



# Secular Franciscan

National Bulletin December 2024 of the Secular Franciscan Order in Canada

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Photo by Lanny Hui at Greccio, Italy



Oil on Canvas by Marcel Morin-Shepherds Adoration of the Christ child

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## National Minister and International Councillor, Jewel Jasmins, OFS



As the lingering days of the Centenary celebration of the Stigmata of our beloved founder St. Francis ebbs away like the passing seasons of life; one can ponder how God used this poor little man of Assisi as a flame to light up many corners of the world. A torch passed on from one generation to another of Franciscans bringing the Gospel to the ends of the earth. In November, many Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters from 68 countries in the world came together for the XVII General Chapter in Rome. From the expanse of geography, diverse cultures and languages, one could see a very rich tapestry of Franciscan presence throughout the world. Work accomplished at the General Chapter included the review and ratification of the updated International Statutes, review of the Presidency report over the last three years and update of the state of the OFS worldwide. Review of the CIOFS financial report, and voting on a proposed budget, including priorities for the upcoming three years. Together with my new extended Franciscan family, we piled into two big continental buses and made the 3.5-hour trip and ascent to La Verna, to pay our respect and gratitude to our Seraphic Father. It was touching to see how this little man of Assisi and his followers, from humble beginnings, probably had no idea how eight centuries later, the ends of the Earth would come to the mountain top in Italy to visit the sacred sanctuary of La Verna, at the site where Francis received the Stigmata of Christ.



*The Franciscan family gathered together in Rome for the XVII General Chapter 2024 – representatives from 67 countries that include Europe, Asia, Americas and Africa.*

*Photo courtesy of CIOFS*

Enriched by the experience to represent Canada at the General Chapter, I can share with you from the many Secular Franciscans I met there, that the OFS membership of 200,000, is alive and well, and making great contributions of service to their communities. Through the profiling of some National Fraternities at the Chapter, one could see how Franciscans working together can create possibilities and make a positive difference.

**Link to highlights from the General Chapter**

<https://ciofs.info/news/gen-chapter/2024-general-chapter/>



## National Formation Director, Catherine Payne, ofS

May the Lord give you peace.....

We had a very successful National Formation Workshop on Saturday November 2 where resources and ideas were shared and friendships forged across our nation. Participants joined us from Dartmouth to Vancouver!! Thank you to all who made the day a total success. Upcoming plans include a time for a National Retreat given in both official languages. This has been a dream of mine for a while to be able to have a speaker from all 3 Orders of the Franciscan Family. We have a First Order, a Poor Clare Sister and a Secular Franciscan all doing a presentation. Happily we have arranged this date for **Saturday February 15, 2025**. You will have already received information and registration details by way of a poster that has been distributed to all Regions in Canada. Everyone is welcome to join in on this special event. Please take advantage of this special time together. What a better Topic than **You are Love**? Notice too the proximity to the date of St. Valentine's Day? I'm sure our hearts will be bursting with love that day.

**Tanto grande è il bene  
che ho in vista  
Che ogni dolore mi dà gioia.  
So great is the good  
I have in sight  
That every pain  
brings me delight.**

*So great is the good  
that I have in view  
That every sorrow gives me joy.  
So great is the good  
I have in sight  
That every pain  
brings me delight.*

This was a troubadour love-verse that St Francis spiritualized to show the love of God and human love are the same and only the object of that love differs. Songs and stories that Francis enjoyed as a boy became love songs directed to God.

## FRANCISCAN RETREAT

Saturday - February 15, 2025

1.5 hours Canada-wide in French & English

10 am PT/ 11 MT/ 12 CT/ 1 pm ET/ 2 AT



## YOU ARE LOVE

A Document from CIOFS

Hear from: First Order, Poor Clares &  
Third Order Secular of the Franciscan family!

Registration: name, email, fraternity, city,  
French or English to [cmariefinlon@gmail.com](mailto:cmariefinlon@gmail.com)

## **DISCERNING OPTIONS-OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS REGIONAL FRATERNITY**

The Local Fraternity Ministers in BC have had the opportunity to meet in small groups during two separate meetings, and share their thoughts on the Feasibility Study, produced by Margaret Huggin, ofc. The study was a comprehensive overview of statistics that showed the numbers of members in the fraternities of BC and AB/SK/MN, and the financial health of the existing Regional Fraternity of Our Lady of the Angels and the provinces. This gave everyone a good look at what the possibilities are for two regional fraternities. This has been a very long journey for the members of this regional fraternity, with many meetings at sometimes inconvenient times. Yet those participating would attend, and did share what their fraternities were saying about the possibility of creating a new regional fraternity for BC. While many feel that not much will change for their fraternities either way, others felt that change is not what is needed at this time, while a few also felt strongly that a change is needed.

