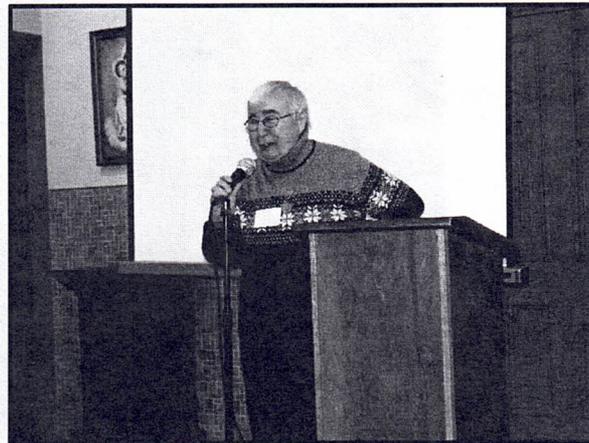
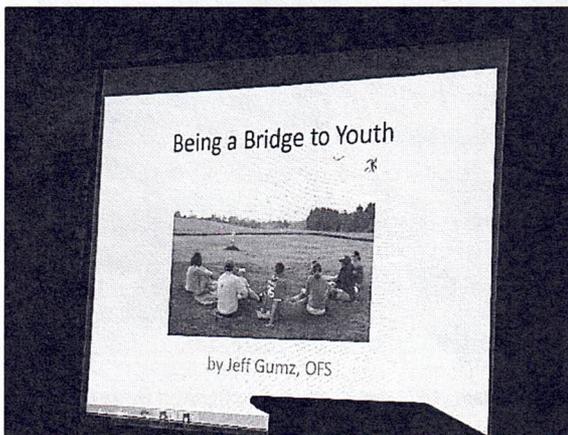




2014 District Gatherings Photos and Events



Morning speaker, Sr. Anita Beskar, FSPA



Beaver Dam group after their Rite of Admission

March 8, 2014 Southeast District Gathering at St. Josaphat Basilica in Milwaukee, WI



SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT GATHERING SHOWS A SURPRISE 'GUEST'

Who says a Secular Franciscan district gathering can't show a little fun?

When an anonymous but well intended prankster displayed a favorite life-size photo image of Pope Francis at the southeastern district gathering, Franciscans, including some smiling members from St. Paschal Baylon fraternity, couldn't help themselves. They had to stop for a photo op.

The Pope's unexpected appearance stood gazing at attendees walking into the main entrance to the meeting room. At first glance, Francis' presence looked real and the unexpected attendee couldn't help but stare at the six-foot tall image. And when you stood next to Francis, there was the eerie feeling that he could turn and give his blessing. But that was too good to be true.

Anyway, the larger than life cardboard cutout was a funny bone hit attraction for the many Secular Franciscans attending the district conference held at the St. Josaphat Basilica in Milwaukee on March 8. In fact some OFS members and guests had to wait in line like celebrity fans to stand next to Francis.

The "Pose with the Pope" photo was harmless good fun, but for some it may be their only opportunity to stand next to his Holiness. Now can anyone please tell me what went on during the meeting? I seem to have been pleasantly interrupted.



Front row: from left to right: Donna Ludwig, OFS, "Pope Francis," Carolyn Multhauf, OFS, Helene Brown, OFS. Back row: left to right: Ed Boss, OFS and Eddie Multhauf, OFS.



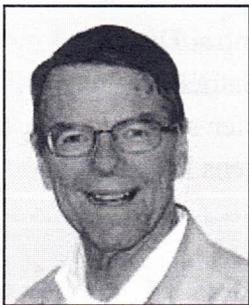
April 5, 2014
Central District
Gathering at
St. Peter's Church in
Stevens Point, WI

Sr. Anita Beskar lead each group assembled for the LaVerna Regional 2014 district gatherings with an opening prayer, followed by her talk and group process on "Being the Bridge through Listening." At the Stevens Point gathering, Sr. Anita asked the group to participate in separate steps of a Lectio Divina prayer taken from Mark 8: 22 - 26 scripture reading on the 'The Blind Man of Bethsaida.'

Later in the morning meeting, REC Vice Minister Jeff Gumz, gave a slide presentation about "Being the Bridge to Youth." During his talk, Jeff commented on a slide which outlined the declining membership numbers of OFS and Candidates nationwide. He asked the members in the meeting, "do we offer our spiritual reality as an attractive way to bring new life [vocations] to our fraternity?"

One avenue that may attract new members into the Order is to volunteer our time to speak at Catholic or public Neumann Centers located on local colleges and universities campuses. Newman Centers provide many pastoral services for college students and faculty such as spiritual talks on Catholic programs and social events. Another path is to organize YouFra groups who feel drawn to St. Francis. Jeff said that Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee is actively engaged in building a bridge with its students. Some Cardinal Stritch students hold meetings on campus and discuss how Franciscan spirituality is part of their daily lives. The students meet on campus each Thursday in a room and open their meeting with prayer. They discuss action plans on how to carry the gospel life to members in the community. Jeff said that these students may transfer out to another college, but the Franciscan/Christian seed has been planted in each of them. Some of them may move to a parish or town and will become attracted to attend a local fraternity.

Minister's Message



Listening and Building

As I write, it is Lent, a time of prayer, fasting and alms—the ending of the current “winter” of our lives. Spring is here at last! It will be Easter soon, a time of hope, new life, and new beginnings. This is a reflection on our District meetings. Sister Anita Beskar, FSPA led us in “becoming the bridge to fraternal living”. We practiced *Lectio Divna*—listening for the God’s whisperings- something simple but so important. *Listening!* Francis was a master at listening-communication. Consider his dialogues with the Pope and Sultan as two examples. We are at an important time in our region as we welcome new co- spiritual assistants and a new regional council at our chapter meeting. We hope **you heard** the REC’s plea for members to respond to the Nominations Committee’s request to be discerned for positions at our chapter of elections meeting June 27-29. Please continue to **pray** for Leaders and Vocations.

