



Clarion

NEWSLETTER

SAINT CLARE REGION

The HOW of Gratefulness.

November 2023

“Awareness of the marvels that the Lord has wrought for our salvation disposes our minds and hearts to an attitude of thanksgiving to God for all that he has given us, for all that he has accomplished for the good of his people and for the whole of humanity. This marks the beginning of our conversion: it is the grateful response to the stupendous mystery of God’s love. When we see the love that God has for us, we feel the desire to draw close to him: this is conversion.”
– Pope Francis in his St. Peter’s Square Address, March 5, 2014.

In my daily conversion, I have found joy in recognizing the works of God’s grace in my life—with continual gratitude for everything. This thankfulness has drawn me closer to God and to the Holy Gratefulness that grounds my present day, heals my past days, and guides my future days.

For me, being a Secular Franciscan is more than wearing a Tau Cross and attending Fraternity Meetings. While those are a good start, being a Secular Franciscan is HOW I live out this way of life. It’s HOW I respond to the good, the bad and the ugly. It’s HOW I show love to others— even to those with whom I disagree or find hard to love. It’s HOW I bring gratitude into every encounter. It’s HOW I have that ‘grateful response’ to God’s love for me as Pope Francis mentions.

My prayer for all Secular Franciscans around the world and, in particular, for those in our region, is that we may always have that grateful response in the HOW we live the Gospel life, our Rule, and follow Jesus Christ in the footsteps of Saint Francis.

*Peace & All Good, Always,
Chris Blood, OFS*

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The Secular Franciscan Order was established by St. Francis of Assisi more than 800 years ago. Our purpose is to bring the Gospel to life where we live and where we work. We look for ways to embrace the Gospel in our lives and try to help others to do

SAINT CLARE REGION- CHAPTER GATHERING

OUR 2023

SAINT CLARE

REGION

CHAPTER

GATHERING

Saturday,

November 4th

Was hosted by:

Padre Pio Emerging
Fraternity



Our annual Regional Chapter Gathering was held on Saturday, November 4, 2023 at the Saint Francis Medical Center in Cape Girardeau, MO.

The St. Padre Pio Emerging Fraternity hosted our gathering.

We began our Chapter Gathering with Morning Prayer at 8:30am, led by Dcn. Tony Peters, OFS. That was followed by fellowship, a presentation on the history of the St. Padre Pio Emerging Fraternity by Shawn Asmus, OFS and a video on the saint. We then heard from Annapoorna Mary, OFS, on praying the Holy Half Hours with Our Rule. We shared lunch and then Chris Blood, OFS, presented the State of the St. Clare Region with business—with the most significant business item being the approved update of our regional guidelines. (it is now approved that a minister of a fraternity can also serve on the regional executive council).

It was a wonderful gathering and all were very grateful for the hosting fraternity, the wonderful facility and the fellowship.

REGIONAL CHAPTER



St. Clare Region OFS Annual Chapter Gathering - November 4, 2023 Hosted by St. Padre Pio Emerging Fraternity Cape Girardeau, MO	
Gather- Check-in / Coffee	REC: Meet at 8:15am (short meeting)
MORNING PRAYER- CHAPEL - led by Dcn. Tony Peters, OFS	
Coffee & Donuts / Social	
Welcome! Chris Blood, OFS, St. Clare Region Minister & Introductions REC, Ministers, and Fraternity Members, Guests	
Group Activity- Ice Breaker	
Shawn Asmus, OFS, Acting Minister- St. Padre Pio Emerging Fraternity	
-History of the Fraternity	
-Personal Witness to being a Professed Secular Franciscan	
-About St. Padre Pio & Fraternity Members & Inquirers	
BREAK	
Formation - Annapoorna Mary, OFS, Regional Formation Director	
- Holy Half-Hours	
- Study of the Rule	
LUNCH	
Chris Blood- State of the St. Clare Region & 2023 National Chapter	
BUSINESS	Roll Call- Maureen Gray
	Treasurer's Report- Pat Smith, OFS
	o Approval of 2022-2023 Budget & Minutes
	o Review & Updated Regional Guidelines per Visitation Report
Open Discussion - any additional topics to discuss, etc.	
CLOSING PRAYER	



