



The Joy of Francis

Together for the Gospel!

Spring, 2007 - Vol. 14, No. 3

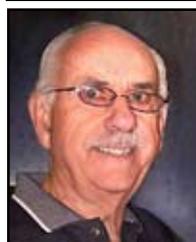
Regional Gathering



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Our annual Ministers' Meeting was held on January 12-14, 2007 at Poverello Retreat House in San Fernando, CA. We were reminded that we are called to be active and intentional members in our Fraternities, and not settle for being associational members. Intentional membership requires the dedication to put one's Franciscan obligations above the many other obligations of the world. Sometimes that means difficult choices and sacrifices. *continued page 3*



To my Franciscan Family: Changes to our Regional Governance Norms

by Rock DeSpain, Regional Minister

This October, we will celebrate our 14th Anniversary of being canonically established as a Region. In my seven years as your Regional Minister, I have encountered things that needed to be amended to exist in the 21st Century. The Regional Executive Council, working as a team, has also been aware of changes that needed to be made. *continued page 2*



*Governance Norms
continued from page 1*

of our Regional Governance Norms, we prepared 2 additions to present to the Regional Fraternity Council (the Regional Executive Council and all the fraternity ministers in St. Francis Region). At the Jan. ministers meeting, these 2 additions were enacted into our Regional Governance Norms, plus the resolution concerning the Year End Report.

Lapsed Members: The first addition concerns any lapsed member who has not attended any meetings for 3 years or more (this includes transferees) is required to go through reorientation before being accepted into any fraternity. Reorientation shall consist of active participation for at least 6 months in the fraternity's initial formation program and in the activities of the fraternity. After completion of the reorientation, acceptance of transferees or of a lapsed member into any fraternity is at the discretion of the fraternity council (SFO Constitutions Article 55 and Regional Governance Norms Article 8.c.).

Election Process: The second addition concerns the election process and how it relates to newly professed members plus members who have transferred into the fraternity from another local fraternity. Newly professed members of one year or less should not run for any office in a local fraternity, and those professed for less than 3 years should not be

elected as minister, vice minister, or formation director.

A member who has transferred to a local fraternity from another fraternity must have been in the fraternity to which he or she wishes to stand for election for a minimum period of 1 year (Regional Governance Norms Article 8.d.).

Year End Reports and Fair Share: A resolution was also passed by the Regional Fraternity Council, because too many fraternities were late sending in their Year End Reports to region. It stated "If a fraternity year end report is not received by March 31, the fraternity is responsible for at least the number of professed that they reported the previous year for Fair Share. Fraternities pay Fair Share for dispensed members. If after doing their official count, they discover that their count is more, they need to report that number and pay Fair Share based on the larger number." Hopefully all Year End Reports are in by now.

Regional Formation Seminars: All those becoming candidates after April 30, 2007 should attend four regional formation seminars prior to profession. All those already candidates who will be professed prior to the series being presented can be professed with the promise to attend the four seminar series, as soon as possible after profession. Formation is ongoing for all, no one is so well formed that they



cannot learn and grow more in their Franciscan life; regardless of how long you have been a Secular Franciscan. The seminars are based on seven years of fraternity visitations that show a consistent pattern of necessary information not being part of the Initial and Ongoing Formation in fraternities. The seminars are an in-depth look at these topics.

Region expects fraternity councils, formation team members, and all professed members to attend if possible. The first in the series is being offered at the following locations. Please bring your lunch (brown bag it) for any seminar you attend.

Seminar Dates:

May 19th, Riverside & San Bernardino County District: St. Elizabeth's Catholic Church, 66700 Pierson Blvd, Desert Hot Springs, CA 92240.

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM. We will gather for social time at 8:30 AM and the seminar starts at 9:00 AM. Mass is at 5:00 PM for those who would like to attend. The contact is David (minister) Cell Phone: 760-285-9591



June 2nd, Tri-County District: Mission Santa Barbara, 2201 Laguna Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93105-3611.

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM. Mass begins at 8:00 AM followed by social time with the seminar at 9:00 AM.

June 23rd San Diego County District: St Patrick's Catholic Church, 3585 30th Street, San Diego, CA 92104.

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM. Mass begins at 8:00 AM followed by social time with the seminar at 9:00 AM.

August 11th Orange County District: Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, 900 West La Habra Blvd. La Habra, CA 90631

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM. We will gather for social time at 8:30 AM at the church hall (Stapleton Room). Seminar starts at 9:00 AM. There is a Mass at 5:30 for those who would like to attend.

August 25th Los Angeles County District: Angeles Plaza, 255 S. Hill Street, Los Angeles, CA. 90012-3303

4th Floor, Parking is \$4.00 All Day. 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM. Gather at 8:30 for coffee, rolls and social time. The seminar begins promptly at 9:00 AM.

