

The Franciscan Times

Lord, Make Me an Instrument of thy Peace



A quarterly newsletter, whose purpose is helping members of The Third Order of the Society of St. Francis share their common journey through news from fellowships and individuals, reviews of books and tapes, poetry, stories, essays, reflections, meditations, graphics, and whatever the Holy Spirit might blow our way.

Lent, 1995

from the editor:

This issue contains timely information for and about our various Franciscan journeys. Assistant Provincial Chaplain David Burgdorf offers some valuable insights on spiritual direction, while Formation Director Ann

Harris brings us up to speed on re-viewing our rules of life.

Judy Gillette TSSF highlights the Lenten theme of "Obedience" with a clear focus in an essay, "Only One Voice to Obey..." And newly-professed tertiary Molly Lin Dutina uses her poetic talents to describe her formation experience.

In addition, Marie McShea TSSF narrates the heartwarming tale of her very Franciscan companion who came to her on Good Friday.

In an effort to include as much good information as possible in the budgeted 16 pages, artwork and open space were severely restricted, and the typeface sizes were reduced. In addition, a long list of new additions to the TSSF library was put on hold, hopefully to be included with the next issue.

Please feel free to make comments or suggestions about these or any aspect of The Franciscan Times. Your Chapter, which essentially serves as an Editorial Board, needs feedback in order to make educated decisions about the future of this and other TSSF publications.

A growing number of readers have written about Franciscan communication and community, using computer modems and the Information Superhighway. Contributions on these subjects for the next issue are welcome, with a deadline of May 1. (Unfortunately, your editor does not have an E-Mail address, as yet.)

May each of you have a Holy Lent and a joyous Eastertide. Pax et Bonum ... and Aloha!

- Robert Durand

HELP WANTED!

VIDEOTAPES NEEDED

**Showing American Province
Franciscan Gatherings of
Convocations, Fellowships.
Raw Footage preferred!**

VIDEO PROJECT DIRECTOR

**Tertiary with experience
in planning, shooting, editing
videotape projects.**

**The Third Order, American
Province, has been asked
to put together a videotape
reflecting tertiary life for
sharing with the other
world-wide provinces.
We also would like to make
a documentary of the
1997 Provincial Convocation.
Can You Help?**

**Please send particulars to:
Robert Durand TSSF, P.O. Box 157,
Kula, Hawaii 96790-0157**

WRITING A RULE OF LIFE

(Editor's Note: As noted in Formation Director Ann Harris' article on the previous page, this document is sent to all Third Order aspirants as part of the Inquirer's Package. It has recently been revised and is an official document. For the benefit of all, especially "long-time" tertiaries, it is reprinted here.)

In general, your rule should fit YOU and your lifestyle. Make it something that is not too challenging to keep — a rule suited to Mother Teresa is probably not one can comfortably manage. The Third Order religious life is not something separate from our day-to-day lives; that day-to-day world of the home and the marketplace is exactly where we are called to live out our vocations! In constructing your Rule, try to be specific about what you actually intend to do to actualize each of our nine categories in your everyday life.

1. **Eucharist:** At least once a week and on principle feasts and holy days. Some people also regularly attend additional services during the week, while others may live in rural areas where even the expected minimum isn't available.

2. **Penitence:** Daily examination of conscience and sacramental confession at least twice a year are required. Your self-examen might be included when you say the Office, or done at the end of the day. You can best work out the most appropriate time for you to do this each day.

3. **Personal Prayer:** With the Eucharist, this forms the very core of your individual rule. Find a regular time each day when you can sit down undisturbed and spend some quality time with God. Your rule should include time for regular intercessory prayer as well as meditation and thanksgiving. In building any relationship, personal time spent in conversation and sharing is vital; how much more so in building a loving relationship with the Lord! It is in drinking from this spiritual well that we are nourished and empowered to do all the rest of it. Make this a very high priority in your rule and in your life.

4. **Self Denial:** Try to think of this as conversion of your life toward growing beyond those ideas and behaviors that negatively affect your relationships with God, others, and yourself. In Simplicity, we try to rid ourselves of excess material baggage and consumer-oriented values that make barriers to our full response to God and others; in self-denial, we do the same thing with our interior baggage and behavior.

Though this category once focused primarily on fasting and similar exercises, we now prefer a broader approach. (We do keep the Church's fasts of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.) This category is the area where we work on breaking down our barriers to wholeness. Talk to your spiritual director and see what you can find to work on. It may mean doing less and taking care of yourself, as well as working to correct the things you discover about yourself in your self-examen, and fasting may be part of this.

It's really about learning to keep the first commandment: to love God with all your heart and soul and mind, and to love others as yourself. Think of it as learning to love and growing whole in Christ. For a Martha, this may mean learning to be a Mary.

