



Conventual Franciscan Friars

Saint Anthony's Newsletter

Winter 2020

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To Heal the World

Keeping Community at the Center of Our Lives

By Friar Jude Winkler OFM Conv.
Assistant General of the Conventual Franciscan Federation (CFF) of North America, Australia, Great Britain and Ireland

By definition, the Conventual Franciscan Friars are brothers who live in a community, in a fraternity. They are the brothers of the friary (the meaning of the word conventual). But given the tendency to individuality in the religious life and the larger society, it is not always easy to witness this fundamental value of who we are.

One of the most important moments in our friars' community's life is the house chapter meeting, especially the spiritual part of that encounter. This meeting presents friars' opportunity to share their most profound beliefs with the friars with whom they live. One might think that these ideas are shared at the table or in other communal life moments, but that is not often the case. A good rule of thumb is that the chapter's spiritual portion should be at least as long as the meeting's business portion.

While house chapters are to take place every month, some communities worldwide have opted to celebrate them every week.

The house chapter meeting is also a time to share what is happening in the friars' lives and their apostolates. The friars must not be strangers to each other, living a pleasant but somewhat distant relationship. The other friars should be a safe sounding board for hopes and fears, challenges, and successes. Furthermore, no matter the apostolate in which a friar is involved, they are an apostolate of the fraternity. For this reason is why the recent General Chapters, which revised the constitutions and general statutes of the Order, speak of pastors sharing pastoral and financial information with the other friars in the friary chapter. The rationale is that while the pastor has been appointed to his office by the bishop, it is, nevertheless, the fraternity that has taken responsibility for the parish's care.

At the same time, a great challenge and a great witness to fraternity is the multi-cultural fraternity. In a period of heightened racism, the very fact that friars from different nations and different cultures attempt to live together in harmony is a powerful witness to the world of the possibility of overcoming those things in our background that could so easily divide us. Some of these communities are simply the consequences of pastoral need (friars of a different culture serving an immigrant community); others are conscious decisions to give witness in this manner (e.g., the friary in Kazakhstan).

Many communities have adopted a simple witness in how they identify themselves, using the word "we" more than "I." People notice these things. They can sense whether we genuinely believe that the community is the center of our lives.

Finally, communities often give witness to their fraternity by spending time with each other. Some of the countries in which friars take a day off identify that day as a time which is to be spent in the community (visiting a museum, going to a park, going to a movie and a meal, etc.). The rationale behind this choice is that this is what families do. They do not view "a day off" as the time to escape from one's family, but rather as a time to nourish one's family bonds.



Dear Friends,

“Rebuild My Church”...



Fr. John Elmer OFM Conv.

Born to privilege, St. Francis would come to know the hardships of war, imprisonment, and sickness. This experience of hardship sparked St. Francis’s conversion to a life among the poor. The Spirit of the Lord moved Francis to embrace the leper. Francis found in the embrace of the leper the person of Jesus Christ. In that spirit, he bathed the wounds of the lepers. Francis cleaned the wounds seeking to bring Christ’s healing.

St. Francis went out to the marginalized and outcasts of society, those reviled and called unclean, and embraced them as sisters and brothers. Francis came to understand that God was telling him in that small chapel that to rebuild “My Church” is to heal and bind the wounds of Christ’s body – men, women, children, families, society, Mother Earth.

St. Francis gave his brothers a set of Admonitions, encouragement to give life to the words and deeds of Jesus. In his Admonition #6, Francis encourages his followers [brothers and sisters] to imitate the Good Shepherd, caring for the sheep, binding wounds of the body, and all of creation. We Franciscans, religious brothers and sisters, laymen and women (Secular Franciscans) desire to bring healing to the broken body – people, families, communities, society, world, and Mother Earth.

Fr. John Elmer OFM Conv.
Spiritual Director

In Thanksgiving

Dear Fr. John,

I am thankful for my parents and teachers and good friends; I am thankful for my opportunities and those who have helped me; I am thankful for my Creator, my Savior, and the Divinity- God Bless You! - M.N.

Dear Fr. John,

I am thankful for all the blessings God has poured onto and into me. - C.M.

Dear Fr. John,

I am thankful for the miraculous healing of my grandson, Brent. It was truly a miracle! - J.M and K.M.

