

# FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 137

Lent 2021



## Kicked Out or Freed?

A Fascinating OEF-Chat Discussion Hosted by Br. Juniper, OEF

"I am really interested in others take on this interpretation of Adam & Eve's leaving the garden. I am really intrigued. It is from the *Daily Devotional*."

**November 24, 2020**

*Then the Lord God said, "See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil." - Genesis 3:22b (NRSV)*

In the initial story of happiness, choices, and paradise lost, Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden. They didn't have to work or worry about what to wear. Everything was available to them. God only asked for one thing: "Do not eat this one fruit in the garden. It is the fruit of knowledge."

If somebody says to you, "Do not think about pink elephants," what are you going to think about? We're all picturing pink elephants right now. "Do not even think about eating that one fruit." Okay, now we're all thinking about eating that one fruit.

God did not have to put the tree in the Garden of Eden. God could have left out the tree. But God decided to give human beings a choice, and we chose to choose. That choice gave Adam and Eve the knowledge of good and evil. Apparently, you don't understand the difference between good and evil until you have dipped into both.

God could have created us like little house cats, where God would deliver a little bowl of water, a little bit of food, and a garden full of cat nip. We wouldn't ever get outside but we'd be brushed, babied, and loved.

Instead, God put this little cat flap on the garden's door and said, "I dare you." Adam and Eve took the dare. Next thing you know, they were kicked out of the Garden of Eden. But were they kicked out? Or freed?

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## Kicked Out or Freed? ...continued

Escaping through the cat flap of good and evil, they made their break for freedom. And the human race was born, complete with challenge, choice and curiosity.

**Prayer:**

Thank you, God, for curiously creating us as curious creatures.

**Lillian Daniel**

\* \* \* \* \*

**Siblings respond:**

This is a fresh way to look at the text and the “narrative” which has become so familiar and engrained. I LOVE the idea of the “cat flap” and it made me think about the Father of the prodigal standing and holding the front door open for his son. “Go. Do what you think you need to do... my door will always be open and your inheritance is always assured.”

This falls apart at the part of the creation story where Adam and Eve were TOLD to leave and not come back. Were they told “Do not come back?” I know there were flaming sentries at the gate, but does that mean they could not get back in? The “original sin” theology seems to lose its “punch” because of Jesus and grace. So why did things have to start off in such a profoundly “negative” way? Right/wrong. Good/evil. Was binary thinking REALLY the way a God of higher consciousness would have done things?

Pondering.

Love to you all, Paula Clare

\* \* \* \* \*

Hmm, freed....

Freed to focus on ourselves first and foremost, instead of having that primal communion with all other creatures. Freed to continually seek new ways to "be like God," forgetting that we had

been made in God's image all along. Freed to experiment with hierarchies, instead of being "bone of the bone, flesh of the flesh" to one another. Above all, freed, every day in every way to say to our Creator, "You're not the boss of me," because that's what free, mature, adult creatures do. Apologies if parody has slid down through sarcasm and flopped into snark here. (I sometimes have a hard time telling these days.) Just my take on this reading.

Peace & blessing,

*David Rensberger*, Associate of the OEF

\* \* \* \* \*

Sarcasm??? Snark? I thought that was the prevailing path to the American dream? ;-(

What Sister Lillian (my UCC colleague and writer of the peace in question) seemed to miss was that it was not a tree of Knowledge but a Tree of judgment of good and evil). The characters in question ate a small part of that fruit and assumed they had the whole substance. If we would fault God for anything, I think it might be that the Creator One kicked and pushed them out the cat flap so they could take their presumption of mastery of good and evil and go vote accordingly! Selah. (Is that the English translation of "snark"?)

Pace e bene, James

\* \* \* \* \*

So, for John Juniper, Lillian's take on the story is intriguing, inviting our take on HER version of this 2nd Story of Creation Genesis offers us... the 1st story culminating in a 6th exclamation of delight by the Creator in all that's been created, IT IS GOOD! IT IS GOOD! IT IS GOOD! IT IS GOOD! IT IS GOOD! IT IS VERY GOOD! And in the 1st story all the plants and all the trees without exception are made available to all the inhabitants of creation... have at it! Eat of the abundance of my love! Glad to have you here! Eat and enjoy! It's ALL GOOD!

## Kicked Out or Freed? ...continued

So good that lest we get giddy with wonderfulness, a more ambivalent story is shared just to remind us that life as it has been given to us does at least have shades of gray, and real tragedies that invite us to ponder and discern in this strange and wondrous and sometimes painful world G-o-d plopped us into. And here in this 2nd story all the trees, all the trees EXCEPT this ONE beyooootiful tree that had a name: The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil [ok, James, what version says “judgment” vs. “knowledge?” Which is NRSV? Let’s go with “knowledge,” and who seems to have knowledge here? to have some truth to speak? The serpent who is not called “evil”, but “crafty,” implying “skillful discernment offering manipulative advantage,” and also apparently created to abide in God’s Garden KNOWING TRUTH about that TREE: Eat that fruit and (1) it won’t kill you, (2) you will be amazed at what you see (eyes opened) and know what’s good (life-giving and lovingly relational) AND what’s evil (sabotages life and relationships) — and who wouldn’t want to gain that bit of knowledge & understanding, and get the bonus of the yumminess of this fruit!

