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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

We Are Pilgrims of Hope: Embracing Hope as Secular Franciscans Today

As we walk in the spirit of Francis and Clare, the pilgrimage of hope entrusted to Secular Franciscans today takes on urgent new dimensions. Now, more than ever, the earth itself groans beneath the weight of neglect and exploitation, and countless brothers and sisters endure the silence of poverty and marginalization. To be a pilgrim of hope is to lift our eyes not only in prayer, but also outward in compassion—to recognize the sacredness of creation and the dignity of every person, and to respond with courage and love.

To understand how Francis and Clare embodied this living hope in their own time, we must look closely at the unique paths they traveled and the profound impact their faith had on the world around them. Their journeys offer us timeless examples of how hope, when rooted in trust and compassion, becomes a transformative force capable of renewing both hearts and communities. Let us explore how their lives of prayer, courage, and radical love have shaped—and continue to inspire—the Secular Franciscan way of life today.

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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.

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER CONTINUED

St. Francis journeyed as a true pilgrim of hope, relinquishing earthly securities to pursue the promise of God's love revealed in every aspect of creation. His pilgrimage was not solely a passage across the hills of Umbria but a profound voyage into the depths of the human heart, where hope is both sown and cherished. His hope was evident in song, woven into his "Canticle of the Creatures," blessing Brother Sun, Sister Moon, and even Sister Death as radiant signs of the Creator's goodness. In moments of trial and suffering, Francis would lift his gaze and proclaim, "Praised be You, my Lord"—words rising from a heart anchored in trust.

The journey of hope recognizes no borders. Amid the turmoil of the Crusades, Francis bravely crossed conflict lines to meet Sultan Malik al-Kamil, carrying only his trust in God and a longing for peace. This courageous gesture—grounded in humility, honest dialogue, and deep faith—showed how hope can dismantle barriers and nurture peace even in the heart of discord. Francis trusted in the potential for understanding and unity, where many saw only separation. Consider reading the book *The Saint and the Sultan—the Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace*, by Paul Moses. (available for purchase on <https://www.amazon.com/Saint-Sultan-Crusades-Francis-Assisi/dp/038552370X>).

St. Clare, having intentionally chosen the cloistered life at San Damiano, embraced her Franciscan calling through contemplation, steadfast prayer, and community with her sisters—a purposeful path rooted in her deep desire to seek God above all else. Clare's hope was most radiant in her encouragement to others, especially in her letters to Agnes of Prague, where she urged a fierce and unwavering faith in Christ. Even amid stillness and seclusion, Clare's journey pulsed with hope—her trust in God's promises unfaltering, her silent prayers carrying transformative power beyond the cloistered walls.

St. Clare's hope was a steadfast flame in her heart as she labored for papal approval of the Rule she had composed for her community. Despite repeated obstacles and long periods of uncertainty, Clare persevered in prayer and unwavering faith, believing that God would honor her desire for a life of radical poverty and simplicity. At the end of her life, her hope was fulfilled when Pope Innocent IV granted approval to her Rule just days before her death—making Clare the first woman to write a monastic rule approved by the Church (see "The Rule of St. Clare," (<https://www.porzioncolaproject.com/the-rule-of-saint-clare>); Papal Bull *Solet Annuere*, 1253 (text only in Latin or Spanish, <https://www.franciscan-archive.org/matriarcha/>); Joan Mueller, *Clare of Assisi: The Letters to Agnes* (available for purchase at <https://www.amazon.com/Clare-Assisi-Letters-Joan-Mueller/dp/0814651682>)).

So, how do we as Secular Franciscans express our hope? Our vocation calls us to be attentive to the cries of our wounded world. We are summoned to care for "Sister Earth," to advocate for ecological justice, and to model a way of living that reveres the interconnectedness of all life. Inspired by Francis, who saw all creatures as kin, we cannot remain indifferent to the degradation of our common home. Hope impels us to action: to reduce our own footprints, to champion sustainable practices, and to inspire others to reverence creation as a gift entrusted to our care.



MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER CONTINUED

At the same time, the Secular Franciscan journey is marked by a preferential love for the poor, and a resolve to be “a voice for the voiceless.” In the faces of the marginalized, the overlooked, and the forgotten, we see Christ himself. Hope urges us to speak out against injustice, to advocate for those deprived of dignity or opportunity, and to hold fast to the Gospel vision where all are welcomed at the table of life. In concrete acts of service, in standing alongside the vulnerable, and in challenging structures of inequality, our hope becomes flesh in the world.

Thus, as pilgrims of hope, we are called not to passive optimism, but to an active, prophetic presence—one that reverberates through prayer, fraternity, and bold witness. Our Franciscan path, illuminated by the examples of Francis and Clare, is to embody hope that heals, hope that restores, and hope that builds bridges across the chasms of our time.

