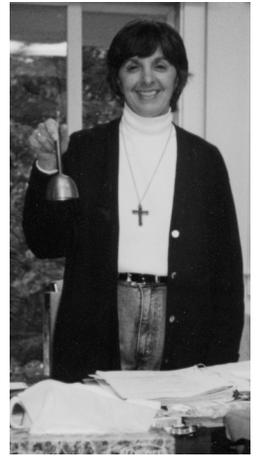


Chapter 8: Anita Catron, Minister Provincial Era 1996-2002



Anita
Catron
Calling
Chapter
to Order
at Little
Portion
Friary



New Orleans
Provincial
Convocation
June 1997

The Provincial Convocation of 1997 in New Orleans was the biggest undertaking of the Province of the Americas in over a decade...and probably the biggest coordinated work undertaken by

TSSF upto this point. It was put on in an area of the country where there was little or no local support—thus everything had to be done from a distance. The keynote speaker, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, TSSF pulled out of the Convocation towards the last minute. Yet from beginning to end, Anita Catron led the work to make the Convocation happen...and she did it humbly and with aplomb. Moreover it was such a success that henceforth this Province has sought to hold Provincial Convocations every five years. (It could even claim a surplus over expenses of \$1330.)

by John Brockmann, *Franciscan Times* Fall 1997

What impressed me about the New Orleans Provincial Convocation was:

- the many, many colors of our Order as demonstrated in accents and stories, liturgies of varied hue and sound
- the wide and wonderful use of talents from those who were musicians, puppeteers, dancers, writers, and mimes
- the range of ages, from dancing children to a beautiful 70-year-old priest from the New Mexican mesa
- the constant scanning to see how each could be of aid to others in creating sacred spaces for our liturgies, to wheelchair pushers, to those who were leaders through the deepest dark of the French Quarter at night, and
- a wonderful embrace of serendipity: “Let’s go to the zoo”; “Let’s feed the birds with the leftover chunks of the communion bread”; “Let’s add in each day’s Prayers of the People the names of those with 40-, 30-, 20-, and 10-year anniversaries in the Order”; “Let’s invent some space each day for Centering Prayer.”

One of our members from Tennessee (John Tolbert) dressed up in whiteface and brown robe as Brother Hereticus and gifted people with hand-forged iron nails. Here’s Lucy Blount McCain’s reaction to Br. Hereticus as published in the Fall 1997 *Franciscan Times*:

Precious Sisters and Brothers,

My mind drifts back to the first whole day of our New Orleans Convocation. We all were gathering to board the buses to go to our beginning Holy Communion service at the Cathedral. As I walked to the bus, there he stood, the man robed in brown. His back was turned. I just thought to myself, that’s a little odd. I don’t recognize that shade of brown belonging to any of our brothers and sisters. Then he turned and I saw for the first time his grease-painted face. It was startlingly white. There seemed to be a gladness, a sadness about this clown who called himself Brother Hereticus. As I came closer, I recognized our own John Tolbert from the Southeastern Convocation. I felt a little awkward and a little “distancing” cropping up in me. Was he being serious or sacrilegious? I thought of the centuries of brothers and sisters in brown marching by. What would they think? I didn’t mind making a fool of myself, why in just a few days I’d be doing so at the talent show [Ed. See related article and photo about Lucy Blount and Lambkins J. Flock], but was this an “approved” activity? I wasn’t quite sure. All I knew is that it made me a little uneasy. Chicken that I am, I just stood and watched and didn’t get too close, except when one of John’s big hugs would catch me off guard.

I remember him silently sitting near the front of the Cathedral on the right-hand side. I remember him silently standing in line



at lunch and then sitting silently at one of the dining tables. I remember him sitting silently at one of our later services. I remember him silently standing in the downstairs hallway giving out a gift. I couldn't avoid him. He's my brother and friend. His hand grasped mine and left the present. I looked down. It was a large, primitive iron nail. I looked up and met John's happy/sad eyes and said, "Thank You!"

John—alias Brother Hereticus—our Franciscan clown, was willing to be a "Fool for Christ" tangibly, literally. His presence was a profound blessing. He cut very close to the edge. It made my heart cry out, "Hey Lucy, how far are you willing to go out on a limb for your Lord, for Francis, for your brothers and sisters in Christ?"

I remember one day gazing into the mirror in our dorm room after brushing my teeth and noticing a big white streak through the side of my hair.

My first reaction was "Oh, dear! I'm aging right before my very eyes." Then I smiled and then I burst out laughing. Hereticus had left his mark on me! Some of his grease paint had rubbed off at the passing of the peace. I carefully wiped it off and went on to the rest of the day's activities.

Later I laughingly mentioned it to John. I once again thanked him for the nail. It was a weighty present, and I asked if he might give me twelve to take home to our Fellowship. It seemed the perfect gift to take back to Alabama's "God's Joyful Fools." He did, and it was. They received them two days ago when we met at the Advent Cathedral in Birmingham for a meeting, lunch, and Holy Communion where I was professed and then there was a reception. Family, friends, Franciscans were gathered. It was a day I'll never forget, never forget.

Funny, as I sit writing to you here on the floor in a hotel bathroom so as not to awaken my sister or mother (we're on a mother-daughters trip to Canada) my mind drifts back and seems to skip from the image of John the Clown to being Professed and then back to John the Clown and then to being Professed. The two scenarios seem to be weaving themselves together and becoming one. Maybe it's because it's pre-dawn, and I just need some coffee. All I know is that I can't wait to see the photographs taken while I was making my vows. It wouldn't surprise me a bit if there was an invisible clown present carrying some nails in his hand, ready to distribute them to each person.

