



# THE JOY OF FRANCIS

Secular Franciscan Order | St. Francis Region #52 | Southern California



Vocations Fair, Christ Cathedral in Orange County, April 6th



Canonization Vigil at LA Cathedral April 26<sup>th</sup>

## RE: Newsletter

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## MINISTER'S MESSAGE

*Sylvia Paoli, OFS, Regional Minister*

Hearts on Fire for the Lord!

Dear brothers and sisters,

Alleluia! Christ is risen! May you have a most holy and blessed Easter season as we celebrate the Resurrection and await the celebration of Pentecost!

It is the Holy Spirit that set the apostles' hearts on fire at the time of Pentecost, and it is the Holy Spirit that sets our own hearts on fire. Consider what happened to the basically uneducated fishermen and other workmen whom Jesus called as his first disciples. With the receiving of the Holy Spirit they suddenly became accomplished speakers, going forward to share the Gospel message with never a backward look. What will it take for us to do the same?

Three Popes have told us to essentially "get out there and do what you are meant to do".

And what was that? “Rebuild my church”. How do we do that? I wish I had a nice formula to share that said “if we do 1, 2 and 3, we’ll be accomplishing our mission.” But of course, nothing in the spiritual journey we’re all on is ever that simple. I can suggest some things that will result in us not accomplishing our mission, however.

We can go to a monthly meeting of our fraternity and never contribute anything except a little money: we don’t conduct ongoing formation, we don’t lead the opening or closing prayer, we don’t volunteer to help with any of the fraternity’s projects. We let everyone else do all the work. We expect to hear a lecture that we like and that makes us feel good, and we resist anything else, like participating in small group discussions, or sharing what we really think. When elections come around, we decline all nominations, because we’re “too busy, have too many personal obligations, have too many church obligations,” or other similar excuses. We pray like we’re sure no one else does: daily Office, daily (or more) Rosary; Divine Mercy chaplet; prayers to a half-dozen saints; Franciscan prayers; intercessory prayers for a long list of people, both living and dead; and many more. But we don’t listen to hear if God is saying anything to us. We say a Morning Offering and then we plan our own day without a thought as to whether we’re planning what God wants us to do that day. We gossip about “so-and-so in the fraternity who never acts right” and wonder why we have to put up with him or her. We complain on a regular basis about “region, that’s trying to tell us what to do.” If someone makes a suggestion at a meeting that we disagree with, we let them know it, arguing with them until the idea is dismissed.

We’re sure we should be able to spend the fraternity money as we choose, giving it to lots of charities, or to one of the local parishes (even though our fraternity may represent 6 or 8 different parishes), complaining about “fair share” and assessing it to individual members, totally forgetting that the fraternity has only a “Common Fund” and it is that fund that pays the assessment to region. If members get sick and can’t come to meetings anymore and can’t even contribute money, we try to get them off the roster so we don’t have to “pay for them”.

That list could go on and on; those are just a few of the things we’ve encountered in fraternities over the years. But they combine to cause us, as an Order, NOT to accomplish our mission but instead to turn inwards on ourselves and become a little group of self-centered “religious” people. I realize that Lent is over, but take the time for a little honest self-assessment and ask yourself: “Have I ever been – or am I now – one of the people described above?” If your answer is “yes” then resolve now to work on that daily conversion that we are called to make, so as to try and become the Franciscan that our Rule and the Gospel call us to be.

We have some wonderful fraternities in this region, and some extraordinary people within those fraternities. So know that I am not talking about those groups and those people. But as we look with wonder and amazement daily at what our “new” Pope Francis is doing and how he is living, we know that we can do and be no less. As a region, perhaps in the next month we could all focus on how we can better live the Gospel life – individually and as a fraternity. Get specific; come up with concrete examples. It would be wonderful to share the results of such focus with everyone in the region. I’m sure we would all learn something and get some good ideas.

So let’s go forward in the name of Jesus the risen Lord and try to be better tomorrow than we were today.

Your sister and servant in the Lord, Sylvia

**TOADally Involved**

*Rock De Spain, O.F. S.*

*CRS, President-in-Turn*

As a Regional Spiritual Assistant, I get to meet hundreds of Secular Franciscans, and as a result of that, I get to hear stories of who they are, and what they are doing as Secular Franciscans. I love to share those stories when I can. Below, is one of them that really touched me.

