



The Joy of Francis

Together for the Gospel!

Summer/Fall, 2008 - Vol. 15, No. 3

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Newsletter Editor

Ted Hewitt, SFO

Associate Editor

William Mussatto SFO

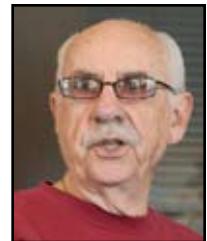


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To my Franciscan Family:

Quo Vadis (Where are you going)?

by Rock DeSpain, Regional Minister



In February of this year, Fr. Steve Gross, OFM Conv., our Regional Spiritual Assistant, Sylvia Paoli, SFO, our Regional Vice Minister, and I flew up to Oakland in Sylvia's plane to discuss the future of the OFM Friars in St. Barbara Province with Fr. Melvin Jurisich, OFM, the Provincial Minister of St. Barbara Province. The OFM was our biggest concern of the three Friar Provinces because most of the fraternities in St. Francis Region are bonded

to the OFM. Fr. Melvin was very open and candid about the OFM and the assistance they could give to St. Francis Region. Needless to say, it was not much. Most of us are aware of the situation with all the Friar Provinces, there is an ever diminishing number of Friars to do their work. Most of the Friars are already overworked with so many things to do, and there are no Friars

Quo Vadis?, continued page 6



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SFO Leadership Conference

Sylvia Paoli, SFO

On June 26 - 29, 2008, a seminar was held at St. Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania, on *Development of Lay Leadership in the Secular Franciscan Order*. The leaders were Fr. Bernard Tickerhoof, T.O.R. and Anne Mulqueen, International Councilor and past national formation director. The campus of St. Francis University was a beautiful setting for the seminar, with classrooms complete with internet access, outlets for computers, and all the most modern video and computer technical equipment. Attending from St. Francis Region were Bill and Judith Mussatto, Bob Herbelin, and Sylvia Paoli. Attendees were from 17 of the 30 regions in the U.S., with all parts of the country represented.



Fr. Kevin Queally, T.O.R., coordinator

The conferences given over the four day period included conferences on: Discernment of Gifts, Basic Choices, Servant Leadership, Listening with Compassion and Empathy,

Leadership Styles, Decision Making, Crisis & Conflict, and Leadership Development & Training. Each day began with Morning Prayer, with the Eucharist celebrated in the afternoon, and Evening Prayer, followed by a social time. Fr. Kevin Queally, T.O.R., coordinated the event. Hoping to attract 50 people to the seminar, he was overjoyed that 72 attended, and plans have already been made for another seminar at the end of June, 2009, in the same location.

The first conference was on discernment. The fact that both the national formation workshop and the leadership conference put so much emphasis on discernment spoke volumes. It is an aspect of our life that is too often neglected once we are professed. The very first requirement to be a servant leader is an honest self-assessment.

We are all composed of four parts:

- 1) an open area which we are willing to reveal to others;
- 2) a blind spot, where others see parts of us that we don't see ourselves;



Anne Mulqueen, SFO, International Councilor and past national formation director

- 3) the private part of our life known only to ourselves; and
- 4) the hidden part of us, known only to God.

Every Christian is empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a disciple. Every disciple receives empowerment to exercise gifts. Leadership in the Christian community arises from discipleship and is the result of the fruitful exercise of the gifts with which each person has been provided.

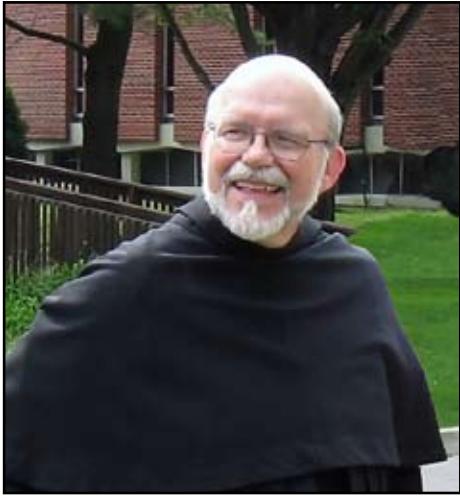
Connecting with God is the most important aspect of being a servant leader. We must pray from the heart; give our head a rest; don't try to figure



Group Photograph from the Development of Lay Leadership in the Secular Franciscan Order, St. Francis University, Loretto, Pennsylvania.



out our gifts; just get into the presence of God, who chooses ordinary people and makes them holy through prayer. We're all ordinary, and we all have a God-given mission and gift. To connect with God, we have to learn to love silence. In silence we will hear God and in silence our love relationship will grow.



Fr. Bernard Tickerhoof, T.O.R.

Don't be tempted to make excuses when God calls us to serve. We have to discern the gifts we DON'T have as well as the ones we do have. There is one prayer that is always answered: "Thy will be done." That brings to the forefront obedience, which has mostly to do with listening, rather than speaking, and sorting out what we hear. The deeper we listen, the freer we become. Ultimately, God is the teacher and God is the leader.

Even with much content on leadership styles & methods of communication, the theme overlapping all the conferences was the need for prayer, for discernment, for listening, for daily conversion, emphasizing the need for all of us to daily surrender ourselves to God and let the Holy Spirit work within us.



How Much Do I Love Thee, Let me Count the Ways

*The 2008 Memorial Day Malibu SFO Retreat
with Fr. Philip Garcia, OFM*

by Dr. Marta M. Kassai, SFO

The duel of storm clouds and sunshine that continued through the weekend painted the perfect background for the message of the saint of excesses, our Holy Father, Francis. "How much do I love thee, let me count the ways." – asked Fr. Philip Garcia, OFM, over and over of us, as he led us in reflection on the abundant love God has for each of us. God is a God of excesses he told us. In the parable of the prodigal son, the Father, who represents God, appears to the older brother as a prodigal Father who wastes his love on his no good son. He is excessive in pouring out his love on his son who returns to him only because he is starving and knows which side his bread is buttered on. The Father puts the finest robe on him, a ring on his finger, sandals on his feet, and kills the fatted cow. Francis is a saint of excesses because he imitates the God of excesses.

