



TAU-USA

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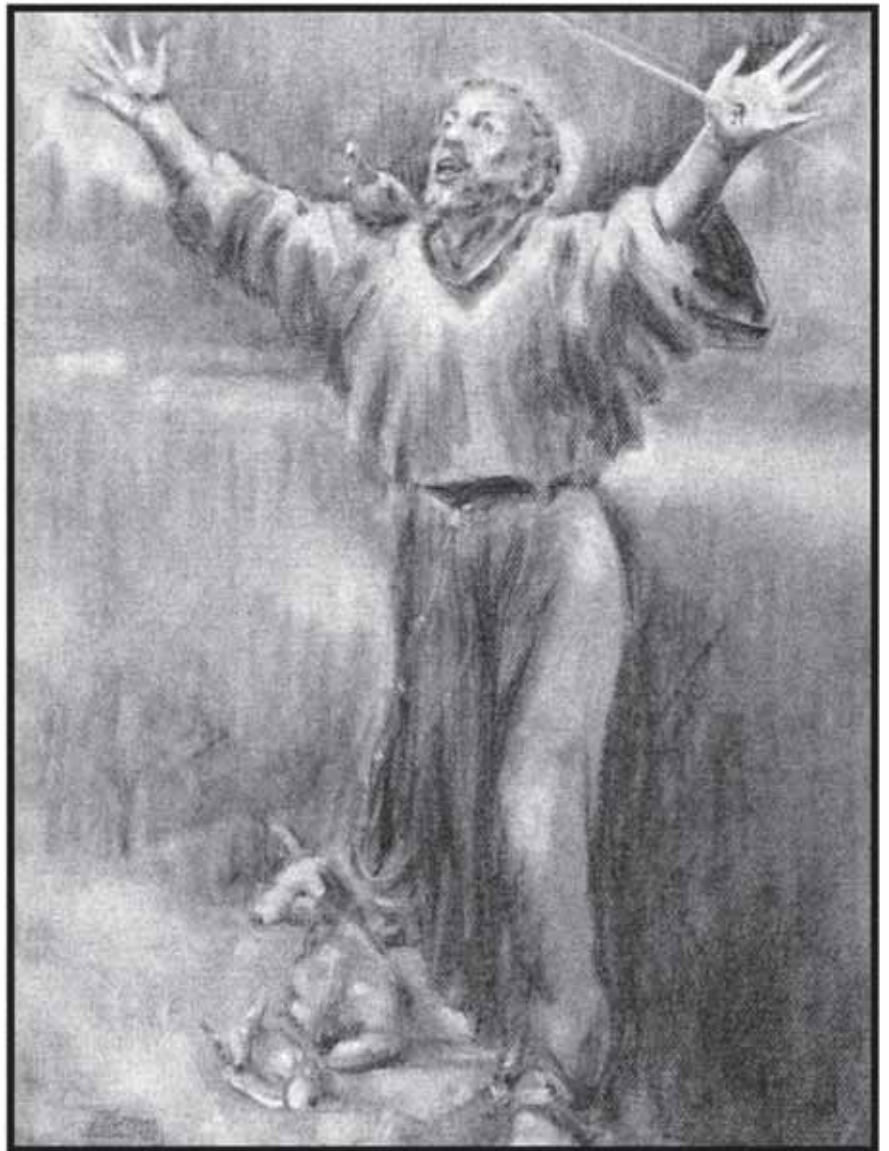
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The Stigmata of St. Francis by Ted Muta, SFO

In the Arms of Lent and Love,
Let us Practice your Presence, Oh Lord!

Lenten Front Page Cover Art

The Stigmata of St. Francis is by **Ted Muta, SFO**. He and his wife Cheryl are Secular Franciscans and this focus has provided the quintessential ingredient, which has inspired Ted to create a fine series of art dedicated to the beauty of God's Creation made manifest throughout the glorious lives of ordinary men and women of many diverse backgrounds.

Ted and Cheryl live in Northwest Indiana with their four children.

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**Seeking St. Francis of
Assisi?
Phone 1-800-Francis
For contact information.**

New Pen & Ink Calligraphy Logos for the TAU

TAU-USA has been gifted with new logos for some of our articles by **Fr. Franklin Fong, OFM**.

Fr. Franklin was ordained in 2006, at St. Francis Church in Sacramento, CA where he has served as a supply priest (2006-2009).

Among his varied duties in the Province has been Vocations Coordinator, member of the Provincial Definitorium, and animator for the province's Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation Office. He currently serves as Director of the Temporary Professed Friars. He is assisting in pastoral ministry for the English speaking community of St. Elizabeth Church, in Oakland, CA.

Fr. Franklin's main academic interests are in plant hormone physiology during maize seed development and his hobbies include gardening and pen & ink calligraphy. You can see some examples of his calligraphy on his Face book website and <http://tau-publishing.com/giftShopProducts.aspx?cat=46>

The deadline for sending address changes to Robert Herbelin, Data Base Adm. and for submitting articles to the Editor for the next issue is April 15, 2010.

Submissions to the newsletter for possible inclusion are welcome. To increase the likelihood of your submission being published, the following guidelines are offered:

- Articles should not exceed one page in length (single spaced).
- Please send all submissions for possible publication in WORD format, as an e-mail attachment or mail to Editor Frances Wicks (address is on top left of this page).
- Material received after the deadline for a particular issue will be considered for other issues.
- Please understand that all articles may be edited for length and clarity.
- TAU-USA does not accept ads.



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The Minister's Message

BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PENANCE

By Tom Bello, SFO
National Minister

When St. Francis called us into an Order, in the very beginning, and wrote our Rule, he considered and named us, "Brothers and Sisters of Penance." Let us spend a few moments in this Lenten Season unpacking our name.

"Brothers and Sisters" are, of course, a family, mutually interdependent, hopefully loving, certainly related by blood, in our case, the blood of the Lamb.

Beyond that, in the Prologue to our Rule, Chapter One, Concerning Those Who Do Penance, we read:

"All who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with all their strength (cf. Mk 12:30), and love their neighbors as themselves (cf. Mt 22:39), and hate their bodies with their vices and sins, and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and produce worthy fruits of penance.

"Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, because 'the spirit of the Lord will rest upon them' (cf. Is 11:2), and he will make 'his home and dwelling among them' (cf. Jn 14:23), and they are the sons of the heavenly Father (cf. Mt 5:45), whose works they do, and they are the spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Mt 12:50)."

Thus, loving God and our neighbors, hating our sins, receiving the Sacred Body and Blood and producing worthy fruits of penance make us one family in Christ, just as Christ will say, "For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mt. 12:50).

What then is penance? What are "worthy fruits of penance?"

"Penance" is our Lord's first call to us, seen in the very first words Jesus utters in what scholars tell us is the very first written Gospel: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15 NAB revised).

This is the call of Lent. This is that call in our Rule (Article 7): "United by their vocation as 'brothers and sisters of penance' and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel calls 'conversion.' Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily."

This is indeed our Christian journey, and St. Francis, in the Prologue to our Rule, presents a life of penance, a life spent turning away from sin and living in Christ, as the only possible response to our all-mighty, all-holy, all-loving God.

Living in Christ, living as Christ lived, then, produces the worthy fruits of penance: prayer, praise, humility, charity. For Francis and for his followers, Jesus Christ is the focus for our penance; Jesus Christ is the way of penance. The primary struggle of penance is, thus, that daily need to turn away from sin and self and to turn toward Christ and the Gospel.

Since Jesus is always present, so the kingdom of God is always present, if we only repent and believe the Gospel. This is that third of the marvelous Luminous Mysteries announced by our late Holy Father John Paul II: The Proclamation of the Kingdom and the Call to Penance or Repentance since we need to do it again and again day after day.

When I pray this third Mystery of Light, I try always to offer this decade of the Holy Rosary for us, the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, the Secular Franciscan Order and for all our Franciscan family here and throughout the world. Might I beg you to do the same?

Let us pray: "Heavenly Father, in Your great mercy, You have called us to imitate and grow closer to Christ, Your Son, by following in the footsteps of Sts. Francis and Clare. Help us, please, to turn away from sin and to be faithful to the Gospel as Christ gives us the grace. Help us to go constantly from Gospel to Life and from Life to Gospel. Help us always to pray for and to support our brothers and sisters in our common call to Penance. Help us to offer ourselves, as did Your Son, in loving service of that kingdom where you live with the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen."

Little Weeds



By M. Marko, SFO
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Brother Jacoba Community
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COOKING WITH FRANCIS

When Francis decided to follow his God his way, I don't know whether he was considering the impact of such a lifestyle on society as a whole. I'm sure he **was** aware of the impact it would have on the individuals he came in touch with and who chose to participate in his way of living. If only because he wanted them to know he loved them and God loved them and they had worth. But the ramifications of Franciscanism (though Francis would have been the last to use such a term) were of much wider scope than the one-on-one contact he viewed as his "medium."

When an individual improves, everything and everyone he/she comes in contact with improves. OK. Not usually perceptively. At least, not in the short run. But even if someone doesn't respond in kind when you're nice to them, you will have touched something inside of them, planted a seed that may, in time, come to fruition. Even if your own lot in life seems dismal, the fact that you're viewing it with a positive attitude will enable you to cope with it better and, eventually, may change it for the better. We can't always control what happens to us. But **how** we react to what happens to us often determines what happens to us next.

Now imagine an entire group of people thus affected. And affecting. There are bound to be changes!

The efforts of Francis' followers to follow Christ more closely resulted in a more positive, loving, honest society on both a small scale (the family) and a larger scale (society, in general). After all, Francis wasn't just out to spread the Faith. He was out to spread the **life** of Faith. There's a difference. Even nowadays.

There's no dearth of literature on the Catholic Faith. But once you read it – well, if you go no further, all you've done is accumulate some knowledge. It may be helpful in doing crossword puzzles and joining in party chatter; but if it remains only knowledge, it has no more impact on one's life than if it had remained on the printed page.

The change occurs, the improvement takes place when the knowledge is turned into action, when the reader

acts on what has been read. Then, you're cooking with gas, as they say! And that's what Francis' aim was: cooks, not cookbooks.

Back in Francis' day, the Church played a much larger role in people's lives. The hierarchy had a great deal of authority in general, and the people viewed the Church as having a definite say in their lives. So it might be argued that following Francis' lead was simpler back then. There weren't the distractions we have today. There wasn't the pluralism we must deal with today. Remember: Francis was pre-Reformation. The two major religions in the world were Catholic (Christian) and "other." So while some people were no doubt more materialistic than others (probably those who had more in the way of the material), they were still Catholic. All things considered, Francis might not have met any non-Catholics until he made his trip to see the Sultan.

In spite of this lack of "competition," Francis' followers nonetheless had an impact on their society. And since that time, Franciscans of the Secular persuasion have continued to do so. Of course, as civilization progressed, so did the need for the Franciscan influence and, proportionately, the difficulty of the task facing Seculars.

The challenge to live as Christ lived begins at home. We must each experience our own conversion first. Francis wasn't born wearing rags and begging for food; quite the contrary. Nor was he brought up to see God as the center of his existence. A necessary adjunct, yes. A Sunday obligation, yes. But as the end-all/be-all? No way. He, too, had to undergo a personal conversion. God spoke to him. He listened.

Actually, God speaks to all of us. It's just that we don't all pay attention. But those who do have an impact, albeit usually that of the small stone dropped in the pond: quiet ripples, traveling ever further toward the edges of the pond.

Many SFOs down through the centuries are noted for their good deeds and holiness – though they're not always noted for their membership in the Order. But they had a positive effect on as much of the world as they personally touched, often just immediate family, but sometimes (in the cases of royalty and other high-profile types), it went further. What was important about them wasn't that they were SFOs so much as the way they lived out their vocation. It behooves us to follow their recipe!

Franciscan Living

Fraternity: Who Is In Charge?

By Francine Gikow, SFO, Staff Editor
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"On various levels, each fraternity is animated and guided by a council and minister (or president) who are elected by the professed according to the constitutions." (SFO Rule III, #21)

Ever come away from a fraternity election scratching your head, wondering what in the world happened? The people you thought would be elected weren't and people who were elected were not even on the ballot! The election seemed to progress like Topsy-Turvy without an apparent reason or direction!

The importance of the chapter of elections in a fraternity cannot be underestimated. The fraternity council animates and guides some of the most important aspects of our spiritual life - our ongoing Franciscan formation and our fraternal community. The Fraternity Council has a very important role in our life as a Secular Franciscan.

Let's take a look at the task of the local Fraternity Council. As the SFO Rule states, each fraternity is *animated and guided* by a council and minister. The word "animates" means to "make full of spirit." It doesn't mean to rule or dictate or even direct. It means to encourage the *spirit* to grow within a fraternity and to guide its expression. This is the first and most important function of the council and the minister. Without a fraternity's animation or spirit, there is no fraternity! To gauge the health of a fraternity, see if it has the Franciscan spirit, commonly known as "Franciscan Joy."

