

FRANCISCAN MIRROR

SUMMER
2021

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



Mary Momot, OFS
regional minister

REGION HOLDS FALL AND SPRING GATHERINGS

Regional Minister Mary Momot, OFS, welcomed everyone to the region's first-ever virtual chapter last September. Then the region followed up with a spring gathering in April, also held via Zoom video conferencing. *PAGES 3 and 7.*



A FRANCISCAN FUNNY BONE?

This clownish pastel portrait was painted by Spiritual Assistant Bill Geary, OFS. He began dabbling with drawing to stay awake while babysitting his sleeping daughter. When he discovered St. Francis, the "Franciscan charism became a part of what I was creating, regardless of the medium. The Franciscan charism was the answer to what I had been searching for. Once I found this, it became the foundation for whatever I was involved in, or creating."

PAGES 14-15.



MONTHLY FORMATION WORKSHOPS

The Regional Formation Team has been conducting formation workshops every month via Zoom video conferencing. Tune in on the second Saturday of the month..

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PRAYING WITH FEELING



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FRANCISCAN MIRROR

SUMMER 2021

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MARCH 15, OCT. 15.

Regional Minister's Message



By MARY MOMOT, OFS

Peace and blessings to you my Brothers and Sisters,

Can it be that Spring is finally here? Flowers are opening. The birds are singing again. Our God is so good, giving us these glimpses of what is to come.

I know this year has been difficult for so many. We have lost family, friends and neighbors. All of us have been affected by this pandemic. I pray it comes to a close soon but in the meantime stay strong and healthy and keep a good mental attitude.

While Zoom calls and phone calls and mailings have kept our fraternities and our order moving forward, it will be a glorious day when we can meet again in person. I know I look forward to that day. Keeping Jesus in our thoughts throughout the day will help us. Give Him the praise, the honor and the glory every day.

I pray for each and every one of you every day. I wish each of you a blessed Easter season!

HELP WANTED!

The region is looking for two very special people.

We need to fill the positions of:

- Coordinator of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC).
- Chairperson for Vocations.

Please pray about this, and contact me if you are interested or know someone who would be a good fit for either of these positions.

SPRING VIRTUAL GATHERING



FOLLOWUP TO FALL CHAPTER FEATURES BUSINESS ITEMS, SPEAKERS

By ROBERT STRONACH, OFS

The St. Kateri Tekakawitha Region hosted a Virtual Regional Gathering via Zoom on Friday evening, April 9, and Saturday, April 10.

"The majority of the ministers favored the idea of a spring meeting during a discussion at our past Chapter, and we are pleased to be able to fulfill this request," Regional Minister Mary Momot, OFS, said prior to the event, noting that all brothers and sisters in the region were welcome to attend.

A number of observers did tune in, both Friday evening, where ministers and delegates discussed and voted on the business of the order, and Saturday, which featured inspirational talks by national speakers.

Some 60 people participated during the course of the two-day gathering,

Mary Momot began her remarks Friday evening by introducing newly appointed Regional Secretary **Kim**

Gardner, OFS. Kim fills a position that had been vacant for a number of months. She is a member of St. Francis Fraternity in Buffalo.

The voting body approved the minutes from last fall's Regional Chapter and went on to approve the treasurer's report for the first quarter of 2021.

Funding for vocations was a topic of discussion, with the Regional Executive Council (REC) recommending that \$1,000 be transferred from a restricted development fund to be used for vocations development. The body approved the proposal.

At the same time the REC announced it was looking for a vocations chair to head up a regional vocations committee.

"Spread the word" and "pray on it," Mary urged everyone.

Added Formation Director Layna Maher, OFS: "Get back to Mary or your regional councilors with suggestions."

The region is also looking to fill the position of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) coordinator, Mary said, which has been left vacant with the resignation of Don Watkins, OFS, due to other commitments.

With the pandemic forcing virtual and hybrid meetings, the region has realized an unexpected benefit, Layna noted – reduced spending resulting in surplus money. Consequently, the REC recommended that the body select some charities to contribute to.

