

Communio

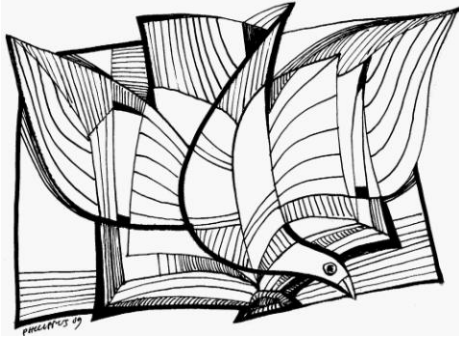
That All May Be One

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

Summer 2018

Our Secular Franciscan Rule

"The OFS Rule is one demanding document! Following some other path, for whatever reason, seems to indicate that the requirements of the OFS Rule are not demanding enough.



"That is amazing to me! I am of the opinion that when we take the OFS Rule seriously, we won't have time to take on other commitments.

"Secular Franciscan life is filled with an awesome array: life changes; attitudes development; conversion points; prayer development; rebuilding a flawed Church; showing compassion; identifying with the poor; sharing the Franciscan spirit with the young

people; co-operating with other groups in creating a more fraternal and evangelical world; worshiping with the local faith community; transforming our workplace; standing up for justice issues no matter where it is needed (in Church or society); learning healthy ways of prayer; developing a personal relationship with Christ, the inspiration and the center of life with God and people. ...

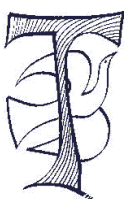
"Perhaps you could have time for other ways of life — but not if you are living the OFS Rule that you have been called to follow. Our energy is limited. If we spread it too thin we get tired, but not necessarily better. Use your energy to enrich your OFS life and the lives of those you touch. In this pursuit we work together, avoiding labels, except the one that says, 'Here is a faithful Franciscan.'

"We can and will help each other be faithful — and in doing so have an impact on a world in great need of our Franciscan ideas and ideals."

Father Lester Bach, OFM Cap., "A Secular Franciscan needs to be persistently faithful in living the OFS Rule, so that other people recognize that Franciscans see life in a special way!" *TAU-USA*, Spring 2004

The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate





Editor's Journal

Wow! We really have a packed issue this time.

I hope you'll all enjoy reading about reminiscences of life under the 1883 and 1978 Rules, monastery immersion experiences, a new prayer ministry, and St. Margaret of Cortona, among other things.

I recently finished reading two books by Steven Pressfield, who's written historical fiction. The two books I just finished, though, were *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles* and *Turning Pro: Tap Your Inner Power and Create Your Life's Work*.

A Dominican priest recommended *The War of Art* to me during a mission I attended at a nearby parish, and I bought the second book along with it. The priest warned me that Pressfield's language can occasionally be a little rough, but he thought the book would help me with some writing problems. He was right; both have helped a lot with my writing.

But I could also relate a lot in those books to being a Secular Franciscan.

Pressfield talks a lot about the difference between amateurs and professionals. In both books, he writes about the qualities of the professional. For example:

- "The professional shows up every day
- The professional stays on the job all day
- The professional is committed over the long haul ...
- The professional is patient
- The professional seeks order ...
- The professional is prepared
- The professional does not show off
- The professional dedicates himself to mastering technique
- The professional does not hesitate to ask for help ...
- The professional endures adversity" (*Turning Pro*, 90–91).

In This Issue

Minister's Message	3
New Councils	3
Regional Formation Director	4
New Prayer Ministry	5
Apostolate Prayer	6
JPIC	7
Old Car	8
New Candidates	9
Seven Decades Professed	10
OFS Websites	11
Remembering 1883 Rule	12
Immersion in Monastery Life	13
Calendar	14
Pondering God's Love	15
St. Margaret of Cortona	17
Book Review	19
REC Roster	20

Are we professional or amateur Secular Franciscans?

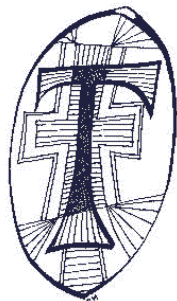
It's worth thinking about whether or not we show up as Secular Franciscans and live our vocation fully every day. Are we really committed for life or only until we don't want to do this anymore?

How are we doing with the rest of these, including that one about adversity; as in, the adversity of things not going as we would like in our fraternity?

I pray that as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of our Rule we ponder and rejoice on what a great gift it is for all of 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.

Minister's Message



May the Lord give you peace!

Secular Franciscans around the world are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the “new” Rule, which was approved by Pope Paul VI on June 24, 1978.

Some of you reading this were professed prior to 1978, but I’m thinking the majority of us were professed sometime in the last 40 years with many of us much more recently than 1978.

Where were you in 1978?

At that time, I was married for four years, working in nursing, and had never even heard of the Secular Franciscan Order. Little did I know that I would begin my Franciscan journey in 1996; ultimately making my Profession on May 7, 1999.

Of course, God knew, because that was his plan for me, just as it is for you. Each of us has our own story as to how we came to know about the Secular Franciscan Order and our “yes” to living this lifestyle.

I don’t know about you but I’ve certainly grown since then, thanks be to God! When we’re newly professed, it seems to me that we don’t fully grasp all that is expected when we say “yes.” And thanks be to God for all the sisters and brothers who walk with us and continue to support us so that our Order will continue!

According to author Matthew Kelly in *The Seven Levels of Intimacy*, “Life is priority driven. Whatever you place your attention on will increase in your life.”

St. Francis was priority driven as he “made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people” (OFS Rule, Art. 4).

I pray that each of us, as St. Francis’s followers so many hundreds of years later, will continue to make our OFS Rule a priority, studying its contents and applying what we study in our daily lives. So, share your story, plant a seed, and watch it grow!

And I look forward to seeing many of you at our Annual Regional Gathering, Aug. 3–5, which will be here before you know it. May God bless you and keep you!

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.

Congratulations New Councils

Immaculate Conception Fraternity

Jonesboro, Ga.

May 12

Minister: Theresa Ryan, OFS

Vice Minister: Rose Campbell, OFS

Secretary: Beverley White, OFS

Treasurer: Roxanne Turner, OFS

Formation Director: Jan Pitts, OFS

Councilor: Sheila Geist, OFS

Councilor: Sharron Shreer, OFS

Councilor: Jeanne Starr, OFS

St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity

Huntersville, N.C.

