



Secular Franciscan

National Bulletin for the Secular Franciscan Order in Canada
December 2015



The National Council extends to you a joyful greeting and the blessings of Christmas!
May your hearts find peace and love in the celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the New Year, may life in fraternity be a beacon of Francis' joy radiating the light of Christ on the world!
Your National Council

NATIONAL MINISTER

“How to Manage an Order such as the OFS”

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Saint Francis,

You have RECEIVED this request from CIOFS and you have probably asked the question “What can I possibly answer or propose to CIOFS, as I know little about the functioning mechanisms of the International Council in Rome?”

I have often asked myself this question, especially in the face of what is happening here in Canada, when I see upcoming Elective Chapters becoming more difficult to realize in certain Francophone Regional Fraternities who cannot envision the possibility of electing adequate councils during their Chapters. This question deals with the future of all our fraternities.

Various reasons have been highlighted: the advanced age of our members who are mainly women, whose limited means for transportation limits their participation in meetings, their reluctance to assume tasks within the Fraternity when they do not feel comfortable in such a hierarchal «system» ... We must remember that the canonical local fraternities

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SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT

“Company is Coming”

Before company arrives, we make preparations so that the party is a success, and joyful.

Yes, the period of Advent prepares us to welcome Him who is coming to visit us at Christmas! The whole Liturgy of the Word calls us to it... And we wonder what it is that we could do so that it is a wonderful celebration for all of the people around us. We plan to decorate to create a festive atmosphere. This year, we would hope to not be overwhelmed by "Friday the 13th" in Paris ...

Beyond the dark presence of the Islamic State (EI) hanging over our heads, have we not also some signs that reveal the best of humanity when we hear the French youth express themselves about these events : "They want to infuse us with fear and death but we respond with love and friendship. Our human solidar-

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ity will be our revenge. ". Do we not find some rays of sunshine through the clouds in welcoming all those migrants who are fleeing to find a little human warmth?

Also, together we place our good will and energy into cooling our "common home" in "Laudato si" by Pope Francis. The meeting in Paris (COP21) where mankind realizes that we have a large housecleaning to do to achieve the better health of our sister and mother "Earth".

Another important sign is this year of the "Jubilee of Mercy" ... All these signs give meaning to Christmas.

Francis welcomes Jesus, who is sent by the Father and who left glory to come to us. The Poverello understood that God reveals his greatness in the most humble of signs: *the fragility of a newborn, a piece of bread to share, a broken man on a cross* ... With Francis, we no longer dream of a Church "triumphant", for God "comes" through the fragility of our lives and the humility of our actions. With him, the way we conceive our mission and that of the brothers and sisters, will spring from this incarnation of Love, this free and voluntary abasement of God who, in Jesus, walks the roads of humanity.

This Child reminds us that God's love makes itself small so that humanity can grow. Announcing the Gospel, it is not primarily to preach doctrine or to establish a structure, but to participate in the ongoing movement of Love in-

carnate that frees us. This love that makes itself "small" to "grow" the human person. This love becomes human to deify humanity. In short, in ruminating on the gospel we discover our Christian and Franciscan vocation by building our life in fraternity with who we are at this stage of our history of the OFS in our country.

May the Breath of the Child of the Creche whisper in our hearts the goodness of God in our evangelical fraternities!

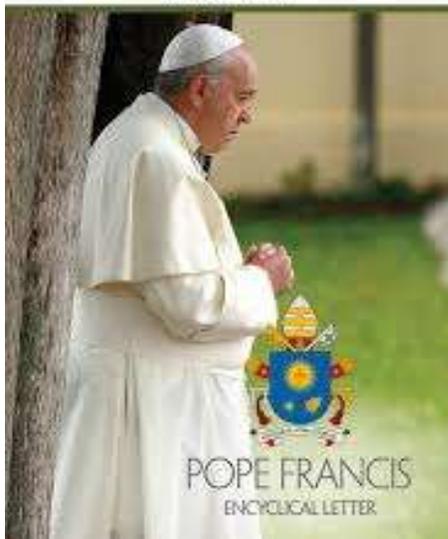
Have a Holy Christmas that will extend into 2016!

Brother André Chicoine, OFM Cap.

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ON CARE FOR OUR
COMMON HOME
LAUDATO SI'



INTERNATIONAL COUNSELLOR

Thank you for your confidence in electing me for a second term as International Councillor. Since our elective chapter in May, 2015, I have been in contact with my counterparts in the USA and Australia regarding spiritual assistance training for ofs members as well as with the Great Britain International Councillor regarding resources. We have sent several updates to our International Presidency Councillor Jennifer Harrington. At Jennifer's request, I asked the National Council to let us know of any seculars who would be attending the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia in August, 2015. OFS candidates Gerard and Rita McCarthy from the emerging St. Padre Pio group in St. John's, NL attended and made contact with USA ofs.