Treasurer Craig Miller, OFS, reported that the region has already contributed \$500 to Amazon Relief, a Secular Franciscan ministry, and set aside \$500 for struggling fraternities, leaving \$3,000 to put toward other causes. The voting body selected six charities to support (\$500 each), beginning with the Secular Franciscan-run Matthew 25 Food Pantry in Catskill. The others are: the National Kateri Shrine in Fonda; Holy Family



Resurrection People

by Anne Mulqueen, OFS, Spiritual Assistant to the National Formation Commission

Orphanage Foundation; Cross Catholic Outreach; St. Jude Food Bank, and St. Gianna's Pregnancy Center.

ON SATURDAY, Regional Spiritual Assistant Mary Frances Charsky, OFS, introduced each of the three speakers, starting with **Anne Mulqueen**, OFS, a spiritual assistant to the National Formation Commission.

"I wish I could be there, but it's lovely to see you," she said from her computer screen.

Joy was her watchword. Anne emphasized that joy was an integral part of being Christian, and she pointed to the joy and hope of Easter. We are alleluia people. The Resurrection is the good news. God is present.

There's still the Lenten journey, she noted, and God is calling us. She shared a number of "calls".

1. The call to prayer... and the call to listen. "Prayer is oxygen of the spirit," and it enables a closer relationship with God. But one must be open to listening for God. "Listening and prayer go hand-in-hand, but not all who pray, listen."

2. The call to repentance. "The story of the Prodigal Son is the story of every human being."

3. The call to joy and celebration.

"Joy is the indefatigable sign of the presence of God," she quoted Teilhard de Chardin, and added: "I look at all of you on the screen and I see Jesus."

Jesus promised joy, Ann noted, but don't confuse joy with just happiness; "there can be a cross, but joy is transcendent."

4. The call to loving union. "Jesus prays to the Father asking that we all be one with him, just as he is one with the Father....It immerses us into the Blessed Trinity, and we become part of the cosmic dance of God."

5. The call to be lovers. Pointing to a fresco showing "the love of friars around Francis on his deathbed," she noted: "If we truly love one another, our love will be like the love of Jesus – unconditional."

She referenced scripture, "Love one another as I have loved you," and the observation about early Christians, "See how they love one another."

6. Call to discipleship. Noting that a disciple is someone who accepts Jesus' invitation to follow him, Anne pointed to Mary as the first disciple. Even though she is only quoted four times in Scripture, "she is present throughout," "from birth to the cross." She adds: "I

consider her my model."

7. Call to holiness. It's like God's touch, she said, pointing Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam" fresco, showing God reaching out and touching Adam. She quoted Pope Francis (*Gaudete et Exsultate*) about asking "the Holy Spirit to liberate us and to expel the fear that makes us ban him from certain parts of our lives." She added: "If I were to pick parts of the Gospel as a shortcut to holiness, it would be Acts 5 and Matthew 25."

She concluded: "With Mary, we , too give birth to the Lord by our holy manner of living."

THE NEXT SPEAKER, Francine Gikow, OFS, a member of the National Formation Commission, began by declaring, "I'm a real big fan of St. Clare," and proceeded to immerse everyone in Clare's method of contemplation by focusing on the story of Zaccheus (Luke 19: 1-10) and tying in the Rule. Clare's method includes four steps: gazing, considering, contemplating, imitating.

"You've probably had the experience of not being able to see above a crowd," Francine said. "Remember how awkward it was to hear or see? Tap into those feelings of frustration as we take the part of Zaccheus. Imagine you are there."



Zacchaeus and the Rule

by Francine Gikow, OFS, National Formation Commission

"Let's begin with Clare's Gazing, which is to 'see' with our hearts as we hear the words of the gospel and see with our eyes."

She showed a slide with words from Luke: "He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd, he could not, because he was short of stature."

Zacchaeus is searching for Jesus through the crowds, she notes. "The harder he has to search, the more he yearns for Jesus. We all have tried to see Jesus. After all, we are all Secular Franciscans... We hunger for Him. Think of that hunger for a minute. How does it feel?"

She continued: "Zacchaeus is frustrated by his yearning that it literally drives him up a (sycamore) tree so he can find Jesus better. Zacchaeus is 'removed' from the crowd - apart and separate. Sometimes, we need to be apart and separate in order to meet Jesus."

