

FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 116

Franciside 2015



“My God and My All” – St Francis of Assisi By Mark Whitten, n/OEF

Editor’s note: The following was offered by Mark as a lay reflection at St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church near his home in Hermosa, MS

It was in the year 1209. [This was before the saint had obtained any followers, about two years after the now famous vision that St Francis had at the San Damiano cross where he received direction to “rebuild my church which, you can see, is in ruin.”] Francis had occupied himself largely with a literal interpretation of that holy commission and was physically restoring abandoned chapels in the Italian countryside. Francis had also cast off all previously held privileges of class and family wealth in exchange for a simple, poor, life that he vowed to live completely for God

A wealthy lord, Bernard of Quintavalle, took notice of the harsh, poor living condition of Francis and also the public mockery that he endured with happy patience (some actually thought that Francis had lost his mind). Bernard recognized that Francis possessed tremendous grace and decided to invite him into his home to learn more.

That night, after dinner, Bernard had a guest bed brought to his own room. Bernard intended to test the holiness of Francis by secretly observing him through the night. As it was, both men pretended sleep, Bernard to hide his secret intentions, Francis to hide his prayer communion with God. After a short time, when Francis believed Bernard to be asleep, he arose in the early night, knelt, and began to adore God with the simple prayer “My God and my all” repeated gently, over and over throughout the remainder of the night.

Bernard observed the tremendous devotion that Francis had for God and while meditating on his words and actions was touched in the heart by the Holy Spirit and inspired to change his life. This event led to the conversion of Lord Bernard who thereafter sold his possessions and followed Francis as the first of what would soon become many Friars Minor.

Francis recognized himself as a creation of God and learned to see the imprint of God in all those around him. What did he mean when he prayed the simple “My God and my all”? Was he acknowledging that all that he had came from God? Was he promising to give his whole self to God? Was he admitting his weakness, his need for God's grace in every occasion? Did he realize that God was in him and he in God?

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this Issue:

- My God and My All - St. Francis of Assisi
- An Invitation from OLF
- Servant Team Meeting Minutes - 9/13/15
- Brother Rat’s Rule Report
- Words from Teresa of Avila
- Seeking Second Round of Proposed Amendments
- A Message From Our Minister General
- Regional News
- Formation Station
- A Prayer for the Earth - Laudato Si!

“My God and My All”... continued

I believe that it was some of these and something more, something currently beyond my consideration, resulting from his direct communion with God while in deep prayer.

In our Christian lives today, Jesus places two commandments above all others. In Mark 12 verses 29 through 31 when asked, Jesus said:

“... The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' The Second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these.”

How do we experience love? How do we love our neighbor as ourselves? Who, in this case, is our neighbor?

As a Lay Franciscan, the order that I am in formation with requires me to have a personal rule of life that challenges me to be in alignment with the general principles of the order. The last sentence of my personal rule reads “I seek the beauty and grace of Christ in all of my brothers and sisters, recognizing that our differences make us whole in community with the help of our Lord Christ.” This directly relates to Christ's commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves.

This is our challenge, to see the imprint of our loving creator in all people. Not just our family, not just our friends, not just our fellow parishioners, all people.



Easier said than done. Certainly, I strive to treat my loved ones with respect, patience, dignity. But at the same time, I find myself quite guarded with strangers, uncomfortable in new places, uncertain and judgmental, my human nature is full of internally voiced assumptions when I meet anyone that is obviously different than I.

How can I silence this internal monologue that categorizes and judges everyone that is a strange neighbor to me?

I know for certain that I will not meet everyone fairly in Christian love without the help of God, I've acknowledged that it is not in my human nature.

I have found some notable success as I continue to develop a discipline of relying on God in all situations that cause me anxiety.

