



## Ahoy and amen!

### Friars in Galveston find blessings on board

*(Friar Colin King is doing a variety of jobs around Holy Family Parish and St. Patrick Friary during his two-month stay in Galveston. Earlier this month he accompanied E.J. Stein, pastor of the parish, on a house call that turned into an adventure.)*

BY COLIN KING, OFM

On June 5<sup>th</sup>, **E.J. Stein** and I boarded the *MV Iron Anne*, a ship sailing under the Marshall Islands flag with a crew of Filipinos. This ship was being loaded with tons of grain to feed the people of Iraq. Unfortunately, during parts of the 30-plus day voyage to Iraq they must sail through pirated waters. The crew asked **Karen Parsons**, the chaplain at the Galveston Seafarers Center and a Secular Franciscan, to have a priest board the ship, say Mass and bless the crew and vessel. So, E.J. and I did just that, with the help of Karen.

On Tuesday afternoon, Karen picked E.J. and myself up from the friary and drove us to the port where we had to get through security. Once we got to the ship, which was MASSIVE, crew members came down the gangway and picked up some toiletry supplies from the Seafarers Center. Once we were aboard the ship a member led us to the officers' mess hall, where they had created an altar with two chairs and an ironing board. E.J. brought all the necessary supplies for Mass. After Mass, he blessed everything from the bridge down to the engine room (which was hotter than a typical Galveston afternoon) and



*Above, E.J. Stein blesses the bridge of the MV Iron Anne; right, grain being loaded for transport to Iraq.*



PHOTOS BY COLIN KING, OFM

objects crew members brought to him. Before we left, Karen, E.J. and I ate some pastries the chef had prepared. This alone was a truly amazing experience. However, to make this experience more interesting, a few days later we found out that the crew thought the ship was haunted and the crew believed the prayers/blessing had done their

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*Damien has his day, Page 3*

### FROM JEFF

The Provincial Council, along with **Kenan Freson** (Liaison to Sponsored Ministries) and **CFO David O'Brien**, met with the Boards of our six Sponsored Ministries: St. Francis Retreat House, St. Francis Seraph Ministries, Roger Bacon High School, the Franciscan Missionary Union, Friars Club, and Franciscan Media. We have an annual fiduciary obligation to meet with these boards and to assess how the organization is functioning. The Boards have the responsibility

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Lower left, E.J. and Colin King with the crew after Mass; far left, blessing the kitchen alongside the chef; left, Colin walks up the gangway to the ship.



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job: Karen Parsons relayed a message from the crew just before they left port. “I was just out on the *Iron Anne* and the crew is reporting that all the strange unexplained activity has subsided since the blessing. No more late night knocks on cabin doors, no more water faucets turning on by themselves, etc. They are very happy! The power of prayer is awesome!”

We have been tracking the ship using a website and as of right now, the *Iron Anne* is in the Mediterranean Sea on the Eastern border of Algeria. It would be great if everyone could pray for the ship and crew members’ safe travel.

By the way: This was the first of two blessings E.J. has done to haunted spaces since I have arrived, the other being a house he blessed recently.

## Franciscan family reunions



Dan Crosby,  
OFM Cap.

■ “Without Anything of My Own” is the topic of this year’s Greater Cincinnati Franciscan Gathering on Saturday, Aug. 4, at St. Vivian’s Parish Center, 7600 Winton Road in Cincinnati. **Dan Crosby**, OFM Cap., a member of the Capuchin Franciscan Province of St. Joseph and Director of St. Anthony Retreat Center in Marathon, Wis., will share his own story as well as

Francis’ Admonitions. The program starts at 9 a.m. with check-in and ends with liturgy at 2 p.m. There is no charge, but donations are appreciated. Please contact **Pat McCloskey** (513-241-5615, ext. 116, or [pmmcloskey@FranciscanMedia.org](mailto:pmmcloskey@FranciscanMedia.org)) if you plan to come.

