



Inside this issue:

Minister's Message	1
REC Updates	3
Vice Minister Message	4
Formator Message	4
Ecumenical Interfaith Message	6
Multicultural Message	8
Yearly Statistics	9
National News	9
Br. Julius	10
J.P.I.C. News	11
Regional News	11
Fraternity News	12
Vocations Spotlight	16

Divine Mercy Regional Newsletter

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

"Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible."
St. Francis of Assisi

Stewardship in the Face of Natural Disasters

Are not our hearts deeply troubled by the devastating wildfires currently raging in California? Is not the severity of these wildfires a stark reminder of the urgent need for environmental stewardship and compassionate action? In the spirit of St. Francis, who saw all of creation as a reflection of God's love, we are called to respond with both prayer and practical support. Let us come together to offer our prayers for those affected, to seek ways to assist in relief efforts, and to advocate for policies that address the root causes of such environmental crises. May we embody the gentleness and care that St. Francis exemplified, working to protect and cherish our common home.

Consider these action items below that when done individually, with family and friends, or especially with our fraternities, we can certainly effect change. Our Sister, Mother Earth, will thrive in all her God-given beauty. As St. Francis wrote in his Canticle of the Creatures, "Praised be you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains us and directs us bringing forth all kinds of fruits and colored flowers and herbs."

REGIONAL COUNCIL

MINISTER
Kathleen Carsten, OFS
dmrecminister@gmail.com
313-510-2614

VICE MINISTER
Jeff Dills, OFS
jdills@steelsupplyengineering.com
616-490-8458

SECRETARY
Brittney Walendzik, OFS
BrittneyMaltese@gmail.com
586-215-5215

TREASURER
Dawn Pulcer, OFS
dpulcerofs@gmail.com
586-419-5291

SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS
Br. Johan Paul Gill, OFM Cap.
jpgill@capuchins.org
313-579-2100

Br. A. Julius Milton, OFM Cap.
ajmilton@thecapuchins.org
248-651-4826 Ext. 6204

Linda Solis, OFS
lsolisofs@gmail.com
313-506-9868

COUNCILORS
Judy Bruce, OFS
judyb4jmj@gmail.com
864-901-5104

Michelle Bryk, OFS
michellebofs@gmail.com
616-485-5783

Jim Hegenauer, OFS
earl76@gmail.com
231-239-1689

Kim Spaniola, OFS
Kim.spaniola@gmail.com
248-408-2957

Visit our website at divinemercyregionofs.org!

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER CONTINUED

APPOINTED MEMBERS OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL

FORMATION DIRECTOR

Beth Price, OFS
bpriceofs@gmail.com
616-915-1757

J.P.I.C. ANIMATOR

Doris Allen, OFS
dorisja19@gmail.com
734-476-9791

YOUFRA COORDINATOR

Brittney Walendzik, OFS
brittneymaltese@gmail.com
586-215-5215

DATABASE MANAGER

Theresa Brown, OFS
dmrfratdata@gmail.com
248-335-1703

MEDIA ADMINISTRATOR (WEBSITE/NEWSLETTER)

Barb Scott, OFS
bscott3315@gmail.com
616-550-5916

ECUMENICAL-INTERFAITH DIRECTOR

Michael Carsten, OFS
mikecars10@franciscanministryinc.org
810-814-0047

VOCATIONS COORDINATOR

Jim Graczyk, OFS
jgraczykdivinemercy@aol.com
989-708-8788

ARCHIVIST

Marge Lanzi, OFS
mlanzi586@comcast.net
586-504-7097

MULTICULTURAL COORDINATOR

Marilyn Webb, OFS
ofs.marilyn@gmail.com
313-757-7484

SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT PROGRAM FACILITATOR

Mary Bittner, OFS
marybittnerofs@gmail.com
734-883-2150

If your fraternity is celebrating any new professions or jubilarian 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.

