



La Verna E-Vision

Be the Bridge to Fraternal Life

Vol. 2

Christmas edition

2019



"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."

Luke 2:7

Minister's Message

by Jeff Gumz, OFS, La Verna Region Minister



My brothers and sisters in St. Francis. Christmas season blessings to you and your family.

Each year in October, your Regional Executive Committee (REC) gathers at the Marywood

Spirituality Center in Arbor Vitae, WI to plan out the upcoming year. The REC wants to deliver annual District Gatherings and Chapters that contain dynamic formation and profound spirituality. An important strategy for any leadership group is reflective practice, taking time to reflect on what we have done as a REC. Research in psychology has shown that reflective practice has many benefits such as increasing self-awareness, developing a better understanding of others, bringing out creative thinking skills, and encouraging active engagement in work processes.

Our Regional Spiritual Assistant, Lee Ann Niebuhr, OFS, led the REC in a reflective exercise during our Marywood

Meeting. Below is some of the qualitative data collected from that reflective exercise. The focus was the successes experienced by the REC over the past 3 years.

Fraternity means family and we the Regional Executive Council of La Verna have become truly a family. Whatever we've accomplished it was accomplished by God using our hands to do His will. I personally have received much more than I ever gave. Thank you!

The La Verna Region districts have been filled with much substance of a deeper learning due to the teaching that the REC has filtered down to the local fraternities. The archives has been taken care of and has been done in a way of order and clarity. The formation workshops were instrumental in the guidance and bringing new light to enhance what formation is. Making it simple but full.

(Minister's Message continued on page 2)

Re-energized the district gatherings. Formed a Vision committee. Masterminded ways to grow and energize the Franciscans. Formed the formation committee and set up three successful formation workshops.

Our REC is a group of beautiful individuals who bring a diversity to our meetings. We learn and grow from each other's different perspectives. We cleaned up our financial books and set our region up for a bright future by raising the fair share. Teri and Sharon did a wonderful job of streamlining the elections and visitation process.

Lee Ann Niebuhr - Valiant Spiritual Assistant who energized the Spiritual Assistant program with inspirational workshops. Her spiritual leadership and dedication to the Scared encouraged many members of the OFS.

Jeff Gumz- Courageous Minister who helped keep us all together when sometimes it felt like we were falling apart.

Teri Doughty- wrote gently worded evaluations of fraternities that encouraged them to grow and she and Sharon rewrote our election procedure to make it better.

Sharon Dale-Did a spectacular job as our archivist-got everything well organized and preserved documents and pictures that record the history of our region.

Peter Bekkers, Our elder Statesman- Always willing to give someone a ride, help with region finances and be an excellent role model of a devoted husband and father.

Bob Henning- got the finances and "fair share" under control.

Kathy Sutliff- Took such great care of minutes-keeping contact info up-to-date, and lists of names on the fraternity councils.

Mary Jane and Sally- Sacred ministers of hospitality. Warmly welcoming all, providing beautiful meals and helping us to grow together through Saturday evening entertainment.

Bob Crane- Always presenting the ideas of helping the least lost and last in our communities and fraternities.

Nick Crane – Willing and eager to assist older council members learn new computer programs to make life easier for all of us.

Ed Boss- Being the wonderful quiet spiritual assistant who is a spectacular listener and helps fraternities grow in their charism.

JoAnn Boss- Created wonderful and challenging programs to help formators learn and teach what it means to be secular and Franciscan.

Lee Ann's reflective practice ended with a moving healing service. I think all members of the REC felt a deep sense of accomplishment and gratitude. I was truly amazed and felt so fortunate to have worked with a great REC over the past 3 years.

However the journey is not finished. St. Francis reminds us, "Let us begin, for up to now we have done nothing." At our upcoming Chapter in Marathon on June 26-28, 2020 we will be holding elections. There will be several openings on the REC this term. Please prayerfully consider running for a position. Many current and experienced members of the REC will not be seeking reelection. We will need new leaders to step forward who will guide our Region into the future. Maybe YOU will be that person who decides to run and join the REC family. Whatever we will accomplish in the next 3 years, it will be accomplished by God using our hands to do His will.

