

The Doorkeeper's Notebook

A Publication of the
Fr. Solanus Casey Regional Fraternity
"Blessed Be God in All His Designs"
Winter 2007



Visitations

by Harry Harned, SFO, Regional Minister

Our Regional 2006 Chapter was the occasion of the triennial election of officers. As many fraternity elections would soon follow, a technical election guide was generated and distributed to local Fraternity Ministers. The guide has proven to be a useful tool in the preparation for and conduction of fraternity elections.

This year we are turning our focus to pastoral and fraternal visitations. In referencing Rule 26, the SFO General Constitution states:

"The purpose of both the pastoral and fraternal visits is to revive the evangelical Franciscan spirit, to assure fidelity to the charism and to the Rule, to offer help to fraternity life, to reinforce the bond of unity of the Order, and to promote its most effective insertion into the Franciscan family and the Church."

Article 92.2(a) of the General Constitutions establishes that each fraternity is to request these visitations at least every three years.

A technical guide to assist both fraternity councils and visitors is currently being developed. All fraternity councils are asked to check the date of the last pastoral and fraternal visit made to their fraternity, and to make requests for visitations at the appropriate time. Fraternity ministers should have a Fraternal/Pastoral Visitation Request form with the Regional forms packet. If not, one can be requested by contacting the Councilor representing your area.

Members of the Executive Council look forward to visiting with you at your fraternity gatherings, observing your fraternal life, and providing assistance wherever needed.

Pax et bonum!

**Fr. Solanus Casey
Regional
Chapter
2007**

**Saturday
April 28th
St. Pius X Church
Middletown, CT**

**All professed members
are welcomed to attend**

**Fraternity Ministers will
receive detailed
information to share
with their members**

A Hunger for the Word

by Mary Lou Scebelo, SFO, Regional Vice Minister

As Secular Franciscans, we have a call to spread the Word of the Lord, the Words and Truths of the Bible in our conversations with all people and in the written word. The Scriptures are Life to a world that is denying Life in our homes, families, work places, nursing homes, and even in the wombs.

The days are coming - declares the Lord Yahweh- when I shall send a famine on the country, not hunger for food, not thirst for water, but famine for hearing Yahweh's word. People will stagger from sea to sea, will wander from the north to

the east, searching for Yahweh's word, but will not find it.

Amos 8:11-2

As many churches are starting Bible classes, I encourage you to ask to begin one in your own church and allow the Word of the Lord to fill your mind and soul with His Goodness, with His Promises. Let His Hope for Heaven on Earth create a new love in your heart for Him and for our neighbors.

May the Prayer of Jesus send us forth as He has gone before us to lead the Way, the Truth and the Life. May we go from the Gospel to Life.

SFO Quinquennial Congress

CHANGE IN LOCATION

**The Radisson Hotel
Pittsburg Gree Tree
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**

July 3 - 8, 2007

**Registration forms will be in an upcoming issue of
TAU-USA or you may contact Dennis Ross,
NAFRA Treasurer, 8933 Trailwood Court, Mentor, OH,
44060-2131; d_ross@oh.rr.com.**

**Early Registration, before May 10th, is \$110/person;
after May 10th is \$150/person**

**Meal Plan (Tues. Dinner thru Sun. Breakfast): \$150/person
Hotel Accommodations can be made by contacting The Radisson
directly at (412) 922-8400**

**Discounted room rate: \$74/per night
Rooms can accommodate up to 4 occupants.**

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Attention Fraternity Ministers:
Report change in your mailing
address or change in the number
of newsletters required for your
fraternity to the
Distribution Manager.

"Secular" Franciscans

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

Recently, I received a phone call, in which a Secular Franciscan expressed concern over the use of the word 'secular' in naming a member of the Third Order of St. Francis. Over the years I have heard this concern many times. Members do not like to be called 'Seculars'.

The word 'secular' comes from the Latin word for 'world'. Many times it is used in a negative sense. In other words, secular connotes that society is very worldly, materialistic, evil, and less spiritual. I know that diocesan priests are sometimes called secular priests, to distinguish them from religious priests, and they do not like that terminology either.