This is a brief summary of some of the comments:

### Creating a new regional fraternity

- is a sign of new growth and hope for the future
- regional council members will not be overly burdened by very large distances to cover: saving fuel and travel time
- there will be more outreach to fraternities due to closer proximity, and more occasions for getting together face to face.
- more people will attend the Elective Chapters
- a smaller regional fraternity may be able to help fraternities grow and assist them in their difficulties, and have the time to do so because the number of fraternities will be fewer
- the Korean fraternities are growing and may be able to contribute to the servant leadership pool if they speak English or translation is provided

### Strengthening the bond of unity as one region

- the existing regional fraternity has a framework in place since the last Chapter that elected one Vice Minister to each area of the region, with a total of 5 Vice Ministers to help to animate the fraternities in their area.
- many areas already hold in-person retreats and days of reflection in accessible areas for physical meetings throughout the 3-year period
- Zoom meetings have become more commonplace and easily accessible to many members
- Communications is a high priority for this regional council and it has been mostly successful reaching out to members online, updating the web-site and newsletters
- Chapters offer an opportunity for members in four provinces to meet together and travel costs may be subsidized for those travelling the longest distances.

### **Challenges**

- most local fraternities and regional fraternities know how difficult it is to get people to serve on council. The existing regional council is mostly split between members of Alberta and BC. The servant leadership pool will be thinner if another regional fraternity forms in BC. And when regional council members encounter challenges in life, do get ill or have to care for someone who is ill....will there be someone to replace them should they have to take time away or resign?
- no matter how close the Chapter is in proximity, there are outlying fraternities that may not or will not be able to participate due to distance, cost of travel, or aging membership. Quorum is not easy to

ensure, as even in Ontario, with distances no greater than 4.5 hours, there are members who cannot travel that distance.

-a smaller regional fraternity may be able to focus more on physical gatherings, but will still need to care for outlying fraternities

While there are not always quick and easy answers or solutions to any of the challenges, the meetings in the last year and a half should bring home the fact that serving our fraternities requires time and dedication, and not a little investment of spirit, energy and money. It draws us out and brings us into the greater fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, beyond our immediate circle. Age, health and mobility do play a significant role, however, I know of a member, immobile and in a hospital bed, pulling out their phone or ipad (sometimes having to get help from the nurses), and getting involved in online meetings, and bringing Franciscan spirituality to those around her, teaching other residents how to make rosaries. I have heard of a 90 year old starting a fraternity in their parish, and it is now thriving, even after her death. Whatever the decision regarding OLOTA as one or two separate regions, we need to ask what we are willing to contribute and commit to, to help our brothers and sisters in the Secular Franciscan Order.

*Debbie Tessier, ofs, National Restructuring Committee*

## Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

“Gentleness”---Kettle and Stony Point Annual Pow Wow 2023

### *Blessings and Peace*

What greater joy may we be blessed with, than to have the Gift of peace. Peace begins in finding what we have in common ... the common denominator.

From there grows trust. From there grows friendship.

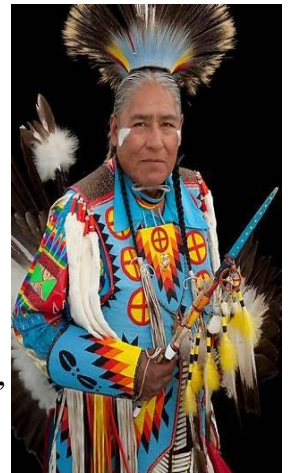
In the Franciscan walk with the Indigenous Peoples, our knowledge and compassion deepens the more we learn about what we have in common. Franciscans begin to understand about the Indigenous Peoples when we are given a glimpse of the pain and loss of love that has been endured for so long, through their testimonies. The stigmata was enough for St Francis to understand what physical pain is about, and what is meant to be in close relationship with God. The stigmata of emotional pain and loss of love goes deeper. It is the sacrifice of love.

What can we personally do?

As loving and charitable people, we are called by God the Creator to give everyone... a sense of belonging.

*Aquene/Peace,*

*Respectfully submitted, ofs National JPIC Team, [ofscanada.ca](http://ofscanada.ca)*



**"the National JPIC team has placed much information on the National JPIC webpage. The theme for this current term is the *Spirit of Peace and Indigenous solidarity*. Please visit the site - <https://www.ofscanada.ca/justice-peace-and-integrity-of-creation.html>.**



## Franciscan Deacon's Bench

### Why Christmas?

These famous hands are from Da Vinci's "*The Creation of Adam*" and portray God reaching out to touch His creation. So, for us, they also point to Christmas: when Jesus reached across the space between Heaven and Bethlehem to be physically with those He loved. Christmas fulfills God's desire to be among His beloved children.