June 5

Minister: Earl Glenn, OFS

Vice Minister: Rob Buchanan, OFS

Secretary: Mark Ceraldi, OFS

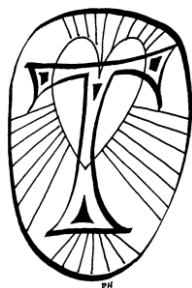
Treasurer: Janet Ceraldi, OFS

Formation Director: Anne Tinsdale, OFS

Councilor: Denise Hickey, OFS

Councilor: Kathleen Zuckerman, OFS

From the Heart of the Regional Formation Director



July 17, 2018

Greetings, my Brothers and Sisters.

Today I am writing from the Mt. Irenaeus Franciscan Mountain Retreat Center in West Clarksville, N.Y.

I spent this last weekend at St. Bonaventure University attending the Secular Franciscan Workshop, "Becoming Prayer, Becoming Presence," given by Brother Richard Hendrick an Irish Capuchin Franciscan. His focus was "Prayer as Meeting God, Becoming the Point of Divine Encounter." He also discussed the Four Inner Directions: Intention, Attention, Compassion, and Wisdom.

One of the important takeaways from the conference for me was that Franciscans do not go to heaven by ourselves. We are walking together to heaven, we are united in spirituality and love in the Franciscan tradition. I will be sending his PowerPoint notes and my own notes to the local formation directors.

I wanted to say how grateful I am for all those who hosted and attended the Area Spring Workshops on "The Formation Toolbox." I have sent all information and PowerPoint slides to the local formation directors. Thank you for your evaluations. They helped me to improve for each workshop and gave me ideas about what to focus on next year.

If you are a formation director and did not receive the information, please email me and I will send it to you. If you're not a formation director and would like this information, please contact your local formation director or myself.

Our next ZOOM meeting will be on Aug. 28, 2017, at 7 p.m. EST. All formation directors, Regional Executive Council members, local council members, and any one on your local formation team are welcome. I send an invitation to the local formation directors each month.

Again, if you have not been receiving this material, please contact me. If you need an invitation to the ZOOM room, please contact me. I would like at least one representative from each fraternity to attend. We always have a great discussion of sharing what we are doing and where we need help, and then I present a short topic which we discuss. I find I learn so much from all of you and have received feedback from those who attend that these sessions are very helpful to them.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the Annual Regional Gathering, Aug. 3–5. On Saturday afternoon, we will have time just for the formation directors to dialogue for about an hour. If you are unable to attend, please send someone from your fraternity to represent you.

I am still in the process of updating the *BSSF Regional FORMATORS' Guidelines for Orientation and Initial Formation*. In addition, I will be having items added to our BSSF Website.

Just a reminder: The new National Fraternity website is secularfranciscansusa.org, our official Facebook page is Secular Franciscans USA, and our twitter feed is @SecFranUsa.

Peace and Love to All
Dianne Ambrose, OFS
ambrosedianne6@gmail.com
706-338-2402

Dianne Ambrose, OFS, the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis regional formation director, is a member of San Damiano Fraternity in Athens, Ga., and historian for the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States.

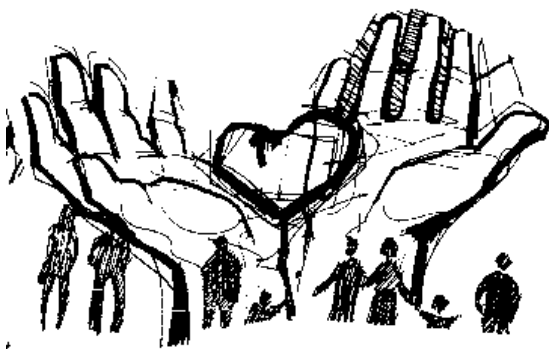
New prayer ministry includes all fraternity members

By Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS

“Keep in mind that our apostolic life and fraternal life are integrally related. As Franciscans, when we minister, we minister to and with our brothers and sisters and we minister to the larger community. ... When we choose an apostolate in which all participate, in some manner, we will come to know each other at a deeper level.”

“The Four Pillars of BSSF Region: Apostolate Pillar” (41–42),
*BSSF Regional FORMATORS’ Guidelines
for Orientation and Initial Formation*

But what about those times when some members cannot be physically present to work on an apostolate? How can they feel involved and included in the fraternity’s work?



The idea of a prayer ministry to address this occurred to Jim Costello, OFS, treasurer of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity in Hendersonville, N.C.

“Several of our brothers and sisters find it difficult to join get-togethers, either because they live at a distance or are ill, infirm, or working to support a family,” he said in his

proposal to the fraternity council. “I believe a new prayer ministry will benefit our fraternity and readily attract the commitment of each of our members.”

The council liked the idea, and Jim wrote a prayer incorporating the OFS Rule, the Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order, and the council’s comments.

“Such ministry will give those who cannot be present at the event the opportunity to pray for its success with ongoing fraternal encouragement,” Jim said. “The blessings that will flow to the fraternity and, through more prayer-filled hands to the community, will be greatly enhanced. This will also contribute to the sense of connectedness of absent but praying members

After tweaking and finalizing the prayer, the council presented it to the fraternity. Everyone received a copy; it was also sent to any who were not at the gathering.

All in the fraternity are notified when an apostolate will take place, and those who cannot be present are encouraged to pray the prayer during the time of the apostolate. Those who will be working on the apostolate will also be praying.

“At the beginning of our apostolate,” said Diane Salkewicz, OFS, secretary, “we need to pray for our brothers and sisters who can’t be with us.”

On June 20, Father Roberto Perez, OFM Cap., the fraternity’s spiritual assistant, celebrated a Mass to commission fraternity members in the new prayer ministry. Members brought their prayer cards to the Mass so that they could be blessed. (See the prayer, on p. 6).

The fraternity doesn’t see the prayer a substitute for showing up to do the work, for those who can actually be there.

“The prayer is not an end in itself,” Jim said. “It is to lift our minds and hearts to God, to come together and be together.”

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.

Prayer In Support Of Our Fraternal Apostolates

Most High and Glorious God, All-Powerful, Most Holy, and Supreme Good.

All Praise, All Honor, All Blessings are yours, Almighty Father, as I thank you for the grace this day to join my brothers and sisters in this prayer.

