



The Joy of Francis

"Together for the Gospel!"

St. Francis Region - Southern California, USA

Secular Franciscan Order
fall/winter, 2005 - Vol. 13, No. 3
<http://www.stfrancisregion.org>

**A Multi-Culture Perspective of
in the Secular Franciscan Order
by;
Rock DeSpain,
Regional Minister**

**St. Francis Region held its First Annual
Multi-Cultural Conference August 20th,
2005 at the St. Francis Korean Catholic
Center in Torrance, CA.**

.... here was a golden opportunity to get to know one another better by sharing the heritages and traditions of our cultures

My perspective as a Secular Franciscan has evolved over the last 5 years that I have lived as the Regional Minister of St. Francis Region in southern California, USA. I have met many new friends, brothers and sisters who were born in different countries and speak a different language than I do. The language part was not difficult to

overcome but was still problematic. What I found more difficult was how to rethink my relationship with my new friends, brothers and sisters.

The adjustment to my thinking revolved around the fact that there was something with a deeper meaning to these relationships. I soon discovered that there was a vast difference in our cultures. I have always loved new challenges and this one was no different. So, I sat back and watched for a while and observed how each of the cultures processed their dynamics in family, fraternity and the secular world. It was exciting to me to see the differences and similarities in each culture I observed. Yet, there seemed to be something holding each culture back. So, I had to go back to the think tank inside my head and do some processing myself.

What was going on here in St. Francis Region? Why weren't things moving faster than they were? After many conversations where I was asked a lot of questions, things started to make sense. My brothers and sisters were bonded together in their own culture for many reasons, language, spiritual and family values, security, support, and business opportunities were among the many reasons I discovered. I was even surprised at myself because I could understand that my brothers and sisters were moving in the right direction, yet, there was still the aspect of a multi-cultural region. How could we work together to utilize this huge asset of diversity? How could barriers be broken down so we could be more of a family? The answer was soon obvious to me, better communication with each other.

Getting to know each other, yes, really know one another was a necessity. I also realized that the differences in the cultures were strengths, not weaknesses. By getting to know the cultural heritage of each group, we could better understand each other. Wow! What a revelation that was to me. It was simple but not an easy task to accomplish.

So with the help of the Regional Executive Council, we brainstormed and discussed many ideas on how we could bring the cultures together. After discussing this, we concluded many realities. The most important one being, that Franciscanism is in itself a culture, that this was a culture that we all are a part of and had in common. We all needed to understand that this was an important fact of our chosen Franciscan vocations.

Another huge revelation to us was that we should not have an attitude of absorbing the cultures but one of encouragement for each culture to maintain the positive traditions that bond their families closer together and utilize them in making our region better. So, here was a golden opportunity to get to know one another better by sharing the heritages and traditions of our cultures. We might even adopt traditions from each other's cultures into our own. Many of us who have European heritages have let many of the positive traditions in our cultures die. What an awful thing to happen.

So in St. Francis Region, we had our first annual Multi-cultural Conference on August 20, 2005. This was another golden opportunity to enhance the life of each other in a Franciscan culture of love, a conference where everyone will had an opportunity to give input by sharing their innermost being with each other. This is an inclusive long range plan for St. Francis Region and hopefully a roadmap for others to learn from and follow.

I love this job.
Pax Et Bonum
Rock DeSpain, SFO
Minister – St. Francis Region

**Don't miss our ANNUAL SFO
REGIONAL GATHERING
on October 8th 2005
(See p. 2. for details)**

From our Regional Minister, Rock De Spain SFO

Our Region Council invites everyone to the annual Regional Gathering.

PRAYER – COMMUNITY MISSION - MINISTRY

Our featured speaker at our Regional Gathering on October 8th will be **Vinal Van Benthem, SFO**. Vinal was one of the speakers at the “The Blessings of Penance: Our Past, Our Future – A Reflection on the Rules and Ways of Life of Secular Franciscan” Conference at St. Bonaventure University in 2003. Speakers at that conference came from as far as Rome to participate. I was there and I can attest to the fact that she will make you think. I will miss this year’s gathering because I will be in the Philippines. We are building a house for our daughter-in-law Imelda’s family and it will be completed in late September. I will be there for the blessing of the house and a memorial Mass for my son who passed away last year. In the Irish tradition, we will have a celebration of his life with my extended family and their neighbors there.

ANNUAL REGIONAL SFO GATHERING St. Francis Region of Southern California

Saturday, October 8, 2005 - 9:00 AM – 4:00PM
Gather at 9:00AM for rolls and coffee
Bring your own lunch – Drinks furnished by Region

**Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Center
900 W. La Habra Blvd, La Habra, CA**

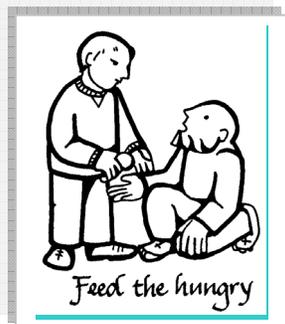
*Featured Speaker: **Vinal Van Benthem, SFO**,
Author: On the Way to Work: Stories and Reflections.
Mystic, CT : Twenty-Third Publications, 2004.*

“On the Way to Work is about How we can make a meaningful connection between Sunday and Monday. Vinal was a speaker at the 2003 National SFO Conference.

**God calls us to come together and share our vocations and our love for each other. Please encourage all members from your fraternities, including those in formation, to join us at our annual gathering.
(Rock DeSpain, Regional Minister)**

YOUR REGIONAL FAMILY LOOKS FORWARD TO SEEING EVERYONE.

Peace, love and prayers - Rock DeSpain, SFO, Minister – St. Francis Region



Emerging Fraternity Follows in the Footsteps of St. Francis.

News from San Lorenzo Ruiz Emerging Community (Los Angeles)
Manuel Graciano mgraciano_007@yahoo.com

On July 30th, 12 members of the San Lorenzo Ruiz Emerging Community went on a Franciscan mission to Tijuana to visit and give clothing, blankets, toys and monetary donation to **Father Jeffrey David** and his very poor parishioners at Nstra. Sra. De la Encarnacion parish. Fr. David's parish includes 7 churches, 3 of which are still under construction and he needs a lot of help both for his poor parishioners and for construction of the churches. Being able to share fellowship with him was a great reward a great blessing knowing his very busy schedule as Editor of Prayer in the Home Reflections with worldwide distribution and pastor of several churches. They are planning to do this again. (Well done, brothers and sisters in Francis).