State of the Region
(viewable)



[HOLY HALF-HOURS LINK TO NATIONAL WEBSITE \(CLICK HERE\)](#)

Annapoorna Mary, OFS,
St. Clare Region- Formation Director

- We will be focusing on Studying the OFS Rule, using Holy- half - hour methods for next 6 months.
- I request the ministers and formation directors to consider advocating this powerful study within your fraternities.
- Please find the link about to the Holy Half-Hour study method. Please use them in your initial formations and in the ongoing formation, along with your study materials.
- Holy Half-Hour study method is an experiential study of rule allowing the cultivation of divine access, interventions, and care in one's OFS way of life.
- This study method connects oneself to the presence of the Lord, Eucharist, and to the Church. It may open a door for a beautiful OFS journey in each one of our life. It is an mystical journey that captures the reason, mind, and soul.
- This Holy Half-Hour study of Rule can be adopted by all the members.

With the intentional and purposeful journey into Regional Ongoing Formation studies on OFS Rule Holy Half-Hour method.



Holy Half-Hours

Ongoing Formation Program on the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order

Make a commitment to spend four **holy half-hours** to prepare for each class.

Preferably, spend one holy half-hour a week.

For each holy half hour:

- Put yourself in the presence of God.
- Pray to the Holy Spirit for Guidance.
- Read the assigned passages.

After reading, spend time with God in prayer. Use some of your thoughts as points of dialogue with God.

GOING FORWARD:

We will adopt a new approach for the study of Rule[Holy half hour] : **Fraternity approach- next 6 months[November 2023- May 2024]. In this regard:**

1. I would like to journey within the individual fraternities via **Zoom/ phone .[whatever works for you]..** to initiate Holy Half Hour Study of OFS Rule.
2. I request all the ministers and formation directors **to give me an appointment within your fraternity meetings, within the ongoing formation time[30-45 minutes].**
3. We will collaboratively initiate/ implement Holy Half – Hour study of OFS Rule in all our fraternities.
4. I am looking forward to your kind invitation and I depend on God's providence for this formation activity.

UNITED IN PRAYERS.

THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL IN ONGOING FORMATION

Regional Formation Workshop November 11, 2023; Workshop # 4 Theme: Gospel to Life & Life to Gospel: Formation of the Formators: Initial Formation [Candidacy: Profession]

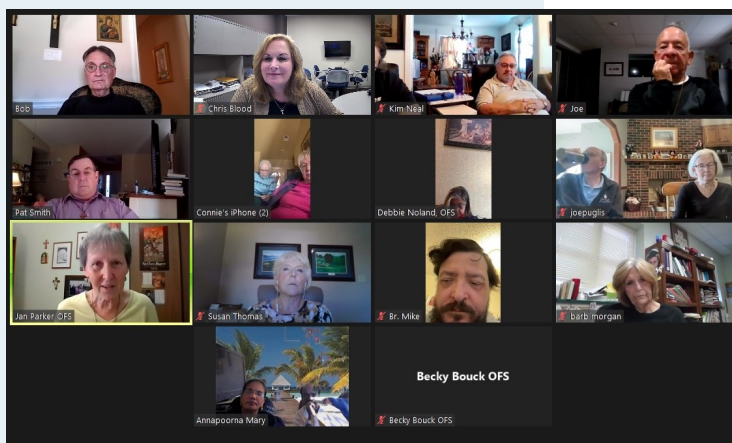
This was excellent! The entire Workshop can be viewed online via this link:

[ONLINE FORMATION WORKSHOP- CLICK HERE](#)

We have 18 participants. A big THANK YOU for Annapoorna Mary, OFS for planning and leading the workshop and for all who were presenters. Our Region is blessed!!

