

Joy of Francis

*Secular Franciscan Order — St. Francis Region #52 — Southern California
Winter Edition — 2020-21*

**FROM OUR REGIONAL MINISTER
JUDITH MUSSATTO, OFS**

Signs in Our Time

from gospel to life and life to the gospel. Where and how does this play out in my daily life? These signs in the front yard tell the story of my journey from gospel to life and life to the gospel.



In 2005, following the recommendations of a home energy audit we (my family) had the attic and the outer walls of the house insulated and upgraded to more efficient heating and air condition units. In 2006 we replaced the front lawn with three fruit trees and a butterfly bush, thus reducing water consumption. If we had waited two years, the city would have paid us to remove the grass. The #7 on the sign indicates that ours was the seventh household in the city of Claremont to have taken those steps in the move towards a more efficient use of our resources.

A twitter hashtag? A slogan? A social movement? Yes. It is all of them.



The movement was founded in 2013 after the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting death of African American teenager Trayvon Martin, February 2012. The purpose of the movement is advocacy and protest against racial discrimination. There is an excellent article on this topic by Carolyn Townes, OFS, National Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Animator in the current issue of TAU-USA.

Over the summer, I participated in an eight-week course intitled *Racial Healing*. Being steeped in African American History was an enlightening and often gut- wrenching reading experience. Close your eyes. Imagine yourself or watching your children, on an auction block, waiting to be sold.

We continue to see, and for many African Americas live with, the long-term effects of chattel slavery. Consider driving while black, food dessert and redlining. Yes. We do need to be reminded. Black Lives Matter.



Care of self. Care for the other.

Love thy neighbor as thy self.

Love of God cannot be separated from love of neighbor, for the neighbor is the very presence of God. Love has the power to change hearts and in turn change the world. Delio, Iliia, OSF. Compassion Living in the Spirit of St. Francis. p.70, p.78.

One can say, but there are Bahais, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Non-Believers and Protestants who have one or all these signs, in their front yards. I say, Thank you Lord! All are welcome especially those who sow seeds of hope, compassion, and love.

Father of All

We ask for the gifts of empathy and the ability to listen.

Open our eyes, ears, and hearts that we may, see, hear and love our neighbor.

All praise and glory to you.

Amen.



In a little over three weeks this sign will occupy a prominent place in the front yard, with a dedicated spotlight.

In these four yard signs, I see expressed Articles 4 – 19 of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order.

Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants

FRANCISCAN PRAYER

If we want to know how Francis went about rebuilding his life, once he discovered it was not just about rebuilding old churches, we need to look to Clare, who best expressed it when she wrote to Agnes of Prague: Gaze upon Christ, consider Christ, contemplate Christ, imitate Christ. Those words explain contemplation as Franciscans see it. Consider the contrast with the monastic form:

Monastic Focus

4. Contemplation
3. Prayer
2. Meditation
1. Reading

Franciscan Focus

1. Gaze
2. Consider
3. Contemplate
4. Imitate

The goal of the monk at that time was to gaze upward toward heaven and this upward direction would lead to union with God, so the monk started with reading and worked upwards to contemplation. The goal for the Franciscan, on the other hand, is a penetrating gaze into the ordinary of life. The starting point with us is the Incarnation – God descending to us rather than our ascending to God. Our gaze is upon this Incarnate God as reflected, particularly, in the Crucified Lord. The goal of contemplation for a monk focused on a vision of God that resulted in the ecstatic union. The goal of contemplation for the Franciscan focused on transformation by which one became like the face of God reflected in the Incarnation and tried ultimately to imitate Jesus.

The object of our gaze is the crucified Savior who stands before us as a mirror in which we see ourselves. In Franciscan prayer the practice of gazing is critical. It is to pray long but with few words. Too many words can inhibit prayer.

The word consider encompasses the purity of one's focus. In the process of gazing one must center on the one essential thing, attempting to put aside anything that can alter or weaken one's gaze. It is to maintain a single-mindedness, a clear and straightforward focus. One's eyes are kept on Jesus alone.

To contemplate requires a radical shift in thinking. Deep contemplative prayer is not so much learning HOW to contemplate God by some method or practice, as it is becoming aware that it is God who is contemplating us. Contemplation is not what I do, or what I do to God. It is what God does to me through an invitation to intimacy and union. It is true that we want to be with God, but all prayer begins because God wants us! We have to be attentive to God's touch and inspiration. This approach to prayer frees us from the compulsion that somehow we have to make prayer happen. It brings in a simplicity to prayer. Remember, we do not make God "be." God makes us "be."

