

## Minister's Message: Easter Blessings!

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

When you receive this issue of *SFO News*, the first Sunday of Easter will have come and gone – but the Easter Season will still be with us. As I write this – on Good Friday – it's snowing like crazy! Seems we're going to have a "white Easter"! Well, white or green, I wish each and every one of you for this Easter Season and beyond the light of Christ blazing in your hearts!

Easter celebrates new life – and I believe we are experiencing new life in the SFO – and I would like to do everything possible to encourage that new life to grow and grow! We had an excellent turnout at the Apostolic Action Workshop (see article on page 2), and at least some excitement was exhibited for the subjects covered. We have the **Candidates' Retreats** coming up on

**April 5 and May 3.** We have a fairly good registration for April 5, but few registered for May 3. I hope those coming in April are planning to come in May – the retreats are connected and you're cheating yourselves if you don't come to both.

At the Workshop, a fraternity minister came up to me, asking if it would be all right for her to come to the Candidates' Retreats just to learn, since her fraternity didn't have any candidates at the present time. The answer, for any others in the same situation, is a resounding YES!

*Any professed* interested in learning by attending the Candidates Retreats is most welcome! If that hasn't always been clear, I hope it is now.

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## Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Happy Easter!!! Wow! We made it. We journeyed through Lent, hopefully with some penance which is bringing us closer to God, and ready to celebrate.

I always find such a big contrast between the seasons of Lent and Easter. The feeling is so vastly different for me. The dying – to ourselves, to selfishness and sin – really leads to the freshness of new life. It is palpable. Having experienced six weeks of Lent, we now celebrate seven weeks of Easter.

I've probably said this before: that our 40 days of Lent *must* be outdone by 50 weeks of Easter – a week of weeks – so wondrous is the mystery we celebrate. Each year I need to "pinch" myself, to get in touch with the awesome reality of what we celebrate: the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

I like to try to feel it as something brand new. What might it have been like to hear this for the first time? When I hear the accounts of the women going to the tomb and finding it empty, what is the feeling? Shock? Grief? Fear? Could they already be replaying in their minds what Jesus had said about rising from the dead? But didn't that seem just too incongruous? At least up till now?

And these women, "fearful, yet overjoyed," as Matthew describes them, ran to announce the news to the other disciples. Again, I can only imagine the jumble of mixed emotions that must have been racing through these disciples all at the same time. And then – wonder of wonders – Jesus appears to them: "Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

*continued on p. 4 ...*

*From Gospel to Life – From Life to Gospel*

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*Councilor for Visitations:*

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

**Submission deadline is the  
20<sup>th</sup> of each month.**

### Rest in Peace

• **Harry Barton**, SFO of St. Pascal Satellite Fraternity (Chicago) has died (date unknown).

### Local Appointments

On November 17, Bernice Green, SFO of **St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity (Fox Valley)** was appointed Treasurer for the remaining 2 years left in the office's term.

### Events of Interest

**April 27:** The Diocese of Joliet Chapter of the Knights of Columbus is sponsoring "A Living Rosary Prayer Service to Our Lady of Charity" at 4 p.m. at the St. Charles Borromeo Pastoral Center, 402 S. Independence Blvd., Romeoville. The service is dedicated to all the victims of abortion, and the Most Reverend Bishop Roger Kaffer will preside. For more information, call 630.985.1876.

**May 10:** Daniel and Susan Willenborg, SFO (St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity, Joliet) invite and encourage all Secular Franciscans in our Region to join with them for this year's interfaith "Hike for Life" in Frankfort. They especially encourage members of fraternities in Ford City, Frankfort, Kankakee, Matteson, and Steger to participate. Please RSVP by **April 15**; for more information or to sign up, contact Daniel and Susan.

**May 18:** Jubilee Mass of Mother Vicarress Amata Rose of the Most High King, PCC, in celebration of the silver anniversary of her religious consecration at 9 a.m. at the Immaculate Conception Monastery Chapel of the Poor Clares, 12210 S. Will Cook Rd., Palos Park. Bishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller, M.SP.S., will celebrate Mass, and visitors are welcome to greet Mt. Amata in the parlor following Mass.

## Report on the 2008 Apostolic Action Workshop

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

On March 15, over 60 Secular Franciscans from throughout the Region gathered at Mayslake Village to hear presentations on and participate in discussions about the Franciscan Action Network (FAN), the Restructuring of the Apostolates, our local outreach ministries, and the main lessons and tools from the 2007 Quinquennial Congress. All handouts will be sent to the ministers of fraternities that had no members present.

■ **Franciscan Action Network (FAN).** We were blessed to have Sr. Sheila Kinsey, OSF, a Wheaton Franciscan, speak to us about FAN. Sr. Kinsey is a member of both the Steering Committee and the Action Commission of FAN, and she was also the author of the beautiful letter sent by FAN to the Franciscans in Kenya, assuring them of our support and prayers. Sr. Kinsey gave a brief history of FAN, from its formation in Baltimore last March to its launch this March during Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington, DC.

