



Issue Number 19

The Newsletter of the National Fraternity

Spring 1998

## Apostolates

*by William Wicks, S.F.O., National Minister*

It is difficult for me to consider someone being Franciscan, and not having an apostolate. All of us have concerns. Apostolic action is nothing more than acting on those concerns. One result of the formation of our conscience is the ability to see, to see with our hearts. St. Francis saw the leper, not only as a diseased person but also as one of God's creatures in need. He acted on his concern. Our formation as Secular Franciscans helps us see. Our Rule helps us see. Our life in fraternity should help us see. The ability to see is both a blessing and a curse. A blessing because it offers an opportunity for us to experience the sweetness of the embrace of our particular leper as Francis experienced his, and to be an instrument of God's grace. A curse, because there is pain. We notice the pain and injustices in the world around us and it hurts.

Articles 15, 16, 17 & 18 of our Rule of life provide us a sense of the spirit of the Franciscan charism in the domains of Peace and Justice, Work, Family and Ecology. These areas are so important in our Franciscan life that Apostolic Commissions have been formed at the National level to bring us to a better understanding, and to help us build an informed conscience. Charles Spencer is Chair of the Ecology Commission, Carol Gentile is Chair of the Family Commission, Mary and Ed Zablocki Co-chair the Work Commission, Dan and Sarah Mulholland Co-chair the Peace and Justice Commission. Mary Mazotti coordinates their efforts. We are very fortunate to have these very knowledgeable and dedicated people serving in these areas. Their efforts have had an impact at every level of society. They have been involved at the international level (conferences, writing letters to protest injustices), the National level (talks and workshops) and (hopefully) the Regional/Local levels (handing down information via Regional Ministers to Local Fraternity Ministers and by articles published in the TAU-USA newsletter. The works and fruits of each commission chair are a treasure and their hearts are certainly where their treasure is.

I suspect that information from the National Commission Chairs reaches only a small percentage of people at the local fraternity level. Most regions do have Apostolic Commissions. Every local fraternity should have

Apostolic Commission Representatives where practical. There should be a free flow of information and inspiration from the National Commissions to each fraternity member and back to the National Commissions.

The fraternity should be a launching pad for apostolic action. It is expected that each fraternity member will be sensitive to the "call-to-action" listed in our Rule. We may not become Mother Teresas or Dorothy Days or Ralph Naders (however, they didn't start being famous). We can make an impact in our neighborhoods, our workplaces, our parishes and, first and foremost, in our families, even regarding national and international issues. Don't forget that prayer is an important part of any apostolic activity: "Unless the Lord builds the house, we labor in vain."

The Apostolic Commission Chairs can help each of us live the apostolic life that we promised by providing us with information and inspiration. The TAU-USA is an important instrument used to accomplish this task. An integral part of the promise of your formation is to learn to see better, and understand better how to live out articles 15, 16, 17 & 18 of our Rule. I believe with all my heart that "The time is now, the Kingdom of God is at hand"---*the time is definitely now for Franciscan Spirituality; the world needs us now*. Pray that "the Lord will tell you [perhaps you already know], what it is for you to do" to fulfill your promises. My prayers are with you.

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## Second Letter of the Conference of the Franciscan Family on the Occasion of the Jubilee 2000, in the Year of the Holy Spirit part II

*from the Conference of the Franciscan Family*

*"Above all, seek the Spirit of the Lord and his holy operation."*

Alongside this principal duty attention may certainly also be given to other interests and other types of "service of the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:8). The Holy Spirit---as the Second Vatican Council affirmed---is at work also outside the visible boundaries of the Church, to guide the development of the social order and give everyone "the possibility of coming in contact with the paschal mystery of Christ."<sup>1</sup> It is up to us Franciscan men and women to play our part in maintaining in life and developing "the spirit of Assisi" which has been given its highest expression in the meeting of the heads of all the religions promoted by Pope John Paul II around the tomb of Saint Francis in 1986. A spirit of dialogue, peace-making, respect for creation.

We should not forget, either, that the first visible effect of the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost was that of uniting in the one faith many different peoples. He is the spirit of unity and he is present wherever unity is created or reinforced: between the partners of a marriage, in the community, in the whole world. To be noted also is that one of the most precious "fruits of the Spirit" is peace (cf. Gal 5:19).

† In our own days the Holy Spirit has raised in the Church a great variety of ecclesial movements which as one of the more visible signs of the "new Pentecost" hoped for by Pope John XXIII on the occasion of the Council. We must learn to appreciate this "grace of the Spirit" which is diffused in the Church today, seeing in it an effective invitation for our life and presence in the Church. Let us also keep in mind that some components of the great Franciscan Family have in recent years received special impulses towards renewing their lives by force of the Spirit, thanks to the formulation of their Rule. On 8 December 1997, occurred the 15th anniversary of the Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis, and on 26 June 1998 there will be commemorated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the approval of the renewed Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. It is worthwhile giving due attention to these anniversaries in order to build a greater understanding and a determination to render an authentic service to the Spirit in the Church.

† On the basis of what we have just indicated as a possible "service to the Spirit" in today's Church we would like to offer some simple suggestions of a practical and operational kind.

† For the Franciscan Family the most precious fruit of this year dedicated to the Holy Spirit should be a renewed effort to *restore primacy to the Spirit*. Not only in a quantitative sense, by giving more time to prayer, but also in a qualitative sense, by bringing it about that every activity---manual, academic, pastoral---is imbued with that "spirit of prayer and devotion to which all other things are meant to contribute," as our Seraphic Father exhorts us. To the renewal of the Franciscan charism may be equally applied what Pope John Paul II had to say of the renewal of the Church in general after the Council: it "cannot become a reality in any other way than in the Holy Spirit, that is to say with the help of his light and his power."<sup>2</sup> This is the opportune moment to commit ourselves to making our Franciscan churches and houses and, as far as possible, our S.F.O. Fraternities, into authentic "centres of spirituality." Let us examine ways of making available: "schools of prayer," times of the Spirit," a well-qualified "spiritual direction," the practice and spread of the *lectio divina* or a meditative, shared reading of spiritual texts (especially Franciscan ones).

† The children of Francis and Clare are called to live the spirit of unity especially among themselves, developing constantly closer bonds of esteem, concord and collaboration between the different Franciscan Families, recalling the words of Dante that the first companions of Francis edified the world most of all by "their concord and their joyful semblance."<sup>3</sup> We want to insist, as we did in last year's *Pre-Jubilee Letter*, in inviting to an ever closer communion and collaboration within the great Franciscan Family. We ask that as far as possible our forces be united in various fields: in formation, in particular as regards proper Franciscan formation, in spiritual animation, in cultural, apostolic and charitable fields. Within the three Franciscan Orders (with all due respect to the specific vocation of the Sisters of the Second Order) encouragement should be given to meetings even of an informal kind, to exchanges, common moments of prayer and reflection, concrete initiatives of communion and fraternity.

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*Ecumenical engagement* should find in the Franciscan Family a particular willingness: the "spirit of Assisi" should make us particularly attentive and solicitous promoters of ecumenical initiatives.

† We have recalled that one of the most precious "fruits of the Spirit" is peace, and we know how much our Seraphic Father himself desired to be an instrument of peace and have his Brothers spread it throughout the world, even through the manner in which they greeted people.<sup>4</sup> The *Franciscan Family ought to be in the "front line" wherever there is work for peace*. Where ethnic conflicts of all kinds tear nations apart and create situations of high tension, we ought to be promoters of peaceful concord, even if this means accepting initiatives which require great courage and upholding positions which are openly inspired by the Gospel and the "new commandment" of mutual love. This presupposes that in our own midst above all we take the greatest care to eliminate the remotest trace of antagonism, hegemony or division.

† Different movements throw light upon the need for a more living faith, a more concrete charity, a more heart-felt, spontaneous prayer, all these values which Franciscan spirituality puts at our disposal abundantly in our choice of life. They stimulate Fraternities to be more alive, more amenable to renewal, more open to welcoming new things of the Spirit more capable of letting demands of obedience and fraternity prevail over our personal choices and experiences. We should be ready to welcome and make use of these stimulating reminders, recognizing them as *incentives to letting the rich spirituality proper to our charism grown young again* and wisely drawing from them pointers for the way in which we incarnate in our lives the spirituality proper to our charism. If we do not renew ourselves, we run the risk of no longer saying or giving anything to the Church and to the world.

† We recognize that throughout the Franciscan Family values which we have underlined in this letter already find positive and encouraging implementation. But we would invite you not to be content with what has been done and is being done, but to strive for new goals, mindful of the exhortation of our Father Saint Francis, "My Brothers, we must begin to serve our Lord and God. Until now we have done very little."<sup>5</sup>

At the moment of writing this letter we have before our eyes the sad state of the earthquake-damaged Franciscan sanctuaries of Assisi: places which are "indispensable" to our spirituality and our living contact with Francis. While we hope for their rapid restoration so that they may remain the longed-for goal of pilgrimages, in the light of the Great Jubilee to come we pray that together with the material work there may also take place a "reconstruction" of our ever more authentic fidelity to Francis and Clare, and through them, to Christ and the Gospel.

We ask our Poor Clare Sisters for a special prayer of intercession that with the help of our Father Saint Francis and Mother Saint Clare we may let ourselves be molded by the Spirit as "new creatures" (cf. 1 Cor 11:7), docile to the Spirit which "renews all things" (Ap. 21:5).

