

FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 129

Lent 2019



A Series of Reflections on Community

by Louis Cantor, OEF

Dear All,

God's peace be with you today. I, your sinful and lowly brother have been asked by our council to write in the weeks of Advent about our origins as a community and what community can mean. With this year marking our 35th year as an Order and our Chapter Gathering being of great importance, I share this with you. Not being very wise about most things, I ask your patience with my sharing, understanding that what I share comes from the heart.

I want to focus on what the scriptures tell us about community and what it may mean for us. When did community begin? It appears from the Old Testament that it was from the beginning. The Genesis Story of Creation tells us that there was God and Spirit: two entities, One God in communion. It takes little time in Salvation History to see that communion or community is the basis of the relationship between God and the people of Israel. What is so interesting in this relationship is that God constantly draws all to God's self, out of love. A wise person once shared with me that when God created, which all was good, he planted His Logos, Word, in all the world. The seed of the Word then grew so that all people would understand the love of the One according to the revelation they experienced. This Logos draws all back to God, and thus all are brothers and sisters because it is the One's desire to be in love and union with One's own creation.

John in his prologue to his Gospel reminds us again on how God is community and unity, a mystery. The Word became flesh to save all creation. Jesus walking among the world gathering and caring for all is a concrete sign of God's deep call for us to be in union with God and one another. Jesus' commandment to love God with all our heart and all our Soul and to love our neighbor as oneself is a commandment to live in union, community with one another. Did Jesus followers get it? Some did, some struggled and some did not. Not much different than the covenant relationship that marks God and the people of Israel. A common thread in both Jesus' message and the Old Testament stories is that God is faithful. Jesus is faithful.

The Acts of the Apostles show us how then the early Christian Community attempted to live out the Gospel and the Commandments of Jesus. The stories of their struggle of living out the Gospel to life and life to Gospel defines I think Principle One of our Order. Community life from this scriptural and sinners perspective is a dynamic dance. The Love of God draws us earnestly to God's self. In doing so God draws us to one another. We are called to see the God in each other and love that God within, only after we have struggled to love the God within ourselves as we truly were created to do.

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A Series of Reflections... continued

The Gospel compels us to love all and all God created; these are our sisters and brothers; these are the ones God asks us to touch with love and mercy.

If God is communal, if God is union, then we who say we follow God, must struggle with the Good News that God wants us to be in union with one another. Principle One: That we should go from Gospel to life and life to Gospel, is our way as a community of saying "The Good News of the Common of God is what I wish to live with the OEF brothers and sisters God gives me, and the life of living with my sisters and brothers is the Gospel I give back to God, the Good News."

Peace,

Br. E. Louis Canter, OEF

II

Week Two Reflection: Origin of Reflection Francis and Clare and Community.

Greetings to you and much peace. Again I share with you, your lowly brother some thoughts about the origin of community from Francis and Clare's perspective. There are those of you much more learned than I, however, I share what I have learned and pray that it helps discussion and reflection.

In reading the writings of St. Francis, his own words, we discover that all creation was community for him. His abandonment to God's divine will for him and his radical life of owning nothing caused all to be given to him as gift. I love the phrase in his Testament and Will "When the Lord gave me brothers," right there, gift. Community formed around the ideal of living the Good News, the Gospel radically and completely. What could be more fun than doing it with others, and witnessing life and Good News at the same time. "When the Lord gave me brothers," the sentence continues, "no one showed me what to do but the Lord Almighty God." The intent was that anyone wanting to belong to this group, community, they simply had to live the Gospel. The community was to live the two commandments of Jesus, namely to love God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their strength and to love their neighbor as themselves.

Many biographers have painted the early years as the honeymoon of the Order. Where there was great freedom in living among the hills and plains of Assisi. And for a short time this was true. As the Community grew there was more to care for, more concerns about use of talent, time and treasure. Francis had to go to

Rome to gain permission to preach, to lead and grow this new Community under obedience, and under the eye of the leaders of the Church. Rules were written to help unify the life of the friars. In some ways community became more complicated, but necessary. The witness of this community and the radical life of the gospel they preached and lived served the world well.

Clare also embraced the Gospel with such passion, that many wished to follow her. Even when she was hidden in San Damiano, her light and her love for the Christ mirrored to the world that cloistered life and contemplation leads to a high form of radical ministry and intercession. What little writings we have of Clare we see a soul so on fire with God that to this day her sisters continue to point to a clarity of life and purpose. She, too, had developed a rule so that the Sisters spread through the countryside would be in union in their quest to live the Gospel. While Francis was the herald of the Great King, Clare was the Mirror of the Great King. What light she and her Sisters gave.

