

Up to Now

Newsletter of the St. Margaret of Cortona Region of the Secular Franciscan Order

Covering the District of Columbia, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia,
and portions of West Virginia and Pennsylvania



Fr. Philippus Philippus, OFM/Cap

Volume 13, Issue 2

Let us begin again, for up to now we have done nothing.

November 2009

Bello Elected National Minister, Mulqueen to Serve as International Councilor

Deacon Tom Bello of St. Thomas More Fraternity in Arlington, Va., is the new national minister of the Secular Franciscan Order in the U.S.

Tom, who was professed in 1983, has served the order at all levels. He was elected vice-minister of his local fraternity in 1986 and became minister in 1988 and again in 1992. He was a member of the Provincial Executive Council, Holy Land Province from 1988 until the province became a region. He then was elected to the regional council of St. Margaret of Cortona region and has served in numerous positions, including regional minister. On the national fraternity, Tom has worked on the National Statutes and up to this election, he served as National Vice Minister.

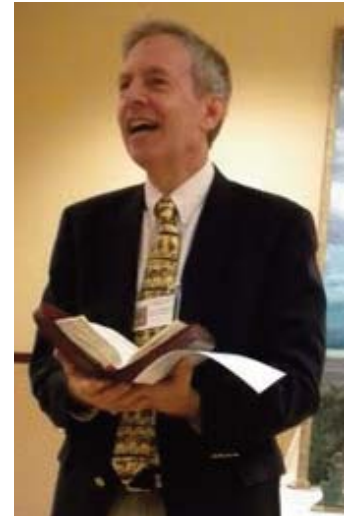
Anne Mulqueen will serve her second her second term as international councilor.

She has served as spiritual assistant to Padre Pio Fraternity in Maryland, is a member of the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity, a secretary of the Duns Scotus Formation Trust Fund, a contributor to the forthcoming Formation Manual and a board member for the Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life based at St. Francis University in Loretto, Pa.



Newly installed National Executive Council. From left, Tom Bello, Minister; Elaine Hedtke, Vice Minister; Jan Parker, Secretary; Dennis Ross, Treasurer; Mary Bittner, National Councilor; Michelle Kim, Ph.D, National Councilor; Arturo Villareal, National Councilor; Anne Mulqueen, International Councilor.

Other council members elected are Elaine Hedtke, Vice Minister; Jan Parker, Secretary; Dennis Ross, Treasurer; Mary Bittner, National Councilor; Michelle Kim, Ph.D, National Councilor; Arturo Villareal, National Councilor. For more information, go to <http://www.kateriregion.org/NAFRA2009/nafra09news0.html>.



Deacon Tom Bello, National Minister

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Minister's Message



Dear Brothers and Sisters of St. Margaret of Cortona Region,

So much to share with you! How can I describe to you the incredible experience that I had at the National Chapter in Albuquerque, N.M. for 5 days in October?

As your minister, I had the blessing of

meeting and sharing with other regional ministers from around the country. Do you know how much we have in common? I didn't, but quickly learned that we truly are brothers and sisters in seeking to live the charism of Francis.

When I left Baltimore, the only folks I knew who would be there were Tom Bello and Anne Mulqueen, but what joy I experienced meeting folks from Texas, Pittsburgh, New York, Missouri and Washington State, to mention just a few. The hospitality of the hosting region, Our Lady Empress of the Americas, could not have been more warm and welcoming.

Each day began with the Liturgy of the Hours — there is something so inspiring when we pray as one voice. The daily celebration of the mass by our Franciscan brother priests was true blessing. There were excellent formation presentations by Bob Fitzsimmons and Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR. Please go the NAFRA website, click on

http://www.nafra-sfo.org/meetings_and_resources.html to read them, as well as all the other presentations at the meeting, and gain much insight from them.

Fr. Kevin affirmed our order and also challenged us. Here are some of the challenges that spoke to me:

- τ avoid legalism
- τ address divisions
- τ what does it mean to be Franciscan
- τ build bridges of understanding and reconciliation
- τ be secular — bring gospel to where you are

How do we meet these challenges? Contemplation is the key — bringing all of this to the Lord and asking for the Spirit to guide us. This is how our actions become effective.

At the culmination of the chapter, the election of the servant leaders for the National Fraternity of Secular Franciscans for the next three years took place. By now I'm sure you know that our own Tom Bello was elected minister, Elaine Hedtke, vice-minister, Jan Parker, secretary, Dennis Ross, treasurer, Mary Bittner, Michelle Kim and Arturo Villarreal, councilors and Anny Mulqueen, international councilor. Yes — it was a wonderful five days in New Mexico!

May each and every one of you have a Blessed Thanksgiving and a Christmas of great joy!

In the peace and joy of Francis and Clare,
Mary Thuman, sfo
SMC Regional Minister

SFO on the Web

Our National Minister, Tom Bello, is featured in Episode 3 of Secular Franciscan TV. He discusses the significance of the National Peace Award.

All three episodes are available for viewing on both blip.tv and YouTube:

<http://secularfranciscans.blip.tv/>
<http://www.youtube.com/secularfranciscans>

Episode 2 features Peace Award Recipient Don Ryder discussing both his work in Jamaica and the Kenya water project.

Episode 1 features immediate past National Minister Patrick Mendés discussing the Secular Franciscan Order.

Please spread the word among your regions, fraternities, and inside and outside the Franciscan family.