More information can be found under the formation tab: stclareregionofs.org

No	Agenda Topics	Presenters & Speakers	Time
1.	Welcome greetings	Ms. Annapoorna Mary, OFS, Regional Formation Director & Ms. Christine Blood, OFS, Regional Minister, St. Clare Region	2 minutes
2.	Opening prayer & blessing & Introduction/ Liturgy of the Hours	Spiritual Assistant of the hosting Fraternity: St. Padre Pio Fraternity / Deacon or priest present	3 minutes
3.	Praise & Worship & Reflection	Mr. Rick Neal OFS, Councilor, & Kim Neal, OFS, Minister St. Joan of Arc Fraternity, Germantown, TN	15 minutes
4.	Profession Witness sharing	Group discussion: Members present: Please bring your story to share Send a photo of your profession to maryannapoorna@yahoo.com For slide show	10 minutes
5.	Candidacy Over view & Introduction: The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: [FUN Manual pages 207-252] Holy Half Hour study of Rule	Annapoorna Mary, OFS, Regional Formation Director, St. Clare Region, MO Connie Shanks, OFS Minister, Joyful Servants, REC, St. Clare Region, MO	15 minutes
6.	JPIC with synopsis of Catholic Social Teaching : TBA: 15 minutes[FUN pages 253- 273]	Joe Scalise, OFS Formation Director, Servant of God Sr. Thea Bowman Emerging Fraternity	15 minutes
7.	Francis and his approach to Divinity -TBA: 15 minutes[274-296]	Jan Parker OES: Former National Minister, Councilor: Servant of God Sr. Thea Bowman Emerging Fraternity	15 minutes
8.	Franciscan Theology, Tradition & Spirituality: 15 minutes [297- 327]: Break	John Owens, OFS, Formation Director, St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity: Video Break	10 5 minutes
9.	Profession : REC [FUN pgs 327-344]	Mr. Pat Smith, OFS, St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity & Regional Treasurer & REC.	10 minutes
10.	Penitence and Conversion: TBA: 15 minutes [FUN pgs. 345- 362]	Barbara Morgan, OFS, Director of Formation, San Damiano Fraternity	15 minutes
11.	Profession witness talk TBA	Mr. Bob Antil, OFS St. Padre Pio Fraternity	10 minutes
12.	Profession Preparation, Documents & Ritual:	Christine Blood, OFS, Regional Minister, St. Clare Region, MO, USA	10 minutes
13.	Closing prayer	Spiritual Assistant of the Fraternity: Mary Wainscott, SA/ Deacons present	3 minutes



SAVE THE DATE!!

The next Regional Formation Online event will be:

A Lenten Retreat

Saturday, March 9, 2024

THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL AT GRECCIO

Christmas at Greccio

Francis loved caves on the sides of mountains
In wilderness areas where there was a clear view
Of God's works in nature:
Changing weather during the day,
Moon and stars at night.
In these places, he came into direct contact
With the Divine Presence.
And the experience renewed him.



Staying in such a place, on the outskirts of Greccio,
One December, as Christmas approached,
Francis asked the townspeople to bring to him
On Christmas Eve their animals
To be a living Manger scene,
The first such assemblage in Church history.

Francis was concerned that people were taking
Jesus for granted. Or they had failed to understand
His connection to us as a fellow human being.
Francis wanted us to see for ourselves
The manner in which Christ was born into our world.
The way in which the animals paid Him obeisance.
The crude, stable environment in which He drew
His first breath.

It is said that when the townspeople were assembled
Where Francis was staying, he arranged the animals
Around an empty manger. Miraculously,
A tiny baby appeared in his arms: the Christ Child.

