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# TAU-USA

Publication of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States  
Autumn 2009 - Issue 64



*Falling Leaves by Betty Misuraca*

## October's Party

*“October gave a party;  
The leaves by hundreds came-  
The Chestnuts, Oaks, and Maples,  
And leaves of every name.  
The Sunshine spread a carpet,  
And everything was grand,  
Miss Weather led the dancing,  
Professor Wind the band.”*

*By George Cooper*

# TAU-USA

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TAU-USA is a vehicle of communication within the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States, allowing the national fraternity to disseminate information to the regional and local fraternities and allowing Seculars to communicate with one another throughout the country, thus fostering a sense of community Nation wide.

All professed members of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States receive the TAU-USA without charge. It is the responsibility of the Regional Ministers to ensure that the addresses of professed members are in the Data Base.

Local fraternities are responsible for providing copies of the TAU-USA for their Spiritual Assistants by purchasing subscriptions.

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All correspondence sent to the editor becomes the property of the editor, and may be published in TAU-USA. Please state in all correspondence whether you wish to have your name withheld.

The deadline for sending address changes to Robert Herbelin, SFO, Data Base Adm. and for submitting articles to the Editor for the next issue is October 15, 2009.

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

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

Minister's Message...1

Regional Roundup...2

Classic Franciscan...5

Reflections...6

Humor Page...10

Little Weeds...11

Summer Seminar II...11

CNSA News and Views...14

Poetry Page...16

Formation...18

Youth...20

JPIC...21

Ecumenical/Interfaith...22

FAN...23

History...25

Spirit of the Country...26

Franciscan Living...27

Green Tip...28

**The poems received for the "The Poetry Contest" are absolutely marvelous. Many have already been published in the TAU.**

**The Winner of the Poetry Contest will be announced in the next issue.**

**Thank you.**

**Frances Wicks, SFO  
Editor**

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Canadian - \$6.00  
Foreign - \$15.00  
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## Minister's Message



The Irises by Monet

*"Give thanks to the Lord for He is good and  
His love endures forever"*

**By Patrick Mendés, SFO  
National Minister**

As my term of office concludes, I'll take this opportunity to give thanks to the Lord and to you for what has been the most unique and most challenging and rewarding period of my entire 48 years as a professed member of our Order.

Perhaps the most rewarding experiences came from making visitations of our Regions. In the past 3 years, I will have visited 29 of the 30 Regions. Here I found dedicated, loving, spirit filled brothers and sisters, living our charism in vital and varied ways, from working with the poor and marginalized in shelters and soup kitchens, to serving in the missions of Bolivia and Brazil, to faithful service and sharing our Franciscan joy in their parishes, to shared ministry and witness to our Franciscan vocation and family with other members of our Franciscan family, both friars and sisters, to serious dedication to the mission of Franciscan Action Network, to the many hours spent in adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament. I even found brothers and sisters who shared my deep love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus! Yes, our charism is living and well. We rejoice in what we have done and are doing and ask God's continued blessing on the work yet to be done.

Equally blessed has been the gift of working with an Executive Council seriously committed to those we have been chosen to serve, often at great personal sacrifice. They have been wonderfully supportive of me as I dealt with often difficult matters. I can only offer

these humble words of thanks which are so inadequate for the gratitude and undying love I have for all of them.

Among the highlights of our tenure has been the inception of the Summer Seminar for the SFO at St. Francis University in Loretto, PA. It was born of the wish of Fr. Gabriel Zeis, TOR, to offer something special for the SFO and to the hard work and genius of National Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR. This year's seminar was filled to maximum capacity. May it long continue and become a tradition of the SFO in the USA.

As we look to the next Quinquennial Congress in 2012, we rejoice in the highly successful "Q" of 2005, while recognizing that there was some controversy, it, none the less, brought together loving brothers and sisters from across our country and we learned very valuable lessons in intercultural communication and shared in the joy of the varied cultures and ethnicities which comprise our Order in the USA.

I also owe a huge debt of gratitude to the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants. They have been, to a man, consistently supportive of my efforts as well as those of the National Executive Council. It was my privilege to participate in the Spiritual Assistants Workshop/Conference sponsored by the CNSA. I had the opportunity to meet with many Regional and Provincial Spiritual Assistants and to offer them my thanks, in your name, for all that they do for us. They have been faithful brothers to us and true companions on the journey from Gospel to life and life to Gospel.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to the Regional Ministers, current and past, who, even in the tough times, supported and encouraged me and filled my life with their fraternal love.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank you, the local ministers and brothers and sisters throughout all of our Regions, who welcomed me with fraternal affection and have shared with me your local newsletters and your invitations to share the memorable events of your local fraternities. It has been a joy to meet, in person, those of you who have written me.

I also offer my thanks to the International Presidency of our Order, especially our Minister General, Encarnacion del Pozo, and Vice-Minister General, Doug Clorey, who has been mentor, friend and brother.

In the words of our Holy Father, Francis, "Let us begin again, for up to now we have done nothing."

My prayer for you continues and, as always, remains: May the Sacred Heart of Jesus surround you with His love and fill your lives with His abundant blessings!

With a grateful heart,

I am your servant and minister, Patrick.

# Regional Roundup

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

## Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha Region

### SFO Receives Anti-Racism-Diversity Award

Mary Stronach, SFO, of Marcy, NY, was honored in April by the YWCA of Syracuse and Onondaga County for opposing racism with a spirit of “peace, justice, freedom and dignity,” and was inducted into the YWCA’s Academy of Diversity Achievers. Mary is JPIC chair for Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha Region, formation director for St. Joseph Fraternity in Utica, PR co-chair for the National Fraternity, and an Italian and Spanish translator for CIOFS.

## St. Maximilian Kolbe Region



L to R: Fr. Bob Sieg, OFM, Kathryn Robankowski, SFO, Carol Jeanne Phillips, SFO, and Fr. Bill Bouhall, Pastor of St. Thomas More Church

Kathryn Robankowski, SFO, and Carol Jeanne Phillips, SFO, are two newly professed members of St. Francis Fraternity. “We are especially proud since this was our first profession in many years,” writes Marcella Bina, SFO. “Our fraternity was established in 1868, at St. Joseph (Franciscan) Church in Cleveland, OH. At one time the membership numbered over 1,000. However, one hundred plus years of building progress in the area forced St. Joseph Church to close and the fraternity moved three times. Currently, the fraternity is gathering monthly in the chapel of the OFM friary of Sacred Heart Province in Cleveland. With the support of the friars and St. Thomas More Parish, which is adjacent to the friary, our small SFO group can come together and grow once again as a vibrant Franciscan family.”

## Juan de Padilla Region



Members of Little Portion Fraternity are shown: front row, left to right: Marie Easton, Edith Bunch, Marty Barnett, Gloria Lafferty, Dinora Reyes, John Witosky. Back row: Bucky Rodkin, Mary Mead, Steve Lafferty, Janice Keeley, Mark Keeley. Not pictured is Dee Hrankaj, who is now Spiritual Assistant for Little Portion Fraternity.

The canonical establishment of Little Portion Fraternity, in St. Brigid Church in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, was celebrated on April 18, 2009. It all started when Edith Bunch moved to Cookson, Oklahoma, from New Mexico, where she had begun her Secular Franciscan formation. She contacted Sts. Stanislaus/Adalbert in Broken Arrow and professed in 2001. She eventually recruited several people in Tahlequah, who in turn recruited people in Little Rock and Fort Smith, Arkansas. The first ones from Tahlequah to profess there (2003) were Marie Easton, Marty Barnett, Mark Keeley, Janice Keeley, and Mary Mead. Father Felix Petrovsky, OFM Cap., Regional Spiritual Assistant, had celebrated their profession. Ann Marie Neuok and Dee Hrankaj (respectively Minister and Formation Director from Sts. Stanislaus/Adalbert) traveled over 70 miles one way each month to provide formation. Four times a year they drove even further to Fort Smith, Arkansas, to provide formation to those located there, and the ones from Little Rock drove to Fort Smith so that all could benefit together from the formation and gathering there.

Frank Carpinelli, Regional Minister, reports that the region has three more emerging fraternities, with one more being established in the very near future.

## Santa María de las Montañas Region

Phoebe Eaton, SFO, former regional minister, went to be with the Lord on February 4, after spending many years in a nursing home. Her funeral Mass took place in Holy Family Church in Pueblo, CO.

Franciscans of the Prairie Region  
**Ordination of Secular Franciscan,  
 Ron Hilt, into the Byzantine Rite**



Pictured are from left to right, Fr. Benet Fonck, OFM (Sacred Heart Province), Ronald Hilt, SFO, his mother Martha Hilt, SFO, Fr. Jeffrey Holtman, OFM (Sacred Heart Province)

Ronald H. Hilt, Jr., SFO – member of Our Lady of Angels Fraternity in Edwardsville, Illinois, and former sacristan and social worker at St. Anthony of Padua Parish in St. Louis, Missouri - was ordained a priest for the Romanian Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of St. George (whose cathedral is in Canton, Ohio) on June 28, 2009, by the hand of his bishop, the Most Reverend John Michael Botean, D.D.

His ordination took place at St. Basil Church in Trenton, New Jersey, during the Divine Liturgy marking the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of that parish and the conclusion of the eparchy’s annual convocation.

It was appropriate that the ceremonies happened at St. Basil’s for two reasons: the eparchy’s very first vocation to the priesthood, many years ago, came from that parish; and, after having celebrated all the other sacraments in that parish over 100 years, it was time for an ordination to the priesthood.

Father Ron served his Divine Liturgy of Thanksgiving there on Sunday, July 12, 2009, where he is assigned as the associate pastor.

Present were the parishioners, his family (including his mother Martha Hilt SFO), and a representation of the total Franciscan Family (two friars, a Poor Clare, three Franciscan Third Order Religious, and five Secular Franciscans).

For about eight years before his priestly ordination, Father Ron has been associated with St. George’s Romanian Byzantine Catholic Church in Aurora, Illinois, first as catechist, then as reader and subdeacon, and finally as deacon for over three years.

Father Ron, 38, actively began his preparation for priesthood about 15 years ago. His theological studies were done at Aquinas Institute in St. Louis, with a special emphasis on the Byzantine Liturgy and the Eastern Fathers of the Church. Fr. Benet Fonck, OFM, served as his academic mentor, spiritual advisor, and liaison with the bishop for his formation while he was also spiritual assistant for Our Lady of Angels Fraternity.

Father Ron is also a theology teacher at Aurora Central Catholic High School.

**St. Francis Region**

St. Louis the King Fraternity celebrated 125 years of establishment recently. Their fraternity was the first on the West Coast. Members held their first meeting on May 18, 1884. During the decade of the founding of the fraternity, 1880 to 1890 these things occurred: The first motion picture was made; The first skyscraper, a ten story building of all metal frame, was completed; His Holiness Pope Leo XIII issued the Encyclical “Auspicato” ardently commending the Venerable Third Order be propagated and fostered; the bacteria causing TB was discovered; Jesse James was shot by a member of his own gang; The first Andrew Carnegie library opened; The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn was published; Ramona, revealing the plight of American Indians was published; And the Statue of Liberty was given to President Grover Cleveland by France. Canticle, Newsletter of St. Louis the King Fraternity.

Sylvia Paoli, Regional Minister, and her husband, Peter, celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on June 6, 2009 at St. Gregory the Great Church in Whittier, CA with family and friends, including many Secular Franciscans, who participated in the Mass and helped with the reception. Mass was followed by a reception attended by 100 people.

**St. Elizabeth of Hungary Region**  
**Election Results:**  
 Minister: Jacquelyn Walsh, SFO, Minister  
 Miriam Kennedy, SFO, Vice Minister  
 Susan Ronan, SFO, Secretary  
 Patricia Gagnon, SFO, Treasurer:  
 Councilors: Sarah Anderson, SFO, District 1  
 Ray Raboin, SFO, District 2  
 Joe Makley, SFO, District 3  
 Roselle Neely, SFO, District 4  
 David Amara, SFO, District 5  
 John Sheridan, SFO, District 6

## Five Franciscan Martyrs



Six newly professed members of Holy Spirit Fraternity in Port Richey, FL from left to right are: Brian Brewster, SFO, Marlene De Santis, Peter Zeppero SFO, Kathan Neal, SFO, Michael Maiorano, SFO, and Mary Jo Artura, SFO

At Holy Spirit Fraternity's Day of Recollection on May 2, six new members were professed and three inquirers became candidates. The newly professed are pictured above and the new candidates are pictured below:



Left to right: Rev. Thomas K. Murphy, OFM, Regional Spiritual Assistant, Anita Jo Behan, SFO, Minister of Holy Spirit Fraternity, Peggy Stahlman, SFO, Formation Assistant, and the three new candidates: Stanica Mech, Mary Walsh and Maria Berrios.

