

# LaVerna Vision

Growing Fraternity ❖ WINTER 2012 ❖ MERRY CHRISTMAS



## HOLY INNOCENTS FRATERNITY SAYS “WITNESS TO THE GOOD YET TO COME”

Earlier this year, the members of Holy Innocents fraternity in Manitowoc, WI recognized the deep need for new people. Council realized many of its members are “not getting any younger,” and plans began to attract people into formation. The fraternity launched its membership drive with prayer to encourage fraternal Franciscan charism. Article 45 of our OFS General Constitution encourages fraternity vocations on a more structured sense:

1. The promotion of vocations to the Order is a duty of all the brothers and sisters and is a sign of the vitality of the fraternities themselves.
2. Although nothing can substitute for the witness of each member and of the fraternity, the councils must adopt appropriate means to promote the Secular Franciscan vocation.

A vocation membership drive requires fraternal teamwork and set priorities: to pray, to evangelize, to invite, to experience, and to mentor. Each speaker and behind the scenes organizer believes that their share helps grow fraternity.



Membership team at St. Francis of Assisi church in Manitowoc, WI: l to r: Ed Boss, Gloria Trainor, Kelley Reis, Rodney and Valeria Knier.

During a warm September weekend, Holy Innocents members put to the test these set priorities. They made into three teams to canvas nine Masses in all Catholic area churches.

Just before each Mass began, two assigned speakers walked up to the church pulpit and spoke to hundreds of parishioners about the call to become a secular Franciscan. Each scripted talk gave meaning to gospel life interacting with our professed way.

The Holy Innocents speakers and behind the scene organizers were: Kelley Reis, Rodney and Valeria Knier, Gloria Trainor, Emily Underwood, Irene Green, Joan Pfaff, Mary Jo Rayford, Virginia Randerson, Sharon Bell, and Bill Witczak.

Immediately following Mass, the speakers regrouped in the narthex to greet congregation members. The church entrance held a small table, which displayed an approachable Franciscan poster board and OFS handouts. The colorful chart and reading material offered parish members a chance to look into Franciscan history, fraternity/national contact information, and sign-up sheets. When the invitation drive had begun to wind down, the team only began to start up their next planned event.

That following September week, the Holy Innocents fraternity membership team had a list of five people, three men and two women, who expressed an interest about becoming a secular Franciscan. The team put into motion necessary plans for another but more in depth presentation. The St. Francis of Assisi parish Teen Center held the next gathering location, and team members not only showed Franciscan hospitality but also knowledge to questions coming from each of the invited guests.

The membership drive and formation journey asks for fraternal gifts all the way toward profession date, and that requires experience and mentorship. More important is that Franciscan vocation work develops the desire to witness to the good yet to come.

## SECULAR FRANCISCAN ANNA SCHÄFFER CANONIZED

In the Holy Mass celebrated on the St. Peter's Square in Rome on October 21, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI canonized Anna Schäffer, OFS. Anna was born in Mindelstetten, a village in Lower Bavaria in the diocese of Regensburg, in southern Germany, on February 18, 1882.

Professed on October 4, 1910, she bore



Blessed Anna Schäffer, OFS  
1882 - 1925

the stigmata of the Passion for a time, but she begged God to make these mystical wounds unapparent, which was granted.

The Schäffers were good Christians and lived simply, and the family was instrumental in helping to develop Anna to a healthy, strong girl. She was modest and devote, and as Anna took her first Communion in 1894, she offered herself to the Savior as a victim soul. In June 1898, Anna heard Jesus' voice telling her things, which would be decisive for the rest of her life: she would endure long and painful suffering. Anna was alarmed, but willingly prepared herself to suffer.

Wishing to enter an order of missionary sisters, after finishing school, Anna tried to earn the necessary dowry working in various jobs as a servant. However, God had other plans.

Please see OFS Saint, page 6

# Minister's Message



## NAFRA Chapter – LaVerna Plans for 2013

### Highlights from the Annual NAFRA Chapter in Denver

Minister Tom Bello's keynote address noted that during his first three-year term, the number of fraternities, members, and spiritual

assistants have all decreased. Positives include: compilation of the F.U.N. manual, and the workshops set up across the nation to promote better and uniform formation; the initial JPIC rally as we seek ways to reach out to those in need; the pending appointment of a Youth/Young Adult chairperson lifts up hope that we may better reach out to youth as our Rule provides.

