The Joy Of Francis





Minister's Message By Sylvia Paoli OFS, Regional Minister

HEARTS ON FIRE FOR THE LORD

My brothers and sisters,

So many wonderful things are happening - in our Region, in our Order and in the World. First and foremost in everyone's mind, I'm sure, is the election of Pope Francis - the first pope ever to take the name of Francis - and he made it clear it was for Francis of Assisi, not one of the Jesuits named Francis. His behavior, both as a bishop and so far as pope, has been totally Franciscan. In terms of dedication to service of the poor - and service in general to others, the Jesuits and Franciscans hold virtually identical views. So I think we have great cause for rejoicing. His election and name choice have caused a renewed interest of the world in St. Francis of Assisi, and we need to take every advantage of that. Every person who mentions the new Pope to us should be an opportunity for each of us to point out that we follow Christ after the example of Francis of Assisi and explain our Order to them.

In our Region, we are thrilled with the way all of you have adopted and now regularly use the FUN Manual in your formation programs - both initial and ongoing. Over the past several years, we've seen a wonderful spiritual growth and reawakening in many

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of our fraternities. We have a long ways to go, but we have a great start! (*Continued on page 2.*)

Our first group of Spiritual Assistant interns will be certified at our annual retreat at Serra in May, and the second group of interns will begin their internship. In the meantime, the fourth class for Spiritual Assistants/Formators has begun and just completed its third class. We have close to 40 people in the class, and we see the potential of quite a number of Spiritual Assistants coming out of that class. So we are beginning to see a situation where one day we WILL have a suitable and well-qualified Spiritual Assistant for every fraternity in the Region, as we are required to have.

If your fraternity is having any difficulty, or has questions about any subject, or just needs a little "boost", please know that your entire Regional Executive Council is here to help. Every person on the council works for you in this Region. They do fraternal visits, they do elections, they visit fraternities needing help with anything, they write for newsletters, and many, many more things. The Regional Council is working on and should have available to you before too long a Council Resource Manual. The beginning work on it was done by a team consisting of the ministers in the Orange County district three years ago, working on a "Minister's Manual", which has been expanded to include a manual for the entire local fraternity council.

Keep up the good work, and keep those hearts burning for the Lord! That's the only way we will ever counteract the horrible things happening in the world today.



Every person who mentions the new Pope to us should be an opportunity for each of us to point out that we follow Christ after the example of Francis of Assisi and explain our Order to them."



Regional Retreat at Serra Retreat House, May 2013



The "door of faith" (Acts14:27) is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into his Church. It is possible to cross that threshold when the word of God is proclaimed and the heart allows itself to be shaped by transforming grace. To enter through that door is to set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime.

-Pope Benedict XVI, Porta Fidei.

On October 11, 2011, Pope, Benedict XVI announced that October 11, 2012 – November 24, 2013 will be a Year of Faith, a summons to a renewed conversion to the Lord. The date, October 11, is significant in that it marked the 50th anniversary of the start of Vatican II and the 20th anniversary of the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

At the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops of the Catholic Church held in Rome in 1985, the Bishops asked for a new Catechism, which would reflect the reforms brought about by Vatican II. The last time that the catechism had been updated was at the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century. Blessed Pope John Paul II appointed Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger to oversee the drafting of the new catechism, in consultation with Bishops from around the world. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is a synthesis of everything we believe as Catholics and is the tool that will illuminate our faith and help prepare us to be sent out as apostles.

We are called to love the Lord with all our hearts, souls and minds. However, in order to love the Lord, we first have to come to know the Lord by learning what Christ taught us through sacred scripture. This year of faith challenges us to study scripture, to understand scripture, meditate on scripture so that like a seed planted on good soil, will grow in our faith and be able to communicate our experiences of faith and charity to those we meet, along our journey.

This call to know, love and serve the Lord should not be new to members of the Secular Franciscan Order. John Paul II in his address to the SFO on November 22, 2002, said:

"The Church expects from you Secular Franciscans, a courageous and consistent testimony of Christian and Franciscan life, leaning towards the construction of a more fraternal and gospel world for the realization of the Kingdom of God."

The Rule, which we professed to follow (Article 5), calls us to live the Gospel Life, which assumes we know and understand the Gospel.

The Year of Faith could be a wake-up call to those of us who are in slumber. If we could take the time to read and meditate on the Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*, Benedict XVI, and re-read, meditate on and live our Rule, we will discover that we have the tools that we need for the journey. This year of faith is a vitamin boost for Secular Franciscans who have professed to a life of faith. So we need to take our vitamin boost and get to work, "for up till now we have done nothing."

Sources:

Bach OFM Cap., Lester, The Franciscan Journey. Kansas, 2010.
Barber, Michael, The Year of Faith. Lighthouse Catholic Media. 2012.
Benedict XVI. Apostolic Letter, Porta Fidei. October, 2011.
The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, NAFRA, 1989.

The Treasurer's Report By Frank Miller, OFS



I am sure we have all heard the old phrase: "I have some good news and some bad news....which do you want to hear first?" Let's start off with the good news!

For the third year in a row, the Treasurer's Report at Chapter was able to announce that the St. Francis Region expenditures were less than budgeted for the prior year. This is great news! It shows that the Regional Executive Council's efforts to find more creative ways to handle costs and mileage have had a true bottom-line impact. This Region has made a commitment to visit our Fraternities once a year through timely Election, Fraternal and Pastoral visits. While these visits have proven valuable in ensuring that we all are fully living our Secular Franciscan charisms, they do come at a cost. That cost is in mileage. our

greatest continuing expense. All of us who drive are more than painfully aware that the cost of gas seems to increase more often than the occasions it decreases. The REC assigns Fraternity visitors, whenever possible, based on those who would incur the lowest mileage cost. We also pair up and carpool so there is only one mileage expense. We recycle when it is responsible to do so. In 2012, the regional newsletter, *The Joy of Francis*, became an e-newsletter, published online, saving nearly \$750 in postage & printing costs for each edition. The Regional website (www.stfrancisregion.org) was updated to make it more appealing and user-friendly, also giving Fraternity Councils the ability to download various forms as needed, instead of locally stock-piling older outdated forms. The REC will continue looking for ways the website can provide needed info and resources to the Fraternities. Your suggestions are welcomed!

But wait...there's more good news! Those present at that Chapter Meeting reviewed and approved a balanced budget for 2013. This budget recognizes and supports the value in continued Fraternity visits, beginning a new Spiritual Assistant/Formator class which will produce additional Servant Leaders for our future, an opportunity for all Secular Franciscans within St. Francis Region to come together during the year for a Regional Formation and Social Gathering (i.e. picnic!), our spiritual renewal through the annual Serra Retreat, and many other worthwhile projects.

So, when do we get to the bad news? As we all know, our Rule (Article 25) calls us to be good stewards, support our Fraternity according to our means and "contribute toward the expenses of the higher fraternity councils." You and I most often refer to this as *Fair Share*. *Fair Share* is not an individual obligation, but rather an obligation of the Fraternity for each Professed Secular Franciscan. That obligation is paid annually to the Regional organization, which in-turn pays a *Share* of it to the national organization (NAFRA), which finally pays a *Share* of it to the international organization (CIOFS). These contributions are what pay for the various expenses found at all three governance levels of our Order. NAFRA had raised all U.S. Regions' *Fair Share* contributions in 2013. At this year's Chapter meeting, the Ministers were reminded that Region's *Fair Share* obligation ato NAFRA had increased by \$5 per member, which meant that local fraternity *Fair Share* contributions would also need to increase. With a view that the increase voted by the Ministers would mean we would not need to have another increase in the next few years, the Ministers voted to make the *Fair Share* \$50 per professed member, an obligation of the fraternity, not each individual.





Last century, in January of 2000, I was elected Vice-Minister of St. Francis Region. In October of 2000, I became the Regional Minister when our Regional Minister, Diane Halal, OFS, was elected to the National Council.

The Fraternal/Pastoral visitations were an important event in our lives. From the beginning, I was very uncomfortable with the dynamics of these visits. There I was, with 3 exceptional Regional Spiritual Assistants (RSA), Fr. Steve Gross, OFM Conv., Fr. William Brand, OFM, and Fr. Jim Cleary, OFM Cap., alternating visits with me doing these visitations, and I was sad.