And the 1st thing they see & know is: they’re NAKED! So is that good or evil? Some other cultures thought that was just fine! Here, the story teller has apparently decided that nakedness is not a good thing, and that leads to the inventiveness of plant textiles, and the practice of hiding our differences and hiding from the Creator who enjoys evening walks in the Garden — and evening is coming on and they know that they maybe made a mistake... “Do not” followed by “did” = disobedience and that means clothes and hiding all the time... and expulsion. All of which is to say, the 1st of the Genesis stories invites instant awe and wonder and gratitude.

The 2nd invites playful consideration of various inconsistencies seemingly purposefully planted to invite the intrusion of a cat-flap and the question: Is freedom on this side of that flap of good & evil, or the other side? I like Lillian’s playful slant on the story. But with what we’ve

done to earth’s air and water, with our hungry exploitation of everything we can use or make and sell, then add our deep mistrust of differences and diversity, and our reliance on violence. We find ourselves in a trap of our own making, as in David R.’s slant on the story.

Maybe we can fix things, do things differently — but what if people are happy doing what they’re doing, or unhappy doing what they have to do to survive? Can we fix ourselves? Will we allow ourselves to somehow be collectively repaired towards love and wise caring for earth and each other? We certainly ARE CURIOUS CREATURES — she got that truth right!

Someone ask the serpent: now what? Or let’s confess to God: yeah, we KNOW! And thank God for joining us on this side of the cat flap. It doesn’t solve all the problems, but that Divine Love sure helps... makes me want to sing! and pray! and dance a little! and soak up some glorious sunshine, and walk in the rain. Knowing that other folks, better off than us or worse off, maybe wiser and more adaptive than us, we all get to live the sunshine and rain, and suffer the too much of this & too little of that... and those sunrises and sunsets sure are something! Thank you, Creator God, for trees and plants and gardens, for cat flaps and love.

- michael v.

\* \* \* \* \*

Or, free to choose to join with God without it being a given?

So much depends on the definition of free/freed/freedom. We in this chat group tend to be US-born, White, Christian, and perhaps skewed older rather than younger, so perhaps our shared understanding of “freedom” is constrained by the cultural niche in which we have been raised and live.

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## Kicked Out or Freed? ...continued

The Soviet Union, where I spent a LOT of time, had wonderful political jokes (much better than Russia though right after *raspad*, i.e. the dissolution of the union of the republics that made up the Soviet Union, that sharp-witted political humor tradition continued for a while). I recall one joke focused on the word, *freedom*. (In Russian, there are two words for freedom: *liberatsiya*, which is etymologically French, and *svoboda*, which is an *ikonorussskoe slovo* [not sure how to translate that, but it means that it came into today's language through Old Russian and the vulgar language, dating back at least 12 centuries. Whereas the etymologically French word dates from the days of Peter I, 1800s, who was fascinated with Europe, built St. Petersburg on a European model, and introduced the use of French into the language of the leader class. Hence, there is a sense of "high style" associated with those words even today.

All that said, *liberatsiya*, which like the French word it comes from implies a form of liberation from something that is bound no longer being bound and can imply some level of loosening from political binding, differs pretty significantly from the broader connotations of *svoboda* which has nothing to do with being unbound. But being left alone to do as one pleases and generally no political overtones or undertones are intended. Though, of course, it can be used in talking about politics. Anyway, that is the way I understand these words, being a general linguist and near-native speaker of Russian and not being an etymologist or semantologist.

So, considering that the word *freedom* (thinking of *svoboda*), like a great many words, is most accurately defined within a culture, then a political joke of the 1980s, considered hysterically funny in the USSR but perhaps understandable. But less funny in the USA because the underlying emotions would not be present in the USA. I repeat the afore-referenced joke here, a conversation between a Russian and American, each insisting that his/her/their culture is freer, told at a time when the US considered the Soviet Union a strong example of lack of personal freedom and

the Russians/Soviets knew that kind of American thinking:

R: How can you say we do not have freedom? We have as much freedom as you do.

A: Really? We can criticize President Reagan.

R: So can we.

(The joke, of course, being that one did NOT criticize Comrade Brezhnev—along with a host of culturally laden emotions, even pre-dating the USSR.)

Sorry for this long introduction to not being able to respond well to the interpretation shared by Br. Juniper about the Garden of Eden, but important for setting the context for my response. The writer of the Garden of Eden *Daily Devotions* article (Lillian Daniel), to me, though I do not know her, is clearly operating on a culturally American understanding, likely White, likely of a somewhat younger generation in the USA (she writes like my students think), of what it means to be free. To reflect on her words within that cultural framework would keep us bound to those concepts emanating from our own cultural niches that are less than enlightening, non-factual, and questionable as being founded in any Truth.

So, I am left with the uncomfortable pronouncement of Montague Brown, a professor at St. Anselm College, writing about St. Augustine's reflections on this topic: "The relationship between human freedom and God's activity (whether understood as knowledge, causality, or grace) is one of the most vexed problems in philosophy."