Whatever may have happened there,
The people were clearly moved.
From that moment on, all Italy adopted the custom
Of displaying crèche scenes at Christmas time.
They leave the manger bare until Christmas Eve,
When they devotedly place the little baby in it.

To Francis, Christmas represents God's reaching down to humanity:
The vertical shaft of the cross from Heaven to Earth.
Christ's birth represents God with Us, Immanuel:
The horizontal bar of the cross that bears our sins.
Incarnation: transcendence and immanence.

©Gilbert Donahue, May 14, 2010

THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL IN THE FRANCISCAN TAU CROSS—PART 2

BY
**BONNIE SABIN,
OFS**

pages 6-10

In Francis's time, every king, knight, noble family, or society had a *coat of arms* sculpted or painted on buildings and/or sewn onto clothing to indicate their *identity*. In choosing this coat of arms, Francis considers himself the herald of the great King. (1 Celano 16)



**ST. FRANCIS OF AS-
SISI FRATERNITY**

According to tradition, Francis had a vision in which he saw Christ on the cross being consoled by a figure who had his arms wrapped around him. This figure was identified as Saint Francis, and the image of the cross with the crossed arms of Christ and Saint Francis became a symbol of the Order's mission to embrace and comfort those who were suffering.



The Franciscan coat of arms shows the **crossed arms of Christ and Saint Francis over the Tau**. Its use in identifying Franciscans and Franciscan facilities began during Francis' lifetime.



Often the crossed arms are referred to as "the Conformity" (*conformitas*: likeness; conformity; agreement).

Christ's bare arm is in front of Francis' clothed arm; Christ's hand has the wound from His Crucifixion; Francis' has the stigmata. Francis *conforms* his soul to Christ, responds in obedience.

The words may be present, *Deus meus et omnia* (my God and my all) or in Italian *Mio Dio e mio tutto*.



THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL IN THE FRANCISCAN TAU CROSS—PART 2

BY
BONNIE SABIN,
OFS

Besides *Deus Meus et Omnia* you may also see *Pax et bonum*.



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Over time, modified versions of the Franciscan coat of arms have appeared, with the addition of other elements such as the IHS or the Crown. However, the original symbol of the arms of Christ and Saint Francis has remained at the heart of the emblem, representing the Order's commitment to imitating Christ and serving those in need.



**Coat of Arms of the
Custody of the Holy Land
1215, Assisi**

Coat of arms we observed around the town of Assisi – July 2022

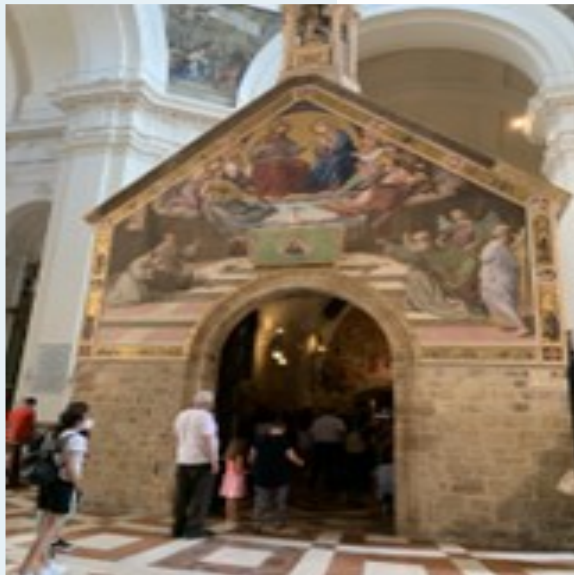
THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL IN THE FRANCISCAN TAU CROSS—PART 2

BY
BONNIE SABIN,
OFS

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Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli July 2022



Inside Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels:
La Porziuncola

My husband Ed entering the chapel

Inside Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels:
La Porziuncola



THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL IN THE FRANCISCAN TAU CROSS—PART 2

