



Our Lady of Indiana

Our Lady of Indiana Regional Fraternity—Secular Franciscan Order

Website: <http://olirf-ofs.org/>

February 2021

Volume 8, Issue 1

"Journey Together in Love and Compassion"

"Offer it Up" ??????



Our Regional Prayer

Holy Virgin Mary, there is no one like you born in the world among women: Daughter and Handmaid of the most high, sovereign King, the heavenly Father, Mother of our most holy Lord Jesus Christ, Spouse of the Holy Spirit.

Pray for us with St. Michael the archangel and with all the powers of the heavens and with all the saints together with your most holy beloved Son, Lord and Teacher.

May the Lord give you peace!

Here at St. Mary's in Avilla, many of us who attended and/or had children who attended our parochial school when St. Theresa Renninger, OSF, was the principal, recall with fondness (and humorously rolled eyes) that one of her favorite phrases to someone who was having some kind of trouble was, "Offer it up!"

Her explanation was that these situations are reminders of how poor we really are because we are not the ones in control. We need to offer up these times to the God who really is in control.

This begs the question: How do we really define *Franciscan poverty*? Our Rule, article 11, gives us a place to begin: a "proper spirit of detachment." However, its context is in regard to material things. What about other less tangible things? What about fraternity? Even more, what about attending Mass?

We Franciscans are "hard-wired" toward relationships. Our Rule immerses us in it: "one among many spiritual families," a "family circle," "brothers and sisters," "encounter," "living in full communion," "reconciliation," "a sense of community,"

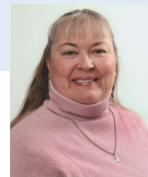
"a fraternal and evangelical world," "public life," "the grace of matrimony," and, of course, "universal kinship."

I was recently part of a discussion on this very topic in light of the pandemic. We are very frustrated that we can't have in-person fraternity gatherings. Some of us still haven't returned to church for Mass yet – and for good reasons. My husband and I even had Thanksgiving dinner by ourselves, which was a first for us in nearly 34 years of marriage. It was weird! Everything seems to be weird now.

In this discussion, however, Fr. Christopher, TOR, pointed out that this time of not being able to be together is really a time of poverty for us. We are without many of the people who mean the most to us. Face Time and Zoom are good, but they're just not the same.

It has been suggested that, in the absence of those we want to be with, we might turn in prayer, meditation, and contemplation, to the God who is never far away. In fact, he is the God of

Continued on page 2



What we have promised to live . . . Our Rule

"Called like Saint Francis to rebuild the Church and inspired by his example, let them devote themselves energetically to living in full communion with the pope, bishops, and priests, fostering an open and trusting dialog of apostolic effectiveness and creativity (Rule, Chapter 2, #6)."

REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Barb Braley, OFS : Regional Minister
 Cyndi Pilot OFS: Regional Vice-Minister
 Sharon Roberts: OFS: Regional Secretary
 Susan Knight, OFS: Regional Treasurer
 Tim Short, OFS: Regional Formation
 Director
 Regional Councilors: Linda Grady, OFS;
 Richard Cain, OFS; Christopher Bercaw,
 OFS

Regional Spiritual Assistants:
 Sr. Agnes Marie Regan, OSF
 Kathleen White, OFS

Continued from page 1

nearness – so near that he is within us. No matter how isolated we may feel from others, we are never really abandoned. God is with us. (Isn't this the whole point of the Advent/Christmas season?)

Emmanuel - God is with us!!

As to the pandemic, it will pass, even though it seems like it's already lasted forever. Put it in the perspective of Franciscan poverty: when it seems as though

we have nothing, especially the nearness of our church, Franciscan, and other relationships, God is with us!

Pax et Bonum!

Barb Braley, Regional Minister



Penitential Needlework *

At Cheb (some call it Eger)
 the poor sisters sewed for their keep
 fingers working thread,
 as had Clare's

They mended, beaded, embroidered,
 keeping the castle's robes
 while tending their Bridegroom's regalia
 in the chapel.

The sisters might never see
 the earthly master clad in their designs,
 yet their heavenly Lord's accoutrements
 gleamed with their handiwork.

They stitched their way through strife
 knots handled daily:
 gently untangled
 or severed outright.

Pierced fingers bled, saliva dissolving stains,
 as Jesus' blood gushed with water
 fountain cleansing
 both wounds and lands.