Peace and Joy! Jeff



The La Verna Region of the Secular Franciscan Order in the USA consists of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. The region's geographical area is divided into three districts: Southeast, Central, Fox Valley. The *La Verna E-Vision* newsletter is published three times a year, is a communication vehicle with the La Verna Region, and presents information that relate to the Secular Franciscan Order way of life.

Permission to copy materials printed in *La Verna E-Vision* is given freely except where the copyright is specifically reserved to the author or artist. *La Verna E-Vision* editors: Ed Boss, OFS, ed-joann@att.net and Jeff Gumz, OFS, jagumz@gmail.com. For further information about the La Verna Region and the Secular Franciscan Order, please go to the internet site: www.lavernasecularfranciscans.com

The La Verna Regional Executive Council

The REC is here to help your Fraternity in any way possible. Do not hesitate to email or call any member of the REC with a concern you may have. Current members of the REC are:

Minister - Jeff Gumz, OFS -
jagumz@gmail.com, 920-393-9087

Vice Minister - Bob Crane, OFS -
bobcrane.ofs@gmail.com, 715-204-9671

Secretary - Kathy Sutliff, OFS -
katsut@charter.net, 715-369-3367

Treasurer = Bob Henning, OFS - BMJHSFO@AOL.COM,
906-273-0374

Councilor - Peter Bekkers, OFS - taxmannatp@gmail.com,
920-757-9027

Councilor - Nick Crane, OFS - ncranewms@gmail.com,
715-204-4113

Councilor - Sharon Dale, OFS -
shadale@wctc.net, 715-423-4136

Councilor - Teri Doughty, OFS - OFS4TERI@GMAIL.COM,
920-231-4838

Regional Spiritual Assistant -
Ed Boss, OFS - ed-joann@att.net,
262 250-9251

Regional Spiritual Assistant -
Lee Ann Niebuhr, OFS -
lamniebuhr@gmail.com 715 356-1009

Formation Director = Joann Boss, OFS
jboss@my.wctc.edu 262 250-9251

The Dotted Road of Life

by Ellen Jennings, OFS

The dots began when we were born
And continue on to that last morn'.
Bringing us from start to end;
Teaching us to rely on our special Friend.

How many dots connecting our life
Is not for us to know
That is only known from above
By One from Whom the Spirit flow.

Each event we have is another dot
Connecting to others day by day.
Be careful of which dot you choose;
Will it heap "reward" or make you "pay?"

The dots bringing good are sent from the Lord.
Connecting with those dots is the way
To complete what began when we were born -
The last dot joining with the one seen the first day.

Our La Verna Region Formation Vision



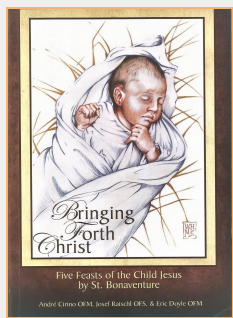
Our Formation Vision Teaches Unity

by JoAnn Boss, OFS,
La Verna Region Formation Director

Over the past two and a half years, I have had the pleasure of attending and contributing to formation actions with local, regional, and national formators. Here are some of the events: National Formation Workshops, La Verna Formation Workshops, district gathering presentations, and talking with the local fraternity formators.

I come to believe that by being and doing formation increases Franciscan Spirituality. Each formation responsibility took on a heart-filled Martha and Mary approach, which isn't as scary as people are lead to believe. The Holy Spirit provides fuel for listening and doing.

I sensed an enthusiastic sharing of St. Bonaventure's five liturgical feasts on "Spiritual Motherhood" with the newly professed and local formators at our 3rd annual La Verna Region Formation Workshop/Retreat held in Marathon, WI. Bonaventure's five reflections of Spiritual Motherhood examine the "life giving force within us." The 13th century mystic and Franciscan theologian writings offer excellent meditations for Advent and Christmas.



