

# 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

Joan Geiger, SFO  
Regional Minister

Dear Friends,

As I sit at my computer this mid-March afternoon, the morning rains have ceased, and a blue sunny sky has brightened the day. The temperature hit a high of 53° and a fine weather weekend is forecasted. I've even raised my storm windows and let in the fresh air. Although the "official" start of spring is still about ten days away, it can't come any too soon. The appearance of crocuses, sprouting buds on trees and the humming of birds reaffirm the arrival of spring.

I am reminded of St. Francis' *The Canticle to Brother Sun*. It summarizes his life so well. In this hymn, Francis praises the Lord for all creation especially for... Brother Sun, who brings the day and gives light; Sister Moon and the Stars in the heaven – bright and sparkling and beautiful; Brother Wind, the air and clouds – serene and tempestuous, yet sustaining all living things; Sister Water – lowly, precious and pure, for her boundless service; Brother Fire – beautiful and joyous, vigorous and strong, for light in the night hours; Mother Earth, who nourishes and sustains us with various fruits, bright flowers and herbs; and for pardon and forgiveness, in sickness and sorrow, and in suffering and death – may God be praised.

As St. Francis considered all nature as a mirror of God, I invite you to contemplate on the *Canticle to Brother Sun* this spring and Eastertime. May

it lead you to praising God in all creation.

Our Region continues to participate in the H<sub>2</sub>O Project during this Lenten Season. We are challenged to not only donate – but to participate in this project. By actively fasting from all beverages, except water, we get a truer idea of how important clean water is to our brothers and sisters around the world. We, who participate in this two-week project, experience solidarity with the poor, a solidarity that is called for within our Franciscan charism. Checks should be payable to NAFRA. Remember to note the Tau Cross Region and the name of your Fraternity on the memo line. All donations should be mailed by May 1, 2011 to: NAFRA – H<sub>2</sub>O Project, 920 Whitney Drive, Apple Valley, MN 55124. The recipient of the 2011 Lenten H<sub>2</sub>O Project donation is the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), specifically for clean drinking water in Haiti.

Next month, May 12-15, Alicia D'Amato and I will attend the "Forming the Formators" workshop at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville, Illinois. We will be asked to replicate the workshop in the Region as charged by CIOFS. We ask your prayers for guidance and direction as we plan to implement the formation directives in the fraternities.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you. May he look upon you with kindness and give you his peace.

Peace and all good,  
Joan



## Fr. Matt's Reflection

Fr Matthias Wesnofske, OFM Cap  
Regional Spiritual Assistant

## On-Going Formation

A few months ago, the General of the Capuchin Order, *Mauro Johri*, sent out a circular letter to all the brothers of the Order on the urgent need for ongoing formation. As I read the letter, I noticed many parallels, between what he was writing about concerning the First Order, and the Third Order, the Secular Franciscan Order. Two years before, the General had sent out a Circular Letter concerning Initial Formation, in which he mentioned how initial formation was not just

**"(Formation) must be a transformation of values and attitudes and these values become a compass guiding every choice and action."**

the conveying of mere words, but the developing of an attitude within the candidate, which would permeate everything they do for the rest of their lives as Franciscans. So formation can become just the imparting of information, but formation must be more. It must be a transformation of values and attitudes and these values become a compass guiding every choice and action.

The General mentioned the importance of those who are called specifically to be formators, or teachers, and he said there is no such thing as a neutral stance in so far as a person being a formator. That person, or persons, are either for-

mators or deformators. But the General quickly went on to the fact that we are all formators to one another. Sometimes in a fraternity, we consider that

***“So formation can become just the imparting of information, but formation must be more.”***

one person has the responsibility to be the formator, whether in initial formation or ongoing formation, and the responsibility falls to that one person. But we are all gifts to one another and we are all formators to one another. If we realize that formation is not just conveying information, but is also the developing of an attitude, then we realize that formation is something for which we are all responsible.

We are always in formation, no one is perfect. We are always learning and we learn from each other, not just from books, not just from a talk, but also in the sharing with each other, and the example we give each other. The topic of formation is huge, and at

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each level of the Secular Franciscan Order, whether international, national, regional or local, the councils at each level are concerned with formation, and strive to provide material for formation. I also think that if there is one area where the Order and our Region, have grown in a positive way, maybe not in numbers, it is in the area of formation. But once again, it is not the material, but the sharing and example we give to one another that is important.

Recently, at a fraternity gathering, when continued formation was conducted, it was decided to provide readings from the formation program offered on the Internet from CIOFS in Rome. I thought the material in this particular lesson was heavy, based on the writings of Pope Paul VI. But it wasn't until we began to share on the readings that the lesson became real, concrete, and we were able to see how the theory became practical in the lives of the seculars.

Continual formation of all the members is essential, because we change, grow and develop as we live our lives. We go through stages. We sometimes tire. We grow older and sometimes lose our initial enthusiasm. The General's Circular Letter was subtitled, "Get up and walk." We might have been going through a period of spiritual dryness. We might have been thrown from our horse, as was St. Paul, and been called to pursue a different course. We might have lost our bearings. My awareness of God's presence in my life might be different today from when

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I first went through initial formation. We have to get up once again, and walk.