The world, especially its younger generations, longs for signs of meaning, purpose, and belonging. Our invitation is to live with the same joyful trust that animated Francis and Clare: to greet every day, every challenge, and every neighbor with the assurance that God is ever at work. The “Canticle of the Creatures” beckons us to find the divine in the ordinary and to let hope blossom in our lives, so that others, drawn by its fragrance, may discover the Franciscan way.

This hope is not an idle wish, but a living flame, kindled and sustained in prayer—especially in our fraternities and daily devotion, where Secular Franciscans lift up their hearts to God, imploring an increase of vocations to our Order. With humility and trust, we petition the Lord to send laborers into the harvest, that many may hear the call to live the Gospel in the footsteps of Francis and Clare. These prayers, offered in fraternity gatherings and in the quiet of daily life, unite us in a communion of hope, as we entrust the future of our Franciscan family to the loving care of the Holy Spirit.

Let us take to heart the words of Scripture, which assure us of the steadfastness of our hope: “Hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (Romans 5:5) Thus, nourished by prayer and the Spirit, we continue our journey—pilgrims of hope—trusting that God’s promise will unfold in our lives and in the world.

Kathleen Carsten, OFS

“Let us insist on dialogue at all levels, to promote a genuine culture of connection and not of confrontation, along with commitment to limiting power, as my beloved predecessor Pope Francis always asked.”

“Combine prayer with the necessary courageous actions and with the enduring patience for gradual progress”. “War will not prevail and children have the right to an authentic, just and lasting peace.”

(Pope Leo XIV, Jubilee of Hope 2025)



In case you missed the Canticle of the Creatures video made from the photos submitted by Secular Franciscans from all around the country that we released on Earth Day 2025, here is the link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1rMu_OZk1A&t=1s

This can also be found on the Centenary Resources web page for 2025, along with other useful materials for fraternities and individuals:

<https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/centenary-resources-canticle-of-the-creatures/>

As a reminder, there are pages on the national fraternity website for each centenary we are celebrating, so these resources are available for your use at any time:

<https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/centenary-resources-rule/>

<https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/centenary-greccio/>

<https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/centenary-resources-stigmata/>

<https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/centenary-resources-canticle-of-the-creatures/>

<https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/centenary-resources-the-easter-of-francis-of-assisi/> (yes, there is already some content here!)

FROM THE FORMATOR

A Time to Learn

During a recent council meeting, we discussed a few articles in the General Constitutions of our National Fraternity as ongoing formation. What caught the attention of several was that each member is responsible for being an active and current participant in their formation (see [GC 44 & 8](#)).

I have to be looking for a deeper understanding of the [Rule](#), the [Gospels](#), and [Church teaching](#). Each time I participate in Mass, pray the Liturgy of the Hours, or read the Bible, I am uniquely experiencing the Word of God. I have changed as has the world around me - personally, in my family & friends, my community, city, the country, and in the world.

It's my job to keep up with what is happening around me and how it affects me, on all levels - physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. I am finding it necessary to set time limits as to how long to engage with the media, being mindful that being engaged in the world is a vocational necessity. I cannot be a Secular Franciscan on my own, as I am part of a community that is local, regional, national, and international in structure. Each fraternity is bonded to the local diocese of the Church. This means I must stay current with and supportive of the Church and its teachings (click the links provided above).

Most importantly, I need to be mindful of my role as a peacemaker in the world. Following in the way of St. Francis of Assisi means I need to be grounded in peace. There is a constant need to have regular time for prayer, reflection, study of the Rule, Bible, and Church teachings to be a peaceful presence in this world.

As I write, another mass shooting occurred. It is on my heart to leave you with this quote from the Rule, Article 19. "Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon. Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others."

Shalom,
Beth Price, OFS
Formation Minister

P.S. I have included these links to two Secular Franciscan sites that provide additional learning opportunities.

[Our National OFS Newsletter](#)

[A Reflection for the 800th Anniversary of the Canticum from Australia](#)

A Councilor's Joy: A Journey with My Brothers and Sisters. A note from Kim Spaniola....

Serving as a Regional Councilor for the Divine Mercy Region has been a journey of grace and discovery for me. From the beginning, I have found that participating in our various meetings and gatherings is a source of spiritual nourishment. I was filled with a **profound sense of joy and anticipation** when I was assigned to my "Geographic Group" of **four** local fraternities. I was excited for the path I would walk on the journey ahead.

