

FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 121

Epiphany 2017



The OEF Generosity Campaign

By Brothers Gary Coyote Nabhan and Michael Vosler

At our 2015 Chapter Gathering as the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, we learned together that our Order needs to take a more conscientious relationship to how we support our mission and being-an-Order out of the personal resources of each member. We (Brothers Gary Nabhan and Michael Vosler) volunteered and were named to examine our current patterns of support and to reflect that back to the Order in a manner that delineates those patterns without attaching names to amounts of contributions. This is our report.

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Essentially we have two areas of Order Life to support: (1) Our Chapter/Convocation expenses met largely by our Registration fees, but also drawing from our general funds; and (2) all other Order activity and commitments (think FAN & the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity), and sharing our resources with people & places in need. It's this 2nd part of our budget that depends upon our contributions as Members whether we attended Chapter or not. We looked at our pattern of giving for the year 2015, Jan. 1st thru Dec. 31st.

Our 1st discovery was that some of our membership give in a very regular pattern: some as one gift for the year; some give quarterly; some give monthly. Others give with no discernible pattern. And some did not contribute during that year.

Obviously, the more of us who are able to give in a regular pattern make it easier for our Council and Purse-keeper to plan activity and schedule our Order expenses and commitments.

Our 2nd discovery was that our giving fits rather discernibly into four groupings regarding the amount we are able and willing to contribute. (Continued on page 2)

OEF GENEROSITY CAMPAIGN, CONTINUED...

This will of course vary with what is available to each of us, and what else we support. Those groupings are:

Generous - from \$400 to \$2000 per year (from \$33 to \$167 per month)

Moderate - from \$200 to \$399 per year (from \$17 to \$32 per month)

Modest - from \$50 to \$199 per year (from \$4 to \$16 per month)

Symbolic - From \$1 to \$49 per year

This is from the perspective of “amounts received.” From the perspective of the giver, a contribution deemed “Moderate” above could have been exceedingly “generous” in terms of one’s ability and willingness to give, or might have been “modest” when ability to give is considered.

That still leaves those who did not contribute during that calendar year. Frankly, there are a larger number of those than we expected, and we have committed to having conversations with those members. National Public Radio is supported in part by contributions from listeners, and every year they hear from people who intended to send a contribution but never got around to it — until this year! Yay!

There’s a bit of that among us. Some may have missed the 2015 cut-off but have already sent in something toward 2016.

Expecting that you give to your faith community and perhaps to one or more charities and causes, how much are YOU able to give to our Order this year?

How much are you willing to give to our Order this year?

What will be your pattern in the course of

the year of giving that amount?

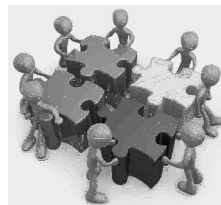
Sharing that with the Keeper of the Purse would be very helpful, even if you have to say “sporadically”.

The promise we claim is that we all participate as we are able and willing. As Professed and Novices certainly, but as Associates and Postulants as well. Readers of Fiddlesticks, participants in our OEF-list conversations, Facebook Friends, yes, we invite your support of OEF through prayers and gifts.

It’s another way to sing an Alleluia of Thanksgiving for God’s grace through abundance and scarcity, and for being led to participate as Franciscans in the life and mission of this little Order.

In gratitude for you, without whom we could not be “us”....

Brothers Gary Coyote Nabhan and Michael Vosler





A Message From Our Council



Well this is not a Star Wars movie, as in action-packed adventure with danger around every corner, but our new leadership format is an adventure. We thought you all might want a peek into our adventure. We started off in May running fast. With weekly conference calls and a short gathering in Philly. While in Philly we spent time discussing our charge, next year's Chapter/Convocation and various concerns. We also attended the meeting with other Franciscans from the Roman Catholic, Episcopal and Lutheran Orders.

Throughout the fall we have realized this is a marathon and we have moved to every other week for our conference calls. We have had discussions with our Formation Team, Fellowship Coordinator, Treasurer and several others. We are planning to gather in Orlando the first week of Jan. to discuss the budget and plan for our Chapter/Convocation in Chicago in late June. The work of administration in our little Order is great with small but important details. Such as the need of keeping good records for future Councils, our 501(3)c status, by-laws and general record keeping surrounding Chapter/Convocation concerns (contracts).

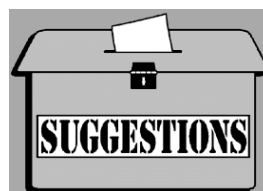
We are all grateful for your prayers and support. We would like to hear from you. Your thoughts, words of encouragement and ideas are important to us. It keeps us going. We are honored to serve. We also want you to be engaged in the life of the Order, so we think the more you know and the more you share with us the richer we all will be.

