

Secular Franciscan Order

FRANCISCAN MIRROR

SUMMER 2020

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha Region
covering most of Upstate New York & Northwestern Pennsylvania

OFS COPING WITH THE PANDEMIC

Secular Franciscans have been coping with the lockdown by canceling events, and resorting to teleconferencing and other forms of "social distancing". *PAGE 5*

ST. FRANCIS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING

Fr. David Couturier zeroes in on the opportunities to stay spiritually connected while physically apart. *PAGE 3.*



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REGION IS 'ENRICHED ABUNDANTLY'

Al Picogna, OFS, giving his farewell State of the Region address after serving five years as regional minister, pointed to St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region as one that is "enriched abundantly" with "Franciscanism." *PAGE 9.*



'BEING OPEN TO GOD'

Mary Momot, OFS, stepped up to be regional minister in February after the previous minister resigned. "I have always lived my life by being open to God..." she notes. *PAGE 2.*



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FRANCISCAN MIRROR

SUMMER 2020

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MARCH 15, OCT. 15.



Regional Minister's Message

As your new regional minister, I thought I should share something about myself.

I am married to my husband Joe, and together we have five children and four grandchildren.

With all the craziness of a very busy life, I always felt something was missing. One day at daily Mass I noticed a friend wearing a peculiar looking cross and told him I would like one like it. His words to me were the very famous "Follow Me". I did and 3 ½ years later I was professed on June 23, 2013.

We retired a few years ago from a very successful business repairing industrial machine tools. Our business has allowed us to be able to travel extensively to many religious sites in the world.

In December of 2018 we received custody of one of our grandchildren. Interestingly enough, after retirement we found ourselves back in the seventh grade. She brings much joy to our lives and we have a lot of fun together. For 23 years we have also sponsored many children through the "Unbound" program (formerly known as CFCA).

I am in my second term as vice minister for St. Patrick Fraternity in Buffalo.

I have always lived my life by being open to God and listening to His voice. It seems to me that He always places me exactly where I can serve Him best. With that thought I pray that I can always serve all of our fraternity members as best as I can, especially with the strong executive council that is in place.

If you use FaceBook, please look at "Secular Franciscan Order" page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/5552942321>. I am administrator. We are always looking for new members and there is plenty of info to share. Also be sure to check out the national OFS Face-book page: <https://www.facebook.com/SecFranUSA>.

ST. FRANCIS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING

A TIME TO BE PHYSICALLY APART BUT SPIRITUALLY CONNECTED



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By Fr. DAVID COUTURIER, OFM Cap.

One of the most challenging disciplines being imposed upon us across the globe because of this pandemic is the practice of “social distancing.”

This goes against so much of our culture and psyche. We want to be close. We want to touch. We want to embrace and hug one another. Being in someone’s embrace when life is frightening holds us together. It contains our anxiety and controls our fears. Social distancing thrusts us back into a world of uncertainty, where we must depend on the ambiguity of trust. Distance reminds us of the void of loneliness and the dangers of being solitary. The challenge we face in this time of pandemic is how to deal creatively, contemplatively, and constructively with distance. How do we turn distance into “an ardent absence,” as the late Franciscan theologian Thadee Matura might call it, rather than an “ambiguous void?”

In his youth, distance was a tool of

fear, anxiety, and disdain for Francis of Assisi. It was a weapon of social categorization, a way to designate those who were worthy and unworthy and those who were included and excluded. He could not go within two miles of a leper hospice without demonstrating his disgust and disdain for bodies disabled by leprosy.

To make progress in the spiritual life, Francis had to undergo a wholesale revision of the meaning of distance itself. Francis learned to refashion the spiritual meaning of distance not by plunging into incessant activity, as we might do in our frenetic modern world, but by going away for a time into contemplation. It was away in silence, in the caves near Assisi, that Francis began to understand the political and social mechanisms of distancing and came to understand how a true and “ardent absence” brings peace to the soul that yearns well and deeply.

