

Minister's Message: Leadership Workshop June 21

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Wow, we just concluded our Annual Chapter, including National Visitation, which was great (see article on page 2), and now we're steaming forward to our annual **Leadership Workshop**. As you know from the Regional Calendar, it will be on Saturday, June 21, at Mayslake Village, with registration at 8:30 a.m. and Mass at 9:00 a.m. Full information is going out by mail to your ministers and should actually be received before you receive this newsletter.

The Leadership Workshop this year will focus completely on formation. However, we're hopeful that ministers will still attend, as well as any others in leadership positions or on formation teams, or who are just interested! This is NOT by any means a closed meeting!

Our Regional Formation Director, Sandy Kisel, SFO, and I have attended the NAFRA Formation Workshop this year, and we are anxious to share the incredible amount of information and guidelines that were presented to us. In addition, in order to give more time to our National visitors, we postponed discussion at the Chapter of the questions from the International fraternity, and therefore will discuss them at the Leadership Workshop. We hope all fraternities have discerned these questions so your representatives at the Leadership Workshop will be able to share all views. Those questions are:

1. To what degree is your being a Secular Franciscan an essential part of your life? Is your life in fraternity only a meeting among many others?

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Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Peace and everything good to you. Are Jubilees just a numbers game? I ask the question because we Friars Minor are beginning already to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the approval of our Rule by Pope Innocent III in 1209. In fact the further question might be what's the significance of celebrating a "rule"?

This reminds me of all the hoopla that went on when we celebrated the new millennium, and some were asking why the year 2000 was such a big deal. Were we just getting excited over round numbers?

Well, you probably know the answers to these questions already. For us as Christians the year 2000 is very significant because it marks the beginning of the coming of God's Son, Jesus Christ, into our human flesh, the

event which has changed all of history. Even more than that, it has changed *us* forever. Our world and our very selves are now different because we share in both the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ.

Similarly, as followers of the poor man of Assisi, we can date our beginnings to Francis getting verbal approval from Pope Innocent III for his *forma vitae* ("form of life"), which was later approved in writing in the Rule that was dated 1223, and which we friars still follow today.

There are several significances to this. One is that Francis was always faithful to the Church. It was vitally important for him to live this form of life *in* the Church and *with* the Church. And it is for us also. In Francis' day there were several groups that were

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Formation Director:

Sandra Kisel, SFO

Secretary:

Monica Marko, SFO

Treasurer:

Stephen Lanterman, SFO

Councilor At-Large:

Elisabeth Shin, SFO

Councilor for Apostolates:

To be appointed

Councilor for Communications/

Public Relations:

Lisa Wathen, SFO

Councilor for Fraternal Life:

Chris Bruhnke, SFO

Councilor for Visitations:

Jacqueline Leo, SFO

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

Professions

- **Joan Badley, SFO,**
- **Roberta Butler, SFO,** and
- **Welly Madinaveitia, SFO** of St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity (Libertyville) made their Professions on May 4.

Rest in Peace

- **Jane Rezek, SFO** of St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity (Libertyville) died October 14.

Local Elections

Best wishes and prayers for the newly-elected officers of **St. Thomas More Fraternity (Des Plaines):**

- *Minister:*
Elisabeth Shin, SFO
- *Vice-Minister:*
Columba Lee, SFO
- *Formation Director:*
Martha Kim, SFO
- *Secretary:*
Anthonio Choi, SFO
- *Treasurer:*
Agatha Hong, SFO

Note: Fr. Larry Dreffein, OFM is the new spiritual assistant.

Events of Interest

September 12-14: Daniel and Susan Willenborg, SFO (St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity, Joliet) invite and encourage all Secular Franciscans in our Region to join with them for this year's interfaith ShareFest, an annual event bringing churches and organizations in the New Lenox area together to visibly demonstrate love of one another through tangible acts of service, which include community service projects, gathering donated items (food, coats, etc.), health care testing and screenings, ecological action, and more.

For more information visit www.sharefestnewlenox.com, or contact Daniel & Susan.

Regional Chapter of Ministers Report

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

I feel we had an excellent Regional Chapter and National Visitation on May 17. We had excellent attendance—representatives of 21 of our 23 canonically-established fraternities were present, as well as one of our two satellites; our newly-forming group; and all but two members of our Regional Executive Council, both of whom had good reasons to be absent. Discussions were lively and our National visitors were well-impressed.

Fr. Lester Bach, OFM CAP., was our Pastoral Visitor, and his talk drew wonderful comparisons of Trinitarian spirituality and our call as Franciscans. He began his talk with a quote from a formation book, *Build with Living Stones*, published by the Franciscan Institute of Bonaventure University.

The quote paraphrased a section in the *Legend of the Three Companions* and said, in part:

“The Franciscan mission within the Church does not consist in defending the faith against outside forces; there are other groups with that charism within the Church. The Franciscan challenge is to accept Francis’ call to heal and to mend and to call according to the Gospel.”

