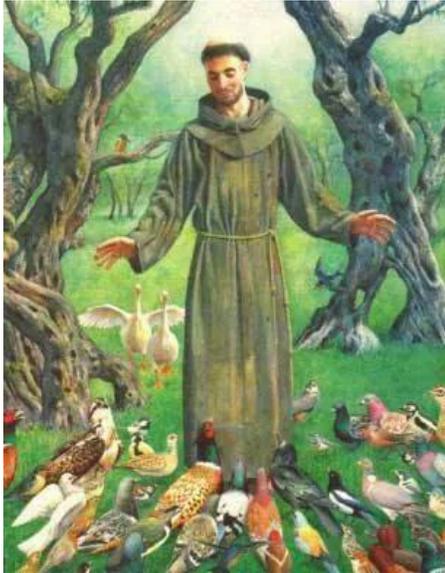


# FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 124

Francistide 2017



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## Words from The Council

Dear Siblings,

Peace and Good !

We write this on October 4, 2017, the Feast Day of St. Francis.

Chapter 2017 (Chicago) has long passed.  
Chapter 2018 (St. Louis) is on the far horizon.

During the hot summer, following the NAACP declaration that the state of Missouri is unsafe for people of color, a lively and passionate discussion ensued on our OEF Chat List.

"Should we even be meeting in Missouri? Will our people be safe? Might the Council consider alternative possibilities? " Initial expressions of concern deepened into expressions of abiding faith and strong conviction. We, your Council, followed the conversation with interest. We, too, listened and prayed, considered and discussed. After speaking with Owusu at a neighborhood block party, Juniper passed along Owusu's sentiments:

"Francis went to the Sultan, and we, too, should go to Missouri. We have nothing to fear because we are messengers of the Most High. ....We must pray for direction in how we witness the truth of the crucified Christ in the midst of a divided and troubled Missouri. Where would Jesus and Francis have placed themselves?" Juniper added: "I am with Owusu."

Many voices echoed beautiful variations of the same sentiments. (If you haven't read them, go back and read them.) The consensus as best we can read it, and the call as best we can hear it is this: Missouri is neither unique nor alone in its troubles. We are to be prophets. We are to be witnesses. Like Francis and Clare, we are to go with Christ wherever Christ goes. We will meet in St. Louis.

(Please note corrected and true dates for Chapter/Convocation 2018:  
Chapter/ Convocation 2018: Pallotine Renewal Center in Florissant, MO  
Thursday, June 28 - Sunday, July 1 (optional early day - Wednesday, June 27.)

We were not given much time to bask in the comfort and delight of what could have felt like a bonding and pleasing revelation from God.

(Continued on Page 2)

From the Council, continued....

Between that week and this week:

- \* Charlottesville exploded, dramatically exposing raw and raging racism.
- \* "Fire and Fury" words between the US and North Korea grew more fiery, more furious.
- \* Hurricane Harvey pounded and poured over Texas.
- \* Hurricane Irma blasted through Caribbean islands and blew on into Florida.
- \* Refugees keep fleeing, seeking safety, wishing for welcome. As do immigrants.
- \* Our president declared DACA doomed to disappear.
- \* Hurricane Maria slammed into the US Virgin Islands then



Puerto Rico, ripping it to pieces.  
 \* The United States told the United Nations and is telling the world that we are fully prepared to destroy an entire country (North Korea).



\* Meanwhile, two weeks in, our military still struggles to bring food, water and medicine to our own in ravaged and devastated Puerto Rico.  
 \* And now this week, we have woken to news of yet another mass shooting. (Las Vegas).

And those are just some of the big stories.

In small and silently screaming ways, upending our lives but never making the papers, a multitude of more personal fears, tragedies, challenges and crises build and unfold, near and far, seeking help, seeking hope . . . .



So we wonder, and so we pray:  
 "How do I speak as a prophet? How do I stand in witness? What is mine to do?"

In this time of fire and fury, raging winds and rising waters. In this time of raw racism -- frighteningly visible and frighteningly invisible --

In this time of violence unleashed for reasons seemingly impossible to resolve, and unleashed as well for seemingly no reason at all, we recognize:  
 -- No place is safe. --



No place is safe, but this, too, is true:

It is in this no-place-is-safe world that Jesus says: "Be not afraid."

It is in this no-place-is-safe world that Jesus draws us into the safety of his steadfast love and abiding presence -- which may be the only safety he offers --

Then, in the power of this steadfast love, and with the promise of His abiding presence, Jesus sends us right back out into this no-place-is-safe world -- "as sheep before wolves" -- -- as witnesses to love without end --

"You are the light of the world... You are the salt of the earth... Go in my name... Love one another as I have loved you..."



May we live and move and have our being in this relentless Love.