Notice the placement of the words, "council" and "minister" in the Rule. The council comes first; the minister is second. The minister is the servant leader who implements the guidance of the council. The council is lead by the Holy Spirit working through its members by discernment.

Our General Constitutions state that the office of minister or councilor is a "*fraternal service*; a commitment to hold oneself available and responsible in relation to each brother and sister and to the fraternity so that each one will realize his or her own vocation and each fraternity will be a true community, ecclesial and Franciscan, actively present in the Church and in society."¹

First, it is a *fraternal* service; one among peers in offering one's self in service to each other so that each fraternity member can reach his/her own full spiritual potential as a Franciscan. We minister to each other when we are not on the council but even more so when we are. The council also has a responsibility to ensure that the fraternity becomes a true ecclesial Franciscan community. The council animates a Franciscan identity in its members and fosters a unity of mission (but can have a diversity of expression in various apostolates). It is extremely important that the Franciscan charism hold a prominent place in the community, since it's only in fraternity where we can nourish our Franciscan identity.

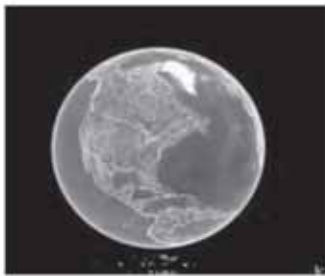
So, what does "a true ecclesial community mean?" It means that the brothers and sisters should have a spirit of love for each other, which reflect the Trinity to others, and being united like the Father, Son and Spirit.² If dissension or discord is present, the council must address it for the health of the fraternity. The council, at times, must make difficult decisions, but if issues are left unaddressed, the fraternity spirit will be diminished, members will leave and the fraternity will slowly die. Courageous action by the council must be taken for the good of the fraternity. It is the role of the fraternity members to stand behind their elected council, believing that the Holy Spirit will be the council's guide.

How can we discern who would make the best servant leaders of our fraternity? We pray. We fast. We bring our concerns for the fraternity to prayer. We hold in our hearts the issues affecting our fraternity and pray for discernment. We do not lobby for our candidate. We do not debate. It is about love and service, not power or persuasion.

So why do the fraternity elections seem so haphazard? Why do they seem to take on a life of their own? Fraternity elections are not like normal political elections we know from our civic life. They are not popularity contests, based upon debates or good looks. Just because there are surprises during elections or changes in the fraternity council, it does not mean the Holy Spirit is not present. Our fraternity is actually directed by the Holy Spirit who whispers and inspires at will. The Holy Spirit is in charge, not us! We are only His instruments and pray that we do not get in His way. It is the Spirit who enlivens our fraternity and who works through the fraternity members. The Holy Spirit is in charge of the election and of the fraternity. It is His fraternity. It is His work. It is His Spirit...not ours.

¹General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order, 2000. Art. 31 #2

² See the Winter 2009 issue of *Tau-USA* for a discussion of the concept of "Holy Unity."



From My Corner of the World

By Anne Mulqueen, SFO
International Councilor, USA

My dear brothers and
sisters,

One of my New Year's resolutions, as far back as I can remember, is to tell *myself* the truth, as I perceive it. Now that's my resolution - not necessarily reality. Although I don't always live up to my ideal, it remains my desire. So here's to TRUTH and its marvelous ability to set us free.

When I attended the Elective Chapter in Hungary - my first International gathering - I was incredibly ignorant of procedure - literally a fish out of water. I knew it was an elective chapter, and I knew that elections require a fraternal presider and a spiritual assistant from a **higher level of fraternity** to officiate. Since there is no higher level than CIOFS, I wondered how they would conduct an election? I imagined all sorts of complex regulations.

The answer is simple; since there is no higher level of fraternity, there is no fraternal presider. (See: GC Art. 76.2).

Now would you have known that? A General Minister from the First Order or TOR conducts the election alone. The general minister is the next higher level for the general spiritual assistants. At this election, the General Minister was Fr. Marco Tasca, OFM Conv. He gave an inspired address. See: www.nafra-sfo.org/FrMarcoTascaOFMConv_Hungary.html

Everyone scam-bled for a copy. Alas, it was written in Italian and had not been translated. All we had was our recollections, but we knew it was good, and we wanted it.

Resource Material

Wonder of wonders! Fr. Tasca's message has been translated, and I have it in my possession. Since it is about 20 pages I can't reproduce it here—however, I will make it available to the regional ministers who, in turn, will make it available to your local fraternities. Fr. Tasca entitled his talk, *The Beginnings of Charism*, and he addresses it to you, as one of the 430,000 professed Secular Franciscans and 50,000 Franciscan youth in the world today. It is a valuable resource on our charism, and it will provide a wonderful ongoing formation focus.

It is divided into three parts: (1) Conversion: The Road to Repentance; (2) The Evangelical Life: Our Form of Life; and (3) Conformity to the Paschal Christ.

Presence in the World

At the beginning of this New Year, let's take a look at the SFO presence in the world. There is a secular Franciscan presence in 110 countries throughout the world. Of that number, 65 are established national fraternities, and 42 are emerging national fraternities. Three nations are in the process of developing a secular Franciscan presence. Franciscan youth are present in 64 countries. Thirty have established national youth fraternities and 34 nations have emerging national youth fraternities. The United States is one of the emerging national youth fraternities.

An observable trend in Western Europe and North America is a reduction in the number of Secular Franciscans, and an aging of our membership. Just the opposite seems to be happening in Asia, Africa, the Slavic nations and Eastern Europe where sustained growth is seen. The numbers reveal that growth in vocations is greater in the so-called "third" world countries.

The current outlook is not promising for the Western world. Yet, I believe this trend can be reversed. As I write this, unemployment is above 10% nationwide, health reform has caused bitter division, we have increased our armed forces in Afghanistan, and a host of problems assail us daily. What can we do? We can pray. We can ask God to form us into authentic witnesses to the gospel - witnesses that will attract others to our Order.

Each of us can make a difference. Fr. Irudaya Samy—former Capuchin General Spiritual Assistant—tells this story.

One evening a man took a small candle from a box and began to climb a long winding stairway. 'Where are we going?' asked the candle.

'We're going up higher than the house to show ships the way to the harbour.'

'But no ship in the harbour could ever see my light,' said the candle. 'It is so very small.' 'If your light is small,' the man said, 'just keep burning brightly and leave the rest to me.' When they reached the top of the lighthouse, they came to a large lamp. Then he took the little candle and lit the lamp. Soon the great polished reflectors behind the lamp sent beams of light out across the miles of sea.

Paraphrasing Fr. Samy - we are God's candles and our job is to keep shining, because our usefulness lies in God's hands. We can do something to reverse this trend. We can keep our lights burning brightly, so that others see clearly that it is possible to live the Gospel today.

The Scapular and Cord of Yesterday!

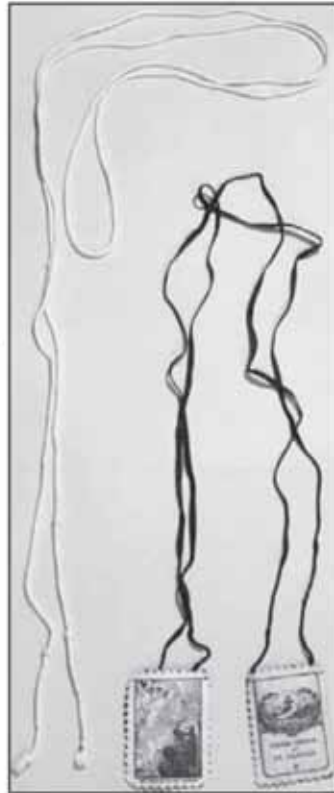
By Dolores Cullen, SFO
St. Frances Region
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[The following recollection comes from Dolores Cullen (nee Twadell), who was Professed as a member of the St. Anthony Fraternity in Chicago.]

What I recall here is a ceremony at St. Peter's Church in Chicago, before it became St. Peter's in the Loop, at 110 West Madison Street. The OFM Franciscans had not yet built the multipurpose structure that is their present church and much more.

The place is Old St Peter's Church at Clark and Polk in Chicago - by the railroad yards. It's the late 1940s and a ceremony is about to take place. Several young people - a young woman and three young men - are gathered on the sidewalk next to the church. They are the Prefect, Vice-prefect, and Mistress and Master of Novices. For this formal occasion, each wears the brown basic ankle-length tunic of the First Order. They wait for the Franciscan priest, who is the fraternity's spiritual advisor, to join them. When he does, they process into the church. The Prefect of the young peoples' fraternity (the "Antonians") leads the way, carrying a staff fashioned as a crucifix.

It is the fourth Sunday of the month and the fraternity members, ranging in age from 18 to 35 or so, have come together from all over the city for their monthly meeting. Some are graduates of Alvernia High School, continuing the Franciscan relationship begun with the nuns there. Married couples bring their little ones. The group numbers close to 100 and arrives by "L" and streetcar. As always, they will say their Office (12 Our Fathers, 12 Hail Marys and 12 Glories) in unison, followed by Benediction. But today has added significance. Nine postulants will become novices and receive the habit -scapular and cord - of the Third Order.



When it is time for the postulants to come forward, the Master and Mistress of Novices signal to them. Four men and five women in their twenties approach and kneel at the altar rail. While the words of the Reception ceremony are said, the Master, inside the railing, and the Mistress, behind those who are kneeling, each hold one of the brown woolen patches of the Franciscan scapular and guide it over the heads of the recipients. (To facilitate the ritual donning of the scapular, the ladies had been asked to wear simple, brimless hats.) Now the Mistress takes five of the cords, reaches around the waist of each woman and loops one of the cords in place. The Master does the same for the young men.

With a final blessing, applause and general rejoicing follows as the entire group exits the church and makes its way down the long, outdoor staircase to the lower level. Coffee and doughnuts and congratulations to our new novices are the order of the business and social meeting.

The scapular and cord, thereafter, will be worn beneath one's street clothes and removed when one disrobes. (The habit would often become a topic of conversation during routine visits to a doctor.) In the excitement of the day, you can picture that a new novice might not be attentive to every bit of information. Such was the case with Donna, an eager novice wanting to do her best and a newlywed of three months, as well. She had married a non-Franciscan which is OK, but she would need her husband's permission to become a lifelong Third Order member.

Brad, Donna's husband, immediately began to find objections to her Franciscan ways. The young woman, in her frustration, phoned me. I, a three-year veteran Tertiary with two children, listened in hopes of being helpful.

"Until I became a novice, we were fine," she lamented, "but last night Brad even said he didn't want me to be professed." She was almost in tears.

"What happened?"

"Well . . . the scapular aggravates him and the cord keeps getting in the way!"

"Donna, didn't you hear that the scapular and cord are to be taken off with your regular clothing?"

"Oh!"

When she gained that missing piece of information it naturally eliminated the obstacle to her being a Franciscan Tertiary. The following year Brad, with little Brad Jr. in his arms, happily attended Donna's Profession.

Classic Franciscan



Marie Amore, SFO

Spirit and Life of a Digital Troubadour: Marie Amore

By Julia Pearson, SFO
Human Interest Editor

"... even to your old age I am He, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save." *Isaiah 46:4*

Marie Amore has walked her adult life in the spirit and flavor of St. Francis of Assisi. A word of wisdom remembered throughout her life is to read one book about St. Francis each year. **St. Francis of Assisi: A Biography**, written by the Danish author, Johannes Jorgensen, "drew me to St. Francis," says Marie when remembering some of her earliest Franciscan readings. She recalls crying when she reached the end of the book. Marie was professed in the Secular Franciscan Order in the St. Bonaventure Fraternity in Detroit, Michigan in 1950.

Marie and her husband, John, had lives immersed in the Secular Franciscan Order. John was fraternity minister. Marie served on all levels of the fraternity, as well as serving as National Vice Minister several terms, and two six year terms as International Councilor.

Sister Death came for John in 1987. The gifts John and Marie's marriage gave to the world were their nine children: Ida Marie, Rosalie, Leonard, Joseph, John, Mark, Robert, Mary, and Paul. Currently there are twenty-two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren in the family.

Having eighty birthdays pass, Marie continually exercises her spiritual muscles. She keeps nearby a self-compilation that she entitled: **Buck Up!** It's a small, purchased "brag book" that she has filled with prayers, scripture, and quotes from spiritual readings that connect her with God. She has a pure heart and eyes that see the Little Poor Man in so many people: friars, individuals she has met through her involvement with the SFO, and has a smile and prayer for and with each of them.

Five years ago Marie was instrumental in the re-activation of the Troubadours of St. Clare Fraternity in Clinton Township, Michigan. On the lists of saintly patrons & patronesses, St. Clare of Assisi is one of the designated patronesses of television. This harkens back to a story of the end of St. Clare's life, when she was too ill to attend Mass and the service would display at the end of her cell.

