

## Minister's Message: It's Time for Chapter!

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Continued blessings during this beautiful Easter Season. Isn't it wonderful to watch the earth come back to life?

Our **Annual Chapter** approaches – and as I have already written to each of your ministers, this is a particularly important one because it is also our **National visitation**. The Chapter will be at Mayslake Village, 1801 35<sup>th</sup> Street, Oak Brook, on **Saturday, May 17**, with Registration and Continental Breakfast at 8:30 a.m. The Chapter will begin promptly at 9:15 a.m. Please note the agenda is different this year – we will *conclude with Mass* at the end of the day.

The Chapter is our “annual meeting” – when we come together to take stock of what we have accomplished, where we are going, and how we can improve. With

National visitors present, we are particularly blessed because they will be sharing their wisdom with us as well.

Our National pastoral visitor will be Fr. Lester Bach, OFM CAP., one of the National Spiritual Assistants and author of a number of formation books used by many of our fraternities. Fr. Bach will also be the retreat director for our annual Regional Retreat this fall.

Our National fraternal visitor will be Deacon Tom Bello, SFO, National Vice-Minister. Tom is very active in NAFRA's activities and is the official SFO representative to Franciscan Action Network (FAN). Both he and Fr. Bach will be speaking *to us*, but they are also looking forward to hearing *from us*. Important dialog will take place during this Chapter.

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## Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Peace and everything good to you. With our National visitation on the horizon (May 17) I thought this might be a good occasion to say a few things about what visitation is all about. One reason for doing this is that I occasionally get the impression that some of our members are fearful about having visitation of their fraternity and others simply question “why” – why do we do this, and “Is this necessary?”

I remember one visitation that I made where these very questions had been raised in the questionnaires beforehand. While our then-Regional Minister, Patrick Mendés, SFO, was giving a wonderful explanation, the very persons who raised the questions were in the kitchen preparing lunch – they missed it all.

Visitation is so important that it goes on in all branches of the Franciscan Order. It just

so happens that we had General visitation of my fraternity, St. Gratian Friary, in Countryside on April 8. There are seven of us in our friary and we welcomed Fr. Frank Jasper, OFM, a member of St. John the Baptist Province (Cincinnati), appointed by Rome to be our General Visitor, who conducted a wonderful visitation.

We each shared what was happening in our lives, what we might be looking toward in the future, some areas where we need improvement, and our hopes and dreams for our friary and our Franciscan Province of the Sacred Heart. I wish you all could have had a bird's eye view of our delightful visitation with Fr. Jasper.

Rather than being fearful, we would do better to have a healthy degree of

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## Council Members

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*Formation Director:*

Sandra Kisel, SFO

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Monica Marko, SFO

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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

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Norman Mosk, SFO

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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.**

### Events of Interest

**May 18:** All are invited to attend the 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.S.P.S., will celebrate Mass, and visitors are welcome to greet Mt. Amata in the parlor following Mass.

**May 24:** Marytown is hosting a Day of Recollection, “Mary in the Garden”, starting at 9 a.m., 1600 W. Park Ave., Libertyville. The day will start with reflection and includes continental breakfast, planting of a Mary Garden (weather permitting), and picnic lunch; blessed herbs will be given to all who attend. Fr. Ephrem Cramer, OFM CONV., will speak on the fascinating history and practice of keeping a Medieval Mary garden. Cost is \$40 per person; please register by **May 16.** For more information or to register, call Chris at 847.367.7800, Ext. 225, or email [retreats@marytown.com](mailto:retreats@marytown.com).

**September 12-14:** 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 ShareFest, an annual event bringing churches and organizations in the New Lenox area together to visibly demonstrate love of one another through tangible acts of service, which include community service projects, gathering donated items (food, coats, etc.), health care testing and screenings, ecological action, and more. For more information visit [www.sharefestnewlenox.com](http://www.sharefestnewlenox.com).

## Thanks and Congratulations

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

### FAN Contributions

Many thanks to the local fraternities who, in addition to completing their Annual Reports and remitting their Per Capita payments, also sent a contribution for Franciscan Action Network (FAN). Of the 20 fraternities and satellites I’ve heard from, 13 have sent contributions for FAN. We are very grateful – and so is FAN!

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excitement and of joyful anticipation. Visitation is described as “a privileged moment of communion with the First Order and the TOR. It is carried out in the name of the Church and serves to guarantee and promote the observance of the *Rule* and *Constitutions* and fidelity to the Franciscan charism” (*SFO General Constitutions*, Art. 95.1). That describes it so well.

The nature of visitation, whether of the local fraternity or of the Region, is not about “checking up” on anyone, but is all about building up our sense of fraternity, encouraging our shared charism, and challenging all of us to live our vocation as Franciscans authentically, wholeheartedly, boldly.

