

Minister's Message: Changes, Events, and Elections

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I'm writing this between the feast days of our Holy Mother Clare and our SFO patron St. Louis IX of France. I hope each of you celebrated these feast days with great joy and gratitude to these leaders of our Order and their witness to our way of life!

■ **Regional Spiritual Assistant.** As mentioned in his "Spiritual Assistant's Message" (*see below*), we're sorry to lose Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM as our Regional Spiritual Assistant. However, we also recognize that his new assignment is an important one, as well as one in which he will be very happy, so we wish him the best as pastor of St. Francis Solanus Church in Quincy and hope that there will be future occasions for visiting! We also thank him for his outstanding service to our Region—his guidance and advice have been of immense value. God bless you

always, Fr. Don—you will be in our hearts and prayers forever!

In the meantime, the Region has been working to fill this position and we believe we have a candidate. Once it's official, we'll announce the appointment; most likely in the October *SFO News*.

■ **NAFRA Workshop.** As promised in last month's newsletter, here's a summary of the workshop held at St. Francis University in Loretto, PA in June. The university is simply a wonderful place to visit; Franciscan peace and joy permeate the campus, which offers many places to visit. While we didn't have much time for visiting, we did walk through the gardens at Mount St. Assisi and visited the local religious bookshop, to which we gave a nice piece of business!

The workshops themselves were outstanding

continued on p. 4 ...

Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I regret to inform you that I am about to be transferred to Quincy, IL, where I will be pastor of St. Francis Solanus Church. As such, I will no longer be your Regional Spiritual Assistant.

I am extremely grateful to all of you for the wonderful four years we have worked together and celebrated our calling as Franciscans. I want to express my thanks in a special way to Stephanie Sormane, SFO and Patrick Mendés, SFO, who were the two regional ministers with whom I've worked.

Thanks also to everyone on the Regional Executive Council, and to all the local ministers, councilors, and spiritual assistants, who have been helpful, cooperative, and generous in so many ways. And again, thanks to all of you who are

living our calling as Franciscans "in the marketplace." You are an inspiration to me, and I will miss you all.

I will be moving in early September, and the Region has been working with the Sacred Heart Province on finding a new Regional Spiritual Assistant.

I have very little idea of what I am getting into as pastor of this rather large parish, but I put all my trust in God who is always guiding me, and challenging me to stretch.

So, please keep me in your prayers, as I will keep you in mine.

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20th of each month.**

**Stay in Touch with
ILSFO.org**

by Lisa Wathen, SFO
Regional Councilor for
Communications/PR

To help you connect with
Secular Franciscans and stay
informed of the latest news in
the Mother Cabrini Region,
I'm pleased to announce the
following information:

■ **New Web Site with
Subscription (RSS) Feed.** If
you haven't yet checked out
our newly-redesigned web
site, www.ilsfo.org, please take
a look and subscribe to our
site feed for the latest
Regional news and updates.
The site feed allows you to
easily see when we've added
new content as soon as it's
available, without you having
to keep checking our site.

■ **We're on Twitter.** We're on
Twitter at <http://twitter.com/ilsfo>.
If you're unfamiliar with
Twitter, it's a free service that
enables you to broadcast and
receive short messages.

For more information, see this
video that explains what Twitter
is and how to use it: "Common
Craft: Twitter in Plain English",
www.commoncraft.com/Twitter
(2 min., 23 sec.).

■ **Join us on Facebook.** We
have a Facebook page which
you can also use to stay
informed about news and
events in our Region, and
connect with other Secular
Franciscans in our area (and
around the world—anyone
can be a fan). If you're on
Facebook, please check us out:
at www.facebook.com, enter
"Mother Cabrini Regional
Fraternity" in the Search field
to be taken to our page.

If you're unfamiliar with
Facebook, which in our age is
becoming the online equivalent
of the town squares in St. Francis'
time, see this video that explains
social networking sites like
Facebook: "Common Craft: Social
Networking in Plain English",
[www.commoncraft.com/video-social-
networking](http://www.commoncraft.com/video-social-networking) (1 min., 53 sec.).

Around the Region

■ **St. Bernardine of Siena Fraternity
(Wayne).** The fraternity is hosting a
"Filipino Celebration", which will feature
food and culture from the Philippines,
and all are invited to attend.

