

# FRANCISCAN BROTHERS of peace

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## Being re-created for Christ What do the Brothers do for fun?

*Devoted to the Gospel of Life*



# Brotherhood Update

By Father Seraphim Wirth, fbp  
Community Servant

## Easter Joy brings renewal

The Joy of Easter encourages us to follow Jesus out of the tomb, to walk in His footsteps and with each step allow Him to recreate us for His purpose and glory. The resurrection should challenge us to renew our life and to be centered on being re-created for doing the will of Jesus in the world. The motivation for this newsletter is to give readers and *Religious Life discerners* a glimpse into the life of the Franciscan Brothers of Peace that you would normally not see.

## Some Background

To be in Religious life and the Priesthood, living a balanced life is important to be able to authentically bring Christ to others. For the Franciscan Brothers of Peace, we encourage each Brother to develop a recreational activity in their life that helps renew them to be better witnesses of Jesus to the world.

The activity should lead us closer to God and to learn to see Him at work in our life when we participate in the activity. We will give you a glimpse into the recreational activities of some of the Brothers. Our hope is that you will notice how your own time for recreation can help you to be re-created and renewed to bring Christ more effectively into the world.

## A dialog with a young discerner

On a particular Sunday an altar server came up to me in the sacristy as I was preparing for mass and asked me some questions. The dialogue went something like this...

**Server:** Father Seraphim, what do people in Religious Life and priests do all day? Do you really pray all day? Are you in church all the time?

**Fr. Seraphim:** What a great question! Some-



*thing great about Religious Life is that our life is a balance between prayer, ministry, friary chores and recreation. All of it together leads us to happiness and closeness with Jesus.*

**Server:** Hmm, then what do you like to do for fun? Can you watch a movie or go on a trip or something?

**Fr. Seraphim:** All of the brothers have fun things they like to do. Our prayer is the first priority and it can be fun. It gives us our strength for everything else. For other fun activities many of the Brothers have interesting hobbies. I like Kayak fishing, Brother Paschal is learning an instrument, Brother Didacus likes to ride horses, Brother Pio likes to ride his bike.

**Server:** Really? I had no idea you guys did all that!

**Fr. Seraphim.** Yes, it's true. Great questions. Maybe God is calling you to Religious Life. It's really a wonderful life with good days and difficult days — but with the help of Jesus we continue to do His work in the world and our 'fun' activities can help to renew us to do our best for Jesus.



For Brother Pio, it's biking...



For Brother Paschal, it's playing the cello...



For Father Seraphim, it's fishing...



For Brother Didacus, it's riding horses...

# Being re-created for Christ

## What do the Brothers do for fun?

(Note - For safety reasons, during times of recreation the Brothers are not required to wear their religious habit).

### Finding God in the Joy of Biking

by Brother Pio King, fbp

When I was approached with the request to write an article on the Easter theme of re-creation, the surprise of a refreshing and interesting change of pace struck me! One of the things that renews and refreshes me is my love of biking.

Biking has brought me much joy during my religious life. Starting 25 years ago there was a big fund raiser event for our AIDS hospice, Samaritan House, which was a major ministry of ours in the 1990's. The event was a bike ride of 480 miles from Minneapolis to Chicago over six days. I experienced much joy from the generous response of volunteers, friends and supporters. It was a real challenge for me but I truly believe now that God gave me a gift of great joy in biking through this event and this has lasted to the present day.

Beauty is a major attraction of biking for me, often simple beauty and sometimes breathtaking. The Franciscan connections to nature and natural beauty and the encounters with birds and other wildlife are all important to me in the joy of biking. You can sometimes almost hear St. Francis' "*Canticle of the Sun*" while on the trail. The elements such as Brother Sun, Brother Wind and even Sister Moon (sometimes) are all praising God with their essence. Often sandhill cranes, eagles, turkeys, hawks and blue jays are welcome sights along the trail.

God's goodness, providence and love for us are evident in so many bike trails and areas to enjoy. I am grateful that I have not lost the God-given gift of awe and wonder in viewing awe-inspiring, brilliant fall colors. The greenery and shimmering lakes of summer are amazing on my rides. Three to four hour rides during my free day usually involve stops for reading, viewing, listening to music and simple lunch. Some examples of these follow.

The practice I developed over the years on trails is to pay a visit to nearby churches. A highlight was one year when I was on the Lake Wobegon bike trail in central Minnesota. I was inspired to make a mini-pilgrimage of this ride, taking me through the small rural towns of Avon, Albany and Freeport. In each of these towns was a beautiful church to experience, including St. Benedict's, Seven Dolours and Sacred Heart. They truly were beautiful, inspiring and all open at the time for prayer and peace with God. I relished this experience of finding God in biking this trail.

