

SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF GREAT BRITAIN - BULLETIN August 2013

Mindful of our priorities, we hope that this bulletin shows OFSGB seeking ways of communicating, involving members and increasing visibility through sharing the wonderful gifts Franciscan life has opened for us, aspects of mission and evangelisation.

In the coming year we will continue to explore and deepen our Franciscan identity and spirit – there is a formation weekend soon and, in September 2014, we plan to celebrate a Chapter of Mats after the manner of Francis – celebrating one another and the diverse ways we live our Franciscan life in this part of the world.

As I write at the time of the Feast of St Clare, I was struck by the following in Ilia Delio's book 'Clare of Assisi: A Heart Full of Love':

"St Clare wrote to Agnes of Prague, encouraging her to contemplate the "mirror" of the Crucified Lord. Clare spent much of her life in front of the San Damiano crucifix.

Although we find it difficult to see this image of God within ourselves, we may see this image of the crucified Christ in other people who, in pouring out their loves for others do, indeed, reflect God. The person who visits the sick in hospital reveals the image of God...the child who picks flowers for an elderly neighbour is the image of God. We see the mirror of the crucified not on a wall but on living human persons. The person of the Crucified is reflected in our neighbours, our parents, our sisters and brothers and in persons we meet along the way." (Delio p 37)

I believe the various events you will hear about in this bulletin celebrate the reflection of God in the members of our Order. Through sharing and communicating I know that we will, each in our own way, be inspired and enriched by the fruits of so many dedicated, faithful lives.

Paula Pearce of National Minister

WEBSITE

Have you signed up on www.ofsgb.org.uk yet? The website allows you to read magazines from the regions, to view and make prayer requests, to look at events coming up in the diary and generally to keep in touch with what's happening nationally. Don't be left out!

See photos of the London Region Retreat hosted by Gibraltar Fraternity May 23-28. Go to 'Resources' then 'Photo Albums'.



QUIET RETREAT Cold Ash 16-18 July

This was postponed – it could be offered later in the year. Please let Paula know if you, or anyone else, are interested.

THE SEARCH FOR FRANCIS OF ASSISI – SEMINAR AT PANTASAPH

Gerard Roche of Leeds fraternity has written an excellent summary of the seminar. Read the full article (Our Vocation to Live the Gospel further in the manner of St Francis) at www.ofsgb.org.uk – go to 'Files' then 'Member files'. Gerard writes:

'Nearly 50 of us assembled for the weekend on 21st June at the Capuchin Friary, Pantasaph. The purpose of the seminar was to help us, as Secular Franciscans, to acquire the skill to become better acquainted with St Francis through the written word about him. This means looking at the medieval sources to discover their contexts, techniques and purposes. But it also means knowing how to read a more recent biography of Francis with greater awareness of what is historical fact and what is fiction...'

'...The timetable was quite loaded with talks but then it was a seminar not a retreat. The hospitality, food and fellowship were excellent. It's always good to meet brothers and sisters from around the country. When's the next instalment?'

PRIORITIES 2012-15

COMMUNICATION

EVANGELISATION/MISSION

VISIBILITY/MEMBERSHIP

How has your region or local fraternity used the suggestions that were sent out from the National Council? Let us know how you are developing your own ideas. Is there perhaps one priority which has lit a fire in your hearts? Please tell us about it...share the 'sonshine'.

SECULAR FRANCISCANS SAY

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YOUTH GATHER REFLECTIONS

Here are some edited contributions compiled by Christine Frendo of (Divine Mercy Fraternity, Gibraltar)

On 11th July, the six of us who were making our way to the Youth Gather in Cold Ash, were chatting before takeoff from the Gibraltar Airport. There was an air of expectancy among us. I wondered whether this weekend would help our two youngsters, Joelle and Juliana make good choices in life and encourage them to look to St. Francis and the way he responded to Jesus? Would it help Gianna and Dianne, who have just finished the Orientation and started on the Enquiry (Formation), to discern whether they have an authentic Franciscan vocation and so help them make their final

choice? Would it help and encourage Karenza, (Professed OFS and Joelle's Mum) and me to take the first steps to start YouFra in Gibraltar? I think that above everything else we knew and trusted that the Lord was in charge!...I would also like to stress that the feeling of being very much part of this joyful, Franciscan family and the presence of God in all of creation was to me very tangible and touching. **(Christine Frendo ofs)**

