

TAU-USA



Issue Number 23

The Newsletter of the National Fraternity of the
Secular Franciscan Order in the United States

Summer 1999

The Greatest of These

William Wicks, SFO, National Minister

Some of you may recall a time when First Corinthians, Chapter 13, verse 13 included the word charity instead of the present word love. I was a little disappointed with

the change. The Douay-Rheims edition read, "And now there remains faith, hope and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity." At the time charity for me meant love with God involved. Since then, for me, the word has changed its

meaning. Now it means donating to the Bishops fund, donating to United Way - it usually involves money. It's funny how words change their meaning over time. Even the word love changes its meaning over time. As we mature spiritually, the word love becomes richer, fuller, more pervasive and more extensive. It becomes more a part of our lives. It is not just a feeling. It becomes a way of living. When I was in college a friend admonished me that the only reason people do good works is that they get the reward of good feeling. Yes, we do feel good when we do for others. However, that is not our motivation. I always knew that there was something more. I always knew that it was the God in me that was motivating me and not an external reward or a good feeling.

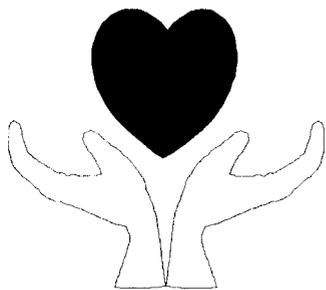
How is love manifest? The gift of love is a gift from God. The greatest gift is that gift that God gave to us: His only begotten Son, Jesus, who taught us what love is and who taught us who the loving Father is. So we try to act like Jesus in our daily lives. We try to be Jesus to all whom we meet. Jesus is the embodiment of the virtue charity, the embodiment of love.

I always knew that it was the God in me that was motivating me and not an external reward or a good feeling.

"Heaven Can Wait" is the name of a movie about a man who died before his time in an accident. So God decided to send him back to earth, but since his body was destroyed God give him the body of someone who had just died but whose body was intact. How do you suppose this person was going to let his loved ones

know who he was? What was unique about this person so that even though he was in a different body his loved ones would recognize him? What is unique about you so that if you had a different body, people would recognize you? Perhaps a more challenging question is: How can you be a body for Jesus? What is unique about you so that people will see Jesus in your body? The most significant manifestation of Jesus is the love that you give.

I don't know the source, but I have always been impressed with the thought: The only things that can make up for the insult to a needy person of the gift of food or money is that it is done with love. When my wife Frances and I were members of Holy Spirit Fraternity in Claremont, California, before we moved to Santa Maria, we helped the fraternity deliver boxes of groceries to the needy to provide a feast for their Easter dinner. Our deliveries took us to the poor areas of South Pomona. On a particular delivery day it was cold and rainy and we had to walk through the water to get to this one small house. The mother very cautiously opened the torn screen door. She held one small child in her arms and her body held another. We placed the food box with the turkey on her table. She held the door open for us as we left and thanked us with her eyes. Then she asked in halting English. Who is this from? I mumbled something about the Franciscans and she nodded. I wish I would have said, "Do you recognize that it is Jesus who is in me that gives this to you?" Her parting smile did feel good but I know that that was not the reason that we were out delivering packages on that cold rainy day. I pray that the Jesus that in this earthly body of mine is seen by others, and that they like what they see.



TAU-USA Housekeeping Details...

TAU-USA is published irregularly by Secular Franciscan Publications, National Fraternity, Secular Franciscan Order. Editorial office, 6 Light Street, Nuangola PA 18637.

Next TAU-USA Deadline

The deadline to submit articles for the next issue of TAU-USA is July 15, 1999. Please submit articles to:

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Subscription Information

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For more information, please see the back cover.

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Guidelines for Submission of Articles

Due to the overwhelming number of submissions for the national newsletter, we cannot possibly include all submissions. Therefore, to increase the likelihood of your submission being printed, we offer the following guidelines:

- Please ensure that articles do not exceed 500 words;
- Please understand that articles may be edited for length and clarity;
- Submissions received after the deadline for a particular issue will be given consideration for the following issue.



For your convenience (and ours), and in the Franciscan interest in ecology, please try to send submissions in electronic format (e-mail or floppy disc), instead of on paper.

A Note from the Editors

Thank you to all who have sent us their reader surveys. The winner of the eleven inch statue of Saint Francis with the Crucified Christ is Vivian Weaver, SFO, from Harmony, PA.

Please remember to keep sending us your Regional newsletters. We cannot report what we do not know! Also, please let us know if your local or regional fraternity has a web-site, so we can mention it in these pages.

Yours in Saint Francis,
the Outhwaites



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“Give Me Right Faith, Certain Hope and Perfect Charity”

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In this issue of *TAU-USA*, the National Commissions continue our commitment to recognize our Order's solidarity with the Church and in particular with Pope John Paul II by focusing the Ongoing Formation section of *TAU-USA* on one of the themes for 1999 which the Pope presented in his 1994 Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (“On the Coming of the Third Millennium”). Of specific interest to us at present is the Christian virtue which our Holy Father has asked us to highlight this year, the virtue of Charity.

We find our point of reference in the words of *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (#50):

“It will therefore be necessary, especially during this year, to emphasize the theological virtue of *charity*, recalling the significant and lapidary words of the First Letter of John: ‘God is love’ (4:8, 16). Charity, in its twofold reality as love of God and neighbor, is the summing up of the moral life of the believer. It has in God its source and its goal.”

In his Sunday Angelus address on February 28, 1999 and in his *Message for Lent*, Pope John Paul II reminded us that the Lord has invited us “to intensify those acts of *concrete charity* which biblical language often describes by the term ‘almsgiving.’ In this last year of preparation for the Great Jubilee, in which we turn our gaze to God the Father, it is important to highlight ‘the greatest’ (1 Cor. 13:13) of Christian virtues, that is, charity. . . The experience of the Father's love urges Christians to give of themselves to others, obeying a logic of service and solidarity in openness to their brothers and sisters.”

The whole of Francis' life could be said to encompass his transformation into the image of Jesus, “the gift of the Father's love”...

Our Seraphic Father Francis certainly came to know in a profound way in his own life the supreme importance of the virtue of charity. Early in his conversion experience he often prayed this prayer before the crucifix of San Damiano: “Most high and glorious God, bring light to the darkness of my heart.

Give me right faith, certain hope, and perfect charity. Lord, give me insight and wisdom so that I might always discern your holy and true will.” (This same prayer of Francis has been recommended by the National Formation Commission as a most appropriate formation prayer.) The whole of Francis' life could be said to encompass his transformation into the image of Jesus, “the gift of the Father's love” (cf. *SFO Rule*, #4) and the perfect reflection of the God who is love.

We, too, have been called by our identity as Christians

and Franciscans to incarnate in our own lives the charity of God which the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines as “the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God” (#1822).

The *Catechism* further states: “Charity upholds and purifies our human ability to love, and raises it to the supernatural perfection of divine love” (#1827). Our *Rule of Life* exhorts Secular Franciscans to “set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters” (#12). We profess our belief in “the transforming power of love and pardon” (*SFO Rule*, #19).

But specifically how are we to realize our vocation to be instruments of the charity of God in the world today? Pope John Paul II gives us some valuable guidance in *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (#51):

“If we recall that Jesus came to ‘preach the good news to the poor’ (Mt. 11:5; Lk. 7:22), how can we fail to lay greater emphasis on the *Church's preferential option for the poor and the outcast*? Indeed, it has to be said that a commitment to justice and peace in a world like ours, marked by so many conflicts and intolerable social and economic inequalities, is a necessary condition for the preparation and celebration of the Jubilee. Thus, in the spirit of the Book of Leviticus (25:8-12), Christians will have to raise their voice on behalf of all the poor of the world, proposing the Jubilee as an appropriate time to give thought, among other things, to reducing substantially, if not canceling outright, the international debt which seriously threatens the future of many nations. The Jubilee can also offer an opportunity for reflecting on other challenges of our time, such as the difficulties of dialogue between different cultures and the problems connected with respect for women's rights and the promotion of the family and marriage.”

Do we see the work of our Apostolic Commissions reflected in these words? Again, in his *Message for Lent* our Holy Father wrote:

“Those who are lonely, those on the margins of society, the hungry, the victims of violence, those who have no hope must be able to experience, in the Church's loving care, the tenderness of the heavenly Father who, from the very beginning of the world, has kept every individual in mind in order to fill each one with his blessings.”

Imagine that: we are called to be the heart and charity of God through which his people can experience the very tenderness of God!

Sisters and brothers, God give you peace!



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Gifts

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To be on the receiving end of a gift is to feel loved and appreciated, and to receive graciously for a good thing is a giving in return. The measure of thanks can be measured by one's level of appreciation and response. However, for that which we do not recognize we obviously cannot be thankful, and where we find no reason for thanks we find no cause for joy. Depending upon one's priorities and expectations, a gift to one may be have no value to another. Being a part of a consumer market-based culture and society, the sanctity and aesthetics of creation are not a priority, which explains, in part, the degradation of our environment. "They may look and look, yet not see, and may listen and listen, yet not understand." (Mark 4: 12) However, those with ears to hear and eyes to see realize "Thy bounty" enriches every grace-filled moment.

To become absorbed without self-centered expectation as Saint Francis was, is to realize there are no ordinary moments. There is never a shortage of His gifts or of reasons to be thankful.

Regardless of the dictates and oversight of our economic system, creation continues to beckon and bestow. As one small example, Mariana 1, which is a botanical listing of over 600 plant species found in a "Mary Garden," there are symbolic references to God, the Blessed Mother, angels and saints in popular Christian tradition. To "see" one of these plants converts a seemingly ordinary moment into a blessed one, drawing us

instantly to her holy protection, with every reason to be thankful. Certainly we can never be too receptive or too thankful, realizing that to "understand" is to submit to and identify with His presence and love. To become absorbed, as Saint Francis was, without self-centered expectation, is to realize there are no ordinary moments.