An important part of the Franciscan approach to spirituality is that it doesn't follow the traditional practices of *via negativa*, rejecting or negating the world to seek God in nothingness; rather it chooses to approach God by embracing and taking great joy in all of God's creation.

5. **Retreat:** We require a minimum of one retreat per year (with other tertiaries, if that is at all possible). This is a very important component of building a relationship with God. We need this quiet time with the Lord, away from distractions, to feed and sustain us on the journey. If organized retreats aren't available to you locally, home retreats are possible. "Quiet Days" also count as retreat time.

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WRITING A RULE OF LIFE (continued)

6. Study: This includes regular Bible reading, reading about Francis and Franciscan spirituality, as well as other books on a broad range of subjects — don't limit this to specifically "holy" books. Anything you read that helps you better understand all of God's broad creation counts here — which includes both fiction and non-fiction. You might also want to include seminars or classes available to you. Many people attend EFM programs and include that. This is a very broad category. We also ask that you regularly read the Principles and Rule as part of your Third Order discipline. It is important to keep going back to our roots and learning more and more about being a Franciscan. State how much time you will spend on reading and study.

7. Simplicity: As Self-Denial deals with behavior and spiritual values, this category deals with material values and possessions. Simplicity includes stewardship of time as well as those material resources and talents you have been given control of your life. Remember, it is you for whom this rule is written, not for your family. We can't ask our partners and children to embrace literal poverty because we might like to.

Remember, you're called to live as a secular Franciscan, "as is," in your current circumstances. That doesn't mean becoming literally poor (some of us are, and others are definitely not!), but rather, learning to practice Gospel values in whatever circumstances you find yourself. If attachment to your personal possessions is more important to you than God, then you're in trouble in this category. The purpose is to exchange the world's values for Gospel values. List how you plan to do this.

8. Work: This area covers specific ministries as well as your everyday work and family life. (These may be very different, or one and the same.) The traditional Franciscan focus addresses issues of peace and social justice, poverty and need, and the environment in the world around us. List the work you do here. We don't require you to have a specific "ministry" or "apostolate," but you may find that you develop one. Each of us has unique gifts, and as we discover these, we are able to put them to use. A balance of prayer, work, and study are important for growth.

9. Obedience: This is a category peculiar to religious orders and does not mean quite what one might expect it to. It refers to obedience to the Third Order itself. Being part of the Third Order requires a kind of accountability that one doesn't usually otherwise encounter.

We are all under obedience to the Provincial Statutes and the Rule of the Third Order. This part of our individual rules reflects that aspect of our common life. Can the Order dictate what we do or do not do? In some areas, yes, though we rarely encounter it. Obedience doesn't call for "blind obedience" to whatever we are told to do, but it does mean that we agree to abide by the Third Order's Rule and by the decisions of our Chapter (the Officers and the elected representatives who form the governing body of the Order).

This area of your rule must include:

- Intention of saying the Daily (Book of Common Prayer) Office of Morning and/or Evening Prayer with lectionary readings and psalms.
- Meeting with your spiritual director regularly.
- A financial pledge to the Order.
- Obedience to the decisions of the Third Order Chapter.
- Regular monthly reporting to your counselor.
- Meeting with other members of the Third Order whenever possible, at local fellowships, convocations, or other opportunities to meet with tertiaries.
- Annual renewal of your novice or profession vow.

Even though we don't usually live in a community house, the Third Order vocation is one to community in a broader sense, and it is important to be a part of that community.

Your rule should state your specific intentions about how each category of the rule will be ex-

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THE CHAPLAIN'S JOURNAL

Several area chaplains report that tertiaries in their areas have not been able to find satisfactory spiritual directors. At least one directly requested help in guiding people to find those to whom they could turn for spiritual direction. It may be that the issue here is expectation.

"What are you looking for?" might be a good question to ask. Spiritual directors come in all shapes and sizes from strict old school clerics to dogs (Fr. Matthew Fox once wrote that his spiritual director was his dog because it kept him in touch with the givenness and earthiness of life.) There are risks attached to both extremes. The martinet may deprive you of your freedom; the dog will not tell you all you need to know.

However, here are some points to ponder as you search (or help others search) for a spiritual director:

1. The spiritual director par excellence is the Holy Spirit. One of our collects prays, "O God, for as much as without thee, we are not able to please thee; mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts..."

Our "New Age" would tell us that the most authentic experiences of spirit are unmediated consciousness, enlightenment, and the like. Catholic practice and wisdom through the ages has taught that Spirit works through people in the Body of Christ. So the Holy Spirit, who knows the depths of our hearts, works through the Body, reveals wisdom, and shows us who can be wise for us.

2. Qualifications. Do potential spiritual director candidates need PhD's in their subject from accredited universities? I think not. As with most things, practical personal experience counts for much.

