

# TAU-USA

Newsletter of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States  
Issue Number Forty-seven ~ Summer 2005



Thank  
You,  
Lord  
For  
Summer,  
Sunflowers,  
And the  
Singing  
Of  
Birds!

# TAU-USA

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TAU-USA is a vehicle of communication within the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States. Our mission is to provide an effective, appealing forum for presenting information in the areas of Ongoing Formation, Regional and National Fraternity news events, and the sharing and promotion of the Franciscan vision and spirituality in an uplifting, Franciscan manner. This publication is intended to allow the National Fraternity to disseminate information to the regional and local levels of fraternity, and also to allow Seculars throughout the country to communicate with one another, fostering a sense of community nationwide.

The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue TAU-USA is July 15, 2005. Please submit articles to the Editor. Permission to copy all material printed in TAU-USA is granted, except where the copyright is specifically reserved to the author or artist. In cases where copyright is not reserved, please credit TAU-USA and author, if noted; care must be taken not to distort the author's intent by adapting or editorializing the article. 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. Submissions to the newsletter are welcome. To increase the likelihood of your submission being printed, the following guidelines are offered: Please ensure that articles do not exceed 250-400 words; Please understand that articles may be edited for length and clarity; Submissions received after the deadline for a particular issue will be considered for the *following issue*. In the Franciscan interest in ecology, please try to send submissions in WORD format (e-mail or floppy disc), instead of on paper. Professed members of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States receive this newsletter without charge.

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# A Tribute to Pope John Paul II

Holy Father, our brother, your life has changed our world forever. Your courage to remain steadfast to the teachings of Christ has challenged all of us to do the same. Pray for us, so we can learn from your example, to be inclusive of all people, and accept our cross with dignity, while challenging the world to seek His truth!

Carol Gentile, SFO

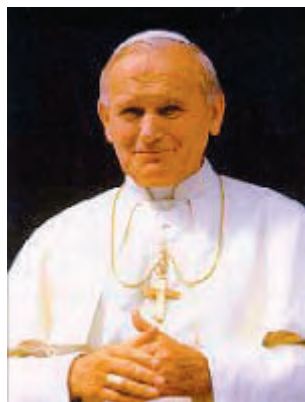
John Paul II, faithful to his understanding of Church and gospel, spread that message to the world. Its effects will be measured in history. For us Franciscans his words give clear direction to what our lives should be: “... *you are called on to give your own contribution, inspired by the person and message of St Francis of Assisi, in speeding up the advent of a civilization in which the dignity of the human person, co-responsibility and love will be a living reality.*” (Words to the SFO General Chapter in November, 2002)

Lester Bach OFM Cap

...You have been my living saint, my image of Christ, my special spring of Franciscan love for all creatures, and you have shown me how the power of the Cross of Christ is the difference between: a Culture of Death and a Culture of LIFE...May You Forever Rest in the Arms of Our Loving Lord.

Ray Smecker

In 1981, an attempt to assassinate him was nearly successful. I remember being near tears for days and thinking what is wrong



## Pope John Paul II

Karol Joseph Wojtyla  
Born May 18, 1920,  
Wadowice, Poland  
Died April 2, 2005,  
Vatican City

with this world. At the time, I was 32 years old and non-Catholic. He was a man who inspired all.  
Sandy Neal, SFO

I went through 20-some years' worth of buttons and found a yellowing "Solidarnosc" button to wear in honor of our Holy Father. What a leader! He gathered the love in all of Poland and inspired a blood-free revolution that brought religious and personal freedom - "peace and all good" to Poland.

Julie Pearson, SFO

Holy Father, we thank you for your life of dedication. Pray for us, that we Secular Franciscans may faithfully follow your exhortation, which was presented to us at our 10th International Chapter. God give you peace!  
Patrick Mendés, SFO

On behalf of the Third Order, Province of the Americas, The Society of Saint Francis, I extend our good thoughts and prayers to you and to all our brothers and sisters of the Roman Catholic Church as we together mourn the death of His Holiness, Pope John Paul, II. He was indeed a great witness to the work of Christ in the world as he championed the causes of peace, justice, and the dignity of human life. Both the Church and the world are different (and better) because of his presence among us.

Do know that we, with you, give thanks for his life and pray that the seeds of the Gospel that he planted during his lifetime will come to fruit, more and more. We further pray for the future of the Church and its ongoing witness to the Presence of Christ in the world.

Rev. Masud Ibn Syedulullah, TSSF

John Paul II is the great communicator in both action and words. His words remain with us—whether a major encyclical addressing the modern world or a simple commentary on a psalm, we will continue to benefit from his penetrating insight.

Bob and Mary Stronach, SFO

The gentlest of men changing the world with a smile now with his Father  
Monica Marko, SFO

Pope John Paul II, our hats are off to you! You have done what was yours to do... *unrelentingly!*  
Frances Wicks, SFO



# Minister's Insights

## A Study Guide

By Carol Gentile, SFO  
National Minister

## Inclusiveness

**“The Kingdom of God is all-inclusive.”  
“A person cannot step out of his or her life to live with and for God. Rather, a person must step more deeply into what life entails to discover the faithful God present and active in one’s midst.”**

Human Development, Volume 25,  
Number four, Winter 2004  
Elements of Spiritual Leadership,  
Reverend Roger A. Statnick, PH.D.

God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, to show us the way, the truth, and the life.  
Jesus has no boundaries to His claims on earth.  
Let us walk with Him on earth and remember what He said and did!

"What I just did was to give you an example: as I have done, so you must do" (Jn 13:15).

"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Live on in my love...Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:9,12).

"I pray ... that all may be one as you, Father, are in me and I in you; I pray that they may be one in us that the world may believe that you sent me ... so that your love for me may live in them, and I may live in them" (Jn 17:20,21,26).

"Beloved, if God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet if we love one another God dwells in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us" (1 Jn 4:11-12).

### Examples:

1. Jesus' healing of and relationships with the Jewish "unclean":

Paralytic at Caparnaum: Mt 9:1-8

Dead girl and woman with a hemorrhage:

Mt 9:18-31, Mk 5:21-43, Lk 8:40-56

Possessed mute: Mt 9:32-34

Man with a shriveled hand: Mt 12:9-15, Mk 3:1-6

Two blind men at Jericho: Mt 20:29-34

Dinner at the home of Simon the leper: Mt 26:6

Leper: Mk 1:40-45

Blind man at Bethsaida: Mk 8:22-26

Possessed boy: Mk 9:14-29, Lk 9:37-43

Blind Bartimaeus: Mk 10:46-52

A demoniac: Lk 4:33-37

Paralyzed Man: Lk 5:17-26

The raising of the son of the widow of Naim:  
Lk 7:11-17

The “immoral” penitent woman who anointed his feet: Lk 7:36-50

The Gerasene demoniac: Lk 8:26-39

Possessed woman: Lk 13:10-17

Man with dropsy: Lk 14:1-6

Prodigal son: Lk 15:11-32

Zacchaeus, the tax collector: Lk 19: 1-10

Paralytic at Bethesda: Jn 5:1-15

The adulteress: Jn 7:53-8:11

The man born blind: Jn 9:1-41

The raising of Lazarus: Jn 11:1-44

2. Jesus' healing of and relationships with non-Jewish "outsiders":

The Canaanite woman: Mt 15:21-28

The centurion's son: Lk 7:1-10

The Samaritan woman: Jn 4:4-42

Royal Official: Jn 4:46-54

Peter and Cornelius: Acts 10:1-48, esp. 34-36

Call of the Gentiles: Acts 11:1-18

### Francis' Insight

"Francis' highest intention, his chief desire, his uppermost purpose was to observe the holy Gospel in all things and through all things and, with perfect vigilance, with all zeal, with all the longing of his mind and all the fervor of his heart, 'to follow the teaching and the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ.'" (1 Celano, 84)

"Indeed, [Francis] was always occupied with Jesus; Jesus he bore in his heart, Jesus in his mouth, Jesus in his ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands, Jesus in the rest of his members." (1 Celano, 115)

### Clare's Insight

"Gaze upon [Christ], consider [Christ], contemplate [Christ], as you desire to imitate [Christ]" (St. Clare, Letter II, 20).

And so my dearest brothers and sisters, can we afford to do any less!

***We must embrace all, and include all, so that the Kingdom of God will prevail in all!***

# Impressions



By Father Kevin Queally, TOR  
CNSA President-in-turn

## Memories of a Pope

The death of our Holy Father Pope John Paul II impacts all of us deeply. That probably goes without saying. The media coverage has been very extensive, so there is little that remains to be said about his life and accomplishments. He was clearly an outstanding and charismatic leader, not only for the Church, but also for the whole world. We are blessed to have lived through his Papacy.

My first personal memory of Pope John Paul was attending the Papal Mass at Yankee Stadium in October of 1979. I was only two years ordained and was teaching at Saint Francis University (College, at that time) in Loretto, Pennsylvania. I am back in Loretto now as I write! I was able to go to New York for the Papal Mass. My Dad had been in the seminary with, then, Cardinal Cooke and they had stayed in contact over the years. Through that connection my family had tickets to this special Mass and we sat on first base while the altar was on second base! It was such a moving Mass and I had never dreamed I would actually ever see a Pope. I took a very close picture of our Holy Father, then still a rather new Pope, as he rode by. What a thrill to have been there. I can remember calling home early the next morning, after having driven through the night to get back for class. I wanted to let my parents know I was here safely, but more, I wanted to reflect with them on such an incredible and deeply moving moment.

In May of 1995, I traveled to Italy to attend the 50th Anniversary of the founding of Pax Christi International. The meeting was held in Assisi and the Holy Father invited the delegates to the Vatican when

the meeting was over. He greeted us personally and, in a very powerful speech, blessed the work of the international Catholic peace movement embodied in Pax Christi. He also encouraged all the participants from all over the world to continue our important peacemaking work. I will never forget meeting the Pope on that May morning. One lasting impression is how the face of each of the person present lit up with joy as he blessed each one and spoke to them in turn, each in his or her own language. I remember every bit of our conversation today, over 10 years later.

I was asked to move to Rome in early 1996 and lived there for five and a half years, serving the Third Order Regular as Secretary General. I had only been in Rome for a few months when the time came for the Stations at the Colosseum led by our beloved Holy Father. I noticed that while the crowd was in the center, there was a police presence around the corner of the ancient building. I walked over to see what was up and right then the limousine carrying the Holy Father arrived! I was on the opposite side of the car when he exited. He looked over the roof of the car, smiled and waved and gave me a blessing. Needless to say, I was absolutely thrilled!

At the end of my time in Rome, in June of 2001, after the General Chapter had elected a new Minister General and Council, the Holy Father received the members of the Chapter in a private audience. I was privileged to be present and greet the Holy Father personally. It was already clear that his health was failing, but I remember his kind words and challenge to our Order. When I had the opportunity to speak with him, I thanked him for all he had done. He smiled at that and blessed me.

I think the entire world feels a loss at this time, not just the Catholic world. Pope John Paul was such a holy man, and his holiness was plain for all to see. He was a man of peace and will be missed by the world. He certainly left an indelible mark on the Church and the world. I feel blessed to have encountered him personally in these few meetings recounted here. I also saw him many other times as a member of large audiences during my time in Rome. Each time I realized that many people would have felt blessed and privileged to have seen him even once. It is for this reason that I am so bold as to share my few experiences with you, in hopes that the memory of our Holy Father be not just as a distant person, but as one who cared for his flock in a real, pastoral and individual way.



### Excerpts from Pope Benedict XVI's First Homily

“Grace and peace in abundance to all of you! In my soul there are two contrasting sentiments in these hours. On the one hand, a sense of inadequacy and human turmoil for the responsibility entrusted to me yesterday, as the Successor of the Apostle Peter in this See of Rome, with regard to the Universal Church. On the other hand I sense within me profound gratitude to God Who – as the liturgy makes us sing – does not abandon His flock, but leads it throughout time, under the guidance of those whom He has chosen as vicars of His Son, and made pastors.

Dear Ones, this intimate recognition for a gift of divine mercy prevails in my heart in spite of everything. I consider this a grace obtained for me by my venerated predecessor, John Paul II. It seems I can feel his strong hand squeezing mine; I seem to see his smiling eyes and listen to his words, addressed to me especially at this moment: *‘Do not be afraid!’*”

“HABEMUS PAPAM!”

“WE HAVE A POPE!”

Dominus vobiscum. The Lord be with you. Amen.

Pope Benedict XVI, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, age 78, born in Markt Am Inn, Germany, is our 265<sup>th</sup> Pope. The Pope’s *kind and gentle face* was radiant, as he asked for our prayers from the balcony in St. Peter’s Square in Rome. With the words “Habemus Papam,” the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, began his *new* ministry to bring the love, the peace, and the hope of Jesus to all of God’s children in the world.



### ‘Friends’ Way to Christian Unity

Marcella Bina, SFO  
Ecumenical Committee Chair  
Marcella\_b@core.com

How Mount Holly in Burlington County, NJ, an old Quaker town with a spirit of ‘Friends’ observes Christian Unity throughout the year was the subject of an e-mail sent to me by Teresa S. Redder, SFO. According to Teresa, ecumenical events begin in December with Christmas lessons and carols. The participating churches rotate hosting the events. This is followed by a “Martin Luther King, Jr. Day,” celebrated in January, with a “Remember the dream” march and prayer service. For this, the ministers from each of the churches proclaim the Scripture and preach the Good News. The Easter celebration is an ecumenical sunrise service on “The Mount.” A “Crop Walk” in May serves to round up food for the needy, and the final ecumenical event of the year is a Thanksgiving prayer service. Again, the participating churches rotate hosting this event.

