

"Up To Now"



NEWSLETTER FOR ST. MARGARET OF CORTONA REGION, SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER
COVERING THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, MARYLAND, DELAWARE, VIRGINIA, AND PORTIONS OF WEST VIRGINIA AND PENNSYLVANIA

Volume 11, Issue 3

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

February 2008

From our Regional Vice-Minister!

Here we are once again in the very special season of Lent! Since we as Franciscans were founded as the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, it seems fitting that we look in our hearts and reflect on what it really means to be a brother and sister of Penance.

St. Francis' *Prologue* touches two points: the life of a person who does penance and a life of one who refuses this grace of penance—or **daily conversion**. By this daily conversion, which is our main attitude as Franciscans, we unite ourselves with the passion of Jesus and His cross. We all suffer during our time here, but St. Francis has shown us how to use our sufferings as a portal to intimacy with Jesus, who asks us to take up our cross and follow Him. So through the Cross of Jesus, we will share in His resurrection.

One *cross* all of us must take up is our daily encounter with those in our homes, workplaces, and social lives. We are asked to see the face of Jesus in each person with whom we come into contact. And so—in this short reflection, let's look at our Rule #13 from *The Way of Life*:

13. As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the firstborn of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ. A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.

This particular section of our Rule is truly a loving and gentle invitation to seek Christ in every face we meet each day. It speaks of hospitality—joyfully welcoming everyone. St. Francis is asking us to help those unfortunate ones who may live in ghettos or on our streets or in our prisons. Not only those just mentioned

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Dear Lord, it would be so easy to live a good life if everything went smoothly every day. But all too often, a new day means a new challenge - the freezer stops working, we have a disagreement with someone at work, the baby needs new shoes, the price of gasoline takes a jump and the pay check takes a dip, or we are facing a serious illness. And sometimes those challenges are a source of anger, depression, self-pity, feelings of abandonment. "Why me, Lord," we might ask, but the better question is "Lord, why not me? Why shouldn't I be challenged the same as any one else? Why is it okay for these things to happen to my neighbor, but not to me?" Help me instead, Lord, to use these daily challenges as an opportunity for growth, a time to put faith into practice, a chance to be an example of strength to others. Whatever the challenge, big or small, help me to remember that I'm not facing it alone, that you will be walking with me every step of the way, leading me, guiding me, holding me in the palm of your hand. Amen. T

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but the most difficult ones to "welcome" are usually those who are closest to us: our husbands, wives, children, co-workers.

With this section of our Rule in mind, let us ask ourselves the following questions remembering that true penance is filled always with a spirit of joy, not dour pessimism.

1. Do I always see others as *gift*; or am I quick to judge them not worthy of my time?
2. Do I use my gifts to make our community joyful?
3. How do I deal with my own prejudices?
4. During this time of Lent, what special concrete action might I take to bring Christ to others?

As we take time to pray, let us ponder these questions in our own hearts and continually renew our commitment to the Rule which we have professed to follow all the days of our lives.

**St. Francis, please help us to keep asking
Jesus for the strength to go
FROM GOSPEL TO LIFE AND FROM LIFE
TO GOSPEL,
for up until now we have done nothing. T**

Angela Gill
Regional Vice-Minister

Looking for a Retreat Center?

Did you know that **Sue Tichy, SFO**, operates **Our Lady of Peace Retreat Center** in **Fairfield, Pennsylvania**, just 15 minutes from Emmitsburg, Maryland, and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania? The retreat center is an intimate 10-acre space that can accommodate about 30 people for day retreats and 8 to 10 people for overnight retreats. Visit her website, <http://olop.ihswweb.net>, for pricing information and photos. Sue can also be reached at 717-642-9353. T

