

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 Brothers and Sisters,

May the Lord give you peace!

I hope you have enjoyed a restful and relaxing summer and that vacation afforded you time to be refreshed and renewed. I hope, too, that the recent events of nature were gentle to you and your neighborhood. Fall is now upon us with its vibrant array of colors that seem to speak of the majesty of God. May nature bless you with its grandeur and beauty throughout the season.

"During the summer, I read the For Up to Now (FUN) Manual ..."

During the summer, I read the **For Up to Now (FUN) Manual** our foundational resource for initial formation that was introduced at the National Workshop in May. Not only is it a valuable resource and reference for instructing those seeking admission and profes-

"...a valuable resource and reference..."

sion to the SFO, but also a source for on-going formation as we seek to energize and renew our life in Fraternity. Chapters on "Our Identify as Secular Franciscans," "The Rule," "Profession" and "Franciscan Spirituality" are well worth reflection. In the Chapter on "Fraternity and Francis," we are reminded that *Fraternity* is the key model for Secular Franciscan Gospel life and that the local fraternity becomes the basic unit of the whole Order and a visible sign of Church, the community of love. Fraternity should be the privileged place for developing

a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members. The local fraternity is the basic living organism of the whole SFO. It is the center for spiritual growth, apostolic outreach, and loving union among members. Fraternity should be a place where we are offered an opportunity for conversion, for spiritual growth. There are two facets of Fraternity Life. One is internal calling (spiritual growth) and the other is external calling (apostolic works). Both are important for the life of the SFO. Our Rule calls Secular Franciscans to go from Gospel (conversion) to life (apostolate). A component of life in Fraternity, and a sustaining force that nourishes fraternal life, is the regular and frequent gatherings of its members. It is in Fraternity that our vocation is nourished and nurtured and where, in the collective efforts of the Fraternity, we build up the Kingdom of God. (Passages excerpted from the Chapter) Fidelity to attending the monthly Fraternity Gathering must be a priority on your calendar if you are to mature in your life as a Secular Franciscan.

"I would like to call your attention to a few Franciscan events that were highlighted in the recent issue of Tau-USA."

I would like to call your attention to a few Franciscan events that were highlighted in the recent issue of Tau-USA. Beginning on Palm Sunday, April 16, 2011 until her feast day on August 11, 2012, we are commemorating the 8th Centenary of St. Clare. St. Clare was a remarkable woman – the first to write a rule of life that received Papal approval on her deathbed in 1253. She also insisted on the "privilege of poverty" which exempted the Poor Clares from income producing property.

Would that we could live simply and without our dependence on material goods! You can obtain information about a plenary indulgence during this jubilee year by visiting the International SFO website at www.ciofs.org. When at the website, why not take a virtual pilgrimage of the tomb of St. Francis. The crypt was recently cleaned, renovated and restored to its original pink stone. On October 27, 1986, Pope John Paul II and other religious leaders visited Assisi to pray for peace. On October 27, 2011, Pope Benedict will commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Spirit of Assisi. Let us take this occasion to renew our collective efforts to build a more fraternal and evangelical world.

"On Saturday, November 5, 2011 our annual Fall Gathering will be held at St. Joseph's Parish, Babylon... Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM will be our Keynote Speaker."

From October 25th to the 30th, I will attend the Annual NAFRA Chapter at St. Francis Retreat, San Juan Bautista, CA. The theme is "Witnessing the Gospel Life Courageously in the World." Please keep me in your prayers.

A reminder: On Saturday, November 5, 2011 our annual Fall Gathering will be held at St. Joseph's Parish, Babylon. Registration begins at 9:30AM. Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM will be our Keynote Speaker. The Peace and Family Awards will be presented. I look forward to seeing you there.

Peace and all good,
Joan

Fr. Matt's Message

Fr Matthias Wesnofske, OFM Cap
Regional Spiritual Assistant

Suggestions/Recommendations

I thought that in this issue of the regional newsletter, I would just make some suggestions or recommendations.

Recently, a friar of my Province suggested I look up **Franciscan Mission Service** on the internet at: kim@franciscanmissionservice.org I did so, and perhaps, there are Secular Franciscans who might find that it is just what they have been looking for, in order to more fully live their professed life. Franciscan Mission Service focuses solely on international mission. It is the only lay Franciscan mission program in North America. These are lay people, single men and women and married couples, teachers, nurses, social workers, computer technicians, administrators, tradesmen and others, who work together and strive to live a simple life with the poor. I know retired Secular Franciscans who have asked if there is such a program. This is it. It is sponsored by Holy Name Province. A formation program is provided, and a period of mutual discernment and the lay missionaries work in Africa, Latin America and Asia. If you feel a stirring within your heart for something more, just click on the internet address above.