There is never a shortage of His gifts or reasons to be thankful. Although we cannot "prove" that God beckons in this way, our heart tells us so, and that's all that matters. To believe otherwise is to believe that creation

is without order and purpose, and that Providence and coincidence are one and the same.

Although a guide or reference for interpretation may be helpful, we can easily draw upon the experience of our own calling: it is to discover that as our relationship to creation becomes more intimate, "Grace" before meals becomes "Grace" before every step we take; it is to move beyond being an observer to becoming an instrument of the Lord according to His own design.

As we remove all measure of hesitation, our level of appreciation increases that much sooner, realizing also, it is not art alone which makes the Artist known, but those who acclaim His works; it is to realize that love begets love, and that one's caring can be measured by his or her acts of charity, peace and justice. To be thankful for the gifts of creation, beginning with the gift of our own being, and that of others, is the measure by which we give in return. In becoming lesser brothers or sisters as poor and obedient instruments of the Lord, we in turn not only strive to become guardians and faithful servants, but virtual brush strokes of creation itself, submitting ourselves to the Lord, according to His will, in return for His grace and love.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Define gift. Give examples.
2. How might we recognize and become more receptive to these gifts?
3. How might these gifts impact our life, and express our appreciation in return?



Ecology Commission Chair Needed

The National Executive Council invites Secular Franciscans to submit resumés for the position of Chair, **National Ecology Commission**. Applicants must:

- Have active Secular Franciscan status (must provide copy of Certificate of Profession);
- Be familiar with the Mission Statement and goals of the Ecology Commission;
- Be able to communicate, educate, and motivate regions and fraternities on Ecology;
- Provide on-going Formation articles for TAU-USA;
- Provide a summary of personal experience on the local or regional Ecology Commission; and
- Be able to attend at least two four-day national meetings yearly.

Interested Secular Franciscans should mail resumés to:
Mary Mazotti, SFO, Coordinator, National Apostolic Commissions, P.O. Box 2571, Arnold, CA 95223-2571.



I Love You: A Lesson in Charity

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"This is my commandment: Love one another as I have loved you." - John 15: 12

Thirty-four years ago, a patient of mine named Lottie Massoud, became a life long friend. This gracious woman had a special gift from our Lord that she shared with everyone including those who had offended her. On February 25th, 1999, at the age of 89 the Lord called her home. Lottie Massoud left her mark forever on the hearts of people who came in contact with her. Here is her story told by her son, Tony Massoud, in her eulogy that depicts a lesson in charity.

My Dearest Mother,

Your most endearing quality was your ability to say with deep meaning, "I love you!" This became your infamous three words that meant, you really loved the person you said it to. I remember you taking over our family the day our father left home leaving five children, age sixteen years to one year. Somehow you gathered the strength to endure a single parent role and managed to raise a loving family that grew to fourteen grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren. Every one of us loved you with unconditional love, as you loved us. If anyone knew you, they knew how much you cared about people. Your love for your family was absolutely powerful. It was a gift from God. You taught us how to be people who forgave those who trespassed against us and how to say "I love you." Three words so difficult for people to say in our world today.

I remember vividly you serving food at the Lebanese Club for the funeral of the son of the woman who took our dad, your husband, away from our home. As you were walking across the front of the hall, filled with people, the woman cried out loud to you for forgiveness for taking your husband away. You said in a clear voice that you forgave her years ago. You hugged and kissed her. It was so important to you to forgive and love everybody; to learn from you was easy; you practiced what you preached.

You never said a wrong word about our father; always told us he was a good man who would come home one day. How many mothers or fathers would teach or talk this way to their children whose parent left? You always taught us to love family, cousins, uncle, aunts, and friends. It didn't matter. They were our family.

The other evening many of us watched your 80th birthday party on video tape. There had to be at least one hundred nieces, nephews, grandchildren, great nieces and great nephews. They were all there to say "I Love You". You were

only 4 feet 10 inches tall, Mother, but to me, you were the tallest, the biggest of us all. Every one of us will always remember you saying to them, "I Love You!"

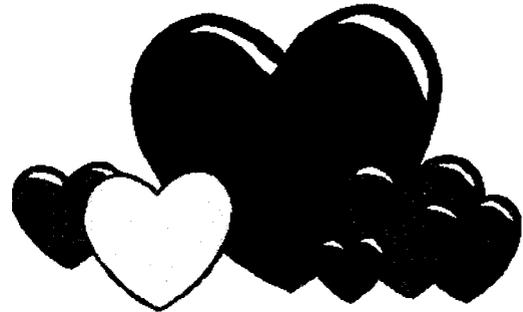
"I Love YOU!"

Lewis L. Dunningham put it in these words:

Someone believes in you. The greatest force for making people bigger and better than they are now is the belief in you heart and mind that they have infinite potential for growth. Even when they fail us, we are to continue to carry and express the mental image of what they may become. To have someone believe in you, even when you fail, is the most blessed and creative force in the universe. Lottie Massoud lived her life believing in people. She believed in the Christ Incarnate.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How would you have handled this situation?
2. What special gift did the Lord give you?
3. Discuss how our children and all those who witnessed this can embrace her gift!



The message of love that Christ brought is always important, always relevant. It is not difficult to see how today's world, despite its beauty and grandeur, despite the conquests of science and technology, despite the refined and abundant material good that it offers, is yearning for more truth, for more love, for more joy. And all of this is found in Christ and His way of life.

Pope John Paul II



Give Us Right Faith, Firm Hope, and Perfect Charity . . .

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Nearly every month at our fraternity meeting, we hear these words of Saint Francis' prayer before the Crucifix:

"Most high, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of our hearts and give us right faith, firm hope and perfect charity, with wisdom and insight, O Lord, that we may accomplish your holy and true will."

In the writings attributed to Saint Francis, he speaks of charity often. "Lady, holy Charity, may the Lord protect you with your sister, holy Obedience" (The Salutation of the Virtues). He believed that "Where there is charity and wisdom, there is neither fear nor ignorance" (The Admonitions, #XXVII). And in the Parchment Given to Brother Leo, he praised God, saying "You are good, all good, the highest good, Lord, God, living and true; You are love, charity."

It is clear that for Saint Francis, charity was a virtue of the highest order, befitting even our Lord. This charity of which he spoke seems primarily to fit the first definition of "charity" found in Webster's: coming from *caritas*, Christian charity, it is defined as "benevolent goodwill toward or love of humanity". This is an attitude of love and as such it demands relationship. To have love there must be both a lover and a beloved. Saint Francis was filled with love for all creation; he mirrored what he saw coming to us from God, that is all-embracing love.

What is charity for us Seculars, some 800 years later? What can we learn from our Father Francis? ***In Peace and Justice terms, the goal of "true charity" is to eliminate charity.***

Often in peace and justice circles you hear the statement that charity is "not enough". What is meant is that charity, in Webster's second sense, "aid given to those in need," does not solve all of our social ills. It is not enough to only feed the hungry. We must work toward eliminating the causes of hunger. It is not enough to write a check from the comfort of our first-world living rooms. We must walk beside those who are oppressed. We must seek out ways to change the structures that make charity in the sense of alms necessary.

"If each person saw God in his neighbor, do you think we would need guns and bombs?"
- Mother Teresa of Calcutta

When we get caught up in the easy road to charity, the safe, alms-giving place, perhaps we should stop a minute and ask ourselves why we feel the need to share with those in need.

Furthermore, why do we feel compelled to change unjust structures? Isn't it because, as Franciscans, the bottom line is we believe as Francis did that we are all children of the same God who loves us? That is we ALL – first

world, third world, American, African, Guatemalan, Serbian, Albanian – are loved by God, and that makes us all brothers and sisters. It makes us people in relationship. We must always be focused on the source of true charity that is so freely given to us.



Relationships can be messy. They can be painful. But they offer the best way we can truly know God. Mother Teresa said some remarkably "Franciscan" things. In a letter written to the people of Albania, the country of her birth, at the time of their financial crisis two years ago, she said "Remember that God has created each one for greater things, to love and to be loved. This is the meaning of life, which no suffering can take away from us. That man, that woman, that child is my brother, my sister – and I must love each one as God has loved us. To be able to love one another, we must pray much, for prayer gives a clean heart and a clean heart can see God in our neighbor. If now we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten how to see God in one another. If each person saw God in his neighbor, do you think we would need guns and bombs?"

If we approach every other child of God in the same spirit of charity that Saint Francis and Mother Teresa brought in their relationships, perhaps we will someday get to that point where we truly no longer need guns and bombs! In perfect charity!

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is my understanding of Charity. How does our Fraternity practice Charity?
2. In what places do I see the need for Franciscan Charity?



"STRIVE FOR PEACE WITH EVERYONE, AND FOR THAT HOLINESS WITHOUT WHICH NO ONE WILL SEE THE LORD."

Hebrews 12:14



Charitable Work

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One of my biggest lessons in life was this: learning that love is not a feeling. Rather, love is a conscious act of one's will to do good for another. The word "charity" captures this other-directed aspect of love. We think of charity as a loving action to benefit another. Catholic Charities comes to mind as an example.

An e-mail I recently received ended with a message that grabbed my attention. It read: "We should not **use people and love things**, but **love people and use things**." That about captures the essence of having charity in our work. We tend to forget other people - their feelings and their needs as we become wrapped up in our work striving to complete a task. There is a fairly new development in the American workplace that is helping to restore the element of regard and concern, of charity for the other. There is a renewed focus is on serving the customer. Concern is shown not only for meeting a customer's expectations, but also for exceeding them if possible.

