



FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 158

Pentacost 2026



SEARCHING in Durham by Br. Neal Dunnigan, OEF

In April 2026, I was in Durham England at the Third International Franciscan Studies Conference. The conference theme was: Life and Love Transfigured: Exploring New Horizons in the Franciscan Tradition. There were about 150 attendees. There were scholars, provincial leaders, even Franciscan media stars Daniel P. Horan and Casey Cole. Two OFS siblings from my old fraternity in Oklahoma City made the special pilgrimage. Even one of our own Br Sam's professors from the Franciscan School of Theology at University of San Diego. (Sam must have impressed her because she wanted to know all about "Prayerful Discernment")

A director of my Unitarian Church is a retired medieval scholar. She tipped me off to the conference and encouraged me to present a paper: Repair My Church - A Unitarian San Damiano Experience. (You can watch video of that on our OEF Google Workspace by going to the Google "space" called: OEF Chat-Spiritual Reflections.)

In this article, I was to share an evangelisation model presented by three young friars (OFM) from Charlotte, NC. The model is called S.E.A.R.C.H (Seek, Encounter, Accompany, Renew, Convert, and Heal). Basically, these three friars had been given permission and funding to setup a mendicant-like hermitage. From that base, they try different methods to simply meet all sorts of people, where they are, in life situations. This likely sounds both simple and familiar to many of us who have been around for a while. For me, what was most exceptional was the fact that both Charlotte's Catholic Diocese and the OFM province were willing to take three professed/ordained resources "off-line" - away from traditional pastoral roles where they would have been in very high demand.

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SEARCHing...continued

I very much enjoyed their stories and anecdotes of their everyday encounters. However, I was left curious about their SEARCH model. The write-up in the program indicated that this team had developed it. Yet, the friars did not mention any struggles of developing or refining the model, nor did they have any interest in delivering the model as a reusable lifelong formation training tool. It appears that they definitely were not modelbuilders. Their session was about a motivational story, not a methodological story.

Good News! The three friars left me curious enough to followup on my own. It seems that SEARCH is one part of a larger Roman Catholic initiative, started by Pope John Paul II, called The New Evangelisation. In some ways, that initiative appears to be open to the social sciences as a tool to better understand what evangelisation approaches work, for which people, and why.

In that context, SEARCH is a model that represents the stages of a person's faith journey. In ministry, we should be perceptive to a person's stage if we want to "meet them where they are" in more than just the physical sense.

Here is my own distillation of the model:
 Search - Seriously exploring life's big questions and looking for deeper meaning. Or Seek - Actively looking for internal and external connections with the divine or a community

Encounter - A personally defining moment or experience where one finds a glimpse of their true self or senses a partial presence of God's glory

Accompany - Walking alongside someone in their journey without judgment. For me, this is the archetype of the intimate stranger as exemplified by Raphael in The Book of Tobit (see OEF Chat -

Spiritual Reflections: The Angel Raphael: Chaplain to the Tobit Family).

Renew - The process of revitalising one's own faith or the life of a church community. Not just returning to some prior status quo, but rather re-connecting with our original created goodness in a more relevant way.

Convert - An ongoing change of heart and mind (metanoia). It is the interior transformation where one turns away from past habits and moves toward their...

Heal - Not fixing. Creating the safety and supportive space for correction, mitigation, adaptation, and new growth.

What do you think of the SEARCH model? Does it sound like a good lifelong formation tool? What would you do to make it better, or to better leverage its use?

When Fiddlesticks publishes this, I'll drop a copy in our OEF Google Workspace. By going to the Google "space" called: OEF Chat - Spiritual Reflections, you can share your own comments and ideas about SEARCH.

Peace and blessings - Neal





* " FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND THE GIFT OF LENT"



This year, something extraordinary is happening in Assisi.

For the first time in 800 years, the relics considered to be those of St Francis are going on public display The Franciscans have chosen to do this during Lent, a season that shaped Francis's own journey of faith.

Francis's conversion had a deeply Lenten character. He learned to see differently: In the leper, he discovered compassion where he once felt fear.

Before the crucifix of San Damiano, he heard Christ's call to rebuild what was broken.

In renouncing his old life, he found the freedom to live simply and joyfully

Lent invites us into the same pattern:

to see with clearer eyes,

to listen more deeply,

and to let go of what no longer gives life. The display of Francis's remains is not meant to glorify him, but to remind us that holiness is lived bodily and simply, in the ordinary places where God meets us. It is a quiet invitation to ask:

What might God be trying to rebuild in us this Lent?

What might we need to release, so that Christ can live more freely in us?

Francis would say that the journey begins not with heroic effort, but with a small step toward love — especially toward those we find difficult to love.

I thought it worth sharing

Br Reg

*This article was sent in after the Lent issue deadline, but seemed relevant to include here. Here is the original online article, a combination of several sources:

The relics of St. Francis of Assisi are on public display in Assisi from February 22 to March 22, 2026, marking the 800th anniversary of his death.

Event Overview

For the first time in history, the mortal remains of St. Francis of Assisi are fully visible to the public in the lower church of the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, Italy. The display commemorates the 800th anniversary of his death in 1226 and allows pilgrims to venerate the saint's relics directly, which are housed in a nitrogen-filled, bulletproof plexiglass case inscribed with "Corpus Sancti Francisci" (The Body of St Francis).. The bones, usually kept hidden in the crypt, have only been briefly displayed once before in 1978 for a limited audience. www.vaticannews.va

Historical and Spiritual Significance
St. Francis, born in 1182, renounced his wealth to live a life of poverty and service, founding the Franciscan Order. His body, which reportedly bore the stigmata, was hidden after his death to prevent theft and rediscovered in 1818, with official recognition confirmed by Pope Pius VII.