The management at Marathon is looking for seculars willing to try a year of living in community-contact Fr. Frank Corradi, 715-443-2236, ext. 117 or email frfrank@sarcenter.com. Remember that we have a fund that can help you attend retreats-contact Peter Bekkers. I hope you heard Jeff Gumz’ talk on reaching out to our youth. Fraternity should have a Y/YA contact person and set a goal of some sort for outreach to youth—our future. Some ideas: the H2O project; contact parish or diocesan youth directors to discuss ways to work with youth, consider forming a youth or young adult “cell”; remember, you can obtain and use “free” the Father Solanus coloring book from the Father Solanus Guild and Center, 1780 Mt. Elliot Avenue, Detroit, MI 48207-3496; 314-579-2100 ext. 140, www.solanuscasy.org. I would also encourage fraternities to write/preserve your histories and update them. Those without documents of establishment should obtain from your Provincial Spiritual Assistant a Document of Verification It is simple-contact Sharon Dale for advice.

And **we heard** you. Some ideas from the afternoon session include: consider divine mercy on the feast-day of our new Saint John Paul the Great; vocations-several newly professed came to us through personal invitation; one fraternity advertises on radio; if a Franciscan hosts a parish retreat, have contact information at the retreat; introduce new members [RCIA] to St Francis; use Facebook; fund-raising ideas; garage sales, brat sales, soup suppers or sell soup-helps fund charities; jail ministry- visits or send cards to inmates; after fraternity elections/ terms of office, have a ceremony celebrating the “old” and the “new”/ passing the “talking stick” [pass three ring binders/offer help]. Build-councils should work side by side with members;

The REC is still looking for a place for our archives, some of our meetings and retreats. Would Marathon be a possibility? Incidentally, poking around in the archives I found the **Document of Establishment** for our region dated October 13, 1995. The **Mission Statement** adopted reads as follows: “La Verna Region, born of seven Secular Franciscan Provinces, is formed for all Secular Franciscans in Upper Michigan and Wisconsin. We are committed to our secular vocation to follow Christ in the Spirit of St. Francis by collaboration in rebuilding the church. Goals: We will: 1) live in society as true Brothers and Sisters; 2) follow the Rule, Constitution and Guidelines of the Secular Order; 3) become a visible sign in the church by affirming and rebuilding the church in the way of St. Francis; 4) participate in Eucharist and daily prayer; 5) collaborate in areas of Work, Family, Ecology, Peace and Justice. **Is this still our mission?** If you have any thoughts, let me know

Peace and Good – *Jim Carlson, Regional Minister*

Reflections



La Verna Regional Spiritual Assistant
Lester Bach OFM Cap

Comings and Goings

Several changes will take place in the La Verna Region at the regional chapter of the *Secular Franciscan Order* at St. Anthony's, Marathon, WI, on June 27-29, 2014,

1. **Elections** to the regional executive council will take place. This happens every three years. The local council minister or his/her delegate is **required to attend** these annual chapters. *Tom Bello OFS will preside at the elections and Lester Bach OFM Cap will be the witness for the elections. Please offer daily prayer for our chapter and the elections.* Our Franciscan family needs good servant-leadership. Professed secular Franciscans of the region, who are able to do so, are expected to serve if nominated and elected. Each office requires particular skills. When you are nominated (or volunteer) for a regional office you should be competent to fulfil the duties of that office. *Observers are welcome to attend the Chapter. Please register for the chapter if you can attend.*

2. This will be my last chapter as Regional Spiritual Assistant of the Region. My term is completed after 12 years. I have enjoyed being with all of you. Thank you for your generous response to our work as a Regional Council and any assistance I may have personally been able to give. I am not moving off of planet earth, so I will still help if I can assist in any way. Thank you for building relationships and seeking to living the Franciscan spirit in our region.

3. I am delighted to appoint two competent and dedicated Secular Franciscans to replace me as Regional Spiritual Assistants. They link the La Verna Region and the Province of St Joseph of the Capuchin Order in serving the La Verna Region.

Lee Ann Niebuhr OFS and Ed Boss OFS will assume responsibility as Regional Spiritual Assistants on July 1, 2014. Ed Boss OFS will serve fraternities in the

southern part of La Verna Region. Lee Ann Niebuhr OFS will serve the fraternities in the northern part of the La Verna Region. Contact them for **Pastoral** visitations of your fraternity. Their dedication and knowledge will be helpful in guiding fraternity life in the Franciscan spirit.

The two nominees and I have spent the last 19 months sharing training sessions for their role at the regional level. During that time we have also begun the development of a Regional School for training new SAs to local fraternities. We look forward to regular conversations with SAs throughout the region. We expect your cooperation in this important project. We want La Verna Region to be a model group of Franciscans in the USA.

I remain the **Provincial Spiritual Assistant** for the Capuchin Province of St Joseph. It remains my responsibility to *appoint local spiritual assistants to fraternities bonded to our Capuchin Province.* Contact me for the appointment if your fraternity is bonded to the Capuchin Province of St Joseph.

Words of guidance

(that sound very Franciscan!)

... Too often I looked at being relevant, popular, and powerful as ingredients of an effective ministry.

The truth, however, is that these are not vocations but temptations. Jesus asks "Do you love me?" Jesus sends us out to be shepherds, and Jesus promises a life in which we increasingly have to stretch out our hands and be led to places where we would rather not go. He asks us to move from a concern for relevance to a life of prayer, from worries about popularity to communal and mutual ministry, and from a leadership built on power to a leadership in which we critically discern where God is leading us and our people.

In the Name of Jesus - Henri Nouwen - Page 91-92

Keeping our missionary fervor alive calls for firm trust in the Holy Spirit, for it is he who "helps us in our weakness" (Romans 8:26). But this generous trust has to be nourished, and so we need to invoke the Spirit constantly. He can heal whatever causes us to flag in the missionary endeavor. It is true that this trust in the unseen can cause us to feel disoriented: it is like being plunged into the deep and not knowing what we will find. I myself have frequently experienced this. Yet there is no greater freedom than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing the attempt to plan and control everything to the last detail, and instead letting him enlighten, guide and direct us, leading us wherever he will. The Holy Spirit knows well what is needed in every time and place. This is what it means to be mysteriously fruitful!

The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium) - Pope Francis - #280

Let us be very sincere with each other and have the courage to accept each other as we are. Do not be preoccupied with each others' failures; rather, find the good in each other, for each one of us is created in the image of God.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

An Accidental Franciscan

Lee Ann Milisch-Niebuhr, OFS

The spiritual earth beneath my feet shook one morning when I found myself standing in front of the tomb of St. Francis in Assisi, Italy. The summer of 1988 I was traveling around Europe with thirteen of my high school students. Assisi, Italy was just another stop on a whirl wind tour of Europe. "Francis of Assisi, cute saint who loved animals . . ." I told my students. Little did I comprehend then, that while standing in front of his tomb, St. Francis had already claimed my heart, and that indeed the ground beneath my feet was about to change in ways so numerous that I gave up counting. Twenty-one years later, I found myself once again standing in front of the tomb of St. Francis. This time I had deliberately come to Assisi to thank Francis for the tremendous gift of my call to become a Franciscan. No longer did I think of him as the "bird bath saint". Now I knew that loving and following Francis of Assisi would be the journey and challenge of a lifetime. I had fallen in love with Francis, his simplicity, his respect for nature, his devotion to our Lord, his tenderness to the least, the last and the lost among us.