So what does this mean for us as OEF? Each of us really has to remember the beginnings of the source of why we are Franciscans, by remembering the beginnings of our founders and the communities they birthed. For us, our journey of 35 years sounds so familiar to the beginnings of the original Community. At first, there were a few who wanted to live the Gospel Life according to the Franciscan Charism. We wanted to follow Francis and Clare. As we have grown so have the needs for ways to keep us in union with one another. The Passion we have is the Charism. From Gospel to life and life to Gospel. As a Community, we stand with one another, support the gifts we have for one another, share those gifts to the world, embrace the love of God and give it right back through those we meet. I often view our Community like a wheel. Our desire to live intentionally in community as Franciscans is the hub of the wheel. The spokes of the wheel are our faith, our gifts, our talents, our passion and our love. May we remember those wonderful words of Francis, "When the Lord gave me brothers..." when God gave us each other in the OEF. We pray, and we pray earnestly that God is showing us the way, that God gives us the Spirit to love radically and laugh heartily.

May all of creation be our brother and sister, may our Community, wherever we are, be a witness to the world of the 'Mirror of Perfection' and the lovers of the One who loves us so lavishly.

(Continued on page 3)



A Series of Reflections... continued

III

Dear All,

The last two weekends, I have been sharing with you some reflections on community from a scriptural and early Franciscan perspective. I hope these humble thoughts have helped in some way in our journey together. Today, I am sharing with you the founders of our Order's perspective of community and the intentional purpose of why we came to be. I asked Sr. Dale for her wisdom and reflection on how we came to be. She quickly noted that Br. Ron Nuss-Warren and Br. Charles were a part of the beginning of who we are. Because of the Formation that Dale received with the Anglican Community, she was equipped with a solid foundation to become and live a Franciscan life. However, because Dale was not Anglican, she was unable to profess with the community in which she was so well formed. So, she began to look over the Rules of 1221 and 1223 and wondered what Protestants could do to embrace the way of life, and life in a community for spiritual growth. Her intent was to form a religious community with a spiritual direction. It was to be intentional whether we feel it or not. The vehicle is the Franciscan Order. Somehow Ron, Charles and Dale got together, prayed and birthed this Community (very short description).

The idea of *intentional* for Dale was and is that we are not bound by geography. We are bound together by our Principles and our Rules. We would communicate by phone, correspondence and any other means possible. We are to be close to God, Jesus in the spirit of Francis and Clare. Clare and Francis, Dale pointed out, did not have a lot of time together regarding visits and such. They met in prayer and of course at the Table of the Lord. This communication then is a tangible way of being which is beyond pens and phones. It is a bond that defies proximity.

Then the OEF Community in its essence is an intentional community in which the members have a relationship by means of our Rules and Principles, and the passion to live in the Spirit of Francis and Clare. In a real way, we are in a supernatural relationship. We need each other. We know one another in our prayer, in our communication, in our gathering and in the knowledge of the fact that all of us live out our lives with the gifts God gives us to support, pray and reach out to one another and for the good of the world. I must say, if anyone thinks that we are not an active community, a community that embraces and lives out the Gospel, then they have not met many of the OEF Community as individuals. I personally am humbled by the amount of apostolic work and the gifts that are present within this Community.

So to sum up the why of us? Dale, Ron and Charles came together to start an intentional community of a religious nature, rooted in Clare and Francis, guided by the Principles which are based on the Rules of 1221 and 1223. Those who wished to follow would become closer to God, Jesus in the spirit of Francis and Clare. The support of one another and our intent of doing so, includes rejoicing in our giftedness, aiding in suffering, and being sisters and brothers to one another in the love of Francis. It is in that Spirit that we can go out into the worlds we live in and share that radical love with the gifts we have. Let us rejoice in that Dale, Ron and Charles heard, listened and responded to the Spirit. The Franciscan Family needs our breed of Franciscan Life. May we take up the intent of our founders and support one another along the Way.



Peace.