In San Damiano Fraternity, Lucas Amato, SFO, from Sun City Center, Florida has written a booklet, Scriptural Meditations for the Divine Mercy Chaplet, Franciscan Crown, Seven Sorrows, and Rosary published by Acta Publications (Greg Pierce is the contact person for the booklet). (See [www.actapublications.com](http://www.actapublications.com)).

Luke is also involved in promoting Rosary Rallies. On Saturday, October 10, 2009 at Noon, Rosary Rallies will be held in the Public Square all across the U.S., from

Florida to Alaska, and from Maine to Hawaii. Last year over 3,500 distinct groups, large and small, prayed the rosary publically. It is sponsored by "America Needs Fatima" to commemorate the 92nd Anniversary of Fatima and to pray for our own United States.

He says, "All that is necessary is that one take the initiative to form a small planning group, pick a very public location in their area, invite others and then pray the rosary publically. One easy way to publicize it, although by no means the only way, is to include a notice in one's parish bulletin, if the pastor so permits. For further information call America Needs Fatima on weekdays between 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM, toll free at (866) 584-6012 or see [www.ANF.org](http://www.ANF.org) on the web."

### Queen of Peace Region

On October 4, the Fraternity of the Sacred Heart in St. Paul, MN will celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of canonical establishment with Mass at Sacred Heart Parish followed by a special dinner at Steak House. Special guests will be Richard Morton, SFO, former National Minister (emcee) and Fr. Michael Perry, OFM, Provincial Minister of Sacred Heart Province. Also included in the celebration will be the special occasion of Jim and Sis Hein, SFO, who will be celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, having been married at Sacred Heart Church on September 12, 1959. Jim's mother, Mary Magdalene Moriarty, was professed into the fraternity in 1927. The group is looking forward to another 100 years of prayer, sacrifice and good works.

### St. Clare Region

The "Padre Pio Newly Forming Group" in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, continues to thrive. Celeste Obermiller, SFO, their leader and the only professed member, so far, has worked diligently to form this group. They now have six candidates and two inquirers. They continue their initial formation using both "Catch Me A Rainbow, Too" and the SFO Rule with commentary. The Forming Group has a wonderful newsletter and the monthly meeting includes: prayer, music, a "Saint Minute," formation and social time.

### Lady Poverty Region

The Interim JPIC Team (Cyl Maljan, Joe Terlesky, Vickie Snyder, Mary Lou Kreider, and Fr. David Moczulski, OFM) have been in the midst of laying the foundation for JPIC in the region. Using the Rule and Constitutions as a foundation, with the guidance of the National Justice, Peace and Integrity team, Lady Poverty Region is developing an Action Plan similar to those of other branches of our Franciscan family.

# Classic Franciscan



Mary Hebert, SFO

## All Things Mary

By Julia Pearson, SFO  
Human Interest Editor

### *We care, God cures.*

- Motto of the Stephen Ministry -

A well-worn phrase that shines through the prism of Franciscan light is: "We are God's hands in the world."

It can also be said that we put hands and feet on our prayers when we serve others for God. Mary Hebert, of Trenton, Michigan has been God's compassionate ears in her corner of the world for many years.

Born on August 15, 1918 in Chicago, Illinois, Nona "Mary" McLaughlin lived with her family in Ferndale, Michigan, where she attended St. James Grade School and was graduated with honors from St. James High School in 1936. She was involved with the youth groups at the Shrine of the Little Flower and at St. James Catholic Church until her marriage to Louis Hebert in January, 1946 at St. James Catholic Church. Mary was professed in the Secular Franciscan Order on October 5, 1945 at St. Bonaventure monastery in Detroit. Her family had its ups and downs, as it grew to include seven children: Francis, Mary, Anne, Carol, Joyce, Cynthia and William.

Mary's life was then visited by profound losses. Her children, Joyce and William, then adults facing what appeared to be overwhelming circumstances, ended their own lives. In the devastation of Joyce's death in May, 1974, her marriage ended divorce in 1975. Mary recalls a miracle that grabbed her attention, as she sat on the sofa of her living room. She heard a voice that she knew was God's: "You have two choices: you can live or you can die." With her God and her faith to sustain her in the depth of her pain, Mary chose life. William's death was another searing tide of grief in 1982.

Divorce and suicide had broken her heart, but a broken heart is also an open heart. In 1987, Mary traveled to Baltimore, Maryland to be trained as a Stephen Leader. As a Stephen Minister through her own parish, she was co-leader in a Survivors of Suicide group for five years. Mary quotes Deepak Chopra, "Everyone is doing the best they can to form their own level of consciousness." She relates, "I really believe this. It frees me to love people unconditionally."

For the last nineteen years, Mary has lived in the Trenton Co-Op Towers, where she serves as an un-official Stephen Minister to her neighbors as well as her extended family. Now in her 91st year, she gave up her car this past October. One of the residents in her building provides transportation for Mary and others. Mary says assuredly, "God takes care of us." Since she can't make it to daily Mass, Mary subscribes to Living with Christ: Your Daily Companion for Living and Praying the Eucharist. Father Lester Bach is a favorite author and Mary is re-reading his 1975 book, Take Time for Sunsets.

The story of Capuchin Franciscan, Fr. Solanus Casey, is especially dear to Mary. After his ordination in 1904, Fr. Solanus served in New York, Harlem, and Yonkers. Known as "the Doorkeeper" during twenty year as the porter at Mary's beloved monastery of St. Bonaventure in Detroit, Fr. Solanus greeted and served people of any age and walk in life. He was always ready to listen to anyone at any time. Fr. Solanus died on July 31, 1957, at the exact day and hour of his First Holy Mass 53 years before. On July 11, 1995, Pope John Paul II named Solanus Casey, as Venerable.

# Our Prayful Reflections

## THE FREEDOM OF FRANCIS

By Rita Baughman, SFO  
St. Clare Region  
St. Louis, MO



My will be done. Sounds quite similar to those holy words from our Savior, but it couldn't be further from the ideals that Jesus envisioned. The holy prayer that Jesus taught his followers to not only say, but to know, deep inside, proclaimed, "Thy will be done." He was speaking, of course, of the will of His Father. Unfortunately, Jesus' prayer is not the mindset of most Americans today, perhaps most earthlings today. And each person with the perception of "my will be done" feels that freedom is his, if indeed his will be done. After all, he is making decisions on his own, in his own time, and for his own good no matter what others may think or how it may affect another person or situation. And, for the moment, these decisions may "feel" like the right thing; success may be found, physical pleasures may be satisfying, and prestige may dominate and caress the ego. However, these moments are very fleeting, very limited to our short life here on earth. And while some decisions are actually for the betterment of our psyche, which in turn can help us live our lives in truth, not all decisions made to make our life easier are good. The majority of these types of decisions, that make our lives easy, can lead to unholy, and can lead to an opposition of what God actually intended.

Real freedom is having the power to say no to sin, to unholy acts or thoughts, and St. Francis of Assisi was a perfect model of this. While St. Francis both physically and egotistically enjoyed the pleasures and wealth of his early life before his conversion, he knew there was something missing. He felt, deep within, that his lifestyle was not giving him the peace he needed. While he caroused with his friends and women, spending his and his father's money lavishly, he felt, deep inside, something stirring that would not diminish. It was the slightest of feelings, actually more of an awareness, that this sort of lifestyle, indeed this participation of ugliness, was not his true self, not what his deepest desire was for

the rest of his life. Therefore, was this true freedom? I think not. Not if there was a realization, even if it was ever so slight, that there was a deviation, an irregularity in the smoothness of his life. Little did he know, at the time, that very soon his life and his misunderstood "freedom" would change dramatically. The sweetness, that he mistakenly felt he possessed in his days of pleasure and merriment, would turn into a life which contained the sweetness that only God can supply and has no comparison to earthly sweetness. In fact, this divine sweetness, with which God supplied St. Francis, was the impetus and the strength he required to live the holy life that he did.

When you first read about the life of St. Francis after his conversion, you may think otherwise about the meaning of sweetness to which I am referring. He actually lived a very difficult, physically demanding and sometimes emotionally draining life. He gave up all worldly goods and pleasures, and lived the life of a poverty stricken reject. While many believed he had lost his mental capacities, St. Francis viewed his new life as a clear, sunny day compared to the fogginess he felt previously. He couldn't be more cognizant of what his purpose in life was, and he was determined to serve and live according to God's will, not his own. As a matter of fact, this newfound freedom, that he realized was a direct grace from God, was, for the first time in his life, actually giving him peace, giving him a purpose and reason to live. He was not concerned that his previous friends and relatives thought he was ruining his prospects of a wealthy, comfortable life. There was no guilt, no embarrassment, no pride, only a newness and clarity to do The Lord's work.

With this new freedom came not only peace, but, also, many challenges, even hardships. The sweetness of life now could even be the opportunity, yes the pleasure, to fast for days or shut himself off from his brothers for long periods of time. He would deprive himself of luxuries, even what we may think of as bare minimum needs such as a soft bed or a warm coat, all for the sake and love of God. In the words of St. Francis himself, "*Many apply themselves to prayers and offices, and practice much abstinence and bodily mortification, but because of a single word which seems to be hurtful to their bodies or because of something being taken from them, they are forthwith scandalized and troubled. These are not poor in spirit: for he who is truly poor in spirit, hates himself and loves those who strike him on the cheek.*" Most of us know poverty only in the material sense. There is a distinct difference between poverty of spirit and poverty of possessions, St. Francis abided by both. This emptying of self gave him the freedom that



God willed him to have so that all his efforts and prayers could be focused only on the divine.

A reminder of the freedom of the gospel that St. Francis lived so perfectly is Paul's letter to the Galatians, "For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love." Gal 5:13 The key word here is serve, and, also, opportunity. Francis saw this newfound freedom as a grace-filled and God-given opportunity to serve his fellow townfolk. The once repulsed leper was now a brother, one that he even welcomed with open arms, literally. He didn't fear the contagion of the physical disease, but realized it was a society given disease. The disease was a very deep mental belief of being less than the rest of society, therefore creating no ease in life. To most of the society in St. Francis' day, being a leper meant that the disease was a punishment for sin. Yet he loved the rejected lepers, served them and had the freedom to humbly place himself at their level, for he knew that God saw us all at the same level. Without this freedom, he would have been bound to act towards them as the rest of society did, all for the love of societal acceptance. It was not a labor, or repulsion, but a desire to please God and please his neighbor. In his own words, St. Francis said "*The Lord gave to me, Brother Francis, thus to begin to do penance; for when I was in sin it seemed to me very bitter to see lepers, and the Lord Himself led me amongst them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, that which had seemed to me bitter was changed for me into sweetness of body and soul.*" Once again, that freedom was indeed a God given sweetness. Human expectations had been replaced by his desire to please God. His previous cloudiness had disappeared and the clarity of real freedom had allowed Francis to do the Lord's work in perfect peace, knowing that the acceptance of the Lord was the only importance to be concerned about.

St. Francis used all five senses to worship God, and through these his sense of freedom was amplified. After his conversion, he realized that we were graced with these senses to worship God and appreciate his gifts. He loved the glory of nature and reveled in its beauty, feel and smells. He saw all that was before him as an extension of God, even life and death. And as his canticle explains, all living things are a part of the family of God. St. Francis even includes fire, water, wind, and death in his canticle, giving praise to God for all things given. In his canticle, regarding the gifts of nature that God provides, he states - "*To You alone Most High, do they belong, and no one is worthy to mention Your name.*" This explains the profundity of St. Francis's thoughts regarding his high esteem of God's goodness

and graciousness in the giving of all nature to us, as unworthy as we are. While he certainly acknowledged the freedom to praise God in all his creation through singing, dancing, and proclaiming the Gospel, he also found great peace and freedom by praying and worshipping God in silence and solitude. He spent many hours, sometimes days in the caves of central Italy, alone in a deep and mystical union with The Lord. However, he never altogether separated the contemplative from the active life. The grace of freedom was to him like the permission a young child has to walk barefoot through the fields, lavishing in its beauty, scents, and feels. He felt this freedom both in his active life and in his silent time alone with God and therefore there was no separation.