You might remember a story of St. Francis moving worms off the roadway, so they would not be crushed. He had read about the words attributed to our Savior, "I am a worm, not a man." (Omnibus 1 p.250). Francis was always mindful of the seemingly most insignificant of people and creatures.

Francis has gained a modern day helpmate who shares his concern for aiding our lesser brothers today. Virginia Haddad OFS, a newly professed member of St. Francis and St. Clare Fraternity in Hemet has a passion for protecting the most threatened class of animal today, amphibians. She is a teacher for Sea View Elementary west of the Salton Sea.

On April 8<sup>th</sup> she traveled with two of her students to Sacramento to present a bill AB2364 to make the California Red Legged Frog our state amphibian. Needless to say, Virginia put a lot of personal time into preparing her two students for this. Why? Her aim is two-fold: First, to bring attention to the most threatened class of animals today, amphibians (nearly 200 species have gone extinct since the late 70's. Fossil records show normal amphibian extinction rates to be about one per century.) Frogs and toads are nature's messengers, when they start dying off or forming weird mutations that signals a problem in our environment. Their skin secretions are used in

medicines and they are an important part of our food web.

Secondly, she encourages kids of low income and migrant worker families who live near a dying sea to become part of forming a better future by educating them and having them initiate legislation by helping create this bill and hopefully bring it into law. I encourage you to view their presentation before the Assembly on Water, Parks, and Wildlife. In the video, you can see the result of a Franciscan living their vocation.

Here is how you can access it: Go to [calchannel.com/recent](http://calchannel.com/recent) –archive Find Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife April 8, 2014 Click on the video / forward to the 2 hour point and you will see Assemblyman Perez introduce Samantha and Freedom (student presenters) the presentation and voting is about ten minutes.

At the end of the student's presentation, you will also hear from Dr. Kerry Kriger, founder of *Save the Frogs*. He was an advisor to them through the process. To learn more about the amphibian crisis, check out his web site at [www.savethefrogs.com](http://www.savethefrogs.com).

You can help support Virginia's efforts in prayer and political action. Let your local representative know that this is a bill you support. Virginia is truly an exemplary example of living out art. 18 of our rule: Moreover, they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate which "bear the imprint of the Most High" and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.

Virginia, welcome to our family, and thank you.

### Franciscan Charism of Caring for Creation

Elle Lesperance, OFS

JPIC Animator, St. Francis Region



Our holy father Francis composed the Canticle of the Creatures, preached to the birds and prayed in the woods can teach us about caring for creation.

To set Francis on a birdbath or in a flower garden or to depict him with birds circling his head is simply a popular way of saying, “This man had a special link with all God’s creatures, and it’s just like him to be standing there humbly among them.” St. Francis saw even in a bug the sacredness of life. St. Francis cared for even the tiniest creatures, not only because he came to know them as neighbors, but he recognized each one as “an imprint of the Most High.” Francis would say that the birds coming to the birdbath are holy; water is holy. Why shouldn’t Francis be there in the garden where he can be pelted by the rain or sleet, or kissed by “Brother Sun”?

Another reason Francis should remain on the birdbath or in the garden is that his being there helps us recognize, as Francis himself did, that the world of God and the world of nature are one. Francis did not build an artificial wall between the natural world and the supernatural, the secular and the sacred. For Francis, every creature was sacred. The world in which he lived was not something evil to be rejected but a sacred ladder by which he could ascend to his Creator, as his biographer St. Bonaventure noted more than once.

The bishops of the United States published a document in 1992 entitled *Renewing the Earth*. In it the bishops praised St. Francis while reminding their readers:

“Safeguarding creation requires us to live responsibly in it, rather than managing creation as though we are outside it.” We should see ourselves, they added, as stewards within creation, not as separated from it. Francis was ahead of his time. He saw himself, like today’s environmentalists, as part of the ecosystem, not as a proud master over and above it.

