



Issue no. 32 – April 2023

Message from our Regional Minister

My Lord and my God, take from me everything that distances me from you.

My Lord and my God, give me everything that brings me closer to you.

My Lord and my God, detach me from myself to give my all to you.

St Nicholas of Flüe

For those who read the Catechism of the Catholic Church or follow Fr. Mike Schmitz' Catechism in a Year, you may have come across this writing in CCC#226. It is profoundly simple. It takes courage to give up things that distance ourselves from God. Often, we already know the things that bring us closer to God but do not have the courage to do them. We would like to be in control and do not like to be vulnerable. I encourage you to do an *examen* based on the three sentences above: write daily, if possible, all the things that distance you from God and those that bring you closer to God. Try to be as specific as possible, down to the graces you have received (e.g., the gift to be patient with my family, going to daily mass) and bad habits (e.g., being judgmental in my thoughts, covering up mistakes so not to be seen as wrong). The point is not to beat ourselves up, but to identify our strengths and shortcomings, to improve with gratitude, so that we can increase in self-knowledge, as this is grace. St. Francis and St. Clare were "experts" in this practice - they could notice one small daily habit that either distanced them or brought them closer to God, into the presence of God's love. We can see examples of this "expertise" in their writings or from those who wrote about them.

Here are the updates from the regional council:

1. As you are all aware, we are continuing with the National Fraternity the work of the previous regional and national councils to explore and discern the best regional structure that would fit the entire western region. We had a mini retreat on April 22. As George Guimond (our National Anglophone Vice Minister) has a serious medical condition, Lynda Black gracefully stepped in at the last-minute notice and gave an introduction, on behalf of the National Fraternity. Our heartfelt gratitude to Br. Gerry Clyne OFM and Fr. Manoj Xalxo, OFM for organizing the mini-retreat. The YouTube recording is available. Please watch the recording to help us with the discernment and pray for George. Thank you for your participation in the retreat.

2. Our regional council would like to express our condolences to the OFM friars of Canada as they are grieved by the loss of beloved Friar Louis Geelan, OFM. Please offer mass intentions and prayers for the repose of his soul and financial donation in his memory to Mt. St. Francis Retreat Centre in Cochrane. Our regional council has sent \$200 in his memory.

3. Watch for the upcoming events: Weekly Faith Formation, Zoom Drop-Ins, Novena of Our Lady of the Angels to celebrate the feast of Our Lady of the Angels, region-wide advertising of our order in September, and the Fine Arts Contest in the Fall.

4. We will have an in-person council meeting July 11-13 at Mt. St. Francis Retreat Centre, in Cochrane.

Please continue to pray for us, our council needs your prayers. We also offer our prayers for the fraternity members across the region, the sick, and the repose of the souls of our brothers and sisters.

Peace and all good,
Lanny

Message from our Spiritual Director



Jesus said to disciples caught up fighting the strong wind at the sea of Galilee *It is I, do not be afraid*. And since then, Jesus had proved His presence to His early disciples in the past and continues to prove His presence even today. Presence of Jesus is the antidote to fear. So, why do we fear when Jesus is here and near? Fear, anxiety and concerns about the unknown future are part of human life. There is no use trying to be superhuman. So just be human. What is of human nature will remain till the end of our life here on earth. Sometimes we are able to discipline our erroneous human nature which leads us to sin. At times we get succumbed to it, but through the grace of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, once again we are reconciled with God and each other and begin again a new life.

We (OLOTA) have entered the process of Discernment of Regional Options for Western Canada in the Secular Franciscan Order. We have started well with the short time together in ZOOM Discernment Mini Retreat and Prayer. It is just the beginning but if we are open to the Holy Spirit and allow the Spirit to work through us, there will be a greater end. So, where is the Spirit leading us to? Before taking our needs and petitions to anybody else, first take them to God in prayer. God has deposited love, joy, peace plus all kinds of blessings in our ATM account. Use without limit. The Pin Code is PRAYER. Pain is a sign that we are alive. Problem is a sign that we are strong. PRAYER is a sign that we are not alone.

