



# The Joy of Francis

Together for the Gospel!

Winter, 2010 - Vol. 18, No. 1

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### Newsletter Editor

Ted Hewitt, SFO

### Associate Editor

William Mussatto, SFO



*A Franciscan Jubilee Pilgrimage, on the Vigil of the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, held at Mt. Carmel in the Desert Retreat Center in Palmdale, one of many places Franciscans gathered to celebrate the 800 Year Jubilee. See page 12.*

## Minister's Message January 2010

### **Hearts on Fire for the Lord!**

by Sylvia Paoli, Regional Minister



My brothers and sisters,

As we begin a new year, I pray that each of us in St. Francis Region can look within our own hearts and realize that we are closer to Our Lord now than we were a year ago. If for some reason we are not, then we need to spend more time in prayer getting to know our Friend and Brother better.

This is so important because without that close relationship with Jesus,

we will not be able to carry out the mission we've been charged with by our founding father Francis, repeated by Pope John Paul II, to go out and "rebuild my house." In his talk to the international Chapter in Hungary in 2008, Fr. Marco Tasca, OFM Conv., said the beginning of the Franciscan charism involves three great interconnected moments, just as it did with Francis: conversion,

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evangelical life, and configuration to the Paschal Christ. Fr. Marco's entire address has been sent to all the ministers, with a request that it be the subject of ongoing formation in the fraternity.

He summed up the conversion experiences by saying they consisted of an initial personal meeting with God and His Merciful Goodness, and the experience of God which transformed the depths of Francis' (and our) humanity: mind - heart - will. Those actions changed him from a self-centered way of thinking to a way of thinking that was centered on the poor, crucified Jesus Christ.

Fr. Marco said "a converted mind has acquired the wisdom to know what and where its real enemy is: not elsewhere or in others, but in its own self, the only one over which it has control." Right along with the mind is the need for a converted heart - that radical daily change called conversion. A converted heart means not being envious of others, loving all - even those who offend one; it is a poor heart and a pacified - or peaceful - heart.

Then there is the will which must be converted. Conversion of the will means expropriating your own self and your own will; not appropriating for yourself your own will, desires, and the goods/gifts with which God blesses you; directing yourself freely to the will of God; renouncing (abandoning) everything that one possesses,

giving it all to God, losing your own life (body and soul) to save it, through obedience: real, charitable and perfect.

This, then, is the basis for who we should be and what we should be about. Essentially, in following the Gospel life, we must first love, as did Our Lord who showed His love by becoming one with us. From that love flows total selflessness, a being centered totally on the Other and others, without room for "me, myself and I." It requires a daily conversion and a daily centering on Christ, as Francis did, and carrying that out into our daily world activities. Let's get and keep our hearts on fire for the Lord, filled with passion for doing His will and being evangelists in our world.

At our recently concluded Chapter meeting (Ministers' Meeting), our National Formation Director, Bob "Fitz" Fitzsimmons, spoke to us on the need for us to recapture the vision of Francis and the energy and vitality of the Franciscan movement which he began. He and his team are busy preparing a formation manual for use by everyone, putting into useable form all of the information that developed from the International Chapter in 2008, and which is continuing to be sent to us. Prominent in all of the information we are receiving, and which was in Fitz' talks as well, is the need for each and every one of us to have our heart on fire for the Lord, as it surely was at the time of our Profession. Let's make this a priority this year!



## **The Secret of True Happiness: Become Saints**

*Pope Benedict XVI, VATICAN CITY,  
JAN. 27, 2010*

[full article at: http://www.zenit.org/article-28181?l=english](http://www.zenit.org/article-28181?l=english)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Continuing our catechesis on the Christian culture of the Middle Ages, we now turn to Saint Francis of Assisi, one of the greatest figures of the Church's history. The story of Saint Francis' life and conversion, and his complete devotion to Christ, poor and suffering, is well known.

After gathering a small group of companions and followers, including Saint Clare, Francis sought the approval of Pope Innocent III for his movement, which was completely committed to the renewal of the Church in holiness and to the preaching of the Gospel. Near the end of his life, Francis' configuration to the Crucified Lord culminated in his reception of the stigmata at La Verna. His deep piety found expression in a great devotion to the Eucharist, as the sacrament of Christ's real presence, and his love for creation as God's handiwork. The life and teaching of Saint Francis has inspired countless people to the imitation of Christ through the embrace of inward and outward poverty. May his example teach us ever greater love for the Lord and his Church, and help us to know the immense spiritual joy born of the imitation of Christ and the pursuit of holiness.





## ANNUAL CHAPTER MEETING OF ST. FRANCIS REGION

*By Midge Neff-LeClair, District Liaison  
for San Diego County*

Packets were filled with information and preparations completed as the Regional Council welcomed those arriving to attend the annual Chapter (Ministers' Meeting) January 15-17, 2010. Greetings were exchanged as check-in continued, rooms located, luggage deposited and we returned to the gathering area. Dinner was followed with Evening Prayer in the Chapel. Later, regional Minister Sylvia Paoli opened the meeting

Friday evening. We were treated to a dynamic presentation by Bob "Fitz" Fitzsimmons, S.F.O., National Formation Director, followed by a pleasant social time.

Saturday was a full day---beginning with morning prayer in the Chapel at 7:30 followed by breakfast at 8:00. Opening prayers, introductions and roll-call, followed by the treasurer's report with a budget presentation was next. Ninety people had been expected for Saturday, including the current Lay Spiritual Assistant/



*Jan DeSpain, SFO*

Formator class, and most of them were there.

Ongoing Formation was presented in depth by the National Formation Director, Bob "Fitz" Fitzsimmons, an eloquent speaker who is "writing" the book on Formation for National. [A summary of Fitz' talks appears elsewhere in this issue.] Sylvia introduced Jan De Spain and Cathy Kwon who shared with us information about the H2O project,

**Chapter, continued page 4**



*Cathy Kwon, SFO, sharing information on the H2O Project: Make water your only beverage for 2 weeks. After 2 weeks, donate the money you saved to the organization of your choice.*



**Chapter, cont'd from page 3**

a Lenten project of the national Youth and Young Adult groups.

