



The Franciscan Times

A Newsletter of the Third Order,
Society of St. Francis,
Province of the Americas

Fall 2017 Special Centennial Convocation Issue

From the Editor

John Brockmann

Creating, funding, organizing, and presenting our Provincial Convocations every five years is the biggest and most difficult project that the Province of the Americas undertakes. You will discover in these pages that the result of this multi-year effort and prayer, our Centennial Convocation in Cincinnati, expressed the incredible range of charisms and ministries alive in our province. There was art in song, dance, sculpture, and movies (*Finding Francis* and *The Sultan and the Saint*). There was constant prayer of the African Bible Study Method (*lectio divina*) in small groups and large group participation in a range of liturgies of many settings. Through history we celebrated our founding by laying wreaths, and we mourned our national original sin looking at the slave shackles at the Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

Enjoy this special issue that we have kept separate from the news and feature articles of a regular issue of the *Franciscan Times*. We believe that the work and prayer that created this Centennial Convocation deserve a dedicated time to focus and remember. We will shortly be publishing a Fall 2017 issue with provincial news and feature articles.

The American Centennial Convocation

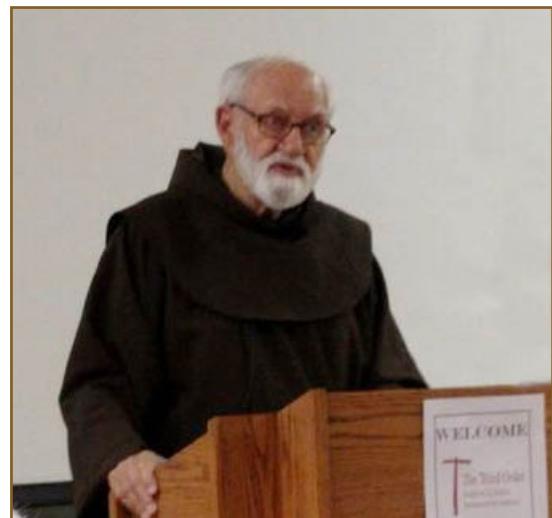
Paul Alexander, European Province Visitor

*Editor's Note: Paul Alexander wrote, directed, and acted in the feature-length film, *Finding Saint Francis*, which was viewed at Convocation.*

Great firework displays seem to go on forever, full of colour, noise, and surprises punctuated with periods of silent expectation. They must be planned carefully, take an eternity to organize, and are over almost before they have begun, but they are never forgotten. This was my experience of the American Province's Centennial Celebrations, a gathering of tertiaries from the United States, Canada, Brazil, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Guyana, Trinidad, and Nevis. (Two tertiaries from Cuba were unable to attend because they were refused USA visas, but more on that later.) Many dialects, accents and languages came together in laughter and song, music and dance, sermons, films, books, workshops, crossword puzzles, shared meals, stories, and small groups that met to look into the future, all bound together with prayer and the centrality of the Eucharist each day.

It was an extraordinary week allowing Franciscan principles to flower so joyously among people from different backgrounds and cultures who made friendships that will last a lifetime. It was all made possible with the meticulous organization of a dedicated group of tertiaries led by Beverly Hosie.

*Franciscan scholar
Murray Bodo
delivering the
keynote address.*



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The Franciscan Times

is a publication
of the Third Order,
Society of Francis,
Province of the Americas



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Our Convocation Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, when the world was growing cold, you raised up blessed Francis, bearing in his body the marks of your suffering, to warm our hearts with the fire of your love. Help us always to turn to you with true hearts and for love of you to bear the Cross; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, forever and ever. Amen

*Centennial Convocation, cont.
from p. 1*



The 100-year-old St. Anne Convent in Melbourne, Kentucky, hosted our Provincial Convocation.

Days Filled With Prayer, Meals, Workshops, Fellowship

Our days started with Morning Prayer at 7 a.m. in small groups, followed by breakfast, workshops, lunch, more workshops, afternoon Eucharist, dinner, more programs, and ending with Compline at 8:45 p.m. Then, for those who had the stamina, there was a time of fellowship with jokes, stories, general chat, and a drink or two (or three) in the aptly named Galilee Room.

The first day started with registration in the afternoon and then, after dinner, there were introductions, orientation and a getting acquainted fellowship hour that went on into the night! Each country, including the European Province, was invited to introduce themselves. I was privileged to deliver a message from the European Province on behalf of Jamie Hacker Hughes, our newly appointed Provincial Minister, who, though he would very much have liked to be present, felt that his place, the week after his commissioning, had to be in Europe.

Wednesday started with a keynote address from Murray Bodo of the Order of Friars Minor, who lives in Cincinnati. We had been asked to read his 2013 book, *Francis and Jesus*, to help us focus on the purpose of the Convocation. He gave a brilliant talk full of wit and deep insights, which set the tone for the rest of the week. (*You may read it on our website by clicking here.*)

The central focus of the Convocation (the absolute heart of both the European and American Convocations) followed each day when we separated into fourteen small groups to discuss these topics:

- The call for transformation in the church and TSSF
- Birth pangs of personally experiencing God's liberating call to the Church and the world
- How we can work together to create God's new kingdom of grace, compassion and justice

Parallels with the European Convocation

What was fascinating was how the distillation of these sessions seemed to mirror our own process of discernment at our recent European Convocation where we agreed to pursue the following themes in order to "enhance the energy that arose across the Province through the Convocation process, which needs to be captured and taken forward so that we recover our distinctiveness and prophetic edge":

1. *Impact:* To make an impact on the church and the world through our *distinctiveness*.
2. *Depth:* To attend in-depth to *ongoing formation*, our distinctive Franciscan spirituality and discipleship, from profession onwards.
3. *JPIC:* To ensure that JPIC plays a *key role*, individually and sometimes collectively, working in the ecumenical and inter-faith arenas.
4. *Growth:* To encourage growth in numbers, depth and engagement, retaining established members and attracting *young members*.

*Centennial Convocation, cont.
from p. 3*

**Many dialects, accents
and languages came
together in laughter
and song, music and
dance, sermons, films,
books, workshops,
crossword puzzles,
shared meals,
stories, and small
groups that met to
look into the future, all
bound together
with prayer and
the centrality of the
Eucharist each day.**

5. *Structure:* To ensure that structure must be in the service of mission and that we *continually strive for simplicity* in every area of the Order's life.

Below I have listed a condensed version of the deliberations that came out of the Convocation of the Province of the Americas and marked in bracketed italics where our Convocations almost exactly mirrored each other.

The Province of the Americas distilled their discussions down to “*Pray and Show Up: Prophetic action* (*‘prophetic edge’*) comes out of Prayer and Contemplation, which is a neat way of paraphrasing (*‘enhance the Energy’*). ”

1. *Impact:*

- a. The church is for others. We need to remember how the gospel makes us different/distinctive from society. The church has become too comfortable with being a part of society. Its task is to be different. The Earth is our cloister.