Fr. Benedict Groeschel recommends that if, in the old theology, there were three stages in the path toward God — purgative, illuminative, and unitive — you want to find someone who has already passed through these stages and is moving in his or her own path. An easy test is, if they don't have a clue about what you're talking about when you pour out your concerns or dilemmas or darkness, you've got the wrong person.

A spiritual director (or spiritual friend or companion) need not have experience exactly like what you've experienced, but he or she better have some familiarity with the way God leads souls. If you want to find out what someone's general approach is, just ask. If you ask, and the person has no idea of how faith, hope, and love can grow in souls, you just may want to keep looking.

Having said this, spiritual direction is not a "head trip." It is about companionship in the mystery of God's love. Or, as Fr. Basil Pennington has said, the essential task of the spiritual abba or amma, father or mother, is "to stand in prayer with their child in the night." By this, he means, I think, those who have sufficiently surrendered their own fears, learning to trust in God so that they can listen to others' fears and hear God's call.

3. Warnings:

- A spiritual director who engages in inappropriate touch or suggestive conversation is a wolf in sheep's clothing. Flee!

- Spiritual directors who talk more than they listen may be good teachers, but you can always read a book. Most of us only want to be heard and deserve to be.

- If no one is good enough for you to have as a spiritual companion, the problem may not be others' inadequacy but our own low self-esteem masquerading as perfectionism. There is wisdom in the saying, "when the disciple is ready, the master appears."

- If you find someone who is always telling you how to do it, it may help you with your need to be dependent and loyal, but it will seldom guide you into the full maturity of Christ. You will not be empowered to love God more with all your gifts and weaknesses. Beware!

In closing, may I say that I never got any bad guidance from anyone whom I prayerfully allowed myself to trust. Peace and All Good to each of you. (the Rev.) David Burgdorf TSSF

Assistant Chaplain, American Province



From Your Formation Director:

Reviewing Your Rule of Life

by Ann Harris TSSF

It has been a while since the Formation Director has communicated with the Third Order community, aside from brief summaries of formation activity in the annual minutes of the Chapter. I am delighted to share with you that the formation program is flourishing and that we have many brothers and sister giving generously of their time and talent to this ministry.

At their 1994 meeting, the American Province Third Order Chapter ratified the decisions on the Interprovincial Chapter that the Principles — as written in the booklet, *The Rule of the Third Order for Daily Reading*, the Constitution, and the vow which all tertiaries take at profession — shall be the Rule of the Third Order.

The Rule of the Third Order for Daily Reading can be traced back in its development through the life of the Third Order in the Episcopal Church, the Christa Seva Sangha, and back to the original Third Order Rule given by Francis to his brothers and sisters who desired to follow his example of living out the Gospel in their everyday lives. It is the basis for our individual rules within the American Province.

As a guide or framework for developing our individual rule of life, Chapter has approved the document, "Writing a Rule of Life," which is now sent to all aspirants as part of the Inquirer's package. We require that all postulants and novices write a rule of life containing all nine points outlined in this document.

At the 1994 Chapter, two areas of the rule came up for discussion:

- The first, Eucharist, does not specifically state attendance at the Lord's table on Sundays. This is intentional as we have a growing number of tertiaries in remote areas for whom Sunday services are not available. Chapter felt that this was a vital part of our rules, and we should not imply "second best" for those who cannot attend on a Sunday. We will all give attendance at the Eucharist priority, according to our individual circumstances.

- Secondly, under Obedience, it was not clear whether the pledge mentioned was a financial pledge to the Third Order or our vow as novice or professed. Chapter decided that both were necessary as members of the community.

I should like to suggest that we all read "Writing a Rule of Life" and compare it to our own individual rules, as part of our Lenten study. It is also useful to compare it to Chapter 11 in Brother Ramon's book, *Franciscan Spirituality*, which was written for the worldwide Third Order, in order to see how everyone is following the way of St. Francis, singing the same tune.

One final point should be made concerning the importance of a spiritual director in developing our individual Rule of Life, helping us to discern whether this is the right expression for our journey or even the right path for us to take.

In order to preserve this independent point of view, postulants and novices must choose a spiritual director who is not a member of their Third Order Fellowship. Professed members of a Fellowship do play a friendship and support role in formation, but it is essential that a postulant or novice have an independent advisor.

David Burgdorf has written an article for "The Chaplain's Journal" in this issue, sharing his thoughts on selecting a spiritual director. David's article includes some excellent suggestions and would be an excellent starting point for discussion at a fellowship meeting.

This past six years as Formation Director have brought me great joy. There have been some sad and very trying times, of course, but the unique opportunity to meet so many of my brothers and sisters, by mail and in person, far outweighs those times.

I cherish all of you in my daily prayers and know that you also pray that we all may persevere with joy.

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WRITING A RULE OF LIFE (continued)

pressed in your life. Keep it simple and strive for an overall balance between prayer, work, and study. Let it reflect your own life and interests rather than a romantic ideal, and try to make it simple enough so that you can keep it without constantly falling short of your goals, yet with enough challenge that you have to stretch a little to manage it.