We need to be dreamers Fr. Anthony De Mello, a Jesuit, tells us, said Fr. Phil. A dream is an unopened letter from God. God speaks to the soul

that's uninhibited. Francis dreams of becoming a victorious knight. He finds himself in the Hall of the Great King filled with the finest weaponry. He interprets this dream as God's promise that he'll become a victorious knight. God knows how to catch Francis' attention. Inspired by this dream, Francis leaves for battle. But God intercepts Francis' plan asking him whom it is better to serve the Lord or the servant.

**Our true home is not
here on earth. We
belong to heaven. The
stars remind us where
we came from — that
we're citizens of heaven.**

When Francis answers the Lord, God responds "then why are you obeying the servant and not the Lord"? Francis turns back as he realizes he misinterpreted his dream. He begins to serve God. He wakes up from the dream and moves to reality. What's important is not to be great in the eyes of the world, but in the eyes of God. After that Francis never stops counting the ways God loves him. It is through the love of God that Francis becomes who he is.

We too must have a dream. Father asked us to share in small group the dreams we had coming to this retreat. For our dream to become reality, we

How Much do I Love, Cont'd page 13



National Formation Workshop

by Sylvia Paoli, SFO

The national formation workshop, put on by Fr. Richard Trezza, O.F.M., from New Jersey, and Teresa Baker, S.F.O, national formation director, in St. Louis, Missouri, May 15 - 18, 2008, was attended by Bob Herbelin and Sylvia Paoli from St. Francis Region. The setting was the Pallottine Retreat Center, a beautiful center just north of St. Louis. Topics included: The Dynamics of RESPECTful Communication, presented by Jan Parker, SFO, Vocations, Discerning Vocations, Stages of Formation, Overview of formation material, Use of the Ritual, Profession, Discerning Profession, and Praxis.

Round tables conducted by the national formation team included Three Components of Formation, Mutual Invitation, the SHAPE of your Fraternity, Assisting Forming and Emerging Fraternities Regarding Formation, and Spiritual Assistance. Morning Prayer was prayed together daily, and there was a Liturgy celebration each afternoon just before dinner. The new national formation director, who will take over from Teresa in October, was introduced. He is Bob Fitzsimmons from the state of Washington. Approximately 30 people attended, from throughout the country. Some of the highlights follow.

It is well to remember, as Franciscans, the words of Pope Paul VI: "Modern man listens



Teresa Baker, S.F.O., National Formation Director

more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." It was again emphasized that as formation leaders, we are not teachers in the usual sense of the word, but rather, we are witnesses, helping to show to others this higher road to perfection in Christ. The two key words involved are "listen" and "witness." A great part of formation takes place in a conversation setting. In our conversations with each other, we are witnesses to the truth. When we listen, we listen with love. When we share love and truth, we are doing what Jesus told us to do. Jesus made sharing the truth our dedication to the Father.

When we share in truth and love, we are sharing the inner life of the Trinity. When we communicate we are drawn into communion. Good communication leads to communion, but that is not to mean

we should all be the same. Diversity is important. John Paul II said: "unity not only embraces diversity, but unity is verified in diversity." In a holy conversation, everyone enters into it wanting to learn, being open, willing to listen, willing to be changed. There's mutual respect. We stay curious about each other. We slow down a bit and think. The goal is to hear everyone's thoughts and experiences, even though it can be ambiguous and messy sometimes. Other virtues, like patience, forgiveness, patience, understanding all come into it.



Fr. Richard Trezza, O.F.M..

Vocation is a design of God for each of us as individuals. The primary goal of a vocation is to live in closer union with God, with full and unlimited openness. The call is a gift. It is not something we deserve and it does not depend on our actions, and we can't pay it back. It comes with the grace to let us fulfill



our mission. The will of God will not take us where the grace of God will not sustain us.

As to our particular vocation, God calls; we are not the ones who choose; we are called to Life - to a life in Christ, to holiness, within a particular state: secular, religious, lay, cleric, the Franciscan "way" of living, with a specific purpose and mission. We have to discern this vocation. . Vocation denotes availability. We are called to "be", not to "do." A good social worker can "do" Franciscan things. We give witness to this life by our very profession. It's a 24/7 task. There are no holidays, but many holy days. We are called to holiness: to be other, to be different, to be set apart by God to do God's will, and to be satisfied to do God's will.

Francis held back nothing; we are to hold back nothing. An apostolic call is to "do" - such as the sisters who nurse and teach, the going out to do good deeds. Ours in an evangelical call - to LIVE the Gospel, to be present to those in the world - our family, our neighbors, friends, and all with whom we come into contact. We have to be still to listen to what we are to do. We have to discern this vocation. One must ALLOW oneself to be confronted by Francis. To KNOW Francis we have to read what Francis wrote, not read about Francis.

Most of the poor formation we observe is due to a lack of discernment, which is either not done at all, or only done once and not repeated. Each of us must

discern constantly as to where in our professed life we are being called. Discernment needs our willingness to accept what God wants. We will always be in second place, subservient to that Will. Discernment loosens the ties that bind us to the pragmatism that's so much a part of our culture. We must believe in a life that is not tangible - the life the Spirit breathes into us. We must believe that Christ is more important to us than anyone or anything else. We must be ready to do what our friends think is madness.

Discernment for the Professed is a matter of what each one is going to do in and for the Order, each day, each month, each year, and we must constantly be discerning God's will for us.

