

# Communio

That All May Be One

Newsletter of the  
Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region  
Secular Franciscan Order  
Spring 2008

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## Minister general seeks input for SFO future

**D**ear Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters,  
We are each called to follow this particular path in life. We are each unique yet similar as Secular Franciscans.

We belong to a local fraternity, which is the basic unit and is connected to our Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis regional fraternity, our national fraternity (NAFRA), and to our international community — Consilium Internationale Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis (CIOFS).

Our minister general, Encarnación del Pozo, SFO, has asked us to contribute to the upcoming General Chapter in November. She asks for our prayers and our thoughts as they define objectives for the future of our Order. This request is a reflection of how we perceive who and what we are today.

Please read her letter (page 4), the CIOFS preparatory document (beginning on page 5), pray the “Prayer for the General Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order” (page 8), and consider this an opportunity to share your thoughts.

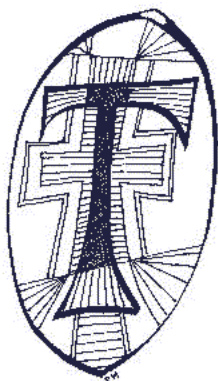
I ask that every professed member take time to pray about the items and reflect on the questions — first individually and then as a community in your local fraternity gathering.

We will discuss your thoughts at our annual regional gathering and submit your responses to our National Fraternity and International Council.

May the Holy Spirit give us inspiration.



Peace,  
Judy Haupt, SFO  
BSSF Region minister



## Minister's Message

May the peace of our risen Lord be with each of you.

Forty days of prayer and fasting have passed.

The Easter triduum brings us together to realize the tremendous love of our God and his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, for us. We can never deserve such selfless sacrifice or love as strongly in return. But we try.

Easter gives us hope and new life to be born again in the resurrection. What a joy!

Pope Benedict XVI said in his Easter message, "The death and resurrection of the Word of God incarnate is an event of invincible love, it is the victory of that Love which has delivered us from the slavery of sin and death."

He added, "It has changed the course of history, giving to human life an indestructible and renewed meaning and value."

After celebrating Easter Mass, and before imparting the blessing, "urbi et orbi" ("to the city of Rome and the world"), the pope read a message in which he highlighted the need for peace in Darfur, the Holy Land, Iraq, Lebanon, and Tibet.

"Through the death and resurrection of Christ," the Holy Father said, "we too rise to new life today, and, uniting our voice with his, we proclaim that we wish to remain forever with God, our infinitely good and merciful Father.

"We receive an appeal to be converted to Love; we receive an invitation to live by rejecting hatred and selfishness, and to follow with docility in the footsteps of the Lamb that was slain for our salvation.

"How often relations between individuals, between groups, and between peoples are marked not by love but by selfishness, injustice, hatred, and violence. These are the scourges of humanity, open and festering in every corner of the planet, although they are often ignored and sometimes deliberately concealed; wounds that torture the souls and bodies of countless of our brothers and sisters.

"They are waiting to be tended and healed by the glorious wounds of our Risen Lord ... and by the solidarity of people who, following in his footsteps, perform deeds of charity in his name, make an active commitment to justice, and spread luminous signs of hope in areas bloodied by conflict and wherever the dignity of the human person continues to be scorned and trampled.

"It is hoped that these are precisely the places where gestures of moderation and forgiveness will increase!

"Let us allow the light that streams forth from this solemn day to enlighten us. Let us open ourselves in sincere trust to the risen Christ, so that his victory over evil and death may also triumph in each one of us, in our families, in our cities, and in our nations. Let it shine forth in every part of the world."

St. Francis said at the end of his life, "Let us begin for up to know we have done very little." I pray that this Easter season is a time of new awareness and a time to act.

Peace and Easter Joy  
Judy

If God forced us to love him, God would not be perfect love and we would not be free. We would be puppets of a controlling God, a God who would be like a dictator; we would live under constant oppression. This would not be a God faithful in love and worthy of our constant trust and hope. But God does not control or manipulate. No, God is a beggar waiting at the soul's door. If we choose to open the door and allow God into our lives, then we will find the freedom to be all that we are created to be.

Ilia Delio, OSF, *The Humility of God: A Franciscan Perspective*



## Editor's Journal

Army brigades and battalions adopt crests displaying designs and mottoes that say something about their mission.

When I was in the Florida Army National Guard, for example, I belonged for a while to the 53rd Support Battalion, which had as its motto, "Support and on time."

Later, as public affairs NCO for the Florida Guard, I wore the headquarters' unit crest, embossed with an image of the headquarters building and the motto, "We accept the challenge."

"Challenge" has a number of definitions, but the one that I'm thinking of here is "a test of one's abilities or resources in a demanding but stimulating

undertaking."

This is precisely what I think we're being offered now in the Secular Franciscan Order — the "demanding and stimulating undertaking" of fully realizing our potential as an Order.

In the "Preparatory Document to Deal With the Themes of the Next General Chapter: The Profession of Secular Franciscans and Their Sense of Belonging" (page 5), CIOFS asks: "To what extent, and in what way, has the sense of belonging to an 'Order' matured within us?"

The document speaks of the challenges that we face. We are to ask ourselves how connected we feel, not just to our own fraternities, but to our region, to NAFRA, and to the SFO worldwide.

If you go to the ARG each year, you know the feeling of connection to the regional fraternity. If you've never been to the ARG, this year would be a good time to start attending and meeting Secular Franciscans from all over our region.

We are to ask ourselves just how central the SFO is in our lives. I don't know about you, but I can't quote much of the Rule from memory. However, in our region we have the concept of the Four Pillars of Franciscan life — spirituality, formation, fraternity, and apostolate — which sum up the Rule. So, each of us can ask ourselves: How well am I living Franciscan spirituality? Franciscan formation? Franciscan fraternity? Franciscan apostolate?

Other articles in this issue also speak of challenges. St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity will certainly face challenges as the members help to start the first fraternity in Antigua. The Franciscan Action Network and our search for a regional apostolate call all of us to reach out to the world. Fr. William Beaudin, OFM, challenges us to use ourselves up in service to others.

CIOFS, in effect, asks us how we're willing to use ourselves for our Order.

Do we accept the challenge?

Pace e bene  
Joanita

## BSSF Region to welcome NAFRA for annual conference in October

Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region will host the National Fraternity (NAFRA) Council Chapter this year.

NAFRA will hold its annual chapter at the Scarritt Bennett Center in Nashville, Tenn., Oct. 14–20.

Observers can attend if space is available but must notify the BSSF Regional Executive Council in advance.

