

Minister's Message: Retreat! And a Symposium

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I hope you've all enjoyed a wonderful summer – how blessed we have been with mild weather! Now we move into the fall and a busy – and enriching – time!

First, I must apologize for a couple of mistakes I've made in past articles – our Editor, Lisa Wathen, SFO, corrected the most important one in the last issue, but I also referred to Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM as our "spiritual director" and I know better than that. I'll try to be more careful!

You should all be well aware of – and I hope registered for – our Regional Retreat on September 12-14 (Fri.-Sun.), at the Portiuncula of Prayer at St. Francis Woods (Frankfort). If for some reason you didn't receive the information and want to attend, contact our Formation Director, Sandra

Kisel, SFO, at formation@ilsfo.org. The Retreat Director will be Fr. Lester Bach, OFM CAP., author of many of our formation materials, and the subject is "Trinitarian Spirituality: The Foundation is Love". Those of you who were at our Chapter and National Visitation in May heard Fr. Bach speak briefly on this subject. Now we will be privileged to learn more! I am greatly looking forward to this retreat and to seeing many of you there!

We have been presented with a wonderful opportunity by Lewis University, coming up later in September. They are presenting a symposium, mainly for their students but open to the public, on September 22-26 at their campus in Romeoville, and they have invited the Mother Cabrini Region to co-

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Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

It so happens that around the middle of September I will be giving a workshop to some Franciscan Sisters on their Rule – the Rule of the Third Order Regular. The Third Order Regular, of course, consists of our sisters and brothers who are vowed religious, and who live according to the Third Order Rule.

The Rule of the Third Order Regular is different from the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. Don't worry, I'm not about to launch into an in-depth comparison of the two, even if I were prepared to do so, which I am not. I will only highlight two significant differences.

First of all, as I said, these are religious women and men, living community life as vowed members of the Order. So that's the first difference – they take the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and, as such, are not

seculars, but religious.

The other difference is that, while the TORs are called to give witness to the Gospel in community life, the Secular Franciscans are called to give witness in "the marketplace." This is not to say that the TORs do not go out into the world, but rather that, while they do ministry in the world, their life is not, strictly speaking, in the secular world.

The SFO, as you well know, is composed of secular members who hold regular jobs and who are involved in all of the business and politics, the give and take of daily life in the real world, and who live the Gospel life in that world. The call, then, is to bring the Gospel to bear in the secular world, to give witness to it in every walk of life, in every thought, word and action in the otherwise ordinariness of life, thereby transforming

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Stephanie Sormane, SFO
minister@ilsfo.org

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Councilor for Vocations:

Norman Mosk, SFO

Spiritual Assistant

Fr. Donald Blaeser, OFM

Newsletter Editor

Lisa Wathen, SFO

Email: sfonews@ilsfo.org

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20th of each month.**

Professions

- **Mary Ellen Hogan**, SFO and
- **Kathleen Long**, SFO of St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity (Evergreen Park) made their Professions on July 27.
- **Jeanne Craig**, SFO of St. Clare Fraternity (Oak Brook) made her Profession on August 5.

Rest in Peace

- **Mary Ann Dojnik**, SFO of Immaculate Conception Fraternity (deactivated) died July 7.
- **Betty Kolpa**, SFO of St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity (Fox Valley) died August 5.
- **Mary Jane Manion**, SFO of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity (Frankfort) died August 14.
- **Cynthia Staworski**, SFO of St. Francis - St. Louis Fraternity (Chicago) died July 3.

Local Appointments

In August, Marc Golab, SFO of **Northwest Franciscan Community of the IHM (Palatine)** was appointed Formation Director for the remaining 1 year left in the office’s term.

Events of Interest

September 12-14: Join in this year’s ShareFest in the New Lenox area. For more information visit www.sharefestnewlenox.com, or contact Daniel and Susan Willenborg, SFO (St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity, Joliet).

October 3-5: All are invited to attend a retreat organized by St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity (Steger) at Mount Saint Francis, 101 St. Anthony Dr., Mt. St. Francis, Indiana. The retreat will be led by Fr. Troy Overton; transportation will be provided. For more information, contact Art Martlink, SFO.

“Francis, Build Up My Church ...”

by Sandra Kisel, SFO; Regional Formation Director

As I write this, we’re nearing September; how many special feast days we have in this month. Among these, the Triumph of the Cross, which we will celebrate while at our Regional Retreat in Frankfort with Fr. Lester Bach, OFM CAP.

How I wish we would all be together at our retreat, brothers and sisters thanking God for the wonderful gifts of His grace to us. Among these, the gift of our vocations as Secular Franciscans, living out our lives with, in, and through Christ our Brother, Redeemer, and Beloved, in the love of the Holy Spirit and as children of our Most High Father, drawing so closely to our Most High Triune God and praying for the grace to always live in His holy Will, striving to cooperate with His grace.

We’ve had a very busy and, I believe, a *very* blessed year, and it’s not over yet! It’s been heart-warming to see so many of you who have attended the regional events, and responses have been good; attendance continues to grow. And, *wow!* The attendance and celebration at our Regional Gathering was *outstanding!* Thanks to our Regional Councilor for Fraternal Life, Chris Bruhnke, SFO, for all the hard work and thanks to all who attended making it so special, and you, too, Fr. Chuck Faso, OFM! Not a few of us finished the day by visiting a local replica of the Portiuncula. I couldn’t help wishing with all my heart that someday perhaps we might celebrate this feast around the Portiuncula, outdoors!

Going forward, each month I’d like to focus on our Rule, starting here with **Article 6:**

In Baptism, we die to sin and become living members of Christ’s Body, children of our Heavenly Father. Every day, at every moment, we strive to live no longer for ourselves but for God alone; His Will, not ours; we strive to live our lives more perfectly just as Francis did, with our eyes focused on Jesus.

While in prayer, Francis experienced the sweetness of union with God, sweetness the world cannot give. This sweetness is not able to be contained but must flow out to all.

Throughout his life of conversion, Francis sought God and longed to give Christ to everyone, carrying Him alive and burning within his heart

so that souls could know and love Him as he did. God deserved to be loved.

Francis wasn’t satisfied at living a mediocre imitation of the life of Christ; no! His was to be Christ to all. God blessed Francis, making him not only a living bearer of His Word and life on earth but also a sign of His living presence and great love for souls.

At Profession, we reaffirm our Baptismal promises to live for God alone and reject the devil and his empty promises, and we promise to observe the gospel according to the way of St. Francis. In the words of the celebrant, “You have been called to give witness to the Kingdom of God and to build a more fraternal world based on the gospel, together with all people of good will.”

Questions for Review

1. Are we being faithful to our Profession promises, to live no longer for ourselves but for Christ, seeing Him in our brothers and sisters around us everywhere? Are we evangelical? What is our understanding of “evangelical”?
2. Do we daily read Holy Scripture and pray the Divine Office, the prayer of the Church?
3. Do we respect Church teachings as St. Francis did? Do we make it our responsibility to spend time with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and papal encyclicals? Do we try to understand and live them? Pope John Paul II said, “The Second Vatican Council was the greatest gift of the Holy Spirit in the twentieth century.” Have we read the documents of Vatican II?
4. Are we living our Professions in full communion with the Church, *i.e.*, the pope, our bishops, and priests? Are we acting in communion within our fraternities, making them signs of the Church in a spirit of true love, seeing Christ in each of our brothers, serving them as Christ serves us? Each of us has gifts to share; do we bring these to fraternity?

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5. Do we believe that Christ is with His Church and that she is guided by the Holy Spirit, or are we making our own rules as we go along? Remember, Francis gave us an example—obedience to Holy Mother Church. We cannot build up the Church if we have no knowledge of her and what she teaches. We cannot be a defense for the Church if we act on our own behalf, lacking knowledge and Divine wisdom that comes from prayer and communion with God. Friar Thomas of Celano in his First Book, #62, p. 238, FA-1

writes: "He put the faith of the Holy Roman Church above and beyond all things, preserving, honoring and following it, since the salvation of all who would be saved was found in it alone. He honored priests and affectionately embraced every ecclesiastical order." And again he wrote in his Testament, 1226, #6: "Afterwards the Lord gave me, and gives me still, such faith in priests who live according to the rite of the holy Roman Church because of their orders that, were they to persecute me, I would still want to have recourse to them."

6. Add your own questions and share discussion. **■**

Excerpts from Pope Benedict XVI's 17-Jun-2007 Angelus Address

Full address available at www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/angelus/2007/index_en.htm

About eight centuries ago, it would have been hard for the town of Assisi to imagine the role that Providence was to assign it, making it a famous city in the world today, a true "place of the soul". It was what happened here which gave it this character that impressed on it an indelible mark.

I am referring to the conversion of the young Francis. After 25 years of a mediocre life full of dreams, spent in the pursuit of worldly pleasures and success, he opened himself to grace, came to his senses and gradually recognized Christ as the ideal of his life. My Pilgrimage to Assisi today is intended to recall that event and to relive its significance and importance.

... From the Basilica of St Francis in which his mortal remains repose, I would now like above all to make his tones of praise my own: "Most High, All Powerful, All Good Lord, All praise is yours, all glory, all honour and all blessing" (cf. *Canticle of the Sun* 1). Francis of Assisi is a great teacher of our faith and praise. By falling in love with Jesus Christ he encountered the Face of God—Love, of whom he became an impassioned bard and sang his praise passionately like a real "minstrel of God".

In the light of the Gospel Beatitudes we can understand the gentleness with which St Francis was able to live his relations with others, presenting himself in humility to all and becoming a witness and artisan of peace.

... I consider it my duty to launch from here a pressing and heartfelt appeal to stop all the armed conflicts which bathe the earth in blood. May weapons be silenced and may

hatred everywhere give way to love, offence to forgiveness and discord to union!

We feel here the spiritual presence of all those whom war and its tragic consequences cause to weep, suffer and die in any part of the world.

We are thinking in particular of the Holy Land, so loved by St Francis; and of Iraq, Lebanon and the entire region of the Middle East. For too long now the peoples of those countries have been experiencing the horrors of war, terrorism, blind violence, the illusion that force can resolve conflicts, the refusal to listen to the reasoning of others and the refusal to do them justice.

Only a responsible and sincere dialogue, backed by the generous support of the International Community, will be able to put an end to all this suffering and restore life and dignity to individuals, institutions and peoples.

May St Francis, a man of peace, obtain for us from the Lord an increasing number of people who accept to make themselves "instruments of his peace" through thousands of small acts in daily life; and that all who have roles of responsibility be motivated by a passionate love for peace and an indomitable determination to achieve it, choosing the appropriate means to obtain it.

May the Blessed Virgin, whom the "Poverello" loved tenderly and praised in inspired tones, help us discover the secret of peace in the miracle of love which was fulfilled in her womb with the Incarnation of the Son of God. **■**

Living the Gospel of Life

"In July, 2004, Priests for Life ... interviewed representatives of the United States Bishops' Conference and asked whether, in the view of the bishops, it was true to say that abortion is the number one most urgent moral issue.

"Cathleen Cleaver Ruse, Director of Planning and Information for the Pro-life Secretariat of the US Bishops' Conference, responded, 'Sure, that's absolutely true. The Church has taught on this issue of abortion and its immorality since the Apostolic Age. It's one of our longest standing moral public policy issues and it is not like any other issue, really. It is, some might say, it's non-negotiable. There are no instances where it is morally licit or justifiable. That sets it apart from other issues like capital punishment, like just war theory and many other social issues that are very, very important but don't have that kind of no exceptions policy. So, the way the Church looks at abortion—abortion is one of those fundamental issues. If that right is taken away, if the very right to life is taken away then no other right matters. You don't have the ability to hold another right or to have another right taken away. So, while health care, the right to a good education, housing, all of these issues are very, very important, they are meaningless if the right to life is not first protected.'

"If social issues are like a house then the foundation is the right to life. An abortion takes away or rips out the foundation. The many other social issues can be considered the walls of that house but they can't be built unless there's a foundation.' "

~ Excerpt from "Distorted Citizenship", by Fr. Frank Pavone, National Director, Priests for Life

For information on the Church's teaching on faithful citizenship and concrete activities you can implement, see www.politicalresponsibility.com, a special site set up by Priests for Life.

Calendar

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

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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sponsor the event. They have some impressive speakers, including Sr. Dawn Nothwehr, OSF of the Catholic Theological Union, speaking on ending poverty and climate change; and Gerard F. Powers of the University of Notre Dame, speaking on peacebuilding.

Also, Russ Testa, the JPIC Coordinator for Holy Name Province and the Executive Director of Franciscan Action Network (FAN), will be talking about FAN. Our co-sponsorship requires no financial outlay, but we are encouraged to spread the word to all interested parties, especially but not limited to SFOs. I'm sending out flyers to all the fraternities as soon as I receive them with further information, but I wanted to alert you of the opportunity so you can save the dates. We will also be arranging car pools for those in need of transportation.

By the way, I have an article on FAN in the Fall issue of *TAU-USA* which I hope you will all read.

I believe I've already mentioned in previous articles that FAN has established a working

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yourselves and the world around you. This is a calling to be particularly "incarnational," to make Christ present and visible in the world.

I know some of you work strenuously to oppose abortion and to provide for other alternatives for women who are facing unwanted pregnancies. I hope you are just as strenuous in opposing the death penalty. If human life is sacred before birth, then it is most certainly sacred after birth and for the rest of the life of every human being.

Some of you are also very active in working for peace in the world, and for justice and human rights, and I hope you are just as active in opposing the arms race that is so horribly out of hand, and opposing the proliferation of weapons in our nation.

We refer sometimes to JPIC – Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. Is equal time given to the Integrity of Creation part, not just to the Justice and Peace part? There are some who, sadly, don't understand that our planet is in real

relationship with Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service, which is presenting peacemaking workshops for FAN throughout the U.S. One will take place in mid-September in Milwaukee, and another SFO and I will be attending. These workshops are for the purpose of training the trainers, and we will then come back to the Region to train others. My hope is to present this training at the Apostolic Action Workshop in March 2009. Just a little "head's up" that this is coming in the future.

In October, the National Chapter will take place in Nashville. It is my deep hope that we will receive some direction at that Chapter for the transition from the Commission to the JPIC model for our apostolic activity.

Finally, for the Mother Cabrini Celebration in Rockford on November 16, I have arranged to bring the 2007 Quinquennial quilt, which is huge, incredibly beautiful, and has been traveling all over the country since the "Q" last year. We had it at the Loretto leadership workshop in June, which will be covered in the Fall *TAU-USA*, and hopefully there will be a picture! ■

danger, that global warming is a reality, that the depletion of the ozone layer above the earth, the melting of glaciers and icebergs and the dead zones in the oceans, are caused by us, by human beings. Our air and water are being polluted, rain forests that provide oxygen and influence the climate are being cut down, and millions of living species are now extinct and many more thousands are threatened with extinction. And so it is us human beings who are challenged to turn around this desecration of the sacredness of Mother Earth.

Certainly St. Francis, our brother, the lover of all creation, would want us to live our calling in a most strenuous way today, in a world so in need of the commitment to cherish and preserve the integrity of the gift of God's creative hand. Just as St. Francis called the secular members in his own day to lay down arms and not engage in the Crusades, so I strongly believe he is calling all Franciscans, and most particularly his Secular Franciscan sisters and brothers to build up the earth, since we are all part of it. ■