

Communio

That All May Be One

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

Fall 2010

New council elected

By Joanita M. Nellenbach, SFO

Communio editor

Our Regional Executive Council (REC) election on Aug. 31, during our Annual Regional Gathering (ARG), was truly an inspiration.

Jennye Taylor Johnson, SFO, and Christine Washington, SFO, the nominating committee, had worked hard to assemble a slate of candidates for the various offices, and a number of our members had already volunteered.

On Friday evening, as the ARG got under way Deacon Tom Bello, our national minister, spoke passionately about the importance of stepping forward to offer service on the council.

More people agreed to accept nominations.

Saturday afternoon, Deacon Tom presided at the election, with Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv., our regional spiritual assistant, serving as ecclesiastical witness. The REC and ministers of established fraternities participating in the voting.

We remained in suspense until results were announced on Saturday evening. The new council has members from all five states in our region. Father Linus presided at the Mass of Installation on Sunday morning.

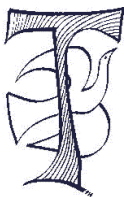
The new council will combine a retreat and its first council meeting at Living Waters

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The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

Spirituality



Formation

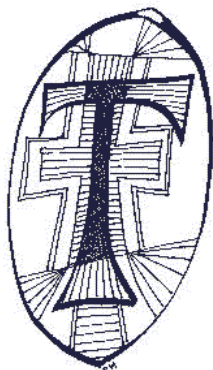


Fraternity



Apostolate





Minister's Message

"She would sit at the end of the dock each morning and look out at the bay. She would stay, usually, about a half hour, then return to her day's work. When I asked why she sat on the dock, still and pensive, each morning, she said, "I don't wake up a nun. I wake up a human being like everyone else. I come out here to recommit myself to being a nun."

"Our daily prayer is like that. We set apart time at the beginning of the day to recommit ourselves to our calling, our vocation, or to ask for enlightenment to know what our vocation is. Much of who we become depends on the willingness to commit ourselves to something larger than ourselves that gives meaning and direction to a life that otherwise is directed from outside, by every fad and pressure, to become what others want us to be, rather than what we want to be.

"We know who we really are by listening in silence to our own inner movement and then committing ourselves to directing that movement toward something that makes of our inner movement more than self-serving self-fulfillment. That is the paradox: We move inward to discern our own inner movement, but we have to move outward to keep that inner movement from turning in upon itself.

"The nun on the dock is an image of that dynamic. She enters the silence and solitude of her morning prayer, not in order to stay there, but to find there a way of bringing her recommitment to her vocation to the world around her. She has to remind herself who she is if she is to be who she is for herself and others.

"You do not wake up a husband or wife, a mother or father, a son or daughter, a single person living in the world, a priest, a brother, a nun, a sister. You wake up a human being who has to remember and recommit to being what your decisions and your life have made you."

Murray Bado, OFM, Song of the Sparrow, pp.123-124

I am humbled at being called and chosen to serve you as your regional minister. God does not call the qualified but qualifies those who are called.

For all who have accepted nomination to serve the region or your local fraternity in any way, I thank you: "They should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters" (SFO Rule, Art. 12). I look forward to the opportunity of visiting each of the fraternities in the region during the years ahead and getting to know "the family."

I am basically a simple person who believes in the goodness of God's creation and in the basic truth that we are all created in God's image and likeness. Therefore, what I ask of you is what I stated at the recent ARG – support, communication, and prayer:

- Support — Support of your brothers and sisters in the local fraternity, region, national, and international: "The brothers and sisters are co-responsible for the life of the fraternity to which they belong and for the SFO as the organic union of all fraternities throughout the world" (General Constitutions, Art. 30.1).
- Effective communication — How can we know what our brothers and sisters need? We learn to listen and engage in true dialogue. Listening requires putting ourselves, our thoughts and feelings, aside for a period of time in order to really be present to another. Make the extra effort to repeat what you think you heard to ensure the message is clear.
- Prayer — As our father Francis's actions were always preceded by a significant period of prayer, so we also, as instruments, must seek to nourish ourselves in this way so that we might live the Gospel. There will be times when living the Gospel will mean leading, and other times it may mean following. If we are rooted in prayer, it will not matter which we

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do, but only that we are doing the will of our God.

Please pray that the Holy Spirit, our minister general, will continue to lead and guide this region that we might truly be a “light” in this time and place in God’s creation. Let us support one another, dialogue with one another, and pray for the guidance and courage necessary to continue our journey toward the Lord as we seek to live a Gospel-centered life of conversion.

Please know that you are all in my daily prayers as I ask St. Francis and St. Clare to intercede for the brothers and sisters whom he has given me.

