

FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 141

Lent 2022



Inside this Issue:

- Reflection on OEF Draft on White Nationalism
- Words From The Servant Council
- Chapter 2022 Invitation
- Fellowship News
- JCFU Conference
- Routine
- How Do We Lament?
- OEF Online Bible Study
- OEF History Project
- Formation Station
- Lifelong Formation Station
- A Few Good Reads
- **Next "Fiddlesticks" Deadline**
- Thoughts?
- A Few Words About Death
- Song
- Where Is My Beloved?

Reflection on OEF Draft on White Nationalism

By Sr. Deb Snider-Scott, OEF

This is my reflection on our OEF Draft on "White Nationalism." I start out with what the general public see about our Order. Then I go into some thoughts concerning the most recent draft that was presented at Chapter 2021, and also thoughts on our Rule of Life. Then a most humble edit to the draft. I do most graciously hope that some new words and expansion of thought beyond just "White" will give us reason to ponder and pray for further discernment. As was quoted at our campfire Vespers: Friar Thomas Celano tells us that Francis "did not consider that he already attained his goal, but tireless in pursuit of HOLY NEWNESS, he constantly hoped to begin again. Let us not ever think we have achieved our goals, but tirelessly be in pursuit! Thank you! And Blessings to all.

Wikipedia describes our Order as follows:

The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (OEF) Is a group of men and women devoted to following the examples [citation needed] of Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Clare of Assisi in their life and understanding of the Christian gospel: sharing a love for creation and for those who have been marginalized. Leadership is shared by a five member council.

An example of Christian ecumenism, the OEF opens its membership to Christians of many different denominations, including Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Moravians, Anglicans, Methodists, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and Reformed Christians, among others. The OEF understands its charism to include not only ecumenical efforts and the traditional emphases of the Franciscans in general, but also to help to develop relationships among the various Franciscan orders. Some reference books consider them one of a number of third orders of Saint Francis, others classify them separately.

The Mission Statement of The OEF is (as a reminder):

Celebrating God's presence and grace in everything, following the Poor Christ of the Gospels in lives of mutual care and accountability in harmony with the faith and practice of the whole Franciscan family, we are The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. We seek to grow in the love and knowledge of God and to serve Jesus Christ in faithfulness to the spirit and examples of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi.

(Continued on page 2)

Reflection... continued

The Facebook description of the OEF is:

OEF is a dispersed, International Franciscan Order, unaffiliated with any one Church. We are an inclusive, accepting and affirming community; we are brothers and sisters, straight and gay, married and single, clergy and lay, contemplative and activists. We are Catholics, Protestants and non-denominational Christians who join together to celebrate and share a common table and at our center is Jesus Christ. We endeavor to serve the poor and marginalized in our world. We pray and work to rebuild the Church, in the Spirits of St. Clare and St. Francis of Assisi.

DRAFT statement on White nationalism presented at Chapter 2021:

The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans is dedicated to following the way of Jesus of Nazareth as laid out particularly in the four gospels. We know that the law of love is at the center of Jesus' teaching that all people are children of God, loved of God. Boundaries of gender, race, language, and creed have no importance in God's ever-present love.

The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans rejects any notion of a White Christianity, a White nation, or a Christianity rooted in patriarchy. The idea that God would endorse the notion of the United States as a "White Christian nation rooted in patriarchy" is blasphemous and has no place in the Good News of Jesus of Nazareth. We know that the current racial injustice in the US is a deep offense to God.

We are committed to live in ways that effectively dismantle racism in the diverse institutions that structure our social and public life together. Each person will address in their Rule of Life under penitence and mission the specific ways that the OEF member intends to actively work to build a human community based on racial and gender justice. The Order will engage in prayer, study, and discussion as to how to undo the history of "Christian patriarchal white supremacy" as a central tenant of our call to follow Jesus and live under the Spirit of God."



First and foremost, a huge THANK YOU goes out to all of those involved in the prayerful discernment and hard work in putting the words together

in the draft noted above that pulls the curtain open for all of us to view the spear and the wounds experienced by, not only in this nation, but in every nation around the globe; the spear and wounds of all of creation!

With being an Order of Franciscans, like many Orders, and like our St.'s Francis and Clare, and like our Lord and Savior, who walked this earth, we grieve, we cry, we are called to rise up and face injustices square in the eye and say "NO MORE!" Like David and Goliath, we are wanting to take down the oppressive giants that stomp around and trample on as many people, creatures, vegetation, and any part of creation that gets in the their way. We are a small Order who, like David, desires to stand against these giants of injustice and oppression, stand against slave owners of the weak and marginalized, destroyers of the heart, mind, body and souls of ethnicities, cultures, faiths, and non-binaries that lessens their power and control.

I say all this, not to "water down" the injustices inflicted by White Patriarchal Supremacy, but to point out, ever since the existence of humanity, there has been a "one" powering over "another." It will continue to the time of Rapture. Then the question is: what do we as a peacemaking community say and do to tell the world in a public statement on our website, FB, Wikipedia, or any other public platform; and what do we convey to any new Inquirers and Postulants; our Novices and Professed in our Rule of Life?

Of course, Love and Christ is the central core of all we say and do. Would it be more peaceful and loving to focus on who all is invited to the table, and who/what we are locking arms with around the globe? Who we companion, embrace and nurture, and tend the gaping wounds made by those piercing giants of injustice may very well be different for each of us in a dispersed Order, depending on where we live and our level of physical and mental capabilities.