Biking has also provided opportunities for discovery, exploration and adventure. I had one encounter when I was making a blind turn and a skunk was crossing the path at the same time. We both veered off —

thank God in opposite ways! Mercifully for me no skunk sprayed me because that would have ruined that day. On another trail, going fast on a straight flat section, a large adult deer bolted out of the trees and raced just in front of me and startled me. Adrenaline rushed over me! God provided some great adventures in these experiences.

Biking has allowed me to be re-created for serving God in my vocation. It helps me to be renewed, balanced and refreshed with a better perspective in life. The physical invigoration of the ride helps me not to overemphasize the mind and thought life. Coming around the final turn of the trail I know that the peace and joy I experience are gifts of God and I am grateful for that.

*See you on the trail!*



# Finding God in the Joy of Learning the Cello



My first introduction to the cello.

by Brother Paschal Listi, fbp

In December 2020 I was searching for music online to inspire the proper sentiments of Advent ...something different from “Jingle Bells.” I clicked on a cello-piano arrangement of that ancient classic, “O Come, O Come Emmanuel.” I was enraptured by the cello as it communicated the haunting beauty of that song. Not only did I appreciate listening to it, I wanted to play the song myself! I wanted to echo that mysterious waiting for the Savior with my body and soul!



Special Thanks to Eric and Modern Day Music in West Saint Paul!

Where to start? I spoke with the first string-player I knew: Brother Didacus! He showed me a little on his violin and then had a great idea: why not call the music store and ask for a demo? He introduced me to Emily, the owner who plays cello, and she generously

showed me the ropes (or the strings). It was awkward for me to hold and get coordinated at first, but as I plucked the low C and tried the bow, I fell in love with creating that deep resonant sound! The Brothers let me sign up for lessons. Eric Graf has been my patient teacher and helped me reach my first goal: playing Christmas hymns by Advent 2021!

*How does learning the cello help me be a better Brother?*

Playing music has wonderful intellectual benefits. Playing music keeps my mind sharp for spiritual reading and study. Translating the



## Being re-created

notes on the page into beautiful sounds is a puzzle that exercises my mind. I’m coordinating so many subtle motions: with my left hand I learn where to press the strings to play proper pitches; with my right hand I hold the bow, varying its angle for the four different strings, varying its weight and position for dynamics, varying its motion for note length and intonation. It is a creative challenge that activates multiple pathways in the brain, both right and left sides. After practicing cello, I can actually comprehend denser spiritual books like philosophy more quickly.

*I will turn my mind to a parable; With the harp I will solve my problem*

*(Psalm 49:5)*

Making music improves my emotional health. Sometimes my emotions can be “sticky” — they don’t go away or change easily when I’d like them to. Making music, more than just listening, helps my psyche turn the page. It engages the whole person in order to re-create the essence of a song and its message. For example, one of my favorite Lenten songs is the old spiritual “Were You There”. My mind guides my fingers to play the notes in series, my body sways to the dynamics of each phrase, my bow hand “sings” the words, and my heart joins in the prayer of the song. I can unite my sufferings to His most sorrowful Cross, and by that final fourth verse, I am being consoled by the wonder of His Empty Tomb. I re-create the song, and the song re-creates me.

*The Lord is  
We shall sing to  
in the house of the Lord*  
*(Isaiah*





Learning an instrument also builds fraternity. We Brothers enjoy a good jam session. For a string trio, Brother Pio tickles the ivories, Brother Didacus plays first fiddle, and I pluck or bow the cello. Brother Conrad and I also enjoy Native Flute duets, and Brother Didacus and I can duel on the saxes. Call us *The F-Bops*, or *Brothers from Another Mother*.

What hobby can you build on or begin? How can it sharpen your mind, lift your spirit, or bless your relationships? Lord, recreate us for your Kingdom.

# nted for Christ

## Finding God in the Joy of Fishing

by Father Seraphim Wirth, fbp

I take great comfort in the fact that Jesus chose ordinary, somewhat rough fishermen to be His first followers. These were ordinary men who depended on God for everything. They understood their limitations, the joys of catching fish, and the disappointment of working hard but catching nothing. The cycle of success and failure these men experienced prepared them well for the demands of being fishers of souls. I have come to learn that fishing prepares, renews and humbles me to be a more effective priest.

our Savior: /  
inged instruments /  
l/ all the days of our life.  
38: 20)

*Brothers in a jam session.*



I have found much enjoyment and renewal in going fishing, most recently in the past 3 years kayak fishing. Starting in early spring I try to go out on the water at least one day a week. Being so close to many rivers and lakes makes for a new experience each time out on the water. I often refer to kayak fishing as my hermitage. I am alone with God on the 'immensity of the waters' (Psalm 29:3) and during that time I learn many lessons about myself and have some good conversations with God.