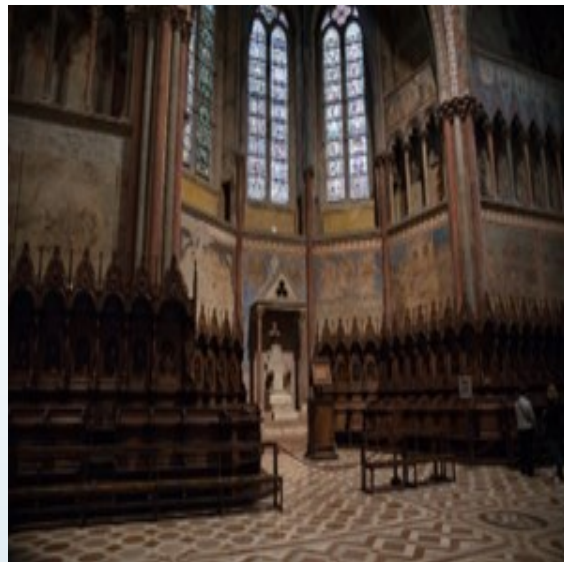
BY
BONNIE SABIN,
OFS

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Coat of arms on floor of Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli

The Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels is a Basilica situated in the plain at the foot of the hill of Assisi. Above the arch, the crossed arms of the coat of arms appears!



The coat of arms also appears among the decorations of the choir stalls at the **Basilica of Saint Francis** in Assisi, which dates to 1253.

THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL IN THE FRANCISCAN TAU CROSS—PART 2

BY
BONNIE SABIN,
OFS

-continued

Is the Franciscan coat of arms the same as the Franciscan shield?

The Franciscan coat of arms and the Franciscan shield are often used interchangeably, but technically they are different. The coat of arms is a broader symbol representing the whole Franciscan Order, while the shield is a particular emblem used by *individual communities or provinces within the Franciscan tradition*.



The Franciscan shield typically contains a range of symbols that reflect the particular history, charism, and mission of the group. However, they often incorporate elements such as the Tau cross or the words *pax et bonum*, the motto of the Order.

Brothers and sisters, I end with a quote from Fr. Jack Wintz, OFM (1936-2021).

This Franciscan Coat of Arms is an image worthy of our contemplation. The image is a true expression of both Jesus' and Francis' fervent style of love. We see in Jesus' crucified hand, first of all, God's incredible love for us. In Francis' wounded hand, in turn, we see the loving response of St. Francis to the burning love of God, who first loved us. --Jack Wintz, OFM

You might say, "Oh, how glorious for our Order to have so great and holy, beautiful and admirable, a symbol of God's love!"

Bonnie Sabin, OFS





ST. CLARE REGION

ELECTIONS:

SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 2024

ST. LOUIS, MO

SAVE THE DATE– MORE

DETAILS TO FOLLOW

OFS VOX FRANCISCANA SUMMER-FALL 2023 EDITION

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The **Vox Franciscana** edition for the Summer and Fall is available on the website www.ciofs.info and the link is below. Please share this message with your fraternities and Spiritual Assistants.

Link to the on-line version: https://ciofs.info/news/vox-franciscana/summer-autumn-2023/#dearflip-df_5155/1/

The English edition is attached as a PDF file. The Spanish edition will be sent separately. The Italian and French editions are available on the CIOFS website. Translations are usually available for OFS documents in the four languages mentioned.

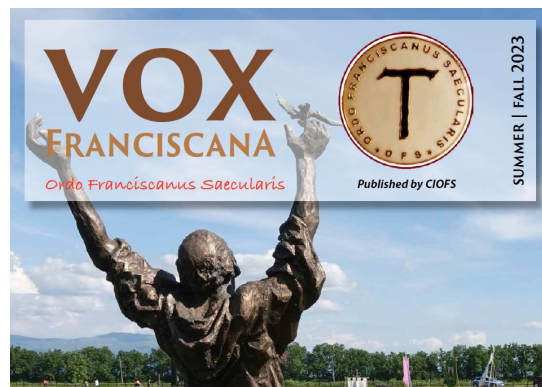
The **Chapter of Mats for 2026** is update on page 7 by General Minister Tibor Kauser.