If saying Daily Office is new to you, or if you have little time to spare, don't plan to say four offices a day! If meditation is a new practice to you, start with ten minutes a day rather than attempting an hour. If you have a family, they're a vitally important part of your life, and your obligation to them comes first, not second, to "doing good works."

Our vocations are lived in the world, not in a convent. It's a different calling entirely than that of a friar or sister, and your rule shouldn't mimic Francis' or what you imagine a First Order Rule would be.

What you express in your rule now will change. A postulant will be asked to re-write his or her rule before novicing and will find this needs to be done about once a year after that, as circumstances in one's life change, and we grow and have different perceptions and needs.

There is one format for an individual's rule, but each must tailor an individual response to each category based on his/her own life circumstances and level of understanding. The Third Order Rule is a framework on which to build a Franciscan life in Christ. Francis was totally committed to living the Gospel in a radical way. The Gospel itself is the true Franciscan Rule; our individual rules express how we intend to live the Gospel in our own circumstances.

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r e a d e r ' s f o r u m

Auckland, New Zealand
December 31, 1994

Greetings and Good Wishes,

Yesterday, I attended the funeral service of Olga Lawrence, probably the oldest tertiary. Born in 1895 in India, Olga spent her working life with the YWCA in India. In 1925 or 1927 (we think), she became, with Bill Lash, a tertiary of the Christa Prima Seva Sangha — so she really does go back to our roots.

In 1958, Olga came to New Zealand and nurtured the tertiaries and Companions who were learning the way. She was treasurer of the N.Z. Third Order Chapter from 1965 to 1978 and for the last few years of that period was treasurer of the whole Pacific Province. When she retired from that job, she was 80 years old.

Her funeral service was attended by both First and Third Order brothers and sisters. I was glad that I was able to be part of it. Prayers and Love,

Sr. Cecelia C.S.F.

T S S F B A S I C S

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4036 Lakota Place. Kingsport, TN 37664

suggested prices are:

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for Daily Reading (\$2.50)

Order of Admission (\$1)

"Only One Voice to Obey . . ."

by Judith Gillette TSSF

A friend of mine used to say, when her three children were teenagers, that she never had to think about what to do with her time. All that was necessary was to stand in the middle of the living room, and she would be told what to do next. There was always someone waiting to direct her time and energy.

Living this story myself, as my own family grew, a phrase from one of the collects of Morning Prayer leapt out at me one day: "O God, the author of peace and lover of concord, to know you is eternal life and to serve you is perfect freedom..."

To serve God is perfect freedom! Indeed, God has become one more voice, a very demanding voice in the midst of family, parish, friends, and the Third Order. But the phrase "to serve you is perfect freedom" would not go away, and I often meditated on it in times of quiet.

Gradually, something became clear: if I could intentionally serve God, if I could see my family and parish and community as members of Christ's body, if any good works that I attempted could be done as unto Christ and in the Name of Christ, then I became incredibly free!

I have only one Master, only one Voice, only one Person to please... and only one Person to obey. There are many, many voices to whom I respond, yes; but there is only one voice to obey.

Of course, that word "obey" is not popular. It conjures up images: an angry parent standing over a child; a teacher scowling at the pupil who did not color all three of the houses red, but colored one green and one yellow; the flashing lights of a police car stopping a driver on the highway; and even the shadowy image of a god who lurks around waiting to catch us at "sin."

Actually, we "obey" all the time. We listen to commercials and buy the products advertised. We remember the voice of our childhood that told us we were not able to do something, and then as adults, we do not even try. We experience society as wealth and power and social standing, and so we seek those goals even as our souls cry out for simplicity, love, and community.

The "do what you're told" attitude and its companion adage, "I know what's good for you," with which we are all familiar are not characteristics of obedience, but submission. They do not lead to freedom, but to bondage.

So what, then, is obedience? It is listening. God speaks within us; our deepest self calls out. We listen.

We act in an intentional response to the life which flows within us. We act justly, for the voice within us is just; we act with mercy for it is mercy which resonates in our deepest self where God abides; we act in humility, knowing that all we are and do relies on the indwelling Spirit. We act with freedom, knowing that if we are doing our best, we can safely leave the results and consequences in God's care.

We can let go of the illusion of control and act instead from the heart, knowing that the One we serve seeks faithfulness and not worldly success. Obedience, then, is trusting in the Providence of God.

Obedience also refers to "a sphere of ecclesiastical authority." This calls to mind Sister L., an Anglican nun. We met while working a retreat for inner-city youth in the late 60's. The kids were delighted with her joy, her easy laughter, and the water pistol she carried in her habit pocket.

