

## Minister's Message: St. Clare and More

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

August is a special month for us Franciscans because of the Feast Day of our Holy Mother St. Clare on August 11. May all of us remember St. Clare not only on her Feast Day – and always – as she so enriched our Order with her spirituality, wisdom, and example.

The **Leadership Workshop in Loretto, PA**, was absolutely wonderful. Five from my fraternity attended, including our spiritual director. It's an easy drive – slightly less than 600 miles, and St. Francis University, run by the TORs, is a very friendly, comfortable and beautiful campus in the mountains. I've never been in more comfortable dorms, and the food was good – and healthy. But best of all was the workshop itself. Presenters were Fr. Bernard Tickerhoff, TOR and Anne Mulqueen, SFO,

and what a great team they were! Sessions centered on discerning our gifts, the choice of discipleship, true servant leaders, the importance of listening, different leadership styles and ways of making decisions, dealing with crisis and conflict, and continuing conversion. Fr. Tickerhoff summarized in his homily at our closing Mass, "All are called to serve in some way and all have been given the gifts needed to fulfill their call; therefore, all are leaders. Now we must decide to use the gifts we've been given so we can answer the call we have received."

Some statistical data: Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR, National Spiritual Assistant, told us they would consider this first SFO workshop a total success if they had 50 people attending.

*continued on p. 4 ...*

## Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Peace and everything good to you. I hope you are all having a delightful summer. I've been enjoying some wonderful vacation time these days. I remember a rather insistent gentleman years ago who said that because I am a priest I don't get a vacation. Maybe he was kidding, but he seemed quite serious. I thought he might do well to get in touch with reality, and that priests, like everyone else, are human.

So do you think St. Francis ever took a vacation? To respond to such a question we might consider the derivation of the word *vacation*. It comes from the Latin word *vacuo*, to make empty, but also *vacatio*, a noun meaning freedom, immunity, exemption. So I'm left with the question of whether we use the time of vacation to really empty

ourselves of our busy, frenetic activities, or if we fill the time with scurrying about from one dizzying activity after another. We seem to be bent on constant stimulation, and I wonder if we have lost the ability to slow down, even to stop for a time.

During some of the vacation time I've just experienced, the time was punctuated by the jingling of cell phones, interrupting our already on-going activities with reminders of the responsibilities that we thought we had left behind, and calling us to account, such that we could not escape to any real "freedom, immunity, exemption" from the stress of life ... unless, perhaps we might hit the "off" button on the phone, or perhaps do the unthinkable thing, and that is to leave the little device at home!

*continued on p. 4 ...*

## Council Members

*Minister:*

Stephanie Sormane, SFO  
[minister@ilsfo.org](mailto:minister@ilsfo.org)

*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

*Email:* [sfonews@ilsfo.org](mailto:sfonews@ilsfo.org)

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.**

**Local Elections**

Best wishes and prayers for the newly-elected officers of **St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity (Libertyville)**:

- *Minister:*  
Maureen Johnson, SFO
- *Vice-Minister:*  
Shirley Koch, SFO
- *Formation Director:*  
Caryn Habley, SFO
- *Secretary:*  
Mary Farrell, SFO
- *Treasurer:*  
Welly Madinaveitia, SFO

**Events of Interest**

**September 5:** The Illinois Right to Life Committee is holding its 13th annual Pro-Life Family Night from 5–10 p.m. at Kiddieland, 8400 W. North Ave, Melrose Park. Bring your whole family and spend an evening with pro-life friends from all over Chicagoland. Free unlimited soft drinks included with each ticket purchase. Tickets are \$20 each in advance, \$23 at the door; free admittance for children 2 years and under. For more information or to order tickets, visit [www.illinoisrighttolife.org](http://www.illinoisrighttolife.org) or call 312.422.9300.

**September 12-14:** Join in this year's ShareFest in the New Lenox area. For more information visit [www.sharefestnewlenox.com](http://www.sharefestnewlenox.com), or call Daniel and Susan Willenborg, SFO (St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity, Joliet).

**Corrections & Clarifications**

In the July 2008 *SFO News*, Fr. Chuck Faso, OFM was incorrectly listed as the September Regional Retreat director in the "Minister's Message". The retreat director will be Fr. Lester Bach, OFM CAP.

We apologize for the error.

**"Francis, Build Up My Church ..."**

by Sandra Kisel, SFO; Regional Formation Director

With anticipation of August 2 and the special feast of **Our Lady of the Angels of the Portiuncula**, what wonderful thoughts fill my mind as I consider this day and St. Francis! And how wonderful that this year the feast falls on the very day we will be celebrating together at Mayslake Village!

We know how greatly St. Francis loved our Holy Mother Mary, so much so that in Chapter 2.9 of our Holy Rule we read "*she was embraced by Francis with an indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family.*"

Anyone reading the life of St. Francis also identifies the great devotion Francis had to the Holy Angels. We know that Francis begged for stones to rebuild three houses of God, the second of these was named for "Our Lady of the Angels".

