

Minister's Message: So Much to Do!

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

The Regional calendar is already in full swing, with at least one event occurring each month through June; the nationwide Quinquennial Congress in July; and our Regional Gathering in August. See page 2 for information about our Apostolic Commissions Workshop and Candidates' Retreats, and also be sure to mark your calendars the Chapter of Ministers on Saturday, May 19.

Full participation in Regional events is so important! "Fraternity" is who we are! Coming together to share our faith, our vocations, and our lives, helps us all to grow more into the Franciscans we're called to be. It's good for us to listen to each other's stories – it broadens our vision, gives us new insights. This is important not only on the

Local level, but on the Regional and National levels as well, and we have lots of opportunities this year!

Don't forget to create baskets for the Apostolic Commissions Workshop raffle – what a great idea, Nancy! It gives us all a chance to be a little creative – it'll be fun to see what everyone comes up with, and the raffle will be great!

Next month, we'll have some important things to report on. Nancy McKenna, SFO and I are going to the Franciscan Family meeting early this month on discerning a Structure for National Action in the area of justice, peace, and creation. This is, to the best of my knowledge, the first meeting of this kind to take place, and the response has been excellent (over 130 participants).

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Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I have to be honest with you. I'm kinda down. I'm discouraged about the horrible, ongoing war in Iraq. And as I write, Congress is in an uproar as they debate the pros and cons of sending more troops there, as the President wishes.

All the debating about whether this will be helpful or prolong the war, all the stuff about the funding (a moral outrage in itself, since those billions and billions of dollars could be spent on doing so much good in our country and in many others), all the stuff about patriotism – the newest way of criticizing and insulting those who disagree with one's position on the issues – and on and on.

What upsets me is that we've lost our moral compass. If anyone tries to bring ethics or

religious values into the discussion, there are people who shout about "separation of church and state." They act as though our mainline religions, which, by the way, agree substantially on moral issues, have nothing to offer. These folks want all of us who are people of faith to just dummy up, keep it to ourselves.

Have we learned nothing at all from history? From the many times when arms and war have accomplished nothing but death and destruction, and the many times when discussion and diplomacy have resulted in people living in peace with each other?

Again the retort is that you cannot negotiate with terrorists. Really? I wonder. What might happen if we made a real effort to use diplomacy?

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Javier Orozco, SFO

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Rosemary Zimmerman, SFO

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Monica Marko, SFO

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Councilor for Visitations:

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Spiritual Assistant

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Newsletter Editor

Lisa Wathen, SFO

The SFO News is the official publication of the Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order.

**Submission deadline is the
20th of each month.**

Local Elections

Best wishes and prayers for the newly-elected officers of **St. Bernadine of Siena Fraternity (Wayne):**

- *Minister:*
Lorna Miressi, SFO
- *Vice-Minister:*
Christine Cegelis, SFO
- *Formation Director:*
Mary Beth Murray, SFO
- *Secretary, Recording:*
Kris Openshaw, SFO
- *Secretary, Corresponding:*
Cindy Kaduk, SFO
- *Treasurer:*
Connie Magdangal, SFO

Also, Fr. Hilary Brzezinski, OFM is now the Spiritual Assistant.

Events of Interest

May 24: The Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart are holding a workshop, "Words Incarnate: The Art of Sacred Conversation", from 8:30 a.m.–3:00 p.m. in their Auditorium, 9201 W. St. Francis Rd, Frankfort. Cost is \$20, which covers lunch. Contact Sr. Marilyn Renninger, OSF for more information.

May 25: The SFO will have a table at the Parish Vocation Fair at St. Nicholas Church in Evanston. Contact Norm Mosk, SFO for details.

Living the Gospel of Life

"The National Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC is a shiny black wall that stretches 492 feet and lists the names of the 58,022 known Americans killed in that war.

"If such a wall listed the names of the children killed by abortion since 1973, the wall would be about 60 miles long!

"The casualties of our wars put together are fewer than the casualties from abortion in a single year."

~ *Priests for Life Newsletter*, Vol. 6, No. 9 (Nov./Dec. 1999)

Candidates' Retreat: "Franciscan Pilgrims of the Gospel"

As we have done for the last several years, the 2007 Candidates' Retreat will be two full days, held one month apart. Candidates are *strongly* encouraged to attend **both days** if at all possible; however, attending one day is preferable to none.

- **Dates:** 1st Session: April 14 (Sat.)
2nd Session: May 5 (Sat.)
- **Location:** Mayslake Village
1801 W. 35th St., Oak Brook
- **Cost:** \$25 for one day, \$50 for both days; covers lunch, snacks, and materials.
- **RSVP By:** March 24 (Saturday)

Directions and a detailed schedule will be sent to each participant, along with a confirmation letter.