The NAFRA Council includes nine members of the National Executive Council

and the ministers of our 30 regional fraternities. Members of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants and commission and committee members also attend.

We plan to share something about each of our five states and our fraternities. If you have ideas or suggestions, please contact a member of our regional council before June 15. T



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Prot. N.1807

Circ. 64/02-08

Rome, March 5, 2008

To the National Councils of the SFO

To the International Councillors SFO and Youfra

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

May the Lord give you peace!

In order to be fruitful and become a strong moment of grace for the entire Order, the upcoming General Chapter must be preceded by:

- ✓ intensive and constant prayer in all the fraternities throughout the world, so that the Spirit of God our Lord can assist the capitulars of each country in allowing themselves to be guided by Him for the well-being of the Order and for the validity of the mission entrusted to the Franciscan Secular Order;
- ✓ a serious intellectual preparation.

For the first objective, the CIOFS Presidency has diffused the text of a prayer to be recited in the entire Order. For the second objective the Presidency has prepared an introductory document on the theme of the Chapter: *"The Profession of the Secular Franciscans and their sense of belonging to the SFO,"* which we are here attaching, with the purpose of stimulating within the Secular Franciscan Order a global reflection to help in the individual (international councillor) and collective (all the members and the fraternities of our Order) preparation to the Chapter.

The national councils and the international councillors, in particular, are asked to divulge this important working tool and assure that it is the object of attentive reflection in their national fraternity; it is, in fact, essential that the maximum attention be given to the preparatory phase of the general Chapter so that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, it will achieve its purpose and define the objectives of the Order for the next six years.

I would like to particularly ask the international councillors to adequately prepare themselves for this important event and commit themselves to studying in all earnest the theme of the Chapter. Only then can they truly fulfil their institutional responsibilities and become authentic and prepared representatives of their national and international reality.

I confide in each and every one of you, and on behalf of the Presidency and the general Secretariat I wish all my brothers and sisters in the world a Happy Easter.

Your sister and minister,

Encarnación del Pozo

## **Preparatory Document to Deal With the Themes of the Next General Chapter: The Profession of Secular Franciscans and Their Sense of Belonging**

### **Introduction**

- ❖ What is the Secular Franciscan Order? What is its ecclesial nature?
- ❖ Who is the Secular Franciscan? What does he/she do?
- ❖ What is his/her deepest identity and the nature of his/her belonging to the Church and to the Franciscan Family?
- ❖ How do the Secular Franciscans and the Order, as a whole, place themselves before the world, and what is their role?

Not only people frequently ask us these important questions but, often, they also emerge even within us, and the response determines the self-affirmation of our “being” and qualifies our “doing.”

During almost 800 years of our existence, for more than 500 years (up to 1978 and beyond), the history of the Order has been characterized by a “diminished” life, due to the practical impossibility of Secular Franciscans to self-determine themselves and assume their responsibilities as an Order.

The Order was prevented, in fact, from “writing its own history,” to give its contribution as an Order and to assume, as a whole, the providential role belonging to it, within the context of the Franciscan family, to fulfill the mission entrusted to Francis of Assisi by the San Damiano Crucifix.

Today, this possibility has become real and it largely depends on us.

The Church, in the light of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, has providentially reflected about our existence and has recognized the unity and autonomy of our Order in a centralized, world structure. Our history has demonstrated how such elements, already existing in embryo from the beginning, were essential to fully accomplish the project entrusted by God to Francis for us, for the benefit of the Church of all time.

But are we truly ready?

To what an extent, and in what way, has the sense of belonging to an “Order” matured within us?

What is the true and concrete awareness that individual Secular Franciscans have of belonging to a real Order, to an Order that finally, after eight centuries has a unified and centralized structure?

“... (Francis) founded a true Order, that of the Tertiaries, not restricted by religious vows, as the two preceding (Orders), but similarly conformed to simplicity of customs and to a spirit of penitence. So, he was the first to conceive and happily carry out, with the help of God, what no founder of regulars (religious Orders) had previously contrived, to have the religious life practiced by all” (Benedict XV, Encyclical “*Sacra Propediem*” June 6, 1921).

“You are an Order: a lay Order, but a real Order. *Ordo veri nominis*, as our predecessor of holy memory, Benedict XV (*Sacra propediem*, June 6, 1921) called it. You will not, as is obvious, be an assembly of the perfect; but you must be a school of Christian perfection. Without this resolute will one cannot suitably be a part of such a chosen and glorious militia” (Pius XII, July 1, 1956, “Speech to the Tertiaries in Rome”).

See PREPARATORY, page 6

**PREPARATORY, from page 5**

“...you are also an ‘Order,’ as the Pope said (Pius XII): A Lay Order, but a Real Order;” and after all, Benedict XV had already spoken of “*Ordo veri nominis*.” This ancient term — we can say medieval — “Order” means nothing more than your intimate belonging to the large Franciscan family. The word “Order” means the participation in the discipline and actual austerity of that spirituality, while remaining in the autonomy typical of your lay and secular condition, which, moreover, often entails sacrifices which are not lesser than those experienced in the religious and priestly life” (John Paul II, June 14, 1988, General Chapter, SFO).

Thus, in recent times, three Popes of great stature and spiritual authority have spoken of our Secular Franciscan Order!

WE ARE AN ORDER, A LAY ORDER, BUT A REAL ORDER. *ORDO VERI NOMINIS* !

It is astonishing how in the course of the centuries the Order was always spoken about as “one” even when the Order did not exist as a structured and autonomous entity. Since 1471 up to 1978 the Order had lived in a state of substantial inferiority, of division and practical subjection. In practice, there existed only local Fraternities that were, for all practical purposes, appendices of the respective religious orders who guided them.

And yet, this awareness of being only one thing and of operating in a virtually singular, unanimous form never lessened, neither in the awareness of the individual “tertiaries” nor in that of the Church.

The longing for unity and autonomy was born with the same lay penitential movement of Saint Francis and, for those who know the history of the SFO, it is well known how, instead, that such aspirations were frustrated from the very beginning.

We, today’s Secular Franciscans, can well say to be privileged: we are the protagonists of a historical epoch-making time in which the dream of all our predecessors becomes reality. It is absolutely essential to realize this and to enter into our role responsibly and with a sense of our history.

The SFO is still a fragile creature. The Order must consolidate, it must create anew structures and new and original methods of operating to help the Order to confront the challenges that the world presents to us, be it internally or externally, in order to develop its role effectively in the third millennium of Christian history.