Rome, 1 January 1998

Fr. Giacomo Bini, Minister General O.F.M.  
Fr. John Corriveau, Minister General O.F.M. Cap;  
Sr. Carola Thomann, President F.I.C.-T.O.R.;  
Fr. Agostino Gardin, Minister General O.F.M. Conv.;  
Fr. Bonaventure Midili, Minister General T.O.R.;  
Emanuela De Nunzio, General Minister S.F.O.;  
Sr. M. Giacinta Ibba, Secretary of the C.F.F.

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1. Cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 22 and 26

2. AAS, 73 (1981), p. 521

3. "*La loro concordia e i lor liett sembianti*" Dante, *Paradiso*, XI 76 s.

4. Cf. *The Legend of Perugia*, 65 (*Omnibus* p. 1043)

5. St. Bonaventure, *Major Life*, XIV, 1 (*Omnibus* p. 736)

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## FINDING GOD WITHIN Part 1

by Richard Morton, S.F.O.

*This is the first in a series of articles dealing with the challenges I presented at the conclusion of the Quinquennial Congress in July of 1997. I asked that we first find the God Within. The recognition of the God Within will bring us to community fraternity with all its rewards and perhaps some trials. We will then go from fraternity to more fully participate in building the Kingdom of God.*

### THE SPIRIT AS GIFT!

The gift of the realization that the Spirit dwells within each of us is a result of the continued revelation of Holy Spirit about himself and his ongoing revelation of the Father and the Son. God in his mysterious plan for the salvation of the world has chosen to reveal himself slowly throughout history. Let's spend a few minutes reviewing the evolution of the Church's understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in the world.

Through his grace, the Holy Spirit is the first to awaken faith in us and to communicate to us the new life, which is to "know the Father and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ." The Spirit is the last person of the Holy Trinity to be revealed. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, the theologian, explains this progression in terms of the pedagogy of divine "condescension:"

The Old Testament proclaimed the Father clearly, but the Son more obscurely. The New Testament revealed the Son and gave us a glimpse of the divinity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit dwells among us and grants us a clearer vision of himself. It was not prudent, when the divinity of the Father had not yet been confessed, to proclaim the Son openly and, when the divinity of the Son was not yet admitted, to add the Holy Spirit as an extra burden, to speak somewhat daringly . . . . By advancing and progressing 'from glory to glory,' the light of the Trinity will shine in ever more brilliant rays.<sup>1</sup>

Another way of looking at God's revelation to us is through the eyes of Henri Nouwen. "At first, in the story of the Exodus, God is revealed as a God-for-us, guiding us out of our slavery with a pillar of cloud by day, and with a pillar of fire by night, ("The LORD preceded them, in the daytime by means of a column of cloud to show them the way, and at night by means of a column of fire to give them light. Thus they could travel both day and night" (Ex. 13:21). Later, in the story of Jesus of Nazareth, God is revealed as a God-with-us "Mary conceives Jesus" (Mt. 1:24), accompanying us in solidarity and compassion. Finally, in the story of Pentecost (The Coming of the Spirit), "Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues" (Acts 2:1-4). God is revealed as a God-within-us, who enables us to breathe the divine life ourselves. Pentecost completes the mystery of God's revelation as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and invites us to become fully part of the inner life of God. By becoming not only a God-for-us and a God-with-us, but also a God-within-us, God offers us the full knowledge of the divine life according to the promise of Jesus: "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything" (Jn. 14:26).<sup>2</sup>

Even in our own more recent times, the presence of the Spirit is becoming more and more realized. In the original schema on the liturgy presented to the bishops at Vatican II, there was no mention of the Spirit. Thanks to suggestions from representatives from the Eastern Churches, the final revision of the document contained five references to the role of the Spirit in the Church's life of prayer. The 16 documents of Vatican II speak of the Spirit 320 times, 85 times in *Lumen Gentium* alone. (In contrast, Vatican I mentions the Spirit only 40 times.)<sup>3</sup>

The previously approved Rule for the Secular Franciscan Order, sometimes known as the "Leonine Rule," did not mention the Holy Spirit and the then applicable Constitutions mentioned the Holy Spirit only once and that was in the concluding prayer at the end of the text. The Holy Spirit is mentioned four times in our present Rule and six times in the Constitutions. Pope John Paul II teaches that preparation for the new millennium is about "increased sensitivity to all the Spirit is saying" to the Church and churches. *To be continued.*

1. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #684

2. H. Nouwen, *Behold the Beauty of the Lord*, pp. 61-62

3. Finnegan, O.F.M., Charles, *Inflamed by the Fire of the Holy Spirit, The Cord*, May 1993, pp 135-145



## Called to Follow Christ in the Footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi

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*This issue's ongoing formation section continues the Commission's reflections on the 1978 Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. Our focus is on the Rule's first chapter, "The Secular Franciscan Order (S.F.O.)."*

Developmental and social psychologists tell us the formation and establishment of a sense of identity is a vitally important process for individuals and societies. Otherwise, people and communities suffer from what is called "an identity crisis." We Secular Franciscans can look to this first chapter of our Rule of Life for a definitive statement of our identity, who our spiritual family is within the broader context of the universal Church and, specifically, the place we occupy within this one Franciscan Family. The first sentence of Article 1 of the Rule makes a clear statement of our belief that we Franciscans---secular and religious, lay and clerical---have our origin in God's plan for the Church and the world, that we have been "raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church," we are not just another human institution, club or organization. We are also reminded in this Article that became Franciscans *not* to follow St. Francis, as wonderful and admirable as he was and is, but to follow our Lord Jesus Christ after the manner ("in the footsteps") of the Little Poor Man of Assisi.

A central reality to grasp and appreciate as expressed in this first Article of the Rule is the interconnectedness of the branches of the Franciscan Family and expressions of the Franciscan Movement. All of us---friars, sisters and seculars---live "in life-giving union with each other" in the service of our common mission "to make present the charism of [our] common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church." The correspondence course recently published by the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants to help with the preparation of spiritual assistants and certification of spiritual animators took its name, Life-Giving Union, from this Article in our Rule.

Article 2 of the Rule further defines our unique identity within the Franciscan Family. The S.F.O. was not an afterthought of St. Francis and has never been merely an auxiliary or affiliate "add-on" to the Orders of friars or sisters. The S.F.O. "is an organic union of all Catholic fraternities scattered throughout the world and open to every group of the faithful." *Organic* implies a living, breathing, growing, changing, developing, evolving, dynamic reality; how could anything created and sustained by the Holy Spirit of God be otherwise? Being a Secular Franciscan on the threshold of the third millennium of Christianity is more about life in fraternity than personal sanctity to the exclusion of concern for community. We journey as a family rather than individuals, or we do not journey at all *as Franciscans!* How else can we hope to realize the "perfect charity" which we, as Franciscans, have been called to strive?

Article 3 of our Rule makes it unambiguously clear that our present Rule of 1978 is the one and only currently valid Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. A few individuals have sought official permission to establish fraternities explicitly committed to live one of our Order's former Rules. Regardless of their motivation, they have failed to realize or accept the fact that, when Pope Paul VI promulgated our present Rule of Life on June 24, 1978, he definitively abrogated (i.e. superseded) the previous Rule of 1883 which succeeded the Rule of 1289 and the "Memoriale Propositi" of 1221. In the mind of the Church there is only *one Rule of Life* for one unified Secular Franciscan Order. To advocate a different point of view is to question the authority of the Church and the Pope whom we, as faithful followers of the Lord *after the manner of St. Francis*, must honor and obey.

What a gift we have received! Ours is a way of living the Gospel of Jesus Christ "in the manner of St. Francis by means of this Rule approved by the Church" (Article 2). In this anniversary year of this gift, may we read our Rule, even for the hundredth time, with a freshness of appreciation, open to new insights and understandings. May we study our Rule individually and in Fraternity and discuss its implications for our lives. May we pray our Rule and incarnate its ideals and challenges in the authenticity of our Franciscan witness every moment of every day of our shared faith journey in the Lord!

Sisters and Brothers, the Lord give you peace!

## Expectations

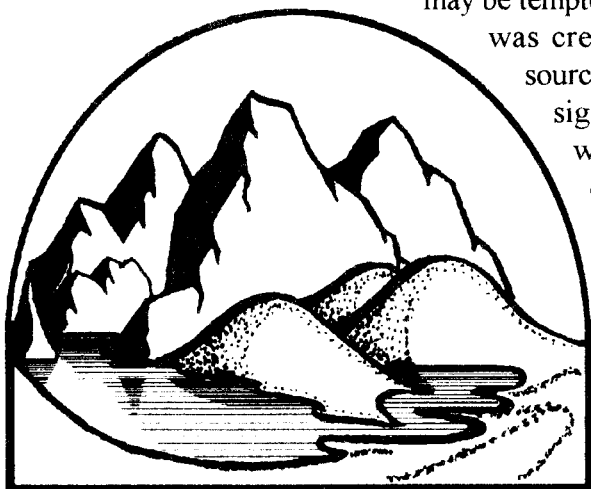
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The question is often raised, how can we make the Church more responsive to the needs of creation? Although certainly the clergy and Catholic media could increase their efforts, we the laity have the freedom and knowledge to influence the Church significantly. As Secular Franciscans, we are the only Order in the Church that professes to "respect all creatures," and "to move away from the temptation of exploiting creation." Thus we are called to a greater level of responsibility. By openly extending our family to include all creatures, as St. Francis did, we strengthen the Church's relationship to creation. Following St. Francis, the perfect imitator of Christ, we come to know and respect all creatures as brothers and sisters simply by being among them. "Foxes have holes, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lie down and rest" (Matthew 8:20). To experience our brothers and sisters of creation is to know them. To know is to love, to love is to care, and to care is to respond to needs, often courageously.