[https://www.anselm.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Institute%20of%20SA%20Studies/4.5.3.2h\\_22Brown.pdf](https://www.anselm.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Institute%20of%20SA%20Studies/4.5.3.2h_22Brown.pdf)

And I am left with an innate tendency to follow the precept of Occam's razor. Well, because sometimes the simplest explanation, whether or not intellectually the truest response provides at least a certain level of comfort in thinking that one just might know some truth.

## Kicked Out or Freed? ...continued

The bottom line? I cannot accept Ms. Daniels' bottom line. For me, she has inadequately justified even the question. (I suppose in that David and I agree though David's wonderful ability to use sarcasm for elucidation is something I have never mastered.)

Peace – Betty Lou

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Hmmm... this is a good one to mull over. Thanks Br. Juniper!

I grew up being taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph (SSJ) that when Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, God also gave them a gift... The Gift of Free Will. Thinking about this today, the banishment is not necessarily all the bad things that are experienced in the world. What can look good to one person from the outside can actually be a train wreck for someone living in a situation. The grass is always greener... yadda-yadda.

At a much younger time of my life, I wished I was married, had kids, good health, the whole picket fence Rockwellian All American Dream life. I was engaged once and could have gone down that road. But I made a difficult choice not to because he cheated on me a few times, including with someone with whom was supposed to be a friend. The dream dashed.

Years later, the choice came to have a hysterectomy at age 34. I always wanted kids. But with more life experiences under my belt and being physically ill, I made the choice the doctors recommended.

A few nights before the surgery, I was receiving blood transfusions. Some women from a ministry who rented space from the church where I worked and worshiped at came to my room to pray over me. After prayers, all I could hear them say were things like, "God doesn't want you to have this surgery. God wants you to be healed and have kids and a husband and this and that."

I was overwhelmed. I said thanks for the prayers but I would pray more about this and seek counsel.

As soon as they left the room, I hopped on the phone before prayer and talked with both my pastor and the volunteer pastor who worked together with our youth. They both asked me what came to my heart as they prayed. It seemed the more they prayed the more at peace I felt I was making the right decision to have the hysterectomy. Both pastors said that was my confirmation that the doctors and I were on the right track. I could always adopt later. A few more prayers, and the surgery was completed.

What seemed to be a horrible choice for those women who came to pray, for a single woman to squander the opportunity to have a husband and children, was actually a decision of peace. Maybe if I was 24 instead of 34, I would have been more upset. But I truly was at peace with the decision.

The night before the surgery, the volunteer pastor brought the kids from the youth group to visit with a few of their parents. Since these were Junior and Senior High kids, he appropriately explained what was happening to me physically and made a teaching reference for them to the woman who bled and touched Jesus robe. (He was such a good teacher!) I never thought about the situation like that either.

A few weeks later, one of the women from that group but who wasn't one of those who came to the hospital sat next to me after meditation. She worked part time in our office and was a retired psychologist. She asked how I was doing and I shared that I was at peace. She then said, remember you already have children: the youth group. Another wise person for whom I was thankful. She didn't judge my decision; another little gift of support from our Creator.

At the time, of course, things might have looked bleak. But years later I was able to thank God for not letting me go down that rabbit hole of a "perfect picket fence life."

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## Kicked Out or Freed? ...continued

And several years later, my ex and I were able to heal and move on. He found someone else who really was more suited and physically healthy for him than I. I was thankful for that healing. Sadly, he passed away a few years ago. I was so thankful to talk with him before that surgery.

So, looking back, all decisions, good or bad are all gifts. Maybe its the other gift God gives us when we ask for grace, that can be used as a lens to discern the immediate choices and retrospection to turn those lemons to lemonade and the timing to pour the glass and how big a glass we do or don't need at the time or at all.

Thanks Br. Juniper! Its been a long time to be reminded that what can seem to be a bad situation can later be seen as the best choice made at the time. That could be the freedom part of this gift of choice.

Sr. Kiara Mychal

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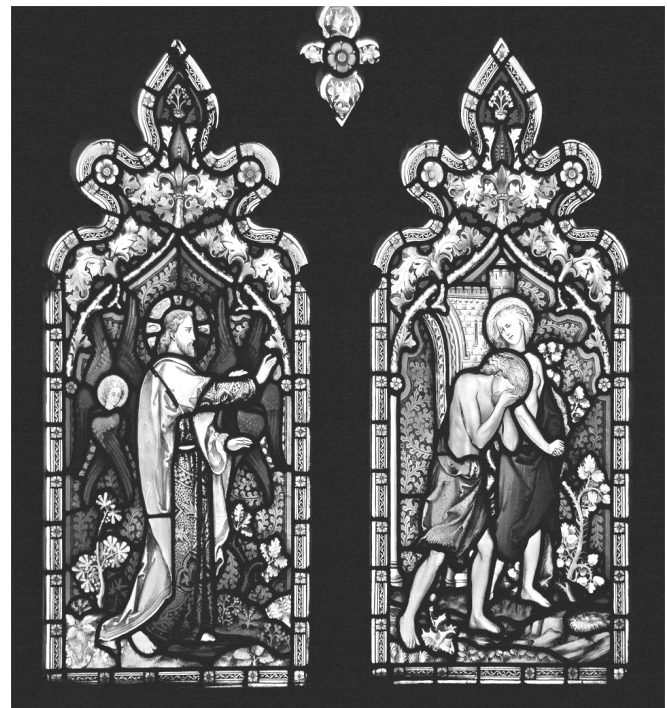
Perhaps Franciscan Duns Scotus can shed some light on the topic - "God's will for humanity regarding original justice is expressed in two ordered divine decisions: That we should have original justice and that God will give it to us unless Adam places a barrier to this gift by sinning. The second divine decision means that Adam's sin is sufficient for our not having original justice. These two divine decisions are, of course, contingent. But the first is prior to the second. This means that even if Adam's sin prevents us from having original justice, this justice is still a quality that we are required (i.e., obliged) to have. By failing to have the gift, we are failing in one of our obligations to God. It is this failure that Scotus identifies as original sin." *Duns Scotus* by Richard Cross

