



The Joy of Francis

Together for the Gospel!

Spring, 2006 - Vol. 14, No. 1

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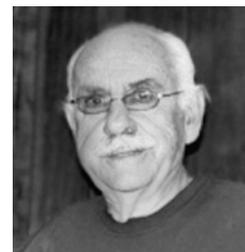
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Newly Installed Regional Executive Council at Poverello Retreat House

To my Franciscan Family:

by Rock DeSpain, Regional Minister



Last weekend, we had our Annual Ministers Meeting. This year we had the Chapter of Elections, which occurs every three years. I was re-elected to serve St. Francis Region as Minister, Larry Frasor was re-elected Vice Minister, Sylvia Paoli was re-elected Secretary, Bob Herbelin was re-elected Treasurer and we have three new Councilors that were elected, Armando Lomeli, Heeyoung Lydia Chung and Peter Hanh Nguyen. This was the first truly

multi-cultural council elected.

At our first council meeting on Sunday afternoon, Catalina Tan was reappointed Regional Formation Director. Our region is probably the most diverse in the world. We have 40 groups (canonically established and forming groups) in our region, 17 would be considered multi-

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 cultural. This election certainly fits in with the plans for the future of our region. We had our first annual multi-cultural conference last year and are looking forward to this year's. With our blessing of diversity being blessed by a truly multi-cultural council, we are prepared to face the future.



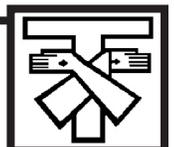
Since this will be my last term as your Regional Minister, I plan to make all the council members visible in the future. This will enable you to select the next council with ease. The council will be delegated to do a lot of the work I do, so that they will be able to step in and take off running. Almost all of us are taking the Formation/Lay Spiritual Assistant classes. Some of us will become Certified Lay Spiritual Assistants and some will receive a certificate of attendance for Formation. These classes will make us better council members.



The District Liaison program was fine tuned and is off and running. You will be seeing a District Liaison visiting your fraternity once in a while, depending on when you have an election or pastoral/fraternal visitation as well as other visits that will improve the communication from region to your fraternity and from your fraternity to region.

We had a lot of good suggestions about improving our region at the meeting. I would love to hear your ideas, please forward them to me.

I love this job.
 Rock





Greetings and++ Blessings

to all as we begin this New Year! Advent and Lent are somewhat similar, in that these two holy seasons have St. John The Baptist calling for repentance!

Some hear the call, some do not!... Easter is Hope.....or not!

- Fr. Stephen Gross

We oftentimes forget that “the end of prayer is not a better prayer or a perfect prayer or an answered prayer, but God. (page 30-31)

All that prayer aims at is drawing closer to God, at uniting the human will with God’s. When God blesses this desire with union the soul knows that there is no greater blessing to be had on earth and that personal achievement does not come into it.

(page 31)

Dom Hubert van Zeller, OSB,
The Trodden Road. (Boston,
MA: Daughters of St. Paul,
1982)

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WORK

Francesco Chiappelli, SFO
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Our regional meeting (SFO, St. Francis Region, Southern California) was held on the 8th of October, 2005. I was unable to attend because I was just barely beginning the arduous process of my recovery. I would have liked to take part in this meeting not only to follow our Rule (cf., Chapter 3), but also because our sister, Vinal van Benthem, SFO, was scheduled to present her new book *On the Way to Work*.

As I meditated on this, and sent a prayer for all of you at the meeting, I realized that work is a blessing! – a hardship and a blessing. Let me give you an example: just a few weeks ago I underwent a major heart surgery to correct an aneurysm of the ascending aorta – for nine and a half hours, my chest was cracked open and stretched. They replaced the major blood vessel that leaves the heart, gave me my own brand new (Swiss) cow valve, and, since the right side of my heart started to act up about 4 hours into the surgery, they slashed open one of my leg, removed a vein (the right saphenous, for you anatomists), and gave me an emergency right coronary bypass. For 9-10 hours, my life hanged at the tip of a scalpel.

My wife, my guardian angel, truly and unquestionably the closest human being I have seen to sainthood in the Franciscan spirit and charisma (although she is not a Secular ...yet) took time from work to assist the nurses who took care

of me during my short week stay in the hospital. She held my hand as I awoke with the tubes of the respirator in my throat, she tenderly assisted me as I sat for the first time in excruciating pain, she supported my weight when I took my first steps wobbling in agony, she guided my hand as I was too weak even to lift the spoon to eat the cream of rice they fed me on my first breakfast off the respirator...