The challenges are immense.

It will be necessary to “invent” — “create” — a way of being and to manage ourselves that will correspond to the requirements of a secular Order, composed mainly of lay people, fully involved in the world and in the ordinary activities of family, work, and society.

It will be necessary to implement an intimate interconnection and effective coordination between all the parts of the Order, without losing the ability to be, everywhere, equal and diverse at the same time, to express the common charism in the varied and complex situations of the world, with that ability to adapt an inexhaustible charismatic thrust that alone can allow us to weave ourselves into the vital fabric of the world.

The challenges can be conquered but they can also be lost and the results are not certain.

**Centralized Structure**

Centralized structure was, and is, necessary for the purpose of allowing the Order to occupy its place in the Franciscan family and in the Church and to be an effective apostolic projection of

See PREPARATORY, page 7

**PREPARATORY, from page 6**

the Franciscan charism in the secular world.

The *Novitas* (Novelty)\* of Francis is connoted by a mission whose field of action is the whole world and the same Roman pontiff has confirmed this mission also for us since the very beginning of our Order.

We are a body composed of some 430,000 professed, who, together with the over 150,000 male and female Franciscan religious must accomplish in time and in history the mission that the San Damiano Crucifix entrusted to St. Francis.

We will be able to fully accomplish all this by developing, living, and letting grow within us, in every part of the world, a deep *Sense of Belonging* and a living awareness of the *Grace of Profession* that has made us Franciscan, fully realizing our baptismal vocation and introducing us into the body of the Secular Franciscan Order and of the entire Franciscan family.

**Profession and Sense of Belonging**

*Profession* and *Sense of Belonging* are two fundamental intertwined elements to fulfill our mission, without which the Order does not and cannot exist.

What authentic awareness do we have of the fact that Profession has constituted us in the state of *Professed* members by imparting to us the Franciscan *character* and introducing us vitally and indissolubly in the body of the Secular Franciscan Order?

Does this sense of *belonging to the very same body* (the Order) surpass the boundaries of states, of languages, of social classes, of cultures in order to make of us one single invincible body, for the spreading of the Gospel and the restoration of the Church in Christ and the restitution of a world redeemed to God the Father?

**The General Chapter**

These two fundamental elements of our life are the themes of our next General Chapter.

It is essential that all the national Fraternities reflect on these two aspects so that the contributions of excellence that we will receive from the spokespersons will not end in an embarrassed silence due to the lack of preparation of those attending the Chapter.

**The International Councilors**

It is, therefore, essential that the international councilors come to the Chapter well prepared to be the faithful interpreters of the experiences and reflections gathered from the discussions to be held in each country so that this fundamental Chapter reflection may become an authentic moment of grace, a *kairos*, of holy resolutions that will make our Order strong and vital, as a whole and no longer as simple committed individuals.

For this reason, we strongly suggest that in every National Fraternity, constituted or emerging, the National Council organize some moments of qualified reflections to discuss these themes. The tracks are those offered in this document.

**The Formators**

The formators at all levels should take the responsibility to deepen with all their brothers and sisters the nature of Profession, its concrete effects of incorporation into the Order, and the effects of belonging that this incorporation produces.

The fruits of this work should be collected and delivered to the international councilor so as to enable the Chapter, through the spokespersons and all the capitulars, to provide responses,

\*Theme of the 2005 SFO General Chapter: Novelty introduced by St. Francis in religious life and in the Church.

**PREPARATORY, from page 7**

stimuli, specifications, projects, and commitments that may let the Order, and all of us, grow, individually and collectively, to assume completely our role in the Church and the world.

**Conclusion**

We wait to receive from each and every one of you a reply to this letter and to learn about the initiatives that each National Fraternity, constituted and emerging, will want to take.

By way of pure example, we offer, in the form of questions, other possible tracks for discussion and reflection, it being understood that you have full liberty to develop this preparatory work at your own discretion.

1. To what degree is your being Secular Franciscan an essential part of your life? Is your life in Fraternity only a meeting among many others?
2. What can you do to be more involved in the intimate life of the SFO?
3. Profession by its very nature is a permanent commitment. Do you live it as such?
4. Why, according to you, is the local fraternity so important in the life of the SFO? To what an extent is your fraternity helping you to accomplish what your Profession demands of you?
5. Does the fraternity help you to remain faithful to your Profession and to give you a *sense of belonging*? To what extent do you yourself work to help the brothers and sisters of your fraternity to achieve these very same goals?
6. Why did you want to enter the Secular Franciscan Order? What contribution do you give to the SFO by means of your Profession and your presence?
7. To what extent do you believe that the new Rule has contributed to the changes that have taken place in the way of “feeling” the Order and “being” part of it?
8. Do you believe that the *sense of belonging* that you live today corresponds genuinely to what the Order truly is, to its “nature” and to its mission? Or does it correspond to something else that belongs to the past or to a personal conception of the Order?

If you think that there is not a sufficient *sense of belonging* to the Order, what are the reasons, according to you?

1. Lack of formation?
2. Lack of communication?
3. Lack of contributions and sharing?
4. Other? **T**

### Prayer for the General Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order

Most High Glorious God,  
we praise you for your presence in the world  
and for the tremendous gift  
of our Franciscan vocation.

We beseech you to inspire every brother and  
sister of the Secular Franciscan Order  
as we prepare for the upcoming  
General Chapter in Hungary.

Grant the necessary wisdom to our brothers  
and sisters who will take part in the Chapter to  
develop the priorities for the Order for the  
next six years and to elect those you want to  
lead and animate us.

Guide and direct us so that we may follow  
the Gospel and our Rule more closely  
and be co-workers with you in rebuilding the  
Church and the Word.

We ask this through Christ our Lord  
and through the intercession of the  
Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Francis, St. Clare,  
and our holy patrons  
St. Elizabeth and St. Louis. Amen.





## ARG to highlight formation

By Judy Haupt, SFO

BSSF Region minister

Our Annual Regional Gathering, set for Aug. 8–10, will be held in the same location as last year, LifeWay Ridgecrest Conference Center, just minutes from Asheville, N.C.

Discussions will focus on our Formation Pillar.

Every fraternity and group registered last year, which was outstanding. We had 200 attend and expect even more this year.

Our annual gathering is a special time of sharing and participating. Don't miss this community opportunity.

Each year fraternities have offered to participate in various activities. Please consider how you can be an active part. Let me know by June 1 if you can help.