I humbly acknowledge my acceptance by the Holy Spirit to follow Christ
in the footsteps of Saint Francis and Saint Clare
as a faithful disciple of my loving God.

I ask for the grace to follow the path from gospel to life and life to the gospel
seeking to encounter Christ in all my brothers and sisters.

To appreciate that my fraternity offers a privileged opportunity to enliven my
apostolic life and the life of all my fraternal brothers and sisters.

To be ready and willing to join my Franciscan family in carrying out our
prescribed apostolic ministries whenever possible to do so.

To esteem the ministries undertaken by my fraternity as a sharing in
creation, redemption, and service to the entire human family.

Even when impossible to be physically present in a particular ministry,
I pray earnestly and confidently for its success,
and for the blessings we share
with all whom we meet in its fulfillment.

Today, our fraternity is united in communion with the Holy Spirit
in the ministry of _____;
in which I join [*by my presence*] [*by my supporting prayer*]
in supplication for all the blessings promised by the Gospels
to those who do the Will of the Father.

I plead that the fruit of this prayer and apostolic ministry be fully responsive
to our calling as members of the Secular Franciscan Order
to share Your love, and joy, and peace with all whom we serve;
and

That all of us who act, observe, and pray for the success of this apostolate be
blessed by You, our Most High Father; Jesus, our Savior;
and the Holy Spirit, our Consoler

I humbly ask this through the intercession of Immaculate Mother Mary,
our Advocate and Protectress. AMEN.

(Inspired By Our OFS Rule)

Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation: Reducing Our Plastic Footprint

By Carolyn D. Townes, OFS

Several weeks ago, an article caught my attention. It was about a small pilot whale that was discovered on the shores of Thailand struggling to survive. Unfortunately, it did not survive.

An autopsy revealed 17 pounds of plastic consisting of 80 plastic bags in its stomach. The whale, having ingested so much plastic, had no room to ingest real food.

This story not only saddened me but horrified me as well.

Although I am not one to litter on beaches or shorelines, I am guilty of my overuse of plastic — bags, bottles, and straws — which are not biodegradable and end up in our oceans.

“Saint Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. ‘Through the greatness and the beauty of creatures one comes to know by analogy their maker’” (Wis 13:5). *Laudato Si*, 12

I offered this challenge to my local fraternity, and I would like to offer it to the entire Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region.

The challenge is to reduce our plastic footprint. What does that mean? Reduce your handling of single-use plastic and find ways to reuse or repurpose the plastic that you do use. For example, instead of getting plastic bags when you shop, bring your own cloth bags. Keep a few in your car or handbag. Use reusable cloth produce bags or simply skip the plastic bag when you can.

My challenge is to reduce our plastic footprint, not eliminate it. Since most of the things we use on a daily basis are made of or contain plastic, it would hardly be possible to completely eliminate all plastic. If you are able to, go for it!

Remember, your debit, credit, and gifts cards are also made of plastic. I wouldn't recommend getting rid of those unless you had a very strategic plan and a lot of cash on hand! Besides, we know very well when we get our monthly statements, that those are not single-use items!

An estimated trillion plastic bags are used worldwide every year; and 9 million tons of plastic end up in the ocean every year.

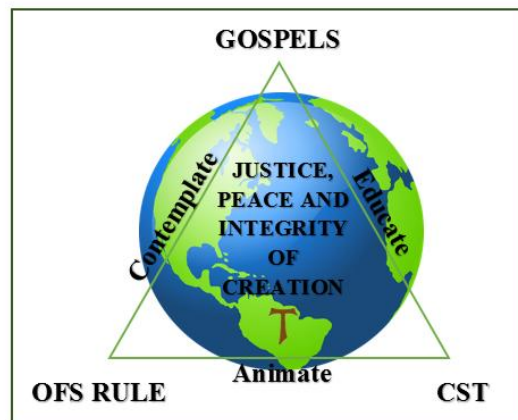
Another way to reduce our plastic footprint is to eliminate straws as much as possible. Americans use and toss millions of plastic straws every year. An alternative is to use metal straws. Starbucks has said that, by the year 2020, it will go strawless and use something resembling sippy cups instead.

Also, when you purchase soft drinks or water that have those plastic rings, cut up the plastic rings before disposing them. Turtles and other sea creatures get caught in those rings, can't get themselves out, and end up growing and conforming to the rings.

So, what about the plastic bags you do accumulate because you were in a hurry and forgot to bring the cloth bags? Find creative ways to repurpose those bags. Plastic bags have been cut up, crocheted and made into blankets and bedding for the homeless. They are thick, durable, and

SPIRITUALITY

FORMATION



FRATERNITY

APOSTOLATE

quite sturdy against the elements. See what new and creative ways you can come up with to reuse and repurpose your plastic waste.

I would love to know what you come up with. Send me an email at [ctownes26 @ gmail.com](mailto:ctownes26@gmail.com) and share your plastic repurposing stories. I would love to hear them. I wish you blessings of peace as you reduce your plastic footprint.

Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, a member of St. Clare of Assisi Fraternity in Aiken, S.C., is the JPIC Animator for the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region, the National JPIC Animator, and a member of the International Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.

Old beater of a car, and I'm OK with it

By Bob Sabisch, OFS

I drive a Honda Accord that is now 18 years old and has more than 303,000 miles on it. She really has been a good car though the years, but now she's showing her age with faded paint and dated style.

At one point in my life, I wanted the latest, fastest car that showed I was the king of the road. That car for me was a 1992 Ford Mustang with all the bells and whistles.

Time passed, two daughters, and my wife's and my hard work of raising them, changed my thinking and, therefore, my outlook of what was important.

St. Francis's love for Jesus Christ, as well as his renouncing of show and wealth, have touched my heart. This now reminds me of our Secular Franciscan Rule, Art. 11:

“Trusting the Father, Christ chose for himself and his mother a poor and humble life, even though he valued created things, attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children.

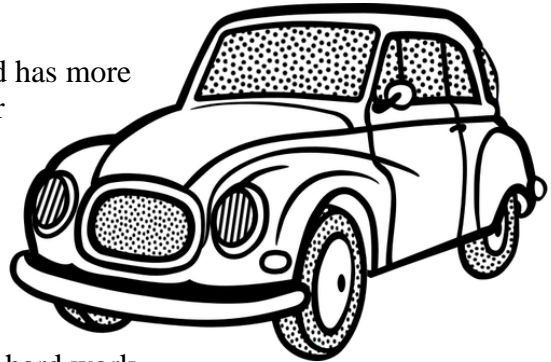
“Thus, in the spirit of the Beatitudes, and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.”