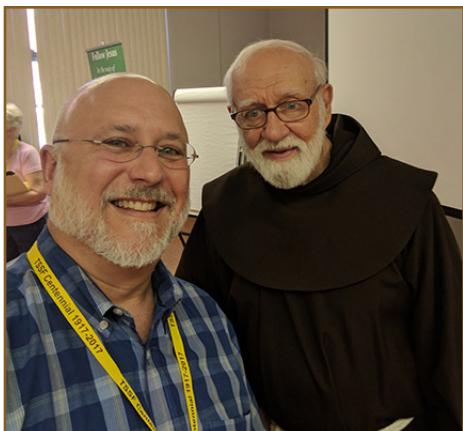
- b. We have to get better at using technology for fellowship, mission and formation and to ensure our internet presence is alive. (It was recommended that tertiaries use TSSF as a signature on emails and hyperlink it to the website and that we employ visibility by wearing t-shirts, Franciscan symbols, etc. so people might ask us who we are.)

2. *Depth:* We must continue formation (*ongoing formation*). Nourishment is the key. We have to “dance with what we've got.” We have to be willing to put ourselves out there and let the Holy Spirit take care of the rest, moving beyond what is comfortable. We must make time for prayer. We must be intentional about our connections to each other and our “senior saints,” who are a constant source of encouragement and knowledge.

3. *JPIC:* Our relationship to creation is *key* (“*key role*”), not relationship as caretakers, but as kin to creation.

4. *Growth:* *Young adults* (“*young members*”) today use technology. Young people sometimes feel like strangers in their churches. They are looking for traditions, but they need us to be genuine about who we are. They want to be involved with communities that are working for the poor and disenfranchised. They don't want us to be “cool”—they want us to be honest. We need to provide engaging work for young people, allowing them to work alongside us whether they want to enter formation or not.

5. *Structure:* The Aims and Notes of the order are our identity, our Principles unite us. Our order/structure will come out of the chaos of new beginnings. We talked in Chapter about throwing open fellowship meetings to anyone who wanted to work with us. We need structure (formation, fellowship, etc.), but we don't want the structure to impede the Spirit's work. *Our processes shouldn't be overwhelming* (“*continually strive for simplicity*”), but should help guide and encourage us to find balance. Back to basics: service/prayer/love.



TSSF Minister General Ken Norian with Murray Bodo, who joined us for lunch.

*Centennial Convocation, cont.
from p. 4*



The small scale of this photo cannot evoke the magical feeling created by "Murmuration," Anne Patterson's installation of copper and brass mesh birds that swirled around the suspended cross in Cincinnati's Christ Church Cathedral. The birds were a fitting Franciscan image for our Eucharistic celebration.

Editor's Note: You may read Geoff Davies' review of Finding St. Francis in the Summer 2016 issue of The Franciscan Times (TFT) by [clicking here](#) and going to page 9. A review of The Sultan and the Saint by Masud ibn Syedullah appeared in the Advent 2016 issue of TFT on page 2 and may be viewed by [clicking here](#).

Also, throughout this issue, italicized green text indicates clickable text.

These compared decisions clearly indicate that we are all moving in the same direction and the excitement this *prophetic edge* gives us needs to be enhanced in the energy to "pray and show up."

Spiritually Enriching Workshops

In the afternoons and evenings we were invited to choose from a number of workshops on themes as diverse as Greening, Solitude, Twelve-Step Transformation, Fundraising, The Cosmic Web, the Online Lending Library, City of Immigrants, Heroes of the Third Order, Forward Publications, The Role of Animals, Transfiguration, JPIC, Franciscan Music Writing, Rumi the Poet, and Franciscan Beekeeping. We also had the opportunity to attend screenings of the films *Finding St Francis* and *The Sultan and the Saint*. Needless to say, it was only possible to attend at most six workshops. The ones I managed to attend were all excellent.

A Day of Exploration

We did have free time, which for some was taken up by meetings and for others provided a welcome chance to put our heads down to rest for an hour or so. The one day that was distinctly different was Friday when a bus tour had been arranged to take us to Cincinnati to visit the Freedom Center and Underground Railroad Museum, Christ Church Cathedral, and the site where the Third Order in America started.

The Underground Railroad Museum was a revelation. (*See Sonya Riggins-Furlow's article, page 15.*) Museum guides conducted tours, explaining how slaves were transported over the Ohio River across the Mason-Dixon line that divided the slave-owning state of Kentucky from the slave-free state of Ohio via freedom trails that led to Canada, Mexico and Florida. This was a dismal period of American history, but Britain and other countries were also complicit in the slave trade. The museum reminded us that slavery is with us today in the form of sex trafficking.

Following the museum, we went to the Cathedral for a midday Eucharist. What immediately struck one on entering this beautiful modern building were the myriad flocks of russet-coloured steel, copper, and brass wire mesh birds suspended from the ceiling on invisible wires swirling down the central nave towards the altar. The next visual treat in this light-bright building were the stained glass windows. Then the vast organ set high above the choir stalls started playing. I'm not an enormous fan of organs, but the sound emanating from this vast beast was so pure that it dispelled all my reservations as to the organ's ability to sway the senses. It was magnificent. Our Eucharist, celebrated by Gordon Scruton, Bishop Protector of the Province of the Americas, was followed by lunch in the Christ Church undercroft, courtesy of the cathedral's hospitality.

This rich tour concluded with our visiting and paying homage to the birthplace of the Province of the Americas with a communal prayer and laying of commemorative bouquets in pouring rain at the very spot where Father Joseph (The Rev. Claude Crookston's Franciscan name) on June 15, 2017 gathered together 18 men and women who

Centennial Convocation, cont. on page 6

***This was indeed
a convocation of
immeasurable worth
where the kingdom of
heaven was definitely
brought closer to earth.***

later began the three Orders of St. Francis. Fittingly, for Franciscans, it was in one of the poorest parts of the city, with rundown tenements and no sign of the house at 1627 Freeman Avenue that had once acted as the spur to the American Franciscan Third Order movement. This tour was documented and led by John Brockmann, who wrote a centennial history of The Third Order entitled *The First 100 Years in the Americas: 1917 - 2017: Third Order Society of St. Francis* (available on Amazon).

Saturday was a gathering-together day, with plenary sessions, the Centennial Eucharist, celebrations, thanksgivings, and special presentations, ending in entertainment, Compline and then a Galilean party that went on late into the night.

And so to Sunday with the wrap, the final Eucharist and the heartfelt goodbyes. This was indeed a convocation of immeasurable worth where the kingdom of heaven was definitely brought closer to earth.