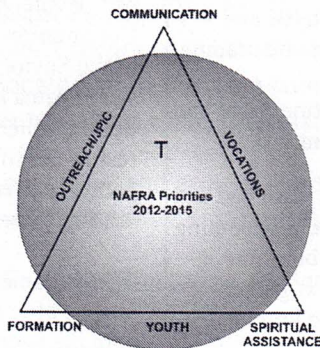
*Francesco's Café* provided helpful information and contacts with The National Formation Commission; the Franciscan Youth/Young Adult Commission; the Joint Commission on Franciscan Unity; the Historian; the Computer Committee; the Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Commission; the Franciscan Action Network; Franciscan Intentional; the Franciscan Mission Service; and the JPIC Award winner, Jan Benton.

The JPIC award presentation again was a highlight as Jan Benton gave a resounding talk on behalf of the disabled that she serves.

Small geographic groups discussed ways that we can reach out to the disabled in our fraternities, parishes, and communities. Touched by Jan Benton's talk NAFRA selected as its theme for next year:

***Be the Bridge: Accept all People as a Gift from God***  
[cf Rule 13]

Building on recommendations made at the Quinquennial gathering, the small groups set priorities for the newly elected National Executive Council: see diagram—three basic priorities that touch others.



We held a Remembrance service of our brothers and sisters who passed into another life this past year. Minister Bello lifted up Wanda S. Antonelli and Geraldine Pfeiffer [OFS fraternities and years of service unknown]. Bequests from their estates to our national fraternity were used to fund scholarships to the "Q."

NAFRA council election results: Tom Bello, National Minister, Elaine Hedtke, Vice Minister, Jan Parker, Secretary, Cyl Maljan, Treasurer, Mary Bittner, Mary Frances Charsky and Arturo Villarreal, Councilors Mary Stronach, International Councilor and Arturo Villarreal, alternate International Councilor.

Our LaVerna Regional Council met October 26-28, and after reviewing highlights of the NAFRA Chapter, we discussed various topics-highlights: a committee to prepare a suggested agenda for our 2013 LaVerna Region district gatherings. The committee agenda will include new fraternity council member training; small group gatherings by council office; and for those not holding a council office, there will be a workshop on "*Works of Mercy- Bethesda Partnership.*"

And perhaps other matters: a Spiritual Assistant Development Committee to form a school for training OFS spiritual assistants. Two Secular Franciscans have agreed to take the 19-month spiritual training course in the prospect becoming our lay LaVerna Regional spiritual assistants. We agreed to assist fraternities in recruiting new members and in forming new fraternities.

On Saturday evening October 27, the regional council, cook, and Marywood Center staff held a celebration for Fr. Bach's birthday. The group presented him an icon (promised at our last 2011 Chapter) celebrating his 12 plus years of serving as our Regional Spiritual Assistant. We then watched on a DVD player an Oratorio titled *Chiesa Nuova* (Italian for "new church") written by Fr. Robert Hutmacher, OFM Cap. The oratorio composition tells the story of Francis and Clare in the months after Francis' experience of the Stigmata in 1224. Fr. Hutmacher also performed at the July "Q" in Skokie. Sunday morning council celebrated Mass together with feelings that the Holy Spirit was again with us at Marywood. We left hopeful for the New Year.

*Peace.*

*Jim Carlson, Regional Minister*

# Reflections

Regional Spiritual Assistant - Lester Bach OFM Cap  
La Verna OFS Region



*But we always did it this way!*

This is a cliché that is not something that a Franciscan should use. It brings with it the idea that nothing or no one can find a fresh way to handle issues. It could mean that we can ignore Vatican II or remain stuck in one place. We might have a whole set of ideas that have not been evaluated, good as they may have been at one point in history.



Good people can hold these ideas. But closing the door on fresh ideas is not for Franciscans. We consistently discover fresh ways to live a Franciscan life. It reflects Jesus' invitation in the Gospel: "You have heard that they were told ... but I tell you .... (Matthew 5:31-48) Or the OFS Constitutions which says of ongoing formation:

*Ongoing formation - accompanied by means of courses, gatherings, and the sharing of experiences - aims to assist the brothers and sisters:*

\* Rule 4 in listening to and meditating on the Word of God, "going from the Gospel to life and from life to the Gospel."

