Brothers and Sisters ~

May the Lord give you peace!

The US-6 Provincials met in Albuquerque, New Mexico, January 28-29, 2019, at “The Becoming Place” a reflective meeting place for Our Lady of Guadalupe Province. Very soon, a summary of the minutes of this meeting will be forwarded to all six provinces.

Congratulations to Andrew Tretow, ABVM Director of Communications, for being recognized, by St. Anthony Messenger, for his gifts and talents. The article, The Gift of Unanswered Prayers, is included in this issue of the Provincial Press.

Soon, in a separate update out of the communications office, you will receive a must-read document for every member of the Order of Friars Minor. The document, from the Plenary Council; Order of Friars Minor, Nairobi, Kenya, Fall 2018. Those Who Have Ears, Let Them Listen To What The Spirit Is Saying To The Friars Minor Today. The US-6 Provincials believe this document provides us with a vision directing the Franciscans in the United States in “Revitalization + Restructuring”. The members of the Provincial Council will study and reflect on this document during the February 26-28, 2019 meeting.

February 14th we celebrate the feast of the heart, St. Valentine. Please continue to hold in your heart our brothers who are experiencing a decline in health because of aging and serious health issues; Austin Mysliwiec, Henry Kolbok, Sergius Wroblewski, and Augustine Fraszczak.

Peace and all good!

Jim
Marching for a Cause

The third weekend of January was a very busy one for our Franciscan postulants as they made their voices and support heard in Washington D.C. On January 18th they joined the Franciscan Action Network to participate in the March for Life. This peaceful march has been going on every year since 1974 to show opposition to the legalization of abortion in the U.S. The following day, several postulants traveled with Franciscan Volunteer Ministry to the Women’s March. This third annual march was a national movement about progressive issues and equality for women around the country.

Postulancy Pizzeria

Every Sunday, two postulants take turns cooking dinner for the community (usually 18-24 people). Postulants, Zach Zeman (ABVM) and Gino Grivetti, nicknamed “the Illinois Boys,” decided in January to to prepare food from their home state. They made two delicious Chicago-style deep dish pizzas, linguini in vodka sauce, corn (to represent Downstate IL) and a dessert-pizza monstrosity named the "Pulaski Street Molten Meltdown."
(For the curious, the "meltdown" ingredients: vanilla-sugar pizza dough mixed with chocolate chip cookie dough, baked with hot fudge and topped with two cans of frosting and more melted fudge - served with ice cream!) Bon Appetite!
Fr. Carl Graczyk Remembered by Archbishop Ryan High School Community

Fr. Francis Berna, OFM (pictured right) celebrated Fr. Carl’s memorial mass with friends and former students of Archbishop Ryan High School last month in Philadelphia. His homily can be found below.

Fr. Carl was no saint. He certainly was not a saint in terms of the piety we usually associate with saints. At the same time, he never pretended to be, and that is good.

I recall back from my undergraduate days in the Midwest when Carl was assigned to Philadelphia and he was not happy about that! But eventually, Carl had found a place.

When it came time for the friars to leave Ryan, Carl was again not happy. When it was time for him to move back to the Midwest, he was even more unhappy. Yet, he found a place where he came to be loved by the Sisters; a place where he made a difference.

And, looking at our gathering here this evening, we see that Carl was a faithful friend, and valued his friendships.

As the word of God addresses us this evening, we might understand something of that word in relation to Fr. Carl’s life. The text of Wisdom reminds us that “the souls of the just are in the hands of God; no torment shall touch them.” The author of this text intended these to be words of comfort, assuring us that those who have gone before us are at rest. The words are a promise for us, a hope for our future. At the same time, that future is meant to be part of our present reality. When we recognize that right now “we are in the hands of God” that does a number on torment.

Our Gospel text reminds us that God longs to provide for us – ask and you will receive; knock and the door shall be opened. We can trust that God will provide for us, no matter where we may be, no matter what circumstance we find ourselves in. We can find a place.

Lastly, our Gospel text tells of a man who wants to provide for his friend, making a request of another friend. Fr. Carl was a good friend. He shared that most sacred bond. And we too shared it with him and with others. Sharing that most sacred bond made Fr. Carl a “saint” and makes us “saints” as well.
Fr. Georges Receives PhD

Fr. Georges, a friar of the Assisi Province, began his studies at Notre Dame University in the Fall of 2013. While studying, he lived with our friars at St. Francis Chaplaincy Friary in Mishawaka, Indiana. During his stay, Georges joined Francis Affelt, Finian Zaucha and Andrew Hochstedler, OFM, Conventual in serving the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi of Perpetual Adoration. We are proud to announce that last month he graduated with a PhD in Theology with a concentration in Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity. He has accepted a teaching position at the Pontifical University Antonianum and at the Theological Institute of Assisi, which is aggregated to the Pontifical Lateran University.