The only sad notes were that Minister Provincial Tom Johnson could not attend because he was preparing for cancer treatments and that the two Cuban tertiaries who planned to attend the Convocation were prevented from doing so by having their US Visa applications turned down—by the American consulate, even though their paperwork had all been approved by the Cuban government and supported by the Cuban Episcopal Bishop.

Finally, on behalf of our brothers and sisters in the European Province, a huge thank you to everyone in the Americas for including us in your celebrations. We are truly one family committed to making our Lord known and loved everywhere; to treating all creation as our brothers and sisters; and to living simply. May God richly bless each and every one of you. ♦

The Centenary Franciscan Song Book

Rick Simpson

Editor's Note: One of the gifts of our Provincial Convocation was an original 85-page printed songbook containing music, lyrics, art, and a CD of recordings created by the Long Island Fellowship for our centenary celebration. Selections from the Song Book enhanced our worship services throughout the week.

The inspiration for a new Franciscan Song Book came from a desire to praise our God with songs that specifically reflect Franciscan spirituality. We found it difficult locating such material. After much searching (nearly in vain) we came across on the internet a Franciscan Prayer Book compiled in the 1920s, containing prayers of St. Francis and prayers attributed to him, as well as a number of pieces written by Popes, brothers, and a few of his other contemporaries.

An unspoken decision was made by a few of our members to create more of the music we desired using the texts we discovered. With promptings of the Holy Spirit, work began during back-to-back snowstorms on Long Island in February 2015. On opposite shores of the island, songs were being simultaneously crafted by like-minded writers, each unaware of the other's intentions. By the time these brothers contacted one another, both had completed eight songs. The exciting phone calls that were exchanged revealed the hand of God at work, and the official project was underway.

This Franciscan Song Book is the fruit of their collaboration. To be sure, more songs are still being composed, but forty-four songs were selected to share at this time. We are already working on more songs, and since the Convocation others from our Order have joined in the effort.

Franciscan Songbook, cont. on page 7

Franciscan Songbook, cont. from p. 6

The Franciscan Songbook is a gift to you from the Long Island Fellowship!

Below, one of the workshops offered during Convocation was entitled “Franciscan Music Writing.” This song, based on Psalm 91, was created during the workshop.

7-16-17

Abide

[Psalm 91:1]

Brother Willy, TSSF,
Rick Simpson, TSSF,
Terry Doyle, TSSF

Simon Fong, TSSF,
James Hagen, TSSF,
Millicent Ramcharan, TSSF

Am A m G

1. In God I abide.
3. In Gott ich ver - trau. My Mein

7 Am G Am
Lord is at my side,
Gott ist an mein-er Seit, at my side.

13 Am G Am
2. In Di - os yo vi - vo. Sen - or es - ta a mi la -

20 G Am
do, a mi la - do.

Deep Prayer: Special Liturgies at the Centennial Convocation

Alice Baird

Center left, Healing Eucharist celebrant Gary Ost with Bishop Celso, who gave the homily during the beautiful liturgy on Thursday evening in St. Anne's Sacred Heart Chapel.



It was a week filled with special liturgies. Shimmering with the beauty of God's word, our prayers resonated with the cadences of Maori and Ojibwa prayer and the lilting voices of tertiaries from Trinidad, Brazil, Canada, England, and beyond. Sitting or standing in the Chapel of the Sacred Heart at St. Anne's Convent in Melbourne, Kentucky, I had a sense that we were united in worship with Franciscans around the world.

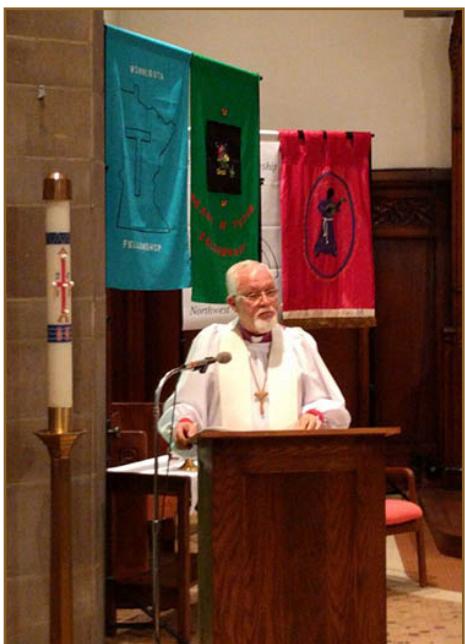
There were many moments of transcendence in prayer and song. Perhaps the most enduring image I took home from our Provincial Convocation was of Bishop Protector Gordon Scruton proclaiming the love of Jesus, arms flung wide, head tilted back in exuberant joy during our Eucharist celebration held on Friday at Cincinnati's Christ Church Cathedral. His cruciform gesture reflected the shape of the large cross suspended above him, around which swirled hundreds of translucent, copper-and-brass-mesh birds, seemingly moving with the Spirit. (The sculpture installation, entitled Murmuration, was created by artist Anne Patterson for the 200th anniversary of the cathedral.)

"We are a round table"

In the months leading up to the Convocation, Masud Ibn Syedullah designed all but the Healing Eucharist liturgy, drawing not only from the American/Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, but also from Anglican liturgies used in other parts of our Province of the Americas: the West Indian Book of Common Prayer and the Canadian Prayer Book.

Special Liturgies, cont. on page 9

*Special Liturgies, cont.
from p. 8*



**Bishop Celso preaching
during the Healing Eucharist.
Behind him hang a few of
the banners representing
fellowships attending the
Convocation.**

This inclusiveness was essential to his inspiration for our 100th anniversary celebration of TSSF. “Originally we were called the American Province, but about 20 years ago we began to change to the Province of the Americas,” he said. “We are a round table, and we are all equals at the feast.” In our printed liturgies, the Gospel readings were written in English, Portuguese, and Spanish, the three main languages of our Province.

Masud has become our Province’s unofficial master of liturgies, esteemed for his stellar gifts of liturgy at earlier Provincial Convocations. (Again and again, his work coordinating the interfaith service at the 2002 Santa Barbara convocation came up in conversation as a peak spiritual experience.) Our 100th anniversary liturgies included Morning Prayer that incorporated *lectio divina* designed to inspire our time in community and Compline accompanied by music created for the Convocation by the Long Island Fellowship (*see The Centenary Franciscan Songbook*). Music was an integral part of all our liturgies, and few could be better suited to selecting our hymns and leading the chorus and accompanists than Masud, who, with a master’s degree in vocal pedagogy and performance, taught music at both university and high school before entering seminary.

One of the key technical innovations during this Convocation was the online posting of all our liturgies, including the music, a decision that saved the waste and expense of printing hundreds and hundreds of pages. Most tertiaries read the liturgies from their tablets, Kindles, and phones; a very limited number of copies were printed for those who did not have access through electronic devices.