Br. Salachar (saladjar)

I have a sense "Adam and Eve" (archetypes for male and female that we are beginning to integrate) were KICKED OUT in order to BE FREED! That in itself symbolizes integration. It is not a binary "either/or," but a holistic "both/and." And holding the tension of the necessary paradox together is what ultimately leads to the liberation. "Kicked out" in order to "be freed" is repeated in the psalms and in our own liturgical music, (ie: "On Eagles' Wings.") The eaglets are literally kicked out of the nest, caught before they hit the ground. And the process is repeated until they "get it." And they fly. Original innocence ("the garden"/"the nest") comes to a necessary end FOR THE ADULT, FOR THE SPIRITUALLY MATURE; not as an end in itself (NOTHING IS AN END IN ITSELF!), BUT TO BE PASSED ON AS WISDOM!

Pace e Bene!

Br. CJ





# Words from The Servant Council



## **2021 OEF Chapter/Convocation June 24th - 27th, 2021 Pallottine Renewal Center Florissant, MO (North St. Louis)**

Our theme for this year's gathering is "Peace, Comfort and Joy: Caring For Our Community."

For our 2021 Chapter/Convocation we are planning both an in-person hybrid (lots of online programming) and an online only gathering. If we have an in-person gathering early arrivals are welcome to arrive on Wed. June 23rd after 2pm. Also we may have a community service opportunity on Thurs. morning for those interested. Regardless of how we gather we will pray together, worship together, have fun together, conduct the Order's business together, spend time in small groups together and time to just be together.

We are monitoring the COVID-19 situation in the U.S. and will make a decision in May. As for now, registration will open April 1st and close May 31st. If we go to an on-line only Chapter/Convocation we will be using the same dates with some times adjusted for time zones and ZOOM fatigue. Registration will only be a sign-up for those who are interested in attending an in-person gathering. If we actually meet in person, financial payment will be due at a later time.

Regarding the cost of our annual in-person gathering, we need to remember that our Chapter/Convocation is a large portion of our budget. Though this year, there is no set registration fee. Those siblings who can pay all of the recommended fee (early arrivals on Wed. \$400.00 per person and those arriving on Thurs. \$300.00 per person), or a portion, are lovingly invited to do so. All siblings who want to attend Chapter/Convocation should not be denied the opportunity due to lack of funds. We are all called to be good stewards of our resources. As an Order we need to be aware of where our needs are and how to support one another. Give if you can so all can be included.

## **OEF Statement On the Jan. 6th Riots**

The Council wrote a statement as a response to the past events in Washington D.C. Currently, you can find the statement on our FB page and soon will be on our website.

We wanted to encourage you all to continue to pray without ceasing and to continue to care for one another. We invite you to read the United Church of Christ statement mentioned in our statement and also consider reading the statement posted by FAN (Franciscan Action Network -- [www.FranciscanAction.org](http://www.FranciscanAction.org)). These two statements say all that we could ever think and write. We invite you to share your comments on these statements. And like Bishop Curry, ask the question, "who shall we be?"

Peace, comfort and joy to each of you in 2021,

Markie and Council





# Formation Station



## Introducing:

### Ian Olson

I'm Ian, a born and raised Minnesotan, ordained in the Protestant tradition, but with strong Catholic roots, very strong (I sometimes introduce myself as a Catholic Baptist).

I have served in the Army for almost 20 years with the last seven as a Chaplain. When I'm not with my Soldiers, I serve as a Staff Chaplain at a 200+ bed hospital where I come alongside patients, family, friends, and staff to support in their spiritual and emotional care.

I love to travel and have done so extensively, enjoying the people, food, and customs of a wide variety of cultures. Perhaps someday our paths will cross and I can learn a little about you.

### Dawn Dreisbach

Greetings and blessings! My name is Dawn Dreisbach. I grew up in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Ohio, then moved to Boston, where I now belong to an Episcopal church. I teach special education at the Lowell Community Charter Public School. I play violin, have a master's degree in women's studies, and have acted in and written plays. I live with my creative and geeky partner Margaret. My experience of God is imaginative and deep. When I first found the OEF site, I loved Br. Louis Canter chanting of the Principles. I love the idea of a multi-denominational opportunity.

