

Minister's Message: Moving Forward!

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Your new Regional Executive Council had its first meeting on January 13. I cannot tell you how blessed we are to have such a wonderful – and talented – team serving our Region! Expect great things from this Council! We had many preliminary issues to address and I'd like to fill you in on the important ones:

Updated 2007 Regional Calendar. The first day of the Candidates' Retreat was changed to April 14 (the week after Easter), and the *location* (not dates) of the Quinquennial Congress has changed – see page 4 for the complete Regional calendar.

Per Capita. Letters will be going out to the ministers of the Region shortly. As the ministers will recall, it was voted at our Chapter of Ministers last May to increase

the *Per Capita* to \$25 per *Professed* member. In addition, it will no longer be possible for the Region to waive its portion of the *Per Capita* in hardship cases; helping those individuals will be the responsibility of their local fraternities.

Apostolates Workshop. The Regional Apostolates Workshop is scheduled for Saturday, March 10 at Mayslake Village (see article on page 2).

Franciscan Family Structure for National Action. This is a very important event in which all branches of the Franciscan Family in the U.S. will come together to “bring a more visible and effective Franciscan presence to the effort of repairing relationships to establish justice in our world.” SFO Regions have been invited to

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Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Wow, it seems like we just celebrated Christmas and New Year, and now all of a sudden we're looking at ... yes, you guessed it, *Lent*. I mean, I still see Christmas lights up on houses in my neighborhood, keeping the memories fresh. Not long ago I received one more Christmas card, which had made a rather zig-zaggy journey, but finally reached my home.

And our colors, at least the liturgical ones, have gone from white to green, and now are soon going to turn to purple. Actually, purple is a very beautiful color, the favorite color of one of my best friends. But it is presented to us as a color of penance. I really don't know how that fits. Are we supposed to fast till we turn purple? What exactly has purple to do with penance?

Well, anyway, I suppose it's more subdued than, say, white.

So, Lent is a time for us to do penance. As you must know, the early name for the lay folks' branch of the Franciscan Order was the Order of Penance. In *A Book of the Praises of Saint Francis*, written by Bernard of Besse around 1277–83, we read:

“The Third Order is of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, shared by clerics, laity, virgins, widows, and married couples. Their purpose is to live uprightly in their own homes, to devote their attention to works of piety, and to flee the world's allurements. Therefore, you might see among them nobles, and even knights and other people great in the world's estimation, dressed in proper cloaks of black fur, humble in both their clothing and mounts, so modestly associating

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Council Members

Minister:

Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Vice-Minister:

Javier Orozco, SFO

Formation Director:

Rosemary Zimmerman, SFO

Secretary:

Monica Marko, SFO

Treasurer:

Bob Spinozzi, SFO

Councilor At-Large:

Elisabeth Shin, SFO

Councilor for Apostolates:

Nancy McKenna, SFO

Councilor for Communications/

Public Relations:

Lisa Wathen, SFO

Councilor for Fraternal Life:

Chris Bruhnke, SFO

Councilor for Visitations:

Jacqueline Leo, SFO

Councilor for Vocations:

Norman Mosk, SFO

Councilor for Youth/

Young Adult:

Sandra Kisel, SFO

Spiritual Assistant

Fr. Donald Blaeser, OFM

Newsletter Editor

Lisa Wathen, SFO

The *SFO News* is the official publication of the Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order.

**Submission deadline is the
20th of each month.**

Professions

- **Tess Catibog**, SFO and
- **Ray Collins**, SFO of the Brother Jacoba Community (Chicago), made their Professions on January 16.

Rest in Peace

- **John Godla**, SFO of the St. Paschal Satellite Fraternity (Chicago), died January 2.

From the Editor

Greetings! As your new SFO News editor, I'm looking forward to serving you and am delighted to follow in the footsteps of Gloria Huerta, SFO. She did an outstanding job of keeping this newsletter packed with useful and timely information, and has been quite supportive in helping me take over its production.

If you haven't already done so, fraternity ministers, please update your mailing lists with my information.

~ Lisa Wathen, SFO

Corrections & Clarifications

In the Jan. 2007 SFO News, the fraternity of Rosemary Zimmerman, SFO, our new Regional Formation Director, was incorrectly listed as St. Francis of Assisi (Crystal Lake). Her correct fraternity is St. Maximilian Kolbe (Libertyville).

In reviewing back issues of the newsletter, an error in the volume number sequence was discovered in the Jan. 2006 issue: Instead of it being Vol. 12, it was listed as 11 and remained at 11 until the Jan. 2007 issue (resulting in two years of newsletters listed as "Volume 11"). To correct this, the current volume number has been set to 13.

We apologize for the errors.

Around the Region

Northwest Franciscan Community of the IHM (Palatine). At their December gathering, members signed and stuffed 500 Christmas cards for the homeless guests at Franciscan Outreach. Each card contained a customized prayer card with the Blessing of St. Francis on the back, and a \$1 gift certificate for a fast-food restaurant.

When delivering the cards, members also donated 12 bags full of socks and underwear, and new/used scarves, hats, gloves, and jackets.

St. Bernardine of Siena Fraternity (Wayne). In December, members shopped for, assembled, and delivered 50 gift bags for Fox Valley Hospice patients. The bags had a blue and white snowflake/snowman theme and were filled with two mugs (one blue, one white), hot chocolate, tea bags, and

cookie and peanut packets. They also included a postcard with the Franciscan Blessing and the fraternity's name.

St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity (Crystal Lake). Once again, fraternity members delivered Christmas gift bags in December to the children at the Santa Teresita Child Development Center. Each gift bag contained a sweatsuit, underwear, socks, toothbrush, and toothpaste.

St. Juliana Fraternity (Chicago). The fraternity held a December crib devotion with much participation from those attending, and enjoyed a festive holiday party. In addition, members donated two heavily-stuffed boxes to Franciscan Outreach just prior to Christmas week. ☑

Apostolic Action Workshop in March

The Region is hosting an Apostolic Action Workshop on **Saturday, March 10**; speakers are still being finalized.

- **Times:** 8:30 a.m.: Registration
9:00 a.m.: Mass
- **Location:** Mayslake Village
1801 W. 35th St., Oak Brook
- **Cost:** \$10 per person for lunch and expenses.
- **RSVP By:** March 3 (Saturday)

Please note – we've paid attention to the surveys! Lunch will be roasted chicken and veggies.

Also, if you have a traveling coffee mug or durable water bottle, please use them!

Bring them to the workshop to save the earth's resources.

Join in the Fun!

To raise money for Regional events like this one, we're having a raffle! We'd like you – fraternities and apostolates – to create baskets valued at about \$45 each for the prizes. Entries will be \$1 each/\$5 for 6.

Feel free to think up a theme and fill a basket. Get local businesses involved – you

can ask for donations to add to baskets. For example, one basket already waiting for the Workshop has:

- 1 garden apron
- 1 reusable cotton tote bag
- 1 non-woven reusable tote bag
- 1 copy of *Midwest Gardening*
- 1 hand trowel
- 1 pair of garden shears
- 1 package of plant labels
- 1 package of water-saving crystals for potted plants
- 1 insulated collapsible lunch bag/6-pack cooler

You can see the basket at:

www.sfoecology.org/workshop.html

For more information or to RSVP, contact Nancy McKenna, SFO. ☑



Change in Quinquennial Location!

The winter 2006 issue of the *TAU-USA* included a registration form for the National Quinquennial Congress, scheduled for July 3–8, 2007.

PLEASE DO NOT USE THAT FORM.

The **location** of the Congress has been changed to the Radisson-Green Tree Hotel in Pittsburgh, PA, and the cost may actually be slightly less. The dates have *not* changed—the event is still set for July 3–8, 2007.

Therefore, please wait to register until you receive the new registration form

in the spring 2007 *TAU-USA*, which will be coming out soon.

Regional Involvement

Our Vice-Minister, Javier Orozco, SFO, will be leading one of the four workshops at the Quinquennial, and our Korean fraternities will be playing a very important role for the multicultural evening.

A Wonderful Opportunity

The Quinquennial is held every 5 years (hence the funny-sounding name), and it's a wonderful

opportunity to make new friends from all over the country, and to learn and be challenged in our Franciscan vocations.

Please, encourage the brothers and sisters of all fraternities to attend! Especially since it will be held in Pittsburgh, travel to the event will be a quick and relatively inexpensive plane trip. Or, if you prefer to drive, it's only 500 miles.

More information will be provided in upcoming issues of the *TAU-USA* and our *SFO News*. ☐

Secular Franciscans Should Be Prophets

from the October 2006 *CIOFS Bulletin* (www.ciofs.org/per/2006-Q/bca6en2b.htm)

This is the key point of the intervention of Fr. José Carballo, OFM during the pastoral visit to the CIOFS Presidency.

Formation is the pillar of our **re-foundation**. Re-foundation means that it is important to go to our origin and rediscover our roots, the essential charismatic elements. What counts is the quality of life. We are Franciscans insofar as we live our project of life. If we do not live it, we do nothing.

What are the consequences of this re-foundation?

Accepting our condition of minority.

We should be happy about what we are. We must not compete with others. All of us are called to be “minors” in our society.

Giving priority to the quality rather than quantity of life.

Privileging the symbolic aspect rather than effectiveness. It is a temptation to put effectiveness above fraternity. We must put the renewal of the Order before survival. The Church does not need survivors, but living people.

Who can take on this journey? THE PROPHET: he has five characteristic features:

A great memory. A population

without history has neither present nor future. Without history the SFO family will have neither present nor future. We must purify our history by living the elements; we must have the courage to say, “This is our history”.

His attention is focused on reality, listening simultaneously to the Lord and to the people. We must always hold in our hands both the Bible and the newspaper to be aware of reality. The Holy Father in his Encyclical, *Novo Millennio Advenite*, invites us to have memory and prophecy to “foresee the future”. We too must foresee the future, like Francis, who always looked ahead. By listening a lot it will be possible for us to have a vision of the future.

A great love for people, which will allow us to live the present passionately.

“Look at the past gratefully and live the present passionately” (John Paul II). A Franciscan must have the passion of Francis who, like Clare, was passionately in love with Jesus Christ and said “love is not loved”. The Scripture is very strongly based against those who are “tepid/lukewarm”.

Faith and courage. A lot of faith because we know we are not alone. We

must recuperate the faith in the Spirit. St. Francis is the first charismatic. He was the man “who moved the Spirit” We must recuperate the faith in the Lord of History. Today's crisis is the crisis of faith. It is faith that gives us the courage to face events. The prophet has courage. He loves the Church profoundly and is critical at the same time. If we don't have courage we should question ourselves about our faith.

Great patience. Be willing to be rejected. We must go ahead knowing that it is not easy. We must not leave for tomorrow what we can do today, considering that no prophet died in his bed. Refusal is part of prophetic vocation. When one accepts to be a prophet, one must accept refusal, like Christ accepted death.

Now we must deepen the sense of our centenary as well as the centenary of St. Elizabeth. We cannot let these moments of grace go by; we cannot restrict ourselves to having a nice congress or making a beautiful publication. We must take action. There is a lot [of] inaction in our family. We are an army. We are the world's largest spiritual family. But what do we do? ☐

Calendar

Note: The NAFRA General Chapter will be held in September or October; TBD.

March

- 01: Per Capita, Census, and Fraternity Annual Reports due
- 03: Registration for Apostolic Commissions Workshop due
- 7-9: Franciscan Family Structure for National Action, Baltimore, MD
- 10: Apostolic Commissions Workshop 8:30 a.m., Mayslake Village
- 17: Council Meeting, 8:30 a.m., Mayslake Village

April

- 14: Candidates' Retreat, Day 1 Mayslake Village

May

- 05: Candidates' Retreat, Day 2 Mayslake Village
- 19: Chapter of Ministers, Mayslake Village

June

- 16: Ministers and Formation Directors Workshop, Mayslake Village

July

- 3-8: National Quinquennial Congress Radisson-Green Tree, Pittsburgh, PA
- 14: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m., Mayslake Village

August

- 04: Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula, Mayslake Village

October

- 12-14: Regional Retreat, Marytown
- 20: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m., Mayslake Village

November

- 11: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration

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participate. Nancy McKenna, SFO, our Councilor for Apostolates, and I will be representing the Mother Cabrini Region.

Regional Goals. We are discerning our goals for the next three years. If there is a particular area you think we should address, I invite you to share your ideas with us. Please contact me!

For myself, I would like to see us focus on two important areas – **formation**, both initial and ongoing, and **leadership training**. We, of course, have addressed these areas under the leadership of Patrick Mendés, SFO, and he gave us an excellent foundation on which to grow. But, as you know, nothing is static in this world – we either go up, or we go down, so we are discerning how we can move forward in these areas.

Please pray for us as we seek the best ways to serve you! May we all grow in our vocations to live the Gospel authentically through the examples of St. Francis and St. Clare! Peace and all good! ☒

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with the indigent, that you would not doubt they are truly God-fearing.” (from *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, Vol. III, “The Prophet”, p. 64)

And Henri D’Avranches in *The Versified Life of Saint Francis* (probably written after 1283) also gave testimony to the penitential holiness of those early members of the Order of Penance:

“But because discernment makes for wholeness in a holy proposal, it is into three Orders he gathered all those converted. One Order got its name from the penance its members practiced: In it both sexes and every state of life were retained, cleric and lay person, man, woman, married and single. Nor did one have to change one’s home; in one’s own each one knew what rules of life to observe, what was to be carried out. Already this Order’s adherents radiate miracles. Which goes to show how great in the Lord’s eyes is its status.” (*Francis of Assisi*, p. 91)

We are all well aware of how much St. Francis loved penance. In his writings he spoke of observing several “lents” each year. One particular year he decided to observe the primary Lent that prepares for the celebration of Christ’s Resurrection in a special way. He spent it on the island in Lake Trasimene, taking with him only a loaf or two of bread.

Wow, that’s real penance! We are not expected to do anything like that. But Francis does remind us of our calling, and of the fact that if all of our life is to be characterized by penance, then Lent is especially the time for it.

While we have a great deal of latitude in choosing our own Lenten penances, freedom can be a stumbling block. Does our freedom result in choosing the easiest kind of penances, or even choosing not to choose? Whatever penance we choose to embrace during Lent, it ought to be meaningful, something that addresses our particular struggle to “turn away from sin and be faithful to the gospel,” as we hear when the ashes are imposed on our heads.

Dear sisters and brothers, let us make a really holy Lent this year that we may celebrate a glorious Easter. May God bless you abundantly. ☒