



FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 142

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Reflection on OEF's Statement on White Nationalism - More Reactions

DRAFT statement on White nationalism presented at Chapter 2021:

The Servant Council has been listening to the ongoing conversation about the statement on white nationalism. As part of our regular work including public statements, we are re-affirming the statement, with the modification indicated by italics in the text:

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 by 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 *and around the world* 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. *Following our Principles, members will include in our personal rules of life a commitment to work actively 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.

More member reactions:

I am glad that our Order has put forth such a specific statement regarding White Nationalism which can be understood with clarity. Clearly, using the word "white" lets the observer know we are naming our "whiteness," and not avoiding dealing with its implications for non-white people, particularly in what is known as the global West. While other ethnicities also wrestle with biases and racism, it is specifically "whiteness" that stands apart, and needs to be called out as apart, from other ethnic disparities.

(Continued on page 2)

Reflection... continued

You see, “whiteness” remains as the dominant power from which “normal” is measured. It’s more than racial identity, it is the standard for how culture, customs, belief and systems are measured or created, resulting in non-white standards being dubbed as inferior. It is this centeredness that creates systems that grant privilege and priority to white people. When white folks can easily be with, participate in, be seen in the media, and learn about their own race at any time, that’s white privilege. When that begins to change, and what was once customarily normal (to see yourself in others in every aspect of your life) gets challenged or begins to change, folks get nervous. Things aren’t as comfortable. Social structures change, and life becomes less familiar. The backlash of fear of allowing other ethnicities to create a new normal results in white supremacy, which leads to White Nationalism. It is the fear of the destruction of whiteness or white culture that leads those who want to hold onto their entitlement and superiority, that they have lived with in this country since its inception. This fear is the driving force behind wanting to create a nation that keeps this whiteness in control. It is this fear that is extremely dangerous.

In the three years that I’ve been working with Dr. Catherine Meeks from the Absalom Jones Episcopal Center for Racial Healing, and the additional years working with Becoming Beloved Community, I’ve learned that most of the work is first done internally. I think the OEF understands this part of the work. By addressing my own whiteness, not out of shame, but by coming to understand and accept that I hold privilege and power that most of my colleagues of color do not have, I can move forward in the outer work of anti-racism. By making this public statement against the evils of specifically “White” Nationalism, we in the OEF are now accountable to it. I am encouraged that that we will continue to do our inner work by acknowledging our white privilege and our “whiteness.” If we do not, we will feel the grip of fear of the changing culture, of the dismantling of systems that have always benefited us, and we will feel this discomfort in our own, mostly white, Franciscan Order. It is our responsibility to take on the discomfort of this work for all of God’s beloved people by calling out the insidious nature of White Nationalism.

-Sr. Magdalena



A word of context: I grew up in an oppressively racist and sexist South in the 1940s and 1950s. Every school that I attended (until I went to graduate school in 1980) was “all white”—“they” (Blacks/African-Americans) had their own schools and “we” (Whites) were ready to defend that separation at any cost! Funding was clearly less for “their schools”—why would “we” need to fund education for kids who were clearly not as gifted or smart or deserving as “our children”? And, if “they” began to be unhappy with separations in education, jobs, and all aspects of public life, then “we” needed to do everything in “our” power to restrict “their” voting and keep “our” system intact (though that inevitably meant violent terrorist tactics, such as public lynchings).

I deeply resonated with Dr. Martin Luther King, jr.’s movement toward equality, and, with Michael and our then two-year-old daughter, participated in a March for Equality in Cincinnati in 1968.

But the work “has only just begun”—and our OEF Statement is an important part of the on-going work, especially in these times of rising White/Patriarchal “Christian” Nationalism! As Franciscans, we will each discern where and how to continue this important movement toward justice (and therefore peace). I’m grateful to our Servant Council for surrounding and supporting my words and deeds in this endeavor, with our Statement words that help me to “keep the faith” that we share in common.

-Sr. Anne Nancy

These are good points, too. In the U.S., and I think in Canada, too (though maybe in different terms), the “Doctrine of Discovery” is under increasing criticism in justice-oriented Christian circles. There are some good Mennonite resources on this, in fact. This was the doctrine promulgated by European Christian authorities in the 16th century that basically said that any Christian ruler who came upon non-Christians anywhere in the world could take their land and their bodies and do whatever he wanted (or she, thinking of Queen Elizabeth I).

It was from this, and from the resulting enslavement of Indigenous peoples in the Americas and Africa, that the idea of “White supremacy” arose, as I understand it. It was this idea that dominated the social injustice of the United States, (Continued on page 3)

Reflection... continued

where slavery was completely racialized. As one who has lived with and against this idea all my life, it works for me as a covering term for the injustices perpetrated on Native Americans, First Nations, Aborigines, Maori, and other Indigenous peoples by European "Christian" colonizers around the world. But perhaps "whiteness" has not been as thoroughly centered and given such strong theoretical and ideological support and prominence in other countries as in the U.S.

Nevertheless, white/European ancestry and culture does seem to be significant for the emotional and ideological *force* behind unjust acts, histories, systems, and structures in other countries too, doesn't it? If a broader statement were to be crafted (with input from non-U.S. siblings!), would something like "European" or "Eurocentric" (with other rewording as well) work in place of "White"?

