



Rose & Tau

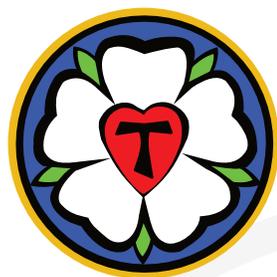
THE LUTHERAN FRANCISCAN
NEWSLETTER

FORMATION

No. 1 | OCTOBER 2021

Our First Issue
Celebrating 10 years as an Order

Order of Lutheran Franciscans
Following the Simple Way of St Francis



Rose & Tau

Order of Lutheran Franciscans
Following the Simple Way of St Francis

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ABOUT

The Rose & Tau is the newsletter of the Order of Lutheran Franciscans (OLF). The name comes from our seal which is Luther’s Rose with a Tau at the center.

The OLF is a religious community of vowed Lutherans, founded in 2011 and dedicated to Christ and the rebuilding of the Church.

We are affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) and we are a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Organization.

This newsletter is intended give news and updates about our community and offer insight into how we follow the Simple Way of St Francis.

In the these pages we hope you are blessed by our reflections on what it means to live a Christ centered life that is informed by both Lutheran Theology and Franciscan thought.

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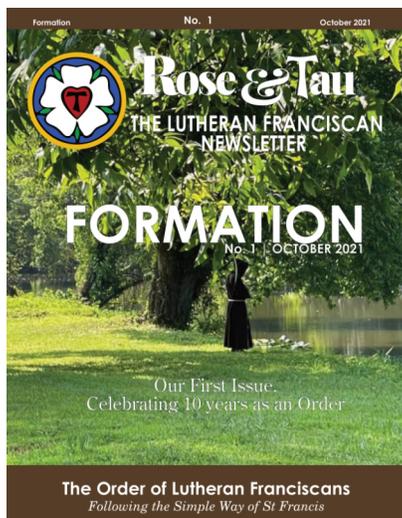


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Cover image from Annual Chapter 2021 Roslyn Retreat Center Richmond, VA

THIS ISSUE

This is our first issue. We are excited to share with you what it means to be Lutheran and Franciscan. The theme is Formation. We will explore a little bit of the history of our order and how we formed. You'll hear from one of our postulants about what drew her to our order and how she has been shaped this far on her journey. One of our Life professed members will share what Life Profession means what impact it makes on his daily life.

We were fortunate despite Covid to gather in person this Aug 2021 for our Annual Chapter and we'll share that experience with you.

We also have a brief some reflections that were presents at the Joint Committee of Franciscan Unity on the Franciscan Prophetic voice and a special reflection from one of our companions in Costa Rica with a devotion based on the parable of the Good Samaritan. We are excited to share with you.

Br Mark Molter n/OLF

We will also here a few words from some of our Servant Council members. Our Minister General, Formation Minister and Chaplain.

IN HUMBLE OBEDIENCE

FROM THE MINSTER GENERAL



BR. CHRIS MARKERT OLF
MINISTER GENERAL

Pace e bene, my friends!

Welcome to the Rose and Tau, the first newsletter of the Order of Lutheran Franciscans (OLF)

The OLF was founded in 2011. Coming out of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, I hoped there were other Lutherans who shared a baptismal calling to follow the simple way of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi. And to my surprise, there were! I also wondered if there needed to be an authentically Lutheran voice at the Franciscan Table. And again, we were welcomed with open arms by our Episcopal, Roman Catholic, and Ecumenical Franciscans.

The foundations of the OLF include the traditional charisms of the Franciscan movement: 1) Accompanying the Poor; 2) Care of Creation; 3) Ecumenical Bridge-Building; 4) and Spiritual Reformation of the Church. The siblings of the OLF make the traditional vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience as

interpreted within a post-contemporary, North American Lutheran context.

The OLF is an RIC community and a member of the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity. The Order is also an institutional member of the Franciscan Action Network and the Poor People's Campaign.

The hope for this newsletter is that it would be a source of inspiration, devotion, information, and communication.

And, we enthusiastically invite you to learn more about the OLF by visiting our website, and consider becoming a Friend of the Order!

I pray this (and our future newsletters) will be meaningful and formative for you and your faith.