"So let's use Clare's CONSIDER:

"Consider the sycamore tree..." One insight is to see the tree as Zacchaeus' spiritual life. "He climbs the branches of his own tree and experiences dead ends and dry periods. The broken branches that he finds are his own 'brokenness.' He must reach for and select a sturdy

branch that supports his weight. (This is when we rely on God and surrender.) Zacchaeus waits for the Lord on a branch but sometimes has to change branches as he waits longer (just like we have to sometimes find a different way to pray)."

Now, she encouraged, consider or picture the articles of the OFS Rule as branches of a tree. She showed an illustration of a tree with its branches sporting the following labels: Gospel to Life, Life to Gospel; Rebuild the Church (Evangelize); Conversion (Radical Interior Change); Prayer and Contemplation; Follow the Poor and Crucified Christ; Detachment and Simplicity; Relationship (Accept All People as a Gift); Fraternity; Justice; Universal Kinship; Peacemaking.

"Where are your broken branches?" she asked. Which attracts, which challenges?

Francine showed a picture of Jesus looking up at Zacchaeus in discussing Clare's method of contemplating, which she described as a "penetrating vision with a deepening love."

She encouraged: "Look at Jesus' face as he looks to you. In the beginning Jesus did not say a word. He looks in silence. What do you see? Look into his eyes? Do you see the merciful Jesus?

Do you see His love for you? Kindness? Being cherished?"

Francine continued the story, quoting: "and (Jesus) said to him: 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.'"

"Imagine Jesus wanting to stay with you at your house? Jesus wants to dwell there and enter into a special relationship with you. How does that make you feel? Do you feel unworthy? Are you scared, humbled? Excited? Euphoric?"

Next, she said, "let's turn to Clare's desiring to IMITATE," as she quoted the story:

'Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much'."

Then she asked: "What would I say if I were Zacchaeus? ... How do I imitate Jesus in my life? Am I converted in my heart or just giving lip service? Am I ready to make changes in my life? If so, which one?"

Her presentation ended with brief breakout sessions, where participants were asked to discuss what inspired or challenged them, and what they might change in their spiritual lives.



An Easter Message

by Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR
Conference of National Spiritual Assistants

THE FINAL PRESENTER was National Spiritual Assistant Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, who brought the day to a close by reiterating Easter's joyful theme.

"We don't look to the empty tomb for proof (of the risen Christ). It's in lives that are filled up... with Christ."

He encouraged everyone to be a "sparkplug" for the faith, especially in a

time of a multi-dimension crisis, spurred on by the pandemic and political divisions in society.

He pointed to the richness of the church's social teaching, and lauded the timeliness of Pope Francis' "dual track encyclicals – Laudato Si and Fratelli Tutti."

In fact, Pope Francis "is applying the Franciscan spirit to Catholic social

teaching."

The story of the Good Samaritan, he noted, "embodies Catholic social teaching" and it "applies to us today."

His parting encouragement was this: "Our work to rebuild, to re-invigorate is quite necessary... Be minstrels for the Lord, bringing joy to the joyless heart."





Welcome to the St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region 2020 Regional Chapter



FALL GATHERING MAKES HISTORY REGION HOLDS FIRST VIRTUAL CHAPTER

St. Kateri Tekakwitha Region held its annual chapter in September, 2020, and in doing so it made history – as local ministers and delegates joined the regional executive council virtually via Zoom video conferencing.

The virtual chapter, necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, took place with barely a hitch over two days. Friday evening, Sept. 11, was devoted to the business of the order, with ministers and delegates hearing reports from the REC and voting to approve a 2021 budget.

Saturday's session was open to any member in the region and featured three presenters:

- National Formation Chair **Diane Menditto**, who spoke on the topic of "*Fraternity*".

- National Formation Commission member **Justin Carisio**, who discussed, "*Francis of Assisi, Penitent*".

- National Spiritual Assistant **Fr. Christopher Panagaplos**, TOR, spoke on: "*Discernment, Being Open to the Life of the Gospel and Conversion*".