The Spiritual Motherhood theme was introduced at the 3rd annual La Verna Regional Formation Workshop/Retreat this past September at St. Anthony Spirituality Center. The theme offered a deeper understanding of Franciscan Spirituality for workshop participants. Here are some brief thoughts on St. Bonaventure's reflections: •

Annunciation - Mary's Journey to the hill country to see Elizabeth - The Holy Name of Jesus - The Adoration by the Magi - The presentation of Jesus in the Temple. Each of these five reflections presented to the local formators attending the workshop come from a small book titled, "*Bringing Forth Christ – the Feast of the Child Jesus*" by St. Bonaventure. All La Verna Region local formators received a copy of the book. So, if you have not heard about **Spiritual Motherhood**, please ask your local formator to share the reflections with you.

Have you seen this report on OFS-USA on the National Formation Commission (NFC)?

The National Formation Commission (NFC) Report to the National Fraternity Council August 15, 2019 on highlights of several NFC Goals for 2020: Here are some calendar updates for the New Year:

There will be a Regional Formation Director's workshop to be held August 20-23, 2020. [The next La Verna Regional Formation Director and one team member will attend. Their registration and room accommodations will be paid by National.

The O.F.S. Affiliate Educational/Instructional Plan has been recently updated by the NFC. Our OFS Affiliation Program by its nature is meant to be temporary. The affiliate must express a desire to remain as an affiliate and make a written request for renewal every 2 years. • If approved, a renewal ceremony occurs, similar to the initial welcoming. • An affiliate continues to grow through prayer, study, and immersion into the life of the local fraternity.

<https://secularfranciscansusa.org/wp-content/uploads/Revised-OFS-Affiliate-Instructional-Plan.pdf>

Our Visioning project continues – Two new initial formation texts will be designed by National, which incorporates changes discussed at the Visioning 2018 and 2019 Workshops.

1. The FUN Manual will move to the background to serve as a resource for two new initial formation.
2. The Franciscan Journey will eventually be set aside.
3. There will be one text combining the material for Orientation and Inquiry. o A second, separate text will include all the chapters necessary for Candidacy.
4. An accompanying guide for the formator will correspond to each chapter in the participant's texts and will have tips and ideas for presenting the material and suggestions of other resources that can be used for each chapter.
5. A resource will provide general guidance for formators at all levels

(Formation Vision Unity continued on page 5)

Have you viewed the film, *Sign of Contradiction*? The film is narrated by Fr. Dave Pivonka, TOR and President of Franciscan University of St. Francis, offers a beautiful history of St. Francis pointing out essential elements of Francis's Spirituality – confrontation, "Enough," penance and conformity. The film considers these elements working in Francis's life, and asks the question "How might you and St. Francis be similar?"

Checked out the OFS-USA Facebook

Diane Menditto, OFS, National Formation Commission Chair, faithfully has been presenting weekly reflection to help support our efforts in "daily conversion" and in regular communications among fraternities. Diane's brief but significant postings propose us to let go of self and surround ourselves to God's will. You will find her reflections helpful.

I pray that these brief formation reviews stir questions which lead you toward deep rendering and development. My hope is a spiritual motherhood stimulates personal growth and your fraternity.

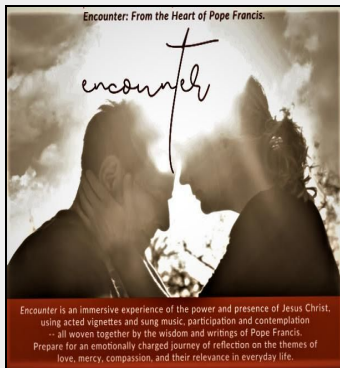
Finally, a wonderful Christmas quote written by St. Cyril of Jerusalem on why Jesus first came to us: "*His first coming was to fulfill his plan of love to teach men [and women] by gentle persuasion.*"

May Our Lord's Blessings be with you all through this Holy Season and into the New Year.