On the last day of the retreat, three of the teen-age girls approached Sister L. while we were having coffee and asked her why she had become a nun, she who was so much fun! "Why do you want to live behind walls?" they asked. A reflective look passed over her face, followed by a gentle smile. "Ah, but what you don't understand is that within the boundaries of my walls, I am so free."

We, who are members of a religious community, live in obedience. But we live in freedom, not bondage. At some point in our lives, each of us heard that inner voice (vocation: an inner call) calling us into community. We requested and we received blessing to respond to this call.

Before novicing and profession, we asked those with whom we journeyed if they perceived the same thing(s) we did as we "listened" together. If the answer was yes, we eventually professed by "life vow and intent." We said not only "I will" but "I choose to continue to will." By so doing, we began a lifelong attempt to let go of those things in our lives which could stand in the way of this intention.

We limited the voices we would obey. By choosing simplicity, we no longer have to pay heed to those voices which tell us to be worldly successful. By choosing charity, we no longer have to wrestle with how to treat others; we have no choice but to love them. By choosing obedience, we continue whether we feel like it or not. And when we fail, we repent and begin again.

Finally, it is obvious that I am making reference to a perfect world. All parents do not prayerfully seek their children's freedom and growth. Church authorities do not always act with holiness and wisdom. And not all religious communities provide a loving environment for the soul and nurture personal growth toward God.

For myself, I am impelled by Jesus' injunction to seek first His Kingdom and by the words of Francis when he lay dying: "I have done what is mine to do. May God give you the grace to do what is yours."

In choosing a life of obedience, I have chosen first to seek Jesus' Kingdom in a world where that Kingdom is often hidden. I have chosen to seek and discover what is mine to do in a society that would gladly lead me in a direction a way from love and prayer.

In a world which screams out its desire for personal freedom, I have chosen to enter a world of a voluntary Rule of Life, and within the boundaries of my life, I am so free!

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

ATTENTION CONVENERS:

If news about your Fellowship — be it something to share from a past or current gathering, or information about an upcoming meeting, retreat, or quiet day — should be on these pages, please send it to: Robert Durand TSSF,
 PO. Box 157, Kula, Maui, Hawaii 96790-0157.
 Deadline for the Trinity issue is May 1, 1995.

BROTHER JUNIPER FELLOWSHIP (Boston and New England)

The Fellowship is planning and will host an open Franciscan conference at the Adelynrood Retreat Center in Byfield, Massachusetts, June 2-3, 1995. The theme will be "Franciscan Spirituality: Inclusiveness in a Competitive Society."

The next meetings are scheduled for April 1 in Rockport, MA., and on August 5 in Gardner, MA. For information about fellowship activities, please contact Convener NANCY KANGAS at 508-632-2435.

LONG ISLAND FELLOWSHIP

The L.I.F. Line newsletter reports that members are embarking on a study of Brother Ramon's book *Franciscan Spirituality*, and a fellowship retreat is planned for May 19-20-21 at Little Portion Friary.

For more information about any activities of the Fellowship, please contact co-conveners MARIE McSHEA at (516) 379-7529 or ELIZABETH SCALERO at (516) 887-4199.

NEW YORK CITY FELLOWSHIP

In a meeting at Trinity Church, Wall Street, vows were renewed at a Eucharist celebrated by the Rev. Masud Syedullah TSSF. Convener VIVIAN MORREL reports that the annual retreat is scheduled for Little Portion Friary, April 21-22-23.

For more information about fellowship activities, please contact Vivian at (212) 928-2305.

WASHINGTON D.C., MARYLAND, AND VIRGINIA FELLOWSHIP

The fellowship will be teaming up with the Philadelphia, Delaware, and New Jersey Fellowship to organize and host the 1995 Northeast Convocation at Graymoor. Members gather on the third Saturday of each month at the retreat house of the Sisters of the Atonement in NE Washington. Any tertiaries visiting the area are welcome to attend. For more information, please contact new convener (the Rev.) BRUCE HANGER at (410) 833-8035.

LAND OF THE SKY FELLOWSHIP (Western North Carolina)

According to "Fruits of the Loom" newsletters, regular fellowship meetings are regularly held on the second Saturday of each month at 10 a.m. The location will be at All Souls' Church, Biltmore Village, in Asheville.

The Spring retreat will be held May 5-7 at Snail's Pace in Saluda, NC. The leader will be Area Chaplain, the Rev. Curley Scramton.

For information about fellowship activities, please call 1995 convener MARY HAYES at (704) 254-0635.

THE SERVANTS OF SAN DAMIANO (North Carolina Piedmont)

Regular monthly meetings are scheduled for the fourth Saturday of each month from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the Episcopal Servant Center in Greensboro. For more information about fellowship gatherings and activities, please contact convener JOAN FOUTS at (919) 929-6101.

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FELLOWSHIP NEWS

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PORTIUNCULA FELLOWSHIP (Tennessee and SW Virginia)

According to "The Portiuncula Messenger," the new fellowship name better reflects the area from which member tertiaries are participating. New co-conveners for the coming year are JOHN DOTSON and (the Rev.) WILLIAM PICKLES.

Plans are being made for the Spring Retreat at Nazareth House the weekend of May 26-28. For more information about any of the fellowship activities, please contact John Dotson at (615) 247-4488 or Fr. Pickles at (703) 628-7313.

PLAINS, MOUNTAINS, & SEA FELLOWSHIP (Georgia and Alabama)

The Alabama portion of the Fellowship held a Quiet Day at All Saints' Church in Homewood on Dec. 3 with eight people attending. Yvonne Willie reports that a Spring mini-retreat is planned at Lucy Blount's Lake Martin house. Convener JACQUI BELCHER notes that the Eastertide Retreat has been scheduled at The Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Conyers, GA from May 12-14. For more information about fellowship activities, please contact Jacqui at (912) 233-2105 or Yvonne at (205) 933-8997.

CENTRAL FLORIDA FELLOWSHIP

Rosemary Pancake reports that the annual retreat was held the weekend prior to Ash Wednesday, under the leadership of the Rev. Masud Syedullah. For more information about fellowship activities, please contact Co-conveners CLIFFORD and ELSIE AMOS at (407) 676-0873.

SOUTH FLORIDA FELLOWSHIP

Diane Darrah reports that the fellowship met on Jan. 27 at Dee Dobson's home. Special guest was Br. Robert Hugh SSF who showed a video and led a discussion on "Paradigms," especially concerning the theme, "Learning new approaches: when things don't get done, go to ground zero and begin again." For more information about fellowship activities, please contact convener BETTY MELFA at 7215 - SW 61st St., Miami, FL 33143.

LA VERNA FELLOWSHIP (Cincinnati)

Dan Cooksey reports that the January fellowship meeting was a special occasion of sharing with Maggie Ross, an English hermit, who is theologian-in-residence with the Diocese of Southern Ohio.

The annual retreat has been scheduled for March 31 to April 2 at the Convent of the Transfiguration. Leader will be Fr. Paul Walsman OFM. For more information about fellowship meetings and activities, please contact convener MARY LOUISE REED at (513) 724-3363.

LITTLE SPARROW FELLOWSHIP (Toronto)

Convener SYBIL YEARWOOD reports that the fellowship meets on the second Saturday of each month from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at St. George the Martyr Church in Toronto. A Quiet Day with a theme of healing is scheduled on April 8. Visiting tertiaries are welcome. For more information, please contact Sybil at (416) 759-2600.

CHI RHO FELLOWSHIP (Chicago)

Regular Chi Rho meetings take place on the third Saturday at the Church of the Ascension. For more information about fellowship activities, please contact convener AL EASTERWOOD at (708) 858-4147 or MARK DRISH at (312) 539-3057.

LILIES OF THE FIELD FELLOWSHIP (Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska)

Convener BETTY WOOD reports that Kimball, Nebraska, was found to be centrally located for a gathering of the Wyoming and Nebraska members on Jan. 7. Nine people were present, and discussions were held about forming a new fellowship. The next gathering will be March 11 (snow date March 18) at St. Hilda's Church in Kimball. For information about Fellowship gatherings, please contact Betty at 1406 East 19th St., Cheyenne, WY 82001, telephone (307) 632-1517.

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Crossing the Bridge: A Formation Poem

by Molly Lin Dutina TSSF

I was crossing a very high bridge.
My Shepherd was on the other side
encouraging me to come to Him.
I have a fear of heights.
A few steps onto the bridge,
driven by a fear of dropping off the right side,
I ventured too close to the left and scraped the concrete edge.

I began to panic with claustrophobia.
I felt in a tight space,
knowing I could not go back,
fearful of proceeding,
terrified by the drop off on my right,
wounded by the scrapes on the left.
Claustrophobia washed over me, compressing my heart and lungs,
Fear — squeezing the life out of me.

And my Shepherd on the other side of the bridge
Kept calling me to open spaces with Him.

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"How?" I asked a trusted friend.
"Try writing a Rule of Life," he replied and explained the process.
I left despondently. "Me? Write a Rule of Life?"
"HA!" screamed The Critic, "You know you never set goals. That is how you keep from failing."
Yet, with prayer, a new term came to be, "Guidelines for Spirituality."
I saw a great glimmer of hope upon the bridge.

I asked a Priest-Friend,
"Shall I be an Associate of the Convent of the Transfiguration
or pursue the Third Order?"
They both required I write a Rule of Life.
I had sufficiently recovered from the shock of the terminology and
was eager to tackle the task.
He answered with a grin, "Why not do both?"

In delight, I skipped three board-widths down the center of the bridge. It had never occurred to me that I could pursue both.
My trusted friend read the first few drafts of my guidelines. He gave me pointers on self-denial and simplicity that would help me stay towards the center of the bridge.
The adventure began in more earnestness than ever before.