Also, just completing initial formation, making a permanent commitment, or reciting a monthly pledge is not enough. It is not enough just to believe. In the Gospels, Luke says of Elizabeth and Zechariah that "both were worthy in the sight of God and scrupulously observed all the commandments and observances of the Lord." But when the angel announces to Zechariah that their prayer has been heard and that they will have a son, Zechariah has doubts. And the angel tells him he would be unable to speak until these things had come to pass, "since you have not believed my words." We cannot take for granted that we believe just because we have embraced the Franciscan way of life. The primary purpose of ongoing formation must be bringing us back to the right way or having us take, again and again, a decisive step forward in our lifelong commitment. There is no standing still in our spiritual life or in our life as Franciscans. We are either moving forward or we are falling back. And continual ongoing formation, whether from a book or a talk, or especially from the example, the witness, and the sharing, we receive from one another, urges us on to live our commitment.

Another area the General spoke of, which could also be applied to the Secular Franciscan, is the importance of updating, renewal, sabbaticals, re-

treats and programs which can help us in our ongoing formation. We have many opportunities for such growth in the region or offered by the local fraternity: the annual assembly or chapter meetings, annual retreats,

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days of recollection offered by individual fraternities or the Region, FLIC, Quinquennial Congresses, and yes, even picnics, where we interact with other Secular Franciscans and receive the example and witness of their lives. Making use of the availability of so many books, videos and films, DVDs, and cassettes can also help. But nothing is as valuable as the living witness we give to each other through our sharing in coming together as members of an order with a common purpose and commitment, sharing our ideals and their practical application.

Besides contributing to the growth of individuals, ongoing formation should also benefit the growth of the entire fraternity. This is brought about by developing a sense of common mission. Today, especially, many Secular Franciscans are involved in so many apostolates and ministries within the Church and their parish. Just as in many friaries, individual friars are engaged in many different ministries, but live together and come together in the late afternoon or evening, to pray together and to share their day's activities. So also Seculars come together, at least monthly, and pray together and

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share their ministries, supporting each other. No matter what we do outside the fraternity gathering, we are bearers of the Franciscan message, we have our particular way of doing things and we bring the Franciscan charism to our activities,

whether it is a spirit of humility, simplicity, peace, joy or penance. For this to happen we need to talk to one another more, and so the local fraternity gathering must be a place of dialogue and planning how to achieve our shared goals and make us ready to face new challenges together.

Finally, spiritual growth requires each of us to keep moving. We must be ready because we do not know at what hour the Lord will pass by and call us. Without a deep sense of openness and inner mobility, we will hardly notice that there is someone knocking at our door, asking to come in and share a meal with us. Considering that His ways are not always our ways and our thoughts are not His, it would be unforgivable to remain with an attitude of inner immobility. We cannot remain closed in on ourselves. Ongoing formation keeps us open to God speaking to us through one another. We see and hear one another, we are open to what God is saying and showing us through them.

Ongoing formation is life-changing. Conversion and the call does not just happen once, but it continues throughout our life, and so does formation continue and it too, is ongoing.

***“Finally, spiritual growth requires each of us to keep moving.”***

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## **Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC)**

Joan Geiger, SFO  
Regional Minister

“The option for the poor embedded in the Gospel and the Church’s teaching makes us aware that the poor suffer most directly from environmental decline and have the least access to relief from their suffering. Indigenous peoples die with their forests and grasslands. In Bhopal and Chernobyl, it was the urban poor and working people who suffered the most immediate and intense contamination. Nature will truly enjoy its second spring only when humanity has compassion for its own weakest members.”

### **(USCCB, Renewing the Earth, #3F)**

NAFRA has joined Catholic Relief Services in its *Courageous Initiative to Confront Global Poverty*. CRS’ 7 policy objectives include International Assistance, Debt Relief, International Trade, Global Climate Change, Migration, Peace, and Extractive Industries. Since January a monthly webinar conducted by Christopher West (CRS) and Kent Ferris, SFO (JPIC Chair) has invited us to take action (pray, learn, share, advocate). The March webinar presented the federal budget and its cutting of funds on the backs of the poor. This will reduce funding to programs such as food distribution, water, shelter, maternal and child health, education for girls and young women, and the care and treatment of HIV/AIDS relief. I urge you to take action and call your US Senators and Representatives at 1-866-596-7030. They play a crucial role in maintaining needed assistance funding. Express your objection to the reduction of financial assistance to those living in poverty. Please do not attempt to balance our budget on the backs of the poor. The poor are in serious jeopardy and depend on our assistance. Additional information on this initiative can be obtained at [www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty)

***“In a gentle way, you can shake the world.”***  
**GHANDI**

## **A Word on F.L.I.C.**

Bob Campbell, SFO  
Bl. Raymond Lull Fraternity

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Saint Francis:

Let us tell you about FLIC 2011. First of all, FLIC stands for Franciscans Living In Community. FLIC is not a retreat, it’s a gathering of Secular Franciscans with all that entails: some prayer, some formation, and lots of socializing. It’s “family” coming together.

