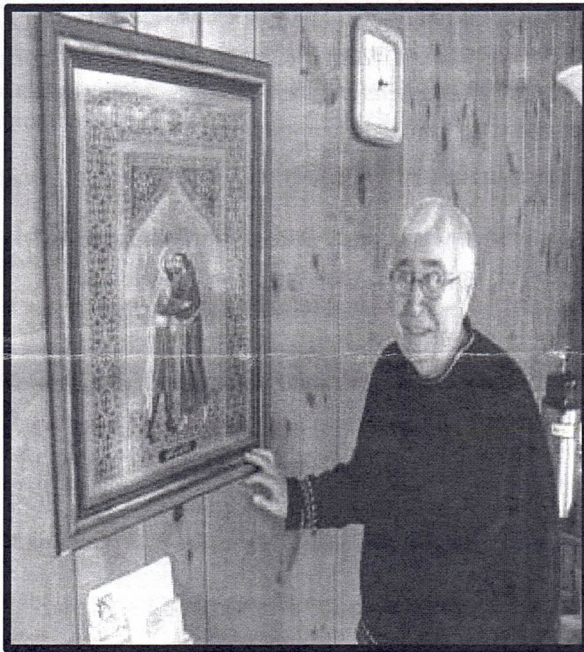




Become the Bridge to Fraternal Living

The 2014 LaVerna Regional district gathering offers spiritual connection for OFS growth

At each of the 2014 LaVerna Regional district gatherings, guest speaker Sr. Anita Beskar, FSPA, will begin the morning



Sr. Anita Beskar, FSPA

gathering with her opening prayer and then lead into her discussion titled *Listening*. “I would like for the district gathering attendees to go home and back to their fraternity knowing how to interact with each other,” Sr. Anita said.

During her October 2013 initial interview with the REC at the

Marywood Franciscan Spirituality Center, Sr. Anita told the council that learning how to listen to our members develops a fundamental impression in building fraternal relationships.

Her district gathering presentation is not meant to be a lecture on OFS structure, but rather an outline which explains how to provide support and accountability for OFS fraternity life. Sr. Anita will also discuss the importance to strengthening Franciscan life by forming “geo-groups” which may be established in Wisconsin cities, like Milwaukee. The afternoon session will offer opportunities for attendees to participate in small groups for forum sharing and listening.

How well do you listen to your members at fraternity gatherings? At the end of her district gathering talks, Sr. Anita said she will ask the audience, “*What did you hear?*” She suggest that meeting attendees continue to join in the afternoon breakout sessions and ask the similar reply ... “*What did you hear?*” from the morning main agenda talks and from breakout group speakers.

Sister Anita Beskar joins the Marywood Spirituality Center located in Woodruff, Wisconsin after nearly 60 years of active ministry in her Franciscan community. She brings a broad experience, including developing a Global Education program at Viterbo University, and companioning women in their early years of incorporation into the life of a Franciscan Sister.

Founded and sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, (FSPA), Viterbo is a Catholic, Franciscan university located in La Crosse. In 1998 Sr. Anita was the recipient of Viterbo’s Leadership Award.

Minister's Message



Advent Message - In the December 5, 2013 issue of the *Catholic Herald* newspaper, Archbishop Jerome ListECKI highlighted that some cultural diversions lead us from the true meaning of Christmas. To counter those diversions, the archbishop discussed four ways to prepare for Christmas: Pray, receive the sacrament of reconciliation, perform works of mercy and each day during the Advent season, reflect on words in sacred scripture.

Greccio - At the November 23 Inquiry formation meeting held at Beaver Dam, one of our agenda items was the Franciscan tradition of storytelling. Part of the formation class assignment was to read chapter six from Fr. Lester Bach's textbook, *The Franciscan Journey*. In the chapter, Fr. Bach writes about the celebration of the Christmas crib. The reading tells about accenting the poverty of the Savior on the night of Christ's birth. Each of us told one such story and we discussed its spiritual significance.