I'm very fortunate that I have found after so many years what is truly important, and it's not the car I drive.

As Secular Franciscans, each one of us can conform ourselves to the Rule in ways that never will be seen by the world (or it may be seen by those on the road) and only by our Father. We as Franciscans strive to conform to the Rule in order to fulfill our profession through the poor and humble example of St. Francis.

Please, Lord, let our sacrifice through self-denial or the necessity of this world be worthy of service to you.

Bob Sabisch, OFS, is minister of Blessed Solanus Casey Fraternity, Morehead City, N.C.



Congratulations to New Candidates



**St. Michael the Archangel Fraternity
Spartanburg, S.C.
Feb. 24 — Paul Lathan, OFS
April 28 — Yolanda Fernandes, OFS**



Padre Pio Fraternity, Raleigh, N.C., June 24

**Louis Coker, OFS, formation team (left); Frank Peluso, OFS, formation team; David Schick, OFS, candidate; Joan Monti, OFS, candidate; Jeanne Casciere, OFS, candidate; Anne Rzewnicki, OFS, candidate; Joe Travers, OFS, minister; Alexandra Rommel, OFS, candidate; S. Lynn Oeser, OFS, formation team; Mike Oeser, OFS, candidate; and Suzanne Nelson, OFS, formation team.
(Photograph by Joanne Jacovec, OFS; Michael Hancock, OFS)**

Seven Decades Professed

By
Joanita M.
Nellenbach, OFS

Seventy years ago, on June 20, 1948, Barbara Carter made her perpetual Profession in the Franciscan Third Order.

This was in St. Elizabeth Fraternity in Southfield, Mich.

One of those attending the ceremony was her husband, Larry. He'd made his Profession on June 15, 1941.

Of course, this was all under the 1883 Rule, which required that a woman have her husband's permission to enter the Order.

Barbara, however, didn't have Larry's permission; she had his mandate. After all, he was a member of the Order, as his mother had been.

"I had his order," she said. "At the time, I wasn't sure, I really wasn't; but during the year of formation it really took."

What attracted her?

"First of all, the people in the fraternity," Barbara said. "They were so welcoming, so eager to answer my questions. We were married in February 1947, and our first baby was born in December of 1947. There was a couple on the formation team: Mr. and Mrs. May. I think they were more concerned about the fact that I was having a baby than that I was joining the Third Order."

She recalled that initial formation was mostly a woman in the fraternity explaining the Rule to her.

"When we were Professed, we had to wear the (St. Francis) scapular and the cord," she said. "When I was pregnant, I didn't like that." The white cord, with three knots, was worn around the waist, under the person's clothes.

Barbara and Larry had seven sons and six daughters in 18 years. There are now 35 grandchildren and 33 great-grandchildren. Grandson, Father Noah Carter, is a parochial vicar at



St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity gathered in Our Lady of the Angels Chapel in Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Hendersonville, N.C., for a special Mass on June 20 to commission the fraternity's new apostolate prayer (see story, p. 5; prayer, p. 6). Afterward, it was time for a fraternity photo to mark Barbara Carter's 70th anniversary of Profession.

Front row: Peake Dana, OFS (left); Barbara Carter, OFS; Esther Dutt, OFS; Lucy Nordlund, OFS. Back row: Brenda Harris, OFS (left); Greg Savold, OFS, vice minister; Nancy Torres, OFS; Joyce Wagner, OFS; Jim Costello, OFS, treasurer; Father Roberto Perez, OFM Cap., spiritual assistant; Gene Ray MaGruder, OFS; Randy Hair, OFS, minister; Diane Salkewicz, OF, secretary; Patricia Paton, OFS; Mark Taylor, OFS, formation director; Frank Colini, OFS. (Photo by Rosy Cruz)

St. Mark Catholic Church in Huntersville, N.C.

“The most striking part of family life was our (commitment to) poverty,” Barbara said, “explaining to the kids when they complained that they couldn’t have something, ‘Look, you have everything you need.’”

The antidote to not appreciating what they did have, she added, was to “‘Look around and find someone who doesn’t have as much as you do.’ Being Franciscan, I look at things differently, at what I can forgo, what I don’t need.”

It wasn’t that the Carters were poverty stricken. Larry eventually became vice president of the company he worked for, Wheel Trueing. They could have afforded whatever they wanted, but he didn’t even buy a luxury car because they didn’t need it.

The children, now grown and with their own families, still practice that simplicity, Barbara said.

When the 1978 Rule was approved and the Franciscan Third Order became the Secular Franciscan Order, Barbara had no trouble with it.

“I accepted it because this is what they were going to do,” she said.

After Larry retired, they moved to Arden, N.C., and transferred to St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity about a year after it was established in Maggie Valley in 1987.

In an interview for a story several years ago, then-formation director Patricia Cowan, OFS, noted that Barbara and Larry “encourage everyone just by their presence, and their attentive to each person.”

Larry passed to eternal life on Sept. 17, 2008, and Barbara is now a resident at Brookdale Hendersonville East, a senior-living center.

Although unable to be present for all the fraternity’s events, she attends when she can, and the fraternity holds some its monthly gatherings at Brookdale.

Barbara, who celebrated her 94th birthday on July 16, prays the rosary daily and continues her Franciscan education.

“I’ve been more interested in learning about St. Francis and the people around him,” she said. “I’ve been reading about them.”

She’s now reading *To Live As Francis Lived: A Guide for Secular Franciscans* by Leonard Foley, OFM; Jovian Weigel, OFM; and Patti Normile, SFO.

What does the OFS Rule mean to her now?

“It keeps you on the right track, to try and be a good example to others,” she said. “Francis, with all the troubles he had, he was joyful, and that’s another thing I try to do.”

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.

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.secularfranciscansusa.org

Consilium Internationale Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis (CIOFS)

International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order

www.ciofs.org

Remembering the days of the Rule of 1883



Frank Peluso (in dark shirt, far right, middle row) in 1962 with members of the Franciscan Saturday prayer group. (Photo courtesy of Frank Peluso, OFS)

By Frank E. Peluso, OFS

After reading the spring *TAU-USA* article of Francine Gikow, OFS, on “Remembrances of the ‘Third Order Secular,’” my thoughts turned back to 1962 and the Order that I was received into.