Peace,
JoAnn

News from around the La Verna Region

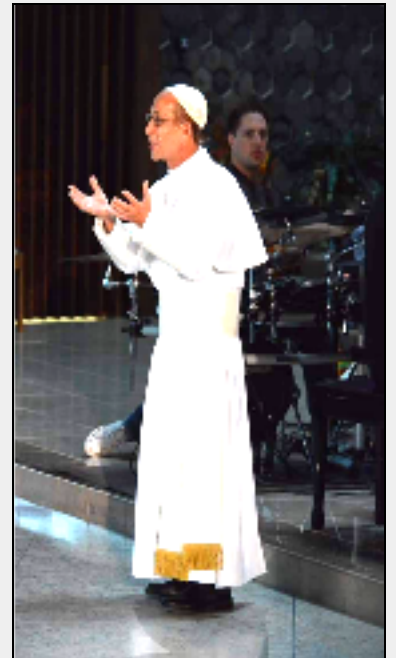
A Challenge to Encounter with God



In tribute to Pope Francis, Paul Salerno, OFS, St. Francis of Assisi fraternity member, along with musicians and artists of Holy Apostles parish in New Berlin, WI presented an **Encounter: From the Heart of Pope Francis**. The theme encourages reflection on love, mercy, and compassion, and their relevance in modern life. The local play, which took place at the Holy Apostles church, ran from November 22 - 24, played before parish, community and religious audiences. explores the pontiff's writings through talented acting, narrative vignettes and musical accompaniment.

Secular Franciscan Paul Salerno, wearing a designed Pope Francis costume, narrates the wisdom and writings of the pontiff. The vignettes and music allows the audience to reflect on special songs that follow and build upon one another during the play. The structure shows ways in which Christ is manifested in our modern everyday life through love, mercy and compassion.

The *Catholic Herald* reported that "every note, word, and vignette, is filled with energy. Paul Salerno, who is steeped in Franciscan thought and prayer life, plays Pope Francis. The cast pour their hearts into songs. A full cast of 15 ensemble singers, 11 actors, and pit orchestra have been working since



Paul Salerno, OFS dressed as Pope Francis, narrates and reflects on the pope's writings and themes experienced within our daily lives. Paul's performance with live musical accompaniment was presented before audiences at Holy Apostles parish in New Berlin, WI



Encounter: From the Heart of Pope Francis, continued on page 6

September to prepare for the event, including small children's choir performing two songs." The entire performance is an immersive experience of power and presence of Jesus Christ.

Each night, immediately following the Encounter event, "Pope" Paul Salerno and cast members attended the church hospitality and discussion sessions open to the audience, who were both challenged by the material and touched by performances. One parent in the group discussion session said that the Encounter play and Pope Francis writings will give a significant and positive outlook toward family, environment, and cultural perspectives.



the

Editor's Note:

The Encounter performance was open to the public and a free-will donation was taken.

FRANCIS: THE MAN

by Don Derozier, OFS

Sacred Heart Fraternity, Oshkosh, WI

There are too many bird-bath Francis statues that depict our saint as a 13th Century environmentalist, soft to the touch of a rabbit or a bird or a butterfly. Although he loved the Good God of All Creation, he was first and foremost a man. Among his many manly things, these five events underscore the need for men in our Secular Order.