Teresa concludes by saying that with these ecumenical gatherings, the churches are always full, the singing is vibrant, and the refreshments are plentiful. All of this makes for a good community.

Like the folks in Mount Holly, we all have a call to goodness and to ecumenism. This call was initiated by the Second Vatican Council moving the Church into dialogue with other Christian denominations.

In “The Church’s Call to Unity” by Marco Aurelio do Tolosa Raposa, the founding of one Church by Christ the Lord is the principle upon which the Second Vatican Council bases its call and commitment to ecumenism. This commitment is in work and in concern for our separated brethren, “Praying for them, keeping them informed about the Church and making the first approach toward them.” The author continues by saying, “The primary duty is to make a careful and honest appraisal of whatever needs to be renewed and done in the Catholic household itself...”

What can we do to build and to foster Christian Unity in our hometowns? Your Ecumenical Committee is eager to hear from you.

# Cultures & Rites

## Within the Catholic Church



From left to right: Sr. Clamma Poothakuzhyil, Kunjamma Francis, John Sanborn, SFO, Kevin Queally, TOR, Carol Gentile, SFO, Annie Kandenkulam, Sarah Mulholland, SFO, Loren Connell OFM, Elizabeth Allen, SFO Lester Bach, OFM Cap., and Peter Vettickanakudy, OFM Cap. at a meeting at the Marywood Retreat Center in Jacksonville, FL

My dear brothers and sisters,

On January 25-28, 2005, three members of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (Kevin Queally, TOR, Lester Bach, OFM Cap., and Loren Connell, OFM), as well as three members of the National Executive Council (Carol Gentile, John Sanborn, and Elizabeth Allen), met with Fr. Peter Vettickanakudy, OFM, Cap., from Kerala, India, Annie Kandenkulam, from Scarsdale, NY, Francis Kunjamma from Basking, NJ and Sr. Clare Poothakuzhyil from West New York, NJ at the Marywood Retreat and Conference Center in Jacksonville, Florida.

The purpose of this meeting was to become acquainted with our brothers and sister from the Syro-Malabar rite and engage in a dialogue that would embrace their rich culture and rite and their interest in becoming part of SFO-USA.

Our goal is to ultimately incorporate them into our regional structure, to have them respond to our goals for initial and ongoing formation and to

function as do the other fraternities in our country. **As this in-corporation occurs, it is possible that your regions will be receiving either these fraternities or some from other cultures or from other rites within the Catholic Church. It is for this reason that we are writing you this letter.**

It is clear from the Constitutions of the SFO, that any local fraternity in the USA must become part of the National Fraternity of the USA and should be integrated into the National Fraternity (refer to Article 28.3 and Article 34).

We have consulted with General Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Samy Irudhaya OFM Cap, and he confirms this process of integrating the fraternities into our regional structure.

This will take time and patience, understanding and tolerance. The Executive Council and the Conference of National Spiritual Assistance are ready to help the Regional Councils in accomplishing the integration of not only Syro-Malabar people but others as well. We are ready to assist in any way that we can to make the process of integration go well.

**Our Brothers and Sisters of different cultures and rites do things differently than we do in some areas of fraternity life. Some of our practices will need to be adapted to their needs so that we can achieve unity without demanding uniformity. Recognizing these differences and embracing them will open new doors for us as well as for them. Showing respect for their traditions and they for ours will lay the groundwork for bringing them into full participation with NAFRA.**

My brothers and sisters, we have much to learn from our brothers and sisters of all cultures and rites. It is through these virtues that we will have unity and peace.

Remembering always, that God's grace will do wonders! Many blessings on our endeavors to unite us as one family,

Carol Gentile, SFO  
National Minister, SFO-USA  
Kevin Queally, TOR  
Conference of National Spiritual Assistance

## National Fraternity Historian is Appointed

Bill Wicks, SFO has been appointed to the position of historian for the national fraternity. Bill is the immediate past national minister and has served in many other leadership positions. These include local fraternity minister, provincial minister, regional newsletter editor and national secretary. Bill and his wife, Frances, were professed together on October 3, 1982. They presently reside in Santa Maria, California. They have five children, three boys and two girls, and six grandchildren. Bill has a sincere interest in preserving, and making available, our SFO history. He plans to use his gift of writing to create one or two volumes that will include the history of the Order in the United States from the time of the creation of the North American Federation in the mid-fifties to the present. There is presently no complete publication of SFO history for this time period. Bill also plans to make available, with the help of the computer committee, an electronic documentation of the history that will be marked with locator keys to allow for time line and subject line access. Historical information will be available on-line from our website and also via CD or DVD. The rapid progress made in information transmission technology opens up many avenues for creating and accessing historical information.



**Bill Wicks, SFO**

Bill says that the success of this endeavor depends on three important components. One is based having on a complete set of archives. Another component is the gathering information through interviews with past SFO leaders and friars that have been deeply committed in service to our Order. The third is, of course, prayer.

It is Bill's intention to include SFO province and SFO region history as part of our national history. The appeal to you is to inform our archivist, Sharon Deveaux, SFO ([sharonx@earthlink.net](mailto:sharonx@earthlink.net)) of your knowledge of any material that you feel could contribute to our SFO history. "How to" Information is given on page 25.

Bill welcomes questions. His e-mail address is: [sfowicks2@earthlink.net](mailto:sfowicks2@earthlink.net). He envisions the writing of the history of our Order as a rewarding challenge. He needs your help. He promises to write a first class presentation of our history in hard copy volumes, and in electronic volumes. He thanks you for your prayers.

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### Brief History - Thirteenth to Twenty-first Century

Excerpts from the 1980 Writings of Fr. Larry Landini, OFM

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Thirteenth Century – Penitential movement is active. St. Frances gave his followers a way of life with the Volterra Letter and the Letter to all the Faithful. The Rule of 1221 was written by St. Francis and Cardinal Ugolino. Tertiaries are forbidden to take oaths...and not allowed to carry weapons. Rule of Pope Nicolas IV is approved in 1289, with minor changes from the Rule of 1221.

Fourteenth Century – John XXII declares the Third Order is cared for by the First Order. More and more Tertiaries begin to live in stable communities.

Fifteenth Century - Juridical Division between the Third Order and Third Order Regular. The Third Order continues to gain popular support.

Sixteenth to Eighteenth Century – In 1508, Julius II substitutes large scapular and cord for full habit. In 1516, Pope Leo X states that Tertiaries are no longer able to claim exemption from civil court. In 1547, Spain and its possessions receive new Rule from Paul III.

Nineteenth Century – The Rule of Pope Leo XIII became the new Rule. 14 years is the age of admittance. Monthly confession and communion required. Old rules about fasting and abstinence are practically eliminated. Increase in membership.

Twentieth Century – In 1957, 173 Articles Constitution...accepted by Pius XII. In 1971, "The Way of Life of the Lay Franciscans" is approved by the ministers general for North America. It contains 17 elements as suggested in 1969, at the Franciscan Order World Congress at Assisi. In 1978, the Rule *that we live by today* was approved by Pope Paul VI.

*Fr. Larry Landini, OFM left us early this year. His contributions to the Secular Franciscan Order are greatly appreciated. (See page4). Bill Wicks, SFO*





**Karen Lezcano, SFO and Daughter, Rachel**

## Classic Franciscans

### Mission Trek D.C.

By Julia Pearson, SFO - Human Interest Editor

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Mt. 5:3 St. Francis of Assisi embraced the Gospel life by hearing the words of Christ in the Gospel and by closely matching His footsteps. Like Christ, Francis spent long hours in prayer and meditation. And like Christ, Francis also sought out Holy Poverty as a life companion. Karen Lezcano and her daughter, Rachel, join other adults and teens seeking such an intimate faith journey. They join the Little Poor Man today by coupling prayer and work with the poor - giving breath to Gospel words and feet to Gospel action.

Karen and Rachel will be spending nearly two weeks of their summer participating in their annual Mission Trek, through their home parish. As part of the Young Neighbors in Action Group, they will leave for Washington, D.C. on July 9 and return July 20, 2005. Like the local Mission Trek group in their home parish of St. Vincent de Paul in Federal Way, Washington, the Young Neighbors will focus on the preferential treatment of the poor and vulnerable. Teens and adult leaders will literally be neighbors, interacting personally through service to the poor, hungry, and homeless. The work groups have assignments that include home maintenance - painting, repairs; clearing lots, helping at recreation centers, and performing daycare tasks. Being shoulder-to-shoulder with the “least of these” of D.C. and doing the assigned hard and sometimes dirty work, many “Trekking” will feel unity as Disciples of Jesus. Adult leaders facilitate daily discussion about the experience with the young people.

Prayer is the beginning and ending of each day of the mission. In fact, when groups leave on a mission trip, the rosary is said every time they get into their vehicles. Each teenager leads a decade as those in the car pray the rosary together. Since this is a favorite devotion, Karen reports with a warm smile, “By the end of the week, everyone knows how to pray the rosary!”

The models of Catholic Social Teaching are the foundation of Mission Trek, with focus on the needy and vulnerable. The Gospel of Matthew proclaims the Good News that we are ALL neighbors, and that we should reach out to the suffering. “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least of these my brothers, you did for me.” Mt. 25: 40.

The work of Mission Trek-D.C. 2005 is financed by sponsors who purchase stock certificates worth \$10 each. These certificates make investments in Mission Trek official and entitle sponsors to pictures and a report from the actual Mission in D.C.

Born and raised in east Texas, Karen Lezcano has a background in the Southern Baptist Church. She converted to the Catholic faith twenty-five years ago, and today is active in the varied ministries of her home parish, St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church. She is a member of the childcare staff, which provides care for children while their parents attend Mass and other special events. She is a Certified Catechist for the Archdiocese of Seattle. As one of the parish’s certified Tribunal Advocates, Karen also helps to process nullity cases.

She and her husband, Juan, have been married for twenty-six years and have nine children: Elizabeth Ann Rose, 24; Christopher John, 22; Anthony Nicholas, 21; Susan Angelica, 20; Sean Michael, 19; Rachel Kateri, 17; James Patrick, 12; Mary Frances Clare, 9; and Jonathan David, 4.

Karen marked the nineteenth anniversary of her profession into the Secular Franciscans on April 6. She is part of the St. Frances Cabrini Fraternity in Tacoma, Washington, which is part of the Troubadours of Peace Region. Her husband, Juan, is our International Counselor.

Karen is inspired by the tremendous faith exhibited in the life of Francis of Assisi. She especially reflects on his laying everything he possessed at the feet of Assisi’s bishop back in 1206, being left totally naked and dispossessed. He was now free to embrace forever his longed-for Lady Poverty, so beautifully allegorized in the earliest of Franciscan writings. “I wonder, would we be able to do the same in the world we are living in?”

For more Trek information contact Karen Lezcano at (253) 925-7206 or [KRLEZCANO@msn.com](mailto:KRLEZCANO@msn.com)

## Remembering Fr. Larry

By Loren Connell, OFM, CNSA



**+Lawrence Landini, OFM 1935-2005+**

Lawrence Landini, OFM, the son of an Irish-American mother and an Italian-American father, was born in New York and reared in Miami. A member of the Province of Saint John the Baptist, he made his profession of solemn vows in the Order of Friars Minor in 1956 and was ordained to the presbyterate in 1961. Six years later he received a doctorate in Church History from the Gregorian University in Rome. His doctoral thesis was a groundbreaking work on the clericalization of the Order of Lesser Brothers (an issue with which the whole First Order still struggles today).

Larry was a teacher—a seminary teacher, to be specific. For nearly forty years he taught in the internal schools of the Order and in other centers of priestly formation. He taught me history and liturgy at our provincial school of theology in the late '60s and was one of the best teachers that I ever had. At the time of his death, he was on the faculty of the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus. In between, he taught at the Franciscan Institute at Saint Bonaventure University and at the National Seminary in South Africa. Seminarians on two continents benefited from his expertise, as did countless Franciscan religious and seculars.

Larry became provincial spiritual assistant to the Secular Franciscan Order in 1986, following in the footsteps of Jovian Weigel, OFM. In 1987 he succeeded David Eckelkamp, OFM, as national spiritual assistant and was succeeded in turn by Matthew Gaskin, OFM, in 1993. Along with Jerry Rome, SFO, vice minister of the National Fraternity, Larry played a key role in the regionalization of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States. In collaboration with provincial minister Ruth Campbell, SFO, he skillfully helped bring the Secular

Franciscan Province of Saint John the Baptist to its end. Larry completed his tenure as provincial assistant in 1996 and undertook a five-year teaching assignment in South Africa. His death in early 2005, in Columbus was sudden and unexpected.

