



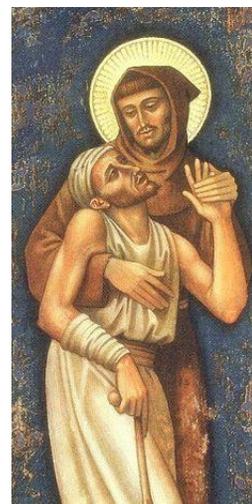
Issue no. 34 – June 2023

Message from our Regional Minister

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

These past few days, I was awakened by the concept of spiritual blind spots. We use the term “check the blind spots” when we want to change lanes while driving. We check the rear view and side mirrors and look at the side of the car. After many years, I finally have the courage to ask myself: what are my spiritual blind spots? I go to church everyday; I am active at my parish, I have good relationships with my family and friends, well... overall, I think I am a pretty good person. Wait! I am told that everyone, except Jesus and Mary, is a sinner. So... how do I reconcile the ideas of “I am a pretty good person” and “I am a sinner”? The fact that it took some time for me to answer this question, tells me that I have spiritual blind spots: I could not recognize my own weaknesses right away. Then I looked back and finally noticed one of my own spiritual blind spots: I myself often interrupt other people in the middle of a dialogue or when I am attacked. I want to be heard. I need to prove that I am right. I defend my ideas or even go as far as making a statement that “This is what I heard from the Holy Spirit” as a part of my defense. My humility just disappears. It is not a comforting thought to realize all of these, and yet, as I brought these thoughts to prayer, I felt God's love in noticing my own weaknesses. God shows me the “narrow way” to follow. I know now that I do not need to prove myself right in front of others or even in front of God for God knows me very well. I do not need to defend myself in front of others as being defensive is one of the signs that I do not trust God completely. God does not ask me to appear right or strong in front of others but He asks me to simply trust him and be faithful to him.

With this sharing, I would like to invite you to *visit* some of your spiritual blindness be honest with God in your prayer.



Praise and bless
my Lord,
and give Him
thanks, and
serve Him
with great
humility.
Saint Francis

Moving on to another topic: when I visited Saints Louis and Zellie Martin Fraternity in March, I heard a wonderful idea from one of the fraternity members, Francis Don Tesalona. He suggested that the regional council start a region-wide campaign to let our local parishioners and diocese know about the existence of our order. Colleen Finlon and Marlene Welch have put together some materials to help you promote our existence - of course, you are welcome to use your own materials. The suggested time frame would be September and October. Here are some ideas of activities to organize during that time-frame.

- Weekly 1hr adoration for five weeks September 1, 7, 14, 21, 28 and include the readings of Seasons of Creation. If a priest is available, please include a benediction as well. Or, depending on the member's preference, other options are ministry to the poor, shoreline clean-up, and nature walks.

- Novena of St. Francis (Sep 25 - Oct 3) either by zoom or in-person at the parish; adoration can be incorporated.

- Organize Transitus of St. Francis as a parish event on October 3. I would encourage your fraternity to start planning soon with your parish priest.

Please pray for the repose of the souls of *Barbara Wallace* (St. Francis, Prince George, BC) and *Elaine Nadeau* (St. Clare, Pickardville, AB). Also, please pray for the speedy recovery of *George Guimond*, our National VM Anglophone, as he is being admitted to the hospital.

Peace and all good,
Lanny

[Link to SEASON OF CARING FOR CREATION](#)

[Link to TRANSITUS](#)

[Link to NOVENA TO SAINT FRANCIS](#)

Message from our Spiritual Director

Stay with us...for we have a room!

It has been my extreme joy to meet the Secular Franciscans of Saskatoon, Kelowna, Kamloops and Salmon Arm, recently. As I was planning my pastoral visits to these places, I made an open suggestion to respective ministers, saying it would be good for me if the Secular Franciscans could offer a place to lay my head in their homes, rather than me staying in a priest's rectory or in a hotel during my visits. I can't believe the response I received from my brothers and sisters of St. Francis, "Yes, we will be glad to have you stay with us, we have a room in the basement if it's fine with you." I said I will grab the offer. I am extremely touched by the openness and generosity of Secular Franciscans. Pastoral visits have helped me to make a personal connection with brothers and sisters. It has given me a sense of what your family is made up with. Glad to have spent time, stayed with your families and taken part of the lifestyle you live.

