

FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 115

Post Chapter 2015



So, what happened at Chapter?

Six discussion sessions were held to address the re-organization of the Order. Small group sessions began with the question: "Listening for God. What does God say when I ask, 'Why am I here?'" We spent some time thinking about how we know when God is speaking to us, and how to identify God's voice aside from our own.

Six candidates were presented for profession:

Louis Canter - Br. Louis
John Fitch - Just PLain John
Obadiah Greene - Br. Obadiah
Betty Lou Leaver - Sr. Betty Lou
Richard LeFevre - Br. Elijah
Greg Williams - Br. Romero



Our new Professed members

Candidates responded to the question, "Why has God called you here?" Their responses:

Obadiah - "The poverty of privilege & the privilege of poverty. Reconcilers, stewards, gentle footstep on the earth. My struggle is a community struggle."

John - "The divide between the congregation and the neighborhood- Pastor vs. Monk? Finding God in the neighborhood. I don't want to do silent worship, I want to go paint someone's house. It's worth it!"

Greg- "Your hat hath ribbons, our hats have none"- William Penn. "We are a silly people if we are worried about what people are wearing and not their spirits. I wanted to be in community with people and I didn't want to be in community with people who were perfect. I need to be here."

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So, What happened at Chapter?... continued

Louis - "I needed to be a part of something larger. Music as a path to ecumenical ministry and relationships. Accountability, siblings in common. I don't have to hide anything. [I can] be myself and have others be authentic. I want to cast my lot here because the community has cast their lot with me."

Richard - "Instead of cops and robbers, I played church. Helping others heal from the inside out. I belong here, you belong here and we're really in this together."

Betty Lou - "I don't always know the why of God, but I know it's not about me. Jonah stories. My SD said, 'You're Franciscan whether you profess or not.' Pre-guilt? Pre-confession!"

Other questions included: "Do you feel free to leave us, or will you always remain?" "How will you stay connected in a dispersed community?" "What can you bring from your experience to enrich our lives?"

All candidates were received by unanimous vote of the gathered Professed.

We reviewed the current and proposed statutes and the pros and cons discussed at Chapter 2014. We began practicing the discernment process of sitting in prayer and waiting for guidance from the Holy Spirit.



Juniper Cup tomfoolery

There were discussions on the role of Franciscan statutes; what we would expect and what we would not want. Some suggestions included having statutes that are not judicial, not constraining, but still challenging. We discussed having statutes that are simple with guidelines for taking care of business, and norms grounded in the Gospel. Other ideas included having statutes that enhance the effectiveness of our principles and support members' inward journeys and outward missions. Others want encouragement of diversity, openness, equality, respect and love.

We spent some time discussing the proposal of a five-member council. Responsibilities would include: collaboration; delegation as needed; deep listening and prayerful discernment; spiritual development of the membership; and encouraging all members to care for one another. We discussed the role of the council as guides rather than leaders. Concerns about division of labor among the council and the need for clarity and accountability to the membership were addressed. The consensus was to trust in using prayerful discernment rather than a win-lose model when making decisions. We will experiment with this method of decision-making and with a five-person council model for at least a year. Many believe three years would be better to see how successful it will be.

JPIC representatives were appointed. Br. Louis Canter and Br. Elias (Richard) LeFevre accepted the appointment. Br. Romero (Greg) Williams and Sr. Magdalena Stebbing were also appointed.



So, What happened at Chapter?... continued

The Statutes Renewal team released with gratitude Shoshanah, Michael, Anne Nancy, Brendan and Carlo. Juniper, Bruce James and Lorraine will continue, along with Magdalena, Markie and Romero willing to contribute and Obadiah willing to act as a listener.

**Editor's comment:*

The preceding was compiled from the Chapter Minutes written by John Michael Longworth, OEF Scribe.