A work of love endlessly displayed, attentions and consolations, and simply being there when, in the depth of my human weakness I would burst in tears: tears of physical pain, yes, and tears of intimate distraught – had not I been a servant of our Lord as best I could all of my adult life, had not I trusted and believed, had not I hoped?, well surely not enough, or not well enough since I was sent back (or refused entrance, however you want to look at it). Nonsensical despair, paradox brought about by the stress of the surgery and the dose of anesthetic and of medication, but real, nonetheless to me in the suffering of the early days of my recovery. Had it not been for her, I would not have fought day in and day out: and believe me, this is the hardest fight of my life so far. Had it not been for the labor of love that she displayed day and night, I could not have grasped not only the unmeasurable depth of her love, but also the responsibility I have to acknowledge that love and to love her entirely back.



Vinal van Benthem, SFO

Love is work, as much as work is love. God is love, and God is also work since we are called to work and to act on our faith in Him – it is not sacrifice that Christ expects of us, it is love, action, forgiveness, work, work of love (“I desire mercy, not sacrifice”, Mat 9:13). We are God’s creation, and as such called by Him to act with Him, for Him and through Him so that our actions become work of love, an expression of His love. The efforts of our work thus become an expression of our love, of His love.

I was surrounded by dedicated nurses, aides, doctors and specialists: all performing their work for one common goal – my well-being and that of all the patients on the floor. It was as magnificent as a symphonic orchestra – the unity of sound that brings about the idyllic nature of music – all under the magisterial

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 hand of the conductor, and for the benefit of the listener in the audience. Well, in the hospital, it is very much the same thing: the unity of work of each of these individuals brings about the idyllic nature of care – all under the magisterial hand of God who is love, and for the benefit of the patients and their families. Love, be it shown as acts of piety, be it manifested in terms of generosity for the poor, or be it expressed as our daily work, brings about peace, deep-rooted happiness, and an ever-growing intimacy with God.

It is not easy, believe me, to be suddenly completely unable to move, stand, sit, wash or eat without the aid and assistance of others. What makes it bearable is the realization that their concerted actions to help and to assist you are an offering to you of their labor of love. Ours, then, we who are in pain and incapacitated, is the responsibility to express our love for them, our thankfulness to them in prayer and with a kind smile of acceptance. They are the hands of God. We are given the incredible gift of being the recipient, the direct witnesses of their work of love.

Thus my tears of despair would dry in her hands, as my loving wife would tenderly wipe them, and I would humbly realize – again (how many times must I?, I am so dense!) – that I am surrounded by God's love and by every manifestation of His loving work, through the perfection of nature, the concerned work of love of others toward me, the indescribable beauty of life.

Love is work, and work is love. In love, let us continue to do the work of rebuilding Christ's church, as our seraphic Father was instructed to do, and he instructed us. Together, let us realize that the work of rebuilding Christ's church is love, and that this work of love starts with each one of us.

These are some of the elements that Vinal develops in her book. In the words of the critic: "Most people spend their adult lives working to support themselves and others, striving for promotions and recognition, and both welcoming and dreading retirement. Author Vinal Van Benthem offers her hope that the stories in this thought-provoking book will encourage readers to make connections between what they hear proclaimed in church on Sunday and what they do during the week. This engaging book is filled with authentic stories of people loving and caring for others in the workplace, even at the risk of losing their own jobs. The stories encourage all workers to reach out to others in need for the sake of Christ, and how to become true followers of him."

(Catholic Explorer,
<http://www.catholicexplorer.com/explore4325/books/books-are-christmas-gifts.shtml>).

Therefore, let me suggest that we all read *On The Way To Work: Stories & Reflections on Living as Christians Today* by our sister in Francis, Vinal Van Benthem, SFO. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2004, 172 pp., \$14.95. (ISBN: 1-58595-291-5)



Propheta Altissimi

Prophet of the Most High

Here's a beautiful poem written by the 'retired' Abbess of the Poor Clare Monastery in New Mexico, Mother Frances Mary. Perhaps we all can see the personal invitation to repentance in this poem.

