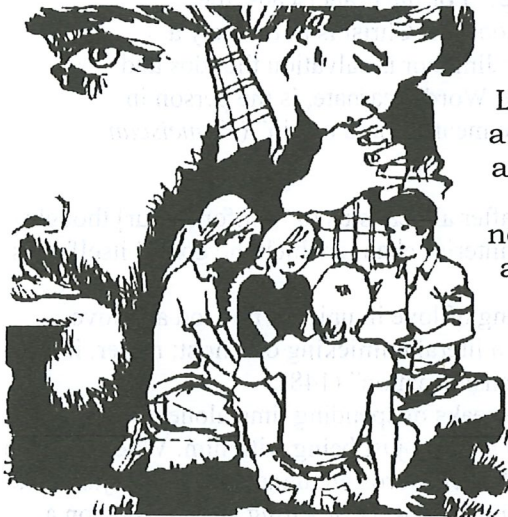


Communio

That All May Be One

Newsletter of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region
Secular Franciscan Order Winter 2018

Building Our Relationship with God



If you look at the life of St. Francis and even read accounts of the early brothers (also includes St. Clare and her Poor Ladies), it becomes evident that they spent a good amount of time deliberately building a relationship with God and one another.

"Contemplating the goodness of God was not relegated to a few minutes when available, or just on Sunday, but this prayerful contemplation formed the foundation of all they did and became. It began the day and served as a spontaneous expression of joy when they came back together to share the wonders God enabled them to do. [Don't think great miracles for the word 'wonder'; think a kind word or smile or

gesture of forgiveness freely given to someone you can't stand. A similar concept might be 'random acts of kindness' but done all the time to all you meet.]

"This time of being 'alone' with God is essential to fully live the Franciscan spirit. To build relationship with anyone takes time, effort and presence, and that also includes relationship with God. If we are willing to constantly make the effort, the Holy Spirit will lead us to the relationship we seek, and for the Franciscan effect the peace and joy we need to love and serve all God's creation, simply because it is God and it is good."

Adapted from CIOFS material by Bob Fitzsimmons, OFS,
Chapter 14, "St. Francis and His Approach to Divinity," p. 4.

For Up to Now: Foundational Topics for Initial Formation

The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate



Editor's Journal



We remember when the WWJD — What Would Jesus Do? — movement was at its height. I still hear people, including Secular Franciscans, asking what Jesus would do in a particular situation.

Sister Ilia Delio, OSF, has a different perspective on that:

“When I ask ‘what would Jesus do?’ I am looking to the example of Jesus as a moral guide to make the right decision or perform the right action. Jesus leads and I follow.

The Franciscan path is different because it does not ask, ‘what would Jesus do?’ but ‘how does Jesus live in me?’ For the Franciscans, the Incarnation is intrinsic to human personhood. ... Christ is not merely a person we follow, as if following John or Jim, nor is salvation the ‘dos and don’ts’ of being saved. Rather, Christ, the Word incarnate, is the person in whom each person finds his or her unique meaning and origin” (*Franciscan Prayer*, 147).

And isn’t that what our Rule is about? Article 7, after all, calls us to “conform [our] thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls ‘conversion’.”

Sister Ilia goes on to say that “prayer is a deepening of love in union with God and love shapes what we become. In this way, imitation is not a literal mimicking of Christ; rather, it means becoming the image of the beloved through transformation” (148).

The FUN manual excerpt on page 1 of this issue speaks of spending time alone with God to develop a relationship with him. It is so good to sit in silence, just being with him. When we love someone we want to spend time with that person, and often words are unnecessary. We just look into the person’s eyes, revel in being close, enjoy going for a walk or sitting side-by-side on a beach or under a tree.

Can I look into God’s eyes? Well, I can look into the eyes of Jesus on the San Damiano Crucifix or into the eyes of Jesus in a favorite painting or icon. Or I can simply be with God, without looking at anything.

“As an elderly peasant once explained when St. John Vianney (a Secular Franciscan) asked

him how he prayed: ‘I look at the good God, and the good God looks at me’” (www.catholicculture.org).

That man truly rested in the Lord. He could just be with the “good God” and experience the goodness of his presence. So simple and so complete. Such a blessing not to always have to think of what to say.

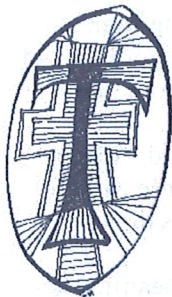
Perhaps during this year’s Lent, we can begin to spend time, or increase the time we spend, looking at God as he looks at us.

Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS, is Communio editor. She is a member of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity in Hendersonville, N.C., and spiritual assistant to Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity in Blairsville, Ga.

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Minister's Message



"Let hope be your joy; be patient in trials" (Romans 12:12).

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

May the Lord give you peace!

Each day I try to hear God speak to me in some manner so I don't lose my way or my focus. So many things occur over time that could be stumbling blocks or cause me to not be at peace. I am a pilgrim on a journey, seeking the right path, going forward step by step, embracing God's chosen path for me as a member of the Secular Franciscan Order, to which I've said "yes" to this vocation.

Since September of 2017, our Region has had several Chapters of Elections; and, in this year of 2018, there will be a total of 13 Chapters of Elections. These opportunities to serve in a council position as a servant leader are means of growth for each brother or sister who embraces the call of leadership and steps out in faith, trusting in God's providential care for all.

We have first-time ministers and second-term ministers, as well as those who have never served on a local fraternity council.

Know that the Regional Executive Council members are supportive of every one of you and are available to assist you when needed.

Dianne Ambrose, OFS, our regional formation director, and her team, have Area Spring Workshops scheduled during which I hope all fraternities and emerging communities will be represented. (See announcement on page 5).

In Chapter III, Life in Fraternity, our OFS Rule states in Article 21: "On various levels, each fraternity is animated by a council and minister who are elected by the professed according to the constitutions. Their service, which lasts for a definite period, is marked by a ready and willing spirit and is a duty of responsibility to each member and to the community. Within themselves the fraternities are structured in different ways according to the norm of the constitutions, according to the various needs of their members and their regions, and under the guidance of their respective council."

Thank you for your "yes" and congratulations to all who have been and will be elected. Pray, collaborate, plan, share together; and always remember that communication is the beginning of understanding. You are remembered in my daily prayers for the fruits of the Holy Spirit and God's peace and love as you go about your work in guiding your brothers and sisters.

Peace and all good,
DorothyAnn

DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS, Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region's minister, is a member of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity, Hilton Head Island, S.C.

Fraternity member attends beatification

By Carolyn Peduzzi, OFS

Sally Woelkers, OFS, founding member of Blessed Solanus Casey Fraternity in Morehead City, N.C., was born in Detroit, Mich.

When Sally was a child, her grandmother, a Secular Franciscan, often took her to Mass at St. Bonaventure Monastery in Detroit, where Father Solanus Casey, OFM Cap., was the porter; that is, he served the needs of those who came to the door. While Sally is unsure if she herself ever met him, her grandmother often spoke of this gentle, humble man. She knew of his good works



and that many believed they had been cured through his intercessory prayers.

On Nov. 18, Sally and several of her children were among some 70,000 attendees at Solanus Casey's beatification service on Ford's Field in Detroit. The field, which is covered, was donated by the Ford family for this occasion.

Sally had written that she required a handicapped card and, "Oh, by the way, I am a Secular Franciscan." She received the response card in the form of a brown Tau which allowed them front-row seats directly across the aisle from the Capuchin friars.

Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron of Detroit presented the beatification request. Brother Richard Merling, OFM Cap., vice postulator for the cause for beatification, read a short biography of Solanus Casey.

As the assembly stood, the apostolic letter was read in Latin. Cardinal Angelo Amato, representative of the Holy See, then rose and presented the decree to Archbishop Vigneron and Brother Mauro Johri, OFM Capuchin, minister general.

Mass followed with 100 priests and bishops offering communion to all present. A pontifical blessing concluded the Mass.

Sally is home once again in Morehead City, but the gleam in her eyes is still present. She prays that the interest of others in Bl. Solanus Casey and their journeys to Detroit will be beneficial to the revitalization of her hometown.

Carolyn Peduzzi, OFS, is minister of Blessed Solanus Casey Fraternity and serves as a Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region Area 3 councilor.

Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation: Mindfully Living Our Holy Rule

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS

This year marks the 40th anniversary of our Pauline Rule and the National Fraternity selected the theme of "Renewed and Confirmed: Live the Treasure!" to commemorate the anniversary.

