

Minister's Message: Ministers/Formation Directors Workshop

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Please, please consider coming to the annual Ministers/Formation Directors Workshop on **June 16 (Saturday)**. We're significantly broadening the workshop's focus with some new and, we believe and hope, helpful sessions.

Also, we've opened the leadership portion to include all leaders, not just fraternity ministers. Here's what's planned:

Schedule Overview

Registration is at 8:30 a.m., Mass at 9:00 a.m. After a "coffee and" break, we'll start the 45-minute long sessions – 4 before lunch (2 held simultaneously during each 45-minute period) and 4 after lunch (same setup). We'll end with prayer, and we'll be done by 3:30 p.m. at the latest.

Workshop Sessions

■ **Formation.** Our Formation Director, Rosemary Zimmerman, SFO, is planning an in-depth review of the relatively new **SFO Formation Manual** developed by our National Fraternity.

Copies were passed out at last month's Chapter of Ministers, and – while not absolutely necessary – it'd be helpful if session attendees would review it in advance. See your fraternity minister if you need a copy; if he/she doesn't have one, contact me.

Also planned: Q&A session and review of the **Liturgy of the Hours**; review of **National formation materials for St. Elizabeth of Hungary**, patroness of our Order and whose 800th anniversary we're celebrating.

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Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

When we feel strongly about an idea, it's often very telling to try it out on others to see what they think. The reaction can be validating and encouraging, or can point us in a direction that we hadn't considered, or can even throw cold water on our idea.

During a recent Sunday brunch at St. Peter's, I shared with some of the friars and a guest my thoughts on the ambivalence about community that I find in our society. On the one hand I see a great desire, a real hunger, even a desperate need for community, while on the other hand I see us doing many things that militate against it and prevent the fulfillment of that need.

Why, for example, do we see so many people talking on cell phones? Why is there so much e-mail being sent all over the globe?

Why are there people in "chat rooms" on the Internet? It's people needing people. We see people forming clubs, groups, and societies for all kinds of reasons. I understand that if one buys a Saturn (the car, not the planet), there is even a club of Saturn owners one is invited to join. There are support groups, interest groups, and focus groups. It seems like the flimsiest of reasons can result in a new grouping of people.

And yet, we find ourselves afraid. We're afraid of talking to strangers, afraid of what we'll get into if we join said groups, afraid of commitments. How many of us prefer to drive our car rather than take a bus or train, in part, at least, so that we can have our privacy? I once knew a couple who never set foot out of the house for about five years.

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Council Members

Minister:

Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Vice-Minister:

Javier Orozco, SFO

Formation Director:

Rosemary Zimmerman, SFO

Secretary:

Monica Marko, SFO

Treasurer:

To be appointed

Councilor At-Large:

Elisabeth Shin, SFO

Councilor for Apostolates:

Nancy McKenna, SFO

Councilor for Communications/

Public Relations:

Lisa Wathen, SFO

Councilor for Fraternal Life:

Chris Bruhnke, SFO

Councilor for Visitations:

Jacqueline Leo, SFO

Councilor for Vocations:

Norman Mosk, SFO

Councilor for Youth/

Young Adult:

Sandra Kisel, SFO

Spiritual Assistant

Fr. Donald Blaeser, OFM

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.**

Rest in Peace

- **Angela Barry**, SFO of the St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity (East Side) died April 29.
- **Alice Doyle**, SFO of the St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity (Evergreen Park) died April 20.

Events of Interest

August 2-8: The Portiuncula Center for Prayer in Frankfort is holding a conference, "Franciscan Gateway to Interreligious Experience", from 7 p.m. on the 2nd (Thursday) through noon on the 8th (Wednesday). Costs are \$325 single occupancy, \$275 double occupancy, \$200 commuter. Topics include approaches to various interreligious relationships; common values shared by religions; and desire for and commitment to peacemaking, universal fraternity, and interreligious dialogue as a spiritual practice. For more information, call Sister Corrina Thomas, FSPA at 815.469.4883.

In the News

Members of **St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity (Joliet)** made the news! **Daniel and Susan Willenborg**, SFO were mentioned in a recent article, "Interfaith 'Hike for Life' supports pro-life center", in the *Catholic Explorer*, newspaper of the Diocese of Joliet.

The article reported on the 23rd annual "Hike for Life" in Frankfort, held on May 12. Hundreds of walkers—the Willenborgs among them—together raised over \$70,000 for Pregnancy Aid South Suburbs (PASS) Pregnancy Care Centers.

To read the article online, see the newspaper's web site, www.catholicexplorer.com, and click on "Around the Diocese".

Around the Region

Northwest Franciscan Community of the IHM (Palatine). In April, members viewed *Saint of 9/11*, a film about Fr. Mychal Judge, OFM, followed by a discussion about his life and the topics presented by the movie.

St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity (Evergreen Park). In March, members collected clothing and \$75 for The COURAGE Program, a ministry based at St. Germaine Parish (Oak Lawn) that provides assistance to pregnant young women and those who are single-parenting by offering resources to help them make important life decisions on issues of sexuality, self-esteem, parenting, and more.

St. Juliana Fraternity (Chicago). At its May gathering, the fraternity started a new apostolic project in which members each bring one dozen hard boiled eggs, which are then collected by St. Vincent de Paul

Society volunteers and distributed to underprivileged neighborhoods in the metropolitan Chicago area.

St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity (Libertyville). All are invited to attend the fraternity's 25th anniversary celebration, which will include Mass, followed by a reception.

- **Date:** August 12 (Sunday)
- **Location:** Marytown
1600 W. Park Ave.
Libertyville
- **RSVP By:** July 1 (Saturday)

For more information or to RSVP, contact Muriel Baum, SFO. ☒



2007 Chapter of Ministers Report

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

We had an excellent Chapter of Ministers on May 19. All but two fraternities (one satellite and our newly-forming group) were present—an excellent turnout—and much was accomplished. Here's a brief summary:

After a beautiful Mass celebrated by our Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM, and a brief continental breakfast, we acknowledged our newest canonically established fraternity, St. Joseph/San José (Chicago), and offered our congratulations to its minister, Ana Godinez, SFO.

Due to the resignation of Bob Spinozzi, SFO as our treasurer, we were unable to approve the 2007–2008 budget. We'll address this by mail to fraternity ministers within the month.

After approving the minutes from last year's Chapter and a brief review of the Regional Executive Council (REC) members' reports, we had an excellent dialog among fraternity ministers and the REC in which a number of concerns were raised and possible solutions shared. This is incredibly valuable and exactly what needs to happen at the Chapter.

Our Secretary, Monica Marko, SFO, is preparing the minutes for this year's Chapter, which will be shared (for information purposes only, as the minutes won't be approved until next year) as a reminder and for reference.

After lunch, we discussed:

- the use of the *Per Capita* and its importance to the Regional and National fraternities
- the Franciscan Voice for Advocacy (see related article on page 3)
- updates on the Quinquennial Congress (see related article on page 3)
- the Ministers/Formation Directors Workshop (see "Minister's Message", p. 1)
- the Regional Gathering in August
- the host for this year's Mother Cabrini Celebration, which is St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity (Fox Valley)

The day really moved along and before we knew it, it was 3 p.m. and time to pray and close. It was a very productive day! ☒

Quinquennial Update: Early Registration Period Extended

Because of many requests to the National Fraternity asking for an extension to send in registrations and still receive the “early registration discount”, the Quinquennial Planning Committee has extended the deadline for early registration and the discounted rate (\$260) to **June 8 (Friday)**.

After June 8, the registration fee will increase to \$300, and the Radisson Hotel cannot guarantee that you’ll receive the SFO special rate of \$74 per night (per room: one, two, three, or four occupants).

If you’re interested in sharing a room and need a roommate, contact Elizabeth Allen, SFO (see registration form for contact details).

So, if you’re thinking about attending, you still have the opportunity to take advantage of all the discounts, but you must act quickly. You can obtain registration forms from current TAU-USA issues and on the National Fraternity’s web site at www.nafra-sfo.org.

We have over 20 people from the Mother Cabrini Region planning to attend so far—be a part of our group and register now. **☑**

Franciscan Voice for Advocacy Update

Since the March gathering in Baltimore, the Franciscan Voice for Advocacy’s steering committee has met twice by phone and once in person to move forward with the direction set in Baltimore.

Committee members have created a timeline and steps to “roll out” the process in developing our shared Franciscan approach to advocacy. In April, the basic structure of the approach was finalized, with three parts to the organization:

- **Franciscan Action Network (FAN).** The overarching body through which the movement will work, comprised of U.S.-based Franciscan groups interested in joining and willing to offer a level of financial, logistical, and public support to the efforts.
- **Leadership Commission.** A representative body of the U.S. Franciscan family which will serve as a recognized group of leaders who will work to help the larger FAN formulate and focus the issues of advocacy for transformation, as well as to enhance the communication conduits of the Network.
- **Action Center.** Based in Washington, DC with staff trained and dedicated to help the FAN achieve its goals of social transformation. The Center will monitor and advise the course of the strategic decisions of the Network to attain maximum effectiveness.

Our National Fraternity will formalize our Order’s involvement in the movement during the NAFRA General Chapter this fall, and seculars will continue to have representation on the steering committee and will be included in the formation of the Leadership Commission.

The committee is planning the first major advocacy event of the Franciscan Action Network to coincide with Ecumenical Advocacy Days on **March 7–10, 2008 (Friday–Monday)**, in Washington, DC; the entire Franciscan family is encouraged to join in. **☑**

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has such care and love for her son born according to the flesh, should not someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit even more diligently?” (First Order Rule, Ch. VI) Sounds like our love for each other is to be more than “skin deep,” doesn’t it?

What I’m saying is that we need to work hard at making community. It doesn’t come easy or naturally in a society so infected with the conveniences that encourage individualism. We need to “think community,” to “talk community,” to make an extra effort to “make community.” And when we do, we will know it. We’ll find ourselves experiencing something that we find absent or very rare in the rest of life. And we’ll find ourselves with more to give to many, many others, especially those who experience very little love and respect. **☑**

Living the Gospel of Life

Amnesty International (AI) has quietly adopted a new policy supporting a “right” to abortion.

Founded by Catholic layman Peter Benenson in 1961, AI has repeatedly ignored the concerns of pro-life activists and now states on its web site (in a members-only, restricted-content section) that its position on “sexual and reproductive rights” now “includes support for abortion”. In addition, AI is advocating the worldwide decriminalization of abortion.

AI even states its opposition to the U.S. Supreme Court’s recent decision to uphold the partial birth abortion ban. “AI therefore opposes the provision of the federal law upheld by the Court in Carhart that imposes fines and up to two years in prison for doctors who perform particular types of abortions.”

Fr. Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life, called the move a tragic mistake. “Amnesty International purports to be an advocate for human rights, yet it apparently now thinks that it’s acceptable for governments to trample on the most important, fundamental right, the right to life,” said Fr. Pavone. “When will we extend amnesty to unborn children?”

Said Fr. Joaquin Alliende, international ecclesiastical assistant of Aid to the Church in Need, “Now by proposing a pro-abortion initiative AI is abandoning its own noble ethical principles, thereby shaking the very foundations on which it is built; for the simple reason that unborn life in a mother’s womb is the very weakest of all threatened and persecuted human beings.”

To contact AI with your concerns, go to www.amnesty.org/contact

Sources: Catholic News Agency, Consistent Life, *First Things*, *LifeSiteNews.com*, *OneNewsNow.com*, Priests for Life

Calendar

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

June

- 16: Ministers and Formation Directors Workshop, Mayslake Village

July

- 1: RSVPs due for 25th Anniversary Celebration of St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity
- 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
- 12: 25th Anniversary Celebration of St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity, 12 p.m. Marytown, Libertyville

October

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

November

- 11: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration, hosted by St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity (Fox Valley) at St. Patrick Parish, 6N491 Crane Rd., St. Charles

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■ **Leadership.** Our Councilor for Communications/PR, Lisa Wathen, SFO, will present a session on **Communication Basics**, co-developed with Jackie Leo, SFO, Councilor for Visitations. Our Councilor for Youth/Young Adults, Sandy Kiesel, SFO, will lead a session on **Youth and Young Adults**, and I will lead a **Leadership 101** session. In the Leadership 101 session, we'll cover all the main officers of a council, share tips on how to structure a good council meeting, share ways to encourage vocations to our Order, and have time for Q&A.

As you can see, we have BIG plans for this workshop! Please encourage *anyone* in your fraternity who's involved with leadership, interested in leadership, or who has leadership potential to attend! We'll soon be sending out flyers to all fraternity ministers to be copied and shared with all our brothers and sisters. We're going to have a really great day together – come learn and grow with us! ☒

Assistant continued from p. 1 ...

I questioned whether they meant except for things like grocery shopping, and they said that, no, they had them delivered! How often do we avoid others because they are not like us, or we think they are not our type, or we expect that they are ... fill in the blank?

A good bit of this is due to our chronic individualism. This, of course, is not just my own idea. Back in 1985, Robert Bellah, *et al.*, wrote a bestseller, *Habits of the Heart*, in which they chronicled the movement from the days of the industrial revolution to the present, and the resulting emphasis on the individual at the expense of the community.

Needless to say, I found strong agreement from my brothers.

I bring it all up because chronic individualism and the resulting weakening of community are taking a toll on our Church and on Franciscan life. Look, for example, at the fact that we see only approximately 1/3 of all those who call themselves Catholic darkening the doorways of our churches. And similarly, we find that many of our once-vibrant SFO fraternities are now dwindling. Membership is down, very few seem to be interested in joining our ranks, and many of our own members are repeatedly absent from fraternity meetings.

Sadly, there is no easy answer to all of this. But I do have a few suggestions. As I said earlier, I believe there is a real hunger for community. This means that we need to really “connect” with each other. SFO meetings that are just perfunctory are not feeding the members. But where this is Faith-sharing, personal sharing, a genuine interest in one another and what is going on in one another's lives, there is an experience of community. If there is communication beyond the monthly meetings, a real concern shown when someone is ill or hurting in any way, if there is inquiry (not condemnation) made when someone is absent, then a member feels cared about, loved.

Community is all about support, encouragement, mutuality, involvement in one another's lives. Is that too much to expect? Do we hold back because we don't really want to get too involved? If so, maybe we need to remember that we joined an Order, not a club, not an interest group, not a casual society, but the Franciscan Order. And in joining, we made a commitment to one another. We joined an Order founded by a little man who seemed to really understand the meaning of brotherhood, and who said, “If a mother

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