First of all, permit me to say, that I have nothing to do or say concerning the word 'secular' in the sense that I can change the terminology. That comes from Rome. The Holy Fathers, Pope Paul VI, John Paul the Great and Pope Benedict XVI, all refer to the Order as the Secular Franciscan Order. Throughout the Rule, approved by Paul VI, the words 'Secular Franciscans' are used. The Dominican Third Order sometimes refer to themselves as 'Dominican Laity'. This is incorrect terminology, and would be incorrect for the Franciscan Third Order, since our members are not all laity, as we have clergy, not only laity, as members, with deacons and priests and bishops as members of the Secular Franciscan Order. They are all seculars but not all laymen and laywomen.

Some would like to be called Third Order members. I don't think Poor Clares want to be called Second Order members, and the

friars don't want to be called First Order members. I am a Capuchin Franciscan. If I said I was a First Order Franciscan, people wouldn't know what I was talking about. If a Graymoor Friar or Sister identified himself/herself as a Third Order religious, it would say nothing about who he/she is, unless people wanted to know the origin of the different Orders in the Franciscan family in greater detail.

The problem with the word 'secular' arises from a misconception or confusion of the phrases, 'in the world' and 'of the world'. Secular Franciscans are, and live their vocation, in the world. But they are not to be worldly, of the world. This is one of the things that make the vocation so difficult to live. The words, 'Secular Franciscan', clearly identify the vocation. The Poor Clare lives in a cloister; the friar lives in a community, the Secular lives in the world.

Someone gave me a book by Henri Nouwen entitled "The Way of the Heart; Desert Spirituality and Contemporary Ministry". The book is based on the spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers. In the book Henri Nouwen writes that, "...the Christian had to become the enemy of the dark world. The flight to the desert was the way to escape a tempting conformity to the world." The vocation of the Secular Franciscan, as mentioned above, is a very difficult vocation. It is not the vocation of the Desert Fathers or Mothers. It is not the vocation of the monk. It is not a call to flee the world, but to remain in the world and not become conformed to the world. Can we do this? This is the real test of our vocation to be a Secular Franciscan.

Introducing ...

**the newly-elected
National
Executive Council
of the SFO-USA**

Minister

J. Patrick Mendés, SFO

Vice Minister

Dcn. Tom Bello, SFO

Secretary

Sarah Mulholland, SFO

Treasurer

Dennis Ross

Councillors

Pat Brandwein-Ball, SFO

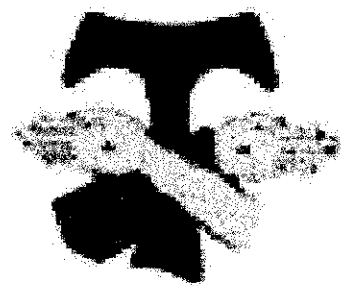
Mike Carsten, SFO

Clare McCluggage, SFO

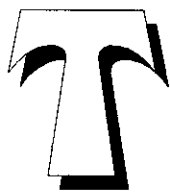
Councillor to CIOFS

Anne Mulqueen, SFO

*President-in Turn
of Council of National
Spiritual Assistants*
**Fr. Bart Karwacki,
OFM, Conv.**



The election took place during the annual gathering and triennial chapter of elections held October 24-29, 2006, at St. Anthony Retreat Center in Marathon, Wisconsin.



In the Footsteps of St. Francis

by Annabelle Sarno, SFO,
Regional Formation Director

Franciscan formation is an ongoing journey through life. The primary goals of Secular Franciscan formation are to grow closer to God and to serve others by following in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi. Brothers and sisters in the SFO daily give personal testimony to Franciscan spirituality.

John Wanat, a Secular Franciscan in the Holy Spirit Fraternity in Fairfield, Connecticut, exemplifies Franciscan spirituality. He recently chose to more actively bring his Franciscan spirit of service into the Catholic Church community.

On August 13, 2006, John was ordained a deacon in the Ukrainian Catholic Church by His Excellency Bishop Paul Chomnycky, O.S.B.M., who is the Ukrainian Catholic Eparch of Stamford, Connecticut. The Ordination took place at Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate Community in Sloatsburg, New York. John was one of two deacons ordained in the ceremony. In attendance for this blessed event were five bishops and about four thousand people.

The Holy Sacrifice of Mass was offered on December 9, 2006 at the Holy Protection of Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church in Bridgeport, Connecticut to celebrate John's ordination. The Very Rev. Canon Zbigniew Brzezicki was the celebrant. Following the Mass, John's family, friends, and Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters received a blessed Icon and were treated to a dinner in the Church Hall.

