



TAU-USA

~Newsletter of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States~
~Summer 2006 ~ Issue 51~

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By Jamie Bernardo, SFO

“Who
do
you
say
I
Am?”

Matthew 16:15

The 17th Quinquennial Congress
Franciscan University, Steubenville, Ohio

July 3 – 8, 2007

TAU – USA

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For TAU-USA policies. See issue 50. The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue is July 15, 2006. Articles received late will be considered for the next issue.

NATIONAL ELECTIONS

October 28, 2006. See page 7.



The New National Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Chair Recruitment

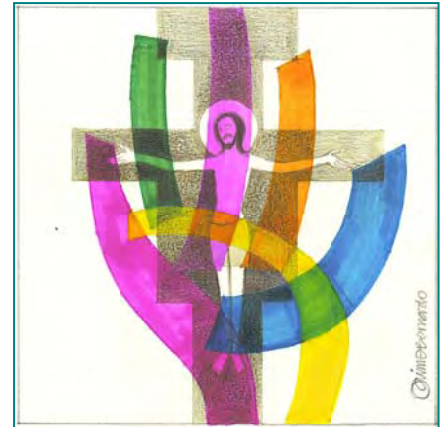
The NAFRA Executive Council is soliciting applications from Secular Franciscans interested in serving as the chair of the newly refocused National Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee. The term of office is for three years (the first year is a trial year for both the selectee and Council) with the possibility of a second three-year term. An applicant must:

- have an active Secular Franciscan status (must provide a copy of Certificate of Profession)
- have a passion for and be able to demonstrate a knowledge of the Ecumenical Movement in the church
- be aware of the Church's stand on reaching out to other faiths and be enthusiastic about a leadership position in this new focus for the committee
- provide a summary of ideas to promote the work of the Committee
- be able to write four short articles for TAU-USA annually
- be able to attend at least one four-day national meeting and one committee meeting yearly

Applications and supporting documents should be sent, by Sept. 15, 2006, to:

Elizabeth Allen, SFO
445 Nickman Street
Chula Vista, CA 91911
or e-mail esasfo@pacbell.net

ATTENTION TAU-USA READERS:



What does the Quinquennial Congress Banner say to you?

Please send your comments to
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Island, NY, 14072
or e-mail at jkсанborn@juno.com
The best one will be published in
TAU-USA
See page 5

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"La Novitas Franciscana" Part II

By Carol Gentile, SFO,
National Minister

The Novelty Of Francis: Mission And Testimony

How did Francis influence his world and give new life to gospel living, examining his call to *rebuild the church*?



Francis was immersed in God's love. He found solace in the words of Scripture that confirmed this love – words that are familiar to us all, but words that became the new core of Francis' being, the core of our Franciscan way of life:

...Yes, God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. John 3:16 - NAB

As the Father loves me, so I also love you. John 15:9 - NAB

He also came to understand the relational aspect of the Trinity of Persons:

The Father and I are one. John 10:30 – NAB
This much have I told you while I was still with you; the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will instruct you in everything, and remind you of all that I told you. John 14:25-26 NAB

Francis desired to be intimately connected to Jesus. So he answered Jesus' invitation to enter into this relationship:

... My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act upon it. Luke 8:21 NAB

But how does a man of the thirteenth century become brother and mother to God? In the *Exhortation to the Faithful*, the Prologue to our Rule, Francis gave flesh to these relationships.

We are spouses, when by the Holy Spirit the faithful soul is united with our Lord.

Earlier Exhortation – Francis of Assisi: Early Documents – Vol 1, The Saint, Armstrong/Hellman/Short, New City Press, NY, 1999, page 42

Francis chose to trust in God because Jesus chose to trust in his Father in heaven. He chose to sleep in the open spaces, because the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head. He chose to spend solitary time with God because Jesus went off to pray. Could anyone have been more united to Christ? He was graced to suffer with his Lord through the holy stigmata.

And the life I live now is not my own: Christ is living in me. Galatians 2:20 NAB

... we are brothers to Him when we fulfill the will of the Father who is in heaven. Ibid- page 42

Francis' every desire was to please God. His paraphrase of the Our Father speaks of the unfolding of God's will in his life:

*That we may love You
with our whole heart by always thinking of You,
with our whole soul by always desiring You,
with our whole mind by always directing all our
intentions to You,
and by seeking your glory in everything,
with all our strength by exerting
all our energies and affections of body and soul
in the service of Your love and nothing else;*

A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father - Ibid – page 158-159

We are mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through a divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and give birth to Him through a holy activity which must shine as an example before others.

Earlier Exhortation – Ibid – page 42

Francis definitely wanted to give his life to God. The monasteries of his day rivaled the nobility for land and wealth. Men went there to give their lives to God, but also to escape the influences of the world. Francis did not see this as his calling. He did not run from the world. He stepped out into the world to complete the Father's will:

*and may we love our neighbor as ourselves
by drawing them all to Your love
with our whole strength,
by rejoicing in the good of others as in our own,
by suffering with others in their misfortunes,
and by giving offense to no one.*

A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father – Ibid – page 159

Francis recognized all persons as being created in the image of God. As such, all deserved the respect that Francis would offer God.

Francis revered the goodness of all people. People followed him. They wanted to know what inflamed him. He shared with them the freedom he found in the Gospel and invited them to join in his newfound freedom.

Francis welcomed into his family all who wished to follow the gospel life. Even more deeply, he invited them into a relationship with the Trinity. They were to be children of the Father, and the spouses, brothers and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ. They were temples of the Holy Spirit. In the same way, Francis invites us into relationship with the Persons of the Trinity.

His service was not limited to the poor outside the fraternity. Francis was very conscious of the needs of his brothers. One night a brother was so hungry that he could not sleep. He cried out:

“I am dying, brothers, I am dying of hunger.” At once that extraordinary shepherd got up, and hurried to treat the sick lamb with the right medicine. He ordered them to set the table, although filled with everyday fare. Since there was no wine - as often happened - they made do with water. Francis started eating first. Then, he invited the rest of the brothers to do the same, for charity’s sake, so that their brother would not be embarrassed.

The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul (Thomas of Celano 22) – Francis of Assisi - Vol 2 – page 259

Service was an important element of Francis’ vocation. Jesus himself remarked that he came to serve not to be served. Francis had the great example of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper. It is important to the Franciscan way of life. Nowhere is this more evident than in the name he chose for the order – the Order of Friars Minor – the Order of Lesser Brothers. This name established their readiness to serve everyone.

From humble roots, the Franciscan movement grew. Francis traveled through villages and towns, always preaching the gospel message of repentance, of turning one’s mind and heart back to God. Again, persons of all classes wanted to change their lives. They wanted to take the message of the gospel and live it. They wanted to follow Jesus. Francis’ message reached not only single people, but married people as well. They were not free to sell all their belongings and become itinerant preachers. They asked Francis what to do. Francis promised he would discern a way of life for them also.

We are the descendants to the first laypersons to follow Francis and our Rule is the embodiment of Francis’ promise...

As his life drew to a close, he desired to empty himself of all earthly things. In the Testament, he recounted:

- *And the Lord himself led me among (the lepers) and I showed mercy to them.*
- *And the Lord gave me such faith in churches that I would pray with simplicity in this way and say: “We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ, in all Your churches throughout the whole world and we bless you, because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.”*
- *Afterwards the Lord gave me, and gives me still, such faith in priests who live according to the rite of the holy Roman Church...*
- *And after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel.*
- *The Lord revealed a greeting to me that we should say: ‘May the Lord give you peace.’*

The Testament – Francis of Assisi – Vol 1- page 124-125

Francis realized the movement of the Spirit throughout his life. Wherever he had taken a radical stance, he never claimed any credit of his own. He referred all good back to God. For those of us who are called and choose to live this Rule of Life, Francis imparts a blessing in the name of the Trinity.

And whoever observes these things, let him be blessed in heaven with the blessing of the Most High Father, and on earth with the blessing of His Beloved Son with the Most Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, and all the powers of heaven and with all the saints). And, as far as I can, I, little brother Francis, your servant, confirm for you, both within and without, this most holy blessing.

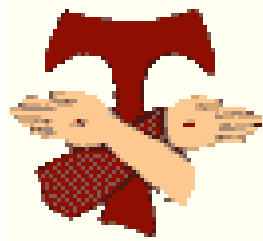
The Testament – Ibid – page 127

My brothers and Sisters, Francis was immersed in God’s love. We are also called to immerse ourselves in God’s love. We have professed to live the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. We are called and choose to live this Rule of Life. So, let us begin with a sincere heart by remembering the words of our brother, Benedetto Lino, SFO, Presidency Councilor:

In reflecting on the “novitas” we can obtain light to understand and deepen our roots to verify and renew the deep motivations of our being Franciscans and reinforce the impulse and determination to carry out the mission with generosity to fully satisfy the expectation of the Church and of God.

I speak with urgency, my brothers and sisters, we must live it out in our everyday life and if not now, WHEN?

What is Conversion for Third Order Franciscans?



Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR

One of my joys in working with the members of the Secular Franciscan Order has been the sharing of life with my sisters and brothers. There is a wonderful bond based on following Christ in the same way as Saint Francis did. However, there is more.

For the first few hundred years of the existence of the Third Order of Saint Francis, there was no juridical distinction between those who lived in community life (regular) and those who continued to live in their homes (secular). We were separated into two Orders after a few hundred years, yet we still share much, such as the same introduction to our Rules from the Letter to the Faithful; our common patron saints, Louis and Elizabeth; our common call to conversion of life.

In the SFO Rule #7, we read: “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.” Similarly, the TOR Rule #2 says: “With all in the holy Catholic and apostolic Church who wish to serve the Lord, the brothers and sisters of this order are to persevere in true faith and penance. They wish to **live this evangelical conversion of life** in a spirit of prayer, of poverty, and of humility. Therefore, let them abstain from all evil and persevere to the end in doing good because God the Son himself will come again in glory and will say to all who acknowledge, adore and serve him in sincere repentance: ‘Come blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.’” (Mt. 25:34) (Bold added.)