After lunch, Sylvia gave the Regional Minister's year-end report, noting that there were 914 professed in the Region reported on the Region's annual report to NAFRA (national fraternity). She stated that there were 31 fraternities and 9 forming groups. Formation Seminar No. 2 was given 5 times, one in each district. The lack of spiritual assistants is still a critical issue, and so she and vice-minister Bob Herbelin are serving as temporary spiritual assistants to two forming groups, and all three of the Regional Spiritual Assistants are serving local fraternities as well as the Region.

Following the continuing presentation of Ongoing Formation by Fitz, the District and Language groups met in small groups. After the group meetings, reports were given from the

Districts. A vote was then taken on recommendations to elevate some of the forming groups, with Sylvia saying a few words about each group. St. Benedict's Newly Forming Group, St. Agnes Newly Forming Group (Vietnamese), My God My All Newly Forming Group (Young Koreans), and St. Mary of the Angels Newly Forming Group were elevated to Emerging Community status. Immaculate Heart of Mary Emerging Community and St. Maximilian Kolbe Emerging Community (Korean) received an affirmative vote to become canonically established fraternities. Rock de Spain, President-in-Turn of the Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants, gave an inspiring presentation.

Fr. Steve Gross, OFM Conv., presided at our evening Mass. Gerri Merchant assisted Fr. Steve in preparing morning and evening prayers, and providing the environment for prayers and Mass.

After dinner we were treated to a short concert by a group of young people from the North Park Middle School Band. Everyone was amazed at the quality of their performance. They were led by Ron Wakefield, SFO, who is raising money to take the band to New York where they will give a concert in Carnegie Hall.

Ron spoke briefly about the innovative program of "Kids Helping Kids" whereby the band members go into inner-city and residential treatment facilities and a children's hospital, where they teach children in those facilities to play instruments. A former student of his has started the same program on the east coast. A number of those disadvantaged children - from the Los Angeles area and from Baltimore, New York City, and Philadelphia, will travel with the band to New York City and play in the concert. This is a once in a lifetime chance for these youngsters, and there was generous support for them.

Sunday we approved the new budget for this year, heard again briefly from Fitz, completed our unfinished business, and concluded with an "open forum" where each Minister who wished could speak on any topic. The closing prayer ended a well planned, full agenda annual meeting. Our Regional Council---Sylvia Paoli, Bob Herbelin, Judith Mussatto, Carolyn Paxton, Bob Lopez, Tuan Cao, John Kwon and the Spiritual Assistants once again provided us with an enlightening, informative, and inspired weekend.



*KIDS HELPING KIDS band members from North Park Middle School, led by Ron Wakefield, SFO. These young people teach disadvantaged youth music, and are raising money to take them to play a concert at Carnegie Hall in New York.*



# Ongoing Formation at Annual Chapter Meeting

St. Francis Region was blessed to have Bob “Fitz” Fitzsimmons, National Formation Director, speak at the annual Chapter meeting held January 15-17, 2010, at Marywood in Orange.

On Friday evening Fitz spoke briefly on the theme of *Hearts on Fire for the Lord*, using Joyce Rupp’s “Hearts on Fire” as the basis. He gave the gathered ministers these questions for reflection: What were you last passionate about? Does your profession reflect the passion and fire of a personal call of the Holy Spirit for others? When were you last excited to be a Franciscan in pursuit of Jesus? What prevents you from imaging the Father as God wildly and recklessly in love with you? When did you last let your light shine?

Fitz entitled his Saturday morning presentation: *The Dream - Propositum Vitae - The Gospel Life*. The life Francis chose was one of identity - a commitment to a lifestyle based on following Jesus, and on a few lines of Scripture. (*Mt. 19:21, Mt. 16:24, and Luke 9:3.*) He was talking about a major shift in the model of the Church, from being primarily a Church based on Acts - Apostolic, to a Church based on Jesus - Evangelical. Fitz set up a diagram of “Churchianity vs. Christianity.” In the former we find hierarchy, unequal relationships, prayer limited primarily to “official” prayer and prayer forms. In the Evangelical church all are brothers and sisters, a family - all equal, prayer is available to all using any formula, especially contemplation, leaders

occupy the role of servant, not lord. He challenged us with: Where are we, and where do we want to be?

## Apostolic vs Evangelical (Michael Crosby OFM Cap)

Traits which typify Franciscan Evangelism include:

- Brothers & sisters under a common Father
- Humanity must de-center to create a common cause between people and the earth
- Simplify (*sine proprio*) so we can be in solidarity w/poor and proclaim the Good News
- Gospel is global & entwined in the cry of the poor - marginalized by either Church or State
- Prayer available to all as trusting daughters & sons
- any formula esp. contemplation
- Leaders accountable to the fraternity - role of servant not lord
- Peace the only radical alternative

He spoke about the **5 M’s** as the barometer of an institution’s history, based on material from Richard Rohr, OFM. The five are: *Man, Movement, Maintenance, Monument and Memory*. A great man begins by being exciting, active, energizing, and charismatic - as was the case of Francis seeing the Gospel and Jesus. The Man sees reality correctly as well as differently, in this case seeing contemplation as belonging to all men. From that point, there is Movement, a risky as well as creative development during a period of great



Bob “Fitz” Fitzsimmons, National Formation Director, NAFRA

growth. During this phase there is always the danger of exchanging the Spirit for stability. That happened during the 1219 Chapter of Mats, when an immature Order was seeking control by worshipping “correctly.” Then comes the period of Maintenance, where one sees the desire for increased stability and/or more normalcy. Thus between 1219 and 1260 there was a transition to a hierarchical structure, where the Movement began to lose much of its energy and began to shift into being an end in itself rather than a vehicle for transformation. From there comes the Monument phase, where the spirituality/charism becomes performance, not transformation, and the Gospel life yields to the moral code. Finally there is the Memory phase, composed of frozen people who are no longer connected with the vision. There is only a memory of a past adventure but no original vision of my own.

