



Secular Franciscan

National Bulletin April 2024 of the Secular Franciscan Order in Canada



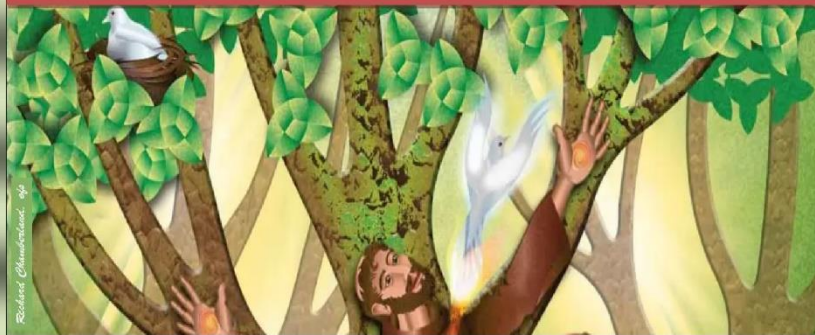
We are here to live
the years of the birth of
the Franciscan orders.



2023-Greccio and The Rule of the First Order
2024-The Stigmata of St Francis
2025-The Canticle of the Creatures
2026-St. Francis Easter

*Saint Francis, at the end of his life, would have said,
brothers, we haven't done anything yet, let's start.*

So off we go, my sisters and brothers...



2024

The Stigmata of St. Francis

The celebration of the Stigmata of St. Francis is annually celebrated on September 17th. This whole year, in celebration of the 800th anniversary of this event, the International Fraternity of Secular Franciscans and the Franciscan Family, are planning reflections, prayers, gatherings and activities to deepen our spiritual sense of St. Francis' way of following Christ, which led to this mystical union with the Son of God.

1. Easter message from the Minister General of the OFM, Br Massimo Fusarelli, ofm:

Dear Brothers and Sisters, May the Lord give you peace!

This message for Easter 2024 is being published on the Fifth Sunday of Lent, when John's Gospel is proclaimed: "unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves their life loses it, and whoever hates their life in this world will preserve it for eternal life" (Jn 12:24-25). Together, then, let us look at this interweaving of death and life as we recall the 800th anniversary of the stigmata of St. Francis..read more at [Lettera ministro generale Pasqua 2024 EN \(ofm.org\)](https://www.ofm.org/lettera_ministro_generale_Pasqua_2024_EN)

2. On Friday, March 1, gathered in the magnificent Hall of the Five Hundred of the Palazzo Vecchio of Florence (Italy) the second major event of the **Centenary of the Stigmata** unfolded, the first having taken place on January 5 at Mount La Verna. Read more at: ["Between the great temptation and the new song: steps on the journey" - Frati Francescani \(ofm.org\)](https://www.ofm.org/between_the_great_temptation_and_the_new_song_steps_on_the_journey)



National Minister, Jewel Jasmins, OFS

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May our risen Lord fill you with abundant joy, peace and grace this holy Easter season. Our old history ended with the Cross of Christ, and our new history begins with His resurrection. This rite of passage from death to new life in abundance in Christ, gives us great joy, and a living hope each day of our lives, (ref. 1 Peter 1:3).

The Easter of Francis of Assisi reminds us that every day is an opportunity to start fresh, to renew our response to the call of the Lord. He sends us forth as brothers and sisters to the whole world, to bear witness to Him in word and deed, so as to draw everyone to the love of God.

Excerpt from *Celebrating the Easter of Francis of Assisi 1226-2026*, OFM, Franciscan Friars.



He has Risen from the dead!

We have had new beginnings this season. Our sisters, Micheline Bergeron and Lynda Black were not able to continue their service on the National Council as a result of medical recommendations and family constraints. Newly appointed to the vacant position of National Vice-minister (Francophone), is Martin Deschênes, Minister of St. François de Laval regional fraternity.

Appointed to the position of National Director of Formation is Catherine Payne, former Minister of the Trillium regional fraternity. Our gratitude goes out to Martha Gabriel, who had served in this position for the last six months. The Formators' Course is ongoing despite the transition. We welcome both of our newly appointed members to the National Council!

