



Dear Brothers & Sisters

Secular Franciscan Fraternity

During COVID-19 we are gathering through Zoom or through partnering with a specific fraternity member.

Council Members

Minister

Stephanie Heavey, OFS
minister@nwfranciscans.org

Vice-Minister

Sue Gribbon, OFS
viceminister@nwfranciscans.org

Formation Director

Jackie Leo, OFS
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Secretary

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Treasurer

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Spiritual Assistant

Jerry Stecker, OFS
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Councilor-at-Large

Kay Crnich, OFS

For privacy, all personal addresses, phone numbers, email, prayer intentions, and (for non-council members) last names are removed from this web version.

New Provincial Spiritual Assistant

Fr. Ed McKenzie, OFM, is moving into a new ministry working full-time with Veterans who suffer with PTSD. This is a ministry dear to his heart and he brings his personal military experience to the ministry in which he has been involved as time permitted.

Welcome Brother Ed!

Following is the email sent by the new Spiritual Assistant:

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I would like to introduce myself to you, my name is **Brother Ed Arambasich, OFM**, a native to the city of Joliet, IL. Most of my early life as a grade school kid and high school youth, I loved working with the Benedictine sisters that taught me for seven years and then we transferred Catholic Schools to St. John the Baptist School and Parish, Joliet, where I was introduced to the Franciscan friars and the Carmelite friars at Joliet Catholic High School. After high school, I became a Journeyman Ironworker, Local 444, Joliet, IL.

At age 20, I entered the Abbey of St. Procopius in Lisle, IL, where the first part of my vocation took place in serving God as a monastic and a school administrator of our high school, Benet Academy. I spent twenty years as a Benedictine doing all kinds of minister from being the Book Store Manager, Campus Minister, Dean of Students as well as Porter, Guest Master and Assistant Novice Master at the Abbey.

In 1992, I applied for a Canonical transfer of religious orders to serve God more abundantly as a Franciscan friar. After my time as a Benedictine, I moved into Franciscan life with great joy! I have served in Joliet, Lemont, New Orleans, Quincy, San Francisco and now back to Joliet, what a blessing. In all of my assignments, I was involved in the care and joy of working with first responders as Police and Fire Chaplain, and loving that vocation. Now, in addition to that, I am so blessed to serve you as the Provincial Spiritual Assistant of our Province as well as our local Guardian here at St. John the Baptist. ☒

Monthly Gathering

The fraternity members in the Zoom group, led by our **Spiritual Assistant Jerry**, will gather virtually on **Monday, December 14th at 7:00 p.m.** Those members who are partnering will decide on the best way to connect with each other in December. **Brother Jerry** will send an email with more information.

Without a doubt, this year has had a huge impact on Everyone. This is a great time to share your fears and doubts, your hopes and prayers, and the ways in which you have adapted to the current new normal. ☒

Fraternity Transfers

One of the Joys of 2020 is the fulfillment of the desire of our **Spiritual Assistant Jerry**. Brother Jerry is now not only our SA, but an Official member of our fraternity, as of December 1, 2020 . We are doubly blessed.

In early spring **Sister Geri** requested a transfer to another fraternity. Health issues had made it difficult for her to attend our evening gathering. The fraternity to which she is transferring holds their gathering in the morning which is a much better time for her.

Because of social distancing, Geri was not able to physically meet with the members of the new fraternity. This is one of several requirements that must be met for an official transfer. Once the restrictions on gatherings are eased, Sister Geri can visit the fraternity and the transfer will proceed. ☒

Liturgy Guides

The Roman-Franciscan Liturgy Guides for 2021 have been ordered.

Our Candidate Roseann has graciously offered to send the Guides to those who ordered them. The Guides are being shipped to Roseann. who will mail them once she receives them. ☒

And So We Pray...

PAPAL INTENTIONS FOR DECEMBER

For a life of prayer

We pray that our personal relationship with Jesus Christ be nourished by the Word of God and a life of prayer.

LET US PRAY

Response: *With hearts full of gratitude.*

For the **gift of faith in the Christ Child** whose birth we celebrate this month, we pray to the Lord,

For the **gift of fraternal love** that recognizes that *every person in the world* is one of God's beloved children and, therefore, our brother or sister, we pray to the Lord,

For the **gift of technology** which gave us Zoom, cell phones, texting and emails to keep us connected during COVID, we pray to the Lord,

For the **gifts of compassion and sacrifice** that are given freely by all in the health care fields, we pray to the Lord,

For the **gifts of intelligence and knowledge** that are being used by all researchers who have worked tirelessly to find a cure for COVID and a preventative vaccine, we pray to the Lord,

For the **gifts of creativity and ingenuity** that have inspired different ways to connect with each other and celebrate special occasions, we pray to the Lord,

For the **gift of patience** that has been and will continue to be given to us until this trial is over, we pray to the Lord,

For the **gift of slowed down time** which has given us an opportunity to assess the direction of our life and God's will for us, we pray to the Lord,

For the **gift of our vocations** to the secular Franciscan life, we pray to the Lord,

For the **gift of Your unconditional love** which caused You to assume our human nature to show us how to live and love, we pray to You Lord,

For **all the undeserved gifts** which You have showered upon us so lavishly, we pray to You, Lord,

Guidelines for Fraternity Life During Social Distancing

Until such time as fraternity life can return to a more normal way, the International Fraternity has determined guidelines to be used by all fraternities. This is a summary:

Rite of Admission

The Rite of Admission takes place within a liturgical celebration (not Mass) and cannot be done virtually. It is possible to have the Rite, if a small group representing the fraternity can be assembled.