When we profess candidates, we need to not just "dump" them into the fraternity and forget them. Instead, we need to continue to meet with them on a periodic basis, to continue to help them discern where they are headed and what is their part in the Order and, in particular, in their own fraternity. Ongoing discerning, like ongoing formation which it is a part of, is the responsibility of everyone on the council of every fraternity.

The workshop also had break-out sessions where those who were fraternity formation team members spent some time together, and those who worked at the regional level spent time together, discussing the best methods for conducting ongoing formation in each



Sylvia Paoli and Robert Herbelin

situation. Teresa Baker discussed "praxis", which is a method of learning, a way of knowing by engaging in a social situation to bring about change. It involves the whole person - the head, heart and lifestyle. It's a freely chosen ethical activity that must always involve a deliberate choice and is very natural. Specific guidelines for using that method were given, with the end result always being that there will be some change made - in a person or in a situation.

Fr. Richard discussed the use of the Ritual. He reminded us that the only thing in the Ritual that is mandatory is the formula for profession. Everything else can be changed, and should be adapted to the circumstances. The Ritual simply lets us know the thinking of the Church on each subject. Sometimes fraternities get "wedded" to the Ritual and it becomes their "Bible." Many of the words in the Ritual aren't the way we would speak. So have someone who can write, write some prayers for the fraternity, instead of always using the same words for prayers.



available to fill the positions as a Spiritual Assistant.

We talked about our ambitious plan for Lay Spiritual Assistants in St. Francis Region and Fr. Melvin suggested that we utilize the Friars that are available for talks, retreats and days of recollection, that would enhance the knowledge as Franciscans, and we assured him that we would. He also stressed the importance for the Lay Spiritual Assistants and leaders of St. Francis Region to attend workshops and conferences that are available to keep the Lay Spiritual Assistant program we have going in our Region on the ‘cutting edge’. We have listened to Fr. Melvin.

I would like to share what your leadership and Lay Spiritual Assistants in St. Francis Region have done so far this year. Four of us from our Region spent a week attending the Kaleidoscope Institute’s program on multi-culturalism and diversity in the 21st century. The four of us who attended speak the four main languages spoken in St. Francis Region. Three of us are serving as Spiritual Assistants to Local Fraternities, the other two Spiritual Assistants are Armando Lomeli, SFO, and Anthony Hoang Le, SFO.

In May, Sylvia Paoli, SFO, our Regional Vice Minister and Bob Herbelin, SFO, our Regional Treasurer, flew to St. Louis in Sylvia’s plane to attend a National Formation workshop where Friars and SFO’s gave the presentations. Sylvia and



At the Kaleidoscope Institute: Left to right: Michael Reidy, SFO, Minister of Peace Fraternity in Scottsdale, AZ; Rosemary Oh, SFO, Member of St. Thomas More Fraternity, Canoga Park, CA; Armando Lomeli, SFO, Member of the Regional Executive Council and Spiritual Assistant to Nuestra Senora De Los Angeles Fraternity in San Diego, CA; Fr. Eric Law, Founder and Director of Kaleidoscope Institute; Anthony Hoang Le, SFO, Spiritual Assistant to St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity in San Diego, CA; Rock DeSpain, SFO, Regional Minister and Spiritual Assistant to San Damiano Fraternity in Palm Desert, CA

Bob are also Certified Spiritual Assistants. They came back with much to share and to enhance the excellent Formation program already in place in St. Francis Region.

In June, Sylvia and Bob flew to St. Francis University in Lorretto, Pennsylvania with Bill Mussatto, SFO, Minister of Holy Spirit Fraternity in Claremont and Judith



Bill and Judith Mussatto, Sylvia Paoli and Bob Herbelin, St. Francis Region





Silvia Paoli and her aircraft

Mussatto, SFO, our Regional Secretary, in Sylvia's plane to attend a Leadership Conference. Bill and Judith are currently attending the Lay Spiritual Assistant classes. All four responded with great enthusiasm about the conference about the Friars who presented to sessions.

In September of this year, I will be attending the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants meeting in Plymouth, Michigan. I will be joined by Sylvia Paoli, SFO, Bob Herbelin, SFO and Bob Murray, SFO, Formation Director of Little Portion Fraternity and currently attending the Lay Spiritual Assistant sessions. This is my third time and the second for Sylvia and Bob Herbelin. Sylvia is also one of the presenters with Fr. Steve Gross, OFM Conv. at this year's meeting.

We have put Sylvia's plane to work many times this year. She and I have done visitations in one day that used to require overnight stays. Other members of the Regional Executive Council have benefitted from the availability of Sylvia's plane. Its faster and saves us money. Thank you Sylvia.

With the help of Fr. Mel Jurisich, OFM and Fr. Steve Gross, OFM

Conv., we are learning how to get where we are going.

In 2007, St. Francis Region started a scholarship program to enable us to send Seculars from our Region to these wonderful workshops that are becoming more available to the SFO. As you can read in Sylvia's articles about the Leadership Conference and the Formation Workshop we are doing our best to utilize what is available to us to better prepare us in the SFO to take ownership of our Order. Five years ago I was at a Conference at St. Bonaventure University. At that Conference, Fr. Michael Higgins TOR, the General Spiritual Assistant from Rome told us "its time for the SFO to take ownership of its Order". By sending Lay Spiritual Assistants to these conferences and workshops we are better prepared to know where we are going.

So, we are asking each fraternity to make a contribution to the scholarship fund to enable our Region to send our Seculars to these programs when they are available. Make you checks payable to St. Francis Region and write, *Scholarship Fund*, on the font of the check.

Another way you can help as an individual, is to include St. Francis Region in your will. We have the forms available to take to your attorney when you have the will written or when you change your will. All you have to do is ask a member of the Regional Executive Council and we will get the form to you.