Seculars will remember Fr. Larry's letters to homebound members, which we now call "*Living by Faith.*"

## The Quinquennial Congress



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## Apostolic Commissions Coordinator Recruitment

The NAFRA Executive Council is soliciting applications from SFOs interested in serving as the Coordinator of the National Apostolic Commissions for appointment starting in October 2005. Applications are due by July 15, 2005. Applicants must:

- have active Secular Franciscan status (must provide copy of Certificate of Profession);
- be familiar with the Mission Statement and goals of the National Commissions;
- be willing to communicate your passion and desire to promote the Commissions to others;
- provide a summary of some of your ideas to promote the Commissions; and
- be able to attend two four-day meetings and one seven day national meeting annually.

If you meet the above criteria and are interested in applying, send your resume by July 15, 2005 to:

Elizabeth S. Allen, SFO  
445 Nickman St.  
Chula Vista, California 91911



## The Lighter Side of Life

Ken Beattie, SFO Humor Editor

A man came home from the office and found his new bride sobbing convulsively, "I feel terrible," she told him. "I was pressing your suit and I burned a big hole in the seat of your trousers." "Oh, just forget it," consoled her husband. "Remember that I've got an extra pair of pants for that suit." "Yes, I know. And it's lucky you have!" said the woman, drying her eyes, "I was able to use a piece from them to patch the hole!"

A tourist was admiring a necklace worn by one of the locals. "What is it made of?" she asked. "Alligator's teeth," she said. "Do they mean as much to you, as pearls do to us?" "Oh no," she objected. "Anybody can open an oyster!"

"HELP WANTED" sign was placed in the front window: "Must be a good typist and be good with a computer. Successful applicant must be bilingual. We are an Equal Opportunity Employer."

A short time later a lovely golden retriever dog trotted up to the window, saw the sign and went inside. He looked at the receptionist and wagged his tail, then walked over to the sign, looked at it, whined and pawed the air. The receptionist called the office manager.

He was surprised, to say the least to see a canine applicant. However, the dog looked determined, so he led him into the office. Inside the dog jumped up on a chair and stared at the manager expectantly. The manager said, "I can't hire you. The sign says you must be able to type. The dog jumped down, went to the typewriter and proceeded to quickly type a perfect business letter. He took out the page and trotted over to the manager, gave it to him, then jumped back up on the chair.

The manager was stunned, but told the dog, "That was fantastic, but I'm sorry. The sign clearly says that whomever I hire has to be good with a computer. The dog jumped down again, went to the computer and proceeded to demonstrate his expertise with various programs, produced a sample spreadsheet and database, and then presented them to the manager. The manager was dumbfounded!!

He said to the dog, "Hey I realize that you are a very intelligent applicant and have fantastic talent, but you're a dog - no way can I hire you. The dog jumped down and went to the sign in the window and pointed his paw at the words, "Equal Opportunity Employer."

The exasperated manager said, "Yes I know what the sign says. But the sign also says you must be bilingual." The dog looked him straight in the eye and said: "Meow".

Having lost weight over the past few years, a lady was discarding

things from her wardrobe that no longer fit. Her seven-year-old niece was watching as she held up a huge pair of slacks. "Wow," the lady said, "I must have worn these when I was 183." Her niece looked puzzled, and then asked, "How old are you now?"

### Children's Science Exam Answers:

Q: Name the four seasons.

A: Salt, pepper, mustard and vinegar.

Q: What causes the tides in the oceans?

A: The tides are a fight between the Earth and the Moon. All water tends to flow towards the moon, because there is no water on the moon, and nature hates a vacuum. I forget where the sun joins in this fight.

Q: How is dew formed?

A: The sun shines down on the leaves and makes them perspire.

Q: How can you delay milk turning sour?

A: Keep it in the cow.

Q: What are steroids?

A: Things for keeping carpets still on the stairs.

Q: What is the fibula?

A: A small lie.

Q: What does "varicose" mean?

A: Nearby.

Q: Name a major disease associated with cigarettes.

A: Premature death.

# OUR STORIES<sub>o.o.o.</sub>

## Monique Bruce, SFO—Living the Gospel

Submitted by St. Michael & The Nine Choirs of Angels  
Fraternity, Rochester, NH  
St. Elizabeth of Hungary Region

**“When Jesus disembarked and saw a great multitude, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.” Mt 14:14**

Monique, a registered nurse of 36 years has served 28 of those years in the Emergency Department. This is her training ground and launch pad for ministering to God’s people. She sings “Open the eyes of my heart, Lord, I want to see [and serve] You” as Saint Francis did. By the grace of God, Monique has ministered to people at a time when they needed the embrace of someone to minister as Jesus and St. Francis did.

Monique sensed a deeper call to action because of her compassion for survivors of catastrophic events. In 1993, she initiated the “Grieving Assistance Program” (GAP), a support program for grieving adults. GAP spawned “Grieving Assistance Program for Students” (GAPS) held in local schools for students grieving the death of a loved one. Students meet weekly for 8 weeks with their peers. During the summer, they attend a two-day overnight camp called “Camp Purple Parachute” that provides a more relaxed atmosphere for working through their grief issues.

“...Here I am Lord” (1st Sam 3:4). In addition to her daily nursing duties, Monique willingly submits her name for service in local (Stephen Ministry) and international works, all the while being docile to the Holy Spirit and waiting upon the Lord’s call to serve someone somewhere.

Through an international agency, which responds to mass casualty disasters, Monique was sent to New York on September 12, 2001 and to Phuket, Thailand on January 26, 2005. She shares the following experiences: The first 3 days in NY were filled with chaos, overpowering emotions and feelings of helplessness. At the end of a most discouraging Saturday, I called my faith-filled Franciscan friend, Diane Ficco, and asked her to pray that I could, in some small way, manage to comfort someone. I explained that I had not been able to attend my customary daily mass so felt cheated out of my usual source of spiritual strength. I told Diane that there

was a basilica of St Francis in New York but it was too far away to visit; besides, I was there to serve others. She immediately gave me the most calming reassurance that I would get there and that I would be helping people in a very special way. She vowed to concentrate her prayers so that I would be enlightened and know exactly how the Holy Spirit wanted me to serve his people. The very next morning, I met a young lady whose ID tag signified that she was looking for a family member missing from the Towers. I asked if she would like to talk and she took me to the hotel room where her mom and brother were staying. Her mom opened the door and ushered us in, while talking on the phone. I noticed a Madonna pin on her blouse. After the phone conversation, I introduced myself and explained the reason for my presence there. I commented on the beauty of her Madonna pin. She said, “Oh, my sister gave me this. You see, she is a Secular Franciscan. My heart leapt! After a while, the mother said that she and her two children were going to meet a friend for mass at the basilica of St. Francis and asked if I would be interested in accompanying them. My sheer ecstasy immediately traveled all the way up my spine and totally filled my heart. A half hour later, I was pointing out a fresco of my precious “Porti Uncula” over the altar at the basilica of St. Francis to the young lady who, I feel, had been placed directly in my path by St. Francis himself less than 3 hours before. I explained to her how, just 2 months ago, I had visited that very place in Assisi, Italy, where St. Francis used to spend so much time praying. We attended a beautiful mass and from that moment on, I never once questioned my mission in New York City. Coincidence? Out of 3,000 victims? I really don’t think so!

In Phuket, Thailand, as part of the International Disaster Victims Identification Team, I was to collate and input data, both anti-mortem and post-mortem, from countless records centrally accumulated. This was done in hopes of identifying typically unidentifiable bodies and eventually repatriating them to their families. An article in the Bangkok Post featured a volunteer working with orphans from the Tsunami disaster and who was soliciting help for these grieving children. After speaking with his interpreter, I sent him the GAPS school curriculum that had been initiated over 5 years ago! Arriving home on February 17<sup>th</sup>, I knew a seed was planted across the ocean in the midst of disaster. Yet another “coincidence”—like 911? I don’t think so! I praise God for the opportunities and blessings He places before me!”

## Living Each Gifted Moment...

By Diane Ganzer, SFO  
St. Thomas More fraternity  
Inver Grove Heights, MN

*As I have grown older*, I have really come to appreciate the simple things in life. Ten years ago, it was a walk before sunrise, then, actually being able to see the sun as it came up over the eastern horizon. I felt a union with all the angels, as we watched the beginnings of a brand new day. Now that I have just turned forty-two, it is even the simpler things that I look forward to. Case in point. When I was twenty-five, I was disappointed if I didn't get a fancy card and a real nice present from my husband, plus birthday greetings from everyone I knew, and if a present came with it, all the better! I was so greedy! Then, when I hit my fortieth birthday, I was rushed to the hospital with what I thought was a heart attack. In the ambulance, tears were running down my cheeks and into my hair, as I debated if these were my last moments on earth. Was I ready to face God? More important, did God want to see me? Turns out it was a gall bladder attack, which necessitated an operation. This year, I expected no surprises from anyone. I was blessed just to BE. Yet, a lady at work gave me a bag of very expensive coffee and some chocolates. Another gal gifted me with birthday greetings. Humbly I accepted them, thanking God for the simplicity of my life.

I have been dealing with a chronic illness, rheumatoid arthritis and lupus, for the last five years, so every day is truly a treasure. When I realize what a witness we had in Pope John Paul II and Terry Schiavo, showing us their humility and trust as they suffered, I know now that each day, each MOMENT, is truly a gift from God. That is why we must be grateful for this time. It is the present! The love we have for one another must be given away. We need to let our light shine for all. No moment must be wasted, as I found out during that ambulance ride. A friend of mine died last summer, suddenly of a heart attack. There were no warnings or indications that anything was amiss. He was only forty-eight. He left a wife and four beautiful children. I often wonder what his last words were to his family, before he left them to attend a hockey game. What are the last memories that they have of him? Now, I always make sure to leave my kids with a smile, a hug and words of encouragement. One never knows what the future holds.

## Leroy Was My Leper!

By Paul Stolz  
St Francis of Assisi Fraternity  
Ringwood, NJ

*Leroy was my leper.* Never before had I wanted to really admit that I had lepers in my life. After all I am a social worker, Christian, Franciscan...I love all, I could not possibly have lepers in my life. But alas, I had to face my darker self and admit that I did in fact have lepers. What made Leroy my leper was that he was just so difficult, manipulating, and just plain mean. (Maybe I should compare him to the wolf of Gubbio). He was never grateful for anything you ever did for him and he would just keep asking for more. No one wanted to deal with him. So, as he did for most of his life, he would be mean and angry towards others and they would be mean and angry back, which would make him meaner and angrier ...you get the picture? However, I was his social worker and he was homeless, in a wheelchair, and penniless.

Surprisingly, despite that fact that I am a social worker, it was the first time I turned to St. Francis for guidance. Please, Francis, what do I do? It was at this moment that two things happened. The first was that I had to face the fact that Leroy was my leper. The second was that I had to get off of my horse and embrace him. Up on a horse, I could not see him clearly; I was looking down at him, keeping my distance and getting ready to run away. However, once I got off that horse, I could really see. What did I see? I saw a man in pain. Leroy never really had a chance. Poverty and violence were always a part of his life. Most of his youth was spent in jail. His wheelchair and pain put him in another type of prison. He knew he could not return to his neighborhood. In that world, he was no longer predator, but prey. In summary his life was just one tragic loss after another. Why should I expect him to be grateful? It wasn't Leroy's job to make me feel good about myself. My job was to offer him help. So I put aside my agenda, my views, my values, all of my "old baggage" and even got off of my high horse. I went to my brother and I sat with him. I kept my mouth shut and my ears and heart open. I let him set the agenda and tell me what he wanted. I said very little and didn't respond to his anger or taunts. In other words I embraced him.  
Continue on next page.

Eventually, we found a place for him to live. A few months later, I learned that Leroy was shot and killed. Most greeted the news with apathy; a few expressed some sense of satisfaction that he *got what he deserved*. His death like his life was violent and tragic, but all I could feel was a deep sense of sadness. I had an image of him being embraced by Jesus and just weeping bitterly, cleansing away the pain and hurt that he had felt all of these years on earth. Whatever happened here, I know that it is over and that he is at peace.

Every now and then I run into someone similar, and before I go to see them, I have this vision of a smiling Leroy helping me down off of my horse and patting me on the back while sending me on my way.

## Poverty

By Mike King, SFO  
Holy Spirit Fraternity  
Springfield, IL

Poverty...The word itself sends chills through every being that draws breath. But is poverty really the worst thing a person can experience? Do we fully understand what poverty is and where we can find it in its purest expression?

Poverty is our deepest need for God in our lives. We do not desire God on our own, for we are incapable of such a desire without something else. Our desire for God is actually God's desire for us.

When we feel compelled to pray, it is not our desire that fuels this need, but rather God's desire for communication with us and it is his Spirit that inspires us to respond. The need for God is the need for us to have pure poverty in our lives. This is not the physical poverty that we see in our world. It is our own radical dependency that we have upon God. Without God, we have nothing of worth in our lives. When we do have God and acknowledge that this dependence exists, then we have become poor and a deep relationship with God is possible.

Poverty can be seen and fully experienced in the crucified Christ because here, Jesus, the Son of the living God, is totally, solely dependent upon God. He has submitted completely to the will of God and it is in this moment of real and raw poverty that we witness the two wills meld into one—that of the Father. With his dying breath, Jesus, in complete submission to the Father, utters, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit."

In this very moment of history, a moment that transcends all other moments, we can see poverty in its purest form. Jesus, the all-powerful and omnipresent Son, yields entirely to his Father's will in a pure act of love that becomes poverty.