IV

Dear All,

As we come to the Fourth Sunday of Advent, this little reflection I was asked to give by the Council continues the idea of intentional community and its roots. In preparing the other three reflections, I have uncovered a few things which have brought me much comfort and excitement about our Community. As I prayed about this writing, here is what I came up with:

(Continued on page 4)



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



A Series of Reflections... continued

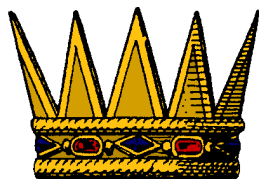
The first is, our Community is so much like St. Paul's analogy of the body we find in Corinthians. We are many parts, yet one Body. We are a community of different Christian Faith Traditions, different talents, different temperaments and certainly different visions of the Franciscan Way. Yet incredibly, we form a unique Body which is relevant to ourselves and to the world. We have some fantastic, talented and passionate people who share their Faith and our Franciscan Way in the way we live our lives and the Apostolates we are involved in. What gifts the Loving God has lavished on us as OEF, to have such passionate people to witness Gods love. What honesty we have within the Community of people who 'Know' their gifts and share them with us and others. Each person God gives us within the Community continues to build up the Body, and as each individual reveals and shares their gift, we are so very much enriched. So, we are not all "eyes" or "ears" or "legs" so to speak. Yet, we need each Member in order for the fullness of the Kingdom to be revealed in us as we are as the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans.

I am so very proud and humbled by what each one of us does and is. There have been temptations on my part to want to do some of the things other brothers and sisters do, only to realize that is not what God is calling me to do within our Community. It is there that I am reminded that I am to be that certain part of the Body to make it whole in sharing who and what I am. The joy of being part of this Community wells up again.

So, what am I saying here? Basically, I am so glad to be part of a community which intends to live out its Christian Faith as Franciscans with others. I love the connections we share by phone, message, email and snail mail, and the unique gift we are for one another. The intent on staying connected, coming to Chapter, fellowships and table gatherings, and the sacrifices it takes to do so, is a great witness. Are we perfect? Do we Love? Are we Merciful? Do we go from Gospel to life and life to Gospel? Me? Not all the time, but I am counting on someone in the OEF Community to be doing so when I am weak; so, I can be lifted up to do the same when another fails. That is what the early disciples shared in the Acts of the Apostles, and so the founders of our way of life. Those who founded our Community 35 years ago picked up on that message, hoped and prayed it could be so for an Ecumenical Community. So now, we are the Body of Christ, living and real, supportive and active to be the Heralds of the Great King in a world that needs to see and hear our witness.

Peace.

Br. Louis Cantor, OEF



OEF Statement in Response to the Shooting at Tree of Life Synagogue, October 27, 2018

How long? How long do we have to experience these acts of hate? We must break the cycle of hate and fear with love. We are in Solidarity with all who say enough is enough. We offer our prayer for the victims and their families and the community of Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. We strongly encourage healing and unity. We pray, act and rise up to break this chain of violence, hate and fear.

To quote the late Yitzhak Rabin, "Enough of blood and tears. Enough!"

Siblings respond:

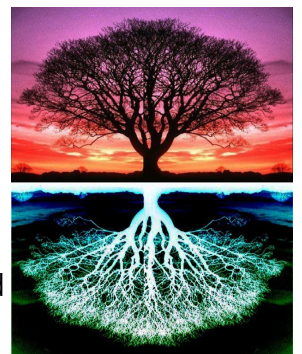
We pray that through penitent lives, God's love would become known. Tonight I bring my penitent self for an interfaith prayer service at our local synagogue to mourn with my Jewish neighbors. How are others making a response to this act of hatred?

Peace,
John Michael, OEF

Dear Siblings,

I am meeting with some black and brown church leaders in our community to discuss how people of faith can make a unified statement against acts of violence and hatred. May we all be instruments of peace.

Sr. Paula Clare, OEF



So yesterday, a co-worker and I were saying how overwhelmed we felt by recent events, and I commented that this had crystallized as a question of which event to attend last night. This being New York City, there were equally urgent and vital protests, rallies, vigils etc. around migrants/asylum-seekers, LGBTQIA rights, and Tree of Life Synagogue. My friend then gave me great clarity: **"It just depends," he said. "Do you want to yell, or do you want to weep?"** Both weeping and yelling: the best available responses. I went with weeping, and attended a memorial at a local temple. So did something like 800 other people, way more than the capacity of the space, including dozens of faith leaders from all kinds of congregations around the city.

Best part: the Cantor sang Psalm 23 in Hebrew, and the Congregation was invited to speak the English translation simultaneously. There wasn't anything like enough prayer books to go around - so those of us standing up, pulled out whatever version of *The Lord is My Shepherd* we had in our heads - a mini-Pentecost cacophony of grieving trust.

