



TAU-USA

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



The
earth
and
every
good
thing in it
belongs
to the
Lord
and is
yours
to
enjoy!

1 Corinthians 10:26

Photo by W. Wicks, SFO

TAU-USA

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

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

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Minister's Insights



The Vine and the Branches

By Carol Gentile, SFO
National Minister

“I am the true vine and my Father is the vinegrower. He prunes away every barren branch, but the fruitful ones he trims clean to increase their yield. You are clean already, thanks to the word I have spoken to you. Live on in me, as I do in you. No more than a branch can bear fruit of itself apart from the vine, can you bear fruit apart from me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who lives in me and I in him, will produce abundantly, for apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:1-5

There was a time when we were not aware of the magnitude of our Secular Franciscan Order. As National Minister, I am asked many questions about the Order. I have used this analogy of our presence in the world, and our purpose: I would like you to envision a cluster of grapes that are connected to a stem. The stem is then connected to a vine and that vine is connected to a branch.

The branch is connected to a plant. This plant, obviously, has roots that get nourished from the land and water. God made both land and water. *“Then God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin, so that the dry land*

may appear.” And so it happened: “The water under the sky was gathered into its basin, and the dry land appeared.” Genesis 1-9

Each grape on the vine is a local fraternity. There are seven hundred forty-one fraternities in the USA. The cluster of grapes represents a region. We have thirty-one regions. The stem (region) is connected to a vine, the Regional Fraternity Council. The vine is connected to a branch that we will call the National Fraternity Council. This branch is connected to a thicker branch that we will call the International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order, better known as CIOFS. This thick branch is rooted in a place called Assisi, Italy where Saint Francis started the Order and lived and died for the love of God. The roots of this plant are embedded in the rich land where they receive water and food.

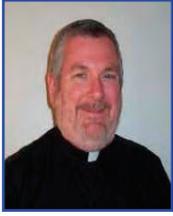
We are the “Fruit of the Vine.”

We are the grapes that are the precious blood of Christ. We are the Good People who are commissioned to go and rebuild His house that we see falling into ruin.

Our vision is to see the world as Christ would have it, to hear the sounds of peace, not violence, as Jesus desired it, to touch another with love and respect, as Jesus touched us, to smell the clean air, as Jesus brings the freshness and newness to us, and to speak the Good News as Jesus brought it to us. In this way, we shall bring it to all our brothers and sisters throughout the world so that we, together, will form the perfect Body and Blood of Christ through that grape on the vine. We must be His hands, His feet, His voice and we must put action to this vision to make the dream come true.

“If you live in me, and my words stay part of you - it will be done for you. My Father has been glorified in your bearing much fruit and becoming my disciples.” John 15: 7-8

Francis did what was his to do and you - what is there for you to do?



By Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR

Friendship with Christ and Being Franciscan

In my earliest days in the seminary – we’re talking the mid-1960s – there were many warnings against “particular friendships.” These were fair warnings about unhealthy or exclusive friendships, which could have happened. The point was well taken that we needed to be friendly to all our fellow seminarians and not be exclusive. However, at least in my experience, this concern got distorted into being a warning against all friendships! That in itself becomes unhealthy and sad. Friendships are often good and healthy, and can even help us to see and understand God’s unconditional love for us.

I was reflecting on all of this, when I came upon a passage from Saint Bonaventure, which he gave on the Feast of the Transferal of the Body of Body of Saint Francis, probably in 1267. (*Francis of Assisi, The Founder, Volume II, The Early Documents*) In this sermon Saint Bonaventure says: “*Jesus calls Saint Francis his friend for a number of special reasons.*” Saint Bonaventure enumerates four reasons: Francis’ truly humble spirit, his utter purity of heart, the serenity of his contemplative soul, and the marks of Christ’s cross imprinted on his body. Saint Bonaventure goes on to say: “*The word Friend, therefore, is addressed to Saint Francis, because he was a faithful, congenial and intimate friend of the Lord, conformed to him by the marks of the stigmata on his body.*”

In today’s society, the virtues that Saint Bonaventure enumerates, as being the reasons for Francis’ intimacy with Christ, are not encouraged. We must struggle mightily to learn what a truly humble spirit is and how to become like that. Indeed, the “*We’re Number 1*” attitude, whether it be about our own fraternity or country, is destructive to the truly humble spirit. I am NOT saying that we cannot love our own country. (I do!) I am saying that it cannot exclude the love of others, even enemies. Otherwise, it departs from the love that Christ teaches us.

Saint Bonaventure ascribed the virtue of purity of heart to Saint Francis. Talk about a virtue not encouraged by society today. Look at one of the major television networks for any period of time and it is clear that today’s society does not value purity of heart. So what must we do? Growing closer to

Christ is not easy. We need to be vigilant constantly concerning our spiritual life. It is important to evaluate what we watch, read and hear.

Saint Francis was a contemplative and this serenity of his soul made his intimate friendship with Christ possible. How can we become more and more contemplative in our world today? Very often we are surrounded by noise. Many of us keep the television or radio going, just as background noise? How many of us seek out and enjoy silence in our day? Many of us cannot bear to be alone, not realizing that there is a difference between being alone and being lonely. It is good for us to constantly renew and re-evaluate our prayer, making sure that we are not only telling God our needs, but that we are also listening to God and trying to discern His will. I read recently, that we cannot listen to God, if we are always talking to God. How true!

God is indeed speaking to us in many ways. The Scriptures are, of course, our primary source. Additionally, we can hear God’s voice in the Church’s teachings, in the events of our lives, in historical events and trends, and especially when we are quiet in prayer.

The source and center of our spiritual life is the Eucharist. In this year dedicated to the Eucharist, we are very conscious of many aspects of the Eucharistic life of the Church. Today, I center on listening to Christ, as we grow closer to him in the Eucharist. This is the place where our friendship with Christ can be most intimate. He is with us, uniting us to each other in the congregation and all the Church. We ARE His Body, the Church. He acts in the world through us.

The final reason Saint Bonaventure gave had to do with the Stigmata. Much of Saint Francis’ deep love for Christ had to do with the Passion of Christ. He was so amazed that God could love each of us so much that he was willing to send His Son to die for us. Our own sufferings and burdens unite us to Christ in his Passion. With Francis, we must embrace our crosses and walk in Christ’s footsteps. The paradox is that doing all of this frees us and gives us joy. (In case you haven’t noticed, one hallmark of the Franciscan is joy!)

Our friendship with Christ is meant to grow, and the Eucharist certainly is the way to intimacy with Christ. With Saint Francis as our mentor, we can model his love for Christ in the Eucharist and work on the virtues we need to always follow Christ faithfully in the same way Francis did! Sisters and brothers, let us begin, for up to now we have done *little*.



Regional Roundup

By Sandy Neal, SFO
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'Ohana 'O Ke Anuenue Region

Recently, 'Ohana 'O Ke Anuenue Regional Minister Joanne Kahaloha, SFO, was named "Island Treasure" by her parish. She was honored at a dinner on Oahu, along with other "treasures" at the Sheraton Waikiki.

Tau Cross Region

Deacon José Roa, SFO celebrated the 25th Anniversary of his Ordination to the Diaconate on June 5, 2005 at Our Lady of Loretto Church in Hempstead, NY. Deacon José and his wife Rosa are members of St. Louis Fraternity.

Diana M. Amadeo, SFO of St. Anthony's Fraternity in Hudson (Nashua), New Hampshire has penned two books, Thirty Saints and Blessed of the Americas, (Pauline Books and Media) and My Baby Sister Is A Premie (Zondervan - Harper Collins).

Maximilian Kolbe Region

Greetings were sent to prisoners by members of Eucharistic Fraternity, Canton, OH, along with crossword puzzle books, stationary, stamps and Bibles. The Mission Jar of money collected was used for to send gift packets to the Armed Forces.

Blessed Giles Fraternity, Parma gave bags of toiletry items to the homeless and funds were donated to the Poor Clare Nuns on Rocky River.

Divine Mercy Region

St. Francis Fraternity, Jackson celebrated their 61st Anniversary.

St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Southfield gifted homeless people with a backpack and a gift. The fraternity makes lunch for the homeless, and mentally ill, monthly.

Lady Poverty Region

St. Louis & Elizabeth Fraternity, Steubenville, Ohio, are participating in Lay Apostolic Ministry for the Poor (LAMP), which provides meals, fellowship, and the basic Gospel message.

Franciscan Martyrs Region

Members of St. Joseph Fraternity celebrated their SFO anniversaries: Carlos Agon-69 years, Sophie Balski-55 years, Mary Jo Bossons, 49 years and, from St. Maximillian Kolbe Fraternity, Maria Scarpio and Betty Sulek, 49 years.

Blessed Junipero Serra Region

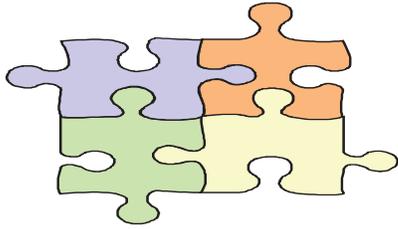


Joan Burke, SFO, Past Regional Minister

Joan Burke, SFO was honored by her parish of St. Stephen in San Francisco. Both her children, Kathy and Karl, attended St. Stephen School. Joan played a major role in establishing a social justice committee at the parish and was a member of St. Stephen's first class of extraordinary ministers. She assists at Martin de Porres Soup Kitchen in San Francisco and is active in service to the home-bound.

Il Poverello Fraternity in Sebastopol (Santa Rosa) CA have a ministry of "Pots, Pans and Baby Bottles" in which they send relief goods to help the people of Llavac, Philippines, who were struck by a horrific typhoon, which left over 1000 people dead and many, many families in need. This ministry was started by Rita Kanvonen, SFO, who had spent time in the Philippines ministering to the poor before the typhoon. See her story on page 27.

"Little Weeds"



The Foot Bone's Connected . . .

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

One day, I stepped off the curb, twisted my ankle, and heard a CRACK. There was some pain; then I spent the next five or six minutes trying to keep from passing out. Not that passing out bothers me – it's the landing on cement that I didn't particularly care to engage in. When it seemed as though I would stay among the conscious, I turned around and hobbled home. What really bugged me was the notion of a month on crutches. I'd done pretty much the same things some years earlier and figured I knew what was in store for me. Perfect joy!

However, the X-rays showed nothing broken: it was just a ligament, ripping, tearing, snapping, or popping – I don't know. But it wasn't broken. Now, all I had to do was, more or less, walk my way through it. The foot guy didn't even wrap it up. He said it was up to me as to how much I stayed off it. So having found by this time that if I walked on the outside of the foot, there was virtually no pain, I semi-limped home. However, even semi-limping jars the spine. Which aggravated a back already bugged by a compressed disk. And since I was favoring my right foot (the hurt one), I was putting more weight on my left leg, which was already in the throes of getting used to more weight as the chiropractor worked on the disk and straightened the spine. This, in turn, aggravated my left knee which was a bit wonky to begin with. And that sent strange messages down to the left ankle.

So, in spite of what the song would have you believe, the foot bone's connected to the spine bone, the spine bone's connected to the knee bone, and the knee bone's connected to the ankle bone! All of which got me to thinking. (You were afraid of that, weren't you . . . ?)

We're all connected to one another, albeit very indirectly sometimes. In this instance, "connected" means "having an effect" on, but I think

you get the idea. It's like we're all little pebbles, and God drops us into the pond of life each day. Then He stands back to watch the ripples. If you live with immediate family, you have a certain number of people you impact every day. If you work for a living, you have another group of people who will be "rippled" by you every (working) day. So even if you live alone (or just with a cat), you can still make some significant ripples, if you work outside your home. In fact, every time you come in contact with someone – no matter how briefly – you're making ripples.

The bottom line, then, is: what kind of ripples do you make? And I'm not talkin' size; I'm talkin' good or bad. Every contact we have with someone is good or bad. And regardless of how brief a contact it is, it can have far-reaching effects.

Say you leave the house one morning, feeling pretty good. You have the day off, so you're going to pick up a few groceries, maybe take in a film, maybe go for a walk – what'th'hay, y'got five or six hours of "Miller Time" stretching out in front of you and it feels great! Alas, it is not to last . . .

The clerk at the grocery store is in a lousy mood and accuses you of trying to rip the store off when you question the change she gives you. The matter is settled without your having to call in character witnesses, but your nifty mood has been shattered. And to make it worse, all the way home, you think of things you should've said to her. But more important, you might let the episode affect how you deal with other people you meet. Ripples. Bad ones.

Make it a point to smile whenever you're interacting with others. Yours may be the only smile they see that day, but it may motivate them to smile at someone else, thereby lightening someone *else's* burden. Ripples. Good ones.

It's easier to see the impact we have on people we know, people upon whom we have an immediate effect and vice versa. We usually try to make the ripples good with these folks. But with perfect strangers, people we'll never see again, why bother? Well, it *is* our "Seraphic Duty," isn't it?

They say the best way to eliminate enemies is to make friends of them. I say this holds true for strangers, too. Not that you have to become bosom buddies. But wouldn't it be nice to leave them glad they'd seen you? And wouldn't it be nice to walk away glad you'd run into them? Ripples, folks, just ripples. But why not make'em good ones? Our Franciscan vocation calls us to no less. And let's face it: the world needs more good ripples!