The Blessing of Presence

I cherish every opportunity I have to attend the gatherings of my assigned fraternities: **The Troubadours of St. Clare, St. David, St. Bonaventure, and Solanus Casey**. For me, each visit is far more than an item on a calendar; it is a true blessing and a chance to witness our faith and vocation in action. I love building relationships with my brothers and sisters in Francis and Clare. The warmth, the shared prayer, and the commitment to living the Gospel in today's world are things I can feel in every fraternity I visit. It is in these moments of shared life that I truly see the spirit of the Secular Franciscan Order shine.

Gospel to Life: Serving the Poor

It has been very inspiring for me to witness the four fraternities coming together to support our brothers and sisters in need. I was overjoyed to see the fraternities' collective dedicated work to feed the poor through Franciscan Ministries (located on Cadieux in Detroit), an apostolate of my fraternity, The Troubadours of St. Clare. Through their organized food drives and generous hearts, the four fraternities have made a difference: **to help fill a pantry** that serves the hungry and marginalized. **Thank you for your generous donations!** Your generosity is especially appreciated by the many guests of Franciscan Ministries who come to the food pantry on a weekly basis. It does take a village! The four fraternities' powerful witness to Christ's call to care for the "least of our brothers and sisters" is a beautiful testament to their commitment to our Franciscan values. Together, the Troubadours of St. Clare, St. David, St. Bonaventure, and Solanus Casey help meet the growing need of supplemental food sources. A special "Thank You" to Dan Carsten, OFS, of the Troubadours of St. Clare. Dan is the backbone of Franciscan Ministries. The folks who visit the pantry can always rely on Dan's warm Franciscan welcome as they come to the pantry on most Wednesdays and some Saturdays to get their "groceries". Dan is a true friend to those in need.

A Journey of Learning and Growth

This journey as your councilor has also been one of immense learning for me. Through countless conversations and shared experiences, I have gained a much deeper appreciation for the rich tapestry of our fraternities and the broader lay movement here in Michigan. I have learned so much about the unique history, character, and strengths of each community; all while recognizing the common thread of faith that binds us all together. This firsthand experience has given me invaluable insight into the life of our Order and the incredible people who animate it.

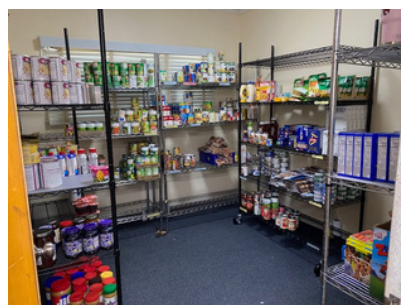
Looking Forward with Gratitude

As I look to the future, I am filled with a profound sense of hope. I see our fraternities continuing to grow in their collaboration and support for one another, thus strengthening the bonds of our Regional Family. I thank God ahead of time for all the good that is in store for the Divine Mercy Region as we continue to draw closer together, united in our mission to bring the Gospel to life.

May the Lord give you Peace.

Kim Spaniola, OFS

Councilor, Divine Mercy Region Executive Council



Kim Spaniola, OFS
and Dan Carsten, OFS

FROM OUR ECUMENICAL-INTERFAITH DIRECTOR

Building Bridges of Peace: Ecumenical and Interfaith Dialogue in Michigan and Beyond

As Secular Franciscans, we are called to be instruments of peace and dialogue in a world that is often divided. Our Rule calls us to go forth as "bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly." This mission compels us to look beyond our own circles and build bridges of understanding with our brothers and sisters of all faiths. Recent and upcoming events, both globally and right here in Michigan, offer fertile ground for this essential work.

Global and Statewide Initiatives

On the world stage, the **Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue** and the **World Council of Churches** continue to foster crucial conversations that promote mutual respect and collaboration. These efforts at the highest levels set a tone of openness and encounter for the entire Church. Closer to home, we are blessed with vibrant local organizations dedicated to this mission. The **Michigan Council of Churches** and the **Interfaith Center for Racial Justice** are excellent resources for regional events and collaborative projects. Their work provides a practical outlet for our Franciscan desire to heal divisions and promote justice.



As His Holiness Pope Francis so beautifully expressed it: "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."

On Campus: Universities Fostering Dialogue

Our local universities are becoming key centers for interfaith engagement, offering rich opportunities for learning and encounter. As we look to the new academic year, several institutions are hosting noteworthy events.

Grand Valley State University's Kaufman Interfaith Institute was a particularly active hub this fall. Their calendar was filled with events designed to foster direct experience and conversation.

Other universities are also contributing to the dialogue in creative ways. **Hope College** has commissioned a new play for the 2025-26 academic year that will explore the complex issue of antisemitism, using the arts to build empathy. **Michigan State University** hosted a book launch for "Mapping Neshnabé Futurity", offering insights into indigenous spirituality.