CIOFS Project

A huge thank you to all the facilitators who helped bring the CIOFS project to the local fraternities in St. Francis Region. We had our Lay Spiritual Assistants, those with Formation certificates, those now attending the Lay Spiritual Assistant/Formator classes and some specially trained volunteers. The response from the local fraternities was excellent and we on the Regional Executive Council are going through the summaries to extract the information to send to our NAFRA International Councilor, so she can bring it all with her to Hungary in November.



**Prayer is not asking.
Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at his disposition, and listening to his voice in the depths of our hearts.**

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta



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History of the Rosary

Our Lord commanded us to pray unceasingly (Luke 18:1). Early monks threw pebbles in piles as they kept count repeating the Lord's Prayer. Later, prayers were counted on knotted cords. And, by the 12th century, beads—usually of wood or clay, and sometimes even of precious jewels—replaced the knotted cords.

The term *Rosary* means garland of roses - a poetic term for prayers. The Rosary is used as a tool of contemplation on the *Mysteries* or aspects of the life of Christ from the point of view of his mother. Pope John Paul II declared the Rosary: "*an echo of the prayer of Mary, her perennial Magnificat for the work of the redemptive Incarnation which began in her virginal womb.*"

From the earliest times, monks and clerics have had a great devotion to the 150 Psalms of David which they divided into three parts of fifty Psalms each. The *three sets of fifties* were recited in Latin for the repose of the dead and for other intentions. For the non-Latin-speaking, the recitation of the Our Father and the Hail Mary prayers became a substitute for praying the full Psalter. Fifteen Our Fathers and 150 Hail Marys were prayed together with meditations on Gospel themes or Mysteries. This became known as *Our Lady's Psalter* or the Rosary.

The Dominican Rosary

According to tradition, the Marian Rosary was given to St. Dominic from the hands of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This Rosary was popularized by the Dominican Friar, Alan de la

Roche (1428-1475). The Rosary was accepted eagerly by people who were looking for solace during a period of war, famine and schism, and "to be preserved from sudden death and the assaults of the devil".

The Rosary most commonly used today is the five decade version of the Dominican Rosary. When it is prayed three times, it makes up 150 prayers. To each decade is dedicated a Mystery. The fifty small beads refer to Mary. The five large beads and the corresponding *Our Father* prayers are intended to honor the Five Wounds of the crucified Christ: in his hands, feet and side.

The Franciscan Crown

The Franciscan historian Luke Wadding (1588-1657), dates the origin of the Franciscan Crown to the year 1422. He tells the story of a young novice in the Franciscan Order who, prior to joining, expressed his devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary by daily adorning her statue with a wreath of fresh flowers. He was prevented from continuing this practice in the novitiate. In distress, he considered leaving the Order. But Mary appeared to him and instructed him to recite a rosary of seven decades in honor of her Seven Joys; thus, he might weave a "crown" more pleasing to her than flowers on her statue.

From that time the practice of reciting the *Crown of the Seven Joys* became general in the Order. Thus it became known as the *Franciscan Crown — or the Seraphic Rosary*.

A free copy of the Scriptural Franciscan Crown is at:
www.RosaryScripture.FaithWeb.com

The Servite Chaplet

On the Feast of the Assumption in 1233, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to seven young men and asked that they devote themselves to her service in retirement from the world. They withdrew from the city to the deserted slopes of Monte Senario near Florence, where their new Order became the *Servants of Mary*, or *Servites*, in recognition of their special devotion to *Our Lady of Sorrows* (Feastday Sept. 15).

Although the construction of the *Servite Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows of Mary* is different from the Franciscan Crown Rosary — seven sets of seven beads rather than seven sets of ten — the Seven Sorrows may also be contemplated using the Franciscan Crown.

Four Special Graces Promised to those Devoted to the Sorrows of Mary revealed to St. Elizabeth of Hungary, SFO:

- 1) The grace of True Repentance for all their sins should they invoke the Blessed Virgin Mary in remembrance of her Sorrows before their death.
- 2) During their tribulations, Jesus would protect all who remember this devotion; they would have His special protection especially at the hour of death.
- 3) Jesus would impress upon their minds the remembrance of His Passion, and that they should have their reward for it in Heaven.
- 4) That He would commit such devout clients to the hands of Mary, so that she might obtain for these souls all the graces she wanted to lavish upon them.



The Seven Joys and the Seven Sorrows of Mary

The Crown of the Seven Joys

Franciscan Crown or Seraphic Rosary

The Modern Mysteries:

1. The Annunciation
2. The Visitation
3. The Nativity and Adoration of the Magi
4. Presentation of our Lord in the Temple and Purification of the Virgin Mary
5. Mary & Joseph finding Jesus in the Temple
6. The Resurrection.
7. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin and Her Coronation as Queen of Heaven.

Praying the Franciscan Crown:

1. Announce the First Mystery and say the Our Father on the fifth bead from the Cross.
2. Say one Hail Mary on each of the ten beads.
3. Announce the Second Mystery and then say the Our Father. Repeat steps 1 and 2 for the 3rd through the 7th Mysteries.
4. Say Two Hail Mary's to complete 72 years of Mary's life on the fourth and third beads from the Cross.
5. Say an Our Father for the intention of the Holy Father on the second bead from the Cross.
6. Say a Hail Mary for the intention of the Holy Father on the bead closest to the Cross

The Seven Swords Rosary

Servite Chaplet: Seven Dolors of the Virgin

1. The Prophecy of Simeon, "This one shall be a sword of sorrow to pierce your own heart"
2. The Flight into Egypt by the Holy Family
3. The loss of the Child Jesus in the Temple
4. Mary meets Jesus carrying His cross
5. The Crucifixion
6. Mary received the body of Jesus from the cross
7. The body of Jesus is placed in a tomb

Three Hail Marys are added in remembrance of the tears Mary shed because of the suffering of her Divine Son.