Living Simply and Sustainably

The Secular Franciscan Rule calls for members to live a life of simplicity and poverty. Article 11 emphasizes the importance of living simply and using resources wisely. By reducing our consumption and living sustainably, we minimize our impact on the environment. This can include:

- ◆ Reducing waste and recycling
- ◆ Using resources like water and energy wisely
- ◆ Supporting sustainable and ethical products

Advocating for Justice and Peace

Our Constitutions encourage members to be voices for justice and peace. Article 18 urges Secular Franciscans to promote social justice and the protection of human rights. We can advocate for policies that protect the environment and promote social justice. This might involve:

- ◆ Participating in environmental campaigns
- ◆ Supporting legislation that addresses climate change
- ◆ Educating others about the importance of environmental stewardship

Caring for Creation

Our Rule highlights the importance of caring for creation as a reflection of God's love. Article 18 specifically calls for Secular Franciscans to respect all creatures and to work to protect the environment. St. Francis saw all of creation as a reflection of God's love. We can honor this by actively caring for the environment. Practical steps include:

- ◆ Planting trees and preserving natural habitats
- ◆ Supporting conservation efforts
- ◆ Engaging in community clean-up projects

Prayer and Reflection

Prayer is central to the Secular Franciscan life, as highlighted in Article 8 of our Rule, which calls for members to pray and reflect regularly. Incorporating prayers for the environment into daily routines and four fraternity gatherings helps deepen the commitment to caring for creation. Reflecting on the beauty of nature can deepen our commitment to protecting it.

Building Community

The Constitutions emphasize the importance of community and collaboration. Article 22 encourages Secular Franciscans to work together and support one another in their mission. Environmental issues are best addressed collectively. By building strong, supportive communities, we can work together to create positive change. This involves:

- ◆ Collaborating with local fraternities and organizations
- ◆ Utilizing and collaborating with Franciscan *JPIC and **FAN efforts
- ◆ Sharing resources and knowledge
- ◆ Encouraging others to join in our efforts

**Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation*

*** Franciscan Action Network*

In the spirit of St. Francis, let us embrace our role as caretakers of God's creation, acting with love, humility, and reverence for all living things. Through our actions, we can make a meaningful difference in addressing environmental issues and promoting a more just and sustainable world.

If you or your fraternity would like to help in any way, listed below are organizations that are aiding in relief efforts. I have chosen charities that provide meals/food, shelter, and pet evacuations.

Peace and all good,
Kathleen

American Red Cross Los Angeles <https://www.redcross.org/local/california/los-angeles/about-us/news-and-events/press-releases/palisades-fire--red-cross-opens-emergency-shelter-.html>. Provides shelter, food, water, health and mental health services for those who need to evacuate immediately.

Los Angeles Catholic Charities https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/?form=25LAFires&utm_campaign=20250108_00270_LAFires25Comms&utm_medium=organic&utm_source=comms&utm_content=disaster.

Pasadena Humane Society <https://give.pasadenahumane.org/give/654134/#!/donation/checkout>. Helps with pet evacuations in the Los Angeles area.

World Central Kitchen <https://wck.org/news/first-alert-ca-fires-jan25>. Distributes food and water to first responders and residents.

Divine Mercy Region Executive Council Updates

With a Franciscan Spirit, the Divine Mercy Region Executive Council (DMREC) is taking great care to foster communication, inclusivity, and transparency. Here are some key updates:

- ◆ **Geographic Groups:** Jeff Dills, OFS, Vice Minister, along with the DMREC Councilors, is leading the development and implementation of these groups. See Jeff's article in this newsletter which provides more details on this initiative.
- ◆ **Office Hours:** These continue the second Monday of each month via ZOOM at 6:30 pm, running through June 2025, with a break over the summer and resuming in September. Notably, Michele Dunn, OFS, Executive Director of the Franciscan Action Network (FAN), joined the January 13 session to discuss FAN updates and actions, particularly for the youth. See Eileen Smith, OFS, Minister of St. Bonaventure Detroit Fraternity, article in this newsletter for her thoughts regarding important FAN information and updates.
- ◆ **Appointed Committee Director Positions and DMREC Guidelines:**
 - ◇ The DMREC has established a collaborative approach that involves individual Appointed Committee Directors working closely with the DMREC Minister, Vice Minister, Treasurer, and Secretary. For example, two Directors and the Minister converse or email frequently with updates and concerns. And so, the same process for each Director. The final approval of position and role responsibilities is currently in progress. The DMREC is enthusiastic about this teamwork.
 - ◇ A draft of the DMREC Guidelines has been completed, with final approval expected between March and April 2025.