Bishops Scruton, David Rice (TSSF Bishop Protector-Elect), Mark MacDonald (Canada), Claude Berkley (Trinidad), and Celso Franco de Oliveira (Brazil) served as celebrants, as well as Tracey Carroll, priest of the Diocese of Oklahoma and Provincial Chaplain Rick Simpson. Provincial Minister Tom Johnson, who could not be present because of illness, was “beamed in,” after a period of technical difficulties, to deliver his pre-recorded Centennial Plenary homily (which you may read [here](#)). Many other clergy, deacons, altar guild volunteers, and choir members, too many to name individually in this article, also enriched our prayer and worship services with their participation and example.

Wounded Healers

For me, the most extraordinary liturgy we shared was our Healing Eucharist on Thursday, in which we both received and offered healing. This service was primarily the work of Gary Ost, who drew on Steven Shakespeare’s remarkable *Prayers for an Inclusive Church* published in 2009 for many of the liturgical prayers as well as his own practice of Buddhist meditation. Following his retirement from the priesthood ten years ago, Gary had been drawn to Buddhist practice in part by his proximity in San Francisco to Green Gulch Farm, a Zen monastery, where he learned meditation techniques that opened him to the reality of suffering and helped him “to become a more honest Christian.”

Special Liturgies, cont. on page 10

*Special Liturgies, cont.
from p. 9*

"Do this to remember me." Suddenly I heard the plaintive words of a young man pleading with his friends not to forget him. I was moved to compassion for Our Lord.

During the Prayers of the People, Gary led us in “A Compassion Practice for All Beings” in which we entered the suffering of others and sent our healing energies in nine directions with the mantra, “May this suffering cease. May this suffering cease.” This meditation, based on the Heavenly Mind State Practices, also known as the Four Immeasurables, implicated all of us as universal healers as well as supplicants for our own healing. Following this prayer, each of us approached one of the seven stations arrayed in front of the altar rail with bishops, priests, and deacons anointing, laying hands on, and praying for the individual intentions we brought. It was personal, it was communal, it was powerful.

But the moment that actually moved me to tears occurred during the Consecration with a simple rewording of the familiar invocation, “Do this in remembrance of me.” I had always heard this as Christ’s institution of the Holy Eucharist. But when Gary instead intoned, “Do this *to remember me*,” I suddenly heard it as the plaintive words of a young man going unjustly to his death and pleading with his friends not to forget him. Suddenly I was moved to compassion for Our Lord. It was stunning and so unexpected.

Memorable Blessings

Those of us who love the literature of prayer feasted our senses on many fine texts during Convocation. Among the most memorable were the final blessings we received before dismissal, none more extraordinary than Bishop Scruton’s blessing at Christ Church Cathedral:

*May the Lord Jesus, who loves with a wounded heart,
be your love forevermore.*

*May the Lord Jesus, who serves with wounded hands,
help you to serve others.*

*May the Lord Jesus, who walks on wounded feet,
walk with you to the end of the road.*

Look for the face of the Lord Jesus in everyone you meet.

*And may everyone you meet
see the face of the Lord Jesus in you.*

*And may the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you and remain with you forever.
Amen.*

If you were unable to attend this special Convocation, you owe it to yourself to read the liturgies posted on our website at <http://tssf.org>.



Sidebar:**“Compassion Practice for All Beings”****Gary Ost**

***“I can feel this suffering.
Let this suffering cease.”***

Someone said, “Compassion is the highest form of spirituality.”

Every spiritual tradition has practices for expanding our compassion. I like the Compassion Practice in Buddhism.

We sit in a relaxed and alert position and remind ourselves we have a compassionate heart and we care about the suffering of others.

Then we bring to mind an experience of suffering--our own, that of someone close to us, or a pet's. We breathe the pain fully into our body and heart.

Breathing out, we release the pain, ventilating it into the Open-Hearted Space around us, as we offer these or similar words:

“I can feel this suffering. May this suffering cease. May the light of understanding and love dispel the darkness of sorrow and regret. May this suffering cease. May this suffering cease.”

We repeat these words for each direction:

“I can feel my suffering. May this suffering cease...”

“I can feel my spiritual mentors' suffering...”

“I can feel my friends' suffering...”

“I can feel my special loved one's suffering...”

“I can feel the suffering of a complete stranger...”

“I can feel the suffering of the person I like the least...”

*“I can feel the suffering of all of these people,
all at the same time...”*

*“I can feel the suffering of all humans,
all at the same time...”*

“I can feel the suffering of all beings in the universe...”

We conclude by congratulating ourselves for doing something about the suffering in the world, as we remember it is a spiritual practice, and like all practice, it improves over time.



Lectio Divina in Three Stages (aka African Bible Study Method)

Peter Stube

Editor's Note: This was the method we used at Convocation during Morning Prayer.

Listening for Christ the Word

- One person reads aloud the passage of Scripture, as others listen for the word or phrase that is especially meaningful for them.
- Silence for two minutes.
- Each person hears and silently repeats a word or a phrase that has attracted him or her.
- Sharing aloud, each may make a single-sentence statement of the word or phrase that has attracted them. No elaboration.

How Christ the Word Speaks to Me

- Second reading aloud of the same passage by another person.
- Silence for two minutes, reflecting on “How does the content of this reading touch my life today?”
- Share aloud, briefly, beginning with “I hear. . .” or “I see. . .”

What Christ the Word is Inviting Me to Do

- Third reading of the same passage by another person.
- Silence for two minutes, reflecting on “I believe that God wants me to . . . today, as a Franciscan.”
- Sharing aloud the result of each person’s reflection. Be especially aware of what is shared by the person on your right.
- After sharing, pray silently in turn, for the person on your right.
- *Note:* Anyone may say “pass” at any time. If instead of sharing with the group you prefer to pray silently, simply state this aloud and conclude your silent prayer with “Amen.” ♦

Sidebar:
Lectio Divina and Its More Familiar Face,
The African Bible Study Method

John Brockmann

When we learn or teach something new, it is always preferable to link it up in readers’ or students’ minds with something familiar. For example, early personal computers came equipped with keyboards and were primarily used for “word processing.” Such equipment and usage immediately empowered lots of “non-computer-knowledgeable” users to begin immediately working with computers because it was so much alike to what they were already used to. (Mind you, the initial premier software, Word Star, did complicate things all on its own.)

Now let’s apply this learning principle to what we did at Convocation, what Fellowships are being asked to do over the next year at local meetings, and what members of Chapter are also being asked to do over the next year: *lectio divina*.

African Bible Study Method,
cont. from p. 12

**So, relax, you don't
need to learn something
completely new to fulfill
the lectio divina project
offered to us over the next
year.**

A number of us were a little confused at Convocation when we were told we would be doing *lectio divina* over the three days in our small groups. Many of us were unsure of the classic Benedictine prayer method.

