



The Tau Signature

Tau Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order – Herndon, Virginia
St. Margaret of Cortona Region

June 2015



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Minister's Message

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

For those of you who were able to attend our retreat at Priestfield, I hope that you had a blessed experience. I encourage each of you to put the dates on your calendar for next year for the retreat (May 20-22, 2016). Please remember that our July meeting will be at Christ the Redeemer (as it was last year). I don't know about the rest of you, but I feel lately like God is putting a lot more people in my path who are in need of prayers (okay, that may be somewhat related to my day job, but not in every circumstance). I have seen so many examples lately of people who from the outside seem to have everything going from them but who are suffering on some level because of their own issues or family issues. This is all in addition to the people in the news that we hear about on a daily basis who are in need of our prayers, both here in the United States and all over the world. It is certainly a reminder of how important our prayer apostolate is - our prayers for others are important. When praying I ask that you pray not only for the victims we hear about in the news and for those who have requested your prayers, but also for those who are in need of prayers but don't ask (for whatever reason). I think Gail words it very well - pray for those who have no one else to pray for them. Please also remember our members who are on inactive status in your prayers. These sisters and brothers are still part of our Franciscan family even though we don't get to see them as often as we would like. I look forward to seeing each of you at our June meeting - and be assured you are all part of my daily prayers.

Peace and blessings, Pamela Brooks, OFS

Recap of Last 5/3/15 Meeting

Opening/Formation:

We started with our opening prayer and grace was said before our meal/social time. At 2 o'clock, the Formation portion of our meeting began with a discussion of our reading assignment, Chapter 4-6 (Part IV) the Gospel of John from Fr. Jude Winkler's book *The Gospels Simply Explained*. At the conclusion, Bob Calderon advised that the copies of *Catching Fire, Becoming Flame*, will arrive in time to be passed out at the June meeting.

Presentation:

Bill Bouffard shared his presentation on the “Franciscan Rule” aka as the red book.

Business Meeting:

- The last call for the annual retreat was made with a total count of 13 fraternity members, plus the retreat master, Father Julio Martinez, to attend. According to Bob, the theme of the retreat is “Mercy – It is in giving that we receive.” Bob relayed that Father Julio had also requested that attendees attempt to attend confession prior to arriving at Priestfield, to allow him more time to devote to leading the retreat agenda. Gail volunteered to assist in the song selection and Veronica accepted the role to lead in facilitating miscellaneous tasks.
- Pam also raised the issue of membership recruitment to all members, emphasizing a policy of “replace yourself” yourself” by trying to identify individuals who appear to have a calling. Vicki inquired about how to proceed, noting past practice of placing recruitment advertisements in papers and church bulletins, as well as publishing brochures containing information about the Secular Franciscan Order. Pam noted those practices met limited success in the past and shared the sentiment that we should reach out to people in the community. Bill Bouffard volunteered to lead recruitment.
- Once again, Pam raised the topic of recruiting volunteers to take over the “Dining with Tau Program.” Clari and Irene stepped forward and agreed to take suggestions on venues and times.
- For June’s meeting, Gail offered to lead the Liturgy of the Hour and John Ata would do the reading.
- In view of the August 2016 fraternity elections, Pam stated that it is not too early for members to pray to and reflect about running for an office. She also noted that our Metro DC area counselor is Bob Longo.
- Pam reminded all those attending the retreat that prior to arriving they should check their emails for last minute prayer requests.
- Pam also noted that John Ata will be adding the fraternity newsletter to the website, and that all should be aware that items submitted to the newsletter will be available on line for public consumption.
- Lastly, Gail shared that she was spiritually moved by a computer app that she found on the Internet called “Examen,” and advised that it is available for free downloading.

