



Secular Franciscan

National Bulletin of the Secular Franciscan Order in Canada
March 2021

A Year of Change

Doug Clorey, ofs, National Minister

Who could have imagined how life would change in the past year?

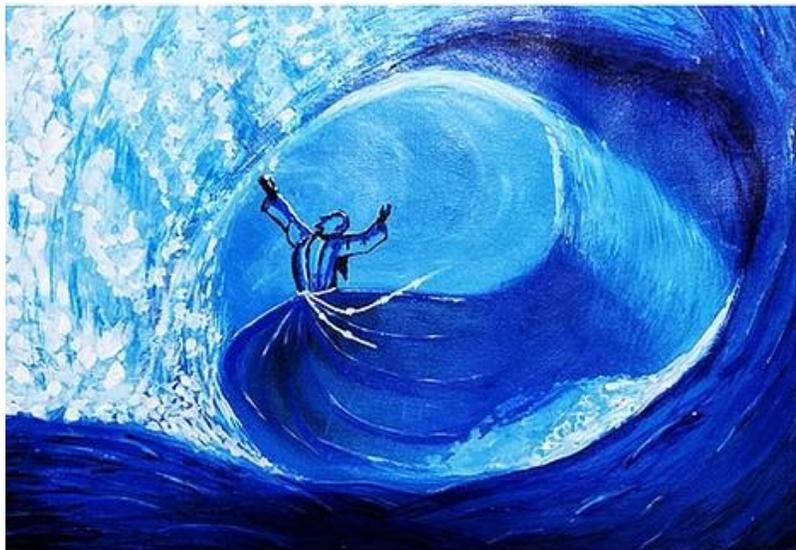
Almost one year ago, COVID-19 arrived in Canada. Despite measures taken to contain its spread, many people, including members of our Franciscan community, contracted the virus, often those in vulnerable stages of life, and some have died.

Travel came to a grinding halt. Businesses and factories closed or, as a minimum, reduced their production level. On a positive note, our planet has seen a reduction in air pollutants as a result. A lot of businesses continue struggling to remain afloat while employees find themselves working from home, often home-schooling at the same time. Essential workers continue to put themselves at risk ensuring that services are provided for all.

For Secular Franciscans, practically speaking, the pandemic has meant having to forego in-person meetings, times of food and fellowship, and, of course, physical contact. Surprisingly, a lot of us have found ways to adjust to our current situation. The importance of reaching out to others, especially to those who are isolated, has become a priority. Many have learned how to use digital technology, like Zoom, as a way to connect with family, friends and fraternity members. Others have connected via telephone and the “ancient art” of letter writing. And, mostly everyone has found more time for reflection and prayer. Even when we have felt that we were in the centre of a whirlwind, we know God has been and is with us through it all and we continue to look with joy at how the future will unfold. In fact, this past year has given us an opportunity to pause, a time to reflect on what kind of society we want to build and leave to our children.

We are reminded of the words that Saint Pope John Paul II addressed to Secular Franciscans during our 2002 General Chapter ... *“You are called to make your own contribution, inspired by the person and message of St Francis of Assisi, to hasten the coming of a civilization in which the dignity of the human person, co-responsibility and love may be living realities.”*

(Address of John Paul II to the Secular Franciscan Order, 22 November 2002)



« Au coeur du tourbillon »
par frère Jaitus, capucin / 2020

Computers

National Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Alix Poulin, OFM Cap

We are in 2021 and I thought that Secular Franciscans could recognize themselves in my experience.

Let me tell you about my experience with computers! In high school, we were still working with typewriters! I had typing classes in high school. When I look back on the time spent learning how to type, it wasn't a waste of time, since the fingering that we were taught was still used for computer keyboards. But still.... typewriters! It seems so long ago! When was the first time I saw a personal computer? Maybe it was my sister who showed me this. As I asked her about two other words that were starting to come up: "Internet" and "website". I remember the date very well: January or February 1996. It was the first time I had seen a website, and my sister had shown me the one at the Louvre museum. The museum's paintings appeared on the screen one centimeter at a time. It wasn't broadband!