Sister Felicity Dorsett, OSF
 2-8-09

"Practical Holiness: Pope Francis as Spiritual Companion"



During this time of pandemic, we have been given extra time for the things that count: extra time for prayer, gardening, house cleaning, phone or email time with our brothers, sisters, and family members, and among other things — reading a good book. One that I'd like to bring to your attention is a power-packed small volume entitled "Practical Holiness: Pope Francis as Spiritual Companion".

It is authored by Fr. Albert Haase, OFM, and is a down-to-earth practical reflection on the encyclical by Pope Francis, "Gaudete et Exultate — Rejoice and be Glad". It is best read with a copy of the encyclical close by for reference. It can be downloaded from the Vatican website at www.vatican.va for no cost.

As he summarizes the spiritual principles of a solid spiritual life, Fr. Albert offers the reader very concrete suggestions — sometimes, ones we'd rather not hear! In so doing, he leads us to discover new ways of living out the Gospel Beatitudes which undergird our Franciscan lives.

The author's approach is not a "cookie cutter" one, as Fr. Albert reminds us of the uniqueness by which God has created us and by which He wishes to lead us to a deeper relationship with Himself. Comparing our-

selves with others or trying to imitate them may lead us further away from that connection with the Lord, one that all serious Franciscans take very seriously. Or we spend too much time and effort comparing ourselves with others we humanly deem as "saints" — canonized or not!

In that regard, one of my favorite quotes from "Practical Holiness" and one I've read multiple times for myself and to others is:

"There is no such thing as a spiritual microwave oven you can jump into and come out, after thirty seconds, a saint. You have to jump into the crockpot called your life and slowly cook for an entire lifetime ("Practical Holiness", p. 21)."

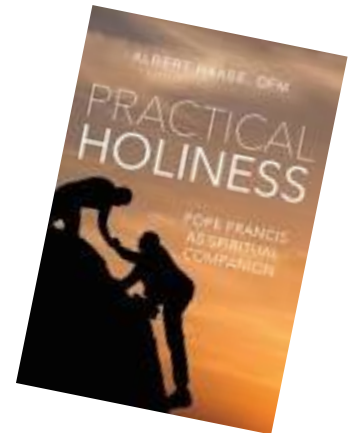
The author also challenges us to avoid the "Job-complex": that is, safely hiding in safe havens which keep us from avoiding complacency such as individualism, spiritualism, living in a little world like an ostrich, addictions (not just to alcohol and drugs), dogmatism, nostalgia for the "good old days", pessimism, and hiding behind rules and regulations. All of these can become serious obstacles to God's creative, redemptive work in us.

Some of the other topics about which Fr. Albert shares reflections include: (1) The Call to Holiness, (2) Two Subtle Enemies of Holiness, (3) In the Light of the Master, (4) Signs of Holiness in Today's World, (5) Spiritual Combat, Vigilance, and Discernment, (6) What's Next?, and (7) a thought provoking

list of "Forty Questions for Forty Days".

This Franciscan writer's reflection on our Holy Father's Jesuit way of expression is fascinating and "spot on". This small volume would be a wonderful possibility for : "Franciscan Enrichment" groups coupled with (1) Pope Francis's encyclical, and (2) the "Admonitions of St. Francis" close at hand.

"Practical Holiness: Pope Francis as Spiritual Companion" may be purchased at www.amazon.com



"Discernment requires the patience to allow God to work in God's own time . . . don't crawl or race — just follow God's pace."

Albert Haase, OFM, "Pope Francis: Spiritual Companion", p. 133).

Spiritual Lessons Learned from COVID-19 and Quarantine



Longing: a strong, persistent desire. I think we have all experienced a longing for Eucharist, for companionship, for singing, for hugging, for a firm handshake, for a sign of peace, for a cup of coffee and a donut after Mass. Perhaps we have returned to Mass, perhaps we are still staying away for fear of health concerns in our own weaknesses. We are longing for our brothers and sisters in fraternal life. We Zoom. We conference call. We call someone on our fraternity phone tree, just to check in and check-up. Nothing is the same as it was, and it may never be that "same" again. We are anxious for the "new normal" – whatever that will look like. Many of us struggle with change. I do. Yet, nothing is constant, but change. The weather. The seasons. The grandchildren are growing and we are, perhaps, missing out on those changes. We gain weight. We lose weight. Our hair grows longer – and perhaps we cannot yet bring ourselves to get it cut. But still, some things (should) remain the same for us. Our daily devotions – The Divine Office, rosary,

Gospel of the day, examination of conscience. If anything, this past year should have strengthened our prayer life – there is so much to pray for! Perhaps we have lost a fraternity member to Covid-19. I have. Perhaps a neighbor, or a fellow parishioner. Yes, I have. We can make it our mission to pray for them daily in 2021.

