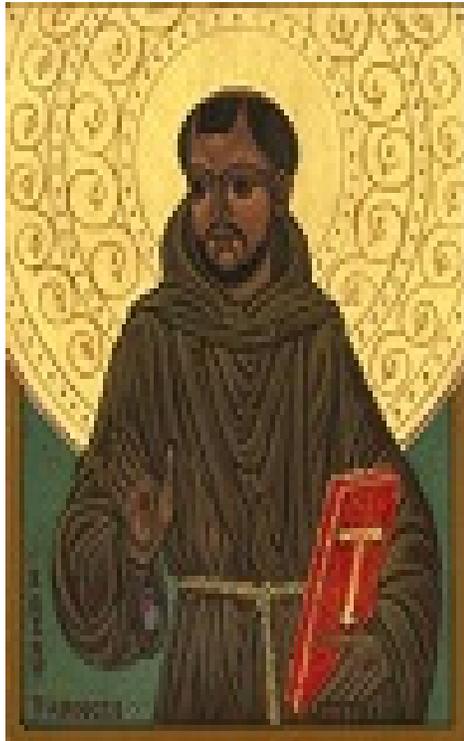


FIDDLESTICKS

Page 1

Lent 2014



The Real Presence Among Us

By Dale Carmen OEF

For the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans to exist there needed to have been a fertile act in time, a lovemaking. Deep human need for companionship on the road to God's heart, coupled with Christ's need to "rebuild my church" through Francis and his followers. The Holy Spirit breathed, "Amen!" "Be it so!" And OEF was born.

Many are our trials and temptations as a religious order. According to our General Rule – the Principles – we are to "devote ourselves energetically to living accountable to our respective denominations..." "Energetically", no less! Balanced on the end of this promise is another one, "... a sense of community will make us joyful and ready to place ourselves on an equal basis with all people..." I see these two promises tested on the issue of the 'Real Presence' during services of Communion, Eucharist, the Lord's Supper. Some Christians may hold that the 'Real Presence' of Christ is especially, if not exclusively, manifest in bread and cup consecrated – or made holy – by those set forward as ordained priests. Other Christians believe in the 'Priesthood of all believers' and the memorial significance of the bread and cup as Jesus asks of his followers, "Do this in remembrance of me".

As an Ecumenical Order, we very much need liberating, all-embracing experiences of the 'Real Presence' of Christ in our prayer, worship and life of service. What may be helpful to us is an instructional statement of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. In their statement, "Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Ministry, #9", they teach....

"In order that they should achieve a deeper understanding of the mystery of the Eucharist, the faithful should be instructed in the principal ways in which the Lord is present to his Church in liturgical celebrations.

"He is always present in a body of the faithful gathered in his name (see Mat 18:20). He is present, too, in his Word, for it is he who speaks when the Scriptures are read in the Church.

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The Real Presence...continued

In the sacrifice of the Eucharist he is present both in the person of the minister, 'the same now offering through the ministry of the priest who formerly offered himself on the cross,' and above all under the species of the Eucharist. For in this sacrament Christ is present in a unique way, whole and entire, God and man, substantially and permanently. This presence of Christ under the species is called 'real' not in an exclusive sense, as if the other kinds of presence were not real, but *par excellence*."

What is affirmed in this teaching is that the 'Real Presence' of Christ is experienced in at least four ways by his followers:

1. "In a body of the faithful gathered in his name."
2. "In his Word, for it is (Christ) who speaks when the Scriptures are read in the Church."
3. "(Christ) is present both in the person of the minister."
4. and "under the species of the Eucharist" (the bread and cup).

Some of us go for all four ways and yet others may feel limited by historical differences in doctrine and practice. Sometimes we focus on and struggle with our limitations without fully realizing that even one brush with the 'Real Presence' in any of the ways Christ is manifest, is enough to knock our socks off! We are entered and wed with the Body of Christ on earth.