And then everything accelerated, as we know. A year later, I became a Capuchin postulant. Postulant being the very first stage of religious life, even before the novitiate. In anticipation of my university studies that would eventually begin shortly after the novitiate, I had acquired for the first time a personal computer, it was called: a Pentium, and it took up quite a bit of space. The Internet would grow incredibly fast. A few years later, Google came into play. I understand very well how this company became so rich and powerful. Everybody uses this famous search engine! I summarize and summarize. Youtube has arrived: forgotten videos and songs came back to life.

Amazon arrived: when I was in Ottawa, it wasn't that easy to find books in French, and there was only one French bookstore downtown. But with Amazon, I could get them easily.... at home! How did something that was unknown to me in my twenties become so present in our lives? And by the way, isn't it thanks to the Internet that I manage to communicate with people in the form of a blog?

And finally, it was last year, because of the pandemic, that we could see the omnipresence of the computer go up another notch, with a new word to assimilate: Zoom. The zoom software. The churches were closed: we had zoom Masses. And working meetings in zoom. I am currently taking a zoom course. In the middle of winter, there is no need to go out walking in the freezing wind, as it happened twenty years ago. No need to go out in an icy or snowy car.

However, how far will the computer's grip go? Meetings that should happen between



friends or colleagues take place in front of a screen. Can the screen replace human contact? No, of course not. It is because of this strange pandemic that we find ourselves in this situation. In some cases, we want to avoid human contact as much as possible to reduce the proliferation of the virus. Strange times when the love of one's neighbor seems to be demonstrated not by human contact, but by the absence of contact!

Our political leaders seem to make the presumption that every household now has access to a computer as well as access to the Internet. We can see this presumption in the fact that teachers are being asked for full weeks to give their courses to their high school students by distance learning. Are we so sure that everyone has access to the Internet? Do all scholarships have easy access? And is this at the expense of a varied grocery basket for the poorest?

(continued on page 3)

Year of St Joseph, National Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Peter Knaapen, OFM Conv

Pope Francis has written an Apostolic Letter about Saint Joseph, to mark the opening of the Year of Saint Joseph, which runs to December 8, 2021. The title of the Letter is *Patris Corde*, which means "*With a Father's Heart*". 150 years ago, Pope Pius IX named Joseph, Patron of the Catholic Church. We remember him especially during the month of March.

Pope Francis in this letter says he is convinced that "*in Joseph, Jesus saw the tender love of God*". Joseph was able to accept his own weaknesses and Pope Francis is sure this shaped the life of the Holy Family. "*Joseph teaches us that faith in God includes believing he can work even through our fears, our frailties and our weaknesses. He also teaches us that we must never be afraid to let the Lord steer our course. At times, we want to be in complete control, yet God always sees the bigger picture*".

Joseph "*accepted Mary unconditionally. He trusted in the angel's words*". His life teaches us to accept rather than to explain. His example can teach us to "embrace the way things are, even when they do not turn out as we wish. Not with mere resignation but with hope and courage".

Joseph's approach can allow miracles to happen in our lives, and "*encourages us to accept and welcome others as they are, without exception, and to show special concern for the weak, for God chooses what is weak*". Pope Francis is sure that just as God used Joseph to achieve His purpose, God can use us. He offers us an interesting challenge: he suggests we should ask "*whether we ourselves are protecting Jesus and Mary, for they are also mysteriously entrusted to our own responsibility, care and safekeeping*"; Jesus entered the world "*in a state of great vulnerability*" and Joseph had to defend, protect, and care for Him; we are called to do the same. The child Jesus is often the "poor, needy, suffering or dying person, every stranger, every prisoner, every infirm person" we come across. The child Jesus grew up and taught us, "*As you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me*" (Matthew 25, 40). If we respond positively to this challenge, we are continuing the mission of St Joseph.



Pope Francis concludes his Apostolic Letter with a prayer to Saint Joseph:

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

To you God entrusted his only Son; In you Mary placed her trust;

with you Christ became man. Blessed Joseph, to us too,

show yourself a father and guide us in the path of life.

Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage, and defend us from every evil. Amen.

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Through my example, which is necessarily very limited, I wanted to show how the computer came into our lives and how much it is present in our lives. Its influence is currently very strong. Let's remain vigilant! How many men consume pornography on the Internet? My experience as a confessor teaches me this. Yet another addiction. May the Holy Spirit enlighten us, especially in this time of Lent, to know how to use computers with discernment.