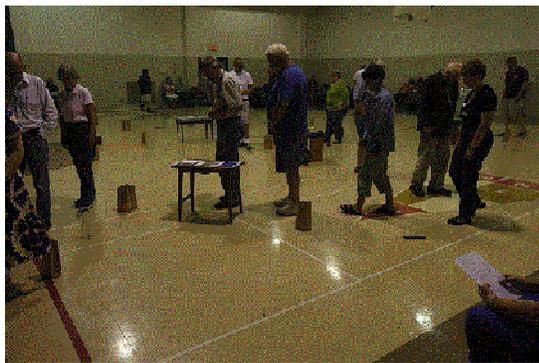
Discussions were interspersed with frequent pauses for silent prayer. The Holy Spirit was invited and felt. Consensus was reached in a calm and loving manner. Thanks to the membership for approaching this new method with an open mind. It seems to be working!



Our musicians at play



Celebrating profession



Walking the labyrinth



We're STILL bananas for the Lord!

New Songbooks!

By John, Son of Syvert, OEF

After our Chapter gathering in St Louis, I was tasked with taking the songbooks home with me. Br. Louis did a wonderful job on creating this first song book for the OEF. I am looking through the songbook and with the assistance of Br. Louis, and Sr. Allegrezza, I will be updating the songbook with inclusive language, and also adding more songs to the collection.

Are there any songs in the book that were not included that you would like to see in there? Are there favorite songs you would like to see included? Do you have any artwork that you would like to add in the book?

Any assistance or suggestions would be very welcome.



Field Trip to EarthDance Organic Farm School In Ferguson, Missouri (July 16, 2015)

By Helen Bathurst, OEF



EarthDance's vision is to see:

Organic farmers feeding the world.

Communities caring for the land.

Farms inspiring creativity.

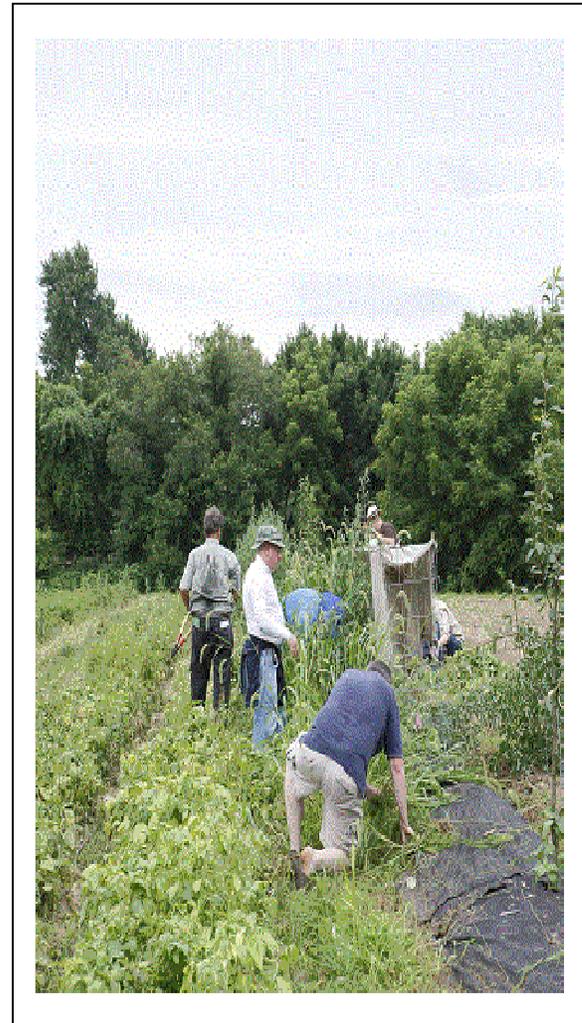
They envision productive local farms where creative endeavors can bloom alongside flourishing produce. They envision former strangers cultivating the land together and growing relationships in addition to sugar snap peas. They envision an Artist-in-Residence gaining inspiration from the beauty of a community farm, and in return, sharing their talents with farm-workers and farm-goers. They envision individuals from all walks of life coming to EarthDance to learn skills in organic farming and gardening, to taste a fresh-picked carrot, and to see where their food comes from. They are dedicated to seeing this vision through to reality.

