



# Our Lady of Mt. Carmel

## Secular Franciscan Order – Newsletter

Winter, 2015

Volume 2, Issue 2



### We Are Marked With The TAU

“The TAU is the sign of the SFO in this country . . . .”

(Catch Me a Rainbow Too by Lester Baxch, page 270.)

—Article shared by David Witkop, OFS

We as Franciscans wear the TAU as an outward sign of our order. “It is our symbol of commitment to Jesus through the SFO way of life.” In our Articles of the Secular Franciscan Rule (Article 23) we are to “wear the TAU with joy.”

The TAU (T) (Greek Alphabet symbol and Hebrew Alphabet symbol) have a long history. Ezekiel, Chapter 8, has a vision of Jerusalem. The leaders were adoring and idolizing false gods, and there was much violence in the city besides unacceptable sexual practices. In Chapter 9: 4-5 of Ezekiel, he sees a vision: The people marked with a TAU (T) belong to God. He hears the messenger who is given directions to “go through the city, all through Jerusalem, and mark the cross (TAU) on the forehead of all who deplore and disapprove of all the filth practiced in it.” Those signed with the TAU will be saved. Those without the mark will not be saved.

The TAU we wear is called the cross of St Anthony in the dictionary. St. Francis saw the TAU as the cross of Christ and God’s salvation for us. Our TAU Cross is a sign that we belong to God. It is also a sign of the penitent. The TAU became St. Francis ‘Coat of Arms.’

He used it as his signature in his writings and drawings. Two major events, the Antonians and the Fourth Lateran Council, influenced St. Francis concerning the TAU. The Antonians were a religious community of men founded in 1095 with the purpose to care for lepers.

St. Francis was at the Fourth Lateran Council and heard Pope Innocent III say that “The TAU has exactly the same form as the Cross on which our Lord was crucified on Calvary, and only those marked with this sign with sign will obtain mercy who have mortified their flesh and conformed their life to that of the crucified Christ.”

Pope Innocent III on Nov. 11, 1215, announced that “For him, for the Church and for every Catholic at that time, the symbol they were to take as the sign of their Passover was the TAU Cross. It is a three fold Passover in which every Catholic must be involved. The triple Passover:

- a Corporal Passover,
- a Spiritual Passover, and
- an Eternal Passover.”



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## How my Franciscan Journey brought about my ordination to Priesthood — by Father Chet Collins

My becoming a **Franciscan** and a Priest began much earlier in my life, many years before it actually happened. However, it was only after I became a part of the Fraternity of St. Anthony's at Cross in the Woods that everything came together. Although I was active in the Church as a Reader, Extraordinary Eucharistic Minister and even usher, I had all but given up on priesthood or ever living the **Franciscan** way of life. It changed during my preparation for making my profession to the **Secular Franciscans**, because members of the order encouraged me to look beyond just becoming a **Franciscan**, at least one suggesting that I give thought to becoming a permanent deacon as well. I checked out the deacon program, but wasn't given much encouragement by the program director at the time.

After making my profession, I eventually advanced to vice minister of the fraternity at Cross in the Woods. This made it possible for me to attend many regional meetings and events. I also took it upon myself to represent the fraternity at the meetings of our neighboring fraternity, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Fraternity located in Lewiston. Attending meetings at both fraternities allowed the two fraternities to work together and to share activities. It also allowed the Lewiston fraternity to eventually kidnap me, and shortly thereafter make me their fraternity minister. The members of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

fraternity, like those of St. Anthony at Cross in the Woods, gave me encouragement, often telling me I should have been a priest. It was this encouragement, given to me by my **Secular Franciscan** brothers and sisters, along with several members of my parish, at the Cathedral, that brought about my decision to approach Bishop Hebda, and ask him if he would consider allowing me, at my advanced age of 64, to finish my seminary studies. After undergoing the required testing, I returned to my studies for priesthood. During my studies my **Franciscan** brothers and sisters continued to be supportive and gave me encouragement the few times I was able to be with them, not to mention their many notes, letters, and cards.