Of special note for us is **Madonna University's Center for Catholic Studies and Interfaith Dialogue**. Rooted in the Franciscan tradition, this center is a vital resource for lectures, programs, and retreats aimed at promoting justice and understanding between faiths.

Let us embrace these opportunities when we see them to step out in faith and meet others where they are. By participating in these types of events, we not only enrich our own understanding but also live out our Franciscan vocation, sowing seeds of peace in our communities, one conversation at a time.

Michael Carsten, OFS



For a Synodal Church

A large, majestic tree, full of wisdom and light, reaches for the sky. A sign of deep vitality and hope which expresses the cross of Christ. It carries the Eucharist, which shines like the sun. The horizontal branches, opened like hands or wings, suggest, at the same time, the Holy Spirit.

The people of God are not static: they are on the move, in direct reference to the etymology of the word synod, which means "walking together". The people are united by the same common dynamic that this Tree of Life breathes into them, from which they begin their walk.



These 15 silhouettes sum up our entire humanity in its diversity of life situations of generations and origins. This aspect is reinforced by the multiplicity of bright colors which are themselves signs of joy.

There is no hierarchy between these people who are all on the same footing: young, old, men, women, teenagers, children, lay people, religious, parents, couples, singles; the bishop and the nun are not in front of them, but among them.

Quite naturally, children and then adolescents open their walk, in reference to these words of Jesus in the Gospel: "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children". (Mt 11:25)

The horizontal baseline: "For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission" runs from left to right in the direction of this march, underlining and strengthening it.

7 Reference: The official logo of the synodal path

"We are rebuilding our Divine Mercy Region (DMR) through basic actions of supportive and consistent order in the way of our Guidelines, Geographical Groups, appointed position responsibilities, leadership direction given and internalized in the Regional Executive Council (REC) Retreat, and the Altius Moderamen realized through our Regional and Local Spiritual Assistant Friars.

We are amid change in our Church. Our Franciscan Family is journeying together. The work of the REC will look to the ideals of our role in the synodal church and the ensuing transformation for the DMR Fraternity. In this third Millennium and in this Jubilee year, 2025, let us move forward as Pilgrims of Hope."

Excerpt from Divine Mercy Region State of the Region, August 2, 2025,
Kathleen Carsten, OFS, Minister



OFS in the Synodal Church: Rebuild the Life

- Reading the Gospel
- Reading the words of St. Francis
- Knowing Developing Ecclesiology of the Church today
- Growing in one's vocation – "Lord, what do you want me to do?"
- Expanding the image of the CHURCH & OFS Fraternity

Embracing the Gift of Franciscan Presence: Welcoming Our Spiritual Assistants

The Divine Mercy Region is filled with gratitude and joy as we welcome the friars who have been appointed to serve as our Spiritual Assistants. The ministry of the Spiritual Assistant is a vital gift to the Secular Franciscan Order, providing a visible sign of the unity and shared charism of the Franciscan Family.

We are pleased to introduce our Provincial Spiritual Assistants who will help guide and animate our region: **Br. Jerome Wolbert, OFM**, representing the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and **Br. Jerome Schroeder, OFM Cap.**, representing the Province of St. Joseph. Their experience and fraternal support at the provincial level are invaluable to our life and mission.

At the regional level, we are especially blessed to welcome our newly appointed Regional Spiritual Assistants: **Br. John Paul Gill, OFM Cap.**, and **Br. Julius Milton, OFM Cap.** We eagerly anticipate their spiritual guidance, wisdom, and fraternal collaboration as they journey with us.

The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order calls the Spiritual Assistant to be a witness to the Franciscan spirit and to offer pastoral animation. We are deeply grateful for the "yes" of these four brothers to serve our region. They are called to be the necessary Franciscan Presence among us, helping us to live our vocation more authentically in the world.

Please join us in keeping these friars in your daily prayers as they begin this important service. Let us welcome them with open hearts and work with them to build up the Kingdom of God in the spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare.

Peace and all good!
Mike Carsten, OFS



Br. Jerome
Wolbert, OFM.
Provincial for the
Province of Our
Lady of Guadalupe



Br. Jerome
Schroeder,
OFM Cap.
Provincial for
the Province
of St. Joseph



Br. John Paul Gill,
OFM Cap. Regional
Spiritual Assistant



Br. Julius Milton
OFM Cap.
Regional Spiritual
Assistant

National News

Highlights from the 2025 OFS-USA Chapter of Elections

Election Results:

National Minister: Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS
National Vice Minister: Diane Menditto, OFS
National Secretary: Susan Ronan, OFS
National Treasurer: Stephen Roszart, OFS
International Councilor: Mary Frances Charsky, OFS
National Councilor 1: Christine Blood, OFS
National Councilor 2: Christopher Leone, OFS
National Councilor 3: Corinne Lorenzet, OFS
Alternate of International Councilor: Diane Menditto, OFS



