

TAU CROSS REGION

The Newsletter of the Secular Franciscan Order for the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau and Suffolk Counties of New York

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Barbara O'Neill, SFO
Regional Minister

By the time you read this, several things will have changed. It will be a new year –2009, and we will have a new president, and in the region we will be looking for a new newsletter editor. Frank Drollinger, our long time editor, has resigned. Many thanks to Frank for giving so much of his time and talent to the region in producing the newsletter for so many years. We will miss you and your expertise, Frank.

I attended the NAFRA meeting in Nashville in October. It is always good to meet with other Seculars from across the country and be able to share with each other our successes, ongoing problems, and solutions. Presently we have 15,821 Secular Franciscans in the United States.. This is first of all a business meeting, and your fraternity minister has already received two requests by letter. We are again being asked to participate in the perpetual novena. It is the same novena as last time, only this is for the Orissa region in India where there is a movement to remove all Christians from the area.. Homes and churches are being burned along with other atrocities. After the recent terrorist attacks in India we can pray for the whole country. Our assigned dates for the novena are the first weeks of March and September. The other is a Confidential Demographic Survey for the international fraternity. No names are asked for; just check off the correct categories, fold it in half and return to your minister who will send it to me. Thanks for cooperating.

Tau Cross Region was honored for our participation in the H20 project. We do-

nated \$1,501.32, the second highest amount. Thanks to all who took part in this Lenten project.

Ongoing Formation is incorporated into the meeting every day. Our outgoing National Formation Director, Theresa Baker, and new Director, Bob Fitzsimmons, prepared wonderful formation sessions. One comment from Pope John Paul II "Gospel truth often contradicts commonly accepted thinking."

Our annual Chapter Meeting will be held on April 25, 2009 at St. Adalbert Church, Elmhurst. This will be our Visitation Chapter. National Vice-Minister Tom Bello will be our fraternal visitor. All Ministers (or delegates) are required to attend.

A Leadership workshop for Seculars will be held again this year, June 25-28, at St. Francis College, Loretto, Pennsylvania. If interested, contact me.(516-221-9619) or jpon2@aol.com There may be some financial help available. We would like the region to be represented

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GOD'S PLAN, Our Plan

Fr. Matthias Wesnofske, OFM, Cap.
Regional Spiritual Assistant

During the Christmas season, one of the stories covered in newspapers, radio and television in the New York City area concerned a young man who had cerebral palsy. He was left on a bus overnight in the bitter cold, the temperature falling to fifteen degrees. As a result, the next morning, the frightened young man was hospitalized, because he suffered from hypothermia, and in his hunger, he resorted to eating the foam in the seats of the bus. It was reported that the excuse given by the bus monitor for leaving the young man on the bus was that she was in a rush that evening to attend a church concert and consequently she neglected to see that the young man was safely delivered to his home. She had plans. It was a horrifying story and, not wanting to judge the woman's actions that night, we might ask ourselves whether we sometimes neglect to have our priorities straight and to consider whether we sometimes put our desires, our plans, even seemingly holy and good desires ahead of conforming ourselves to the will of God.

Francis of Assisi had a desire and a plan to become a knight. He was captured and imprisoned; he became sick. God had other plans. He wanted to avoid lepers; God had other plans. Francis' father wanted his son to be a cloth merchant. God had other plans. Clare's family had plans for their daughter. God had other plans. We have plans. Do they conform to the will, the plan of God?

In the Gospels we hear the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. In the Gospel, Jesus is moved with pity by the vast crowds who have come to listen to him. The crowds followed Jesus to a

God's Plan (continued)

deserted place. The disciples urged Jesus to dismiss the crowds. It had been a long day. They wanted the crowds to fend for themselves. Their plan was for the crowds to look for and buy their own food. Jesus, moved by love and compassion, feeds the crowds. He first suggests that the disciples interrupt their plans for a quiet evening and feed the crowds themselves.

In midtown Manhattan it is sometimes difficult to walk through the streets. They are crowded and people are all in a rush. They all have plans. If you are too slow or cross in front of their path, they can become aggressive. You are interrupting their plans. You are slowing them down.