\* in reflecting on events in the Church and in society in the light of faith, and with the help of the documents of the teaching Church (e.g. Vatican II), consequently taking consistent positions.

\* in discerning and deepening the Franciscan vocation by studying the writings of St. Francis, St. Clare and Franciscan authors. (Article 44.3 - OFS General Constitutions)

## **Spiritual Assistance Information**

During this time of transition in La Verna Region a number of fraternities are getting new spiritual assistants. There are important issues for all local and regional councils to follow:

1. **NO council** has the authority to appoint a spiritual assistant to their fraternity. They should be consulted, but only the Provincial or Provincial Spiritual assistant of the 1st Order/TOR province, to which a fraternity is bonded, has the authority to appoint a local spiritual assistant.

On the regional level, any of the Provincials or PSA's who have fraternities in the Region have the authority to appoint a Regional Spiritual assistant after consulting the regional council. There are no exceptions.

2. The appropriate fraternity should be CONSULTED about the appointee or the council can initiate recommendations to the Provincial or PSA. The Provincial or PSA is not obligated to follow this advice. Ordinarily, however, he would certainly evaluate the results of a consultation since the particular council will have to work with whoever is appointed.

3. Anyone, friar or otherwise who is appointed, is expected to take the 19-month-long training course: *Franciscan Family Connections*. The book material and other costs are borne by the fraternity requesting the SA or by the candidate. Usually the Provincial or PSA of the province to which a fraternity is bonded would *mentor* the training course. The Provincial or PSA can delegate another competent person for the role of *mentor*.

4. Taking the course does not automatically mean the individual will be appointed as a SA. The course helps to discern whether the individual is called to serve as a SA. Not everyone who applies will be certified as a SA after completing the course. In addition to the "head" learning, the individual must exhibit good people skills and be a "heart" person as well. A time for internship with a fraternity should be part of the course during its last months. During this final period an experienced SA will mentor the individual and contribute to the discernment process.

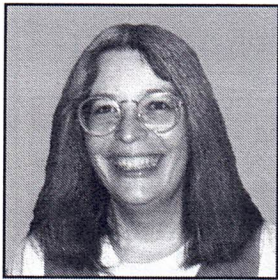


5. A prayerful spirit should infiltrate the whole process.

*The spiritual and pastoral care of the OFS, entrusted by the Church to the Franciscan First Order and the TOR, is the duty, above all, of their general and provincial ministers. The **Altius moderamen**, of which Canon 303 speaks, belongs to them. The purpose of the **Altius moderamen** is to guarantee the fidelity of the OFS to the Franciscan charism, communion with the Church, and union with the Franciscan family, values which represent a vital commitment for the Secular Franciscans.*

General Constitutions of the OFS - Article 85.2

**PS:** To be canonically established, an emerging group must be bonded to a province of the 1st Order/TOR & a spiritual assistant appointed to the emerging group. This is done no later than the first of the last three years of the process of development. A fraternal and pastoral visitation is conducted the Regional Executive Council and the 1st Order/TOR Province during the last few months of the emerging group. They approve the canonical establishment if the visitations offer a positive report on the readiness of the emerging group to function as a full-fledged fraternity.

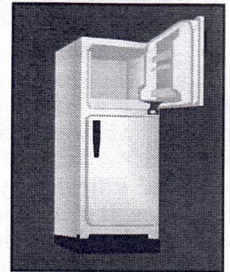


## OUR ENVIRONMENT

### Simple Things That Save Money and Electricity

A lot of times the "green" movement focuses on activities that take extra effort, or add costs to our pocketbooks. But there are little things that help save electricity that are cost-savers as well. Here's a few that are easy to do.

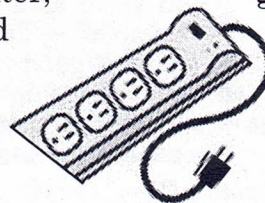
1. Keep your freezer full (this trick works for either a free-standing freezer or a freezer that's part of your refrigerator). You don't have to do that by keeping it full of frozen food. Fill used washed plastic soda bottles or plastic milk jugs two-thirds full of water, cap them and keep them in the freezer, filling up your freezer's empty spaces with them. Your appliance will need to run significantly less, because the ice inside the bottles works to help keep temperatures low inside the freezer. This can save an average household \$75 to \$100 a year in electricity costs.



