



Divine Mercy Region
Secular Franciscan Order—USA

June 2023
Volume 2, Issue 2



Divine Mercy Regional Newsletter

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

Brothers and Sisters,

Our Spring Gathering was held in late April, and what a great success it was! Thank you, Michelle Bryk, our Regional Formation Minister and our Formation Team. I received many great compliments from several attendees. You did a fantastic job! Our theme centered around communication within our fraternities. Communication is such an important issue in today's society, mostly because there is so little of it going on. People take sides and are not willing to listen to each other. Many times there is an "us versus them" mentality. Franciscans are people of peace and people who will listen. The skills and lessons we learned at our Spring Gathering will not only help us within our fraternities, but also within society.

Formation is such an important aspect of our development as Franciscans. Over the years, I have met many Formation Ministers who have helped bring out the Franciscan spirit within us. Not just to those in the initial stages of becoming Franciscans, but also to all of us who continue to need formation to grow in our love of God and know of His love for us. When there is an opportunity for further formation, I encourage you to be a part of it. At the regional level, we also have an October Formation Day. In the earlier days, this seemed to be geared more to those who were in the initial stages of becoming a Secular Franciscan. However, over the years it has grown to include all of us. There is that need for constant formation and conversion in our lives. Please consider joining us for future Regional events. I have been

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Visit our website at divinemercuryregionofs.org!

We Remember

Doris Feldpausch

St. Bonaventure
Fraternity, Lansing

Passed to eternal life
on May 22, 2023

Those That Have Gone with Sister Death



If your fraternity is celebrating any new professions or milestone anniversaries this year, please send the names and your fraternity name to the Newsletter Editor, Barb Scott, OFS, bscott3315@gmail.com for publication in the next quarterly issue.

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER CONTINUED

attending them for many years, and I am never disappointed. Our Region has been blessed with great formation over all the years. Also, the sense of community that is shared makes a difference. I have always looked forward to these meetings!

Next, I would like to share our plan for Fraternal Visitations for the next year. Our Regional Council's term will end in August, 2024. As we have come through, with hopefully, the end of COVID times, it's time to catch up with our visitations. Theresa Brown, Dawn Pulcer, and I will be conducting Fraternal Visitations to any fraternities that need them over the next year. A pre-visitation questionnaire will be sent out that can be filled out with your fraternity's council. Please send that back to the visitor and have the date of visitation scheduled. In speaking with our Regional Spiritual Assistants, Linda Solis and Brother George Kooran, they have informed me that, if available, a RSA or appointed SA will do the Pastoral Visitation also. Please have patience with us all. We want to hand over to the new Regional Council in 2024 one that is caught up with its responsibilities. If you have any questions, please give us a call or contact us through email. Thank you for your help.

Peace,
Jim Graczyk, Divine Mercy Regional Minister

FROM THE FORMATOR

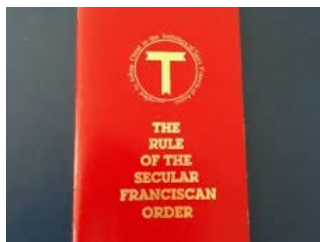
Formation takes its time

I wanted to take an opportunity to address a question I have gotten several different times in the last few months and from several different Fraternities in our region. I have been asked lately about "fast tracking" people into fraternity.

There are several scenarios where this has come up:

- a person 70 or older wants to join the fraternity and there is concern for their age

FROM THE FORMATOR CONTINUED



- a person who is very well educated wants to join the fraternity and formation teams feel they already “know” the information they will study
- the fraternity is worried that if they make someone go through formation for 2 1/2 to 3 years they will “lose” them

Let’s work through this in light of what formation in our order is supposed to be.

Let’s look at the last concern first - we might “lose” someone. One of the reasons we form people over the longer time period is to give adequate time for discernment and formation. (We will explore both of those further.) If someone leaves formation it is usually because the Franciscan vocation is not something they are called to live. If someone leaves, they were not ready to live out this vocation for the rest of their lives. This is not a failure in the fraternity. This is formation working the way it is supposed to work.