I believe that our OEF Principles and our Rule of Life guidelines already allow us freedom of expression and intent on what we are called to do, how we will do it, and what we desire to be accountable for.

I see and hear that we are all PASSIONATE about the injustices and the evils that surround us. To mandate a requirement of some form of action or

Reflection... continued

acknowledgement of only one type of injustice (White Patriarchal Supremacy), although a highly grievous sin, is limiting the freedom, and may limit the scope of what an individual feels compelled, or called by the Holy Spirit to address in their private Rule of Life.

A recommended preface to writing or updating a Rule of Life can certainly be a call to "Prior to writing your Rule of Life reflect upon the injustices that you see in your home community and/or around the world and to Creation. Maybe think of an injustice you have personally experienced, past and present. What calls to you, and where in your Rule of Life would you place your convictions and your call to action?" This keeps it personal and free to speak, write and commit to the spears and wounds of society that touches them deeply.

When it comes to the blanket statement that the public eye will be witness to: *The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans is dedicated to following the way of Jesus of Nazareth as laid out particularly in the four Gospels. We know that the law of Love is at the center of Jesus' teaching that ALL people are children of God, and Loved by God, our Creator. ALL are welcomed to the OEF table. We stand firm in our conviction that boundaries of gender, race, language, creed, abilities or social status have no importance in God's ever-present Love for humanity and all of Creation. There is no room at this table for any level of supremacy over another race. We do not, in any way, support white, patriarchal nationalism. We lock arms with people of all ethnicities around the globe, standing firm to abolish supremacy of "one" over "another." We respect, support, honor and walk alongside Indigenous traditions and cultures of every nation. We were given a very clear commandment (a mandate): John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have Loved you, so you must love one another."*

We know that the current racial injustice experienced around the world is a deep and grievous offense to God. We denounce the use of Christianity as weaponry to power over and war with others. We acknowledge this to be a form of blasphemy against God and Spiritual abuse to other belief systems. We are committed to live in ways that effectively dismantle racism in the diverse institutions that structure our social and public life together. Each person in the OEF is

strongly encouraged when creating and updating their Rule of Life to do a self examen of injustices, such as race and gender, and how they can actively incorporate their call to action throughout the Rule, and particularly under penitence and mission.

The Order, as a whole, will engage in ongoing prayerful discernment, study, discussion and growth to use the past history lessons of Ethnic Supremacy over another ethnicity, supremacy and suppression of non-binary genders, social deprivations of all types, in our communities and around the world, and for all of creation, as a central focus of our call to follow Jesus and live under the Spirit of God.





Words from The Servant Council



Chapter 2022 Invitation

Our **2022 Chapter and Convocation** will be **June 23-26** (early arrivals on Wednesday, June 22) at the [Pallottine Renewal Center](#) outside of St. Louis, MO. We will also have a **special Zoom session on Saturday, June 18** at 5 pm Central Time USA to receive Chapter reports.

Our Convocation theme this year is a question, “How can we be more like Francis and Clare?” We will use the image of [Francis climbing down from his horse to embrace the leper](#) to reflect together. When are we Francis, in a position of privilege? And when are we the leper, in a position of social exclusion? And how does acting on this awareness help us grow into community that is loving, wise, safe, and free for everyone?

A statutes revision and a principles update will be among the items on our agenda. **The Principles Revision team** will be making a report; we will also have a **statutes proposal regarding the process for**

receiving a Novice by transfer. A third item of business will be to follow up on the **request for release by Sr. Louann.**

Finally, don’t forget our playful and joyful celebration of **the Juniper Cup!** This year’s theme, as presented from Sr. Kiwi, is:

"St Francis has just parachuted into modern Western Civilization of 2022 after time traveling directly from 13th Century Italy. You have been sent to find him and interview him for your local Television Current Affairs Program. Where did you find him and how did the interview go? You may want to record some of the dialogue. (Assume that there is no language difficulty.)"

You will receive more information about our gathering in the weeks ahead, and **registration will be open from April 1 through May 31, 2022.** Please also refer to the attached documents in the email: 1) **Information, Notes and Important Dates**, 2) **Prayerful Discernment**, and 3) **Statutes Proposal on Novices by Transfer.**

Words from The Servant Council... continued

Please join us as we come together to share in our common life in the Spirit, following Jesus in the little way of Francis and Clare.

Your Servant Council,

Betty Lou, Bruce James, Jacoba, Juniper, and Markie

Thanks to your continued generosity, OEF had \$37,041.04 in the bank as of Dec 31 2021. Your donations make possible everything OEF does, including our annual Chapter/Convocation gathering, the work of the Council, and our contributions to the Joint Committee for Franciscan Unity and The Franciscan Action Network. If anyone needs a summary of their 2021 donations to the Order for tax return purposes, please let Nancy Menning know.

An Invitation:

Coming soon, an updated song book. But first a few additions are needed. Calling all who like to draw, take photos or write poems to submit something to the song book. Here is a chance to add something of ourselves to the book. If you have a drawing or a photo or a poem you have created please send them to me. The deadline for submission is April 1st, 2022. Hoping to be ready for Chapter/Convocation 2022. Please send by email.

Over the past year some of us have sent some books to Pallottine Renewal Center to build up their library. If you have some book on Francis, Clare, books of poems or Sci Fi that need a new home consider donating them to PRC (address: Pallottine Renewal Center, 15270 Old Halls Ferry Rd., Florissant, MO 63034)

Thank you Siblings, for all that you bring to our little community.