St. Francis taught his followers, "*Preach the Gospel at all times; use words if necessary.*" This is true freedom in action. Not to even have to speak, but to have the ability to convey the will and word of God with our actions. What a joy, a total release and surrender of self. And it is the visibility of this joy in life that becomes more evangelistic than any words that could be spoken. It has only come when we can truly and freely say "Thy will be done" and have the freedom to sincerely believe it.

### **I Never Knew**

By Rita Baughman, SFO

I never knew that I could dance  
To glorify my Lord  
I never thought the joy I felt  
Could magnify my words

I thought that my expressive praise  
A shame would surely bring  
But as the praise rose in my heart  
I couldn't help but sing

My singing was exuberant  
My love had overflowed  
And soon my body danced with joy  
To show love for my God

I thought of Francis ever free  
His inhibitions gone  
I read of how he left his world  
To give to God alone

He didn't care if he looked strange  
His folly mattered not  
He only knew he had to praise  
And serve those we forgot

The suffering, The poor of heart  
He cared for with much glee  
As he remembered Jesus say  
"That you do unto me"

So sing and dance and play your tunes  
And serve all those in need  
Express yourself in holy ways  
And Jesus will be pleased

# Our Prayful Reflections

## The Woman

A Meditation by Kathi S. Latta, SFO  
Owensboro, KY

I am in such pain. I hurt with a deep pain that words cannot explain. The pain is almost overwhelming. Each day is an unbearable burden for me. Each day I spend time looking for a release from this pain. It is not just physical pain, but a deeper pain within my heart. I have sought help from those around me, yet no one is able to help me and those that do offer help are unsure or they simply do not understand. I do not understand why I am being tormented with this pain.

Lately, I hear of this man... a teacher, who has cured others in miraculous ways. These people were blind, or had leprosy, or were lame, or had been deathly ill. They tell of hearing him teach about his compassionate love for all of us, his children. (I wonder what he means when he says that we are his children.) These others have approached him and they are cured now. They say he spoke to them about having faith in him and to love one another and that when he touched them, they were cured or he simply told them they were cured. They believe him...or at least they say they do. They listened to him and they believed him. They are changed. It is so noticeable in how they act now and in what they say. They are happy and they speak of this incredible amount of faith they have in him. And they say how good it is being with him and listening to him. It is amazing. How can they be so different now? I want to feel like that, too.

Do I dare approach him?

I am afraid to approach because he may not understand or be able to help me, yet I cannot bear this pain any longer. It isolates me from everyone. I have been so preoccupied with my own problems there is no room for anyone else. As I stand in the crowd I hear him speak of forgiveness and repentance and of faith and love. He speaks gently but with authority. I am beginning to believe his words...he is beginning to touch my heart in a way I do not quite understand.

Do I dare approach him?

I honestly believe what he is saying is true. It has been a long time since I have heard such truth. He speaks of faith and love and his concern for us, his children. I think I will reach out to him and touch his cloak. There are so many around him he will never know it is me touching him. I do know in my heart that I need to touch him. There is something about him that compels me to

touch him. He is walking so quickly and it is difficult keeping up with him, but I know I must follow and touch him if I am to be healed.

Do I dare approach him?

In faith, I touch him. Suddenly there is a relief from the pain. I am healed.

He turns and looks directly at me. *"Who has touched my clothes?"*

"I did."

He said to me, *"Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction."* Mark 5: 34

+++

# Our Prayful Reflections

## You Did It For Me!

By Jay de la Cruz, SFO  
Blessed Junipero Serra Region

Mt. 25: 40 - *"And the King will say to them in reply, Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."*

The poor, the marginalized, those who are wanting in life are given to us to provide the opportunity for our own holiness.

We always encounter the pain handlers, we see the poor and the hungry on the television, we read about the plight of the poorest in near and far away places, and we see the immediate need of those devastated by natural calamities. These are all situations that should touch our inner core as human beings. A response is required of us when we are confronted by these experiences. Hopefully, a positive response will emanate from our heart to real life saving action.

Life experiences and stories from saints, holy, caring people, and my own, have taught me these guidelines, which I would like to share with you:

First, the power of detachment enabled Saint Francis to give back to his father, Bernardone, everything that he had, including the most basic, his clothing. Saint Therese of Lisieux gave her life by serving Christ through the nuns she was living with and the missionaries needing her prayers. Her great love for Christ was manifested in the daily, mundane tasks she did without much regard for her own concerns. Mother Teresa of Calcutta also showed detachment from material comfort and the safety of the monastery in a life of total service to the poorest of the poor.

One winter evening two years ago, I was moved by the television coverage of the street people sleeping on the cold sidewalk with nothing to protect them from the harsh cold wind and sometimes the rain soaking their cardboard covers and sleeping bags. Oftentimes, sleeping with empty stomachs and tired bodies. My wife, Ester, and I decided to save the money that we would be giving to each other for Christmas gifts and use it to purchase food items, toiletries, bonnet, socks, gloves, etc. and put them in individual brown bags for distribution to the street people. Early Saturday morning before Christmas, we drove to the sidewalks in Berkeley and in the neighboring places where they take temporary shelter and just brought them the bag of goodies which we lovingly prepared for them. When our prayer group heard what we were doing they took part in it. Two weeks later, we all went with more bags of good stuff and more street people were served, bring the real presence of Christ in their Christmas. We have done this for two years now and it seems like it will continue since more people have joined us in this endeavor. You do not need an organization to do Christ's work, just a loving response with detachment from material possessions.

Secondly, the power of timing is essential in encountering Christ. Mother Teresa made herself available when the need arose. Many of our priests visit the hospital and convalescing homes during unholy hours (early morning oftentimes) to anoint the sick and the dying. Timing is not at our convenience, but at the time of actual need. I heard a taxi driver being interviewed in Manila and was asked about his donation of canned foods every Friday in the collection center. His daily income does not often provide a comfortable life for his family, but for several months he was able to come with donation every Friday. He told the reporter that if he waits to become rich before making the donation, it may not happen in his lifetime, so that whatever he can share at this time, he does so with a willing heart. This statement should inspire most of us to leave our procrastination and act NOW!

I remember Fr. Melvin, a humble Franciscan who died last July 2008. He was a good friend and our spiritual guide for a tour of the Holy Land six years ago. At most of our prayer group meetings, he would come and join us for the evening. In winter time, he would come with his old, discolored thin jacket, so we decided to give him a nice warm jacket for Christmas. When he opened the gift, he liked it so much that he put it right on. A few weeks afterwards during our meeting, (it was very cold at the time) he was wearing, again, his old jacket, so we asked him about it. He apologized for not wearing it, explaining that a brother Franciscan priest from India was studying in Berkeley and goes to school early in the

morning and does not have much clothing or money for transportation. He gave the jacket to him because he needed it more.

Third, the power of holiness is within our reach. As the saints were exposed to the possibilities of sainthood during their time, such opportunities are also available to us now. The saints of the past were able to see the chance and acted positively, encountering Christ in the process.

Last December 2007, my brother-in-law came from Los Angeles where his family was residing to buy a car from my wife which would give them mobility in their start-up life here in USA. After a couple of days, he experienced excruciating pain and high fever and was brought to Seton Hospital in Daly City. Upon examination the specialists found that he was suffering from fourth stage prostate cancer. He was confined to the ICU and was given emergency treatment. Then he was in and out of the hospital for treatment for several months. My wife and I provided him and his family a space in our house, so that he could continue with his therapy. While with us, they were introduced to our way of life, which is nightly prayer, morning Masses, prayer before meals, prayer and worship meetings at home, weekly Bible study and reliance on God for most of our daily needs. My brother in law, who barely went to Mass, let alone pray every night the holy rosary, became gradually an eager participant in our prayer life. The whole family followed in our footsteps and to this day, he and his wife attend daily Mass without fail. I encouraged his ten year old son to be an altar boy and he has been serving now for over a year. We encouraged them to have their eight years of married life solemnized in the church and after the exhaustive investigation and prompt submission of the required paper work, their union was sanctified in the Church and blessings manifested openly in their family. As we were active members of the Couples for Christ, they too joined the three month Christian Life Program and now are active members of the same group. They are now living separately from us but their life style continued to be God-centered. This was one opportunity that opened to us and we accepted the challenge without thought to its cost or to the inconvenience and the sacrifice that it entailed. It turned into a blessing for all of us.

Jesus calls us all, in the Gospel of Matthew, to see the invisible God through other people. If we respond to their needs with material detachment to give the support needed in the present now, we will find that these situations are offered to us to transform them and us into "his image and likeness." More Reflections on Page 12.

# Humor Page

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 WORD TO THE WISE

Save the Earth... it's the only planet with chocolate!!!!

What other people think of you is none of your business.

The happiest of people don't necessarily have the best of everything; they just make the most of everything that comes along their way.

Life isn't tied with a bow, but it's still a gift.

Be eccentric *NOW*.

Frame every so-called disaster with these words - In five years, will this matter?

God loves you 'cause of who God is, not 'cause of things you did or didn't do.

If you don't have a sense of humor, you probably don't have any sense at all.

A good time to keep your mouth shut is when you're already in deep water.

Envy is a waste of time. You already have all you need.

Always be yourself, because the people that matter, don't mind - and the one's that mind, don't matter.

If you want your dreams to come true, you mustn't oversleep.

The real art of conversation is not only to say the right thing at the right time, but also to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.

You've got to do your own growing, no matter how tall your grandfather was.

Don't listen to critics; just get on with the job that needs to be done.

Coincidence is when God chooses to remain anonymous.

Good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment.

If you can't be kind, at least have the decency to be vague.

Human beings, who are almost unique in having the ability to learn from the experience of others, are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so.  
Douglas Adams

Most of the stuff people worry about ain't never gonna happen anyway.

Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear.

You can tell how big a person is by what it takes to discourage him.

A smile is an inexpensive way to improve your looks.

You can't choose how you feel, but you can choose what you do about it.

Some minds are like concrete, thoroughly mixed up and permanently set.

You can easily judge the character of a man by how he treats those who can do nothing for him. James D. Miles

Don't interfere with somethin' that ain't botherin' you none.

Never put both feet in your mouth at the same time, because then you won't have a leg to stand on.

When it comes to chocolate, resistance is futile.



# Little Weeds



## That Amazing Grace

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

Back when I was in grade school, Sister said grace was something you “got.” Yet, it was also spoken of as a “state” – i.e., you were “in the state of grace.” If I’d given it any thought, I might’ve wondered about this wonderful stuff that you could both *get* and be *in*. Maybe it was one of those mysteries of faith I’d always heard about.

I think grace is our relationship with God. And, as is the case with any relationship, it’s a two-way street. I remember once, I went to confession - actually I’ve been to confession more than once, but that’s beside the point - for my penance, Father told me to read over one of the Prayers after Communion given in the missalette. So I did. After all, I’d just had God’s forgiveness; I figured I’d stay in good with Him for as long as possible. Well, my eyes were opened! The prayer said, in part, that Jesus had chosen *me* to be *His* friend.

It dawned on me that I’d never really thought about my part in our relationship. It had never occurred to me that I was *His* sister, that I was *His* friend. Me, friend of the deity! Wow! I don’t know why, but that really hit me. So, in a way, grace is what we are to God as much as what He is to us.

It’s not something you “get” (Dear God, give me two pounds of grace to go). The “in the state of” phrase is much closer to the point. Just as we sometimes talk of

being in someone’s “good graces,” so we can enjoy that sort of a relationship with God. In fact, it’s easier - God loves us absolutely; whereas, people can be little pickier. But there will be times when we sort of “fall from” His graces. We’ve all done something that we were wrong to do. ‘At’s right, gang, SIN! Boo. Hiss. Sin. Just as all crime breaks down to an infringement upon the rights of another (however indirectly), so all sin breaks down to a betrayal of love – the love God has for us, our love for one another.