The things we have learned from this pandemic are vast. We learned about viruses and masks and distancing and the necessity to stay home if we are unwell. We learned that family means more to us than we can express, whether we are home with them or we are separated from them because of the virus. We learned about the Center for Disease Control and task forces. We learned about the authority of governors and mayors. And we learned that some people express their fears and frustrations through violence. We learned a lot about small businesses and how they depend on local patronage. Perhaps we learned about compassion and caring for those who have so little compared to our comfortable lifestyle.

Kathleen White, OSF



REACH OUT AND TOUCH SOMEONE

This was the name of a very successful ad campaign by AT&T to promote more telephone usage. It highlighted the fact that a person could be in contact with family and friends at any time, day or night. Due to the advances in telecommunication technology, we are able to text, telephone on the go and interact through video communication.

However, since the Coronavirus pandemic restrictions were put into effect, we are unable to physically "reach out and touch someone" on a casual basis. It has been shown that the sense of touch is the first sense developed. Touch transmits feelings of heat or cold, hard or soft and any number of sensations through the fibers of the skin. Babies held in the arms of loving parents, for instance, experience safety and comfort automatically. The basic treatment of drug addicted babies is being lovingly held.

Other touches, such as kisses, hugs and handshakes not only convey feelings of love and friendship; but also surrender and trust. My daughter used to warn the guys she brought home to meet me, to be ready with a firm handshake. I can't stand a dead fish in my hand.

I am prayerfully waiting for the day when I can freely give and receive a Holy Franciscan Hug.

Ted Boczkowski O.F.S.



When was the last time you "reached out" to "hug" one of your Franciscan brothers or sisters with a PHONE HUG?

"Happy Those Who Endure in Peace"

*All praise be Yours, my Lord...
Through those who endure sickness and trial...
Happy those who endure in peace,
By You, Most High,
They will be crowned.*

It is speculated that these lines were among some that Francis added to the Canticle of Creation later. Prior to this, human beings are absent from the Canticle. Perhaps Francis was following God's timeline in the creation scenario in Genesis. God created the heavens, the earth, the ecosystems, and the creatures on Earth in preparation for His beloved humans, whom He would create in His image and likeness.

However, the sin of our first parents brought trials, sickness, sin, and death through their original sin. Thus, we, their descendants, inherit the loss of paradise that God planned for us along with the maladies caused by this sin—and our sins.

These lines from the Canticle also hint of the Beatitudes, for they have a similar form. Recall, also, that God revealed to Francis that he would attain Heaven, and this at least partially through Francis enduring his hardships and ill health.

We, likewise, are to bear our hardships and trials--peacefully. We are given the grace of these hardships that we might embrace them and offer them in union with Christ's passion and death for the conversion of sinners—our own conversion included—and for the Holy Souls in Purgatory

We should strive to suffer them in peace, the peace of Christ, the peace brought by His passion and death. We should endeavor to take on the yoke of His Sacrifice along with Him—as two oxen share a burden of plowing by being attached to their yoke,

making light work of their burden. Thus our enduring in peace.

Our present time in history is marred with grave, horrifically invading, evils. Satan and his demons are intensely hard at work trying to destroy Christ's Church and to win the souls of God's precious human beings. Our trials can be offered, along with our prayers and penances, for the conversion of our very sinful world and country. Our prayers and penances can become a source of reparation for the blasphemies and sacrilegious atrocities perpetrated against God, His Church, Our Blessed Lady, and the saints. Against the persecution of Christ's Church.



Our present time in history potentially looks forward to an extremely ominous future. However, we must guard against succumbing to the depression that can easily overcome us. As seemingly impossible as it is at times, Father Francis reminds us that those who endure in peace are actually happy. Those who endure in peace, who offer their challenges in union with Christ's passion and death for the conversion of sinners in our country and in the world, will not only conquer the battle plan of Satan and the demons, but will triumphantly receive the crown of brothers or sisters of our King and Savior. The crown of the saints that we will become. The crown that we will gain upon our entrance into the presence of our infinitely merciful God in Heaven.