The Candidates' Retreat is a key component

of our initial formation program, so ministers and formation directors, please strongly encourage your Candidates to attend; if necessary, please assist them in obtaining transportation to Mayslake.

If a Candidate cannot afford the registration fee, the local fraternity is asked to share the cost with the Region. If this is needed, please contact our Formation Director, Rosemary Zimmerman, SFO.

Formation directors, mentors, and other formation team members are also welcome to attend so they can better assist in following up with the Candidates on the topics covered.

For more information, contact Rosemary Zimmerman, SFO. 📧

Apostolic Action Workshop: Topics & Speakers Announced

As mentioned in last month's *SFO News*, the Region is hosting an Apostolic Action Workshop on **Saturday, March 10**, and the topics and speakers have been finalized:

Using Safe Pest Control Products in Schools and Childcare Facilities

Speaker: Steve Pincuspy of the Safer Pest Control Project

Summary: The Safer Pest Control Project has developed an innovative and effective training program that helps key staff at schools and childcares to use safer methods of pest control. Their programs create excitement around a topic that many prefer not to think about, but is vital to the health and safety of our children. Mr. Pincuspy will share information about this very important topic.

Supporting Youth Ministry Through Scouting

Speaker: Gordon Stiefel, National Vice-Chairman of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting

Summary: The National Catholic Council on Scouting encourages the formation and

support of Catholic-chartered scouting units, supports diocesan Catholic Boy Scouting committees, and offers Catholic programs complementary to Boy Scouts of America programs. Mr. Stiefel will discuss how we as Catholics can help youth grow in their faith by working with the scouting program.

Catholics are often invisible as we tend to lead by example rather, than going door-to-door or creating a public outcry. But this doesn't mean that we aren't effective in responding to need.

Ecology, Family-related issues, Peace and Justice, Youth ministry, and Work are the areas of outreach practiced by the Secular Franciscan Order and the need in these areas can be overwhelming unless we focus on solvable problems, building on past success, and working toward future goals.

The speakers at this workshop will help guide us toward our goal, giving achievable examples of ministry.

For more information or to RSVP, contact Nancy McKenna, SFO. 📧

Quinquennial Updates: Schedule & Speakers

The multicultural theme of the Quinquennial, “Many Cultures, Through Francis, In Christ”, will be highlighted during liturgies and presentations, with Masses offered in Korean and Spanish, plus an Eastern Rite Divine Liturgy, and an Indian Syro Malabar Rite Mass.

Following is a high-level overview of the schedule and speakers:

July 3 (Tue.): Opening Mass, celebrated

by Bishop Daniel Conlon, DD of Steubenville, OH.

July 4 & 5 (Wed & Thu.): Keynote speaker Rev. Eric Law, an Episcopalian minister, will present plenary sessions on multiculturalism.

July 6 (Fri.): Patti Normile, SFO on “Caregiving and the Elderly”; Ed Shirley, SFO on “Spirituality in Today’s Secular World”; Ron Pihokker, SFO on “Secular Franciscans and the

Catechetical Ministry”, and Javier Orozco, SFO on “Francis, Divine Providence and Our Secular Life”.

July 7 (Sat.): Third plenary session with Rev. Law.

July 8 (Sun.): Closing remarks by national leaders and a “traveler’s style” bagged lunch.

In addition to the general sessions, there will be Youth and Young Adult sessions for those aged 16–26. ■

National Yearlong Novena for Darfur

As mentioned in last month’s *Apostolic Action* newsletter, the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States is instituting an ongoing novena for at least one year on behalf of the people of Darfur. Every day for the next year, members of the SFO will be praying the novena prayer.

Five Regional fraternities are assigned to cover each month, with four to five “waves” of the novena, each starting on Sunday. In this way the people of

Darfur will be held in prayer by the SFO for the entire year.

In the event there are only 4 Sundays in a month, the fifth Region can pray Week 1 or choose another week.

Individuals may start and end their novena on other days if necessary, or do a different week.

If you want to continue to pray before or after your week/month you can certainly do that! Also, please feel free

to share the novena with others.

A novena allows us to hold a particular concern before God in a special way. The name “novena” comes from the Latin for “nine”.

Traditionally we pray a novena every day for nine days, and the prayer is usually a bit longer than a brief intercession. This allows us to give more of ourselves to our prayer for the concern we are bringing before God. ■

----- clip and save -----

Novena Schedule

Week	Dec / Jun	Jan / Jul	Feb / Aug	** MAR / SEP **	Apr / Oct	May / Nov
1	St. Elizabeth of Hungary	Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha	Fr. Solanus	Tau Cross	Our Lady of the Angels	St. Katharine Drexel
2	Lady Poverty	St. Margaret of Cortona	Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis	Five Franciscan Martyrs	St. Maximilian Kolbe	Holy Trinity
** 3 **	Divine Mercy	Our Lady of Indiana	La Verna	MOTHER CABRINI	Franciscans of the Prairie	St. Clare
4	St Joan of Arc	Queen of Peace	Juan de Padilla	Los Tres Compañeros	Our Lady of the Rockies	Santa Maria de las Montañas
5 or 1	Our Lady of Guadalupe	Troubadours of Peace	Bl. Junipero Serra	St. Francis	St. Thomas More	Ohana 'O Ke Anuenue

Novena Prayer

Merciful Father, Prince of Peace, Spirit of Wisdom and Compassion, please look upon our brothers and sisters in Darfur. We humbly pray:

For those who have been subjected to violence, women, children, young and old men,
– We ask for healing, consolation, and relief of further suffering.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

For those who have done violence,
– We ask for healing, forgiveness, and the grace of conversion.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

For those in authority throughout the world,

– We ask for wisdom, creativity, compassion, and courage in addressing this situation.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be

Lord Jesus, Your Sacred Heart burns for love of all Your people. Please place in our hearts that same love and inspire us to have the courage, wisdom, and ingenuity to take what measures we can personally to relieve the suffering in Darfur. We pray this in the Name of Jesus, our Lord, through the intercession of the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Conclude with the Memorare.

Calendar

Note: The NAFRA General Chapter will be held in September or October; TBD.

March

- 01: Per Capita, Census, and Fraternity Annual Reports due
- 03: Registration for Apostolic Commissions Workshop due
- 7-9: Franciscan Family Structure for National Action, Baltimore, MD
- 10: Apostolic Commissions Workshop 8:30 a.m., Mayslake Village
- 17: Council Meeting, 8:30 a.m., Mayslake Village
- 24: Registration for Candidates' Retreat due

April

- 14: Candidates' Retreat, Day 1 Mayslake Village

May

- 05: Candidates' Retreat, Day 2 Mayslake Village
- 19: Chapter of Ministers, Mayslake Village

June

- 16: Ministers and Formation Directors Workshop, Mayslake Village

July

- 3-8: National Quinquennial Congress Radisson-Green Tree, Pittsburgh, PA
- 14: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m., Mayslake Village

August

- 04: Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula, Mayslake Village

October

- 12-14: Regional Retreat, Marytown
- 20: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m., Mayslake Village

November

- 11: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration

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In addition, the Regional Executive Council will be meeting on March 17 and we will be discerning our goals, both short- and long-term. I invited input from all of you last month – haven't heard from anyone yet, but there's still time. So, please call or email me with your suggestions.

I'm personally very excited about the Quinquennial Congress this year – Professed, look for your Spring *TAU-USA*, which should be arriving early this month, and share the information with anyone who may not receive it. The new registration form and lots of information will be included. Remember, the Quinquennial isn't just for the Professed; it's for *anyone* who's interested.

Finally, I'd like to wish all of you a most blessed Lent. It is truly one of my favorite times of year! Forty days is just the right amount of time to form a new, good habit. While often not successful, I like the structure of Lent to try to correct something in myself. A good thing to give up is something that isn't life-giving – often not easy to do, but productive.

Whatever any of us choose for our Lenten practices, may it enhance our faith and our vocation as Franciscans! 📖

Assistant continued from p. 1 ...

Even if it didn't work – though I believe it has a good chance of working – wouldn't the effort speak volumes?

I was listening to an excellent Sunday morning radio program on NPR called "Speaking of Faith" in which Douglas Johnston, a theologian, was speaking about diplomacy and religion in the 21st century. The greatest threat in the post-Cold War world, says Johnston, is the prospective marriage of religious extremism with weapons of mass destruction. Yet the U.S. spends most of its time, resources, and weapons fighting the symptoms of this threat, not the cause. The diplomacy of the future, he says, must engage religion as part of the strategic solution to global conflicts.

He noted that we have departments of defense, and economics, and a bunch more – so why not have a department of religion? It would help us to understand and deal with the differences in people, much of which we did NOT understand or deal with before going into Iraq. It would help create a basis for dialogue.

I am reminded of what St. Francis did when he dared to cross the enemy lines and speak with the Sultan of Egypt, Malik al-Kamil – an adventure that was considered useless, foolish, and doomed to failure, not to mention dangerous. And yet, in one sense Francis was successful: he developed a relationship of mutual respect with the sultan. Also, Francis was open-minded enough to be impressed with the Moslems' call to prayer, and came home urging Christians to do something similar.

My brothers and sisters, we as followers of Francis need to do something. We need to work for peace – to demonstrate, to write letters, to attend prayer vigils, to speak out, to use our vote. It is a crime to see this war continue with no end in sight. Lent is a good time for us to do penance – a penance that can make a difference in our world. Please do your part. Please follow the example of our founder, the man of peace, Francis of Assisi, and do something to work for peace. 📖