

Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO

Dear brothers and sisters,

May is always a very busy time in our regional fraternity. We are in the Easter season and have the second day of our Candidates' Retreat, plus we have our annual Chapter of Ministers, where the full Regional Council (comprised of the Regional Executive Council and all local ministers or their delegates) meets to do the business of the Order - which, of course, includes building fraternity at the regional level by praying together, socializing, and learning (formation), as well as the necessary business of approving the budget for the coming fiscal year. This year's Chapter is our triennial visitation from the National Fraternity. Just as we have a member of the Regional Executive Council and either Brother Joe or another spiritual assistant visit each local fraternity roughly midway between elections, this year we have National Vice Minister Elaine Hedtke and President-in-Turn of the Council of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap., visiting us. Visitation is a special time that reinforces the bond between us and the national fraternity, and we are grateful to have Elaine and Fr. Lester with us.

There was an extra Secular Franciscan event this month. Over the weekend of May 12-15, we had the National Formation Workshop at Our Lady of the Snows Shrine in Belleville, IL. According to National Minister Tom Bello, the 128 SFOs who gathered there constituted the largest national gathering of Secular Franciscans since the Quinquennial in 2007. We had three members of the National Executive Council, eighteen regional ministers, three of the four national spiritual assistants, many regional formation directors and spiritual assistants, and many other formators. Thank you for the prayers we requested in advance for the success of the workshop - the prayers were certainly answered! It was both an excellent learning experience AND a wonderful opportunity to experience fraternity. Especially after having missed the Chapter of Ministers last fall, it was particularly joyous for me to be there.

The new national formation manual developed from the CIOFS (International SFO)

National Formation Commission is truly an impressive work.

The manual covers all the topics considered essential by our Order's Presidency, plus other topics deemed important for the United States. Some of these topics such as ecclesiology (study of the Church), do not sound like topics of interest or importance to Secular Franciscans...until you start reading or listening to the presentation and then the connection to our way of life becomes clear.

This program is named *For Up to Now...* (FUN for short). The name refers to the famous quote from St. Francis on his deathbed, "Let us begin again, *for up to now* we have done nothing." When it comes to our formation as Secular Franciscans, this program truly marks a new beginning for ALL of us, no matter how long we have been professed. There is SO much for ALL of us to learn!

What a great blessing it is that our Minister General recognized the need for all Secular Franciscans around the world to have a common understanding of our vocation and our place in the Church! We are most fortunate to have this material developed in our time. I am looking forward to being part of the formation team presenting this material to ministers, formation directors, spiritual assistants, and others in our Regional Fraternity on September 17-18. Remember that while the Holy Spirit has primacy in our formation, *all* of us are part of formation, both for ourselves and for those entering the fraternity. The better our formation is, the stronger our fraternities will be. If we are living the life we professed, we will have no problem with vocations!

I encourage as many of you as possible to participate in our regional formation workshop this fall, and to support the introduction of this new material as an important component of your formation programs going forward.

Peace and blessings as we begin the summer season...Vickie

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The *SFO News* is the official publication of the Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order.

CALENDAR

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

- **Election & Visitation dates subject to change.**
(E=Election/V=Visitation)

January

- 15: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 17: San Jose Fraternity (E)

February

- 15: St. Junipero Serra (V)
- 26: Apostolates Workshop

March

- 01: Fair Share, Census, and Annual Reports due
- 14: NW Franciscan Community (V)
- 19: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

April

- 2: Candidates' Retreat, Day 1
- 17: St. Thomas More (E)

May

- 07: Candidates' Retreat, Day 2
- 12-15: National Formation Workshop, Belleville, IL
- 21: Chapter of Ministers - Fraternal & Pastoral Visitation

June

- 07: St. Clare Fraternity (Oak Brook) (V)
- 12: St. Juliana Fraternity (V)
- 23/ Summer Seminar - "Fraternity"
- 26: Loretto, PA
- 26: St. Anthony Padua (East Side) (E)

July

- 10: St. Elizabeth of Hungary (V)
- 10: St. Maximillian Kolbe (E)
- 16: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 23: St. Francis of Assisi Fox Valley (V)

August

- 06: Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula
- 07: St. Bernardine of Siena (V)

September

- 17-18: Regional Formation Workshop for Ministers/ Formation Directors
- 18: St. Mary of the Angels (V)

October

- 02: St. Francis/St. Louis (V)
- 15: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 25-30: NAFRA Meeting

November

- 13: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration (location TBD)

Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

What an exciting time it has been for Franciscans in this neck of the woods. On Wednesday, May 4th the friars of The Sacred Heart Province held a solemn profession event here at St Peter's Church for Friar Vaughn Fayle, ofm. Then the following Saturday at St John the Baptist Church in Joliet we celebrated the ordination to the priesthood of Friar Rommel Perez-Flores, ofm; and to the diaconate of Friar Duc Pham, ofm and Friar Ed McKenzie, ofm. After all that we were called upon to lay to rest our dear Brother Freddie Smith, ofm with a wake service honoring his life and his many years of faithful service in the Chicago area on Tuesday evening the 17th and a beautiful funeral mass and interment the next day. This was not just an opportunity to experience the Friars at their very best, which it was, but also at every event there were many Secular Franciscans present which testified clearly to the life giving union of our common Franciscan vocation.

The Franciscan "fun" continued down in Bellville, Illinois at Our Lady of the Snows Shrine this past weekend. The National SFO formation council sponsored an event to present a new initial formation instrument entitled "*for until now*" aka the FUN manual which was commissioned two years ago by the national council of the SFO. You will be hearing much more about all of this from our brother, Patrick Mendes, and our regional formation council in the coming months ahead. I find the material meaningful and exciting, but the most exciting part of this gathering was the contact with Secular Franciscans from around the country. Every region in the country was represented with the exception of Hawaii. Each fraternity in our region will receive a copy of the "FUN" manual at our annual formation workshop this September. Since it seems that the thrust and focus of Secular Franciscan activity around the

world for a while will be "formation, formation, formation," as well as living well and faithfully in our local fraternities, I would encourage you all to explore and consider these Franciscan dreams and wonderful resources. Your brothers and sisters have prayerfully worked for years to prepare and produce them for you. You will be hearing more later.

And now finally, there is one more Franciscan activity that is about to happen or more rightly by the time you receive this, it will have happened and that is the regional visitation by the national fraternity. Representing all of you, the Regional Executive Council (REC) will share our story and statistics with representatives of the National Fraternity of the SFO (NAFRA). This event was open to all Secular Franciscans but most importantly the local Ministers and hopefully the Spiritual Assistants have been encouraged to attend this Chapter of Ministers. We have the benefit and loving wisdom found in the good company of Elaine Hedtke, SFO the National Vice Minister as well as the iconic presence of the man who wrote our current formation book(s), Lester Bach, O.F.M. Cap. All of this is something else you have to look forward to hearing more about in the future. I hope that our future will blossom and grow far and wide; and deeply.

As always I wish you everything good. I am your brother Joe

Some Good News...

Congratulations to *Juan Ponce de León*, Minister of Nuestra Sra. De Guadalupe Fraternity who was ordained as a permanent deacon on May 15th at Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago. He is one of 12 men ordained as permanent deacons this year. Congratulations, Juan!

Three members of St. Anthony, Oak Lawn fraternity celebrated milestone anniversaries on May 22nd. Mary Dalton celebrated her 50th Anniversary and Rosaleen Neven and Dolores Karnia both celebrated 65 years as SFO members. We extend hearty congratulations and thanks to these sisters for their faithful witness over all these years!

In-Formation

By Sr. Marilyn Renninger, osf
Formation Commission

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Many of us have happy childhood memories of picking flowers for our May altar in our homes. But my family also had a June altar honoring the Sacred Heart. Vivid in my memory is the statue of the Sacred Heart on the buffet in our dining room and also the family consecration hanging on the wall.

Most of us know something about the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Perhaps we remember the name St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, or maybe it is the nine First Fridays we remember as were growing up.

Now as a Franciscan Sister of the Sacred Heart, the rich history of this devotion is even more in my blood. As I studied Scripture I became aware that devotion to the Sacred Heart has biblical roots in both the Old and the New Testament.

The word “heart,” as it is used in Sacred Scripture and in our own English language, is a symbolic word that is used to mean the whole person. It means the center or core of the person.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for heart occurs many, many times. Also in the New Testament there are many references to the Heart of God and God’s love. Jesus frequently used the word “heart” to refer to the fundamental center of the person. For example: “Where your treasure is, there your heart will also be” (Lk 12:24); “Blessed are the pure in heart” (Mt 5:8); “Come, and learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart” (Mt 11:28).

God wants to speak to us heart to heart. So it is only natural that God would choose to speak to us through the heart of His Son. Jesus allowed His heart to be pierced to show us His infinite love. His open side and the stream which flowed from His heart became the source of the living waters of salvation, the source and fountain of grace. This stream of living waters is notable in all pictures of the Sacred Heart.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is but a special form of devotion to Jesus. It is a devotion simply based upon love and a sorrow for sin. It involves both consecration and reparation. To me it is very Franciscan. We know that Francis had a special love and devotion to the humanity of Jesus – the great love that Jesus showed by his human birth and his passion. Francis’ love for the God man led him to imitate Jesus as perfectly as possible.

Even though the promises of the Sacred Heart and this devotion, per se, were not known at the time of Francis, his biographers note that his heart was totally spent in loving Christ. His heart was totally united with the heart of Jesus.

Thomas of Celano says of Francis, “He (Francis) was always with Jesus: Jesus in his heart, Jesus in his mouth, Jesus in his ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands, he bore Jesus always in his whole body....With amazing love he bore in his heart and always held onto Christ Jesus and Him crucified” (Chapter 9, 115).

As a Franciscan, I hold devotion to the Sacred Heart very special because it is devotion to the love of God, a devotion that emphasizes His love. If you do not presently have a special love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I encourage you to look into it during this month of June.

I close with a quote from Richard Baxter, who three hundred years ago wrote, “If we have trouble recognizing Jesus’ face or voice or hands, we will know Him by his Heart.”

Have a happy and hearty month of June. May the Sacred Heart fill you with peace and all good! Sr. Marilyn Renninger, osf 

Editor’s Corner

2011 so far has been a year fraught with turmoil and many natural disasters. In the wake of all of this news I have found the following passage from St. Teresa of Avila consoling and good counsel:

*Let nothing disturb thee,
Nothing affright thee
All things are passing;
God never changeth;
Patient endurance
Attaineth to all things;
Who God possesseth
In nothing is wanting;
Alone God sufficeth.*

Rest in Peace...

Doug McDougall - St. Francis Crystal Lake, died on May 25th. Many of you will recall that both Doug and his wife, Melissa, were Mother Cabrini Award recipients and had made frequent trips to Haiti to volunteer their time helping in various capacities. In fact, Doug had to shortcut their last trip to Haiti as he became ill while there. Please keep Melissa and the rest of the family in your prayers.

Hattie Plecki - St. Anthony Oak Lawn Fraternity, died on April 5th. She was a member of that fraternity for 63 years.

May God grant Doug and Hattie eternal light, happiness and peace.

JPIC News – Some Materials Coming Your Way!

By Stephanie Sormane, SFO

JPIC Councilor

As I hope you are all aware, our Annual Chapter took place on Saturday, May 21. It was also our National Visitation, and I know others will be writing about that meeting.

In anticipation of the Chapter, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) sent me some materials to be distributed to the Ministers, who, in turn, are to share them with their Fraternity brothers and sisters. Unfortunately, there were not enough copies for each SFO in the Region, but there are certainly enough copies for several Fraternity members in each Fraternity to review and then share with the rest of the Fraternity. I hope that will happen. Here's a summary of what those materials are.

As I have written in *SFO News* before, Kent Ferris, SFO, our JPIC Councilor for NAFRA, introduced at the National Chapter last October the Courageous Initiative entered into with CRS with respect to their campaign, Catholics Confront Global Poverty. The term, "*Courageous Initiative*" is taken from Article 15 of our Rule, which states: *Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.*"

The materials I handed out offered suggestions of various activities individuals and/or fraternities could undertake. The point of the one-year initiative is to encourage SFOs to

- **Pray** – include global poverty issues in your prayers and/or organize special prayer services or masses
- **Learn** – choose one or more of the seven Catholics Confront Global Poverty issues and/or Church teaching on global poverty and study these topics as a group (check www.usccb.org/globalpoverty or www.crs.org/globalpoverty)
- **Advocate** – promote and support the life and dignity of poor people by organizing a letter writing campaign to your elected officials based on a current Catholics Confront Global Poverty action alert (see web sites above)
- **Act** – share your talent by engaging in service activities that address poverty in your community and around the world; organize a speaking event or write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper to educate others about these issues. CRS is also happy to receive financial support to help them in their work, but the main thrust of the courageous initiative is to pray, learn, advocate and act.

CRS encourages us to work together. I believe we could develop a project in the Region which wouldn't be a

burden to any of the Fraternities but would be a good learning experience for us all. Therefore, I'm inviting suggestions from all of you and I look forward to hearing from you. I will also think about what we could do and will report to you next month on what we might consider doing together. If we do come up with a project and follow through with it, we can report our project to CRS and receive a star on their Solidarity Map, with our Region's name, location and details of our efforts. I think this would be great! Remember, the project needs to address global poverty. Also included in the materials I handed out at the Chapter is a brochure on Franciscan Action Network (FAN). It seems some in our Region are still confused about FAN and I would really like to clear up that confusion in the hopes that more of us will participate in its activities.

I am not the author of the brochure – I simply copied it in a more reproducible form; therefore, I changed nothing in the copy, and some things require explanation. Membership in FAN is basically institutional, at least as far as dues are concerned. A list of institutional members is included in the brochure. NAFRA is an institutional member – its name is in bold type. There are two other ecumenical secular orders – Order of Ecumenical Franciscans and The Third Order Society of St. Francis, Province of the Americas. All the rest of the institutional members are religious communities, and you will recognize many of them. FAN did not, and does not, replace the Apostolic Commissions – it is simply one of the ways we address Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. FAN is special because it provides opportunities for the entire Franciscan Family to work together.

What needs to be explained is individual membership, which does not require dues. When you go to the FAN web site (www.franciscanaction.org) you will see on the home page in the upper right-hand corner, a gray box. Simply fill out that gray box, and you're an individual member. Why should you want to do that? Because as an individual member of FAN, you will receive information from FAN on important issues facing our society, meditations during various seasons of the church year connecting our faith with our call to care for and about our brothers and sisters, and information regarding activities undertaken by other organizations with similar goals as FAN in which we may wish to participate.

I hope the Local Ministers will share these materials with all of you, and I hope you will find them interesting and educational. I look forward to taking this to the next step next month! 