Peace and blessing,
David Rensberger

I know that there is a need for this statement. I am still troubled about the statement's lack of universality. There is a parochialism in it in so far as it still implies an exceptionalism in the case of the United States. While the prophetic statement is certainly true, there is also a need to more clearly assert the Franciscan understanding of the sin in authoritarian domination, especially when done in the name of race.

I truly appreciate the effort and emotion in developing this statement.

Thank you all,
Ron

I echo Ron's comments. As a non USA citizen, I still see the statement as primarily US focused whereas we are developing into an international order.

In NZ, we are more likely to be talking about the evils of colonisation and the land wars of the 19th Century. We have Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi); a treaty signed by many Maori chiefs (but by no means all) and representatives of the British Crown. But a Treaty which was not always (or often not much) recognised in practice by the colonisers. Partly because of the discrepancies between the Maori language version and the English one. There are efforts being made to right the wrongs but it is a continuing process.

- Kiwi

Thank you to the Council for this diligent work. Thomas Merton, in *New Seeds of Contemplation*, speaks of the need for each of us to remove the masks we put on to make ourselves presentable or acceptable or formidable to those around us. It occurs to me that there are collective masks as well, such as the Mask of White Supremacy. What happens to us when we take that off? What children of God emerge when they no longer bear the ridiculous self-imposed burden of a false "supremacy?" As many in the African-American civil rights movement have noted, the struggle is to liberate *everyone* from the unjust falsehoods of racism.

Peace and blessing,
David Rensberger

I thank the team for this statement. It is important and their labor on it is valuable. Several things I want to point out. In terms of language, I prefer the term "supremacism" to "supremacy" because the first term is a belief and the second a lie.

It is fantastical for a white Christian to think that they are not implicated by birth, upbringing, and enculturation, in patriarchal Christian white supremacism. Our entire civilization since its patriarchal beginnings four-and-a-half thousand years ago in central Eurasia has been a story of violence, genocide, theft, deceit, and domination. In the past five hundred years, the Christian empires of the West have practiced a genocidal and colonizing war on the rest of the world.

Beginning with Portugal's West African slave trade in 1441 and the "Age of Exploration" which spelled the genocide of millions of Indigenous people wherever the West found them, our civilization has been characterized by murder, theft, and deception, and a colossal project of self-righteous self-justification. The United States, far from being an exception, is perhaps the most "successful" example.

This is not to say that colonized people and other civilizations have not engaged in similar behaviors. It would be wrong, though, to say that this behavior is universal and characterizes human beings or even homo sapiens in particular. Humans have been around for several million years and homo sapiens for the last quarter million years because they had learned to practice cooperation and working together.

(Continued on page 4)

Reflections... continued

Our civilization, as we can see from the history of the last century, is still completely in step with the four hundred – and four thousand – years that preceded the last century, and the United States as a leader among nations (for good and evil) demonstrates by the racial and gender strife and economic polarity within it that it is part of this description. White supremacy (the belief that people of Eastern and Western European descent are morally superior to all other people and creatures on Earth) formed the United States since the very first European settler-colonists set foot on North American soil. The agenda from the very beginning was to remove the uncivilized inhabitants – whether we had Christianized them or not – and to build up the white “Christian” civilization with the help of forced labor – whether that labor was the labor of enslaved Indigenous and African people or poor Europeans. It is in the nation’s DNA, in other words. It adheres to our unconscious assumptions about ourselves, about life, and about society. It is there in our homes, streets, schools, places of employment, marketplaces, and our public discourse.

“Whiteness” – a historic and mental construct – is an unconscious thing that is bred into us who are white. It is not on the surface of our skin but underneath it. We don’t see it and it is hard to reflect on it because it is invisible *to us*, being unconscious. It does not mean, however, that it is invisible. We tend to wear our unconscious behavior on our sleeve – the whole world sees it – and the less we are aware of it the *more* visible it is to others. The way to address it is to see it through the eyes of others, to render what is invisible to us, visible to us, to make what is unconscious conscious, to put it in front of us and to reflect on it – no matter how much it hurts. We cannot address our whiteness until we recognize and own it.

The practice of penance does not begin with rejecting sin. It begins with owning it. It means to stay put under the penetrating eyes of God without covering up, to look at what God sees without turning away or trying to make excuses. It also means to agree with God about my sin and to feel about it the way God feels about it. This is poverty of spirit – impoverished in the sight of God. Only the one who does this can then see that God is loving and merciful and full of compassion to the sinner. This penance is



what Jesus did in both baptism and cross. This is also what penance meant for Francis and Clare.

So, I am not in favor of striking the word “white” from OEF’s public statement. It would be even better if those of us who are white acknowledged our own complicity in white supremacy and the debt we owe to others, and if we were explicit about our desire to become free of it with God’s help, and our determination to be active in our own conversion for the sake of the world.