Why OEF? As John Michael wrote in issue 135 of Fiddlesticks, "We exist to provoke the conscience of the church and the world both through our unashamed proclamation of a Loving God and our fearless demonstration of that love to our neighbors." I feel like OEF is "my people."

### Allen Siegel

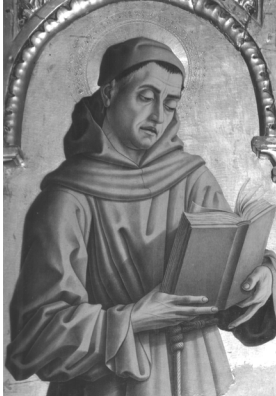
I'm a novice-transfer, a member of the Religious Society of Friends and an ordained minister. Live in northeastern Maryland with my wife Susan. I am the Chaplain and director of spiritual care services for the University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Health System. I am a disaster Chaplain for the American Red Cross and US Health and Human Services.

*\*Any and all new-comers to OEF are invited to introduce themselves in this column. Please write a simple paragraph about who you are, what you do, how you found OEF, etc. Send it to Sister Chris, Fiddlesticks Editor, at [capoef@solarus.biz](mailto:capoef@solarus.biz).*





## THE OEF JOHN DUNS SCOTUS, FRANCISCAN, STUDY GROUP



...dug into Mary Beth Ingham's **Scotus For Dunces** (Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003).

...felt we pretty much fit that category of scholarship on Duns Scotus (i.e., dunces).

...met in five sessions from November into January.

Alphabetically, those who participated along the way included: Linda Barley, Salachar Bowman, Andrew Clifford, John Michael Longworth, Samuel Loudenslager, Nancy Menning, & Michael Vosler.

Because he died young (at age 42) and moved around a good bit, Duns Scotus did not have a "finished" articulation of his thought, but Mary Beth Ingham has found a way to see where he was headed. Her words: One day I recognized the centrality of beauty for whims a Franciscan, along with the role of love and creativity.

He wrote a long time ago, why should we care?

Because he offers a Franciscan answer to the question: What does it mean to be human? Every day, consciously or not, we act out an answer to that question.

Scotus' answer has come to significantly define "the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition" to which we belong. Others have offered answers which may have come to influence your answer more than you think: Aristotle, Plato, Modern & Post-Modern philosophers.

"The Church" has an answer at its core, then splits into versions of it: "Jesus is the answer!" "Love is the answer!" Jesus models the answer, embodies the answer, leads us to the answer, informs our answer.

Four insights the Study Group would share as fruit of our study of Mary Beth Ingham's book:

1. We confirm Genesis 1:27-31: We are made in the Image of the One who made us, who blessed

us, who said 'Go and make more of you!', who looked upon us and (in love!) declared that WE AND ALL OF CREATION ARE 'VERY GOOD!'

2. We attest with the 1st Letter of John, that GOD IS LOVE, and loved by God in every moment of our lives we are in fellowship, in communion with God. We and all humans have been given the capacity, the indwelling affections, for loving God and knowing God in this life. We carry within us and therefore can willfully access the beatific vision of HARMONY between God and ourselves, HARMONY within ourselves, and HARMONY relationally with every other human being and with all creation. That harmony, when it happens, reflects the beauty of God.

3. Incarnation, Emmanuel, God-with-us was intended by God from the first moment of "Light in the darkness" (Genesis 1:3ff). Jesus is the fullness of the divine and human, embodying harmony between God and all that God has created.

4. Rational human freedom is our highest possibility to love God and to imitate God's generous and prodigious love for ourselves, for others, for creation in an ordered way that reflects the harmony that God intends. We won't always get it right as we exercise this freedom, but God loves us and attends to us even in the moments of our muck-ups, and delights in us when we "turn around," intend the harmony that God intends, and act to make it so.

Duns Scotus, along with you and me walking this Franciscan way, was taken with Francis and Clare's (FranClarian?) charism of loving a God who loves so prodigiously. Francis and Clare were led to "throw everything away out of love." In them, Duns Scotus saw the integration of intellect and spirit through love, which allows all of us to be "both scientist and artist, philosopher/theologian and poet, people of rational faith." Mary Beth Ingham closes her reflections with: "In his intellectual and spiritual vision of reality, Scotus may offer the resources of the Franciscan and Christian tradition to address in a coherent way the needs of all. His thought may be another support for rebuilding not just the Church but also an entire society, indeed, the entire world."

- michael v., for the group & edited by the group

## Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity

As a review, and for all the OEF newbies, the JCFU is a Committee developed to build bridges between Tertiary Franciscan Orders, providing opportunities (mini-conferences) to explore the values and charisms our Orders share in common, and dialogue together on how we might move closer together as followers of Christ, and Saints Francis and Clare. Currently, we have representatives from the OFS, TSSF, OLF, and our very own OEF. The current OEF representatives are: Br. Ron Nuss-Warren and Sr. Debra Snider-Scott. At this Fiddlesticks publication we will have had our Zoom mini-conference dated January 14-16, 2021. Usually this mini-conference is in-person and shared once a year.