Newsletter of the
 Secular Franciscan Order
 National Fraternity of Canada
 March 2021

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National Youth and Young Adult Team



Initiating a Dialogue with Young Adults

At the last Atlantic gathering of OFS members of the Regional Fraternity of Eastern Canada, the theme of the deliberations was to explore how fraternities might reach out to youth and young adults. St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity in Cornwall, PEI, took up this challenge. In small discussion groups, fraternity members deliberated these questions:

- Who are our young adults?
- For what are they searching?
- What insights did you come away with from conversations you have had with young adults?
- What have they revealed to you about the world in which they live, their needs, their fears, and their hopes?
- How is the Spirit calling us to respond?

The outcome of these deliberations was a decision that several of our fraternity members initiate a discussion with young adults. These three fraternity members have met subsequently with young adults via Zoom several times. During these meetings, we have focused on exploring

common ground, on how Secular Franciscans might accompany young adults on their spiritual journeys, as well as on how younger faith seekers could accompany us older faith seekers. We have framed our discussions around peacemaking, dialogue, and social justice issues. We have explored perspectives of young adults and Franciscan members about building a better world, sustainability for the planet, and integrating our values into our lifestyles. One of the young adults called this initiative a “community of authentic conversation and change”. We do not know where this community is going in the future, but we look forward to continuing to explore together the intersections of the lives of young adults and Secular Franciscans.

Martha Gabriel, ofs, member of the National Youth and Young Adult Team and Director of Formation, St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity, PEI.

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CIOFS has a new web-site address: www.ciofs.info

A Day of Walking in Sault-au Recollet, Montreal For Franciscan Youth

By Jean Sébastien Lajoie, Youth Director for SIAF*

On Saturday, September 5, 2020 as part of the activities of Franciscan Youth, about thirty people (young adults, young families as well as Capuchin and Franciscan brothers of Emmanuel) met for a day's walk in the Sault-au-Récollet sector of Montreal.

The 7-kilometre route is strewn with historical elements and sites (e.g. a monument commemorating the first Mass in Canada in 1615 at the Sault-au-Récollet Museum, Miller's House) as well as natural and ecological sites (such as the arboretum on biodiversity in an urban environment known as the IDENT-cité project and the Visitation Nature Park).

The excursion ended with a mass which was celebrated in the Church of the Visitation, the oldest church built under the French regime still standing in Montreal. After several months of confinement (due to the pandemic), everyone was very happy to be able to experience such an activity!



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**SIAF is a service which promotes the Franciscan charism through the animation of various projects. It is made up of representatives of the Franciscan Family in Quebec,*



**SERVANT LEADERSHIP IN GOSPEL LIVING
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JEUNES ADULTES**

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National Formation Commission – 2020 Year End Review

	<p>The National Formation Commission team has been very engaged in the work of formation in the OFS. The common connection and focus to serve our local fraternities across Canada, has created inroads to enrich the formation of Secular Franciscans in all Regions. In the unanticipated extension of the 3 year term of its work to May 2022, there will be some changes in membership and new opportunities to advance the work of Secular Franciscan formation: spiritual, human, and communal dimensions. <i>Our year end review of 2020 below outlines the work that has been carried out by the National Formation Commission.</i></p>
<p>Role of the Spiritual Assistant in Formation - National Guidelines</p> <p>Made available in English, French and Korean languages. Published on the OFS National Website</p>	<p>Clarifies the role of the Spiritual Assistant in Formation, as complimentary and collaborative with the Formation Team of the local Fraternity. Sent to all Regional Fraternities for circulation to all local fraternities.</p>
<p>Introduced New Formators' Course (3) versions (1) Online and (2) Correspondence English and French Correspondence versions</p>	<p>Introduced to all Regions - 18 members successfully completed the 1st Course in June, and 34 members are set to complete the 2nd Course in March/April. One Region is running an online version of the Course.</p>
<p>Introduction of the CIOFS Guidelines for Initial Formation (Candidacy) 2017. Made available in French, English and Korean languages. Has an international flavour with an opportunity to intensify or broaden the Candidacy formation experience.</p>	<p>The new CIOFS Guidelines were reformatted and implemented for use in Francophone Regions. Also being trialled with (1) Young Adult in an Anglophone Region.</p>
<p>Created and distributed to Regional Fraternities Care and Feeding of Fraternity Councils – Canadian Edition. Made available in French, English and Korean languages.</p>	<p>Leadership resource booklet. To assist local fraternity Councils in carrying out their work as a Council. Includes a feedback mechanism for fraternity members to provide input into their experience of fraternity life.</p>
<p>Living Fraternity ongoing formation publication. Continues to be provided in French and English.</p>	<p>Made improvements from suggestions by local fraternities through the <i>National Formation Questionnaire (2019)</i>.</p>