If I were on the outside considering a spiritual group with whom I could journey, and most of the faces I saw were like my own, i.e., white, I would be suspicious about the racial assumptions of the group. If the group held back from condemning white supremacy, white nationalism, or white Christianity, if they were uncomfortable naming these things specifically and explicitly, I would really wonder what was going on. Every church preaches love and the importance of loving one’s neighbor. We have heard it all our lives. Hatred is always justified as a form of idealized love. The level of discomfort around naming the specific speaks volumes, however. It says it all if you – or that which oppresses you – happen to be the specification that is avoided.

Of course, condemning these things can also be a form of self-righteous self-labeling (“virtue signaling”) if not accompanied by words and behavior that reveal the heart.

What about naming the United States? Since most of the people in the OEF are citizens of the United States, and the Order originated in the States and has its annual chapter here, I think it is important to know what the position of the Order is in relation to the problem of white supremacy, white nationalism, patriarchy, and the idea that there can be such a thing as white Christianity. I absolutely would not assume that it is self-evident that the position of the Order is what it is. Those who would like to enter the Order and become followers of the Little Way need to know where the Order stands regarding the ideology of whiteness and patriarchy. How does the Order handle these issues on its “home” ground? White supremacy, white nationalism, patriarchy, and white Christianity are problems that affect every white nation. This would also indicate how the OEF would respond in any culture or nation that persecuted racial, ethnic, religious, or ethnic minorities.

- Sr. Petra

**There are many more reflections, but no room! This discussion will continue in the next issue. -Your Editor*



Words from The Servant Council



Everyone should have received (by email or postal mail) an invitation from Nancy Menning to register for the 2022 Chapter/Convocation. Registration closes May 31. Contact Nancy directly (at nancy.menning@gmail.com) to register or with any questions.

Thank you!

Sr. Nancy

Reminders from Your Servant Council:

- May 31. Don't forget to register for Chapter by this date.

- June 18. Late afternoon (exact time TBA). Annual Business Meeting. (Zoom)

At Chapter, your current Servant Council will be finishing its 3-year service and therefore transitioning. Please spend some time prior to Chapter in discernment about whom you would like to see on the next 3-year Servant Council.

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Betty Lou, Bruce James, Jacoba, Juniper, Markie



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





Fellowship News

I had a brief layover in Seattle and got to meet in the flesh our Novitiate hopefully-soon-to-be-Professed Mir Plemmons! We had dinner and a chat that could have continued had I not needed to catch a flight to Austin.

-Sr. Magdalena



Northeast OEF Brothers and Sisters (Bruce James, Shoshana, Juniper, Catherine, Anjelica, Carol, Sam, Claire, Linda) gathered Saturday afternoon, March 19th. Opening and closing prayer cradled beautiful shares -- working groups successfully securing property to open shelters for homeless; the *Tiny Takeout* (a tiny house/shelter doubling as a takeout for the hungry); life review and contemplation of Jesus' sheltering response to violence and chaos; establishing a pantry for new mothers (diapers, blankets, etc.); efforts to revise NYS family law from punitive to supportive; and re-tooling mini-retreats from face-to-face to electronic formats. Well-being and health shares; celebrated 4th boosters; increased antibodies; the wonder of an *empty nest*; readings of *The Road*, *The Upper Room*, and *The Gift of Years*; enrollment in a Christian Spirituality Advanced Certificate Program; contemplation of enrolling in a Franciscan Theology Master's Program; and the gratitude felt for our OEF Community.

-Linda Rose

Blessings to all. March found **Crossroads Fellowship** to be quiet in a Lenten way. April will find us meeting via Zoom on April 23rd. It will hopefully include a meet and greet with a potential Postulant and a n/OEF out of Kentucky. We will be discussing a May in-person gathering in Indianapolis, IN. This is an opportunity for fellowship, food and fun, along with Spiritual Enrichment. We'll have more coverage in our next Fiddlesticks! We are very excited to prepare ourselves for Chapter 2022! Hope to see you all there! A Blessed EASTERTIDE to everyone!

-Sr. Deb

JCFU Conference May 20-21, 2022

Good and Blessed Day Brothers and Sisters! This is a communication about an upcoming mini-conference in May. Sr. Deb Snider-Scott and I are part of the JCFU (Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity). The JCFU is a team made up of tertiary Franciscan Orders. We have representation from the OFS (Catholic), TSSF (Episcopal), OLF (Lutheran), and our beloved OEF! We offer an annual mini-conference which allows for the opportunity to fellowship with each other, and learn about our common charisms and common elements that bind us together.

This year we will meet May 20-21st at the Spiritan Center, located at 6230 Brush Run Road, Bethel PA 15102. Attendees would arrive on Friday, May 20th by 3:00 pm. Departure would be on Saturday, May 21st by 3:00 pm. The JCFU provides the food and lodging for this event. Travel expenses not included. Attendees will need proof of vaccination and/or Booster, plus a negative Rapid test 1 day prior to travel.

If interested please feel free to give me or Deb a call with any questions or concerns that you may have. It would be wonderful to meet you there and have you be a part of this conference. We have only two more spaces for the OEF. So, hurry to request a spot.