My largest undertaking was the construction of a process in response to the CIOFS initiative to consult with local members regarding the theme of the 2017 General Chapter "How to manage an International Order like the OFS."

All local fraternities should have received a request from their regional minister to outline three priorities for the improvement of the management of the order and to create a specific proposal for each of these priorities. Summary documents were also included to provide background for the discussion. The complete documents should be on our National website <http://www.ofsnational.ca/> in the near future. A synthesis of your responses will be sent to CIOFS by May 1, 2016.

Marion Clorey, ofs

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are essential to the existence of the Regional, National and International structure.

However, as we belong to a secular Order, what is possible to do to 'maintain this Franciscan fraternal LINK' so dear to us? How to consider this LINK, without having a certain structure that would allow us to better support this first objective: 'from the Gospel to Life and from Life to the Gospel'?

We expect a lot from the various levels of the Order or from the Franciscan Family to provide the means and tools that they give us in order to pursue our monthly meetings, such as the biblical sharing (ongoing formation - Living Fraternity) and the Regional and National resource gatherings, the supply of different electronic means and documents of information and magazines on the LIFE of the Order and the Franciscan Family and others...

All this is available thanks to members who undertake it and offer us these



means by placing their talents in our service. Yes, we must look at how to bring the Order closer to us and in service to our members.

Each one of us, must ask ourselves how 'I' can give this service to my Sisters and Brothers of the Order with 'MY' means. We all have qualities and talents that can be useful, all the while seeing in the structures the LINK between these means allowing us to find the members willing to give such services.

Some Regional fraternities are already looking at new ways of functioning, that would allow them to pursue this way of LIFE, knowing that this reality has been lived so many times during the 800 years of existence of the OFS.

A renewal is before us, that would make it possible for this meeting with Francis and Clare? The Lord will see to it, as he has said to Francis, 'It is not your Order, it is Mine'.

Let us openly do what we can and the Lord will be the GATHERER.

Gilles Métivier ofs

This is a submission for the national bulletin that wasn't going to happen. My life has immersed in various medical issues, myself and a person close to me. What can I say that would be edifying or even remotely helpful to my Franciscan sisters and brothers? I was sure that my moaning and whining (I've listened to myself...and so has my family) would not be edifying in the least. So I was going to tell Gille, our wonderful national minister, and Maurice, our National Bulletin creator, that I have nothing. As I was about to send that email, when I realized I was wrong.

Thomas Merton. He was a Trappist, but he was also a Secular Franciscan. He had much to say about many things, which is probably why I like him very much. I encourage all of you to read his books!

But his words regarding pain and suffering have helped me over the past 30 years. He said that nothing more easily becomes unholy as suffering. And it is quiet easy for that to happen. I know. Selfish misery is a dark hole, but it can be avoided and even climb out of that abyss, with the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Suffering can be made Holy. Yes, we try and do that by offering it up to God. But Merton goes further:

"Merely accepted, suffering does nothing for our souls except, perhaps, to harden them. Endurance alone is no consecration... We can deny ourselves rigorously for the wrong reason and end up by pleasing ourselves mightily with our self-denial... Suffering is consecrated to God by

faith - not by faith in suffering, but by faith in God. Some of us believe in the power and the value of suffering. But such a belief is an illusion. Suffering has no power and no value of its own. It is valuable only as a test of faith. What if our faith fails the test? Is it good to suffer, then? What if



we enter into suffering with a strong faith in suffering, and then discover that suffering destroys us?"

Suffering can thus destroy us. But Merton shows how this can be avoided: "To believe in suffering is pride: but to suffer, believing in God, is humility. For pride may tell us that we are strong enough to suffer, that suffering is good for us because we are good. Humility tells us that suffering is an evil which we must always expect to find in our lives because of the evil that is in ourselves. But faith also knows that the mercy of God is given to those who seek him in suffering, and that by his grace we can overcome evil with good. Suffering, then, becomes good by accident, by the good that it enables us to receive more abundantly from the mercy of God. It does not make us good by itself, but it enables us to make ourselves better than we are. Thus, what we consecrate to God in suffering is not our suffering but our selves."

Thus humility allows suffering to become Holy. As Franciscans, humility should be part of our character.

