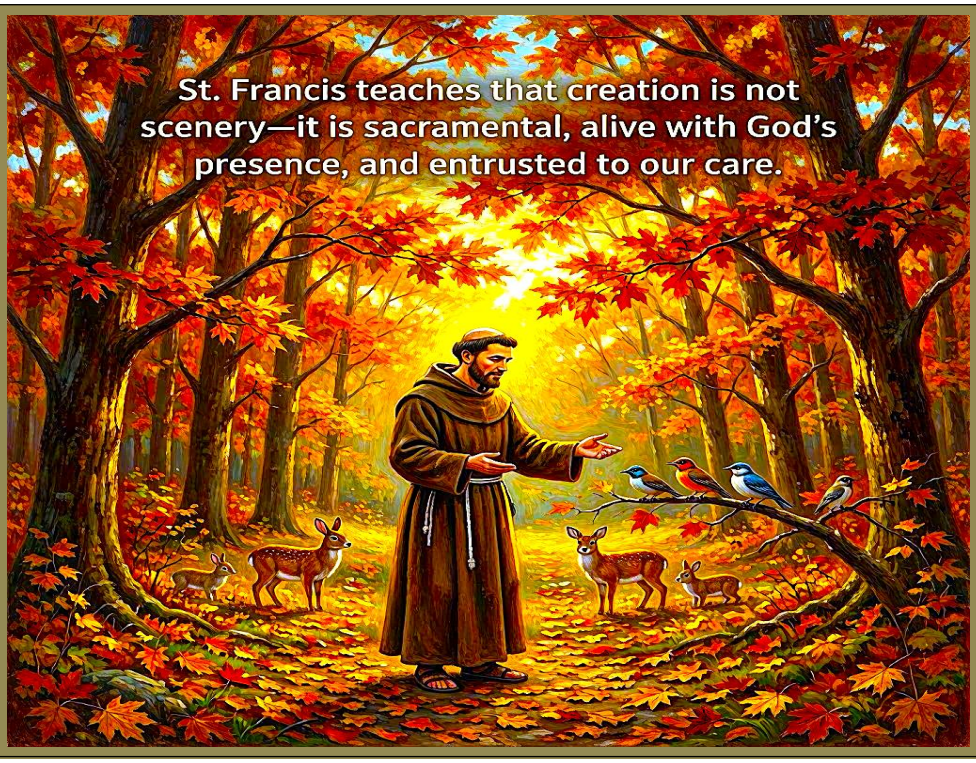
Welcome to our Fall Newsletter

September 2026

ST. MARGARET OF CORTONA REGION

UP TO NOW NEWSLETTER



Covering the District of Columbia,
Central Maryland,
Southern Pennsylvania, all of Virginia,
and one fraternity in Delaware,
and one fraternity in West Virginia,

"Let us begin again, for up to now we have done nothing."
~ St. Francis of Assisi ~

2026 ~ Issue 3

St. Margaret of Cortona Regional Minister's September 2026 Message

My sisters and brothers, I extend greetings and peace to you, and I pray that you enjoyed your Summer Season with friends and family, with Labor Day traditionally marking the end of summer. In this edition of the newsletter, I have two reminders and two announcements for upcoming events.

The first reminder is about an important date/anniversary for Franciscans. On October 3rd we will be celebrating the 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi's Transitus. An important date for us each year to be sure, but this 800th Anniversary the whole month of October is designated as Franciscan month with the purpose of creating greater awareness around our charism. A website was created by Franciscans in the U.S. at https://www.franciscanmonth.org/. Hopefull you saw the email advertising this last month. The website contains videos, blogs, and prayers for one to follow and participate in and I encourage you to take advantage of it for your continued spiritual development. You can also connect to the materials through our own regional website, https://saintmargaretofcortona.org/upcoming-events/?utm_source=copilot.com.

The second important reminder precedes the Transitus, and it is September 17th, which is the estimated date (I've seen September 14th used) that St. Francis received the Stigmata on Mt. La Verna in 1224. His was the first documented case of the Stigmata recorded by the Catholic Church and the basis for his title as Seraphic Father.

Regarding announcements, there is a JPIC Workshop scheduled for Saturday, December 5th at the Pope St. John Paul II National Shrine in Washington, D.C. Please contact your local JPIC Coordinator for more information. Additionally, the annual Chapter of Ministers will be held on October 31st - November 1st at Our Lady of Bethesda Retreat House in Bethesda, MD. The regional council has been

2024 – 2027 Regional Council

Regional Minister:
Gary Burton, OFS
Vice Minister:
Michael Oliver, OFS
Secretary:
Maria Martinez, OFS
Treasurer:
Randy Bender, OFS
Formation Director:
Tom White, OFS
Area Councilor (N. MD/S. PA):
Michael Huether, OFS
Area Councilor (MD/DE):
Vacant
Area Councilor (Metro-DC):
Vacant
Area Councilors (VA):
Sita Chakrawarti, OFS

Regional Spiritual Assistants:
OFM ~ Br. Henry Fulmer
OFM ~ Br. José Luis Peralta
OFM Cap. ~ Br. Michael Meza
OFM Conv. ~ Vacant

Appointed Council Positions
Regional JPIC Chair:
Pat Boye, OFS
Regional Multi-Cultural Chair:
Sita Chakrawarti, OFS
Regional Interfaith/ Ecumenical Chair:
Michael Huether, OFS
Regional Youth and Young Adult Commission Chair:
Vacant

Appointed ~ Non-Council Positions
Regional Database Manager ~ Region Website Administrator
Regional Newsletter Editor ~ Vocations/Archivist - Bob Longo, OFS

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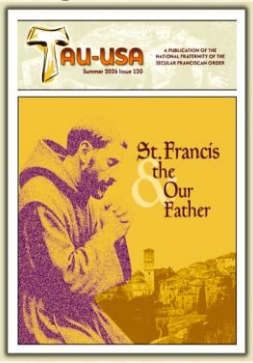
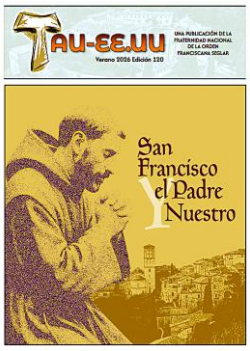
TAU-USA – Summer 2026 Issue

English Issue



Emisión Española



2026년 여름

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working hard on preparing the materials for discussion with the local ministers during this important annual meeting. I will report on the results of that meeting in our December newsletter.

Finally, I want to thank all of you who prayed for Pope Leo XIV and the Church that the Society of Saint Pius X or SSPX would not consecrate bishops without papal authority. As you know, unfortunately, they did and are now excommunicated. I ask you for your continued prayers to help heal this schism.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Regional Executive Council, I wish you and your families an enjoyable fall and start of the new school year for your children, grandchildren, relatives, and friends.