As the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans we are distinct among Franciscans as we intentionally strive to experience the 'Real Presence' of Christ in Quaker silence, Baptist heartsong, Salvation Army servitude, Unitarian reason and all the ways Christ comes – in flesh and blood and spirit – to us. We have a unique and precarious role in Christianity in affirming and witnessing to Christ's 'Real Presence' in traditional and unorthodox ways and yet that is our call. Someone has to do it as we barrel towards even greater chaos and suffering in the world. May we faithfully live "accountable to our

respective denominations" and also joyfully experience Christ, real and present, strengthening us for service and thanksgiving.

As the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans we passionately witness and affirm Christ's 'Real Presence' among and in us. "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20).



And the Holy Spirit breathes, "Amen!" "It is so!" "Rebuild my Church!"

Announcements

Special Note on our Chapter/Convocation Social Time

We are trying something different for the 2014 Chapter/Convocation. We will have **alcohol-free evening social times**. A special non-alcohol treat will be home-made sodas by the hands of Markie and Elinor. You are welcome to bring soft drinks and juices. Come to enjoy the drama of a play, the gentle competition of cards and board games, and a joyful spirit of fellowship!



O.E.F. Professed Members Wear San Damiano Cross

There has been some confusion when O.E.F. Professed members wear the Tau cross or other symbols. According to our Statutes/Constitution/By-Laws the San Damiano Cross is the designated 'habit' of the community. O.E.F. Profession crosses may be any metal or enameled, yet recognizably the San Damiano Cross. Please and thank you for wearing this cross especially at Chapter/Convocation. It is a sign of our distinctiveness as Professed members of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans.



FELLOWSHIPS IN THE OEF - "MUTUAL LOVE"

MICHAEL VOSLER, OEF



At a time when Francis' body was failing him in April of 1226, he declared his "will in three words...as a sign and a remembrance of my blessings, let them mutually love another" Mutual love is the first of the three words (2nd - observe holy poverty; 3rd - be faithful to the Church). Each of us entered into the covenant of being a Franciscan Order for our own reasons, but with common touchstones in that journey: a love of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a desire to be faithful disciples, a fascination with how Francis and Clare embodied their discipleship, a recognition that such discipleship is grounded in community, and a celebration that all these communities together comprise the Body of Christ, the Church.

As an Order, we are our scattered selves, but always in relationship with one another. By virtue of our covenant, we are never "out of relationship". Mutual love will cover the distance of seas and miles and spans of time and even disagreements. Yet, being covenantal community seeks the togetherness of being "us", the gathering of us. Our foremost time of being incarnationally together is at Chapter/Convocation when we see "the many" that we are and the diversity that we are. Names are linked to faces, eye meets eye, soul meets soul, we feel together after the common charism that we are as the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. We hear stories that weave into our common story

"In between times" we communicate as we can through our website, through e-mails to one another, through Skype conversations, through phone calls and cards and letters, through "stop-ins" in our travels, and shared meals when possible. We gather as we can in shared geographical locales, or around specific common interests and commitments, or to do the business of the Order, or to pray. Brother Dick Maseo Gray and myself have been assigned to both track and encourage such gatherings. Maseo has found it necessary to step back in this effort due to health issues, and we thank him for his work and prayers on our behalf.



the Peachtree Fellowship gathers in Sautee, m GA, up in the NE corner of the state, where new Postulant David Miller has a cabin.

What's going on with geographical Fellowships?