There is risk involved in any new endeavors but risk is worth taking to find the hidden treasures. True discernment in prayer and contemplation, listening not only with our ears but with our eyes open to realities around us and with fraternal dialogue, will surely lead us to make decisions and choices that are SMART = **S**pecific, **M**anageable,

Achievable, Realistic, Time bound. As a universal Church we are in a synodal process pondering on the theme "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission." Documents from the continental stage echo strongly and speak about 'Listening Church and Co-responsibility.' Let us Listen with curiosity, speak with honesty and act with integrity - be synodal people in everything we speak and do.

Life is a journey, a journey leading to heaven. On this journey, we are not alone, we have the Risen Christ journeying with us. A beautiful example of this is the two disciples walking to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-35). Broken and frustrated with what happened to Jesus, their master, they take steps to go back to their village. Discouraged and sad as they were, a 'stranger' (Jesus) joins their journey, learns from them about their pain, listens to them and explains the Scriptures. Here we notice, Jesus does not walk ahead or behind them, but walks along, together with them, side by side. He does not get angry but is patient and kind with them explaining in detail the Scriptures. Walking together is the mark of Christ's disciples. If we want to walk fast, walk alone but if we want to walk far, walk together.

As we go through this discernment process, let us also take time to discern the true cords that bind us together. As Christians, Baptism is the cord that binds us together as brothers and sisters belonging to God's family. As Franciscans, the Holy Gospel of our Lord (Rule of life) and our profession (vows) are the cords that bind us together as brothers and sisters of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare, belonging to a Franciscan family. It is our relationship with each other built on love that binds us together. It is ultimately the Agape Love of God that binds us together in HIM.

Fr. Manoj Xalxo, OFM

Message from our Director of Formation

Remember to set aside some "Mary" time at the May Fraternity Meeting to honour Mary, the Mother of God. In their book, *Franciscan Virtues Through the Year*, the Members of the Confraternity of Penitents remind us that "Saint Francis had a tremendous devotion to the Blessed Mother, perhaps as a result of his devotion to his earthly mother who steadfastly showed him love and

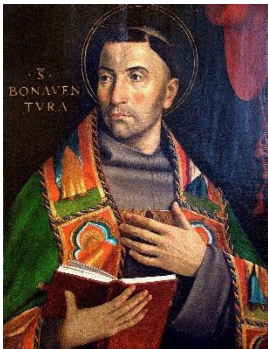
support. Francis knew the comfort of a mother's love and attention."

In his book, *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, Thomas of Celano states, "What gives us the greatest joy is that Francis appointed Mary the Advocate of the Order, and placed under her wings the sons to be left behind, that she might protect and cherish them to the end."

Secular Franciscans from St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity are going into St. Gregory the Great School in Blackfalds and Ecole Our Lady of the Rosary School in Sylvan Lake, Alberta to make Cord Rosaries with 125 grade four students during the month of May. The students will have the option of keeping the Rosaries or giving them as a gift to a loved one. What joy!

Send me an email and tell me what your Fraternity is doing to make May a "Mary" month in your community! catherineregionalofs@gmail.com

Peace and joy to all,
Catherine McNiff, ofs



*Open your eyes, then, alert
your spiritual ears, unseal
your lips, and apply your
heart, so that in all creatures
you may see, hear, praise,
love and serve, glorify
and honor your God...*

St Bonaventure

Save the Dates

-VESPERS and FRANCISCAN CROWN ROSARY
first Saturday of each month. Next on -

Saturday, **MAY 6th** at 7pm PT/8pm MT/9pm CT
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86486098310?pwd=R1VQZ3EybWMrG1PTTYxb1p1WllvQT09>
Meeting ID: 864 8609 8310 Passcode: 741246