*Peace and All Good,
Jerry*

**Editor’s Journal**

Local legend in the village of Valleremita in the Marches of Ancona, Italy, tells how St. Francis visited there in 1210.

He was searching for the hermitage of Santa Maria di Val di Sasso (St. Mary of the Valley of Rock) and spotted a local farmer whose cows were hitched to the plow he was using in his field. Francis asked the farmer to guide him to the hermitage, but the farmer said he had to finish his work.

When Francis commanded the farmer to lead him to the hermitage, the man agreed. Upon his return, he found the field plowed and the cows resting.

We five pilgrims (four Secular Franciscans and a Buddhist/Daoist) didn’t need a farmer to guide us. Now, 800 years after Francis’s visit, there’s a rather rocky path, for those who want to walk up the mountain, and the one-lane dirt road that we took in a van.

In the eighth century, this was a fortress; from the ninth to the 12th centuries it was a monastery for Benedictine nuns.

Then, Franciscan friars used it for several hundred years. For two periods, one of which lasted more than 100 years, when the Church was suppressed in Italy, the friars were forced to leave the hermitage. Today there’s a small community year-round, usually two–four friars, including some who are spending time there as part of their preparation for solemn vows.

There’s a chapel and an adjoining building that houses the sacristy, dining room, and kitchen on the first floor, and the friars’ bedrooms on the second floor.

With a grant from the Italian government (the land is part of a state park), they’re hoping to rebuild the part of the hermitage that collapsed before the mid-20th century.

I talked with Father Ferdinando Campana, OFM, former provincial of the Province of the Marches and current guardian of the community, several days after our visit. “Francis liked to stay there because it was dedicated to the mother of God,” he said.

In fact, it became known as the “Portiuncola of the Marches,” in part because, like St. Mary of the Angels, the Portiuncola in Assisi, it was named for the Blessed Virgin.

When we arrived, we found pitchers of water and coffee and a tray of pastries on a table in the portico outside the chapel. Brother Luca Gabrielli, OFM, who would be making his solemn profession on Sept. 17, told us about the place, and we had time for private meditation.

This was one of six hermitages we visited in Umbria, the Marches, and Tuscany, Sept. 5–10, with St. Francis Pilgrimages. The others were the Carceri, on Mount Subasio above Assisi; Mount LaVerna, where Francis received the stigmata; Renacavata, the birthplace of the Capuchin order; Monteluco, near the city of Spoleto; and Montecasale, about five miles from the city of San Sepolcro.

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Visiting these places, it's easy to see why Francis loved them.

Most are in forested areas. Although these hermitages are no longer quite as remote as they were in Francis's time, I could taste the solitude that Francis experienced, and it's wonderful to have time in such ancient places.

We spent several hours at Monteluco and visited a cell from which we had a spectacular view of the valley: the same view St. Anthony of Padua had when he stayed there.

"The dense forest of ilex and oak trees were venerated by ancient pagan Umbrians 3,000 years ago, and later Romans," the pilgrimage guidebook explains. "Syrian and Italian hermits built shrines here, as did Benedictine monks. Monteluco was mentioned with respect by Cato, Seneca, and Pliny.

"The first recorded laws to protect the environment were recorded here on a third-century B.C. engraving still extant, which forbade cutting a single branch. St. Francis himself founded a hermitage here which the friars still maintain today. It serves as the postulancy for the OFM friars of Umbria."

The next day, we stopped by Montecasale on our way to Mount LaVerna. Francis visited Montecasale in 1212, and there are two statues of him here: one stands on a small rise above the hermitage and is dedicated to St. Francis, patron of ecology.

The other statue has Francis seated on a wall inside the hermitage and looking toward a distant hill where there were three wooden crosses. At first I wondered why the life-sized white statue wasn't positioned so Francis looked out across the valley. Perhaps, though, he was looking away from the world below to gaze on higher things.

We prayed Morning Prayer before we left the hermitage, but we'd originally planned to pray right after we arrived. Just as we began, though, Brother Francisco came into the chapel and offered to give us a tour. He showed us St. Bonaventure's and St. Anthony's cells in a wing adjacent to the chapel, introduced us to the three dogs who live in the hermitage, and told us stories about Francis during his time there.

In one story, a nobleman and a farmer wanted to join Francis, who told them to plant some vegetables upside down. The nobleman did as he was bid, but the farmer protested that vegetables wouldn't grow upside down. As you might guess, it was the nobleman who was admitted, because of his obedience. Francis told the farmer, "We need friars, not farmers."

Openness to what's being asked of us. Something to think about in our own journey.

*Pace e bene
Joanita*

H2O Project totals for 2010

**Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region
raised \$1,075.05.**

Participating fraternities in our region:

Channel of Peace

Chattanooga, Tenn.

Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg

Blairsville, Ga.