Following the call to be a Franciscan has taken me to places I never imagined. The last nine years of my life have been both exciting and challenging. Most recently, Fr. Lester Bach has asked Ed Boss and me to take on the role of co-Regional Spiritual Assistants. Knowing Fr. Bach's great love and dedication to the Seculars in the La Verna Region, I knew that it would take the two of us to fill his shoes. Ed Boss and I will formally begin our roles as co-Regional Spiritual Assistants on July 1 of this year.

Permit me to introduce myself. I am a sixty-five year old mother of two daughters, Jenn and Becky, both born on St. Patrick's Day a year apart. I have a 12 year old grandson, Nathan, and a ten year old granddaughter named Savannah who are the delight of my life. In 2005 I retired from teaching English and Speech on the high school and community college level; and in 2006, I started my dream job as Director of Evangelization at Holy Family Catholic Church in Woodruff, WI. In January of this year I became part of the preaching staff at St. Anthony's Spirituality Center in Marathon, WI.

Ed Boss and I, acting as co-Regional Spiritual Assistants, will each take half of the region. Ed will take the southern half, and I will take the northern half starting with the Wisconsin Rapids fraternity and going all the way north to the Marquette, Michigan fraternity. Specifically, I will be the pastoral visitor to the following fraternities: St. Ann in Green Bay, St. Peter in Stevens Point, Queen of Heaven in Wisconsin Rapids, St. James in Wausau, St. Anthony in Marathon, St. John Neumann in Rhinelander, St. Paschal Baylon in Wind Lake, St. Anthony in Marquette, MI, and St. Francis in Escanaba MI.

I look forward to seeing many of you this year. I hope that together we can share the beauty and the challenge of being Franciscan. Below is one of my favorite quotations about St. Francis. It is one of two quotations that I use as the anchor point in my approach to all people.

He honored all men. What gave him his extraordinary personal power was this; that from the Pope to the beggar, from the sultan of Syria in his pavilion to the ragged robbers crawling out of the wood, there was never a man who looked into those brown burning eyes without being certain that Francis Bernadone was really interested in him; in his own inner individual life from the cradle to grave; that he himself was being valued and taken seriously, and not merely added to the spoils of some social policy or the names in some clerical document (G.K. Chesterton, in *Praying with Francis of Assisi*, p.61)

I wish each of you that beautiful sense of peace that surpasses all understanding.

Lee Ann Niebuhr, OFS

MOVEMENTS AND PATHWAYS FROM THE MIND TO THE HEART

Ed Boss, OFS

I'm reminded about an inspiring article inserted into my Sunday parish bulletin. It was a short story about a holy monk who found and saved an exquisite ring encased with priceless gems. He later met a beggar and felt so conflicted about owning the precious ring, that he offered his ring to someone who so obviously needed it. The following is the short dialogue between the two men: After receiving the jeweled ring ...

"The beggar was stunned and just sat there, amazed by his sudden good fortune. But the more he thought about it, the more he realized he needed something else. He ran after the monk and said, "Give me something more precious than this gem."

"I have nothing more to give you, my friend," said the holy man.

"Oh, yes, you do," said the beggar. "Please give me what moved you to give me this gem."

The beggar's earnest request to the monk was a similar appeal that attracted me into the Secular Franciscan Order: *"please give me what moved you to give me this gem."* I wanted to know *why* Franciscans give away goodness without complaint. But first, I would like to give a little background information. Lee Ann Niebuhr and I will be working together as co-Regional Spiritual Assistants. Lee Ann will take the northern half, and I will take the southern half starting with the Stevens Point and stretching all the way east to Manitowoc, and parts of southeastern Wisconsin. We are both excited (and a little fearful) but we put our trust and prayers in that the Holy Spirit will guide us. So, how did I get here?

Many years ago, I lived in Chicago and worked for a financial-insurance corporation that owns one of the tallest buildings in the Loop. I took the 45-minute 'L' ride to work from my north side Rogers Park neighborhood to the downtown train station. I dressed in a suit and tie, wing tip shoes, trench coat, and often ate with the business crowd. Money chatter was our common topic of survival at most luncheons, meetings, and elevator rides to the top

floor of the skyscraper. Our sales and marketing plans were how our business products can legally get your money into our company profits. Trust me ... people stay awake at night thinking of schemes about how to do this.

Years later I began my spiritual journey at the St. Francis fraternity located in the heart of the Loop. My initial formation class instructor, a wise retired corporate executive, would often speak about why St. Francis grew less anxious about money, possessions, and personal time. My instructor continually noted that St. Francis only wanted to receive spiritual gifts in order to recognize that he totally trusted in God. At that time, I thought Francis was totally out of his mind. Years later, when I professed into the Secular Franciscan Order, I realized the opposite. St. Francis learned that the hidden "gem" is really Lady Poverty, the symbol of Gospel paradoxes.

In 1998, my wife JoAnn and I moved to Wisconsin and joined St. Paschal Baylon fraternity located in Wind Lake. We both agree that the geographic location change from the Windy City to 'God's country' does not lessen our Franciscan servant/leadership vocation: Every day our secular world offers opportunities to witness and discern the Franciscan lifestyle. We feel that helping the poor, teaching formation students, or support

council asks for the same spirit that the beggar so much wanted to own.

As La Verna regional spiritual assistant, Lee Ann and I want to assist you to recognize and animate Franciscan spirituality. We want to encourage you to give away your gems which will move and guide us on life's pathways. Why? Because your gifts will mirror Jesus Christ.

Finally, Lee Ann and I want to say "thank you" to Fr. Lester Bach, OFM who faithfully served as our regional spiritual assistant. He reminds us that a loving and balanced dialogue best communicates the goodness outlined throughout our Rule, Constitution and Gospel living. One of Lester's discernments about the Secular Franciscan Order is that our formation never ends; it is a lifetime commitment. Over the years, Fr. Bach penned many books, *Catch Me a Rainbow*, *Come and See*, *Franciscan Journey*, *Franciscan Family Connections*, and reflective spiritual assistance articles regularly published in the La Verna Vision and TAU-USA newsletters. His works remain to educate and inspire initial formation, ongoing formation and much more. Fr. Lester, thank you and may the good Lord bless you and keep you.