-Next ZOOM DROP IN: May 17th
at 6pm PT/7pm MT/8pm CT for an hour or so.
Choose a *Break Out Room* for various topics:
**Finance, Formation, JPIC, Youth, Fraternity
Life, OLOTA Website>>>CLICK HERE TO SEE POSTER**
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82134049106?pwd=d2lXWVB5d3Z0M2U3Q3F5enhM3YxQT09>
Meeting ID: 821 3404 9106 Passcode: 13417

-FRANCISCAN VISION GLOBAL SUMMIT each
month of 2023 to celebrate 800 Years of the Rule
of 1223 and the Crib of Greccio. **NEXT SESSION: Sat.
MAY 27th** at 3am PT/4am MT/5am CT by
Br Gabriel Mathias, OFM on: *The Human and
affective life of Friars Minor in response to the
Rule of 1223 and to the call of Pope Francis today.*
Register to receive ZOOM link. Registration is free.
>>>CLICK HERE TO SEE POSTER and BROCHURE

-ALBERTA CHAPTER OF MATS
Saturday, **JUNE 17th** at Sacred Heart Parish Hall in
Red Deer. Theme: *Live & Love Your Rule*
Presenters: Paul Vanderham ofs, Deacon Thomas
O'Toole ofs, Deacon Roger Reilander ofs.
All professed members, candidates and inquirers
are welcome!

New BIBLE STUDY every Tuesday starting **MAY 9th** at 6:30-8 pm PT/7:30-9 MT/8:30-10 CT

Topic: ***God-the Mystery of the Trinity in the Bible*** with Dr Elizabeth Klein

ZOOM LINK: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81323887291?pwd=aXNsaWV5dVA0VDRydEJ2KzZaWjljQT09>

Meeting ID: 813 2388 7291 Passcode: 654163

What do we mean when we say "God"? Misconceptions about God abound, even among Christians, and these misconceptions can become obstacles in our relationship with God. Join Augustine Institute Assistant Professor Dr. Elizabeth Klein for a careful study of Scripture that will lead you to a deeper and clearer awareness of who God is, equipping you to share this truth with others. Starting in the Old Testament, Dr. Klein presents what God says about himself at various points in salvation history, and how he reveals to Israel that "the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). Moving to the New Testament, Dr. Klein shows how this one God then reveals himself as three. Along the way you'll get answers to questions such as, how can God be transcendent and personal? If God

is one, how can Jesus be God? What does it mean that “God is love” (1 John 4:8)? Why is the doctrine of the trinity the central mystery of our faith when the word “Trinity” never appears in the Bible?

Social Corner

BC Coastal Chapter of Mats



On Saturday March 18, 2023 BC Coastal held Chapter of Mats for the first time in person since 2019. Forty-five Seculars gathered together for a day of prayer, reflection and inquiry on the theme of ***Our Franciscan Journey Through Lent***. Following Morning Prayer, we spent time focusing on the Beatitudes (Sermon on the Mount) from a Franciscan point of view. We then reflected on why we are called to be Franciscans during the presentation: Why St. Francis? After our brown bag lunch and time to connect with others, we spent time discussing themes arising from

Fr. Casey Cole, OFM *The World Needs A Franciscan Renewal*. The discussions centered on St. Francis' incarnational world view and how it leads us to viewing the integrity of creation; peace at all costs and how we develop peace in our lives; radical egalitarian communities built on humility and how our individual fraternities reflect such; and finally, how our fraternities share what we have received. Our day concluded with praying the Stations of the Cross led by Friar Michael Perras, OFM (a YouTube presentation from Mount St Francis). The day was one of joy and strengthening of our fraternal bonds as we journeyed towards Easter!