Psychology and spirituality, at their best, provide alternative pathways for the fear and insecurity erupting in this time of social distancing. As Franciscans, we look to our primary value propositions to guide our thinking and our feeling. I would name the following as healthy provocations:

- ***The goodness of God.*** Central to the Franciscan worldview is the proposition that God is good, all good, supremely good, all the time and to everyone. God has created a lush and abundant world that, despite its occasional spasms of virulence and illness, manages to survive and thrive. God’s original assessment of the world at the beginning of creation must remain our standard view of how the world operates, “it is good.”

- ***The fraternity of all creation.*** One of the most beautiful beliefs in our Franciscan intellectual tradition is the

VIRUSES KNOW NO BORDERS. NEITHER SHOULD CHRISTIAN LOVE.



appreciation for the interdependence of all creatures in one global family under the goodness and graciousness of God. A pandemic brings this global unity into a stark and sudden relief for many, as this virus circulates the globe at an accelerated rate. We recognize how truly united we are and how dependent we are on one another across every artificial boundary we have created. We must strengthen the ties that bind us and appreciate the insights, discoveries, good will and compassion that circulate the globe even more profoundly than any virus can.

• **Solidarity.** For several years now, Pope Francis has cautioned us against a “global indifference,” a lack of caring and compassion for those far away or distant geographically or culturally from us. A pandemic stretches our compassion and reminds us of the need we have to care for those who are most vulnerable, wherever they may be. Viruses know no borders. Neither should Christian and Franciscan love. We must do whatever we can, whenever we can, to see that medical and financial aid reaches those who are most desperate for

relief. It is natural in a time of immediate social distancing to think only of one’s own. However, Christian love has never been “tribal.” It has never been solely familial or cultural in level or range. I remember Bishop John Corriveau, former minister general of the Capuchin Order, saying often at international gatherings that “baptismal water is thicker than blood,” meaning that what binds us by faith should be even stronger, more durable and enduring than what holds us together as biological families or even as civic societies.

• **The universal dignity of all and its charity.** There is an ever-present danger in times of social fear and anxiety to scapegoat or discriminate against others who are different from us. Our physical forms of isolation can easily devolve into moral forms of isolation. The dignity of each and every person as image and likeness of God should translate into a universal respect that extends to concrete forms of charity, care and compassion. We should accelerate our support for organizations that provide international relief. One thinks of the World Health

Organization, Caritas International, and, in our own Franciscan context, the efforts of Franciscans International, our NGO at the United Nations.

Our social distancing offers us opportunities to go deeper with one another to express our yearning to be closer and to hold and comfort one another. This moment provides us a chance to express sentiments and feelings that are suppressed in our ordinarily rushed and crowded lives. Now is the time to be physically apart but spiritually connected, appreciative of the deepest bonds we have, in touch with the integral peace we have with God, with creation, and with one another. It is time to become ever more aware that Jesus is the God of all nearness and He is the Lord of every distance and in Him we live, move, and have our being.



Fr. David Couturier is executive director of the Franciscan Institute at Saint Bonaventure University. This article is used with permission and is excerpted from a longer one he was drafting.



Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, speaks to other members of the CIOFS Presidency via Zoom video conferencing. BELOW: Soup kitchen's website tells the lunchtime meals-to-go story, with well over 4,000 meals going out per month.

Secular Franciscans have been coping with the COVID-19 pandemic by postponing events, canceling regular meetings, and resorting to teleconferencing and other forms of "social distancing".

OFS-supported ministries like soup kitchens and food pantries have continued operating under recommended protocols. For example, Mother Marianne's West Side Kitchen in Utica converted to providing only take-out meals, reduced the number of volunteers, and mandated facial masks in addition to gloves.

The CIOFS Presidency (the international executive council) took to Zoom video conferencing in April when the global lockdown forced the cancelation of its semi-



Easter Dinners to Go; 4,338 meals in March

annual meeting. The video meetings brought together officers and councilors from Europe, Asia, Mid-East, Africa and Latin America. The four general spiritual assistants under lockdown in Rome also participated.

Secular Franciscans also have been checking on each other, sharing encouraging words and maintaining a sense of humor. For example,



4,111 Meals in Feb.; Meals to Go in March

one Secular Franciscan in the region shared via email a humorous diary of living in isolation, starting out with a month's worth of groceries and a "can do" attitude. After a few days, overeating and drinking threaten her supplies, and boredom starts to take hold. She discovers that some strawberries have 210 seeds and others, 230 seeds. "Who knew?"