V. Pray for us, O most sorrowful Virgin.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Concluding Prayer

Lord Jesus, we now implore, both for the present and for the hour of our death, the intercession of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Thy Mother, whose holy soul was pierced at the time of Thy passion by a sword of grief. Grant us this favor, O Savior of the world, Who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

"Obedience is the one and the only way of wisdom and prudence for us to offer glory to God. . . .

We will learn this lesson more quickly through the Immaculate Virgin, whom God has made the dispenser of his mercy. It is beyond all doubt that Mary's will represents to us the will of God himself. By dedicating ourselves to her, we become in her hands instruments of God's mercy even as she was such an instrument in God's hands."

From the letters of St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe, OFM Conv., (1894-1941)



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Tertiary Mass at St. Paul the Apostle Church



SFO attendees from *Immaculata*, *St. Padre Pio* and *Holy Spirit* Fraternities

A year ago, Mrs. Marta Kassai, SS.CC.SB., approached Bishop Rutilio del Riego to have a special Eucharistic celebration of vocations and contributions of Secular Orders and Branches of Religious Orders and Congregations in the San Bernardino Diocesan and neighboring areas. He said "Yes," and the Mass was held on August 16, 2008, thanks to Fr. Patrick O'Hagan, SS.CC.V.F., pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church in Chino Hills, and Vicar Forane of the Diocese.

Mrs. Kassai had a vision to bring together the various Secular/Lay Orders and Branches so that they get to know the unique spiritual gift each Order and Branch bring to the Church: The Franciscans, the Benedictines, the Dominicans the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Congregation, and the Missionary Sisters of Mary, were present at the

Mass, but the Carmelites had their annual formation workshop on this weekend and were unable to attend.

About 100 people came to the Mass hosted by the Secular Branch of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Congregation. Fr. Michael Brooks, SS.CC. was the celebrant and Fr. Philip Edwards, OSB and Fr. Rey Raluto concelebrated. Deacon Pat Martinez acted as Master of Ceremony. A multi-order organization committee including several Franciscans was put together to coordinate the liturgy and the reception that followed.

There were five information tables set up for the five Orders/Branches present, with picture posters about their community. The Mass was a great success, and we hope that this becomes a regular event rotating between Diocese and which Order hosts it.



The Tau cross in the Franciscan Tradition

<http://home.earthlink.net/~sfo-stuff/id2.html>

The Hebrew people, like many other ancient cultures, progressively elaborated a theology, or a complementary spiritual interpretation proper to each letter of their alphabet...

The last letter of the Hebrew alphabet represented the fulfillment of the entire revealed word of God. It could be written as: x, +, T. When the Prophet Ezekiel (9:4) uses the imagery of the last letter of the alphabet, he is commanding Israel to remain faithful to God until the last; to be recognized as symbolically "sealed" with the mark of the tau on their foreheads as God's chosen people until the end of their lives. Those who remained faithful were called the remnant of Israel.

Although the last letter of modern Hebrew is no longer cross-shaped as described in the variations above, the early Christian writers commenting on the Hebrew scriptures (the Old Testament) used its Greek translation (the Septuagint) in which the tau was transcribed as a T.



For Christians the T came to represent the cross of Christ and the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises. The cross, as prefigured in the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, represented the means by which Christ reversed the disobedience of the old Adam and became our Savior as the “New Adam.”

During the Middle Ages, the religious community of Anthony the Hermit, of which Saint Francis was familiar, was very involved in the care of lepers. These men used Christ’s cross shaped like the Greek T as an amulet for warding off the plague and other skin diseases. After his conversion, Francis worked with these religious in the Assisi area. He eventually accepted and adapted the T as his own crest and signature. For Francis, the T represented lifelong fidelity to the crucified Christ; it was his pledge to serve the least, the leper and the outcast of his day.

The tau imagery was intensified when Pope Innocent III opened the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, using the same exhortation as the Old Testament Prophet Ezekiel,

We are called to reform our lives, to stand in the presence of God as righteous people. God will know us by the sign of the tau marked on our foreheads.

This symbolic imagery, used by the same pope who commissioned Francis’ new community a brief five years earlier, was immediately taken to heart as the friars’ call to reform. With arms outstretched, Francis often told his brother friars that their religious habit was in the shape of the tau, meaning that they were

to become “walking crucifixes,” models of a compassionate God and examples of faithfulness until their dying day.

Today, followers of Francis, as laity or religious, wear the tau cross as an exterior sign, a “seal” of their own commitment, a remembrance of the victory of Christ over evil through daily self-sacrificing love. The sign of contradiction has become the sign of hope.



What about the wearing of a “habit” by Secular Franciscans?

In Circular 41-02/08, the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) was provided with guidance and direction regarding the wearing of a habit by Secular Franciscans.

In the opinion of the Juridical Commission, Secular Franciscans were reminded that their apostolate is the personal witness that they offer to the society in which they live - in their families, in their workplaces, in their local communities and in the Church. This witness must be recognized by others through the way in which they live and love each other as brothers and sisters (“see how they love one another”). It is this witness that is to be the “sign” of the Secular Franciscan presence in the world, not any habit, dress or uniform. The Juridical Commission also reminded Secular Franciscans that a “habit” is the sign of the religious friar, not the secular. The SFO General Constitutions further remind us that

“The secular state characterizes our spirituality and our apostolic life and is expressed according to our respective conditions; that is, contributing to building up the Kingdom of God by our presence in life-situations and in temporal activities”
(CC. GG. 3,1-2).

With respect to wearing a habit within the Secular Franciscan Order, the opinion of the Juridical Commission is clear. Local fraternities of the SFO must not use a habit as part of their fraternal way of life and should not practise the rite of “taking the habit” in admitting new candidates. Rare exceptions to this direction is provided for fraternities who have been in existence for hundreds of years (ie. “ancient” fraternities) and whose fraternal life has included the wearing of a habit as part of their fraternal way of life, based on their spiritual and cultural history. Permission to wear a habit is provided in these circumstances as a rare exception based on a long history and tradition. However, this exception is not intended to imply that, if some fraternities wished to go back to the days when habits were permitted, other exceptions could be granted. As a general rule, the wearing of a habit by Secular Franciscans is not permitted.

In addressing this subject, reference should be made to the SFO Rule (Article 23) which states that “...the distinctive Franciscan sign (is) regulated by the statutes.” The General Constitutions (Article 43) further state that “The national statutes establish ... the distinctive sign of membership in the Order (the “Tau” or other

SFO Habit, continued page 12



Franciscan symbol)." And, in most countries, National Statutes specify that the distinctive sign for Secular Franciscan is a form of the Tau cross. It is also important to note that all Secular Franciscans within a nation fall under the jurisdiction of the National Fraternity of that nation, irrespective of the Province of friars who established the fraternity and are bound by the provisions of their respective National Statutes.

"The Juridical Commission of the CIOFS Presidency is of the opinion that, in obedience to the Rule, the Constitutions and the Ritual, local Fraternities of the SFO cannot continue practising the rite of "taking the habit" in admitting new candidates, who in turn, must not use a habit, under the responsibility of the respective Councils and Ministers. It insists, furthermore, that each National Council of the constituted fraternities is responsible for ascertaining that the distinctive sign established by their National Statutes is respected and that each of the provisional National Councils are respectful of the decision taken in the Chapter. The above mentioned sign must be in harmony with the secularity of the SFO." (Circular 41-02/08, dated May 28, 2006)

For more information on this subject, please consult the CIOFS website at

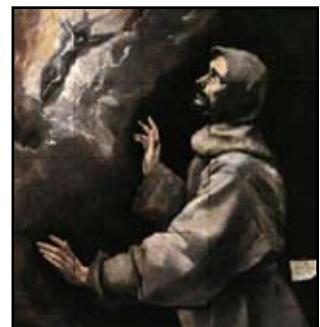
<http://www.ciofs.org/circ/pva6en41.html> <http://www.ciofs.org/circ/pva6en41.html>.



Feast of the Stigmata of Our Holy Father Francis

From *The Dove*, Newsletter of the San Juan Capistrano Fraternity

September 17th is the day St. Francis received the stigmata. Many Saints have borne the wounds of Christ on their body: Padre Pio, for one, in recent times. This outward sign of the work of Jesus Christ in the person unites that person in the suffering and salvation in a special way. Through their sacrifice and suffering, they lead souls to God.



Let us remember St. Francis on Sept. 17th, and pause for a time to reflect on his life that led to this momentous day when the wounds of Christ appeared on his body. St. Francis, pray for us and the whole world.

Invitation to Celebrate the Transitus of Our Seraphic Father Francis, October 3, 2008

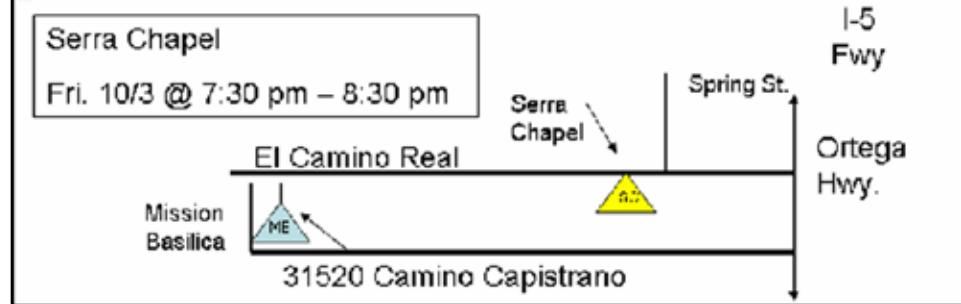
The San Juan Capistrano Fraternity is extending an invitation to celebrate the Transitus of Francis of Assisi on October 03, 2008; from 7:30 — 8:30 p.m. at the Serra Chapel in San Juan Capistrano, CA, with a reception to follow at the Parish Center on the second Floor. Entry is on the street just behind the Mission Basilica. Yellow and White balloons will be on the gate to help show you the way.

Getting to the Serra Chapel

Pass Basilica (MB) turn on El Camino, Proceed to just before Spring Street.

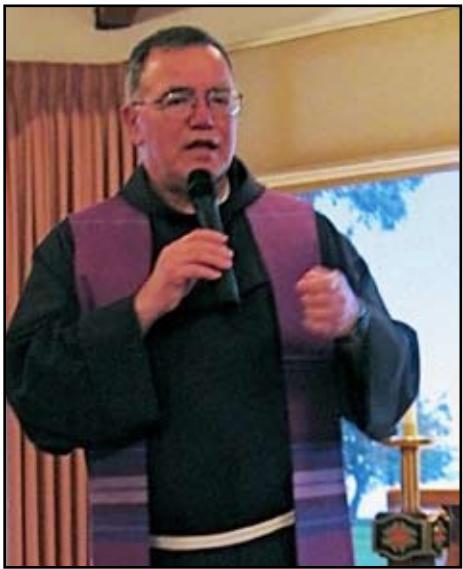
Parking on El Camino or park inside MB lots, and 1/2 mile walk to Serra Chapel

Enter through Gate with the Yello & White Markers



How Much do I Love, From Page 3

need to wake up like Francis, and allow God to mold us through his great love. Our dream, our hope must turn into trust — a deep trust in God. God has excessive trust in us said Fr. Phil. He gives himself completely to us, as he demonstrated on the cross. He loves us without conditions.



Fr. Philip Garcia, OFM

Father talked about the meaning of holy poverty, mystical chastity, and perfect obedience. God is absolute holy poverty. Poverty is being unselfcentered, or other centered – being able to accept everything, the good and the bad, as a blessing from God. God is chaste. He is simple minded. True chastity has a oneness of heart, is only interested in the blessings of God. God is perfectly obedient. He is unable to break his covenant with us. He gave us the commandments so we can live freely without stepping on each other's toes. God is not watching us to punish us if we do wrong, but rather he sees everything because he loves us and can't take his eyes off of us. He only wants our love in return.



Saturday afternoon, we walked the Stations of the Cross in the garden. We each picked a stone, a small pebble, in the chapel, and took it with us on the journey. It represented the sins and burdens we carried with us. Upon return, we dropped the stone into a bowl of holy water symbolizing the waters of baptism. During the evening reconciliation service, after receiving absolution, we retrieved a stone from the bowl of holy water signifying that our sins were washed clean. We were truly renewed, recreated in Christ, and made whole. Father shared a beautiful reflection. When we look at the stars at night, our hearts are moved by the beauty of the heavens. Why are there so many stars on the sky? Looking at the stars fills us with a spiritual melody, a desire to be back with the stars. We are homesick. Our true home is not here on earth. We belong to heaven. The stars remind us where we came from — that we're citizens of heaven.

At the Mass on Sunday, Father told us about his childhood experiences in Ireland. When the priest was bringing holy communion to the sick, he carried the Blessed Sacrament in a special container through the streets, and the people would kneel

in great reverence at the site of our Lord. The Blessed Sacrament was also carried through the city in a procession during Corpus Christi.

How strange that Jesus would walk through the streets of our city. He does not fit into our ordinary life we would think. Yet that's what God does, Father said. He walks with us and wants to touch us. In the movie "The Queen" when Tony Blair kisses the hand of the queen, she quickly pulls it away as if that was too much. She is untouchable. She cannot allow him to get too close. Jesus does the exact opposite. He asks "touch me", and "embrace me". The King of kings wants to be touched by us. We are truly the sanctuary of the Holy One.

It is most amazing that we as a community can call God down from heaven, and he becomes the bread and wine to nourish us. He is present to us, Fr. Phil told us. The mystery of God comes in our midst in the Eucharist. At the time of the homily, we were sent out to walk in the garden in quiet, to be with God and listen to him. Then we returned and sealed this beautiful retreat celebrating the Eucharist giving thanks to God who loves us so much that we can't stop counting the ways.



The Voice of Christ St. Francis on the Crown of Monte Alverno

from *The Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas A Kempis, circ. 14 century

My Child, I will teach you now the way of peace and true liberty.

Seek child, to do the will of others rather than your own.

Always choose to have less rather than more.

Look always for the last place and seek to be beneath all others.

Always wish and pray that the will of God be fully carried out in you.

Behold, such will enter into the realm of peace and rest.



By Fr. Gregory Elmer, O.S.B.

Breathless was the brilliant afternoon,
Heat lighting flashing from the sky, and
White Levin bolts dropping in abundance,
And thunder rolling in from nearby.

Repeatedly ripping the silence asunder,
As though some great revelation were at
Hand, but St. Francis could not imagine
What that would be, as he watched, from

The crown of Alverno, the thorn-bushes
Whipping in storm wind, and sycamores
Reaching out from beside him to shelter
Him in the tempest, which was wrecking

Havoc, a few feet away, on the handsome
Roses, writhing in God's wild-wind, and
On simple violets, as they bend their heads in
Humility, shivering beneath bright numinous

Blasts causing the mountain to quake, as the
Tempest screams louder and louder than wind
Is king and storm clouds and rain his servants,
But Francis is God's servant only, and God

Hides him in a cleft of The Rock, sage till the
Storm passes by, and there remains only the
Sound of a simple, small breeze, and in the
Vast silence beneath it, Francis' skin starts

To prickle, as he, in his soul, perceives God,
The All Holy, begin His descent down the
Steep sill of time, caparisoned with all the
Panoply of perfection, the crown and the

Nails, and Jesus' stark dereliction, these
Badges of the Redeemer, and God the Father
Bestows on Francis, too humble for pride,
Christ's wounds of affliction and His marks

Of affection, to outfit Francis for the rest of
The journey, through the darkness here below
Till the day, which God has appointed, arrives,
And God seats him with Christ, Wound to

Wound and side by side, at His heavenly table,
There to join Him, in thanksgiving and perfect
Joy, unending forever.



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67456 785-227-2364

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St. Francis Region Southern California, USA

Executive Council

Regional Minister

Rock De Spain SFO
Home phone (951) 766-1308
Cell phone (951) 288-6038
sforockandjan@att.net

Vice Minister

Sylvia Paoli SFO
Best Phone number (714) 521-5333
Cell phone (714) 273-4078
spaoli@roadrunner.com

Secretaries

Carolyn Paxton, SFO
cpaxsfo627@yahoo.com

Judith Mussatto, SFO
jbnmussatto@earthlink.net

Treasurer

Robert Herbelin SFO
Home phone (951) 678-6427
Cell phone (951) 440-1941
rherbelin@juno.com

Councilor, Spanish Lang.
Armando Lomeli SFO
Cell phone (714) 296-6152
mandosfo@aol.com

Councilor, Korean Language
Heeyoung Lydia Chung SFO
Cell phone (714) 514-5161
heeyoung1011@hotmail.com

Councilor, Vietnamese Lang.
Vacant

District Liaisons

Orange County
Carolyn Paxton, SFO
cpaxsfo627@yahoo.com

San Bernardino Riverside
Judith Mussatto, SFO
jbnmussatto@earthlink.net

San Diego
vacant

Tri-County
Ed Gordon, SFO
edwardlgordon@aol.com

Los Angeles
vacant

Liturgy Coordinator
Gerri Merchant, SFO
merchant22@verizon.net

Data Base Coordinator
Robert Herbelin, SFO
rherbelin@juno.com

Newsletter Editor
Ted Hewitt
6571 Farmington Drive
Riverside, CA 92504
(articles may be mailed here)
joyoffrancis@charter.net

Associate Editor
William Mussatto SFO
mussatto@acm.org

Web Servant
Mike Morris SFO
mw_morris@verizon.net

Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants (CRSA)
Rev. Stephen Gross, OFM Conv
boccaperta@msn.com

National SFO USA

www.nafra-sfo.org

CIOFS

SFO International Council

Encarnación del Pozo,
Minister General OFS

CIOFS Headquarters
Calle Vittorio Putti, Rome
<http://ciofs.org/sfo.htm>

A Reminder

Mike Morris SFO, Web Master

If you know of any events we might be able to attend together, let me know. Also, if you have access to the Internet you can look at our Calendar located on our Regions website,
www.stfrancisregion.org

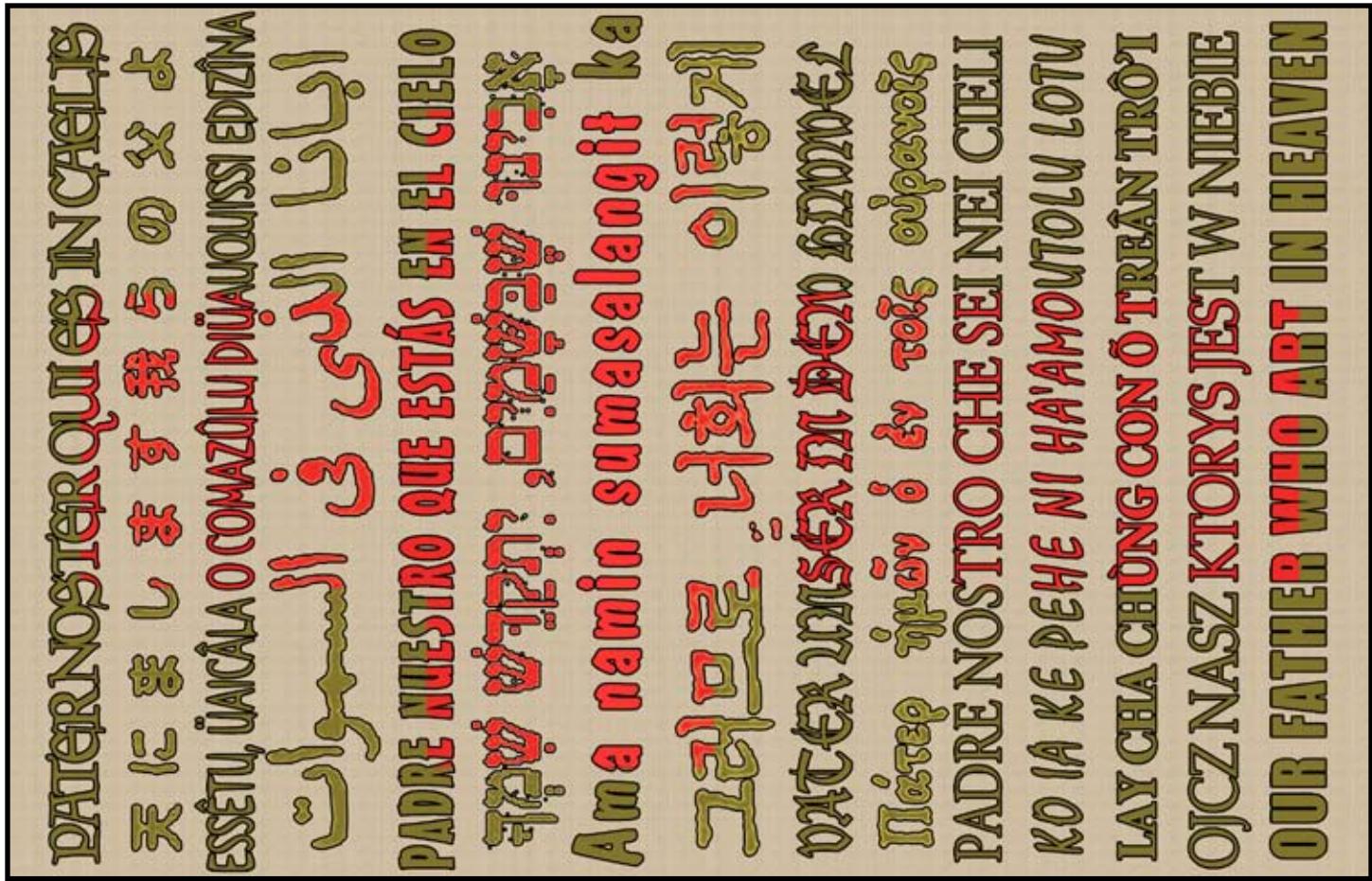
Annual Regional Gathering

On Saturday, October 25th, 2008, the annual Gathering for the Saint Francis Region of the Secular Franciscan Order will be held at St. Gregory's Parish, located at:

13935 Telegraph Road
Whittier, CA 90604

The Gathering will begin at 9:00 a.m. and will close about 4:00 p.m.





The Joy of Francis



ST. FRANCIS REGION #52
Secular Franciscan Order
Southern California, USA
28275 Rawlings Rd.
Hemet, CA 92544