Any successful relationship has ups and downs. The ups and downs in our relationship with God will always be our doing. He’s the constant, we’re the variable. It’s our humanness. Our sin pulls us away from God. We know we’ve done wrong and we have difficulty facing Him. So we pull back a bit. And doing that increases our chances of getting further from Him. Oh, he still loves us. But looking at the situation from a human stand point (the only one we have), we figure He’s displeased with us. We would feel that way in His shoes. And while we know intellectually that He’s ready to forgive us, we have trouble accepting it emotionally. So we draw back to the border of the state of grace. And if we hang around that border long enough, there’s a very good chance that we’ll cross it.

Leaving the state of grace is something only we can do. God’s always there, in the middle of the state, arms outstretched, beckoning us to come to Him. We are the ones who decide how deeply into the state we travel. Do we run to Him, there at the “interior?” Or do we hang around on the outskirts, never quite realizing the full potential of our relationship? Do we bask in the warmth of His love? Or do we stand apart, somewhat shaded by what we’ve done and somewhat chilled by the distance we’ve put between us and Him?

Our Franciscan vocation should enable us to do well in this relationship with God. After all, He’s given us a special calling, hasn’t He? The question is, did He give us that calling because we have greater potential for fulfilling our part in the relationship - or because we *needed* more help than others? (Betcha never thought of that, didja?) Not that it matters. The thing to remember is that we have extra help in maintaining our relationship with God: the moral support of our brothers and sisters in Francis, the increased awareness of our part in the relationship that formation gives us, and a deeper appreciation of grace and what it’s all about through the example of Francis.

Yup, the state of grace is open 24 hours a day, and you don’t need a visa: just come on in!

# Our Prayful Reflections

## The Challenge of The First Version of the Letter to the Faithful

By Stephen Pastick SFO  
Queen of Peace Region  
tauhouse70x7@hotmail.com

“The First Version of the Letter to the Faithful,” as you know, serves the Secular Franciscan Order as the Prologue to our Rule of life. Many would readily say that the challenge in this letter, written by St. Francis for the first members of his newly formed Third Order, would be his graphic description of what happens to a soul that has not done penance at the moment of the death of its host body: “The devil snatches the soul from his body with such anguish and tribulation that no one can know it except he who endures it.” [p. 4 SFO Rule] There have been some Inquirers who have lost interest in our Order after reading this, and it has proven to be a challenge to Formation Instructors as to how to explain the medieval mindset of St. Francis of Assisi. Yet I tell you, that it is not the primary challenge.

The treasure and the challenge to be found in this letter is the worldview of St. Francis of Assisi contained within. What is it? And can we of the 21<sup>st</sup> century make it our own? How binding is it? First, it must be acknowledged that there are those who feel that this Letter to the Faithful is really the first rule given to the Third Order. Benet Fonck, OFM, has written that, “Just as he did for the Lesser Brothers and the Poor Ladies, he gave these seculars a ‘way of life,’ or rule, which is preserved as the First Version of his ‘Letter to All the Faithful.’” [p. 03-7 [Fully Mature](#)] We can dig no deeper than this for our spiritual roots. Forget that lifeless Rule of 1221, which was not written by Francis. Consider this letter and the one that soon followed, “The Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful,” as our earliest Rules. I see the second version as an answer by St. Francis to those Third Order members who wanted Francis to better spell out as to how to do penance. How binding are these two documents? I think that the salvation of this world may very well depend on how we choose to live out these two exhortations of the prophet, St. Francis of Assisi.

What is St. Francis’ worldview? Examining the first letter we can see that there are 3 kinds of people who inhabit it. There are those who do penance and, then, there are those who do not do penance. These two groups are in the minority and are in constant tension with each other. I will suggest to you that it is no less

than mortal combat over the Kingdom of Heaven becoming a reality here on earth. The third, larger, group is only hinted at by St. Francis. He writes, “We (who do penance) give birth to him through a holy life which must give life **to others** by example.” This group of “**others**” is the majority of men and women in the world, who are caught in between the tug-of-war between good and evil. They are a noble group as they are made in the image of God, but many of them are fast asleep, content as long as they have enough to be happy. In a sense, they are the prize that is being fought over. Sometimes they are the required sacrifice to the gods of those who do not do penance, so that they may have even more, to possess what they covet. Fear and might and rules of right are coercive means of manipulating many of them to actively support the spoilers who would have it all without regard to cost. While the ones who do penance, knights in the happy employ of Sir Francis, can only enter the fray armed with faith, hope and loving kindness; wooing and winning souls by loving service, heralding the Peace and Goodness of Christ their only king.

What camp is it that I am a member of? I must confess to you my brothers and sisters, that I have had a foot in all three camps at one time or another. At present, I have a foot in the “**others**,” and a foot in the camp of those who do penance. I am a house divided, a work in process. What I want and what I desire most, and I beseech thee Lord most heartily for, is this: to “love the Lord with my whole heart, with my whole soul and mind, with all my strength, and love my neighbors as themselves...and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and produce worthy fruits of penance.” [Paraphrased from the opening of The First Letter to All the Faithful] I want to have both feet firmly entrenched in the camp of those who do penance, to be counted among the holy, one of the Kingdom, who serves only one King, Jesus Christ and no other. For God’s sake, believe me, brothers and sisters. You do, too, you do, too. What if God the Father, Abba, sacrificed His only beloved Son for nothing? That the Prince of Darkness wins and eternal night reigns?

The question begs an answer. Is St. Francis’ worldview still relevant today? Is the Prophet’s truth of yesterday, still the truth of today? Is the Gospel of yore still the page of the play today? Jesus, over 2000 years ago, said, “The kingdom of heaven has been enduring violent assault, and the violent have been seizing it by force.” [Mt 11:12bc] Who could testify that this may yet be the truth? Ask Oscar Romero. Ask Franz Jagerstatter. Ask one of the children, who dies every three seconds in our world from hunger. St. Paul has warned us that our wrestling is not “against flesh and blood, but against the Principalities and the Powers, against the world-rulers of

this darkness, against the spiritual force of wickedness on high.” [Ephesians 6:12] If it is true that there are those amongst us who are ones who do not do penance, who wield such power and might and are so very persuasive, then we, little lambs of God, are in their way. Once St. Paul, one of the greatest examples of one who does penance, walked as a little lamb into a room and placed his head in the lion’s mouth. It was Nero, the Roman lion, one of the greatest examples of one who does not do penance. I can hear St. Paul boast just before his end, “When it is that I am weak, then it is that I am strong!”

I think that they are few in number. Most are safely locked behind walls of security. But there are some of their minions within our midst, who work to persuade and dupe and make us out to be fools for an unsound truth. It is the Gospel of Peace and Love being attacked by the Gospel of Violence, where their end justifies the means. It is all idolatry, so many bloody sacrifices to their gods. Beware the wolf in sheep’s clothing. Francis cautioned his brothers about the world and quoted the Master, “Behold, I am sending you forth like sheep in the midst of wolves. Be therefore wise as serpents, and guileless as doves.” [Mt 10:16] Do not think it otherwise. Once, I thought St. Francis too severe when he described what happened to a soul who does not do penance. Now, I do not think so. Those who do not do penance are small in number, without a conscience and knowingly do much harm. They live to serve another master, not our Master. They are spoilers. All they touch is spoiled or destroyed. Ultimately, the real challenge is Perfect Joy. Can we go about doing what is ours to do with a happy heart, no matter what? To do so, we must be as St. Francis admonished us to be, simple, humble and pure.

### Quotes:

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

John 15:12

God’s kingdom is love. What does it mean to love? It means to be sensitive to life, to things, to persons, to feel for everything and everyone to the exclusion of nothing and no one.

Anthony De Mello from The Way To Love.

Faith is the ability not to panic.

Unknown

## Summer Seminar II, June 2009 St. Francis University

Bob “Fitz” Fitzsimmons, SFO, National Formation Commission Chair (See pages 18 and 19) and Vinal Benthem, SFO, were the main presenters for the event, which got great reviews. Vinal is the Spiritual Assistant for La Verna Region and a noted author on the subject of “work.”



Bob “Fitz” Fitzsimmons, SFO and Vinal Van Benthem, SFO



Group Picture from Summer Seminar II

John and Mary Wainscott, SFO from St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity wrote a review on Seminar II for “The Clarion,” newsletter of St. Clare Region. Here is one excerpt from that review: “Bob “Fitz” Fitzsimmons, presented much challenging, educational, and interesting information. We heard about Augustine, Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, and the Incarnational Spirituality of Franciscans. We learned about the “Three P’s of Franciscan Spirituality: Prayer and contemplation, preaching poverty. We learned the elements of Providential love: Incarnation, Passion (crucifixion), and Eucharist. We reviewed the words of Clare: “Gaze upon Christ, consider Christ, contemplate Christ, in order to imitate Him.”

# EXPLORING

## Things Franciscan



+ CNSA News & Views +

Lester Bach OFM Cap

### ELECTIONS

Election time in the SFO (at any level) is a time for serious reflection. Secular Franciscans should reflect on how he/she might serve. It requires individual competency as well as clarity about the role of the office - whether it is a national, regional or local council office. As the SFO Rule puts it:

*... let them exercise their responsibilities **competently** in the Christian spirit of service*

SFO Rule - article 14

*Their service, which lasts for a definite period, is marked by a ready and willing spirit and is a duty of responsibility to each member and to the community.*

SFO Rule - article 21

The members who have a right to vote need to carefully consider the nominees, being assured that they have the gifts of service needed by a particular office. The personality of the nominees also makes a difference. But it is especially important that nominees are competent for the office to which they are nominated. In this sense it is not a popularity contest but a prayerful process of selecting Seculars who are able to serve the fraternity in the offices to which they are elected (or appointed).

3. *The leaders of the SFO at every level should be perpetually professed, convinced of the validity of the Franciscan evangelical way of life, attentive to the life of the Church and of society, with a broad and encompassing vision, open to dialogue, and ready to give and receive help and collaboration.*

General Constitutions - article 31.3



### BE HUMBLY PROUD

Franciscan life has a special place in the Church. Our daily decisions spring from the spirit of love. The choices we make are meant to maintain relationships among us and with others. Such choices are a matter of preference for us. We have a special concern to make decisions that nurture relationships.

Jesus is the heart/center of our lives. He came in poverty in the crib and with humility (vulnerability) on the cross. His Father shows how a life of humility and endless love receives a resurrection that out-distances any power the world claims to have. In a text of *To Build With Living Stones*, Jesuit Peter Lippert wrote these words about Francis and his inspiration.

*The principle that led, through Benedict to Dominic and on to Ignatius, to the organization of more recent congregations, seems to be nearing the term of its possibilities of development. This does not mean to say, of course, that it will ever be superfluous or replaceable. But a fundamentally new guideline, sought for by so many, and experimented in new foundations, especially today, can probably be found on quite a different track, namely that of the primitive Franciscan ideal: unhampered vivaciousness in a free community of love, that expresses itself spontaneously without being forced into a mold of prescriptions and ordinances, developing personalities according to their own essential nature, both vital and original, obeying their own inmost law of discipline and self-command. If God should grace His Church one day with an Order of the future, for which so many of the best are yearning today, then it will probably bear the imprint of St. Francis' inspiration.*

Quoted in: To Build with Living Stones - Peter Lippert S.J.  
Unit 2 - Page 10 - SBU

We, who are the inheritors of this inspiration, need well-honed formation to enrich the value of our Franciscan life. More importantly, we are called to make the Franciscan spirit obvious to people by the way we live our Franciscan lives. It is not a secret to be hidden but a calling/vocation to be proclaimed by word and life.

Our world dotes on celebrities and their chimp or poodles, on elongated and repeated "news" about people who find it difficult to be normal; or vitriolic words that tear people down and do little or nothing to build relationships for the common good. The Franciscan spirit must offer a different contribution for the creation of a different kind of world.

Even as I wrote the above paragraph, it didn't seem "right" to me. Our Franciscan spirit calls us to build up, to create an atmosphere of dialogue rather than



simply offering blanket criticisms from a "better than you" stance. We recognize the reality of negatives but focus on positive ways to deal with them.

Franciscans are sensitive to how easily we can do exactly what we criticize. That in itself makes real the point of the SFO Rule - article 7: *Let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls "conversion." Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily.*

## THE TASK OF FORMATION

Our National formation commission is developing a *manual* to integrate materials from the International formation commission and Presidency. The *manual* will serve "formators" in their ministry of formation. The National formation commission will reach out to over 700 Seculars who serve as formation directors. Some are well-read and well-prepared. Others may be struggling. Some feel they are in a difficult situation. Some may ignore fresh insights and follow a path of personal ideas or programs that were followed in the past.



The *manual* is a help for "formators." It will offer ideas from the International formation commission and Presidency concerning the content and direction of formation programs. **This process will develop a sense of unity in SFO formation programs throughout the world.** Workshops for formation personnel at national and regional levels will assist the implementation of this process. It becomes a "train the trainers" program and process.

Regional and local "formators" can use the *manual* as a guide in their choice of formation materials and receive assistance in the process of formation. Regional and local formation personnel will find the *manual* a helpful tool in developing regional and local formation programs. As workshops are offered, regional and local councils will encourage and support attendance by their formation people.

*The first requirement is for the community to identify itself as a group of learners. We can no longer presume to have the answers to the many Franciscan questions that have confronted us throughout our history and still plague us today. ... Franciscans are people who have found their own identity through Francis and Clare. This is an ongoing process of discovery that takes place within a community of learners, who remain open to grace-filled encounters and conversions.*

*This group of learners must realize that they are simultaneously teachers and pupils. In other words the formative Franciscan experience is horizontal rather than vertical, circular rather than hierarchical. Another word for learning within the Franciscan tradition, then, is listening.*

*To Build With Living Stones* (SBU) - Unit 6 - Page 7

*Franciscan formation is based on a personal encounter with the Lord, and begins with the call of God and the individual's decision to walk with St. Francis in the footsteps of the poor and crucified Christ as His disciple under the action of the Holy Spirit.*

*Franciscan formation is the continuous process of growth and conversion involving the whole of a person's life, called to develop his or her own particular human, Christian, and Franciscan dimensions, radically living the Holy Gospel, in the spirit of prayer and devotion, in fraternity and minority.*

*The following of Jesus Christ in the manner of St. Francis leads us to commit ourselves to the Church and with her to place ourselves at the service of men and women of our time, as messengers of reconciliation and peace.*

*SFO International Council - CIOFS List  
Vol 2 - No 1 - January, 1996*

## A LOOK AT LIFE

Franciscans collaborate in living a Franciscan-spirited life. Profession commits us not only to live the Gospel but to find ways to encourage others to follow the Gospel in their own situations. The word "leaven" is used in Vatican II documents to describe our role in the world. One definition of *leaven*, in Webster's dictionary, says: *something that modifies or lightens.*

Franciscans *modify* negatives and *lighten* life through positive ideas and experiences. Such a goal is challenging and invites daily conversion. It is easy to be negative when there are so many things to be negative about. It is easy to criticize rather than offer positive alternatives. Yet, Franciscans invest their energy in the struggle, choosing positive elements as our natural response. Profession calls them to positive, life-giving ways to live and love.

*Blessed is the person who supports his neighbor in his weakness as he would want to be supported in a similar situation.*

*Admonition XVIII - Francis of Assisi - the Saint - Vol 1 - Page 134*

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*Christianity, if false, is of no importance,  
and if true, is of infinite importance.  
The only thing it cannot be  
is moderately important.*

C.S. Lewis

# Poets are We...

## Glory

By Joe Stefan, SFO  
St. Margaret of Cortona Region

Once there was a man whose name we didn't know.  
He wanted Glory for himself and called its name out low.  
So in his quest for Glory he pondered day and night,  
and thought that he'd find Glory by joining the Third Reich.

So he signed up with the Nazis and practiced  
saying, "Sieg Heil!"  
He thought if he got good at this he'd find Glory after awhile.  
And in his quest for Glory, to a concentration camp he came,  
his inferiors to eliminate. He called Glory by its name.

In this concentration camp, an escape had been made,  
and so ten men had to die. The Nazis called it fair trade.  
So this man who wanted Glory had the prisoners stand real still and counted out ten men to torture and to kill.

One poor man begged and pleaded to maybe spare his life.  
He told the man who wanted Glory he had a family  
and a wife.  
Then another man stepped forward.  
"Just take me instead."  
I'm a priest who has no family.  
No one will miss me if I'm dead."

And so the man who wanted Glory took the priest  
and the other nine,  
and threw them in starvation cells to wait for them to die.  
They had no food or water but Death just took its time  
And when the cells were needed once again,  
the priest was still alive.

So the man who wanted Glory injected acid in the priest's veins  
And in a dirty prison cell,  
Glory called the priest by name.  
For the priest who died, Max Kolbe,  
was later called a saint

And the man who wanted Glory, well,  
we still don't know his name.  
Glory can wear out your shoes;  
put holes in your hands and your feet.  
Glory can raise you up tall  
when you thought you were sunk in defeat.  
And if you're meek you will inherit the earth.  
You won't need fortune or Fame  
when the Power and the Glory call you  
by your name.

## IDENTITY

By Mary Louise Kreider, SFO  
Our Lady of Poverty Region

### COMPASSION and GENTLENESS

Flowing from me as water from a  
ceaseless waterfall  
Kindness, peace encircle me as a  
rainbow

Love and caring are what I desire  
Teach me your ways, O God  
Mothering, birthing,  
Teaching, joining  
Community of love,  
All the earth  
Desires oneness  
And peace.

Teach us your ways, O God

### FORGIVENESS

#### CALMNESS

Refreshes my soul  
Bathes me, purifies me  
Keep me close, O God

CENTER ME IN YOUR LOVE,  
WHOLENESS IS WHAT I DESIRE !

## HEARTPRINT

By Cathy Pierce, SFO  
Our Lady of Guadalupe  
Empress of the Americas Region

Sweet and loving  
Ardently longing  
Reconciling to the  
Ear of the Father  
Daily

Humble compassion  
Eternally flowing  
Around those  
Requesting the heart-blood  
Triumphant

## Slow Leaking Tire

By Stephen Kolter, SFO  
St. Katharine Drexel Region

He didn't need soapy water  
to find the leak.  
The head of a nail shined  
from the tread  
like the head of a  
drowning man in a dark sea;  
searchlights and helicopter ripples  
churning the surface.

His filthy hands only paused  
while his furrowed brow briefly  
considered  
which end of a nail would be called  
the "working end:"  
the head that accepts the  
hammer's  
calculated beating  
or the point that pierces.

Life is short  
and answers like these don't really  
matter.  
Only the work to be done.

The mouth of the hole hissed anointed  
breath  
of gas station air compressors,  
scattering the ashes of the cigarette  
that slanted from his thin lips.

His hands,  
tough with work  
repairing the tires  
patching the holes  
of nails  
he drove upon

His hands,  
filthy with the grime  
of spoiled rubber  
and crusted with  
glue

His hands,  
bleeding from the places  
where the awl slipped  
and missed the plug

His hands  
black wrinkled cracked and pierced  
begin to resemble the tires.

He sits back.  
Admires work well done,  
knowing full well  
that it will need to be done again.  
It is never enough  
to plug the hole.

## Just Because

By Caroline Richbourg, SFO  
Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region

Chloe, teach me to run and jump  
For no reason at all.  
Just because.

Lotzi, teach me to appreciate  
The back porch after dinner.  
Just because.

Bogie, teach me to be a soldier  
Who, though in pain, patrols.  
Just because.

Gilda, teach me to shake hands and  
smile  
And find people interesting.  
Just because.

Mary, teach me to how to be persistent  
And never, ever, ever give up.  
Just because.

And teach me to love my dinner  
No matter what is in my bowl,  
And teach me to celebrate with  
supreme ecstasy  
Simple walks,  
Simple cookies,  
Or my loved one's return.  
Teach me how to deeply sleep  
And how to stretch beyond my reach  
And how to point my nose  
In the direction of the new day.  
Just because.

## An Offering

By Helen E. Broxmeyer, SFO  
St. Margaret of Cortona Region

Poverty and obedience can be imposed  
from above,  
But celibacy is a delicate matter of the  
heart,  
And can only be vowed to the Spouse  
as a gift of love.

## Storm

By Mary Clare Potthast, SFO  
Five Franciscan Martyrs Region

Listen to the wind and rain  
Beating on the window pane,  
It is good, without a doubt,  
To be inside, looking out!

## Speak, Lord. I am Listening

By Valerie J. Cadarr, SFO  
St. Clare of Assisi Fraternity, Aiken, SC

*Where am I headed?  
I'm afraid I don't know,  
but when I asked God,  
He said, "Val, **JUST GO!**"*

*Don't worry about  
what lies ahead.  
Just look at the sparrows -  
they're **gloriously** clothed and **very** well  
fed!*

*Let go of your fears.  
I'll **never** leave your side.  
Don't ever forget - it was for **YOU**  
my beloved Son died!*

*Keep your eyes focused on Me,  
despite the pain.  
You've nothing to lose and certainly  
**everything** to gain.*

*Be **not** afraid!  
You **can** drink this cup.  
Don't **ever** let Satan  
persuade you to give up.  
When your cross seems too heavy  
and you think I don't care,  
it's time to empty yourself  
and **humbly** seek Me in prayer.*

*Val, turn to me, **now!**  
You know there's **no** other way!  
To surrender **everything** to Me  
means you must **trust and obey!***

*You're a stubborn child,  
a brickhead for sure,  
but My grace **is** sufficient.  
You can't ask for more.*

*You would willingly die for Me -  
at least that's what you **say**,  
but would you willing **live** for Me?  
(You know, I prefer it that way!)*

*Come back to Me, Val.  
I **so** long for you!  
Come back to Me, Val.  
Give Me the chance to make **all** things  
new!"*

## Surprises

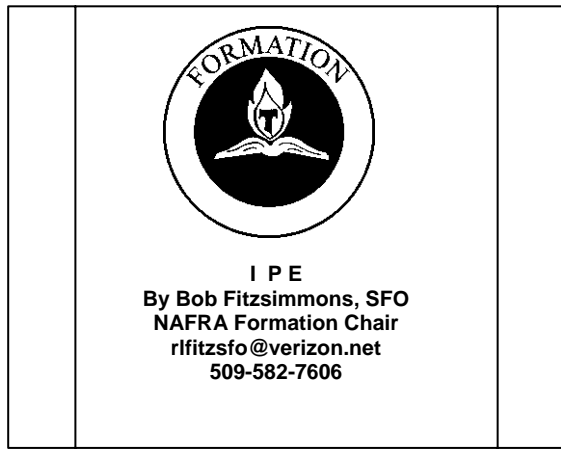
By Mary Clare Potthast, SFO  
Five Franciscan Martyrs Region

A seeker finds the answer  
(Not always one he seeks),  
As travelers in the mountains  
Find unexpected peaks.  
So life has its surprises,  
The things we can't foresee.  
But that's what adds excitement!  
(Or so it seems to me).

## St. Francis of Assisi and the Wolf of Gubbio

By Maureen Hartmann, SFO  
Junipero Serra Region

The story is that St. Francis  
went to a town in Italy, Gubbio.  
He found there that  
a wolf as a serial murderer  
had been terrorizing the town people,  
killing and devouring them.  
Francis entered into dialogue  
with the wolf, and found that  
the wolf was afraid of starvation.  
So Francis mediated a pact  
between the wolf and the citizens  
of the town. The wolf would stop  
killing the residents, and the  
people would in turn feed the wolf  
from their own pantries.  
I think the wolf is symbolic  
and this story is a gift  
to our schizophrenic society.  
The wolf is a metaphor for people who  
in a modern day way  
fall through the cracks  
of social legislation  
and turn to criminality  
out of desperation.  
People who follow Francis' spirit,  
whether consciously or unconsciously,  
are able to dialogue with  
persons over the edge and  
those who exploit them and at least  
at times bring about love  
between the haves and have-nots.