Peace and all good,
Ed Boss, OFS



Washing Clothes ...

What's Best, Powdered or Liquid Laundry Detergent?

Judy Stouffer, OFS

I got a great question from another OFS earlier this year, asking if there was a difference between liquid and powdered laundry detergent when it came to impact on the environment. I've done some research on it since then, and it turns out that the answer is: not really.

Liquid and powdered detergents have similar or even the same active ingredients. The only real difference is that a liquid detergent has a formulation that keeps it dissolved in water. A powdered detergent has a formulation that helps it remain pourable so it doesn't turn into a solid lump when it's stored.



Both have pros and cons that are more of a question of personal preference than anything else. They do have slightly different environmental impacts, but those offset each other, making neither one worse or better than the other when it comes to any adverse effects.

The big environmental impact from laundry detergents comes in whether or not the product contains phosphates. Phosphates soften hard water. Unfortunately, phosphates contribute to or may even cause algae blooms as they enter the waterways. Algae blooms can produce toxins that are deadly to fish and other marine life. They can also lower oxygen levels in water, adversely affecting water-dwelling plants in addition to causing problems for fish and marine life.

Many companies voluntarily stopped using phosphates in their laundry detergents in the 1990s. Sixteen states, including Wisconsin and Michigan, have also restricted or banned phosphates in dishwashing detergent.

Laundry detergents do contain other ingredients which Dr. Anne Steinemann, University of Washington professor of civil and environmental engineering, points out "can affect not only personal health, but also public and environmental health. The chemicals can go into the air, down the drain and into water bodies."

However, manufacturers are not required to list or disclose the ingredients in laundry and dishwashing products. Unless the label states that it lists 100 percent of the ingredients in a laundry detergent, it's impossible for a consumer to know if those problematic ingredients are in a specific brand.

WORKING WITH THE SCRIPTURES

VINAL VAN BENTHEM, OFS

April 2014

(Mt. 26:14 – 27: 66)

They opened her up, then closed her again. The cancer has spread; there's nothing they can do. Sentenced to death, her passion has begun. The woman is 94 years old. The doctors are surprised that she survived the surgery; her family is surprised that the doctors even attempted it. Their mother/sister/grandmother has cancer. Now they will walk the way of the cross with her. Before her surgery she asked her daughter to pray with her. They prayed together in their Garden of Gethsemane. When she leaves the hospital to return to the nursing home where she lives the hospice nurses will go with her.

They will accompany her on her way to Calvary.

Her baby stopped moving. She was eight months pregnant. The doctors confirmed her worst fears. Her baby was dead. Her womb had become its tomb but it would be weeks before the stone could be rolled away. She must carry her sweet, dead child until it could be delivered safely. Too soon or too late and its life would become her death. She stood at the foot of her child's cross and cried out in pain. It was the Pieta, this mother holding the body of her dead child close to her heart.

Thankfully, most of us will never have to experience this kind of pain and death. But there are other experiences of pain – and other deaths. One may be betrayed by a rival, denied by a friend, rejected because of the color of his skin or the number of years she has passed on this earth. Another may be beaten down by financial worries or concerns over deteriorating health. And still others may be scourged by prejudice, pierced by the nails of oppression, or crucified on the tree of marginalization.

Crosses come in many shapes and sizes. How do we respond to the Passion of the Christ being lived out in the lives of the people around us? Do our actions identify us as a Resurrection People? Or are we content to simply sit and watch Mel Gibson's version on late night TV?

TAPESTRY LESSON

Nora E. Kessel, OFS

I have always loved tapestry....of any kind.....upholstery, purses, clothing, pillows, wall hangings, etc. I love the intricacy of each item. I've always thought that my life is a tapestry.....my Heavenly Father being the weaver and I am the fabric. So often I only see the underside.....the knots, the slipped stitches, the tangled open areas; whereas He sees the upper side in all its beauty and perfection.

Two thousand ten was a year full of knots, tangles and slipped stitches to be sure. My beloved, Tom, left for China in early April 2010. Determined to be strong and capable while he was away, I focused on day to day life and finding a job. At first, the task seemed manageable until months went by without paycheck or job offer. It was then that the pity party began.....a party to end all pity parties...and it lasted a long time. It felt like a slow downward spiral and before I knew it....out of desperation, I had begun selling some of the "special" things we had saved when we moved north to pay bills and to buy groceries. It was a difficult process, but necessary. Occasionally, there was a lovely card in the mail from one of my guardian angels below the bridge that contained a check or gift card. But I was still barely making it....bills were late, the cars were running on fumes and the house was cold. And I was getting tired of smiling, tired of coping, tired of believing that better days lie ahead-I couldn't see 'em at all. And at my very lowest point is when the lesson of patience and belief began.

Something my parents taught me, by example and word--when life is tough.....help someone who has it tougher. It will not only help you through, it will bring you closer to Our Lord. It was a tall order to be sure-I didn't feel like thinking of much outside my own walls of worry. But--nothing else was working & I was desperate now.....and needed to follow their advice, whether I wanted to or not. I just had to do something...my prayers were flat and not enough at that time.

One day while looking in the want ads, I read an article in the local paper which said that the homeless numbers had risen and St. Vincent de Paul was struggling to keep its guests comfortable and supplied for their day-to-day needs and activities. One of the things they requested was especially intriguing to me. They put a call out for backpacks, duffels and travel bags as most of the guests at the shelter keep all their possessions in these items. It got me to thinking.....I could do something.....there are numerous travel bags from the past 25 years that are still in a box in the basement. Bags I used for trips long ago, bags I was given as gifts, bags given to me as a thank you for speaking engagements and homemade bags from loving family and friends. I went down the basement and opened the classic barn red rubbermaid container and found the bags.....embarrassingly all 11 of them. I mean.....who needs eleven travel bags? I went through each one of them.....reminiscing about each one--the trips, the gifts, the stories behind them all warmed my heart.