There continue to be parallels in our Rules. It might be good to look at the parallels and connections during formation! (If you don’t have access to it, the TOR Rule is available on the web: <http://www.franciscanfriarstor.com/theorder/Holy%20Rule/index.htm>) We all look to our Rules for inspiration and guidance. I have suggested, in a few visitations around the region and around the nation, that we read and study the Rule more regularly. One practice might be to read one number of the Rule for each day of the month and then reflect on how I am living it out. It works better for the SFOs, since there are 26 paragraphs in the SFO Rule. The TOR Rule

has 32 paragraphs! In any case, the remaining days of the month could be used for reading the prologue and reflecting on it.

As you probably know from your formation process, all active Franciscan sisters have the TOR Rule. Additionally, many groups of Franciscan brothers follow the TOR Rule. Putting together these groups with the TOR friars and all the SFOs, we have the whole Third Order. Together also, we must reflect on how we live out this call to conversion of life, how we make it manifest in our lives, in the Church, and in the world around us by means of our apostolate or out-reach. The SFO Rule has quite a few ways to do this right within it. I will give one example and try to make a parallel with the TOR Rule. In the SFO Rule # 19, we read: “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.” The TOR Rule #30 says this: “As they announce peace with their lips, let them be careful to have it even more within their own hearts. No one should be roused to wrath or insult on their account, rather all should be moved to peace, goodwill and mercy because of their gentleness. The sisters and brothers are called to heal the wounded, to bind up those who are bruised, and to reclaim the erring.” Perhaps you can see a parallel here, and, additionally, the words of the TOR Rule may resonate within you. Surely they start with something from Francis, but they show ways in which the Third Order can find commonality.

Human nature makes it difficult at times for people to accept change. For us, change is our calling. At times we must uncover the areas in our lives where we need conversion if we are to be true to our calling. This is a difficult process. None of us likes to admit that we were wrong, headed in a wrong direction or had an erroneous way of thinking. However, if we are true Third Order members we must push ourselves toward that growth, that change of heart.

As this is being written, our great season of conversion, Lent, is coming to an end. We have spent the weeks of Lent in an attempt to prepare for the joy of Easter, the celebration of the Resurrection. Our hearts have been challenged to repent and to grow. This attitude is one which we as Franciscans take with us through the Church year. May the blessings of the Easter season fill your hearts and carry you through the years to come with courage to repent, to convert, to grow, to change! May the Lord give you peace!

The Seventeenth Quinquennial Congress

The Rev. Eric H. F. Law will be the major and keynote speaker at the Quinquennial Congress in Steubenville, Ohio in 2007. Fr. Law is currently the Missioner for Congregation Development of the Diocese of Los Angeles. For the last 12 years, he has been a consultant and trainer, in multi-cultural ministry, for building inclusive community and helping churches from all the major denominations to address, constructively, the challenges of racism and cultural diversity. Early in his ministry, he served as the seminarian-in-charge of the Boston Chinese Ministry (1983-1984), and the Campus Minister at the University of Southern California (1984-1991), where he developed many innovative ministry models for reaching out to young adults and multicultural ministry development.

His Ministry Goal

is to create and facilitate gracious and spirit-filled environments in which the people of God are empowered to respect the dignity of every human being and seek and serve Christ in each other, while being fully aware of the differences in culture, race, gender, orientation, age, ability, community and theology that exist among us.

Fr. Law received his Bachelor of Science from Cornell University and Master of Divinity from the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass. He was ordained deacon in the Diocese of Central New York (1984), priest in the Diocese of Los Angeles (1985). He is a photographer, a playwright and a composer of church music.

Fr. Law is the author of five books: The Wolf Shall Dwell With The Lamb – a Spirituality for Leadership in a Multi-Cultural Community (also published in Spanish); The Bush Was Burning But Not Consumed—Developing a Multicultural Community Through Dialogue and Liturgy; INCLUSION: Making Room for Grace; Sacred Acts, Holy Change—Faithful Diversity and Practical Transformation; The Word at the Crossings – Living

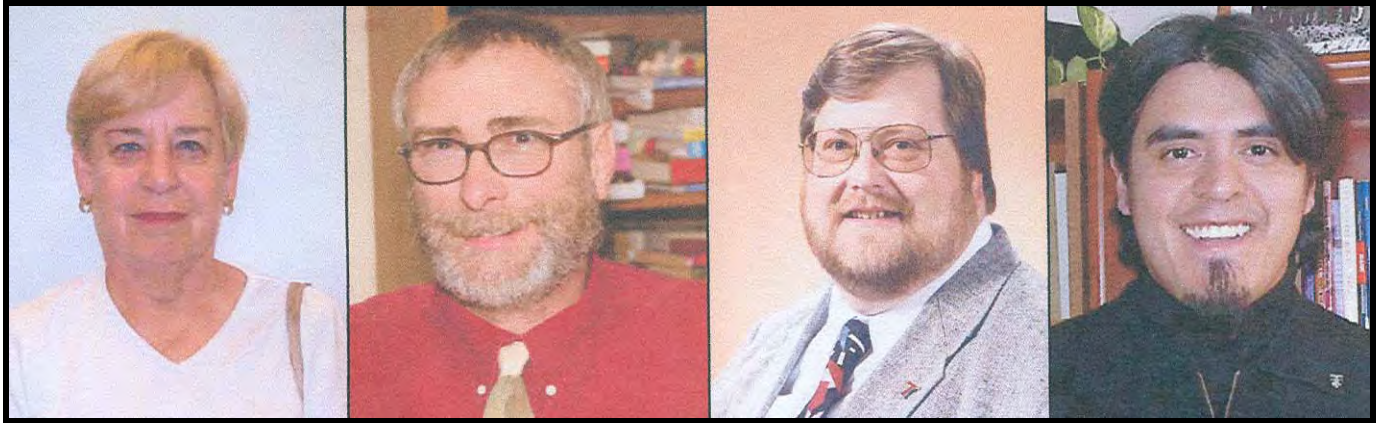


Rev. Eric H. F. Law

the Good News in a Multicultural World; The Gift of Diversity – part II of the Anti-racism Study/Action Guide published by the General Commission on Religion and Race and the General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church. Besides his teaching ministry, Fr. Law has participated in many long term multicultural projects, has spent time working with the clergy, has given workshops across the US on Lay Ministry Training. He is the Founder of the National Asian American Youth and Young Adult Ministry Training Program. One of the goals of the project was to raise up the next generation of Asian Episcopal Church leaders – both lay and ordained.

His consulting work has taken him to share his expertise in congregation development and multicultural ministry with the Roman Catholic Church, Presbyterian Church, United Methodist Church, Lutheran Church and United Church of Christ locally, nationally and internationally. He is equally comfortable in an interfaith environment, having been the consultant for the Inter-religious Council of Southern California in bringing people from nine religions to participate in a two-year interracial dialogue program after the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

Quinquennial Congress Workshop Presenters



Patti Normile, SFO

Ed Shirley, SFO

Ron Pihokker, SFO

F. Javier Orozco, SFO

The presenters and their workshops are: Pattie Normile, SFO—“Caregiving for the Elderly;” Ed Shirley, SFO—“ Spirituality in Today’s Secular World;” Ron Pihokker, SFO—“Secular Franciscans and the Catechetical Ministry: Building the Kingdom More Effectively;” Javier Orozco, SFO—“Francis, Divine Providence and our Secular Life.”

Masses:

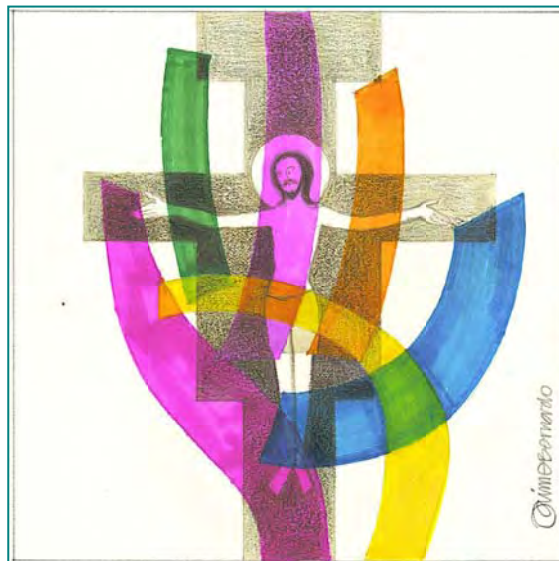
There will be daily Mass with multicultural influences in different languages. The presiders are Bishop Daniel Conlon, DD (Steubenville)—English Mass; Fr. Peter Vettickanakudy, OFM Cap— Syro Malabar Rite Mass; Fr. Francis Kim, OFM—Korean Mass; Bishop John Kudrick, DD (Parma)—Eastern Churches Rite Mass; and Fr. Moises Villalta, OFM Cap.—Spanish Mass.

Prayer & Fun:

There will be prayer time and fun time. Fun time includes a Fourth of July picnic, cookout, sing along, and fireworks, two Festivals of Cultures with food, beverages, music and dancing.

Attention Readers:

What does the
Quinquennial Banner
say to you?
Please send your
comments to:
John Sanborn, SFO
1611 West River Parkway,
Grand Island, NY, 14072
or e-mail at
jksanborn@juno.com



The
Best
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Seculars in Ministry



Doug and Melissa McDougall, SFO present a San Damiano Cross to Sister Marthe, MC, the Superior of the Mother House and orphanage run by the Missionaries of Charity in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Also pictured are some of the children that live with the sisters.

Preach the Gospel Everyday

Contributed by Joan Sanders, SFO
Joan.Sanders@abbott.com

The streets of Port-au-Prince are dirty, noisy and crowded, but for Doug and Melissa McDougall, SFO, this is nothing new. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Haiti's need is great. Doug states that this is the first lesson you learn, when coming to Haiti.

The McDougalls began working in Haiti in 2001. Their first trips were to Louverture Cleary School, a Catholic boarding school in Croix-du-Bouquets, where they helped with construction of a new girls' dorm. In recent years, they have been facilitating working retreats, in Haiti, at an orphanage run by the Missionaries of Charity.

A typical day for the McDougalls starts with 6:30 AM Mass. They spend time at the orphanage, holding babies. Doug also does maintenance for the sisters, repairing screens, doing plumbing, carpentry, and electrical repairs. Melissa, a registered nurse, uses her skills at the orphanage dispensary, giving vitamin shots, checking on sick kids who have been left with the sisters, or doing dressing changes at the clinic in downtown Port-au-Prince, that the sisters operate.

