



## *Eastern Canada OFS Update: Celebrating Our Franciscan Way of Life*

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### **A Few Words from Your Regional Minister**

As we know, this is an important time of the year for Franciscans: the third and fourth of October hold special significance for us. On October 3, we celebrate Francis' Transitus: his passage from this life to the next. And on October 4, we celebrate his feast day. On both occasions we joyfully acknowledge our spiritual father and give thanks to God for the great gift of our Franciscan Charism and vocation.

This issue of the Update, following the recent Regional Elective Chapter, is an opportunity to share with you our new Regional Council. In our respective reflections, are reminders of how and why we commenced our Franciscan spiritual journeys. Individually and collectively, in our own small way we contribute to the Franciscan family. God has truly given us a great gift! It is right for us to celebrate our Charism...and also essential for us to share it with others.

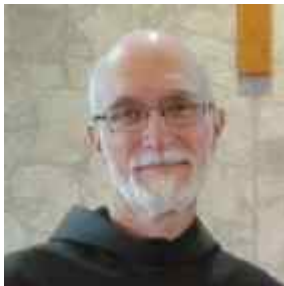
Fraternal regards,

Gerry Gabriel, OFS  
Minister, Regional Fraternity of Eastern Canada  
(RFEC)

### **Why I Became a Franciscan Friar**

*Brother Gerry Clyne OFM, Regional Spiritual Assistant, Regional Fraternity of Eastern Canada*

Before I knew about St. Francis or even was a Catholic, I was interested in Religious Life. I desired to become a Religious because I wanted to live a radical life of prayer and ministry within the context of a very intentional community. This intensity of prayer, ministry and communal/fraternal life requires living a radical form of the Evangelical Counsels (Poverty, Chastity and Obedience) under vows. This is the essence of Religious Life - no matter which Religious Order.



Eventually, however, I discovered St. Francis, his order and his spirituality. Franciscan spirituality appealed to me more than other spiritualities in the Church, especially with its emphasis on the Primacy of Christ and its Christ-centred perspective on creation. Also, being non-monastic, its emphasis on active ministry and witness in and to the world appealed to my Evangelical (Methodist) roots. Lastly, the Franciscans also best suited my life situation - allowed me the freedom to continue contact with my non-Catholic family.

The OFS appealed to me for basically the same reasons as the Friars did: my interest in intentional Christian community (even if not so intensive) in the context of a Franciscan spirituality and its emphasis on witness in the world (Gospel to Life; Life to Gospel). So, while applying to the OFM, I began formation into the OFS. When I was accepted to the Friars, I maintained that connection with the OFS by becoming a Spiritual Assistant. Being an S.A. has been an avenue of ministry for me and a way to stay in touch with the bigger Franciscan family.

## Exploring Franciscan Spirituality

*Carol David, Vice-Minister Eastern Ontario, Regional Fraternity of Eastern Canada*

I became a Franciscan because at around that time in my life I began to feel a deep calling to grow spiritually and to embrace a more radical way of living. No doubt, the Holy Spirit was very much nudging me forward. In Francis, I discovered a kindred spirit—his love for God, for neighbour, and for creation resonated deeply with me. Since then, I have never looked back.

The Franciscan path has brought countless blessings into my life, my family, and my wider community. On the day of my profession back in September 1999, it felt as though life itself had transformed—from a black and white photograph into vivid technicolour.

Pax et Bonum!



## My Franciscan Walk with God

*Mary McKenna, Vice-Minister Quebec, Regional Fraternity of Eastern Canada*



My decision did not come overnight to be a Secular Franciscan, only because of the commitment. For years I prayed to St Francis for help in making this decision. And once I decided to become one, it has increased my understanding of the walk with God. I made my profession in 2011 to the Secular Franciscan Order with the Fraternity of St Francis and St. Clare. I have served as Treasurer and am now in my second term as Minister of this local fraternity.