Handouts of the Unity, Visions, Mission, and Values Statements were distributed; these form the basis of why FAN has been formed and how it will accomplish its goals. Future plans were also discussed, which include peacemaking workshops conducted by Pace e Bene throughout the U.S.

■ **Apostolic Commission Restructuring.** Next we discussed restructuring of the Apostolic Commissions. I handed out copies of articles by Pat Brandwein-Ball, SFO, the NAFRA Councilor heading the Ad Hoc Committee for the Restructuring of the Commissions (these are also in the Winter and Spring issues of *TAU-USA*). One gave a brief history of the Apostolic Commissions and why restructuring is now thought appropriate. The other suggested a careful review of the *Rule*, especially the "Prologue" and Articles 4–19, to fully appreciate our calling as Secular Franciscans.

I suggested that the *Rule* might be summed up in Article 4—to be Gospel people—and the Gospel could be summed up by the Great Commandment, which is the law of love, for God and our neighbor. On the subject of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), we're

looking at this model because it's the model used by the rest of the Franciscan Family, and it would allow us all to communicate and work together better. However, JPIC for the SFO might not be exactly the same as it is for our religious brothers and sisters, and exactly how we would transfer from the Commissions model to the JPIC model has not as yet been determined.

In the meantime, our ministries still need our attention, so I suggested that, for the time being, fraternities continue as they have, with the understanding that a restructuring was on the way, which probably will change more the way we look at service than the service itself.

■ **Local Outreach Ministries.** We had excellent presentations on some of our local outreach ministries. Dorry Dahl, SFO spoke about Kairos Outside and Kairos Inside, which is a ministry both to women who have incarcerated loved ones, and to women inmates themselves. Kris Openshaw, SFO, Dorothy Balicki, SFO, and Bea Hogan, SFO spoke about activities at The Port, and Diana Faust, SFO spoke about Franciscan Outreach. Their presentations were animated, and you could see how much their work in these ministries means to them. All were invited to join them.

■ **Tools & Techniques from 2007 Quinquennial.** Finally, we reviewed the main tools given to us at the 2007 Quinquennial Congress by Rev. Eric Law, specifically, "Respectful Communication Guidelines", "Mutual Invitation", "Iceberg Analogy of Culture", and "Cycle of Gospel Living". These handouts give an idea, but more information is available from the Kaleidoscope Institute's section of the Episcopalian Los Angeles Diocese's web site at: [www.ladiocese.org/ki](http://www.ladiocese.org/ki).

Of course it's easy to mention what we covered, but it's far more difficult to incorporate all the activities and ideas into our fraternities. But it's an exciting time for the SFO—a time to work together to become more of a presence in society, a time to work with the rest of our brothers and sisters in the Franciscan Family. ■

## National Seminar on Servant Leadership: Update

In our February issue, we mentioned a 4-day seminar, “Developing Servant Leadership”, to be held from **June 26 (Thu.) through June 29 (Sun.)** at St. Francis University, Loretto, PA. Presenters are Fr. Bernard Tickerhoff, TOR and Anne Mulqueen, SFO, and the seminar is endorsed by the National Executive Council of NAFRA.

The eight sessions include: Discernment of Gifts, Basic Choices, Servant Leadership, Listening with Compassion and Empathy, Leadership Styles, Decision-Making, Crisis and Conflict, and Leadership Development and Training.

Before April 30, cost for the full weekend is \$210 single/\$170 double, which includes room, meals, campus shuttle, and

registration. After April 30, the cost increases to \$225 and \$185 respectively. The Eucharist will be celebrated on Fri. and Sat.

Some Secular Franciscans from our Region are driving—please let our Regional Minister, Stephanie Sormane, SFO, know if you’d like to join them. If you’ll be flying, while the literature suggests arriving in Johnstown, arriving in Altoona seems better, both in timing and expense.

For more information, or for a flyer, please email our Regional Minister, Stephanie Sormane, SFO, at [minister@ilsfo.org](mailto:minister@ilsfo.org).

This is a great opportunity, so don’t miss it! 📄

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## Excerpt from Pope Benedict XVI’s Message for World Day of Peace, 1 Jan. 2008

from the Vatican, 8 December 2007; [www.oecumene.radiovaticana.org/en1/Articolo.asp?c=173082](http://www.oecumene.radiovaticana.org/en1/Articolo.asp?c=173082)

[Continued from our January issue.]

The family needs to have a home, employment and a just recognition of the domestic activity of parents, the possibility of schooling for children, and basic health care for all. When society and public policy are not committed to assisting the family in these areas, they deprive themselves of an essential resource in the service of peace. The social communications media, in particular, because of their educational potential, have a special responsibility for promoting respect for the family, making clear its expectations and rights, and presenting all its beauty.