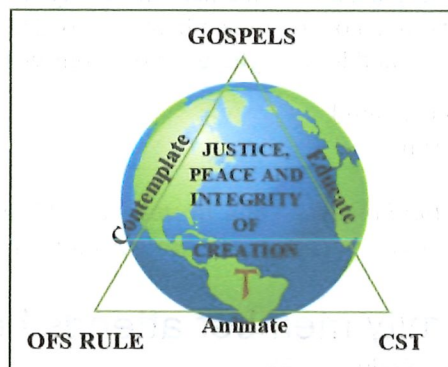
Our holy Rule is certainly a treasure. We may all wear different styles of Tau crosses, use different materials for ongoing formation, and have differing opinions about how to live out our vocation.

Yet, one thing remains steady and true for each and every Secular Franciscan: our Rule of Life. Though some members were professed under the Leonine Rule, before 1978, this, the Rule that Pope Paul VI approved on June 24, 1978, is where we currently live, move, and have our being.

Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation is the embodiment of our Rule, the whole Rule. The former Apostolic Commissions came out of Articles 15–19 of the Rule. JPIC comes out of

SPIRITUALITY

FORMATION



FRATERNITY

APOSTOLATE

the entire Rule, including the Prologue. The three parts of the Rule — “The Secular Franciscan Order,” “The Way of Life,” and “Life in Fraternity” — speak to all parts of Franciscan life, all parts of we who call ourselves Secular Franciscans. The entire Rule animates and guides us to go from gospel to life and life to the gospel.

Those of you who have heard me speak know that one of my favorite words is “mindful.” Being mindful means being fully aware, on purpose; being intentional in the present moment, nonjudgmentally and without resistance to what is. Being mindful is about knowing who you fully and truly are in Christ.

This word “mindful” appears three times in our holy Rule: Articles 11, 14, and 19. It says to me that we are called to an intentional life in Christ. Not just as fans of Jesus but as followers of Jesus. Fans sit on the sidelines and cheer; followers imitate and behave as Jesus did when he walked the earth. He lowered himself and became human to show us how to *BE* as children of God.

For the Lenten season, revisit the Rule — intentionally and on purpose. Meditate on it. Let it seep deep down into the marrow of your soul. Ask yourself some heart-opening questions:

- How am I living this article of the Rule today?
- How does this article of the Rule challenge me in my walk with the Lord? As a Franciscan?
- If I lost my Little Red Rule Book in or near my neighborhood, would someone know to return it to me?

The holy Rule reminds us to live a life of peace, love, and joy. During this 40th anniversary year, delve more deeply into the Rule and let it become your curriculum vitae!

~ * ~ * ~ * ~

As we approach the Lenten season, I want to remind you of the H2O Lenten Project. My challenge to you is to give up mindlessly purchasing coffee or soda and give the money to someone in need of clean water. This can be a wonderful Lenten activity to do with your fraternity or your family.

After collecting the money, make your check or money order payable to **NAFRA with H2O Project in the memo** and mail to our national treasurer, Jerry Rousseau, OFS, 82 Kim St., Blairsville, Ga. 30512.

A past recipient, our own brother Stephen Smith, OFS, Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity, Blairsville, Ga., used the funds to help build a clean-water well in Uganda. I thank you for your generosity and I pray you have a blessed and peace-filled Lenten season.

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region's JPIC animator, is a member of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity, Hilton Head Island, S.C.; the National JPIC Commission; the International Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation; and the Franciscan Action Network Commission.

On the Road Formation Workshops on Formation Toolbox

Area 1, April 28, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Area 2, April 21, Spartanburg, S.C.

Area 3, May 19, Raleigh, N.C.

Open to (and registration forms to be sent to):

Ministers/Leaders, Formation Directors and Teams, Spiritual Assistants

Registration Fee: \$20.00 per person. Lunch provided on site.

Registration: 8:15 a.m. to 8:50 a.m.

Workshops: 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Newly Professed — Congratulations!

Padre Pio Fraternity

Raleigh, N.C., Dec. 2



Father Steve Kluge, OFM, associate pastor of St. Francis Roman Catholic Church in Raleigh, speaks with the fraternity's newly professed members: Chris Peffley, OFS (left); Michael Hancock, OFS; Lee Cunningham, OFS; S. Lynn Oeser, OFS; Theresa Flynn, OFS; Ellen Ferrone, OFS.

Presiding at the Rite of Profession, Father Kluge led the candidates to the baptismal font and had them renew their baptismal promises.

"That should be in all of the profession ceremonies," said Bob Pearson, OFS, Area 3 councilor, who attended the profession.