- Fr. Stephen Gross

Come,
 Thunder-throated prelude
 Of Love's red symphony.
 Walk in my wilderness
 and cry his Name.
 Dwell in the desert-land
 Of my dull heart and cry his
 Name.
 Rise up,
 Dark trumpeter of Love's white
 flame.
 Prepare in my soul's tanglewood
 A way Where he may walk at
 eventide
 Of my confusion Straight a way.
 Tell me,
 O great unquestioning
 Martyr of trust,
 how I may dwindle.
 Teach me of decrease.
 Or when I stray,
 Learning of increase,
 Stay me..
 Cry out to me
 The Lamb of God.

- Mother Frances Mary



GOD BLESS AMERICA

by Jo-Ann Hardwick SFO
Peace and Justice Commission
Chair

Last time Ray wrote an article about Jesus' command to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute you. I would like to follow up on that with some thoughts on this subject.

Since the beginning of the war in Afghanistan and Iraq a lot of churches have put up signs that say, *God bless America*. Who knows what Jesus might think of such a sign? I can't imagine him taking it down. I can, however, imagine him grabbing a paintbrush and adding a lot of names to it, *and Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Russia, China*. I also can imagine Jesus putting up another sign: *Love your enemies*. That's a sign I haven't seen in front of any church lately. But I can't think of anything that Jesus said that seems more relevant these days.

Some historians say *love your enemies* is the only original thing Jesus ever said. It's certainly one of the most radical and subversive things he said. I'd love to ask him what he meant by it. Christian scholars, theologians and clergy have disagreed about that for centuries. Some say Jesus rejected violence outright. Others say he didn't

Who knows? But the Gospels contain direct quotes from Jesus and he sure wasn't endorsing violence. "You have heard it was said, 'Eye

for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,' But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other to him as well." (Matthew 5: 38-39)

Then in Chapter 5, verse 43-44, he says, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." In Luke's Gospel, Jesus said it another way: "Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you." (6:27)

Easy for the Son of Man to say, I guess. Maybe Jesus could love, Hitler or Stalin or Osama bin Laden and get away with it. What good is that advice for mere mortals? On the other hand Jesus loved his enemies and didn't get away with it. Why didn't he rely on violence against his enemy, the way Moses did in Egypt? Why didn't he fight back against his enemy, as Muhammad did in Medina? Why did Jesus insist on loving his enemies to the point of death? I wish I could ask him. I wish the church could tell me, but the church seems to put as much faith in the government's protection as in God's.

Maybe that's why there aren't any *Love your enemies* signs. Even church people say it's an unrealistic standard in the real world of terrorists and other evildoers. What Jesus said may be fine as a Sunday sentiment, but it's foolish foreign policy or military strategy, isn't it?

Then again, the church isn't here to represent the policies of any kingdom of man. It's here to present the policies of the kingdom of God. Even those seemingly dangerous and foolish policies such as *love your enemies*.

"Christians must behave as Christians no matter how much our society and churches ridicule nonviolence as idealistic and ineffective," theologian Walter Wink says in *Sojourners* magazine. If we cannot be faithful in such a crisis as we presently face, when will we?

T

A Prayer for our Soldiers

Anthony Moore passes along this prayer for our soldiers:

Lord, hold our troops in your loving hands.

Protect them as they protect us. Bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform for us in our time of need.

I ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Amen.

As you read this, please stop for a moment and say a prayer for our troops around the world. Of all the gifts you could give a U.S. soldier, sailor, airman, marine and others deployed in harm's way, prayer is the very best one.

From the HNP Today, December 7, 2005, Vol. 39, No. 48; Franciscans of the Holy Name Province, N.Y.



GOD DEFENDS THE WEAKEST

Roman Catholic News, Volume 5, Issue 171

VATICAN CITY, DEC 7, 2005 (VIS) - In the general audience held this morning in St. Peter's Square, Benedict XVI continued his catechesis on the Psalms, speaking on Psalm 137, "a hymn of thanksgiving." Twenty thousand pilgrims filled the square to hear the Holy Father's words.

The psalmist, said the Pope, "raises his voice before the Temple assembly or, at least, having the Shrine of Zion as a reference. ... He sings before God Who is in heaven with His host of angels, but Who also listens within the earthly space of the Temple."

