



K A N S A S T M I S S O U R I T O K L A H O M A

Minister's Message

Headlines

- Newly Elected Minister's Message
- New Column "Francis & You"
- New fraternity spiritual assistant
- Franciscan Flash Mob!

Inside this issue:

Minister's Message 1-2

Francis & You 3-4

May the peace and joy of Jesus Christ be with you, and may the blessings of St. Francis and St. Clare fill your hearts!

I pray you will read this message with a kind heart as this is my first Minister's Message as your new Minister. To start I want to thank the outgoing members of the REC, especially Alice Crews. Alice, those are going to be big shoes for me to fill! Your dedication, sacrifice and giving of precious time to the Juan de Padilla Region these many years goes beyond words. Thank you, and God bless you, Alice. Now, enjoy your well earned rest. But not too comfortable. I'm sure the council can still find good work for you to do!

Needless to say, I was humbled and shocked when I realized that I was elected Regional Minister. In my eyes any position on a council is first and foremost a position of service, which I am

happy to accept. But it is also a position of responsibility and leadership, and here I fear my inadequacy. My only hope lies in the other members of the REC, the fraternity ministers and all of you, my Franciscan brothers and sisters. I was overwhelmed with the kindness and pledges of support I received from the members present at the election. I thank all of you and want you to know that I will not forget your generous offers of help. When you told me "If you need anything, call," I trust you meant it. So, don't be surprised when I do call!

And, I apologize to my fellow REC members. I'm a newbie on the council, like some others, and will need a lot of hand-holding at the beginning. I'm a relatively fast learner, but the ways of Regional and National councils are only book-learned. To be involved in the way that this council *(continued on page 2)*



Regional Executive Council

Formation Corner	5
New Spiritual Assistant	6
The "Q"	7
Fraternity News	8-11
JPIC	12-13

Spiritual Assistant	Fr. Michael Scully OFM Cap	frmikescully@yahoo.com
Minister	Judith Cronk OFS	judyklynne@gmail.com
Vice Minister	Greg King OFS	rgregking@gmail.com
Secretary	Dona Gibbons OFS	donagibbons2@gmail.com
Treasurer	Claudia Kauzlarich OFS	claudiakauz.sfo@gmail.com
Formation Director	Janice Keeley OFS	catholics2@hotmail.com
Kansas Councilor	Geri Rupp OFS	gerirupp@hotmail.com
Missouri Councilor	Maria Epperson OFS	epperson@aol.com
Oklahoma Councilor	Deacon Mark Keeley OFS	catholics2@hotmail.com



(Continued from page 1)

works in reality will take me some time to learn. Please be patient.

On a quirky note, after re-reading Alice's Message from our Summer Newsletter (yes, I confess that I was so nervous over writing my first Minister's Message I had to read what Alice had done in the past to find direction!), I realized that I am the fifth Regional Minister for Juan de Padilla.

This is a good sign. Five has always been my God-given lucky number - my birthday is on 5/5! Let's hope God remembers this and continues to offer me His holy grace for the next three years!

To begin, I feel I should state what I hope for the Region in the next three years, and I see a number of important issues on which we should focus. First of all, I want us to heal. We have gone through a lot of problems and issues in the last five years that have torn us apart as a Region and as individual fraternities. They were painful times, heart-wrenching times, and I thank the former REC for its dedication and struggle in handling them. But, it is time to let God heal the wounds. For reasons known only to God, we had to walk through those fires, maybe to learn, maybe to temper our wills, maybe to grow in holiness. But now, I invite you to pray for peace in our fraternities and for direction on how to become whole once again.

I would also like all of us to pray and meditate on what it really means to be Franciscan. It is so easy in this world of quick information and fancy technology to be swayed to compromise the direction that was clearly given to us by St. Francis in our holy rule. We used to commonly hear the term "cafeteria Catholic," picking and choosing only those laws and directives that we wanted to follow. The same holds true for our Franciscanism. As directed by Fr. Scully at our Formation in Wichita, a prayerful, daily reading of the gospel, and I add reading and rereading AND rereading of our rule as well, will help us daily to live our promise - ALL of it. Each of us made a promise to God to be Catholic and to be Franciscan. I pray that each of us embraces the vows we have freely chosen with joy and submission.