Blessings - Sara Holliday



Formation Station



Greetings on behalf of Helen, Paula Clare, Sophie Elisa, and myself,

The formation team reorganized our work in the second half of 2018, with Sister Helen taking on the role of greeter for Inquirers, Sister Sophie Elisa tending the Postulants and their Companions, and Sister Paula Clare and I sharing the tending of the Novices and their Companions. We work together using our prayerful discernment model to accompany each individual through their process, either to the point of separation, ongoing friendship, or Life Profession.

As we begin 2019, there are 9 active Postulants, 11 Novices, and a potential Profession class of 3 for the 2019 Chapter Meeting. We hope to be able to share the specific list as we lead up to the Chapter Meeting and the official requests come in. I am so grateful for the work of each member of this team, because they not only share in this tending of the whole garden, but we are all serving as Companions as well.

While you are making your travel plans and connecting with Siblings with whom to share the pilgrimage to Chapter, we hope that you will also do some discernment work and listen for a call. Is God calling you to be a Formation Companion? Is the Holy One drawing you to work with the Formation Team on matters like ongoing formation and discipleship? We'd love to have intentional conversations with you when we are face-to-face.

Thank you to the 13 siblings currently serving as Formation Companions, we are exceptionally grateful to serve alongside you!

Peace and All Good,
John Michael, OEF

Julie Baker has Noviced with the preferred name of JUL (n/OEF). Lovely ceremony in which 10 or so of her close friends were in attendance as well as her supportive spouse Lyle, with Stephan and I officiating. Stephan, Muriel and I spent the night and the conversation flowed into breakfast the following morning. So, a good NW Fellowship was held.

We were sorry that Jahiro was not able to celebrate with us; he was missed and held in our love. Stephan was our photographer. So he will be the go-to guy for photos.

Peace and All Good,
Sophie Elisa



L-r: Sr. Sophie Elisa, Sr. Jul,
Br. Stephan, Friend of Jul

And last, but not least: We welcome a new Postulant! **Claire Slomski** joins us from Warminster, PA. (What an appropriate name for a Franciscan!)

WELCOME, CLAIRE!

Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

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

Deadline for submissions is April 15, 2019.

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.**



Words from the Council



A New Year Dawning / A New Chapter Coming

OEF Chapter/Convocation 2019

Roslyn Center

Richmond, Virginia

Thursday, June 27 -- Sunday, June 30, 2019

Optional Early Day: Wednesday, June 26th

Full information on registration will be available soon on our OEF website: oeffranciscans.org

Theme: 35 Years: Looking Back / Looking Forward

There will be a celebration of our 35th year, and a deepening embrace of the Franciscan spirituality which enlivens us and calls us forward. As always, we will worship together, pray together, share with one another and break bread together.

We will renew our vows, and we will welcome those joining us in this journey. This will also be a time of deep discernment. We will be selecting five members to serve on the Council for the next three years.

Please review our Statutes concerning this, most especially: Article V: A. The Council; Article VIII: Prayerful Discernment

Article V: A. reads in part: *The Council is made up of 5 Professed Members of the Order, both 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.

Article V: A. 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.*

If you are unwilling or unable to serve on the Council, please send your notification to Br. Stephan Gerhardt or to Br. John, Son-of-Syvert,

Please note that the words are "*unwilling or unable*" which is not the same as "I would rather someone else do it". Just sayin'...

While you're on this "Statute-reading roll", maybe also read over Article IV: Chapter. Including Article IV: A. 2: Participation of Absent Members.

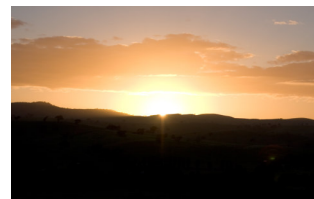
A word of apology:

In response to interest expressed by some that we meet in various parts of the country, and having discovered this lovely retreat center during an event sponsored by the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity, we, your Council, enthusiastically booked the Roslyn Center for this year's Chapter. We have since realized that, for some, traveling to this site is much more burdensome than we had anticipated. (distance/cost/time-zones) Further, while it is served by Southwest Airlines (used by many members), their service to Richmond is unfortunately quite limited. Please look early into your travel options. The optional early day offers many possibilities: time to relax and settle in early, time for informal meetings and sharing, time for committees to meet, time for prayer and contemplation, time to spend as the Spirit leads... Please consider this as well.