Past National Minister
Patrick Mendés



Peace Award
Recipient Don Ryder



National Minister
Tom Bello

Formation Director's Message

What a beautiful weekend it was both weather-wise and spiritual-wise! I speak of the regional retreat weekend of last month. Fr. Ron Pecci really moved all of us with his inspiring and practical presentations on the value of silence and solitude in our fraternity lives as Franciscans. I personally learned to make more of an effort at finding and/or making more contemplative time in my life. The only effective way to do it is to make the time to be silent and to have solitude, which will give God the chance to communicate to us what we need to know to make our Gospel lives more impressionable to those who really need us. I look forward to next year's retreat.

The regional formation team met again on August 29 at the home of Ann Corro. Among the items discussed were:

- † The status of on-going fraternal visits and contacts. Much of this was done by the team members over this past summer. It is estimated that a good two-thirds of the fraternities of the region now have the regional formation manual. Visits and contacts will continue, especially to those we think may not yet had the opportunity to obtain the manual. Formation programs, both initial and on-going, have shown to be going well among the fraternities that have been visited thus far. As needed, fraternity issues encountered during these visits by the team will be brought to the regional council to be addressed, especially at the request of the fraternity itself.
- † Future ongoing plans to set up a lesson-by-lesson formation program for youth considering the Franciscan life will be a side project of the regional team. The plans here will take awhile, as the team will need to coordinate with the guidelines set down by the National Fraternity. Such a program, when complete and made official, will be able to be implemented by individual fraternities and be similar to the initial formation of inquirers and candidates.
- † Plans were made to visit the Companions of Francis and Clare fraternity in southwestern Virginia as a team to do a presentation at the invitation of fraternity minister Marty White. The visit is to be done on November 22. Jeanie McLees, Sue Burke, and I will be making this team visit.
- † The team welcomed as guests to the team meeting Mary Thuman, our Regional Minister, and Margee Williams, Formation Director of Little Flower Fraternity of Baltimore. This, of course, as a reminder that

any fraternity formation director, or his/her designee, is welcome to attend any of the regional formation team meetings. All you need to do is to let me know ahead of time that you are coming at 410-488-9375 or mhuether1@cavtel.net

- † The team decided to meet again informally either during the regional retreat or the regional meeting of November 14.

The team did meet on Friday evening of the retreat weekend and discussed mainly the particulars of the visit to be made to the Companions of Francis and Clare fraternity on November 22. We also discussed the possibility of a day of recollection for inquirers, candidates, and newly-professed on the regional level. This was done by the region a few years ago and pulling it off again will depend much upon the time and place availability, staffing, and commitment to participate ahead of time. More on this later.

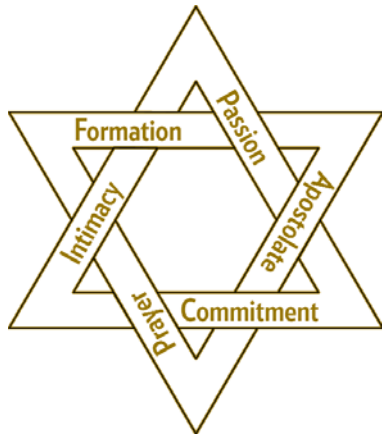
My own fraternal visits made since the last Up-To-Now issue included St. Elizabeth Ann Seton fraternity of Thurmont, Maryland on September 20 and St. Michael the Archangel fraternity of Baltimore on September 23. Other fraternity visits and dates will be announced at the regional meeting of November 14. I wish to personally thank all of the fraternities I visited thus far for all of their warm and welcoming Franciscan hospitality extended to me as a brother. All of you have shown great respect for me as one of your regional council members, but please do not forget that I come to visit you to get to know you in order to serve you more effectively as one of your servant leaders. If can address anything you may have concerns for in your fraternities, especially in formation, let my team and I know about them.

The regional formation team plans to meet again at Ann Corro's home on January 23, 2010 with a snow/inclement weather date of February 6. The time for either date will be 10AM to 1PM. Please do not hesitate to contact anyone of us on the team on any matter of formation, especially before this next meeting. Do this even before we contact you to plan a visit, if we haven't already visited you.

Peace and all good to all of you! Have a safe, happy, joyous, and blessed Thanksgiving and Christmas season! Thank you all for all that you do to spread the Franciscan way of life!

Mike Huether, SFO
Regional Formation Director

The Secular Franciscan Star of David



Years ago, Fr. Bob Stewart was the speaker at a Chapter of Mats. He talked about three aspects of Secular Franciscan spirituality: Commitment, intimacy and passion, and he drew them in a triangle. If you remember your geometry (or maybe your carpentry) you'll remember that the triangle is the most stable geometric figure. There's no way it can wobble. That's how we strive to develop our SFO spirituality.

Commitment is the first leg of the triangle. We can't accomplish anything; we won't have development or growth, if we don't have commitment. Commitment is the start of our journey. It begins us on our path and keeps us focused day after day and year after year. Commitment means we intend to focus on our journey and keep at it even when things get harder than we'd like.

Our commitment is to our profession, to our fraternity, to our fellow Franciscans, to our order, to the Church, to the Franciscan way of living, and to our relationship with the Trinity.

Commitment, fully lived out, leads to **intimacy**. If we are open to our brothers' and sisters' hearts and to the voice of God in our hearts, if we open our hearts to our brothers and sisters and God, if we are aware of the Franciscan possibilities in our daily lives, if we honor our commitment to our relationship with God, we cannot fail to develop intimacy with our brothers and sisters and with our God.

And intimacy leads to **passion** – to fire in our relationships with God and our brothers and sisters – depth and intensity in what we give and what we receive.

Commitment, intimacy and passion are nourished by and lead to the other triangle in the Star of David – formation, prayer and apostolate.