Marie Amore could easily be recognized as a digital troubadour in St. Clare's footsteps. In 1994, the SFO National Minister of the United States, Richard Morton, SFO, recognized a need for a phone line where anyone needing information about the Secular Franciscan Order could get personal and accurate answers. In 1995, Marie was appointed to the new service of National Vocation Minister, and a dedicated phone line was placed in her home: 1-800-FRANCIS. "A joy and a privilege," according to Marie, she has sent over 13,000 responses to inquiries from the 1-800-FRANCIS phone line through the postal service as well as email. She continues this ministry today.

As a member of the SALT (Spirit and Life Team) team, the effort to enhance the spirit and life of Secular Franciscans and their fraternities in the United States, Marie works with others through presentations, personal and communal reflective time, and practical applications of the Gospel. More information about SALT and what it offers to individual Secular Franciscans can be found at: spiritandlife.catholicweb.co

Our Secular Franciscan Order has been blessed by the more than sixty years of her dedicated service. Marie Amore is indeed a Classic Franciscan.

LABORS OF LOVE

By Faith Libbe, SFO
Staff Editor

There was much excitement and anticipation in the air as Franciscans (SFOs and TORs) gathered for a weekend filled with talks on peace and justice issues from a Franciscan perspective at San Pedro Center, Winter Park, FL. This "Chapter of Mats" was hosted by the SFOs of Lady Poverty Fraternity, Winter Park. Hearts were encouraged to be open to the possibility of God's call to action.

Throughout the weekend hearts were indeed touched for various peace and justice issues. I would like to share the story of how two hearts in particular were touched in response to a talk that dealt with the Wall surrounding the Palestinian Christians in Bethlehem.



Br. David's Christmas creche complete with present day Separation Wall, barbed wire, and watchtower found in present day Bethlehem. Jesus is in the manger behind the Wall, on the other side of the checkpoint. Wise men wait in line to hopefully pass through the checkpoint to adore Baby Jesus.

One of the presenters for the weekend, Br. David Liedl, TOR, was inspired to seek the permission of his superior to create a Christmas crèche reflecting the present day Bethlehem. Upon his return to Minneapolis, he was granted the permission by his superior Fr. Anthony, TOR, Pastor of St. Bridget's Catholic Church. His creative juices began to flow! The artist immersed himself for two weeks straight, constructing his own Separation Wall with watchtower and barbed wire to be part of this year's Christmas crèche at St. Bridget's Parish.

Moments before the Christmas Eve Mass, Br. David's Christmas crèche reflecting present day Bethlehem was completed. In this labor of love, Br. David beautifully used the artistic gifts God has given



The portion of Br. David's Christmas creche that places the Blessed Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus behind the Wall.

him to draw attention to the plight of the present day Christians in Bethlehem. The parish was enriched as hearts were touched for the precious babe born in Bethlehem 2000 years ago, as well as for His present day followers struggling behind the Wall.

Pat Jacks, SFO was also inspired. With some of her fraternity members soon leaving for pilgrimage to the Holy Land, she offered to crochet and knit hats and scarves that they could pack and take with them for the needy children of Bethlehem, located in the West Bank.



Photo taken at Franciscan Family Center, Bethlehem with Sr. Maria Grech (3rd from left) of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary together with the SFOs from Lady Poverty Fraternity that helped transport the clothing for the needy children.

Other fraternity members with a similar gift, Liz Velotti, SFO, Aurea Crawford, SFO and JoAnn Miller (in formation), joined in and also knitted and crocheted hats and scarves for the children. In addition, Patricia Balinski, SFO and many other fraternity members hit the stores and purchased new clothing for the little ones of Bethlehem.

Each hat and scarf, made with lots of love and (Continue on page 9).

Excerpts from the keynote address

***Reconciliation with Our Earth:
Wisdom from Spiritual Traditions***

**For the Week of Spirituality, Values and Global
Concerns, honoring the Spirit of the United
Nations: Global Peace Through Reconciliation,
October 26 – 30, 2009**

By Michelle Kim, SFO
Franciscans International Chair
CSVGC Eco-Spirituality Working Group
Church Center for United Nations
Tuesday, 27 October

Once upon a time, there was a tiny speck in the vast blackness. It was extremely small, and hot and dense. Then, thirteen and a half billion years ago, the little speck exploded in a giant firework, sending off hot flakes in all directions. Scientists call this explosion the Big Bang.

With the Big Bang, began the grand cosmic dance that gave birth to the universe that continues to expand to this very day - and with radiation from its infancy still around us.

Everyone loves a good story. I begin here with the Big Bang, a story from science about the origin of the universe. The Big Bang theory tells us that the universe emerged from a tremendously dense and hot state about thirteen and a half billion years ago with a cosmic explosion—exploding and cooling ever since. American astronomer Edwin Hubble discovered, in 1929, that distant galaxies were moving away from us, such that the farther a galaxy is, the faster it is moving away. In other words, we are living in an expanding universe - not in a fixed and unchanging world as it was previously thought. The distance between the different galaxies is growing all the time, and radiation released from the Big Bang is still all around us today. Radiation from the very hot early stages of the universe was discovered in 1965 by two American physicists, Penzias and Wilson. For this, they were awarded the Nobel Prize in 1978.

Cultural historian Thomas Berry (Berry 1988) recognizes the story of the Big Bang as being mystical and sacramental and calls the universe - or the natural world -the "primary revelation of the ultimate mystery." For him, the current ecological crisis arrived as a result of the modernity, which created a gulf between humanity and the natural world especially in the Western society. The natural world then became resources to be utilized with greater control. Religion and science isolated from each other, each with an ideologically differing focus, science focusing on the control of the physical world and religion - Western religions, i.e. - on the redemption of humanity. Deep antagonisms developed between them. Without a unifying story, no community can exist, Berry warns. We need a new story about the natural world, or a new shared context for humanity, which can help us renew

our understanding of the Earth-human relationship. A greater sense of the sacredness of the natural world can then motivate us to work together to restore the Earth-human relationship. The idea of "nature as being mystical and sacred" is as old as human history. Human recognition of and reverence for the sacredness of nature can be understood as a basic impulse, as manifested in so many of the world's religions.

For instance, indigenous traditions are extremely sensitive to the natural elements, regarding them as sacred. Many hold an animated world view, where everything in the world is seen as being alive, and with life force present in everything. In such a world, human beings must treat all things with care and respect. An ethic of restraint and conservation follows. One is expected to take only what one needs and to use all the parts of an animal or plant.

Similarly, in Hinduism all things come from the same sacred source, Brahman, and all forms are manifestations of the Divine spirit. For Hindus, non-violence is an essential virtue. Buddhism also teaches an ethic of non-violence and demands the awareness of the unity of the universe. In Taoism, which originated in China, everything is a part of the rhythm of nature - the Dao, the sacred. In Japan's Shintoism, natural forces are sacred, and spirits (kami) are omnipresent, animating all of nature. In Zoroastrianism, the religion of the ancient Persian Empire, one of the oldest living religions with its 3000 years of history, which had tremendous influence on Judaism (and therefore on Christianity and also on Islam), earth, fire, water, air are regarded as the most sacred elements in life, and therefore cannot be polluted. In Judeo-Christian traditions, nature is God's creation, and the creative divine Spirit is vitally at work throughout creation. For Saint Francis of Assisi, the natural world was a sacred book, the "Book of Creation;" it was God speaking to him. In Islam, nature is sacred and nature actively praises God in its existence and movement.

To solve our present ecological crisis, it is essential that we aggressively pursue science, develop technologies, and establish policy frameworks, which can help us slow down climate change and which can enable us to cope with its consequences. However, unless we see the current environmental crisis as fundamentally a moral crisis, or a spiritual crisis, and address the problem as such, the solutions we offer, based on technological and scientific grounds and environmental policies alone, will be ignoring the most basic human impulse.

To effectively address the present ecological crisis, we need to engage values and ethics, religion and spirituality. Just imagine the sheer magnitude of the potential power of religious beliefs and institutions. There are approximately 2.1 billion Christians worldwide, 1.5 billion Muslims, 900 million Hindus, 400 million Buddhists, another 400 million adherents of the Chinese traditional religions, including Daoism and Confucianism, 300 million indigenous peoples, and so

on, easily adding up to 80 percent of the world's population of 6.8 billion. Consider the potential for inspiring them and mobilizing them in the ecological movement.

Certainly for Francis the mystic, all creation was related and interdependent. His world view was holistic. It was full of wonders with genuine novelty. When Francis prayed in the caves on the mountain-side, it was Sister and Mother Earth upon which he rested. The wolves in Gubbio and the birds in the Spoleto Valley, with whom he conversed, were his brothers and sisters. Thomas Berry's proposal can be seen as a contemporary echo of Francis' world view, which is shared by many of the world's religions. In this view, all things are related, interdependent, holistic, and mystic, just as in an emerging scientific world view of our time as in the Big Bang story.

Perhaps this can provide a starting point for a spirituality that is inclusive, and transcendent of any particular faith tradition or a dogma. Perhaps we can explore and promote this spirituality, which we can call an eco-spirituality, as providing a shared story and an ecological vision for all people of good will who wish to honor our home, our Sister and Mother Earth, and save her from our own destructive, ignorant, and indifferent behaviors, and from our greed. An eco-spirituality demands that we "reconcile" with our Earth, our home planet.

What does reconciliation with the Earth mean? According to Delio and others (Delio 2008), who argued from the Franciscan tradition, "It entails transforming our relationship with the Earth, understanding how to pursue this, and bringing it into action."

As such, reconciliation with the Earth calls us to turn to the Earth and its sacredness and to Earth's community of living things. It involves the recognition of our role on the Earth, and our fundamental relatedness to the whole, not just to other people but to the entire Earth community. It is engagement with the human and nonhuman world of amazing diversity and beauty; it is participation in the well-being of all. It is to turn from oneself as an individual, self-consuming subject toward an ecological self, a self interwoven in the web of life, dependent on others and on the things of this Earth.

The fruit of this change of the heart is a new way of being and acting in the world - and living out an eco-spirituality. This involves a set of challenges. We are challenged to change our individual lifestyles. We have to take individual responsibility for our own lives and households. But that alone is not enough. As Delio insists, "We must call others - individuals and institutions - to reconciliation." We must invest time and energy to engage larger systems, such as our churches, our schools, and our economic and political institutions so that we can begin creating systems for a sustainable future on a much larger scale.

This is how we can reconcile with our Earth, honoring her as our Sister and Mother, and as the unfolding revelation of the ultimate mystery.

References: Berry, Thomas, 1988. *The Dream of the Earth*. San Francisco: Sierra Club. Delio, Ilia, et al. 2008. *Care for Creation*. Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press

Labors of Love continued from page 7



Photo taken in the West Bank village of el-Qubeibeh (Emmaus) of a very poor Palestinian boy that received clothing (knitted scarf around his neck)

each piece of clothing purchased with lots of love, filled the many bags, which safely made their way to the Holy Land. The clothing was distributed to the poorest of the poor in the West Bank.

Br. David gave a voice to our brothers and sisters living behind the Bethlehem Wall, through his art. He also offered informative handouts for ways to help. The SFOs reached out and directly touched the poor behind the Separation Wall of the West Bank. May these labors of love continue to be a blessing for many, for many years to come!

"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for Me." Matthew 25:40

A Summer Seminar for SFOs

**Endorsed by the National Executive Council of the SFO
Presenters:**

**Fr. Joseph Nangle, OFM and
Pat Brandwein-Ball, SFO**

Thursday evening, **June 24, 2010** – Sunday lunch, **June 27, 2010**
**St. Francis University
Loretto, PA**

**Registration limited to 100 participants! Absolutely no
registrations accepted after June 12, 2010!**

**Contact person for registering:
Cecilia Maljan, SFO, 1111 Freyburg Street, Pittsburgh,
PA 15203-1211**

**Questions? Contact Diane Rombouts, St. Francis
University's Institute of Contemporary Franciscan Life,
(814) 472-3219
E-mail icfl@francis.edu**



Reflections for Franciscans

By Lester Bach, OFM Cap

It is a challenge for anyone to read the signs of the times like a prophet. Being a prophet means listening to God more than speaking for God. It requires us to view day-to-day events and attitudes in the light of the Gospel. A prophet need not predict an unknown future. Rather, prophets view current events and practices and attitudes in the light of God's Word – the God who practices compassion and justice.