As we all know, we have been dislodged from "usual and normal". But, thanks to technology, we can and will continue to journey forward. With that in mind, we decided as a Committee that with this Zoom technology, and the travel time and expense saved for another time, why not offer a second Zoom mini-conference May 13-14-15 of 2021?

We look forward to this event and inviting more to gather. Each Order invites five people to attend. The Joy has been the unanimous response from the invitees of our loving siblings. I'm positive that January went well, and May is right around the corner.

Ron and I will be inviting five more from our Order. With the OEF being Ecumenical in nature, we do get excited to share with our Franciscan families of other Orders. We do ask that you keep us in prayer, and maintain that enthusiasm and joy of coming to a table of which ALL are welcome to take a seat.

Beyond May, we are hoping for an in-person planning meeting in June, and an Interfaith (Jewish, Christian, Muslim) Conference November 14-16, 2021 at Mariandale Retreat Center in Ossining, NY.

## 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



## Christianity's Complicity In The Jan 6 Insurrection At The US Capitol

Siblings and friends,

The American Academy of Religion is the professional organization of people engaged in the academic study of religion. This morning (January 29, 2021) they hosted a 90-minute webinar on "Insurrection, White Supremacy, and Religion."

This webinar is a valuable resource for anyone who wants to begin to understand the central role of Christianity in the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6. And of course the drama of January 6 was not an isolated event. Christian Nationalism has deep roots in American history and remains powerful going forward.

Many of us in the OEF want to see our little religious order take a firm stand against racial injustice in the US and elsewhere. Many of us want to find ways to effectively dismantle racism in the diverse institutions that structure our social and public life together. The scholars of religion featured in this webinar present info that may help us understand the complicity of some forms of Christianity in ongoing racial injustice in the United States.

Description: Religion figured centrally in the January 6, 2021, siege of the U.S. Capitol, revealing yet again the entanglement of white supremacy and public religion in American politics. Images of the cross, the Bible, and prayers in the Senate chamber show how religiosity was intertwined with the attempt to overturn the election. This webinar examines the connections among religion, white supremacy, and the attempts to delegitimize the results of the 2020 presidential election, describing the interplay between Christian nationalism, conspiracy theories, and anti-Black racism.

The webinar, conceived and organized by Anthea Butler, is hosted by the Committee on the Public Understanding of Religion (CPUR) of the American Academy of Religion. CPUR webinars

aim to enrich discussions of religion as it intersects with urgent public issues—e.g. racism, misogyny, xenophobia, public health, and sustainability—whether these occur in the classroom, the newsroom, or in the boardroom.

Webinar presenters include:

**Anthea Butler** - University of Pennsylvania Associate Professor and author of the forthcoming book *White Evangelical Racism*

**Peter Manseau** - Curator of American Religious History at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History

**Samuel Perry** - University of Oklahoma Associate Professor

**Sarah Posner** - Journalist and author of *Unholy: Why White Evangelicals Worship at the Altar of Donald Trump*

**Andrew Whitehead** - Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis Associate Professor

The moderator is **Evan Berry**, chair of the AAR's Committee on the Public Understanding of Religion and Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and Environmental Humanities at Arizona State University.

You can watch the webinar here:

<https://fb.watch/3k3INUnW-z/>

Peace and All Good,

Nancy Menning, OEF



## Our Brother Recognized!\*



Considered a pioneer in the local food movement, Gary Paul Nabhan has been involved in justice and environmental causes for decades.

From a young age, Gary Paul Nabhan loved nature and the solitude of the outdoors. The backyard of his boyhood home butted up against Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, and by age 14, he became the first youth member of the Save the Dunes Council, which worked to protect the shores of Lake Michigan.

His Irish mother's family was Catholic, but as a boy, his Lebanese relatives on his father's side attended a Lutheran church that was closer to their home. Gary warmly describes the effort to promote dialogue and says that Catholics and other Christian denominations are united in their concerns for social justice values, such as caring for creation and human dignity.

### 'ONE OF US'

Gary's journey to becoming a Franciscan started when he was 20 years old. He spent six days meditating and camping alone. Upon returning to civilization, he saw an article on St. Francis of Assisi being designated patron of ecology, and he became interested. A few years later, he founded the Franciscan Renewal Center in Arizona and began inquiring about formal formation, but it was a long way from where he lived.

During this time, he was promoting a book he had written on his 250-mile walking pilgrimage to Assisi. A woman approached Gary at a reading of his book *Songbirds, Truffles, and Wolves* and said to him, "I think you're one of us." That woman was Nancy Menning, then the leader of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (OEF). That simple phrase

jumpstarted his Franciscan formation. In accordance with St. Francis' intention when he encouraged the formation of a third order, the OEFs welcome men and women, married or single, ordained or laity from any Christian denomination who feel called to a lifelong dedication to the Franciscan charism.

Knowing him to be a nature lover and with a nod to the story of St. Francis taming the wolf of Gubbio, Gary's friends, fellow students, and spiritual advisors have christened him "Brother Coyote," since one is bound to see more coyotes in the Southwest than wolves like the one St. Francis tamed. Now, Gary says, whenever he walks into a room full of his OEF sisters and brothers, everyone howls.