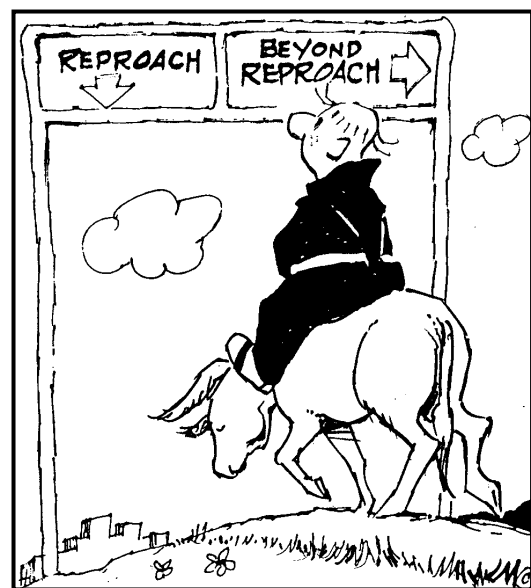
Here, in this moment, frozen in time for all generations, we understand that the Son of God possesses only one thing—the love of God for him. He has nothing else. He has no other possession. If indeed he had one, it would not even come close to this one precious thing at the end of his earthly existence.

Gaze upon the face of Christ crucified. Contemplate his action at that moment in time and realize that this moment touches the present. Let your imagination take you to the crucifixion and realize that what you seeing is poverty at its highest meaning. In this way, the Savior of the world becomes king of the Universe. It is only through this kind of poverty that this is possible.

We become poor in spirit, when we know that God is our all—our everything. Nothing is important besides this. Gazing upon the crucified Savior of the World, we find the loving eyes and heart of Divine poverty and are able to say with confidence, "Lord, we seek your perfect poverty, so that we may enjoy the complete and pure embrace of God's love."

In uniting with Christ's poverty of the cross, we enter perfect communion with God, our Father and, in turn, with each other. Thus, we come to understand the spiritual meaning of Poverty!

## Brother Juniper



By Fred Mc Carthy, SFO

# Secular Franciscans at Your Service

By Fred Schaeffer, SFO - Divine Mercy Fraternity in Vero Beach, FL [www.franciscan-sfo.org](http://www.franciscan-sfo.org)

“The local fraternity is to be established canonically. It becomes the basic unit of the whole Order and a visible sign of the Church, the community of love. This should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.”  
*SFO Rule 22*

The SFO is divided into fraternities of various levels, the purpose being to promote, in an orderly form, the union and mutual collaboration among the brothers and sisters and their active and communal presence in both the local and the universal Church. The SFO shall also support the commitment of the fraternities in their service to the world, and specifically to the life of society.” *General Constitutions, Article 28 #2*

Traditionally, Franciscans have been, and are, at the forefront of providing a valuable service to their sisters and brothers and to the world, in the area of showing mercy and compassion for the underprivileged and for anyone who is not being treated as we would like others to treat us. Jesus washed the feet of the Apostles, as the bishops and priests still do on and Statutes and in reports from each region. Then in each country, there is one National Fraternity. These people are very busy, in a nation as great and as large as ours, going to meetings, regional visitations, etc.

Looking toward the next higher level from the fraternity, it is clear that the Regional Fraternities and the National Fraternity cannot exist without financial support from all of us, and a part of this support goes to the International Council (CIOFS) as they have expenses as well, and are, in fact, hoping more National Fraternities, worldwide, will send support to them because they're operating on a shoestring. (See CIOFS -SFO International Council - *Weekly edition*, Volume: 11 - N. 05 - 2005 - February - I; From: CIOFS Secretariat. This is a letter identifying the urgent need for payment of funds – Fair Share - to CIOFS.)

The issue of providing support is a very Franciscan thing. In the history of the Franciscan Order as a whole, local support always services Definitories, Provincialates and General Ministers, except that

Holy Thursday. Likewise, Secular Franciscans, with humility and a sense of service in the Name of the Lord, obedient to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, seek to be of service to others. This service takes many forms and is done in an understated way. Our Seraphic Father, Saint Francis, told the friars that they should go and preach, and use words if necessary. Thus our service to others should be done with good cheer and genuine helpfulness without pointing back at ourselves or the Order. Such an example brings many more vocations than all the written brochures and handouts put together.

We are divided into fraternities of various levels. All of the professed know that there is the Regional Fraternity, such as Five Franciscan Martyrs Region, for example. The region provides many services for the fraternities. They provide a Regional Spiritual Assistant through financial support, so that this Assistant can get around, sometimes, very large areas and be of service in many pastoral ways, particularly in doing visitations and assisting at Chapters of Election, etc., all of which is outlined in Constitutions

in the First and Second Order of Franciscans, money comes from parish donations, generally. In the Secular Franciscan Order, funds come from fraternities and usually that means from each and everyone of the Professed. These means of support are not dues. I cringe when I hear Secular Franciscans speak about their Order as if they were paying membership dues. That's very inaccurate. Generally, in a membership organization, when one does not pay dues, you're out. Done with! That's not so with the Secular Franciscan Order. You're professed and have taken on a lasting commitment. So, if you truly cannot afford to provide the support requested by a Regional Fraternity, you're not out at all. Your fraternity minister and council can sort this out in a Christian fashion and provide support where needed. That's what we're here for, to provide service and support to our sisters and brothers in Christ. And, if the Fraternity has no means to provide the monies requested, they should ask their Regional Fraternity for guidance and assistance. As St. Francis did, let us treat all with reverence and love, with understanding and wisdom, and use words if necessary.



# NEWS & VIEWS

Reports-Information-Recommendations-Reflections

For spiritual assistants at all levels

By Lester Bach, OFM Cap

## HANDBOOK FOR SA's

**News Note:** The CNSA is in the process of taking a look at revising the Handbook for Spiritual Assistants. If you have ideas that could be incorporated, please send them to Lester Bach, OFM Cap. Keep in mind that we want clarity so that it is as helpful as possible for all spiritual assistants.

## REGIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS

Personal reflections by Lester Bach, OFM Cap

You may note that a number of regions are without a regional spiritual assistant. In many cases, it is not possible to find a friar to fill that role, either because of a lack of friars or no friar is able to assume this task. This situation invites us to take a reflective look at how we might find SFO members to fill the role of regional spiritual assistant. A number of issues need to be understood. They can help us develop the means to prepare SFO members for the role of RSA.

### 1. Who appoints an RSA?

The regional assistants to the SFO and Franciscan youth are appointed by the competent major superior, after consultation with the respective regional council. Where there is more than one major superior involved in the appointment, the norms established jointly by the Superiors with jurisdiction in the territory of the regional fraternity shall be followed.

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the SFO – Article 21.1

**Comment:** Major superiors are the ministers provincial of the 1<sup>st</sup> Order/TOR provinces with the *altius moderamen* for fraternities in the region. They can delegate this responsibility to the Provincial Spiritual Assistant of their province.

### 2. How are the SFO members prepared to fill the role of RSA?

The recommendations made at our September 16, 2004 meeting of the CNSA, RSAs and PSAs indicate

that we prefer to have a friar as RSA. If that is impossible, qualified Secular Franciscans should be trained and mentored to collaborate with or replace friar Regional Spiritual Assistants. If a member of the SFO assumes the role of RSA, it is important to have adequate training.

A) The appointee could be asked to take the LIFE-GIVING UNION program. This will give clarity about the role of a spiritual assistant.

B) The appointee could be mentored by an RSA who is close enough to meet with the appointee with some regularity for a period deem suitable.

C) CNSA could invite RSAs and PSAs to assist in developing a program of training. This would offer common training throughout the USA and be a help for the major superiors.

D) Friars with experience in the role of RSA could assist with such training and share what is effective and what does not work well.

E) Any SFO member chosen for this task could be helped if they have experience in being on a local or regional council and able to observe an RSA in action. It seem reasonable that any appointee should be professed for AT LEAST five or more years.

F) *Please add other ideas that would be helpful so that we can develop a common process for appointing RS's. Send them to Lester Bach OFM Cap – [lbofmcap@aol.com](mailto:lbofmcap@aol.com)*

### 3. What is the responsibility of a RSA?

*It is the responsibility of the conference of regional spiritual assistants, or of the regional assistant if there is only one:*

+ *to collaborate with the regional council in the task of spiritual and apostolic animation of the Secular Franciscans in the life of the Church and of society in the region, and in a special way in the*



formation of leaders.

+ to provide for the pastoral visits of the local councils of the SFO and to ensure a presence at the local elective chapters.

+ to co-ordinate, at the regional level, the service of spiritual assistance, the formation of the assistants and the fraternal union among them.

+ to foster the interest of friars in the SFO and Franciscan Youth.

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the SFO – Article 21.3

1. The regional Assistant must keep the major superiors and his Order informed on the life and activities of the SFO and the Franciscan Youth in the region.

2. He shall also deal with matters regarding the service of assistance given by his Order to the SFO and Franciscan Youth, meet with local fraternities assisted by his own Order in the region and keep constant fraternal contacts with the local assistants of his own Order. *IBID – Article 22.1,2*

Having laid out the role of the RSA, and the direction of our documents, we can initiate the work of developing a healthy program to help SFO members who may serve as RSA's. Things continue to change in the SFO and its relationship with the rest of the Franciscan family. This is one more issue the Spirit calls us to address.

## NOTICE – ANNUAL MEETING

We remind all **Regional and Provincial Spiritual Assistants** of our annual meeting. The meeting will be held at Palisades Retreat in Seattle, WA. The meeting begins on the evening of September 13, and concludes at breakfast on September 16, 2005.

Please plan to attend. Send your travel arrangements to Sarah Mulholland, SFO, our CNSA secretary. Address any questions to Sarah.

## MULTI-CULTURAL ISSUES

We are engaged in the work of integrating various cultural, language and rites into the SFO.

What is of special importance is that we live our charism as we invite integration into our regional structures. Everyone involved needs much understanding and a great deal of patience to discover the best ways to achieve this integration. It will not happen quickly, nor without difficulty. The development of mutual respect will require a bundle of good relationships and communication. Our goal is to come to a point where we can work together to further the Franciscan vision, no matter what language, culture or rite is used.

Common respect, a good deal of patience and a deepening of relationships will enable us to achieve our goal of a unified SFO that can speak with many languages, cultures and rites. Regional councils and others who are involved are encouraged to share with NAFRA and the NEC the processes that work well. A similar process throughout the USA will enable us to have a common pathway to integration.

It may take a generation to achieve, but it is worth the effort to show the world that people can work and pray and live together in harmony even when there are different languages, cultures and rites involved. That is our gift not only to the Church, but to the whole world. It is what we Franciscans want to achieve within our Franciscan family. Keep praying and sharing – and praising God with our efforts.

**God, grant me the SERENITY  
to prioritize the things  
I cannot delegate,  
the COURAGE to say “No”  
when I need to,  
and the WISDOM  
to know when to go home.**

*As the Father has loved me,  
So I have loved you.  
Dwell in my love.  
If you heed my commands,  
You will dwell in my love,  
As I have heeded my Father's commands  
And dwell in his love.  
I have spoken thus to you,  
So that my joy may be in you,  
And your joy complete.  
This is my commandment:  
Love one another as I have loved you.  
John 15:9-12*

# BOOK REVIEWS

## Reflections of a Secular Franciscan By Ruth Vogel, SFO

Reviewed by Dennis Mallon, SFO

The “Little Flowers of St. Francis Fraternity” of Ormond Beach Florida has compiled, into a spiral bound book, the writings of Ruth Vogel, SFO (January 21, 1910 – May 26, 1998). The book titled “*Reflections of a Secular Franciscan*” has been used by our fraternity and other fraternities in formation for candidates and ongoing formation. The book is composed of articles written by a very devout and dedicated Secular Franciscan. Ruth Vogel wrote many articles for her fraternity and other Franciscan publications, as well as the “Franciscan Herald.” Her gift of perception to the Franciscan way of life helps her enter into the middle of Francis’ thoughts, in describing the wonders of God’s creation and Franciscan spirituality.

She has spent many years as a formation director for her fraternity and provided articles for formation seminars in the Five Franciscan Martyrs Region. She discusses such topics as obedience, penance, humility, Franciscan Spirituality, and commitment to the Order. She also writes about Francis and how his way of life is an inspiration to everyone who wants to become closer to our Lord.

Ruth says in her book “I have always had a great love for God and for the Blessed Virgin; but, for so many years, this was a superficial feeling in my life – until I was exposed to the “Franciscan Way.” Then from the very beginning, when I found Francis, it suddenly burgeoned on me – my faith became intense, vibrant and alive. This Jesus was no longer casual; this God was no longer a vague being somewhere out there in the stratosphere. He was around me, in me, alive in my life and living right in my house with me.”

\$12.00 (+ S+H) For information regarding the book contact Dennis Mallon, SFO at [denmarpar@earthlink.net](mailto:denmarpar@earthlink.net) web site: [www.secularfranciscans.org](http://www.secularfranciscans.org)

## The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

Reviewed by Andrew Martin, SFO

When I read *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, I am reminded of “going from gospel to life and life to gospel”. The Church’s social doctrine seems to be that interplay between the unchanging truth of the gospel and the ever-changing problems and issues of our material world.