It is no great revelation that society is getting older. There are always differences between generations. Today many youngsters can run circles around many oldsters when it comes to technical tools that keep blossoming in our society. It takes no great genius to realize that differences exist among people, among Catholics, and in our Franciscan Family. E.g. It is one thing to want time for quiet prayer when we attend Eucharist. It is quite another to recognize that Eucharist is a community prayer and not quite the time for private Jesus and me moments. This is a both/and situation. Time for both community hospitality and conversation as well as quiet space to open our hearts to the Word. Both have value and neither is completely isolated from the other.

At times, the community needs sensitivity to my personal need for quiet space. At other times, I need to converse with others and enter their lives at this community gathering called Eucharist. To impose one or the other on everyone at every Eucharist, or at every moment, shows a lack of the compassion we are called to show one another.

Respect, compassion, and reverence for one another are community qualities. They develop an attitude that acknowledges the variety of needs within the community. This attitude is not a one-way street. E.g. This attitude of openness is clear to me when I am at the funeral of a loved one. I need to interact with people sharing my grief. Hopefully, they will also recognize that I need personal quiet time to remember a loved one. I need both. A healthy community will allow for both needs.

This is also true at celebrations of Eucharist and other gatherings. I respect the community's need to know me better through conversation while allowing me to be "me" with personal needs. Neither is used as a club to enforce personal opinions. Being "me" may require personal quiet time. At other times, I need community support and sharing. This is one of those both/and times. The community's compassion and reverence will recognize which one is important today.

On a personal level, I will not always have "my way" when the community has a different need. Conversation and compassion will guide my attitude at Eucharistic gatherings or at other times. Each gathering requires a decision that fits the atmosphere of that particular gathering. I don't make a lifetime decision once and for all. My decision will reflect the reality of today and will be made with that reality in mind.

This is one of a multitude of issues that may touch our lives. The goal is to develop a community spirit where one can feel at home, accepted, forgiven, reconciled, loving one another even when a good outcome is not assured, and enjoy allowing for a variety of ways to respond... with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ (SFO Rule #13).

Scripture

When we act with compassion and reverence, we bring qualities of understanding, compassion, and reverence to the situation in which we find ourselves. A brief look at Scripture stories illustrates this way of acting - in the life of Jesus Christ in the Gospel.

Notice how the attitude of the Samaritan woman changed during her conversation with Jesus (John 4:1-30). When she first met Jesus, he was simply a man and a Jew – and she made clear her opinion about conversing with him. By the end of the story, she calls him a prophet. Had she refused to converse with Jesus the story may have ended differently. It took a prolonged conversation to achieve this result. Little did she suspect the end result at its beginning. We face the same possibility as we mingle with people at various gatherings.

In another story, when Jesus heard the news of John the Baptist's death, the Scripture says: Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself (Matthew 14:13). This is a normal reaction to the death of someone you love. Quiet time is important.

Matthew goes on: But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. (Matthew 14: 13-14). The story goes on to tell how he not only cared for them but also fed them. He put off his desire for quiet time to deal with the community's needs. His action showed love and compassion. Yet, at the end, the both/and process took hold. When the meal and clean-up was done ... Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. (Matthew 14: 22-23).

Two different decisions were required by the circumstances. Without neglecting his own need, he did not run away from the community needs. Both were met by Jesus with love and compassion.

Franciscans remain open to the needs of others while not neglecting their own needs. Franciscans, in their daily lives, learn better ways to love. The quality of love is spelled out in Scripture. As gospel people, we listen to the gospel words. They find a home in our lives. As the Rule puts it: Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel (SFO Rule #4).

... you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. ... You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12: 30-31). Love your enemies, do good to

(Continue on page 14)



“Forming the Formators” the CIOFS Formation Project

By Bob “Fitz” Fitzimmons, SFO
National Formation Chair
nfcnafra@verizon.net

Dear Sisters and Brothers;

This issue I will deviate from my customary formation article. 2010 marks our year to complete the initial “Forming the Formators” Project Manual and start a series of National Formation Workshops (2011). With that in mind, I want to share with you some of the insights from the past 2 General Chapters of our Order. These segments are excerpted from the Introduction of the CIOFS Formation Manual. I hope they will help you all understand the impetus behind this global Initial Formation project, “Forming the Formators.”

*** CIOFS Comments ***

“This [Formation] was by far the theme that received the most attention. The importance of formation has emerged as the essential element to guarantee an authentic and deep sense of belonging, rooted in a clear notion of identity and knowledge of the true nature of the OFS and of its place in the Franciscan Family and in the Church. The Chapter has manifested the urgency of finding new, original and efficacious ways to give to formation the completeness and uniformity which an Order, spread around the whole world, deserves to accomplish the fundamental role of mature and authoritative apostolate it is called to offer, in collaboration with the rest of the Franciscan Family.” (Conclusions, General Chapter 2002)

Encarnación del Pozo OFS - Minister General

In a certain sense the Order of Penitents of Saint Francis (Franciscan Third Order), in its secular component, today called SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER³, lives a new era, some kind of rebirth marked by the new Pauline Rule, the new General Constitutions, new Statutes, the new Ritual and an Ecclesial Status clearly redefined.

³ The official name of the Order is : *ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS*. In this text we will refer to our Order always with the acronym OFS.

“In the process of renovation of religious life called for by the II Vatican Council, all the religious Institutes had to question their institutional identity in the light of the new doctrinal acquisitions ‘canonized’ by the Council and to offer an adequate response of their charism to the changed conditions of times.”⁴ The SFO is not a Religious Institute of Consecrated Life, however our foundational history, our laws, our Profession place us in a state which makes these words applicable to us as well. Let us not forget, moreover, that the same Papal Magisterium has defined us a «True Order» and a «Lay Order».⁵ We must, therefore, become fully aware that our Order is a «unique» reality in the history of the Church.

This process of renewal has already produced deep changes in our structures and in the way we “understand” our Order and ourselves as members. Such changes, however, have remained, to a large extent, confined to some restricted circles and have a hard time to break through, without a strong effort to “push” formation, to reach the very roots of the Order.

All this demands:

- a clarification of the identity of the Order
- the awareness of being a fully authentic and an essential component of the original Franciscan Trilogy.
- a great effort to integrate into the DNA of each of the individual OFS member and of the OFS, as a whole, the complete dimensions of Secularity, Unity, Autonomy
- a new understanding and awareness of the role that the OFS and, consequently, every Secular Franciscan, has in the Church and in the Franciscan Family,

The Presidency Formation Commission, and subsequently, the Presidency itself, after a close study and consideration, have approved a project to reshape the

INITIAL FORMATION OF SECULAR FRANCISCANS of the entire Order.

- We are moving our first steps towards a unified *ratio formationis and studiorum*. Organic and systematic *Guidelines for Formation in the OFS*, prepared by the 1996-2002 Presidency, were offered for the first time only in 2004 and they will have to be implemented starting with a solid INITIAL FORMATION program.

⁴ A. Boni OFM, “La Novitas Franciscana nel suo essere e nel suo divenire,” *Spicilegium Pontificii Athenaei Antoniani*, pag. 13

⁵ Benedict XV, Encyclical Letter “*Sacra propediem*,” Pius XII, Speech to the Tertiaries, 1st July 1956; John Paul II, to the SFO General Chapter, 14 June 1988.

- The OFS has been for many centuries an Order divided in four branches, fully subjected to the religious and, due to this, there never was a homogeneous initial formation, a true discernment of vocation or a significant extent of sharing of formation experiences.
- Too many OFS members were simply “enrolled” in the OFS because they were “good and pious people” and they were accepted to profess without really ascertaining vocation, spiritual life and too many of them had (many still have) very foggy ideas on revelation, doctrine and Franciscan spirituality.
- Initial Formation in the Order takes place in the local Fraternities, irrespective of whether there are adequate and prepared formators or not. Assistants have played an important substituting role in providing a support to formation but most of them have little knowledge of the OFS and of its true specificity, and formation has been (in many cases, still is) limited to good Christian living with some underlining of Franciscan devotions.
- Due to the foregoing, there are at times very great differences in the formation and perception of the Order from nation to nation, from region to region, and even locally between local Fraternities of the same “assistance.”

A good, systematic and well-assimilated initial formation is the necessary prerequisite for a fruitful permanent formation, which is nothing but a formation that starts and never ends, until the end of our life.

A reflection on Permanent Formation is, therefore, not perceived as being as urgent as the INITIAL FORMATION in the framework of our present fundamental goal which aims at shaping the OFS of the third millennium on a fully shared and uniform basis . .

*** End CIOFS comments ***

During 2010 we, the NFC, hope to assist you in preparing for the Workshops of 2011, scattered throughout the US. Besides the NAFRA channels and TAU-USA, we are considering several Formation Conference Calls to gather your comments and, if we can, answer some of your questions on this formation project.

As we build momentum for the workshops, I am asking the formators of the Order to let us know your feelings, thoughts and concerns. Here in the US, we have tried to insure the materials assembled for the

formation directors will be “user” friendly to assist and support the formation of our future sisters and brothers in our Franciscan Traditions. This is easier to do if you dialogue with us, let us know what would be most helpful. I look forward to your insights and comments.

Who Founded Earth Day?

By Sister Janet Corcoran, the Green Franciscan

St. Francis was born in Assisi, Italy in 1182 and died in 1226. He lived to be 44 years of age. One of the things remembered about Francis is his respect for all of creation, exemplified in the “Canticle of Creatures.”

St. Francis, a man both of and ahead of his time, had a special fraternal relationship with the natural and human environment; everyone and everything was brother and sister to him. Francis revered all of creation. He realized and lived out the thought that the power of the heart is greater than the power of the mind. Francis had “heart-titude” for all. In 1979, Pope John Paul II proclaimed St. Francis the Patron Saint of Ecology in the Catholic Church. St. Francis is often quoted by various philosophies and religions because of his inclusiveness and respect for all of creation. His loving heart was like a living room, which welcomed all.

Here in the United States, we have a day designated as Earth Day, which calls us to a similar reverence for all of creation. You may wonder who founded Earth Day. John McConnell submitted a proposal to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, which was approved for the inauguration of the first Earth Day. This event took place on March 21, 1970, in the city and county of San Francisco, which coincidentally bears the name of Francis. The celebration included the raising of the Earth Flag, which portrays our beautiful blue planet.

Another environmentally friendly gentleman, the late Senator Gaylord Nelson, was an originator of the National Earth Day, which evolved over a period of time, starting in 1962. Senator Nelson was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his role as the Earth Day founder. During the summer of 1969, while flying from Santa Barbara to Berkeley. In the spring of 1970, he announced that a nationwide Earth Day would take place on April 22, 1970. This first national Earth Day brought together over 20 million people across the United States to participate in activities that demonstrated and promoted a healthy, sustainable environment. Since that time, Earth Day is most often celebrated on April 22, but some people observe it on other days, i.e., the first day of spring, which is March 21st.

St. Francis, John McConnell, and Senator Gaylord Nelson are to be commended for their role in seeking to instill in others a respect and reverence for Sister Mother Earth. May we, too, follow in their footsteps by reusing, reducing, recycling, and conserving the goods of our sister, Mother Earth.



Franciscan Youth

**NATIONAL FRANCISCAN YOUTH
YOUNG/ADULT COUNCIL**
www.franciscanyouthusa.com
franciscanyouthusa@hotmail.com
Facebook – YouFra America

WHY?

During the annual National Fraternity meeting in October 2009, the SFO declared the year of 2010 as **CELEBRATE YOUTH!** CIOFS announced the #3 priority of the SFO as the Franciscan Youth.

Why? Why not celebrate the genders, or aging, or our diversity? Why zero in on an age-group and a mentality that most of us, as SFO, are well beyond-- and NEVER want to repeat?

Let's go back to the basics.

Starting with our SFO Rule, let's look at Article #24:

“To foster communion among members, the council should organize regular and frequent meetings of the community as well as meeting with other Franciscan groups, *especially youth groups*. It should adopt appropriate means for growth in Franciscan and ecclesial life and encourage everyone to a life of fraternity. This communion continues with deceased brothers and sisters through prayer for them.”

Why *especially*? These words were added during the final revision of the 1978 Pauline Rule. The word *especially* means preeminently; more than ordinarily! Maybe the revisionists of the Rule not only understood the great gift of charism we have as Franciscans, but knew how open and exciting it would be to engage and share this with the next generation.

The 2000 SFO General Constitution devotes Title VII, the Articles, #96 and #97 to the Franciscan Youth. Article #96.1 states:

“The SFO, *by virtue of its very vocation*, ought to be ready to share its experience of evangelical life with the youth who feel attracted to Saint Francis of Assisi and to seek the means of adequately presenting it to them.”

THAT'S WHY!

The Franciscan Youth have their own Formation Program, A Way of Life, and in the USA, we have the National Statutes approved in 2008.

You have been given the Rule, the documents and the tools. You have access to all the information on the web site and a FYYA Council to assist you...

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

GO OUT and...



