

Communio

That All May Be One

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

Summer 2017

God Loves Us – and All Creation – Into Being

“[T]he Trinitarian God as understood by Francis and Clare forms the spiritual center of all Franciscan theological thought. ... [T]he Trinitarian God emphasizes relationality, an important Franciscan value. ...



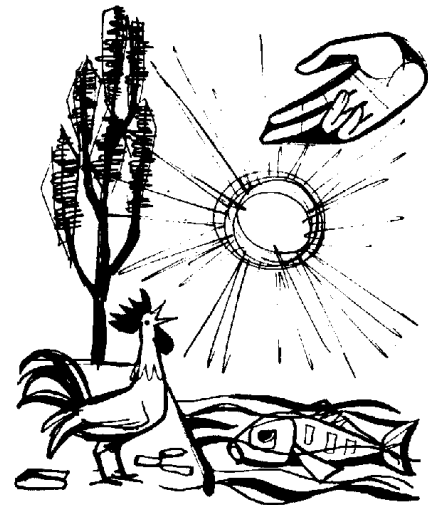
“In God’s inner life, there is a dynamic interrelationship of love flowing through God’s triune nature. In God’s external actions of creation, Incarnation, and sending the Spirit, God is again described as relational, since God shares God’s own goodness and love with every creature.

“In Franciscan theology, God is not simply the first cause of all created beings or the first principle of existence. God does something far

more than cause creation. God loves creation into existence. God’s love is both the core of life within God, and it is also the dynamism which loves us into existence.”

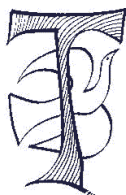
Kenan B. Osborne, OFM,
“The Development of the Spiritual Vision
of Francis and Clare into a Major Spiritual
and Theological Tradition,” 52–53.

*The Franciscan Moral Vision: Responding to God’s
Love*, Thomas A. Nairn, OFM, editor

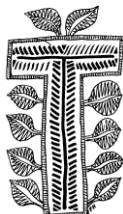


The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate





Editor’s Journal

While I was in Assisi (April–June) I found a small book, *Accomplices of the Spirit: The “Renunciation Room”, Francis and Bishop Guido*, by Bishop Domenico Sorrentino, bishop of Assisi-Nocera Umbra-Gualdo Tadino. The book is his meditation not only on Francis’s radical act, but also on Bishop Guido, who wrapped his cloak around Francis after the young man stripped himself, renouncing everything to live a life of poverty.

Unfortunately, as far as I can tell, the book isn’t available in the United States, but you can find it if you go to Assisi. I bought my copy in the book shop at Casa Papa Giovanni, Via San Paolo, 32. If you visit the Renunciation Room, you’ll also find the book there. It’s in English, Italian, and several other languages. But you can also read Bishop Sorrentino’s beautiful “Shrine of the Annunciation Pastoral Letter” if you type those words into your search engine.

I’d never thought much about Bishop Guido. Bishop Sorrentino, though, has asked himself some questions as if speaking to his predecessor:

“If you decide for Francis, what will the people say of your foolishness, of your thoughtlessness, of your idealism without your feet on the ground ... they will say perhaps that you are the one who ‘breaks up families’ ...

“If you decide against Francis, how can you bear, for life, the remorse of having cancelled a Word of God? The warning of Paul worries you: ‘Never try to suppress the Spirit’ (1 Thes 5:19). The institution cannot be the death of the charism. It needs to be the womb in which the ‘mystical’ Christ is continually conceived, the womb of Mary continuing to be fertile: *Virgin made Church (Saint Francis, A Salutation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, n.1)*.

“This is the night of your searching. Tomorrow Francis will arrive, with his furious father, with the curious town. And what will you do? I would not like to be in your night. But the Spirit will tell you...” (14)

Bishop Sorrentino’s meditation on someone we may not have thought much about is a great example. We can do the same. Pick someone who’s in the background in a gospel story or in one of the stories about Francis or Clare. For instance, the story in which Jesus says he must go to Jerusalem and give up his life. Peter, who’s just received the keys to the kingdom of heaven, protests that this must not happen, and Jesus rebukes him.

Imagine yourself, not as Jesus or Peter, but as one of the other apostles or maybe a bystander. How do you feel about what you’ve just heard? Are you comfortable with it? Were you jealous that Peter got the keys, so you don’t feel quite so bad about his dressing down? Do you

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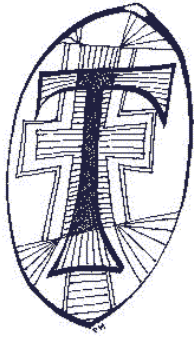
sympathize with Peter, knowing how you’d feel if Jesus said that to you?