We are the Brothers and Sisters of Penance. Our commitment is to constant conversion – to turning away from the old way of life to walking with Jesus in Francis.

Formation is an essential element of conversion. Formation allows us to look at ourselves and our lives and to search for the Gospel in our way of living.

Commitment, intimacy and passion are a result of constant **prayer** – and lead to constant prayer.

Commitment, intimacy and passion means that we are not able to turn away from our brothers and sisters in the world who are in need of our service – of our prayers, justice and peace, our care for the universe – which is **apostolate**.

This is a very brief commentary on the SFO Star of David. It is the task of each member, each formation director and each fraternity to break open and live these concepts.

– MLC

Advent Retreat

St. Thomas More Fraternity in York, Pa., will be holding an advent retreat on December 5, 2009, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The retreat will be led by Father Moises Villalta, OFM Cap. The theme of the retreat is "Preparing the Way: Franciscan Advent."

The location of the retreat is
 Saint Joseph Church
 2935 Kingston Road
 York, Pa. 17402-4003

Attendees should bring a bag lunch; coffee, tea and hot chocolate will be provided.

The cost for the day \$10.00 for preregistration and \$15.00 at the door. Preregistration must be received by November 30. To preregister, please contact Andy Gubicza at

andyg1946@msn.com, and then mail a check to Andy Gubicza, 3509 Hawthorne Drive, Camp Hill, Pa. 17011.

Please send a 3x5 card with the names of those planning to attend along with your check.



St. Margaret of Cortona Served by Two New Spiritual Assistants

The St. Margaret of Cortona Region is blessed to have two new spiritual assistants appointed to serve the region.

BR. MARK PATTOCK, OFM CAP

Brother Mark grew up in a the small town of Natrona, Pa., in the Allegheny River Valley about 25 miles north of Pittsburgh, Pa. He was raised in a loving family environment with two siblings, his parents and his grandparents all together in the same house. Br. Mark's great lived just across town near his parish, St. Ladislaus Church.



Brother Mark
at Regional Retreat

After graduating high school in Natrona Heights, Br. Mark relocated with his family to Coatesville, Pa., just an hour west of Philadelphia, in 1982. He worked at various jobs such as landscape construction and a job at ARCO Chemical, and was even an apprentice to a professional tile setter.

During these working years, Br. Mark served his local parish, where he helped with evangelization, choir, cantor, CCD and other programs in the church. Br. Mark felt a calling to the Franciscan way of life and became a professed member of the SFO in St. John's Fraternity in Philadelphia, Pa., in 1997. He served as Vice Minister and Minister as he transitioned into a Capuchin Franciscan vocation with the Province of St. Augustine. He served the SFO as Spiritual Assistant for five years in Washington, D.C.

Br. Mark is now professed solemnly for two years and is

currently attending St. Mary's Seminary (St. Sulpice) in Baltimore, Md., as a second year theologian. He lives at St Ambrose parish in Baltimore and teaches RCIA in the parish.

Brother Mark is a self-taught artist and enjoys going for day hikes in the mountains.

FR. JOHN J. SHANAHAN, TOR

Fr. John is a member of the Order of St. Francis of Penance, commonly known as the Franciscan Friars of the Third Order. He entered the Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in Loretto, Pa., in 2001 after working as a clinical social worker for many years at Bellevue Hospital in New York City.

Fr. John was attracted to the order by the call to conversion. He professed his solemn vows in July 2007 and was ordained to the priesthood in May 2008. He is currently stationed at St. Louis Friary in Washington, D.C., where he ministers as a clinical social worker for Catholic Charities in a homeless shelter for men who abuse alcohol and drugs. He enjoys helping others to empower themselves to achieve their goals and desires.

Fr. John ministers as a priest at the Church of the Resurrection in Burtonsville, Md., where he preaches the Word of God and celebrates the sacraments each weekend. All this work as a priest and social worker is done through the fruits of prayer, with the hope that he may be an instrument of mercy and peace to all others in most need of help.

Editors Note: We do not currently have a photo of Fr. John, but will publish one as soon as it is available.



Environmental Tips



When stocking up on cold-weather gear, buy recycled-content items such as fleece clothing and blankets made from recycled soda bottles and snow shovels made from recycled plastic. Buying recycled-content products "closes the loop" and encourages companies to make more items with recycled materials

Cuando se abastezca de equipo para el tiempo frío, compre artículos de contenido reciclado como ropa y mantas de lanilla hechas de botellas de refrescos recicladas y palas para la nieve hechas de plástico reciclado. El comprar de productos de contenido reciclado "cierra el círculo" y alienta a las compañías a hacer más artículos con materiales reciclados.

Newsletter of the St. Thomas More Fraternity
Harrisburg, Penn.

**Remarks of Friar Ivan Matic
Assistant General SFO-YouFra
to the National Elective Chapter**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
May the Lord Give You Peace!

With great joy I greet you all cordially. I thank the Lord for the gift of being able to be here with you together with Doug Clorey, Vice-Minister General of the SFO, and to share with you this experience of the celebration of the National Chapter of the Fraternity of the SFO of the United States. As a sign of communion with all the International Fraternity of the SFO and on behalf of the all the members of the Presidency of the CIOFS and especially the Conference of the Assistants General, I send you best wishes.

We celebrate the National Chapter in the year of the celebration of the VIII Centenary of the start of our Franciscan Charism. For this reason, we want to give thanks to the Lord for the gift of Francis and the way of life that he handed down to us. We entrust ourselves to his protection and, by following his example, we want to renew our love for both God and the poorest, committing ourselves anew to pass *from the Gospel to life and from life to the Gospel*.

