



# TAU-USA

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Photo by Frances Wicks, SFO

**Celebrating the Franciscan Charism!**

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## TAU-USA

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TAU-USA is a vehicle of communication within the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States, allowing the national fraternity to disseminate information to the regional and local fraternities and allowing Seculars to communicate with one another throughout the country, thus fostering a sense of community Nation wide.

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Submissions to the newsletter for possible inclusion are welcome. To increase the likelihood of your submission being published, the following guidelines are offered:

- Articles should not exceed one page in length (single spaced) in Times New Roman size 12 font.
- Please send all submissions for possible publication in WORD format, as an e-mail attachment or mail to Editor Frances Wicks, SFO, (address is on top left of this page).
- Material received after the deadline for a particular issue will be considered for other issues.
- Please understand that all articles may be edited for length and clarity.
- All letters received become property of the editor.
- TAU-USA does not accept ads.



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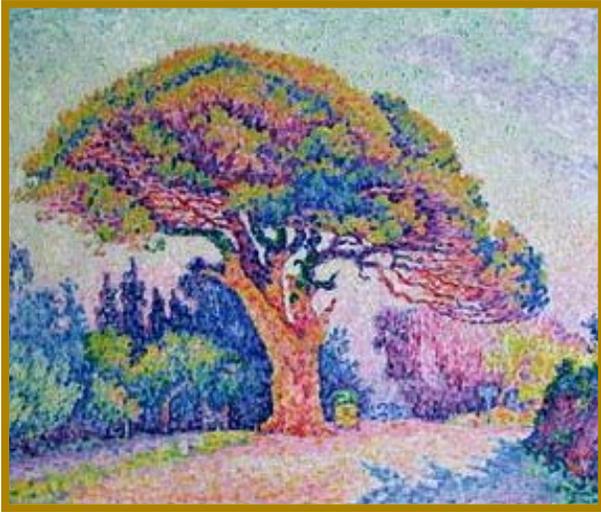
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# Minister's Insights



By Paul Signa

## Pearls of Wisdom in an Emerald Setting...

By Patrick Mendés, SFO  
National Minister

Nestled high in the Alleghenies, amid towering trees of a resplendent emerald green, lies St. Francis University and here in this idyllic setting, history was being made. From June 26<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup>, more than 75 Secular Franciscans from across the United States, representing 17 of our 30 Regions, gathered for the First Annual Summer Seminar for the SFO, to learn about servant leadership.

The pearls of wisdom shared by our presenters, Fr. Bernie Tickerhoof, TOR and Anne Mulqueen, SFO, offered us new insights in to the vision of Franciscan servant leadership. They challenged us to stretch ourselves as we looked at such issues as the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church; Conversion and Faith; Discipleship and Mission; Prayer – Foundation and Connection; Growth and Christian Maturity – Virtue.

As we moved through these questions, addressed in a variety of ways by our speakers, we looked at the difference between role functionality and leadership. We were challenged to “see as God sees...act as God acts...”

I came away from those four days refreshed, affirmed and inspired. I am sure that all the other participants

have similar feelings. We shared much during our classes and during our social hours in the evenings. We built fraternity as we grew our skills and expanded our vision and our horizons.

A lasting thought I hold from one of our sessions: “*Each life situation will ask me to discern what kind of action I must take to do the most loving thing – and my action will not be without personal cost.*” (Quote taken from Fr. Bernard Tickerhoof, TOR, from his forthcoming book, *Development of Lay Leadership in the Secular Franciscan Order*).

The Summer Seminar for the SFO is a gift to us from St. Francis University. It was born of the dream of Fr. Gabriel Zeis, TOR, President of St. Francis University, to offer something special to the SFO. The dream became a reality in the hands of National Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR, who was tireless in putting the Seminar together and taking care of the myriad tasks necessary for a successful seminar. If any of you have ever been responsible for putting together a seminar or workshop, you know the amount of work necessary.

I can speak for my fellow participants and myself, I believe, when I say thank you from the bottom of our hearts to Fr. Gabriel for the vision and dream and to Fr. Kevin for turning it into a reality. As one of our sisters remarked to me “It was like a miniature Q with all of the brothers and sisters from across the country, coming to study and share together.” Indeed it was! And I know we are all looking forward to the 2009 Summer Seminar for the SFO at St. Francis University.

*“Each life situation will ask me to discern what kind of action I must take to do the most loving thing – and my action will not be without personal cost.”*

Fr. Bernard Tickerhoof, TOR

Fr. Bernie, in one of our classes, observed that “the Holy Spirit is primary in the ongoing life of the Church. We need to begin to see the Spirit as alive and motivating.” And didn’t we see that in our Seminar and time together?

I pray with a grateful heart for Fr. Gabriel, Fr. Kevin, Fr. Bernie, and you...May the Sacred Heart of Jesus surround you with His love and fill your lives with His abundant blessings.



By Francisco de Zurbaran

## The 800th Anniversary in 2009 – *What's it all about?*

By Fr. Stephen Gross, OFM Conv.  
CNSA President-In-Turn

Each of the 30 Regions of our country are at some stage of preparation for celebrating the 800th Anniversary of the Founding of the Franciscan Movement in 2009. The International Conference of the Franciscan Family published a letter to the Franciscan Family entitled, *LIVING ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL*. The leaders of our Franciscan Family make important observations. They say (in part):

- It is not a question of commemorating a figure, a Francis, Clare or any other person, but rather the calling to mind of the origins of the Franciscan Charism.
- The text presented by Francis to Pope Innocent III was a plan and a description of a life-style, rather than a regulation.
- Faced by a technological and computerized world, by its crisis of creeping wars, terrorism, poverty and globalization, the Christian faith is exposed to all the questions and challenges

about God, about His entering into history in the Person of Jesus, about the diversity of religions and their relationships, about the nature of the human being and about the meaning to be given to life and death. This situation of crisis is, at the same time, a great challenge to the Church to live the new evangelization and for the Franciscan Family to live its own identity, aware that its place and influence have become fragile and questioned.

- Our Franciscan Family has been weakened, particularly in the European world, because of its numerical reduction, of the uncertainty of our identity and through the temptation to turn-in on self and to become discouraged. The same Franciscan identity, however, is still a challenge to the world! It is our reference of self to the Gospel, of which the Rule is like a summary, which alone can help us to respond with trust, imagination and courage to the many and multiple challenges.
- The Franciscan spiritual current, like a river, broadening and being enriched in the course of centuries through a variety of contributions, never ceases to irrigate us and the Church itself.
- For all this and more, we communally join together in a joyful Act of Thanksgiving. It is also necessary to add the humble recognition of the distance between the Gospel proposal of Francis and the way it was lived during the course of our long and tumultuous history.
- Despite the ongoing efforts at beginning again and of reforms, our Franciscan Movement is not yet up to the demands of the Gospel. This dual moment, the act of thanksgiving for being called to live the Gospel and the purification of our memory, as recognition of the shadows present in our Family, should lead us all to face the challenge of re-foundation.
- We must find the roots, the foundations, i.e., discover in wonder the power of God, the Gospel, the Good News of the Love of God for us and of the communion with Him offered to us. Only on such a foundation can a solid structure be built, a true community in mission in the Church and in the world. This moment of grace, a *kairos*, which we are experiencing at the present, tests us by revealing weaknesses to us, but it also invites us to rely on the power of God.

***How will your region/local fraternity  
Celebrate the Anniversary?***

# The Transforming Power of Love and Pardon

By James Thomas, SFO

*Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.* Article XIX - SFO Rule

For me this Article has been one of the most inspiring, yet challenging, demands contained in the entire Rule. Inspiring, in that it tells us what is to be done, how to do it, and supplies the power that brings it about. The desired goal is to 'build peace.' The work or activity is to 'seek unity and harmony through dialogue.' The power to bring it about is in the 'love and pardon' that we bestow upon others.

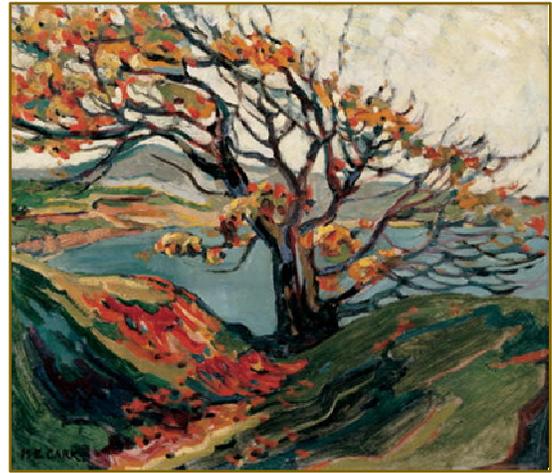
Now, here are the challenges. Since this is so clearly stated, then why, at times, do we have difficulty in embracing the task and obtaining the wondrous results? Let's examine some of the elements and see what could be lacking.

*Are we mindful that we are bearers of peace?* Do we have sufficient awareness of the mantle of peace that is bestowed upon our spiritual family? What saint is more universally associated with the charisma of peace, than Francis?

*Do we really want peace?* The fruitfulness of our desire is somehow tied to the purity of our intentions. Building peace always involves a sacrifice: it requires relinquishing power, shunning privileges and sharing resources. Do we trust in the providence of God and reject a competitive mindset in which everything is limited and fought over?

*Are we willing to do the work or activity?* Some training might be involved, such as obtaining better social and communication skills. Can we dialogue with someone without rushing headlong into an argument? Learning to listen is ever in demand. Will we find the time and exert the effort needed?

*Do we trust that the divine seed is in everyone?* Certainly no medical X-ray will find this seed. Many are simply unwilling to consent to this faith demand. And yet without it, there is no basis for peace. We live in a world that descends not only to denying the divine

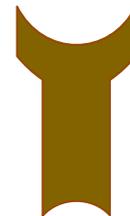


Tree in autumn by Emily Carr

seed, but even further, falsely describing enemies as less than human. Do we provide a response?

*Will we unleash the transforming power of love and pardon?* Or imprison it in never-ending justifications of why we don't have to forgive? Excuses abound: 'the other side is beyond forgiveness' ...'*doesn't deserve forgiveness*'...'*hasn't asked for forgiveness*'...'*won't accept forgiveness*'...and so on. But wait: the point of receiving the '*transforming power of love and forgiveness*'...is to use it. We don't need to ask permission to give 'love and pardon'. In fact, we will be held accountable, if we don't give it.

Brothers and Sisters, the Lord himself says... "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*" Matt. 5:9 We are empowered as peacemakers by our profession of the Rule. If the results aren't evident, it is most likely due to the challenges mentioned above. We must *desire peace*. We must do the *work for peace*. We must rely upon the transforming power of *love and pardon to achieve peace*.



# The Pearl of the Franciscan Missions

By Fr. Peter Vasko, OFM



Fr. Peter in the Holy Land with one of the workers on housing projects that provide work and affordable housing for the local Christian community couples.

In the year 1219, during the Fifth Crusade, our Seraphic Father St. Francis of Assisi set sail from Italy and voyaged to Acre, Palestine. The land of Palestine/the Holy Land was considered the most hallowed of any other land on earth by Francis, as it was the very land walked upon by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Although Francis welcomed martyrdom in the land where our salvation was realized, God had another plan. Francis met with the Muslim Sultan Malek-el-Kamel in Damietta, Egypt and engaged in a respectful dialog. This encounter not only resulted in an assurance of safe passage for Francis in Damietta (a huge Muslim city in Egypt and the pathway to the Holy Land) to the Christian camp but also gave an assurance of safe passage for his brothers, now referred to as the 'brothers of the cord,' to come to the Holy Land and thus beginning the Province of the Holy Land.

In 1342, Pope Clement VI mandated the friars to be the official custodians/guardians of the Holy Land and thus the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land was born. The Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land or the 'Custodia di Terra Santa' continues to be the hands and feet of Jesus serving the Christian community as well as the guardians of our beloved Holy Sites marking the life of Jesus. The Franciscans in the Holy Land today indeed serve as bridges/ instruments of peace between their Jewish, Muslim and Christian brothers and sisters.

It seems that life in the Holy Land has never been without its challenges...but who would ever suspect that one day the Christian presence would be threatened and on the verge of extinction? The Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land felt a great responsibility/call to respond to this crisis and in 1996; the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (FFHL) was created and became the first organization to formally attempt to stem the massive Christian exodus from this land. When the Christian community was asked what would make them remain, they responded that if they could secure a college education in the country so that they could secure professional employment and have affordable housing, they would remain. In response, a variety of programs were created through the FFHL to assist the Christian community, in these specific areas, in their time of need.

St. Francis, himself, referred to the mission in the Holy Land as the "pearl" of the Franciscan Missions. He considered this as the primary mission for his followers because of his ardent love for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who was born, ministered, died and rose from here. No other land on earth has this claim! Is Christ not saying the same to us, His Franciscan family, as He did to Francis some 800 years ago, "Rebuild My Church which is falling into ruins?" Most Church officials are saying that if something is not done to stop the Christian exodus from the Holy Land, then within 60 years our beloved Holy Sites, marking the life of Jesus, will simply become empty religious monuments and museums with no living, worshipping community! As Christians, and especially as Franciscans, we cannot allow the "Living Church" in the land of Jesus to simply fall into ruins.

