

# 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

**"Keeping the gift of Gospel living alive."**

The recently elected National Executive Council came together last month to search for a common vision and priorities to guide us during the next three years. Using the vision and priorities shared by geographical groups at the NAFRA 2009 meeting, the vision is "Keeping the gift of Gospel living alive." Included in these few words are ideas of going from Gospel to life and life to Gospel; seeking the Kingdom of God, of reflecting Christ's love through the working of the Holy Spirit to all around us, of obedience to the Gospel, of making Christ our life, all by following in the footsteps of Francis and Clare. This vision will be promoted through these areas of focus: Fraternity, Formation, Communication and Youth. In our region we will also use these topics to focus on increasing vocations to the Order. Feel free to send me any comments you may have on implementing this vision and priorities.

National Minister Tom Bello will be the presider at our election on April 24, 2010 at St. Adalbert Church in Elmhurst. Ministers must attend. Each fraternity needs to be represented. We will be electing a new minister and council. Everyone is welcome to attend. Bring a brown bag lunch.

My brothers and sister in St. Francis, I have served as your minister for the last eight years and it has been a wonderful experience for me. I en-

joyed visiting the fraternities and meeting so many of you and sharing our joys and struggles in being Secular Franciscans. I have always felt welcome at visitations and elections. We are indeed one family. I am grateful for the opportunity to have served the region and for your prayers and support. It was one of the best things I have done! I was blessed in having executive councils who were supportive and cooperative in carrying out the various

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duties of the council. I thank them for that. Father Matthias Wesnofske, OFM Cap. has been our Spiritual Assistant and council member since the region was formed. I thank him for his willingness to give so much of his time and energy to us. And I ask you to give your support, cooperation and prayers to the new officers of our region.

— Barbara

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## SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT'S MESSAGE

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

Mary, the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of God, the Immaculate Conception, is honored and will be honored for all generations. The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order calls for you not just to honor her, but to look to her as intercessor and model. Chapter 2:9 states: "The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self giving and by praying earnestly and confidently."

***"The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order calls for you not just to honor (Mary), but to look to her as intercessor and model."***

When we look to the Gospel of St. John we see we can turn to her in our need and Jesus will answer her prayer as He did at the wedding at Cana. We can also turn to her as our mother, remembering the words of Jesus on the cross, "Behold your Mother." When we consider how every breath Jesus took on the cross was so painful, since crucifixion was a slow death of intermittent suffocation, He used his dying breath to convey this message: that Mary was our Mother. In a sense these words were His last will and testament. John never used his own name in the Gospel. He was the 'beloved disciple,' because we are all Jesus' beloved disciples. So we go to Mary, our Mother, in prayer.

But the Rule also calls you to look

**SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT'S MESSAGE**  
**Continued**

to Mary as a model. This might seem difficult because we see Mary as free

***“Chapter 2:no.9 states: ‘The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.’ ”***

from sin, the Immaculate Conception, full of grace. But it might be helpful to remember that she was a lay woman. Mary was not a priest. Mary brought Christ into the world, and the priest makes Christ present on our altars. But she wasn't a priest. We too can make Christ present in our world. As St. Bonaventure encourages us to conceive the Child and give birth to the Child, so we make Christ present in our world. Mary was not a religious. She did not take solemn or perpetual vows. Yet she lived poverty, chastity and obedience. We too are called to live simply, to live purely and to obey civil laws and Church

***“Let us also not be afraid to look to her as a model for our own very human, secular lives.”***

laws and to live lives of service within the fraternity.

Mary was a lay person. She breast fed her Child, she washed His clothes and swept the floors. She was a wife and a widow. She experienced great joy realizing her 'soul magnifies the Lord' and she suffered great sorrow at the loss of her husband and witnessing the terrible death of Her Son. Her life was a mixture of joys and sorrows; the joy of the resurrection, the sorrow of Jesus leaving to begin his ministry. But in all of this she serves as a model of obedience, with a willingness to accept the will of God. She didn't respond to the angel by saying 'I will do it' but rather in the passive voice she responded, "Let it be done to me."

Let us continue to offer our prayers to Mary. Let us also not be afraid to look to her as a model for our own very human, secular lives.

--Father Matt.