Every year St. Francis began his "Lent of St.

Michael" on the Feast of the Assumption. Anyone pondering Francis and the Holy Gospels knows Francis didn't want to imitate the Gospel so much as to *be* Gospel. So then, with that in mind and on the occasion of this special feast, let us consider a few occasions of Mary and the Holy Angels in the life of Christ and St. Francis.

We know that at the Annunciation, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God the Father to announce to Mary that He had found great favor with her and that she was to become the mother of God by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. (*The angel brought the message of God's grace and by grace Mary responds to this call with her fiat, "Let it be done to me according to your word."* Luke 1:38). Let us consider how we might imagine Francis overflowing with God's

*continued on p. 3 ...*

**Please Help Us Save Trees, Time, and Money**

**If you already receive the SFO News directly from the Region itself** (such as local ministers and spiritual assistants):

A portion of our Regional expenses go towards photocopying the newsletter and for stamps and envelopes. It also takes gas and time to drive out to make photocopies, and time to assemble and mail the newsletter.

**Can you help us save money, trees, gas, and time by choosing to receive your newsletters by email?**

If so, please send an email with your name to [sfonews@ilsfo.org](mailto:sfonews@ilsfo.org). Or, complete and send the following form to Lisa Wathen, SFO, Regional Councilor for Communications/PR, via postal mail. Thank you for your help! ☑



\_\_\_\_ **Yes**, I would like to help save money, trees, gas, and time! Please send me the Regional newsletters by email instead of postal mail.

**PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Office/Role:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

Return this form to:

Lisa Wathen, SFO  
Regional Councilor for Communications/PR

Church continued from p. 2 ...

love pronouncing his “fiat”, that whatever God wanted of him he would he would do with the help of Mary and the holy angels.

Again, we hear the holy angels announcing the birth of Jesus. They guided holy souls searching for Jesus to His crib, singing, “Glory to God in the Highest and peace on earth to men of good will!” Reflect on Francis’ wish for peace to all, and in humility giving glory to God, praising Him for His works and the gifts of all creation.

And while our Lord was in the Garden of Gethsemane, it was the angel who gave strength to Jesus as He suffered agony before His crucifixion. (*Recall here the six-winged Seraph when St. Francis received the stigmata.*) We also see the holy angels at the Resurrection and the Ascension of our Lord.

To honor of this feast, I would like to borrow excerpts from the Office of Readings (from Thomas of Celano; *Analecta Franciscana* 10, 142.182) for August 2:

**Consider God's dwelling worthy of all honor**

“The servant of God, Francis, an unassuming humble person, a man of no importance in his own opinion, while dwelling on earth chose for himself and his followers a small place. Without this small place he would not have been able to render service to Christ in this world. It was not, however, without some knowledge of the Scriptures that the place long ago was named Small Portion (Portiuncula), a place destined for those who desired to own nothing whatever of this world. A church had been erected here to the honor of the Virgin Mother who because of her marvelous humility ... merited to be the first of all saints.

“... Although Francis realized that the kingdom of heaven is found in every dwelling on earth, and though he believed that heaven’s graces are imparted everywhere to God’s chosen ones, he had learned nevertheless that the church of Saint Mary at Portiuncula was filled with

more abundant grace and visited more frequently by heavenly spirits. Consequently he used to say to his friars: ‘See to it, my sons, that you never leave this place. If you are driven out by one door return by the other for this is truly a holy place and God’s dwelling. Here when we were few, the Most High increased our number; here he enlightened the hearts of his poor with the light of his own wisdom; here he inflamed our wills with the fire of his love. He who prays here with devout heart will obtain his request, and he who offends here will be punished more severely. Therefore, my sons, consider the place of God’s dwelling worthy of all honor and with all your hearts, with loud cries of joy and thanksgiving praise the Lord in this place.’ ”

It is a fact that Francis frequently came to this holy chapel, that no place was dearer to him. It was here he spent many years and it was from here that “*he winged his flight to heaven*”. Here with the Blessed Virgin’s encouragement, he became the founder of three Orders, received his first disciples, and consecrated Saint Clare to God’s service.

In the loving shelter of this chapel, Francis gathered his band of friars and sent them forth as soldiers of Christ to wage holy wars. (*Hymn from Office of Readings*).

“Fountain of mercy, mother of grace, hope of the world, hear us as we call to you, because all virtue and beauty and glory are resplendent in you.” Mary, Queen of all angels pray for us! Teach us to love the holy angels of God.

I hope to see you all at our **Regional Retreat in September!** In the generosity of your hearts, please consider sharing rooms so that the greatest number of persons will be able to partake in this wonderful retreat given by Fr. Lester Bach, OFM CAP.