We are committed to submitting an article to each Fiddlesticks issue as well as a Council letter to the membership as often as needed.

Again, please call, snail mail or email us.

Blessing to each one of you during this Advent season.

Markie Oliver, OEF





IRS and Us

By Dale Carmen, OEF



As the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, we are a religious order and we are in relationship with the Internal Revenue Service. We were incorporated in the State of North Dakota in November of 1983; and after a revision, were re-affirmed a 501(c)(3) tax-exemption status as a non-profit in April of 1991.

Sometimes our IRS status and classification has been an issue of concern. So, this fall I followed a trail which ended with Patrick J. Brown, Certified Public Accountant, who checked our historical papers and put this information and affirmation into the hands of the OEF Council.

Our standing as a 501(c)(3) public charity is intact, and we have annually updated the appropriate IRS form. In answer to the question, "Should we seek recognition as a religious organization?", we are told that there is some risk of denial and no great advantage in doing so. Being in compliance is quite sufficient.

Our identity as "religious" doesn't come from the IRS. Our identity as a religious order has come to us gradually through a collective practice of our Principles and Rule of Life, and through our Community life in the spirit of Francis of Assisi. We are blessed.

P.S. As always, there is a story behind the factual details. In the physical journey to clarify our IRS standing, I found Franciscan spirituality everywhere. At the IRS office there were printed and audio 'guides', in several languages; for U.S. citizens, green card workers, visiting students and immigrants. Every place is

the mission field and our Principles include everyone.

In the IRS parking lot I bumped into a farmer from a parish I had once served. One of his sons I had visited in jail and another son died in a car accident and we had held each other at his funeral. I saw healing and knew my OEF community had a part in the new hope of this farm family.

Patrick J. Brown, CPA, was recommended as one who worked with non-profits. I found his office in downtown Bismarck right next to the Heartview Foundation. In the last 30 years, I have recommended Heartview to many people needing drug and alcohol rehabilitation services; and personally walked a few through their front door. I am indebted to this Foundation and know that my Franciscan brothers and sisters work towards mental, physical and spiritual health.

I found Patrick J. Brown, CPA to be a kind and humble soul. I jokingly asked if he could make his reply to the OEF Council, "look presidential" and sign it with a flourish of great importance. His one contact with the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans lit up a smile of Franciscan joy.

We walk together on a journey of faith and love,

Dale Carmen OEF



FAN Statement on Civil Discourse in Response to 2016 Presidential Election



Submitted by Nancy Menning, OEF



In response to Tuesday's election results, FAN has issued this statement on civil discourse.

We hold these truths to be self-evident; that we are created equal and that our discourse with one another is marked by mutual respect, considerate listening, and a genuine concern for the common good.

Unfortunately, we have experienced a national loss of civil discourse and the long ignored problems impacting families and institutions have been laid bare. Attitudes of hatred, sensationalism, rigidity, and greed have taken root and given rise to name-calling, exploitation, unashamed selfishness, and corruption.

Pope Francis addressed our Congress and spoke to all Americans, asking that our collective response to polarization, "be one of hope and healing, of peace and justice [because] the challenges facing us today call for a renewal of that spirit of cooperation...and resolve to support one another, with respect for our differences and our convictions of conscience."

When speaking with fellow citizens in the coming days and weeks, try to hear their frustrations and anxiety with an ear toward understanding where they are coming from. We all have deep feelings that, instead of being ignored, should be acknowledged so they can be healed.



Therefore, we ask you to join us in **taking the FRANCIS PLEDGE: Commitment to Civility in Discourse. Commit to:**

Facilitate a forum for difficult discourse and acknowledge that dialogue can lead to new insight and mutual understanding.

Respect the dignity of all people, especially the dignity of those who hold an opposing view.

Audit myself and utilize terms or a vocabulary of faith to unite or reconcile rather than divide conflicting positions.

Neutralize inflamed conversations by presuming that those with whom we differ are acting in good faith.

Collaborate with others and recognize that all human engagement is an opportunity to promote peace.

Identify common ground such as similar values or concerns and utilize this as a foundation to build upon.

Support efforts to clean up provocative language by calling policy makers to their sense of personal integrity.