Brothers and Sisters, as always, we want to hear from you! Please call or email any one of us!
Kathleen

MESSAGE FROM THE VICE MINISTER

Geographic Groups

At our recent DMR Fraternal/Pastoral visit and follow up report, the National Executive Council (NEC) recommended that we establish a practice they call Geographic Groups. This has been successful at the NEC. Kathleen Carsten, OFS, Minister meets regularly with an NEC Councilor along with other regional ministers to discuss regional practices and receive news from the NEC. We are implementing a similar practice within our Divine Mercy Region, which I will oversee. Each of our REC councilors, Michelle Bryk, Pam Spaniola, Judy Bruce, Jim Hegenauer, along with myself will have the responsibility of communicating with our assigned local fraternity ministers or their delegate. This will establish an open, consistent point of contact and line of communication between an REC council member and the local fraternities. We will communicate REC news and events, but more importantly, we will be a point of contact for any concerns from the local fraternities. Local fraternities are not limited to this point of contact and are encouraged to reach out to any council member if there is a particular concern.

Also, through this consistent communication, we will have the opportunity to establish some “best practices” between fraternities. If any of us learn of something that is working particularly well within a fraternity, we can talk about that with each other and with other fraternities as suggestions.

Lastly, know that we are praying for you and with you. Each council representative sees this as an opportunity to get to know and better understand and serve each fraternity. We will provide support from a vocations and formation perspective. Every REC member and our appointees are available to support and strengthen the life of and within each fraternity, which is ultimately the goal of this initiative.

Regards,
Jeff Dills, OFS

FROM THE FORMATOR

Ponderings on a Cold Winter’s Day

I’ve been writing this article as I listen to the frigid winds blow and watch a few robins peck at the remaining berries on a tree. I am reminded that I need to listen to my vocational call. Am I listening? Have I allowed a cold hardness due to lack of self-control, selfishness, and stubbornness to come between me and essential aspects of Secular Franciscan life? Am I obedient to the Rule and Constitution?

I have been blessed to be a formation team member since my profession in 2009. It is a gift to journey with people discerning a vocational call to the Franciscan family. It is a privilege to enliven and rekindle the promises made during our profession into the Secular Franciscan order with the fraternity through ongoing formation.

It is a great joy to be able to serve my sisters and brothers in this way. It is also very humbling. I am made aware of being complacent and lazy, having squandered the graces I received during my profession. I am reminded that I need to be faithful to the commitments I made during my profession in the Order of Secular Franciscan as my vocation requires.

The FUN (For Up to Now) manual has a beautiful chapter on profession, "Profession and the Secular Franciscan". *"The liturgical act of Profession makes the connection with Baptism clear....Profession memorializes Baptism. I do not mean that it gives us a chance to merely remember the moment when we were baptized, but Profession actually revitalizes our promises and allows us to draw new strength from the baptismal promises made years ago. "Profession acts upon Baptism, impacts upon it, seals and develops it, founds a new entity and produces a new outpouring of the Spirit."....Profession relates us to the Church in a new way...' gives rise to a new relationship with the Church...the basic baptismal relationship is made stronger and closer..."They have been made living members of the Church by being buried and raised with Christ in baptism: they have been united more intimately with the Church by profession (Rule art 6)...*

"The Brothers and Sisters of Penance are asked to offer, constantly and in all the circumstances of life, the supreme proof of their fidelity to God." There is no place where the Secular Franciscan is excused from living out the Rule. There is no circumstance where the Secular Franciscan cannot find a way to preach the Gospel by word and deed. In this way, the Secular Franciscan extends the tremendous gift of "hope" to a world in despair." Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM and Fr. Felice Cangelosi, OFM.Cap, pg. 10-11

*Through our **Yes** at profession we are more deeply bound to the Church. We have been set aside, no longer to belong to ourselves, but dedicated to the service of God. We are committed to living life according to The Rule and Constitution of the Secular Franciscan Order.*

Found in The Rule, article 10: Uniting themselves to the redemptive obedience of Jesus, who placed his will into the Father's hands, let them faithfully fulfill the duties proper to their various circumstances of life. Let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to him even in difficulties and persecutions.