All Praise be Yours, My Lord

For those who endure in peace.

*Reflection by Virginia Anson, OFS,
of St. Boniface Fraternity in Lafayette*



"A Beautiful Journey: A Faith Journey as God's Servant"

"A Beautiful Journey: A Faith Journey as God's Servant", an autobiographical account, was written by Karen Gunter, OFS, a member of Immaculate Conception Fraternity in Mishawaka.

This small volume is such a treasure and nothing this reviewer can say, can match the joy of reading each precious word! "A Beautiful Journey: A Faith Journey as God's Servant" by Karen South Gunter, R.N., OFS, is an exciting biographical sketch of Karen's extraordinary journey from a miners daughter in West Virginia to being the co-founder of "Kid Care International" as well as other notable movements of God's work in her life. Significant points along the way were amazing interventions God used to develop the gifts and talents He has given her and which led Karen to do things she could never have imagined.

A gifted nurse and administrator of many facets of nursing care at Memorial Hospital in South Bend, IN, and in various positions in health care administration in Chicago, Karen eventually found the greatest gift God had given her: working with children and providing for the care as President of "Concerned Care" a pediatric home care company and "Pediatric Home Care Company", both organizations that cared for children with specialized medical needs. But even then, God was not finished honing her talents!

An invitation to join a group of healthcare professionals on a trip to South Africa changed the course of Karen's life as well as a life-giving working relationship with Sandra Matteson — a skilled nursing partner with whom she would minister for many years. The mastery of fund raising skills and learning to slosh through ankle deep mud in the outposts of Africa to reach the homes of those need-

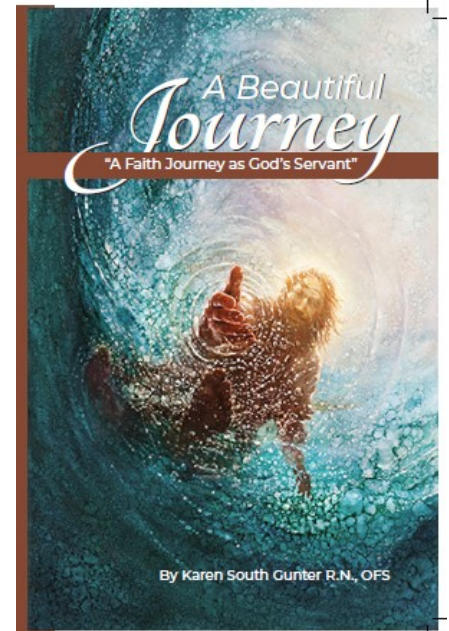
ing care, were all part of the learning experience that led to something beyond Karen's imaginings with the care of sick and needy children.

It was this love for medical care for children which eventually took her back to Africa and to the co-founding of "Kid Care International" whose mission is to provide nutrition, education and basic healthcare for children living in poverty. From its first beginnings of providing education and medical supplies, "Kid Care International" has developed into a school with a full eight grades of education as well as a clinic for health care in Tanzania.

Karen's passion for excellence in nursing has been shared nationally at conventions, and has led to numerous publications especially in the area of competency in pediatric nursing. The Notre Dame Alumni Association has awarded her the William D. Reynolds Distinguished Alumni Award for her service with youth and their quality of life. No one could be more deserving!

But God still had another magnificent journey for Karen to travel: namely, of walking in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi as a Secular Franciscan. Looking back over her life, she could see God's workings in all the various and challenging tasks with which He had placed in her path, but her journey as a Franciscan, as Karen says in her own words, ". . . has taught me to listen . . . I know He is always walking right beside me. I feel his presence everywhere I go, even when I try to sleep."

This small but powerful volume is an excellent source of reflecting on



all the seemingly small but very important ways God works in our lives from beginning to end. Karen has shown us that we may not see how the pieces of the puzzle fit together as God hands them to us, but taking precious time to examine each one can only lead to gratitude and reflect on them as she has. She writes, "I know my "Beautiful Journey" will continue. I do not know the direction it will take me, but it no longer matters because I know I will never walk it alone."

I can only encourage anyone who has worked, especially in pediatric health care or in education, to treat themselves to this precious account of "A Beautiful Journey ... as God's Servant." It would make a lovely gift for someone working in those fields as well.

"A Beautiful Journey: A Faith Journey as God's Servant", Copyright 2020, can be purchased from TAU Publications at the following web address:

www.taupublishing.com Phone number for TAU is: (602) 300-1074.

Lessons Learned from Covid From Tina Popiela, OFS, and Virginia Anson, OFS

Often when difficult things happen, people say, "Oh don't worry everything will be all right." But how do we make sense of things when they do not turn out alright? We did all the right things. I really thought that we were safe. Yet both my husband and I were exposed to the virus. And despite all the prayers, things did not turn out all right. I was angry. Jesus told us to ask in His name. To me it became a hollow promise. I felt abandoned. How could a loving God do this to me? Yet as I looked around and saw all Bob's pills, his cane and other things, I realized that it was not about me. God gave us 52 years to walk our path together. But no one belongs to us. God's love for each of us is

greater than any love we share with another. He knew that Bob was overwhelmed by his medical challenges, so God knew it was time to call him home. So as I continue on my path, this is the lesson I have to embrace: Live in faith and hope, though it be in darkness, for in this darkness God protects the soul. Cast your care upon God for you are his and he will not forget you. Do not think that he is leaving you alone, for that would be to wrong him.—St. John of the Cross

*Tina Popiela OFS
Our Lady of Lourdes Fraternity*



Ironically, I finally felt fairly normal with the COVID catching the world up to my OCD fear of germs. That said, I am more than ready for this uninvited intruder to leave.

During the quarantine, with our churches closed, the Eucharist became even more precious to me as I terribly missed receiving Jesus. God's nature also called diligently to me as I struggled with the desire to walk a nature path and not feeling safe venturing out. This is partially due to COVID but also because a couple of years ago two 13 year old girls were murdered in a wooded area in Delphi, and the killer has not been caught.

More positively, the pandemic has afforded me many opportunities to offer challenges for the Holy Souls in Purgatory-- apprehension, inconvenience, cabin fever. You get the picture. I only hope that I helped a few get closer to entering Heaven and, perhaps, even being able to leave purgatory.

*Peace and all good
Virginia Anson OFS
St. Boniface Fraternity*



News From Around the Region

St John Evangelist Church approached St. Mary of the Angel's Fraternity to be of service when it was decided to offer a Sunday Mass viewable in the parking lot. The Mass is streamed and broadcast to the cars in the parking lot whose occupants are uncomfortable with coming inside because of age or other health concerns. Josephine Kornelik, OFS, and Kate DeRolf, OFS, volunteered to serve as outside Eucharistic Ministers at the 9:30 am Mass. They have been assisting with this service for several months.



DO YOU WANT TO FAST THIS LENT?

In the words of Pope Francis

Fast from hurting words and say kind words.

Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.

Fast from anger and be filled with patience.

Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.

Fast from worries and have trust in God.

Fast from complaints; contemplate simplicity.