Not to compare my experience with that of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus who invited Jesus to stay with them; "Stay with us, Lord, for it is almost evening" (Lk 24:29). This was the humble invitation that the two disciples journeying to Emmaus on the evening of the day of the resurrection made to the stranger who had

accompanied them on their journey. And we know the rest of the story...in the 'breaking of the bread' they recognized Jesus their Lord and Master. Imagine, if they did not invite Jesus to stay with them, what would they have missed?

I am glad to have made the suggestion or invited myself to stay in your home with your family. If I did not, then I would have missed the onetime opportunity to know you. God works in a mysterious way. Truly, we can encounter Him and His love in each other. I came to you as a stranger and you did not have any hesitation to open the door of your dwelling and share your food with me. This opportunity provided me to come to know you better than what I knew of you. I believe it's the same with you. It's not only about those families who hosted me but with other members in these fraternities who opened their hearts to make me feel one and at home among them. I believe it to be genuine and part of your vocation and you did not do that just for me. It is who you are by your calling, isn't it?

St. Francis of Assisi, like the two disciples, invited Jesus in the leper to stay with him and the leper became a member of his new family. There are many lepers in our midst that need to be invited and welcomed into our midst. I saw so much love and likeness that you have for St. Francis of Assisi. I am convinced that each of you, young or old, are trying your best to be a good follower of him. Reality can't be denied that vocations have declined, members are aging and no new blood to carry on the Franciscan charism in some of the fraternities. My only encouragement is, and always will be, 'do your part and leave the rest to God...do the best you can, but do your part...' Don't be discouraged by lack of vocations or by aging but live in hope and sustain your Franciscan vocation with faithfulness to 'observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord.' Let us be willing to open the room of our hearts for Jesus and His Gospel. And like the two disciples, let us invite Jesus to stay with us; stay in our life and in our home. When we have Jesus our Lord staying with us, we can make a difference around us. Come Lord Jesus and stay with us!

Friar Manoj

Message from our Director of Formation

First of all, I hope you all have a joy-filled summer enjoying the richness of God's creation all around you and time to spend time with family and friends. Sometimes Secular Franciscans ask "What is your fraternity reading for ongoing formation?" It is a great way to share something transformative with our Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters. At the moment I am reading "Surrounded by Love - Seven teachings from Saint Francis" by Murray Bodo, OFM. On page 47, the writer refers to the Parable of the Prodigal Son and on page 50, he reminds us what we as Secular Franciscans are called to do. He says "That is the Franciscan challenge in our own time: contemplative seeing, affective response, practical help and sustained assistance as the way of restoring God's house which is falling into ruins. It is Jesus's own prescription for learning to love."

At Saint Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity in September 2023, we will be reading "The Way of Beatitude - Living Radical Hope in a World of Division and Despair" by Casey Cole, OFM. David Bouchard - Vice Minister for Southern Alberta tells me that it is a "must read" book with discussion questions at the end of each chapter. I am a visual person - even the cover looks inviting! Be sure to let me know if there is a book that transforms you over the summer and remember what today's Gospel reading says "Even the hairs of your head are numbered" which reminds us that God loves us that much, wow!

Peace and Joy, Catherine McNiff, ofs

Save the Dates

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

Saturday, **JULY 1st** at 7pm PT/8pm MT/9pm CT
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86486098310?pwd=R1VOZ3EvdWMrG1PTTYxb1p1WllvQT09>
Meeting ID: 864 8609 8310 Passcode: 741246

-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. **JULY 29th** at 3am PT/4am MT/5am CT by **Br Joseph Dolphy Pias, OFM Cap** on: *Fidelity to the Gospel of Lord Jesus Christ and His Church in the Rule of 1223 in the pontificate of Pope Francis*
Register to receive ZOOM link. Registration is free. >>>[CLICK HERE TO SEE POSTER](#) and [BROCHURE](#)

-INTERIOR BC FRANCISCAN PICNIC
Saturday, **AUGUST 12TH** 10:30 am at Carmel of St Joseph in Armstrong, BC. *San Damiano Fraternity* is happy to invite Secular Franciscans, families and friends to our annual picnic again this summer.
HOLY MASS at 11 am with *Fr Tony Acherman* as Celebrant. A potluck picnic-lunch and fellowship will follow as we celebrate the Feast of St. Clare and close with prayers.