We want to commit ourselves to begin anew and once again take the Gospel seriously. We want to joyfully receive the invitation of the Lord as Francis did when he heard the voice from the Crucifix in St. Damian Church, saying, “Go Francis and rebuild My Church!” This invitation also resonates strongly in our hearts, for through our varied and different ways and our communion with each other, we want to incarnate the charism of the *Little Poor Man of Assisi* in both the life and mission of the Church today.

At the audience we had at Castel Gandolfo after the historical “Chapter of Mats” celebrated in Assisi April 15-18, 2009, Holy Father Benedict XVI, in his address to the members of the Franciscan Family, said among other things, “While you praise and thank the Lord who has called you to belong to such a large and beautiful ‘family,’ continue to be attentive to what the Spirit says to it today, to each of its components, so that you may continue to proclaim the Kingdom of God fervently, treading in the footsteps of the Seraphic Father. May every brother and sister always preserve a contemplative, simple and joyful heart: Always set out anew from Christ, just as Francis set out from the gaze of the Crucifix of San Damiano and from the meeting with the leper, in order to see Christ’s Face in the suffering brethren and bring his peace to all. May you be witnesses of God’s ‘beauty,’ which Francis was able to praise while contemplating the marvels

of creation, and which made him exclaim to the Most High “You are beauty!” (*Lodi di Dio altissimo*, 4,6: FF, 261).

Let this also be, therefore, the journey and mission of the SFO and YouFra of the United States as well as all the Franciscan Family who live in this very beautiful country. Let us open our hearts to these inspirations which the Holy Spirit wishes to spark off and realize in our lives and fraternities.

I would like to leave you with some pointers that, in my opinion, can help in your commitment as Secular Franciscans to renew your motives and way of evangelizing today.

The Franciscans of the SFO and Franciscan youth, as an integral part of the Franciscan family, all have a specific and important task in evangelization. Together with the other members of the Franciscan family, you are called to render our common Franciscan charism present in the mission of both the Church and society.

In the Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, John Paul II recalled that the work of the faithful laity is all the more necessary today and that this call “is a concern not only of pastors, clergy, and men and women religious, but a call addressed to everyone: lay people as well are personally called by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church and the world” (*ChL 35*).

The same Pontiff in his discourse to the members of the General Chapter of the SFO in a private audience, quoting their General Constitutions said, “Secular Franciscans, you live by vocation your belonging to the Church and to society as inseparable realities. For this reason, you are asked first of all to bear a personal witness in the place where you live: ‘before all: in [your] family life; in [your] work; in [your] joys and sufferings; in [your] associations with all men and women, brothers and sisters of the same Father; in [your] presence and participation in the life of society; in [your] fraternal relationship with all creatures’”.¹

The Pope, then, underscores firstly the need of bearing witness by one’s life and then highlights the various areas in which Secular Franciscans are called to bring the Good News. These are areas in which we are likewise called to bring the Gospel message.

¹ John Paul II, *Discourse to the participants of the General Chapter of the SFO*, Rome, November 22, 2002.

(See Matic, page 7)

(Matić, continued from page 6)

I would like, furthermore, to recall some areas of evangelization that, in my opinion, members and the Fraternity of the SFO and of YouFra have to consider as challenging areas in today's world. These are areas in which they themselves seek to respond by the personal witness of their lives:

1. Evangelizing the Family

It is about bringing the Gospel in the families to enable them in this way to take leading roles of a new evangelization through prayer and the listening of the word of God.

2. Evangelizing Fraternity

This is about evangelizing ad intra in order to help Fraternity in its life and mission according to the real needs of the local Church and the social life in which they live and work.

3. Evangelizing Society

This concerns evangelizing the society in which we live with courageous and prophetic initiatives, especially in the field of human dignity from conception to natural death, and in situations of discriminations, marginalization, and indifference toward the weakest and the poorest.

In addition, it is about bringing the Gospel logic to the public life, in politics, in the field of culture, health, education, sport, etc., through courageous activities and initiatives and build, in this way, a more fraternal and Gospel world.

4. Evangelizing the Mass Media

This is about employing all the possibilities offered by the

mass media today to carry the Gospel message to every person.

5. Evangelizing for a Gospel Conscience of Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation

It is about promoting a Gospel vision of Justice, peace, and integrity of creation; a vision that is based on the redeeming work of our Lord Jesus Christ and his revelation.

6. Evangelizing Children and Youth

This is about helping children and youth in the overall human, Christian, and Franciscan growth process by fraternally accompanying them, while using the methods and adequate pedagogical initiatives for their needs.

To conclude, I would like to thank you for your service and witness of life. I extend a special greeting and thanksgiving to all the members of Franciscan Youth, whom I have come to know on different occasions, and who are committed to live boldly their calling and mission in both the Church and Society.

Lastly, let us extend a fraternal greeting and heartfelt thanks to all the Spiritual Assistants who dedicate themselves with fraternal concern to your service and who walk with all the Fraternity of the SFO and YouFra in the United States.

May the Lord help us to be faithful to his most Holy Will!

Br. Ivan Matić, OFM
Assistant General SFO-YouFra



Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life

Those of you who attended the Leadership Workshop at St. Francis University in Loreto, Penn., may remember that the University also offers distance-learning courses through the Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life.

Courses available are:

Franciscan Gospel Living in the Contemporary World

The Franciscans: A Family History

Franciscan Spirituality

Clare of Assisi: Her Life and Writings

Franciscan Prayer

Franciscan Servant Leadership

St. Francis Of Assisi, An Introduction

The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order

Site licenses are also available so that fraternities can study the various topics as a group.