Regional Minister **Mary**

Momot, OFS, welcomed everyone then turned the Zoom gathering over to Vice Minister **Carol Onuffer**, OFS, who served a moderator.

Missing in-person get-togethers, Carol lamented



**Diane Menditto, OFS, Chair
National Formation Commission**

**Justin Carisio, OFS, Member
National Formation Commission**

**Fr. Christopher Panagaplos, TOR,
Conference of National Spiritual
Assistants, President-in-turn**

2020 REGIONAL CHAPTER

that “we’re not able to hug and see each other.”

However, the pandemic is forcing the region to “communicate better.” Zoom conferencing has allowed the REC to meet more often, and in fact, regional officers are “here to serve; yes, serve.”

Regional Treasurer **Craig Miller**, OFS, in preparing to discuss the budget, mentioned how fair share contributions from each fraternity were critical to a balanced budget.

Each fraternity has to be considered individually, Carol noted. “If you think your fraternity will have a problem with fair share, contact us.”

After the chapter approved the financial report as of Aug. 31, Craig said he made an adjustment to the current budget, allowing an extra \$2,000 for charitable donations with funds saved from the REC not meeting in person.

The body approved the charitable donations

Craig then presented a budget of \$42,800 for 2021. After some discussion, the body overwhelmingly approved the budget

On behalf of the regional minister, Carol reported on the state of the region.

She began by emphasizing the regional executive council’s theme, “*Team work makes the dream work.*”

Carol pointed to some accomplishments and initiatives:

- A Zoom formation workshop took place Aug. 8, with some 50 participants.

- Two members of the region are active on the National Formation Team – Regional Formation Director Layna Maher, OFS, and Mary Stronach, OFS (St. Joseph Fraternity, Utica).

- It may be “a banner year for communication” despite the pandemic. The region re-launched its website, kateriregion.org; resurrected Franciscan Mirror magazine, and launched SKTR Regional News. Zoom meetings with

the National Executive Council have been occurring, and communication with local ministers have been happening regularly via emails, snailmail and phone calls.

- Some local fraternities have been having virtual meetings via Zoom, or communicating via phone calls and mail. One fraternity was meeting in a church parking lot, keeping social distancing and wearing masks. Another met outside with chairs and tables separating mask-wearing members.

Carol noted that visitations and elections were being postponed during the pandemic.

She reviewed some demographics, noting the region was composed of **23 fraternities, 371 professed members and 26 candidates**. Two spiritual assistants serve the regional, and another 16 serve local fraternities. They include friars, sisters, diocesan priests, deacons and Secular Franciscans.



AROUND THE REGION



Deacon Ron Walker

RON WALKER CELEBRATES 40 YEARS AS DEACON

Deacon Ron Walker, OFS, celebrated 40 years as a deacon on June 4, 2020. Deacon Ron is the spiritual assistant for St. Joseph Fraternity, Buffalo, where Sally Summa is minister.

Deacon Ron is recognized as the first African-American ordained to the permanent diaconate within the Diocese of Buffalo, the Western New York Catholic reported.

"It started a long time ago at St. Patrick's," Deacon Ron told the newspaper. "A Franciscan Friar approached me about the diaconate. He said I would make a good candidate. I prayed about it for a while and got in-

spired and decided to do it. I am honored to be the first black Catholic deacon to be ordained 40 years ago now. I feel very good about serving the community."

He went on to explain where he has been assigned. "The first place I served was St. Nicholas Church, on Welker Street near Utica Street, it's closed now. Eventually my journey led me to St. Martin's (on Northampton Street on Buffalo's East Side) when it opened 17 years ago and I have been there ever since."

In addition to the Secular Franciscan Order, Deacon Ron is a member of the Holy Name Society and the Knights of Columbus. He has also served in the United States Army and the Army National Guard.

FRATERNITY PRAYS FOR UNBORN VICTIMS

On Jan. 29, 2021, members of St. Francis Fraternity in Binghamton prayed the rosary at the local monument to the unborn victims of abortion. This was the same day of the March for Life in Washington, D.C. Being unable to attend, we still participated by praying at the cemetery while the march was starting.