Peace and all good,

Markie Oliver



"Lead me on the right path O' Lord"
(Artist unknown)

**ALL ARE INVITED
OEF ZOOM LENTEN SERVICE
MARCH 12, 2022
3:00 pm CENTRAL TIME
ZOOM CONNECTION:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81589013625>
Meeting ID: 815 8901 3625**



Fellowship News



Crossroads Fellowship: We have been enjoying good conversation and fellowship at our monthly Zoom gatherings on the 3rd Saturday of each month. We have individual check-ins, prayer and petitions, a wide range of discussions from book reviews, such as Murray Bodo's *Francis, the Journey and the Dream*, spontaneous conversation about intentional community, aiding our local ministries, and just growing as a Franciscan family.

Our early 2022 Gatherings will be focused on what direction we (Crossroads) would like to take in 2022. What action?; what continuing Formation?; what can we do for each other and for our growing OEF Order? and much more!

Our doors are always open to visitors! Please feel free to join in. We'll post our meetings on the OEF chat.

Peace and Prayers Always.
Deb Snider-Scott OEF

Great Lakes Lighthouse Fellowship:

We met via Zoom on Sunday, February 20, after a bit of a break. Thank you, John s.o.S for getting us back together! Present were Br. John, Sr. Chris, Sr. Kiara, and Bethany.

We had a good time catching up, and welcomed visiting siblings from other regions: Br. Stephan and Muriel in WA, Kimberly in Molalla, OR, and Sr. Kiwi in New Zealand!

- Sr. Chris Petersen

Northeastern OEF Sibs gathered on December 11, the day before the 3rd Sunday of Advent. The spirit of Philippians 4:5 permeated our shares, ***Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.*** It was a joy to share our Franciscan lives with one another as we awaited the birth of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Sibs celebrated new homes, return to health, children's well-being and successes; we offered lamentations for justice, peace, and relief from natural disasters. Amidst the serious, there was laughter and gentle spirits of Francis and Clare.

JCFU Conference November 14-16 21021

As most of you know already, but for the sake of newcomers: By being a member of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, I have the humble honor of being part of the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity (JCFU)! Normally we are working on building bridges between all Third Order Franciscans by doing "mini-conferences" to draw us all together with our common denominators of Christ, St. Francis of Assisi, Clare, and the many Franciscan charisms we share. Those tertiaries on the JCFU are from the OFS (Catholic); TSSF (Episcopal); OEF (Ecumenical, meaning many denominations); and OLF (Lutheran). There are two representatives from each Order.

This year we, along with Roots and Branches, Programs for Spiritual Growth, hosted an Interfaith Conference at Graymoor Spiritual Life Center in Garrison, NY, which was just inaugurated as Holy Mountain Franciscan Retreat Center. "The People of God: A Sacred Prism" conference first took place in the Spring of 2015 in Tampa, FL, and this year, November 14-16, 2021 at Graymoor, a conference that took us layers deeper than just Interfaith, but into Interspirituality! It was a coming together for Christian, Muslim, and Jewish traditions, prayers, songs, chants, and being able to experience first hand each other's Faith and Spirituality. Along with individual journeys of each attendee, our most important and strongest common denominator is our Faith, Love, and Prayers spoken to our God, our Allah, the Divine (more names than can be listed here). Our Creator shining through us in our many faith traditions, on out into the world, in a brilliance of color and variations (A prism of Glorious Light)! The message of PEACE, respect, love and care of humankind and creation resonated throughout this entire time that we were together! We had 10 attendees from each Faith tradition. Our guest speakers were: Rev. Masud Ibn Syedullah, TSSF (rootsandbranchesprograms.org); Rabbi Shefa Gold (www.rabbishefagold.com); Imam Mohamad Bashar Arafat, PhD (Civilization Exchange and Cooperation Foundation www.cecf-net.org); Rev. Stephen Holton, S.T.M. (Diocese of NY, Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission).

The closing of the conference was hardly a closing, but a commissioning, a Blessing and Anointing with Holy Oils, sending us out into the world to spread words of Peace, Unity (not to be mistaken with uniformity), Love for humankind and all of creation! Mark and I were able to share this special time with our fellow OEF family members, Carol Stiver and Petra Strand.

-Deb Snider-Scott





Routine By David Rensberger



I come from a Christian tradition (Mennonite) that has not valued spiritual routine very much. We tend to think of routine in the spiritual life as something dead or mindless. For instance, we emphasize spontaneous prayers, ones that arise from the heart in the immediate situation, rather than set prayers from books. Yet over time I've come to see the value of both openness to spontaneous inner promptings and spiritual routines.

I was moved to reflect on this once when I saw an interview with two baseball players, not stars but guys who sit on the bench and may go two or three games without playing. When asked how they manage to be ready to play so well at a moment's notice, they both said the same thing: routine. They have settled routines of practice, study, and exercise. Doing this day in and day out leaves them prepared mentally and physically when they're called on to go in.

This got me thinking about the role of routine in the spiritual life. Christian monks, nuns, hermits—and friars!—have routines of prayer, work, and reading that maintain their spiritual fitness. Ever since the days of the desert fathers and mothers, much of monastic life has simply been keeping up a routine. As Franciscans living outside the cloister, we may want to reflect on the role of spiritual routine for us as well.