- **Date:** October 4 (Sunday)
- **Time:** 2-4 p.m.
- **Location:** Marvin Hall,
Resurrection Catholic Church
30W350 Army Trail Rd., Wayne
- **RSVP By:** September 4 (Friday)

A free-will collection will be taken to benefit
the Capuchin Tertiary Sisters of the Holy
Family, who at present have three charitable
institutions in the Philippines devoted to
helping the country's children and youth in
risky and troubled situations. They also
work among the poor, teach catechism, and
give health care to the most needy.

For more information or to RSVP, contact
Lorna Miressi, SFO. ☒

"Francis, Build Up My Church ..."

by Sandra Kisel, SFO; Regional Formation Director

*"I (am) the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning
and the end. To the thirsty I will give a gift from
the spring of life-giving water."* (Rev 21:6)

It is only through our renewed awareness of
who we are and our determination to act as
genuine Franciscans that "the Seraphic family
as a whole will shine forth in its true brilliance
as a living Word of Christ, as the Poverello and
his first followers did in their day". (English-
Speaking Conference of the Order of Friars Minor, *I Have
Done My Part; May Christ Teach You Yours.*)

St. Clare continually speaks to us of being
mirrors of Jesus Christ in the world. In our
daily examines, do we reflect Jesus in our acts,
words, lives? Do people identify the Holy
Trinity as the bedrock of all we are, say, and do
and that all that flows forth from us stems
from our loving, living *relationship* with God?
God within us, *the beginning and the end*, the
first and the last cause of everything we do? Is
He the beginning and the end and the first
cause of everything we do?

If not and if we truly have hopes of making
genuine contributions and changes in this world,
then conversion must first take place within us as
it did Francis. We must seek Jesus to know, listen
to, and respond to Him. We need to get out of
our heads and into our hearts where God must
reign. If we truly want to make a difference in the
world, not only our outward image must be
changed but, *most certainly*, our inner selves.

"Jesus Christ, 'Image of the invisible God'
(Col 1:15), clothed with humanity and freely
reduced to the condition of a servant (cf.
Phil 2:6-8), became for Francis the model for

all human behavior and the norm for every
human decision, whether individual or
social. ...[T]he people to whom Francis
preached were captivated by this intensely
personal approach to God; they too began
to rediscover the Lord as their closest and
most faithful friend; Emmanuel living in the
midst of his people like a shepherd among
his beloved sheep." (*I Have Done My Part*)

"Francis proclaimed insistently that Mary, the
Mother of Jesus, 'had made the Lord of Majesty to
be our Brother' (2 Cel 198). ... Francis himself had
experienced, and was able to present to others, a
living God, a God who lived in the midst of his
people and shared with them human hopes,
joys and sufferings (cf. Jn1:14)". (*ibid.*)

Are we fully aware of our calling as followers of
Francis? Do we continually come to the
fountain to renew our determination to act as
genuine Franciscans? "It was in the Eucharist, ...
that [Francis] saw our Lord, Jesus Christ 'filling
everybody ... worthy of Him' (EpOrd 40-Letter
to a General Chapter and to All the Friars)". (*ibid.*)

"The motivation for our actions is love.
True love shows itself in ordinary things.
True love shows itself in ordinary things.
We listen to a hurting friend; we walk with
someone in depression; we act justly in
business; we forgive people who hurt us;
we seek justice for oppressed people; we
work to lift the burden of poverty ... Our
love finds expression in the actions of daily
life." (Fr. Lester Bach, OFM CAP., *Capturing the Spirit
of Francis & Clare*)

continued on p. 3 ...

Regional Retreat: “Fire Burning in My Heart”

All Professed* are invited to attend this year’s **Regional Retreat**, “Fire Burning in My Heart: Keeping Alive the Franciscan Spirit”.

- **Dates:** October 09–11 (Fri.–Sun.)
- **Location:** Marytown
1600 W. Park Ave., Libertyville
- **Times:** 4:30 p.m. Fri.–2p.m. Sun.
- **Costs:** Double: \$125
Single†: \$175
Commuter: \$75
- **RSVP By:** September 29 (Tuesday)

* If any rooms are available in the last week of September, Candidates are welcome to register for rooms. Otherwise, Candidates are free to attend as commuters.

† Please share rooms wherever possible as we can only accommodate a *maximum* of 66 people with Double occupancy plus 34 commuters, for a total of 100 retreatants.

Registration

Please make checks payable to: Secular Franciscan Order, Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity.