Finally, in our 20th year as a Region, I feel it is time to look not only for renewal but growth. So many of our fraternities are enjoying a blessed increase in new candidates. Even newly emerged fraternities are doing well. But we still have fraternities that have recently deactivated and others who are struggling - struggling with aging and ill members, and struggling financially to hold it all together. How can we as a region assist all of our fraternities in flourishing? How can fraternities who have larger communities and who are financially well off help those fraternities in need? I applaud the members who have left the love and security of their own fraternities to join fraternities who are struggling, or to emerge as a new fraternity to open our Franciscan way to those in rural areas. How do we tell our parish communities of the blessings and graces of our Franciscan family? I ask all of you to pray over these issues and to participate in forging a new time in our region by helping to solve these problems together in a loving and Franciscan way.

We have so much to be grateful for. Every night in my examen I find more and more blessings that the Lord puts in my life, in our fraternity and in our Region. But, these blessings and the success of the REC and the region can only happen if all of us work together. Remember, many of us elected to councils are amateurs and volunteers in the positions we fill. We are learning as we go, especially me. All we have to offer is our willingness to serve with the grace of God. We cannot hope to solve all of our problems; only God in His omnipotent power and unconditional mercy can do that. But, we are here, with His help, to try. As your servants, know that we, the REC, can't do our jobs without your kind Franciscan prayers, understanding and support. With that, we pledge, with the Grace of God through the power of the Holy Spirit, to do the best we can. So be it, so be it.

Pax et Bonum!

Judith Cronk, OFS, Regional Minister





We are pleased that Father Mike Scully, Regional Spiritual Assistant of the Juan de Padilla Region, agreed to write a regular column to further our formation as Franciscans. If you feel that this column is a good addition to the newsletter, please let him know.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

REFERENCES:

Omer Englebert, St. Francis of Assisi

At Spoleto, where he stopped for the night, the mysterious voice spoke to him again in his sleep.

"Francis," it said to him, "where are you going like this?"

"I am going to fight in Apulia," replied the young man.

"Tell me," the voice continued, "From whom can you expect most, the master or the servant?"

"From the master, of course!"

From the Regional Spiritual Assistant:

"Then why follow the servant, instead of the master on whom he depends?"

"Lord, what would You have me do?"

"Return to your own country. There it shall be revealed to you what you are to do, and you will come to understand the meaning of this vision."

Francis awoke, and unable to go back to sleep, spent the rest of the night in reflection. Abandoning his project, he took the road back to Assisi the next day. He was about twenty-five years old. [chapter 2]

Scripture: Acts 9:1-19

Paul's conversion account.

M. Scott Peck, The Road Less Traveled

Among the factors that the schema of the differing severity of mental illness fails to take into account is an ephemeral something in the individual patient which might be called a "will to grow." It is possible for an individual to be extremely ill and yet at the same time possess an extremely strong "will to grow," in which case healing will occur. On the other hand, a person who is only mildly ill, as best we can define psychiatric illness, but who lacks the will to grow, will not budge an inch from an unhealthy position. I therefore believe that the patient's will to grow is the one crucial determinant of success or failure in psychotherapy. Yet it is a factor that is not at all understood or even recognized by contemporary psychiatric theory.

[Section IV, Grace; Resistance to Grace]

Bob Seger, "Understanding"

It seems like only yesterday, I didn't have a clue. I stood alone not knowing where to turn. Now suddenly I look around, and everything looks new. I don't know why, but I think I'm starting to learn. They call it understand, a willingness to grow. I'm finally understanding: there's so much I could know.

Continued on the next page



Continued from previous page

I often quote the song “The Rock” by Harry Chapin in the talks that I give to young people. It tells the story of a young man who receives the vision that a rock on top of the mountain above his town will eventually destroy the town. Receiving no help from his parents or friends who tell him that “that rock has been up there for a hundred thousand years,” he decides to save the town by himself and stop the rock. In exasperation at the end of the song, he finds that the only thing he can do is to run under the rock to stop it from coming. Chapin ends the song: “High up on the mountain when the wind is hitting it, if you’re watching very closely, the rock slips a little bit.”