Brother Richard Contino, OSF, a member of the Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn, has just announced the publication of a new book. Some of you might have read his previous book, *These Sacred Days; Walking with Jesus through the Sacred Triduum*. His new book, an ideal reading and reflection for the Advent and Christmas season, is called: ***To the Stable: Encounters on the Way to Bethlehem***. Bro. Richard is the Spiritual Assistant to the Blessed John XX111 Fraternity in St. James, Long Island, N.Y. I would also recommend that Secular Franciscans read the weekly **FAN**, Franciscan Action Network, Newsletter on the internet: elliott@franciscanaction.org.> Secular

Franciscans sometimes feel that political issues, such as the environment, are not spiritual enough and have become more political issues. *The FAN Newsletter* helps in seeing the spirituality of many political issues, and the Franciscan viewpoint for taking action.

Finally, I would like to recommend the book ***Render Unto Caesar, Serving the Nation by Living Our Catholic Beliefs in Political Life***. The book is written by Archbishop **Charles Chaput**, OFM.Cap. I received my copy by making a donation to Americans United for Life, which made me think the book would just be about Right to Life or the struggle against abortion. It isn't. The book is a history of the Church and the State from Roman times to the present. There is a chapter on Thomas More, a Secular Franciscan. The book is very objective, an unbiased account of reality. There is a strong emphasis on the importance of Catholic laity involvement in the political life of our nation. The book has provocative chapter headings, e.g. "Men without Chests," "Conscience and Cowardice," and "What Needs to Be

ALPHA-OMEGA

O God You are magnificent in Your majesty!
Your power rains upon swift-flowing streams,
trees bow in the wind of Your holy breath
day darkens to night at Your Spirit's will,
and earth is cleansed once again.

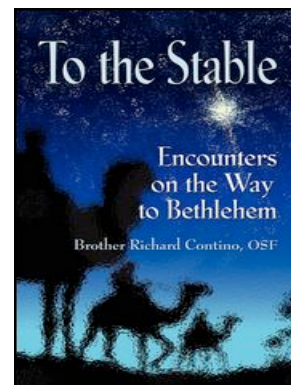
Fire falls from the sky, seemingly splitting the heavens asunder,
and angels roar in Your praise,
their loud hymns inspired by the strength of their love for you—
but while I might feel awe at these works You have wrought,
let me never forget that it all begins and ends with You.

—MARGARET BIRTH
ST. MICHAEL'S FRATERNITY

Done." The book discusses the struggle against racism in our country, the influence of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Charles Carroll, signer of the Declaration of Independence, the difference between Mario Cuomo of New York and Robert Casey, Sr. of Pennsylvania, and the importance of a Catholic education. The book is easy reading, but stimulating.

These are just some suggestions and recommendations that might help us in putting our faith, our profession, our Franciscan vocation, into action, and taking "courageous initiatives."

A NEW BOOK
FROM
BROTHER RICHARD CONTINO, OSF



AN INNOVATIVE BUT SPIRITUALLY REFLECTIVE PORTRAYAL OF THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST. THIS IMAGINATIVE AND PRAYERFUL NARRATIVE OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY USES LITERARY CREATIVITY TO STIR THE SOUL, TOUCH THE HEART AND GIVE PAUSE IN ORDER TO PRAISE GOD AND GIVE THANKS FOR THE GREATEST GIFT POSSIBLE—THAT OF HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST.

AVAILABLE AT:

BOOKLOCKER.COM
AMAZON.COM
BARNESANDNOBLE.COM
BOOKSAMILLION.COM
INGRAM.COM

A GOOD BEGINNING
TO THE LITURGICAL YEAR!
\$14.95

The Branches of the Franciscan Family Tree: The First Order

by Margaret Birth,
St. Michael's Fraternity

Long before St. Francis of Assisi was acknowledged to be a saint within the Roman Catholic Church, he banded together with a likeminded group of Christian penitents who, in time, became the Order of Friars Minor. This was the First Order that he established.

"St. Francis first gathered his group of some dozen disciples around the year 1207. . ."

St. Francis first gathered his group of some dozen disciples around the year 1207; according to tradition, the exact date on which Pope Innocent III approved of the founding of the Ordo Fratrum Minorum—the Order of Friars Minor—was April 16, 1209. As Franciscans, we share this common history.

