

THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY
of
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

Newsletter



Summer, 1991

MARY AND THE EUCHARIST

James David Lynch, SFO
National Minister

Very close are the links that unite our Blessed Lady to the Holy Eucharist. We need God, and our hearts naturally go in search of him. The pagans of old and of our time, even the most primitive, worship a god or gods and are constantly making for themselves images of their false gods. God granted us Christians the grace and the opportunity of satisfying our need of God by means of the mystery of the Incarnation, and later by means of the Holy Eucharist.

The Son of God came down from heaven and dwelt here on this very earth. He dwelt here amongst us just as one of us. We could see him, know him, speak to him, touch him, and love him as any other friend or companion. But a day was to come when he would die and pass from this world.

Before that day came, he arranged for a continued Incarnation. The Holy Eucharist was the means he devised. He would remain with us until the end of time, not now under the appearance of a child of man, but under the outward appearance of bread. He is really with us, and we with him. We can speak to him and love him and become inti-

mately united to him. Food, by assimilation, becomes one with the eater; so, Christ in the Eucharist becomes one with us. The Holy Eucharist is a continued Incarnation. It is the application of the Incarnation to each of us. This is how God satisfied the craving we have for him.

God indeed has given us the gift of the Incarnation. Did he not give it to us through Mary? And this second gift of the continued Incarnation is given to us also through Mary. Mary is still giving and presenting her Child to the world as she gave and presented him to the shepherds and magi. Let us thank Mary for the gift of Jesus in our tabernacles.

O Mary, help me to live as a faithful disciple of Jesus for the building up of Christian society and the joy of the Catholic Church. I greet you, mother, morning and evening; I pray to you as I go upon my way; from you I hope for the inspiration and encouragement that will enable me to fulfill the sacred promises of my earthly vocation, give glory to God and win eternal salvation, O Mary! Like you in Bethlehem and on Golgotha, I too wish to stay always close to Jesus. He is the eternal King of all ages and all peoples.

Pope John XXIII

TO BE MORE UNITED

Emanuela De Nunzio, OFS
Minister General

The ICSFO Presidency, elected October 1990 by the Chapter at Fatima, presents you with this first 1991 issue of our Bulletin, at least partially renewed. Its typographical face doesn't yet correspond to the level of an international Order of world dimensions; its contents are still limited to some essential announcements...but we intend to respond to one of the most insistent requests made by the participants of the Chapter: a demand for more intense, more widespread, more frequent communication in the Order.

To intensify communication means certainly to risk more, to counter problems frontally, to adopt a more "transparent" style, clarifying any decision including the reasons behind it; but it means also to show more confidence in others and to accept fully the concept of shared responsibility. Shared responsibility meaning not only "to divide" responsibility, but above all to adopt a style:

- where communication becomes habitual, normal;
- where trust, esteem and mutual acceptance open human and spiritual relations of unsurpassable value;
- where the certainty of being listened to induces among the many and varied national realities a feeling of belonging to a single Order more loyally and fully.

To reach this goal, the Bulletin will be published four times a year. It should be clear that this frequency makes it impossible to continue publishing as many separate editions as there are languages present in the ICSFO. We decided, therefore, to publish one single edition, giving the most important communications at least in English and in Italian (possibly also in Spanish). Items

arriving from different nations will be given in their original language, with short summaries in the principal languages.

...Through these small things, we can feel ourselves more united and, precisely through the strength of this unity, propose to the world the ideals our Seraphic Father has planted in our hearts and put into our hands.

Ed. note: private subscriptions to the CIOFS Bulletin are available; an offering to cover expenses is requested. Based on U.S. currency, the cost is estimated at \$2.00 per issue minimum. Send request/offering to:

Segreteria Centrale OFS
V. S. Teodoro 42
00186 Roma, Italia.

LETTER FROM ZAMBIA

(Excerpts from a letter carried by the SFO Newsletter of Australia and New Zealand.)