Peace and Prayers Always-

Ron Nuss-Warren, OEF (308) 225-1489
Deb Snider-Scott, OEF (317) 213-8652





Siblings Discuss... Invasion of Ukraine



Dear Siblings,

For those of you who do not stay glued to the OEF website, this statement was posted there yesterday in English, Ukrainian, and Russian, in that order.

As Franciscans, deeply committed to peace, we are appalled by the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine, grieve for the victims of the ongoing attacks, stand with those in Ukraine, Russia, and beyond who oppose this war, and pray for all concerned.

Ми, служителі Ордену францисканців, завжди щиро прихильного ідеям миру, приголомшені неспровокованим російським вторгненням в Україну. Ми сумуємо за жертвами безперервно триваючих нападів, підтримуємо усіх тих, хто в Україні, Росії та в усьому світі виступає проти цієї війни, і молимося за всіх, кого вона торкнулася.

Мы, служители Ордена францисканцев, неуклонно и искренне приверженного миру, возмущены неспровоцированным российским вторжением в Украину. Мы скорбим о жертвах непрекращающихся нападений, поддерживаем всех тех в Украине, России и во всём мире, кто выступает против этой войны, и молимся за всех, кого она коснулась.

-Betty Lou

For your Servant Council

This Holy Week... Prayers for peace in Ukraine seek to be going unanswered. As we hear of thousands of people slaughtered and whole cities wiped out by Russia but sit back and watch it all like it's some kind of new reality TV series, I grow more disgusted by the lack of direct intervention by the US. We've gone into totally selfish and senseless wars around the globe in the past. But Ukraine's survival and freedom is far from pointless. It's beyond time to send in our

own military & stop avoiding what I think is inevitable: war with Russia. I struggle mightily with this. I want to be a pacifist, a peace-maker. But that position makes me feel as if I am handing out carnations to those being herded into railcars headed for the concentration camps and saying "My thoughts and prayers are with you." Or like the priest who passed by the mugged victim in the parable of the good Samaritan. This can not go on!!! Just saying...

- Br. David Delacroix, OEF

My OEF Siblings, as I respond to this heartfelt worry, it comes time for you to know another piece of my background that informs it. I'm a Cold War Army Brat (a military kid) who spent my formative years in officers' country of various bases and around a lot of conversations about why so much of our military was based in Europe.

Right now, as awful as this is, the Bear is still scratching its back in its sleep. If we look at US history, the American Revolution only worked because Britain decided that those colonies weren't worth the effort, not because they successfully went toe-to-toe with the full imperial might King George's government could have dedicated - if they didn't have a lot of other factors to weigh. If USA sends troops, honestly if NATO sends troops, we wake the Bear. Fully. With all the implications us Cold War kids remember from our childhood nightmares. Perhaps lessened, certainly out of practice - but they'd REALLY rather keep the Bear semi-sleeping, be an inconvenience and an embarrassment, and hope the Bear will roll over in its sleep some other direction, say, industrializing some new spot in Siberia. I truly believe that NATO is trying to make Ukraine really inconvenient but not actually wake the Bear. I can't make any guesses about whether they're doing this wisely but I do know that what they fear is far, far worse - even in Ukraine - than what we have.

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Siblings Discuss... continued

I think we need to put our efforts to day-lighting abuses, supporting rescues, supporting everything that'll get people away from power plays. I think these things do have worth and aren't just carnations. I'm supporting some of my geek contacts - companies that make replica armor are making tank traps. Companies that make costumes are making blankets and bandages and camo netting and water filtration - and all of these folk need our support, financially through truly reliable and vetted donations. And our prayers. Prayers for bombs to fail and miss, prayers for incubators in ambulances, prayers that the right level of inconvenience is the right level of incentive to roll back East.

Brother David, you are right to worry, you are right to burn to do more. I affirm and honor that. I don't know what fighting smarter really looks like for sure, so I have to trust NATO for that... it may not be an answer that comforts or works for you, but it's the only answer I can offer.

In shared sorrow and concern, from the guy who's been wearing his orthodox prayer ring since this started,
Your brother Mir

It should come as no surprise to anyone who knows me that I am a pacifist through and through. I want to settle things through peaceful means way beyond what is reasonable. That being said, I feel it is well past the time to take action to stop this war even if it means force by friends and neighbors of the people of Ukraine to avoid the rail cars to the camps and mass killings of women and children in hospitals, food lines, railroad stations etc. Not to boast, but here is a bit of familial history.

For those who have heard about my background I am a second generation American from North Dakota. My mother and 3 grandparents came through Ellis Island. I have more family in Norway than the United States. Since the early 1800's, my relatives have been involved in the

government in Norway including when Norway was aligned with Sweden and then Denmark.

In the 1930's, one of my mother's first cousins was a member of the Norwegian Parliament. In 1942, the Prime Minister signed a secret deal with Hitler giving Norway to the control of Germany. To cut the government off at the knees, the Nazis rounded up all the government leaders that they could find and put them in concentration camps. The King and Queen escaped Norway and for a time were kept secure at Buckingham Palace and even for a short time at the White House in Washington D.C.