In other news, the Council was blessed to have a fruitful face-to-face meeting in December in St. Louis. We are grateful for the prayers and presence of all. May we support one another in doing that which is ours to do.

May we be salt. May we be light. May we bear Christ's love.

In Christ's Love for Each and All, ~ OEF Council: Sr. Shoshanah, Sr. Markie, Br. John Son-of-Syvert, Br. Louis and Br. Jahiro (formerly known as Br. Elijah)





Fiddlesticks Book Reviews



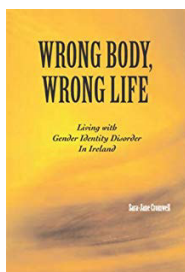
Siblings,

I had the recent opportunity to get to know a local activist in the field of Gender Identity Disorder (GID). Sara-Jane Cromwell is an officer in the Unitarian Church in Cork, Ireland. I was fortunate to obtain a copy of one of her books on the topic of GID.

Sara-Jane's Unitarian Church in Cork is a pretty inclusive group, and given that the OEF is also, I thought I would make the opportunity to share my thoughts on:

Wrong Body, Wrong Life: Living with Gender Identity Disorder in Ireland

by Sara-Jane Cromwell
Publisher: MetaCom Publishing
(May 10, 2010)



Sara-Jane also authored an earlier book which was more autobiographical:

Becoming Myself: The True Story of Thomas Who Became Sara.

Wrong Body, Wrong Life actually does occasionally touch on some autobiographical aspects of Sara-Jane's life. However, its main purpose is to educate or more specifically increase overall awareness and general understanding about Gender Identity Disorder (GID). There appeared to be a primary audience for whom the book could be a source of direct support. This would include those having GID and also those who share the spaces of family, friendship, work, and community with them. The extended audience would be the general public. This would be more of an advocacy messaging. While many in this group might be personally unaware of GID, they may still be called on in the public debate and need to have informed participation in democratic processes.

My sense was that Sara-Jane captured the spirit of her book very well in its Dedication: "This book is dedicated to all those who never had the chance to live and be their true selves." The first half of the book deals with some of the basics of what is GID and why is it important. There was some good discussion about terminology as an evolving area. I found that discussion to be interesting both from the perspective of an American looking at Irish terminology and also looking at the emerging terminology from 2010 with a 2019 perspective.

The book goes on to talk about the evolution of GID awareness and maturity in the Irish culture. I found this to be very interesting. In some ways, Ireland was at a disadvantage

compared to the US. For example, being a small country with a conservative, monolithic, religious tradition, GID individuals in Ireland had a particularly lonely start. However, there were also Irish advantages. For example, the EU provides an umbrella architecture of human rights that does externally influence Irish law. Also, Ireland's having a nationally integrated healthcare system means that you only have to get it right in one place.

From there the book walks us through the life cycle of GID. Starting with the complexity of natal development and walking through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, the book presents factual, yet humanized explanations of numerous considerations and the difficulties they present. Most of these considerations are inherently individual and personal, but some of them are cultural-legal. For example, when can the gender be altered on a birth certificate, and how might that retroactively impact other legal standings such as marriage licenses?

The last section of the book is a brief (45 pages total) collection of 5 different personal stories about coming to terms with GID in Ireland.

I found the book to be informative. While I already had a bit of a handle on the topic of GID, my understanding was made more complete by Sara-Jane's deep research and personal experiences. It also helped me to hear the GID story from a different (i.e. Irish vs US) cultural perspective.

One conclusion of my own, which I extrapolated from the book is that GID is made more problematic by overall sexism in our society. Overly rigid gender conformance expectations and socialization create their own inherent problems, but to the degree they are prevalent, or even pervasive, GID adjustment becomes all that much more difficult.

In my view, the information in this book is much needed by the Christian majority in the US whose compassion is in check because biblical inerrancy, or doctrine, block their acceptance of, and acting on, medical facts.

Finally, I personally found the book to be representative of what our OEF Principles refer to as "conversion". Finding the "true self" of one's gender identity in spite of physical appearance and socialization struck me as a parallel path to our OEF personal journeys of transformation to find the Christ in ourselves. This, of course is the spiritual "true self". I might admit that on my journey, I don't suffer nearly the degree of torments and injustices of my GID friends on theirs. However, encouraged by that contrast, I speculate that perhaps own my spiritual transformation is simply incomplete and not radical enough - I have yet to truly experience Francis' "perfect joy" at a higher level. Sara-Jane Cromwell lives in Cork, Ireland.