6 Fellowships have taken on some degree of regularity of gathering or of making an earnest attempt to gather. Some have adopted names that say something about their geography. Thus:

- **The Northeast Fellowship** includes all of New England, Eastern NY State including all of the NY City Metro Area, and so New Jersey. They last gathered in early March. Their invitation is always "ya'll come if you can". Meeting places have included Boston and New London, CT, and NYC. New York City has had its own periods of regular gatherings.
- **Eastern Canada** has 3 OEF souls, and we listen for the gatherings that may occur there.
- We once had the **St. Anthony Fellowship** comprised of Virginia & the Carolina's, then some folks left for other parts; but the seeds of growth are spouting there again.
- **The Mid-Atlantic Fellowship** convened in Lexington, KY, hosted by Sr. Allegrezza; and draws from the mid-interior states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia (no one there yet!) and way-western Virginia. They even did a telephone connect while gathered with an emerging colleague who bounces between San Miguel de Allende, MX and Laredo, TX.
- **The Piedmont (formerly "Peach Tree") Fellowship** convened in northern Georgia in March of 2014, continuing the momentum from gatherings along the way in and around Atlanta. This used to be The Southeast Fellowship. Unfortunately, the breadth of that geography proved a bit much, but all in the Southeast are invited. Meanwhile, we await the emergence new OEFers beyond our current 2 souls in Louisiana, Mississippi, & Alabama.

(Continued on page 4)

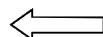
FELLOWSHIPS IN THE OEF ...CONTINUED



- Our southern Florida two-some has adopted the name of **The Sunshine Contingent**, and we all wait to see what might emerge towards a central & southern Florida Fellowship.
- **The Great Lakes Light House Fellowship** gathered in Rochester, MN, in November 2013 and included OEFers from Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, but also opens to Illinois, Michigan, Indiana and Ohio PLUS any emerging colleagues from central & western Ontario and Manitoba.
- Then, let's hear it for **The Texas Bluebonnets!** where we have significant history, enough membership density, though with miles betwixt this place and that with Waco at the apparent center and Huntsville as our densest spot (3! = 1 of us for every 10k people!) [*every time you see a "!" say "Wahoo!"*]
- And speaking of space, in **The Northern Plains**, we are very here and there in North (& one day South) Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, & Colorado. That's a challenge! But the call to Fellowship beckons.
- Rather suddenly we have significant presence in **Arizona** that awaits the formation of a Fellowship, and hopefully can reach to include **New Mexico** where we have an Associate Member.
- In the northwest corner of the US, from Washington to Northern California, **the Juniper Fellowship** has embodied its ability to transcend the distances. **The Golden Gate Contingent** last met for Betty Lou Leaver's Novicing Ceremony, has intentions for more and the advantage of the SSF Abby in SF as a gathering place, and reaches down to try to include Tehachapi, east of Bakersfield. We await the emergence of **The Central-Southern Cal. Fellowship**.



Lighthouse bunch (l-r: John Syvertson, Louis Canter, John Salvesson, Sister Chris, Dale Carmen, Keith Downey



- In **the Southern Pacific** we have 2 in New Zealand, 1 North Island, 1 South Island; then add an emerging presence in Australia. Not a Fellowship yet, but the seeds are planted.
- 2 of us are in Japan, constituting our whole presence in **the Northern Pacific**. (See article on page 10.)
- We have an emerging presence in Nigeria, so a "shoot" that one day may become the field of presence in **Africa**. Ireland and Hungary constitute our beginnings in **Europe**.

The boundaries of all these actual and potential Fellowships are, and need to remain, fuzzy. The will to be with one another is not defined by where any line might be drawn, but by the decision to go and to be with. A Convener or a Core Team within each Fellowship gives energy and continuity. Program ideas are available upon request, but the key components are: time for personal journey check-ins, worship, a Eucharistic sharing, some joy-time, discussion of Order issues, reflecting together time, journey celebrations, and prayer.

One day, we will be comprised of Provinces -- maybe sooner rather than later. But we won't rush it!

See you at Chapter/Convocation in Detroit!

- michael vosler/oef, Juniper Fellowship, the Golden Gate Contingent



A gathering in Texas (l-r: Owusu Slater, Katie Cook, Michael Vosler, Luis Rivera)



Words From the Interim Minister General



Grace and peace.