Throughout this ongoing Christmas season - as you continue to rejoice **THAT** Jesus took on human flesh, also ponder **WHY** He did that. The usual answer to this question is that God was forced to send Jesus to repair the separation caused by Original Sin. **BUT** that answer raises a contradiction. If our sin was the primary reason for Christmas, then sin controls God, and we are able to compel God to do what God would not have done if not forced - and that's an impossible contradiction.

An alternative answer, (in the tradition of the Fathers of the Church, and later in Franciscan theology,) proposes that Jesus became one with us **primarily** because God is Love, and that other reasons for Christmas are secondary. Love decided to take on human flesh for love of you.

It's most reasonable that the Trinity - the relationship of infinite love of three persons - always intended to enter into creation. God loves all of creation, but especially humanity. People, all people, are the "beloved children" of God. And God always intended to enter fully into the world of His children.

The Franciscan theologian, Blessed John Duns Scotus (1265–1308), proposes that, from all eternity, God freely chose **both** to create **and** to take on human flesh. Scotus teaches that creation was, (and is,) a special way for God to be Love and to express love. People were created with body **and** soul, (humanity and divinity,) to be God's physical entry point into His creation. The lover yearns to intimately be with the beloved.

Reasoning that Jesus became "*Incarnate of the Virgin Mary*" primarily to love us doesn't deny that the death and resurrection of Jesus opened the gates of heaven to us by overcoming the effects of Original Sin; just the contrary. In an analogy of God as our mother: a mother longs with all her heart to be near her child: to physically hold and touch her child; a 'Zoom' call is not the same as being there. **BUT** when her child is wounded and dying, then a mother's love yearns even more to be with her child, to hold her child, and to save her child from death.

Christmas occurred because God loved the world so much that He sent His only Son into the world, to love the world. Our sin gave a simply secondary effect to the always intended Incarnation of Jesus. If Christmas makes us reflect on our sinfulness, then it is to show that God loved us just as much, and even more, **after we were mortally wounded by sin**. The parable of the Prodigal Son presents God as a parent who runs out into the road to embrace his wayward son; God is **not** the elder son in the parable who wants the prodigal expelled for his sins.

**Why Christmas?** Because of love. The divine lover became incarnate to embrace, and touch, and walk with us ... to be Emmanuel - with us... **and then also** to redeem us.

Being **with** the ones you love is life-giving at Christmas. So, be **with** your immediate family, (even the prodigal ones,) just because you love them. Be **with** your brothers and sisters in the Church, (even the prodigal ones,) just because you love them. Be **with** your enemies and those who do not deserve your love - just because **you love them**.

**AND**, be **with** The Father, and The Son, and The Holy Spirit.... just because **They loved you** enough to take on human flesh - just to be **with** you.

*Submitted by Deacon Maurice Prindiville, ofs*

# REGIONAL FRATERNITIES PAGE



Eastern Reg. Leadership Development Workshop  
Oct.'24



St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity Retreat Sept. '24



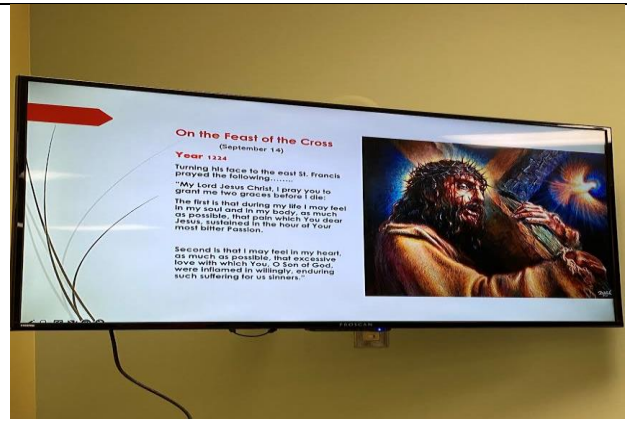
Annual Day of Recollection in Montreal area, Nov.'24



St. François d'Assise Frat., Ottawa, Transitus



The 800<sup>th</sup> Centenary of the Feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Clare Fraternity, Coquitlam, BC



*Feast of the Stigmata at their September meeting with a power point presentation. Lanny was able to join her fraternity from Indonesia, thanks to the technology of Zoom.*

## “Go, Repair My Church.”



Francis of Assisi wanted to know what God wanted him to do. He went into the broken-down chapel of San Damiano. He saw a large crucifix, and appealed to the Lord: “What do you want me to do?” He received a response. “You see my Church is falling into ruins. Go, and repair my Church.”