We need coordination for the following:

1. Registration — involves making nametags and signing-in arrivals (good way to meet everyone). Channel of Peace and St. Michael the Archangel can offer advice.
2. Set up and schedule our eucharistic-adoration chapel — includes bringing materials. Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg fraternities have helped in past years.
3. Recognition of newly professed and special anniversaries.
4. Memorial service for our dear deceased members.

Bring your fraternity banner, if you have one; if not, consider making one.

Price per room with two queen beds has increased from \$71 to \$73, and price for five meals increased from \$41.75 to \$46.50. However, we have the option this year to select a four-meal package for \$38.50.

The five-meal package includes Friday dinner; Saturday breakfast, lunch, and dinner; and Sunday breakfast. The four-meal package includes Friday dinner, any 2 meals on Saturday, and Sunday breakfast.

Commuters will pay a \$12-per-day fee (instead of the \$16 a day charged last year)



and can purchase meal tickets. Individual meals are breakfast, \$7; lunch, \$8.25; dinner, \$9.85.

I'll send registration forms to ministers and leaders. Please return all four of your fraternity or group's registration forms to me in one mailing (e-mail preferred if possible) before July 10. Attendees pay Ridgecrest when they check in.

Remember: Only sacramental wine for Mass is permitted at Ridgecrest. No other alcoholic beverages are allowed.

Mark your calendar. Please plan to attend and be part of our community. See you there. T

Prayer lives in pure open moments of right here, right now. This is enough, this is fullness. If it is not right here, right now, it doesn't exist. If we don't know God now, why would we know God later? If we don't see God now, would the eyes be prepared to see God later? ... We will not recognize God later if we cannot recognize God now.

Richard Rohr, OFM, *Everything Belongs*

## Training begins for Secular Franciscan spiritual assistants

By Joanita M. Nellenbach, SFO  
FFC course coordinator

Franciscan Family Connections, our spiritual assistant course, is up and running.

We met March 15 at Queen of the Apostles Church in Belmont for our first class. After Morning Prayer, Fr. Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv., our regional spiritual assistant and director of this course, gave the presentation and led the discussion.

"Prayer is the element we steep ourselves in," Fr. Linus said. "We live in the presence of God. We will surrender our lives in service. We will be more a reflection of Christ, of Francis, as time goes on. This is a step that will complement you, enrich you."

He also stressed the necessity of spiritual assistants continuing their "ongoing formation in Franciscan life. Continue to build upon your own formation."

As the General Constitutions note, "The principal task of the assistant is to communicate Franciscan spirituality and to co-operate in the initial and continuing formation of the brothers and sisters" (Article 90.1).

The five-hour session on March 15 included Mass and a short lunch break. We'd received our assignments and journaled about the questions prior to the session.

Fourteen SFOs, from all three areas of our region, and one from Queen of Peace Region (northern and central Midwest) have signed up. Except for one absence because of illness, everyone was present for the first session.

Some of us arrived the afternoon or evening of March 14 and stayed at a motel near the church. Others met us at the church on the 15th. Students pay their own

expenses for meals, lodging, and transportation.

The plan is to meet every couple of months and to conclude the course before our Annual Regional Gathering in 2009.

Our next session is planned for June 8 in the Atlanta or Athens, Ga., area.

We'll also have a

session during this year's ARG, with further sessions announced at that time.

We're studying *Franciscan Family Connections*, the book for the program of the same name that the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) prepared to train people to serve as local spiritual assistants (SAs) or as regional spiritual assistants (RSAs). We'll discuss one or more of the following FFC topics at each session:

1. The Role of a Spiritual Assistant (discussed March 15),
2. Franciscan theology/spirituality,
3. The Trinity and Us,
4. SAs and initial formation,
5. SAs and ongoing formation,
6. Franciscan writers,
7. Vatican II's influence,
8. SFO organizational structure,
9. SFO activity in the world/leadership,
10. The Ritual and devotions,
11. Church and Eucharist,
12. General reflections for SAs and RSAs.

In addition to *Franciscan Family*

See SPIRITUAL, page 12



**SPIRITUAL, from page 11**

*Connections*, other books that will likely be used include *Elements of Formation: A Reflection on the Formation Process* (1992–1994), *Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leaders* (1986), and *Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the SFO* (2005). This last text includes “Guidelines for Initial Formation in the USA,” “SFO General Constitutions” (2000), “Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the SFO” (2002), and “Statutes of the National fraternity of the SFO in the USA” (2003–2005).

Who’s eligible to take this course?

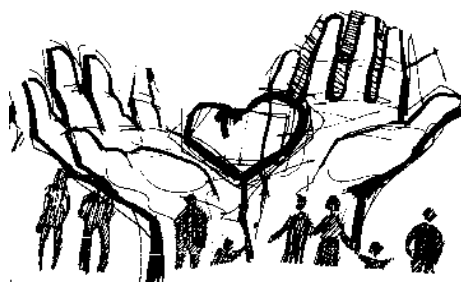
According to *Franciscan Family*

*Connections*:

- Secular Franciscans, professed at least five years, who are recommended by their fraternity councils;
- Other individuals who may be appointed as SAs — clergy, religious, or laity;
- Those who already serve as SAs and wish to upgrade their knowledge and skills.

Applicants have given Fr. Linus a:

- letter of recommendation from his or her pastor, parish deacon, or a Religious who knows the person;
- letter of recommendation from the spiritual assistant to the applicant’s fraternity if the applicant is preparing to become a local spiritual assistant, or from the regional spiritual assistant if the person is preparing to be an RSA;
- letter of recommendation from the applicant’s local council or from the applicant’s regional council (if preparing to become an RSA);
- résumé of the applicant’s religious and educational background. T

**Reaching the wider world**

The BSSF Region Executive Council is seeking a regional apostolate.

It is meant to be a holy endeavor for the members of the fraternities/region to come together to provide ongoing assistance to those less fortunate than ourselves.

This apostolate should have various options for participation. For example, our fraternities could decide to make Franciscan Crown rosaries, send religious articles, make financial donations, or gather to say the Franciscan Crown Rosary for the intentions of the Secular Franciscans in China.

“Chinese SFOs struggle in secret,” (winter 2008 *Communio*) prompted the Franciscan Crown idea.

We want to have a presentation of possible regional apostolates during the ARG in August and to ask the BSSF Regional Council vote to on its choice.

Please send your suggestions to Faye Martin at [fmartinsfo@bellsouth.net](mailto:fmartinsfo@bellsouth.net). T

To be reduced to nothing is to have everything. When everything we wrongly thought would make us happy is stripped away, we are thrown back onto our own resources. We are forced to find that place within that is our true home, the place where God dwells, the very center of our unique self. This is our immortal soul, uniquely stamped with God’s creative love. At this center we begin to be born again in a whole new way of being. We begin to live wholly dependent on the creative providence of God.

Murray Bodo, OFM,  
*The Place We Call Home*

## Formation Director



### Devotion to Mary, the Mother of God

By Faye Martin, SFO  
BSSF Region  
formation director

*Lectio divina* is ancient, yet modern.

The *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* tells us that, “*Lectio divina* is a reflective reading of Scripture leading to meditation on specific passages. This is a centuries-old practice of prayer which relies on the guidance of the Holy Spirit within the heart as the person reads a Scripture passage and pauses to seek out the deeper meaning that God wants to convey through his Word” (p. 474).

The catechism further explains that, in *lectio divina*, “the person praying either reflectively reads a passage from Scripture or listens attentively to its being read, and then meditates on words or phrases that resonate” (pp. 517–518).

**READ and REFLECT** — Using the *lectio divina* approach with the following writings about Mary, what word, phrase, line, beckons you, challenges you? Sit with these words and allow them to penetrate your spirit.

“Devotion to Mary is part of our Catholic heritage. All seek to capture the beauty of this Jewish woman of faith. Every solid devotion to Mary bears the imprint of Jesus: ‘while honoring Christ’s mother, these devotions cause her son to be rightly known, loved and glorified and all his commands observed’ (Const. on the Church, para. 66). The final criteria for healthy devotion to Mary is that it brings us to Jesus and his gospel.”

*Catch Me a Rainbow*, Fr. Lester Bach,  
OFM Cap.

“Mary said, ‘Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your Word’” (Luke 1:38).

“His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you’” (John 2:5).

“Hail, holy Lady,  
Most holy Queen,  
Mary, Mother of God,  
Ever Virgin;  
Chosen by the most holy Father in heaven,  
Consecrated by him,  
With his most holy beloved Son  
And the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.  
On you descended and in you still remains  
All the fulness of grace  
And every good.  
Hail, his Palace.  
Hail, his Tabernacle.  
Hail, his Robe.  
Hail, his Handmaid.  
Hail, his Mother.  
And Hail, all holy Virtues,  
Who, by the grace  
And inspiration of the Holy Spirit  
Are poured into the hearts of the faithful  
So that, faithless no longer,  
They may be made faithful servants of  
God  
Through you.”

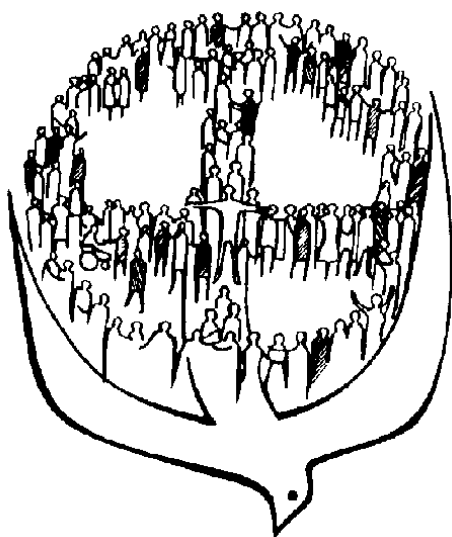
St. Francis of Assisi, *Omnibus of Sources*,  
Vol. 1, pp. 135–136

**RECEIVE** — Sit in silence. Sit in God’s presence. Receive what God is giving you.

**RESPOND** — How do you respond to the stirrings in your heart, your conscience? How do the above passages challenge you to look upon the world? How do they affect your interactions with others? How do they change how you see yourself? God spoke to you. What is your response to God?

*Any formation director or minister who is not receiving the formation director’s monthly e-mail, please get in touch with me at [fmartinsfo@bellsouth.net](mailto:fmartinsfo@bellsouth.net). Thank you. T*

## FAN off to good start with D.C. kick off



By Dan Mulholland, SFO  
FAN representative for NAFRA

The Franciscan Action Network (FAN) meeting in Washington, D.C., March 6–7 was a good effort for the 20 action commissioners and staff who attended from six U.S. regions (bios at [www.franciscanaction.org/FAN\\_Staff.html](http://www.franciscanaction.org/FAN_Staff.html)).

SFOs attending were Ken Beattie, regional minister, LaVerna Region; Tom Bello, NAFRA vice minister; Patti DeWitt, formation director, Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Region; Jan Parker, minister, St. Clare Region; Stephanie Sormane, minister, Mother Cabrini Region; and myself.

Input and prayerful discussion focused on “How do we do change with our 450 represented ministries in the U.S. Franciscan Family?” This starts from our experience

as Franciscans to then moves to social analysis (political, economic, sociological, and cultural) examined in light of our faith and values to see what God invites us to do to make some dedicated actions for change in our society.

This may be to raise our Franciscan voice when bills in Congress reach some critical points, where they may be dropped because of perceived lack of support. With a Franciscan voice in Washington we may be able to positively change some legislation to reflect the common good.

We discussed how a bill becomes law and the process in which 30,000 bills introduced might result in only 300 bills becoming law. Ken Preston-Pile from Pace e Bene explained how to approach advocacy from a nonviolent, Franciscan perspective.

As an example, Preston-Pile told about Franciscan Sr. Rosemary Lynch, who is almost 90. Sr. Rosemary says that advocacy starts with spiritual groundedness and building connections with your legislators, connecting to their goodness. One way to start is to express gratitude for bills they have supported and to appeal to them on new issues from a position of values and faith.

She always approaches this from a win-win approach, stressing what can be done rather than from reproaching them for what hasn’t been done. Sr. Rosemary points out that you may not get through the first time, but you will have established a relationship that opens the door the next time on the next issue. Relationships are always more important than issues when trying to advocate.

We adjourned the meeting to visit the new FAN office and have a blessing ceremony, followed, in proper Franciscan fashion, by a dinner.

The next day we finished discussions on how to expand the FAN membership and what can be done to the Web site to support these efforts. It will be possible, fairly soon, for members in different regions to join FAN using the Web site.

We finished up by noon after a Mass and adjourned to travel to the Ecumenical Advocacy Days at a hotel in Alexandria VA.

The FAN kick-off followed a 6 p.m. Mass the next day.

Fr. Hug, S.J. told me afterwards that he didn’t realize that the Franciscans were so “high

See FAN, page 15

**FAN, from page 14**

church” (referring to the kick-off’s formality). I told him we can be when we need to be.