Secular Franciscan
 Newsletter of the
 Secular Franciscan Order
 National Fraternity
 of Canada

December 2015
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I will leave you with a very special prayer written by Thomas Merton in “Thoughts in Solitude”: *“Let this be my only consolation, that wherever I am You, my Lord, are loved and praised. The trees indeed love You without knowing You. The tiger lilies and corn Flowers are there, proclaiming that they love You, without being aware of Your presence. The beautiful dark clouds ride slowly across the sky musing on You like children who do not know what they are dreaming of, as they play. But in the midst of them all, I know You, and I know of Your presence. In them and in me I know of the love which they do not know, and, what is greater, I am abashed by the presence of Your love in me. O kind and terrible love, which You have given me, and which could never be in my heart if You did not love me! For in the midst of these beings which have never offended You, I am loved by You, and it would seem most of all as one who has offended You. I am seen by You under the sky, and my offenses have been forgotten by You—but I have not forgotten them. Only one thing I ask: that the memory of them should not make me afraid to receive into my heart the gift of Love- which You have placed in me. I will receive it because I am unworthy. In doing so I will only love You all the more, and give Your mercy greater glory.*

Remembering that I have been a sinner, I will love You in spite of what I have been, knowing that my love is precious because it is Yours, rather than my own. Precious to You because it comes from Your own Son, but precious even more because it makes me Your son”

Marzio Apolloni, ofs
Vice Minister (Anglophone)

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PRESIDENCY COUNSELLOR

To all my brothers and sisters
Peace and all good!

This last month has been an incredible journey of faith for me, and our Almighty Father has carried me and my family. We had our 2nd Presidency meeting at Seraphicum, in Rome from the 7 to 14th November, and I had our Project Africa Meeting take place from the 3rd, so I was away from home for 13 days. This was at a time, that no mother or grandmother would like to leave her daughter and grandchildren, as my daughter was 37 weeks pregnant and about to give birth to her 6th child. I assist Laurin daily with all her extra mural activities, and in Johannesburg the temperature rose to 40 deg C. So I felt very stressed and had to abandon myself totally to God. He was so faithful, that I was able to be at peace, participate and return home, and be with Laurin as she delivered our granddaughter and both of them are well. Praise God.

I would like to share with you a brief summary of our intense meeting with reports, deliberations, reflections and decisions that took place. The meeting was attended by the full Presidency and the fraternal spirit was again felt and shared throughout by everyone. On Wednesday



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afternoon we took a few hours break and visited the Catacombs of Domitilla..

During the week we had REPORTS from the DIFFERENT COMMISSIONS - Financial, Formation, Juridical and Patrimonial, Communications, Family, Justice, Peace and Integration of Creation,

PROJECTS - Translation of Official documents, China, Africa and Arabian countries
Brief Sharings on the DIFFERENT CONGRESSES that were attended during the year:
OFS/YouFra European Congress (*Andrea*), OFM General Chapter (*Tibor*), US St. Bonaventure Congress (*Tibor*), Congress in Mexico Oct 16th-18th – (*Chelito*), Congress of the Families, USA, Sept 22nd-25th – (*Sissi*), Congress of Madagascar (*Jenny*)
NATIONAL FRATERNITIES - The General guidelines for twinning and fraternal accompaniment, will be discussed at next meeting.

Fraternal and Pastoral Visits were done in Germany, Great Britain, Chile and Russia.
National Elective Chapters were held in Germany, Great Britain, Sweden, Sri Lanka, USA - Canada, Austria, Brazil, Ireland, Rwanda, Puerto Rico El Salvador, Cameroun
National fraternities with necessary updates.- Latvija, Peru, South Africa, Malawi, Uganda and Ethiopia

YOUFRA WYD and International gathering of Youfra in Poland - July 2016.

Youfra - documents on Celebration in the Fraternity of the Franciscan Youth.

OFS AND FRANCISCAN YOUTH CONGRESSES -

Latin America - 2016 in *Ecuador*, Asia 2017 in *Bali, Indonesia*, Africa possible 2018.

We had VISITS from

Francesco Mattiocco - CAUSE OF SAINTS will be made known to all national fraternities. Local fraternities to give names of possibly unknown saints. Fr Francis mentioned Lucien Botovasoa of Madagascar

Fr Marcus Heyns ofm from FRANCISCAN INTERNATIONAL - *We were given the booklet "Making human rights work for people living in extreme poverty" The book can be downloaded from the website.. <http://www.franciscansinternational.org/> This book will be presented at all national visits.*

In preparation for 2015 Paris COP 21 here is a link that you can take action in a personal capacity <https://catholicclimatemovement.global/>, The Petition can be signed on line or you can download a petition that can be promoted, with prayers

Programming of forthcoming visits/chapters and preliminary discussion for the General Chapter 2017 took place. The decision on the venue would be made in April.