Above right—OEF members being shown the swale system. Water from the roof enters tanks and then flows through a series of hollows creating ponds which water the plants.



Above—Inspecting the herb Spiral in the seven generation garden (*Hugelkultur*, *Multi-Story Guild*, *No till garden beds*, *companion plantings*, *sheet-mulching techniques*)

Right—Getting hands dirty and doing some much needed weeding.

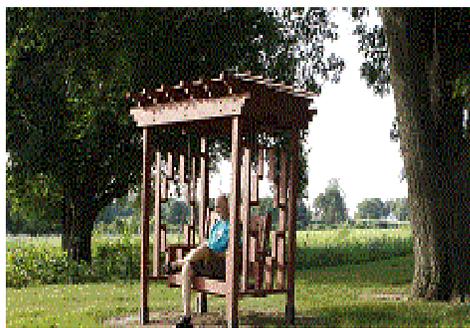


Chapter 2015 - One Brother's Experience

By David Delacroix, OEF

2015 marks 25 years as a professed member of this little community. It has been quite an amazing and blessed 'ride'. We have been through many Ups and Downs during the course of my professed life. I have not been to every Chapter and Convocation, but have been to enough of them to say that this meeting in Florissant was one of the most unique and blessed events of the community. It was profoundly moving, in my opinion. It was deeply spiritual as the community tackled what threatened to be a mundane, boring and potentially contentious issue in revising the statutes and method of communal governance. The Spirit of the Lord moved among us like she did at Creation. The Spirit breathed new life into us in a way I don't think anyone could foresee.

I personally found the gathering to be first of all a healing time. This was my first visit back to the Pallotine Center since being installed as MG and the problems that followed. I needed to make amends in a way that I knew for sure was helpful. I needed to have some of my own baggage dropped off and disposed of, emotional and spiritual baggage. Good stuff happened and I felt I could breathe freely once more. May God bless those gracious souls who helped in that process. I also experienced a sense of engagement with social justice issues outside of my own as a gay child of God. The presentation about endemic racism and police violence pushed me to take a look in my own backyard as well as within, a challenge I have gladly accepted and have begun here in Altoona, PA. And I met and was blessed with reconnecting with some good old friends and making some new ones.



Peaceful Solitude

While at Chapter I was contacted about playing the role of Dennis Shepard, the father of Matthew Shepard who was murdered in Laramie, WY, in 1998, in a production of "The Laramie Project". I accepted that dramatic opportunity and have been blessed to help Altoona to take a look at the issue of bullying and of acceptance of people who differ from the majority in any way, especially sexual orientation. The role is very emotional as I confront my "son's" murderer and offer him life in prison rather than execution. I think the role is symbolic of the choices we face as vowed religious persons. Do we share violence, or do we share peace and healing? The issues we confronted at Chapter and Convo and our discernment process gives us the tools to carry into the communities in which we live from day to day.

The Order is an organism that shows signs of life, of hope and action on many levels. I look forward to seeing how God works in our life together. And I am anticipating that the Spirit will continue to breathe new life, create new wineskins, continue to bring healing, and to re-gather us in 2016 with some amazing stories to share about what happened as we worked like the salt of the earth to flavor our spiritual communities, our neighborhoods, and our families. May we continue to listen, to share, to love, and follow our Risen Savior. Amen!

Hear Ye, Hear Ye!



Submissions for the Francistide 2015 issue of "Fiddlesticks" are being accepted immediately.

Deadline for submissions is September 30, 2015.

Send submissions to Sister Chris at
capoef@solarus.biz

or snail-mail to:

Christine Petersen, OEF
 853 Norwich Ct.
 Nekoosa, WI 54457

Thank you!



A Franciscan at the Thomas Merton Society



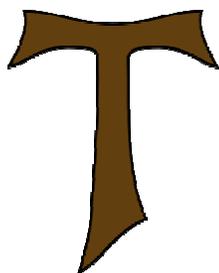
By David Rensberger, OEF Associate

Hi, All!