In the scene with Francis and Bishop Guido: Is Francis really crazy? Oh, his poor father and mother. Or, I wish I had the courage to do what he did.

Entering into these stories, we can learn much, including about ourselves.

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



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

May the Lord give you peace!

The summer days are longer and here in the Lowcountry of South Carolina, hotter and more humid. The trees, shrubs, grass, and flowers are all thriving since recent thunderstorms have nourished Mother Earth here. Just as our heavenly Father provides for the earth, he lovingly provides for us, his children.

Consider how you are nourished on a daily basis: prayer, Eucharist, family, fraternity, a hummingbird that stops to feed on a flower in the garden, and whatever you acknowledge as gift from God.

We will soon be fed by our presence together for our Annual Regional Gathering. I am looking forward to being nourished by Brother Bill Short, OFM, and his presentations. I trust you are, as well, since many have registered to attend. Brother Bill's talks will be based on our theme, "Living Our Vocation Guided by the Holy Spirit"

Remember to bring your fraternity's banner and display items you wish to showcase, as is done each year. The agenda for the ARG and Visitation and Election calendar are included in this issue of *Communio* (pages 16–18).

It will be so very good to share Franciscan joy, love, and peace with each of you!

"Mindful that the Holy Spirit is the source of their vocation and the animator of fraternal life and mission, Secular Franciscans should seek to imitate the faithfulness of Francis to His inspiration. They should listen to the exhortation of the Saint to desire above all things 'the Spirit of God at work within them'" (General Constitutions 2000, Article 11).

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.

Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation: Dealing with Unconscious Bias

By Carolyn D. Townes, OFS

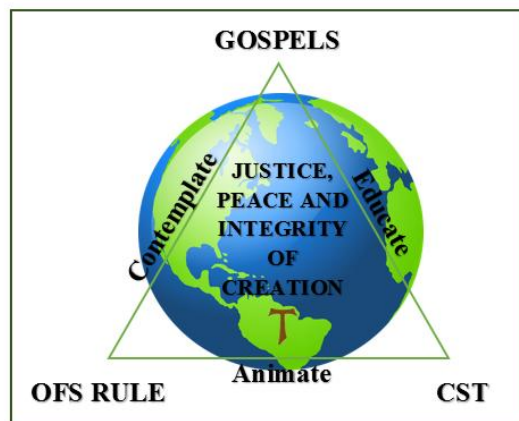
I was privileged to be one of the presenters at this year's summer seminar at St. Francis University in Loretto, Penn. The topic was "Multiculturalism and Diversity: Who is My Neighbor?"

I was paired with Mary Stronach, OFS, our international councilor and one half (with her husband, Bob, who takes all the wonderful photos) of our national public relations team. Though a smaller group than in past years, it was a spiritually enlightening and blessed weekend.

In offering our working

SPIRITUALITY

FORMATION



FRATERNITY

APOSTOLATE

definitions of terms, one of the concepts I introduced was **unconscious bias**. I wanted to bring this up because it is one of those insidious traits we all have yet we may not be aware of it.

Our subconscious mind can process much more information and data than the conscious mind, using shortcuts based on our backgrounds, cultural environment, and personal experiences that make automatic associations and decisions about our everyday lives.

The unfortunate part of this automatic decision-making is that it is usually wrong, especially when we need to use rational thinking to make those more important decisions. The subconscious mind makes snap judgments on issues, concerns, and certain people we encounter. We tend to judge and categorize people according to their color, gender, nationality, religion, or political persuasion.

Again, this is not a conscious action; we are not even aware we are making these judgments because they are so ingrained in our minds.

Unconscious biases color our decisions without our realizing. Within seconds, we judge whether someone is like us or not; in our group or not; someone we can trust or tolerate. Have you ever heard someone say, or heard yourself say, “But this is the way we’ve always done it!” That is an example of unconscious bias — basing your decision on past experience instead of present analysis.



Mary Stronach, OFS, NAFRA international counselor (left); and Carolyn D. Townes, OFS, JPIC animator, at the summer seminar at St. Francis University, Loretto, Penn.

Most of our decisions are based on the media and hearsay rather than facts and statistics. Then, we tend to favor and align with those who support our biases, while shunning and ignoring those who disagree with us.

Some decisions are quick and do not affect the whole, like which flavor of ice cream to choose. However, there are those decisions that do affect the future of the whole; like, “Is the person argumentative and disruptive in the fraternity, or is he or she posing questions that I don’t want to look at?” As you see, this is not a decision you want to reach by a snap judgment; but must be discerned and deliberated carefully.

Take a Franciscan sacred pause and invite the Holy Spirit to be part of the discernment and deliberation. There is no law that I am aware of that says you must come to important decisions in less than 30 seconds. If you must come to a decision quickly, buy yourself some time by saying the decision is too important to make a rash judgment and you need some time to pray and discern.