Today I had an opportunity to meet with the human resources manager at Wegman's, a Western New York based supermarket chain that has been rated by Fortune magazine as one of the top 100 companies to work for in the United States. The family owned-company reflects the Catholic values of its founder. Managers are trained to be concerned about the personal lives of their employees and to be responsive and flexible in helping employees fulfill their work obligations within the context of the rest of their lives. In turn, employees are expected to be sensitive to the needs of their customers. Let me share with you a striking example: On Christmas Eve, a harried customer called the Wegman's meat department to complain that her roast had spoiled. The store accepted full responsibility for what was a disaster for the customer. What was the response? The manager of the meat department personally delivered a new roast then stayed to personally carve it for the family!

Charity has less to do with how we feel than with how we act toward another.

Isn't that something a Secular Franciscan would do? "Secular Franciscans should always act as a leaven in the environment in which they live through the witness of their fraternal love and clear Christian motivations." (Const. 19) One could say that the meat manager was doing

what he did not out of charity but for some other reason. He didn't really love his customer. But, as noted earlier, charity is not an emotion - it is an act of the will to do good for another. Charity has less to do with how we feel than with how we act toward another.

Sometimes, as people busy at work we forget to be more charitable toward ourselves! The pressures of

work to be done lead us to drive ourselves into unhealthy habits - constantly staying late at the office, needing the house to look perfect every day, trying to be everything and everywhere for our children, etc. Our work



obsessed American culture can drive us crazy if we let it. We need to get a grip! We need to restore a sense of balance. As our Constitutions (Article 21) remind us:

"Leisure and recreation have their own value and are necessary for personal development. Secular Franciscans should maintain a balance between work and rest and should strive to make meaningful use of their leisure time."

I recently experienced a better-balanced culture first hand. On a recent trip to Sweden, I found stores closing at 5 or 6 pm every evening. The pace at the university I visited was casual and relaxed. I learned that Swedes take a long ski holiday to break the winter monotony, and that the country generally takes off the entire month of August! Yet the standard of living and the quality of life was very high. These people were living their lives at a more humane pace, having time for the really important things - family and friends. An article in the *Buffalo News* confirmed my personal observations. What surprised Europeans the most about American culture? They can't believe that we work as hard as we do. Why do we? Because we love things more than people?

John Paul II, in his encyclical, *On Human Work*, said: "*Work is for man, man is not for work.*" *Work is for man* - enabling individuals to grow in dignity, allowing persons to use their gifts to serve others and treat them with respect and compassion. *Man is not for work* - man is not to be personally consumed by work itself or work for the purpose of having more money to buy more things; man is not to be oppressed by work. "Daily work is not only the means of livelihood, but the opportunity to serve God and neighbor as well as a way to develop one's own personality...[T]he brothers and sisters should commit themselves to collaborate so that all persons may have the possibility to work and so that working conditions may always be more humane." (Const. 21)

God intended work to be charitable in nature - always directed toward the good of others. St. Francis grasped this insight in seeing work as grace. Fr. Daniel McClellan, OFM speaks from this Franciscan perspective on work in saying:

"Because it is grace, work is never task oriented but person oriented. The Franciscan doctor doesn't cure disease, she heals patients; the Franciscan professor doesn't teach theology, he teaches students; the Franciscan cook doesn't prepare meals, she feeds people...Work is an expression of that redemptive love which embraces the whole of a scarred, imperfect yet wonderfully graced creation."

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Charity: An Activity of Faith, A Call to Franciscan Youth/Young Adults

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*"Be imitators of God as His dear children. Follow the way of love, even as Christ loved you. He gave himself for us an offering to God, a gift of pleasing fragrance."
(Ephesians 5:1,2)*

When working with Franciscan Youth/Young Adults, SFO Leaders can help them to more fully appreciate the depth of the meaning of the word "charity." This word is often seen by youth only in the context of "charity drives" or in appeals for sending money, food, clothing, and medical supplies to areas hit by natural disasters, through organizations such as the National Catholic Relief Service or the National Red Cross.

Youth Leaders should not underestimate the attraction Franciscan Youth/Young Adults have for challenges and quests.

The Franciscan youth/young adult learns best the meaning of charity in the "experience of fraternity that is a community of young believers, children of one Father, sharing their faith on the basis of love... under the direct accompaniment of capable members of the SFO," and, in addition, by the original Christian idea of love as expressed in the New Testament. (*The Franciscan Youth: A Franciscan Vocational Journey*).

The word "charity" is often used in various English translations of the Bible in place of "love." In the Formation Program of the Franciscan Youth Organization, the Franciscan youth learns to discover and live the message of love according to the example of Saint Francis, who followed Christ perfectly.

Pope John Paul II, in his 1985 Apostolic Letter to the Youth of the World, confirms the need for youth to understand, in its fullest Scriptural sense, the meaning of charity by stating,

for charity is 'the bond of perfection'. Through charity, man and human fraternity come to a fuller maturity. For this reason, love is the greatest and the first of all the commandments as Christ teaches; and in it all the others are included and made one. (Col. 3:14; 1 Cor. 13:13)

Challenging us to live the life of love more perfectly, the Scripture verse at the beginning of this article contains three powerful action words for the Franciscan youth/young adult to learn. They are: **be imitators, follow, and give:**

be imitators: be imitators of God as his dear children;
follow: follow Christ's way of love;
give: give (yourself) as a pleasing offering to God.

The New Testament is filled with accounts of charity and love between God the Father and his Son Jesus, and between Jesus and his followers, the Church. Youth Leaders should not underestimate the attraction Franciscan Youth/Young Adults have for challenges and quests.



A great treasury-find for them would be to see how many acts of charity and love they could track down in the four Gospels.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does Pope John Paul II mean when he calls Youth the hope of the Church?
2. Does your fraternity see itself as helping to fulfill that hope?



The Church needs you. The world needs you, because it needs Christ, and you belong to Christ. And so I ask you to accept your responsibility in the Church, the responsibility of your Catholic education: to help by your words and, above all, by the example of your lives to spread the Gospel. You do this by praying, and by being just and truthful and pure. Dear young people: by a real Christian life, by the practice of your religion, you are called to give witness to your Faith. And because actions speak louder than words, you are called to proclaim by the conduct of your daily lives that you really do believe that Jesus Christ is Lord!

Pope John Paul II



New Formation Text Available



The long anticipated rewrite of Capuchin Father Lester Bach's Catch Me A Rainbow is finally completed! Catch Me A Rainbow Too is now available for purchase from Barbo-Carlson Printers. This text comes highly recommended by the National Formation

Commission for use in both initial and ongoing formation programs in our fraternities. Last summer our National Formation Director David Ream, SFO, had the privilege of spending some time with Father Lester and interviewed him about his new book.

David: Lester, tell us about what motivated you to make this major rewrite of that wonderful text Catch Me A Rainbow?

Lester: (He chuckles!) Well, there were a couple of things. I wanted to do it because I like that, I like rewriting things because I never stand in one place very long. And theology and my own understanding of it keeps growing, so that also impacts on what I wrote. At the time that I wrote Catch Me A Rainbow, it might have been fine, but the first revision I did had the same motivation behind it and then I looked at that and said it should be done. Then when I talked with Marie (Amore, SFO), she had some ideas and Teresa Baker, SFO and they said some of it didn't seem to flow well and that I should consider shortening the chapters, and all that sort of stuff. And so, I said, "Okay, that sounds like fun!" So, once I got started, it really ended up being a rewrite, not a revision; most of it is quite different from Catch Me A Rainbow. And that was fun because it was incorporating things that I had learned in the five or six years since the last revision. That's kind of the way it is. I'm sure I'll feel the same way after a few years about Catch Me A Rainbow Too. It's fun, I enjoy doing it . . . and I have been with the Seculars long enough, I think, that I have a fairly good sense of the *Rule* and the *Constitutions*.

David: What helped you settle on the title, Catch Me A Rainbow Too?

Lester: I just thought that, well, let's keep some continuity. People will know then that there is something connected with Catch Me A Rainbow that is also in this one. I think that, at first, people might think it's just a revised text; but as they get into it they'll realize it is so much more. The title expresses a wish: Catch Me A Rainbow Too. Just as Francis and Clare had their rainbow, catch *me* a rainbow as well!

David: What is your fondest hope for those Secular Franciscans or people in initial formation who will use Catch Me A Rainbow Too as part of their journey?

Lester: My sense at this point is that we as a Church are on the brink of our development, that we're really coming to life. It's like Vatican II is just starting to come to life. Vatican II and Catch Me A Rainbow Too are like pebbles in the ocean; they will surely make some waves, but there will be other things that will follow after. We need to be ready to make our contribution to the Church and to the world. You know, our society is in desperate need of people like the Franciscans in the midst of the world who are living a life that says something to other people who ask the question, "Why are these people living this way?" Does it make sense or doesn't it? Everyone is searching for something to give their life meaning. They go to New Age, they go to the Eastern religions, they go everywhere else --- and we've got it right here! We have the Word of God, we have the Gospel of Life! So how do we reach these other searchers? We don't have to run all over the place and it is just exciting to be a part of that.

David: When you were writing the book, were you writing mainly for initial formation or ongoing formation?

Lester: Well, with Catch Me A Rainbow I did a different thing, I had a different set of questions for the professed. At this point in SFO history, I think Catch Me A Rainbow Too is for both. You have a lot of professed Seculars who have not had much formation, initial or otherwise. They're good people, but they just haven't had it and they don't really seem to understand what the SFO is all about in today's Church. So we just want to invite them and to suggest that this is a way to go about it.

David: Anything "pithy" you want to leave us with?

Lester: Any time you see a rainbow, it takes clouds and rain and sunshine. So life takes the same. AMEN!!