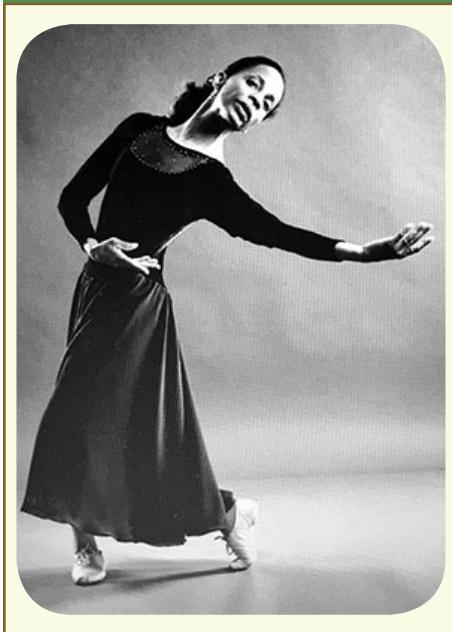
When I returned home, I poked around the internet to see if I was remembering the Convocation process differently, and I found a very succinct description and process for the African Bible Study Method from an Illinois Episcopal Church's website ([click here](#)). Many dioceses and other organizations have used this method under this title: *The African Bible Study Method* (aka Ubuntu Bible Study method, or the Lambeth-African Bible Study Method 1998).

I myself just used this method with my parish Youth Group over the last year. The directions on how to do it from the website linked above match up to the Convocation instructions for *lectio divina*.

So relax, you don't need to learn something completely new to fulfill the *lectio divina* project offered to us over the next year. Just remember your African Bible Study Method and use it to discern in small groups the re-imagining of our Province. ♦

Channel of Light: Body Prayer at Provincial Convocation 2017

Diana Turner-Forte



Diana Turner-Forte

The centennial celebration of the Third Order Society of St. Francis was my first Provincial Convocation. It was an enriching event filled with prayer, problem-solving, interconnection, and in many ways it reflected the ideals of Franciscan community—service, joy, and love. There was something for everyone. I found my place in worship, quiet spaces, and in presenting “body prayer” for the last evening’s Compline service.

Preparing a dance for worship is like any other spiritual practice; it requires going to the space within. Added to that is the specificity of the danced prayer: the breadth of movement, the location of objects, limitations of the human form (at least this human form) and attunement to the sacredness of the space. Essential elements are woven together with exactitude and most importantly, prayerfully. Each prayer dance has its own feeling, role in a service, and message. Some works are presented once, not to be used again; others are stored kinesthetically for future use, as the work presented at Compline.

The danced prayer to composer Alberto Ginastera’s “*La Danza de la Moza Donosa*,” which translates to “Dance of the Beautiful Maiden,” was originally presented on World Hunger Day. ([Click here to listen to it and see it played on YouTube](#).) The piano composition is in 6/8 chromatic inflections divided into several sections, creating a tension and release, expansion and contraction, and concluding on a surprising final note. The fluid, flowing time signature provides the backdrop for a meditative interpretation of the music.

Body Prayer, continued, page 14

Body Prayer, cont. from p. 13

**As choreographer,
I envisioned the
Eucharistic table as
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heaven and earth.**

As the choreographer, I envisioned the Eucharistic table as the centerpiece. The intention was to evoke a bridge bringing together heaven and earth, stated at the beginning with arms opening and reaching to the altar, arcing toward the ceiling into an extended downward bow, before returning to a single upward line. This movement is repeated later in the dance, more subtly.

On the expansive music, circular movements of the arms, reaching out and coming in, and going beyond the body is an invitation to the observer to participate: to be drawn into the movement from all directions towards the abundance and inclusive celebration of oneness at the table of forgiveness, love, and compassion.

The dance closes with deliberate steps marking the shape of an infinity symbol on the floor, with the arms gesturing outward and then into a gathering shape that is an open embrace facing the table, complemented by the composer's atonal chord, which speaks to the mystery of our relationship with the divine.

Throughout history many cultures have incorporated the whole body into their sacred practices, invoking divine energy through ecstatic movements, repetitive actions, or gentle meditative gestures. In *Secrets of the Lost Mode of Prayer*, geologist and spiritual seeker Gregg Braden documents a simplified version of whole body prayer. Attempting to bridge the gap between science and spirituality, he suggests that a divine essence exists in all beings, which we as humans are able to tap into:

Experiments confirmed that we're bathed in a field of energy that connects us with all the events of our world. Given names that range from the Quantum Hologram to the Mind of God, research has shown that through this energy, the beliefs and prayers within us are carried into the world around us.

Traveling to monasteries in the Himalayas of Tibet, remote villages in Bolivia and Peru, as well as Hindu temples and Navajo families in the Southwest, Braden went on a quest seeking answers regarding human responses to suffering, resilience in times of hardship and crisis, and adaptability to change. In *Secrets* he identifies the impact of body prayer, meaning prayers that include the whole body, mind, emotions and heart as another form of expression for our spiritual toolkit.

Active body prayer is a template that holds hope, peace and love in spite of outward appearances. Our prayer creates a ripple effect, and the universal pattern speaks to our hearts. Aligning our thoughts with our emotions cultivates a heart feeling (a wordless expression) of pure compassion and love that emits apparent miracles.

While we will continue with our rituals, prayers with words and chants of protection or intercession, Braden's inquiry and experience uncover another method of prayer that "is based in the silent language of human emotion." With practice and drawing from Christianity's ancient tradition, perhaps in the next 100 years, participants at future Provincial Convocations will witness and participate in reverential and dignified movement prayers to enhance their worship and spiritual lives. ♦

Provincial Convocation 2017: The Underground Railroad Freedom Center

Sonya Riggins-Furlow

Editor's Note: Our bus excursion to Cincinnati included a tour of the Underground Railroad Freedom Center. In light of recent events in Charlottesville and the national media, Sonya Riggins-Furlow's commentary resonates far beyond our communal experience at the Freedom Center.



Slave shackles on display at the Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati.

It is a normal reaction to be appalled by the history of slavery in the United States. It is my history, but it is also the history of all Americans. Touring the Freedom Center with our Franciscan group, I wanted to know what my fellow Franciscans were thinking. Often we found ourselves shaking our heads as we walked together through the galleries to witness the brutal, enforced servitude of kidnapped and enslaved African people. (It is interesting to me that they named the museum the Freedom Center when there are millions of African Americans still enslaved in ghettos, poverty, malnourishment, inadequate education, low job prospects, violence, addiction, and the list goes on and on.)

As Christians in the way of St. Francis, do we live a life of unconditional love toward our neighbor? Jesus wants us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. If we love our neighbor unconditionally, then our treatment of our neighbor will be reflective of that love.