At age 17, Gary took a gap year from college to work at the headquarters for the first Earth Day and contributed to a newsletter about the event. He acknowledges some paradoxes have occurred since 1970. Despite the initial participation of many congregations, as more people sought to get trained in the science behind climate change, many forgot the connection to their faith. As a result, caring-for-creation discussions eventually became excluded from science-based discussions.

Through his work, Gary attempts to show that science and faith are far more complementary than contradictory, citing authors such as Richard Rohr, Thomas Berry, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, all of whom use the term *evolution* as it relates to faith as well as science. He says, "I've tried my best to bridge those two sides and heal the wounds." He is grateful for initiatives like "*Laudato Si*," which have the same goal and help point out common ground.

### HEALING WOUNDS AT THE BORDER

More recently, Gary's work has seen him advocating along the US-Mexico border, along the path of the Trump administration's proposed border wall. When Gary was a botany student, he earned money teaching on a Native American reservation, where he met many Franciscans who lived among indigenous desert farmers. Immersed in that setting, he gained a respect for border cultures, fully accepting their different upbringings, lifestyles, customs, and traditions. He cofounded the Healing the Border project, an initiative of five indigenous

## Our Brother continued...

tribes concerned with the border wall and its impact on their lands, life, and faith. Working among people who for generations have been allowed to live and cross the border without issue offers another perspective. One often hears the saying, "We didn't cross the border; the border crossed us." Gary has worked on this issue ever since, initially assisting in transborder movement for spiritual gatherings held for centuries in the border areas. Any discussion on integral ecology, Gary says, cannot be simply about our knowledge of the environment, but must also include the diversity of human lives and values. Land restoration must take into account land ethics in order to increase a "value-based education about why and how to care for the land."

Gary admits his need to be anchored to the earth rather than having it be an abstract idea. He accomplishes this by keeping a 3-acre orchard, which offers him a sense of humility due to its difficulty. He says, "To be successful at farming, there are so many variables involved." His forthcoming collection of essays from Broadleaf Books, *Jesus for Farmers and Fishers: Justice for All Those Marginalized by Our Food System*, is due to be published next month. In it, he provides a retrospective on the most iconic parables Jesus offered to farmers and fishermen, drawing parallels to the crises that those now marginalized by modern agriculture and the fishing industry are facing today.

To learn more about Gary and his work toward ecological justice, visit his website:

**GaryNabhan.com.**

*\*Originally published in St. Anthony Messenger magazine, February 2021*



For Gary Nabhan (left), the dignity of nature and of those who work the land are deeply connected.



## A Few Good Reads



We are doing an outdoor exhibit on a book called **Holy Troublemakers & Unconventional Saints**  
By Daneen Akers

Highly recommend it!

Br. Stephan

I just stumbled across a website of prayers of all types, from many Christian faiths, across the ages. Just in case you haven't been there I send you this link: <https://acollectionofprayers.com/>

Sr. Julian

Tired of searching on line for movies and books about Francis or maybe you're looking for a phone app to augment current prayer practices? Whatever your quest may be, come and check out the new Formation resources tab on the OEF website ([www.oeffranciscans.org](http://www.oeffranciscans.org)) where you'll find an ever expanding list of contemporary and traditional resources for all parts of your Franciscan journey.

## Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Submissions for the Pentecost 2021 issue of "Fiddlesticks" will be accepted immediately.

**Deadline for submissions is April 15, 2021.**

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!**







# Fellowship News!



## Crossroads Fellowship December 19, 2020

We entered our Zoom room at 10:00 am with check-in and greetings. Those present today were: Markie, Darryl, Ron, Angie, Worth, John, Mark, Debbie.

Darryl started us off with opening prayer.

We each gave an update on the local ministries near and dear to our hearts:

Darryl (Louisville, KY): Street Reach Ministry is busy with winter care (tents/blankets/coats/food/sterno heats).

Markie (Muncie, IN): Community meals out of a local Episcopal church kitchen services 80-90 on an average day. Short staffed due to COVID-19.

John (Veracruz, Mexico): Feeding and Vet care of local dog population (an account is being set up for donations); Aiding local children with technology. There is a DIRE need for used tablets, laptops, phones for children to connect to e-learning. They will welcome any and all devices at:

**Señor John Fitch  
Guillermo Prieto  
Entre` Maria Teresa y Juan de la Barrera  
Colonia Don Pedro, Catemaco  
Veracruz, Mexico 95870**

Angie & Worth (Indianapolis, IN): Angie's Social Work career skills and ministerial abilities shine through in her care of family, friends, and neighbors in need of being heard, understood, and often times guided through difficult scenarios. Worth pastor's our seniors and families at a local senior community. COVID-19 has, as we are all painfully aware, has changed the landscape of these communities and the lives of families. Prayers for Worth and all those in Pastoral care. He is also very dedicated and active with "Faith in Indiana" ([faithinindiana.org](http://faithinindiana.org)). Worth shared many ways this organization serves as a vehicle for all faith communities (priests/pastors/rabbis/imams) and people of good will to work together for racial and economic equity in Indiana. Visit their website to learn more.

Ron (Midland, MI): Online Ministry, posting from the Daily Office; supporting his local Church Community and other local ministries; active with the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity and with OEF ministries.