I certainly believe in and practice prayer any time, anywhere, in any words that are appropriate. But I've come to appreciate routines of prayer as well. Arthur Paul Boers (a former Mennonite pastor) suggests in his book *Day by Day These Things We Pray* that prayer at set times throughout the day can help focus us on God at all times. It can lead us toward continuous prayer, continuous presence to the Presence of God. Regular practices of prayer can reorient our entire lives toward God, so that not only designated moments of prayer but all of life becomes holy.

Spiritual routine can also be a kind of fighting fire with fire. As Boers suggests, rhythms of prayer, anchoring our encounter with God in the flow of daily life, can be a way of resisting the inhumane schedules many of us endure at work or school. The daily grind can be opposed with a counter-structure of prayer, one on which authentic life can climb like a rose on a trellis. A search for genuine meaning in the midst of a pointless maze of routine may be one thing that draws people toward spiritual seeking today. In a sincere spiritual quest, we are often trying to unmake ingrained habits of thought and action and develop more positive patterns instead. Those new patterns require habit-building disciplines in order to take root in us.

We may idealize our inner lives as being free of routine, creative and unrestricted. Yet creativity always occurs within some limits, needing boundaries to push against and to

give it shape. Even the most stream-of-consciousness writers have a vocabulary and a grammar to work with—and if they're going to get anywhere, a time of day to sit down and write. Of course, different gifts, personalities, circumstances, and callings produce different proportions of routine and spontaneity in the spiritual life. Spiritual routine can be highly varied: short periods of prayer (verbal or silent), reading or walking, music or journaling, solitude or gathering. A simple turn toward God, a few moments of stillness and awareness once an hour or so, can be enough to keep us connected and directed.

In Franciscan vocation, our Rules of Life may form the most fertile garden for blending spontaneity and routine. Devising a rule and rethinking it every so often is an act of spiritual creativity. Yet the whole point of a "rule"—from the Latin "regula"—is to be regular. The 5th principle of The OEF urges, "Let us participate in the sacramental life of the Church, above all the Eucharist. Let us join in liturgical prayer in one of the forms in use in the Church." This is intentionally broad, as is appropriate to an ecumenical order. Those of us from less highly liturgical denominations may have forms of prayer that are intentionally formless. Yet even the most spontaneous prayer can be offered on a regular basis, setting aside periods during the day to pray as worshipers, intercessors, and contemplatives.

I'm convinced that having a routine of spiritual practices woven into my daily activities helps keep me ready to "get in the game." Work, relationships, and social life all present issues that call for spiritual and ethical preparedness. Having routine practices structured into the day can help us frame these issues in larger contexts of spiritual values, and respond to them more authentically and lovingly than we might otherwise. I find that when I am recovering from some trauma, small or great, or some spiritual or moral failure, my routine helps me get back on my feet and on the path. There is certainly something comforting about routine. But for me a spiritual routine is not "comforting" like an old lullaby that puts me to sleep, but something both familiar and challenging that develops my spiritual strengths. Far from being dead, a spiritual routine can in fact be thoroughly life-giving.

(A version on this reflection was originally posted on Carl McColman's blog on Patheos:
<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/carlmccolman/2019/09/practice-practice-practice/>.)



How Do We Lament? By Br. Juniper, OEF

The personal nature of lament is important. But lament is best when it's both individual and corporate.

The Psalms of Lament and the Book of Lamentations provide a model for present day lament. This model is flexible and adaptable and we shouldn't use it rigidly. But it shows us that lament typically has nine elements:

1. Invocation: We address our lament to God. How long, Lord? (Ps 13:11)
2. Worship: We describe who God is (loving, just, merciful, and good) and how God promises to be with us at times of crisis. "Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One, you are the one Israel praises (Ps 22:31)
3. Description: We describe the lamentable, sorrowful, and shameful situation. Complaint about the problem and description of the problem often go together. This is often expressed in questions to God (a) about God's action or inaction. (b) about our enemies. (c) and/or about suffering and pain. "Dogs surround me." (Ps 22:16)
4. Connection: We connect the lamentable situation and our pain and suffering with individual and corporate sins (such as pride, racism, sexism, idolatry, power seeking, fear-mongering, etc.). "We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation. You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence." (Ps 90:7-8)
5. Repentance: We express deep sorrow for our sins and travails of our people and our desire to change. "If only we knew the power of your anger! Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you. Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." (Ps 90:11-12)
6. Confession: We confess our sins, complicity, sorrow and desire to repent and change. "We have sinned, even as our ancestors did; we have done wrong and acted wickedly." (Ps 106:6)
7. Petition: We cry for God's intervention and mercy, and that God would bring hope and healing and restoration as we come to God in lament and repentance. "Repent, O Lord, how long will it be? Have compassion on your servant. Satisfy us in the morning with our unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days." (Ps 90:13-14)
8. Trust: We express our trust in God because of who God is and in remembrance of God's saving and redeeming actions. We acknowledge that God listens and responds. "From the horns of the wild oxen, you have rescued us." (Ps 22: 2)
9. Praise: We offer thanksgiving and praise to God for who God is and what God has done. We offer praise and trust that God can and will bring change. "From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly." ((Ps 22: 25)

Kim, Grace Ji-Sum & Hill, Graham (2018). Healing our broken humanity, Practices for revitalizing the Church and redeeming the world. Intervarsity Press. pp. 47-48

OEF Online Bible Study

The weekly OEF Bible Study has moved to Wednesday at 8:00 pm EDT. You can join the study on Zoom:

Topic: OEF Bible Study Time: This is a recurring meeting Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89760718708?pwd=N2ROTHcrWUpWSzlyM2N3eEdG-dEF0QT09>.