It has been suggested that Christ didn't have much to say about creation, when in fact, that is where many of his teachings are rooted. "Listen, then, if you have ears to hear with!" (Lk. 8:8). "Look at the birds" (Mt. 6:27). "Look how the wildflowers grow" (Mt. 6:28). "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure in a field" (Mt. 13:44). "Let the fig tree teach you a lesson." (Mt. 24:32). "Not one of them [sparrows] is forgotten by God" (Lk. 12:6). "It is God that clothes the wild grass" (Lk. 12:28). "Let us not waste a bit" (Jn. 6:12). "The seed is the word of God" (Lk. 8:11). In page after page in the Gospels, Christ makes references to water, waves, wind, mountains, seeds, plants, wheat, pearls, paths, and so forth.

There are those who suggest Jesus used examples of creation in His teachings so the countryfolk of His time could better grasp His message, as if those teachings were beneath city dwellers and others today. Though some may be tempted to pigeonhole Scripture, it should be noted that "before the world was created, the Word already existed" (Jn. 1:1), and "the Word was the source of life" (Jn. 1:4). Quite likely many today overlook the value and significance of Christ's references to creation, because of losing touch with creation itself and its relativity to providence and the fulfillment of life. Think about it, relative to the divine, apart from the Word of God, creation (life) is all we've really got. When the Holy Father designated St. Francis the patron saint of ecology in 1989, maybe he was trying to tell Franciscans something special. However, if the Church is to become more assertive in this regard, we as Franciscans have a distinct obligation to lead, not only due to the patron of ecology designation, but by our Rule and profession. Although we continue to grow, let us also continuously be guided by the words of St. Francis himself, "Let us begin for up until now we have done nothing."



**I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.**

### Questions for Reflection:

1. How can the Church make creation more central to its teachings as Jesus did?
2. What can we do to raise the expectations of our own calling to strengthen the Church's voice and actions for the integrity of creation?
3. What can we as Franciscans hope to gain by acting upon this calling?

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# Contemporary Francis: Life to Gospel and Gospel to Life

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*Draw close to God and He will draw close to you. James 4:8*

**The Secular Franciscan Order  
The Key to Franciscan Spirituality  
The Key to Christianity  
The Rock Bottom Message  
is the  
*Word of the Lord***

Francis lived his life according to the word of the Lord. His journey was marked by poverty and humility and rooted in the spirituality of compassion for our Lord. Our journey begins with our conversion. Our readiness to please God comes from our passion to love and serve our Lord. Through our passion we can maximize our charism and minimize our structure. We can grow into the person that we were called to be. Moving out of our comfort zone, we can now enter into the Paschal Mystery.

At the 15<sup>th</sup> Quinquennial Congress of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States of America, Sr. Brenda Hermann, M.S.B.T., a member of the Missionary Cenacle Family, spoke about refounding. She said refounding is to “return to the excitement of the founding story so as to be energized to address the issues of contemporary society at their roots. To do so is to willingly enter into the Paschal Mystery (death) so that new life emerges. It is less about vision and planning, more about entering into the mystery of God’s plan.”

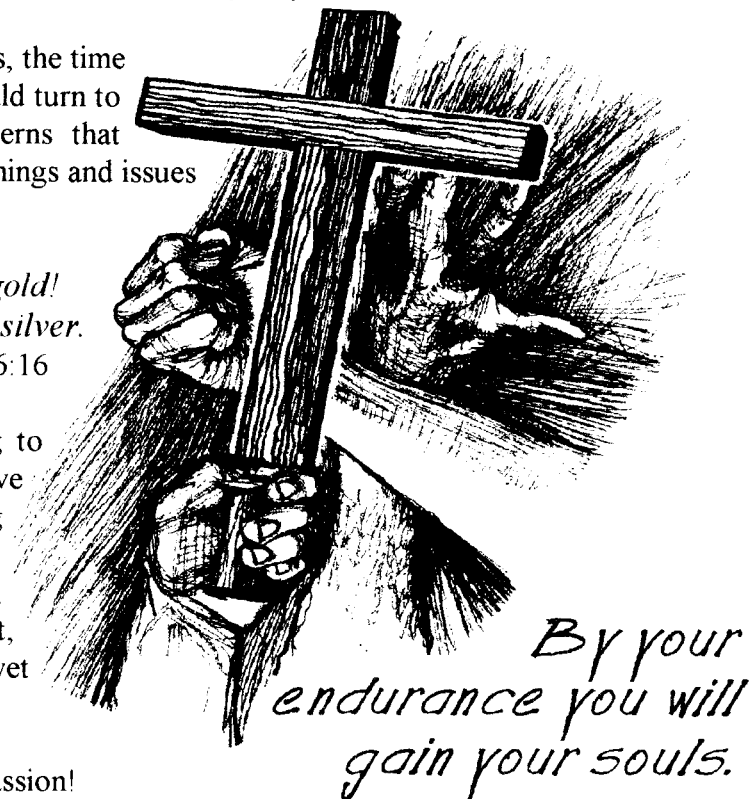
When the Holy Spirit overtook the young Francis, the time had come for him to follow the desire of his soul. He would turn to things of the spirit and put aside his worldly concerns that dominated his life. We, too, must put aside the worldly things and issues that dominate our lives.

*How much better to acquire wisdom than gold!  
To acquire understanding is more desirable than silver.*

Proverbs 16:16

Our charism is one of detachment. According to Patrick McCloskey, O.F.M., men and women who have been inspired by the courage of Francis to risk everything in following Jesus, share in the following similarities: humility, devotion to Christ’s passion and cross, penance, an innovative spirit, loyalty to the Church, missionary spirit, devotion to the Eucharist, reverence for life, joy, busy yet centered, a “Together” people.

Together we can follow Jesus and share in His passion!



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## Challenges for Secular Franciscans

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There is a short story about an early Franciscan brother who wanted to be a solitary pilgrim. He was renowned for his holiness within the Franciscan Order. He had decided that he needed greater solitude for prayer and devotion. But when he took himself away from his brothers, and even shortened his habit to further distance himself from the Order, he found that he had nowhere to turn for encouragement and support and soon found himself full of despair.

One of the simplest-sounding, yet most challenging, chapters in our Rule, Chapter 1, reminds us that we are called to live in “life-giving union with each other.” Our very lives depend on our fraternity’s support and encouragement. When we are separated from our sisters and brothers, for whatever reason, we lack vitality.

There are many ways that we can be separated from our fraternity members. The most difficult separation is not geographical but spiritual. When we fail to listen attentively to a brother in need, when we do not try to understand a sister whose perspective may be different from our own, when we rush through a meeting without allowing everyone to offer their thoughts, we can create spiritual distances among ourselves. We forget that we are called to develop our spirituality in fraternity, for it is through our interactions with our brothers and sisters that we are able to share our individual understandings and experience of God in each of our lives.

Article 2 of Chapter 1 states that “In these fraternities the brothers and sisters, led by the Spirit, strive for perfect charity in their own secular state.” How hard that can be!

How many of us find it easier to express concern for an injustice half a globe away than to recognize a situation that needs healing within our own fraternity? How often do we encourage a gesture of peace between nations, while denying conflict under our own roof?

Secular Franciscans have so many gifts to help us! We have many examples from stories of St. Francis

to give us guidance. When he sat down to eat with the brother who had trouble fasting and was overcome by hunger, he lived a charity that can inspire us. Perfect charity draws on the example of God’s unconditional love for each of us, and calls us to extend that love to our brothers and sisters. When St. Francis rejoiced that the Lord had given him brothers, he acknowledged that fraternity is a place of life-giving union.

The simple stories of St. Francis and St. Clare facing daily challenges within their own communities reinforce our understanding that charity and peace and justice must all be nurtured in our hearts and our “homes” first. Then we can go out into the world to bring the Gospel to life, and life to the Gospel!

### Questions to consider:

1. How does life in community with the brothers and sisters of your fraternity help you to grow and “strive for perfect charity?”
2. Our current Rule adapts our Order “to the needs and expectations of the Holy Church in the conditions of changing times” (Ch. 1, art. 3). What are some of the “signs of the times” in which we live and how do they challenge us today as Secular Franciscans?





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## Work's Place in the Franciscan Charism and Catholic Tradition

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Formation articles in this issue are using Chapter 1 of the Rule as the start for reflection. Entitled "The Secular Franciscan Order," it situates us in relation to the Church, St. Francis, the Franciscan Family and the Order's own history. Reflecting on this chapter provides means to address important questions about work and its place in the Church, the Franciscan family and our lives as Secular Franciscans.

Many Seculars wonder why the Order is paying attention to "work." What does it have to do with their professed way of life to follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis? It is especially true for those professed more than 20 years ago when the then-in-force *Leonine Rule* said nothing about work *per se* than "to promote practices of piety and good works." That is emotionally, spiritually and intellectually distant from Article 16 of the 1978 *Pauline Rule*: "Let them esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption and service of the human community." Work moves from no emphasis to being "esteemed;" its significance expands from the personal acts of charity to participation in the divine drama of creation and redemption.

To understand this enormous change in the appreciation of work, we need to understand the development of the *Rule of 1978*. After Vatican II, all Orders in the Church were to update their rules. Two points were to guide this effort: a return to the original charism of the Order's founder; a faithfulness to the spirit of Vatican II. We see these in Chapter 1 of our Rule. Article 1 describes how the branches of the Franciscan family "... intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church." Article 3 notes "the present rule ... adapts the Secular Franciscan Order to the needs and expectations of the Holy Church in the conditions of changing times." Let us understand how both paths led to a renewed appreciation of work in our lives.