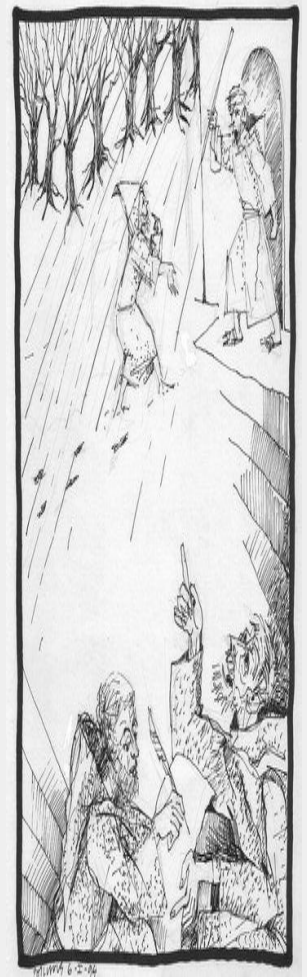
§ **Mountain Climbing:** Francis chose reclusive spots, often in caves high up in the mountains that required endurance and strength to reach, so that he could present himself as a man to the God-man of the Passion.

§ **Medical Condition:** Francis' man-up to Brother Fire and its steel shaft as it lay across his painful eyes, pain seen as loving care to be absorbed into meaning.

§ **The Wolf of Gubbio:** not known as a hunter, Francis boldly Alpha-approached and subdued the wolf into its dependent position in the community.

§ **The Sultan:** Francis met and attempted to convert a radical Muslim warrior when the Crusaders were broken and had lost the dream of reunion with the Holy Land.

§ **Division in the Order:** Francis managed division by acceptance of Christ as the CEO, not himself.



Can we call men of action, brave leaders who love the Church and can manage to place themselves subservient to the 'upward call of Christ' to our Secular Order?

A Spiritual Assistant's Reflection

The Beginning of a Spanish Fraternity in Green Bay

by Fr. Macabalo, OFM

St. Ann Fraternity Spiritual Assistant



Fr. Ponciano Macabalo, OFM
St. Ann Fraternity spiritual assistant

I'm happy to be back working with the Secular Franciscan Order in my new assignment at St. Mary of the Angels Parish as Celebrant and Moderator, and as the Spiritual Assistant of St. Ann Fraternity in Green Bay, WI.



Two years before my ordination to the priesthood many years ago, I had wonderful experiences with the OFS by attending their fraternity meetings as part of our Franciscan/priestly formation. As a priest I was invited by the OFS brothers and sisters to their celebrations. I had a break to work full time with the OFS on the National level as a substitute when the national spiritual assistant requested me to take his place during his three months home vacation. However, his vacation in Spain became three years due to his by-pass operation and change of plans. My plan to go for a sabbatical program in Washington State in 1989 was changed and upgraded into further study of Franciscan Spirituality in Rome in 1991.



My studies were affected by two deaths in my family and the call of our Minister General to work in the Mission office of the Order at our Headquarters in Rome. Twelve years in the OFM mission office ran fast, and my next destination was another mission office at Burlington, WI to be engaged in fundraising for the mission. After fourteen years, here I am assigned in Green Bay.



Fr. Ponciano Macabalo, OFM talks with a group of Spanish speaking parish members on St. Francis of Assisi and the Secular Franciscan Order.

In my sixth month serving both Green Bay parishes of St. Peter and Paul and St. Mary of the Angels, I thought of exploring the interest of Spanish speaking parishioners of St. Peter and Paul to the Franciscan life as OFS. Talking to them immediately created a spark of interest in eleven Mexican parishioners to begin our first meeting: Two of them were male, nine were women and two teenage girls. The teenagers reminded me of the YouFra that the pastor, Fr. Cirignani, OFM was encouraging me to organize.

In the first meeting we decided to meet again the following week. From then on, the group meets every Tuesday for an hour from 6:30 in the evening. I call this conversation and sharing in the discernment process for prospective members of a possible OFS emerging fraternity. Among the topics we covered in my short presentation about Franciscanism were: the person of St. Francis of Assisi - the Founder and of the Franciscan Movement, The Franciscan family all over the world, about fraternal relationship in the teaching of St. Francis, the Gospel life, Franciscan Saints, the Eucharist in the life of the OFS, Stages of Formation and others. At the end of the meeting, we recite the prayers composed by St. Francis (Prayer before St. Damian Crucifix, Praises of God, Canticle of Creatures, etc)

Our November 19th Spanish gathering was also with the Minister of St Ann Fraternity, Mary Domke, OFS and La Verna Regional Minister, Jeff Gumz, OFS. The meeting gave a great awareness of their future connection with the local, regional, national and international level of OFS. Thanks to Jeff as Spanish interpreter and for Mary to be able to participate in listening and in conveying her message to the group.