Pax,

Gary J. Burton, OFS
Minister
St. Margaret of Cortona Region

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Around the Region
New Local Fraternity Councils

Blessed Solanus Casey Fraternity

R-L Minister - Amy Kulesa, OFS
Vice Minister - Laurel Swencki, OFS
Secretary - Kristine Burneko, OFS
Treasurer - Edgar D. Haynes, OFS
(not in picture)
Formation Director - Claudette Lucas, OFS
Councilor - Kevin Kulesa, OFS

San Damiano Fraternity

L-R Minister - Santos R. Paniagua, OFS
Vice Minister - Jorge Ramos, OFS
Secretary - Berta Ascue, OFS
Treasurer - Patricia Ramos, OFS
Formation Director - Marilu Tirado, OFS
(not in picture)
Councilor - Gloribel I. Paniagua, OFS
Councilor - Gloria Pérez de Calderón, OFS

St. Conrad Hanover Fraternity

L -R

Minister - Mary Blickenstaff, OFS

Vice Minister - Jeffrey Topper, OFS

Secretary - Emory Appleby, OFS

Center L-R

Treasurer - Judy Topper, OFS

Formation Director - Kathleen Knightlinger, OFS

Councilor - Jose Barata, OFS

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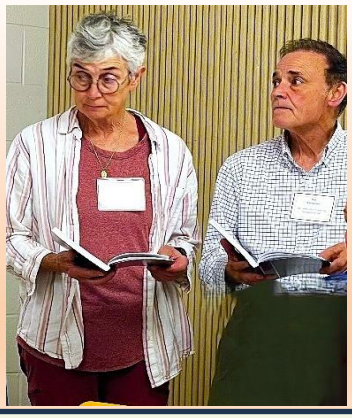
New Inquirers

Pope John XXIII Fraternity



Helen Brown
Sal Sylvester

St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity

L – R: Carl Scheffel, Bob Balassone, John Hebeler, Patrick Blaisdell, Cate Hawthorne, Deb Joissant, Pat Curtis

New Candidates

Florecillas de San Francisco Fraternity

(Candidates (**C**) and newly Professed (**P**)

L-R Sylvia Amaya de Avalos (**C**) María Barrera (P) Beatriz Castellanos (**P**) Roselín Henríquez (**P**) Humbelinda Alcalá (**P**) Iris Ayala (**P**) María Pinguil (**P**) Erick Baires (**C**) Silvana Avalos de Baires (P) Iris Meza (**C**)

Newly Professed

Del Camino Fraternity

On the left:
Jennifer Guadalupe Cruz, OFS
Temporary Professed
Center:
Nelson Escalante, OFS
Professed
Far Right:
Lucinda Lovos, OFS
Temporary Professed

St. Clare Delaware Fraternity

L - R

Marilyn Butler-Murphy, OFS

Sandy Garber, OFS

Pauletta Riley, OFS

St. Conrad Annapolis Fraternity

Dianne Beaven, OFS

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Local Fraternity Events Around the Region

Sacred Heart Fraternity

BRINGING LAUDATO SI TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD - 7/18/26

In 2007, the Care for Creation Ministry at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Norfolk adopted part of Princess Anne Road, from Hampton Boulevard to Monticello Avenue, about 10 blocks, in support of the Keep Norfolk Beautiful Program. The Sacred Heart Fraternity joined this initiative in 2019. Together, we enjoy a quarterly morning outdoor event picking up trash and recyclables. On Saturday, July 18th, we picked up 45 pounds of trash and 3 pounds of recycling. This faith-in-action activity helps the fraternity members to meet with one common goal in mind: to bring Laudate Si to the neighborhood. The team of 10 volunteers, including three members of the Sacred Heart Fraternity, met in the church parking lot at 8:15 am and returned at 10:30 am. William Wallace, OFS Minister, offered the opening prayer by Saint Francis of Assisi: "Make me a channel of your Peace." Also present were Michael Guthrie and Patricia Britz, OSF

In the picture, to the left, are three members of Sacred Heart Fraternity:

William Wallace, OFS, and Michael Guthrie — both in the back row, the last two on the right

Patricia Britz, OFS — in the front row, on the right end

In the picture, on the right, are two members of Sacred Heart Fraternity:

Michael Guthrie and William Wallace, OFS

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Sacred Heart Fraternity

VISITS TO MIGRANT WORKER CAMP ON THE EASTERN SHORE. The Sacred Heart Fraternity visited the camp twice (June 23rd and July 14th). "We distributed 76 pairs of new and slightly used running shoes and clothing items. There were over one hundred workers present, all from Mexico. They were grateful, and we had a wonderful experience expressing our love and support to them."

In the first picture are Scott Graham, OFS (front right), and Michael Guthrie (front left)

St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity Apostolate

Saint Joseph Cupertino Fraternity in Ellicott City provided over 200 blessing bags for the Franciscan Center in Baltimore. The Franciscan Center serves nearly 2000 meals to those in need in Baltimore each day. The blessing bags contained much needed hygiene items for the Center's clients. The bags were handed out the same day that they were dropped off to the Center. Each person who received one was appreciative.

The Franciscan Center of Baltimore provides free meals, case management, financial assistance, and personal counseling to individuals in need. They also offer services like food distribution, dental referrals, and support for various basic needs. It is currently sponsored by the Conventual Franciscan friars from Our Lady of the Angels Province. Hygiene items and baby items like diapers and clothing are the most requested need.

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St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity Pilgrimage

St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity made a pilgrimage to the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in America. The fraternity attended Mass, had lunch, prayed the Franciscan Crown of the Rosary, and took a tour of the Monastery. The tour was led by a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre.

The Passing of a Member in Our Franciscan Family

With hearts both grateful and sorrowful, we remember those among us who have journeyed home to the Father, who were woven into the fabric of our Franciscan community—marked by humility, service, and joy in the Gospel.

John Handiboe, OFS, a beloved member of Blessed Solanus Casey Fraternity in Middletown, Maryland, entered eternal life on July 21, 2026. John made his Profession on October 23, 2016, at St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity at the Shrine of St. Anthony in Ellicott City, Maryland.

**Remember, Lord,
those who have died and
have gone before us marked
with the sign of faith,
especially those for whom
we now pray. May these
and all who sleep in Christ
find in your presence light,
happiness and peace.
Through Christ our Lord
Amen.**

(“Around the Region” continued from page 7)

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St. Thomas Harrisburg Fraternity

Living the Rule More than 800 Years Later: Secular Franciscans Model Saint’s Life as Instruments of Peace

(To read the full article, click on the picture below)

Immaculata Fraternity Holds Peace-themed Day of Recollection

Immaculata Fraternity held a Day of Recollection on July 11. Presenting a Peacemaking theme, the gathering was held at St. Jude Catholic Church in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and drew attendees from both St. Francis Fraternity (VA) and two local parishes.

Deacon Bob Lyons delivered the spiritual talks, and Rev. Mark Moretti celebrated Mass, both from St. Jude Church.

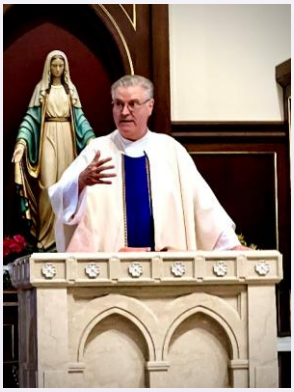
As stated in the Fraternity’s welcoming invitation:

In a world that sows division, hatred, and despair, we are called as Francis was called not to seek comfort, but to give it, not to be understood, but to understand. not to be loved, but to love.

Come, still your heart. Open your hands. Let God make you what the world most needs, an instrument of His Peace.

Congratulations to Immaculata Fraternity on a successful gathering.

Immaculata Fraternity Minister Irene Theriault, OFS offers welcoming remarks.



Rev. Mark Moretti, celebrates Mass.

Deacon Bob Lyons and Immaculata Fraternity Vice Minister Tony Gibert, OFS

OPPORTUNITY and CHALLENGE for ECUMENISM

HELLO TO ALL MY FRANCISCAN SISTERS AND BROTHERS!

