



Issue Number 64

Merry Christmas 2025

From our REGIONAL MINISTER

Dear Franciscan Sisters and Brothers,

On behalf of the regional council, I would like to express my deep gratitude to each one of you and your fraternity members for continually sharing the charism of Franciscan spirituality with your own family, fraternity, parish, and our society at large. Also, your financial contribution to the regional, national, and international councils are greatly appreciated; the contributions allow the councils at different levels to serve you. A significant amount from what we have will be used at the upcoming Regional Chapter of Elections and we still have enough for the next council to begin their service. We are also grateful for the outreach initiatives of some local fraternities to help or work together with other fraternities and/or help members in isolated areas stay connected. I also have deep gratitude for those who served and are serving as local fraternity council members.

Your roles are beyond the you help the fraternity to be calling, as outlined in our Rule I also would like to thank this year: thank you for your the order. Whether your or not, your professions have were professed before you - it fraternities are forever presence. Finally, a million as they are the heart of our now underway for our July 2-5, 2026 in Kelowna, BC. plan to arrive on Thursday leave after lunch on July 5. fraternities will follow in The highlights of this year are previous issues of OLOTA the many individuals who activities:



*Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign.
Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son and
his name shall be called Emmanuel. Is 7:14*

technical tasks you are doing - faithful to the Franciscan and the General Constitution. those who were professed love to your fraternity and to fraternity members realize it affirmed those of us who means a lot to all of us. Our transformed because of your thanks for all of your prayers ministry! Preparations are regional Chapter of Elections, Please save the dates and July 2 between 3-7pm and Formal letter of invitation to January.

(some details are in the Messenger) - big thank you to were involved in the following

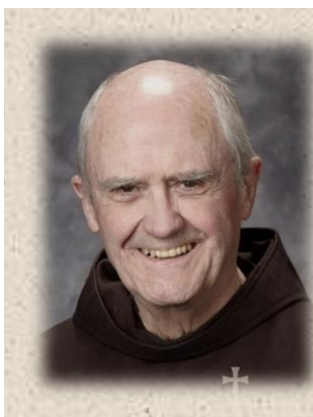
- Formation initiatives by Catherine McNiff to reach out to inquirers who are too far from the nearest fraternities.
- Winter Young Adult Retreats in January, OLOTA sent stipends to some participants with financial difficulties
- Council Elections at the following fraternities: St. Berard (Sherwood Park, AB), St. Agnes (Coquitlam, BC), St. Clare (Coquitlam, BC), Little Flowers (Kelowna, BC), St. Anthony's (Winnipeg, MB), Little Portion (Victoria, BC), St. Clare (Chilliwack, BC), and St. Pio (Delta, BC), St. Louis and Zelig Martin (Edmonton),

and St. Anthony of Padua (Richmond, BC). Thank you to those who are willing to be nominated and/or elected as council members.

- Our second annual Festival of Tents at Our Lady of Victory Camp in Lacombe County, AB. Many thanks to the organizers, friars, cooks, MCs, religious sisters, and speakers. OLOTA sent stipends for a participant from each province.
- Zoom gatherings by communication team (Colleen Finlon and Marlene Welch): Novena to Our Lady of the Angels, Novena to St. Francis, and monthly vespers and crown rosary and Franciscan Intellectual Tradition book club.
- Monthly newsletter and OLOTA website updates (Colleen Finlon). Thank you for your submissions and positive feedback!
- Technical support for Formator's Courses at the National level and at Trillium Region and the Spiritual Assistant Course.
- Extensive consultation organized by the Restructuring Committee; Recommendation to the regional fraternity (which include all local fraternities from Manitoba to Vancouver Island) regarding discerning the regional options.
- The National Chapter of Elections at the end of June. From our region, Jewel Jasmins (St. Pio, Delta, BC) was reelected as the National Minister, David Bouchard (St. Maximillian Kolbe, Red Deer, AB) became the Anglophone Vice Minister, and Heather Thompson (St. Clare, Coquitlam, BC) became the National Secretary.
- Some fraternity members from Alberta helped with the Summer BBQ at Mt. St. Francis in Cochrane.
- Regional Council in-person meeting in August: council reports were presented and we discussed the Annual Reports submitted by local fraternities and how we can help them.

As for myself, I helped with the Chapter of Mats in BC, went to the Chapter of Mats in Alberta and visited Immaculate Conception (Winnipeg), Little Portion (Victoria), St. Anthony's (Winnipeg), St. Anthony of Padua (Richmond), St. Clare (Chilliwack), and St. Elizabeth of Hungary (Edmonton), St. Elizabeth of Hungary (Saskatoon), St. Francis Korean Fraternity (Vancouver) and St. Pio (Delta). Also, I am helping St. Clare (Pickardville) as they are waiting for a friar to be assigned as their spiritual assistant. My experiences with the fraternities and attending professions at different fraternities have been the *crème de la crème* of my duties as a regional minister - very joyful and uplifting, indeed. I have learned a thing or two as I presided elections, thank you for your warm fraternal spirit and for being patient with me. Let us be faithful to the Gospel, Rule, General Constitution, and our statutes, so that when the Lord sends us new members, we are spiritually ready to nourish them. May you have a blessed Christmas and a grace-filled New Year.