We’re gearing up for another wonderful experience on August 8-11 at Mount Alvernia Retreat Center in Wappingers Falls, NY. This recently renovated center is fully air conditioned and each room has a private bath.

The theme of this year’s FLIC will be *Franciscan Penitential Spirituality: Where We Come From and Where We’re Going*. Once again our facilitator will be the truly inspiring Teresa Baker SFO.

This year’s cost is \$250 per person. We’re asking for a deposit of \$50 (or the full amount) for registration.

If you have any questions, or would like a detailed brochure, please contact Bob Campbell at [arcyc@aol.com](mailto:arcyc@aol.com) or (516) 599-4256.

***“Behold how good and how pleasant...For brethren to dwell together in unity.”***  
**PSALM 133**



**Mount Alvernia Retreat Center  
Wappingers Falls, N.Y.**

## Around the Region

Alicia D'Amato, SFO  
Regional Secretary

### Rite of Admission

On Feb 4: Nympha Alama and on Match 4, Vincent Bergius were admitted to Bl. Raymond Lull Fraternity of Hewlett. Minister Augusta Van Duzen presided.

### Elections

December 19, 2010: Carolee Lawrence, SFO, elected Minister of Canticle of the Sun Fraternity, Brooklyn.

March 13, 2011: Martin Walsh, SFO, elected Minister of New Pentecost Fraternity, Dix Hills.

### Deaths

April 8, 2010: Isabel Gregg, SFO, St. Mary Queen of Angels Fraternity  
January 6, 2011: Otto Ondroczyk, SFO, St. Agnes of Assisi  
January 30, 2011: Frances Napolitano, SFO, St. Agnes of Assisi  
February 12, 2011: Clare Oakes, SFO, St. Bonaventure  
February 23, 2011: Theresa Rapiejko, SFO, St. Adalbert  
March 25: Rita Harris, SFO, Cure of Ars

### Calendar of Upcoming Events

**Brunch on the third Tuesday** of every month, 11:45 at the Premier Diner, Commack Road, off Expressway Exit 52. Contact Frank Harnos 631-499-0074

**April 12-14: Regional Retreat** at Cor Maria, Sag Harbor. Cost \$170. Contact Bob Campbell 516-599-4256

**April 16: Regional Chapter** at St. Adalbert, Elmhurst. Fraternity Ministers are required to attend. All others are welcome. 9:30 to 3. Bring lunch. A.M. Coffee & refreshments.

**May 7: Day of Recollection** at Villa Immaculata Retreat House, Riverhead, NY. Br. Louis Miritello, OSF, retreat director. 9:30 to 2:30. Cost \$15. Contact Pete D'Amato at 516-331-7680 Bring lunch.

**June 18: Day of Recollection** at Tabor Retreat Center, 60 Anchor Ave. Oceanside; presenter Sr Meg Holden FCP; Topic: "Ways of Being a Franciscan," offering \$25, bag lunch, 9:30-3:00 PM 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.

**August 8-11: FLIC** (see article on P 3) at Mount Alvernia, Wappingers Falls, NY. Theresa Baker, principal presenter. Cost \$250. Contact Bob Campbell at 516-599-4256 for info.

**August 27: Day of Recollection** at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Island, Eastport. 10 to 3. Sponsored by St. Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity. Director: Fr. Matthias. Fee: \$10 Bring lunch.

**December 3: Day of Recollection** at St. Anthony High School, South Huntington. 9:00 Mass to 3. Br. Richard Contino, OSF retreat director. Cost \$15. Contact Pete D'Amato for info. 516-331-7680. Bring lunch.



NEED FORMS? RESOURCES?  
VISIT OUR TAU CROSS WEBSITE  
[www.taucrossregion.org/taucross.htm](http://www.taucrossregion.org/taucross.htm)

### A LITTLE HUMOR

Jim O'Neill  
Bl. Raymond Lull Fraternity

After the church, seven-year-old Brian said to the priest, "When I grow up, I'm going to give you some money." "Well thank you," the preacher replied, "But why?" Because my Daddy said you're one of the poorest preachers we've ever had."

## National Prayer for Vocations to the Secular Franciscan Order

Marian R. Crosby, SFO  
NAFRA Chapter 2010, Scottsdale, AZ

**O, Good and Gracious God,**

**God of mercy, compassion, generosity and love,**

**As we live our lives today in the model of St. Francis, choosing daily to live the Gospel life,**

**Help us to help others hear your call.**

**Help us to help others to recognize their vocation as a Secular Franciscan that You have already planted in their heart.**

**Help us, so that together we all may work to bring the Gospel to life.**

**Amen!**

### TAU CROSS REGION

The TAU CROSS REGION 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 send items of interest (elections, professions, anniversaries, events, recognition) to Regional Secretary Alicia D'Amato, PO Box 447, Miller Place, NY 11764 or email at: [damoto1@optonline.net](mailto:damoto1@optonline.net)*

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