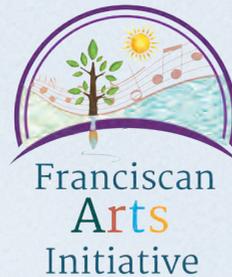
Province Updates



Mount Saint Francis Signage Complete

The Mount Saint Francis signage project was completed in early October. Our signage project not only helps our visitors understand how to navigate the property, recognizing the friars private times and spaces, but also introduces them to the many ministries on campus. The signs also familiarize visitors with the spiritual teachings of St. Francis through quotes from the “Canticle of the Creatures.”

The Franciscan Arts Initiative Come. Create. Celebrate.



St. Francis’ vision of nature and creation affected early Renaissance artists who began incorporating scenes of the natural world and creation into their work. The friars at Mount Saint Francis have a long history of celebrating and honoring the arts. We believe in the importance of art for our community. Art that inspires. Art that speaks to the soul.

Our campus provides studio/gallery spaces and outdoor natural areas that lead to spiritual and creative encounters for people of all ages. Art is beautiful and essential to the human spirit. Art binds us all in community, fraternity, and oneness. With the launching of our new Franciscan Arts Initiative, we want to ensure that beauty and spirit brought to life through art continues to be honored and celebrated.



The Franciscan Arts Initiative kicked off with Music at the Mount at Mount Saint Francis on October 24th. A sold out, outdoor concert featuring well-known cellist Ben Sollee.

Pope Francis’ new encyclical signed on October 3, 2020, focuses on the timely message of fraternity. What better way of recognizing each other as brothers and sisters than through our shared appreciation, creation, and love of art. The initiative’s goal is to create a diverse regional arts community and destination at Mount Saint Francis while eventually expanding to other friaries and ministries of the Province and Order.



Throughout this issue we are featuring the artwork of painter, Francisco Daniel Moreira. We absolutely love the beauty in which he explores the themes of love, solidarity, and unity.

Global Solidarity

Interreligious Dialogue with our Human Family

Interviewed by Friar Bob Roddy OFM Conv.

Friar Steve McMichael, OFM Conv., serves as Associate Professor of Theology at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN. Fr. Steve holds a Doctorate of Sacred Theology in Fundamental Theology from the Gregorian University in Rome. He often serves as a Pilgrimage Leader for Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs. Fr. Steve has participated in Inter-Religious Dialogue Groups for over 35 years.

Q & A

with friar Steve McMichael



Friar Steve McMichael

How and when did you become involved in inter-religious dialogue?

When I was a student in Rome in the mid-1980s, another Friar, Patrizio Spina, invited me to meet the Notre Dame Sisters of Sion, who had an excellent Library and who conducted tours of the former Jewish Ghetto in Rome. I needed some type of outside ministry while in Rome, and I asked the powers that be if I could assist the Sisters with these tours. My ministry there led me to the work of Friar Alphonso de Spina, whose work was the subject of my doctoral dissertation.

When I returned to the United States I taught a course on the Holocaust as an Adjunct Professor at Saint Louis University and I became involved with Ecumenical Commission of the Archdiocese of St. Louis as well as the Interfaith Partnership of St. Louis.



Painting by: Francisco Daniel Moreira

How did your interest in dialogue with Islam come to be?

A course on Islam that I took with Jack Renard left a deep impression on me. St. Francis' friendship with Sultan Malik Al-Kamil also reminded me of the Franciscan-Muslim connection. When I arrived at St. Thomas University, I was asked to teach courses on Islam and World Religions. Another faculty member, Terry Nichols, was starting a center for Christian-Muslim dialogue and invited me to participate. I also have been part of a dialogue group here in the Twin Cities for many years.

How did your involvement in inter-religious dialogue affect your perspective on your Catholic and Franciscan spirituality?

I see these conversations as an opportunity to build bridges. We start with mutual understanding and respect of each other's traditions. We are distinct, but we also share much in common. Vatican II's groundbreaking document on Christianity and its relationship with the world religions, *Nostra Aetate*, especially paragraph 3, opens up many possibilities.

What were some of the "epiphanies" that you experienced as a result of inter-religious dialogue?

If you have a certain amount of trust and respect for each other and each others' traditions, the dialogue will be very fruitful; it's really about building relationships among one another. We share our strengths as well as our weaknesses. In St. Francis, I see one who saw service as the hallmark of discipleship. Both Judaism and Islam share a strong commitment to service.

To me, the dialogue between Muslims and Christians is most productive when we center on areas where we have common ground, especially in the Muslim view of Jesus as a prophet; this also leads to shared concerns in the areas of social justice and care of the environment. St. Paul says that we must have the same mindset of Christ, i.e., of emptying ourselves (see Philippians 2:6-11). Our shared quest for finding the common good reveals that we have much more that unites us than divides us.