As the Episcopal Bishop of Las Vegas said today:  
 "Life is short. So be swift to love. Make haste to be kind."

Amen and Amen.

In Christ's Love for Each and All,  
 Your Council -- Markie, Louis, Elijah, John Son-of-Syvert, and Shoshanah

\*\*\*\*\*

The Council offered in the previous Fiddlesticks a report covering a number of the highlights from Chapter/Convocation 2017.

Stephan Gerhardt and David Ketchum graciously provided us with our "working notes". Both expected we would edit what they sent. As it turns out, their minutes were far better than our "edited minutes". Stephan was careful to highlight the essentials (included in previous report). David Ketchum offered a delightfully detailed version that just seemed wrong to "whittle-down". You will understand when you read it. Due to the length and with sensitivity toward confidentiality, we have decided to send this electronically to the membership. It goes on for quite a few pages, but is well worth the read. For those of us present: It is a warm and vivid reminder. For those absent: It is a light-filled window into the experience.





## Our History: Twice Named, Twice Incorporated, Twice Blessed\*



By Dale Carmen, OEF

In the life of our little troupe of ecumenical Franciscans, we went through quite a bit of change from 1983 - 1988.

To satisfy the needs of spiritual loneliness and accountability in the tradition and spirit of Francis of Assisi, the Third Order of St. Francis, United Church of Christ, was incorporated and blessed on November 22, 1983 at Parshall, ND. Why was it the "United Church of Christ" expression of the Third Order?

The founders were very aware of the importance Francis placed on faithfulness to the church in religious communities, and that the Roman Catholics and Episcopalians each had their Third Order Franciscan expressions of religious community. We believed that to be a religious order meant to be in connection with other Christians and under authority to a single denomination

The three co-founders of our religious community; Dale Carmen, Ron Nuss-Warren and Charles Maxfield, were all members of the United Church of Christ. We thus named, incorporated and celebrated in worship, the Third Order of St. Francis - United Church of Christ on November 22, 1983. However, long before that momentous day there was a flurry of letters between the founders and U.C.C. judicatories; including the Northern Plains Conference Minister, Marwood Rettig; Roger Knight and Reuben Sheares III from the Office for Church Life and Leadership; and the President of the Denomination, Avery D. Post. This exchange of communication intensified through the next couple of years.

Generally, we were encouraged in our efforts to live in a geographically dispersed Franciscan religious community. Specifically, our 'birth' preceded any formal acceptance and integration into a denomination. Though we had the guidance and blessing of the TSSF (Episcopal), we were plowing an unconventional path through the United Church of Christ. This is evident in a January 9, 1984 letter from the U.C.C. President Avery D. Post, to Dale Trana\*\* with cc to just about everybody in the national chain of command. In this letter, Post says,

*"I do have some concerns -- some of them quite serious. An organization can identify itself as related to the United Church of Christ only by action of the General Synod or the Executive Council acting as the General Synod."*

We were nowhere near approval by action of the General Synod or Executive Council of the United Church of Christ. Jesus said, "The wind [Spirit] blows where it chooses..." (John

3:8). By our third Chapter in 1986 at Alcester, SD, we were ecumenical, as Jimmie Reese, all the way from Texas, climbed on board. He was United Methodist! In a letter dated May 28, 1987, by Dale Trana to U.C.C. President Avery Post, the new Third Order of St. Francis -- United Church of Christ, was described enthusiastically as "ten members comprised of five U.C.C., four United Methodists and one Pentacostal." This may not have been as thrilling to Dr. Post as it was to us!

We rapidly grew in diversity and at our fifth Annual Chapter at Afton, MN, in the Spring of 1988 with eleven in attendance, we voted on a new name and new incorporation as the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. Though no longer 'under' the guidance and authority of a single denomination, we emphasized our commitment to the third Principle of our General Rule which states, "...called like St. Francis to rebuild the church and inspire by his example, let us devote ourselves energetically to living accountable to our respective denominations and in spiritual fellowship with Christians everywhere."

The core statements of the Principles are shared by other Franciscan orders as well. However, the last half of this third Principle is original and unique to us. It was penned in the Summer of 1983 by the three co-founders, who must have known even then that our heart and soul were ecumenical. The way to be intrinsically ecumenical, which makes us unique among Franciscan orders, came to us and is still being revealed by the Holy Spirit among us.

Twice named, twice incorporated, twice blessed. Actually, we are blessed beyond measure as we continue to find each other and what it means to be in Franciscan Community. We are on a journey of faith and Francis is with us. Thanks be to God!

Peace,  
Dale Carmen, OEF



\*An excerpt to be included in the OEF History Book, being compiled by Dale Carmen, OEF, Ron Nuss-Warren, OEF and Betty Lou Leaver, OEF.