■ Cincinnati will host this year’s Franciscan Federation Conference July 27-30 at the Hilton Netherland Plaza Hotel. “The theme, ‘Releasing Energies to Love: Creative Fidelity in the Church’, will be the focus of keynote presentations by **Fr. Joseph Chinnici**, OFM, and **Sr. Marlene Weisenbeck**, FSPA,” according to a Federation e-mail. The conference schedule and registration materials are posted online at [www.franfed.org](http://www.franfed.org) in the Annual Conference section. The conference fee is \$380 (\$370 for multiple attendees from the same organization). A room rate of \$129 at the Hilton is available until July 11.

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of running the day to day operations, making policies, overseeing employees, etc. The Council approves the overall mission, appoints directors, and assures the Catholic and Franciscan identity of the ministry. Though admittedly not our favorite meeting of the year, since we deal with complex finances and issues, these are important moments for us and the Boards. They are moments for both of us to acknowledge the accomplishments of the past and the challenges of the future. Each year the Council notes how blessed we are to have very talented and dedicated board members who assist us in extending our Franciscan mission in unique and creative ways. The Board members are incredibly generous people who lend their time, talents, and expertise to making our ministries more effective and more professional. Over the years we have noted that we can no longer run “mom and pop” organizations, but we must be highly professional, manage personnel and issues appropriately, be innovative, measure our results, be financially responsible and savvy, and responsive to the needs of our “market.” In order to be effective in the 21st century we friars have to know how to collaborate with these professionals, and we are very grateful for their guidance!

– **Jeff Scheeler, OFM**



# After 50 years, Damien has his day

BY JOHN JOSEPH GONCHAR, OFM

I have never seen our chapel so full, with the overflow going into our dining room and sacristy, as I did Tuesday morning, June 19. Why such an overflowing attendance at Mass? They came to honor our **Brother Damien Murkley**, who this year celebrates 50 years of profession as a Franciscan friar.

Who in the Uniontown area does not know or heard of Brother Damien? The poor and needy are very much aware of his selfless service, being beneficiaries thereof. You can't be around him too long before you hear one of his many jokes and hearty laughter. Brother Damien is a firm believer of the healthy effects of humor. He is a beloved member of the local community; that explains the overflowing chapel. People came to honor him and to thank him for his many years of dedicated ministry.

After St. Anthony devotions, which we

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Top, Damien Murkley takes time for prayer and reflection; left, the honoree tackles his cake; above, John Joseph Gonchar at the reception.

PHOTOS BY JUNIPER CROUCH, OFM

## In his own words

- "I enjoy working with the poor. I come from a family of 11; my father died when I was 3. Being poor was a way of life. I had a good mother who pulled us through."
- "I wasn't a Catholic until I met a nice Italian girl who converted me. She married another guy. She broke my heart but did me a favor in the long run."
- "I worked in food service [in the Army]. I thank God I didn't have to carry a gun. I had a good Irish buddy from Altoona who used to come and see me. He said, 'You can get out of work by going to Mass.' So I went to Mass, but I had the wrong motivation. That's when I started going to church."
- "After the Army I stayed home and took care of my good mother for a few years. The Franciscans came to my parish in Western Pennsylvania for a mission. **Fr. Roland Maruscak** looked good in a habit and preached a good sermon. I came to visit them at St. Anthony's in Uniontown. Seemed like everything sort of fell into place after that."
- "It's hard to put all the blessings into words. I thank God for so many good people, for my whole new Franciscan family since we joined [SJB] the province. I've been well blessed for 50 years. I'm enjoying every minute."

-- Damien Murkley, OFM

# Paschal just kept on going

BY TONI CASHNELLI

“I would like to look upon this as a blessing,” said **John Joseph Gonchar** when he learned of the passing of **Paschal Dierks**. “Paschal has been suffering for quite a long time.”

In later life, the cross borne by Paschal was a tank of oxygen that followed him wherever he went: to church; to ministries; to social events. Imagine the frustration of dragging around what was essentially an extra appendage. Paschal rarely complained about it; it kept him alive for years. **Damien Murkley** helped care for Paschal in the years they lived together. “I got to know him pretty well. He was a simple brother but very spiritual. He was a good-hearted guy” whose concern for the poor helped him struggle onto a bus with his oxygen to ride to his ministry, a food pantry in Pittsburgh, when he was part of the team at the House of Evangelization.

