



Issue no. 18 – January 2022

Message from our Regional Minister

Welcome 2022... Happy New Year Secular Franciscan Brothers and Sisters: May God enrich you with holier, happier, and healthier days ahead.

Looking back, the fraternities of Western Canada are survivors, overcoming the many challenges of the pandemic, sustaining devotions, prayer and faithful service. Hope has been built like a fortress wall. Praise God for his goodness.

Today is a new day. Let us rejoice and be glad (cf. Psalm 118.24). OLOTA regional council, in its planning for regional elections received guidance from the National Fraternity to postpone our chapter of elections which had been scheduled in the coming month of May. The national commission on restructuring has produced a draft report, which has been made available to all fraternities. The distribution of the draft report is part of the commission's consultation process which will bring the document to the National Chapter of Elections in July for discernment and decision. Your voice has been heard and will again be heard through OLOTA fraternity providing the national fraternity with our feedback by February.

As a minister of OLOTA, my heart was so looking forward to gathering together through our regional chapter of elections in May: to being with you in prayer, at mass, spiritual enrichment, and in social fun.

In the meantime, regional vice ministers are encouraged to plan chapter of mats within their areas, drawing fraternities together in prayer and spiritual reflection. Secular Franciscans are overcomers!

OLOTA regional fraternity prepares for the transition. To this end, there is a regional council spring meeting planned for early May to consider a number of issues. Please keep your regional council members in prayer.

Thank you to all fraternities that have submitted the census/contribution documents for the year 2021. The data will be important for our regional and the national fraternities as the civil boundaries are considered for realignment. If your fraternity have not yet completed the forms, may I invite you to do so as quickly as possible.

As companions on the journey, may the Holy Spirit continue to guide us with his wisdom, binding all secular Franciscan in love and in unity.

Let us stretch our wings in grace, glorifying God, pleasing God, knowing that all things are possible with

God. Let us keep God first in all our endeavors, and commit all to him for only he has the perfect plan for the family of Secular Franciscans.

In service,
Linda Adams, ofs

Upcoming Events

Sat., Feb 5 and Mar 5, 2022 at 6pm BC/7pm AB/8pm MB Vespers and Crown Rosary

Join us at ZOOM:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86486098310?pwd=R1VOZ3EvdWMraG1PTTYxb1p1WllvQT09>

Meeting ID: 864 8609 8310

Passcode: 741246

Or, call any of the following numbers from any phone and enter the meeting ID and passcode.

AB: 587 328 1099 BC: 778 907 2071 MB: 204 272 7920

When using telephone, press *6 to mute/unmute and press *9 to raise hand.

Sat., Mar 19, 2022 at 11pm BC / 12pm AB / 1pm MB: BC Coastal Chapter of Mats

Join us at ZOOM:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89055088382?pwd=N2VLMjRldTNGMTVmT29xUHRtV3ZFUT09>

Meeting ID: 890 5508 8382

Passcode: 379229

Or, call any of the following numbers from any phone and enter the meeting ID and passcode.

AB: 587 328 1099 BC: 778 907 2071 MB: 204 272 7920

When using telephone, press *6 to mute/unmute and press *9 to raise hand.

FINE ARTS & POSTER CONTEST, 2022

Calling all young artists, poets, and writers between the ages of 5 & 16 years!

Plans are already underway for the 6th Annual Franciscan Fine Arts & Poster Contest.

This year's theme, registration forms and information will be sent to all ministers of fraternities for distribution to friends & families in the OLOTA region by mid-February, 2022. Many thanks – it is a joy to see how much thought and love goes into every entry.

– Catherine McNiff, ofs

Message from our Director of Youth

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL THE FRATERNITIES IN THE OLOTA REGION

Did you know that Lydia from Little Portion Fraternity, Victoria, BC has a group of 14 kids from Grades 5 to 10 who are working to make our world a better place? During 2021 they did a Beach Clean-Up, Prayed the Rosary outside and had a Nature Walk in one of Victoria's spectacular parks. They also have a senior who is a "Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation" powerhouse working with them! His name is Andrew Conradi. Many of you will know Andrew from his years of tireless work in this area and his involvement with the Laudato Ci Movement. They also raised \$300 and bought a cow for a needy family from CHALICE - the International Aid organization - supported the elderly at the local hospital and donated to "Cool Aid" - a dental program for the homeless in Victoria.