On August 6th, 2005 the annual pilgrimage to St. Clare was highlighted with a fraternity meeting and Ceremony of Welcoming for a couple at the Friar's Chapel at Mission Santa Barbara and a surprise visit with **Fr. William Brand, OFM** at the Recreation Room of the Infirmary where he received all 17 of us. Father is doing well and looking quite well and gave us an audience of 45 minutes with his good sense of humor that has always been a part of him. The visit culminated with attendance at the Mass celebrating the fiesta of the Mission and of course the beautiful novena to St. Clare.



(Editor's note: The San Lorenzo Ruiz Emerging Community holds their meetings at Angelus Plaza, a Senior Citizens Complex at 255 South Hill Street in downtown Los Angeles. There is something here to be learned from our emerging communities!)

A letter sent to our Region Council from Fr. Stephen Gross, OFM Conv.

May the Lord Grant you Peace!

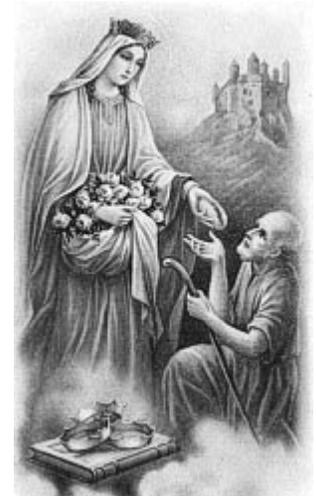
Dear Fellow-Franciscans and Servant Leaders in St. Francis Region-SFO,

In 2009, the Franciscan Family throughout the world will be celebrating the 900th Anniversary of the Founding of the Franciscan Movement (1209). Soon we shall be hearing all about recommendations as to how we might celebrate this 800th Centennial.

In 2007, the Franciscan Family throughout the world is already beginning to announce and prepare for the 800th Centennial of the Birth of St. Elizabeth of Hungary – Royal patroness of the Secular Franciscan Order and the Third Order Regular (SFO/T.O.R.).

Here is the first of many such announcements for this 2007 celebration that comes from the General Headquarters of the Third Order Regular.

Please read this announcement, share it with the Sisters and Brothers and begin to reflect on how we might celebrate the 800th Anniversary of the Birth of St. Elizabeth of Hungary in our Region and Fraternities. Remember that this is only the first of many announcements and we are certain to hear from **the Minister General of the SFO, Encarnacion del Pozo, SFO.**



St. Elizabeth of Hungary: In the world but not of the world!

Editor's note: The announcement mentioned in Father Steve's letter is from **Fr. Llija Zivkovic, TOR**, Minister General of the Third Order Regular. It 8 pages long and contains the life of St. Elizabeth as well as practical suggestions for the celebration of this important centennial. I have tried to summarize it here, but if you would like a copy of the document, **Fr. Steve** will have a copy for each fraternity at the Region Gathering. Ministers are asked to pick up a copy or have a representative pick up a copy of the article and share it with their fraternities. (Tertius Ordo Regularis Sancti Francisci, Minister Generalis (Prot. No. 23-2005))

Wishing you the
++Blessings of the Most High,
I am
Fraternally yours,

Fr. Steve, OFM, Conv.
Spiritual Assistant
St. Francis Region

Excerpts from the Minister General's Letter:

We would like to involve every part of our Order in the spiritual preparation for the celebration of the 8th Centennial of the birth of **St. Elizabeth of Hungary**....

St. Elizabeth was influenced by the preaching of the friars and in a very real way she incarnates the meaning of what lay spirituality is all about. She loved her husband tenderly while dedicating herself to works of mercy. Her tender love was also demonstrated in her desire to serve Christ present in the poor as for her, to wash and clothe the poor was to wash and clothe Christ Himself.

After her husband died, she dedicated herself to renouncing "those things that the Lord advises to abandon in the Gospels", and she and her companions donned grey colored clothing. Her external works of mercy were the fruits of a profound contemplative spirit.

She was not ashamed to work with her hands and would spin wool to make clothes for the poor. She used her own money to build a hospital and to bring food

to the poor. The famous incident of the bread that she was carrying to the poor that was changed into roses (pictured above) has become a classic throughout Europe.

With St. Elizabeth we find ourselves at the dawn of the active apostolic life for the laity in the Church. Through Elizabeth (woman, spouse, mother and apostle to the poor) we also see what the characteristics of Franciscan lay life really are. We trust that with the help of the Lord, this celebration will encourage a spiritual renewal of the Order based on the spirituality of evangelical conversion and the works of mercy which were so dear to our holy Patron....

This document ends with some practical suggestions on how we as fraternities and as a Region might prepare for the celebration of the 8th Centennial of the birth of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. Be sure to get your Fraternity's copy at Region.

Formation

Another Miracle in St. Francis Region: One More Birthday, One More Christmas

Kata Tan, SFO, Regional Formation Director, at
hantayo31@hotmail.com.

(NOTE: LAST July 2005, we knocked on the doors of the hearts and souls of the SFO in the St. Francis Region for prayers and support. The response was overwhelming! My family and I are truly grateful for all your support. In gratitude, the following is a 'thank you' letter from the recipient of your generosity: my younger brother, Renato. Again, our thanks to each and every one of you! -- Kata Tan, SFO)

The year 2005 did not start out very well for me. My health was deteriorating and we could not easily afford good medical attention here. By June, I thought I was going to die. I was rushed to a government-run hospital one evening, here in Manila, Philippines. When my mother-in-law spoke with my parents over the phone, she had only this to say to them: his condition is very bad....aren't you coming over?



I had stomach ulcer, liver complications, tuberculosis, pneumonia and I was shaking all over. I was skin and bones but I could not eat because I had sores all over my throat. I could not eat more than 2 tablespoonful of soft food at a time. I was trembling all over that I could not even hold up a spoon. My wife decided that I had to be moved out of the government-run hospital because the facility was very dirty and could not provide me with the treatment I needed.

On my fifth day of my confinement, I had the very wonderful, pleasant surprise of seeing my parents again, after 10 long years! They just flew in from Los Angeles to be at my bedside during this time. From the look on my mother's face, I saw a fear I never saw before in her eyes: the fear that her child would pass on to the next life before she does! Mastering all the strength and energy I had left, I managed to sit up with joy, ready to embrace my mother and father for being there with me at a time when I needed them most. But I could not embrace them. I was very ill and I did not want to pass on my sickness to them.