With Pope Francis highlighting the themes of "Healing the World" and "Solidarity" how has your involvement in inter-religious dialogue affected your understanding of "Solidarity"?

The more that we can find some kind of common ground, especially around social issues, the poor, the sick, the migrants, and the environment, the more we can heal our misunderstandings and misconceptions of one another. Luke's Gospel, with its emphasis on the forgotten and the marginalized, is where the rubber hits the road. In that compassion, in that care that we exhibit for others, we will be brought closer together.

There is also a solidarity in our thinking about Creation. The Qur'an is very much in harmony with an understanding of creation that St. Bonaventure articulates. Everything in creation points to and leads to the Creator. I have noticed that Muslims are very cautious about associating the human with the divine. In the Qur'an, human beings are formed with mud and the breath of God, not in the divine image.

As we engage in these conversations, we begin to see one another as brother and sister, not "the other." We begin to realize that we are a part of this diverse, extended family. These days, with so much disinformation being spread, we must not let other forces drive us apart. In the words of *Nostra Aetate*: "Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Muslims, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and respect, and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all humankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom."



COVID-19

and Mental Health:

Assessing the Impact

By Friar Matthew Malek OFM Conv.

COVID-19 has created an unprecedented upheaval in the American culture, with over 200,000 fatalities, skyrocketing unemployment, and numerous changes to education, daily routines, and social interactions. As more data becomes available, the pandemic's effects now reflect its enormous toll on mental health and exploding demand for new treatment options.

Many people experienced the psychological impact of COVID-19 as infections became prevalent, and lockdowns began. Fear of the unknown, uncertainty, social isolation, ambivalent statements by public health and government officials, and constant media coverage leads to high anxiety and depression rates among the general public. Those hardest hit were susceptible population groups, especially individuals with pre-existing psychiatric conditions and individuals who live in regions with high COVID-19 prevalence.

While lockdowns and restrictions have eased in some states, the psychological impact of the pandemic lingers. U.S. Census Bureau released data in May, revealing that one-third of Americans reported signs of clinical anxiety or depression. The data was based on a survey conducted in a one-week period that drew 42,000 respondents. Alcohol and drug abuse have also spiked during the pandemic. According to research published by the Society for the Study of Addiction, people with addictive disorders are particularly badly affected due to poverty, physical and mental health vulnerabilities, and disruption of access to services. The pandemic may well increase the extent and severity of some addictive disorders.

In addition, physical distancing strategies critical for reducing the spread of disease may also increase the risk of loneliness and isolation that make addictions and mental disorders worse. They also increase the likelihood of suicide among higher-risk individuals. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) note that suicide risk is higher among people who have experienced violence, including child abuse, bullying, or sexual violence. However, the risk of suicide during the pandemic can be lessened. Support from family and community, or feeling connected, and having access to in-person or virtual counseling or therapy can help with suicidal thoughts and behavior, particularly during a crisis like COVID.

These same supports can help individuals, regardless of the mental health reality they are confronting. As COVID-19 restrictions have eased, more counselors, physicians, and treatment programs have returned to in-office services. Telehealth is an option for many providers, and many can find support through online versions of their 12-Step meetings. Parishes have also opened up more, and many have online liturgies and resources to connect people to support. Likewise, parishes can be a great access point for help, as can family physicians and clinics.

COVID-19 can make recognizing and treating mental health issues more difficult but not impossible. According to an April 20 article from The New England Journal of Medicine, psychological symptoms will emerge for each person in a uniquely personal and social context that should be considered in developing a treatment plan. The key element is to reach out and get help.

For anyone who needs assistance finding help or is in crisis now, please contact:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Disaster Distress
hotline, **800-985-5990**, or text **TalkWithUs**

National Domestic Violence Hotline, **1-800-799-7233 (TTY: 1-800-787-3224)**

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, **1-800-273-8255**, or call **911**.

To Heal Our Church

By Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv.

On the anniversary of St Francis of Assisi's death, Pope Francis celebrates Mass before the Saint's tomb and signs his Encyclical "Fratelli tutti".