2. If you're in the market for a new computer, consider buying an "energy star" rated laptop instead of a desktop. Laptops use about 1/3 the energy of desktop computers. Most laptops have monitor ports on them, so you can connect a low-energy large screen LED monitor if you need a bigger screen to view. You can also use a full-sized USB or wireless keyboard, and an external mouse, with most laptops if the laptop's keyboard feels cramped to use. Make sure to turn off (not just put into standby) the laptop and monitor when you aren't using them.

3. If you have cellphone chargers, or chargers for other devices, unplug the chargers when you aren't actually using them to charge a device. Most chargers draw power whether or not you are charging a device. You save energy, and in the average household save several dollars a month as well on energy bills by doing this.

4. Consider buying a surge protection "power bar" with an on/off already have one) to plug in your TV, stereo, computer, printer, all similar electronics. Most modern electronics are designed constantly, keeping themselves in a 'standby mode' "off" even when you have turned them "off" for the day. At day, or when you are away, you can turn them off as switch off the power bar to "really" stop them from drawing when it's not needed. Households can save a few dollars a month dollars in electric bills a year by doing this, depending on how many in the home.



switch (if you don't game console and to draw power instead of the end of the usual, and then power constantly to hundreds of electronic devices are

5. Do you have kitchen appliances plugged in that you rarely use? Many of those draw power all the time as well. Unplug them except when you are ready to use them.



**HAPPY SAVINGS!**

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## 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, LaVerna Regional Treasurer, W6855 St. Mary's Dr., Greenville, WI 54942. Telephone number is (920) 757-9027 or email Peter at [taxmannatp@gmail.com](mailto:taxmannatp@gmail.com)

**Your Franciscan Way of Life and generosity will be remembered for years to come**



### Book Report

#### **THE FUN MANUAL ... *How is it working?***

In May 2011, the National Formation Workshop titled, "Formatting the Formators" began at Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, IL. The workshop introduced the FUN

Manual to national and regional leadership, spiritual assistants, and formation directors from all regions in the country. The intention of the FUN Manual is to develop a more uniform formation process across the USA, to define essential elements of this formation, and to provide our formation team with easy to read and use materials.

By the end of the four-day workshop, the hopeful and enthusiastic attendees departed the workshop to spread the good news of their FUN manuals with their brothers and sisters on the fraternity level. In his 2012 Annual Report, Bob Fitzsimmons, OFS Chair to the national formation commission, emphasized that all 30 regions have conducted one or more formation workshop based upon the "For Up to Now" FUN Manual.

#### **FUN ON THE ROAD**

The manual has had a year or longer to work its way into the local fraternity. So, how is it working? Some reports from around the country are beginning to surface from formation directors, spiritual assistants, and students. Formation director Faye Martin, OFS from the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis region representing the southeastern states writes, *"The FUN Manual is laid out well, easily understood, and topics have a spiritual layering. Since the FUN manual is new to everyone, we recommend that topics be used in ongoing formation. Before fraternal sharing begins, set aside time to gaze, consider, and contemplate, as you desire to imitate Him, in the manner of St. Francis."* Formation directors are becoming familiar to use the manual and notice its great importance. In addition, there are wide range and updated sources of teaching materials on CD and internet sites: ([www.nafraformation.org/FUN%20CD.htm](http://www.nafraformation.org/FUN%20CD.htm)).

The LaVerna Region FUN Manual kick off was held in October 2011 at St. Peter's Church in Stevens Point, and the workshop listed 64 attendees from and all 18 area fraternities. Fitzsimmons stated in his 2012 annual report that LaVerna Region evaluated the FUN workshop as "materials well received." Other OFS regions in the country, like the Father Solanus Casey region—New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island—planned three FUN workshops. St. Kateri Teakwitha region—New York and northwestern Pennsylvania—outlined three additional FUN manual workshops, and Lady Poverty region—sections of West Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania—also planned three additional workshops, plus made time to meet with people who could not attend the initial workshop kick off.

On Profession, Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR, National Spiritual Assistant, noted that formation does not end with profession. In fraternities that are not doing well, Fr. Kevin said ongoing formation could consist of all professed going through the formation process, using the FUN manuals.