IMPORTANT DATES MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



- | | |
|------------|---|
| March 1 | Canonical establishment of St. Clare Fraternity at 12 noon in Lewes, DE |
| March 23 | Easter Sunday |
| April 5 | Regional Executive Council Meeting, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Cap College in DC |
| April 19 | MD/PA/DE Area Minister Meeting, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Charlestown Retirement Community. Meeting is for Ministers and Formation Directors . |
| May 15 | Next issue of UP TO NOW |
| Oct. 10-12 | Annual Retreat at Priestfield |

MD/PA/DE Area Ministers Meeting

The next meeting will be held Saturday, **April 19, 2008**, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Charlestown Retirement Community. This meeting is for **Fraternity Ministers and Formation Directors**. Clara Choe, SFO, Regional Formation Director, will be present at this meeting to answer any questions and concerns regarding Formation. Please note that this meeting will replace the March 15th meeting, as Teresa Baker, SFO, was not able to make a one-day meeting. Further details will be forthcoming at the meeting.

Mary Simmons, SFO
MD/PA/DE Area Councilor

Prayer for Franciscan Vocations

O God, when the world was growing cold, you called Blessed Francis to enkindle your love in the hearts of men. Increase in us the warmth of your Holy Spirit. We also pray that you will increase the number of our brothers and sisters in the Lay Order of St. Francis, so that through them and all others living a Christian life, the world may be worthy to receive your Peace and Goodness and give glory to you - through Christ Our Lord. Amen. T

*The St. Clare Fraternity
of the
Secular Franciscan Order
St. Margaret of Cortona Region
Cordially Invites You To Attend Our
Canonical Establishment Ceremony
Saturday, March 1, 2008
St. Jude the Apostle Church
Lewes, Delaware
12 Noon*

RSVP BY FEBRUARY 16 TO:

DICK MCCARTHY, SFO

BEVERLY STONER, SFO

301-684-1936

302-645-1785

BROADKILLLIFE@AOL.COM

RRSTONER@EROLS.COM

**Directions to St. Jude the Apostle Church
125 Tulip Drive, Lewes, DE 19958
302-644-7300**

South from Wilmington:

South on DE #1 all the way (approximately 65 miles). Still on Route 1 at DE Route #16, you have approximately 6 miles to St. Jude's. Blinking yellow light, turn left. St. Jude's will be on the right.

North from Bethany:

North on DE #1 all the way to St. Jude's Church which is about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from "5 Points" intersection for Lewes. St. Jude's is on the right.

East from Bay Bridge:

Take US #50 East across the Bay Bridge. US 50 goes right at the break to Wye Mills. Left on 404 at Wye Mills to 5 miles past Denton. Left on 16 (blinking yellow light). Follow 16 until you reach Rt. 1. (Keep designated speed limit thru small towns). Right turn onto US #1 (South) approximately 6 miles. Left turn at blinking light. St. Jude's is on the right.

**News from around
the region...**



◆ Our Secular Franciscan family continues to grow with professions being held in at least two fraternities in November. On November 17, **St. Francis Fraternity**, in VA professed **Mary Liepold, SFO, Karen Nolan, SFO and Steve Cardillo, SFO**. The following day, **Joseph Clemente, SFO, Salvacion Pagado, SFO, Soledad Wong, SFO, Mark Pirritano, SFO and Bill Richardson, SFO**, were professed as members of **Mount St. Sepulchre Fraternity** in DC. *℣*

◆ We continue to congratulate all the Secular Franciscans who are celebrating anniversaries of their profession, but for those who have been faithfully following our Rule for more than **30** years, some special recognition is due. Please join in congratulating each of these long-time members who celebrate their profession anniversaries:

From **St. Conrad Fraternity** in Hanover, PA, **Thelma Moore, SFO** has been professed for 35 years and **Ruth Ratti, SFO**, has been professed for 40 years.

From **St. John the Beloved Fraternity** in VA, **Genevieve Strosser, SFO** is celebrating her 36th anniversary and **Anita Olivette, SFO** is celebrating her 40th anniversary. *℣*

◆ Elections have been held in four fraternities in our region. Please join in congratulating these council members:

St. Clare Fraternity, in Maryland: **Gregory Choe**, Minister; **Kyong Ja Park**, Vice Minister, **Sun Ae Lee**, Treasurer, **Dong Chul Lee**, Secretary, **Clara Choe**, Formation Director.