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Francis of Assisi. continued

The public exposition of his relics is intended not only as an act of devotion but also as a spiritual encounter, allowing the faithful to connect with the saint's life and message of peace, fraternity, and simplicity. Church officials emphasize that venerating the relics is a way to experience the Holy Spirit through the saint's humanity. (Manila Standard+3)

Visitor Information

Approximately 400,000 people have registered to view the relics, with daily attendance expected between 15,000 and 19,000 visitors. A highly organized system with QR code reservations allows about 750 people to enter the lower church every 30 minutes. Pilgrims follow a designated route past 13th- and 14th-century frescoes by Cimabue and Giotto, with opportunities for silent prayer and reflection. Special arrangements are in place for people with mobility or visual impairments, and the display is carefully monitored to ensure preservation and security (www.vaticannews.va +5)

Cultural and Community Impact

The month-long display has significant cultural and social impact on Assisi, drawing visitors from Italy and around the world, including the United States, Brazil, and Africa. Local accommodations and services are fully booked, and the city has implemented shuttle services and additional parking to manage the influx. The event reinforces Assisi's role as a major pilgrimage destination and highlights the enduring relevance of St. Francis' teachings in contemporary society (National Catholic Register+3)

Conclusion

The 2026 public display of St. Francis' relics in Assisi is a historic and spiritually significant event, offering pilgrims a rare opportunity to venerate the saint's remains, reflect on his life, and experience a tangible connection to one of Christianity's most beloved figures. The exhibition will continue until March 22, 2026, providing a month-long period for devotion, prayer, and cultural engagement. (Newsday +2)



Why "Fiddlesticks?"

The uninitiated among us may not know the story of our newsletters odd name. Here is the story:

One day, when Francis was walking in the woods, he was so filled with delight at the beauty of the world that he wished to express his gratitude with music. He had no violin, so he picked up two sticks and began to play. Birds sang and animals came out and danced...

Far-fetched, you say? Perhaps only those who believe that animals dance can hear the violin music of two twigs (Fiddlesticks!)

- from Simple Living by Jose Hobday
- Shared by Dale Carmen, OEF

Farewell, Br. Bob, Until We Meet Again



From the family: We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who was with us today to help us celebrate our dad's life and lay him to rest. To those who could not be with us in person, we deeply felt your kind words,

messages, and prayers. Thank you all for the love, support, and comfort you have shown our family. Dad, I hope we made you proud today. We love you! Happy first Valentine's Day in Heaven! ☺

My Eulogy for Dad

How fitting it is that we are here today on Valentine's Day. Originally rooted in Christian tradition to honor Saint Valentine and now dedicated as a day to express love, affection, and friendship. I can't think of a better day to come together to celebrate the life of our dad.

We want to thank each of you for being here today. Your presence means more to us than words can say.

One of the first things I shared with David and Emily after Dad's passing was a quote I found on his phone. I'd like to share it with you all today. It reflects his heart, his unwavering faith, the peace he carried with him, and the comfort he would want us all to feel today.

"When death one day comes for me, I shall go with a smile on my face, a hallelujah on my lips, and no fear in my heart, for my God will be coming for me. And where I will go, no more troubles will I ever see. Amen."

Dad truly lived by those words. He was not afraid of death—quite the opposite, in fact. We spoke about it often, and his faith gave him a deep sense of

peace and assurance. If he were standing here with us today he would boldly remind us not to mourn his passing, but to celebrate his life, and his love. I remember him saying "I don't want anyone to cry or feel sad" followed by a huge smile and joy in his voice as he said "I sure won't be!" He is now right where he has wanted to be. Surrounded by God and his family, whom he missed so much.

When I would ask him what he wanted to be remembered for in this lifetime and what he would want me to share with you today it always came down to the following three things: his faith in God, his family and friends, and his passion for helping others.

From a very young age our Dad had very clear ideas and a very firm and unwavering sense of his faith. At 15 he left for Seminary School where he began his religious, academic, and practical training for Ordained Ministry. During this time he made lifelong friendships with his brothers in Christ, several of whom became our family. He traveled the world praying, studying, and teaching all while gaining a deeper appreciation of his Catholic faith. He was inspired by the foreign countries he visited, their cultures and their language. Even becoming fluent in several such as French, German, and Latin. He played the piano and boy could he sing a church hymn. He would sing full throated and heartfelt! In 1971 he accomplished one of his proudest achievements and was ordained into Priesthood as a Franciscan.

Eventually he decided to step away from the Priesthood to find love and start a family of his own. However he always led with God first. When he still felt the calling to preach the word of God,

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Farewell, Br Bob... continued

he didn't let the fact that he could no longer preach in Catholic Church in the same capacity stop him. His spiritual heart, his deeply rooted faith, and his love for God remained completely intact. He lived his final days with the quiet certainty that God was with him always—something he knew and felt until his very last breath.

Dad was the third of four children, born to our grandparents, Oscar and Marian. His sister Barbara and his brothers Jim and John meant the world to him, and that love naturally extended to his many nieces and nephews, whom he cherished deeply. Whether family members were with us here on earth or already in heaven, Dad had a remarkable gift for keeping their memories alive through the stories he loved to tell and the many photographs he proudly displayed. Even when distance separated us, he remained a steady and loving connection, always quick to keep us kids updated on the lives and milestones of our family, ensuring that no one ever felt far away. When we were little he was patient and gentle, creating a home grounded in safety and care. Those early days revealed what we would come to know for a lifetime—that his greatest joy was simply being our dad. We have such fond memories of the moments we shared with him as kids: annual family vacations, trips to the movies and McDonald's, planting flowers, Saturday morning trips to the bank, weekends at our lake house, bedtime routines that consisted of the best back rubs and personalized lullaby's, and celebrations for every birthday, graduation and life milestone along the way.