Maritza from St. Mary's Fraternity, Calgary, Alberta and Friar Dan Gurnick, OFM are busy planning a 24-hour

Young Adult Retreat on February 26 and 27, 2022 at Mount Saint Francis Retreat Centre in Cochrane. Posters with info will be coming to all fraternities in the OLOTA region soon.

As for me? I am still in the "Franciscan Apron, Cap and Tote Bag" business and sales in 2021 supported donations to Covenant House for homeless youth, Vancouver, BC, a Nutritious Lunch Program for children in Africa thru' CHALICE and Catholic Missions in Canada to bring God's word and sacraments to our aboriginal brothers and sisters in the North.

I have also been writing a Franciscan Youth Page on the OLOTA web site every season and include a story for kids about Ritz, the Mount Saint Francis Friary tabby cat with attitude!

As they say in Ireland "May all your troubles be little ones."

Wishing all of you peace and joy
from snowy Sylvan Lake, Alberta,
Catherine McNiff, ofs

The Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano

Chapter XVI CONCERNING THEIR STAY IN RIVO TORTO AND ABOUT SAFEGUARDING POVERTY

⁴² Blessed Francis gathered with the others in a place called Rivo Torto near the city of Assisi.^a In this place there was an abandoned hut. Under its cover lived these despisers of great and beautiful houses, protecting themselves from the torrents of rain. As the saint said, "It is easier to get to heaven from a hut than from a palace."^b All his sons and brothers were living in that same place with the blessed Father, *with great labor*^{2 Cor 11:27}, and lacking everything. Often, they were deprived of the comfort of bread, content with turnips they begged in their need here and there on the plain of Assisi. The place in which they were staying was so narrow that they could barely sit or sleep in it.

Yet there was no complaining about this, no grumbling;

but with peaceful heart, the soul filled with joy preserved the virtue of patience^c

Saint Francis used to engage carefully in a daily, or rather, constant examination of himself and his followers. Allowing nothing dangerous to remain in them, he drove from their hearts any negligence. Unbending in his discipline, he *was watchful of his guard*^{Is 21:8} at every hour. For if, as happens, any temptation of the flesh struck him, he would immerse himself in a ditch filled in winter with ice, remaining in it until every seduction of the flesh went away. The others avidly followed his example of mortifying the flesh.^d

⁴³ He taught them to mortify not only vices and to check the promptings of the flesh, but also to check the external senses, through which death enters the soul. At that time, the emperor Otto passed through that area, traveling in great pomp and circumstance to receive the crown of an earthly empire. The most holy father and his followers were staying in that small hut next to the very parade route. He did not go outside to look and did not allow the others to do so, except for one who, without wavering, proclaimed to the emperor that his glory would be short-lived.^e The glorious holy one, living within himself and walking in *the breadth of his heart*,^{Ps 119:45 [Vulgate, Ps 118:45]} prepared in himself a worthy *dwelling place of God*.^{Eph 2:22c} That is why the uproar outside did not seize his ears, nor could any cry intrude, interrupting the great enterprise he had in hand. Apostolic authority resided in him; so, he altogether refused to flatter kings and princes.

^a Rivo Torto, a crooked, snake-like stream below the road from Assisi to Panzo, flows down into the Umbrian Valley not far from San Damiano.

^b A similar saying is attributed to "a certain hermit" by Peter Cantor (+1197): "*Melius et tutius prosilitur in caelum de turgurio quam de palatio* [It is better and safer to proceed into heaven from a simple hut than from a palace]" Cf. Peter Cantor, *Verbum abbreviatum* 86.

^c These words are taken from the hymn from the Common of Several Martyrs, *Sanctorum Meritis: Non murmur resonat, non querimonia/Sed corde tacito, mens bene conscia/Conservat patientiam* [No grumbling resounds, no complaint/But with silent heart, the mind well attuned/Preserves patience].

^d The mortification of the flesh is a prominent theme throughout medieval hagiography and Thomas's descriptions of these practices of Francis are not unlike those described by *Vita prima s. Bernardi* III or recommended by Bernard himself, *On Consideration* IV 6, 21.