St. Conrad Fraternity, in Maryland: **Emily McGeady**, Minister; **Jenny Moreira**, Vice Minister, **Ed Wilbourne**, Treasurer, **Joan Faltot**, Secretary, **Judith Tyrrell**, Formation Director and **Susan Greif**, Councilor.

St. Mary of the Angels Fraternity, in Maryland: **Connie Barrera**, Minister; **Sonia**

Bernardo, Vice Minister, **Gregory Davis**, Treasurer, **Helen Hillstrom**, Secretary, **Richard Schaefer**, Formation Director, **Alina Zygmunt** and **Kristen Doherty**, Councilors.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Fraternity, in Warrenton, VA: **Mida Sheehan**, Minister, **Fred Duca**, Vice Minister; **Toya Finzel**, Secretary, **Doris Rowzie**, Treasurer and **Bill Daley**, Formation Director. *℣*

Please join in praying for the recovery of two members of our Regional Family who are struggling to make their way back to health.



Dan Evans, a member of **St. Francis Fraternity** in DC, is recovering from complications after back surgery, and **Phyllis Fowler**, treasurer for **St. Casimir Fraternity**, who is recovering from a stroke. *℣*

“Praise be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death, from whom no living man can escape.”

Please join me in praying for the repose of the souls of two members of **Mount St. Sepulchre Fraternity** who moved on to their eternal reward in January, **Mary Frances Vacchi, SFO** and **Andrew Przybilski, SFO**. *℣*

The Franciscan Action Network website is up and running. For the latest information from FAN visit the site at www.franciscanaction.org

Those of you who know **Joe Mantegna, SFO**, from **Mary Our Queen Fraternity**, know of his fondness for prayerful meditational acronyms. Joe sent the following for our spiritual enrichment:

Month after month, may we meditate on the Lord through daily conversion!

JANUARY – Jesus Always New, Unchanging, Almighty Righteous Yahweh

FEBRUARY – Faith Emits Blessed Rewards Unto All Reverently Yearning!

MARCH – My Assured Resurrection Christ Hallalujah! T



St. Clare's Fraternity, Lewes, DE, is helping out the Ronald McDonald House. A neighboring hospital has a wing for children and their parents to stay while undergoing surgery and/or treatment. The Fraternity collects pop-tabs from cans that the House turns in for money. Also collected are travel-size toiletries, non-perishable foods, household cleaning items, etc. To locate the nearest Ronald McDonald House near you log onto the internet to www.rmhc.org and click "volunteers" then search for a chapter or house (left side of the screen) and find your state. Any help is welcomed and appreciated. T



DREAMIN' OF SPRING
by Pauline Tebo, SFO

1. Come, O Spring, let your flowers bloom
Signal the end of Winter's gloom
Show me your yellow daffodils
I will bring a bouquet to someone who's ill.
2. Beauties of nature with head lifted above
Creations made by our God's love
Grow tall and straight in every nation
Colors, scents, the Lord's decorations.
3. The statuesque lily, pure and white
Honor Resurrection worship sights
Easter morning's altar flowers
Will serve to beautify every hour.

The ultimate beauty of Spring
HE IS RISEN! ALLELUIA

A **formation booklet** is available which contains articles and sample letters of the following:

An Open House Flyer
Secular Franciscan Order Creed
Letter of Response to Inquiries about the Order
Application to the Secular Franciscan Order
Stages of the Formation Program
Candidate Request for Reference letter
Transfer Policy Procedure

The booklet can be obtained by emailing Victoria Spalding, SFO, at vspalding@verizon.net. The booklet will be sent to you through an attachment which can be printed out and modified for use by your fraternity. Pax et bonum! T



Members of Little Flower Fraternity, Baltimore, recently made a tour and pilgrimage to the Basilica of the Assumption in downtown Baltimore. Their spiritual assistant, Father Mark Carter, OFM Cap, offered Mass in the catacombs below the Basilica, and then they gathered for lunch at a nearby restaurant. *T*

What a Great Analogy of God...For Those Who Don't Know

by Robin Williams

(reprinted from the newsletter for St. Casimir Fraternity)

This is one of the best explanations of why God allows pain and suffering that I have seen. It's an explanation other people will understand.

