FROM OUR REGIONAL MINISTER
JUDITH MUSSATTO, OFS

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The three-year term of the current Regional Executive Council will end in January 2021. In view of this, the council has appointed a Nominations Committee.

Janet Serros, OFS, Minister of St. Padre Pio Fraternity, Moreno Valley and Lisa Hernandez, OFS, Minister of St. Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity, Los Angeles, together form the nominations committee that will guide you through the nominations process leading up to the elections which are currently scheduled for the weekend of January 15-17, 2021.

I take this opportunity to thank you for the privilege you afforded me to be a Servant Leader in our Order, at the regional level. I was appointed to serve as Regional Secretary for eighteen months, followed by two consecutive elected terms to that position, which was followed by two consecutive terms as Regional Minister. Those years have been excellent opportunities to growth as a Secular Franciscan. It is now time to create space for other leaders to emerge.

May you be guided by the Holy Spirit as you begin the nominations process in mid-September.

Your Sister in Christ,
Judith
Clairvoyance: A Franciscan Charism?

In the last six months, many of us have learned new skills. Some have learned how to use FaceTime, others have continued their education through online learning, and some have extended their shopping skills by using apps to order groceries, dinners from local restaurants, or move travel plans to a future date. Even an institution as aged as the eight-centuries-old Franciscan Family has brought formation online; I took a week-long Franciscan School of Theology class on the *Writings of Francis of Assisi* in July. Br. Bill Short, OFM, had his challenges presenting the sessions remotely from his office based at the University of San Diego, but there was also the added blessing that participation included lay and Religious, including all branches of the Franciscan Family, from all over the world! They were able to get on their phones, laptops or computers and log into this interesting class presented live by Br. Bill.

It has also been very heartening to hear that most of the Fraternities within St. Francis Region have made a great deal of effort to ensure that, in this period of social distancing, we can still meet with one another as brothers and sisters in Fraternity. Some have done this through group conference calling, some through cards and letters, but the majority have used conference software like Zoom to bring everyone together in a face-to-face online gathering. An easy accomplishment? No, but most have managed to make it work through trial and error (it took me a while to locate my onscreen mute button as well!). Being with each other, praying together, catching up with what is going on (and not going on) in our lives, ongoing formation, and just seeing one another has been such a gift!

Who could have foreseen something like this? **Actually, YOU did!** In 2017, the OFS of the St. Francis Region met together in the Fall for our annual Regional Gathering. The topic that year was our declining “membership” and what were some ideas we should think about as we aged, moved, had changing life situations, etc. You may remember we met in smaller table groups to come forward with suggestions. Those suggestions were compiled and shared with the Regional Ministers at the January 2018 St. Francis Region Chapter meeting. And what was your #1 prediction for what Fraternity meetings might look like in the future? Online meetings! Your ideas were years ahead of their time. You suggested that there may be a time in the future when we may have to conduct our Fraternity meetings over the internet (Zoom wasn’t a common vocabulary word yet). And it’s working! Is it a substitute for the sisterhood and brotherhood shared at a regular Fraternity meeting? No, not really. And I do miss those potlucks which you can’t really do virtually. But the important thing is that we are still family, even when we are staring at a computer screen which looks like the beginning of the Brady Bunch.

We Secular Franciscans are a resilient family. So, when we think about our OFS charisms of love and relationship, maybe we might want to add just a little bit of clair-voyance as well (see, I worked Clair into the conversation!). + Pax et Bonum.
UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL

We “go from Gospel to life and from life to Gospel.” We learned this almost as soon as we began attending a fraternity and started initial formation. We know we are to “live the Gospel.” But what does that all mean? Do you understand everything you read and hear from Scripture? Because in order to “live the Gospel” you have to know and understand all Scripture. Throughout the New Testament, there are quotes, references, allusions and paraphrases from the Old Testament. Jesus himself quoted the Old Testament liberally, as did the twelve apostles. All were good practicing Jews and knew the Jewish scriptures thoroughly. Can we do any less?

