

THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY
of the
SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER
NEWSLETTER

Fall, 1989



PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

James David Lynch, SFO
National Minister

To the person who has no faith, Christmas is merely a pagan festival. It should be far different with us who have a living, active faith in the true meaning of the feast. With faith we welcome Jesus. With faith we believe in him. With faith we love him. When we look back over the years of our life, we cannot but feel deeply grateful to God for all his gifts and blessings. Our vocation, his guidance, the graces he has granted us, including perseverance - all these should make us welcome Jesus with grateful hearts. Bowing down before the throne of the most high God, we should return humble, earnest thanks. We love those who are good to us. We ought to love him not merely out of gratitude for his gifts, but also, and principally, because he is infinitely good and perfect. In God there is every perfection and excellence. The Child born to Mary that night at Bethlehem is the Son of God; his coming into this world was the greatest event that ever happened. And it is this event we recall again on Christmas Day.

The saints sought God alone and found him easily in Bethlehem. Our Lord once said to St. Teresa of Avila, "Do you know who they are who truly love me? They are those who

realize that all which is not related to me is nothing but vanity." Quoting those words, St. Teresa of Lisieux said, "Oh, how true it is. Everything but God is vanity."

On Christmas, as you kneel before the manger in your parish church, may you know peace, love, and joy, which only he can give. May each day of the New Year be filled with many special graces and blessings.

SECULARS RECEIVE TOP AWARD

Two members of the Secular Franciscan Province of St. Mary of the Angels were recently awarded the Cross *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*. Joan Bodak, SFO, was recognized for her majority role in the spiritual formation of the laity in her parish. Marian Izak, SFO, was recognized for her ministry of music in hers.

The medal, cruciform in shape, bears the likenesses of Sts. Peter and Paul, the tiara and the papal keys, the words *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*, and the name of the present pontiff, all on the same side; it is attached to a ribbon of yellow and white, the papal colors. The award is made in recognition of service to the Church and the papacy.

We congratulate them for their help in building up the Church of God, each with her own special talent.

SECULAR FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

Fr. Ulric Buening, OFM Cap

For too long many have neglected the proper formation of the Secular Franciscan Order. Some have stressed that the Third Order Secular is a religious Order. Not so! The Church has stressed over and over again that the Secular Franciscan Order is a true Order, a lay Order. Pope Pius XII, in his address "Nel Darvi", states, "...you are an Order; a lay Order, but truly an Order, an Order in the true sense of the word."

The need is to instruct, inspire, and form Secular Franciscans to meet the daily challenge of bringing the gospel to the ordinary circumstances of daily life according to the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

Far too often pious phrases are used that have no bearing on actual living. Secular spirituality is the crying need. It is important to assist the Secular Franciscans in bringing the gospel to the real world in which they live, e.g., the home, family, shopping centers, bank, filling station, restaurant, library, business world, etc., wherever they find themselves. Initial and on-going formation needs to stress secular spirituality. The Secular Franciscans are not religious, but people living in the real world, striving to transform the world unto Christ. Spiritual Assistants to the Secular Franciscan Order are encouraged to explain and stress secular spirituality to help the membership cope with daily living.

The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, issued a beautiful exhortation December 30, 1988, entitled "Christifideles Laici - The Vocation and Mission of Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World." Here the Holy Father states clearly what is expected of the laity today. Pope John Paul II says, "It is not permissible for anyone to remain idle;" "...lay faithful have an essential and irreplaceable

role in announcing and giving testimony to the living and personal gospel -Jesus Christ Himself." Again, "...lay faithful are formed by the Church and in the Church in a mutual communion and collaboration of all her members." The task of bringing and disseminating the message of the Holy Father to the Secular Franciscans is clear.

I encourage all Spiritual Assistants to read and reflect Christifideles Laici. To be leaders, people must be informed. This document offers much food for thought, reflection, and daily application.

It is encouraging to see how Secular Franciscans have been responding to the call of the Church. This exhortation can be a great assist in understanding and developing more concretely the role of the laity in the Church today.

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NATIONAL DIRECTIVE BOARD

Gloria N. Shriver, SFO

The Directive Board of the National Fraternity met at the Mother Boniface Center of Spirituality in Philadelphia, October 11-14. An air of love, trust, and brotherhood permeated the atmosphere as each new arrival joined those earlier arrivers who were anxiously waiting to greet them. When, at last, over fifty delegates had been greeted, billeted, fed, and feted by one of the local fraternities, they were ready to take care of the business at hand.

National Minister, James Lynch, in his keynote address, emphasized the importance of proper leadership. "Leadership is servanthship, a dedication to generosity and humility in the service of others," he said. In trying to live by this principle, he reported that he had visited one tri-state and eight provincial meetings during the year, had met with our Minister General, Manuela Mattioli, in New

York and in Rome, and had helped to solve several provincial problems.

Fr. Ulric Buening, OFM Cap, spoke on the "crying need to get NAFRA's message out to the rank and file." In his opinion we do need leadership, but we also need collaboration. He suggested we practice greater discernment in admission to the Order and work toward openness, sensitivity, and more careful listening with each other, and harmonious cooperation between ministers and spiritual assistants.