Communio's editor, Joanita Nellenbach, OFS, contacted Father Kluge for his thoughts on why he feels including renewal of baptismal promises is important during the Rite of Profession. He responded via email:

"The answer is simple. Our baptismal identity and mission is foundational to us as Christians. As St. Augustine wrote: 'Rejoice O Christian! For by your baptism you are more than a Christian, you are Christ Himself.' (This was also quoted by Pope John Paul II in '*Christifidelis Laici*.')"

"At profession we are saying that Christ is calling me to live my baptism in this specific way: by following the insights of St. Francis.

"Profession is not a new vocation. We have one vocation given to us in Baptism, to be Christ in the world. Our profession is then a deepening of our Baptismal call publically accepted, proclaimed, and celebrated."



Immaculate Conception Fraternity (photo at left)

Jonesboro, Ga., Jan. 13

Pedro Arce, OFS

Lori Moran, OFS (center, formation director)

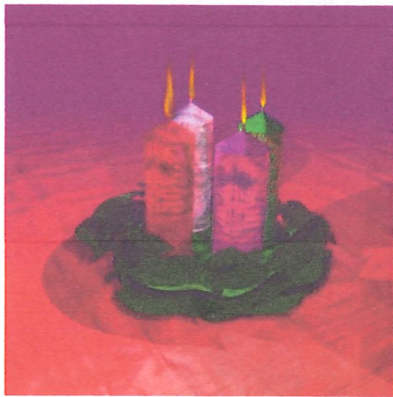
Carol Hamill, OFS

San Damiano Fraternity

Athens, Ga., Dec. 9

Christine Marie Reynolds, OFS

Remembrance and Renewal in San Damiano Fraternity



By Julie D. Lorenz, OFS

Advent 2017 was a very rich time for San Damiano Fraternity in Athens, Ga.

We all felt God's presence and that he was consoling us in our losses and giving us hope in bringing new life into our fraternity.

Less than two months after our Transitus service, where Barbara Smith, OFS, arrived frail but smiling, this beautiful Secular Franciscan joined Sister Death on Nov. 24. Barbara was our formation director and was like a mother and was a mentor to our original members from our beginning. She taught us sound Franciscan spirituality and knowledge.

Barbara's family was honored and touched by the number of us from the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region who attended her funeral Mass on Dec. 5 in Christ Our King and Risen Savior Catholic Church in Greensboro, Ga.

Many from our fraternity spent Dec. 1-3 at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Conyers, Ga., sharing in a retreat on "12 Step Spirituality." While there, we visited the grave of our founding minister, Dr. Hank Cutler, OFS, and other beloved deceased.

Then on Dec. 9, Christine Marie Reynolds, OFS, professed during Mass at our University of Georgia Catholic Center. At this ceremony, many of us celebrated our 10-year anniversary of profession, Dec. 9, 2007, and met after Mass for a meal and fellowship.

The day was made more hallowed as we received news of the passing of Nat Seney, OFS, one of the original members of San Damiano Fraternity and a beloved friend to all of us and to others, as well.

Nat was the salt of the earth. Living a very simple and austere life, she left a box of books, some pictures, and a few clothes. Nat gave of herself and was an example of living the gospel life in the world. She would help anyone and did a lot of work with the homeless and outcasts in our community. In fact, there's a single mom living in her trailer now who escaped domestic violence courtesy of Nat's generosity. Her witness and example will be missed, as well as, her salty sense of humor.

Nat wasn't with us physically for our anniversary; instead, she was with us in spirit. We felt her presence with us, and we shared this with our church community that day during Mass. It moved one of the attendees to inquire about joining our fraternity.

The losses we were experiencing left some of us hoping that our fraternity would be able to continue and not dwindle away as we are all getting older. Our hope was that God would provide and guide us. He has done this by bringing us three people who are interested in our way of life.

Our new year finds us with the fourth pair of friars to minister to San Damiano Fraternity since our founding. Father Frank Critch, OFM, is the Catholic Center's new director, and Father Bill McConville, OFM, is the associate director. Both priests have experience with Seculars and are wonderfully supportive of their lay brothers and sisters.

If you are in the area on the first Tuesday of the month, join our fraternal gathering. And come to Athens any time to enjoy the rich Franciscan spirituality at every Mass held at the Catholic Center.

Julie D. Lorenz, OFS, is secretary of San Damiano Fraternity.