Members of our National Council continue to extend themselves above and beyond in serving you, our brothers and sisters through the mandate given to us in innumerable ways. Our National Spiritual Assistants have also remained steadfast in their commitment to support us in tangible ways.

For your generosity in small and great ways, serving our local fraternities, regions, and national fraternity; through your time, talent, and contributions, we are able to build collectively on the foundation on which we stand. As Secular Franciscans, '*sent forth as brothers and sisters to the whole world, to bear witness to Him in word and deed, so as to draw everyone to the love of God.*' Thank you!



Newly Appointed National Formation Director Catherine Payne, OFS

May I wish everyone the blessings of the Easter Season!

Isn't it funny how the scriptures can speak to us as Secular Franciscans? On the second Sunday of Lent the first reading from Genesis says, "God put Abraham to the test. He called to him, "ABRAHAM!" "Here I am!" he replied. Well, here I am,

as that evening after Mass I received an email inviting me to take the position as the National Formation Director. After hearing those words from Abraham how could I reply otherwise? I come willing to serve and to try and meet the needs of my brother and sister Secular Franciscans. My predecessor, Martha Gabriel, and myself have put together a

terrific team of Secular Franciscans who represent the east to west coasts to form the National Formation Commission. These wonderful team members also answered, "Here I am," when called upon. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of service to you. As we continue in our celebrations of the eighth Centenary, I came across these words from Pope Pius IX, who celebrated the seventh Centenary in 1926, **"there never was anyone in whom there shone forth more vividly and who resembled more the image of Jesus Christ and the evangelical form of life than Francis."** What a blessing to be called to this wonderful life as a Secular Franciscan! Let us bring joy, peace and light wherever we trod so that we might be a true reflection of that image of Christ as Francis so readily manifested. Alleluia, Christ is risen indeed!

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All Glory, Praise and Honour to our Lord God!

A message to a couple about starting out in the faith and the Secular Franciscan Order

My daily life charism is certainly Franciscan, but my 'faith knowledge', which was influenced and formed by my dearest sweet mother has been on-going since the tenderest of ages. We were a single parent family, my sister-7yrs my senior, mom and I.

From the earliest days, I mean before I could speak, she would talk about the Lord to me. My earliest memories are flooded with her saying prayers, speaking out loud constantly to the Lord, asking Him questions, asking for help in everything. Dishes, cleaning, cooking, rest, little snoozes together, you name it, she involved Him in it. Naturally I was the benefactor and so my spiritual maturity grew deep quickly. Before long, our conversations evolved from instruction/teaching only to communal thoughts about our God...but always instruction and teaching too! It truly was marvellous as I look back because my mom was a convert, and so as she learned, we learned, and because her conversion only started in 1966, myself born in 1969, it honestly was an 'us' process. This continued the rest of her days until she passed December 12th, 2013. Still though, I often feel her close, sharing about Him all the while.

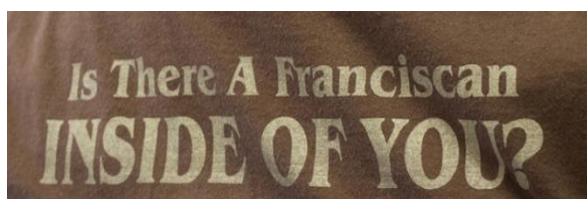


Yes, our Roman Catholic faith is absolute. There is no 'maybe', it is to be taught, heard and learned and accepted definitively and with authority. I pray for humility as it is challenging to talk with assertion yet be received humbly. Please pray for me. Thank you for allowing me to share a bit of my background, if for nothing else it is good for my soul to articulate and God willing it might serve you in some capacity.

Regarding the Secular Franciscans, ours is a most beautiful, simple, loving fraternity. We meet monthly. The fraternity has shrunk considerably, many have passed away. Currently we are 5 or so. St. Francis is the first person/saint blessed with the stigmata (the wounds of our crucified Lord). He is a gentle, loving, peaceful, simple saint. He hadn't a great mind like St. Thomas, his life and rule is simple and meets us all where we are. He has tremendous devotion to our Lady and the franciscan way of life is not arduous in the least. Honestly, it is a simple call to holiness, for love of God, love of neighbor and love for self...as God would have it and not as the world heralds it. If you and your husband were ever interested in coming to a meeting I would be deeply honoured. There is something profoundly beautiful about you both as persons and a couple, and listening to

your husband, I recognize a similar St. Francis approach and charism in you both. Interesting, bet you might not have ever thought that. Anyhow I will leave that between God, St. Francis and you. Thanks again and the Lord's blessings on you and yours. Pax et Bonum!