Because it was still coming. The people of the town could ignore it all they wanted, but it was still coming.

Applied to the spiritual life, there are many “rocks” that can destroy our way of life. But there are also many ways to stop those rocks, many things that we can do in order to prevent spiritual destruction.

But before we can use any of them, we have to develop an essential attitude of the spiritual life, what might be called, a “willingness to grow.” One of the important moments of Francis’ conversion was his inability to answer the vision’s question “Where are you going”, because only then, was he able to begin his spiritual life. He was willing to grow. He didn’t know where he was going, but he was willing to look for the answer.

Truly spiritual people must spend time with the question “Where are you going” because it can lead them to see that they may not have done enough in their spiritual lives. Older spiritual people may even discover that they have stopped growing. To celebrate any type of conversion requires a *desire* to celebrate it in the first place. Popular authors call it a “willingness to grow”; a secular Franciscan should experience it every day of their lives.

1. *What is most striking to you in a) the reading from Omer Englebert; b) the reading from M. Scott Peck?*
2. *What are the principal blocks to our spiritual lives?*
3. *Given the situation of our current secular Franciscan fraternity, what are the specific ways that we can strengthen our spiritual lives?*
4. *Francis responded to the question “Where are you going” with the question “What do you want me to do.” Given our current situation, what does the Lord want from us most of all?*
5. *Paul the Apostle became such a great leader because he was willing to grow. In general, are most of today’s secular Franciscans willing to advance into a deeper spiritual life? Yes or no, and why?*
6. *[A personal question, that each one of us must answer in as honest a way as possible.] Am I making the effort to grow in my spiritual life? Yes or no and why?*





THE FORMATION CORNER



Janice Keeley
Formation Director
In the Sea of Galilee

“Toto, I have the feeling that I am not in Kansas anymore.” Actually, I am originally from North-central Kansas, although I am now “at home” in Oklahoma. The reason I am “at home” is because I have found like-minded people in my church and in my fraternity.

It takes a lot more to live a Catholic life than ever before. We need to know where we can go to find at least one or two people who agree with us on important issues. All of you know, however, that even among Catholics and Franciscans there are many differences of opinion and manners of practicing the Faith. All of these factors can cause us to hear and occasionally say, “This must be the beginning of ‘end times’.”

I am using this column to offer my encouragement. At the Chapter of Elections in Wichita on September 24, I bumped shoulders with a regional council of devoted Franciscan Catholics who want to lead the Juan de Padilla Region to the heights of Franciscan Spirituality, focused on Jesus Christ through the **Gospels**. I was very “humbled” (and I know everyone is saying that ‘nowadays’) to have been re-elected Formation Director of the Region, especially after I heard the reports everyone gave about activities in their home fraternities. Your fraternities are doing very important and necessary services for your communities. Also, nearly everyone has been studying the **FUN Manual** and using **Franciscan Journey** in formation or ongoing formation, which I believe is a good thing.

It seems that everyone is very concerned that our new members are adequately formed and that we are being very particular in our member-selection process. We learned that when St. Francis chose new brothers, he required that they spend one year caring for lepers before profession. You should be comforted to know that we have not added that requirement, but hopefully our candidates are showing a willingness to study and to participate in the apostolates we are performing in our fraternities.

Praying together with fraternity is also important. Servant of God, Father Patrick Peyton (d. 1992) who promoted the rosary by saying, “the family that prays together, stays together” and “a world at prayer is a world at peace” could have been speaking to us in our fraternity families.

The Regional Executive Council (REC) decided that at all future large gatherings of OFS members in our region, we will use the **Shorter Christian Prayer** when praying Liturgy of the Hours for morning and evening prayer. In our fraternities and as individuals, we need to keep practicing and praying the book of **Christian Prayer (1 volume)** or **Divine Office** (4 volumes). The prayers and readings contained in the more inclusive books are the prayers of the Church, and next in importance to the Mass. Check www.sfojuandepadilla.org for **Liturgy of the Hours** instructions and for more prayers that will benefit our order and the world.