And my Shepherd on the other side of the bridge
Kept calling me to open spaces with Him.

-3-

I began writing a monthly report to A-Woman-I-Had-Never-Met,
Sharing with her the dearest part of my life
— my intimate relationship with Jesus —
and how that spilled over into relationships with others.
She told me I'd write to her only for a while. My formation counselor was out of the country
and the Woman-I-Had-Never-Met didn't want to delay my beginning.
Her replies were encouraging and uplifting.

A few months later I was introduced by mail to my Formation Counselor. She became to me the Second-Woman-I-Had-Never-Met and I shared with her the dearest part of my life just as I had the first woman.



(continued next page)

Crossing the Bridge: A Formation Poem

(continued)

I knew they would both read my letters
and I couldn't honestly treat one differently from the other.
Besides, the Lord reads my heart and would have known instantly
if I was insincere in my report.

The guidelines for Spirituality began to slowly take shape as framework rising from each side
of the bridge. I was amazed to find convenient attachment points for each one built right into the
bridge foundation posts.

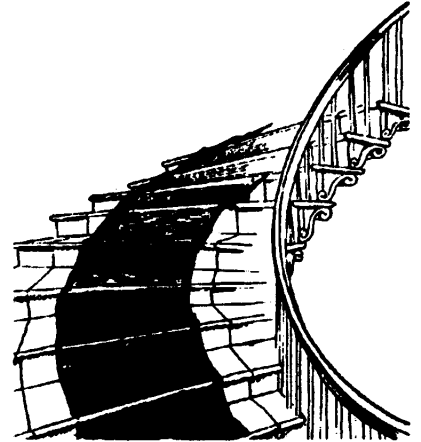
Study, work, and prayer on the right,
Simplicity, chastity, and obedience on the left,
Joined to humility, love, and joy for a roof.

And my Shepherd on the other side of the bridge
Kept calling me to open spaces with Him.

-4-

The construction process went slowly.
I would get overly eager and focus on one aspect.
Then I'd have to dismantle the parts I had haphazardly fitted.
and cut pieces that fit from the raw materials of Guidelines.

My Formation Counselor urged me to continue.
She gently taught me it's ok to cut new pieces.
My Spiritual Director could actually come within the structure.
She would help me see things I had overlooked;
Things that, with minor changes, could greatly improve my journey and shelter.



And the reports went on
I even began talking to others about my Guidelines and
how they might like to form some, too.
At Novicing, my Shepherd came to me in the framework
and commended my efforts,
urging me on, saying,
"Seek Me and My strength. Seek my presence continually." (Ps 105:4) and "I satisfy you with
good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagles'." (Ps 103:5)
I responded, "Come, my heart says, Seek His face!
Your face, Lord, do I seek.
Do not hide Your face from me." (Ps 27:8)
He said many other things, including,
"This will be a tangible, lasting fellowship for you, and a blessing unto Me."

And my Shepherd on the other side of the bridge
Kept calling me to open spaces with Him.

-5-

I began to decorate the sides of my structure.
Prayer cards with sayings like:
"Through discipline comes freedom."
Images of the poor man of Assisi
"Work is love made visible."
A petal-less rose to remind me of Clare.

With study, work and prayer on the right,
Simplicity, chastity and obedience on the left,
The roof of humility, love and joy had great stability.

And as each piece took its place,
the roof became translucent,
allowing the light light of Brother Son and Sister Moon to glow through.

(continued next page)

Crossing the Bridge: A Formation Poem

(continued)

I felt safe enough to explore
community, penitence, self examen, Daily Office.

And my Shepherd on the other side of the bridge
Kept calling me to open spaces with Him.

-6-

The one day the letter came.
It was time to write to yet a Third-Woman-I-Had-Never-Met.
I suppose I had been told this would happen again. But I forgot.

I was blue for a while, but I realized I had come this far!
The risk of vulnerability had been survived and
the community of women and men I now knew who were crossing the bridge
with the same materials as me was increasing.
So, why not? I shared as deeply with my new Formation Counselor as I had ever with anyone.
And the bridge was less scary
with the structure forming soundly.
It seemed that the better fitted the pieces became,
the more room was created for relationships.
And the closer the face of the Lord appeared.
The wounds from the left were healed now,
and the right was not nearly so frightening.
I was learning the shelter of this Rule
and taking deliberate steps forward on the bridge.

And my Shepherd on the other side of the bridge
Kept calling me to open spaces with Him.

-7-

I watched the calendar.
I counted the reports.
I took a risk and asked,
"When? may I take my vows of profession?"
I want this structure, this fellowship, this community to be mine for life.
The Face of my Shepherd surprised me
many times within the community.
Sometimes the love and joy were so raucous that the bridge swayed — and I didn't even mind.
Sometimes turbulence arose and even washed over the bridge.
But I was never torn away. The strong anchor line of my Rule held me firmly within
my Shepherd's realm.
I could see other bridge structures in the distance.
I found some of them very beautiful,
But THIS was the one for me.

