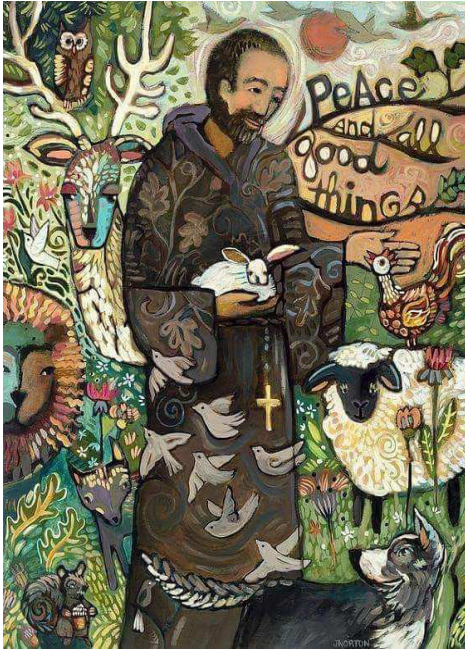


# FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 128

Thanksgiving 2018



## OEF Siblings Celebrate a Season of Creation

Friends and Siblings,

Today (Sept 1) is the **World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation**. It begins a **Season of Creation** that lasts until you-know-who's-day on October 4. I hope everyone has a chance this weekend to step outside and enjoy some aspect of the natural world.

Kinship with creation is a central element of our Franciscan charism. I'd love to hear folks share a little about what that means for them. (I'll let y'all start that sharing, then contribute my own thoughts after a half dozen or so, or you have had a chance to chime in.)

I'd also love to hear ideas from anyone who decides to celebrate the Season of Creation by taking on a particular practice. For example, might you commit to spending twenty minutes each day meditating in a natural setting? Or, over the course of the month, commit to learning to recognize twenty bird songs common to your area? What other ideas might we have?

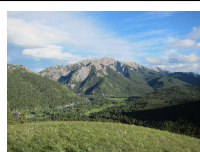
Peace and All Good,  
Nancy Menning, OEF



### Inside this Issue:

- OEF Siblings Celebrate a Season of Creation
- Words from the Council
- Greetings & Gnawings from Brother Rat
- Blessing of the Worms
- Pilgrimage by Sr. Anjelika
- Fiddlesticks Book Reviews
- A Greeting from a Former Brother
- Lament by Br. Sam
- Fellowship News
- Formation Station
- From the Newsletter of Pastor Steve Garnas-Holmes

Thanks for starting this, Sr. Nancy! At the Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship, we've been celebrating the [Season of Creation](#) for several years. The Season consists of a 3-year cycle of 4 Sundays, each with a specific creation-related theme and (more or less) appropriate lectionary readings. This year is year B, and the 4 Sundays are Earth, Humanity, Sky, and Mountain. For a complicated reason, at AMF we had to start the Season a few weeks early this year, so tomorrow we're actually marking the end of it. I will be preaching a sermon for Mountain Sunday, inviting people to recall some of the mountains in their lives, both physical and metaphorical.



(Continued on page 2)

## Siblings Celebrate... continued

One of the ways I recall our kinship with creation is when I pray [Psalm 148](#). There, the other creatures are not objects for us to use and exploit, but fellow-worshippers giving praise to our glorious Creator.

This psalm (I think) may have been part of Francis' inspiration for the Canticle of the Creatures.



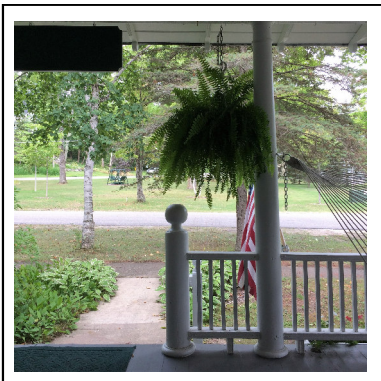
Peace and blessing,  
David Rensberger  
Associate of the O.E.F.



Thanks for highlighting the special day/season, Sr. Nancy! Delighted to share with you my view as I read your message - on the porch of my in-laws' timeshare at the tip of the mitten in Michigan.

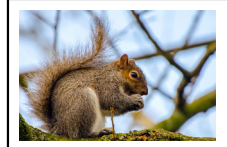
On Monday I'm back home in New York City, but the weather should still permit some weeks of walking in/through Central Park, our great urban greenspace. I'm also working on an essay about some Christian symbols and some trees, and [creationjustice.org](http://creationjustice.org) is a useful link for that.

Just a thought: if anyone reading this might wish to take on the spiritual discipline of a lower-impact diet during this season, I highly recommend the guidance of [Colleen Patrick-Goudreau](#). (In spite of her glossy website, she's very thoughtful and creates great recipes.) Blessings from your postulant - Sara Holliday



Nice, Sara!

I'm fortunate enough to live in the woods of Wisconsin. I see creation through my windows every day, including birds, squirrels, rabbits and deer. I keep bird feeders, and have learned most of the bird songs around here. I don't spend enough time on our closed porch. (It's usually too hot or too cold.) But when I can, I love it! As do my cats! If I'm working, I am out in the car most of the day. I usually eat a bag lunch in a park or near a lake or the river. One of my favorite parks has a little zoo that I like to walk around in.



Peace,  
Sister Chris, O.E.F.



While I tend to celebrate creation year round, I find myself much more attuned to it as Fall approaches. In August, I start looking for the first Fall leaves. This year, I found the first leaf on August 26th which was followed by the discovery of a tree whose leaves were half gold and half pale green on the way to gold August 30th.



Today my wife and I will walk Greenlake and give our regards to the trees, the birds and the Turtles who will no doubt be catching a few rays on the West side of the Lake this afternoon.

And today just like all the other days, I will enjoy the clouds and note the change in the lighting as the sun sits a little lower in the sky this time of year.

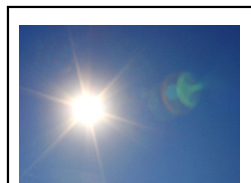
Peace and Blessings, Br. Stephan, O.E.F.



...And last, but not least:

I pray Psalm 19 at noon daily.

Br. Sam, O.E.F.





# Words from the Council



*This report covers the year following OEF Chapter/Convocation 2017 (The Cenacle, Chicago, Summer 2017) and continues through OEF Chapter/Convocation 2018 (Pallotine Renewal Center, outside of St.Louis, Summer 2018).*

Let me begin in a straight-forward manner: The Council meets by Zoom (conference call) for one hour almost every week. We open and close with prayer. We offer our personal "check-ins" and share pertinent news from and concerns raised by others in the Order. We address the agenda items for the night with follow-up work continuing during the coming week(s). Expectations and responsibilities of the Council are stated in Article V of the OEF Statutes. They are extensive. The well of responsibilities and opportunities never runs dry. There is always opportunity for more sharing, caring, collaboration and communication.

Some highlights during the past year:

- Collaborative phone conference between Council and Formation Team.
- Collaborative phone conference between Council and Treasurer.
- Representing OEF at OLF, OFS and TSSF Chapters.
- Face-to-Face Council Meeting -- November 2017, St.Paul, MN (included visit with local member Kiara Mychal).
- Participation in the program offered by Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity.
- "Agents of Peace in a Time of Fear", May, 2018, Richmond, VA. We used this time to grow and to learn, to connect with other Franciscans in attendance there, and to work together, among ourselves, as your Council. OEF Chapter/ Convocation 2019 will be at the same place, Roslyn Center.
- Chapter/Convocation 2018, Pallotine Renewal

Center, St.Louis. Theme: "Listening Deep, Rising Up, Embracing Hope."

Let me continue in a more free-floating, contemplative style: The lines of a song by Rich Mullins run through my heart and mind:

"Sometimes the night could be so long.  
Sometimes the day could be so hot.  
There was so much work left to do,  
But so much you'd already done.  
Oh God, you are my God,  
And I will ever praise you.  
I will seek you in the morning.  
I will learn to walk in your ways.  
And step by step, you'll lead me.  
And I will follow you all of my days."  
("Step By Step", by Rich Mullins)



I hear this poetically and I hear this spiritually. We -- all of us -- are living in a time of hot days and long nights. There is much we have done. There is much still to be done. There is much God has done. There is much God wants and wills still to do in and through us -- and in spite of us. We, the Council, earnestly try to do our bit part and to do it well -- so that, hopefully, each member becomes more free to follow -- step by step -- wherever and however God leads (individually and together).

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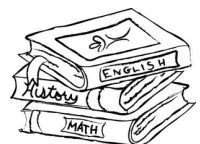


## OEF History Project



For those who haven't heard, we (Sr. Dale, Br. Ron, Sr. Markie, and I) are working on a history of the Order. As we move forward, it would be helpful to me to receive copies of pictures, notes, meeting records, and the like to help fill out the content of the book, especially anything that reflects not only "business" decisions but personal takes on the order at any given moment in time.

Thanks,  
Betty Lou





## Words from the Council, continued...

Council work is often underground work: At times more noticed when it is not done than when it is done. It is confidential work. It is necessary work. It is in-the-shop work, in-the-house work, in-the-garden work -- not unlike: building, repairing, weeding, and cleaning -- not unlike: knocking down spider webs, picking flowers, baking the bread, setting the table and lighting the candles. Some parts are more fun than other parts. Our most crucial task is to listen for God and to God -- which is also to listen to one another and to love one another -- which, of course, extends beyond the Council to the Order to our churches, to neighbors near and far, to all of Creation. We pray to do this well. In these hot days and long nights, may we pray steadfastly for one another.

In Christ, our Light and our Salvation,  
~ shoshanah

On behalf of OEF Council: Sr. Markie, Br. Louis, Br. John Son-of-Syvert, Br. Jahiro Yeshua, and Sr. Shoshanah

A few more words:

**2019 Chapter/Convocation -  
Celebrating 35 years!**

June 27-30th  
Roslyn Retreat Center  
8727 River Road  
Richmond, Virginia 23229



Registration will open up in February. This will be a time for fellowship and reflection upon our 35 years as Ecumenical Franciscans. A major task at Chapter, which requires your prayerful discernment from now and until we gather in Virginia, is to choose new members for our Council. If you feel you are unable to serve on Council please submit your name to Br. John Son of Syvert at [jsyverts@hotmail.com](mailto:jsyverts@hotmail.com).

Council's next Face-to-Face Meeting will be in St. Louis 12/5-12/8. Please hold your Council in prayer as they continue to be of service to our little Order and plans for Chapter.

And a little more...

A question has been raised about selection of a new Council at the upcoming Chapter. The statutes read thus:



*Article V*

*1. The Council is made up of 5 Professed Members of the Order, lay and clergy without distinction, who have been selected by the Professed at Chapter to ensure the healthy and effective administration of the Order, to support the Order community in its Life and Witness, and to represent the Order to the wider Church and the world. Council Members are trusted to seek the well-being of the entire Order and are accountable to the membership.*

*2. Terms of Council Members.*

*a. The Council will be selected every three years for a term of three years. Council Members are selected from the Professed by the Professed. A Council Member may serve up to three consecutive terms on the Council, then must step away from this service for at least two years.*

*3. Selection of Council.*

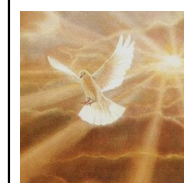
*a. Prior to Chapter:*

*i. Members of the Order are encouraged to be in prayer individually and collectively regarding the needs of the Order and the gifts of members.*

*ii. Any Professed Member unwilling or unable to serve on the Council will notify the Scribe in writing requesting that his or her name be removed from consideration for service on the Council.*

As of now, no scribe has been appointed. Therefore we are asking that any professed member unwilling or unable to serve on the Council, notify John Son-of-Syvert in writing. All 5 members of the Council are currently eligible for re-selection. Some may choose to remove their names from consideration. Some may choose to let their names stand. The Professed will prayerfully discern and select. It is possible that all 5 could let their names stand, and a totally new set of 5 be chosen. As the Spirit leads..... which is a beautiful thing..... :)

Peace to All, ~ shoshanah





## Greetings & Gnawings from Brother Rat



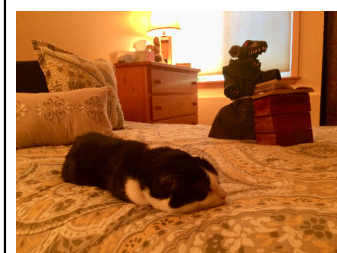
- July 30, 2018

It is not easy being a Rodent on a Franciscan journey especially when one of your assignments is community building with cats. There are times when I'm not sure if I'm reaching my intended audience. Maybe I just need more exposure to cat body language or a better understanding of the nap cycle. Last week I introduced Buddy to Lectio Divina and would you believe he fell asleep! How does a cat fall asleep when the word is being broadcast exclusively for and about the cat. I even started with the Catitudes! Really, I do love my assignment but there are times when 12 pounds of cat can be a bit overwhelming, especially when he snores mid service.

Anyway, I'm working on some really amazing things with my spiritual director. Our focus this year will be the Five Ratitudes: a blend of commandments and strategies for survival beginning with 1. **"Make Peace and do not gnaw on thy neighbors walls. Remember your body is a temple not a storage space for insulation and wiring. In short, Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall avoid premature extinction."**

Would love to write more but I've been given the dubious honor of cutting the cheese for our community supper and helping with the evening service for our plants with working parents support group.

Hugs and Happy Thoughts,  
Br. Rat



- August 12, 2018

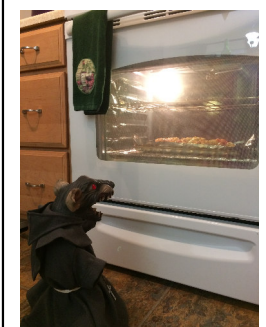
The Rhododendron rehabilitation project is off to a good start. Of the three Rhodies I was assigned to care for, only one is on HOSPICE. The other two Rhodies are doing quite well. I will be working with Br. Stephan's friends at Pride landscaping to arrange for a therapist to do some education on palliative care as well as providing some emotional support for our surviving Rhodies.

On a side note I heard a wonderful sermon on gardening this morning. The part I remember best was about how turnips were a vital part of a garden: Grow 3 rows of turnips: Turn up for church, turn up for meetings and turn up for each other.

As you can see I'm still learning how to navigate the elements / I got the cork out of the communion wine on the first try! Having spent the better part of the summer rehabilitating Rhodies and getting a handle on the "elements of communion," I was surprised when my spiritual journey took yet another turn in the direction of what I would define as a religious experience.

One day as I was walking through Br. Stephan's kitchen, I noticed a rather wonderful smell; sort of cheesy with a bit of onion but then it hit me, the light bulb came on (by the way, so did the one in the oven).

(Continued on page 6)



## Greetings and Gnawings, continued...

and all I could think about was the story of the loaves and fishes which was odd as Br. Stephan was making seafood nachos. As I watched the cheese melt and the chips change color ever so slightly, I realized seafood nachos were more than a delicious meal; they were and remain a wonderful way to provide hospitality and engage in community.

After speaking with Br. Stephan about my experience we agreed that it would be good for me to participate in the planning and execution of Br. Stephan's yearly Christmas Feast. If all goes well, perhaps Br. Stephan will allow me to sample the cheeses and sweets to insure that they are appropriate for the 21 people that we will serve on December 15th.

Forgive the short notes but Seattle is a very busy place. Squeaks and Blessings, Br. Rat

\*\*\*\*\*

- August 15, 2018

*\* As Br. Rat has landed in what will become a very busy community come September, I am helping him to front load his correspondence for the holidays / so that you will have things for the Fall newsletter, FB etc. Br. Stephan*

As Buddy and I were wrapping up our Summer assignment with the Rhododendron Rehabilitation Program we received word that Br. Stephan's refrigerator had passed away and that a new one was soon to arrive. As one of my next assignments will be assisting with holiday

hospitality, Br. Stephan asked me to do the refrigerator blessing. I cannot tell you what an honor it was to stand on the great purple toaster podium and offer the words every refrigerator yearns to hear: Blessed are you the not so



little hospitality box for you shall provide sustenance and smiles to all who will enter this house.

I continue to be amazed at the many unique and challenging ministries that are a part of this Seattle community. As with all churches, Fall is a very busy time, especially if you are the one who has to write the sermons. Fortunately, Rodents are exempt from having to follow the lectionary which makes it easier to focus on what the community needs and wants to hear.

This Fall, I will be preaching to the Choir and anyone else who might be interested. Below is a list of some of the sermons I will be giving as well as a summary of the Ted Talk I have been invited to give on the Ratitudes.

### Sermons By Br. Rat

1. A Cat Inclusive World:  
Learning to Live Two By Two  
Just In Case it Rains
2. Eating Cheese & Other  
Ways We Celebrate Crea-  
tion



### The Ratitudes: A Blend of Commandments & Strategies For Survival

- Love thy neighbor no matter how many times he ignores your sermons and gives you cattitude.
- Rejoice and be glad for cheese is unlimited in heaven and you will not have to make a break for it.
- Blessed are the mice for they shall inherit the Earth. Rejoice for you are part of this economy, just a slightly larger version.



(Continued on page 7)



## Greetings and Gnawings, continued...

- Treat other critters as you would like to be treated even if they are lazy and meow as if they own the world.
- Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall avoid premature extinction.

\*\*\*\*\*

- October 1, 2018

Where did the time go! I almost forgot to report on my formation activities! Fortunately, Sr. Kiara Mychal inquired after me and Br. Stephan reminded me that I had a bit of writing to do. Anyway, we have been super busy wrapping up our Rhododendron recovery program, looking up recipes and making lists for the Christmas Feast and catching up on our reading for the Franciscan book club. Br. Stephan says I have to finish the Cat Dictionary before I can start on my new spiritual formation book by Henry Nouwen. The Cat Dictionary is a slow read but I figure I ought to get used to it as everybody in the book group is either a cat or a cat lover. Oh the challenges of being in a diverse community. Fortunately, Buddy and I work well together except when he tries to turn my animal blessing for the peace cranes into a last rites ceremony. Overall, we are doing quite well, and yes, the animal blessing went off without any casualties. Not sure what Christmas will bring but around here anything is possible. In other words, beware of Franciscans that are Crazy for Christmas, and cats that nap too frequently!

Hugs & Happy Thoughts,  
Br. Stephan



## Formation Station



Anjelika Morse has retired from the Formation Team. We miss her considerable experience and quiet wisdom and wish her well in what ever this retirement holds. The team currently consists of John Michael Longworth, Sophie Elisa Dale and Helen (Kiwi) Bathurst. Kiwi has taken over Anjelika's role of responding to all initial inquiries.

Kathleen Dlugosz tried three times to attend chapter and make profession but three times in a row her significant health issues flared up and prevented this. Those at Chapter 2018 discerned that Kathleen would be allowed to make profession at a regional gathering. This has now taken place. She professed at the Great Lakes Fellowship Gathering in Rochester on October 6th. We welcome our newly professed sister, Sr. Kiara Mychal Hart!

Also, since chapter Louis Cantor heard Tobias Caskey's novice vows in a quiet ceremony in Florida. We welcome our newest novice!

We continue to have a steady flow of inquirers, some of whom request application materials, and a small handful are working on their applications. Watch this space!

## Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Submissions for the Lent\* 2019 issue of "Fiddlesticks" will be accepted immediately.

**Deadline for submissions is January 15, 2018.**

Send submissions to Sister Chris at  
capoef@solarus.biz

or snail-mail to:

Christine Petersen, OEF  
853 Norwich Ct.  
Nekoosa, WI 54457

**Thank you!**

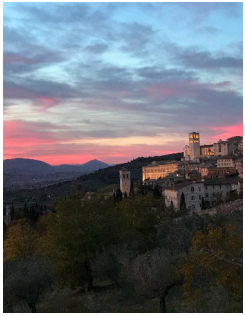


*\*Note: to make article deadlines a little easier, "Fiddlesticks" will now be distributed in February, May, August and November.*



# Pilgrimage

by Sr. Anjelika Morse, O.E.F.



Whether or not it is a conscious thing, I think that each of us has within us a "bucket list" of those things that we really hope to accomplish before we die.

For me, the lists has begun to emerge and to speak increasingly loudly to me as I have grown older. As a result of a series of acts of good fortune,

I have been able to realize one of the primary items on my list, a pilgrimage to Assisi, not once, but twice in a period of six months.

The first time was in October of 2017, when I joined with a small group of other women, under the leadership of two brilliant retired professors, for a study retreat in Assisi. After a significant amount of advanced reading, we spent a week in Assisi, sharing in daily prayer, visiting significant sites in the lives of both Francis and Clare and spending two hours daily in group reflection on what we had read and seen under the leadership of participants in the program. It was an outstanding program. There was also time for individual exploration of the city, a delightful *cappuccino doppio* in the common square, and meditation in any of the multitude of churches that fill Assisi.

For me the most moving part of the trip was our visit to the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels. We took the city bus down into the valley below Assisi and walked to the grand Baroque Basilica that reigns over that area. After the customary search by Army troops armed with assault rifles, we were admitted to the grounds of the Basilica and made our way across the large square and into the building. When I came around a pillar and saw the tiny *portiuncula* standing in the center of the front of the grand Basilica, I began to cry.

This was the little chapel that Francis and his brothers had rented from the Benedictines for the price of a basket of fish per year. This was the place that was so precious to Francis throughout his life that it was as close to a "home" as he could claim. This was the place where he



begged his brothers to carry him as he was dying so that he could die in this very spot. I sat in prayer in front of the tiny church for a long time before I ventured into it. Then I prayed inside as well. It was here that I felt a change beginning in my heart. I cannot describe what that change was, but it continued throughout the time I spent in Assisi. I returned home a changed woman. Those changes are deep and they reflect in all aspects of how I live my life.

But, Assisi was not done with me. When I returned home, I shared my experiences with many people, but I also knew that I had to go back. Something was missing. My wife is also Franciscan, TSSF. It was very important to me that she have the opportunity to experience what I had done. We also were approaching our 30th anniversary. We decided to celebrate of anniversary in Assisi. Consequently, in April, 2018, we spent a pilgrimage week in Assisi. This time I was the guide. We did go to some places that I had not visited previously. Most significant of these were the caves up on Mt. Subasio, where the brothers had gone to get away from the city for quiet time.

Again, it was a wonderful time. It was a joy to share this wonderful experience with my wife and to renew our vows in this holy place. I also made a connection that was important to me. As one approaches the entrance to San Damiano, the little church where Francis first heard God's call to go and rebuild the church, there is a lovely little statue of Francis sitting in an Olive grove and gazing out over the valley below. On this visit I noticed something that I hadn't seen on the first trip. By leaning over the fence and looking behind Francis, I could see that his sight line was directed precisely at St. Mary of the Angels. From the place of his initial call, Francis was gazing toward his beloved *portiuncula* where eventually his life would come to its end.

I don't know if I will return to Assisi. What I do know is that there is part of Assisi that is within me. There is a connection in my heart that now is a permanent part of my being. I feel incredibly blessed.







## Fiddlesticks Book Reviews



**St. Francis of America: How a Thirteenth-Century Friar Became America's Most Popular Saint** by Patricia Appelbaum, published 2015 by The University of North Carolina Press

This book examines how a 13th Century Italian friar, our Seraphic Father Francis, came to be perhaps the most beloved of all saints in North America. She does not explore the history of the Spanish Franciscan missionaries at all but looks at the more-or-less Northern European immigrant slice of the American pie, especially American Protestantism. She begins her book in the 19th Century northeast United States. In nine chapters plus an epilogue she looks at what attracted people to embrace his mythology, the phenomenon of garden statuary, our cultural interpretation of the saint, and selective nature of 'using' his name and some of what he stood for historically. She writes a very readable treatise. Her annotations and bibliography of source materials is more than 80 pages! (And that does NOT include devotional writings!!) She includes a short survey she used to gather a plethora of opinions about the draw power of Francis. I do recall actually filling it out some years ago as part of her research. She mentioned The OEF in the book as well!

As I read this book, as a history buff of sorts, I found myself joining her in asking questions about the 'real Francis' and now re-reading the biographies. I also find myself pondering just what it is about Francis and Clare that initially attracted me to them, and consequently to our little Order. I would encourage reading and sharing about her observations on this American interpretation of Francis. Also, I'd encourage one to reflect on what attracts one to him and why. There are many saints in Christian hagiography. Why Francis? Why Clare? What difference have they made in our society, in our community, in our personal lives? Are we attracted to the historical figures or the embellishments and romanticism of modern interpretations? Check it out!

*(Submitted by Br. David Delacroix, O.E.F.)*

**The Enthusiast: How the Best Friend of Francis of Assisi Almost Destroyed What He Started** by Jon Sweeney, published by Ave Maria Press @ Norte Dame, Indiana

I had not previously read anything by Sweeney. According to his bio, he is author of some 30 books including many about Francis of Assisi such as "When Saint Francis Saved the Church," "The Complete Francis of Assisi," and "The Enthusiast." The book was recommended to me by Amazon/Kindle, something that normally makes me suspicious. In this case however, I was intrigued by the title. Maybe I'm fascinated by stories about nails that went astray and lost the shoe that lost the horse that lost the battle, etc. The best friend in this story is, of course Brother Elias. I was a little surprised because the major part of the book is about Francis himself and Elias occasionally drifts in and out. However, Sweeney's retelling of the story that many of us know well is worth the read. Sweeney has a style that makes Francis' story an adventure of passion. Elias appears from time to time, but it is not until later in the book, towards the end of Francis' life that Elias really comes to the forefront.

I think I might be tempted to try another Sweeney book some day. In addition to some fun facts and a good read are the lessons of managing success while preserving the charism - something for contemporary reflection.

*(Submitted by Br. Neal Dunnigan, O.E.F.)*

### A Greeting from a Former Brother

I'm doing well. My chaplain residency ends in a few weeks and I have an on-call job at UIC starting in September and am waiting to hear if I'm going to be interviewed for a FT Staff Chaplain job there. I have a new beau in my life in whom I've found a healthy, mature and beautiful man. His name is Christopher. I turn 53 on the 26th of this month (August)!

Yossi Lopez-Hineynu (on left)  
August 12, 2018





# Lament

by Sam Loudenslager, O.E.F.



Towards the end of the season after Pentecost in 2017, the Old Testament readings for the Morning Office touched me differently than in any previous year. So for context, I've been praying the Morning Office for the last twenty years or so. In other years by the time the liturgical calendar moves us into the end of the season after Pentecost, while we always hear the voice of Old Testament prophets, I've been looking forward to Advent. So, my frame of mind has been really open to hear the words of a prophet--any prophet.

Not so in 2017. Instead of looking ahead to Advent, I heard the cries of pain, the cries of lament and occasionally a word of hope. After some reflection, I recognized that these words and the basic question, "Why God?" were directed at me.

I don't consider myself pessimistic about life in general but for me the headlines the last few years have been troubling. And all the headlines seemed to lead me to ask what has happened? Who are we as a people and where is God?

After reflecting on the words of the prophets for a few weeks, I decided that what had happened was the result of our separation from God and the love of Christ and I knew that all of us had been complicit in the evil that seemed to come into the light. So, I began to think about what a liturgy of lament might look like. I have tried to be clear that this call that I'm responding to really isn't about the current administration in Washington. Instead, there are a number of headlines that reflect what I sense is a separation of the people of God from God present in the world. This seems very similar to the situation the people of Israel found themselves in when they were conquered by Babylon and taken into captivity from their homes.

So, I put together a liturgy of lament and hope. The reason for the hope is because throughout the Bible, while God's people ask "where is God" in the midst of suffering and calamity, there is a recognition that God is in the world, and therein lies hope; hope for the ancient world and hope for our world.

I made a commitment to pray this "Service of Lament and Hope" on Fridays throughout 2018. I also made a commitment to fast on Fridays.

If you would like a copy of the service, let me know.

Sam



*Lament*

*Hope*



## An Important Reminder

**Reminder! Nancy Menning is the OEF Treasurer. Contributions can be made by sending a check (made out to "Order of Ecumenical Franciscans") to Nancy at:**

**Order of Ecumenical Franciscans  
Nancy Menning, Treasurer  
521 N Aurora St  
Ithaca, NY 14850.**





## Fellowship News



For our collective consciousness, we all need to know that the Golden Gate Fellowship delighted in participating in the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Marriage of Karen and Kathy Lawler, this past Saturday, July 28th. While some of us celebrated from a distance (Brother Sophia), Sister Betty Lou Leaver along with husband Carl and son CB, and Sister Anne Nancy & Brother Michael were able to be with Kathy and Karen and their Episcopal Church Family in South Sacramento to join in our praise of, and gratitude to God for the gift of marriage, and this marriage in particular. Hallelujah!



- michael v.

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OEF Northeast - TriState Fellowship Gathering. From noon on August 3rd to noon on August 5th: The first item must be the recognition of the radical hospitality of Br. Fred and his wife Marian!

Friday evening was the OEF participation in the fund raising music, poetry and art sale event at the Byzantine Franciscan Holy Dormition Friary in Sybertsville PA. We had the very pleasant experience of having Donna Claire, an inquirer, join us.

Saturday was a day of fellowship and prayer. In spite of Br. Fred's engineering background the day was not "over engineered." There was time for extemporaneous discussions that were instrumental in bonding. The Friary property was once a vibrant setting so we each had some special sites for our personal prayer and reflection. Br. Fred had the "bridge" where he celebrates his submission to God by accepting his call to the OEF. Sr. Petra selected the remote statute of Mary for her blanket and stone seat. (Was this a refuge in the wilderness (Rev 12: 6, 13-14) from the serpent of ecclesiastical elitism?) I said my Franciscan Crown Rosary and then was in awe of the mosaic San Damiano Cross. (Earlier I had questioned whether, we, the OEF regional community should repair the front porch of Clare House for the Friary. After seeing the commitment and former splendor of the Friary, there was no longer any question in my mind.) I think Sr. Nancy was at the duck pond because she spoke about the beauty of a blue heron in the pond, very Franciscan. (Sr. Nancy failed to say whether the heron stopped to listen to her preaching) Br. David will have to add his prayer location and experience. Sr. Nancy began a discussion of what we needed to do as an Order after Profession.

We went to a beautiful worship service at Christ Lutheran, Br. Fred's home church, and met Rev. Karen. We

easily saw Jesus' presence in her, and why Br. Fred spoke so highly of her. We then went to Br. Fred and his wife Marian's house for a fabulous dinner. We enjoyed Br Fred's fruit of the vine without making Neil Diamonds lyrics (Cracklin' Rosie) applicable. Br David headed home after dinner and missed the opportunity to see why In anthracite territory it was easy to understand why Br. Fred's HO train set included a dumping coal car.

Sunday was a fabulous opportunity to serve the poor! We joined the Valore project volunteers assisting people in obtaining clothes and enjoying a meal as part of the Valore service to veterans and the homeless community. Our siblings Sr. Nancy and Sr. Petra began their homeward trek.

When Br Fred and I went back to pick up the chairs he had placed for our reflective prayers, we explored the Friary property more extensively. Br. Fred showed me the St Cosmos and Damian Shrine, the Stations of the Cross and the outside worship area, altar and seating area, all of which have become overgrown. I was more convinced then, at the San Damiano Cross, that there was a call to serve our brother Franciscans in the preservation and restoration of the Friary.

Gerry Clark, Postulant

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On the weekend of August 3rd to 5th, while the Eastern Tri-State Fellowship was going on.... Several brothers connecting at the New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in Castleton, VT.

I (Michael V) can't speak for Robert Julian, but for the OEFers, that's Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. For the ecumenists among us these pictured include

Friends/Quakers, Lutheran, UCC, Roman Catholic, and Episcopalian.....I think. To behold Brother Romero's presence while in hospice care makes the heart go pitty-pat, and the lungs to exhale with "Hallelujah!" We share deep gratitude toward all who made his presence possible!



(Left to Right) Brothers John Michael, Obadiah, & Romero, Brother Robert Julian of the Order of Charity,

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*Tobias Caskey was welcomed as a novice on 9/28/18 at his home church. Brother Louis performed the ceremony.*

(Continued on page 12)



## Fellowship News, continued...

*Tobias' words:*

Of Course the Father, the Son, the Christ, Francis, Clare; all the Franciscan saints were there, as well as all of our OEF Brothers and Sisters were in full attendance alive and living in us and through us as always. Br. Louis Cantor was there as a witness as well as the officiant of the service. Rev.

Jeff Sumner was there, and read the second reading. He is my Spiritual Advisor/Mentor. He is the Pastor of the Church I am commissioned out of -- Westminster by the Sea Presbyterian Church where the service was held in our Chapel. My wife Valeri and my Daughter Tara were there, and my wife read the first reading from Micah. It was a beautiful ceremony! It is such a beautiful honor to be a Novice of the OEF.



Br. Louis &amp; Tobias

Peace and all good be with you!

*Tobias*

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From Oct. 2, 2018:

As we ready for Transitus and the Feast of St. Francis, some will be gathering. Tomorrow afternoon Oct. 3), Brother Stephan Gerhardt, and Sister Julie (& Lyle!) Baker will join a **Puget Sound gathering** of Franciscans at St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church in Shoreline, WA, hosted by Friar John Ryan of the Order of St. Francis for a regional celebration of the Transitus of St. Francis. Stephan & Julie are the northernmost contingent of the Juniper Fellowship of the OEF.

**The Great Lakes Lighthouse Fellowship** met Oct. 4th - 6th in Rochester, MN. A report on that gathering from Sr. Kiara Mychal:

Greetings from the Upper Midwest! This year was our 6th Annual Gathering at Assisi Heights, Rochester MN. We have made this location our unofficial Gathering "Home." As always, the Sisters, speakers, accommodations and meals were much appreciated. And we had a number of firsts this year, too.

To start, we had our first ever joint Gathering with the Order of Lutheran Franciscans (OLF). With MN being the "Land of Luther," or so to speak, a good way I remember their call letters is to think of the great Norwegian King, St. Olaf, Sans "a." Br. Jeffrey Brown, OLF represented their Order, bringing his gift of music for our Rite of Profession Service, and of laughter and joy. We really enjoyed his presence and insights. We hope to meet more OLF members very soon.



Another first: Celebrating Transitus with the Rochester Sisters of St. Francis. This year, they hosted a Service that was interactive and interpersonal. Visitor and friend of Sr. Betty Lou Lever, Doris Telles; OLF Brother, Jeffrey Brown; Br. Joseph Thomas "Keith" Downey, OEF; and OEFsrs. Christine Petersen and myself were in attendance.

Incorporated into the Service were two small guided meditation sessions with a small group discussion with people seated near you in the pews of the Chapel. It is during this time we learned more about each other and what led each of us to Franciscan Spirituality. After the Service, we each met some of the Sisters while making our way out of the Chapel. We shared how thankful we are for them opening their doors to us. And they were very surprised and pleased to hear about our Orders that there are now additional Ecumenical, Protestant and Catholic Members of the Franciscan Family. I Believe Br. Jeffrey shared that one Sister he spoke with said that having even Protestant

Orders embracing Franciscan Spirituality is the Body of Believers completing the Circle of Faith. The next day, Thurs., Oct. 4, Sr. Dale Carmen, OEF; Br. John "Son-of-Syvert" Syvertson, OEF; OEF Postulant, Dale Blesz; and Br. Craig Robert Miller, O.E.F. joined the rest of us for a wonderful weekend.

Throughout the weekend on the grounds of Assisi Heights we could see several deer families grazing throughout the entire day. We also saw the leaves start to turn, some with bright reds and golds already.

Friday, another day of firsts: we had the opportunity to hear two excellent speakers! In the morning, Pr. Shari Mason Pastor, invited by our very own Br. Joseph Thomas, is from Austin Congregational UCC. Pr. Shari presented "The Eight Pillars of Joy" from The Book of Joy by The Dalai Lama and Bishop Desmond Tutu. After Dinner, we joined the Sisters and their private Retreat Group at Assisi Heights to hear a talk given by Fr. Ed Shea, OFM, entitled, "My God and My All: The Spirituality of St. Francis." In between both sessions, we had free time in the afternoon where we could either take some personal time or have additional fellowship time.

The last day of our retreat, we ended with our Rite of Profession Service and a celebratory lunch. I finally made my Vows of Life Profession in OEF after 14 (that's right-you heard me) years of preparing, discerning and studying.

It is true... Good things come to those who wait; even if that waiting period seemed way looonnnnggg and sometimes difficult. With great anticipation, we had a beautiful Service where every person in attendance had an integral role within our worship time together. We missed having others at the Service but we definitely felt your prayers and we prayed for all of you, too.

(Continued on page 13)

## Fellowship News, continued...

Next year, we plan to meet at Assisi Heights again, from Thurs., Oct. 3 through Sat., Oct. 5, 2019 with Wed., Oct 2nd as optional. We are very thankful to the Rochester Sisters of St. Francis who have helped us make a central location and retreat "home" for our vastly most spread-out region of the Upper 48 States. We hope you will mark your calendar and join us. Blessings!

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From Oct. 20, 2018:

Tomorrow (if you're still up and reading this on Friday evening).....Today (if it's Saturday where you are)

.... the storied Bluebonnets of Texas, and maybe some border-crossers, gather in Waco to be together in Franciscan Fellowship. The Sultan and the Saint is on the agenda! We ask your prayers for traveling mercies and gathering blessings.

Sr. Katie Cook writes:

On Saturday, October 20, a small but intrepid group of Bluebonnet Franciscans gathered in Waco, TX, for a day of fellowship. They came from as far away as Little Rock, AR, and College Station, TX, and as close as McGregor, TX. The day began with midmorning prayers and a phone visit from Sr. Magdalena Stebbing. The group lunched at Mission Waco's World Cup Café and learned about the many ministries and projects of Mission Waco. We then took an excursion to St. Francis on the Brazos Catholic Church to enjoy the Spanish architecture and wonderful murals. The photo below is taken just outside the church, which stands

near the Brazos River in downtown Waco. The next step was to Sr. Katie's house to watch *The Sultan and the Saint*, talk about the encounter between St. Francis and Malik el-Kamil, the Sultan of Egypt, observe vespers and communion together (led by Br. Sam), and finish off with supper. Throughout the day, our two inquirers asked questions and the members told stories about our journeys in the OEF, and we all shared about our Franciscan calling. It was a good day.

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Another country heard from! From Steven Bowman, n/O.E.F.:

Brothers & Sisters: I just wanted to report, belatedly, a subcommittee of the Gateway Region gathered for St. Francis feast (Br. Bob Blattner and I) and our Father St. Francis was honored, song was made and prayers were offered before Eucharist and fellowship. The entire Gateway Region is scheduled to meet in early Nov in St. Louis for a day of prayer, learning and Franciscan fellowship.



L-R: Chelle Samaniego (inquirer), Sam, Katie, Denise

Sr. Katie adds: We have fellowships scheduled quarterly, with our next being in February. If anyone would like to attend, please let one of us know, and we will add you to our Facebook Group so you can stay aware of our get-togethers!

*\*The full article on this gathering will appear in the next issue.*

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And from Sr. Markie:

Hi all,

Last evening I went down to Indy to visit with Deb Snider and her husband Mark, they are novice by transfer folks. We have been trying to gather often and sometimes with John Fitch (Richmond). We all are about 45 minutes to an hour from each other. We are calling our gatherings "Table Fellowship". Our Catholic Franciscan siblings call their local groups who meet monthly "fraternities". So we are trying a similar concept and certainly less formal.

We gathered to share what has been going on over the past couple of months and had a wonderful meal. We also talked about formation topics and began making plans for next month. A big part of this is getting to know each other better. And Deb is the one who made the Tau cookies last Chapter/Convocation. (She may make them again for our next Chapter/Convocation!)

I encourage others who live within a hour or two of each other to try and gathering for a "Table Fellowship." This is another way to fellowship together between our annual Chapter/Convocation and Regional Gatherings.

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And one from David Rensberger, O.E.F. Associate:

Just want to say that in the Atlanta area, several of us try to gather over a light meal or just coffee/tea/chocolate at local restaurants. Some TSSF-related folks join us at times. It is indeed a good means of fellowship.

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A final word from Br. Michael V. on Nov. 2:

OEF Sisters and Brothers are making their way to Mercy Farm, near Benson, among the green, green hills of rural Vermont across the road from Mill Pond which is fed by, or feeds, the Hubbardton River with the Hudson River to the west — bucolic! The New England Fellowship of the larger Northeast Fellowship gathers this evening through Sunday lunch, we'll presume. Prayers of support and gratitude for them during this time of their gathering as a part of us in our scatteredness around the globe.

And I alone of the Golden Gate Fellowship got to meet last weekend in San Jose with Franciscans of 6 other Franciscan Orders here in the SF Bay area. The themed focus of the gathering was "Francis: Sign of Hope" — we were there and brought our greetings to the gathered!

-michael vosler, oef



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*c/o Christine Petersen, OEF*  
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*U.S.A.*



From the newsletter of Pastor Steve Garnas-Holmes



Dearly Beloved,  
 Grace and Peace to you.  
 Begin with gratitude  
     for all you have received,  
     that you see and that you  
 do not see.

Let your gratitude grow into  
 trust

    that you are included in a great wonder;  
     and entrust yourself to the grace you are given.

Let your trust blossom into compassion  
     for all those who are also part of this oneness  
     who have been excluded, used or targeted.

Let your compassion flourish into solidarity,



Piglet noticed that even though he had a very small heart, it could hold a rather large amount of gratitude.

knowing you are one with those who suffer  
     and that their wholeness is part of yours.  
 Let your solidarity bear fruit in justice,  
     working for freedom and fullness of life for all,  
     against all evil and oppression.  
 And when you are most challenged  
     by the forces of injustice,  
     most weary and discouraged,  
 return to gratitude  
     that you are guided, accompanied,  
     empowered and saved;  
     and entrust yourself to the undying love of God.  
 Deep Blessings,  
 Pastor Steve

*\*Submitted by David Delacroix, OEF*