I remembered the beloved friars who formed us under the Rule of 1883, the Leonine Rule.

The 1289 Rule, written by Pope Nicholas IV, was in effect for all Third Order Franciscans until Pope Leo XIII radically modified the Rule.

He believed that every Catholic would do well to become a Franciscan, and he foresaw vast

spiritual growth if they did. His intent in relaxing and changing the 1289 Rule was to make it more livable for masses of people. Indeed, after the Leonine Rule’s proclamation, many did join the Third Order of St. Francis.

I was only 19 years old at the time and a U.S. Navy hospital corpsman stationed at the Medical School in Bethesda, Md. Our bacteriology instructor, Lt. Cmdr. Elizabeth McCormick, a Third Order Secular, invited several of us to her home in Rockville to say the rosary on Saturdays. My mates in laboratory school were Daryl Hartman and Raul Alonzo. We attended for several weeks and were invited to the Third Order Secular meetings at Holy Name College in Washington, D.C.

Third Order Franciscans who professed at the college were also part of the rosary group.

Spiritual assistant, Friar Eustice Smith, OFM, was the one who took care of everything for the group. He and a few other friars led the ongoing formation sessions. We attended Sunday Mass at the Franciscan monastery located not far from the Catholic University of America and the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. It contained beautiful gardens with replicas of the sacred shrines of the Holy Land.

After Mass, we walked next door to Holy Name College, which later moved to Silver Springs, Md. At the college, the nuns prepared breakfast, and we would eat with the friars. Then we moved to one of the classrooms, where we received formation from one of the friars. We were thrilled to have Father Steven Hartigan, OFM, give us the sessions each Sunday during Lent. An internationally known, celebrated biblical scholar, his name can still be seen with the *Nihil Obstat* in many Bibles.

After one year of novitiate, we made permanent Profession in the Order during a ceremony in the chapel, with several friars present as well as fraternity members and friends. We were given the scapular of St. Francis and a cord to wear around the waist, under our clothing. We were also given lit candles and told we were “the light of the world.”

They gave each of us a new name, which was used at our meetings and among fraternity members. Mine was Brother Anthony. St. Anthony had long been a patron of mine and a very close “companion.” The friars gifted us with two small booklets: one with the 1883 Rule and the

other with prayers and numerous ways to receive indulgences. TOS (Third Order Secular) could then be added after our name.

Some requirements of the 1883 Rule: to dress in moderation, not attend public spectacles such as shows and dances that were obstreperous in nature, and to attend an eight-day retreat yearly. Attendance at Sunday and daily Mass and monthly confession were part of the Rule along with daily rosary (Dominican).

Pope Leo XII added, “Likewise once a month, if any have recited the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be fifteen times for the safety of Christendom, at the same time according to the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff, let them enjoy every right to expiate the stains on (their) soul, which they enjoy both who for the cause of religion perform the stational supplications in the City (of Rome), and who frequent the Portiuncula, the most holy places in Jerusalem, and the shrine of James the Apostle at Compostella.”

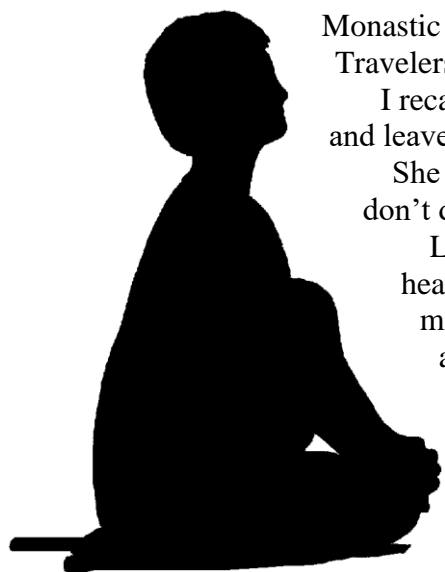
To be truthful, the adjustment to the Rule of 1978 was not difficult but most welcome and made sense. It brought us into the 20th century and a commitment to bring the Order into the workplace and world.

Frank Peluso, OFS, is a member of Padre Pio Fraternity in Raleigh, N.C.

Immersion in Monastery life is profound experience

By Nancy Torres, OFS

I had never experienced contemplative prayer within an enclosure: Christian prayer spread throughout the day. Liturgy of the Hours — all the hours.



One of the first things I came to understand during two weeks of Monastic Immersion Experience at the Monastery of St. Clare in Travelers Rest, S.C: Prayer is their work.

I recalled St. Teresa of Calcutta being asked, “How can you just up and leave this needy person whenever the bell rings?”

She had answered, “I can’t do that (caring, washing, feeding), if I don’t do that (spend that time in prayer).”

Living for two weeks with these sisters, being accepted into the heart of their community, I was immersed into their acceptance of me *as I am*. Continually, I was overcome by their patience, actually their long-suffering, putting up with me. For example: during my duties as a kitchen helper, they generously complimented me on my high-rise biscuits, when anyone could see they didn’t rise!

Up until the last day I got lost in the monastery, sure as shootin’ taking a left turn when I needed to go right. I learned to smile and ask, “Could you just point me in the direction of the laundry room (library, chapel, refectory, and so on). During prayer in the choir, Sister Kathy on my left or Sister Sharon on my right would always be ready to lean over and help me find the right page, or just put her own Liturgy of the Hours onto my lap, taking mine onto hers.

When I entered the monastery, I was aware of a comic (cartoon) balloon over my head filled with “I” and “me” and “my schedule.” Little by little, maybe after the first week, I realized with awe that God himself had taken the place of “me” in my consciousness — leading me into a rhythm of monastic prayer.

As the two-week experience was coming to a close, that rhythm of prayer was all I wanted. When I said, “I don’t want to leave,” one of the sisters reminded me, “You already have a

vocation, as mother, mother-in-law, and grandmother.” Also, I thought, the vocation as Secular Franciscan.

Leaving the Monastery of St. Clare, I knew I had had a true and profound experience of God’s love. It was potentially life-changing — but only if I wanted it to be. I know I need to maintain a rhythm of prayer, make it primary, a priority in my day-to-day life. Asking God, “What do you want from me right now?”

One personal way of prayer for me is to sing (even to dance), which I hear as a persistent command from Scripture. Another is to work. At the monastery, we were assigned (often volunteered for) two hours of work, first in the morning and again in the afternoon. Weeding in the garden became for me a true spiritual experience, getting to the root of the entanglements.

The way I was accepted in the monastery led me to accept myself. I grew to love myself, too. It would have been counter-cultural not to do so.

“In Your mercy, Lord, You called me, . . .
 Lord, I did not freely choose you
 Till by grace You set me free;
 For my heart would still refuse You
 Had Your love not chosen me.
 Now my heart sets none above You,
 For Your grace alone I thirst,
 Knowing well that, if I love You,
 You, O Lord, have loved me first.”

Josiah Conder, 1789-1855

Public domain from *Magnificat*, June 2018

Nancy Torres, OFS, is a member of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity, Hendersonville, N.C.

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

* confirmed	V+ follow-up visit	(observers in parentheses)
Date	Fraternity/Group & Location	V Fraternal/Pastoral Visitors E Presider/Ecclesial Witness

Aug. 3–5: Annual Regional Gathering, Ridgecrest, NC, National Visitors

Sept. 21–22*	St. Michael the Archangel, Spartanburg, SC	V Janet Hulshof/Audrey Binet
--------------	--	------------------------------

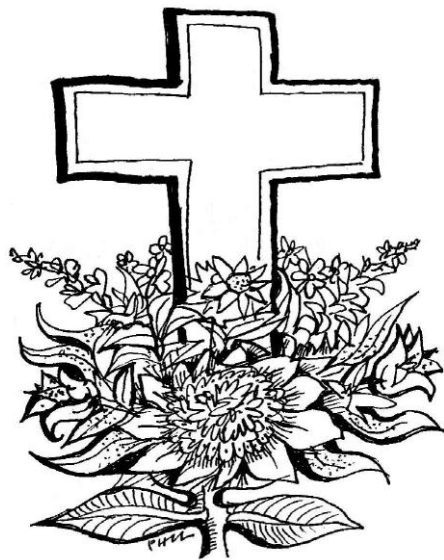
Oct. 9–14: NAFRA Chapter, St. Louis, MO

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

Pondering God's love during monastery immersion

By Brenda Harris, OFS

As children of God we are always searching to find his purpose for our lives here on earth:



Who we are, what God expects of us, and the knowledge that we're following the right path.

We seek these answers through prayer, retreats, readings, and studying the Scriptures, the prophets, and the mystics. Some of us spend a lifetime searching without even realizing that the answer is right in front of us, if we just stop and listen. God creates us to love. God's love speaks to us at every turn in every moment, if we just rise above the noise of our everyday lives to hear his voice.

This had never been more apparent to me than recently when I had the incredible opportunity to spend two weeks in the Monastic Immersion Experience at the Monastery of St. Clare in Travelers Rest, S.C. These 12 ladies have consecrated their lives to doing God's work through contemplative prayer. They live in love and in continual prayer for the world.

From the moment I arrived at this small monastery tucked away among nature I could feel the presence of the Holy Spirit. I had previously spent much time in their little chapel and the retreat house, La Foresta, but this was to be a new experience. This was the opportunity to immerse myself into their day-to-day life of prayer.

I was one of three ladies selected by the sisters. As the time grew closer, I could feel the excitement — and some apprehension — in living this life of contemplative prayer absent of idle conversation, basically closed off to the outside world.

Arrival was set for a Sunday afternoon, and as we arrived we were shown to our rooms. I had Sister Mary and Sister Kathy Ann as my neighbors; and I was honored to be staying in the room of Sister Joan who had passed to eternal life in January.

Some may imagine that rooms in a monastery are small, dark, cubical cells. Our rooms were spacious, with private bath, walk-in closet, and an oversized window looking into nature. Each room was amply furnished with a twin bed, desk, lounge chair, and small bookcase. They were bright, and smelled clean and fresh with an airy sweetness.

We were given a chance to unpack and refresh and were requested to be in the chapel at 5 p.m. for Evening Prayer.

As I unpacked I could feel my anxiety wash away, and I was overtaken by the amazing peace around me. Once I was settled I proceeded to the chapel as requested.

After Evening Prayer, we were escorted to the dining room where a special meal had been prepared in our honor. It was an opportunity to meet and get acquainted and to learn where to find coffee and breakfast in the morning. It was to be the first of many meals spent talking, laughing, and growing together.

By 6:30 the sisters were beginning to retire. It was quiet time. The rest of the evening was ours with only two thoughts to remember: Morning Prayer was in the chapel at 7:20 and at 10 a.m. we would meet to receive our schedules and a tour of the monastery.

After Morning Prayer each day, we had adoration, followed by Mass at 9 a.m.

As I sat in my room that evening, surrounded by the peace and tranquility of that holy place, I felt as though I was home. This was what I had longed for; my heart was full. This was what I

had hoped to capture and bring back into my life in the world.

The next couple of days were full and exciting as we learned our way around the monastery, our schedules, and about each other, and sharing the sisters' way of life.

Work at the monastery is pretty simple, mostly household chores. I never got the chance to work in the alter-bread room, but we did get to see it on our tour and it was very impressive. They don't make the wafers on sight anymore. It was too expensive and time consuming. It also took special machinery. Now they receive large quantities at a time and fill orders as they come in. We saw two huge cases come in while we were there — took up the entire entry hallway.

As far as my work assignments went, I helped with cleaning, including vacuuming inside and sweeping walkways and breezeways outside. I also helped prepare meals.

One day I spent both work times sorting, organizing, and counting the prayer remembrance cards the sisters have available. Another day I helped Sister Sharon clean and reorganize the liturgy room.

The three of us put together the sisters' new 3rd- and 4th-week breviaries and cleaned the guest house, La Foresta.

We also had some class time learning about the history of the Poor Clare's, the monastery, and the dossals of St. Clare and St. Francis.

I was able to have three hours of spiritual direction, and there was still plenty of time left over for private prayer, adoration, and meditation. We had adoration and Mass everyday too.

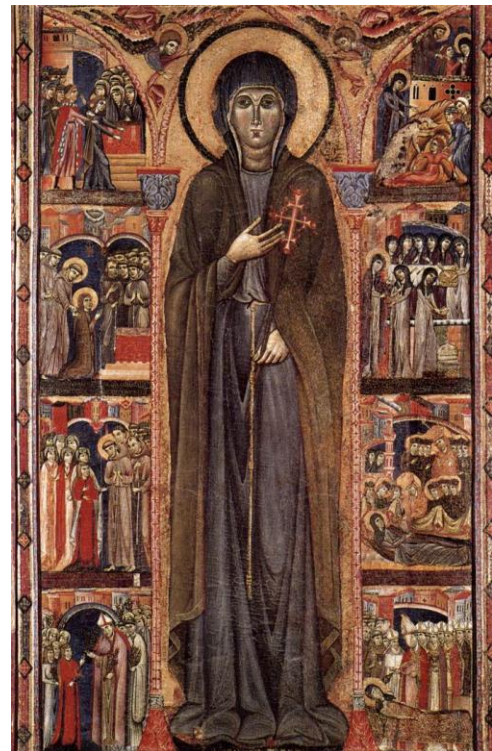
Finding my way around was confusing at first, but one of the sisters always seemed to be there to point the way. Although it was surely an interruption of their prayerful lives, they never showed even the slightest annoyance. They were patient, loving, and kind.

One of the first things I noticed was the practice of walking past another without acknowledgement. At first this seems strange or even rude, but then I realized that everyone I passed was in conversation with God. To interrupt that conversation would actually be the rude response.

During the days that followed, I felt as though I was gliding on air. I would barely notice my steps as I had begun my own conversations with God. The gentle silence was filled with endless prayers. I could almost hear them all, like an angel choir. I could feel the Holy Spirit feeding me, loving me, joining us all as one with him. My relationship with God was growing, deeper than I had ever known before. It was two of the best weeks of my life.

And although I have been home for more than a month now, I can still feel his love deeper in me than ever before.

Growing in faith and in his love, our lives enter different stages of spirituality. As a Franciscan, I have experienced much in my spiritual growth, but never had I felt God's love so deep within me or felt so elevated in his grace. It was as if I had entered a new level of relationship and awareness. This was more than I imagined, more than I had hoped for, and just a part of what I have brought home into my life. We never know where the Holy Spirit is going to



Dossal of St. Clare

lead or what gifts he has waiting for our “Yes!”

During my two weeks at the monastery I learned many things about myself and had the privilege to experience God’s pure and extravagant love through the example of these 12 selfless Franciscan women.

I learned that what I sought to bring home was already deep inside my heart. It is where I can find his love and hear his voice, if I just rise above the noise and listen. I also learned that sometimes God’s answer to my prayers is “No.” He created me with one individual purpose. He knew me before he breathed me into life. I’ve questioned, tried to take control of my own life, to mold it into what I want or think it should be, and when he says no, I’ve pushed back instead of listening for his voice and his guidance.

Now I can see that I sometimes have to back up and take a different look at the answers he is giving me, because what I think is wrong or question may be his gift to me, the lifeline I need to fulfill his purpose for me.

While I didn’t leave the monastery with all the answers, I did leave with a deeper understanding of pure, selfless love and unquestionable trust. I learned that what I thought God had dangled in front of me only to take it away, is in fact his gift of a lifeline. A very special lifeline, through which I will always be able to hear his voice and to find his love and comfort. To refresh and to be in his grace.

The place where I can say, “Hello, my dear friend, I have missed our closeness.”

Brenda Harris, OFS, is a member of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity, Hendersonville, N.C.

St. Margaret of Cortona (1247-1297)

By Bret Thoman, OFS

“And while she was in this ecstasy Christ spoke to Margaret, saying: ‘My Eternal Father said of Me to the Baptist: This is My beloved Son; so do I say to you of Magdalene: This is my beloved daughter.’”

From the first Biography of St. Margaret



St. Margaret of Cortona.
Detail of a work by
Vittore Crivelli.

St. Margaret of Cortona, a Franciscan tertiary, is one of the renowned penitents from 13th century Italy.

She was not, however, someone who lived what we might consider the “perfect saintly life” from a young age. On the contrary, the early part of Margaret’s life was scandalous both to her and her family. Having lived in the turbulent decades of the second half of the 13th century, St. Margaret endured a great deal and experienced a profound conversion.

She was born in Laviano (near Perugia, in the diocese of Chiusi) to farming parents. As a young girl, Margaret was energetic and enthusiastic; at the same time, she craved attention. While very young, she lost her mother, and two years later her father remarried. Margaret did not get along with her new stepmother.

Not feeling wanted, Margaret, who was both beautiful and flirtatious, ran away at the age of 17 and met a young man, according to some accounts, the son of the local noble lord and, therefore, a knight. She lived with him as his mistress in his castle, giving birth to a son. She hoped her lover would marry her, but he never did. Her biographers state that at this point she began to regret

her decisions and her life.

After they had lived together for 10 years, he was murdered by a gang of thieves. Upon discovering his bloodied body in the woods, Margaret was shocked and horrified. She immediately returned everything she had to her companion's relatives, and she and her son left the castle. She intended to return to her father's house, but he would not receive her. Suddenly, she found herself a single mother with no place to go.

Margaret sat crying underneath a tree near her father's house when she heard a voice call to her: "Go into the town of Cortona and put yourself under the spiritual direction of the Franciscan friars." And so she did.

Margaret embraced a new life of self-discipline, including fasting, penance, and service to the poor. After three years of probation Margaret was admitted to the Third Order of St. Francis and from this time onward she lived in strict poverty, supporting herself by begging alms, tending to the poor and sick, and giving herself freely to help others. Her son became a friar.

All the while, Margaret was still young and beautiful and men were still very attracted to her. She found it difficult to resist the temptation to return to the lures of her old world, to an easier life, by using her beauty. During this time, she felt tempted to mutilate her face so as to rid herself of the temptations; yet, her spiritual directors warned her not to do so. By grace, she remained faithful to her Franciscan calling and her vows and continued her disciplined religious life of devotion and poverty.

During this time, she began receiving revelations. In the year 1277, as she was praying in the Franciscan church, she seemed to hear the words: "What is your wish, *poverella* (poor little one)?" to which she replied: "I neither seek nor wish for anything but You, my Lord Jesus." From this time forth she lived in intimate communion with Christ.

In time, she took on more and more the life of a recluse; yet, she tirelessly dedicated herself to the service of others. She founded a hospital as well as a community of Tertiary sisters to serve the sick. She established a confraternity dedicated to Mary, the members of which devoted themselves to supporting the hospital through a spiritual ministry of prayer.



