

The Portiuncula

Franciscans of the Prairie Region
Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis



REGIONAL MINISTER'S LETTER

What do I bring to the Order?

Greetings Friends,

Serving as Regional Minister over the three years has been such an adventure of JOY. I've truly come to realize that we each bring our gifts to the Order. Some of us are Prayer Warriors, some are business focused, some bring liturgical gifts, some bring bushels of love, some bring our own simpleness. Whatever gifts you bring to the Order, do so with Love & Joy. We are called to conversion as we all know. But sometimes it is in stepping outside of our own thoughts of our capabilities that we can truly experience the deep conversion. It is also in just the simplest of things – a smile whether receiving or giving it. Realizing that not all of us are perhaps called to the positions of a Minister, Vice Minister, Formation Director, Secretary, Treasurer or Councilor – we are all called to play an active role within our Fraternities – even the Regional. This can be done by our willingness to help by offering assistance whether at a mtg or Retreat etc.

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But ask yourself, what do I (*or could I*) bring to the Order, and what can I bring? I know the Holy Spirit will guide you.

Even though come July following our Chapter of Elections, please know that we are to serve one another, reach out to each other, check in. I know the good people of my Fraternity have supported me these last 3 years and I thank them all! I thank each of those presently serving on the REC (Linda, Lynn, Matt, George, Jacques, Deacon Dave) and those on the Regional Formation Team (Mary & Thérèse). All of

these wonderful people said yes to Servant Leadership for their Region. I pray all those who are nominated and feel the ability to step out into the 'deep' will prayerfully discern a call. And if they choose not to accept nomination to be sure to support their Local Ministers who will be meeting to choose our next REC. Nominations from the floor by the voting member can be made also. Please do pray the Regional Elections Prayer.

A Prayer for Elections

Almighty, most high and supreme God, Father, holy and just,
Lord, King of heaven and earth:
we give you thanks for yourself.

Of your own will you created all things spiritual and
physical, made us in your own image and likeness,
and gave us a place in Paradise,
through your only Son, in the Holy Spirit.

We trust in you, and we ask for your light so that we
may choose those who will properly serve our
fraternity through their servant leadership.

Help us to select those who are able to animate and guide us by their example,
their virtues and prudent decisions, so that the Gospel of Jesus in the spirit of
St. Francis may come alive in our Fraternity.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen!

[adapted from the *Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order*]



I must add my extreme sincere gratitude and appreciation to Deacon Dave & Thérèse for all the time they have gifted me with mentoring. This is a treasure that I will hold dear (& always welcome more ☺). Let us each mentor one another. Your presence as our RSA will be truly missed. I'm thankful you are but a phone call, email or zoom away! You have given a great example of being a Franciscan to us.

We are now perhaps the smallest Region, and I know not the future for us. However, I do know, as I have repeatedly expressed to National, ☺ – We are a Fraternity! Being smaller has allowed us to be more connected I feel. We are Blessed! Pope Francis left us such good examples of Love – may we also be good examples to one another and EVERYONE we encounter!

Thank you all for your faith in my efforts, your patience with my errors, the opportunity to grow & especially your love and friendship, may I continue to serve you in whatever capacity I may be called to in the future.

As St. Francis shared to his good Brothers, *“I have done what was mine to do, may Christ teach you what is yours”*. What is yours?

God Bless you all!

Love,

Kathy, O.F.S.



FROM OUR REGIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT

Dear Franciscan sisters and brothers,

May the Lord give you peace!

“I’m So Glad We Had This Time Together!”

The following article details the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants’ plan for implementing the provisions of article #78.2 of the 2024 OFS International Statutes which prohibit Secular Franciscans from serving as Spiritual Assistants to their own fraternities at any level. So, in this my final contribution to our Regional newsletter, I simply want to express a sincere word of my deepest gratitude to each member of our Regional family for allowing me to serve as your Regional Spiritual Assistant since March of 2019. I am especially grateful for Thérèse’s never-failing support of me in this ministry as well as for the confidence placed in me by Father Ed McKenzie, O.F.M. when he as Provincial Spiritual Assistant appointed me to represent and act on behalf of the Friars of Sacred Heart OFM Province in serving the Secular Franciscans of Franciscans of the Prairie Region.