Francis began to repair San Damiano with the help of men from Assisi. They repaired two other chapels. Francis eventually realized that the Lord did not want him to go around repairing churches but to repair or

build up the faith of people.

Men and women began to follow Francis and he formed them into a group we now know as Secular Franciscans. Some men wanted to join Francis; they were the first members of the Franciscan brotherhood. His friend, Clare of Assisi, started a community of women known today as the Poor Clares.

Francis’s approach to his brothers was “to live the Gospel and follow in the footsteps of Jesus.” Francis realized that it is by our lives that we repair the Church.

**For more information about us Franciscan Friars Conventual in Canada, please contact Friar Reto Davatz at [friar.Reto@gmail.com](mailto:friar.Reto@gmail.com) (in French or English).**



# FAITH, HOPE, LOVE

We are still restructuring. Let us pray that all will be done according to His Will. It's His work and we are His little instruments. I'd like to share with you some wonderful and precious divine gifts during this Advent season.

Treasure to share: Faith, believing in the presence of the One who loves us. Believing in Him invites us in prayer and the Word. St. Francis to “Live from Gospel to Life and from Life to Gospel. from Life to Gospel. Like Francis and Jesus and Jesus, time for silence and intimacy.



Graces to remember: Hope, the little sister of faith. To remember, we need to listen. “Listen Israel.” Hope reminds us reminds us of all the graces and declarations of love the Lord has for us. Let's live Listening and Hope.

Pearl to offer : Love, tenderness, gentleness.

The oyster contains the pearl within itself, just as we have his Love within us. St. Francis tells us in the Rule: “Keep nothing of yourself, so that you may receive all of Him who gives all of Himself to you. Moreover, he writes: “Love is not loved.” Let us accept and live this Love every day. Let us abandon ourselves to the One who says to us, “As the Father has loved me, so I love you; abide in my Love.” So let us be Franciscan AAs (Love and Abandonment).

Wonder to evoke: Life, in fullness, God's gift, “I have come that men may have life, life in abundance. I am with you always, until the end of time. “Let's always be in the present moment with Him, in Him. Then let us taste and see how good, infinitely good the Lord is.

Madeleine Bigras ofs

Being happy: It's having the courage to say  
“I'm sorry”.

It's having the sensitivity to say  
“I need you”.

It's having the ability to say  
“I love you”.

Let your life become a garden  
of opportunities for happiness...

Pope Francis

# Passing from Advent, a wonderful time of hope



Once again this year, Advent had invited us to hope, in anticipation of the full realization of God's plan for the world, which we call His Kingdom. The entire liturgy of these last 4 weeks reminds us of this, calling us to vigilance, to expectation, to attention to the signs of God already inscribed in the heart of our lives, all terms that express Hope. The faith I love best," says God, 'is Hope.' This beautiful affirmation, which Charles Péguy puts into God's mouth, resonates like a call to a living Faith expressed in vigilance, in the attention of the heart, of a heart turned towards the Lord, on the lookout, not because it's afraid of being surprised by God's coming, but because it has only one desire: to recognize him, welcome him and commit itself to him. The hope expressed here is not passive.

Rather, it invites us to recognize the signs of God's coming, and to collaborate with him through active charity. Hope, Paul tells us, makes us see and recognize the realities promised by God.

It's the same in our lives. It's hope that keeps us vigilant and attentive, so we don't let ourselves fall asleep. It is hope that gives us a heart capable of recognizing what is beautiful, great and alive in the lives of people and the world. It is Hope that makes our charity inventive and creative, supporting the weakest, recognizing the dignity of every person, continuing to work for the common good. and to continue to work for justice and peace. It's hope that makes us discover the seed of God in every person, and stimulates us to foster its growth. It stimulates us to work with perseverance to build fraternity within our families, our Christian communities and the

world, even in difficult times, in times of searching and doubt - and, let's face it, there are plenty of those in the world today. From this Advent season, we've had so many opportunities to manifest and grow this Hope that expresses the heart of God: food drives for the less fortunate, gatherings of family and friends, exchanges of greetings and gifts, celebrations that keep us on the road to Christmas, gestures of love and reconciliation, attention to the lonely.... so many beautiful signs of active Hope when they are lived out in Faith and with a Charity-Love that is not guided by convention, but is a reflection of God's Love for us today and for the world. Let us remember Francis' prayer: Give me right faith, solid hope and perfect charity..... With him, let us ask ourselves to grow in this hope so that we can share it widely. It's perhaps the most beautiful Christmas gift we can give, because it's a gift of LIFE. May the Christmas festivities give us an abundant taste of the Love of the One who was the first to watch over us without ceasing.

Your brother Henri Éthier, ofm