Thank you, John. Your happy/sad eyes reminded me of another "Clown of Christ." It is my prayer that I may become as you have become—willing to come close to the edge, to go out on a limb, to do a little hilarious humility dance as our Brother Francis did and all for the love of Jesus.



And now it's time to rise off this cold tile floor and tiptoe back to bed. But first I'm going to take a glance into the mirror, for there might be a little while grease paint still stuck to my hair. If not, I do know it has surely stuck to my soul. It was stuck on by a bear hug and a nail gently placed in my hands.

Other events at the 1997 Convocation included Br. Jon Bankert's presentation of a play with sacred puppetry in the style of Japanese Noh theater, *An Experience of Saint Francis in India* written by Arthur Little. Sisters Pamela Clare and Jean of the Community of St. Francis gave a presentation on Creation Spirituality based on Matthew Fox's *Original Blessing*. There was also a jazz Eucharist led by Ken and Janet Watts from Florida, and Lucy Blount kept us all captivated with her stories illustrated by a lamb puppet and a whole barnyard of critters hidden away in her hat.

Responses to the first provincial convocation in fifteen years. (From *Franciscan Times*, Fall 1997)

- Now I know this community is real and there. I had not felt it and was so isolated.
- Just knowing how we are all connected with one another—to know that we are of one heart if not always one mind. The wonderful spirit-filled and varied worship was great!
- I wanted to meet living, breathing people in the TSSF to help me decide whether or not to pursue Postulancy. My expectations were more than fulfilled.
- Meeting all those people I have been praying for and who have been praying for me.
- My vocation was supported by the presence of so many "old timers" and so many "new folks." I know that the T.O. is very healthy across the Province.
- I was called back into a renewed commitment after a period of being somewhat lackadaisical.
- The variety of worship and music was greater than I have ever experienced.

- The overall atmosphere of prayer and worship and the rhythm of liturgies and music throughout each day were an obvious central focus, and this set the tone for the Spirit of love and inclusiveness which I encountered here.
- Very impressed by the many gifts and talents of the members.
- The liturgies did become a seamless garment! Wise and wonderful sermons while being funny, full of tears, and hugs, but deeper and more mature than some meetings have been.
- Being among this multicultural and multi-ethnic group. Loved having Romans, Ecumenical Franciscans, and a variety of other related brothers and sisters.
- To learn how others integrate their vocations as Franciscans with secular interests—I found most had positive attitudes.

1997 Steering Committee: Dee Dobson, Joan Verret, Carol Tookey, John Brockmann, Gloria Waldron, Julia Bergstrom, Anita Catron, Bob Kramish Secretary, and David Burgdorf



Provincial Convocation 2002

by John Brockmann

Just before her final term ended, Anita pulled together another team to design and create a second Provincial Convocation in Santa Barbara, California. I had recently read Susan Farnham's books on discernment in community (*Listening Hearts*), and persuaded Chapter to invite Susan as the keynote speaker.



The convocation was surrounded by a eucalyptus grove at the La Casa de Maria retreat center with trails up into the Santa Ynez Mountains rising up behind the retreat center. Some trails led to a lovely pool at the foot of a waterfall where one could relax and cool down from hikes. I was on the planning committee of the Convocation, and the host for the talent show. For most of us the most amazing part of the Convocation was the prayer service and blessing presided over by Masud who was accompanied by Iman Bashir from Baltimore, and Rabbi Carlos Huerta from West Point Military Academy. (You can see much more of this convocation by viewing the streaming video on the website, *Resources for Tertiaries*.)

Responses Far and Wide to Santa Barbara Convocation 2002 From the British

Five tertiaries, **Michael Daws** (the official representative of the European Province), **Margaret** and **Richard Scott, Maria** and **John Fox**, were privileged to attend the Convocation of the American Province in Santa Barbara. Such an event occurs every five years; Maria and John had been to the previous Convocation in New Orleans in 1997, and were so enthused by it that they repeated their participation in 2002. All five tertiaries found the six days in Santa Barbara an unforgettable and moving experience, which is quite difficult to describe because it depended almost entirely on the warmth and capability of the American tertiaries involved. There were around 150 people attending, and everyone who travelled by plane was met personally at the

airport and delivered to the Casa de Maria Retreat Centre just outside Santa Barbara! The Centre was set in seven acres of beautiful parkland, complete with swimming pool, tennis courts, etc. and adjoined estates of celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey and Michael Douglas. The theme of the Convocation was "Discernment: Seeking the Mind of God in our Franciscan Life" and the six days were packed full of opportunities to worship, be still, be vigorous or be entertained. As it is not possible to describe the full scope of the Convocation in any detail, we have selected just a few personal impressions of some activities that we felt to be worth mentioning.