**FORMATION CORNER**

*Bob Campbell, SFO*  
*Regional Formation Director*

As my assignment as Regional Formation Director comes to a close, it seems appropriate to recollect some of the more important lessons of the past 3 years.

In his book, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict XVI showed his Franciscan heart and spirit. Here is an excerpt: "By creating the Third Order, Francis accepted the distinction between radical commitment and the necessity of living in the world. The point of the Third Order is to *accept* with humility the task of one's secular profession and its requirement, wherever one happens to be, while directing one's whole life to that deep interior communion with Christ that Francis showed us."

This sentiment was reinforced when Joan Geiger and I attended National Formation Workshops in Orlando and St Louis respectively. We brought much back to share with you. One of the speakers reminded us that we are an Evangelical Order, not an Apostolic Order. Evangelical means living in accordance with the Gospel; Apostolic means sent to do some particular work in the Church. St Francis of Assisi did not found an Apostolic Order - he based everything on living the Gospel. Our apostolic work (our *DOing*) will follow from our living of the Gospel, our (*BEing*). We don't have to look for something to do; we need only be present to our space in the world and God will afford us something to do - which will follow from our living of the Gospel.

***“St Francis of Assisi did not found an Apostolic Order - he based everything on living the Gospel. Our apostolic work (our DOing) will follow from our living of the Gospel, our (BEing).”***

Another teaching from the National Workshop concerned terminology. FRANCISCAN FORMATION is that process of giving shape to and building up our vocation as Secular Franciscans.

This formation never ends - it is a lifelong process. Our FRANCISCAN FORMATION DIRECTOR is the Holy Spirit. In addition, each fraternity has a FRATERNITY FORMATION DIRECTOR, who was elected to the fraternity council to direct the process of formation in that fraternity. This is for those who are just beginning the process ("*initial formation*") and for those who have already been professed ("*ongoing formation*"). While the formation Director has the overall responsibility, anyone who assists in the formation process - either initial or ongoing - is called a FORMATOR. It is helpful to rotate the role of Formator for ongoing formation at each fraternity gathering. In this way, the brothers and sisters grow by sharing the responsibility.

We conducted a Regional Formation Workshop in March 2008, at which we "modeled" a fraternity gathering. We also reviewed the phases of Initial Formation, which has MINIMUM periods for each phase: Orientation: 3 months, Inquiry: 6 months, Candidacy: 18 months. We stressed the necessity of having some form of ongoing formation at EVERY fraternity gathering. The use of a text - at least most of the time - is extremely important to keep us focused on our Franciscan vocation.

Franciscan Formation is a lifetime journey, but we do not travel alone. It was important to Francis to have community, and so it is with us, as we live life in fraternity. So we strongly encourage you to participate in the many opportunities (such as Days of Recollection, our Regional Retreat and FLIC) that are available to us throughout the year for joining with other Seculars. Also look for opportunities to visit your neighboring fraternities at their monthly gatherings or for a Profession. You will learn something useful for your own fraternity but, more importantly, you will enjoy simply being with your Franciscan brothers and sisters. A

very 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.

Another – more individual – element of our ongoing formation is personal development. It is very important that we continue to learn about Francis, Clare and other Franciscan saints, our Franciscan spirituality and matters that pertain to Gospel living, as well as

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Church teachings. Today, there are so many opportunities for this kind of personal development: books and periodicals, DVD’s and movies, as well as loads of information available on the Internet. It’s not simply enough to do this privately - we also need to find ways to share what we have learned with our brothers and sisters. In this regard, it’s suggested that each fraternity create a fraternity library.

St Francis didn’t intend to leave us a lot of rules. He simply wanted to point us in the direction of our Lord Jesus Christ. So the one thing he asked of his followers was to live the Gospel life – that is, to follow Jesus. Perhaps it would be easier if we had more specific rules, but that’s not the way of Jesus or Francis! We need to learn for ourselves - a little at a time - which is the reason why we can’t say at our profession that we are truly “prepared” or “ready” or any such word - any more than those who are married, ordained or professed to religious life can say that they’re “ready” when they pronounce their vows.. At our profession we pledged to follow

the Gospel and the SFO Rule, to walk forward in faith, willing to take that next step, and then another one, and so on. This means that we are always in the process of being formed – we never arrive. Thus ongoing Franciscan Formation is a never-ending process.