I believe that my **Franciscan** background and way of life, has been and will continue to be a big influence on my way of dealing and meeting with people as a priest. Attempting to follow in the footsteps of **St. Francis**, **St. Anthony**, **St. Clare** and the numerous other **Franciscan** saints, always joining in the singing hymns that have **Franciscan** connections, reminds me, and allows me to treat my parishioners with **Franciscan** compassion, peace and joy. I am most grateful that my **Franciscan** background allows me not to worry about worldly things, and helps me have the grace to bring the love of Christ to others, that through his love he makes all things good.





A message from Barb Collins,  
Formation Minister

Jeralyn Wisniewski and Jean Corpe have been on a special journey the past few years during which time they have completed orientation, inquiry, and in March of 2014 became candidates of the Order of Franciscan Seculars.

As we prepare to enter the new year of 2016, Jeralyn and Jean will have reached another milestone in their journey. In the New Year they will have completed their period of candidacy and will be ready to make their profession into the Community of Franciscans.

As the time for their profession draws near, we ask that you pray with them, and for them, as they seek God's will for them and their commitment to the Rule of the Franciscan way of Life. That they will be ready to accept the obligations of living a Franciscan life, along with the spiritual depth, that comes from living the Rule of Life as approved by our Holy

Father St. Frances. That is: Going from Gospel to life and from life to Gospel.

Also, we wish to acknowledge that Shirley Wolf and Lori Ponchart have been following Jeralyn and Jean on a similar journey. If they faithfully continue this journey, they too will be ready to make their profession in the Franciscan Community later in 2016 about July or August.

This past month we had the honor of welcoming Donna Tobias as a candidate of our fraternity. We ask that everyone keep Donna in their prayers as she struggles with, and accepts the cross of dealing with serious illness.



## Stewards of the Earth

– Article contributed by C. Lynn, OFS

In previous issues of our Newsletter, we began an on-going discussion of what we can do to be better Stewards of the Earth. We were asked to review our use of resources and simply cut waste of these valuable gifts in our day-to-day lives. We later looked at the way we eat and suggestions were made for ways to eat that would be healthier for our bodies and the planet. In the interim, our Holy Father, Pope Francis, gave us his encyclical, **Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home**. This comprehensive and brilliant letter calls us to recognize the "urgent ecological crises" and to change the ways we take care of ourselves, others, and all of creation.

The purpose of this and the following articles is to summarize and discuss Pope Francis's letter along with presenting his solutions and call for action. We've been hearing about global warming and pollution for decades now, and most of us would rather not hear about it and wish the whole mess would just go away. Many don't believe it's actually a problem, and if it really is, then technology will be developed to fix it, and everything will be fine, and we can continue as usual. Pope Francis writes: "[u]rgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. **Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions.**"

The language Pope Francis uses in his letter is strong – more like the way Jesus spoke, "I have come to set fire to the earth... Do you suppose I came to establish peace on earth? No indeed, I have come to bring division" (Luke 12:49-52). Jesus minced no words when not using parables to teach. (See Matthew 5-7 – no pussy-footing here!) Nor does Pope Francis. Our current "throw-away" consumerist culture has developed for the economic gain of the powerful few with no concern for the common good. Hundreds of millions of tons of waste are generated each year, much of it toxic and/or non-biodegradable. One-third of all food produced is discarded. Toxic chemicals from industrial and agricultural activities pour into rivers, lakes and seas as ground water, soil and air are also polluted. Emissions of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases from the use of fossil fuels are changing the climate.

Climate change from the use of fossil fuels has grave environmental implications which affect everyone, especially the poor. Water is wasted and polluted, and an acute water shortage is predicted within the next few decades. The oceans and marine life are being polluted and overfished and forests are being cut down to allow for more grazing land for beef cows. Industrial farms grow genetically modified monocultures which threaten all plant life.

All of this high growth in business and supposed "improvements" are instead resulting in a decline in the quality of human life and the breakdown of society. People are only one of God's creatures, and all creatures have the right to clean air, water and a present and future that includes life, happiness and dignity. This is the "common good." Climate change can be alleviated by developing forms of renewable energy and developing production and transportation methods which consume less energy. Growing organic diverse crops, changing production methods, city planning, and so forth are all things that can be done, but we do not have the culture needed to confront this crisis. And we lack the leaders capable of moving in another direction that is concerned for all of us on Earth and future generations.

Pope Francis states, "As often occurs in periods of deep crisis which require bold decisions, we are tempted to think that what is happening is not entirely clear. We want to think that things are not that serious and the planet could continue as it is for some time. Such evasiveness serves as a license to carrying on with our present lifestyles and models of production and consumption. This is the way human beings contrive to feed their self-destructive vices: trying not to see them, trying not to acknowledge them, delaying the important decisions and pretending that nothing will happen....It is my hope that this Encyclical Letter, which is now added to the body of the Church's social teaching, can help us to acknowledge the appeal, immensity and urgency of the challenge we face."

(to be continued next issue)

C. Lynn, OFS 11/2015





*A Message From Minister Annette Dolan*

**I would like to share with everyone some of the wonderful Prayers,  
Love & gratitude to our Lady.  
LADY, HOLY QUEEN, HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD, VIRGIN!**

“I GREET YOU, Lady, Holy Queen, Holy Mary, Mother of God, Virgin...chosen by the most holy Father of heaven: consecrated to holiness through His most holy and beloved Son and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. In you was and is the whole fullness of grace and everything that is good.” —St. Francis.

“Mary, mother of Jesus, please be a mother to me now.” Blessed Mother Teresa.

Blessed Mother, my Mother, your Mother, the Mother of our Order, the Fifth Gospel.

Of course, we all know the names of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. How many of us know the name of the fifth Gospel: ? —Mary

She is the Gospel written by God through Her life. We are each called to be living Gospels like Mary. Mary is our Mother in faith. She is the first believer in Jesus Christ, the Son announced to her and conceived in her womb by the Holy Spirit.

Our Secular Franciscan Rule Four calls us to devote ourselves “especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel.”

As the fifth Gospel, as the first believer, as our Mother, Mary can lead us all into a closer encounter with all the Gospels and with her Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Our Secular Franciscan Rule Nine tells us of the great love our Father Francis had for the Blessed Mother: “She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family. The Secular Franciscan should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.

Tom Bello, OFS

“Hail, advocate of the poor! Fulfill toward us your office of protectress until the time set by the Father.”

“Mary the Mother who cared for Jesus, now cares with maternal affection and pain for this wounded world. Just as her pierced heart mourned the death of Jesus, so now she grieves for the sufferings of the crucified poor and for the creatures of this world laid to waste by human power.” Pope Francis

**Know for certain that I am the perfect and perpetual Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God...here I will show and offer all my love, my compassion and protection to the people.  
I am your merciful Mother, the Mother of all who love me, of those who cry to me, of those who have confidence in me.**

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--**Message from Annette**--Continued from page 5

**Know for certain that I am the perfect and perpetual Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God... here I will show and offer all my love, my compassion and protection to the people.**

**I am your merciful Mother, the Mother of all who love me, of those who cry to me, of those who have confidence in me.**

**Here I will hear their weeping and their sorrows...their necessities and misfortunes. Listen and let it penetrate your heart.**

**Do not be troubled or weighed down with grief. Do not fear any illness or vexation, anxiety or pain.**



**Am I not here who am your Mother?**

**Are you not under my shadow and my protection?**

**Am I not your fountain of life?**

**Are you not in the fold of my mantle?**

**In the crossing of my arms?**

**Is there anything else you need?**

Depiction of the conversation between our Blessed Mother and St. Juan Diego.

## OUR FRATERNITY

### Councilors:

Dorothy McNamara, OFS

Joanne Witkop, OFS

Marion Byrne, OFS

Andrea Teagan, OFS

### Minister

§ JPIC Rep: Annette Dolan, OFS

Vice Minister: Bob Berg, OFS

Secretary: Christine Lynn, OFS

Treasurer: David Witkop, OFS

Formation: Barb Collins, OFS

Gatherings: The 3rd Sunday of every month  
12:30—2:30 at St. Mary Cathedral