Having introduced the SFO in Zambia I would like to inform you that we are badly in need of Christian literature, particularly relevant for the formation of our SFO. Any generous contribution from you in this regard would highly be appreciated. We have been running formation workshops in various regions; but in order to achieve effective results there is need to read as much Christian literature as we possibly can.

Clement Milambo, SFO
National Secretary
P.O. Box 81600
Kabwe, Zambia,
Central Africa

If anyone can help, please ship materials directly to Clement. Suggested items: bibles, any Franciscan biographies and histories, the Rule, commentaries on the Rule, general Catholic reading.

THE GOLDEN TONGUE

Rev. Francis Lonsway, OFM Conv.
National Spiritual Assistant

The month of June always makes me think of Saint Anthony of Padua. We celebrate his feast on June 13. Since it is a "summer time" feast, it probably is a day like many other days for us. However, because he was a contemporary of Saint Francis of Assisi (1195-1231 A.D.) Saint Anthony's life and work invite special consideration.

While he joined the Franciscan Order so that he might be a missionary to the Saracens, ill health prevented Anthony from reaching that goal. He quickly became renowned for preaching and was entrusted by Francis with teaching theology to the friars at Bologna. That was risky business because the study of theology required books, and books were rarely in the hands of anyone except the rich.

Furthermore, the only place one could find many books was in the university towns, a setting where it was necessary to live in larger, more stable houses close to the schools, clearly a danger to the preference for huts and hermitages of the early friars.

In addition, there were enough heresies around at that time, among them, the Albigensian, to make one wary of the study of theology no matter where it took place.

There was also a host of itinerant preachers about the countryside, some of whom were faithful to the Church, but others, dissidents which added cause for concern.

Hence, the mandate to teach the clerics was clearly a measure of Saint Francis' confidence in Saint Anthony, not an unfounded trust.

Two recent volumes, *Praise To You Lord* and *Seek First His Kingdom*, highlight the beauty of Saint Anthony's prayers and the scope of his sermons. Both are only glimpses of his monumental work, *Sermones dominicales et festivi*.

The smaller of the two volumes, the collection of prayers, includes prayers to the Trinity, to the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Let me share one prayer with you.

"Christ the Lord,
we ask you humbly
gather us under the wings of your love,
keep us alive
with the water of remorse,
with the air of contemplation,
with the earth of humility,
so that we may be worthy of joining you
who are life itself.
With your help,
who are blessed throughout the ages.
Amen." (II/394)

It is not remarkable that this prayer is Franciscan-like. However, because of its call to the fundamental elements of life, water, air, and earth (ground), we must be reminded of our stewardship of the world.

Our Commission on Ecology of the National Fraternity, ably chaired by Justin Carisio, SFO, teaches us some basic things we can do to preserve and enhance the world in which we live. Saint Anthony of Padua reminds us that such concern has a clear theological dimension and is, in fact, part of our life with Jesus himself.

It was recently reported that the difference between a terrorist and a liturgist is that one can reason with a terrorist.

FRANCISCAN BARE MINIMUM: RADIANCE FOR THE JOURNEY

Dr. Marguerite B. Stein, SFO,
Canonist

For whatever reason, you have chosen not to accept an elected office in your fraternity for a time. Let's say that you are in the midst of a hectic business and family schedule and now you are examining that busy life in search of a way to organize your time and still remain faithful to all of your commitments, including the Franciscan.

You say to yourself, what is the bare minimum required in each compartment of my life? You are tempted to start with your work or family obligations. Don't do it. Do what Francis did: BEGIN WITH GOD. Make time for daily personal prayer.

In his Testament, Francis describes the form of prayer that was used in the first days of the Order:

When God gave me some friars, there was no one to tell me what I should do; but the Most High himself made it clear to me that I must live the life of the Gospel...Those of us who were clerics said the Office like other clerics, while the lay brothers said the Our Father,...Although I am ill and not much use, I always want to have a cleric with me who will say the Office for me, as is prescribed in the Rule.