We study the gospel for the coming Sunday as listed on the Revised Common Lectionary. We use the "African Method" Bible Study: Read the passage, everyone picks the word or phrase that stands out for them. Read the passage again (in a different translation), everyone identifies how this impacts them as a person. Read the passage a third time (in a third translation) and everyone identifies how this impacts us as a community. Then time for general sharing on the passage.



You are most welcome to join!

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





Formation Station



Introducing:

My name is **Robbie Phillips** and my family and I live in Kansas City, Missouri (central United States). I've been married to my wife for almost 20 years. We have four children (three boys and one girl) and four fur babies (three cats and one dog). Professionally, I've worked in the behavioral health field for the last 15 years. I am extremely excited to begin my journey with The Order and to see where God leads.

* * * * *

Greetings siblings

My name is **Kelly Tague**, I am a Novice in OEF and really just starting this journey to follow Francis. I live in Muncie, Indiana currently, but I was born and raised in Anaheim, California. I live with my wife and two foster sons and have two biological children who are adults and we have a dog and a cat. I work as a special education school bus driver and love working with those kids. My wife and I are a part of Dialogue Church here in Muncie, which is very loving and small, but very active as well. We both volunteer at the local LGBTQ youth group



It's been a long road for me to this point in my spiritual journey, I have read a lot from A. W. Tozer to Dietrich Bonhoeffer to Richard Foster to Richard Rohr to David Bentley Hart to Thich Nhat Hanh to Ken Wilber, to many more. It's this knowledge that led me to OEF, it was around two years ago that I sensed the call to stop trying to know and start learning to be, or as Fenelon put it: "to stop learning and put into practice what you've already learned." I've sought to put orthopraxy over orthodoxy and that can get you in trouble. I have been very blessed in my short time as a member of OEF and everyone I've interacted with have been

amazing. I look forward to getting to know you all and hopefully meeting you all in person soon. Thank you for welcoming me into your little enclave.

* * * * *

Hi! My name is **Kris Eterea** (they/them/theirs) and I am a clinical social worker currently residing in Los Angeles with my girlfriend and 2 cats. I am looking forward to continuing my journey towards living out the Gospel message with the support of the OEF.



**Do all the good you can, and make
as little fuss about it as possible.**

Charles Dickens



Lifelong Formation Station



VIA DOLOROSA OF THE PRESENT

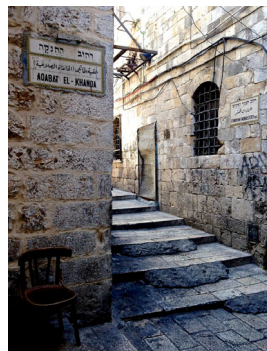
Many of us in O.E.F. have meditated on the fourteen stations of the cross, especially during Lent; and many of us have not grown up with this tradition. It comprises fourteen 'stations' or incidents, attributed to Jesus' last few hours as he progressed through Jerusalem to Golgotha. The geographical journey is sometimes called the Via Dolorosa. 'Via Dolorosa' (Latin) means way of suffering, sorrow, pain and grief. The Via Dolorosa is mapped out in Jerusalem for tourists and pilgrims, replete with stalls and shops for everyone.

We will be reminded often during Lent of the past and Jesus' 'Via Dolorosa,' and yet we each have our own Via Dolorosa and it is now in the twenty-first century. We are in the midst of multiple social upheavals and a world-wide pandemic. What is our 'Via Dolorosa of the Present?' Here is an outlined journey of our own personal spiritual growth through our time to the present. Certainly, as we reflect on our personal past, in community with other seekers, we will gain insight and strength in meeting the suffering of today.

There are seven 'Stations' of reflection. Why seven? There are seven Wednesdays in Lent, beginning with Ash Wednesday March 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th, and April 6th and 13th. We have not put a date by each Station because another rhythm may fit you better. We have broadened the time period and we affirm Jesus is with us on this journey in our time. We receive blessing upon blessing as we travel our personal Via Dolorosa of the Present. (RSV = Revised Standard Version)

1. Mark 1:9-11, The Baptism of Jesus

Question: When did I first feel immersed in the love of God?
 "...thou art my beloved...with thee I am well pleased."
 (RSV)



2. Mark 1:12-13, The Spirit Drives Jesus into the Wilderness and Temptation

Question: Why (and how often) have I experienced the wilderness... and serious temptation? What does the Holy Spirit want me to grasp?

3. Mark 6:7-13, Jesus Sends out Disciples, two-by-two

Question: At what stages did I feel Jesus' nudging me to go out among people with a message and ministry? Who were my companions?