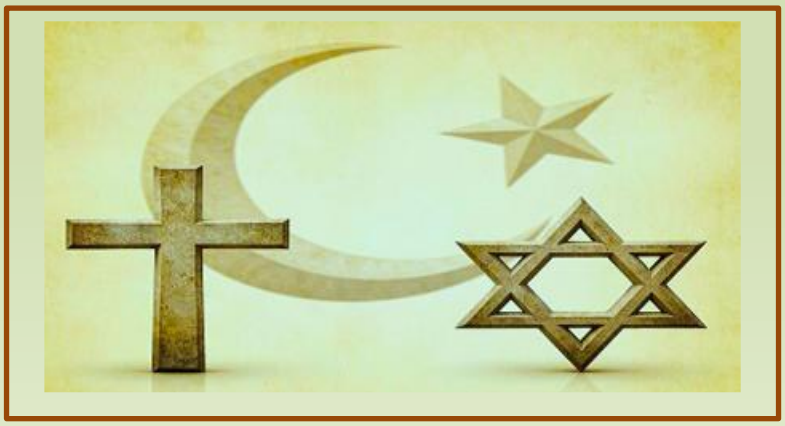
We continue with this third part of my series based upon the publication, "Opportunity and Challenge for Ecumenism" in the Vatican periodical, "L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO" written by Cardinal Kurt Koch, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity. We look now into how Christological Spiritual Ecumenism was founded.

The Nicene Creed is shared by the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Churches as well as the ecclesial communities established by the Reformation: its ecumenical relevance must, therefore, not be underestimated. To restore the unity of the Church, there must be agreement on the essential contents of the faith among today's Churches and ecclesial communities as well as those of the past, particularly with her apostolic origin. The unity of the Church is based on this apostolic faith bestowed to each and every new member of the Body of Christ by Baptism.

The Christological confession of the Nicene Council became the cornerstone of spiritual ecumenism, since unity can only be achieved with a shared faith. But if Christian ecumenism is not spiritual, then it is not ecumenism at all. This is the reason why the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism defined spiritual ecumenism as "the soul of the whole ecumenical movement" (Unitatis Redintegratio, 8). This was already evident at the start of the ecumenical movement with the introduction of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18 – 25), an ecumenical initiative of itself: the ecumenical movement began as a prayer movement, paving the way for the movement itself.

The centrality of prayer indicates that all ecumenical works are above all spiritual tasks, undertaken with the conviction that the Holy Spirit will lead us and bring it all to fruition. This is especially true when spiritual ecumenism is acted upon as Christological ecumenism, solidly founded by the Council of Nicaea. The heart of Christian ecumenism resides in the shared conversion of all Churches and all Christians to Jesus Christ to whom we are already united. It is only if Christians together return to the one faith found only in Jesus Christ as the Nicaean Council Fathers professed. By this, Christian ecumenism corresponds more to the will of the Lord, who, in His priestly prayer common to all Christians, asked for the unity of His disciples: "That they may all be one" (John 17:21). Jesus prays for this unity, rather than demand or command for it among His disciples, turning to His heavenly Father. In part IV, we look at Jesus's priestly prayer as the way to "all be one" and how the Christian faith of today is trying to bring it about.

~ Mike Huether, OFS
Regional Interfaith/Ecumenical Chair



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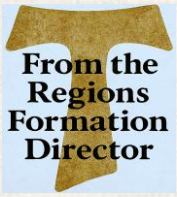

On Universal Kinship

On this day of the World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation, many in the world will pray and reflect on caring for creation, which was the command that God gave Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and by extension, all of us. For Franciscans, the Care of Creation comes from Saint Francis of Assisi's recognition that "we" are all brothers and sisters. That "we" extends beyond human beings to everything that God created, because we are all creatures of God's creation. All creation is tied together in a nurturing relationship. When we look at a tree, we can see that it interacts with everything around it. The tree absorbs nutrients, water, and minerals from the earth. The surrounding earth is held in place by grass, rocks, and the tree's roots. The tree holds nests for the birds of the air and squirrels and sometimes other animals. The tree receives carbon dioxide from the air around it and produces oxygen for animals and birds. The Sun gives light and warmth to all God's creation. These actions sustain life for all around the tree and affect ozone, influencing the entire world. And this is just one small example of how creation interacts and supports every other working in creation. Saint Francis believed that all creation worked in harmony because they were created by God, so their relationships with one another would sustain even the smallest part of creation, and no part of creation was too small or unimportant. We refer to this perception that all creatures are brothers and sisters as "universal kinship."

As we remember all these acts of creation, we must also recall all the other aspects of universal kinship. Human beings are a very big part of creation. Genesis 1:26 tells us that God created us "in his image and likeness." That means we reflect the image of the Creator. Reflecting that image is a great gift from God and a great responsibility and obligation. God so loved us that he created all things, animate and inanimate, so that we might exist, because without the world, we could not exist. If we reflect God's image, then we have a responsibility and obligation to reflect a true image of God. That means living as God wants us to live, revealing God to the world, just as the Sun's light shines to all the world. We must be the light to the world in all we say and do, whether that is caring for the world or each other.

Caring for the world and each other demands we speak out and act when we see or do wrong things. Jesus told us that he is the "Way, the Truth, and the Life." If we are to follow his way, we must not remain silent, because Jesus did not remain silent. We must "deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow" him, even if we face ridicule, protest, anger, and persecution. In Virginia, an election on November 3rd will decide whether people have a constitutional right to abortion from conception to birth. For those who do not reside in Virginia, this may seem irrelevant, but these issues indirectly affect the development of laws in other states and throughout the Nation. As Catholics and Franciscans, we believe that all life is a gift from God. More than just a gift, we believe that life is Sacred. None of us chooses when we are conceived, and none of us has the right to choose when or how we will die. Some couples struggle to conceive children, others are incapable of having children, and still other couples have ten or more children. Even if some people attribute these differences as "genetic," that does not fully explain these experiences, and we certainly cannot control them. Some people even believe that this world is so screwed up that they should not have children. The truth is that the world has always been a challenging place and people have always brought

(*"**Formation**" continued from page **10**)* ***Return to – "In This Issue..."***

life into the world. Imagine living in the Middle Ages, when Francis lived. I'm pretty sure the world looked like it was a mess then too. The point is that human beings should not exercise control over life. Only God has the wisdom, knowledge, and power to decide when we are conceived and when we will die. Only God knows and understands the purpose for which we were conceived or when our purpose will be fulfilled. For any person to decide he has a right to take a life because that life is disgusting, disabled, unwanted, or inconvenient is wrong. God said all he needed to say when he commanded, "Thou shalt not kill." Becoming pregnant with Jesus was inconvenient for Mary too, and she gave birth to the Savior of the world.

While this is an extreme example of the impact one baby can have, we never know until many years later the impact of any child brought into the world. Jesus' impact on the world was not understood until he started his ministry at 32 years old, and not fully realized until after his death. Others argue that these concerns are not appropriate because the abortion issue is a political or legal issue or that not everyone is Christian. But for me and for all Christians, this is a religious issue and one of our central Christian beliefs with roots in Genesis and references throughout the Bible. If someone wants my support, they will have to earn it by addressing my concerns, which are based on my religious beliefs. Everyone has a right to vote the way they desire, but true Christians are expected to vote their consciences, formed by faith and belief. We should not "enshrine" anything that is not sacred anywhere.

Mary, Queen of Franciscans, pray for us.

~ **Tom White**, OFS
Regional Formation Director

Regional Formation Retreat

World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation

O Creator God,
Whose breath stirs the dawn
And whose whisper awakens the hills—
Today we pause, barefoot upon Your earth,
To remember that every living thing is kin.

Brother Sun warms our folded hands,
Sister Water runs through our open fingers,
And the quiet soil beneath us
Holds the memory of your first blessing.
Teach us to walk gently, as Francis once did,
Seeing Your face in feather, fur, leaf, and light.

May our prayer rise like incense from the forest floor—
A vow to tend what you have entrusted,
To mend what we have broken, to cherish what still blooms
In hidden places.