Sometimes our plans are interrupted by the needs of others. We can complain and become impatient. We can be reluctant to adjust or postpone our plans. Blessed John XXIII, a Secular Franciscan, said, "The secret of life is to let oneself be carried to God." To let go and let God is difficult but it is the secret of life.

Francis had such respect for all creation. He knew animals, plants, rocks and planets could not sin. They just did what God created them to be and do. Only we human beings, who have been given the gift of free will, can decide not to conform to God's plan.

One area of our lives as Secular Franciscans where we do not like to have our plans disrupted by the needs of others is in the area of service to the fraternity. We do not want to have our names placed in nomination for office. We have our own plans. We want to decide what we can or cannot do. We think we know best concerning our abilities and talents. We don't want to take the chance. We don't want our plans interrupted by the needs of the fraternity.

Someone said, we put everything in the pot but the last penny. We are willing to attend fraternity gatherings regularly; we contribute to the common fund; we wear the Tau Cross; we take whatever we can from the sharing and the formation. But we won't put in the last penny. The last penny is trying to save our life without losing it. Jesus calls us to lose our life that we might have life. Jesus calls us to give up our plans that we might live the plan of God.

The Promise of Poverty, Chastity & Obedience

Gerard Crean, SFO

Minister: St. Lawrence of Brindisi Frat.

Ed. Note: This is the first in a three part series on Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. The balance will follow in subsequent editions.

We, like most people, promise something and almost immediately forget what we have promised. It is not always simply the fact that we forget the promise, but we forget the meaning of what has been promised. In our case we promise to do or be something and in light of that promise, we are promised something in return.

I am talking about the Promise we take when we are professed into the Secular Franciscan Order.

We promise to live these virtues as St. Francis did and in return we are promised by the Church that we will have a reward of eternal life.

There used to be a Minister of our Fraternity that never referred to Mass as simply Mass. He always said "Holy Mass." To me that has come to mean a great deal. He, in his simplicity of holiness, was not just referring to Mass in the ordinary sense but something from God. Attaching the word "Holy" to something brings about a whole new meaning to that something. It is from God and that something now belongs to God.

We all know the dictionary meanings of poverty, chastity and obedience but let's attach the word *holy* to each of those words and let's see if it brings about the kind of change that I am talking about.

Poverty means not having wealth or possessions. We hear about that everyday in the newspapers and on the television news programs. Our Lord himself said that we would always have the poor. We do not have to search the world for the poor; we have them right here in our own nation. Maybe not in our town, but in our neighboring towns or down the street there are people with not enough to eat. They have to depend on food stamps or free lunches for the school children. They have to depend on organizations like the St.

Vincent de Paul Society, the Salvation Army or the Parish Outreach for clothing or furniture. That is the meaning of poverty: not having the things that are needed for everyday living.

We promised "Holy Poverty" and this we can live with even if we are poor or rich. St. Francis did it when he embraced "Lady Poverty," when the things of the world no longer were important to him. He gave up his hold, his search for wealth and the things of this world for something better, the things of the next world. As we know the story, and perhaps it seems a bit dramatized, St. Francis took off his clothes in front of his father and the Bishop and declared he had no father except for the Father in Heaven. I am sure that St. Francis' father was shocked at this but his son was choosing his vocation in life. The dramatization of what he did, I am sure, was not for his sake but for ours. God was using him as an instrument; he was given his call to "rebuild the Church" and this was the way that the Holy Spirit moved St. Francis to accomplish that mission. Down through the 800 years that have followed that act, others have chosen "Lady Poverty" as their way also but not always giving up the clothes off their backs. They have found that they could live "Holy Poverty" and still be kings, queens, doctors, lawyers or simply the person working next to you. For

New Lenten Booklet

Brother Richard Contino, OSF of the Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn has written a new Lenten booklet entitled: *These Sacred Days*, which will be published in January, 2009 by St. Paul's Press.

If you have access to a computer, it may be obtained online at Amazon.com or St. Paul's Press/Alba House at www.albhouse.org.

If you wish any additional information, you can contact Brother Richard by phone at (631) 979-9061 or by email:

brrcontino@verizon.net.

Amazon currently has it available for pre-order at \$4.50 per copy.

