

The Doorkeeper's Notebook  
 A Publication of the  
 Fr. Solanus Casey Regional Fraternity  
 "Blessed Be God in All His Designs"  
 Summer 2004



**Life in Fraternity - Living the Rule**

By Harry Harned, SFO, Regional Minister

"It is by doing something good, and not only by believing, that man is justified. A body dies when it is separated from the spirit, and in the same way faith is dead if it is separated from good deeds." (James 2:24,26)

When we answered our call to be followers of St. Francis, we were taught the Rule of the Franciscan Order during Initial Formation. The Rule covered many areas, including topics such as 1) Liturgical Prayer, 2) Fraternity Gatherings, and 3) Bringing the message of Jesus to others.

Your fraternity is the basic unit of the whole Order and a visible sign of the Church, the community of love. At your monthly meetings, you are able to help your brothers and sisters grow in the love of the Lord. We help each other, we love each other as a family. This is a privileged place for developing a sense of Church, your Franciscan vocation, and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.

Many of our fraternities have professed members who become isolated due to illness, job re-

quirements, etc. We must continue to reach out and assist these members. Remember, they are still our brothers, and sisters.

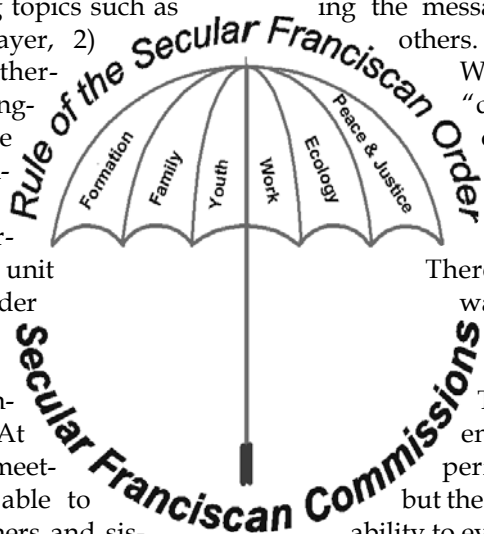
A **Commission** is a group of individuals that focus on a section of the Franciscan Rule to animate and guide members in living out their Franciscan profession. Commissions can exist at all levels. These Commissions focus on animating local Fraternities in bringing the message of Jesus to others.

We all have "different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Holy Spirit gives them.

There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served.

There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability to everyone for their particular service. The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all." (1 Cor 12:3-7)

Read about Commission activities in this *Doorkeeper's Notebook*, and in the *TAU-USA* magazine.



**REGIONAL  
 COMMISSION  
 APPOINTMENTS**

**Commission Coordinator**  
 Patricia Wilkin, SFO  
 203-888-5995  
 wilkinpl@aol.com

**Formation Commission**  
 Otto Schaefer, SFO  
 845-297-1391  
 otto.schaefer@verizon.net

**Family Commission**  
 Dorothea MacNeil, SFO  
 413-737-5183  
 ldmacneil@yahoo.com

**Peace & Justice Commission**  
 Ray Killoran, SFO  
 413-783-9516  
 rmkilloran@aol.com

**Youth Commission**  
 Elizabeth Carter, SFO  
 401-253-4982  
 ride2535@ride.ri.net  
 and

Nancy Brochu, SFO  
 860-666-8379  
 nblovesrb@cox.net

If you have an interest in serving on the **Work Commission** or **Ecology Commission**, contact Patricia Wilkin. Contact information shown above.

# Pray that the Lord send Laborers into the Harvest

by Patricia Wilkin, SFO  
Regional Commission Coordinator

I had the privilege of attending the All Commissions Conference (ACC) in Denver this June. What a gift it was to be there with so many of God's friends, sharing the Franciscan vision!

The ACC is a very specific kind of conference. It's a national Franciscan conference designed for commission-style "worker bees." We had opportunities to learn from each other in considerable depth. We shared our own ideas and efforts, and heard about each other's efforts, projects and concerns.

The commissions were developed to assist us in living out Articles 15 through 19 of our Rule. Living our Rule is more than a personal way of life. We live it together. Our hands and hearts are supposed to be reaching out in the same direction. And as you all know, when we work together, or simply do things together, as a single body, we become more truly "fraternity." Our efforts accomplish more. Our existence is more visible! And, I hope, God is more glorified.

Commission work does not consist of "this" and "not that." What I mean is that we should not be looking at the commissions as separate entities. They are more like facets of a single gem. All the Articles of our Rule reflect a single vision. They spring from the same central core and are intertwined. Our efforts to live the Rule should lead us to interact in all the areas the Articles focus on and we are all called to share a piece of the action.