The same chapter story goes on to say that St. Francis asked a friend to provide a place (a cave) near Greccio with a manager with hay, an ox, and an ass. The cave was to be like a new Bethlehem with a host of its local citizens present. Francis was seen by a virtuous man to go to the manager and pick up the figure of a child from the hay that came awake or to life in his arms. As the story says: *It is believed and not without reason that the Lord Jesus aptly revealed his infancy in this vision to the one who reflected on it. He who was asleep or dead in the hearts of many, owing to forgetfulness, was awakened and recalled to memory by the teaching and example of St. Francis. The solemnities were completed with great exultation and everyone happily returned to their homes.* "The Life of St. Francis" by Julian of Speye, Francis of Assisi – The Saint – Vol. I - pages 405-407.

Are the people today ripe for a new awakening? What can we do? I presented a short version of this Greccio Christmas story to the children's religious education directors at my local parish. The directors were so impressed that they used it as a basis for a well received children's play, December 21, 2001. It was one way to reach out to youth as recommended by Rule 24.

Newsletters—Periodically I receive newsletters from 12 of the fraternities. I find them interesting to read and some are quite innovative in making the newsletter come to life—keep up the good work.

Annual Reports—Fraternities have received this year's modified Annual Report form request. I hope the fraternity councils will consider it a high priority to return them completed as requested by February 28. Some members may be sensitive to the demographics requested which you must collect and summarize. Do all you can to collect them from all professed members in a way that will keep the identity of the person filling it out anonymous.

District Meetings- You have all received advanced notice of the upcoming District meetings. The REC has worked on an agenda that will follow this year's theme, Be the Bridge, and help all to grow in servant leadership.

2014 Chapter- the LaVerna Region will hold its Chapter of Elections, June 27-29 at the St. Anthony Spirituality Center in Marathon. Hopefully fraternities will make discernment time for these elections as a part of their formation (also, please remember to reread Jean Platz's recommendation flyer that was handed out at each 2013 district meeting.)

I have contacted by mail persons who the REC thought would be members who have gifts of a Regional Formation Director, or be on the Formation Team. This position is critical in light of the fact that the REC has undertaken sponsorship of a new and a re-activating fraternity.

Vocations-I hope all fraternities are promoting group and individual prayer for vocations. From my vantage points it appears a number of new prospects have surfaced. Keep the Prayers coming!

Peace and Good,

Jim Carlson, Regional Minister

Reflections



Regional Spiritual Assistant - Lester Bach OFM Cap
La Verna Region



Spiritual Assistants

We were blessed with a good turnout at Monte Alverno on September 14, 2013 for our initial meeting for SAs and other interested Seculars.

We want to follow-up on this meeting with a special SA trac at our district meetings in the spring of 2014. We hope that you will register for a district meeting in your district and attend both a part of the general meeting and a special program for SAs. Read the *LaVerna Vision* for more information.

The dates and places for the district meetings are as follows:

* **March 8, 2014 - Southeast district**
Basilica of St. Josaphat - 2333 S. 6th St
Milwaukee, WI 53215:

* **April 5, 2014 - Central District**
St Peter's Church - 4th Ave & Second St
Stevens Point, WI (800 4th Ave)

* **May 3, 2014 - Fox Valley District**
Most Blessed Sacrament Parish - 449
High St - Oshkosh, WI (Lower level)

Tentative schedule:

Morning:

9:00 to 10:45 AM - Sr Anita FSPA - *All attend*
11:00 - 12:00 AM - Jeff Gumz OFS - *Being a
bridge to youth;*

Afternoon

12:00 - 1:00 PM - Lunch
1:00 - 2:30 PM - **Separate session for SAs*
**Separate session for other attendees.*
2:30 PM - Evaluation and closing prayer

We strongly urge SAs and those taking the training course to attend. Other Seculars are welcome as well.



We have a responsibility to one another to develop good SAs for all our fraternities. Your prayers and participation will be most welcome & helpful.