The Regional Executive Council, Fr. Mike Scully, OFM Cap and I are discussing plans for having formation/spiritual assistant information sessions in the three areas of our region. Those plans will be communicated to you as soon as we are ready.

In the meantime, keep up your prayer and good works and peace be with you in these troubled times. There have been times like these in the past also. Remember that you are not alone. Give me a call if you want to talk about anything. Janice Keeley, OFS, 918-456-9334

All peace and all good with prayers for you all,

Janice OFS



Capuchin Priest Named Spiritual Assistant for Our Lady of Sorrows

Franciscan prayer, therefore, is Christ-centered, affective, contemplative, cosmic and evangelizing. The goal of prayer is to make Jesus Christ alive in the believer. To bring Christ to life is the way to peace.

Franciscan Prayer –
Ilia Delio OSF



Our region gained another Capuchin priest as a spiritual assistant! Father Barnabas Eichor OFM Cap. who was recently named as the new spiritual assistant for Our Lady of Sorrows fraternity in Olathe, KS has an interesting story.

Father Eichor was born, James Richard Eichor Jr., on June 5, 1962, in Littleton, CO. James Eichor earned a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Anthropology, and Masters of Arts in Anthropology from the University of New Mexico, and a Masters of Science in Economics from Texas A & M University.



Father Barnabas Eichor OFM Cap.

In 1989, James Eichor spent the four years 1989-1993 in the United States Army as part of the 1st Infantry in Fort Riley, KS. He was deployed to Desert Storm and Desert Shield and earned a Kuwait Liberation Medal, an Army Achievement Medal and two Army Commendation Medals.

Prior to entering the army, James Eichor was drawn to the Catholic Church and entered the RCIA program in 2001 at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Denver and was baptized at the Easter Vigil in 2002.

James was drawn to the Capuchins and entered the postulate program in the Capuchin Province of Mid-America. He took the religious name of “Barnabas” (which means, “son of encouragement”) when he entered the Capuchin novitiate on November 30, 2002. Father Barnabas Eichor earned a Master of Divinity from St. John Vianney Seminary, Denver, where he pursued his priesthood studies.

After his investiture in 2002, Barnabus did his novitiate year in Allison Park, PA, and then returned to the province for his post-novitiate training and for his theological studies in preparation for June 24, 2011, which is the date when **Archbishop Charles Chaput OFM Cap.** ordained Father Eichor to the priesthood at Sacred Heart Church in Denver.

Fr. Barnabas’ deacon internship was at Holy Ghost Church in downtown Denver. His first assignment was at St. Joseph’s Parish in Hays, Kansas. He is currently the associate pastor for St. John the Evangelist Church in Lawrence, KS.

Does Your Fraternity Need a Visitation or Chapter of Election in 2017?

All fraternities should have a regional visitation and a Chapter of Elections every three years. If you do need to schedule one or both of these events, contact Judith Cronk, Regional Minister, to get your fraternity on the schedule. If you are not sure, we will let you know.



Don't forget to provide a stipend to your regional visitors.



Quinquennial Congress

SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER



St. Louis
June 30-July 4
2016

My Experience of the "Q"

By Susan Tabor OFM
Brother Jacoba Fraternity, Lawrence, KS

Being with Secular Franciscans from around the nation and the world was awesome!

It's always good to be in the same place as Fathers Murray Bodo and Lester Bach! They are in so many ways so supportive of our order!

Brother Keith Warner, OFM, facilitated a wonderful presentation in which he postulated, quite convincingly, that *Laudato Si* is the most Franciscan of Papal encyclicals.

What moved me most were presentations from Father Daniel Horan, OFM. He brought the teachings of St. Francis and the Gospels right into our world of today. His notes and those of the other speakers can be found on the NAFRA website at the Quinquennial link. Or you can simply go to <http://www.quinquennial.org>. Go to the slides and docs link and you'll find notes on the presentations given by our speakers.

Though I took several things away for prayer and reflection that Father Dan shared, there's one statement that keeps coming back to me: The greatest enemy of discipleship is fear. And that is so true!

May we all pray for the courage to conquer fear in a time when being a good disciple and loving all of God's people, no matter who they are, is so crucial to our growth and survival in our world!



Back row--Judith Cronk (Servants of Divine Mercy); Bob Brill (Br. Jacoba); Mark Keeley (Little Portion); Jackie Monroe (Br. Jacoba)--barely visible; Deanna Perry (St. Elizabeth); Janice Keeley (Little Portion); Mary Mead (Little Portion) Middle row--Lynne Lonnquist (Br. Jacoba); Alice Kowalewski (Servants of Divine Mercy); Jennifer Garrison (St. Elizabeth); Linda Mayer (St. Elizabeth); Ann Marie Neuok (St. Stanislaus-St. Adalbert); Susan Lee (St. Francis); Kay Sullivan (St. Francis); Alice Crews (St. Elizabeth) Front--Susan Tabor (Br. Jacoba); Jonelle Bradshaw (St. Anthony) Not pictured--Dan Lonnquist (Br Jacoba)



Alice Crews with Jonelle and Steve Bradshaw



General Minister, Tibor Kauser OFS



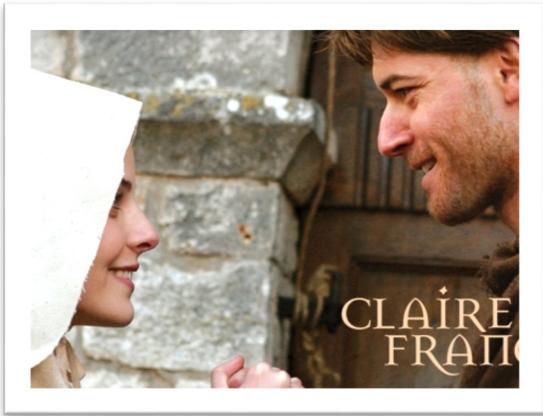
Fr. Lester Bach OFM Cap



NAFRA Minister, Jan Parker OFS

Fraternity News

Day of Reflection & Transitus



Members of the Holy Eucharist fraternity in Independence, Missouri hosted a **Day of Reflection** and a Transitus service on October 1st which featured Father Michael Scully OFM Cap. and the movie, **Clare and Francis**. Father Mike is known for his ability to use the power of the Gospels and media to prompt serious personal reflection.



During the event, Father Mike provided instruction on the truth of the movie and historical facts of St. Francis and St. Clare and provided teaching on the role of Franciscans in the world today. The movie was so touching and brought many to tears. A beautiful Transitus prayer service was held at the end of the day.

The following fraternities participated in this special event: Sacred Heart of Emporia, KS; St. Elizabeth of Leawood, KS; Brother Jacoba of Lawrence, KS; Queen of the Angels of Buckner, MO, and Holy Eucharist of Independence, MO.

If you are interested in hosting this event or a similar event in your area and want to know how to do this, call Father Scully or Sister Josephine for information.



CALENDAR EVENTS 2016

DATE	EVENT	Location
November 12, 2016	Regional Executive Council Meeting	Haskell University, Lawrence, KS
June 8-10, 2017	Regional Annual Retreat	Spiritual Life Center, Wichita, KS
October 2017	NAFRA Visitation to Juan de Padilla	Spiritual Life Center, Wichita, Ks

Fraternity News



St. Anthony, Wichita, Kansas Welcomes New Inquirers



The group with Chris Riggs and Bryan Burkemper on the ends are, from left, Dr. Tony Barba, Adam Nguyen, Jerry Cornejo, and Jean Marie Murry. Welcomed were Jonelle Bradshaw and Lance Reichenberger.

Sacred Heart Election Results Emporia, Ks



Congratulations to the newly elected council of the Sacred Heart Fraternity! Pictured (l-r): Dena Kaminski, Minister; Fran Hudson, Vice Minister; Dorothy Krueger, Secretary; Terri Sturm, Treasurer.; Mary Lou Young, Formation Director.

Our Lady of Sorrows Olathe, KS September Election Results



Congratulations to the newly elected council of Our Lady of Sorrows. Back row -- Nick Novello, councilor; Mike Crevoiserat, treasurer; Charles Gurera, minister; Norma Crevoiserar, vice minister; Renee Schmit, inquirer; Front row: Genna Ferrell, inquirer; Evelyn Holmes; Rose Di Teresi, councilor; Mary Ann Dougherty, secretary; Jeanette Harriman.

Queen of the Angels Holds Elections Buckner, Missouri



Congratulations to the newly elected council of Queen of the Angels Fraternity! Pictured (l-r): Kathy Johnson, minister; Dave and Virginia Forbes, councilors; Cathy Herndon, secretary; Alice Crews, fraternal visitor; Pat Durham, vice minister; Father Scully, pastoral visitor; Dona Gibbons, formation director; Helen Boos, treasurer.

Franciscan Flash Mob!



Franciscans of the Poor of Jesus Christ



St. Elizabeth Fraternity helped with a hot dog booth and other food at a music festival held at Savior Pastoral Center in Kansas City, Kansas. All proceeds went to the Franciscans of the Poor Jesus Christ. The picture shows the brothers and sisters dancing to a song being sung and played. - by Linus Drouhard, minis-

The Sisters of the Poor of Jesus Christ have a street ministry, providing food and clothing for the homeless in Kansas City, KS. Members of the Queen of the Angels Fraternity visited the Sisters to help prepare sandwiches and assemble lunches. Some stayed to help distribute food to the homeless on the streets of the city. (l-r) Kathy Johnson, Kelli McSwain, Cathy Herndon, Helen Boos, Stacey (Kelli's sister), Br. Joseph, Virginia Forbes, Dona Gibbons, Dave Forbes, and Sr. Magdalena.





Fraternity News

Unexpected Recruiting Opportunity – Service to the Parish!



Queen of the Angels fraternity worked for a week, cleaning and decorating the Church of the Santa Fe in preparation for the visit of the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese new leader, Bishop James Johnston.

Bishop Johnston wanted to get a picture of the fraternity to add to his Facebook page. Members talked about how giving service to the parish had been an unintended recruiting activity because several parishioners asked about joining the fraternity during the bishop’s reception. They are now ready to follow through!

Standing in front of the parish kitchen above is (front row l-r): candidate, Kelli McSwain, Dave and Virginia Forbes OFS, Bishop James Johnston, Helen Boos OFS, Dona Gibbons OFS, and Cathy Herndon OFS. Back row (l-r) candidates Mark Robertson, and Janice Cox. Kathy Johnson OFS, and Monsignor Kaiser OFS. Not shown were candidates Margaret Madsen and Jo Keller.



On October 22, 2016 new candidates were admitted to the Queen of the Angels fraternity in Buckner, MO. Monsignor Kaiser OFS looks over (l-r) Mark Robertson OFS, Janice Cox OFS, Jo Keller OFS and Kelli McSwain



Sister Death

NAME	FRATERNITY	CITY, STATE	DATE
Mary Iovan OFS	St. Clare	Norman, OK	January 15
Janice Turner OFS	St. Stanislaus-St. Adalbert	Broken Arrow, OK	January 21
Helen Patrick OFS	St. Clare	Norman, OK	April 16
Martin Palazzolo OFS	St. Francis	Oklahoma City, OK	August 31
Daniel McCue OFS	Holy Eucharist	Independence, MO	October 8

(Please let Judith know of any deaths in your respective fraternities.)



JPIC Corner

Greetings of Peace and all Good, my Franciscan family!

I hope and pray that each of you celebrated a prayerful and joyful Feast Day of our Seraphic Father Francis of Assisi on October 4, and that you got to also experience a Transitus service which commemorates the movement of our Father Francis from life on earth into eternal life.

Since I last wrote to you, I had the honor and privilege to experience our OFS Quinquennial in St. Louis in late June and early July. As I had anticipated, it was a wonderful experience! Meeting other Secular Franciscans from around this nation and even from around the world really brings home for me the universality of our order!