St. Vincent de Paul

Keep up the good work in food donations – they are greatly appreciated. I noted the response to last month’s requests for specific items did not go unheeded. Terry

Fraternity Retreat – 2015

Below is background on the retreat along with the thank you note that Bob sent to Father Julio:

Thank you from the Tau Fraternity

The Tau Fraternity held its 2015 annual retreat at the Priestfield Pastoral Center in Center in West Virginia from May 15 – 17, 2015 with Fr. Julio Martinez, O.F.M. from the Shrine of Saint Anthony as the retreat master. There were a total of twelve attendees from the Tau Fraternity. The retreat's theme was "Mercy: It is in giving that we receive". Fr. Julio used Pope Francis' Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy as a primary source document.

"On behalf of the Tau Fraternity, Fr. Julio - thank you very much for this retreat weekend on the theme of 'Mercy'. We have been given much food for thought and prayer as we continue our Franciscan Journey and prepare to join Pope Francis and the Church celebrate the 'Year of Mercy.'

Respectfully, Bob Calderon Tau Fraternity, Vice Minister"



LESSONS FROM THE TAU RETREAT

Gil Donahue, OFS

During May 15-17, 2015, Fr. Julio Martinez, OFM Conv led our annual retreat. He chose mercy as the theme of the retreat sessions, inspired by Pope Francis' recent announcement of the Holy Year of Mercy, to begin on December 8, 2015.

(Note: The text of *Misericordiae Vultus* (The Face of Mercy), the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, is available at the following link: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html).

SUGGESTIONS FOR TAU FRATERNITY

Throughout the sessions, Fr. Martinez had several suggestions for our fraternity to consider in the months and years ahead. These suggestions are organized by broad topic.

Attracting new members: The challenge is to attract young adults. Millennials do not connect with church in the traditional way. They do not feel the church is inclusive. They want to get involved with some concrete project that helps people. Young people do give of themselves and they are very interested in humanity. They also seek openness and acceptance. They accept differences and celebrate them. The “gay issue” is not an issue for them. The question is: how do we enter into a dialogue so we can learn from one another.

Expressing love to one another: The challenge is to make this a reality in our world.

What are you going to do with the love in the fraternity? Allow God to move people—this requires humility—a Franciscan virtue.

Fraternity programs: Ongoing formation keeps feeding the hunger we have for the Lord. We should invite speakers who bring different perspectives – challenge and deepen our spiritual life. Doing so will keep the life of the fraternity interesting. Don’t focus on fluff.

When did you stop telling your story? Within the fraternity, you should have the freedom to tell your story: how you have experienced mercy. Tell the brothers and sisters that you need to receive mercy through them. When we close ourselves off to dialogue, we close ourselves to growth. Something happens through the telling of your story. It is very healing. Akin to journaling (which is generative), telling your story, even to yourself, makes connections in your experiences and enables you to see the big picture.

Living mercy—in the fraternity and the wider community: This is an opportunity to renew ourselves, as a people of God, a family of God, to speak mercy to the people of today. The message of Jesus Christ is peace, mercy, life—not severity.

How do I know what is from God? You must be able to answer yes to the following three questions:

Does it unite you to yourself?

Does it unite you to others?

Does it unite you to God?

Furthermore, does this lead to peace and harmony in our relationships with others and with God?

Addressing poverty, peace and justice issues: As Franciscans we need to deal face to face with the poor. That’s where conversion happens. The poor have much to give us. Part of their poverty is that we all too often assume they have nothing to give us. Many good people are numb and apathetic. They mistakenly think their involvement will not make a difference. If we are Franciscans, we should want to make a difference, and not remain part of the status quo. Jesus came to save us and set us free from all kinds of injustice. We are called to make this freedom a reality in the world.

The community’s role in healing: The community seeks the health of its members. Indirectly, the community is asked the same questions (that the traditional healer asks the individual who is seeking healing). The community, like the individual, has to examine itself.

1-Have we somehow prevented this person from telling his or her story?

What has our role been?

Are we open, or do we simply say we are?

Do we provide a safe, loving environment?

2-Have we created so much noise that this person is unable to sit in silence? Or not have space to be him or her self?