^e The emperor Otto IV (1198-1218) passed through the duchy of Spoleto at the end of September 1209, but the event related here probably took place in 1210 during another of Otto's passages. In Roman triumphal processions, a slave would whisper into a general's ear admonishing him that the glory of his triumph would be brief. Francis's refusal to flatter the emperor is reminiscent of Saint Martin of Tours: "It is almost a miracle that a bishop should not have succumbed to the temptation of flattering an emperor." Cf. Sulpicius Severus, *The Life of Martin* 20.

⁴⁴ He always strove for holy simplicity, refusing to allow the narrow place to restrict *the breadth of his heart*. ^{Ps 119:45 [Vulgate, Ps 118:45]} For this reason, he would write the names of the brothers on the beams of that little house so that each would know his place when he wished to pray or rest, and the confines of the place would not disturb the silence of the spirit. One day while they were staying there, a man came leading an ass to the little shelter where the man of God and his companions were staying. To avoid being sent away, the man urged the ass to enter by saying, "Get inside, for we shall do well for this place!" When the holy Francis heard this statement, he took it seriously, since he knew the man's intention: the man thought that the brothers wanted to stay there to expand the place by *joining house to house*. ^{Is 5:8} Immediately Saint Francis left the place, abandoning it because of what the peasant had said. He moved to another place, not far away, which was called "Portiuncula," where, as told above, he had repaired the church of Saint Mary a long time before. He wanted *to own nothing* so that he could *possess everything* ^{2 Cor 6:10} more fully in the Lord.

Social Corner

Message from St. Pio, Red Deer, AB



St Pio Fraternity held their Council Election on January 8, 2022, at St Mary's Church in Red Deer amid all kinds of Covid protocols. We were thankful that almost all our professed members were able to attend in person as it has been so long since we've done that. However, with the omicron virus seemingly lurking everywhere, some of our members attended via ZOOM. Those on ZOOM were not able to vote as per the election rules, but they were able to participate in the acceptance, or not, of their nominations. Plus, it was great for the rest of us to be able to see their faces!

Ron Semenoff, as our Regional Minister, traveled from Calgary to preside at the election and confirm the elected. His wonderful wife, Marie, came along with him. Our fraternity always enjoys their visits. David Bouchard, our Spiritual Assistant, was also there as a witness.

Let me introduce you to the new St Pio Fraternity Council from Red Deer....

Minister: Irene Manning, Vice-Minister: Nelly Brillantes, Secretary: Lynne McLoughlin, Treasurer: Theresa Hopper, Director of Formation: Joyce Reilander.

Message from St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Saskatoon, SK

Finding the Pot of Gold

I once read "What we are is God's gift to us. What we become is our gift to God" (*Eleanor Powell*). A gift we receive in the secular world often comes in a box wrap in colored paper with a beautiful colored ribbon. Inside that box is special gift chosen just for us from a special friend. When that special friend is God, the gift is even more special as it is given more richly in love than gifts we receive from anyone else.

Jesus, the Son of God, is the ultimate gift given to us. When he was on the cross, we were on his mind. The love of Jesus has lifted me up and taught me so much. Each day, I think of where I would be if Jesus had not entered into my life. My faith and the love of the Trinity is my pot of gold.

Christ asks us to live the gospel each and every day. Pope Francis said Jesus did not tell his disciples to share the Gospel only when it is convenient for them and when they have time. As Jesus also sends us to live the gospel, we are sent to everyone around us. There is no border or limit.

Many of us are looking for a loving home for our hearts, which can only be found in God the Father and his Son Jesus. As we rest our hearts in him, we sin and make mistakes. What a comfort it is to find that God always forgives us through the sacrament of reconciliation. When he forgives and I accept his forgiveness, I feel that God's heart and my heart become one.

Recently, rather than spending time of thinking of "the good old days", I have been inspired to live "the good present days". I have more time for prayers and reflecting. Looking back of the days when I was working, the visits with Jesus in prayers were always short, like meeting someone for an afternoon coffee break. Now, I can spend long time in prayers like having a sumptuous dinner and enlightening conversation with a very dear friend.

- Yvonne Armstrong, ofs