For more information on the Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life, go to

<http://www.sfcpa.edu/ICFLHome.htm>.

To receive information, either in Acrobat or print version, on the program, site licenses and course content, you can contact

Diane Rombouts, LHS

Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life

Saint Francis University

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dnrst1@mail.francis.edu



Advent Meditation from the National Minister

Dear Sisters and Brothers Called to Penance,

November should be the one month when we feel closest to the parts of the Church that we don't physically see day in and day out: the Church Triumphant and the Church Suffering. After all, we open the month with the Feast of All Saints; the following day, we celebrate the Feast of All Souls; and we of the Franciscan family celebrate on November 29 the Feast of All Saints of the Seraphic Order, those women and men, known and unknown, First, Second and Third Orders, Regular and Secular, who followed Father Frances into Heaven.

So what does it take to get to Heaven?

On Sunday, September 27, 2009, I had the honor of serving at a special yearly Mass at the National Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., to celebrate one of the most popular of the recently canonized Franciscan saints, St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina. The main celebrant was Father Jacob Smith, OFM, and he offered St. Padre Pio's advice on this question that St. Pio often gave to those under his spiritual direction: Prayer, Meditation, Confession, Reception, Reflection. St. Pio said that these five were available to all striving to be holy.

With apologies to Father Jacob, who only outlined his homily, and to St. Pio, about whom I could find no print or online reference to these five, what follows is my recollection and reflection on the five.

First, prayer. St. Pio said, "Pray, hope and don't worry. Worry is useless. God is merciful and will hear your prayer." He also said, "Prayer is the oxygen of the soul." Prayer is the breath of the Spirit; prayer is our communication with God. Like all communication, prayer involves our active listening, clearly and correctly, to God, followed by our active response, appropriately, politely and effectively. We may pray by words, silence, sighs, tears, actions. Prayer comes from God and returns to God.

Second, meditation. Most of us probably spend most of our prayer time in one of the recognized forms of verbal prayer. The greatest prayer of the Church is, of course, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We have the Liturgy of the Hours. We have the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, which all serve when we pray the Rosary. Yet meditation takes us deeper, closer to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. When we pray, we need to meditate on what we are praying, for whom and to Whom we are praying, and why we are praying. When we act, whatever actions we perform, we need to do the same: meditate on what we are doing, to whom and for whom we are doing what we are doing, and why are we doing what we are doing. Prayer

may be noisy; meditation should usually be silent.

Third, confession. All Franciscans are called to Penance, a turning away from self and sin and a turning toward the Gospel Life. Article Seven of our Secular Franciscan Rule says it so well: "United by their vocation as 'brothers and sisters of penance' and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel calls 'conversion.' Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily. On this road to renewal the sacrament of reconciliation is the privileged sign of the Father's mercy and the source of grace." St. Pio spent hours and hours celebrating the Sacrament of Penance and urged frequent Confession, certainly as soon as possible after the commission of a major sin and as often as needed, at least once a month, since human memory is so short.

Fourth, reception. Our Lord Himself said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53). Again, our Holy Rule, Article Five, guides us: "The faith of St. Francis, who often said, 'I see nothing bodily of the Most High Son of God in this world except His most holy body and blood,' should be the inspiration and pattern of their Eucharistic life." Because of the power and efficacy of proper reception of the Most Blessed Sacrament, St. Pio urged frequent, even daily, reception of Holy Communion, if and only if the recipient were properly disposed.

Fifth, reflection. St. Pio urged constant, even daily, reflection on "The Four Last Things": Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell. He urged that this reflection not be done in a fearful manner because of his advice above to pray, hope and not worry, trusting always in the love and mercy of God. Rather, the reflection on the four last things is to focus our lives. Where are we going? How are we getting there? If the basic purpose of our lives is not to know, love and serve God in this life with our whole hearts, minds, bodies and spirits, then what are we about? What is more important?

Note that St. Pio has made no comment on what exactly else we are doing with our lives. We may be Poor Clares spending our lives in cloistered contemplation, or we may be busy wives, mothers and workers out in the world. It doesn't matter. Prayer, meditation, confession, reception and reflection can apply to all.

Peace and love,
Tom

Regional Retreat

On October 9, the Secular Franciscans of the St. Margaret of Cortona Region returned to Priestfield Pastoral Center in West Virginia for our annual retreat. Once again, we were not disappointed. Our "Thanks" go to Carolyn Protin and the staff of Priestfield who made all the arrangements for the weekend. A very special "Thank You" to Fr. Pecci who led this wonderful retreat.

The rooms are very comfortable, the food is excellent, and all the staff is friendly and very accommodating. The atmosphere and surrounding scenery is peaceful and beautiful. There are many places to be alone, to gather your thoughts about the teachings, to listen to the Lord, and just to be present with Him. And, of course, there is social time to get together to talk and to share.

I invite you to join your Franciscan family in October 2010, on a Franciscan spiritual journey at Priestfield. It's a wonderful opportunity to leave all your busy life behind and be spiritually fed and renewed.

Our Spiritual Director was Fr. Ron Pecci, TOR, the theme "Franciscan Solitude and Silence" (Contemplative Time). Following are the main points of Fr. Pecci's talk.



Secular Franciscans from Kenya



Retreatants



Bette Onorato, sfo reading poem to Fr. Pecci



Treasurer Patrick Martin leads the Liturgy of the Hours



Retreatants with Fr. Pecci



Fr. Ron Pecci



Susan Burk shares experiences with full group.