- **Worship and prayer** surrounded all that we did. There were Morning and Evening Prayer, a Eucharist and Compline on most days, using a specially prepared and bound Worship Booklet. The spirit of the worship and the joyfulness of the singing was almost beyond belief, bringing us to tears on a number of occasions. There was sufficient time for reflection and meditation each day, guided in the Chapel or privately either in a multi-faith Meditation Chapel, through Centering Prayer, use of a labyrinth, a Peace Garden or the beautiful grounds.
- **Discerning our Franciscan Life** was the main theme at the Convocation. We were guided by Suzanne Farnham, author of *Listening Hearts*, in how to discern ways forward in difficult situations, both through individual and group approaches. On the individual front we were asked to choose a method of exploring what was in our hearts, through arranging a pattern of natural objects on a tray, writing a Letter to God or developing a short story, hymn or prayer. Small groups were formed to practice a special technique for discerning issues that were lying under the surface within a group. The process was quite revealing, especially the requirement that while listening to others, we were bidden to refrain from interruption but also from formulating our own response. Rather we were asked to allow each other's contribution to be respected, by waiting in silence for the Holy Spirit to inform our responses before speaking; unfortunately there was insufficient time to appreciate the full implications.
- **Peace and Justice Issues** were prominently discussed during the Convocation. There was a special workshop on the topic, held twice, and a group formed during lunches to continue the dialogue. There was great strength of feeling on these issues, and a special e-mail for "SSF Peace with Justice" has been set up, to which any tertiary may subscribe.
- **The Interfaith Initiative** was for us all the highlight of the Convocation. An assistant TSSF Chaplain, Rev. Masud Syedullah, had arranged for two friends, Imam Moshamad Bashar, Johns Hopkins University Chaplain from the Baltimore Islamic Centre, and Rabbi Carlos Huerta, Jewish Chaplain at the West Point Military Academy, to engage in an interfaith dialogue. This was followed by an incredibly moving service and ceremony in the Chapel, during which the Anglican, Muslim and Jewish clergy intoned their own scriptures; the service commenced with the sounding of the Shofar on a ram's horn by the rabbi. At a critical point in the service each of us formed in a line to receive the laying-on of hands from the three clergy, in turn. They prayed over us individually, and finally we surrounded the three and laid our hands on them. We were charged to be "reconcilers"; it is difficult to imagine a more inspirational experience in this faith-based, strife-torn world.
- **Finally, the Fun and Warmth** that permeated all that went on was genuinely astonishing. Our universal reaction was "What very nice people these American tertiaries are" and it was like being immersed in a luxuriously warm bath. Michael commented: "A major impact on me was how much I felt in the presence of Francis with a place of much simplicity and celebration of sun, of earth, of water, of people, yet within a world of so much complexity and therefore contradiction. I felt that this was a world that Francis would have recognised and suffered with." There were people present from the Caribbean (three of the seven professed during the week were ladies from Tobago), Guyana, Canada and all over the United States. There were many First Order Brothers and Sisters, representatives from OFM and SFO; there were tertiaries' friends and relatives interested in TSSF as well. The organisation and administration were superb, the food too extravagant for words, and we all caught our flights home!



Logo of Convocation: A Community of Meercats Surrounding a Tau Cross

We would like to thank Anita Catron, Minister Provincial, and her team for the wonderful time that we spent with them in Santa Barbara. As well as benefiting from our attendance, there has been much to learn in terms of organising such an event, and the involvement has stimulated a number of ideas about our own forthcoming General Chapter in 2005 or thereabouts.

From "Good News For The Idaho Guard" (July 2002)—Our Father?

Chaplain (COL) Larry Harrelson, STARC Chaplain

The last week of June I attended an international convocation of the Third Order, Society of St. Francis, of which I am a professed member. I was touched beyond expectation by grace. I share some of what happened. It gave me hope for our world, and perhaps it will encourage you as well.

One day we had an interfaith dialogue between a Jewish rabbi, a Muslim imam, and a Christian clergyman. The Christian minister, an Episcopal priest, pastors in New York and works part-time with cadets at West Point. He met the imam (who lives and teaches in the U.S.) at the Taize international prayer community in France. The Jewish rabbi is an active-duty chaplain at West Point.



Our 85th Anniversary of Founding Cake

The most powerful piece for me was the actual interfaith worship service following the dialogue, which was held in the chapel at the Catholic retreat center where we were meeting. The modified Taize worship service was called to worship by the rabbi's shofar (ram's horn) and the Muslim call to prayer by the imam. Sacred readings from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Koran, and the New Testament were done in Hebrew, Arabic, and English respectively. The three faiths were respected, yet nothing was watered down or diminished. Respect for diversity and unity was present.



The essence of shared spirituality at Santa Barbara: Rabbi Carlos Huerta, Jewish Chaplain and Professor of Higher Mathematics at The United States Military Academy, West Point, NY; Anita Catron; Imam Mohamad Bashir Arafat, Founder & Director of Civilizations Exchange and Cooperation Foundation, Baltimore, MD Muslim Chaplain, Johns Hopkins University; The Rev. Masud; Brother Robert Hugh in foreground right; and Keith Slater, Minister General and Bishop-to-be front row back.

All were invited forward to receive the laying-on-of hands—a practice common to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—and simultaneous prayers by the rabbi, imam, and priest, prayers done in the languages and traditions

of the three faiths. Most of the 150 convocation participants, including myself, received this spiritual blessing. We were in no hurry, for God's work was being done by us children of Abraham. Dialogue is important. More important is praying together, with mutual respect.

I am proud to be in the U.S. military and to know that we long have been interfaith in the Chaplain Corps, as we promote the free exercise of religion for all—an expression of our great country. The cards and handbooks we carry as chaplains in the pockets of our BDUs [battle dress uniforms] speak to our calling. At the casualty collection points, we prayerfully make our rounds of those not expected to live. If a chaplain of the dying person's faith group is not present, any chaplain uses the appropriate prayers for that person—be they Catholic prayers, Protestant prayers, Jewish prayers, or Muslim prayers.