Your servant, Lanny



Please pray for the repose of the soul of our beloved **Fr. Kevin Lynch, OFM**, who died this morning on December 19, 2025 at the age of 87. Fr. Kevin's kindness in ministry and Franciscan heart meant a lot to many in the Franciscan family and beyond.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen



From our REGIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT

Incarnation is God's Absolute Love & Gift to Humanity: GK Chesterton rightly said, *Whatever else is true of man, man is not what he was meant to be.* God's dream for us is completely different from ours. God created us by his love, in love, to love and for love. God created us to be good. He did not intend human beings to be evil. God did not create human beings to be an agent of death, destruction and darkness in the world. God's dream for us seems to be destroyed by non-other than ourselves. Human nature got tainted with sin and it resulted in all our sufferings. And yet, God did not give up on humans.

St. Augustin summarized the content of Christmas and said *the Son of God became the Son of man so that the sons of men could become the sons of God.* So great is God's love for us that He became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with Him. God willed the Incarnation as a free gift for the perfection of the human person and all of creation, not simply as a response to sin. In the incarnation, God emptied Himself, taking on the human form so that He might regain the lost paradise for all of us.

The Christmas love, this gift of God's love to us, comes wrapped in silence. Jesus was not born in the splendour of the day but in the silence of the night. God is a great lover of silence. Silence is the great revelation: it reveals God to us; it also reveals us to ourselves. Usually when we look for God, we look the other way, towards the sky. Incarnation is God's movement downward. Incarnation is God coming down, love coming down from heaven to create love. In order to find and encounter God, we need to look within ourselves as we are created in the image and likeness of his Son. Christmas celebrates God's entry into our world as the break of a new day, a light shining in the darkness. Christmas challenges us to recognize and receive Jesus as our light. Like Jesus, we are then to be light amid darkness, rays of hope amid despair. Celebrating this love at Christmas should inspire and induce us to live the Gospel.

Alexander Pope, a British poet said, *What does it profit me if Jesus is born in thousands of cribs all over the world and he is not born in my heart?* We need to give Jesus the gift of ourselves and he needs to be born in our hearts. The joy of Christmas is not for a day or a season. It is an eternal joy, a joy that no one can take from us because it is the joy of Jesus Christ himself made present in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. Let us take God's love from the manger and share it with the people at home, with people in your offices and with the people in the world.

Br. Manoj Xalxo, OFM



From our REGIONAL DIRECTOR of FORMATION

Overview of The Incarnation, Dr. Google and Sister Ilia Delio, O.S.F: When I visit Ireland, I am surprised that most people check in with 'Dr. Google' on their devices to confirm facts or ideas so when I write this piece I too, check in with 'Dr. Google' and confirm the facts with writings by Sister Ilia Delio, O.F.S. 'Dr. Google' tells us "The Incarnation is the Christian belief that Jesus is both fully divine and fully human, meaning God took on human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. This is often described as the Son of God being "made flesh" by his conception by the Virgin Mary via the Holy Spirit. It is a central tenet of Christianity, affirming that Jesus was both fully God and fully man."

In her book *A Franciscan View of Creation*, Sister Delio brings us insights from the Franciscan tradition on the meaning of creation and the relationship of humans to creation when she says "Francis's love of nature grows out of a deep theological conviction that God is truly present to us in the Incarnation. The intimate link between creation and Incarnation is what marks the distinctively positive view of creation in the Franciscan tradition." 'Dr. Google' tells us that a primary purpose of the Incarnation is for God to become human so that humanity

could be saved from sin. It is through Jesus's life as both God and man that he is considered the path to redemption for believers.

The Franciscan view of the Incarnation asserts that the Incarnation is God's original "Plan A" for creation, predestined from all eternity and independent of human sin. This position, championed by medieval theologian *Blessed John Duns Scotus*, emphasizes God's absolute love and the Primacy of Christ. Scotus says "No Christ, no universe. In other words, the universe is dependent on Christ, not Christ on the universe." For Franciscans, Christ is not a "Plan B" or an afterthought to fix humanity's fall into sin. Instead, the Incarnation - God becoming human - is the reason the universe is created in the first place. All of creation is orientated toward Christ as its intended centre and culmination. The primary motive is God's infinite love and desire for complete communion with humanity. God desires to share his life and love with creation in the most intimate way possible - by uniting the divine nature with human nature in the person of Jesus.