The most common medical problem that the sisters treat is malnutrition. They also treat children with TB and juvenile AIDS. The sister also run a primary school for 150 boys and girls, grades 1 through 6.

Mission Teams, from the Church of Holy Apostles in McHenry, Illinois, go on retreats with the Mc Dougalls to Haiti. Past retreats have included "Beatitudes" and "Your Response to Poverty in the World." The retreat in 2006 will be a Marian retreat. Part of the retreat days are spent working for the sisters in caring for the sick and orphaned children or working on team projects.

Ping An (Peace) SFO Project in China

Contributed by Ann Corro, SFO
AnnCorro@aol.com

Inspired by their Franciscan lay vocation, SFOs Patrick and Ying White established a tax-exempt Chinese-American Catholic lay missionary society, the Saint John of Montecorvino Society (SJOMS) in 2003. It is named after the Franciscan who was the first Bishop of China. NAFRA, St. Margaret of Cortona Region, and their local fraternity, St. John the Beloved Apostle Fraternity in Alexandria, Virginia, have helped fund the Society.

One of the Society's first major endeavors is the Ping An Social Services Project. Ping An assists poor rural dioceses in China with establishing social service centers. The social services done by these centers, in conjunction with the Society, benefit the entire community, not just Catholics.

Many international donor agencies wish to fund Catholic social service projects in China, but most Catholic social services are typically small in scale and run by minimally trained Catholic women religious and laity who only speak Chinese. This makes it difficult for international and foreign aid agencies to work with them.

Ping An acts as a bridge between donors and the Chinese Church by providing dioceses with the training and hands-on experience needed to operate social service centers according to internationally accepted standards and thus, enable international donor agencies to offer funding.

(For further information please write to the Saint John of Montecorvino Society at 1001 Rockville Pike, Unit #819, Rockville, MD 20852, or visit the Website at <http://www.saintjohnofmontecorvino.org>).

National Elections

National Elections are scheduled for October 28, 2006 at Marathon, WI. The call for nominations is from April 1 to June 30. Nominations are open for the national offices of Minister, Vice Minister, Secretary, Treasurer, Councilors, and CIOFS (International) Councilor; the name address, and e-mail address of the person nominated should be emailed or mailed to both of the nomination committee co-chairs:

Kathleen White, SFO,
612 Front Street, Logansport, IN 46947,
kdwsfo@verizon.net and
Kathryn Poelman, SFO,
1702 Peosta Avenue, Helena, Mt 59601,
kpmom8@myfam.com

Nominations are sent to both to avoid a nomination being lost. All professed Seculars are eligible to nominate someone for the National Executive Council.

A Prayer for National Elections

Lord, we thank You for the servant leaders that You have gifted us with over the years. We thank You for helping them with their work, and with their decision making, on our behalf. For our upcoming national elections, we ask that You go before us to help us nominate, and help our delegates to vote, for servant leaders who can take the Secular Franciscan Order where You want it to go. Help us to choose people who are willing to serve You, not themselves. For this we pray. Amen.

(The nine week novena begins on August 22, 2006, for Holy Spirit led elections).

Formation on the Road—a Workshop

This is a weekend full of interesting ideas and concepts that deal with the ministry of formation. We share such topics as the aspects and agents of formation, discernment and conflict resolution, secular spirituality, nature of our Franciscan vocation, an understanding of our profession, the how and why of ongoing formation, how to use and adapt the ritual. We take a look at the various formation materials that are available for your use. We have set in Q & A time, and there is time for you to interact with the other participants. A binder of materials is given to each participant. We would be glad to bring the workshop to your Region. Please contact us at Tbakersfo@aol.com or Anne_Mulqueen@juno.com.

National Secular Franciscan Order Family of the Year Award



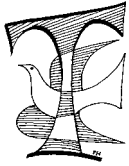
Left: Diane Halal, SFO, Terry & Thecla McCarthy, SFO
Br. Bob Brady, OFM, and Diane Mann, SFO

Terry and Thecla McCarthy, a most deserving couple, received the National Family of the Year Award on February 12, 2006. The award was presented by Diane Halal, SFO, National Councilor.

Terry and Thecla have been Seculars for more than fifty years. They have been married for fifty-five years and have been blessed with twelve children, forty-two grand children, and one great grandchild. Even though their family is large, they have extended it even more by considering everyone as family.

The McCarthys belong to St. Anthony Fraternity, in Saint Thomas More Region, in Tucson, AZ. Their ministries through the years have included:
(Terry) — Formation Director of St. Anthony Fraternity, Former Regional Minister (6 yrs);
(Thecla) — Editor of St. Anthony Fraternity newsletter "Following Francis;"
(Terry and Thecla) — Members of St. Monica Respect Life Committee, praying for the end to abortion at Planned Parenthood every Wednesday from 8:00 to 10:00 AM and their favorite ministry/vocation is being a Secular Franciscan .

Their word to all families, "No matter how bad it gets, *pray together*. Remember it is God who accomplishes all that we do."



The Death Penalty

By Patricia Mulligan, SFO,
National P & J Commission Member
cpmsfo@adelphia.net

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the highest profile innocent one to receive the death penalty, was severely tortured before being executed. Grief saturated those who loved him and certainly our own Seraphic Father, Francis, grieved to the extent that even heaven recognized his love for the Crucified when he was branded as one of God's own with the marks of the execution. Not everyone has the capacity to interiorize their grief as Francis did, but throughout history, friends and families have grieved over the execution of their loved ones. The innocent as well as the guilty have bowed to Sister Death by a decree from someone in power. The execution of well known innocent people like Thomas More, a Secular Franciscan, who was decapitated and Maximillian Kolbe, OFM, Conv., who was killed by lethal carbolic acid injection after three weeks of starvation and dehydration at Auschwitz, live in our memory while others remain faceless and nameless. In our society, contemporaries like convicted murderers Patrick Sonnier and mentally retarded Larry Robison are electrocuted or killed by lethal injection, the firing squad, gas or hanged by the neck. Humane killings, we say.

The number of lives that have been snuffed out in the name of justice during the march through history is so long it is beyond our grasp. And the list continues to grow despite the fact that our broken legal system sometimes executes innocent people, discriminates against minorities and the poor; and that defendants in many states get disastrous legal counsel unless they can afford otherwise. The teaching of the Catholic Church upholding the right of the state to execute criminals "in cases of extreme gravity" was in place for over 1600 years, until that phrase was removed from the Catechism in 1997. As a result of the former use of the phrase "extreme gravity," almost half of the present population believes the illusion that we can defend life by taking life.

Contemporary Issue: Dignity of Human Life

One need only take a fleeting glance through the halls of ancient history to recognize that the seeds of war and the killing of perceived enemies germinated early in the human family. There was no concept of human dignity. Entire nations were wiped out under the culturally accepted "ban" (Joshua 6:21), and death penalty laws were codified by the eighteenth century BC. But the greatest influence on America's use of the death

penalty came from Britain. "The Jamestown Colony in Virginia operated under Divine, Moral and Martial Law and enacted the death penalty for such minor offenses as stealing grapes or trading with the Indians." (Amnesty International) It made no impression on the Colony that Britain's 222 crimes punishable by death were not a deterrent to breaking the laws. And over thirty years of research in present day United States shows, also, that capital punishment still does not deter crime.

Archbishop Charles Chaput, OFM Capuchin, writes that "Killing the guilty is still the wrong choice for a civilized nation. Why? It accomplishes nothing. It does not bring back or even honor the dead. It does not ennoble the living. And, while it may satisfy society's anger for awhile, it cannot even release the murder victim's loved ones from their sorrow. Only forgiveness can do that." As a nation with an evolving standard of decency, it is time to end the historic collective unconsciousness that violence is the answer to certain social problems because this becomes a clear sign of failure. It is time to recognize that for the common good, our culture has a serious need for a consistent life ethic and that includes those guilty of serious crime. We believe that "the intrinsic dignity of every person is the 'foundational bedrock of a moral system.'"

Reflection

Centuries ago, the heart of St. Francis reminded him that he was servant and not master. Likewise, we as servants should be subordinate to the One who is always and everywhere greater than ourselves. *God serves as the horizon of our experiences, the ever present backdrop against which we read reality.* Reality for us includes examining certain truths, such as Jesus' forgiveness of the robber, murderer and revolutionary who hung on the cross next to him - "Today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43) To the woman caught in adultery, a crime punishable by death, he said, "Go and do not sin any more." (John 8:11) Mercy and love were the hallmark of His earthly ministry. Can we do less? In the twenty-first century, we have the means to incarcerate dangerous criminals in order to protect society, and we should incarcerate them - for their lifetime. For those who believe the death penalty is more appropriate, ask yourself if St. Francis or Jesus would agree. Would they ask someone else to flip the switch, inject the poison, spring the trap or pull the trigger? I think not. Love and mercy are always the moral high ground.

To read the complete article, see the National Peace & Justice Website: <http://www.nafra-sfo.org/peace.html>



"Our
Ministry
Stories"

Respect for Life is a Justice Issue

Barbara Woessner, SFO, of St. Lawrence of Brendisi Fraternity, Long Island, New York, works hard for life. As chairperson of the Respect Life Committee in her parish, she makes sure that the Sunday bulletin contains important facts about pro-life issues. This information helps the parishioners write to their legislators to make their views known. Barbara quotes a statement made by the late Cardinal Bernadin on October 1, 1989. "On this Respect Life Sunday, I wish to emphasize that no earthly value is more fundamental than human life itself. Human Life is the condition for enjoying freedom and all the other values. Consequently if one must choose between protecting or serving lesser human values that depend upon life for their existence and life itself, human life must take precedence."

In her fraternity, a Spiritual Adoption Program was established for the unborn through the Peace and Justice Commission and there is a fraternity apostolate, which sends letters advocating Life to the legislators on a regular basis.

"...human life must take precedence."

It is Barbara's hope that the truth of Cardinal Bernadin's statement will help other Seculars do what they can to help people live and stay alive by advocating the fundamental value of life itself.

If this life-giving ministry appeals to you, inquire about the Respect Life, or Right to Life ministry in your own parish.