David Fox, ofs, St. Mary of the Angels Fraternity, Welland, ON



Restructuring

In our French-speaking fraternities a process that is progressing.

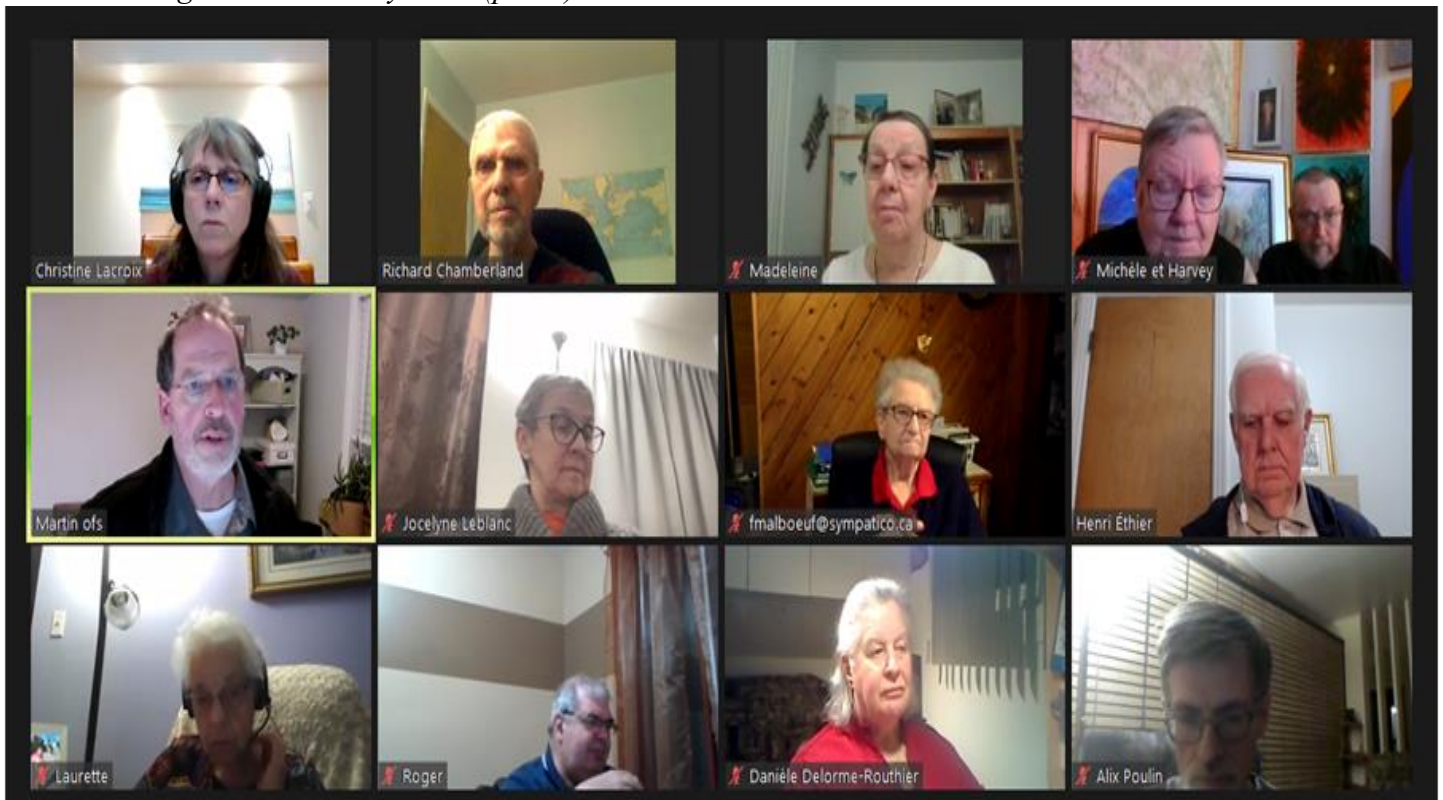
The French-speaking Franciscan family is facing an important challenge: the decline of our local fraternities and, consequently, of the leadership. This situation is not unrelated to what our churches in general are experiencing, as they are being abandoned by the younger generations. There are exceptions here and there, but this is a general observation.