I have discovered Francis' simple prayer to be very practical. “My God and my all”. It is powerful to invoke the presence of God by simply calling out. It is reassuring to positively acknowledge that all good things come from God and he is my strength in the face of human anxiety. It is really hard to not smile and find joy either in the call to God or in imagining Francis gently praying this prayer all night long. It is hard to have our savior and the saint so closely at mind and heart and still remain critical of the stranger I might be physically encountering.

When I leave my car, when I enter the store, when I approach this parish, when I see a stranger in the distance, while waiting in line, when I encounter the poor, when I interact with young people or people older and wiser than myself, I try to keep these words either quietly vocalized or mentally in time with my breath. “My God and my all.” This prayer fills my heart with love and puts a joyful smile on my face.

Please pray with me...

“My God and my all.

My God and my all.”

May the peace of our Lord be with you. Amen.

ADVENT FRANCISCAN RETREAT

December 10-12, 2015

Shalom Retreat Center, an Institution of The Sisters of St. Francis in Dubuque, Iowa.

Proposed agenda includes:

- A brief study of Pope Francis' recent "Laudato Sii" Encyclical on environmental issues;
- Professor Winston Persaud of Wartburg Theological Seminary, a participant in the Lutheran/Roman Catholic Dialogues, to facilitate a conversation on the growing ecumenical relationship among Protestants and the Roman Catholic Church;
- Worship and fellowship

Registration for two nights/six meals is \$175 a person (this includes presenter fee).

We need a minimum of five registrations to make this retreat.

The retreat is open to all Franciscan kin.

Registration deadline is Sunday, Nov. 22.

Contact Br. Ron Yarnell (OLF) for more information or to register.

roneyarnell@gmail.com



OEF Servant Team 9-13-15

from the Scribe's desk



Meeting began at 8:00 pm

Shoshanah opens in prayer

Juniper check-in: busy fall, school year, 2 online courses, 2 standard courses, challenging care issues in the senior apartments; Br. Derek, SSF died 10 days ago- Brooklyn memorial will be on 10/4.

Petra check-in: new friendships; new work with a life coach; worshipping at an Episcopal Church regularly.

Romero [check-in]: fighting with the Trump campaign; challenging Quakers to speak on racial justice issues surrounding the presidential campaign; looking for people of faith to express alternative visions.

Shoshanah [check-in]: youngest son moved to college; Bruce & Shoshanah moved to new house in Willimantic. Donating many items to a tag sale at Bruce's Church; visiting Sister for a few days before representing OEF at TSSF and OFS gatherings.

Brs. Elias & Louis Canter representing OEF at Franciscan Unity planning meeting; Immaculata Retreat has rescheduled our meeting to November.

CJ [check-in]: ongoing efforts to sell home; investigating chaplaincy in Nashville, TN area.

JM [check-in] start of school, church, etc.; preserving and preparing the garden produce.

Items for discernment:

1. OEF conflict resolution process

a. Request that the Minister name a discernment group to study and propose a set of norms for communication and conflict transformation:

i. Incorporate Community Covenant, biblical resources, community resources, meditation training that is available;

ii. Creating a culture for mending and re-setting boundaries;

iii. Present the means to Chapter 2016.

2. Response to flagrant racism in the presidential campaign:

a. Co-minister reflection on website;

b. Draft of a servant team messages/commitments.

3. Formation- 15 inquirers in process.

4. Face to Face Meeting:

a. Helping the community discern about the council;

b. Helping the council discern its tasks;

c. Discerning about reporting;

d. How to give pastoral care to the order as current servant team.

CJ closes in prayer.

Next meeting: November 1-3, Willimantic, CT at Immaculata Center.