Thursday through Sunday, June 4 - 7, 2015, I attended the meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society in Louisville. I'd never attended one before, but I wanted to join because this year marks the 100th year since Merton's birth, and he has been enormously influential on me.

I wore a small wooden Tau cross, and this resulted in a couple of Franciscan conversations. I met a man named Charles who serves on the Southeast regional board (if I'm remembering right) of the Roman Catholic Third Order (Secular Franciscans). He did not know of the OEF, and was interested to learn about us. I also met a young man named Tony, a student at St. Bonaventure University who is planning to become an O.F.M. postulant this fall.

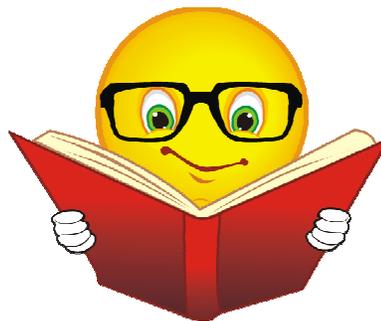
There was (not surprisingly) an enormous book display. While I managed to restrict myself to 3, one in particular is proving fascinating. It's called *The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton*, by Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M. Horan is a Merton scholar, and he makes the case that, while it is well known that Merton's initial attempt to enter the O.F.M. in 1940 failed, he did enter the Third Order. When he went on to teach English at St. Bonaventure, a Franciscan college, he was mentored by several friars on the faculty. In the process, he immersed himself in Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus, two medieval Franciscan theologians and philosophers. Horan argues that these thinkers, especially Duns Scotus, became central for Merton's distinctive and influential understanding of the "true self;" the inner person where God is encountered; for his understandings of Christ and of creation; and for his understanding of the contemplative's engagement with the world.



I'm only halfway through this book, but I'm finding it quite rewarding. Horan has brief biographies of Francis and Merton at the beginning. Even though these lives are well known, he draws on the latest research to bring out points that might not be so familiar. So far I'm finding him convincing that the Franciscan influence on Merton was much greater than has often been realized. I've always resonated deeply with Merton's writing about creation, and now I'm coming to understand why! Merton's foundational orientation toward Francis and the Franciscan tradition (especially Duns Scotus) persisted after he entered the Trappist order, and throughout his life and his writing.

The book is a bit heavy on intellectual content. However, it would certainly be possible to "read around" some of the thick stuff on Duns Scotus to learn more about the sources of Merton's thinking and how it developed. I'd recommend it to anyone who's looking for a theological read and is interested in Thomas Merton. The one theme that Horan seems to leave out is Merton's contemplative practice, whether because he is less interested in it or sees less Franciscan influence there. Yet Francis was a profound contemplative, and it would be at least worth wondering whether this aspect of Francis's spirituality was also influential on Merton.

As you can tell, I've been having a good time! I was glad to make these Franciscan connections while joining in the celebration of the life and work of someone who has been of great importance to me spiritually and vocationally.





A Message From Our Co-Minister General



**This homily was delivered by Sr. Shoshana at the Saturday night profession service, Chapter, 2015*

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you.

As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:1-5 (NASB)

I am neither a preacher nor a theologian. I know less than I should of our Franciscan history, and less than I wish of the pivotal Jewish stories that lie deep in the rich spiritual soil that nurtures our Christian roots.

But I do know, that every year at Passover, Jewish families gather for a meal which begins with a young child asking: "Why is this night different from any other?" And, in answer, they share a meal which tells their story.

Tonight, we do the same. We share a meal which tells our story.

And as we do, we remember our first steps into this community. We feel the blisters and calluses of our walking together. We look back - and see how far we have come. We look ahead - and see how far we have yet to go. We ask for sustenance to stay the course, - for the will to stick together.

How is this night different from all other nights?

This night - of all nights - is the night of our "yes".