As a Secular Franciscan, if you study social doctrine in either initial or on-going formation, I would now start with the Compendium. It’s concise, complete, easy to read, and it ties in our faith’s understanding of things with an incredible simple beauty.

The Compendium offers something for each Commission as well. It should provide every level of fraternal life with new challenges and inspirations, like the call for a mother’s work at home to be valued and compensated competitively in a society (#251) or putting into practice Civil Friendship (#390). But make no mistake; the Church’s social doctrine is not complete and final. As we move through time and new problems surface more will be added and old issues will be put into their proper light (capital punishment is a good example of this) so that at some point we will no doubt see a Compendium II published.

My hope is in the near future someone will publish a Franciscan commentary on the Compendium for catechesis work in fraternal life or better incorporation with such initial formation materials like *Fully Mature with the Fullness of Christ*.

*The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* is published by the USCCB for US customers only. \$24.95 (+S+H) Contact 1-800-235-8722 for more information or visit their Website at [www.usccb.org/publishing](http://www.usccb.org/publishing). Those outside the US should contact their own Bishops’ Conference or see the Vatican Bookstore in Rome at [www.paxbook.com](http://www.paxbook.com)

# SECULAR FRANCISCAN LIFE TODAY<sup>1</sup> Part IV

By F. Javier Orozco, SFO

Most High,<sup>2</sup>  
glorious God,  
enlighten the darkness of my heart  
and give me  
true faith,  
certain hope,  
and perfect charity,  
sense and knowledge,  
Lord,  
that I may carry out  
Your holy and true command.

**Image Four: “that I may carry  
out Your holy and true command”**

As a final prayer, this fourth image really summarizes well what a Secular Franciscan life can be about. Paul says to the community at Corinth that if he has not loved he is nothing more than a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal. What I take him to mean by these words is that above all love is key to a Christian vocation, no matter what particularities our life takes on. Similarly for us Franciscans, our Christian vocation is already mapped in our baptismal waters: who we are and who we become is intimately connected to love in obedience. As Franciscans, we profess publicly that we bind ourselves to a life rooted in the Gospels and a Gospel lived out in our secular vocation. Our Franciscan life today is a ‘loving obedience’ in the sense of right listening or a constant willingness to put ourselves under the life of the Gospel. As Franciscans we publicly profess that our values are different, not because we are better, but because we seek and want to be better. We know from our Church’s teaching that holiness is a universal vocation, open to our particular form of life. So our desire to better our life is simply a manifestation of our ecclesial vocation.

Seeking to be better includes the recognition that we belong to a community within a community. For our Br. Francis this meant - and quite publicly -

putting his earthly life in order; symbolically he did this when he called God his ‘Father,’ and in so doing realigned his personal-familial loyalties. I suspect that for many of us the road to becoming a Secular Franciscan was similar to Br. Francis experience - for some of us less dramatic, but non the less just as significant. Many of us have had to explain to our families, friends and colleagues what exactly we were doing when we professed as Franciscan. While our family and friendship confrontations were not as dramatic as Francis’ and Clare’s, I am sure many of our close companions share a glimpse or two of bewilderment or even confusion—not always sure what we were doing but being supportive of our actions. The reason I am bringing this up is to simply highlight the fact that Franciscan life today, as always, points to a radical commitment to be attentive to the possibility of an alternative lifestyle: one that desires deeply the will of our Abba or Father and Mother.

The prayer says, “that I may carry out your holy and true command.” I take this to mean that as Franciscans we are no longer our own; at least we don’t want to simply be our own. We want to belong and belong to the Kingdom. I certainly cannot speak for you, but I can share with you my own personal feelings here. I know for myself that doing another’s will is never easy; be it God’s will. The world I belong to often tells me that the only way to get ahead is by pushing and advocating for my own rights as an individual; the world I live in tells me that success is measured by my own accomplishments; the world I work in tells me that my curriculum vitae or resume needs to be filled with clear action verbs and projects that reflect how good I am; the world I move in never ceases to tell me just how much I truly deserve for being me! As Franciscans, today, we belong to a community of friendly companions whose responsibility includes reminding ourselves that the values of this world are not always the Gospel values, so we walk together listening to each other on the road we call our Franciscan Way, a via that seek to place God’s voice at the center: “that we may carry out your holy and true command.”

## **Conclusion:**

Secular Franciscan Life Today is both different and the same. It is different because we live in a different world: our world today is a Global community that demands our attention. Our secularity as Franciscans is no longer localized by small town boundaries in Assisi, on the contrary, today, our ‘secularity’ our worldliness is of Global perspective. Brother Francis

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was presented at a Chapter of Ministers for the Mother Cabrini Region of The Secular Franciscan Order held on Saturday May 15, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents; Volume I: The Saint.* Edited by Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., J.A. Wayne Hellmann, OFM Conv., William J. Short, OFM. New City Press, 1999.

and Sister Clare today find themselves in the virtual world of the Internet; they find themselves speaking languages that go beyond the dialects of Italy. A Secular Franciscan Life Today means that we remain open to the world, that is to say, remain being who we are, seculars: in and for the world - no matter how big or small our cosmos becomes. And this is where our similarity or sameness lies. As Franciscans we bring with us the best of who we are, our Franciscan Tradition: Prayer, Dialogue, Faith, Humanity, Joy, Sensibility, and a deep sense of community. We are "Secular." Today more than ever, we cannot abandon our worldliness or cosmic awareness. "Most High, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me true faith, certain hope and perfect charity, sense and knowledge Lord, that I may carry out your holy and true command." Indeed a prayer to live by.

## Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

By Patrick Mendés, SFO, Minister  
Mother Cabrini Region

Franciscans have a long-standing history of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Friar Provinces are dedicated to the Sacred Heart and there is a community of Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart. No Regions are dedicated to the Sacred Heart, but Divine Mercy Region can be included, since devotion to Divine Mercy relates to the mercy from the Heart of Jesus. We have only to look at the image of Divine Mercy to know this.

St. Clare greeted the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament many times each day.

St. Bonaventure, perhaps our greatest theologian, wrote: "Since we have reached the most sweet Heart of Jesus, and it is good for us to abide in it, let us not readily turn away from it. How good, how sweet it is to dwell in Thy Heart, oh good Jesus! Who is there who would not desire this pearl? I would rather give all else, all my thoughts and all the affections of my soul in exchange for it, casting my whole mind into the Heart of my good Jesus." He also wrote: "Who is there who would not love this wounded heart? Who would not love in return, Him, who loves so much?"

When Blessed Baptista Varano, the holy Poor Clare, asked Jesus, how great was the sorrow of His heart, he said, "As great as the love, which I bear toward my creatures."

Jacopone da Todi, the Franciscan composer of the hymn *Stabat Mater*, also wrote a hymn, which refers

to Christ writing the names of devout souls in His heart.

While St. Francis does not refer to the Sacred Heart, specifically, in any of his writings, we can be certain that he was deeply devoted to Christ, poor and crucified and, of course, in all of Francis' life, he mirrored the love and compassion of Jesus.

While devotion to the Sacred Heart is much older than our Order, we find references to the Heart of Jesus in the writings of the early fathers of the Church, throughout history.

Of course, it was St. Gertrude, the Benedictine, who wrote extensively and tirelessly to promote devotion to the Sacred Heart in the middle ages.

Then later, in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, St Margaret Mary Alacoque, the Visitation nun, would be called to the chapel by St. Francis, where she would have the first apparition of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and foster the devotion to the Sacred Heart in the manner we now have it.

Called to daily conversion, by our SFO Rule, we have the opportunity to make "reparation to the Heart of Jesus," as He asked. The familiar Morning Offering to the Sacred Heart is a good start for our day and a focus for living our vocations, stemming from the primary virtue of compassion.

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus surround you with His love and fill your lives with His abundant blessings now and especially on the Feast of the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

## DEAD SEA SCROLLS

By Dottie Alfred, SFO  
Our Lady of Guadalupe Fraternity  
Tallahassee, FL

Sifting sands stream relentlessly  
seaward in the desert.  
Years upon years eroded time  
in long-forgotten caves.  
The message of the Messiah  
had long before entered civilization  
through Tradition's pious affirmation.  
And then, center-stage,  
a lonely Bedouin shepherd found the Scrolls,  
Gave civilization treasures beyond art,  
Original extant manuscripts from Qumran,  
Confirmation of belief unfolds.

## SO NOW WHAT???



By Teresa V. Baker, SFO  
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Have you been concerned about how to care for the newly professed in your fraternities? Have you questioned which materials to share with them? Have you wondered where you would find the time?

In SFO General Constitutions Article 44.2 The Fraternity has the duty to give special attention to the formation of the newly professed and of the temporarily professed, to help them become fully mature in their vocation and develop a true sense of belonging.

Last Fall, Anne and I shared with the Regional Ministers that this task might be overwhelming for those local formators who are overseeing both initial and ongoing formation processes. We suggested to them that this one year of formation be handled on the regional level. Here is the plan we set forth:

### **Guidelines for Regional Formation Gatherings of the Newly Professed**

*Time Frame:* Four meetings within a year

#### **1. Regional Day of Unity**

As your regional fraternity gathers for its annual Day of Unity, invite the newly professed; have them gather together in their own session to share:

- How is your vocation going?
- What do you find difficult about not being in the smaller formation group?
- What new insights have you gained?
- What has surprised you?
- What has happened that you did not expect?

#### **2. Day of Recollection**

Regional Executive Council invites the newly professed to a Day of Recollection set up just for them. Invite them to a uniquely Franciscan prayer experience. Have someone present a talk that pertains to the newly professed. Afterward, invite them to share:

- How has their prayer life changed?
- What does it mean to be professed?
- What were their expectations?
- Have their expectations of being a professed Franciscan been met?
- Have them share their initial formational experiences.

#### **3. Clusters of Newly Professed**

Clusters, districts, areas, local fraternities gather the newly professed together in smaller groupings. Afterward, invite them to share:

- What are their fraternal issues?
- Are they feeling included?
- What surprises continue to unfold for them?
- What new insights are they gaining as they enter more deeply into fraternal life?
- How has these times of gathering together enhanced their lives?

#### **4. Gathering with other Newly Professed**

Invite newly professed members of the Franciscan family. Invite newly professed members of other Third Order groups in your area. Afterward, invite them to share:

- How do they give an ecclesial witness?
- What apostolate are they involved in?
- Do they reach out to other ecumenical gatherings?
- How might they continue to network?

How does this sound? Talk it over with other local formators and with your Regional Formation Director. See how you can implement this process in your region, cluster, or district. Sharing resources, time and experiences is just one more way we can enhance our fraternities and serve our newly professed.

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#### **Familiar Quotations:**

Keep thy heart  
with all diligence;  
for out of it  
are the issues of life.  
Proverbs 4:23

The art of being wise  
is the art of knowing  
what to overlook.  
William James

God loves to look at us,  
and loves it when we  
will look back at Him.  
Kathleen Norris

## The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



### Power to Change

By Kathy Taormina, SFO  
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*"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."  
Gandhi*

You may have seen this quote on a billboard or a bumper sticker, but have you really ever thought about its impact on your own life?

We all want change to occur; as a matter-of-fact, we expect it! But most of the time we expect other things, or people, to be the ones to change. If only **he** would act differently; if only **my child** would try harder; if only **she** would understand me; if only...

How many times have we turned our statements around and questioned ourselves? If **I** acted in a more loving way maybe he would also; if **I** had more patience to listen to my youth's needs maybe they could succeed; if **I** tried to see her point of view maybe we could come to a mutual agreement. I was told at an early age by a wise Gypsy Grandma that "we are the only person whom we can truly change," but as I grew older, I seemed to have forgotten that statement and started expecting change to come from without, instead of within myself.

Eucharist has the power to change us, but the change has to

come from within. It comes from within our hearts and within our minds. We are transformed by the loving power of a God who offers himself to us through the Eucharist, if we are willing to be transformed. But, once transformed, we must go out and offer that transforming power of the Eucharist to others.

How do we do that? By changing our own attitudes and living in solidarity with others, changes will occur. It may not be the others or the situation that will change, but it may be our understanding or our attitudes that change. Changes may come in very surprising ways.

Recently we engaged in the **H2O Project** with the Franciscan Youth around the country. Many adult fraternities also took the challenge and participated. But I wonder...

Did we really change our lifestyles for just one week and drink nothing but water? Did we feel the want or urge for other beverages and still offer our funds to change the world? Did we actually feel solidarity with the poor of the world who have no clean drinking water on a daily basis? Or did we simply write another check to donate to a worthy cause? Did we keep the gift of our Eucharist to ourselves, or did we attempt to change our lives, even just for one week, and truly be Eucharist for others? Christ did not preach of the Father's kingdom while building tables and chairs in his carpentry shop.

Francis did not preach about the need for helping the lepers while lounging around in his merchant shop, selling bolts of cloth to the rich and healthy.

Do we as Secular Franciscans talk about the need to witness our

charism to the youth while sitting in our fraternity meetings that do not include any youth?