Peace and All Good,

John Michael Longworth, OEF



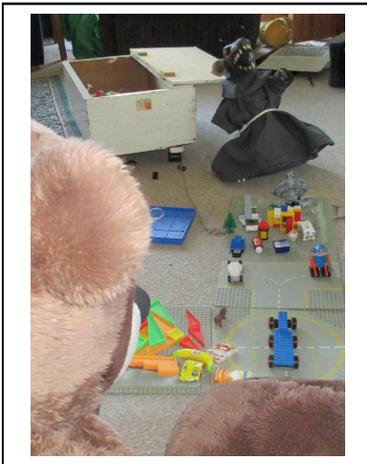
Brother Rat's Rule Report

October 2015

O woe is me! My trials continue. Helen's mother came to stay and she took exception to my good looks, so I was banished to Helen's bedroom. The down side of that was that I was present at Morning Prayer for a whole week. No way of escape!

Not long after Helen's mother left, a grandson came to stay- the seven year old I had met in Carterton. He and Helen visited an exhibition about Gallipoli - a battle in World War 1 which the Australia and New Zealand Army Corps lost to the Turks. When they got home, Elias set up the battle scene on the lounge floor. Good, I thought, some fun at last! But then he put me in charge of the ANZAC force and Big Bear in charge of the Turks. Putting **ME** on the losing side, whatever next?

I am so not suited to community living. Has anyone got a nice quiet closet for me for next year?



Brother Rat



Words from Tereza of Avila

Christ has no body on Earth now, but yours:

No hands but yours;

No feet but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which

He is to look out his compassion to the world.

Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good.

And yours are the hands with which he is to bless us now.



Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Submissions for the Epiphany 2016 issue of "Fiddlesticks" are being accepted immediately.

Deadline for submissions is December 15, 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!



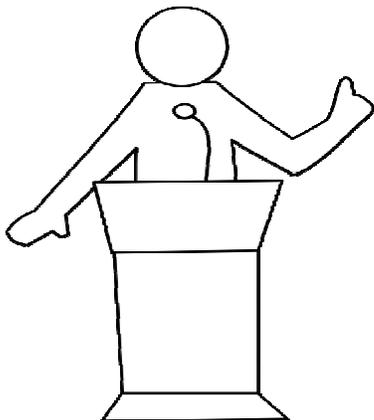
Seeking Second Round of Proposed Amendments to the 2015 Draft Statutes

Hi, to all the members of OEF

As part of the process of developing the OEF Statutes, we are asking you for proposed amendments. These proposals should be posted to the "Second Stage Statutes Forum" in the Cloister on the OEF Webpage. If this is difficult for you, please email or mail your proposed amendment to me or any other member of the committee, and we will place them on the Cloister for you. As your proposals come in, the Committee will take them up as we discern our recommendation for a modified Draft Statutes for the 2016 Chapter.

The community gathered in Saint Louis was excited about the draft statutes. The Chapter accepted the proposal for a Council and the process to select a Council at the 2016 Chapter. Chapter embraced the concept and way of discernment described in the 2015 Draft Statutes.

But much work remains to complete the Statutes. Many amendments have been offered and undoubtedly many of you have proposals you would like to make in shaping the final draft of the Statutes. The Second Stage Statutes Committee, constituted at Chapter, met on August 19th: Br. Bruce James, Sr. Markie, Sr. Magdalena, Br. Obadiah, Br. Romero and I. We have begun to take each of the statutes comments posted to the



Cloister prior to Chapter and to address each as a proposed amendment to the 2015 Draft Statutes. We are implementing the Chapter determination that some of the content of the 2015 Draft Statutes should be moved from the Statutes to a Book of Norms. The Second Stage Statutes Committee will have a revolving convener. We have met twice and will be meeting again on Nov 8th.

So that the membership has time to reflect and pray prior to the 2016, we have set a goal to have our draft ready for mid-February. Chapter is Memorial Day weekend in Indianapolis.

Please post your amendment to the OEF webpage in the forum thread or email them to me at jgrbklyn@gmail.com or mail them to me at Juniper OEF, 103 Pilling St Apt 3, Brooklyn NY 11207

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Hugs and blessings,

Juniper





A Message From Our Co-Minister General



I penned the following reflection upon accepting the invitation to attend the annual TSSF Chapter in Chicago as your OEF representative I shared it as an expression of our solidarity during their "Day of Discernment".