St. Anthony of Padua

Fayetteville, N.C.

St. Francis of the Hills

Hendersonville, N.C.

St. Francis of the Living Waters

Franklin, N.C.

St. Maximilian Kolbe

Charlotte, N.C.

St. Michael

Garden City, S.C.

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Catholic Reflection Center in Maggie Valley, N.C., Nov. 12–14.

Here's a short profile on each council member:

Minister: Jerry Rousseau, SFO

Professed: Oct. 24, 2004

Fraternity: Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg, Blairsville, Ga.

Service to Region: appointed treasurer, April 2006–August 2007; elected treasurer, August 2007

Service to Fraternity: appointed leader, March 2005–December 2007; elected minister, December 2007

Vice Minister: Frank Massey, SFO

Professed: 1996

Fraternity: Franciscan Family of Greensboro, Greensboro, N.C.

Service to Region: region's first Peace and Justice chair after the commission was established in 2000, served three years

Service to Fraternity: minister, 1996–2002; re-elected minister, 2006, and continues to serve in that position

Secretary: Christine Washington, SFO

Professed: Oct. 3, 1982

Fraternity: St. Joseph of Cupertino, Bessemer, Ala.

Service to Region: Work Commission chair, 1998–2001; formation director, 2001–2004

Service to Fraternity: secretary, 1982–1985; formation director, 1985–1991; minister, 1991–1997; formation director, 1997–present; also, fraternity newsletter editor

Treasurer: Greg Savold, SFO

Professed: Aug. 22, 2009

Fraternity: St. Francis of the Hills, Hendersonville, N.C.

Formation Director: Faye Martin, SFO

Professed: Aug. 15, 1999

Fraternity: Channel of Peace, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Service to Region: elected formation director 2007

Service to Fraternity: assisted Ed Campbell, SFO, fraternity formation director with formation classes; upon his death, appointed to fill the position; twice elected minister, 2002 and 2005; manages fraternity's apostolate.

Area 1: Bessemer, Ala.; Decatur, Ala.; Athens, Ga.; Blairsville, Ga.; Conyers, Ga.; Duluth, Ga.; Jonesboro, Ga.; Franklin, N.C.; Chattanooga, Tenn.; Knoxville, Tenn.; Nashville, Tenn.

Councilor: Awilda "Willie" Guadalupe, SFO

Professed: Oct. 4, 2003

Fraternity: Immaculate Conception, Jonesboro, Ga.

Service to Region: elected Area 1 councilor, 2007

Service to Fraternity: past minister, currently serving as a sponsor

Councilor: John Knippel, SFO

Professed: August 2007

Fraternity: St. Francis of the Living Waters, Franklin, N.C.

Service to Fraternity: minister since November 2008

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Area 2: Augusta, Ga.; St. Simons Island, Ga.; Asheville, N.C.; Charlotte, N.C.; Hendersonville, N.C.; Hickory, N.C.; Aiken, S.C.; Charleston, S.C.; Columbia, S.C.; Greenville, S.C.; Hilton Head Island, S.C.; Spartanburg, S.C.

Councilor: Sara Nell Boggs, SFO

Professed: Oct. 16, 1999

Fraternity: St. Michael the Archangel, Spartanburg, S.C.

Service to Region: area councilor, 2007–2010

Service to Fraternity: formation director, six years

Councilor: Charles A. Meyer Jr., SFO

Professed: Nov. 22, 1997

Fraternity: St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Augusta, Ga.

Service to Fraternity: served as treasurer; currently serving as minister

Area 3: Burlington, N.C.; Elizabeth City, N.C.; Fayetteville, N.C.; Greensboro, N.C.; Morehead City, N.C.; Raleigh, N.C.; Wilmington, N.C.; Winston-Salem, N.C.

Councilor: Jane Sullivan, SFO

Professed: May 1996

Fraternity: Franciscan Family of Greensboro, Greensboro, N.C.

Service to Fraternity: treasurer, one year; vice minister, nine years; formation director, four years

Councilor: Paula Zanker, SFO

Professed: May 29, 1999

Fraternity: Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, Burlington, N.C.

Service to Region: Ecology Commission chair, 2000–2004; formation director, 2004–2007

Service to Fraternity: formation director, 2000–2005; minister, 2008–present. T

“Essentially, a hermitage is a place of silence. The silence taught the brothers how to speak in the noisy streets of the city.

“Eremetical solitude is an essential part of Francis’ spirituality. He did not consider solitary adoration as an optional extra. Francis founded at least twenty mountain hermitages. They were primitive, poor and simple. Saint Bonaventure was washing dishes in a hermitage when he received the news that he had been made a cardinal. While Francis and his followers were deeply involved in evangelization, they recognized the importance of maintaining a certain distance and perspective from society. The hermitage experience kept them from becoming too deeply submerged in active cares, and also safeguarded them from becoming physically and spiritually drained by the demands of their exhausting work of caring for the poor and preaching the Good News. Prayer does not flourish without help, and the hermitage helps revitalize prayer by providing it with time and space.