My cousin was one of those government officials who was caught along with my great uncle and were put in cattle cars and sent off to the camps. My great uncle was killed in the camps. However his son, my mom's cousin, survived. I was able to meet him in the 1970's. He never shared his experiences but always wore long sleeved shirts to cover up the burned-in prisoner number on his arm. My mother and grandmother moved back to Norway for a time to help rebuild Norway. Even today, there is an anti-aircraft gun in the yard of the farm where my grandmother was born, both as a memorial that never again should it ever happen, but also in preparation in case it would happen. One of my second cousins is currently an ambassador from Norway to the European Union stationed in Belgium to try to deescalate the tensions and find peace in the region. I am not able to visit with him as I don't want to have him compromise any discussions between NATO, the European Union and other nations involved which causes me some worry.

That being said, I confess I would have no problem taking up arms if it stopped the genocide that is happening. I know that doesn't sound Franciscan, but that is where I am right now.

Pray for peace, but pray that this war may soon be over.

- John soS



Siblings Discuss... continued

Hearts are heavy, eyes are not dry, thoughts swirl at the evil, senseless genocide. If you are not troubled by what is happening in this world, then there is something wrong. Ignoring the urge to share is not helpful as an individual but sharing the heaviness within community is healthy spiritually, psychologically and emotionally.

Our own individual experiences we share are windows of a heart's door for others to see others perspectives, pains and concerns. What one may not understand, one can share and a perspective shifts in proper place.

My heritage is Slavic. The latest genetic test update has that side of my family as Polish, Ukrainian and a smidgen of Ashkenazi. We gravitated and gathered around the individual who insisted to share their concentration camp experiences. Those Jewish elders at the pool we used to go to didn't hide their concentration camp tattooed numbers. They were brave. They felt the stories had to be shared, lest we forget. But fast forwarding to today, it seems the US is forgetting. Why?

What is happening in Eastern Europe has been going on for centuries. The ebb and bloody flow of the evil power the Russ people forced upon the Slavs is sadly not new. The boundaries have been rewritten so many times. The country boundary lines were so blurred so often, the outcast would be forced south. It is an area of Europe called "The Pale." And yes, the term "beyond the Pale" originated from this reference meaning you couldn't be saved, or you were the dirtiest of the dirty. And it was the Russ (or Russians) and Belarussians of Belarus that tried to keep that "cleansing" going; just like Putin is trying to bring back the Russian Empire as it was after the Red and White War (aka: The Bolshevik Revolution.)

I am thankful that family came to the States before the 1918 War. But what is very

interesting is how all those stereotypes are still being projected generations later even in my own family. My Babczi was fine with having friends who were Ukrainian. Likewise, with my friends' Ukranian grandmas with us Poles. But what surprised me was my Babczi's reaction when we told her that a Russian Orthodox priest and his family moved near our school. She told us to be "careful" and "watch your back." We tried to explain to her that the other Russian priests saw an opportunity for their church to have a new start in the US away from the ranks of the Orthodox Church in Russia, which is now the puppet of Putin.

I agree though... prayers only go so far. God knows we are in anguish. God expects us to act prayerfully and appropriately when feel called. So, why don't we answer? Why isn't the so-called leading country of the free world helping out more?

I don't know if I could bear arms. But there are other ways to help and protest. What and how... I don't have the answers. I am just in shock this is happening. The ethnicity I identify heavily with is once again in danger of being wiped off the face of this world... in fact we all are.

Thank you for sharing your stories. I think it helps to share and listen to each other.

Pokój,
K-M



Thank you, dear siblings, for sharing your honest feelings and thoughts, and your family histories. My wife Sharon and I have been having similar conversations. For those who do not know us, we are of Mennonite and Church of the Brethren ancestry, Anabaptist pacifist groups with which we continue to identify and worship. My own history is that I spent some time in prison during the Vietnam War for refusing to cooperate with the military draft;

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Siblings Discuss... continued

my ancestors were conscientious objectors during both world wars (which, in World War I, meant harsh imprisonment).

So, it is with real astonishment and dismay that I find myself actually thinking that the U.S. ought to be sending much more weaponry to Ukraine, maybe even attack Russian missile positions ourselves. I wonder (and I have not answered this question) where this thinking is coming from within me. It is clearly not coming from theology or spirituality or discipleship to Jesus. I ask, is there ever a situation when I can stop being a disciple of Jesus for a moment? And of course the answer must be No. And yet my thoughts are not consistently disciplined.

I do find myself thinking in terms of "relative" nonviolence much more often than usual. The economic sanctions are relatively nonviolent; and as nonviolent methods generally are, they are long-term rather than short-term approaches. One problem with them, strategically, is that if there is one thing that the 20th century taught ordinary Russians how to do, it is live with economic distress and food shortages. But I don't know if a generation of Russians brought up in the 21st century will be willing to do that. Various peculiarities of Russian culture and religion are definitely factors in this.

Part of the difficulty for pacifist and nonviolent Christians in the U.S. (and maybe elsewhere in the West) is that all the news we are getting comes through the filters of a highly militarized society and culture, more militarized than it has been since World War II. CNN and other outlets will only show us (a) bloody violence and its results; (b) appropriately violent responses to it; and (c) dramatic escapes and rescues, and humanitarian aid for refugees. Any nonviolent responses will be studiously ignored, since they do not fit the narrative of justified violence.

