

Communio

That All May Be One

Newsletter of the
Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region
Secular Franciscan Order
Spring 2006



Nominees sought for NAFRA Executive Council

The NAFRA (National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order) triennial election is scheduled for Oct. 28 at Marathon, Wis.

All professed Secular Franciscans are eligible to nominate professed SFOs for the NAFRA Executive Council.

Timeline:

April—Notice of elections published; call for nominations

June—Nominations close

July—Nominations Committee contacts nominees; they accept or decline nominations

Aug. 15—Deadline for nomination forms returned from nominees

Aug. 22—Start nine-week novena of prayer for Spirit-led election

Aug. 29— Nominees' résumés sent to voting members of the elective chapter

Procedure:

For the office of minister, vice minister, secretary, treasurer, councilor, and/or CIOFS councilor, e-mail the name, address, and e-mail address to BOTH Kathleen White and Kathryn Poelman. (Nominations are sent to both committee members to avoid a nomination being lost. Committee members will continually cross reference nominations.)

Kathleen White, SFO (kdwsfo@comcast.net), 612 Front St., Logansport, Ind. 46947

Kathryn Poelman, SFO (kdwsfo@verizon.net), 1702 Peosta Ave., Helena, Mont. 59601

Nominations are confidential. **T**

Minister's Message

The solemn season of Lent is over.

Let us be silent in prayer to listen for our Savior's voice. Let us then rejoice and be glad for he is risen!

The first four months this year have passed quickly. Some of the time was spent reviewing reports from our fraternities, preparing reports for NAFRA, and trying to keep up with the e-mails. But the best part was visiting local fraternities, meeting the members, praying together, and getting to know our Franciscan family that is spread over the five states in our region. Traveling with Fr. Linus is an added benefit and privilege (but don't tell him I said so).

The executive council and commissions met in Greenville, S.C., in February. Members of Our Lady of Good Counsel Fraternity treated us to a delicious potluck supper at the Monastery of Saint Clare; then we prayed evening prayer together in the chapel.

We have wonderful news to share: The council voted unanimously to grant St. Clare of Assisi Newly Forming Group in Aiken the status of Emerging Community. The community has seven professed members, one candidate, and two inquirers. Please pray for our growing family.

In March, Fr. Linus and I were on the road. We had a wonderful visit to Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Fraternity in Burlington. Fr. Linus had a chance to visit at the friary, and I was introduced to "Tennessee fainting goats" and Bella, the beagle. Thanks to Michael Teixeira, minister, and his wife, Irena, for their hospitality.

After my pleasant and restful visit with Paula and Alan Zanker, Fr. Linus and I drove to Elizabeth City.

We had a delightful dinner and visit. We also witnessed their election. Please welcome the new minister, Doreen Warren (past editor of Communio). Fr. Linus had a reunion with Fr. Doug Reed, a classmate from seminary, and I enjoyed spending the night with Eileen Chaney, former vice minister and new secretary.

The next day we drove to Fayetteville for a short visit with some of the members of St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity. They also have a newly elected minister, Ray Miller. It was good to meet and visit with them.

Back on the road to Greensboro and peaceful quiet time at St. Francis Springs Prayer Center. Fr. Louis Canino, OFM, is not only a gracious host, he's a marvelous chef. (If you have not yet been to the prayer center, try to make a visit in the future.)

Fr. Linus and I enjoyed spending time with the council of the Franciscan Family of Greensboro. The week ended with Fr. Linus leading a prayerful retreat with Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity from Hilton Head.

Please plan to attend the Annual Regional Gathering in Charlotte, Aug. 11-13. I look forward to being with you. May you have a joyful Easter season.

Peace and all good,
Judy





SFO initial formation

By Paula Zanker

BSSF Region formation director

Every now and then it's always good to revisit certain topics to refresh our memories and emphasize a few points that might become fuzzy over time.

Below, is a brief review of the initial formation process to become a member of the Secular Franciscan Order (from the National Formation Commission).