*All our formation programs and books and examples about the SFO mean little or nothing if they are not used. The call is not for brilliance but faithfulness to the Franciscan spirit and life. This is not the place for memorizing the *Constitutions* but for giving flesh to the *Constitutions* in daily life. This is not the place to argue interpretations, but to live the *Rule*. All our conventions, conferences, study programs and social action must move us to DO what we have promised -- to be faithful to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are committed to offering people and the world a practical image of the alternatives the Gospel offers for living on planet Earth.*

Father Lester Bach, OFM Cap.
Catch Me A Rainbow Too

Regional Roundup



Please be sure to add us to the mailing list for your regional newsletter:

*Mr and Mrs Antony Outhwaite, SFO, Editors, TAU-USA
6 Light Street
Nuangola, PA 18637*

Blessed Junipero Serra Region

Blessed Junipero Serra Region is sponsoring an old fashioned Community Week at Saint Francis Retreat Center, San Juan Bautista, CA from August 1 through August 6, 1999. If you will be on the west coast during this time, you are invited to inquire for further information, and join them for this special celebration. Special presenters during the week will include William Short, OFM; Camillus MacRory, OFM Cap.; Claire Breen, SFO; John Murphy, SFO; John Vaughn, OFM; Justin Carisio, SFO; Mary Mazotti, SFO; Murray Bodo, OFM (taped presentation); Robert Brady, OFM; Stephen Gross, OFM Conv.; and William Brand, OFM. For further information contact John W. Schroeder, SFO, 6643 Dunmore Avenue, Citrus Heights, CA 95621-6403; e-mail bjsrso@jps.net; phone 916-967-4233.

Blessed Katharine Drexel Region

Blessed Katharine Drexel Region held their annual regional gathering March 19-21, 1999.

Blessed Katharine Drexel Region will conduct a novena of continuous prayer of the Franciscan Crown rosary prior to the opening of the Jubilee Year. The novena will begin at midnight on December 16, and continue through midnight, December 24, as the Jubilee Year officially begins with the celebration of Midnight Mass by our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II. Ninety-six participants per day, for nine days, will be assigned fifteen minute intervals, so that there will be continuous prayer throughout this time.

Brothers and Sisters of Saint Francis Region

Brothers and Sisters of Saint Francis Region will hold their annual gathering July 23-25, 1999, in Hickory, NC.

Father Solanus Casey Region

Father Solanus Casey Region announces the 1999 Secular Experience of Living Franciscanism (SELF) Retreat which will be held August 15-19 at Villa Maria in Stamford, CT. In keeping with Pope John Paul II's program in preparation for the millennium, the theme for 1999 is God the Father. The following talks are scheduled: Father; Our Father; Father, Forgive Me / Prodigal Son; Creator of Heaven and Earth; Father of All; Mary, Daughter of the Father.

Their Regional Chapter Meeting was held on April 17, 1999 at Saint Pius X Center in Middletown Connecticut.

Five Franciscan Martyrs Region

Five Franciscan Martyrs Region has made a donation to Queen of Peace Church in Ocala, FL in memory of Dr. Rita Mulligan, SFO, who was a former Regional Councilor. The donation will be used toward the purchase of a large rose window in the Church.

They will hold their annual regional meeting May 27-30 to celebrate their Chapter of Elections, and Pastoral and Fraternal Visitations.

Holy Trinity Region

Holy Trinity Region held their annual meeting in Fort Thomas, Kentucky, on April 25, hosted by Little Portion local Fraternity. The Region will participate in a Day of Recollection, led by the Poor Clares of Saint Clare Monastery of Cincinnati, Ohio, on August 14, 1999.

Lady Poverty Region

Lady Poverty Region held their annual meeting at Villa Maria in Pennsylvania, April 23-25, 1999, during which they received fraternal and pastoral visitations. They also had Lady Poverty t-shirts specially designed, and available for purchase. Lady Poverty Region is also currently making plans for a Franciscan Fest which will be held in July, 1999 at Youthtown in Clintonville, PA.

La Verna Region

La Verna Region held their annual Regional Meeting and Chapter of Elections on April 23-25, 1999 at Saint Anthony Retreat Center in Marathon, WI.

Queen of Peace Region

The southern part of the Queen of Peace Region will hold their Chapter of Mats gathering on August 15, 1999 at Saint Bonaventure Parish in Columbus, NE. The sponsoring fraternity for this event will be Saint Bonaventure Fraternity.

Saint Margaret of Cortona Region

Saint Margaret of Cortona Region is following up on 1997's Quinquennial Congress and their own Chapter of Mats through the "Catch the Fire" program, offered by presenters from the Region to each individual fraternity. This renewal of the Region follows the direction of the Magisterium that renewal be grounded in the original charism of the founder of our Order. During the "Catch the Fire" weekend, each fraternity meditates on the Biblical meaning of conversion, and prays and studies Saint Francis' own directions to conversion. In small groups the fraternity considers what it means to each of us to be a member of the Order of conversion. Other sessions examine what a deeper understanding of our vocation might mean for the way we live in fraternity. The current schedule includes presentations made to the local fraternities throughout February, March, April, and May.

Troubadours of Peace Region

Troubadours of Peace Region northern area meeting was held April 10, 1999 at Saint Francis Mission in Toledo, WA.

Family Matters

Carol Gentile, SFO

Chair, National Family Commission

136 Wood Avenue, Monaca, PA 15601

724-775-4248; e-mail: gentilecsfo@hotmail.com

Family Life: "Back to the Basics"

Families must have life. By definition, this life is to be together. The concept of quality time which has become a cliché in our society is a very good concept, but there must be a sufficient quantity of this quality time in order

A shift in values is demanded here.

to grow healthy families. A shift in values is demanded here. To be a Christian family, we must establish our

families on the values of Christ. Each family periodically needs to evaluate its time spending. In many families, family life has been replaced by care taking, a type of chauffeur and kitchen service provided by parents for the children. Children must be taught to put family needs ahead of their own desires and parents must prioritize and establish the ground rules for family life. This takes introspection, discipline, and patience.

This takes introspection, discipline, and patience.

This is a matter of going back to the basics. Families must decide what is necessary for the health of the family as well as what needs are valid for the individuals within the family. This does not mean all members of a family must act together at all times, or that all members must enjoy the same things. This means that a certain amount of activity will be done together, and each family should determine this for itself. For example, sharing supper together should be the routine, not the exception.

When we as family evaluate our time spending, we are prioritizing our schedules to fit with all members of the family. In the ordinary household, the television set may be on for more than seven hours a day. In some families, television takes the place of the parent or becomes a type of babysitter. Depending on the amount of time devoted to television and the type of programs permitted, the effect can be good or bad. Parents must take responsibility and communicate the limits to the children and parents must show by example the way to judge programs and discern the effects of television and other activities on family and individuals. Without limits, the television can be a dangerous influence on children in search of diversion.

As Franciscans, our judgment should be based on our Gospel values. We must look to see what is in need of repair. The impact of television on the family dynamic may seem obvious, but we must try to be sensitive to the other influences in our family environment. Every change in environment should call for evaluation and monitoring by the parents. Computer use, computer games, change in philosophy of public and private school systems, single parent households, two income producing parents households, all these factors could add up to shifts in time management and budget

adjustments. We must be sensitized to watch for weaknesses in our family systems.

When we become Secular Franciscans, we do not turn our backs on our relationships with our own families. The fraternity is not a substitute for the family, nor is it an escape hatch. We are called to be inclusive, not exclusive. Our Franciscan way should always enhance the gifts we share with our families and friends. The fruits of following Christ with Francis are to be apparent in our family life. Charity, generosity, hospitality, and humility need to be nurtured and expressed prayerfully in our daily lives.

Setting this tone is the parents' responsibility. Through faith in God, parents cultivate the spirit of peace, fidelity and respect for all life. They will succeed to the extent that they give of themselves, forgive others and share in the joys and sorrows of family life. The parents are the model for the children, so a loving atmosphere is essential. If the father and mother do not love and respect each other, the children will have difficulty relating to one another, to God and to the community.

Our families teach us to care and to be cared for. It is in our family that we learn our values and we learn that we are valuable. We learn to interact and grow in relationships. We learn these things by doing these things. If love is present, we learn of love; if compassion is present, we learn of compassion. If mercy is present we learn of mercy.

Strong families do not just appear out of thin air. They must be deliberately grown. Family life is a process that involves time, effort, prayer and some luck, also known as the grace of God. We cannot enter a grocery store and select a variety of family values and traits as we would choose vegetables from the produce bins. Strong, healthy families are cultivated and nurtured with patience and perseverance, in the same way as a gardener plans and grows a garden. We must all depend on God to guide us, to direct our actions, and to forgive us as we form families and as we try to grow. In the same way, values need to be instilled in a family during its entire growth span.

We are in the world as well as of the world, we learn to live by God's standards in every day life. This is not an easy, comfortable style. Because of our human nature, we are not always in balance physically, mentally, and spiritually. By grouping with others, we encourage and support one another. If we play by God's rules and discern with His standard, we can build our homes with God's materials and live our lives projecting God's love.



The family constitutes
the primary, fundamental,
and irreplaceable community.

Pope John Paul II

Called to be Faithful and Faith-filled

Dan and Sarah Mulholland, SFO
Chairs, National Peace and Justice Commission
855 N Jefferson Street, Arlington VA 22205
703-524-6017; e-mail Dannymai@aol.com

At the time of making preparations for this issue of TAU-USA, the conflict in the Balkans is in its fifteenth day. We have found ourselves thinking and praying about this situation continually for the past several weeks. It is a situation full of confusion and internal conflict.

The negotiations that took place trying to reach a solution reached an impasse, and the refusal to negotiate further left only solutions that meant death and destruction. The NATO countries cannot tolerate the destruction of lives by the faction that wants "those people" gone. Bombing starts as a means to get people back to the negotiating table. It is precise with little destruction of life, only property, but now this permits increased opportunity to make "those people" go away more quickly. Our television screens fill with images of thousands of helpless people deposited on the borders of neighboring countries who are ill equipped to handle such a catastrophe. At the time of Easter it is evident that we have yet to learn the message of the Prince of Peace. As followers of Saint Francis, we feel it is necessary to respond in some way. How do we respond as Secular Franciscans? What lessons can we learn from Saint Francis, the peacemaker?