The General Constitutions of our Order state in Article 12.2 Rule 10: With Jesus, obedient even to death, they should seek to know and do the will of the Father. They should give thanks to God for the gift of freedom and for the revelation of the law of love. In order to carry out the will of the Father, they should accept the help which is offered to them through the mediation of the Church by those who are given authority in her and by their confreres. They should take on the risk of courageous choices in their life in society with decisiveness and serenity.

The above Rule and Constitution articles are the foundation of why it is so important to be present at fraternity gatherings, regional events and accept nominations for positions within the fraternity. We have been called to actively participate in building the kingdom of God, through our vocation as Secular Franciscans. Each of us has been called to serve the Lord. We have to listen to Him as we practice **obedience**, giving ourselves more deeply through His Word, receiving the sacraments, and being faithful servants to the Fraternity. We need the Holy Spirit and our community's support to fulfill our vocation.

The [Handbook For Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership](#), pg.v reminds us:

(4) It is our belief that all of us have been called through our Baptism as Christians and our Profession as Franciscans to exercise some form of servant leadership after the manner of Jesus and Francis and Clare. Certainly, this truth applies in a most direct way to our elected and appointed servant leadership at all levels of fraternity. But we hope that the somewhat changed focus in emphasis implied by the use of the term "leadership" will create a clearer connection with the process of Franciscan servant leadership rather than just with the person of the leader. As the General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order remind us. "The brothers and sisters are co-responsible for the life of the Fraternity to which they belong and for the OFS as the organic union of all Fraternities throughout the world" (Article: 30.1).

We need each other as Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John 15:1-5, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you.

Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing."

I look forward to the warmth of the community that is waiting for me at the next fraternity gathering. I pray to nourish strength, courage, and joy as I embrace the challenge of living my vocational call each day.

Most high, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me, Lord, a correct faith, certain hope, a perfect charity, sense and knowledge, so that I may carry out Your holy and true command. Amen.

Shalom,
Beth Price, OFS

FROM OUR ECUMENICAL-INTERFAITH DIRECTOR

Interfaith Dialogue: Unity for Immigrant Rights

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Located in the southern realm of Michigan's lower peninsula, a border state adjoining Canada, Secular (lay) Franciscans of Divine Mercy Region are uniquely situated to confront the critical challenges surrounding immigration and refugee rights. This geographical proximity creates a profound obligation. It resonates deeply with our Franciscan vocation of peace and justice, which is especially important for marginalized and vulnerable people.

Immigration and Refugee Rights: A Franciscan Mandate

We have a sacred duty. We must advocate for fair and compassionate immigration statutes, extend tangible support to refugees and asylum seekers, and resist unjust deportation measures. This mission transcends political advocacy and embodies our Gospel commitment to love, compassion, and justice.

Advocating for Fair and Compassionate Immigration Statutes

As followers of St. Francis, we are called to take action. We need to support immigration reforms that honor every person's intrinsic dignity. These reforms should respect individual rights. This advocacy includes endorsing legislation that ensures a transparent and just pathway to citizenship. It also safeguards immigrants' rights and fortifies family unity. We can collaborate with local and national organizations to drive reforms that resonate with human dignity and collective welfare tenets.

Extending Support to Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Our mission extends beyond advocacy to offering substantive support. This includes providing legal counsel, shelter, and employment opportunities, enabling refugees and asylum seekers to reconstruct their lives with dignity. We must also tackle their holistic well-being by facilitating access to education, healthcare, and spiritual nourishment.

Resisting Unjust Deportation Measures

Unjust deportation practices shatter familial bonds and inflict profound suffering on individuals and communities. As Franciscans, we must denounce these practices and champion the humane treatment of all, regardless of their immigration status. This entails collaborating with policymakers to ensure immigration enforcement respects human rights and embodies justice and mercy.

Fostering Unity Through Interfaith Dialogue

Interfaith dialogue is pivotal in our efforts to support immigrants and refugees. Engaging with diverse faith communities cultivates mutual understanding and respect. This engagement fosters a spirit of unity and collaboration, which is essential for building a just and peaceful society.