We pray that our hearts will care for creation as you do. Amen - AI Generated

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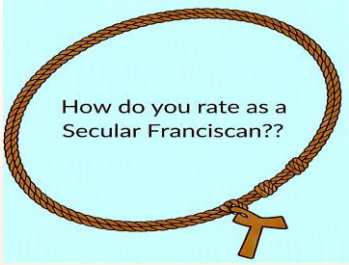

Where do you rate yourself on the scale of living the Franciscan rule and your profession commitment? Where do you think others rate you? What does it mean to be a "10" on the scale, or perhaps even a "3" or "1", etc.?

As Secular Franciscans, we promise to live in the world "according to the spirit of the Beatitudes and the gift of His grace." We commit ourselves to embracing the gospel way of life as did St. Francis, to giving witness to the kingdom of God and building a more fraternal world based on the gospel, along with all people of goodwill, and to binding ourselves more closely to the Church and its mission. That, of course, is quite a promise!

So, how often do we self-reflect on these promises? Consider these questions:

- **Can we see ourselves and our actions living what Jesus taught in the parables?**

- **What is your favorite parable and why? What did it teach you? Have you embraced that teaching and made it your own?**

- **Do you live as the centurion who trusted Jesus implicitly? Do you love your fellow man to the point of "washing his feet," cleansing his deepest wounds – whether they be physical, emotional, or spiritual ones?**

- **Do you practice giving without reward, and if you say "yes," when was the last time you did so and how did it feel – was it humbling and joy-filled, or were you somewhat resentful or sorrowful because something you gave, you would never have again?**

- **Did you see, or just know, of others in need and turn a blind eye – at home, in your community, in your world? Did you let go of your own brokenness so as to heal the brokenness of others?**

- **Were you the example to others as St. Francis was – striving to live each day so as to become more like Jesus? Living each day in community, prayer and sacrifice?**

We profess so as to live in a very special way. The commitment remains, whether it was made years ago or recently. It is lifelong. The gospel does not change. The example of St. Francis and Jesus does not change. Do we?

Hopefully, whatever change we experience is related to the metanoia of our hearts, that transformative deepening of our living the Franciscan way of life through our ongoing conversion.

Let us strive to improve our rating on the scale of living the Franciscan way of life, ever striving for the deepest union we can have with our Lord and Savior, until that day when we meet Him in eternal life.

~ Joan Kane OFS,
Little Flower Fraternity

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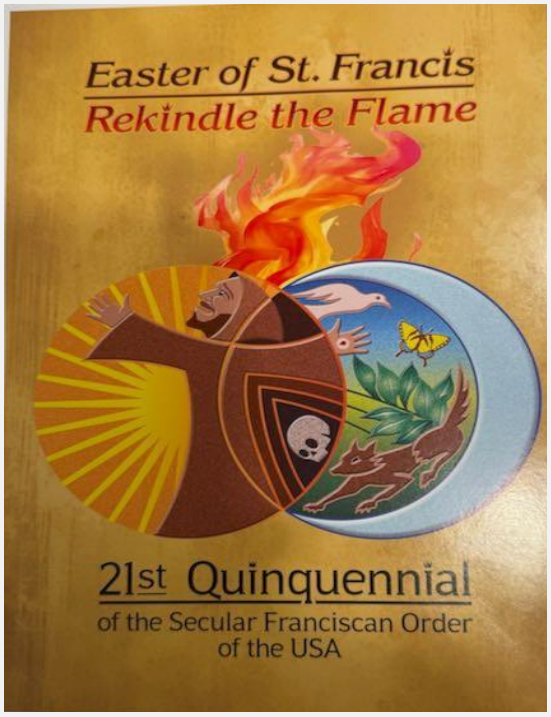
SAINT FRANCIS IS THE FIRE; LET US REKINDLE THE FLAME



MY EXPERIENCE ATTENDING THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN 21st QUINQUENNIAL

~ Gil Donahue, OFS - Tau Fraternity, Herndon, VA

About 500 Secular Franciscans attended this year's national meeting in Lexington, Kentucky from July 29 to August 1. This was a particularly appropriate year to hold a meeting of fellow Franciscans to celebrate together the "Easter of St. Francis." That is, the last few months of his life, which ended with his Transitus 800 years ago on October 3, 2026.

The three keynote speakers offered thoughtful reflections on St. Francis' stigmata and preparations to leave the world, the importance of care-giving, and suggestions on how we might carry St. Francis' vision into our individual missions in life.

Br. Bill Short, OFM discussed the stigmata, based on early Franciscan documents and artwork through the ages. Dr. Darleen Pryds used the relationship between St. Francis and "Brother" Jacoba as an example of devoted care-giving. Fr. Wayne Hellmann, OFM Conventional highlighted Pope Leo's proclamation of the Jubilee Year of St. Francis and the prayer he composed for it, which includes references to the saint's writings, Vatican II documents, and the Pope's own teachings.

Br. Bill Short, OFM

Dr. Darleen Pryds

Fr. Wayne Hellmann, OFM Conv
and Gil Donahue

Above Left: Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS with Gil
Above: Papal Nuncio Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia

Below: Attendees from the St. Margaret of Cortona Region

Left: Only known painting of St. Francis completed prior to his death; Monastery of St. Benedict at Subiaco - il Sacro Speco

(*"SAINT FRANCIS IS THE FIRE; LET US REKINDLE THE FLAME" continued from page 14*) ***Return to – "In This Issue..."***

I participated in a meeting of the National Council of Spiritual Assistants for the Secular Franciscans serving as spiritual assistants. We raised the need for the First Order and the TOR to provide spiritual assistants to the local fraternities. Many fraternities either are doing without a spiritual assistant or else rely on a Secular Franciscan to perform that function.

The OFM National Spiritual Assistant Br. Cidouane "Cid" Joseph gave a Mass homily in which he called on us to ask St. Francis to "give us the fire" and to help us to "rekindle the flame."

POPE LEO XIV PRAYER FOR JUBILEE YEAR OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Saint Francis, our brother, you who eight hundred years ago went to
meet Sister Death as a man at peace,
intercede for us before the Lord.

You recognized true peace in the Crucifix of San Damiano, teach us to
seek in Him the source of all reconciliation
that breaks down every wall.

You who, unarmed, crossed the lines of war and
misunderstanding,
give us the courage to build bridges where the
world raises up boundaries.

In this time afflicted by conflict and division, intercede for us
so that we may become peacemakers:
unarmed and disarming witnesses of the peace that comes from Christ.

Amen

Reflection on Magnifica Humanitas

I recently participated in a program on Pope Leo XIV's encyclical, "Magnifica Humanitas, organized by Tom White, our Regional Formation Director. While one of the main topics is Artificial Intelligence (AI) and technology in the digital age, there is a lot more to it. Because I found the document fascinating and thought-provoking, I would like to share my impressions with you.

Pope Leo begins by tracing the history of Catholic Social Doctrine (CSD – also known as Catholic Social Teaching) from his namesake Pope Leo XIII's "Rerum Novarum" to Pope Francis' "Fratelli Tutti." According to Pope Leo, each pope wrote about the challenges of his own age. Thus, their focus on CSD varies to suit the situations they dealt with.

The Pope calls on all Catholics – and all persons – to look at the problems facing our world from the perspective of working for the common good, respecting the dignity of every human being, promoting social justice and standing in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, and caring for all of creation. In seeking solutions to today's problems, Pope Leo draws on the foundations of Vatican II, saying that the Church does not have answers to these questions. Science, scholars, and other faiths all have truths and ideas to contribute. While we do not have to agree with every idea from every side, we are to respect our interlocutors and enter into honest dialogue and cooperation with them to build a better world. We must be willing to find solutions that can evolve so that we can adapt to the changing circumstances and challenges that come with new developments in technology. And we must not be afraid to speak truth to power when necessary, even within the Church, to combat contemporary evils.

