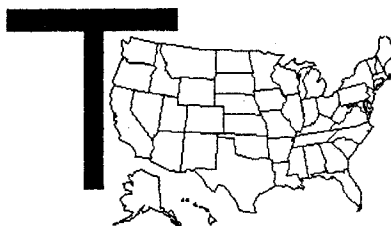

The National Fraternity
of
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER



Issue Number 4

THE NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

Summer, 1994

THE IMPORTANCE OF FORMATION

I am writing this after attending a meeting of the National Fraternity Formation Commission. Attending members of the commission were: Marilyn Friga (Franklin, VA), Fr. Matthew Gaskin, OFM (Butler, NJ), Diane Halal (Los Alamitos, CA), Bill Niggemeyer (Spokane, WA), Ron Pihokker (Clifton, NJ), Edward Shirley (Austin, TX), and Mary Lou Young (Olpe, KS). Both Diane and Marilyn retired from the commission after having completed over seven years of service. Our thanks and appreciation go out to the both of them for their many years of dedication and all the expertise they have shared with the Commission and the National Fraternity. Both Diane and Marilyn are valuable formation resource people and I know they will continue to make major contributions to the maturation of formation programs around the country.

When we consider the subject of formation, we realize that, in many respects, it is the most important activity the leadership of our Order is charged with. To support this endeavor, the National Fraternity established the Formation Commission several years ago. Its mission statement reads in part: "The mission of the commission, as a prophetic ministry, is to advise and provide consultation...with regard to the vision and direction of Secular Franciscan Formation in concert with the theology and spirituality of the Secular Franciscan Rule, Constitutions..."

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REGIONALIZATION

-A Reality

Regionalization as defined by the SFO General Constitutions is "...the organic union of all the local fraternities existing in a territory or which can be integrated into a natural unity, either by geographic proximity, or by common problems and pastoral realities...and assures the link between the local fraternities and the national fraternity." (Art.61.1)

We have made a permanent, lifelong commitment by profession to the Secular Franciscan Order Rule and have promised to live the Rule given to us by the Church. Ch. III.20 states we are "...divided into fraternities of various levels--local, regional, national and international. Each one has its own moral personality in the Church. These various fraternities are coordinated and united according to the norm of this rule and of the constitutions."

Given this understanding and acceptance of our willingness to live our *Franciscan Way of Life*, why has regionalization caused some distress and anxiety? The primary reason is simply that we are human beings who are sometimes fearful of change. There has been some confusion about our relationship with Spiritual Assistants and the connection with friar provinces that canonically established our fraternities. Lack of information exists about what is involved in transition from provinces to regions.

While there is resistance to change, if we understand that our Order will be stronger and there will be a recognition that we are one order responsible for our own governance, we can work toward accomplishing the goal of full regionalization as approved by the National Fraternity Directive Board.

There are now 11 established Regional Fraternities in the United States from the Pacific

Ocean to the Atlantic, including Hawaii, and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. It is expected that 12 more emerging Regional Fraternities will request approval of establishment at the October, 1994, National Fraternity Meeting.

If your fraternity has not begun the journey toward becoming part of a Regional Fraternity, find out what is being done in your geographic area. Ask your local fraternity council to provide a program explaining what is involved and how you can help. An excellent help is the Handbook of Regionalization, prepared by the Regionalization Committee and approved by the National Fraternity in October, 1991. Each Provincial Minister and Provincial Spiritual Assistant has these books.

It is a wonderful time to discover the many Franciscan brothers and sisters who belong to fraternities that may meet nearby and whom you may have never met. The experience of learning about other fraternities close to yours will be an exciting, rewarding experience. It's like finding members of your family that you did not know about, who share your vision of St. Francis' dream and seek to bring his dream into the world.

The Regionalization Committee desires to be of assistance to you--informing, educating, facilitating--to bring about full regionalization for the United States in 1996, as mandated by NAFRA.