The NAFRA JPIC Council on which I serve met every day throughout the Q. for lunch. Sometimes we talked about pending Council business and just as often we dialogued with Secular Franciscans from around the nation who wanted to learn more about us and who wanted our input concerning the work they were doing. One group was interested in obtaining help finding resources to help with their campaign not to have fracking move into their geographical area.

One goal the Council has recently adopted is that of all OFS fraternities designating a JPIC animator for their fraternity. Once you designate your fraternity's JPIC animator, I will need to know so that I can add them to my regional JPIC animator mailing list. I will email the animators JPIC-related news which they will then share directly with their fraternities. We feel that this will create a more direct and comprehensive flow of information so that all fraternities can directly receive information and can prayerfully expand their knowledge and practice of justice, peace and integrity of creation.

The JPIC Council is also sponsoring another JPIC conference in the summer of 2017 which will likely be held at the Renaissance Hotel in St. Louis. All JPIC animators will be welcome!

Once each of your fraternities has designated a JPIC animator, please forward the person's name and contact information to me at

souljourner@sbcglobal.net,

and I will email them the JPIC animators' handbook. Thanks for your assistance in helping us grow JPIC!

And yes, I do have some relevant JPIC-related news to share. This pertains to a new work of mercy enthroned by our Pope Francis on September 1 of this year:

(Vatican Radio) To mark the September 1st day of prayer for creation, Pope Francis has added a new work of mercy for Catholics to perform: caring for our common home, the planet and all its inhabitants.

At a press conference on Thursday morning, Cardinal Peter Turkson, head of the new Vatican office for Promoting Integral Human Development, and Bishop Brian Farrell from the Council for Christian Unity, introduced the [Pope's message](#) for this annual observance, together with Irish author Terence Ward.

Philippa Hitchen went along to find out more...

Continued from previous page



Listen:

'It's not every day that you have a new work of mercy in the Catholic Church!' That was how the new director of the Vatican press office, American Greg Burke introduced the briefing, focused on the papal message entitled 'Show Mercy to our Common Home'.

Since biblical times, Christians have been called to carry out 6 acts of mercy, listed in St Matthew's Gospel – giving food and drink to the hungry and thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and the prisoners – with a 7th one, burying the dead, added in medieval times.

Now the new papal message adds an eighth one to that list and, as Terence Ward, author of 'The Guardian of Mercy' pointed out, it could be seen as the most significant of them all...

"Caring for our Common Home. Groundbreaking and visionary, ecumenical and ecological. One could argue that this is the highest work of mercy because it includes all the others, a modern work of mercy for our modern epoch."

As Bishop Brian Farrell explained, it's an issue around which there is broad ecumenical agreement throughout the Christian world, with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and other Orthodox leaders pioneering many groundbreaking initiatives to raise awareness about critical ecological concerns.

But what exactly does this first ever papal message for the day of prayer for creation call for? Not surprisingly, mercy is the key to unlocking that 'ecological conversion' of our hearts that Pope John Paul first called for a quarter of a century ago. As Cardinal Turkson explained, it's a step-by-step process which begins by recognizing the harm we have already done through our selfish, irresponsible and greedy behavior..

"The first step in this process is to humbly acknowledge the harm we are doing to the earth through pollution, the scandalous destruction of ecosystems and loss of biodiversity, and the specter of climate change – which seems nearer and more dangerous with each passing year. And to realize that when we hurt the earth, we also hurt the poor, whom God loves without limit"

After acknowledging the harm done and confessing our sins, we are then called to change our lives, beginning with the small changes that can lower our own carbon footprint, while also advocating for an economic and political system that is just and sustainable, rather than focused on short term financial and electoral gains.

Much of the Pope's appeal to all people of good will was already spelt out a year ago in his groundbreaking encyclical *Laudato Si'* but, as Cardinal Turkson asked at the end of the briefing, how many of us are ready and willing to respond to the challenges that document contained?

"It should not be a document to be read, but [...] a document with practical implications that we should all try to implement and to practice".

[Ecumenism](#)

[Pope Ecology Encyclical](#)

[Laudato si'](#)

[Care of Creation](#)

[The Works of Mercy](#)

*Susan Tabor,
Regional JPIC Animato
Member of the NAFRA JPIC Council*