To imitate does not mean to mimic the behavior of another. When Clare used the term, she was asking Agnes to become the image of the God on whom she gazed. To gaze, consider and contemplate Christ Crucified in the movement I've described leads to transformation - our-goal. When I gaze at the cross, I am looking into a mirror. I see my true self. Imitation is transformation insofar as Christ comes alive in my life. In this transformation, complete union happens.

Thus, when I gaze upon the cross, I no longer see suffering: rather I see open-armed, unconditional, extravagant, self-giving love. I find myself confronted and comforted. This is the only kind of love that can put hatred to rest, that can break the forces of violence and bring us comfort and strength in our sorrow. Each year on Sept. 14th we celebrate the Feast of the Triumph of the Cross. The cross is a triumph because it symbolizes the reality that the power of love has broken, once and for all, the power of self-centeredness, sin and death.

Read *1 Cor. 1:18-19, 22-25*, for what might be considered a summary of this. Then consider if you have experienced any of this in your own life.

Pax et bonum!

Sylvia Paoli, OFS

President-in-turn of Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants



"I want to see with my own eyes His poverty and Helplessness... and His many baby-needs..." And when St. Francis raised the carved wooden image of the Christ Child from the manger into his arms it came to life...and smiled at the poor man from Assisi. Eyewitness: St. Francis and the first Christmas Crèche at Greccio

In the quiet prayers we offer, in the silent harmony of hearts, in the love we give and gather ...
Peace is born anew. May it bless your Christmas with gentle joy.

Merry Christmas and a Blessed Christmas Season!

FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF FORMATION LUCY IBARRA

Peace and all Good,

On August 21-22, 2020 I had the honor of attending the “Regional Formation Director Workshop” via Zoom. Margie Rodrigues, OFS and Tinh Le, OFS also joined me.

You will be able to review the workshop on the National website under Formation Workshops

Topics discussed were:

*Fr. Christopher, T.O.R talk:

- Discernment of God’s Call
- Being Open to a Life of the Gospel
- The Journey of Conversion - Conversion Journeys of Francis and Clare and their influence on the OFS

**How to Talk Like a Franciscan* (Mary Stronach)

*New materials for formation, this was extremely exciting. The National Formation Commission is working hard on updating formation tools. They are not ready to be released at this time. They took our feedback with them and will work hard to provide us with excellent formation materials.



I would like to highlight one of the talks which was “*How to Talk Like a Franciscan*”

Do you ever feel misunderstood? There are times when I feel as if I am not getting my point across, but is that what really should be happening or is it the Holy Spirit guiding me?

It is important that we build strong relationships with our brothers and sisters, as a Franciscan.

Article 14 of the Rule: With all people of good will, they are called to **build a more fraternal and evangelical world** in order to be effective in realizing the Kingdom of God, conscious that ‘whoever follows Christ, the perfect human being, becomes themselves more human’.

Article 19 of the Rule: 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....

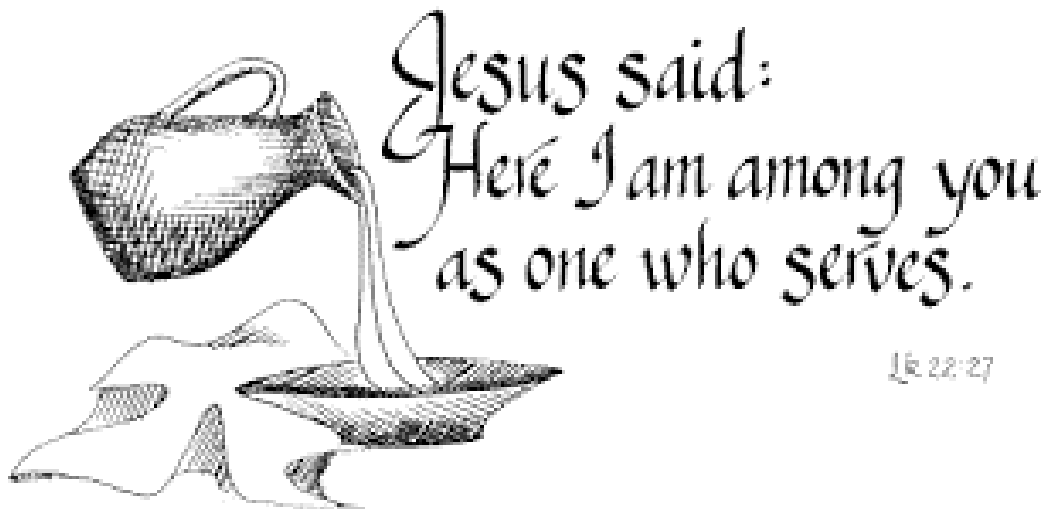
An example Mary used was the meeting of Francis and the Sultan. A courageous Francis greeted the Sultan with “May the Lord give you peace.” In a situation where there seemed to be no common ground, they explored their religious roots and found mutual understanding, acceptance and respect.

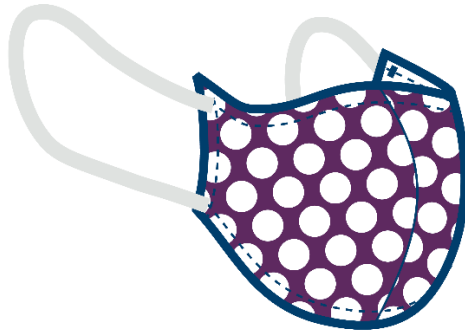
Today, building such relationships is as critical as ever if we are to make a Franciscan Impact in our world. There is so much more, please go on to the website to embrace what our National Formation Commission is doing <https://secularfranciscansusa.org/formation-spirituality/>

St. Francis reminds us to prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christ's birth, embracing the true "reason for the season." Advent is a time of hope and with this pandemic we all need hope. I pray that everyone has a fruitful preparation rejoicing in our Lord's birth.

As you prepare for the birth of Christ, I ask that you pray for our upcoming Elections. I ask that you open your hearts to the call of Servant Leadership.

Merry Christmas, Lucy Ibarra, OFS





A Prayer for Putting on a Mask

Creator,

as I prepare to go into the world,
help me to see the sacrament
in the wearing of this cloth
let it be “an outward sign of an inward grace” –
a tangible and visible way of living love
for my neighbors, as I love myself.

Christ,

since my lips will be covered, uncover my heart,
that people would see my smile
in the crinkles around my eyes.
Since my voice may be muffled,
help me to speak clearly,
not only with my words, but with my actions.

Holy Spirit,

as the elastic touches my ears,
remind me to listen carefully
- and full of care – to all those I meet.
May this simple piece of cloth
be shield and banner,
and each breath that it holds,
be filled with your love.

In your Name and in that love, I pray.

May it be so. May it be so.

JUSTICE, PEACE, AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Regional J.P.I.C. Animator Patrícia Grace, OFS

The Eucharist and JPIC

Like many converts from Protestantism to Catholicism, it was my clear and abiding belief in the real presence of Christ that brought me into the Church now nearly twenty years ago. I was an active Protestant, active in Christian education committees, teaching Sunday and Bible School, serving as lector, enlivening mission projects. But, on Saturday evenings, in my small town in Pennsylvania, I would find myself at St. Elizabeth's Roman Catholic Church, processing with others, to stand before the real presence of my Lord and Savior Jesus. With arms folded, I would receive a blessing, and then kneel to pray through and connect with the powerful currents running through my being. I knew I had received spiritually the true body and blood of our Lord. Finally, then, I entered RCIA and was received into the Church. Then, and now, I can receive Him physically. Praise be to God.

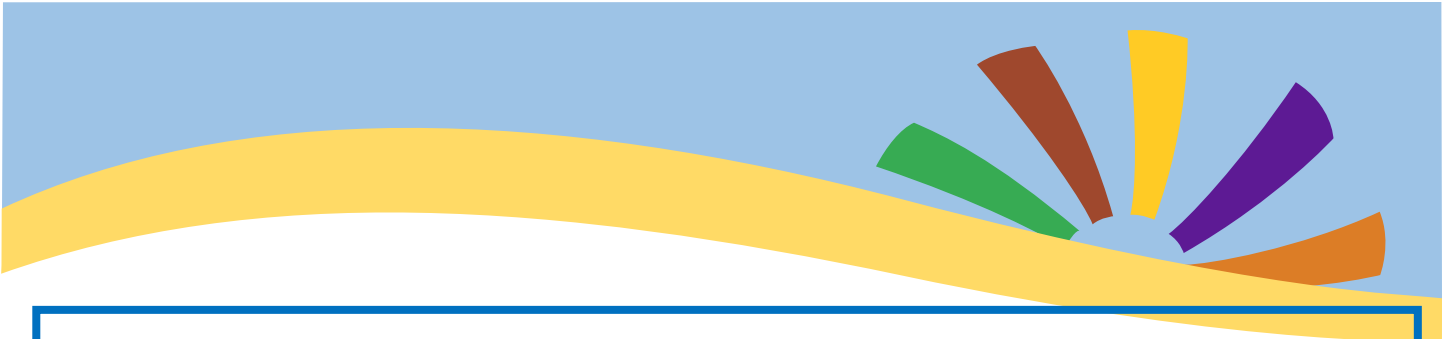
The Eucharist is our most powerful prayer. There we stand before Him humbly and in awe, reflecting on the enduring beauty of this gift of grace given to us by our most merciful and generous Lord. We receive him and rededicate ourselves to never being separated from Him.

