

LEADERS BRING SPECIAL MESSAGES

3 simple prayers open Quinquennial

the 18th



Deacon Tom Bello

CHICAGO -- National Minister Tom Bello, General Minister Encarnita del Pozo and Chicago Auxiliary Bishop George J. Rassas all had special messages for some 600 Franciscans participating in the opening of the 18th Quinquennial Congress here July 3.

Deacon Bello said he had three simple prayers for the group. "My first prayer is that everybody knows we are family. There are no strangers here. We're all brothers and sisters." The audience erupted into wild applause.

continued on next page

By BOB & MARY STRONACH, OFS

Some 600 Franciscan family members came together for the 18th Quinquennial Congress, July 3 - 7, 2012 at the Holiday Inn Skokie on the north side of Chicago.



Encarnación del Pozo, OFS
General minister

continued from previous page

His second prayer was to “think of yourself as the largest manifestation of the national fraternity,” and as such, to ponder “what it means to be a Secular Franciscan in the United States in 2012,” and “where do we go from here, what is our future?”

His third prayer was to remember that “we are all brothers and sisters of penance,” which to him reflects a turning away from sin and a turning toward God. “Let us be Spirit-filled... Let this be daily on-going conversion.”

THE GENERAL MINISTER, who flew in from Spain and was introduced



Bishop George J. Rassas
Chicago auxiliary bishop

to a rousing standing ovation, said she was struck by the theme of the Quinquennial, “Why Francis? Claim the Gift.” It hit her as an “insistent call” for a “supernatural gift,” to ask for it over and over again. It’s not unlike the way Francis responded “to the supernatural love God gave to him.” Noting that the congress would be a journey for herself as well as everyone else, she prayed that “we all perceive in ourselves the gift God is offering us.”

BISHOP RASSAS celebrated the opening liturgy, noting it was the feast of St. Thomas the Apostle. Thomas was the epitome of the saying, “seeing is be-

lieving,” doubting the risen Christ really had visited his fellow apostles. But his later profession of faith, “my Lord and my God,” turned the saying around to “believing is seeing.”

Believing is seeing the presence of Christ in the world, he said.

St. Clare, he noted, took it a step further by encouraging followers to gaze on the image of Christ, consider the image of Christ, contemplate the image of Christ, and then take action and imitate Christ.

Likewise, the bishop encouraged the Franciscans to take action and “extend the compassion of Jesus to others, especially the most vulnerable.”



The opening session was filled with nearly 600 Secular Franciscans, and First, Second and Third Order religious.



Sr. Ilia Delio, OSF

Keynote speaker, Franciscan sister, author of ten books, and senior fellow at Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University, where she concentrates in the area of science and religion. She holds a doctorate in pharmacology from New Jersey Medical School/Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and a doctorate in historical theology from Fordham University.

DAY 2

Francis gets to heart of matter, keynote speaker notes

Franciscan theologian Sr. Ilia Delio, OSF, reminded attendees at the 18th Quinquennial Congress that St. Francis of Assisi had wanted to be a famous knight until he smashed into the reality of battle, ending up as a prisoner of war and ill. But it's often when times are tough that God speaks to us, she noted, and touches our heart.

"The key to Francis... is not the mind, but the heart," said Sister Ilia, whose two keynote talks highlighted day 2 of the "Q". The morning presentation addressed the conference theme, "Why Francis? Claim the Gift." The afternoon talk zeroed in on a Franciscan view of God.

After each presentation, attendees broke into small groups, or "fraternities," to reflect on and discuss a series of questions related to Sister Ilia's topics.

Francis demonstrates, she said, that "the way to search for God begins within... begins with the heart."

Reflecting back on what the Lord meant when he told Francis to "go and repair my house, which has fallen into ruin," "we realize 'go repair my house'

starts with an inner house," she said.

By going within himself and experiencing an on-going conversion, Francis couldn't help but go out and impact the church and world around him.

Francis didn't choose an apostolic life, or focus on a mission. He simply chose the whole Gospel and focused on the life of Jesus Christ.

"That's what marks Francis' life," sister said. It was a whole-hearted dedication to the life of Christ, with a focus on joy and hope in the risen Christ.