St. Francis of Assisi addressed creatures as “sisters” and “brothers,” that is, as equals, not as subjects to be dominated. And that is why the humble figure of St. Francis standing on the birdbath or among the shrubs is so right for our day. He truly saw himself as a simple servant and caretaker of creation—little brother to the birds and the fish and the lowly ivy.

Pope John Paul II proclaimed St. Francis of Assisi the patron of ecology in 1979. The pope cited him for being “an example of genuine and deep respect for the integrity of creation.” On August 21, 2006, Pope Benedict the XVI called for a commitment to care for creation. He said, “creation is exposed to serious risks by life choices and life-styles that can degrade it.” He particular, he said, “environmental degradation makes the lives of the poor especially unbearable.

“St. Francis invited all creation, animals, plants, natural forces, even Brother Sun and Sister Moon, to give honor and praise to the Lord. He prayed in praise -

“ All praise be yours, My Lord,  
through all that you have made.  
And first my lord Brother Sun, who brings the  
day....

How beautiful is he, how radiant in all his  
splendor!

Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister  
Moon and Stars;

In the heavens you have made them, bright  
and precious and fair.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brothers  
Wind and Air..."

Therefore, we Franciscans must realize that our  
responsibility within creation and our duty  
toward nature and the Creator are an essential  
part of our charism.

### **Reflecting God's Creation When Praying the "Our Father, Who Art in Heaven..."**

Except in the Temple, Jesus spoke Aramaic.  
In Aramaic, *Father* means much more than it  
does in English. When Jesus said, "Father," he  
actually meant, "birther of the cosmos", a much  
more enlarged and expansive image of the  
Eternal Creator! All of creation is the vibration,  
the "name" which expresses divine mystery in  
space and time. Teilhard de Chardin recognized  
this so well when he said, "To those who know  
how to see, nothing is profane—everything is  
sacred." Have we secular Franciscans forgotten  
how to see the awesome world of which we are a  
part?

When we proclaim God's name as "hallowed"  
(holy), do we recognize the echo of God's name  
in the wonder all around us? Might God be calling  
us Franciscans to be co-creators of a transformed  
Earth, a heaven of peace and harmony?

In our times we are blessed with the fact that  
science is constantly uncovering truths about our  
magnificent planet. No longer is the universe  
seen as finished, with the sun, stars and planets

in unchanging orbits, but as an expanding process  
of which we are a part. Scientifically, it has  
become quite clear that God has chosen an  
evolutionary mode of expressing divine mystery.

The creation story can be interpreted as the  
unfolding presence of God within the universe.  
Haven't we all been saying this since our  
childhood catechism days? "Where is God? God  
is everywhere." But have we really believed this?  
If we learn to see more clearly through the eyes  
of faith, assisted by what scientists discover, we  
can contemplate "the Word of God being made  
flesh in space and time."

Will our plea for "daily bread" continue to be  
only for ourselves? Do we see all of God's living  
creatures as needing a place at the table? Will we  
continue to forget that we are dependent for our  
very life on the plants, animals, microbes, rivers,  
sun, soil, air and water? If so, we will continue to  
forget that we are members of the Sacred Earth  
Community.

Surely God would never lead us into  
temptation. It helps to realize that the more  
accurate Aramaic sense is, "Don't let us be  
seduced by the appearance of....". In our  
frenzied efforts toward progress, many of us  
have succumbed to the values of our world  
today: prestige, money and "the American  
dream."

This is a virtually luxurious lifestyle when  
compared with that of so many of our human  
sisters and brothers around the world—and one  
which the planet cannot afford. If all 6.6 billion  
humans today lived with the average lifestyle of  
U.S. and Canadian citizens, we would need three  
more Planet Earths.

As a Franciscan, are you one that is  
engaged in environmental justice that deals with  
the relationship between ecology and justice,

beginning with a reflection on St. Francis and our Franciscan spirituality? Study shows how our founder and our charism inspire us to be concerned with the current environmental crisis in which we find ourselves. The concept of environmental justice offers situations from around the world where Franciscans are dealing with climate change issues. Let us be proactive in our call to care for creation.

As the Scripture says, "All things come into being through Him, and without him not one thing came into being." John 1:3.

Let us be reminded of our Secular Franciscan Order Rule Chapter II, Article 18~

"Moreover they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which bear the imprint of the Most High," and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship?"

