

# REGIONAL FORMATION WORKSHOP "FUN" FOR ALL!



*Local Fraternities Energized!*

## DIVINE MERCY REGIONAL FORMATION WORKSHOP "FUN" FOR ALL!

Excitement and anticipation were in the air as 53 members of **DIVINE MERCY REGION**, representing most of the region's 33 local fraternities, gathered at the Capuchin Retreat Center in Washington, Michigan on July 22–24, 2011, for a Regional Fraternity Workshop on Formation.

The workshop's purpose was to introduce to local fraternities the newly released national formation manual, *"For Up to Now – Foundational Topics for Initial Formation"* (affectionately called the "FUN" manual), a publication of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order. Divine Mercy's gifted Regional Formation Team, led by their spirit-filled Formation Director, Patti Reynolds, SFO, were amazing in their planning and facilitating of this workshop that was described by attendees as "awesome", "revitalizing" and "the most informative meeting I have attended."



**FOR  
UP  
TO  
NOW**

The weekend's beautiful first priority was reflected in Friday evening's opening prayer service, where a breaking open of Scripture & Faith sharing was led by Deacon Richard Hulan, SFO. The Holy Spirit moved among the brothers and sisters forming a community of hearts open and ready to receive all the gifts of the workshop ahead – and by the end of the weekend there was no doubt that the Holy Spirit had graced all in attendance with the power of a Pentecost! At Sunday's closing prayer service Deacon Hulan stated that he had never before experienced such a movement of the Holy Spirit in the Order as he did in this weekend – both in the fact of the FUN Manual itself and in the workshop's formative events.

Comments throughout the weekend confirmed what he had experienced.

"This manual is so unifying and so complete! It sets a standard and will help us flourish and grow!" "This is a powerful guide! We are now 'in sync'; finally we are all on the same page." "It's so well organized and detailed." "The CD is an amazing resource." "It's fantastic that our National leadership has done this!"

Mary Herbert, professed in 1945, shared her excitement, "All we had 60 years ago was written on one sheet of paper. Now we have so much! This is wonderful". Marie Amore, a member of the Region who joined the International Formation Commission in 2004, shared how she witnessed the beginnings of this formation project nine years ago at the 2002 General Chapter of the SFO. "This is a miracle!" she exclaimed, lovingly holding up the "FUN" manual.

Throughout the weekend Patti and her team members gave insightful and passionate presentations on key topics, as well as on the use of the manual, outlining a plan for how the Region would move forward. The workshop also featured guest presenter, Jan Parker, SFO, a member of the National Formation Commission (NFC) who worked on the development of the FUN Manual for the past two years.



Jan gave several presentations and, with her experience on the NFC, was able to answer questions and present new ideas for good formation. Her joyful songs added even more “fun” to the “FUN” weekend!



Energized by the region’s enthusiasm and fraternal spirit, Jan shared her thoughts on what she calls a “defining moment” for the Order.



“I am so appreciative of the formation efforts of so many who have gone before us and for all that has led up to this moment. I will do everything I can to help our regions introduce the manual to local fraternities because this is where it needs to be embraced.”



Jan noted that she and the other members of the NFC would greatly welcome the opportunity to help plan and facilitate regional formation workshops. “Anyone who would like us to help present a workshop should just call on us! We ask regions to cover our room and board, but our travel expenses are covered by NAFRA.”

The FUN Manual is being released within the regions after it is presented in a workshop-type gathering. “CIOFS (the International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order) asked that this new formation material be conveyed in a living transmission within a fraternity experience. It won’t work to just ‘hand out the book.’ My experience at Divine Mercy Region’s workshop convinces me of the wisdom of this approach. There is no substitute for the wonderful personal exchanges that take place when a fraternity gathers. This new formation project needs to be presented in a gathering such as this.”

The appreciation of those attending the workshop was shared in comments on the evaluation sheets.



He then gave a solemn blessing and after a rousing rendition of “They’ll Know We’re Franciscans” (*by our love, by our love!*) all went forth to share the good news.

*“All the presentations, especially the one on Profession were “excellent.”*

*“Patti, Marie (Amore) and Jan are dynamic and uplifting speakers.”*

**“The profession talk was excellent! It gave us the reason we are Franciscan!”**

**“This weekend was terrific!  
What a beautiful display of diversity of gifts!”**

Understandably, there were concerns and questions as well. Comments included:

“This will take time to read and understand. This is a big responsibility.” “We need to take this little by little — it won’t be difficult, but it needs to be a team effort.” “This is a bit overwhelming — we need to break it down.”

Others added thoughtful encouragement:

“It’s a gift of the Holy Spirit, so let’s trust it!” “Don’t be afraid — just try it. It will take practice but we’ll get it.” “It took them (CIOFS and the National Formation Commission) nine years — I can certainly invest a few hours each week to study it and internalize it.” “Regionally, we can find specialists for each topic, we can help each other. This will build fraternity across the region.” Many said this would certainly move the Order forward. Some talked about this being a watershed moment for the Order. Deacon Hulan summed it up well, saying, “This manual is a gold mine. To get the nuggets will take prayer, patience, time and openness to the Spirit.”

All present were extremely appreciative of the foresight of the Regional Council for arranging what turned out to be a premier regional workshop on “FUN”. Sheri Hafeli, Regional Minister, shared, “This new manual is the key to revitalizing and energizing our Order and a tool for rebuilding our Order. When WE realize who we are called to be it will set us on fire and others will be attracted to the Order.”

At the closing commissioning on Sunday afternoon, Deacon Hulen asked everyone to raise high their individual FUN manuals for a blessing. He challenged each Formator — exhorting them to take all they had learned to their local fraternities. “Read it and live it!” he said.