Creating a Website for your Fraternity

By Samuel Monaco, SFO
Most Holy Name Fraternity
Little Falls, NJ

Recently, I created a new web site for our fraternity. I had brought the idea to the attention of the fraternity several months ago and the members were excited about the idea and asked me to pursue it further. I then took the liberty of contacting one of the fraternities in our region, which had an existing web site, for some specific information about their site, namely, who was their web host, how much did it cost and how did they build their site. As a point of clarification, a web site is made up of a collection of web pages that contain text, graphics and pictures, which help to define an organization and that organization's mission or subject matter. The home page, similar to the table of contents in a textbook, is generally the first web page you access when you type a web address called a URL (Uniform Resource Locator) into the address box of your internet service provider, which provides you access to the World Wide Web, which contains all the available web sites.

In creating a web site for your fraternity you first need to register your web address which can be done for a small fee and find a web host to contain your site. Most web hosts charge a monthly fee (about \$5.00). The advantage with going this route is that you would not have to deal with commercial advertisements appearing on your web site that you would not want. The fraternity I contacted created their web site through a company, which provided a web hosting service for about \$4.95 a month.

However, in my search for a web hosting company, I was advised to try www.CatholicWeb.com, which provides free web hosting and free web address Registration for Catholic Churches, Catholic Organizations and Religious Communities. Advertisements do appear on your web site created through CatholicWeb, however, the advertisers, who are the reason why the site is free, are for the most part from Catholic and religious companies. CatholicWeb also provides it's own web site building program, so you don't have to use any web page creation tools, like FrontPage or Dreamweaver. Remarkably, in a very short amount of time I was able to create a wonderful and informative fraternity Website: www.mostholynamesfo.catholicweb.com. The results have been more than satisfactory.



NEWS & VIEWS

Reports – Information – Recommendations – Reflections

For spiritual assistants at all levels

By Lester Bach OFM Cap

Spiritual Assistance

The role of Spiritual Assistance to the SFO is undergoing changes. (That's what we used to call a "trockmorton" i.e. *hot pursuit of the obvious*). The lack of friars available for this Franciscan family ministry offers us the opportunity to consider how the family connection can be maintained in the future. Our documents speak of how important Spiritual Assistants are in the Franciscan family. Reality calls us to develop alternate ways to maintain this Franciscan family connection.

All of us have a stake in this process. Seculars as well as Friars need to consider ways and means to achieve the purpose of spiritual assistance in the growing reality of fewer friars to serve. **Spiritual Assistants, whether friars or others, represent the 1st Order/TOR to the SFO.** SA's provide a link between the SFO, the Franciscan 1st Order/TOR, and the Church. We want to assure that this link is maintained.

It is our responsibility to seek, with open minds and hearts, effective ways to continue this service, fulfill the purpose of the Rule and Constitutions, and achieve the goal of spiritual assistance. Prayerful dialogue and the discovery of fresh ways are our tools. Franciscans on all levels can offer options to the CNSA as well as NAFRA's National Executive Council. The interchange of ideas will produce life-giving results.

Relationship and **communion** are key words in this search. How we relate to one another and achieve communion (unity) are vital ingredients in this exchange. Dialogue will assist us to move beyond what structures alone are able to accomplish. The training of *suitable and well-prepared* people is a serious responsibility for all of us.

Franciscans of Other Faith Traditions

There are many Franciscan in other faith traditions. The Anglican Church has a group called the Third Order Society of St. Francis (TSSF). Their website reads: *The Third Order consists of men and women, single or in committed relationships, who, though following ordinary professions, are called to a dedicated life of service to our Lord through prayer, study, and work.* They have their own Rule with a basic thrust: *to make our Lord known and loved everywhere; to spread the spirit of fellowship; to live simply.* Cf. <http://wwwtssf.org/>

Another group of Franciscans of other faith traditions are known as the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (OEF). Their mission statement reads: *Celebrating God's presence and grace in everything, following the poor Christ of the gospels in lives of mutual care and accountability in harmony with the faith and practice of the whole Franciscan family, we are the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. We seek to grow in our knowledge and love of God and to serve Jesus Christ in faithfulness to the spirit and example of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi.* (1994)

Since most of the OEF people do not live in the same physical community with our OEF brothers and sisters, our mission finds unique expression in the various ministries with which our members are involved. <http://wwwfranciscaris.com/mission/index.html>

These groups and others (as well as groups within the Catholic Church) who follow Francis, are connected to us by a common desire to live the spirit of Francis and Clare. **Though we cannot join these groups as members,** we joyfully collaborate with them in seeking common Franciscan goals.

Reality Check

St. Anthony Messenger's Website provides a reality check on some frequently used Franciscan quotations. (<http://www.americancatholic.org/Messessenger/October2001/Wiseman.asp>)

1. *Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary.*

This text is clearly not in Francis' writings. No scholar could find this quote in any story written within 200 years of Francis' death. This particular phrase is not in Francis' writings, nor in the earliest biographies. However, the word certainly reflects Francis' spirit.

2. *The Peace Prayer*

Francis certainly did not write this prayer. Exhaustive research on the origins of the *Peace Prayer of St. Francis* has led to Christian Renoux's new book in French. This 210 page study is described at: www.eleetre.com under: Les Editions Franciscaines.

An 11th century French prayer is similar to the first part of the *Peace Prayer*. The oldest known copy of the current prayer, however, dates to 1912, in France. The prayer became more well known in other countries during World War I. Like the above quote, it certainly reflects the spirit of St. Francis.

Our constant use of both the quote and the *Peace Prayer* reflects familiarity with the spirit of Francis. We have a treasure in our call, by the Holy Spirit, to be Franciscans. It is God's gift to us to share the spirit of Francis in our world.

Church and SFO

The Franciscan Order serves the Church. That is part of the reason for our existence. Francis, praying before the San Damiano crucifix, received a call from Jesus to *rebuild My church (house)*... Fraternities are expected to dialogue about how they do this in their parishes, dioceses and the wider church. While serving as a lector or Eucharistic minister is fine, we ask the question of *how* our actions can *build up* the Church. Rebuilding often

requires changing old structures to meet new situations. It requires a gospel conversion of heart that can address the signs of our times.

We regularly take a fresh look at structures to see that they support the vision of the Gospel. Franciscans are called to such adjustments in order to continue the blessed task of *rebuilding* a Church whose goal is to spread the message of Jesus to the world (evangelization). As we read in Mark's Gospel: *Go to every part of the world, and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.* (Mark16:15)

Collaboration in parishes, dioceses, and the wider Church is part of our Franciscan heritage. We avoid arrogance and "I know best" attitude in this collaboration...**Secular Franciscan, with a gentle and courteous spirit**, accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ. Rule #14

He was accustomed to search out with special eagerness how and in what way he could serve God more perfectly according to God's good pleasure. As long as he lived, this was his supreme philosophy, this his supreme desire, to inquire from the wise and simple, the perfect and imperfect, the young and the old, how he could more effectively reach the summit of perfection. Bonaventure – The Life of St. Francis
Translated by Ewert Cousins – Page 128

Collaboration

The members of CNSA and the SFO National Executive Council held a joint meeting on February 15, 2006. The focus of the meeting was the role of spiritual assistance and how to deal with the realities of today. We spent the day discussing options and possibilities retaining the relationship the Church expects us to have. The interchange offered opportunities to help us maintain a solid relationship between the SFO and the 1st Order/TOR in our present situation. This dialogue is ongoing.

**Too bad that
all the people
who know how to
run the country are
busy driving taxicabs
and cutting hair.**

George Burns



Beginning at Home . . .

By M. Marko, SFO
camontcu@aol.com
Brother Jacoba Community
St. Peter's in the Loop, Chicago, IL

They say charity begins at home. I say, so does psychosis. But that's neither here nor there. Another thing I feel begins at home is (are?) the commissions. Maybe I like this idea as it would seem to let me off the hook. Let me explain . . .

Family: my family is a cat. I love her madly and am very nice to her. Check off "family."

Youth and Young Adults (or, as I like to think of them, YaYAs): well, Muppy is 13 – definitely a senior cat; and I've been a card-carrying member of AARP for 9 years now. No YaYAs here. Check off "Youth, etc."

Ecology: we don't own a car, so we're not poking any personal holes in the ozone layer; and in summer, we try to use the air conditioning only during heat waves. Check off "ecology."

Peace and Justice: Mupper and I are at peace, and we're fair to one another. And P&J goes down.

That leaves Work: as I work out of my home, I have no problem bringing a Franciscan outlook to my workplace. Check off "work."

So I've dealt with all the commissions and have acquitted myself quite well. But wait – that can't be all there is, can it? Of course not! I still have over half a page to fill up . . .

If the commissions begin at home, I should define "home." Well, that's a no-brainer. Home is where I live. And where is that (she asks, hoping the answer will fill up the rest of the page)? Also a no-brainer: I live in a studio flat. In Chicago. In Cook County. In Illinois. In the US of A. In North America. On the earth. Uh, oh. Y'mean "home" ain't just my immediate 500 square feet? Hmmm, bummer! But that means – golly neds! – I'm not as off the hook commission-wise as I thought I was. Because if I broaden "home," I have to broaden the scope of the commissions as well.

Family: it's not just a cat anymore! Now I must see everyone as family. This will be very difficult at times – both for me and for the parties of the second part. But it can't be avoided. We're all sons and daughters of God, so we're all brothers and sisters. As they say (I gotta find out who 'they' are someday), friends are

the family you choose. But the world is the family you're stuck with.

Youth and Young Adults: even if you don't have any YaYAs at home, even if (like me) you're too old to bear live young, you can still have an impact on youth. "Role model" seems a rather lofty goal to aspire to, but any time you're out where people can see and hear you, you have the opportunity to be a good role model. This is especially true where YaYAs are concerned. All the world's a stage. There ain't no audience: we're all in the play. And everything we say or do is a cue for someone else. If we want them to say and do the best they can, we must give them – especially YaYAs --the best (Franciscan) cues we can.

Ecology: You may think one person can't make a difference. But one person can sure make a lot of garbage. So be careful where you toss it when you're out and about. Recycle. Take your own bags when you go shopping and provide them to the checkout person. If you go to dinner, don't leave half of it on the table; ask for a doggy bag. There are so many simple things that can be done that *will* make a difference.