May you all have a very blessed Advent, and may your preparation for the birth of the Christ Child Jesus bring many blessings to you and your families. Please keep our Holy Father Francis in prayer as he visits Africa.

With much love, May God bless you all,
Jenny Harrington



MILLIONS OF CATHOLICS UNITE WORLDWIDE BEHIND POPE’S CALL FOR CLIMATE ACTION Putting *Laudato Si’* into action



Here are just six of them in Calgary
Left to right: Sr Patricia Derbyshire,
Andrew Conradi, ofs, Ron Semenov,
ofs, Joe Glaab, ofm (photo by
Paul Vanderham, ofs)

Not only was the day of the Climate March/Rally a cold Grey Cup Day, but the day was also the funeral for a very popular Calgary MP so the turn out in Canada’s oil capital was not huge (I would estimate about 400 tops, but in Ottawa the March and Rally drew 25,000!).

In Calgary, First Nations and young people took a leading part and the day was organized by the Calgary Climate Change Action Network and hosted by the United Church.

It could not have been a more beautiful day to showcase our Sister Mother Earth with Brother Sun and Sister Snow in evidence! Brother Wind was sleepy and Brother Clouds were elsewhere. People came together to demonstrate their concern for Mother Earth and the common good!

As Pope Francis has said *“I ask you in the name of God to defend Mother Earth!”* The Secular Franciscans who participated worldwide on 29 Nov 2015 were living Rule 15: *“Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their*

faith.” They were attentive to the *“cry of the earth and cry of the poor”* as Pope Francis asked us in *Laudato Si’*.

Pope Francis participated in the Global Climate March by sending his shoes to join the thousands of shoes displayed at the Place de la République in Paris. The shoes were on display to represent the 300,000 Parisians who were supposed to begin the Paris Climate March from that location. The march was cancelled by the French government in the wake of the terrorist attacks. Cardinal Cláudio Hummes, OFM attended the human chain of 10,000 who did manage to demonstrate in Paris together with the Global Catholic Climate Movement, after yesterday’s emotive petition delivery event. Eight hundred and forty thousand Catholic signatures were added to a global total of over 1,780,000 faith based signatures delivered to Christina Figueres, Executive Secretary of the U.N. Climate Change Secretariat, and Nicolas Hulot, Special Envoy of the French President for the Protection of the Planet.

The *Laudato Si’* quote *“Hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor”* was the background message behind the Pope’s shoes ceremony. Cardinal Hummes and the GCCM team posed for a final picture in front of the thousands of shoes at the Place de la République in Paris, in memory of the victims of the recent attacks and in solidarity with the 2000 rallies that happened on 29 November 2015 all over the world.



Andrew C



OFS Commissions Newsletter

December 2015

YOUTH



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we look forward to the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, let us be heralds of Joy, Peace and Love! We are a people of HOPE and FAITH!

In today's media, there is much violence and good role models are rarely featured. Some young people, being drawn into a dark place, feeling hopeless take their own lives or the lives of others. ***The light and love of Christ in our eyes and in our actions, dispells darkness and softens hardened and hurt hearts!*** The seeds of the Gospel can take root! The simplicity and joy of knowing Jesus, as St. Francis lived it, in love and service has a proven record of changing the world! ***This Good News is needed in this world now more than ever!***

In the last bulletin we talked about, "Three Steps to YOUTH Friendly Fraternities" with prayer and hope and NO worry! Secular Franciscans are to "Foster communion among members,.....as well as meeting with other Franciscan groups, especially youth groups" RULE XXIV

Today we have many OFS members working with Youth! In parishes, at home, in schools, in organizations and in Events and Youth activities right across Canada!

