

# 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

We have recently had a change on the Regional Executive Council. Vice-Minister Pauline DiCicco resigned to be able to fulfill her responsibilities to family. We miss Pauline, and thank her for her willingness to serve the region and the order. Following Art. 81 of the Constitutions, the Executive Council elected Councilor Joan Geiger to the office of Vice-Minister, leaving the office of councilor empty. There are many Seculars who have the abilities to fill this office. We need you to submit names for this office.

Each year the council asks each fraternity for a headcount of how many members they have. This determines the amount of Fair Share the fraternity sends to the region, is the basis for the regional budget, and also determines the Fair Share that the region sends to NAFRA. As the numbers are reported and totaled, it has become apparent that, in the last few years, we have had a substantial loss of membership. Two of our fraternities,

***"We must all work to increase vocations."***

Queen of Heaven in Ozone Park and St. Mary Star of the Sea in Rockaway have been deactivated. Fortunately the remaining members will be able to transfer to nearby fraternities. However this presents a challenge for all of us. We must all work to increase vocations. This needs to be an ongoing priority in every fraternity. Our presence in parishes must be known. We must be visible. We all have the responsibility of seeking members, inviting

them to our gatherings, and to be welcoming and hospitable when they come. And our fraternity gatherings should be "a visible sign of the Church, a community of love, a privileged place for developing a

***"At both the state and federal level we face unprecedented attacks on human life."***

sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members." (Rule 22).

At both the state and federal level we face unprecedented attacks on human life. Two radical legislative proposals promoting abortion on demand are pending before lawmakers. In our last issue, we included information on the federal "Freedom of Choice Act" (FOCA) pending before Congress and how to contact legislators to oppose it. Similarly, NY State lawmakers have introduced a state-level version of FOCA, called the "Reproductive Health & Privacy Protection Act" (RHAPP). If enacted, the right to abortion in New York State could trump all other rights, eliminat-

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**Bob Campbell**, Formation Director: (516) 599-4256; email: arcy@aol.com

**Councilor:** Vacant

**Fr. Matthias Wesnofske, OFM, Cap.** Spiritual Assistant: (212) 564-9070 ext 244; email Mwesnofl@aol.com

ing even the right to hold pro-life beliefs. It is important that you act now to oppose this bill since in the state legislature bills often move very quickly and become law. Contact your state officials by going to [www.nycatholic.org](http://www.nycatholic.org). Click the "Take Action Now!" button and click the alert under "extreme abortion proposal". Together we can defeat these bills.

Don't forget to register for the Summer Seminar, "Franciscan Spirituality for Secular Franciscans," at St. Francis College in Loretto, PA. June 25-28. Contact me if you are interested.

Sadly two fraternity ministers have died: Kathleen McElligott of St. Barnabas in January, and we recently learned of the death of Maria Daniela Burza from St. Stansilau last year. Eternal rest grant to them O Lord.

## POLITICS

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

Sometimes, as we share during a fraternity gathering, we don't always get all the details of a story, but the basic facts can be inspirational. Recently, such a story was told as we shared at a fraternity gathering.

After the recent national elections, subsequent elections had to be held to fill vacancies caused by the national and state elections. Such an election had to take place in the county of Queens in New York City. One evening all the candidates vying for the same position presented their views to a crowd of prospective voters. The speeches given were bland, nothing controversial, just efforts to impress the listeners. Three Secular Franciscans from one fraternity were in the audience and one of them wore a prominent

## POLITICS (continued)

TAU Cross. One of the candidates, while he was making his presentation, spied the TAU and mentioned it and said that he was a Secular Franciscan and that he believed in the right to life, opposed abortion and embryonic stem cell research and gay marriage. Suddenly, the evening was no longer an exercise in sleepwalking but in liberal New York City the discussions became more heated. Several weeks later, the Secular Franciscan won the election.

***“Suddenly, the evening was no longer an exercise in sleepwalking but in liberal New York City the discussions became more heated.”***

I mention this story because it shows us, once again, how just wearing the TAU Cross can not only make a difference and initiate discussion, but also show the importance of Secular Franciscans becoming involved in politics. Some today would like to see Catholic clergy more involved in politics. Some would like to see politicians speak in our churches and want the bishops to tell us for whom we should vote. We know, of course, that the clergy are not to be involved in politics and priests and bishops are forbidden to run for political office. We, too, are aware of how, in past ages when the Church was political, when bishops and Popes led armies and held offices in the secular sphere, the spiritual focus of the Church was dimmed and the reputation of the Church became tarnished and scandalous. However, the Church has encouraged the laity to become involved and to study issues and help to bring about a transformation of society. We saw this in Poland where the leaders of Solidarity sought the guidance of the Church but it was not the Cardinals and bishops who ran for office or who led protests. It was the laity that changed the political landscape of Poland. Today, we might bemoan the influence of Hollywood or lobbyists or Planned Parenthood or the media in determining the future of our country, but, we might ask, where is the influence of the laity of the Catholic Church?

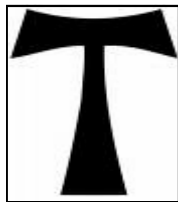
From the very beginning of the Third Order, the Secular Franciscans were involved in

politics, held prominent offices in society, worked as mediators in disputes, emphasized peace and diplomacy, and brought about the transformation of European society. Frequently Secular Franciscans were sought for such positions because of their honesty, their simple life styles, their humility and their clear sense of justice.

***“We can’t just limit our participation to voting and jury duty.”***

We might say, ‘Well, I pray’ and for many of us that is all we can do. But ‘Faith without good works....’ Perhaps we can become more informed on issues. Watching the news and reading the newspapers can be depressing but it would be difficult for us to engage in meaningful conversations if we don’t know the issues. We also must be informed on the Church’s position on these issues. We can’t just limit our participation to voting and jury duty. Write letters and respond to emails not just to the politicians, but local newspapers, which sometimes receive few letters and are just looking for printable letters. Speak out! Protest! March! Write! Attend meetings!

A review of the final book of Rev. Richard John Neuhaus, “American Babylon,” said: “Christians are people of exile upon whom God has placed an ‘awkward duality of citizenship.’ Much prayer and much hard thinking must go into figuring out when we can ‘go along’ with the ways of our American Babylon and when we must say no.”



“Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively.” Rule #14. “Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their lives and their **courageous initiatives**. Especially **in the field of public life**, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.” Rule #15.

## The Promise of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience

Gerard Crean, SFO  
Minister, St. Lawrence of Brindisi Fr.

**Ed. Note:** *This is the second in a three part series on Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. We should note that, as Seculars, we do not promise the Evangelicals at profession. We promise to “live the Gospel” by “observing the Rule...” However, they are an integral part of Franciscan Spirituality.*

Chastity is perhaps a little harder to get a handle on. St. Francis certainly lived a chaste life in what we consider the normal sense, and we can recall the story of how St. Francis admonished his Brothers to cast their eyes downward as they walked past a woman.

The dictionary goes on to say, after the normal definition, that “chaste” is being “virtuous; free from impurity in thought and language; not gaudy”. Let’s, once again, add the word *holy* and see if this is what we are talking about. Holy Chastity is again a state of mind. We are called to be chaste not only in body but in thought. Perhaps, first, we should address the body; for in receiving the Holy Eucharist do we not become the temple of God? How can we be holy if we permit ourselves impure acts, acts that are committed by the body? St. Francis referred to himself as Brother Ass, so that he would control his body rather than let his body control him. How often have you heard the phrase, “Body and Soul”? Perhaps we should remember that it is the “Mind and Body” that we have to deal with in our struggles. Holy Chastity is then a state of mind and body.

***“Perhaps we should remember that it is the “Mind and Body” that we have to deal with in our struggles.”***

The Second Commandment, one of the “Ten” we learned so diligently as

we went through our CCD classes as children, says we should not take the name of the Lord our God in vain, something we can apply to all the words that we utter. Someone once said that we are a product of what we say and, if this is true, shouldn't we choose very carefully what we say and about whom we say it? If we speak unkindly about someone are we then not an unkind person? If we speak a falsehood, no matter how small, are we then not a false person? I could go on and on but you can get the drift of the meaning. Words do not come on their own; they are the results of our thoughts.

To those who consider themselves Defenders of the Faith, I would say defend, yes, but as our Lord would do it, in charity. If it is judgment that you are rendering, let the judgment come from the Lord. In that way you will be able to speak in charity.

The last part of the dictionary definition refers to "gaudy" a part of chastity that also should be considered. Gaudy does not only apply to what you are wearing but to all that you possess. You can, by the way you live, be gaudy. The things that you possess may be excessive. But the true crime of being gaudy is to flaunt it before those who have not. If someone has worked hard for the things that they have accomplished and the possessions that they have acquired for themselves and his/her family, do not judge them and say they are flaunting it if it is not true. Instead, be happy for them, for God has blessed them. He has blessed you in other ways.

So live the life of Holy Chastity in mind, body and soul and know that you are doing it for our Dear Lord.



## ***“Rebuild My Church”***

Gale Durney, SFO  
St. Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity

Article Six of the SFO Rule tells us that we Franciscans “should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her (the Church’s) mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by our life and words.” The Article goes on to instruct us that, like St. Francis, we too are called to rebuild the Church by

***“Through our Franciscan calling to personal holiness, we are also called to bring others to Christ and His Church.”***

energetically devoting ourselves to a life in full communion with the Pope, bishops and priests. The Article also directs us to “foster an open and trusting dialogue of apostolic effectiveness and creativity” with others.

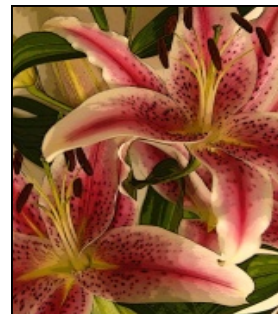
Through our Franciscan calling to personal holiness, we are also called to bring others to Christ and His Church. We are so blessed by the faith we’ve been given. Don’t hide your light under a bushel basket. Let it shine! Let it be the lure that draws people in so that they, too, may find the contentment and consolation we derive from Christ and His Church.