Each Pastoral Visitation I conducted and each local Chapter of Elections for which I served as the Ecclesial Witness never failed to inspire me with new insights into what authentically-lived Franciscan life looks like and with gratitude for our shared vocation as Franciscans. Thank you so much for the always-gracious kindness and hospitality you extended to Thérèse and me when we came to gather with you as family.

What a privilege it has been to serve as Spiritual Assistant on three Regional Executive Councils and three Regional Formation Teams, each unique in composition yet firmly united in the resolve to act tirelessly as servant-leaders to the members of our Regional family. Together we planned and celebrated many significant Regional events: the annual retreats, formation workshops and seminars, our Regional Silver Jubilee, the Franciscan Centenaries – and we even survived the lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic together!

I pray fervently that this may be for all of us a time of continued growth in God’s grace and the awareness of His infinite love for us which we, in turn, must express to others through our lives of loving Franciscan service.

In closing my final contribution to The Portiuncula as Regional Spiritual Assistant, I invite you to accompany me down memory lane to remember with me a television show I'm sure many of us enjoyed over the years – and now I AM dating myself! The Carol Burnett Show, which aired on CBS from 1967-1978, was standard viewing in the Ream household as I was finishing grade school, throughout my high school experience at St. Joe's in Princeton and even through my college years at St. Francis in Loretto. In addition to its comedy skits, the show also became known for its closing theme song, written by Carol's husband, with these lyrics:

I'm so glad we had this time together
Just to have a laugh or sing a song.
Seems we just get started and
before you know it,
Comes the time we have to say "So long."



At the close of each episode, Carol tugged her ear. This silent message was meant for her grandmother who raised her, and meant she was thinking of her at that moment. After her grandmother's death, Carol continued the tradition.

These past twelve years of service – six as your Regional Minister and six as one of your Regional Spiritual Assistants – have been a privilege and a blessing for me beyond description. When I catch myself humming the melody of "I'm so glad we had this time together," I'm thinking of you and all that we as a Regional family have experienced together since 2013: the challenges we have embraced, the projects we have accomplished together, the laughter and the tears we have known, the ways we have both inspired and frustrated one another, the ups and the downs, the joys and the sorrows – everything that has been part and parcel of our shared Franciscan life on the Prairie. My great joy is in knowing that I continue to be your Franciscan brother even after my appointment as Regional Spiritual Assistant ends on June 15, 2025. And if I have offended anyone in any way during my term of service, I beg your forgiveness with all my heart!

Now has come "the time we have to say, 'So long'" and I am tugging my ear while commending each of you to the Lord! Let us always remember to pray for each other and for one another.

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

OFS INTERNATIONAL STATUTES AFFECT SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE

On March 14, 2025 the Regional Ministers and Regional Spiritual Assistants of the United States received the following communication from the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA):

Dear Regional Spiritual Assistants and Regional Ministers,

May the Lord give you peace!

The Secular Franciscan Order in November 2024 promulgated International Statutes which have been in force *ad experimentum* for three years prior including IS 78.2: A Secular Franciscan cannot be appointed Spiritual Assistant to his/her own Fraternity at any level. This clarifies that the *altius moderamen* cannot be exercised by a member of the same fraternity, contrary to recent practice. According to the national database, there are 31 local fraternities and eleven regional fraternities which are currently served in this manner. There are many other fraternities, local and regional, which do not have all the spiritual assistants they are owed by our obligation to provide *altius moderamen*.

We are issuing the attached instruction on the implementation of IS 78.2. As part of this instruction, we determined that any appointment of a Secular Franciscan to serve their own fraternity as spiritual assistant will expire on 15 June 2025. We also encourage you to make an adjustment to any of these appointments in advance, if relevant to your region.

The general spiritual assistants have recommended that the relevant friars discuss the issue of spiritual assistance to the OFS where it appears difficult to find a suitable person to serve as spiritual assistant. We hope that some of you will join a future conversation with us and perhaps share ideas even beforehand so that we can better fulfill the responsibilities of the *altius moderamen*.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Marek Stybor, OFM Conv, president-in-turn

Fr. John De La Riva, OFM Cap

Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR

Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM

Conference of National Spiritual Assistants

In the accompanying Instruction, the CNSA provides the following rationale for the restrictions imposed by this statute: “IS 78.2 makes explicit what is implicit in canon law: the *altius moderamen* cannot be exercised by a member of the group that is being moderated; that is, those OFS members who are otherwise suitable and well-prepared to serve as spiritual assistants are ineligible to serve their own local or regional fraternities (CIC 303). The required ‘higher’ or ‘outside moderation’ cannot be fulfilled by self-moderation.”

The Friars clearly state that “providing spiritual assistance to a fraternity is the responsibility of the First Order and TOR. The ordinary choice for a spiritual assistant should be a friar of the First Order or TOR. While we are blessed with many others helping us provide spiritual assistance, including Secular Franciscans,

this gift that we are to each other in the Franciscan Family creates a ‘life-giving union’ which fosters a ‘vital reciprocity’ between the friars and the seculars (Rule 1, GC 89; see also the footnote to GC 85). The friars also lose part of who they are when friars and seculars are not present with each other.

The Provincial Minister or his delegate (in some provinces called *OFS Animator* or *Provincial Spiritual Assistant*) is responsible for providing spiritual assistance. If there is no spiritual assistant appointed, then this delegate is responsible for assisting the fraternity. The local minister should not hesitate to request the delegate’s assistance to obtain the proper assistance for the fraternity—whether it is a specific task such as interviewing candidates before profession, or a request for advice.”

The CNSA envisions the possibility of the appointment of *remote* Spiritual Assistants whose presence with the fraternity could be facilitated by what they refer to as *Spiritual Liaisons*: “When the spiritual assistant is not able to be present in person most of the time, it may be helpful to a fraternity to have someone who is aware of the perspective and responsibilities of spiritual assistance to remind the fraternity of its obligations and needs as well as to facilitate communication with the spiritual assistant. This becomes even more important in a situation where the fraternity relies on PD [the provincial minister or his delegate], in the absence of an appointed spiritual assistant. We propose that a spiritual liaison (SL) could be appointed from within the fraternity to facilitate this communication. The spiritual liaison must understand the role (responsibilities and perspective) of the spiritual assistant and thus should have completed the spiritual assistance formation appropriate to the role of spiritual assistant.”

This is clearly a time of major transition for the way in which spiritual assistance is experienced by many of the local and regional OFS fraternities throughout the United States. Please keep the members of the CNSA in your prayers as they lead us in navigating the new terrain mandated by article 78.2 of the *OFS International Statutes*.

*Submitted by Deacon Dave Ream, O.F.S.
Outgoing Regional Spiritual Assistant*

Regional Vice Minister

The Gift of the Vocation to the Secular Franciscan Order

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Peace and all good! The call to the Order for me was subtle, as I was made aware of it through the profession of two women during a Sunday Mass. It was continuing my search discovering God’s Will for me.

There is a saying in many circles that “there are no accidents in God’s world”, meaning that His Purpose is always at work.

There are many paths to God, but each one has his/her own destiny that God has laid out. I reflect on the last 15 years since my profession and the transformative power of God in my life and witnessing the amazing changes in others who are on this Franciscan journey. The very writing of this article for the Portiuncula has had its own timing, thank you John for your patience with me.

We recently experienced a juncture of the Church celebrating the Risen Christ, our “Alleluias” raised in prayer, how grateful we are for our Risen Savior! Then within a day the world saw the loss of our Pontiff, Pope Francis. God’s timing is not our timing.

No matter how controversial some of Pope’s Francis’ actions were within his time of Papacy, we know as Catholics, he was fulfilling his destiny in God’s plan. May he rest in peace.

