



Secular Franciscan

National Bulletin of the Secular Franciscan Order in Canada
November 2021

Life in Fraternity and COVID-19 Vaccinations

Doug Clorey, ofs, National Minister

Since October 1, 2021, a national directive has been in place within the National Fraternity of Canada regarding the participation of vaccinated and unvaccinated sisters and brothers in fraternity meetings, chapters and events. This directive was a response to requests from both regional and local fraternities to provide direction in this area.

Simply put, for an initial period of six months, the directive requires that only Secular Franciscans who are fully vaccinated attend and participate in fraternity meetings, chapters and events in person. It also requests that all fraternities endeavor to accommodate Secular Franciscans who are unvaccinated so that they may continue to participate in the life of the fraternity during this period.

**COVID-19:
vaccine**



NOVA SCOTIA

As expected, this directive has been welcomed by some and criticized by others. In this regard, I would like to emphasize that no judgments are being made on the choices made by individual Secular Franciscans to remain unvaccinated. I would encourage all of us to be patient and kind with our sisters and brothers who have made this choice and to continue to love and reach out to them as best we can during these challenging times. And, to those who have chosen to remain unvaccinated, I would encourage you to also be patient and kind with your sisters and brothers who have chosen to be vaccinated. Please respect the choices that they have made. It is most disheartening to read some of the material being circulated by Secular Franciscans that is clearly disrespectful and offensive to the members of our family.

Finally, let us remember that we are an Order within the Catholic Church, called to be a “community of love”, as Saint Pope John Paul II exhorted us to be at the OFS General Chapter in 2009. As individuals, we may not have qualms about taking and expressing strong positions on certain issues; however, as members of the Secular Franciscan Order, there are boundaries that must be respected if we are to maintain unity and live in full communion within the Church (OFS Rule, 6). Clearly, we don’t have to agree with everything, but we do need to think long and hard before we decide to break the bonds of unity and follow our own path.

At the end of the day, it is my hope that all will understand that the primary objective of this time-limited directive is the safety of all the sisters and brothers, as well as the safety of those with whom they come in contact.

May God give us peace and strength during these challenging times!

Ordre Franciscain Séculier
Fraternité nationale du Canada



Secular Franciscan Order
National Fraternity of Canada

National Fraternity of Canada Statistics
May, 2021

Statistiques de la Fraternité nationale du Canada
mai 2021

| | Local Fraternities Fraternités locales | | Members Membres * | |
|---|---|------------|----------------------|-------------|
| | 2020 | 2021 | 2020 | 2021 |
| secteur Anglophone sector (3 regions / 3 régions) | 64 | 64 | 1152 | 1106 |
| secteur Francophone sector (9 regions / 9 régions) | 48 | 45 | 502 | 479 |
| Total (12 regions /12 régions) | 112 | 109 | 1654 | 1585 |

* Includes both professed members and candidates

Comprend tous les membres engagés ainsi que les candidats en formation

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Newsletter of the
Secular Franciscan Order
National Fraternity
of Canada

November 2021

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WELCOME/BIENVENUE



Secular Franciscan Order
National Fraternity of Canada

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Ordre franciscain séculier
Fraternité nationale du Canada

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Latest News

Dernières nouvelles

New OFS National Website – ofscanada.ca

New OFS National Website – ofscanada.ca

Submitted by Marion Clorey

The National Fraternity of Canada is very proud to announce it has a new website! This site, which was launched recently, was a project of the Communications team of the National Council. Two of the members of the team, Martha Gabriel and Lanny Hui did most of the hard work of putting the site together. We are extremely grateful for their hours of service on this project. Lanny Hui will continue as webmaster taking over the reins from Martha. Links to the previous National Fraternity's website (ofsnational.ca) will continue to be active for several months. You are invited to visit the new website of the National Fraternity of Canada at: www.ofscanada.ca.

Check out the National Council and the National Council Teams working on your behalf, as well as various Canadian Franciscan resources, including the National Bulletin, the monthly *Living Fraternity* Formation program, the JPIC Communiqué and other documents such as the OFS Rule, Ritual, Statutes, and General Constitutions.