Deb & Mark (Indianapolis, IN): Prayer Warriors; Active with OEF ministries and Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity; supportive of our area Wheeler Mission who serves men, women and children in need of food, shelter, clothing, while also providing, as needed, programs and guidance to a healthier life, Spiritual guidance, occupational guidance to skills training and education.

OEF News: The Servant Council is finding that the quarterly meetings bringing the various ministries of the Order together are being fruitful in improved communication, and providing more support to the various endeavors of our continually growing Order. The next quarterly meeting will be in March. A short-term committee of 8 has been formed to look at the 17 Principles of our Order. A review of subtle verbiage that can be changed to demonstrate more inclusivity. All of which will be presented to the body of the OEF at a Chapter gathering for prayerful discernment of changes.

Markie led our Spiritual Enrichment portion of our gathering by sharing insights from recent Sunday readings of John 1, 1 Thessalonians 5, and Psalm 121. Where does our Help and our Hope come from? As God came to humankind through Jesus, to be a light in the darkness, The Beacon Of Hope, so we are God's feet, hands, voice, the light in the darkness to all those around us. We keep Hope alive by caring and sharing and loving, listening, feeding, clothing, making those in need our extended family. As Francis and Clare embraced Lady Poverty and cared for the lepers of their time as family, so we bring Hope and the message of the Gospel (not always by words) to those who would be the lepers of today. Bringing Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel by, oftentimes, in the simplest of ways. Providing physical securities of food, shelter, clothing, warmth; offering a caring smile, a sense friendship and belonging as extended family speaks volumes, in and of themselves. That is Gospel in Action and Hope for another **day!**

Debbie led us in our prayers and petitions (taken from *Franciscan Morning and Evening Praise*). The O Antiphon of the day: O Flower of Jesse's stem, you have been raised up as a sign to all peoples....

For all of our petitions spoken and unspoken we pray:  
Come Lord Jesus!

## Fellowship News... continued

Our next Zoom Crossroads Fellowship Gathering happened on January 23, 2021, at 10:00 am EASTERN TIME. Mark provided our Spiritual Enrichment segment for that meeting.

Be sure to check out our OEF website and our OEF FB page, and always stay connected with OEF-chat e-mail.

With continued COVID-19 restrictions on travel and gathering, remember to give someone a call, e-mail, or send a card. Markie sent some out to OEF members who needed some extra love this Christmastide Season.

Closing Prayer: Mark

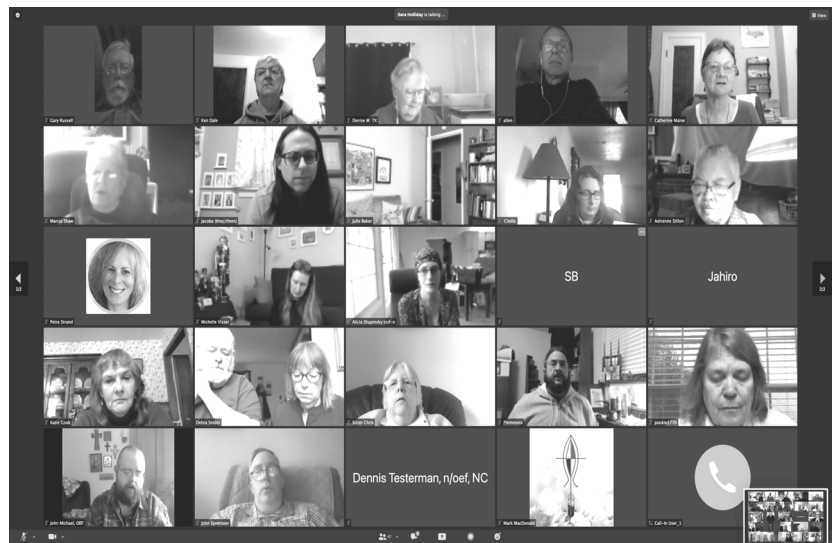
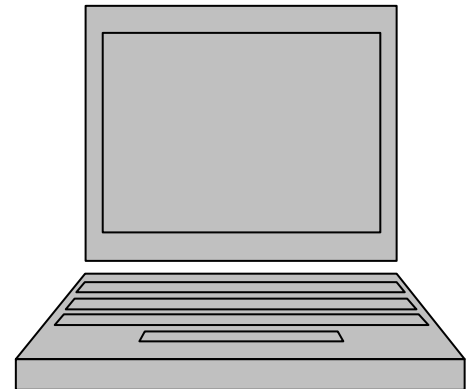
## An Important Reminder

**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**



## A Few Faces From Our OEF Advent Service via Zoom, December 12, 2020:





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



## A Prayer For The New Year



O God beyond  
 calendars and clocks  
 let me dwell often enough  
 in that realm  
 where there is only  
**NOW**  
 in You



Give me grace enough  
 To live in the moment  
 To trust You always  
 To see You  
 In each encounter



To find You  
 In each person  
 To seek You  
 in every circumstance  
 To live well  
 All the time  
 You have given to me  
**NOW.**  
**Amen.**



from *In Due Season 1: Prayer for Autumn,*  
*Advent, Christmas and Winter Feastsdays*  
 Shared by, Br. Brendan, OEF