After rummaging for about an hour and finding everything from kleenex to combs to breath mints, to nylons and pocket change, I decided I had to narrow it down to the 2 bags I needed most and give the rest to St. Vincent de Paul. One of the many bags I didn't think I needed anymore was a lovely handmade tapestry bag. I had used it on many a trip with a group of girlfriends. I was perfect--each of us had one, handmade by one of our own. If that bag could

Through the Eyes of Students

By Suzanne McKinney, OFS (*Ordo Franciscanus Sæcularis*)

Making a pilgrimage to Assisi is a dream for many Secular Franciscans. Upon learning that students from St. Thomas More High School had the opportunity to make such a pilgrimage and were willing to share their experiences with us in the Portiuncula Fraternity, we knew that we had to write an article.

This may not be an easy task. As the Franciscan brochure states “putting words to the experience is not easy because words often fall short to describe an experience of God, a deepening of one’s faith.” We will, however, attempt to express the richness of their experiences.

We asked the students, Lang Vu, Clare Huffstetter, Gabby Hamilton Sam Reinke, the chaperone Theology Teacher, Anna Carter, a series of questions.

What inspired them to go to Assisi? Some said it was an opportunity to see Italy. Others said they wanted to see where many popes and saints came from that they had studied in class. For some, viewing the birthplace of St. Clare was important. Carter, having previously been to Assisi, wanted to “walk through Assisi” with her students.

All the students said they desired to learn more about Francis and Clare than that St. Francis was the “animal saint.” Carter witnessed to the awe and reverence of the students had during their encounters with the saints of Assisi.

The students shared the favorite sacred places they visited. Gabby said, “Mass at the church where St. Francis was buried brought me an inner peace that I never knew existed.” Sam said he “realized his faith was more than going to Mass.” Lang experienced an aura of astonishment that Francis was buried surrounded by his friends. Clare was able to enter St. Clare’s Basilica, named for her patron saint.

When asked how this experience of pilgrimage changed their perspective, they gave the following responses: “[I] have a feeling of being more at peace with myself,” “I view people differently, not all the same and am able to forgive,” and “I look more in the beauty of nature and in others.”

Mark Joerres, President and Principal of St. Thomas More High School, was very impressed by the impact the trip had on the students. “It’s an amazing thing as an educator to watch teenagers become so transformed during this eight day experience. They can’t help but come to appreciate the beauty and simplicity of the Franciscan way of life. The impact is immeasurable and it will affect their entire life.”

The students developed new friendships during the trip, as well as, tasting gelato for the first time!

All of the students would like to return to Assisi if possible. If they are unable to do so, it is clear that they have definitely taken Assisi back home with them. The enthusiasm and life changing experiences of these students and their teacher, reminded us, as Secular Franciscans, which Francis and Clare continue to teach and inspire us all.

Thank you staff and students of St. Thomas More for allowing us to share your story.



St. Thomas More High School students on pilgrimage in Assisi pray at the place where St. Clare died in San Damiano on August 11, 1253. Photograph by Mark Joerres, Ph.D.

'Day of Recollection' Held for Beaver Dam Inquirers

On a windswept February morning, area formation team members and spiritual assistants met with five Beaver Dam Inquirers for a special Day of Recollection held at the Holy Hill Basilica. The outside winter chill may have gripped the arctic air, but inside the old Carmelite monastery historical building there was the warm Franciscan atmosphere for gathering the team members and Inquirer students.

La Verna Regional Spiritual Assistant Fr. Lester Bach and fraternity spiritual assistant Fr. Kim Studwell, along with OFS formation team members Teri Doughty, Joan Reiter, Laurel Swencki, JoAnn Boss and Jim Carlson met all day on February 22 to listen to each Inquirer's discernment.

The team met with Beaver Dam Inquirers Sue Bashynski, Coletta Cody, Fr. Mike Erwin, Janice Tischler, Mike Adsit, and Jeanne Heft, OFS. Each student's objective was to talk about their life line spiritual growth and their desire to continue onto Candidacy. The team's main purpose was not only to listen but also dialogue with Inquirers in a forum sitting and then later hold individual interviews in sincere expectation admittance as Candidates.

THE MARTHA & MARY TEAM

In early 2013, the La Verna Regional Council heard word that some parishioners associated with St. Katharine Drexel Parish in Beaver Dam, WI had expressed the desire to become Secular Franciscan. A short time later, the REC voted to sponsor the Beaver Dam group.

The council's next step was an immediate need to assemble formators in order to train the students on a regular basis, and prayers were answered when OFS formators from local fraternities volunteered their time. The formators, who lived as far away as Racine, Oshkosh, Rhinelander, Whitewater, and Sussex all agreed to drive from their homes to the St. Katharine Drexel Parish Center and teach Orientation and Inquiry classes.

THE COURAGE TO RISK

JoAnn Boss, OFS has participated as a Beaver Dam group formation team member and attended the Day of Recollection at Holy Hill. "The purpose of recollection is revisiting one's life to realize patterns where God interconnected. Then to see if the Inquirer's next step to become a Candidate not only is consistent with God's guidance, but also a call to be with the Secular Franciscan Order," JoAnn said.

Recollection requires an earnest desire and interior movement in the heart which go beyond just reading inspired books about St. Francis or turning in formation homework assignments. JoAnn stressed to the Inquirers to "ask yourself if Candidacy is your calling. And then ask yourself what the Lord is calling you to do?"



Front row: left to right: Sue Boshynski, Candidate; Coletta Cody, Candidate; Jeanne Heft, OFS; Janice Trochler, Candidate; JoAnn Boss, OFS formation instructor. Back row: left to right: Laurel Swencki, OFS formation instructor; Mike Adzki, Candidate; Fr. Kim Sturdell, OFM, spiritual assistant; Jim Carlson, OFS formation instructor, La Verna Regional Minister

During the morning session, Fr. Kim said that the Inquirer's decision to enter into Candidacy should not be a lone decision. Each Inquirer should speak with like-minded peers. For example, Fr. Kim said that St. Francis consoled with other community members as to whether he should preach or remain less active in his ministry. He talked about this with St. Clare and Bro. Sylvester. Kim added that each Inquirer should ask "am I becoming more tolerant of people? Can I appreciate differences in people, places and things?" He said that Francis allowed so many acceptances that he accepted lepers. People he had earlier detested in his life.

ACCEPTANCE IN CANDIDACY

A final happy note to this story: The Inquirers' documents and letters to accept admission as Candidates were reviewed by the La Verna Regional Council, and council unanimously approved all. The students celebrated their Rite of Admission ceremony during the 2014 southeastern district gathering held at St. Josaphat Basilica in Milwaukee on March 8, and they will continue on their next phase of Candidacy formation class beginning in April.