*Would youth want to be a part of our fraternities? What are the changes that must occur in our fraternities and in us before this will happen?*

- *Invite youth to participate in fraternity apostolates.*
- *Have a Pope John Paul II night of reflection on youth, for and by the youth.*

## The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



### Power to Change

By Richard Fetkovich, SFO  
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"Lord, look upon this sacrifice which you have given to your Church; and by your Holy Spirit, gather all who share this bread and wine into the one body of Christ, a living sacrifice of praise." (Eucharistic Prayer IV)

Amen! What an extreme privilege we have! What an exceptional gift to be shared with all! What a tremendous mystery of faith!

While pondering the power to change, a multitude of thoughts and inspirations were experienced. This sacrificial meal brings us into communion with one another and with God in Christ. Our Lord wants to "feed us" and "enrich us" by sharing His personality. His sacrifice of self-surrender to God in submission and love should, in

turn, make our self-surrender and submission a communion of a living sacrifice of "praise." "Through Him, with Him, In Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, for ever and ever." "Amen." How could this not instill in us a power to change or be changed?

Regarding the family, "The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in The Holy Spirit." (Catechism of the Catholic Church). Thus, a family is more than the sum of its parts. It is a dynamic and developing system, whose members are radically interdependent. St. Paul, in his letters, captures this understanding (1Cor 12:24-26). Any change in a family, or in a family member, or in a family environment affects the life and functioning of the family.

By what means are we affirming the role of the Christian family in our world, today? What are we doing or not doing to affirm this role?

## The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



### Power to Change

Pauline Cahalan, SFO  
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Talk about the biggest change most of us will ever witness in our lives. For me that would be the bread and wine, gifts of the earth, changing into the Body and Blood of Christ each time we are

guests at the Eucharistic Banquet. How do change, work, and the Eucharist all influence each other in our lives? It would seem there are at least two aspects of change. There is *Being*, the one who causes the change and then there is the aspect of having to accept change. The Serenity Prayer comes to mind. "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." Both *Being*, the one who effects the change and *being*, the one who has to accept the change, involve work. It involves the work of our minds and hearts with courage. Change is a very difficult thing for many people, especially when it involves something major that turns their life upside down. I teach first semester RN students. For these eight weeks we are doing clinical experience at a long term care transition unit. A number of the folks are transitioning from being very independent and living alone to, now, having to move into totally different living arrangements, perhaps where they won't be living alone anymore, and needing to have more people looking in on them and helping them daily. They have to effect change in their lives and they have to accept this change if they are going to enjoy life to the fullest as it is presented to them now. It is a tough struggle involving a time to grieve, letting go of the old and accepting the new with enough positive attitude to launch off on this new chapter of their life. It's tough stuff, and requires a lot of psychological work.

We live in a time when tremendous change going on all around us, all the time. Very few

things in our lives can be counted on to be the same from one year to the next. People used to work for the same company for many years and, no matter what kind of work it was, there was some routine to each work day. Employees can't count on that kind of longevity of employment anymore, with companies merging, going bankrupt, or moving to another country to find a cheaper labor force. Several years ago, I read that the average college graduate would change careers, involving returning to higher education, at least five times during their work life. The older one gets and the more family responsibilities one undertakes, the harder it is to acquire more education and training for a new field or career.

It is hard to know where to even begin to advocate, and for what, in the complex world of jobs, job training, discrimination within the employment structure, etc. There is one issue that could help many of our economically disadvantaged brothers and sisters that SFOs could get involved in. That would be the minimum wage. The federal minimum wage, \$5.15 per hour, has not been raised since 1997. Full time employment is 2,000 hours per year. So these folks work at manual labor (many holding 2 or 3 jobs), many of us wouldn't care to do and try to survive, but never get out of poverty. I don't know about you but that wouldn't be a living wage for me. I don't understand why we expect it to be for others. If minimum wage had been indexed to inflation it would now be \$8.46 but it wasn't. I've heard people say, "Well, that minimum wage was never meant for people raising families. It was for high school and college kids

when they got their first jobs.” The folks filling these positions as dishwashers, retail clerks, cleaning personnel, etc. are a number of years older than the high school and early 20s crowd. They need a decent “living wage.” God, with the grace of the Eucharist, help me to change the things I can. What is God calling you to do?

## The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



### Power to Change

By Carolyn Colburn, SFO  
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The order of change is first myself and then the world. I must come first because, unless I am able to love the world and the people in it, I cannot sustain the effort required to change it.

Every one of us is surrounded by an invisible line of demarcation. Inside the line are our family and friends and others we love. The line is expandable and can be flexed out to include persons of whom we are not now aware. It expands to include others when our compassion is aroused because the experience of the other reminds us of our own feelings, often of pain. We must allow ourselves to feel our own pain in order to experience compassion.

When Francis was a rich young man, he was in dread of lepers. After he had experienced the rejection of others--in his family and among the townspeople--he was able to extend that experience

to embrace others, even more rejected than he.

The compassion of Jesus knew no limits. People called on him when their dear ones were desperately ill. However, no one sent for Jesus when the only son of the widow of Nain was dying. Jesus saw the funeral procession as he approached the town. He was moved with pity for the widow and said, “Do not weep.” Then, he returned her child to her. (Luke 7: 11-17)

We are not told that when Jesus saw the funeral procession, he thought of his own widowed mother with an only son, but it could have been that way.

Compassion comes to us when we join our experience to that of another. Then we allow our line of demarcation to expand until it includes the other.

Compassion leads to action. Those with compassion for the poor can serve the less fortunate with food, clothing and shelter. It is a mistake to think that hands-on help is all that can be done. Advocacy is a tool available to all. Poverty, debt relief, welfare reform, living wages, and redirection of national resources to serve human needs are examples of areas for our advocacy.

Something all persons can do is to see the world through the eyes of the poor. When we place the poor inside our invisible line of demarcation, we are consciously aware of them, even as we go about living our first world lives.

For example, television parades its endless advertisements. Think of the feelings of a TV viewer, especially a child, who has never had the money to buy any of these things and knows the money will never be there. That person sees the ads as often as

you do. Each time that viewer feels excluded.

When you settle down with a good book, think of the people who didn't learn to read in school. They have never had the experience of a good book. For them, this way of obtaining entertainment, information, and even a decent job is closed.

When an ache or pain causes you to make a doctor's appointment, think of all the people without health insurance who have no doctor they can call. The pain must wait till it is severe enough for the emergency room.

When you pass men standing on the street waiting for a day's work, think of crossing over on the dangerous desert route and the loneliness of being so far from home.

When you attend an abundant buffet dinner, think of the parents who ate less than they wanted today so that their children could have enough. They will do the same tomorrow.

When we see the world through the eyes of the poor, we are looking through the eyes of Christ. Now we can sustain the struggle to work for structural change.

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### Familiar Quotations:

DON'T HURRY,  
DON'T WORRY,  
YOU'RE ONLY HERE  
FOR A SHORT VISIT.  
SO BE SURE TO STOP AND  
SMELL THE FLOWERS.  
Walter Hagen

On the whole,  
I'd rather be in Philadelphia.  
*His own epitaph...*  
W. C. Fields



## The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



### Power to Change

By Nancy McKenna, SFO  
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In our Rule we read “Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel.” (Rule 4) In Ephesians we find the words, “You must lay aside your former way of life and old self which deteriorates through illusion and desire, and acquire a fresh spiritual way of thinking.” (Ephesians 4:23) St. Francis said, “Let us begin, for up until now we have done nothing.”

Change is not easy. Like a thief in the night, good intentions slip away unless we are relentless in our quest for ongoing, daily formation. But how do we accomplish this? How do we even start?

We go back to first principles: In the beginning there was God. And all things come from God.

“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Cor 3:16). The Second Vatican Council proclaimed that the Eucharistic sacrifice is “the source and summit of the Christian life.”<sup>1</sup> “We feed on the food of life, we constantly refresh our souls with his precious blood, as from a fountain.”<sup>2</sup> It is the Eucharist,

<sup>1</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 11

<sup>2</sup> Easter letter by St. Athanasius

received weekly, or even daily, that renews us as temples of the Holy Spirit.

Just as our best known saints did not become such overnight, change within us is gradual as well. Some years ago, I read an article about a rag rug weaver. She mentioned she bought her clothes by considering how they will look later as parts of a rug. “That’s ridiculous!” I thought to myself. But you know what? Now, years later, I wear only black cotton jogging pants, no other color, so that when I’m ready to make rag rugs I have raw materials that are the same color and material. Once I did not see any problems with wearing synthetic fabrics, now I wear only bio-degradable fabrics. When recycling started I heard people say, “Who washes a tin can before throwing it out?” But this is now a common part of food preparation. Earth Day, River Sweeps, National Wildflower week: these started as the action of one person. This change did not happen overnight. Indeed, it happened without much thought. Just one tiny step followed by another. And as you change yourself, the whole world changes. Not only because your perspective changes, but also because you become an example to others, and soon more will be doing as you do. Every trend starts out as a single person doing some-thing new, followed by many who have seen the value of the initial example.

Franciscans are called to be people of action as well as contemplation. Not only are we called to revise ourselves, we are called to make a difference in the world. We are called to rebuild the Church. In Francis’ words, “preach the gospel, use words

only if necessary” tell us how to be in the world. It is our *example* that is to show the gospel message to others. Small steps, almost i-perceptible steps at first. But you will see the change. First in yourself, then in the world.

“In the humble signs of bread and wine, changed into his body and blood, Christ walks beside us as our strength and is our food for the journey, and he enables us to become, for everyone, witnesses of hope. If, in the presence of this mystery, reason experiences its limits, the heart, enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, clearly sees the response that is demanded, and bows low in adoration and unbounded love”<sup>3</sup>

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### Familiar Quotations:

Too late I loved you, O Beauty so ancient, yet ever new! And behold, you were *within* me, and I out of myself, and there I searched for you.  
St. Augustine

Our life is fritted away by detail ... Simplify, *simplify*.  
Henry David Thoreau

Words are sacred.  
They deserve respect.  
If you get the right ones,  
in the right order,  
you can nudge the world a little.  
Tom Stoppard

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<sup>3</sup> Ecclesia de Eucharistia of His Holiness Pope John Paul II

# Loretta's "Black Dog"

## Another Classic Franciscan

By Julia Pearson, SFO

I dwelt as if myself were out,  
My Body but within  
Until a Might detected me  
And set my Kernel in...  
Emily Dickinson

Loretta Juras was born at home on Straight Shore Farm, which is on the Choptank River near Suicide Bridge, Cambridge, Maryland, in November 1927. Roman Catholicism and a Polish heritage were the bedrocks of the Juras family. Loretta was the sixth of seven children born to John and Lena Juras. Her siblings were Lillian, Florence, Marie, Theresa, Jean, and Leonard, the only brother. The children piled into a horse-drawn wagon to attend mass at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church in Secretary, Maryland.

Loretta spent her childhood with an overwhelming feeling of being lost, utterly alone, and abandoned. Her mother described her as a "nervous" child to explain the anxiety and panic attacks. As early as her eleventh year, Loretta would go off by herself and cling to a crucifix, while begging God to "take this cross away from me." Biologically-based clinical depression would be with her throughout her life.

Leaving home at sixteen with ten dollars and a small suitcase, Loretta took the bus to Baltimore, where she attended the Baltimore Business College and completed the two-year senior secretarial course in nine months. Her pastor spoke with her about entering a convent, and in August 1948, at the age of nineteen, she entered the Mother House of Glen Riddle Franciscans in Pennsylvania, with her youngest sister, Irene. They had both stayed for the two year novitiate only, when she was advised to return home by a psychiatrist and "wear off the habit." When they returned to Straight Shore Farm, Irene had a total breakdown and was sent to a psychiatric hospital. With the hundred dollars given to her when she left the convent, Loretta left for Wilmington after a couple of weeks. There she found work and began her search for healing. In less than a year, she "found an avocation in writing and producing the weekly radio program, Catholic Forum of the Air."

Hope was the antidote that brought temporary patches of peace in her life. She hand-fed this hope with music, art, travel, journaling, taking classes, group therapy, and, importantly, with work that gave her contact with people. She courageously sought out four psychiatrists, one psychoanalyst, and two spiritual directors. The poetry of Emily Dickinson gave her an intimate kinship with someone else who had the same struggle. Loretta also learned that Mother Theresa of Calcutta wrote of her problem with depression. St. Therese of Lisieux had bouts of depression before her death that often left her unable to pray. Sir Winston Churchill spoke of "the black dog" that followed him.

Despite the depression, Loretta never missed a day of work at St. Francis Hospital in Wilmington, from which she retired in 1990. She received a BA in History from the University of Delaware in 1966, graduating Phi Beta Kappa.

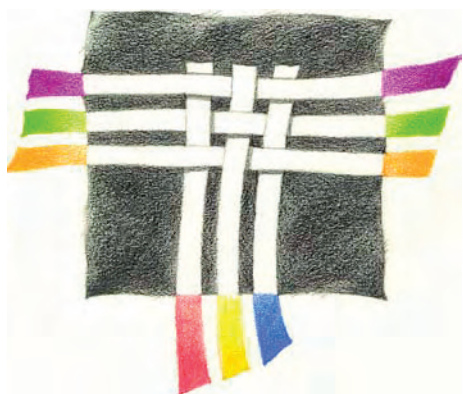
Loretta tried antidepressants when they came on the market in the 1980's. Until 1993, when Paxil arrived from Europe, she could not tolerate the drugs, Prozac being one of the worst for her. Paxil was not effective at first. After several months, the pharmacist included the prescription "insert." There she read: "Some patients require twice or three times the regular starting dose." After convincing her doctor to increase the dosage, three weeks later the depression lifted for the first time in her life.