Approved Guidelines:

“Guidelines for Fraternal Accompaniment”

“Guidelines for Affiliates”

[https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/guidelines-forms-other-resources/.](https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/guidelines-forms-other-resources/)



**Our 21st Quinquennial Congress
July 29th through August 2nd, 2026
Lexington Kentucky**

The Easter of Francis: Rekindle the Flame

We hope to see you there. For more details and registration, please visit [21st Congress Secular Franciscan Order - USA](#). **Scholarships are available either through your fraternity or the region. Talk with your Minister. Early registration discount will need to be completed online by December 31, 2025.**

Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Award

Recipient, **Carolyn Townes, OFS**, spoke to us sharing her deep love for her brothers and sisters. She also shared the importance of being present with someone who is in need of love and comfort. We are not there to fix it, just to listen. If we find trouble in giving a listening heart, Carolyn offers this:

“God breaks your heart over and over again until it remains open.”

Update on Franciscan Action Network

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the spirit of fraternity and transparency, I offer a brief background on the discernment process regarding Franciscan Action Network (FAN) and the OFS-USA institutional membership with FAN, as well as the recent vote held during the OFS-USA Chapter of Elections, September 9-14, 2025, in Marriottsville, Maryland.

Over the past year, I have embraced the privilege of serving as your Divine Mercy Region Minister. Alongside my fellow Regional Ministers, I was entrusted with reaching out to our local fraternities to listen and discern their thoughts on the renewal of OFS-USA's institutional membership with FAN. Each Regional Minister was guided to ask a simple yet important question of their local fraternities: Do you support the OFS-USA membership—yes or no? I prayerfully sent out the accompanying letter (below) to each of you, hoping it would inspire thoughtful conversation within your fraternity gatherings. Multiple follow-up emails and requests followed, all rooted in a desire to hear your voices and honor your discernment.

During the chapter, our Regional Minister groups and the OFS-USA Fraternity Council engaged in sincere and heartfelt dialogue. The opinions and guidance offered by various Regions reflected a richness of experience and perspective. Some gently reminded us, "That was five years ago; let us forgive those who erred." Others expressed caution, "We must be sure that such a situation will not arise again." Still others lifted up FAN's dedication, "FAN advocates for justice in Washington, D.C., on behalf of the voiceless and the poor." There was also the thoughtful suggestion, "If you, your Region, or fraternity feel called to support FAN, you may do so individually; the whole Order need not be bound."

And so, we continue our journey together, discerning with humble hearts and seeking always to embody the love, peace, and justice of Saint Francis in all our choices. Seeking to ensure all voices were honored, the OFS-USA Fraternity Council voted to require a two-thirds majority for the decision of institutional membership with FAN. This measure was proposed in response to concerns from some members and fraternities who feared that passage might prompt departures from the Order. The two-thirds requirement was intended to reflect a significant sense of unity and conviction, should the measure prevail.

Here are the responses from our Divine Mercy Region fraternities: Yes: 9; No: 4; Unsure: 2; No response: 3.

OFS-USA Fraternity Council secret ballot was taken: Yes: 19; No: 22. The motion did not pass.

To read the letter sent to you in August, please click here: [FAN Discernment Request](#).



<https://franciscanaction.org/>

Fraternity News

Rediscovering St. Francis: The Power of His Testament

On Sunday, September 21, 2025, **St. Bonaventure Detroit Fraternity** hosted a meaningful Day of Reflection. During this event, participants spent four hours with Br. Julius, OFM Cap, who guided the group through the writings of St. Francis. Unlike hagiography, which focuses on the lives of saints, the session centered solely on the authentic writings of St. Francis, e.g. “The Testament”.

Our time together was deeply enriching, with a desire on my part that more Secular Franciscans and others could have attended. Br. Julius led attendees in an exploration of the “evolution of St. Francis,” dedicating the entire session to an in-depth study of the four pages of St. Francis’ Testament. It felt very much like a Lectio Divina encounter with St. Francis’ Testament.

The Day of Reflection was a profound opportunity to engage with the writings of St. Francis and deepen personal spirituality through daily practices and compassionate outreach, as encouraged by Br. Julius.

Br. Julius offered several recommendations for our daily spiritual growth:

- Read a passage from the Gospel every day.
- Read a paragraph daily from St. Francis’ Testament. The Testament can be accessed by creating an account at www.Franciscantradition.org:

1. Go to “Digital Collections.”
2. Navigate to “Francis and Clare of Assisi, Early Sources.”
3. Scroll down to “Subcollections.”
4. Click on “Francis of Assisi, Early...”
5. Click again on “Francis of Assisi, Early.”
6. On the right, scroll down to page 124 for the “Testament.”