Formation continued on page 6



Is that where we are right now? If so, then 2009, our anniversary year, was the beginning of an opportunity to re-capture the VISION of the man - Francis, and the energy and vitality of the movement. Fitz urged us to be leaders as Jesus taught - *come to serve and not to be served*. Those who are assigned over others should glory in that appointment as if they were assigned to the office of washing the feet of the brothers.

Saturday afternoon's presentation was *Understanding the Economic Trinity*, where we move from Divine Economy to Fraternal Economy, based on characteristics derived from the Blessed Trinity: equality - we are all brothers; mutual relationship - by each of us with God; resources are to meet the needs of all so that all recognize their dignity and have the fullest mutuality and participation.

Gift, in the Franciscan tradition, says that we are inter-related and are a reflection of the Trinitarian communion, with its emphasis on goodness, the giving and receiving of gifts, gratitude. The foundation expressed by Francis was: God is Good (praise of God), God is the source of all good, All good belongs to God. Anything I have, make, do, think, accomplish, any good I am capable of expressing, all come to me as a gift from the source of all goodness, and that goodness describes who God is. It is about giving ourselves completely, and recognizing that everything we are and have is a gift from God. If I accumulate, hoard, consume, operate as though everyone were here to enrich me, then

I am self-sufficient and therefore I am God. That was the basic (original) sin for Francis - appropriating for self what belongs to God. The opposite is the Economy of Gift, which focuses on the Gospel actions of Jesus, where I am compassionate, healing, loving, turning to the other and esteeming the other for the sake of enriching the other who is in need. Matt. 19:21 is not a test or self-renunciation exercise, but rather, is *IDENTITY* - identifying with Jesus. We need to learn to see society from the bottom up, recognizing that everything beyond authentic needs belongs to someone else who is in greater need. We are only stewards of those gifts. This is who we are called to be.

Sunday morning Fitz gave us an overview of where the formation process is going, and told us he anticipates that nation-wide formation seminars on all the material being worked on now will be available in 2011. In the meantime, we have our work cut out for us, to "measure up" to what Francis - and Our Lord - called us to be.

T



Bob Murray, SFO

## Communication

by Bob Murray, SFO

14 December 2009 - As a member of our National Fraternity's Executive Council, Anne Mulqueen's, SFO, primary responsibility is to maintain communication between our National Fraternity and the International Fraternity in Rome. She attended the International Fraternity's Chapter of Elections in Hungary during 2008, where several issues were set as priorities by CIOFS for the next six year term. Anne addressed one of those priorities in her column "From My Corner of the World", found in *The Joy of Francis*, Spring 2009.

Following the Chapter, according to Anne's article, Michele Canone, OFS (an Italian nun) offered this reflection: "Communication in the past meant to the Order little more than issuing a circular [letter], which informed everyone about important events. Today, communication is action, communicating means living communion and making this known so that others can live it. This is the greatest challenge. Training will be necessary in communication, which is the soul of sharing!"

Anne states in her article that she will heed his insight and work to improve the flow of information between Rome and each of our U.S. fraternities. However, communication today is not just about the flow of information. Communication is essential to living in society. It is crucial within the Order; it is crucial in our personal lives and our business lives. When



used well, communication can be the glue that keeps relationships together. When used poorly, it can cause misunderstanding, dissension, hatred and even war. So, it seems that communicating poorly would not be *very Franciscan* as it can lead to difficulties and problems instead of Franciscan Joy.

Note the last sentence of Michele's quote above: "Training will be necessary in communication..." She's right! Did you know that one can earn a college degree in communication and still not be able to communicate well? Knowledge and theory are great, but *doing it* is necessary. Communicating is not just about *sending* the message but also *receiving it*, and by *receiving it*, I am referring to the listener's understanding. Many years ago, while traveling out of state, I asked a man for driving directions. He responded: "Go up the road apiece, turn left up where the Jones' barn used to be, cross the stream and...." I was stunned. He thought he was helping! And, by the way, what happened to the barn?

Today communication takes on many forms: face to face, telephone, fax, e-mail, twitter; perhaps even a presentation to a large group. Yet, there are some basic elements that should be considered in every circumstance if we are to communicate well: stay focused, be accurate, be precise, listen carefully, ask questions, don't leave out important information, understand the other's point of view, respond to criticism with empathy, use "I" messages, look for compromise, and own what is yours. Should things get

heated, take a time-out... and then come back to the same conversation. Perhaps you or I will be confronted with a cultural or language barrier. Perhaps the listener has difficulty with the speaker's accent. Perhaps one has a speech impediment. Moses did. Perhaps the listener has a hearing disability. (My wife claims I have *husband hearing*). In some cases it may be necessary to ask for help. Don't let your pride get in the way if help is needed. There can be any number of difficulties that will arise causing communication to be less than admirable.

When speaking face-to-face, factors other than words can play a major part in our communication. For example, our tone of voice can convey anger, sadness, joy and more. Our body language, such as clenched teeth or a relaxed smiling face or a side-glance to a third party can say more to the listener than just the words spoken. No matter the language spoken or used, communication happens through signals, voice, sounds, gestures, and written symbols. If you don't believe that, cut someone off on the freeway... No... better not. That would not be Franciscan.

In today's world, we often rely heavily on electronic means to communicate with each other: e-mail and tweeting are two such forms. The problems that can arise in these instances are no different than those experienced when sending a letter via the postal service. Body language and voice inflections can rarely be conveyed in print and much can be lost in the translation. Misunderstandings can arise that will have repercussions for months or years to come.