*Their discernment questions included:
"What do you want to do? How do you want to be?"
"What is God saying to the Third Order?"
"Will the Third Order continue as the old order, or is God inviting us to discover a new pattern?"*

Sharing has been deep and rich. I am grateful to be here.

I could give statistics, but, simply put, we are small and growing.

I could give facts, but I choose to give flavor.

I could list the many things we've been up to, but I choose to share this one:

Our decision to discern together -- in prayer -- about anything and everything, trusting that God will lead us to who-knows-where to do who-knows-what, who knows how and God-knows-why. And no matter the what, where and why, we just wanna be true.

~~~~~\*~~~~~\*~~~~~\*~~~~~

My husband and I just sent our youngest off to college. He went on crutches

with a broken leg.

He said he wanted wings...

~~~~~\*~~~~~\*~~~~~\*~~~~~

You, TSSF, gave birth to us, the OEF, and sent us off. We're your kid -- small, but growing. In our youthful optimism, we want to sing and dance and change the world. We want to be the best that our churches gladly are and all that our churches sadly are not:

humble and honest and open, inclusive, inviting, daring and caring, listening and giving, surrendered and willing, courageously kind, warm and alive, faithful and free.

We want to follow Jesus in the way of Francis, in the way of Clare. We want to kiss the leper, feed the hungry, save the planet, stop the violence, end the war, tear down the walls, build the bridges, open the gates, rebuild the church.

We mean so well yet we fall so hard.