Pax et Bonum
Peace and Good



FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

NOTES FROM THE CHAPLAIN



SR. LYNN FONFARA n/OLF
CHAPLAIN

Chaplains help people find Jesus in their lives, in the circumstances they are experiencing. The chaplains for the Order of Lutheran Franciscans do not replace the parish pastor. We are here to be present with those who are experiencing the struggles and joys of formation and matters within the Order. And, of course, we are happy just to talk with a friend.

I want to share a formation event in my life, to encourage everyone to be on the lookout for Jesus. When we spend time with open hearts inviting God to be present with us, God shows up. Here is how that happened for me the other day.

My husband Mike suggested we check out the Botanical Garden in Spring Hill. It is a collection of small gardens with a variety of themes: roses, desert, bromeliad, Asian, and so forth. Mike had his bigger camera, so I knew if I went with him through the garden, I would just be watching him take 25 pictures of the same butterfly.

So, I told him I would explore on my own and see him later. I found a quiet spot with a bench and plenty of

shade. Then I noticed this guy, and decided to spend some time in the company of Brother Francis. At first, I just sat quietly and asked God to join me.

After a while, I looked closer and noticed that the lamb by Francis' hand was looking up at him in adoration. I saw so much tenderness between Francis and the lamb that I found myself saying, "I want to be loved like that."

And then I remembered I am loved like that, by Jesus, the Lamb! And it seemed to me I felt a hand on my head, which soon dropped down onto my back. A loving, reassuring touch. Maybe I imagined it, but it felt real to me.



This relationship Jesus calls eternal life leads us into such moments of recognizing that we are loved unconditionally by God. It can be a challenge to choose to take the time, to make the time, to be silent with God. But I encourage you to make the effort, to choose to be with the Divine Presence in this way.

A YEARLY HABIT

ANNUAL CHAPTER REVIEW

Brother Bill Bradley ^{n/OLF}

The ride was finally over. It had been enjoyable traveling with three of my siblings for the last several hours, but it was great to arrive at our final destination...Annual Chapter 2021! After a virtual AC last year, I had been really looking forward to this one. I had first met the others in the Order in person back in 2019 in Florida. It had been a long two years since we had been able to come together again.

Annual Chapter to me is a combination family reunion, spiritual retreat, extended vacation, and source of personal renewal, all rolled up into one. We always meet in a wonderful location with amazing amenities. And the people...ah, the people. What a group! Yes, we are a religious Order, but we are so much more.

I could tell the moment that I stepped out of Br. Ian's car that this year was going to be special. There was just something in the air. As I surveyed the grounds of the retreat center my eyes were immediately drawn to the chapel. A large A-frame structure that seemed to be made of glass; the chapel shone in the afternoon sunlight. Just looking at it I knew that many memories would be formed there over the next few days. The second thing I noticed were the birds. Ducks, geese (I wasn't quite sure yet what kind they were), walked by on their way to a set of buildings that I learned later were to be our homes during AC; leaving a trail we would all learn to avoid as the week progressed.

. Is not a large place, but the layout and well-placed trails and buildings made for a sort of intimacy with nature that so many centers seem to miss today. From its beginning as an Episcopal Retreat Center in the 1930s with just one large house, to its expansion over the years adding more accommodations, a large dining facility, and buildings for meetings and administration, the center has grown into the surrounding countryside in a very natural way. The whole layout seems to draw one in closer to Creation.

This year, rather than some sort of guest speaker or workshop leader, we were taught by some of our siblings in the daily sessions of the chosen topic of Spiritual Formation. And all the classes were excellent! We covered Centering Prayer/Contemplative Prayer and The Daily Examen on Tuesday, Prayer Walking/Labyrinth and the Body Prayer of Julian of Norwich on Wednesday, and Lectio Divina and Visio Divina/Praying with Icons on Thursday. But it seemed the true growth and formation occurred when we came together for worship, or when we sat in silence during the times of Sabbath rest interspersed during each day's activities. Of course, we also cannot forget the evenings as we sat and shared a taste or two of our favorite adult beverages and discussed things both serious and humorous.



Closing Eucharist Br Joe Murdy OLF presiding
Annual Chapter 2021

Continues on page 5

Continued from page 4

Written within all of our days and nights, regardless of the activity, or lack thereof, was the fellowship and camaraderie that cannot be explained in mere words on a page. And that indeed is what makes Annual Chapter an event like no other. Although we are engaged in ongoing, deliberate Spiritual Formation in small cohorts, and individual Spiritual Direction on a regular basis, all our Formation activities lead us up to Annual Chapter.