The other day I experienced a flash back to the Diocese of Naha, Okinawa, Japan, where many years ago I was able to experience my first Cursillo. I remember especially two things; the first was the glorious sunsets and sunrises over the South China Sea, and then the tripod of Cursillo: Piety, Action, Study. Three important movements for all Christians and I think these very much describe the activities of Francis.

I admit, now as a formation type, I might lean somewhat toward the study leg of the tripod, but study brings to mind understanding of who we are called to be and why. As I was preparing my presentations for the SFO Summer seminar, another tripod came to me that for me sums up the essence of Franciscan Spirituality – it's **I - P - E**.

**Incarnation is the I leg.** That God so loved us that He would send the Beloved Son to be one of us, so we might have life abundantly. Incarnation is the foundation of the Franciscan Soul, it's about love and relationship, not God's response to an "oops" by His children. Our free will, exercised for our own self elevation, does not prompt God to figure out the ultimate bailout plan. On the contrary, before God created, He had a plan, a plan of creation centered on His desire to enter a world that was ready and able to respond to His coming. This great master plan is Jesus and creation was prepared from the beginning just to receive Him, a creation filled with beauty, wonder, joy and filled with people who were created in His image and who have the ability to love and be loved by this God-Man. Sure, sin diminished our ability to love anyone beyond ourselves, but this spark was never extinguished, and we have many wonderful examples, I am sure even from our own lives, of loving selfless acts done for us or by us for others.

**P = Passion of Jesus.** Francis, if you read his writings does not dwell on the sufferings and horror of the Cross, an action where those created to Love seized Love, and tried to snuff it out. Certainly not our finest hour, yet Francis moves us directly into the great, overflowing

love made visible in action. Yes, for a time, even we Franciscans overly embraced the sorrow and sufferings of the Cross, and much of our own ministry became cross and sin-centered, but the writings of our early developers and, especially, Francis always pull us back. Our early forebears continue to focus us on God's loving actions, not man's rejection or cruelty. Francis would shed many tears because "Love is not loved" but it was because of his understanding of the Great Love that brought everything into being.

The crucifixion seems to speak to the Franciscan mind in endearing words that remind us for a second time the depths of God's love. It speaks in a world of conditions, and holding back, and fear to jump into life with both feet, that on God's part, He does not suffer from our lack of trust or confidence and so He jumps in with both "feet." The Cross speaks boldly to us and to all the powers of the world, that Love is the answer, Love will never die and it will be poured out at all times even those times when you are not looking or are ready. The cross speaks of just how far our Lover will go to prove His love, a love that embraces all of His beloveds.

Finally we arrive at **the great E, Eucharist**. Just when you thought God could not give any more or become any more poor and humble, Jesus leaves us with the Eucharist, the lowest and most common food broken and shared by the poor of the world. If you study the writings of Francis, especially the 1<sup>st</sup> Admonition and the various Letters (2<sup>nd</sup> Letter to the Faithful, Letter to the Whole Order, to the Rulers, to the Clerics), you can see how he exhorts us all to honor, reverence and give great praise and thanks for so wondrous gift of Jesus in the Eucharist. The places where the Beloved Son becomes present must be clean and splendid; so, if the physical places and vessels must be such for they hold the precious Body and Blood, how much more so for us, to have a proper disposition. The Eucharist is the same Jesus that the Apostles saw in the flesh with their eyes, and as the Apostles needed to develop new eyes and a new way of seeing, we are also called to see the same reality in the bread and wine, that it is the Body and Blood of the same Jesus, the Beloved Son. For the Franciscan, Francis states the proper preparation or disposition for Eucharist is a penitential life, a life devoted to conversion and transformation into a living image of the Living God.

So what is the common thread, the Franciscan thread that runs through IPE? It is the blatant Love of God, who time and time again chooses poverty, humility, vulnerability and littleness over grandeur and power and might. No, this Crucified Love freely chooses to be with us where we hurt the most, because it is there where we are the most vulnerable, there we are the most human, the most God-like and where we can love the most. **I P E**

## June 2009 -- Update on the NFC Standardized Formation Project “Forming the Formators:”

By Bob Fitzsimmons, SFO  
NAFRA Formation Chair  
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509-582-7606

National Formation Workshop delayed until May 2011  
This delay will allow the NFC and the formation project writers adequate time to develop the materials and teaching assistance materials (as well as the participant’s guide), to develop the suggested format and use of the materials to be presented to the Regions, in order to assist their respective local formation directors, and to allow adequate time for the Regions to budget for 1 or 2 formators to attend the National Formation Workshop.

We do believe that this slight delay will allow us to assemble a more complete training experience for our formation directors and to provide all our regions with CIOFS recommended materials to supplement the materials already in use. Our goal is to make available the formation materials deemed essential by our CIOFS Presidency. This delay will, I think, allow us to provide the experience and guidance that has been asked of all nations by our Minister General and her International Council.

Ultimately, the Regional Fraternity (Regional Exec. Council & Local Fraternity Ministers) will decide how to use all or portions of this material to supplement or re-define formation within their regions and fraternities.

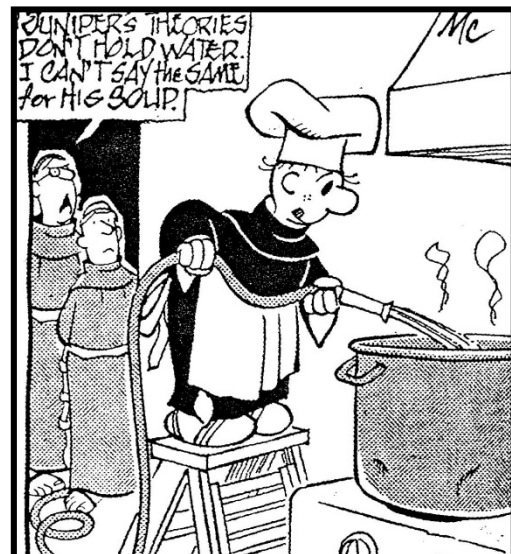
Lastly, please allow me to respond to some comments and questions we have received about what the new Formation is and what it is not:

1. This project at the request of CIOFS is being developed primarily to train the formation directors of the SFO. To that end, we are putting together a comprehensive program for use in developing more formation expertise at all levels of our Order. Our goal is to provide the formators with the most user-friendly and complete materials we can, to facilitate those topics of understanding that CIOFS feels necessary in the formation of Secular Franciscans.

2. While we will provide a sample formation program and a suggested schedule for implementation, the educational materials and programs are not “mandated” nor are they the only acceptable materials allowed in initial formation. These materials can be used in full or part as it best supports your own formation plans. We feel this formation plan can be a valuable resource for all.
3. We are, at all levels, open to the workings of the Holy Spirit and the actual topics selected for use in initial formation are ultimately based on the needs and desires of both the Regional and local fraternity councils.

As always, please send me your comments:  
rlfitzsfo@verizon.net  
Pace Fitz

### Brother Juniper



**“Juniper’s theories don’t hold water.  
I can’t say the same for his soup.”**

By Fred McCarthy, SFO



# Franciscan Youth

## NATIONAL FRANCISCAN YOUTH YOUNG/ADULT COUNCIL

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### YOUTH FRATERNITIES VS. YOUTH MINISTRY

By Kathy Taormina, SFO  
FYFA Fraternal Animator

This is a question I get asked repeatedly throughout the year: “Is it better to start a Franciscan Youth Fraternity or is it okay if I just invite a few youth to activities that the SFO fraternity already has going on?”

My first question back is, “Define *better*?”

My answer and the answer of the experts (the youth themselves) usually depends on their definition of better. What would be better for the SFO fraternity? What would be better for the youth? What would be better for the community, either the parish and/or civic community?

I have written, spoke about and demonstrated throughout the last ten years that the two most important factors in the Franciscan Youth movement are an open invitation and the acceptance by the SFO.

The youth need to know they are most welcome to just come and see what this “Franciscan Charism” is and how we live it to its fullness. They need to know they will be accepted for who they are, and where they are, on their spiritual journey to God.

Can those two elements be fulfilled by only being with the youth occasionally? Sure! Can they be attained by starting a YouFra fraternity and gathering consistently? Most definitely, but these are not the *ONLY* ways!

Youth ministry involves the whole person and the whole fraternity, sometimes even the whole Region! It is an ever-changing, dynamic, life-giving (and receiving)

proposition between people, involved in God and faith, and whose ultimate goal is to discover God’s purpose for their lives. Franciscan Youth ministry centers on a three-fold methodology: human, Christian, and Franciscan.

***How we bring this about is not as important as bringing it about!***

Starting a Franciscan Youth fraternity may be beyond the scope of your fraternity, but that does not mean that youth ministry cannot be started and experienced. Most youth will be open to the invitation, if they do not feel pressured into future decisions. Let them come and see us, living and experiencing our Franciscan way of life in the real world.

I have always said that we as SFO are not out to make “baby Franciscans,” but if we truly live our charism, we may open the way for the youth to be interested in a long-term relationship with God through Francis and Clare. We can be God’s instruments!

Most parishes have a CYO, Teen Life or other type of youth group. These groups usually need a chaperone for their service projects. Volunteer to be one! Make sure you wear your Tau Cross. One of the youth might ask “What’s the T for?” It’s an opening for dialogue. It just takes one person from your fraternity to get involved. Your participation with the youth means a lot to them even if they do not tell you.

Have a pizza party for the Altar Servers; hold a movie night; help with one of the youth fundraisers. When we have a fraternity social, we can invite youth. Have a retreat for them. We can also pray for them and be a good listener. Our youth today need positive encouragement from those of us who have “been around a bit.” We may not see anything immediately from our involvement, but it’s something that the youth will remember for a long time.

***GET INVOLVED!*** The gifts are everlasting!

#### Emery Tang, OFM

On June 9, 2009, Fr. Emery Tang went to be with the Lord. He was 81 years old, 62 years professed, 57 years ordained. Some of the many things he will be remembered for are: Being with the “Hour of St. Francis” in the late 60’s; Co-authoring Listen, the Clams are Talking with Hugh Noonan, OFM; and being a noted Retreat Master for many years.



## Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation

By Pat Brandwein-Ball SFO, JPIC Transition Chair  
patball76@yahoo.com

I thought for this issue I'd write a one page synopsis of Pope Benedict's latest encyclical. WOW!! Did I ever bite off more than I could handle! So, here is another approach to it.

Deacon Tom Bello sent a copy of Pope Benedict's recent encyclical letter, "Caritas in Veritate." I've read excerpts from it in various publications and sat with it for some time. It is not difficult reading, but does go slowly as one must truly ponder along the way. After days, I'm really only part way through the first chapter. (There is an introduction, 6 chapters, and a conclusion.) I recommend this to all SFO, not only those directly involved with social justice issues. I also recommend study groups, as this letter has far reaching implications and will be understood more easily via discussion.

In the opening lines of the introduction, Pope Benedict reminds the faithful, "Charity in truth, to which Jesus Christ bore witness by his earthly life and especially by his death and resurrection, is the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity. Love — caritas — is an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace. It is a force that has its origin in God, Eternal Love and Absolute Truth. Each person finds his good by adherence to God's plan for him, in order to realize it fully: in this plan, he finds his truth, and through adherence to this truth he becomes free (cf. Jn 8:22). To defend the truth, to articulate it with humility and conviction, and to bear witness to it in life are therefore exacting and indispensable forms of charity. Charity, in fact, "rejoices in the truth" (1 Cor 13:6). All people feel the interior impulse to love authentically: love and truth never abandon them completely, because these are the vocation planted by God in the heart and mind of every human person."

He goes on to say in Paragraph #6, "Charity goes beyond justice, because to love is to give, to offer what is 'mine' to the other; but it never lacks justice, which prompts us to give the other what is 'his', what is due to him by reason of his being or his acting. I cannot 'give' what is mine to the other, without first giving him what pertains to him in justice."... Not only is justice not

extraneous to charity, not only is it not an alternative or parallel path to charity: justice is inseparable from charity,<sup>1</sup> and intrinsic to it. Justice is the primary way of charity or, in Paul VI's words, "the minimum measure" of it,<sup>2</sup> an integral part of the love 'in deed and in truth' (1 John 3:18), to which Saint John exhorts us."