Right: Friars raise a glass to toast Fr. Georges’ during his graduation dinner celebration. Pictured: (L-R) Fr. Andrew Hochstedler, Fr. Georges Massinelli, and Fr. Jim Gannon.

Save The Date

Chapter of Mats
Monday, July 29th - Friday August 2nd, 2019
Denver, CO

You will soon receive a PRE-REGISTRATION FORM to the Chapter of Mats. **This form holds no commitment.** It is just a way to give the members of the Chapter of Mats Planning Committee an approximate number of Friars who are interested in participating. The formal registration form will be forwarded at a later date.

The Gift of Unanswered Prayers
by. Stephen Copeland (from St. Anthony Messanger February 2019 issue)

Andy Tretow found himself at a vocational crossroads. Having set out to become a sports broadcaster upon graduating from college, five years later he began to wonder if he was meant to try something new. He was growing weary of the lifestyle that radio demanded. He targeted several jobs in communications he felt that he would enjoy and began the strenuous application and interview process.

Three straight times, Tretow advanced all the way to the final two people being considered for...
the position; and three straight times, he fell short, as the runner-up candidate. Tretow found himself in the proverbial desert, his future uncertain. “That was really hard to take,” Tretow admits. “My mom always told me while I was looking for jobs, ‘You have to ask God, ‘Where can I best serve you?’’ I put that off for a long time. I was thinking that it was all up to me.”

As is often the case when ambition fails, the more he was emptied, the more Tretow began to open himself up to new possibilities. That was when an opportunity that he least expected arose: serving as the director of communications for the Franciscan Friars Assumption BVM (Blessed Virgin Mary) Province in Franklin, Wisconsin. The friars took a chance on him with the communications position, hiring him in May 2017. But for Tretow, this sense of settling into himself—of being filled after having been emptied that year—was just beginning.

Whereas Tretow labels 2017 as a “teardown year,” 2018 was a year marked by building. Upon getting hired, he spent the next year learning the ropes of his new job, “making plenty of mistakes,” and becoming more inspired in his vocation the more he was impacted by the hearts and minds of the friars whom he served. Then, in June 2018, he got married. One month later, he and his new bride made a pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi.

“I got to visit all the places that are so important to the friars’ religious journeys, and it was just breathtaking,” Tretow recalls. “It was a breath of fresh air in my own faith life. One day, our pilgrimage leader stressed to us the Franciscan charism, ‘Where there is good, there is God.’ That night, my wife and I walked through Vatican City and just had a conversation about that charism. It was kind of like hearing everything for the first time. That was something that reawakened our faith lives on that journey, and it just so happened to be in a city that is one of the building blocks of our faith.”

Something about the charism pieced together for Tretow what had been missing in his spirituality. True to the ways of St. Francis, the charism bridged the chasm between tradition and lived experience. It made spirituality incarnational. And today, that charism inspires not only his own faith and marriage but also his vocation through the content he creates for the Franciscan Friars Assumption BVM Province and its pilgrimage programs.

“Life is about reframing disappointments and seeing them as opportunities. I see now that all the failure and disappointment in 2017 was just a buildup for better things. Being receptive to that is very powerful,” Tretow says. “The charism pushed me to want to be a good person—to do God’s work by helping make the world a better place. I really try to live that way.”
Our Provincial’s Updated Schedule

February 14-25: Franciscan Pilgrimage
Rome/Assisi, Italy

February 26, 27, 28: Provincial Council Meeting
Francis + Clare Friary
Franklin, WI

February 28- March 3: Provincial Office
Francis + Clare Friary
Franklin, WI

March 4-8: Visit postulants and Brother Jude
Silver Springs, MD + Washington, DC

March 9 + 10: Provincial Office
Francis + Clare Friary, Franklin, WI

March 11-15: US-6 Committee meeting + visit novitiate.
San Damiano Retreat Center, Danville, CA

March 16-23: Provincial Office,
Francis + Clare Friary, Franklin, WI

March 25-29: Provincial Council Meeting
Holy Dormition Friary, Sybertsville, PA

March 29-April 6: US-6 & ESC Provincials Meeting
Siena Retreat Center, Racine, WI

Do you have news, photos, or stories to share?
For inclusion in the next issue of the Provincial Press, email them to awtretow14@gmail.com.