St. Francis of Assisi profoundly emphasizes the humility and poverty of God in the Incarnation, dramatically illustrating it by creating the first Christmas creche or nativity scene. This view stresses that God is intimately present in the ordinary, everyday world, not a distant or detached God. This theology fosters a highly positive view of humanity, seeing every person as created in the image and likeness of the predestined Christ, who is the model for all existence. The Franciscan view of the Incarnation centres on the idea that God's desire for intimate, loving union with creation is a more fundamental reason for Christ's coming than the need for atonement for sin.

Catherine McNiff, ofs

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Hebrews 10: 24-25

COMING UP SOON!

2026 Winter Young Adult Retreat (18-35)

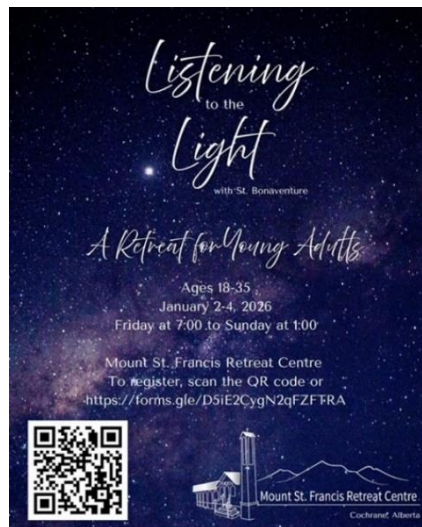
Mount St Francis Retreat Center in Cochrane, AB

"Listening in the Spirit Conversations" based on the writing of St Bonaventure

Friday January 2nd to Sunday 4th. Cost: \$230

For more information and to register please contact Maritza Chouza at

maritzachouza@gmail.com



A new **WhatsApp** group called ***Our Lady of the Angels*** is being formed to pray daily together for vocations. We'd love to hear your thoughts: Are you interested in joining?

- Early morning prayer seems best: 5:00 AM (BC), 6:00 AM (AB), 7:00 AM (MT/SK).
- What prayers should we include?
- Do you know anyone else who might like to join or help organize?

Please let me know if you would like to be part of this prayer group.

Contact: ofsmiriam@gmail.com 604-819-1204



WHAT'S HAPPENING ACROSS OUR REGION!



The Padre Pio Fraternity in Delta, BC hold the men of *Luke 15 House* close to their hearts. At fraternal gatherings, the intentions of *Luke 15 House* are lifted in prayer during the Evening Liturgy of the Hours. Sometimes support arrives quietly — a doorstep delivery of homemade treats, a small reminder that someone is thinking of them. Then an invitation arrived from Director Nigel Vincent & Clarke Umengen of *Luke 15 House* to share food and fellowship. The fraternity accepted. Marla, fraternity secretary, suggested inviting a friend, Salesian Brother Rob Malusa to the gathering. What unfolded was Franciscans and Salesians breaking bread together with the men of *Luke 15 House*. Stories were shared; laughter and faith drew everyone together in a new & familial way. They were reminded that God's family comes through many charisms, colours & journeys. As the evening closed — guitars, praise & worship filling the room with hearts truly blessed, they were inspired to gather again.



St Berard Fraternity of Sherwood Park, AB had their Annual Christmas Dinner with the Sherwood Park L'Arche Community & Friars from the OFM Edmonton Friary.





St Clare Fraternity of Chilliwack, BC has a newly elected council. L-R: Pauline (Director of Formation), Liz (Vice Minister), Irene (Treasurer), Miriam (Secretary), Peter (Minister).

On December 14, 2025, the St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity in Richmond, BC held a fund-raising campaign for the benefit of the Franciscan Missionary Union (FMU). The successful event was fully supported by the parishioners of St. Joseph the Worker Parish, who contributed generous cash donations & baked goods for the bake sale table. A big thank you to Fr. Dan Gurnick, OFM, who suggested the idea as well as the all-out support of Fr. Manoj, OFM & Fr. Joseph, OFM.



Prayer Intentions for Vocations in OFS 2025-26 (from CIOFS)

Dec 2025: For Secular Franciscan married couples, that their spousal life in the Franciscan spirit will inspire other couples to follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi. Jan 2026: For all OFS brothers and sisters that they may fully embrace their vocation to follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi.

Save the Date

- Pray the Franciscan CROWN ROSARY together!

On the first Saturday of each month.

Next... **2026 Jan 3rd** @ 7pm PST/8pm MST/9pm CST

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

Meeting ID: 864 8609 8310 Passcode: 741246

- OLOTA Franciscan Book Club

Next... **Jan 4th 2026** with discussions of the book *A Franciscan View of Creation* by Ilia Delio (OSF)

Contact Miriam Liem at ofsmiriam@gmail.com or Marlene Welch at Patmarlocel@gmail.com

-National Formation Course

6 modules beginning January 12, 2026

[Click here for more info & Application Form](#)

Our Lady of the Angels Messenger, Secular Franciscan Order of Western Canada Region

December 2025 Minister Lanny Hui, of lanny.hui@gmail.com

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