We are reminded of the quote attributed to Mother Teresa, that we are not called to be successful, we are called to be faithful. It will be God who is successful. Our job is to be faithful and faith-filled.

For us as Franciscans, we believe that this means the first step in bringing peace must always be prayer. We should pray for peace in the Balkans. We should pray for wisdom on the part of the leaders hoping to settle the conflict. We should pray for the people in the region, uprooted by violence and made victims by political agendas.

We want to cry out: "stop the bombing", but can't be sure if it would only further aid the "Ethnic Removal" efforts going on. It is hard to negotiate with people who have hardened their hearts; you have to hope God can help them be able to see and listen. Saint Francis was committed to dialogue and the goal of reconciliation in situations needing peacemaking. He believed that everyone was a child of God, and that our God loved each and every one of His children. As followers of Saint Francis, we believe that we should encourage those in positions of power to strive for dialogue and reconciliation as much as possible. We should support their efforts to do so. We should support every effort to find creative and nonviolent solutions, to develop outcomes in which the sacredness of all human life is respected.

As the "little man of Assisi", Saint Francis walked with the oppressed. Therefore, we believe that the third thing we Franciscans can do in response to the conflict in the Balkans is to help the "little ones", the refugees, those

people torn from their homes and oppressed by the conflict. We should find ways to support relief efforts, to encourage generosity and compassion for the refugees and their needs.

It may not bring immediate, spectacular results or a quick resolution to the conflict, but by being faithful to our Franciscan vision we are doing what we can.

In this spirit, the Executive Council of NAFRA recently sent the letter appearing on page 21 to President Clinton and NATO Secretary General Javier Solana:



"Insofar as men are sinners, the threat of war hangs over them and will so continue until Christ comes again; but insofar as they can vanquish sin by coming together in charity, violence itself will be vanquished and these words will be fulfilled:

"They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

Gaudium et Spes, 78



Following Jesus Christ in the Footsteps of Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi –

Franciscan Youth of Switzerland
(Junge Franziskanische Gemeinschaft JFG)

Our small country (41,285km²; 7,094,000 habitants) in the heart of Europe is really a melting pot of different cultures, languages (four official languages!), mentalities, and religions (48% of us are Roman Catholics).

For a few hundred years the Secular Franciscan Order has been established in Switzerland. It is difficult to say exactly how many members live in the communities of our country, but there are about 5,000 members. Since the beginning of the Franciscan movement in Switzerland there were also the "Young Tertiaries". First, it was an organization for the children of the SFO, but more and more other young people joined the Young Tertiaries. But then, in the sixties, the YT lost a lot of its members like all the religious/church organizations because of the big changes within the social structure and the secularization in the country.

Then, in 1992, during a conference, three young people had the idea to "refound" the Franciscan Youth of Switzerland with a new name and a new structure.

In this article I will try to give a description of the JFG, how it is in these days. I am sorry if I do not find the right words because English is not my mother tongue. I will do my best:

JFG: these three letters characterize us. We are Young (Junge), Franciscan (Franziskanische) and we are a Community (Gemeinschaft).

That sounds good, but who actually are we?

The JFG is a national youth organization for young people and young adults between the ages of 15 and 30. Our aim is to disseminate the Franciscan spirit and spirituality. We are willing to build our life on the Gospel and the Franciscan Rule. So we try to lead a modest, Franciscan life in which the Eucharist is the heart and center.

*Together we are
on our way. In
the footsteps of
Saint Francis
and Saint Clare
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also ourselves.*

The JFG is a varied and lively mixture of young people from different chapters, training, origins and ways of life (lay, Franciscan brothers, sisters and priests) – unity and variety!

Together we are on our way. In the footsteps of Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi we are discovering our faith, life, and also ourselves.

Everyone is in a different situation, but in seeking together the source of life we

can really rely on each other's understanding. We try to support everybody in finding and going his own way. The community, which means common experiences, lively

exchange and just knowing no one is left alone, helps us to follow Him with new inspiration and energy.

The JFG is lead by the "leading-team", by the "bureau", and the "minister" (lay, male or female). In these teams we coordinate, plan, organize, and lead a lot of national events and meetings.

In addition, there are also six "Regional-Groups" (Central-Switzerland, Zürich, Näfels, Eastern-Switzerland, Fribourg, Lucerne). They are independent in their organization. The "Regional-Groups" meet one to four times a month for prayer, reading the Gospel, singing, music, further education, spiritual exchange, playing. In this way, we try to cultivate community spirit in smaller groups from 8 to 20 members.

*The community, which
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If all that sounds too well-behaved for young people, I can say we really do not wear a gloriole! We are just normal people who dare to ask the big and important questions about God and life.

Many young people question, seek and doubt. Of course, the JFG does not have the general solution for all the problems, but we ask questions, seek, and doubt together, so we are able to support others, being supported at the same time by the community.

Our annual activities are manifold. Everyone will find something adequate. We choose (Franciscan) themes for every event. Every year the JFG arranges weekends and a few days of contemplation. Bigger events are the youth retreats, pilgrimage weeks on foot or by bike, a week in Ireland, and the Easter Meeting. Another highlight is the Assisi-Holiday. It depends on the occasion, but there are always 15 to 55 people joining the meetings.

The communities are very open. To join for the first time is no problem. We just enjoy being together, to feel the freedom to be ourselves.

Since we are on the internet we also try to be in touch with other Franciscan youth organizations all over the world. There is a JFG in Tanzania, the Gifra in Italy, the "Jeunesse Franciscaine" in France, Franciscan communities in Asia, and now we have learned about you in the USA!

We hope we will keep in touch to share our common Franciscan spirit, our efforts for peace, justice and preservation of God's creation. May we be inspired by each other, and may our communities grow in the love and fellowship of Jesus Christ!

May The Lord give you His Peace!

For the Franciscan Youth of Switzerland:

Susanne N. Altoè

In the Trenches

Mary Zablocki, SFO

Co-chair, National Work Commission

360 Beard Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14214

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website: <http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~zablocki>

When I was in initial formation, back in 1981, one of the most effective tools for teaching offered by my fraternity was the monthly apostolic service in a soup kitchen. The experience of hands on giving, of feeding the hungry, of touching and being touched by the poor was very powerful and deeply moving. The communion I felt with Jesus embodied in our guests was enriching and uplifting and I had no trouble seeing His holy hands as they reached for a plate of food or feeling His tenderness as a pregnant mother locked her eyes onto me as I gave her extra milk.

There were moments, of course, when I was frightened by the rougher clientele, and there were plenty of those because the place where we volunteered was the last stop for many of them, the only place that would allow them in the door. But the smell, the sight of violence done to another human being, the knowledge that what I and my fellow Franciscans did would probably not change lives much beyond satisfying immediate need never bothered me. It was enough to be with these courageous people who slept nightly in places I would never tread in the daylight, who risked constant humiliation, rebuff and even betrayal just to live the life they lived. Sure, I wondered why they were in our line month after month. Some were obviously mentally ill, victims of a well meaning but misguided attempt at affording them independence and dignity. Some were on the lam, looking around them and at us like foxes who smell a trap, but were too hungry to stay away from the bait.

There were so many others, the young ones with sorry eyes who challenged us to play the mother or father they had left behind, the children who had no idea what was going to happen to them, the old ones of every background who had been around the block so many times that they had no hope of ever seeing anything new or different. There were the two hardened men who fought on the concrete while we, oblivious to their struggle, mashed potatoes in the steaming basement kitchen. There we stood, ten minutes later, our institutional sized spoons and lids in hand, while one man stood insanelly screaming and the other lay on the ground bleeding from being bitten in the face by the screamer. We were frozen, a half dozen able bodied adults with all the good intentions in the world, unable to move as we watched these two regulars play out their bloody drama as firefighters and police from the station across the street ridiculed and berated them as they lay on the ground. Believe me, it was a very subdued and humbled group of Franciscans who doled out supper that night.

Another time, we were making a salad to go with the meal, and another candidate and I were given onions to

chop. These were major onions, big, hairy, yellow onions, ripe and smelly. We were a little cowed by the woman in charge of the group because she had been doing this for years and did it very well. She was not much interested in suggestions from rookies. As we peeled and chopped, I removed the bottom of each onion, complete with roots and the nasty little tight part at the center that tastes so strong. Our leader came over, and literally ordered me to chop up those parts and put them in the salad. Her reason, offered in response to my shock was simply that it was a sin to waste food and they were basically lucky to get it anyway. I can only imagine the look on my face as I deliberately took the knife and swiped the onion butts into the garbage.

When I returned from the soup kitchen that night, I was more disheartened and saddened than angry. What kind of charity was it that would treat the objects of our love as though they were some sort of lesser life form? This still causes me pain eighteen years later, and I have since many times worked with and celebrated with my Franciscan friend whenever I see her. As I have grown in my own Franciscan life I have grown to hold her dearly for the many wonderful faithful qualities she has. I have never felt the need to bring up that episode. I only know, that having been affected as I was by it, I have a responsibility to be faithful to the kind of charity I am called to give.

*What is this caritas,
this love of neighbor
we are called to as the
greatest commandment
of all?*

What is this caritas, this love of neighbor we are called to as the greatest commandment of all? Saint Francis exhorts his friars in the Rule of 1221, Chapter 11, to love one another, and forbids detraction or

speaking injuriously of one another. He goes further on to say that this love must be proven by deeds, as Saint John says: *"Let us not love in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and in truth"* (1 John 3:18). We must not only profess to love each other and all those God places in our lives, but we must act on this love, give life to this love, take the risk of vulnerability in this love.