Still, talking was painfully difficult for me. I tired easily even after a brief conversation. I could not breathe well. I had to keep my face cover on often so as not to transfer the germs to others and for me not to acquire other germs that might worsen my condition. I was so weak, I did not even have the energy to think about how we could possibly afford the medications that I needed badly, much less the hospitalization bills. My family is not well off and all these expenses are too much for them too.



But my parents came with the news that we are receiving support from a lot of very good people: people who do not know us opened their hearts and souls to us! People from the Secular Franciscan Order of Southern California! Lots of prayers were being sent my way....our way. Heaven was bombarded with petitions and more petitions for my recovery. These unceasing prayers brought the miracle to our family, to me. The prayers helped my system to respond positively to the treatment I was receiving. By the start of my third week of confinement, the doctors told us that I was starting to show signs of responding to the medications. I began to be able to sit up by myself without assistance, I started to be able to eat by myself, and my trembling was completely gone.

But my appetite had not returned because everything I ate or drank were still tasteless. I was told that initially, there was the \$400 pledged from among the Secular Franciscans. Then there was \$850. The hope of the person who started the fund drive was to be able to raise at least \$1,000. But the generosity of the Secular Franciscans in Southern California was so immense that a total of about \$4,250 was raised!!! This heartwarming response is so overwhelming that we our prayers were all prayers of gratitude and thanksgiving! The donations were used to pay for my hospital bills and medicines that totaled more than 175,000 Philippine pesos (almost \$4,000). The rest of the donations we received, including from office colleagues, family friends, and loans, are still being spent for my continued medications and treatments which will last for a year or so.



At the start of my confinement, the doctors informed my family and I that I will need to undergo physical therapy in order to help get back on my feet again, be able to stand and walk on my own. But the prayers and petitions were heard in heaven that I did not need the therapy and I was able to stand and walk again some almost two weeks before I was released from the hospital!

By the time you read this, I am back home again. Eating well again, my appetite back like as if I had not been very ill at all. I am now able to do minor household chores, talk on the phone with my family without tiring easily, cook my breakfast (since my wife leaves for work very early), and make sure I get to take all my medications and vitamins as prescribed by the doctors. Life is slowly coming back. Every now and then, I tell myself, a miracle has taken place here. I am living a second life! All those medicines, all those prayers, all those positive thoughts, all those financial support! God is merciful, God

financial support! God is merciful, God is forgiving. God is very good! He uses 'strangers', that although they don't know me and I don't know them, this did not deter them from extending their goodness and compassion to support this soul! A couple of months ago, I was not sure if I would reach my next birthday. I was not sure if I would get to spend another Christmas with my wife. I was not sure if I would be able to hear the voices of my parents and brothers and sister one more time.

**Our Region collected over
\$4,000.00 to help Kata and her
family. (Rock)**

Last August 28, I spent my 45th birthday with my wife and her family. I spent hours on the phone speaking with my parents and siblings in Los Angeles. I know I will be celebrating Christmas with a different perspective in life. A perspective full of hope and joy and GRATITUDE! I have been asking how I can express my gratitude and be able to thank each and every one of you who helped, who prayed, who sent their well wishes. I was told: the best way to say 'Thank you' is to GET WELL!

I know that there will be more birthdays and more Christmases for me. For all this and more, I AM TRULY GRATEFUL AND DEEPLY INDEBTED to all the Secular Franciscans of Southern California who came to my aid and support when I needed it most. THANK YOU VERY MUCH TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU!

God bless you all and I am sure He is blessing you immensely for your goodness and compassion.

RENATO LUCENA GARCIA
Manila, Philippines

The poem below as sent to us from **Father Steve** who writes:

St. Clare Fraternity, Santa Ana, CA:

"The following was in the Anaheim Vietnamese Fraternity Newsletter. You decide if it's good for the Regional Newsletter." (*And of course it is too beautiful not to share with everyone.*) Fr. Steve went on to write, "**St. Clare Fraternity's** newsletter is written in Vietnamese, except for two pages. This is one of those two pages."



So the man went off and washed and came back able to see

God Uses Us

God, grant me the Serenity to accept the people I cannot change,
the Courage to change the one I can, and the Wisdom to know it's me!

The next time you feel like God can't use you, remember:

Noah was a drunk
Abraham was too old
Jacob was a liar
Leah was ugly
Joseph was abused
Moses had a speech problem
Gideon was afraid

Jonah ran from God
Naomi was a widow
Job went bankrupt
John the Baptist ate bugs!
Peter denied Christ
The disciples fell asleep while praying
Martha worried about everything
The Samaritan woman was divorced, more than once!
Zaccheus was short
Paul was too religious
Timothy had an ulcer and
Lazarus was dead!

Samson had long hair and was a womanizer
Rahab was a prostitute
Jeremiah and Timothy were too young
David had an affair and was a murderer
Elijah was suicidal

**So no more excuses now! God can use you to your full potential.
Besides, you aren't the message -- you are the messenger!!**



In the August issue of the Pax et Bonum, (San Damiano Fraternity, Palm Springs, CA) **Sherry Elliott, SFO**, Family Commission Chair wrote: Here is the Mission Statement of the Family Commission:

The mission of the Family Commission of the National Fraternity of the SFO in the USA is to witness that the family is a sanctuary of acceptance, support and respect which encourages the total growth of its individual members and nurtures them in the spirit of peace and love, enabling them to be aware that they are children of God, and to let peace and love flow out to others. I think that our first mission field is under our own roof. IF YOU ARE NOT ALREADY DOING SO, PRAY BEFORE AND AFTER MEALS. PRAY THE ROSARY TOGETHER REGULARLY. Be

a good example to your own family members. Sometimes we forget that our family should come first. How do we expect to be an example for others when we aren't for those across the hall?

St. Francis prays: "O Holy Father, protect those in your name whom you have given to me in the world." (1 Letter to all the Faithful, 8-14)

THEY LIVED AS FRANCIS LIVED!

SISTER DEATH CALLS THESE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS HOME



Marguerite Blackwell Stein (80) (Oct. 16, 1924–Aug. 24, 2005)
Marge was pictured in the spring issue of the Joy of Francis wearing her Padre's shirt. She was a member of the Immaculate Conception Fraternity, San Diego and was a former minister of the Junipero Serra Region. Marge did many things in her life including raising 5 children, earning 4 academic degrees. She served in the Navy and worked as a civilian with the War Crimes Tribunal. She entered the convent when her children were raised and later left and became a Secular

Franciscan. She served as national canonist for the SFO before returning to San Diego in 1994 to work as a judge for the Roman Catholic Diocese. And she loved the Padres!!! **Larry Frasor, SFO Bob Herbelin, SFO and Sylvia Paoli, SFO** represented the Region Council at her funeral.