4. Mark 9:2-8, The Transfiguration of Jesus

Question: When were times I was so distracted that God had to remind me "...this is my beloved son, listen to him."
 (RSV vs. 7b)

5. Mark 14:12-26, the Last Passover for Jesus with His Disciples

Question: As Jesus gives us the cup, what do these words mean to me?
 "...this is my beloved son, listen to him."
 (RSV vs. 24)

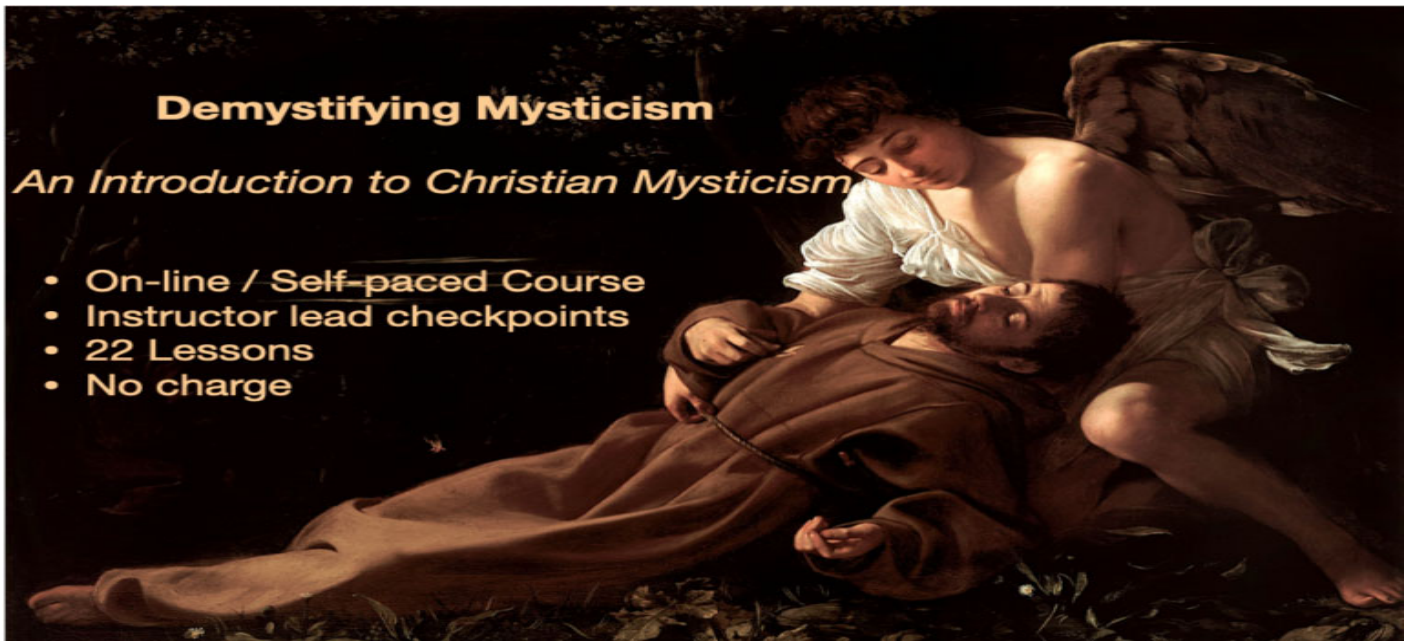
6. Mark 14:53, Jesus before Caiaphas

Question: When have I felt dragged before religious authorities and what were the issues?



7. Mark 15:16 to 16:8, The Crucifixion and Mystery

Question: Make note of times I have felt accused, humiliated, emotionally scourged, turned against, abandoned by God, at bottom, not alone, frightened and hopeful. "...with trembling and astonishment..." (RSV 16:8b),



Demystifying Mysticism

An Introduction to Christian Mysticism

- On-line / Self-paced Course
- Instructor lead checkpoints
- 22 Lessons
- No charge

Dear Siblings,

An interesting opportunity has presented itself, courtesy of our Brother Neal in Ireland. This is a self-paced free course offered by the Unitarian Church in Cork. Here are the objectives:

After having completed this course you should be able to:

1. Understand and appreciate the historical presence and development of mysticism in western Christianity;
2. Recognize and appreciate the tendencies (or lack of tendencies) towards mysticism in yourself and others;
3. Apply your knowledge to make useful contributions to discussion about mysticism within your own church community;
4. Apply your knowledge to make discernments about any future Christian mysticism training or practices that you might later consider.

The course starts on March 7, 2022, but can be joined on your own schedule. Here is the URL to join the course:

<https://classroom.google.com/c/NDE2MzgqMzg5NDE1?cjc=onptq3e>

- This course is self-paced and delivered on-line using *Google Classroom*. You will need a Google *G-Mail* user ID (i.e. *xyz@GMail.com*) to access the course content.

- There is no charge to take the course.
- Two optional on-line sessions are scheduled each month (the 1st and 3rd Monday evenings) for students to share their thoughts about the course material with the teacher(s) and other students. A 7:00PM (2pm EST) section is provided for the convenience of students in Europe and an 11:00PM (6pm EST) section is provided for the convenience of students in North America. Students may attend the section of their choice.

Worth looking into!



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
3175 Duke Snider Ave
Eugene, OR 97402**





A Few Good Reads



A review of **Jesus and the Disinherited** by Howard Thurman, published in 1996 by Beacon Press with a foreword by Vincent Harding but first published in 1949 by Abington Press.

Howard Thurman was a Methodist preacher and theologian of African-American heritage. It was then and still is a treatise aimed at the seats of power as a challenge to address the issues of those who have been disinherited people of color from sharing that power in this democratic nation. He is particularly concerned about those who embrace Jesus of Nazareth as Savior and Lord. On page one, he writes, "To those who need profound succor and strength to enable them to live in the present with dignity and creativity, Christianity often has been sterile and of little avail. *The Christian word is muffled, confused, and vague. Too often the price exacted by society for security and respectability is that the Christian movement in its formal expression must be on the side of the strong against the weak.*" (Italics mine.)