"The Friars Minor Conventuals (OFM, Conv.) established their own independent order in the early 1500s and the Friars Minor Capuchins (OFM, Cap.) by the early 1600s"

The Friars Minor Conventuals (OFM, Conv.) established their own independent order in the early 1500s and the Friars Minor Capuchins (OFM, Cap.) by the early 1600s, at the same time that the original Friars Minor (OFM) continued to exist.

When St. Francis of Assisi approached Pope Innocent III with his request to start a new order within the Church, he would have pre-

"So, if all three branches of the First Order follow the same rule, what makes them different?"

mented his request with a rule; although no written record remains of the Rule of 1209, writings by Thomas of Celano and St. Bonaventure indicate that it was a simple rule, largely inspired by the Gospels. The first written rule of which we have record is the Rule of 1221; that rule was expanded into the Rule of 1223, which Pope Honorius III approved on November 29, 1223. It's this Rule of 1223 that all three branches of the First Order still follow today. You can read it at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/stfran-rule.html>.

So, if all three branches of the First Order follow the same rule, what makes them different? The simplest explanation might be to say that, while they follow the same rule, each branch of the First Order interprets and follows that rule differently.

"...while they follow the same rule, each branch of the First Order interprets and follows that rule differently."

The Friars Minor Capuchins came into being when some of the Friars Minor felt that the Friars Minor Conventuals, who had evolved so that they accepted revenues by papal dispensation, had veered too far from St. Francis's original vision, and felt that even the original Friars Minor had gone too far in allowing other individuals to own property and money which they would then use to the monks' benefit; the Capuchins sought a return to the strict simplicity and poverty of the earliest days of the order. There were also divisions of opinion, among the three, as to which was more beneficial to their ministry: living in rural areas where they could spend more time in meditation and in preaching, or living in friaries in urban areas where they could live and work among the poor. In other words, they did not differ in their loyalty to the Rule of 1223, but did differ in whether they believed in a stricter and more literal adherence to it, or in a more fluid and flexible following of it. They remain united, however, in their devotion to living a Gospel-inspired life modeled upon their—and our—Seraphic Father,

St. Francis of Assisi.

"Combined, then, the Order of Friars Minor, the Friars Minor Conventuals, and the Friars Minor Capuchins make up what we Franciscans refer to as the First Order."

Combined, then, the Order of Friars Minor, the Friars Minor Conventuals, and the Friars Minor Capuchins make up what we Franciscans refer to as the First Order. Like the roots and trunk of a family tree, it is from this First Order that the Second and Third Orders and other Franciscan groups branch out, and upon which we continue to look for guidance.

NEED FORMS? RESOURCES?
VISIT OUR TAU CROSS WEBSITE
www.taucrossregion.org/taucross.htm

THIRD ANNUAL ADVENT DAY OF RECOLLECTION

SPONSORED BY:
NEW PENTECOST FRATERNITY
AT
THE FRANCISCAN CHAPEL
ST. ANTHONY HIGH SCHOOL
275 WOLF HILL RD
MELVILLE, NY
631-271-2020

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2011
WE BEGIN WITH MASS AT 9:00
BROTHER RICHARD CONTINO,
O.S.F.
WILL PRESENT: "TO THE STABLE"
FEE: \$15.00 PER PERSON
PAYMENT IN ADVANCE WOULD BE
APPRECIATED

BROWN BAG LUNCH
BEVERAGES AND PASTRIES SERVED
AT BREAKFAST

FOR RESERVATIONS CONTACT:
PETE OR ALICIA D'AMATO AT (631)
331-7680

READ THE BOOK (SEE PAGE 2)
THEN
ATTEND THE DAY OF
RECOLLECTION!

The Formation Corner

Ralph Di Cicco, SFO
Regional Formation Director

Chapter 8 of Ilia Delio's *Franciscan Prayer* is entitled "**Becoming** what we love."

Delio compares the concept of imitating Christ -- as in some spiritual classics like *The Imitation of Christ* and the *WWJD (What would Jesus do?)* movement -- to the Franciscan path which, she asserts, asks rather "**how does Jesus live in me?**"

The difference may seem subtle, but it is huge. In the first case, I am on the outside looking in at Jesus, pondering how I can learn from his example. Jesus is my "moral guide." He leads, I follow. Not a bad thing, of course.

But Delio suggests that for us Franciscans, it really is more than that. Jesus is God's image made flesh. She writes: "Christ... is the perfect image of the invisible God... **As an image of God, we too are created in such a way as to imitate God...** Christ is the image in whom we are created."