Korean Fraternity members sing at Mass



Retreatants

Fr. Pecci began his talk on contemplation as the core of Franciscan life. It is not separate from our active life; in fact our active life is lifeless without contemplation. In contemplation we take a penetrating gaze that gets to the truth of who we are and who God is. Contemplation facilitates the integration of all aspects of our life: our spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical life. It is the process of trying to bring everything together around the center of our life, faith. It is openness to the gift of God's loving self-communication. We come as we are; God initiates our prayer, for we do not know how to pray...Romans 8:26

The task before us is to consider prayerfully how family life, ministry, work, spiritual life, scripture study and liturgical life all fit together to enable and direct our own conversion.

The pillars of contemplation for Franciscans, as they were for Francis, are simplicity, solitude and silence. In contemplation God comes to us (we can't go to Him as we don't know where He lives); we slow down enough to experience the God who is everywhere. Contemplative times are times when we should fast not only from food but from all the things that clutter our lives and take up so much time. It is a time for solitude. It is not a time for doing nothing, but

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for prayer. If you are distracted by thoughts, just let them come, don't dwell on them, let them drift away.

Francis commends his brothers to the Office frequently in his writings. The Church, in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, tells us "that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praises of God." We consecrate God's gift of time, by which we travel through eternity, by praying the Office.

For Franciscans contemplative time follows the ideas laid out in St. Francis' rule for hermits. It is important to remember that without silence there is no solitude and thus no prayer. The hermitage is not a place, it is a state. It can exist anywhere; in the busy city or out in a deserted place. Francis wrote "A Rule for Hermitages," the document of solitude (1217-1221).

In the early years of the Church, after the persecutions had stopped, people who went out into the desert to escape the world and pray; they were known as the "desert fa-

thers and mothers." Later monks entered monasteries, where silence and solitude was practiced. They became the first schools of wisdom and knowledge. They prayed all day, elaborate prayers of praises to God. They sang the psalms, and when they weren't praying and singing; they were practicing the songs. The Office came from the monasteries.

Francis found the Roman Breviary, used in the Vatican by the Pope and approved by the Church; it was what Francis wanted for his order. The first friars lived in caves and hermitages, they were always moving, and the Breviary was portable and compact. Francis wanted his brothers to pray the Office but not like it was prayed in the monasteries because that's all the monks did. The Franciscans prayed always, to be in communion with God. They prayed until they knew the Psalms by heart. When Francis was asked, where his cloister was, he responded, "The world is my cloister."

*Reprinted from The Little Portion, October 2009, of the St. Padre Pio Fraternity, Jarrettsville, Md.
Barbara Teller*



Region Holds Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the St. Margaret of Cortona Region was held on November 15 at Good Samaritan Hospital in Baltimore, Md. About 25 of the local Fraternities were represented at the meeting.

During the morning session, Regional Minister Mary Thuman introduced the Region's two new spiritual assistants, Br. Mark Pattock, OFM Cap, and Fr. John Shanahan, TOR (see story on page 5).

Following these introductions a talk was given by Fr. Bart Karwacki, OFM Conv., on the idea of commitment as lived by Secular Franciscans.

JPIC Representative and Vice Minister Clare Hoagland talked about the various activities available to Seculars to bring about a more just society. Treasurer Patrick Martin gave a financial report. A PowerPoint presentation called "Who Are We?" was shown, and a presentation with individualized information was given to each Fraternity present at the meeting.

Concluding the day was a very moving service in remembrance of those who had died in each Fraternity over the past year.

The meeting was adjourned promptly at 2:30 p.m.



Note: If your Fraternity has not yet received its copy of the PowerPoint presentation, please contact Mary Lou Coffman at marylousfo@verizon.net, and a copy will be sent to you.

Stuff That Should Have Been Published Earlier, But Wasn't

Editor's Note: For the past year, I've felt like Lucy and Ethel on the chocolate assembly line with my emails. I've spent the past two days going through 1,200 emails that should have been deleted or assigned to other folders, but weren't. The emails went back to February.

In the course of this Herculean task, I discovered several items that should have gone in earlier issues. I think they're worth printing now.

THE ONLY DEAF SECULAR FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY IN THE WORLD PROFFESSES SIX NEW MEMBERS

As far as we have been able to discover, NAFRA has the only deaf Secular Franciscan Fraternity in the world.

This fraternity is St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity of the Deaf located in our nation's capital.

Thus it was with great delight that National Vice Minister Tom Bello participated in the Rite of Permanent Profession to the Secular Franciscan Order for six new members of this fraternity at a Mass celebrated with the Catholic Deaf Community at St. Francis of Assisi Deaf Catholic Church at the Center for Deaf Ministries in Landover Hills, Maryland on Sunday morning, December, 14, 2008.

On the feast of St. Francis, October 4, 2003, this fraternity celebrated its 25th anniversary. With its six new members, it is hoped that this fraternity will continue to thrive.

The six new members are Sally Mooney, Janet and Peter Noyes, David Koche, Godwin Ofodu from Nigeria, and Eleanor Ward. Joining them at their profession were two of



Dorothy Steffanic, SFO, and Deacon Tom Bello, SFO

the original members of the fraternity, Patricia and Alan Porreca.

The Sunday Gospel was beautifully signed and spoken by Brother Deacon Hugh MacSherry, OFM, who has assisted in their formation.

Their formation has been a collaborative process with their Minister Dorothy Steffanic, SFO, and Jan Benton, SFO, a member of another fraternity, but also the Executive Director of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (www.ncpd.org). Jan can hear, but is very fluent in sign language, and she was able to do the formation assisted by Dorothy and Brother Hugh.

It was so moving to see the Gospel, Homily and entire Mass signed. Hands can be so expressive. For the six new members, this is the beginning of a permanent life of Gospel living following Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis. For the continuing members of the fraternity, the new members offer new life and new hope for the future.