Lay Spritual Assistants and Formators session: The first orientation class was on April 28th with another Orientation planned for June 10th. Classes start on June 30th. If you are interested in the program, please let me know and

you will be invited to an orientation session to see if this is right for you and the SFO. Also, if you know of anyone who would be interested in being a Lay Spiritual Assistant or earn a Certificate of Attendance for Formation, tell them and let me know so they can be invited to attend the orientation session. Sessions will be on Saturdays. For more information, call Rock at (951) 766-1308.

St. Francis Region has over 40 groups including those on the way to Canonical Establishment, but only 16 Lay Spiritual Assistants. Please pray and consider this service to our Lord and our Order.

I love this job.

Your servant, Rock
Regional Minister
– St. Francis Region



Gathering, continued from page 1

Another topic of conversation was how to strengthen the fraternal bonds within our Fraternities. One suggestion was to take part in group ministeries as a Fraternity. Done properly, it will both serve God, the Church, and enrich our fraternal communities.

It is important to remember, however, that such service must be kept in perspective, and does not take precedent over Franciscan obligations. Another suggestion was to have more social time and intentional social gatherings outside of general meetings. This will help deepen our fraternal relationships.



Silvia Paoli at the Regional Gathering, January, 2007

Of course, these too are means to an end, and our Fraternities are not meant to be social clubs.

Silvia Paoli's Handout, *How the Structure Supports the Vision*, made it clear that we need to get back to our roots as Franciscans.

Sylvia states, "Anyone whose heart is aflame with the Holy Spirit will, almost automatically, look after the poor, feed the hungry, and support those in missions, and participate in the life of the Church. But those things are not the *GOAL* — they are the *RESULT* of living a Gospel life as evangelizers.

What is the goal? Sylvia reminds us that "our goal, as we have been instructed, is to form an Order that is truly what our founder, Francis, and the late John Paul II had in mind for us — keeping in mind the Vision that the National Spiritual Assistants and NAFRA have spoken about....

Start working on living the Vision and presenting it to the world.





Regional Formation Seminars

Kata Tan, SFO (Regional Formation)

On May
19th, 2007,
the Regional
Executive

Council of St. Francis Region will be starting a series of Formation Seminars that will be held over a period of 2 years and will be held at each of the 5 District in the Region, plus the 3 languages Districts (see pp. 2 - 3 for dates). These seminars are going to cover the following topics:

- * **History of the SFO**
- * **Rule of Life (Pauline Rule)**
- * **Documents of the SFO, and**
- * **The Spirituality of the SFO.**

These seminars, although they address some of the major topics indicated in our Guidelines for SFO Initial Formation in the United States, are not intended to replace the formation lessons held at the local fraternity level. Rather, they are intended to supplement the local fraternity formation lessons.

In the visitations and observations of local fraternities made by the Regional Council and Regional Spiritual Assistants, it is observed that these topics are not adequately covered at the local fraternity formation sessions.

Fr. Michael Higgins, TOR, spoke of the formation within the Secular Franciscan as such:

Most formation programs focus primarily on information, that is, the intellectual development of new and current members of the fraternity. Much attention is given to "teaching" the members about St. Francis by studying his writings,

the documentation/literature about him, the history of the Order and its structure on various levels, and a host of other topics that concern Franciscan life and spirituality. This is well and good and should continue to be fostered at all levels in the Order.

Formation, however, involves more than intellectual knowledge. Formation is fundamental to the life of the brothers and sisters and carries more importance than how much knowledge one may have about Francis or about the order.

Formation deals with spiritual and human development at every level and dimension of life. It is the process of a gradual unfolding of a person's identity as a child of God made in the image and likeness of Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The formation seminars are intended to deal with the "Why" of the above-mentioned topics, not the articles of the Constitution or the Rule. The seminars will deal with the background, the vision, and the inspiration of the topics. Hopefully, this will allow the local fraternity formation sessions to spend more time on bonding and knowing the person undergoing formation and the person facilitating the formation.... a necessary element of spiritual deepening and growth.

Through these formation seminars, we hope to provide clarity to the vision of our Order and stability to our direction and journey.

As Archbishop Ryalco of the Vatican reiterated,

Christians are not exempt from the influence of today's culture. It produces individuals whose Christian identity is weak and confused; faith is little more than a routine practice often influenced by a dangerous syncretism of superstition, magic and New Age. Membership in the Church, often superficial and distracted, fails to impact their choices and behavior in any significant way. Today we are witnesses to a worrisome lack of educational environments not only outside the Church, but also even within the Church....

Precisely in these cases the ecclesial movements appear as places for a Christian formation that is both solid and deep. The movements and new communities are characterized by a wide variety of methods and educational approaches of extraordinary effectiveness. And what is the motivation behind their pedagogical strength? The "secret," so to speak, is found in the charism which have produced them and which constitute their very soul. It is the charism which produces the "spiritual affinity between individuals" animating a community and a movement.

We pray that with the help of the grace of God, we will be able to achieve true commitment among the members of our Order.... commitment to our baptismal promises...commitment to our God and our spirituality....commitment to our Order. Thus, there will be more Intentional members than associational members.



Father Steve is back:

Franciscans as an Easter People



Billed as a SFO “Day Away” retreat at Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Habra, Fr. Steve talked to us about what it means to be a Christian — especially a Roman Catholic Franciscan Christian — in the Season of Easter.

Highlights: In iconography, the symbology of the skull pictured beneath Christ’s Cross at Golgotha demonstrated that Adam, shown buried on the very spot Christ was crucified, was baptized by Christ’s blood. This symbology is amplified by another iconic representation called, the Harrowing of Hell, which shows Jesus Christ breaking the bonds of Hell, releasing its prisoners. These symbolic teachings tell us of the power of Christ’s sacrifice and mercy to reach all people.

We are called as SFO to live in the joy of the resurrections. Our mission is to live so as to share and

proclaim His mercy by showing mercy — by living the Beatitudes: Lord whatever you want is really for the best. We must open ourselves to His possibilities.

Servant leaders should be pastorally sensitive (e. g., understand vision goals of our way of life). Nurture inter-relationships among members and with Christ. They must nurture inter-relationships among members and with Christ.

We must prayerfully ask, “What is God calling me to be (now)? What is my purpose and what is the purpose of the order? How are we responding?”

We must allow time within meetings for an honest sharing of our life’s joys and sadnesses. Help build a sense of community and trust.

Fraternities must also be outward focused to serve their parishes and communities. This takes a careful balance. Our activities are an expression of our Franciscan commitment, but not an end in themselves.

We all serve in our own way, there are no “cookie cutter” Franciscans. Each of us is called to a unique task. A candle is a good analogy for Christ’s impact on us. For His light to grow, the candle must be consumed.

T



RE-LIGHTING THE FIRE OF PENTECOST

By Sylvia Paoli, SFO

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. (Acts. 2 :1-4)

The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name - he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you. (John 14:26)

Do you remember when you were baptized? Probably not, since most people were baptized as infants. What about confirmation? You were probably in your early teens when you studied all about the Holy Spirit and were confirmed. Do you remember? Were you on fire for the Lord? You might have had some enthusiasm for a short while, but it probably didn't last long.

How about when you remember the day of your Profession? I bet you were on Cloud 9 then. How long



did it last?? Think hard. When is the last time you were really on fire for Jesus Christ? Or have you ever been?

These are hard questions, but we who belong to an Order of which Francis said the Holy Spirit was the General, need to answer them honestly. If we don't have that fire that Francis and his early companions had, that caused the 1st Order, the 2nd Order and the Secular Franciscans to grow like mushrooms, and that has been seen in saints down through the ages, then we need to do something about it - each one of us.

The feast of Pentecost was so important to Francis that the Chapter of Elections was held at that time, according to his rule of 1223 for the friars. But what exactly did it mean to Francis? Going back to his early beginnings in holiness, in Celano's Life of St. Francis, the story is told that Francis went down into a pit in the house and lived in darkness, hiding from the persecution of his father:

"Fasting and weeping, he earnestly prayed for the Savior's mercy, and, lacking confidence in his own efforts, he cast his care upon the Lord. Though staying in a pit and in darkness, he was imbued with an indescribable happiness never before experienced. Then totally on fire, he abandoned the pit and openly exposed himself to the curses of his persecutors. He rose, therefore, swift, energetic and eager, carrying the shield of faith for the Lord, and strengthened with the armor of great confidences, he set out for the city. Burning with holy fervor, he began to accuse himself of idleness and sloth."

Such fire and fervor caused those who saw Francis then to believe him mad, and to throw mud and stones at him. *"They blamed everything he did on starvation and madness."* But Francis *"showed himself deaf to all of them, and neither broken nor changed by any wrong to himself he gave thanks to God for all of them."*

Then, because he had ceased hiding, his father found him, dragged him home, and shut him up for several days in a dark place. *"As a result of this Francis became more fit and eager to carry out his holy plan."* But Celano tells us that Francis was not deterred. In fact, he began preaching *"with a fervent spirit and joyful attitude,"* inspiring his

His word was like a blazing fire, reaching the deepest parts of the heart, and filling the souls of all with wonder.



listeners. It was said that “his word was like a blazing fire, reaching the deepest parts of the heart, and filling the souls of all with wonder.”

Ubertino da Casale, writing about Francis in 1305, observed that “from the beginning of his conversion to the end he blazed continually like a fire with an ardent love for Jesus. Fanned by the breath of the Holy Spirit, he kept the furnace of his heart ever ignited. . . .”

If those descriptions do not fit us then we are not being our most effective for the Lord Jesus Christ whom we publicly promised to serve and to model our lives after His, all the days of our life.

Do we constantly find fault with members of our fraternity? Members of the Regional or National fraternities or executive councils? Do we question everything we are asked to do by higher authorities, arguing for our own way of doing things? Do we get so involved with “ministries” - doing good works for others - that we have no time to listen when someone needs a loving friend, or to visit our sick and homebound members, or to join with our brothers and sisters in joint gatherings, for fun, for prayer, for service to others, or to make our Franciscan life the top priority in our busy schedules, pulled on every side by worldly considerations and even by other “good” things?

If we find ourselves in any of these positions, then we have let the flame die, for one who is truly on fire with the Holy Spirit has such a love of

Jesus that nothing else gets in the way.



Unfortunately, we as human beings, are all too human. Our failings are many. But we must pick ourselves up after every failure and begin again. If we let the fire in our hearts die, then we need every bit of help we can get to relight it. We must not hesitate to ask others of our brothers and sisters to help us, to pray with and for us, to guide us. We must spend enough time in prayer — communication with He whom we love - to let Him do the work in us that He wants to do. For He will send the Holy Spirit to rekindle that flame, if we but open ourselves up to it and ask for it.

Let’s get about doing and being the Secular Franciscans that Pope John Paul II challenged us to be - and change the world! To do that we only have to start in our own place - home, work, school, church, wherever we may be - and live the Gospel life we all professed to live.

Notes and references:

Francis of Assisi: The Saint, Early Documents (1999), The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas Celano, Chapter V, p. 191.

Francis of Assisi: The Prophet” Early Documents (2001), The Tree of the Crucified Life of Jesus, by Ubertino Da Casale, Bk. 5, Chpt. 3, p. 173. **T**



SAINT FRANCIS “THE CONVERTED MAN”

*Pope Benedict XVI,
September 5, 2006*

Here in Albano, I have heard, a representation was made of the life of Saint Francis... This can be a sort of first lesson in a context of Christian tradition, to reawaken the thirst to understand better what it was that this saint drew upon. He was not merely an environmentalist or a pacifist. He was, above all, a converted man.

I have read with great pleasure that the bishop of Assisi, [Domenico] Sorrentino, precisely in order to remedy this “abuse” of the figure of Saint Francis, wants to proclaim the eighth centenary of his conversion as a “Year of conversion,” in order to... demonstrate what conversion is by connecting us with the figure of Saint Francis, in order to widen the horizon of life.

At first, Francis was a sort of playboy. Then he realized that this was not enough. He heard the voice of the Lord: “Rebuild my house.” And little by little, he understood what it meant to “rebuild the house of the Lord.” **T**





The Acid Test for being a Christian

Ray Hardwick SFO

RayHardwick@juno.com

The other day I was thinking about the All Commissions Conference that Jo-Ann and I attended in June 2004 at Regis University in Denver, Colorado. The friar who celebrated the Eucharist on Saturday night talked about the polarization within the Church and within the Franciscan Order as well as the Seculars. At the time I was wondering what he was talking about. I was very aware of the polarization in the Church, but hadn't noticed it to any great extent in our order, so I decided to be more observant.

What I observed saddened me, because brothers and sisters that I love were going at one another over who and what is Catholic and who and what was Franciscan. As a result I observed a growing conviction among some Seculars that their brand of Catholicism was the only true way, that those who thought differently from them were, to put charitably, out of step with Rome.

So I asked myself, "Did Jesus have a criterion for being a disciple?" On the recommendation of my friend and brother Dan Mulholland, s.f.o., I purchased a copy of the book "The Holy Longing" by Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I. Fr. Ronald says that there are four things that Jesus asks of anyone who would be his disciples and that they are non-negotiable:

"First, that he or she 'keep the

commandments', both the larger commandment of the heart 'to love God and neighbor' and the Ten Commandments. 'If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.' An essential component of Christian discipleship is having a private relationship to Jesus and being faithful in the area of private morality.

"Second, Jesus mandates social justice as non-negotiable, not optional, within Christian discipleship. This is clear from Jesus' own life, from the text on the last judgment in Matthew's gospel, and from the fact that the gospels, on average, one out of every eight lines is an imperative from Jesus to reach out to the poor."

"Third, as Jesus defines it, discipleship demands involvement within a concrete community of faith."

"Finally, what Jesus asks of us as an essential component of discipleship is a mellow, warm, grateful heart. Discipleship isn't just about what we do; it's also about the spirit within which we do it. We need the right truth, but also the right energy. Nothing counts for much, no matter how right or orthodox the action, if it doesn't issue from love and gratitude. When our concern for truth, orthodoxy, justice, or morality comes out of a place of

anger, bitterness, or judgment, we are no longer acting as disciples of Jesus, no matter how right the cause it can never justify itself in Jesus' name."

"But there's still a further question: Is there anything in Jesus' teaching and his challenge to us that might serve as litmus test? Is there any one, singular, teaching that can serve as a criterion as to who is and who isn't a true disciple of Jesus? There is. For Jesus, the litmus test for a disciple, at least for a mature disciple, is this: Can you love an enemy? Can you bless someone who curses you? Can you forgive, and can you forgive even a murderer?"

"It is precisely to this challenge that Jesus refers when he tells us that our virtue must go deeper than the virtue of the scribes and Pharisees." As Jim Wallis of Sojourners said: "Don't be a liberal or a conservative, but a woman or man of faith!"

We must be careful, irrespective of our ideological temperament and leanings, to be, first of all, women and men of faith, long before we're liberals and conservatives. We must learn to speak and minister from faith and from the gospel and not from some liberal or conservative agenda.

Who's a real Christian and who's not? The deepest answer in the gospels would be: The person who can love an enemy, bless those who curse them, and forgive everyone, even a murderer. To love one's enemy is the acid test of who's a Christian and who isn't. Everything else is rhetoric simply replaying itself over and over



Serra Retreat
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May 25 - 27, 2007

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CHRISTIAN ECOLOGY
(July 27 - 29)

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Some critics of the Christian Tradition have suggested that it is complicit in the "western war against nature". These critics feel that Christianity is too humanity-centered, as well as too other-worldly, to give an intrinsic value to nature, and to environment. Often they cite the idea of humanity being given "dominion" over the earth, as detailed in Genesis, as virtually permission for the exploitation and despoliation of the planet. Is this true? Or, in fact, as the ecological and environmental crises worsen does Christianity offer a positive and constructive approach to how humanity must relate to the world? If this is so, what then are the obligations of the human person towards his or her environment? These are some of the issues that will be addressed in this workshop. Led by: Fr. Aelred Niespolo, OSB

For further information please write, call, fax, or e-mail the Administrator of the Retreat Center if you would like further information. The better hours to call the Retreat Office are: 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. and 2:00 - 5:00 p.m. seven days a week.

Our address, phone number, and e-mail addresses:

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Canonical Establishment of the Luchasio and Buonadonna Fraternity of Los Angeles, November 26, 2006 at St. Basil Catholic Church

The Visitor St. Padre Pio Fraternity & St. Francis and Clare Satellite/ Moreno Valley/Hemet
Minister: Dixie Marshall SFO
Editor: Gerri Merchant, SFO

NEWS: About 35 SFO'ers and guests who attended the "Lenten Day Away" had a spiritual and enlightening day. Highlighted with the them of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, it was presented by Brother John BBSF. Ending the afternoon with "bringing our sins to the Cross" and "Penance". Remember removing the two "n"s in Penance gives you "Peace."

St. Joseph's Staff, St. Joseph's SFO Fraternity, Los Angeles;
Minister: Michael Sanchez, SFO,
Editor: Mike Sanchez, SFO

NEWS: What a great time we all had at our Epiphany Gathering!

We all gathered at the Cathedral Chapel of St. Viviana's on Sunday, January 7 – Epiphany! We sat

together near the front of this small parish church. We heard a powerful historical/factual account of various characters who played a part at the original Epiphany. The church was beautifully decorated and it is wonderful that the members of the parish were warm toward us. It was also wonderful to note that the members of the church were of every race – black, white, Hispanic, Asian - Philippinos, Koreans, etc. – truly an international gathering of the people of God! There was a beautiful crèche set up with a sweet baby Jesus prominent at the front of the church in front of the altar. After Mass we did a short liturgy of praise for Jesus which everyone really enjoyed.

After getting some free religious calendars from the back of the church, we car-pooled off to the Soup Plantation.... After getting our fill we raced off to the theater, which was just across the street. What a simple (therefore Franciscan) movie it was.

It was quite profound and somewhat disturbing to see the trails of Mary, Joseph and the baby, Jesus. But what a joy to know, to be able to see, the great love our heavenly Father shows us in giving His own Son for our salvation! There were a number of times I found myself spiritually stunned and even brought to tears at the goodness of God. Everyone enjoyed themselves so much and enjoyed each other so much that the general consensus was – *"WE MUST DO THIS AGAIN!"*

Icons of Sinai pilgrimage: What a blessed (and crazy) time we had! God is so good and really, truly takes care of us. We began the day at St. Vivian's Chapel in Beverly Hills... We arrived at the Getty and kept an eye out for people for a while but soon moved to some benches and chairs facing the ocean on the West. After a "snack," we settled down to hear a talk (by me) about the Ascetic life – how the Patriarchs of the Hebrew Bible, the prophets, Jesus and his disciples and then father Francis all lived this life and encouraged others to follow their example.

We then got into a discussion of the Desert Fathers who first established St. Katherine's monastery in the Sinai. People seemed to enjoy it (it went long but everyone's eyes were bright and joyful!). After that we went to see the exhibit which was amazingly beautiful, powerful and profound and took us all back over a thousand years to the faith of the early believers. We ran into Bob and Mary Rose Garon while there, and later, Fr. Manny Gacad joined us. I think we all got our 'hearts' full of the exhibit.





Newly Forming Santa Ana fraternity of St. Joseph the Worker. From left to right, top row: Ralph Moreno, Judy Gaspar---bottom row Margaret Tapper, Sharon Deveaux.



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Discernment and the Spirit

Observations from a newly forming Fraternity

Judy Gaspar, SFO

During the summer of 2004, I felt the gentle nudging of the Spirit. By October, it was no longer gentle. It seemed that I was being called to begin a new fraternity at my own parish. "Why, Lord. Aren't I busy enough? What will our new pastor say? How can I be the formator of a new group? Me?"

Fr. John Money Penny, our pastor, was delighted, but he wanted to read more about it. Within days he gave his approval. After this past Saturday's meeting with Fr. Steve, I realize that we are quite blessed to have a very supportive pastor! Then I met with Rock at the Roadhouse in Riverside, half way between our two homes. He gave the OK to begin, so we were set to go. I invited Sharon Deveaux to help with formation, and the "Little Portion" in Irvine" agreed to sponsor this new group.

Margaret Tapper, a candidate, spoke the following words at a Sunday Mass:

"Have you ever had the Holy Spirit tap you on the shoulder and say WAKE UP?? That's what this was for me. As I sat in church that day, I had been thinking/praying about what it was I should do to strengthen and further develop my commitment to the call that we are given at Baptism. When the Holy Spirit taps you on the shoulder, -- you'd better respond. So, the words flew out of my mouth. 'I might be interested in that.'"

In March, three inquirers came. It

was delightful to see them and to hear their stories. BUT, in April, we added more and more chairs to our circle. The table with Francis on it had to be moved back to make room. Now I was starting to get a bit excited. I cannot capture the two hours in words. It was like Pentecost! The wind of the Holy Spirit was swirling at a rate that seemed to move everyone there.

We were all speaking the same language---the words that people of like minds say to each other. It was supposed to be meeting from 3-5pm, but no one moved. No one wanted to leave. 45 minutes later, when I feared that we might be having an "all-nighter," I opened the front door. We walked slowly across the school yard---still on fire. Then we lingered out by the curb--still talking, still unable to break apart.

It is obvious that I was excited, am excited, and look forward to our next gathering with great anticipation. This group is now 14! I know it doesn't mean that these inquirers will someday be professed, but what happened that day was "priceless!" What I can say for sure is this: bulletin announcements do not bring inquirers! Personal testimony does! Let someone who is trying to live the gospel life do it! It doesn't matter if that someone is not professed yet. Let's not keep our Order a secret any longer! Let's all get excited about the possibilities of what might happen!



Quinquennial Congress Moves to New Location

The 'Q' Planning Committee has changed plans and relocate the congress from Steubenville, Ohio to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It's a scenic river community. In fact, it's where three major rivers converge. Held every five years, the Congress will convene July 3 at the Radisson Hotel Pittsburgh Green Tree, 101 Radisson Drive, Pittsburgh, and run through July 8.

The Radisson will facilitate featured presentations, the daily liturgies, and the three tracks that the Congress will offer – the general sessions, the youth/young adult track and the sessions for spiritual assistants. In addition, the meeting rooms and the hotel's 465 guest rooms are equipped with complimentary high-speed internet access."

The 'Q' offers Franciscans of all stripes, and anyone with an interest in St. Francis of Assisi, to share and explore the Franciscan charism. With a focus on celebrating cultural and ethnic differences, the 'Q' theme is *Many Cultures – Through Francis – In Christ*.

The multicultural theme will be highlighted during liturgies and presentations. There will be masses in Korean and Spanish, plus an Eastern Rite Divine Liturgy and an Indian, Syro-Malabar Rite mass. In addition to three plenary addresses, there will be sessions and workshops on the following topics:

Keynote Speaker will be Episcopal Priest Eric Law, author of *Sacred Acts, Holy Change: Faithful Diversity and Practical*

Transformation, The Wolf Shall Dwell With the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community, and other works.

Care Giving and the Elderly by Patti Normile, SFO, former teacher, hospital teacher and retreat director. She has written several books and is the author and teacher of *Caring with Faith*, a video series designed to train people for ministry to the sick and dying.

Spirituality in Today's Secular World by Ed Shirley, SFO, professor of religious studies at St. Edward's University in TX and chairperson of the National Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee.

Secular Franciscans and the Catechetical Ministry by Ron Pihokker, SFO, director of the Catechetical Office of the Archdiocese of Newark, NJ and chairman of the Religious Education Division of the National Catholic Education Association.

Francis, Divine Providence and Our Secular Life by Javier Orozco, SFO, chaplain at DePaul University and newly elected vice-minister of the Mother Cabrini Reg.

Besides the general sessions, there will be **Youth and Young Adult** sessions for those between the ages of 16 and 26; and sessions for Spiritual Assistants. The Youth and Young Adults will participate in a **Franciscan Youth Congress**, the first one held in the USA in over 30 years. The Youth and Young Adult track will include a collection of

new tennis shoes and socks to be donated to *Footprints Ministry*, a non-profit organization which helps the underprivileged, begun by Rose Averill, SFO. The Franciscan Youth Congress will also include workshops on **Youth to Youth Leadership Training, Franciscan Ecology with an Urban Renewal Restoration Project**, other activities, and dances.

The **Spiritual Assistant** sessions will provide hands-on training and formation for those religious and lay who are serving SFO fraternities as spiritual assistants.

Quinquennial special airline price

Regional Minister Rock DeSpain has obtained a special price for round trip airfare for the Quinquennial on Delta Airlines. It is \$264.00 per person if 10 or more fly together.

The flight leaves Ontario airport on July 3, 2007 at 6:05AM and arrives in Pittsburg at 3:48PM. This will give us plenty of time to arrive for dinner and the opening Mass. Our return flight leaves Pittsburg at 4:33PM and arrives at Ontario Airport at 9:50PM. All times are based on the local time of the airport.

Make sure you let Rock know as soon as possible. The price is based on a non-cancellation agreement. If you reserve and cancel, there will be a charge, we might be able to change the names as long as the reserved number remains the same. The last Q we had over 20 fly together.



REGISTRATION FORM
SFO: QUINQUENNIAL CONGRESS
JULY 3-8, 2007



Opening Mass on Tuesday, July 3 at 7:00 pm
Congress Concludes Sunday, July 8 at 1:00 pm

Important Instructions:

1. Please **TYPE** or **PRINT** all information clearly.
2. Only one participant or married couple per registration form.
3. Payment must accompany this form and is **NON-REFUNDABLE**.
4. Make your check for registration and meals payable to **NAFRA**.
5. Mail this form with payment to: Dennis W. Ross, NAFRA Treasurer,
8933 Trailwood Court, Mentor OH 44060-2131
d_ross@oh.rr.com
6. **Hotel reservations must be done separately by each person (see bottom of this form).**

PLEASE TYPE or PRINT CLEARLY

Title First Name(s) Last Name

Address City State Zip Country

Home Phone Work Phone E-Mail Address

Early Registration: # of people _____ x \$ 110 = \$ _____
After May 10, 2007 the registration is \$ 150 per person.

Meal Plan: Tuesday Dinner through Sunday Breakfast

of people _____ x \$ 150 = \$ _____

If received by May 10, 2007: TOTAL = \$ 260 per person
If received AFTER May 10, 2007: TOTAL = \$ 300 per person

Housing and the Congress are at: The Radisson Hotel Pittsburgh Green Tree
101 Radisson Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15205 Telephone: (412) 922-8400 www.radisson.com
NAFRA has arranged for a discounted room rate of \$ 74.00 per night. Each room has twin double beds with 1 to 4 occupants possible. You should make your own room arrangements directly with the hotel **prior to June 9** in order to get this reduced rate.
IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN SHARING A ROOM AND NEED A ROOM MATE, PLEASE CONTACT: ELIZABETH ALLEN AT 619-427-4613 RATHER THEN THE HOTEL, PRIOR TO JUNE 1.
The Hotel provides free shuttles to and from the Pittsburgh Airport.



The Portiuncula Indulgence

HOW ST. FRANCIS ASKED AND OBTAINED THE INDULGENCE OF FORGIVENESS

From: www.franciscanfriarstor.com/stfrancis/stf_portiuncula_indulgence.htm

He awoke one night in 1216 at the Porziuncola and an inspiration stronger than usual prompted him to arise and go into the little chapel. He knelt in prayer and, as he prayed, our Lord, accompanied by His Mother, appeared to him and bade him ask for that which he desired most. "O God," he said, "although I m a great sinner, I beseech You to grant a full pardon of all sins to all who, having repented and confessed their sins, shall visit this church." And Jesus said to him: "Francis, you ask much, but you are worthy of greater things, and greater things you shall have."

Our Lord then granted Francis' request and told him to go to His Vicar for ratification of the indulgence. Honorius III, who was just beginning his Pontificate, was holding court at Perugia, and it was to him that Francis presented his petition.

Honorius was a spiritual, unworldly man, yet at such a request he hesitated. "Holy Father," Francis said urgently, "a little while ago I restored a chapel for you in honour of the Virgin Mother of Christ (the Portiuncula), and I beseech you to bestow on it an indulgence."

"For how many years do you want this indulgence?" the Pontiff inquired. "Holy Father," said Francis, "I ask not for years but for souls." "Just what do you want?"

Honorius asked. "Holy Father," replied Francis, "the Lord has commanded me to ask you that all those who after confession shall visit the Portiuncula with contrite hearts may obtain full remission of the punishment due to the sins of their whole lives from the day of Baptism to the day they enter this church." Honorius pondered the extraordinary request, and said slowly three times: "I also, in the name of God, grant you the indulgence."

Honorius wanted to give Francis the document of the indulgence, but Francis saw no need for it. "What have you to show that this indulgence has been granted you?" the Pope asked in amazement as Francis prepared to depart for Assisi without any written confirmation of the great permission. "Holy Father," he replied, "Your word is enough for me. If this is the work of God, it is for Him to make His work manifest. I desire no other document. The Blessed Virgin Mary shall be the charter, Christ the notary, and the angels the witnesses." Some days later, before the Bishops of Umbria, Francis said: "Brethren, I want to send you all to Heaven!"

CONDITIONS TO OBTAIN THE PLENARY INDULGENCE (for oneself or for a departed soul)

* *Sacramental Confession to be in God's grace (during the eight days before or after);*

* *Visit to a Catholic Church, followed by PROFESSION OF FAITH, in order to reaffirm one's own Christian identity;*

* *Participation in the Holy Mass and Eucharist.*

* *Say the OUR FATHER, in order to reaffirm the dignity as child of God that one received in Baptism;*

* *A prayer for the Pope's intention, in order to reaffirm one's membership in the Church, of which the Roman Pontiff is the foundation and sign of visible unity.*

NOTES: Prior to 1480, the Indulgence could be gained *only* in the Portiuncula chapel. Later popes extended the privilege to all churches pertaining in any way to the Franciscan Order. In 1910, Pius X granted the privilege that bishops could appoint any public churches whatsoever for the gaining of the Portiuncula Indulgence, whether on Aug. 2nd or the Sunday following (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis, II, 1910, 443 sq.; Acta Ord. Frat. Min., XXIX, 1910, 226*). This privilege has been renewed for an indefinite time by a decree of the S. Cong. of Indul., March 26, 1911 (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis, III, 1911, 233-4*).

The Portiuncula Indulgence was again confirmed by Pope Paul VI after the Second Vatican Council in his Apostolic Constitution, *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, (1967).

While the declarations of the Popes have rendered the Portiuncula Indulgence *certain and indisputable* from the juridico-canonistic standpoint, its *historical authenticity* (sc. origin from St. Francis) is still a subject of dispute.



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WHAT IS A SECULAR FRANCISCAN?

A Secular Franciscan is a person conscious of their baptismal dignity who incorporated into the people of God through spirituality of communion, lead their brothers and sisters to encounter the living Jesus Christ. They are largely responsible for the future of the Church. They work in holiness wherever they are and consecrate the world itself to God. They embody deeply evangelical ideas, such as mercy, forgiveness, honesty, transparency of heart and patience in difficult situations. They announce the Gospel with one heart and soul. They cultivate deep unity among themselves, which is based on complete doctrinal agreement. They live belonging to the Church and society as inseparable realities. They commit themselves with connection to the high measure of ordinary Christian life. They are persons who persevere in the true faith and in a life of joyful conversion in the manner of St. Francis of Assisi.

CF The Church in the Americas JP11
 CF Consistoral Message JP11
 CF Message of JP11 to the S.F.O.

Most high
 glorious God,
 enlighten the
 darkness of my
 heart;
 Give me, Lord,
 a correct faith,
 a certain hope,
 a perfect charity,
 sense and
 knowledge,
 so that I may
 carry out Your holy
 and true command.
 - St. Francis of Assisi

The Joy of Francis



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