On my father's side of my family, I have been able to trace our ancestors to the year 1820 and on my mother's side to 1834. Having a deep knowledge of the enslavement of Africans in America, hearing the stories passed down through the generations, I was somewhat prepared to walk through the galleries of the Underground Railroad Freedom Center. My great-grandparents were born enslaved. I am of the third generation born free. My grandmother was born free, my dad was born free, and I was born free. My great-grandfather's mother, Eliza, (I do not know if she was born a slave or captured in Africa and forced into enslavement) was a slave on the King plantation, and the master, George King was the father of her children. However, he sold his slave children to Mr. Hall, and thus their last name changed from King to Hall.

As Christians in the way of St. Francis, do we live a life of unconditional love toward our neighbor?

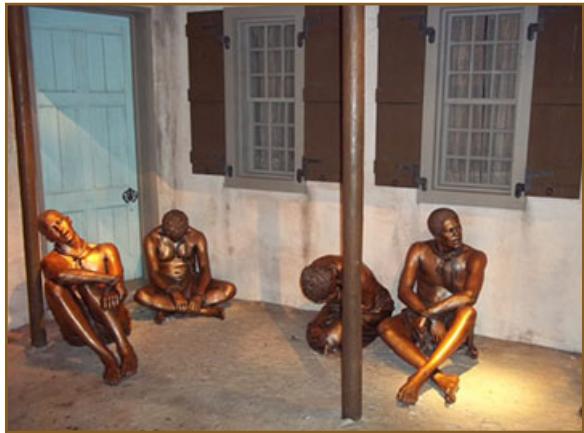
As an African American, I personally experience the loss of our heritage, our language, our freedom. We are branded by our skin color. We are the descendants of slaves. Where we are now is the deliberate destination from a path of physical, mental and emotional effects of slavery. Dr. Joy DeGruy has coined a term for this in the title of her book, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing*.

The exhibit that touched me the most was "The Slave Pen." It illuminated the life of my ancestors, who survived reaching a foreign place after an unexpected capture and ocean voyage. The exhibit label explained:

Freedom Center, continued, page 16

*Freedom Center, cont.
from p. 15*

These lifesize statues of bound and shackled slaves were so disturbing to Kay Miller's service dog Shelby that he had to be distracted from barking at them. Shelby was on to something: in art these abject figures were as trapped in bronze as in life they were imprisoned in slavery.



The Slave Pen, built in the early 1800s, was recovered from a farm in Mason County, Kentucky, less than 60 miles from the Freedom Center. The structure was used as a holding pen by Kentucky slave trader, Capt. John W. Anderson, to temporarily keep enslaved people before being moved farther south for sale. The slave pen played an integral role in the greater story of the internal slave trade in America.

It is amazing that human beings can invent such horrible, hateful, despicable ways to treat other human being. How did we forget that these individuals, despite their dark skin, curly hair and broad noses, were breathing human beings?

As recent events in Charlottesville made abundantly clear, today we continue to live with the legacy of slavery in this country. Let me quote here from *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, by Michelle Alexander, published in 2012:

All people make mistakes. All of us are sinners. All of us are criminals. All of us violate the law at some point in our lives. In fact, if the worst thing you have ever done is speed ten miles over the speed limit on the freeway, you have put yourself and others at more risk of harm than someone smoking marijuana in the privacy of his or her living room. Yet there are people in the United States serving life sentences for first-time drug offenses, something virtually unheard of anywhere else in the world. Arguably the most important parallel between mass incarceration and Jim Crow is that both have served to define the meaning and significance of race in America. Indeed, a primary function of any racial caste system is to define the meaning of race in its time. Slavery defined what it meant to be black (a slave), and Jim Crow defined what it meant to be black (a second-class citizen). Today mass incarceration defines the meaning of blackness in America: black people, especially black men, are criminals. That is what it means to be black.

For me, there was no great awakening at the Underground Railroad Freedom Center, but it visualized the history I already knew on an epic scale. More importantly, it visualized it for others who may not, or care not, to know the history of the brutal kidnapping and enslavement of an innocent people.

What I found particularly interesting at the museum was the commitment to *engaging the community* through education and inspiration about the ongoing struggles for freedom. Several exhibits focused on human trafficking, a modern-day reincarnation of slavery, as President Barack Obama rightly branded it:

It ought to concern every person, because it's a debasement of our common humanity. It ought to concern every community, because it tears at the social fabric. It ought to concern every business, because it distorts markets. It ought to concern every nation, because it endangers public health and fuels violence and organized crime. I'm talking about the

Freedom Center, continued, page 17

*Freedom Center, cont.
from p. 16*



The Eternal Flame of freedom burns outside the museum on a plaza overlooking the Ohio River, which marked the boundary between slave and free states.

injustice, the outrage, of human trafficking, which must be called by its true name: modern slavery. Our fight against human trafficking is one of the great human rights causes of our time. — President Barack Obama, September 25, 2012

Human trafficking is as horrendous as any slavery in human history. Other forms of slavery persist today, in forms not always immediately apparent. Do you own any slaves? Before you reject this as a ridiculous question, visit slaveryfootprint.org and take the Slavery Footprint survey. It asks the question, "How Many Slaves Work for You?" Millions of people from 200 countries have taken the survey to discover their connection to modern-day slavery. Take the survey and you will be surprised at just how many slaves work for you.

And once you know, you will want to recommit yourself to your Franciscan values of peacemaking, non-violence, and the equality of all people, no matter their skin color, economic status, or country of origin. ♦

Do you own any slaves? Before you reject this question, visit slaveryfootprint.org and take the Slavery Footprint Survey.

Centennial Convocation 2017: A History in Four Acts

John Brockmann

Placing flowers and offering prayer at the spot where TSSF began. (Paved over, the hallowed spot revealed no outward sign of its significance, an appropriate nod to the first note of the Order, humility.) Left to right, Dominic George, Blair Matheson (guest from the Pacific Province), David Burgdorf, Joy Bidlack, Will Wauters (in red coat), Lucy Blunt (in yellow slicker, on tiptoes), Francesca Wigle, Jim Hagen, ? Joyce Wilding, Rick Simpson, Verleah Kosloske, Anton Armbruster, ?*, Gerald Hancock, Masud ibn Syedullah, John Brockmann, Julia Bergstrom, and Mark Casstevens.*

**If you can identify these individuals, please email jbrockma@udel.edu and we will reprint a corrected photo in our next issue.*



The reason why the Province of the Americas chose to hold our Centennial Convocation in Cincinnati rather than Atlanta or San Diego is because this is where the Rev. Claude Crookston, Father Joseph, founded the Third Order Secular of the Poor Brethren of St. Francis of the American Congregation of Franciscans on June 15, 1917.

Act One originated for me almost 20 years ago when I first became editor of this *Franciscan Times*, and I began including occasional historical pieces about our provincial pioneers and founders.

History, continued, page 18

*History, cont.
from p. 17*

I offered this presentation to remind those present that these towering inspirational men and women from our early history should confirm our pride in TSSF but should not limit our ministry imaginations.

Two years ago I began serializing my book, *The First 100 Years in the Americas: 1917 - 2017: Third Order Society of St. Francis*, in the *Franciscan Times*. All 16 chapters are available on our [website](#), or in a paperback available from [Amazon.com](#) for \$12 dollars.

Act Two was a multimedia presentation I created entitled “Heroes of the Third Order: Their Pictures, Stories, and Poetry.” It was a look at four contemporary “saints” from our *Devotional Companion* (2015): H. Baxter Liebler: Apostle to the Navahos; Hugo Muller: On the Barricades with the Cree Indians in North Quebec; Emily Gardiner Neal of Cincinnati: *A Reporter Finds God Through Spiritual Healing*; and John Dorman: Missionary Priest of Upper Mazaruni and Upper Cuyuni Region in Guyana. I offered this presentation as a workshop at Convocation, to remind those present that these towering inspirational men and women from our early history should confirm our pride in TSSF but should not limit our ministry imaginations, remembering St. Francis’s admonition, “I have done what was mine to do. May Christ now teach you what you are to do.”

Act Three consisted of interactive crossword puzzles and clue puzzle posters. Each day participants at the Convocation had a crossword puzzle. Also, each day about 15 posters were taped on the walls of the plenary meeting room so that people could get a summary of the book in pictures and a few words. Then each night, as everyone made their way into Compline, the solution to that day’s crossword puzzle would be posted on the chapel’s entry doors. All three crossword puzzles, the three solutions, and the 39 history clue posters may be used to have fun with our history at future regional convocations or fellowship meetings. They are all stored and ready to be downloaded from our website on the [Resources/History of the Province of the Americas page](#).

Act Four was a narrated bus tour that took us to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, Christ Church Cathedral, and the place of our nativity at 1627 Freeman Avenue in Cincinnati. As we approached the place of our beginnings, here is what the guides read aloud on the buses:

The Rev. Claude Crookston had a vision of founding a Franciscan Order in the Episcopal Church, and so he came to St. Luke’s Church here at the corner of Findlay and Baymiller Streets. He ostensibly came here because he was on a leave for illness from his Wisconsin parish, and his former seminary roommate at General Theological Seminary in New York was the rector here at St. Luke’s.

But his deeper reason was because from this parish, 19 years earlier in 1898, a religious community of women was founded, the Community of the Transfiguration. Claude Crookston probably thought that since the Holy Spirit had struck this spot once, perhaps it would happen again.

Mind you, the motherhouse of the Community of the Transfiguration, Bethany House, was at 1711 Freeman Avenue.



Things are never just what they seem: these crossroads signs signify more than guideposts for motorists; they point to the hidden beginnings of the Third Order Society of St. Francis in the Americas.

*History, cont.
from p. 18*

*The actual building at
1627 Freeman Avenue
had long ago been torn
down, but we tumbled off
the buses in a light rain
and gathered at a traffic
island in the middle of
the road and laid three
wreaths.*

Crookston became the Assistant Rector at St. Luke's, and on February 2, 1917, he dedicated himself to the Franciscan vocation, renaming himself Father Joseph. With him doing that, three others in Cincinnati began a solemn novena to seek what sort of Franciscan community might be possible. Even before the novena was finished, one of the women offered herself and a large sum of money for the creation of a convent if the Anglican Franciscan life could be started immediately.

In May 1917, a house at 1627 Freeman Avenue was rented where three women began living a religious life. This "House of Our Lady, Help of Christians" was blessed on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, June 15, 1917. At this benediction all the men and women who later began the three Orders of St Francis were gathered together.

The actual building at 1627 Freeman Avenue had long ago been torn down to make way for access roads to I-75, but we tumbled off the buses to be greeted with a light rain, and gathered at a traffic island in the middle of the road and laid three wreaths. As we did that, we recited the names of these Cincinnati Third Order postulants who 100 years ago "when it seemed as though our Congregation could not survive...gave the interest, prayers, and encouragement that made it possible to go on with our plans and life" (Father Joseph):

Charles Mussuckles

Alfred Lindloff

Wintrop Sterling

Barbara Sterling

Eva Belle Sterling

Edward Sterling

Anna Marie Strothles

Lucy Thuevessan

Lisle Garber

Johanna Schulz

Mary Posey Foote

Jacob August Saville

William Henry Braussan

With the play ended, we can now begin to re-imagine and create the next 100 years of our TSSF Province of the Americas leaving the responsibility for telling our stories to the next generations of tertiaries. ♦

Small Group Conversations at Convocation

by Anton Ambruster



During Convocation, Anton Armbruster, left, and Dom Celso, right, shared thoughts, fellowship, and refreshments.

With discernment one of the primary goals of Convocation, the planning committee designed a small group process that was both prayerful and egalitarian in order to elicit faithful discussion and widespread participation. Accordingly, everyone was assigned to a small group with a designated leader who led discussions as part of Morning Prayer. Groups were asked to consider three questions:

- *The Call:* In what ways is God calling for a transformation in the Church and TSSF?
- *The Birth Pangs:* What painful obstacles and/or serious challenges do you see in God's call to the Church, the world, and TSSF?
- *Responding to the Call:* How can we work together in our fellowships (and alternate fellowship associations) to create God's kingdom of grace, compassion, and justice?

After a week of small group exchanges on these questions, there was much to harvest by way of ideas to be prayerfully discussed in our fellowships. The *plenary process* on our last full day attempted to harness the key themes represented across the members of the large group.

The Need to Get Back to Basics

What was especially striking was the energy in the room around the need to "get back to basics" and the importance of our being a presence in the world for peace, justice, and love of God's creation. The emerging dominant narrative could well be entitled "*Be Christ for one another and the world.*"

Here are the themes that support this narrative from the final summary meeting:

1. *Break down all walls* and "go out" into the world ("*Into the Borderlands*") and be the instrument of peace and amity. The movie, *The Sultan & The Saint*, moved everyone, and many committed to showing the movie within their fellowships and parishes.
2. *Millennials:* We need to go where the millennials are and engage them in real dialogue. The concept is not to teach but to listen with "the ears of the heart" and be living exemplars of the Gospel. To break bread with those who are unchurched was a prominent sentiment. Youth are being lured away by other things. We need to place them squarely on our radar screen.
3. *Fellowships* need to avoid being "clubs" but instead be present as robust, sacred containers of Spirit and contemplation. Much more time needs to be devoted to *contemplative prayer*.

Small Groups, continued, page 21

*Small Groups, cont.
from p. 20*

We have a deficit of visibility and presence. We need to “show up” and be seen more in the world for what we are called to represent.