NOVENA for **THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS OF THE PORTIUNCULA** via zoom
JULY 25th to AUG 2nd at 7 pm BC/8 pm AB/9pm MB

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86486098310?pwd=R1VOZ3EvdWMrG1PTTYxb1p1WllvQT09>

Meeting ID: 864 8609 8310 Passcode: 741246

>>>[CLICK HERE FOR EXCERPTS ON THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS](#)

BIBLE STUDY every Tuesday from **MAY 9th** to **JULY 4th** 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.

Social Corner



Br Manoj Xalxo, OFM visits St Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity in Saskatoon, SK on May 23, 2023.

Br Manoj visits San Damiano Fraternity & newly received candidate in Salmon Arm, BC on June 13, 2023.



Barbecue and fraternal visit with Br Manoj Xalxo, OMF and Little Flowers of St Francis Fraternity in Kelowna, BC in June 2023. Regional Vice Minister Anna O'Hagan, ofs visited as well.

BC Coastal Retreat with Sr Maria Serra Garcia, FSE at Westminster Abbey in Mission, June 2023.



St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity in Winnipeg, Manitoba Renewal of Profession June 18, 2023.

Fifty-eight OFS members from Alberta gathered in Red Deer on June 17 for the Annual Chapter. The theme was *Live and Love Your Rule* with Deacon Roger Reilander, Deacon Dr. Thomas O'Toole & Paul Vanderham. All fraternities in Alberta were represented.



The May Session: Franciscan Vision Global Summit 2023

“The Human and Affective Life of Friars Minor in Response to The Rule of 1223 and to the Call of Pope Francis” was the topic of the May session of the Franciscan Vision Global Summit. After participants had been warmly welcomed by Br. Arokiam John, the novices of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (India) called upon the Holy Spirit in song. Then, Fr Gabriel Mathias, a Franciscan for 55 years and priest for 45 of those, tackled the somewhat obscure challenges of life within an institutional framework that has changed substantially since the death of Francis. As a specialist in psychology, he was able to deftly explain the underlying significance of Francis’ guidelines for his brothers in the rule.

He noted that Francis was a “down to earth” and a charitable man who always made concessions for others as he respected their differences. As the early band of brothers were itinerant, he was also acutely aware of the need to take into account the effects that different places, climate, topography etc. may have on the brothers. This compassionate attitude is also seen in Pope Francis as he calls for a culture of mercy.... “Be merciful as your father is merciful!” In the church today, there is great need for us to extend mercy as we contemplate the scandals of pedophilia and other abuses associated with priests and other religious. Placing the root cause of such behaviour on “Intimacy Deficits” Fr Gabriel noted that Francis understood that human intimacy was important, quoting “The Lord gave me brothers and sisters.” As a result, Francis stressed the importance of relationship; of brotherhood and of fraternal holiness. The behaviour of the brothers should demonstrate that they belonged to the same family. Fr. Gabriel noted that Pope Francis has acknowledged the contribution of St Francis.

Looking at the Ethics of the Life of the Friars, we see that Francis examined himself and the brothers daily with respect to discipline and temptation such as lust. Francis understood the limitations of human beings and in fact devoted an entire chapter of the Rule to relationships between man and woman and on establishing boundaries. Fr Gabriel noted that personal boundaries can be broken by the following:

- 1) Touch
- 2) Sexualised behaviour such as conversations, jokes etc.
- 3) Misuse of Power (when there is a difference between those who minister and the vulnerable who are served)

He noted that opportunities for the breach of personal boundaries were limited by cloisters but this is of lesser significance in today’s world. Lamenting that a lack of interpersonal relationship is one of the key challenges faced by friars today, as fraternal relationships continue to shrivel under the many pressures of today’s fast paced world. Fr Gabriel cautioned against the appearance of crossing boundaries - as can happen when taking group photos.

As seculars, though we are not faced with the same daily challenges, we are certainly not immune to falling prey to scandal because of inappropriate or seemingly inappropriate behaviour. May the Holy Spirit guide us to strengthen our fraternal bonds thereby safeguarding our brothers and sisters from loneliness and isolation.

Prepared by Marlene Welch, ofs