\*\*Dale Trana legally changed her name to Dale Carmen in 1991. It was a spiritual decision based on huge changes of mind and soul. She is the wife of Ken Trana, forty eight years and counting...



## A Croagh Patrick Pilgrimage

by Neal Dunnigan, OEF



*"Send me your light and your faithful care. Let them lead me. Let them bring me back to your holy mountain, to the place where you live." (Psalm 43:3 NIRV)*

The name Croagh Patrick comes from the Irish Cruach Phádraig meaning "(Saint) Patrick's stack". It is a 2,507 ft mountain and an important pilgrimage site in County



Mayo, Ireland. While it has been important since Paleolithic times, its modern religious significance comes from the tradition that St. Patrick began his Irish mission with a 40 day retreat up at the top. Oregon's Three Sisters may be four times higher, but against the smaller area of Ireland's west coast, Croagh Patrick stands out just as dramatically, maybe even more so. I had been to the spot a year ago, just to the gift shop and to stroll along the base. I could see that it was more than I could take on at the time. I'd need more conditioning and better shoes. So here I was back again. Somewhat more conditioned and with better shoes, ready for a pilgrimage.

A friend had recently loaned me a copy of "Prayers of the Cosmos: Meditations on the Aramaic Words of Jesus." The book was in my backpack. I was picturing myself at the summit sitting on the grass engrossed in prayerful study. The first mile went fine. It was sunny and mild, yet I could see the summit was enshrouded with clouds. Was this like Mt. Sinai? Surely I would not meet the fate promised in Exodus 19:12-13. More likely the shroud was either a divine expression of modesty or maybe just a playful game of hide-and-seek. I was going through my morning meditations as I walked. It was delightful. The countryside was beautiful. The trail at this point was a rocky stream bed. I speculated about how the water was running down and away from the holy mountain as I was walking up and towards the summit. Depending on the rain, more or less of the trail was dry, the rest was a matter of walking on the dry rocks as stepping stones. The trail width

varied from about 10-20 feet wide, so no two pilgrims would ever be following exactly the same path. I pondered that as well.

The people ascending were a mix of pilgrims, tourists, and locals. Most used walking sticks. I even saw some middle aged men walking with their old "hurling" sticks, a native Irish sport that resembles American lacrosse. Some high-tech people came equipped with one or two metal ski/hiking poles. Most people just rented the primitive sticks offered by the shop at the visitor center down below. A few people were walking without a walking stick. Technically you did not need the stick, but it helps quite a bit.

I began to think about the walking stick being like the institutional church. Theoretically people don't need the institutional church. It does not actually save us, but it often helps. I began meditating that the first inch of my walking stick is like the apostles, the next inch like the evangelists, then the church fathers, then the church doctors, and so on. I was enjoying my analogy when a driving rain came in. I ended that meditation and started to sing a hymn:

*"Wash away my troubles, wash away my pain  
With the rain in Shambala  
Wash away my sorrow, wash away my shame  
With the rain in Shambala  
Everyone is helpful, everyone is kind  
On the road to Shambala  
Everyone is lucky, everyone is so kind  
On the road to Shambala  
I can tell my sister by the flowers in her eyes  
On the road to Shambala  
I can tell my brother by the flowers in his eyes  
On the road to Shambala  
Ah, ooh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah  
How does your light shine,  
in the halls of Shambala"  
(Shambala by Three Dog Night)*

I was perspiring enough inside my jacket that I was as wet inside as outside. My pants were totally soaked. Thoughts of humility and incontinence came into my head. Not too proud as to be humiliated by being called a pee-pee pants. The rain leaves and the sun returns. The view is beautiful. I watch the various people as they pass me ascending. I wonder to myself about their readiness and their chance of success. Certainly the mountain has many thousands of visitors, so doing the full climb is very much the norm. However, just surveying footwear, clothing, posture, gait, and other characteristics I'm a bit surprised about some of my travel companions. Perhaps God

## A Croagh Patrick Pilgrimage... continued

would provide for them in some way that I would come to understand.

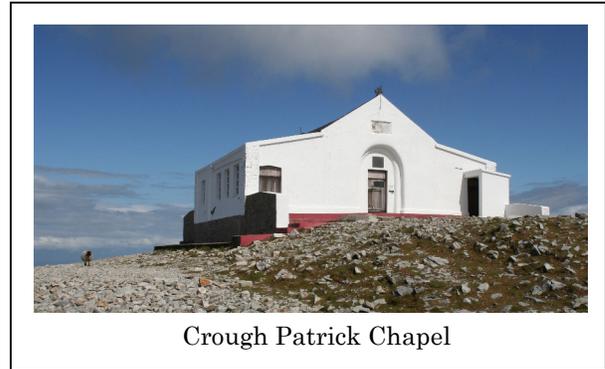
At one point, I chat with a man who is ascending at a good clip. He is a local man and makes the climb weekly for both physical and spiritual benefits. He is a wealth of information. He tells me how the climb gets progressively steeper (from a 22.1° grade to a 41.5° grade) and more difficult - particularly the last half mile; how the many travelers from the prior week's large pilgrimage have loosened the footing on the trail, how my legs will be more tired "like jelly" coming down. I asked him what has changed over the years. "More rescues!" he tells me. "They're pulling people off the mountain with the helicopter every day now. That's because we have more of those 70 year olds still climbing."