Classic Franciscan



San Damiano

The Pilgrim's Cup

By Julia Pearson, SFO
Human Interest Editor

*"Though the tree be cut down, it will sprout again.
Its shoots shall never cease." Job 14:7*

Fr. John Cella, OFM, knows personally the hidden powers of sacred places. While in seminary, the study of canon law was appealing. However, his provincial sent him to teach at a Catholic High School in Philadelphia. Working with the young people energized his heart and mind, and he happily became vice principal of 3000 students. Thirteen years later, a new provincial called him back to his desire to study canon law. On June 30, Fr. John handed in the keys to his beloved school, and on July 2, he was in Rome to begin his studies of canon law. Coping with such a sudden and big transition, Fr. John felt drawn to Assisi and the ancient roots of Franciscan spirit for comfort and direction.

The world's great religions encourage pilgrimages to sacred earthly sites: Muslims travel to Mecca; Jews to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, Christians to the Holy Land, and Catholics to Rome. Various sites surrounding Assisi offer the environment to understand Francis - to experience the landscape that nurtured his relationship with God and how he outwardly lived the Gospel. Fr. John was seeking an encounter with Jesus Christ in this "spirituality of place." He visited Chiesa Nuova built on the site claimed to be the birthplace and home of Francis; La Verna, the mountain where Francis was marked with the stigmata; the Basilica of St. Francis, beautiful with the art of Giotto, Cimabue, Simone Martini, and Lorenzetti, and the tomb of Francis and his closest followers; the Basilica of St. Clare, with the

tomb of Clare and the San Damiano Crucifix. Outside the door of San Damiano, the convent in which Francis heard the Christ on the Crucifix speak to him, Fr. John "met God" in the person of "a humped-over old brother" who sat giving out prayer books to those who came for evening services. He recalls in detail the brother looking up and "I saw Francis." Fr. John knew, from looking into that face, that our job as Franciscans is to bring people to God.

Many institutions founded by Franciscans are no longer administered by religious communities. To keep the original Franciscan spirit and vision alive, CEOs, administrators, board members and those who have significant responsibility in carrying forward the mission of Franciscan institutions, are visiting significant sites in Assisi to experience for themselves the "spirituality of place." The Mayo Clinic has sponsored pilgrimages for its doctors and administrators. The Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady, a Health Care System based in New Orleans, Louisiana, have sent their janitors, cooks, servers, nursing assistants, and clerical workers, as well as health professionals, on pilgrimage to sense and absorb Franciscan values from the sacred places of their source. It is hoped these values will then be enlivened into corporate action.

High school and college students find role models of faith in Sts. Francis and Clare while on pilgrimage. Blessed Raymond Lull, a Secular Franciscan, had mystical experiences at a Franciscan Center on a mountain overlooking much of the island of Mallorca, the homeland of Junipero Serra, Luis Jayme, Juan Crespi, and many other early Franciscan missionaries to California. The individual sites on the Franciscan mission trail of California provide sanctuaries for modern seekers.

In January 2005, Fr. John became the Director of Franciscan Pilgrimages. He encourages people to make a pilgrimage to the places where they were born and grew up. Fr. John believes the Gospel calls us to love: *"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."* Matthew 22:35-40

To take the time and place to feel this love of God, love of our neighbor, and love of ourselves – the pilgrim's cup refreshes each of these. For more information regarding Franciscan Pilgrimages contact: srliz@franciscanpilgrimages.com or the website at www.franciscanpilgrimages.com.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

The National Work
Commission Chair is
Sally Haddad, SFO



Sally Haddad, SFO

Sally was born in Norwood, Massachusetts. Presently she lives in Berlin, Connecticut. Her local fraternity is St. Pius X in Middletown, CT in The Father Solanus Casey Region. With NAFRA approval, she plans to develop flyers that would provide guidance to a variety of moral issues, which pertain to our daily work. These flyers could then be copied and distributed to the local fraternities. There are many books on the subject, but she feels that there are a sizeable number of people, who would prefer to read one sheet of paper on the subject. Her first order of business will be to develop a dynamic workshop for the Quinquennial in 2007.

Quotable Quotes

Do what you can, with what you
have, where you are.

Theodore Roosevelt

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune
Without the words,
And never stops at all...

Emily Dickinson

The National Family
Commission Chairs are
Ken and Kim Flanagan, SFO



Ken, Martin, Meaghan, Brendan, and Kim
Flanagan, SFO

Ken and Kim Flanagan see the vocation of marriage as a call from God. They were born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio and are now living in Crown Point, Indiana. Their local fraternity is Little Portion in Our Lady of Indiana Region. They hope to build upon past accomplishments by continuing the Living By Faith Letter to the Homebound, by sponsoring the Family of the Year recognition, and by promoting the Franciscan charism in family life. Their first plan of action will be to survey the regions in order to gain a greater understanding of what is already being done to promote family life and to identify the needs of each region. This will be followed by the development of resource toolkit designed to enhance and promote Franciscan family living within the local fraternities.

Quotable Quotes

Who ran to help me when I fell,
And would some pretty story tell,
Or kiss the place to make it well?
My mother.

Ann Taylor

Ideas are one thing, and what
happens is another.

John Cage



Toddler's Property Laws:

1. If I like it, it's mine.
2. If it's in my hands, it's mine.
3. If I can take it from you, it's mine!
4. If I had it a week ago, it's mine.
5. If it's mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way.
6. If I'm building something, all the pieces are mine.
7. If I think it is mine, it's mine.
8. If it looks just like mine, it's mine.
9. If it is near me, it's mine.
10. If it's broccoli, it's yours!

James O'Neill, SFO - JP Paper

Quotable Quotes

Much that I sought,
I could not find;
Much that I found,
I could not bind;
Much that I bound,
I could not free;
Much that I freed
returned to me.

Ronde Macabre

I never met a man I didn't like.
Will Rogers

If you don't say anything, you
won't be called on to repeat it.
Calvin Coolidge

What's the use of worrying?
It never was worthwhile,
So, pack up your troubles in your
old kit-bag,
And smile, smile, smile.
George H. Powell

LIVING BY FAITH

A letter for the ill, the aged, the shut-in, and the handicapped

By Ken and Kim Flanagan,
SFO National Family Co-chairs

We would like to begin this letter by introducing ourselves. We have recently been appointed as the co-chairs of the Family Commission. One of our responsibilities is to ensure that you receive this letter, *Living by Faith*, on a monthly basis. We would like to thank Sonia Bernardo for her service during the past few years for providing this letter to the brothers and sisters.

A little information about us: we are both from Cleveland, Ohio but most of our marriage of 20 years was spent in Columbus, Ohio and for the past four years in Northwest Indiana. We have three children Brendan, age 18, Meaghan, age 15 and Martin, age 13. Our home is in Crown Point, Indiana, which is near Chicago. Ken is the Director of Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Gary and Kim is a kindergarten teacher at a charter school in Gary, Indiana. We have been professed for six years. We are members of the Little Portion Fraternity in Valparaiso, Indiana, which is part of Our Lady of Indiana region. Both of us look forward to sharing with you through this letter and welcome your thoughts as we support each other in our Franciscan journey.

Since our appointment to the National Family Commission, we have been reflecting on the numerous transitions and changes that have taken place in our lives during these past few years. These changes include moving to a new State, family illnesses and deaths, new jobs, new schools for our children, and now new responsibilities with the Order. Since we are experiencing these transitions and changes, it seemed to be a good topic to share in this letter. We have found transitions and change challenging because it calls us to “let go” and “let God.” We find that what is at the core of this challenge is the desire to control.

You may be finding that, due to circumstances beyond your “control,” or not of your making, you have to cope with transition and change too. Maybe due to illness, disability or age, you are coping with decreased mobility or health. Spouses or other individuals, who were your support, are no longer there to provide this for you. There are often three issues to take to prayer and reflection when coping with these circumstances. These issues are:
Control, Loss, and Anger.

As circumstances change in our lives, we may feel we are “losing control,” or are no longer in charge of our destiny and more dependent on others, whereas, in the past independence was present. This change can cause us to feel loss. Some ways to cope with loss are to:

- Accept the reality of the loss: this means accepting that things have changed
- Experience the pain of grief: this sometimes means we have to allow ourselves to feel anger about our new situation, maybe anger at ourselves, others or even God
- Learn to invest in new activities: as we move beyond the pain of grief, we now can be open to new possibilities

As followers of Jesus in the footsteps of St. Francis we are called to move to the point where transitions and change are part of the journey of becoming. Moving ever closer to the Kingdom where all loss, pain and grief will be washed away. Prayer is key to making the transition from pain to new life. If your current situation is causing you to experience: Fear, pray for the grace of trust; Anger, pray for the grace of peace; Loss or grief, pray for the grace of acceptance and serenity; Confusion, pray for the grace of discernment and wisdom.

Reflection:

1. What are some recent transitions or changes that have occurred in your life during the past six months?
2. How have you handled these transitions or changes?
3. Are you experiencing fear, anger, loss or confusion due to these transitions or changes?
4. Do you pray for trust, peace, acceptance, serenity and wisdom to help you through this period?

Prayer: O Loving Father, allow me, during this time of transition and change, to experience your peace, so that all that I am going through now can lead to good and work to bring about your will for me. Let me not despair, but let me experience the power of resurrection to new life, through Christ our Lord. Amen

“We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” Roman 8: 28

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things that I can change, and the wisdom to know the difference.



SNEAK PREVIEW!



Important Note from the Editor

In order to keep TAU-USA light and readable, writers are asked to shorten articles, as much as possible.

SFO Athletes Unite!

If you are running in the Chicago Marathon on October 9, 2005, several SFO members from the Mother Cabrini Region will be helping at the water station on mile Five - so - don't stop - but do say hello!

TAU-USA Audio Tapes for Visually Impaired

Please write to the editor, if you have a visual impairment and would be interested in purchasing an audiotape of the TAU-USA. (Cost per audio subscription would be approximately \$24.00 to \$28.00 per year) Do not send payment. This is a pole.

Send Archives or Request Archival Information

Sharon Deveaux, SFO, 2416 Valencia Ave, Santa Ana, CA 92706, sharonx@earthlink.net

For Request to the SFO

Contact: John Sanborn, SFO, jksanborn@juno.com
716-773-1912

National Ecology Commission Chair Recruitment

The NAFRA Executive Council is soliciting applications from SFOs interested in serving as the Chair of the National Ecology Commission.

The selected person(s) will begin the 3-year term upon appointment.

An applicant must:

- have active Secular Franciscan status (must provide copy of Certificate of Profession);
- be familiar with the Mission Statement and goals of the National Ecology Commission;
- be willing to communicate his/her passion and desire to promote the Commission to others;
- provide a summary of ideas to promote the Commission;
- be able to write four articles for the TAU-USA newsletter yearly; and
- be able to attend at least two four-day national meetings yearly.

If you meet the above criteria and are interested in applying, send your resume, a letter responding to the above criteria, and a copy of your certificate of profession by September 30, 2005, to: Jane DeRose-Bamman, SFO, 737 Valverde Dr. S.E., Albuquerque, NM, 87108, 505-254-0512, janedbsfo@msn.com

National Ecumenical Committee Chair Recruitment

The NAFRA Executive Council is soliciting applications from Secular Franciscans interested in serving as the chair of the National Ecumenical Committee. The term of office is for three years (the first year is a trial year for both the selected and the Council) with the possibility of a second three-year term. An applicant must:

- have active Secular Franciscan status (must provide a copy of Certificate of Profession);
- have a passion for and be able to demonstrate a knowledge of the Ecumenical Movement in the Church;
- be familiar with the Mission Statement and goals of the National Ecumenical Committee;
- provide a summary of ideas to promote the work of the Committee;
- be able to write four short articles for TAU-USA annually;
- be able to attend at least one four-day national meeting and one committee meeting yearly.

Applications and supporting documents should be sent, by September 30, 2005, to: Elizabeth Allen, SFO, 445 Nickman Street, Chula Vista, CA 91911-1910, esasfo@pacbell.net

Prisoners and the Secular Franciscans

By Marvin Dickman, SFO,
dickmanma@aol.com,
Holy Trinity Region

Saint Francis of Assisi and his followers, our late Pope John Paul II, our American Roman Catholic bishops, the Scriptures, and our Church, all teach us about prisoners. Our Secular Franciscan Peace and Justice mission statement calls us to the gospel challenge of "...to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim the captives release and sight to the blind, to set liberty to the oppressed," as in Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61:1-2. Goals one and two of our Secular Franciscan Peace and Justice statement calls for us to re-explore and rethink the basics of the Rule from the perspective of peace and justice, to help with the ongoing identification of systems which deny human dignity and freedom, and adopt focused and nonviolent confrontation of those systems.

Pope John Paul II wrote, on July 9, 2000, "We are still a long way from the time when our conscience can be certain of having done everything possible to prevent crime and control it effectively so that it no longer does harm and, at the same time, to offer to those who commit crimes a way of redeeming themselves and making a positive return to society. If all those in some way involved in the problem tried to...develop this line of thought, perhaps humanity as a whole could take a great step forward in creating a more serene and peaceful society."

Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice, issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on November 15, 2000, states that the inmate population "has risen from 250,000 in 1972 to a record two million inmates in 2000. Just as African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans are victimized at higher rates, so too, are they incarcerated at higher rates." The statement reports that, while the vast majority of inmates in the United States are men, the number of women being incarcerated has increased 600 percent since 1980. Nationally, one in ten African American males, who make up 12 percent of the U.S. population, but represent more than 49 percent of prisoners in state and federal prisons, are in prison, on probation, or on parole. Also, 24 percent of the two million people behind bars in 2000 were incarcerated for drug

offenses, with nearly half under the influence of drugs or alcohol when they committed the crime; 70 percent did not complete high school; and, as many as 200,000 suffered from some form of mental illness.

Every day, Christians pray for justice and mercy in the prayer that Jesus taught us: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Every day, Christians recognize both that we are guilty of sin and that we are forgiven: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." The Lord's Prayer recognizes our failures and offenses, and acknowledges our dependence on God's love and mercy.