If we want to know of such things in order to shape our own thinking, we will have to look beyond the usual media. Early on in the attacks, I did get from Christian friends some news of innovative grassroots nonviolent resistance. Even putting an obscene gesture on a postage stamp is

relatively nonviolent; and frankly, I doubt that any nation that will do that can ever be fully subjugated. If we are feeling dismayed or concerned by our own violent inner responses, we may need to look deeper and wider for sources of information beyond the militarized mainstream.

The spiritual theoreticians of the nonviolent African-American civil rights movement in the U.S., Dr. Howard Thurman and others, followed Jesus in seeing the essence of nonviolence as recognizing the humanity and the inner need of the enemy, even the bloodthirsty and oppressive enemy. No one commits these atrocities if they are able to access their own inner wholeness, but only if they have lost touch with their own humanity and are in pain because of it. It is desperately hard to recognize this in the current situation. But I recognize that, to a very great extent, it is not mine to do so. The decision for nonviolent response belongs to those who are literally on the front line. Those were the ones whom Jesus was addressing, his fellow Jews under the heel of the Roman Empire, which did not hesitate to crucify those who resisted. It is not for me to tell the Ukrainians how they ought to respond.

What is for me to do? By all means to dig deep and support humanitarian aid for refugees, and then later to contribute to the rebuilding of Ukraine (though I would support any efforts to put Russian assets to that task). Surprisingly, and with great difficulty and no sense of conviction, it may also be for me not to object to acts of violence perpetrated by my country in the process of defending Ukraine.

It is also mine, and ours, to pray. A month ago, Sr. Nancy Menning sent us a video of Ukrainian Evangelicals praying Psalm 31. We used it last Sunday in the worship service at the Baptist church to which Sharon and I also belong. It's worth watching again.

So, those are my thoughts (if they can be called thoughts) at this moment. Thanks again to Br. David D. and others for starting this.

Peace and blessing,
David Rensberger



Siblings Discuss... continued

I thank you all for your "confession." I too find this a spiritually difficult time. My personal prayer focus comes from a now deceased friend Rev. Howard Osbourne (PCUSA). He lived at Bayard, Nebraska. Every Easter, he and like-minded individuals would plant Easter lilies on the perimeter of a missile site located nearby (there were many of them). His prayer was that the missiles would not function, neither ours nor theirs. My prayer today is that all the armaments of Russia and Ukraine would cease to work (I also pray that the people of Ukraine, including their military, not lose hope and that the military of Russia would lay down their arms and walk away from the battlefield. In addition I pray that President Putin would hear the whispers of the Holy Spirit and repent of his destructive course of actions. Further I pray for the healing of the Church of Russia and its clergy, that they too might be led by the Holy Spirit. Finally, I pray for a just peace that would make the people of Russia and Ukraine come to love and trust one another again, as Russians and Ukrainians, two separate nations in the family of God.

I also include a Hymn/Song by Jim Manley of a prophetic nature:

"The Eagle and the Dragon and the Bear"

by Jim Manley

in

Songs for Saturday Night and Sunday Morning

*Refrain: Oh, the Eagle and the Dragon and the Bear
Sometimes two would join to form a most uneasy pair
They'd cut the third one out awhile
until the moment came
When one stepped on the other's toe
and then the partners changed*

*1. The Eagle leveled Viet Nam but never won the war
The Dragon struggled to survive
and even up the score.*

*The Bear kept giving big bear hugs that left its
neighbors dead
And everybody looked upon this rivalry with dread.*

*2. "May I cut in?" The Dragon said, "You know that
Bear is mad."
Its only goal is oil control, the Gulf to Leningrad."*

*"Why, yes, please do," the Eagle said, "and while we
have this dance*

*You'd better take these weapons plans,
together we've a chance.*

*3. And round the world the little folk,
the Badger and the Mouse
Muttered in their poverty, "A plague on every house!
And more joined in the Dance Macabre,
until the floor was jammed
The only ones to send regrets were
the Lion and the Lamb.*

*4. The Dragon hissed, the Eagle screamed,
the Bear let out a roar
And each one cried, "The other side
is forcing me to war!"*

They raised their paws and bared their claws and
blew their fiery breath
And in the name of peace they led us
in the dance of death.

Copyright 1980 by James K. Manley. Available
through CCLI

In prayer,

Pax et bonum,

Ron Nuss-Warren, OEF



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**





Formation Station



Lifelong Formation Station



Introducing:

Charles (Chip) Wilson:

My name is Charles Wilson, but my friends and family call me Chip. I currently reside in San Antonio, Texas where I serve at Abiding Presence Lutheran Church as the Minister of Faith Formation. I am originally from Houston but have been here a little over four years. I am also a student at Colorado Christian University where I am working on a degree in Biblical Studies. After I complete this program, I plan on pursuing further theological education. I am married to Gregory Lawton, and we have three dogs: Cooper, Wes, and Klaus. We have also been foster parents and have high hopes of adopting soon. I enjoy digging into scripture, Christian Church history and liturgical traditions. History and Paul's letters are my favorite things to explore, and I am liable to share lots of random facts with you in one of our conversations. My favorite saying is, "Have faith in all that you do," because I believe that faith is central to all aspects of life. I am thrilled to begin this journey towards deeper spirituality and service.