The process of becoming a professed Secular Franciscan is a journey that involves three separate stages and culminates in a lifelong commitment to live the gospel following the example of St. Francis of Assisi. This formation process unfolds in regularly scheduled formation sessions during which the home-study material is thoroughly discussed.

Orientation, the first stage, provides time for dialogue and developing relationships in fraternity. Individuals will be introduced to the lives of St. Francis and St. Clare and share in Franciscan prayer life. They will receive general information about the Secular Franciscan Order. Orientation is a time to discern if the Spirit is calling them to the Secular Franciscan vocation. Orientation lasts a *minimum* of three months.

Inquiry, the second stage, is the first formal period of initiation. It is a time of in-depth study of the lives of St. Francis and St. Clare. During Inquiry, individuals learn about the Franciscan charism and Franciscan history. They deepen their understanding of what it means to be secular and Franciscan, and they continue to discern if the Spirit is calling them to the Secular Franciscan way of life. Inquiry lasts a *minimum* of six months. If a vocation is discerned, the inquirer is received into the order as a candidate for perpetual profession.

Candidacy, the third stage, is the final formal period of initiation. Candidates prepare for permanent commitment by immersing themselves in fraternity life.

Central to this stage of formation is Article 4 of the "Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order," which states, in part: "The rule and life of the Secular Franciscan is this: to observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people."

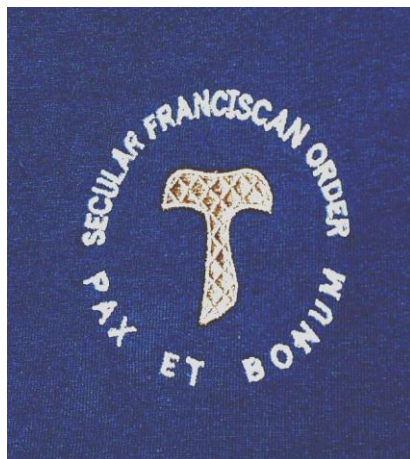
The candidacy period is a *minimum* of 18 months and culminates in permanent commitment to the gospel life. After profession of the Rule and permanent commitment to the gospel way of life, the newly professed member joins the rest of the fraternity in ongoing formation.

Bear with me while I make a few additional comments.

If you're in initial formation in the Secular Franciscan Order, this is a time for questions, learning, introspection, discernment, and—sometimes—frustration. It is **not** a race to a finish line or a quest to see how fast you can learn all the printed material available.

The three phases — Orientation, Inquiry, and Candidacy — can be lengthened, but they should not be shortened. Many people in today's fast-paced world have difficulty understanding this and become very frustrated with the process, and that's OK — frustration can be a sign of growth.

Those of us who are perpetually professed Secular Franciscans must all remember that it is **our** job to help inquiring individuals understand that, if anything, it is just the start of a lifelong journey of spiritual growth. **T**



Shirt story suits BSSF Region to a T

Yes, we still have
BSSF Region T-shirts!

They are 100 percent
cotton, navy blue, short-
sleeved. Embroidered on
the front: tau cross with
“Secular Franciscan
Order” and “Pax et
Bonum” in a circle. On
the back, the embroidered
design shows St. Francis

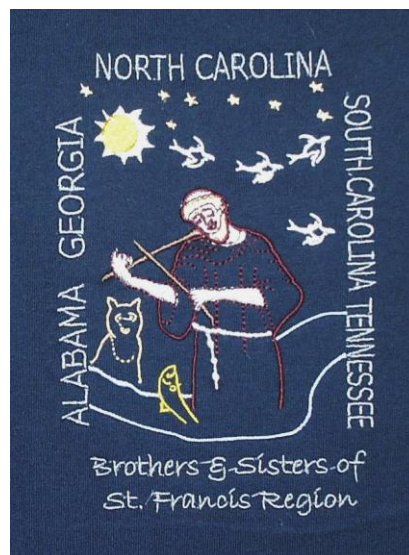
playing his sticks among the animals, with region name and
states listed.