We would arrive, say hello, do an opening prayer, and dig in. We would discuss the formation program of the fraternity, look at financial records, council meeting minutes etc., and all of this was to be done in about 2 hours, and still have time for the RSA to share a few words about the Fraternity. Needless to say, they only had a few minutes at the most.

After a few years of frustration, I asked the Regional Executive Council (REC) and the President-in-turn of the Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants (CRSA) to change the format so we could do more spiritual things during the visitation. After discussing it for a while, we all agreed that we would try a format that would allow us more quality time with the council and the fraternity. So, we started the visitation with 2 hours with the fraternity council, and then about 2 hours with the fraternity. This enabled us to get the "detail work" out of the way with the council, and then have a more spiritual conversation with the fraternity. Surprise!!! I still wasn't satisfied. We needed more spirituality at these visits.

Another surprise, the Holy Spirit wasn't finished. I was appointed a RSA in 2008, along with 2 other seculars, Anthony Hoang Van Le, OFS, and Armando Lomeli, OFS. Fr. Steve was still with us as a mentor, and a big help. So, one day, I discussed another change in the Fraternal/Pastoral visitations. I talked with Fr. Steve first to get a feel for what his wisdom would bring forth. I wanted to explore splitting the visitations into 2 visits, one of each. We both agreed that there would be more spirituality that way, but other things might fall short. It was then decided that all 4 of us would talk about this at our next (CRSA) meeting. We gathered for that meeting and the discussion began. After some quality discussion, we all agreed that it was a good idea and we should present the idea to the REC, and spent time going over every aspect we could think of, with the result that we all agreed to give it a try.

All of the first ones were outstanding. We liked it, but more important, the fraternities liked it. So we are continuing the format.

We now spend 2 hours with the council discussing their formation program, looking at the council meeting minutes, and discussing how we can be of help to their fraternity. It keeps getting better. We then spend 2 hours with the entire fraternity going around the room listening to each member of the fraternity share their thoughts. They talk and we mostly listen. It works well. We then spend about 30 minutes with the council reviewing what help we might be for them and the fraternity. We also write a report on the visit.

++blessings to all. Your brother Rock

Thăm viếng Mục Vụ trong thế kỷ thứ 21 Rock DeSpain, OFS, Trợ Úy Miền Thánh Phanxicô, California

(Anthony Tuấn Cao phỏng dịch)

Trong tháng 1 năm 2000 của thế kỷ 20, tôi được bầu làm Phó Phục Vụ của Miền thánh Phanxicô, tháng 10 năm 2000 tôi trở thành trưởng Phục Vụ Miền khi chị Diane Halal, OFS Trưởng Phục Vụ Miền, được bầu vào ban Phục Vụ Quốc Gia.

Thăm viếng Mục Vụ và Huynh đệ là biến cố quan trọng trong đời sống của HĐĐ chúng ta. Ngay lúc đầu tôi đã không thấy thoải mái với sự diễn tiến của các cuộc thăm viếng. Chúng ta có 3 vị Trợ úy Miền (Regional Spiritual Assistant ,RSA) thật xuất sắc, Cha Steve Gross ,OFM Conv,Cha William Brand,OFM và Cha Jim Cleary ,OFM Cap.Các Cha đã luân phiên cùng đi với tôi trong các buổi thăm viếng, nhưng tôi lại có cảm giác buồn.

Khi đến nơi, chúng tôi chào hỏi, dâng lời cầu nguyện và bắt tay vào làm việc. Chúng tôi thảo luận về chương trình Huấn Luyện của HĐĐ, xem xét tài liệu về tài chánh, biên bản báo cáo các buổi hop.....tất cả làm trong 2 giờ đồng hồ và vẩn còn thời gian cho vị Trợ Úy Miền RSA chia sẻ vài lời về HĐĐ..Không cần nói nhiều cũng biết là họ chỉ có vài phút ngắn ngủi mà thôi.