What is our mission as Secular Franciscans? “To bring the Gospel to life and life to the Gospel” summarizes the mission and our Rule details how this occurs. The joy of being Franciscan lies in our ability to live each day immersed in the Rule as we grow in our spirituality and love of Jesus. Isn’t this what happened to St. Francis and St. Clare and all the saints that answered God’s call? We begin our journey in seeking God’s will and continuing by listening to God’s Word and follow the guidance provided (putting into action) the direction given us.

At this time in our Secular Franciscan Order, we are celebrating the co-occurring Centennials, covering over 800 years of Franciscan spirituality that we have in our culture and in our Faith. Francis brought the Creche and the birth of Jesus to the little Village of Greccio. The village was amazed at the scene and experienced the birth of Jesus in the telling of the story.

St. Francis received the Stigmata, a mystical experience that would define his journey to embrace the suffering Jesus. And this year the celebration of the Canticle of the Creation, which he completed on his death bed. It is a celebration of Life, brought forth by God, and ends as he lay dying. Francis even greets death with a filial greeting of Sister Death!

We all are part of this beautiful Secular Franciscan Order, learning to address each other as “brother and sister”, learning to greet each other in peace, “Pax et Bonum” and always striving to live the Gospel, to bring it into our daily lives.

Each one of us can reflect, “How have I been changed by the grace of God and following the call to be a Secular Franciscan?” How do I show gratitude to God for His unbounded mercy and love? How am I extending the call to the blessing of this Order? Within my fraternity, am I reaching out to others? When a call for help to support the Gathering, do I raise my hand and say “Yes, here I am.” Do I continue to connect with those who are now ill or at home or in care? Do I bring the “fraternity” to others, by showing kindness, comfort or support in their state of life?

St. Francis brought us the paradox of learning about true joy happening when I remain in the state of grace and praise God when things don’t go my way.

Let us be there for those who are still searching, and by the way we live our life, we pray that God will draw others to this beautiful way of living.

Thank you for letting me share my love for this Order and my last letter in the Portiuncula as your Regional Vice Minister.

Linda Howley-Skuby, ofs

FROM THE REGIONAL FORMATION DIRECTOR

Three years as Regional Formation Director have gone by fast! When I first began in 2022, I pretty much only had the *love* to learn more about everything regarding St. Francis, St. Clare, and our Secular Franciscan Order, as well as the *desire* to serve our Region. During these three years, I *have learned* so much, especially about our Order. And I have learned much on *how* to serve our Region. I am sincerely grateful for all the help I have had, particularly from Deacon Dave Ream, Therese Ream, and Mary Farrell-Diekemper, who were all on the Regional Formation Team (RFT). Thank you, teammates, for the wonderful job you did, for using your talents and strengths in service to our Region, and in assisting and bearing with me with all my weaknesses and faults.

I also would like to thank the Regional Executive Council (REC) for all your work in serving our Region in so many ways, and in your support for the RFT. Specifically, I personally thank Kathy Adams, Regional Minister, for putting in the effort and taking the time (a lot of both!) to help the RFT and the REC with the many activities and issues that they were involved with.

So with this being said, with some sadness I will not be the Regional Formation Director for another term. For personal reasons, I have discerned to not accept the nomination for this office or any other REC office. It has truly been a blessing and a privilege to be a part of the RFT and REC for these past three years. I wish nothing but the best for the next Regional Formation Director, the RFT, the REC, the Regional Fraternity Council, and all the Fraternity Members of our Region.

And last, but certainly not least, I wish the best for all the Local Formation Directors. As a former one myself, of Sacred Heart Fraternity, I know the big responsibility and the large amount of work it entails. But you are doing such a great service as a Servant Leader for your Fraternity members. Keep up the good work!

May the Lord's peace be with you in the spirit of St. Francis,

Matt Yee, O.F.S.

ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY FRATERNITY - QUINCY

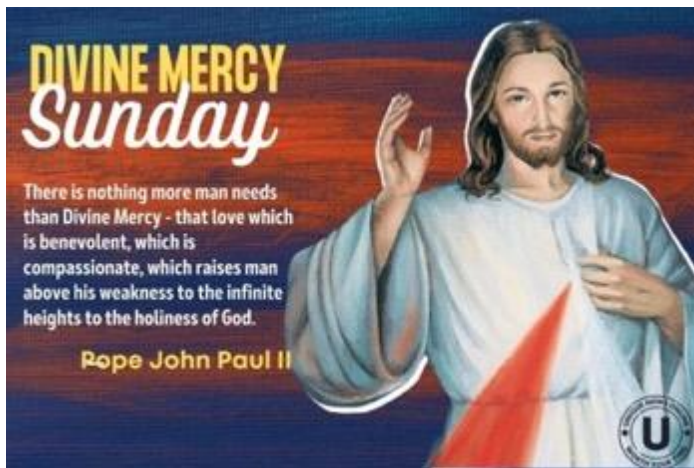
We are gearing up for a changing of the guard as we will have our fraternity chapter of elections on Sunday, May 18th.

We're also excited about the impending ordination of Dwayne Goodwin to the permanent diaconate. His ordination will take place on June 7th at the cathedral of Jefferson City, MO. The Mass of Thanksgiving will be Sunday, June 8 at 9:30 am at St. Joseph Church in Palmyra, Missouri with lunch and reception to follow.

Deb Moffitt, ofs, Minister



ST. MARGARET OF CORTONA FRATERNITY – BLOOMINGTON



Our gathering on Sunday, April 27 was more prayerful than usual. After our customary praying of the Liturgy of the Hours, Sister Betty Jean led our group in the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. We are so blessed to have both Sister Linda and Sister Betty Jean with us at every gathering.

Our Formation Director Maria Garcia gave an informative presentation on the history of the Divine Mercy image and

St. Faustina's interactions with Jesus. Divine Mercy prayer cards were distributed. For the second half of our gathering, we held a Holy Hour in the St. Francis of Assisi chapel for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis and for the upcoming conclave selecting a new Pope. May the Holy Spirit guide the process. It was a wonderful quiet time spent with Jesus.

Carol Burroughs, OFS, Minister

SACRED HEART FRATERNITY – PEORIA

On April 5, 2025, our Fraternity had our annual Day of Reflection. We met for Mass at Holy Family Church in Peoria. Fr. Greg Jozefiak, Pastor, was the celebrant. We then went to the St. Francis Room for a Lenten Meditation. Colleen Mattern, Vice-Minister of our Fraternity, led the Meditation with a reading from the Gospel of St. John 8:1-11, about the woman caught in adultery. This was followed by a reflection, with music, and narrated through the eyes of the woman. It was very powerful. We ended this Meditation with a discussion by the Fraternity members.



After lunch, our Spiritual Assistant, Brother Donald Thielsen, OFM Conv, led us with a Lenten Reflection. The topic was Indecision countered with Attention. One of the many things Bro. Donald said was “indecision is often not for lack of knowledge but rather fear of man or lack of convictions in one’s own beliefs.” And regarding attention, he said “indecision is a concern that should prime us to be more attentive.” He also explained how the Five Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary bring out this notion of attentiveness. It was very enlightening.

We were all enriched and blessed during this time together!

Matt Yee, ofs

POPE ST. JOHN XXIII FRATERNITY – ROCK ISLAND

“In commemoration of the VIII Centenary of the Canticle of the Creatures, the Pope St. John XXIII Fraternity of the Quad Cities moved their ongoing formation from the monthly meeting to the campus of St. Ambrose University.

Fraternity members joined several hundred others from the greater Quad Cities metro for a screening of the documentary, *Giants Rising*, an immersive journey into the heart of America’s most iconic forests, the coast redwoods.”

Peace and All Good,

Deacon Kent, ofs, Minister



ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI FRATERNITY - TEUTOPOLIS

Our fraternity is very happy to have Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and meditation after council meetings and before Gathering every time we meet. This is done by our Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Dennis Koopman, OFM.



Our April 27th Gathering featured Deacon Jim Rupp (ret.), who shared the story of his life - a long and ongoing commitment to the poor. Deacon Jim is out of St. Charles parish in Charleston, IL.