Peace and Justice: While you may not be into picketing and demonstrating, it takes very little time and energy to send a postcard to your congressman. Voting is another way to make your voice heard. And a short but well-worded letter to the editor of a newspaper or national magazine can also be quite effective in getting your viewpoint across. In the meantime, be active in your own community. You don't have to go to a Third World Country to find someone without a home or who doesn't know where his next meal is coming from.

Work: Even if you work out of your home or you're a stay-at-home mother who "doesn't work" (I've yet to figure that one out!), when you're out in the world, chances are you're in someone else's workplace. If you're at the grocery store, in a department store, or just picking up a McSomething for lunch, you're not just in someone's workplace, you are part of their work. They'll be able to do their job better if you're pleasant and polite to them.

While you may feel drawn to this or that commission in particular, they overlap constantly. And if you live your vocation as you should, you'll find yourself weaving all of the commissions in and out of your daily life. And that's as it should be. Living the Gospel life automatically embraces the commissions, includes them, acts on them, embodies them. They are, in large part, what we're about.

Vacation Thoughts

By Dolores Cullen, SFO

Give me a sense of humor, Lord,
Give me the grace to see a joke,
To get some humor out of life,
And pass it on to other folk.

A minister waited in line to have his car filled with gas just before a long holiday weekend. The attendant worked quickly, but there were many cars ahead of him in front of the service station. Finally, the attendant motioned him toward a vacant pump. "Reverend," said the young man, "sorry about the delay. It seems as if everyone waits until the last minute to get ready for a long trip." The minister chuckled, "I know what you mean. It's the same in my business."

Actions speak louder than bumper stickers.

A guy driving down the freeway was pulled over by a State Trooper. The Trooper walked up to the man's window and asked, "Sir, are you aware that your wife fell out of your car about four miles back?" The driver looked relieved as he exclaimed, "Oh, thank goodness, I thought I was going deaf!"

MOSQUITO: An insect that makes you like flies better.

God created the world in six days. On the seventh day, he rested. On the eighth day, he started getting complaints.

I was at the airport, checking in at the gate when an airport employee asked, "Has anyone put anything in your baggage without your knowledge?" To which I replied, "If it was without my knowledge, how would I know?" He smiled knowingly and nodded, "That's why we ask."

All of us could take a lesson from the weather. It pays no attention to criticism.

Don't judge folks by their relatives.

A day at the park —

Little Timmy sat playing by the flowers. As his mother came near, she saw that he was slowly eating a worm. She turned pale. "No, Timmy! Stop! That's horrible! You can't eat worms!" Trying to convince him further, "Now the mother worm is looking all over for her nice baby worm." "No, she isn't," said

Timmy. "Why not?" said the mother. "Because I ate her first!"

Centuries ago, when men beat the ground with sticks, they called it witchcraft. Today they call it golf.

Once there was a golfer whose drive landed on an anthill. Rather than move the ball, he decided to hit it where it lay. He gave a mighty swing. Clouds of dirt, sand, and ants exploded from the spot. Everything that is, but the golf ball. The golfer lined up and tried another shot. Again, clouds of dirt, sand, and ants went flying, but the golf ball didn't even wiggle. Two ants survived. One dazed ant said to the other, "What are we going to do?" The other ant replied, "I don't know about you, but I'm going to get on the ball."

If you look like your passport picture, you probably need the trip.

"How long have you been driving without a taillight?" asked the policeman. The driver ran to the back of the car, gave a long groan, and put his face in his hands. The policeman said, "You don't have to take it so hard. It is not that serious." "Yes it is - unless you know where my boat and trailer are."

Drive carefully. It's not only cars that can be recalled by their maker.

Every path has a few puddles.

How is it one careless match can start a forest fire, but it takes a whole box to start a campfire?

"Don't you ever look at the speedometer?" the officer scolded. Before I knew it, the truth spilled from my mouth. "As fast as I was going," I admitted, "I was afraid to take my eyes off the road."

Never be afraid to laugh at yourself. After all, you could be missing out on the joke of the century.

Down memory lane—

<i>No matter the price</i>	<i>Brother speeder</i>
<i>No matter how new</i>	<i>Let's rehearse</i>
<i>The best safety device</i>	<i>All together</i>
<i>In the car is you</i>	<i>Good morning, nurse</i>
<i>Burma Shave</i>	<i>Burma Shave</i>

Just remember that every single day is a miracle.

If you're happy—let your face know it!

*Always leave loved ones with loving words.
It maybe the last time you see them.*

The Beggar

By Edward Czapla, SFO

Wistfully he came to me,
His mien of tender dignity
That want and need do not dispel.
His need had led him to the hill
Our Lady chapel graces well—
He humbly asked me for an alms;
Respectfully I gave to him.
Though some might squander,
some deceive,
I must no harbor this surmise,
But only live the paradigm,
For “oft goes Christ
in a stranger’s guise.”
Still, through no merit of my own
Did Providence bestow on me,
But only that I share the loan
A loving God entrusted me.
So I, as steward of His wealth,
Then gave to him and made us free!

Saint Francis and the Birds

By Seamus Heaney

Francis and Clare in Poetry

Edited by Janet Mc Cann & David Craig

When Francis preached love
to the birds.
They listened, fluttered, throttled up
into the blue like a flock of words
released for fun from his holy lips.
Then wheeled back,
whirred about his head,
pirouetted on brothers’ capes,
danced on the wing,
for sheer joy played
and sang, like images took flight.
which was the best poem
Francis made,
his argument true, his tone light.

Psalm 23, Verses 5-6

... You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy
will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the
Lord forever.



Growing

Old

By Ella
Wheeler
Wilcox

The days grow shorter,
the nights grow longer;
The headstones thicken
along the way;
And life grows sadder,
but love grows stronger
For those who walk with us
day by day.

The tear comes quicker,
the laugh come slower;
The courage is lesser
to do and dare;
And the tide of joy
in the heart falls lower,
And seldom covers
the reefs of care.
But all true things
in the world seem truer,
And the better things
of earth seem best,
And friends are dearer,
as friends are fewer,
And love is all
as our sun dips west.
Then let us clasp hands
as we walk together,
And let us speak softly
in low, sweet tone,
For no man knows
on the morrow whether
We two pass on—or but one alone.

Widow’s Mite

By Richard Hurzeler, SFO

You see her there?
She pulls up at the recycling center,
ninety four years old
her little packs of glass,
newsprint, plastics,
doing her part
and when I say, “great”
she gets real humble
with slow words, soft gray eyes and a
wrinkled wizened face and croaks,
“I do what I can.”

Saint Clare

By Louise Erdrich

Francis and Clare in Poetry

Edited by Janet Mc Cann & David Craig

The Call

First I heard the voice
throbbing across the river.
I saw the white phosphorescence
of his robe.
As he stepped from the boat,
as he walked
there spread from each footfall
a black ripple,
from each widening ring
a wave,
from the waves
a sea that covered the moon.
So I was seized in total night
and I abandoned myself
in his garment
like a fish in a net,
The slip knots
tightened on me
and I rolled
until the sudden cry
hauled me out.
Then this new element,
a furnace of mirrors,
in which I watch myself burn.
The scaled of my old body
melt away like coins,
for I was rich, once,
and my father
had already chosen my husband...

Jewel

By Richard Hurzeler SFO

Do you know what it’s like
seeing that old crippled guy
creeping in here
on those aluminum poles?
Watching him slink along—
a tortoise on the floor
with all these young speedy roaches
working the machines?
Most are too busy—
bouncing on treadmills,
pumping iron, jotting on pads
to notice this *radiant jewel*
of inspiration.

Katrina Lives

(August 29, 2005 -?)

By Bill Wicks, SFO



St. Clare Church in Waveland, Mississippi was destroyed and rebuilt, as a Quonset hut.



Owner was watching her house being leveled. She said that she was going to rebuild.



Katrina's signature on my niece, Jenny's, house.

Frances and I went home to New Orleans in February with an uncertain, and somewhat heavy, heart – as if visiting the grave of a loved one. The pictures on this page don't really do justice to the people who experienced Katrina firsthand. She, Katrina, affected the lives of many of our SFO brothers and sisters in ways that no one who wasn't there could ever imagine – they they lost homes, friends and, for the lucky ones, only roofs. I sensed this loss. It had the face of quietness, loss of trust, and abandonment. Yet, I also sensed a fraternal bonding together of those who were affected. We have fraternities in New Orleans and on the Gulf Coast - Katrina abused them.

We drove along the Gulf Coast and went inside Our Lady of the Gulf church, a brick structure that survived, but was gutted by the force of water; Frances had attended Mass at that church when she was a student at St. Joseph Academy in Bay St. Louis. Saint Clare's, in nearby Waveland, didn't fare so well, (see picture). We drove through the Lake View area of New Orleans, close to where the levee gave way. We stopped at my niece's house that was under seven feet of water during the flood, (see picture). We are all wounded by Katrina, whether we experienced it firsthand, or not – whether we know it, or not. Here are some of the pictures that we took:



This is the lot where the house of my childhood once stood. It was blown over by Katrina, and removed.



Someone else's house.



Somebody's shoe.

Regional Roundup

By Sandy Neal, SFO
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Salinas, CA 93906
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Five Franciscan Martyrs Region

Sheila Thomas, SFO –
celebrated her
50th Profession Anniversary
on May 13, 2006.

Walter A. Urban, SFO –
of St. Joseph's Fraternity,
in Ft. Lauderdale, FL
celebrated his 35th Anniversary
of Profession.



The region held the first ever Young Adult Regional Retreat in March 2006. The theme was "Answer the Call" and included a weekend of prayer, liturgy, adoration, music, singing, faith-sharing, small groups, a bonfire and kayaking, all enjoyed within the Franciscan charism. For more information: see Website at www.franciscanyouthusa.com.

Queen of Peace Region

Pat Randall, SFO, of the Fioretti Fraternity in Brainerd, Minnesota celebrated her 50th Anniversary of Profession at Mass in Saint Andrews Catholic Church on Saturday March 11, 2006.

Members of the fraternity renewed profession promises and a reception in Pat's honor followed.

