

Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO

Dear brothers and sisters,

It's hard to believe it's been a month since Chapter and our triennial visitation. (Actually, it seems a lot longer than that...but that's just me.) It was a blessing to have Elaine Hedtke, National Vice Minister, and Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap., as our fraternal and pastoral visitors.

This visitation meeting (whether at the local, regional, or national level) is not like an IRS audit. Rather it is time spent with family members who've seen more of life than we have. We're familiar with our own region (and our own individual fraternities); visitors have seen how other fraternities, both local and regional, conduct their business and live their SFO vocation. With that perspective our visitors can advise us about what they have seen work well and what are potential pitfalls. Besides sharing this accumulated wisdom of experience, our visitors represent our connection to the larger Franciscan family. They remind us that we are not alone on our journey; the fraternity at the higher level shares our joys and challenges.

The good thing about writing this a month after Chapter is that we already have the reports from our visitors. Some of the strong points that Elaine highlighted in her report include our "informative and well written" newsletter, our "vibrant" formation commission, and our "noteworthy" participation in diocesan Vocation Commissions by our Councilor for Vocations. Based on the feedback of our local ministers and our Regional Executive Council (in separate sessions), our region's most commonly mentioned strength is our geographic closeness. Most regional fraternities meet only once a year for their Chapter, over a weekend. It is good to remember how blessed we are that we do gather multiple times each year as a regional fraternity!

While Elaine and Fr. Lester were very positive about our regional fraternity, they of course had some suggestions to make us even

better. Some of these suggestions involve ALL of us. For example, when we do have a regional event we should work at establishing relationships with members of other fraternities by sitting and talking with them rather than sitting with our own fraternity brothers and sisters. Fr. Lester describes this as "a gift [we] give each other." We've talked about this from time to time - let's make a renewed effort to mix at regional events.

Formation must be a very high priority for all of us. As Fr. Lester says, "Though it takes time and effort without end, it is vital for the blossoming of the Franciscan spirit. As we look around at the violence, divisions, and lack of courtesy in our world, God calls Franciscans to bring something positive to fraternity life, to the Church and to the world. As a *community of love*, we learn how to do this through formation - which never ends."

Both Elaine and Fr. Lester emphasized our common responsibility to promote vocations to the SFO. Elaine said, "Pray for vocations! Encourage all of the brothers and sisters to utilize the national prayer for vocations [included in this newsletter] and to strive to make their gatherings a family celebration of thanksgiving to God for each other and for the blessed vocation given to each person." Fr. Lester reminds us that "The SFO Constitutions state that everyone is responsible for discovering vocations given by the Holy Spirit. Councils at all levels have a special duty in this regard. With that goal comes the need for good discernment with newcomers to ascertain that they have a vocation to the SFO."

It was very good for us to have Fr. Lester and Elaine with us. We will benefit from their good advice, but more from their fraternal love that was shared with us during our time together.

Peace and good.....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,

Greetings from the first days of summer to all of you! I have just returned from The Sacred Heart Province's 2011 Chapter held in St Louis. During this time away we discerned our provincial leadership and a new provincial council. We also spent a good amount of time discussing and deciding the direction of our future. All of this was done under the guidance of a visitor general appointed by Rome, a steering committee elected by the friars of the province, a visioning committee appointed by the provincial and the provincial council, and we trust, the Holy Spirit of God, who as they say, is our minister general. We all worked very hard and from my perspective I have to say that all went well and for the most part it was good to be with the brothers. I am, however, quite exhausted and the creative juices required to write seem to be flowing like molasses. So, for that reason I went digging through the "Essential Documents of the Secular Franciscan Order" mining a few nuggets for your consideration.

First from the Rule, chapter II: 7. "United by their vocations as brothers and sisters of penance, and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls conversion. Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily." Then, there is this from the General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order 2000, Article 14, 1 & 5. *1. "Aware that God wanted to make of us all a single people and that he made his Church the universal sacrament of salvation, the brothers and sisters should commit themselves to a faith-inspired reflection on the Church, its mission in today's world and the role

of the Franciscan laity within it. They should take up the challenges and accept the responsibilities that this reflection will lead them to discover."

*5. "In all places and at all times, it is possible for true worshippers of the Father to give him adoration and to pray to him. Nevertheless, the brothers and sisters should try to find times of silence and recollection dedicated exclusively to prayer." I invite you to ponder and pray with these good words from our Essential Documents.

For your further consideration along these lines I would like to invite you to consider participating in a Secular Franciscan Retreat sponsored by the St Francis / St Louis fraternity at St Peter's Church. This special event will be held beginning on Friday evening September 9th through Sunday afternoon September 11th at the Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center at 513 W. Fullerton in Chicago. The cost is \$216 for a single room, \$176 for a double room, and \$96 for commuters. The retreat includes a presentation from Franciscan Outreach, a vigil mass and holy hour presided over by Fr Arthur Anderson, ofm, and the continuing theme of The Spirit of Prayer and Devotion presented by your humble Brother Joe Middleton, ofm. For reservations please contact Norm Mosk, sfo at vocations@ilsfo.org.

With my best wishes I remain
your Brother Joe 

NATIONAL PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS TO THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

O, Good and Gracious God,
God of mercy, compassion, generosity, and love,
As we live our lives today in the model of St. Francis, choosing daily to live the Gospel life,
Help us to help others hear Your call.
Help us to help others to recognize their vocation as a Secular Franciscan that You have already planted in their heart.
Help us, so that together we all may work to bring the Gospel to life. Amen!

Marian R. Crosby, SFO,
NAFRA Chapter 2010, Scottsdale AZ

In-Formation

By Nick Noe S.F.O. Formation Commission

Peace at La Verna

(Feast of St. Bonaventure-July 15)

The year was 1259, 33 years after Francis died, when (St.) Bonaventure of Bagnoreggio began the steep walk to the top of Mount La Verna. Francis had last visited the hermitage in late summer 1224, and it was during this time he had a vision of the six-winged Seraph and received the marks of the Crucified. Bonaventure, who had been Minister General of the Franciscan Order for two years, had a cell built for him near the large stone where the Stigmata event occurred. He came to La Verna to find something we all need, inner peace. In his Prologue to *The Soul's Journey into God*, Bonaventure wrote that he came to La Verna to seek that peace which Jesus Christ had proclaimed and which Francis exemplified and experienced in contemplation. It had been a difficult two years for Bonaventure and more challenges were ahead.

Bonaventure became the seventh Minister General of the Order of Franciscan Minors in 1257 when he was 40 years of age. Before that he had a brilliant academic career at the University of Paris. He studied under the famous theologian, Alexander of Hales, who became a Franciscan in 1236, and then officially established the Franciscan School at the University. Alexander's theology and presence greatly influenced Bonaventure and in 1243 Bonaventure also joined the Franciscan Order. He saw the Franciscan Order evolving in a pattern similar to the Church. Although the Church had begun with simple fisherman, through Christ it "afterward developed to include the most illustrious and learned doctors." When Bonaventure left the University of Paris in 1257 his reputation as one of the Church's greatest theologians was firmly established, a reputation that eventually led to his canonization as the "Seraphic Doctor."

Bonaventure was well aware of the discord and division within the Franciscan Order when elected to the position of Minister General. One faction (the Spirituales) wanted the Order to return to the original Rule and have the friars live as Francis and his first companions. The other faction (the Relaxti) wanted an even more liberal interpretation of the current Rule. But Bonaventure had no intention of leading the friars back to the way of life practiced by Francis. He believed the Order was at the service of Church and he accepted the Vatican's interpretation of the Rule and Testament. However, he also firmly believed the friars should be following the current Rule. Shortly after becoming Minister General, Bonaventure sent a letter to all the friars (now more than 30,000) listing 10 areas where "some" of the friars were

not following the Rule, and insisted these abuses be corrected. There was little response to his letter.

For Bonaventure, his time at La Verna was a time of transformation. His deep reflections and meditations on the six-winged Seraph and the Stigmata, resulted in spiritual and mystical writings centered on the humanity of Christ, especially the crucified Christ, with Francis as the perfect exemplar of Christ. His theological writings had always centered on God, but now his spiritual writings were very Christo-centric, and he was convinced, perhaps from personal experience, that the journey into God (the Trinity) must begin with the crucified Christ. The theologian, teacher and mystic also proved he was a capable leader and administrator. His talents and personal charisma, including a pious and humble nature, enabled him to successfully lead the Franciscan Order for seventeen years. He visited friars living in most of the European countries and convened several general chapters. He also found time to return to the University of Paris to lecture and to meet the challenges of the secular masters who opposed the positions held by Dominican and Franciscan faculty.

Bonaventure was nominated to be Archbishop of York in 1265, but he declined the appointment. In 1273, he was nominated by Pope Gregory X to be Cardinal-Bishop of Albano and told not to refuse this appointment. Legend has it that when the Pope's delegates arrived with the cardinal's red hat, Bonaventure was busy washing dishes and he told the delegates to hang the hat on a tree outside the friary until he was finished.

Popes continued to seek his advice and he was instrumental in organizing the XIV Ecumenical Council in 1274. He resigned as Minister General the same year and died on July 15, 1274 while the Council was still in session.

There is much to learn from Bonaventure about our Franciscan intellectual and spiritual traditions. Two books that are very readable and helpful are: *Simply Bonaventure* by Ilia Delio O.S.F., and *The Journey into God (A Forty-Day Retreat with Bonaventure, Francis and Clare)* by Josef Raischil S.F.O. and Andre Cirino O.F.M. 

Volunteer Opportunity:

Franciscan Outreach is in serious need of volunteers for the months of July and August. This is typically a time when regular volunteers take well-deserved vacations with family which leaves the ministry short-handed.

Times to volunteer are from 4:45 to 7:00 pm at the soup kitchen and 7:15 to 9:15 at the shelter. If you go to <http://www.franoutreach.org/volunteerchoices.htm> you can see that there are lots of dates available.

JPIC News – FAN Workshop in Milwaukee!

By Stephanie Sormane, SFO

JPIC Councilor

In my article last month, I mentioned some documents regarding FAN and the SFO's Courageous Initiative with CRS which I had passed out to Ministers at our Chapter in May. Subsequent to writing the article, I received from FAN and Kent Ferris, SFO (our JPIC Councilor to NAFRA) really good and easy-to-duplicate documents on both, as well as the announcement of a FAN workshop in Milwaukee on July 26-27 which I emailed to all Ministers in the Region. If you haven't seen those documents and would like to, please contact me and I will be happy to send them to you either by email or U.S. mail.

I suggested last month we might find a project in which it would be easy for all fraternities in the Region to participate and which could be our "Courageous Initiative" to submit to Catholic Relief Services (CRS). I had suggested that fraternities discuss the possibilities of such a project and let me know any ideas that surfaced. I did refer you to the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' and CRS's websites on Global Poverty for ideas. I heard from no one, so perhaps searching out that information on the internet is a problem. Therefore, the following may be helpful.

If you go to the Bishops' web site (www.usccb.org/globalpoverty), you will find the following suggestions of documents:

Teaching from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (partial list; more on web site)

- Fighting Poverty to Build Peace – Pope Benedict's challenge to the world by Bishop Howard J. Hubbard, in America magazine
- Full text of "Called to Global Solidarity" by U.S. Catholic Bishops

Teaching from the Vatican (partial list; more on web site)

- 2009 World Day of Peace Message, "Fighting Poverty to Build Peace," by Pope Benedict XVI (a search for this document will probably take you to the Vatican web site)
- Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (just Google search for this)
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church (I'm hoping many of you have this)
 - Part 3, Section 1, Chapter 2, Article 3 (paragraphs 1928-48) on the human person, equality, and solidarity
 - Part 3, Section 2, Chapter 2, Article 7 (paragraphs 2437-42) on justice and solidarity among nations
 - Part 3, Section 2, Chapter 2, Article 7 (paragraphs 2443-49) on love for the poor

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services call on **one million Catholics** in the United States to confront global poverty. Advocate with them to end hunger, disease, conflict, and other issues that affect the lives of our brothers and sisters worldwide.

Catholics Confront Global Poverty can take action to:

- improve and increase U.S. international assistance, so people can lift themselves out of poverty.
- strengthen international peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives, so all can live in peace.
- foster debt relief, so poor nations can invest in the needs of their people.
- reform global trade and agricultural policies, so that people can flourish, and smaller farmers in the United States are protected.
- ensure that poorer countries' wealth of natural resources are explored in ways that protect the environment and ensure that poor people benefit and have a voice.
- promote comprehensive immigration reform and address the root causes of migration, so the rights and dignity of migrants can be upheld.
- address global climate change and help people adapt to its effects.

Here are seven suggestions; could each fraternity choose one and address it; that is, study the issue so you can speak intelligently about it, and then either write a letter (signed by all fraternity members) to your elected officials advocating for the poor and/or presenting to other groups to educate them about this issue? We are called to this!

The workshop will focus on integrating powerful action for justice with Franciscan spirituality. Participants will consider what it takes to create systemic change and will increase their ability to build and lead teams to achieve this change. Doesn't this sound like exactly what we need? How I would wish that at least one representative from each of our clusters in the Region could attend!

The workshop begins at 9 a.m. on July 26 and completes at noon on July 27. The fee of \$60 includes lunch and dinner on July 26. Accommodations are not provided so I'm searching out hotels. I'm also happy to organize car pools to get up and back to/from Milwaukee. Think about this – it's a very special opportunity! 

REMINDER: Regional Gathering (Feast of Portiuncula)

is Saturday, August 6th. Fr. Robert Hutmacher, ofm, will be principal speaker and provide afternoon entertainment. Registration is at 8:30 a.m., Mass at 9:00 a.m., Lunch provided at \$15/person or bring your own. Day should end around 3 p.m. Ministers will have information at your next fraternity meeting.

Franciscan Feasts – July

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| 7/01 | Blessed Junipero Serra |
| 7/09 | St. Nicholas Pick & |
| 7/10 | St. Veronica Giuliani |
| 7/12 | Sts. John Jones/John Wall |
| 7/14 | St. Francis Solano |
| 7/15 | St. Bonaventure |
| 7/21 | St. Lawrence of Brindisi |