In her book *Beyond Apathy: A Theology for Bystanders*, Dr. Elisabeth Vasko says "To be a Christian is to take sides with those who are marginalized, dehumanized and subject to violence. Whether we like it or not neutrality isn't an option. In the face of violent activity, to hide behind the mirror of ignorance is to take sides with the powers that be." We could substitute any and all faith traditions for Christian in her statement and it would be the same. Pope Francis called for a "Bold Cultural revolution", a revolution of Spirit, a reawakening of our interconnectedness. We need a "coming together" so we are in relationship with all as brothers and sisters and not separate.

So let's continue this bold cultural revolution. Of course no one ever said the revolution would be easy, quick and painless.

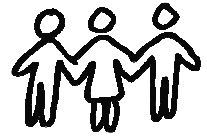
Peace and All Good,
Patrick Carolan
Executive Director



A Reflection on the Visit with the Order of Lutheran Franciscans



By Louis Canter, OEF

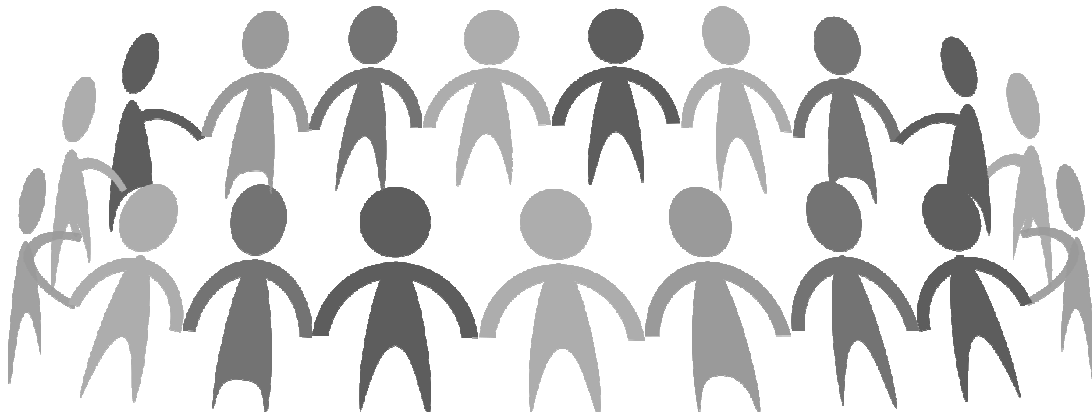


(This past September) I had the privilege of sharing in the Chapter of the Order of Lutheran Franciscans. Brother Christopher Markert, founder and Minister General of the young Order has roots with us as he did formation with us. Another Brother of the Order, Brother Joseph Byrd, also spent time in formation with us, so it was very comforting to be among them and to know they have a connection with us.

The Order while young, five years old this year, has grown rapidly in the past year. In fact there were more postulants, inquirers and novices than professed at the gathering, which brought much joy to Br. Chris. The chapter was divided into formation, like our convocation portion, and business meetings. There were times of Liturgical prayer and Eucharist and free time to share and connect. Like our Order, they meet once a year. Because of the growth of the community, they have decided to break into three provinces with a provincial to minister to these provinces.

The hope of the community is that there will be good communication and provincial meetings throughout the year besides the one chapter they meet. They are interested in reaching out to the SFO and to the OEF as well and asked for information regarding our regions and those living within the regions.

It was exciting to see, pray and to live with this community and see how God is raising up a wonderful Lutheran Franciscan sister and brotherhood. What a gift to witness how God is calling more and more to follow the little poor man Francis and Clare, the mirror of love.





TSSF PROVINCIAL MEETING REPORT

from Brother Michael Vosler/oef, October 2016



To sit for 5 days with our Brothers and Sisters of TSSF, to pray with, to sing with, and to attend their working through the issues and joys of their entire Order, is to live into our OEF memory of Sister Dale Carmen journeying with members of this Order who welcomed her as a TSSF Postulant and Novice before OEF existed. It would be these same travelers in the way of St. Francis and St. Clare that would discern with Dale the possibility of launching an ecumenical energy for another expression of the Franciscan Charism. With their help along with Brother Robert Hugh and others of the SSF, OEF came to be.

The setting for this TSSF Province Chapter Meeting, for 5 days in October of 2016, was the San Damiano Retreat Center in the hills above Danville, CA, run by Members of the OFM, providing the feel and beauty and hospitality of a Franciscan monastery. Minister Provincial Tom Johnson, who was a recent attendee at OEF's Chapter-Convocation, guided the proceedings.

There are so many parallels of concern for our two Orders, including the worship/prayer centeredness of the time design and process of discernment along the way of together "deciding" an issue or a direction for the short-term or long-term future.