A Clarion Call to the Secular Franciscan Community

Beloved Secular Franciscans, though our cherished fraternal gatherings hold great importance, they are but a glimpse of the vast tapestry of our calling. The Rule of Life and Constitutions beckon us to breathe life into our faith and vocation far beyond the warmth of these meetings. We are summoned to be beacons of justice, to extend our hands and hearts to those in desperate need. If we retreat into the comfort of our fraternity, we risk betraying the very essence of our mission. Let us step boldly into the world, carrying our faith as a lantern, illuminating the path of justice and reflecting the Gospel in every breath, every action, and every corner of our lives.

Conclusion: Embracing Our Franciscan Vocation

As Franciscans of the Divine Mercy Region, we are emissaries of God's peace and love. By living the Gospel and embracing Catholic Social Teaching, we strive for a world where justice and compassion reign. Inspired by St. Francis's boundless charity, we dedicate ourselves to this sacred mission. Bringing hope and healing to all we meet.

Wishing you peace
Mike Carsten OFS

Celebrating the Feast of St. Francis

Members of four OFS fraternities and newly forming OFS group gathered to celebrate the Feast of St. Francis at St. Joseph Chapel and Shrine of the IHM in Pontiac, MI on October 4, 2024.



FROM OUR MULTICULTURAL COORDINATOR

Multicultural Ministry & Events

Last year, I saw one of our city buses covered in art, to celebrate a particular heritage that month. It was Spring, and written on the bus was the message, “Celebrating Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month”. I also noticed during that month, were more advertisements, television shows, movies, and articles recognizing the achievements and contributions of people who shared in this heritage. These messages served as an open invitation for anyone who noticed, to learn more about them.

In our Region, we have offices for Cultural/Multicultural Ministry that provide resources, help bring about awareness, and serve as a place to connect and share cultural events with the people in and visiting their dioceses. You will find that a few of our dioceses have an office for Black Catholic Ministry, Hispanic Ministry, Native American Ministry, Deaf Ministry, and/or other ministries.

Many of the cultural events in the Detroit area are advertised online, shared through social media, parish announcements/bulletins, emails, and by word of mouth. And I am proud to say that after attending several of these local events, I have seen quite a few of our Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters, actively participating and sharing that Franciscan joy!

One of the annual events in Detroit, is a Novena that is held in July, at the Basilica of Ste. Anne de Detroit. Along with Mass and prayer, each of the nine days is themed towards an ethnic group, with cultural celebrations and music each day, and on the tenth day there is the celebration of the Feast of Ste. Anne.

This is just one example of the many celebrations that occurs within our admirable Divine Mercy Region but finding out about these events early enough is not always easy, especially if they are occurring outside of your diocese. By Spring, I would like to have available, a cultural events calendar along with a list of contacts to share as a resource. If you are interested in receiving a copy of this or you have information that you would like to share about an event happening in your diocese this Spring or later, please feel free to email that information to caritas@disciples.com.

May this year be filled with fruits of joy!
Marilyn Webb, OFS



Yearly Regional Statistics

2024 # of Professions made = 18

2025 # of members in Candidacy = 23



New Ritual Templates Available on the OFS-USA Website

Fillable forms are now available for download from the website for the Ceremony of Welcoming, Rite of Admission and Rite of Profession from the new Ritual. The forms contain the exact wording from the new Ritual, and provide fillable fields for names, dates, readings and hymns for your celebrations. These documents are set up to print as booklets using Acrobat Reader (which is free) or the paid Acrobat version.

Also available is a one sheet foldable handout for opening and closing prayers for Fraternity gatherings.

There are directions on how to use the forms on the website page, but if you are having difficulty using the forms, please log a ticket in **Contact Us**. You will find the **Contact Us** link on the website page.

Click on the image below to view the webpage



Welcome Br. Julius



Please welcome our newest Regional Spiritual Assistant, Br. Antony Julius Milton, OFM Cap.