Pope Leo notes that science and technology, including AI, are not evil per se. Science is based on the beautiful laws of nature that God created to define our world, and technological developments and AI have been created by brilliant human minds that are also part of God's creation. It is how we use or misuse these tools that can be good or evil. We must also be aware of the massive toll on our natural resources and environment that building and storing digital platforms and other forms of technology require.

While these products can make life easier in a variety of ways, we must also be aware of their dangers. The greatest is the dehumanization of large segments of the population. People are reduced to data points; many who produce the materials needed to build and run these platforms live in oppressive, dangerous conditions; and the (mis)information programmed into them can be polarizing and dehumanizing. Both adults and children can become addicted to social media and video games and to using potentially biased databases for quick research, resulting in isolation and the loss of critical thinking and social skills. Warfare has never been easier, as we can fire missiles from thousands of miles away, never seeing the casualties, the human victims, except as statistics of our success or failure.

Pope Leo points out that we must never forget that these tools are indeed just that: tools. They cannot love. They cannot provide a hug or a smile. They cannot laugh with us in joy or cry with us in sorrow, as they cannot feel these emotions. I am reminded of Psalm 115: "pagan idols are silver and gold [titanium and tungsten may be more expensive today]; they have eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but they cannot hear; they have mouths, but they cannot speak…all who worship them will come to be like them."

The Pope calls on Catholics to cooperate with scientists, governments, other religious leaders, school heads, and families in respectful, thoughtful dialogue to explore the ethics of the use and abuse of these great technological tools. We must work together to develop regulations and guidelines grounded in CSD to safeguard the environment and the dignity of all human

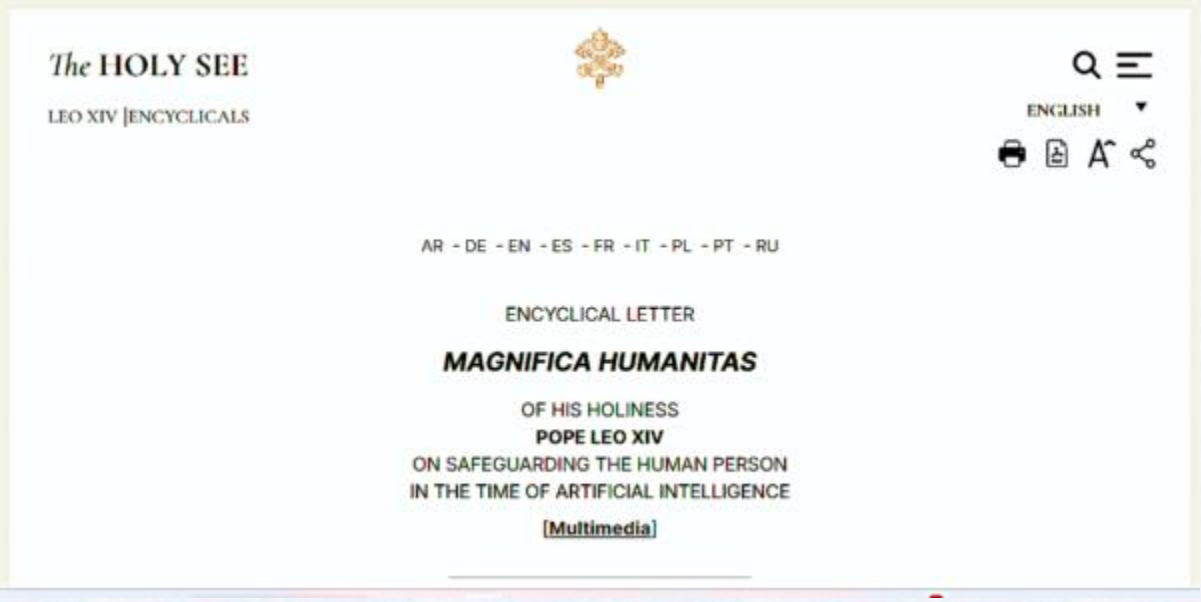
(*"Reflection on Magnifica Humanitas" continued from page* ***16***) ***Return to – "In This Issue…"***

beings and to find ways to use technology for the common good. This must be done in such a way as to build in the flexibility needed to evolve as technology itself evolves, looking ahead to protect tomorrow's world as well as today's. He reminds Catholics to do this rooted in the Gospel, the Church, the Eucharist, love, and prayer.

This is our calling and charism as Franciscans. Respectful dialogue and cooperation with those who hold other truths, even when we don't agree with everything they say: this is Francis with the Sultan. Articles 13-19 of our Rule call us to respect the human dignity of all persons and to care for our environment. We are called to stand in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed; as the equals of all human beings, we are not better or above the lowest on the economic food chain. By the same token, that same sense of equality should give us the strength and courage to speak truth to those with wealth and power, campaigning for social justice and for protection of humanity and the world around us. The Rule is not rigidly prescriptive, allowing us to adapt our ways of following it to serve the needs of our changing times. And we are firmly exhorted in our Rule to do all this rooted in the Gospel, the Eucharist, love, and prayer.

During the month of August, we celebrate the feasts of two strong, faithful women who can serve as examples and guides for us – Our Blessed Mother and St Clare. Mary braved the dangers of the flight into Egypt and stood by her son at his crucifixion, then adapted and expanded her ability to love to become the mother of us all. St Clare had the strength and courage to demand poverty for her order and to badger the popes of her day until one of them finally approved her visionary Rule. May the prayers and intercessions of these two great women help us to find the courage and love we need to work – in whatever ways suit each of us – to safeguard our children, all human beings, and the natural world, both now and for generations to come. Amen.

Magnifica Humanitas



JPIC News

JUSTICE, PEACE, AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Contemplating a Season of Creation

> *Let us imagine a world in which the energies currently invested in war are directed toward integral human development, to overcoming poverty, protecting human dignity and reconciling divided peoples. Such a vision reflects faith in the coming of God's Kingdom.*
>
> Pope Leo XIV, Message for the 2026 World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation

In his special message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, Pope Leo XIV reminds ua to be good stewards to the earth, but also recognizes a broader definition of Creation. As Franciscans, we understand Creation to include Mother Earth and all created things and people.

Our Order's national mission statement for Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) actually uses that broader language, referring to "all created things and people." And the JPIC name itself does not refer to Justice and Peace and Creation, three separate ideas. . . but perhaps exists for lack of a single word that sufficiently describes the way they are interconnected.

Personally, I sometimes think of our Care for Creation being the "umbrella," so to speak, with Peace and Justice being critical aspects of that Care. Again, looking at Our Holy Father's recent remarks, it appears that this perspective is consistent with his own broader definition of Care for Creation.

As one additional thought for your own contemplation:

> *In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the word "creation" has a broader meaning than "nature"... Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all.*
>
> Laudato Si 76

Prayerfully consider please how we respond to this call to Care for Creation. Our Church has designated this to be the Season of Creation, starting with the September 2 World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation and not coincidentally ending on October 4. Especially in this Jubilee Year of Saint Francis, this is a special time for us to renew our commitment to our Care for Creation.

Where to Begin

The JPIC team recently sponsored a Zoom gathering on the September 2 World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation. We prayed the Laudato Si Chaplet, discussed the Holy Father's statement, and several Secular Franciscans shared their own efforts to Care for Creation. Presenter Patricia Britz, OFS from Sacred Heart Fraternity in Virginia, was asked "how to begin." For a Fraternity, unlike her own fraternity that is actively engaged in environmental and clean-up apostolates, where does the effort start? "In prayer. . .," Patricia advised.