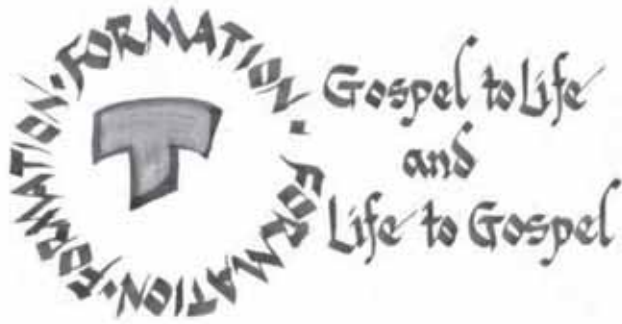
Prayer and Aid for Haiti

Please continue to pray for Haiti and the victims of the Earthquake.

On Jan. 19, 2010 a check for \$1,000.00 from our Donor Fund was sent to Catholic Relief Service for the Haiti disaster. And on Sunday, Jan. 24, 2010, another check for \$3,390.00 to CRS from the donations that was received in the last week. Thank you for your generosity for the Haiti Disaster.

Donations for the Haiti Disaster may be sent to Dennis Ross, SFO, National Treasurer. Make checks payable to NAFRA and write **For Haiti Relief** on the comment line.

MAIL CHECK to:
Dennis Ross, SFO
8933 Trailwood Court
Mentor, Ohio 44060-2131



Let me begin with “logistics” as this is exciting news.

**By Pat Brandwein-Ball SFO
JPIC Chair**

At their October 2009 meeting, the NEC voted to give permanent status to JPIC. Present members are Cherryle Fruge, SFO, from St. Joan of Arc Region, and Sandra Thompson SFO, from St. Elizabeth of Hungary Region, and myself as Chair. Additional 1-2 members are anticipated. All regions have submitted a contact person. That person should be part of the SFOPJNet list. If you are not receiving information and forwarded alerts please contact me.

This week a 7.0 earthquake crumbled the nation of Haiti, already one of the poorest countries. Aid from many nations, organizations, and churches were mobilized and sent. As a National Fraternity we contributed. Many donated money and supplies. Horrendously devastating natural disasters seem to be increasing...perhaps we just have better global communication.

But this brings up a few points for reflection as we begin Lent. First, what was my initial response deep in my heart? Whatever that was tells much about my own “state of compassion and solidarity.” Such complete destruction as this earthquake inflicted wakens a sense of being an integral member of God’s people. What did I know about Haiti prior to now? I knew it was a poor nation, but did I realize it was *that* poor? Did I recognize Haiti as my neighbor? My neighbor...those geographically close and those for whom I am to care about as if they are not strangers. What do I know about the people in my own neighborhood, those people across town? I don’t mean “know” in an intellectual sense. To know, in a personal experience way, takes on a deeper meaning. Receiving, “those people” return a blessing. Without this mutual blessing and thus relationship, those we seek to help are further victimized.

Blessing is that marvelous mystery, the giving forth and receiving back in order to give forth again. Poverty takes on a fresh sacredness. God’s giving belongs to everyone. God’s blessing extends to all. Are we a blessing to others? Do we allow others to bless us?

The second question for reflection begs, “What can I learn about myself today...about the situations I am in right now.” Do I say I love you; do I speak kind words and offer a smile to a stranger. Do I seek to enter relationship, or do I try my hardest to give, but not of myself, avoiding messy ministry. Relationship calls for integrity, calls for listening, calls for quiet, frequent prayer.

By the time this issue comes into your hands weeks will have passed and time itself will reveal the heart of each one of us. How are you living Articles 11 and 13 of our Rule?

Being and Doing:

Read and pray articles 11 and 13 of our Rule. Look in the Constitution how they are further understood. Now read the prologue and then reread the above articles. How is the Holy Spirit speaking to me today? Do this frequently during Lent. How am I being transformed?

+++

Reflections for Franciscans

(Continued from page 10)

those who hate you, pray for those who abuse you (Luke 6: 27-28). Let all that you do be done in love (1 Corinthians 16:14). Or as the Rule puts it ... seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue ... and in the transforming power of love and pardon (SFO Rule #19).

Whether at Eucharist or at any other time the value of love and compassion remain foundational for the life of Franciscans. In fact, the SFO Rule clearly expects us to act in this way. ... The brothers and sisters, led by the Spirit, strive for perfect charity in their own secular state (SFO Rule #2).

Why wait? Each moment of life requires this kind of response. Francis offers us a special blessing in his Prologue to the SFO Rule.

Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, because “the spirit of the Lord will rest upon them” (cf Isaiah 11:2), and he will make his home and dwelling among them” (cf. John 14:23), and they are the sons (daughters) of the heavenly Father, whose works they do.



***“LET US BEGIN, FOR UP TO NOW,
WE’VE DONE NOTHING”***

By Ed Shirley, SFO, Chair
 elssfo@hotmail

When St. Francis said this, he didn’t mean it literally: of course, he his early followers had “done something.” However, Francis knew how easy it was to become self-satisfied, to think, “Well, that about takes care of it; I guess I can sit back on my laurels and take it easy.” He knew that saying yes to the movement of the Spirit was not something that was done once. He knew that yes had to be a daily assent, indeed, even moment-to-moment. When it comes to the Christian life, we are all and always beginners. This reminds me of a title of a book on Zen: *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*. When you move into the Infinite, there is no “I’ve finally arrived.”

I’ve been thinking about this as I begin my second term as the chair of the Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee. When I think of where we, as an Order, were ten years ago, I realize how far we have come: we have good relations with two other “third” Orders, the Third Order Society of St. Francis (TSSF, Anglican) and Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (OEF). Together, representatives from these three Orders form the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity. These relationships began before I was appointed chair, and they have continued to grow; I count many of those “other Franciscans” not simply as “brothers and sisters,” “over there,” but also as personal friends. In the past three years, the SFO has also begun to build relationships beyond the Christian household: dialogues with Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims are being formed. We have, indeed, come a long way. However, St. Francis’ words keep drifting through my mind: “Let us begin, for up to now, we have done nothing.” Like the spiritual life itself, the work of building relationships is always new: old relationships can be deepened, and new relationships can be forged.

I am reminded of Catholic marriage vows: we are not asked, “Do you...?” nor do we respond, “I do.” Rather, we are asked, “Will you...?” and we respond, “I will.” “I do” is for this moment. “I will” goes on forever.

So, where do we go from here? I know that the members of the Ecumenical Committee can meet twelve times a year; we can work with the Joint Committee to write three documents annually. I can write these articles for the Tau. All of that is important. However, unless the work of building bridges, the work of dialogue and understanding, is lived on the local and regional - dare I say “grassroots”? - levels, it will all remain only a good idea. Imagine, for example, that no one actually read papal encyclicals or bishops’ documents or tried to put them into practice? Imagine if Francis had simply heard the Gospel and reflected on the plight of the poor, but had never actually crossed a very physical road to kiss a very physical leper. What if the teachings of Jesus or the conversion of St. Francis had remained only “good ideas?”

This is where you come in: I need your help. I do not know your local situation; only you do. The Ecumenical Committee can offer guidelines, can set visions, but friendships only begin when one person steps out into the unknown to embrace another. Some of you have shared your local stories with me. I would like to hear more. I would also love to come to your region, to your local fraternity, to hear your situation and perhaps share some practical tools with you.

And so, I invite you to suggest to your local and regional councils that you would like to begin the work of building relationships. The simplest way to begin is to begin, and we must do it soon, for up to now, we have done nothing.

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Request for Applications: Editor of the TAU-USA

If you are interested, and are qualified, please send your application and resume to National Secretary Jan Parker, SFO: jansfo@yahoo.com. An e-mail attachment is acceptable.

The Editor of the TAU newsletter is expected to have:

- Computer skills
- Writing skills
- Formatting skills
- Ability to work with an editorial staff
- Ability to interface with the publisher
- Ability to meet four deadlines each year



Fellowship at its Best

By Tom Short, SFO

The timing is the first Sunday in February, 2008. The setting is a pseudo classroom on the campus of the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, Mishawaka, IN. The participants include a Franciscan Priest, somewhere between six and ten Sisters from the local community, another six to ten members of the local Immaculate Conception SFO Fraternity (some pledged, some still in formation) and a couple newcomers who have been invited by someone else in the room.

The group is diverse, yet linked by a mutual desire to delve further into their Franciscan roots. Everyone hopes that what comes next will help them be productive in a world that desperately needs exposure to what the charism of St. Francis has to offer.

The occasion is the kickoff of a study group that will meet the first Sunday of the month for the next sixteen months, give or take. The study centers on the book *Franciscan Prayer* by Sr. Ilia Delio, OSF. Copies of the book, along with some additional study materials, have been procured for everyone by Sr. Agnes Marie Regan, OSF, the spiritual assistant for the Fraternity, as part of program sponsored by St. Francis University, Loretto, PA.

The meeting begins with prayer and song. Father gives a short presentation on the material in the introduction of the book.

And everyone in the room begins a process that will turn out to be life changing.

At the end, no one has been affected in exactly the same way. When asked to explain what they took from the process, everyone has a slightly different answer.

One speaks about insights into the nature of Franciscan poverty and a new appreciation for the need to love others, especially the others they are at odds with. Another speaks about gained intimacy with God, and the benefits of simply placing himself in God's presence. Yet another speaks to an intensifying of the ability to gaze upon "the Incarnate One" within prayer.

The materials are so rich that to summarize everyone's outcome is impossible. One even starts a blog (www.emboldenme.com) in an effort to begin to

document the many blessings obtained in the course of the study.

But there is one overarching comment mentioned by all. Despite the diversity, the mutual link to St. Francis, enhanced by the presence of the Spirit, empowers and frees everyone who participates. The exchanges during the discussions are not intellectual, but powerfully personal and remarkably uninhibited. Everyone in the rooms trusts one another, and the love for one another is palpable.

The individual reading and contemplation is informative. But the confident fellowship is what is truly transformational. Yes, everyone takes away personal insights based on who they were and what they were seeking when they entered the room that first Sunday. But more importantly, everyone has learned the possibilities of fellowship within a community where the love for one another is so clear that sincerity is unquestionable.

Perhaps, in some small way, we learned what it was like at the beginning for Francis and his first followers.

Perhaps, in some small way, we will be able to take that to the other groups we interact with as we engage the world outside our Franciscan enclave.

Even so, we knew before we ever finished that a second session would follow. We just needed to give Sister enough time to assemble some new materials. Last Sunday was the first Sunday in January, 2010. It was a different room in the same building, but we were back together again, joined by some fresh faces, ready to continue what was started.

You see, we need the fellowship we found.

We crave it the same way we crave God.

The Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life (ICFL) at Saint Francis University, Loretto, PA, offers an afford-able learning opportunity for Secular Franciscan fraternities. The "Site License" learning option allows for enrollment as a group in any ICFL distance learning course. With the guidance and insight of an assigned instructor, a group can work together to meet educational, spiritual, and ongoing formation needs. Among the many benefits of pursuing on-going formation together, consider the financial advantage of only one tuition cost.

To learn more, email ICFL Coordinator, Diane Rombouts, at ICFL@francis.edu or call 814-472-3219. More details about courses can also be found at www.francis.edu/ICFL/home.htm

Regional Roundup

Please send Regional News to Frances Wicks, SFO, Editor.

St. Clare Region



Teri Devlin, SFO, celebrated the 61st anniversary of her profession last year on the feast of All Saints of the Franciscan Family, November 29. She was professed at St. Francis Church on 31st Street in New York in 1949. Teri was elected national minister in 1981. She also served as Provincial Minister for St. Mary Capuchin Province. Teri presently resides at the apartment retirement

community at Our Lady of the Snows Shrine in Belleville, Illinois, and belongs to St. Peter fraternity. She remains hail and hardy.

Mother Cabrini Region



Minister Phyllis Maxwell, SFO, Jan Tucker, SFO, Virginia Breden, SFO, and Fr. John Sullivan, OFM

Virginia Breden, SFO, and Jan Tucker, SFO were professed on October 25, 2009, members of the Franciscans of the TAU Fraternity at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Hardin, Illinois. Mass was celebrated by Fr. John Sullivan, OFM assisted by Deacon Michael Hagen, SFO. Phyllis Maxwell, SFO, minister of the sponsoring fraternity, St. Elizabeth of Quincy, Ill coordinated the profession and social that followed.

La Verna Region



Lizanne Schulrud, of St. Josaphat parish in Milwaukee and James Carlson, of St. Patrick parish in Whitewater, are helping their sister parish in the Dominican Republic by facilitating the dedication of a picture of St Francis, donated by the La Verna Region of the

Secular Franciscan Order, for placement in the new chapel in the village of Barreras. This chapel will likely be the central gathering place for the new parish carved out of the area of La Sagrada Familia known as La Plena. Father Juan will be the pastor. When the chapel is completed, a date will be set for blessing this new facility and its picture of St. Francis.