Contemplating Christ, he saw that the Incarnation, with God coming among us, was an incredible gift of love. "Francis understood this... and he lived in that thankfulness of the gift." Sister Ilia imagined Francis getting up in the morning and saying "thank you," recognizing "everything is gift."

Because of Francis, Franciscans carry "fundamental values that we can offer the world today."

One is the spirit of poverty. Not poverty from material things. But a realization that, as Christ showed, we are dependent on one another and that all



Attendees broke into small discussion groups after each talk, affording the opportunity to bond as a "local fraternity" while exploring the meaning of their Franciscan vocation in the context of messages brought by the keynote and plenary speakers.



of creation is good. Francis grasped, she said, that the world is not poor. Rather, it is rich in God's goodness.

Francis would say goodness is in the heart of the world -- the treasure hidden within. Franciscans aren't about bringing good where it is not, but about discerning the good already there.

Francis shows that "what fills us inwardly must express itself outwardly," and it requires on-going conversion. "It's not what we pray," she said, "but how we experience the presence of God through Christ."

The interior journey, the on-going conversion, leads to becoming an "authentic human person" and a change that can't help but express itself. Franciscan life is not a life of work, she noted.

"It's a life of example, of how we live as brothers and sisters."

It's a life-long process of shifting from self-centeredness towards God-centeredness, and it "let's us be open to grace."

Another way of looking at it: "Conversion is a coming home to oneself... to realize that the God of the universe is the God of my heart." Conversion is also realizing that "the God in you is the God in me."

Another aspect of poverty is letting go of the need to control and of being possessive. "Possessive power makes true communication between persons and with creation impossible," sister noted. In addition, without letting go, "there is

no room within us to receive God."

A second fundamental value Franciscans offer the world is humility. In fact, sister describes poverty and humility as sisters. "Humility recognizes the earthly limits of our humanity" -- especially in the face of a God whose love inexorably gushes forth.

God's incredible act of humility through the crucified Christ and the Holy Eucharist allowed Francis to be taken up into the goodness of God and begin to develop a new relationship with nature, with creation... to begin to see Brother Cricket and Sister Star. "Everything in creation 'spoke' to Francis of God."

Yet another aspect of poverty is prayer and contemplation. "Without poverty,



TOP, ABOVE, OPPOSITE PAGE: Smiles were contagious. RIGHT: National Secretary Jan Parker and National Minister Tom Bello presented a gift and offered words of appreciation to Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM, (center) who is stepping down as a national spiritual assistant.



true prayer is hard to nourish,” she said.

Prayer and solitude were an essential part of Francis’ life, as the saint contemplated the “living Word of God,” which led to him “going out into the marketplace” with the fruits of that prayer. “Contemplation really begins with ourselves” -- accepting oneself in the inner journey towards God. With Franciscans called to be active contemplatives, “contemplation is not a way of prayer, it’s a style of life.”

In fact, she said, “the whole of Francis’ life is outward moving.” And it’s a combination of inner and outward love. “There is not true love of God and neighbor without the love of self.”

Sister Ilia added: “We live in a culture that is dying, is dying for identity as a

human person. This is what we have.”

The audience erupted into applause.

So what is an Evangelical person to do? The first thing is pray and be a living witness. And remember, “whatever happens in our life, God is there.”

In other words, “we are called to celebrate the gift of God’s goodness” and “bear witness to the Gospel.”

IN THE AFTERNOON session, Sister Ilia went on to elaborate on the concept that God is love, that the Son expresses the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is the bond of love of the Trinity. The Father is the ultimate source of goodness. “We’re talking about a fountain of gushing goodness.” Like Niagara Falls, only infinitely greater.

“Love is what God is.” And “one of the greatest contributions of Franciscans to the 21st century” is that we “understand love as the deepest form of knowledge.”

In spite of the fact that “God is ineffable, beyond what we could grasp,” God bends down in love “to embrace this tiny fragile creation.” God is so outward-moving in love, He doesn’t leave anyone out of the picture.

This leads to two different schools of thought about why Jesus came. One tradition is that because mankind sinned, Christ came to provide salvation. The Franciscan view is that Christ would have come whether mankind had sinned or not -- an inevitable result of the goodness and love of God expressing itself in Christ.



DAY 3

Theologians point to human dignity, prayer

The third day of the Quinquennial Congress featured two Franciscan theologians.