The **Koinonia: The nativity Scene Today**, produced by the Conference of General Spiritual Assistants, is also available on the CIOFS website. Please share this with your Spiritual Assistants.

Thank you!

Peace and all good. Pax y bien. Pace e bene. Pax et bien.

Mary Frances Charsky, OFS
International Councilor, OFS-USA



OFM GENERAL DELEGATE TO THE US6 PROVINCES

July 7, 2023

Dear brothers and sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order,

This October, Franciscan friars from provinces across the United States are coming together to form one new province, under the name of Our Lady of Guadalupe Province. This new province will offer a renewed Franciscan witness to society through its fraternities in the United States, Puerto Rico, Cuba and Jamaica.

I am pleased to share that on July 5, the General Definitory of the Order of Friars Minor elected the friars who will serve in the provincial administration of the future province. These men will take office on October 17, during the first provincial chapter, and will serve for a three-year term.

The incoming provincial administration is:

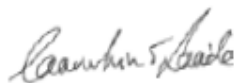
Provincial Minister-elect: Br. Lawrence Hayes (Holy Name Province)
Provincial Vicar-elect: Br. Mark Soehner (St. John the Baptist Province)

Provincial Councilors-elect of the future Our Lady of Guadalupe Province:

Br. John Eaton (Sacred Heart Province)
Br. Edward Tlucek (Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province)
Br. José Rodríguez (Our Lady of Guadalupe Province)
Br. Erick Lopez (Holy Name Province)
Br. Rommel Perez Flores (Sacred Heart Province)
Br. Roger Lopez (St. John the Baptist Province)
Br. Samuel Nasada (St. Barbara Province)

These friars come from each of the six provinces that have been involved in the years-long renewal and restructuring process. They bring a variety of gifts, diversity of experience and faith-filled vision. I humbly ask that you keep them in your prayers as they prepare to serve in their new roles.

Fraternally,



Br. Caoimhín (Kevin) Ó Laoide, OFM
General Delegate



Caoimhín Ó Laoide, OFM
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The National Executive Council prepared this summary of the budget-related actions from the Chapter.



- 1. Action: Fair Share. The National Fraternity Council unanimously voted to raise the fair share by \$5 per member (to \$22 per member per year to be paid by each local fraternity) starting in early 2025 (based on the numbers from December 31, 2024).**

Reason: The National Executive Council develops a budget with specific requests for each area (NEC, commissions, committee). These requests include estimates for accomplishing the work of the Order. Transportation, food, lodging, and postage costs are significantly higher. The NEC reviewed where costs could be trimmed (example: reducing the number of in-person meetings). The main source of income is the Fair Share contributions from the fraternities. In addition, the NEC estimated a reduction in income due to decrease in membership. Thus, expenses are increasing, and income is decreasing. The National Fraternity Council raised the Fair Share to \$17 per person in 2014, 9 years ago. Based on the increase in expenses and the decrease in income, the NEC estimated that we will use up our savings within the next five years. Therefore, the National Fraternity Council discussed raising fair share and approved the increase to be applied in early 2025.

- 2. Action: TAU-USA Printing. The National Fraternity Council voted to reduce the number of printed newsletters to one edition per year for 2024.**



Reason: One of the largest expenses is printing the Tau-USA newsletter. It has been a priority to send out printed copies as a formation tool, but also because many of our members do not have email or access to review the newsletters digitally. Many entities are going to digital only publications or print based on a subscription. To reduce expenses, the National Fraternity Council voted to print one of the four editions planned to be published in 2024. This will reduce expenses by an estimated \$40,000.

Saint Clare Region Website: www.stclareregionofs.org

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BY
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