According to the U. S. Catholic Bishops' statement, of November 15, 2000, "We believe a Catholic vision of crime and criminal justice can offer some alternatives. It recognizes that root causes and personal choices can both be factors in crime, by understanding the need for responsibility on the part of the offender and an opportunity for their rehabilitation. A Catholic approach leads us to encourage models of restorative justice that seek to address crime in terms of the harm done to victims and communities, not simply as a violation of law."

Jesus demonstrated his disappointment with those who oppressed others, as noted in Matt. 23, and those who defiled sacred spaces (Jn 2). He rejected punishment for its own sake, noting we are all sinners (JN 8). Jesus rejected revenge and retaliation and was hopeful that offenders would transform their lives, and turn to be embraced by God's love.

Jesus calls us to visit the imprisoned and to take care of the sick, the homeless, and the hungry, (Matt. 25). His mission, very similar to our Secular Franciscan Peace and Justice mission, began with proclaiming good news to the poor and release to captives (Luke 4:18).

According to the *Statement of the Conference of the National Spiritual Assistants, Secular Franciscan Order, USA, to the NAFRA Executive Council*, September 21, 2000, "It is the mind of the CNSA that...Secular Franciscans are encouraged to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to those in prison in whatever way is most effective in the local circumstances. When isolated individuals honestly and sincerely express an affinity to the Way of St. Francis of Assisi, they are first to be encouraged to associate themselves informally with an SFO community or become "Friends of Francis" until such time as they are more free to enter the Order."



The Lighter Side of Life

By Dolores Cullen, SFO
Humor Editor

A man feared his wife was not hearing as well as she used to, and he thought she might need a hearing aid. Not quite sure how to approach her, he called the family doctor to discuss the problem.

The doctor told him there is a simple, informal test the husband could perform to give the doctor a better idea about her hearing loss. "Here's what you do," said the doctor. "Stand about 40 feet away from her and in a normal conversational speaking tone see if she hears you. If not, go to 30 feet, then 20 feet, and so on until you get a response."

That evening, the wife is in the kitchen cooking dinner, and he is in the den. He says to himself, "I'm about 40 feet away. Let's see what happens." In a normal tone, he asks, "Honey, what's for dinner?" No response.

So the husband moves to closer to the kitchen, about 30 feet from his wife, and repeats, "Honey, what's for dinner?" Still no response.

Next he moves into the dining room where he is about 20 feet from his wife and asks, "Honey, what's for dinner?" Again, no response.

So, he walks up to the kitchen door, about 10 feet away. "Honey, what's for dinner?" Again, there is no response.

So he walks right up behind her. "Honey, what's for dinner?"

"Earl, for the 5th time, WE'RE HAVING CHICKEN!"

A well-worn \$1 bill and a similarly distressed \$20 bill arrived at a Federal Reserve Bank to be retired. As they moved along the conveyor belt to be burned, they struck up a conversation.

The \$20 bill reminisced about its travels all over the country. "I've had a pretty good life," the twenty proclaimed. "Why, I've been to Las Vegas and Atlantic City, the finest restaurants in New York, performances on Broadway and even a cruise to the Caribbean."

"Wow!" said the \$1 bill. "You've really had an exciting life!"

"So tell me," says the twenty, "Where have you been throughout your lifetime?"

The \$1 bill replies, "Oh, I've been to the Methodist Church, the Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church."

The \$20 bill interrupts, "What's a church?"

Before you criticize someone, walk a mile in their shoes. That way, if he gets angry, he's a mile away and barefoot!

OF ALL OUR WORRIES, GREAT OR SMALL -
THE GREATEST ARE THOSE THAT NEVER
HAPPEN AT ALL!

When the bus driver stopped the bus to pick up little Chris for pre-school, he noticed an older woman hugging him as he left the house. "Is that your grandmother?" he asked, when the boy boarded. "Yes," Chris said, smiling.

"How nice," he said, "Where does she live?"

"At the airport," Chris replied, "Whenever we want her we just go out there and get her."

THE COWBOY

A cowboy was herding his herd in a remote pasture when suddenly a brand-new BMW advanced out of a dust cloud towards him. The driver, a young man in a Brioni suit, Gucci shoes, Ray Ban sunglasses and YSL tie, leans out the window and asks the cowboy, "If I tell you exactly how many cows and calves you have in your herd, will you give me a calf?"

The cowboy looks at the man, obviously a yuppie then at his peacefully grazing herd and calmly answers, "Sure. Why not?"

The yuppie parks his car, whips out his Dell notebook computer, connects it to his AT&T cell phone, surfs to a NASA page on the Internet, where he calls up a GPS satellite navigation system to get an exact fix on his location which he then feeds to another NASA satellite that scans the area in an ultra-high-resolution photo. The young man then opens the digital photo in Adobe Photoshop and exports it to an image processing facility in Hamburg, Germany. Within seconds, he receives an email on his Palm Pilot that the image has been processed and the data stored. He then accesses a MS-SQL database through an ODBC connected Excel spreadsheet with hundreds of complex formulas. He uploads all of this data via an email on his Blackberry and, after a few minutes, receives a response. Finally, he prints out a full-color, 150-page report on his hi-tech, miniaturized HP Laser Jet printer and turns to the cowboy and says, "You have exactly 1586 cows and calves."

"That's right. Well, I guess you can take one of my calves," says the cowboy. He watches the young man select one of the animals and looks on amused as the young man stuffs it into the trunk of his car. Then the cowboy says to the young man, "Hey, if I

tell you exactly what your business is, will you give me back my calf?"

The young man thinks about it for a second and says, "Okay, why not?"

"You're a consultant systems analyst," says the cowboy.

"Wow! That's correct," says the yuppie, but how did you guess that?"

"No guessing required." answered the cowboy "You showed up here even though nobody called you; you want to get paid for an answer I already knew, to a question I never asked, and you don't know anything about my business. Now give me back my dog!"

THINGS TO PONDER:

How did a fool and his money get together in the first place? Why is abbreviation such a long word? What was the best thing before sliced bread? Why isn't phonetics spelled the way it sounds?

SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING?

A dime has 118 ridges around the edge.

A cat has 32 muscles in each ear.

A crocodile cannot stick out its tongue.

A dragonfly has a life span of 24 hours.

A goldfish has a memory span of three seconds. (My questions is how did anyone find this out?)

A "jiffy" is an actual unit of time for 1/100th of a second.

A shark is the only fish that can blink with both eyes.

A snail can sleep for three years.

Al Capone's business card said he was a used furniture dealer.

All 50 states are listed across the top of the Lincoln Memorial on the back of the \$5 bill.

Almonds are a member of the peach family.

An ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain.

Babies are born without kneecaps. They don't appear until the child reaches 2 to 6 years of age.

Butterflies taste with their feet.

Cats have over one hundred vocal sounds. Dogs only have about 10.

"Dreamt" is the only English word that ends in the letters "mt".

February 1865 is the only month in recorded history not to have a full moon.

In the last 4,000 years, no new animals have been domesticated.

If the population of China walked past you, in single file, the line would never end because of the rate of reproduction.

If you are an average American, in your whole life, you will spend an average of 6 months waiting at red lights.

It's impossible to sneeze with your eyes open.

Leonardo Da Vinci invented the scissors.

Maine is the only state whose name is just one syllable.

No word in the English language rhymes with month, orange, silver, or purple.

On a Canadian two dollar bill, the flag flying over the Parliament building is an American flag.

Our eyes are always the same size from birth, but our nose and ears never stop growing.

Peanuts are one of the ingredients of dynamite.

Rubber bands last longer when refrigerated.

"Stewardesses" is the longest word typed with only the left hand and "lollipop" with the right.

The average person's left hand does 56% of the typing.

The cruise liner, QE2, moves only six inches for each gallon of diesel that it burns.

The microwave was invented after a researcher walked by a radar tube and a chocolate bar melted in his pocket.

The sentence: "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog" uses every letter of the alphabet.

The winter of 1932 was so cold that Niagara Falls froze completely solid.

The words 'racecar,' 'kayak' and 'level' are the same whether they are read left to right or right to left (palindromes).

There are 293 ways to make change for a dollar.

There are more chickens than people in the world.

There are only four words in the English language which end in "dous": tremendous, horrendous, stupendous, and hazardous

There are two words in the English language that have all five vowels in order: "abstemious" and "facetious."

There's no Betty Rubble in the Flintstones
Chewables Vitamins.

Tigers have striped skin, not just striped fur.

TYPEWRITER is the longest word that can be made using the letters only on one row of the keyboard.

Winston Churchill was born in a ladies' room during a dance.

Women blink nearly twice as much as men.

...NOW YOU KNOW EVERYTHING!



NEWS & VIEWS

Reports-Information-Recommendations-Reflections For spiritual assistants at all levels

By Lester Bach, OFM Cap

MEETING IN SEATTLE

Regional and Provincial Spiritual Assistants

The annual meeting for PSAs and RSAs will be held at Palisades Retreat Center in Seattle, WA. The meeting will begin on the evening of September 13, 2005, and conclude at breakfast on September 16, 2005. We encourage Regional and Provincial spiritual assistants to attend. We recommend that you fly to the Seattle – Tacoma airport.

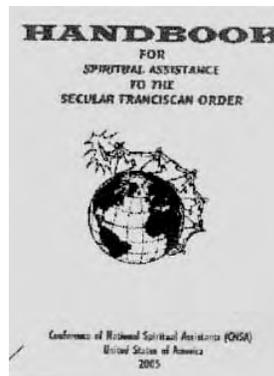
We are faced with important issues in our service to the SFO. We are focusing on the *Role of Spiritual Assistants in articulating spirituality for the SFO fraternity*. CNSA hopes that it will be as thought-provoking as our meeting last year. Mike Carsten, SFO and Steve Gross, OFM Conv will offer insights for our consideration. Representatives from the National Executive Council will also be present to dialogue with us.

Diminishing numbers among the friars, and the *altius moderamen*, will need to be addressed as we share Franciscan spirituality. We are at a crossroad with regard to Spiritual Assistance in the USA. CNSA look forward to an open and frank discussion of this issue. Your presence and creative ideas are your opportunity to contribute to dealing with these issues. Make every effort to attend and do some dreaming about fulfilling our responsibilities to the SFO.

Send your travel information to Sarah Mulholland, SFO - 855 North Jefferson St. - Arlington, VA 22205 or e-mail it to Sarah at smulholland@apa.org

REVISED HANDBOOK FOR SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE TO THE SFO

CNSA has revised the *Handbook for SA's*. We hope to have it ready in the next few months. It contains updating that was needed, as well as helps and guidelines for formation. It contains the *SFO Rule*, *SFO Constitutions*, *Statutes for International and National Fraternities*, as well as, *Statutes for Pastoral and Spiritual Assistance to the SFO*. It offers job descriptions of SAs at various levels. The role of a sponsoring fraternity is described, and the process of



establishing new fraternities is outlined. There are pages with fundamental *documents on formation*, as well as documents on *Youth and Young Adults* in the SFO (YouFra). It is a handy tool for all spiritual assistants and fraternity councils.

We recommend that all fraternity councils purchase a copy for the council and a copy for their spiritual assistant. It is available (in the next few months) from Barbo-Carlson Enterprises. The address is on the back cover of TAU-USA. We expect the cost of the Handbook will be less than \$15.00 plus postage and handling.

It is printed on 8 1/2" X 11" sheets, which can be inserted into a 1 inch, three ring binder. The binder does NOT come with the purchase, but is readily available at stores in your area. As things change, revised pages can be easily inserted into the binder.

LIFE-GIVING UNION BOOK



With the revision of the *Handbook*, the *LGU* book needed revision, as well. Many of the pages referred to the older *Handbook* and needed to be changed to conform to pagination of the *revised Handbook*. In addition, we added an appendix to *LGU* that addresses the issue of

Regional Spiritual Assistants and the appointment of SFO members to that role. The appendix offers information to meet the present needs of SAs in the USA. The changes and additions are helpful for regions faced with a lack of either local or regional spiritual assistants. *LGU* will be available from Barbo-Carlson Enterprises within the next few months. The \$5.00 cost will probably increase with the addition of more pages and changes. CNSA is happy to provide these publications.

REGIONAL VISITATIONS

We encourage Regional Executive Councils to request a visitation, both pastoral and fraternal, in plenty of time – at least six or more months in advance of a selected date. This allows the National Executive Council and CNSA to arrange their schedules to meet the regional needs.

It is important to allow sufficient time to permit the visitation to fulfill all of its responsibilities. Generally, we encourage a weekend, i.e. from Friday afternoon/evening until Sunday noon. That allows time for good interaction between the visitors, the regional council, formation, regional fraternity members and spiritual assistants. Dialogue is an important part of a visitation and time is required to have a healthy dialogue.

CNSA encourages attendance by as many local spiritual assistants as are able to attend. It is required that the Regional Spiritual Assistants be present at the visitation. SAs meeting is scheduled by the Regional Executive Council (in consultation with the Regional and local spiritual assistants) in their preparations for visitation.

Please read Pages B6 and B7 in the *Revised Handbook* (2005) for information on visitations.