Following fraternity elections, newly elected fraternity Formation Directors should receive the following resources from the previous FD; if you did NOT receive them, please contact me or our new Regional Formation Director.

1. Essential SFO Documents (or SFO Resource Handbook)
2. Formation Resources (blue sheet)
3. Bibliography of Franciscan Books

Thanks to all of you for working so closely and cooperatively with me these past 3 years. Together we have learned so much about Franciscan spirituality and Franciscan Formation!

-Bob C

## **AROUND THE REGION**

*Bob Campbell, SFO,  
Regional Database Manager*

### **Rite of Admission**

On December 6, in Patchogue, Frances McCarthy was admitted into St Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity. Robert Metz, Minister, presided. Rev Matthias Wesnofske OFM Cap was Friar Witness.

On December 11, in St James, William O’Brien was admitted into Blessed John XXIII Fraternity. Jean D’Onofrio, Minister, presided.

On January 17, in Merrick, Marie Erker and Marianne Miller were admitted into Cure of Ars Frater-

nity. Frank Tavella, Minister, presided. Deacon Robert Campbell, Spiritual Assistant, was the Witness.

On January 17, in Sunnyside, Corazon Bustamante and Stephanie Martin were admitted into St Mary Queen of Angels Fraternity. Peggy Fleming, Minister, presided. Rev Matthias Wesnofske OFM Cap was Friar Witness.

On February 21, in Merrick, Angela Signa was admitted into Cure of Ars Fraternity. Frank Tavella, Minister, presided.

### **Rite of Profession**

On December 13, in Jamaica, Ann Chiapparone was professed into St Monica Fraternity. Patricia Leptak SFO, Minister, presided. Rev Matthias Wesnofske OFM Cap was Friar Witness.

### **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 31<sup>st</sup> Street, NYC: Saturdays 4-10 pm: Topics & Dates: Dorothy Day – Who Was She? (April 17 & June 12); 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 13-15, 2010: Regional Retreat** at Cormaria, Sag Harbor;

## AROUND the REGION continued

cost \$170. Contact Bob Campbell (516-599-4256) for reservations.

**April 24, 2010: Chapter of Elections,** St Adalbert's, Elmhurst. All Fraternity Ministers are required to attend (or send an authorized representative).

**June 19: Day of Recollection** at Tabor Retreat Center, Oceanside; presenter Fr Richard Trezza OFM; offering \$25. Sponsored by Blessed Raymond Lull and Our Lady of the Atonement Fraternities; contact Augusta VanDuzen (718-539-0384) or Marge Buckley (516-208-3623) for details.

**June 25-27,** St Adalbert Fraternity Retreat at Mount Alvernia, Wappingers Falls; contact Connie Watz (718) 821-1875 for information.

**August 9-12, 2010: FLIC** (Franciscans Living In Community) at St Alphonsus Retreat Center, Esopus NY. Cost \$325. Contact Bob Campbell (516-599-4256) for details.

**August 28: Day of Recollection** at Shrine of Our Lady of the Island, Eastport; presenter Fr Matthias Wesnofske OFM Cap; offering \$10; bring bag lunch. Sponsored by St Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity; contact Bob Metz (631-730-3731) for details.

## NOTICE

### 2010 REGIONAL PICNIC

Once again, there will be a Regional Picnic this year. And, again, there is no cost. Just bring your appetite and family.

**DATE:** Saturday, June 26  
10 A.M.-4 P.M.

**PLACE:** Elwood Park  
Huntington, L.I.

**For additional info call:**

Frank Harnos 631-499-0074  
Pete D'Amato 631-331-7680  
Gene Durney 631-929-3317

## NOTICE

### CANTICLE SERIES REVIVAL

Brother Tom Barton, OSF

To the SFO's of the Tau Cross Region: Fr. Andre Cirino, OFM, has agreed to a Canticle Series day for the members of the Tau Cross Region.

Some of you may recall the day Father gave us several years back on St. Bonaventure's: Bringing Forth Christ: Five Feasts of the Child Jesus. It was considered by many to have been the best of the Canticle Series at that time.

The subject will be "Praying the Office of the Passion of St Francis". The date is May 1, 2010. Canticle Series days in the past have generally begun at 9:30 am and ended at 3:00 pm. According to the information we have, this date does not conflict with any other program being offered by the Region.