One of the most stunning things I've read in Franciscan history is the effect thousands of "Brothers and sisters of penance" had on medieval society.

Francis made a Rule of 1221 for those who wanted to follow in his footsteps yet had families and shops; i.e. could not follow the Rule of the First or Second Order which included celibacy and poverty. Francis' Rule for his 'Brothers and sisters of penance' included a lot of prescribed prayers, fasts and simple attire such as, "They are permitted to have leather purses and belts sewed in simple fashion without silken thread..."

In a very short sentence Francis also required a life-changing stance when he dictated, "They are not to take up lethal weapons, or bear them about, against anybody.". This Rule came in an age when most people were serfs and did not own land, yet pledged allegiance to Lords, who did own land, for the privilege of tilling the land and living on it. The serfs also had to pledge military support to the Lords if and when the Lords went into battle with each other or other principalities.

It is said that Francis' requirement to his 'Brothers and sisters of penance' against taking up lethal weapons was practiced so



faithfully that it was a contributing factor to the breakdown of feudalism in the middle ages in Europe.

What a legacy! Our Principles, our General Rule, come from this root. How may we be fruitful in the spirit of Francis?

Ehpesians 3:20, "Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine..."

Peace and Joy, Dale Carmen OEF, I-MG



Announcing: OEF CHAPTER/CONVOCATION JULY 17-20, 2014
Capuchin Retreat Center; 62460 Mt. Vernon Road; Washington, MI. www.capretreat.org

Chapter is generally the time intended for Professed members to meet and attend to the business of OEF. Convocation centers on a spiritual theme and is for all OEFers at any stage of formation, and for visitors and friends.

This year's theme is "**Discernment and Healing**". The hope of the Servant Team is that 2014 Chapter/Convocation may be a religious experience, a joyous experience and an enabling experience.

On Thursday, beginning at 2:00 pm and on Friday morning, Professed members will prioritize a budget, prepare for elections and ponder "**Discernment of those who serve us**". They will elect DFC and Scribe and discuss upcoming MG elections.

Thursday evening we share faith stories and Friday beginning at 2:00 pm all of us will focus on "**Discernment and Healing**" presented by Shoshanah Kay, OEF; and Masud Syedullah, TSSF. We will focus on "**Discernment of Call to Franciscan Community: OEF specifically, or to other Orders in the Franciscan Family**", and at a later time, "**Discernment of OEF's Unique Identity and Purpose as a member of the Franciscan Family**".

Saturday evening, we will Worship together celebrating Communion – The Lord's Supper – Eucharist; and we will be affirmed as Postulants, Novices and Professed. We will make vows by our Rule of Life and the Principles, set to music.

**Calling all Musicians! Lute and harp! Violin and ivory keys! Guitars and African drum! And more! We will practice and make joyful sounds to the glory of God in the spirit of Francis.*

Evening social time will find home-made sodas (from the hands of Markie and Elinor); popcorn, banana splits, ice cream cones and root beer floats. Friday night will host "Francis: The Play", and for Saturday night bring cards and board games.

***All social times will be alcohol-free times of celebrating community.*

Got a book to trade? There will be a "Bring one/Take one" book swap.

For early birds, we've tucked in yoga, jogging and the labyrinth.

Mosquitoes will be on vacation to Texas that week and we'll get the last of the polar vortex, swinging down to cool us...ahhhhh...

Register with Treasurer, Sophie Elisa Dale (included in this Newsletter).

2014 Chapter/Convocation Registration: Please fill out and email copy to oeftreasurer.registrar@gmail.com or snail mail to: Sophie Elisa Dale, OEF

Chapter Registration
P.O. Box 1152
Florence, OR 97439

Or you may call 541- 997-8969 (after 10:00 am PST) and register by phone.

Please enclose your payment (for Thursday, July 17 through Sunday morning, July 20) or pay by PayPal. **\$250 if paid by May 31. \$280 if paid after May 31.** Please add \$50 if arriving Wednesday for an additional day of fellowship and/or contemplation.