Three of the so-called “Last Seven Words of Christ” were taken from the Old Testament. “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” comes from Psalm 22:1. When Jesus said “I thirst” He was fulfilling Psalm 69:22 which says “. . . in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink”. Jesus’ last words on the cross, “Into your hands I commend my spirit” are taken from Psalm 31:6.

A few other examples: Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Look for that in Deuteronomy 8:3. He said “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test”, found in Deuteronomy 6:16. He said “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve”, found in Deuteronomy 6:13. Those are only quotes from Jesus during his initial temptation, at the beginning of his ministry.

If your Bible has footnotes and other references, always read them and look up the other passages. That way you will begin to have a better understanding of the total interrelationship between the Old and the New Testaments. In doing that, you will begin to have a better understanding of the meaning of “living the Gospel”, and that will help you to live it better – always, of course, based on a solid and regular prayer life, asking for help from the Holy Spirit in understanding.

1 The Last Seven Words of Christ refers to the seven phrases Jesus spoke on the cross. Three of them are found in Luke, three in John, and one is found in both Matthew and Mark.
Blessings my Brothers and Sisters!

As I sit here and reflect on what is in my heart, I learned something powerful. I need to listen more during my prayer time, not always asking.

“The Gospel is never forced it is a choice,” this has been popping up in my head over and over as I heard it in a homily this past month. It has now transferred from the head to my heart.

We are Gospel people; we have been told. So, what does that really mean? Do I walk around with my bible in my hand knocking it over people’s heads? Do I walk around with a sign saying you are saved? Do I go up to someone and say you’re not living life right?

Here are my thoughts. God has given me the calling to following him and to be a Secular Franciscan. It means I need to try my hardest to live the Gospels. I have chosen to live the Gospel life and by doing so I have a responsibility to share His Gospels. I do that by one word and one word only “LOVE.” Doesn’t that sound so simple, not for me it is the hardest thing to do with that man that just cut me off on the road, to the person not social distancing. To the people around me not wearing a mask. To love the police officer who just shot someone in the back, to the women in pain who just walked out of the abortion clinic, to the father who just smacked his one year old across the face. The list can go on and on. We need to combine our world with the world of our God, to live heaven on earth. It is an invitation from our God.

Matthew 22:1-4
Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

Did you realize you were invited to God’s banquet and with that came a sense of responsibility? You’re not there just for the dinner, are you? As a Secular Franciscan I have realized this, and my response is to love and by loving I am living the Gospels. People I encounter will see the love of God poured out of me like a fountain. Francis is a wonderful example of this. He identified his life with Christ and never looked back. He picked up his cross and followed Him.

So yes, you have chosen to be a Gospel people, and yes you are invited to the banquet. Let’s all share the Gospels by showing Gods love to each other. A fountain overflowing.

Events
In the month of August Margie Rodriguez, Tinh Le and myself attended our annual Regional Formation Director Workshop. (Zoom). It was a wonderful event and will have a lot of information to share in the future. I will be sending a report out soon to our Ministers and Formation Directors. Please keep our National Formation Commission in prayer, they have a large task reviewing and updating items for formation, they are doing and awesome job.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at our Reginal Gathering, September 19th. (Zoom)
This was what our normal Regional Chapter gathering used to look like.
With the effects of Covid19, our normal activities will not be the way they were.
Are you willing to embrace the "new normal" and go forward or are you still thinking about the past and the way it was???

Peace and all good. Tuan Cao, OFS

SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER
ST. FRANCIS REGION
REGIONAL GATHERING
BY ZOOM!

SEPTEMBER 19, 2020
1:00 P.M. TO 3:00 P.M.

THEME: CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING
WE WILL MEET IN THREE GROUPS:
ENGLISH, SPANISH, AND KOREAN
TO GREET EACH OTHER, PRAY, REFLECT,
AND PRAISE GOD!

PLEASE NOTIFY YOUR MINISTER IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND,
AND A ZOOM INVITATION WILL BE SENT TO YOU!
Let Us Follow Jesus, As His Servants

Sometimes I have heard people say they shy away from JPIC, thinking it is too political. I want to share with you, dear sisters and brothers, as your newly appointed JPIC animator, that I believe our Franciscan work in addressing justice, building peace, and caring for creation is not political. In fact, it reflects our deep spiritual lives, our lives tied to our Loving Lord. I am excited to be inviting you to walk a journey with me this year, exploring the spiritual path of JPIC. As you will see, we are following the four themes established at our national JPIC conference in May.