Dad was genuinely interested in us kids as people -our thoughts, our dreams, and the lives we were building. He was always completely

supportive of everything we set out to do, utterly and unconditionally proud of us and our achievements. When we needed him, he was there, ready to listen with patience and offer heartfelt guidance, and when words weren't enough, he somehow knew that a shopping trip could usually lift our spirits! His loving way of reminding us that we were never alone and that every problem could be met with care and generosity.

And then there are his granddaughters. The sheer joy on his face, and the love that seemed to burst from his heart each time he learned he was going to welcome a new grandchild was truly unmistakable. Lillian Ryan came first, followed by Addison Ann, Lucy Marie, and Emma Josephine—each one treasured beyond measure and each one holding a very special place in his heart.

Our Dad was profoundly intelligent—not only in the academic sense, but in the way he approached life with an open, agile, and endlessly curious mind. He devoted much of his time to exploring spiritual and philosophical ideas, including reincarnation and past lives, meditation, energy work, mediumship, and the power of positive thinking. What mattered most to him, though, was not simply what he learned, but how he used that knowledge—applying it with compassion and purpose to help and guide others.

Our dad's life's work was rooted in service to others, which he believed to be his highest calling and the truest expression of his faith. In 1989, he opened his own practice, Blattner Consulting, and for the next thirty-five years—until his retirement (and I use that term loosely) in 2024—he devoted himself to helping people

Farewell, Br Bob...continued

navigate some of life's most difficult and transformative moments. His work was never just a profession; it was a ministry of compassion, wisdom, and deep respect for the human spirit.

In the days since Dad's death, the family have received many messages of love and respect about Dad.

Many have spoken of Dad's guidance and mentorship; a few have spoken of how Dad supported them in their faith; others simply spoke of what a good and kind man Dad was. There have been many more similar messages, and it has helped us all so much to know how much our beautiful dad was so important to, and so loved by so many. He was indeed a good man; he was without doubt the best man I have ever known, and ever expect to know.

I would like to finish by re-sharing an old post he wrote on Facebook:

"I have an hour here in the Wurzburg Cathedral to rest and pray for every person I have ever met that God will bless us all with love and friendship!"

And that is our dad in a nutshell. We love you, Pop, we are grateful to have had you for as long as we did, and we will ALWAYS miss you. Thank you for everything you did and everything you were.



A Few More Words for Br. Bob

Because it's Week One and Brother Bob Blattner's name is noted for this day along with Sister Helen Kiwi Bathurst and Brother Dale Paul Blesz for our Intercessory Prayers, we do indeed lift our prayers for you, Kiwi and Dale. We pray for your well-being, trust the power of God's Love to be flowing through you to touch the world through your Vocations and the happenstance of people you encounter. May you enjoy your places here on Planet Earth and the particularities of plants, trees, rocks, creatures, weather, and living creatures that neighbor you. We thank you for incarnating God's love through your presence in this Order and your service on behalf of this Order, Amen!

And I say of....

BROTHER BOB BLATTNER 6/13/1944-2/10/2026

Bob was a Franciscan who walked with several Franciscan Orders in the course of his spiritual journey with the Church as the Body of Christ, in the companionship of Francis and Clare and the generations of Franciscans who preceded him, and very intimately with us as Members of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans.

His movement between 3 different Franciscan Orders were marked by significant events in his personal life, each reshaping some aspect of his commitments to God, to Jesus, to the Roman Catholic Church, to Saints Francis and Clare.

The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans was his most recent Franciscan "home," as part of the Gateway Fellowship, residing in the St. Louis Metro area. He lived the trials of life, knew suffering and sadness, and through them grasped the power and joy of walking the Way of Jesus in the company of those who exercise the joy and service, the poverty and simplicity of Francis and Clare.

Ah, Bob! May your soul thrive in God's eternal Love. Br Michael Vosler- 2/24/2026

Volker Leppin, Francis of Assisi: The Life of a Restless Saint. Yale U.P.,
2025. Rhys Bezzant, tr.
Review: Br. Seaghán Murphy, OEF

Searching for the "historical Francis" proves elusive. A Yale professor of late medieval and Reformation theology, Volker Leppin sifts through the "fragmentary" evidence of Francis' earliest chroniclers. He emphasizes primary sources, opting for a streamlined approach appealing to audiences ready for a cogent, compact study. Complementing Dominican historian Augustine Thompson's sober analysis and French scholar of spirituality Andre Vauchez's broad survey (both appeared in 2012; see my reviews in Fiddlesticks #151 and #155 respectively), Leppin alerts us to rewards of placing the Poverello within his era rather than romanticizing his appeal or rationalizing his relevance (for this, consult Patricia Appelbaum's 2015 Francis of America).

He opens with over five pages scrutinizing the name given to the son of Pietro Bernardone. Is it Giovanni or Francesco? Thomas of Celano likely invented the ambiguity to insert parallels to the Baptist preceding the Messiah. Patient examination of these origin stories typifies Leppin's rigor.

Relying on the Legend or Report of Three Companions (useful to remember in the later Middle Ages, "legend" meant an instructive saint's tale to be literally read daily rather than dubiously inspired by true events" as we regard inventive endeavors; a negative connotation arose under Anglicanism around the arrival of the King James Bible), the two Lives by Thomas of Celano, and sporadically, the Fioretti Bonaventure, Jordan of Speyer and John of Perugia, Professor Leppin examines their functions aligning Francis amidst scriptural and typological prefigurations.