*Geraldine Rome, Vice Minister
Regionalization Chairperson
12266 N. Lakeview Drive
Baton Rouge, LA 70810*



LORD OF THE LEDGER

(From an article of the same name by Joseph Colosimo, in FRA NOI, Chicago, IL,
submitted by John K. Sanborn, SFO National Treasurer)

Fra Luca Pacioli was the father of modern accounting. He was one of those dazzling Renaissance luminaries, a man for all seasons, who was conversant in many disciplines. He was familiar with the more famous artistic masters of his age who eventually overshadowed him. Born in 1445 near Florence, Italy to Bartolomeo Pacioli and his bride, and educated by the Franciscan Friars, he eventually became one of their number in 1472. He had been educated into the world of economics and exposed to the rigor of mercantilism. For the remainder of his life he would intersperse the spiritual and moral philosophy of the Franciscan order into his work. Business and commercial accounts and calculations were prepared "a nome di Dio," (in the name of God) and often many completed "a sui laude et gloria," (for His praise and glory).

Fra Luca's greatest work was his "Summa de Arithmetica, Geometria, Proportioni et Proportionalita," (Compendium of Mathematics, Geometry, Algebra and Proportionality). This book had a great influence on Donato Bramante, the creative genius of 15th century architecture. Leonardo da Vinci was tutored in mathematics using the book and went on to paint in inspiring proportional harmony. Fra Luca's proficiency in mathematics also found application in military strategy, but above all, in business.

Venetian merchants, then the mercantile leaders of the Western World, utilized the system of bookkeeping that Fra Luca had developed and refined. With the introduction of the Gutenberg Press, Fra Luca's "Summa" was put to publication for public consumption in 1494. The short chapter on accounting, "Particularis de Computis et Scripturis (Methods of Accounting and Reporting) was translated into several languages and became the standard textbook for accounting for centuries to come. It was issued to the world as an accounting manual that established "double entry" bookkeeping as the universal standard of accounting for Venice, all of Italy, and eventually the world.

Fra Luca modestly called himself a codifier of mathematical knowledge, but C.A. Cooke states that, "The importance of double-entry systems of keeping books lies not in arithmetic, but in its metaphysics," (its rationale). Fra Luca was indeed the consummate "Renaissance Man," and an inspiration to SFO treasurers everywhere.

Printed Material Available

From the National Treasurer's Office

A. Distributed at October, 1992, Directive Board meeting:

1. Fraternity Treasurer's Reporting Requirements /Forms
2. Control of Computer Viruses
3. USCC Letter regarding SFO tax exempt status
4. Treasurer's Guidelines
5. Treasury Guidelines ("How much is enough?")
6. Record Retention

B. Distributed at October, 1993, Directive Board meeting:

1. Accounting System and Forms for Provincial/Regional Treasurers
2. Obtaining a Provincial/Regional Employer ID Number

3. Communal Celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours

4. Requests: Preserving and Extending SFO way of life

5. Per Capita Donation Guidelines

Also available:

1. NAFRA Annual Financial Report for 1992 and forward

2. Print out-individual Provincial/Regional data, includes:

Provincial/Regional Council Members
Fraternity Ministers' Names/Addresses
Fraternity Names, Locations, membership numbers

Contact: John Sanborn, SFO, National Treasurer
1611 West River Parkway
Grand Island, NY 14072-2418



RECYCLED PAPER



Franciscans and the Chapter of Mats

The first North American Franciscan Chapter of Mats will meet in Denver in 1996.

If it can get off the ground, this will be quite an historical event--and maybe epic. How so? Well, in the first place, it will be the first time *Franciscans* from the three orders will meet as equals. The new *Franciscans Network* is trying to bring this all together--not "friars," "nuns," and "seculars," just Franciscans meeting to share the common North American experience of Franciscanism. Maybe this may be a seminal event--an event that will help us get our act together as Americans and Franciscans as we move to the 21st Century.