WELCOME!!!

Pentecost

The term Pentecost comes from the Greek Πεντηκοστή (Pentēkostē) meaning "fiftieth". It refers to the Jewish festival celebrated on the fiftieth day after First Fruits, also known as the "Feast of Weeks" and the "Feast of 50 days" in rabbinic tradition. Pentecost is also the Christian holiday which we celebrate on the 50th day following Easter Sunday. **It commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and other followers of Jesus Christ** while they were in Jerusalem celebrating the Feast of Weeks, as described in the Acts of the Apostles (Harper Collins, Wikipedia). So many customs rich with tradition, so many laws it's a wonder that anyone was able to see beyond them, to experience the revelation of the Holy Spirit. But they did and so can we. In our Lenten service we were asked to consider the question of how we might be the church courageous. Now as we commemorate the birth of the church, this new way of relating to God and understanding as Jesus understood, I invite you to consider how you will use your voice to spread the spirit of understanding. Will you march with your feet, will you companion the unwanted, or will you speak for those who cannot speak, in what way will you celebrate the church by being the church? There are so many ways for us to celebrate the church and our conversion to understanding through Spirit all of them inviting us not to a building but to a place within and without where unconditional love is the way. May this Pentecost be the beginning of a kind of church that is born of love rather than law.

- Br. Stephan Gerhardt, OEF



A Short Review

The course is called: "Narratives of Holiness: Biblical Wisdom and the Franciscan Tradition."

This class was offered by the Center for Spiritual Development located in Orange, California and was part of the Center's "Sojourners Well" series of classes. It took place on March 26 so as a birthday present to myself, I registered. The class supposedly was designed with spiritual directors in mind and was offered in person and over zoom. Given that I serve as a spiritual director for a number of people, I thought this might be a good opportunity to improve my chops. But the real reason I registered is that the teacher was Sr. Mary Beth Ingham, the author of *Scotus for Dunces*!

Dr. Ingham was simply outstanding for three hours. She began the class by stating "following the Franciscan tradition, we are flying by the seat of our pants". The first part of the lecture focused on spiritual direction as storytelling in three dimensions: directee, director, and the revelation of dynamic interchange between directee and director.

She talked about how our later stories add to the earlier narrative that is our life. She then moved onto the topic of Biblical wisdom. Mary Beth then spent the rest of the class time on the narratives of both Francis and Clare as vehicles for spiritual formation.

She noted that our narratives show us the map and closed with the question, "who am I becoming?".

Well worth the time!

Br. Samuel/OEF



NEXT "FIDDLESTICKS" DEADLINE

Submissions for the **Post-Chapter** issue of "Fiddlesticks" will be accepted immediately.

Deadline for submissions is July 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!



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





A Few Good Reads

The Life We're Looking For

By Andy Crouch

"Very few people are happy with the way technology has come to dominate our lives," argues author Andy Crouch. He thinks it will take a while for humans to reclaim autonomy from machines.

"I rarely meet anyone who thinks, 'Oh, it's really working quite well,'" Crouch said in an interview. "I just don't meet anyone who thinks we're in great shape and should just keep kind of on the path we're on."

Crouch's new book, The Life We're Looking For: Reclaiming Relationship in a Technical World, identifies one of the core problems of our time as a "breakdown of recognition."

Our neurology is actually wired for this kind of face-to-face encounter. It's when another person really attends to me and knows what I'm feeling, and in a way thinking, that I can fully be myself," said Crouch, a former executive editor at Christianity Today magazine who has written four other books on culture-making, the ethical and moral uses of power, and how to use technology rather than be used by it.

There are, Crouch said, "fewer and fewer settings that I'm in where I can expect that another person knows who I am, knows what it's like to be me."

In addition to separating humans from one another, Crouch says that, too often, technology separates the individual from an essential part of themselves. "To be a person is actually to be a heart, soul, mind, strength complex," Crouch said in an interview on "The Long Game," a Yahoo News podcast.

Much of our technology disassociates us from one or more of these qualities," he said. For example, "it's best for the computers if we sit still. So we're idling this aspect of the human body that is a crucial part of being a person," Crouch said. "And this is doing huge damage to people. I mean all these jobs, of which you and I probably each have one, that mostly we're paid to sit without motion most of the day: it's horrible for our heart, for our blood sugar, for our weight, everything."

Crouch had already written a book in 2017 called, The Techwise Family, which has plenty of practical advice. But his latest book is harder to categorize, as Crouch struggles with how to recover our humanity. His answers to this question are unconventional.

For one, Crouch writes that those who are considered "unuseful" will be "teachers of real personhood and real community." These are the young, the old, the disabled, and anyone else who Crouch says, "cannot make themselves of use to our kind of practical... money-driven, market-driven world. Their value cannot be accounted for in money."