In the spirit of Patricia's response, consider going back and reading again Laudato Si. And for those not at the September 2 gathering, contact jpic@secularfranciscan.org to request a copy of the Laudato Si Chaplet used on the Zoom call.

JPIC at the Quinquennial Congress

More than 500 mostly Secular Franciscans attended our Order's recent Quinquennial Congress. 29 members of the St. Margaret of Cortona Region made the trip to Lexington, Kentucky, for what was a Franciscan Family five year reunion. From personal observation, the amazing gift bestowed to attendees was the Quinquennial having somehow made the gathering extremely personal for each of us. I watched my Brothers and Sisters immersed in the things about which they were passionate:

- Sita Chakrawarti, OFS and Jennifer Kerwin, OFS shared their musical gifts at the Quinquennial, performing during daily Mass. More than once, Sita was seen cutting short a meal to run off to rehearsal.
- Janice Benton, OFS staffed a table for the National Accessibility Committee for which she is a co-chair. Jan and co-chair Susan Tabor provided direct assistance to many of the attendees, including large print copies of conference materials and the availability of wheelchairs and other assistance.
- Ruth Shea, OFS, having authored several books on caregiving for dementia patients, shared her expertise with other Secular Franciscans at a table sponsored by the organization she co-founded, the Taming the Chaos of Dementia Institute.
- Michele Dunne, OFS represented Franciscan Action Network (FAN). A tremendous gift to our region, Michele also staffed a table, sharing FAN resources with Quinquennial participants.
- Anne Mulqueen, OFS, appeared completely at home. One of our Franciscan Family matriarchs, Anne was seen reconnecting with old friends with whom she had served in various national and international OFS roles over the years.

At the same time, there were candidates and inquirers from our own and other regions. I pray that they also were on a spirit driven journey.

The list continues, with more of the region's 29 attendees engaged in talks, "little fraternities," morning prayer, a service project, and Franciscan trivia games. Bishop John Stowe, OFM of Lexington, called us to be witnesses of Hope. And Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, not only bestowed a papal blessing upon the event, but in the last night volunteered to be a participant in a talent show magic act, drawing laughter from both himself and the audience. There was no shortage of Franciscan Joy at this "rekindle the flame" themed gathering!

If you bear with me while I share my personal experience. . . In a way, I have already done so. Seeing my Brothers and Sisters "in their element" made it feel like a real family reunion. The fact that there were so many "animated" OFS. . . For me, I felt in a real way the JPIC core at the center of our Franciscan charism.

I also staffed the JPIC table over the four day event, feeling inspired and energized by National JPIC Animator Joe Makley and the other regional animators with whom I worked. I even shared a room with a fellow regional JPIC animator, staying up late to exchange stories and ideas. And unexpectedly, I met in person several members of my virtual FAN Justice Circle. It was such a gift, all of it, for some reason not what I was expecting, but so meaningful at a time when it was needed. And in the Jubilee Year of St. Francis. I am grateful.

As we continue on our Franciscan journey, let us ask for the intercession of our Seraphic Father Francis, our Holy Mother Clare, and Mary, our Mother Queen of the Seraphic Order, to be inspired by and faithful to Catholic Social Teaching and the Secular Franciscan Rule in all aspects of our professed lives.

JPIC NEWS AND UPDATES

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE CARE OF CREATION

Thanks to the Brothers and Sisters who joined the JPIC sponsored Zoom gathering on September 2. Special thanks to Mary Lynn Pitts, OFS, Tony Gibert, OFS, Connie Wild, OFS, and Janice Benton, OFS, for reading parts of the Laudato Si Chaplet prayers. And also appreciated were the Care for Creation stories from presenters Sally White, OFS, Scott Graham, OFS, and Patricia Britz, OFS. If you were not on the call, contact jpic@secularfranciscan.org if you would like copies of the Laudato Si Chaplet used in the Zoom gathering.

WORLD DAY OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Prayerfully remember the 112th World Day of Migrants and Refugees on Sunday, September 27. A long standing celebration in the Church, Pope Leo XIV focuses this year on children, the millions of children and adolescents forced each year to leave their homelands. In a small excerpt from his 2026 special message for this day, he writes:

> *"An urgent change of perspective is needed: the focus of the debate must shift from the mere management of migration to the full and immediate protection of human rights, adopting "a coordinated, supportive and effective response, capable of guaranteeing protection, welcome and genuine opportunities for integration to those who migrate" (Address to the Spanish Parliament, Madrid, 8 June 2026).*
>
> *Let us entrust migrant and refugee children to the maternal protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary who, together with Saint Joseph and the child Jesus, experienced the cruelty of Herod's violence and the tragedy of exile in Egypt (cf. Mt 2:13-15). May she accompany their steps and help our communities to become living and credible signs of the Gospel.*

Please read the Holy Father's entire message on the Vatican website.

TRANSITUS SERVICES AROUND THE REGION

Multiple Transitus services are being planned around the St. Margaret of Cortona Region, many of them including the involvement of Secular Franciscans. Two of them have been mentioned: in Ellicott City, Maryland, the longstanding annual Transitus the evening of October 3 at the Shrine of St. Anthony, this year with a visit from Archbishop William Lori from Baltimore. 100 miles away in Fredericksburg, Virginia, Immaculata Fraternity will sponsor a Transitus at St. Jude Catholic Church on the morning of October 3. (We like this one for our OFS who prefer daylight driving.) All are welcome at both services.

BRING BLANKETS FOR HOMELESS TO UPCOMING MINISTERS GATHERING

Each Minister in attendance at this year's Chapter of Ministers on October 31 – November 1 is being asked to bring at least one clean/washed blanket to the meeting, for distribution to our homeless neighbors through a 10 year old OFS apostolate whose ministries include collecting blankets and sharing warmth in the Greater Washington, DC area.

If your fraternity is interested in participating in the apostolate on a larger scale, blankets are collected starting in November, but also in December and January. If a fraternity outside the Greater Washington area wants to reach homeless communities in their local areas, the apostolate is able to help you plan how to best do the distribution. Please contact Pat at pboye@secularfranciscan.org if you have any questions or are considering a larger scale participation in the effort.

FAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE, NOVEMBER 7 – 9

Join Franciscan-hearted people from across the country this November 7 - 9 for the FAN Leadership Conference in Arlington, Virginia. Drawing college students from around the nation for a Franciscan-focused experience in civic engagement, the conference is expected to draw again this year JPIC animators and others from a long list of Franciscan religious orders, including our own Secular Franciscans. Registration ends September 30.

REGIONAL FORMATION AND JPIC TEAMS PLANNING A NOVEMBER 13 WEBINAR

Regional formation director Tom White, OFS will co-sponsor with JPIC a November 13 call on Learning and Living the OFS Rule. Originally announced at the region's annual retreat, this discussion of practical approaches to teaching the Rule is a deeper dive follow up to a retreat session presented by Anne Mulqueen, OFS, Tom White, OFS, and Pat Boye, OFS.

WORLD WEEK OF THE POOR

The World Week of the Poor will be recognized this year by Secular Franciscans and some other members of the Franciscan Family, starting November 9 and culminating on the World Day of the Poor on Sunday, November 15. Our National JPIC Commission is currently coordinating efforts among regions to respond to a call for us to participate in both our fraternities and as a region. More information will be provided soon to your fraternity's JPIC coordinator or contact.

FAITH AND ACTION: JPIC WORKSHOP ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5

Mark your calendars for Saturday, December 5, at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine in Washington, DC. Fraternity JPIC Animators are encouraged to attend, as well as all JPIC-minded Secular Franciscans. Hmmm. . . In living our OFS Rule, that means all of us! Especially invite your fraternity's candidates and inquirers. It will be a time to listen, share, and plan future initiatives.