Mindful Franciscan Dialogue: We convened our first regional workshop this year on July 19 exploring Mindful Franciscan Dialogue. Carolyn Townes, national JPIC animator, was our formator. Many of you attended and expressed gratitude to Carolyn for sharing with us the importance of respectful exchanges within our families, fraternities, community, and world. Only through empathic listening and thoughtful dialogue can we work together to build a more evangelical world.

Spirituality and JPIC: The theme at our Regional Gathering on September 19, 2020 is Catholic Social Teaching, the foundation of all our work for justice, peace, and integrity of creation. Together we will explore how Catholic Social Teaching is rooted in scripture, articulated in the Catechism of our mother church, reflected in the Catholic wisdom writings over the last century, and lived out through us as Franciscans following the Rule given to us by our Beloved Saint. Please let your minister know if you plan to attend and a ZOOM link will be sent to you. Our region is pleased to provide this ongoing formation in Spanish and Korean as well as English. Our Vietnamese sisters and brothers will be studying it later in the year.

With Catholic Social Teaching as the foundation, it is our plan to continue exploring JPIC over the next year through a series of ZOOM workshops.

Care for Creation: Part One. In December we will convene a JPIC workshop on Care for Creation. Many of you have studied Laudato Si! This year is the fifth anniversary of that remarkable document and many of us throughout the region have insights to share about what our Holy Father presented in that document. Let us gather our thoughts and our prayers. A date for it will soon be announced and you will be notified through your ministers and/or JPIC animator.

Care for Creation: Part Two. In April 2021 we will continue our discussion of Care for Creation, sharing some initiatives fraternities have undertaken.

Immigration: In July 2021 we will gather by ZOOM to explore the global refugee/immigration crisis from a Catholic perspective.

I am excited to work with all of you as we journey together. Kaaron Esmonde, OFS, at Mission San Luis Rey fraternity, is sharing her gifts as the point person for Care for Creation. Please contact me through email or telephone if you want to work together on one of the workshops. I welcome the opportunity to collaborate. Hopefully, we will soon be able to be together in common meeting space. But as for now, we will be grateful that the creative use of technology allows us to keep connected.

Sending many blessings to all of you. Peace and All Good.
“A Franciscan presence and spirit require living a way of life that cherishes Gospel values as St. Francis understood them. Francis tried to live as Christ lived, especially as peacemaker, as one in solidarity with the poor, as living lightly on the earth and as a brother to all creatures. Franciscan presence and spirit are also about prayer especially prayers of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for His love, for the gift of life and for the world we inhabit.” From the Eco-Congregation Ireland website.

All members of St. Francis Region are invited to join together in prayer at 6:00 p.m. on the eve of the transitus, October 3, to lift our collective voices to our Loving Lord in praise and thanksgiving for the earth Our Lord has created and promise Him to honor it in all the ways we are called.

A Prayer of Gratitude for Creation
by Fiona Murdoch of Eco-Congregation Ireland:

God of the universe,
We thank You for Your many good gifts –
For the beauty of Creation and its rich and varied fruits,
For clean water and fresh air,
for food and shelter, animals and plants.
Forgive us for the times we have taken
the earth’s resources for granted
And wasted what You have given us.
Transform our hearts and minds
So that we would learn to care and share,
To touch the earth with gentleness and with love,
Respecting all living things.
We pray for all those who suffer as a result of
our waste, greed and indifference,
And we pray that the day would come when everyone
has enough food and clean water.
Help us to respect the rights of all people and all species
And help us to willingly share your gifts
Today and always. Amen.
The district leaders met electronically for the quarterly meeting on August 9th. This would also have been the date of our annual District Picnic. In its place we had a District Gathering via ZOOM. About 24 persons were able to attend.