LaVerna Regional Chapter of Elections Coming Up Soon

June 27 – 29, 2014

Every three years normal elections are held to elect a group of Secular Franciscans who have volunteered to lead and animate the Regional Fraternity as servant leaders.

A group of Secular Franciscans volunteered some time ago to serve as a Nominating Committee. Their job was to seek out other permanently professed members of our region and ask them to consider running for an office in the Regional Executive Council. So far they have received 8 names.

The list of nominees should be announced to the regional fraternity a month in advance of the elections (Convocation). This can be done in the fraternity newsletter or another adequate publication.
Cf. SFO Constitutions: Article 76 & NS 11.

The purpose of announcing the nominees is help the rest of the region to become a little more knowledgeable about the people they will be voting for.

The next several pages contain biographic sketches about the nominees running for an office.

Peter J. Bekkers, OFS – running for Regional Treasurer

Born in Combined Locks, WI 9/25/34 and grew up in the Fox Valley area where I lived all my life. I married my wife, Carol, 10/5/57 and together we reared 8 children, 3 girls and 5 boys. All of them are now married and have blessed us with 18 grandchildren ranging in age from 28 years down to 5 years (4 of whom are adopted). Now, we've added one great grandchild, 3 months old.

I've spent my life in the accounting profession working for several companies taking early retirement in 1990 to devote my efforts to my business as public accountant and tax professional. I owned my own company doing accounting and personal and corporate taxes part time for over 50 years until I sold the business in January 1998. At that time I agreed to work for the buyer for 6 years. I finally retired on May 31, 2003. I am a co-founder in 1979 and charter member of (NATP) the "National Association of Tax Professionals". I also traveled around the country teaching taxes during the early 1980s. We now have over 25,000 members worldwide.

I spend my retirement doing volunteer work wherever and whenever I can. This way I can do as much good as God calls me to do. I feel that's the best way to stay young by staying active. I drive for Theda Clark Hospital Auxiliary in Neenah, WI as a volunteer. I'm also the treasurer for several different "non-profit" organizations at the present time. This helps me to stay active and involved.

At the point of retiring I promised myself that "I would not spend my retirement practicing being dead."

If re-elected, I'll do my best to fulfill this commitment.

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Teri M. Doughty, OFS – running for Regional Councilor

I was professed as a Secular Franciscan in 1984 as part of the St. Joseph Fraternity in Appleton, WI. I later relocated in Oshkosh and joined the Sacred Heart Fraternity where I currently act as Formation Director. I started out being part of a Formation team several years ago, and learned so much and enjoyed it so much that I ran for Formation Director and was elected. I have served on our local Council in this capacity for almost two terms, and continue to learn and grow in my knowledge of the Franciscan way of life and the inner workings of the Fraternity and its relationship to the greater Secular Franciscan family. I believe that we are an integral part of our Church, and that as Pope Benedict XVI said in 2010, we always work in communion with our Pope and our Church. I appreciate that!

Personally, I work part time as a sleep technologist at the Affinity Sleep Disorders Center and am involved in facilitating a sleep apnea support group and doing public speaking to educate the community about the importance of sleep, God's special gift for all of us! I'm active in my parish, St. Jude the Apostle, as a communion distributor, a member of the Caring for God's Creation committee and teaching sixth grade Religious Education. Like many of us, I have served in many different capacities within the parish. I strive to bring my Franciscan values into all aspects of my work and my parish, especially having an interest in social justice and ecology.

I would appreciate the opportunity to serve the Secular Franciscan Order as a Regional Councilor because it will provide me with a way to meet and get to know new people on a more personal level and to improve my knowledge of the functions of the Region.

Kathryne Sutliff, OFS – running for Regional Secretary

I was professed in 1991 and have been active on the local level since that time. I was vice minister for two terms and minister for one term and am currently formation director for our St. John Neumann Fraternity in Rhinelander. I was councilor on the first regional council until I became ill and had to resign. I then accepted an appointment as secretary for the region in 2003 and was elected for two additional terms. In 2013 I was appointed secretary once again to complete the vacated position.

I attended three Quinquennial Gatherings over the years and know that being involved at all levels of the OFS has helped me understand the Order as being more than just a local "group."

I have been on my parish council, been a minister of the Eucharist and a sacristan in my parish and am a volunteer at the cancer center here in Rhinelander and the food pantry. If elected I will do the best I can to be a servant to the REC and the local fraternities.

James L. Carlson, OFS - running for Regional Minister

single/never married

Occupation: Circuit Judge, Walworth County, almost 35 years

St Patrick Catholic Church, Whitewater

- Past member and chair, Parish Council -13 years; Past trustee-10 years
- Involved in parish activity such as lector, human concerns, stewardship, adult formation committees

Archdiocese of Milwaukee-

- Past member and chairman of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Pastoral Council-4 years; past parish delegate to the APC District committee
- co lay director, *Milwaukee Cursillo*

Professed member of St. Pascal Baylon Fraternity, OFS, Burlington, WI (11/11/01)

Past Vice Minister and Minister; Youth/Young Adult and Commissions/JPIC contact person-8 years

La Verna Region

- Current Regional Minister
- All Commissions Coordinator/JPIC contact-6 years
- Regional Councilor-Fox Valley District-3 years
- Vice Minister-History Book/Website contact-3 years

I once presented at chapter about recruiting new members and hold this as something important that I would like to follow up on [vocations].

- As minister I have attended 3 NAFRA meetings and have tried my best to keep the Region and fraternities advised about what NAFRA is doing, how NAFRA can help us [our wonderful representation at the “Q” in Skokie is one example].
- I have been directly involved on behalf of the REC in the formation of 6 members who would like to re-activate St. Peter fraternity, Beaver Dam. I have made several visits to the St. Francis of Assisi emerging fraternity that meets at Cardinal Stritch University and received three of their newly professed members [4 more scheduled for March].
- I have presided at district and chapter meetings the past three years and have been present at numerous fraternal visits and elections. I have joined Ed Boss at several meetings of Portiuncula fraternity that is struggling to survive.
- I just turned 70 and am contemplating retirement within the next couple of years.

Jeff Gumz, OFS – running for Regional Vice-Minister

Jeff grew up in rural North Central Wisconsin and graduated from Colby High School in 1988. He graduated from UW Oshkosh in 1992 with a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology, with a minor in Spanish. He spent 1992-1994 in the cloud forests of Eastern Ecuador working with sheep and guinea pig farmers as a Peace Corps Volunteer. He taught ESL and Spanish in Haysville, Kansas while earning a Master's Degree in Education from Wichita State University from 1995-1999.