-- Theresa Schlitz, OFS, minister



4 PROFESSED AT ST. JOSEPH IN BUFFALO

St. Joseph Fraternity in Buffalo boasts four newly professed members. They are Maureen Daley, OFS; Kathleen Milligan, OFS; Pat

Morlock, OFS, and Dianne Sippel, OFS.

The rite of profession took place Oct. 10 during Mass celebrated by Rev Pat Kelener. Assisting was the fraternity's spiritual assistant, Deacon Ron Waller, OFS.



Pictured are Maureen Daley, OFS; Pat Morlock, OFS, and Dianne Sippel, OFS. Absent from photo is Kathleen Milligan, OFS.

LEE STRONG PENS WINNING 'CLERIHEW'

Lee Strong, minister of The Glory of the Most High Fraternity in Rochester, is a member of the Rochester NY Chesterton Society.

He was awarded 2nd prize

**Saint Thomas More
wandered into a Denver marijuana store
where he was chagrinned by the cornucopia
of products labeled "Utopia."**

in the Clerihew Contest of the 39th Annual Chesterton Conference of the Society of G.K.Chesterton (formerly the

American Chesterton Society).

A clerihew is a form of comic or satiric verse,

consisting of two couplets of metrically irregular lines in AABB form, containing the name of a well-known person, named after its inventor Edmund Clerihew Bentley, a contemporary and friend of G.K. Chesterton. At left is Lee's prize-winning entry.

-- Rod Quebral, OFS

AROUND THE REGION

BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE IN ERIE, PA

This pandemic has caused a lot of interruptions in fraternity life. In person meetings, gatherings and events have been put on hold. This can be particularly difficult when it comes to Formation of candidates. But, for St. Peter fraternity in Erie Pa. the pandemic has turned into an unexpected blessing, especially for one

candidate to our fraternity. Unable to meet in person, fraternity Formation Director Roger Baetzold arranged for the candidate (Eileen) to continue her formation process through Zoom meetings; that in itself was a blessing, but not the whole story.

Roger and Gail's son, Fr. Anthony Baetzold of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, found himself with some available time when his in-person retreats and

talks had to be postponed. Fr. Anthony graciously made himself available to assist in facilitating Eileen's formation sessions on Zoom, something that without the pandemic would not have been possible. The insight and guidance that Fr. Anthony has offered, along with lesson preparation by Roger and the accompaniment of Eileen by Fr. Anthony's mother, Gail Baetzold, OFS, has enriched the formation process at a

time when circumstances could have easily delayed or derailed a vocation to the Secular Franciscan Order.

As Eileen's sponsor, along with all of us at St. Peter Fraternity we are grateful to our glorious Father in Heaven and the working of the Holy Spirit in seeing through obstacles to accomplish His plans for our lives and especially vocations to the OFS.

-- Jack Raab, OFS
Vice Minister



When I became regional minister last year, I did not know that a first class relic of St. Francis would come into my possession for the length of my term. I was not happy with the reliquary the relic was housed in. I asked a member of my fraternity to make something simple as a tribute to St. Francis. What he made shows elegance in its simplicity. Thank you so much Gary Engl of St. Patrick fraternity. St Francis pray for us!

-- Mary Momot, regional minister

SECULAR FRANCISCAN CONFERENCE HOSTED BY ST. BONAVENTURE

"Living Franciscan Values in our Contemporary World" is the topic of the virtual Secular Franciscan Conference to be hosted June 28-July 1, 2021 by St. Bonaventure University.

The seminar, to be held 7:30 to 9 each evening, will feature **Benjamin Johnson, OFM Cap.**

Zoom video conferencing



instructions will be sent to registrants.

Registration fee: \$50 (includes required text).

Registration cut-off date: June 1.

REGISTRATION LINK

<http://stbonaventure.com/living-franciscan-virtues-in-our-contemporary-world-virtual-conference/>

LAYLA'S FAVORITE SAINT

On All Saints Day last November 1, the children of St. Columba-Brigid Church in Buffalo were asked to dress as their favorite Saint and read a little essay about whom they chose, Regional Minister Mary Momot reports.

"Layla is 11 years old and in the 6th grade. She chose St. Kateri Tekakwitha."