SECULAR FRANCISCANS AND THE CHURCH

Franciscans are dedicated to *rebuilding the Church* into a people filled with the gospel spirit of Jesus. We are not ostriches with our heads in the sand. The Church is not perfect and we, who are “church,” are not perfect people. The following quotation offers good food for personal reflection: One can derive an important consequence from the words of St. Catherine: *Christ has loved the Church, despite the iniquities that she was to commit, so who are we to find in the Church’s weaknesses and misery a reason not to love her but to judge her instead? We, who are filled with sin?*

Do we actually think that Jesus doesn’t know the sins of the Church as well as we do? Did he not know that one of his disciples had betrayed him and that another was denying him and that the rest were fleeing? He, however, loved this real Church, not an imaginary or ideal one. He died to make her “holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27), not because she was holy and without blemish. He loves the Church “in hope,” not just for what she is but also for what she is called to be and will be: the heavenly Jerusalem “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Revelation 21:2)

Christ loved the Church and gave himself for her so that she would be “without stain.” And the Church would be without stain, if we were not part of it! The Church would have one less wrinkle if I committed one less sin. Martin Luther criticized Erasmus of Rotterdam for remaining in the Catholic Church despite its corruption, but Erasmus answered him: “I put up with this Church in the hope that one day it will become better, just as it is constrained to put up with me in the hope that one day I will become better.” Loving the Church (Meditations preached to the Papal Household) Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap – Page 45 – 46

WORDS OF WISDOM

Like a fine mist, she (Wisdom) rises from the power of God, a clear effluence from the glory of the Almighty: so nothing defiled can enter into her by stealth. She is the radiance that streams from everlasting light, the flawless mirror of the active power of God, and the image of his goodness. She is but one, yet can do all things; herself unchanging, she makes all things new; age after age she enters into holy souls, and makes them friends of God and prophets, for nothing is acceptable to God but the person who makes his home with wisdom. She is more beautiful than the sun, and surpasses every constellation. Compared with the light of day, she is found to excel for day gives place to night, but against wisdom no evil can prevail. She spans the world in power from end to end, and gently orders all things. Wisdom 7:24-8:1

BROTHER JUNIPER



By Fred Mc Carthy, SFO

“Somehow he drags religion into everything.”

Observations and Recommendations of the Fraternal and Pastoral Visitors to the National Fraternity of the US Part I of II

By Encarnación del Pozo, SFO, General Minister &
Fr. Michael Higgins, TOR, General Assistant
Michigan, October 24, 2004

In response to an invitation of the National Council of the United States, the Fraternal and Pastoral Visits to the National Fraternity of the United States were conducted by the Minister General, Encarnación del Pozo, and the General Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Michael Higgins, TOR, from October 19 – 24, 2004.

On the afternoon of October 18, we were welcomed at the airport by our sister, the National Minister Carol Gentile, and the Vice Minister, John Sanborn, who accompanied us to the location of the National Meeting at St. John Center, Plymouth, MI. We were greeted by the organizing and welcoming team from Divine Mercy Region, who were waiting for us at the center.

The Visitations were held during the celebration of the Annual Meeting of NAFRA, so that we could verify its method of work, the active and dynamic participation of all its members, the order in which the general sessions are carried out and the work throughout the geographic areas.

We were able to participate in all the liturgical ceremonies which were exceptionally rich and full of personal meaning. Fraternal life ceremonies were organized in such a way that all could benefit from them as well.

The Visitors

+ We appreciate the opportunity that has been offered to us to share with all our brothers and sisters and the availability of a number of brothers and sisters: Juan Lezcano, International Counselor; Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM; Mary Stronach; Delia Banchs; and Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR, National Spiritual Assistant, for helping sister Encarnación del Pozo with translations, so that she could speak freely with all the participants.
+ We offer the following recommendations and observations, with the hope that they will be of value to the National Fraternity of the United States:

1. Activity of the National Executive Council

1.1 Relations among its members

We have been able to ascertain that an excellent fraternal relationship exists among the components of the National Council - as well as a spirit of collegiality and co-responsibility with which all carry out their service to the National Fraternity.

1.2 Secretary

+ All the documents of the Secretary since the last

Visitation in 1998 have been placed at our disposal.

+ We have been able to confirm that, as of this date, the archives have been maintained adequately.
+ The minutes of the National Executive Council meetings and of the National Council Session (plenary sessions) are perfectly in order, as well as all the appendices.

+ We have made a small observation to improve the order of the minutes that have been accepted by our sister Secretary.

We congratulate you from our hearts.

1.3 Formation

+ We appreciate the efforts of the Formation Commission, as well as your projects. We hope that they reach all local Fraternities.

+ We congratulate you for the aids that you have prepared and we encourage you to continue with the project to deepen the formation of the newly professed.

+ You must pay attention to the suggestion of one of the geographic groups to establish different levels in the programs and content of formation, according to the degree of formation of the persons to whom it is being directed.

+ In order to attend to the brothers and sisters that live far from their fraternities, the National Council should offer practical guidance to them while keeping in mind the document mailed by the Presidency of CIOFS last year.

+ We also remind you that it is the responsibility of the National Council to promote and ensure that the personality and capacity of each brother and sister of local fraternities be fostered - and that the plurality of expressions of the Franciscan ideal be respected and that diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds be welcomed (CC.GG.33.1).

+ We want to remind you that it is the duty of the National Council to point out and spread the contents of formation to all levels - initial and permanent (on-going) (CC.GG.66.2d) - by using appropriate means to disseminate them.

+ We support the program of taking formation to the regional level so that it may provide impetus and a confirmation of the responsibility of the Regional Councils, who have the mission of animating and guiding the local fraternities in their areas. In application of article 33.3 of the General Constitutions and in accord with the principle of subsidiarity, once this project is completed we remind you that, in respect to the local fraternities, the ultimate responsibility falls with the Regional Councils.

+ The TAU-USA newsletter is an interesting instrument - not only for communicating the news about Fraternities, but also as a means of permanent (on-going) formation.

1.4 Treasury

- + Absolutely all documents of the treasury since the last visit in 1998 have been made available to me, as a Fraternal Visitor.
- + I must congratulate the National Executive Council and the treasurers who have handled this delicate task. Because of the accuracy in the safekeeping of the funds of the Fraternity, the attention in everything related to financial matters, the saving of all documents and vouchers of the cash box and banks, everything is very clear and in order.
- + As you know, there exists a progressive deficit since the year 2001 that must be definitively over-come. You have taken some necessary measures - such as the increase in "per capita" (fair share) - now we must hope that the Regional Fraternities respond to the decisions that were taken by this Assembly.
- + We suggest to the National Executive Council that it send the budget approved by the National Assembly to all the Regional Councils so that they may share it with local fraternities and explain the necessity to contribute to the support of the SFO at its different levels.

2. Commissions

- + The decision to create a conference that co-ordinates Commissions is very positive because it helps to focus the field of conduct (action) of each of them and it keeps them from superimposing on each other.

We believe that they are all necessary and they will assume a strong thrust for the National Fraternity. It is necessary that you carry out the program of activities in very concrete ways and that you have as a purpose to illuminate and to promote concrete actions in the national arena - but you also must illuminate and stimulate the initiatives of the local fraternities through the Regional Councils.

Remember that the local fraternities are the objective and central point of all our efforts because they are the expression of the vitality of the whole Order - and in them the life of each brother and sister becomes formed and developed.

3. The Structure of the Meeting

Your organization, as well as the purpose expressed by the National Minister (that the Assembly assumes appropriate responsibility for the programming of initiatives and the development of decisions for the life of the National Fraternity) is adequate. It is well within the scope of the National Council session. The duty of the National Executive Council is to put into practice the agreements of the Assembly.

4. Finances- responsibility for the economic sustenance of the Order

Here the meaning of belonging to the Order is expressed with perfect clarity. We have heard during these days how our brothers and sisters make considerable or small gifts for other apostolic or social purposes - especially for the religious of the Franciscan Family, including leaving them their estates in their wills... Permit us to ask them: "And their own Order?"

The Presidency of CIOFS carries out its service from a location loaned to us by the General Curia of the Capuchins. The Capuchins now need to take the location back for the activities of their own Order. Now CIOFS has to buy an apartment in order to do the work of the International Fraternity. Brothers and sisters, can we count on the generosity of those who have the means and with small contributions from those who are less favored economically?

How many times do we ask ourselves why the other movements of the Church have more vitality than we do? Do we consider sufficiently the commitment of these in sustaining their organization and the diffusion of its charisma and objectives?

Article 30.3 of the Constitutions point out that each one must do his or her part based on his or her ability. Those who can must offer a larger portion to the support of the Order.

You must progress in fraternal solidarity and in the communion of goods with respect to those who cannot contribute to the maintenance of the Order, and perhaps they may need some type of help.

I make a very serious call to all of you for fraternal solidarity, especially in relation to the international level because many times the CIOFS Presidency lacks the resources to offer the service which it needs to provide for all National Fraternities - especially those emerging. (For example, how many Fraternities cannot count on the presence of their Minister General, as they would wish, because they lack the economic resources?)

We have heard these days how many brothers and sisters offer service that has been entrusted to them and pay for their own expenses. Appreciating the attitude of these brothers and sisters, we must think seriously that in order to quantify the service to the Fraternity - no matter what level it may be - it is necessary to communicate all the expenses incurred. Even if we desire to make a donation we must enter it into the books as an expense or an income.

And finally a very fraternal recommendation: your response to the petitions for help that you receive from other National Fraternities is very gratifying and demonstrates a wonderful spirit of sharing. However, we sincerely recommend that you consult with the CIOFS Presidency when you receive these requests in order to avoid situations in which some National

Councils present the same petition to different Councils.

5. Franciscan Family

The National Council can and must take the initiative so that the Franciscan Family in the United States can develop a Federation or Conference. You must not wait for the decision of others. Start promoting it yourselves!

Take advantage of the invitation extended to you yesterday by Sister Sharon Dillon, OSF, (Director of the Federation of the Sisters and Brothers of the Third Order Regular) to collaborate together in order to raise a larger union.

6. Demographic Survey

We exhort you to respond to all the sections of the demographic survey promoted by the CIOFS Presidency to each General Chapter. It is necessary to know the constituency of our Order, its composition, its average age, and its cultural levels. The Holy See also requests it. But, we must be conscious of the fact that by knowing well the reality of our own Order we will be able to focus adequately on the lines of necessary action.

7 Borders of the Regions

We have recommended that the National Executive Council prepare clear criteria to complete the process of regionalization, taking into consideration the situations which have surfaced and those that will surface in the future. Once approved, the criteria developed by the National Council of the NAFRA Assembly must be incorporated to the National Statute (CC.GG.61.2).

8. Franciscan Youth

The Franciscan Youth (Youfra) is not an apostolic commission (a field for the apostolate) of the SFO - or of the First and Third Order. It is not a resource meant to stop the aging of our local fraternities. It is a road to a vocation that can end, or not, in the SFO. We must work with enthusiasm and conviction - and offer freely to the youth what we freely have received. Let us leave the rest to the Lord.

Try to establish programs and methods that are adequate and suitable to reaching the youth. The document of the Presidency: "The Youfra (Franciscan Youth), Road to a Franciscan Vocation" can help provide an orientation for you.

When you get involved in the field of youth, it is important that the Councils prepare the Fraternities to welcome them with generosity and an open mind and heart - aware that they will live and express their vocation in a different way according to the necessities

of the organization and with the appropriate methodology.

We also exhort you to begin in the field of the children as well. (CC.GG.25)

9. Presence and Mission

A geographic area has justly indicated that we need to form ourselves more strongly in order to be present in society.

We also need to form ourselves in order to know the meaning of the "mission" to which we are called today - in order to insert ourselves with the spirituality and the style of Francis of Assisi into temporal structures while looking to be "Christ" in the world, in the Church, in our places of work, in our families, and in our moments of leisure.

Let us not forget that by our "being" Christian and Franciscan - contemplative or active - our mission will sprout. (R.8)

The Secular Franciscan Fraternity is not a devotional group but an evangelical vocation and, as the rule says: your life should be as a vessel holding the content and mission of the Order, going "*from Gospel to life and life to Gospel*" (R.4). The general Constitutions translate it and define it thus: "to promote the initiatives necessary for fostering fraternal life, for improving the human, Christian, and Franciscan formation of its members and for sustaining their witness and commitment; to make concrete and courageous choices, appropriate for the situation of the fraternity, from among the numerous activities possible in the field of the apostolate" (Art. 50).

The whole fraternity must feel implicated in those activities selected by the Fraternity Council, as much in the heart of the Church as in the heart of society, in which one lives and manifests Franciscan Secularism. Each member collaborates according to his or her possibilities - with personal contribution, by economic means which are available, prayer, and the offering of one's own sickness or suffering for the success of the activity assumed. In the work of the Spirit all is valid, because it drives us to complete what is lacking in the passion of Christ that leads to his Resurrection, which is the liberation of all injustice and evil.

Apostolic or charitable activity reinforces the bond of fraternal communion; and your testimony is an effective instrument for vocational promotion.

To be continued in the next issue:

The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



Power to Forgive

By Anne Mulqueen, SFO
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I don't remember where I was when I heard a priest say in his homily, *Be what you see and believe that you are, the Body of Christ*. He was, of course, referring to Eucharist. His statement startled me. I was fairly young, and my understanding of the Eucharist was not comprehensive. I did believe in the "true presence" of Christ in the Eucharist, but his statement opened my eyes to the possibility of deeper truths. I knew at once that I did not completely understand Eucharist or its power to change me. The priest's words challenged me, yet I focused on only the first part of his statement, "Be what you see..." I was neither ready to explore the commitment attached to Eucharist, nor surrender my individuality. It would take time to be willing.

Years later, I attended a lecture given by Fr. Eugene La Verdere, SSS, a Scripture scholar, who spoke on the communal aspect of Eucharist. He used two simple portions of Scripture verses to support his teaching. The two phrases he used were from First Corinthians 11:17 and 11:25, "*when you assemble as Church,*" and "*do this in memory of me.*"

At the time of the lecture, the Church did not discourage Masses in private homes. I liked them. They were warm and hospitable. I saw nothing

exclusive about them. Fr. LaVerdier did not agree. He said that assembling for the *Lord's Supper* in a setting that excludes some of God's children is not assembling as Church, but as a select group of family and friends.

Basically, this is St. Paul's rebuke to the church in Corinth—that they had separated into factions *when they assembled*, and further, they embarrassed the poor, who went hungry, while others had plenty to eat. Paul says it would be better for them to eat at home because these meals clearly were not the *Lord's Supper*.

But when all are welcome, then the assembly becomes Church and authentic mission and ministry flow from this union. This Eucharistic Church serves and preserves God's creation, both animate and inanimate, "*in memory of Christ.*" (1Cor. 17-34)

Recalling our Baptismal identity helps us to function as the Body of Christ. Since all have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, and all are clothed with Christ, our "doing" (mission and ministry) flows from our "being" (Body of Christ) and celebrating Eucharist in radical equality. Our gene pool may be different, but our creator is the same. When we form Church, there is no distinction between Western European and Asian, learned and illiterate, rich and poor, etc., because no distinction exist (Gal 3:26-28 paraphrased).

The transforming power of the Eucharist is real! All we have to do is accept it and be willing participants in the transformation process. As Catholic, Christian, Franciscan, we are called and sent – one in body, one in Christ – into the world. May we see

what is ours to do and have the courage to do it. Saint Francis would require nothing more and would expect nothing less. *Think of a valued relationship that has been lost because of conflict or misunderstanding. What can you do to rebuild it? Take responsibility for your part in the rift. If you cannot repair the damage, pray for the relationship and stay open to reconciliation.*

The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



Power to Forgive

By Vivian Weaver, SFO
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In Roget's New Millennium Thesaurus, 1st edition copyright 2005, a synonym for the noun *penance* is FORGIVENESS. If we are indeed Brothers and Sisters of Penance, forgiveness is not an option. Forgiveness is a large part of who we ARE!

Ratherius of Verona (887-974) *spoke to the penitent to be attentive to the command of Christ concerning pardon – Besides all these ways of meriting the pardon of God there is another way that was instituted by the Lord himself "...Forgive and you shall be forgiven."*

Yet daily, we journey in an environment of rudeness and hostility – opinionated, stiff-necked co-workers, angry drivers, school violence, child abuse, neglect, wars and rumors of wars. We read or listen to stories of kidnappings, rape, murder, and car bombings. We are involved in or know those

who have had their children, your friends, killed in drive by shootings, drug overdoses, and suicide. On a smaller scale we have neighbors whose animals eliminate in our yard, young people skateboarding and bike riding on the lawn. As students we have had our lockers sabotaged, term paper ideas stolen and library books taken leaving us to pay the fines. Parents divorce; younger siblings borrow and break our things. College student gets their laptops, Ipods, and bikes stolen on campus, while trying to concentrate on that next term paper or project that is due.

SO – where do we get the strength and courage to forgive, move on and start over? *At the table of the Lord!* “Whoever wants to persevere (in the way of the Lord) let him receive our Lord. He is the bread that will nourish your failing strength, that will sustain you...” St. Peter Julian Eymard, SSS.

I find forgiving others difficult, therefore, I find meditating on the Lord’s Prayer a powerful tool to keep me on the right track. Hearing and saying the words, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” compels me to embrace forgiving others, if I expect to be forgiven by Our Lord. This beautiful prayer is recited communally at each and every celebration of the Eucharist. At Mass I listen, participate in and get fed with the Words and Body and Blood of Jesus, which infuse me with the power to forgive.

Without eating the Body and Blood “you do not have life within you”...the life that gives me the strength to forgive.

As a young person, you might not be going to Sunday Mass because your parents do the

driving and they are not going. Confide in them your need for strength in this area of forgiveness and your need to receive the nourishing food of the Lord. If you don’t tell them that the Eucharist is important to you, they will never know. If you are able to drive yourself, recommit yourself to weekly, if not daily Mass and Communion.

1. Who or what do you need to forgive?
2. How long has it been since your last celebration of the Eucharist?
3. How long has it been since you received Communion?
4. Do you need to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
5. Do you need to leave your gifts at the altar and ask your brothers and sisters for forgiveness? Or to tell them you forgive them?

The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



Power to Forgive

Fr. David Moczulski, OFM
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As this article is being written, the world once again witnesses an act of terrorism in the bombing of the public transportation system in London. We are reminded, in this act, of all that has come before it: the devastating attacks of September 11th, the bombing of Afghanistan, and the continuing bloodshed taking place in Iraq. Let alone the violence that comes to us within our own local

communities and, perhaps, even within our own selves. In February 2003, I was living in Washington, DC. It was a time of one of the high terrorism alerts when “Home Depots” within a hundred mile radius of the 495 beltway were out of stock of black plastic sheeting and duct tape. Everywhere you went the conversation centered around the heightened security alert. Then on the morning of February 27, I read the morning news of the death of children’s television host Fred Rogers in Pittsburgh. If the word *spiritual* has meaning in any living person, Mister Rogers embodied it. In the midst of the “conflict and division” that is a part of our everyday world, in his death, as he did for countless numbers of children and adults in his life, Mister Rogers had us stop, and reflect. For the first time in days or weeks, we stopped talking about terrorism and “dirty bombs” and talked about this “gentle” man who first asked us to be his neighbor.

In an interview Mister Rogers gave in 2001, he talked about a professor he had in the seminary and how this man changed his way of thinking. Many years after the seminary, Mister Rogers would visit this professor in a nursing home. Once, after they were finished praying, Mister Rogers asked Dr. Orr about a line in the hymn “*The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him. For, lo, his doom is sure. ... one little word will fell him?*” Dr. Orr, what is that one thing that would wipe out evil?” The old professor stated: “Evil simply disintegrates in the presence of forgiveness.

When you look with accusing eyes at your neighbor, that is what evil would want, because

the more the accuser - which, of course, is the word Satan in Hebrew - can spread the accusing spirit, the greater evil spreads." Dr. Orr said, "On the other hand, if you can look with the eyes of the Advocate on your neighbor, those are the eyes of Jesus."

The man who dedicated his life to teaching us how "to be neighbor" had me stop and reflect on what it means to have the eyes of the Advocate. As Catholics, we center so much of our faith on this that we do weekly or daily. We share the bread, the cup. We bring ourselves to the table of the Lord and we share in the gift of life. We hear the stories from Scriptures that tell us that our God is not a vengeful God; our God is a loving God. Genesis tells us that we are created in the image of God. The image not of a God who is a dictator, but of a God who is constantly beckoning us to come. To realize that we have within us the power of scripture, the power of the Eucharist. As the bread and wine are transformed, so we are changed. We are called to become what we eat.

St. Francis in his writings would tell his followers that in the Eucharist we find a God who is always offering us love. Both Francis and Clare will tell us that in the Eucharist the work of the Incarnation is ever-happening. And that the Eucharist is our main source of reconciliation. In this celebration, we are intimately invited to take part in the Incarnation (God's offering of love to the world). We are called not to hoard this gift jealously, but as we take leave of our celebration, we are called to have within us the eyes of the Advocate, the eyes of Jesus. Realizing that God sees the

world through human eyes. If we spend our lives accusing, whose work do we do?

The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



Power to Forgive

By Pauline Cahalan, SFO
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We have lots of verbs that have to do with work—to dig, to build, to serve, to compile, to research, to compute, to study, to run, to organize, to compose, to bake, to clean, to raise children, to farm, to pray, and a host of others. To forgive, repeatedly, is part of the work of our spiritual journey. Sometimes it is an easy thing to do. Other times, when hurts are very deep and/or have profound affects upon our lives, this process is a very difficult one involving lots of time, prayer, and grace.

Who among us has not experienced situations that have wounded us emotionally? Sources of these perceived injuries to our personhood could be family (birth, adopted, &/or Franciscan), friends, co-workers, parishioners, clergy, religious, neighbors - really any person with whom we interact, even if it is only for a moment. Our pride and our attitude about how people who respect us *should* treat us seem to be at the root of whether the words or actions of another are perceived as positives or negatives by each of us.

Christ is our most powerful model as we seek spiritual guidance for the forgiveness process. He asked God to

"forgive them. They know not what they do," as he was being crucified. Frequently people who have hurt us emotionally have not done so deliberately and may not even know their words or actions caused us emotional or spiritual pain. Each time we pray the "Our Father," we are asking God to forgive us as we forgive our brothers and sisters. Scripture assures us that God's forgiveness is total and unconditional. So, it would seem, our forgiveness needs to be total and unconditional. That is an amazingly difficult process, at times, depending on what happened and given that our pride gets our mind racing very rapidly to help us rationalize how the other person was wrong and we were right. And, often, this may all be about expectations and perceptions. We have an expectation of how some interaction should play out so that our dignity and self-respect will be preserved. And then things don't go that way.

Okay, now what?

Perhaps some examples of how Francis handled circumstances involving peace making and pardon will give us some guidance. Henri d'Avranches writes Francis was "Compassionate and lenient to everyone...swift and prompt with pardon...Slow and cool when it came to anger." Once Francis and some of the brothers approached a bishop for permission to preach in his city. The bishop became angry saying, "Brother, I preach to my people and that is enough!" Francis bowed his head and went outside but came back later. When the annoyed bishop asked what he was doing back, Francis answered, "My Lord, if a father throws his son out by one door,

he should come back by another.” The bishop recognized the humility of Francis and gave permission to preach.

Francis prayed for the salvation of Brother Elias, despite the fact that Brother Elias did not conduct the affairs of the Order the way Francis had planned and expected.

Article 16 of the Rule directs us to “esteem work as a gift.” To help us progress through the process of forgiveness, no matter how much or how little time it takes, we have gifts from God. We have the complimentary sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Our God, in infinite wisdom, knew, given our human condition, that the process of forgiveness would be some of the most difficult work we ever do here on earth. So we are given the gift of graces as we repeatedly become reconciled in right relationship with God, our earthly sisters and brothers, and receive our heavenly brother, Christ.

Examples taken from [Francis of Assisi 3 volumes](#)

The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



Power to Forgive

By Jim Hein, SFO
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After making a few Fraternal Visits, I was musing about how dysfunctional some fraternities seem to be. Then I started to think about how God in his gentleness uses the dysfunctional to build bridges of graces and forgiveness. Peter was a bit hot tempered; Paul was in poor health; Martha worried a lot;

Thomas had doubts; John the Baptist was eccentric, to say the least; Timothy was timid; James and John, sons of Zebedee, had an intrusive, overbearing mother; Matthew was a hated tax collector; Simon belonged to a terrorist party and they, along with others, they were all a part of God’s plan of redemption through His son Jesus. In a way – this group/family was basically the first Fraternity. Not much different from some of what we come across on Pastoral and Fraternal Visits - with one exception. The exception was that the twelve apostles, chosen by Jesus, were about to bring something into the world that would redefine a sin offering. At their last supper together they had the “Real Presence” of Christ before them. How awesome it must have been when Jesus took some bread, said a blessing, broke it, and giving it to them said, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.” The “Real Presence” left all of mankind the “Real Presence” in the Eucharist and redeemed all of mankind before their eyes.

From that awesome last supper to our present day, families and fraternities, we are called by our Rule in a special way to, “...seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity. The faith of Saint Francis, who often said, “I see nothing bodily of the Most High Son of God in this world except his most holy body and blood,” should be the inspiration and pattern of their Eucharistic

life.” (Rule, Article 5) Within this “Transforming Power of the Eucharist” is an action response to our daily lives, namely, the forgiveness of sins. Jesus left each one of us the “Power to Forgive.” Certainly, he imparted to the Apostles the authority to not only forgive, but to reconcile sinners with the Church – “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Mt 16:19) But, for us who are of human frailty, it is necessary that this reconciliation, conversion, be carried out daily. With a sense of whimsical wisdom, Jesus leaves us with the prayer to the Father: “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” (Mt 6:12) He then throws us a little hook to think about: “If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Mt 6:14) So, on a daily basis we have the “Power to Forgive” others and indeed free them from anxiety, guilt and apprehension. Caution though: if we fail to forgive others, we should be aware that we are cursing ourselves by praying this prayer – the Our Father. In my life as a Secular Franciscan, I find the workings of Our Father humbling. At this stage of my life, I have taken an inventory of what I have to offer in praise and thanksgiving to my Creator. The only things that I truly have of my own are my sins (which are always before me) and my opinions. Both are truly worthless. (I do believe that some of my opinions are rather cool though. Especially those on pride.) However, any and all good that comes out of any of my actions is truly

nothing but being a part of building a bridge where Jesus could walk across from His heart to yours. As family, individual, fraternity and community, we must always understand that the “Power of Forgiveness” is a decision, not a feeling. It is to be used daily.

In the spirit of Jesus, Francis, Clare and the Sacred Heart may we always keep in mind that - everything will be all right in the end. If it is not all right, it is not the end. So, keep going on your Franciscan spiritual journey!

The Transforming Power of the Eucharist



Power to Forgive

By Ron Stoner SFO
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In the Garden of Eden, mankind was entrusted by God to care for all creation. Our Catechism instructs us that as stewards of creation we have the responsibility to be collaborators with God’s will and divine plan by our prayers, actions and sufferings. However, because of original sin we are imperfect stewards and all of creation is also in need of redemption. But, God’s divine plan is for the recreation of our world through our savior, Jesus Christ.