Br. Antony Julius Milton, OFM Cap. was born and raised in a small town called Konalai in the state of Tamil Nadu in Southeast India. He has an older sister who is married with two boys currently studying in 7th grade and 4th grade. His mom and dad are in good health in his hometown. His dad is a farmer and his mom is a teacher in the kindergarten in the same town. He visits them every year in the summer.

Br. Antony Julius was inspired by the dedicated pastoral works of a diocesan priest—his home parish pastor during his school years. He then discerned to be a Franciscan Capuchin in his High School and joined the Amala Annai Capuchin Province of Tamil Nadu right after high school. He completed his initial stages of formation, postulancy and novitiate, in the years 2010-2013 and his bachelor degrees in English literature and Philosophy in the years 2013-2016. He did one year of community experience in 2016-2017 at the provincialate of the Amala Anna Capuchin Province in Tamil Nadu, India.

In the Fall of 2017 Br. Antony Julius was invited to come to the Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchins in the Midwest USA to study Masters of Divinity in preparation for his presbyteral ministry and become part of the Fraternal Collaboration between the Capuchin Provinces of St. Joseph in the USA and Amala Annai in Tamil Nadu, India. After his priestly ordination in April 2022, he has been ministering at the Capuchin Retreat Center in Washington Township, Michigan as the Program Director. He loves the Capuchin Charism of preaching and teaching about the Catholic faith and the Franciscan spirituality. With the consent of his provincial minister of the Capuchin Province of St. Joseph, he has been appointed as one of the Spiritual Assistants of the Divine Mercy Region to represent the Observant Franciscans of the province of Guadalupe in the US. He is excited to serve the brothers and sisters of the region in whatever way he can.

J.P.I.C. News

SAVE THE DATE!!

From May 8-11, 2025, there will be a gathering of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation animators and those considering serving in a JPIC role, at [Holy Cross Retreat Center](#) near Las Cruces, NM. Holy Cross is a Franciscan retreat center. It will be a prayerful, learning, and connecting event. Registration details and additional info will follow in a few weeks.

Regional News

Thank you to all who contributed to the Hurricane Relief Fund in October. A total of \$3200 was divided and given to Catholic Charities of Florida and North Carolina. Local Fraternities and individuals collected \$1600. The Region matched with another \$1600.

DIVINE MERCY REGION ANNUAL DAY OF REFLECTION

By Mike Carsten, OFS

On the 26th of October, the Divine Mercy Region gathered together for a day of reflection and renewal centered on the theme, "The Stigmata, St. Francis, and His Journey through Suffering." This Formation Day offered us a deeply contemplative path into understanding suffering through the life of St. Francis of Assisi, whose enduring example of resilience and spiritual strength continues to inspire and guide us on our own journeys.

Beth Price, OFS, our Regional Formation Director, began the first session with a profound exploration of "St. Francis and Suffering." Beth's reflections illuminated how St. Francis embraced his afflictions as a path toward communion with Christ. Her insights into the stigmata and the redemptive power of suffering offered us a moving and thought-provoking perspective on how suffering when accepted with faith, can draw us closer to God.

In the next session, Eileen Smith, OFS, and Mike Okragleski, OFS, shared stories of contemporary Franciscan witnesses who lived out their faith through the trials of daily life. Their stories of resilience and unwavering devotion were inspiring and profound examples of the strength of living one's faith within the crucible of suffering.

The first session after lunch invited us to reflect on "Suffering in Our Lives." This session, led by Michelle Bryk, OFS, and Brittney Walendzik, OFS, encouraged us to explore our experiences of suffering. Their compassionate approach created a safe space for vulnerability, where we could examine our challenges and consider how they might serve as growth sources. The dialogue was filled with empathy, fostering a sense of shared healing as each story brought new perspectives and insights.

Brother Johan Paul Gill, OFM, Cap, one of our Regional Spiritual Assistants, presided over the Mass and delivered a homily that elegantly weaved together the day's themes. His words resonated deeply, reminding us of the redemptive nature of suffering and the hope we find in our unity with Christ.