Lori Taormina, SFO age 22, Queen of Peace Regional Youth/Young Adult Commission Chair cut ten inches

from her long hair to donate to "Locks of Love," an organization based in Florida that creates natural hair wigs for children who are cancer victims. See Website at www.locksoflove.org.

Tau Cross Region

Lori Pieper, SFO, who is a member of Mother of God Fraternity in the Bronx, NY, has been asked, by the Inter-Franciscan Commission planning the celebrations for the centenary of her birth, to translate the early sources of St. Elizabeth of Hungary's life, including the canonization process, from Latin into English. Newly discovered early testimonies from the canonization process shed new light on Elizabeth as a Franciscan.

The Commission also asked Lori to revise her doctoral dissertation, "St. Elizabeth of Hungary and the Franciscan Tradition," for publication during the centenary year (Nov. 17, 2006 to Nov. 17, 2007). Lori received her Ph.D. in Medieval History from Fordham University in 2002. Lori is serving the Order in a unique way.

Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha

On February 19, 2006, St Patrick Fraternity, Buffalo NY, celebrated the significant anniversaries of profession.



Left to right: Bro. Maurice (Moe) Swartout, OFM, (60 yrs), S A, Julia Maxwell, SFO, (50 yrs), Formation Director, Shirley Brown, SFO, (35 yrs), a former Minister, John Sanborn, SFO, (30 yrs), a former Minister and current National Vice Minister, Eileen Russo, SFO, (25 yrs), Treasurer, Picture submitted by Marie Meyers, SFO, Fraternity Minister.

Glory to God!

Amid praise and thanksgiving,
the **Poor Clares of Montana**: Sisters Jane,
Judith Ann, Maryalice, and Catherine
moved into the new monastery at
2001 26th Street S

Great Falls, MT, 59405
on November 5, 2005

Website: www.poorclaresmt.org

Telephone: 406-453-7891

There was an open house on April 29, 2006.

The Local Fraternity the privileged place

By Teresa V. Baker, SFO
National Formation Co-chair
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603-432-9135



So states Article 22 of our Rule. Privileged place for what? *For developing a sense of church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.*

For this brief reflection, I'm going to focus on developing the Franciscan vocation.

Anne and I were privileged, recently, to partake in an International Formation Seminar. The material I choose to share with you comes from this endeavor.

The entire essence of formation is centered on this very theme, developing the Franciscan vocation. Formation begins by helping the persons in Orientation discern whether or not they have a Franciscan vocation. Formators and Spiritual Assistants must be aware of the intricacies of discernment and aid those persons seeking information about the Order. Anne addressed the gathering on this pertinent topic.

The importance of the call, the vocation, was addressed by Fr. Martin Bitzer, OFM Conv. He equated its importance to the call of Abraham and that of Moses. He insisted that God has placed an unrepeatable call on each of our hearts. No one else can accomplish the mission God has chosen for each of us individually. If each of us does not answer this call to its fullest, that portion of God's mission is left undone. We must help those in formation discern exactly what is the charism given specifically to them. Once discerned, we must help them decide how to put this charism into practice.

Yet, why is the fraternity is the privileged place for developing the vocation? Fr. Felice Cangelosi, OFM Cap. gave an incredible account as to the importance of Profession. This act in its component parts, the individual act made by the candidate coming into the Order and the communal act of the fraternity in accepting this new person, opens anew the entire fraternity to the working of the Holy Spirit. Fr. Felice claims that each profession is to be experienced as a new Pentecost!

Profession is seen first of all as an act of commitment, a renewal of one's baptismal promises. In full freedom and in full awareness of the change that is being exacted on their lives, persons dedicate their lives to God. They no longer belong to themselves but to God.

They give themselves over to God's service to live out the mission God has chosen for the individual. God responds to this dedication, by consecrating, gracing, these persons to live out their particular charisms.

Fr. Felice went on to say that when God gives the fraternity a new member, God is in effect re-founding the local fraternity. The fraternity is, in a sense, melted down and re-formed by God. It is no longer, nor can it ever be again, the fraternity it was before the profession ceremony. It is forever changed; it is forever graced by the addition of this new member. The new member need not adapt to our routine; we must be willing to adjust the way the fraternity does things in order to incorporate (make part of the body) the new member. With the addition of this new sister or brother, the wealth of the fraternity is enhanced. Not only is the vocation of this newest member to be developed, but all members' vocations will develop, be nurtured, and will grow because of the dedications made by all persons in the fraternity.

It is this response to the action and grace of the Holy Spirit that makes the local fraternity the privileged place for our Franciscan vocation to develop. May you be open to the new Pentecost that is in your midst!

True Family

Ashley Hautman, age 20
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What is a *family*? When

I was younger I always saw my family as my dad, my sister, my brother, and me. Scientifically, this was correct; however, when I got a bit older, I realized that family extended beyond blood, to the people who mean most to you. They are people in your life who always seem to be there when you need them and, most importantly, people who love you as if you were blood. That definition seemed to be the right one for me; one that made sense and fit my life perfectly - that is until I discovered a new kind of family. A type of family with which I was less familiar was the kind in which family members were all strangers, but the second they met, it was as if they had known each other all their lives. Even more different and strange to me, was discovering that I had been a member of this family for quite sometime now and didn't know it.

I had always known that we are all "brothers and sisters in Christ," but, very rarely did I see examples of this. That is, until I went to the International WYD YouFra Meeting in Germany in July of 2005. As we

arrived, I was greeted by Fr. Ivan Matic, OFM, the International Youth Spiritual Assistant. Instead of greeting me with a hello and a hand shake, he looked at me, smiled, and gave me a hug. He said, "USA! Hey! How have you been?" It was like he was an old friend. The next morning, it seemed as if I knew almost everyone there. I was completely comfortable. We ate breakfast, not with our individual countries, but spread out and intertwined.

The next several days were full of meetings, prayer, Mass, and activities. There were so many things that touched me and helped me realize how much of a YouFra family we were.

Adoration was the main thing that touched me, because I had never done it before and I really didn't know what to expect. Adoration itself was a moving experience. To be in the presence of the Eucharist, and just sit and reflect for an hour, was like nothing I had ever experienced. What touched me even more was to look up during adoration and see the 25 or so other YouFra in the room, so devoured in prayer. It was as if they were all alone in the room. The thought that Christ can be such a huge part of someone's life and to be able to share that with people and not be afraid to show it in front of people left me with another aspect of what being a Franciscan meant.

I had no idea that when I stepped into that Franciscan school in Vossenack that I would be meeting people with whom I would hold life long friendships. The fact that this kind of Franciscan family is not just an idea or a theory but a reality, gave me such an insight into what being Franciscan really is. It is not just going through YouFra or SFO formation to join a way of life. When you profess into the Franciscan Order you are committing yourself to being a member of another *family*, who will support and help you in times of need, both in your faith life and your regular life. St. Francis set out to rebuild God's church, to preach the gospel always; the Franciscan family gives us Franciscans to help and support doing just that.

Helps for experiencing this type of family:

- * Don't preach Franciscan vocation...live it and let others experience it firsthand!
- * Make sure the SFO fraternity gatherings are "youth friendly" and welcoming.
- * Invite and encourage youth to participate in the fraternity's various apostolates.
- * The fraternity can support a local/parish youth fundraiser activity, without being asked or sponsor a youth/young adult retreat at (www.franciscanyouthusa.com).

Presence in the World II

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Walking on Two Feet of Love

Returning joyfully from Rome after their rule of life had been confirmed by the pope, the brothers entered the Spoleto Valley. *These true proponents of justice conferred together about whether they should live among people or go off to solitary places. St. Francis did not put his trust in his own efforts, but with holy prayer coming before any decision, he chose not to live for himself alone, but for the one who died for all. For he knew that he was sent for this: to win for God souls which the devil was trying to snatch away.* (Armstrong, Hellmann, Short, Francis of Assisi: the Saint, p 214)

From the perspective of our times, it is difficult to appreciate the importance and the radical nature of this decision. At the time of Francis, the contemplative life was considered to be far superior to the active life of service to the world. Based on the words of Jesus that "Mary has chosen the better part," (Luke 10:38-42) most theologians held to the position of Augustine who stated that "The active life has much merit; the contemplative life has more." The religious orders of Francis' time were contemplative and many religious were hermits. St. Francis and St. Dominic began the practice of a re-ligious life of prayer lived in the world with preaching and acts of charity.

A Third Order Dominican, St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) lived a life of intense prayer in a small closet in her parents' home until she was told by Jesus to join love of God to love of neighbor and participate in the world around her. Once, as she was crying bitterly because she had to leave her closet to go and eat with her family, Jesus said to her: *You know that the precepts of love are two: love of me and love of the neighbor; in these, as I have testified, consist the Law and the Prophets. I want you to fulfill these two commandments. You must walk, in fact with both feet, not on one, and with two wings fly to heaven.*

(Rakoczy, Susan Great Mystics & Social Justice. Paulist Press 2006 p. 32-33)

Catherine left her closet and involved herself in the most important religious and political issues of her time. She intervened in political and family feuds in Siena. She worked for the return of Gregory XI from Avignon. She tried to bring peace between Italian cities and the Papal States. At the same time, she served the

sick and poor personally and urged others to do so. (Rakoczy pp. 25; 34)

The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order is about a life of service to the Church and to the world with “prayer and contemplation [as] the soul of all they are and do.” (Rule VIII)

Our local fraternity is the “privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.” (Rule XXII) We can start in our fraternities by taking time to let members tell about what they are doing to walk on both feet of love. Even if the fraternity has a group apostolate centered on service to the community or to the world, not all members may be involved. Each of us needs to have a special action of his or her own that makes love of neighbor concrete. Here are some suggestions:

- Participate in the US Catholic Bishops’ program of legislative advocacy.
- Join your parish Pro-Life group and participate in its activities.
- Volunteer as a teacher’s aide in a public or private school.
- Prepare to work in prison ministry in your diocese.
- Provide transportation for elderly persons.
- Volunteer at a food bank or at a homeless shelter.
- Find out from Catholic Charities what needs to be done in your community.

Brother Juniper



By Fred McCarthy, SFO

Serving Our Unemployed Brothers and Sisters

By Sally Haddad, SFO
National Work Chair
sallydhaddad@sbcglobal.net



In these uncertain times, it is very common to personally know someone who has recently lost his or her job.