Surely, our attitude can be that of Jesus, who taught us to pray, saying, "Our Father" (Matthew 6:9).

From Suzanne Harrison on the Internet Discussion Group

Wow. I am still processing it all. It was a bit overwhelming at times for me, as I've never been around that many Franciscans at once. I had the privilege of driving Br. Dunstan down from San Francisco, and then HE drove ME back again when I was feeling under the weather.

High Points

The interfaith dialogues and service—especially the laying on of hands and spontaneous dance at the end, while we poor musicians tried to keep up with the music of the Spirit. Finally meeting my first postulant/novice counselor, Pat Shelton. What a wonderful lady she is! Plus, I have so many more faces to recall when I pray for the names. Sr. Rose's sense of humor, Fred Ball's fractured Bible stories (just try to find the thirty-tooth chapter of the Book of Revolutions!), and Br. Robert Hugh's stories about his aunt. The talent show. I'm no ham, really I'm not, it just looks that way. Look at John Brockmann, now HE's a ham. Laughter, joy, contemplation, prayer. Being surrounded by my Franciscan family's love and warmth after my "field trip" to the emergency room - at St. Francis Medical Center. The prayers are working, I will be fine!

Heroes of the Order:

Ralph Shower Honored by Diocese for His Ministries

(Franciscan Times, Winter 1998)

Lay leaders from around the Riverside Diocese were honored for their ministries by Bishop Frederick Borsch on December 6th, 1998 at the Diocesan Convention, and among them was our own Ralph Shower. His Diocesan citation read as follows:

A ministry of "accompaniment," "a ministry of presence" is how Ralph Shower categorizes his five plus years of HIV/AIDS prevention work with homeless persons in their isolated communities under downtown freeway overpasses and along the Los Angeles River. In weekly outreaches, Shower offers condoms, brochures, and counsel...along with food, clothing, and blankets to persons who are at great risk of exposure to HIV. Many use heroin, crack, alcohol, and other substances. Some subsist as panhandlers, pimps, or as male, female, transgender, or transsexual sex workers. As a brother of Jesus and as a member of the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis, Shower extends God's embrace to those who are perhaps the most marginalized in our society.



Ralph Shower

TSSF, SSF, CSF Preaching Trips to Mexico: 1999 and 2000



Br. Tom, Bishop Carranza, Anita, and Br. Clark

Brs. Clark, Guire and Tom with Sr. Pamela Clare arranging flowers before a service



Novice Mission to Mexico 1999

Anita Catron, Provincial Minister (from Franciscan Times Spring 1999)

For ten days this last March, a group of Franciscans (Brothers Tom, Clark and Guire (SSF novice), Sister Pamela Clare, and I) were invited to do a preaching/teaching mission in the Diocese of Mexico. The Right Reverend Sergio Carranza, Bishop of the Diocese of Mexico, and Father Vincent Schwahn, Dean of the Seminary of San Andres, organized the nine-church engagement. The goal was to share



Anita with Graciela Alvarez y Fuentes

Br. Tom Preaching TSSF in Mexico City

our personal Franciscan journeys, describe the whole Society of St. Francis, give homilies, and learn about Mexican Anglican spirituality—all in Spanish. The churches where we went ranged from small mission churches in outlying areas to large congregations in Mexico City. A few of the Anglican churches were over 100 years old. In general, the Diocese of Mexico is growing.

Perhaps what we gained more than we offered. We found the Mexican congregations to be very welcoming, friendly, inquisitive, and open to the idea of Anglican religious orders. One of the most rewarding experiences took place when we accompanied a priest to the homes of two sick parishioners to pray and visit with them. The hospitality exhibited by our Mexican brothers and sisters was outstanding; one whole evening was organized around a shared evening meal. One of our group put it quite well: the spirit in the more remote churches was most moving and generally deeper than elsewhere. We even learned about some of the deeply-rooted, pre-Spanish customs woven into the services.

There was even time to tour the pyramids at Teotihuacan; the exquisite Templo Mayor (Tenochtitlan), archeological ruins excavated within the last twenty years in the center of Mexico City, the main archeological museum; and to re-master the metro and bus system, which is less hectic than I recall from twenty years ago when I was last in Mexico.

I very much enjoyed returning to a country where I once lived for three years and returning to the Spanish-speaking congregation of San Jorge where my own vocation developed. I loved reviving my Spanish language skills, seeing former friends, and being a whole family with my First Order brothers and sister. It was also a real treat to visit two of our four Third Order members who live in Mexico.

True, we did miss interacting more with the seminary students and learning from them, but, when we return at the Bishop's invitation in Advent 2000, perhaps we can remedy that shortcoming.

TSSF Helps Form the National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities

Franciscan Times Spring 2000

Four of the Episcopal Church's Christian Communities met with Bishop Rodney Michel of the House of Bishops' Standing Committee on Religious Communities in late February to report on the formation of NAECC, the National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities. Five of the church's eight canonically recognized Communities have voted to proceed with the formation of this association, which Bishop Michel has hailed as of vital importance for the spiritual growth of the Episcopal Church. As he told the gathering, "You are spokespersons for your community, your parish church, and the Episcopal Church." Religious life is one of the best-kept secrets in the Episcopal Church, and Bishop Michel called on the communities to be more active in the dioceses in which they are resident, taking part in diocesan conventions, and furthering the mission of the church whenever possible. Sparked by input from George Gray (Community of the Paraclete), the association defined its purpose: to "share and communicate the fruits of the Gospel, realized in community, with the church and the world." This year's meeting, the third such conference of communities, focused on discernment and formation, and began to explore the Rules of Life followed in each community. Bishop Michel stressed the importance of the discipline of the Daily Office, common to most Rules, as a means to foster a sense of community. As conference convenor Tobias Haller (Brotherhood of Saint Gregory) put it, "an invisible wave of prayer washes over the world several times each day as people around the globe open their prayerbooks and breviaries, whether alone or in choir." Carol Tookey (TSSF) added that given the international character and the flexible rule of her community, the Office is being prayed in many ways by many voices. The next

step for the association is the adoption of by-laws, which will be explored at the next conference.