From this Fr. Bach spoke of Trinitarian love—that which is the Trinity, and holds the Trinity

together, and how we are called to that love, too, in our dealings with one another.

Deacon Tom Bello, SFO, our Fraternal Visitor, facilitated a really good dialog among all of us, answering questions and allowing us to share our stories.

A lively discussion centered on the Mother Cabrini Award, and I am writing a letter to all ministers in the Region, which they, in turn, are to share with you. We need to discern if and how we will continue this activity in our Region. The letter will go out this week, so your ministers should have it for your June gatherings.

Patrick Mendés, SFO, also provided some information on the Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life. They are located at St. Francis University, Loretto, PA, and offer correspondence courses on various Franciscan subjects. Courses earn Institute Units toward a post-baccalaureate Certificate in Contemporary Franciscan Life or can be taken simply for interest. You can learn more at www.francis.edu/ICFLHome.htm.

I greatly appreciate the excellent participation we had at the Chapter. I was very proud of our Region. There will be a written report from our National visitors which will be shared with all of you when it is received. ■

From Our Formation Director

by Sandra Kisel, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It was so good to see so many of you at our Candidates Retreats in April and May. We were blessed to have many wonderful guest speakers, among them our Regional Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM, who presented “Our Franciscan Life of Prayer”.

Two local fraternity spiritual assistants also gave talks: Fr. Tony Fox, OFM CONV. (St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity, Libertyville) spoke of “Franciscan Simplicity” and “Franciscan Humility”, and Sr. Marilyn Renninger, OSF (St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity, Steger) presented “You Are My All in All: Francis and Clare’s Search for

God”, and “Clare: A Woman of Light”. Stephen Lanterman, SFO, Regional Treasurer, spoke beautifully with open discussion on “Pilgrim's Process: Ongoing Conversion”.

As was announced elsewhere, I recently returned from St. Louis, where the second “On the Road Workshop” was held from May 15–18. I am exhilarated with all the information exchanged for the good of fraternal life throughout the entire Order. The presentations touched on and clarified many questions fraternities have been seeking answers, to while offering aids in presenting and building up life within our

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local fraternities and all levels of our Order.

Our Regional Minister, Stephanie Sormane, SFO, and I will share the information we gathered from this weekend at the upcoming Leadership Workshop on June 21, and I do hope that everyone will make a special effort to attend. This is material you won't want to miss, and I'm looking forward to seeing everyone there.

Reminders

■ **National Seminar on Servant Leadership, June 26–29.** It sounds great, and you won't want to miss it! I can't emphasize enough how wonderful these workshops are, as

they offer opportunities for implementation and discussion on materials presented, fraternity with brothers and sisters you haven't met yet, and a great deal of fun.

■ **Regional Retreat, September 12-14.** Fr. Lester Bach, OFM CAP. will be our Retreat Master. What a treat! We'll have limited space, so please get your reservations in early when the announcements are sent out.

■ **International Elections in November.** Please continue to pray for our upcoming International Elections, which will take place in Hungary, and for the good of the entire Order.

God bless you all! ☒

“Francis, Build Up My Church ...”

by Sandra Kisel, SFO

Jesus speaks to us today as He spoke to St. Francis centuries ago. His words are alive! He entrusts to us our Franciscan brothers and sisters, our families, coworkers, and the world. How deeply do we hold our Lord's words in our hearts and act on them?

These are exciting times for our Order and for our world! Are we ready as Secular Franciscans to stand up for the cause of righteousness, peace, and integrity of God's creation? How will we move forward with these issues individually and collectively, because we are called to do both? Have we given thought to the means available to be instruments of change, and have we invited others to join us?

As members of the Mystical Body of Christ and as Franciscans, we must be leaven in today's world, keeping in mind the evangelical councils. We must be available to others, full of joy, with a profound devotion to our Holy Mother Mary, and totally conformed to Christ on His way to our loving, Heavenly Father.

As we read the life of Francis, are we moved by his conversion and love for the Word of God; the way God moved within him creating a new man? Remember the words of Brother Masseo to Francis: “Why does all the world flock to you? Why does everyone want to see you, to listen to you, to obey you?” (Fior 10)

Are we becoming what we love, as Francis did? Are we on fire with God for others? Do the gospels daily renew us in the life of grace and

union which we long for? Are we becoming mirrors of the gospels? Daily our Lord calls us into His all-loving presence to renew us in a life of grace, and filled with His Divine presence, we are re-energized in our commission to do good.

Francis exhorts us to lives of penance, reminding us of the first two commandments—to love God with all our heart, with our whole soul and mind, with all our strength (Mk 12:30), and love our neighbors as ourselves (Mt 22:39)—and to hate our bodies with their vices and sins, and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, producing worthy fruits of penance (Prologue of the Rule).

May we not hope, looking upon the signs of the times, that God will accomplish a re-incarnation of the spirit of our seraphic father among all men by calling forth from the ranks of his disciples and spiritual children those who will meet the particular needs of this age, rekindling the fire of divine love on earth and recalling man to a realization that the Kingdom of Heaven is not in what we eat or drink or wear, but rather in the joy of the Holy Spirit; teaching them also that the prayer of our Lord, “‘That all may be one’ lays upon all Christians a grave responsibility and sublime obligation”? (Fr. Paul of Graymoor, founder of the Society of the Atonement)

The Old and New Testaments give us a command to “Be holy as God is holy”. Conversion begins with each of us and our daily response to God's call. How are we doing? ☒

Living the Gospel of Life

“We in the pro-life community have been fed up for a long time with ‘public servants’ who can't seem to tell the difference between serving the public and killing the public. They mask the violence of abortion with the smooth language of ‘choice,’ and refuse to protect the victims. ... These abortion supporting politicians get away with what they are doing in large measure because they refuse to talk about what the ‘choice’ actually is. They try to avoid the word ‘abortion’ altogether; but even when they use it, the word has lost practically all its meaning. Voters hear the word but are left with little or no awareness of the gruesome horror it represents.

“... [I]t's time that we who know what abortion is draw a line in the sand and give candidates and office-holders alike this challenge:

“If you're going to take a position on abortion, then you're going to have to come clean about what it is. We are no longer going to let you obscure or trivialize the issue. Whether people agree with you or not, you owe it to them to be honest about what you're talking about. Therefore we issue this simple call to honesty: We will describe abortion to you, and you tell us if that's what you're talking about.

“That's it, pure and simple. This is not a debate, nor a threat. It's a call to clarity, a demand for honesty. That is not partisan, nor is it unreasonable; it is not fanatical or inappropriate in any way. Nor is this about religion or morality. We just want to make sure that we're hearing you. When you say ‘abortion,’ we just want to make sure we're both talking about the same thing.”¹

Watch the short videos from Fr. Pavone in which he describes and demonstrates the two most common abortion techniques at youtube.com/user/FrFrankPavone. Then, ask “pro-choice” politicians and candidates if this is what they mean when they say “abortion”.

¹ “Is This What You Mean?”, 14-Apr-2008 letter from Fr. Frank Pavone, National Director, Priests for Life

Calendar

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, all events are at Mayslake Village (Oak Brook).

June

21: Leadership Workshop

July

19: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

August

02: Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula

September

12-14: Regional Retreat, St. Francis Woods, Frankfort

October

25: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

November

16: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration (location TBD)

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2. What can you do to be more involved in the intimate life of the SFO?
3. Profession by its very nature is a permanent commitment. Do you live it as such?
4. Why, according to you, is the local fraternity so important in the life of the SFO? To what extent is your fraternity helping you to accomplish what your Profession demands of you?
5. Does the fraternity help you to remain faithful to your Profession and to give you a *sense of belonging*? To what extent do you yourself work to help the brothers and sisters of your fraternity to achieve these very same goals?
6. Why did you want to enter the Secular Franciscan Order? What contribution do you give to the SFO by means of your Profession and your presence?
7. To what extent do you believe that the new [1978] *Rule* has contributed to the changes that have taken place in the way of “feeling” the Order and “being” part of it?
8. Do you believe that the *sense of belonging* that you live today corresponds genuinely to what the Order truly is, to its “nature” and to its mission? Or does it correspond to something else that belongs to the past or to a personal conception of the Order? If you think that there is not a sufficient *sense of belonging* to the Order, what, in your opinion, are the reasons: lack of formation? lack of communication? lack of contribution and sharing? something else?

Another decision to be made at the Workshop is whether or not to bring in NAFRA’s Spirit and Light Team (SALT) for the Leadership Workshop in 2009. A brochure describing what SALT presents was distributed at the Chapter. SALT requires a full weekend rather than one day, so we need to determine if we are willing to make that time commitment for next year.

We look forward to seeing and sharing with you at the Leadership Workshop on June 21! ☑

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going their own way, not faithful to the Church, and not approved by the Church. And so St. Francis wanted to be faithful to the Church, the Body of Christ present in this world.

Also of significance for us today is that the jubilee year of 2009 and our preparation for it provide an opportunity for us to delve more deeply into the meaning of our vocation. This is an occasion for our “refounding” – to seek to live our life as Franciscans more authentically, in a more committed way. Our General Minister, Brother José Rodríguez Carballo, OFM, was quoted in *St. Anthony Messenger* in April, 2008, as saying, “Refoundation means going to our roots, keeping the essentials of our charism, but from these essential elements always answering the questions of people today.”

There will be various celebrations around the world, but the primary celebration will be at St. John Lateran Basilica in Rome in the week after Easter 2009. But again, what is more important than any celebration is that we let this touch our lives in a way that calls us to a deeper living of our calling as Franciscans.

In Pope John Paul II’s apostolic letter, *Tertio Millennio Ineunte* (“At the Beginning of the Third Millennium”), he wrote something that applies to us here: “In this moment we must look to the past with gratitude and embrace the future with hope, living the present with patience.” If we can do that every day we will be Franciscans worthy of the name. ☑