In the one of the Eucharistic prayers said during the Mass, our priest says, "When we were lost and could not find our way to You, You loved us more than ever", as he prays aloud to the Father Who is perfect. We all bask in the light and warmth of this perfect love, and yet our tradition allows that we do not do so because we are, or are nearly or even remotely, perfect. No, our perfect Father loves us most when we are lost, when we are broken, when we are wandering. We can rest at night, secure in our Father's love, even when we are guilty of slighting each other, of betraying a confidence or slurring a reputation. We can turn to Him at any time for loving forgiveness like the sorry eyed teenagers in the soup line, or the frightened and immobile Franciscan on the sidewalk, guilty of holding back, far away from the perfection we seek.

...continued on page nineteen

Requiescat in Pace

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Art Petit, SFO, Regional Minister of Saint Francis Region. Art passed away suddenly on Tuesday, April 20, 1999. His wife, Gloria, and their family need our prayers. He is succeeded as Minister by Diane Halal, SFO.

At this time of our great loss and grieving, words alone cannot begin to express our gratitude for all your prayers, phone calls, Mass cards and sympathy cards. The feeling of love and concern have been overwhelming.

We, the family, did not realize how many people Art (Dad) touched in his works for the Franciscans. We are all united with St. Francis in caring, loving and following the Gospel life. May God shine this grace on you all.

Art sends his hugs and kisses, we know, from a better place.

Sincerely,

The Art Petit Family: Gloria, SFO; Greg, Linda, Pam and David and their families.



CIOFS International Office Help!

Our International Councilor, Laura Haukaas, SFO, informs us that the present lease for our International Office is terminating. The International Council is making an urgent plea for 50 cents from each member to help fund a permanent site and purchase necessary office equipment. Article 25 of our Rule reminds us of our obligation to support the needs of the higher councils.

Please send donations, marked **CIOFS "Sede" Fund**, to your Regional Treasurer, who will combine the local fraternity donations, and send them on to:

John Sanborn, SFO, National Treasurer
1611 W. River Parkway
Grand Island, NY 14072



Does Your Fraternity Need an Apostolate?

The Church Assistance Program is designed to be used by clergy and lay persons. The program consists of six videotapes offering a variety of education, training, and practical suggestions for dealing with people in crisis and problems faced by dysfunctional families, drug and alcohol abuse and addiction, and mental health problems such as eating disorders and depression. For information contact Carol Gentile, SFO, NAFRA Family Chair, 136 Wood Avenue, Monaca, PA 15061; telephone 724-775-4248.

Pax et Bonum!

Since I became a Secular Franciscan I have been collecting "Pax et Bonum" in various languages. I am now able to greet my brothers and sisters worldwide in over thirty languages. I thought I would share this with you. If you know of any others, please send them to me at: Mrs. Antony Outhwaite, SFO, 6 Light Street, Nuangola, PA 18637.

Aramaic	Shelam ve tav!
Catalonian	Pau i Be!
Croatian	Mir i Dobro!
Danish	Fred og alt godt!
Dutch	Vrede en alle goeds!
English	Peace and All Good!
Esperanto	Pacon kaj Bonon!
French	Paix et Bonheur!
German	Friede und alles Gute!
Greek	Eirini kai kalo!
Greek (Ancient)	Eirene kai agatha!
Hebrew	Shalom v'kol tuv!
Hungarian	Aldas s minden jo!
Indonesia/Bahasa	Damai Dan Segala Yang Baik!
Indonesia/Toba-batak	Dame Dohot Sude Na Denggan!
Irish	Siochain agus Beannachta!
Italian	Pace e Bene!
Korean	PyungHwa Wa Seon!
Latin	Pax et Bonum!
Latvia	Miers un Labums!
Malta	Paċu u Ġid
Miskito Indian	Kupia Kumi An Diera Pain Sut!
Norwegian	Fred og god!
Polish	Pokoj i Dobro!
Portuguese	Paz e Bondade!
Russian	Mir i vsevo khoroshevo!
Slovenian	Mir in Dobro!
Spanish	Paz y Bien!
Swahili	Amani na uzuri wote!
Swedish	Fred och allt gott!
Tagalog	Kapayapaan at kabutihan!
Urdu	Omshanti or Acha!



Yosemite Franciscan Experience Update



**PLAN TO
COME WITH
YOUR
FRATERNITY
FRIENDS
AND ENJOY
THIS
WONDERFUL
EXPERIENCE
TOGETHER!**

Please submit your deposit to: Frances Wicks SFO, 3307 Quail Meadows Dr., Santa Maria, CA 93455. Include your name, address, phone number and/or e-mail address. You may also write (or e-mail: sfofrances@aol.com) her for more information. In either case, she will follow up with a letter to you which will include more of the details. Please make reservations by July 1st. 1999.



**"Come by yourselves to
an out-of-the-way place,
and rest a little."**

Mark 6:30

Then what...?

An American businessman was at the pier of a small coastal Mexican village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the small boat were several large yellow-fin tuna. The American complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish, and asked how long it took to catch them.

The Mexican replied, "Only a little while".

The American then asked why didn't he stay out longer and catch more fish?

The Mexican said that he had enough to support his family's immediate needs.

The American then asked, "But what do you do with the rest of your time?"

The Mexican fisherman said, "I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take siesta with my wife, Maria, stroll into the village each evening where I sip wine and play guitar with my amigos, I have a full and busy life, señor."

The American scoffed, "I am a Harvard MBA and could help you. You should spend more time fishing and with the proceeds buy a bigger boat. With the proceeds from the bigger boat you could buy several boats. Eventually, you would have a fleet of fishing boats. Instead of selling your catch to a middleman you would sell directly to the processor, eventually opening your own cannery. You would control the product, processing and distribution.

"You would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to Mexico City, then LA and eventually New York City, where you will run your expanding enterprise."

The Mexican fisherman asked, "But señor, how long will all this take?"

To which the American replied, "Fifteen to twenty years."

"But what then, señor?"

The American laughed and said, "That's the best part. When the time is right you would announce an IPO and sell your company stock to the public and become very rich. You would make millions."

"Millions, señor? Then what?"

The American said, "Then you would retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late,

fish a little, play with your kids, take siesta with your wife, stroll to the village in the evenings where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your amigos."



Author
unknown

Way of Holiness for the Penitent

Fr. Matthias Wesnofske, OFM, Cap.
Regional Spiritual Assistant, Solanus Casey Region
and Tau Cross Region

Last Summer, I spoke to several groups about an article found in the magazine *The Voice of Padre Pio*. The article was entitled "A Powerful Means to Reform Society". The "powerful means", according to Padre Pio, the Third Order, the Secular Franciscan Order of Saint Francis. Padre Pio himself was a Spiritual Assistant to a fraternity of Secular Franciscans for over fifty years.

Much of the article refers to letters written by Padre Pio. One particular quote from Padre Pio, and my comments on the quote, brought a number of questions and further remarks, which I would like to share.

Padre Pio on "Problem" Candidates

Someone had asked Padre Pio about accepting sinners in to the Third Order, and he replied as follows:

Jesus came into the world not to save the just, but for sinners; not to cure the healthy, but to cure the sick. With this said, I answer you question whether one can receive into the Third Order those who had the misfortune of being sinners. I answer and say yes, only, however, if they are truly contrite and have given proof of their sorrow. It pleases God that these poor creatures acknowledge their faults and truly return to Him! For these people it is necessary to have the feelings of a mother and for this, one must have extreme care, since Jesus has made known that in heaven there is more joy over a repentant sinner than over the perseverance of ninety-nine just."

Padre Pio wrote this on January 18, 1921. Examples and problems, difficulties, conflicts, and solutions today might be a little different, but the statement of Padre Pio contains our basic attitude. We are not called Brothers and Sisters of Holiness, but of Penance. The Order is a means, a way, to holiness. It is a call to conversion.

"Problem" Candidates Today

Let us never close the door to a modern penitent who wishes to follow Christ in the Franciscan Order.

Today we have many individuals seeking admission into the Order, and we might have some questions – questions probably not too common in the time of Padre Pio. For example, the prevalence of divorced and separated Catholics; gay couples who seek admission; people who are known to have had abortions, who suffer from alcoholism and drug addictions; remarried Catholics, etc. Consequently, I would like to make a few points to help you in making decisions, conducting interviews, and welcoming inquirers.

Things We Cannot Forget

Charity must reign supreme. Gossip must always be avoided. If you don't have all the facts, don't discuss it.

No one has the right to demand a manifestation of conscience. It is against Church law. The fact that a person is noticeably prayerful (attends daily Mass, says a rosary every day) does not automatically mean that the person has a vocation. A person cannot make permanent profession before the age of twenty-one; but, on the other hand, admittance of very old people should also be questioned. Can they fulfil the call to service and apostolicity required by the Rule? Do they just want to be buried in a Franciscan shroud, or as a Franciscan?

There are other questions we might want to consider as well. Are the inquirers truly Catholic? Do they engage in bizarre or unusual spiritual practices? Do they understand what a lifetime commitment entails? We must always avoid scandal towards the Church or the Order, whether on our part or in accepting certain individuals into the Order.

Finally, we must remember that Saint Margaret of Cortona came into the Order only after she found the body of her murdered lover while searching through the woods. She came in to do penance. Let us never close the door to a modern penitent who wishes to follow Christ in the Franciscan Order.



Workshops for Local Spiritual Assistants Set

Five workshops for local Spiritual Assistants of the Secular Franciscan Order will be scheduled throughout 2000, according to the decision of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants when it met for its winter meeting in San Antonio, TX, February 1-3, 1999.

These five gatherings will be held in Florida, Texas, central New York, southern Illinois, and southern California; the dates will be announced before September 1999.

The national assistants also announced that in the year 2001, five more workshops will likely be held in the localities of Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Kansas City, Albuquerque, and Seattle.

The workshops are intended to prepare and motivate the local assistants in their work of providing pastoral care and spiritual guidance to Secular Franciscans in local fraternities; the topics of the actual presentations will be determined after a survey of selected Spiritual Assistants.