**NOTE: Fr. Andre requires that each participant bring a copy of *The Geste of the Great King*.**

There are many ways to purchase a copy, but the safest way to do so is to order it through the Franciscan Institute of St Bonaventure University, which publishes the book. Frs. Andre and Laurent Gallent, OFM, are the editors of the book and translators.

**Please register at Mount Alvernia, 1-631-261-5730. The stipend for the day is \$20 and the location will be at the Alvernia boathouse. Do so early since no registrations will be taken after April 25.**

Refreshments and cold drinks will be provided but be sure to bring along your own lunch.

Details will be available on the website by March 25.



## A LITTLE LAUGH

from Jim O'Neill, SFO

The preacher gave a Sunday sermon titled "Forgive Your Enemies". At the end of the long sermon, he asked how many were willing to forgive their enemies. About half held up their hands. Not satisfied, he preached for another twenty minutes, and asked again. Everyone responded except one elderly lady in the rear. "Ms. Jones, are you not willing to forgive your enemies?" the preacher asked. "I don't have any," she replied. "That's very unusual, Ms. Jones, How old are you?" he asked. "Ninety-three" she replied. "Please. tell us how you can live to ninety-three and not have an enemy in the world, the preacher asked. The sweet little lady faced the congregation and said, "It's easy. I outlived them all!"



## 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.Clarke1@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-tol1@optonline.net.

# SAYONARA

*Pete D'Amato, SFO*

"I have done what was given me to do..."  
(St. Francis)

For most of us Seculars, the Regional Council is an institution which we pretty much take for granted. It is part of the Order woodwork, the background noise of daily life that keeps the SFO wheels greased and the gas tank filled thereby allowing us to go on about our daily fraternal business without mishap. A visit here, a memo there, a call for info or a regional meeting are usually the sum of our encounters; unless, of course, a problem develops in our fraternity. Then a plea for help goes out. Then we become conscious of the Council's presence as a source of guidance and support.

In a sense, the Council, itself, is a microcosm of this model. Writing as one of its more recent members, I can attest to the fact that, within the Regional Council itself, there are those of us who take for granted the presence of others more experienced and wiser than ourselves. When knotty issues crop up, we look to these individuals for guidance and, after awhile, we come to realize that, without them, governing would be considerably more difficult. And the idea of them not

being available becomes much more challenging. That will soon be the case with the departure of Minister Barbara O'Neill and Formation Director, Deacon Bob Campbell.

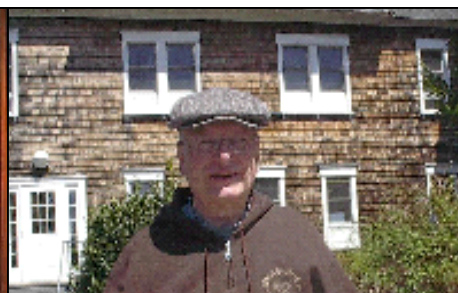
In the 10+ years that I have been a Secular Franciscan there has never been a time when the Council has not been blessed by the presence of both Barbara and Bob. In point of fact, both have been members of the Council since its inception. And each brought to the Region their unique gifts of faith, experience and administration. We can all recall the precision, care and attention to detail with which Deacon Bob managed Regional personnel issues as our Secretary for nine years and his conscientious work as Formation Director. We can be comforted by the fact that Bob will remain our Data Base Manager even in retirement. He will also remain our retreat and FLIC coordinator. This assures us that he will have ongoing input in SFO matters.

Barbara has served on the Council in various capacities including Formation Director, Vice Minister and, for the past eight years, as Minister. Her responsibilities in this, her latest role, have taken her to every corner of our region conducting fraternity elections, annual visitations, dealing with issues and resolving problems. In addition, it

has required her to maintain contact with the National Fraternity, implementing directives, attending NAFRA and other conferences, participating in elections and, in general, acting as our liaison with the rest of our Franciscan family. All of these, Barbara has done with a quiet dignity, competence, attention to detail and a sense of dedication and fraternal integrity that is a model for us all.