A man went to a barbershop to have his hair cut and his beard trimmed. As the barber began to work, they began to have a good conversation. They talked about so many things and various subjects. When they eventually touched on the subject of God, the barber said: "I don't believe that God exists."

"Why do you say that?" asked the customer.

"Well, you just have to go out in the street to realize that God doesn't exist. Tell me, if God exists, would there be so many sick people? Would there be abandoned children? If God existed there would be neither suffering nor pain. I can't imagine loving a God who would allow all of these things."

The customer thought for a moment, but didn't respond because he didn't want to start an argument. The barber finished his job and the customer left the shop. Just after he left the barbershop, he saw a man in the street with long, stringy, dirty hair and an untrimmed beard. He looked dirty and unkempt.

The customer turned back and entered the barbershop again and said to the barber, "You know what? Barbers do not exist!"

"How can you say that?" asked the surprised barber. "I am here and I am a barber and I just worked on you!"

"No!" the customer exclaimed. "Barbers don't exist because if they did, there would be no people with long, dirty hair and untrimmed beards, like that man outside."

"Ah, but barbers DO exist!" replied the barber. "What happens is, people do not come to me."

"Exactly!" affirmed the customer. "That's the point! God, too, DOES exist. What happens is that people don't go to Him and do not look for Him. That's why there's so much pain and suffering in the world." *T*



Do I Live the TAU...or Simply Wear It?

By Sandy Reid, SFO
St. John the Beloved Fraternity, Alexandria VA

For several years now, a "Lady" from my parish comes to our house on Saturday nights so I can attend church. Mom has late-stage Alzheimer's Disease and has regressed to an infant-like stage. She cannot be left alone. Another volunteer couple comes every third Saturday, but for a long time now, my "Lady" has covered all the other Saturdays when she is not traveling with her husband or otherwise obligated. During the month between Thanksgiving and Christmas 2007, she traveled for an extended time to South Africa and England and was not available. Frantic about how I would get to mass for these Sundays and Christmas day, I began calling around without luck. Finally, I pleaded with the church secretary who got in touch with someone who put the word out. *I was only asking an hour's time, I thought. About the time our parish priests asks people to sit with Jesus. An hour to sit and pray with a poor ailing soul. An "easy" apostolate hour for someone, I thought.*

Fortunately, one kind lady appeared at my door and has pledged to assist us as much as possible. Thank God for these kind-hearted people (men and women) over the years, who have given me more than they know. They help me feel connected, not only to my God and my church family, but to the soul of humanity, evidenced in our world by charity. Many times in the eight years of caregiving, I have gone long stretches when no volunteers came forth. And sometimes those who did, seemed to do so grudgingly.

As we know, St. Francis lived and breathed and died for the sake of charity, and the symbol he adopted to remind him of it was the Tau. Recently, I came across this explanation on the internet (no author given): *Saint Francis began wearing this symbol of Christ's crucifixion while caring for lepers with the religious followers of St. Anthony the Hermit, who used it for protection. Saint Francis eventually adopted the Tau for his own crest and signature. For him, the "T" represented a life-long commitment to living the Passion of Christ. To drive home this point to his friars, Saint Francis stretched out his arms and proclaimed to his friars that their religious habit was the Tau cross. The posture that forms this cross shows that we are open to the needs of others, that we love them and welcome all. Sometimes this openness leads to more suffering, and this is how we live the Passion of Christ. This is how we become more effective in leading others to heaven with Christ, for all our Good Fridays eventually lead to Resurrection Sundays.*

I love this explanation of the Tau and why Francis wore it. The extra bonus in this story is the sentence at the end that tells us we take a risk every time we open ourselves to others. And the author reminds us that we grow by joining with our Lord when we suffer through difficult human interactions or the loss of those we come to care about. A message to take with us into Lent, too.