The *General Constitutions* go on to say, “The visitor will promote collaboration and a sense of co-responsibility among the secular leaders and the religious assistants. The visitor is to examine the quality of the spiritual assistance given to the visited fraternity, encourage the

### Regional Vice-Minister Earns Ph.D

On Thursday, May 8, our Regional Vice-Minister, Javier Orozco, SFO, will receive his Ph.D. in Theology from Loyola University! He is also receiving the Dissertation Award for 2008, which gives some idea of the document he wrote and how he defended it! Well done, Javier! How blessed we are to have you with us! 📖

spiritual assistants in their service and promote their continuing spiritual and pastoral formation.” (GC, Art. 95.3)

Ah, so they’re going to look at how I’m doing as your Regional Spiritual Assistant. Should I be fearful? I know I’m far from the best, but I have confidence that this will be a great occasion for my improvement and for growth for all of us.

The visitation of Mother Cabrini Region will take place within this year’s Chapter of Ministers, which is always to be a celebration of fraternity, and an occasion to take an honest look at ourselves – how we are doing, and how we can do better.

Our visitors this time will be Deacon Tom Bello, SFO, and Fr. Lester Bach, OFM CAP., who are highly respected members of the National fraternity. We need to give them a Franciscan welcome with open and loving arms, and to approach this visitation confident that they will find Mother Cabrini Region to be vibrant in living the Franciscan dream.

## Excerpts from Pope Benedict XVI’s April 20 Homily

Full homily available at [www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/b16usyankstad.htm](http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/b16usyankstad.htm)

*During his Apostolic Journey to the U.S., our Holy Father celebrated Mass on April 20, 2008 at Yankee Stadium in New York. Following are excerpts from his homily.*

In the Gospel we have just heard, Jesus tells his Apostles to put their faith in him, for he is “the way, and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6). Christ is the way that leads to the Father, the truth which gives meaning to human existence, and the source of that life which is

eternal joy with all the saints in his heavenly Kingdom. Let us take the Lord at his word! Let us renew our faith in him and put all our hope in his promises!

With this encouragement to persevere in the faith of Peter (cf. Lk 22:32; Mt 16:17), I greet all of you with great affection. ...

... In this land of freedom and opportunity, the Church has united a widely diverse flock in

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the profession of the faith and, through her many educational, charitable and social works, has also contributed significantly to the growth of American society as a whole.

This great accomplishment was not without its challenges. Today's first reading, taken from the Acts of the Apostles, speaks of linguistic and cultural tensions already present within the earliest Church community. At the same time, it shows the power of the word of God, authoritatively proclaimed by the Apostles and received in faith, to create a unity which transcends the divisions arising from human limitations and weakness. Here we are reminded of a fundamental truth: that the Church's unity has no other basis than the Word of God, made flesh in Christ Jesus our Lord. All external signs of identity, all structures, associations and programs, valuable or even essential as they may be, ultimately exist only to support and foster the deeper unity which, in Christ, is God's indefectible gift to his Church.

The first reading also makes clear, as we see from the imposition of hands on the first deacons, that the Church's unity is "apostolic". It is a visible unity, grounded in the Apostles whom Christ chose and appointed as witnesses to his resurrection, and it is born of what the Scriptures call "the obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5; cf. Acts 6:7).

"Authority" ... "obedience". To be frank, these are not easy words to speak nowadays. Words like these represent a "stumbling stone" for many of our contemporaries, especially in a society which rightly places a high value on personal freedom. Yet, in the light of our faith in Jesus Christ – "the way and the truth and the life" – we come to see the fullest meaning, value, and indeed beauty, of those words. The Gospel teaches us that true freedom, the freedom of the children of God, is found only in the self-surrender which is part of the mystery of love. Only by losing ourselves, the Lord tells us, do we truly find ourselves (cf. Lk 17:33). True freedom blossoms when we turn away from the burden of sin, which clouds our perceptions and weakens our resolve, and find the source of our ultimate happiness in him who is infinite love, infinite freedom, infinite life. "In his will is our peace".

Real freedom, then, is God's gracious gift, the

fruit of conversion to his truth, the truth which makes us free (cf. Jn 8:32). And this freedom in truth brings in its wake a new and liberating way of seeing reality. When we put on "the mind of Christ" (cf. Phil 2:5), new horizons open before us! In the light of faith, within the communion of the Church, we also find the inspiration and strength to become a leaven of the Gospel in the world. We become the light of the world, the salt of the earth (cf. Mt 5:13-14), entrusted with the "apostolate" of making our own lives, and the world in which we live, conform ever more fully to God's saving plan.

This magnificent vision of a world being transformed by the liberating truth of the Gospel is reflected in the description of the Church found in today's second reading. The Apostle tells us that Christ, risen from the dead, is the keystone of a great temple which is even now rising in the Spirit. And we, the members of his body, through Baptism have become "living stones" in that temple, sharing in the life of God by grace, blessed with the freedom of the sons of God, and empowered to offer spiritual sacrifices pleasing to him (cf. 1 Pet 2:5). And what is this offering which we are called to make, if not to direct our every thought, word and action to the truth of the Gospel and to harness all our energies in the service of God's Kingdom? Only in this way can we build with God, on the one foundation which is Christ (cf. 1 Cor 3:11). Only in this way can we build something that will truly endure. Only in this way can our lives find ultimate meaning and bear lasting fruit.

... [M]ay you step forward and take up the responsibility which your faith in Christ sets before you! May you find the courage to proclaim Christ, "the same, yesterday, and today and for ever" and the unchanging truths which have their foundation in him (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 10; Heb 13:8). These are the truths that set us free! They are the truths which alone can guarantee respect for the inalienable dignity and rights of each man, woman and child in our world – including the most defenseless of all human beings, the unborn child in the mother's womb. In a world where ... Lazarus continues to stand at our door, let your faith and love bear rich fruit in outreach to the poor, the needy and those without a voice. ■

### Living the Gospel of Life

Abortion Services at 200 East Eckerson Road in New City, N.Y., was one of more than 50 clinics across the nation where 40 Days for Life prayer vigils were conducted this spring [and which closed on April 25]. "My family and I visited that particular clinic vigil on a snowy night earlier this year," said [David Bereit, national campaign director of 40 Days for Life]. "My wife and children were photographed alongside a young man who carried a sign reading, 'Nothing is impossible with God.' That is certainly the case here. The prayerful efforts of many pro-lifers over the years have won this victory. We are humbled to know that people participating in the 40 Days for Life campaign may have played a role in the peaceful closure of this abortion center."

Bereit said there are also reports that two Planned Parenthood locations where 40 Days for Life prayer vigils were held have stopped performing abortions. One is in Lincoln, Nebraska and the other is in Council Bluffs, Iowa. In both cases the cessation of abortions was unexpected. "40 Days for Life leaders in both cities are unsure of the reason," said Bereit, "but they suspect it is because no abortionist is available since both facilities previously shared the same abortionist. ..."

In addition, local 40 Days for Life leaders are reporting that a number of children saved from abortion during 40 Days for Life campaigns have now been born. "In just the past few days, we've heard from 40 Days for Life groups in Greenville, South Carolina; Providence, Rhode Island and Sacramento, California," said Bereit.

"The births of these children are among the most awesome blessings people have witnessed because of the prayerful outreach of 40 Days for Life. ..."

~ *LifeSiteNews.com*, 25-Apr-2008; reprinted with permission

For more information on 40 Days for Life, see [www.40daysforlife.com](http://www.40daysforlife.com).

## Calendar

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

### 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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It is absolutely *imperative* that we are fully represented at this Chapter. *Every* member of the *Regional Council* (which is made up of the local ministers of the Region plus the entire Regional Executive Council) needs to be there. If a local minister is unable to attend, that fraternity council *must* select a delegate to attend the Chapter in the place of the minister. I leave it to each of you in the Region to be sure that your fraternity is represented at the Chapter.

Of course, as we usually do, the Regional Executive Council will be submitting written reports of our activities over the last year, and there will also be a period when the local fraternities will be asked to share their activities and concerns. Time will also be given to discuss and answer the questions raised by our International fraternity, on which they have asked for our input. Those important questions are:

1. To what degree is your being a Secular Franciscan an essential part of your life? Is your life in fraternity only a meeting among many others?
2. What can you do to be more involved in the intimate life of the SFO?
3. Profession by its very nature is a permanent commitment. Do you live it as such?
4. Why, according to you, is the local fraternity so important in the life of the SFO? To what extent is your fraternity helping you to accomplish what your Profession demands of you?
5. Does the fraternity help you to remain faithful to your Profession and to give you a *sense of belonging*? To what extent do you yourself work to help the brothers and sisters of your fraternity to achieve these very same goals?
6. Why did you want to enter the Secular Franciscan Order? What contribution do you give to the SFO by means of your Profession and your presence?
7. To what extent do you believe that the new [1978] *Rule* has contributed to the changes that have taken place in the way of "feeling" the Order and "being" part of it?
8. Do you believe that the *sense of belonging* that you live today corresponds genuinely to what the Order truly is, to its "nature" and to its mission? Or does it correspond to something else that belongs to the past or to a personal conception of the Order? If you think that there is not a sufficient *sense of belonging* to the Order, what, in your opinion, are the reasons: lack of formation? lack of communication? lack of contribution and sharing? something else?

We only have an hour scheduled for this discussion, so these questions need to be considered in advance of the Chapter. I hope that has happened in the local fraternities.

Who comes to the Chapter? The minister, or his/her delegate, is the only one who may vote. However, we *strongly* encourage the formation directors and spiritual assistants of each local fraternity also to come. If the minister is unable to come, the formation director could be the minister's delegate, but we suggest that the vice-minister fulfill that responsibility.

In addition, all interested SFOs are most welcome. The difference is that the Region will cover costs for ministers or their delegates, formation directors and spiritual assistants. For all others, we ask for \$10 each to help cover the cost of the meals (breakfast and lunch). And, of course, we need to know numbers so we have enough food! All ministers have already received registration forms, so if you would like to attend, be sure to let your minister know.

We look forward to a large and productive Chapter on May 17! 📅