Peace and blessings - Br. Neal Dunnigan, OEF



Two Siblings' Lenten Reflections



At Communion, many of us repeat these words, "and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son, the blessed company of all faithful people; and are heirs, through hope, of thy everlasting kingdom." Over the past year, when I repeat these words and when we pray for "for those saints who have entered into joy," I find myself repeating the names of those OEF saints who are among the "blessed company of all the faithful people"; Gordon, Ron, Richard, Gay, Afi, Bill, Francis Leo and Rene`.

When I reflect on the early church as recorded in Acts, I think about how in these pockets of believers there must have been the beginning of remembering of the names and the stories of each saint being shared. There has been such a tradition within Jewish communities of lighting candles, remembering and saying the names of people from their community each year. The early church took the traditions from around them, the traditions they grew up with and continued to practice them.

Sometimes we create new traditions to help us remember. For me, at Chapter in 2017, having the photos of OEF saints, impressed on my mind the names and the stories we shared. I encourage all of us to find ways to share stories.

I think about how the early church connected one with another. They used the means they had, face to face, sent verbal messages or handwritten letters. Sharing with one another was important to them, it helped them to keep going when times were hard. I encourage us to use all the means we have (email, web site, list serve, interest groups, Facebook, Twitter, OEF-chat, snail mail - handwritten letters, postcards, phone calls, face-to-face, conferences, table fellowship gathering for a meal and conversation, regional gatherings, and of course Chapter/Convocation. Share our stories, joys, sorrows, concerns, needs, gifts, memories.

Let's us not forget. We are all in the Blessed Company.
Peace and all good,
Sr. Markie, OEF

My favorite Bible verse is Psalm 46:10 which is "Be Still And Know That I Am God." This is actually my life verse as it was used at my Baptism, my Confirmation as a teenager; my Ordination, my profession into OEF, and every time I have been installed into a new ministry setting.

Going through my early years, I always emphasized that last part of this verse as knowing that God was in charge and that I could rest and relax. When I was in seminary, and facing a difficult final exam, a fellow student told me that I was reading that verse all wrong in her opinion. Rather than a request to be still, the verse read as a command to BE STILL in a strong voice. In other words, to rest and relax was not an invitation, but a command to chill out because God is still in charge.

At times this has been easy for me and at times it has been very difficult. I have had exposure to chemical dependency through close family members and for a time I was in Al-Anon. And the line that was used by someone whenever I was there was, "I tried to be God but found I wasn't qualified." And immediately, it reminded me of my life verse. I needed, and continue to need, to be reminded that God is in charge when there are things that seem totally out of control.

One of my many joys of OEF is there is a time to be serious as an individual and as an Order. We are called to carry out the Gospel of Jesus through thought, word and deed. But we are also called to be silly, relax and not take life so seriously. TO REST, BE STILL, TO PLAY, and let the one who created us, calls us and is with us each and every day, worry about the big stuff. Francis knew this very well. He was walking in the deeper steps of Jesus to share the Love of Christ with everyone He met, without the trappings of who they were, but rather remembering whose they were: sisters and brothers all. May it be so with us.

Peace and all good,

Br. John, son of Syvert OEF





Fellowship News



In this issue of Fiddlesticks and next, we are invited to take a walk around the world to “see” where Members of the Order are gathering, or have been unable to do so. This time we’ll follow the sun from New Zealand to the Mississippi River, traveling through 5 geographical “Areas” that encompass 11 Fellowships.

THE PACIFIC AND EASTERN ASIA AREA

The Kiwi Fellowship with just two Professed, Brother Reg and Helen “Sister Kiwi” are able to get together in Wellington, NZ. The local TSSF has provided a broader Franciscan nest of Fellowship that continues today.

We pray for the emergence of a Fellowship in Japan and other East Asia countries, cities, & towns, that our colleague, Brother Pacifica, in Hadano, Kanagawa Japan, southwest of Tokyo & west of Yokohama, one day will have colleagues in that region of the world. We can reach his way by reading his novel, Mind Virus.

AREA: EUROPE

Brother Neal Dunnigan is doing a year in Ireland, giving Brother Irishman Scott Peddie the closest & only OEF neighbor he’s had since joining the Order. Hopefully, they’ll be able to get together. Scott lives in Straid, Ballyclare, north of Belfast, Northern Ireland, and has been visited by Brother Craig Robert (& others along the way?), while Neal is way south in Cork, 4 hours away. For now we’ll call it the Irish Fellowship and look forward to a report.