Fraternity News

News from St. Bonaventure - Detroit



Sidney Davis II

The close of 2024 brought the passing of our dear friend and brother, Sidney Davis. I don't think a day went by when he wasn't at the Solanus Center evangelizing and spreading his Franciscan spirit. He was a friend to many at the Solanus Center, Soup Kitchen and St. Charles. He was a member of our Leadership Council and a volunteer at the Gift Shop. He was responsible for maintaining our marketing materials and tended to the upkeep of the votive candles.



All indications suggest that Sidney died on Christmas Eve of natural causes. His funeral was held on Thursday, January 2 at St. Bonaventure. Close to 400 people came to pay their respects. Sidney will be laid to rest in Mt. Elliott Cemetery in the columbarium honoring Fr. Solanus.

Congratulations to our Newly Professed

On November 17, 2024 Sheila Barstad, Florence Hayman, Anne Piontkowski and Carl Piontkowski were professed at the St. Bonaventure Chapel. After the Profession mass there was a dinner in the Solanus Casey Center dining room.

Congratulations Steve Wasko and Capuchin Soup Kitchen

On Dec. 16 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency made grants in what is being described as the largest granting for Environmental Justice in the country's history. In a highly competitive Community Change grant process, Michigan applications received among the most funding, and the Detroit Community Resilience Hub Initiative, led by EcoWorks, Michigan Interfaith Power & Light, and Solar Faithful received a \$20 million grant to assist 15 Detroit-based houses of worship and food assistance programs in environmental justice neighborhoods become resilience hubs. **St. Suzanne Cody Rouge Community Resource Center is among the largest single recipients of this funding for resilience hubs. The other Catholic organization receiving funding is the Capuchin Soup Kitchen's multiple sites.**

A Minister's Thoughts...

On January 13 I participated in the DMR Office Hour Zoom call with special guest Franciscan Action Network's (FAN) Executive Director, Michele Dunne, OFS. The purpose of the call was to understand FAN's objectives and to dialogue with Michele to learn about FAN <https://franciscanaction.org>. FAN is an advocacy non-profit organization located in Washington D.C. Their Mission Statement is: *"Inspired by the Gospel of Jesus, and the example of Saints Francis and Clare, the Franciscan Action Network is a collective Franciscan voice seeking to transform United States public policy related to peace making, care for creation, poverty, and human rights."*

Michele became the Executive Director in October 2021 and brought a fresh Franciscan perspective to FAN through her position. She made it a top priority to reassert FAN's Franciscan identity. Since 2021 under her leadership FAN has focused on the following:

Reasserting our Franciscan identity

- Start with gospel values & Franciscan charism before policy positions

- Keep messaging consistently Franciscan in tone

- Invigorate work with other Franciscan organizations:

 - Franciscan Federation, Association of Franciscan Colleges & Universities, Franciscan Network for Migrants,

 - Franciscans International Reorienting towards our Network

What is FAN?

- Turn focus towards our 53 institutional members, 30 Franciscan Justice Circles, nearly 15K individuals

- Helping to rejuvenate the Franciscan movement with outreach to young adults

2025 Priorities

- Expand work with young adults; enlarge conference and pilot more activities

- Build advocacy campaigns on environmental justice, immigration, peace

- Enlarge and sustain Franciscan Justice Circles grassroots groups

- Third intentional benefit with a Franciscan charity

I was pleasantly surprised to learn FAN is more focused on Franciscan values and its Franciscan identity than in times past. Two programs showing this change are Justice Circles and the Justice Leadership Conference. Justice Circles is a new process introduced by FAN to guide participants in identifying injustices while instilling Franciscan values. In 2024 a Justice Leadership Conference was held. It was based on our Franciscan tradition and provided participants with an experience of connection, learning, growth and empowerment Both of these initiatives are intergenerational and most important are attracting young adults. FAN's 2025 priorities will continue to build on this foundation with even more focus on young adults.

Whatever your viewpoint is of FAN it is worth acknowledging Michele's hard work and accomplishments. As a Secular Franciscan she gives witness to our Rule. Through her efforts our Franciscan values are being promoted at FAN with the hope of bringing dialogue and peace to the public space.