The following sizes are available: Medium, Large, X-Large, 2X-Large and 3X-Large (sorry,
no smalls).

Shirts are \$15 each, which includes shipping. Orders can be made on a fraternity or
individual basis. Just send your order with payment (checks should be made out to “BSSF
Region”) to:

Paula O. Zanker, SFO
4441 Amberwood Dr.
Haw River, N.C. 27258

Or e-mail your order to pazanker@aol.com. **T**



Annual Regional Gathering set

Reserve weekend of Aug. 11–13 and plan to
attend our Annual Regional Gathering.

It will be held at the Wyndham Garden Hotel in
Charlotte, N.C., again this year.

The gathering begins on St. Clare of Assisi’s
feast day. Our theme will focus on St. Clare as we
continue to explore the Spirituality pillar of our
Secular Franciscan life.

St. Clare added the contemplative vision to
Franciscan life. The combination of absolute
poverty, along with the silence and solitude of
contemplative living within an enclosed community,
can serve as a light to inspire us on our journey.

Sr. Bernadette Marie Cappola, a Poor Clare,
from the Monastery of Saint Clare in Greenville will
make a presentation.

We will be honored to welcome Carol Gentile,
SFO, our national minister, who will be with us for a
Visitation.

**Be sure to bring your
fraternity banner to the ARG.**

**Annual Regional Gathering
Aug. 11-13, 2006
Wyndham Garden Hotel
Charlotte, NC**

**Room \$73.78 (no increase)
Breakfast \$10.95
Lunch \$16
Dinner \$20**

**Forms are available
Reservations due by July 14**

See ARG, page 5

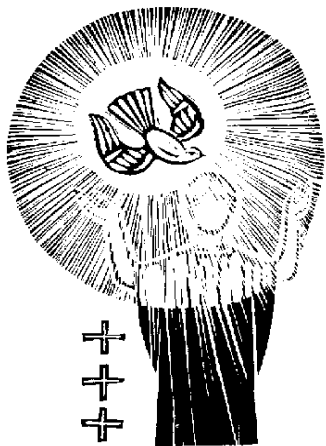
ARG, from page 4

Come meet Carol and Sr. Bernadette and share in your spiritual growth with your brothers and sisters of our region.

Three fraternities have offered to participate more actively this year: St. Michael the Archangel Fraternity, Spartanburg, will coordinate registration; St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity, Hendersonville, will lead the memorial service again; and Fraternity of St. Clare, Winston-Salem, will prepare and lead us in the Saturday evening prayer. Thanks to each of them for their generous service.

This is a time of sharing and participating. Additional volunteers are sought for the special task of coordinating the eucharistic chapel, recognition of the newly professed (we have a large number), and shopping for the evening snacks.

Please let me know if your fraternity or group would like to be a more active part of our time together. **T**

**Fr. Linus celebrates 35th anniversary**

Fr. Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv., was ordained a priest on May 22, 1971.

He serves as our regional spiritual assistant and shares his vibrant Franciscan spirituality with us so willingly.

May God continue to bless him and keep him in his loving care.

Please pray for Fr. Linus as he continues to serve. If you wish to send him a note, his address is:

Fr. Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv.

St. John Vianney Friary

1920 Skyview Drive

Lithia Springs, Ga. 30122 **T**

St. Anthony finds the way

By Deacon Dennis Arcand, SFO

St. Benedict the Moor Fraternity

Here's a true story that happened to my family. We're convinced that St. Anthony saved our family this particular night.

It was the winter of 1960 and my father, a U.S. Army warrant officer, had orders to a new assignment in France. We were living on an Army post in the Midwest. After the movers had packed the household goods, Mom and Dad loaded my two younger brothers, my sister, and me into the family car; we started for New England to spend some time with our grandparents before going overseas.

The interstate highway system was not yet completed, but there were still fairly good highways going across the country. Many were toll roads.

We were on one such a road, somewhere in Illinois, I think, and it was already after dark. We noticed that no more traffic was coming from the opposite direction. Dad found a local radio

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station that gave us news of a heavy winter storm that was blowing in behind us and warning all drivers to get off the road and into shelter.

Just then the lights in the car began to dim. Dad told us kids to start praying because he was afraid that the alternator had stopped working. We'd be in a bad way, he said, with the storm coming up if we couldn't get off the road soon and the battery died.

Mom led us in her favorite novena to St. Anthony, praying that we find someplace to get off the road before the car died and that we get the car repaired.

I remember Dad saying that it looked like our prayers were answered, because an exit off the toll road was coming up and he could see lights off to the side.

As we pulled off the road, Dad said it was odd that there was no toll station on that exit, but there was a little community that consisted of a general store and a gas station almost immediately at the exit.

The gas station's sign announced that it was Tony's Service Station; the car died just as we pulled in. Tony came over to the car and told Dad that he was about to close for the night.

Dad explained the situation. Tony said he would check his parts inventory and try to fix the car so that we could get back on the road. It just so happened that the only alternator he had in stock fit our 1957 Buick, and in less than an hour the new alternator was in and we were back on the road.

About 45 minutes later we came to the end of the toll road. As Dad paid the toll clerk, he recounted our adventure. The toll clerk said it was impossible. It couldn't have happened, he insisted—there was no such exit or community between the tollbooth and where we where we got on the toll road.

The state police had closed the toll road and there were no other travelers, so Dad got out of the car and lifted the hood to show the new alternator. The clerk still insisted that it

could never have happened because there was no such exit.

My family knows that our prayers were answered that night and that "Tony the mechanic," who repaired our car and saved us from the snowstorm, was none other than Anthony, our favorite saint.

Novena to St. Anthony

If then you ask for miracles,
Death, error, all calamities,
The leprosy and demons fly,
And health succeeds infirmities.

The sea obeys, and fetters break
And lifeless limbs thou dost restore;
And treasures lost are found again
When young or old thine aid implore.

All dangers vanish at thy prayer,
And direst need doth quickly flee,
Let those who know thy power proclaim—
Let Paduans say—these are of thee.

The sea obeys ...

To Father, Son may glory be,
And Holy Spirit eternally.

The sea obeys ...

Pray for us, blessed Anthony,
That we may be made worthy of the
promises of Christ.

Let us pray:
Almighty God, you have given St. Anthony
to your people as an outstanding preacher
and a ready helper in time of need. With his
assistance may we follow the Gospel of
Christ and know the help of your grace in
every difficulty. Grant this through Christ
our Lord. Amen **T**

A reflection on St. Clare for Secular Franciscans

Carole King, SFO

St. Clare of Assisi Emerging Community

Our mother Clare tells us that, "Our labor here is brief, but the reward is eternal. Do not be disturbed by the clamor of the world, which passes like a shadow. Do not let the false delights of a deceptive world deceive you. Close your eyes to the whisperings of hell and bravely oppose its onslaughts.

"Gladly endure whatever goes against you and do not let good fortune lift you up: for these things destroy faith, while these others demand it. Offer faithfully what you have vowed to God, and he shall reward you."

Wow. That's a lot of stuff! What is St. Clare telling us? Two statements jump out at me: the first and the last.

Clare tells us that we are only here for a very short time, to labor—to work. In the same statement, she says that our reward for this bit of work is eternal!