The idea that we were made in the image of God is hardly a new concept! Remember your *Baltimore Catechism?* (Some of you won't... that's okay. Take my word for it.) But yet how often do we resist believing that Jesus lives in each of us... **and that I can live out of that deep place of my true identity?**

We "imitate" Christ not by mimicking, but by "**becoming** the image of the beloved through **transformation.**" **We are transformed by prayer.** Prayer engenders in us a deepening love, a compassionate love, so that **God's love is made manifest through us.**

And although Delio gives us this conceptual framework, it is not concepts that change us. It is not our spiritual ideas that transform us, but our Franciscan prayer... Prayer changes us! Prayer transforms us!

Last month, our Regional Formation Team (Joan Geiger, Alicia D'Amato,

and I) began a series of workshops in our region on the new *FUN (For Up to Now) Manual* and *CD* developed by NAFRA in coordination with the international effort initiated by CIOFS. The intent is to identify (and provide the supporting resources for) what are considered foundational topics for **every** Secular Franciscan.

We make our profession in the Secular Franciscan Order in the Roman Catholic Church. As such, it behooves us to be well-grounded in all that is inherent in this reality.

But we must not lose sight of the fact that the essence of our vocation is not about accumulating knowledge for the sake of becoming knowledgeable. Francis himself showed little interest in such activity.

We recognize that our charism -- Ongoing Conversion -- requires that we continually surrender to the power of God's transforming love so that Jesus may live in and through each of us -- without us even thinking about it.

And so we pray!
With the Holy Spirit as my guide, I reflect on my responses to some of the events and situations of my days. When have I given birth to Jesus, or allowed Jesus to live in me?

As I come into this awareness, I note what stirs inside me...and sit in the presence of Jesus with this awareness.

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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

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: damato1@optonline.net

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AROUND the REGION

Alicia D'Amato, SFO
Regional Secretary

Rite of Admission

7/3: Sylvia Murdolo, St. Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity. Minister: Robert Metz, SFO; Friar Witness: Fr. Matthias Wesnofske, OFM, Cap.

Rite of Profession

6/14: Andrew Clark, SFO, Our Lady of Atonement Fraternity. Minister: Margaret Buckley, SFO; Friar Witness: Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM.

Deaths

7/4: Anne Scully, SFO, Bl. John XXIII

July: Mary Eddy, SFO, St. Mary Queen of Angels Fraternity

8/6: Hugh Cassidy, SFO; Blessed John XXIII

Anniversaries

50 Years: Ron Chirco, SFO, St. Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity

35 Years: Margaret Goodwin, SFO, Our Lady Queen of Angels Frat.

35 Years: Joan Scarlett, SFO, Bl. Raymond Lull Fraternity

30 Years: Barbara O'Neill, SFO

30 Years: Jim O'Neill, SFO
Both of Blessed Raymond Lull Frat.

25 Years: Jack Lilly, SFO
Bl. Raymond Lull Fraternity

25 Years: Marilyn Cooke, SFO, Our Lady Queen of Angels Fraternity

20 Years: Teresa Ascione, SFO, Our Lady Queen of Angels Fraternity

Activities

July 30: Our Lady of the Angels Portiuncula celebration sponsored by the Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn held at St. Anthony's High School

August 8-11: FLIC held at Mt. Alvernia Retreat Center, Wappingers Falls

August 27: Day of Recollection at Our Lady of the Island Shrine sponsored by St. Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternity.

August 27: HELP Suffolk Picnic sponsored by New Pentecost Fraternity.

September 10: FUN Manual Workshop conducted at Immaculate Conception Church, Bronx.

September 17: Second Annual "Getting to Know You" Picnic sponsored by St. Helen Fraternity

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Brunch on the third Tuesday of every month, 11:45 AM, at the Premier Diner, Commack Rd off the LIE (495) exit 52. Interested: contact Frank Harnos, 631-499-0074

October 3: Annual Transitus Liturgy held at St. Joseph the Worker Church, 7 PM; sponsored by St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity.

November 5: Tau Cross Region Fall Gathering at St. Joseph's Parish Center, Babylon. 9:30 registration. Bring lunch.

November 19: FUN Manual Workshop to be conducted at Holy Family Church, 74-15 Utopia Pkwy, Flushing Queens, NY., 9:30-12:30. Info: contact Joan Geiger (718) 347-4470 or Alicia D'Amato, (631)331-7680

December 3: Third Annual Day of Recollection at St. Anthony's High School, 275 Wolf Hill Rd., So. Huntington, NY Directed by Br. Richard Contino, OSF 9:00-2:30. Bring Lunch. Fee \$15.00 Info: contact Pete D'Amato (631)331-7680

December 10: FUN Manual Workshop to be held at St. Anthony's High School, 275 Wolf Hill Road, So. Huntington. 9:30-12:30. Info: contact Joan Geiger (718) 347-4470 or Alicia D'Amato (631) 331-7680.