The man is walking faster than me, and as he goes ahead he calls back, "Mass at the summit at noon." "OK, see you there," I shout. I realize that I have fallen behind the cadre of people who started about the same time that I did. At first I am a little concerned about being last. Then I remembered that Francis always took up the rear position when traveling. So, perhaps I was actually leading and had only to look back to enjoy the blessing of his seraphic smile. Then I begin to wonder, "With me leading, would he take the opportunity to tease me with some teaching like he did with Brother Leo and "Perfect Joy?"

The local man was very right about the last half mile - yikes! But then, the last hundred yards to the top are very steep. Between the prior week's pilgrimage with its thousands of visitors and today's rain, the trail is quite the slippery mess. It becomes hard for me to tell if I should try to stand or clamber or alternate between the two. I try to think about it. I'm losing my sense of the horizon as the verticality of the trail contrasts with the horizontal of the background. I can just turn back now. I've made no vow that I need to honor. This is not a pride thing. I would be avoiding the danger of the last bit and the return danger of coming back. Instead, I press on.

Maybe the thought of trying to turn around while looking down seemed too much. Going forward simply seemed like the path of least resistance. The summit was a desolate barren gray pile of rocks - an area a bit smaller than the size of a basketball court. I see a couple of ruined stone huts, a couple of memorial rock piles and a place to leave mementos. I carefully place a couple of small painted stones that my wife, Virginia, had given me. There is a nice sign commemorating the summit and tourists are posing there for photos. There is partial clearing and they get a dramatic background panorama. I see that there is a small primitive stone chapel. My ascent took me 2 hours and 45 minutes. It is now 12:15 PM, so I missed the start of the noon Mass. I go up to the chapel.



Crough Patrick Chapel

Although the stone makes it look larger, inside is no bigger than a one car garage. The chapel is quite overflowing and I can only stand at edge of the overflow crowd in the vestibule.

From the sounds of the mumbly responses it seems like they are on the Prayer of the Faithful. I remember what the local expert had told me on the ascent, "It's more dangerous coming down because your legs are jelly." I decide that standing is a very bad thing for me at this moment. I step away and recline on a "comfortable" rock. The non-religious climbers outside of the church are amused at my taking comfort on the hard ground in the fashion of the old saints. Eventually, I hear a call for anyone wanting to take communion to come in. I don't see how that is even possible because no one has yet come out of the chapel, and there is no way in. I decide to stay reclined and get in the last few minutes of my rest. Finally mass is over and a cloud drifts into the summit from the ocean. It brings fog, rain, cold, and wind

(Continued on page 6).

## An Important Reminder

**Reminder! Nancy Menning is the OEF Treasurer. Contributions can be made by sending a check (made out to "Order of Ecumenical Franciscans") to Nancy at:**

**Order of Ecumenical Franciscans  
Nancy Menning, Treasurer  
521 N Aurora St  
Ithaca, NY 14850**



## A Croagh Patrick Pilgrimage... continued

People scurry about. I try repositioning alternately at each exterior side of the chapel to find shelter. Wherever I stand, that is where the cold rain is blowing. I reflect on an old hymn:

*“Stopped into a church  
I passed along the way  
Well I got down on my knees  
And I pretend to pray  
You know the preacher liked the cold  
He knows I'm gonna stay  
California dreamin' on such a winter's day  
("California Dreamin'" -  
The Mamas And The Papas)*

As Mass lets out, the pilgrims and the tourists mix together in the rain. Maybe 50 or 100 people, it was hard to tell as they milled around the small area. I think briefly about St Patrick's original 40 day pilgrimage. How the scene at the summit would change alternately and arbitrarily between a dramatic panoramic view of the glory of all God's creation to a curtain of isolation like now where things can only be seen in prayer.

Among that crowd at the top of the mountain I glance at a heavy older man. He is dressed in an old woolen tweed sport coat and has baggy old-person pants with suspenders. His hair is mussed and his shave is uneven. He is having difficulty with the rain and someone who appears to look like a Mountain Rescue person is helping the old man get his clear plastic rain poncho on in the wind. Looking at the man's apparent lack of agility, I think to myself, "How in God's name did this guy ever get up here in the first place? I surely would not want to watch him trying to make it back down." My mind then moves on to more practical matters. I really need to use the bathroom.