The importance of work to St. Francis is unmistakable. He spoke of brothers "to whom God has given the grace of working." He encouraged brothers joining the Order to "remain at the trade and in the position in which he was called" and even in taking vows of absolute poverty the brothers were "allowed to have the tools which they need for their trade." In his final

*Testament* of 1226, he makes plain his sentiment toward work: "I worked with my own hands, and I am still determined to work, and with all my heart I wish to have all the rest of the brothers work at employment that can be carried out without scandal."

The importance of work is evident in Vatican II documents, particularly the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. The following excerpts are from that document.

34. *Individual and collective activity, that monumental effort of man through the centuries to improve the circumstances of the world, presents no problem to believers; considered in itself, it corresponds to the plan of God. Man was created in God's image and was commanded to conquer the earth with all it contains and to rule the world in justice and holiness . . . This holds good also for our daily work.*

67. *Human work . . . proceeds from the human person, who as it were impresses his seal on the things of nature and reduces them to his will. By his work a man ordinarily provides for himself and his family, associates with others as his brothers, and renders them service; he can exercise genuine charity and be a partner in the work of bringing divine creation to perfection. Moreover, we believe by faith that through the homage of work offered to God man is associated with the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, whose labor with his hands as Nazareth greatly ennobled the dignity of work.*

The first part of Article 16, "Let them esteem work as a gift," derives from St. Francis, *Rule of 1221* ["the friars to whom God has given the grace of working"]. The rest is from section 67 of the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the World*. Work is an important aspect of the Franciscan charism and the Church's renewed understanding of its life and mission in the modern world.

### Dialogue Starters

1. Should there be an article in our Rule concerning our manner of working? Why or why not?
2. Why should work be "esteemed"?

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Register Now! \$295.00 Double; \$375.00 Single; \$75.00 Deposit. Make checks payable to: S.F.O. N.E.C. Complimentary shuttle between Graymoor and local train, bus and air terminals. Hearty Vegetarian Meals (fish & dairy incl.). Strategy Sessions, Group Discussions. Sponsored by Secular Franciscan Order, U.S.A. Registration and info.: Charles Spencer, S.F.O., National Ecology Commission, 107 Jensen Circle, W. Springfield, MA 01089-4451; Phone (414) 737-7600; E-mail: cspencer@mail.map.com

## To Judge or Not to Judge

*by Bob Sommers, S.F.O.*

In today's culture, the only thing it seems we can be intolerant of is intolerance. However, "Judge not lest you be judged" refers to the person, not to the deed. As Franciscans, can we stand in judgment? Sure. Perhaps if not of the person, then at least of the act. We judge not the murderer but hold wanton homicide to be sinful; we judge not the homosexual but can view sodomy as unnatural and sinful.

In order to lead a moral life, we must have the leeway to judge acts as either moral or evil. We also have an obligation to transmit these judgements to others. Among the spiritual works of mercy we count: instruct the ignorant; admonish the sinner. Spiritual works of mercy seem to me to be essentially Franciscan.

## On Fire with the Spirit, Following in the Footprints of Jesus

August 17-20, 1998, A Franciscan Family Assembly will be held at the Hyatt Regency Milwaukee in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It is co-sponsored by the Franciscan Friars Conference and the Federation of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular.

Among the speakers:

Ed & Mary Zablocki, S.F.O. Fr. Murray Bodo, O.F.M.

For further information and/or brochure, contact:

Eleanor Granger, O.S.F. or Meigan Fogarty, O.S.F.

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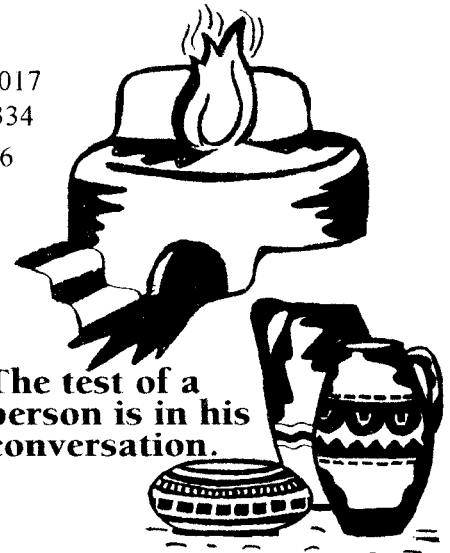
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**The test of a person is in his conversation.**

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support one another  
look for God in one another  
see God in everyone  
live as individuals  
are separate yet one  
are joined by God's presence  
living in each other

*from Regional Tracings. Queen of Peace Region*

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## The *Our Father* in Thoughtful Motion

by Ralph Schlueter, S.F.O., Holy Trinity Region

***Our Father*** . . . Yes, Our Father, not My Father! Well, yes, God is my Father, but not only my Father. God is Father of us all, not just my family and friends but also my enemies. My enemies? Yes! God is Father of all. That makes us brothers and sisters in the family of human beings, united through God Himself. Does that mean we are to love friends, families, even enemies and strangers? Jesus tells us to love one another as His Father has loved him, and to love our neighbors, including strangers and enemies, as we love ourselves. Do I look on everyone as a brother or sister loved by God and thus worthy and deserving of my love? Shouldn't I?

***Who art in heaven*** . . . You're in heaven, but You're also here with us in all we think, say, do and avoid. How? Jesus tells us that He and the Father are one. We know that we abide in Jesus, so we are with the Father here and now. Do I act like I know this throughout the day?

***holy be Your name*** . . . God's first name is not *Good* and His last name isn't *Damn*. Okay, I've gotten away from that. Now what? I could show greater reverence for His name and for Him in my attitude toward all things pertaining to God. In dealing with others, especially my family, I can work to impart an attitude of holiness for the name of God and for all His works. There's a job for me!

***Your kingdom come*** . . . When I pray this I express a personal wish that God's kingdom be a reality in my life. As an active believer, I can't passively wait for God's kingdom to come. I must work to bring it about visibly in my surroundings. I must be a Christian in action. Do I act as part of the workforce that is building God's kingdom?

***Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*** . . . What a prayer that is. I want to do God's will, in a general way, in all that I do, but "as it is [done] in heaven"? How can I do his will in my life as perfectly as all things are done in heaven? I can't, but I must keep trying, lest my prayer be empty. Do I want to be a hypocrite in prayer?

***Give us, this day, our daily bread*** . . . Jesus taught us to ask the Father for everything we need; food for body and soul is necessary. We have no trouble asking for ourselves, but when we pray "Give *us*," we are reminded that we aren't the only ones in need of the basics of life. Being God's instruments on earth, we are to work toward sharing our gifts from God for the physical and spiritual sustenance of others. Am I ready and willing to share my bread, and other gifts, with the rest of *us*? Do I make it a daily practice to live in the habit of sharing my gifts as a means of doing God's will?

***and forgive us our trespasses*** . . . This we need. We jump at the chance to be forgiven our grievous sins and our peccadillos. God is just as eager to forgive us, if we are sincere. That sincerity is demonstrated by a real desire to change our way of life. How sincere am I when I continually fall into the same rut of past behavior?

***as we forgive those who trespass against us*** . . . Whoa! This is a fast curve. We're asking God to forgive us no more and no less than we forgive everyone else. This is the part which makes praying the Lord's Prayer really hard. Yet, it's what Jesus taught us to pray and He showed us the extreme to which we are to go as He forgave all of us from the cross. Do I have someone whom I have not yet forgiven for wrongs done to me or to those I love? Will I, with God's help forgive that someone?

***and lead us not into temptation*** . . . Certainly God wouldn't lead us into temptation, that's what the devil does. That's also what we do. Into temptation is the way we want to go. The way we want to live our lives, the way we want to be led, is often contrary to the way God wants to lead us. Here we ask God to lead us in the way He wants us to go, not according to our own desires. Do I pray that I may make what God wants in my life to be what I want with all my heart and mind?

***but deliver us from all evil*** . . . "All evil" can include what happens to us through the actions of others as well as the plans we have for our own aggrandizement--often to the detriment of others. If we succeed in placing ourselves in God's hands and letting God's will be ours, nothing truly evil can come into our lives. God used the crucifixion of His Son as the prelude to Jesus' resurrection! Do I accept as a gift whatever comes my way so that I may use it for God's glory?

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## Are We Responsive to the Needs of Others?

by Elizabeth L. Francis, S.F.O.