We are all members of the Franciscan family and I am sure that if Francis was alive today, he would be the first to call upon all of his followers to help save the "Mother Church" which is crumbling, to make sure that we indeed have a Christian presence in the land where our Church was founded. Together as brothers and sisters in St. Francis we can work together to rebuild and preserve our Christian heritage/ presence in the land which Francis considered the 'pearl' of the Missions. This mission is our mission and this mission, your mission. Please visit the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land website to see how you/your SFO fraternity can help: [www.ffhl.org](http://www.ffhl.org)

*"So then, while we have the opportunity, let us do good to all, but especially to those who belong to the family of the faith."* Galatians 6:1

# Building Bridges

By Faith Libbe, SFO



This photo was taken in June at the Franciscan Family Center, when we were blessed to meet the SFOs from Bethlehem. I (Faith) am third from the left with my hands on Rose Marie, SFO's shoulders. Fadi is in the very front of the group!

The indigenous Christians of the Holy Land are often referred to as the "forgotten faithful." Many Christians in the U.S., by no fault of their own, are simply unaware that Palestinian Christians exist. I was first introduced to this beautiful population of people during my first pilgrimage to the Holy Land in May of 1997. Our guide was a Palestinian Catholic and he was the one that God used to both open my eyes to the plight of Palestinian Christians, and to touch my heart to want help them in some way. As my heart kept calling me to return to the land of Jesus, the Palestinian Christians continued to become more and more dear to me.

Ever since the Wall separating Israel from the West Bank began encircling Bethlehem (located inside the West Bank), my brothers and sisters in Christ who dwell there have weighed heavily on my heart and mind. They are separated from the rest of the world by that Wall, deprived of the basic human right of "freedom of movement." The first time I saw the Wall surrounding Bethlehem was in May of 2004. I returned to the U.S. with the hope and dream of some how "building bridges" of communication, love and...hope...so that the Bethlehem community might not feel so alone and forgotten.

Blessed to return to Bethlehem the following year, I was blessed to speak to Fr. Amjad Sabarra, OFM, (then pastor of St. Catherine's parish, adjacent to the Basilica of the Nativity) who in the midst of our conversation mentioned that there was an SFO community in Bethlehem. I discovered that Fr. Amjad

and also Sr. Maria Grech of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, worked with this local SFO community. I instantly knew that I wanted to connect with their SFOs and soon after my return to the U.S. was blessed to receive an e-mail from one of the SFOs in Bethlehem!

Yes, Sr. Maria had given a young man by the name of Fadi Gedeon my e-mail address and I was so blessed to begin communication with him! Fadi wrote that he too believes in building bridges and "making good communications" with other SFOs around the world. He also wrote that there were 40 men and women, single and married in his Bethlehem fraternity and that they pray the Liturgy of the Hours together every Sunday before Mass. He wrote that he loves being a "good working Christian man who 'fixes the Church' and who lives the Gospel, as our Father, St. Francis." Fadi signed his e-mail, "Take care and God bless, your brother Fadi Francis Gedeon, Bethlehem." We communicate till this day.

Fadi then gave my e-mail address to one of the women in his fraternity by the name of Rose Marie Nasser and we began to communicate. I once asked Rose Marie to write about life in Bethlehem and I would be happy to share it with SFOs in my Five Franciscan Martyrs Region. I was blessed to read Rose Marie's e-mail at our Annual SFO Regional Meeting just a year ago. The heart of one of our region's ministers was touched so deeply by the e-mail that her fraternity, in Dunedin, Florida, "adopted" Rose Marie's fraternity! I was so grateful to God that the building of bridges was expanding...from my personal communication with SFOs in Bethlehem, to an entire fraternity communicating with them. God is so good. Continue on page 22.



Faith Libbe, SFO in the middle of two young Palestinian Christians



## WORLD YOUTH DAY 2008 A Pilgrim's Diary



Ashley and the Sydney Opera House

By Ashley Hautman, SFO  
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**Acts 1:8** says *“You will receive the power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witness.”* This was the theme of World Youth Day 2008. I would come to find through my WYD experience that this statement had more truth to my life than I could have ever imagined.

We arrived after 30 hours of travel to Sydney International Airport Friday night. As we walked out into the receiving area we were greeted by the SFO Regional Minister of St. Clare Fraternity NWS & ACT, Barry Blake, holding a sign saying “Kathy Taormina and others.” I thought “Cool, I’ve got an airport sign - I’m ‘others.’”

We walked out of the airport and into an entirely different world, steering wheels were on the opposite sides of cars, people drove on the left side of the road, toilets flushed counter-clockwise, and it was winter in July. It truly was in an unfamiliar place, but it didn’t stay unfamiliar for very long. Soon we arrived at the St. Francis of Assisi school, where we would be staying. We were warmly greeted by the school’s principals,

Louise and Kathryn, who made sure we were set up, as quickly as possible, so we could rest after our travels. The next morning, I awakened from my first night of sleeping on an air mattress in a room where our sleeping areas were outlined in masking tape. My clock said it was still yesterday - Aussie time is 15 hours ahead. I walked down to breakfast and was no longer in another world. Sure, all of the above mentioned was the same, but I had walked into a room full of energy, smiles, and warmth. This was the joy I remembered from other YouFra gatherings. That energy is within us no matter what country we’re in.

The first three days of our journey was the Franciscan Youth International Gathering. It included amazing discussions within our work groups, a pilgrimage to the Poor Clare’s Monastery, singing, dancing, and most importantly, building fraternity. Fr. Ivan Matić, OFM, CIOFS Spiritual Assistant to YouFra, spoke to us during the Monday morning session about a topic that I would carry through the entire week. He spoke about the *fullness of time* and how, within every moment there is something significant. Every second of every minute of every day there is something to be absorbed in us. We as YouFra, and as Catholics, need to embrace these moments to get out of them all we can. I took this message to heart because in my life, I have to admit, there are days when all I want is to get through it and move to the next, I know we all do. However, this idea Fr. Ivan was speaking to us about really made me step back and think. I needed to embrace my time, and try to cherish my moments, all of them.

On Tuesday the YouFra gathering ended and the World Youth Days began. We were fortunate to be able to keep most of our group together for the entire week, so we were still one fraternity.



Franciscan YouFra Group



Dale Anesi, SFO, Kathy Taormina, SFO, and Ashley

The Catechesis sessions consisted of music from a local Youth Group, a presentation on the theme of the day by a Bishop, a Q/A session with the Bishop, then closed with the celebration of Mass. Our topics for the week were on the Holy Spirit. Day one was **water** lead by Archbishop Charles Balvo, Papal Nuncio to New Zealand; day two was **light** with the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit lead by Bishop Justin Bianchini of Geraldton, Western Australia, and day three was **fire** lead by Archbishop Brendan Michele O'Brien of Ontario, Canada. I was most taken by two messages in these morning sessions.

Bishop Justin said that the Church is like a body, Christ is the head - the mind, and we are all the parts that make the body complete. No matter the importance of the individual, the body is not complete without them. The Holy Spirit is the soul of this body and it holds is all together. This was intriguing because it was a great visual, but even more importantly because it was so true, and I could understand why. *We are one body.*

The second topic that stuck with me was a story within a story of Christ on the Cross. Bishop Justin started his story by stating that in most cultures, when someone goes away, we offer them a gift of some sort as a farewell present. He said that in the story of the crucifixion it was Christ who was going away, and instead of the people (us), giving Him something, He gave us the greatest gift possible - the gift of forgiveness and the gift of salvation. Christ said, "I must go, for unless I do the Holy Spirit cannot come upon you." There it hit me. I'd heard it a million times before, but now it really hit me: *Christ died so that we may truly live.*

The rest of my week consisted of an amazing opening Mass that looked back on the previous World Youth Days and a great welcoming address from Archbishop

George Cardinal Pell of Sydney. The Papal welcome was on Thursday and I got within 50 feet of the Pope driving by. It is an indescribable feeling. Another most touching experience was to sing the World Youth Day song, arms waving in unison with 200,000 other people. Friday was Stations of the Cross, the most dramatic version I'd seen. The highlight for me was that they had an Aboriginal to play Simon of Cyrene. He was a "local guy."

The highlight of the WYD activities was the evening vigil and final mass with the Pope. We made a Pilgrimage to Randwick Racecourse with all our stuff on our backs. We reached our section, set up camp, (essentially unraveled all our sleeping bags on a tarp), and it was time to reflect and just spend time with each other. I was able to spend some time by myself and really reflect on what I had taken from the week, the messages that had been resonating in my head over the week: *"The fullness of time. We are one body. Christ died so that we may truly live."* and it finally really hit me. For the first time I understood the theme and how it related to me.

These topics were memorable because it was how the Holy Spirit was coming to me; it was how I was to "receive the power." I realized that this message, this theme, was not generic, but individual, and WYD gives each individual youth their own opportunity to get what they can take out of it. Before He ascended into heaven, Christ preceded it by saying that time and dates are irrelevant to His return, but take the Holy Spirit and be His witness.

After everything, my final thought is this: it doesn't matter if you're a youth or not, (in Christ's eyes we are all God's children), so the messages from WYD can be shared with all. *"You will receive the power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witness."* Go be a witness; it's easier than you may think.



The Pope at the Welcoming on Thursday

Complete Photo Diary can be found at [www.franciscanyouthusa.com](http://www.franciscanyouthusa.com)

# Celebrating the Franciscan Charism

By Teresa V. Baker, SFO  
National Formation Commission Chair



Photo by Frances Wicks, SFO

During the year 2009, we will join with all members of the Franciscan family to celebrate the primitive Rule, those gospel passages that Francis and the early friars took to Pope Innocent III, seeking approval for their new way of life. It is not so much the words of this Rule that we celebrate, but its spirit, the charism that is found therein. Again, defining charism Bishop Joseph Galante, formerly Undersecretary of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life: states: *A religious charism is an intensely personal reading of the Gospel resulting in an inner enlightenment that changes the way a person relates to God, to self and to others. This new way of relationship is so powerful that it has the potential to attract others who sense in them-selves the same desire and capacity to read the Gospel in this "new key."*<sup>1</sup>

How are we to read this "new key?" First and foremost, we are not called to relive Francis' life; we are called to discern our own gifts and how we can use them to "repair God's house." We are called to live an evangelical life, one that stems from the example Jesus left us in the Gospels.

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<sup>1</sup> "Renewing Religious Life," unpublished lecture, as quoted in *The First Franciscan Woman: Clare of Assisi & Her Form of Life*, Margaret Carney, O.S.F. (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), 226.

Exactly what is an evangelical life and how does it differ from an apostolic one? There are apostolic orders founded within the Church that are guided by a specific apostolic activity. Examples would be the numerous congregations of teaching brothers and sisters, or those communities that have the care of the sick as their vocation. Our vocation is not defined by specific activities to perform, but by our BEing present to the activities of the church and the world where we find ourselves. When someone asks us about our Franciscan life, what is the first thing that comes to mind? Do we answer by sharing the ministries that fill our time? We often define ourselves and the living out of our Franciscan vocation by what we DO. But this is not the charism Francis left behind. *For Francis, the only "work" that is fundamental to his way of life is to imitate Christ and to make that experience of Christ available to others. Evangelical life focuses on what we are, not what we do<sup>2</sup>.*"

By our promise to live an evangelical life, we take up Christ, the Book of Life. GC #10 states "God, poor and crucified," victor over death and risen, the greatest manifestation of the love of God for humanity, is the "book" in which the brothers and sisters, in imitation of Francis, learn the purpose and the way of living, loving, and suffering.

How do we take up the life Christ portrayed for us? We are not to imitate the circumstances and activities of the Lord nor of Francis; rather, we must become aware of the life of Christ as portrayed in the Gospel accounts and translate these messages into our own lives and the circumstances within which we find ourselves. So we begin, as did Jesus, with prayer. We are to ask the guidance of the Spirit in our lives that we be open and available to see what others do not see, to hear what others do not hear, to be present when others are too busy. We are to BE Franciscan. We are to BE persons of the gospel message. Think of it for a moment, when did Jesus set up a soup kitchen; where did he set up a medical clinic? He didn't. He remained present to his world and shared the grace of God with all whom he met. To some it was a kind word, to others a challenge to live a better life. He was open and present to whatever circumstances surrounded him. This was the "new key" Francis found in the Gospel accounts. This is the key we take up this year in celebration.

Yet, as for Francis, there are no specific recipes for us. As he lay dying, Francis remarked *I have done what is mine; may Christ teach you what is yours!* So how do

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<sup>2</sup> *Franciscan Prayer*, Sr. Ilia Delio, OSF (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2004), 6

we discern what is ours to do? We begin with prayer, asking Christ to teach us what is ours to do and the grace of the Holy Spirit to carry it through, remembering in all that we do to give honor and glory to the Father. We look to the various components of the charism that are mentioned in our Rule and pray for the wisdom and insight to act upon them, not by particular tasks we think need to be performed, but by opening ourselves to the possibilities God has placed in our lives. Often times as we walk out the door in the mornings, we go with a set agenda. **If we are so tied to the agenda, it becomes the driving force for our day rather than the opportunities God places before us.**

Besides being aware of this foundational point of our Franciscan charism, how else might we celebrate? For those of you who have already adopted a way of celebrating the charism this coming year, kudos to you. To those fraternities that are still seeking ways, the National Formation Commission offers these monthly topics for your consideration:

**January** – Gospel living as our way of life

**February** – Trinity and the love of God that sustains us

**March** – Conversion and the penitential life

**April** – Eucharist and our connectedness to the Church

**May** – Mary as our Mother and model

**June** – Prayer as the soul of all we are and do

**July** – Fraternity as our gifted place of growth

**August** – Love as total giving to the other

**September** – Creation as God's gift to us

**October** – Peace and Joy as hallmarks of our interior life

**November** – Simplicity in this world of consumerism

**December** – Humility and Poverty in imitation of Jesus, our way to the Father

Choose readings or other focusing activities that are compatible with the given topic from the writings of Francis or from one of his biographies. Set up a small ritual service to take place at the beginning of your gathering. For example, in January when commemorating Gospel life, enthrone the Gospels in a prominent place throughout your meeting. Choose a way to reverence the Scriptures. For April, when you focus on the Eucharist and our connectedness to the Church, you might want to participate in a Holy Hour. Afford everyone in the fraternity an opportunity to participate in the planning. Keep in mind that the goal of this celebration is to share with each other how the particular aspects of the charism are lived out in the lives of the brothers and sisters.

In a different venue, we also offer petitions to be added to your Morning and Evening Prayer:

### **Sunday - Creation:**

MP: Recognizing Christ as the New Morn, we ask that we become more aware of God's presence this day through the wonder of creation, we pray to the Lord

EP: As we give thanks for this day, we ask the grace of caring for all of God's creation by using the goods of this world responsibly and wisely, we pray to the Lord...

### **Monday - Fraternity:**

MP: Grateful for all fraternities throughout the SFO world, we ask that they truly be those privileged places where we may meet God in each of our sisters and brothers, we pray...

EP: In thanksgiving for this day spent in the love of the Lord, we ask the grace to continue to labor to make our fraternities places of prayer and compassion, we pray to the Lord...

### **Tuesday - Peace:**

MP: For all persons of good will, that they feel peace, think peace, and do peace, in order to be true instruments of God's peace to our world, we pray to the Lord...

EP: As we continue to grow in peace and love, may we be transformed into messengers of God's peace, we pray to the Lord...

### **Wednesday - Poverty and Joy:**

MP: For Secular Franciscans, that as we delight in God's gracious goodness to us, we might share holy joy with God's world, we pray to the Lord ....

EP: Called to follow the Son unreservedly, we ask for the ability to turn from the allurements of this world in order to turn ourselves toward God, we pray to the Lord...

### **Thursday - Prayer Mission to Church and World:**

MP: As we were baptized into the Church and joined more fully to her by our profession, may we be faithful witnesses to her mission in the world, we pray to the Lord...

EP Francis called the world his cloister; may we who chose to follow his "new key" of Gospel living consecrate the world to our heavenly Father through our presence in it, we pray to the Lord . . .

### **Friday - Life of Penance and Gospel Living:**

MP Called to live a penitential life, we ask the wisdom to understanding that this call to penitence is itself a gift, we pray to the Lord . . .

EP Jesus set forth the Gospel as our way to follow the Father's will in our life; grant us the grace to be true to this path, we pray to the Lord...

### **Saturday - Mary and her Son:**

MP: Francis embraced Mary as our protectress and advocate of the Franciscan family; may we follow her example of living completely in the will of the Father, we pray to the Lord...

Continue on page 22.

# An Irreversible Change: Profession

By Francine Gikow, SFO

*“I, by the grace of God, renew my baptismal promises and consecrate myself to the service of the Kingdom. Therefore, in my secular state I promise to live all the days of my life the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Secular Franciscan Order by observing its rule of life.”<sup>3</sup>*

With this statement, we have made a permanent commitment - an irreversible change in our lives. We have chosen to hold fast to Jesus Christ, the Church and each other through the example of St. Francis.

The evidence of this change is not readily apparent early on in our life as Secular Franciscans. However, after many years, this change is revealed by the depth of our commitment and by the direction of our lives, our values, our subsequent decisions and even how we have lived our lives. Have you met an older Secular Franciscan who has been an inspiration for you in fidelity and Franciscan love? Well, that is the result of this change.

When we originally commit ourselves to God, we take the initial first steps in responding to the call of God in our lives. We might pray more, join a prayer group, or become more active in our parish. However, at some point we realize that it is not enough for us. We want more.

In time, we might realize that we cannot live without God in our life, nor do we want to. He becomes so integrated into what we do and who we are that we become inseparable. God lives in us and we live in God. We are changed.

So we search for ways to become closer to God, his people and the Church. We seek the radical Christian lifestyle which we find in Francis. We find that the charism of St. Francis of Assisi calls us as a way to deepen our spiritual life and share it among His people. St. Francis’ way of life has spoken to us and we find real value in his methods.

Eventually, we want to unite ourselves to God and His Church even more closely and we want to join others in this journey. We find that we *need* a community of like minded people to keep us going on the journey we have

chosen. The decision to make our spiritual life a priority for the rest of our lives is not an easy one to make. In fact, we are continuously making that decision, again and again, as we renew ourselves and keep that commitment in fidelity and truth.

In essence there are really only two choices in our journey as a Secular Franciscan: either decide to constantly pick yourself up and keep trying to live the Rule, or become complacent and give up.

We have all seen those of our brothers and sisters who start out strong as Secular Franciscans, but slowly start drifting away. They start coming sporadically to the fraternity reunions and have other priorities in life. Sometimes they experience darkness of the soul and, instead of sharing this with their other brothers and sisters, they keep to themselves and therefore miss the wealth of knowledge and experience, which others might have to offer. They might find that community life is hard and would rather retreat than address issues. It is so easy to give up and forget about the promises we made when the honeymoon period is over and the real work of being a Secular Franciscan begins.

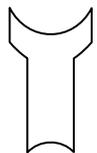
In contrast, you might see other Secular Franciscans, who although they are not especially gifted or graced, continue to persist and decide over and over and over again to be faithful. They keep trying, stumbling sometimes, but always going back to what they have promised. They work things out lovingly and realistically and meet the challenges, some times more perfectly than at others, but they never give up.

Those little decisions do add up! Eventually, they accumulate to a critical point where in hindsight the person has changed! Their life path has changed. Those seemingly unimportant choices to remain faithful have, unconsciously, changed the Secular Franciscan irreversibly! You find loving, joyful and faithful Secular Franciscans alive in the love of God!

Our life is not measured by big decisions but by the nitty gritty every day choices we make. That is the deceptive reality of Secular Franciscan life. Our small decisions make a big difference!

*“Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.”*

Robert Frost<sup>4</sup>



<sup>3</sup> International Franciscan Liturgical Commission, Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order. St. Anthony Messenger Press: 1985, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> “The Road Less Traveled” by Robert Frost

# Humor Page

By Dolores Cullen, SFO



## ANIMAL ANTICS

By Dolores Cullen, SFO

At a high school in Montana, a group of the students played a prank. They let three goats loose in the school.

Before they let them go they painted numbers on the sides of the goats: 1, 2, and 4. Local school administrators spent most of the day looking for #3.

New definition of a word—**AVOIDABLE**: What a Bullfighter tries to do.

After scolding one's cat, one looks into his face and is seized by the ugly suspicion that he understood every word and has filed it for reference. *Charlotte Gray*

If a pig loses its voice, is it disgruntled?

Q: How Do You Catch a Unique Rabbit?

A: Unique Up On It.

Q: How Do You Catch a Tame Rabbit?

A: Tame Way, Unique Up On It.

No amount of time can erase the memory of a good cat, and no amount of masking tape can totally remove his fur from your couch. *Leo Dworken*

Q: How can you delay milk turning sour?

A: Keep it in the cow.

The second mouse gets the cheese.

Do not corner something you know is meaner than you. A Sunday school teacher asked, "Johnny, do you think Noah did a lot of fishing when he was on the Ark?"

"No," replied Johnny. "How could he, with just two worms?"

A lady was picking through the frozen turkeys at the grocery store but she couldn't find one big enough for her family. She asked a stock boy, "Do these turkeys get any bigger?"

The stock boy replied, "No ma'am, they're dead."

Cowboy Advice: Your fences need to be horse-high, pig-tight, and bull-strong.

Keep skunks, bankers, and lawyers at a distance.

Notice in a farmer's field: **THE FARMER ALLOWS WALKERS TO CROSS THE FIELD FOR FREE, BUT THE BULL CHARGES**

**CATERPALLOR** (n.): The color you turn after finding half a worm in the fruit you're eating.

**ARACHNOLEPTIC FIT** (n.): The frantic dance performed just after you've accidentally walked through a spider web.

Sign spotted in Safari Park: **ELEPHANTS PLEASE STAY IN YOUR CARS**

If swimming is so good for your figure, how do you explain whales?

**THE WOLF IS SHAVED  
SO NEAT AND TRIM  
RED RIDING HOOD  
IS CHASING HIM.  
Burma Shave**

Q: When do cows go to bed? A: Pasture bedtime.

Sign in Veterinarian's Office: **ALL UNATTENDED CHILDREN WILL BE GIVEN A FREE KITTEN.**

A big game hunter went on safari with his wife and mother-in-law. One evening, deep in the jungle, the wife awoke to find her mother gone. Rushing to her husband, she insisted they try to find her. The hunter picked up his rifle and they started to search. In a clearing not far from the camp, they came upon a chilling sight, the mother-in-law had been backed against a tree by a large lion - "What are we going to do?" the wife cried. "Nothing," said the hunter. "The lion got himself into this mess—let him get himself out of it."



# EXPLORING

## Things Franciscan



++ CNSA Notes & Views ++

Lester Bach OFM Cap

### SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS' WORKSHOP

PSA's, RSA's and provincials are encouraged to send their reservations ASAP. Local SA's should send their registration to get on the list for attending. A fair number of rooms will be available for **local SA's**. They will be notified on a *first come, first served* basis. Please register as soon as possible.

Registrations, payments and travel arrangements are sent to:

Elizabeth Allen, SFO  
445 Nickman St.  
Chula Vista, CA 91911  
(619) 427-4613 / (619) 829-4613 (Cell)  
esasfo@pacbell.net

Fly to Detroit airport

**Cost** - \$300 – make check payable to CNSA

**Arrive** – September 23, 2008 – by evening

**Depart** – September 26, 2008 – after breakfast

### UNDERSTANDING STRUCTURES

(Cf. Statutes for SA's for more information)

Here are brief descriptions of the various roles that are the responsibility of the 1<sup>st</sup> Order/TOR in relationship to the SFO.

**PROVINCIAL SAs** – This role is filled by a friar, appointed by his Provincial, to deal with the SFO issues of fraternities bonded to his 1<sup>st</sup> Order/TOR province. The Provincial Minister delegates authority, as he sees fit. The scope of a PSA's authority may differ from province to province.

\*If so delegated, the PSA **appoints** spiritual assistants to fraternities bonded to his province.

They are to ... *ensure a specific preparation for the Assistants so that they will be suitable and well prepared.* (Cf. *Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO* – Article 5.4 –also SFO Rule # 26)

\*The PSA is free to **visit** fraternities bonded to his province as seems good to him and the fraternity.

\*The PSA **mentors** applicants (from fraternities bonded to his province) for the *Franciscan Family Connections* training program. He may delegate this task to others.

**NATIONAL SAs** - The Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) consist of four friars who represent the First Order and TOR branches of the Franciscan Family. CNSA friars are appointed by their Provincial or Provincial Conferences of the First Order/TOR.

CNSA is part of NAFRA. CNSA's President-in-turn is a member of the NEC. CNSA members conduct regional visitations and witness regional elections or delegate someone to be the witness. CNSA deal with issues relating to spiritual assistance to the SFO.

CNSA is honored to have Francis Kim OFM (a Korean friar of Holy Name OFM Province) to assist us in dealing with and understanding the needs of our Korean fraternities.

*\*The competent major superior, having heard the council of the fraternity concerned, appoints an assistant according to the norms of these Constitutions and the Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO* (Cf. General Constitutions – Article 91.3)

**REGIONAL SAs** – serve as a link between the First Order/TOR and the SFO region/regional council. The RSA is preferably a friar. Individual situations may require appointing a person from another Franciscan religious Order or a member of the SFO. The appointee is required to take the *Franciscan Family Connections* training course which includes training for RSA's.

\*The RSA serves the regional council and fraternities. He/She conducts pastoral visitations in the region and witnesses elections or delegates a witness.

*\*The regional assistants give their service to the regional fraternity. If they are more than one, they form a conference and give their service collegially.* (Cf. *General Constitutions*- Article 90.3c)

**LOCAL SAs** – serve a local council and fraternity. *The principal task of the assistant is to communicate Franciscan spirituality and to co-operate in the initial and continuing formation of the brothers and sisters.* (Cf. *General Constitutions* – Article 9.1)

*The council of the fraternity at each level requests suitable and prepared assistants from the competent superiors of the First Order and the TOR.* (Cf. *General Constitutions* – Article 91. 1)

WHO can be appointed? Obviously, a friar can be appointed. In addition, the following people can be appointed to the role of local SA.

- a. *religious brothers and sisters of other Franciscan Institutes*
- b. *diocesan clerics, or other persons, specially prepared for such service, who are members of the SFO.*
- c. *other diocesan clerics or non-Franciscan religious* (*General Constitutions* – Article 89.4)

The local fraternity council submits the name (and their recommendation) of a SA applicant to the PSA of the province to which the fraternity is bonded.

People who are recommended must be *suitable and well-prepared*. Nominees are expected to take the *Franciscan Family Connections* course before being certified as a SA. The PSA decides if this requirement need not be followed.

When Provincials or PSAs make the appointment, they must be assured that the person is *suitable and well-prepared* for his/her role as spiritual assistant.

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*Francis’ plan for rebuilding, his architectural drawings, if you will, are no more beautifully nor profoundly articulated than in his call for his family-in-Christ “...to heal the wounded, bind up the broken, and recall the erring.” We must continue to reflect on this mission if we want to fulfill the task of rebuilding the house of Christ. In doing so, we must humbly be the Church that Jesus envisioned, in the spirit of Pope Paul VI’s exhortation in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:*



- + *by assisting the Church to become Gospel centered and Kingdom-oriented; and*
- + *by helping people to find a protective home and kindly shelter in the Church.* *Build with Living Stones*  
– “SBU” Unit 14 – Page 4

## SHARING INFORMATION

A note to regional secretaries;

*We ask you to keep the CNSA and the NEC informed when there is a change in Provincial or Regional Spiritual Assistants in your area.*

Send the information to the CNSA secretary (Presently Elizabeth Allen SFO) or the the National executive secretary for NEC (Presently Sarah Mulholland SFO). Include the full name, address, phone numbers(s), and e-mail address of the appointee.

## WELCOME

We welcome these new appointees:

- + Regional SA for Thomas More Region – David Buer OFM
- + Provincial SA for Sacred Heart Province of the TOR’s – David Morrier TOR
- + Provincial and Regional SA for St. John the Baptist OFM Province and Joan of Arc Region – Juniper Crouch OFM
- + Provincial SA for the OFM Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Regional SA for the region of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Empress of the Americas – Larry Schreiber OFM.

## PROFESSION

Being with Secular Franciscans at visitations, I find that there is a need to be aware of the serious implications of profession in the SFO.

Among the responsibilities that are assumed at profession, the following are part of the commitment that comes with profession.

- + commitment to a lifetime of personal growth in Franciscan spirituality.
- + commitment to influence people in the world and the Church with a Franciscan, gospel-oriented attitude to life.
- + commitment to enrich fraternity life.
- + a commitment to serve the SFO when called upon.

Service, in turn, requires both a willingness to serve and the ability to serve with competence. SFO members commit to fraternity service in whatever way is possible for them.

Secular Franciscans contribute creative and imaginative ideas to stimulate good regular gatherings.

Our Franciscan lives, attitudes, perspective and words should bring the Franciscan spirit to the Church and the World. We are expected to influence people in ways that builds God’s Kingdom.

# Our Franciscan Spirituality

By Teresa Baker, SFO  
National Formation Commission Chair

As I prepared this last insert for the TAU-USA as chair of the National Formation Commission, I ask the Good Lord to bless each of you, and I praise God and thank you for the many blessings I have received from knowing and serving you. May the Lord bless us and keep us safely on the journey he has chosen for our lives. Teresa

Seven years ago when I applied to co-chair the National Formation Commission, one of the main goals I stated was to share with the members of the Secular Order our Franciscan spirituality. I attended various workshops on the works of Bonaventure and Scotus and gleaned from them the principle tenets of their philosophy and theology. Personally, I was more drawn to Bonaventure and found basic underpinnings of our Franciscan spirituality in his *Itinerarium, The Soul's Journey into God*. Therein, he gives our tradition, a guide on the spiritual path. However, parts of it were too detailed for the uneducated friars of his time – not to mention for many of us today. So when recounting Francis' life, Bonaventure clothed the spiritual experiences of Francis within a theological vocabulary easier to understand. When writing the Major Life, Bonaventure chose to relate Francis' life not so much in chronological order but portrayed instead Francis' growth in virtues as he made his way along the spiritual path. He placed before us an excellent portrayal of Francis as one who chose to follow as closely as humanly possible, the example left for us by Jesus himself.

Still, this spirituality is coming to us in the words and perceptions of Bonaventure, not Francis. At a recent workshop, one of the participants asked for a basic book on Franciscan spirituality that was easy to comprehend. No one was able to offer a precise title. Everyone could offer books that spoke of our Franciscanism, but none geared specifically toward our Franciscan spirituality. It was only after returning home that I discovered two books written by Thadee Matura, OFM, that set out to deal specifically with our Franciscan Spirituality:

- 1) *Francis of Assisi: Writer and Spiritual Master*
- 2) *A Dwelling Place of the Most High*.

In these two small books he has set out to share our spirituality as it arises from Francis' own writings. In this first book, he arranges his work topically, drawing from different sources segments that share a common theme. He also suggests that if we are looking for a pattern to the Franciscan spiritual life, Francis has laid it out in two works for us: *The Earlier Rule* and the

*Second Letter to the Faithful*. Matura contends that following the prescriptions of these two works will identify the markers that make our spirituality truly Franciscan. His second work, *A Dwelling Place of the Most High*, is set up as a fifteen day retreat focusing on a particular topic taken from a different source each day. The words of Francis are explored and the nuances of Francis' thinking are imparted to us. I invite you to read these works that give an overview of our spirituality derived from the words of Francis. For those who are looking for a more comprehensive work, Matura's *Francis of Assisi: the Message in his Writings* should fulfill your quest. However, I would caution you to take Bonaventure's words to heart before reading about our Franciscan spirituality:

*Do not think that  
reading is sufficient without unction,  
reflection without devotion,  
investigation without admiration,  
observation without exultation,  
industry without piety,  
knowledge without charity,  
intelligence without humility,  
study without grace,  
or the reflecting power of a mirror  
without the inspiration of divine wisdom.  
Itinerarium Prologue 4*

If you wish to know how these things come about,

*ask grace not instruction,  
desire not understanding,  
the groaning of prayer not diligent reading,  
the Spouse not the teacher,  
God not man,  
darkness not clarity,  
not light but the fire that totally inflames  
and carries us into God  
by ecstatic unctions and burning affections.  
This fire is God, and His furnace is in Jerusalem;  
and Christ enkindles it in the heat of His burning passion.  
Itinerarium, 7. 6*

And, when you have discovered for yourself the gem of our Franciscan spirituality, that pearl of great price, let the words of St. Clare be a guard for you:

*What you hold, may you (always) hold.  
What you do, may you (always) do and never  
abandon. But with swift pace, light step,(and)  
unswerving feet, so that even your steps stir up no  
dust, go forward securely, joyfully, and swiftly, on the  
oath of prudent happiness, believing nothing,  
agreeing with nothing which would dissuade you  
from your resolution or which would place a  
stumbling block for you on the way so that you may  
offer your vows (promises) to the Most High in the  
pursuit of that perfection to which the Spirit of the  
Lord has called you.* Blessings of St. Clare

# Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation

By Pat Brandwein-Ball, SFO  
National Councilor  
JPIC Transition Committee Chair  
patball76@yahoo.com

Members of the JPIC Transition Committee met in May, as planned, to work out the necessary structure for JPIC. Members of the committee are Ed Zablocki, Mary Zablocki, Barbara Smith, Heleni Pedersoli (excused) and Carolyn Colburn (excused), Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM, and Pat Brandwein-Ball.

Let me recap a comparison of the former Apostolic Commission model with the JPIC model: The Apostolic Commissions focused on individual articles of Rule; each commission was headed by a chairperson and 4-5 commission members, and concentrated upon our doing works of charity and our involvement with issues appropriate to a particular article of the Rule. Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation is based upon the wholeness of the Rule, is headed by a coordinator, has a foundation of Franciscan theology, and works of charity and involvement in issues of our times spring forth from our being, as the worthy fruits of conversion.

This paradigm shift brings to light insights expressed in our General Constitution. Recall that it is the Constitution that defines our identity as Secular Franciscans in our everyday circumstances...our presence in the world. The Rule and Constitution given by the Church are derived from the "outline" concerning the Apostolate of the Laity from the Vatican II Council. I encourage everyone to read and re-read The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*). The document is not very long and is a bit dry getting into it, but stick with it...it improves greatly and is well worth the effort and time. You will see the SFO Rule throughout.

## Beginnings (from the JPIC meeting)

All regional and local fraternities:

- continue apostolic works in which you are currently engaged
- appoint a JPIC coordinator to disseminate information

- collaborate with your respective formation commission in reviewing ways to stimulate theological reflection and discussion of materials from CIOFS: Profession in the SFO, Nature of the Secular Franciscan Order, Vocation, the Vocation, Charism and Mission of Secular Franciscans
- explore local parish and diocesan websites for information on issues pertinent to your area; develop a personal Franciscan response
- sign up for the SFOJPNet - contact Carolyn Colburn at colburn@sonic.net or subscribe to the Catholic Charities Alerts and Catholic Relief Organization for bulletins sent out frequently by the USCCB
- develop a database of contact persons for each fraternity for JPIC purposes
- ensure that all members have read (and re-read) the JPIC articles in the past issues of TAU-USA (winter 2007, spring 2008, summer 2008) and have reflected upon the "Being and Doing" section of the articles

Please contact me with questions and concerns.

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## Quotes:

Asking is the beginning of receiving. Through a simple believing prayer, you can change your future. You can change what happens one minute from now.

Dr. Bruce Wilkinson

Let go of the need to control. Trust in the wisdom of a divine plan.

Cheryl Richardson

Whatever people do, feel, think or say, don't take it personally. Others are going to have their own opinion according to their belief system, so whatever they think about you is not about you, but it is about them.

Don Miguel Ruiz

Avoid the enticement to be mean or argue. Allow others to be right. As far as you're concerned, be peaceful with everyone you encounter.

Tavis Smiley

Be confident enough to be able to voice your opinions without fear of recrimination. As such, you will inspire the same action in others.

Deepak Chopra, MD

## FAN UPDATE

By Stephanie Sormane, SFO



The first big news is that Franciscan Action Network's (FAN) website is now up-dated to the level to which it was originally envisioned, with tons of information (historical as well as current), all the founding documents, current actions, news, videos from the March 2008 launch – you name it – it's there! (Do check it out at -

[www.franciscanaction.org](http://www.franciscanaction.org)).

One additional important aspect of the updated website is that individuals can register as members – and individual membership is free (NAFRA, for us, is the paying member!)! So – what does that do for you? First of all, it makes you a part of the network – and this is SO important. Building the network is a primary goal of FAN at this time, and, because of our numbers, it's one of the best ways we SFOs can help in this endeavor. Does this mean you'll be over-whelmed with email? No, it doesn't – because FAN is very selective of what it sends out to its membership – but what they do send is important! One head's up on registering (which is very easy): you will be advised that you will receive an email with your password. That email is automatically generated, and therefore sometimes goes to your Spam mail. So - if you think your password got lost, check you Spam mail! A good way to avoid that is to include the FAN website in your favorites.

FAN is currently offering two training programs – Engage Franciscan Peacemaking Program and Care for Creation. The Engage program was designed by Pace e Bene; the three facilitator trainings currently scheduled are September 4-7 in Washington, DC, September 18-21 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and October 23-26 in Ringwood, New Jersey. Those trained will then go back to their Regions and train others. Full information is on the FAN website. More facilitator trainings will be offered in 2009.

The other training program – Care for Creation (C4C) – is a 5-session, intense immersion experience and spiritual journey for a small group (8-18 persons) to become self-conscious Franciscan Caretakers for Creation. All materials are provided through FAN; each group chooses 1-2 facilitators to lead the process,

and there is ongoing electronic and telephonic support throughout the training process. Again, see the FAN website for complete information.

The next meeting of the FAN Action Commission will be September 3-4. Since our March meeting, we've had monthly conference calls sharing our progress in spreading the word about FAN and building the FAN network. The Action Commission currently is made up of three representatives – a First Order member, a Third Order Religious Sister, and a Secular – from each of six regions that make up the United States (including Alaska and Hawaii). In addition, there are two at-large members representing Franciscans International and the Ecumenical Franciscans.

I think it would be helpful to clarify a couple of things with respect to FAN. First, some have the impression that FAN is replacing the Apostolic Commissions. This misconception probably arose because NAFRA's joining FAN was approved at the same Chapter meeting that approved the abolition of the Commissions. Let's make this clear – FAN isn't replacing anything! FAN is a peace, justice and ecology activity. If we still had the Commissions, it would be an activity under the Peace and Justice Commission – an important activity, but not the only activity. There are many ways for us to follow the Gospel; FAN is one of them.

The other thing that I think troubles some people is their discomfort with advocacy. However, FAN's very first Value Statement says: "Our means of doing advocacy will not dehumanize or demonize those with whom we disagree on policy matters." To further illustrate the way we intend to operate, Ken Preston-Pile, of Pace e Bene, in his presentation to the FAN Commission in March 2008, related his talk with Sr. Rosemary Lynch, OSF, on Franciscan advocacy. Sr. Lynch, well-known and experienced in advocacy, gave these principles:

- Work for a win-win situation;
- Work for relationship, not just winning;
- Pray before every legislative visit to remain peaceful, regardless of the outcome;
- Always begin from a point of respect;
- Express gratitude for the work of the legislator;
- Determine common ground; work from that base;
- End visit with prayer of thanksgiving.

This kind of advocacy isn't easy, but more and more it is being recognized as the way to accomplish something. It is certainly a way to bring our Franciscan spirit to the world. Choose readings or other focusing activities.



## ISLAM: OUR ABRAHAMIC COUSIN

By Edward L. Shirley, SFO  
National Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Chair  
elsso@hotmail.com (512) 794-0546

In our last article, we discussed Judaism, which Pope John Paul II called “our sister religion.” Now, we turn our attention to the other Abrahamic religion, one that the Holy Father called “our cousin.” This religion is Islam. Like Jews and Christians, they believe in absolutely one God. Though they believe that Muhammad was the last of the Prophets (and with him, prophecy was “sealed”), they see him in the same line as the Jewish prophets, Jesus and the apostles. They honor Jesus as the greatest prophet, next to Muhammad himself. They believe that Jesus was born of a virgin, though they do not believe he is the Son of God, nor do they believe that he was crucified (God would never allow his prophet to die like that). Rather, Jesus was taken to heaven, from whence he would return to judge the living and the dead at the end of the world.

Muhammad was born in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D., and Muslims believe, received a call from God, through the angel Gabriel, to take a message to the Arab people. His message was simple: There is no God but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God. This is the *shahada*, the Islamic creed. To Muslims, there is no greater sin than to assign another being equality with God: this is idolatry, in Arabic, *shirk*. *Shirk*, like the Christian notion of idolatry, is more than simply bowing down before false gods: anything that gets in the way of your relationship with God is *shirk*. This is similar to Jesus’ saying that no one can serve two masters.

Islam is founded on Five Pillars: recitation of the *shahada*, prayer five times per day (morning, mid-day, afternoon, evening and night), giving 2.5 % of their total accumulated wealth to the mosque and the poor, fasting from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan (this means no food, water or sexual relations), and making the Hajj, the Pilgrimage to Mecca, once during one’s life. We can see here many similarities to elements in Christianity: the Apostles’ or Nicene Creed, the Liturgy of the Hours, tithing, and

Lenten observances. The pilgrimage to Mecca is a lot like Christian pilgrimages, and particularly resonate with our Franciscan notion of visiting holy sites (think of Francis and the Holy Land, or Bonaventure’s visit to Mount La Verna).

After the death of the Prophet, there was disagreement as to who should lead the Muslim community. Some felt leadership should be inherited. Muhammad had no sons, but he had adopted his son-in-law Ali, husband to Muhammad’s daughter Fatima, and father to Muhammad’s only grandsons. These Muslims were known as the Party of Ali (Shi’ia Ali). Others believed the leader should be chosen from among Muhammad’s companions or members of his tribe. This disagreement led to the split between the Sunnis (the majority, who follow the *sunna*, a long tradition of interpretation) and the Shi’ites. The Shi’ites themselves divided within the first few centuries. The majority of Shi’ites follow a line that died out with the twelfth hereditary leader. They are called Twelvers, and the majority of Twelvers live in Iran.

There is also a mystical stream of Islam called Sufism. Like Christian mystics, Sufis focus on the love of God, and seek union with God in this life. The spirit of Sufism resonates with Franciscan sensibilities: ecstatic love of God, seeing God in all creatures and circumstances, and singing. The Sufi teacher, Rumi, once said, “Music is the squeaking of the Door of Heaven.” A man in audience countered, “I do not like this squeaking.” Rumi replied, “That is because you hear it squeaking as the Door closes to you, but I hear it squeaking as it opens to me.” This reminds me of a Troubadour I know, who used to play stick fiddle. In fact, some scholars believe that the reason St. Francis was not killed immediately by the Muslim soldiers who captured him was because they thought he might have been a Sufi. Rumi even mentions Francis in his poetry. Unfortunately, most Western Christians have only a very superficial view of Islam, particularly since 9/11: Islamic terrorists, crowds of angry Arabs chanting anti-American slogans, and so forth. However, this is as much of a distortion of Islam as is the view that Catholicism is all about bombing abortion clinics and priests abusing children. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, and, like Catholicism, one of the most ethnically diverse: not all Arabs are Muslim (there are many Arab Christians, Maronite and Chaldeon Catholics among them), nor are most Muslims Arab. Muslims are African and Malaysian, Indian and Chinese. Many Western Cau-

Continue on page 22.

## Action for Interracial Understanding Part of Our History

By William Wicks, SFO  
NAFRA Historian



Waldemar Roebuck (on the left) at Convention

Most people will agree that the subject of Race is topical. We have an African American as the presumptive Democratic nominee for president. And just yesterday I watched a segment on CNN called *Race In America*. It should be noted here, for future readers, that when one writes of Race today, the presumption is that it is about relation between “blacks” and “whites.”

But, is the topic of race relevant to the SFO at this time in our history? There are good reasons that argue both for and against its relevancy. The “against”, of course, is that there are not that many African American who are members of our Order. (The why is apart from the object of this article) The “for” reason, and I believe this strongly, is that, as an Order, we are called to accept all people as equal under God; our own Rule testifies to this: we trust “in the divine seed in everyone.” (Rule 2:19) And - who can prejudge the divine seed? A third reason that could be mention is that we, as Franciscans, are sensitive to the diversity of culture – we had a whole Quinquennial Congress dedicated to Multiculturalism last year, (2007).

With this article, I plan to not address race relations. You are probably thinking, thank goodness. However, I will present that we did, as an Order, addressed this “challenge,” in the past - part of our SFO (Third Order) history

“The Color Question” was a topic addressed at a National Executive Board Meeting held in Cleveland, Ohio, in August, 1938. The dialogue was related to: how to respond to the situation in which white

members complained about the presence of “Negroes” at their fraternity meetings, and, how should the question of “Negroes” at a convention be addressed: some hotels did not allow them room accommodations. Here are excerpts taken from the meeting dialogue. Board Chairman Fr. Thomas Grassman, O.F.M. Conv., stated, “We must more aggressively come out for the equality of all in sight of God and because of the immortal soul.” When the topic of a separate convention was offered, Secretary Maximus Poppy, OFM, argued, “That amounts to Jim Crow...” Fr. Max ended the discussion with “...any members who feel that they cannot subscribe to this policy [of equal accommodations] are free to remain from the convention. Thus liberty is safeguarded, and the principle, even though we lose their good will.”<sup>1</sup>

This “Color” dilemma resurfaced in the planning of the 1947 Quinquennial Congress held at the Netherland Plaza Hotel in Cincinnati, Ohio. “The question relative to our Colored delegates was then raised, since the Netherland Plaza Hotel refused to house them. A Friar [not named] said that he had made arrangements with the Manse Hotel, a Colored Business men’s hotel...Arrangements were also to be made to reserve a special dining room in the Netherland Plaza Hotel and to designate it as the Convention dining room. The Colored delegates could eat freely here with our white delegates. This was necessitated by the fact that the hotel management declared that the Colored could not eat in the public dining room of the hotel, nor perhaps in any of the adjacent White restaurants.”<sup>2</sup> That is “the way it was.”

The Action for Interracial Understanding (AIU) began as an apostolate for the Third Order in 1963, a year prior to the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. It was a program designed to educate members on race relations, and to encourage them to participate in non-violent demonstrations in support of Civil Rights. “Our apostolate, ‘Action for Interracial Understanding,’ certainly needs paramount attention in all fraternities. Good race relations must be a concern of every tertiary. No tertiary can close his eyes and ears to the tremendous problem. Love of God and love of neighbor demands that you involve your self in helping Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans and other minority

<sup>1</sup> Wicks, William H., *A History of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States, Volume I (1917 – 1942)*, Barbo Carlson Printing, Lindsborg, KS, 2007, 247- 249

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of Special Executive Board Meeting, January 1947



Waldemar Roebuck with Robert Fenton, Director of AIU

groups in obtaining a true recognition of their dignity as sons of God and your brothers in Christ. This is no time to wring your hands. It is a time of action.”<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that many Tertiaries participated in the famous 1963 Washington march.

Although the apostolate was motivated by the “African American” Civil Rights movement, all minority groups were included. Robert Fenton was the first Executive Director. Waldemar Roebuck, who later became president of the North American Federation (the national SFO organization at the time), was very much involved in the AIU apostolate.

It is also noted here that the 1963 St. Francis Peace Medal was awarded to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In a letter of gratitude addressed to the Executive Secretary of the Third Order, Dr. King wrote: “This is a rather belated note again to thank you and the Third Order of St. Francis for honoring me in such a significant way with our St. Francis Peace Medal. It is an honor that I will cherish as long as the cords of memory shall lengthen. In a real sense, your desire to bestow upon me this distinguished award was expressive of two important points. On the one hand it expressed the new and vital willingness of the Christian church to take a concrete step in the direction of identifying with the struggle for racial justice in our nation. Since I happen to be a Protestant, the awarding of the St. Francis Peace Medal expresses the new ecumenical concern that is now greatly alive in both Protestant and Catholic circles. So I am convinced that your generous gesture toward me will go a long, long way toward bringing about new levels of fellowship for all Christians, a move so nobly initiated by Pope John, and

<sup>3</sup> *Franciscan Herald and Forum*, August 1963, 226

it will give those of us engaged in this difficult, yet challenging struggle for freedom and justice the consoling awareness of the support of the church.”<sup>4</sup> During those days, for some of the general population - and even for some Third Order members, Dr. King was not a welcomed choice for the Third Order St. Francis Peace Award.

The Action for Racial Understanding apostolate extended, into the seventies. It was, in a sense, an “early days” Multicultural Committee.

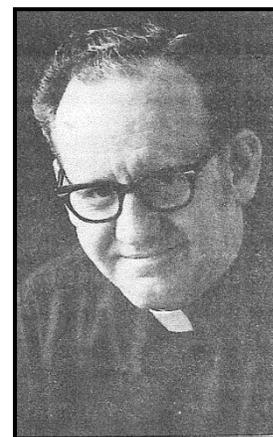
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### Fr. Jovian Wiegel, OFM

+ 1921 – 2008 +

By William Wicks, SFO

The Secular Franciscans lost a good friend with the passing of Fr. Jovian Wiegel, OFM, who died peacefully on June 5. He professed solemn vows in 1943 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1948. “Jovian’s whole ministry at the local, provincial and national levels was to his Secular Franciscan sisters and brothers,” wrote Fr. Loren Connell, OFM, of St. John the Baptist Province.



Fr. Jovian

Fr. Jovian began his Third Order/SFO ministry as a local spiritual assistant in 1950.

In May 1970, he was appointed executive secretary of the North American Federation (that included provinces from both the United States and Canada). He served in that central position for over six years. Fr. Jovian also was the OFM representative to NAF Executive Board and for thirty years he served as Provincial Spiritual Assistant to St. John the Baptist Third Order Province. Fr. Jovian, together with the late Fr. Ulric Buening, OFM, Cap, and the late Fr. Brendan Mitchell, OFM, worked as a team as National Assistants, dedicating their lives for the benefit of the Third Order during the time of transition from friar to lay leadership. Fr. Jovian wrote several pamphlets, booklets and books - his latest: was co-authored with Fr. Leonard Foley, OFM, and Patti Normile, SFO - *To Live as Francis Lived*. He will be missed by all who knew him.

<sup>4</sup> *Franciscan Herald and Forum*, March 1964, 66

# Our Stories

## A Kiss to Remember

By Donna Acquaviva, SFO

The one thing about being a Franciscan that I find irritating, is that all the average person seems to remember about St. Francis is that he loved birds and animals. Warning: this story may seem to buy into that concept, but it doesn't.

My husband, Bob, has always been a physically and mentally vigorous man. He has been a writer, editor and teacher all his life and, to those who hired him, as the "idea man." At 74, he has never had a major illness or surgery. So you can imagine our dismay, when Bob's latest trip to the doctor for a check-up revealed that the arteries to his brain are narrowing, causing Alzheimer's with the probability of a stroke or heart attack. Suddenly our lives would halt their leisurely journeys to old age and would change in ways we could not imagine. We were devastated!

The next day I went outside to give Bob a phone message, but he was in the woods gathering stones for our garden path and was nowhere in sight. I called again louder. Suddenly he was there, standing near a small bush, and whispering urgently, "Look behind you." What, I thought? A bear? A snake? A ghost? I turned my head and there trotting purposefully, as though on a mission, was a young deer. Usually deer leap past us, or they don't see us and they're browsing. This one, even when he glanced at me had no fear. He had someone to see and I wasn't it.

He rounded the fence and followed the trail 'til he was directly in front of my husband, looked up into his eyes, rubbed his nose against Bob's, then kissed him on the lips with a gentle flick of his tongue. He backed off, gazed again into Bob's eyes and walked away, turning his head to look back at my husband once as though to say, "Well, I've done what I had to do," and then disappeared into the forest.

It took several minutes to fully realize what had just happened. Slowly, peace ran through us like warm honey. Then we knew that this was God saying, "You've just heard some bad news, but be not afraid, you are not alone. I am with you always and I love you."

When Bob told this story to the hunters, the outdoorsmen and the animal behaviorist whom we know,

all of them said basically the same thing: "This doesn't happen. I've never heard anything like this before. If you hadn't had a witness, I don't think I'd believe it."

Was it a blessing, or just a coincidence? Was it a sign, or just a very tame deer? Others are free to think what they will – but we are Franciscans and we believe that we were blessed through that deer. The years ahead may be difficult, but we will not be alone. That much we know whether we see the deer again or not.

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## The Encounter

By Vanessa Tong, SFO

Nothing about that January day in Atlanta was typical. As I walked the few blocks to my early morning destination, the wind bit with a cold more in keeping with the winters back home. My husband walking briskly beside me, kept me a little warmer simply with the effort of trying to keep pace with him.

Atlanta is a fascinating city, especially to a small town girl like me. Growing so quickly, it is constantly in a state of flux. I am always amazed at the diversity of the people there. For such a large city, Atlantans seem to be very open and friendly.

That cold morning though, while the gray sky spat snow, I saw a "not so kind" part of big city life. One that, in truth, I had witnessed before. This was certainly not my first trip here, nor my first encounter with the city's homeless and destitute.

I, along with everyone else who would perchance catch a glimpse of a suspicious character out of the corner of the eye, would veer as far away as possible. Keeping your eyes straight ahead or better yet, down, was the best way to avoid speaking to these nefarious characters. I had been warned many times never to give a homeless person money; they would only use it for drugs or drinking. They probably had more money than I had anyway!

I would soon find out how quickly things in life might change. With an encounter never expected, I would begin a journey that would change my life forever.

My husband, Jim, and I decided to use some idle time before our appointments by having a cup of way too expensive coffee at one of Atlanta's busiest coffee shops. It was standing room only at first, but finally we gained a seat near the window looking out on Peachtree Street. Downtown Atlanta at nine in the

Continue on the next page.

morning on Peachtree Street...we sat and watched the mass of people struggle to cross the street. Women with their Prada bags, men in their designer business suits, all come here to spend millions of dollars at Atlanta's Market Center.

As I sat feeling self important, drinking my overpriced coffee, I glanced up, and my heart stopped dead. Struggling to cross the street, oblivious to the traffic around him, walked an old black man. Never in my life have I seen a more beautiful face. Wizedened and stooped, gray headed, and in rags, he walked as if he had no fear of cars, buses or anything else in this mortal world of ours. The beatific smile he wore literally took my breath away. I began to tremble as I watched him. Why was this man having this effect on me? What in the world was going on?

I am normally a very reserved and, at times, shy person. To bring attention to myself in a public display would be nothing less than mortifying. Why then did I desperately want this old man to come into this coffee shop?

For several moments he stood outside the window where I sat. I could tell he was trying to talk to people, but they all turned away. The more I watched, the more sure I was that I must be crazy. My body seemed to be in the midst of a panic attack or something. When I realized he was coming into the coffee shop, I was sure I would faint!

Slowly, stately, leaning on his cane he made his kingly entrance. The crowds moved aside for him, and amazingly a table immediately opened up for him when he approached. He sat and began to babble to himself. The entire group heaved a sigh of relief: "Perhaps he will just sit there," I am sure was what was on everyone's mind. It was on my mind, too, of course. "Please, just sit there long enough for me to get up the strength to go over there and hand you this money," I thought to myself. "I'll just walk over there really quick, thrust the money at him, and run. Maybe no one will look at me and I can get this crazy feeling out of my head."

In all actuality, it didn't take that long. I screwed up my courage and began my rather unsteady way across the room. Like tunnel vision, he was all I saw. That sweet, beautiful face transfixed me. Suddenly I found myself before him and I could contain my tears no longer. I dropped to my knees and took his old brittle hand in mine. With tenderness, I kissed it. Then I leaned forward and touched his face. Such an amazing face he had, and such undisguised intelligence and overwhelming love in his eyes. Tenderly again, I

kissed his cheek. Drawing back, we smiled at each other, and then I placed my small gift in his hands. Standing, it was then that I realized how quiet the coffee shop had become. All eyes were on me, but trying not to be obvious. Taking my seat, I began to drink my coffee again, but this time a seven-dollar cup of coffee didn't seem nearly as good. My dear, loving husband only smiled, and took my hand. He knew something wonderful had happened, not what, but it was mine to cherish forever.

Many years later, in the wee hours of the night, as I contemplated the words I had written, I realized the great error I had made. So many years I thought He came only for me, for my sake, and for my journey. How silly and egotistical I was. Like St. Francis early in his journey of discovery, I heard and saw only a part of the message, the part I wanted to see. I was merely an instrument for Him that day! How many other lives were touched? How many others no longer walked with their eyes downcast, but from that day forward, looked with love and charity on all? Perhaps many journeys began on that cold January day.

*"Francis who is it better to serve, the servant or the Master?" Thus began my journey to perfect joy!*

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## Brother Juniper



By Fred McCarthy, SFO



## Celebrating the Franciscan Charism

Continued from page 9.

EP: Jesus came among us to share the love of the Trinity with us; may we always be witnesses of his love to all we meet, we pray to the Lord...

In whatever way you choose to celebrate, remember that we are all called to be members of this one Franciscan family. I appreciate this description of family that a friend once shared with me. *Family are those persons who share your hopes and dreams; rarely do members of the same family grow up under the same roof.*

May we all, members of the First, Second and Third Orders relish the hopes and dreams of our father Francis and bring them to fulfillment in our lives.

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## Building Bridges

Continued from page 5.

But, God had more, for in His goodness, I was blessed to return to Bethlehem this past June 2008. It was on that day that I actually got to meet my brother Fadi and sister Rose Marie in person! Not only that, but they spoke to our entire pilgrimage group about the challenges of their everyday life in Bethlehem. I so love and admire the SFOs in Bethlehem. They have the same Franciscan joy in their hearts, despite the unique challenges they face while striving to live the Gospel. Can you imagine living the Gospel of love, while not being a free people, but a people under Israeli occupation? I can't imagine ...but am touched so deeply by their courage and positive spirit. At the conclusion of Fadi and Rose Marie's talk, all the SFOs in our pilgrimage group from the U.S. joined with the SFOs from Bethlehem for a group photo. What a

joy...what a blessing. I cannot help but smile and thank our dear Lord for the blessing of more bridges being built that June day.

I pray that more and more bridges of peace, love and understanding will continue to be built between our "sister" SFO fraternity in Bethlehem and SFOs in Florida, across the United States and across the world. I hope our brothers and sisters in Christ and in St. Francis will never have to feel that they are alone in their struggles. May God continue to bless and protect Rose Marie, Fadi and the rest of their fraternity, as they strive to follow our Lord in the footsteps of St. Francis. May they continue to be His instruments of peace and love under such trying conditions in the little town of Bethlehem...the very town where our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ was born.

Should you or your fraternity wish to communicate with Rose Marie's and Fadi's SFO fraternity in Bethlehem, please contact me at: [faithalibbe@juno.com](mailto:faithalibbe@juno.com)

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## Islam: Our Abrahamic Cousin

Continued from page 17.

casians are Muslim. I have been asked many times why Muslim leaders do not speak out against terrorism. The fact is, they do. Unfortunately, our media does not choose to give us those stories; they do not sell papers.

Francis saw the Crusades as short-sighted, and tried to reach out to the Sultan in friendship. He did not, of course, end up converting the Sultan to Christianity, which was his original intent, but he did convert the Sultan's heart by his sincere faith, and, in turn, was himself converted into a greater appreciation for Islam. Francis' followers can do no less.

I want to end with two stories, both taking place here in Austin, Texas. A couple of years ago, a local mosque was desecrated. Within a couple of hours, a multifaith candle vigil was held outside the mosque, with Jews, Christians and people of other faiths showing solidarity with the Muslim community. The second happened last year. Austin Interfaith Ministries holds a multi-faith Thanksgiving dinner every year, hosted by some particular group. A local church had agreed to let the dinner take place in their building. However, when they found out that Muslims (who did not have a large enough space to hold it themselves) were hosting, the church withdrew its agreement at the last minute. Immediately, a Jewish congregation volunteered to allow Muslims to host the event at their synagogue, and the response from the Austin community overwhelming. What a wonderful demonstration of true interfaith respect.

# "Little Weeds"



## Epiphany – It's Not Just For the Magi!

By M. Marko, SFO  
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Brother Jacoba Community  
St. Peter's in the Loop, Chicago, IL

To Catholics, the word epiphany is spelled with a big "E" and brings to mind the Magi. However, there's a little-"e" epiphany as well. The American Heritage Dictionary defines it as "a comprehension or perception of reality by means of a sudden intuitive realization." In everyday language, they're called "aha! moments," and we're all eligible for them. How cool is that?! I've had a few. I daresay you have, too. It's hard not to if you pay attention.

Epiphanies come in a variety of guises. Sometimes, you hear a homily on a particular reading that gives you a whole new insight into the Scripture, even though you've heard it many times before. You suddenly "get it" even though you thought you'd understood it before (but realize now you didn't really).

Sometimes, you "hear a little voice" in your head telling you to act on something. I had that experience when I first heard of the SFO. I literally heard a voice in my head telling me "this is what you've been looking for" – which surprised me as a) I wasn't used to hearing voices in my head, and b) I hadn't realized I'd been looking for anything. I hadn't recognized my vocation because I'd always connected the idea of vocations with religious life, and I knew I didn't have any interest in that. (Though I did like the idea of wearing the same clothes everyday.)

Sometimes, you have a dream that gives you direction. This happened to Francis. We all know the story. He wanted to be a knight, but that wasn't quite working

out. Then in a dream, he heard a voice asking him if he wanted to serve the master or the servant. Naturally, he responded "the master," and then he realized who the master was.

Francis had the "little voice" experience, too, though in his case, the voice came from a Crucifix rather than from inside his head. (I'm not sure which would seem weirder.) But, again, he knew who was speaking and accepted the direction given (albeit misunderstanding a bit at first).

I guess another word for epiphany could be "sign." But I've a tendency to shy away from signs. Not that I can't recognize one when I see it; but I don't actively seek them out. It's been my experience that folks who look for signs invariably find them. Even when they ain't there. So I'd rather the sign find me, so to speak.

Sometimes, epiphanies come in a person. We meet someone we've admired from afar and realize we could do the same good works they do. Or we hear or read about something someone's done to help others, and we figure out how we could do it on our own turf. The lives of the saints have probably provided an epiphany or two.

Sometimes, an epiphany comes in an event of some sort, a walk-a-thon for this or a telethon for that. It dawns on us that we could participate and make a difference. So we do.

An epiphany can be quite small. Something reminds you of someone you haven't spoken to in ages and you decide to call them. You probably wouldn't even recognize that remembrance as an epiphany, yet it prompted you to do something.

Yes, epiphanies come in all shapes and sizes. They can change your life. Or they can just change the way you see something . . .

Some years ago, I was in a foreign country. Nonetheless, nature found me and called. I entered the public facility and upon hearing flushing, figured all was well. However, once I'd closed the stall door and turned around, I found myself staring at a hole in the floor with a stone footprint on either side of it. (How they could make it flush will forever remain a mystery to me.)

Once outside, it was then that I had an epiphany: those ladies hopping around in the parking lot on one foot were not friendly natives doing a folk dance for the tourists; rather, they were tourists who, like moi, who had just piddled on one of their feet! (Hey – I never said an epiphany had to be profound).

## **A Moon Poem**

By Andrew Martin SFO

Sister Moon so perfectly set in the heavens,  
I view you night after night.  
I study you and gaze at your face.  
I am drawn to you, but do not know why.

Together we journey.  
You silently traverse the sky,  
Moving in ways known to you alone.  
I sit transfixed in wonder.

Your lands seem so foreign and yet so familiar.  
An ancient beauty.  
Your presence is far greater,  
And yet it seems not.

Most go about ignoring you.  
A dead lifeless rock in the sky.  
For those willing to follow you,  
You continue to provide enjoyment

A created thing of the Father.

## **The Footsteps of Francis**

By Alice Kenat, SFO

Longing to be near him  
Desiring his every word  
Wanting to be like him  
Rejecting a lavish world

Longing to follow Jesus  
Desiring His perfect way  
Following the footsteps of Francis  
Following the Calvary way

Closer to the heart of Jesus  
Closer to our heavenly home  
Steps that began in Assisi  
Guiding us to our Father's throne

## **St Clare**

By Mary Clare Potthast, SFO

A light in the garden  
A song ever new,  
A breath of God's springtime  
In a world overdue  
For peace and His mercy,  
For love and His grace,  
A shining example  
That time can't erase.

## **IXTUS**

By Bruce Snowden, SFO

In the Galilean Sea beneath its crest,  
A Mother Fish with pride confessed,  
To many of her sons and daughters,  
Who swam with joy within the waters,  
That one day not too far away,  
The Resurrected Lord would say,  
"Have you anything to eat?"

Then Mother Fish continued saying,  
In tones akin to solemn praying,  
One of you my dears will be,  
The meal your Maker makes of thee.  
To Him they'll give a piece of fish,  
Baked and eaten at His wish,  
The purpose of *your* life complete!

"This is My Body" He earlier said,  
"This is My Blood" on both be fed.  
Take this as the Gospels quoth,  
The Fish He ate symbols both.  
Ixtus offered on shore of Sea,  
In the Upper Room Eucharistically,  
A Mystery linked in leavened dough!

Linked in rising leavened dough,  
Resurrection's mystery aglow,  
The Fish in transubstantial way,  
Became the Eucharist of Maundy Day.  
The when and how no time involved,  
The then and now remain unsolved,  
In grasping this, the mind is slow!

## **Cosmos**

By Judy Russoniello, SFO

Roller Coaster of vista peaks of far away scenery, six  
blue petals arrow-shaped, pointed to the floor of your  
heaven.

Down I plunge into your infinite source of all beauty,  
into the whirlpool of duality that is so fragile, so  
delicate.

Each day is going and each day is flowing into the ocean  
of your universe. The naked extreme of the  
darkest chamber covering the mantle of your  
gentleness.

Cooing sound of meekness, envelopes all creation,  
sculpturing me, into your likeness, connecting all  
creation into your galaxy of wonder.

## Dream O Tender Sparrow

By Susan Coyle, SFO

I've watched you soar with eagles  
Though you are such a tiny bird  
You draw your life from Jesus  
And as you feed  
upon His word

You gather strength and courage  
So you can lift your wings to fly  
You take with you the joy of life  
And smile as you reach the sky

Now finding freedom within yourself  
Still smiling you look down  
You know you must descend again  
But content to return to the ground

You dwell among the animals  
Who so often keep you bound  
And joyfully you work and play  
You breathe in the beauty of each day

And in the wind you hear Me say  
Dream O tender sparrow  
Dream of what you love  
I'll take your dreams with me on high

In mercy and in love  
I'll reach down,  
I'll lift you up  
'Til once again you fly.

© 2008 Loretto, PA

*I wrote **Dream O Tender Sparrow** and shared it at the end of the Summer Seminar 2008 on "Servant Leadership," held at Saint Francis University, Loretto, PA on June 26-29. My attendance was a last-minute decision and really an "escape," a searching as to whether I should even be a Franciscan. I arrived feeling broken and wounded by some unresolved, unreconciled conflicts that left me questioning my vocation, much less any call to "servant leadership." With the dawn of the second morning there, I awoke with the joy of my salvation having returned to my heart and my journey through Francis in Christ revived, re-claimed and renewed.*



## In His Steps

By Richard Hurzeler, SFO

*In the year 2004—  
an ironic scenario:  
the leader who was  
so eloquent  
sometimes cannot talk,*

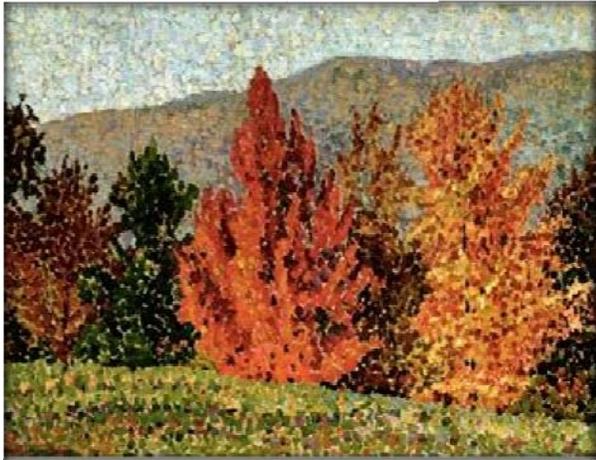
*the linguist, who spoke  
a dozen tongues, is,  
at times, feeble in voice.  
The healer, who would  
pray for others, is now  
a cripple. He shows up  
then at Lourdes amid  
the patients.*

*Yet with slurred speech,  
trembling hand, Wheelchair  
bound, he comes embracing  
with humility the Poverty of  
Disability.*

*In his weakness the Grace of God  
springs out touching all those  
who are bent low.*

*The shepherd bears the cross  
of hope and love.  
Not just a leader but  
a real Disciple absorbing  
the path of Calvary.  
And millions drink in his  
actions which slake  
their thirsty souls.*

# Making “Peace-Making” a Commitment



By Henri Edmond Cross

## *A Franciscan Prayer for Peace<sup>1</sup>*

Lord, make me an instrument of your Peace.  
In a world all too prone to violence and revenge,  
We commit ourselves to the Gospel values of  
Mercy, Justice, Compassion and Love;  
We will seek daily to promote forgiveness and  
healing in our hearts, our families, and our world.

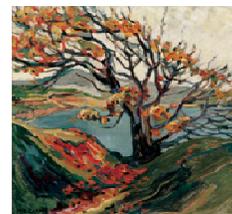
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
Where there is injury, let us cultivate Peace  
Fear and distance prevent people  
from recognizing all  
as brothers and sisters; tensions lead  
to violence and mistrust;  
We will strive to honor the dignity that God places  
in each and every human person.

Grant that we may not seek to be understood  
as to understand;  
To be loved as to love

Our failure to understand the other  
can create exclusion  
in all its negative forms – racism, marginalization of  
those who are poor, sick, the immigrant;  
it can also create  
situations of domination, occupation,  
oppression and war.  
We pledge to see the way of solidarity,  
to create hearts, homes  
and communities where all people  
will experience inclusion,  
hospitality and understanding.

For it is in giving that we receive, in pardoning  
that we are pardoned  
And in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Let us pray:  
Lord God, create in us:  
the Capacity to hear and understand the voices of  
those who suffer from  
every form of violence, injustice and  
dehumanization;  
the Openness to receive and honor people from  
other cultures, languages,  
religious traditions and geographical regions;  
the Creativity to explore new ways of  
communication and dialogue through  
music, poetry, performing arts and the mass media;  
the Audacity to understand the building of  
communities of forgiveness, healing and  
reconciliation.  
To God who is above all and in all  
are the glory and the honor. Amen.



<sup>1</sup> Making “Peacemaking” a Commitment, © Franciscan Province of the Sacred Heart (used with permission).



Sr. Caritas Barajingitwa, LSOSF

### **African Nun Who Founded Orphanage Honored by Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha Region**

*By Robert and Mary Stronach, SFO*

SKANEATELES, NY -- Sister Caritas Barajingitwa, LSOSF, currently assigned to St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Binghamton, NY, dreamed of providing a loving home and practical education for orphans in Africa. That dream came true when she opened Holy Family Vocational Orphanage in Southern Uganda in 2003.

Secular Franciscans in upstate New York and northwestern Pennsylvania recently surprised Sister Caritas with the **Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha Regional Franciscan Peace Award**, citing her for “creating a future for children of AIDS victims.” They also named her and the orphanage as the **2008 Family of the Year**, dubbing her “Mama Caritas.”

In conjunction with the awards, the Secular Franciscans donated \$1,000 to the orphanage. The money is enough to “pay the orphanage’s bills for two months,” said Sister Caritas, a member of the African-based Little Sisters of St. Francis. With her plans to expand, and teach practical life skills, the \$1,000 could also buy a brick-making machine, or eight sewing machines, she said.

The orphanage houses 30 children, and includes 13 acres for farming plus 26 acres for future dormitories and a school, eventually to accommodate 100 children.

Sister was honored at Stella Maris Retreat Center in Skaneateles during the recent annual gathering of the Secular Franciscan Order’s Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha

Region (which encompasses the Albany, Syracuse, Rochester and Buffalo dioceses in New York and the Erie diocese in Pennsylvania).

Sister Caritas got the idea for the orphanage while pursuing a master’s degree in education in the late 1990s at Magill University in Montreal, Quebec. In fact, the idea became her master’s thesis, she said. “Going back to Uganda, I thought it would be just a matter of putting the project into place,” she recalled. “I went door to door begging, to no avail.” But God opened another door, as she would put it.

The pastor of St. Mary’s in Binghamton wrote a letter to the mother superior of the Little Sisters, asking her to send one of her sisters to work in his parish. The mother superior summoned Sister Caritas and told her she was going to the United States. She arrived in June 2001. Two years later, thanks to donations by American Catholics, she was able to open Holy Family Vocational Orphanage and welcome 30 children into its protection. Her fellow sisters run it. She has been returning to Uganda a couple of times a year – especially around Christmas and during the summer – when not visiting the sick and homebound in Binghamton or coordinating the parish bereavement ministry.

Regional Minister Mary Frances Charsky, SFO, who made the awards presentation, noted that in September Sister Caritas plans to return to Uganda permanently. “She really wants to get to the orphanage to build on the work that has begun,” Charsky said, noting that Holy Family Vocational Orphanage Foundation, which friends set up in the U.S. to aid her cause, will continue to raise funds for sister’s dream.

A proponent of teaching practical life skills as well as academics, Sister Caritas said the orphanage teaches home economics, carpentry, basket weaving, sewing and tailoring, and, more recently, farming and animal husbandry. And a fishery is in the offing.

However, sister added, for the orphans, “knowing that they are loved is most important” because “then they will be able to love others.”

+++

**Quote:**

So what if someone was born thinner or stronger or lighter or darker than you? Why count diplomas or compare résumés? What does it matter if they have a place at the head table? You have a place at God’s table.

Max Lucado

# Regional Roundup

Please send Regional Happenings to:  
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Santa Maria, CA 93455  
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## Blessed Juniper Serra Region



Baby Clare

### Announcing the birth of

Clare Olivia Tippet  
Born at home on July 8, 2008  
8 pounds, 10 ounces  
The proud parents are  
Michael & Jennie Lou Tippet, SFO

Jennie Lou belongs to Blessed Giles Forming Group in Twain Harte, CA (in the foothills near Yosemite). She will be professed on Oct. 12 with three other candidates.

## St Thomas More Region

+ VIRGINIA MORENO, SFO +  
1925 – 2008

(Excerpts from Obituary by Thecla McCarthy, SFO)

Virginia Moreno, SFO, professed for 67 years and founding member of St. Anthony Fraternity in Tucson, AZ (1941), went to her heavenly reward in July on the feast of St. Mary Magdalene. Up until last year, Virginia would regularly attend the monthly fraternity meetings, driving herself. Br. David Buer, OFM, Regional SA, states, "Although I only knew Virginia since coming to Tucson three years ago, I was able to come to appreciate the sacred treasure of her life, her prayer and fellowship. As far as we can tell, she was professed an SFO longer than anyone else in our Region. Are there SFOs in the country who have been Professed longer than 67 years?" Virginia served as Secretary of her Fraternity many years. She was very thoughtful; she sent birthday cards

to the members of her fraternity. Her spirituality was contemplative, and her service to others was active.

Her Wake service and funeral Mass were joyous in the Franciscan tradition with family and fraternity members present. There were three vocations in the Moreno family: Virginia's twin sister, Sister Gloria of the Eucharistic Missionaries of St. Dominic, in the religious life, her brother Charles and his wife, Lydia, in the married state, and Virginia in the single as a Secular Franciscan. Virginia and her twin, Sr. Gloria was born on January 1, 1925, the first babies born on that New Year's Day in Tucson.

"Virginia had a wonderful sense of humor," states friend and fraternity member Thecla McCarthy, SFO. "She never failed to have us laughing at one time or another during the monthly meetings." Thecla also remembers that when Virginia took her turn to report to the members how she became a Secular Franciscan, it was during a presidential election year and she began with, "I'm Virginia Moreno and I approve this message." Now Thecla says, "Well, Virginia, we're in another presidential election year and I hope you're saying: 'I'm Virginia Moreno and I approve this message.'"

## St. Margaret of Cortona Region

On Saturday, August 2, 2008, Feast of the Portiuncula, Holy Family fraternity was canonically established during Mass at All Saints Church in Manassas, VA. The main celebrant was Fr. Matthew Palkowski, OFM Cap. Vicar General Rev. Mark Mealey, of the Diocese of Arlington, VA and pastor Fr. Bob Cilenski concelebrated the Mass. Deacon Richard O'Connell, SFO, Fraternity SA delivered an uplifting and motivational homily and assisted at the Mass.



Holy Family Fraternity

The entire Mass was punctuated by the incredible vocal talent of the fraternity's Formation Director, Margaret Gregory, SFO.

During the Rite of Canonical Establishment, Fr. Matthew signed the Document of Establishment as Provincial Spiritual Assistant. It was witnessed by Ann Corro, SFO, Secretary of St. Margaret of Cortona Regional Fraternity and by Diane Bigos, SFO, Minister of Holy Family Fraternity. About 100 guests were present for the Mass and for the bountiful reception that followed in All Saints' Fr. Kelley Hall.

### Franciscan Peace Award

The recipient of this year's Peace Award is **MARIE DENNIS, SFO**. Marie was nominated by Teri Egan, Peace and Justice Chair for St. Margaret of Cortona Region. Teri writes, "I would like to submit Marie Dennis' name again for the Peace award. While she seems to have devoted her whole life to the efforts for peace, the Maryknoll magazine wrote about her, as her new book, *Diversity of Vocations*, is out, "She has lived more vocations (and more than one at a time) than anyone we know...Dennis is a mother with six children, a Maryknoll employee who lives in a Franciscan community in the inner city of Washington, D.C., and directs the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. She also finds time to serve as co-president of Pax Christi in the cause of world peace and to write books. Her life hasn't always been easy, but she makes it look easy and encourages us not to be afraid when our hearts point to places our brain can't yet conceive. Dennis has learned that there are many ways to be true to ourselves and to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ."

### Father Solanus Casey Region

Three Seculars celebrated their Golden Anniversaries of Profession. They are Alice Fitzpatrick, SFO and Iolanda and Jerry O'Loughlin. See *Classic Franciscans* on page 30 in this issue.

### Los Tres Companeros Region

The Annual San Jose Mission Walk for Vocations, October 12, 2008. For more information, contact David Basile, SFO, Minister of San Jose Fraternity, 210-495-6213.

Annual SFO Retreat sponsored by St. Francis Fraternity at the Catholic Formation center in Dallas. It will take place on Oct. 31-Nov. 2. The theme will be "Living in Today's Times."

## Queen of Peace Region



R-L: Sr. Lois Erpelding, OSF, Sr. Rosemary Vaske, OSF, Lori Taormina, SFO and Sr. Marie Therese Kalb, OSF.

The "2008 Lenten H2O Project" provided water to those in need thanks to your help and prayers.

At the recent Queen of Peace Annual Gathering, on behalf of the National FYYA Commission, Lori Taormina, SFO, Regional FYYA Chair, presented a check for \$12,491.97 to "The Sister Water Project" of the Franciscan Sisters of Dubuque, Iowa.

## Juan de Padilla Region

A retreat was given by Fr. Angelus Shaugnessy, OFM Cap, on love and eternity at the Spiritual Life Center on June 20-22 in Wichita, KS. Father is from Pittsburg, PA. He is a form-er missionary to Papua, New Guinea and now serves as the National Executive director of the Archconfraternity of Christian Mothers.

## St. John the Baptist Province

Two Silver Jubilees are coming up in October 2008, for Cynthia Duet, SFO, and Barbara Holscher, SFO. Both Seculars are members of St Teresa of Avila Fraternity.

The Liturgy for the Jubilees will be concelebrated by Father Billy, SFO, and Father Joe Benson, SFO, at 2:00 PM on October 19, 2008, in the Chapel of the Monastery of the Poor Clares at 720 Henry Clay, New Orleans, LA. Cynthia Duet was Liturgist for the Quinquennial held in New Orleans in 2002, with Sr. Charlene Troups, OSC.

## National Fraternity Meeting

OCTOBER 14-19, 2008 - Nashville, Tennessee.

# Classic Franciscans

## Golden Faith and Marriage

By Julia Pearson, SFO



Odilon Redon

*"We manage by prayer . . ."*

The year 1958, was a priceless one for Jerry O'Loughlin and his beautiful bride, Iolanda. Shared faith, celebrated and strengthened through daily Mass and the rosary, has always been part of their relationship. They met through Our Ladies of the Angels Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. On April 12, they were joined in holy marriage in Holy Ghost Church in Portsmouth, with Father Tarenti officiating. Iolanda's profession to the SFO was in June, 1958 and Jerry's profession was in December, 1958. Another blessed memory will be their 50th wedding anniversary, acknowledged during Sunday mass. Their bishop was celebrating and brought the holy Eucharist to them."

Within eight years, six children were born to the couple: Marie, Peter, John, Susan, Thomas and Stephen. Jerry worked for the Newport Electric Company, now the National Grid Company, as a drafts-man and fieldsman. Iolanda worked a number of years as a pharmacist with the Newport Hospital, but always the children were her first "job." She can say with a laugh that all mothers are working mothers.

The years have indeed been filled with golden moments - daily mass, taking communion to the hospital to ill

parishioners, enjoying and loving each other and the four grandchildren in their family: Alexandra, Corinne, Julie, and Emily. A great grand-daughter, Avery, has a precious place on the O'Loughlin family tree.

Iolanda, now 79 years old, and Jerry, 84 years old, live in a complex about twenty minutes from Portsmouth. Jerry's health has been riddled with complications since a fall seven years ago. Neither Jerry or Iolanda drives now, so a son takes them to doctor's appointments and to Mass at St. Anthony's Church on Sunday mornings, stopping for small errands on the way home.

Prayer, family, and loved friends are the center of their days. Their parish priest, Father Daniel Gray, has meaningful homilies and is greatly appreciated by the O'Loughlins. Iolanda's sister and niece visit every month. Children and grandchildren gather together for holidays and summer cookouts. Iolanda reflects on the specialness and comfort of the regularity in their lives. But she does miss driving.

Iolanda says the prayer of St. Francis is a good way to start the day. At 8 AM every morning Jerry and Iolanda "attend" daily Mass on station EWTN, the Catholic TV station. Jerry enjoys the company of books, many of them with religious themes. Iolanda loves to cook. Together they try to say the rosary every day, and Jerry feels that the Chaplet of Divine Mercy is also an important part of their daily devotions.

Iolanda sums up: "Life is good, and I'm grateful for patience to do the ordinary things day by day."



Iolanda and Jerry O'Loughlin, SFO

## "DARKNESS AND LIGHT ARE THE SAME"

### A Spiritual Experience

By Bruce Snowden, SFO

In his book, "Open Mind Open Heart," on Centering Prayer, Fr. Thomas Keating's translation of lines from the Latin hymn, "Vene Sancte Spiritus" Speaks to me about my spiritual life - "*Like a giant furnace blast, You dry up all my faculties*" and "*You cast us before You like dead leaves in winter's gale.*"



Van Gogh

Yes, the spiritual life is like a giant furnace blast, drying up all my faculties which become like dead leaves in winter's gale! There is no lasting, consoling, attraction to spirituality which seems like a fleeting process of seeking ever, finding never! Yet, Good Jesus, somehow You keep me going ever conscious of Your final Coming - yes, Lord, You keep me *coming and going*, producing a kind of spiritual vertigo! Fortunately, I am ever mindful of the words of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta "*Jesus isn't concerned with success, only with effort!*" And in this there is some dark consolation, as "my sins are ever before me." How true Scripture's words "*For You darkness and light are the same.*" There you are found! Even in darkness You are there! (Ps 138)

Good Jesus, allow me to further express my yearnings for, yet distaste of, all things spiritual. For me, the spiritual life is like a walk in an arid desert, where an occasional oasis appears, only to be discovered as a mirage, but where, thankfully, in the darkness of disappointment You send some relief, as when the sun sets, cooling the hot sands. For in Your kindness, Lord, You lead me to a cactus flower, where for a moment I admire Your face in its beauty and, in that moment of favor, feel revived to continue the journey to the stars, to where You call all Your children to dwell! But I cannot get too close to You, Lord Jesus, to the "Cactus Flower" which You are, because the thorny surface of the cactus repels me! And this is the way it always seems - come close, but not too close, seek familiarity, yet seemingly held afar! Why Jesus? Why do You seem so distant from me, yet, I know, so very, very close? What a mystery!

In conclusion, dear Jesus, as You know, through it all, I try to do what you told Faustina, "*Tell aching humanity*

*to snuggle close to My merciful heart!*" And "*snuggle*" I try to do, as children and lovers try to do, for I am a child and a lover. And in that "*snuggle*" for sure, somehow, I expect victory! Thus the words of Your great servant, Ignatius of Loyola, sustain me, "*Take Lord and receive my liberty, my memory, my understanding, my entire will ...Your love and Your grace are enough for me.*"

+++

## Let It Be

By Jay de la Cruz, SFO

When the Beatles were at the height of their fame and fortune, there seemed to be a gnawing emptiness inside them, a longing for something else besides what their worldly possessions offered them that was difficult to grasp. It was at this time that one of them was inspired to write and compose the song - "Let It Be." The lyrics are, "When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me speaking words of wisdom, "let it be." And in my hour of darkness, she is standing right in front of me speaking words of Wisdom, "*Let it be.*"

How does Mother Mary speak to us? Her Annunciation gives us a profound lesson on abandoning oneself to the will of God. If we are to find contentment and fulfillment in this world, we must heed this even though we may not know exactly what He wants from us. Thomas Merton wrote in Thoughts in Solitude, "I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so... I will fear not, for you are ever with me and you will never leave me to face my perils alone." By predisposing ourselves to His will, beautiful and good things will be its fruit.

Mother Mary is asking us to trust in the Lord, as enunciated by Thomas Merton above. In the inspired moments of your life when the Holy Spirit is speaking to you words of wisdom, listen attentively and do what He tells you. It is only in doing that we can get affirmation of His will. You may hear the cry of the unborn or feel the pain of the lonely. You may hear the despairing shout of marginalized people seeking help for survival or the anguished voices of those hungry and homeless. This is the time to "Do whatever He tells you to do."

Traveling that road from Annunciation to the foot of the Cross was an experience of peril, happiness, pain, glory, sadness and abundant joy all mixed-up like Mother Mary's life. She was equipped by the Lord to undergo this turmoil and we will be too. So, *let it be* and ask for her intercession, courage, and will. Amen.

## "A Celebration of Franciscan History"



*Mass at Blanco Canyon, May 12, 2008*

By Chrystal Holley, SFO, and Dr. Larry Holley, SFO

My husband and I recently attended a much-anticipated rendezvous close to five hundred years in the making. Surrounded by beef cattle and mesquite trees, in a broad expanse of canyon land, bordered by a small tree-lined stream and accented by potholes, cactus, and cow patties, we gathered with a group of some forty Catholics from the Diocese of Lubbock, Texas, around a portable altar on private ranch land. We were keenly aware that we stood on the same ground that had felt the imprint of Conquistador boots and Indian sandals at another Mass there five centuries before. To be exact, four hundred and sixty-six springs had passed since Fray Juan de Padilla, OFM, celebrated Mass in Blanco Canyon, one of Captain-General Francisco Vasquez de Coronado's two main Texas campsites during the expedition of 1540-41. Now, on May 12, 2008, the Most Reverend Placido Rodriguez, CMF, bishop of the Diocese of Lubbock, and a representative sampling of his flock, had gathered at the same spot to celebrate the Liturgy of the Mass just as Coronado's Franciscan chaplain did: the same liturgy, in the same language – Latin -- and even with a similar Spanish accent, because Bishop Rodriguez was born in Mexico. And my husband and I were blessed to be the Secular Franciscans invited to attend.

What brought about this celebration in Blanco Canyon near Floydada, Texas? It was because of a find by Jimmy Owens in 1990, of a chain mail gauntlet. Anthropologist Dr. Donald Blakeslee and his students, from Wichita State University in Kansas, explored and excavated the area, establishing beyond reasonable doubt that Coronado and his expedition did indeed call Blanco Canyon home for a time in 1541. Dr. Blakeslee has

even been able to point out the probable position of Fray Juan de Padilla's altar. As Bishop Placido explained, the Franciscan presence on the expedition was instrumental in bringing Christ to this part of the world. Fray Padilla, who would be martyred in three years, and three other Franciscan friars were responsible for the spiritual welfare of the three hundred soldiers and twelve hundred Tlaxcalteca Indians from the interior of Mexico, all baptized Catholic Christians, who were also on the expedition.

Now here Larry and I stood, united with our brothers and sisters in Christ across time and space, united by the same faith, the same belief, the same Eucharist, and the same Jesus - our Hope. We became profoundly aware of our responsibility to carry on this mission of sharing the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ with a world in great need. Our God is indeed an awesome God!

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## "Deep Gratefulness"

By Robert J. Wicks

"Taking ourselves lightly allows us to recognize when we commit the mistake of entitlement. If we feel that life owes us more, we paradoxically wind up depriving life, ourselves and those whom we are called to guide (children, employees, students...). We fail to experience the spontaneous joy of reaping the benefits of what is already given to us. We live in a world filled with such very needy and demanding people. Such people, when faced with munificence, ignore it in order to inspect the overall situation to make sure they are getting what they feel they deserve. The following popular story illustrates the type of person about whom I am speaking.

A man would come in each day to a restaurant that served a small loaf of bread with its meals. Shortly after sitting down, he would ask for more bread to be served with his meal. After a few days of this, the waitress got tired of running back and forth, so she put two loaves of bread in front of him. Much to her surprise, he still finished them in record time and asked for more. She then gave him two baskets with four loaves when he came in next time – only to have him eventually demand more bread. Finally, she'd had it with him, so she talked to the baker prior to his next visit. The baker made a large loaf of bread four feet by two feet in diameter. She thought to herself, "This will shut him up!"

When he came in and was seated, she went back to the kitchen for the bread. Struggling as she carried it to the table, but still smirking all the while she did it, she dropped it on the table in front of him. He looked at it, paused, looked up and said in a whiny voice, "Oh, so we're back to one piece of bread again, eh?" [Living a Gentle, Passionate Life](#) by Robert J. Wicks, Paulist Press, NY/Mahwah, New Jersey

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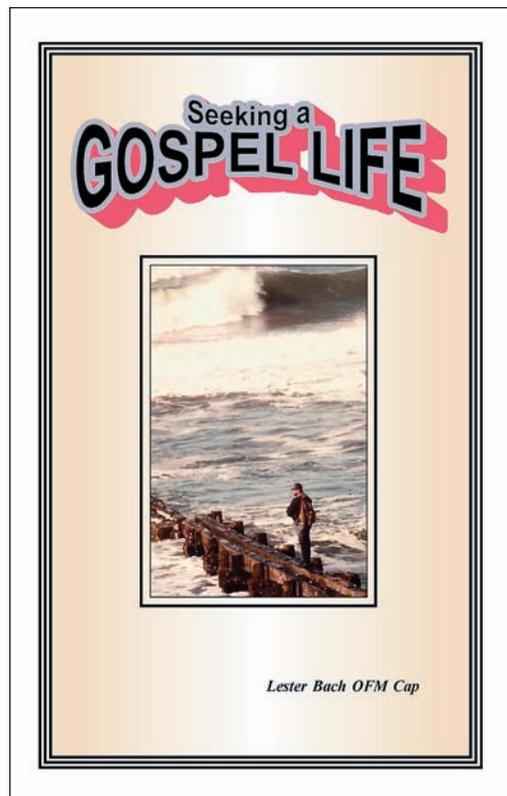
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