Dear National Family,

I write to ask your prayers for the Franciscan Action Network (FAN).

For sure, politics can be a dirty business and probably always has been. Also for sure, our father, St. Francis, was not afraid to speak the truth with love to power as you can read below in his “Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples” (1220) and my introductory commentary.

For those of you listening to this year’s campaign and election coverage, when was the last time that you heard any politician from any party use the term “Franciscan values”? When was the last time that you heard any politician — local, state, national — pledging to go “from gospel to life and from life to gospel”? Honestly, I think I never have.

We have our work cut out for us, and perhaps we may never be very politically successful in getting the values of Sts. Francis and Clare spoken seriously and reverently in the halls of local, state, and national power, but we will never know until we try and until we pray ever more fervently.

At our NAFRA meeting last October, we voted overwhelmingly to support FAN. We will walk and pray and work with sisters and brothers from the First and Second orders, and Third Order Regular. We will try to speak the truth with love in a unified, focused, and prayerful voice.

Please pray for your commissioners. Please pray that somehow, some way, each of us may be more successful in speaking the truth with love, to power at all levels of our nation’s political life.

Peace and love with prayers,  
Tom Bello, SFO  
NAFRA vice minister

The Poverello, as we learn from his early biographer, Thomas of Celano, did not hesitate to address himself directly to the rulers of the world. Celano’s “First Life of St. Francis” (para. 43) tells us that Emperor Otto IV passed the friars’ hovel at Rivo Torto, near Assisi, on his way to Rome to be crowned by the pope. Francis sent a friar to call out repeatedly that his glory would last only a short while.

In Celano’s “Second Life” (para. 200), St. Francis expressed his wish that emperors would enact laws that, on Christmas Day, more than the usual amount of hay be given to the birds, the oxen, and the asses. He would have no fear, then, to write such a letter as this to remind rulers of their responsibility before God:

Brother Francis, your little and looked-down-upon servant in the Lord God, wishes health and peace to all mayors and consuls, magistrates and governors throughout the world and to all others to whom these words may come.

Reflect and see that the day of death is approaching. With all possible respect, therefore, I beg you not to forget the Lord because of this world’s cares and preoccupations and not to turn away from His commandments, for all those *who* leave Him in oblivion and *turn away from His commandments are cursed and will be left in oblivion* by Him.

When the day of death does come, everything they think they have shall be taken from them. The wiser and more powerful they may have been in this world, the

See FAN, page 16

**FAN, from page 15**

greater will be the punishment they will endure in hell.

Therefore I strongly advise you, my Lords, to put aside all care and preoccupation and receive the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with fervor in holy remembrance of Him. May you foster such honor to the Lord among the people entrusted to you that every evening an announcement may be made by a messenger or some other sign that praise and thanksgiving may be given by all people to the all-powerful Lord God. If you do not do this, know that, *on the day of judgment*, you must render *an account* before the Lord Your God, Jesus Christ.

Let those who keep this writing with them and observe it know that they will be blessed by the Lord God.

*Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*  
Volume I: *The Saint*, pp. 58–59

**SFO ordained to diaconate**

Edward D. Rademacher, SFO, was ordained as a permanent deacon Feb. 8 in the Diocese of Atlanta.

Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory celebrated the ordination Mass, with Archbishop-emeritus John F. Donoghue and two dozen priests as concelebrants and a number of deacons assisting and attending.

Ed and his wife JoAnn, SFO, have been members of the Stigmata of St. Francis Emerging Community since it was formed at St. Monica Church in Duluth, Ga. JoAnn participated with Ed in the diaconate formation program and earned the designation as a master catechist. He has been assigned to St. Monica parish. **T**

**CONGRATULATIONS —NEWLY PROFESSED****San Damiano NFG, Athens, Ga., Dec. 9**

Marisa Bilbao, SFO	Hank Cutler, SFO
Joanne Cutler, SFO	Dianne Dukes, SFO
Julie Lorenz, SFO	Virginia Macagnoni, SFO
Nat Seney, SFO	Howard Sligh, SFO
Sue Stephens, SFO	John Strickland, SFO
Mary Lou Zeitler, SFO	

**Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity  
Hilton Head Island, S.C., March 1**

Rhoda Haight, SFO

**Congratulations  
New Councils****Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity  
Hilton Head Island, S.C.****Elected Feb. 2**

DorothyAnn Rowland, SFO, minister  
Dian McCarthy, SFO, vice minister  
Christine Sheridan, SFO, secretary  
George Bellas, SFO, treasurer  
Rosemary DeWolfe, SFO, formation director  
Betty Purdy, SFO, councilor  
Bill Trecartin, SFO, councilor

**Channel of Peace Fraternity  
Chattanooga, Tenn.****Elected March 9**

Gail Campbell, SFO, minister  
Rita Cooper, SFO, vice minister  
Mary Coleman, SFO, secretary  
Debby Williams, SFO, treasurer  
Marlene Dickshinski, SFO, formation director  
Mechtild Boles, SFO, councilor  
Song Davis, SFO, councilor

A prayerful leader is a gift to a fraternity. Servant leaders rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. A good leader in the SFO needs a sense of the power of prayer and the need for the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in leading a fraternity. Look for someone who has a spirit of prayerfulness. They need not proclaim it, but generally their spirit reveals itself in their contacts with people.

Lester Bach, OFM Cap., *Pick More Daisies*



## Live a life where you give yourself

by Fr. William Beaudin, OFM  
College chaplain  
Siena College, Loudonville, N.Y.

How often have you been to a wake and heard the comment, “Doesn’t she look good?”

Usually the object of the compliment is not a fashionably dressed fellow mourner, but the deceased. There’s no doubt that a good funeral director can work wonders and that some people look even better in the coffin than they did in life.

Yet, I’m inclined to agree with Loretta LaRoche, the motivational guru, who thinks it should be otherwise.

She says that if you live life to the fullest, if you wake up each morning bound and determined to give it your best shot, if you live each day as if it were your last, then when you die you shouldn’t look good.

You should look terrible. You should look all used up. You should look worn out because you haven’t held yourself back. You haven’t kept your time, your gifts, your talents, your treasure to yourself. You have been fully engaged in the demands of living, and have spent the bulk of your time in the business of loving until there’s very little left.

### The example of Matthew Conlin

I think of LaRoche’s sound advice whenever I think of Matthew Conlin, OFM, a friar I’ve had the privilege of living with for the past six years and of knowing for more than 30. Twice a week, in fair and foul weather, Matthew drives the 45-minute trip from the friary to a state penitentiary, where he teaches Bible study to inmates in both English and Spanish. He also counsels them and celebrates the Eucharist. On weekends,

he presides at a Spanish-language Mass in a nearby parish.

What makes this schedule remarkable is that Matthew, a Shakespearean scholar and former Siena College president, is 87 years old.

He battles skin cancer and has undergone knee and hip replacement surgery. He favors one leg when he walks, and like a lot of older folks, he suffers from insomnia. Yet, none of these ailments stops him from working. None of them keeps him from ministering to the poor, the content, and the marginalized.

Matthew takes very seriously and very literally the words of Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

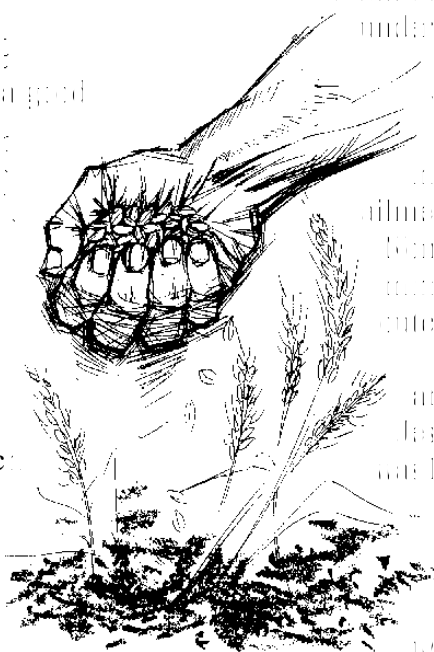
I can assure you that when Matthew dies and is lying in the coffin, there will be plenty of mourners surrounding him, because he has touched so many lives. But I very much doubt that anyone is going to say how good he looks. What they will say is, “He looks terrible,” which is precisely how he ought to look after so many years of self-giving.

### The example of Christ

Nobody who gazed on the crucified Christ on that first Good Friday said: “My, doesn’t he look good!” They probably said, “What a mess. He looks terrible. He looks all used up.” And he was used up — used up by his complete dedication to the work and will of his heavenly Father, and used up by his love for the poor, the lost, the broken, the sinful, for all men and women, even the enemies who killed him.

“Unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a single

See LIVE, page 18



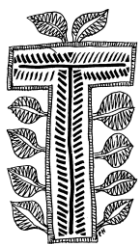
**LIVE, from page 17**

grain,” Jesus says in John’s Gospel. If the grain wants to preserve itself, if its No. 1 goal is to remain intact and to look like a perfectly lovely seed, it is of no use to anybody. “But if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24).

If the grain allows itself to be used up, to lose its shape in the service of others, it will give life to the world. Such is the way of Christ; such is the way of the cross.

At the beginning of Lent, you and I receive a smudge of ashes on our forehead — a graphic reminder that we will die someday. The ashes are traced in the form of a cross, but might they also be applied in the form of a question mark? For, they ask what kind of death we will die and, therefore, what kind of life we will live.

They ask: Is our ultimate goal in life to take good care of ourselves, to look out for No. 1, and to look our best at all times? Or is our aim to look terrible by the time we die, all used up, because, like Jesus, like Matt Conlin, our love for God and neighbor, especially the least of our brothers and sisters, has thoroughly consumed us?



Follow in the footsteps of  
St. Francis  
Oct. 5–15, 2008  
Fr. Linus DeSantis, OFM  
Conv.,  
will lead a pilgrimage to  
Italy.

While in **Assisi**, visit the Basilicas of St. Francis and St. Clare, the Portiuncula, and Mount LaVerna, where Francis received the Stigmata. Then on to the **Marches of Ancona**, where you’ll visit the Holy House of Mary, as well as the mother house of the Capuchins, and spend a wonderful evening with the Poor Clare sisters in their convent in San Severino. In **Rome**, see St. Peter’s and the Vatican, and the Catacombs.

For more information, visit  
[www.stfrancispilgrimages.com](http://www.stfrancispilgrimages.com).



### **Born into eternal life** **Frances Drew, SFO**

Francis Drew, SFO, a member of the Secular Franciscan Order for 41 years, died Feb. 8 in Atlanta, Ga.

She was active in Immaculate Conception Fraternity, Jonesboro, Ga., including serving several terms as minister. Frances was the glue that kept the fraternity going in the lean years and kept it going as an active fraternity.

She was involved with the formation of our Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region and was the region’s first secretary. She was able to go to these meetings with the help of St. Joseph Cupertino Fraternity, Bessemer, Ala., whose members took Frances with them to the formation and regional meetings in Greenville, S.C.

Francis taught at St. Vincent’s Academy in Savannah, Ga., before serving for 30 years as librarian at the Georgia Institute of Technology. She assisted in the development of the archives for the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta.

In addition to membership in social and professional organizations, Francis volunteered in outreach and faith-based ministries in Atlanta, including feeding the hungry at St. Francis’ Table.

A Franciscan Wake Service and recitation of the rosary were planned for Feb. 17 at the funeral home, with the funeral Mass on Feb. 18 in her parish church, Sacred Heart, in Atlanta. Interment was at Evergreen Cemetery in Francis’s native Jacksonville, Fla. **T**

## Round about Lenten retreat

Eleven members of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity, Hilton Head Island, S.C., and six of their spouses made a Lenten retreat, Feb. 22–24, at San Pedro Center in Winter Park, Fla. San Pedro, under the care of Franciscan Third Order Regular priests, is the retreat center for the Diocese of Orland. The retreat focused on St. Francis' "Office of the Passion."

## Walking for those who can't

Jim and Sue Taylor, SFO, members of the Fraternity of Brother Francis, Hickory, N.C., plan to hike the El Camino Santiago (The Way of St. James) Trail, which, Jim says, "is an ancient pilgrimage trail walked by millions of pilgrims since its beginning around 800 A.D. The 500-mile trail begins in southwestern France, crosses the Pyrenees into Spain, continuing west to Santiago, where St. James the Apostle is buried."

The Taylors, volunteer puppy trainers and board member of New Life Mobility Assistance Dogs (see Round about: "Phoebe goes to Washington," Communio, winter 2008, p. 12), are making the 40-day walk this summer to raise funds for NLMAD. Donors can pledge a certain amount per mile to help with the effort.

Funds are used to rescue dogs from shelters and pay for their vaccinations, plus defray expenses for those training the dogs.

Assistance dogs aid persons with disabilities by pulling wheelchairs, helping with balance and support, alerting the hearing impaired to sounds, and alerting persons with epilepsy to impending seizures. The dogs learn some 60 skills, including turning lights on and off, picking up dropped items, retrieving the phone, opening and closing doors, getting drinks from the refrigerator, and providing bracing for getting up from a seated position or a fall,

To receive pledge forms, contact the Taylors at [TaylorsPeak@netscape.com](mailto:TaylorsPeak@netscape.com) or call 828-264-0054. T

## Council sets to work in 2008

The Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region held its first 2008 Executive Council–Commissions Gathering at Our Lady of the Rosary School in Greenville, S.C.

Thanks to members of Our Lady of Good Counsel Fraternity in Greenville who treated the council to a delicious potluck dinner after all attended evening Mass together.

REC attendees: Judy Haupt, minister; Dale Anesi, vice minister; Joanne Babin, secretary; Jerry Rousseau, treasurer; Faye Martin, formation director; Madeline Rousseau, Area 1 councilor; Pat Cowan and Sara Nell Boggs, Area 2 councilors; Mary Sue Riddle and Alan Zanker, Area 3 councilors; Audrey Binet, area councilor, newly forming groups and emerging communities; and Jennye Taylor Johnson, Apostolic Commission chair. Guests were Kathy Taormina, NAFRA Youth/Young Adult chair, and Joanita Nellenbach, Communio editor. Willie Guadalupe, Area 1 councilor, and Cathy Arcand, Apostolic Commissions, were excused due to illness.

Highlights of items covered:

- ❖ Minutes from Oct. 26 meeting were approved.
- ❖ Jerry Rousseau presented treasurer's report:
  - Actual report for 2007 was approved.
  - 2008 was reviewed and approved.
- ❖ Reports from Area Councilors:
  - Area I councilor — Madeline Rousseau reported that an election has been scheduled in Chattanooga for March 9, 2008, and that the first election of Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity, Blairsville, Ga., was held Dec. 2. Willie Guadalupe will go to Bessemer, Ala., for St.

See COUNCIL, page 20

**COUNCIL, from page 19**

- Joseph of Cupertino Fraternity's election; no date has yet been scheduled. Jerry and Madeline attended a profession in Franklin, Tenn., where four people were professed. Madeline is contacting Tamara Marshall, minister of Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin Mary Fraternity, Nashville, Tenn., to schedule elections for October.
- Area II councilors — Pat Cowan and Sara Nell Boggs attended the election in Hilton Head and have yet to plan the election in Charleston. They set June 21, 10 a.m., for the election in St. Michael the Archangel Fraternity, Spartanburg, S.C. Sara Nell will set a date for Our Lady of Good Counsel Fraternity, Greenville, S.C. Audrey added that a tentative profession has been set for July 13 in St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Augusta, Ga.
  - Area III councilors — Alan Zanker and Mary Sue Riddle. Visitation is planned on March 16 for St. Stanislaus Fraternity, Wilmington, N.C., and an election will be scheduled in August. A partial visitation will also be planned for Franciscan Family of Greensboro (N.C.) after March and before May. In May, Greensboro will have an election. St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity, Fayetteville, N.C., has not been contacted yet, but Judy asked Alan to set up a visitation.
  - Newly Forming Groups — Audrey Binet. Our Lady of the Holy Spirit NFG, Conyers, Ga., needs a visit to become emerging. San Damiano NFG, Athens, Ga., professed 11 people on Dec. 9. Audrey will make plans for a visitation to determine if they are ready to become an emerging community. Duluth had a visit in January 2007 and the region has given them permission to become an emerging community. Members have selected Stigmata of St. Francis as the group's name. Our Lady Queen of Angels NFG, Columbia, S.C., has seven professed members and would like to become emerging. They also have requested a visitation. Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity, Hilton Head Island, S.C., is the sponsoring fraternity. Knoxville has seven professed and would like to become emerging. They had two information nights, which seven people attended. The fraternity will begin orientation with them. St. Francis and Clare NFG, Knoxville, Tenn., has significant health and family issues among their professed; they do not have five active professed members. They will be contacted.
  - ❖ Commissions: Judy reported that Betty Longinotti has resigned as Youth commissioner because of a schedule that is too full. Jennye, serving as peace-and-justice commissioner, told us that she is not sure where national stands on the commissions. She said that the justice and peace commission is still sending out e-mails, and she continues to forward them to members in our region.
  - ❖ Spiritual assistant course: The course is set to begin on March 14–15 in Charlotte. Joanita is coordinating, and Fr. Linus will lead the class.
  - ❖ Review formation workshop and plans: Faye, Judy, Jerry, and Madeline attended the national formation workshop at San Pedro in Winter Park, Fla. Council agreed to use "formation" as our theme at this year's ARG and then follow up with formation workshops in our region's three areas in 2009.
  - ❖ NAFRA meeting 2008: Kathy Taormina and Dale Anesi toured the Scarritt Bennett Center in Nashville, Tenn., the NAFRA meeting site in October. The overall theme of the meeting will be St. Elizabeth of Hungary. Kathy summarized the NAFRA host plans in an excellent way, and we are indebted to her for her wonderful help and assistance.
  - ❖ Support of new fraternity in Antigua: Audrey told us that Vin Feudo, SFO, a member

See COUNCIL, page 21

**COUNCIL, from page 20**

of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Augusta, Ga., and his wife, are doing missionary work in Antigua. The local bishop in Antigua has asked them to start a Secular Franciscan fraternity. Representatives for National and International (Anne Mulqueen, Doug Clorey, and Fr. Kevin Queally) traveled to Antigua, Feb. 8–10, and were excited and uplifted by the fraternity. At this point, our job is to “accompany them” on their journey and to keep a low profile. We are asked to keep the infant fraternity in our prayers.

- ❖ Request to re-activate fraternity in Garden City: The group had written a letter to the regional executive council asking to be re-activated, so it was decided that a member of the council would visit the fraternity and then “re-vitalize” it if Holy Name Province has not de-activated it. Judy will discuss this with Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM, of Holy Name Province, and speak to Diane Curran, minister of Crucified Christ Fraternity in North Charleston, S.C., which has been meeting with members from Garden City.
- ❖ Other discussion included:
  - Change in process to establish a new fraternity;
  - Regional apostolate ideas;
  - Acceptance of SFO member’s request to withdraw from the Order;
  - Dale to travel to Sydney, Australia, for a youth conference July 12–14.

Next REC-CG is scheduled for June 28–29 at Ridgecrest, N.C. T

## Communio

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**Spring 2009**

Copy deadline: March 20

Publication date: March 27

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