You who are professing, your yes stands on the shoulders of our yes - our OEF yes - which is tangled into the yes of the Franciscans of Reconciliation and the yes of the Order of Lutheran Franciscans, and which stands on the shoulders of the TSSF yes, which stands on the shoulders of the OFS yes, and the TOR yes, and

the OFM yes, and the Capuchin yes, and the Poor Clare yes, and the Franciscan Sisters of the this, that & the other yes, and the yes of all other unknown and here-unnamed Franciscans, which stand on the shoulders of the Francis yes and the Clare yes, which were in response to the "yes" of Jesus born of the "yes" of Mary, informed by the yes of the Law and the yes of the Prophets, and in response to the yes of the Angel Gabriel who said "yes" to the Lord God Almighty who spoke the first "yes" — the yes to life; the yes to creation — the yes that spoke the entire cosmos into being — the yes that, not so very long ago, breathed your life into being and now whispers, ever so softly into your ear this night: "Yes. Yes. Come. Do this. Do this with these ones this night. Yes."

So here we are . . .

My Spiritual Director is Hermana Mary Jude. She is a strong woman, born in Jamaica, raised in New York City. A Roman Catholic nun who has ministered tirelessly for many years among the Latino community in Connecticut.

She laments: "People feel I am harsh. People say I am severe. Why couldn't God make me sweet?" She says: "God is at work in all things — especially in our places of conflict. It is always we who are strong in the Lord who must make the first moves toward reconciliation. We cannot sit back and blame. We cannot sit back and wait. Jesus leads the way. Jesus shows us how to live in this world. Jesus shows us how to be with one another. We must follow him."

Hermana Mary Jude is the Mother Superior of her local community. She, just days ago, celebrated 50 years in Religious Life. We had a grand celebration in her honor — una gran fiesta.

La Gran Fiesta began in the afternoon with a mass and continued well into the evening with food and dancing, and "speaking" and hugging and presents and cake.



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A Message From Our Minister General... continued

The priest asked the 30 or so Sisters present, many of whom are now aging, to raise their hands if life in community had been easy. The Sisters laughed. Not one raised a hand.

He then dared to ask: "Has it been worth it?" The Sisters smiled — each and all — and, yes, each raised her hand.

So here we are
On the night of our Gran Fiesta, as the beautiful and tragic events of our world rise and fall around us.

For these few days — for this night — we are here — together — in the flesh — — we in OEF and you on the way to being in, — those we love whom we have asked to come — those invited from the vast and spreading tree of the Franciscan Family — branches that came before us — branches that extend beyond us — sturdy branches and tender shoots, side by side, each and all — branches of the True Vine, listening together, this night, for a word from Jesus our Lord
our Savior
our Redeemer
our Liberator
our Light
and our Love.



Jesus left many words for us.
This is but one: "I am the vine; you are the branches. Abide in me."

In John's Gospel, this comes after the Last Supper, after Jesus washes the feet of his disciples, after Judas has left, when it was night. It comes after Jesus predicts that confident committed Peter — so ready to risk — so ready to say "Yes!" would, in fact, say "No. No, I don't know this man." It comes just before Jesus goes to the garden to pray, to sweat blood, as his friends stay so very close — and fall asleep. It comes just before he is arrested and tried and crucified.

"Abide in me. Apart from me, you can do nothing."

This story, told as it was, between the wine of the meal and the wood of the cross,
— this story is our story too —

So where are we in this story? Not just you and me, but we. Where are we? Where is OEF in this story of submitting to the Gardener God? The Gardener God who cuts off that which does not bear fruit and prunes that which does?

Cutting. Pruning.

But with the assurance from Jesus our True Vine that: "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you."

And with the promise: "Abide in me, and I will abide in you."

With the instruction: "No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."

And with the blunt statement of the simple fact: "I am the Vine; You are the branches. Apart from me, you can do nothing."

We just might need some submitting
to some cutting
to some pruning,
to some shaping
and to a whole lot of abiding . . .



So here we are . . .
on the night of our Gran Fiesta.

Some of us are perceived as harsh and severe and wish God would make us sweet.

Some of us are perceived as sweet and wish God would give us more guts more strength, more resolve to stand firm and speak up and to please just Do something, damn-it.

Continued on page 9

A Message From Our Minister General... continued

Needing some cutting...
 Needing some pruning...
 Needing some shaping...
 And a bit more abiding...



How is this night different from any other?

We are here — together — just as we are. We come with our Rules in our hands, and our crosses hanging exposed, before our hidden hopeful hearts. We come weighed down with our baggage and burdens and grievances, reaching toward healing and hope and light in the darkness. We come singing and dancing and ready to risk. We come attentively listening and quietly waiting. We come with a mix of doubt and faith in our souls and a brazen “yes!” on our lips.

And 6 more are this close to jumping in with us.

No. Not jumping. Stepping forward. Kneeling. 6 more are this close to kneeling down — shoulder to shoulder — with one another and with you and I — the whole motley mix of us — beloved forgiven sinners — at the foot of the cross which lies in the dead center of our story.

My Baptist mother was troubled when I became Roman Catholic. She was afraid. Afraid I was leaving a faith that, for her, was so full of light and joy. She was disturbed by the crucifix, by the in-your-face gruesomeness of it all. “I don’t like to see Jesus hangin’ there.”, she complained. “I like the empty cross.”, she said, “because Jesus is risen.”

And he is.
 But before he rose, he died.
 And before he died, he was nailed to a cross.
 And before he was nailed to the cross,
 he laid down his will again and again and again.
 And as he was nailed to the cross,
 he laid down his will yet again.

Which some understand as God needing Jesus to die. And some understand as God-in-Jesus was willing to die. And some understand as we killed him. But, whatever your understanding of the why, the reality is:

This Jesus, whom we Christians claim to be the living, breathing, walking, talking, touching, healing, in-the-flesh Incarnation of the Living, Loving, Divine Creator of the Cosmos, forever and for all eternity,

This Jesus
 hung on a cross, naked and bleeding,
 incomprehensibly saying: “Abba/Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing.”

We just might need some forgiving . . .
 And some submitting to “Thy will be done” . . .

Forgiveness: the dead center of the cross.
 The Cross: the dead center of our story.

My sister does not self-identify as a “religious person”. She identifies more as a “positive-energy person”. My sister lives on a dead end street. But she won’t call it that. (and don’t dare tell her I just did!) She says: “My street is not a dead end; it is a living beginning. Go as far as you can go. And there you will hit the living beginning.”

So let me rephrase my dark catholicism into something more positive-energy:

Forgiveness: The Living Beginning at the very Center of the Cross. The Cross: The Living Beginning at the very Center of Our Story.

Why is this night different from all other nights?

Because this night — one more time — we say “yes”. We share the meal that tells our story. We profess: “Not my will, but Thy will...” We promise forgiveness. In the footsteps of Francis and Clare, and in the company of these our sisters and brothers in this little ecumenical Franciscan Order, we submit to our Gardener God. We say “yes” to abiding in Jesus, our True Vine, the Living Beginning at the very Center of Our Story,
 — knowing it is not easy,
 — praying it will be worth it.

YES!

Grace and Peace,
 Shoshanah Kay, OEF, Co-Minister



Regional News

Submitted by Br. John Son of Syvert



The Great Lakes Lighthouse Conference met on April 30-May 2nd at Assisi Heights in Rochester, MN. Those in attendance were Sr. Chris Petersen, Br. Craig Robert Miller, Sr. Kathleen Dlugosz, Br. Keith Downey, Br. John, Son of Syvert and Sr. Dale Carmen. The theme of the weekend was celebrating our Brother and Sisterhood in OEF and culminating with the Profession of Br. Keith Downey.

The weekend began on Thursday evening in reconnecting with our Brothers and Sisters, and sharing how we are currently living out our lives as Franciscans and our journey both recently and long term.

Friday Morning, Brother Craig Robert opened up the day with Morning Prayer and devotions. Our discussions continued with reconnecting with one another and exploring the expansive grounds of Assisi Heights once again.

Friday evening, Brother Keith, members of his family and friends and members of the Order gathered at the Chapel at Assisi Heights to witness the recommitment of those in attendance who were previously Noviced, those who were previously Professed and for the Profession of Brother Keith. Leading the service was Br. John, Son of Syvert with Sr. Chris presiding over renewing of the vows of



Profession of Br. Joseph Thomas

Sr. Kathleen, n/OEF, Br. Keith's Profession, and renewing of the vows of all the Professed members in attendance.

Rev. Glenn Monson, who is Br. Keith's Pastor gave a beautiful Homily on what it means to Profess not only to be a member of a Franciscan Order, but how each one of us boldly Profess who we are each day. Rev. Monson reminded us how Br. Keith's life has come full circle from his beginnings, being taught by Franciscan nuns in grade school, to beginning religious life in a Franciscan Order in his early 20's, to taking his vows in the OEF many years later.

The Holy Eucharist was presided over by Br. John, Son of Syvert and Rev. Scott Richards, who was previously a Seminary Intern serving with Rev. Monson.

Br. Keith as a professed member of OEF chose the name Br. Joseph Thomas in honor of his parents Josephine and Thomas who have passed away previously.

It was a wonderful weekend that brought joy to all gathered around Brother Joseph Thomas in the midst of challenging circumstances, and reminded us all of the joy we all share in community.

Saturday morning devotions were led by Sr. Kathleen Dlugosz n/OEF



Great Lakes Bunch



Formation Station



Brother Rat's Rule

written with assistance from Sr. Kiwi

The office of Formation Counseling would like to welcome seven new professed members received this year:

- Br. Louis Canter
- Br. Br. John Fitch (Just Plain John)
- Br. Obadiah Greene
- Sr. Betty Lou Leaver
- Br. Richard Le Fevre (Br. Elijah)
- Br. Greg Williams (Br. Romero)
- And Br. Keith Downey (Br. Joseph Thomas), who was received at the Great Lakes Lighthouse regional gathering in April.

During this Chapter, we also welcomed five new novices:

- Donna Baiocco, Larkspur, CO
- Rebecca Christian, Waco, TX
- Kathy Lawler, Elk Grove, CA
- Karen Lawler, Elk Grove, CA
- Jim Whittaker, Cary, NC

And last, but not least, we welcome two new postulants:

- Neal Dunnigan, Kingfisher, OK
- David Ketchum, Springfield, MO

Congratulations and welcome, one and all!

** Professed members: We still need Formation Counselors willing to mentor our new folks. If you can act in this capacity, please contact Sr. Allegranza: dfc4oef@mail.com*

Worship

I refrain from attending Sunday services. My excuse is that my physical appearance will frighten younger worshippers.

Prayer

I only attend Morning Prayer when it is said in the room I am in and I cannot find a way to escape.

Penitence

Having strongly considered penitence I have decided I would rather not.

Work

I do as little work as possible.

Lifestyle

I am not eating meat. This is solely because I am living in a vegetarian household. However a nice tasty Kiwi bird would go down well.

Mission

Ostensibly, my mission is to keep the house pest-free. However, either because there are no pests to banish from the house or they have all run away at the sight of me, I am relieved of the need to do mission.

Obedience

I give every appearance of being obedient and of being accountable while secretly and slyly doing what I want to do anyway.

Community

I willingly engage in community as long as everyone else does what I want to do.



Brother Rat



(his paw print)
July 2015

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



Light Your Candle!



Here's a quote for you that I find relevant...

[Daily Dig for July 23](#)

Marian Wright Edelman

It is so important not to let ourselves off the hook or to become apathetic or cynical by telling ourselves that nothing works or makes a difference. Every day, light your small candle. The inaction and actions of many human beings over a long time contributed to the crises our children face, and it is the action and struggle of many human beings over time that will solve these crises with God's help. So every day, light your small candle.

Source: [Guide My Feet](#)

Submitted by David Delacroix, OEF