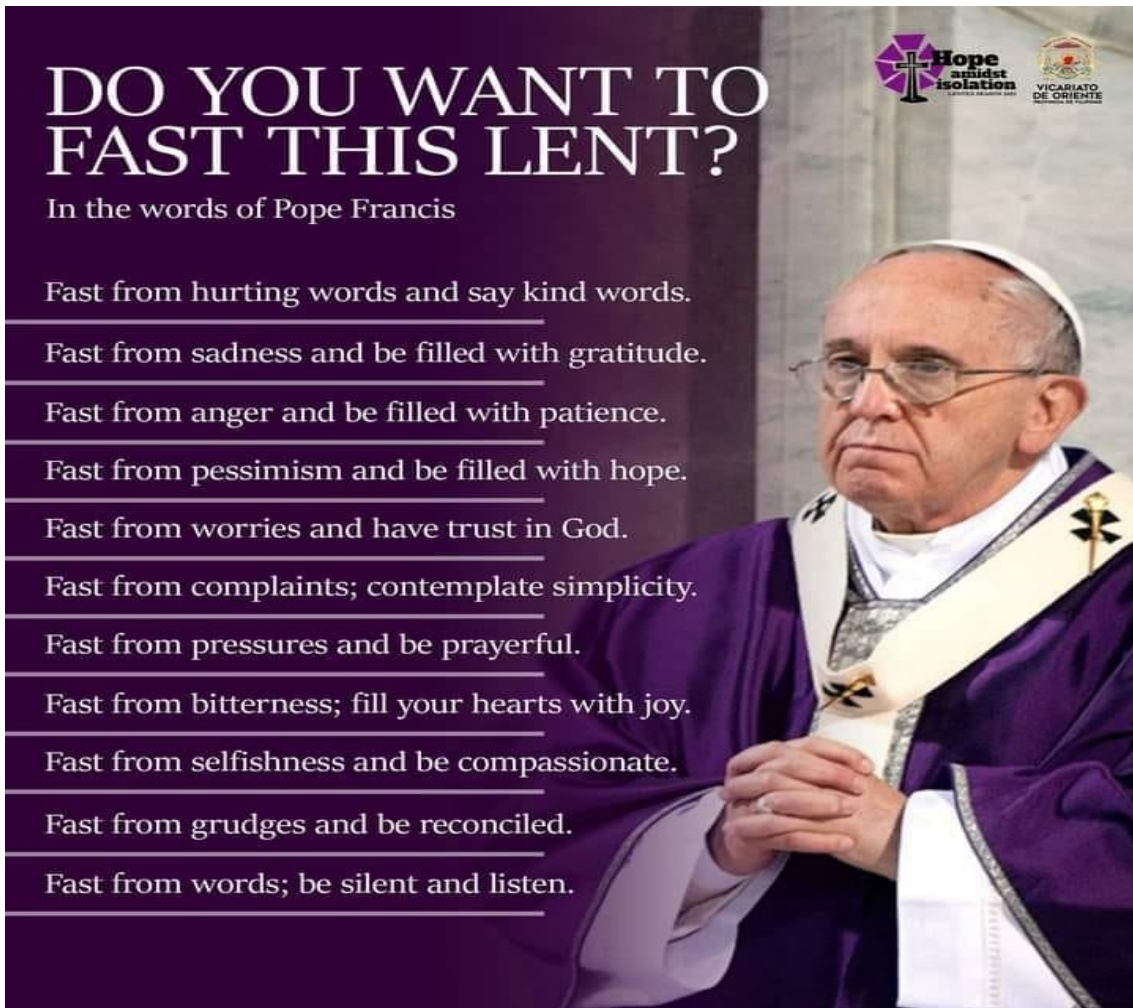
Fast from pressures and be prayerful.

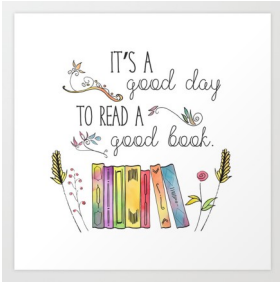
Fast from bitterness; fill your hearts with joy.

Fast from selfishness and be compassionate.

Fast from grudges and be reconciled.

Fast from words; be silent and listen.

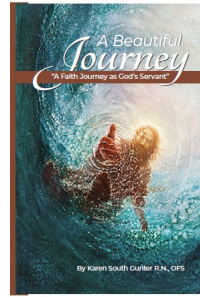




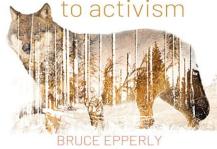
TRY ONE OF THESE ...

"A BEAUTIFUL JOURNEY: A FAITH JOURNEY AS GOD'S SERVANT"

A review of this lovely book is found on page 6 of this newsletter. It was written by Karen Gunter, OFS, of Immaculate Conception Fraternity in Mishawaka.



Walking with Francis of Assisi from privilege to activism



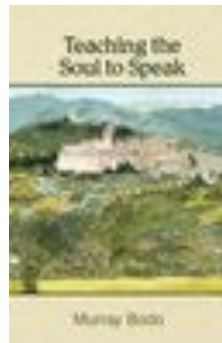
"WALKING WITH FRANCIS OF ASSISI: FROM PRIVILEGE TO ACTIVISM"

Written by Bruce Epperly, ©2020 Franciscan Media.

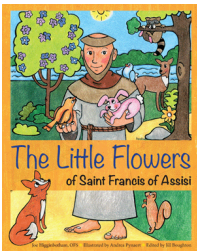
From a pilgrimage through the streets of Assisi to contemplative walks on the beaches near his home, Bruce Epperly has pondered the questions of privilege, prayer and social justice while walking with the teachings of Francis of Assisi.