Then, give a time frame and honor that time: “This is a very important decision, and I want to give it my utmost attention. Therefore, I will take it to prayer and give you my answer by this Friday. Is that agreeable?”

Once you make the agreement, honor the agreement.

There is no “cure” for unconscious bias. It is part of the human experience. However, there are ways you can curb your biases and learn to make more rational and logical decisions.

First, intentionally slow down when making decisions. My three-step method is to stop, take a few deep breaths (that Franciscan sacred pause), and ask questions. Ask yourself the reasons for making this decision. Is it because of cultural stereotypes, past experiences, or something else? Then, ask others about the reasons behind their decisions, especially if you notice unconscious biases. Question, don’t accuse: “That’s interesting. Would you mind sharing how you came to your decision?”

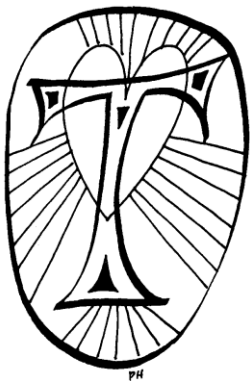
Again, this is the human experience, and we are living that human experience. So don’t berate yourself or another. Just become more aware. Remember, you cannot change what you are

not aware of. When you are more aware of what is likely to happen, then you can take the necessary steps to intercept the subconscious mind and make more rational and Spirit-filled decisions.

May the Lord give you his peace.
Carolyn

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.

From the Heart of the Regional Formation Director



Greetings, Brothers and Sisters.

I look forward to meeting you during the Annual Region Gathering (ARG) in Ridgecrest, N.C., Aug. 11–13.

For the first time, we will have a formation directors' meet-and-greet: Saturday, 2:30–3:30 p.m., in Johnson Springs, room 5A–D, across from the Azalea Room.

If you are a formation director and not attending the ARG, please have someone from your formation team attend this gathering. I would like you to come prepared with one good idea that is working in your fraternity and one question or suggestion for me on how I can serve you better, or a topic you would like to discuss in detail.

I strongly encourage you to include your spiritual assistant in your initial and ongoing formation and in all your formation planning. They are there to be a great resource for you and your fraternity.

Anne Mulqueen, OFS, spiritual assistant to the National Formation Commission, passed this on to regional formation directors:

“Did you know (and many of you do) that before a candidate's profession, you must ask the spiritual assistant for his or her opinion? And the spiritual assistant should have one because he or she is supposed to be involved in initial formation. Alas, our SAs are really busy, so if your SA is not available for initial formation sessions, think of creative ways that he or she can develop a relationship with the candidates without having to attend every session. Then the SA can give an informed opinion when you ask.

“When I use the word *involved*, **I don't mean in charge** — I mean he or she knows the candidates and is actively discerning the call along with the candidates and the formation team. SAs can make great resource persons so let them serve you.”

General Constitutions, Article 41

1. *Rule, Article 23* Having completed the time of initial formation,

- the candidate submits to the minister of the local fraternity a request to make his or her profession.
- Having heard the master of formation
- **and the assistant,**
- the fraternity council decides by **secret ballot** on the admission to profession,

- gives its reply to the candidate,
- and informs the fraternity.”

We continue to hold monthly ZOOM formation director meetings. From the feedback I received in June, we went to one a month. This will be on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST).

Our topics have been a presentation by Diane Curran, OFS, formation director for Crucified Christ Fraternity, North Charleston, S.C., on how to bring Scripture into ongoing formation. Scriptural listening, commentary, and understanding, she said, are all inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Suggestions from other formation directors:

- Each monthly fraternity gathering discuss the Gospel for the next Sunday and pick out a phrase that speaks to you.
- Encourage brothers and sisters to read the Gospel daily and journal on how it ties into their lives as Franciscans. Have members share their thought as the next monthly meeting.
- Remember the psalms are prayers. Pray a line of a psalm, and pray it for a particular person.
- Franciscans should be familiar with Scripture, liturgy, and prayer. If we are going “from gospel to life and life to the gospel” (Rule, Art. 4), we have to be familiar with the gospel. It was also noted that the latest version of the *New American Bible* was released March 9, 2011.
- Several fraternities set up a small table with the Bible on it, with members sitting in a circle around it. The thought is to start each meeting with Scripture and to anchor ourselves with Scripture.
- Review “The Spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi: Elements of Franciscan Spirituality,” pages 51–54, in our *BSSF Regional FORMATORS’ Guidelines for Orientation and Initial Formation*.

At another ZOOM meeting we discussed more ongoing formation resources, some of which were listed in the spring *TAU-USA*. In addition to those listed, “Building with Living Stones: Comprehensive Course on Franciscan Mission Charism” has been released by Franciscan Institute Publications. Its 14 units contain great material for ongoing formation discussions and there are excellent discussion questions at the end of each unit.