Congratulations! New Councils



Padre Pio Fraternity, Raleigh, N.C., Jan. 28

Spiritual Assistant: Friar Greg Spuhler, OFM Conv. (left); Councilor: Ellen Ferrone, OFS; Councilor: Suzie Nelson, OFS; Treasurer: Louis Coker, OFS; Councilor: Lee Cunningham, OFS; Vice Minister: Victoria Romero, OFS; Formation Director: Lynn Oeser, OFS; Minister: Joe Travers, OFS; Secretary: Michael Hancock, OFS (Photo by Joanne Jacovec, OFS).

St. Thomas More Fraternity

Wilmington, N.C., Nov. 12

Minister: Marie Mallon, OFS

Vice Minister: Linda Keir, OFS

Secretary: Evelyn Lauer, OFS

Treasurer: MaryEllen Humphrey, OFS

Formation Director: Mary Hellmann, OFS

Councilor: Margaret Jennings, OFS

Councilor: Greta Strittmatter, OFS

Five Georgia Martyrs Fraternity

St. Simons Island, Ga., Dec. 14

Minister: Lawrence Lynch, OFS

Vice Minister: Ann Mallon, OFS

Secretary: Georgia Ann Markley, OFS

Treasurer: Lois Cutia, OFS

Formation Director:

Patricia Bergeron, OFS

St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity

Augusta, Ga., Jan. 13

Minister: Theresa Christie, OFS

Vice Minister: Nora Wessling, OFS

Secretary: Renee Strunk, OFS

Treasurer: Webb Bufford, OFS

Formation Director: Ken Wessling, OFS

Councilor: Dorothy Huebner, OFS

Councilor: Susan McArthur, OFS

Councilor: Peg Saam, OFS

Stigmata of St. Francis Fraternity

Duluth, Ga., Jan. 14

Minister: Kenneth Brooke, OFS

Vice Minister: Jan Murina, OFS

Secretary: Kathleen Stephens, OFS

Treasurer: JoAnn Rademacher, OFS

Formation Director: David Rohr, OFS

Councilor: David Panter, OFS

Councilor: Salvera Reid, OFS

Councilor: Dcn. Thomas Shaver, OFS

See NEW COUNCILS, page 9

CALENDAR, from page 8

Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin Mary Fraternity

Franklin, Tenn., Jan. 21

Minister: Stephen Brace, OFS

Vice Minister: Akisha Eaton, OFS

Secretary: David Weir, OFS

Treasurer: John Blake, OFS

Formation Director: Dcn. Simeon Panagatos, OFS

Councilor: Daniel Epright, OFS

Councilor: Sofia Grey, OFS

Councilor: Jamie Maravia, OFS



Immaculate Conception Fraternity, Jonesboro, Ga., welcomed Willie Arnold as an affiliate on Jan. 13.

New Citizen



St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity, Hendersonville, N.C., celebrated a milestone in the life of fraternity member Margarita Melendez, OFS. She was sworn in as an American Citizen on Nov. 1. At its gathering on Nov. 18, fraternity members cluster around Margarita, who displays a framed copy of the U.S. Constitution, which the fraternity presented her.

Seated: Patricia Paton, OFS (left), Margarita's friend Jacqueline; Jim Costello, OFS, treasurer. Standing: Lucy Nordlund, OFS (left); Randy Hair, OFS, minister; Nancy Torres, OFS; Diane Salkewicz, OFS, secretary; Barbara St. John, OFS; Tom St. John, OFS; Mark Taylor, OFS, formation director; Joanita Nellenbach, OFS; Greg Savold, OFS, vice minister; Frank Colini, OFS; Gene Ray MaGruder, OFS.

Christmas cheer in Spartanburg



St. Michael the Archangel Fraternity in Spartanburg, S. C., shared Christmas cheer with residents of Miller Place, a privately owned and run home for mentally challenged people who have no other place to live.

"We had their annual Christmas Party, with food, fun, Christmas stories and songs, and of course presents," said Carol Drum, OFS, fraternity minister. "We feel blessed to be able to be part of their lives."



**"Conversion of the Heart"
A Franciscan Lenten Retreat**

March 3, 2018

**Guest Speaker: Father Bob Menard, OFM
from St. Andrew Parish, Clemson, S.C.**

**St. Mary of the Angels Parish Hall
1821 White St., Anderson, SC 29624**

**Registration begins @ 9:00 a.m.
Retreat opens with Morning Prayer: 9:30 a.m.
Concludes with Evening Prayer: 3:00 p.m.
Liturgy of the Hours text printed in program.**

Lunch provided.