He has taught Spanish for NWTC in Green Bay and St. Norbert College in De Pere. He has been a teacher at historic Green Bay East High since 1999, where he began as a bilingual social studies teacher. Currently, he is teaching U.S. History and World Affairs, bilingual social studies and AP Psychology at Green Bay East and Preble High Schools. Jeff is a member of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Champion. There he serves as a Eucharistic Minister, Lector and Lay Leader of Prayer.

Jeff is a member of the St. Ann Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in Green Bay and has served as minister since 2010. His philosophy of leadership is the Servant Leader, which means that you're not dictatorial, you don't put yourself forward, and you are collaborative and seek to exalt the gifts of your brothers and sisters. In his free time, Jeff enjoys reading, taking long walks and visiting his wife's family in México.

Jeff resides in the town of Scott with his lovely wife Vianney and two sons, Jay and Santiago.

Barb Spies, OFS – running for Regional Councilor

My profession in the Secular Franciscan Order took place on November 21, 2010, a month after my return from pilgrimage in Assisi and Rome. This step in my ongoing Christian conversion took place at a wonderful time for me to help continue my pilgrim path following in the footsteps of St. Francis and St. Clare. I have played a role in starting the emerging St. Francis of Assisi fraternity at Cardinal Stritch University. From March of 2008, when members of the Portiuncula fraternity came to campus to introduce the order to interested members of the community, I was happy to seek out such a fraternity experience in my life.

As we became an emerging fraternity, I took on the role of Director of Formation. Typically, I run our Initial Formation meetings, though I have been conducting the Ongoing Formation for the last few months as I unexpectedly took on teaching a course in homiletics at Sacred Heart School of Theology that conflicted without Initial Formation meetings. I am an Associate Professor in Communication Arts at Cardinal Stritch University, teaching such courses as Public Speaking, Family Communication, Mediation, and Social Media, among many others. Through conversation with Fr. Michael Weldon, OFM, the seminary sought me to cover an overload course in Fundamental Preaching Skills this semester. Fr. Michael and I are currently working on a project together on Franciscan Preaching.

I am the wife of an ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) Lutheran pastor. We will have been married for 24 years this summer. We have four children: a son who is 23, and three daughters aged 20, 17, and 13. As one might imagine, faith plays a dominant role in the family of a Lutheran pastor and a Catholic Secular Franciscan. We pray that we have demonstrated the love of God to our children with joy and care. I was not brought up in the church, but God found me and showed me his love through the model of St. Francis. I was baptized as a result of having seen "Brother Sun, Sister Moon" as a teenager. I grew up in California, and attended Mass as a college student at the Franciscan mission in San Luis Obispo. I began teaching at a Franciscan university eleven years ago. St. Francis has been there each step along my path of faith, reminding me of how I can live my response to God's unfailing love for all people. I offer myself as a candidate for Regional Councilor, having prayerfully considered this new possible response to God's call in my life.

Sharon Dale, OFS – running for Regional Councilor

I have been professed for 17 years, and have had the privilege of serving our local fraternity as minister, treasurer, and am now serving as secretary.

One of my special accomplishments as minister was researching our fraternity's history. We lost all important old records, not even knowing when we were officially established. The process took over two years of intense research, which included a letter to Rome. We finally found a document in the Capuchin archives which verified our establishment at Our Lady Queen of Heaven parish back in 1956.

After attending Quinquennial 2012 and getting great ideas there, another member and I proposed that we consider fraternity t-shirts. We designed our own logo, organized a brat fry fund raiser, and now wear our shirts at all major fraternity events—special gatherings, retreats, our annual garage sale, and so on.

With recent new vocations, it has been my privilege this last year to assist our Formation Director by teaching our Candidate's class. I've initiated making monthly prayer favors which have been well-received by our members.

As current secretary of our fraternity, I have "beefed up" our monthly OFS newsletters, engaging several members to contribute articles, pictures, jokes, poems, even recipes which are shared by all. I've attended many District gatherings and the yearly Region meeting in Marathon as well as going on several OFS retreats.

I've met many wonderful people in our Franciscan family, and, if elected, will try, with God's help, to be a faithful representative of the Region Council. As St. Francis said in one of his Letters, "We must be simple, humble, and pure. We ought to be servants who are submissive to others for God's sake."

Elsa Milagros Ruscoe, OFS – running for Regional Councilor

My name is Elsa Ruscoe, I originated in New York. I have lived in New York, Connecticut, Maryland and Wisconsin. I have five children and 15 grandchildren. During my business life, I have run my own delicatessen, manufacturing of cooking herbs and spices, run my own accounting office, worked for a software manufacturer, was a business manager for a parochial school and church and presently work as a secretary for the faith formation office at St. Pius X church in Appleton.

I found St. Francis when I went with my daughter to Steubenville. She was starting her Junior year there. I came home from there filled with the Holy Spirit and anxious to meet St. Francis. Myself, my oldest daughter and her husband went into formation right away and we were professed in 1993. Not one to sit around, I jumped right into the life of my fraternity and became the vice minister the next year. It wasn't long before I wanted to do more so I joined the regional council as the coordinator of the Work Apostolate. Then I went on to be elected as the regional counselor for Southern Pennsylvania, Maryland, and southern Delaware. I worked closely with Deacon Tom Bello, who at the time was our regional minister.

I left Maryland and my Franciscan family in Maryland and came to Wisconsin. Here I have been a member of St. Joseph's fraternity in Appleton, since 2007. I am presently serving as vice minister of the fraternity. I have been a 1st grade catechist and a lector in the church for the last 45 years as well as a Eucharistic minister. My faith and my church are all important to me and I do what I can to help spread the word and the love of Christ.

Bob Crane, OFS – running for Regional Councilor

Born in South Dakota and raised on a Dairy Farm in Northwestern Wisconsin. Went to college at UW Stevens Point in the early 80's, earned degrees in Forestry - Administration and Communications - Public Relations.

Active in the TEC, Teens Encounter Christ program from high school to the present time. Nearly joined the Capuchins during college, where I started my journey to become a Franciscan. Sally and I were married 30 years ago on April 28, 1984. We have 3 children; our youngest is a Forester, graduate of St. Lawrence Seminary, currently our fraternity's treasurer, and considering becoming a Capuchin.