On another day, at 8 p.m., she removes her day pajamas to put on her night pajamas.

By day 14, she was watching birds fight over worms. "The Cardinals beat the Blue Jays, 3 to 1."

Thinking of Francis' words to Brother Leo on coping with suffering, one might call it, "perfect joy."

- R. Stronach, OFS

AROUND THE REGION

GREETINGS FROM VESTAL & BINGHAMTON

Here in the valley of no sun, my fraternity is keeping in touch via email and phone calls. I made up a phone tree with five callers. Each caller has about five brothers and sisters to contact.

Since this 'thing' started, I have been calling members and or emailing if I can't get through. Our formation director did a Zoom class with our candidates and inquirers and I was actually able to sit in on it, which surprised me because I am not good on the computer. Ed Corcoran gave me good instructions though and I popped in on the class.

I pray you are all at peace with the extra quiet time for prayer and reflection.

-- Theresa A. Schlitz, OFS
Minister
St. Francis Fraternity



Photo from mountainonline.org.

Mt. Irenaeus Franciscan center, where the fraternity normally meets.

ZOOMING FROM THE MOUNTAIN

We here at Mt. Irenaeus are meeting at our regular scheduled monthly time by ZOOM (video conferencing), which was kindly set up by member Don Watkins.

One of the things that has made this even more special is we have been able to reach out to fraternity members that have moved from the area or who for other reasons have been unable to attend.

We start our meeting with prayer and then "go around the circle" and give each member a chance to share how they are doing in these challenging times. We then try to spend some time in forma-

tion. For instance, last month we used an article from the Tau on what it means to be in Fraternity. Discussion was led by Vice Minister Anne Claire Fischer.

We all agree that we miss very much the opportunity to hug and be in close personal contact, but being able to "see" and hear each other is very comforting. We also keep in touch by sharing inspirational poems or stories that we find in our readings

We all look forward to the time we can go to mass in the chapel and have brunch together, then attend our meeting in person, but in the meantime we are very thankful for technology.

-- Betty Hooker, OFS, Minister
Mt. Irenaeus Fraternity

BUFFALO FRATERNITY KEEPS IN TOUCH VIA MAIL, EMAIL & ZOOM

As the Coronavirus pandemic has had a pervasive impact, we are striving to nurture and maintain our Franciscan family relationships through several initiatives in St Patrick Fraternity of Buffalo.

In April we started conducting our Council Meetings virtually by conference call and then by Zoom. We also increased the frequency of our newsletter mailings to our members from monthly to bi-weekly. After encouraging all members to immediately submit any changed email addresses, we began sending daily "Minute Meditations" from Franciscan



Minister Rick Heist, OFS

Media, as well as other relevant materials, to all those with email.

In our correspondence by both email and "snail mail." we have asked all our fraternity members, despite our separation, to "pray the rosary together," along with prayers from Pope Francis, every Saturday at 10 a.m. (or whenever available that day), especially for those suffering during this difficult time. On May 21, we scheduled "Liturgy of the Hours" together for our fraternity

and asked members to join through call-in and/or social media. For ongoing formation, we are doing "at home" assignments from *Franciscan Journey*. In May, asked fraternity members to reflect on and respond to a question at the end of the chapter, then share their response with another member(s) either by phone, email or social media.

Of course, in each of our newsletters, we encourage all fraternity members to stay in touch with each other by phone, email, letters and cards.

Hopefully through these efforts, we can nurture and build on the cherished relationships we share with each other, and ultimately the spiritual relationship we have with Our Risen Lord.

-- Rick Heist, Minister, St. Patrick Fraternity

ROCHESTER FRATERNITY PRACTICES 'DISTANCE GATHERING'

As Secular Franciscans, we are called to community, but in this time of the coronavirus, gathering to share that community has become difficult. The Glory of the Most High Fraternity in Rochester, N.Y. normally gathers the first Sunday of the month at St. Theodore's Church. With the closing of church buildings and stay-at-home recommendations in place, we were not able to gather April 5. We had planned to say "The Way of the Cross According to the Method of St. Francis of Assisi," so we contacted the members of the Fraternity and suggested that each of us say it at 1 p.m. that day.