The disinherited is described later on as "The masses of men live with their backs constantly against the wall. They are the poor, the disinherited, the dispossessed." (p.3) He follows the example of Jesus and his brief ministry as described in the Gospels to call out formal religion's weak responses to genuine human need. If he only spoke as a prophetic voice in calling out the well known shortcomings of modern religion it would still be worth the price of this book. But he's a pastor in heart and soul and does offer pathways to improve our following of the Christ.

The book is brief, only 102 pages. It contains 5 chapters: 'Jesus, an Interpretation', 'Deception', 'Fear', 'Hate', and 'Love' with a very short epilogue. Each chapter is filled with gems and erudite analyses of the topics. His succinct manner, lack of what one might describe as academic jargon and heartfelt reflection make this book a 'must read' by people of faith, people currently engaged with the established power structures of our society. I wish I'd been exposed to this tome when I was a first year seminarian. There is an honesty in this book that hearkens back to St. Francis as well as to Jesus of Nazareth.

Thurman may have written to address concerns about segregation and racism in the 1940's; but, not much has truly changed. People are still oppressed, exploited, victimized by sanctioned violence too often and still "disinherited" in many ways. But through a genuine living faith these wrongs may be healed and humanity can excel without stepping on the backs of others. Read the book! Discuss the book! Apply the insights gained. As God spoke to Joshua, "Only be strong and of good courage; be not frighten, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9b RSV) Let us go forth in love!

David Wirick Delacroix, OEF

For those interested in pursuing a deeper relationship with the life and spirit of Howard Thurman, there is a bibliography compiled by Shalem Institute. (It should be searchable online.)

Clare of Assisi: A Heart Full of Love

(Franciscan Media, 2007) by Ilia Delio, OSF, teacher and author, is not so much a biography of Clare (though it contains some biographical material) as it is a discussion of Clare's writings and ways of thinking. As noted on the back cover of the book, "Clare was not simply a follower of Francis; she was a formidable, resolute, devout and loving" person in her own right. Topical areas include poverty, contemplation, transformation, and "the mirror of the cross." Delio notes (p. xxiv) that Clare's "thought is centered on the essence of human identity: Be yourself and allow God to dwell within you. Christ will then be alive and the world will be created anew."

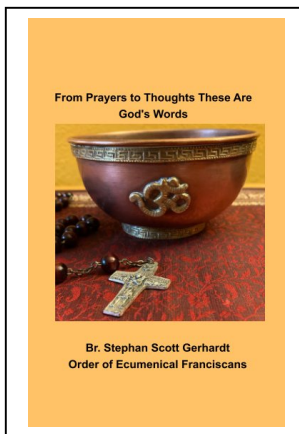
Peace and All Good. Sr. Anne Nancy



A Few Good Reads... continued

Has anyone read, or is currently reading, **The Dream of God: A Call to Return** by Verna Dozer? She was an African-American preacher and Bible teacher (I'm not familiar with much of her curricula vitae) but this little book is a wonderful inspiration on reclaiming our identity as a people of faith.

And one from our very own Br. Stephan!



From Prayers to Thoughts These Are God's Words by Stephan Scott Gerhardt, OEF

A book about hope, love and the meaning of the little things God has written into our lives and onto our hearts.

Book hounds, check out this site:
[Electronic Library. Download Books Free. Finding Books.](#)

There are oodles of books in a variety of formats available for free download. They have levels of membership. The free one is adequate for me but you can pay a small fee to add volumes and features as you desire. You can save to kindle, Nook, email, text or PDF.

David Wirick Delacroix, OEF

Thanks. Good to know. I already use <https://www.gutenberg.org/> another source of free books.
Br. Ron Nuss-Warren

Sibs, any recommendations on Francis and earth/creation? Not looking for theology books.

Br. Sam Loudenslager

Thanks for asking Sam. I thought of Ilia Delio, looked on Amazon and came across [Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth.](#) Lots of used paperbacks and I had to order one.

Sr. Jul Baker

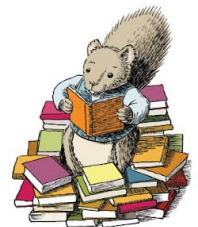
Also, by Ilia Delio: [A Franciscan View of Creation: Learning to Live in a Sacramental World](#)

Franciscans and Creation: What is Our Responsibility?

Both are available from the Franciscan publications:

https://www.franciscanpublications.com/products/franciscans-and-creation-what-is-our-responsibility?_pos=1&_sid=c572fd2e2&ss=r&variant=7282427909

Sr. Karen Lawler



NEXT "FIDDLESTICKS" DEADLINE

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

Deadline for submissions is April 15, 2022.

Send submissions to Sister Chris at
capoef@solarus.biz

or snail-mail to:

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

Thank you!





Thoughts?*



We tend to forget how surprising the growth of the early church was. Nobody had to join the churches. People were not compelled to become members by invading armies or the imposition of laws; social convention did not induce them to do so. Indeed, Christianity grew despite the opposition of laws and social convention. These were formidable disincentives. In addition, the possibility of death in persecution loomed over the pre-Constantinian church, although few Christians were actually executed. In many places baptismal candidates sensed that “every Christian was by definition a candidate for death.”

The expansion of the churches was not organized – it simply happened.

Nevertheless the churches grew. Why? After AD 312, when the emperor Constantine I aligned himself with Christianity and began to promote it, the church’s growth is not hard to explain. But before Constantine the expansion is improbable enough to require a sustained attempt to understand it. The growth was odd. According to the evidence at our disposal, the expansion of the churches was not organized, the product of a mission program; it simply happened. Further, the growth was not carefully thought through. Early Christian leaders did not engage in debates between rival “mission strategies.” The Christians wrote a lot; according to classicist Robin Lane Fox, “most of the best Greek and Latin literature which remains [from the later second and third centuries] is Christian.” And what they wrote is surprising. The Christians wrote treatises on patience – three of them. But they did not write a single treatise on evangelism. Further, to assist their growing congregations with practical concerns, the Christians wrote “church orders,” manuals that provided guidance for the life and worship of congregations. The best treatment of how a second-century Christian should persuade a pagan to become a believer was published in London in 1970!

Most improbable of all, the churches did not use their worship services to attract new people. In the aftermath of the persecution of Nero in AD 68, churches around the empire – at varying speeds in varying places – closed their doors to outsiders. By the end of the second century, most of them had instituted what liturgical scholars have called the *disciplina arcani*, the “discipline of the secret,” which barred outsiders from entering “private” Christian worship services and ordered believers not to talk to outsiders about what went on behind the closed doors.

The early Christians attributed the church’s growth to the patient work of God.

Fear motivated this closing – fear of people who might disrupt their gatherings or spy on them. By the third century, some churches assigned deacons to stand at the doors, monitoring the people as they arrived. It is not surprising that pagans responded to their exclusion from Christian worship by speculation and gossip. The baptized Christians, on the other hand, knew how powerful the worship services were in their own lives – early fourth-century North African believers said simply, “We cannot go without the Lord’s Supper.” They knew that worship services were to glorify God and edify the faithful, not to evangelize outsiders.

And yet, improbably, the movement was growing. In number, size, and geographical spread, churches were expanding without any of the probable prerequisites for church growth. The early Christians noted this with wonder and attributed it to the patient work of God. Teaching catechumens in Caesarea around AD 240, Origen observed that throughout history, God had been faithful to Israel, sending them prophets, turning them back from their sins.

See how great the harvest is, even though there are few workers. But also in another way God plans always that the net is thrown on the lake of this life, and all kinds of fish are caught. He

Thoughts?... continued

sends out many fishers, he sends out many hunters, they hunt from every hill. See how great a plan it is concerning the salvation of the nations.

The churches grew because the faith that these fishers and hunters embodied was attractive to people who were dissatisfied with their old cultural and religious habits, who felt pushed to explore new possibilities, and who then encountered Christians who embodied a new manner of life that pulled them toward what the Christians called “rebirth” into a new life.

“We do not speak great things but we live them.”
—Cyprian

Twenty-first-century Christians must live with this heritage. We will not do things precisely as the early Christians did, but the early believers may give us new perspectives and point us to a “lost bequest.” As we rediscover this bequest, we will not make facile generalizations or construct how-to formulas. Instead, we will say with Cyprian and other early Christians: “We do not speak great things but we live them.”

Kreider, Alan. [*The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire*](#), Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2016. Used by permission.

*Shared by Br. Juniper Robertson, OEF

Siblings respond:

What strikes me most in that piece is the clear message that we are not to measure our success by how many of us there are, but by how well we encourage one another to live toward our vision (whatever that may be...).

Nancy Menning, OEF

Yes! Brings to mind Francis' philosophy of preaching the Gospel without words.

Sister Chris Petersen, OEF

A Few Words About Death

Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, Principle 15 –

“Since we are immersed in the resurrection of Christ, which gives true meaning to Sister Death, let us accept death serenely as an encounter with our God.”

Death is no stranger and it is an inevitable part of the journey of life. It came upon our family on October 16, 2021, when our daughter Grace died of COVID – 19 at age 51.

An OEF member asked permission to put it on our website and I said, “No”, for several reasons. First, we don’t share personal information on websites and social media. Perhaps more importantly, there was an immediate press of legal, financial, logistical and emotional issues to resolve days and weeks after her death.

There was a lot of response to us locally and it felt like an avalanche. Love and winter solitude does its work of healing and restoration.

We are grateful we could be Grace’s parents, that family and friends could surround her ICU bed and sing to her as she died. We are grateful for our spiritual communities and the shared strength of many.

The Benediction is always; “Bless we the Lord. Thanks be to God.”

Peace and Joy, Dale Carmen OEF





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



Song

by Sr. Denise Magnuson, OEF



I want to sing of forever things,
 Always without stopping.
 But a song needs a stopping place,
 To catch a breath
 Before continuing on its flight.

Jesus, You are my song,
 You are my breath and my stopping place,
 You are the wings of my heart,
 You are the song of my life.



Where is my Beloved?



Br. Salachar 1/22/22 White House Jesuit Retreat Center

In the darkness beyond concepts, I cried out
 "Where is my Beloved!"

My soul whispered, "There is your Beloved."

In the darkness beyond concepts, I cried out
 "Where is my Beloved!"

My soul spoke, "Here is your Beloved."

In the darkness beyond concepts, I cried out
 "Where is my Beloved!"

My soul exclaimed, "I am your Beloved."

In the darkness beyond concepts, I cried out
 "Where is my Beloved!"

My soul admitted, "All is your Beloved."