"The psalmist is certain that the 'name' of the Lord - in other words His personal, living and active reality and His virtues of faithfulness and mercy - are the ... bastion of all faith and all hope. The psalmist's gaze then goes back for an instant to the past, to the day of suffering, when the divine voice answered the faithful's anguished cry, infusing courage into his troubled soul."

"Following this apparently personal premise," the Holy Father continued, "the psalmist extends his gaze to the earth and imagines his testimony incorporating the entire horizon: 'All the kings of the earth' ... join the Jewish psalmist in a common hymn of praise in honor of the greatness and regal power of the Lord."

The themes of this chorus of praise,

the Pope explained, are "the 'glory' and the 'ways' of the Lord. ... God is clearly 'high' and transcendent, but He 'regards the lowly' with affection while removing the haughty from His sight. ... Thus, God chooses to defend the weak, the victims, the smallest; and this fact is conveyed to all kings that they might know which option to choose in governing their nations."

The closing section of the psalm contains an imploration to the Lord for His help in the trials of life, and a reference to the wrath of enemies. "A kind of symbol," said Pope Benedict, "of the hostility the just may face during their journey through history."

"We must be certain," the Pope concluded, "that however burdensome and stormy are the trials that await us, we will never be left alone, we will never fall from the Lord's hands, the hands that created us and that now follow us on life's itinerary. As St. Paul confesses: 'He Who began a good work in you will bring it to completion'."



A consistent ethic of life is based on the need to ensure that the sacredness of human life, which is the ultimate source of human dignity, will be defended and fostered from womb to tomb, from the genetic laboratory to the cancer ward, from the ghetto to the prison.

Joseph Cardinal Bernardin

ECOLOGY

Carolyn Paxton, SFO
pacebene104@aol.com

Top 10 Reasons to Care for Creation!

From the Catholic Conservation Center

God is the Creator of the Universe and maintains its existence through an ongoing creative will.

God has blessed and called "very good" all that is created.

God's plan for Creation is one of harmony and order. Creation forms a whole, a cosmos.

God loves the community of life. God's creatures share a common home.

God's presence is discernable in all Creation.

God intends the Earth's goods to be equitably shared.

Within Creation, the human person enjoys a consummate dignity. Inherent to this dignity is that of exercising a wise and just stewardship over the rest of Creation.

Sin brought division into the entire world, but not only within and between human persons. The consequences of sin also affect the Earth.

In a mysterious way, Christ's redemptive mission extends to all of Creation.

<http://conservation.catholic.org/>



Local Fraternity News

Pax et Bonum, San Damiano Fraternity, Palm Springs

Minister: Donna Corti, SFO, Editor Sherry Elliott, SFO

NEWS: San Damiano Fraternity had several projects this past Christmas. They collected new baby clothes and items for Birth Choice of the Desert, an alternative program for women who choose life. The fraternity members did the Christmas Shopping for the Sisters of Providence who work with the Migrant families in the Coachella Valley. The sisters gave the Franciscans lists of names and ages of the children and the Franciscans did the shopping and wrapping of the gifts. The Fraternity helps the sisters throughout the year with their ministry. San Damiano fraternity collected new clothing and gifts for the many homeless in the valley. These ministries are on going for the fraternity.

The Dove, San Juan Capistrano Fraternity of the SFO, Laguna Niguel, CA

Minister: Bill Lynn SFO, Editor: Tom Cooney, SFO

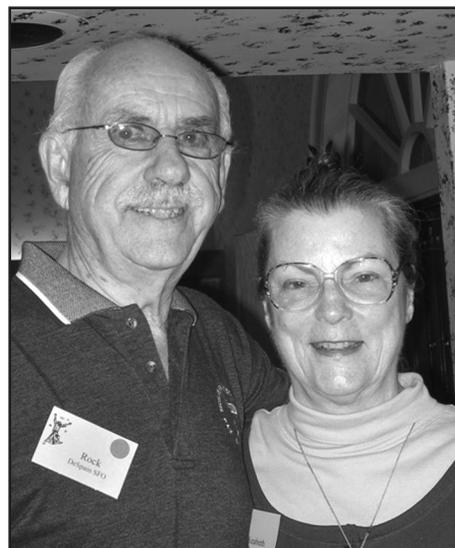
NEWS: Our San Juan Capistrano Fraternity Christmas Party was held 12/17 and, as announced, along with the party and festivities we planned for the collection of cuddly bears to be distributed to rest home residents - some of whom are rarely visited by family. It's lonely for them and one of our members, Marie O'Donnell, SFO, came up with the idea of everyone who was attending the Christmas party to bring a cuddly bear for distribution. What a

success we had today! Over 30 bears and stuffed animals were collected including a baker's dozen from the State of Texas! I am sure we will have lots of smile reports in future editions of The Dove. We think we have found an annual event!