I have recently read that business leaders are complaining because many of their employees have poor writing skills. They claim that those who are able to write good business proposals or contracts have become a rare commodity. Poorly written business letters have caused mistrust and even broken relationships. If that is the case in business, how well do you and I communicate in fraternity life... especially through electronic means? How many problems have you or I caused due to poor communication? Has our inability to communicate well caused strained relationships? The question begs to be asked: How are things going at home? At work? In fraternity? Not good? As Fr. Steve Gross, OFM Conv., would say: "Just how Franciscan is that !!!!!?"

The ball is in our court, so to speak. How we improve our communication skills within the Order is up to you and me. This is our Order. We have been told to take ownership of it. Do we care enough to improve upon what we have been given?

Working to improve our communication skills can actually help us live by our Rule. Article 4 of our Rule tells us to devote ourselves "to careful reading of the Gospel, going from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel". The Gospel tells us that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. And, if we love our neighbors - and ourselves - we should be working to improve our skills of communication. How else can we greet each other with Franciscan joy? And that, my brothers and sisters, IS being Franciscan.





# Regional Gathering 2009



# ST. FRANCIS REGION ANNUAL GATHERING 2009

Our annual Regional Gathering was held on October 17, 2009, in St. Margaret Mary Parish in Chino, CA. Holy Spirit Fraternity in Claremont acted as our hosts, and did a magnificent job of it, providing hot and cold drinks, water, really delicious snacks throughout the day, and at the end of the day, a wonderful decorated cake celebrating the 800 years of Franciscan life. The liturgy committee, headed by Gerri Merchant, and working with Fr. Steve and other volunteers, decorated the hall so that we felt as though we had walked into a very sacred place, right from the beginning.

After a time for coffee and snacks at 8:30, we began at 9:00 am with greetings and an opening prayer by our Regional Spiritual Assistant, Rock DeSpain. That was followed by a talk given by our Regional Minister, Sylvia Paoli, who spoke on "800 Years, and I Am Still Called." Starting with a scripture passage (*Eph. 4:1-7*) calling upon us to "live a life worthy of the vocation to which you were called", Sylvia noted that although many things have changed in the 800 years since Francis lived, including our Rule (four times), as well as society, our culture, technology and science, one thing has never changed: we still speak of having a vocation. A vocation is a call, and we as Christians receive two calls: the first is the universal

call to holiness and the second is a call to deepen our spiritual life. It is in the second call that some of us are led to a Franciscan vocation. St. Paul listed five qualities that were associated with living a life "worthy of the vocation" to which we are called: humility, gentleness, patience, mutual support and unity. Sylvia explored each of those in terms of what it means to us in our own lives as Franciscans.

The apostles whom Jesus called answered *at once*, because their hearts felt the passion and fire of the Lord. In order for us to keep our own hearts on fire and full of passion for the Lord, we must *pray* as a way of life. We do not flee the world to immerse ourselves in prayer, but rather, we make our lives in the world a sacrament - a constant prayer. She challenged us to pray constantly - and to be humble, gentle and patient, always supporting one another and being united in the Spirit - "for although it has been 800 years, up until now we have done nothing."

The second talk was given by Sr. Madeline Fitzgerald, O.S.C. (Order of St. Clare). Sr. Madeline entered the Poor Clares in 1959 in Ireland, and made her final profession in 1964. She has worked in formation, and as a teacher, both in junior high school and in adult education. She is the Spiritual Assistant to the San Luis Rey Fraternity in Oceanside. She spoke about the Second Order

of Franciscans: Poor Clares - Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow. After giving a brief background of the establishment of the Poor Clares, she noted that the first line of their Rule - to live the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ - is also the first line of the friars' Rule and of the SFO's Rule. Clare taught her followers to stay close to the Son of God, who is the WAY, the LIFE, and our MODEL. Sister noted that St. Clare presided over her sisters more by virtue and holiness of life, than by the authority of her office - giving all of us guidance for leadership today. St. Clare expected the practice of contemplation to change a person's way of acting, and so it should do today for each of us.

Speaking of "Today", Sister noted that they are "contemplatives in action." Their prayer leads to action and their activities lead to prayer. The sisters today serve in a wide variety of ministries, in diverse parts of the world. Their Minister General has challenged the sisters for the future to "imitate the creativity and courage of Clare... and to bear witness as persons united around the person of Christ." They are challenged to live among the poor, to share their contemplative lives with others, to work for peace and justice, to be evangelists to the world, to let the world know of Christ and His Gospel.

The final speaker was Fr. Steve Gross, OFM Conv., who spoke on the address given by the Minister General of the SFO, Encarnacion del Pozo, to the Friars gathered in





*At the Regional gathering, our three new Spiritual Assistants were introduced: Bob Murray, Deacon Lou Rocha, and Dan Abalos. Those receiving certificates in Formation were: Anna Dang Lien Huong, Char D'Amato, John Ubelhor, Lucy Capones, Teri Curtis, Judith Mussatto, and Bill Mussatto.*

Assisi to celebrate the 800th year of the founding of the Franciscan Movement. In her address to the Friars, she spoke of the realities of the SFO today, of the hopes and dreams of the SFO today, gave some statistics about the Order (the SFO is in 110 countries, has 431,000 members, and 49,000 youth), and some details as to thirty years' of development between 1978 and 2009, including the re-discovering of who we are.

Fr. Steve noted that we are all One Franciscan Family, to whom Francis gave one rule - to live the Gospel. In speaking of Spiritual Assistants, Fr. Steve noted the unavailability of friars to take that position, and spoke of the proactive position St. Francis Region has taken in training and educating Secular Franciscans to be "suitable and well-prepared" Spiritual

Assistants. He challenged the group to step up and embrace the lay Spiritual Assistants as part of our "owning" and running our own Order.

After each of the talks, the assembly broke into small groups for discussion on the questions each speaker presented to them, followed by summaries of the small group discussions. A highlight of the day was the "ice-breaker" game presented by the young Koreans of My God My All Newly Forming Group. Everyone had a good time with that and we all ended up "well-decorated".