We are certainly different from our Franciscan predecessors who brought us into the 20th Century. More culturally attuned to the European expression of Catholicism they look differently at the world--a vale of tears to be endured only at the peril of your soul. We, on the other hand, were formed under a unique experience called Pax Americana, the result of the rise of capitalism as the most successful economic venture in the postwar world. We are different because we were religiously formed under Catholicism but our secular formation is Protestant. American capitalism is the product of the Protestant ethic, an ethic of "a day's work for a day's pay" and "work hard, God will reward you." Our Catholic predecessors gave us Thomas a Kempis' The Imitation of Christ to read as a daily work ethic; our Protestant friends were reading Adam Smith's Wealth of

Nations and viewing Washington, Jefferson and Franklin as the spirit, soul and body of enlightened Christian persons. "Bloom where you are planted" is a modern rendition of the Lutheran idea of vocation--one need not join an order or go to a monastery to be a servant of God. The Calvinist idea of your work being the instrument of your salvation and wealth being a blessing for a job well done makes a Franciscan blush.

So where are we in all this? When Saint Bonaventure was hunting for a biblical figure that he could compare best with Saint Francis, he picked Job. The name, Job, he pointed out means "sufferer." In a word, the symbol of the servant of God is a sufferer. Our founding fathers looked at the same Old Testament book for a sign of who is among the elect and damned and found Job as the best example of a man blessed by God. The reason? Not his suffering but his wealth! He had a large, healthy family, a heck of a lot of real estate and enough livestock to make Ben Cartwright of the Ponderosa look like a pauper--even though the latter was storied to own a good chunk of Colorado.

Our Franciscan side looks at Job as a sufferer with great suspicion over money--flee from it; our American side looks at Job as a sort of Old Testament Andrew Carnegie--very adroitly avoiding any dungheap on which to lay his wealth. As a matter of fact we associate walking into excrement as a sign that we are going to get money! Is then, being an American Franciscan an oxymoron? Certainly the idea of a "poor" American creates as much angst as a "rich" Franciscan. But as anyone who has traveled to the land of the "have-nots" in

the Third World knows, our poorest Franciscan here, friar, nun or secular, is materially well off indeed. The poor of the world are looking at us as an almost macabre 20th Century rendition of the Dives/Lazarus story. They would love to change places with the poor of America--it would be a breathless blessing!

Maybe as we prepare to join together in 1996, we can come to grips with who we are. Obviously we are not copies of 13th century Franciscans. And who would want to be? Could you see the spiritual mentality of Saint Angela of Foligno prevalent today--praying for her husband and children to die so she can lead a life dedicated to God? Hardly! And it would be arrogant to judge her as she was a creature of her time. History has a way of pointing the direction in which God is moving the world. We have seen Communism fall lifeless like a lead ball. As if to vindicate our Protestant forefathers, John Paul II gave papal approbation to our economic system as the best people have to offer albeit with strong admonitions towards gospel stewardship.

So here we are--American Franciscans. The very poor I personally know in far off places, and they are quite destitute, don't want me to leave America's shores and come live in a thatched hut next door to them in some romantic display of 13th Century Franciscanism although that may still be a calling for those who are on the mystical path. Mine is the path of the Secular Franciscan. They want me to send help and experience so they can share in some modicum of material security.

There is a place for wealth in the world

and God knows there is a lot of suffering going on--people like the Old Testament Job abound. The Chapter of Mats may be historical and epic-making for what we have to say of ourselves and our relationship to the world. What is the corporate face of American Franciscanism going to be like entering into the 21st Century? Will it be relevant to our position of wealth and our needs as Americans? Demographic studies have been completed concerning the seminary training needed for the 21st Century. The movement is away from European Catholicism, heavily laden as it is with high ritual and intellectual pursuits, toward the Third World. Among other things this means sharing in the American dream. It should mean a spiritually compatible world for Franciscans--but will it be for American Franciscans? Are we yet at home with our Protestant ethic, money and the meaning of life?