We certainly wish to help our unemployed brothers and sisters, but we may not know the best way in which to do so.

First of all, it is important to understand that there are many possible reasons for job loss. A person may have been laid off because he or she was a member of union, where layoff is based entirely on seniority and his or her date of hire was more recent than those who did not lose their jobs. That was the main reason for my own long-term unemployment years ago. A person may have been laid off because the corporation made a decision to close the entire plant. Sometimes a person loses his or her job because management considered that individual’s category of work to be less necessary to the company than other categories. Finally, a person may lose his or her job because that person did something that displeased the boss or manager. No matter why someone loses a job, that person is experiencing a form of death.

People react in a variety of ways to their job losses. Most people experience sadness. Some feel intense fear, and some experience anger, if they think that their job loss was directed against them personally and/or if they think that their job loss was unfair in any way. Also, depression can set in if the period of unemployment is overly long. On the other hand, I have met people, who were able to maintain a strong sense of optimism despite their job loss.

When someone approaches us with news of his or her job loss, it is appropriate to say, “I am sorry.” It is also helpful to assure him or her of our prayers. It is also beneficial to inform our brother or sister about a job opening or job fair that might be of some interest. Sometimes, it is helpful to offer to hire the friend or relative to do odd jobs in the home or yard, if we can afford to do that. On the other hand, it is usually wise to refrain from asking if he or she found a new job, because if he or she did not, it can be embarrassing for that person to have to say that he or she is still unemployed, and if that person did find a job, then, in most cases, that person will eagerly share that information before any questions are asked.

In conclusion, it is more important to listen than to dispense advice, which may be unhelpful. Please use the resources on the National Work Commission Website: <http://www.nafra-sfo.org/work.html> - select "Work Commission Mission" in the middle of the page. There are five links in Section G - Resources for the Monetarily Unemployed, which may help someone who has either lost a job or knows another person, who has lost a job.

The National Ecology Commission



Clara Falzone, SFO

Welcomes Clara Falzone, SFO

By Fred Young, SFO
National Ecology
Commission Chair
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Dear Brothers and Sisters, in reconstituting the National Ecology Commission, I would like to introduce to you the first member appointed: Clara Falzone, SFO. Clara has been a friend of mine for over twenty years and an active member of the Secular Franciscan family since 1987, when she was 29. Within the St. Bonaventure Fraternity in Detroit she has served on the Peace & Justice Commission, and presently on the Youth Commission.

As a child, music, nature, and healing were the means, which the Lord used to draw Clara close to Him. Clara is a nurse, a musician, and an environmental advocate within the guidelines of the Church.

Some of the environmental actions that Clara has accomplished include helping teens learn outdoor skills, such as canoeing, camping, and survival skills. Clara has worked closely with "Stewards of God's Creation" (an interfaith ecology group), and a member of the environment committee at her hospital.

Clara says, "I am looking forward to working with the National Ecology Commission. My objective is to educate and my focus is mostly on river and wildlife conservation, and on environment and health. It would be wonderful, if we could bring people, young and experienced, back to the spiritual life of the church and to our SFO, through environmental or ecological activities. May the Lord of all renew the face of the earth!"

Promoting a Family Perspective

By Ken and Kim Flanagan, SFO
National Family Co-chairs
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In 1988, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a document entitled "A Family Perspective in Church and Society." The purpose of the document was to have parishes and other church related entities become more sensitive to meeting the needs of families. The vehicle for doing this was to implement a family perspective. A perspective is how we view something, the attitude we hold towards something. A family perspective views individuals in the context of family relationships. A family perspective has four elements:

- having a Christian vision of family life: by viewing the family and fraternity as the domestic church, forming loving communities, bearing and educating children, building a just society and sharing in the mission of the Church
- view the family as a developing system, realizing that the family will go through a life cycle with the needs, both emotional and spiritual, changing in response to the life cycle
- Respecting family diversity: being sensitive to the different types of families that exist within our society and Order
- Developing a partnership between families and institutions in order to strengthen family life: working to promote structures that enhance family life and work towards improving the quality of family life

As Franciscans we not only have our family of origin but through our profession we become members of the

Franciscan family and relate to our fraternity family. This year, the National Family Commission hopes to encourage all of us to become more sensitive to the needs of families within our fraternity and the larger society. By promoting a family perspective at the national, regional and local levels, we join our family apostolic activities with our Bishops' desire to implement a family sensitive perspective in our faith community.

As members of the Franciscan family please reflect on these questions:

In our local Franciscan fraternity and regional gatherings do we structure our activities to allow those members who are raising children or caring for aging parents the opportunity to participate?

Do we schedule national, regional and local activities in such a way that it reduces the amount of time that participants are away from family?

Have we examined ways to encourage the Sharing of our family experiences with our local, regional and national fraternities?

Do our Franciscan charism and structures enhance the quality of family life of members of our Order?

We would be interested in hearing some of your responses to these questions. Feel free to email us at kflanagan@catholic-charities.org

The time was filled with prayer, small group sharing, and plenary session presentations, enhanced by the warm hospitality and support of the friary brothers.

The theme for the weekend was, "That All May Be One" (John 17: 22). Fundamental to the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity is the belief that "all our Orders understand that our Franciscan vocation proceeds from our relationship with God through Holy

Baptism in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The call to vocation implies being conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ by means of radical interior change that the Gospel calls conversion, taking up our cross daily to follow Christ. Our particular vocation is to observe the Gospel by following the examples of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi. As members of Franciscan orders, we pledge ourselves, with life-long intent, to live out our Franciscan vocation in community with our brothers and sisters."

Getting together on Friday evening came readily as the participants gathered in an informal circle of chairs to introduce themselves. Introductions were followed by a "Taize Prayer Service" bringing everyone together in the lovely monastery chapel to chant and to meditate around the San Damiano Cross which called St. Francis to "Rebuild the Church."

The four plenary sessions on Saturday covered the top-

A Fresh Start

By Marcella Bina, SFO
National Ecumenical
Committee Chair
Marcella_b@core.com

Twenty-three Franciscans from the U.S. and Canada gathered together at the Little Portion Episcopal-Anglican Friary on Long Island, N. Y. in mid February 2006.

Uncertainties of traveling at this time of year did not stop these hardy Franciscans representing three separate groups: the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, the Secular Franciscan Order, and The Third Order, Province of the Americas, The Society of St. Francis. The weekend of unity and "fresh start" had been planned by the six members of the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity.



ics of Baptism and Vocation, Charism, Christo-centric Dimension, and Prophetic Voice. Each presentation was followed by small group sharing.

Although differences in our faith traditions were noted, all Franciscans left the conference weekend fired to work with a fresh start and the belief "That All May Be One."

A Little Bit of History

By Bill Wicks, SFO,
Historian
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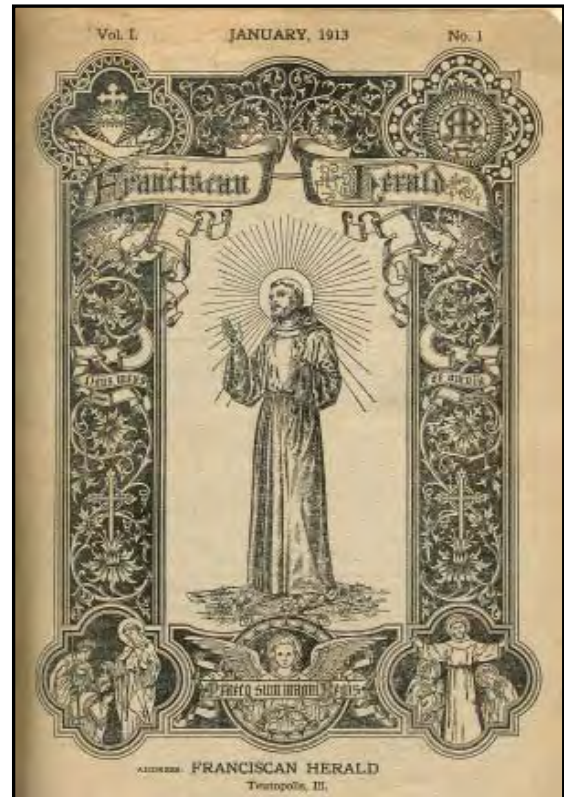
There be books – seventy-four of them. Our SFO archives have recently been enriched with a complete set of the publication, Franciscan Herald, a gift from St. John the Baptist Province. The Herald was first published in 1913 and was discontinued in 1986. It was a publication of Sacred Heart (OFM) Province that contained articles from many Franciscan sources. The Introduction in the first issue reveals, “The Franciscan Herald is devoted primarily to the interest of the Third Order of St. Francis and of the Franciscan Missions.” The Herald was, during those times, an excellent tool for formation and communication, and is a superb chronicle of our history.

Over the past few weeks, I have been scrutinizing these texts to make notes of historical significance. This effort has been very rewarding. I am delighting in discovering threads of the workings of the Holy Spirit throughout our history, as presented in these texts. I really got caught up in the writings, as one would in finding items of interest in very old newspapers. And, every now and then, I came across some words that would cause me to pause, and sometimes smile. I share a few of these with you now. They are all taken from the Franciscan Herald, (Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, Illinois); the year and page are cited after each quote.

* Did you know that we have an official hymn of the Third Order? It is called *Hail St. Francis*. Does anyone out there know this song? (1962, p2)

* In 1964, an “Equitable Calendar” was created by a friar: Leap year would occur every fifth or sixth year, with a “leap week” added in December giving it 37 days. The leap year would contain 53 weeks. Easter would always fall on April 9; January 1 would always be on Sunday, Memorial Day on a Tuesday, July 4 on a Wednesday and Christmas on a Monday. (1964, p123)

* Movie stars participating in “The Hour of St. Francis” television program, conducted by Fr. Hugh Noonan, OFM, were: Ann Blyth, Ruth Hussey, Jayne Meadows and Steve Allen, and MacDonald Carey. I wonder how many of you recognize these once famous movie stars. (1965, p303)



Franciscan Herald, Vol. I, No. 1, 1913

* In 1966, a billboard in downtown Pittsburgh, sponsored by the Third Order of St. Francis, St. Augustine fraternity, proclaimed in bold letters, *Smile, God Loves You*. (1966-p95)

* Miss Minnesota for 1954-55 was a Tertiary. (1955, p190) Go figure!