There are also pages sharing information about Regional Fraternities in Canada, Secular Franciscans worldwide, Pope Francis, Secular Franciscan spirituality, more National Council resources, and Secular Franciscan prayers and symbols. In short, there is a wealth of information on our new OFS National website. This is a “resource library” that is readily available to you at your fingertips. In the interest of being well-informed as a Secular Franciscan, take advantage of it!

Any suggestions for further updates to the site can be sent to Marion Clorey - mgclorey@gmail.com

Servant Leadership in Gospel Living Young Adult Retreat

In late August during the easing of the public health travel restrictions, four Secular Franciscan members from the National Youth & Young Adult Team organized a Servant Leadership in Gospel Living Retreat at Mount St. Francis Retreat Centre in Cochrane, Alberta.

Fourteen young adults from three provinces attended, three of whom were discerning a vocation to the Franciscan Friars. Br. Michael Perras, OFM, our Retreat Master, provided rich and engaging sessions, whilst Friar Dan Gurnick, OFM, celebrated daily Eucharist for us, as well as Eucharistic Adoration and a Saturday twilight campfire with drumming and stories of St. Francis. Br. Carlos Ona, OFM, participated with our team in the break-out sessions that followed each talk.

Mount St. Francis, Alberta

The sunny skies and grounds of the Retreat Centre was inviting to meander outside, or stroll around the grounds for quietude and reflection. There were various outdoor landmarks such as the Way of the Cross where one could visit and pray, or St. Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio. For others, the Chapel remained opened at all times for retreatants to pray. The blend of individual and group activities such as enactment of Gospel passages in today's society led by our young adults, richly demonstrated how the transmission of the Gospel could be conveyed and understood by today's youth. The Retreat was sponsored by the National Fraternity of Canada, the Knights of Columbus, OLOTA Region, local fraternities, and individual sponsors. Hopefully in the future, we will be able to have a similar Young Adult Retreat in our Eastern provinces.



Mount St. Francis Retreat Centre

Some comments received at the end of the Retreat from our young friends were:

I loved this Retreat.

I felt the Retreat rejuvenating and inspirational

I really felt the loving presence of Christ throughout the weekend.

The Adoration touched my heart. Talking with God and putting my life before the altar was a wonderful moment that recharged my energy.

I listened to God in my heart.

It was a wonderful Retreat, a good mix of faith, prayer and socializing.

I would sincerely like to thank all the sponsors, and the Friars here at Mt. Saint Francis, this was a wonderful experience.

Thank you and God bless.

Submitted by Jewel Jasmins, ofs

Youth & Young Adult Liaison to the National Fraternity of Canada



Did You Know About the August 2021 Young Adult Retreat at Mount St. Francis?

Almost a year ago one of the members of the Youth & Young Adult Secular Franciscan National Commission – David - mentions the idea of a Weekend Retreat for young people across Canada. The rest of us – Jewel, Maritza, Catherine, Colleen, Martha and Heather - jump on board thinking this will be the impetus for young people to deepen their relationship with God and give them a taste of Franciscan spirituality at the same time.

Well, that turns out to be a bit of a roller-coaster ride! COVID will not go away and the May, 2021 the dream of inviting kids from across Canada to meet in Alberta changes into a plan for a BC/Alberta smaller group encounter of ten to fifteen young people at Mount Saint Francis in August, 2021 when COVID rules are relaxed a little.

Brother Michael Perras, OFM agrees to be the Retreat Master and Friar Dan Gurnick, Maritza and Jewel put their thinking caps on and use Face book to get the word out to young people they know and we end up with twelve retreatants and three Franciscan Vocation Inquirers on the weekend of August 27, 2021 at Mount Saint Francis, Cochrane, Alberta.

We all know that the cost of a Weekend Retreat is an expensive venture for any Retreat Centre and for cash-strapped students so David approaches the Knights of Columbus who sponsor three students. OLOTA and National give some financial support and three fraternities and some private donors help out too so we know that God is with us and we can now go ahead.