Kenneth Washburn Milner SFO, (78) (July 8, 2005) (St. Francis and Clare Fraternity, Hemet) **Kenneth is remembered for his selfless dedication to making life better for the less fortunate in the community.** Ken served in the Navy as a corpsmen, graduated from USC and worked in the aerospace industry for 35 years. Ken's greatest pride was his wife, Agnes, his seven daughters, 23 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren. In 1984 he received the "Good Samaritan" award from St. Irenaeus Catholic Church in Cypress, for being the founder of the H.O.P.E. Ministry, which served the poor, hungry, homeless, sick and elderly. Kenneth enjoyed volunteering in the Catholic community as a Eucharistic Minister, Legion of Mary member, and Ministry to the Elderly. He also enjoyed writing stories, oil painting and his computer. **Rock DeSpain, SFO,** sent this note: Ken was a Secular Franciscan for over 54 years and served many of those years on councils, formation teams and newsletter editor. Many of us remember his vast knowledge of Francis and Clare, and his ability to recall many of the stories. May his soul rest in peace!



Each Wednesday, **Vincent Buonassisi** drove to Riverside to buy a truckload of food for 10 cents a pound and then he would give it all away.

Vincent (Charles) Buonassisi SFO (63) (May 2, 1932- July 22, 05) Holy Spirit Fraternity, Claremont. The Editor received an envelope from Azusa with no return address. In the envelope was a copy of a newspaper article written several years ago by Karen Turley, Staff Writer for some paper. It was a testimony to Vincent. Here is part of the article: "Each Wednesday, **Vincent Buonassisi** drove to Riverside to buy a truckload of food for 10 cents a pound and then he would give it all away. Since 1978, he said he has not worked for anything other than room and board—and the satisfaction of helping others." The article told how Vincent worked with the Society of Vincent De Paul in every capacity from distributing food to parishes throughout the valley to picking up donations and government surplus food. "Buonassisi sees (what he does with the poor) as an outgrowth of his devotion to a Franciscan lifestyle. "I gave up the world and all its allurements. I led my life to help people." "The article ended with the announcement of his upcoming marriage to Judith, co-manager of the thrift store. She shares his devotion to aiding others. **(An angel took him!)**" Wrote his wife, Judith Buonassisi).



WORK

Francesco Chiappelli, OFS
Work Commissioner, (818)458-3676
St. Francis of Assisi Region
fchiappelli@aol.com

As we go to press, Francesco is going into the hospital for open heart surgery. Please add him to your prayer list so that Francesco is back helping us with the Work Commission soon.

News from the Fraternities:



St. Anthony Fraternity, Long Beach continues to support Casa Franciscana and **Father Elias, OFM** sent another "Thank you" for their generosity." note. They are planning a Lasagna dinner on September 10 and we look forward to hearing more about that.

St. Louis the King Fraternity, Santa Barbara is holding elections for a new Council on Nov. 5th. Take pictures, St. Louis and send them to the newsletter editor or to our webmaster, **Mike Morris, SFO**. By the way, St. Louis fraternity holds their formation classes in the Assisi Lounge and their Mass in the Serra Chapel. They are blessed to be so close to all that the Franciscans cherish.

St. Francis Fraternity, Huntington Beach has a new minister. **Linda M. Nelson, SFO** was professed in 2005 and served as their Secretary for 12 years. After her husband died, with her brother in Virginia and her mother ill, St. Francis Fraternity became her family. Linda has a degree in Ecology (very fitting for the SFO) and a MS degree from Cornell. Linda works for the Orange County Housing Authority and is active in La Purisima Parish in Orange. Her personal vision statement is this: "Discover God's presence in my life each moment; Discover God's will and act upon it; and Share my journey of faith, hope and love with others." We look forward to meeting you at the Annual Regional Gathering. (Submitted by **Gabriel Jon, SFO**, St. Francis Fraternity.)



St. Joseph Fraternity, Los Angeles is also preparing for elections as well as an **October Day of Recollection**. They ask for all our prayers. St. Joseph's newsletter is 8 pages long, single spaced, full of prayers and joyful news of the neighboring fraternities and all their brothers and sisters in Francis. They celebrated three anniversaries of profession in July that totaled 106 years of Franciscan Living. **Gerald and Doris Lubin SFOs**, 27 years each; and **Teresa Steinmetz SFO** 52 years professed. (**Mike Sanchez SFO** is the editor).

St. Padre Pio Fraternity and St. Francis and Clare Group, Hemet, Moreno Valley mourns the death of their brother **Ken Milner SFO** (see page 6)

yet they continue their ministries with the same enthusiasm Ken had over the years. They have a recycling center (*I wonder how it works*) and Dixie's husband is helping with that project. They also helped staff a baby shower for Veronica's home at St. Patrick's Parish. Stephanie, Denise and Dixie worked the Masses and collected many baby gifts and over \$300 for the home. Peggy, the lady who has held these baby showers for years says that these unborn children will know you when you meet in heaven.

"This morning my wife asked me what Secular Franciscans do and I told her that I did not know. Now I can tell her. They help each other.

(Quote by a parishioner at Our Lady of Assumption Church, Claremont).

Holy Spirit Fraternity, Claremont also lost a brother this summer, **Vincent (Charles) Buonassisi SFO** Formation Director and

founding member of their fraternity. **Judith B. Mussatto SFO**, Minister wrote:

"Many people, fraternity members and non, have been helping Judy Bounassisi go through the necessary motions of dealing with the death in the family. **Pat Stellenberg, SFO** accompanied Judy to the funeral home. Dolores organized caravans in order to transport Vincent and Judy's earthly possessions to Claremont in preparation for a yard sale. As I helped, a parishioner from Our Lady of the Assumption Church move some plants off his truck, he said to me, "This morning my wife asked me what Secular Franciscans do and I told her that I did not know. Now I can tell her. They help each other."