Holy Trinity Region

On November 13-15, 2009, the region had a Pastoral and Fraternal Visit at the Regional Fraternity Meeting at St. Ann Convent in Melbourne Kentucky. Mary Bittner, SFO, National Councilor and Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap. were the visitators.



Group picture of those in attendance.
Photo by Marvin Dickman, SFO

Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Region

St. Patrick Fraternity hosted an "SFO Day" entitled "A Call to Live the Gospel and to Transform the World" at the Church of St. Clare, 193 Elk Street, Buffalo, New York. Thirty eight people attended from the parishes of the Diocese of Buffalo.

The program featured presentations on "St Francis and Franciscanism" by Fr. Jim Vacco, OFM along with a talk on "The Secular Franciscan Order and the Steps toward becoming a Secular Franciscan." The formal part concluded with a personal reflection entitled "On Being a Secular Franciscan" by Paulette Adams, SFO. It was a blessed SFO Day!

HUMOR PAGE

By Dolores Cullen, SFO

ANOTHER YEAR OLDER

We could certainly slow the aging process down if it had to work its way through Congress. Will Rogers

The older we get, the fewer things seem worth waiting in line for.

Ever get the feeling that your *stuff* strutted off without you?

Don't let aging get you down. It's too hard to get back up.

One thing about aging is - it's such a nice change from being young. Being young is beautiful, but being old is comfortable.

Reporter interviewing a 104-year-old woman: "And what do you think is the best thing about being 104?" the reporter asked. She simply replied, "No peer pressure."

Age is an issue of mind over matter: If you don't mind, it doesn't matter. Mark Twain

An older gentleman was on the operating table awaiting surgery. He had insisted that his son, a renowned surgeon, perform the operation. As he was about to get the anesthesia, he asked to speak to his son.

"Yes, Dad, what is it?"

"Don't be nervous, son; do your best and just remember, if it doesn't go well, if something happens to me, your mother is going to come and live with you and your wife."

Why is it that, at class reunions, you feel younger than everyone else looks?

An hour with your grandchildren can make you feel young again. Anything longer than that, and you start to age quickly. Gene Perret

You know you are growing old, when you get winded playing chess.

I have reached the age where the happy hour is a nap.

At my age I can have a party and the neighbors don't even realize it.

Old age is like a plane flying through a storm. Once you are aboard there is nothing you can do about it.

The golden years are when actions creak louder than words.

TAMMY (age 4) was with her mother when they met an elderly, rather wrinkled woman her Mom knew. Tammy looked at her for a while and then asked, "Why doesn't your skin fit your face?"

How old would you be if you didn't know how old you are?

It's taking me a long time to become the person I want to be.

Just before the funeral services, the undertaker came up to the elderly widow and asked, "How old was your husband?" "98," she replied, "two years older than me." "So you're 96," the undertaker commented. She responded, "Hardly worth going home, is it?"

I was always taught to respect my elders, but it keeps getting harder to find one.

Some people try to turn back their odometers. Not me, I want people to know *why* I look this way. I've traveled a long way and some of the roads weren't paved.

Remember, once you get over the hill, you pick up speed.

Life is too short for long pity parties. Get busy living - or get busy dying.

It's important to keep a twinkle in your wrinkle.

ATTORNEY: What is your date of birth?

WITNESS: July 18th.

ATTORNEY: What year?

WITNESS: *Every* year.

One must wait until evening to see how splendid the day has been.

Burn the candles. Use the nice sheets. Wear the fancy lingerie. Don't save them for a future *special* occasion. Every day is special...

OUR STORIES

Please send your own stories to the Editor.

The Call from St. Francis

By John Clemmens Mares, SFO
Jesus, Morning Star Fraternity
Albuquerque, New Mexico

It is difficult for me to remember exactly when the call came. It was so long ago (over seventy years) that some of the particulars are a little vague. However, some of the circumstances I will never forget.

During the dark days of the great depression, St. Clare Church, near Portland, Oregon was a Franciscan parish. Most of the parishioners were poor and struggling. I did not realize that we were poor and struggling. I thought it was the way we were supposed to be. The Franciscan Friars, who were our pastors, did know that we were poor and struggling. It was almost impossible to keep the church and school open. The collections were meager. The Friars, in true Franciscan tradition, would beg. The Friars would take their evening meal at the home of one of their parishioners. Of course we did not consider it begging, because it was an honor and a privilege to have them with us in our homes. Since my mother was such an excellent cook, we would have Father to dinner every Wednesday or oftener. I was the beneficiary of this custom because I would get at least two Sunday dinners every week. Whenever Father would come we always got a Sunday Dinner or better. All of our Franciscan Pastors were not just our friend, they were family. Since they always had a better car than we did, they would often take us places. I will never forget the time that Fr. Modesto took us to Spirit Lake Washington in the shadow of Mount St. Helen. That was such a beautiful forest park. Spirit Lake was crystal clear, spring fed, a cool place to swim on a hot summer day. Mother had brought the table clothe, place settings, the pot roast, veggies, cake and cold drinks. What a great memory! Mount St. Helen, as you will remember was the volcano mountain that blew its top, years later.

The Franciscan Friars had a three story frame building that was a church, school and rectory. In the basement was an auditorium with a kitchen used for plays, graduation, and other special parish functions and events like bingo, bazaars, and ice cream socials. On the second floor were three classrooms and Father's apartment. Way up on the Third floor was the church that held over 200 people. St. Francis and Clare watched over that building because it was a fire trap. The BVM sisters were in charge of cleaning the building. They did not actually do the cleaning, they assigned and supervised us. The way the vertical grain fir floors were cleaned was that they

were first swept and then mopped with oil, lots of oil. Can you imagine what a fire with a packed church on the third floor would be like? Our church was like that for over 50 years, a fire trap, protected by the Saints in heaven.

Father's apartment in the building was too handy in my estimation. It was where school disciplinary problems were handled. I can remember Father Felician saying, "Well, what is it this time?"

My mother was a registered nurse. She was the primary care provider in those days for the parish and the neighborhood. She helped the Friars when they were sick. She also laundered all of the albs, cassocks, and altar linens for years.

The Friars, Fr. Felician, Fr. Modesto, and Fr. Ambrose were my role models. I wanted to be like them. It was arranged for me to go to St. Anthony's Seminary in Santa Barbara, CA. I jumped at the chance. In 1938, I spent a year in formation for the Third Order of St. Francis. One year later, on October 4, 1939, I was professed. St. Anthony's Seminary was located on the Old Mission Santa Barbara property. The mission was very old, beautiful, and full of Franciscan heritage, tradition and history. Its architect and builder was the Blessed Junipero Serra, the saintly founder of the California Missions who brought the Faith and civilization to the California area. My friend and high school English professor, Fr. Eric O'Brien was the priest who handled Blessed Junipero Serra's cause for his beatification. We pray for the canonization of Blessed Junipero Serra.

While at the Seminary, I was thoroughly imprinted with St. Francis and the Franciscan way of life. I spent three and one half years, in a Franciscan community at the seminary, until it became evident that I did not have a vocation to the Priesthood.

"Once a Franciscan - always a Franciscan." St. Francis has had a great, guiding influence on me. And I have made every effort to reflect Franciscan values in my life. I have tried to live the rule. I do not claim to be a good Franciscan, just an old one. I am still working on the good part.

This year, August 2009, I made a Family pilgrimage and visited my father's home in Vienna, Austria. My trip to Europe was also a religious pilgrimage. I renewed my Secular Franciscan profession with Father Noel of the basilica staff at the tomb of St. Francis in Assisi. I have been a Secular Franciscan for seventy years on this the 800 year anniversary of the Franciscan Order. The pilgrimages were lifelong dreams. I was the guest of my son, John, and his family.

It would have been easier to tell when I got the call to the married life. It was the first Saturday of March 1951, at Mass in St. Care Church. Shirley and I renewed an old friendship. But that is another story - a story of fifty-eight years of marriage, four children, seven grand children and five great grand children.

Poets are We...



Art by Jon McNaughton

He is Risen!

By Georgia Nagy, SFO
Santa Maria de las Montanas

He is Risen!
Have no fear!

He is Risen!
I hear the cry.

He is Risen!
He did not die.

He is Risen!
Our souls He won.

He is Risen!
Rejoice this day.

He is Risen!
Give thanks and pray.

He is Risen!
Our Redeemer, Savior, our King.

He is Risen!
Rejoice and sing!

Sweet Perfume of Heaven

By Juana Salamack, SFO
Province of St. Mary

Holy Spirit of God
Delight of the Senses
Loyal Companion
Healing Spirit
Love of my Life.

Spirit of the Father
And of the Son,
May You be
Praised, Adored
And Loved forever.

The Noble Tree

By John Virogh, SFO
Our Lady of the Angels Region

Dear Lord allow me to be like the
noble tree
It held you up when you saved
my soul
It reaches its arms out for all
God's creatures
It shelters the Homeless
It supports the Church
It teaches me to be humble to
allow all to walk above me
But most importantly it dies and
is reborn again in you.

Looking at St. Francis in a Cimabue Fresco

By Tom Cloutier, SFO
St. Elizabeth of Hungry Region

He looks back at me with eyes as
large as Love,
And speaks from a mouth
Small enough to form
The gospel with
Humility,

And hears with large ears
Ever attentive
To the night-time whimpering
Of the beaten down,
Lonely
Exhausted
And abandoned.

I have born these
Crosses
Upon my back

And there he has stood,
So familiar as to be as
Invisible

as hope

while bearing my burdens
as well.

Peace

By Larry Landry, SFO
St. Francis Region

Oh, Peace, where do you hide?
Brushed aside by my selfish
pride.
or outside in the cold.
Are you so simple or old
The heart cannot be told
You belong in our fold?

The world is so bold
As to send you down the river.
We have lied to possess only
gold.
We have slipped and fallen on the
world's grease
To make our hearts quake and
quiver.
It is for you we must reach.
Why not walk quietly along the
beach,
To seek, find, and hold you, the
Child,
The King of Peace!

Womb of Faith

By Richard Hurzeler, SFO
St. Joan of Arch Region

Charcoal gray
Menacing clouds
Pierced by luminous
Rays showing
A golden path
Where belief
Penetrates
Through murkiness
And seas of doubt--
Grace

Hope

By Emily Dickinson

Hope is the thing with feathers
that perches in the soul
and sings the tune
without the words
and never stops at all.

The Franciscan Action Network (FAN) has been active for a couple of years now and has proven to be a real asset to the Franciscan Family in promoting Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation throughout the family. FAN has monthly webinars to communicate with the Action Commissioners. This has been a great communication tool. The meetings are recorded and available for those Action Commissioners who were not able to be at a particular webinar. The Action Commissioners also meet twice a year for a face-to-face meeting: once in March right before Ecumenical Advocacy Days to take part in that, and again in September; the meetings usually take place in Washington, DC, but FAN met in Chicago to tie in with an Immigration Seminar last fall. The Action Commissioners represent Sisters, Friars and Secular members of the Franciscan family and cover six geographical areas around the USA. Current SFO Action Commissioners are: Ken Beattie, Tom Bello, Dan Mulholland, Jan Parker, Stephanie Sormane, and Carolyn Townes. There is also a TSSF Action Commissioner, Francesca Wigle.

FAN is active in exploring Franciscan approaches to many of the issues of our times. These include Care for Creation and climate change issues; Riobart Breen SFO has been actively working with FAN in this Area. In the area of Peacemaking, FAN is offering a ten-session Franciscan Peacemaking program for small groups to become Franciscan Peacemakers, and is providing prayer resources and FAQ pages for Franciscan Peacemaking in the Holy Land on the web site. In the area of Poverty and Human Rights, FAN embraces a position called the Consistent Ethic of Life, which seeks to defend and promote all life at all stages. They recently issued this statement at the March for Life in Washington DC:

MARCH FOR LIFE STATEMENT

"All praise be yours my Lord through all you have made"

St. Francis of Assisi



St. Francis invites us to a radical love and care for life. He teaches us that all life is filled with the presence of God. We are connected to that loving presence and we are happy when we celebrate it. On this 37th remembrance of *Roe vs. Wade*, we are challenged to reflect on the many ways that we fall short of celebrating and enhancing God's gift of life. We are called to demonstrate in a public way that all life is sacred and our desire that our nation create and revise laws and policies that care and protect all life.

We stand here today mindful of our weakness and mindful of our self pre-occupation that insulates us from life's potentials and life's possibilities. We pray that in our God-given freedom we may consistently choose and embrace life, and that our lives bear witness to that embrace so that our laws and our public policies are a living proclamation of the value of life. We desire to live in a society where there is peace, economic justice, equality, a profound quality of family life, and a loving respect for children born and unborn.

Let this day be a time to appreciate our calling to be co-creators, to care for creation and to worship the God of life.