Letting Love Transcend

On the vigil of the Feast of Saint Francis, the first pope to share his name traveled to Assisi to sign a new encyclical right at his tomb. An encyclical is a letter written by the Holy Father to exercise his teaching ministry. This encyclical takes its title "Fratelli Tutti," which is Italian for "brothers and sisters all," from "The Admonitions" of St. Francis. As in the previous encyclical, "Laudato Si," which also takes its title from the writings of St. Francis, the influence of the poor man of Assisi permeates the entire document. "Laudato Si" was taken from St. Francis' famous poem celebrating the inter-relatedness of all of creation, and "Fratelli Tutti" sees Francis' vision of human fraternity as essential to the healing of the world, especially after the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our first Jesuit pope took the name of Francis after being counseled by a Franciscan cardinal right as the votes for his election were being counted; Cardinal Claudio Hummes of Brazil told the newly elected pope, "don't forget the poor." Not only has Pope Francis never forgotten the poor, who were already central to his ministry as the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, but as the first pope from Latin America, Pope Francis has continuously directed the world's attention to the marginalized and insists that we can encounter Christ by encountering the poor. Beginning with his first papal voyage to the island of Lampedusa, where shipwrecks have claimed the lives of many refugees fleeing from war and starvation in Africa, Pope Francis continues to deflect the spotlight shining on him towards people the world often ignores. This latest encyclical begins with a rather gloomy depiction of the world at this time but moves quickly to an invitation to the hope offered by an encounter with Christ, especially if we are willing to live in conformity with the teaching of Jesus that with one Father in heaven, we are all brothers and sisters.



Bishop John Stowe shares a moment with Pope Francis

The pope tells us that the Covid 19 virus has exposed our false securities and fragmentation that has left us divided even as we face a global crisis. This is a moment for change, for conversion, and to "dream...as a single-family, as fellow

travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home.” While the poor suffer disproportionately in every crisis, the pope particularly mourns the elderly abandoned to die in the pandemic and reminds us that it doesn’t have to be this way. He has previously denounced the “globalization of indifference” and calls us to the virtue of solidarity. To recognize our common humanity is to recognize that we are members of the same family despite our location, culture, or religion. We must work together, across borders and differences, to create a better, more just, and more fraternal world.

The pope offers a contemporary reading of the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan. The story is proposed in response to a question, ‘What one must do to attain eternal life?’ The questioner knows that we are to love God and our neighbor, but he asks: who is my neighbor? As the pope recounts the well-known story of the man beaten by robbers and left on the roadside, passed over by two religious people but generously tended to by a despised Samaritan, he emphasizes that it was a foreigner, someone from a distance, who teaches us how to be a neighbor. The pope invites the world’s inhabitants to become neighbors despite our differences, just as Jesus instructed his questioner to “go and do likewise.”

Pope Francis affirms each human being’s goodness and dignity based on ethics and how relations of love are essential for humanity. He describes radical individualism as a virus that must be eradicated for humans to flourish and reminds us that our economic and political systems must be ordered to the common good.

While the encyclical is global in its reach, it is not hard to see implications for the United States as it was released in the midst of a very divided political campaign. Chapter 5 offers a vision for a “better kind of politics,” which leads to the improvement of life for all through the exercise of genuine charity. The whole letter is a call to overcome the division and to focus again on the good, the noble, and the true. Francis reminds us that kindness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit and “frees us from cruelty, anxiety... and facilitates the quest for consensus.” Just like his namesake, Pope Francis proposes a way of life marked by the flavor of the Gospel, with all as brothers and sisters, where love transcends geography and distance.

Interested in learning more?

You can read Pope Francis’s new encyclical in its entirety

<http://bit.ly/fratelli-tutti-cff>



Painting by: Francisco Daniel Moreira

Healing Our Families

A Secular Franciscan Perspective

By Joe Edwards, OFS

Minster of Holy Trinity Region of the Secular Franciscan Order

Those who have followed Pope Francis know that he has taken a new, more empathic, and forgiving approach in viewing the frailties associated with family. While no change has occurred in terms of church law, he reinterprets church doctrine. He has consistently advocated for a Gospel approach to meeting people where they are—with their human imperfections. He has insisted that church doctrine cannot be the final word when viewing tricky moral questions, but rather, Catholics be guided by their informed consciences.

Pope Francis has addressed the topic of family in several ways during his pontificate. He has dedicated a series of catechesis to the family, centered his Wednesday addresses on this topic several times, held a world meeting on family, and convened two bishop synods. Pope Francis has emphasized family more than any previous shepherd. He realizes the importance of recognizing that the Church consists of imperfect individuals. Like St. Francis, he is responding to a call to rebuild an imperfect Church. Pope Francis has used the metaphor of the Church as a “field hospital on a battleground”—where we are called to quickly respond as medics to help those injured and in pain, and to heal.