I would say that this will be a Spanish speaking emerging OFS Fraternity based in St. Peter and Paul Church in Green Bay, WI. Please pray for them. Please pray also for me in my new assignment as an OFS Spiritual Assistant. - Fr. Ponciano M Macabalo, OFM

Upcoming La Verna Region and National Events

- **Franciscan Fellowship Time!** Come and join us for saintly celebrations:
 - 1 p.m. each 1st Sunday of the month at the Franciscans Downtown store, 1000 Main Street, Stevens Point, WI. Franciscans Downtown is a place of hospitality for all, helping to create a culture of empathy and resilience. Follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/1000MainSt>

January 5, 2020: Bring veggies and help make homemade soups
February 2, 2020: Create your favorite Valentine's Day cards for the homebound
March 1, 2020: Pizza party with community and friends
- **La Verna Regional District Gatherings - Celebrate our La Verna Region's 25th Anniversary!**
 - March 21, 2020 - Southeast region - Portiuncula Fraternity host, at the Basilica of St. Josaphat, South 6th & West Lincoln Ave., Milwaukee, WI
 - March 28, 2020 - Fox Valley region - St Joseph Fraternity host, at St. Joseph Catholic Church, Appleton, WI
 - April 18, 2020 - Central region - Our Lady Queen of Heaven Fraternity host, at St. Lawrence Catholic Church, 530 10th Ave., Wisconsin Rapids, WI
- **La Verna Regional Executive Council Meeting and Chapter**
 - February 1, 2020, 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m., Stevens Point, WI
 - June 26 - 28, 2020, Chapter of Elections, St. Anthony Spirituality Center, Marathon, WI
 - August 20 - 23, 2020 - Regional Formation Directors summer workshop, King's House Retreat Center, Belleville, Illinois (the National Executive Council will host entire workshop)
- **Spiritual Assistants Workshop**
 - May 3 - 4, 2020 - St. Anthony Spirituality Center, Marathon, WI. Workshop registration TBA April 2020.