* The term, Chapter, as applied to meetings, comes from the early days of monasticism, when it was customary to call the community together to hear a portion, or Chapter, of the Rule. (1951, p244)

* Finally, Will Rogers is quoted in an editorial, *Speaking Louder Than Words*, (1968), by Editor Mark Hegener, OFM: “Will posed a solution to the U-boat menace during World War I by declaring, ‘All we have to do is heat the Atlantic to 212 degrees. Then when the subs have to surface, we can pick them off one by one. Now, somebody’s going to ask how to heat up the ocean. Well, I’m not going to worry about that. That’s a detail – and I’m a policy maker.’” Of course, we don’t have any such animals in the world today. (1968, p228)

Mexico

...Our Culture and the SFO

By Adelina Frisbie, SFO
Our Lady of Guadalupe Empress
of the Americas Region

Culture is the way we dress, the food we eat, the music we play, the buildings we construct, and the art we create, including our family traditions. It is a combination of old and new. The culture of Mexico is very old. Mexico's ancient civilizations produced some of the most spectacular, eye-blasting architecture ever built, thousands of years ago. The native people of Mexico had very advanced civilizations. They were called civilizations because they were more advanced than the societies of many other peoples around the world. They were experts in mathematics, astronomy, and art. They had a religious calendar as well as a solar calendar. Many people visit the ancient sites of Chichén-Itzá, Teotihuacán, Tenochtitlán, and others.

The culture of Mexico has been influenced by the Spanish, who sailed over from Europe. With them came twelve Franciscan (OFM) missionaries, who converted the native people to Christianity, and today 95% of the population is Roman Catholic, but native ways still remain, and have blended with the Roman Catholic traditions. For example, ancient native dances are performed to celebrate Catholic holidays. The Franciscan charism and traditions influence our faith, and celebrations. For example, nine days before Christmas, on Dec. 16th, the Posadas celebration begins. On these days, the hardships of Joseph and Mary traveling from Nazareth to Bethlehem, in search of an inn where Jesus could be born, are remembered. Sometimes, adults and children dress in biblical costumes, carry candles and statues of the Holy Family, and go from door to door through the streets of the neighborhood, singing carols about the journey. These are times of prayerful reflection on the coming of Jesus to our world. As part of the celebration children break a candy filled piñata.

Another Franciscan tradition, started by St. Francis himself, is to build a Nacimiento (a crèche, Nativity scene). In all celebrations, we have music, food, and colorful decorations. We venerate Our Lady of Guadalupe with deep respect and love in our hearts. Throughout the year many pilgrims travel for days (sometimes on foot) to visit the Basilica and bring thanks for her blessings.

During the persecution of the Catholic Church, from 1919 to the early thirties, President

Plutarco Elias Calles closed all the churches throughout the country. This action did not stop the faith. Faith grew deeper. Many seculars provided lodging for the clergy and other religious where the Eucharist and Sacraments were received privately. It was the time of martyrs. Two of them were Secular Franciscans, from Guadalajara Jal, who were beatified on Nov. 20, 2005. The Franciscan Family is still very strong in Mexico. There are 35,000 Seculars in 17 Regions.

The Mexican culture is known for Family Unity. The country's divorce rate is the lowest in the world (0.33 divorces per 1,000 population, compared to 4.95 in the United States). Children regularly live with their parents until marriage. It is also quite common for family units to remain connected, often with grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, and children, all living in the same area. Loyalty to family is absolute. Brothers will fight for the honor of their sisters, and family members are often tapped for employment opportunities. Also, the parent roles are well defined: the father is ruler and the mother is the heart of the family. Some times this is the cause of machismo (Spanish for male chauvinism). The government and the Church are working through programs to avoid family violence. When both parents work, grandparents help by taking care of the children.

Mexican Seculars bring a deep commitment to our Order by trying to follow the Rule faithfully and by working hard to help the Church, through our parishes. We respect the priests and all the members of the Franciscan Family. At the same time, we are learning the traditions, celebrations and the way of life of our brothers and sisters of the SFO in the USA, and the way they serve the Order. Life can be very hard for people who emigrate to another country. Family roots and family support are missed and a new language must be learned. It is a new way of life, but the Secular Franciscan Order became a new family for us, and a home away from home.

A mis queridos hermanos y hermanas en Clara y Francisco:

Todos los Latino Americanos tenemos muchas cualidades que brindamos a nuestra Orden. Sigamos trabajando gustosamente por su bien y su prosperidad. La OFS necesita de todos y cada uno de nosotros. Los miembros del Comité Nacional Multicultural estamos trabajando por la unión de todas las culturas, por el bienestar de nuestra Orden Franciscana Seglar y para ayudar en sus necesidades. Si quieren escribir un artículo sobre su cultura y su país, envíenlo a: Multicultural Committee. Sonia Bernardo, SFO, jsbernardo@msn.com. Los esperamos en nuestro próximo Congreso Quinquenal en Julio 3, del año próximo. Ven y representa a tu cultura.

Paz y Bien – Adelina



Our Dining Room a Church?

By Diana Faust,
SFO
<http://www.franoutreach.org/>

Last Friday I served dinner at the Marquard Center soup kitchen with

some people from my parish. The menu was tuna sandwiches, refried beans, fruit, bread, and milk. Oh yes - and chocolate eyeballs donated by a Halloween candy manufacturer.

Early in the dinner hour two guests started arguing. Nothing major, more like a loud discussion. One guest used a swear word and the other said to him, "What are you cussing in a church for?"

Near the end of the dinner hour, a women was talking to someone and said "Oops, I can't be talking about that here. This is a church."

In the nine years I've been working here, it has never occurred to me that the guests think of our dining room as a church. It certainly doesn't look like a church - the dining room used to be the gymnasium of a grade school. We have some religious decorations - a picture of the last supper, a banner from a street pole with a picture of St. Francis on it, a small crucifix on the wall. We also share a court yard with the Lutheran church next door. But we don't hold any religious services for our guests. That night, I don't even think we said grace, unless I just missed it.

I've always known that a lot of praying goes on around here - not group prayer, but the kind that arises out of desperation and need. Guests pray that they'll get into the shelter at night and live to see another day. They pray that they'll have the strength to kick a substance abuse habit and that they'll find a place to live. Our case managers often pray that they can help them achieve their goals. Our guests pray for us, too - they tell us so. And our donors pray for our guests and us - they tell us, too. And I certainly pray all the time that people will be generous in their

donations so that we can keep all of our programs open. We also have Mass for our donors at least once a month. Yet the amount of prayer that goes on in a place doesn't make it a church.

St. Francis of Assisi was recorded as saying "the world is my cloister" (which must be the origin of the phrase "the world is my oyster" - ha!). While monastic religious orders separated themselves from the world in order to keep its evil influences away and focus on God alone, St. Francis looked at all of creation as speaking to him of God. To him, everything could draw him closer to God - earthworms, birds, lepers, poor persons he met along the road, the brothers with whom he lived, and even Sister Death. (For a good discussion of this read Chapter 3 of the wonderful book, Franciscan Prayer by Sr. Ilia Delio.)

Even though he saw God in everything, churches were important to St Francis. He and his brothers would say a certain prayer every time they saw a church in the distance and, some say, even when they saw random things that looked like a cross. (The prayer is the "Testament Prayer" at <http://www.franciscans.org.au/spirituality/prayers.html>.) Yet, his prayer wasn't limited to churches. At the end of his life it was said of him that he was not so much praying as having, himself, become a prayer. Maybe even though we don't hold prayer services for our guests we have in some way become prayer. For both those who eat and those who serve, what we do here is an expression of our gratitude for the gifts God has given us, a statement of our need, and a simple entering into relationship with each other that's filled with the presence of God.

When the guests called us a church, it also reminded me of when I first went on a Christ Renews His Parish retreat, almost 20 years ago. When I got to know the people there and saw their faith, I realized for the first time that "church" wasn't a building or the services that were held there. "Church" is really the people - people who choose to have faith - not perfect in holiness or free from struggles, but simply living their lives as best they can in contact with others who are trying to do the same. For the first time, I saw why being part of a church was so important. Perhaps it was no coincidence that the people I was volunteering with on Friday were people I recently met through the Kingdom Weekend retreat at my parish. After discovering "church" in one another, we were out being church for the men and women who needed a place to eat that night.

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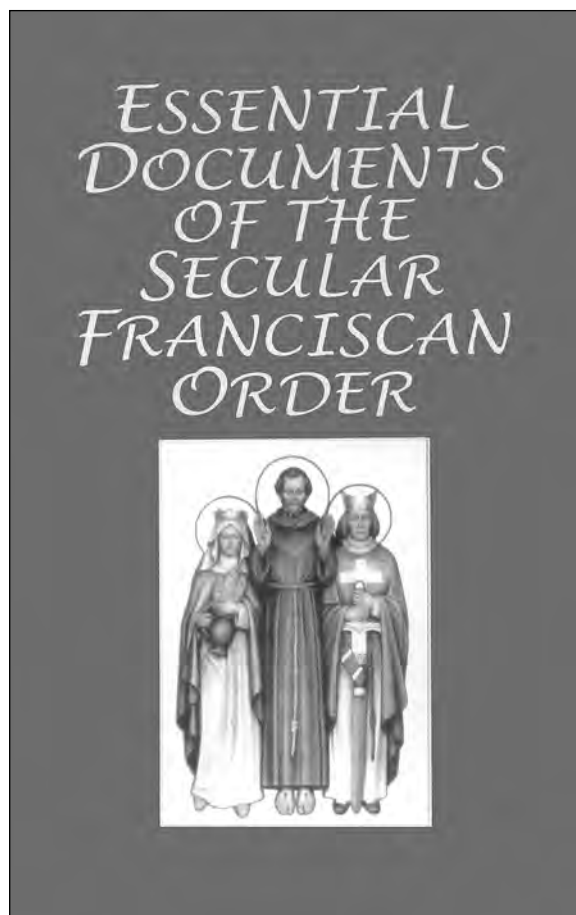
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