LEADERSHIP BY JUNE CARPENTER

June Carpenter, SFO, Minister of the Secular Franciscan Province of St. Mary of the Angels, was the Chapter's principle speaker. She warned the delegates not to become human doings instead of human beings. According to her, we can become so involved with doing that we are no longer beings filled with the Holy Spirit and God. She said, "We lack openness with our leaders," and reminded the delegates that a good leader in the wrong position is no leader at all. She summed up her talk by saying, "Love and loving service is what we are all about. That's leadership."

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT ELECTED AT NAFRA CHAPTER

The Conference of National Spiritual Assistants and the Provincial Spiritual Assistants, at their annual meeting during the NAFRA Chapter, elected Fr. Francis Anthony Lonsway, OFM Conv. to be the National Spiritual Assistant for the next three years. Fr. Francis, a member of the Conference and Spiritual Assistant to the Province of Our Lady of Consolation, replaces Fr. Ulric Buening, OFM Cap.

DAVID BROWNE, SFO, PRESIDER

David Browne, SFO, International Councilor from Ireland, was delegated by the Minister General to preside at and confirm the NAFRA elections.

Brothers and Sisters, it's a tribute to you that I'm not shaking at the knees. Jim (Lynch), by the way, told me that I had to make a good report to Manuela Mattioli. I have no conscience problem with that at all, at all. I'm really impressed with the organization, the commitment, the lovely way, the easy way of working that you have. And I mean that. I'm really impressed.

Back home I say a number of things to the fraternities and I'm going to say the same things to you. But I do want you to know that they may not be relevant here.

To you, I would say take a critical look at your work from time to time. There are always ways to improve and do that little bit extra. There may be many members who would be delighted to get more involved and share the work. That's a good thing.

Fraternities should always check and see how the sick are looked after. I think we should do everything possible to encourage the older members to pray for the Secular Franciscan Order. If we request them to pray for the Order, they will see themselves as very, very valuable members and not forgotten - that's important.

Fraternities should have specific apostolates - peace, justice, ecology. And they should give thought to how vocations to the priesthood and religious life could be promoted.

Words I have heard here that have struck a cord within me are, "now is the time," "love," and "we are brothers and sisters." We are brothers and sisters; we must always think of how we do what is right. We must love and not put off till tomorrow what we can do today.

(Cont. next page.)

I thank you for the privilege of being with you over the last few days. I have learned and I mean that. Thank you very much, and may God, St. Francis, and St. Clare bless your efforts.

14TH QUINQUENNIAL CONGRESS

The 14th National Quinquennial Congress will be hosted by the Secular Franciscan Province of St. John the Baptist under the leadership of Catherine Miltz, SFO, Provincial Minister. The dates are August 2 to 7, 1992. The place will be the University of Dayton, a Catholic college. The theme of the Congress is yet to be decided.

FROM THE EDITOR

The purpose of our National Newsletter is to facilitate communications. The only way we can succeed is if every one sends items that are of general interest. Please send a copy of your provincial newsletter to me:

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I thank you who have been helpful so far and am looking forward to having a more exciting and all-inclusive newsletter next time. Remember, it can't work without your help.

ARTHUR J. HOLLAND, SFO, MAYOR OF TRENTON, NEW JERSEY

Arthur J. Holland, SFO, died November 9, after a long bout with cancer. "Honest Art" was mayor of the capital city for 26 years, and will be remembered for his integrity and commitment. His Franciscan heart beat for the poor and the needy. The National Minister attended his Mass of Christian Burial.

SECULAR ELECTIONS AT CHAPTER

Mary Mazotti, SFO, Minister of the Secular Franciscan Province of St. Barbara, was elected to the office of National Vice-Minister. At a later meeting of the Executive Council, she was elected First Vice-Minister. William McVernon, SFO, was reelected National Treasurer.

Laura Haukaas, SFO, Minister of the Secular Franciscan Province of St. Joseph Cupertino, was elected to the International Council.

Marie Amore, SFO, Minister of the Secular Franciscan Province of St. Joseph, was reelected to the International Council, as was James D. Lynch, SFO, National Minister.

PSALM 151.5

Elizabeth M. Ryder, SFO,
National Secretary

A secretary's anguish

Lord, you know when I am awake or asleep. You know my coming and going, even to the mail box.

My cry is not against you, O Lord, but I appeal to your omniscience: Why do they reject me? Why do they hide their rosters from me?

The Lord asked, "who is hiding fowl from you?"

You are testing me, Lord. I said rosters, not roosters. It is they, the Provincial Ministers, my friends. After two requests and six weeks, only four have I received.

"Why," he questioned, "would you want to send over a thousand pieces of mail when thirty-one would do?"

Because, Lord, your servant David (Browne) told us to work harder.

The Lord consoled me. He said, "I will move their hearts; I will enhance their memories. I will activate their typewriters and word processors. (But, if that doesn't work, let me know; I'll instigate plan #2.)"