The private Padre Pio Chapel near Rochester.

As the closings continued, we realized we would not be able to gather May 3. Since May is the month of Mary, we had discussed saying the Franciscan Crown Rosary for the regular gathering, so we decided to repeat the April "distance gathering," substituting the rosary. But then the suggestion was made that

those of us who felt comfortable doing so could gather to say the rosary at the St. Padre Pio Chapel in the Rochester suburb of Gates. The chapel is a private one, created in 2007 by a family with a devotion to St. Padre Pio. The building is the size of a small church, with plenty of room to practice social distancing. It

has remained open for private devotions throughout the pandemic. We therefore proposed to the Fraternity that we all say the Crown Rosary wherever we were most comfortable. Several of us did gather there May 3, wearing masks and keeping social distance.

It was such a wonderful experience that the suggestion was made that we gather at the chapel every Sunday at 1 for the month of May, and invite the rest of the Fraternity who could not join us to pray the rosary wherever they were. Meanwhile, members of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Fraternity from nearby Hilton heard about what we were doing, so we welcomed them to join us.

Whether at the chapel or at home, we are united in prayer as a community.

-- Lee Strong, OFS, Minister

70-YEAR MEMBER UNVEILS UTICA'S SAINTLY SIGN

When St. Joseph Fraternity in Utica celebrated its 160th anniversary in 2019, **Betty Frank** was honored for her parish ministries and for being among the longest living professed members in the U.S. She has been professed for 70 years. Betty also unveiled the sign, "Welcome to Utica, The Home of St. Marianne Cope." The fraternity donated four signs to the city, which installed them at north, south, east and west entrances to Utica. Betty received the fraternity's Mother Marianne Cope Award, along with **Duffy Geary**, OFS, of Holy Family



Betty Frank, OFS, with "Welcome to Utica" sign.

Fraternity, for her food pantry, soup kitchen and prison ministry, and **Edward Morgan**, for directing Mother

Marianne's West Side Kitchen at St. Joseph-St. Patrick Parish. Also, member **Jo Ginnity**, OFS, was honored

with the Silent Giver Award for lifetime achievement in service to the order, church and community.

AROUND THE REGION

SECULAR FRANCISCANS MARCH FOR LIFE

Some fraternities in the St. Kateri Tekawitha Region took part in local “Life” events coinciding with January’s National March for Life in Washington, D.C.

Our Lady of the Angels Fraternity in Geneva, NY, was involved in two pro-life events in Ithaca on Jan. 24 and 25 – a prayer walk from Immaculate Conception Church that Friday, and a “Stand Out for Life” prayer vigil across from Planned Parenthood that Saturday. In an announcement prior to the events, Fraternity Minister Mary Anne Tissot, OFS, invited other fraternities “to join us in these events, being a presence of hope to the



Photo of Syracuse marchers shows a Secular Franciscan carrying a “Franciscans for Life” placard with the Tau logo (center).

mothers and fathers, and their families.”

In Syracuse on Jan. 21, Secular Franciscans were among hundreds of people marching through the downtown area to witness to the value of human

life, reported Ray Porzio, OFS, minister of Saint Marianne Cope Fraternity.

He noted: “At a time when one group of politicians in New York and nationally are expanding or seeking to

expand abortion up to the moment of birth and beyond, it is critically important that the love of St. Francis to protect the most vulnerable and most marginalized among us be made known.”



GEARYS CELEBRATE 40 YEARS AS OFS

Bill and Duffy Geary are celebrating their 40th Anniversary as Secular Franciscans. Besides being spiritual assistant for St. Joseph Fraternity in Utica, Bill has served as manager of the national database, regional minister and fraternity minister. Duffy has been the manager of a restaurant, but also has been active feeding the poor, in prison ministry, and in fundraising through pancake breakfasts and bake sales. Between them we have 80 years of collective service to the Seculars. God Bless them both,

-- Linda Robinson, OFS, Minister, Holy Family Fraternity

DEACON PHILIP ASSIGNED TO SYRACUSE FRATERNITY

Deacon Philip Slominski, OFS, has been appointed as the new spiritual assistant for St. Marianne Cope Fraternity in Syracuse.

