

Minister's Message: Quinquennial Report

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Quinquennial Congress was simply outstanding! There were 430 registrants who became a real family as the Congress progressed. The close proximity of the hotel was certainly a contributing factor, which also made it much easier for those who had difficulty walking. You should also know that our Korean brothers and sisters were one of the real highlights of the Festival of Cultures.

Doug Clorey, SFO, Canadian Presidency Councilor to the International Fraternity, wrote a 4-page report to our General Minister, Encarnación del Pozo, SFO, which you can read on the National Fraternity's web site at www.nafra-sfo.org under "Quinquennial Congress 2007." Some comments:

- "The keynote speaker, [Reverend] Eric Law, was an excellent choice to support the

Congress theme of diversity and inclusiveness. ... He is a skilled presenter ..."

- "It is important to underscore the significant effort of the organizers in helping participants gain an appreciation of the multi-cultural dimension of Secular Franciscan life."
- "It is regrettable that [the youth and young adults] did not have the opportunity of hearing the keynote addresses. ... These young people will be the leaders of tomorrow and could have benefited from hearing [Reverend Law's] presentation ... Perhaps further integration between the two groups could be explored for the next Quinquennial."

At the conclusion of the Congress, the assembly approved the following statement:

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Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Back in April, I began my article by asking, "What's a word that begins with a 'Q,' contains twelve letters, and means 'occurring every five years?'" And you probably knew: it's "quinquennial," the fancy word we use to refer to our SFO Congress that's held every five years. At this point the 17th Quinquennial Congress is history, but it still shines brightly in my memory and occupies a warm place in my heart.

I'll make a little confession here, as long as you promise not to tell anyone. I decided to attend the "Q" more out of a sense of "ought to" than "want to." Since I have a responsibility to serve you as Regional Spiritual Assistant, I thought I "should" keep up on what's going on, particularly in the national arena, and so this would be a good way of fulfilling some of my responsibility.

Well, my paltry attitude changed very quickly

once I got to Pittsburgh, and the first thing that helped was seeing some of you there! Sometimes we don't think our own presence means much, but did you ever notice how much the presence of others means to us, especially the presence of others whom we call our "sisters and brothers in St. Francis"? In addition to seeing some of you from our Region, I met some other Secular Franciscans whom I've known for years but haven't seen in a while, as well as some friars who are dear to me, and made some new friends.

And then there was our featured speaker, Reverend Eric Law. My heart went out to him because of all the controversy that swirled for months before the Q, knowing that he was going to be under the proverbial microscope. Well, he didn't need my sympathy. He was

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Council Members

Minister:

Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Vice-Minister:

Javier Orozco, SFO

Formation Director:

Rosemary Zimmerman, SFO

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Monica Marko, SFO

Treasurer:

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Councilor for Fraternal Life:

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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.**

Local Elections

Best wishes and prayers for the newly-elected officers of the following fraternities:

San Damiano (Chicago):

- *Minister:*
Diana Faust, SFO
- *Vice-Minister:*
Jim Strnal, SFO
- *Formation Director:*
Linda Doering, SFO
- *Secretary:*
George Tarasuk, SFO
- *Treasurer:*
Mike Doering, SFO

St. Anthony of Padua (Rockford):

- *Minister:*
Gail Vannetter, SFO
- *Vice-Minister:*
Virginia Gissler, SFO
- *Formation Director:*
Joe Berg, SFO
- *Secretary:*
Pat Berg, SFO
- *Treasurer:*
Barbara Turman, SFO

St. Clare (Kankakee):

- *Minister:*
Diane O'Connor, SFO
- *Vice-Minister:*
Gerarda Seemayer, SFO
- *Formation Director:*
Reisha Raymond, SFO
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Doreen Marcotte, SFO
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Eugene Kiefer, SFO

St. Francis (Crystal Lake):

- *Minister:*
Bob Proctor, SFO
- *Vice-Minister:*
Lodi Mula, SFO
- *Formation Director:*
Marianne Flesher, SFO
- *Secretary:*
Judi Warren, SFO
- *Treasurer:*
Ann Proctor, SFO

Corrections & Clarifications

In the "Around the Region" section of the July 2007 *SFO News*, the "Prairie Path Clean-Up and Fellowship" for St. Bernardine of Siena Fraternity (Wayne) was incorrectly listed as having taken place in June. It was actually postponed until the fall due to inclement weather.

We apologize for the error.

Promoting Vocations

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Last month, I promised to summarize in this issue what I'd hoped to present on vocations at our June Leadership Workshop:

■ **Personal Witness.** There's nothing like our own personal witness as Secular Franciscans to attract others to our way of life – and it's a real challenge, too. But that's what Francis did; remember, he said, "Preach always; use words when necessary."

■ **Personal Invitations.** The very best way to bring others into your fraternity is by personal invitation. This is something *everyone* needs to be doing – always being on the lookout for those who might want to embrace our way of life. This takes discernment – not everyone is meant for the SFO, but let's not miss the ones who are!