As Secular Franciscan Fraternities, I believe we are ready and willing, to encourage and support those youth drawn to us! When they are drawn to us, as family or as friend, or as teacher, or as mentor, ***truly they are drawn to the spirituality of St. Francis***, because ***that is who we are***- franciscans! Let us not hesitate to share about YouFra! ***Our Youth, need to know that there is an International Organization of YOUTH that is there for them, in the Franciscan family!*** A ***special place*** just for them! ***YouFra!*** When we share this information, those who are drawn by the Holy Spirit, will desire to begin a journey as a franciscan youth! We as fraternity, invite children and youth at our family gatherings! Some of these children, will want to be little "friends of St. Francis"! ***We must encourage every little spark of faith that we see in our Children and Youth! God has brought them to our lives!*** Have you seen the movie about the life Blessed John Duns Scotus? When he went to the brothers wanting to join he ***was only a little boy!***

The last week of October, I was privileged to stay with the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, in Montreal. I was on my way to the National Council Meeting in Quebec. Many of the Sisters are aging in this house. In other countries there are many young Sisters. As I attended Mass and Prayer, I reflected on all these beautiful virgins in waiting of the Lord. I knew each one had a story. A calling. They had spent their lives in service! While visiting the infirmary, I shared who I was and why I was in Montreal and what my role was. The Sisters were all so excited and happy to hear about our desire as Seculars to reach the Youth. One bed ridden Sister, once the Provincial of Canada, now in her nineties, squeezed my hand stared in my eyes and told me how wonderful that was! She said, ***"I am so glad you are doing this! I wish you would***

have been there when I was a child, it would have helped me so much!" I marvelled at her words.

I asked the Sister I was touring with "How did you become a Sister?" She told me she didn't think she would be a Sister when she was finished school and working but something had happened when she was a little girl! She remembered she attended a Catholic School, and one day there was a table set up with information and there was a Nun standing by and a picture of a woman hanging on the wall. She said, "I was drawn to that woman in the picture! I wanted to help her what ever she was doing and so I tugged on the Sisters dress. I told her I wanted to join her in this work! She told me that was nice and to come back when I was older. I walked away and then realized that she had given me no information so I went back and said –you told me to come back but you didn't tell me where to come?- So the Sister gave me the address! The number and the street in Montreal. I was ten years old. Later due to the health of my Father we moved to New Hampshire USA, my mother was American. I went to a Catholic School and learned English, graduated and was working. I was now 18 years old. One Sunday, at Mass, as the Priest elevated the Host, I heard a voice ask me-‘what are you doing with your missionary vocation’? I was shocked! There was no one there! And then I remembered! I went quickly, to the Sisters at the school I had recently graduated from. I asked my old teacher did she know which order lived at the address back in Montreal! I remembered the exact address! She did not know which congregation was there but encouraged me to mail my enquiry to” the Mother Superior” at that address! Monday I mailed my letter! Friday I received an answer! I was so excited to see the letter from the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary!” This Sister is now 87 years old!



Shortly after this trip on my way home, I received a phone call! It was Aaron Arbuckle from Prince Edward Island! He was back in Ontario! Aaron grew up with the franciscan charism and as a child attended Fraternity meetings, with his parents.

Many of you know Aaron, he attended our YouFra Pilgrimage to Trois Rivieres and Cap de Madeleine, Quebec, in 2010 and wanted to be part of YouFra! He agreed to be a JPIC contact for Youth for the National Council as YouFra formed! He has out Franciscan information at Catholic Conferences, lived in Ontario and worked with me with the Youth in a Youth Centres and helped open a Transitional Home for Women. He attended our local Fraternity meetings and was one of the representatives of Canada at the YouFra Gathering before the WYD in Spain!

Aaron's call was to ask me if we would still like him to help form YouFra, He was ready now to seriously reach youth, form youth to be YouFra! He also wishes to continue to share the JPIC concerns with the Youth! I said "YES!"

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NOTES AND NEWS

We have over 233 likes on our Face Book page YOUFRA Canada

WYD 2016!! We are invited to send 10 delegates to the YOUFRA/JEFRA gathering and WYD in Krakow Poland July 22-31st 2016. I will need the names by the end of January 2016 more details to follow! Canada is recognized by the International You-Fra Jefra as an emerging Fraternity and we are

There are groups meeting across Canada! It is only a matter of time! *Never give up hope!* *The Trillium Region began working with Fraternities trying to get YouFra started in 2002*, with the appointment of a Youth Coordinator on the Regional Council! **Now 13 years later, in Woodbridge Ontario, on October 4th, 2015, 21 young people decided to meet monthly to begin the process!**

“I am happy to announce that our region may be doing the impossible! There are two Fraternities who have made YOUFRA a priority and I will have the privilege of spending the Transitus with one and the feast day of St. Francis with another. Both of these meetings look to start the process of YOUFRA here in Canada.” *Lisa Theriault, ofs Youth Animator Trillium Region Praise the Lord!*

If you have some news to share or questions you can call or text me at 613-242-1125 or email colleenmacalister@yahoo.ca

Colleen MacAlister, ofs, National Youth Animator

Pray Hope and Don't Worry!