REGIONAL FORMATION WORKSHOPS

By LAYNA MAHER, OFS

The Regional Formation team has been presenting formation workshops the second Saturday of the month from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Brothers and sisters joined from all over the region and even a few from other states.

DECEMBER

Sr. Pat Larkin OSF, led us on a pilgrimage to Greccio in December. Our brothers and sisters toured the Sanctuary of Greccio including the Friar's Convent. We also looked across the Rieti Valley to see the Southern Walkway (Camino) of St. Francis and made a quick stop in city of Greccio to see the beautiful murals of St. Francis painted on the sides of many homes. We returned to the sanctuary and the chapel. We looked through the entrance to the cave and could see how small it is. The people of Greccio stood outside as the cave barely had room for the cow, donkey and priest.

The Regional Formation team consists of Regional Spiritual Assistants Sr. Pat Larkin, OSF, and Mary Frances Charsky, OFS, plus Regional Councilor Linda Quaranto, OFS, and Formation Director Layna Maher, OFS.

We walked through the building and through the old friary kitchen and past the fireplace where they cooked. Down the narrow hallway, we looked into the tiny room where Francis stayed. We even got to stop in the choir, to see where the Friars prayed office.

Lastly, we visited the large chapel for the pilgrimage groups to gather and attend Mass. We learned that pilgrims are allowed to say the Christmas Mass here every day of the year. Before we left, we looked at the beautiful life-size nativity in the back of the chapel.

We ended our pilgrimage by breaking into small groups and sharing our experience visiting Greccio.

JANUARY

In January, the topic was Mary, our Mother and Model.

The session opened with praying the Magnificat.

Article 9, of our Rule that recognizes Mary as a humble servant, Francis' love for her, and it calls us to imitate her. We also looked to our General Constitutions for further recognition of the important role of Mary in our lives as Franciscans with the recognition of her virtues and response to her.

Article 9. *The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to His every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family. The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.*

GC Article 16.1, *Mary,*

Mother of Jesus, is the model of listening to the Word and of faithfulness to vocation; we, like Francis, see all the gospel virtues realized in her. The brothers and sisters should cultivate intense love for the most holy virgin, imitation, prayer, and filial abandonment. They should manifest their own devotion with expressions of genuine faith, in forms accepted by the Church.

GC Article 16.2, *Mary is the model of fruitful and faithful love for the entire ecclesial community. Secular Franciscans and their fraternities should seek to live the experience of Francis, who made the Virgin the guide of his activity. With her, like the disciples at Pentecost, they should welcome the Spirit to create a community of love.*

After reviewing the Rule and Constitution, we turned to the words of St. Francis himself in his Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We look at Mary in her roles as mother, advocate, and queen.



Cave



Chapel

We broke in to small groups and discussed what qualities or attributes of Mary most moved us and how we could imitate those qualities and attributes in daily life.

Next we looked to scripture to hear Mary's own words and how she responded to God by saying "Yes." We went back into small groups and shared how we are saying yes, Imitating Mary's self-giving and acting with faith.

We closed with a prayer from Deacon Tom Bello, past national minister.

Let us pray: "Lord Jesus, Your Mother made her concerns Your concern, and You repaid the compliment by making Your concerns her concern. Help us to respect her role in Your plan of salvation. Help us to love and praise Mary as Your Mother and our Mother; as St. Francis showed us so well. We ask this grace in Your name, You Who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen."

FEBRUARY

Deacon Ron Walker, OFS, was the featured speaker for the February formation workshop, giving two powerful talks to help us prepare for Lent. He shared a beautiful wooden cross with a crown of thorns on it as he began his first talk on forgiveness. He reminded us of God's forgiveness, and Jesus calling out "Father, forgive them," to be for our forgiveness. Deacon Ron discussed how we are called to live our Franciscan



life as merciful and forgiving people. He reminded the group of our Franciscan Charism: to live the Gospel; promote justice; be united in Fraternity; embrace the marginalized; respect creation; see Christ in all people; and follow Jesus in the footsteps of Francis. The group broke into small groups to share ways they were showing forgiveness in their life.