What I have read so far is so full of food for mediation that only these few excerpts will have to suffice on whetting your appetite. I did "fast forward" to the conclusion and found these gems: "Only if we are aware of our calling, as individuals and as a community, to be part of God's family as his sons and daughters, will we be able to generate a new vision and muster new energy in the service of a truly integral humanism. The greatest service to development, then, is a Christian humanism<sup>3</sup> that enkindles charity and takes its lead from truth, accepting both as a lasting gift from God..." "Only a humanism open to the Absolute can guide us in the promotion and building of forms of social and civic life — structures, institutions, culture and ethos — without exposing us to the risk of becoming ensnared by the fashions of the moment..." God gives us the strength to fight and to suffer for love of the common good, because he is our All, our greatest hope."

May we all spend the time required to pray and meditate on this timely encyclical and then move out into the world as the Spirit is already inspiring us.

### Logistics:

In reviewing the documents approved by the regional ministers October 2008, JPIC is moving in the planned direction. All of the regional contact persons are on the SFOPJNet. The website is under construction with the input of former apostolic commission chairs and members. These are the concrete externals of JPIC. I hope that the deeper meaning and source of our actions is becoming clearer.

### Being and Doing:

Our entire Rule gives signposts for Gospel living. We find our Rule being further elaborated to us in this new encyclical. In what ways are you enlightened and inspired?

Do you have a clearer vision of the Church's social teaching? If so, what does it mean for how you live your life? If not, what is foggy to you?

How are you specifically called today to work for the common good; to work for another's human development; to work for solidarity of your community (family, work place, civic area, etc)?

<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas et Veritas*, Footnote 1

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, Footnote 2

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, Footnote 157



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### BUDDHISM: RELIGION OF INNER PEACE

By Ed Shirley, SFO  
National Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee  
elsso@hotmail.com

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We have looked at three of the four major non-Christian religious traditions: Judaism, Islam and Hinduism. The first two are, with Christianity, Abrahamic Traditions, rooted in the stories of Abraham, our father in faith. Hinduism comes from a culture that is literally half a world away, but, as we saw, had points of similarity with Christianity, particularly in its Franciscan expression, especially finding God in all things. The final major tradition we will look at is Buddhism. Buddhism can, on the surface, seem like it has little in common with Christianity: Buddhists do not accept the idea of God, seem to focus on self-effort, and rarely speak of love. However, when we dig beneath the surface, several interesting items parallels come forward.

Both Buddhism and Franciscanism were founded by charismatic leaders, who were raised with privilege and possessions, both of whom became renunciants. Both the Buddha and Francis were raised with the conventional religiosity of their day, and both offered a new vision. Both the Buddha and Francis attracted followers by their sincerity and dedication. Both founded mendicant communities, forbidding their monks or friars from even touching money. Both distrusted philosophical or theological discourse for its own sake, but both inspired great thinkers who fleshed out the implications of their teachings. And both, at the end of their lives, said something along the line of "I have done my part; now you do yours."

The Buddha was born a prince in the 6th century BC, and raised in luxury. At his birth, an old sage predicted that if he ever discovered the transient and unsatisfying nature of the world, he would renounce his position and become an enlightened being. Fearing this possibility,

the king made sure that young Prince Siddhartha never wanted for anything, never knew old age, sickness or death: only young, healthy, happy people were allowed around him. There is a story that when he was a child, he was left unattended at a festival. When they found him, he was seated under a tree, meditating. The shadow of the tree, it is said, did not move with the sun, protecting the young prince all day long. (Sound familiar?)

However, when he was 29, he encountered old age, sickness and death, and realized that life was finite and permeated with suffering. In response, he gave up his position in life, donned the robes of a begging monk, and began a six-year search. He studied philosophy at first, but found that he was still left with a feeling of uneasiness. He then tried extreme asceticism, believing that if he tamed the body and its passions, his mind would be free. This almost killed him. Finally, he sat under a tree and vowed not to move until enlightened. The story says that with enlightenment ("Buddha" means the Enlightened One), he recognized that the human condition was one of dissatisfaction, and that the cause was our seemingly endless desire, our yearning. He taught that if one eliminated coveting and attachment, one would eliminate the feeling of dissatisfaction. Truth, he said, was found in the Middle Path, between two extremes (an insight also taught by Medieval Christian theologians, following Aristotle).

The Buddha taught that all things are impermanent, and therefore unable to satisfy us: possessions, power, prestige. Even our very self, he taught, was impermanent (everything I can put my finger on as "me," in other words, is not really me: body, thoughts, feelings, even the mind itself). He taught the Eightfold Path, a way to eliminate our constant yearning: right viewpoint, right action, right occupation of one's time, and so forth. These culminated with right meditation, the inner practice of letting go. When we learn to let go of our inner attachments, we can begin, also, to let go of our outer attachments, and conversely.

Eventually, Buddhist thinkers described the emptiness of all things in terms of their impermanence and the fact that everything is also interconnected. Therefore, you can't grasp a hold of anything in and of itself: everything is what it is in relation to everything else. Because of this, we should take a stance of non-harming and non-possessing. The first two precepts that one takes upon becoming a Buddhist are non-harming and non-stealing.

The parallels with the lives of Jesus and Francis should be clear. It is also interesting that Buddhist teaching bears so many similarities to the Franciscan interpretation of Christianity: Francis forbade his

Continue on page 28.





## Capitol Hill, Main Street Introduced to FAN-Style Advocacy Over Climate Change, Caring for Creation

61 congressional visits showcase the strength of grassroots movement

June 08, 2009

Washington, DC - The Memorial holiday weekend is a time when many Americans stop to remember those whose sacrifices make this nation's freedoms possible. For many members of the Franciscan Action Network, this past holiday was a time to vigorously exercise one of those freedoms. Besieged by calls from FAN members, Senators' and Representatives' offices on Capitol Hill and across the nation's heartland granted over sixty requests for face-to-face meetings. As a result, this year's holiday also may memorialize the time when the Franciscan Action Network came of age.



Jan Parker, SFO on is on the right.

Jan Parker of the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) has been part of FAN since its inception in 2007. She teamed with Lou Helleny, SFO, and Cheri Held, SFO, to express a care for creation value to Congressional District 9 in Missouri where opposition was anticipated. Her experience typified that of others who felt they were well prepared by the FAN staff for the con-

gressional visits, even when those visits were contentious.

"We are sorry to report our Congressman's opposition to climate change legislation," she said, "but we are confident that we did all we could to make our case." The climate change webinars that FAN hosted in the weeks leading up to the campaign "were invaluable," she said. The leave behind gave Congressman Luetkemeyer and his Deputy District Director Dan Engemann something to think about. ("Leave behinds" are documents that summarize a visit's talking points.) Ms. Parker noticed that Mr. Engemann was especially interested in the expanse and reach of the new Franciscan Action Network. He sought to find common ground with FAN in articulating the congressman's pro-life position, something Ms. Parker acknowledged after drawing attention to the fact that caring for creation is a preeminent "pro-life" issue.

Returning to the upcoming climate change vote, Mr. Helleny and Ms. Held expressed disappointment that politics should obstruct a vote for the common good. The congressman's position - that climate change legislation hurts farmers - struck the trio as short-sighted and ironic. It is farmers, after all, who are hurt most by unstable weather patterns, toxic run-off, and depletion policies. A more plausible explanation is that the district's constituents believe they will be hurt by any carbon tax.

Coordinating Ms. Parker's visit and sixty others was Grant Clifton at the FAN Action Center in Washington, DC. Mr. Clifton expressed admiration for the pluck of the members who were willing to advocate for a care for creation ethic in places where the message was not apt to be welcomed. Fellow FAN Staffer Fr. Larry Janezic, OFM, picked up on the theme of courage. "I'm inspired by the fact that FAN's grassroots stepped up like they did," he said, "This is what it means to answer the prophetic call of the Gospel." Although some were members of religious orders, a majority of the modern day prophets were lay people, or "Franciscan-hearted" persons. "We believe that everybody has a Franciscan heart," Mr. Clifton laughed, "they just all don't know it yet."

The Climate Change campaign was chosen as a “coming out party” for the non-partisan organization. FAN’s constituents believe that no threat to the sustainability of the human species is more urgent and, thus, better able to unite diverse interests than climate change. As Fr. Larry implied, the Franciscan spiritual tradition compels advocacy for climate change policies regardless of politics. Three parameters have characterized FAN’s position since long before legislation was introduced:

1. Reduction of “green house emissions”
2. Movement towards sustainable, non-carbon based energy
3. Transition to a low carbon economy in such a way as to not place additional burden on the lives of persons who are poor. This last point, the most important unifier of FAN’s approach to climate change, is the most difficult.

The staff at the FAN Action Center indicated it intends to bring the strength of its growing grassroots base to bear for a more moral and workable climate change policy. Partners in this effort include the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change, Catholics in Alliance, the Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation offices of 44 institutional members, the many Franciscan ministries in the field, and the over 1900 Franciscan-hearted members of the online network. FAN also participates with over sixty ecumenical and secular organizations in education, outreach and advocacy around climate change.

On the Friday before Memorial Day, Jan Parker’s car made the forty mile return trip from the congressman’s office in time to enjoy the holiday break. There was no discouragement inside of it.

“We traveled home as joyfully as when we first set out, thankful that we not only shared the Gospel of Life,” she said, “but that we lived out an article of our [SFO] rule.” That article challenges secular Franciscans “to promote justice with the testimony of their lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.” Grant Clifton, visibly drained from the effort of organizing the campaign, was even more succinct.

“Franciscanism is really something,” he said.

## Quotes:

Franciscan prayer is contemplative and cosmic. It is a type of prayer that impels one to find God in the vast corners of the universe. Because of the Incarnation, the Word made flesh, all of creation is holy, all of creation is the sacrament of God. Prayer is that relationship with God which opens the eyes of believers to the sanctity of all life – from earthworms to humans, from quarks to stars. Everything that exists reflects the goodness of God. Prayer is the breath of the Holy Spirit within us that opens our eyes to the divine good which saturates our world.

According to Bonaventure, the heart centered in God is the heart that can see into the depths of things.  
Ilia Delio, OSF from Franciscan Prayer

We are in a world that is absolutely transparent and God is shining through it all the time.  
Thomas Merton

## More Quotes:

Slow down; God is still in heaven. You are not responsible for doing it all – yourself – right now.

Take nothing for granted: watch water flow, the corn grow, the leaves blow, your neighbor mow.

Take time to read – the Bible, poetry, great books. Thoughtful reading is enriching reading.

Taste your food. God gives it to delight, as well as to nourish.

When you talk with someone, don’t think about what you’ll say next. Thoughts will spring up naturally if you let them.

Talk slower. Talk less. Don’t talk. Communication isn’t measured by words.

Take time to wonder. Without wonder, life is merely existence.

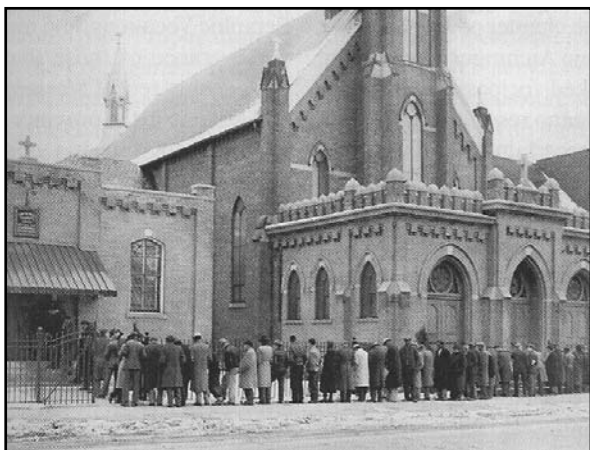
Once in a while, turn down the lights, the volume, the throttle, the invitations. Less really can be more.  
Linus Mundy from Slow-down Therapy

# A Little Bit of History

## Hard Times

By William Wicks, SFO, Historian

*Let us pause in life's pleasures and count its many tears,  
While we all sup sorrow with the poor,  
There's a song that will linger forever in our ears,  
Oh, hard times come again no more.<sup>1</sup>*  
Stephen Foster - 1854



Soup Kitchen Lines - St. Bonaventure Church

Whatever words you use, or songs you sing, to define today's economy, most of us are getting by – some better than others. The lyrics above are from a Stephen Foster song written in 1854, but its popularity arose during, well, hard times. It was popular following the Civil War and the Great Depression. Somehow, it does not, as yet, seem appropriate today – at least to me. But, perhaps, it does to some.