This being the Jubilee Year of Hope <https://www.usccb.org/jubilee2025> and we the pilgrims on the journey, I think it is worth considering the words of Pope Francis: *"We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision."*

In this Jubilee Year of Hope with God's grace may we mend our relationships, open our hearts with love and fan the flame of hope. Let us be true to our Franciscan call and charism in whatever work we are to accomplish in Jesus' name.

Peace and Blessings,

Eileen Smith, OFS

Minister, St. Bonaventure Fraternity

Fraternity News Continued



Please pray for the repose of the soul of St. Thomas More Vice Minister Madge Kinsella who passed to eternal life January 6, 2025 May she rest in peace.

Congratulations to the newly elected Council of St. Paschal Fraternity of Toledo, OH on November 17, 2024.
 Left to right: Spiritual Assistant Rita Jane Radecki, OSF; Treasurer Jeannie Dery; Councilor Deacon John Okragleski; Minister Michael Okragleski; Vice Minister BJ Starn; Secretary Patricia Okragleski; Councilor Lisa Craig



Congratulations to St. Anthony, Indian River Fraternity Council election results of December 15, 2024:

Pictured from Left to Right
 Kathleen Carsten, OFS, Presider
 Jim Hegenauer, OFS, Minister
 Brad Kuivinen, OFS, Vice Minister
 William Schyrer, OFS, Secretary
 Stacie Longwell Sadowski, OFS, Councilor #1
 Linda Solis, OFS, Spiritual Assistant
 Marcia J. DePauw, OFS, Councilor #2
 Jennifer Kuivinen, OFS, Treasurer

St. Anthony Fraternity of Indian River, Michigan on Sunday, November 3, 2024 brought into Profession Stacie Longwell Sadowski at her home parish, St. Mary of the Assumption of Lake Leelanau, Michigan.



Left to right, Bob Bowersox, formation person to Stacie, Jim Hegenauer, minister, Stacie, and Fr. Ben



Bob, Fr. Ben, Stacie, & Jim
 14



The Professed and Candidate who attended the Profession.

St. Francis Fraternity hosted a very special day of reflection on the San Damiano Cross, in honor of the 800th anniversary of our order. Seven other fraternities attended. The hosting parish, St. Vincent Ferrer (Madison Heights) was very pleased and is open to another gathering in 2025.



Congratulations to the newly elected Council of St. Bonaventure in Detroit.

- Eileen Smith, Minister
- Ed Bechard, Vice Minister
- Betty Zaranek - Secretary
- Susan Ayoub - Treasurer
- Formation Minister - Joe Quesnelle (not pictured)
- Doris Allen - Councilor
- Sidney Davis - Councilor
- Teresa Leinert - Councilor
- Karen Parsons - Councilor (no pictured)



Saint David Fraternity did an outreach on October 21, to Dutton Farms, located in Rochester Hills. Dutton Farms cares for Challenged Adults eight hours a day. There are very few facilities that provide this type of care in Oakland County. The need is great, and the waiting list is long. Conne, who is a professed member, has a daughter who attends the program at Dutton Farms. Connie brings her daughter to our Gatherings and is always welcomed! Saint David Fraternity is blessed to have young members who are on their way to Profession. One of those members is a homeschooling couple who accompanied us to our Dutton Farm Outreach with their four children to help on the farm! Saint David encourages young families to come and discern. If they say that they can't due to children at home, we invite them to bring their children if that would make it work! There are times when her husband, Che, and Melissa bring some of their children to our social gatherings. The children seem to enjoy the food and games we play! Who knows if children will follow in the parent's footsteps in becoming a Franciscan! Matthew 25:45 "Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me."



Vocations Spotlight

Vocations Committee sets up at Conferences and Events Around Michigan

This past year the Vocations Committee has set up tables at various conferences and events around Michigan. This is a great way to bring awareness to Catholics regarding the Secular Franciscan Order. We don't have to be the best kept secret of secular vocations.

If you know of a Catholic event (Conference, Relevant Speaker, Mission, etc.) in your city or area, please let the Vocations Committee know so we can set up a table. Contact Jim Graczyk, OFS at jgraczykdivinemercury@aol.com.



**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 dmrfratdata@gmail.com.

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

Divine Mercy Region
Editor: Barb Scott, OFS
6490 Kingtree SW
Byron Center, MI 49315



PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE