

# FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 134

Easteride 2020



## Inside this Issue:

- Siblings Reflect on Living in the Time of COVID-19
- Words from The Servant Council
- Prayers in the Pandemic
- April 2020 Intertribal & Interfaith Letter
- A Few Good Reads
- A Statement from The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans for Earth Day
- Fellowship News
- Formation Station
- Corona de Cristo in The Era of Corona Virus

## OCF Siblings Reflect on Living in the Time of COVID-19

In the midst of this pandemic, it is easy to feel afraid and anxious. We don't really know what is happening, and we don't know where it is going. It is really unclear where things will be at the end of April, let alone over the summer. The Episcopal Bishop of Long Island announced this weekend that because of social distancing, churches will continue to worship at a distance till at least May 27. No gathering for Holy Week, Easter. Maybe for Pentecost. Worship together on computer or phone. Who are we? Where are we going? What's happening?

It is amazing that we are now gathering on Zoom to talk with people around the corner. Connection and intimacy that we're accustomed to experiencing over the dinner table or at the office or in church now happen on the computer. A friend who teaches at a local primary school is working to put her kindergarten and first grade classes on line. At every level, social distancing.

This weekend, I attended my weekly 12-step meetings on Zoom. We had most of the regular members at the gathering. Everyone talked about how important it was to see each other on camera and to hear the sound of each other's voices. At the meeting were members who had moved away from New York - people from Florida, California, Ontario, and even Thailand. These faraway members of the group were just as close as the regulars who were in the city. It was a small gift of the pandemic.

This virus is definitely showing us that we are one people on the planet. Whether we have any connections in our networks, we speak the same language, have the same worldview, we are sharing the same breath. I remember someone a few years ago asking me to look at the labels of all the clothes I had on to see how global my life is. But now, in the space of mere months, we are all connected in the breath and in the droplets that the breath spreads into the atmosphere. How to live in this connected world where I am intimately connected to people whose existence, I'm not even aware of? Everyone shares my fear and anxiety and uncertainty, wherever they are on the planet.

If I unconsciously bleed my fear and anxiety to others, I know that they will experience judgment, rejection, and harm. Fear and anxiety freeze me in a state of self-centeredness. I am locked into my projections of a future that I can't know much about.

(Continued on page 2)

## OEF Siblings Reflect... continued

The fear and concerns of others will not be heard or respected. Living in our fear and anxiety, is a crazy game of bumper cars where all the drivers are blindfolded and the speed is not regulated.

So what do I know? What has my faith taught me? The first remembrance that comes to mind is that this is the Most High's world, and it remains so even now. The Holy One of Blessing is with me and around me and holding me and holding you. What do I have to fear? My path, which has been prepared for me, is a path built on love. The second thing that comes to mind is that others, my ancestors, our ancestors, have lived through really rough times, and the hope and knowledge of the Love at the center of the Universe has brought them through. My work is to relax, practice the "sacrifice of thanksgiving," and sing the praises of the One who loves us. Spring is all around me in New York. Can I just relax, open my eyes, and rejoice in the beauty and the gift?

Francis and Clare held poverty and humility as central tenets of their response to the call of Jesus. It is a call to humility to completely relax into the "I-don't-know." This pandemic makes it obvious to me that I don't know - but in fact that is my every day. I just don't know what is coming, what is just around the corner. Living in the I-don't-know locates me in a place of listening, to the birds, to the struggles of those around me, to the signs of spring, to the fear and anxiety of others. It takes all my commitment of humility to drop what I know, and therefore what I fear, and be there to hear what is happening for others. In social work school, we talk a lot about listening with our minds, with our hearts, with our compassion. Recently there has been a deeper focus on stepping out of



our privilege and accepting that we know little about the experience and the struggles of those we encounter who have walked a different path than ours. So my work becomes to relax, let go of the privilege of

knowing, and to listen deeply.

There is a deep poverty in not knowing. It means that I am just another beggar on the road trying to find my next meal. How to be open to the poverty of not knowing, how to embrace this as Francis embraced Lady Poverty?

Every encounter I have is as a fearful, anxious person. At my best, I am shifting to

gratitude and praise for the Most High and all they have given me. I have the opportunity to be open, loving and affirming - but only as I relax my self-centeredness. Because of this, every encounter is an encounter of reaching out over social distancing. Wherever I am, I can be present in my gratitude and joy. But I will also be there with my fear and anxiety.

My work is to give up my self and to open myself to the other. I will mess up. Harming will happen. At times, others will need to point out to me how my self-centeredness has resulted in damage to others.

In our little community, I (we) strive to be messengers of the Most High, to share the good news of the Love that we have come to know with one another and with all with whom we have contact. I am so grateful to have found a place with you all in this.

I ask that you hold me in your prayer and that you support my efforts to respond to the Holy One with Love, Humility and voluntary Poverty. I wish to learn to listen deeply and to seek out ways to be more open, more humble, more available. It is a gift when you let me know when I have failed. Help me to remain attentive to new ways to be the servant follower of the Most High.

This time of uncertainty and fear is passing and will pass, and the bright light of the Holy One will blaze through. My fear and anxiety remain the deepest barrier to my life of gratitude, praise, and celebration.



-Br. Juniper Robertson

\* \* \* \* \*

### Some thoughts on sharing in a traumatizing time from a survivor circle facilitator:

Remember that we are all going through a traumatic experience, and for some of us, this is compounding with previous trauma.

Use "I" statements. Don't assume that your thoughts or feelings are shared by anyone else or that they need to be in order for yours to be valid.

Do not shame people for their trauma response. No one is at their best right now, but we are surviving

## OEF Siblings Reflect... continued

and need one another to keep surviving

Do not speak for others. Let each person own their experience and speak for themselves, if they wish.

Avoid spiritual and emotional bypassing. Forcing ourselves to think happy thoughts or to seek miraculous solutions or to suppress own pain will actually deepen the trauma and grief. Stay with the feelings if you can, and simply give yourself breathing room as soon as you feel "done."

What has and is happening to us is hurtful, scary, and distressing, but looking for scapegoats actually centers and empowers the scapegoats, not the hurting people.



It is ok to not be ok. It is ok to pass. This experience is not your fault.

You remain loved and loveable no matter how much you are struggling right now.  
-Br. John Michael Longworth

\* \* \* \* \*

A short piece for my church newsletter. Thought I would share:

***We Live In Strange Times but All Is Not Lost  
(My Experience of COVID 19)***

*It was nice to watch the morning begin with its layers of light and sound. First the birds, then the outlines of the trees finally coming into view and at last enough light that I could navigate the 1 mile walk to the grocery without disturbing Mr. Raccoon's routine. Under normal circumstances, I would not be shopping at 7:00 am; my wife Muriel would be with me and we would be celebrating the beginning of our weekend; senior day at the grocery store. The grocery is a 2 mile walk round trip full of conversation about everything from what's growing to plans for date night but not this week. This week it is just me thinking, praying and wondering how this will end. Will my wife and I survive? Will people see that there are benefits to living life at a slower pace? Can we turn this pandemic into a world reformation on behalf of the*

*notions that ALL people are "our" people and as our environment begins to heal can we urge that on by maintaining this new slower pace of living? Are we destined for extinction or is this the beginning of a world where people will choose to live out of a sense of care and compassion for others? I prefer to think that all is not lost but only if we are willing to pay attention. How does your morning begin? How is the world outside your door speaking to you?*

-Br. Stephan Gerhardt

\* \* \* \* \*

Comes a poem to my inbox that speaks mightily to living another day amidst some human tragedy... for us, the pandemic with thousands dying, and front-line medical responders working beyond their limits without sufficient personal protective equipment; while the climate crisis continues to roll us down the chute of time, day by day, towards outcomes that are way too ominous for our psyches; then add wars and violence that continue, and whatever your personal concern or crisis might be this day.... Ya Lateef!

Ghazal (لطيف يا) Ya Lateef!)\*

Marilyn Hacker, received 4/9/2020

*A lot more malaise and a little more grief every day,  
aware that all seasons, the stormy, the sunlit, are  
brief every day.*

*I don't know the name of the hundredth drowned  
child, just the names  
of the oligarchs trampling the green, eating beef  
every day, while luminous creatures flick, stymied,  
above and around the plastic detritus that's piling  
up over the reef every day. A tiny white cup of  
black coffee in afternoon shade,  
while an oud or a sax plays, brings breath and relief  
every day.*

*Another beginning, no useful conclusion in sight,—  
another first draft that I tear out and add to  
the sheaf every day.*

(Continued on page 4)



## OEF Siblings Reflect... continued

*One name, three-in-one, ninety-nine, or a matrix of  
tales that are one story only, well-springs of belief  
every day.*

*But I wake before dawn to read news that arrived  
overnight on a minuscule screen,  
and exclaim يا لطيف every day.  
And I say my: Amen!*

Helpful adjuncts:

The ghazal, an ancient, intricate, and beloved form of poetry in the Middle East and nations further east.

Although the late Agha Shahid Ali, who popularized ghazals in English, stressed that "an unrhymed ghazal would be a contradiction in terms to an Urdu and Persian speaker," imitators writing in English soon ignored its traditional rules and breathlessly labeled any unrhymed poem in couplets a "ghazal." Hacker's ghazals are effective responses to such ham-handed cultural appropriation. She understands the essential nature of the qaafiyaa, the monorhyme that precedes the radif, the repeating word or phrase at the end of the couplet. She understands, too, that a ghazal needs to extend to at least six couplets in order for the qaafiyaa to create its pleasurable suspense.

'ya lateef' literally: "ya" is the calling letter in Arabic & "lateef" means kind, but when said this way "ya lateef" then it refers to Allah (=God) The Egyptians mostly say this phrase when they hear bad or scary news, so its meaning is like "Oh God you're the most kind, be kind to us"

- br. michael vosler

\* \* \* \* \*

Followers of Christ and Lovers of Creation,

A message on an academic listserve I follow just posted the following quote from Barbara Kingsolver's novel *The Poisonwood Bible*:

"God is everything, then. God is a virus. Believe that, when you get a cold. God is an ant. Believe that, too, for driver ants are possessed, collectively, of the size and influence of a Biblical plague... I was

boggled by the array of creatures equipped to take root upon a human body. I'm boggled still, but with a finer appreciation for the partnership. Back then I was still a bit appalled that God would set down his barefoot boy and girl dollies into an Eden where, presumably, He had just turned loose elephantiasis and microbes that eat the human cornea. Now I understand, God is not just rooting for the dollies. We and our vermin all blossomed together... Five million years is a long partnership. If you could for a moment rise up out of your own beloved skin and appraise ant, human, and virus as equally resourceful beings, you might admire the accord they have all struck... Back in your skin, of course, you'll shriek for a cure. But remember: air travel, roads, cities, prostitution, the congregation of people for efficient commerce-these are gifts of godspeed to the virus."  
(528-530)

In the context of the novel, this quote is from the character Adah Price. After a traumatic and defining experience as a daughter in a Christian missionary family to the Congo, Adah eventually goes on to study viral epidemiology and work for the CDC in Atlanta.

In sharing this quotation with you, I'm not suggesting that God is rooting for the coronavirus. Not at our expense, certainly. But I do think God calls us to root for (and work for) the wellbeing of all of the creation.

I pray fervently that a better world will arise from the injustice and suffering of the one we inhabit now. And I pray that each of us might come to see our small part in bringing about that better world.

[At Easter], Christ leaves the tomb and goes ahead of us to Galilee (Mark 16:7). Let us go meet him there and find what it is we are now called to do.

-Sr. Nancy Menning







# Words from The Servant Council



We the Servant Council have two things to bring to you:

First: After much deliberation, and in consultation with our hosts in Missouri, we are moving this year's Order of Ecumenical Franciscans Chapter/Convocation to **August 10-13, 2020** at the Pallottine Renewal Center, Florissant, MO. **God willing**, of course. If all goes well, it will begin at 4 pm Monday August 10 and end with lunch Thursday August 13. (The usual ability to arrive a day early is not possible this year.)

The **cost is \$300 and can be paid at Chapter**. In fact, **please don't pay** if you haven't already done so. Scholarships are available.

So that we can get a good idea of how well Chapter may be attended, and so that Pallottine can prepare for our arrival, we need for you to register online, if you haven't already done so. (Those who already have don't need to re-register.) Registrations **after June 24** will entail a **late fee of \$50**. And we really need to know **no later than July 27**. Please contact the Registrar if you would like to cancel your registration.

Know that our hosts have informed us that they have been taking the safety of all who come there very seriously, for example, installing extra hand sanitizer stations throughout the complex. We are also going to be putting together some "care kits" of individual hand sanitizers and other health essentials for our attendees.

Your Servant Council will of course stay tuned to current events. It may still be problematic to travel and gather together physically in August. If that is the case, we will be canceling Chapter this year entirely, and will announce such as soon as it becomes clear. We will explore the possibilities of a "virtual" Chapter if necessary.

Second: We the Servant Council want to reach out to everyone in the Order during these difficult times. We are all struggling with the many aspects of the coronavirus pandemic. Around the world we have many members who are in the front lines, helping those around them. And we are all taking care of ourselves as best we can, as we need to. Our needs for spiritual companionship are great nowadays, and not being able to physically get together doesn't help. We just want you to know

that we, your Servant Council, are here to listen. We invite anyone in the Order to contact any of us for a conversation via any of the ways of communication at hand, be it phone calls, texts, email, snail mail, Zoom, Skype, ...

Let us bear one another up as we proceed through this valley--together.

Peace and All Good,  
The OEF Servant Council  
Bruce James Kay; Jacoba Ketchum; Betty Lou Leaver; Markie Oliver; Juniper Robertson

\* \* \* \* \*



The OEF Council has signed this \*statement for the OEF at the request of Br. Coyote, OEF:

*Dear friends,*

*We invite your organization to be a signer on a letter to Homeland Security, to Congress and to the U.S. Senate regarding religious freedom violations caused by border wall construction and oppressive policies that are affecting the spiritual practices of a number of trans-border tribes.*

*This letter was initiated by a trans-border spiritual freedom watch project under the Alianza Indigena Sin Fronteras/Indigenous Alliance without Borders non-profit and includes Verlon Jose's input from Traditional O'odham spiritual and political leaders living on or near the border.*

*Its goal is to build stronger intertribal and interfaith base to support the concerns that Tohono O'odham, Hia c-ed O'odham, Yaqui (Yoeme), Carrizo/Comecrudo and other tribes have expressed to Homeland Security and to Congress. As stated in the letter we are asking you to sign,*

***"When Indigenous peoples' religious rights and place-based spiritual practices are desecrated by government actions, all people of faith are negatively affected by this threat to our Constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom and fundamental human rights."***

*\*The full letter is included in this issue. See center pages 7-8.*



## Prayers in the Pandemic



### Prayer for a Pandemic, by Cameron Bellm

May we who are merely inconvenienced  
Remember those whose lives are at stake.  
May we who have no risk factors  
Remember those most vulnerable.  
May we who have the luxury of working from home  
Remember those who must choose between  
preserving their health or making their rent.  
May we who have the flexibility to care for our  
children when their schools close  
Remember those who have no options.  
May we who have to cancel our trips  
Remember those that have no safe place to go.  
May we who are losing our margin money in the  
tumult of the economic market  
Remember those who have no margin at all.  
May we who settle in for a quarantine at home  
Remember those who have no home.  
As fear grips our country,  
let us choose love.  
During this time when we cannot physically wrap  
our arms around each other,  
Let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace  
of God to our neighbors.  
Amen.

*-Submitted by David Rensberger*

\* \* \* \* \*

Yes there is fear. Yes there is isolation.  
Yes there is panic buying. Yes there is sickness.  
Yes there is even death. But,  
They say that in Wuhan after so many years of  
noise You can hear the birds again.  
They say that after just a few weeks of quiet the sky  
is no longer thick with fumes But blue and grey and  
clear.  
They say that in the streets of Assisi, people are  
singing to each other across the empty squares,  
keeping their windows open  
so that those who are alone may hear the sounds  
of family around them.  
They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland Is  
offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.  
Today a young woman I know is busy spreading  
fliers with her number through the neighborhood  
so that the elders may have someone to call on.  
Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and  
Temples are preparing to welcome and shelter the  
homeless, the sick, the weary

All over the world people are slowing down and  
reflecting  
All over the world people are looking at their  
neighbors in a new way  
All over the world people are waking up to a new  
reality  
To how big we really are.  
To how little control we really have.  
To what really matters.  
To Love.  
So we pray and we remember that  
Yes there is fear. But there does not have to be  
hate.  
Yes there is isolation. But there does not have to  
be loneliness.  
Yes there is panic buying. But there does not have  
to be meanness.  
Yes there is sickness. But there does not have to  
be disease of the soul

Yes there is even death. But there can always be  
a rebirth of love.  
Wake to the choices you make as to how to live  
now.  
Today, breathe.  
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic

The birds are singing again The sky is clearing,  
Spring is coming,  
And we are always encompassed by Love.  
Open the windows of your soul  
And though you may not be able to touch across  
the empty square,  
Sing!

- Brother Richard Hendricks

*-Submitted by Br. Michael Vosler*





## April 2020 Intertribal & Interfaith Letter



### **April 2020: Intertribal & Interfaith Alliance Condemns Damage to Sacred Sites, Plants, Waters, Cemeteries, Shrines and Burials By Border Wall Construction & Seeks Legal Protection of Religious Freedom Guaranteed by U.S. Constitution**

*The undersigned representatives of Tribal members, Tribal leaders, Indigenous rights organizations, and Interfaith organizations request meetings with Homeland Security as well as Congressional and Senate Committees with Oversight on the Border and Its Natural Resources to substantively address violations of religious freedom resulting from border wall construction.*

Our tribal and faith communities stand united in expressing our concern, grief and outrage regarding how Homeland Security, the Army Corps of Engineers and their contractors have repeatedly disrupted religious expressions, damaged sacred sites, killed ceremonial plants, and threatened sacramental waters during the last six months of border wall construction.

When Indigenous peoples' religious rights and place-based spiritual practices are desecrated by government actions, all people of faith are negatively affected by this threat to our Constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom and fundamental human rights.

This interfaith coalition—including Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Muslim and other religions—stands firm that place-based spiritual practices of Indigenous border tribes are legally and theologically equivalent to those of these faiths. Therefore, any assault on their living place-based spiritual practices at the border is an assault on the sanctity of all of our practices.

In the particular case of impending and nearby border wall construction at Quitobaquito Springs in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, we are deeply concerned that:

1. Both native (O'odham) spiritual practices and those of the Roman Catholic faith persist at this sacred sanctuary in an unbroken chain from 1698 AD to the present, justifying the landscape's status as a Traditional Cultural Property under federal law and as Holy Ground under our Creator.
2. The sacred salt pilgrimages of the Akimel O'odham, Tohono O'odham and Hia c-ed O'odham that have passed across the border at several sites—including Quitobaquito—have been put at risk by the wall, and cannot be rectified by a single door at one of many locations historically used along the international boundary line,
3. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed by President Polk in 1848 guarantees indigenous persons and their communities (such as the O'odham and Quechan historically associated with Quitobaquito) that were once part of Mexico the inviolable continuation of their rights to property and religious practice as U.S citizens.
4. In the enabling legislation establishing Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument (in which the Quitobaquito Springs are located) O'odham tribal members are guaranteed unrestricted rights to harvest cactus fruits, both for sustenance and for the sacramental use of cactus-wine in religious ceremonies.

(Continued on page 8)

April 2020 Intertribal and Interfaith Letter... continued

5. All National Park Service superintendents have granted the O’odham access to cactus fruit harvesting, to care for graves, and for ceremonies at Quitobaquito without abandonment of those practices or abrogation of those rights until the present moment.

6. Seven different sacramental, ceremonial and medicinal plants associated with O’odham spiritual practices occur at the site, including some species not found away from the springs; several of these are already in decline and may be lost to groundwater pumping for wall construction continues.

7. Both burial sites and sacramental resources have been bulldozed by Homeland Security contractors, even though their locations were fully provided to Homeland Security officials, who were informed of these sensitive sites months in advance.

Tribal spiritual and political leaders have witnessed how current border wall construction policies violate their religious freedom, but Homeland Security officials either falsely claim that no cultural properties like human burials have been damaged, or that the Presidential Declaration of an emergency at the border overrides all of these concerns. If that were correct, Homeland Security officials would not have made earlier promises to heed their concerns, nor would they have started transplanting saguaros after months of allowing contractors to bulldoze them. While Homeland Security deems that certain federal laws must be waived in relation to the so-called “border crisis,” the Constitution itself has not been waived.

We remain as concerned about disruptions of sacred pilgrimage routes to the Sierra Pinacate, a sacred mountain, through other federal lands west of Organ Pipe, and to the east, across Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge to Baboquivari Peak, a sacred mountain.

The special government-to-government relationship that the United States has with the Tohono O’odham Nation should ensure substantive consultation, avoidance of, or remediation and re-consecration of sacred sites be undertaken to protect their religious freedoms.

As Tohono O’odham Nation Chairman Ned Norris, Jr. has stated before Congress, “Look at the reaction when Notre Dame burned down... You feel an emotional connection to that, even if you’re not Catholic. That kind of emotional connection is abundant in the case of the border issues for the Tohono O’odham.”

We request that all work be immediately halted on or near Quitobaquito Springs and surrounding areas –including well pumping--until Tohono O’odham spiritual practitioners, the Traditional O’odham leaders and the impacted tribes, and the Tohono O’odham Nation are properly consulted through direct engagement by all departments, agencies, contractors or affiliates constructing the wall in order to devise alternatives to avoid violation of the Tohono O’odham religious rights and freedoms.

We firmly stand with our brothers and sisters of O’odham culture in condemning the indiscriminate and illegal destruction of their sacred sites, ancient burial grounds and tribal cemeteries. United, we grieve this unjust matter and call for immediate action to cease all activity.





## A Few Good Reads



[In February] at the Formation summit in St. Louis, several books were shared about St. Francis. Two that I purchased were *Discovering the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition* by John Kruse. This has a brief biography of Francis and Claire, plus the early beliefs of the early Franciscan movement. It is an easy read (short but deep) which can be read in the span of a couple of hours.

The second book is *Franciscan Moral Visit-Responding to God's Love* by Thomas Nairn.

These two books are available in paperback from [www.franciscanpublications.com](http://www.franciscanpublications.com). This is a great resource to get almost any book on Francis and Claire in paperback. It is a huge treasure trove of anything Franciscan at reasonable prices.

-John soS

\* \* \* \* \*

At a Franciscan retreat last summer, I asked a brother: *What is your favorite book about Saint Francis*. He recommended *Brother Francis of Assisi* by Ignacio Larranaga

Not in an intellectual tradition, almost the opposite. I am so completely immersed in this book, experiencing joy and pain, with Francis, Brother Leo and Clare, and the environment surrounding Mount Alvernia that I called Muriel and Brother Stephan and asked *what if I take the name Sister Mother Earth when I profess*. They are both so wise, kind and loving.

I may never finish reading this book or settle on a name. I am remembering so clearly why I searched for OEF in 2016. I am humbled and re-inspired, reading slowly now to stretch out my time and remembering who I have come here to be.

-Jul Baker

\* \* \* \* \*

Hi all,

This Lenten season I [spent time] reading Rohr's "Eager to Love," subtitled "The Alternative Way

of Francis of Assisi.' Did you ever pick up a book that just felt good and right from the start? That's how this one feels for me. He opens the preface with a poem by Neale Donald Walsch that goes:

"Yearning for a new way will not produce it.

Only ending the old way will do that.

You cannot hold onto the old, all the while

declaring that you want something new.

The old will defy the new;

The old will deny the new;

The old will decry the new.

There is only one way to bring in the new. You must make room for it."

Brother Richard then goes on to state "Francis of Assisi was a master of making room for the new and letting go of that which was tired or empty." And like a beautiful flower, he continues to open the life of Francis and various followers throughout history on how this all happened, and continues to happen. It smells like a fresh Spring breeze!

David Delacroix

\* \* \* \* \*

Sibs –

Assuming most of you are aware of Rilke but my SD just turned me on to him and I'm reading "Book of Hours, Love poems to God," and am touched. (Continued on page 10)

## Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Submissions for the Claretide 2020 issue of "Fiddlesticks" will be accepted immediately.

**Deadline for submissions is July 15, 2020.**

Send submissions to Sister Chris at [capoef@solarus.biz](mailto:capoef@solarus.biz)

or snail-mail to:

Christine Petersen, OEF  
934 Round Oak Ct.  
Nekoosa, WI 54457

**Thank you!**



## A Few Good Reads...continued

Thought you'd appreciate this one:

*Where is he now, who leaving wealth behind  
grew so bold in poverty  
that he threw off his clothes before the bishop  
and stood naked in the square?*

*The most inward and loving of all,  
he came forth like a new beginning,  
the brown-robed brother of your nightingales,  
with his wonder and good will  
and delight in Earth.*  
Rilke III.33

Steve Bowman

\* \* \* \* \*

I just happened onto a new resource for used books. ALIBRIS.com has a wide variety of books re St. Francis, religious studies as well as the usual subjects, mysteries psychology, cooking etc. I found a number of used books by Richard Rohr all of them quite affordable. Anyway, just thought I would share.

Hugs and Happy Thoughts,  
Br. Stephan Gerhardt

\* \* \* \* \*

A book I've recently found helpful in thinking about racism and antiracism work is James Addington's "Tragic Investment: How Race Sabotages Communities and Jeopardizes America's Future—And What We Can Do About It."

It's addressed specifically to privileged whites. We (Michael and I) worked with James (who self-identifies as white, male, and privileged) in the '70s when we were with the Ecumenical Institute/Institute of Cultural Affairs in Chicago (and globally). The section headings are: "Race and Why It Matters;" "The European Imperial-Colonial Enterprise;" "The Cost of White Supremacy;" and "Reparation: Portal to the Future."

Peace and All Good.  
Anne Nancy Vosler

## OEF Online Bible Study

A group of six or seven have been meeting for Bible study using the communication software ZOOM. All OEFers are welcome to join.

We are studying the Gospel lesson from the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel Reading for the Sunday that follows. We have now studied Luke 10: 1-11 & 16-20, the sending out of the 72; Luke 10:25-37, The Good Samaritan; and Luke 10:38-42, The Martha and Mary story. The sessions have been fun, and have taken us all deeper into our faith and our exploration of living the Franciscan way. We use the "African Method" bible study: We first read the passage and everyone identifies a word or phrase that stands out for them. We then read the passage again (in a different translation), and everyone identifies how this passage impacts them individually. We read the passage a third time (in a third translation) and everyone identifies how the reading impacts us as a community. Then time for general sharing on the passage. We alternate between Monday and Tuesday evening @ 8:00 PM EST. **Everyone is welcome!**

You will need a computer or a smart phone with a head set (and camera would be good) to participate. If you are interested in joining, send me an email at [jgrbklyn@gmail.com](mailto:jgrbklyn@gmail.com) and I will send you the Zoom link. We can also talk on the phone to get you started. It will be great to have you with us!

Br. Juniper, OEF.

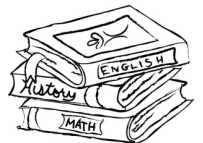


## OEF History Project



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 Statement from The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans for Earth Day

with a bow to Br. Coyote, OEF

The Holy One for Blessing spoke  
and gathered the dust from the Big Bang into  
the most fabulous life form – Earth.  
Earth was spoken into being:  
Sister Water, Brother Air, Sibling Rock and  
Blazing Fire  
shaped by the Voice into  
rivers, plains, tundra, oceans, and highlands.  
The Voice gives us  
first single cells, viruses, and chains of DNA  
and then it explodes into rats and cats, snakes and  
caterpillars, leaves, roots, seeds, and blossoms.  
All the beings are intertwined into a fabric  
ever changing, ever more beautiful  
Each birth, flourish, fade, and decay  
transformed into a yet more complex and fascinating  
thread in the fabric.  
The spinning, gathering of primordial dust – Earth.  
How can we celebrate the wonder of the Creation -  
seeds and honey, flight and burrow,  
chlorophyll and immunity?  
Humans must and do dance, worship, praise  
the Holy One who gives the wondrous  
gift of Earth.  
Humans see the development, the complexity,  
the weave of the fabric and  
weep in praise of the beauty.  
For fifty years, some humans - many humans - have  
marked, marched, rhymed, and reentered  
the wonder of Mother Earth  
And remembered the Holy one who have given us  
dominion to see, celebrate, and care for  
all that Earth is.  
We are odd, undependable stewards  
of this extraordinary blessing –  
Earth our island home.  
Among us are the powerful and indifferent  
the marginalized, despised and struggling.  
Some of us are entranced by a patriarchal,  
White-supremacist domination.  
We have forgotten that we are just part of a wondrous  
whole and have become a dysfunction, a plague  
that threatens the human community and the splendid  
fabric of Mother Earth.  
Humans of darker colors, of different genders, with  
different talents

are harnessed to feed the trance.  
Whales and rhinoceri and plants of many kinds are  
simply allowed to disappear.  
The trance turns into a horror.

Today, as Franciscans, we affirm all the life of our planet.  
We recall ourselves to give thanks for Earth  
and we recommit ourselves  
to care about and care for all that is Earth.  
To care for the compost, source of new life.  
To limit our burning of past life in automobiles  
and power plants.  
To be intentional about our consuming of  
the bounty and  
Not to destroy the boreal or rain forest.  
To plant as many trees as we cut.  
To not churn our forgotten consumption into  
the thriving community of the salty seas.  
To inhale the breath that enlivens us, but not endless  
CO2 and toxic chemicals  
To speak truth to power and to put ourselves on the  
line for our mother - Earth.

May we stand up, turn up, speak up  
to resist and dismantle the human creations  
that poison and pervert  
the beauty and wonder of Earth's ever-renewing  
multitude.

## Earth Day

A day of praise and dance and wonder and blessings  
A day challenging us to courage, creativity,  
resistance, recovery, and truth-telling.  
May all humans - especially humans of wealth and power -  
Shift our purpose to  
Love and care and returning to being part of Mother  
Earth and her ways.

The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, through its Servant  
Council announces, declares, engages in and meditates upon

Earth

And we recommit our deepest beings to stand up for  
and embrace Earth on this day!!

April 22, 2020



# Fellowship News



**THE CROSSROADS FELLOWSHIP** gathered on Saturday, February 29, 2020 at Grace Episcopal Church in Muncie, IN. Those who gathered were Markie Oliver, Ron Nuss-Warren and his lovely wife, Carolyn, Debra and Mark Scott. Ron has made contact with an inquirer in Midland MI. Small world in the fact that they are attending the same local church. They will be having conversation over coffee, and I'm sure at Church. Let's keep this sprout in our thoughts and prayers!

We began our day with prayer and worship in the small prayer room. Following a Lenten frame of mind and heart we opened with scripture (IS 58: 6-12); a Responsorial Psalm taken from Psalm 86; a Reflection from "Lent with St. Francis"; music video, "Heal the World;" sharing time; reading of Gospel (LK 5: 27-32); song "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus," at which time we came to the altar and picked up our cross to follow Jesus; then shared petitions and closing prayer.



From there, we gathered in the common area and began discussions about the upcoming Chapter in (August) having a Clare of Assisi theme. We have been invited by the Gateway Fellowship to join in an OEF book study on Clare of Assisi "A Heart Full Of Love", as preparation for Chapter. This will begin in March. We already have the books and are looking forward to the study.

Markie filled us in on how the new Servant Council is melding and molding and praying for our Order. Of course, Chapter is a main focus, as is "ongoing formation" or "spiritual growth opportunities" that can be offered for our professed members. As part of that came a discussion on how we can care for one another. We have all been subject to harm (hurtfulness/woundedness) by others, intentionally or unintentionally, in the world, and even in our little Order. How can we go from Harm to Healing? Can we begin by loving each other where we are? Agree to disagree? Approach "hot topics" with respect, a sense of calm, and an open ear to hear? This discussion went forward into our pitch in luncheon and beyond.

The Crossroads Fellowship plan to gather again in the Fall. It was suggested to meet the third week of September in Pokagon State Park.

We may be able to share with the UU Church who has group camping and meals that weekend. We would have our OEF time together and share in the UU fellowship and meals. More will be decided as we get closer to the Fall Season.

Lent provides an opportunity for each of us to live generously ~ to show gratitude for God's gifts to us and to share those gifts with others. Our OEF Crossroads Fellowship brought canned goods and nonperishable items to be distributed to the food pantry at Grace Episcopal Church and other food pantries in the area.

We closed our day with a daily prayer with St. Francis and sharing the "Do You Want to Fast This Lent". Hugs and safe travels were shared by all. It was a Holy Spirit-filled day.



L-r: Ron, Markie, Mark, Deb

**THE NORTHEAST FELLOWSHIP** met, via ZOOM on March 28, 2020...

which may be a preview of how more and more of our Fellowships will gather; and because it was ZOOM Gathering, our Irish colleague Scott Peddie was able to share in the mode and mood of OEF Fellowship. We delight in the fact of their gathering, and look forward to hearing/reading a report of this gathering in time but with geographical reference.

Blessings be with our colleagues in the fullness of connection.

br. michael vosler, for the Fellowships Team

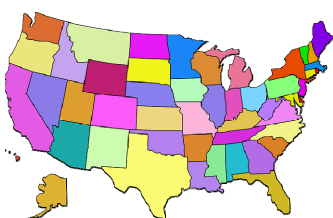
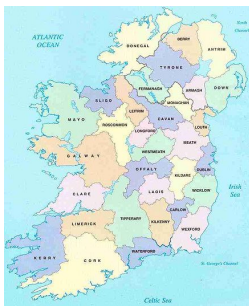


## Fellowship News... continued

**The Great Lakes Lighthouse Fellowship** met via Zoom on Sunday, April 19, 2020. Present were Br. John son of Syvert, Sr. Kiara Mychal, Sr. Chris Petersen, and new postulant Phil Waselik from LaCrosse, WI. We spent some time checking in with each other and catching up, just for the sake of fellowship. The group has decided to meet via Zoom every two weeks to keep each other's spirits up during the pandemic.

**FELLOWSHIPS COMING UP:**

Pandemic permitting, **The Great Lakes Lighthouse Fellowship** will have their annual retreat Thursday - Saturday, Oct. 1-3, 2020. Retreats are held at Assisi Heights Spirituality Center in Rochester, MN. More information will be made available closer to the event.



## Pandemic

by Lynn Ungar



What if you thought of it as the Jews consider  
the Sabbath--the most sacred of times?

Cease from travel.

Cease from buying and selling.

Give up, just for now,  
on trying to make the world different than it is.

Sing. Pray. Touch only those  
to whom you commit your life.

Center down.

And when your body has become still,  
reach out with your heart.

Know that we are connected  
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.  
(You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives  
are in one another's hands.  
(Surely, that has come clear.)

Do not reach out your hands.

Reach out your heart.

Reach out your words.

Reach out all the tendrils  
of compassion that move, invisibly,  
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love--  
for better or worse, in sickness and in health,  
so long as we all shall live.

-Submitted by Br. Brendan Shaffer, OEF







# Formation Station



## Introducing:

### **Mir Plemmons:**

I've walked a rather Franciscan path since childhood, finding God in the woods and outdoors. I ran across Don Francisco and John Michael Talbot's singing in the 80s and learned of St. Francis' influence on them. I learned more about him, and then in 1986 got my call from a Readers Digest about Father Jerzy Popiulsko, a Conventual Franciscan, and in 1994, I think, helped form a Franciscan community. Each thing has its season, and after a number of losses the remaining members agreed it was time to close the books and find new paths forward. I was the only one who still felt the call irresistibly. Thus, I began exploring the Franciscan options that could accept an intersex friar. I've been in formation with OEF since December.

I'm a special education teacher at Renton High School, am married as of St. Stephen's Day to my wonderful wife Kris, and live outside town in the woods and ravines that delight my heart.

I'm on facebook as Mir Plemmons (find me via Jul or Stephan), and I'm very glad to be here!

Pax et bonum,  
Mir Plemmons

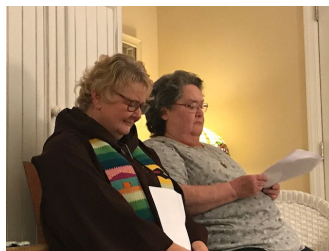
## **Welcome, Mir!**

\* \* \* \* \*

Greetings Sibs!

I have photos of the Novitiate Ceremony for our dear sister Claire Slomski in Warminster, PA! I am thrilled to welcome her as a Novice into the OEF, and I fear I've been a pretty "flaky" formation companion. Bud's ailments and a dozen unforeseen issues have caused me to be less than "consistent." Regardless, as always, Claire is gracious and always ready to do the next thing. She's an excellent Novice and student of all things Franciscan.

Without further ado, I give you our dear Sister Claire Slomski: Novice to The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans:



Sr. Paula Clare, Claire



Receiving the Tau



Friends & family gathered

Humbly submitted, Sr. Paula Clare, OEF

## **Congratulations, Claire!**

\* \* \* \* \*

On March 14, 2020, a little group of us got together in Waco, TX, for the Novicing Ceremony of Andrew Clifford, who is from McKinney, TX. The group included myself and a friend who has attended several Bluebonnet gatherings, Chelle Samaniego. We met at Seventh & James Baptist Church, where we had late morning prayers with wonderful music from the singer Ashane.

Because of growing concerns about the Coronavirus, we decided to forgo some of the usual Bluebonnet excursions and replace them with a brown bag lunch at the church. We did make a brief field trip to the Seeds of Hope office (partly because we wanted coffee), which is in one of the church buildings.

## Formation Station... continued

After this, we went back to the older youth Sunday school room for a deeply moving Novicing Ceremony and Communion.



Andrew!



Sr. Katie &amp; Andrew



Andrew &amp; Katie

Joyfully reported by Sr. Katie Cook, OEF

## Congratulations, Andrew!

\* \* \* \* \*

### And Introducing:

#### Donal Welch:

I was born and was raised in Los Angeles, and attended college and graduate school in Salem, OR and Santa Barbara, CA. By profession, I have been an educational audiologist in the public schools for 33 years.

My husband and I moved from Albuquerque, NM, to Creston, Iowa, nearly 4 years ago, so that we could be closer to our children and grandchildren. It's quite a departure from life in a large metropolitan area, but it's the right place at the right time. My

great passion is working with children, particularly those who are at risk. I serve on the Iowa Council for Early Access, which advises and assists the Iowa Department of Education in the planning, coordination, and delivery of services to infants and toddlers with special needs and their families.

My interest in St. Francis has its roots in my recovery from alcoholism. In some meetings, The Prayer of St. Francis is recited. The seed was planted, but it took 20+ years and an encounter with a statue of Francis at the San Diego Mission before my interest took root. There is something in recovery referred to as "spiritual awakening", mentioned in the 12th Step. I had been waiting for my spiritual awakening for ages, expecting a chorus of angels or a bolt of lightning. Little did I realize that the awakening I was seeking was happening in hundreds of little ways over many years. It was my connection with Francis and Clare that opened my eyes. I am excited and grateful to be a part of OEF. Author Kent Nerburn sums it up better than I: "If you find a tradition that engages your spirit, give yourself to it with your whole heart. Read its texts. Participate in its rituals. Give yourself over to its ways of spiritual formation."

## Welcome, Donal!



## 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  
c/o Nancy Menning, Treasurer  
908 Elm St  
Missoula, MT 59802**





*Fiddlesticks*  
*c/o Christine Petersen, OEF*  
*934 Round Oak Ct.*  
*Nekoosa, WI 54457*  
*U.S.A.*



## Corona de Cristo in The Era of Corona Virus

Brother Coyote, OEF, Easter Day 2020



forty days of fearing  
 the worst could be happening  
 worlds falling apart  
 hospitals filling their beds  
 loved ones barely breathing

towns running out of most things  
 they're needing to curb the suffering---  
 you know---hoping, hugging, healing--

I am worrying as I hike alone  
 up a running rivulet Holy Saturday  
 grieving that worshipping together  
 is being altogether abandoned

while trying to climb up out of this muddy stream  
 I see a glowing on the creek bank above me  
 a wildflower, one I'm remembering  
 might be the rare Corona de Cristo

recalling how an elderly Mexican woman revealed  
 "its protruding thorns once worn by Jesus  
 on the cross

begin turning into a crown of blossoms  
 ones we've been going to see each Easter day  
 since the time I began walking "

I'm standing up high on the bank now,  
 leaning over the little wreaths  
 blooming with a paler tint of purple  
 than I've ever seen coloring any floral cluster  
 each stalk ending in such a glorious wreath  
 not just reminding us of endings  
 but foreshadowing new  
 beginnings

Brother Coyote,  
 Easter Day 2020