### Humanity is one great family

6. The social community, if it is to live in peace, is also called to draw inspiration from the values on which the family community is based. This is as true for local communities as it is for national communities; it is also true for the international community itself, for the human family which dwells *in that common house which is the earth*. Here, however, we cannot forget that the family comes into being from the responsible and definitive “yes” of a man and a woman, and it continues to live from the conscious “yes” of the children who gradually join it. The family community, in order to prosper, needs the generous consent of all its members. This realization also needs to become a shared conviction on the part of all those called to form the *common human family*. We need to say our own “yes” to this vocation which God has inscribed in our very nature. We do not live alongside one another purely by chance; all of us are progressing along *a common path as men and women, and thus as brothers and sisters*. Consequently, it is essential that we should all be committed to living our lives in an attitude of responsibility before God, acknowledging him as the deepest source of our own existence and that of others. By going back to this supreme principle we are able to perceive the unconditional worth of each human being, and thus to lay the premises for building a

humanity at peace. Without this transcendent foundation society is a mere aggregation of neighbors, not a community of brothers and sisters called to form one great family.

### The family, the human community and the environment

7. The family needs a home, a fit environment in which to develop its proper relationships. *For the human family, this home is the earth*, the environment that God the Creator has given us to inhabit with creativity and responsibility. We need to care for the environment: it has been entrusted to men and women to be protected and cultivated with responsible freedom, with the good of all as a constant guiding criterion. Human beings, obviously, are of supreme worth vis-à-vis creation as a whole. Respecting the environment does not mean considering material or animal nature more important than man. Rather, it means not selfishly considering nature to be at the complete disposal of our own interests, for future generations also have the right to reap its benefits and to exhibit towards nature the same responsible freedom that we claim for ourselves. Nor must we overlook the poor, who are excluded in many cases from the goods of creation destined for all. Humanity today is rightly concerned about the ecological balance of tomorrow. It is important for assessments in this regard to be carried out prudently, in dialogue with experts and people of wisdom, uninhibited by ideological pressure to draw hasty conclusions, and above all with the aim of reaching agreement on a model of sustainable development capable of ensuring the well-being of all while respecting environmental balances. If the protection of the environment involves costs, they should be justly distributed, taking due account of the different levels of development of various countries and the need for solidarity with future generations. ... 📄

## Calendar

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

### 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)

**Minister** continued from p. 1 ...

Regarding attendance at the Candidates Retreats, there IS one concern. In some instances, inquirers have asked to attend, but then, the following year, when they were candidates, they said they didn't need to attend because they had done so the previous year. That is *not* acceptable. The Candidates' Retreats are planned for persons who have been in formation for a while. If an inquirer is interested and wishes to attend the Retreats, we're happy to accommodate them, but if the following year they think they know it all and don't need to attend, that's a *big red flag!* We need to remember that *all of us* are in formation for as long as we live – we *never* reach the ultimate. Thus, for a candidate to think they don't "need" the Retreats is a serious indication that they don't understand or appreciate the Secular Franciscan Order.

It should also be kept in mind that the Candidates' Retreats are never exactly the same. Thus, having gone one year does not preclude one going the following year (although, it occurs to me that a repeat wouldn't be a waste of time either). The Candidates' Retreats are provided by the Region to assist local fraternities in the formation of those interested in the SFO. The Retreats can be changed in structure – perhaps a longer one-day event would be preferred to the current 2-day event. If that's the case, all you need to do is let us know. However, we ask highly qualified formators to conduct these Retreats, and it's really a shame that more in the Region don't take advantage of them.

I'm happy to say I'll be able to attend both days of the Candidates' Retreats this year, and I'm looking forward to seeing many of you then. In the meantime, be filled with the Spirit of New Life this Easter Season – and pray for Spring! 🍀

**Assistant** continued from p. 1 ...

How can they tell anyone this impossible thing? Who is going to believe them, especially since they are *women* in a male-dominant culture? But how can they NOT tell the others this startling, wonderful, glorious news?

Well I could go on with this meditation, but this is what I often do with the Scriptures to make them real, to let them speak to me, to my heart, to our life today. Do you ever do this or something similar? I hope so.

I believe St. Francis did this in his own unique way, and this became his prayer – a meditative and mystical prayer. This, I believe, helps to account for the kind of outstanding saints that Francis and Clare came to be. They never dealt with the Incarnation or the Paschal Mystery as bits of history to be remembered, like a pretty wall plaque that is nice, but unconnected with real life. They give us the example and the challenge to really live our Faith – that as a resurrection people we treat others differently, we work for justice, for peace, for ethical/moral honesty and have a disposition of good will, an attitude of gratitude, a pervading lifestyle of love for all.

If we do this, if the resurrection is indeed radiating from us, it is because we, like Francis and Clare, keep our gaze fixed on the risen Christ. Then we are like those women running from the tomb, filled with enthusiasm to *live* and *share* the Good News. Then nothing can stop us or dampen our spirits, because the risen Lord is alive and shining from our hearts. May the risen Christ of Easter be in you! 🍀