The Echo, St. Anthony Fraternity, Long Beach

Minister: Clara Samson, SFO, Editor: Doris Salcido SFO

NEWS: In December, St. Anthony Fraternity had a pastoral meeting and was visited by the Region Officers. A pastoral visit is an expression of the pastoral care of the SFO entrusted by the Church to the First Order and the SFO. Members of the Fraternity were asked to attend the meeting and bring something for a potluck lunch. Clara Samson, SFO, Minister wrote: Let's make it the best every by bringing your favorite dish and a *little extra goodies* to share with others.



Regional Minister Rock DeSpain, SFO, with Elizabeth Allen, SFO, National Secretary

The Cord, San Luis Rey, Mission San Luis Rey, Oceanside, CA

Minister: Karron Esmonde, SFO sfokarron@yahoo.com

NEWS: We are very fortunate this year in that our annual Christmas celebration was punctuated by a Rite of Admission for several inquirers who are being welcomed into the Candidacy phase of formation. This is indeed a cause of joy and celebration in the fraternity.

The fraternity collected gifts for the Migrant workers and gave them to Sr. Madeline at St. Francis of Assisi parish in Vista. If other SFO fraternities would like to help Sr. Madeline with this ministry, call her at 760 945-8040.

We also have five new candidates who are, Barbara Upson, Ed Upson Matt Heffernan, Vlad Bolsakov, and Tim Corrigan.

St. Joseph's Staff, St. Joseph's SFO Fraternity, Los Angeles

Minister: Margie Rodriguez, SFO, Editor: Mike Sanchez, SFO

NEWS: St. Joseph's Fraternity will be having elections this January. That is always an exciting time for fraternities. Their formation is now taking place at Amia Ignacio's home of the first Friday of each month at 1.p.m. Lucy Capones is their Formation Director and they have three in formation: Lolita Yardley, Amia Ignacio and Darlene Lorenz.

St. Mary of the Angels has their own newsletter now. Bob Garon is the editor. Frank Miller is a candidate and also in formation are: Mary Rose Garon, Edward Graff and Jennifer Conyac.





**San Lorenzo Ruiz Fraternity
Manuel Graciano:**

Sixteen members from San Lorenzo Ruiz Emerging Community did something different this Christmas. We have been giving Christmas presents to patients in Convalescent Hospitals for years. But this year, we felt there was a greater need that had presented itself to us.

This year, we changed to giving gifts to the “undocumented laborers” standing alongside big companies looking for menial jobs. Gifts included socks, Tshirts, food and also Rosaries, medals and scapulars and prayer leaflets. The expressions of joy and gratitude in them told us that we were doing the right thing. Afterwards we went to the Monastery of the Angels, where we gave thanks and prayed the Seven Joys of Our Blessed Mother. The day was ended by the community sharing Christmas dinner together including their kids who came along to experience this ministry.

San Lorenzo Ruiz has a new meeting times The meet on the 2nd Sunday of each month at 3 P.M. San Lorenzo has two Inquirers: Patrick and Paula Ignacio, children of Amia Ignacio (Inquirer) and two Candidates, Joahan Tubola and Pacita Bongat. Visitation and Rosary are said with the residents of Angeles Plaza by the Fraternity.

**The Visitor St. Padre Pio
Fraternity & St. Francis and Clare
Satellite/ Moreno Valley/Hemet
Minister: Dixie Marshall SFO
Editor: Norma Candelaria SFO**

NEWS: These two fraternities held their annual Christmas Party at Holy Spirit Church in Hemet. They all brought gifts for Veronica’s Home. Dixie Marshall, SFO, Minister, wrote: “We like to think these gifts are for Baby Jesus!” By the way, these fraternities are collecting recyclables as a fund raiser for their fraternity

**Share the Joy Holy Spirit Fraternity
of the SFO, Claremont, CA
Minister: Judith Mussatto SFO**

NEWS: Old news, but *GOOD NEWS!* Members of Holy Spirit Fraternity in Claremont were active participants in feeding the poor in Claremont this past year. Thanks to all our Fraternity members for helping with all our November events, the Mass for our deceased members, the Alternative gift market and the Thanksgiving Dinner. The teams that worked the dinner did comparison shopping, cleaned the kitchen, set tables, decorated the auditorium and served the food. We must not forget the members and friends who prayed for the success of the event. We shared the food from our hands which was truly replaced with food for our souls!

**Sts. Francis and Clare
Editor: Gerry Rohrkemper**

NEWS: EPIPHANY PARTY, SUNDAY, JAN. 8, 2006, 1-4 pm We will gather at our usual meeting place (15223 Purche Ave., Gardena), but Hilda’s mother has graciously offered us use of the house instead

of our meeting room in the back. For directions, please call Gerry Rohrkemper (310) 322-7407), Kathy Brown (310) 378-0996 or cell (310) 365-5744), or Hilda Amaya cell (310) 804-9383).

A reminder for all of us from Mike Morris SFO, Minister of St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity in Los Alamitos and our web master for our Region web page: 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 Regional Calendar located on our Regions website, <http://www.stfrancisregion.org>, for upcoming events in other fraternities. We are all part of a big Franciscan family. All are welcome to attend these gatherings

Hear the Silence Hear

By Jack Keilly, SFO

The wind kissed my cheek.

The sun smiled with love.

I did not feel.

I did not see.

I did not hear.

I did not know you.

One day, in total darkness,

One day, in complete silence,

One day, when I felt nothing,

A gentle voice from deep in my heart said, Simply - I Love you.

And the world became your temple,

And I prayed.



PARENTING ADOLESCENTS: Hair, Hormones and Hassles

As a parent or grandparent, do you feel that your teenager is about to drive you crazy? The music; posters; clothes. It's outrageous!

Do discussions end in shouting? How can I make it through adolescence?

Try meditating on the following Bible passages in the order presented and see what Our Lord has to say to you about dealing with your problems.

Topic - Stressful Times - Fracas in the family - Luke 15, 11 - 32 .
What in this story is most like your own story?

Topic - Confusing Times - When Jesus didn't come home - Luke 2, 41 - 52. How would you have reacted when you finally found Jesus? In what ways are you growing "in wisdom and age and favor before God?"

Topic - Angry Times - The golden calf - Exodus 32, 1 - 35. How do you react when others disappoint you?

Topic - Decisions, Decisions!
- Samson's dating fiasco - Judges 14, 1 - 20. Samson had communication problems with his parents and his wife. How can your marriage and / or family improve its communication?

Topic - A Parent's Responsibility
- Eli's failure to restrain his sons -

1 Samuel 3, 1 - 21. Eli was guilty of failing to restrain his children. When it comes to disciplining your children (your own or others) what do you have a tendency to do?

Topic - Getting Along - Joseph: A kid with an "attitude" - Genesis 37, 1 - 11. What would a family therapist say about his family? How are you at listening to other people's dreams?

You are welcome to call me if you would like more questions relating to these readings - OR if you would like me to arrange a small retreat for either parents and / or adolescents.

Peace be with you and your families.

- Eileen Costa - 760-231-5362
Mission San Luis Rey,
Oceanside



Franciscan Print Resources

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Whenever you want to express your opinions about an objectionable TV show, call The *Parents' Television Council*: 1-800-TV-COUNT.



BARREL O BEARS HUGE SUCCESS

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO FRATERNITY



Marie O'Donnell, SFO gets "first hugs" from the bears collected at our annual Christmas Party. It was Marie's idea that the Fraternity might like to help in assuring that all residents at a local rest home have a bear to hug.

The idea caught on and over 30 were brought in by Fraternity members, friends and family to our annual Christmas party. After a special blessing for the recipients of the bears by our Deacon Sire, SFO, the bears are now on their way bringing a smile all year long to some who rarely have a visitor.

What a great idea – Way to go, Marie!

T

Are You Listening?

Ray Hardwick, SFO, Minister
Immaculata Fraternity, Riverside

Deacon Jim Neuffell, S.F.O, the Spiritual Assistant for Immaculata Fraternity is always asking the above question and some wonder why.

Well, what I understand him saying is the only way to know God, the only way to know the other, is to listen. Listening is reaching out into that unknown other self, surmounting your walls and theirs. Listening is the beginning of understanding, which is the first

None of us listen enough, do we? We only listen to a fraction of what people say. Listening is a wonderfully useful thing to do. You almost always hear something you didn't expect.

exercise of love.

Jim has said, "None of us listen enough, do we? We only listen to a fraction of what people say.

Listening is a wonderfully useful thing to do. You almost always hear something you didn't expect."

We must listen because we are so often wrong in our certainties. When we pass a motion in the chaotic debating chamber of our heads, it's never completely right, or even, most of the time,

half-right. The only way to edge closer to the truth is to listen with complete openness, bringing to the process no preconceptions, nothing prepared.

How seldom, in fact, do I listen? I bring to almost every encounter with another human some preconception of people or issues, none-too-subtly intent on getting mine out before the other guy.

I repeat the question, are you listening? *Really listening?*

T



Family Spirituality

Six daily routines that foster family faith

homefaith.com, a service of Claretian Publications

Learn French in your sleep! I remember seeing that headline on an ad years ago. It sounded too good to be true, and it probably was. But recent research shows that your child can learn his or her faith, if not while asleep, at least while getting ready for bed. And while eating breakfast, talking around the kitchen table, and enjoying Christmas, to boot.

Princeton Sociologist Robert Wuthnow discovered that the prime source of faith for self-described “religious” people was the way faith permeated the daily life of their family. Time and again they pointed to variations on six common family activities. Wuthnow says his study showed that religious formation happens when “specific, deliberate religious activities . . . are firmly intertwined with the daily habits of family routines.” He adds, “Compared with these practices, the formal teachings of religious leaders often pale in significance. Yet when such practices are present, formal teachings also become more important.”

So, parents, pay attention to these six at-home opportunities as they’re

practiced (religiously or not) in your home. Think of ways to enhance them in your home.

Eating: Time and time again I come across data showing the extreme value of the family meal. When you sit down to eat together regularly, say grace before meals, and share information about your lives, you provide your children with one of the most potent ways of forming their faith.

Sleeping: Bedtime rituals are a great opportunity to introduce prayer naturally to your children. Spend time talking at bedtime and you’ll hear questions they never would have asked in daylight. It’s easy then to introduce your belief in God’s providence and care, which can accompany them through the night. Invite them to pray about the joys and worries of the day.

Having conversations: Think about the quality of conversations you have with your kids. Decades ago, children spent hours a day in conversation with adult family members. Now it maybe reduced to a few minutes of information exchange, order giving, or reprimands. A friend rues the day she got an automatic dishwasher because it ended the practice of standing at the sink gabbing with one or another of her children every night. You don’t have to go out of your way to lace your conversation with talk of values, character, and holiness. Your values and character

and everyday brand of holiness will come through if you talk (and listen) long enough.

Adorning your living spaces: Good religious art is becoming easier to find (call Religious Resources International at 800-648-8350 for their catalog). Is there a Bible within easy reach in your home? A crucifix on the wall? Art that reflects your values? Catholic magazines or newspapers? Any indications at all that people of faith live in your home?

Celebrating the holidays: The religious roots of most of our holidays provide their true significance. But those religious underpinnings get lost amidst the secular celebrations. Remedy that by going back to family traditions from your past or by researching religious holiday practices and adopting them as your own. The good news is that with kids, if they like the practice and if you do it twice in a row, it becomes the “way we’ve always done it.”

Being part of a community: Kids take much of their identity from the groups they belong to, e.g., Bulls fans, kids who love N’Sync, kids who hate N’Sync, kids who talk endlessly about Star Wars, or the goof-offs who go up and down my alley every Saturday night knocking down garbage cans. These groups are generally harmless. But we can do better than that for our kids. Initiate your children into a community of faith by making your parish your community, too. Sign up at the rectory. Talk to people you meet at church. Participate in ways that appeal to you. Doing so will

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As for me and my house we will serve thee Lord!

Book of Joshua 24:15



A walk with San Juan Diego

round out your child's identity as more than a child of a consumeristic age.

You don't have to make a big production out of these routines. Just emphasize the ways your own faith shines through. After all, children don't learn their faith from instructors; they learn from witnesses. (Based on ideas from *Growing Up Religious: Christians and Jews and Their Journeys of Faith*, by Robert Wuthnow, Beacon Press, 1999.) TJM



Reflection on Hope

—from the *St. Jude Journal*

Hope comes softly and often unannounced. It makes no grand displays, but changes everything.

Hope is one of God's most tender gifts.

There is no way we can earn it; all we can do is open our heart – even a crack – and it will flow into us and make the barren wasteland fresh and green once more.

Hope knows that there is ground to stand on, a hand to hold, a love that's present even when all that is good seems to have vanished.

Have confidence. Place your worries, fears, and even despair before the loving eyes of God.

Open your heart to hope.

by Ted Hewitt - originally written to explain Catholic ways to non-Catholics

This last December I joined a procession of our local Mexican community of Catholics up to a mountain shrine in honor of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Saint Juan Diego (a Mexican Indian who lived during the Spanish Colonial period). The pilgrimage was climaxed by a Mass given by Rutilio del Riego, Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of San Bernardino.

It was a rather amazing procession with about 5,000 people gathering at the Cross on Mt. Rubidoux for services. We had several groups dressed in traditional Mexican regional costumes and a few in Aztec regalia. On the procession itself, we had a float which bore an image of the Virgin Mary with Juan Diego kneeling before her. Such processions are common in Catholic countries.

On the walk, I noticed one non-Catholic bystander praying her heart out for us as we passed by. I thought a little bit about what she was seeing and I understood. She saw the "graven image of the Mother Goddess" with people dressed up in pagan Indian costume - and so she was praying fervently for the salvation of our souls. Sometimes it is really hard for someone from a "puritanized" Christian denomination to see past the costumes and icons.

The symbols that we walked with had to do with the way Jesus



transformed culture. The Virgin of Guadalupe, believed to have been an actual visitation by Mary the Mother of God, changed the way Native Americans saw Christianity. Their previous experience had been with the Spanish conquistadors who used religion as a tool of conquest. The visitation was a message to the most humble of people that Jesus was there for everyone, not just the powerful. Within a short time after the visitation, the local Indians converted to Christ wholeheartedly.

So, we walked with symbols of that culture which had been transformed into a worship of Jesus, the triumphant son of God. It was truly a celebration of Jesus and his people.



Franciscan Calendar of Saints

February

- 4. Joseph of Leonissa, I Order
- 6. Peter Baptist, Paul Miki and companions, martyrs, I and III Orders -- Memorial
- 7. Colette, virgin, II Order
- 10. Conrad of Piacenza, III Order

March

- 2. Bl. Agnes of Prague, II Order
- 4. Bl. Didacus Joseph of Gadiz, priest, I Order

April

- 3. Benedict the Black, religious, I Order -- Memorial
- 21. Conrad of Parzham, religious, I Order-- Memorial
- 23. Bl. Giles of Assisi, I Order
- 24. FIDELIS OF SIGMARINGEN, PRIEST AND MARTYR, I Order -- Feast
- 28. Bl. Luchesius, III Order.

May

- 9. Catherine of Bologna, II Order
- 11. Ignatius of Laconi, I Order
- 16. Margaret of Cortona, III Order -- Memorial
- 17. Paschal Baylon, religious, I Order -- Memorial
- 18. FELIX OF CANTALICE, RELIGIOUS, I Order -- Feast
- 20. BERNARDINE OF SIENA, PRIEST, I Order -- Feast
- 24. DEDICATION OF THE BASILICA OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI -- Feast
- 28. Mary Ann of Jesus of Paredes, virgin, III Order
- 30. Bl. Bapbtista Varano, II Order



Father William, OFM

Fr. Steve Gross, OFM Conv. and I were at Santa Barbara for the fraternity election, so we stopped off to see Fr. William Brand, OFM. We had heard rumors but wanted see him and spend time with him.

The cancer in Fr. William's body is all gone, he is still a little woozy from all the medication but we were told that should clear up in a few months after it has all worked out of his body. Those of you in the medical field know that Lymphoma doesn't usually work this way. Let's give credit to God for another miracle. Prayer works. Peace, love and prayers

Rock

Seventeenth Quinquennial Congress July 3-8, 2007

Franciscan University at Steubenville, Ohio
Without You, the family is incomplete.

A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.
(SFO Rule, Article 13)

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 (the 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.



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The Joy of Francis



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