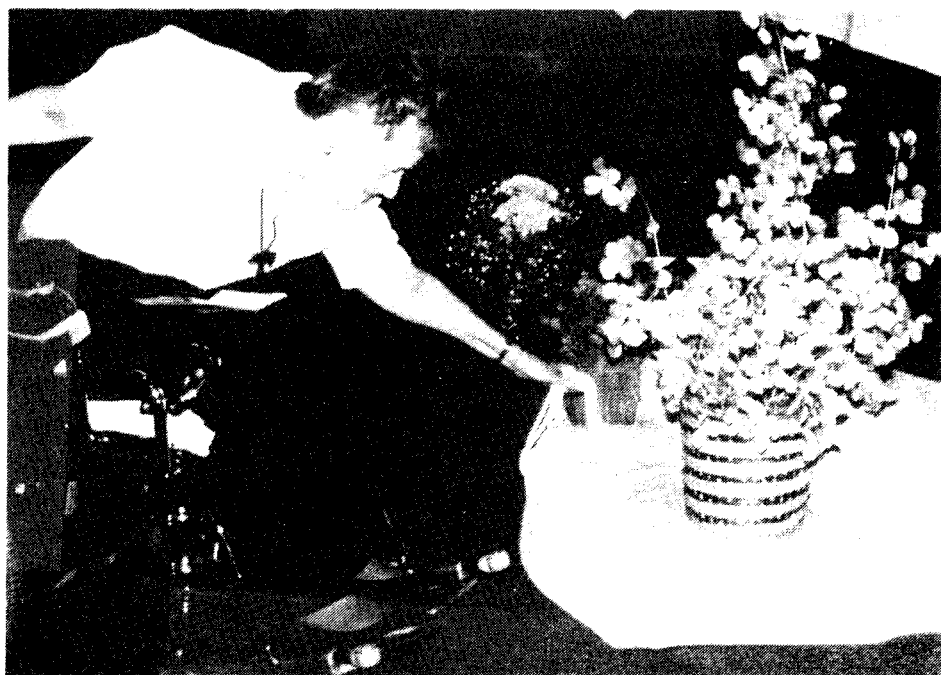
People with handicaps are, first of all, people; secondly, they just have some sort of a limitation. Please, never define a person by his or her limitations. Most of us have some sort of "disability," such as a need for glasses, or difficulty hearing in a noisy situation, or a bit of arthritis that makes us a bit more slow in our movements.

Is there someone in your fraternity who needs a little bit of help with some things? Is there a brother or sister who is not able to drive? Are arrangements made for that person to be transported to all fraternity gatherings? Does someone have difficulty hearing? Is an effort made by everyone to speak clearly and perhaps just a bit more slowly---and just one person speaking at a time? Does a brother or sister have some difficulty with walking? Is somebody in a wheelchair or using a cane or walker? Do fraternity members assist these people as needed? Is your meeting site wheelchair accessible? Is there a brother or sister who has visual difficulties or is blind? When there is material to be read, does someone read the material for that person? Does a brother or sister in your group have a service animal such as a guide dog? Do people know what to do, and what not to do, with the service animal? Do members of the fraternity see to the needs of their brothers and sisters when refreshments are served? Some people may have difficulty moving to the area where the refreshments are located, or they might have trouble moving the treats to an area to eat. The list is endless. These questions have been posed just to give an idea of some difficulties our brothers and sisters may encounter.

You may feel awkward in offering assistance to someone with a disability because you don't know how to help. Don't just ignore the person and the situation. Ask the person what help he or she would like. One who is blind may wish to have an arm or elbow to grasp and some verbal comments on the area when moving about. Assistance cutting food and knowing where food is located on a plate may be needed. Someone with difficulty hearing may wish to be located closer to a speaker and/or within sight of the speaker, to hear better and to read lips. A better idea that may help those with a hearing difficulty is to try to have everyone sit in a circle. His or her view of the speaker would be unobstructed. An individual with difficulty walking or with some sort of a walking devise might like someone nearby to help "just in case." A little bit of extra time is always welcome. Try to build a little extra time into the schedule, especially if people will be moving about. Everyone in the fraternity should be open to and responsive to the needs of others in the group.

Please be sure that *everyone* is included in all fraternity activities. Everyone is important and has something to contribute. St. Francis never ignored an individual with a disability. He worked with the lowest of the low in his time---lepers. He saw Christ in every individual. Can we do any less today? We are members of the Franciscan family. As family, we are to care for one another, to be aware of the needs of our brothers and sisters and to respond to them. We are to treat everyone we meet in our lives with respect and dignity. Let us begin by helping our brothers and sisters in our Franciscan families.

→ Joetta Robertson, S.F.O., St. Ann Fraternity, Warren, Ohio. Transitus Services, placing a symbol of the Order.



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# Family Matters

Carol Gentile, S.F.O., Chair, National Family Commission

## **Let the Children Come to Me and Do Not Hinder Them**

Mk. 10:14

*"Everybody today seems to be in a hurry. No one has any time to give to others: children to their parents, parents to their children, spouses to each other. Love begins by taking care of the closest ones--the ones at home..."* Mother Teresa

### **The ABC's of Positive Parenting**

- ACCEPT** the individuality of your child, when others engage in comparisons.
- BELIEVE** your child, when others fail to work at establishing mutual faith and trust.
- COMPLIMENT** the smallest efforts of your child, when others can only find fault.
- DISCIPLINE** your child, when others fail to establish appropriate limits of behavior.
- ENJOY** simple things with your child, when others are missing priceless moments and memories.
- FORGIVE** your child, when others cannot seem to forget mistakes.
- GREET** your child with a smile, when others prefer wearing frowns.
- HUG** your child, when others underestimate the need and power of touch.
- IMITATE** the simple faith and optimism of your child, when others prefer to grow in cynicism.
- JOKE** with your child, when others have lost the ability to laugh.
- KNOW** what matters most to your child, when others are lecturing more than listening.
- LOVE** your child with daily expressions of affection, when others forget to say "I love you."
- MODEL** appropriate behaviors for your child, when the actions of others can serve to confuse.
- NURTURE** the creative potential of your child, when others overlook the special gifts of childhood.
- OBSERVE** classroom progress through your child's schoolwork, when others show little interest.
- PAUSE** and have fun with your child, when others are too involved in their yesterdays and tomorrows.
- QUESTION** the amount of time you spend with your child, when others offer 'presents' rather than 'presence.'
- READ** frequently with your child, when others prefer television.
- STUDY** and grow with your child, when others have chosen to stop learning.
- TALK** in a gentle tone, when others prefer shouting.
- UNDERSTAND** and nurture the traits you wish for your child, when others fail to give such values serious thought.
- VALUE** the time you share alone with your child, when others underestimate the need for such intimacy.
- WORK** toward appreciating small successes with your child, when others meet only frustration in seeking perfection.
- XEROX** your child's creations and efforts, when others fail to preserve priceless childhood memories.
- YIELD** to positive alternatives in resolving misconduct with your child, when others rely on punishments.
- ZERO** in on your strengths as a parent, celebrating the positive differences you are making for a better tomorrow.

Dr. A.P. Witham, American Family Institute

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# Dignitas

## Proclaiming the Dignity of Work

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## Work and Human Dignity in the Social Encyclicals

by Terry McCarthy, Sr., S.F.O., Work Commission Member

**“They should take clear positions whenever human dignity is attacked by any form of oppression or indifference.”**  
(Art. 22.2, S.F.O. Constitutions)

It seems each of us at sometime in our life becomes socially active. For some it is a flash that dies away, others burn year after year. For me, this social action has been continuous. My life provided many opportunities at many levels and directions. Marching with placards has never been my way. Spending time on a picket line is different. Over time my approach has become that of passive resistance, or better yet, passive dynamics. Others can carry signs. My roots go in many directions and a number of years, but the turning point which set my course has been twofold: becoming a Secular Franciscan and the social encyclicals. Both date back about 40 years.

A priest who wrote a column for Catholic publications visited a seminary with other priests to talk to seminarians who would soon be priests. During the visit some of the priests-to-be stated they wished to be involved in social action. This prompted the visitors to ask if any of them had read any of the social encyclicals or pastoral letters. They all said, “No.” How can a priest effectively become involved in social justice without any knowledge of what the Church teaches. Can we be effectively involved in social justice if we don’t know the Church teachings?

My first encyclical was Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* or *The Condition of Labor*. Written about 105 years ago, it is valid today. Pope John Paul II’s letter celebrating the “Hundredth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*” states certain objectives of *Rerum Novarum* are still valid and some goals are yet to be met (# 34). While he refers to Third World countries, it takes very little looking to see goals yet to be met in the United States.

Pope Leo XIII’s letter was not the first written on the topic of social justice. In *Rerum Novarum* he

placed the Church firmly in the center of the involved moral issues, especially about workers. His was a time of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. The oppression of the masses was such that a solution was needed. Socialism was becoming a force, Communism was about to show itself. One of his first concerns was saving workers from speculators who used them just as instruments to make money (#33). The masses were treated as chattel (#16), just tangible moveable property. Socialism, Liberalism, Communism, etc., were looking for solutions. Pope Leo XIII stepped to the very center of the fray, proclaiming the Church to have an interest in the problem and correct solution. That took intestinal fortitude or was it the Holy Spirit?

The benchmark set by Pope Leo XIII and the wellspring of subsequent social writings was the “dignity of the human person.” Pope John Paul II, in his 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary letter, calls it “the transcendent dignity of the human person.” We are created in the image and likeness of God---all peoples of all times.

How do we read encyclicals and pastorals? *How not* to read them: 1. They are not an exercise in speed reading. 2. They are not to be just read. 3. Once is not enough. *How to* read: 1. Have a Bible and dictionary at hand. 2. They are to be studied. 3. They have been written for the universal Church. For a first time reader: use them for spiritual reading; meditate on them; check out Scriptural references.

So, it takes three months to cover the letter of Pope Leo XIII. Time is not important here but rather having a good understanding of what he is saying. The transcendent dignity of the human person should be your benchmark and wellspring for your social action. It worked for Francis and it should work for us.

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# In the Trenches

by Mary Zablocki, S.F.O., Co-Chair National Work Commission

## Easter Family

What does it mean to be part of the *Franciscan Family* and how does this relate to the whole family of the Church? This question has stumped many for years; the only way I can address it is by a story. This is one Secular Franciscan's experience of Easter Sunday Mass this year. This inspiration follows one of my sandier desert experiences of Lent.