Our own brother Bret Thoman, OFS, has released two excellent books: *St. Francis of Assisi: Passion, Poverty, and the Man Who Transformed the Catholic Church* and *St. Clare of Assisi: Light from the Cloister*, both from TAN Books. I also strongly encourage you to obtain from Tau Publishing *For All The Saints: St. Francis’s Five Point Plan for Salvation* by our dear Deacon Tom Bello, OFS, former national minister, published posthumously.

For the July 25 ZOOM meeting, my chosen topic was the Secular Franciscan conference, “The Development of the Franciscan Person,” which Father David B. Couturier, OFM Cap., conducted July 21–23 at St. Bonaventure University. The two books we used were *The Cantic of Brother Sun: Francis of Assisi Reconciled* by Jacques Dalarun and Father Couturier’s *The Four Conversions: A Spirituality of Transformation*.

Our Aug. 25 ZOOM meeting (7 p.m. EST) will focus on the ARG and my attendance at the National Regional Formation Directors Workshop, Aug. 17–20, in St. Louis, Mo.

ZOOM meeting after that will be Sept. 26 at 7 p.m. EST.

The ZOOM format is an opening prayer, introductions, topic and discussion, time for any

other questions on your mind, and closing prayer.

My email is ambrosedianne6@gmail.com, and my phone number is 706-338-2402. If you want help in setting up ZOOM, I will walk you through it step by step. Or if you have any questions or comments about anything concerning formation from any brother or sister in the region, feel free to contact me. I look forward to seeing and hearing from you.

Peace,
Dianne

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

Congratulations! New Council

Franciscan Family of Greensboro Fraternity

Greensboro, N.C., April 2
Minister: Bob Pearson, OFS
Vice Minister: Katie Baier, OFS
Secretary: Jeanne Carter, OFS
Treasurer: Mary Fenton Faint, OFS
Formation Director:
Georgette Schraeder, OFS
Councilor: Dorothy Fansler, OFS
Councilor: Beth Kristofersen, OFS
Councilor: Mary Taylor, OSF

Newly Professed — Congratulations!



St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity, Hendersonville, N.C., May 20.

Newly professed (NP) and sponsors:

Front row: Brenda Harris, OFS, (NP, left); Peake Dana, OFS; Barbara St. John, OFS (NP); Diane Salkewicz, OFS. Back row: Lucy Nordlund, OFS (left); Joann Colini, OFS (NP); Frank Colini, OFS (NP); Gene Ray MaGruder, OFS, (NP); Thomas St. John, OFS (NP); Jim Costello, OFS.

The “Light” of St. Clare is a beacon for the world

By Bret Thoman, OFS



Fresco of St. Clare by Simone Martini in the Chapel of San Martino in the Lower Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi.

It was one morning, early in 1192, when a young noblewoman of Assisi was experiencing a difficult childbirth. The Holy Spirit spoke to her saying: “Do not be afraid, woman, for you will give birth in safety to a light which will give light more clearly than light itself” (“The Legend of St. Clare,” Chapter I, (10); *Clare of Assisi, Early Documents: The Lady*, 281; Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., editor).

The baby’s name, Clare, in fact, means “light.”

Clare was born into a family of status and means. Her father’s family name was Offreduccio and he, her uncles, and cousins were all knights. Clare’s mother, Ortulana, descended from the family of Fiumi. Both Clare’s mother and father belonged to the Assisian aristocratic class known as the *maiores* (majors) and traced their ancestry back four centuries to Charlemagne and King Pepin, the first Holy Roman emperors.

While the men of Clare’s family spent much of their time in business affairs and training for combat, the women devoted their time and resources to prayer, works of mercy, and service to the poor. Her mother was particularly pious and virtuous and had made pilgrimages to Rome, Monte Sant’Angelo in southern Italy, Compostela in Spain, and the Holy Land.

As a child, Clare was formed by these experiences and from an early age she took on the life of a penitent: she embraced asceticism, prayed frequently, and performed acts of charity, especially giving to the poor.

During her canonization process, one of the witnesses said that,

“although their household was one of the largest in the city and great sums were spent there, she nevertheless saved the food they were given to eat, put it aside, and then sent it to the poor. ...

“While she was still in her father’s house, she wore a rough garment under her other clothes.

“He also said she fasted, prayed, and did other pious deeds, as he had seen; and that it was believed she had been inspired by the Holy Spirit from the beginning” (“The Acts of the Process of Canonization of Clare of Assisi, Twentieth Witness (8–12), *The Lady*, 195).