All the other friars, too, are bound to...say the Office according to the Rule. Testament.

Murray Bodo, in his *The Way of St. Francis*, which deals particularly with Franciscan spirituality, has drawn up for us "a sort of canon of Franciscan prayer" using Celano's description of how Francis prayed. It includes the following:

Make all of your time a holy leisure in which to inscribe wisdom in your heart.

When visitors or any other business disturbs you, it is better to interrupt your prayers than to end them. Then, afterwards, you can return to them again in your deepest center.

Retreat to places of solitude where not only your soul, but also your body, can relax with God.

Do not neglect any visitation of the Spirit. Even when some business is pressing or you are on a journey, take time to respond to the touches of grace; taste the sweet manna in frequent snatches.

When you go on a journey, always stop to pray, remembering the story of Francis returning from Rome in the rain and how he dismounted his horse and stood for a long time in the drenching rain. For he used to say, "If the body tranquilly takes its food, which together with the body will become the food of worms, how peacefully and tranquilly should the soul not take its food, which is God himself?"

In chapter two of the Rule, we Seculars have a few clear directions to follow:

1. We follow the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, seeking the Father through Christ; and we carefully read the gospel, going from gospel to life and from life to gospel (¶4).
2. We seek to encounter Christ in others, in Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity (¶5).
3. We go forth among all people, proclaiming Christ by word and example and living in communion with the Pope and his clerics (¶6).

4. We conform our thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of radical interior change, or "conversion"; and human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily (¶7).

5. We let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all we are and do; we participate in the Mass and in liturgical prayer in one of the forms proposed by the Church (¶8).

All of us know that the Franciscan life, like the clear diamond that it is, shines with numerous other facets: work, honor for priests, love for Mary, equality, courtesy, poverty, purity of heart, service, peace, ecology, obedience...how difficult even to list what composes our charism.

Hoping that the busiest Secular will find a way to radiate these attitudes, today we emphasize the thought that it is only through prayer that we ourselves come near the Radiance we want to reflect.

Once Francis sought advice: Should he content himself with the practice of prayer and contemplation, or should he engage in evangelical, apostolic works? His advisors replied, both. Thus, as followers of Francis, as we engage in our missionary vocation of visible work and example of living, we recognize that our strength comes from the Holy Spirit.

When Christ was giving his final lessons to his apostles prior to the Ascension, we are told in Acts 1:8 and 2:17-18 that the coming of the Holy Spirit will make them witnesses and prophets. Pope John Paul II tells us in his recent encyclical on missionary activity, *Redemptoris Missio*, that this coming:

fills them with a serene courage which impels them to pass on to others their experi-

ence of Jesus and the hope which motivates them. The Spirit gives them the ability to bear witness to Jesus with "boldness".

(January 22, 1990; ¶24)

Later in that document, speaking of the apostolate of the laity "to strive so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all people" and pointing out that seculars especially are called "to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering these in accordance with the will of God," the Pope says that the field of the laymen "is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics" (citing Code of Canon Law c. 225; *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 6, 13; *Lumen Gentium* 31; *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 70) at ¶ 71, 72.

Very close to the end of that document, we read: "The characteristic of every authentic missionary life is the inner joy that comes from faith" ¶91.

How much prayer must we find time for? We suggest an hour a day -- twenty minutes for morning prayer, twenty minutes for readings, twenty minutes for evening prayer and examination of conscience. Plus Mass and Communion, if at all possible. Get away from the family or the office rush -- they can spare you for twenty minutes at a time. Find a broom (or other) closet. Relax and enjoy it; behavioral science types and stress counselors, today's gurus, are behind it (for the wrong reasons, but quote them to your critics and see how the denunciation disappears).

Raoul Manselli, in his *St. Francis of Assisi*, published in 1981 and recently released by Franciscan Herald Press in an English translation, notes that Francis, who was given the tonsure by Innocent III on the occasion of the approval of the first Rule, was a cleric and,

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therefore, from that point onward recited the Office of the Church of Rome. The lay brothers recited the Our Father, which has its roots in the Gospel's quotation of the words of Christ himself which emphasize that all are children of God.