For instance, when Francis flings the money the priest at San Damiano's dilapidated chapel

refuses onto its windowsill, this vignette superimposes levels of interpretation guiding the Friars Minor a few decades later towards pure mendicancy. Divesting himself of clothes before Bishop Guido of Assisi, Francis embodies a "medieval symbolic connection" in which performative acts asserted one's status within feudal society beyond "merely vocalizing or gesturing" to create meaning and convey a mission. The shaggy dropout from Umbrian conventions broke with municipal and paternal propriety through a "radical ascetic lifestyle" within approved parameters. Neither heretic nor lunatic. Francis began (if briefly) as a hermit. Then, his validated religious role via rupture" expanded into a renovator of churches, generating a fellowship of beggars for alms, and forming a squad of itinerant day-laborers underwriting their care for castoff lepers.

No wonder, as Leppin quotes Celano, that the Founder appeared as if "homo alterus saeculi," a man from a different age. The Little Brothers' rapid leap into prominence via papal supervision pivoted their shift from vagrants to an approved (albeit provisionally) movement announcing, as did John the Baptist, the advent of Jesus' arrival anew. Parsing Francis' greeting of harmony signed to all he met, Leppin reflects how Francis' task in life contained within it a proclamation of peace built around his call to challenge others to repent, spiritual postures that he had long since cultivated himself. This personal development in the life of Francis was shaped by a multitude of ruptures, which he pursued and cultivated to renew his creaturely experience."

In the Admonitions, Leppin gleans hints of Francis' preaching power

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Volker Leppin... continued

Not only angels but devils fill these excerpts. Threats of "everlasting fire" jostle beside paeans to God's glory. For admirers who hearken only to a Canticle of the Sun as their inspirational assurance, Francis and Leppin might concur that serious discerners of the Poor Man's message must take his blunt apocalyptic insistences alongside praises of the natural realm as inextricably tied to his stark stern mindset.

After all, these pious troubadours who spread beyond Italy played into expectations. Those they approached for donations would offer them to gain their own rewards, as the Beatitudes taught. Leppin glances at the expansion of the urban penitents beyond the formal First and Second Orders. "In a dialectical kind of way, the Franciscans were forcing the hand of others to give, even though they themselves had become beggars only by renouncing daily labor in order to receive alms. Those who sympathized with the Franciscans stood apart from the normal round of dutiful Christian giving, and therefore rushed to hear Francis preach or to offer the brothers lodging. They did both because they keenly supported the insights of Francis and his brothers, though they couldn't live in the same way themselves." As education (and soon the ownership of property beyond breviaries) had to be incorporated to enable the entrance of learned elucidators as Anthony of Padua into their ranks, so fervent restrictions of the evangelical associates who'd surrounded Francis loosened to accommodate middle-class and lay growth.

While his bold expedition to the Sultan gains ecumenical acclaim today (see my review of Paul Moses' popular account in last issue), Leppin cautions here as in our tendency to cast doe-eyed Francis as a starstruck stick-fiddler among birds

and beasties that we edit cues from a few rosy highlights of a competing congeries of jumbled scripts. Leppin advises we frame such pacifying episodes as "real people presented with dramatic license": akin to today's biopic film tropes.

We forget that zealous Francis got "mixed up in a crusading army." He demanded the summary repentance and conversion of those he met in the Muslim camp. Who wouldn't have been able to understand his "unknown tongues" of Italian or Latin. He sought martyrdom, and was lucky to have been regarded as a madman rather than another lethal threat from the Christian intruders.

Francis here exhibited "spontaneous naivete," characterizing his urgent essence. He combined fidelity to Rome with fierce piety heedless of propriety. From the periphery, he pointed to priests and popes as necessary shepherds for the Church's wayward flocks. Tiring of command of his jumpstart Order turned international institution, he retreated towards his internalized minimalism, his poverty integrating service with simplicity, preferring humble apostolates to the poor rather than repeating Manichean fulminations of Cathars or imitating dogged dissent by Waldensians.

Leppin delves deeply into Francis' conformity with the Lateran Council, his "reserve" among women, his marked distrust of "sexuality" within the fraternal ministry, his followers' conflicting testimonies of his stigmata, and his decision to step down from leadership. Leppin directs us away from exaggerating our countercultural cachet of the Founder. And as a keen biographer of Martin Luther, this German Protestant academic offers a sturdy style and a subtle corrective to glib hagiography. Leppin firmly sets Francis along his proper orientation: looking to Jesus first.

FAN, Check-in and Other Updates From Brother Coyote

OEF Sisters and Brothers:

Now that we are blessed by spring, I wish to confirm with you that I have reached out to FAN leadership to let them know I will be filling in for Ron Nuss-Warren as a liaison between OEF and FAN. Because other members of our order are already engaged with FAN through participation in their local justice circles, in no way do I want to disrupt those conversations and collaborations. If you know which FAN members are currently active in the Circles, perhaps I can stay in touch with them through emails.

I will be writing for FAN about my visit to the Vatican's interfaith Borgo Laudato Si Center for Higher Education on Integral Ecology, which I've been invited to visit for dialogue with its Director, Cardinal Baggio, on the 56th Earth Day, 55 years after I worked at Earth Day HQ.

I will also be writing a feature story for Earth Island Institute's e-magazine, which is kindly underwriting \$300 of my travel costs. While in the Rome vicinity, I will also meet with the staff of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, and in both appointments discuss the need for interfaith engagement in the conservation and propagation of plant incenses, anointing oils and embalming herbs now endangered by war, climate change and the drying up of springs and oases due to groundwater overpumping. See attached briefing paper I've prepared for the Sacred Plant Biocultural Recovery Initiative I helped to found. It's an expression of my vocation focused on caring for creation through service to Sister Herb and Brother Wolf.