- 1—Anita Catron and Andrew Wilkes, TSSF
- 2—Congregation of the Companions of the Holy Spirit
- 3—Order of the Paraclete
- 4—Brotherhood of St. Gregory
- 5—Worker Sisters and Brothers of the Holy Spirit

Three Reflections by the American Province Representatives to Interprovincial Third Order Chapter (IPTOC) 1999

Anita Catron, Minister Provincial

The experience of the 1999 Interprovincial Third Order Chapter (IPTOC) in Brisbane, Australia, was one I shall remember fondly. It confirmed again that I have been called to follow Christ in the way of St. Francis. I remembered that it had been almost twenty years since my profession in that small lush garden far from home. Indeed I have been called to pray unceasingly. I have been called to love my brothers and my sisters, those whom I know and even those whom I do not know halfway around the world. Further, our Third Order aims tell me that I have been called to live simply, to spread the spirit of love and unity within the family of God and to make our Lord known and loved everywhere.

The IPTOC papers each provincial delegation wrote helped us have an early understanding of one another from province to province but also within our own provinces, where distances are great, and cultures, languages, devotions, and practices are varied. Each Franciscan province truly has its own rich and varied heritage to be cherished and celebrated.

In Brisbane, I had a chance to test once again my various Franciscan callings. I was in a new and different location, new people, new way of expressing the English language; new cultures—both indigenous and Australian; new foods (scones!), new ways of praying the Daily Office, new reasons to love my Franciscan family. And yet, it was as though I belonged to this new, far-off setting. During my lifetime I have lived in three other countries and six different American cities, experiencing the diversity of life each offered. To my amazement, my heart recognized the Franciscan charism everywhere I lived or traveled.

One could say, after all, that I've been well-grounded in the Third Order Principles for Daily Reading, the intercessory prayers we say for one another around the globe, the Third Order Constitution, our own provincial statutes, the new Guide to Love and Harmony: "What first steps can I do today." Suddenly, the community obedience prayer, "Both here and in all your churches throughout the whole world..." took on true meaning. Besides the institutional ways of recognizing my callings, there was the mere "being" with one another in study, prayer, work (meetings!), meals, and sightseeing. To me these are all clear callings to witness Jesus in the lives of others wherever I may land or with whomever I may be. They even teach me something about myself, that while I am special accord-

ing to God's gift of grace, so is everyone else in God's creation. I am called to love others, and that love we share really is the glue of our community. Or, as William Countryman said in his book, *The Good News of Jesus*, unless I realize that you are as fully human as I am, there is no love (paraphrased).

Interacting with my tertiary brothers and sisters from other countries at IPTOC was part of the heavenly calling I have experienced. We were indeed fortunate to have the advantage of meeting with our First Order brothers and sisters, and one second order sister as well, completing the Franciscan family. Both our diversity and our similarities bind us together. Hence, we are called upon to be lovers, paving the way in this needy world of ours toward our ultimate, heavenly calling with God. Our journeys, then, may all be diverse, but the faith we share and celebrate in Christ and Francis is the same. For that we give thanks.

From Joan Verret, IPTOC representative and Fellowship Coordinator of the American Province

The jumble of sights and sounds and the discovery of sameness and differences at the Interprovincial Third Order Chapter have finally melded together into an experience that has identified for me the worldwide aspect of our Order. We came to IPTOC from diverse geographical locations and from varying social and economic levels within our own provinces.

The societies and cultures that we live in color our understanding of Francis and Clare. There are vast differences of "norms" of behavior in our own provinces, let alone throughout the world. The status of women, especially ordained women, educational opportunities or the lack of opportunities, and economic security are just a few examples of the differences that we experience.

Our language at first seemed the same, but nuances of meanings and sometimes totally different definitions of the same word or phrase led to confusion if not misunderstanding at times. And yet we came together united by our Christian faith, lived out by us through our Franciscan spirituality.

The Eucharist united us in thanksgiving and praise. The daily offices brought us together corporately to pray and study. As Scripture was read with various accents and pronunciations, I thought it must be pleasing to God to hear us all together, united in worship.

Our differences in preferred food and drink, accents, etc., became very secondary to our discovery that we are the same at the core of our beings. We are united in an Order that "sets out in the name of Christ to break down barriers between people and to seek equality for all." We all offer the Community Obedience, and we attempt to live up to our Rules. Our vocation calls us to prayer, study and work. Hopefully others see in us humility, love and joy.

There is a bond between us that transcends language, custom, nationality and race. We are united in and for the love of Christ and Francis.

From David Burgdorf, Provincial Chaplain

A symbol, according to one of my teachers, "throws together" many experiences and makes them all available in one picture or word. As I reflect on the many moments of the First and Third Order Interprovincial Chapters in Brisbane last September, my brain has "thrown together" many experiences in one symbol. The picture is not, in fact, from any of the scheduled deliberations of brothers and sisters from around the world.