As Secular Franciscans we look to St. Francis, the Patron Saint of Ecology, as our role model for environmental stewardship. It has been recounted that St. Francis’ many acts of mercy included compassion for nature, such as the following examples:

+ Sparing the extinguishments of fire

- + Walking with reverence over rocks
- + Forbidding cutting down a whole tree as it might sprout again
- + Insisting that portions of the garden be left undisturbed to enable wildflowers to flourish
- + Picking up worms along the road so they would not be trampled
- + Befriending the wolf at Gubbio

Francis is an exemplary model of stewardship of creation based on compassion and mercy, of which a key component is the power to forgive. Because we live in an imperfect world, we, as Francis did, sometimes have to suffer in many ways inconveniences, hardships and dangers of nature. But, Francis was able to forgive these offences and see the good (i.e., the imprint of God) in nature and everyone. He saw the sign of internal life in a flame although he, at times, suffered from the pain of fire. He saw the symbol of Christ in a rock, although he must have been bruised when he was rebuilding God’s house with stones. He empathized with the wolf at Gubbio who needed sustenance to survive, though the wolf was a threat to the village and himself. Francis relished the harshness of the biting wind, snow and other discomforts of the weather.

Yes, Francis was a good steward of God’s creation, even when it required personal discomfort and sacrifice. He saw the world around him through the merciful, forgiving and loving eyes of Jesus. It was Francis’ devotion to the Eucharist that empowered him to see God’s hand in all creation and to respond with love and mercy instead of bitterness.

As stewards of creation, we, also, must be able to forgive all that offends us. This includes forgiving those who exploit natural resources, pollute the environment and otherwise endanger the ecology of the earth by environmental abuse and/or neglect. We should consider again the example of Francis, who showed us how to be environmental peacemakers (e.g., he facilitated compromise and peace at Gubbio). As participants in a society of over-consumption, sometimes referred to as “affluenza,” we must also repent and ask God’s forgiveness for our environmental sins. We should seek the sacrament of reconciliation and pray for the ability to change and become better environmental stewards. This ecopenance process will bear the fruits of universal kinship with all of creation, simple living as well as environmental peacemaking. Such a radical transformation from environmental sinners to environmental stewards, however, can only occur by the empowerment of the Eucharist to forgive and to seek forgiveness. We must follow the example of Francis whose devotion to the Eucharist transformed his heart to see God’s divine plan in all of creation and to live his life in accordance with this sacred vision.

Familiar Quotes

La Rochefoucauld

Nothing is given so profusely as advice.

We frequently forgive those who bore us; but can’t forgive those whom we bore.

Fr. Mel Brady, OFM



(May 9, 1922- April 12, 2005)

By Mary Zablocki

Our beloved friend and spiritual “uncle”, Mel Brady OFM was called home to God April 12, 2005. He grew up in Detroit and spent his last years there doing what he loved most: serving the people of God. Fr. Mel was a wonderful Franciscan. His kind eyes beheld the world with great tenderness and an unmistakable Irish twinkle. He had a fire in his belly for the poor and a keen sense of justice. We knew him at the end of a long career that spanned the globe. When we met him in 1993 he was the North American Coordinator for *Build with Living Stones*, a global mission correspondence course he had helped to initiate in the early 1980’s. This was the beginning of a strong commitment to SFO that lasted the rest of his life. Retired, he went back to Detroit and worked with the poor homeless. While he “rested”, he founded Oasis Detroit, a home for mentally disabled homeless men and women that opened just before he died. After his funeral, friars from a nearby

suburb hosted a luncheon. One of Mel’s last wishes will be one of our most lasting memories. He had his brother friars hire a bus and bring his beloved poor to the luncheon. He just wanted to serve them one more time.

Cooking, Eating, Eucharist

Kathy Coffey
Immersed in the Sacred

Cooking is its own poetry, having certain rhythms and intensities. All the poem’s strands culminate in a final stanza that should end with a bang, not a whimper. Its themes come together in a grand finale: Yeats called this the certainty of a box lid clicking shut. So, too, all the feverish work over stove, sink, and refrigerator comes together at the table when hungry folks sit down. Click!

Of course the whole activity is based in splendid metaphor: the giving of life to those we love. In a sense, nothing we do is more important. The sanctity of cooking was recognized long ago by Brother Lawrence when he said *“The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament.”*

Rewards:

Herman Melville

People think that if a man has undergone any hardship, he should have a reward; but, for my part, if I have done the hardest possible day’s work, and then come to sit down in a corner and eat my supper comfortably—why, then I don’t think I deserve any reward for my hard day’s work—for am I not now at peace? Is not my supper good?

The Hermit

Sarah Ban Breathnach
A Man’s Journey to Simple Abundance

Surely one of the joys of reading is the moment a sentence leaps off the page and straight into your heart. That happened for me when Jake Jacobsen mentioned his prayer these days is gratitude for being able just to see the beaver. “It never took much to make me happy, and it takes even less now.” Recently I was reminded of just how little I need to make me happy, and it occurred during a solitary walk in the woods. I was alone. But I wasn’t lonely. I was complete.

Familiar Quotes

If the only prayer you ever say in your life is thank you, it will be enough.
Meister Eckart

The historian must have some conception of how men who are not historians behave.
Abinger Harvest

From the last issue—the correct version:

Secular Franciscans at Your Service

By Fred Schaeffer, SFO
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The local fraternity is to be established canonically. It becomes the basic unit of the whole Order and a visible sign of the Church, the community of love. This should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members. *SFO Rule 20*

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

Traditionally, Franciscans have been, and are, at the forefront of providing a valuable service to their sisters and brothers and to the world, as such, in the area of showing mercy and compassion for the underprivileged, and for anyone who is not being treated as we would like others to treat us. Jesus washed the feet of the Apostles, as the bishops and priests still do on Holy Thursday. Likewise, Secular Franciscans, with humility and a sense of service in the Name of the Lord, obedient to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, seek to be of service to others. This service takes many forms and is done in an understated way. Our Seraphic Father, Saint Francis, told the friars that they should go and preach, and use words if necessary. Thus our service to others should be done with good cheer, and genuine helpfulness without pointing back at ourselves or the Order. Such an example brings many more vocations than all the written brochures and handouts put together.

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

in doing visitations and assisting at Chapters of Election, etc., all of which is outlined in Constitutions and Statutes and in reports from each Region. Then in each country, there is one National Fraternity. These people are very busy, in a nation as great and as large as ours, going to meetings, Regional visitations, etc.

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

The issue of providing support is a very Franciscan thing. In the history of the Franciscan Order, as a whole, local support always services Definitories, Provincialates and General Ministers, except that in the First and Second Order of Franciscans, money comes from parish donations, generally. In the Secular Franciscan Order, funds come from Fraternities and usually that means from each and everyone of the Professed. These means of support are not dues. I cringe when I hear Secular Franciscans speak about their Order as if they were paying membership dues. That's very inaccurate. Generally, in a membership organization, when one does not pay dues, you're out. Done with! That's not so with the Secular Franciscan Order. You're professed and have taken on a lasting commitment. So if you truly cannot afford to provide the support requested by a Regional Fraternity, you're not out at all. Your fraternity minister and council can sort this out in a Christian fashion and provide support where needed. That's what we're here for, to provide service and support to our sisters and brothers in Christ. And, if the Fraternity has no means to provide the monies requested, they should ask their Regional Fraternity for guidance and assistance.

As St. Francis did, let us treat all with reverence and love, with understanding and wisdom, and use words if necessary.

Beneath the Father's Will

By Delia E. Banchs, SFO
Contributing Editor

Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is brother and sister and mother to me. Mt 12:50

St. Francis, the "saint of the *Our Father*," made the Lord's Prayer the principal community prayer of the friars, and, later, in his *Letter to the Faithful*, recommended it to all. Francis even quoted the prayer, when he broke publicly with his father, Pietro Bernadone, and called only God in Heaven his Father.

The *Paternoster* shaped Francis' life in a spiritual and practical sense, and, like many before him, he wrote a commentary or explanation of it. For Francis, the prayer mirrored fully the love of God as he mentions "love" ten times in his explanation. Like all mystics, Francis had experienced an intimacy with God in joy, in His light and His love. Francis came to know that the gateway to an intimate relationship with Our Father God is contained in second petition "*your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*"

Our Lord Jesus lived his earthly life in the fulfillment of the Father's will, and taught his disciples that their relationship was forged in doing the Father's will in all things. Jesus further explained that *only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven will enter the kingdom of God (Mt 7: 21.)*. Fr. Romano Guardini explains that *(t)he kingdom of God means that God rules directly and powerfully...His truth illumines the mind...that love rules perceptibly in our goings and our comings...and that taught by God, our desire is for the will of God (The Lord's Prayer)*.

Our SFO Rule invites us to unite ourselves to Jesus in obedience by placing our will into the Father's hands, and fulfilling our daily duties faithfully.

*Our Father— thy kingdom come:
So that you may rule in us through your grace
and enable us to come to your kingdom,
where there is an unclouded vision of you,
a perfect love of you,
a blessed companionship with you.*

Francis of Assisi

Bajo la Voluntad del Padre

By Delia E. Banchs, SFO
Contributing Editor

Porque cualquiera que hace la voluntad de mi Padre que está en el cielo, ése es mi hermano, mi hermana y mi madre. Mt 12:50

San Francisco, el "santo del *Padre Nuestro*," designó esta oración del Señor como la oración principal de la comunidad de los frailes, y en su *Carta a todos los fieles* se la recomendó a todos. Francisco también citó esta oración cuando rompió en público con su padre, Pietro Bernadone, cuando llamaba solamente a Dios que está en el cielo su Padre.

El *Paternoster* le dió forma a la vida de Francisco de una manera práctica y espiritual, y como muchos antes de él escribió un comentario con explicación de ésta. Para Francisco, esta oración reflejaba la plenitud del amor de Dios y por eso él menciona "el amor" diez veces en su explicación. Como todos los místicos, Francisco había experimentado la intimidad con Dios en la alegría, en su luz y en su amor. Francisco pudo comprender que la entrada a una relación íntima con nuestro Dios Padre está contenida en la segunda petición "*hágase tu voluntad en la tierra, así como se hace en el cielo.*"

Nuestro Señor Jesús vivió su vida terrenal en la realización de la voluntad del Padre, y enseñó a sus discípulos que su relación era forjada en cumplir la voluntad del Padre en todas las cosas. Jesús además explicó que *solamente los que hacen la voluntad de mi Padre* entrarán el reino de Dios (Mt. 7:21.) Padre Romano Guardini explica que *el reino de Dios significa que Dios reina directamente y poderosamente...Su verdad ilumina la mente...que el amor reina perceptible en todos nuestros pasos...y enseñados por Dios, nuestro deseo está en la voluntad de Dios (The Lord's Prayer por Romano Guardini.)*

Nuestra Regla nos invita a unirnos a Jesús en obediencia poniendo nuestra voluntad en las manos del Padre y cumpliendo nuestros quehaceres diariamente con fidelidad.

*Padre Nuestro—Venga a nosotros tu reino:
Para que reines tú en nosotros por la gracia y nos
hagas llegar a tu reino, donde se halla la visión
manifiesta de ti, el perfecto amor a ti, tu dichosa
compañía, la fruición de ti por siempre.*

Francisco de Asís

MULTICULTURAL
COMMITTEE



SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER / U.S.A.

The Transforming Power of the Eucharist

By Sonia Bernardo, SFO
National Multicultural Committee Chair
Jsbernardo@msn.com

What is the Eucharist? Perhaps it would be better to ask, who is the Eucharist? There is only one answer to that. The Eucharist is Jesus Christ himself in the form of bread, whom we partake at Holy Communion. St. Paul proclaims, "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body for we all partake of the one bread." 1 Cor 10:17 The Eucharist is vividly described as a source of unity, for we are the outward signs of the food that we consume at the table of the Lord, many grains of wheat, whose difference is not apparent, since we have been made into one whole, perfect loaf of bread. When "we eat this bread and drink this wine" we are mutually joined to one another in Christ. Color, race and culture do not matter. The Eucharist unites us. It builds up the Church, and it creates a human community.

When we receive Holy Communion, we become one with Christ, a willing sacrifice. The attitude of self-giving sacrifice can prepare us for the complete union with His heart, which we call Communion. We "lose our life in order to save it." (Mt 10:39 paraphrased) We give of ourselves in fraternal and humble service, according to need, not expectations. In the end, we will be moved to imitate Christ and be one with Him, in sacrifice. We become more aware of who we are, so that we can be transformed more completely into the image of Christ. This challenges us to "find" our-selves – to "reassemble" all our parts, whether weak or ugly, and sacrifice them to God, so that we may become what we have received.



Primary Task & Final Tribute

By Marcella Bina, SFO
National Ecumenical Committee Chair
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With the passing of Pope John Paul II, those of us who are committed to Ecumenism were anxious to know, if his successor would have the same dedication and zeal in promoting ecumenism as our latter Pope. Shortly after his inauguration the new Pontiff, Pope Benedict XVI assured us that he "takes on, as his *primary task*, the duty to work tirelessly, to rebuild the full and visible unity of all Christ's followers." Each one of us must come before the supreme judge of every living person, to render an account to Him of all we have done or have failed to do to further the great good of visible unity of all His disciples." May the Lord grant that we be one flock and one shepherd, as He promised.

As followers of Saint Francis what is our commitment to this 'primary task' of our new Church leader?

A Final Tribute to the Local Indigent

Events and programs that foster Christian Unity can be found in many of our communities. The following notice was sent to the local SFO membership passed on to us by Kurt J. LeVitus from Chicago:

"It is a sad event when a homeless person dies on the streets from the cold or violence. It is even sadder when no friends or relatives can be found to claim the body. In the past 12 months, the Cook County Medical Examiner's office has buried 140 persons. Twelve of these persons were listed as 'unknown.' On May 25, 2005, the 20th Annual Interfaith Memorial Observance for Indigent Persons was held to mark the passing of these persons." At the time of their burial there were no relatives or friends present to mourn the deceased, just a minister who gave a brief prayer service before an open grave. Then on May 25th a memorial service was held at the First United Methodist Church at 77 West Washington Street. Guest speaker was Eric Zorn, from the Chicago Tribune. A reception and celebration followed the service."



A Garden of Prayer



By Patrick Mendés, SFO
Contributing Editor

“Christ is both the way and the door. Christ is the staircase and the vehicle, like the *throne of mercy over the Ark of the Covenant* and *the mystery hidden from the ages*. One should turn his full attention to this throne of mercy, and should gaze at him hanging on the cross, full of faith, hope and charity, devoted, full of wonder and joy, marked by gratitude and open to praise and jubilation...” (St. Bonaventure’s *Journey of the Mind to God*)

On warm, sunny days, the gardens are ablaze with color and full of God’s beauty inviting us to vibrant prayer and deed!

Contemplative prayer – out in the garden is a good starting point! We can turn our attention to “the throne of mercy and gaze at Jesus on the cross.” We can reflect on how our Franciscan spirituality, which is *Incarnational*, brings us to a renewed awareness of God’s great love for us. Charity (Love) is the crown of all virtues, for it is from His great love for us that God, in the person of Jesus, became Man.

Our sure and certain hope is born of unwavering faith and rooted in charity, that cardinal virtue which is our motivator. We are committed to return God’s love simply because He loved us first!

The garden allows us to be filled with wonder and joy because in it we see the imprint of the Most High. Suddenly, it becomes easy to say “Thank you, Lord, for the beauty of your world. Help me to be a faithful steward of this great gift. Thank you, Lord, for the grace of my Franciscan vocation. Help me always to be an instrument of your peace and a bearer of your great love to others. I praise you Lord, especially for your great love for me and for your boundless goodness.” “For these and for all good things, O Lord, we give you thanks!”

Contemplative prayer is the “launching pad” for our active life, for, as St. Paul tells us, “The charity of Christ urges us on.” (Caritas Christi urget nos!) Let your good works, born of your prayer, shine before all that they may see the goodness of your deeds and give glory to God. Summer days are truly the days the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in them. May your days be restful, joyful and filled with love and gratitude and always, may the Sacred Heart of Jesus surround you with His love and fill your lives with His abundant blessings.

The Martha-Mary Syndrome



By Constance Watz, SFO
St. Adalbert’s Fraternity
Elmherst, NY

Work – Life Balance



There seems to be an emphasis today on the issue of work-life balance. In our human existence, we find that we have limits - limited time, limited knowledge & ability, and limited energy we can’t do it all. The conflict between our work and our life is a spiritual conflict as well.

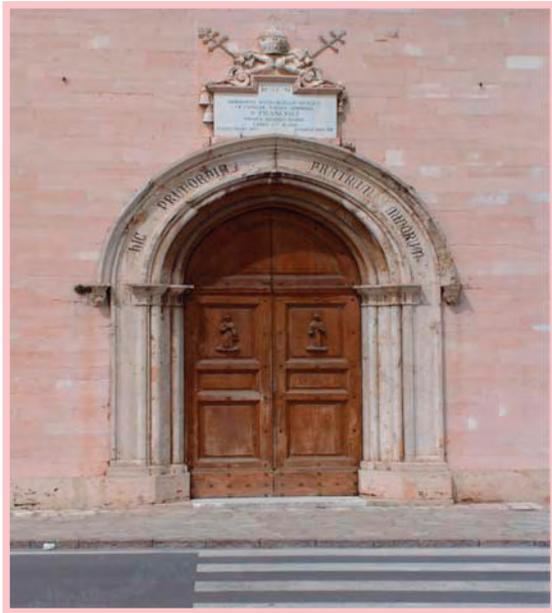
Holiness is doing ordinary things
in an extraordinary way.

We see this dilemma appearing in Scripture in what may be referred to as the Martha-Mary syndrome. Martha waits on table, while Mary sits and listens at Jesus’ feet. We cannot always be Martha and we cannot always be Mary, but we must learn to integrate the two and achieve that work-life balance. Sometimes Jesus is telling us, be still & know that I am God. Mary welcomed Jesus to her home, by just *being present* to Him, *listening* to Him. Martha’s work was also a welcoming one of *loving service* to her guest, Jesus. But, perhaps what Jesus was really saying to Martha was that He knew *her* need to rest a while in His Presence.

In our own lives, we welcome Jesus as our guest whenever we receive Him under our roof in Holy Communion, whenever we take time to rest in His Presence before the Blessed Sacrament. We also welcome Jesus when we provide loving service to Him by responding to the needs of our brothers and sisters. Do we realize that our prayerful listening and good works toward others contribute in making the world a better place? Like Francis, we are called to *renew the face of the earth*.

Even in today’s world the struggle to get the balance goes on. The answer then is to integrate our lives as contemplatives in action. We remain in a listening-relationship with Jesus as He compels us to go out to others. Then by the grace of God the ordinary becomes the extraordinary. For holiness is doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way.

*Many Doors have been
Opened Wide
to the Seculars...these are
our Ministry Stories*



Church of Santa Maria di Rivortorto
Inside is "The Sacred Tugurio," the place of the first Franciscan
Fraternity, where Saint Francis lived with his first disciples.

Pots, Pans and Baby Bottles

By Rita Karvonen, SFO
3400 Colony Drive
Redwood Valley, CA 95470

My faith walk has taken me on many incredible twists and turns all over the world. The venture to help a friend experience actual poverty took me to the Philippines. In Manila, the poverty we encountered was everything one sees in the newspapers, television and relief-organization magazines. It was so great, it was impossible to take it all in. The sights, sounds and smells of poverty, so abject that it seemed almost surrealistic, enveloped us the moment we arrived. The city of Manila defies any attempts to describe it. The traffic, the pollution, the sheer size of it, is simply staggering. The skyscrapers and shopping malls make it look like another version of Los Angeles or New York. The city was hung over by smog and

huge moisture clouds. The buildings are marked by this perpetual moisture. Amidst all those buildings, along an incredibly polluted river, the slums of the poor are squeezed into any space available. They are inescapable and give the city an unspoken sense of hopelessness.

We settled in at the mission and were happy there, but I had a nagging sense of wondering. What on earth am I really doing here, so far away from home? How did this happen? Why did God send me here to minister to these particular people? I would pace the chapel floor at night, pondering these questions, haunted with the thought I was somehow missing the point.

After returning to America, I kept in touch with a family in the little mountain town and my fraternity started a school fund to sponsor some of the poorest children. It was July when I left the Philippines and by the end of November my questions were answered. My friends in Llavac notified me that they had been struck by a horrific typhoon, which left over 1000 people dead. 170,000 families had been evacuated and they were waiting for another typhoon to hit. All of this happened before I could read about it in the papers. I was stunned. That was the area where we had been! There was much back and forth communication between the young woman from my family there and me. I could hear the terror and panic in her voice as she told me what was going on. In the background, I could hear the noise of the rescue efforts. I could hear and feel their despair. Thousands of those tiny huts had been washed down the mountains or were buried in the mud.

Had I not gone there myself this summer, I would have read about the disaster, felt sad for a moment, and then turned to the next headline in the papers. But, because of that journey, I was personally involved and I could do something about it. I began to ask friend and family for donations and informed my SFO fraternity, Il Poverello, who responded immediately to my call for help. Since the families there had nothing with which to cook the relief goods, we began by sending pots and pans and baby bottles. This has become an ongoing apostolate for our fraternity. We feel that good works are always recognized, when they benefit more than just one person.

Our First Annual Bethlehem Christmas Gift Project

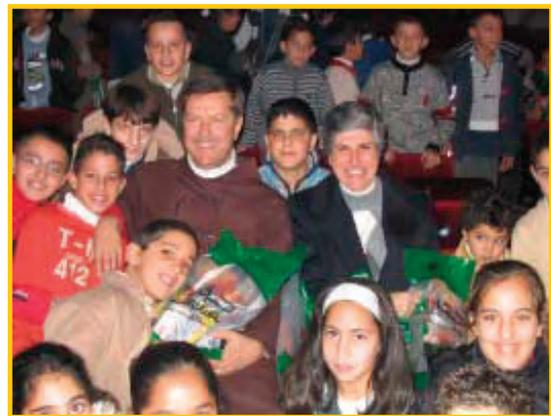
By Faith Libbe, SFO
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I was blessed to return to the Holy Land this past May of 2004. Our pilgrimage was sponsored by the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land. I traveled with 22 other pilgrims from the United States. We met our guide, Fr. Peter Vasko, OFM, President of the Franciscan Foundation at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, Israel. Fr. Peter, a native New Yorker, has lived and served in Jerusalem for the last 20 years and is part of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land. Our pilgrimage was most blessed. We were fortunate enough to enter Bethlehem after an Israeli soldier entered our bus at the checkpoint, requesting to see all of our passports. We later entered the Church of the Nativity built right over the site of Jesus' birth! I was so honored to meet Fr. Amjad Sabarra, OFM, Pastor of St. Catherine's Catholic Church, adjacent to the Church of the Nativity. Fr. Amjad was inside the Church of the Nativity during the infamous siege in 2002. He was truly an instrument of peace during the entire experience. Fr. Amjad spoke to our group and told us the 60% of his parishioners were unemployed and that the community has suffered greatly, especially since this Intifada began in September of 2000. I knew in my heart that day that I wanted to reach out to Fr. Amjad and his community.

When I returned to the United States, I prayed and discerned, with the guidance and blessing of Fr. Peter Vasko, OFM, that I would initiate a program to raise funds to purchase Christmas gifts for the needy children of St. Catherine's parish. Fr. Amjad put me in contact with Sr. Maria Grech, of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, and Assistant Executive Director of the Franciscan Family Center in

Bethlehem. It was when Sr. Maria informed me of the number of the children in St. Catherine's parish, that I realized this project the Lord had put on my heart was going to be a bit bigger than I had anticipated. I immediately consecrated this project to the Lord, putting my trust in Him and praying for His guidance and blessing, knowing that nothing is impossible for Him! By the grace of God, I set out and collected donations from SFOs in my fraternity, from a Scripture Group in my parish, from my Small Faith Community in my parish, from friends, and from family! The morning that I was due to send my donations to the Franciscan Foundation in Washington, D.C., I discovered my total to be \$171.00 short of \$5,000. I was determined to round off the total to \$5,000 even...and quickly e-mailed a friend in Texas and he said a check for \$171.00 was on the way...God is so good! I sent the donations to the F.F.H.L. Headquarters in Washington, D.C. and they consolidated 100% of the funds I collected into one check and sent it to Fr. Peter in Jerusalem for safe deliverance to Fr. Amjad in Bethlehem. I was told that Fr. Amjad and Sr. Maria were thrilled to receive the check for the children. Sr. Maria then set out to coordinate the purchase and distribution of the Christmas gifts to the children.



To see the smiles on the faces of the precious children was the best Christmas gift I could have ever received! (Next to the gift of Jesus of course!) For those of us who participated in this project, please know the blessing has been all ours! To reach out to descendants of the very first Christians living today in the very place where Jesus was born, has been a privilege that warms the heart so! May the light and love of Christ continue to burn brightly in the hearts of the Christian remnant of the Holy Land and...in all of our hearts.



Our Stories

"Why me, Lord, why me?"

By Terri Leone, SFO

During meditation today, Holy Thursday 2005, the importance of "carrying our crosses" became very urgent. As I dwelt on this, the Holy Spirit kept "flashing lights on and off" on various concepts without giving me a chance to really develop them. The concepts, as I recall them, were "carry your cross", "God can/will produce good from any event", "Rebuild My Church which is falling into ruin", "Why me, Lord, why me?" "Franciscans don't have an apostolate", "take up your cross and follow Me", "one who loves is willing to 'die' for the one who is loved". How do all these fit together? What *do* they have in common?

I suppose it is only natural to spend time thinking about "crosses", "suffering" and "death" as we recall and relive Jesus' Suffering, Death and Resurrection to restore us in our relationship with God. We try to imagine the pain and the great love Jesus has for us. We think of the little love we have for Him and how much we complain about the "crosses" in our own lives - the very small, insignificant crosses when compared to His. Many theologians and "great saints" have offered explanations, usually referring to Sacred Scripture, as to the "why" and "how" we are called to suffer/carry our crosses - to atone for our sins; to "show" us areas of our lives in need of "conversion"; to release souls from Purgatory, to show our love for God by willingly sharing in Jesus' Suffering and Death, etc. The following is a somewhat different "explanation."

As I struggle to make sense of the "concepts" listed above, I hear the Holy Spirit say, "Is your brain really that 'foggy' today? Can't you see the connections?" What did God ask of Francis? What was he called to do? "Rebuild My Church which is

falling into ruin." That was Francis' primary vocation and apostolate (which was the visible expression of his love for God); it was and is the same for all Franciscans today. Francis was open to the Holy Spirit's guidance as to what needed to be done or said each day and he expected his followers to be equally open. There is no "one" apostolate for Franciscans except following God's guidance in "rebuilding His Church" wherever we are; in whatever "position" we hold/service we provide (spouse, parent, child, employee, employer, priest, religious, politician, etc.). We are called to "live the Gospel ... going from gospel to life and life to gospel"; we are called to love and live as Jesus did; to experience and to deepen for all the experience of "brotherhood" - oneness in God. How do the various concepts above related to "suffering" and "dying" fit in here? While I accept the teaching of the theologians and saints on this, I am being led to see another facet, as it were, to these issues, and for me, it answers perfectly and completely the question, "Why me, Lord, why me?" It also addresses the Franciscan vocation/apostolate of "Rebuild My Church/My Kingdom". There are entirely too many "social justice issues" and "moral issues/problems" that need "correcting" for us to try to tackle. I know I have asked many times, "Lord, where do You want me to put my time and talents?" He answered, "It lies in your "crosses"!! That is if you let them". Through our "crosses" God is showing us what He wants us to "rebuild" through prayer and action. Through sickness and disease, we can/should see many related issues - the medical care needed; the cost of this medical care; the personal & emotional support needed; what needs to be done to prevent or cure that disease, etc. A child or close friend tells you (s)he is homosexual; a child or friend is arrested after hitting another vehicle after having one too many drinks or being overtired; a child or friend is stalked by an ex-boyfriend/girlfriend; a child or friend is attacked or kidnapped. What do you do? What do you say? Are you overwhelmed by what is/has happened to you or that close person? Are you able to go beyond yourself and think of praying for others in similar situations? God has led me to believe that the reason these things "happen to me" is to make me more aware of these issues in the rest of His Kingdom and that He wants me to pray for others; to be more compassionate and understanding of others in these situations, and to act in some way to "end these evils". In other words, God is calling me (and you) to be a sister (or brother) to those in need in circumstances similar to "my/our crosses."



