



FAN Group Picture by Dan Mulholland, SFO

Franciscan Action Network: Transforming the World in the Spirit Of St. Francis and St. Clare

By Sr. Sheila Kinsey, OSF

WASHINGTON, DC - On Dec. 7-8, 2007, Franciscan men and women from across the United States gathered in Washington D.C. for the inaugural meeting of the newly launched Franciscan Action Commission. Organizational members serve in a variety of entities that comprise the Franciscan Action Network (FAN).

Their mission—like the Starship Enterprise from Star Trek—is to boldly go where no man/woman religious has gone before. While FAN's membership need not traverse the universe to bring about justice, they, as a network of friars, sisters, secular and ecumenical Franciscans along with the men and women with whom they minister, envision a grassroots advocacy that stretches around the world.

The most recent commission meeting, held at Washington Theological Union included the FAN steering committee. In total, 19 members arrived ready to embark on an action-oriented plan to achieve authentic social transformation by viewing proposed strategies, development initiatives and economic endeavors through the lens of Franciscan values. The commission's role was defined earlier within the framework of a commitment statement adopted by the FAN gathering in Baltimore, MD, in March 2007. Commission members affirmed FAN's future development as an organization and the manner in

which members and affiliated organizations implement methodologies.

As members of FAN's core, the Action Commission also agreed to accept responsibility for increasing the visibility of FAN within the Franciscan family and beyond. FAN intends to focus on U.S. policies and how they impact the world. FAN's advocacy efforts shall be strategic, acquiring the critical upfront information for effective implementation. FAN's representatives are intent on formulating focused action initiatives based on perspectives and input gathered directly from those associated with membership communities.

The gathering was marked by an enthusiastic group of attendees. Each of the proceedings at this historic event was conducted within the context of prayer. Some of the members were called upon to don several organizational hats - as regional representatives and members of leadership teams or committees. At the outset, the agenda ensured that members achieved a measure of progress as FAN prepared for its debut in unified advocacy. After the introductory remarks, members shared some biographical information, which helped to nourish the formation of relational connections. Participants went on to share their hopes and expectations for FAN's future expansion into a world ready to harvest the benefits of a *kairos* venture. The bulk of the meeting was spent identifying the aspects of FAN, which are slated to be presented for acceptance to the FAN gathering planned for March 7, 2008. The next FAN gathering would include time to discuss progress and stumbling blocks; the event would also be tied to the annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days which are scheduled for March 7-10, 2008 in Washington, DC.

In organizing FAN, the U.S. was divided into six geographic regions. Each of the six regions within the Franciscan province in the United States was represented on FAN. Although the Poor Clares were not present at this session, they were with the group in prayer. After the meeting, Sr. Claire Andre, OSC, from the Poor Clares of Chesterfield, NJ, said that the sisters definitely kept the Washington D.C. meeting in their prayers over the weekend. She was delighted that the Poor Clares were included in spirit at the meetings and she was pleased to hear of the results. She said that the Poor Clares have an ongoing ministry to offer assistance to whomever shows up on their doorstep. Their prayers also touch the concerns of the world.

The commission made clear that their objective would be to help the larger FAN organization with the formulation of focus issues for which to pursue

advocacy and, ultimately, to achieve positive transformation. The mission, values and procedural strategies were outlined. While moving to activate FAN for the purpose of social transformation, commissioners came away with a sense of how we wanted to operate as an organization which functions as a network. Relational connections were identified as being very important, if the organization is to succeed. Commissioners accepted the challenge to make every effort to enhance communications between groups within the total network. They agreed to utilize the FAN Web site, www.franciscanaction.org, and its list serve. Members expressed a commitment to participate in regular conference calls with affiliates and to report their findings to the commission.

Moving forward, it was decided that an Action Commission would engage in a formation process in order to assist FAN in its effort to keep on task and to provide a resource for the spiritual, technical and other practical aspects. Of course, at the heart of the matter lies FAN's intention to apply Franciscan values and echoes the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare in all elements of this local, national and international movement. Although these values are more fully developed, the following list addresses the areas of the Franciscan heritage that must be reflected in any endeavor:

1. Advocacy will not dehumanize or demonize those with whom we disagree.
2. Poor and marginalized fare better after the action for change.
3. Framework insists on a consistent ethic of life.
4. Non-partisan focus involves bi-partisan actors.
5. Policies involve reconciliation of injustices in larger social sphere.
6. Work in a collaborative and consultative manner.
7. Balanced desire to be prophetic and to make noticeable improvements in peoples' lives.
8. Love in action is our method and process for actualizing how we follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

The members of the Franciscan Action Commission Inaugural Meeting were energized and excited about continuing the development of the "Franciscan Voice." Having been enriched and filled with the spirit, a united commitment was made to prepare for the first formal gathering of the total membership of FAN on March 7, 2008. Stay tuned for more details.

Franciscan Action Network Commissioners:

Ken Beattie, SFO (Region 4)
Tom Bello, SFO (Region 2)
Dan Mulholland, SFO (Region 6)
Jan Parker, SFO (Region 5)
Stephanie Sormane, SFO (Region 3)
Emmett Jarrett, TSSF (Region 1)

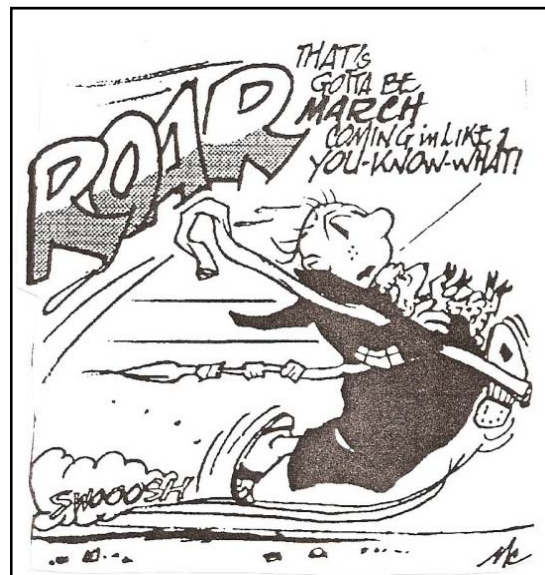
FAN Website:

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

The Franciscan Action Network website is up and running. Please visit it for the latest information from FAN. www.franciscanaction.org

Peace and all that is good!
 Patrick Mendés, SFO

Brother Juniper



By Fred McCarthy, SFO