There is a rudimentary stone facility 40 yards away, almost below the level of the horizon, only the top of the structure is visible due to the steepness of the drop. I reassure myself that there must be a path down that does not necessarily result in certain death. Did I mention that I don't do well with heights? Fortunately, the weather has once more descended a shroud on the mountain, and I am relieved from acute acrophobia as I slowly make my way along the barely visible path.

Returning to the top of the summit, very much relieved, I decide that it is a good time for me to start back down. I forgo any romantic spiritual notions of reading my book on Aramaic prayers. Little Sister Kiwi decides to stay in my backpack and forgo any cold wet photo opportunities. There is a break in the wind and rain. The summit is still overcast, but this is still a great



relief. The group that had been at Mass has broken into their small traveling parties and have started on their de-

cent. I like this because I will be able to use those ahead of me as trail markers to find the portions of the trail that are in the best condition (i.e., good footing, no slippage, no walking into cul-de-sacs). I decide to pack my glasses away. They are a bit loose on my ears and if I have a slip, they could go flying - a distraction I would not need. A four foot ahead vision is all I really need. I'm glad for the cloud cover, I can forget about how high I am. I start down, patiently, slowly, carefully. I'm observing the people in front of me. Following the choices of some, rejecting those of others. There is now the added complexity of 2-way traffic as new people are also ascending.

Like walking a tightrope, I keep my mind on the near term, not how far I need to go or how far I could fall. I begin to feel that I have this under control. Then after about 10 minutes of descent, I see him - the big old man from the summit - the one whom I absolutely did not want to see descending. He is moving very slowly, checking each step with his walking stick, being extra careful of avoiding loose rock. His movement is somewhere between plodding and doddering. I can see that his old, cheap work boots were flopping at the soles. Still, between his two feet and the walking stick, he manages to always keep two points of contact on the trail. I need to make a decision. He is slower than everyone, even me. I need to find the opportune time to pass him safely and be on my way. Yet, he seems to be a little wobbly and he is traveling alone. I decide to follow on behind him for a while - to do what, I didn't know. Within a few minutes, the wobbles were getting more pronounced in his upper body as it now begins to over compensate for the movements of his feet. The man starts grunting as if commanding his feet to obey. In a bit, his sound then turns into a cadence of horrible whining screaming grunts as his feet will no longer perform his will. I move a little closer, even though I can do nothing to break any fall. Then he loses it, the hand with the walking stick flies into the air. Only one foot on the loose trail stones as the heavy man thrashes for balance.

I move up along side of him. "Sit!" I command. "Sit down! Now! Sit



## A Croagh Patrick Pilgrimage... continued

down here! Just SIT!" Finally he gets a partial footing, and realizing that he is not falling, he leans and then sits on a rock on the side of the trail. I scoot up beside him to assess the situation. He is clearly incoherent, terrified, and agitated. He appears to have signs of both dehydration and low blood sugar. He is sitting up well enough, but can't talk. I pull out a canteen of water from my backpack and he drinks some. It is a bit of a challenge rummaging through my backpack. I'm holding my walking stick. If I were to put it down it would just hurtle down the trail like a javelin. He and I are blocking the best part of the trail, so folks are diverting around us.



People are stopping to ask if everything is OK. I say, "No, our friend here has collapsed on the trail." I get a variety of well meaning responses. A couple of older ladies wanted to help but could not manage someone that size. Various German climbers plied me with chocolates and some Irish contributed potato chips. A couple of folks mentioned the Mountain Rescue team. "Great! How do we get them?" "We don't know. Try calling them. Do you have a phone?" "Yes, an American phone. How would I call?" "We, don't know." One ascending woman told me that the group behind her had two nurses with them. "Great," I think. "We can get take some vitals and get a physical assessment."

The old man begins to come around but is not thinking clearly and he knows it. He is not yet able to answer some simple questions. I try to give him some of the donated chocolates but he won't take them as he repeats, "I have no pocket to put them in."

Just then a passerby shows up with two large marshmallows. I think that this is about the most useless contribution I can imagine in the middle of this emergency. Sometimes we don't get what we want, we get what we need. I thank the marshmallow donor out of politeness, and so I can go back to focusing on the old man. Then I eat one, both out of acute frustration and to simply get it out of the way. I offer the remaining marshmallow to the old man. Again he tells me he can't take it as he has no room in his pockets. I tell him to put it in his mouth. After about three progressively more emphatic repetitions of this, he begins to eat the marshmallow. Between the marshmallow and the water and the rest, his mind began to clear.

His name was James. He was 70 years old. He had done this climb 19 times since he was 20 years old. This was his second time climbing the mountain this year. James was sweating under his poncho. He had borrowed the poncho and the walking stick from the landlady at the hostel he was staying at near the base of the mountain.