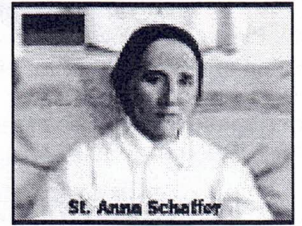
One LaVerna Region formation instructor recently stated, "... the FUN manual and its resource materials, along with current internet updates, bring us into the 21 Century. There is no need to remain a devotional or pious fraternity anymore. Professed members are learning to use these manuals and references in order to teach students not only to understand Franciscan spirituality but our fraternal way of life."



# International OFS

FROM PAGE 1 - OFS SAINT

On February 4, 1901, at a forester's lodge in Stammham, Germany, her time of suffering began. That day, the laundry boiler stovepipe had become detached from the wall, but in trying to fix it, Anna unfortunately slipped into a vat of boiling lye, scalding both legs to above the knees. She accepted her infirmity as a way of sanctification.



Despite intensive treatment in the hospital, the doctors were unable to heal her injuries. After she was released from hospital as an invalid in May 1902, she went back to her mother's home, but her condition continued to worsen, confining her completely to bed. To her painful infirmity was added extreme poverty. After futile attempts at rebellion, Anna learned to recognize God's will in this harsh school of suffering and to accept it with ever-greater joy. In weakness and poverty, she heard the loving call of the Crucified One to become like him. This was her mission in life and its fulfillment. She generously decided to offer her life and sufferings to God. In the autumn of 1910, some extraordinary things happened. In a vision, Anna saw Saint Francis announcing her to a visit of the Lord. On October 4 during the Morning Prayers of the Breviary, she saw the Redeemer who said He was ready to accept her sacrifice of reparation. When the priest came bringing the Communion, she saw five flames from the Host that pierced her hands, feet and chest. From that time, she bore the wounds of Christ, the stigmata. Later, in order to suffer in secret and to avoid any sensationalism, she asked the Lord to remove the visible stigmata.

On April 25, 1923, Anna had another special day: she lived the events of Good Friday in her body and soul. Thereafter, her condition considerably worsened. Her legs became completely paralyzed; this was followed by painful cramps due to a stiffening of the spinal cord and, finally, by cancer. She was able to combine an active apostolate with one of prayer, sacrifice and suffering. She wrote countless letters to the needy and to those who sought her advice in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and America; she gladly did embroidery for churches and chapels. In a letter of January 1925, she wrote: "The most important thing for me is to pray and suffer for the holy Church and her Pastors."

In the morning of October 5, 1925, she received for the last time the Communion, the source of power of her 25 years long suffering time. As she was making the Sign of the Cross and saying, "Jesus, I live in you," she died.

From 1910 to 1925, Anna Schäffer wrote her thoughts in twelve notebooks. One hundred eighty-three of her letters or notes are also intact. Her language is quite simple, yet the originality and personal character of her writings strike the reader, who discovers in them a soul firmly established in faith in Jesus Christ dead and resurrected, and in the living Communion with all God's people. This unflinching confidence in God, this certainty in His infinite love manifesting itself to her through her sufferings, shone on those who approached her to entrust to her their intentions or to ask her for encouragement or advice.

## National OFS

### OFS Advocate Receives 'Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Award'



JPIC Award recipient  
Janice Benton, OFS

DENVER -- "Don't think of disabilities as exceptional... We say

it's a normal part of life."

That's how Janice L. Benton, OFS, described her advocacy work Oct. 18 before the national gathering of the U.S. Secular Franciscan Order in Denver, Colorado -- where she was honored with the Franciscan Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Award.

"You should make assumptions that people with disabilities want to be part of our community."

A Secular Franciscan herself, Benton heads the National Catholic Partnership on Disability, encouraged the 80 chapter attendees, representing over 13,000 Secular

Franciscans across the U.S. and Guam, to start building relationships, one on one. The Franciscan vocation, she noted, is about affirming the dignity of life, and that covers a wide range of people -- those with such disorders as Down syndrome, refugees who come across the border, victims of human trafficking, elderly persons deteriorating physically and mentally, homeless children everywhere.

Recognizing people with disabilities is not just an issue of charity, Benton said. "You're not doing anyone any favor if you sentimentalize people with disabilities and their care givers...It's an issue of justice."

PLEASE SEE JPIC AWARD, PAGE 7

Justice, first of all, means recognizing people having value, she said, and fighting against such things as abuse in institutions and providing what people need to be able to participate meaningfully in life.