*Statement of the Franciscan Action Network
March for Life, January 22, 2010*

FAN has also worked unceasingly in the areas of Economic Justice, Health Care reform, and Immigration reform bringing the uniquely Franciscan perspective to these issues. A visit to the FAN Web site at <http://www.franciscanaction.org/> will provide lots of resource papers discussing these issues and would make for lively fraternity discussions and ongoing formation material for some time to come.

FAN has aligned itself with many Catholic Social Justice groups to be able to share the Franciscan Perspective with these groups, and combine efforts to provide effective lobbying with key members of the Congress on many of the issues that affect peoples lives and moral well being. They have been a resource for the USCCB and have promoted the USCCB Catholic study guide to examine Torture as a Moral Issue

FAN currently has 45 Institutional Members, of which NAFRA is but one. The small but dedicated staff at FAN headquarters in Washington DC has been very active in providing the most current tools available on the Internet to get information on issues of importance to Franciscans out to Franciscans. Their web site is quite good and provides a wealth of information. We suggest a visit to the web site soon.

EXPLORING

Things Franciscan



✦ CNSA News & Views ✦

Lester Bach OFM Cap

Reflections: On Spiritual Assistance

+ A few reasons why a spiritual assistant can no longer serve as a SA at whatever level he/she is serving:

1. If the SA has completed his/her 12 year term. Neither a local, regional nor national SA should continue to serve the same fraternity / region / nation when the 12 year term is completed.
2. If the SA is transferred or moves to another area.
3. If new ministries or work situations make it impossible to continue as SA. Work overload!
4. If the SA fails to fulfill the responsibilities of a SA. Councils should dialogue with the SA about this and come to a reasonable decision. If the SA can no longer serve it is good to acknowledge that fact and seek a new SA.
5. If the SA is unable to fulfill the duties of a SA due to physical or mental incapacity or (obviously) is called home by Sister Death.

+ A few important things to remember when there is the need for a new SA.

1. Only the Provincial or Provincial Spiritual Assistant (PSA) of the province to which a fraternity is bonded has the authority to appoint a SA to a *local* fraternity. Only the Provincial or PSA of First Order/TOR provinces with fraternities in the region can appoint a *regional* SA.
2. *Provincial spiritual assistants* are delegated by their Provincial to serve the SFO in the name of their Province. The Minister Provincial may limit the PSA's role or give the PSA total delegation in SFO matters related to fraternities bonded to their Province.
3. PSAs serve at the discretion of their Minister Provincial. Their term may be limited to the period of time during which the appointing

Provincial is in office or he may be re-appointed by subsequently elected Provincials.

4. Whether the PSA or Minister Provincial make the SA appointment, *they consult* the appropriate council where the appointee will serve. Since the councils have to work with the individual they deserve to have input on the appointment.

+ The process of requesting a SA.

1. The council of the concerned *local fraternity* makes the request, in writing, to the PSA or Minister Provincial of the Province to which their fraternity is bonded.

For the appointment of a regional SA, the regional council makes the request to one of the Provincials of provinces who have fraternities in the region. Ideally a regional council would have four regional SA's to serve the regional council, i.e. one person appointed by each of the three First Orders and the TOR with fraternities in the region.

Today this ideal is rarely achieved. Previously, provincials/PSAs would know a friar in the area who could be appointed. With a lack of friars, a Provincial or PSA is often not acquainted with people in the area of need. The PSA or Provincial needs a recommendation from local or regional councils making the request for a SA.

Regional or local councils recommend individuals who are, or can become, *competent, suitable & well-prepared spiritual assistants*. They submit the name(s) to the appropriate Minister Provincial or PSA and give their reasons for recommending the individual.

2. The CNSA expects SA candidates to take the training course developed by CNSA. It will prepare the candidate to be *suitable and well-prepared* for his/her role as a SA to the SFO.

The present training course is titled: *Franciscan Family Connections*. The course is mentored by the Provincial or PSA or someone delegated by them to do so. Mentoring is a process

recommended for *local SA's* as well as those who serve at the *regional level*. The mentor certifies when/if the individual is ready to serve and, if necessary, informs the Provincial or PSA who makes the appointment. (Consult the General Constitutions, article 89.3 & 89.4 concerning *who can serve as a SA*).

Secular Franciscans should be *perpetually professed for at least 5 years* before being appointed as a SA. It is recommended that a secular Franciscan *NOT be appointed to serve his/her own fraternity*. Serious pastoral reasons may allow for an exception to this directive.

The International Council stated in a letter of September 29, 2009: ... *considering that in defining the Assistant, being a priest is not a requirement, as his/her specific duty is not "sacramental" assistance, but spiritual assistance ...*

3. Ordinarily mentoring is done through correspondence between the candidate and the mentor. If candidates from the same area can meet together with the mentor each month that is a preferred process. Such meetings, if possible, are helpful. Some form of reflection for candidate(s) is a good way to conclude the training process for SAs.

4. Part of the purpose of the training course is to discern if a candidate is called to be a spiritual assistant. Having successfully completed the training course, the candidate may be appointed to serve a local fraternity or regional council.

Conclusion: + Councils should be pro-active when the need for a SA is approaching. Be aware when a SA's 12 year term is ending or other needs arise. Prepare in advance. + The correspondence course is usually a year-long process. + First Order/TOR and SFO collaboration allows for a smooth transition for new SA's and the SFO.



The principal (not the only) task of the assistant is to foster a deeper insight into Franciscan spirituality and to co-operate in the initial and continuing

formation of the Secular Franciscans.

Statutes for the Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the SFO - article 13.1

Reflections

Events in our world often force decisions that are made out of fear or anger. Fear and anger often move us to hate certain people or dismiss others as unknowing idiots who will destroy our country or our Church. Fear and anger often keep us from making decisions based on gospel values. The Gospel requires conversion. But instead of working to bring people together we frequently find reasons to stay separate in our own cocoons. Creeping infallibility (I'm always right!) seeps into peoples' lives. Whose kingdom are we building?

*Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more **fraternal and evangelical** world so that the Kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively.* (Rule #14)

Terrorism and violence, creating fear and anger, can influence our decisions, moving us to destroy people who try to destroy us. Fear is not the healthy "fear of the Lord." Rather fear and anger move us to act in ways that have no basis in the Gospel. Personal reflection (contemplative prayer) moves us to a deeper dedication, letting our Franciscan spirit show in the reality of daily life.

These issues provide a daily challenge for Franciscans to show people another way of acting and re-acting to fear and anger. The SFO Rule is clear:

Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon. (Rule #19)

These attitudes will keep us on a path of conversion in a world that often fails to support our Franciscan spirit. Putting these attitudes into practice is an everyday challenge to Franciscans. Implementing the Franciscan spirit in this muddled mess (in the world or the Church) requires faithfulness to the SFO Rule and reliance on the Holy Spirit. We are to be instruments of peace rather than instruments of division. Our daily personal decisions must reflect the Franciscan spirit we profess to follow.

It is with the smallest brush that the artist paints the most exquisitely beautiful pictures.

Br. Andre Bessette

National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order - USA

Quarterly General Fund Reports for Calendar Year 2009 as of DECEMBER 31, 2009

Quarter Ending On:		3/31/2009	6/30/2009	9/30/2009	12/31/2009	TOTAL FOR	BUDGET
Acct #	INCOME					YEAR	for 2009
6110	PER CAPITA	12,890.00	82,358.00	53,362.00	20,753.00	169,363.00	174,000
6120	INTEREST	277.13	112.34	148.84	130.27	668.58	3,000
6200	FORMATION SALES	11,127.52	10,104.05	8,044.25	9,066.71	38,342.53	47,000
6140	MISCELLANEOUS						
	TOTAL INCOME	24,294.65	92,574.39	61,555.09	29,949.98	208,374.11	224,000

EXPENSES

7110	CIOFS PER CAPITA			10,000.00	10,756.00	20,756.00	20,000
7115	FAN Fran. Action Network	-573.00	7,573.00	4,058.76	7,000.00	18,058.76	14,000
7120	NEWSLETTER	10,631.44	9,000.00		10,662.56	30,294.00	42,000
7130	ANNUAL MEETING	706.22		9,165.87	44,784.01	54,656.10	40,000
7140	COUNCIL OFFICERS	322.89	763.28	763.41	1,453.61	3,303.19	5,000
7145	CIOFS MEETING						
7150	COUNCIL MEETINGS	8,610.19	3,993.74	1,316.77	371.80	14,292.50	9,500
7155	LIABILITY INSURANCE			1,610.00	1,610.00	3,220.00	3,200
7160	CIOFS VISITATION						2,000
7171	MULTICULTURAL CMTTEE						3,000
7172	PEACE AWARD CMMTTEE				2,227.80	2,227.80	2,000
7173	NATIONAL ARCHIVES			2,820.79	236.06	3,056.85	3,400
7175	HISTORIAN	1,122.64	635.77	249.78	-135.00	1,873.19	3,200
7176	COMPUTER COMMITTEE	1,800.00	900.00	900.00	1,471.90	5,071.90	6,100
7180	FORMATION-PRINTING	4,201.58	888.22	6,384.35	854.48	12,328.63	25,000
7181	FORMATION	2,819.45	198.30	585.01	3,767.26	7,370.02	16,500
7182	PEACE & JUSTICE						
7183	FAMILY						
7184	WORK						
7185	ECOLOGY						
7186	J P I C						4,700
7187	YOUTH	2,429.07	133.77	4,445.15	2,338.07	9,346.06	11,200
7188	ECUMENICAL COMMITTEE			963.88		963.88	4,200
7199	CNSA			4,000.00		4,000.00	4,000
7197	QUINQUENNIAL CONFERENCE						5,000
	TOTAL EXPENSES	32,070.48	24,086.08	47,263.77	87,398.55	190,818.88	224,000

NET INCOME(EXPENSE)	-7,775.83	68,488.31	14,291.32	-57,448.57	17,555.23
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Bank Balances of General Funds:

Beginning: CHECKING - HSBC	25,098.99	18,131.03	52,259.22	60,403.48
SAVINGS - HSBC	128,914.34	128,106.47	162,466.59	168,613.65
MERCHANT ACCOUNT	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
TOTAL - Beginning Bal.	155,013.33	147,237.50	215,725.81	230,017.13
Ending: CHECKING - HSBC	18,131.03	52,259.22	60,403.48	17,962.71
SAVINGS - HSBC	128,106.47	162,466.59	168,613.65	154,605.85
MERCHANT ACCOUNT	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	
TOTAL - Ending Balance	147,237.50	215,725.81	230,017.13	172,568.56

Respectfully submitted by Dennis W. Ross SFO, National Treasurer

National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order - USA

Quarterly Financial Report for Calendar Year 2009

RESTRICTED FUNDS REPORT

Acct#	DUNS SCOTUS GRANT	BEGINNING BALANCE	Quarter Ending On:				YEAR TOTAL	ENDING BALANCE	
			3/31/2009	6/30/2009	9/30/2009	12/31/2009			
8220	LEGAL & OTHER EXPENSES	882.07					0.00	882.07	
							0.00	0.00	
OTHER RESTRICTED FUNDS								0.00	0.00
7307	DONOR FUND	8,965.33	200.00	-575.00	250.00	-1,850.00	-1,775.00	7,190.33	
7310	CIOFS OFFICE FUND	1,768.00	600.00	110.00		-610.00	100.00	1,868.00	
7314	FORMATION COMM FUND	892.10					0.00	892.10	
7315	ECUMENICAL COMM FUND	1,750.00					0.00	1,750.00	
7316	YOUTH H2O COLLECTIONS	150.00	285.00	6,172.22	-6,432.22	394.00	419.00	569.00	
7317	Y/YA YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP	293.00		45.00	184.00	2,856.05	3,085.05	3,378.05	
7319	GIFT FUND	0.00				92.00	92.00	92.00	
7335	QUINQUENNIAL FUND	4,871.22	-17.85	-17.85	-23.85	-7.95	-67.50	4,803.72	
							0.00	0.00	
							0.00	0.00	
							0.00	0.00	
TOTALS		19,571.72	1,067.15	5,734.37	-6,022.07	1,074.10	1,853.55	21,425.27	