No registration fee; free-will offering will be taken up.

**RSVP by Feb. 17, 2018:
Nanette Perron, OFS,
nperron@sma43.org or (864) 642-7823**

**Hosted by
Mother Cabrini Emerging Community
Anderson, S.C.
with support from
Our Lady of Good Counsel Fraternity
Greenville, S.C.**

Desert of the Heart

"One of most characteristic virtues of both Syrian and Egyptian monks was compassion. Freed from the burden of the selfish ego, the monk was reborn in the heart and attentive to the needs of the poor, the weak, and the fragile limits of the human person.

"The movement into the desert of the heart forms a new relationship with the world. Francis left the world of the merchant and entered the world of his heart, praying before the crucified Christ.

Ilia Delio, OSF,
Compassion: Living in the Spirit of St. Francis, 22.

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for the
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Secular Franciscan Order
in the United States.**

Secular Franciscan Websites

Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region

www.bssfsfo.org

National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States (NAFRA)

www.nafra-sfo.org

Consilium Internationale Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis (CIOFS)

International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order

www.ciofs.org

BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS REGION CALENDAR**SCHEDULE OF VISITATIONS (V) AND ELECTIONS (E)****February through November 2018**

* confirmed	V+ follow-up visit	(observers in parentheses)
Date	Fraternity/Group & Location	V Fraternal/Pastoral Visitors E Presider/Ecclesial Witness
Feb. 9–10*	Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Hilton Head Island, SC	V Janet Hulshof/Audrey Binet
Feb. 11*	Fr. Solanus Casey, Morehead City, NC	E Carmen Madero/Audrey Binet
Feb. 17*	Our Lady of Good Counsel, Greenville, SC	E Janet Hulshof/Audrey Binet
Feb. 18*	Sts. Francis and Clare, Knoxville, TN	E Barbara Garrison/Faye Martin
Mar. 10–11*	Channel of Peace, Chattanooga, TN	V Lori Moran/Willie Guadalupe
March 17–18	Spirit of Francis and Clare, Conyers, GA	V DorothyAnn Rowland (Lannie Newman)/Willie Guadalupe
Apr. 7–8*	Franciscan Family of Greensboro, Greensboro, N.C.	V Janet Hulshof/Audrey Binet
Apr. 8*	St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Elizabeth City, NC	E Carolyn Peduzzi/Joanita Nellenbach
May 12*	Immaculate Conception, Jonesboro, GA	E Carmen Madero/Joanita Nellenbach
June 3*	St. Maximilian Kolbe, Huntersville, NC	E Sara Nell Boggs/Willie Guadalupe
June 8–9*	Blessed Sacrament, Burlington, NC	V Bob Pearson/Joanita Nellenbach
June 9*	Crucified Christ, North Charleston, SC	E Janet Hulshof/Audrey Binet
June 23–24	St. Joseph Cupertino, Bessemer, AL	V Lori Moran/Willie Guadalupe
Aug. 3–5: Annual Regional Gathering, Ridgecrest, NC, National Visitors		
Sept. 21–22*	St. Michael the Archangel, Spartanburg, SC	V ?/?
Nov. 14*	St. Anthony of Padua, Fayetteville, NC	E Carolyn Peduzzi/?
Nov. 17*	St. Francis of the Hills, Hendersonville, NC	E Carmen Madero/Fr. Roberto Perez

New year invites us to look forward and backward

By Bret Thoman, OFS

The name of the month of January derives etymologically from the Roman god Janus. According to ancient mythology, he was a two-faced figure: one face looking backward, the other looking forward. He stood at the threshold of doors or, in this case, at the beginning and end of the year. As our calendar has just marked the month of January, we, too, can look forward and backward and ask ourselves various questions.



On pilgrimages, we often take groups to the Catacombs of San Callisto. As we drive along the ancient road, the Via Appia Antica, leading up to the entrance just outside the old city walls, there sits a nondescript little church. Its name is unusual as it is a question: "*Domine, Quo Vadis?*"; Latin for "Lord, where are you going?"

"The legend has it this was the spot where Saint Peter, who was fleeing Rome to escape persecution, had a vision of a risen Christ.

According to the apocryphal *Acts of Peter*, Peter asked Jesus; "Domine, quo vadis?" meaning "Lord, where are you going?"