We began by breaking into small groups to share how we are living our vocation. We then had ongoing formation led by Robert Murray, OFS who is the Spiritual Assistant for Immaculata Fraternity. His topic was *Signs of the Times*: The issue of racism has become a widespread topic of conversation. How are we to respond to this "epidemic" as Catholic Christians and Secular Franciscans? We broke again into small groups for discussion and then come back together to share are thoughts.

The Fraternities have continued Initial Formation using a combination of electronic and in person (with proper precautions). Electronic formation has allowed Holy Spirit Fraternity to increase its initial formation class to twice a month. They have had several visitors who *may* begin formation. Jenny Tsui, Holy Spirit Fraternity’s affiliate, has left California to begin her training that will lead to a two-year period of service with the Franciscan Mission Service. She will continue to connect with the Fraternity. The use of electronic meeting format has allowed Holy Spirit Fraternity to better connect to distant members of the Fraternity and are able to provide an electronic copy of the meeting for those excused members who work when the Fraternity meets.

Padre Pio Fraternity is waiting for conditions to be safe enough for the Fraternity to have a Rite of Profession Ceremony at the normal location. They have six candidates who have completed more than half of the candidacy formation.

Immaculata has begun meeting electronically but is increasing its outreach to members who are having difficulty with this process. They anticipate one candidate will be ready for profession in the fall.

All three fraternities would welcome guests from other Fraternities whose home Fraternity is not able to meet. Contact the minister of the Fraternity you want to visit.
This is a story about a person called Person, a spectacularly lovely, talented and generous member of the Wise family.

One day, Person chose to be a Parent, and travelled to a foggy and inhospitable city called Desolation. Moving down the streets of this neglected town, Person found one orphan, and another, and as the sun sank below the horizon, yet a third abandoned child.

Person brought the orphans home and adopted them. When all three were safe, warm and well-fed, Person explained they were now a family. Person gave the children elaborate gifts. And just for fun, each child received a sack of marbles. One had blue marbles, another green and the third set were red. With the marbles came a Book of Rules on how to play.

The children were delighted with the marbles. They marveled at the color and depth of each one. How they sparkled in the sun, as they rolled and spun! In a short while, the children were able to spin and shoot marbles across the room. This was a great source of delight, and each was keen on playing with their own color.

They deliberated on how best to play. The Book of Rules seemed difficult and their interpretations varied. Together, they discussed changes. How would they really play every day? In the end, they agreed on some Rules, ignored others, and privately made exceptions.

Disputes soon arose about which Rules were agreed on, and what exceptions allowed. The children began to quarrel. When their feelings got hurt, they became upset. Being immature, they didn’t patch up their differences and move on. Instead, they became angry and resentful. There were tantrums and crying fits. They stamped their feet, shouted, and cried until their eyes were red and swollen with tears. And one by one, each refused to play with the others.

With all the noise and mayhem, they did not hear their Parent’s firm, gentle voice.

Instead, one started to spit, and another mouthed a few marbles to prevent their being swiped. Soon the children put marbles in their mouths and using them as missiles, spat them at one another. Obsessed with their quarrel, they didn’t notice the mess they made.

Meanwhile, they’d all but forgotten their Parent and how they’d got Marbles in the first place. The town of Desolation was now a distant memory, and they couldn’t recall being orphans. On the contrary, the children believed a good home, warm bed and tasty food were simply their due.

Saddened and alarmed by their behavior, Person saw the infants could not play and were about to do serious harm. Concerned they’d re-create their old town; Person took the situation in hand.

Ordering a TIME-OUT! Parent separated the children and swooped in to collect the marbles.

Lately the children cover their mouths and noses as they approach one another, to prevent spitting, shouting, or mouthing marbles. The “Time Out” must last until they once again hear their Parent’s voice and live together in loving kindness. Otherwise, they will never be a Family.

Ever loving and kind, Person urges the children to love one another in a happy family. Consequently, their ears and eyes remain uncovered.

In the merciful quiet of this Time-Out, Parent walks each of them through the lovely home. Perhaps they’ll regret their selfishness and find a better way to behave. Or perhaps loneliness will inspire greater kindness.