I helped him remove the poncho and stowed it with my rain gear in my backpack. James said



he had no history of heart disease. He was ready for one of the chocolates. He ate it like a small child. The foil went flying down the trail. James had just tossed it. As he ate, pieces of the chocolate bar sheared off as they missed his mouth. We remained parked there for a while, and it had become apparent that there were no nurses or Mountain Rescue assistance coming our way.

We had a good half mile of very steep decent over loose shale before we came to the more gradual, but still rocky trail. If we could get out of this dangerous area, we might have more options. James wanted to start down again, but I could see that he had zero reserves. Anything could go wrong. "OK," I told him, "You go first and set your own course and pace, but we will stop and rest every little bit. That rock down there will



be our next stopping point." I slip on my backpack. I notice the cross logo of the SwissGear brand, but I have no time to consider any prophetic irony of the logo with Matt 16:24 / Luke 9:23.

James was as slow as a toddler - very small steps, yet he chose them carefully and tested each one first with his walking stick. I stay just behind James, protecting his rear. I force descending pilgrims to walk wide around me and stay clear of James. I'm also the buffer for any avalanche of loose shale sent down by a careless youthful climber. And of course, I watch James for signs of fatigue and look for the next rest stop.

We made it to the first of many stops and I gave James some more water. My phone rang and my wife, Virginia wanted to know when I would be down. "Oh, I'm just helping my new friend James...can't talk now." As we slowly continued our now mutual decent, James started a muttering a continuous mantra: "I must have gone totally mad to be here. I'd rather be in prison or a lunatic asylum. If I fall here and crack my head, that will be the end of me."

Mostly James says this litany out loud, to himself; but every now and then he shares it with any passerby. After about an hour James starts speaking a mix of Gaelic and English. Between the wind and the fact that I am walking behind, I really can't hear all that well. I take the topics to be: the C oiste Bodhar (Death Coach), the Dullahan (Death Coach's driver), and the Banshee (the spirit whose cry summons the death

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coach, which naturally can never return empty). I'm not quite



## A Croagh Patrick Pilgrimage... continued

sure if this new topic is a very bad sign (like a Freudian Thanatos) or a good sign (like nice “cheerful” Irish story telling). Reaching back to my best childhood memories of Walt Disney’s 1959 classic “Darby O’Gill and the Little People”, I try my luck with: “Tis a blessing indeed that the Banshee did not put the come hither on you.”

It seemed to work OK. As we moved finally off the steep slope of the summit, things improved. We were spared the risk of plummeting to death, but the trail was still very rocky and we had a long way to go. James was still running on empty and quite fragile. I learned that James also answers to the Gaelic version of his name - Seamus. He now started re-



peating a less ominous litany: “I’ll be glad when I get my back to this.” While encouraged by this new verse, I’m a little baffled. After 19 climbs, has James/Seamus lost his love relation with the mountain entirely, or is it just this near-death situation with me that he wants to end? My water ran out, but twice I was handed water for James by other passing pilgrims. Our conversation got more relaxed as the grade becomes less severe.

We exchanged family stories, talked about people and places. James had been a factory and a road construction worker in his day. James shared his faith story. He spends a good portion of his time on pilgrimages (the less physically demanding kind), novenas, and prayer. He offers up his physical hardships penitentially. He is very interested in the new young pastor that the bishop has assigned to his church. He believes in Universal Recon-

ciliation and that over time God’s mercy saves all. Yet he also believes that God chastises society as a whole for sexual and reproductive misdeeds of individuals. James also gets visions through his inner voice. He has



just finished writing a book on staying optimistic during times of trouble. James would now exchange friendly greeting with passersby, and he would imitate a sheep to tease any dogs accompanying them. Most especially, he would look to greet any babies, asking permission to touch and pray for them.

Many of those people we see now have passed us once as they were going up and have now overtaken us on the descent. They remember us and are happy to see that we are making our way. At some point, James asks me to help take a photo with his camera. He poses for me and I pose for him. Then I get a selfie of the two of us. Eventually I get another phone call from my wife, Virginia. “Yes we are still coming down. Hard to say how much longer.” It turned out to be another hour and one half. Virginia had set up a command center at the base of the mountain. She was debriefing the

returning hikers to hear if they had seen the guy with the cowboy hat. “Oh yes, the one with the hat and the Notre Dame sweatshirt. He’s up there with another fellow who is talking on about how he would rather be in a madhouse or prison. He and your husband must be very old friends - they seem to be chatting and having a grand time.” After 6 hours of descent, we finally made it back. The visitor center is closed for the day and almost everyone has left the mountain. Virginia is there with water and candy bars. James’ hostel is just across the parking lot. My new friend Seamus and I said goodbye. Our parting promise was to stay on each other’s prayer list.

...“I live in a high and holy place. But I also live with anyone who turns away from their sins. I live with anyone who is not proud. I give new life to them. I give it to anyone who turns away from their sins.” (Isaiah 57:15 NIRV)



Croagh Patrick Visitor Center

## AND OF OUR MOTHER...

by David Sparenberg

If animals see and trust you  
 you are somebody  
 if sparrows rest  
 safely on your shoulders  
 if deer drink the silent  
 harmony of water from your palms  
 if the wolf with the lion  
 and the lamb walk beside you  
 if the bear brings you laughter, guidance  
 and wisdom of the medicine bundle and  
 eagle soars high overhead, miming  
 the narrative of new day  
 creation — then you are somebody:  
 beloved of our brother  
 the sun, our sister the moon  
 choreographing life’s waters,  
 and of our Mother the Earth.

—David Sparenberg is a poet, novelist and playwright who lives in Seattle, Washington. He uses his craft to help people cope with life-threatening illness and loss.

\*Submitted by Katie Cook, OEF



# Fellowship News



The Kiwi Regional Fellowship met on 28 July 2017 in the National Library of New Zealand for soup, toast and a catch up. Br. Reg, Br. Rat and Sr. Kiwi were present and we were joined by Grandma Bear who got to know Br. Rat when he was in New Zealand with Sr. Kiwi a couple of years ago. We enjoyed reflecting on Convocation 2017 which was still fresh in our minds and sharing some photos of Convocation and Br. Reg's subsequent travels in the Baltic.



The Kiwi contingent:  
Sr. Helen (Kiwi) and Br. Reg



On August 30th, the Tri-State Fellowship (NY,NJ,PA) gathered for a day of sharing, prayer, embracing joy, and worship. We came together at Marian's and my home in the late morning and began check-in. We went to the local Byzantine Franciscan Friary and had lunch and continued with check-in and sharing. We then spent time in the beautiful Friary Chapel, and walked some of the extensive grounds together. We embraced joy with a visit to a local camel named Humphrey and his caretaker. We worshiped together including partaking in the Table of Holy Communion at the outdoor worship space at Christ Lutheran Church, Conyngham. We ended with some fellowship time and dinner in our home. It was a wonderful day of being-together time.

Peace and all good, Fred Jaxheimer, n/OEF



Tri-Staters: Br. Owusu, Sr. Nancy, Sr. Carol S., Fred, Br. Juniper, Sr. Petra

...And more on the Tri-State gathering:

You can't make this stuff up! The camel (below) shares his presence in Fred's Lutheran Church living stations of the cross every year. As he appears towards the end, his presence usually creates a bottle neck! The young lady is dressed up as a Wise Woman and bonded with Petra over radical minimal use, as she came with her own cup and dishwasher. Her sister had a Standing With Standing Rock tee shirt on, so there is activism deep in the woods!

Love, Carol



Br. Owusu with Wise Woman & Humphrey

## Fellowship News... continued

Hi all! I'm back home and have a little time to report back that I had a wonderful brunch with Anne Nancy and Michael Vosler while in San Francisco on August 26. We met at The Embarcadero on Pier 1. It was quite crowded but we still managed to enjoy visiting and catching up. The photo (below) looks like I need to diet! LOL (I'll work on that one of these days!) Thank you to Bro. Michael and Sister Anne Nancy for the blessed time, which went all too quickly. We discussed current issues and responses to those tensions, the life of the community, and our own personal journeys. We all almost had to run to keep up with Bro. Michael as he wended his way through those crowds to find the right place to dine! It is always good and pleasant to have face-to-face fellowship! Do I hear an "Amen!"? peace and all good--  
David D

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Anne Nancy and I got together with (Br. David D and Yosef) in SF on Saturday, the 26th at the Ferry Building for brunch — so, that's a report of a Rendezvous to add to your report. That was the day of the Patriot Prayers Demonstration, so Thom Longino went to counter-demonstrate — the PPD was called off at the last minute; and Betty Lou as a high-level government employee was forbidden to come to SF because of those demonstrations. Still, the life of the Tri-State Fellowship and the Golden Gate Fellowship mingled on the pier by the Embarcadero.

Peace! and all good!  
michael v.



Br. David, Sr. Anne Nancy & Br. Michael on the pier

And more Kiwi news:

Thank you all for birthday wishes. the day itself was a good one. My friend and I took a picnic lunch to Zealandia Eco sanctuary here in Wellington. We had lovely weather and a very enjoyable day walking the bush trails and seeing and hearing many of our native birds.