But we get back up and try to walk with our broken leg as we pray to God and beg for wings . . .

~~~~~\*~~~~~\*~~~~~\*~~~~~

By this I mean to say:

We are not a perfect little Order of perfect little mini-monks. We are -- each and all -- a mix and a mess. And our beautiful blessed beloved little Order can be as dysfunctional, distracted and distressed as any.

But we stick it out, and we stick together because we've caught a glimpse of the humble Christ who walks among us and shows a different way and a bigger love.

So we look for him. We listen for him. We try to be still and we try to wait 'til we catch a glimpse of this humble Christ.

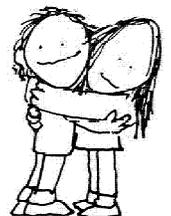
Then we run to catch up. And we try to pitch in. And we work so hard and we mean so well as we try to walk with our broken leg to who-knows-where to do who-knows-what, who-knows-how and God-knows-why -- 'cause we just wanna be true --

We just wanna be true. Just like you. So just like you: We stick it out and we stick together. We strain to see 'til we catch a glimpse of the different way and the bigger love. Then grabbing hands and holding tight, we throw down our crutches and we run to catch up. We roll up our sleeves and we try to pitch in.

And we pray to God

and we beg for wings . . .

Shoshanah Kay, Co-Minister





## Regional News

Submitted by Kathleen Dlugosz, n/OEF and Sister Chris Petersen, OEF



The OEF Great Lakes Region had our annual Francistide retreat Sept. 30 - Oct. 3 at Assisi Heights Spirituality and Retreat Center in Rochester, MN. In attendance were Sr. Christine Petersen, Br. Craig Robert Miller, Br. Keith Downey, Kathleen Dlugosz and inquirer David Hottinger.

Christine and Kathleen began the retreat with an extra day at a retreat sponsored by Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in St. Paul, MN. This retreat addressed "Spirituality in the Second Half of Life." They experienced a sampling of several different spirituality practices, including Lectio Divina, Mandalas, Walking Meditation, Spiritual Inventory, T'ai Chi, Spiritual Friendship and Journaling. They shared some of these materials with OEF siblings during the regional gathering.

At the gathering, some of the siblings attended an educational session hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Assisi Heights titled "Saintly Lives of Four Teresas." The discussion included the lives of St. Teresa of Avila, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (aka Edith Stein) and St. Theresa of Lisieux. The siblings found it interesting, and Br. Keith and Sr. Chris each won a door prize!

The agenda for the gathering was very loose by design. The group decided it was more valuable to spend time in fellowship than in programmed activities. Mandalas, games and music were made available throughout the weekend. We did some personal sharing about what drew us to OEF for the benefit of our new inquirer.



We spent some time discussing possible venues for future retreats and siblings volunteered to research different sites. We also discussed making a recommendation to the Servant Team for a future Chapter to be held at Assisi Heights. Possible sites for regional gatherings include Assisi Heights in Rochester, MN; Franciscan Spirituality Center in La Crosse, WI; UCC retreat center in Buffalo, MN; OFM Priory in Prior Lake, MN; the Methodist retreat center in Williams Bay, WI (near Lake Geneva); and the Dominican Retreat Center in the Twin Cities, MN. This region is looking into the Williams Bay facility or Craig Robert's home retreat center in Peoria, IL for next year's Francistide retreat.

On Friday afternoon, Craig Robert led us in a discussion of the Encyclical, "Laudato Sii," by Pope Francis. We discussed the major points of the document and committed to encourage the Order members to participate in the Green Faith Webinar sponsored by FAN. Br. Craig agreed to make contact with FAN about how to access this session. The suggestion was to make it available at Chapter, 2016 so that the membership can all be certified.

We had a Eucharist Service in the chapel on Friday evening with bread made by Kathleen and using Br. Craig's special challis and paten from Ireland. More fellowship Friday evening led to our departure Saturday morning. A good time was had by all!





# Formation Station

Hi all!

## New Novice

History was made in St. Ronan’s Presbyterian Church, Eastbourne, New Zealand on 3 September 2015, when Brother Reg Weeks made his novice vow and became a novice in the OEF. Also gathered to witness the occasion were Reg’s minister, Michelle Shin, and his spiritual director, Peter Stuart. In a short ceremony Sister Helen Bathurst (Sister Kiwi) heard Reg’s vows and presented him with his Tau cross and his wall San Damiano cross.

Sister Kiwi



L-R Sister Kiwi, Reg Weeks and Peter Stuart

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With Great Love,

Dear friends and fellow OEFers,

Some of you know that I am a survivor of domestic violence. A connection to my past has popped up, not my ex-husband, and I want to assure you that I am in no immediate danger.

However, I do feel the need to retire from public life to protect my privacy and the safety of myself and my family.

I am resigning effective immediately from my Servant Team role and I have requested that the Team appoint one of my assistants, Br. Romero as interim DFC until the Chapter meeting in Indianapolis. I hope you will support

him in prayer and encouragement. In addition, I request release from my vows so that I can be relieved of all public connections with the Order.

I prayerfully request that you would allow me to withdraw via this notice rather than publicly at Chapter.

Second, I would ask that you never speak of me to anyone new inside or outside of the Order. Sharing my description, situation or location or any point of reference at all could compromise my well-being.

I hope to keep in touch with those who are dear to my heart but it depends on keeping information private. I covet your prayers and assure you of mine.

Pace Bene,

Sr. Allegrezza

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## A Message From the Servant Team:

The Servant Team met for discernment this week, seeking a way to ensure that the important work of formation would continue. It seemed wise to the Holy Spirit and to us to call an Interim Formation Director and to provide guidance that would strengthen the office in the years to come.

With joy and gratitude, we your Servants announce that Brother David Luke Hutton has agreed to serve as Interim Formation Director.

Please hold David Luke and all of us in prayer as he selects the team of formation assistants best able to share in this most important work for our Order.

Peace and all good to each of you.



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



**“A Prayer for the Earth”**  
*from the Encyclical, “Laudato Sii,” by Pope Francis*



All powerful God,  
 You are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.  
 You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.  
 Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.  
 O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.  
 Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray,  
 in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

Amen.