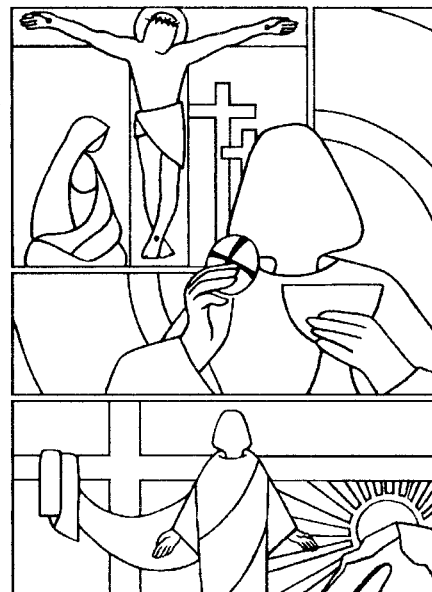
This Secular Franciscan (call her Mary), and her family arrived at their church, a large gothic structure holding almost one thousand people, only to find families leaving to go elsewhere because the church was overflowing. The 11:30 A.M. liturgy was known throughout the city as exceptionally wonderful every Sunday and had attracted hundreds of non-parishioners for Easter. Not wanting to miss a glorious culmination of the Easter Triduum, she and her family decided to squeeze into the back of the church. They climbed the stone steps. A few teens and adults were in the doorway. When they tried to get into the back of the church, it was obvious these folks were on the steps because that was the only place left.

Mary admits to an initial irritation and a wave of panic when she realized that she would miss her favorite liturgy and Easter Mass if they could not get into the church. She was ready to leave for another church when her husband and two sons performed a few side-stepping football moves and, following them, she found herself inside. The music in the sanctuary echoed in the church. The lector started the first reading. Mary couldn't bear not hearing what was being proclaimed. Squeezing politely through the aisles filled with people standing with children in fluffy dresses and little tailored short pants, she found a space next to a pillar that was waiting for her to slip in.

Looking around at the faces of young, old, Black, Hispanic, Oriental, married, single, able and disabled people, she broke into a smile that stayed for the whole Mass. The excitement and joy of this hubbub was palpable. There were not enough seats, but no one seemed to mind. Many couldn't see the altar but there was no need, God flowed from the altar into the corners of the church. She regretted not having a program and couldn't join in the singing. She strained to see the words on a distant page when she noticed a teen next to her not singing, and he had a program. Unable to resist the music, Mary asked for his program. A very Franciscan approach, when in doubt---beg. He gave it to her, she held it open for others to share. Four people in the aisle were singing their hearts out, grateful to have the music.

The liturgy was one big Alleluia, with traditional hymns, vibrant gospel music, rhythmic clapping and a gentle African lullaby to ease the crowd forward for Communion. No one seemed to care if things took longer than usual. The church ceased to be individuals alone in pews, lost in the private devotions of Good Friday. They were a family, all crowded into the diningroom, elbow to elbow, glad to see friend and stranger alike, in a ballet of love that excluded no one, moved as a whole and throbbed with a joy both rare and familiar on a deep visceral level, uniting saints from past and future, heaven and earth. This throng was her family and this, a modern day miracle of loaves and fishes, a pinnacle experience of church. Mary left singing, shocked that Mass lasted only one hour and fifteen minutes. The experience of this celebration seemed to have transported the people beyond the limits of time and place.

Those who were caught off-guard by this Mass dashed off early to get out of the parking lot, muttering about the kids, the length, the music. Those who milled around the back of the church were bursting with joy. Mary was aware that it was God's grace that filled her heart with joy. She knew she was irritated when she approached the crowded church. She knew that it was Jesus' Easter gift to her that washed this sinful attitude away and invited her to be reborn in glory. What more could a person want for Easter?



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In the Trenches (continued)

The only negative thing Mary experienced was when she tried to describe it to a friend who bitterly passed it off as simply “Easter and Christmas Catholics.” Ah, the sour jellybean at the bottom of all that chocolate. It would not stop Mary from feasting on the treats of the Lord, just as naysayers could never stop Francis.

To relate this experience of liturgy to our Rule is a daunting task. There is one line, however, that does sum up the very Franciscan nature of Mary’s experience. In Chapter One, Art. 1, the second paragraph reads: “In various ways and forms but in life-giving union with each other, they intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church.”

Let us intend to make present this charism. Let us look for various ways and forms to do it. Let us always try to be filled with joy. It has such an impact on the folks around us. The important thing to remember is, we can choose to be singing or grumbling in any given experience. It is the abandoning of self that makes the difference.

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## **Come Back to Me**

*by Patti Normile, S.F.O.*

The following is based on a talk given by Anne Robichaud at Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, Kentucky, on Tuesday, March 3, 1998.

When asked what the people of the world can do for Assisi after the earthquakes of 1997, the people invariably say, “Come back!” While the September quakes and aftershocks did tremendous damage to the Basilica of San Francesco and Santa Chiara, the absence of pilgrims and tourists has devastated the economy of the blessed town on the side of Mount Subasio. The reason? Misinformation.

One San Francisco newspaper [note the irony of the U.S. city’s name] stated that 80% of the homes were destroyed. The reality is that many are plagued with cracks but few are irreparable. All structures must be restored according to an anti-seismic building code. Another media source said that 50% of the frescoes in the Basilica were lost. The reality is that about 3% of the total number of frescoes were damaged. Probably 1% are lost. The spread of this misinformation has resulted in the annual tourist population diminishing from about 4 ½ million to virtually zero since the quakes. The loss is reflected in the other hill towns of Umbria---Gubbio, Perugia and Spoleto---whose tourist business stems from those who go to Assisi.

Anne Robichaud, experienced lecturer and official Assisi guide, is an American married to an Assisian builder. In early 1998, she traveled the United States with a slide presentation depicting the restoration work underway in Assisi. She also brought the message that now is a wonderful time to visit the city. Because so many are staying away due to the misinformation,

crowds are not a problem in the historic and spiritual sites of the hill town. The people welcome pilgrims and tourists with a graciousness that even exceeds the usual Assisian hospitality. Visitors will also have the experience of witnessing aspects of the restoration. Parts of buildings appear to have been treated by an architectural orthodontist who placed metal braces to protect their facades. Volunteers work sorting fragments of frescoes. More volunteers would be welcome.

The upper Basilica of San Francesco and Santa Chiara are not accessible to the public but the lower Basilica and the tomb of Saint Francis are open and undamaged. There is no hidden danger in visiting now. San Damiano sustained no major damage. The Temple of Minerva and the Rocca, as well as other Roman structures, were unscathed---the Romans built for strength. Fifty-five Poor Clares have moved into pre-fabricated housing on the property of Santa Chiara to remain close to their precious Clare. San Damiano sustained little damage. San Rufino will remain closed until restoration is complete. No damage occurred to the Portiuncula. The town bell tower wasn’t damaged. Anne told the audiences about miracles of the earthquakes. While the loss of nine lives in Assisi and the Marches was tragic, the toll could have been much higher. The risk of collapse of a high portion of the Convento of San Francesco energized engineering forces to action. A 42 ton-crane was lifted by another crane

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Come Back To Me (continued)

over the roof part of the Convento into a courtyard area. That crane then raised a "cage" up to the facade of the endangered building. The cage was secured only three hours before a major tremor struck which certainly would have caused irreparable damage and harm. German engineers sent a congratulatory message stating that only the Italians would have attempted such a "mad and ingenious" venture successfully in such a brief time.

The statue of Mary was removed from atop Our Lady of the Angels in the lower city. She now stands to the right on the piazza. At a certain time of the day her shadow casts an image on the wall of "Los Angeles" as the church is called. The image is a silhouette of a kneeling Francis complete with a cowl. Viewers say it is "awesome" in its reality.

Prior to the late summer of 1997, no precise record of the frescoes in the Basilica of San Francesco existed. Then a photographer asked for and was granted permission to photograph the artistic treasures. For two months he laid on scaffolding six feet from the vaulted ceiling, capturing the frescoes on film. His work was done at night. On the night of September 26, 1997, at 2:32 A.M., he was high on his scaffold when the quake struck. He survived, as do his documentary photographs which provide invaluable tools for the reconstruction process.

Three options exist for the upper Basilica which will be reopened in 2000: 1) large photos of the frescoes may be hung in the damaged spaces; 2) new frescoes may be painted, probably by the world's most renowned fresco artist from Japan; 3) the damaged vaults may be repaired as "neutral" areas with restored pieces of the original frescoes displayed in museum areas.

Each year one of the 20 regions of Italy brings oil to Assisi for burning at the tomb of St. Francis, Italy's patron saint. This year it was Genoa's turn. In presenting the gift, the mayor called it the "oil of healing for the injured city." Anne reminds her audience that in blessing Assisi at his death St. Francis said, "Assisi will have troubles but it will never perish." The healing will come.

In the meantime, life is as it always was in Assisi. Giuseppe carves his Tau crosses in anticipation of the pilgrims who will surely come. A potter applies glaze to his pottery for shoppers of the not too distant future. Only 135 residents still live full-time in the upper town

In normal times the population is 875. In the

time of Saint Francis the population was about 8000. Citizens are housed in apartments in the lower town so that restoration can proceed. The work has a "global nature" as Anne calls it. The west wall of one house is the east wall of its neighbor. All must be done together to insure that future earthquakes will find the city protected by anti-seismic measures. But the city is safe to visit. Travelers will surely be greeted by Assisians overjoyed at their arrival.

One of the first donations for restoration came from an octogenarian Assisian who, with the help of a cane and his wife, labored up the aisle of the lower Basilica church when it opened once again for worship on December 8. He thrust a lire note worth \$6.00 into the hands of the priest saying, "This is for Francis' church." Contributions collected for assistance in the restoration will be presented to the Bishop of Assisi. While the Italian government will pay for about 90% of the restoration, much additional expense will be incurred. Contributions can be sent to:

Attention: David Stolberg  
The Cathedral Foundation/Assisi Fund  
1140 Madison Ave.  
Covington, KY 44011

And, as the Assisians say, "Come back!"