St. Francis Fraternity is pleased to announce we are hosting the Regional Picnic this year. It will be Saturday, September 13, 2025. The Monastery Museum will be open for touring from 1:00 - 4:00 pm. Lunch will be at 11:30 am.



Pat Niemerg, ofs, Minister



REGIONAL PICNIC SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2025

Time: 11:00am – 4:00pm
11:30am lunch

Location: St. Francis of Assisi Church
203 E. Main St.
Teutopolis IL

Venue: Indoors at church hall OR ...
Outdoors at church pavilion



Monastery Museum: Open 1:00-4:00pm

The museum houses many historical documents and artifacts from throughout the history of the Franciscans in Teutopolis. A separate room within the museum is dedicated to the St. Francis of Assisi Secular Franciscan Fraternity (est. March 6, 1864).

Contact: Pat Niemerg, ofs 217-994-2366 patniemerg@yahoo.com



UPCOMING EVENTS AROUND THE REGION (& MORE)

2025

- June 4 REC meeting (Zoom)
- July 11-13 Regional Chapter of Elections (Villa Maria)
- Aug 7-10 St. Clare Region inviting Franciscans of the Prairie Region for a joint retreat (St. Louis area)
- Sept 9-14 NAFRA Chapter of Elections (Baltimore MD)
- Sept 13 Regional Picnic (Teutopolis)
- Oct 24-26 Regional Retreat & REC/RFC meetings (Villa Maria)
- Nov 15 Virtual Workshop for Local Formation Directors and Teams (Zoom)



2026

- April 10-12 RFC/REC Annual Meeting (*Villa Maria - tentative*)
- Jul 29 – Aug 2 Quinquennial (“The Q”) in Lexington KY

2027

- March Regional Pastoral/Fraternal Visitation (*date tentative*)

PORTIUNCULA DATES – SUMMER 2025

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

Newsletter questions or comments?

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

On the lighter side ...



Addendum A – Pope Leo

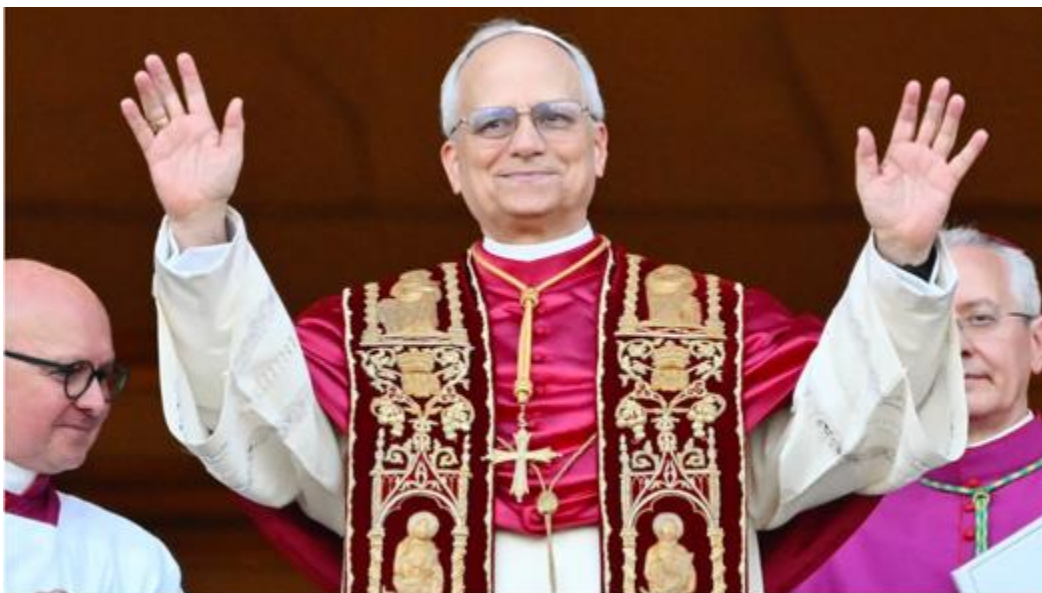
Habemus Papam!