The day closed with Mass, Fr. Steve presiding, at which those who had completed the Lay Spiritual Assistant/Formator class were commissioned.

## Excitement in the St. Francis Region

In November of last year, we began our third set of Lay Spiritual Assistant/Formators classes. What is so exciting is that we have the most diverse group ever. All of our language groups are well represented. We are blessed with the quality and depth of this group. We have 30 in the class, which is our maximum. God is good!!!!

Our sessions are multi-lingual. We do presentations in English, but then break off into the four language groups for discussions to make sure there is total understanding and develop meaning for each class member.

If our first two sessions show the quality of understanding and response to our program, we will have many new well-prepared certified Lay Spiritual Assistants and Formators to go out and help our Region.

At the January Chapter for fraternity ministers, the National Formation Director will make two presentations. All of the participants of the class will attend the Saturday session as their January meeting, and have a meeting after the presentations to make sure we develop total understanding and meaning for each class member."

We have asked the three First Orders Provincials to allow us to take ownership of our Order. They have given us the opportunity to do so, and we are responding to this opportunity with the help of the brothers and sisters of St. Francis Region.

++ blessings,

Rock DeSpain, SFO  
Regional Spiritual Assistant



# From My Corner of the World

Anne Mulqueen, SFO  
International Councilor, USA  
2010-1

My dear brothers and sisters,

One of my New Year's resolutions as far back as I can remember is to tell myself the truth, as I perceive it. Now that's my resolution—not necessarily reality. Although I don't always live up to my ideal, it remains my desire. So here's to TRUTH and its marvelous ability to set us free.

When I attended the Elective Chapter in Hungary—my first International gathering—I was incredibly ignorant of procedure—literally a fish out of water. I knew it was an elective chapter, and I knew that elections require a fraternal presider and a spiritual assistant from a higher level of fraternity to officiate. Since there is no higher level than CIOFS, I wondered how they would conduct an election? I imagined all sorts of complex regulations.

The answer is simple; since there is no higher level of fraternity, there is no fraternal presider (see GC Art.76.2). Now would you have known that? A General Minister from the First Order or TOR conducts the election alone. The general minister is the next higher level for the general spiritual assistants. At this election, the General Minister was Fr. Marco Tasca, OFM Conv. He gave an inspired address. Everyone

scrambled for a copy. Alas, it was written in Italian and had not been translated. All we had was our recollections, but we knew it was good, and we wanted it.

## Resource Material

Wonder of wonders! Fr. Tasca's message has been translated, and I have it in my possession. Since it is about 20 pages I can't reproduce it here—however, I will make it available to the regional ministers who, in turn, will make it available to your local fraternities. Fr. Tasca entitled his talk, *The Beginnings of Charism*, and he addresses it to you, as one of the 430,000 professed secular Franciscans and 50,000 Franciscan youth in the world today. It is a valuable resource on our charism, and it will provide a wonderful ongoing formation focus.

It is divided into three parts:

- (1) Conversion: The Road to Repentance;
- (2) The Evangelical Life: Our Form of Life; and
- (3) Conformity to the Paschal Christ.

## Presence in the World

At the beginning of this New Year, let's take a look at the SFO presence in the world. There is a secular Franciscan presence in 110 countries throughout the world. Of that number, 65 are established national fraternities,



and 42 are emerging national fraternities. Three nations are in the process of developing a secular Franciscan presence. Franciscan youth are present in 64 countries. Thirty have established national youth fraternities and 34 nations have emerging national youth fraternities. The United States is one of the emerging national youth fraternities.

An observable trend in Western Europe and North America is a reduction in the number of Secular Franciscans, and an aging of our membership. Just the opposite seems to be happening in Asia, Africa, the Slavic nations and Eastern Europe where sustained growth is seen. The numbers reveal that growth in vocations is greater in the so-called "third" world countries.

The current outlook is not promising for the Western world. Yet, I believe this trend can be reversed. As I write this unemployment is above 10% nationwide, health reform has caused bitter division,

*My Corner, continued page 11*



*My Corner, continued from page 11*

we have increased our armed forces in Afghanistan, and a host of problems assail us daily. What can we do? We can pray. We can ask God to form us into authentic witnesses to the gospel—witnesses that will attract others to our Order.

Each of us can make a difference. Fr. Irudaya Samy—former Capuchin General Spiritual Assistant—tells this story.

One evening a man took a small candle from a box and began to climb a long winding stairway. ‘Where are we going?’ asked the candle.

‘We’re going up higher than the house to show ships the way to the harbour.’ ‘But no ship in the harbour could ever see my light,’ said the candle. ‘It is so very small.’ ‘If your light is small,’ the man said, ‘just keep burning brightly and leave the rest to me.’ When they reached the top of the lighthouse, they came to a large lamp.

Then he took the little candle and lit the lamp. Soon the great polished reflectors behind the lamp sent beams of light out across the miles of sea.

Paraphrasing Fr. Samy—we are God’s candles and our job is to keep shining, because our usefulness lies in God’s hands. We can do something to reverse this trend. We can keep our lights burning brightly so that others see clearly that it is possible to live the Gospel today.

With fraternal affection and in peace,

Your sister Anne



# Franciscan Jubilee



*Franciscans from St. Mary of the Angels (newly forming group) and Holy Spirit Fraternities at A Franciscan Jubilee Pilgrimage, on the Vigil of the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, held at Mt. Carmel in the Desert Retreat Center in Palmdale, with Father Anthony Howard, OFM Conv., Retreat Master.*



*Transitus at San Juan Capistrano including Franciscans from Six Fraternities. Little Portion, St. Francis, St. Joseph, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Maximilian Kolbe, and San Juan Capistrano.*





As a highlight to conclude our celebration of the 800th anniversary of our Rule the San Lorenzo Ruiz Fraternity of Los Angeles made a mini-pilgrimage to Mission San Luiz Rey in Oceanside on November 8, 2009, where our Spiritual Assistant Fr. Philip Garcia, OFM now resides. We had lunch in picnic area, then Father gave us a tour of the Mission, had our fraternity meeting, a Eucharistic Celebration in honor of our deceased Secular Franciscans and also renewed our profession to the SFO. We concluded the day with a delicious dinner before starting our trip back to Los Angeles in our rented van.



The Holy Spirit Fraternity celebrated the Transitus of Our Holy Father Francis with the Felician Sisters at St Joseph Church Convent, Pomona.



## SFO Retreat May 28-30, 2010 Serra Retreat Center in Malibu

<http://www.serraretreat.com/>

Serra Retreat, P. O. Box 127,  
Malibu, CA 90265  
Ph (310) 456-6631  
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SUGGESTED DONATION:  
Private Room: \$240.00; Shared  
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## Franciscan Print Resources

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1615 Republic St. Cincinnati,  
OH 45210 800-488-0488

**Smoky Valley Printing**  
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# SFO Regional Formation Seminar III

## *Documents of the SFO*

### **March 6, 2010 - San Diego**

St. Patrick's Church Hall  
3538 30th St.  
San Diego, CA 92104  
(619) 296-2385

### **April 24, 2010 - Orange County**

Santiago de Compostella Catholic Church Hall  
21682 Lake Forest Drive  
Lake Forest, CA 92630

### **June 12, 2010 - LA County**

St. Mel's Church Hall  
20870 Ventura Blvd.  
Woodland Hills, CA 91364

### **June 26, 2010 - San Bernardino/Riverside**

Our Lady of the Assumption Church Hall  
435 Berkeley Ave.  
Claremont, CA 91711

**Tri-Counties** has not been set yet.

The times: 8:30 am - coffee and social time, 9:00 - beginning of Seminar.

Presenters are: Bob Herbelin, SFO, Sylvia Paoli, SFO, and Peggy Paoli, canon lawyer.



**Mike Morris, SFO** has been appointed new Orange County District Liaison, replacing Bob Murray who is now our Regional Formation Director.

# USA ~ SFO Declares 2010 as the year to CELEBRATE YOUTH!

<http://www.franciscanyouthusa.com/>

To prepare for the year to "CELEBRATE YOUTH", The FYYA Council suggest that you read the following:

1. A GUIDE FOR FRANCISCAN YOUTH/YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY is available from Smoky Valley Printing [lindabce@kans.com](mailto:lindabce@kans.com) or 785.227.2364, \$10.00.
2. FRANCISCAN YOUTH (YOUFRA) - A WAY OF FRANCISCAN VOCATION is available for free download at <http://www.franciscanyouthusa.com> under Formation.
3. RENEWING THE VISION or RENOVEMOS LA VISION is available from USCCB Publishing [www.usccbpublishing.org](http://www.usccbpublishing.org) or 600.235.8722, Publication No. 5-004, \$6.95.
4. NATIONAL STATUTES OF THE FRANCISCAN YOUTH/YOUNG ADULTS OF THE U.S.A. <http://franciscanyouthusa.com/howto/National%20Statutes.pdf>

The First Three Things Every FY/YA Interested Person Should Do <http://www.franciscanyouthusa.com/packet/THE%20FIRST%20THREE%20THINGS.pdf>

*A Secular Franciscan Youth Group Rule of Life*, by Fr. Benet Fonck, OFM <http://www.franciscanyouthusa.com/packet/rulelife.pdf>

Franciscan LEAD website at: <http://www.franciscanyouth.com/LEAD>

Order form for *A Guide for Franciscan Youth/Young Adult Ministry* <http://www.franciscanyouthusa.com/packet/yyaguideorder.pdf>

National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) <http://www.nfcym.org/index.htm>  
<http://www.nfcym.org/gscf/index.htm>

National Catholic Committee on Scouting® <http://www.nccs-bsa.org/>  
<http://www.nccs-bsa.org/activities/index.php>  
Serra Venturing <http://www.nccs-bsa.org/ScoutUnits/SerraVenturing.php>



## Day Away with Fr. Steve Gross, OFM Conv.

On August 22, 2009, the Holy Spirit Fraternity hosted Fr. Steve Gross at Our Lady of the Assumption in Claremont, and on October 10, 2009, the San Juan Capistrano Fraternity hosted Fr. Steve at the San Juan Capistrano Mission Basilica for a Day of Recollection.

### Fr. Steve's Reflections:

The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to his every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress. The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete selfgiving and by

praying earnestly and confidently. Mary, Mother of Jesus, is the model of listening to the Word and of faithfulness to vocation; we, like Francis, see all the gospel virtues realized in her. The brothers and sisters should cultivate intense love for the most holy virgin, imitation, prayer, and filial abandonment. They should manifest their own devotion with expressions of genuine faith, in forms accepted by the Church.

Mary is the model of fruitful and faithful love for the entire ecclesial community. Secular Franciscans and their fraternities should seek to live the experience of Francis, who made the Virgin the guide of his activity. With her, like the disciples at

Pentecost, they should welcome the Spirit to create a community of love.



Fr. Steve Gross, OFM Conv.



## Franciscan Action Network

Transforming the World in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare

P.O. Box 29053 • Washington, DC 20017 • 202-527-7575 • 1-888-364-3388 (toll free) • 202-527-7576 (fax)

*"All praise be yours my Lord through all you have made"*

St. Francis invites us to a radical love and care for life. He teaches us that all life is filled with the presence of God. We are connected to that loving presence and we are happy when we celebrate it. On this 37<sup>th</sup> remembrance of Roe vs. Wade, we are challenged to reflect on the many ways that we fall short of celebrating and enhancing God's gift of life. We are called to demonstrate in a public way that all life is sacred and our desire that our nation create and revise laws and policies that care and protect all life.

We stand here today mindful of our weakness and mindful of our self-pre-occupation that insulates us from life's potentials and life's possibilities. We pray that in our God-given freedom we may consistently choose and embrace life, and that our lives bear witness to that embrace so that our laws and our public policies are a living proclamation of the value of life. We desire to live in a society where there is peace, economic justice, equality, a profound quality of family life, and a loving respect for children born and unborn.

Let this day be a time to appreciate our calling to be co-creators, to care for creation and to worship the God of life.

*Statement of the Franciscan Action Network  
March for Life, January 22, 2010*



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## Member Spotlight

By Peggy Botte, SFO, Immaculate Conception Fraternity, San Diego, CA.

If you didn't happen to notice a certain special name written up in the most recent edition of the Southern Cross, it was our own **Julia Bryn, SFO**, professed in 1950 and dedicated to full-time rosary making for 26 years since the first Annual Rosaries for Peace Convocation held back in 1983. Bishop Brom awarded Julia, on the evening of August 9th, 2009, with a papal blessing in recognition of her work in spreading the devotion of our Blessed Mother worldwide.

Dee Nielsen and I recently visited Julia at her apartment adjacent to St. John of the Cross Church and were delighted in our time there to view the many different kinds of rosaries and chaplets Julia has designed.

Julia was an active member of our fraternity until the mid-90's when her heart would not allow her to make the trip up the hill. We have missed her presence, but it is apparent to me that if all our dear infirmed are as actively involved as they can be, then we can sing God's praises and count our blessings to be family!

Besides the rosaries, Julia has sent out worldwide 500 Spanish and 1000 English pamphlets on how to pray the Rosary. Most of what she has accomplished during her 26 year involvement has been financed out of her own pocket. Julia's next project will be to develop a rosary out of tennis balls to replace the worn one at St. John of the Cross Church. Congratulations Julia!



On the 7th of November 2009 the **Saint Anthony of Padua Fraternity** celebrated its 30th anniversary. Formed in 1978, with four professed members under the sponsorship of the Immaculate Conception Fraternity in San Diego it has more than 40 members now. During that time the fraternity lost 27 deceased members including two spiritual assistant priests.



**Profession of Ted Hewitt, SFO** — It was an occasion of great joy when the editor of our Regional Newsletter, the *Joy of Francis*, made his Profession at Mission San Luis Rey on January 9, 2010. Ted has served as our editor for the past four years, while he was going through initial formation. He has faithfully attended every event in the Region during those years, taking photos and notes which showed up in the *Joy of Francis*. While Ted is a member of Holy Spirit Fraternity in Claremont, there were representatives of at least ten fraternities in attendance, as well as most of the Regional Executive Council. The Mass of Profession, presided over by Fr. Philip Garcia, OFM, was followed by refreshments and social time in the Clare room of the Mission. Many of Ted's family members, including his mother, were able to attend. Congratulations, Ted, from all of your family in St. Francis Region!





## Conference of the Franciscan Family

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Peace and all Good!

Over the past 25 years, with your support, a dream has become a reality. Franciscans International (FI) has become a collaborative initiative of the whole Franciscan Family. Through its ministry FI is continuing St. Francis's legacy of challenging leaders, as he did with his "Letter to the Rulers." Today, FI is our united letter to the rulers, urging them to abandon injustice and promote peace, respect, and care for creation.

FI's ministry is to bring the voice of the Franciscan grassroots and those whom we serve to the United Nations (UN). In addition, FI provides formational trainings to Franciscans on topics of human rights, poverty, peace-building, and the environment, with the aim of empowering participants with skills with which to make change happen. We would like to encourage all of you to take advantage of the resources and assistance FI offers to you. Please do not hesitate to contact any of the FI offices in Bangkok, Geneva, or New York to share your concerns, challenges, needs and any information that could be used at the UN.

Two years ago a new human rights mechanism called the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was

established. The UPR allows FI to submit reports to the Human Rights Council during the review of its 192 member states. Every state is reviewed over a four year period. So far FI has been able to submit reports for 13 countries (please see enclosed sheet), using statistics and information from Franciscans in the field. This programme has shown great potential for FI to influence the international community with the voice of the Franciscan family, speaking on issues effecting the most vulnerable. To learn more about FI and how to make use of this important resource, please visit: [www.franciscansintemational.org](http://www.franciscansintemational.org). We strongly recommend you read FI's 2008 annual report on line, which is available in French, German, Italian, Spanish and English.

The Conference of the Franciscan Family (CFF) is very proud of FI's accomplishments and its wonderful expression of Franciscan solidarity-a collaboration of all the orders and congregations of the Franciscan family, together with the Anglican Franciscan family. We are confident of FI's commitment and viability. We fully endorse its mission to bring about systemic change to improve the lives of our brothers and sisters who are suffering, oppressed, and vulnerable.

We encourage you to become more familiar with the opportunities available to you through FI and

to help and facilitate our common mission to be a voice for the voiceless.

We, likewise, request your financial support for this collaborative ministry of the whole Franciscan Family. May God bless our work on behalf the poor and marginalized.

The Members of the Conference of the Franciscan Family

Fr. José RodríguezCarballo, OFM  
Minister General

Fr. Marco Tasca, OFM Conv.  
Minister General

Fr. Michael Higgins, TOR  
Minister General

Fr. Mauro [ohri, OFM Cap  
Minister General

Fr. James Puglisi, SA  
President CIF-TOR

Encarnacion del Pozo, OFS  
Minister General

## Franciscans *International*

37-39 rue de Vermont  
PO Box 104  
CH 1211 Geneva 20  
Switzerland

232 E 113th St  
New York, NY 10029

[www.franciscansinternational.org](http://www.franciscansinternational.org)

+41 22 919 4010 T

+41 22 740 2433 F

[director@fiop.org](mailto:director@fiop.org)



# NEW NATIONAL COUNCIL ELECTED

NAFRA conducted its election of officers (as required every three years), Saturday, October 24, 2009, at the Order's elective chapter held October 20-25, 2009, near Albuquerque, NM. The newly elected officers are listed below:



Deacon Tom Bello of St. Thomas More Fraternity in Arlington, VA is the new national minister of the Secular Franciscan Order in the U.S. Deacon Tom, national vice-minister for

the past three years, is a deacon assigned to St. James Church in Church Falls, VA, and a resident of McLean, VA.



Elaine Hedtke is the new national vice minister. She hails from Port Angeles, WA, and has been serving as regional minister for Troubadours of Peace Region

(which encompasses Washington, Northwest Oregon, Idaho, and Alaska).



Jan Parker of O'Fallon, MO has been elected secretary. She has been serving as regional minister for St. Clare Region (encompassing

most of Missouri, southern Illinois and the southern tip of Indiana).



Dennis Ross was elected for a third term as national treasurer. He hails from Mentor, OH. He also served as treasurer of the SFO province of St. Augustine from 1990 to 1996. On

the regional level, he was treasurer of St. Maximilian Kolbe Region from 1995 to 2001.



Mary Bittner was elected as a national councilor. She hails from Ypsilanti, MI, and has served as regional minister of Divine Mercy Region for six years. She has

also been vice minister and on the regional formation team.



Michelle Kim Ph.D., was elected as a national councilor, and also elected substitute international councilor. She has

served as formation director of the NY Korean Martyrs Fraternity. She hails from Scarsdale, New York.



Arturo Villareal was elected as a national councilor. He hails from El Paso, TX. He has served as vice minister of Empress of the Americas region. He is member of St. Patrick's Fraternity in El Paso, Texas.



Anne Mulqueen was re-elected international councilor. She has served as spiritual assistant to Padre Pio Fraternity in Maryland, is a member of the Joint Committee on Franciscan

Unity, a secretary of the Duns Scotus Formation Trust Fund, a contributor to the forthcoming Formation Manual and a board member for the Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life based at St. Francis University in Loretto, PA.



# St. Francis Region Southern California, USA

## Executive Council



**Sylvia Paoli SFO**  
**Regional Minister**  
Best (714) 521-5333  
Cell (714) 273-4078  
[spaoli@roadrunner.com](mailto:spaoli@roadrunner.com)



**Robert Herbelin SFO**  
**Vice Minister**  
Home (951) 678-6427  
Cell (951) 440-1941  
[rherbelin@juno.com](mailto:rherbelin@juno.com)



**Judith Mussatto, SFO**  
**Secretary**  
[jbnmussatto@earthlink.net](mailto:jbnmussatto@earthlink.net)



**Carolyn Paxton, SFO**  
**Treasurer**  
[cpaxsfo627@yahoo.com](mailto:cpaxsfo627@yahoo.com)



**Anthony Tuan Cao, SFO**  
**Councilor**  
[tuancaosfo@gmail.com](mailto:tuancaosfo@gmail.com)



**Robert Lopez, SFO**  
**Councilor**  
[robtvirglopez@gmail.com](mailto:robtvirglopez@gmail.com)



**John Kwon, SFO**  
**Councilor**  
[kwon\\_younghwan@yahoo.com](mailto:kwon_younghwan@yahoo.com)



**Rock De Spain, SFO, CSRA**  
Home (951) 766-1308  
[sforockandjan@att.net](mailto:sforockandjan@att.net)



**Armando Lomeli, SFO, CSRA**  
Cell phone (714) 296-6152  
[mandosfo@aol.com](mailto:mandosfo@aol.com)



**Anthony Hoang Van Le, SFO, CSRA**  
[anthonyhvl@gmail.com](mailto:anthonyhvl@gmail.com)



**Rev. Stephen Gross, OFM Conv., CSRA, Mentor**  
[boccaperta@msn.com](mailto:boccaperta@msn.com)



**Robert Murray, SFO**  
**Formation Director**  
[bobchuck@cox.net](mailto:bobchuck@cox.net)

## District Liaisons

**Orange County**  
Mike Morris SFO  
[mw\\_morris@verizon.net](mailto:mw_morris@verizon.net)

**San Bernardino - Riverside**  
Bill Mussatto, SFO  
[mussatto@acm.org](mailto:mussatto@acm.org)

**San Diego**  
Midge Neff-LeClair  
[midgeandbill@cox.net](mailto:midgeandbill@cox.net)

**Tri-County**  
Ed Gordon, SFO  
[edwardlgordon@aol.com](mailto:edwardlgordon@aol.com)

**Los Angeles**  
Michael Coughlin  
[mike.coughlin@hotmail.com](mailto:mike.coughlin@hotmail.com)

**Data Base Coordinator**  
Robert Herbelin, SFO  
[rherbelin@juno.com](mailto:rherbelin@juno.com)

**Newsletter Editor**  
Ted Hewitt  
6571 Farmington Drive  
Riverside, CA 92504  
(articles may be mailed here)  
[joyoffrancis@charter.net](mailto:joyoffrancis@charter.net)

**Associate Editor**  
William Mussatto SFO  
[mussatto@acm.org](mailto:mussatto@acm.org)

**Web Servant**  
Mike Morris SFO  
[mw\\_morris@verizon.net](mailto:mw_morris@verizon.net)



St. FRANCIS REGION #52  
Secular Franciscan Order  
Southern California, USA  
8121 Barrington Drive  
La Mirada, CA 90638



## The Joy of Francis

*Go forth in peace, for you have followed the good road. Go forth without fear, for he who created you has made you holy, has always protected you, and loves you as a mother loves her child. Blessed be you, my God, for having created me.*

*~ Saint Clare of Assisi*

*Vete en paz ya que has seguido el buen camino; vete confiada, ya que tu creador te ha santificado, custodiado incesantemente y amado con la ternura de una madre con su hijo. Oh Dios, bendito seas por haberme creado.*

*~ Santa Clara de Asís.*