San Juan Capistrano Fraternity, Laguna Niguel listened to a reading from the *Omnibus of Sources* at their August meeting and the sharing that followed the reading apparently was outstanding. A quote from **Tom Cooney, SFO** Editor of *The Dove* their newsletter "In fact, it was one of the most enlivened meetings I have attended. What energized the meeting? We heard a real life story of angelic intervention orchestrated by God to help a brother see the evil of pride; how pride can destroy one's vocation if left unchecked. The sharing afterward proved how relevant those words were in our lives today. I think we are on to something. **Let's hear more from the *Omnibus!*"**



Ecology Field Trip Taken by Immaculata Fraternity, Riverside.
from: John Ubelhor SFO, Ecology Commission Chair

The aim of this trip was to help our fraternity to recognize and form an appreciation for God's many miracles of life and beauty (and sustenance of plants, animals, all things) even in a seemingly hostile environment like our California desert. We came away changed in some small way by our time in the desert, and also a little closer to our Fraternity brothers and sisters... John Ubelhor SFO Johnubelhor@aol.com

Our Lord calls us to be faithful stewards of the earth and all its creatures. To become more environmentally minded as good Franciscans. The Ecology commission of Immaculata Fraternity, Riverside, organized a field trip to explore Joshua Tree National Park and see the desert wildflowers in March. The outing was attended by 9 Seculars and their families.

The day started off with Mass at Queen of Angels Parish in Riverside and carpools were formed for our drive to Joshua Tree, We spent the morning exploring the northern areas of the park (which is high desert environment) by car, and then took to the foot trails for some short nature walks. After all the rain we had this spring, the Yuccas, Ocotillos, Agave plants, numerous types of cacti & all the varieties of desert plants were saturated with moisture and abundant.

We also saw rabbits, ground squirrels, red-tail hawks & many types of birds, various insects and lizards (no snakes though). We climbed around on some of the rock formations, which were so interesting and beautiful and even found a grassy area watered by a natural spring.

The sky was clear, air so clean and filled with the wild fragrances of the desert in springtime. We then went to the Visitor Center where we saw some exhibits and a film on the desert ecosystem and history of the park. We then participated in something I particularly enjoy, the traditional "bring your own and something to share" SFO lunch. Nobody went away hungry. →



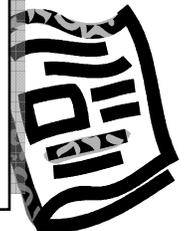
Left to right: Joice Quinsaas, SFO, Jim Rodgers; Mickie Rogers, SFO; Nina Allison, Candidate; Mary Pat Decoteau, SFO, Maria De. J. Siordia Candidate, John Ubelhor, SFO.

→In the afternoon we drove down to the lower elevations of the park...the wildflowers which blanketed the desert floor were overwhelming; the color and smells definitely worth our trip. Walking a ways from the road out into the desert, our group of Franciscans and family formed a circle for a most appropriate time of prayer, praise and thanksgiving.

(August 22, 2005)- Pictures sent in by **Mary Pat Decoteau, SFO.**



Jo Ann Hardwick, SFO is our new Peace and Justice Commission Chair. Ray said he may put his two cents in now and then. Ray was recently elected Minister of Immaculata Fraternity



Region Notices:

**Next Ministers
MEETING
January 13, 14, 15, 2006**

**Poverello of Assisi
1519 Woodworth St.
San Fernando, CA 91340**

HELP WANTED:

St. Francis Region is looking for an editor for the Joy of Francis Newsletter. Last spring we asked if anyone was interested, and no one stepped forward. Please pray to the Holy Spirit that we find a new editor soon, as Pat Yunker SFO is planning on retiring and moving out of state.

All you editors out there who work with your fraternity's newsletter (past and present) have wonderful skills and any or all could do this job. Please let our Region Minister know if you will step forward and help our Region.
sforock-jan@dslextreme.com

PEACE AND JUSTICE



Jesus, Are You Serious?

In this short article I ask you to join me in taking the risk of love, to let your life be tran-sfo-rmed by God's love. God will give us the courage to open the door, courage to live in a peaceful way even in dangerous times and places.

**Ray Hardwick, SFO
Peace and Justice Commission**

Listen to Jesus with new ears and open hearts: "I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly. To the man who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek too; to the man who takes your cloak from you, do not refuse your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and do not ask for your property back from the man who robs you. Treat others as you would have them treat you." (Luke 6: 27-31)

Jesus, are you serious? You can't really expect me to live like that. No reasonable person would do that, and I know you are a reasonable person. You must be speaking allegory, no mature, intelligent person would respond like that.

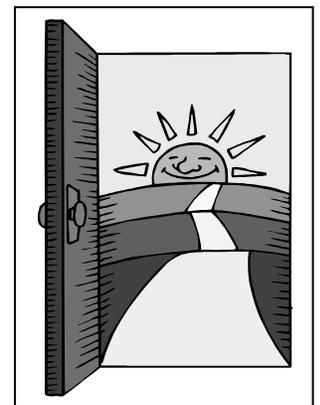
Jim Forest tells the story of a man in a very big city who lived alone in an apartment behind a door with four locks and bolts. When home he watched TV, which confirmed his fears that everything was war, murder, rape and robbery, or natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina. One night there was a knock at the door. No one was expected. He turned off the TV and the lights and stood in terror on the other side of the door. The only light came from under the door. He could see the shadow of someone standing in the hallway. There was another knock, he held his breath. Then the sound of paper being pushed under the door and steps walking away. He waited, and then turned on the light. On the floor was an envelope, and in the envelope was an unsigned Valentine card.

John's gospel opens with the contrast of darkness and light. "All that came to be had life in him and that life was the light of all people, a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower." (John 1:4-5) Yet two thousand years later our world is still dark. We experience the darkness as anxiety, fear, loneliness and locked doors. We easily believe the worst of others, and readily forget the goodness that is in them. On the other side of our darkness is someone standing in the light waiting to deliver a Valentine card.

I'm not saying that there is nothing to fear, no need for locks. Our fear is reasonable, our darkness is reasonable, and our locks and weapons can be explained rationally. We may all die of reasonably made decisions that launch a terrorist nuclear weapon in a suitcase that has been designed by the most rational people on earth.

In this short article I ask you to join me in taking the risk of love, to let your life be tran-sfo-rmed by God's love. **God will give us the courage to open the door**, courage to live in a peaceful way even in dangerous times and places.

At Cana, Jesus turned water into wine, a great miracle indeed, but his greatest miracle is turning darkness into light, frightened hearts into courageous hearts, violent hands into healing hands and enmity into love. Join me in the risk; join me in the adventure of living the gospel in the way of Francis. Ray



From: **St. Joseph's SFO Fraternity's** Newsletter, May 2005 (Los Angeles)
St. Joseph's Fraternity has three (3) *Emerging Communities*: St. Lorenzo Ruiz in LA, **Manuel Graciano SFO**, Leader, St. Mary of the Angels, Woodland Hills, **Bob Garon, SFO**, Leader and St. Benedicts in Montebello, **Helen Hernandez SFO**, Leader. (See page 1 for an article on St. Lorenzo Ruiz.) Between the three communities and St. Joseph's Fraternity, there were eleven Inquirers and Candidates in May. (Also, we have a new priest from the Franciscan families in L.A. **Bob Garon, SFO and Rose Garon's** son was ordained this summer. Rose is a Candidate with St. Mary of the Angels Emerging Community.



In the Eyes of a Child

By **Judy Gaspar**,
SFO, Minister
Little Portion
Fraternity,
Santa Ana, CA

One Sunday afternoon, I had one of those miraculous moments where time seems to stop and there was a sudden realization that I was exactly where I was supposed to be at that moment in time. No, it wasn't an experience of nature, or fighting off ants, or even wondering about why weeds grow more prolifically than do the flowers and ground coverings. No, this time it involves children.

Sunday the newly forming SFO group at St. Joseph parish went to visit the Catholic Worker. **Leia Smith** gave her usual tour, talked to us for about an hour, and then sent us out to do what we wanted to do there. Some went to cut up fruit and veggies for dinner. Three of us went out to meet the folks in the backyard. Before I left the upstairs, however, Leia handed me two boxes of crayons and two coloring books. "Tear out the pages to let the children color," she said.

I told the other two that Leia apparently wanted us to be with the kids. Rita, a pre-school teacher of the "under two year olds," said that she was shy, so she stood back and watched. Shauna and I turned two benches over by a long table and the children appeared. The boys chose pages from the Tonka coloring book and the girls picked pages from "The Bratz." We had eight children sitting around the table coloring and chatting away. Augustine, a fifth grader, is going to be a veterinarian. He loves cats. He colored an entire picture, after doing a follow the dots. When he finished his masterpiece, he showed it off proudly to us. The colors were bright. He stayed in all the lines. After showing it off, he offered to share the

other side of his page, another picture, with another little boy who walked up. I was wishing I had some tape to put that picture up on the wall. That's what I would have done at home with my child or grandchild.

Augustine had a bright look about him. He is still full of hope and dreams. He and his brother were just new to the Catholic Worker and his unfulfilled wish at this point was simple: he wanted to meet Bob. Bob is a friendly, lazy black and white cat, who lounged about our meeting table upstairs, demanding petting from each one of us.

I looked into the eyes of these children who are no different from my own grandchildren, except that life is being unfair to them. They don't have any place to call home. They share space with 100 or more other people. The Catholic Worker is their residence for now, but what about their future? Augustine is eleven. What hope is there for him? Will his dreams die, one by one? Will he even dare to dream pretty soon? Will the light in his eyes grow dim? What is his future? I cannot get his face or the faces of any of the other children out of my mind. What we did for forty five minutes was so simple. Those kids were so appreciative.

I wonder if Jesus was thinking of them when He said, "Could you not spend one hour with me?" I found the face of Christ in these kids.

This weekend, join me in the fast and prayer to end poverty. It's the least I can do. Augustine and the rest of those children need our help. They are entitled to their dreams and God knows, they like all of God's children, are entitled to love, food, and shelter.

*Submitted to Glad Tidings,
Little Portion Fraternity*

Excerpts from TAU-USA, Autumn 2005, Frances Wicks, SFO, Editor.



The Vine and the Branches: Carol Gentile, SFO, National Minister

"Our vision is to see the world as Christ would have it, to hear the sounds of peace, not violence as Jesus desired it, to touch another with love and respect, as Jesus touched us, to smell the clean air, as Jesus brings the freshness and newness to us, and to speak the Good news as Jesus brought it to us. In this way, we shall bring it to all our brothers and sisters throughout the world so that we, together will form the perfect Body and Blood of Christ through that grape on the vine. **We must be his hands**, His feet, His voice and we must put action to this vision to make the dream come true."

We must be his hands!

(This statue of St. Francis of Assisi with missing hands is at St. Theresa Church in Palm Springs, CA.)

Carolyn Paxton SFO

Commission Chair

ECOLOGY

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The world in which we live is a fragile world created by God and sustained by God but a world where far too often our domination of the world has led to destruction. Sometimes domination is necessary, as the instinct for self-preservation suggests. But sometimes it is fostered by greed, by the urge to exert one's own superiority and power to control. We show our superiority by the cars we drive, the homes in which we live, the conveniences we have and even the clothes we wear and the food we eat. In these instances when taken to excess domination is no longer necessary it is evil.

We are people who depend more and more on ourselves and less and less on God. The ancient Israelites were keenly aware of their vulnerability; they recognized their dependence for their very survival, on the God who brought them out of Egypt, the God who did and continued to do wondrous things on their behalf. They recognized their dependence on God's creation, on the elements, on the plants, on the animals, and on one another.

But along with their consciousness of their dependence on God and creation was also an awareness that unless they sought to dominate certain aspects of creation, they would die. Unless they sought land associated with water, with rivers and / or rainfall, they would be destroyed by drought. Without rain and moist soil plants would not grow. Unless they killed and ate certain animals they would be destroyed by famine. Because so many women did not survive childbirth and the mortality rate was high among the newborn one man was allowed to impregnate many women so their numbers would be increased, otherwise they too like other creatures may cease to exist.

The distance between us and our ancestors in faith is a distance of consciousness brought about by time and location, by differences in what we understand to be threats, by differences in how we spend our time, and even by our affluence. Most of us do not daily feel our physical survival threatened by drought or by famine. Surely we lack a daily consciousness of our need for

Caring For a Fragile Earth

women to reproduce if we as a species are to continue to exist.

And yet for believers God is not superfluous. God is the giver of life and all good things. We do, in fact, continue to depend daily on all things that sustain our continued existence, in spite of the fact that our modern first world consciousness has come to take these things for granted. Today, nothing rings more true of this than the hurricane named Katrina that devastated much of the gulf coast and destroyed the lives of so many.

Was the magnitude of Katrina an unfortunate natural disaster or was it something we contributed too through our life styles, modern conveniences and all the things we think of as progress? It is at this point I want to explain about global warming; what it is, what it does and what part do we play in God's plan for his earth.

For the first time since the dawn of civilization the earth's temperature is rising. Scientists from around the world agree that the burning of fossil fuels contributes significantly to this warming and they predict the temperature will continue to rise as long as we continue to burn fossil fuels. When fossil fuels are burned, they release "greenhouse gases," which have a special ability to trap the sun's heat inside our atmosphere. The more fossil fuels we burn, the more greenhouse gases there are to trap the sun's heat – which means a warmer planet for us all.

A warmer planet may not sound all that bad to you, especially if you're from North Dakota. The effects of global warming won't stop there, however. A rise in earth's temperature will cause increasingly severe weather, including more sudden temperature swings, droughts, floods, heat waves, wildfires, and thunderstorms. As a result, our food and water supplies will be threatened and more people will die. Global warming will also cause the world's glaciers to melt, making sea levels rise and flooding low-lying areas such as the Mississippi Delta. A warmer earth will endanger thousands of plant and animal species that cannot migrate to cooler regions. Tropical and sub-tropical regions will expand, allowing insects that carry diseases such as the West Nile virus to reach epidemic proportions in places like Florida, Louisiana, and Georgia or maybe even New York and California. Scientists cannot predict exactly where

or to what magnitude the consequences of global warming will occur, but they do know that hints of these effects are already happening.

Does this sound vaguely familiar of what is currently happening in New Orleans and other gulf cities? A recent study one by climatologist Kerry Emanuel of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology suggests that major storms spinning in both the Atlantic and the Pacific have increased in duration and intensity. The trends are closely linked to the average temperature of the ocean surface and also correspond to increases in global atmospheric temperatures.

Before this study, most researchers believed global warming's contribution to powerful hurricanes was too slight to accurately measure. Most forecasts don't have climate change making a difference in tropical storms until 2050 or later. Sciences predictions now seem to be off by at least 50 years, at least for the United States. Perhaps the aftermath of Katrina will bring a greater awareness of the results of global warming to more of America and the world.

We are not helpless in the solution to global warming.

God made us caretakers of the earth and all creation and each of us has a part in ensuring its survival. While science struggles to develop other sources of energy that depend very little on fossil fuels we must do our part by reducing our wants in the



choices we make.

But this is not all we can do we can also be advocates or ombudsmen for mother earth by way of writing letters to our congressmen and supporting bills that preserve nature rather than destroy. We must be activists either through peaceful civil disobedience or a simpler way is through petition signing from your own computer via the inter-net. Here is a great web site and a simple way to become a political activist in the true Franciscan spirit. (Carolyn)

<http://www.thepetitionsite.com>

ECOLOGY

Family

Some of the ways parents educate their children was perhaps best explained by **St. Louis, the king of France, in a letter to his son.**

“If the Lord has permitted you to have some trial, bear it willingly and with gratitude, considering that it has happened for your good and that perhaps you well deserved it. . .

Sylvia Paoli SFO,
Family Commission Chair
sylviapaoli@earthlink.net

Like most of our Rule, rule 17, on family life, doesn't give us specifics, so it seems appropriate to consider some of the aspects of living that particular Rule. In reflections on living the secular Franciscan life, **Leonard Foley, O.F.M., Jovian Weigel, O.F.M., and Patti Normile, S.F.O,** noted that “the life of God is not lived in a vacuum. We do not become Christians and then withdraw from relationships with others. Holiness is not something we find ‘outside’ normal, everyday human activity. . . . Any and all fruits of following Christ with Saint Francis must show up primarily in those relationships which are fundamental: family life. Charity and prayer, penance, poverty, humility - - all must have their first fruits in what we contribute to the atmosphere of our home.”

The family is often considered the “little” church. It's rather obvious that “there would be no ‘big’ Church were it not for thousands of ‘little’ churches where the Gospel takes root in the most intimate of personal relationships. . . .The group of persons that comes together around the Eucharist is - or is trying to be - a community. They will succeed to the degree that they have given and forgiven, agonized and rejoiced, in the “little” community from which they come.”



Parents are the first teachers of the faith and the first and foremost educators of their children, according to Vatican II.

They are witnesses of Christ's own mystery of love which he revealed to all the world by his death and resurrection. “When Christianity pervades a whole way of life, it gradually transforms it.” In Christian homes, husbands and wives find their proper vocation in being witnesses of their faith in Christ and their love for Him, to one another and to their children. Some of the ways parents educate their children was perhaps best explained by **St. Louis, the king of France, in a letter to his son.**

“If the Lord has permitted you to have some trial, bear it willingly and with gratitude, considering that it has happened for your good and that perhaps you well deserved it. . . .

- Keep yourself from everything that you know displeases God. . . .

- Listen to the divine office with pleasure and devotion. As long as you are in church, be careful not to let your eyes wander and not to speak empty words, but pray to the Lord devoutly, either aloud or with the interior prayer of the heart. . . .
- Be kindhearted to the poor, the unfortunate and the afflicted. Give them as much help and consolation as you can. Thank God for all the benefits He has bestowed upon you. . . .
- Be just...
- Always side with the poor rather than with the rich, until you are certain of the truth. . . .
- Live in justice and peace. . . .
- Be devout and obedient to our mother the Church.” If all parents gave their children these basic foundation stones of life, society would be a more peaceful place.

However, many things other than just educating and caring for children are included in the family apostolate, such as: the adoption of abandoned infants, hospitality to strangers, assistance in the operation of schools, helpful advice and material assistance for adolescents, help to engaged couples in preparing themselves for marriage, catechetical work, support of couples and families involved in material and moral crises, help for the aged, help for abused members of families, just to name a few. These things are not limited to husbands and wives. Single persons have their own witness to give. They have benefited from family life and have made their contribution to their family. As single people living a Gospel life, they may be involved in any of the activities just mentioned. As single people they do not share either the particular satisfactions or the problems of married life - - a sacrifice on one hand, and an advantage on the other. But because of that, they may be freer to engage in the apostolic activities above. “Their witness of a charitable, joyful and chaste life is rightly honored as an integral part of the Church's life and activity.”

Application and meditation:

Consider the adverse influences in the world. As a parent, decide not to lose confidence in the normal processes of family life even in the face of those influences. As a single person, resolve to never underestimate the power of your witness to all around you. Pray on the gifts God has given you and seek to discern how best to use them in your family apostolate.

Give praise to our God, all you God's Servants and you who fear God,
the small and the *great*;--**Let us praise and exalt God above all forever!**

Office of the Passion (St. Francis of Assisi)

Recycle! Recycle!

YOUTH

Eileen Costas SFO costas@sanluisrey.org
Youth / Young Adult Commission
(760) 757-3659 ext. 146

Many of our fraternities do not have Franciscan Youth/Young Adult Groups – If you are one of those, don't let that stop you. There are many ways to help the youth and young adults in our parishes, homes and communities become involved in helping those in need. Recycling is one way.

Youth / Young Adults would like to be able to do something for the people in the Gulf States or perhaps for a family in need in your area. The problem is that oftentimes they don't know where to start. If you know even a few young people, you can suggest the following:

RECYCLE: Collect glass and aluminum cans - place separate recycle garbage cans around the church gathering spots. (Maybe their schools would be willing to let them do this as a school project also). The glass / cans need to be rinsed before being dropped off at the recycling center - this is where team work comes in. An adult supervising the group during collections, rinsing and delivery to the recycle center could become a resource of spiritual guidance for the youth involved. -- Preach the gospel by your actions - use words where necessary. Our adult group at Mission San Luis Rey collected glass and aluminum. The donation was \$200 for several weeks of collection. **Even small groups of youth can make a difference - every penny counts.**



Letter to the Entire Order

Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God,
give us miserable ones
the grace to do for You alone
what we know You want us to do
and always to desire what pleases You.
Inwardly cleansed,
and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit,
may we be able to follow
in the footprints of Your beloved Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ,
and, by Your grace alone,
may we make our way to You,
Most High,
Who live and rule
in perfect Trinity and simple Unity
and are glorified
God almighty,
forever and ever.
Amen
(St. Francis of Assisi)

Fraternities in Orange County take note:

A Day of Recollection- a short type of retreat - will be held for all fraternities in the Orange County district, on November 5, 2005, at Marywood in Anaheim, from 9 to 4. Everyone will need to bring a sack lunch. There are no places to eat out nearby, and there will be group discussion during the lunchtime period. More details are available from district liaison, Sylvia Paoli, SFO at (714) 521-5333 or sylviaapaoli@earthlink.net. All Franciscans are invited to attend, but Sylvia will need a head count the week before the Day of Recollection. It will be a time of spiritual recharging for all of us - something we need on a regular basis, so plan to come."

BRING YOUR OWN AND SOMETHING TO SHARE!!!

Want a great idea for food at your special meetings? Read the article on page 8 from Immaculata Fraternity where John writes, "We then participated in something I particularly enjoy, the traditional "bring your own and something to share" SFO lunch. Nobody went away hungry".

Celebrate the Feast of St. Francis ...October 4th.

St. Francis of Assisi (1182 -Oct.4, 1226)



On his deathbed, St. Francis said to them, "Now, bring the Gospel Book, that John 13:1-17 might be read:"

"Tell Sister Clare That I forbid her to lose herself in sadness, and that she continue being the great lady she has always been."

Brother Francis of Assisi, Ignacio Larranaga p445



MULTICULTURAL CONFERENCE WELL ATTENDED



On August 20, 2005, St. Francis Region took a giant step forward to advance the blessing of its diversity. We held our **First Annual Multi-cultural Conference**. More than 80 Secular Franciscans from 3 different Regions attended. The conference was meant to bring the many different cultures together and share some of their history and traditions as well as discuss multi-culturism as Franciscans.

*(Pictured speaking at the conference is **Norma Solorio, SFO**, the minister of Santa Toribio Fraternity in Los Angeles. Norma also serves as the Spanish speaking community's liaison.)*

Fr. Steve Gross, OFM Conv. started off the day with a comprehensive explanation of this from social, historical and religious points. He mentioned how cultures were patterns of behavior that evolve over time and become ingrained in groups. He further explained that Franciscanism is a culture unto itself. He also added how Franciscanism is a sub-culture of Roman Catholicism. There is so much more that he went into that there is just not enough room to share with you. During the day we heard from so many different cultures and nations, telling the story of their history, religious evolution and traditions.

Bob Matthew from the Syro-Malabar Eastern Rite Catholics from India forming in Fullerton, told the story of how the Apostle Thomas brought the Church to India and how it evolved using a nice slide show. **Gabriel Jon** from Huntington Beach explained about his Eastern Rite Malakite Church. **Yvonne Bacchus** and **Judith Mussatto** gave us a South American touch with stories about Yvonne's British Guinna and Judith's Trinidad. **Ana Graciano** from Los Angeles told us about the Philippine culture.

Juan Kwon from San Diego related the history and cultural development of Korea. **Joseph Bui** from Santa Ana shared how the Vietnamese culture developed. **Jose Garcia** from Los Angeles explained the Spanish/Mexican traditions and culture. Other pertinent details of multi-culturalism were shared by **Larry Frasor, Sylvia Paoli, Catalina Tan, Norma Solario and Rock DeSpain**. Fr. Steve finished the day by tying all the loose ends together. Fr. Steve's final blessing was at 4:00PM sharp.

The Spiritual Assistant/ Formators session has begun. The first meeting was Saturday, September 10th. Eighteen SFO attended, 10 for the Spiritual Assistant training and 8 for the Formation. Classes will continue through the year. The next issue of the Joy of Francis will feature this new program. (Rock)



Father, you helped our seraphic father Francis reflect the image of Christ through a life of poverty and humility. May we follow your Son by walking in the footsteps of Francis of Assisi and by imitating his joyful love.

*Proper Offices of Franciscan Saints and Blessed
in the Liturgy of the Hours. Oct. 4th p. 350*

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**Deadline for the 2006
Spring issue of the Joy of
Francis is January 18, 2006.**

OBLIGATIONS OF A SECULAR FRANCISCAN:

To observe the **Commandments** of God the precepts of Holy Mother Church.

To attend the monthly Fraternity meetings.

To join in liturgical prayer in one of the forms proposed by the Church, preferably the *Liturgy of the Hours*.

To wear the SFO **habit** (Tau cross).

To reverently say Grace before and after meals.

To examine one's conscience daily.

To attend daily Mass, if possible.

To contribute to the Fraternity's common fund.

To observe moderation of dress, recreation, food and manner of life.

To give good example, avoid disputes, and minister to the needs of others, **especially the poor**



**St. Francis Region
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THE JOY OF FRANCIS



TO: