

The Portiuncula

Franciscans of the Prairie Region

Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis



REGIONAL MINISTER'S LETTER

Peace Be with You!

As we near the beginning of the beautiful season of Lent next month, I am so reminded of how important it is to take time to do an internal check-up on myself, which can include taking a deeper dive into Scripture, The Rule and other documents of the Order taking time away, look at my prayer life, my actions and how am I living out my Vocation as a Secular Franciscan, and many times just looking around me – a check up. I look to how the Lord will call me to possibly a further conversion or even awareness and how am I being cooperative. Recently, I have been asking those around me – “What are you doing for Lent this year. What are you studying”? I’ve enjoyed the Formed series on “How to Lent.” (<https://watch.formed.org/how-to-lent>). What are you planning? Feel free to reach out to me and share what you plan to do to increase your love for the Lord. May we each feel not only His Love but His call to deeper conversion. This year we celebrate 800 years – the Canticle of Creatures. Let us sit and ‘be’ with the Lord.

I humbly serve you all as the Regional Minister and I am constantly aware of my feelings of inadequacy to do so. Yet our Lord has never ceased to amaze me at providing the tools for me to serve, as I’m sure many of those serving feel also. One just needs a Servant’s Heart. We are approaching our Regional Chapter of Elections this July and as you’ll see within this Portiuncula there is information explaining the Nomination Process. I truly invite you to review it and to submit your Nominations; especially to prayerfully discern if you feel called should you receive

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TOPIC	PAGE
Regional Minister	1
Regional Spiritual Assistant	3
Regional Vice Minister	5
Regional Formation Team – Part 1	6
Regional Formation Team – Part 2	7
St. Elizabeth of Hungary (Quincy)	8
St. Margaret of Cortona (B’ton)	9
Sacred Heart (Peoria)	9
Pope St. John XXIII (Rock Island)	11
St. Francis of Assisi (Teutopolis)	11
Prayer for Fidelity to Rule	11
Upcoming Regional Elections	12
Upcoming Events	13
Portiuncula Dates – next edition	13

a Nomination. The members of the REC are also available should you have specific questions – just reach out. May we all also join in praying our Prayer of Elections too.

Recently and throughout these last almost three years many have struggled with having to follow the governing documents. While I can understand no one likes ‘rules’ at times. I am constantly reminding myself for the OFS – we Professed to this Rule of life. –

I, by the grace of God, renew my baptismal promises and consecrate myself to the service of his Kingdom. Therefore, in my secular state I promise to live all the days of my life the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Secular Franciscan Order by observing its rule of life.

And in Article 20 of the Rule, we are united according to the norm of this Rule and of the Constitutions. Throughout the rest of our Rule it reminds us of the importance of the Constitutions. So I invite you when you find another or even yourself feeling that there are so many ‘rules’ to seek out the Rule of our life and let the Holy Spirit show you that – We profess to live out the Rule but we are guided and governed by our documents to help us do so - The General Constitutions, National Statutes, and the International Statutes. Take a moment to read the Decree at the beginning of the General Constitutions and the Letter of the Conference of General Ministers of the First Order and the TOR, and also the 2001 Promulgation of the General Constitutions letter from the then Minister General. I share this as many times we can take on the thoughts that it’s all business, rules, etc. When in true reality we need reminding that we are an Order within Holy Mother Church and Francis calls us to honor this always.

“And whoever observes these things let him be blessed 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”

(Blessing of St. Francis found in The Testament of Francis)

God Bless Each of you!
Humbly in Christ,
Kathy, O.F.S.





REGIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT'S MESSAGE

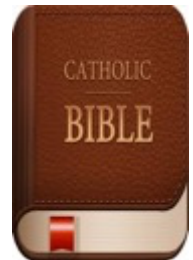
Dear Franciscan sisters and brothers,
May the Lord give you peace!

Lectio Divina as a Lenten Practice



The holy season of Lent begins this year with the observance of Ash Wednesday on March 5, 2025. In a sense, the whole Church is invited to join us in the Order of Penance for these forty days of prayer, fasting and almsgiving in order to prepare well for a worthy celebration of the Paschal Mystery of the Lord at Easter. Article 4 of the *Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order* instructs us that “Secular Franciscans should devote themselves to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel.” Especially during this Jubilee Year of God’s Grace and as the Franciscan Centenaries of the final events in the earthly life of our Seraphic Father St. Francis continue to unfold, this Lent may be a very propitious time for us to focus on sacred reading, traditionally known as *Lectio Divina*.

The weekly *Formation Friday* series published by the OFS National Formation Commission focused on *Lectio Divina* in its May 5, 2019 edition. Author Diane Menditto, O.F.S. noted that “Many of us use *Lectio Divina* to pray Scripture” and she listed the four stages of the classic *Lectio Divina* model: Read, Reflect, Respond (pray), and Rest (contemplate). In her contribution to the *For Up to Now (FUN) Manual* on the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, Teresa Baker, O.F.S. elaborated on each of these four stages which she termed “The 4 R’s”:



- 1) **Read** (*Lectio*): Read the Scripture passage through thoroughly.
- 2) **Reflect** (*Meditatio*): Reflect upon what you have read. Ask yourself which word, which phrase, which passage speaks to you, challenges you, tugs at you this day. Which word or passage got your attention this day? Sit with these words and allow them to penetrate your spirit.
- 3) **Respond** (*Oratio*): How do you respond to the stirrings in your heart, your conscience? How does this passage challenge you to look upon the world? How does it affect your interactions with others? How does it change how you see yourself? God spoke to you; what is your response to God?
- 4) **Receive** (*Contemplatio*): Sit in the silence; sit in the Presence of God; receive what it is that God is giving you. Remember: God’s first language is Silence.

In the May 2019 Formation Friday article, Diane continues by asking, “How about a Franciscan take on *Lectio*?” and she briefly presents the model found in the writings of the Seraphic Doctor, St. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio:



1) **Read**; 2) **Meditate**; 3) **Pray** (contemplate); 4) **Act**

The first three steps lead to love and love leads to action; we are transformed by the Gospel and we PUT IT INTO ACTION.

Finally, Diane notes that St. Clare of Assisi's model of contemplation which she practiced for many years before the Crucifix of San Damiano can be very useful for us Franciscans in reading and praying the Sacred Scriptures:



- 1) **Gaze** [upon Him];
- 2) **Consider** [Him];
- 3) **Contemplate** [Him];
- 4) **Imitate** [Him]

We **gaze** (read), we **consider** (listen in the heart), we **contemplate** (allow ourselves to be challenged and transformed), and we **imitate** (become what we love in reality and action). Saint Clare wrote sometime around the year 1238 about this process in her *Third Letter to Agnes of Prague*: "Place your mind before the mirror of eternity! Place your soul in the brilliance of glory! Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance! And transform your entire being into the image of the Godhead Itself through contemplation."



Even though our vocation as Secular Franciscans calls us to an active life of living in the world, serving as a leaven of Gospel values to help transform our world after the mind and heart of Christ, we are also to have this contemplative dimension to our spirituality. Article 8 of the *OFS Rule* exhorts Secular Franciscans to "let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do." As our model and exemplar of Franciscan Gospel living, Saint Clare can teach us much about being an "active contemplative" in today's world. The regular practice of *Lectio Divina* according to one of the forms our Christian and Franciscan tradition teaches us will provide rich nourishment for living just such a life – during this holy season of Lent and beyond!

Here is a short Lenten prayer:

Lord our God, by the power of your Holy Spirit, we have entered into this Lenten time of penance and conversion, of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, in order to renew our dedication to live the holy Gospel of your Son in the footsteps of St. Francis. We ask for your blessing and guidance so that this holy season may help us to appreciate our vocation more deeply, to embrace it more enthusiastically, and to share it more fully with one another and with all people. Amen.

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

Deacon David D. Blum, O.F.S.

Regional Spiritual Assistant
Franciscans of the Prairie Regional Fraternity



Secular Franciscan Order
T In Persona Christi Servi

REGIONAL VICE-MINISTER

Isaiah 6:8 “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Peace and all Good!

For most of us, we have been singing this song, “Here I am Lord. Is it I, Lord? ...” or hearing it read in the Mass readings. When singing this song, I have felt a surge of energy and felt that “Yes, Lord, here I am, send me.”

I am writing this letter to you because I have been thinking about the openings for service that we have as a Region. We have a need for a JPIC and a YOFRA person to connect the Region to those goals of working with the National and International community of Secular Franciscans. Please pray to say “Yes, Lord send me.” There is no insignificant work on the Council. We work as an instrument of the Lord to support the fraternities and all our brothers and sisters. As Jesus expressed, “I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I am in him, bring forth much fruit; for without me, you can do nothing.” (*John 15:50*) With this in mind, please also note that as the current Regional Executive Council comes to the end of its term this summer, we will have elections. Will you pray to discern and listen to the call of Lord?

As an observation, St. Francis in creating the Rule for us to live by, wrote it with the enlightenment that has carried us forward over 800 years. I believe, not only was it an enlightened Rule, but creates in us who live by it, a way to also grow in enlightenment. How else can we achieve our promises of service and sacrifice? Brothers and sisters, keep in mind what our goal is, as stated in Admonition 16:

“They are clean of heart who despise earthly things, and always seek those of heaven, and who never cease to adore and contemplate the Lord God, Living and True, with a pure heart and mind.”

Linda Howley-Skuby. Ofs Regional Vice Minister

FROM THE REGIONAL FORMATION TEAM – PART ONE

Mark Your Calendars!**Saturday, March 15, 2025, 10:00 – Noon – Via Zoom****For: ALL members of the *Franciscans of the Prairie Region*****Topic: Overview of *CIOFS Formation Guidelines*****Why this topic?**

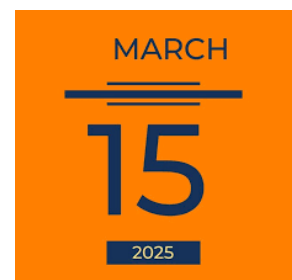
- 1) We all belong to 4 Fraternities 1: Local; 2: Regional; 3: National; 4: International (FIOFS) [The International Presidency is CIOFS]
- 2) Everyone in the Fraternity has the obligation to participate in Formation:
 - A) "... those responsible for formation are: the candidate, the entire Fraternity, the Council with the Minister, the Teacher of Formation, and the Spiritual Assistant (*General Constitutions*, article #37.2).
 - B) "... Permanent formation – accomplished by means of courses, gatherings, and the sharing of experiences – aims to assist the brothers and sisters ..." (*General Constitutions*, article #44.3).
 - C) "Ongoing formation is the responsibility of all professed members consonant with article #44 of the *General Constitutions* (*National Statutes*, article #19.4).
- 3) This document provides CIOFS' comprehensive understanding of the basic elements of Secular Franciscan Formation!



Presentation will include an overview of the four chapters plus briefly touching on their 16 themes with time for discussions (e.g., practical use in our Fraternities), observations and comments!

CIOFS Formation Guidelines*: 4 Chapters & 16 themes*Chapter I – *Life in Christ, in the Church and in Francis* (4 themes)****Chapter II – *The Secular Franciscan Order* (7 themes)****Chapter III – *The Secular Franciscan* (3 themes)****Chapter IV – *Mary & the Holy Spirit – Our Companions on the Journey* (2 themes)**

**Mark your calendars now &
learn about the values which we as
Secular Franciscans embrace!**



FROM THE REGIONAL FORMATION TEAM – PART TWO

On Saturday, January 18, 2025, the Regional Formation Team sponsored a 2 hour virtual presentation on *The Canticle of the Creatures*.

This presentation in support of the Franciscan Family's observance of the 8th Centenary of significant events in the life of our founder, St. Francis of Assisi, was open to all the members of our Regional Fraternity.

What follows are the notes detailing what was covered!

[Outline, Opening Prayer & Justin's Presentation were emailed prior to event; Presentation was recorded excluding breakout sessions.]

[Video Link: <https://zoom.us/rec/share/XBscuLcZJ-7f22DAqb5pCKdPXRZXwpNeN8X3ComjlwOQfmig1cYcZkg7lZg-zdCu.CEv67Oux6GL7BFZ9>; Passcode: vGt2bE=i]



1. [Matt] Regional Formation Director **Welcomed Everyone**
2. [Kathy] Regional Minister **Gave Words Of Welcome & Encouragement**
3. [Thérèse] Opening Prayer [*Prayers From Franciscan Hearts*, Paula Pearce, O.F.S., *Heavenly Father* by Cecilia Sweeney]
4. [Matt] Participants Shared Their Names & Fraternities: **All Fraternities were represented: [6 registered but did not attend]**
St. Margaret of Cortona, Bloomington – 4 [FD + 2 + Candidate]
Sacred Heart, Peoria – 3 [FD + 1 Sec & RFT + 1 RFT]
St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Quincy – 7 [Min + FD + Sec + Treas + Councilor + 2 RFT]
Pope St. John XXIII, Quad Cities – 2 [VM + Inquirer]
St. Francis of Assisi – Teutopolis – 2
5. [Thérèse] Introduced the YouTube of Murray Bodo, O.F.M. reciting *The Canticle of the Creatures* in the original Umbrian dialect (4:23 minutes) [Link was emailed after the Presentation]
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEyDOP4sHxM>

Participants Shared General Comments & Observations

6. [Deacon Dave] Introduced the YouTube Presentation done by National Formation Commission member, Justin Carisio, O.F.S. on 10/21/23 (38:46 minutes) [Link was emailed after the Presentation]
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjlhnTXyqM0>

1st breakout questions: When did you first encounter the *Canticle of the Creatures*?

What portion of the *Canticle* resonates most strongly with you? [10 Minutes]

2nd breakout questions: What do articles #18 & #11 of *O.F.S. Rule* have to do with the *Canticle*? What is your attitude toward creation (animate & inanimate)? [10 Minutes]

Large Group Discussed Their Answers & Insights

7. [Matt] Feedback Survey (Return to Matt on or before 1/22/25) & *All Creation in Christ*, Keeping Our Focus on St. Francis of Assisi, by Fr. John Sullivan, O.F.M. [These were emailed the evening of the Presentation]

[Thérèse] [Gave an overview of *CIOFS Formation Guidelines Presentation* which will be via Zoom for all in the Region on 3/15/25!]

8. [Mary] Closing Prayer [*The Franciscan Journey*, Lester Bach, O.F.M. Cap., *Canticle of the Creatures*]

9. [Deacon Dave] Blessing [We finished at 11:58 A.M. & were invited to stay & talk if we wished & everyone left by 12:04 P.M.]

RFT thought that presenting this topic early in the year would allow Fraternities the opportunity to share it with their own Fraternity for the 2025 Centenary year of *The Canticle of the Creatures*.

[Submitted by the Regional Formation Team: Formation Director, Matt Yee, O.F.S., Team Members, Mary Farrell-Diekemper, O.F.S., Deacon Dave & Thérèse Ream, O.F.S.]

ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY FRATERNITY - QUINCY

On January 19th, our monthly fraternity gathering was held at Blessed Sacrament Church in Quincy instead of St. Francis Solanus as usual. This gave us the opportunity to use our monthly gathering as the occasion for a “Come and See” event. Blessed Sacrament Parish is the parish to which our vice-minister, Jim Smith, belongs. Our formation director, Becky Goodwin, prepared a welcome packet. We had three people show up to listen and ask questions.



Jim had notices placed in the parish bulletin, he spoke at all of the Masses at Blessed Sacrament on the weekend of Jan. 11 & 12, giving testimony and welcoming all to come and see. The parish priest, Fr. Tom Meyer was very supportive. He spoke about it from the pulpit and also came to our gathering for a short while.

We are currently preparing for our chapter of elections to be held at our May 18th gathering.

Deb Moffitt, ofs, Minister

ST. MARGARET OF CORTONA FRATERNITY – BLOOMINGTON

St. Margaret of Cortona held a “Little Christmas” celebration during our regular gathering time on Sunday, January 26. A large number of our members were able to attend as well as some special guests. It was truly an afternoon of Franciscan Fellowship. The planning committee put on a wonderful event. We were blessed to have with us a large number from the Ignite Youth Group which serves as the unified Catholic High School Youth in Bloomington-Normal. We learned about their group and shared with them who we are. What a delight to have these young people with us! Thank you to our Formation Director Maria Garcia, OFS, for making the contact and arranging for them to join us. We hope that they will return.



Father John Pham from St. Mary's Parish joined us blessing the delicious and abundant food (especially desserts). Socializing and conversation was exuberant. Some of the group who brought a wrapped gift for the “White Wolf” Exchange went home with a new treasure.

We collected a large amount of paper towels and toilet paper that will be given to the Catholic Charities St. Nicholas van which comes to St. Mary's once a month to distribute to the Loaves & Fishes Soup Kitchen clients.

After the party, the new Council went to work preparing the Regional Annual Report which is due in February.

Carol Burroughs, OFS, Minister

SACRED HEART FRATERNITY - PEORIA



On December 14, 2024, the Fraternity went Christmas caroling at The Loft Rehabilitation and Nursing of Peoria. We were accompanied by a guest cantor and guitarist.

On February 1, the Fraternity held a Come and See event at Holy Family Church in the St. Francis Room. Shown below is the flyer that we used to get the word out.

Secular Franciscan Order

Sacred Heart Fraternity



Email us at
SacredHeartOFS@gmail.com
or visit our website
secularfranciscansusa.org



Come and See

Join us for a come & see event
to meet us and learn about the
Secular Franciscan Order
Saturday, February 1
1pm

Join us for any of our monthly
gatherings
First Saturday of every month
1-3pm

Cursillo Center adjacent
to Holy Family Parish
2312 W. Wagner Ln
Peoria, IL 61615



Who We Are

Background

The Secular Franciscan Order of the Catholic Church was started by St. Francis to allow single and married men and women to follow the Franciscan way of life. We are a branch of the Franciscan Order.

Purpose

Our purpose is to bring the gospel to life where we live and work. Our Order is obedient to the Catholic Church, and we strive to follow Christ in the spirit of St. Francis. We focus on continued spiritual growth and various apostolic ministries.

Monthly Gatherings

The Sacred Heart Fraternity, the Peoria fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, meets on the first Saturday of every month. If you are interested in learning about our fraternity, please join us for any of our monthly gatherings.

On January 4, 2025, the Fraternity held its annual Epiphany Party. During the party, we conducted an Extraction of "Each one of us also drew a card with the name of a current Fraternity member to keep in our prayers throughout the year and received names of deceased members of our Fraternity to pray for."

Megan Gilbert drawing from the box which Bob Polizzi is holding.



Matt Yee, ofs

POPE ST. JOHN XXIII FRATERNITY – ROCK ISLAND

Shown here is the Pope St. John XXIII Fraternity of the Quad Cities at their monthly meeting. Topics at the meeting included a summary of the recent USCCB Catholic Social Ministry Gathering in Washington DC and related action alerts on foreign and domestic aid.



*Peace and All Good,
Deacon Kent, ofs, Minister*

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI FRATERNITY - TEUTOPOLIS

We were able to hold our Annual Memorial and invited the families to participate and pray the Franciscan Crown with our Members. They were also given Crown Rosaries and invited to a social following to visit. Due to inclement weather had to miss our Annual Epiphany Christmas Party with the Friars at their home. Regardless of the disappointments we see how much we truly look forward to seeing each other. The members are joining prayers during the Lenten Season by using the Magnificat Lenten Companion.

Stay tuned as St Francis of Assisi Fraternity is planning to invite the Region to a picnic this fall (possibly September).

John Adams, ofs, Vice Minister

PRAYER TO ST. FRANCIS FOR FIDELITY TO THE RULE

Holy father, loving and most beloved St. Francis,
I beseech you by the holy wounds of our Lord Jesus Christ,
which were imprinted on your body,
assist me to govern the five senses of my body according to the will and pleasure
of almighty God.

Intercede for me, so that I may be most faithful in the observance of your Rule of Penance.

Obtain for me contrition and devotion, faith, hope, and charity, patience, and purity of body and soul, together with the grace of persevering in the service of our Lord; so that after this life I may merit to come to you, and with you to enjoy eternal happiness, which I hope through your intercession to obtain from Christ our Lord. Amen

from the *Secular Franciscan Companion*

UPCOMING REGIONAL ELECTIONS

We invite you to please pray for our upcoming Regional Elections which will be held on **Saturday, July 12, 2025** at the Regional Chapter of Elections at the Villa Maria Center in Springfield. The term of office is three (3) years. The following elected persons will include: Regional Minister, Regional Vice-Minister, Regional Secretary, Regional Treasurer, Regional Formation Director, and one Regional Councilor [“at least one elected Councilor” (NS, article #23.2)]. All professed members of the Region are eligible to be nominated and are also eligible to make nominations.

The First call for nominations will take place by **March 1, 2025**. The Nominations Co-Chairs will send out electronically the First Call for Nominations to the 5 local Fraternity Ministers and current Executive Council Members specifying the closing date of midnight on **April 15, 2025** for the Co-Chairs to receive names and either email addresses or postal addresses and office(s) for which the person is being nominated. If address information is unknown, the name only may be submitted. Second call - **March 15, 2025** and Third Call – **April 1, 2025**.

We ask each Fraternity to prayerfully discern about whose names to submit as nominees and we ask each member to discern if God is calling you to serve in one of these open positions. You can nominate any permanently professed from your local Fraternity or from any of the other local Fraternities in our Region. Self-nominations are also acceptable.

Please feel free to reach out to us if you have any questions or require additional information and thank you for your support of our Region.

Respectfully,

Jim Smith, O.F.S. of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity (james@adams.net)

Scott Diestelkamp, O.F.S. of Sacred Heart Fraternity (scott.diestelkamp@gmail.com)

Regional Nominations Co-Chairs

UPCOMING EVENTS AROUND THE REGION (& MORE)

2025



- Mar 15 Regional Formation Presentation – CIOFS Formation Guidelines. Open to all (Zoom)
- July 11-13 Regional Chapter of Elections (Villa Maria)
- Aug 7-10 St. Clare Region inviting Franciscans of the Prairie Region for joint retreat (St. Louis area)
- Sept 9-14 NAFRA Chapter of Elections (Baltimore MD)
- ??? Regional Picnic (*tentative ... Teutopolis*)
- Oct 24-26 Regional Retreat & REC/RFC meetings (Villa Maria)
- Nov 15 Virtual Workshop for Local Formation Directors and Teams (Zoom)



2026

- April 10-13 RFC/REC Annual Meeting (tentative)
- Jul 29 – Aug 2 Quinquennial (“The Q”) in Lexington KY

PORTIUNCULA DATES – SPRING 2025

- 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

Newsletter questions or comments?

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

On the lighter side ...