I would like to thank members of the National Formation Commission whose dedicated participation and work over the last two and a half years has pushed OFS Formation to new frontiers. For our members who have retired, or who are not able to continue serving for the extended period to 2022, we extend heartfelt gratitude for all your exceptional service: (continued on page 7)

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Doug Hagen (RFEC), Michele Turgeon and Marcel Munger (Francophone Regions), Donna Dooling (Trillium) who has served as a Formators Course facilitator.

We are fortunate that new members have volunteered to participate in the work of the National Formation Commission 2021 – 2022: Fr. Peter Knaapen (National Spiritual Assistant), Cathy Payne (former Trillium Regional Minister) and Claudia Batchilder (Fraternity Formation Director –RFEC).

To the many brothers and sisters who have volunteered time and talent to translate Formation materials in French and Korean languages, we thank you immensely.

Jewel Jasmins, ofs National Formation Director

"Our Friend COVID..."

Par Fr. André Chicoine, ofm cap.

Dear sisters and brothers of the Secular Franciscan Order!

"Our friend Covid" leads us to experience situations that we would never have foreseen... Personally, who would have thought that I would have been "isolated" on the island of Tahiti for five months? Who would have thought that we would continue to be more or less isolated in this second wave in Canada?

I come to you with a few thoughts - I have already expressed these in the little newsletter of the Church in Tahiti, "Le Semeur" (The Sower). I also had a discussion on this with the sisters and brothers of the OFS Fraternity at the Monastery of St. Clare in Tahiti.

My first reaction to the pandemic situation was to say, "My friend Covid"! This may seem strange to you... Let me explain: I immediately made the connection with the encounter of Francis of Assisi with the wolf of Gubbio. As we know, the legend says that the wolf terrorized the inhabitants of the village of Gubbio. He attacked both livestock and humans. The Poverello of Assisi went to find the animal and with the sign of the cross calmed it down and made a pact with it because it was hungry. The inhabitants of the town would promise to feed him if he promised not to hurt them. This lasted two years until the wolf died of old age. It is even said that he was given a funeral...

While not downplaying the "Covidian" reality, we too have to tame this reality. We can no longer continue to live as we have done: to consume without much consideration. The Pope speaks of our common home. He reminds us in "Fratelli tutti" how we must rediscover that fraternal relationship that we have forgotten...

St. Francis invites us to revisit this particular connection with the elements of nature. He spoke of Brother Sun, and of his Sister, Mother Earth... The question we ought to ask ourselves is: "What relationship do I and we have with this?" Mother Nature is tired! Am I and are we aware of this? We have an "adulterous" attitude towards Creation, i.e. we only see our own interests and not that of the Creator.

For me, the virus is my friend who comes to remind me: "If you stop consuming frivolously, then we will be good friends and everything will be fine." Tomorrow won't be the same as before. Perhaps that is the grace of the "Covid"! Sister "Covid" tells us that you are no more than Creation, you are no less than Creation. You are one element, so return to your proper place in this fraternity of creation.



Regional Fraternity Page

Our Lady of the Angels Regional Fraternity

Throughout the OLOTA region, Secular Franciscans do not stop their activities, including admitting new members and professing candidates, while observing the provincial health protocols. Ten fraternities across the region have used OLOTA ZOOM account for the council, fraternity, and candidate formation meetings. Some members even feel comfortable to host their own parish ZOOM accounts. Recently, we started monthly gathering together on the first Friday to pray Vespers and Franciscan Crown Rosary.





Nov 12, 2020: Profession of Goretti and Marla - St. Pio Fraternity, Delta, BC



Christmas 2020: Revisiting Christmas at Greccio - St. Mary's, Calgary, AB



Jan 1, 2021: 12 Fraternities Celebrating Solemnity Mother of God