The Promise (continued)

you see, the kind of poverty we are talking about is a state of mind. We do not hold in contempt the things of this world, for everything we have is a gift from God and it is to be treated with respect as just that, *a gift from God*. Still we must understand that these gifts are for now and that the true gift is that which we are promised, eternal life. More importantly, we should realize that, however much or little, these gifts are to be shared with those around us who are less fortunate. For it has been truly said, "The greater joy is not in receiving but it is in giving."

(In APRIL: Part II: Chastity)



FORMATION CORNER

Bob Campbell
Regional Formation Director

One of my favorite Gospel scenes is the Visitation. I feel the joy when the cousins Mary and Elizabeth (as well as Jesus and John in the womb) greet each other and enjoy each other's company. I imagine great hugs! That's how it is when Franciscans visit each other - family gathering and enjoying each other's company.

As you read in Barbara O'Neill's column, the Region will have our Fraternal Visitation at the Chapter in April. Those of us who were present at our last Visitation in 2006 will remember the greetings of warmth and affirmation we received from our National Visitors then - and anticipate a similar reaction this time.

At our Fall Regional Gathering, we heard about other "visitations": Barbara O'Neill at the NAFRA Chapter; Fr Matthias at the Spiritual Assistants Conference; Joan Geiger and myself at the

National Formation Workshops. The common theme was how heart-warming it is when Franciscans gather! The articles in the last issue of the Newsletter about SELF also shared on that same theme; those attendees who are Candidates commented on how much they learned about becoming a Franciscan by being with (visiting) other Franciscans.

I strongly encourage you to participate in the many opportunities for "visitation" that are available to us throughout the year. Check out the Upcoming Events section below for some of them, such as our Regional Retreat in April and FLIC in August. Also look for opportunities to "visit" your neighboring fraternities as they conduct special events that are advertised in this Newsletter (for example, Days of Recollection and the monthly Breakfasts in Commack). Another suggestion would be to visit your neighboring fraternities at their monthly gatherings or for a Profession; you will probably learn something useful for your own fraternity but, more importantly, you will enjoy simply being with your Franciscan brothers and sisters.

You may ask, "What has *visitation* got to do with Franciscan Formation?" I feel very strongly that the most important element of both initial and ongoing formation is what we learn from our brothers and sisters in the ways they show their love for one another and for us.

PEACE and ALL GOOD

AROUND THE REGION

Bob Campbell, SFO
Regional Data Manager

Rite of Admission

On October 27 in Elmhurst, Kathleen Allen was admitted into St Adalbert Fraternity. Constance Watz, Minister, presided; Rev Paul Miskiewicz, OFM Conv, witnessed.

Rite of Profession

On April 30 in Mastic Beach, Mary Rodas was professed into Queen of the Seraphic Order Fraternity. Madeline

Sacco, Minister, presided.

On October 5 in Patchogue, Anthony and Maria Vissicchio were professed into St Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity. Gerard Crean, Minister, presided. Rev Matthias Wesnofske, OFM, Cap. was Friar Witness.

On October 26 in Brooklyn, Marcia Murray was professed into Canticle of the Sun Fraternity. Rose Canepa, Minister, presided. Rev Charles Matonti celebrated Mass.

On November 8 in Mastic Beach, Donna Poole and John Stewart were professed into Queen of the Seraphic Order Fraternity. Madeline Sacco, Minister, presided. Rev Matthias Wesnofske OFM, Cap. was Friar Witness.

On November 9 in Jamaica Estates, Sarah Higgins and William Higgins were professed into St Monica Fraternity. Patricia Leptak, Minister, presided. Rev Matthias Wesnofske OFM, Cap. was Friar Witness.

On December 5 in Hewlett, John Hynson was professed into Blessed Raymond Lull Fraternity. Augusta VanDuzen, Minister, presided. Rev Matthias Wesnofske, OFM, Cap. was Friar Witness.

Anniversaries

50 years: Mary Korber, St Lawrence of Brindisi

25 Years: Theresa Stamm, St Lawrence of Brindisi

Deaths

Mary Rodas, Queen of the Seraphic Order, June 12

Maureen Collins, St Bonaventure, October 7

Juliana Galasso, St. Mary Queen of Angels, December 26.

Elections

September 21, Holy Child Jesus, Joan Brancato, Minister

November 23, Queen of Angels Fraternity, Alicia D'Amato, Minister

Establishment

Congratulations: On October 21, at Queen of All Saints Church, Brooklyn, Blessed Josephine Leroux Fraternity was permanently and canonically established.