At one point, as a friar was professed in St. Philip's Parish in Brisbane with a church packed with family, parishioners and Franciscan friends, a high-pitched drum began a rhythm about half a regular heart rate. The most amazing sound came from the back of the church. Around the font were seated twenty or so very dark-skinned men and women from the Torres Strait Islands. The four-part praise song they began was unfamiliar to me, but its very strangeness and otherworldliness impressed on me the breadth of people God's love touches. These people were leading the praise of Africans, Americans, Europeans, Pacific Islanders, Australians and New Zealanders. Embracing us all with their unique sound, they pointed us and helped us respond to the boundless Love, which drew us



L to R, Front to Back: Row 1: Dorothy Brooker (MP, New Zealand); Anita Catron (MP Americas); Joan Verret (Americas); Row 2: Val Tibbey (Australia); Anne Kotze (MP Africa) Marion Nevell (Europe); Back Row: David _____ (Africa); Keith Slater (incoming Minister General, Australia); Caroline Clapperton (MP Europe); Alden Whitney (outgoing Minister General); David Burgdorf (Americas); Allen Williams (Europe)

all together in the first place. Later on January 1, 2000, when television images of Pacific Islanders welcoming the new Millennium flashed around the world, I thought of the Torres Strait Islanders leading our praise. Even now, hours before I get up in California, they lead my praise in time on any given day.

Often, staying in the Franciscan Way in the USA can be challenging simply because we live so far from each other. Remembering that the song praising God's love precedes and follows us around the globe shortens the distances and throws us together again into the immense community of the Beloved.



The Norms are Published For the First Time

Anita Catron (Franciscan Times Spring 2000)

Following the lead of the First Order Brothers, Carol Tookey reviewed the minutes of ten years or so of Chapters (1988-1999) and collected items that were voted on and passed. Many had been reported in *The Franciscan Times*, so none of them were “new.”

They were compiled in one document in order to help Chapter members carry out their duties, and to inform those who were new of actions undertaken at previous Chapter meetings. As is our custom, they have been published in the minutes of each Chapter meeting over the years. In effect, they are informational and help all Third Order members, in many respects, to interpret the current TSSF Statutes and TSSF Constitution.

Here are some “Norms” that are unique to the Province of the Americas and that remain as part of our heritage from Father Joseph and TSF (see page 31):

- the requirement of each tertiary to read a Daily Office, and
- the sacrament of penance (e.g. confession) is normative, with two sacramental confessions required annually. (1996)

Additionally, professed members are expected to report yearly, renew their vows annually, and pledge to the Third Order. If there is no response to a request for clarification of status by the inactive member to two letters and two phone calls by the Area Chaplain, we will consider the lack of response to constitute a request for release from vows, which will be acted upon at the next Chapter. (1998)

Finally, it has been a Norm that all professed members be members of parishes in communion with the See of Canterbury. This has led to the creation of an Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, the Order of Lutheran Franciscans, and the Order of Old Catholic Franciscans.

Anita Catron's Final Report as Minister Provincial (October 2002)

As I reflect upon my six years as your Minister Provincial, I am very grateful to each of you here, to all Third Order members and to my family—David, Stephanie and Ruth-- for the faithful support and love during this time of my ministry to the Third Order. The First Order Brothers and Sisters in this Province have also contributed so much to my upbringing, and I consider them family.

I have grown in my own spiritual journey in unimaginable ways, and for that I thank God and the Holy Spirit for leading me. The *Principles* of the Order have undergirded me, and given me an appreciation for the ministry of each and every Third Order member, and I celebrate the diversity that we share. I could not have designed this path myself—it was entirely God's doing.

There have been challenges—modifying the sacramental confession requirement, reinforcing use of the Daily Office in the American Province, helping fellowships grieve in a healthy way, recognizing Community Obedience, being asked to preach sermons at the last minute, and the loss of two Ministers Provincial. The joys far outnumber the challenges. The joys include seeing the Third Order as a truly global Christian Community, inclusion of non-Anglicans in the Order, birth of NAEC (National Association of Christian Communities), the recent Provincial Convocations, ecumenical relations with the Roman Catholic Secular Franciscans and the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, the two preaching missions in Mexico, the beginnings of interfaith dialogue, engaging conversation with the First Order Brothers and Sisters worldwide, efforts for peace and justice, and much more.

Here are a few highlights of the past year. In November my husband David and I hosted a celebration of the ministry of John Scott, our first Minister Provincial/Guardian, in his Philadelphia home. About 20 members from the NJ and Philadelphia Fellowships attended. We shared our Franciscan journeys and how we had met John. It was evident from the “stories” that John had touched the spiritual lives of many of us, including David and me. It was through John that I was introduced to the Third Order.

I had a rewarding experience when I joined Brothers Clark Berge and Tom Carey on the preaching and teaching mission to the Diocese of Mexico. We were well received by Bishop Carranza and the clergy of the 12 churches we visited. The parishioners treated us kindly, always showering us with special meals and stories. One of the best memories was being housed at the “Asilo de Ancianos” (Old Folks Home) in Toluca!

Other memories were the penetrating questions people asked us about our Franciscan journeys. And the Provincial Convocation! A treat in so many ways, and a beautiful California location with time to pray, relax, meet friends, “discern” and hear Rabbi Huerta and Imam Ararat. The blessing from Father Masud, the Rabbi and the Imam was unforgettable.