A big concern for her, she said, is that "our society, our culture is teaching that some people are disposable." These folks are "despised" because they're costly or requiring too much time. This involves everything from aborting less-than-perfect babies to organ donation pressure to so-called compassionate death.

That's where Franciscans come in, she said, because they understand, as Franciscan Theologian Sr. Ilia Delio put it at the Secular Franciscan Quinquennial Congress in July, that all of humanity is imprinted with the dignity of God and that nothing in creation is accidental.

Benton has been an advocate for 30 years. He knowledgeable in sign language, helped her serve as vocation director for a fraternity of deaf Secular Franciscans. Earlier this year she received the Harry A. Fagan Award from the National Association of Catholic Diocesan Social Justice Directors.

National Minister Deacon Tom Bello, OFS, presented the JPIC Award, a glass statue of a pair of hands enveloping the globe, along with a \$2,000 prize, noting: "You are a hero for me. You are my 'Secular Franciscan' Secular Franciscan."

Formerly known as the Peace Award, it was renamed to capture the significant inter-related efforts in the areas of justice, peace and the integrity of creation, noted JPIC Chairman Kent Ferris, OFS. "Our Franciscan Rule reminds us of our responsibility to 'individually and collectively be in the forefront of

promoting justice by the testimony of our lives.' The JPIC Award allows us to recognize those who have modeled such courageous efforts."

The annual award was revived in 2007 after a lapse of several years. The 2008 award honored Marie Dennis, a Secular Franciscan who directs the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and who is immersed in advocating on behalf of people marginalized by society, poverty, abuse, war, violence, and human trafficking. The 2009 award went to Don Ryder, a La Verna Region Secular Franciscan from Wausau who helped save the Maasai people in Kenya from disease and drought by drilling water wells.

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**Editor's note:** Story material for the 2012 JPIC Award was provided to the *LaVerna Vision* by permission of Bob Stronach, OFS.

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## Regional OFS

### LaVerna Regional Obituary



Emily B. Underberg, OFS  
1916 - 2012

Emily B. Underberg, age 96, of Manitowoc, WI entered eternal life on Monday, September 25, 2012 at Holy Family Memorial Medical Center, Manitowoc. Emily professed into the Secular Franciscan Order in October 1968, and she dedicated many years of her life to service with Holy Innocents fraternity. When she was assistant formation director, Emily structured her lesson plans on teaching all 26 Rules of the OFS. Emily motivated people to help others. She carried a persona of energy and positive thinking as part of her Franciscan charism. She was coordinator of religious education programs, Eucharistic minister, and volunteered at Holy Family Hospital.

Born March 1, 1916 in Valders, WI, she attended St. Boniface School, continued her education at the Manitowoc Vocational School to obtain her high school credits, and finished her education at the Green Bay Academy of Religion. She married Donald Underberg at the Holy Innocents Catholic Church rectory. He preceded her in death on April 12, 2000.

Emily was an avid aerial performer for the Billy Schultz Circus, performing on the revolving trapeze-suspended in the air while doing somersaults without any net or restraints. She was known as the "queen of the revolving trapeze" and in 1938, she broke the world's record which was recorded by NBC news by turning 146 backward summersaults spinning head over heels on the high bar, hanging on only by her arms. Her act was known as the "muscle grind" for the strength and endurance it took to accomplish it.

Emily was a Girl Scout leader, received a 45-year pin for volunteer duty, and awarded as an honorary lifetime member. She was a parishioner to St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Manitowoc, and in past years, had served as President of the St. Theresa Society.

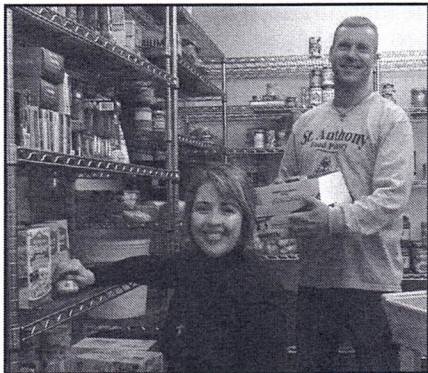
## Secular Franciscans Support Food Pantry and the Hungry

Homemade chili and chicken noodle soup feed the hungry at St. Anthony parish food pantry in Milwaukee, but warm and fresh meals are not the only staple ingredients.