We must be visible examples of the positive influences our faith and the Church have on our lives. We must counter the negativity so many people associate with religion, Church and people of faith. We do this with words, but we also effectively convey the message through our demeanor, body language, attitudes and our life styles. When we project an honest image of who we are, devoted Catholics who find peace and joy in our faith, we become ambassadors of Christ and Catholicism to everyone whose lives we touch. Let us be instruments of His peace, joy, comfort and love. Let us be examples of happy, fulfilled Catholics whose spiritual lives are flourishing.

We should not be afraid to wear our faith on our sleeves, so to speak. Wear the TAU always, as a sign of our Franciscan identity, and as a reminder of our responsibility to present Christ and His Church as the source of our joy.

Another way we can answer the Call to rebuild the Church is through involvement in catechetical parish ministry. Our parishes are in need of competent volunteers who can teach sound doctrine wrapped in good theology, supported by Scripture, with faith formation and spiritual conversion as the ultimate goal. Our experience with Initial and Ongoing Formation has prepared us to present God’s Truth in a positive way that can be understood and made personal. We can ignite the spark in others, young or old, that could lead to lasting faith and spiritual conversion. “Where there is doubt, let us sow faith.”

## **The Lord Is Risen**



### **ALLELUIA!**

Awhile ago I was reading a book by an Irish theologian, J. P. Mackey. Although I cannot remember the name of the book, I found something there that has remained in my memory. In citing the Holy Spirit as the principle bond of the Christian community, Fr. Mackey recalls the Apostles and their converts, sharing their love and knowledge of God, one group ministering the faith to the other, each sharing the same Spirit. This image applies to catechetical ministry in our parishes. It also applies to formation sessions in our fraternities.

**-Gale**

## AROUND THE REGION

Bob Campbell, SFO  
Regional Data Manager

### Rite of Admission

On January 25, South Ozone Park, Cecilia Baboolal was admitted into St Michael Fraternity. Joan Geiger, Minister, presided.

On March 1, in Patchogue, Roger McEnerney was professed into St Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity. Gerard Crean, Minister, presided. Rev Matthias Wesnofske OFM, Cap. was Friar Witness.

### Deaths

Maria Daniela Burza, St Stanislaus, June 1, 2008.

Catherine Coyne, St Adalbert, November 10, 2008.

Kathleen McElligott, St Barnabas, January 15, 2009.

Robert Gilbert, St Adalbert, January 24, 2009

Robert Conneely, St Lawrence of Brindisi, January 30, 2009.

Rosary Fratello, Holy Child, February 1, 2009.

### Activities

**Epiphany Party:** January 9 at St Joseph RC Church, Hewlett, sponsored by Blessed Raymond Lull Fraternity. 25 brothers and sisters attended, representing 7 fraternities. After Evening Prayer, a skit ("Precious Pearls") was presented. The evening closed with a social.

### Calendar of Upcoming Events

Brunch: third Tuesday of each month at 11:45 am at the Premier Diner, Commack Road, Commack. 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 the Church

of St John the Baptist, 210 West 31<sup>st</sup> 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 Visitation, at St Adalbert Church, Elmhurst. **ALL FRATERNITY MINISTERS ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND.**

**June 20: Day of Recollection** at Tabor Retreat Center, Oceanside; presenter Brother Richard Contino OSF; offering \$25. Sponsored by Blessed Raymond Lull and Our Lady of the Atonement Fraternities; contact Augusta VanDuzen (718-539-0384) or MaryAlice DelCastillo (516-223-1596) for details

**August 17-21: FLIC at Mount St. Alphonsus, Esopus, NY;** cost \$390.00 Contact Bob Campbell at 516-599-4256

## CANTICLE SERIES

**The Canticle Series continues through the early Spring at the boathouse at:**

**Camp Alvernia  
105 Prospect Road  
Centerport, NY 11721**

### On April 18:

**A study of The Canticle of the Sun. Presented by Brother Thomas Barton, OSF. TIME: 10-3:00. The stipend is \$20.00.**

### On May 16 or May 23:

**A Day of Prayer with Padre Pio , 10:00 AM –3:00 PM. Presented by Brother Bob Reinke, CFP, a member of the Brothers of the**

**Poor of St. Francis. Brother holds an MA in Social Work and is the founder of FAITH Services and the Franciscan AIDS Initiative in Hoboken, NJ.**

**The suggested stipend for A Day of Prayer with Padre Pio is \$25.00**

**PREREGISTRATION IS NECESSARY FOR ALL SESSIONS. Two days have been scheduled for "Praying with Padre Pio" due to the high level of interest.**

**Soft and hot drinks will be available on all dates. Bring your own lunch. Some scholarships are available.**

**To register call: 1-631-261-5730**



**Welcome to the Premier Diner, Commack, every third Tuesday!**

### 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: Raymond.Clark1@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.