Lynda Black, ofs

St Francis of Assisi Korean Fraternity of Surrey, BC New Council

From left to right

Minister: John the Baptist

Vice Minister: Gabriel Cho

Secretary: Peter Yoo

Treasure: Lena Cho

Director of Formation: Catharine Doho

JPIC Director: Paul Kim

Spiritual Assistant: Fr Joachim Yoon, OFM



St Pio Fraternity of Red Deer, AB New Candidates

On April 3, 2023 St. Pio Fraternity members of Red Deer witnessed two inquirers, Pat Rawlusk and Blaise MacSween, indicate their desire to further pursue a journey towards the life of a Secular Franciscan. Both candidates spoke authentically and the professed members once again were reminded of their own journey through orientation, inquiry and candidacy. All at St. Pio Fraternity will share in the joy and responsibility to support the new candidate's growth as human persons, as Christians and as Franciscans.

St. Pio of Pietrelcina Fraternity in Kamloops

Walking Stations of the Cross
with friends, followed by a
simple soup and bun at
St. Vincent de Paul
Store & Kitchen



[Click here >>>](#) [Mini Retreat with Br Gerry Clyne, OFM & Br Manoj Xalxo, OFM](#)
on *Discernment of Western Canada Region, April 22, 2023*

The March Session: Franciscan Vision Global Summit 2023

The March session of the Franciscan Vision Global Summit commenced with an inspirational hymn to the Holy Spirit sung by Franciscan Friars of Nairobi, Kenya. Ordained Maltese priest, Br. Noel Muscat, OFM, then presented ***The Spirit of the Rule of 1223: Minors Grace of work, the use of money and goods to promote care of the common home today.*** As secular Franciscans we were never required to grapple with strict guidelines for wealth and personal property. Those of us attending this talk needed to be just a little more attentive in order to grasp those segments of the discussion applicable to the secular life.

We were first reminded that Francis was in uncharted waters: he was introducing a new way of life. Before him, religious life was either hermitic or monastic. Francis desired to “Observe the gospel”. The Latin verb, *observare*, from which the word observe comes, means *to be a servant*. If Francis needed to truly “be a servant to the Holy Gospel”, neither way of life would suffice. So, when the Rule was incorporated into the Papal Bulla, it meant it was accepted by the church and recommended as a way of life. Knowing the Rule is therefore, simply put, not enough. The Spirit of the Rule must be understood in order to live it.

The formation of the Rule took 14 years. During this time, the brothers were an itinerant fraternity; moving from place to place preaching the gospel. The object of their lives was not to gain money or hoard riches. Bartering was common in the time of Francis. So, Francis saw the act of receiving money or goods as “amassing wealth”. The brothers were prohibited from doing this. Others received money on their behalf and gave them what they needed. Exceptions were made for sick brothers and for essentials like clothing and books for prayer. The brothers, however were not expected to rely on others simply giving them what they needed. They were allowed to beg for alms but only as a last resort when their work did not net them sufficient for their essential needs. Francis saw work as a grace given by the Lord. It was essential to avoid idleness, which he felt helped to extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion in a soul. What that meant was that the brothers were not expected to work to the point where they forgot to pray or had no time for prayer. And this “work” meant manual work. Those who did spiritual work or administrative work were not exempt from doing manual work. Their work created good things; and creating good things meant participating in God’s work. As God is the giver of all that is good.

In the Canticle of the Sun, Francis references that all creatures serve, know and obey their creator. Like all creatures, Jesus served, knew and obeyed the Father. When we live like Christ, we too serve and obey the Father and come to know him through our service, work and prayer. Much of the world has changed considerably; for example, money is now, more or less, solely used for buying/selling goods and services; and begging now occurs on “Go Fund Me” pages on the internet. Yet still, we can find ways to live the Spirit of the Rule. Our lives must be “prophetic voices” raised to promote social justice and the care of our common home.

The Brothers of Madagascar sang a closing hymn to honour St Francis. Br Noel Muscat can be found at Spirit & Life www.franciscanstudies.com

Marlene Welch, ofs