A Beacon of Hope

By Thomas R. Jacob
Chicago, IL
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"There's a bright light out there. Don't know whether it's an evening star or a planet."

He was in his shirtsleeves, even though it couldn't have been more than twenty degrees out. The sky was clear - as clear as those I had experienced camping in the bottom of the Grand Canyon last summer. I remembered those nights fondly. Nights where the moon shone so brightly you cast a shadow when you walked beneath a dark expanse littered with a million glowing drops of magic.

I looked upward in the direction he was gazing. There it was, brighter and bigger than anything else in the sky.

He had spoken with a thick Irish brogue I thought I remembered hearing in the dining room, though his face was unfamiliar to me. Standing there on the compressed snow and ice, he seemed frozen in time, oblivious to the cold Wisconsin wind that was cutting through my coat.

"It must be a planet. It's too bright to be anything else," I replied as I approached him, my steps sounding unusually loud in the silence of the countryside.

"Someone told me once what it was. Venus, I think, but I can't remember now. I guess it really doesn't matter. Enjoy it, son." He turned and walked past me going toward the abbey. Entranced by the unidentified light in the sky, I didn't even hear his steps or a door close behind him.

My imagination raced as I remembered the Star of Bethlehem. Having spent the last 26 hours praying, sleeping, and absorbing the holy space I had sought, I wanted to believe it was magic. A sign. A beacon of hope trying to convince me with each flicker of its light that all was good and everything would be all right. "Son" had caused a rush of warmth and safety to envelope me—a feeling caused by being the object of another human's compassion.

I continued my post-supper walk by turning left up a slight grade. It wound past the conference center toward a large tree-covered expanse that housed various statues of saints and others revered by the men of the abbey. It was a place I had enjoyed earlier in the day when the sun shone so brightly on the unblemished snow that I was forced to walk with my eyes almost fully closed.

Seconds later, looking ahead and not more than 50 yards away, a figure was moving toward the same destination. A black hooded robe covered its body and it seemed to just glide along as the wide expanse of its garment camouflaged the steps it took. Already vulnerable to feelings of spiritual awe, I again stopped and studied this latest show of the night.

It continued to move almost effortlessly up the road until it reached a gate with a large sign warning visitors to the abbey grounds to "STOP." Pausing, as if undecided or intimidated by this hindrance to its journey, it remained still for what seemed like minutes. But it was only seconds.

I relished the eerie sight. A black-robed shadow on monastery grounds traveling into woods for solitude and prayer on a dark winter night. My imagination flashed split-second images of scenes from movies dealing with possession and exorcism, as well as images of a Higher Power speaking aloud to a chosen one in a forest.

My heart was pounding and I was terrified that I would be caught staring - caught infringing on the solitude afforded by the night. But I couldn't bring myself to turn around and retreat back to the main road. It was too intriguing. Too ethereal.

Having decided to continue, the figure seemed to glide over the gate and, within seconds, disappeared into the darkness of the unlit grounds. I could only imagine the conversation that might take place this evening between the shadow and its God.

After returning to my room and writing down these happenings, I decided that I wanted one more breath of the cold night air before going to bed. Donning my coat, I retraced my steps of minutes earlier. In the twenty minutes I had been inside, the bright star or planet or whatever had disappeared from the sky. The light had been to the right of the sliver of a moon, but now it was nowhere to be seen. Calling upon the minuscule knowledge of celestial movements I garnered from my sophomore astronomy course, I scanned to the left, right, top, and bottom of the sky.

But it wasn't there. Just the faint pulses of light from thousands of other stars.



Our Stories

Our Fraternity

By Jerome Kling, SFO
St. Leonard's Fraternity

In the fall of 1959, the friars at the New St. Leonard's Seminary in Centerville, Ohio put a small ad in the Catholic Telegraph looking for members to start a "Third Order of St. Francis." Six men attended that first meeting and the following month Fr. Jovian and Fr. Cletus began our instruction. Fr. Baldwin took over as Novice Master. Our meetings began with instruction and Benediction in the chapel and a social in the undercroft. Some of the points I remember from Fr. Baldwin are:

- A Ford will get you to where you are going just as well as a Lincoln and you won't have to work extra hours and neglect your family.
- Just before Lent on Penance: "Children give up candy." We must learn to ACCEPT every day things, like waiting for a train, a long line in a grocery store, a traffic jam or very slow traffic. Our Lord is giving you more time to pray.
- Do what you can where you're at, with what you have.
- You can measure your love for God by the one you love the least.
- Pray always and whatever you do, do it for the Glory of God, like washing dishes, walking, eating, mowing the lawn, and painting, etc.

The six of us made our Profession on April 16, 1961. Our next Spiritual Director was Louis Rohr, OFM. The racial issue was starting to heat up and all fraternities in the region were asked to send representatives to a big meeting in Cincinnati. The outcome of this meeting was, if you kept silent when someone was degrading our brother blacks, we would be agreeing with them. If you disagreed with what was being said, we should "Speak Up" and say I disagree.

Like marriage we had our up's and down's. Our fraternities looked for things we could do as a group. We volunteered to help paint the classrooms at St. James (a black parish), but when their men came in, they saw there was enough help, and went back home.

In 1963, we had a dinner to welcome, Fr. William Faber. It was shortly before Christmas and he wanted to know who would be ushering the Christmas Masses. We told him the 4th Degree K. of C. does it. In a Franciscan Church, this was no good. He asked us to order 6 habits and we found out that Cincinnati only had ones for burial. This really upset Fr. Bill and he had the tailor shop at St. Leonard's make us 6 habits. We used these every month for Benediction, Professions and special Masses at St. Leonard's. (Several years later our National Minister said we were not permitted to wear a habit).

Our National people did a lot of debating about our Office, daily Mass, reading the Bible, rosary, and prayers. Some of our older members still do some or all of these.

Our members lived a long way from our meeting place, Middletown, Huber Heights, Vandalia, Miamisburg, etc. We were offered the friars rec room, as a new meeting place. We had a paint party, and used 10 gallons of paint, getting the room in readiness. It was a great room, while it lasted. There was a piano and it was perfect for potlucks.

After this, all our meetings started with Mass, many on the 2nd floor roof or by the pond. We had Mass every week, Council meetings at members' homes, third Sundays were spent together at someone's home. It was a wonderful way to get to know each other.

For me, 1976, was a real challenge. In January, we lost a 19-year-old daughter, after being missing for 2 weeks. With 30 years at N.C.R., I was one of over 1000 laid off, and then, in August, my wife was laid off. We had to learn to accept whatever comes our way.

Eventually St. Leonard's was sold and we moved to St. Francis Parish, where we all have our own ministries. During a visit one veteran who has been bedridden for over 8 years asked, "How is it that everyone finds time to visit a funeral home and can't find time to go to a nursing home?" Over 40% of the people in nursing homes have no visitors. One time, we Franciscans heard Mother Theresa of Calcutta say *"That man, that woman, that leper, that drunk, so smelly, my brother, the image of God."*

The Seashore

By Dottie Alfred, SFO

The waves gently caress the shore, and we find nature free once more.
Tides come in and we are brave to find the sea and sky and wave.
For we who bold come to the coast fear not the troubles bothering most.
We face the foam and marvel there-- answers found to every prayer.
The vastness of the water astounds!
Within the deep and shifting grounds we find renewal and the hope: A new sunrise to help us cope.
For Providence made manifest in creation is always best.
Praise Father, Son, and Spirit forevermore for blessing us at the seashore.

This Goose

By Elizabeth Sonderman SFO

This goose has lived his life well.
Once mated, he remained faithful to his feathered spouse.
He had not debts, no bills to pay, no mortgage on an aging house.
Summers, he winged his way north, then like the snowbirds and other sports, he wintered at the best resorts.
He moved to Florida when he retired.
No relations fought over his nest egg when he expired.
As anonymous in death as he was at birth, he lies beneath a plot of unmarked turf.
I would the complexities of my own life lose, to live as simply as this noble goose!

Dawning

By John Engle
St. Anthony Messenger

The sleeping world seemed far removed from dawn.
The tired wind slept.
The trees that own my lawn were silent.
The orchestral brook lay still.
The screeched owl, hollow-oaked upon the hill, for once forgot his urgent shibboleth.
The morning glories held their honeyed breath.
Then, from somewhere high in a quiet tree, a rapid rain of birdsong fell on me.
That was how I learned the sudden way
God's love turns bleak negation into day.
From doubt's dark pond the sun, a silver trout, leaped up to see what the singing was all about;
and from my inner garden's gray repose, bright faith awoke, unfolding like a rose.

Innocent

By Richard Hurzeler SFO

He bumbled and fumbled, even stumbled.
He wanted to help.
But so many times he was not needed.
So then, derided, ignored; at best abided.
The few that were open to his awkward advances were his own kind—those "not correct,"—disabled, neurotic, psychotic, klutzes.
In his clumsy gait was an innocence, non-intrusive, unnoticed but to the tender ones.
These he touched.
Even the cross he wore with chipped legs and mangled arms said it all— *bent, but caring.*

Listen to Me

By Richard Hurzeler SFO

Listen to me—
let me be.
Deep within your womb
I cry against the tomb.
I want to be like you—
to taste the sun and blue,
to laugh, to cry,
to shine and fly,
to ail and wail,
soar and sail,
to fret and love.
Listen to me—
let me be.
Will it *to be true,*
and always—
I'll remember you!

A Blessing

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May your mind inhabit your life with the same sureness with which your body belongs to the world.
May the sense of something absent enlarge your life.
May your soul be as free as the ever-new waves of the sea.
May you never succumb to the danger of growth.
May you live in the neighborhood of wonder.
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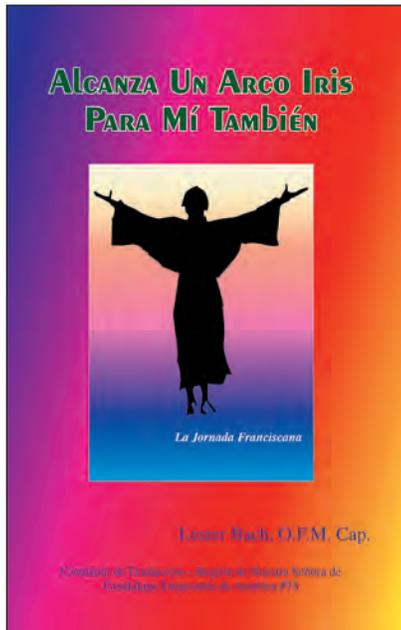
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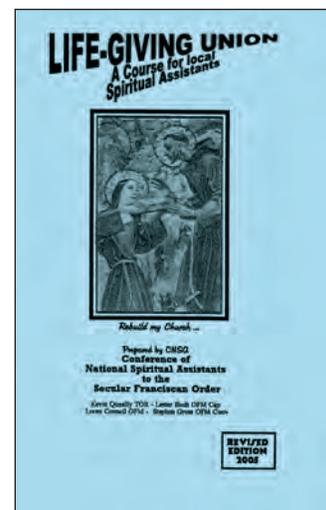
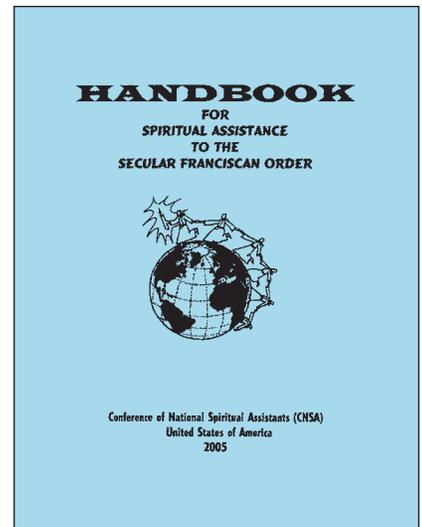
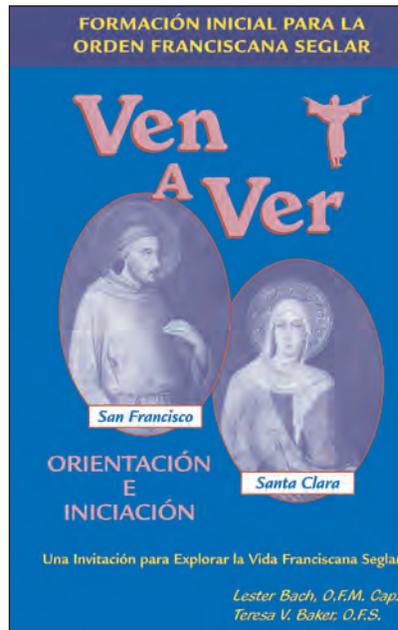


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