Paschal’s problems didn’t keep him from taking part in the life of the senior community where he spent his last years. “Paschal did try his best to be involved in the running of Vincentian Regency,” said **David Moczulski**. “He was on the resident’s council, known for attending all the activities.”

This was part of Paschal as surely as his simplicity, his devotion to the poor, his spirituality, and a stubborn streak that sometimes got the best of him. He was known by fellow friars, but few knew him well, based on the conversation his death engendered. “His funeral was very small,” said **Richard Portasik**, one of about 25 attendees

at Paschal’s Mass of Christian Burial in Pittsburgh on June 2. “He never really had many friends. He was kind of an independent spirit,” trained in auto mechanics, forced to reassess his life when a car accident claimed his wife of five years. The loss would turn many into emotional cripples, but Paschal searched for and found a reason to go on, becoming a friar of the Vice Province of the Holy Savior and later St. John the Baptist Province.

In his homily for Paschal’s funeral, John Joseph said, “We have come to celebrate Paschal’s death. We do so because we firmly believe that he remained faithful to Christ to the end and thus shares in Christ’s victory over death. Together with Christ and all the saints, he can taunt death, crying out, ‘Death, where is your sting?’ You have been swallowed up in eternal victory. How can we not rejoice?”

He called Paschal “a man of prayer. He gave of himself in service to his country and to the Franciscan family to which he belonged, and especially to the poor. His very suffering was of service not only to us friars, his religious community, but to the Church at large. I firmly believe that Brother Paschal’s life has not ended, but has merely been transformed into eternal life.” A life where, for the first time in decades, he will no longer struggle to breathe.



*Paschal at a reception in 2008.*

PHOTO BY JEFF SCHEELER, OFM



PHOTO BY JUNIPER CROUCH, OFM

*The chapel was filled to overflowing.*

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have every Tuesday after Mass, the people filed into our narrow social hall to enjoy a catered breakfast of fruit, eggs, potatoes, sausage and ham. As is done at weddings, Brother Damien cut the beautiful cake baked in his honor, which was then served to those attending. What enhanced the celebration was the presence of Damien’s brother, **Michael**, with his wife and his high school classmate, **Leo**. The breakfast was buffet style. People did not mind the tight quarters and warm temperatures. All stated that they enjoyed the whole affair. It was a tribute deserved by Brother Damien.

**I**t was the Secular Franciscan Fraternity of the friary, together with some non-fraternity friends, who sponsored, prepared and served, making it a special and unforgettable event for everyone attending. After we sang “happy anniversary” and “Sto Lat” to Brother Damien, the party was over. Everyone went home happy. Unfortunately, such celebrations come only once in a lifetime.

# Settling in at St. Bona's



*"Alive and well at St. Bona's" was the e-mail message this week from Carl Langenderfer, who accompanied Postulants from SJB Province to a summer program at St. Bonaventure University. Postulants from Holy Name, Sacred Heart, OLG, Immaculate Conception, Assumption and Western Canada are taking part. The program began last week with a little labor, weeding work at Canticle Farm. That led to a discussion about the early Franciscan attitude and involvement in manual labor, as Ron Pecci of HN reported. "Thus far, they are all very cooperative and willing, there is no shortage of volunteers and once we get our 'House Jobs' assigned, Carl and I anticipate 'smooth sailing.'" On their free day, a group of Postulants traveled to Rock City Park in Olean. "We have a few more extensive outings planned for later in the summer, provided the study schedule allows for them," Ron says.*

PHOTOS BY RON PECCI, OFM



## DIRECTORY UPDATES

■ **John Turnbull** is temporarily living at St. Francis Seraph Friary while some work is being done on his room at Mercy at Winton Woods.

■ **Greg Friedman** has a new e-mail address: [Gregf1723@gmail.com](mailto:Gregf1723@gmail.com).

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