§ Alternatively, the book can be purchased at <https://www.amazon.com/Francis-Assisi-Early-Documents-Saint/dp/1565481100>. Other bookstores are listed on Google.

- Read a paragraph from the Constitutions each day.
- Take time for personal and/or communal prayer.
- Spend time with those who are “most vulnerable, the most disgusting.”

At 3:00 PM, we gathered in the St. Bonaventure Chapel for Eucharistic Adoration, where we joined together for Evening Prayer. This provided us with a meaningful opportunity to reflect and perhaps begin drafting our own Testament. We extend our gratitude to Br. Julius, Eileen Smith, OFS Minister, and the St. Bonaventure Fraternity for creating such a wonderful experience of fellowship.

Kathleen Carsten, OFS

Fraternity News from St. Anthony of Indian River: Living the Franciscan Call

In the gentle embrace of our Franciscan journey, the Spirit continually calls us to rejoice in new beginnings and to walk compassionately through times of change. Our fraternity, bound together by the love of Christ and the example of St. Francis, cherishes each soul who joins our path and honors the resilience of our bonds.

Welcoming New Professed Members

On May 18, 2025, our community was graced with the profession of Angela Stevens and Clifton Kennedy. Their "yes" to the Franciscan way is a beautiful testament to God's ongoing work in our midst. Angela and Clifton were professed on this day, and their presence is a blessing, enriching the tapestry of our fraternity with hope and new purpose. We rejoice in their willingness to share their gifts and to walk humbly alongside us in the marvels of the Franciscan vocation. May they be guided by the teachings of Francis and Clare, seeking always to serve with joy and simplicity, and to find Christ revealed in each person and moment.

Transitions in Fraternal Life

It is always with a measure of sadness that we witness the deactivation of an OFS Fraternity, for each community holds memories, friendships, and a legacy of faithful witness. Yet in every ending, the Spirit invites us to embrace new ways of belonging. On June 8, 2025, the St. Anthony Fraternity of Indian River, Michigan, opened its doors and hearts to welcome all eight members of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Fraternity, Gaylord—a gesture of hospitality and solidarity that is a living sign of Franciscan compassion. As cell members, named Gaylord Cell of St. Anthony, Indian River, it is encouraged that at least one member, but hopefully more, be present at St. Anthony Fraternity gatherings, nurturing the unity of the whole body. This is a gentle reminder that even when communities change, the bonds of fraternity endure.

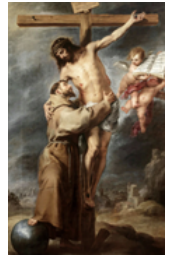
Maintaining Fraternal Bonds

Just as the early Franciscans gathered in small groups to pray and support each other, so too do our newly joined members meet at separate times, carrying forward the spirit and tradition of their former fraternity. Now, eight members from the formerly named Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Fraternity gather separately, either in person or by ZOOM, fostering their fraternal spirit while united with St. Anthony Fraternity. This practice honors their shared history and strengthens our collective vocation. Their ongoing commitment to one another radiates the values of fraternity, love, and perseverance—reminding us that the Franciscan family is ever wider than we can imagine.

May we remain open to the movements of the Holy Spirit, welcoming new companions, nurturing old friendships, and living out the Gospel in the sincere joy and simplicity that are the hallmarks of the Franciscan way. Let every transition, and every gathering, be marked by prayer, gratitude, and the peace of Christ.

Jim Hegenauser, OFS
Minister

**ST. DAVID FRATERNITY
SECULAR FRANCISCANS, WASHINGTON, MICHIGAN**



A big thanks to our Regional Minister, Kathleen Carsten, and Kim Spaniola, Regional Councilor, who presided over Saint David Elections, and of course our beloved Spiritual Assistance, Brother Bob Malloy! We are very blessed to have this wonderful mission in life to help guide us to a closer walk with Christ every day. Looking forward to the new growth at Saint David, and all the creative ways in which each new member uses their talent and gifts to increase our capacity to see life through many different displays of human love! Until next election we will be praying for the Holy Spirit to bring those individual members to enjoy the experience of the council that I have enjoyed, and the privilege to serve here at Saint David Fraternity!