How have we affected the person’s relationship with God?

What have we told this person about silence?

What fruits have we shared?

3-What is our role in this person’s ceasing to listen to music?

Have our expectations caused the music to silence itself?

Have we extinguished the free spirits?

Have we created an atmosphere of grace and mercy?

Do we always do it this way? If so, it points to failure.

What is the fraternity’s track record? Even with the best intentions do we try to over control? The Holy Spirit cannot go there and move things. These attitudes freeze out others and tend to force them into a mold. Or create too safe an environment, which is boring.

4-How have we affected this person’s ability to celebrate his or her life?

Are we placing barriers or restrictions on that person’s freedom?

Community examen: The community needs to do an examen from time to time.

Are we giving God the opportunity to work with us and be present in our community?

What role do we have in encouraging people to sing their stories?

SUGGESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL HEALING

Fr. Martinez explained how some indigenous cultures approach the process of healing one of their members. The community brings to the indigenous healer the person in need of healing.

The indigenous healer asks the first question: ***When did you stop telling your story?***

Pope Francis' emphasis on mercy calls us to tell our own story. The Holy Father is leading us to the Jesus Event. Mercy is the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Jesus incarnates mercy: the very generosity of God. We need to hold it gently (being non-possessive) so we can offer it to others and return to a state of receptivity.

When was the last time you told God your story? Tell me about it. In the telling I will reveal myself and dispense my mercy.

Tell me about how merciful, or unmerciful, you have been with others; I will listen without judgment. This requires personal conversion and transformation. It is important for both the person and the community. The group helps us validate the good and to correct what we've got wrong.

The indigenous healer then asks the second question: ***When did you stop sitting in silence?***

It is important to bring our story into our prayer life. This is how we develop our relationship with God. There are two dimensions here: personal and communal. When we sit in silence we create the space for something profound and intimate between us and God. God invites us into the power of that intimacy—this is the power of silence, the one my soul desires. Indeed, it is the desire of my desire. We need to give God full freedom to express Himself in our lives.

In today's world we have a tendency to run away from silence. We have lots of gadgets to keep our minds going. We have lost the ability to be silent. We have equated silence with loneliness. As a result, we fear silence. This creates an inability of what to do with silence, and how to quiet the mind. We have to distinguish between the words God wants us to hear, and the other things entering our minds, which are distractions.

God is a jealous lover who plays hard to get. To make the relationship work, we have to be productive.

In silence we get to know ourselves more—and this can be scary. We often have ceased to be merciful to ourselves. We stay stuck in our sin and feelings of unworthiness.

We need to be compassionate with ourselves in order to be compassionate with others. We can only give what we already have. We need to discover the unfolding of mercy in our lives. It is in silence that all this bears fruit. We need to reclaim the sacredness of our story. To allow God to create mercy within us so others may find peace in our presence.

The indigenous healer asks the third question: ***When did you stop listening to the music?***

The universe is filled with divine music to which we are called to awaken ourselves. We don't hear it because we are born into it. Almost everything in the universe makes a sound, and we are part of the harmony.

Why have we been created with the gift to make music? Is this an ancestral grace? It is our human way to connect with the universal symphony?

When did you disengage? We often disengage from other people and even ourselves. Mercy is an invitation to keep engaged, to be connected with the music of our own lives. These rhythms dictate the time we spend with others and with God. Mercy provides an opportunity to look at all of it. It gives us hope we will be loved forever. This gives us courage to see the world, confront injustice, and bring peace to the world. We need to identify all those things destroying the harmony of the universe.

When did you stop being fulfilled with all the hope the music provides? Music has a tremendous power because it resonates with the divine music within us. It inspires and exalts.

Finally, the indigenous healer asks the fourth question: ***When did you stop dancing?*** We speak of a God who dances. Our triune God is engaged in a divine dance—the three persons dance together as one.