Being that close, I will also be going to Assisi with two friends to celebrate the 800th year since our beloved St Francis's passing, and to Perugia for an International Festival of Environmental Journalists. It will take me a while to recover from all of that, so by May I will

begin on the FAN -OEF efforts, and by June, hope to be oriented and helpful to our community and to FAN.

Three weeks ago, I had the honor of presenting the opening keynote at the Junipero Serra Franciscan Retreat Center on the California Coast. With contemplatives from three continents present, 70 of us discussed the writings and art of Christian, Sufi/Muslim and Buddhist mystics regarding deserts, mountains and seas. To be with like-minded kin discussing our favorite mystics for four days in retreat was a wonderful way to celebrate my 74th birthday. I was happy I could invite into that discussion Victoria Looz, the founder of the Church of the Wild Movement- now over 300 outdoor interfaith gatherings in four countries. A former minister, she would be a greater speaker at a future convocation.

I have also been listening in on Braver Angels, Compassionate Communication, Contemplify and Border Justice zooms, but am still having vision and cognitive difficulties with online discussions.

As you know from the beautiful but heartbreaking immigration justice town hall the Servant Council organized, Laurie and I remain involved in border justice in our back yard. We had 15 border patrol agents chasing a single undocumented person through the woods 300 yards from our home in plain sight, injuring the person after an hour-long pursuit, then calling in a helicopter to the tune of \$10,000 an hour to fly to the closest hospital. I've been in nearly weekly respectful dialogue with Border Patrol officers, several of which have been very kind, and in placing roadside crosses and prayer signs at sites where such incidents occur. This summer, I'll be part of an event at the border in El Paso with two Hispanic border justice writers, and in a High Country News article on these issues...

(Continued on page 11)

Br. Coyote... continued

how to move beyond protest to dialogue. In other words, my yearlong leave of absence from OEF has been worthwhile.

I'm still recovering from last March's assault and concussion and an October accident that gave me frozen shoulder syndrome and neck-to-lower head injuries. That said, I'm running and doing walking meditation each day, so, I'm feeling better than I have in 7 years, losing 35 pounds.

Finally I am heartbroken daily by what is happening to dozens of my cousins in Lebanon. I cannot speak without weeping about the World War raging in the Middle East I am so distraught, and you each have your own personal sorrows or stories to tell about it, so I'll stop there.

Blessings Brother Coyote

Please use gpnabhan@arizona.edu as my contact email over the next months.

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OEF Online Bible Study

This is a recurring meeting every Thursday. Each week's Bible reading will be announced on the OEF-Chat.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89760718708pwd=N2R0THcrWUpWSzlyM2N3eEdGdEF0QT09> - Meeting ID: 897 6071 8708 -

Password - oef

7:30-8:30 PM ET

6:30-7:30 PM CST

5:30-6:30 PM PST

7:30-8:30 PM in Ecuador

1:30 -2:30 PM Friday in

New Zealand

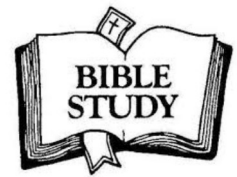
12:30-1:30 AM Friday in Ireland

9:30- 10:30 AM Friday in Japan

You will need a computer or a smart phone. A headset (and a camera) would be good to participate. I will give a brief Zoom tutorial as we meet, and I can help people before the meeting gets connected. We can talk on the phone as we work things out.

You are most welcome to join!

Br. Juniper, OEF



An Important Remminder!

Nancy Menning is the OEF Treasurer.

Contributions can be made

by sending a

check made out to:

"Order of Ecumenical

Franciscans" to:

Order of Ecumenical Franciscans

c/o Nancy Menning, Treasurer

3175 Duke Snider Ave.

Eugene, OR 97402



On Conflict

By Dale Carmen, OEF

The O.E.F. Archives Team is beginning to use the North Dakota Historical Society as a safe repository of our history. It is a humbling and miraculous story growing out of the hunger for the Holy Spirit, alive and present, as witnessed by Francis and Clare.

That communal spiritual Presence found form most useable to us in T.S.S.F., who encouraged and guided us into an ecumenical translation of Francis' Rule of 1221.

We are Franciscans. Ecumenical Franciscans. We are like the Acts 2 Pentecostal gathering; often accused of inebriation and heresy, and yet claiming to transcend the diverse languages of dogma and doctrine, and reaching 'common ground' in the Holy Spirit Present and active among us.

Our written trail preserved in Archives is evidence to great labors of love and also many conflicts of personality, power and doctrine. The Archive Team is advised to 'lock up' correspondence involving frank conflict among OEF Professed members, for a few years (20-50?) until we have died. I say "we" because in the earlier years of OEF I often used power and control in relation to others and was taught to 'let go' and let others lead. I have been the cause of hurt and frustration in community, and for that I am deeply sorry. The Archive Team is reviewing material containing conflict issues. I list some of the main themes for continued discernment and discussion.

1.The use of liturgical garb. A friend of OEF made a stole depicting two pierced hands; Jesus' and Francis'. We were given this stole at our birth in 1983 and whoever leads Worship can wear it. Other liturgical garb can and may encourage a two-tier system of privilege and power, reflected in many areas of Christianity. OEF seeks to experience the Holy Spirit working though every

person present.

2.The wearing of garb labeled 'habit'. All kinds of controversy surrounds a desire to wear an imitation of what Francis wore. Should it be a part of the Profession service or not?