Pax et Bonum
Cherry Iudiciani, OFS



Minister: Cherry Iudiciani OFS
Secretary: Melinda Jenkinson OFS
Formation Director: Scott Chaney OFS

Vice Minister: Sheila Tricoci OFS
Treasurer: Cathy Prylow OFS
Councilor: Vacant



Congratulations on More Fraternity Elections



St. Elizabeth of Hungary, September 21, 2025:

Back Row (L-R): Jeff Dills, OFS, REC Vice Minister and Guest, Michelle Bryk, OFS, Presider, Sr. Lynn Hartigan, OSF (not pictured), Ecclesial Witness, Gregory Davis, OFS, Treasurer, Antoinette Ozdych, OFS, Vice Minister, Sue Hayosh, OFS, Minister,

Front Row, (L-R): Christine Pyrkosz, OFS, Secretary, Peter Valente, OFS, Formation Director.

San Damiano Election on October 19, 2025

L-R: Mary Bittner, OFS, Ecclesial Witness
Kathryn Maresco, OFS, Formation Director
Kathleen Kelly, OFS, Councilor
Bozena Buraczewsai, OFS, Councilor
Liz Oras, OFS, Treasurer
Veronica Russell, OFS, Secretary
Michael Gath, OFS, Vice Minister
Jerry Miller, OFS, Minister
Kathleen Carsten, OFS, Presider



St. Francis Election on October 22, 2025

L-R: Dawn Pulcer, OFS, Treasurer
Mary Lambrix, OFS, Minister
Natalie Frey, OFS, Councilor
Donna Francis, OFS, Secretary
Theresa Wilson, OFS, Vice Minister
Jane Bischoff-McKay, OFS, Formation Director
Rosario S. Marato, OFS, Councilor
Not pictured: Brittney Waldenzik, OFS, Presider
Br. Julius Martin, OFM-Cap, Ecclesial Witness

St. Joseph Fraternity, Ann Arbor

On April 13, 2025, the fraternity celebrated the Rite of Admission for **Jeanine Gillikin**.

Pictured from left: Anthony Patti, Cathy McAlister, Eleanor Brundage, Bernard Tiffany, Serena Larson, Mary Anne Evans, Bob Brundage, Jeanine Gillikin, Mary Bittner, Mary Anne Galligan, Marianne Danks, Br. Julius Martin, OFM Cap.



On May 10 the fraternity celebrated the temporary profession of **Serena Larson**.

Pictured from left: Bernard Tiffany, Bella Larson, Greg Larson, Bob Brundage, Eleanor Brundage, Jeanine Gillikin, Mary Bittner, Serena Larson, Marianne Danks, Mary Marcantonio, Mary Anne Evans, Fr. Matthew Palkowski OFM Cap., Debbie Konishi, Judy Bruce (in 2nd picture) .



“Heavenly Visit”

Susan Hayosh, OFS, Minister
St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity

A “Heavenly Visit” today or before darkness at night
Unsure, we wait, the breeze or coming wind welcomes its flight
And such anticipation becomes a most prayerful delight

It is the Monarch in motion that catches our sight
Drifting, then twittering left, quickly circling right
Content to swirl beyond us as it dances like a kite

Its orange-black striated wings capture ever luminous light
An ever-floating glimpse of pure heavenly delight
Peace and joy surround us as a rapture in its flight

God’s light and peaceful hope within our grasp and sight
The promise of truth and life removes all hate and blight
Each floating Monarch in its “Heavenly Visit” welcomes spiritual delight



Name	Professed Fraternity	Location	Date Entered Eternal Life
Stephen Haycox	St. Bonaventure	Detroit	April 26
Rose Marie Hickey	Our Mother of Sorrows	Grand Rapids	May 2
George Durisin	Our Lady of Mount Carmel	Allen Park	June 8
Margi Smith	San Damiano	Brighton	June 8
Lorretta Lemmons	St. Joseph	Ann Arbor	June 14
Norbert Chmielarczyk	St. Bonaventure	Detroit	July 9
Anna Ortega-Seitz	St. Bonaventure	Detroit	August 9
Walter N. Schoendorff	St. Joseph	Grand Blanc	August 20
Theresa Dorsey Newblatt	St. Joseph	Grand Blanc	August 28
Stanley Adamczyk	St. Anthony of Padua	Dearborn Heights	September 2
Doris Karlowski	St. Francis	Sterling Heights	September 5
James Heymes	St. Bonaventure	Detroit	October 2

Transformation Through Faith, Hope, and Love

The call to live the Gospel in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi is as radical and relevant today as it was 800 years ago. As Secular Franciscans, we are called to be a transformative leaven in the world—in our families, our workplaces, and our parishes. Yet, many of our fraternities are facing the challenge of an aging membership and a scarcity of new vocations.

This is not a time for discouragement, but for a profound renewal of our own vocations. We need a deeper conversion of heart and a courageous return to the source of our charism. Our work, as always, must emerge from our Franciscan and Catholic roots, trusting that it is the Holy Spirit who ultimately brings forth the harvest.