I'm happy to report that my family is well. My granddaughter Emilie is as cute as a button—almost in the terrible twos—but she reminds me daily that life is a precious gift. While we saw the passing of my 90-year-old mother-in-law in January, later we were able to

celebrate my uncle's 90 birthday in NJ. In May I returned to Frederick, MD for a college reunion and in late October I shall go to my high school reunion in NJ. My work at American Express continues to go well, and life moves along, thanks be to God.

I urge you as tertiaries to focus on the future vision and hopes of the Third Order, to continue compiling our 85-year-old history in this Province, and to engage the talents and ministries of all Third Order members to further the three aims of the Order.

Thank you for the privilege of being your Minister Provincial. May God bless you all.

“My Early Days in TSSF”

Mary Alice White (*Franciscan Times* 2003)

I do not know the date of Brother Robert Hugh's arrival from England and the merging of our Order and the English Order into the Society of St. Francis. I only know that there came a renaissance within the Order. Other brothers, of course, came. I believe actually it was 1960 that I first met Brother Robert when he visited Denver.

He told a small group of us what the brothers did in England as well as at Little Portion. Now that I think back upon it, I believe that his enthusiasm and knowledge of the brothers' work is what really inspired me to become a full-fledged tertiary in the first place. He then and now means so much to the Order and has influenced hundreds of people, I'm sure, to become Third Order people.

Reminiscences of Br. Robert Hugh, SSF

Br. Robert Hugh, SSF



Fr. Algy

All from memory, so no guarantees as to accuracy in every detail.

I was 16-years old when I discovered that only ten miles from my high school was the headquarters of a Franciscan Friary organized in the Church of England. I had always supposed that strange characters like monks and nuns and friars were bound to be Roman Catholic. A weekend visit proved me wrong, and I came under the guidance of Fr. Algy, SSF, and his young secretary novice, Br. Michael. When I left school for military draft service in the army just after World War II, Algy suggested I become a Companion (Associate, as we would say in this Province), and helped me draw up my first Rule of Life and make my first confession, and was my spiritual director until his death in 1955. After reading theology at Cambridge, and going on to seminary at Oxford, I became a tertiary for the next decade as a parish priest in the diocese of Durham. First Fr. Francis and then Fr. Reginald were the friars who guided my Third Order journey. I also remember being sent off by bus to be looked at by Dorothy Swayne, a formidable but wonderful tertiary who in the 1930s had worked with Algy in adapting the Principles of the Christa Seva Sangha to become the Principles of the First and the Third Orders SSF.

In 1964 I left parish ministry to test my vocation in the First Order SSF, at Alnmouth, Hilfield, and Glasshampton. Only just first professed, I was asked to be one of three friars to visit the OSF

Friars in the US as part of an exchange at the time of the amalgamation of OSF and SSF. I was told it was for "a year, or so." At the end of November 2002 I shall have completed thirty-five years of "...or so"!

For three years I was Novice Guardian at Little Portion, while Br. Luke fulfilled that role in England. In 1970 I made my life profession in New York, and when Luke returned to the US and succeeded Br. Paul as Minister Provincial, he asked me to become Chaplain to the Third Order, which I did for the next four years.

Paul had been working to communicate his vision of the Third Order while he was Minister, and I saw it as my trust to further that vision. Paul saw the Third Order as free-standing in its own right, with its own administrative, pastoral and formation leadership, rather than being heavily dependent upon the paternal benevolence and guidance of the friars. In accepting Luke's invitation, I declared my hope that by the end of my term as Chaplain I should have worked myself out of a job, as the role would thenceforward be filled by a tertiary. That did not quite happen, as Br. Mark Francis followed me for the next three years, but already much progress was being made. During this time I traveled a great deal to spend time with fellowships and individuals, realizing that it is not really possible to win people to a different understanding of the Third Order by the written word alone. I believe that I managed to visit personally with all the professed but three or four during my years as Chaplain. Many were very responsive to this, but others clearly felt threatened by any change. In many cases they had a staunch Anglo-Catholic background, a deep commitment to their profession, and to the friars, especially to Fr. Joseph, which they feared they might lose if the Third Order stood free and equal with the First. Because Paul's initiative coincided with the SSF/OSF amalgamation, quite a number of tertiaries concluded that it was all a scheme that "hose dreadful Brits" (who, some of them were convinced, were "Black Protestants!") had



Hilfield Friary



Br. Robert Hugh, 1968

hatched. In fact it was the American Province that blazed trails in many areas that other provinces followed later.

I find it hard to believe how different my role as friar Chaplain to the Third Order was from that of, say, a Friar Visitor today. If new would-be tertiaries wanted to join, they wrote to me, and I approved their draft rule. If they were ready for profession, my approval as Chaplain was a key part of that. If a newsletter needed to go out, I was the one who composed it, and then typed it on to a stencil, put it on the Gestetner duplicator, and lamented as all the 'o's dropped out after the first fifty copies, leaving blobs of ink on the page. Fortunately, numbers were much smaller (my guess is about 150).

Formation was the first area really taken over by the Third Order itself, and I have the happiest memories of visits to Lambertville, NJ, where Peter Funk was composing the first set of Formation letters, as he and Marie Hayes guided those in formation (at first divided according to gender). John Scott became the first administrator of the Third Order (Guardian in those days, rather than Minister).

In 1979, when Norman Crosbie succeeded Luke as Minister Provincial, he asked me (I was Assistant Minister) to represent him and the Province in the relationships between the friars and the tertiaries. Thus began the Friar Visitor role. In 1981 I became Minister, and, as the

CSF Sisters have done consistently, combined both roles. For most of the years since 1987, when my term as Minister ended, I have continued to be Friar Visitor. Participation in Regional and Provincial Convocations and in the Third Order Chapter have been highlights for my years. Now, as Br. Derek begins his term as Minister, he is combining the roles, ensuring the closest possible links between the First and Third Orders.