Prayer is primary in John's life. He can be found in many churches at Mass, Adoration, devotions, leading the Liturgy of the Hours, leading the rosary, and singing praises to the Lord. He often offers his help and charitable donations to the needy, even taking those less fortunate into his business and his home. John models his life after St. Francis, who was also a deacon. He studied to be a deacon because, like St. Francis, he wants to be a servant for other people. The primary purpose of a deacon is to imitate Christ as a sign and sacrament of service. The word deacon is derived from the Greek word diakonos, which means servant. John said, "I want to assist people in whatever way God calls me."

Congratulations to John Wanat from the Secular Franciscan Order, Fr. Solanus Casey Region. May God guide and bless you in your new ministry.

Profession Anniversaries

Congratulations to the following members of the St. Fidelis Fraternity, Beacon, who recently celebrated profession anniversaries

Robert Kampa - 50 Years
Marti Armstrong - 25 Years
Auncey Boss - 25 Years

Are members of your fraternity celebrating milestone anniversaries? Share the good news with the Region by submitting the information to The Doorkeeper's Notebook.

Fraternity Activities

The Doorkeeper's Notebook wants to include information about your fraternity activities.

Did your fraternity celebrate a special event, perform a service, or participate in an activity that you would like to share with the Region?

Are you planning a retreat, day of recollection or special prayer service that you would like to advertise in The Doorkeeper's Notebook?

This is your newsletter, so we want to hear from you.

Submissions should be forwarded to the Editor ... contact information is found on Page 2.

Please note that invitations for future events should be submitted at least 6 months in advance.

Thank you!

A Letter to all the Brothers and Sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order

On the occasion of the feast of the Epiphany when we celebrate the manifestation of Jesus to the world, your brothers and sisters of the CIOFS Presidency wish you a Happy New Year 2007.

Brothers and sisters, 2007 marks the beginning of our celebration of the eighth centenary of the birth of St. Elizabeth of Hungary and Thuringia. I invite you to take advantage of this opportunity to deepen your knowledge of our patroness and to reflect on the roots of our Order and, more specifically, on our own vocation as Secular Franciscans.

As you may know, Elizabeth was a Hungarian princess born in 1207, the daughter of King Andrew II of Hungary. As was the custom of the time among the medieval nobility, Elizabeth was promised in marriage to a German prince from Thuringia and was entrusted to the Thuringian court when she was four years old. There, she was raised along with the other children of the Landgraf's family, including her future husband. At the age of fourteen, she married Louis IV, the Landgraf of Thuringia and had three children. She was left a widow at the age of twenty and died in 1231. During her short life, she made herself available to those in need including the forsaken of society, the hungry and the sick.

St. Elizabeth dedicated her life to loving charity and is recognized as patroness of the Third Order, Secular and Regular, as well as of many other Institutes such as those dedicated to the caring of the sick. Despite this recognition, many fundamental

aspects of her life are not well known, even among ourselves. We are, therefore, invited to take advantage of this anniversary celebration to become more knowledgeable of this Saint and to recognize our own charism in the manner in which she lived her life. This is also an excellent time for us to reflect on our own call to the Secular Franciscan Order.

There is much to be gained in reflecting on young Elizabeth's vocational path. Clearly, her experiences in life can show us how to read God's plan in our own lives, and to embrace it even when it does not correspond to our wishes and desires. Elizabeth had a profound confidence in God's will and was able to see it in the events of her life. Her example should stimulate us to recognize God's plan in the events of our own lives, a plan that is full of love, even during times of difficulty and sufferings.

Today, Elizabeth also challenges us to reflect on our marriage and family life, on our professional work and social engagements. Throughout her married life, Elizabeth lived her marriage with Louis as a sacrament of the eternal wedding to the Great King, *the most handsome of men*. With the help of God and of Louis' companion soul, she successfully journeyed with her husband in marriage and was able to reach Christian perfection by adhering obediently to her vocational call, which shaped her into an exemplary spouse.

Although she was the wife of the landgraf, she practiced

the most authentic humility in service to the poor, the marginalized, the most repugnant and even in hiding her royal identity with never a thought of leaving any trace of herself.

The depth of her spiritual life allowed her to offer God the proper space in which He could work in her life, and to share this experience with Louis by fully accomplishing her mission as wife, mother and landgräfin. This explains the tender gestures between husband and wife, gestures to which her servants referred during the process of her canonization, as well as her capacity to enter into deep dialogue with her husband in a complete sharing into each other's feelings and lived experience. These intimate experiences of living within a family can provide a sense of reality to some of the legendary episodes from her life, such as the miracle of the roses and that of the leper in her bridal bed.