In 1980 Loretta was professed in the Secular Franciscan Order. She has served six years as Minister of St. Patrick's Fraternity, five years as Treasurer, and two years as Formation Director. Backed by her own personal experience with spiritual direction, Loretta has been persistent that the Fraternity have the constant and loving care of a spiritual assistant.

For the past five years Loretta has found inspiration by spending an hour a week with a blind friend who is paralyzed from the neck down as a result of multiple sclerosis. Loretta says she "is as helpless as Christ was on the cross." Their time is spent with Loretta reading to her and feeding her black grapes or cantaloupe. Loretta also takes Holy Eucharist to hospital patients and conducts weekly song and prayer hours at a Franciscan nursing home.

Loretta has written of her struggle with depression in a book entitled, *Peace, the Finest Gift*. She continues to study and is struck that one in seven who have clinical depression will commit suicide. She invites anyone interested in talking or learning more about depression to phone her at 302-571-8503

## MULTICULTURAL COMMITTEE



SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER / U.S.A.

### **The Transforming Power of the Eucharist**

By Barbara Smith, SFO  
National Multicultural Committee  
[barblaines@bellsouth.net](mailto:barblaines@bellsouth.net) 706-453-7715

Jesus tells us in Scripture that “He came not to condemn but that we might have life” (John 3,16-18). On Holy Thursday, He established the Eucharist as His Sacred Body and Precious Blood, and He also established the Holy Priesthood to administer this great gift of Himself. St. Francis speaks to us in our Rule about the divine seed within each one of us. Trusting in that divine seed within each one of us, we are united in the mystery of the Eucharist to the Sacred Body and Precious Blood of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Each time that we receive Him we enter into friendship with Him and He with us. It is the mutual indwelling of this unfathomable mystery of God, which transmits His Love, his Peace, and His Way into our spirit, mind, and body. Over time He becomes more and we become less as He grows in us with each Eucharist we receive. It is His Love that permeates all that we do. His Love becomes the “reason d’etre” – reason for being.

The Eucharist is the highest goal of human desire; it is the peak of our spiritual life. The Eucharist sustains individuals as well as whole nations and cultures. Various cultures shape their Christian manifestation through the inspiration of the Eucharist. Thus, we become aware of the diverse expressions of love and service demonstrated by the Hispanic, Filipinos, Vietnamese, European, Slavic, African and Native American cultures, including all other cultures. We are brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.

## Focusing on the Regional Archives

By Sharon Deveaux, SFO  
National Archivist  
[SharonX@earthlink.net](mailto:SharonX@earthlink.net)



A major Regional Archives project will commence this year, and the purpose will be to establish accountability and preservation of the archival material in all the Regions.

This new project is directly related to the fact that the NAFRA records are growing and a substantial collection of records will be added later on this year with more expected to be found at the different provinces and elsewhere throughout the USA. Because of limited space at the main repository at St. Bonaventure University, it has been determined that only NAFRA records can be stored here.

As a result, this new project calls for the regional archives to be permanently retained within each individual region. Basically, the plan will require each region to have one or two people work on the archives. They will be asked to locate specific regional records, inventory them, find a storage location, and then provide the National Archives with a summary of their inventory. Preservation of the material will be discussed and promoted. I will be working closely with these people, assisting them throughout the process. Each region can work at its own pace. Detailed information will be sent to each region as well as some specialized information, and all questions will be answered. I will personally be doing the archives inventory of (my) St. Francis region, in Southern California.

The underlying idea is that even though we cannot accommodate the physical records of all 30 regions at SBU, there will at least be inventory summaries of all the regional records. So if our National Historian or other researchers need some information about the regions, the summaries will have the basic information, but if more details are needed they can contact the region(s) directly.

One exception to the plan is that the Executive Council has requested that the original canonical papers of all the fraternities be kept at the National Archives, with which we will comply. And finally, each year the summary inventories will be updated to account for any new regional materials and records that were added to the archives within the last year. Eventually, all the records of the SFO-USA will be preserved, organized and accessible for study even though they are in 31 different locations! Support and participation is needed from every Region.

# Living in the Animal Kingdom of God

## Churchtown-Amish Country, PA-USA



Art By Betty Misuraca

## Bluebirds

By Ray Smecker

*Believe it or not...* St. Francis NEVER saw an Eastern Bluebird...*They are only found in the United States and Bermuda...* At one point they were almost extinct...but today bluebirds are flashing across the local airways, and, as Henry David Thoreau once described, "...*carrying the sky on their back.*" and as I describe...they are always ready to share their symbols of sunshine and images of love and hope with everyone.

So, they have become one of my many (wild) pet friends...(and spiritual teachers) and I have learned to feed them in a special way...and they (in turn) feed me in a special way...I can tell you, at one time, I had them eating out of my hands; but eventually, stopped...It was a selfish initiative on my part. However, there was nothing mystical or magical about the routine...it was all in their training and my handling of them...It was and is in my training of them and in their training of me...It's a little like our spirituality...I love bluebirds and bluebirds love

back... St. Francis never saw a bluebird in Assisi but, when you hold a bluebird in your hand, you sure do understand His spirituality...you sure understand His training and his handling of our spirituality... At this point we can (then) thoroughly understand why St. Francis' and his stories are so astonishing and why his *discourse* with us and the Birds *can be so inspiring.*

## Bluebird Trails

...Bluebird nature lovers often have blue bird trails, places where they string a line of bluebird boxes every 100 yards...and then they monitor the boxes daily to insure that no predators threaten the boxes...We are bluebird lovers and have done this...but we also love Mother Seton and when we travel her spiritual trail and read her writings and love her as much as we do...and we find no mention??? of bluebirds nor bluebird trails...well, we wonder if they did adequate research at Emmitsburg??? in the state of Maryland...so we did our own investigation. ...."She must have watched bluebirds...We know she was a lover of the environment, just look at this beautiful area," we discussed as we parked our car at her Shrine..."This time we are not going into the Shrine, first, we are going to bluebird watch," we said to each other. So we headed straight for the park benches near the outside sanctuary and found a cozy spot and sat down...It was still mid-morning and the dew was still melting under the sun's morning rays...It was serene and the gentle breezes were blowing off the nearby mountain and one could see the trees swaying in a sea-wave-like motion...The morning passed and just as the sun burst through the cloud cover...there he was..."A bluebird," we smiled and looked at each other...His russet belly feathers were, too, swaying under the breezes showing the gray tufts...his head was up and he was warbling a merry tune...and the sunshine sparkled on his back...Thoreau was correct, when he said, "Bluebirds carry the sky on their backs."

...Her Shrine at Emmitsburg was now a permanent part of our bluebird nature trail too... we were on the trail of bluebirds and on the trail of some of Mother Seton's spirituality too...Enjoy your Blue bird trails...and Spiritual trails...

# I FOUND THE ARK OF THE COVENANT...

By Dennis R. Dowell, SFO © 2000

I found the Ark of the Covenant!  
Oh, it wasn't easy, because it's been hidden  
for so many years.

*But, I did find the Ark of the Covenant!*

I traveled valleys and mountains;  
I forged rivers and streams;  
I endured impossible challenges  
and met courageous foes;

I overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles;

*But, I found the Ark of the Covenant!*

The people whom I met on my journey were varied:

Some were kind and gentle;

Some were helpful and supportive;

Some were mean and dangerous;

Some were loving and caring;

But, I met them

and through my encounters with them,

*I found the Ark of the Covenant!*

I met one man, who was much like me.

He offered to travel the road with me.

We talked for a long time and then began  
our Journey.

He was a very wise man, very much so for his years.

He was a young man in his late twenties or early  
thirties.

That was my guess.

He had strong hands and arms;

His face was kind and gentle;

His eyes always danced with joy;

And his smile captivated my heart;

He told wonderful stories that helped explain things.

He was very kind to all of the people whom we met.

We continued our journey for many years and met all  
sorts of people.

We traveled to many strange places on many  
different and unfamiliar roads;

We saw many sights  
and explored all sorts of places—

*Looking for the Ark of the Covenant.*

We looked high and low;

We looked far and wide;

We looked in and out;

We looked in front and behind;

We looked inside and outside;

We explored the darkest caves  
and the brightest valleys;  
We climbed the highest mountains  
and the deepest canyons;  
We looked everywhere;  
*To find the Ark of the Covenant.*

And we did!

*We found the Ark of the Covenant!*

For through all of our journeys  
and all of my friend's stories  
I began to change and transform  
my understanding of things.

He told me about a God of love  
and compassion;

A God of grace and forgiveness;

A God of joy and happiness;

A God of peace and justice;

A God of Goodness and Creation.

He told me of a God who loves his people

And wants them to love Him;

A God who wants to be in touch everyday  
And not locked up in a box or a building.

A God who interacts in our lives

And shows the right paths for us to travel.

A God who cares about us

And desires so strongly for us to accept His  
Good and Grace and Peace.

And through our travels, my friend and I,  
Over all the years of travel, we grew like One.

And I returned home knowing

That I had found the Ark of the Covenant.

You see, my friend,

It's not out there.

It's not buried in a hillside.

Or hidden in a monastery;

It hasn't been tucked away on Sinai or Horeb;

It wasn't stolen by a secret group of monks;

And, the government doesn't have it stored in a top-  
secret warehouse.

No, it isn't in any one of those places,  
or any other for that matter.

But, I know where it is,

because, with the help of my friend

*I found the Ark of the Covenant!*

# THE ARK

The Ark of the Covenant is much,  
much closer, you see.  
It's here – right here,  
and has been all of the time.  
Point to the middle of your chest—  
*that's where it is.*  
My friend helped me understand  
and showed me the Way.  
The Ark of the Covenant is my—  
your, individual  
And personal Relationship with God.

My friend told me that  
he had been a carpenter for many years,  
But recently he began traveling  
the roads looking for someone like me  
Who was really looking  
for the Ark of the Covenant.  
When we parted, he said that he was  
going home to his father.  
Later, I heard that he had died;  
But he had been seen by others.

I've never seen him again,  
But he still lives brightly in my heart,  
Because he showed me the Way to God.  
He showed me how to live and love  
And be patient and kind.

He showed me how to  
accept myself and stop looking.  
He showed me that  
the Ark of the Covenant  
was always here.  
All I had to do was to stop  
looking around for a moment  
And just look inside—  
And *THERE IT WAS—*  
***THE ARK OF THE COVENANT!***  
It had been here all of the time.  
You can find the Ark, too!  
Just stop looking around and outside.  
Have a quiet talk with my friend.  
And you'll find the Ark of the Covenant  
In the same place I did—

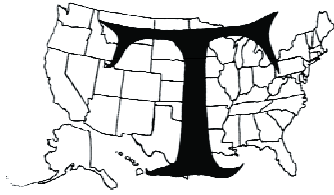
Right here,  
Deep in your heart and soul.

# EXODUS

By Tamara Marshall-Stevenson, SFO

Open palms reaching  
receiving blessings  
and reaching out to other open hands  
Blending, uniting  
Walking together  
toward the promised land  
Carrying those too weak to walk  
Encouraging those too slow  
Speaking patience to those  
running on ahead  
“Please wait beside the road.”  
When one falls  
we cannot continue on  
We will pick them up  
from off the ground  
If one person hurts  
we will take care of that need  
looking out for each other  
so that we all can succeed  
We are all needy people  
We don't want to walk alone  
Stronger in our weaknesses  
Belonging in the depths of our souls  
Strong because we accept our need  
Because we choose sharing over greed  
Not striving for a reward  
or material things  
Only striving to do our best  
to help humanity  
Expanding our love for each other  
reaching out to animals, plants and trees  
Crying out freedom for all life's creatures  
longing to be free  
Individual blooms  
beautiful, unique  
Blending into a field of blooms  
A hillside of beauty  
A loving community  
A promised land, indeed!  
Pilgrimage of the faithful  
on our journey of life  
Striving to bless this world  
in being and in doing what is right  
Vulnerable, gentle, open, loving  
sharing, not comparing  
Fraternal life.

## REGIONAL ROUNDUP

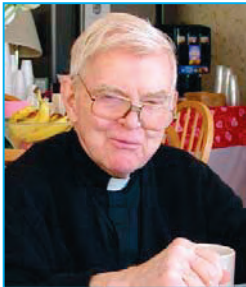


By Sandy Neal, SFO, Regional News Editor  
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[MARK-SANDY@worldnet.att.net](mailto:MARK-SANDY@worldnet.att.net)

### St. Francis Region

On April 16, sixteen Seculars attended their first orientation class for lay spiritual assistants and certified formators.

The St. Francis Region Fund for the Tsunami disaster has reached almost \$10,000. The funds are sent to NAFRA to donate to Catholic Relief Services for the victims.