By the time you read this, dear sisters and brothers in Christ and in St. Francis, we will have gathered on November 14 to reflect upon the presence of our Lord in the Eucharist, and His unwavering devotion to us, calling us to be unwavering in our faithfulness to Him. We will have prayed through the four-fold pattern of the Eucharist – how our Lord took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to His disciples gathered with Him in the upper room. We will have reflected on how we, too, are taken, blessed, broken, and given. For those of you not present, let us reflect together with those who were present on the call of the Eucharist.

We are “taken” at our baptism, and then again at our profession when we commit before God to live the Gospel way of life. We are “blessed.” Each of us was created, loved, and called into being by our Lord. Each of us was sent on a mission of love. Our work is to discern that mission for which we were sent, to embrace it, and fulfill it. God gives us the grace to do so. Each of us is “broken.” Indeed, we are broken by life. But, for our purposes here, it is instructive to consider what breaks our hearts? The unborn? The homeless? The elderly? The degradation of the environment, the unchecked desire for power that keeps wars raging? The refugees on the planet seeking safety? What breaks our hearts so wide so that the love God has poured into it can be poured out for the sake of the world?

We know we are “given.” Our Lord called each of us. St. Francis heard the call and followed. He then called all of us to join him in creating our Order that celebrates 800 years of presence in the world. We are nurtured and sustained by the words of our Beloved Saint Francis, “Who I am before God, that I am and nothing else.” Let us pray together to follow Jesus as St. Francis taught us. Let us en-hope each other as we journey forward, praying and working for Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation.

Sending many blessings to all of you. Peace and All Good.



JPIC REGIONAL GATHERING: CARE FOR CREATION

**DECEMBER 12, 2020
BY ZOOM
1:00 TO 3:00 P.M.**



**We come together to Praise God for Creation,
As her beauty resonates in our Franciscan
hearts**

**We come to learn of many things -
Sacred and Scientific -**

**As we Prepare ourselves to honor, heal, and help
This Loving Sister in her Present Distress**

**KARRON ESMONDE, OFS, WILL SERVE AS FORMATOR
PLEASE R.S.V.P**

patriciaelizabethgrace7@gmail.com



A Non-traditional Blessing

*A version of this prayer sometimes called **A Franciscan Blessing** was used at the last JPIC gathering. Here is the original prayer prepared by Sr. Ruth Fox, OSB, in 1985.*

May God bless you with **discontent** with easy answers, half-truths, superficial relationships, so that you will live from deep within your heart.

May God bless you with **anger** at injustice, oppression, abuse, and exploitation of people, so that you will work for justice, equality, and peace.

May God bless you with **tears** to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war, so that you will reach out your hand to comfort them and to change their pain to joy.

May God bless you with the **foolishness** to think you can make a difference in this world, so that you will do the things which others tell you cannot be done.

If you have the courage to accept these blessings,
then God will also bless you with:

happiness—because you will know
that you have made life better for others

inner peace—because you will have worked
to secure an outer peace for others

laughter—because your heart will be light

faithful friends—because they will recognize your worth as a person.

These blessings are yours—not for the asking, but for the giving—
from One who wants to be your companion,
our God, who lives and reigns, forever and ever. Amen.

Riverside/San Bernardino

William Mussatto, OFS, District Liaison

2020 Winter San Bernardino/Riverside District Report

The Three Fraternities in San Bernardino/Riverside District: Holy Spirit, St. Padre Pio and Immaculata continue to gather for monthly fraternity meetings, initial formation session and informal meetings using Zoom

Reaching Out: Jenny Tsui, Secular Franciscan Affiliate with Holy Spirit Fraternity, completed Mission



training with Franciscan Mission Services, in Washington D.C. She was commissioned on Nov. 7th and is scheduled to begin serving as a member of the Peace Corps in Kyrgyzstan, beginning in June 2021. She will teach English.

Commissioning, Jenny is 4th from the left

Secular Franciscans are often told to be creative, so members of Holy Spirit Fraternity joined staff members of Our Lady of the Assumption Parish, Claremont to provide a drive through Blessing of the animals. Some 150 cars drove through the parish parking lot, stopping to have their pests blessed and a Franciscan themed Holy card (with Fraternity information on the back) and a medal for each animal.