Kurt Keidl, OFS, summed up his apostolate work with a quote: "The guiding principle of the pantry comes from Matthew 25:35, 40: *'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me,'*"

Kurt is the coordinator of the St. Anthony parish food pantry on 1711 South 9th Street in Milwaukee. He said, "the apostolate of providing food to the hungry is Franciscan at its very core."

Keidl said he offered the opportunity to St. Josaphat fraternity to help serve the needy and they jumped on it. On November 17, St. Josaphat fraternity minister Steve Pontus with his wife Pat, and Judie Longrie, help prepare and serve chili and a warm lunch. "I was thrilled to give back to the needy from the wonderful produce I received from our land," Judie Longrie, OFS said, "and along with my efforts to make homemade soup, I added my love and good will. I think that I got more out of being with the people we served, than they got from me."



Secular Franciscans Kurt Keidl and Michelle Schoenecker prepare meals at the St. Anthony parish food pantry.

"Our objective, as Secular Franciscans and Christians, is to attain a condition of perfect charity in our secular state and, in our day-to-day lives, to try and see Jesus in our fellow "pilgrims" on the journey," Steve Pontus said.

"Serving in a food pantry ministry has always left me with a feeling that I have received more from the clients than I have given." Pontus added that soup kitchen work deepens Franciscan spirituality, affirms the orders of Franciscan charism and the JPIC mission, and gives the opportunity to perform a corporal work of mercy. "...serving interacts with those who are served as brothers and sisters in Christ, helping to reaffirm the worth and dignity of the less fortunate as human beings," Pontus said.

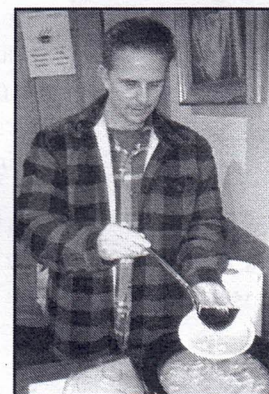


Steve and Pat Pontus, and Judie Longrie,

An active member of St. Josaphat fraternity in Milwaukee, Kurt Keidl said that on the first and third Saturdays of the month, members from his Franciscan community arrive at

the pantry to prepare homemade chili and chicken noodle soup. One day the volunteers severed 23 needy families who came for meals, he said.

This year Kurt began something new at the pantry. During this *Year of Faith*, he said the staff is asking clients to begin giving back in some way. "They are receiving food through the gracious donation of strangers, so we are asking them now to give back in a way that anyone can. We ask our clients to pray for those who are donating the food," he said. "Our clients may not have money to give in return for the food, but certainly, anyone can pray," added. "When our donors drop off food, they are asked to jot down a prayer petition, and I type them up and place them into a prayer basket at the food pantry. When a client receives food from us, they are asked to select a petition to pray for that person and their special need. That way, there is some spiritual connection and exchange between our clients and donors as well as the physical food. So this year, both are giving and both are receiving," Keidl said.



Rob Schoenecker, OFS parish food pantry volunteer, serves up hot chicken noodle soup for the body and soul.



## La Verna Regional Executive Council and Formation Team

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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.

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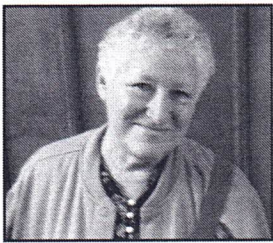
The La Verna Vision newsletter is published three times a year. Deadline for submitting articles are as follows: spring issue—March 1; summer issue—July 1; winter issue—November 1.

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

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*Merry Christmas and a  
Peaceful New Year*



## TOGETHER WITH JOY

Ellen Jennings, OFS

Joy seen on the faces around  
Gathered together to mutually grow  
United by the Spirit to surround  
With anointing from heaven to us below.

Ellen Jennings is a member  
of Portiuncula Fraternity,  
Franklin, WI

We wait in silence hoping we will  
Experience within all healing and peace,  
And Christ's strength to journey up the hill  
All hurt and anger to release.

In our need to be whole, we may feel  
All that's needed is help from above.  
The Lord sends His Wisdom to reveal  
Joy in healing felt through each other's love.

### WORKING WITH THE SCRIPTURES – (Mark 13:24-32)

VINAL VAN BENTHEM, OFS

"God, take care of me; St. Francis, take care of the deer." That prayer may not seem necessary to folks living in the big city but here in Wisconsin I say it every time I get into my car, especially during hunting season when deer often dart out in front of your car without warning. Why did I ever start praying such an unusual prayer? Because I realize that there are things that are basically out of my control unless God is taking care of me and I'm looking for reassurance.