She was known for being a peacemaker, and she mediated peace among various feuding families in Cortona. Once (following a divine prompting), she challenged the local bishop to live a more Christian life, as he was scandalizing the faithful by living and acting like a worldly prince.

Toward the end of her life, Margaret withdrew from the hospital she founded, seeking more solace in the Basilian church (run by the Order of St. Basil) outside the city gates. There she died on Feb. 22, 1297, at the age of

49. Her body was interred in that very church.

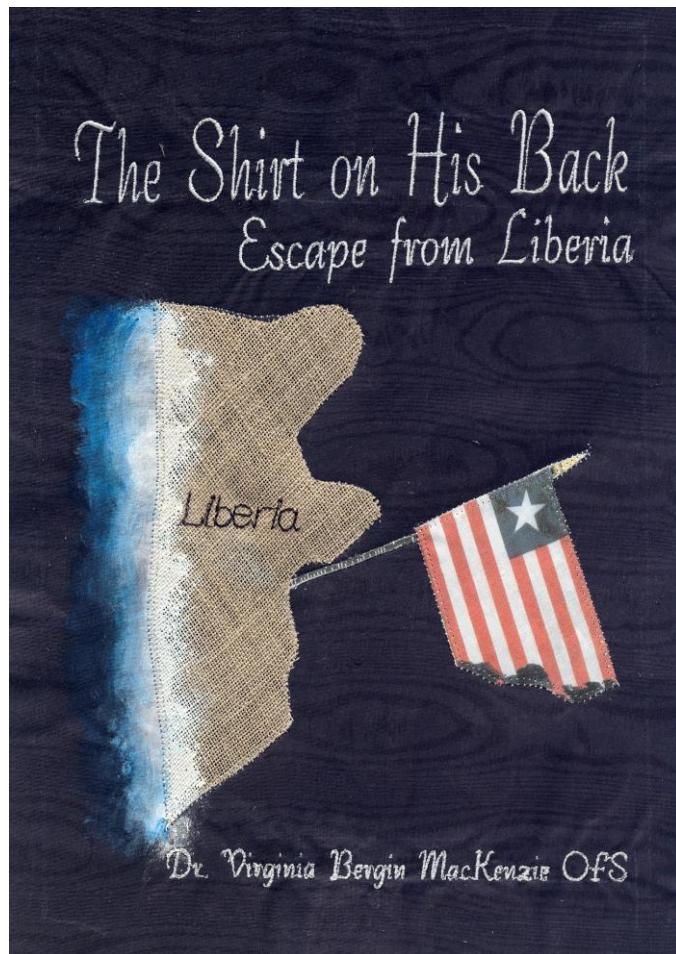
After her death, the church was rebuilt in more magnificent style and dedicated to her name. Her body remains enshrined to this day in the same church, incorrupt, in a silver shrine over the high altar. It is run by the OFM Franciscans.

Although honored as blessed from the time of her death, Margaret was not canonized until May 16, 1728, by Pope Benedict XIII. Her feast day is Feb. 22, and she is the patron of the falsely accused, homeless people, the mentally ill, orphans, penitents, single mothers, and reformed prostitutes.

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.

Book Review: True Story Tells of Perilous Escape

The Shirt on His Back: Escape from Liberia by Dr. Virginia Bergin MacKenzie, OFS.
Covenant Books (Murrells Inlet, S.C., 2018). 106 pages.



By Joan Davis, OFS

Secular Franciscans in our Region knew Joe Bailey, OFS, as a member of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity in Hilton Head Island, S.C.

Not everyone, though, may know of the desperate circumstances that brought Joe, his wife, Vera, and their four daughters to the United States from the Republic of Liberia, on the West Coast of Africa.

Joe and Vera Bailey had received Fulbright Scholarships, earning their doctorates at Tulane University in New Orleans in 1989, then returning to Liberia as the scholarships required.

From 1989 to 1996, a bloody civil war took the lives of more than 200,000 Liberians and displaced many others. The Bailey family's very lives depended on them fleeing the country.

This book is the inspirational true story of the Baileys' harrowing escape from Liberia in 1990. Joe said he got out of there with only the shirt on his back.

After settling in South Carolina, Joe became a Secular Franciscan.

He was a beloved biology teacher, first at Hilton Head High School and later at the Technical College of the Lowcountry in Beaufort, S.C. Vera was the executive director of the Pregnancy Center & Clinic on Hilton Head Island.

The book is a memorial to Joe, who died in 2016. His fraternity misses him terribly. He was a true son of St. Francis.

Virginia MacKenzie, OFS, the author of the book, is also a member of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity. When Joe was near death in a hospital in Savannah, Ga., Virginia visited him and prayed the Franciscan prayer, "Stay with me, Lord." This brought tears to Joe's eyes. A few days later, he died.

Virginia has traveled to Africa four times. While touring the West Coast, she and her husband met with Secular Franciscans in Togo and Angola in 2015. She holds a doctorate in public policy from the University of Buffalo.

In the early 1800s, the United States sent thousands of freed slaves and free-born black people to Liberia, where it was thought they would have a better life than they would be able to have in the United States.

Many are unaware Liberia's history and the devastation caused by the country's civil wars. The Baileys' struggles and fears are felt through the pages of this book. It opened my eyes to the plight of this nation. The book is replete with history and weaves a tale of horror and suffering that I was surprised to know existed in our modern-day world. I greatly enjoyed the read and was

pleased to learn proceeds from the book's sale will be donated will go to the Franciscan

Missions.

Brother Andrew Brophy, OFM, executive director of the Franciscan Missions wrote: "The story of Joe Bailey will allow us to reach out to those who continue to struggle as he once did. We are delighted that the profits of the book will go to the Franciscan missionaries who do such wonderful work among the poor throughout the world."

The book can be obtained now from Amazon or Barnes and Noble. It will also be available at our Annual Regional Gathering in August — for a discounted price. The hardcover version is \$26.99 (\$22.00 at the gathering), and the softcover is \$16.99 (\$15.00 at the gathering). Virginia would be happy to sign it for you if you wish. It is in digital format as well.

Joan Davis, OFS, is a member of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity, Hilton Head Island, S.C.

**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.

**Communio
is published in
January,
April,
July,
and October
for the
Brothers and Sister of
St. Francis Region of
the Secular Franciscan
Order in the
United States.**