Despite the women’s religious zeal, the men were seeking to move Clare in another direction: they needed her to enhance the family’s position through an arranged marriage. It was in such an environment — surrounded by holy women devoted to religion and men absorbed in worldly concerns — in which Clare grew up. And it would be this dichotomy that would lead to conversion — when she left the world and received the tonsure.

It is unclear when Francis heard of Clare; however, he knew very early that she would come: one day. Soon after his own conversion, while rebuilding the little country church of San Damiano, he felt the movement of the Holy Spirit. He announced to all who were near: “Come and help me in the work on the monastery of San Damiano, because there will as yet be ladies here who will glorify our heavenly Father throughout His holy church by their celebrated and holy manner of life” (“The Testament” of St. Clare (13–14) *The Lady*, pp. 60–61).

Clare was acquainted with Francis either by hearing him speak in the cathedral of San Rufino, next to her house, or through her first cousin, Rufino, who had joined Francis’s movement. During her meetings with him, something powerful took place within as she discerned her life’s calling: following Francis in poverty as the first Franciscan woman. The day would be Palm Sunday 1212.

During the Mass, the bishop of Assisi distributed branches to the faithful. When he looked out, he saw Clare and went down from the altar to place the branch in her hand. In this, it is believed that he acknowledged her decision: the 18-year-old woman would leave her home with its privileges of wealth and power to become the first woman to follow Francis with only one privilege — poverty.

That night, she secretly exited her home and, with a companion, left the walled city of Assisi, walking to the little church of St. Mary of the Angels in the valley. There she met Francis, who gave her the tonsure and covered her head with a veil, both signifying consecration to God; in place of her fine clothes, she donned the penitential habit.

The brothers then accompanied Clare to San Paolo delle Abbadesse, a Benedictine monastery for women. With a papal interdict in force prohibiting outsiders from entering the cloister, San Paolo would grant Clare sanctuary and keep her safe from any attempts by her father or the knights of her family to draw her away: to remove a consecrated nun by force would incur excommunication. And when they came, indeed, Clare had to simply lift the veil from her head and reveal the tonsure. The men had no choice but to leave her.

San Paolo was one of the most prominent women’s monasteries in the diocese of Assisi. It was made up of both noble women (known as *choristae*) who entered the convent with dowries and who spent their time primarily in prayer; as well as the serving sisters or lay sisters (known as *conversae*), who looked after the practical needs of the monastery such as cleaning and cooking. True to Franciscan poverty, Clare radically departed from this tradition by giving away her possessions before entering. Thus, she renounced her birthright, arriving not as a noblewoman but as a servant!

After a brief time, Clare left San Paolo for another women’s community: Sant’Angelo in Panzo. Though traditionally thought to be a simpler Benedictine community, some believe it was more akin to a Beguinage — a community in which women, not vowed to a traditional rule,



lived together and engaged in charitable works of mercy, perhaps in an adjoining hospital.

**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.

Here Clare was joined by her sister, Caterina, who changed her name to Agnes. Their relatives came for her, too, but due to Clare's intercessory prayers, Agnes became so heavy that a dozen knights were unable to lift her. This was Clare's first miracle. After Francis tonsured Agnes at Panzo, the two left for their final home: San Damiano.

As Francis rebuilt San Damiano with rocks and mortar, Clare and the sisters became living stones who spiritually edified not only that particular church, but the universal Church. Her community eventually consisted of 40 women including her own mother and her other birth sister, Beatrice. From the cloister, the women lived a Franciscan life centered on fraternity, mutuality, work, prayer, and evangelization. And underlying it all was a life dedicated to radical poverty. From within the enclosure of San Damiano, Clare was a light for all to see.

Clare died on Aug. 11, 1253, just two days after her rule was approved by Pope Innocent IV. This was the first time in the history of the Church that a rule written by a woman was accepted. Her body was moved to the little church of San Giorgio in Assisi. Shortly thereafter, construction began on her basilica and on Aug. 15, 1255, she was declared a saint. Her remains are there to this day, and her "light" is available for all to see.

Bret Thoman, OFS, is a member of Immaculate Conception Fraternity in Jonesboro, Ga., and director of St. Francis Pilgrimages.

**BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS REGION CALENDAR
SCHEDULE OF VISITATIONS (V) AND ELECTIONS (E)
August 2017 through November 2018**

* confirmed V+ follow-up visit (observers in parentheses)

**Date Fraternity/Group & Location V Fraternal/Pastoral Visitors
E President/Ecclesial Witness**

2017

**Aug. 11–13: Annual Regional Gathering, Ridgecrest, NC
Br. William Short, OFM, featured speaker**

Sept. 8–9*	Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg, Blairsville, GA	V	Lori Moran/Willie Guadalupe
Sept. 9*	St. Clare of Assisi, Aiken, SC	E	Janet Hulshof/Audrey Binet
Sept. 9*	Blessed Sacrament, Burlington, NC	E	Carmen Madero (Bob Pearson)/Pat Wilkerson
Sept. 19–20	St. Anthony of Padua, Fayetteville, NC	V	DorothyAnn Rowland (Carolyn Peduzzi)/Pat Wilkerson

**Sept. 26–Oct. 1: National Executive Council Chapter, Mount St. Francis, Ind.
Host: Holy Trinity Region**

Oct. 11–12	St. Clare, Asheville, NC	V	Sara Nell Boggs/Joanita Nellenbach
Oct. 14–15	Spirit of Francis and Clare, Conyers, GA	V	DorothyAnn Rowland/Willie Guadalupe
Nov. 3–4	St. John Vianney EC, Lithia Springs, GA	V	Lori Moran/Willie Guadalupe
Nov. 12	St. Thomas More, Wilmington, NC	E	Carolyn Peduzzi/Pat Wilkerson
Dec. Date TBD	Five Georgia Martyrs, St. Simons Island, GA	E	DorothyAnn Rowland/ Fr. William McIntyre

2018

Jan. 5–6 or 12–13	San Damiano, Athens, GA	V	?/?
Jan. 13	St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Augusta, GA	E	Sara Nell Boggs/? See CALENDAR, page 12

CALENDAR, from page 11

Date	Fraternity/Group & Location	V	Fraternal/Pastoral Visitors	E	Presider/Ecclesial Witness
Jan. 14	Stigmata of St. Francis, Duluth, GA	E	Lori Moran/Willie Guadalupe		
Jan. 21	Seven Dolours of the BVM, Franklin, TN	E	Lannie Newman/?		
Jan. 28	Padre Pio, Raleigh, NC	E	Bob Pearson (Carmen Madero)/Joanita Nellenbach		
Feb. 4	Fr. Solanus Casey, Morehead City, NC	E	?/?		
Feb. 9–10	Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Hilton Head Island, SC	V	?/?		
Feb. 17	Our Lady of Good Counsel, Greenville, SC	E	?/?		
Feb. 18	Sts. Francis and Clare, Knoxville, TN	E	?/?		
Mar. 10–11	Channel of Peace, Chattanooga, TN	V	?/?		
Apr. 7–8	Franciscan Family of Greensboro, Greensboro, N.C.	V	?/?		
Apr. 8	St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Elizabeth City, NC	E	?/?		
May 12	Immaculate Conception, Jonesboro, GA	E	?/?		
June 3	St. Maximilian Kolbe, Huntersville, NC	E	?/?		
June 8–9	Blessed Sacrament, Burlington, NC	V	?/?		
June 9	Crucified Christ, North Charleston, SC	E	?/?		

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

Aug. 24–25	St. Michael the Archangel, Spartanburg, SC	V	?/?		
Nov. Date TBD	St. Anthony of Padua, Fayetteville, NC	E	?/?		
Nov. 24	St. Francis of the Hills, Hendersonville, NC	E	?/?		

Communio

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For members of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region
of the Secular Franciscan Order
in the United States of America

New shrine preserves site of Francis's renunciation

Story and photos by Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS



Bishop Domenico Sorrentino, bishop of Assisi-Nocera Umbra-Gualdo Tadino, followed by the Assisi city banner and a crowd of the faithful, carries a piece of the cloak that Bishop Guido wrapped around St. Francis after he renounced his worldly possessions in 1206.

stripped bare before everyone. The bishop, observing his frame of mind and admiring his fervor and determination, got up and, gathering him in his own arms, covered him with the mantle he was wearing. He clearly understood that this was prompted by God and he knew that the action of the man of God, which he had personally observed, contained a mystery. After this he became his helper. Cherishing and comforting him, he embraced him in the depths of charity” (Thomas of Celano, “The Life of St. Francis,” 15, *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint*, 193–194).

And what Francesco said in front of everyone! What would you think if your son declared that God in heaven was his only Father?

We’ve entered into that scene at Bishop Guido’s house, one of the most often recreated moments in the life of St. Francis. Now a shrine commemorates this famous event.

On May 20, Bishop Domenico Sorrentino, bishop of Assisi-Nocera Umbra-Gualdo Tadino, concelebrated with the rectors of the churches in his diocese the Mass for the solemn

It’s 1206 in Assisi and you’re headed to the house of Bishop Guido, right next door to the church of Santa Maria Maggiore. You’ve heard there’s going to be a trial: that well-respected merchant, Pietro di Bernardone is demanding justice from the bishop.

His eldest son, Francesco (*some* people think the son is crazy), stole some expensive cloth from Pietro’s shop. Francesco also took a horse from the stable, rode to Foligno, and sold everything.