As a result, we have to adapt to this reality, which we know is temporary but which nevertheless requires an adjustment on our part. We are well aware that our fraternities need structures that can stimulate the spiritual life of our sisters and brothers, rather than weighing it down. "Our structures must be at the service of fraternal life and not the other way round".

Various steps were taken following the resolution of our national fraternity on the restructuring of the regional fraternities of the French-speaking sector. The fraternities have come together through fraternal activities, the creation of a newsletter, virtual reality meetings, exchanges, etc. We want to keep pace with the sisters and brothers who are already in place to encourage everyone involved to join in. Our deepest desire is not to lose the fraternal spirit that currently exists among all of us.

Micheline Bergeron, who worked on the first stage, has had to step down for health reasons. We'd like to thank her for all her hard work. I have taken over and we are currently a group of 12 people from the Eastern and Western fraternities working on the next steps in the process. We had a meeting at the end of February and another is planned for mid-April. There is a wonderful fraternity around the screens and I feel that our work will give new energy to support our local fraternities. We must remember that the primary objective of our regional fraternities is to be at the service of our local fraternities.

Our meeting on 28 February 2024 (photo)





**Little
Flowers
Fraternity
Kelowna
BC**

The *Little Flowers of St Francis Fraternity* in Kelowna gathered on November 12 to celebrate the 8th Centenary of Greccio by reading Pope Francis' Apostolic letter, *Admirable Signum*, on "The Meaning and Importance of the Nativity Scene" while placing each figure into the scene.



The *Little Flowers* also gathered on December 10 to share a meal and recite together a beautiful liturgy called **A Christmas Remembrance** with Holy Scriptures, Christmas hymns and a reading from Thomas of Celano on the Nativity.



Holy Spirit Fraternity in Olds, AB hosted a Creche Display by members and some parishioners to highlight the 8th Centenary of the Greccio Christmas Creche. The fraternity raised \$410 on a Cookie Walk for a family in need.



December 9, 2023, members of **St. Francis of Assisi Korean Fraternity** of Surrey, BC gathered together in the celebration of the Centenary of Greccio by participating in a mass celebrated by Fr. Joachim Yoon.



The fraternity sponsored a youth event at St Luke's Parish with Fr. Dan Gurnick, OFM presenting The Greccio Creche.

St. Mary's Fraternity, Calgary



Left/Right: The Fraternity of celebrated the Rite of Admission for seven inquirers. One was unable to be present.

Special thanks to Heather Shilling and Sr Anne Adoukpe, FMM for accompanying them in their journey.



**REGIONAL FRATERNITY OF
OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS
WESTERN CANADA**



Little Flowers of St Francis Fraternity in Kelowna had three permanent professions on February 24, 2024. Newly professed are (L to R) Anne Engel, Wilma Suarez-Pinzon and Paulet Froh. Bishop Greg Bittman

was the main celebrant with Fr. Wayne Fliger, Fr. Gerald Sekanga and Fr. Cerlouie Jimenez as concelebrants.



**St. Pio
Fraternity
Red
Deer,
Alberta**

The Fraternity concluded their Lenten activity on March 20 with the completion of six Wednesday evening Soup Suppers where they enjoyed their 'soup of the week'. With the different numbers of people attending each week, and the different items brought to be put into the soup, each meal was different. It was a time to journey together during Lent and fellowship for those who were able to attend.