The community is excited to begin a new formation cycle with six interested seekers.

—Tom Bello, Then-National Vice Minister

ONLINE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Frank Rega, sfo, of St. Clare Fraternity in Milford, Delaware, sent me a link for the Liturgy of the Hours. I used to use this Web site when I was working in an office, and it's great for saying the Liturgy during the day without having to leave your desk.

<http://universalis.com/today.htm>



New Members of St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity

Around the Region

RECEIVED AS CANDIDATES

Edward Burgee, SFO, St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity, Ellicott City, Md., October, 2009

Cathy Farinell, SFO, St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity, Ellicott City, Md., October, 2009

Geri Flynn, SFO, St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity, Ellicott City, Md., October, 2009

Joyce Frierott, SFO, St. Joseph Fraternity, York, Pa., February 20, 2009 (with my deep apologies)

Rich Mattson, SFO, St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity, Ellicott City, Md., October, 2009

Carl Stacy, SFO, Sacred Heart of Jesus Fraternity, Warrenton, Va., November 1, 2009

Rosemary Whelan, SFO, St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity, Ellicott City, Md., October, 2009

Jerry Yu, SFO, St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity, Ellicott City, Md., October, 2009

NEWLY PROFESSED

Mary Tschida Badjo, SFO, St. Mary of the Angels

Fraternity, Rockville, Md., November 8, 2009

Teresa Ann Baker, SFO, Holy Family Fraternity, Manassas, Va., October 3, 2009

Frances Butler, SFO, St. Clare Fraternity, Milford, Del., October 8, 2009

Annette Casanova, SFO, St. Mary of the Angels Fraternity, Rockville, Md., November 8, 2009

Adelaida Lucena de Lower, SFO, Holy Family Fraternity, Manassas, Va., October 3, 2009

Mary Moran, SFO, St. Clare Fraternity, Milford, Del., October 8, 2009

Jean Cortes Zalamea, SFO, Mt. St. Sepulcher Fraternity, Washington, D.C., November 15, 2009

LOSSES IN THE FAMILY

John E. Baker Jr., SFO, St. Thomas More Fraternity, Harrisburg, Penn., November 23, 2009

Br. Finbar Gallagher, Spiritual Assistant, Mary Our Queen Fraternity, Baltimore, Md., October 16, 2009

Edith Shirley Murphy, The Sacred Heart of Jesus Fraternity, Warrenton, Va., July 27, 2009

Congratulations to Our Newly Elected

HOLY FAMILY FRATERNITY, MANASSAS, VA.

Minister: Jeanne Davis

Vice Minister: Maura Needham

Secretary: Irene Hamblen

Treasurer: Joe Harkins

Formation Director: Peggy Gregory

PORTIUNCULA FRATERNITY, WINCHESTER, VA.

Minister: John Caroselli

Vice Minister: Nancy Caroselli

Secretary: Beth Benedetto

Treasurer: Lisa Arbogast

Formation Director: Susan Burke

Spiritual Assistant: Fr. Carl Vacek TOR

ST. FRANCIS FRATERNITY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Minister: Plater Campbell

Vice Minister: Dolores (Dee) Calisto

Secretary: Mary Liepold

Treasurer: Francisco Ramos

Formation Director: Lolita Jardeleza

Councilor: Vivian Fogg

40 Days for Life Speaker at Immaculata Fraternity

The Immaculata Fraternity in Fredericksburg, VA was honored to have David Bereit from the 40 Days for Life as a guest speaker at their September meeting. David spoke to them about the fall campaign.

He explained that the campaign planned for September 23 to November 1 was expected to involve hundreds of thousands of people in 212 cities in the largest 40 Days For Life in history.

This effort involves 40 days of Prayer and Fasting for an end to abortion, Peaceful Vigil outside abortion facilities, and grassroots Community Outreach to spread the message that life is sacred. People of faith are praying that, with God's help, this initiative will help bring an end to the tragedy of abortion.

David's talk was very hopeful and enlightening in directing us on how each of us can peacefully help in the pro-life effort.

<http://www.40daysforlife.com/about.cfm>

What Are We Reading?

Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality by Richard Rohr, OFM (St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, Ohio, 238 pp.)

Franciscan prophet and teacher Richard Rohr is a mystic rather than a systematic theologian: indeed he believes "systematizing" theology runs the risk of doing it violence and missing the point: Theology is to be experienced in a life of faith, hope and love, not organized into creeds.

Is he "evangelical"? I would say yes, though he doesn't use the term of himself: He has an unqualified commitment to Jesus as Lord and God's special revelation of God's character. Is he "progressive"? Yes: For example, he likes Marcus Borg and reads the mainline liberal biblical scholars. Is he a dogmatist/fundamentalist? Definitely not: Any exclusionary system which divides humans made in God's image into "our people" and "those [heretics] not like us" is alien to the will of God as experienced in the life and teaching of Jesus.

He writes in the Introduction: "Only when inner and outer authorities come together do we have true spiritual wisdom. We have for too long insisted on outer authority alone, without any teaching of prayer, inner journey and maturing consciousness. The results for the world and for religion have been disastrous... I offer these reflections to again unite what should never have been separated: Sacred Scripture and Christian spirituality." He quotes Eugene Ionesco with approval: "Over explanation separates us from astonishment." Example: The humble recipient of God's love in the Eucharist/communion, who gazes at Christ on the cross with awe and wonder and love, is far more likely to "get the point" than a theologian who organizes dogma into theories of the atonement.