■ **Open Houses.** It's a good idea to have a yearly (or every other year) Open House or Information Night. Get the word out to parish bulletins, and Catholic and local media for them to include in their publications. Make up simple flyers to leave at retreat houses or similar places where Catholics gather.

■ **Information.** You need a fraternity brochure

with clear, concise information about the Secular Franciscan Order and your fraternity; Franciscan Resources (www.franciscanresources.com) has many examples you can use for ideas. Be sure the information is correct; for instance, anything that says there are one million Secular Franciscans in the world is out of date – the number now is under 400,000!

Once you have a good brochure, don't hide it in your files! It needs to be in every parish in your area and other places where Catholics gather. Ensure a constant supply in all these places.

■ **Formation.** Hopefully, your formation process is such that you can let interested people begin whenever they happen to come to you; the Holy Spirit doesn't call people only at the beginning of the school year. Also remember there's now a 3-month *minimum* period of Orientation, *before* Inquiry begins. If you don't have a formation team, you need to establish one. One person can't possibly take care of all the different levels of formation.

Hope this is helpful. If any of you have other ideas, I'd love to hear from you and will then be happy to share with others in the Region. ☑

The Nature of the SFO

by Rosemary Zimmerman, SFO; Regional Formation Director

Following are some remarks I recently shared with our Region's formation directors, which I'd also like to share with you.

This is an exciting time for our Region to take advantage of the opportunity to share in the accomplishments of our National and International Formation Commissions, who have worked diligently to provide us with rich resources to facilitate the "information," "formation," and "transformation" of the Secular Franciscan Order. We are so blessed!

The Nature of the SFO, as presented by Benedetto Lino, International Director of Formation, is determined by three basic elements:

1. Its genesis and the intention of our founder, St. Francis, based on an inspiration he received by God, who wanted our foundation.
2. Our historical evolution.
3. The will expressed by the Church by way of:

- legislation given by the Church itself
- the Supreme Pontiffs in the course of history

Our *Rule* establishes the nature, purpose and the spirit of our Secular Franciscan Order. Study it often. Review it annually with the entire fraternity, along with our *Constitutions*.

Remember that the SFO exists by a deliberate act of will of the Church. The Church wants and needs the SFO. It is erected by the Holy See. And it is intimately connected to the life of the Church for whom we receive a specific Mission to accomplish in her name.

My goal is to provide you with more formation and training opportunities. Please let me know if there are any questions, concerns, or suggestions of how I and the council can be of service. I'll have a questionnaire in the next newsletter, and I look forward to your comments! We are blessed. Share the grace. ☑

Regional Pro-Life “Think Tank” Meeting in October

In order to better live the gospel of life within our Region, Daniel and Susan Willenborg, SFO (St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity, Joliet) are spearheading a **Regional Pro-Life Think Tank Meeting**.

- **Date:** October 13 (Saturday)
- **Locations:** *Fraternity Gathering:*
St. John the Baptist Parish
404 N. Hickory St., Joliet

Think Tank:
nearby restaurant to be determined
- **RSVP By:** September 15 (Saturday)

Everyone is welcome to attend the fraternity’s monthly gathering, after which the Think Tank will immediately follow. During the Think Tank, participants will brainstorm ways in which we as Franciscans

can promote the Culture of Life in our Region. Feel free to bring articles, resources, and ideas!

Schedule Overview

- 8:00 a.m.: Morning Prayer
- 8:30 a.m.: Liturgy of the Day
- 9:15 a.m.: Fraternity Gathering
- 11:15 a.m.: Think Tank Meeting and Lunch

More details on the event will follow as they’re finalized; see the upcoming September *SFO News* and *Apostolic Action* newsletters for updates.

For more information or to RSVP, contact Daniel and Susan Willenborg, SFO. ☒

Regional Retreat: “Models of Charity”

Even in our own troubled times centuries later, Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi, and St. Elizabeth of Hungary continue to teach us the meaning of charity. All Professed* are invited to attend this year’s **Regional Retreat**, “Francis, Clare, Elizabeth of Hungary: Models of Charity for Our Franciscan Family.”

- **Dates:** October 12–14 (Fri.–Sun.)
- **Location:** Marytown
1600 W. Park Ave., Libertyville
- **Times:** 6:30 p.m. Fri.–noon Sun.
- **Costs:** Double: \$125
Single†: \$175
Commuter: \$75
- **RSVP By:** September 9 (Sunday)

* If any rooms are available in the last week of August, Candidates are welcome to register for rooms. Otherwise, Candidates are free to attend as commuters.

† Please share rooms wherever possible as we can only accommodate a *maximum* of 60 people with Double occupancy.

The Region is responsible for the full cost for all participants when providing the final count to Marytown, so **all registrations must be paid in full by Sept. 9**. Registration not paid in full by Sept. 9 will be cancelled and deposits will be refunded. After Sept. 12, the Region can’t refund any deposits.

For more information or to register, contact Dennis Temple, SFO.

Schedule Overview

- **Registration:** 6:30 p.m., Oct. 12 (Fri.)
no evening meal provided
- **Departure:** noon, Oct. 14 (Sun.)
brunch provided

General Information

Transportation to/from the Libertyville train station will be available; if needed, please note this when registering.

About the Retreat Master

Fr. Donald Blaeser, OFM is the Spiritual Assistant for the Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the SFO. He holds a Master of Divinity in theology from Catholic Theological Union, and a Certificate in Preaching from the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis, MO.

Fr. Blaeser has been serving on the “Ministry of the Word” team since 2000 and regularly speaks at numerous parish missions and other assignments, and gives retreats to religious and priests. ☒

Living the Gospel of Life

“We believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a ‘Gospel of life’. ... We cannot simultaneously commit ourselves to human rights and progress while eliminating or marginalizing the weakest among us. Nor can we practice the Gospel of life only as a private piety. American Catholics must live it vigorously and publicly, as a matter of national leadership and witness, or we will not live it at all.”

~ U.S. Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n. 20

Some who defend abortion claim that one is “truly human” only when able to reason, to choose, and to be creative. Yet a book* about how to perform abortions contains this quote:

“Surely embryos and fetuses do none of these things. In fact, neither do newborns, and there’s the rub. Presumably it would be equally as acceptable to destroy newborns as fetuses, since both are in the same prehuman boat.”

Think about it.

* *Second Trimester Abortion: Perspectives After a Decade of Experience*, Berger et al., Eds., p. 215.

“The abortion-rights folks know it, the anti-abortion folks know it, and so probably, does everyone else. One of the facts of abortion is that women enter abortion clinics to kill their fetuses. It is a form of killing ... you’re ending a life.”

~ Ron Fitzsimmons, Executive Director, National Coalition of Abortion Providers (*New York Times*, February 26, 1997)

Calendar

August

- 04: Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula, Mayslake Village
- 12: 25th Anniversary Celebration of St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity, 12 p.m. Marytown, Libertyville

September

- 09: Registration due for Regional Retreat at Marytown
- 15: RSVPs due for Regional Pro-Life “Think Tank” Meeting

October

- 2-7: National Chapter, Belleville, IL
- 12-14: Regional Retreat, Marytown
- 13: Regional Pro-Life “Think Tank” Meeting, hosted by St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity, Joliet
- 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

Minister *continued from p. 1 ...*

“In a spirit of Christian unity and love, over four hundred members of the Secular Franciscan Order gathered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania July 3–8, 2007. They celebrated their 17th Quinquennial Congress. Representatives came from all over the United States as well as from Caribbean Islands, Canada, Australia, India and Latin America.

“During their days together, they focused on the multicultural nature of their Order. Several cultural groups were highlighted, including Eastern Rite Catholics, Filipinos, Italians, Koreans, Mexicans, Native Americans, Syro-Malabar Catholics from India and Vietnam.

“The Secular Franciscans modeled inclusion of all cultures and races during the Congress. The Secular Franciscan Order has committed itself to an intentional effort to transform racist attitudes and all forms of exclusion that separate and oppress the people of God.”

Materials from Reverend Law’s presentations and some of the workshops – including the one presented by our own Javier Orozco, SFO (which was brilliant!) – are all on the national web site, as well as lots of pictures. Check it out! 📄

Assistant *continued from p. 1 ...*

congenial. He was humorous. He was light-hearted. He was very relaxed and comfortable with us. He disarmed the controversy by telling us up-front that he would not teach theology or morality or how to live our lives as Franciscans. And he was very well organized, clear in his presentations, and had wonderful, helpful, practical material to present on the subject of cultural diversity and communication.

We also prayed Morning Prayer together each day, and had Eucharistic Liturgies that reflected our multi-cultural richness. On two evenings there was a “Festival of Cultures” in which we saw audio-visual and live presentations that provided a glimpse of various cultures through song, dance, and storytelling, including Native American, Korean, Indian, Vietnamese, Mexican, Filipino, and Italian. We were even treated to a taste of some of their foods. Mmmmmmm, good! Which reminds me – some of our meals together were, at least for me, important times to share and get to know each other and to delight in our Franciscan fraternal spirit.

Getting back to the controversy surrounding the selection of Rev. Eric Law, an Episcopal minister, as the featured speaker, it was delightful to see how he was totally accepted by our gathering at the Q. Perhaps in a way the earlier ugliness will bring about something helpful. Maybe we all needed to be reminded to not prejudice, to not assume bad things, to not reject, but accept. Maybe we need to recall how Jesus accepted the sick, the sinner, the tax collector, and how St. Francis did the same by embracing and caring for lepers, and included himself with the poor, the rejected, the unfortunate. And Rev. Law doesn’t even fit in any of these categories.

Finally, we are reminded about trusting the good judgment of our leaders in the National Fraternity and the Planning Committee, who thoroughly researched this speaker. Personally I’m very glad that they did not crumple under the heat of controversy, especially when the Congress couldn’t be held at Steubenville, and I applaud them for their courage. God bless them. Those of us who attended are all the richer for the experience. 📄