Sharing and Ongoing formation

I visit fraternities and notice a serious effort to create good *ongoing formation*. Whether it means using a good book, articles, speakers or dialogue on Franciscan topics, the practice is growing among the fraternities.

In addition we need to share personal stories, putting our experiences in living the Rule into our conversations. As we trust one another with our stories, our relationship of love also grows. We help one another live the OFS Rule as we share stories of our experiences of conversion in daily life. We can share our Franciscan experience of compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation, dealing with anger, showing love, etc. As we reveal our inner spirit we learn to imitate what we hear. Here are some wise words from the cover of a book titled: *Turning to one another - simple conversations to restore hope to the future*, by Margaret Wheatley. She writes:

I believe we can change the world if we start listening to one another again. Simple, honest, human conversation. Not mediation, negotiation, problem solving, debate or public meetings. Simple, truthful conversations where we each have a chance to speak, each feels heard, and we each listen well. This is how great changes begin, when people begin talking to each other about their experiences, hopes, and fears. (Cover blurb)

Other words of guidance from the book (Page 29)

Here are some principles I've learned to emphasize before we begin a formal conversation process:

- .. we acknowledge one another as equals;*
- .. we try to stay curious about each other;*
- .. we recognize that we need each other's help to become better listeners;*
- .. we slow down so we have time to think and reflect;*
- .. we remember that conversation is the natural way humans think together;*
- .. we expect it to be messy at times.*

These words are helpful in ongoing formation programs. Don't abandon speakers nor reflections from Franciscan books. *But don't abandon personal sharing.* Ongoing formation needs both kinds of sharing to help us live an active & effective Franciscan life.

... 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



EPIGENETICS

by Judy Stouffer, OFS

A developing twist in the science of genetics has overturned the applecart when it comes to understanding how genes work. It's being explored in a new area of research called "epigenetics." In a nutshell, it turns out that exposure to environmental factors -- such as chemical toxins -- can "switch on" or "switch off" genes in all living organisms.

What does this mean for us?

Imagine that you are standing in front of a huge bank of switches that can be turned "on" or "off" that control a set of lights for a stage. The switches are designed to work so that when certain sets of lights are turned on together the stage is lit so the actors are visible to an audience, without any lights shining so they blind the audience or the performers. The light switches also, for example, don't allow lights that are too close to each other to get turned on at the same time, to avoid overheating and fires.

But what if someone comes in and overrides how the switch bank works willy nilly, so that all of a sudden lights are glaring directly into the audience, or lights that are too close to each other get turned on together, and overheat or even explode, or the stage intermittently suddenly goes dark so the performers can't see?

That's what can happen with an "epigenetic change." Individual genes, or groups of genes, in a plant, or an animal, or a human's body can get switched on -- or off -- in ways that never should happen. This can affect a baby in the womb when a pregnant woman is exposed to a toxin that can cause an epigenetic change in her developing baby's DNA. An epigenetic change can, however, also occur in a mature individual. This means that how our genes work isn't set or static. They can get turned on and turned off by outside influences in ways that were never meant to happen.

The bad news is that it means that environmental toxins -- especially from some of the synthetic chemicals that have been invented since World War II -- are directly impacting how our basic DNA works in ways we are only beginning to understand. On top of that, it looks like at least some of these epigenetic changes are being inherited.

But there is good news as well! The more scientists understand about epigenetic changes, and how they work, the more they can untangle the causes of diseases, like cancer, and learn how to "unwind" or reverse harmful changes to the DNA itself.

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WORKING WITH THE SCRIPTURES *(Isa. 42:1-4, 6-7; Mt. 3:13-17)*

by VINAL VAN BENTHEM, OFS

In the reading from Isaiah the word 'justice' is used three times. But what *is* 'justice'? And what do we think of when we hear the word?

Maybe when we hear someone talking about 'justice' it's in connection with a crime and while we hear people calling for justice what they're actually seeking is revenge. Maybe it's the courtroom scenes we see on television; but television isn't reality (even if they do call them 'reality shows') so that doesn't work. Maybe it's 'Lady Justice', a woman holding balance scales, blindfolded so as not to be swayed by appearances; but that doesn't work either because Isaiah points to someone (Jesus?) who will "...open the eyes of the blind..."

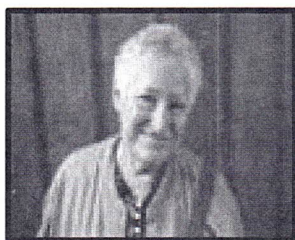
Today Olympic officials continue in their attempts to bring to justice those responsible for recent bombings in anticipation of the upcoming Winter Olympics; the Transportation Security Administration continues to seek improved airport screening; legal and illegal immigrants continue to risk their lives in search of a better life; and politicians continue to share their plans to improve the justice process. But is this really what Isaiah is talking about?

Maybe we need to look again. Maybe we need to look at those people who seek justice through working with the Red Cross, Catholic Charities, the Salvation Army and other agencies, secular and religious, helping people who have lost jobs or homes due to fire, flood, or economic circumstances beyond their control; or at military men and women who reach across borders to bring food and medical aid to those devastated by war or natural disaster. Maybe we need to listen to those people who invite us to take off our blindfolds and to balance scales weighted down by prejudice and poverty.

At Jesus' baptism "...a voice came from the heavens saying, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'" But in truth we are ALL God's children. And as God's children each one of us is called to be "...a light for the nations". What does 'justice' mean to *us*? And how are we working to "...establish justice on the earth?"

DEER-MORNING

by Ellen Jennings, OFS



Cold - and bitter.
Dark winds blowing.
Snow waves moving, swirling.
Time now to rest; curling up for warmth.
But soon -
The sun opens an eye - then another.
A smile begins.
Sudden movement happens - in still woods.
One - two- then three of them.
Walking - printing good-morning in the snow.
Stopping - looking - inquiring of the air -
Safe? Yes, all is well!
Now welcoming the morning with dancing.
Running - reaching - leaping for joy
To touch the sun touching creation.

Editor's note:

Ellen Jennings, OFS contributes her writings to the *LaVerna Vision* newsletter, and has read her poems during the LaVerna Regional Chapters in Marathon. She is formation director with Portiuncula Fraternity located at in Franklin, WI.

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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"

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Calendar of Events: 2014

February 22 – Day of Recollection for Beaver Dam Inquirers at Holy Hill Basilica, Hubertus, WI.

March 8 – Southeastern District Gathering at the Basilica of Saint Josaphat, 2333 S. 6th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53215. Basilica's undercroft. Enter from 7th Street parking lot. 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

April 4 – Central District Gathering at St Peter's Church, corner of 4th Avenue and Second St. Basement of the church, 800 4th Ave., Stevens Point, WI 54481. 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

May 3 – Fox Valley District Gathering at the Most Blessed Sacrament Parish, 449 High Ave. Oshkosh, WI 54901, lower level. 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

June 27-29 – LaVerna Region Chapter of Elections, St. Anthony Retreat Center, 300 East 4th Street Marathon, WI 54448.

July 5 – 7 - The 5th Annual Secular Franciscan Seminar - ***Finding Our History: An Interactive Theater Presentation of the History of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States 1917-2007*** presented by OFS Historian William Wicks, TAU-USA editor Jim Wesley and Cindy Wesley, OFS. St. Francis University, Loretto, PA. Endorsed by The National Executive Council of the Secular Franciscan Order – USA. For more info: <https://francis.edu/5th-summer-secular-franciscan-seminar>

July 10 – 13 – ***Focus on Spiritual Assistance*** program held at the Summer Institute of St. Francis University, Loretto, PA. For more information call: (814) 472-3000.

September 24 – 25 – Workshop for Provincial and Regional spiritual assistants meeting, Marytown, IL.

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