Editor's Note: Fr. Murray Bodo, O.F.M., recently spoke to a friend in Assisi who reported a minor quake on April 5<sup>th</sup>. Italian regulations state that reconstruction cannot commence until 60 days after a tremor.



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## The Vocations Continue

by Fr. Joe Naugle, O.F.M., Director, Franciscan Mission Service

Three laymen and a deacon (unusual, no women this time) recently completed our orientation program in preparation for overseas mission. This brings to fifty the number of lay missionaries sent out by F.M.S. since 1990. All but one of this group will leave shortly for assignments in Zambia, Jamaica and Honduras. The fourth man plans to finish up some personal work and make his way to Brazil in August. Something of each one's background may give our Secular sisters and brothers an idea of the quality of people F.M.S. sponsors.

Sixty-something Oscar Padilla put in years with the internationally known Bechtel Corporation. Born in Venezuela, he went to Canada as a teenager and then to college and graduate school in the U.S. He has traveled the world. In the last few years he moved into consulting work on his own. Most recently, this vigorous "Latino" has sensed a call to work at a more grassroots level; at the same time he heard of F.M.S. The coincidence of these---vocation and overseas placement possibilities---have proven providential. Just as providentially, we secured an assignment for Oscar in the Zambian bush country where he will work directly with a Korean missionary priest in a diocese headed by an Irish African Mission society bishop. It should be fascinating to watch this world traveler settle into the area and bring his considerable talents to bear on community development there.

At the other end of the age spectrum in this group is 33 year old Peter Tolhurst. After several years with United Parcel Service, Peter felt there had to be more to life and went to Peru. There he volunteered with Mother Teresa's sisters, helping the poorest of the poor. The step from that experience to a more formalized missionary commitment was natural. Peter now goes to Honduras. His personal attractiveness, love of sports and communication skills will stand him in good stead working with children in an orphanage directed by a Conventual Franciscan friar. We are relishing the thought of Peter's healthy masculine influence on the little ones who face life in the Third World without even the benefit of mother or father.

Nearly two years ago Jim Fortier lost a life's companion when his wife of 38 years died of cancer.

The grieving process led Jim to visit his sister, a religious who has worked as a missionary in Kenya for 50 years. She suggested that Jim consider a tour as a missionary. With a background in labor relations and as an ordained deacon (Hartford, Ct. Archdiocese), it was relatively easy to find a suitable placement for Jim. The bishop of Montego Bay, Jamaica, willingly accepted his services as a catechist and director of the impressive Good Samaritan Project. Good Samaritan cares for indigent, elderly, AIDS sufferers, needy school-children and orphans in several buildings on diocesan owned property in the city of Montego Bay. Jim will observe at close range the huge gap between ostentatious tourism of that famous resort and the grinding Jamaican poverty as he brings his diaconate and people skills to ministry there.

Steve Grube experienced a Saul-like conversion during Holy Week last year. It caused this 44 year old to take stock of his upward trajectory in the Caterpillar company and ask if climbing the corporate ladder was where he really wanted to expend his considerable energies. The rest, as they say, is history. He made the transition from board room to potential missionary gracefully. One of the benefits from his career at Caterpillar was a love for and a knowledge of Brazil. He tells us his next move in the business would likely have been a stint in that country. Now he will go there as a witness to the Gospel, working with Franciscan sisters in a hospital in the northeast city of Olinda.

These snapshots strike us as pretty typical of the people presenting themselves these days for foreign mission duty. In our three months of orientation we have found Oscar, Peter, Jim and Steve to be normal, good-willed, intelligent and, above all, faith-filled men. They will make wonderful contributions in Zambia, Honduras, Jamaica and Brazil, as in St. Francis' words, "they Preach the Gospel, sometimes using words."

*Note:* Not one of these four is a Franciscan. We console ourselves with the thought that two of the S.F.O. Regions have continued to offer prayerful and financial support for all our lay missionaries. We could use more of both from the other Regions.

## Convocation on Spiritual Assistance

The Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (C.N.S.A.) to the Secular Franciscan Order will hold a *Convocation on Spiritual Assistance* in Denver, September 22-25, 1998, to bring together the general spiritual assistants from Rome and the major superiors and formation directors of the Franciscan, Conventual, Capuchin and Third Order Regular friars of the United States and Canada along with provincial and regional spiritual assistants and national Secular Franciscan leaders to discuss the quality of spiritual assistance and to plan for the friars' future presence with the S.F.O. in the new millennium.

Topics to be considered will be the official relationship between friars and seculars, preparation of friars to assist the S.F.O., use of the correspondence course to certify spiritual animators for Secular Franciscan communities, and techniques to be used for pastoral and fraternal visitation.

The national spiritual assistants decided to write an open letter to Secular Franciscan permanent deacons asking them to assume more active involvement in spiritual assistance and to relinquish roles of lay leadership in S.F.O. fraternities.

Publication and distribution plans for *Life-Giving Union*, a correspondence course for spiritual animators, developed by the C.N.S.A. with the help of the Co-chairs of the National Formation Commission of the S.F.O. in the United States, Therese and David Ream, S.F.O., were finalized. Provincial spiritual assistants have this program; it is ready to be implemented.

A process to establish interactive dialogue with diocesan priests who are members of the Secular Franciscan Order has been started.

For more information, please contact:

Friar Benet Fonck, O.F.M.,  
C.N.S.A. Executive Secretary  
3140 Meramec Street  
St. Louis, MO 63118  
Phone (314) 352-9159; Fax (314) 353-7470  
E-mail FonckBenet@aol.com

## Funds Needed

Additional funds are needed to hold the National Convocation on Spiritual Assistance to be held in Denver, Colorado, September 22-25, 1998. This gathering is very important for our Secular Franciscan Order in the United States. It will bring to the attention of First Order and Third Order Regular leadership the importance of spiritual assistance in the life of the Order.

Individuals and fraternities wishing to contribute may send checks made payable to:

NAFRA/Richard Morton Fund

Send checks to:

John Sanborn, S.F.O., NAFRA Treasurer  
1611 W. River Parkway  
Grand Island, NY 14072

## Prayerful Meditation

My consciousness cries out for prayer---prayer of being, prayer of openness. I feel your presence as I see the clouds unfurling across the horizon in layers. A patch of blue peeks out from behind the gray clouds hinting at the promise of a better day. Light plays along the edge of the clouds pouring forth and reminding me of the joy of your love and the promise of love's victory over darkness.

If only I take a moment to listen to You speaking to me, there is so much to hear. Everything around me proclaims your glory---the clouds, the raindrops, each blade of grass, every little creature scurrying to its home and even the birds of the air as they make their way home. Everything bursting forth with new life.

Thank you, Lord, for letting me awaken to the beauty of Your presence in my life. Please let me be Your song so that others can know You through me and be awakened, too.

Lovingly,  
Lucy

from *Contemplative Moments*, Vol. III by Lucy Nordlund, S.F.O. For more information on these delightful and inspirational booklets, please write to Lucy at: 18 Quail Ridge Rd., Fletcher, NC 28732

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## Secular Franciscans Meet the Challenge Daily

*by Alfred J. Picongna, S.F.O.,  
Our Lady of the Angels Fraternity, Blessed Kateri Tekawitha Region*

In the Franciscan Office of Readings for April 23 we honor the saintly memory of Blessed Brother Giles who was one of the first disciples of St. Francis. A quote from Brother Giles used there is, "I would prefer living in the religious life with a small measure of grace to living in the world with abundant grace because there are more dangers and fewer means of assistance in the world than in religious life."

What a wake-up call and at the same time an affirmation of strength for the Secular Franciscan Order. A Secular Franciscan lives in the world his or her whole life. Distractions and dangers abound constantly. As the final years of the twentieth century slip into history, it doesn't take deep reflection to realize that distractions of all kinds are mere understatement to such hideous pseudo-deities such as drugs, computer addiction, gambling and other financial addictions. Obviously a few of these could be extended to great length, because the realities of the haves and the musts are presently so extensive.

Brother Giles spoke his words more than seven hundred years ago. If the distractions of the world were so obvious and possibly intense during his lifetime, imagine if you will, the contrasts between his time and today.

My grandparents, all deceased for many years, would have great difficulty comprehending the realities of today. Imagine Brother Giles' reaction, overwhelming initially and some degree of fascination after the initial shock wore off. Being a man of God, Brother Giles next reaction would be possibly withdrawal into a deeper hermitage of the mind, the heart and the soul. He would be astounded by so much we commonly take for granted. His first reaction would probably be a heartfelt praise to God even before the concept of fascination was sensed.

Secular Franciscans have much to reflect upon. Our life is not one of withdrawal, but rather a life of understanding the intense distractions which are ever-present today, while at the same time striving to bring about that which is right, good and sacred according to the Gospel life of Jesus Christ.

Our life today is difficult because of the obvious and tremendous challenges constantly being presented to us. With all the distractions, however, the amount of grace flowing from the Immaculate Heart of our Savior is incomprehensible to mere humans. Jesus said, "I am with you always" (Mt. 28:20). Is there any greater protection or armor for life as a Secular Franciscan? I think not!

Staying focused and remembering our spiritual calling, while having great challenges, also has unfathomable merit. We cannot escape run off to a hermitage to live out our days. This is not the road we are to travel. Potholes, truths, ditches, cracks and bumps are a part of our well-traveled road of life. Little by little, with the right focus, the Little Portion, the Portiuncula of our lives will make a difference in humankind, all for the honor and glory of God.