The retreat turns out to be amazing! The Rocky Mountains sparkle like diamonds in the distance, the sun is warm, the friary atmosphere is prayerful. The young people are engaged by Brother Michael's presentations and Jewel's leading of the music and song. They love the skits and appreciate the opportunity to spend quiet time with Jesus during prayer, Reconciliation, Mass and Adoration. They enjoy the drumming and the campfire and Fr. Dan's stories by moonlight under a starry sky.

The question remains – Where do we go from here? Do we want to show young people a way of life that's different from the world? Do we want to entice them to a life of peace and joy and servant leadership as Secular Franciscans?

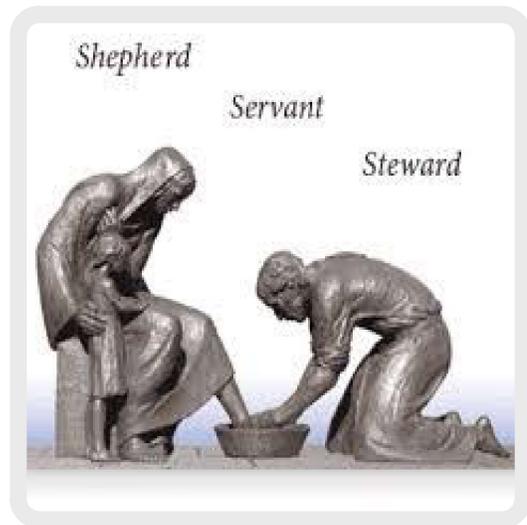
If this is what we want for the 50% who are under forty years of age in Canada, how do we make our fraternities a welcoming place for them to come to? Are we willing to move over for them, are we willing to set some money aside in our yearly budgets to support activities like this retreat? Are we willing to show them that we love them as brothers and sisters like Saint Francis, like Christ himself?

Catherine McNiff, ofs
Director of Youth, OLOTA

National Formation Corner

Our National Formation Commission continues to explore different ways to incorporate themes of interest for our Living Fraternity monthly publications. Our range of resources extend across global sources, such as incorporating *Memoriale Propositi* in today's context from CIOFS, to local, as in the reflection on the life of St. Joseph from one of our Regional Spiritual Assistants. We will soon be introducing living universal fraternity, through segments from *Fratelli Tutti* in our monthly Ongoing Formation.

The third season of our National Formators Course started in September, and within the four streams of the Course, we have 34 members from across Canada participating in the Course, which will complete in March 2022.



Our National Formation Commission has started to review the feedback obtained from members' input into Servant Leadership in the OFS, through the work completed in the *Instrumentum Laboris* document.

Priority to focus on developing ways of creating a better understanding of what it means to be called to Servant Leadership in the OFS and its responsibilities, has been prominent among the many suggestions voiced, to inspire, guide and empower our local and regional fraternities. This work will be the main focus of our National Formation Commission.

Submitted by: Jewel Jasmins, ofs,
National Formation Director

Update from the National JPIC Team

The Mutemwa Project in Zimbabwe

“Thank you for your email and interest in the Mutemwa water project which is still in process. At the end of July, the drilling was undertaken by Skylake Borehole Drilling company who drilled down to 70 m, but no water was found at this depth. The recommendation by the company was to drill further to 106 m. and this called for extra funding. Well4Africa has transferred the additional grant of 680 USD to JBMS who is the official applicant on behalf of the Mutemwa water project.

A few days ago, we got a message from Br. Raymond Kondo OFM, Mutemwa administrator: "The borehole was further deepened to 106m on Friday the 3rd of September 2021. The yield has improved and we intend to install the borehole for domestic purposes. Our wish is to have water for agricultural projects but subsequently it is proven that Mutemwa has poor ground water due to the mountains that surround us. Hence, government engineers have advised us to dig

our own dam or to draw water from the nearest dam. Thank you Well4Africa in your endeavors to support us and we intend to work with you in our future projects. I will keep you posted on the progress of our project."

