

February 2021

Our Mother of Sorrows Fraternity Ordo Franciscanus Secularis (OFS) A Member of Divine Mercy Regional Fraternity

Newsletter

Volume 6, 2

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February Fraternity Gathering

****Saturday, February 27 @8:00 am****

****Please note date and time change****

At St. Thomas the Apostle Parish

Profession Renewal

Fr. Jim Chelich will celebrate Mass followed by our annual Profession Renewal. The renewal will begin immediately after Mass, so **please sit in the reserved section in the front of church**. Safe distancing rules will be in place and masks are required.

If you are unable or uncomfortable attending Mass in person, the Mass and Profession Renewal will be livestreamed on the St. Thomas website, <https://stthomasapostlegr.org>.

****Please mail your fair share checks for the month to Jeff Dills (address on the back on the newsletter). There will be no collection box at church.**

Day of Reflection Postponed

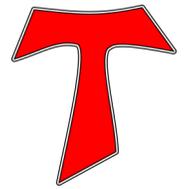
The Day of Reflection scheduled for March 6 at St. Thomas will be rescheduled to either May 1 or the fall, depending on gathering regulations. Please watch for more information to come.

Upcoming Fraternity Gatherings

Feb 27 (Sat)	Profession Renewal	8:00 am	St. Thomas
Mar 24 (Wed)	The Franciscan Family Rite of Welcoming	7:00 pm	St. Thomas
Apr 28 (Wed)	TBD	7:00 pm	St. Thomas

Celebrating the Milestones

Wishing our brothers and sisters many blessings!



Professions

Ken Estes	March 21
Ellie Estes	March 21
Lois Flickinger	March 25
Diane Gray	March 25
Marilyn Hawkins	March 25
Mary Lou Thompson	March 25
Paul Wojtas	March 25

Birthdays

Alvin Matkovich	March 7
Barb Scott	March 8
Mary Lou Harig	March 14
Barbara Czurak	March 23
Jeff Dills	March 26

Message from the Minister

Last month we had a wonderful formation time on Zoom with Michelle. We reflected and discussed what “life to Gospel and Gospel to life” practically means as Franciscans. Thank you, Michelle, for a thought-provoking time to deepen our Franciscan calling.

This month we will gather in person at St. Thomas for our Profession Renewal. We have arranged for it to be live-streamed on the parish website for those unable to attend. I hope you all can join us either in person or online starting at 8:00 am for Mass followed by the renewal.

I would also like to point out that this month, we will be beginning monthly reflections on articles of the Tau Newsletter by one of the council members. NAFRA has recommended that we reflect upon the larger order to understand that we are more than just our local fraternities. I hope you take time to read the reflections to spur your own thoughts and prayer.

I wish you all a meaningful and spiritually productive Lent.

Pax et bonum,

Barbara Scott, OFS



Please pray for the repose of the soul of Judy Wojtas, wife of Paul Wojtas, who passed away on February 9, 2021. May she rest in peace.



Year of St. Joseph

In this year of St. Joseph, we would like to reflect on various gifts of leadership that St. Joseph was given. We pray for his intercession in developing these gifts in ourselves to use for the common good of the fraternity.

Selflessness—placing the needs of the fraternity before his or her own personal needs

“Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.” (Luke 2: 4-5)

When have I done what is necessary even when it is not convenient? How can I serve the fraternity in the future in spite of my fears and trepidations?

Reflections on the Tau

by Jason George

The fall of 2020 edition of the Tau features a piece by Mary Bittner, OFS, entitled, "Fraternity: Advice from Scripture and St. Francis." I recommend taking the time to read this insightful article when you find the time. In her writing, Bittner makes five points that serve as topics for instruction and reflection. The subjects are:

1. Love is the basis of fraternity
2. Make building a fraternity a priority
3. Don't be judgmental
4. Don't gossip
5. Willingly show forgiveness

As Lent is upon us, I felt we may want to revisit some of these ideas and reflect upon what they might mean for us and our fraternity.

Self-centeredness destroys fraternity

The beginning of all holiness is humility. To know that we are small and not worthy of the gifts our Lord has given us and to place others in a place of importance over our own selfish needs is one of the keys to finding Franciscan joy.

The opposite of true charity is narcissism. Like that single grain of sand that stands up in the desert, one day, and says, "I can manage on my own," it is folly to assume that we can exist as Franciscans without being an integral part of fraternity life.

In order to find that genuine love for one another, it is necessary to get to know each other. Our meetings are not enough. Even though we are in the midst of a pandemic and we may not be able to spend time in close proximity, perhaps we could pick up a phone, more often, or email a brother or sister.

Not prioritizing fraternity leads to failing our brothers and sisters

Looking beyond ourselves and seeking to be part of the fraternity is step one. But, thoughts and words are one thing; deeds are another.