His speeches have included various topics that impact family in our times, emphasizing the need to be compassionate while avoiding judgment. He has not shied away from controversial issues like divorces, remarriage; women who have been verbally, physically, and sexually abused; racism; human trafficking; couples grappling with conception; sex education; or sexual orientation. He has emphasized that if family wounds aren't dealt with in a healthy and timely manner, they can negatively affect spouses and children. The pope has encouraged wounded families to work toward healing so that the outcome will not be bitterness and detachment. He reassures those struggling that Jesus' family experienced hardships. The Holy Father sends a message of hope to families, emphasizing that God is compassionate, loving, and merciful and that healing must occur for the wounded.

So how does this apply to Secular Franciscans? The message preached by Pope Francis is at its core very Franciscan. It emphasizes the importance of fraternity, compassion, and the importance of accepting people as they are—we are all sinners who rely on the compassion and mercy of our loving God. Francis of Assisi was a man who understood the power of forgiveness—for in forgiving others—it frees us to love as God loves. So that we can receive and radiate His joy and peace! Let us become channels of healing to a world divided in pain and confusion, helping heal and resolve inequities throughout the world.



Painting by: Francisco Daniel Moreira

†Br. John Mauer OFM Conv.

To read Friar John Mauer's full obituary or make a donation in his memory please visit:
<https://franciscansusa.org/br-john-mauer>



Brother John Mauer always made time for the people most others ignore. He could be frank in describing life experiences that prepared him for his dedicated service as a Conventual Franciscan. But one of his Franciscan brothers said that Br. John's deep faith and profound prayer life formed the bedrock of his personality and his ability to understand those on society's margins.

Br. John Richard Mauer OFM Conv. passed away on September 10, 2020. He was born July 7, 1939, in Lansing, Michigan, to John and Joy Mauer, the oldest of 10 children. He entered the Order of Friars Minor Conventual in 1975, professed Simple Vows on August 5, 1978, and Solemn Vows on August 7, 1981. Before entering the Franciscan Order, he had been married and the father of four children. He had served in the US Army, worked as a truck driver, and served as a union foreman while working at an automotive manufacturing plant.

His Franciscan ministry took him across the country, and he served at various times in Washington, DC; Prior Lake, Minnesota; DeKalb, Illinois; Lorain, Ohio; San Antonio and Austin, Texas; Bloomington, Minnesota; and in Louisville, Kentucky, and neighboring southern Indiana.

After entering the Franciscans, Br. John dedicated himself to those who are often invisible to others. He served the elderly, the homeless, and those suffering from addictions. He had a 'street ministry' to the poor and never hesitated to invite people on the streets to join him for a cup of coffee or a sandwich. He listened to their stories and offered help when he could.

It is your kind support that allows us to continue the tradition of our Conventual Franciscan Friars, the same tradition St. Francis began over 800 years ago.



Help secure the legacy of the Franciscan Friars you love.

Friar Alberto Bravo renews his vows with friar Miguel Briseno in El Paso, TX
Photo credit : Al Baeza

End of the Year Tax Savings, Retirement Income, and a Franciscan Legacy

Future generations need Franciscans, and your support through a Franciscan Gift Annuity helps secure the Conventual Franciscan Friars' legacy. You receive fixed-payments of up to 8.6% of the value of your donation for life. Franciscan Gift Annuities also offer a charitable deduction for a portion of your gift to the friars. For example, Louise, age 84, made a \$10,000 donation establishing a Franciscan Gift Annuity. Louise receives \$740 (7.4%) annually, with only \$45.15 of that payment reported on her taxable income. Louise also can take a \$5,207 charitable tax deduction that can be spread over several years if necessary.

If you are 60 or above, please contact Shaunna Graf at (812) 923-5250 or s.graf@franciscansusa.org today to receive a confidential proposal.

Find out how 2020 has unique charitable giving tax incentives:
<https://bit.ly/cff-cares>

I WOULD LIKE MORE INFO!

If you are 60 or above please go to:
<https://bit.ly/cff-gift-annuities>



Or clip out this part of your newsletter and mail it back in with your prayer requests:

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ / _____ / _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Please pray for the intentions of those here, and for all your Franciscan family:

Frank and Angie Sartor
KM
Ms. Judith W. Alford
Alan L Amann
Mr. and Mrs. Henry L. Andres
Mrs Adele Baliunas
Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Bame
Mr. Frank H. Barzano
Concordia Bautista
Mrs. Mary Becht
Mr. & Mrs. Earl H. Book
Mr. Keith E. Buda
Ms Gail P Cargiulo

Michael and Shannon Carter
Joyce Chism
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Disalvo
Ms Teresa Falco
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Ray and Dorothy Gettelfinger
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