The registration forms have been sent out and as we have limited space, please make your reservations as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please email me at [formation@ilsfo.org](mailto:formation@ilsfo.org). 📧

**Living the Gospel of Life**

The Alan Guttmacher Institute, which favors the “freedom to terminate unwanted pregnancies” (Mission statement), indicates that “on average, women give at least 3 reasons for choosing abortion: 3/4 say that having a baby would interfere with work, school or other responsibilities; about 2/3 say they cannot afford a child; and 1/2 say they do not want to be a single parent or are having problems with their husband or partner.”

In other words, **the dominant reasons women ask for this medical procedure have nothing to do with medical needs**, according to “pro-choice” sources.

Source: Alan Guttmacher Institute’s web site, [www.guttmacher.org](http://www.guttmacher.org)

---

“All rights presuppose the right to life. If the right to life is not defended, the defense of all other rights is useless. It becomes a lie, because it would mean that the defense to the right to work, to society, etc. applies only to some, and not to all.”

~ Monsignor Elio Sgreccia, President of the Pontifical Academy for Life

---

Since the start of the Iraq War, **6,943,223** American children have died from abortion.

---

“A Catholic politician or a Catholic voter can not separate himself or herself from his or her moral responsibility. You cannot choose when and where to be Catholic and that includes political life and voter responsibility.”

~ Cardinal Renato Martino, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

## Calendar

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

### 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 ...

In fact, there were 73, representing 17 of the 30 Regions in the United States – so we were all elated and, yes, there will be another one on June 25-28, 2009. The subject will be “Franciscan Spirituality” and the presenters will be Vinal Van Benthem, SFO and Bob Fitzsimmons, SFO. Mark your calendars now and plan to attend because this will be too excellent for words!

Many of you know Vinal as she was originally in our region, gave many talks, and was one of the workshop leaders at the 2002 Quinquennial Congress. Vinal is one of our few certified lay spiritual assistants. Bob is our new National Formation Director, and Franciscan spirituality is one of his areas of expertise. We are so blessed!

Our **June Leadership Workshop** at Mayslake, which focused entirely on formation, was well-attended and I believe well-received. We had over 40 attend, and we had excellent dialog, which is such an important part of a good workshop.

I look forward to seeing all of you at our **Franciscan Gathering on August 2** at

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

Amazingly, our General Minister of the OFM branch of the Franciscan Order has encouraged us to take a “moratorium,” or a suspension of activity, from time to time. In a report on our Extraordinary General Chapter of 2006, he wrote: “We Friars are often victims of the illusion of the productivity of our lives – ministries, commitments. The need for an experience of a hermitage, of solitude or of a *moratorium* seems to be a luxury for some original or ‘rare’ Friars, something that would represent only the loss of precious time to the ‘normal’ or ‘committed’ Friars.”

And if it is difficult for us friars, then I am sure it is even more difficult for you who are lay people, who have the responsibilities of family, job, ministry, and more.

This month of August brings several feasts which might call us to consider how we could take some “vacation” or “moratorium,” time even for just part of a

Mayslake, at which Fr. Chuck Faso, OFM will be our featured speaker, and at the **Regional Retreat on September 12-14** at St. Francis Woods, with Fr. Lester Bach, OFM CAP. as our retreat director. Fr. Faso is a well-known and popular preacher in our area; Fr. Bach is one of the National Spiritual Assistants and the author of many of our formation materials. Again, we are so blessed!

Just want to also mention that for the **Mother Cabrini Celebration on November 16**, I am bringing the quilt which was made for the 2007 Quinquennial Congress. It is truly beautiful and has been traveling all over the country since the “Q” last year. I am so glad we will have it with us this year.

Finally, a word about the upcoming **November elections**. The official document of the U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) on this subject is *Faithful Citizenship: The Challenge of Forming Consciences*. It can be found in its complete form (about 42 pages) on a site created by the USCCB at [www.faithfulcitizenship.org](http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org). The officially-approved summary of the document is also available at [www.faithfulcitizenship.org/resources/bulletin](http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org/resources/bulletin). ☒

day to be with the Lord. On August 2 we have the Feast of the Portiuncula, which even reminds us of how St. Francis loved to spend time in that beautiful little chapel in prayer. August 11 is the Feast of St. Clare, whose whole life was contemplative. August 14 is the Memorial of St. Maximilian Kolbe, and of course, the following day we celebrate the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and on August 25 the Memorial of St. Louis IX, Patron of Secular Franciscans. And there are more. But these are reminders that all of us, both lay people and friars and/or priests, need at least some spaces, some emptiness, the freedom to stop the merry-go-round.

Understood in that sense, I believe St. Francis *did* indeed take vacation time. And I believe he knew the best kind of vacation to take – to crawl into the cave of his soul and open it to the Lord. What a refreshing vacation that would be!

God bless you always. ☒