They already had an old borehole at the Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre, and this new one will help greatly in providing additional water they can use for everyday purpose but not for their agricultural needs.

I hope this information is helpful for you. As soon as the Mutemwa project is officially finished, Well4Africa will give a detailed report."

Fraternally, Virginija Mickute, OFS, Coordinator,
WELL4AFRICA COORDINATION TEAM



Regional Fraternity Pages



Trillium News:

Since the churches re-opened many of our fraternities have been able to meet in person in the church, others are still meeting on Zoom or Google meet. Our members were anxious to reconnect socially and fraternally.

On the feast of St. Clare Father Peter Knappen and I attended a profession in Welland at St. Mary of the Angels Fraternity and on August 21 we were at St. John Vianney Fraternity and Brother

Leo Korean Fraternities in Toronto for Admittance, Temporary Profession and Permanent Profession ceremonies. Its always a pleasure to welcome new members.

For the Feast of St. Francis some of our fraternities celebrated the Transitus and Feast of St. Francis in person and others celebrated the Transitus privately at home with a YouTube video that Father Peter and his fraternity put together last year. As the season changes we marvel at God's creation and His goodness. Let us persevere with patience and grace.

Fraternally submitted, Clelia Malerba, Trillium Minister

Long time Franciscans at San Damiano Fraternity, Salmon Arm, BC

San Damiano Fraternity boasts several long time Secular Franciscans. Among the longest professed are four in particular who have served as leaders and formators, who have founded fraternities, and lived their call to holiness in the Secular Franciscan Order.



Mabel Flore often says she has been a Franciscan all her life, but only discovered the Franciscans at St Anthony's Fraternity Penticton where she was professed in 1982. When Mabel and her husband moved to Salmon Arm, she helped found the San Damiano Fraternity, which was canonically established in 1994. She served as its minister and later as Regional Vice Minister for interior BC. Mabel's vocation has been her life, and the Franciscans her family.

Madeleine Sevigny says joining the Franciscans helped her and brought her closer to God, like coming home. She was professed into the San Damiano Fraternity in 1995. When her family moved, she joined the Magnificat fraternity in Creston, BC. She later returned to the fraternity in Salmon Arm where she has served in various council positions for many years.



Peggy Sikora, was also professed in 1995 into San Damiano Fraternity. She, too, has taken her turn on council. Peggy says "When I joined, I was looking for something more than I had. I liked the idea of simplicity. Can't say I stuck to it entirely, because I'm a 'pack rat'. The companionship and others' ideas were good."

Lillian Novotny was professed into the Fraternity of Mary Queen of Peace, Carlsruhe, Ontario in 1979. When the family moved to BC, Lillian and husband Mike spread seeds. The Magnificat Fraternity was established in Creston in 1985. Lillian served in various positions on council. 1998 saw the Novotnys move to Vernon and transfer to San Damiano Fraternity. Lillian continued in servant leadership roles. "Being Franciscan has helped to keep me on track in my quest for authentic humility and a simple life style."



Mabel 39 years, Madeleine 26 years, Peggy 26 years, Lillian 42 years, - four secular Franciscans, 133 years of following God's call to love and serve. How good is our God!

St. Pio of Pietrelcina Fraternity



The canonical establishment of St. Pio of Pietrelcina Fraternity took place with much joy, Monday, September 20, 2021, at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Kamloops, BC. Father Manoj Xalxo and Monsignor Jerry Desmond concelebrated Mass. Linda Adams, regional minister, came to witness the event and welcomed St Pio of Pietrelcina as the 27th fraternity in OLOTA region.