Alan Ouimet, SFO

Founder & Director

Franciscan Family Apostolate

The National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order considers the work of Franciscan Family Apostolate to be in accordance with the SFO Rule. By offering Franciscans opportunities to do as Father Francis did--to care for the poor and oppressed--it is an outward sign of our conversion to gospel life. It enables us "to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought more effectively."(Rule of SFO,Ch.2:11,14)

Because of the thousands aided by American Secular Franciscans, FFA and Alan Ouimet were awarded the Benemerenti Medal by Pope John Paul II in 1987.

PRAISE GOD FOR THE GOOD
GREEN EARTH!

(From The Secular FOCUS,
St. Conrad Province)

by Jim Anthony



Praise God for our good green earth. Praise Him for the gifts He has given us. Praise Him for beautiful water which nourishes all His creatures. Praise Him for chaste, pure air which sustains all of creation. Praise Him for mother earth and for rich soil which gives nourishment to abundant plant life. Our God is good. Our world was created in goodness. We can choose to despoil and exploit this goodness.

Today chemicals are a part of our daily lives: CO₂, H₂O, H₂O₂, NH₃, NaCl to name a few. We also have many manmade chemicals--motor oil, gasoline, cleaners, solvents, adhesives, paints, etc. The chemicals we have are useful and our world would not function as it does if they weren't around. But they can pose hazards for us and the rest of creation if not handled properly.

So what are we to do with chemicals which are no longer useful to us? Companies are required to dispose of chemicals through EPA approved chemical waste disposal companies. Individual households are never monitored because it would cost too much. Yet it is up to the individual consumer to be conscientious when it comes to disposal of unwanted chemicals.

Although it is not a good idea to pour unwanted chemicals down the drain, a water treatment facility is able to process most detergents, soaps and drain openers when diluted. Call your local water treatment facility to determine exactly what they can and cannot handle. A good rule of thumb is that if it doesn't normally go down the drain during usage, don't put it down the drain to dispose of it. Remember, it is always better to purchase biodegradable soaps and detergents than those containing phosphates which kill the

natural bacteria that help decompose waste. A list of chemicals that should not go down the drain includes but is not limited to: petroleum products, solvents, adhesives, paints, industrial cleaners, insecticides, poisons, anything containing heavy metals such as chromium, lead, mercury, etc. or anything labeled flammable.

Most full service automotive shops or oilchange shops accept used motor oil which is then recycled. Never pour motor oil onto the ground. It finds its way into the ground water and eventually drinking water.

Paints often can be donated to a local charity if usable. If unusable, continue to spread paint in thin coats onto scrap cardboard until it is all dried. Then discard the cardboard to the landfill. If discarded wet, paint can find its way into groundwater.

For other chemicals of which you are unsure, many counties now are sponsoring household chemical roundups. Call your local health department to see if one is scheduled. If not, it will get them thinking about sponsoring one. Ask what to do with the unwanted chemical in the meantime. (Note: it is not a good idea to simply let solvents evaporate out of an opened container. They do not simply disappear, they pollute our air.)

Remember, prevention is the best policy. Don't use chemicals unless absolutely necessary (this includes gasoline). If a little more physical exertion can eliminate the use of a chemical, opt for a cleaner planet. If you have to use a chemical, use the most earth-friendly one available. Let's work together to keep our air, water and soil, clean for the benefit of all.

Those of us old enough to remember WWII may remember this slogan which applies to ecology today: **USE IT UP! WEAR IT OUT!**

MAKE IT DO! OR DO WITHOUT!

(Anne Yager, Regional Ecology Commission Chairperson, Troubadours of Peace Region)

Letters from you:

Dear Fellow Franciscans,

Thank you for the National Newsletter. I find it informative and inspiring and I look forward to receiving it.

I was especially glad to hear that the Franciscan sisters at Zagreb have been released. I made copies of the letter from the last Newsletter and had the members of my fraternity sign each one.

I'll be happy to announce the good results when we meet this month. With prayer (and action) all things are possible. We'll keep praying.