He then makes the very interesting point that:

It was the daily reading of the office, along with the remaining liturgy of the Mass and the other sacred functions, that served greatly to provide a modest theological and scriptural education both for the saint and for his companions.

We can learn from this: Never is a moment of prayer wasted, particularly if we require of our mental muscles a real involvement with the words of the psalms and readings in the full office of the Church. Sure, there will be days when we can only mutter the Our Fathers in traffic enroute to the office, but a little advance planning, rising a bit early, parking under a tree on the way home, and we can reap...RADIANCE!

AND FRANCIS WILL BE PROUD OF US.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL REPORT

At its March meeting, Hickory, North Carolina, the Executive Council announced that Justin Carisio, SFO, would be one of the speakers at the 1992 Quinquennial Congress. Justin is Chairman of the National Ecology Commission; he is also Minister of San Damiano Fraternity, Wilmington, Delaware.

OVERHEARD

Concerning a man proposed for some parish work: That guy efficient? He could foul up a one car funeral.

FROM THE EDITOR

Some issues back, we mentioned that the National Executive Council had said that the purpose of the *Newsletter* was to "inform, educate, and spiritually enrich." With each issue, we have tried to follow that mandate more fully. With each issue, there is an increase in private subscriptions, and your comments certainly indicate that we are succeeding. Now, the promise of a quarterly CIOFS bulletin opens another avenue.

But we still have a long way to go. Please carefully read Fr. Carl's article, "Regional Fraternity - Key To Unity". We are one Order. Our understanding and acceptance of this depends upon our knowledge; knowledge depends upon our exposure to information and education; exposure depends upon communication.

The National Fraternity is communicating; the *Newsletter* is sent to all national and provincial officers, including local fraternity ministers. The rest is up to you. Please consider it a moral obligation to pass on the contents to the local members either by making copies for them or encouraging private subscriptions. One subscriber wrote that the *Newsletter* was the one thing that convinced him that he belonged to a world-wide Order. If that is our only fraternal link, it is not a good comment for 1991.

Private subscriptions are \$2.00 per year (four issues); Canada, \$3; others, \$4. Make checks payable to NAFRA and send to:

National Newsletter
R. D. 1, Box 1251
Brandon, VT 05733

Private Subscribers, please note the date below your name and address. First subscriptions are due for renewal before the September issue.

BORN TO VOLUNTEER

Barbara Ritter Garrison

I always thought it was love that made the world go around; but according to the latest survey, it's not love, it's volunteers. It was also discovered that:

- 1) for every paid employee there were three volunteers actually doing the job,
- 2) behind every "success" was a half-dead volunteer whose name no one could quite remember, and
- 3) God so loved the world that God sent a volunteer.

The word volunteer comes from two Swahili words: *vol* which means to kill one's self, and *unteer* which means without pay. Anthropologists, in trying to ascertain the first "volunteers," have thought perhaps they originated when Moses parted the Red Sea. However, others place them in Columbus' time, claiming that old Chris didn't discover America but the abandoned set of an amateur theater group.

What still baffles authorities on the subject is how person number one convinced person number two that they would want to do the same thing - only for nothing. Some say it was probably the church who came along preaching "money is evil, we'll take it off your hands" - and then gave out the work of God to do (like building fancy churches with big rectories and heated garages).

Wherever and however the origins of volunteers, it is hard to imagine the world without them. Why, doctors would be selling nylons and M&Ms in the hospital gift shops; and parishioners would be playing bingo without cards. Their importance is such now that Clairol has come up with a new hair shade called "Volunteer Gray", and changed their slogan to "If I have but one life, let me live it as a volunteer." And the Book of the Month Club is now sending out (in a very large envelope) someone to read the book to you.