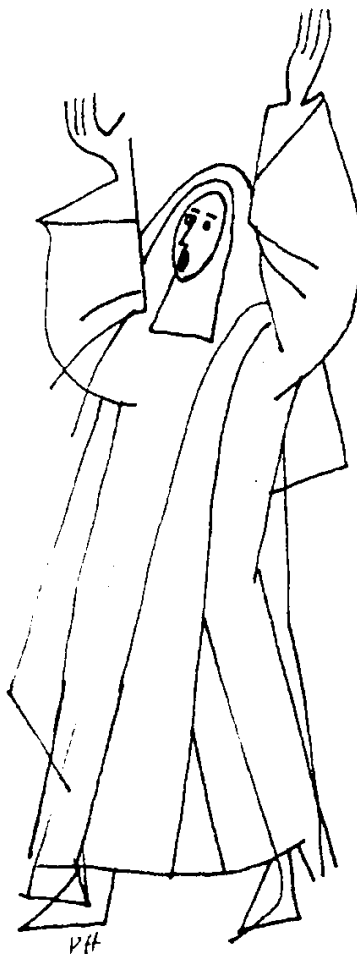
In the light of eternity, this world and all it holds is diminished to nothingness, but the value of what we do in our short time here lasts forever. Like eternity, our reward is forever—life within the loving presence of our almighty Father, our Creator—without end. One heck of a reward for such little work!

Heaven is our goal, but how quickly we forget.

Clare gives us the admonition in the last statement: "Offer faithfully what you have vowed to God."

Hmmm. How many times in a day must we remind ourselves of what we have promised to God? How easy it is in the heat

of a moment of anger, self-righteousness, judgment, criticism, self-centeredness, or just plain ego, to forget that we have promised ourselves to God.



How easily we become protective of our time—our precious, valuable time. We want to prioritize our time in our own way and resent being asked to use it any other way. We pick and choose and perhaps unknowingly end up saying "no" to what we have promised to God because we *feel* that we are "doing enough" or that our "plate is full."

But do we stop to truly discern how God wants us to use our time? What is it that I have promised to God as a Franciscan?

My promise is to live the Gospel in community with my brothers and sisters as well as in my private life. To live in community requires desire, love for God and one another, and time.

How can we accomplish these difficult things in this

busy world?

Prayer: Give your time—your agenda—to God. Only he truly knows what the best use of your time, for yourself, for your community, and, most important, for him and the building up of his kingdom.

This world is bursting with all kinds of delights to fill the senses: food, computers, amusements, sports, etc.; not to mention careers, jobs, families, friends, and responsibilities.

Clare tells us to be careful not to let our senses become so overloaded that we lose sight of what is truly important. We must focus on our goal—heaven—and on that which will draw us nearer to it and what will

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help us to draw others with us to our goal.

Clare is telling us that we must be careful to ignore hell's whisperings that seek to distract, confuse, discourage, and deter us from the path God has chosen for us. She says that we must not be carried away by what this world calls "good fortune" lest we lose sight of God and one another and become blinded to his grace.

God has called us, and we have answered his call to follow in the footsteps of St. Francis and St. Clare. In our answer, we are bound together irrevocably as brothers and sisters in the Secular Franciscan Order. Our mission is to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ into our lives; but more important, to carry this Gospel together into our world, so that we can draw many souls into the kingdom of God.

Such little work for so great a reward. **T**



Pilgrims encounter Francis, Clare in land of the *Fioretti*

By Bret Thoman, SFO

St. Francis Pilgrimages

My wife, Katia, and I are candidates in Immaculate Conception Fraternity in Jonesboro, Ga., to profess (God willing) this year.

But we've also connected with St. Francis and St. Clare in another way. Two years ago we began a ministry: taking pilgrims to Italy, the land of Francis and Clare. I'd like to share how our ministry unfolded.

Katia, who grew up in southern Italy, studied at the University of Assisi, where she made many friends among the friars and nuns. When we met, married, and, in 2002, moved to the United States, we couldn't realize how God would use our marriage in wonderful ways.

In April 2004, we participated in a series of retreats in Loreto, Italy, led by some of

her friar friends. At the end of the retreats, the provincial described ways laity could collaborate with his friars in evangelization. One such project was the "*Terra dei Fioretti*," or "Land of the Little Flowers."

A friar in the Marches (the region bordering Umbria/Assisi to the east) wrote the *Fioretti* in the 14th century. It chronicled stories and legends of Francis and early saintly friars. Chapters 42–53, in particular, are stories about the Marches.