Fr Matthias Wesnofske, OFM, Cap, was the principal celebrant at the Mass; Regional Minister Barbara O'Neill witnessed for the Region.

Activities

1 Transitus Celebration: October 3 at St Joseph the Worker Church, East Patchogue, sponsored by St Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity.

2 Fall Regional Gathering: October 25 at St Joseph Church, Babylon.

3 Canticle Lecture Series: November 22 at Camp Alvernia, Centerport; topic was St Bonaventure's Five Feasts of the Child Jesus.

4 Calendar of Upcoming Events: Brunch: third Tuesday of each month at 11:45 am at the Premier Diner, Commack Road. Seculars from several fraternities gather to promote a fraternal bond between our SFO fraternities on Long Island. We talk about Franciscan subjects with brothers and sisters - we're not afraid to speak about spiritual things in public; a grand time is had by all. Contact Frank Harnos (631) 499-0074 for directions.

"Christ in the City" Retreats at Church of St John the Baptist, 210 West 31st Street, NYC: Saturdays 4-10 pm: Topics: Jesus The Word Become Flesh, Francis of Assisi, Perfect Joy, Finding God in Stillness and Solitude; contact Brother Salvatore Patricola, OFM, Cap. (212) 564-9070 ext 247.

Secular Franciscan Study Days: offered by the Franciscan Brothers at Mount Alvernia, Centerport. Call Brother Tom Barton at (631) 261-5730 for information.

April 14-16, 2009: Regional Retreat at Cormaria, Sag Harbor; cost \$165; contact Bob Campbell at (516) 599-4256.

April 25, 2009: Annual Regional Chapter and NAFRA Visi-

tation, at St Adalbert Church, Elmhurst.

ALL FRATERNITY MINISTERS ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND.

August 17-21: FLIC at Mount St Alphonsus, Esopus NY. Contact Bob Campbell (516-599-4256) for information.

Apostolate Spotlight

For the past five years, Bob Metz, SFO and member of the St. Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity, has overseen a Fraternity Apostolate which brings tangible support to expectant and mothers of recently-born children. Patterned on a nationwide program which is used in many parishes around the country, the programs major objective of calling for daily prayer for the unborn is met with the eager participation of St. L of B Fraternity.

The Purpose of the Spiritual Adoption Program is three-fold:

- 1) Encourage our Fraternity to pray for babies in danger of abortion.
- 2) Educate participants about the development of the pre-born child.
- 3) Provide mothers in need with assistance by celebrating a closing Benediction and baby shower at the conclusion of the nine month program.

Fraternity members are encouraged to spiritually adopt an unknown, unborn baby, and to follow their baby along the path to being born. Participants pledge to pray for nine months for a baby in danger of abortion. During each month of the program, the "spiritual parents" are given information about their baby's development in the womb. Donations of baby supplies are also collected and brought to the Mercy Center in Patchogue each month. The Mercy Center is a private non-profit agency that provides housing and support for pregnant and new mothers who would otherwise be homeless.

While it is not always possible to see

the particular effects of prayer, we know that God wants us to pray, and we know by faith that He answers all prayers.

At the ninth month and following a Benediction and the reading of the "names" of those newborns who have been spiritually adopted, a baby shower is conducted. Again all gifts and cash donations collected are given to the Mercy Center.

Any Fraternity wishing to start such a program may call Bob Metz at 631-475-3426 or search the internet for "Spiritual Adoption Prayer Program."

*Gene Durney, SFO
St. Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity*

Please visit our Regional website: taucrossregion.org Send your comments to the webmaster.



REGARDING the NEWSLETTER

Please send items of interest (elections, professions, anniversaries, events, recognition) to Regional Secretary Raymond Clarke, 899 Crestview Avenue, North Woodmere NY 11581; email at: Ramond.Clarkel@verizon.net

The TAU is published quarterly, in January, April, July and October. Articles by fraternity members are welcome. If accepted, they may be edited. Please submit copies by the 10th of the month prior to publication. Please address correspondence to editor Peter D'Amato, PO Box 447, Miller Place, NY 11764-0447. TEL: (631) 331-7680 or email at: dama-to1@optonline.net.