Yesterday (Oct. 2) I joined with some 3 TSSF members some OFS members and 3 Capuchin friars to celebrate Transitus; a moving occasion. (See photo below - Sr. Kiwi is in the second row on the left) love to all.  
Kiwi



Lots of fellowship going on this month! Five intrepid Great Lakers met Oct. 5 - 7 for our annual Francistide retreat at Assisi Heights in Rochester, MN. The theme for the weekend was "Common Thread - Common Cord." We shared our stories of searching and finally finding OEF, then discussed what binds us together and keeps us as an Order. We spent some time in quiet solitude, and gathered together for worship. We talked about how our regional fellowships are organized and brainstormed some ideas for future Chapter locations to be shared with the Council. OEF-ers present were Dale Carmen, Craig-Robert Miller, Keith Downey, John Syvertson and Christine Petersen. Ron Nuss-Warren and Kathleen D. were greatly missed!

Peace  
Sister Chris



## “A Pilgrim in Assisi: Searching for Francis Today”

A Book Review By Neal Dunnigan, OEF



So, I was in Athlone (just about the geographical center of Ireland) and haphazardly stopped in a tiny second hand book store. I happened to see a title that I had seen before on Amazon, but had never read. I could not resist the bargain price for this 1981 paperback edition that seems to have been treated so kindly by its many previous owners. That afternoon, I secluded myself on a rock in the bulrushes along the shore of Lough Res and quietly devoured the book. By the time I was done, I stood up momentarily thinking I was in Italy, not Ireland.

The work in question may already be familiar to many of you: “A Pilgrim in Assisi: Searching for Francis Today” by Susan Saint Sing, OFS.

The book had never made it to the top of my reading queue. I had a somewhat mistaken notion that it was some kind of travelogue. Personally, while I embrace pilgrimages, I’m pretty skeptical and therefore disinterested in historic destination pilgrimages. The amount of imagination that I would need to see past the modern trappings takes away a lot of my enthusiasm.

Of course, “A Pilgrim in Assisi” is no more a travelogue than “Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance” is about motorcycle mechanics. Susan Saint Sing got right to the heart of my disinterest in describing her efforts to see past the modern. She applies her imagination in a way reminiscent of Ignatian Spirituality. While the book is primarily prose, she has a free style that maintains the looseness of poetry. I don’t know if it was her intention, but I found the book’s structure to be reminiscent of the Stations of the Cross. The author takes various locations in Assisi, and devotes a page or two of meditative reflection to each, juxtaposing what she physically perceives with what she intuitively feels.

I was led to recall a once popular book from long ago called “Zen Flesh, Zen Bones.” In the foreword, Paul Reps reminds the reader that this, as well as any text, can only provide bones and that it is up to the reader to make the marrow.

While “A Pilgrim in Assisi” is a wonderful treatment of Susan Saint Sing’s visit, it did not leave me a sudden desire to go to Assisi. For me the work was metaphorical. The pilgrimage to Assisi represented the pilgrimage of

my life as I look to realize my rule. A lot to meditate on. Anyway, I was pleasantly surprised by the book, so I thought I would share.

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*For those of you who were out of touch with Little Sister Kiwi since Chapter, here is an update...*

This is the statue of St Francis at the Friary in Ennis, Ireland. The plaques on the left and right (English and Gaelic) say: "Praised be you my Lord, with all of your creatures."



If you look at the next photo, you can see who showed up in the Saint's hands (next to the ladybug.)

Athlone:



And a close-up:



## Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Submissions for the Epiphany 2018 issue of “Fiddlesticks” are being accepted immediately.

Deadline for submissions is Dec. 15, 2017.

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.



## Canticle of the Creatures

a poetic adaptation by David Sparenberg



Highest, most powerful and goodly Lord  
 to you only go praise and honor, benedictions  
 of all kinds and every glory  
 to you only, Most High do these belong  
 no man being worthy to signify your name

praise my Lord through all creation--  
 especially through the lord my Brother Sun  
 shining with the gift of day  
 dispensing to us bounteous light,  
 beautiful and resplendent with brightness  
 to you my Lord he is most like in likeness

praise my Lord through our Sister  
 the Moon and moving stars  
 set heaven high by your high hand  
 beautifully arrayed, precious and most bright

praise my Lord through my Brother the Wind  
 and every breeze and all degrees  
 of alternating weather

praise my Lord through my Sister Flowing Water  
 useful she is-- a humble, chaste and priceless treasure

praise my Lord through my Brother Master Fire  
 who sparkles for us in the dead of night  
 his dancing lithe and bright, joyous  
 and abounding with power

praise my Lord through our Sister Mother Earth  
 who upholds and nurtures us  
 bringing forth reviving fruits, flowers  
 of many hues and helpful herbs

praise my Lord through those who show forgiveness  
 through love of you  
 enduring the painful perils of time and harsh adversity  
 blessed are they who persevere in peacefulness  
 for by you, Most High are they adorned

praise and bless my Lord most truly  
 and render thanks and service to him  
 greatly and with great humility

*\*Submitted by Katie Cook, OEF*