Then he walked the 10 miles back, and tried to give the money to the priest at San Damiano, down in the valley, so the crumbling church could be repaired. But that priest was afraid of what Pietro would do when he found out, so he wouldn’t take the money. Francesco left it anyway, on a window sill.

Pietro wanted the mayor to hear the case, to make Francesco give back what he took; but Francesco claims he’s now a penitent and under Church authority, so Bishop Guido has to decide what’s to be done.

Well, can you believe what happened? “When [Francis] was in front of the bishop, he neither delayed nor hesitated, but immediately took off and threw down all of his clothes and returned them to his father. He did not even keep his trousers on, and he was completely

inauguration of the Room of Renunciation (*il Santuario della Spogliazione*).

That Mass on May 14 was part of a program, “*Senza nulla di proprio*” (“Without anything of one’s own”), May 14–21, offering prayer, reflection, and study of social justice.

Francis’s renunciation is usually pictured as taking place in a public area such as a courtyard or piazza, but is that accurate

“According to the sources and tradition,” Bishop Sorrentino has written, “everything happened between the house where I live (the building has undergone a lot of restoration so that it is very different from Francis’ time) and the square which is still dominated by Saint Mary Major, the ancient cathedral, which still looks impressive today and forms one body with the Bishop’s Residence” (Domenico Sorrentino, *Accomplices of the Spirit: The “Renunciation Room”, Francis and Bishop Guido*, 16).

So, having been in 1206, let’s jump ahead 811 years to May 14, 2017.

The Basilica of St. Clare is full this afternoon. It’s 4:30 and we’re praying Evening Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours. Bishop Sorrentino gives a talk. The Poor Clares sing from behind their grille that looks into the chapel which contains the San Damiano Crucifix, adjacent to the main worship space.

For further reading, type these titles into your search engine:

- “Letter of the Holy Father to the Bishop of Assisi to Mark the Inauguration of the Shrine of Renunciation”
- “The Shrine of Renunciation Pastoral Letter”

We stand as the procession forms: a server in cassock and surplice, and flanked by candlebearers, carries a large cross, members of several confraternities with their colorful banners fall in behind. After them come friars and sisters from Franciscan Orders and Benedictine monks.

Then — Bishop Sorrentino, carrying the reason for this procession: he holds, in a glass-fronted sealed frame,

a small piece of the cloak that his predecessor, Bishop Guido, wrapped about St. Francis on that long-ago day. We are escorting the precious relic.

A policewoman, just behind the bishop, carries Assisi’s banner. We are a couple hundred people in this procession that makes its way down through Assisi’s streets to Santa Maria Maggiore.

For the next week, the program, “*Senza nulla di proprio*,” will be held daily in the



“The Stripping of Saint Francis, a painting by Cesare Sermei (1576-1668) in the Room of Renunciation, shows Francis humbly placing his head in Bishop Guido’s lap. At right, Francis’s father clutches his son’s discarded clothing, while in the background a man approaches with a garment for Francis.

Renunciation Room, encouraging those who attend to seek ways to live the Gospel message.



A sign in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore shows the dramatic moment when Bishop Guido wraps his cloak around a naked Francis. The words are: "Reclothe yourself in Christ. Room of the Renunciation."

Although the Mass on May 14 opened the Shrine of Renunciation, pilgrims, including Pope Francis (on Oct. 4, 2013), have visited the room, which had previously been called the Throne Room because a canopy there looked like a throne. Bishop Sorrentino renamed it the "Renunciation Room."

In a letter dated this past Easter Sunday, the pope commended Bishop Sorrentino for the new shrine. He reflected on his own visit and what Francis had done:

"I recall quite well the emotion of my first visit to Assisi. Having chosen the name of Francis as the inspirational ideal of my pontificate, the Room of Renunciation made me relive with particular intensity that moment in the Saint's life. Renouncing all earthly goods, he unfettered himself from the enchantment of the money-god that had seduced his family, in particular his father, Pietro di Bernardone. Certainly the young conversus did not intend to show his father a lack of due respect, but he recalled that a baptized person must place love of Christ above all his dearest affections."

Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS, Communio editor, 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.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 (1994-2017)
ANNUAL REGIONAL GATHERING
 Life Way Conference Center - Ridgecrest, North Carolina
 August 11–13, 2017

“Living our Vocation Guided by the Holy Spirit”

FRIDAY — Aug. 11

- 3:00 p.m. Registration - Mountain Laurel Lobby – (Franciscan Family of Greensboro Fraternity)**
- 2:00 Meeting — Regional Executive Council (Johnson Spring Board Room)
- 4:00 Meeting — Spiritual Assistants- (Johnson Spring Board Room)
- 4:00 Choir practice for cantors and musicians (Johnson Spring 2nd Floor, Azalea B&C)
- 5:00 Liturgy of the Hours Evening Prayer (Johnson Spring 2nd Floor, Azalea B&C)
- 5:30–6:30 Dinner buffet (tickets required)
- 7:00 Welcome, Opening Prayer (Johnson Spring 2nd Floor, Azalea B&C)
- Recognition of New Councils, New Attendees, and Anniversaries
- 7:30 Presentation: Br. Bill Short, OFM
- 8:30 Social (refreshments: Mountain Laurel (conference connector level))

SATURDAY — Aug. 12

- 7:15-8:15 Breakfast buffet (tickets required)
- 8:30 **Liturgy of the Hours Morning Prayer (Johnson Spring 2nd Floor, Azalea B&C)**
- 9:00 **Celebration of the Eucharist: Msgr. Richard Bellow**
Procession to Eucharistic Chapel (Stigmata of St. Francis fraternity)
- 10:30 **Break**
- 10:45 **Presentation:**
Br. Bill Short, OFM
- Noon - 1:00 Lunch buffet (tickets required)
- 1:15 **Presentation:**
Br. Bill Short, OFM
- 2:15 **Break – Opportunity Time**
- 2:15-4:15 **Spiritual Assistants meeting (Johnson Spring Board Room)**
- 2:30-3:30 **Formation Directors meeting (Johnson Spring Room 5 A-D, across from Azalea room)**
- 4:15 **Presentation: Br. Bill Short, OFM**
- 5:00 **Liturgy of the Hours Evening Prayer (Johnson Spring 2nd Floor, Room 2 B&C)**
- 5:30-6:30 Dinner buffet (tickets required)

- 7:00 **Memorial for Deceased Members of Region**
(Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary fraternity)
- 8:30 **Social** (refreshments: Mountain Laurel – conference connector level)

SUNDAY — Aug. 13

- 7:15-8:15 **Breakfast** buffet (tickets required)
(Time to check out)
- 8:30 **Liturgy of the Hours Morning Prayer** (Johnson Spring 2nd Floor, Room 2 B&C)
- 9:00 **Celebration of the Eucharist:** . – Msgr. Richard Bellow
- 10:00 **Recognition of newly professed - Renewal of Commitment** (all professed)
- 10:30 **Regional Fraternity Council** (*See agenda page 14*)
*** Opportunity time for all who are not required to attend Regional Council Mtg.
- 12:30 **Adjournment - Closing Prayer - Closing Comments**

***** Local fraternity displays will be available in Johnson Springs 2nd floor Rooms 3 A-D and 4 A-D as well as special information tables on various ministries, pilgrimages, etc. throughout the weekend.

FRANCISCAN BOOKS AND ARTICLES WILL BE FOR SALE
(St. Francis Springs Prayer Center)

Johnson Spring Building – 2nd Floor, Room 2 A

***A Chapel will be open for Eucharistic Adoration 10:00 AM Sat. until 9:00 AM Sun.**

Please sign up to spend quiet time with our Lord
(Chapel: Mountain Laurel Building, lower level - conference room #5)

AGENDA

REGIONAL FRATERNITY COUNCIL MEETING

Sunday, August 13, 2017 *** 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**
Johnson Spring Building - 2nd Floor, Room 5 A-D (Across from JS Room 2 B & C)

Every elected Fraternity Minister and REC is a member of the Regional Fraternity Council.

Please be present or delegate this responsibility to another member.

OPENING PRAYER

Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order

ROLL CALL

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

REPORT OF TREASURER

BUSINESS

Approval of Budget for 2018

ARG – 2018: August 3-5, 2018 (Ridgecrest) - National Visitation
Calendar of Visitations/Elections – Sept. 2017/Nov. 2018

OPEN FORUM – Please discuss items with regional minister before meeting.

COMMENTS from Regional Minister

ADJOURNMENT – CLOSING PRAYER

*****MEMBERS OF FRATERNITIES, NEWLY FORMING GROUPS AND EMERGING COMMUNITIES ARE INVITED TO OBSERVE THE COUNCIL MEETING.**

"Exploring the Canticle of the Creatures"

- ❖ St. Francis and Creatures
- ❖ Writing the Canticle
- ❖ Praying with the Canticle and Creation

Oct. 6 @ 7 p.m. – Oct. 8 @ 11 a.m.

Presenter: Joanita M. Nellenbach, OFS

Bring Your Liturgy of the Hours for Morning & Evening Prayer

Avila Retreat Center, Durham, N.C.

Cost: \$170 (\$30 non-refundable registration deposit required by Sept. 29 to confirm reservation. Send check to Avila Retreat Center, 7111 Mason Rd., Durham, NC 27712.)

To register call Avila at (919) 477-1285 or email avila@raldioc.org