Jesus' disciples were looking for reassurance, too. Jesus had been telling them to prepare for the difficult days to come but they didn't understand. They thought they could wait until the skies darkened and the earth shook and then begin to get ready... "God take care of me..."

Unfortunately, things haven't changed much. The economy remains as unpredictable as a deer in the woods. Every morning individuals go to work not knowing if they'll still have a job at the end of the day, and the possibility of needing to use retirement funds to live on can feel more and more like the end of the world. What if God is

not taking care of us? What if the job market doesn't rally? What if a deer runs out in front of our car? What if we knew that the world would end tomorrow? Would we do anything differently?

"Learn a lesson from the fig tree...when you see these things happening, know that he is near..." What a relief! We don't have to start worrying until the ground starts shaking, right? But Jesus says that no one knows when the hour will arrive; and when your job is on the line it can feel like the ground is already shaking.

Couldn't God at least give us a little notice so that we can prepare? "I promise to give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay." "I promise to look out for the good of my employees." "I promise - I'll do it tomorrow." "God take care of me; St. Francis, take care of the deer."

**Editor's note:** Vinal Van Benthem is the published author of *On the Way to Work*. She works as a pastoral associate, liturgist, and spiritual director. She is also a member of St. Joseph fraternity and their spiritual assistant in Appleton, WI.

**LaVerna Regional Fraternity OFS  
APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE  
FOR 2013 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	\$ 1,490.00
2	\$ 2,004.00
3	\$ 2,518.00
4	\$ 3,032.00
5	\$ 3,547.00
6	\$ 4,061.00
7	\$ 4,575.00
8	\$ 5,089.00
9	\$ 5,604.00
10	\$ 6,119.00

**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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### Calendar of Events: Winter 2012/Spring 2013

**December 31 – January 1** A New Year's Eve Retreat, at the Schoenstatt Retreat Center, Waukesha, WI. "Have You Got the Time?" Presented by Sr. Ann Kelley, OSF and Jerry Schroeder, OFM Cap. Contact Info: Phone 414-374-8841 ext. 35; [sfim@thecapuchins.org](mailto:sfim@thecapuchins.org). Date & Time: Dec. 31, 2012 at 5:00 p.m. (arrival) – Jan. 1, 2013 at 1:00 p.m. (departure).

**February 2** – LaVerna Regional Executive Council meeting/Green Bay. 9 a.m.- 3 p.m.

**February 2** – Interfaith Airport Meditation Room of Milwaukee benefit concert. Come and enjoy "Eternity," a gospel quartet with the upbeat style of the Oak Ridge Boys, Statler Brothers and Gaither Vocal Band. Location: Poplar Creek Church, New Berlin, WI. Music begins at 6:30 p.m. Sponsored by Interfaith Airport Meditation Room of Milwaukee Board members, Suzanne McKinney, OFS and Helen Krueger, OFS. Info website: [www.mkeairportmeditationroom.org](http://www.mkeairportmeditationroom.org)

**February 26 – March 5, 2013, Lenten Pilgrimage to La Sagrada Familia.** The Sagrada Familia (Holy Family) is the Archdiocese of Milwaukee's Sister Parish in the Dominican Republic. The parish of Sagrada Familia is located in the province of Azua in the southwest corner of the Dominican Republic. Sabana Yegua is the largest town in the region; this is where the parish center is located, with the main church and rectory as well as sewing and cosmetology centers; computer lab; and a health center with a clinic, pharmacy, and laboratory.

Trip fee of around \$1,800.00 covers air and ground transportation, programs, guides, translation service, communal reflection retreat, and meals. contact name: Elizabeth Howayceck, phone:414-758-2283, [howaycecke@archmil.org](mailto:howaycecke@archmil.org)

**March 9** – Southeast District Gathering hosted by St Clare fraternity. At Blessed Sacrament, Church 3100 S. 41 Street, Milwaukee. 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

**March 23** – (Tentative) Fox Valley/Upper Peninsula District Gathering hosted by St Ann/Green Bay. 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

**April 6** – (Tentative) Central District Gathering hosted by OLQH/Wisconsin Rapids. 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.