I also liked the article in Spanish. It gives us something to think about. My high school Spanish was a help but I mainly read the English side.

Peace & joy,
Peg Newcomer

Enclosed please find my check for \$8 for a two year subscription to The National Newsletter. Since I am no longer Minister of St. George Fraternity, I will no longer receive the complimentary copy.

I have enjoyed and profited from the Newsletter, both personally and for the Fraternity. I will look forward to continuing to receive it.

One question--suggestion--would it be possible to include, at least on an occasional basis, a book list of excellent new Franciscan literature? It is not that we don't all receive a lot of advertising mail, but it is not always easy to make decisions long distance. St. George Fraternity is making a concerted effort to build up its library, and would appreciate some knowledgeable guidance! Thanks so much.

*With peace and joy,
Mardie Dougan, SFO*



Dear Readers: Thank you for your letters. It is encouraging to know what helps and what does not. A book review of Secular Franciscan material is scheduled for the Fall issue. If you have a book either by a Secular Franciscan or about Franciscan life that you wish to have reviewed for The Newsletter, please send it to the Editor (address on p.11). We would welcome someone knowledgeable in current Franciscan literature to contribute the list requested. PPN

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GRACE

Please grant me
Oh my Lord,
Your holy gift
of giving.

Let me retain,
Dear God,
when I am spent and used,
one millionth of Thy love
and pity for my fellow man.

I pray that I may be of use,
and render back to Thee,
through service to my fellowman,
a tiny fraction of the blessings
of my life.

Let me see them,
the ragged, tattered army
of my misbegotten brethren,
and seeing them,
see Thee.

So that when dusk for me shall fall,
and I am gathered in my father's arms,
You shall say to me,
"Well done, thou
good and faithful son."

by John M. Petric
St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity
Pueblo, CO
(from The Secular FOCUS)



Evangelization 2000

Fraternity Ministers, please share this information with your members. Unless your members are informed, they cannot take into consideration the U.S. Bishops Public Policy interests as they impact on Social Justice and Family Life. There are members of every fraternity who would be interested in the USCC position on issues.

Mary C. Lahiff, Evangelization 2000 Chairperson

HEALTH CARE REFORM: Different bills are coming out of Committee for debate in the full House or Senate. The USCC is focusing on two aspects - **excluding mandated abortion and achieving universal coverage.** Abortion is ethically wrong. Even the Supreme Court stated in a 1980 ruling: "Abortion is inherently different from other medical procedures, because no other procedure involves the purposeful termination of a potential life." (Harris v. McRae). In fact, it destroys actual human life. Federal precedent is against it in many rulings. State precedent is against it, public opinion is against it, the medical profession does not see abortion as an integral part of Health Care and doctors do not like to perform the operation and do not have to. This most controversial of elective procedures should certainly be excluded.

The reasons for supporting **Universal Coverage** are not so well understood. Universal Coverage is being undermined by special interest pressure and anti-immigrant sentiment. The bishops have said, "Real reform cannot offer the promise of universal access without providing effective means to assure coverage (e.g., through employer-provided coverage, government assistance, private action, or a combination of these.) We will measure reform proposals by how completely and effectively they provide true universal coverage. Universal coverage cannot be significantly postponed, because coverage delayed may well be coverage denied. Promises of universal access are no substitutes for the practical means and fiscal investment to assure coverage." The Bishops' advocacy for Universal Coverage is rooted in principles of Catholic social teaching. The common good must be protected and nurtured by the entire community as a means of protecting the fundamental dignity and rights of individuals. Health care is an ingredient for the common good because it is essential for full human dignity and necessary for the proper development of life.

Another item to be wary of is rationing of health care by various means. The important thing is to measure everything against the Gospel teaching and let your legislative representatives know where you stand.

WELFARE REFORM: The administration program has been scaled back considerably but financing remains a problem. Earlier attempts to identify sources of funding have proved unsuccessful. The Administration seems now to be reconsidering the possibility of generating funds by denying services to legal immigrants. In other