Here are some representative quotes:

"Suffering seems to be the only thing strong enough to destabilize our arrogance and our ignorance. I would define suffering... as 'whenever you are not in control.'"

"If you are not trained in a trust of mystery and some degree of tolerance for ambiguity, frankly you will not proceed very far on the spiritual journey. Immature religion creates a high degree of "cognitively rigid" people. If you want to hate somebody... do it for religious reasons... do it thinking you're following some verse from the Bible. It works quite well. Your untouched egocentricity can and will use religion to feel superior and 'right.'"

"It is painful but necessary to be critical of your own system, whatever it is. But do know it will never make you popular. As you know, the prophets are always rejected by their own (see Luke 12:50-51)... Until you are excluded from any system, you are not able to recognize the idolatries, lies or shadow side of that system. It is the privileged 'knowledge of the victim.' Insiders are by nature dualistic, because they divide themselves from the so-called outsiders."

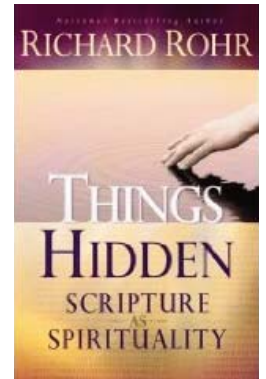
"True orthodoxy ('right ideas') is important, but in the Bible orthodoxy is never defined as something that happens only in the head... Jesus consistently declares people to be saved or healed who are in right relationship with him, and he never grills them on their belief or belonging systems... I observe that the people who find God are usually people who are very serious about their quest and their questions, more so than being absolutely certain about their answers."

"Prayer and suffering are the two primary paths of transformation. Only people who have first lived and loved, suffered and failed, and lived and loved again, are in a position to read the Scriptures in a humble, needy, inclusive and finally fruitful way."

"My lifetime of studying Jesus would lead me to summarize all of his teaching inside of two prime ideas: forgiveness and inclusion."

Toward the end of his marvelous *Things Hidden*, Richard Rohr tells a marvelous story, which is an encapsulation of what Rohr has to say about the spirit of scripture. Parents bring home a newly-born baby. Their 4-year-old daughter insists on speaking to her new sibling, "alone." The amused parents leave, but stand at the doorway for easy eavesdropping. Their daughter gets close to the infant and urgently whispers: "Quick! Tell me where we came from and why we're here. I'm beginning to forget!"

—Rowland Croucher
Our Lady of the Rosary Fraternity



Franciscan Saints, Blesseds and Feasts

(Click on the name to go to a Web link)

NOVEMBER

- 17 **St. Elizabeth of Hungary**
- 18 **Bl. Salome**, virgin, II Ord.
- 19 **St. Agnes of Assisi**, virgin, II Ord.
- 25 **Bl. Elizabeth of Reute**, virgin, III Ord.
- 26 **St. Leonard of Port Maurice**, priest, I Ord.
- 27 **St. Francis Anthony Fasani**, priest, I Ord.
Bl. Umile de Bisignano, religious, I Ord.
- 28 **St. James of the March**, priest, I Ord.
- 29 **All Saints of the Franciscan Order**
(We pray the **Franciscan Litany of the Saints**)



The Immaculate Conception
Bartolomé Esteban Murillo

DECEMBER

- 2 **Bl. Maria Angela Astorch**, virgin, II Ord.
Bl. Rafal Chylinski, priest, I Ord.
- 8 Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Patron and Queen of the Franciscan Order
- 10 **Bl. Peter Tecelano**, III Ord.
- 13 **Finding the Body of St. Francis**



Crypt, St. Francis Basilica

- 15 **Bl. Mary Frances Schervier**, virgin, III Ord.

JANUARY

- 3 Holy Name of Jesus
- 6 **Bl. Diego José of Cádiz**, priest, I Ord.
- 7 **Bl. Angela of Foligno**, religious, III Ord.
- 8 **Bl. Eurosia Fabris**, III Order
- 12 **St. Bernard of Corleone**, religious, I Ord.



The Triumph of the Name of Jesus
Giovanni Battista Gaulli

- 14 **Bl. Odoric of Pordenone**, priest, I Ord.
- 16 **Sts. Berard**, priest, and companions, protomartyrs of the Order
- 18 **St. Charles of Sezze**, religious, I Ord.
- 19 **Bl. Thomas of Cori**, priest, I Ord.
St. Eustochia Calafato, virgin, II Order
- 20 **Bl. John Baptist Triquerie**, priest, martyr, I Ord.
- 24 **St. Francis de Sales**, bishop, doctor, III Ord., founder
- 27 **St. Angela Merici**, virgin, III Ord., founder
- 29 **Bl. Roger of Todi**, religious, I Ord.
- 30 **St. Hyacinth of Mariscotti**, virgin, III Ord.
- 31 **St. John Bosco**, priest, III Ord., founder

FEBRUARY

- 1 **St. Veridiana**, virgin, III Ord.
Bl. Andrew of Segni, religious, I Ord.
- 4 **St. Joseph of Leonessa**, priest, I Ord.
- 6 **Sts. Peter Baptist, priest, and companions**, martyrs (Martin of the Ascension, Francis Blanco, priests; Philip of Jesus, cleric; Francis of St. Michael, Gon-salvo Garcia, religious; 17 tertiaries), I and III Ord.
- 7 **St. Colette of Corbie**, virgin, II Ord.
- 8 **St. Giles Mary of St. Joseph**, religious, I Ord.
- 15 **Transfer of the Body of St. Anthony of Padua**



May you have a blessed Advent and a holy and joyous Christmas season. Peace and all good to you from the entire Regional Executive Council.