The Region is responsible for the full cost for all participants when providing the final count to Marytown, so **all registrations must be paid in full by Sept. 29**. Registration not paid in full by Sept. 29 will be canceled and deposits will be refunded. After Sept. 29, the Region can’t refund any deposits.

For more information or to register, email Mary Farrell, SFO at retreat@ilsfo.org.

Schedule Overview

- Registration: 4:30–6:30 p.m., Oct. 09 (Fri.)
Evening dinner provided from 5–6 p.m.
- Departure: 2 p.m., Oct. 11 (Sun.)

General Information

Transportation to/from the Libertyville train station will be available; if needed, please note this when registering.

Francis continued from p. 2 ...

Formation News

■ **Regional Gathering.** Thank you to Fr. Sergius Wroblewski, OFM; Sr. Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSE; our Korean dancers; and all who attended for making it a perfect day. I’ve had many inquiries about the availability of Fr. Wroblewski’s excellent Bible study CDs, which are \$56 each and include: *Old Testament* (#505-50C), *New Testament* (#505-51C), and *Acts & Letters* (#505-52C). You can purchase them from Marytown Media Communications; for more information, call 800.743.1177 or email media@marytown.com.

About the Retreat Master

Fr. Benet Fonck, OFM is the Coordinator of Communications for the Sacred Heart Province of the Order of Friars Minor. In this capacity, he writes a weekly newsletter, prepares news releases and obituary notices, publishes a quarterly journal, and soon will be the manager of the Province’s web site, www.thefriars.org.

Previously, Fr. Fonck worked for 32 years in the area of spiritual assistance for the Secular Franciscan Order and was involved with updating the *SFO Ritual*, providing commentaries for the new *Rule* and *General Constitutions*, and facilitating a deeper commitment to spiritual life, community participation, and apostolic endeavors in the SFO. From 1980-1985, he served as a delegate of the Franciscan Superior General for all Secular Franciscans worldwide. A prolific author and translator, Fr. Fonck wrote extensively for the former *Franciscan Herald Magazine* and his books include *Fully Mature with the Fullness of Christ*, and *To Cling with All Her Heart to Him: The Spirituality of St. Clare*. He has translated a life of St. Francis of Assisi from Italian by Gianmaria Polidoro, OFM and is collaborating on a text of liturgies and prayer formats to be used by Secular Franciscans.

Born in 1945, Fr. Fonck entered the Order of Friars minor in 1965 and was ordained a priest in 1972. He holds a bachelor of philosophy degree from Quincy University (Quincy, IL), a master of arts in theology from DePaul University (Chicago), a master of divinity degree from Chicago’s Catholic Theological Union, and a degree in journalism from Marquette University (Milwaukee). He served as parochial vicar for two parishes and as the pastor of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in St. Louis (MO) for four years. A popular retreat master, Fr. Fonck has given retreats, workshops, and seminars for Secular Franciscans and for Franciscan religious; presented days of recollection to various church-based groups; and facilitated several parish missions and renewals. ■

■ **Regional Retreat.** We are so blessed to have Fr. Benet Fonck, OFM as our Regional retreat master this year! I ask that you please get your registrations in early, as I believe rooms will go fast. In consideration of others who hope to attend this year’s retreat, please share rooms wherever possible—Marytown can only accommodate 66 overnighters and 34 commuters for a total of 100 retreatants.

■ **On a Personal Note.** Happy News! The Feast of St. Maximilian Kolbe, August 14, was a very special day for me this year as my seventh grandchild, Tyler, was born, weighing in at 7 lbs. 15 oz! ■

Events of Interest

September 12: The Archdiocese of Chicago’s Office of Reconciliation is holding a workshop in three parts on peacemaking and reconciliation from 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Archbishop Quigley Center, 835 N. Rush, Chicago. The Sept. 12 topic is “The Spirituality of Reconciliation”, Oct. 3 is “Polarity Management”, and Oct. 10 is “Getting to Basics” [sic]. Cost is \$100 for the full workshop or \$50 per individual session; however, the Office can work with those with financial difficulties. For more information or to register, email Ralph at rbonaccorsi@archchicago.org or call 312.534.8291.