"TEACHING THE SOUL TO SPEAK" by Fr. Murray Bodo, OFM. © 2020 Tau Publications.

Another awesome contribution to the poetry written by a master word craftsman, Fr. Murray Bodo, OFM. A reviewer wrote this: "In Teaching the Soul to Speak" Father Murray Bodo lovingly assembles seventy-three tuned words-songs of body and soul in a mystical exchange of lyrical intensity".



"THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI", by Joe Higginbotham, OFS. ©2020, Our Sunday Visitor Press.



This lovely book would be a wonderful gift to your children and / or grandchildren or any child to teach them about twenty-four of the events in the life of St. Francis of Assisi. Accompanied by totally awesome illustrations, the children will not only learn the stories about St. Francis, but how to apply the lessons they teach to the practice of their Faith and love of God and neighbor. Each story includes a prayer written for children, asking God to help them imitate Francis and grow in their own faith. The author is a member of Immaculate Conception Fraternity in Mishawaka.



Sister Death has called to our
Heavenly Home ...

May all our Franciscan Brothers and Sisters, who have passed to our Heavenly Father's hands, rest in peace!

Don Fox, OFS
Lady Clare Fraternity

Dr. John Williams, OFS
People of Peace Fraternity

All family members of our Secular Franciscan Family who have died because of COVID (list is not inclusive):

Brother-in-law of Jean Wonderly, OFS

Husband of Connie Lux, OFS

Caleb Matthew, grandson
of Elaine Stiner, OFS

Husband of Christine Popiela, OFS

Husband of Mary Jo Biscan, OFS

John, husband of Lillian Leap, OFS

Chuck, husband of Joan Hurley, OFS

All those whose names we do not have, but whose names are written in the Book of Life

Our Lady of Indiana Secular Franciscan Regional Fraternity



International Website:

www.ciofs.org

National Website:

www.secularfranciscansusa.org

Our Lady of Indiana Fraternity Website:

www.olirf-ofs.org

To join OUR LADY OF INDIANA list-serve send a blank email to:

olirf+subscribe@googlegroups.com

Also follow us on Facebook

"We, the Secular Franciscans of Our Lady of Indiana Regional Fraternity, are called by virtue of Baptism and Confirmation to holiness. We are committed by our Profession to living the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in our time according to the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi for the rebuilding of the Church.

With the help of Mary our Advocate, Protectress, and Patroness, we will foster prayer, vital fraternities, and communication. We will provide direction, support and resources to local fraternities for understanding and implementing the Rule, the General Constitutions, and the National Statutes of the Secular Franciscan Order, and our Regional Fraternity Guidelines."

Dates to Remember

February: 10 — Regional Executive Council

April: 10 — Spring Chapter of Mats: ZOOM
28 — Bl. Luchesius and Buanadonna, 1st Secular Franciscans

May: 24 — Dedication of the Basilica of St. Francis

June: 12 — Regional Executive Council: ZOOM (unless otherwise indicated)
13 — St. Anthony of Padua

August: 2 — Our Lady of the Angels
11 — St. Clare of Assisi
14 — Unity Day: more information to follow

September: 17 — Stigmata of Our Holy Father Francis

October: 3 — Transitus of Our Holy Father Francis
4 — Solemnity of Our Holy Father Francis

October: 9 — Regional Executive Council

November: 13 — Chapter of Mats
17 — St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Patroness of the Third Order Regular and Secular

Theme for 2021 GENERAL CHAPTER

"ANIMATE AND GUIDE
with
SERVANT LEADERSHIP"

20th Quinquennial Congress Postponed Due to Covid-19

There's a late 60s tune made famous by Glen Campbell that starts out, "By the time I get to Phoenix..." That song comes to mind as we announce that the 20th Quinquennial Congress, scheduled to be held in Phoenix in August 2021, is now postponed due to pandemic related concerns.

This past August, the 40+ members of the National Fraternity Council gathered via Zoom to deliberate on this difficult decision. There were important factors to consider, including the safety of our members, the financial impact, and the desire for a successful Q. There were no easy answers. In the end, a strong majority voted to cancel the current contract and rebook for a later date.

The new date for the 20th Quinquennial Congress has not yet been established, but we are negotiating for the Summer of 2023. Let's pray that "by the time we get to Phoenix..." this pandemic will be history. More information will be in upcoming issues of TAU-USA.