We are called upon to not only bear the burdens of our brothers and sisters on our shoulders, but, more importantly, I might venture to say, to open up and share our personal trials and struggles. If we do not allow our fraternity to pray for us, assist us, and feel pain with us, then we are preventing their own personal growth in holiness.

Our fraternity is our family. Under the guidance of our patron and our Holy Mother, we may be a part of each other's lives that many others may never experience. Let us bring our experiences, our pain, and our joy to the table. So, allow yourself to feel the excitement of seeing family when you meet your fellow Franciscans out in the world.

Scripture exhorts us to "greet one another wholeheartedly and lovingly; and honor one another." (1 Pt 4:9) Commit yourselves to honoring your brothers and sisters.

To judge is to cast a shadow over Francis

Since we are Secular Franciscans, we are called to live in the world. This means that we all come from different backgrounds and live very different experiences. Especially now, in this time of such radical gulfs between political ideology, religious interpretation, and social identity, it is imperative that charity takes precedence over points of philosophic difference. This applies not only within the bonds of our fraternity, but in everyday life.

Our seraphic father says to us, "I advise, warn, and exhort my brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ, that, when they go into the world, they shall not quarrel, nor contend with words, nor judge others. But they shall be gentle, peaceable and modest, merciful and humble, honestly speaking with all, as is becoming."

Gossiping causes great harm to ourselves and others

Mary Bittner, in her article, writes that “gossip is a serious matter [that] poisons the spirit of the fraternity.” How dangerous are those sins that come so easily, which everyone does frequently, and that seem to pass with no effect. But they do have an effect: on our environment, on each person involved, and on our fraternity as a whole.

Gossip jeopardizes trust and it opens people up to judgment, which we are to avoid as Franciscans. Ultimately, though, gossip exposes our own flaws (lack of humility, prudence, and charity, and being judgmental.) In our role as Franciscans, we should be protecting our fraternity members, rather than harming them. We should care for our fraternity members “as a mother loves and cares for her son.” (1 Th 2:7)

In daily life, it is we, who are Secular Franciscans, that are the visible signs and representatives of our Order. And to some, we may be the only Gospel to which they are exposed.

Forgive, forgive, forgive!

Let us make ourselves small, confess that we were wrong (even if we do not believe we are), and make amends, forgiving all and asking forgiveness of all. As we pray the Our Father, each day, we state clearly our understanding that God forgives us *as we forgive our debtors*.

St. Francis is very clear on the subject: “There should not be any brother in the world who has sinned, who (...) would go away, without receiving your mercy.” For through his words we learn that we should seek to understand, rather than be understood. And that it is in forgiving that we are forgiven.

This Lent, let us reflect upon the ways that we can temper our actions, grow in our charism, and build up our Fraternity. Life has many difficulties and the path to Holiness is not an easy one, but, Our Lord has given us a gift that can help us along the way... each other!

Upcoming Franciscan Feast Days

Chair of Peter	February 22
St. Polycarp	February 23
St. Casimir	March 4
Sts. Perpetua and Felicity	March 7
St. John of God	March 8
St. Frances of Rome	March 9
St. Patrick	March 17
St. Cyril of Jerusalem	March 18

Bold denotes Third Order Secular Saints & Blesseds From Proper Offices of Franciscan Saints and Blessed in the Liturgy of the Hours

For the Spirit of Penance

O seraphic father, St. Francis, I venerate in you the living image of Christ crucified. Your love transformed your whole life into one long martyrdom. It made you strive by means of severe penances to satisfy the ardor of your desires, until at last it impressed on your body the wounds it had long before engraved deeply in your heart. It thus made you a living crucifix, preaching sweetly to all people the sufferings and love of Jesus. Obtain for me, O holy father, that I too may banish from my heart the spirit of the world; that I may esteem poverty and humiliation above wealth and honor; that I may mortify my passions and advance daily in the knowledge and love of God, until at last, detached from myself, from the world and from all creatures, I may live for God alone, and like you say with my whole heart, “My God and my all,” my God, my inheritance and my joy in time and eternity. Amen.

From the Secular Franciscan Companion

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NOTES

****Please note the new format****

- We ask you to pray for the person you are partnered with all month.
- We encourage **either** person to call to check in or ask for prayer requests.
- All numbers are cell numbers, if available
- M=Mailing list
F=Formation
- Prayer requests can be emailed to Barb Scott and Michelle Bryk

We encourage you to call your prayer partners and check in to see how they are fairing. Specific prayer requests can be sent to Michelle Bryk if needed.

Fair Share Update

If you are excused from attending the fraternity gatherings and would like to send your fair share amount, please make check payable to Our Mother of Sorrows Fraternity and send your check to:

Jeff Dills, OFS
2265 Burton Pines SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

To Be Excused

If you are unable to attend a fraternity gathering due to health or other hardship reasons, please email:

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