The workshops are open to all those who already provide spiritual assistance, whether Franciscan friars, diocesan priests or deacons, women religious, or certified professed Secular Franciscans, and also for those intending to be giving such assistance who have been recommended to attend.

For more information contact Benet A. Fonck, OFM, Executive Secretary, Conference of National Spiritual Assistants, SFO, 3140 Meramec Street, St. Louis, MO, 63118-4339; phone 314-352-9159; fax 314-353-7472; e-mail FonckBenet@aol.com.

The National Ecology Commission Claims Redwood Logging, and East Liverpool, Ohio, Hazardous Waste Incinerator Egregious Examples of Exploitation and Injustice

Suit Challenges Redwood Agreement

The Environmental Information Protection Center (EPIC), Garberville, CA and the Sierra Club filed a suit in Sacramento Superior Court, March 30, 1999, claiming the "boom and bust" liquidation of ancient Redwood forests in northern California would cause damage to fish, wildlife, and water quality, and destroy endangered species. The suit specifically challenges the "Sustained Yield Plan," which allows loggers to "strip hillsides," resulting in environmental problems, decreased forest productivity, and eventual unemployment in timber dependent communities. The suit also challenges that the "incidental take permit" allows loggers to exterminate endangered species.

Contact: Dr. Andrea Tuttle, Director, California Department of Forestry, P.O. 944246, Sacramento, CA 94244-2460, requesting that California "uphold both state and federal laws by requiring that *all* of Pacific Lumber's logging plans comply with the Habitat Conservation Plan and other standards set by the Headwaters agreement. Phone: 916-653-7772; fax: 916-653-4171.

Contact EPIC: phone: 707-923-2931; e-mail: epic@igc.org

Cancer Epidemic Surrounds Hazardous Waste Incinerator

According to the Tri-State Environmental Council, March, 1999, a recent study by the Ohio Department of Health, the city of East Liverpool, OH has a cancer rate of 588.9 per 100,000, which is 40.25% higher than the national average. Citizens have personally documented over 70 cases of cancer near the Von Roll/WTI toxic waste incinerator in East Liverpool, OH since it began operating in 1992. To further compound suffering, Von Roll/WTI Corporation has filed a multi-million dollar law suit against local citizens working to inform public of this injustice.

Contact: Terri Swearingen, Tri-State Environmental Council: 304-387-0574.

Contact: Carol Browner, Administrator, U.S. EPA, 401 M Street S.W., Washington, DC 20460

Note: Terri Swearingen, 1997 Goldman Prize award winner, spoke at the Ecology Commission Environmental Health Conference at "Graymoor," Garrison, NY, June, 1998, and accompanied the National Ecology Commission to speak at Franciscan University, Steubenville, OH, October, 1998. Franciscan University is located south of East Liverpool.

OFM Property to Become Refuge for Endangered Species

Through the efforts of many, the Ecology Commission initiative to encourage Franciscan properties to become refuges for suitable overflow endangered species from regional botanical gardens has met with success, as the OFMs at Mount Irenaeus, West Clarksville, NY, and the New York Botanical Garden are discussing specifics of a transfer. Saint Bonaventure University and the Environment Committee, International Council of Women, are also assisting. Considering the numerous botanical gardens and Franciscan properties covering every region of the United States, the opportunity for expanding upon this profound moral statement is extraordinary.

Contact: Joe Kotula, OFM, Mount Irenaeus: 716-973-2470.

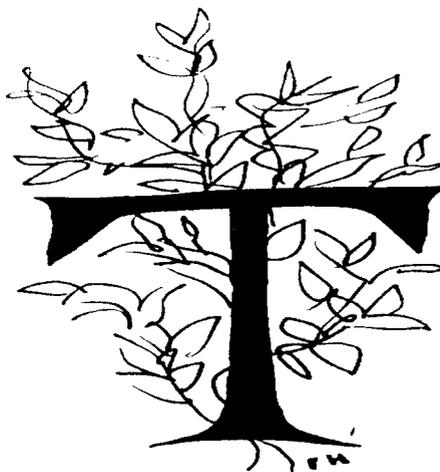
Ecology Commission Initiates Over 425 Wildflower Gardens in the United States

The National Ecology Commission's Sixth Annual National Wildflower Garden Sale and Restoration Initiative accounted for another 49 wildflower gardens to be introduced this spring east of the Rockies, raising the total number of gardens introduced, since 1994, to 425.

National Wildflower Week, May 2 - 8, 1999, was celebrated with walks and wildflower plantings among other events, including reports that Secular Franciscans in Hannibal, MO, and Quincy, IL, were successful in having their respective mayors proclaim National Wildflower Week.

Ecology Commission Prepares for Earth Charter Discussions

In addition to the All Commissions Conference at Saint Bonaventure University in June, the Ecology Commission is preparing for the international Earth Charter discussions in July. The Earth Charter is expected to be introduced to the United Nations for eventual adoption. The Ecology Commission does not support the document in its present form.



Dignitas

Proclaiming the Dignity of Work
National Work Commission

Ed and Mary Zablocki, SFO, Chairs,
360 Beard Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14214
716-838-4178; e-mail: zablocki@acsu.buffalo.edu
website: <http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~zablocki>

Work as a Gift

The following reflection was written by George R. Garbrick, SFO, of Lancaster, PA, as part of his study program through the Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life.

"Let them esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community." (SFO Rule, Article 16)

Francis and Clare may have based their philosophy of work on the words of Saint Paul to the Corinthians: "We are fellow workers with God (or fellow-workers in God's employment); you are God's farm, God's building." (1 Corinthians 3:9). We know that Francis believed that Christ is our center. All good things pour from Christ, Our Redeemer. Christ began the process of redeeming the world and, as His brothers and sisters, we are to continue the work which He began two thousands years ago. Francis taught that we continue the work of Christ in creation. Francis believed that work was grace, our gift from God. In his Rule, Francis knew that work was a calling from God to help. Work was a visible means of exhibiting submission to God's calling. It was a vocation.

Cajetan Esser, OFM states that, "Man labors, but ultimately it is God who works through man as his agent. To Him who has given and gives to all of us our whole body, our whole soul and all our life, man owes his very capacity and ability to work. God, who by his holy will and through his only Son in the Holy Spirit has created all things spiritually and bodily, makes use of man as his instrument in creation.... When the worker thus recognizes God as the Lord of all things, his work becomes itself an act of homage that gives glory to God. Work has become worship." (Cajetan Esser, OFM, "Work in the Life of Penance," *Love's Reply*)

Along with this surrender to God's calling to produce some duties to serve others in community. Francis sees work as a service to others. This is our giving part of our time and talents to make this a better world and to bring hope. If we follow this focus, then our choice of employment should first be the good of the community or family, and secondly the profit gained from this work.

*By cooperating with
God and working
with His grace, God
has raised our
humble service to a
holy status.*

Work for a Franciscan becomes holy. Why? We are cooperating in God's plan of redemption. We are a part of God's work. God is holy. By cooperating with God and working with His grace, God has raised our humble service to a holy status.

Franciscans must keep a balance in their lives. We are called to prayer and contemplation as well as being christened to an active life in the market place. First is prayer, a connection with the Holy. Our prayer life has to be Gospel-centered. Our spiritual life has to be strengthened by prayer life. Then, and only then, should we go out into the market place prepared and strengthened! Then we can bring our graced selves to the world.

As followers of Christ through Francis, we are called to cooperate in "God's Employment." I like this term. It is a footnote in the Jerusalem Bible (1 Corinthians 3:9 footnote c). The footnote reads, "fellow-worker in God's employment." Somehow that term has a special meaning in today's society.

My understanding of work has changed. I always thought that work was a necessary evil, even though I enjoyed my work. However, I thought of work in general as a burden. I thought it was a punishment from God; not a gift from God. I was taught that work was punishment in response to Adam and Eve's sinfulness.

The whole Franciscan concept of Christo-centric theology is so liberating. Christ loves us so much that he would have come to be with us even if there were no Original Sin. Christ is not one who punishes, but one who invites. He invites us to be co-workers in His employment. As a teacher in a Catholic school, I see myself as a prophet bringing God's invitation to His children. I have seen His words being passed on to His little ones. I have seen beautiful men and women that I taught share Christ's values with their children whom I am teaching now. It gives me hope for the future. I am privileged to work in an environment that He has chosen for me. I always needed to answer His call to help Him. At first, I thought it was going to be as a TOR priest. However, He wanted me right where I am for the past thirty-three years. My work has been a pleasure for me. Now my work has a richer dimension knowing that it is a gift. It never really was a burden. I know I have conveyed my passion for teaching to my peers, students, and parents. Now, I hope I can share my "employment" with a renewed focus as a gift.



In the Trenches

...continued from page fourteen

The real mystery here is that the perfection we seek, the perfection of our heavenly Father, *Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect* (Matthew 5:48), is tied into the paradox of being loved at our worst and being called from that place to love each other at their worst. The mystery of such a love freely given brought Francis to his knees. The realization of how often that perfect love was rejected, and because it was rejected was never shared, made him weep. Now, we must pray to love as we are loved. With grave humility, and awe, let us contemplate our invitation to give, as we receive, perfect charity.

Our Father

In honor of 1999, the year of Our Father in Heaven,
inspired by the paraphrased version by
Holy Father Francis

Jeanine Pavkovic, SFO

 **ur Father**, we exult Your supremacy, Your patience, and Your presence. Praise Your perfect and unending love for us. Teach us by action and deed to be included as Your children.

 **ho art in Heaven**, the place of hope for all who wander in this life to seek You. May our search allow us to be accompanied by more of Your children. May we bring your perfect hope to the broken and lost. Thank You for the path to heaven through our Lord Jesus Christ. You gave us Your angels to light our way, and the saints to rely upon in moments when one voice to You is just not enough.