April 21, 2012: Regional Meeting at St. Adalbert's Parish Hall, Elmhurst, NY 9:30 -3:00 Save the date!

April 24-26 2012: Regional Retreat at Cormaria Retreat Center, Sag Harbor, NY
contact Bob Campbell (516) 599-4256.

SIXTY YEARS an SFO

.....and COUNTING!

Peter D'Amato, SFO
Tau Cross Region Newsletter



Al & Jeanne Rocco

By any standard, sixty years is a long time. Consider this: Our longest serving Senator was Robert Byrd at 51 years; or the longest serving baseball manager was Connie Mack at 50.

Al Rocco has been an SFO for 60 years, surpassing them both. Nor were they 60 years of corner dwelling, thumb twiddling. He has been minister for three fraternities, most recently and currently St. Agnes of Assisi in Babylon. He has served fraternities in all council posts. Al also was, at times, regional Treasurer and Vice Minister. Have you ever attended a regional function where Al was not present? Nope. And it wouldn't be the same without him.

Longevity is not the bailiwick of the malcontent. I think that you have to love who you are, where you are and believe in what you do. There must be a peace of mind that comes from a strong faith. Also, a good wife goes with the territory. Al and Jeanne are inseparable. Anyone who knows Jeanne, also knows that she matches Al stride for stride in her spirit. I have never seen either anything but positive and enthusiastic about all things Franciscan.

We celebrate Al, but, really, they are a duet; Franciscan to their very marrow. You cannot honor only one. They share its DNA. It's obvious that they love what Francis proclaimed and are immersed in his spirit. You cannot ask for more from any member. Role models for as all, we wish them nothing but continued Franciscan joy and sixty more years of Pax et Bonum!

The TAU

Pete D'Amato, SFO
O.L. Queen of Angels Frat.

We are called to reform our lives, to stand in the presence of God as righteous people. God will know us by the sign of the "Tau" marked on our foreheads

POPE INNOCENT III, 1215

Recalling the words of Ezekiel 9:4 *Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem: and mark Thau upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and mourn for all the abominations that are committed in the midst thereof*, Pope Innocent III invoked this ancient symbol of the TAU to commission the Fifth Crusade at the Fourth Lateran Council. Francis, who had appeared before him a few years earlier, took these words as a personal commission. The expression: "Take up thy cross," had a different meaning in the Middle Ages than today. At that time it

was a call to arms in defense of Christianity. Francis, however, saw it differently. For him, the cross was a symbol of redemption, love and conversion of life. He wore it on his habit as he crossed into Saracen territory in order to speak with the Sultan. It was his *spiritual mace and armor*. And his friars' habits were in the form of that same Tau.

Symbols, as we can see from this quote, are critical to human survival on many levels. Words are symbols. Numbers are also symbols which reveal a truth. They are part of our everyday lives-the cross, the flag-pointing out to us a reality or a belief. The TAU was/is just such a symbol. For the Hebrews of Ezekiel's time, it was a call to remain faithful to the God of Abraham and a sign of those who did. In a sense, then, perhaps Francis' understanding of the TAU was more in keeping with that of Ezekiel. For he and his followers, were, indeed, a unique "remnant" of Israel. Yet, for Francis of Assisi, it

was much more than a symbol. He was *il Poverello, the Mirror of Christ*, a man completely absorbed in and totally committed to living the Gospel existence of Jesus Christ. The older he became, the closer he approached the cross until, finally, in the last few years of life, he was signed with it. *I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*. So the TAU was much more than a symbol. It was his signature. It was who he was! There was no separation between himself and His Savior. There was mystical union.

The TAU for us Franciscans, then, is not merely an ancient symbol. Francis did the job of transforming it into something much more. It should be the essence of who we are: *the mark...upon (our) foreheads*.. identifying us as his followers. May we wear it now in the same Spirit which animated Francis and let it identify us also as members of his "remnant."

PAX et BONUM!



Group at the "Getting to Know You Picnic"



Sylvia Murdolo received



FLIC: Theresa Baker makes a point



At St. Anthony's Chapel before Portiuncula celebration 7/31



Familiar faces at FLIC in August



Studying the music