And the letter came. "Yes you may now request profession. But don't set your heart on a
particular date. This part of the process can take time." And finally I was not anxious over time.
I wanted the discipline of writing those monthly reports!
I wondered who would read them monthly after profession?
I celebrated the news, mailed my request and convenor's letter and took off for a convocation 350
miles away. I realized I would not know a soul in attendance. But hey, I thought, I might as well
test the waters before I professed for life...

And my Shepherd on the other side of the bridge
Keeps calling me to open spaces with Him.

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The Saga of Good Franciscan "Friday"

by Marie McShea TSSF

On Good Friday in 1991, my husband had gone into our yard to add seed to the bird feeder when he discovered a white pigeon with an injured wing, hopping frantically around on the ground.

In hot pursuit was a neighborhood cat, totally unmindful of the day being one of strict fast and abstinence, obviously relishing the idea of a squab dinner. With its right wing dragging on the ground, the poor pigeon had no chance for escape without human intervention.

And so, the bird was brought in to me.

We placed the traumatized creature on our screened front porch in a very large wire cage used over the years to raise several generations of puppies. At least the bird was safe, and we left her alone to recover from the shock.

Closer examination in the morning revealed a gaping wound and bone fragments. We took her to the vet, where the damaged cartilage was removed and the wound packed with antibiotics.

"Friday" then came home to receive T.L.C. nursing care. To her new quarters were added daily sections from the New York Times, a small carton for a roost, large heavy crockery bowls for seed and water, and a box of pigeon grit. Slowly, Friday's wing grew stronger and no longer was hanging on the ground.

However, the damage was extensive, and even now, after nearly four years, her flight is somewhat lopsided. We know that she would not survive in the wild, but it would sadden us to keep her confined. So Friday goes free, but regarding her quarters as a place of security, she flies swiftly back to them at the approach of any stranger.

For two years, Friday's relationship with us was friendly, provided we kept a strict hands-off, no touch approach. But one day, at the beginning of last year, she sat cooing away on top of her carton, and I began to make cooing sounds in response to her. Suddenly, up went her ruff, out spread the tail feathers, and a round-about mating dance began, followed by quick little rushes to nibble on my fingers.

From that moment on, I had only to appear, and the whole procedure would begin again. Now she wanted me to stroke her head and back, and soon she decided she wanted to sit in my hand or perch on my shoulder, pressing her face against my face.

This Third Order Tertiary had been selected as Friday's mate — a lifetime commitment for pigeons!

As our relationship continued, Friday's greatest delight became taking the black cord of my profession cross in her beak and swinging the cross in the air. Well, St. Francis preached to the birds, so I spoke to her of how Our Blessed Lord had saved us on a Good Friday. As she raises the cross high in the air, we sometimes sing a verse or two of "Lift High the Cross."

On March 9 last year, Friday surprised me by laying a large white egg, followed within 48 hours by a second egg. She would sit faithfully on the eggs until I appeared, obviously expecting me to feed her and take my turn on the nest.

Another change occurred. No longer was she content to share the profession cross. She wanted it for herself and tugged at the cord with all her strength. Out of curiosity, I placed the cross on the counter in front of her cage.

Quick as a wink, Friday grabbed the cross in her beak and strutted back to her nest, wedging it between the two eggs and winding the cord in a circle around the eggs. We are Franciscans!

As a would-be father bird, my ability is nil, so after a few days, we removed the eggs. Never one to be discouraged, Friday has routinely laid another 26 eggs since then. Without eggs in the nest, the cross is mine, but once there are eggs, the dispute over ownership of the eggs begins anew.

No three-year formation for Friday, but a confirmed Franciscan!

Now this tertiary is well aware that St. Francis is about far more than birds and bird baths. Nevertheless, I am very grateful for God's creatures who enrich my life with joy and laughter, whether it be a Franciscan pigeon, my St. Bernard who will not be coaxed from my side when I experience pain, or the two kittens who gleefully hitch rides in my wheelchair.

They all cause me, countless times a day, to praise and thank our Creator who saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.

Lord, that in all Creation, I may discover you!

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The Franciscan Times

Lord, Make Me an Instrument of thy Peace

ST. FRANCIS ON OBEDIENCE

Whenever blessed Francis received direct and simple commands, rather than requests, he regarded them as commands under holy obedience. But he believed that the highest form of obedience, in which flesh and blood plays no part, is to go among the unbelievers under the inspiration of God, either to help one's fellow men or with a desire for martyrdom. He considered that to seek martyrdom was truly acceptable to God.

— from "Mirror of Perfection," Chapter 48 (*St. Francis of Assisi Omnibus of Sources*, Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983)