La Verna Regional Treasurer's Report

La Verna Regional Fraternity SFO STATEMENT OF REVENUE & EXPENSE FOR PERIODS ENDED DEC 31, 2019 and 2018						AMENDED Approved 6/22/2019 Budget 2019
	THIS YEAR Y. T. D. 2019	Budget 11 months period 2019	Budget Variance Favorable (Unfavorable)	Approved Last Year Actual 2018		
BEGINNING BALANCES:						
REGULAR CHECKING -----	6,748.66			(957.20)		
RETREAT SUBSIDY FUND -----	3,888.08			3,201.72		
EDUCATION/TRAINING FUND -----	837.46			1,023.52		
RETREAT/EDUCATION ENDOWMENT FD ---	25,000.00			25,000.00		
CUSTODIAL FUND -----	25,547.00			0.00		
CASH ON HAND -----	0.00			0.00		
FAIR SHARE FUND -----	500.00			0.00		
TOTAL CASH ON HAND & IN BANKS -	62,521.20			28,268.04		
REVENUE:						
DONATIONS -----	4,386.82	1,785.14	2,601.68	32,818.21		1,947.43
FAIR SHARE FUND -----	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00
INT. RETREAT ENDOWMENT FUND	0.00	0.00	0.00	686.36		0.00
INTEREST EDUCATION FUND	0.00	0.00	0.00	686.37		0.00
SPECIAL MEMORIALS -----	410.00	0.00	410.00	0.00		0.00
CHAPTER -----	1,664.00	1,999.25	(335.25)	2,156.00		2,181.00
FAIR SHARE -- 371 + 25 @ 80-40	28,955.00	28,370.83	584.17	24,972.25		30,950.00
SA WRKSP -----	1,460.00	1,397.92	62.08	1,525.00		1,525.00
INTEREST CUSTODIAL FUND -----	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00
MISC & FORMATION WS INCOME -----	4,490.00	3,483.33	1,006.67	3,539.78		3,800.00
TOTAL REVENUE -----	41,365.82	37,036.47	4,329.35	66,383.97		40,403.43
TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDS -----	103,887.02			94,652.01		
EXPENSES:						
STIPENDS & EXPENSES -----	2,845.70	2,750.00	(95.70)	2,600.00		3,000.00
RENT INCLUDING EQUIPMENT -----	500.00	458.33	(41.67)	481.34		500.00
MATERIALS & SUPPLIES -----	0.00	45.83	45.83	245.73		50.00
EDUCATION/TRAINING -----	3,585.39	4,047.08	461.69	4,413.35		4,415.00
MEETING ROOM & FACILITIES -----	1,035.00	45.83	(989.17)	1,035.00		50.00
OFFICE SUPPLIES -----	636.98	450.08	(186.90)	490.94		491.00
DONATIONS -----	410.00	3,208.33	2,798.33	0.00		3,500.00
ADMINISTRATIVE EXP -----	585.39	333.67	(251.72)	78.40		364.00
NEWSLETTER -----	0.00	275.00	275.00	0.00		300.00
TRAVEL EXP & EXPENSES -----	9,815.72	4,915.35	(4,900.37)	6,923.06		5,362.20
FAIR SHARE TO OFS-USA -- 396@17- ---	6,732.00	6,171.00	(561.00)	6,817.00		6,732.00
ANNUAL CHAPTER -----	5,761.27	5,999.58	238.31	6,882.20		6,545.00
VISITATION / ELECTION -----	641.00	2,291.67	1,650.67	100.00		2,500.00
RETREAT SUBSIDY -----	580.00	159.58	(420.42)	100.00		174.09
FAIR SHARE FUND	0.00	-	0.00	0.00		0.00
SA WRKSP -----	2,870.75	1,830.58	(1,040.17)	1,637.77		1,997.00
MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSE -----	291.81	366.67	74.86	326.02		400.00
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS -----	36,291.01	33,348.58	(2,942.43)	32,130.81		36,380.29
GAIN OR (LOSS) FOR PERIOD ---	5,074.81	3,687.89	1,386.92	34,253.16		4,023.14
ENDING BALANCE -----	67,596.01			62,521.20		
CURRENT BALANCES:						
REGULAR CHECKING -----	8,648.47	101%		6,748.66		
RETREAT SUBSIDY FUND -----	3,838.08			3,888.08		
EDUCATION/TRAINING FUND -----	4,062.46			837.46		
RETREAT / EDUCATION CATHOLIC FUND *- -	25,000.00			25,000.00		
CUSTODIAL FUND INVESTMENT (JC) -----	25,547.00			25,547.00		
CASH ON HAND -----	(0.00)			0.00		
FAIR SHARE FUND -----	500.00			500.00		
TOTAL CASH ON HAND & IN BANKS --	67,596.01			62,521.20		
CUSTODIAL FUND(5283)-JC bequest + St Pascal Baylon gift as of 10/31/19, last 12 mo = +11.18% Gain / (loss)	28,243.94 2,696.94	5% \$	1,412.20			
CATHOLIC FOUNDATION FUND (5205) as of 10/31/19	27,330.19	5% \$	1,366.51			
* St Francis of Assisi + Anonymous + REC Last 12 mo +8.25% Gain / (Loss)	2,330.19					
Bob Henning, OFS, TREASURER	12/06/19					

Merry Christmas