I've heard conversation on whether it should be wool or linen, hooded or unhooded, cowled or not, and who made it. My opinion is that the only authentic Franciscan garb at Chapter is coming apart at the seams, has holes in it and smells like it has been slept in a very long time. Historically, OEFs only habit is the San Damiano Cross. Again, there is concern that garb not lend itself to a hierarchy of spiritual knowledge and ability.

3.Inclusivity. There has been opposition to Profession for members whose faith traditions were not credal, sacramental, trinitarian or Christian enough; to gender identification issues, and more. If we err, we prayerfully err on the side of inclusivity.

4.Hierarchy has historically been the dominant Christian norm so our transition to a Council and Principle # 17 ("We commit to a process of prayerful discernment") has transformed and reformed us with a new heart and soul. It remains challenging as we learn to change and grow in ecumenical religious community.

5.Accountability to our Rule of Life. Principle # 16 is about our covenant to be accountable to the sharing our Rule of Life with a Formation partner within OEF community. How we do this has changed much through the years and we continue to search fruitful ways to do this, so everyone is in this relationship.

On Conflict... continued

6. The Eucharist. Principle # 5. ("Let us participate in ...the Eucharist"). It is called the Passover in scripture, and to many Christians it is The Lord's Table, Communion, the Eucharist. It is interpreted and practiced in many different ways in Christianity. For an Ecumenical Order, are we able to experience the Real Presence no matter who serves with the hands of Jesus and, setting aside denominational rules, only as we gather at Chapter and OEF community? For now we use the term 'Agape Meal', which may or may not be true to an ecumenical witness. The Holy Spirit continues to work in and among us for the harmony of Christians everywhere.

Conflict is an opportunity for growth and bonding as ecumenical Franciscans. I close with a proverb, attributed to Peter Meiderlin during the Thirty Years' War in the 17th century, as a plea for peace among religious and political factions in Europe.

"In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; In all things, charity."



Stephen Becomes a Novice!!!

On April 23, 2026 at 3pm AST, Stephen Joseph Irénée (Irenaeus) Weiss, M.Ed., n/OEF at St. James Anglican Church in Kentville, Nova Scotia, vowed to continue his spiritual journey as a Novice in The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. Br. Juniper took part in the ceremony with additional OEF Members attending via Zoom.

Please send well wishes and lift up prayers for Stephen as we walk together with him towards Profession.

- Sr. Kiara Mychal Hart

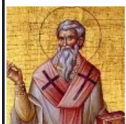
Congratulations, Stephen!!!!



I-r: Rev. Kristen MacKenzie; Stephen Weiss



...and the proud formation companion, Br. Juniper, attending virtually from Winnipeg



Irenaeus of Lyons and the Apostolic Faith

Remembering the Creed, Remembering the Church

By Stephen Joseph Irénée (Irenaeus) Weiss, n/OEF



There are moments in the life of faith when something long familiar quietly asks to be revisited. Not because it has changed, but because we have. Such moments often arrive without fanfare, through attentiveness rather than revelation, inviting us to listen again to the story the Church has been telling all along.

For me, one such moment came through a renewed encounter with a name: my middle name, Irénée, given in honour of my grandfather. Like many inherited names, it had long been present without much reflection. Only recently did I pause to explore its deeper roots and discover that Irénée is the French form of Irenaeus, derived from the Greek Eirēnaios, meaning “peaceful” or “one who brings peace.” This discovery did not suggest distinction or status, but prompted reflection—particularly as I continue in discernment toward higher orders within the Church.

That reflection led me to the life and witness of Irenaeus of Lyons, one of the most influential figures in shaping early Christian belief and preserving the apostolic faith later expressed in the Apostles’ Creed.

A Bishop Rooted in Living Memory

Irenaeus lived in the latter half of the second century, a period marked by persecution, doctrinal diversity, and rapid expansion of the Church. Born likely in Asia Minor, he later became bishop of Lyons in Roman Gaul. His authority rested not simply in office, but in proximity to the apostolic generation. As a student of Polycarp of Smyrna—who had himself been taught by the Apostle John—Irenaeus stood within living memory of the apostles. At a time before the New Testament canon was fully settled, the Church relied heavily on faithful transmission: the careful handing on of what had been received

(cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1–3). Irenaeus understood his vocation not as innovation, but as guardianship.

The Rule of Faith and the Shape of Belief

Central to Irenaeus’ theology is what he called the Rule of Faith (*regula fidei*). This was a shared confession taught to catechumens and used in baptismal preparation across the early Church. Though not yet fixed in the precise wording of later creeds, its structure was remarkably consistent. The Rule of Faith affirmed belief in one God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth (cf. Genesis 1:1; Matthew 6:9); in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who truly became flesh, suffered, died, and rose again (cf. John 1:14; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4); in the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14:26); in the Church (cf. Ephesians 4:4–6); and in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting (cf. John 11:25; Romans 8:11).¹

This theological framework closely parallels what would later be formalised as the Apostles’ Creed. While the Creed itself developed gradually—particularly within Roman baptismal practice—Irenaeus’ articulation of the Church’s shared faith helped establish the boundaries of orthodox Christian confession.

Embodiment, History, and Salvation

One of Irenaeus’ most enduring contributions is his insistence on the full reality of Christ’s incarnation. Writing against Gnostic teachings that denied the goodness of creation and the significance of the body, Irenaeus argued that salvation unfolds within history and through embodied life.

His well-known affirmation—“What is not assumed is not healed”—captures this conviction.² If Christ did not truly become human, then humanity itself remains unredeemed.