'...I enjoyed the retreat and made many friends there, I hope that one day we could invite some of these people to our neck of the woods one day. ' (Joelle from Gibraltar)

'... There have been many special moments, but for me, celebrating Mass together with the farm animals has to be one of the highlights! God has bestowed on me many blessings this weekend- in particular, having given me the opportunity to share this experience with my daughter. I feel that this is the beginning of some beautiful mission God is calling us to...' (Karenza from Gibraltar)

'I had a great time ... there were lots of activities and I had the opportunity to meet wonderful people. I would definitely go again. ' (Julianna from Gibraltar)

'The youth retreat was an absolutely wonderful experience. ... The retreat's location was serene and beautiful and the interactions with the farm animals was a genuinely heart warming experience and gave me a new found appreciation for the wonder of God's creation. The whole experience truly captured the essence of Franciscan spirituality and I would recommend it to anyone.' (Gianna from Gibraltar)

'What a great retreat with a real family atmosphere probably due to the mixture of ages- and the fact that the monks and nuns joined in! The highlight for me was the open air mass with the farm animals!' (Diane from Gibraltar)

'The weekend has inspired me to co-found a Young Franciscans Group back in our Parish of St Francis of Assisi in Stratford. Being surrounded by such stunning creation has allowed me to further my vocation of being involved with the youth as well as support them on a spiritual journey through faith developing and widening their understanding.' (Jason Balaquidan from Stratford)

'I found it a great experience for a person my age (13/14) it was nice to meet people from different places and making new friends. The atmosphere was just outstanding, you could not imagine it, everyone was talking, taking part, getting involved and that's what the Catholic religion is all about. GATHERING TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY AND HAVING FUN IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD. .. I am definitely coming back next year and I invite anyone to come along too.' (Matt Pawlik from UK)

Photos and complete edition on the YOUTH page of www.ofsgb.org.uk

YOUFRA INTERNATIONAL GATHERING - RIO 19-22 July 2013

Report and photos expected soon on Youfra section of www.coifs.org – keep looking.

DO YOU USE **facebook**? A fraternity in South Wales has created a lovely page. Go to <https://en-gb.facebook.com/StFrancisAndTheLittleFlowerFraternityOfsPortTalbot> for a look.

If you are a member of facebook you could 'like' it or join in the chat. You don't have to sign up to facebook to view the page.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY 2014 – 'Chapter of Mats'

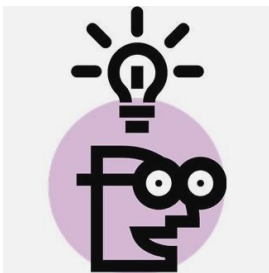
Every 3 years the National Council organises an Assembly to which all members are invited. It is an opportunity to spend time with your brothers and sisters from across all the fraternities of Great Britain. It is not a business meeting, but a gathering intended to 'foster communion among members' (Rule 24). Next year we will be joining together at The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire over the weekend of 19-21 September. The Assembly will be based on the early meetings held by St Francis and his brothers. Francis realised as the Order grew and spread that the brothers needed to have special times of gathering together to share their news and to deepen their relationships. At first they met twice a year but later settled into a pattern of every 3 years. Our Chapter of Mats will look back at our history and remember the people we have encountered in the Order.

Each region is asked to prepare for a presentation lasting 30 minutes which expresses the diversity within the Order and celebrates the members and their history. (see Const.33.1)

A display based on the Canticle of the Creatures will be constructed over the weekend. Again regions will need to prepare in advance for their allocated theme. The 9 themes are:

Brother Sun - London
Sister Moon - Midland
Brother Wind – North East
Sister Water – East Anglia

Brother Fire – North West
Sister Mother Earth - Scotland
Forgiveness - Southern
Peace – South East
Sister Bodily Death – South Wales/South West



Please contact your Regional Minister to express an interest and /or to suggest ideas for including in the presentation or display.

The cost of the weekend is likely to be around £140.

Mind your language! Still struggling with 'OFS'?

Here are some more changes of terminology to get your tongue round...

ICJP (Integrity of Creation, Justice and Peace) is now 'Presence in the World'
Levy (our annual financial contribution) is now 'capitation'