Service is a Franciscan hallmark. It is more than a personal commitment of time and talent. It is an act of faith-in ourselves, in our community, in each other and in God. It is also, perhaps, the most personal and trying prayer that we can offer because it asks us to risk ourselves, to make ourselves not only vulnerable but obedient to our own ideals and beliefs. When asked to serve, we should never dismiss it off-handedly. It is a chance for graces that we may not have known were possible.

In both Barbara O'Neill and Deacon Bob Campbell, we have been blessed with two members who saw the need and made the commitment with generosity. We have all benefited from their selflessness. Both did "what was given (them) to do..." Now it is our turn to follow their lead. Thank you both for a job well done. Our prayers go with you.  
Pax et Bonum!



**85th ANNIVERSARY  
celebrated by  
Immaculate Conception  
Fraternity**

Fay Muir, SFO,  
Minister

The Immaculate Conception Fraternity feels a great sense of gratitude to the grace of our predecessors to have the privilege of celebrating our 85<sup>th</sup> year on Saturday, March 6th. The day was perfect, a sunny, mild, spring-into-summer day – unbelievably beautiful weather for early March. Members of IL Poverello, Poor Clare and St. Barnabas Fraternities shared in our celebration.

In keeping with the liturgical season of Lent, we planned a Day of Recol-

***“...we planned a Day of Recollection focusing in on the state of the world during and even before the birth of St. Francis.”***

lection focusing in on the state of the world during and even before the birth of St. Francis. Our Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Peter Napoli, OFM Cap., led the discussion. He talked of the world in the age of St. Francis and even before he was born.

Following the lunch break, in which we partook of foods similar to those the disciples shared with our Lord, there was a roundtable discussion. Each participant spoke of what led them to follow St. Francis and how they could give service to the body of the Church. We were all greatly uplifted and inspired in this time of sharing. We were struck by the similarities of the state of the world in ancient times with the world of today. We saw how necessary it is to share the peace of St. Francis, in these troubled times, with each person we encounter in our daily lives. Also how important the fellowship of fraternity is as well as fellowship with

people of faith worldwide, some of whom suffer persecution and death. We Secular Franciscans, a spiritual arm of the Church, are called to pray with and for them in union with all Franciscan Orders.

The day ended with the resolve to continue sharing and to have more inter-fraternity events. This was a beginning. We will continue to plan

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more gatherings where we can strengthen the Franciscan presence within the Church and in the world at large. Norma Cintron said, “I had attended a retreat with Franciscans in the South Bronx some years ago

***“This was a beginning, we will continue to plan more gatherings...”***

and longed to have one here, this was a dream come true.”

### **A BOOK REVIEW**

#### ***Reluctant Saint:***

the life of St. Francis of Assisi”

by Donald Spoto

Penguin Books, 2002

by Jacinta Ugwu,  
Bl. Josephine Leroux

*Reluctant Saint*, written by Donald Spoto, offers an explicit summary of different stages in St. Francis of Assisi's life, each of them reflected in the fifteen chapters of the book.

St. Francis was born in Assisi in 1182. His father was Pietro Di Benardone, a rich merchant in the city of Assisi, while the mother was Lady

Pica, a woman of strong character with a "chivalrous conception" of life. Francis attended school under the direction of the church of San Giorgio. He joined his father's business at the early age of fourteen.

As a youth, Francis loved entertaining, squandering his father's money with a luxurious lifestyle. Another important element in Francis's early life was a quest for chivalry. In 1202, at about age twenty, Francis participated in a war between Perugia and Assisi and was among those captured and imprisoned. After he was released, he returned to Assisi where he continued his quest for chivalry.

Francis went through different processes in his conversion: His prison experience in Perugia; his illness, despising his former delight; his dreams at Spoleto and experience of poverty at Rome; the encounter with a leper, and the voice from the crucifix of San Damiano.

From careful reading of the book, I have been able to understand how Francis succeeded in developing the spirit of poverty, humility and compassion.

Some of the lessons I learned from reading about St. Francis in *Reluctant Saint* are:

- To be generous and kind
- To be joyful and thank God in every occasion
- Never being vulgar. or greedy
- To have a burning desire to do the will of God
- To have a deep devotion for Christ crucified
- To seek the spirit of poverty as well as humility
- Praying devoutly and asking God for his wonderful mercy
- Persisting obstinately in doing good
- Frequently withdrawing from the world
- and lastly, to listen to God inside myself.