### *Fishing for souls and fishing for fish.*

There are many connections that can be made between fishing for souls and fishing for fish.



I make two fishing trips in spring and summer and one of those is going to the Boundary Waters. The process is as follows. I start to think about which lakes and fish I will target. I have to understand the conditions, the water temperature, the wind, the current and the bait presentation. I enjoy the preparation process of learning new techniques and understanding the fish habitat.

Similar skills can apply when fishing for souls and I often think of this while I am casting my bait for a fish. The greatest skill I learn is patience. Approaching fish (souls) without scaring them away can be a difficult process especially when you see a large school of fish (souls). Often different techniques are required to keep them interested in the presentation (church).

I also find there is a similarity between the lakes and rivers I like to target and the ministries I am involved in. When fishing I tend to go to very remote lakes that are difficult to get to. I have to learn about



*Continued...*

the lake and hope not to get lost along the way. On these waters I never see anyone else fishing, which is part of the reason I go because I enjoy the solitude. Similar to the ministries of the Franciscan Brothers of Peace, the areas I minister are often missionary focused, working with people from a variety of cultures and backgrounds.

Most of all fishing gives me an opportunity to slow down from my normal responsibilities. It is a time for me to be completely open to God. Much of my time is spent in prayer as I navigate the waters and most of all enjoy the silence and listening to how the Holy Spirit is directing me to the next great catch of fish.



# Being re-created for Christ

## Finding God in the Joy of Riding Horses

by Brother Didacus, fbp

Scott and Mary Mogren, owners of Mercy Reins Ranch, welcome me with open arms into their corral. I receive a tutorial about how to strap the saddle on Pacem, a young, beige Quarter Horse. It's time for a lesson in riding!

*Plop, plop, plop!* The hooves make their imprint into the dusty bed. Pacem hoists his nose to the Heavens and takes a big snort!

*Trot! Trot!* I call, and Pacem begins to promenade. Swerving left and right around orange cones, I kick my legs and try to orient him to follow my lead. Before long, I click my teeth and he breaks out into a Cantor, a speed just shy of a gallop.

And... I take a deep breath pulling gently on the reins, "Wooooah!" Pacem stops on cue.

"You rode great, Br. Didacus!" Scott cheers.

"Yeah. We can tell that Pacem really likes you. He's not like that with everybody," Mary affirms.

I take a deep breath and stare into blue skies hovering above the field. Kittens lick their paws as bluebirds feast on leftover feeders. All around, I experience God's presence in every living thing and try to establish a peaceful dominion with it, just as Adam did in the Garden and St. Francis emulated with such devotion.

Mary turns to me and asks, "Would you like to go again?"

I nod my head, eager to learn how to bond with the creature patiently abiding below my waistline. I am met with a soft breeze which tickles the verdant trees. From the dirt caked into the horse's hooves to the sunshine beaming high above reminds me of the beauty of God's creation.

As I inch forward to embrace Pacem's furry muzzle, I feel like a grown man who cannot seem to shake himself from snuggling with a life-sized, animated stuffed animal. In response, Pacem pierces my soul with doleful, loving eyes.

**"And God looked upon all that He had made, and He saw that it was good."**

*(Gen. 1:31).*

This Scripture verse came from the sixth day of God's creation, just before God rested. Being out here among the animals, away from the noises and distractions of the city, I am able to experience a bountiful renewal: a re-creation of sorts. Not only do I experience the love of God through the animals and the earth, but also through the people



*Continued...*

like Scott and Mary and all our close friends and family who find this ranch a source of refuge, peace, and spiritual revival.

Every time I am out here, it feels as close as I can get to Heaven without actually touching it. I experience my sixth day just before the eternal, beatific reality of Jesus Christ reveals Himself to me. I come to understand more deeply the value of recreation, to invite oneself into a joyful and loving relationship with Our Lord between the hustle and bustle of making it to prayers or laboring to stay active. Recreation itself reminds us of our purpose in doing all of these things so that we receive the joy of the eternal kingdom and do not separate it from the toil and responsibilities of our daily life.

The patience and thrill of establishing a bond with a member of God's creation like a horse allows one to embrace the dignity and goodness of it all on a deeper level. Ever since I have taken the saddle, I have come to know the value of recreation. To become truly acquainted with God's original design has helped me to once again know what it means to be created.

Praise Jesus Christ in God the Father Most High, Lord and Creator of All. Amen, Alleluia!



Please Join Us via LiveStream on YouTube or Facebook!

# FRANCISCAN holy hour

Every First Friday at 7:00 P.M. | Church of St. Columba, St. Paul, MN  
Adoration + Franciscan Crown Rosary + Chanted Compline + Benediction

[www.brothersofpeace.org](http://www.brothersofpeace.org)