DUNS SCOTUS SECULAR FRANCISCAN FORMATION TRUST FUND

		Available for Grants	Investment Account	Total Value
12/31/01	Trust Fund Balance	7,275.22	462,650.00	469,925.22
	Investment gains/losses	104.48	-86,476.00	-86,371.52
	Grants Approved	-3,000.00		-3,000.00
	Grant Refunds	5,052.69		5,052.69
12/31/02	Trust Fund Balance	9,432.39	376,174.00	385,606.39
	Investment gains/losses during 2003	45.00	93,081.00	93,126.00
12/31/03	Trust Fund Balance	9,477.39	469,255.00	478,732.39
	Investment gains/losses: during 2004	51.00	49,942.00	49,993.00
12/31/04	Trust Fund Balance	9,528.39	519,197.00	528,725.39
	Investment gains/losses: during 2005	155.00	23,754.00	23,909.00
12/31/05	Trust Fund Balance	9,683.39	542,951.00	552,634.39
	Investment gains/losses: during 2006	284.00	62,368.00	62,652.00
12/31/06	Trust Fund Balance	9,967.39	605,319.00	615,286.39
	Investment gains/losses: during 2007	319.00	40,908.00	41,227.00
12/31/2007	Trust Fund Balance	10,286.39	646,227.00	656,513.39
	Grant to SALT TEAM 3/25/08	-5,000.00		-5,000.00
	Investment gains/losses: during 2008	170.00	-225,260.00	-225,090.00
12/31/2008	Trust Fund Balance end of 2008	5,456.39	420,967.00	426,423.39
3/31/2009	Investment gains/losses: First Quarter	15.00	-25,741.00	-25,726.00
	Trust Fund Balance	5,471.39	395,226.00	400,697.39
6/30/2009	Investment gains/losses: Second Quarter	3.00	59,913.00	59,916.00
	Trust Fund Balance	5,474.39	455,139.00	460,613.39
9/30/2009	Investment gains/losses: Third Quarter	1.25	56,419.36	56,420.61

Performance of Duns Scotus Investments

a	DRTHX	Dreyfus Third Century Fund
b	NBSRX	Neuberger & Berman Socially Responsive Fund
c	PAXWX	Pax World Fund
d	DSEFX	Domini Social Equity Fund

	DRTHX	NBSRX	PAXWX	DSEFX	TOTALS
Value at 12/31/00	179,896	82,144	150,357	124,595	536,992
Value at 12/31/01	137,232	80,031	136,693	108,694	462,650
% change in 2001	-23.72%	-2.57%	-9.09%	-12.76%	-13.84%
Value at 12/31/02	96,924	68,467	124,578	86,205	376,174
% change in 2002	-29.37%	-14.45%	-8.86%	-20.69%	-18.69%
Value at 12/31/03	121,847	92,073	145,745	109,590	469,255
% change in 2003	25.71%	34.48%	16.99%	27.13%	24.74%
Value at 12/31/04	129,232	104,563	165,662	119,740	519,197
% change in 2004	6.06%	13.57%	13.67%	9.26%	10.64%
Value at 12/31/05	133,711	112,486	174,586	122,168	542,951
% change for 2005	3.47%	7.58%	5.39%	2.03%	4.58%
Value at 12/31/06	145,755	128,735	193,287	137,542	605,319
% change for 2006	9.01%	14.45%	10.71%	12.58%	11.49%
Value at 12/31/07	156,769	138,367	211,540	139,551	646,227
% change for 2007	7.56%	7.48%	9.44%	1.46%	6.76%
Value at 12/31/08	103,000	84,729	146,549	86,689	420,967
% change for 2008	-34.30%	-38.77%	-30.72%	-37.88%	-34.86%
% change 2000 to end of 2008	-42.74%	3.15%	-2.53%	-30.42%	-21.61%
Balance on March 31, 2009	96,611	79,735	140,946	77,934	395,226
% change for First Quarter	-6.20%	-5.89%	-3.82%	-10.10%	-6.11%
Balance on June 30, 2009	113,128	91,953	156,081	93,977	455,139
% change for Second Quarter	17.10%	15.32%	10.74%	20.59%	15.16%
Balance on September 30, 2009	129,646	105,074	172,002	110,312	517,034
% change for Third Quarter	14.60%	14.27%	10.20%	17.38%	13.60%
Balance on December 31, 2009	137,294	110,660	177,840	117,514	543,308
% change for Fourth Quarter	5.90%	5.32%	3.39%	6.53%	5.08%
% change 2000 to end of 2009	-23.68%	34.71%	18.28%	-5.68%	1.18%

NAFRA - USA - SFO - 2009 REGION REPORT

Reg #	REGION'S NAME	ESTAB	2009 ESTAB. FRAT.	FAIR SHARE AMOUNT	2009 FAIR SHARE PAID IN 2009	2009 Professed Members	2009 DATE RECEIVED
50	OHANA O KE ANUENUE	10/25/91	4	40	\$ 600	50	12/1/2009
51	FIVE FRANCISCAN MARTYRS	10/23/92	36	45	\$ 8,496	708	7/28/2009
52	ST FRANCIS	10/29/93	32	40	\$ 10,968	914	6/19/2009
53	BL JUNIPERO SERRA	10/29/93	26	41.50	\$ 7,200	600	10/6/2009
54	TROUBADOURS OF PEACE	10/23/92	10	50	\$ 3,048	254	4/7/2009
55	QUEEN OF PEACE	10/23/92	29	45	\$ 6,684	557	6/19/2009
56	DIVINE MERCY	10/29/93	30	29.50	\$ 9,096	758	6/9/2009
57	ST MARGARET OF CORTONA	10/29/93	30	18	\$ 7,560	630	2/19/2009
58	ST THOMAS MORE	10/29/93	10	35	\$ 2,448	204	4/16/2009
59	MOTHER CABRINI	10/23/94	23	25	\$ 8,244	687	6/9/2009
60	ST JOAN OF ARC	10/29/93	15	25	\$ 2,359	197	10/21/2009
61	BRO & SIS OF ST FRANCIS	10/23/94	24	40	\$ 5,352	446	6/9/2009
63	FRANCISCANS OF THE PRAIRIE	10/23/94	9	20	\$ 3,168	264	7/22/2009
64	HOLY TRINITY	10/23/94	18	25	\$ 3,048	254	6/19/2009
65	LA VERNA	10/12/95	19	50	\$ 5,340	445	6/9/2009
66	OUR LADY OF INDIANA	10/23/94	15	20	\$ 3,864	322	10/6/2009
67	LOS TRES COMPANEROS	10/23/94	23	50	\$ 3,324	277	6/9/2009
68	LADY POVERTY	10/23/94	25	25	\$ 5,604	467	5/29, 11/3/2009
69	ST KATHARINE DREXEL	10/23/94	32	25	\$ 9,924	827	8/3/2009
70	ST MAXIMILIAN KOLBE	10/23/94	23	23	\$ 430	36	1/18/2009
	ST MAXIMILIAN KOLBE				\$ 4,872	406	10/28/2009
71	BL KATERI TEKAKWITHA	10/23/94	31	35	\$ 5,544	462	8/27 9/28/09
72	SANTA MARIA DE LAS MONTANAS	10/23/94	13	40	\$ 2,472	206	6/18 6/19/09
73	OUR LADY OF THE ROCKIES	10/12/95	7	23	\$ 876	73	4/19, 4/27/2009
74	ST CLARE	10/12/95	8	25	\$ 2,328	194	7/2/2009
75	OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE	10/12/95	20	44	\$ 3,960	330	9/23/2009
76	FR SOLANUS CASEY	10/17/96	35	21	\$ 9,696	808	9/28/2009
77	OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS	10/12/95	48	25	\$ 2,500	208	2/6/2009
77	OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS				\$ 11,170	931	8/3, 9/28/09
78	ST ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY	10/17/96	37	35	\$ 8,304	692	4/27/2009
79	THE TAU CROSS	10/16/97	39	25	\$ 4,000	333	4/1/2009
79	THE TAU CROSS				\$ 4,484	374	4/30/2009
80	JUAN DE PADILLA	10/17/96	12	30	\$ 2,400	200	3/5/2009
TOTALS			683		\$ 169,363	14114	

2007

2008

2008

Average
32.5

14114	98.70%
14300	% PAID

Frances Ann Misuraca Wicks, SFO

August 6, 1939 – February 18, 2010

Editor – TAU-USA (2003 – 2010)



Frances grew up in Harvey, Louisiana – across the river from New Orleans - a Sicilian community that celebrated their culture with St. Rosalie Day parades, St. Joseph Day Altars and, of course, good cooking. She graduated from St. Joseph Catholic School in Gretna, Louisiana, and then from St. Joseph Academy in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. Her husband Bill, then her boyfriend, took her to the senior prom. A year later, they were married at St. Joseph Church in Gretna.

This is Bill telling it now. The romance began on our first date. I didn't have a date for the big LSU football game. Vincent, Frances brother, who also lived in the Engineering dorm, asked if I would like to ask his sister – I found out later that Vincent had, for a while, been bringing college boys home for Frances to look over. We doubled-dated with Vincent and Betty, soon to be his wife. The magic began at first glance; E-harmony could not come close to this match. After the date, Frances told Vincent, "If he is all I think he is, he is the one." Vincent replied, "Oh no, he is going to break your heart."



We were married June 7, 1958 at St. Joseph church in Gretna, and celebrated our 50th anniversary on that date in 2008. Frances lived her vocation as a wife and as a mother as if that was what God intended – with dedication and caring. This all came so natural to her. Our marriage was blessed with five children: William III, Guy Charles, Zina, Paul and Mary.

At the Mass of Christian Burial, Fr. Chris Dietz, O.F.M. Conv. presiding, each of her children spoke about their mom and the special love that she gave to each. Then I spoke. I used the lyrics of a song that was special to us. Here is why. Very often we were both working at the computer, she doing the TAU, and I working on the history. I would get a notion, click on I-tunes and play a song called Winterwood, by Don McLean. We would look at each other and know that it was time for a break – sometimes just a hug; sometimes a walk in our favorite park, and sometimes our Starbucks date where she would get a Tea Latte and I would get a Frappuccino and we would park in the parking lot and just sip and talk.

Back to the church – The words of the song are about hope and life. A line, "The birds like leaves on winter wood, sing hopeful songs on dismal days. They've learned to live life as they should. They are at peace with nature's ways." One particular stanza that I shared goes like this. "You are as natural as the night, and all that springs from you is good. And the children born beneath your light are like the birds on winter wood." Frances was so natural, so real. Everything that sprang from her was good. And our children are, in fact, filled with hope and love.

Frances and I were professed on October 3, 1982. She was Franciscan from birth. Her profession into the SFO was an official acknowledgement of this by the Church. Frances was in leadership at both the local, provincial and regional level. But the job she cherished most was that of editor of the TAU-USA. That was her ministry. That was what she loved to do.

I scan through her photo album and see a young girl growing up, always smiling, always laughing, as she always did. I feel so lucky to have been married to Frances. Her prayers, and she prayed often, and her life have brought her to where she was headed all along – to be with her heavenly Father. I had the pleasure of her company for a while, and I am forever grateful for that.



Frances As a young girl



Frances with her young family



Frances with her grown-up family

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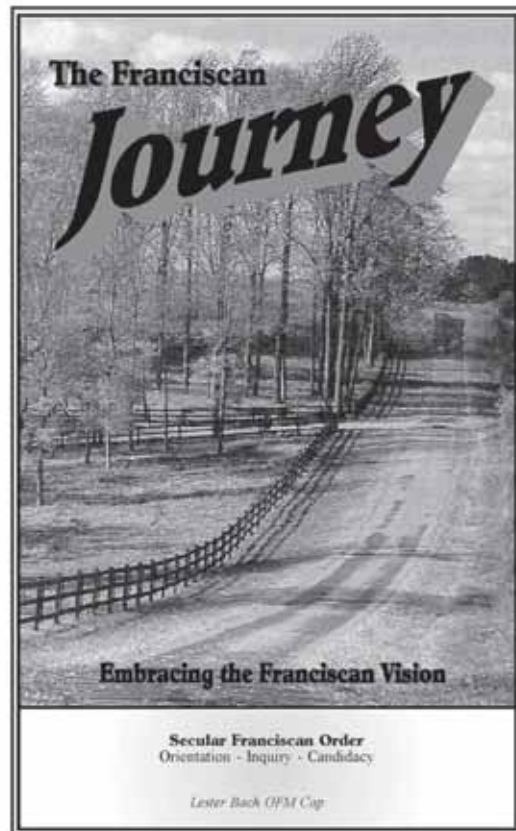
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New book by Lester Bach OFM Cap to be published soon

A brand new formation book, with only a few elements from previous publications, is being prepared for use by the SFO in the United States and other English-speaking countries: *The Franciscan Journey*. It contains materials for Orientation, Inquiry and Candidacy. It could also be used for ongoing formation at fraternity gatherings.

Excerpts from the Rule, the Constitutions and Statutes are used liberally. The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Catechism of the Catholic Church, encyclicals and Vatican II documents grace its pages. Quotations from Franciscan authors offer insights into our Franciscan vision. Directives from the recent (2008) international chapter of the SFO have been implemented in the book. Trinitarian spirituality and biblical words help to link the SFO Rule to Scripture. Readings and questions at the end of each chapter stimulate research and reflection. Fraternities are encouraged to use it.

Watch for a publication announcement in a future issue!



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