The healer asks: When did you stop celebrating your life? With yourself, with others, with the community, with God? When did you stop expressing the fruits of your journey? When did you stop hearing the music that you hear and your life creates? What in your life keeps you from joining the universal harmony?

These are areas we need to open to God. Invite God in. We need his mercy in our life. Don't be afraid of letting God loose in your lives. He's wild. He gave us free will. We spend most of our time trying to domesticate Him. We need to speak to God, pray to God, visit God. We need to go to the place where we know, but do not know. The place where we are filled with wonder and where we can still be surprised. We need to be open to Him.

GENIUS OF THE UPCOMING HOLY YEAR OF MERCY

Pope Francis' Bull of Indiction establishing the Holy Year of Mercy is entitled "the Face of Mercy." The document is extremely powerful. He calls us to transform our lives to the ultimate end of union with Jesus. "I am the face of God's mercy."

Pope Francis has issued a wake up call, and he addresses all of Christendom. Each of us needs to consider where and when we have felt mercy. When God has been welcoming me, accepting me, making me feel appreciated, loving me. God's mercy has no bounds and it is unconditional love.

We are called to enter into the event of Jesus: His attitude, how He treated people, the way He healed. He dispensed love and mercy so easily.

Pope Francis calls on the church to be pastoral. This is essential for the credibility of our message. The church's first truth is the love of Christ. Wherever the church is present, the mercy of the father should be also present. Everyone should find in the church an oasis of mercy.

Pope Francis pillories the indifference of the rich. He calls us to rediscover and practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and to reawaken our consciences too often grown dull in the face of poverty.

We are called to open "our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society: fringes modern society itself creates. The Church will be called even more to heal these wounds, to assuage them with the oil of consolation, to bind them with mercy and cure them with solidarity and vigilant care. Let us not fall into humiliating indifference or a monotonous routine that prevents us from discovering what is new! Let us ward off destructive cynicism! Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, and our fraternity!"

Pope Francis notes that mercy is the bridge connecting God and humanity. It is experience that opens our hearts to a love that lasts forever.

Unprecedented for a pope in modern times, Francis excoriates corruption, which "prevents us from looking to the future with hope, because its tyrannical greed shatters the plans of the weak and tramples upon the poorest of the poor. It is an evil that embeds itself into the actions of everyday life and spreads, causing great public scandal. Corruption is a sinful hardening of the heart that replaces God with the illusion that money is a form of power. It is a work of darkness, fed by suspicion and intrigue."

Pope Francis said the extraordinary jubilee year is "dedicated to living out in our daily lives the mercy which the Father constantly extends to all of us. We hope the church becomes an oasis of compassion demonstrated by mercy."

Prayer Submissions

Please forward prayer requests to Terry by the 14th of the month, so that they may be included in the newsletter. Please keep the following members, relatives, and friends in your prayers:

Sally & Gary White and Sally's sister

Mary McCarthy

Richard & Carole Clarke and their son Liam

William Brewster

Helen Broxmeyer

Fr. Alberto's father

Kimberley Heatherington

All those who are in need of our prayers who have been inadvertently omitted from this list.



Tau Fraternity: Next Meeting Date

Tau Fraternity General Meeting:

Sunday, June 7. **Please read chapter 7 & the conclusion (part IV) of the Gospel of John** from the book *The Gospels Simply Explained*, by Rev. Jude Winkler, OFM Conv.

St. Joseph Parish Facility (room 205)

12:30 - 1:30 Inquirer/Candidate Formation

1:30 - Opening Prayer

1:35 - 2:10 Social time with meal

2:10 - 3:00 On going formation

3:00 - 3:10 Break

3:10 - 3:30 Saint presentation or other

3:30 - 4:00 Liturgy of Hours, business meeting, and closing prayer

Readings for Corpus Christi:

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Song: #114 – I Am the Bread of Life

For the next newsletter, please send your prayer requests and submissions to Terry Rinker at reknir12@yahoo.com, or call (703) 383-0562.