NATIONAL JPIC GATHERING COMING TO WASHINGTON, DC IN MAY 2027

Our Order's National JPIC Commission will bring its National JPIC Conference to Washington, DC on May 20 – 23, 2027. Hosting regional animators from across the nation, this four day event will also be open to fraternity JPIC animators, ministers, and others who desire to participate, as either full registrants or as "commuters." Regular overnight registration will open up to our local regional participants only after a registration period for regional JPIC animators only. At that time, remaining spaces are expected to go quickly. So if you hope to attend, let us know. We will put you on an email list to keep you informed of upcoming details and registration dates. It is our sincere hope that we have a robust turnout from the St. Margaret of Cortona Region, for both full registrants and commuters.

Please consider being on the Regional JPIC Volunteer Team for the event. There are multiple tasks with which we will be able to support our visiting Sisters and Brothers. Contact Pat at jpic@secularfranciscan.org.

JPIC SPEAKER TOPICS

A reminder to all Fraternities: speakers and discussion facilitators are available to interested Fraternities in the St. Margaret of Cortona Region on JPIC related topics, including the following:

- Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC): History and Overview for Secular Franciscans
- Care for Creation: A Franciscan Response
- Lady Poverty and the Franciscan Charism
- Accompanying Immigrants: A Franciscan Response
- Racism: A Franciscan Response
- Mindful Communication
- Peacemaking: An Overview
- Conflict and Dialogue
- Servant Leadership: What and Why
- Servant Leadership: implementation Plan
- Secular Franciscans in the Workplace
- Secular Franciscans and Family
- What is Ours to Do: Discernment in Franciscan Spirituality

Let us know your specific need – a monthly Fraternity gathering presentation, a Fraternity Council meeting or formation class, or even help in presenting to a church group or in the community. We will attempt to match you with a Secular Franciscan, or in some cases another expert, who is willing to speak on and, as appropriate, facilitate discussion on the topic. If you are interested in a topic not listed here, let us know, and we may be able to work with you on it. Contact us at jpic@secularfranciscan.org. Also, please let us know if you personally are an expert on any of these topics and are interested in being a speaker-facilitator.

JPIC MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of JPIC is to assist the Professed Secular Franciscans as they reflect on their relationship with God as manifested in the fruits of conversion in their lives. This with special regard to the daily choices made in the areas of justice, peacemaking and respect for all created things and people; as brothers and sisters of penance, bringing life to the Gospel and the Gospel to Life.

(*"JUSTICE, PEACE, AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION" continued from page 21*)

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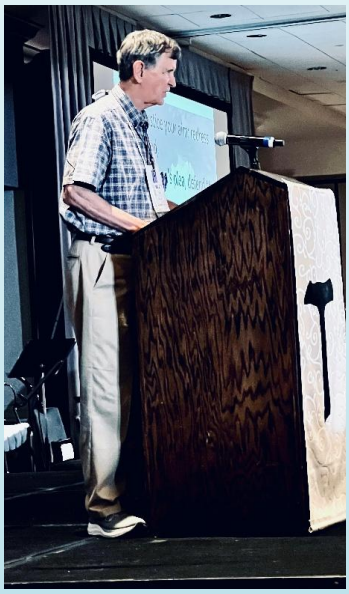
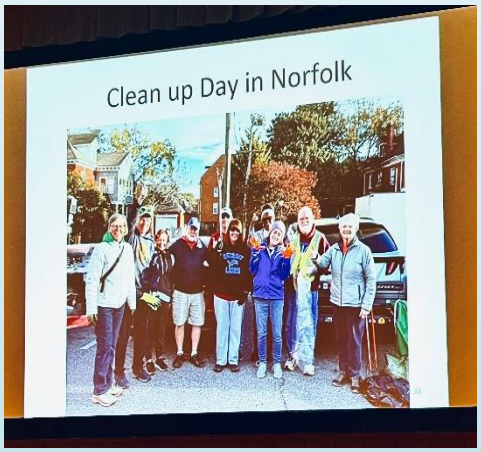
CONTACT INFORMATION

Please contact Pat Boye, OFS, or a member of the JPIC team at jpicmoc@secularfranciscan.org. If you are a JPIC Coordinator at your local fraternity, but not on our email list, please let us hear from you.

Pace e bene,
Pat Boye, OFS
Regional JPIC Chair

JPIC and Friends at the Quinquennial





In a Quinquennial presentation by National JPIC Animator Joe Makley, OFS, he described the environmental work being done at Sacred Heart Fraternity (VA) as an example of an active Care for Creation apostolate. And sign holding Toby Harkleroad, OFS and Janice Benton, OFS were shown at a Maryland courthouse, as Joe mentioned ways that Secular Franciscans are accompanying immigrants.

At the Quinquennial JPIC booth, (left to right) Pat Boye, OFS; Our Lady of the Angels Region JPIC Animator Jim Andreano; Marylou Holloway, OFS, Our Lady of the Rosary Fraternity (VA); and Our Lady of Guadalupe Region JPIC Animator Nancy Singh, OFS

National Accessibility Co-chairs Susan Tabor, OFS and Janice Benton, OFS

(*"JUSTICE, PEACE, AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION" continued from page* ***22***) ***Return to – "In This Issue..."***

MORE FROM THE QUINNENNIAL

Bonnie Ng, OFS, of Little Flower Fraternity (MD)

Caregiving expert Ruth Shea, OFS, (St. Conrad Fraternity MD) interacted with Quinquennial attendees at a booth sponsored by the Taming the Chaos of Dementia Institute, an organization Ruth co-founded

Pat Boye, OFS, and FAN Executive Director Michele Dunne, OFS

Regional Councilor and vocalist Sita Chakrawarti, OFS

Bishop John Stowe, OFM called OFS to be Witnesses of Hope

Papal Nuncio Archbishop Gabriele Caccia brought greetings and a blessing from the Holy Father

18 of the "St. Margaret of Cortona 29" gathered for a photo, all 29 "rekindled" by the Franciscan Family experience

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-SA

Faith and Action

A Day of Sharing Our JPIC Journey

Saturday, December 5

11:00 AM – 3:30 PM

Saint John Paul II National Shrine,

Washington, DC

Leave behind all passivity and indifference. . . We cannot remain as unengaged spectators; rather, we must listen with our hearts, allow ourselves to be challenged, and become involved.

Pope Leo XIV

Come together to explore some of the charitable and advocacy efforts we are called to on the JPIC journey that lies at the core of our Franciscan spirituality. On the day's agenda will be:

- **Guest Speaker Dan Misleh, Founder of the Catholic Climate Covenant, followed by a discussion of actions we are able to take back to our own fraternities.**
- **A discourse on the roles played by Franciscan Justice Circles, including insights from FAN Executive Director Michele Dunne, OFS.**
- **A discussion of the realities and misperceptions around homelessness, including ways to become involved in existing apostolates that serve our region's homeless neighbors.**
- **And more. . . including updates on ways to respond to the OFS call to "accompany immigrants," and brainstorming our future involvement in peacemaking and other initiatives.**

$40 registration fee includes a light lunch. We regret that we are unable to accept unregistered walk-ins.

Early registration discount: $30 through November 5.

Register here:

https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0D4DABAA2BAAFACE9-65634033-faith#/

Sponsored by the St. Margaret of Cortona Region JPIC team. For more information, contact Pat at pboye@secularfranciscan.org.

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Other News

BOOK REVIEW

Papa Francesco's Greatest Hits

"Papa Francesco's Greatest Hits," a book released last month by Fr. Stan Fortuna, CFR, was in part inspired by discussion among Fr. Stan and his Friar brothers following the Holy Father's passing in April 2025. Citing some of the meaningful things Pope Francis had said during his Papacy, he suggested that there ought to be a compilation of the Holy Father's most significant words into a book.