- Due time was given to under-girding TSSF Fellowships as the primary means of sustaining the TSSF community, and enabling the annual Regional Gatherings and the National Gatherings. A guiding Essay on Fellowships was provided by the new Fellowships Coordinator, Peter Stube, and could contribute to our own discernments around initiating and nurturing our local and regional fellowships. This "missional model" was adopted by the Province to invite focus "on the ministry we exercise personally and corporately."
- The Brazil Regional Chapter was represented and its connections to the TSSF Provincial Chapter further shaped. A Special Formation Director for Latin America was appointed as a 3-year trial Jim Hagen serving in that role.

- An extensive new Formation guide was presented bearing the title "Forming the Life of a Franciscan, 2016".
- Ongoing Formation of the Professed was addressed by inviting Professed Members to prepare essays and reflections on Franciscan themes that could be circulated among the membership (echoes of Paul's letters to the various churches circulated among them).
- Giving support from the Fellowships to "spear points of service" through prayer, live-bodies and skills, alms, and study of particular projects was offered as a re-visioning of service participation.

Three SSF happenings were celebrated: (1) the successful handing over of Little Portion to a group doing work-training and now able to use refurbishing that facility and site as hands-on work experience; and (2) the promising offer a "propose built friary" as new SSF living space in Riverside, part of the Los Angeles metro area. That will enable the SSF brothers to lend their support to work going on with the various needs of homeless people, those with drug addictions, single mothers, and offenders trying to regain their footing on re-entry; (3) new inquirers and postulants.

I am grateful for the blessings received from the interactions of these few days with the TSSF Order and the privilege of representing and forwarding greetings and love to the Provincial Chapter from the OEF. The TSSF Provincial Chapter offers us a model for how we grow into a not-so-little Order, no longer able to accommodate a "y'all come" invitation to Chapter/Convocation.





Poems for Restoring Our Place

Reflections by Br. Coyote Nabhan, OEF



1.

You who they said was lost

In a world of numbers

Numbers that coalesced into streams



That surged like flashfloods if left

Untended

Or numbers that (if cared for, listened to)

Gently dropped fertile soil in the very place

Where a hummingbird bush, a worm

Or a dirt farmer really needed some help



You who they said dreamed in pictures

Of interlocking triangles, laminar flows

Of sources and sinks

Of springs and other places

Where grasses and sparrows gather

You,



Of all people,

Will wake from a dream only you could see

To bring it as a fecund vision to the rest of us

To plop it down on broken ground

As a means to rebuild what has been broken

But build it not as some replica

Of what some stuffy history buff



Thinks was here

From a traveler's diary

Writ a century ago

But build it as a living, flowing

Ever changing

Flowering of what this place

Has held within itself

A blueprint only the Masked Bobwhite quail

And the Five-striped sparrows,

Or the rare the Corona del Cristo
wildflower

Clinging to eroding banks along Flux Canyon

Could have pointed to.



What the naysayers and gatekeepers

Of Greater Mundania never saw about you

Is that the numbers and triangles,

sources and sinks

Were never, really, "just in your head"

They were all "out there"

In a landscape waiting to be healed.

Poems for Restoring Our Place, continued...

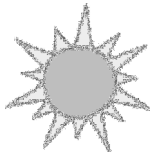
Friends, I don't think I need to tell you
How much we need you now
The world itself is crying out
For exactly what you dreamed about.



2.



As I was awakening, I saw before me
Strong women and men
Who worked with their hands
In the soil
Folk who didn't mind laboring
Into the heat of the day
If what they constructed
Would possibly last ten thousand days



They did not talk about
Their doubts that it might not endure
Their fears that it might wither
They simply placed one hand, or foot or heart
In place with the others
Until something formed that no single one of
them
Could have imagined on her
own.



3.

A voice called out to Francis,
"Son, rebuild my sacred dwelling place,
For it has fallen into ruin."
So Francis, like any good Italian Catholic boy
would do,

Found a long-abandoned church

With no more roof to shed the rain
Or walls to block the
wind



Where he could put
some stones in place.

As the walls rose up once more
And the roof arched over the sanctuary
Francis felt his pumping heart

(Continued on page 10)

Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Submissions for the Lent 2017 issue of
"Fiddlesticks" are being accepted immediately.

Deadline for submissions is March 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!



Poems for Restoring Our Place, continued...

Nearly burst with pride inside his chest
For it looked as though the work was nearly
done.

Then he heard the voice again, "Son,

I see the lovely work you've done,

But when I urged to

To care for my sacred place,

I did not mean a little church,

I was referring to the entire earth."

"Now, go out, you Dear Fool,
to spread this news,

But write it with soil and water,
plants and birds,

Build with people and water
and wine and food,

And only, when necessary, say it with words."



A Little Levity for Epiphany

Submitted by John Michael Longworth, OEF

Some Advent Imponderables:

- Out of the millions of water vessels all over the planet, one of them contains the contents of an Ocean, but the vessel is not destroyed. [#The-BigIdea](#)
- A supernova announced the arrival of someone who watched the Big Bang unfold.
- Waiting for someone to arrive who has already come and rejoicing in the presence of that one while pleading for them to come. [#wibblywobblytimeywimey](#)
- Human arms cradling the one who cradles the cosmos with the same tenderness. [#ilovethesmel-lofparadoxinthemorning](#)
- The artist hides a tiny portrait of themselves in the corner of their most magnificent work of art, people are delighted to discover this every single time.
- Chutes and ladders stood on its head, the journey upward takes us further from God and God's journey downward brings God closer to us. [#Godlikestogetdown](#)
- We get four weeks to practice holding our hands out when it dawns on us how much they look like a manger.
- Advent imponderable for today: if you aren't ready for the water, you'll never be ready for the fire. [#turnourheartsaround](#)
- We cry out for the shelter of a mighty oak and long for a warrior king, God sends a sapling from a stump and a little child. [#Thedivineplanisbetter](#)
[#whileyouwerentlooking](#)
- There's a beat up hatchback headed for a sketchy motel in their hometown. They will

A Little Levity for Epiphany... continued



probably have to sleep in their car under the carport in the back lot. [#hollyfamily](#) [#holyscandal](#)

- Want to see children springing out of the rocks? You have to head to the wilderness. [#newroots](#)

- The heavenly host is a chorus not a warband. [#crypeace](#)

- Rejoicing not in the craziness of the season, or in the potential for luxury, but in signs of Jubilee. [#freedomiscoming](#) [#maranatha](#)

- Only half the globe is waiting for more sunlight after the Solstice, Christ comes, summer or winter to bring new things to light. [#downunderchristmasatthebeach](#)

- Silent Night sounds like a Death Metal anthem if you sing it in German with an angry tone of voice. [#Incarnationisdangerous](#)

- Instead of an instruction booklet, God downloaded an Emmanuel. [#presenceisthebest-present](#)

- Mary said yes. [#Iwantfaiththatbig](#) [#Magnificat](#) [#bravewomenchangetheworld](#)

- Bethlehem means House of Bread. This season is our spiritual breadline. [#wearehungrytoo](#) [#fedby-God](#)

- Waiting for something to end and waiting for something to begin can be the same thing. [#God-is-here](#) [#Godwillsave](#)

- We light candles to Watch, to Turn our Hearts, to Rejoice and to cling to Hope, but the flicker that these lights cast is nothing compared to the one who is coming. [#lightthewhitecandle](#) [#Marantha](#)

- A whole season of preparation to discover the truth, we're not ever truly ready to receive God's anointed. [#hecomesdownanyway](#) [#graceisreal](#)

Formation Station



Novice Profession of Stephan Gerhardt in Seattle, WA 10/29/16



L-R: Jo G. Spiritual Director; Br. Elijah LeFevre, OEF (back row); Muriel (Stephen's wife); Berlina B and Twila M (Friends)

Dear OEF Sibbs,

Ever wonder what we can do with our leftover red ball noses from previous chapters? Here is my solution.



Have a very Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!

Blessings and deep peace,

Bro. Craig Robert Miller,
OEF



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



REFLECTING ON THE HOLY IN OUR MIDST

SUBMITTED BY DAVID DELACROIX, OEF



*Joseph, being a righteous man
 and unwilling to expose Mary to
 public disgrace,
 planned to dismiss her quietly.*
 —Matthew 1:19

Imagine if he had.
 Imagine how often we dismiss the holy
 because we don't see it as holy.
 How often we judge,
 come to our conclusions
 and make our plans,
 without knowing we're dealing with God.
 How easily we dismiss or avoid
 people or relationships,
 issues or awareness
 unmindful that God is present,
 unbelieving that something unseen
 and possibly glorious
 may imminently appear.

The door you close
 may open of itself.
 The Unexpected One may emerge
 from that one, or another.

Learn to expect the wholly unexpected,
 the holy unexpected.
 Look on your disappointments and discouragements
 with eyes of faith.
 God is coming.
 God is already here, gestating.
 God is not done yet.

Steve Garnaas-Holmes
Unfolding Light