(Continued on page 15)

Irenaeus of Lyons... continued

This emphasis echoes the Gospel proclamation that the Word became flesh and lived among us (John 1:14).

The Apostles' Creed reflects this same grounding of faith in real events: Christ's suffering under Pontius Pilate, his death, burial, and resurrection. For Irenaeus, these affirmations were not secondary details, but essential safeguards of the Gospel.

Resurrection and the Renewal of Creation

Irenaeus also placed strong emphasis on the resurrection of the body. Salvation, in his understanding, was not escape from creation but its restoration. God does not abandon what God has made; rather, creation is brought to fulfilment in Christ (cf. Romans 8:19–23).

This conviction resonates with the Creed's final affirmations: "the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." It offers a hope that is neither abstract nor escapist, but grounded in God's promise to renew all things (Revelation 21:1–5).

A Name as Invitation, Not Claim

Reflecting on the shared name Irénée has not led to a claim of authority, but to attentiveness. Names are gifts, often carrying memory and responsibility. In this case, the name links family lineage with the wider life of the Church, drawing personal history into conversation with tradition. As I continue discerning vocation, Irenaeus' example offers a steady companion: a theologian whose faithfulness was marked by clarity, patience, and pastoral courage rather than self-assertion.

The Creed as Living Confession

The Apostles' Creed remains a living declaration of faith within Anglican worship. Its endurance lies in its ability to hold together Scripture, tradition, and lived experience. Irenaeus' witness reminds us that doctrine exists not for argument, but for the life of the Church.

To confess the Creed today is to stand within the same apostolic story Irenaeus sought to protect—a story of creation affirmed, humanity redeemed, and hope anchored in resurrection.

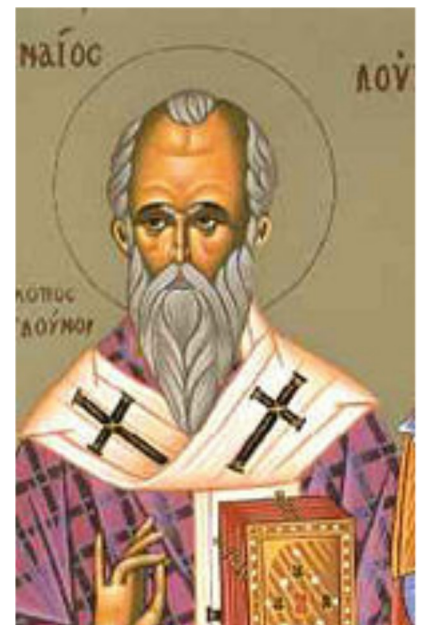
Remembering Forward

The Church remembers not only by looking back, but by carrying faith forward. Names, creeds, and vocations become threads in a larger tapestry of witness. In rediscovering the history of a name shared with a grandfather and with a second-century bishop, I have found not distinction, but responsibility: to receive the faith with humility and to hand it on with care.

In this way, Irenaeus of Lyons continues to speak—not loudly, but faithfully—reminding the Church that to remain apostolic is to remain rooted in the Gospel as it is lived, confessed, and embodied today.

Notes

1. *Irenaeus, Against Heresies I.10.1–2; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1–4; Ephesians 4:4–6.*
2. *Irenaeus, Against Heresies III.18.7; V.1.1; cf. John 1:14; Hebrews 2:14–17.*





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

Articles for Post-Chapter 2026 are due on July 15, 2026

***Past Present & Future* by Alero "The Mimz" Ogisi**

Threat of loss of the benefit of the Black bodies in bondage caused great fear
The Confederacy didn't care for Lincoln
The Civil War had been going on for over an entire year
Lincoln then made a power move to get them to conform
He signed the Emancipation Proclamation it didn't work though
the Confederacy pushed back with great determination
After two years of battle full of frustration and ultimate humiliation
In April of 1865 Robert E. Lee surrendered ending the Civil War
But see Black people were not truly free until freedom had blessed each and every door
One instance was marching into Galveston Texas on June 19th
The News was spread strong and loud
The Abolitionist had succeeded a true moment to be proud
The 13th Amendment it plugged up some of those holes that the Emancipation missed
Please, I encouraged you to put both of them on your must-read list
The rejoice began the rebuilding surging through our Black veins
Building our community securing our Black reigns
We are qualified builders and planters sowing the seed of upliftment
Something out of nothing we build our own equipment
Depending on where you lived is when you celebrated being free
We didn't have cell phones or the internet
News took some time to reach every city
April of '62 began the festivities in DC
Tennessee gotta glimpse at the end in August of '63
Ohio grasped a hold to freedom in 1862 in September
While Kentucky didn't see freedom until 1865 in December

Many Variations of a well-deserved celebration called by many names
Freedom Day Jubilee Day Emancipation Day 2nd Independence Day
Throughout the United States freedom was celebrated
Striving for upliftment not to be underestimated
America was taking a turn and now suffered a great depression
Designed laws which supported systemic oppression
Fueled by greed corruption racism and domination
None of that was stopped by the Emancipation
Housing and education and the onset of strong Jim Crow
Laws were being passed to protect the status quo
Civil Rights movement Kwanzaa Boycotts
And the Rebellion caused the celebrations to be reignited
Celebrating Black people abolishing racist laws got me excited
Experiencing horrible tragedies we still try to instill hope
Through education and upliftment we will have growth
You changed the world George
Juneteenth is a National Holiday An accumulation and great.
anticipation as we come together to strive forward as a unified Black nation. Going forward what does that mean
One more day to sleep in and take a long bath
One more day that you can get time and a half. One more day from work or school. One more BBQ to go to
I challenge you to look into the eyes of our beautiful Black children
And make them a promise
You will strive for them to learn all that they can be a leader in the crowd. You will support perseverance to keep pushing and to be proud
You will do your very best for them so they can succeed
You will encourage them to thrive and plant the seed

2026 OEF Chapter and Convocation Registration

Wed. June 24th — Sun. June 28th at Pallotine Renewal Center, Florissant, MO, US (Wed. arrival optional)

Please Print Name _____ Pronouns _____

Email _____ Cell Phone _____

Will you be joining us by Zoom? ___ No ___ Yes - What time zone? _____

If joining us In-person please continue to fill out this form. Arrival day: ___ Wed. ___ Thurs.