Two events come to mind as I review the history of our Order - times when we responded to *hard times*. One event came in the form of a Franciscan Soup Kitchen; many Soup Kitchens that were sponsored by the Third Order, and assisted by the friar provinces, served the needy over the years, and continue today. They are truly a manifestation of our Charism.

A Soup Kitchen – “On November 1, 1930, the Third Order members of St. Bonaventure fraternity in Detroit, Michigan, opened a soup kitchen. This action was motivated by the spiritual director, Fr. Herman Buss, O.M. Cap., who was asked by his superior to respond to the need of those who were out of work due to the Depression. On the first day of operation, only nine people showed up, but by the end of the month the count

rose to 935.”<sup>2</sup> The Soup Kitchen continues today to serve the needy.

The second event was a Three Point Program sponsored by the national Third Order federation.

“The Three Point Program – The Three Point Program was introduced at the 1936 Quinquennial Congress held in Louisville. It reinforced the sense of true poverty that was appropriate during the time of the Great Depression. Briefly, in observance of the Three Point Program, Tertiaries were resolved:

1. To commit no sin in heart and hand for the sake of goods of fortune
2. To observe moderation in acquiring and enjoying goods of fortune
3. To share their goods of fortune with God and neighbor...”<sup>3</sup>

There are presently shelters and food banks all over the country that were initiated by Third Order members. Perhaps, not coincidentally, after I started writing this article, I received in the mail my weekly L. A. Diocesan newsletter, The Tidings. Under the title, *Will pope's social encyclical take root? Only time will tell*, there is a picture of an elderly man finishing “a meal at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, where hundreds of people receive free meals and groceries in Detroit. In his latest encyclical [*Caritas in Veritate*], Pope Benedict XVI is telling us ‘to not be me centered, but to be other centered.’”<sup>4</sup> This is a timely message from our Pope to be embraced by all Franciscan. Let us pause in life's pleasures...

Watch the You Tube Video – For those of you who are touched by song, view (and listen to) the “You Tube” video referenced below. It's that good. Other renditions are by James Taylor and Yo Yo Ma, etc. on You Tube.



Friar, Tertiary and Fr. Solanus Casey

<sup>1</sup> Hard Times Come Again No More by Stephen Foster, 1854 – YouTube  
Hard Times Nanci Griffen

<sup>2</sup> Wicks, William Wicks, History of the Secular Franciscan Order, Volume I, Barbo-Carlson Enterprises, 2007, 206

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 215

<sup>4</sup> The Tidings – Southern California's Catholic Weekly, July 17, 2009, 4

# Spirit of the Country

By Faith Libbe, SFO  
Staff Editor



Country lane

After flying into Philadelphia and traveling the highways, a certain feel or “spirit” comes over me when turning up the country lane that leads to my mother’s house in the Pennsylvania countryside. The quick pace of the highway gives way to a slower pace. The lane is surrounded by the beauty of the woods, which immediately evokes a spirit of tranquility.

The sounds of the city and the highways far behind me, the sounds of the country are a delight to my ears. I listen to the leaves rustling in the breeze, the chatter of squirrels, singing of birds and the croaking of the frogs on the pond at night. These sounds welcome me to slow down and tune in to nature, fostering peace and joy within.

Early in the morning the woods come alive with the song of a multitude of birds. It is a joy to wake up to such a choir! I wonder if they begin their day praising God? I then recall Thomas of Celano’s recording of the following words of St. Francis preaching to the birds, “My brother and sister birds, you should praise your Creator and always love him: He gave you feathers for clothes, wings to fly and all other things that you need. It is God who made you noble among all creatures, making your home in thin, pure air. Without sowing or reaping, you receive God’s guidance and protection.” Yes, I’d like to think the birds are praising God/our Creator!

This song of the birds, so pronounced in the early morning quiet of the country, precedes the dawn. As the sun begins to rise, its rays start to filter through all the trees...magnificent! The animals in the woods slowly emerge from their slumber. On any given day, one might also see squirrels, chipmunks, woodchucks, rabbits, even deer! I love all of God’s creatures, but the beauty of a deer (sometimes with fawns) stops me in my tracks, mesmerized not only by its beauty, but also its gentleness and grace.

There is such wholesomeness to life in the country. I am happy to see so many farms up the road in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. I don’t have to drive far to see teams of horses plowing the fields. It reminds me of a simpler time, when this way of life was more prevalent in our country. I am also reminded of the joy of purchasing truly fresh produce from local fields!

My heart is both touched and delighted each time I visit a certain farmhouse near my mother’s house. During the summer there is a table of fresh vegetables from the field for sale in front of this farmhouse. The family simply leaves a plastic container in the middle of the vegetables; trusting folks will place their dollars and coins inside. Here the “honor system” is alive and well...how sweet indeed!

Time spent in the country invites one to slow down and enter into a spirit of simplicity, tranquility, and harmony with all of God’s creation. In doing so one’s soul can be refreshed, and moved to praise God with all creation.

*“Bless the Lord, all creatures, everywhere in God’s domain. Bless the Lord, my soul!”* Psalm 103:22



Table with vegetables in front of farm house



Photo by William Wicks, SFO

## Encounter with the Living God

By Francine Gikow, SFO, Staff Editor

Have you ever yearned to see the face of God? Have you ever felt the absence of God? Have you ever pleaded: “Lord, let me see you?”

But we already DO experience Christ in the Eucharist and *see Him* in the blessing of the Bread and Wine! We just don’t recognize Him!

*“Why do you not recognize the truth and believe in the Son of God? See,...daily He comes to us in a humble form; daily He comes down from the bosom of the Father upon the altar in the hands of the priest. And as He appeared to the holy apostles in true flesh, so now He reveals Himself to us in the sacred bread. And as they saw only His flesh by means of their bodily sight, yet believed Him to be God as they contemplated Him with the eyes of faith, so, as we see bread and wine with bodily eyes, we too are to see and firmly believe them to be His most holy Body and Blood living and true. And in this way the Lord is always with His faithful, as He Himself says: Behold I am with you even to the end of the world”<sup>1</sup>*

If we really meditated upon Jesus being present in the Eucharist, we would not receive the Body and

Blood so lightly! The reality of this Encounter with our God is unbelievable to us because we know we are not worthy - after all, we are poor and lowly in our sinfulness. But that is the point! We ARE so deeply loved and embraced by a God who loves our lowliness, that He has promised to be with us until the end of the world!

It is through this Encounter that God reveals Himself to us as a living God. This Encounter with Jesus takes place in our daily lives and struggles. God knows us and gently leads us to Him! Our hearts become alive in His love as He dwells in us! We hear His voice and listen to His message of love when we spend time with Him as we receive His Body and Blood. It is an awesome and mighty reality we believe in!

When we receive the Eucharist, it changes us each time we receive Him into our bodies. When we acknowledge the presence of our Lord in the Eucharist, we allow the Encounter to change our own lives. It is our “Yes!” When Jesus comes to us in the Eucharist, we are altered. Christ unites Himself to us and changes us in love. Our lives start to transform. He becomes greater and we grow lesser. Our values and priorities shift. What was, so previously important, pales in comparison to His Presence in our lives now. We bask in His love and want to share it with others. We bring Him with us into our daily work. We become His body on earth for others. We are His Face others can see. It is through us that God is alive to others.

In response to His love, we freely offer ourselves back to Him on the altar. We offer our own personal crosses and sufferings in unity with His sacrifice, each day as we receive His Body. “By virtue of our profession, [we] make ourselves entirely available to God and place [our] own bodies (persons) on the altar of Christ’s sacrifice as a holy victim pleasing to God.”<sup>2</sup> We have consecrated ourselves to the living God. In other words, according to Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM, we have written God a blank check!

Our commitment to the Living God is a permanent sacrifice, since our profession is permanent. Our food along this journey is none other than God Himself in the Eucharist! How blessed are we when we carry Him in our hearts and body!

*“Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, since the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and He will make His home and dwelling among them.”<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> *Admonitions of St. Francis*, I, 15-22

<sup>2</sup> Felice Cangelosi OFM Cap “Profession in the SFO: Gift and Commitment.” Address to the General Chapter Nov. 15-22, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> First Version of the Letter to the Faithful, Chap.1, 5.

## **BUDDHISM: RELIGION OF INNER PEACE**

continued from page 22.

followers, religious and lay, to bear arms. Friars were not to touch money. Every creature was to be honored as brother or sister. St. Bonaventure, often called the second founder of the Order, taught that even God is dynamic and interrelated (this was the way Bonaventure understood the Trinity). The dynamic interconnection that is God is reflected in the dynamic interrelationships among creatures and between God and Creation. This is a universal application of what St. Paul had already said of the Church: when one member suffers or is exalted, the entire Body suffers or is exalted. This is the very basis of St. Francis' realization that every creature is brother and sister.

I would like to end with two stories of Franciscan encounters with Buddhists. My fraternity hosted a dinner for some Tibetan monks visiting Austin. During our conversation (one of the monks acted as a translator), I told the monk the story of St. Francis. He had never heard the story before, and was quite impressed with the points of similarity to the Buddhist story. In the end, I gave him my San Damiano cross, for which he expressed much gratitude. Since we did not actually speak the same language, I felt that this might have been one way of "preaching the Gospel," while only being able to use a few words.

I am a member of the Society for Buddhist Christian Studies. One year, at our annual meeting, part of the discussion centered around whether plants had consciousness or not. The Buddhist tradition tends to say no, only animal life has consciousness. The Christian tradition is largely silent on this. I said, "I am a Franciscan, and Francis taught that every creature, animal or plant, organic or inanimate, is brother and sister. We've been waiting for 800 years for the rest of you to catch up, and frankly, we're getting tired of waiting."

I got an ovation from both Buddhists and Christians. I suspect that as never before in history, this may be the Franciscan moment.

### **Quotes:**

Work with your hands. It frees the mind.

Let go. Nothing is usually the hardest thing to do – but often it is the best.

Learn to stand back and let others take their turn as leaders. There will always be new opportunities for you to step out in front again.

Linus Mundy from [Slow-down Therapy](#)

## **Environmental Tip by The "Green" Franciscan Sister**

By Sr. Janet Corcoran, OSF

Eco-friendly "Green" picnicking demonstrates our efforts at reducing, reusing, recycling, and conserving the goods of our sister, Mother Earth. Therefore, choose to have a healthy, environmentally friendly "green" picnic. The following are some suggested ways to "green" your picnic:

- Place your food items, etc. for the picnic in a reusable tote/picnic bag, backpack, or basket, which prevents the usage of paper or plastic bags, etc.
- Bring plates, glasses, cups and cutlery from home and try not to use paper/plastic cups and disposable cutlery, as they create a lot of waste. If one chooses to use recycled or recyclable paper products, select biodegradable dishes and utensils made from natural and renewable sources such as cane fiber, a natural byproduct of sugar refining, corn based plastic and fermented potato starch. After use, they can be placed in a composter where they eventually become garden fertilizer
- Avoid the use of Styrofoam, as it endangers wildlife and is not biodegradable
- Avoid the use of plastic sandwich bags as it takes approximately 1000 years for a bag to biodegrade in a landfill. Instead of plastic bag(s) use reusable storage containers or canisters
- Use cloth table linens and napkins as they are reusable. A second best is napkins and paper towels that are unbleached and made from 100% recycled paper. These napkins are available from Treecycle, [www.treecycle.com](http://www.treecycle.com) or select local stores
- Use a container that has a spigot on it for serving or pouring liquids for drinking, which will prevent the usage of bottled water and other drinks
- Avoid the usage of petroleum based lighter fluid as it is not a renewable resource and causes toxic air pollution. Preferably use odorless, ethanol based fluid which is 99% petroleum free and burns hotter than standard fluids. Real Goods [www.realgoods.com](http://www.realgoods.com) sells this product, as do other select stores.

Choose to have a healthy, environmentally friendly, "green" picnic, which is a way to demonstrate a respect for our sister, Mother Earth.

Dave Barbo will fill this inside back cover page and the back cover page.

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Change Service Requested



Photo by William Wicks, SFO