Since the only real qualification to be a volunteer is a listed phone number, and since education and experience are not requirements, the future could find such situations commonplace:

- brain surgery done by an auto mechanic who "likes helping out" and has Wednesdays free,
- scientific research projects headed by high school dropouts who want to make their parents proud,
- the presidency of the United States filled by an Avon lady who thought she could change the face of the nation.

In great demand everywhere, the basic model volunteer can now be customized to suit your group's particular needs:

- A parish sodality breakfast volunteer can come with a slot that dispenses pancakes which, with a small adjustment, also flips out slightly greasy bingo cards.
- A volunteer fireman in a small community can come equipped with a high-powered hose that can spray water, foam, and butter-cream frosting (for the monthly bake sales).
- A poppy seller can have six legs and a photographic memory for those people who say, "get me on the way out; I don't have any change."
- A co-worker selling his kid's Girl Scout cookies, candy, and raffle tickets will have amnesia every time he tries to approach anyone and will end the day having bought and eaten all his own cookies and candy bars (providing a service both to the organization and his co-worker victims).

Yes, volunteers are definitely responsible for most of the kindness that takes place in the name of humanity. It's time to give tribute, for without them it would be difficult to explain the "good news", much less get it delivered to your door.

From Precious Jewel Person: Reflections on the Spirituality of Everyday Life by Barbara Ritter Garrison, ©1990. Available from ACTA Publications, 4848 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60640, 1-800-397-2282.

REGIONAL FRATERNITY KEY TO UNITY

Rev. Carl Schafer, OFM
Conf. of General Spiritual Assistants,
Rome

According to the Rule of Paul VI of 1978, the Secular Franciscan Order is a single Order, with only one Rule, one set of General Constitutions, one only International President (Minister General), one only International Council and with a structure of its own.

The Secular Franciscan Order is not divided according to the Obediences of the friars. It does not allow of any division or separation according to the Obediences of the friars. There are no "Obediences" in the SFO.

True, there is a bond through its canonical establishment, between the local SFO Fraternity and one of the four Franciscan Orders of friars, but the SFO is not identified with any one of these Orders. The Secular Franciscans are not friars or religious. They do not make a vow of obedience to anyone. The Minister General of the friars is not the Minister General (International President) of the seculars. The Regional Fraternity of the SFO is not identified with the Province of the friars.

"Interobedience" or else the word "interobedientiality" has been used to refer to the grouping of SFO fraternities that are assisted spiritually by different Orders of friars. However, it is not a legitimate way of describing the only single SFO, because the term signifies only a cooperation, a collaboration between the religious Obediences.

The General Constitution, Art.1.5 (following the Rule, Art.20) says, "[The Secular Franciscan Order] is divided into fraternities of

various levels - local, regional, national and international. Each one has its own juridical personality in the Church." These fraternities at the various levels are coordinated and united among themselves according to the norm of the Rule and of the Constitution.

The structure of the SFO is based on the grouping of local fraternities into larger fraternities on the levels mentioned in the Rule. The grouping is not according to an Obedience of the friars, but according to territory or by reason of some common aim.

The SFO General Constitution in Art. 29.1 says, "The local Fraternities are grouped into fraternities at various levels: regional, national, and international, according to ecclesial or territorial criteria or norms of some other nature."

It is obvious from Art.61.1 that the unity of the one single Secular Franciscan Order remains intact, independently of the various Franciscan Obediences: "The Regional Fraternity is the organic union of all the local Fraternities existing in a territory or that can be integrated into a natural unity either by geographic proximity or by common problems or pastoral realities. It assures the link between the local Fraternities and the National Fraternity, with respect to the unity of the Secular Franciscan Order and with the collegial integration of the various Franciscan Obediences that happen to take care of spiritual assistance in the area."

This article does not allow the possibility of setting up a Regional Fraternity composed exclusively of local Fraternities assisted by one Obedience of friars. It does not foresee the possibility of converting the present obediential Provincial Fraternities into Regional Fraternities, simply by changing the