

Minister's Message: Chapter!

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Easter Season blessings! As we celebrate our Lord's Resurrection, isn't it wonderful to watch the earth come back to life—and enjoy a few, and look forward to more, warmer days ahead!

Yes, May is the month of our Chapter, and I look forward to seeing you on May 16. A draft agenda has already been sent to all ministers and your packets, with reports from the Regional Executive Council, will be sent soon. We're anticipating a wonderful day together and good sharing and decision-making!

Where does the idea of "Chapter" come from? The first "Chapter of Mats" was held in 1221 in Assisi, when St. Francis called the then-more than 3,000 friars to the Portiuncula for a general meeting—or chapter. They were celebrating the approval of their first Rule, the beginning of the Franciscan Order! Because Assisi could not accommodate such a large number of visitors, the friars lived in

huts made out of reeds and slept on mats—thus the name. Since that time Chapters have been held regularly by all branches of the Order. It is a time to come together, share our experiences, assess our current status, and make our best plans for the future. That's what we will do on May 16.

It's imperative that each fraternity in the Region be represented, usually by its minister. If the minister is unable to attend, the vice-minister should attend. If the vice-minister also cannot attend, then the fraternity council must choose someone to represent the fraternity. We also encourage formation directors and spiritual assistants to attend, and observers are also welcome. Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided for the official fraternity representatives, formation directors, and spiritual assistants. Observers will need to pay \$10 to help cover the cost of food and materials.

Remember, we will be voting on whether or not to

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Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

As I travel around our Region doing visitations and witnessing elections, I find every SFO fraternity to be different—there are no two alike. This is good! We are not to be cut out as from a cookie cutter, but rather each fraternity has a kind of personality all its own. The same is true of our friaries—I have lived in quite a few, and no two are alike.

So the result of our individual differences is that each fraternity gathering (or meeting) is different. Again, no two are alike in terms of the focus, prayer together, content, time spent, and so on.

The basic structure of the usual SFO gathering/meeting, however, remains the same for all. There are four life-giving components, which we should faithfully find in our meetings: *prayer, ongoing formation, business matters, and social time*. These are dealt with in various places in our documents, and the *Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership* (pp. 57-58), offers a

succinct overview. I'd like to give some attention to these components.

First of all, *prayer together*. Again, variety is the spice of life, and each fraternity has its own methods and sources for prayer. The important thing is that we do have prayer together. For some fraternities prayer is, or includes, the celebration of Mass. Again, that is certainly good. However, there is also a great value to having some prayer that is shared, such as the Liturgy of the Hours, or some prayers from the SFO *Ritual*, a reading from Sacred Scripture, or even *lectio divina* (a slow, meditative reading of a passage from Sacred Scripture with sharing of a word or phrase that strikes us, and repeating that several times). These ways of sharing prayer together contribute to building community.

In fact, the Mass, because it is our highest form of worship, can even leave us feeling that the rest of the meeting is second-rate. And because the Mass is longer than most of the other prayer forms, we may

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Minister:

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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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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

- **Genevieve Thompson, SFO** of St. Anthony of Padua (Oak Lawn) died April 14.

Events of Interest

June 25-28: A 4-day seminar, “Franciscan Spirituality for Secular Franciscans”, will be held at Saint Francis University, Loretto, PA. Presenters are National Formation Director Bob Fitzsimmons, SFO and Vinal Van Benthem, SFO. Cost for the full weekend is \$220 single/\$180 double, which includes room, meals, shuttle, and registration fee. After April 30, the cost increases to \$235 and \$195, respectively. For more information, email Sandra Kisel, SFO, Regional Formation Director, at formation@ilsfo.org.

Calendar

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

May

- 02:** Candidates’ Retreat, Day 2
- 16:** Chapter of Ministers

June

- 20:** Leadership Workshop

July

- 18:** Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

August

- 01:** Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula

October

- 09-11:** Regional Retreat, Marytown, Libertyville
- 17:** Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

November

- 15:** Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration (*location TBD*)

December

- 12:** Regional Elections (*to be confirmed with NAFRA*)

National Elections

The NAFRA Triennial Election is scheduled for October 24, 2009 in Albuquerque, NM and *all Secular Franciscans are eligible to nominate* someone for the NAFRA Executive Council.

Timeline

- April: Notice of Election published; Call for Nominations.
- June: Nominations close.
- July: Nominations Committee contacts nominees, who accept or decline nominations.
- Aug. 15: Deadline for nomination forms returned from nominees.
- Aug. 22: Start 9-week novena for spirit-led election.
- Aug. 29: Resumes of nominees sent to voting members of the Elective Chapter.

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continue the Mother Cabrini Award. If your fraternity has not yet discussed this matter, be sure you do before the Chapter so your minister’s vote will represent the will of your fraternity. If it is decided not to continue the Mother Cabrini Award, we will still continue to have the annual Mother Cabrini Celebration.

Speaking of Chapters and the 800th anniversary of the Order, we are planning a very special Franciscan Gathering at Mayslake Village on Saturday, August 1. Our Regional Councilor for Fraternal Life, Chris Bruhnke, SFO, will be reporting on the details shortly!

Finally, 2009 is a big election year for the SFO, because we have National elections (see page 2) and our own Regional elections, hopefully on December 12. I say hopefully because the National elections are in October and we won’t know until then who will be presiding

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have little energy or time left for each other or for the rest of the meeting. So, I do not recommend the celebration of Mass at every meeting. It might be best to have the Mass only on special occasions, such as for professions, thereby highlighting its importance, and the specialness of the occasion.

I would like to suggest that those fraternities that have not yet tried the Liturgy of the Hours—called “the Prayer of the Church” by the Second Vatican Council—should begin to use it. This beautiful ancient prayer isn’t to be viewed as just the prayer of priests and vowed religious, but of the whole Church. There are many good resources on this, and the one-volume edition containing Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Night Prayer is easily obtained from a variety of sources; you can even get it with the Franciscan Supplement.

Procedure

For the office of Minister, Vice-Minister, Secretary, Treasurer, Councilor, and/or International Councilor, email (*preferred*) **OR** snail-mail the name, address, and email address of nominees to *both* committee members:

- **Kathleen White, SFO:** Email: kdwsfo@verizon.net
Postal address: 612 Front St., Logansport IN 46947
- **Linda Grady, SFO:** Email: lgradysfo@sbcglobal.net
Postal address: 6001 Harvard Dr., Kokomo IN 46902

To avoid lost nominations, all nominations are sent to *both* committee members, who will continually cross-reference them.

DO NOT email nominations to the NAFRA-L list. *Nominations are confidential.* ■

over our elections and whether or not that date will work for them.

We would like to encourage everyone to seriously discern the possibility of serving the Region or NAFRA. If unable to serve yourself, then who do you know who you believe would be a good candidate for a Regional or National office? The most important attributes are a willingness to serve, the ability to work as a team player, and basic knowledge of the position for which the candidate is running.

To help in that area, the Leadership Workshop this year will focus on council positions, and I have asked each of the Regional Executive Council members to give a short presentation on their position. We’ll have more information on that workshop at the Chapter.

Looking forward to seeing you soon. Meantime, continue to enjoy this blessed Easter Season and the arrival of spring! ■

Years ago, when I was a spiritual assistant for a fraternity in Indiana, the regional minister and spiritual assistant at our visitation suggested that we do this, and they asked me to teach the SFO members how to pray it. We did so, and I believe they found it to be a beautiful way to pray, as Francis did, in union with the whole Church.

Prayer, then, is an important component of the SFO gathering. We should guard against making it so rote or routine that it becomes meaningless. Again, variety is good and life-giving. But as important as prayer is, it is not the sole purpose of our meetings. We are not just a prayer-society, and should never assume that this is the only reason we come together. The rest of our gathering is equally important.

More on the four components of the SFO meeting next month. In the meantime, I wish you a very Happy and Blessed Easter Season. ■