Thank you, Blessed Brother Giles, for your insight, wisdom, love, life, prayers and especially your focus, which is even more realistic seven hundred years later.

[The artwork at right was done by Kent State University Student Corey Boecker. He has given permission for this to be freely duplicated by others in the S.F.O. Corey requests that a copy of the publication in which it is used in be sent to him. His address is: 730 Morris Rd., #3, Kent, OH 44240]



## HAPPENINGS

### S.F.O. Networking Corner

Are you interested in networking with other Seculars with similar interests? With courtesy and love, doors can be opened to new and rewarding friendships. To be listed, send name, address and interest or profession to:

Mary K. Mazotti, S.F.O., Networking  
P.O. Box 2571  
Arnold, CA 95223-2571

\*\*\*\*\*

Names will be printed once. Please save the lists. Write to Mary and let her know how the S.F.O. Networking Corner benefits you.

### FRANCISCAN FAMILY APOSTOLATE

More than 200 families still await sponsors. For information about supporting an impoverished family in India through the S.F.O. sanctioned Franciscan Family Apostolate, contact:

Alan Ouimet, S.F.O.  
Franciscan Family Apostolate  
303 Church St.  
Guiford, CT 06437

**The Franciscan Family Apostolate may be able to provide a speaker for your next regional meeting.**

### NEXT TAU-USA DEADLINE

July 15, 1998

Submit articles to: Patti Normile, S.F.O.  
Editor, TAU-USA  
609 Amherst Ave.  
Terrace Park, OH 45174

Computer disk adaptable to WordPerfect 8.0 appreciated.

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### Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life

St. Francis College, Loretto, PA, offers a correspondence program in Franciscan studies. The 3-credit hour courses are available for home study.

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For registration or information contact:

St. Francis College  
Office of Continuing Education  
Loretto, PA 15940-0600  
Phone (814) 472-3219  
E-mail ICFL@SFCPA.EDU

### Amazon Relief Project

Embrace a leper; help support the work of our Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters in the Amazon. Checks may be made payable to "Amazon Relief," send to:

James Flickinger, S.F.O.  
1745 Lake Michigan Dr. NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 4950

*All donations are tax deductible.*

### Position Open

Applications are being accepted for the position of editor of TAU-USA, the quarterly publication of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order.

Qualifications:

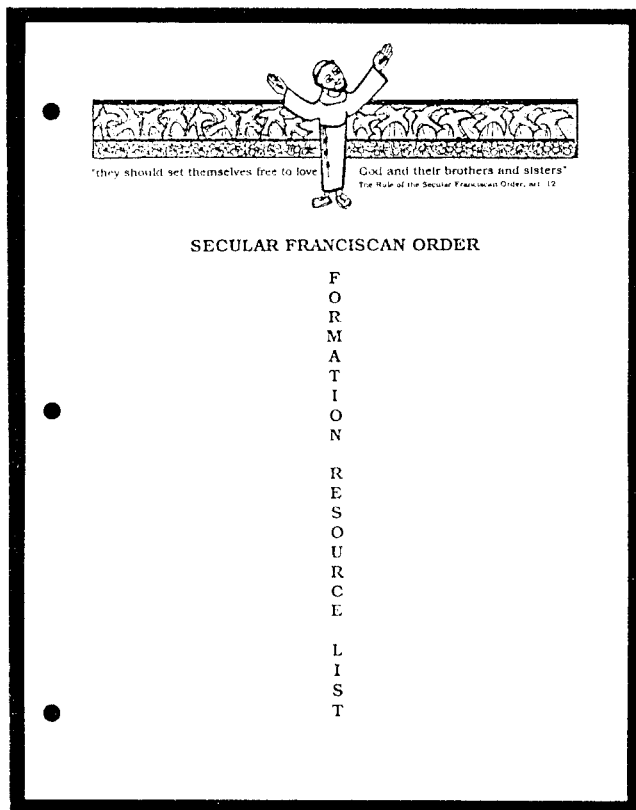
- ☛ Must be a professed Secular Franciscan.
- ☛ Must present evidence of experience in writing and editing newsletters.
- ☛ Must be able to attend annual meetings of the National Fraternity.

Please submit applications by June 30, 1998 to:

National Minister Bill Wicks, S.F.O.  
3770 Quail Meadows Drive  
Santa Maria, CA 93455

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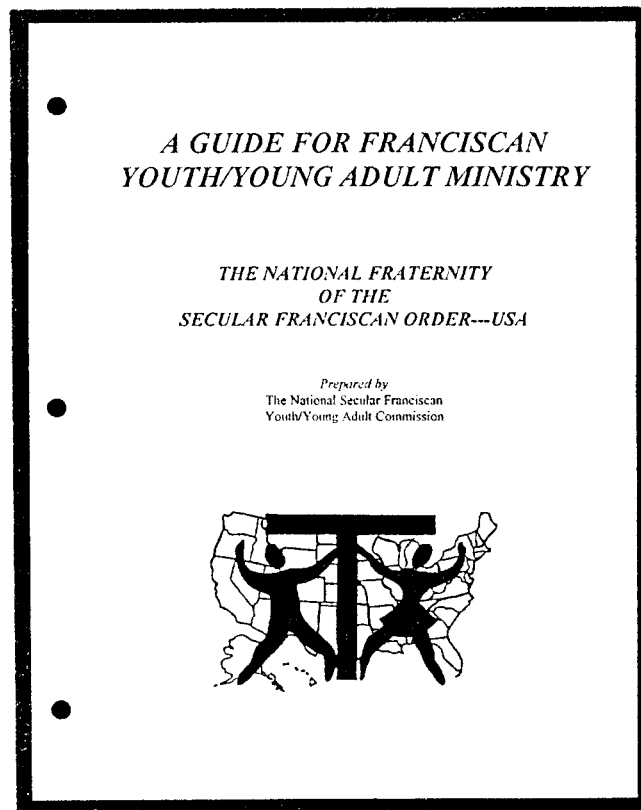
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# Franciscan Formation Materials Made Available by the National Formation Commission

- Catch Me A Rainbow: The Franciscan Journey (revised edition). Bach, Lester, OFM Cap. (1990). 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", 405 pages, \$ 10.00 per copy, plus \$4.50 P&H; P&H is \$ 5.50 for 2 and \$ 7.00 for 3; 10 or more copies = \$ 8.00 per copy plus P&H. **Coming in 1998, Catch Me A Rainbow, Too! A complete revision by Father Lester! Watch for it!**
- Gospel Living Every Day Of Our Lives: A Formation Guide To The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. Baker, Teresa V., SFO. (1994). 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", 131 pages. \$ 10.00 per copy, plus \$ 4.50 P&H; P&H is \$ 5.50 for 2, \$ 7.00 for 3; 10 or more copies is \$ 8.00 per copy plus P&H.
- Elements of Formation: A Reflection On The Formation Process. (1995). 8 1/2" x 11", 38 pages. \$ 5.00 per copy, plus \$ 3.50 P&H; P&H is \$ 5.00 for 2, and \$ 6.50 for 3; 25 or more copies = \$ 4.00 per copy plus P&H.
- Formation Resource List. (1997) 8 1/2" x 11", 3 hole drilled, 66 pages. \$ 7.50 per copy plus \$ 3.50 P&H; P&H is \$ 5.00 for 2, \$ 6 .50 for 3: 10 or more copies \$ 6.00 each plus P&H.
- Guia Para La Formaci3n Inicial En La Orden Franciscana Seglar De Los Estados Unidos. (1987). 8 1/2" x 11", 41 pages. \$ 5.00 per copy, plus \$ 3.50 P&H; P&H is \$ 5.00 for 2, and \$ 6.50 for 3: 25 or more copies = \$ 4.00 per copy plus P&H.
- A Guide For Franciscan Youth/Young Adult Ministry. (1998) 8 1/2' x 11", 84 pages. 1-9 books @ \$ 8.50 each plus P&H: \$ 3.50 P&H; P&H is \$ 5.00 for 2, and \$ 6.50 for 3: 10 or more books @ \$ 6.80 each plus P&H.
- Guidelines for Initial Formation In The Secular Franciscan Order in The United States. (1986). 8 1/2" x 11", 38 pages. \$ 5.00 per copy, plus \$ 3.50 P&H; P&H is \$ 5.00 for 2, and \$ 6.50 for 3: 25 or more copies = \$ 4.00 per copy plus P&H.
- Handbook For Secular Franciscan Servant Leaders. (New revised edition which will include the Formation Resource List as an appendix will be available in 1998.)
- The Rule Of The Secular Franciscan Order. (1997). 5' x 3' red presentation edition, 40 pages. 10 books for only \$ 18.40 (includes P&H).
- Video: Discovering Our Myth: Our Challenge For Today With Sr. Christa Marie Thomson, OSF. \$ 10.00 per copy, plus \$ 4.50 P&H; P&H is \$ 5.50 for 2 and \$ 7.00 for 3: 10 or more copies = \$ 8.00 per copy plus P&H.

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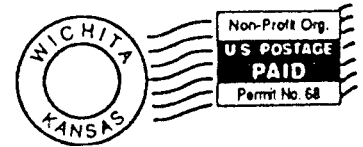
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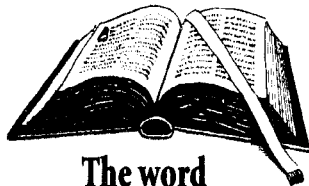
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