I hope that these reminiscences may be of some interest to Chapter as part of our Provincial memory, and might perhaps be of enough interest to the wider membership to warrant reproducing in a future *Franciscan Times*.

If you did not have the opportunity to experience one of Br. Robert Hugh's famous presentations with his British sense of humor, you can get a taste of his presentations from the following excerpt from his pamphlet, The Religious Life (A Franciscan Viewpoint) (1979), that appeared in the Franciscan Times.

“Francis the Romantic”

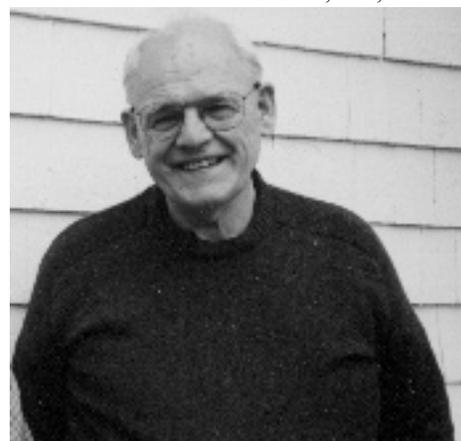
Br. Robert Hugh, The Religious Life (A Franciscan Viewpoint) (1979) (pp. 10-13)

As a Franciscan friar I find the great popularity of St. Francis a mixed blessing. On the one hand, Francis is so widely known and loved that most encounters and conversations start with a fund of good will. On the other hand, people often have their own assumptions as to who St. Francis was, and their own expectations as to what Franciscans should be. You would not believe how often we get calls from people who assume that as Franciscans we must have a limitless capacity for inheriting other people's discarded pets. And when someone says to me, “Oh, are you a Franciscan? I love St. Francis,” my heart sinks a little lest this be yet another person for whom St. Francis exists exclusively as the patron saint of birdbaths and/or the S.P.C.A.

Don't get me wrong: I am all in favor of being kind to animals, and certainly Francis had a great love for all the animal creation. All sorts of stories and legends of St. Francis—preaching to the birds; taming the wolf of Gubbio; introducing live farm animals into the first ever Christmas crèche at Greccio—testify to this. The problem is not starting here, but stopping here. Francis loved animals as part of a greater love for the whole creation as God's creation and for humankind as the crown of that creation.

Francis was undeniably a romantic. But a true romantic is not a sentimentalist. To make a thoroughgoing affirmation of the creation demands steel in the backbone along with the romantic vision. The sentimentalist is self-indulgent in allowing the luxury of being selective. If I say I love animals, or people, but in the end limit my love to those that are pretty, cute, grateful, responsive, or share my own preferences and prejudices, then I am being sentimental. Affirmation requires the risk of opening myself to the whole truth of the creature or person I affirm. If it is God's world, then it is all God's world, and not only the lovely bits of it: “He's got the whole world in His hands.” Francis understood that very clearly, as the story of the leper underlines. He learned that he would never meet anyone, however apparently unlovely, who was not created by God out of the same overflowing love as he himself was; never meet anyone for whom Christ did not die and rise again. So, shortly before his death, Francis could write in his last “Testament”: “When I was in sin the sight of lepers nauseated me beyond measure; but then God himself let me into their company, and I had pity on them. When I had become acquainted with them, what had previously nauseated me became a source of spiritual and physical consolation for me.”

It was Francis, the poet, visionary and romantic who wrote his great “Canticle of the Creatures” about our Brother Sun and Sister Moon, Brother Fire and Sister Water. One might think of this as the outpouring of a young man, but, in fact, it was written in the last year of his life, when he had experienced much suffering and disappointment. He does indeed rejoice in and with Brother Fire “who is bright and cheerful and warm,” but for Francis, Brother Fire is still Brother Fire when he sears and burns. Thus, soon afterwards, lying



Br. Robert Hugh, 2002

frail and ill as thirteenth century surgeons try to treat an eye disease by heating an iron instrument red-hot in the fire in preparation for cauterizing his face from temple round to cheekbone, without any anesthetics, Francis can show himself the true romantic as without a trace of self-pity or sentimentality he says, "I pray you, Brother Fire, deal courteously with me."

Francis had learned that the gesture of true affirmation is also the authentic gesture of the cross, putting the one who affirms totally at risk to the one who is affirmed. This may help us to understand the phenomenon known as the Stigmata of St. Francis. Two years before his death he spent weeks alone in prayer upon Mount Alverna. During that time alone Francis was granted a vision of a Seraph responding to his earnest desire that he might be allowed to feel in himself something of the love that Christ felt for mankind and also something of the suffering Christ experienced upon the cross. When he came down from the mountain, for the brief remainder of his life, he bore in his hands and feet wounds as of nails, though he did his best to hide them from others. The fact of the stigmata in St. Francis is well attested. How should we respond? Cynically? "A most interesting example of hysteric symptoms in the light of our present-day understanding of psychosomatic illness." Or sentimentally? "What a beautiful story!" Or shall we just say that it was utterly consistent with Francis as the true romantic, who had learned that to make one's whole life an expression of the vulnerable gesture of arms freely stretched out upon the cross is inevitably to leave oneself open to hurt as well as to love and joy and peace?