Deacon Ron gave a second talk on forgiveness and conflict in our families, fraternities and communities. The group spilt up into small groups a second time to answer the question: "What are you doing to cultivate peace?" Many people shared very powerful and moving stories.

MARCH

Our March formation workshop continued the

Lenten theme as we prayed, discussed and shared Lenten traditions.

We began the session with a review of the history of the Stations of the Cross and the role Franciscans had in spreading them throughout the world. Including how whenever St. Francis caught sight of a Catholic church in the distance, he was known to kneel down and give praise to God. Often he would say the following words that he passed on to his friars.

We adore you, O Lord Jesus Christ, in this church and all the churches of the world, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world. Amen —

St. Francis of Assisi

The Stations did not become common in churches until Pope Innocent XI gave permission to the Francis-

cans in 1686 to erect displays in their churches. He also declared that all indulgences given for visiting the sacred sites in the Holy Land would apply to any Franciscan or Franciscan lay affiliate visiting a set of stations in a church. The indulgence was extended to all the faithful in 1726 by Pope Benedict XIII. Pope Clement XII allowed all churches to have stations in 1731 and fixed the number of stations at 14. Benedict XIV specifically urged every church in 1742 to enrich its sanctuary with stations. In recent years, many churches have included the Resurrection as a 15th station.

The group then joined together to pray the Stations of the Cross with the Conventual Franciscans from St. Bonaventure Church, Toronto, where Fr. Peter Knaapen, OFM Conv., Provincial Spiritual Assistant, serves. At the conclusion of the Stations, people joined small groups and shared which station reflection touched them most.

The last part of the workshop focused on fasting, prayer and almsgiving. It also included the history and meaning of other Lenten and Easter symbols and traditions.

Symbols and traditions discussed included fish, stones, water, colors, flowers and foods. The group enjoyed going back into their small groups to share a favorite family or fraternity Easter tradition. Deacon Ron Walker closed the session with a special blessing.



LESS IS SOMETIMES BEST WHEN YOU ARE UNWELL

PRAYING WITH FEELING

By MARY WALKER, OFS
Holy Family Fraternity, Vernon, NY

We all know that God gives us the strength to endure. He is also there with us like a parent hanging out with a sick child.

I was experiencing anxiety (due to a thyroid problem), doing what I could to help myself -- housework, deep breathing meditations, and reading liturgy of the hours.

Then I remembered (by God's grace) when Francis was staying overnight at Bernard of Quintavalle's house and Bernard saw that instead of sleeping, Francis was praying but using only a few words over and over. It was "My God, My God" (this was from the Little Flowers of St. Francis). At the time I was remembering it more like the "My God and My All" from Franciscan Family Chaplet (the website is <https://franciscanchaplet.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/franciscan-family-chaplet1.pdf>).

I decided to say it at that moment but with emphasis/feeling/strength/love in each word (I was reciting "My God, My All" as I thought that was what Francis said at Bernard's house).

Praying with emphasis was the subject of a talk my fellow Secular Franciscan Bill Geary gave at our fraternity. We used the Our Father and prayed certain words with emphasis and feeling instead of a monotone recitation and discovered the difference and how much more fruitful and meaningful the prayer was.

As I recited "My God, My All," I DID feel different. Not better with the anxiety, mind you, but more secure

and accepting. The tension released from my muscles and I found ME inside all those feelings.

Here is what I think about those few words.

The "My God" part gave me the reminder that I had Him with me right then and there -- in the present and I am "covered". It helped me focus upon Him and His love for me and my love for Him because he is MY God and he IS God.

The My All part was a not-so-gentle reminder that He is in charge and has my back and He is my main focus on all and everything, so I am OK with having symptoms right now. I found ME again in the midst of my fear. It brought me "back to center" -- like a tennis player going after the ball but

then returning to the center to be ready for the next shot. The "My All" part gave me priorities and even more security that all things will work out for the good because God is in charge and he is most important.

Since I have been feeling back to myself, I continue to recite this little prayer once or twice throughout the day to re-connect with God, re-prioritize myself, and get back to center. I notice my tension is lessened and realize how tense I was for whatever reason at that moment.

I encourage you to try it. If you are distracted or ill and cannot think of prayers or even praying, STOP and say with passion, slowly, "My God, My All."