Videos to watch and listen to:
[st Francis The Praises of God - Google Search](#)

Beloved Friars Gone to Their Eternal Rest



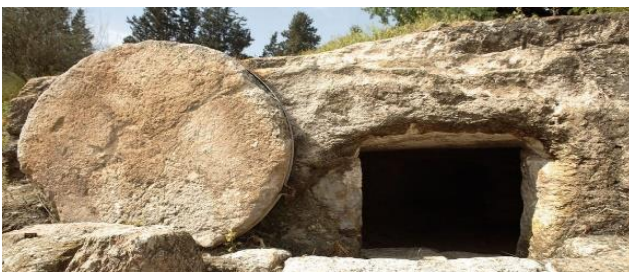
Fr. Paul Seo, OFM, 1973-2024. It is with immense sadness that the Franciscans of Trois-Rivières announce you the unexpected death of Paul Seo, at the age of 50, Friday, March 15, 2024 His funeral took place on Sunday, March 17, in Seoul (Korea) where he had returned since January 2024 The P. Paul Seo served as a missionary in Canada for 10 years, including six years in Trois-Rivières (until December 2023), where he held the position of master of applicants and animation of Korean secular Franciscans in



Montreal. A man of humility, Father Paul discharged his duties with an exemplary sense of duty. Worthy representative of Korean Franciscans, he combined both rigor and benevolence, depth and wisdom. He had acquired a solid spiritual companion training at the Centre le Pèlerin in Montreal. He leaves in mourning his mother and two brothers as well as several nephews and nieces as well as his Franciscan fellows from Korea. Here in Canada, he leaves deeply saddened his Franciscan friars from Trois-Rivières (Guylain, Michel, Benjamin and André) and in Canada, as well as this year's applicant (Donal) and all those who knew him in the organizations Les Artisans de la Paix, Albatros and CHSLD Christ-Roi de Nicolet. A memorial service will be celebrated at the Sanctuary Bon-Père-Fédéric on Saturday, May 11. [Hommage au P. Paul Seo, OFM \(1973-2024\) \(youtube.com\)](#)



Roland Bonenfant, OFM, 1941-2024. It is with profound sadness that the Franciscan community in Trois-Rivières said good-bye to Fr. Roland Bonenfant. He passed away on March 20, 2024 at the age of 82 years after 63 years of religious life and 55 years of priesthood. He was former Regional Spiritual Assistant for the Ofs Region of Trois-Rivières. Born in St-Narcisse, Québec on 17 September, 1941, he joined the Franciscan Friars in 1960 and did his novitiate in Lennoxville, Québec, making his first vows in 1961. In 1964 he made his solemn vows at Couvent Franciscain in Montreal and was ordained to the priesthood in 1968 at Saint-Narcisse-de-Champlain. He worked in many ministries as a Franciscan Friar. From 1968-1971, he was a pastor at Paroisse Sacré-Coeur in Welland, Ontario. He lived at several Franciscan friaries including Longueuil, Montréal, Lachute, and Trois-Rivières. He was busy with many duties such as guardian, vicar, bursar, Ofs spiritual assistant, director of vocations, master of postulants, Provincial Council definator, etc. Last but not least, he was Vice-Postulator for the cause of canonization for Blessed Bon Père Frédéric Janssoone from 2001-2020 and was editor of the magazine *Le Souvenir du Bon Père Frédéric* from 2011-2024. He was known for his trademark smile, laughter, and gentleness and was widely sought after for pastoral counselling and spiritual direction. We will miss you, Père Roland!! Rest in Peace.



No one in the tomb!
A very Happy and Blessed Easter to our
brothers and sisters of the Franciscan Family!

From the National OFS Council

Adoption of Indigenous Brothers and the 60s Scoop

- the Good and the Bad! by George Guimond, ofs

In 1979, we adopted two native boys. We wondered if we were guilty of what had become known as the 60's scoop. *"The sixties scoop is a term that refers to the Indigenous child removal system in Canada that spans the late 1950s to the present day. Thousands of Indigenous children were adopted into white settler Canadian families, with most of those adoptions taking place in the 1960s and 1970s. Children were apprehended in large numbers (... to assimilate them into white culture). Some First Nations communities lost virtually all their children in certain age groups."* (*Ohpikiihaakan-ohpimemeh - Raised Somewhere Else, A 60s Scoop Adoptee's Story of Coming Home* by Colleen Cardinal).