It’s also possible they’ll be less interested in Marbles. Who can say? As we near the close of this story, what do you think? Will the children hear their Parent’s voice, and learn to live together with kindness? Or will they seek to hurt one another over Marbles? I leave the answer to you.
Once or twice as a Protestant, before my conversion, I heard someone say, “God has no grandchildren.” By that, they meant that each and every person must come to faith on their own. They must make the faith that perhaps they were “raised in as children” their own adult faith. They must be born again.

Franciscans have a similar, yet different view, I think. Although we cannot claim to be Christian Catholics simply by virtue of our parents having been, or having been “raised in the Church,” we must make faith our own mature faith, yes. But we cannot do it entirely alone.

Fraternity - not our little satellite units, but again, those too - the brother-and-sisterhood of all believers is necessary for optimal growth in faith.

My other has said to me that marriage is good for developing character (faith). Over the years there’s enough friction to knock all our rough edges.

The same is true of any close relationship. Anyone who has been part of a family knows this. Anyone who has been with Saint Louis the King Fraternity for a while, knows this, too.

But then came the “pandemic.” Mandated social distancing to slow the spread of a new virus has changed the way our fraternities meet. We can’t be physically close right now. and for a while, we couldn’t go to church at all.

What becomes of a fundamental unit of Franciscan growth when it can’t be watered and fed in the usual manner?

Some fraternities meet via online platforms. We have met in small groups - the Santa Barbara Candidacy group met via Zoom. Then the handful of us decided we could meet outside for a Rosary, then distanced at someone’s home as long as there is room to spread out the four of five of us attending. It’s ultimately very refreshing to be together even in little groups!

Creativity and reaching out in ways we aren’t accustomed to are necessary. As much as we pray and hope for a change in policy, and a reversal of illness statistics reported, none is apparently forthcoming.

I’m suggesting we all reach out to a handful of members every week. Let those who have aptitude with running a Zoom meeting or other online platform, do so, with either small group or full attendance. I know how to join a meeting, for example, but I don’t know how to set one up.

For those who attend the outdoor Masses, don’t forget to greet your siblings in the Fraternity (not that anyone doesn’t) and perhaps take more than a moment to check in.

We think we do, and here is my own mea culpa — We all love our Nancy S., right? I found out weeks after it happened from another friend not even in the fraternity, that she fell and had some stress fractures in her spine due to her osteoporosis.

We can do better than this. We can be in closer touch. We are on the same path, and need to remember that although God has no grandchildren, our Lord has called us to be HIS family, and as such, asked us to come to the Kingdom hand-in-hand.

Well, figuratively, anyway. Wash those hands! I want to keep seeing you!
I’m writing this based on a recent personal experience which opened my eyes on the cost to others, including frustration at various institutions, of not being prepared for changes in life situation.

**Background?** Article 23.3 OFS General Constitution states:

“To preserve peace in the family, the brothers and sisters should, in due time, make a last will and testament for the disposition of their goods.”

However, in today’s environment, I have discovered, a will is not enough. We can become incapacitated, perhaps at the same time as others in our family with little notice for an extended period. This can happen through accidents or illnesses (e.g., COVID-19). Who will pay your bills or deposit checks? The Post Office will permanently close the box and return all the mail as undeliverable if you miss a payment by 10 days, even if you are ill. Unless you make special arrangements, no one will be able to access your accounts, particularly those online.

Planning needs to cover two cases: if you are incapacitated (even if it’s for a short period of time) or if you die; each require different preparations. You want to preserve peace and reduce stress on your family and friends in either case.

**If I’m incapacitated:** You need to set up a process to handle your medical decisions and another to handle your financial ones.

- **For medical,** you will need an Advanced Health Care Directive (AHCD) to determine what medical decisions, including what kind of life extension treatment, you desire, under what conditions, and who should make those decisions if you can’t. Do not assume the default will match either your desires or church teaching.