But the discussion among Friars is not where it started. Fr. Stan already had his own curated collection of these meaningful quotes and anecdotes from Pope Francis, or as Fr. Stan lovingly calls the Holy Father, Papa Francesco. As he had done for Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, and as he does now with Pope Leo XIV, Fr. Stan is a collector of words. . . meaningful words, often kept longhand in piles of notebooks, some of which he brings with him as he travels around the world to evangelize and give spiritual talks. A poet and also composer who writes lyrics, Fr. Stan draws on his voluminous notebooks to inspire stirring homilies and offer spiritual advice. On a retreat, there always lie several notebooks beside him.

So, this book represents so much more than simply a collection of quotes by Pope Francis. Rather, it feels like an inside peek at Fr. Stan's own journals, the words and thoughts he found meaningful personally. The book cover uses the words "collected and indexed" in stating Fr. Stan's contribution. Again, curate is an even better description, with each of the book's 193 entries being carefully chosen, Spirit driven, and meaningful to Fr. Stan himself at the time he recorded it.

With this inside look at Fr. Stan's journals, Pope Francis now becomes more personal to the reader. There are multiple ways to approach using the book. A particularly thorough index allows for a search for a reference to specific topics. He compares the index to a "book within a book." Fr. Stan offers suggestions of his own in a section called "How to Use this Book," for instance, explaining that the entries are intentionally without titles as to not limit the ways each reader may find meaning in the citing's. *Personally, I am using individual entries as an aid in my own daily prayer. Sometimes even a single entry guides me in contemplation.*

When Fr. Stan was asked to cite a specific entry that he finds especially moving, he immediately referred to #120. In what Fr. Stan described as our Seraphic Father's openness to the Holy Spirit, Pope Francis discusses St. Francis and what the Holy Father called the heroism of St. Francis as he watched in "merciful silence" the quarreling within the Order:

> **"*Francis experienced mercy at many points in his life. Perhaps the definitive vessel, which became real wounds, was not so much kissing the leper, marrying Lady Poverty or feeling himself a brother to every creature, as the experience of having to watch over in merciful silence the Order he had founded. This is where I see the great heroism of Francis: in his having to watch in merciful silence the Order he had founded. This was his great vessel of mercy. Francis saw his brethren divided under the very banner of poverty. The devil makes us quarrel among ourselves, defending even the most holy things with an evil spirit."***
>
> **Pope Francis**
> **Basilica of Saint Mary Major, 2 June 2016**
> **Jubilee of Mercy – Jubilee for Priests**

Those familiar with Fr. Stan's ministry know that he has a special devotion to Saint John Paul II, and is considered an eminent authority on his life and spirituality. In mentioning Pope John Paul II in relationship to Pope Francis, Fr. Stan says that he believes there to be something special and providential about our four most recent Popes and their Papacies. Starting with John Paul II, continuing with Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, and now with Pope Leo XIV, he sees a continuum.
Fr. Stan was one of his Order's founding members in 1987. Starting with eight Friars in the South Bronx, the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal has grown to more than 140 CFRs around the world. Also, there is a thriving Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal, founded in 1988. The Order's Franciscan charism brings them to work with the poorest of the poor. Fr. Stan has led several retreats for Secular Franciscans in the St. Margaret of Cortona Region, most recently to a full house at the 2026 Regional Retreat in June.

A professional musician and poet, Fr. Stan is best known as a jazz artist. At the time he took questions for this review, he was actually working in his studio in the Bronx on his next artistic endeavor. He described a project he calls "Echoes from Our Home." While the project includes original music across several genres, Fr. Stan just finished recording "Echoes of Solidarity," a rap song promoting peace and justice.

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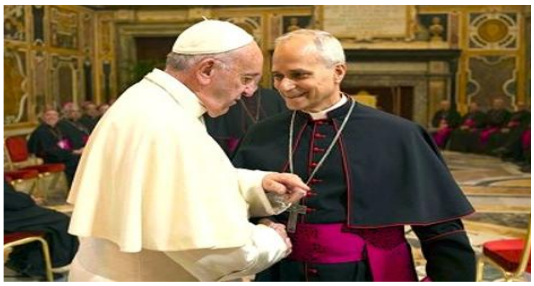
Look for "Francesco's Greatest Hits" at booksellers including Amazon, available in hardcover, paperback, and Kindle formats. The hardcover book makes an attractive gift. Profits from sales of the book go to Fr. Stan's ministry and supports his Order's work both evangelizing and serving the poorest of the poor.

~ Patricia Boye, OFS



DC RETREAT HOUSE REOPENS

The John Paul II Retreat House in Washington, DC, formally reopened in August, after shuttering for almost two years. Previously the Washington Retreat House, the beloved center served numerous OFS fraternity and regional retreats over the years, under its former ownership by the Sisters of St. Francis of the Atonement.

Acquired by the Knights of Columbus in 2025 and now associated with the John Paul II National Shrine next door, the retreat house is within walking distance of the John Paul II Shrine and also the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. The grand opening last month brought out Baltimore Archbishop William Lori for a spirit filled day of Mass at the shrine, retreat center tours, ribbon cutting and blessings, and a Polish themed lunch. Secular Franciscans in attendance included Sandy Oleksy-Ojikutu, OFS, Toby Harkleroad, OFS, and Pat Boye, OFS, all invited separately to the event but providentially finding each other.

The renovated retreat center holds many of the former center's treasures, including the stained glass windows in the library, older but quaint furnishings in the hallways, and the recognizable St. Francis of Assisi statue in the garden. With the renaming, each room now bears the name of someone or something from the life of John Paul II, such as Emilia's Library, named after the saint's mother. The dining room is named Wujek (Polish for "uncle"), a nickname for the saint originating when he was a young priest in Krakow, ignoring anti-Stalinist Poland's prohibition for a priest to travel with groups of students. Photographs of Saint Pope John Paul II are displayed throughout the retreat house.

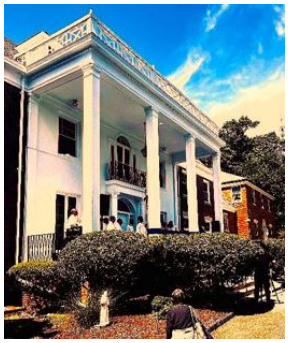
For those OFS hoping for a return to the reopened retreat center, consider the pros and cons. Advantages include 40 single rooms (with one shared bathroom per two adjoining rooms), a large technology equipped conference room able to accommodate more than 80 persons, and the same serene "vibe" for which the previous retreat house was known. The DC location is ideal, including its association the John Paul II National Shrine next door. And unlike most of its surrounding area, parking is free and abundant. Rates are average to competitive, compared to other area retreat centers, with groups able to block either one or two floors, 20 or 40 rooms.

Disadvantages include retreat groups being on their own to arrange for meals, with a list of catering sources provided but no arrangements made by the retreat center itself. (A small kitchen area not allowed to be viewed on the tour is said to have both refrigeration and warming ovens able to be used by groups to heat and store, but not cook food.) While the center has a small elevator and ramps at the main entrance, hopefully the new management plans to yet remedy some awkward accessibility concerns on retreat room hallways. Only one of the 40 rooms is fully accessible, and it was also not available to view on the tour.

Blessings on Washington, DC area fraternities as they make plans to return to this beloved retreat center.

~ Patricia Boye, OFS

Toby Harkleroad, OFS, and Sandy Oleksy-Ojikutu, OFS, at the John Paul II Retreat House Grand Opening



Reopening of the DC Retreat House

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