life composed by Deacon David Ream, OFS and his wife Therese Ream, OFS in 2007, modified somewhat to fit our time restraints. Carol Burroughs, OFS, began with opening prayer and we recited the Cantic of Brother Sun responsively. We listened to a reading by Connie Noble, OFS from the First Exhortation of St. Francis to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance. John Grillot, OFS read from the Holy Gospel according to St. John.

A candle was lit for each deceased member and their obituary was read. Leo Grimes, OFS read for his aunt Rosalie Phalen, OFS, Tony Pecora, OFS read for his good friend Freddie Payne, OFS and Theresa Witte, OFS read for Chrisann Tallis, OFS. The entire fraternity joined in sharing memories of each of these individuals.



We ended with General Intercessions led by Kevin Kaurin, OFS and singing a verse of *Now Thank We All Our God*. The symbols of our Secular Franciscan Profession were displayed. The Bible as we are challenged to live our profession by going from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel. The Rule of Life we are to observe in our Order. And the Tau that is a symbol of penance and conversion as a witness to our Franciscanism. Rest in Peace Rosalie, Fred, and Chrisann.

Submitted by:
Carol Burroughs, OFS
Minister

POPE ST. JOHN XXIII FRATERNITY, ROCK ISLAND

The Pope St. John XXIII Fraternity will offer a weekly Zoom session during Lent for members and friends. The offering will utilize the Pax Christi Lenten resource, A Fast that Matters. It features reflections for every day of Lent from Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday written by Frida Berrigan. Order print copies or obtaining e-copies of the reflection resource are available at : <https://paxchristiusa.org/>

Members of the fraternity will also attend a screening of the documentary, “With this Light (con esta Luz)” at St. Ambrose University on February 27th at 6:30pm. With this Light is the story of Sister Maria Rosa Leggol, OSF, who founded the orphanage, Sociedad Amigos de los Niños in Honduras. Sister Maria was also a catalyst for Global Brigades and assisted the people of Honduras in creating free health clinics across the country. By attending, the fraternity will honor the legacy of a Franciscan sister and also provide moral and financial support to nine St. Ambrose University students who in March will undertake a learning and medical health brigade with Global Brigades.

Additionally, if your members are interested in T-Shirts that say, Peace and All Good, here is a link to a worthy non- profit in Milwaukee by the name, Franciscan Peacemakers: <https://franciscanpeacemakers.org/> Their mission: Franciscan Peacemakers finds a pathway to sustainable, healthy, safe, and productive lives for women engaging in prostitution due to sexual exploitation, trauma, human sex trafficking and addiction. The service approach of Franciscan Peacemakers includes street outreach, a two-year residential program, meaningful employment, and advocacy work.

Submitted by:
Kent Ferris, OFS
Minister

******* SAVE THE DATE *******

October 18-20, 2024

Regional Retreat at Sacré-Cœur Retreat Center, Magnolia IL

Retreat Leader: Fr. Cidouane Joseph, OFM ("Fr. Cid")

The theme will be along the lines of Servant Leadership and carrying our cross -
"How do we embrace our Cross as Servant Leaders?"

UPCOMING EVENTS AROUND THE REGION (& MORE)

2024

- Feb 24-25 Regional Fraternal Council (RFC) meeting in Springfield
 - with REC meeting on Feb 25
- Sep 17-22 NAFRA Chapter meeting in Scottsdale, AZ
- Nov 16 Virtual Workshop for Local Formation Directors & Teams
- Oct 18-20 2024 Regional Retreat at Sacré-Cœur Retreat Center

2025

- July 11-13 Regional Chapter of Elections at Sacré-Cœur Retreat Center
- Sept 9-14 NAFRA Chapter meeting, Baltimore MD
- Oct 24-26 *Tentative Date for Regional Retreat*

2026

- Jul 29 – Aug 2 Quinquennial in Lexington KY
- TBA International Chapter of Mats in Rome, Italy

PORTIUNCULA DATES – SPRING 2024 EDITION

- April 15 “Call for Articles” by Newsletter Editor
- May 1 Deadline for Article Submission
- May 8 Draft submitted to REC for review & feedback
- May 15 Publication

On the lighter side ...



Newsletter questions, comments, complaints, advice, or whatever?

Contact John Grillot, OFS, at grilljw@gmail.com or 309-696-4846

I really do love to get feedback of any kind! 😊