She listened to God's word and was obedient to His will, even when she became a very young widow. She, as a faithful spouse, had always believed in the plans to which God had called her in joy and health, and who continued to call her in sorrow and sickness. Even when she received the body of her dead husband, she united herself to St. Francis in praising "sister death" and thanked the Lord. With tears, she proclaimed: "You know how much I loved him; you also know that both of us had offered his sacrifice in the Crusades in the Holy Land and I am not sorry for this. If I could have him back, I would give

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

the whole world for him, and go begging with him forever. But you are witness that I would not want to rescue his life if it were against your will, even if it cost but a single hair of mine."

During this centenary, we are all invited to give particular attention to the following:

St. Elizabeth, as one of the first "spiritual daughters" of St. Francis, who produced "worthy fruits of penance".

Like her, we must heed the admonition of St. Francis to become men and women of mercy, living the charism of poverty, humility, contemplation and, above all, of ongoing conversion. Elizabeth was able to incorporate all of these virtues into her life, virtues that continue to distinguish the brothers and sisters of penance to this day.

St. Elizabeth, as a concrete and exemplary model of the apostolic mission to which we are all called.

Her complete giving of self to her marriage and family life, to the temporal tasks associated with governing her country, and to the poor, the sick (especially, lepers) and the marginalized of her time, is an example for all of us and a reminder to feel constantly challenged by the spirit of St. Francis who calls us to be in the world without belonging to it.

The life of St. Elizabeth was extraordinary, especially for a woman living in a culture where

the role of women was restricted to being at home and caring for children. Most women of that time were expected to live a passive and silent life, economically and emotionally dependent, having no one to care about their true thinking or performing capabilities.

The life of our holy patroness and her Franciscan spirit provides an inspiring example for us to imitate. Elizabeth challenges us, by living our secular and Franciscan identity, to offer our lives, in response to the signs of our time, with a continuous spirit of conversion and moved to give an active response to the requirements of our Rule (4) to "go from Gospel to life and from life to Gospel". We are further challenged to create bonds of friendship and mutual understanding in a world filled with indifference and where the weak are often mistreated, so that the values of our own vocation may shine with a new light in our daily lives.

We, your brothers and sisters of the CIOFS Presidency, invite you to share with us in celebrating the life of St. Elizabeth by deepening our understanding and appreciation for her and by engaging in a reflection on her life and spirituality. You are encouraged to use the formation program proposed by the Centenary Commission, and available on the CIOFS website, to further this reflection.

With fraternal love,
Encarnación del Pozo
SFO General Minister

FORMATION PROGRAM

Life of St. Elizabeth - Year One

1. Original Family of St. Elizabeth
2. Years of Youth in the Court of Thuringia
3. Marriage
4. Motherhood
5. Meeting the Friars Minor
6. Conscience, the Sense of Justice
7. Meeting the Poor
8. Widowhood
9. Chasing from the Court
10. Penance and Prayer Life
11. Charity and the Hospital at Marburg
12. Sickness and Death

Spiritual Aspect -Year Two

1. Family: Tradition, History, Source
2. Youth and Formation: Giving up things for God, this Home and the Heavenly one
3. Marriage: The Spirituality of Marriage as a Secular State of Life
4. Parenting: Children are Gifts of God, whom we have for a certain period of time
5. Vital Reciprocal Union: Meeting Franciscan Family, the Church, Spiritual Direction
6. Conscience: Peace and Justice Issues
7. Encounter with the Poor: Seeing Christ in the Poor
8. Dealing with Loss: Loneliness, Losing the Beloved
9. Dealing with Change: Profound Changes in Life
10. Penance and Prayer Life: How can Seculars be Contemplative
11. Works of Mercy: How do we Practice Service
12. Death and Dying: How we Deal with Sickness

Fraternities are encouraged to incorporate these teachings in monthly formation presentations

A detailed listing of the Formation Program for the Biennial Celebration of the 8th Centenary of the Birth of St. Elizabeth is found to the right.

Formation plans, as they become available, can be found at www.ciofs.org or contact Annabelle Sarno, SFO, Regional Formation Director at 203-372-9904 or anel@aol.com