4. We have a deficit of *visibility and presence*. We need to “show up” and be seen more in the world for what we are called to represent. To that end, fellowships should find opportunity to be present at functions and events locally (*e.g.*, by establishing kiosks that showcase the work and commitment of the Order). Broadly speaking, we need to *let people know we are here*. Communicate, communicate, communicate! We need to be bold in Christ, not invisible and largely silent.
5. *Stand up for justice*. The will to rise and stand for what’s right was palpable and an example of our calling.
6. Fellowships need to be *true communities of mutual support* in living out our ministries. We need to talk about our Rules: what’s working well and where we struggle.
7. *We are international*. It would be good to do more across fellowships (shared occasions for praying and worshiping and being together) both in the Americas and globally.
8. Let us rededicate ourselves with deliberate vigilance to *healing and healing prayer*. This was raised within the context of the unique and powerful experience of our Healing Eucharist at St. Anne’s.
9. One group called us to be “*Comets of Christ*.” This was offered up with the image of a guidon.
10. *Live biblically* and more radically.
11. Choose to *focus on positive, joyful vision*, not on the obstacles. Keep our eyes on the horizon.
12. Do more to put faces to the names of our brothers and sisters. Many in our directory lack photos.
13. Be more *creative*.

Being an Antidote to Negativity

Overall, the small group process was a source of renewed energy and engagement. There was deep and abiding listening and the search for better questions on which to focus. I believe we need to do a lot more of this regionally all year and within our fellowships.

I believe follow-through now is critical. More is needed to provoke fresh thinking and the exchange of further ideas and exemplars of fresh action. We must reinforce the sense of leaning forward rather than projecting a closed and protection-oriented mindset. This is imperative if we are to combat the malaise and fear that many commented upon across the small groups all week, given the current political climate and fever pitch of uncivil discourse.

*Small Groups, cont.
from p. 21*

*All of this is a test of
faith. We are called to
live the Gospel of Jesus
Christ. Period.*

Members spoke of stress and of deep anxieties and worries. I believe we need to check the climate of negativity that surrounds us and be an antidote for it, not a victim of it. While hard, it is the work of those who are called to be the Light together.

All of this is a test of faith. We are called to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Period.

I believe we need to balance *doing* with *being* (making sure that all our action is grounded in contemplative prayer). We need, as Bishop Scruton opined in his sermon, to "find our first love again."

TSSF is alive and well and we need not panic nor rush to decision. Let's take a deep breath and be careful that we don't jettison what we do today too quickly or precipitously. Above all else, it is our call to show Christ's love to everyone, everywhere, all the time! ♦

Confession of a Kiwi at Centenary Convocation 2017

By Blair Matheson, Province of the Pacific, Taupo, New Zealand



*A sweet international
friendship: from left,
Gordon Kubanek, Canadian
beekeeper, who offered a
workshop on "Franciscan
beekeeping" at Convocation;
Blair Matheson, New Zealand
Director of Huka Honey Hive
Products; and Masud, who
just likes honey.*

Tuhia ki te rangi

Tuhia ki te whenua

Tuhia ki te ngakau o nga tangata

Ko te meu nui

Ko te Aroha

Tihei na Mauri Ora

Write it in the sky

Write it in the land

Write it in the heart of the people

The greatest thing

Is Love

Behold, there is Life

What an amazing privilege to attend the Centenary Convocation of the Province of the Americas on behalf of the TSSF Province of the Pacific. A hugely warm, gracious and welcoming group of about 110 gathered at St Anne's Retreat Center, a 100-year-old former convent in Kentucky just outside Cincinnati Ohio.

Common Themes

Among the themes we explored during our six days together were these:

- leaning into the next decade
- the next 100 years
- where to now
- what are our challenges as a religious order, and
- how do we remain true to our calling yet be relevant in and with the world we live in.

*Confessions of a Kiwi, cont.
from p. 22*

**Write it in the sky,
write it in the land,
write it in the heart of
the people.**

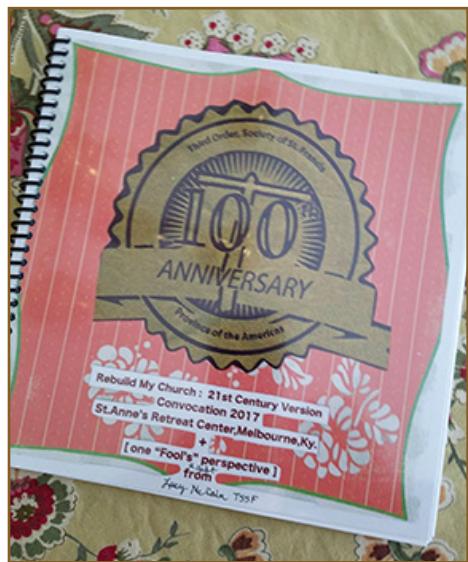
We are facing similar question in our Province but in a different context, especially since the Province of the Americas stretches geographically from Alaska to the bottom of South America! It really is a joy to realize afresh that together our provinces are part of a much bigger picture, organization, and outcomes, while recognizing at the same time that we as the Province of the Pacific must do what is right in our area of the world.

An Uncommon Keynote Speaker

The keynote speaker was Fr. Murray Bodo, whom I also had the pleasure of having dinner with one night. An amazing man filled with the grace, humor, and love of Jesus in every way. Here are some aphorisms I jotted down from his chat with us:

- *Making peace means defeating injustice, and peace requires encounter.*
- *A movement of the heart leads to action.*
- *Francis "worked" mercy with lepers in a reciprocal giving and receiving.*
- *Create openings in human relationships, just as earth, water, air and fire do in creation.*
- *Jesus was the firstborn perfect creature.*
- *The world needs a revolution of tenderness leading to transformation.*
- *Look at The Canticle of the Creatures: is it not a prolonged Freudian pair of opposites?*

It was amazing to listen and hear of all the “doing” that our brothers and sisters are involved with in their churches, communities, and neighborhoods. Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation in action! Many churches are running soup kitchens and food banks; some feeding 400 - 500 people each day. A number of tertiaries in their 60s and 70s have a “food license,” which allows them to work in these kitchens and prepare meals for the hungry and homeless. “Church” is held in local taverns, on the beach, and in homes in order to have funds available for the hungry and homeless rather than for the upkeep of buildings used only a few times a week.



Those who attended the Convocation received in the mail a delightful surprise: a memory book created by Lucy McCain. It is available in the TSSF library.

Hikitia hikitia te rongomaiwhiti o tenei wananga

Tukua kia ea, tukua kia oi

Ko Ranginui ki runga

Ko Papatuanuku ki raro

Tuturu whakamaua kia tina

Huie, taiki e!

Lift the sacredness and focus of this learning session.

Let it go so that we can return to the everyday world.

Where Ranginui is above us and Papatuanuku is below us.