On the final day, as I hugged each sibling goodbye and reentered Br. Ian's car for the ride back home I stopped for a moment to remember that feeling on arrival Monday. I looked once more toward the chapel, the center of our week together. Yes, we are so much more.



Just some crazy Lutheran Franciscans taking a group Photo.
Annual Chapter 2021

Brother Bill lives in West Virginia. He has a heart Franciscan heart. He is active in the poor People's Campaign and in Addiction and Recovery programs.

THIS IS THE WAY

GUIDANCE FROM THE FORMATION MINISTER



BR. JOE MURDY OF
FORMATION MINISTER

Formation is about walking the simple way and working together. October means that we are $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way to the conclusion of our three-module formation system. It has been a journey to say the least, one we have walked together. As I think about our Order in particular and the Franciscan community in general, I think, like many of you, consider us to be family. We support one another. We pray for one another. We can be vulnerable, frustrated and not always our best selves, yet, like family we love and rely on one another.

As we near the end of this process each of us should ask ourselves, how have we changed? Where have I grown and where must I continue to grow? Then, we must ask ourselves, how have we changed as a community? Where might we need growth to continue.

I share this reflection as we near the end of our modules to encourage and remind us that we are not alone. We are in this together. When Jesus sent his first disciples he sent them two by two. Imagine the encouragement

they must have given one another. When one fell there was someone to pick them up. When one was ridiculed or threatened there was someone beside them. When their faith faltered they had someone to encourage them. When they were sharing the good news, growing in the faith and learning how to be a disciple- they had one another.

As Franciscans we are at our core disciples of Christ- not lonely travelers. We do this together. We succeed or fail together. We grow together! If you are struggling to cross that finish line or perhaps not quite ready to cross that line- share with a sister or brother. If you need encouragement or inspiration, let a sibling know. We are family. Formation is not a lonely act but the means of bringing a collection of people, prayer and purpose into one.



A REFLECTION ON POSTULANCY

BEING GRATEFUL FOR THE PAUSE

Mary Delasin

It is said, “The longest distance is from your head to your heart.” For me, this describes my postulant journey. Postulancy is the beginning of a life-long journey of letting go of my own way of being, my expectations, my control, and allowing God to work within me in ways I do not expect, and I admit, in ways I am not always happy about. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.” (Isaiah 55:8)

I came to become a part of the Order of Lutheran Franciscans the same way as most others did. It started with a deep yearning for following Christ in the path of Saint Francis and Sister Clare. A calling to simplicity of life and a desire to walk in Christ’s love with those marginalized and hurting through relationships built on mutuality, solidarity and friendship. And through a “chance” meeting of Brother Jason and later Sister Lynn, my discovery that an Order of Lutheran Franciscans exists! I went through the process of entering into postulancy, excitedly reading Chesterton’s book on Saint Francis and writing my first postulancy assignment reflecting on the words of this book. This was December of 2019. I had so many expectations! And then, in January of 2020 I received word that the postulancy process was going to be paused for period of time, and I was told to wait...not knowing how long. I was devastated. I thought my head had it all figured out and there must be some mistake, but in reflecting back on the pause, it was a gift that allowed God to prepare my heart in new unexpected ways.

“God’s first language is silence,” (John of the Cross) and I learned God speaks loudly in silence. Letting go of my tasks of assignments, and my expectations of progressing through the steps forced me to stop “doing for God” and taught me to be present with Christ in receiving the grace of who God created me to be. I realized through the silence that my call to the ways of

Saint Francis is a way of being, not something you accomplish. It is inherent in our True Self in Christ. By letting go of expectations, I gained a deeper appreciation for the heart of the journey of Franciscans throughout time. The pause of silence and the time of solitude during the pandemic taught me more about poverty (letting go of seeking accomplishments), and obedience (God’s ways are not our ways), and love (being present in people’s suffering during the pandemic) than I ever could have imagined.