The Tau Cross

The last letter of the Hebrew alphabet is the tau, which was transcribed as a "T" in ancient Greek. Many early Christians used this shape as a crucifix when honoring the sacrificial death of Christ. Since it looked like the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the Tau cross represented the means by which Christ reversed the disobedience of the first Adam and became the world's Savior as the "New Adam." Ancient texts about Roman crosses describe them as consisting of two pieces. The upright piece ("stipes") was fixed in the ground, often permanently. The horizontal piece (the "patibulum") weighed about a hundred pounds or so. The condemned person was usually forced to carry it to the place of execution. Our pictures and statues of crucifixes today usually show the two pieces mortised into each other in the † shape. More probably, the Roman army carpenters didn't bother with such time-consuming joinery, because there were too many to build. They would have simply hammered a peg into the top of the stipes and bored a hole in the patibulum for easy assembly, forming the cross in a single motion — in the shape of the letter tau.



The Editor's Thoughts....

Well, I'm feeling very optimistic! February is the shortest month of the year and we're half way through it already. Now I'm not the kind of person who wants to wish my life away, but I always yearn for spring, so that means that I struggle through January, rejoice at the shortness of February and beam with anticipation as we enter March. Then I savor each day as it gets warmer and we head toward summer!

So I was thrilled to receive the submission of Pauline Tebo for the newsletter...for I, too, am "Dreamin' of Spring!"

I have been so pleased with the number of fraternity newsletters that have been sent to me, as well as the personal submissions for Up To Now. And you've all been so attentive to the fact that I have changed my email address. Thank you.

Please continue to send me your reflections, your poems, and other pieces that you come across in your reading, and I will be glad to share them in this newsletter as space permits. And don't forget to take some photos when your fraternity does something special. Just like your biological family, your Franciscan family enjoys sharing those special moments with you.

Finally, I ask that you keep me in your prayers as I prepare for a kidney transplant after Easter. While I know that God is holding me in His hands, I believe that prayers are what will get me through this lengthy healing process. I may not be responding to emails for a while, but know that I will be downloading your newsletters, articles and other submissions and tucking them away for the May issue. I expect to keep pretty close to schedule but one never knows, so I ask your patience in advance.

May God be with you all...

*Peace and all good,
Sharon*

Sharon Crews Hare, sfo
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Be Careful What You Pray

Advice I forgot.

"Be careful what you pray."

Besides it wasn't really a prayer.

It just slipped out.

The sound felt good.

So I repeated it – over and over.

It came creeping down my forehead,
erasing the carefully worn frown lines.

A gleaming balm filled my eyes,
then on to my mouth.

I tried facial contortions to control my mouth.

In a breath, the corners arched upward and
wouldn't go back.

When my mouth did open slightly,
unknown sounds slipped out.

Apprehensive about the rest of me,

I sat on my hands.

They flew skyward every time I moved.

Then the mouth let out a jubilant, "Praise the
Lord!"

I was breathing in the Spirit.

He was everywhere.

And there was laughter – for no reason.

Just laughter from the both of us.

*Judith Ryerse, SFO
St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity,
Triangle, VA*

Il Poverello



Join Us On Our Franciscan Pilgrimage

October 20 - October 30, 2008

Departing Dulles Airport with visits to Padua, Assisi, San Giovanni Rotondo, and Rome, as well as several side trips to other Franciscan sights

**Pilgrimage Price is
\$2,659.00 per person, double or triple
\$3,299.00 per person, single
Staying in hotels and religious housing
Price includes breakfast and dinner.**

**For additional information, please contact Teri Egan
Telephone: 410-695-2925
Email: ortygia77@verizon.net Subject Line: TOUR**