Sr. Ilia Delio, OSF, led off with her third and final talk, addressing the Franciscan understanding of the human person; that is, seeing the human person as sacrament.

Then, following Mass celebrated by Fr. Stephen Gross, OFM Conv. and a lunch break, Secular Franciscan Ed Shirley, OFS, who taught theology at St. Edward's University, addressed the topic, *"Deepening Our Relationship with God."*

In the evening, musician/composer Friar Robert Hutmacher, OFM, performed a concert on the harp and piano.

THE FRANCISCAN tradition is really a heritage of human personhood, Sister Ilia said. Francis of Assisi becomes a model for recognizing human dignity. As his relationship with God deepened, Francis started gaining a new vision of everything around him. On the road one day he came upon a leper, and on impulse he embraced and kissed him. What once filled him with fear he now saw as a person who bore the image of Christ.

He recounted, "what was bitter, tasted

sweet," because he met the goodness of God in the human person. He realized humanity is good and loved by God because it bears the divine image. In the person, God is alive.

Sister imagined Francis stepping back and saying, "WOW! God is among us!"

And this experience of God means we are in relationship with others, even with all of creation. "When we unite, God becomes alive in us," she said. Like Jesus says in the Gospel, "when two or more are gathered in my name, I am with you."

In today's culture, she noted, we've lost sight of human personhood. But Franciscans have the solution. As Franciscan thinker John Duns Scotus put it: God creates us in a way that He's uniquely present in everything. Each person, each creature is unique to God.

"Everything has a unique being-ness to it," sister said. It's a "this-ness" that's irrepeatable.

"Each and every thing, no matter how

small or seemingly insignificant, is of infinite value because it images God in its own unique being."

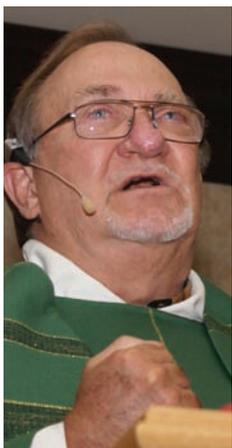
And people of faith like Francis recognize this with "a penetrating vision that gets to the truth of reality" -- unlike today's culture where "we see but we don't see, we hear but we don't hear." Modern culture "has deadened our eyes and ears to all of this."

The Franciscan understanding of the sacredness of life takes it a step further. "To love authentically is to accept other humans and all creatures on their own terms." And to give them time. "We in our culture don't have time for one another," she said, nor for creation. She showed images of homeless people, noting that society treats them as disposable.

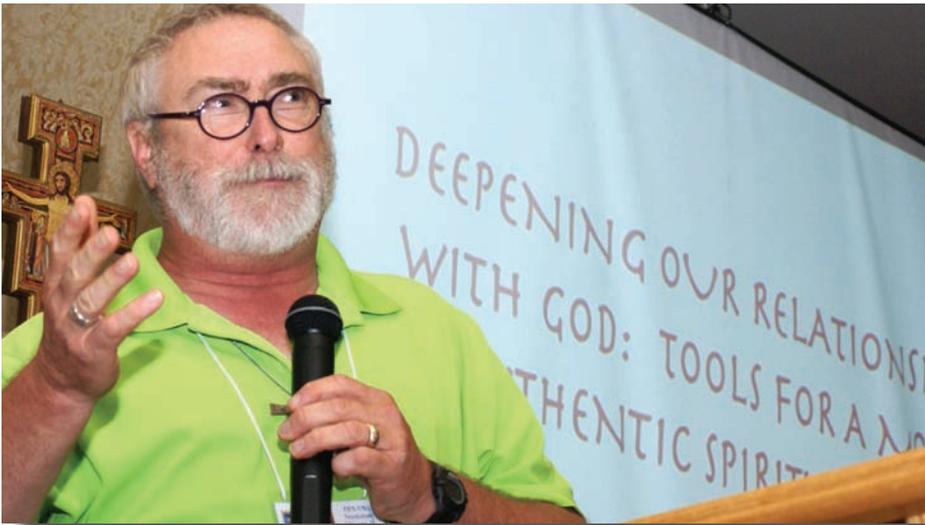
"Francis had time."



Sister Ilia Delio with Vice General Minister Doug Clorey and International Councilor Anne Mulqueen.



LEFT: Fr. Stephen Gross, OFM Conv. CENTER & RIGHT: Small group "local fraternities," where even small children were at home.



Ed Shirley, OFS

Plenary speaker and theology professor at St. Edward's University in Austin. The order suffered a loss when Ed died unexpectedly Aug. 15 while recovering from shoulder surgery.

The Evangelical life is a relational life, she said, and added: Francis came alive in the reality of God's gift. Do we see each other as gift?

"We are called to be among people... and discover the presence of God in every person." And that comes with bearing witness to the Christian life, not engaging in quarrels and disputes (even though we differ), and not controlling others, but, for God's sake, entering into dialogue, offering respect, listening and learning.

To accomplish all this, we need to "let go" (spirit of poverty), have inner space for God, and compassion.

Of course, it's not easy. Francis himself struggled. Sister Ilia imagined the saint saying to himself, "I'm running off to the mountain and never coming back. These guys are nuts."

But he always came back, moving outwardly because of what filled him inwardly.

"Francis did not so much pray as he became a living prayer."

With Francis as a model, and with ongoing conversion, "we need to reclaim that every person is an icon uniquely written by God."

ED SHIRLEY'S afternoon talk zeroed

in on the transforming power of prayer, with some theology tossed in, such as Bonaventure's look at the Trinity.

He began the session by referring to Sister Ilia and saying he would throw down the gauntlet were she present. "Sure, she had a great presentation, but can she do that and play the harmonica, too?" He whipped out the instrument to a roar of laughter and then began playing "Ode to Joy."

He noted that a Franciscan view of the Trinity (with the Father as the source, the Son expressing the Father, and the Holy Spirit as the love uniting them) sees a dynamic, inter-penetrating relationship that wends its way through and is imprinted on all of creation. It's a realization that led Francis to declare the sun as his brother and the moon, his sister.

Ed Shirley "danced" around a "fancy word" -- Perichoresis -- which refers to the indwelling and inter-penetrating relationship between the Father and the Son. He called it the divine do-si-do of the Father and the Son, with the Spirit being the Dance.

Like the Trinity, there are three phases of Franciscan life, all mentioned in the Rule, that have a dynamic relationship, a

flowing back and forth, he said. They are prayer and contemplation, transformation of consciousness/vision, and apostolic action. Prayer leads to transformation, where we begin to see the world as pregnant with Christ, which leads to apostolic action and in turn leads more deeply into a transforming vision. And seeing the world "shining with the Trinity and incarnating Christ, we are struck with awe and wonder." This, in turn, leads to deeper prayer.

This deepening prayer and grander vision should lead us to be "transforming lives, just as certainly as bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ."

It's a little like the attitude and vision of three stone carvers. When each was asked what he was doing, one said 'carving a stone'. The second said he was putting food on the table, and the third said he was building a grand cathedral. What is the difference? Their vision, their mindfulness.



Friar Robert Hutmacher, a Chicago-based composer and musician, capped the day with performances on the piano and harp.

DAY 4



Plenary speaker Br. Bill Short, OFM, poses for picture with Quinquennial Co-chair Patrick Mendes, OFS.

Order's history chaotic while showing vitality

"We're so diverse...and beautiful."

That was one of Br. Bill Short's opening comments about the Franciscan Family. The theology professor tried to put the Secular Franciscan Order, originally called Third Order, in the context of the family's history, which, he noted, one historian referred to as chaotic, but nonetheless showing vitality because it has flourished for 800 years.

"If we were doing the history of the

Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), this would be quick and clear," Brother Bill quipped to peels of laughter.

Despite tensions among branches in the early years, and later oppression and suppression by secular states in Europe in later centuries, the Franciscan movement is a model of inclusivity. And it's all based on a far-reaching innovation that Francis and Clare introduced to society and the church -- to live the Gospel of

Jesus Christ. It's an indelible mark on all the branches and orders -- the first, the second, the third orders.

The Third Order history is replete with a combination of religious, secular and something-in-between; and the secular and something-in-between had profound impact on society through their front-line apostolic works (especially among the poor and sick). Seculars (known as brothers and sisters of penance) tried to live the Gospel while living at home with their families and going to work. Some, especially women, tried living in lay communities, and were independent, which brought suspicion because they were not under male authority, so many adopted the Third Order Rule to stave off persecution.

Brother Bill, an OFM Franciscan who has taught at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, CA, since 1983, pointed to major examples of women lay communities that eventually evolved into religious communities still in existence today. They took their inspiration from Francis and Clare and saintly Third Order members like St. Elizabeth of Hungary. Male religious communities rose similarly. A major player was what was to become known as the Third Order Regular (TOR) friars.

The Third Order tertiaries (which today comprise the Secular Franciscan Order) went through periods of growth and decline over the centuries. The Great Plague decimated fraternities, whose members were usually in the forefront of caring for the sick and burying the dead. Later, several popes encouraged the spread of the Third Order, thinking it would help revitalize the church. While membership swelled, formation wasn't always what it should have been, Brother Bill pointed out.

Despite its seemingly fractured structure, the Franciscan Family has strength in its diversity, inclusiveness, and in a common charge to live the "holy Gospel of Jesus Christ" in the footsteps of St. Francis.



The morning sessions ended with mass celebrated by Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap., after which General Spiritual Assistant Amando Trujillo-Cano, TOR, presented a gift to Father Lester. Then, Father Amando performed one of his original songs with General Vice Minister Doug Clorey.



Pat Brandwein-Ball, OFS
Plenary speaker and former national councilor.

Just start the journey, speaker challenges

Pat Brandwein-Ball, OFS, took a moment to survey the hall from the podium and said:

“From up here the room is aglow because I see in your eyes the light of God.”

Then she reminded attendees that “God wants us” to be holy, which the first part of the Secular Franciscan Rule addresses.

“The second part of the Rule talks to us about our presence in the world,” which comes out of living the first part of the Rule.

The Rule and Constitutions are important documents in the life of the Order. Reading and studying them, and absorbing them internally help shape the Secular Franciscan identity.

“Franciscanism is not something you can put on and take off...” she said. “It’s something you live and breath.”

How do we get to that point?

“We’re called to be saints, after all. It’s in that call we need to take a look at ourselves. What do we need to change within ourselves? Where is God calling us in our lives?”

She added: “Jesus came to make things anew. Let us not stand in the way of him making us new... of making the order new.”

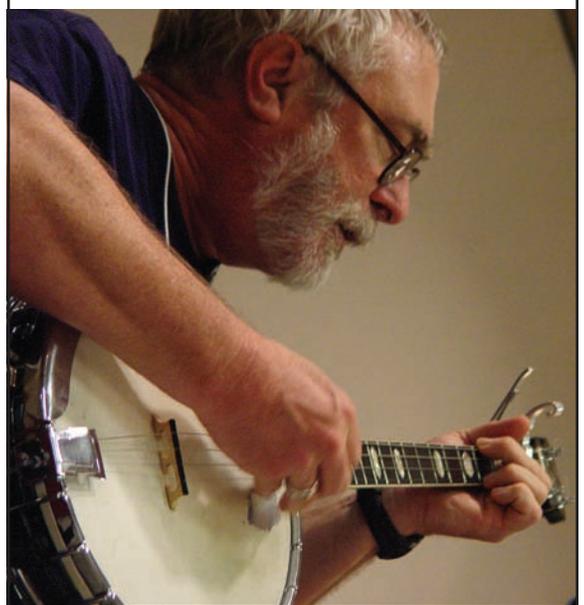
Pointing to the second part of the conference theme, “Claim the Gift,” she said “it refers to our vocation” and claiming it is part of answering the question of where God is calling us to be.

She concluded by offering a challenge to “start the journey.” Quoting from the book, *Pathways to Re-creating*, she advised that mission statements and waiting for everyone to get on board are not enough. Just start the journey.

You can expect failure and ups and down. But just start the journey, and get up and start it again.



Ed Shirley, OFS, was part of the evening’s entertainment, strumming the banjo for a rousing sing-along.





Anne Mulqueen, OFS
International councilor



Clare McCluggage Reidy, OFS
Quinquennial co-chair



Encarnación del Pozo, OFS
General minister

DAY 5

'Be Christ in the world' is a key message

"Secular Franciscans are Christ in the world."

And "just do it".

That was how Quinquennial co-chair Clare McCluggage Reidy, OFS, summed up the messages of some of the presenters at the 18th "Q".

International Councilor Anne Mulqueen spoke those words on behalf of Clare, who was ill, during the morning session on Saturday, July 7, the final full day of the conference.

She charged attendees to do some quiet prayer and reflection and then meet in small "fraternities" to address such thought-provoking questions as "what are we called to be as Secular Franciscans" and "what would the order look like if we were doing everything right."

But before Anne discharged them to their assignment, General Minister Encarnita del Pozo took to the podium to say goodbye and offer a few thoughts of her own.

"I'm thankful for sharing these five days of my life with you," she said... "You, my brothers and sisters, are the reason for my service...I have experi-

enced very strong moments" at the Q.

She noted: "Christ gave Francis a mission to rebuild the church. In today's world the church is also falling apart." In our secular state of life, "we are called to repair, to rebuild...in everything we do." For example, "we rebuild the church when we accompany those in pain and suffering... we rebuild the church when we listen to our brothers and sisters."

She was greeted by applause when she mentioned that "you have (Secular Franciscan) brothers and sisters in 113 countries," and reminded everyone:

"His love for us should turn into love for Him, and for one another."

"Who are we?" she asked. "We are for God. We are for church. We are for society. We are for one another..."

"We are to live the Gospel in FRATER-NI-TY," she emphasized, sparking rousing applause.

Then she sang a short Spanish ballad in which she said "goodbye with her heart, but not with her soul," which is now with U.S. Secular Franciscans.

She left the stage to a standing ovation.



The assembly prays for Clare before she was taken to the hospital.

'Be who we are in all we do,' leader sums up

Calling it "a Trinity of Scary Basics," National Minister Deacon Tom Bello summed up what he saw as key themes coming out of the small group discussions at the 18th Quinquennial Congress.

He saw an initial overarching three-part theme of a life-long commitment to the Trinity, a life-long commitment to fraternity, and a life-long commitment to sanctification of the self.

And that comes with one primary goal: Salvation within and through the fraternity with the help of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

He cited three practical implications: Keep our charism alive, keep our fraternities alive, and keep ourselves alive (on-going formation and self-improvement). Those are accomplished through prayer, priority and commitment.

Regarding the specific ideas coming out of the discussions, he pointed to three basic concepts:

1. **Rebuilding and building bridges** (in fraternity, church, world) and better communication.
2. **Better formation** at all levels.
3. **Be who we are in all we do.** "Be better children of the Gospel, making Christ ever-present in the world."

AFTER HIS presentation, Tom gave out several prizes, including recognizing the longest professed member in attendance -- Mary Ceil McManus, who found herself facing cheers and a standing ovation for being professed 67 years.

Professed on July 1, 1945, Mary Ceil turned 91 on July 10. She is a member of St. Anthony Fraternity in Oaklawn, Illinois.



National Minister Deacon Tom Bello, OFS



Mary Ceil McManus, OFS, 91

A standing ovation for being longest-professed in the room.

QUINQUENNIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Secular Franciscan Order in the United States sponsors a Quinquennial Congress every five years to bring together the Franciscan family from all over the U.S. and even other countries.

The 2012 "Q" Planning Committee was headed by Co-Chairs **Clare McCluggage Reidy**, OFS, a former national councilor, and **Patrick Mendes**, OFS, former national minister.

Other members:

- Tom Bello, OFS, national minister.
- Fr. Larry Dreffein, OFM, spiritual assistant.
- Cyl Maljan, OFS.
- Barb Morgan, OFS.
- Sarah Mulholland, OFS.
- Anne Mulqueen, OFS, international councilor.
- Michael Reidy, OFS.
- Dennis Ross, OFS, national treasurer.

QUINQUENNIAL CANDIDS



It seemed as though everyone wanted a photo op with the general minister, who was only happy to oblige.



TOP: The closing liturgy featured a graceful, liturgical dance by Donna Hollis, OFS. BELOW: Quinquennial logo, designed by Lisa Landwehr, OFS, of St. Cloud Fraternity in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

National Minister Tom Bello welcomes YouFra attendee from Siena College.



ECUMENICAL FRANCISCANS: Rev. Joan Verret, TSSF, representing the Anglican Third Order Society of St. Francis, and Craig Robert Miller, OEF, minister general of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans.

Experience the Q on DVD: FranciscanVideos.com