Arriving by: ___ Car ___ Bus ___ Train ___ Plane

Are you interested in joining some of us in community service on Thurs.? ___ Yes ___ No

If arriving by bus, train or plane, send as soon as possible the time of arrival and which carrier.

Room: ___ Standard room is a single room with 2 twin beds ___ Couple's room with a queen bed

Would you be willing to share a standard room? ___ No ___ Yes With whom?

Other room needs _____

Food: ___ Vegetarian ___ Vegan ___ Carnivore ___ Gluten Free ___ Lactose Free Food Allergies:

Communion: ___ Wine ___ Grape Juice ___ Gluten Free Bread

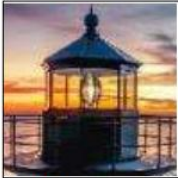
Emergency contact person and cell phone number: _____

General info:

Are there Allergies that we might need to know?

Are there any physical accommodations that we need to know about to provide a better experience at C/C?

Is there anything else you want us to know?



2026 OEF GREAT LAKES REGIONAL GATHERING
REGISTRATION FORM

Each person needs their own form
OUR WEEKEND THEME:
CHANGE



NAME:

DATE:

I AM WITH (CHECK ONE) OEF OTHER Guest of OEF Member: _____

FRANCISTIDE RETREAT

prior to our retreat, please ponder on the verses listed on christianity.com that coincide to our theme of "change." pick 2 verses that speaks to your heart. we can share during vespers on Thursday and Friday evenings as lead to share ●

wednesday sept. 30th	Thursday, october 1st.	cost = \$90
3pm Early Arrival Option	8am Breakfast	
5pm Dinner	Noon Lunch	

Thursday, oct. 1st. cost = \$300
 3pm Check In; refreshments: Coffee Table; Jacoba's Cookies
 5pm Dinner - Cafeteria (If possible, we can go down as a group.)
 7pm -10pm Introductions; ice breaker; catching up; Vespers.

Friday, oct. 2nd
 8am Breakfast
 Enneagram presentation with steve spilde
 includes: History, individual tests and interpretation of individual results.
 Session 1 9am-Noon
 Noon-1pm Lunch - Cafeteria
 Session 2 1pm-4pm
 5pm Dinner - Cafeteria
 6pm St. Francis' Transitus Service with the FSPA and visiting Franciscan Communities in St. Mary of The Angels Chapel
 8pm Discussion on Change

saturday, oct. 3rd
 7am Breakfast - Cafeteria
 9am-11:30am Jacoba Rm.: Sharing Time
 11am Feast of St. Francis Mass in St. Mary of The Angels Chapel
 Noon Lunch - Immediately After Mass

IMPORTANT: Deadline is Tuesday, Sept 1st!! Please follow this deadline. We are staying at a new facility where we are required by FSC to have all registrations a few weeks before our weekend.

Please send Sr. Chris your payment of \$300 (\$390 if arriving Wednesday) for the weekend by PayPal under the account: capoef@solarus.biz.

Please fill out this form; make a copy to keep the agenda, email your scanned form to Sr. Kiara-Mychal (aka K-M) Questionsat: kmhart@oeffranciscans.org. Questions/Concerns/Suggestions? Contact K-M via email or call 507-258-5424.

Please print and provide one registration form(2 through 4) for each person attending in your party. We look forward to having you participate in our gathering!

DATE:

NAME:

ADDRESS

(C)PHONE_____ (H)PHONE:_____

(W)PHONE:

ANY SUGGESTIONS AND/OR GIFTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH THE GROUP FOR THE WEEKEND (i.e., Music, Prayers, Meditation, Downtime Activities, etc.):

All meals are in the St. Rose Convent Cafeteria with the FSPA Sisters.

All Snacks will be served in the Jacoba Conference Room.

SPECIAL DIETARY REQUEST(S) (i.e., Diabetic, Vegetarian, Vegan, Gluten Free, Food Allergies, etc.):

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION(S) REQUEST (i.e., Shower Seat, Bathroom, Wheelchair Accessibility, Parking, etc.)

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION -Your information will be kept confidential; will be used for emergency purposes only; and it is completely voluntary for you to provide this information. You may choose what information you wish to share for emergency purposes. By no means is sharing your personal medical information mandatory to participate in this event. It is with good intentions for event participants that this information is requested in the event of a medical emergency or situation that would require medical attention.

NAME(S):

RELATIONSHIP(S):

(H)PHONE:_____

(W)PHONE:_____ (C) PHONE:_____

KNOWN MEDICAL CONDITION(S):

Add additional information by attaching another sheet of paper.

KNOWN ALLERGY(IES): Add additional information by attaching another sheet of paper.

MEDICATION(S): Add additional information by attaching another sheet of paper.

In the event of a medical emergency, do you give representatives sponsoring this event or the facility the authority to share the above emergency information to emergency medical personnel, if needed and/or you are unable to do so?

Please check one: Yes No Date Signed:_____

Above Registrant or Representative Please Sign:_____

Name of Representative & Relationship if different from Registrant:_____