Rite of Profession

The Rite of Profession needs to be delayed until the fraternity can gather for two reasons:

1. According to General Constitutions, the Council needs to decide *by secret ballot* on admission to profession of each candidate
2. The Fraternity needs to be present to witness the profession

Fraternity Council Elections

Fraternity members, the appointed Presider and Ecclesial Witness must be physically present for an election. Elections involve voting by secret ballot, and this cannot happen by teleconference phone or email.

Mail in ballots are not acceptable for the following reasons: the reading of the ballots must be overseen by the Presider and Ecclesial Witness, and there are multiple elections and a changing slate. Elections that cannot be held safely must be postponed.

Our fraternity is scheduled for Fraternity Council Elections in September 2021.

Official Fraternity Visitations

Fraternity members and the Visitor(s) must be physically present for an official Visitation. An official Visitation cannot take place by teleconference. Visitations that cannot be held safely must be postponed.

Our fraternity had its official Visitation in March just before social distancing took effect.

Fraternity Transfers

If a secular Franciscan requests a transfer to another fraternity, but did not physically visit the new fraternity several times before social distancing went into effect this year, the transfer request is put on hold until all requirements are met. The secular Franciscan remains a member of the original fraternity in the interim.

Other Guidelines

A few other guidelines mentioned are in sync with what we have been doing as a fraternity to keep our fraternal life active through Virtual gatherings or gatherings following local social distancing norms.

20th Quinquennial Congress

Happy News!

A few weeks ago, NAFRA council was able to sign a new contract for the Q! Several national Secular Franciscans, practicing the “prudence of children of the world”, were able to secure the same favorable room rate for attendees as the contract had for 2021.

The Q will be held: **August 3-7, 2022**
Phoenix, Arizona

While it seems a long way off, mark your calendars. ☑

Glad Tidings

The following is taken from the Fall/Winter 2020 Graymoor Today, publication of Franciscan Friars of the Atonement (At-one-ment) in Garrison, NY. I am sure that Fr. Bob Warren, will not mind my sharing his experience.

“Several years ago, just before Christmas, I stopped at a diner for a quick meal. When I entered it was nearly empty, but shortly a family entered. As they sat down, I heard their toddler squeal. His face was alive with glee. He giggled with excitement.

“Then I saw the source of his merriment—a tattered rag of a coat, dirty worn baggy pants, spindly body with toes that poked out of would-be shoes, knotted greasy hair and a tired worn face. The man spoke loudly across the room. ‘Hi there, baby. Hi there, big boy. I see you.’

“The parents exchanged looks of ‘what do we do’ and ‘that poor man’. Then the man began shouting, ‘Do you know patty cake? Do you know peek-a-boo?’ The baby squealed louder creating even more disturbance. The parents were clearly embarrassed and uncomfortable with the interaction. They tried to distract the baby. ‘Eric, leave the man alone, he’s eating. Here Eric, play with this.’

“Nevertheless, Eric was enraptured with the man dressed in rags and continued throughout the meal to reach out to him. I couldn’t help wonder WHY? The family hurried through their meal, paid and bolted for the door. As they passed the man’s table, Eric flung himself from his mother’s arms towards his new friend.

“The old man stood up and caught him. Eric laid his head on the old man’s ragged shoulders, hugging him tightly. The man’s eyes closed and I saw tears rolling down his cheeks. His aged hands full of grime and pain and hard labor held that baby so very gently. Then his eyes opened and he handed the baby back to his mother and said in a whisper, ‘God bless you, ma’am. Take good care of this child. He gave me my Christmas. ...’

“ I suggest that the meaning of Christmas is Eric. Eric is the God figure, the Christ Child, filled with zeal and love for us tattered people with our tattered lives, our tattered hurts, our tattered relationships and our tattered sins. God, like little Eric, always has his arms out-stretched towards us, determined to break into our lives. God, like Eric, embraces the least likely, often the ones others would like to avoid.

“Look at the first people called to the stable—poor shepherds and foreigners. Shepherds were considered lowly outcasts. The wise men were outsiders, pagans and not trusted. Of all the people in the world, god chose the outcasts and the foreigners to be the first to receive the astonishing news that God would become human.” *With hearts full of gratitude.* ☩

Our Apostolates

BINGO. Meets one night per month at 6:30 pm in St. Joseph’s activity room. Please pick one month in which to volunteer. Contact Sisters Kay or Mary Kay to sign up. *Temporarily affected by COVID.*

FRANCISCAN OUTREACH. This is a year round project. Welcome Kits with necessities for kitchen, bed and bath are needed for every person transitioning from homelessness to an apartment. We will buy the items needed and fill kits throughout the year. For more information, contact Sister Faith. *Temporarily affected by COVID.*

PRAYER & PRAISE MINISTRY. For our brothers and sisters unable to participate in our monthly gatherings due to poor health or transportation issues. For more information, or if you are ill or know of a member who is ill, please call our infirmarian, Sister Kay.

PRAYER CARD MINISTRY. Remembering our brothers and sisters at the special moments in their lives that occur each year. Coordinated by our Candidate Marion.

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY. We interweave prayers along with God’s love, care, and warmth into the stitches as we knit or crochet shawls for others. For more information, contact Sisters Sue B. or Cyndy.

SUPPORT (Money, Materials). Quarterly donations are taken from any excess funds that are available in our Common Fund *after* all the fraternity obligations are met. The donations are given to Franciscan Outreach, the Poor Clares (Palos Park, IL).

YOUTH PRAYER PARTNERS. Coordinated by Brother Tom, this apostolate matches up fraternity members with young people who are preparing for First Communion or Confirmation. For more information, please call Brother Tom. *Affected by COVID.*