Perhaps what made the deepest impression on me at the ACC was the number of "worker bees" who were there despite physical difficulties, even disabilities, and advancing age. Their personal generosity for the love of God was one of the most encouraging experiences I have had in the SFO. I salute these brothers and sisters who are humble enough to know that their service is valuable. We don't have to be wonder-workers. In fact we're not called to be wonder-workers. We're called to make our contribution in service to the Kingdom.

While we are delighted to have Re-

gional Commissioners representing the Formation, Family, Peace and Justice, and Youth and Young Adult Commissions, our regional commission positions for both Ecology and Work remain open. This is not right. Someone must not be listening. Or more likely thinking other people are more qualified and .....

We are in need of a Secular who thrives in the glory of creation, who drinks in its sacredness and can teach us ways to reverence our Creator in the world around us. Who are you? Come forward. Teach us of the beauty and balance of God! Help us learn ways of harmony with God through his creation. No wonder workers needed. Simple guides, ideas, and appreciation will lead the way.

And Work! This sacred trust that allows us to co-create with our God! Who are you? Help us to appreciate the opportunities that are ours each day, in the workplace and every place. The Church has a rich social teaching on work that the world is so hurting for right now. Help us focus on those teachings, support one another in just efforts and glorify God by our work. Bless us and bless God with your insights and knowledge.



## Regional Fraternity Council

Harry Harned, SFO  
**Minister**  
845-298-8073  
harry.harned@verizon.net

Maureen Haege, SFO  
**Vice Minister**  
845-758-5410  
maureen@webjogger.net

Otto Schaefer, SFO  
**Councilor - District I  
and Formation Director**  
845-297-1391  
otto.schaefer@verizon.net

*Presently Vacant*  
**Councilor - District II**

Annabelle Sarno, SFO  
**Councilor - District III**  
203-372-9904  
anbel@aol.com

Roger Nadeau, SFO  
**Councilor - District IV**  
860-223-8372  
rupert00@snet.net

Mary Ann Julian, SFO  
**Councilor - District V  
and Treasurer**  
860-749-2643  
nonamar01@aol.com

Sally Haddad, SFO  
**Councilor - District VI  
and Recording Secretary**  
860-828-0878  
sallydhaddad@sbcglobal.net

Elizabeth Carter  
**Councilor - District VII**  
401-253-4982  
ride2535@ride.ri.net

Kathleen Ambrose, SFO  
**Councilor - District VIII**  
508-394-0231  
cmjguardangel@aol.com

Fr. Matthias Wesnofske,  
OFM, Cap.  
**Spiritual Assistant**  
212-564-9070, x250  
mwesnof1@aol.com

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### Regional Office:

Father Solanus Casey Region  
9 Amherst Lane  
Wappingers Falls, NY 12590

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# Understanding the Role of the Apostolic Commissions

by Fr. Matthias Wesnofske, OFM, Cap., Regional Spiritual Assistant

In my summer issue of the newsletter for the Spiritual Assistants I spoke of the role of the Spiritual Assistant with regard to the Commissions of the Order. The Spiritual Assistant is not called upon, in his or her role, to tell the members what to do, but rather to give the basis for the Commissions and to show their roots as found in the Gospels, the Rule, the Constitutions and the teachings of the Church. The Commissions are not a popular topic in many of the fraternities I visit, and I think, the reason for this, is the lack of connection between the Rule and the Gospels and the teachings of the Church. Members are perhaps unaware of this connection and the fact that the Commissions make the living of the vocation a reality in daily life.

The Gospels speak of the Christian vocation as a call to be a disciple of Jesus. We believe that all the baptized have been given a vocation to follow Christ and we, as Franciscans, have been given a more specific vocation. We are called to follow Christ in the way of St. Francis. But we see in the Gospels, that Jesus sends the disciples forth to preach the coming of the Kingdom. Jesus is saying the message is not just for you, but for others as well, and you are the ones to bring it to others. It is time for us to put our faith into action. We are called to get moving. In the Divine Office recently we had a reading from the Letter of James, in which he wrote, "Act on this word. If all you do is listen to it, you are deceiving yourselves."

To live the Gospel life means that our vocation is not just devotional, concerned only with our spiritual lives, but a call to go out and preach the coming of the Kingdom and rebuilding the Church now.

It is also important that we grow in the knowledge of what the Church has taught in these areas of the Commissions. The Popes have written

extensively on social justice, the poor and the hungry, peace and war, children and women, the environment, nuclear weapons, and political involvement, especially with regard to lay people. All of us are aware of the Church's position on abortion and the right to life, but are we as familiar with the Pope's position on the war in Iraq, capital punishment, and stem cell research?

At the time of St. Francis, the Emperor, or the local Lord, said something and it was done. We have just celebrated Independence Day and we were reminded of the fact that as Americans, unlike people in so many other places in the world, we have the power to vote, we can protest, we can speak out without fear of death, we can write letters to our government leaders, we can practice our faith. Are we using these privileges to build the Kingdom of God? Given our circumstances, our situations, even our age, what really can we do? We can always pray. St. Therese of Lisieux is the patroness of the missions, never having left her cloistered convent. We, too, have the power of prayer even if we cannot leave our home or sick bed. We can offer our daily sufferings and sacrifices for the spread of the Gospel message. We can give witness. Considering our personal behavior and public actions, do they edify? Do we cause people to think of another life, an alternative way of living, an alternative to what is promoted in our media and in our secular society today? Are we faithful to our obligations and responsibilities in the family, with our children and grandchildren, at the work place?

None of this has to do with concrete, specific projects, programs or positions in our society. But it forms the basis for understanding the Commissions of the Order. Let

us study the Gospels, the teachings of Jesus, and apply it to our lives. Let us study and learn the position and the teachings of the Church with regard to contemporary life. Let us ask ourselves where the Rule is leading us to have a more effective influence upon our world today. Let us pray and do what we can today to build up the Church and the Kingdom of God.

If we study the Rule and the purpose of each of the Commissions, we can see the connection between them. All of the Commissions can find their purpose in the Rule and in the Gospels.

**May the Lord  
be with you  
and may you  
always be with  
Him**

Blessing of St.  
Clare



## Formation Corner

by Otto Schaefer, SFO, Regional Formation Director

After returning from four fantastic days at the "All Commissions Conference" in Denver, I would like to share with you some of what I learned. The true value of such a conference is not only what you learn in formal sessions but also what you learn from other attendees across the country. It's also important to pass on to others the information that we have acquired so that all may benefit, not just those that attended the conference.

This article will focus on practical resources each fraternity can use in **Ongoing Formation** and approaches to defining themes and potential talks. Developing plans for ongoing formation can be very intimidating for a Council, Formation Director or Formation Team. I hope that some of the resource material and suggestions that I have collected from so many Secular Franciscans across our region and country will be of value to you.

Resource material is the basis for any ongoing formation program and I will describe several sources for your fraternities. Several Formation Directors highlighted the following resources at the Denver conference:

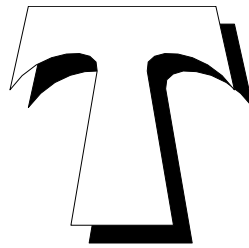
- *"The Journey into God"*, A forty-day Retreat with Bonaventure, Francis and Clare by Josef Raischl, SFO and Andre Cirino, OFM
- *"The Way of St. Francis"*, The challenge of Franciscan Spirituality for everyone by Murray Bodo, OFM
- *"Francis of Assisi"* by Chiara Frugoni
- *"To Live as Francis Lived"* by Leonard Foley, Jovian Weigel, Patti Normile

Let me begin with *"The Journey into God"*. The beauty of this book is that it's suited for enabling both the individual as well as a group to deepen their spirituality. The basic layout for individuals is a forty-day retreat spanning six weeks. In a

group such as your fraternity, the book is organized in six sessions, which are:

- Introductory Meeting – Desire for Peace
- Second Meeting – Let Flowers Speak!
- Third Meeting – Drink It All In!
- Fourth Meeting – The Inner Circle
- Fifth Meeting – Full of Grace
- Final Meeting – Praise God!

If your fraternity feels more ad-



venturesome, then the Prologue of the book contains the Itinerarium of St. Bonaventure, which is, titled "The Journey of the Human Person into God". St. Bonaventure wrote the Itinerarium (which means journey) after he had become Minister General of the OFM and the Franciscan Order was in crisis. He had taken a personal retreat at Mount LaVerna and there wrote his personal reflections. These reflections by St. Bonaventure can become themes for discussion and individual sections could be used to develop your fraternity's ongoing formation program. My recommendation is to take what has already been created and work it into your fraternity needs.