This renewal rests on five essential pillars.

1. The Power of Authentic Witness

Before we can invite, we must inspire. The single most powerful tool for vocations is a life lived with authentic Franciscan joy. Our Rule states this plainly: "The rule and life of the Secular Franciscan is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people" (Article 4).

Are we known for our simplicity, our peace-making, our care for creation, and our love for the poor? Do people see in us a light that is attractive because it is the light of Christ? A vocation is not attracted to a set of rules, but to a well-lived life. We must first focus on our own conversion, our own prayer life, and our own commitment to living the Gospel joyfully in our secular state. This is the foundation upon which all else is built.

2. Formation as Lifelong Transformation

Initial formation is not a class to be passed or a checklist to be completed; it is the beginning of a lifelong transformation. To attract and retain new members, our formation must be dynamic, relational, and deeply spiritual.

- **Beyond the Book:** While study of the Rule, the Constitutions, and the lives of Franciscan saints is essential, it must be connected to real life. Formation should be a dialogue where we wrestle with how to apply Franciscan principles to modern challenges—in our work, in our families (with our children and grandchildren), in our friends, and in our society.

- **Ongoing Formation is Key:** A fraternity that ceases to learn is a fraternity that begins to decline. Ongoing formation for the professed must be robust and engaging. When guests and inquirers see professed members who are still growing, still excited about their faith, and still learning, they see a living, breathing Order, not a historical society.

3. Building Vibrant, Welcoming Fraternities

Our fraternity is the hearth of our vocation. The Rule reminds us that the fraternity gathering "is the visible sign of the Church, the community of love" (Article 22). We must ask ourselves honestly: is our fraternity a welcoming community of love? When an inquirer walks through our doors, what do they experience? Do they find a warm and authentic welcome, or a closed and impenetrable clique? A vibrant fraternity is one where members genuinely care for one another, pray for each other, bear each other's burdens, and share each other's joys. This requires intentional effort: social time outside of formal meetings, a phone tree to support members in crisis, and a clear "welcome ministry" to greet and accompany newcomers on their first few visits.

4. An Apostolate with Purpose

St. Francis was a man of action, and so must we be. A fraternity that is turned inward and exists only for its own members will not attract new ones. Our fraternities must have a clear, active, and visible apostolate. As the Rule directs, we are to be "in the forefront in promoting justice" (Article 15).

What is your fraternity doing?

- Serving at a local soup kitchen?
- Advocating for the unborn or the marginalized?
- Leading a parish effort in caring for creation?
- Visiting the sick and homebound?

A fraternity with a mission is a fraternity with life. This outward focus shows the world that the Franciscan way is not a pious sentiment, but a powerful force for good.

In your daily prayers AND in your fraternities, please offer prayers for an INCREASE in Secular Franciscan Vocations.

5. The Courage to Personally Invite

Finally, we must have the courage to invite. We can live joyfully, have a great fraternity, and serve the poor, but if we never take the next step, our numbers will not grow. We cannot assume that good people will simply find us.

This is not about aggressive "recruiting," but about a gentle, personal invitation. Who in your life exhibits a Franciscan heart? A colleague who is a peacemaker? A fellow parishioner who loves nature and serves the poor? A young person searching for a deeper way to live their faith?

The most effective invitation is a personal one: "I am a Secular Franciscan, and it has brought such depth to my life. I see a similar spirit in you. Have you ever considered learning more about it? I'd love for you to come and see."

Let us pray for the courage to issue this invitation, trusting that we are merely planting a seed that the Holy Spirit will water. By renewing our own commitment, deepening our community life, and courageously sharing the gift we have received, we can and will build a vibrant future for the Secular Franciscan Order.

In the spirit of Francis and Clare, and together with the REC, our Regional Spiritual Assistants, Br. Julius Martin, OFM-Cap, and Br. Johan Gill, OFM-Cap, we are seeking to illuminate the journey of our Order. It is our call as Franciscans to walk forward together with unwavering Faith, Hope, and Love, rather than resting in comfort with what has already been.

With the eyes and ears on the few years to come, and as a sign of our unity, YOU and your fraternity are invited to prayerfully reflect on what our Order's future can and will be! Through a deeper communion and mutual encouragement, we, the REC and Brothers Julius and Johan Paul, will reach out to each fraternity in written word and dialogue to learn your reflective thoughts and ideas for the changes to come. STAY TUNED!

Reflection question:

How can you nurture hope within yourself today, or help it flourish in our brothers and sisters, especially when discouragement or despair threaten to take hold and the burdens of the world feel overwhelming?



2025-2028 OFS-USA Theme:

*"Go into the world and
proclaim the Good News!"*



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
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Byron Center, MI 49315



PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE