

Minister's Message



The Irises by Monet

*"Give thanks to the Lord for He is good and
His love endures forever"*

**By Patrick Mendés, SFO
National Minister**

As my term of office concludes, I'll take this opportunity to give thanks to the Lord and to you for what has been the most unique and most challenging and rewarding period of my entire 48 years as a professed member of our Order.

Perhaps the most rewarding experiences came from making visitations of our Regions. In the past 3 years, I will have visited 29 of the 30 Regions. Here I found dedicated, loving, spirit filled brothers and sisters, living our charism in vital and varied ways, from working with the poor and marginalized in shelters and soup kitchens, to serving in the missions of Bolivia and Brazil, to faithful service and sharing our Franciscan joy in their parishes, to shared ministry and witness to our Franciscan vocation and family with other members of our Franciscan family, both friars and sisters, to serious dedication to the mission of Franciscan Action Network, to the many hours spent in adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament. I even found brothers and sisters who shared my deep love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus! Yes, our charism is living and well. We rejoice in what we have done and are doing and ask God's continued blessing on the work yet to be done.

Equally blessed has been the gift of working with an Executive Council seriously committed to those we have been chosen to serve, often at great personal sacrifice. They have been wonderfully supportive of me as I dealt with often difficult matters. I can only offer

these humble words of thanks which are so inadequate for the gratitude and undying love I have for all of them.

Among the highlights of our tenure has been the inception of the Summer Seminar for the SFO at St. Francis University in Loretto, PA. It was born of the wish of Fr. Gabriel Zeis, TOR, to offer something special for the SFO and to the hard work and genius of National Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR. This year's seminar was filled to maximum capacity. May it long continue and become a tradition of the SFO in the USA.

As we look to the next Quinquennial Congress in 2012, we rejoice in the highly successful "Q" of 2005, while recognizing that there was some controversy, it, none the less, brought together loving brothers and sisters from across our country and we learned very valuable lessons in intercultural communication and shared in the joy of the varied cultures and ethnicities which comprise our Order in the USA.

I also owe a huge debt of gratitude to the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants. They have been, to a man, consistently supportive of my efforts as well as those of the National Executive Council. It was my privilege to participate in the Spiritual Assistants Workshop/Conference sponsored by the CNSA. I had the opportunity to meet with many Regional and Provincial Spiritual Assistants and to offer them my thanks, in your name, for all that they do for us. They have been faithful brothers to us and true companions on the journey from Gospel to life and life to Gospel.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to the Regional Ministers, current and past, who, even in the tough times, supported and encouraged me and filled my life with their fraternal love.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank you, the local ministers and brothers and sisters throughout all of our Regions, who welcomed me with fraternal affection and have shared with me your local newsletters and your invitations to share the memorable events of your local fraternities. It has been a joy to meet, in person, those of you who have written me.

I also offer my thanks to the International Presidency of our Order, especially our Minister General, Encarnacion del Pozo, and Vice-Minister General, Doug Clorey, who has been mentor, friend and brother.

In the words of our Holy Father, Francis, "Let us begin again, for up to now we have done nothing."

My prayer for you continues and, as always, remains: May the Sacred Heart of Jesus surround you with His love and fill your lives with His abundant blessings!

With a grateful heart,

I am your servant and minister, Patrick.