Jesus answered; "I am going to Rome to be crucified again". This made Peter turn around, go back to Rome and

face his martyrdom" (www.worldsiteguides.com/Europe/Italy/rome/church-of-domine-quo-vadis).

In some ways, Peter's question is similar to a different vision that took place some 12 centuries later, although this time it was the Lord who posed the question. A young Francis of Assisi was still seeking worldly honors and was on his way to fight in the Crusades in hopes of becoming a knight and nobleman. However, while overnighting in Spoleto, he heard a voice speak to him in a dream: "Francis, who can do more for you, the Lord or his servant, a rich man or a beggar?"

"The Lord, of course," responded Francis.

"Then, why are you serving the servant?" asked the Lord again. "Go back to your home and you will be shown what to do." (See Bonaventure, *Major Legend*, Chapter 1.3).

God was trying to help Francis change direction. God wanted Francis to understand who he was serving: himself, his own will and desires, the expectations of his culture, the desires of his earthly father. Indeed, Francis awoke and, like Peter, promptly turned around. He went back to Assisi to fulfill God's will by renouncing his dream of knighthood and taking on the life of a penitent.

The question God posed to Francis makes me think of yet another divine query — perhaps the first time God ever questioned anyone. In the Book of Genesis, after Adam sinned, God asked the first man: "Where are you?" (Gn 3:9). We know that God is omniscient and therefore knew exactly where Adam was: hiding naked in the garden with Eve. God, however, was not asking for his own sake; instead, he was posing the question for Adam's sake. God wanted Adam to look inside and realize what he had done, that he had violated God's



Statue, by Umbrian artist Norberto Proietti, in front of the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, shows Francis returning from Spoleto.

**Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis
Regional Executive Council Roster**

Minister: DorothyAnn Rowland, OFS

Vice Minister: Carmen Madero, OFS

Secretary: Barbara Garrison, OFS

Treasurer: Ken Brooke, OFS

Formation Director: Dianne Ambrose, OFS

**Spiritual Assistant:
Search In Progress**

Area Councilors

Area 1

Lori Moran, OFS; Lannie Newman, OFS

AL: Bessemer;

GA: Athens, Blairsville, Conyers, Duluth, Jonesboro;

TN: Chattanooga, Knoxville, Nashville

Area 2

Sara Nell Boggs, OFS; Janet Hulshof, OFS

GA: Augusta, St. Simons Island;

NC: Asheville, Charlotte, Hendersonville, Newton;

SC: Aiken, Charleston, Columbia, Greenville,

Hilton Head Island, Spartanburg

Area 3

Bob Pearson, OFS; Carolyn Peduzzi, OFS

NC: Burlington, Elizabeth City, Fayetteville, Greensboro,

Morehead City, Raleigh, Wilmington, Winston Salem;

SC: Garden City

Archivist: Sara Nell Boggs, OFS

Communio Editor

Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS

Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation Animator

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS

Multicultural Commission Chair

Willie Guadalupe, OFS

Youth/Young Adult Fraternal Animator

Position Available

Prayer Ministry (online prayer requests)

Area 1: Lori Moran, OFS

Area 2: Dorothy Huebner, OFS

Area 3: Bob Pearson, OFS

Fraternity prayer coordinators submit prayer requests.

command and sinned against him.

Of course, God does not speak only to great saints or biblical characters; he speaks to all people. All of us can ask ourselves: "Where are we?" "Where we are going?" and "Who we are serving?" Then, if need be, we, too, can turn around and move in another direction — the direction God wants for us in our lives.

Yet, if we are already sincerely seeking God's will for our own lives (as most Secular Franciscans probably are), now is a good time to look back at the previous year as well as look to the future. It is a good time to take stock of what is happening around us and then seek God's will.

Regardless of what has happened in the past year, we must look forward to the future with hope. We are a people full of hope. Looking forward, there may very well be more tragedies and difficulties. But there will also be countless graces and blessings: for God is always at work in this world. So let us be full of gratitude and give thanks while we live.

As you walk the road wherever God leads you this year, remember our ultimate destination. Christ gave us hope when he said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). For our hope is in the Resurrection: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

Bret Thoman, OFS, is director of St. Francis Pilgrimages and author of St. Francis of Assisi: Passion, Poverty, and the Man who transformed the Catholic Church and St. Clare of Assisi: Light from the Cloister.