Leo XIV, PREVOST Card. Robert Francis, O.S.A.

“Peace be with you all.”

- the first words of Pope Leo XIV (May 8, 2025)



Newly elected Pope Leo XIV, Robert Prevost arrives on the main central loggia balcony of the St Peter's Basilica for the first time, after the cardinals ended the conclave. Photo: Alberto PIZZOLI/AFP via Getty Images

A Franciscan Prayer for Pope Leo

"Most high and glorious God,
we give thanks for the work of the Holy Spirit
to elect Pope Leo as our new pope.
We ask that You give him right faith,
certain hope, and perfect charity.
Lord, give him insight and wisdom
so he might always discern Your holy and true will."

Addendum B – A Look Back In Time

I recently read this article from over 7 years ago, in the early years of my experiences in Uganda and with Ugandan Franciscans. I shared this with Gilbert Muhumuza, ofs, who is now our Region's webmaster. At that time I had never met Gilbert in person. His response is below.

The Journey of a Tau Crucifix

Uganda Background. For the last couple of years, St. Margaret of Cortona fraternity has been developing a “twinning” relationship with St. Francis of Assisi fraternity near Mbarara, Uganda. This relationship started following my visit to Uganda in June 2015. We have exchanged messages, photos, and prayers during that time, and St. Margaret of Cortona fraternity last year sent over a couple of boxes of Franciscan-related books. My contact in their local fraternity, Gilbert Muhumuza, OFS, was last year elected to be the ~~YouEra~~ International Councilor for Africa. In his new role, he attended the CIOFS Chapter in Rome (his first plane ride) in November 2017.

The Tau Crucifix. During my trip to the Holy Land in October 2016, I purchased a large beautiful Tau crucifix made of olive wood. This was bought specifically to be donated to the silent auction at our September 2017 retreat. I was unable to be at our retreat during the silent auction because I was attending the NAFRA Chapter as a delegate for ~~Dcn.~~ Dave. However, I pre-submitted an opening bid on the crucifix merely as a way to set a minimum starting bid. Some understood this as a sign that I wanted the crucifix for myself and thus a fellow Secular purchased the crucifix and then later gave it to me! What a lovely gift ... full of love and joy.

The Tau Crucifix in Uganda. I decided to give the Tau Crucifix to the fraternity in Uganda, and had my good friend, Fr. Julius Turyatoranwa, carry the crucifix to Uganda in December 2017 and arrange for get it to Gilbert. Upon receipt, Gilbert wrote: *“Hallo Br. John. Am very praised to share my joy and thanks to you for thinking about me and sending me this gift. On this note, when I went Rome, I wanted to buy one Crucifix for my fraternity but I never had enough money. Now God had my prayers and you bought it for me from Holy Land. This is great. Again, I thank you for this letter you sent to me and thank you for remembering and supporting fraternity of Uganda and community at large. Peace and joy in 2018. Muhumuza Gilbert.”*



Epilogue. As I was sharing this story during our fraternity's January Gathering with brothers and sisters from our fraternity, an email arrived from Gilbert with pictures and a message:

“Everybody was happy to see Tau Crucifix since it is so not common in our fraternities and even in most Catholic shops. We are the luckiest fraternity to have this. Although every fraternity wished to have one.”

God truly works in mysterious ways! The Tau Crucifix is exactly where it was meant to be.

John Grillot ofs St. Margaret of Cortona fraternity April 2018

Peace and Good, Brother John,

I thank you from the heart for sharing this letter with me. It is a joy to behold words you penned in years gone by especially from a time before our paths had crossed. Such a sharing is a gentle thread woven through the tapestry of our brotherhood, a reminder of God's grace and the bonds He forms among us.

Your gesture echoes the call of Christ, who said, “It is by your love of one another that everyone will recognize that you are my disciples” (Jn 13:35)

May the Lord bless you and keep you always in His peace.

Your brother in Christ, **Brother Gilbert** (8 May 2025)

Submitted by John Grillot, ofs