- **For financial,** it begins with a Durable Power of Attorney for Management of Property and Personal Affairs (DPOA) which authorizes someone to talk to various financial institutions, in person, on your behalf if you are unable to. Your representative will have to know how to manage each account. To do this you will need to describe completely how to access each account particularly if your on-line accounts (including on-line versions) as well as the devices you use to access these services. Even with a DPOA, banks will take time to grant your representative access and may not provide access to the online part of any accounts. They may also need statements from your doctor. You need to find out what each financial account at each institution requires to authorize access and if you don’t like their requirements, get another service or change how you use their services. Your representatives will need to know where this information and equipment is. Without complete information your accounts may become locked and continue to run on autopilot (e.g., payments may not be made, or made when not needed, accounts may become overdrawn). Some portals (e.g., Gmail) may ignore a DPOA entirely and will require a court order to unlock an account, so you will need to provide access. Information may have to go beyond site address, username and password to include answers to any authorizing questions you may have answered when you set up the account. **Determine what your bank requires. If you don’t like what it requires, change banks!**
If I die: The goal is to provide peace among those who will be mourning your passing. It also reduces conflict among your relatives at an incredibly stressful time. All typed documents must be formally witnessed (i.e., notarized).

Sometimes a Trust Fund will be needed instead of a will. According to a lawyer I talked to, the people who need Trust Funds fit into 3 categories:
1. You have a lot of money and you can save/avoid taxes with a trust (but on estates under a million dollars - and it may be more now - there are NO taxes).
2. You have property in several states and without a trust they'd have to do a probate in every state.
3. A husband and wife, one of whom is incompetent (Alzheimer's, etc.) and the other is the caregiver; if - as often happens - the spouse who is the caregiver dies and leaves the incompetent spouse, it's much faster to transfer care of that person to a person named in a trust than to have to go to court and get a conservatorship.

Additionally, you should think about what kind of service you desire and how your body will be handled (e.g., donated, all or in parts, to science for a time; cremated; viewing or no viewing)

Who should I choose? The AHCD, DPOA, and Trust will be managed by someone if you become incapacitated. You should choose someone you trust, who shares your values, and is competent in the area you wish them to assist you. You can select one person to make medical decisions and another to make financial ones.

Resources: This article is meant to start a discussion. It is based on my recent experiences and is not legal advice. Parishes, as well as other groups, sponsor short seminars on this and related topics. You can also discuss this with a lawyer. If you go through a lawyer referral service, the first visit is typically low cost. Online resources are also available, but should be from our area (i.e., rules vary by state).

Finally, if you have equipment or material which belongs to another (e.g., Fraternity documents, books, statues) you should list them so they are returned to the proper organization rather than becoming part of your estate or thrown out by your family.
Scully Fund Requirements

The Scully Fund has been set up to encourage fraternities in the St. Francis Region to participate in charitable activities.

When members of a fraternity take an active role in an apostolic activity and use fraternity funds to purchase materials or supplies for the activity, the fraternity may request to be reimbursed by the Scully Fund for half of those expenses by supplying the following:

- A letter detailing the activity, the date it occurred, the number of fraternity members involved, and the amount of expenses incurred.

- Receipts for the purchases or a copy of the check(s) used to pay for the items.

- A request for reimbursement of half of the expenses.

Send the above information to either the Minister or Treasurer of the St. Francis Region.

THE ADDRESS OF ST. FRANCIS REGION IS:
276 E. Green St.
Claremont, CA 91711

Last Will and Testament

Each of us can play an important role in preserving and extending our Secular Franciscan way of life, in our own fraternity, and at the regional level.

This can be accomplished in many ways, including a bequest in your will.

Suggested beneficiaries:
- Your FRATERNITY
- Your REGION

Suggested wording for your bequests:
1. A BEQUEST FOR GENERAL PURPOSES:

"I give and bequeath the sum of $________ (or_______% of my disposable estate) to: (name and address of fraternity, or region).

2. A RESIDUARY BEQUEST OF INDEFINITE AMOUNT:

"After payment of expenses, debts and specific bequests, I direct that the residue of my estate be given to: (name and address)

or

"I bequeath to (name and address) any part of my estate that other beneficiaries are unable to receive because of death or other reasons."
Joy of Francis

c/o Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, OFS
540 W. Nelson Road,
Sequim, WA 98382