At our recent Regional Elective Chapter, my brothers and sisters showed trust and confidence in me, and elected me to serve as Vice-Minister for the Quebec Area. Accordingly, I do believe I have things to offer. As I go forth to serve, I recall what St Francis was asked by God: *humility, love, and to preach the Gospel by his actions, not his words.*

## **A Story of Engagement in a Franciscan Way of Approaching Life**

*Martha Gabriel, Vice-Minister Atlantic, Regional Fraternity of Eastern Canada*

I grew up around Franciscan friars in the summertime, and always enjoyed spending informal time together with them. The friars had a summer cottage on a lake where we spent time as kids, and we used to play tennis or go boating with a number of the vacationing friars each summer... Our family also occasionally went to the chapel at the Franciscan friars' summer place for Mass on Sunday, and we'd then be invited to stay on and all have breakfast together. Our family became very good friends with several friars, and attended several ordinations and first Masses. Our two best Franciscan friends presided at our (Gerry's and my) wedding, and one friar (years later) was able to participate at our 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary celebration, and preside at the Mass.



So when Gerry and I were quietly attending Mass in Cornwall one weekend, and Marion and Doug Clorey spoke to the congregation about the Secular Franciscan Order, and about a fraternity of Franciscans who met at our parish, I was curious. I also felt very comfortable with the idea of Franciscans... but I did not know many details about Franciscan spirituality.

To make this long story short, I wanted to pursue this opportunity and learn more... That all happened over 30 years ago. I believe that I was already oriented toward exploring the Franciscan way of life due in large measure to my very positive experiences with people who were following St. Francis in their own lives. The past 30+ years as a member of a Secular Franciscan fraternity have certainly been seminal in my own spiritual journey... in fact, I cannot imagine what my faith life would have been like over these last three decades without being an engaged member of my Franciscan fraternity/family! I treasure my own growth in trying to live the Franciscan charism, as well as the wonderful community that is now my expanded family, and I look forward to continuing to serve my sisters and brothers in whatever ways I can.

## **My Franciscan Journey**

*Luba Legault, Treasurer, Regional Fraternity of Eastern Canada*



My Franciscan journey started about 28 years ago. We lived in an area where I had 3 churches that I attended every day; one of them was only a 10 minute walk. Because of financial reasons, we had to move. For the next 2 months I prayed my Lord Jesus that if He wants me to go to Mass every day, I prayed to help us find a home close to a church, because my mother was 90 years old, and I could not leave her alone too long.

My husband was looking through the newspaper for apartment advertising and told me we had an appointment that day. When we arrived at the address on Hope Street, I noticed that there was a church just across the street on Rene Levesque. At that time, I did not know that it was a Franciscan Friary.

We moved in February 1998 and started attending Mass every morning, and I felt at peace in that Chapel. Josefina Bangalan noticed me and invited me to attend the Immaculate Conception Fraternity meeting, but because my mother needed me, I told her why I could not. My mother died

August 16, 1999, and on that morning Fr. Brendan announced that the Mass was offered for my mother. Josefina came over and said “now you have no excuse, you can join Immaculate Conception Fraternity. I started Initial Formation and was Professed June 11, 2001.

At the next Elective Chapter, I was elected Minister. It is only because of Fr. Clarence, who helped me to prepare each meeting that I was able to lead. I was also Treasurer, Vice-Minister, and elected again Minister in 2015 and 2018 until 2022. I thank my Heavenly Father! God alone brought me and introduced me to the Seraphic Order of St. Francis of Assisi.

Peace and all good,

Luba

## Following in the Footsteps of Francis

*Carol Allen, Secretary, Regional Fraternity of Eastern Canada*

I got to know about St Francis, at 15 yrs of age, when my parents moved to Montreal from Trinidad and Tobago. Slowly, later on I got to know him, as the Franciscan Mission Church, St Joseph's Friary, became my ('parish') church. In 2002, I made my permanent profession to the Secular Franciscan Order with the Immaculate Conception Fraternity. I have served on Council as the Director of Formation, as well as more recently, the Secretary. What I have really appreciated is the sense of fraternal community; this has enabled my personal spiritual growth.



St. Francis' search for Christ and his 'becoming' Christ, his humility, appeals to me. I am still learning to become a true Christian and a faithful Secular Franciscan. Francis continues to teach me; the journey is not over.

## Why a Secular?

*Claudia Batchilder, Formation Director, Regional Fraternity of Eastern Canada*



It was in the 1990s and two friends and I saw pamphlets at the back of our church advertising St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity's "Come and See" event 60 km. away. Our welcome was warm but not pushy. And there we saw a couple of spiritually well-grounded people we knew.

As we were driving home we discussed the evening, and we planned to go back because they were not "too crazy". We just had a new pastor who encouraged us to always go deeper in our relationship with God. I knew parish was not enough. I needed a more intimate relationship with my

Catholic family...and I came to realize this was it! I had also thought about religious life but I discerned the call to holiness is for the lay faithful to live out in their Baptismal call.

Profession was a big celebration for me as a single person, and the next big one will be my funeral. I try to live out my Franciscan spirituality in my parish work and in my relationships with others. It is an exercise in daily conversion! With the grace of God and the unconditional love and support of my Franciscan family it can be done! I guess that is why I enjoy my work in formation. As I support others in their formation, I become formed myself.

Thank you! Pax et bonum, Claudia

## My Franciscan Spiritual Journey

*Gerry Gabriel, Minister, Regional Fraternity of Eastern Canada*

It is just over 30 years ago that I made my Permanent (Perpetual) Profession as a Secular Franciscan. It does not seem that long ago. My Permanent Profession came after journeying with a number of other candidates, and one year of temporary profession. My Profession was a special event, in part because I was making this commitment at the same time that my wife Martha was. As result, our mutual profession enriched not only our personal lives but also our marriage.



Why did I become a Secular Franciscan? The simple answer is that God called me to be. More exactly, my Franciscan vocation was a gift from God at a time when I needed it most. In hindsight, my decision to enter the Secular Franciscan Order was transformative...it eventually enabled me to take “a path less travelled”. Over these many years with the OFS, God has blessed me with many gifts and graces. I am eternally grateful for God’s love and goodness. The interesting and challenging reality is that one’s spiritual journey is never complete. If we are open and receptive, God leads us to further growth and development. As our OFS Rule indicates, we are called to daily conversion. Part of the joy of the journey, is that we do not journey alone...we have sisters and brothers to support us and encourage us along the Way.

## The Transitus of St. Francis of Assisi “passing over” from this life to the glory of heaven: October 3<sup>rd</sup>

It has long been a pious tradition of prayer and devotion for Franciscans to keep this night as a remembrance of his passing (transitus) to God. Here is a Transitus service that you might consider using for a gathering on October 3 for your own fraternity:

[The Transitus of St. Francis](#)

## Celebrating Our Franciscan Regional and Local Fraternities!



OFS members from the Québec and Eastern Ontario Areas gathered to celebrate the Feast of the Portiuncula together at La Réparation Capuchin Friary in Montreal (Sanctuary of Reparation to the Sacred Heart and of St. Padre Pio) on August 2, 2025



The Regional Fraternity of Eastern Canada Elective Chapter at Le Cénacle, Cacouna, QC, July 18-20, 2025



Lorraine Gillan, 95 years young, celebrating with members of St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity, Cornwall, PEI



Members of Our Lady of the Philippines Fraternity at our Regional Elective Chapter in Cacouna



*Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, Who is the day and through whom You give us light. And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor; and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.*



Celebrating the 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St. Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures* with artwork done by children, and then quilted by hand (Margaret Quinlivan-Hall and Ferris MacPherson, St. Bonaventure Fraternity, Halifax, NS)



The new Council of St. Francis of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Fraternity Patrick Denison, Michel David, Joan Moran, and Carol David. Missing from picture: John Moran and Fr. Moe



The new Council of Our Lady of the Philippines Fraternity: Edith Valenzuela, Ermina De La Cruz, Bernadette Jalea, Edralyn Bigcas, Modesta Estoque

*Praise and bless my Lord  
and give Him thanks  
and serve Him with great  
humility.*





St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity Annual Retreat at Our Lady of Hope Retreat Center, New London, PEI. A number of members from all of the Atlantic Area fraternities attended.



Music Ministers Eric Lasota and Brother Gerry Clyne leading music at the Regional Elective Chapter in Cacouna, July, 2025.



OFS Canada Elective Chapter, Québec City, QC, June, 2025



*Be praised my Lord, for  
all Your creatures, great  
and small!*