October 24: Marytown is holding a day of recollection, “Happiness, Only in the Next?”, from 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m., 1600 W. Park Ave., Libertyville. Author and retreat leader David Paul Eich will challenge participants to answer the question, “What can you do in this world that may well determine what you will do in the next?” Cost is \$35 per person and includes continental breakfast, talks, and lunch. Register by Oct. 19. For more information or to register, call 847.367.7800 or email retreats@marytown.com.

Calendar

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

October

09-11: Regional Retreat, Marytown, Libertyville
17: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

November

15: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration, hosted by St. Bernardine of Siena Fraternity (Wayne)

December

12: Regional Elections (to be confirmed with NAFRA)

Minister continued from p. 1 ...

and intense. In reviewing the eight presentations, which are available on www.nafra-sfo.org along with all the other workshop materials, it’s amazing how much was covered in such a short time. Our National Formation Director, Bob Fitzsimmons, SFO, gave the presentations; following are my notes:

- *Introduction and thought questions; what image of God do you hold fast to?* Our images of God have an important effect on our relationships with God; if one sees God as a powerful deity, demanding perfection and judging and punishing those who don’t measure up, that relationship will be far different from one who sees God as all-loving and forgiving.
- *It all begins: 1209 Propositum Vitae – The Life Project.* Propositum Vitae was the first Rule for the Friars, an oral rule, basically a few lines of Scripture: “...sell what you possess and give to the poor; ...take up your cross and follow me.”
- *The Primary (Dominican) and Alternative (Franciscan) View of our Catholic Theology.* Primary Catholic theology says if there had been no original sin, Jesus would not have come. This is based on the theology of original sin (St. Augustine), the Doctrine of Atonement (St. Anselm) and the Dominican Tradition, mainly as articulated by St. Thomas Aquinas. Alternative Catholic Theology, which is now also accepted, says that even if there had been no original sin, Jesus would still have come; that the Incarnation was always part of God’s plan because God loves us so much. Primary and monastic spirituality sees us seeking to leave the world to ascend to union with the Divine. Alternative/Franciscan spirituality sees God descending out of love to us and all creation through the Incarnation.
- *Clare of Assisi.* St. Clare, although monastic, did not follow a monastic spirituality. She emphasized the Incarnation as the starting point of spirituality, the goodness of creation, and that God cannot be found apart from the world. Everything that exists is dependent on and uniquely loved by the Father and called into relationship with the Holy Trinity.
- *Bonaventure’s Gift.* His gift was an appreciation and better understanding of the Holy Trinity.

- *Bl. John Duns Scotus and Franciscan Spirituality.* Bl. John Duns Scotus explained that the Incarnation is not a divine afterthought or reaction to any event (i.e., original sin) but is the cornerstone of the whole plan of creation: everything that was, is, and ever will be is based in Christ.
- *To Be Eucharist.* Eucharist is for Francis the final act of God’s [Jesus] self-emptying, to be physically present in the lowest, poorest, humblest manner of food. This is our model for imitation.
- *Re-founding the Legacy: Gospel to Life and Back Again – Secular Spirituality.* Francis models the essential conditions for living a penitential life: a complete turning to God; loving one’s neighbor as oneself; acknowledging and despising one’s personal tendency to sin; receiving Eucharist devoutly; and allowing God’s Spirit to dwell in us. This is surely “going from Gospel to life, and from life to Gospel.”

Vinal Van Benthem, SFO presented the prayer services and encouraged dialog on various aspects of Bob’s presentations, and she shared a Trinitarian hymn, “Everyday God”, composed by Bernadette Farrell, which is available on the *Restless is the Heart* CD.

■ **Regional Retreat.** The registration forms have gone out for our retreat, and the theme, “Fire Burning in My Heart”, sounds really great. Hope to see all of you there! See the article on page 3 for full details, as well as our web site, www.ilsfo.org.

■ **Regional Elections.** During our August 1 Gathering, I was asked which council positions will be vacant. First, all perpetually professed SFOs are welcome to run for any office, whether or not there’s a vacancy, so if the Spirit is calling you to a position, please don’t hesitate to run. At this time, we do know we need to fill the *elected* position of Secretary and the *appointed* offices of Councilor for Apostolates, Councilor for Fraternal Life, Councilor for Visitations, and Councilor for Youth and Young Adults. See the August *SFO News* (page 3) for full details, and if you have nominations or suggestions, email our 2009 Regional Nominating Committee Chair, Monica Marko, SFO, at elections@ilsfo.org.

Blessings to all as we embark on the busy fall season! 🙏