When the postulancy process began again early in 2021, I was now ready. I thought I was ready before, but I realized I was not. It was in holding the process loosely, that God spoke volumes. Being a Franciscan is not what a person does, it is who you are. It is a continual journey to learn and grow and discover God’s call. I was blessed by attending the annual chapter meeting in July and had the experience of being with siblings who personify living God’s call daily. It was an experience of unconditional love, belonging, and a call to action that speaks at a depth beyond words. I am grateful. I am grateful for Saint Francis. I am grateful for those who have walked before me. I am grateful for God’s call. I am grateful for God’s grace and goodness. I am grateful for the pause.

Mary is a recent postulant. She lives in Tampa Bay, Florida and attended her first chapter this year 2021. We are grateful for her presence.

SOMEONE IS SHOUTING TO US FROM THE SILENCE

Original Spanish
"Alguien nos grita desde el silencio"

Isis Fallas Salazar

Inspired by the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) in response to the question, who is my neighbor? I encourage you to think for a moment what images come to mind when you hear [the word] 'neighbor'. We most likely think of people and not the earth, although, just as the thieves treated the person in need on the road to Jericho, the capitalist system has plundered our Mother Earth. Although the Bible tells us that creation waits with great impatience, and clearly manifests that we are sons and daughters of God who must avoid the hardness our hearts, we have become accustomed to the idea that this land is 'destined to the

We most likely think of people and not the earth, although, just as the thieves treated the person in need on the road to Jericho, the capitalist system has plundered our Mother Earth.

fire' as it says in 2nd Peter chapter 3 verses 10 through 13; so that instead of promoting life, our species, and all life on earth, is now threatened with death.

We have only two options. We can turn a blind eye and think of the destruction as something natural or we will become aware that together with the earth and the rest of the creatures we form one family with God as creator of all life on our beloved Mother Earth. On the side of the road she's beaten, bleeding to death, she's been attacked by thieves, and cries out for us to save her and asks us for help because she has heard that we are daughters and sons of God who created her with the confidence and

knowledge that because we are from the same family, we will help heal her. We can continue believing long-held excuses in the Bible that we are not responsible, as the priest and the Levite viewed the dying man, or we can show love and act like the good Samaritan, and through concrete actions, show that the love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit prompts us to love our neighbor – our Sister Mother Earth as we love ourselves - the same love that Jesus showed to us. If we follow the example of the good Samaritan, we will love with deeds and not only with words as the first letter of the Apostle John in chapter 3 verse 18. Through concrete actions we will do this work because the message of salvation is for all of creation.

Let us pray:

Beloved heavenly Father, in the book of Wisdom we hear that you love all beings and do not hate anything you have created. You would not have created all beings if you had not wanted them to exist. Everything that you have created will be preserved by your command for to us to have compassion for all, because everything belongs to you, and you love everything that has life. May we, dear God, choose to side with all life; with you and all your friends.

AMEN.



Image from YouTube Video

This reflection comes to us from Central America. It is from the YouTube videos series Insumo Litúrgica (Liturgical Input). Isis Fallas Salazar is a student in the School of Biblical Studies at the University of Biblical Studies of Latin America and the representative from the Lutheran Church in Costa Rica to the OLF. Her reflection was inspired by the parable of the good Samaritan.

Insumo Litúrgica (Liturgical Input) - by Isis Fallas Salazar: Someone is Shouting to Us from the Silence.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzaPtL5gTU>

THE PROFESSED LIFE

REFLECTIONS ON THE MEANING OF LIFE PROFESSION

Br. Jeff Brown ^{OLF}



“I do so vow.”

These words marked my life profession with the OLF in 2018. I was young – 29 years old; most would say my whole life was ahead of me. I was going through an almost-finalized divorce, and the irony of one set of vows ending

right when others were beginning was not lost on me.

“I do so vow.” These words echoed through the chapel at Carol Joy Holling Camp in Ashland, Nebraska. The rest of my life would look different. Hopefully, it would look more like Jesus. “Christ must increase, but I must decrease,” to borrow from John the Baptizer (John 3:30).

When my God-given breath formed those words across my lips, three times for the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, I was professing that my life was over. I had, voluntarily – of my own will and of sound mind – laid my life at the foot of the Crucified One. Yet, like Francis, a voice echoed through my soul: “Go, repair My church, which is falling apart.”

How, Jesus? I was falling apart. My life was breaking apart. How exactly could I be an instrument of peace in rebuilding when I was – and still am – so broken?