I would have joined the OFS when I was in college if I had known of it then, but instead my involvement with OFS was delayed until the mid-2000's when Nick was entering St. Lawrence Seminary.

Throughout my adult life I have tried to live a Franciscan life, a simple life caring for the people and the world that God has entrusted us to care for. Currently I have been very busy trying to minister to our fraternity, care for my family, and run our forestry consulting business.

I enjoy the opportunities that I have had to interact with the ofs regional council and the other ministers, learning about ways to live as a better Christian, Franciscan, and minister of our fraternity. Hopefully as a regional councilor I can continue to learn and help both my fraternity as well as the people of other fraternities in our region.

Looking forward to seeing all of you at the LaVerna Regional Chapter of Elections in June.

Thanks,
Bob



La Verna Regional Executive Council and Formation Team

Minister, Jim Carlson, OFS (262) 473-3130
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Councilor, Joanne Guzik, OFS (715) 362-4752
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Vice Minister, Jeff Gumz, OFS (920) 866-2005
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Secretary, Kathy Sutliff, OFS (715) 369-3367
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Councilor, Ed Boss, OFS (262) 250-9251
ed-joann@att.net

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taxmannatp@gmail.com

Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap
(608) 222-6238 lbofmcap@aol.com

Councilor, Kathy Sutliff, OFS (715) 369-3367
ksut517@charter.net

Formation Team
In the process of forming.

The La Verna Region of the Secular Franciscan Order in the USA consists of Eastern ¾ of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. The region geographical area is divided into four districts: Southeast, Central, Fox Valley and Upper Michigan. The La Verna Vision is a communication vehicle with the LaVerna Region, and presents a forum for information and insights that relate to the Secular Franciscan Order way of life.

Permission to copy materials printed in LaVerna Vision is given freely except where the copyright is specifically reserved to the author or artist. Please credit LaVerna Vision if you copy any of the articles. 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 Vision newsletter is published three times a year. Deadline for submitting articles are as follows:
spring issue—March 1; summer issue—July 1; winter issue—November 1.

La Verna Vision editors: Ed Boss, OSF, ed-joann@att.net, and Bob Henning, OSF, bmjhsfo@aol.com

PLEASE REMEMBER US IN YOUR WILL

We value our life as Secular Franciscans and wish to have our way of living the Gospels continue through future generations. If you as an individual feel strongly about this, we ask you to remember the La Verna Regional Secular Franciscans in your will. Please advise your attorney to have the request read: "I give and bequeath the sum of \$ _____ unto the La Verna Region of the Secular Franciscan Order for the purpose of furthering the ideals of the Secular Franciscan Order."

Correspondence can be mailed to Peter Bekkers, OFS, La Verna Regional Treasurer, W6855 St. Mary's Dr., Greenville, WI 54942. Telephone number is (920) 757-9027 or email Peter at taxmannatp@gmail.com

YOUR FRANCISCAN WAY OF LIFE AND GENEROSITY WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR YEARS TO COME.

**LaVerna Regional Fraternity OFS
APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
FOR 2013-2014 FRANCISCAN RETREAT FEES**

APPLICANT _____ PH # (____) _____ - _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____ / ____ / _____

FRATERNITY: _____ PROFESSION DATE: ____ / ____ / ____

RETREAT LOCATION _____

RETREAT DATE ____ / ____ / ____ FEE \$ _____

IN ORDER FOR YOU TO QUALIFY FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, WE NEED TO HAVE SOME INFORMATION.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN FAMILY LIVING AT HOME _____

TOTAL MONTHLY HOUSHOLD INCOME \$ _____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

THESE GUIDELINES WILL HELP US TO DETERMINE YOUR QUALIFICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:

FAMILY SIZE	MONTHLY INCOME
1	\$ 1,536.00
2	\$ 2,081.00
3	\$ 2,625.00
4	\$ 3,170.00
5	\$ 3,714.00
6	\$ 4,259.00
7	\$ 4,803.00
8	\$ 5,348.00
9	\$ 5,893.00
10	\$ 6,438.00

RETURN TO: PETER BEKKERS, OFS, W6855 ST. MARYS DR., GREENVILLE, WI 54942
PHONE: (920) 757-9027 E-MAIL: TAXMANNATP@GMAIL.COM

NOTE: IF FOR SOME REASON YOU CANNOT ATTEND THIS RETREAT, PLEASE RETURN THE ASSISTANCE MONEY TO "LAVERNA REGION OFS

LAVERNA REGION
SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER
236 ELIZABETH STREET
WHITEWATER, WI 53190

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KATHY SUTLIFF OFS
1015 THAYER ST
RHINELANDER, WI 54501-2368

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Calendar of Events: Spring/Summer 2014

May 17 - Regional Executive Council meeting at Green Bay, WI., 9 AM to 3 PM

May 30 – June 1 – A Franciscan Retreat that will explore the challenge of Pope Francis and St. Francis as we follow Christ in our time. The retreat will be held at the Marygrove Retreat Center located in Garden, MI. The retreat will be facilitated by Sr. Louise Hembrecht, OSF and will cost \$115 per single person or \$195 per married couple.

June 8-12 – A Franciscan Retreat about the legacy of “presence” expressed in the Canticle of Creation. Held at the Marywood Spirituality Center located about 8 miles North of Woodruff, WI. Begins on Sunday at 5:30 PM through Thursday at 1:00 PM. Sr. Marla will facilitate. Suggested donation is \$299 for a private room in a shared lakeside cabin. Commuters are asked to donate \$199. Please register by 8 May, 2014.

June 27-29 – LaVerna Region Chapter of Elections. Regional Executive Council meeting on 27th at 1:00 PM, St. Anthony Spirituality Center, Marathon, WI.

August 3 – Portiuncula Celebration (Plenary Indulgence service), during Portiuncula chapel prayer readings, 1 p.m. at Burlington, WI. Celebration services are open to all and sponsored by St. Paschal Baylon Fraternity.

August 31 – September 5 – Icon Retreat: “Angels in Our Midst” – Experience “writing” (painting) your own angel icon retreat led by Sr. Maryam Gossling. No experience required. Art Supplies included. Fee: \$490 includes all needs and nights in a private room; or a shared room in lakeside cabin \$350. At Marywood Franciscan Spirituality Center, Arbor Vitae, WI. (715) 356-7830, www.marywood.org

October 24-26 – Regional Executive Council planning meeting at Marywood, WI., if approved by new council