Fraternity Minister Ray Porzio, OFS, announced that the appointment was made by Provincial Spiritual Assistant Fr. Peter Knaapen, OFM Conv., on behalf of Minister Provincial Fr. James McCurry, OFM Conv. The letter of appointment was received on March 4.



Dc. Philip Slominski, OFS

Deacon Philip has been serving at Assumption Church, where the fraternity meets, since he was ordained in 2016. He and his wife, Nancy, have four sons. Deacon Philip is a 31-year Navy veteran who has been working as a tugboat captain on the Erie Canal, *The Syracuse Catholic Sun* reported.

REGIONAL CHAPTER



Ministers, delegates and observers listen to reports at the Regional Chapter held last September in Syracuse.

STATE OF REGION REPORT

REGION 'ENRICHED' WITH FRANCISCANISM

Al Picogna, OFS, giving his farewell State of the Region address after serving five years as regional minister, pointed to St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region as one that is “enriched abundantly” with “Franciscanism.”

Guided by the charge to “proceed from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel,” Al noted several happenings during his presentation at the Regional Chapter last September:

- dynamic regional formation workshops intended to bolster fraternity formation teams.
- the emergence of a reactivated fraternity, Our Lady of the Angels in Ge-

neva, bonded to a Capuchin friar province. (In fact, all of the region’s fraternities are bonded to friar First Orders – OFM, OFM Conv. and OFM Cap).

- the training of spiritual assistants having “finally taken root in our region,” even though several fraternities were still without spiritual assistants. The spiritual assistants include 14 Secular Franciscans (not all have received permanent assignments), four OFM friars, two OFM Conventual friars, three Third Order religious, three non-Franciscan religious, three diocesan priests and deacons.

- the appointment of two regional spiritual assistants – Franciscan Sister Pat Larkin, representing the OFM Conventual, and Secular Franciscan Mary Frances Charsky, representing the OFM.

Al expressed gratitude for the coordinators for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) and Franciscan Youth – Don Watkins, OFS, and Peter Woolschlager, OFS, respectively. Don “is very involved in JPIC concerns.” In fact, “he lives it,” judging “by the amount of communication he forwards to me.” Peter, likewise, has been working with youth as a teacher, through his music ministry

and in various Franciscan activities – “interspersed with studies as Peter pursues the deaconate.”

Al announced that professed membership stood at 386, spread among 23 fraternities. While that’s 43 fewer from the previous year (with some attrition due to Sister Death), fraternities reported they had 29 people in initial formation (16 candidates and 13 inquirers).

Before he finished his report, Al called on St. Kateri to guide the region: “*May the inspiration and guidance of this courageous Saint be a beacon of hope and guidance as we proceed further in years to come.*”

REGIONAL CHAPTER



Carol Onuffer, OFS
vice minister



Mary Momot, OFS
minister



Roderick Quebral, OFS
councilor



Craig Miller, OFS
treasurer



Layna Maher, OFS
formation dir.



John Balmer, OFS
secretary



Linda Quaranto, OFS
councilor



Barb Quebral, OFS
councilor

ELECTIONS USHER IN NEW EXEC COUNCIL

The St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region held its annual chapter Sept. 13-14, 2019 in Syracuse.

Representatives from local fraternities across upstate New York and Erie, PA participated. A highlight of the chapter was the triennial elections of regional servant leaders. National Councilor Donna Hollis, OFS, presided over the elections, with National Spiritual Assistant Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, serving as the pastoral witness. The election results were:

- Minister Joanne Lockwood, OFS, of Holy Family Fraternity in Vernon, NY. (Joanne has since resigned.)
- Vice Minister Mary Momot, OFS, of St. Patrick Fraternity, Buffalo, NY.
- Treasurer Craig Miller, OFS, of St.

With the resignation of the elected regional minister, Vice Minister Mary Momot stepped up to fill the position. The new vice minister is Carol Onuffer, who was secretary, and stepping up to be secretary is John Balmer, who was central area councilor.

Francis Fraternity, Binghamton, NY.