He writes: "If we can stay with them in their limits, their profound anchoring in this place and time, we have some hope that we will not detach from the real world of heart, soul, mind and strength." And Crouch, who is currently caring --alongside a sibling-- for two older parents who are struggling with illness warns that "if all your value is wrapped up in what you're useful for, that is an extremely precarious position to be in as a human being because the truth is all of us could lose our usefulness overnight,"



A Few Good Reads... continued

St Francis of Assisi

By G.K. Chesterton



(In response to an inquiry on the Chat List about this book by Mir Plemmons):

G.K. Chesterton's *St. Francis of Assisi* was the first book about Francis I read. I LOVED Chesterton's "Orthodoxy..." and learned his writing style is a bit...sarcastic? Paradoxical? Admittedly his writing is not for everyone. But I love his tongue-in-cheek way of looking at Francis' life. Chesterton is a writer who looks at things from many different angles. And the conclusions he comes to are not always popular. But I have been a long time fan of his writing. I read his book about Francis because I wanted to read EVERYONE's book about Francis. I started with Chesterton because I like his very dry humor and wit.

And from David Rensberger:

I must have at least looked through Chesterton's book at some time because I have a note to myself about chapter 8, "The Mirror of Christ" (i.e., Francis mirroring Christ). Chesterton devotes part of this chapter to proving to his own satisfaction that the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church mediated uniquely between Christ and Francis, and to asserting that Francis would ultimately have approved the defense of orthodoxy by force of arms (which he admits would take a large book to prove!).

I was more impressed by Chesterton's point that many things we find difficult in the teaching of Christ—consider the lilies, turn the other cheek, give your tunic as well as your cloak—would seem perfectly natural coming from Francis. "There is in it something of gentle mockery of the very idea of possessions; something of a hope of disarming the enemy by generosity; something of a humorous sense of bewildering the worldly with the unexpected; something of the joy of carrying an enthusiastic conviction to a logical extreme... It seems reasonable to infer that if it was this spirit that made such strange things possible in Umbria, it was the same spirit that made them possible in Palestine" (p. 138).

Now, I agree wholeheartedly with Chesterton's description of what is going on here: mocking possessions, disarming the enemy, bewildering the "worldly." But he wants to conclude that since Francis was speaking to Franciscans, Christ must have been speaking... no, not to Christians, but to only a few with a particular apostolic vocation. I would actually question Chesterton's premise that Francis was speaking only to his dedicated band of followers—he was known to preach to large and wildly receptive crowds wherever he went. I would say instead that Francis' extraordinary openness to simply adopting the teaching of Christ as his lifestyle led him also to adopt the "atmosphere" of Christ's teaching. To me, it's a shame that we need Francis to make this radical teaching seem real or plausible. But there is definitely a point to Chesterton's observation. Of course, that lets him, and a lot of people, domesticate this radicalism: when Francis said it, he really meant it. But he didn't mean it for *us*. Let's not suppose that Jesus was serious when he said it. Otherwise, we would have to take it seriously too.

So, I'd agree with Paula Clare, this seems a good and serious book about Francis. It's not necessarily the first book one ought to read about him, because of both Chesterton's style and his very particular point of view.

In 2020, as contractors were bulldozing cacti and sucking up groundwater along Arizona's southern border, ethnobotanist Gary Nabhan convened an interfaith group, which he called the "Healing The Border Project." Nabhan, an Ecumenical Franciscan brother, completed a PhD in interdisciplinary arid lands resource sciences at the University of Arizona in 1983, focusing on O'odham agriculture. In the years since, he has worked alongside

As the clip above shows, our beloved Brother Coyote (known to the broader world as Gary Nabhan) is mentioned in a lovely article in Emergence Magazine that you can read here:

<https://emergencemagazine.org/essay/saguaro-free-of-the-earth/> Also see:

https://emergencemagazine.org/op_ed/rights-of-nature-at-the-border/ -Sr. Nancy Menning



Fiddlesticks
c/o Christine Petersen, OEF
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A Zen Parable

Author Unknown

"Tell me the weight of a snowflake," a coal mouse asked a wild dove. "Nothing more than nothing," was the answer.

"In that case I must tell you a marvelous story," the coal mouse said. "I sat on the branch of a fir, close to its trunk, when it began to snow..."

Since I didn't have anything better to do, I counted the snowflakes settling on the twigs and needles of my branch. Their number was exactly 3,741,952. When the next snowflake dropped onto the branch--nothing more than nothing, as you say--the branch broke off..."

The dove, since Noah's time an authority on the matter, thought about the story for a while and finally said to herself: 'Perhaps there is only one person's voice lacking

for peace to come about in the world.'

-Shared by Br. David Delacroix

An Easter Surprise!



Happy Easter to all! In honor of the season, your editor has hidden some Easter Eggs and Peeps Bunnies in this issue!



There are five eggs and five bunnies (like those pictured above - These two don't count!) of various sizes and orientations hidden.

The first three OEF-fers to contact Sister Chris by phone or email with the correct locations of all 10 doodads will each receive a special prize at Chapter!!! (Of course, they will be mailed if you cannot get to Chapter.)

GOOD LUCK!!!