I know we are all concerned about declining numbers and building our fraternities, but we want to trust that God will call those people into the vocation that He wants. Our job is to be welcoming, open and true to the Franciscan way of life. The fullness of our life is beautiful and enlivening - that is what we are called to share with those in initial formation.

Let’s look at the age dilemma. We think we are being kind to “fast track” an older individual. I can speak from the experience of 20 years on the formation team in my fraternity. The oldest person who went through formation was 81 when she professed. She went through the full 3 years in our fraternity’s formation. It was a rich and joyful time of formation for her and her family was very impacted by her vocation.

In my fraternity, there has twice been a situation when we have professed someone in formation who was terminally ill prior to their death. This is a very different situation, but one where we are allowed to bring someone into the fraternity early so they may be professed before they die. These were meaningful for the fraternity and for the individual as they died fully professed.

In the last scenario above, it is important to focus on what happens in formation. In a combination of reading, time with fraternity, time in dialogue and time in prayer; persons in formation are asked to begin looking at life from a Franciscan perspective. As they talk with us in Formation, spend time in regular personal prayer and yes, read about the Franciscan way of life we have a different end goal than a class would have. We are opening people in formation up to be formed. This is an act of the Holy Spirit as they began to change and conform their life to the way of a Franciscan. They also, along with the Formation Team, spend time discerning their vocation as a Franciscan.

To discern and be formed takes time. We cannot rush the work of the Spirit. It is important to take the necessary time for those in formation to make the changes in their lives to conform and embrace the Franciscan vocation. Formation is less about studying than it is about Franciscan spirituality. There is no test, only dialogue that helps the Formation team and Council discern that true formation has taken place in the life of the candidate. Only then can we offer someone the gift of profession. As we must all keep in mind, profession is not the end, it is the beginning!

Peace,
Michelle Bryk, OFS

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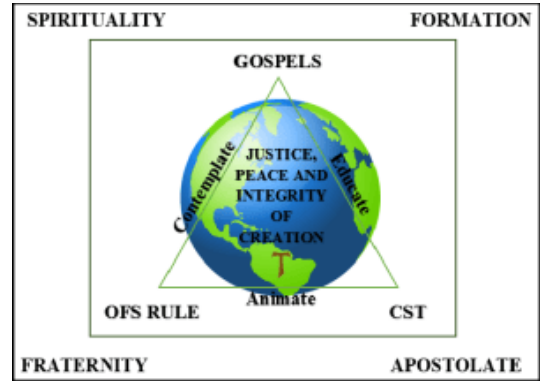
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Pictures from the 2023 Spring Gathering



J.P.I.C. News



USG/UISG Commission for Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation & JPIC Roma

has put together some very good information regarding plastic pollution in this very well done PDF. It can be used for a presentation to your fraternity or to community groups. [Download the presentation here.](#)

Franciscans International appoints new Executive Director

The [International Board of Directors](#) (IBD) of Franciscans International (FI) met in Assisi, Italy, from 11 to 14 May 2023. After significant deliberations, prayer and discernment, on 13 May, the IBD appointed Blair Matheson TSSF to be the new Executive Director of FI. He will replace Brother Markus Heinze OFM on 1 January 2024.



Blair is an Anglican Third Order Franciscan from New Zealand. He and Br. Markus will work together during the transition period from now until the end of the current calendar year. The Board recognizes the tremendous contributions by Br. Markus, who, over the past eleven years, guided FI through significant changes toward both organizational and financial stability.

The members of the IBD look forward to working with Blair and the dedicated staff of FI as we continue to stand up for [human dignity](#), [care for creation](#), and [promote peace](#), defending human rights and raising these concerns at the United Nations and to the international community.