We visited many of the same hermitages and friaries mentioned in the book but which are virtually unknown to the public— isolated and untouched by tourism, just as they were in Francis' time.

The friars had been organizing religious excursions through these places for about a

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PILGRIMS, from page 8

year. They took the groups to places where the stories happened, read from the *Fioretti* and concluded with a spiritual reflection. I immediately felt inspired to organize such journeys for Americans.

Since then Katia and I have organized three pilgrimages for Americans. In addition to the Marches, we spend about half of the trip in Assisi and visit the places significant to the life of Francis and Clare, including the basilicas of Francis and Clare, and the Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli, which houses the Porziuncula.

We also visit the hermitages of San Damiano and the *Carceri* (above Assisi on Mount Subasio) and go to Mount LaVerna, where Francis received the stigmata. This year we will conclude with two days in Rome.

Our trips have well-rounded itineraries, allowing the pilgrims to spend time in prayer where Francis prayed but also to experience Italian culture and enjoy the food, wine, and magnificent artwork. With our contacts among the friars and nuns we are able to create a true Franciscan experience, and our visits to the various communities enrich the experience in a way that is not possible for tourists.

The Marches' friars have been delighted with our visits. For them, it's an opportunity to revitalize their region by praying with people of other countries. They are not interested in the financial aspect (although we contribute by lodging in their hotels and convents); rather, they consider a pilgrimage successful when hearts have been touched and people are aware of their Franciscan history.

After each pilgrimage, Katia and I leave with a deeper knowledge of our Franciscan vocation. We have learned a lot about Franciscan spirituality in a way that would not be possible had we never visited these places.

Katia and I, after much discernment and prayer, decided to leave our careers: I was a pilot for Delta Connection and am now in

real estate with my mother; Katia worked in customer service, but left that to care for our daughter, Claremarie.

We plan to move to Italy to dedicate ourselves full time to this project. We will welcome our brother and sister Franciscans in Italy, making ourselves available to host group pilgrimages and individuals passing through.

For more information, including details about our Oct. 1-10 pilgrimage, with Fr. Linus DeSantis as spiritual assistant, visit our website, www.stfrancispilgrimage.com, or call us at 770-402-4335. Some of the people who went on the pilgrimage last September have already signed up for the one this October.

In the meantime, *Pace e bene a tutti!*
(Peace and all good!) T

Calendar

Ministers may contact editor with fraternity events for the calendar.

2006

June 2-4Fr. Linus: Retreat,
Monteagle, Tenn.
June 9-10REC-CG: Charlotte
June 11Visitation: Charlotte
June 12Visitation: Winston-Salem
June 13Visitation: Raleigh
June 14Visitation: Morehead City
June 13-22.....Cricket: Pilgrimage—Assisi, etc.
July 9-13.....Fr. Linus' Province 100th anniv.,
Chapter of Mats

Aug. 11-13 ARG—Visitation from NAFRA

Oct. 1-12Fr. Linus & Judy: Pilgrimage—
Assisi, etc. (Registration
deadline: 3 months prior to
departure. Info:
www.stfrancispilgrimages.com)
Oct. 24-29Judy: Wisconsin—NAFRA
Nov. 10-11.....REC-CG: Plan to meet in
Hendersonville

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Nov. 11–17Visitations: Hendersonville,
Asheville, Franklin

2007

July 3–8Quinquennial:
Steubenville, Ohio

Aug. 9–12ARG (elections)

2008

OctoberBSSF Region hosts NAFRA
(week of 12th or 19th)

**Communio**

Published four times a year for members of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region of the Secular Franciscan Order.

Upcoming deadlines for copy submission and publication dates:

- ❖ **Summer 2006** deadline, June 23
Publication date, June 30
- ❖ **Autumn 2006** deadline, September 22
Publication date, September 30
- ❖ **Winter 2007** deadline, January 12
Publication date, January 19
- ❖ **Spring 2007** deadline, March 23
Publication date, March 30

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