 **llowed be Thy Name**, on every tongue of every being past, present, and future. May it be whispered, spoken, shouted, sung, hummed, and breathed continuously until we come into the light of eternity.

 **our kingdom come**, here, to Your faith-filled, with all its pure goodness. With our passion for love of You serving as Your eternal throne among us.

 **our will be done** on earth, beginning with one servant, and never ending, everlasting, and forever, with every person who is, was, and is to be.

 **ive us this day our daily bread**, of Christ's body, so that we may become what we eat. Allow us to bear each other's burdens, love our enemies as ourselves, do good to those who hate us, and offer our most heartfelt prayers to those who do evil against You to us. With every taste of Jesus' body and blood, let us taste Your heavenly presence, Dear Father. Give us His lips, so that we know how to speak to You.

Give us His hands, so that we give to all and for all, as You would ask us to do. Give us His feet, so that we may never stray from the path that leads to You. Give us His heart, to enflame us with perfect love for You. Give us His wisdom, in order to choose, know, and rationalize only for You.

 **nd forgive us our trespasses** which number as the stars, and are more vile to You than dreaded diseases are to us. Allow us the privilege to know right from wrong, and never live outside of Your love. When we come to you in sin, place us in true sorrow and the intention never to sin again. Be our example in forgiveness, so that we can:

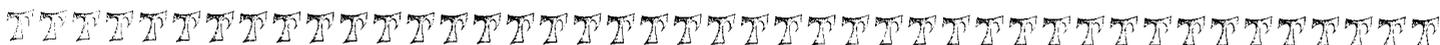
 **orgive those who trespass against us** no matter how painful the instance. Let us remember the pillar, the post, the pain, and the blood of Christ in every situation. Open our arms to resolution, forgiveness, and peacemaking, like Christ opened His arm's on the cross.

 **nd lead us not into temptation** by all the things that our bodies pleasure on Earth. Allow us to remember that the time we spend here is finite, while Your love is eternal.

 **ut deliver us from the evil** that we desire in this life. Help us to deny our very selves, and carry the burdens of this life in a spirit of hope for the next.

 **ay the Triune God** be forever glorified by every action, thought, and deed personified now and always. Amen.

Jeanine Pavkovic, SFO is a member of Saint Patrick Fraternity, Buffalo, NY, in Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Region. Married with two young sons, Jeanine is a youth minister in her diocese. Her work has been published in "Queen of Peace", an international Catholic newspaper which is published annually; "Western New York Catholic" diocesan newspaper; and various parish newspapers when she lived in Baltimore, MD.



Franciscan Materials for the Vision Impaired

Do you have a blind or vision impaired member or inquirer in your fraternity? Lota Piel, SFO is in the process of trying to make available Braille and large print Franciscan materials. If you know of anyone who could make use of these, please send their name and address, along with your own, to Lota Piel, SFO, 522 Delmar Street, Sterling CO 80751, or call her at 970-522-2779. Also feel free to contact her with any suggestions.

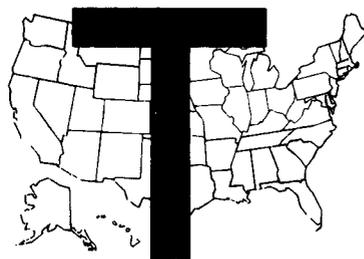
*Lead us to the wild,
solitary spot in our own hearts'
where we may encounter your gift
of fiery love and
see the gracious way
you look upon us
from
the
cross!*

**GOD
of LOVE**

*Help us to open ourselves
to your limitless love
which holds nothing back from us.
May our hearts catch some of
the seraphic flame that marked
Francis' all-out response
to your great love.*

Amen

CALLIGRAPHY BY MARLENE STEELE



THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - U.S.A.

8 April 1999

President William J. Clinton
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500
Fax: 202-456-2461

Mr. Javier Solana
NATO Secretary General
Autoroute de Zaventem
B- 1110 Brussels, Belgium
Fax: 011 32 2 728 4579 or 728 4117

Dear Mr. President
Dear Mr. Solana,

Peace and all things good!

As members of the Executive Council of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States of America and on behalf of our fellow seculars, we plead with you and we call on all who have power and responsibility in the conflict in Kosovo to use all their influence to keep open a dialogue between the parties involved. Our Order, with some 18,000 members in the US, was founded in the thirteenth century by St Francis of Assisi along with the Order of Friars Minor and the Poor Clares. Following the example set by St Francis, we firmly believe that peaceful and long lasting solutions to political conflict can only be achieved by having recourse to dialogue and diplomacy.

In the current situation, where these avenues have seemed to fail and the call to arms was deemed the only useful approach, it appears that little positive benefit has occurred from this violence. We pray that communications be maintained between all the parties involved so that the conflict can be resolved quickly. We wish to add our voices to that of Pope John Paul II, who said: "It is always the hour of peace. It is never too late to come together and negotiate."

We want to express our solidarity with the grief of those who have lost their loved ones and their homes through armed violence, and those driven out of their own land. We feel closely united with all those who are struggling to provide aid and comfort for tens of thousands of refugees in Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro.

As we celebrate Easter with our families and friends, we cannot forget the images of the thousands of refugees not being able to return home or find shelter because of their sheer numbers. We applaud all efforts to find temporary shelter for those suffering and hope that our government will be as unceasing in this effort as they have been in the earlier parts of this crisis.

We encourage you to redouble your diplomatic efforts, to be patient, even more resourceful and to reopen the use of dialogue as the preferred means to achieving a mutually acceptable and dignified solution to this ongoing crisis in Kosovo

Sincerely in Saint Francis,

William Wicks, sfo, National Minister - Marie Amore, sfo, National Vice-Minister
Kay Pelletier, sfo, National Secretary - John Sanborn, sfo - National Treasurer
Br. James Boyle, TOR, National Spiritual Assistant
Councillors - Juan Lezczano, sfo, Mary Mazotti, sfo, Laura Haukaas, sfo
Commissioners - David and Therese Ream, sfo, Charles Spencer, sfo
Carol Gentile, sfo, Sarah and Dan Mulholland, sfo, Ed and Mary Zablocki, sfo
Anthony and Mary Mazotti, sfo

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Formation Is Our Foundation

Ruth Vogel, SFO

(January 21, 1910 – May 26, 1998)

This article was written for the Southern Area Congress at Rollins College, Winter Park, FL, on June 7-9, 1985. Ruth was Formation Director of Saint Francis Fraternity in Daytona, FL for many years. This article discusses the importance of Franciscan community and the monthly meetings.

I have found that one of the most frustrating things to impress upon people is the importance of the monthly meetings.

The Secular Franciscan Order is not just another spiritual organization, club, or society; not just another undertaking to tack onto other spiritual things a person is already involved in. You may be sincerely high on, for instance, the charismatic movement. Good. That is leading you in the right direction. So, why do you want to be a Franciscan? Why? You say you have good reasons. You tell us what they are. They seem good. Alright, then, let's get started. We do, and on we go, and now you have reached the point where you are professed.

But, now what is happening? Are you satisfied now to be a Franciscan? Yessss... but... now you are becoming restless. There are these people who are talking about committing yourself to the Franciscan way of life, and to its obligations. Where is your loyalty, your dedication to this Franciscan way you were so excited about before? Now you are allowing another spirituality, good though it is, to push it aside.

*True Franciscanism
requires sacrifices,
at times, for the
good of your
fraternity and of
the Order.*

The Franciscan way of life cannot be pushed aside. Once you go through the ceremony of profession where you stand up there in that deeply religious ceremony during Mass and solemnly pledge before God to live under the Rule and Constitutions of the Secular

Franciscan Order, you assume for life this obligation. You cannot take it off like a removable garment, so that you can put on another garment you prefer for the moment. You cannot because it is not a removable garment. It is a part of you, just as surely as is your skin. You cannot zipper into and out of your skin. It goes right along with you wherever you go.

True Franciscanism requires sacrifices, at times, for the good of your fraternity and of the Order.

The Eucharistic Ministry is an edifying and necessary work in our parishes. But if you are a Secular Franciscan and want to become a Eucharistic Minister, in my opinion you have an obligation to schedule your times of serving **around** the day of your regular Franciscan meeting. Make it known to the person in charge of your schedule that such and such a day is the day of your regular Franciscan meeting and you cannot

serve on that day – any other day, yes, happily and gladly; but not your fraternity day.

*Your Franciscan way
of life begins in, is
nurtured on, and
blossoms out of your
fraternity meeting.
This is your
community life.*

Your Franciscan way of life begins in, is nurtured on, and blossoms out of your fraternity meeting. This is your community life. Only for a good and acceptable reason – and there are times, such as health problems and family matters – should you skip a regular fraternity meeting. But to

do it month after month because you prefer something else is a violation of your solemn profession promise. A sincere, dedicated Secular Franciscan will not tolerate in him or herself such a violation.

Without our regular monthly meetings, our Secular Franciscan Order will come to an end. It will cease to exist.

We all owe it to God and Saint Francis, and to our brothers and sisters in our fraternities who **need** our presence at the meetings, not to let that happen.

*There was a boy, quite willful
A show-off, teen-aged brat,
Who wakened folks at midnight
With loud singing and all that:
Who spent his father's money
As though it was going out of style,
But
Who suddenly had a vision,
And in a very little while
Became so hooked on Jesus
He was never again the same.
He reached the heights of sainthood,
Came alive in Jesus name!
We're speaking if Saint Francis -
Believe it if you can!
Our noisy, willful laddy boy
Became that saintly man.
So, Secular Franciscans,
It's very plain to see
That what happened to our Francis
Proves there's hope for you and me.*

Ruth Vogel, SFO

Franciscan Formation Materials Made Available by the National Formation Commission

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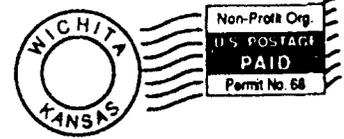
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