*"The Way of St. Francis"* is another example of material that can be used for your ongoing formation program. Just about any chapter in the book could be developed into an ongoing formation talk with such topics as Poverty, Making Peace, Living the Gospel, Learning to Pray and Peace & Justice to name just a few. I know that at least one fraternity in our region is using this

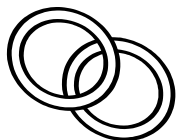
book as their resource. Make sure that you create three or four discussion questions that can be handed out after the talk. This book also contains additional sources by topic in the back.

*"Francis of Assisi"* is a good example of material that is focused on the life of St. Francis. It not only contains a wealth of information about the life of our beloved saint but a study guide has been written by Fr. Michael J. Higgins, TOR, which provides his reflections on the book. This book and study guide can be ordered by your fraternity through the Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life at Saint Francis University (814-472-3219).

Finally, *"To Live as Francis Lived"* is my last but certainly not the least example of resource material, which contains five major topics with 52 reflections. The major topics covered are the Foundation of the Order, Conversion, Prayer, Apostolates and Structure of the Order. Each of these topics has many reflections which can be used for your ongoing formation program. Just choose a major topic as your theme for the year and use the individual reflections for your ongoing formation gathering. Each reflection also contains questions for sharing among your fraternity members. This book would lend itself to a more straightforward approach and requires the least amount of effort in creating your ongoing formation program.

Each of these resources has unique value and depending on the needs of each fraternity, will determine what resource is best suited for your fraternity. I would suggest that your fraternities purchase at least one copy of each and see which best fits your fraternity needs.

*May the Lord's peace be with you.*



## A Call to Action

by Dorothea MacNeil, SFO  
Regional Family Commission

I am outraged by the current conditions in the Church today. For many years our holy sacraments have been criticized and ridiculed by society and the media. One in particular has been attacked as hypocritical, unnecessary and elitist. This assault, which began many decades ago, has increased in intensity in recent years. Now even the ministers of that sacrament are by their actions subverting its very essence. Because of this, there have been fewer candidates for this ministry. At the same time, many of the consecrated ministers of the sacrament have broken their sacred vows and deserted their vocations, sometimes even using their voices to condemn the holy Church they had promised to serve. There are those who have gone still further in desecrating their ministry, the Church, and indeed the whole of society. Their actions have created scandal, led to the abuse and neglect of innocent children, and made a mockery of this sacrament of holy service. Many others have stood by, doing nothing to prevent the erosion of this institution by society and the courts. I am speaking, of course, of the sacrament of marriage.

We have all heard much in the media about the clergy abuse scandal. We hear very little about a greater scandal in the Church: the failure of the ministers of the holy sacrament of matrimony to live in accordance with their vocations. If fifty percent of priests left their ministry there would be an uproar. Half of all marriages end in divorce, and it has become a commonplace. If a priest has an adulterous affair, there is, justifiably, a scandal. Where is the outrage when a married person breaks his or her sacred vows? Why are there so many movies and TV shows where adultery is condoned, and fornication occurs on the second date? Why do we (again, justifiably)

condemn priests who abuse children, and say nothing and do nothing about the far greater number of lay people who physically and sexually abuse children? In criticizing clergy for their lack of sanctity, have we not forgotten that marriage is also a sacrament, and that all people, laity and clergy are called to holiness? If we blame the Church hierarchy for failing to take appropriate action, have we not forgotten our own responsibilities to society?

For any who may still be in doubt, do not be mistaken: we are at war. At the All Commissions Conference, those of us in the Family Commission spent two days hearing about the many current assaults on the family, especially the recent attacks on the structure of marriage itself. As a resident of Massachusetts, where homosexuals have been allowed to "marry" by order of the Supreme Judicial Court, I know first hand how insidiously the attacks begin, and how devastating the final results can be. Here we know that the idea of marriage as a committed, loving and permanent covenant between one man and one woman has become counter cultural and extra-legal. For those who live outside Massachusetts, be prepared. The anti-marriage forces will be coming soon, if they haven't already started.

It has taken some fifty years for our society to "progress" to this era of "free" sex, without love or commitment, and to its denigration of fidelity, chastity, and family. It may take fifty or more years to set things right again. If it is not the responsibility of the Catholic laity, especially we Secular Franciscans, to take up this cause, then whose is it? And if we do not begin now, when will there be a better time?

*Preach the Gospel, and if necessary  
use words*

*by Elizabeth Carter, SFO with  
Nancy Brochu, SFO  
Youth & Young Adult Com-  
mission*

*Working with youth for most of us is a daily activity, whether it be our own children, those in our family, or those we encounter daily in our neighborhood, the grocery store, at church, or at work. I suppose we don't think about it unless we are immersed in the society of children, but none-the-less, we all somehow associate with children. So, as Secular Franciscans, how do we encounter the living person of Christ in each of them (Rule#5)?*

*Personally, I find this easy since children innately live the ideals which we are trying to manifest. It is not that we must actively teach them something, but that we must be humble enough to enter their world and let them teach us, joyfully accompanying them on their human and spiritual journey (Rule #17). They marvel in God's creation in all its levels and in all its beauty, from asking "Why is the sky blue?" as toddlers to wondering about the nature of sexuality as teenagers. Have you personally noticed how difficult these two topics are to address, even now? I don't think we should offer pat answers or scientific explanations, though these types of responses are important and have their time and place. Rather, I propose we join in the wondering and the mar-*

*(Continued on next page)*

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*veling at Our Loving Father's fantastic designs (Rule # 8).*

*While they are critically observing the world around them, they are also critically observing us. Children expect adults to be genuine. They are ever willing to trust and believe what we tell them, until we prove to be dishonest or untrustworthy. In many cases as we encounter older children, they have already been abused and disillusioned through their relationships with other wounded people. In this regard we must take extra care to be gentle with them, to help heal their previous wounds by respecting them, and cultivating a spirit of peace with and for them.*

*How do we enter a child's world as a genuine, gentle and courteous messenger (Rule#13)? How do we live this? Our motto is, "Peace and Good." With the transforming power of love and pardon we meet all of our brothers and sisters(Rule #6). With His peace and joy, through our ministry, we establish genuine Franciscan community with all God's children. Then, by our example, they too will be able to greet others in the same way, thus building a more fraternal and evangelical world (Rule #13).*

## Praying For and Mentoring Prisoners

By Raymond M. Killoran, SFO

During Herod's persecution of the Christians, Peter thus was being kept in prison, but prayer by the church was fervently being made to God on his behalf (Acts 12:5). Then the Lord sent His Angel to free him...they emerged and made their way down an alley, and suddenly the angel left him. Then Peter recovered his senses and said, "Now I know for certain that (the) Lord sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people had been expecting (Acts 12:10-11)." Considering how the DNA evidence is now freeing prisoners from death row it would behoove us as Franciscans to pray as fervently for our current prisoners as the early Christians had done for Saint

Peter. Our prayers are especially critical for those on death row and their need for repenting their wrongs by turning back to God and seeking his compassion, love and mercy.

Mentoring prerelease and released prisoners can be a rewarding spiritual journey for both mentor and those we counsel. Showing someone by our example how to become a productive citizen as well as faithfully following the path to communion with the God of our (their) understanding, can be a high never achieved by using drugs. As a

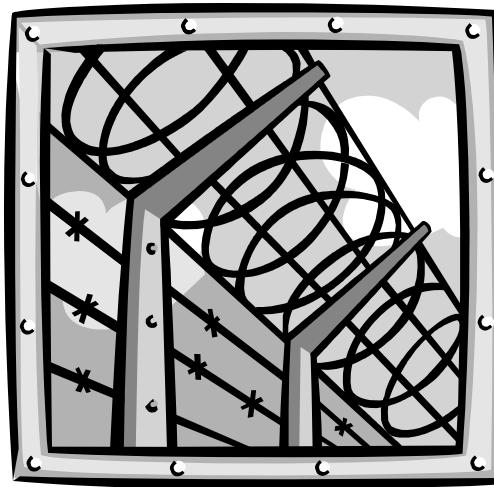
certified alcoholism and drug abuse counselor (CADAC) who has worked within the prison system I have been a witness to numerous miracles, and those miracles were achieved by seeing them through the loving eyes of Christ. After I heard their fourth and fifth steps of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and then having a priest hear their confession we would go to Mass and Communion together, which is leading by example as St. Francis did. As for those from other faith journeys

we would see their Minister, Rabbi or other spiritual director for their reconciliation with the God of their understanding. Having worked with folks of all ages, faiths and ethnic backgrounds over the years has truly given me an extended ecu-

menical and Inter-faith family to nurture, and be nurtured by, as well as seeing them blossom into the human beings that God had intended for them to become.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. Is your Franciscan heart open to reaching out to your local prisoners in need of mentoring?

Pax et bonum!



### Newsletter Editor

Maureen Haege  
67 Jefferson Road  
Red Hook, NY 12571  
maureen@webjogger.net

### Distribution Manager

Otto Schaefer  
11 Smoke Rise Lane  
Wappinger Falls, NY 12590  
otto.schaefer@verizon.net

Submit contributions  
for future issues of  
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### Attention Fraternity Ministers

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