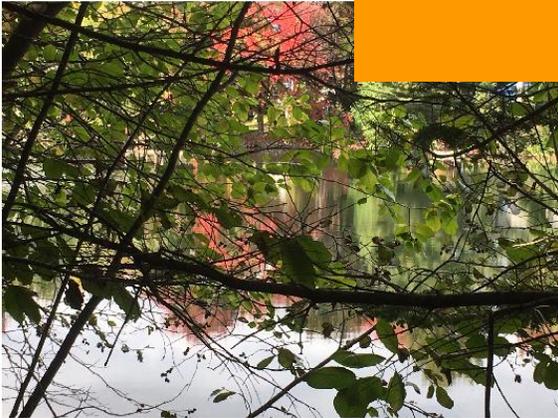
Pictured here are Mary Fankhauser, Lyn Cuikimdit, Isabelle Allan, Therese Goodie, and Michelle Zwolak. Grateful, after many years of discerning and setbacks the nine members of St Pio of Pietrelcina fraternity are ready to 'begin again' in responding to God's call to love and to serve.

The mother fraternity, San Damiano from Salmon Arm, BC wishes St. Pio of Pietrelcina fraternity peace and all good.

Excursions through the parks of Eastern Québec



In Thanksgiving



Fraternal greetings from the Regional Fraternity of Sherbrooke

Eastern Regional Fraternity

A warm welcome to Friar Maurice Richard, OFM Conv who has been appointed Spiritual Assistant to St. Francis of Immaculate Heart of Mary Fraternity in Ottawa. Friar Richard is a Canadian friar who grew up in Greenfield Park, Quebec. For the past several years he was assigned to the St. Joseph Cupertino province Provincial Office in Arroyo Grande, California, as Assistant Director of novices. As of August 3, he was reassigned by his Franciscan leadership to Ottawa, where he is ministering at St. Ignatius Martyr Roman Catholic Church there and taking on the position of parish priest.



His assignment to serve as Spiritual Assistant is effective as of September 15, 2021.
Pax et bonum brother Maurice!



Dr. Richard Shields, PhD, M.Ed, was a previous guest speaker at the Eastern Regional Spiritual Conference in 2018. He is a member of the faculty at St. Michael's College, at the University of Toronto. Richard has his Masters in Franciscan Spirituality from St. Bonaventure in New York and his Doctorate in Religious Studies from McMaster in Ontario. Dr. Shields has been very generous in sharing a number of his reflections over the years and this current article is a reflection on the future of the Secular

Franciscan Order.

Submitted by Sherrill Guimond, ofs

Embracing the Franciscan Future by Richard Shields

Driving from the Quebec City airport on the way to a retreat in the French Canadian village of Cacouna, Carol, a Secular Franciscan, asked: "How will we attract young people to the Secular Franciscan life? What does it say about our charism, when it doesn't seem to speak to young people?" Friar Benny, an amiable Capuchin, originally from India and now a member of the Canadian Capuchin community was also with us. Those questions, he said, apply equally to the First Order. In Canada many friaries have closed because of a shortage of vocations. "I am not the only friar from a missionary country," he added, "friars are coming from Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe to support community life and the ministries of the Franciscans here." There is, of course, no institutional guarantee of the future; yet members of all three branches rely on God's assurance to St. Francis that "though the Order be reduced to three, it will remain by My grace unshaken (2 *Celano*, 158)." But what might the future look like and how do we get there?

The Future: Gift of the Present

St. Francis' embrace of the Gospel was neither a nostalgic journey into the past nor an attempt to adjust to the *status quo* of the Church of his time. It was a decisive act that changed how he saw the world and understood himself. It was a conversion in the sense of Jesus' announcement: "*The time has come, repent and believe the good news!* (Mark 1)" The future Jesus' contemporaries so ardently desired was now. These words also shed light on St. Francis' conversion. For Francis the "time" was there before his eyes: the dilapidated Church, the leper on the road, the disparity between the merchant class (to which he belonged) and the beggars and migrants (who

were left behind in the emergence of towns and cities). Francis was prepared, whatever the cost, to *repent* (to place into question what he expected from life); and to *believe* (to entrust his future to a God who would lovingly show him what to do next). In this way Francis heard the call to what Pope Francis describes as “*a way of life marked by the flavour of the Gospel.*” When Francis counselled every friar “*to love and respect one’s brother as much when he is far from him as he would when he is with him (Admonition XXV),*” he was proposing, in the Pope’s words, “*a love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance. In his simple and direct way, Saint Francis expressed the essence of a fraternal openness that allows us to acknowledge, appreciate, and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives (Fratelli Tutti, n.1).*” Here we find a Franciscan way of embracing the future. As individuals and communities, Franciscans are called to repent and believe, to discern where God is present in the here and now of our world. Franciscanism is not a self-contained cocoon of spirituality. The “*love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance*” was for Francis a gift of God, making the future the gift of the present.

“*While we have time, brethren, let us do good (Exhortation to the Friars, attributed to St. Francis).*”

Walking Together—The Synodal Way

The future is a journey already begun and on which we will need companions. Traveling together is a theme that for Pope Francis is how God expects the whole Church to move forward. He calls this the *synodal way*. Will the window to the Franciscan future not open in a similar fashion? Why a shared journey? Because to hear God’s voice we have to listen to one another. In community we find mutual support along an unfamiliar path. In faith filled conversation we discern how to nourish mutual hopes, stimulate trust, bind up wounds, weave new and deeper relationships, learn from one another, build bridges, enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission (*Handbook for the Synod 2021-2023*).

St. Francis showed us the way. His biographers recount many conversations he had with his companions: at gatherings of the friars called “*chapters;*” and along the road with one or two brothers. The more intimate conversations frequently revolved around a brother’s doubts or perhaps Francis’ concerns for his own spiritual welfare. At the larger gatherings Francis and the brothers talked about the challenges they faced as a community trying to live the Gospel in their ordinary lives. The image of walking together not only tells us to see, reflect, and act together; but it tells us how. “*The ability to imagine a different future...depends largely on the decision to initiate processes of listening, dialogue, and community discernment, in which each and every person can participate and contribute (Preparatory Document for the Synod).*” The Franciscan future depends on how well we share the journey.

New Wine in New Wine Skins

The uniqueness of St. Francis is not that he founded an Order separated from the world. Just the opposite. He embraced the noble dreams and ideals of his times and his contemporaries, but he responded to them in a way that seemed to the people of Assisi to be innovative, creative--an unheard of way of understanding and living the Gospel. Conventual Minister General Carlos



Trovarelli reminds us that the Franciscan movement was “*one of several medieval lay movements that were born from a social and cultural ferment of change, openness, and novelty.*” It cannot be properly understood apart from the particular historical situation in which it originated. That situation was Francis’ *now*. As communes replaced the feudal agricultural tracts as centres of influence, citizens of Assisi anticipated a new social order based on an economy of goods and trade and marked by the dream of human equality, individual freedom, and economic mobility. But the quest for wealth corrupted these ideals and became the source of inequality, oppression, and social divisions. St. Francis came to recognize the contradictions in what was going on. Disillusionment set in as he saw the misery caused by the broken promises of progress. His later disdain for money, to the point of forbidding the friars to accept “neither coins nor money (*Rule 1223, Chapter 4*),” can be traced back to that betrayal of what Pope Francis calls the duty to “*social friendship and universal sisterhood and brotherhood (Fratelli Tutti)*”.

The Church was also shaken by the cultural shift taking place. It struggled, often reluctantly, to come to terms with its ties to the feudal system and to embrace a truly communal way of Church life. Many bishops and pastors seemed incapable of understanding the changing attitudes and values in the people they were called to shepherd. Those living on the margins of society—homeless, disabled, or just poor—were for the most part relegated to the peripheries of the Church. Francis threw himself into this conflicted present. He did this with eyes wide open, expressing the ideals, dreams, and questions of contemporaries in the language of the Gospel. He did not try to fit his calling into the structures of the past.

What would happen next in his life (the first followers, the mission of preaching, the example of St. Clare, and the beginning of the “brothers and sisters of penance”) reveal Francis’ understanding that “new wine needs new wine skins.” Today the way to the future means letting go of attitudes, practices, and customs that tie us to the past. While we can’t say how St. Francis would respond to the many crises of our world, we know this: St. Francis worked at rebuilding the Church, without a strategy for the future. His underlying plan, if one could call it that, was to live the Gospel of Christ in whatever would happen next.