- Secretary Carol Onuffer, OFS, of St. Peter Fraternity, Erie, PA.
- Formation Director Layna Maher, OFS, of St. Thomas More Fraternity, Fonda, NY.
- Eastern Area Councilor Linda Quaranto, OFS, of St. Francis Fraternity, Binghamton, NY.

^a Central Area Councilor John Balmer, OFS, of Our Lady of Angels Fraternity, Geneva, NY.

- Western Area Councilor 1: Roderick Quebral, OFS, of St. Thomas More Fraternity, Kenmore-Cheektowaga, NY.
- Western Area Councilor 2: Barbara Quebral, OFS, of St. Thomas More Fraternity, Kenmore-Cheektowaga, NY.

In addition, two appointed regional spiritual assistants serve on the council. They are Sr. Patricia Larkin, SOSF, a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities, and Mary Frances Charsky, OFS, of St. Francis Fraternity, Binghamton.

After the elections, the new executive council was installed and prayed over by everyone in attendance.



Donna Hollis, OFS
National Councilor



Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR
National Spiritual Assistant



Mary Frances Charsky, OFS
Spiritual Assistant



Sr. Pat Larkin, SOSF
Spiritual Assistant

REGIONAL CHAPTER SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS IN SPOTLIGHT

Just preceding the Regional Chapter, Father Christopher led a spiritual assistant workshop, which culminated in the formal recognition of spiritual assistants to work with fraternities.

The spiritual assistants are:

1. Fr. Corey Van Kuren, appointed to St. Francis Fraternity, Binghamton, by Provincial Spiritual Assistant Fr. Peter Knaapen, OFM Conv.

2. Fr. Tim Lyons, OFM Conv., appointed to St. Thomas More Fraternity, Fonda, NY, by Fr. Peter Knaapen, OFM Conv.

3. Franciscan Sr. Sharon Goodremote,

FSSJ, appointed to St. Patrick Fraternity, Buffalo, by Provincial Spiritual Assistant Fr. Gene Pistachio, OFM. She was installed by a Friar of the OFM in June.

4. Deacon Ron Walker, OFS, appointed to St. Joseph Fraternity, Buffalo, by Fr. Gene Pistachio, OFM.

5. Bill Geary, OFS, appointed to St. Joseph Fraternity, Utica, by Fr. Peter Knaapen, OFM Conv.

6. Mary Smith, OFS, appointed to Our Lady of the Angels Fraternity, by Provincial Spiritual Assistant Fr. Samuel Fuller, OFM Cap.

7. Sr. Patricia Larkin, SOSF, ap-

pointed as Regional Spiritual Assistant by Fr. Peter Knaapen, OFM Conv. She is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities,

8. Mary Frances Charsky, OFS, appointed as Regional Spiritual Assistant by Fr. Gene Pistachio, OFM. She is a member of St. Francis Fraternity, Binghamton.

9. Rich Backlas, OFS, for Glory of the Most High Fraternity, Rochester, was expected to be appointed by Fr. Peter Knaapen, OFM Conv. (This Fraternity was transferred to the Our Lady of Angels Province of the OFM Conv.)

CHAPTER CANDIDS



Peter Woolschlager, OFS



Fr. Adam Keltos, OFM Conv.



Don Watkins, OFS

REGION'S WEBSITE GETS COMPLETE MAKEOVER

The region relaunched and updated its website, kateriregion.org.

"It's a complete makeover," noted webmaster Bob Stronach, OFS.

"The intent is to provide a more attractive and vibrant experience, with easy navigation to information and resources."

The site boasts a lot of images, with many showing Franciscans in action.

The Home page features a photo slider, along with "Latest News" excerpts that link to full stories.

Linked from the About menu item are pages about the Region, about the order and the OFS vocation, listings of the regional executive council and local fraternities, a biographical glimpse of the region's namesake, and information on Franciscan youth.

There are also:

- a News roundup page.
- a Newsletter page with international, national and regional publications.
- a Resources page with a variety of documents
- a page of Franciscan links.

ST. KATERI TEKAKWITHA REGION | SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

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SECULAR FRANCISCANS

ST. KATERI TEKAKWITHA REGION