Pets blessed waiting for cards and medals

Initial Formation: St Padre Pio and Immaculata Fraternities have Candidates who have completed Initial Formation and eagerly await the time when it will be safe to gather for Profession. St. Padre Pio Fraternity has six Candidates who continue Formation by means of a combination of in-person with social distance and electronic meetings. Holy Spirit has one Candidate who continues his formation via Zoom.

Prayers: We ask that you add to your prayers list, both the Minister Bruce McAdams OFS and the Vice Minister Georgia Zepek, OFS are recovering from medical conditions.

Fraternity Gatherings: All three fraternities in the District welcome visitors from other fraternities to their monthly gatherings. Please check the fraternity newsletters on the Region's Website (<https://stfrancisregion.org/About-St-Francis-Region/Fraternity-Newsletters-Sites>) and contact the fraternity minister to receive links to the meetings.



Before



After

Change: For many years a Chinese Elm Tree, planted at 276 E. Green St, Claremont, CA by Katharine Mussatto, OFS, provided shade at the Annual District Picnics each August. On October 26th, 2020, a hurricane force wind swept through our area, downing many trees in Claremont, the "City of Trees". Among the many trees felled by the mighty wind was the 67-year-old Chinese Elm. The Upside of the event? There is a small patch of land which now enjoys full sun, where, climate change permitting, there will be a vegetable garden by the spring of 2021.



We have received pleas for help *Will you help?*

New Mexico Hospitality + Coalition needs:

- + Child/Adult Tylenol Cold&Flu
- + Child & Adult ROBITUSSIN
- + Cough Lozenges
- + IBUPROFEN
- + PEDIALYTE (Powder)
- + THERMOMETERS

Generics are also acceptable

Order/ship medications to: **OR**
Send a check **PAYABLE** to
HOLY CROSS RETREAT CENTER
Memo: Refugee meds

TO:
Holy Cross Retreat Center
c/o Donna Hollis, OFS
600 Holy Cross Rd.,
Mesilla Park, NM 88047

Reconstruction AID for Lebanon

<https://ciofs.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/EN-Lebanon-letter-fundraising.pdf>

Send check with **Memo: Support for Lebanon**

Send all checks to our National Treasurer

Claudia Kauzlarich, OFS

2007 Maverick Trail

Harrisonville, MO 64701-1545

Payable: National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan
Order-USA

Send check with **Memo:** Support for Venezuela

IGLESIA NUESTRA SEÑORA DE CHIQUINQUIRA,

Caracas Venezuela - Needs:

ACETAMINOPHEN / IBUPROFENO / ASPIRINA / Naproxen / VITAMINA C /
OMEGA 3 CAPS / PEPTO BISMOL / Multi Vitamins Adult & Child /
OMEPRAZOL/ PANTOPRAZOL/ESOMEPRAZOL / Antihistamines / Antacids /
TRIPLE ANTIBIOTIC Cream / LIOLACTIL SOBRE / ANTIDIARREICOS /
ENTEROGERMINA AMPOLAS BEBIBLES / PROBIOTICOS TAB / ACIDO FOLICO
TAB / CALCIUM TAB

Send check with **Memo:** Support for Venezuela

Important Announcements

Scully Fund Requirements

The Scully Fund has been set up to encourage fraternities in the St. Francis Region to participate in charitable activities.

When members of a fraternity take an active role in an apostolic activity and use fraternity funds to purchase materials or supplies for the activity, the fraternity may request to be reimbursed by the Scully Fund for half of those expenses by supplying the following:

- A letter detailing the activity, the date it occurred, the number of fraternity members involved, and the amount of expenses incurred.
- Receipts for the purchases or a copy of the check(s) used to pay for the items.
- A request for reimbursement of half of the expenses.

Send the above information to either the Minister or Treasurer of the St. Francis Region.



THE ADDRESS OF ST. FRANCIS REGION IS:
276 E. Green St.
Claremont, CA 91711



Last Will and Testament

Each of us can play an important role in preserving and extending our Secular Franciscan way of life, in our own fraternity, and at the regional level.

This can be accomplished in many ways, including a bequest in your will.

Suggested beneficiaries:

- Your FRATERNITY
- Your REGION

Suggested wording for your bequests:

1. A BEQUEST FOR GENERAL PURPOSES:

"I give and bequeath the sum of \$_____ (or _____% of my disposable estate) to: (name and address of fraternity, or region).

2. A RESIDUARY BEQUEST OF INDEFINITE AMOUNT:

"After payment of expenses, debts and specific bequests, I direct that the residue of my estate be given to: (name and address)

or

"I bequeath to (name and address) any part of my estate that other beneficiaries are unable to receive because of death or other reasons."