Jumping the Atlantic to THE EASTERN MARITIME AREA.

Brother Patrick Lublink is in Kingston, ON, on the northeast corner of Lake Ontario, and is now within reach of Brother Carlo who is just north of Toronto (a Lake Ontario Fellowship?). And we can imagine linkage with upstate New York, U.S. colleagues, Brother Gerry Clark in Rochester and Sister Nancy Menning in Ithaca, both of whom have actively gathered with colleagues in the Eastern TriState Fellowship (Pennsylvania to the Hudson River & New Jersey) sparked by Brother Fred Jaxheimer and Brother David D.

Meanwhile, the New England Fellowship continues to gather at its center in Vermont or New Hampshire, or on its southern end in Connecticut. The New York City Metro Fellowship with Owusu, Juniper, Luis Antonio, Richard, Sara & Petra is able to, and does convene occasionally, as well as participating in those Fellowships to the west and to the north. These 3 Fellowships together are the Northeast Fellowship and demonstrate a fluidity of participation, and the breadth of invitation to any of the Fellowships in the Area.

Going south we’re in THE CENTRAL ATLANTIC & SOUTHEAST U.S. AREA.

In the Central Atlantic Fellowship we have three Order Members: Sister Carole Jerome in coastal Delaware, Brother Ed Holm in coastal North Carolina, and Brother Dennis Testerman in Concord, NC. Fellowship formation is a work in progress, and one day we’ll pray it will come to include future Sisters and Brothers in Virginia, the D.C. area, and Maryland.

On down, we come to The Piedmont Fellowship, with South Carolina (only whispers of interest there) and Georgia centered on Atlanta where Brother James Schwarzlose and Brother David Rensberger anchor a monthly Table Fellowship that includes a TSSF-er. A more lengthy Fellowship Retreat was hosted by David Miller in or around Lawrenceville, GA. There are others on the fringe of their gatherings. And we wait for the Holy Spirit to shape an Alabama contingent one day.

In Florida, the Tropical Troubadour Fellowship had a recent convening with Brother Louis (Orlando) receiving the Novice Vow of Brother Tobias Caskey, (Daytona Beach). Sister Faith Klein is further south in West Palm Beach.

We dream of a Caribbean Fellowship one day.

THE MIDWEST & EASTERN RIVERS AREA

The Mariposa Fellowship has a history of vitality consisting of OEF Members in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Mississippi. The people are still there for the most part, but a new spark is needed towards Fellowship gatherings..

(Continued on page 10)

Fellowship News... continued

Indiana colleagues, including Markie, Just Plain John, Debra & Mark are doing fairly regular Table Fellowships.

Two Fellowships, and maybe three bridge the Mississippi River. We'll include them next time when we complete our flying walk from the Mississippi River to Hawaii.

What I've gotten wrong in any of this narration, please send me your edits!

- michael v., for the Fellowships Team

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Greetings Dear Siblings!

Just a note to let you all know how completely we **(The OEF Gateway Fellowship)** enjoyed our time together last Saturday (Nov. 3, 2018). It was a beautiful time of better getting to know one another, sharing stories and faith, prayer and healing.



L-r: back - Jon, Jacoba, Bob
front - Paula Clare and Steve

Brother Steve Bowman provided the space (and lunch for a few of us... (thank you!), and shared some incredible insight into some of the more difficult personal struggles shared. Brother Bob Blattner shared an historic timeline of

the lives of Francis and Clare. He also presided over the Eucharist/Communion/Lord's Supper. The music, the words, the healing presence of Christ were palpable. Such a beautiful, holy unity. Thank you, Brother Bob! Thanks also to Jacoba/Katya and Brother Jon Savage for making the trip from Springfield and Rolla, and for sharing your hearts, your stories, and your wisdom. It was so very good to be with you all again--like hearts, faith and passion for the Franciscan life--such a healing balm to this war-weary soul! 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!

Again, SO GRATEFUL to have a Fellowship in St. Louis again! Also, if anyone has contact info for the St Louis area TSSF member(s) please reply here! Thanks!