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This small lake was painted in acrylics from a photo of a Secular Franciscan's favorite nature spot. Bill intended to give the artwork to the fellow, but lost contact with him. It still ended up as a gift to one of Bill's favorite speakers -- Anne Mulqueen, OFS, former National Formation Commission co-chair and now spiritual assistant to the commission.

DRAWING HELPED KEEP HIM AWAKE... THEN HE DISCOVERED ST. FRANCIS

By BILL GEARY, OFS

My dabbling in drawing began during the Cuban missile crisis when we (Duff and I) were stationed in Texas at James Connolly U.S. Air Force Base near Waco.

Duff got a job working at the base drive-in and I did the babysitting while she worked. I got very bored and started going to bed at the same time as our daughter. To counter this excessive sleeping habit, my doctor advised me to take up a hobby. Result was a newfound outlet—drawing to pass the time. Now instead of early bedtime, I began staying up late. (I found out a few years later this is called “drawing on the right side of the brain,” a process by which the brain shuts down the need to deal with time.)

Fellow Franciscans are prone to ask, where did you go to school? Basically, I was self-taught. I took some art classes at Syracuse University, plus read art

books and finally completed The Famous Art School. In July 1965 I began a 11-year hitch working in the Design Department of Oneida Silversmiths, Sherrill, NY. It was during this period I began teaching ceramics and had a side hobby of carving leather crafts. It went so far as to my adventure into opening a studio in Clinton.

This turned out to be a bad choice. My next job, where I received a greater desire to venture deeper into the field of art, was my last employer at Hamilton College as a textbook manager.

This opened a newer and expanded version of drawing and painting possibilities. This exposed me also to the field of picture framing. I operated a picture framing studio in my home.

My artwork was mostly a hobby. I actually sold only one piece; most of my paintings were given away. I never considered them worth anything.

One Secular Franciscan asked where the Franciscan charism, or St. Francis, might come into the picture. We didn't discover Francis until after I left the Air Force and we were living in Oneida, NY. He has since become the heart and soul of everything I do.

The Franciscan charism became a part of what I was creating, regardless of the medium. The Franciscan charism was the answer to what I had been searching for. Once I found this, it became the foundation for whatever I was involved in, or creating. It just became second nature. It was always on my mind that I was thanking God for this gift He gave me.

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Bill Geary is a former regional minister who helped found Holy Family Fraternity in Vernon. He is a spiritual assistant to St. Joseph Fraternity in Utica.



This Native American and eagle were carved in basswood. The piece has a natural finish, sealed in polyurethane.

RIGHT: This acrylic painting of a pond in the woods is "our favorite," Bill notes. "It reminds Duff of a similar pond she used to go ice skating on."



This acrylic painting of an old country church "was done in two stages," Bill says. "First there were no large stones in the painting. It hung on my wall for some time before I realized there was something wrong, resulting in the addition of four large rocks. Now I'm happy."

PAST REGIONAL COUNCILOR CO-AUTHORS BOOK

Karen Szczesniak, OFS, a former Eastern Area councilor, has co-authored a book with fellow Secular Franciscan Luke Amato. The book is titled, *"Ministry To and By Homebound And Isolated: Covid-19 Made Us All Homebound"*.

Karen was a member of St. Joseph Fraternity in Utica before retiring and moving to Florida, where she is spiritual assistant to two local fraternities.

From the book's publisher:

Why a book for the homebound now that, God Willing, inoculations of the Covid-19 Vaccine have begun? What so moved two Secular Franciscan authors not only to write the book, but also authorize Lulu Publisher to send the royalties directly to the U.S. National Fraternity for the benefit of the homebound? Wasn't it their very experience of being homebound themselves? They felt first-hand the sense of isolation that our sisters and brothers have suffered for years.

So, we now ask the homebound, ourselves and you:

What can all of us do to minister to each other now and in the future? How does the mystery of suffering assist us in this ministry?

Who among us will follow the first millennial blessed, Carlos Acutis, and seek his intercession in using social media to evangelize the young and the elderly, bringing the homebound, the isolated and active together, as GOD meant us to be?