## REGIONAL NEWS:

### Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistance

**Meeting:** The St. Francis Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants invited all their local and regional spiritual assistants to their meeting on Saturday March 1<sup>st</sup> at St. Joachim Parish in Costa Mesa, CA. There were over twenty spiritual assistants present representing all levels of spiritual assistants: National as well as regional and local levels. Seculars as well as religious; lay as well as clergy. As a result of this workshop we have ...

#### "An Encouraging Word"

by Fr. Chris Thiel, OFM Cap

The old song "Home on the Range" had a great lyric: "...and seldom is heard a discouraging word." I love to hear about good news, and I am always encouraged to hear of the good things people are doing. While at the last Spiritual

Assistants' meeting, I heard several delightful things that encouraged me.

It's not uncommon to hear folks wondering how to invite younger people to consider if they have a vocation to OFS. Most of our fraternities don't even have any contact with younger people. Rather than being discouraged about it, I heard a wonderful and creative idea that one fraternity had. Around the time of the feast of St. Francis, they offered a cash prize to local Catholic School students for writing the best essay about St. Francis. I suppose we have don't have to stop at St. Francis, either. I won't mind encouraging students to write essays about St. Elizabeth of Hungary or any number of wonderful Franciscan saints.

Sometimes we can get discouraged as we age. Health problems can keep us from being able to attend fraternity meetings. It's not uncommon that we miss seeing some of our sisters or brothers who are getting too frail or sickly to attend fraternity meetings. I heard of a very caring and loving thing that one fraternity does. Some fraternity members keep track of sick members and send a monthly get well card with information about what happened at the fraternity meeting. I also heard of fraternities who celebrate each month those who have a birthday in that month, and even send a card to inactive members.

It's such an encouraging thing to hear of the creative ways that Franciscans care for each other, and reach out to others. If you find something that works, I hope you don't keep it a secret! We can all benefit by hearing it! Let us encourage each other and give thanks and praise to God!

**Annual REC Retreat:** The members of the St. Francis Region Executive Council, District Liaisons and Formators, JPIC Animator, and Newsletter

Editor met at Pro Sanctity Spirituality Center in Fullerton for their annual retreat and planning session on March 7<sup>th</sup> to March 9<sup>th</sup>. Sylvia Paoli and Margie Rodriguez did a presentation on St. *Bonaventure's Journey Into God*



Council Members and Guests at REC Retreat

**Regional Executive Council (REC) Meeting:**

Date: Saturday April 5, 2014

Place: Our Lady of the Assumption Parish, Claremont, CA.

**Present** at the meeting were:

- Minister, Sylvia Paoli, OFS,
- Vice-Minister, Robert Herbelin, OFS,
- Treasurer, Frank Miller, OFS,
- Secretary, Judith Mussatto, OFS,
- Councilors: Margarita Rodriguez, OFS and Anthony Tuan Cao, OFS,
- Regional Spiritual Assistant, Rock DeSpain, OFS.
- Mentor the Regional Spiritual Assistants, Fr. Stephen Gross, OFM, Conv.

**Excused:** Regional Spiritual Assistant Armando Lomeli, OFS

**Ongoing Formation:**

The council continues to use the FUN manual as its source for topics for Ongoing Formation at the council meetings. The topic for the April meeting was *St. Francis and His Approach to Divinity* adapted from CIOFS material by Bob Fitzsimmons, OFS.

The council members reported on the visits that they made in the months of February and March.

**Under Old Business:**

There was a wrap-up discussion on the Region's hosting of a booth at the Religious Education Congress that was held in March at the Convention Center in Anaheim.



Religious Education Congress 2014



Patricia Brandwein-Ball, OFS, will be the retreat master for the Serra retreat in May 2014.

The schedule for visits and elections in 2014 was updated.

The Region is in discussions with the sales manager of Best Western Inn Suits in order to use the facility for Chapter 2015.



Rebecca Aquino, OFS, has been appointed to the position of District Liaison for Los Angeles District.

**Under New Business:**

The REC accepted an invitation to participate in a Vocations fair organized by the parish at Christ Cathedral in Orange County, the first weekend of April.

Some fraternities have not yet turned in their annual reports and/or fair share. Sylvia will contact the ministers of those fraternities.

The next meeting of the Regional Executive Council will be Saturday June 7, 2014 at Our Lady of the Assumption Parish, Claremont, CA

Judith B. Mussatto  
Secretary, St. Francis Region.

**DISTRICT NEWS:**

**Orange County**

On Sunday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, Joan Cook, Lina Daukas and Irene Renteria were professed into the Secular Franciscan Order at the St. Francis Home, in Santa Ana by their St. Maximillian Kolbe fraternity minister Diane Halal. A pot luck reception followed.

**San Diego County**

The St Anthony Padua fraternity had a pre-election visit by Joseph Bui (Liaison) to prepare for the upcoming election in July.

On June 1st the San Luis Rey Fraternity will have a previsit by Tuan Cao to help them prepare for their Fraternal Visit in September by Sylvia Paoli.

Several events and activities are planned

within the district during the upcoming months:

- On May 4th there will have a Rosary for Mary's crowning celebration at the Immaculata Conception Fraternity from 1.30 pm to 2.30 pm. (St Gregory church);
- The district plans to have a picnic for the 5 fraternities in San Diego sometime this summer;
- A profession is being planned for a member of the San Luis Rey fraternity on July 13th, 2014 at the San Luis Rey Mission in Oceanside.

**San Bernardino/Riverside District**

The Immaculata Fraternity of Riverside sponsored a One Day Retreat on Saturday, March 29<sup>th</sup> at St. Matthew's Church in Corona. Fr. Franklin Fong, OFM, from the Franciscan School of Theology was the retreat facilitator. Members from several fraternities in the district attended the all day event.

**LANGUAGE GROUPS:**

**Vietnamese:**

**The FUN manual brings new changes:**

Joseph Thach Bui/Vietnamese Language Liaison  
Joseph Bach Nguyen/ Vietnamese Formator



We would like to share a few thoughts about formation changes in our fraternity since we received new formation materials contained in the FUN manual.

One of the characteristics of a Secular Franciscan is "Conversion". Therefore, the

formation in the Secular Franciscan Order has to be changed to adopt new requirements of formation for Secular Franciscans in this modern world. The FUN material prepared by the National Formation Commission in the USA and the guidance of the regional council of St Francis Region has brought a lot of improvements in the formation program for the Vietnamese Secular Franciscans in Orange County, California.

- 1- **Acknowledgement:** My brothers and sisters in my fraternity have rediscovered their own Franciscan identity. They know more clearly about the role and functions of a spiritual assistant in the Secular Franciscan Order. They recognize their responsibilities in paying a fair share and got a respectful view about relationships between their fraternity and other local fraternities as well as their fraternity and their regional council.
- 2- **Formation classes:** Since 2010, common formation classes have been joined by the St Clare fraternity and the emerging Vietnamese Martyrs fraternity. Since April 2014, the emerging Vietnamese Martyrs fraternity has also participated and sends candidates to formation classes held on every fourth Sunday of the month. Currently classes are composed of: Orientation phase: 5 candidates (3 of these prepared to begin the candidacy) – Candidacy phase: 8 candidates.
- 3- **Materials and contents:** The translation of the FUN manual into Vietnamese was completed in 2011. The preparation and printing of formation materials required by the St Francis region were completed in 2012. In 2013, formation contents have been revised and summarized for the sake of different levels of understanding of our brothers and sisters,

because some topics in the FUN manual were difficult for them to understand and absorb (i.e. Writings of St Bonaventure C 3-4-5 Franciscan Theology and Traditions C13 &14). However, the FUN manual is not the only material we use in our formation program. We also use other materials such as: *Come and See, The Franciscan Journey, etc...*

After being absent for a several years, a member returned to our fraternity. He told me he was surprised about changes in the fraternity formation program. He said the program is more organized than before. Formation topics were presented by different brothers and sisters who lessen the burden of the formation director. He liked the portions of PowerPoint presentations along with the talk of topics and that helps him to understand and remember more about the related topic.

For Until Now, we understand more about our Franciscan vocation.



*Vietnamese Fraternity in Formation*

### THE CANONIZATION OF TWO POPES

*Sylvia Paoli, OFS*

On May 4th, Divine Mercy Sunday, Pope Francis canonized two recent Popes in a ceremony that made news around the world. Pope John Paul II was the Pope during the lifetime of the majority of us and we know much about him. But only the older folks may remember John XXIII, who was a Secular Franciscan, and so I'd like to share a little about him.

Born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli in 1881, in Italy, John XXIII was elected Pope on October 20, 1958. I had entered the Catholic Church on May 19th of that year, so he was really the first Pope I “knew” from his election forward. Without much papal history with which to compare him, I was nevertheless impressed with him from the beginning of his papacy. When my husband, Pete, and I, married in 1959, were in Italy that summer, we were part of a general audience held by the Pope at Castel Gondolfo. It was one of the highlights of my life, because he came across as a saint even then. His words were words of a pastor, a shepherd, looking after his flock, full of love and compassion.

John XXIII had spent his priestly life as a diplomat, not a pastor, and yet perhaps that helped shape him into a pastor even more than a series of parishes would have. He began as the secretary to the bishop of his own diocese. He served in the medical corps of the Italian army during World War I, as a draftee. After the war, he served in Rome as head of the Italian office that raised funds for the foreign missions. In 1925 he was consecrated archbishop of Areopolis and began a decade-long assignment as papal nuncio to Turkey and Greece, followed by nine years as papal nuncio to Bulgaria. At the end of 1944, he was named papal nuncio to France. In 1953 he was made patriarch of Venice and a cardinal.

John XXIII was a man with a sense of humor. Answering a journalist’s question once about how many people worked in the Vatican, he said “about half of them!” He was the first Pope in almost a century to leave the Vatican. His first two visits were to a children’s hospital and to a prison, reminiscent of our present Pope Francis. He received visitors quite different from those of previous popes, meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury, the first visit of an Archbishop of Canterbury to the Vatican in 600 years. He received the atheist son-in-law of former Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev.

His election as Pope came only after 11 ballots. It was generally believed that he was a

compromise candidate, an “interim” Pope, because, at the age of 76, he wasn’t expected to serve long. What a misconception that idea proved to be! Indeed, he didn’t serve long, dying on June 3, 1963. But in that short time, he changed the Church for all time, starting with the comment that the Church should “open the window and let in some fresh air.” Contrary to what some thought, he was not trying to change basic Church doctrine, which he totally supported, but rather to restate the Church’s beliefs in a way that would reach the understanding of modern people. The Church doctrines were not to change, only the ways of expressing them. Vatican II was a pastoral council.

The Pope’s lifetime spiritual journey was set forth in his book, “Journal of a Soul”. He began his journal as a 14-year-old seminarian, and completed it in 1962 when he was an 81-year-old pope. It was published after his death, and I read it not too long after that. I’m doing a re-read now - it’s worth it. I have often recommended it to people as help on their spiritual journey. In that book he set down six brief maxims for attaining perfection. They are:

1. Desire to be virtuous - and so pleasing to God.
2. Direct all things and thoughts, as well as actions, to the increase, the service and the glory of Holy Church.
3. Recognize that I have been sent here by God - and therefore remain perfectly serene about all that happens...
4. Entrust myself at all times to Divine Providence.
5. Always acknowledge my own nothingness.
6. Always arrange my day in an intelligent and orderly manner.

As a seminarian, he wrote the following:  
*“Jesus, here I am once more . . . . The Church has called me; you invite me: Lo, I come. I have no pretensions; I have no preconceived plans; I am trying to strip myself of all that is self; I am no longer my own. My soul is open before you, like a blank sheet of paper. Write on it what you will, O Lord: I am yours.”*



For names of and contact information of Regional Council members, appointed Chairs and District/Language Groups go to:

<http://www.stfrancisregion.org/About-St-Francis-Region/Executive-Council>

To submit articles and/or photographs for ***The Joy of Francis***, contact Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, OFS at [cylmaljan@earthlink.net](mailto:cylmaljan@earthlink.net)

Volunteers to translate this and future issues into Korean, Spanish and Vietnamese are needed. Contact Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, OFS at [cylmaljan@earthlink.net](mailto:cylmaljan@earthlink.net)