Sau vài năm thất vọng vì cách thức thăm viếng này, tôi đã đề nghị Ban Phục Vụ Miền (REC) và hội trưởng đương nhiệm của Hiệp Hội Trợ Úy Miền (CRSA ,Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistant) thay đổi cách thức thăm viếng để chúng ta có nhiều thì giờ hơn để nói vể linh đạo. Sau khi bàn thảo một thời gian, chúng tôi hoàn toàn đồng ý với nhau là phải tìm ra phương thức để chúng ta có nhiều thì giờ hơn với BPV và HĐĐ. Chúng tôi bắt đầu bằng cách sinh hoạt với BPV trong 2 giờ và sau đó sinh hoạt với HĐĐ khoảng 2 giờ nữa. Việc này giúp chúng tôi có dịp tìm hiểu chi tiết hơn với BPV và sẽ có nhiều giờ để nói về linh đạo. Thật ngạc nhiên là tôi vẩn không hài lòng .Chúng ta cần nhiều thì giờ hơn để bàn về linh đạo trong các buổi thăm viếng đó.

Một ngạc nhiên khác là Chúa Thánh Thần vẫn chưa dừng lại với tôi. Năm 2008 tôi được chỉ định làm Trợ Úy Miền RSA cùng với 2 giáo dân khác là Anthony Lê Văn Hoàng, OFS và Armando Lomeli, OFS. Cha Steve vẫn là người Cố Vấn và là người giúp đỡ rất nhiều cho chúng tôi. Tôi đã thảo luận về sự thay đổi trong việc thăm viếng Mục Vụ và Huynh Đệ. Tôi nói chuyện với Cha Steve để xem sự hiểu biết và kinh nghiệm của Cha có thể giúp được gì hay không? Tôi muốn tách các cuộc thăm viếng Mục Vụ/Huynh Đệ thành 2 lần thăm viếng khác nhau. Cha Steve cũng đồng ý làm như vậy chúng ta có nhiều thì giờ hơn để bàn về linh đạo nhưng có thể có những trở ngại khi tách cuộc thăm viếng ra như thế. Chúng tôi đồng ý là sẽ thảo luận trong kỳ họp sắp tới của Hội Đồng Trợ Úy Miền giữa bốn người chúng tôi. Trong cuộc họp đó, sau khi thảo luận kỹ lưỡng chúng tôi đã đồng ý nên bàn việc này với ban Phục Vụ Miền. Sau khi thảo luận cặn kẽ với BPV Miền, chúng tôi đồng ý là sẽ thử áp dụng cách thăm viếng này.

Những buổi thăm viếng đầu tiên có kết quả rất tốt, chúng tôi rất thích nhưng điều quan trọng hơn nữa là HĐĐ cũng thích cách thăm viếng này, do đó chúng tôi quyết định tiếp tục.

Bây giờ chúng tôi dành 2 giờ với BPV để thảo luận về chương trình Huấn Luyện, xem qua những ghi chép trong các buổi họp của HĐĐ, thảo luận xem có cách nào giúp đỡ HĐĐ v.v...Sau đó trong 2 giờ kế tiếp chúng tôi họp với toàn thể HĐĐ, lắng nghe các thành viên trong HĐĐ chia sẻ cảm nghiệm. Họ nói, chúng tôi lắng nghe, mọi việc diển ra tốt đẹp, sau đó chúng tôi họp lại với BPV khoảng 30 phút để tìm xem có cách nào giúp đỡ BPV và HĐĐ hay không? Chúng tôi cũng viết bản báo cáo về buổi thăm viếng này.

Xin Chúa ban phước lành cho tất cả các anh chị.

Rock,người anh em của bạn.

La Visita Pastoral en el Siglo 21

Rock DeSpain, OFS, Asistente Espiritual Regional St. Francis Region, California del Sur

El ultimo Siglo. en Enero del 2000 fui elegido Vice-ministro de la region de San Francisco. En octubre del 2000, por la eleccion de nuestra ministra regional al consejo nacional, Diane HAlaL OFS me converti en ministro.

Las visitas fraternales/pastorals heran un evento muy importante en nuestras vidas. Desde el principio,no estuve satisfecho con la dinamica de estas visitas. Ayi estuve yo con tres asistentes espirituales (RSA) excepcionales. El Padre Steve Gross, OFM Conv, Padre William Brand, OFM y Padre Jim Clearly, OFM Cap. Haciendo las visitas conmigo alternandose y yo seguia triste.

Llegavamos, nos saludamos, oracion de apertura y a trabajar enseguida. Por su puesto, nos quedaba poco tiempo.

Despues de unos cuantos anos de frustracion, le pedi al consejo ejecutivo de la region y al pesidente-en turno de la conferencia de asistentes espirituales para cambiar el formato para poder hacer cosas que fueran mas espirituales durante las visitas.

Despues de discutir por un tiempo coincidimos para tratar con un formato que nos daria mas tiempo de calidad con el consejo y la fraternidad. Asi que empezamos con la visita con 2 horas con el consejo fraternal y 2 horas con la fraternidad. Esto nos dio el tiempo para los detalles de nuestra visita con el consejo para poder entonces tener una conversacion mas espiritual con la fraternidad. Sorpresa! Todavia no estuve satisfecho. Se necesitaba mas espiritualidad en estas visitas.

Otra sorpresa, el Espiritu Santo no habia terminado. Fui asignado como Asistente Espiritual Regional in 2008, con otros dos seglares, Anthony Hoang Van Le, OFS, y Armando Lomeli, OFS. El Padre Steve permanecio con nosotros como consejero y ha sido una gran ayuda. Asi que un dia, hable sobre otro cambio en las visitas Fraternales/Pastorales. Primero hable con Padre Steve para ver que sentia El y para ver que no aconsejaba con su sabiduria. Queria explorer si al dividir las visitas en dos visitas. Coincidimos que hubiera mas espiritualidad de esa manera, pero otras cosas podrian faltar. Entonces decidimos que los 4 hablariamos sobre este tema durante la proxima junta de la Conference de Asistentes Espirituales. Empezo la discusion cuando llego el tiempo para esta conference. Despues de un buen tiempo de compartir el tema coinicidimos que seria buen idea y deberiamos presentarsela a la Region. Con el consejo revisamos todos los aspectos que podiamos pensar y result en la decision de tratar a ver que pasaba.

Las primeras visitas fueron sobresaliente. Ahora tomamos dos horas con el consejo hablando de su programa de formacion, revisando los minutes de las juntas, y hablando sobre como podemos ayudar su fraternidad.

Cada vez se hace mejor. A continuación, pasamos 2 horas con toda la fraternidad tomando el tiempo escuchando a cada uno de los miembros de la fraternidad compartir sus pensamientos, que funciona muy bien. A continuación, pasamos unos 30 minutos con el consejo examinando qué ayuda podemos ser para ellos y a la fraternidad. También escribimos un informe sobre la visita.

Bendiciones a todos Su hermano Rock

Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation: A Franciscan Reflection

By Elenita L'esperance, OFS



I cherish many memories of solidarity, joy, friendship, time of quiet contemplation and acquired knowledge on the spirituality of justice and peace work during the retreat organized by the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) last October in Scottsdale, Arizona. In the past, I have made many trips to different parts of Arizona for retreats, visiting friends, or vacationing with family. So far, this last trip stands out as one of the most remarkable and memorable weekend of my life. From every retreat that I attend, I find myself always coming home inspired, refreshed, renewed, and regrouped, growing more in knowledge of my Franciscan spirituality. It seems to me that there is the concept of addition, from the increase in knowledge and spiritual consciousness acquired each time. But in reality, the concept of subtraction plays a much more significant role in the process. Although I have come to increase in self-knowledge, I also realize that I have decreased in my attachment to self, to the world, to many societal values, as well as to some of cultural and religious practices. I have become more attached to "the other", wanting more to serve Christ through "the other" -Christ becoming the central focus of my life.

Francis during his conversion turned toward the poor. I, too, find myself turning toward the poor and the suffering: the human face of Christ on earth. Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM, teaches that unless we reach a higher level of spiritual consciousness, we will not be able to truly serve the poor in humility and surrender. Fr. Richard points out the paradox of Franciscan discipleship and spiritual growth: "Paradoxically, our soul does not grow by being fed. It does not develop by taking more and more into itself, by adding experience, by increasing information or activity. It is not an aggressive activity but a passive one, not by letting in but by letting go." He teaches that the more we fall in love with God or "fall upwards", the more we engage in the process of subtraction. It's about the letting go of things, of our comfort zone, material and worldly pleasures and possessions, and even of our intellectual values.

I guess that is what "on-going conversion" is all about one prayer of contemplation at a time, one encounter with the poor at a time. It is a relationship with the other. There is no real conversion without relationship with another. It is "contemplation in action", one step at a time, one foot of love in action at a time. It is my Franciscan journey of encountering God here on earth, striving to reach the summit of perfection in my very imperfect human nature.

Francis came to embrace creation by first embracing his fellow human beings, especially the poor. The poor reminded him of his true nature: a dependent creature unable to be self-made, self-sufficient, or self-fulfilled. He entered into a radical companionship with the poor, and through them, with all of creation. His life and his new relationship with all of creation, which included the elements, the stars, animals, the poor and the sick, sultans, crusaders and strangers, princes and prelates - represented "the breakthrough of a new model of human and cosmic community". For Francis, poverty is a way of being by which the individual lets things be what they are; one refuses to dominate them, subjugate them, and make them objects of the will to power. As Francis became poorer, he became more fraternal. He saw poverty as the way into the experience of universal fraternity with creation. Realizing that he is a creature of the Maker, a fellow companion with all of God's creation, he was not over things, but together with them, like brothers and sisters of the same family. This is how he defined peacemaking: by being in communion with God, with his brothers and sisters and with all of creation.

Our Franciscan vocation calls us to be prophetic disciples of Jesus in a country full of spiritual, cultural and societal contradictions. We can celebrate all that is life-giving and good about our cultural values, but we must have a discerning eye and ear regarding the messages of the American culture. While our culture exposes us to the messages that possessions and worldly pleasures bring happiness, our Franciscan values call us otherwise. We are called to practice simplicity, to strive to live simply so that others may simply live. As Franciscans, we are called to bring a message of hope and justice to a suffering world. This is our prophetic call - to be light in the darkness. The Gospel calls us to be joyful stewards of our gifts, treasures and talents. We are called to be in fraternal solidarity with others and with all of creation. The Gospel calls us to be active participants in the true "prolife" movement: that means, respecting and valuing every form of life, giving preferential attention to the poor, living in fraternal solidarity with others, promoting a non-violent lifestyle, having a sacramental view of all of creation, advocating for social justice and promoting peace-building. We must be tireless advocates of the consistent ethic of life. Exemplified by Pope John Paul II, we must be critics of war, of the death penalty, of economic injustice and the greed for possessions and property. We must be advocates of worker's rights, the unborn, the immigrants, innocent prisoners, gun control, sustainable energy, abused children and women, elders, and animals. We must be critics of euthanasia and the ecological crisis (global warming/climate change). We must fight racism, human trafficking (modern-day slavery), military use of torture, and the use of fossil fuels for energy. We must walk with our "two feet of love in action" - one foot doing charitable works and the other foot working for social justice.

CONCERT FOR PEACE

The North Park Middle School Band, from Pico Rivera, California will sponsor a "Concert for Peace" on Monday, November 11, 2013 at 4:00 P.M.

This event will be a gathering of children from many places to perform in the concert that will send a message of "peace" to the world. Children have made commitments to participate from:

Haiti, Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador, the Philippines, Ethiopia, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, a Los Angeles Homeless Shelter, a Los Angeles facility for abused children, and Saint Mary's of the Assumption School (Whittier, CA).

More kids from other places are being invited, including children from Los Angeles County's many ethnic communities.

Included will be 9 children who live in a Cuernavaca, Mexico orphanage, and a young lady who lost a leg in the 2010 Haitian Earthquake (her identity will be protected).

The exact performance venue is not yet confirmed. For further information please contact:

Ron Wakefield, OFS Music Director North Park Middle School and Outreach Music Clubs <u>npmsmusic@yahoo.com</u> (562) 328-8653

Editor's note: You may remember that Ron Wakefield received the first St. Francis Region JPIC Award in 2012 for all the work he does with orphans and other disadvantaged children. He brought some of his band members to perform at the Chapter meeting that year.



Names of and contact information for Regional Council members and appointed chairs are available on the Regional website at **www.stfrancisregion.org**.

The Joy Of Francis