Three years later, I’m discovering it’s in those liminal (“thin”) spaces that God’s voice and Spirit breaks through my own ego and stubbornness. That’s when God really gets to play in the dirt of my life and form me again. That being formed again and again is what being a baptized child of God is all about – “dying and rising again a new creature in Christ,” as Luther said. This daily death and resurrection is really what these three

vows are all about – keeping us (me) grounded in the simple way of Francis and Clare:

- Poverty’s call to a life of simplicity and clinging to Christ
- Chastity’s plea to love all, without distinction
- Obedience’s invitation to be joyfully formed by the wisdom of others

I have no hope – zero – that those words will magically fix my life; I’m not going to gain an ounce of holiness whatsoever. My whole life may still be ahead of me (or it may end before this is published!) – yet God has chosen to call me – us – to a new way, a new life, not for ourselves, but for Christ – to live in response to God’s grace abundant.

In response God’s grace and gentle voice calling, all I can do is lay my life down every day at the feet of the Crucified and promise again, “I do so vow.”



Our Life Profession Cross and Habit

THE PROPHETIC VOICE

A FRANCISCAN VOICE

Br. Mark Molter ^{n/OLF}

In September I was honored to give a presentation at the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity (which consists of Representatives from TSE, TSSF, OEF, and OLF) on one of the Elements of Franciscan Unity. Which are Baptism, Vocation, Charism, Christ-Centered, and Prophetic Voice.

As I was preparing for this presentation I began to wonder what does it mean to be a prophet? We all have various definitions. For many, it seems fortune telling and predicting the future. However, the Biblical notion of Prophecy can be best described as radical truth telling, declaring God's imagination for the world, and Trusting in God's Word.

St Francis had a way of speaking truth in a variety of situations. We might say that Francis spoke truth to power. Noam Chomsky is dismissive of "speaking truth to power" as He asserts: "power knows the truth already, and is busy concealing it". It is the oppressed who need to hear the truth, not the oppressors. Francis' ability to speak to the poor and offer hope and convince those with wealth and power to follow Jesus is part of the Franciscan charisma.

Francis would was also an example of bringing God's Imagination into reality. Walter Breuggeman writes that "a prophet is someone that tries to articulate the world as though God were really active in the world. And, that means on the one hand, to identify those parts of our world order that are contradictory to God, but on the other hand, it means to talk about the will and purpose that God has for the world that will indeed come to pass even in circumstances that we can't imagine." Through his action Francis reminded us of God's presence. In numerous stories those with Francis have claimed to see the presence of Christ among them in prayer. Even Francis bearing the sign of the stigmata a clear sign that God is active in Francis' life and those around him.

Francis was one who took God's Word seriously. In a story from the Little Flowers. It states:

Now that Francis' ears were open and receptive to the Word of God, the Lord made use of this same Word to teach him the way of life he should lead. Francis' soul at this time was like fertile soil ready to receive the seed of truth. He heard this Gospel proclaimed:

"Take no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff; for the laborer deserves his food...Preach saying 'the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand'...Whatsoever house you shall enter say 'Peace be to this house.'" (cf. Mt. 10) From these and other similar verses Francis learned that he was to be a poor servant of the Kingdom. Casting from himself all money and provisions and removing his sandals and leather girdle he clothed himself with a rough habit shaped like a cross, put a rope about his waist, and cried out in great joy that this is what he longed for with all his heart. This was the birth of the Franciscan Order.

To be Franciscan is to be a Prophet. Let us find ways to live this prophetic life out. God used prophets through out the Old Testament and God continues to send prophets. As Franciscan we proudly carry on this task.

A WORD FROM SAINT FRANCIS

A PRAYER FOR YOUR ON GOING FORMATION

Almighty, eternal, just, and merciful God,
grant us in our misery that we may do for your sake alone what we
know you want us to do,
and always what pleases you;
so that, inwardly cleansed and enlightened,
and on fire with the Holy Spirit,
we may be able to follow in the footsteps of your Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ,
and so make our way to you, Most High,
by your grace alone –
you who live and reign in perfect Trinity and simple Unity,
and are glorified God almighty,
forever and ever. Amen.



Bishop's Chapel at Night
Roslyn Retreat Center in Richmond, VA