Pope Francis condemned “consumerist greed” and “selfish hearts” as responsible for the climate crisis in his yearly message for World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, [the Vatican announced on May 25](#). Inspired by the words of the Prophet Amos, the pope chose “let justice and peace flow” as the theme for the Season of Creation, which runs from September 1-October 4. Francis said his message was inspired by an Indigenous and Catholic pilgrimage site in Canada, which he visited last summer.

"Listen, Discern, and Go Forth"

(OFS-USA 2022 - 2023 Theme)

Opportunities Around the Region



LAUDATO SI'
AND THE U.S. CATHOLIC CHURCH
A Conference Series on Our Common Home

Creighton UNIVERSITY
Catholic Climate Covenant

Opening Keynote
Christiana Figueres
Former Executive Secretary, UNFCCC

Wednesday, June 14
7:00 pm CT

Register once; attend any of all nine conference sessions!

Register now free at bit.ly/LSUSCC23



Catholic Climate Covenant is offering a Summer's virtual conference

The 2023 *Laudato Si'* and the U.S. Catholic Church is almost here! Register free today if you haven't already.

The conference opens next Wednesday, June 14 at 8 pm Eastern with a keynote address from Ms. Christiana Figueres, former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) who brokered the Paris Agreement.

The biennial conference series co-sponsored by Creighton University and Catholic Climate Covenant. Eight virtual, 90-minute sessions will be held about once a week between June 14-July 25, with an awards ceremony honoring Catholic environmental champions to follow on July 27.

Can't attend all the sessions? No worries! You can [register](#) now for free, and you will receive a link for access to all the sessions -- you choose which sessions to attend. If you miss any sessions a recording will be sent to you.

Here is the [full schedule](#) of the LSUS Conference, which this year aims to provide practical guidance and trainings on each of Laudato Si' Action Platform's seven goals. Each session will focus on one of the goals and feature scholars who describe the theological underpinnings of the goal, followed by practitioners

Looking for Formation Opportunities this Summer?

Franciscan School of Theology has many online opportunities. [Go to the website to learn more.](#)



Upcoming Dates

August 4-6	Regional Annual Chapter	DeWitt, MI
August 20-25	National Chapter	St. Louis, MO
October 28	Fall Regional Formation Day	

Regional Council News

It is with great sadness that the Regional Executive Council has accepted the resignation of Kevin Wahr, OFS, our Vice Minister. Kevin has moved to Oregon for a new work opportunity. We thank him for his service to Divine Mercy Region and wish him well in his new venture.



Centenary News

Dear brothers and sisters,

Peace and good,

It is a great joy for us to share the celebration of the Franciscan Centenary. The new Secretariat of Formation has prepared the annual formation material to be shared in our local fraternities, but the proposal has a responsibility and a challenge. This fraternal meeting must be together with the local Franciscan Family, as proposed by the Conference of our Franciscan Family.

Therefore, we invite you to accept our proposal, to gather and celebrate together. In this year 2023 our material proposes two moments:

- The Nativity set... 800 years of celebration... 800 years of joy.
- The Rule... a lifestyle... 800 years of journey.

Attached you will find the material that we hope will be sent and to work on. We invite all the fraternities to send us their meeting experiences, photos, stories and to share the joy of celebrating our history, our life and our charism with the rest of the world. We greet you with the hope that Chiara and Francesco will continue to accompany us on our journey of service and that the Risen Jesus will support us with the strength of his love.

SECRETARIAT FOR FORMATION

Silvia Noemi Diana OFS
Presidency Councilor

[Click here for the
Centenary materials](#)

**DIVINE
MERCY
REGION**

Order of Franciscans
Secular

Lower Peninsula of
Michigan and
Toledo, Ohio

Whenever you have membership changes, please email member updates: information on new candidates/contact information and admission dates, profession dates, change of addresses, dates of deaths, lapse or withdrawal dates, or completed transfer forms to the Regional Secretary at divinemercury.region@gmail.com.

Please remember the National database information must match your fraternity's Annual Report information! Accuracy is imperative! Thank you!

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PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE