

Minister's Message: Upcoming Workshops – Save the Dates!

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I've just returned from Florida where I was privileged to attend the NAFRA Formation Workshop. It was attended by Regional Formation Directors and Regional Ministers from 15 of our 30 Regions and all the presentations were, quite simply, *outstanding!*

The wealth of material shared was incredible, and we're anxious to share it all with you. Exactly how we will do that needs to be discussed, since the NAFRA Workshop filled 2½ days, so our Region's normal one-day Leadership Workshop in June probably won't be sufficient; the Regional Council needs to decide how best to share all this material.

The NAFRA Workshop is being repeated in May in St. Louis, and Sandra Kisel, SFO, our newly-appointed Regional Formation Director (see related article on page 2), will be

attending. In the meantime, I'd just like to whet your appetite with an idea of what was covered:

- respect and mutual invitation from Rev. Eric Law's 2007 Quinquennial presentation
- vocation and its discernment
- profession and its discernment
- using the *Ritual* to full advantage
- ongoing formation
- conflict resolution

Here are just a few of the comments that really struck me:

- "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*

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Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Peace and everything good to you. What a way to start off a New Year! I had the privilege of being on retreat during the first full week of 2008 at Holy Cross Retreat Center in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Don't get too excited – it's over 4,000 ft. above sea level, so it was warmer than here, but not as warm as you might expect.

However, the whole experience was very warm, since the retreat was preached by Fr. Murray Bodo, OFM, a wonderful author, poet, and genuinely spiritual Franciscan, and there were 65 of us attending the retreat, representing every OFM Province in the U.S., plus a friar from Canada!

In one of his homilies, Fr. Bodo shared some thoughts on prayer. He likes to use a mnemonic device to list his components of

prayer, the word **SPORT**:

■ **S is for silence.** It is so important for us to be silent before the awesome presence of God. To be prepared to listen, to be attentive. Too often we begin immediately to do the talking, and perhaps do most or all the talking. So, silence is the number one priority for prayer for Fr. Bodo, and is certainly good for all of us.

■ **P is for purification.** We must be purified of our selfishness, our self-absorption, our sinfulness. We need to ask pardon, to seek purification, since we are in the presence of God who is all good. This is the very way we begin our celebration of the Eucharist – with the Penitential Rite. However, Fr. Bodo was quick to add that we must NOT beat up on ourselves. This was terribly prevalent in

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Council Members

Minister:

Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Vice-Minister:

Javier Orozco, SFO

Formation Director:

Sandra Kisel, SFO

Secretary:

Monica Marko, SFO

Treasurer:

Stephen Lanterman, SFO

Councilor At-Large:

Elisabeth Shin, SFO

Councilor for Apostolates:

To be appointed

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

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

- **Susan Jelen**, SFO and
- **Bonnie Michels**, SFO of Northwest Franciscan Community of the IHM (Palatine) made their Professions on January 14.

Rest in Peace

- **Mary Biegel**, SFO of St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity (East Side) died January 6.

Events of Interest

February 11: George Weigel will speak on “Why Freedom Needs Virtue: The Social Teachings of John Paul II”, 7 p.m. at Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, 36 Ellsworth, Naperville. For more information, call Christine Kancewick at 630.718.2154 or email christinesspp@yahoo.com.

February 16: Tour of the PASS Pregnancy Care Center, 17214 S. Oak Park Ave., Tinley Park. Time and details to be determined. For more information or to RSVP, contact Daniel and Susan Willenborg, SFO.

February 17: All are invited to attend a “Day of Reflection” hosted by the St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity (East Side), at St. Francis de Sales Parish, 10209 S. Ewing, Chicago. The presenter will be Fr. Ildephonse Skorup, OFM. For more information or to RSVP, contact Margaret Harkenrider, SFO.

February 29–March 2: The Rockford Diocese is holding “His Mercy ... Your Healing: A Lenten Weekend of Reflection, Devotion & Healing”. Fr. Mark Baron, MIC will lead participants to a deeper understanding of Jesus’ Divine Mercy. Activities include daily Mass, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Confession, and healing services. For more information, call 815.965.5011 or email blrcprograms@dpsrfd.org.

Regional Councilor Changes

New Formation Director Appointed

Sandra Kisel, SFO, who has been serving as Councilor for Youth and Young Adults, has agreed to accept the position of Regional Formation Director, filling the position previously held by Rosemary Zimmerman, SFO. A member of St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity (Libertyville), Sandra is also serving her fraternity as its Formation Director.

We are very grateful to Sandra for taking on this important responsibility for the Region.

Office of Youth/YA Councilor on Hold

The Regional Executive Council agreed to temporarily suspend the position of Councilor for Youth and Young Adults while it clarifies for itself and for the Region exactly what we are trying to accomplish with this position, and what are reasonable short- and long-term goals in this area.

Should anyone in the Region wish to participate in this discernment process, please email Stephanie Sormane, SFO at minister@ilsfo.org. ■

New Email Addresses for Regional Council

In order to facilitate communication with the members of the Regional Executive Council, we have created **permanent email addresses for each council position/function**.

Now you can always use the same email address to reach a council position/function, no matter who is holding the office at any given time. This means that, in the future, you won’t have to update your email lists whenever a new Regional Council is elected or members appointed.

In addition to ease of communication, the official council email addresses will aid in uniformity throughout the Region, and present a more professional image.

The official Regional email addresses are (to correspond, just remove the spaces before and after the “@” symbol):

- **Minister:**
minister@ilsfo.org
- **Vice-Minister:**
viceminister@ilsfo.org
- **Formation Director:**
formation@ilsfo.org
- **Secretary:**
secretary@ilsfo.org
- **Treasurer:**
treasurer@ilsfo.org
- **Councilor At-Large:**
atlarge@ilsfo.org
- **Councilor for Apostolates:**
apostolates@ilsfo.org

- **Councilor for Communications/PR:**
pr@ilsfo.org
- **Councilor for Fraternal Life:**
fratlife@ilsfo.org
- **Councilor for Visitations:**
visitations@ilsfo.org
- **Councilor for Vocations:**
vocations@ilsfo.org
- **Spiritual Assistant:**
spiritualassistant@ilsfo.org
- **SFO News:**
sfonews@ilsfo.org
- **Webmaster:**
webmaster@ilsfo.org

Please update your email distribution lists and use these addresses when emailing council members. ■

National Seminar on Servant Leadership

A 4-day seminar, “Developing Servant Leadership”, will be held from **June 26 (Thu.) through June 29 (Sun.)** at Saint Francis University, Loretto, PA. Our National Executive Council encourages *all* SFOs—not just those currently in leadership roles in various levels of the Order—to attend, especially those considering leadership roles in the future. Each one of us is a leader in some aspect of our life, in our fraternities, in our parishes, and in our daily lives. So everyone will benefit from attending this seminar.

Cost for the full weekend is \$210 single/\$170 double, which includes room, meals, campus shuttle, and registration fee. Topics include discernment, decision-making, listening, crisis and conflict management, and more.

Full details will be in the Spring TAU-USA issue.

Franciscan Advocacy Network: Ecumenical Advocacy Days

by Russ Testa, Interim FAN Coordinator

The Franciscan Action Network (FAN) continues to move rapidly towards its public launch. Thus, on behalf of the FAN Steering Committee and the newly formed Action Commission, I am thrilled to invite you to our first FAN-sponsored event.

The Franciscan Action Network Steering Committee and Action Commission determined that the first public action of FAN should be one that represents who we hope to be as an organization. To this end, they discerned and have worked to make the **Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice 2008** part of our launch event, and our first official action of advocacy.

Ecumenical Advocacy Days is a gathering of more than 40 national and regional organizations spanning the Christian spectrum. The event gathers together more than 1000 persons to advocate on common issues where they collectively can help build the Common Good. This is a most appropriate backdrop for the launch of the FAN.

Although we may not agree with all the stances that other sponsors hold, we as Franciscans seek to find common ground and engage in dialogue, as does the larger Catholic and Christian Tradition for public action. We are called to add to the mix our particular message to live out the Gospel values. This bridge-building activity is itself an action of Franciscan Peacemaking.

This year's theme, *2008: Claiming a Vision of True Security*, speaks to the urgent need for peace in our nation and world. As Franciscans, our deep peacemaking tradition and message can help make this effort, during this pivotal election year, all the more possible.

The program for Ecumenical Advocacy Days is better than ever. The sponsors are working not only at having an advocacy day on Capitol Hill that will help the U.S. have better tools for domestic and

international peace, but also at getting the 2008 Presidential Candidates to come for a public forum. In this way, the more than 1000 participants can help shape the possibility of a more peace-filled future. Franciscans must be a part of this dynamic if we are to be true to our charism.

For more information on Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice, please go to the conference's web site, www.advocacydays.org. This site will provide you with the most current details of the event and allow you to register.

During the **Ecumenical Advocacy Days** gathering, we officially will launch the Franciscan Action Network as an organization seeking to transform our world in the Spirit of St. Francis' and St. Clare's example of following the Gospel. The launch will take place **on Saturday evening, March 8, 2008**, and promises to be an exciting, spirit-filled event of prayer, formation and solidarity-building. You won't want to miss it!

So, we want to invite you and other members of your provinces, congregations, regions, fraternities, etc. to participate in this important moment in Franciscan history. If Franciscans are to fulfill their call to be peacemakers and workers for justice, the first step surely is to show up and participate.

Therefore, I ask that you forward this message to other members in your communities. This group certainly can include lay persons in the ministries that we serve. For we know it will take many persons to build the FAN network and, more importantly, to bring the Franciscan message of transformation to our weary world.

Again, please consult the Ecumenical Advocacy Days we site for more information at www.advocacydays.org, or feel free to e-mail me at testa@franciscanaction.org.

I hope to see you in March! 📌

Living the Gospel of Life

About 225,000 pro-life activists gathered on the national mall in the nation's capital on Jan. 22 for the 2008 March for Life.

"Following the phone-in address by President George W. Bush in which he said he was proud 'to be standing with you', dozens of politicians spoke of their pro-life convictions and thanked the massive crowd for their support and witness to those in power.

"Powerful addresses were made by spiritual leaders and with a prayer and a rousing rendition of 'America', the march commenced. What would normally be a 15 minute walk took the line of marchers hours to complete.

"Fifty across and thousands deep, the march was an unbelievable sea of people. Some near the front who had completed the march went for lunch and returned to their hotel rooms only to see thousands of marchers still progressing toward the Supreme Court. ...

"Leading the March were a large group of women who had had abortions and regretted them. At one point the march stopped briefly as Alveda King, the niece of Martin Luther King invited the marchers to join her in singing 'We will overcome'."

~ John-Henry Westen, *LifeSiteNews.com*, 23-Jan-2008; reprinted with permission

For more information on the annual March for Life, see www.marchforlife.org.

From **Feb. 6-Mar. 16**, join in a special Lenten, nationwide pro-life campaign, **40 Days for Life**—an intensive time of prayer and fasting to raise awareness, save lives, bring healing, and prepare the U.S. for the beginning of the end of abortion. For more information, see www.40daysforlife.com.

Calendar

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, all events are at Mayslake Village (Oak Brook).

March

- 01: Per Capita, Census, and Fraternity Annual Reports due
- 15: Apostolic Action Workshop
- 29: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

April

- 05: Candidates' Retreat, Day 1

May

- 03: Candidates' Retreat, Day 2
- 17: Chapter of Ministers and National Visitation

June

- 21: Leadership Workshop

July

- 19: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

August

- 02: Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula

September

- 12-14: Regional Retreat, St. Francis Woods, Frankfort

October

- 25: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

November

- 16: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration (location TBD)

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- We don't answer the call to *do* something, but to *be* someone.
- [Regarding *secularity*] Jesus was a lay person who lived in the world.
- Humility is not thinking less of ourselves, but thinking of ourselves less.

Meantime, we have the **Apostolic Action Workshop scheduled for March 15**. The name will change – either before or during the workshop – but the date will remain the same. Included that day will be a viewing of Rev. Eric Law's Quinquennial workshops (DVDs produced by NAFRA), specifics on the Franciscan Action Network, and a session explaining the reasons for the restructuring of the Apostolic Commissions and what changes we need to make in our fraternities. We'll also have news from local ministries.

We're asking you also to mark your calendars for the Regional **Chapter of Ministers on May 17**. We *must* have every fraternity in the Region represented, either by its minister or the minister's delegate. This will be a visitation by NAFRA: Tom Bello, SFO, NAFRA Vice-Minister, will be the fraternal visitor, and Fr. Lester Bach, OFM CAP. will be the pastoral visitor. There also will be a major updating of the *Minister's Manual*.

For the **Leadership Workshop on June 21**, we are considering inviting NAFRA's Spirit and Life Team (S.A.L.T) to do a presentation. They normally do this over a weekend rather than one day, so we're looking into the possibilities. ☒

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the past, to the point of many good Catholics becoming scrupulous and thinking everything was a sin. Rather, we need to humbly acknowledge our humanness, with our faults and failings and therefore our need for God, who understands and forgives us out of wondrous love.

■ **O is for openness.** We need to be open to God and God's agenda. This is often very difficult because we know what we want, and we like to be in control. Rather, the challenge is to risk the openness to allow God to do with us whatever God wills. We may find ourselves moved in entirely new directions, taken out of our "comfort zone." But wherever we are taken, we can be assured that we are not alone – God is with us.

■ **R is for response.** Our prayer needs to be more than just some sweet time alone with God. It extends beyond our conversation with God and into the rest of our daily life, and that implies a response to God – a willingness to carry out God's agenda for us. We are called to act, and to respond, as St. Francis and St. Clare did, with a joyful heart.

■ Finally, **T is for talking.** Surely God wants to allow us to make our needs known, so we are welcome to tell God what is in our heart. But as you see, our time to do some talking comes last. That's last in the sense of priorities, just as silence is the first priority. So these five components are not necessarily to be taken sequentially, but rather in whatever manner suits our form of prayer, but with silence being most important and talking being least.

This little overview of prayer has been very helpful for me, and is so easy to remember that I am recalling all of it without any notes. It is also pretty intuitive, isn't it? It makes abundant sense to me. I share it in the hope that it might make sense and be equally helpful for you.

God bless you all abundantly. ☒