Please circle or highlight one: Professed Novice Postulant Inquirer Guest Other _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____, State: _____, Zip Code: _____

Contact Phone #: _____ Emergency Contact Name/Number: _____

Email: _____

Denominational/Church affiliation: _____

I prefer this type of room:

Single (one twin bed)

Double (one double bed)

Twin (two twin beds in one room)

I am sharing a room with _____

I am willing to share a room if necessary (Circle One): YES NO

***PLEASE CIRCLE/HIGHLIGHT ALL THAT APPLY:**

Yes, I am attending Chapter in Detroit (Thursday-Sunday)

Yes, I am arriving on Wednesday to spend Thursday in OEF fellowship

Yes, I need airport transportation upon arrival and departure My arrival time/day is _____/My departure time Sunday is _____.

Yes, I am driving and am willing to help with airport transportation! (Help is needed. You will be contacted if able to help.)

I am an OEF member (a postulant taking novice vows at Chapter 2014, a novice or a professed member with no unpaid balance for past Chapters) requesting scholarship assistance; I will pay \$_____.00.

(Scholarship may not exceed 50% of registration fee)

I am a vegetarian.

I have other health concerns that require additional help. Please explain: _____

NOTES FOR THE REGISTRAR: _____

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CHAPLAIN'S CORNER



On-Going Formation for Novice/Professed Members of the OEF (a collaborative effort submitted by the Chaplain and Director of Formation)

THE Rule for all of the Franciscan communities is the Gospel. It is our “default button”, our starting point, and our ultimate criterion for how and why we are Christians in a uniquely Franciscan way. So the synthesis of this “dance” between 1) the words and actions of Jesus and 2) how/why we live out our own lives, finds expression in the simple words, “From Gospel to Life; from Life to Gospel.” Continuing formation of our ecumenical and Franciscan way of being in the world must, therefore, parallel this “dance”.

As the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, we bring something very unique to the Franciscan family. We come from many denominational Christian families. Different traditions, different liturgies, different understandings of “word” and “sacrament”, and different ecclesiologies bring us together and yet keep us apart. That paradox is a special gift/challenge that other Franciscan communities are not blessed/cursed with. Our on-going formation needs to name and to accept this reality as well. Ultimately, we hope that this struggle in our formation, leading to profession and continuing thereafter, will result in celebrating the diversity. The celebration of diversity is a special Franciscan charism. We, in the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, are called to live that charism like none other of our sisters and brothers in The Family who all have their Franciscan life within the life of their common shared denomination and tradition.

Writing one's *Personal Rule* is one of the first tasks undertaken by those entering our Order. At each Convocation/Chapter, these *Rules* are renewed and presented on the altar. And we need to be responsible and accountable to each other as a community in *living* our own

Rule, OUR INDIVIDUAL WAY OF APPLYING THE EIGHT PRINCIPLES TO “FROM GOSPEL TO LIFE; FROM LIFE TO GOSPEL.” Again, the Eight Principles are: Worship, Prayer, Penitence, Work, Lifestyle, Mission, Obedience, and Community.

What we are calling for in “on-going formation” is nothing less than 1) integrating our accountability/responsibility *to the OEF community* of how we live our *Personal Rule* with 2) teaching and learning from each other's gifts and struggles in how we all try to live the Gospel Life. Our on-going formation as Ecumenical Franciscans, in other words, is not about didactic teaching, but the sharing of our experience as Ecumenical Franciscans. And we will be using both the Gospel and our *Personal Rule* as the tools for doing just that. The vehicle for this shared experience of on-going formation will be in the *Cloister* section of our website. This is a section necessarily open only to Novices and the Professed, since this is about “on-going” formation. We are hopeful this methodology will prove fruitful and find its way into expression for the initial formation of postulants as well.

Here is a practical example of how this might look in fleshing out “Gospel to Life; Life to Gospel”: Every three months, a new Gospel is presented as the centerpiece. The *Beatitudes*, for example. Each novice/professed member is asked to share how his/her *Personal Rule* strives to live out of that. *How does my own experience of the Principle of Community find expression in “Blessed are the peacemakers...”?* Responding to that question would be a concrete example of how a sister/brother could share with the OEF at large a piece of her/his Franciscan lifestyle. And THAT is how we would also be accountable and responsible to each other.

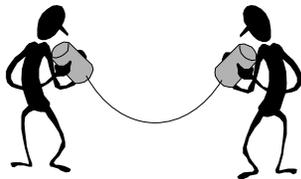
(Continued on page 10)



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER ...CONTINUED

And this process of accountability/responsibility would replace an earlier methodology of accountability that involved "reporting to" a particular individual or small group. This, of course, does NOT mean that individuals should stop their relationships that they may have developed during that "reporting" process. Indeed, those relationships are of utmost importance. But they are not the same as accountability to the whole Order, nor do they foster the on-going formation of the whole Order. The new methodology will.

The website, which has been "down" for some time, is the single greatest tool our Order has for sharing *as a community*. Another is *Fiddlesticks*. But the latter is passive sharing for nearly all. So there is a lack of responsibility and accountability in reading *Fiddlesticks* because there is no interaction. Access to a computer is nearly universal. Libraries are often resources for those who do not have their own. For those who do not have computer access at all, not once in three months, we as community will make sure that somehow, someway, such an individual is included. Inclusive formation must be part of our on-going formation.



Formation Station



The Office of Formation Counseling is pleased to announce that Br. Ian Vincent entered the novitiate on Jan. 18, 2014 at the Kamakura Yukinoshita Catholic Church, Japan. (See article on facing page.) Br. Pacificus, O.E.F. received Br. Ian's Rule of Life on behalf of the members of the OEF around the world. The ceremony took place at the exact place of the picture below.

Congratulations, Brother Ian., n/OEF!



The Office of Formation Counseling is happy to make welcome the following individuals to the Postulantcy

Mark Whitten; Jan W. Hilton; Janet "Sue" Gagliardi; David J. Miller.

Many of you may remember the first one from Chapter/Convocation 2013 - Mark Whitten-who was present with his wife, Leigh-Ann~

Jan Hilton is a Novice by Transfer from the TSSF.

Welcome, one and all!





Regional News.



OEF MEMBERSHIP IN JAPAN DOUBLES!

by Charles Pacificus Kowalski, OEF

When Francis of Assisi stumbled upon a church and opened the Gospel book, resolved that the first words he read would form the foundation of his ministry, he planted a seed that would produce more branches, and take root in more places, than he could possibly have imagined.

Francis' earthly journey ended before Marco Polo's began, so he might not even have known such a place as Japan existed. He could certainly never have foreseen that four hundred years later, a brother in his order, Juan Pobre Diaz Pardo, would be shipwrecked on its shores and invited to start a Franciscan community there. Or that, over the next four centuries, the order would survive persecution and martyrdom to grow to nearly 300 brothers in the OFM alone at its height.

Or that, eight hundred years later, a new brother in a new branch of the Franciscan family would formally begin his ministry by...stumbling upon a church.

On January 18, in the 26th year of the reign of Emperor Heisei (2014), in the historic city of Kamakura (once the capital of the shogunate, and still a center for Zen Buddhism), Brother Ian Vincent took his vows in the first OEF Novicing ever held in Japan. We had originally discussed holding the ceremony by the sea, but whether by chance or divine providence, Brother Ian happened to discover a Catholic church where a Franciscan martyr was honored. It was located in the neighborhood called Yukinoshita ("Under the Snow") - and in fact, it did snow that morning, although by the time we arrived in Kamakura, the sky was a beautiful blue.

The baptismal font, where Brother Ian laid his Rule, stood in an alcove with a triptych of oil paintings depicting Christians martyred in Kamakura. The central figure was one of the earliest Franciscan missionaries to Japan, Francisco Galvez, who first arrived in 1612 to preach the Gospel and care for lepers. He was driven out in 1614, when the shogun Tokugawa Hidetada expelled all Christian missionaries from Japan on the charge of "destroying law and order and corrupting goodness", but returned in 1618, smuggled aboard a merchant ship disguised as a slave. In 1623, along with two Jesuits and 47 secular Franciscans whom the shogun's order had driven underground, he was arrested and burned at the stake.

Times have changed since then. Today, the only danger to Franciscans in Kamakura is the temptation to overindulge in homemade cake and excellent coffee at the

Amish Cafe, an incongruous green-and-white clapboard house that could have been plucked from the Pennsylvania countryside and set down next to the sprawling shrine to the Shinto god Hachiman. The owners visited their daughter in Lancaster County when she was studying there 20 years ago, made friends with an Amish family, and set about trying to recreate the Amish Country atmosphere in Japan. Brother Ian became the third OEF member to visit this cafe, after Brothers Bruce and Pacificus, thus firmly establishing it as our "official" gathering place in Japan!

Yes, some things have changed since the time of Francisco Galvez. We no longer have to disguise ourselves as anything other than what we are: clay jars holding a priceless treasure. There is no shogun to condemn us to exile or execution. The worst enemies we face are the internal ones that confront every Christian living long-term in a starkly secular country: apathy, isolation, loneliness.

And some things have not. We are still called to kiss the leper. We are still called to bless those who curse, revile, and utter all manner of evil against us falsely. And we are still called to preach the gospel, using words if necessary. And so we heartily welcome our joyful new brother, and ask prayers for his mission and that of the OEF community in Japan. May it continue to grow and flourish for the next four hundred years!



Br. Francisco Galvez



Br. Ian (l) & Br. Pacificus

Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Submissions for the Post-Chapter 2014 issue of "Fiddlesticks" are being accepted immediately.

Deadline for submissions is July 31, 2014.

Send submissions to Sister Chris at capoef@solarus.biz

or snail-mail to:

Christine Petersen, OEF
853 Norwich Ct
Nekoosa, WI 54457

Thank you!

Fiddlesticks
 c/o Christine Petersen, OEF
 853 Norwich Ct.
 Nekeosa, WI 54457
 U.S.A.



Furnaces and Angels' Wings

By Sister Allegrezza



I woke to the rumble of my furnace turning on yet again. "Ugh" I thought, "will this winter never end?" Then I indulged in a therapeutic daydream. (can you call it that in the middle of the night)? I found myself standing at the complaint desk of heaven. I rapped on it to get their attention and said loudly "Hello, is anyone there? I just wanted to let you know that winter really isn't supposed to last 6 months. I'm pretty sure if you look at your records you'll find out that I'm correct..." But at that point the Holy Spirit hijacked my fantasy. The familiar words to a song came drifting over the P.A. system. "...and my heart burdened be; then I am still and wait here in the silence until you come and sit awhile with me..." from Brendan Graham's "You Raise Me Up" (sung by Josh Groban in heaven of course). I manage a

pretty significant eye roll before I hear the rustle of angel wings that always accompanies this song for me. I am ushered into the presence of the Almighty. Still feeling a little petulant, I open my mouth to plead my case. Instead I find myself encompassed in the shadow of His wings feeling the heartbeat of God vibrate with the wisdom of things I do not know. There is a slight shift and I hear the song again. "...You raise me up to more than I can be..." And suddenly I understand. If I wait a while in the presence of God, I will be more than I can be: more patient, more forgiving, more loving, more kind, more of all that is the best of humanity. More of a reflection of God. I am drawn from these thoughts by the click of my furnace shutting off. And I smile and sleep again .