### Blessed Kateri Region

Fr. Leon Dicks, OFM Conv., 79, stepped down in March as spiritual assistant to Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Region, retiring to St. Francis Center for Spirituality on Staten

Leon Dicks, OFM Conv Island, NY. He had been the regional spiritual assistant since regionalization created the Blessed Kateri region. While celebrating Mass at his last regional council meeting, he offered these parting words: *"I call myself a Secular Franciscan - because my heart is with the Secular Franciscans."*

### St. Joan of Arc Region

On Feb 15, 2005 the Fraternity of St. John The Evangelist in Lafayette, Louisiana celebrated the profession of **Jordan Henry, SFO** at St. Paul's Friary. Many were in attendance, including his mother, Mrs. Mary Irene Henry, his sister, April Henry, and her son, Brad, the fraternity and the bible study group. A reception followed.

## Our Lady of the Angels Region



L to R: Ernest Sulat, SFO; Teodora Reyes, SFO; Julia Cleary, SFO; Rev. Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM; Leonardo Gutierrez, SFO; Larry Meyers, SFO; Deacon Joseph DeMonte, SFO and William Harris, SFO Photo by Hydelyn Bermoy, SFO

**St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity** elections took place on June 13, 2004 at the St. Francis Hospital in Jersey City. The elected were Leonardo L. Gutierrez, SFO, Minister; William Harris, SFO, Vice Minister; Teodora Reyes, SFO, Secretary and Ernest Sulat, Formation Director.

The St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity has been serving the poor in Jersey City, through its various ministries such as Food and Bread for the poor, 2000 Turkeys for the poor on Thanksgiving Day, Clothing, Prison Visitation, and Shelter for the Homeless, Soup Kitchen, Pantries. Fraternity members and other Secular Franciscans in the Region started a Soup Kitchen and Clothing and Healing Ministries at the St. Ann's Church and St. Antoninus Church in 2002.

### Lady Poverty Region

Serious about peace, members of **Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Fraternity** erected a "Peace pole" on the front lawn of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Northern Cambria, PA. In a special ceremony, on October 3, Robert Bailey, SFO, Minister and Father Christopher Panagoplos, S. A. dedicated the pole with its message of peace. On the pole "May Peace Prevail on Earth" is inscribed in eight languages. Saint Clare Fraternity from Johnstown, PA and the Boy Scouts joined fraternity members for this event.

Contributed by Carol Pio, SFO

## Franciscans from New York to Hawaii are celebrating!

*Mother Marianne Cope, a Third Order religious from Utica, NY, was honored as Venerable in 2004. Beatification date is May 15, 2005. Secular Franciscans from the Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Region and St. Joseph Fraternity in Utica, NY are especially proud because Mother Marianne spent the convent at the age of 24, in St. Joseph-St. Patrick's Parish where the fraternity meets. Franciscans in Hawaii are just as proud because of last half of her life helping the lepers throughout the world may have the footsteps of Francis.*

Mother Marianne spent the last 30 years of her life nursing the lepers of Molokai. Known as Mother Marianne of Kalaupapa, she and a handful of Sisters of St. Francis left Central New York to do what no one else dared to do. Fear of contracting the disease kept others away from the island. Mother Marianne, on the other hand, wrote that she joyfully accepted the assignment. In her letter responding to a priest asking for assistance in managing the hospitals and schools on the Hawaiian Islands, she said: "I am hungry for the work and I wish with all my heart to be one of the chosen Ones, whose privilege it will be, to sacrifice themselves for the salvation of the souls of the poor Islanders.... I am not afraid of any disease, hence it would be my greatest delight even to minister to the abandoned 'lepers.'"

After she and six sisters arrived at Oahu in November of 1883, they began to clean the hospital and caring for the 200 patients. By 1885, the



sisters had made major improvements in the treatment of the patients and their living conditions. They also founded a home within the hospital grounds for the non-patient daughters of Hansen's Disease (leprosy) patients.

By 1888, Father Damien of Molokai, knowing that he was dying from Hansen's disease himself, invited Mother Marianne and her sisters

to Kalaupapa to care for the most severe cases who were confined there. Despite the trepidation which some of the sisters felt, Mother Marianne and two other sisters accepted the invitation. Through her optimism and example, Mother Marianne gave the sisters strength.

Mother Marianne never returned to New York. She remained in Kalaupapa until her death in 1918. The sisters continue today to serve the few patients left. No Franciscan sister who has served there has ever contracted the disease.

As per the directives of beatification, Mother Marianne's body was exhumed in January and returned home to the Sisters of St. Francis Motherhouse in Syracuse, NY. Before settling in her final resting place, she was brought to Utica for a special Mass. Members of St. Joseph Fraternity and the community at large welcomed mother home.



Utica Observer-Dispatch Photo by Patrick Palladino

*Betty Frank, SFO of over 50 years, played a major role in bringing Mother Marianne to Utica. Here, she stands in front of a stained-glass representation of Barbara Cope (Mother Marianne as a child) in a chapel at St. Joseph-St. Patrick's Parish Center where The St. Joseph Fraternity meets monthly. After she was exhumed, Mother Marianne was brought home to her home parish for a special Mass. Over 1200 packed the church. She now rests at the Franciscan Motherhouse in Syracuse, NY.*



# Getting the Word Out

PUBLIC RELATIONS AS A MINISTRY

by Bob & Mary Stronach, Public Relations Chairs

## How to Make

# Family

# of the

# Year

## Event

## Purposeful

*Promoting good family life should be the work of each fraternity and region. The Secular Franciscans have the perfect venue to inspire and educate families in our communities – the Regional Family of the Year Award.*

It is an honor for a family to be recognized as Regional Family of the Year, but, it can be much more -- a useful tool for education and for practicing the Family Commission. Society needs role-models for good family living, and we have them in abundance.

### *How do we get our members to nominate families?*

Annual meetings are the perfect venue to reach almost every fraternity. Take ten minutes to explain the importance of the award -- not just because it is a way of recognizing the efforts of our families, but also because we are desperate as a society to see that good family living is possible and worthwhile. Inform the ministers that we need to broadcast to our communities how families can live the Gospel. Then, pass out a brief preliminary nomination form and tell them that you will collect it within 10 minutes. Also allow them to take extra nomination forms back to their fraternities so their members can also nominate families. Remind the fraternities often about getting nominations back soon.

### *How do we get all the information about our nominated families?*

Once the preliminary forms are reviewed, the nominators should be contacted for additional information. The National Family of the Year nomination form can be an excellent guideline.

The families, themselves, should also be contacted by the Family Commission Chair. Additional information should be gleaned about family life, the how-tos of building family relationships, church and volunteer activities for all members of the family.

### *How do we honor our families of the year?*

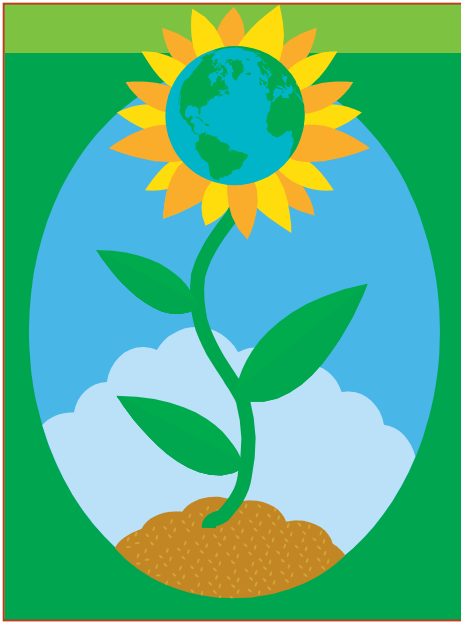
The annual meeting should be planned so that one of the dinners or lunches will focus on the Family of the Year. Family members, friends, fraternity members, parish priests, volunteer organizations where members of the family serve could all be invited. (Who knows, perhaps, among the guests, will be others who have the vocation.) Provide flowers and a plaque or some other memento of the event.

### *How do we use our Family of the Year to help educate the community?*

An article announcing and profiling the family of the year for the region should be sent to media where the family lives. It should also be sent to the diocesan newspaper and the family's home parish. Included in the article should be some how-to advice on good family living.

If possible, and if the family is willing, interviews could be scheduled on local talk shows.

Benefits for such a campaign include: honoring a family for a job well done, promoting good family living in the community, good-will for the Secular Franciscans, and a greater understanding of the work of the SFO in relation to the Family Commission.



## "Little Weeds"

### Maintenance v. Sustenance

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

June 1, 2005 marked/marks/will mark (depending on when you read this) my Silver Jubilee as an SFO. Twenty-five years – wow, that's almost a quarter-century!! (OK, now we know why I'm not an accountant . . .) If there's one thing I've learned over the years, it's that a vocation is a life; and a life is a matter of sustenance. There's a dollop of maintenance in there, but it's primarily sustenance. And I'm glad. I don't do maintenance well.

Guess that's why I don't like housework. I mean, if you could wash those dishes and sweep that floor once and have done with it, I could get behind that. But no. No matter how well you wash those dishes or sweep that floor – wham! Two or three weeks later, you have to do them all over again. Sorry, I am not liking.

But sustenance is different. It lends itself to the dynamic. I guess you could say that maintenance is marching in place while sustenance is marching forward. So what sustains a vocation, allowing it to evolve, grow, develop?

All sorts of good stuff. Prayer, the Eucharist, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, interaction with other SFOs, involvement in your communities (fraternal, parish, civic, home, work) – all the things that feed your longing to emulate Christ and Francis and allow you to do so.

I'm very different from the person I was on Profession Day. I walked down that aisle with the knowledge that I was making a permanent commitment that should change me and my life. It took a while, though, for the fact to hit me that any changes would be the result of *my* effort, nothing more, nothing less. Merely walking down that aisle didn't do it, and just hoping it would happen wouldn't do it.

Initial and ongoing formation have helped considerably in showing me where I am and where I should be. But while there's a bit of a gap (yeah, like the Grand Canyon is a "bit" of a gully!), that same formation helps me learn how to narrow that gap. And as it turns out, what narrows that gap also sustains my vocation. Ah, yes, all things work for the good of those who believe.

A vocation, like life itself, is 24/7. It's living, breathing, ongoing, growing. **If** it's sustained. Without sustenance, while it may not die, it won't go anywhere either. And we've all seen that happen, haven't we? People who go through formation with you, get professed with you, and are never seen again. As if they "graduated Francis school" and that's the end of it.

This is not to say they don't go on and do good things with their life. But you can't have a vocation in a vacuum. And if you aren't active in and involved with your fraternity, how can you sustain the precious vocation that God gave you? Of course, it's possible some of these "paper Franciscans" didn't actually have vocations. Perhaps, they simply loved Francis and wanted to learn about him in more depth than a mere book or film had to offer.

Second to these are those who *do* make it to the monthly gatherings but don't get involved in any way. It's a spectator sport to them. But they figure if they come every month, they're being "Franciscan."

For those of us who have been blessed with a genuine vocation and sustain it, it's the "gift that keeps on giving." Meanwhile, monthly Franciscans, like Sunday Catholics, are missing the boat. And don't even know it. At Jubilee Time, do you know where your classmates are?! If you haven't seen one or more of them for a while, why not check up on them – a vocation is a terrible thing to waste.

# BOOKS – BOOKS – BOOKS

# PAMPHLETS

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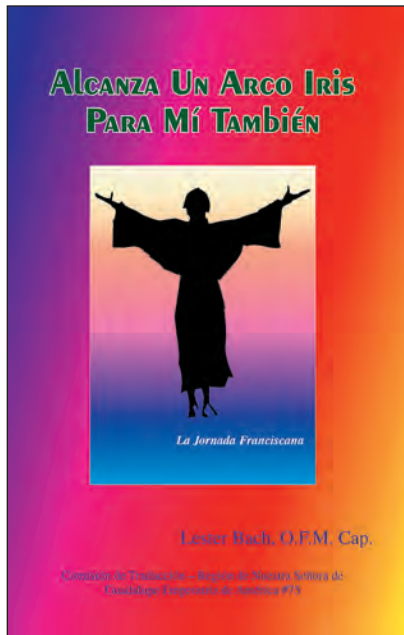
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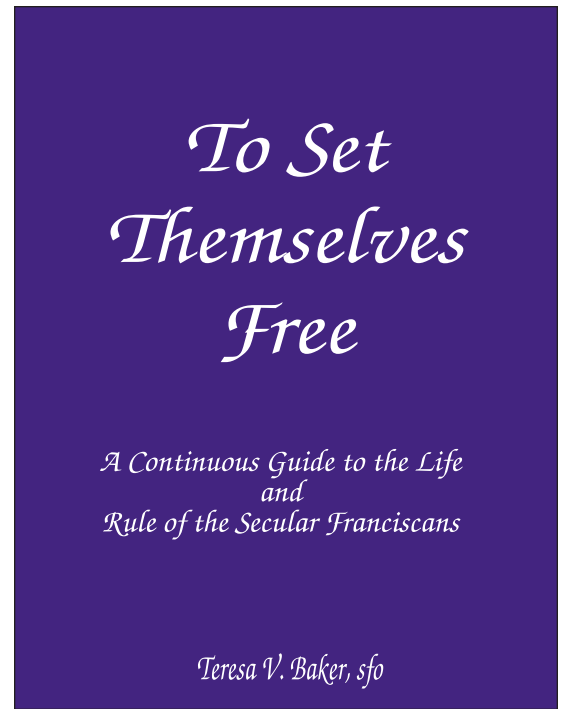
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