In 1979, my wife Sherrill and I listened to a radio announcement calling for couples to adopt an older child. Would-be parents willing to adopt older children were hard to find. We responded to the call and applied to adopt. Social Services quickly contacted us with a proposal to adopt two siblings, native boys - ages 6 and 7, who they felt should remain together. The boys had been in the foster care system for 3 or 4 years, living short-term with several foster parents. We understood that native communities were not interested in taking on older (native) children. At one point, the boys were being considered for transfer to the USA. The biological parents, afflicted with serious addictions, were living in the province but were not able to care for their boys and were known to have abused them. One was diagnosed with fetal alcohol syndrome. Eventually, the courts removed them from their home to become state wards, but Social Services was ill-prepared to deal with older children's adoption.

Our willingness to adopt an older child morphed into an instant family with two highly energetic boys. Was our adoption another example of the 60's scoop? We do not think so because the boys seemed so happy to finally have a home with us, and we were happy to give them that home. There was no other intention but to create a loving family. On their first day in their new school, when asked to give their full names, the boys proudly gave their new adoptive name even though another child in the classroom (a cousin) declared that their last name was their biological name. The boys did know their birth parents and other relatives who lived only a short 2-hour drive away but now they were part of this new family. There was both good and bad in this story. Support from Social Services for fledgling adopting parents was not there; we were on our own. We made many mistakes. With support, the boys were able to connect with their native relatives and were exposed to their Indigenous culture. Sadly, one of our boys, after living in our home for over 10 years, ran away, returned to the reservation, became an alcoholic and estranged from our family. But, after many years, we, along with our adopted girl at 8 years of age, were reunited during the holidays. It was a wonderful gathering full of rekindled love.

Sherrill and I feel sad that so many children of the 60's Scoop remain broken people today. We understand that it was a misguided concept that now needs reconciliation. We are forever grateful for our beautiful family that is, we believe, 'scoop free'. We made many mistakes for which we regret to this day. We were simply parents looking for older children who needed us as much as we needed them. We only hoped that we were doing the right thing.



National JPIC Team-OFS and the Indigenous Peoples of Canada-Living Stories

1. Living Stories and/or pictures and captions continue to be submitted to our OFS National website at www.ofscanada.ca . More submissions are to be encouraged, for example when attending a Pow Wow (the English term “Pow Wow” has been accepted as part of the Indigenous culture).
2. Resource Section ... is being organized online in both English and French, with information and videos of the Indigenous Peoples and culture. To be viewed at your leisure.
3. Languages of the Submissions ... will be available in both English and French and will reflect our culture.
4. Action: response to our calling of Peace and Reconciliation ... is to Learn, Understand, and Love the Indigenous Peoples.
5. 94 points from Truth and Reconciliation ... is an excellent resource on what the Indigenous Peoples are looking for in the way of Peace and Reconciliation. Our role is to make contact and possibly befriend an Indigenous person. Contact can be made by visiting a Friendship Centre in your area, attending cultural events, attending learning sessions, making purchases from Native businesses ... for example, gas for your car.
6. Our responsibility in Peace and Reconciliation ... we are called to support the Indigenous Peoples as they navigate through their Intergenerational trauma, by fostering fraternity and initiate friendship. Being in fraternity with all human persons is deeply engrained within the Indigenous culture. As Franciscans, being in fraternity is our common denominator with all human persons and is what we all understand.

Submitted by the National JPIC Team

The Spirit of Reconciliation, by Margaret Ross, OFS, National JPIC Committee

B.C. Coastal Chapter of Mats - March 9, 2024, Coquitlam: Father Larry Lynn, of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Coquitlam, British Columbia, presented his powerful film In the Spirit of Reconciliation at the recent Chapter of the Coastal Fraternities of British Columbia.



The film, written and directed by Father Larry Lynn, is an hour-long journey that asks the questions: "How do we forgive?", "How do we find healing?", "How do we cope?" to adversity? » "How can we find healing? These issues are explored through the personal stories of residential school survivors in Canada's Northwest Territories and demonstrate the courageous efforts of survivors striving to achieve reconciliation and healing.

Photo courtesy of Lanny Hui, ofs

Watch the trailer at: <https://www.reconciliation.film/>

Contact Father Larry Lynn at ourladyoflourdes@gmail.com to order your DVD copy of the film.

Consider participating in this journey of reconciliation. Visit <https://www.ofscanada.ca/justice-peace-and-integrity-of-creation.html> for ideas and other stories.