Youth: More than a period of time

We began with the question of how to attract youth to the Secular Franciscan life. While a legitimate question, Pope Francis asks a more challenging one. How do we regain the spirit of youthfulness in our often aging fraternities? “*Youth,*” he says, “*is more than simply a period of time; it is a state of mind (Christus Vivit, 35).*” Recruitment strategies fail when they are disconnected from the actual life experience of each Secular Franciscan community. On the future of Franciscanism, French friar Eloi Leclerc (+ 2016) noted: “*The Gospel experience of St. Francis has an exemplary quality...that even today has the power to renew and rejuvenate.*”

Pope Francis sees the source of youthfulness in Jesus’ desire “to give us hearts that are ever young. God’s word asks us to ‘cast out the old leaven that you may be fresh dough’. Saint Paul invites us to strip ourselves of the ‘old self’ and to put on a ‘young’ self (*Christus Vivit*)” T

he current *Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order* places two questions before the followers of Francis today. (1) How does journeying together allow our fraternity to “live the Gospel” and proclaim it? (2) In what “ways and forms [does our] life-giving union with each other... make present the charism of the Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church?” This may mean changing what we have grown accustomed to. But it will “bring a new evangelizing



fervour and a new capacity for dialogue with the world whereby the Church is renewed (*Joy of the Gospel*).

Restoring the youthfulness of the Franciscan way may not be easy. St. Francis often found it painful to deal with change. But as German friar Cornelius Bohl points out, Francis was a happy man, not because he had an easy life, but because he had a thankful spirit.

A Spirituality for the Journey

The *Legend of the three Companions* relates how Francis, hearing the words of St. Matthew's Gospel, "*take nothing for your journey* (Matthew 10)," clung to these words as a guide for his way forward. Secular Franciscans, as they walk together in the world today, will need to travel lightly. In the *First Rule* for Secular Franciscans (1221) Francis offers them three ways to simplify their lives that gives structure for a spirituality that allowed them to more clearly hear the Holy Spirit's voice in the questions, doubts, and hopes of our brothers and sisters. In chapter one Francis exhorts the brothers and sisters of penance to dress simply; to know the difference between what we need and what we want. Next he encourages periodic fasting and abstinence not only because it turns our minds toward the passion of Jesus, but fasting reminds us that we can do with less. Finally, he speaks about frequent prayer as part of our daily routine, because prayer is the language that raises the first two practices to a hymn of praise to the Lord. For Francis spiritual practices are not about what we can do for God, but a celebration of what God, "*our most holy Father, our creator, Redeemer, Consoler and Savior* (*St. Francis' Teaching on the Lord's Prayer*)" is already doing for us. "Take nothing for your journey" is an invitation to a simple life; a way to make room for God in our today.

What it requires of us may not be easy. Francis' response came after several periods of prayer and serious reflection on the reality of his time. By choice and by grace Francis acknowledged and identified with those people left behind by "progress" in his own society. He unburdened himself from the expectations of his times and found a path to the future by living simply. In a world marked by complexity, by contradictory "truths," alternate "realities," and polarizing ideologies we need to regain a sense of simplicity, "*the sister of Wisdom* (*Salute to the Virtues*).



We need to find times and places to reflect on our personal life choices, our relationships to others, and finally on how we treat "our Sister Mother Earth (*Canticle of the Creatures*)." In Pope Francis' words, there can be no way forward "without the Spirit, and there is no Spirit without prayer."

Conclusion

How many young people will be attracted to the Franciscan movement in the future is beyond our knowledge. We can only be faithful to our vocation today. Time does not stand still. We must move forward as it unfolds. Pope Francis has proposed the image of walking together as a model for our going forward on a journey that requires a "willingness to be converted by listening to the Word of God and by [moving with] the Holy Spirit present in our lives." Does this not describe St. Francis' experience as he moved forward into the unknown future, confident in Christ present in his life. He listened to the Word of God and found the Holy Spirit in "the now." Francis was a man of his times; but his life continues to inspire Franciscans today to choose the future with open eyes and courageous hearts.