Peace and Grace,
Paula Clare

The Golden Gate Fellowship gathered at the home of Betty Lou and Carl Leaver on a hill overlooking San Juan Bautista this past Friday evening and Saturday, the 16th & 17th in this month of November 2018,

We began by lamenting the absence of Fellowship regulars Thom Sophia, Anne Nancy, Karen & Kathy, and Jahiro, each called to other urgencies; then celebrating this gathering of two Professed (Betty Lou & Michael), and two Postulants (Doris & Steve) joining in prayers and check-ins, and immersing ourselves in a discussion of our OEF Principles. Late morning, we toured the Franciscan Retreat Center. (Hmmm, a someday California Chapter/Convocation in Danville or in San Juan Bautista? — we have that choice!)

Barbecue Chef Carl Leaver provided lunch and joined us in conversation, and took the picture below..

For the afternoon, we did an extensive tour of (1) the SJB State Historical Park dramatizing the collision of Indian, Mexican, Spanish, and European cultures, (2) downtown San Juan Bautista, and (3) The SJB Mission Museum — ah, those early Franciscans! That put us in place for the 5pm Mass in the Old Mission Sanctuary led by a Franciscan Priest from the Santa Clara Mission. We then joined SJB community folk in the celebration of CB Leaver's 39th birthday, he the famed author of "Mommy Poisoned Our House Guest," and son of Betty Lou and Carl.

Blessed by being gathered, we again scattered...

michael vosler



L-r: Steve, Michael, Betty Lou
and Doris



Greetings & Gnawings from Brother Rat



11/8/2018

My head is spinning! Br. Stephan said there would be much to do in the way of hospitality but I had no idea what would be entailed! I spent the better part of September addressing Christmas Cards and scribing for Br. Stephan. Do all Friars write Christmas letters in the style of novellas or is this just my luck to be assigned to the one who does? Anyway I've recovered from my writers cramp and am now scurrying to help Br. Stephan prepare for the Christmas Feast on December 15th. My job is to ensure that we have enough sweets and cheeses on the big day as there will be 22 of us, counting Buddy the cat and myself. Br. Stephan says this is one of several hospitality events that will be happening in our community this Fall. Not sure what the other events will entail but I can tell you that the ultimate penance is resisting the urge to sample the cheeses and baking supplies you've been assigned to inventory. If I make it through this, I'm going to celebrate with a trip to England so that I can nibble cheese in the caves of Cheddar and sip wine with my bread on the Thames River. Spontaneous Communion and an English Cathedral with lots of dark places for napping - here I come!

Merry Christmas and Happy Everything!

Br. Rat



12/17/2018



It has been an extremely busy time for me. After many days of cooking for Br. Stephan's Christmas Feast, I was tasked with organizing the entertainment for the Christmas Feast. I have attached a

couple of photos. I also made a new music video titled *The Sisters of Song aka the Birds in the Trees* conducted by Br. Rat.



Let us squeak with Joy! The antics of Br. Rat have only just begun!

Br. Rat

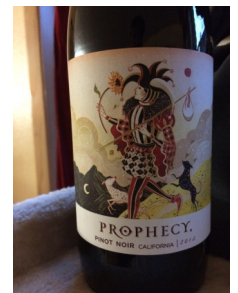
12/31/18

It has been a very productive year for me what with the Rhododendron Recovery Program, Br. Stephan's holiday happenings and of course my formation subjects. As we wrap up 2018 and move into 2019 I will be immersing myself in all things related to the Table. I have attached a few photos from my first presentation which I hope will evolve into a class called *Choosing the Right Wine for the Table*. Buddy is not the most enthusiastic student but we have to start somewhere right?



Wishing you all a Happy New Year and a Joyous time at the Table with friends and family.

Br. Rat



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.**





Fiddlesticks
 c/o Christine Petersen, OEF
 853 Norwich Ct.
 Nekeosa, WI 54457
 U.S.A.

Inner Compassion

If we eavesdropped on the continuous thread of commentary in our minds, we'd be surprised at how cruel we are to ourselves.

If self-criticism were a disease, it would likely dwarf other epidemics.

If you are your own worst critic, you know what distress this relentless mental criticism can cause.

Cultivating compassion for ourselves is necessary if we are to be compassionate toward others.



Being kind to ourselves brings healing and flows out in kindness to others. Compassion allows us to connect with our own goodness and see the goodness of others.

-from *Conversations About Compassion*, The Feltzer Institute

A Quote from St. Oscar Romero



We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the miraculous enterprise that is God's work.

We cannot do everything, and there is liberation in realizing that.

It enables us to do something small and try to do that well.

It may be incomplete,
 but it is a beginning,
 a step along the way,
 an opportunity for God's grace
 to enter and do the rest.