“We all need time in a hermitage.”

Gerard Thomas Straub,

The Sun & Moon Over Assisi: a personal encounter with Francis and Clare, pp. 536–537



Formation Book Review Corner

By Faye Martin, SFO

BSSF Region formation director

I may have enjoyed *In the Footsteps of Francis and Clare* by Roch Niemier, OFM, so much because I read it after making two pilgrimages to Italy. Father Roch is past president of Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs and was a guide on numerous pilgrimages.

Each chapter is a *place* that was significant in the lives of Francis and Clare. Father Roch believes that, “Places have their own power, one that evokes meaning, direction and spirit.” Each place gives us insight into how Francis and Clare were awakened to and transformed by divine love.

His invitation to join him as an armchair pilgrim recommends that we have a pilgrim’s mindset: “Be open to discovery, receptive to the movement of God’s grace; be willing to be changed and to accept a call to holiness.”

Father Roch begins at San Francesco Piccolino: La Stalletta, a chapel that legend says was the stable where Francis’s mother chose to give birth to him. The chapter gives a brief overview of how Francis sought to conform himself to Christ throughout his life. He found it in the reality of his everyday life. He began doing penance, when he turned his heart to Christ and the Gospel.

At Rocca Maggiore and Perugia Francis learned that we “do not handle violence with violence.” He began “coming to grips with the aggression inside his own heart ... Francis learned that the propensity to violence, this inclination to evil in which we all share, is the same motive that keeps alive our judging of others, our greed and anger, our revenge and self pity.... He embraced that ominous, negative side of his nature and turned his life over to Jesus to be redeemed” (see Mark 7:5, 15, 20–23). These interior battles were waged in places of solitude. His desire for reconciliation with all became the “nonviolent charism of Francis.”

“God was the center of Francis’ world—not brothers and sisters, not making peace, not the poor or the beauty of the created world, not being a gallant and victorious knight or a successful merchant. Francis did say yes to all of these, up to a point. But it was the living God who entered his life and made all the difference. This grounded him and he awakened this hunger and the possibility of experiencing God in the hearts of others.”

As Francis continued his life’s journey, his trust and faith in God became his poverty: My God, My All! “In other words, the foundation of our life is not some structure, or religious laws, or an institution. The foundation of our life is faith in Jesus Christ, a knowledge and relationship with him. Because of that faith we are able to live within structures and institutions and be guided by religious laws, as was Francis.”

Reflection: Father Roch reminds us “not to confuse conformity with external acts.” T

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW
FOR OUR NEXT
ANNUAL REGIONAL GATHERINGS
JULY 22–24, 2011
AUG. 3–5, 2012
AUG. 2–4, 2013**

With grateful thanks for Annual Regional Gathering

It is always a joy to gather together to sing, pray, and share our Franciscan spirit. This year included election of our Regional Executive Council. The Holy Spirit did an outstanding job of selecting our new servant leaders.

We had 256 registered to attend our ARG this past summer. We keep growing each year. So many work together to make it a success.

We were blessed with special visitors and guest speakers.

Deacon Tom Bello, SFO, national minister, was with us as fraternal witness for the election. He is a warm and wonderful example of our Franciscan family.

Guest speakers included our own special spiritual assistant, Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv.; Sister Bernadette Marie Cappola, OSC; and Cricket Aull, SFO. We were so pleased to hear Kelly Hart, who gave an inspirational talk about her spiritual journey as a young adult.

Thanks to so many who were involved to make our ARG such a success. Please join in thanking everyone who participated and attended to make the event a joyful, prayerful time in community.

Thanks to Bernie Bessette, SFO, minister, and the members of St. Clare of Assisi Fraternity, Aiken, S.C., who did a great job of coordinating the registration and bringing the very attractive shirts to sell and share.

Thanks to Jim Moran, SFO, leader, and the members of Stigmata of St. Francis Emerging Fraternity, Duluth, Ga., who coordinated the eucharistic adoration chapel that allowed us to continue to pray and worship our eucharistic Lord throughout the night.

Our Lady of Good Counsel Fraternity, Greenville, S.C., prepared cards to recognize the newly professed and special anniversaries. The members joined in the recognition. The card had a copy of a drawing by the young son of Judy and John Bruce, SFO.

For the second year in a row, Rose Campbell, SFO, minister, and members of Immaculate Conception Fraternity, Jonesboro, Ga., prepared a beautiful display and led the memorial service for our deceased members.

Many thanks again to Theresa Christie, SFO, from St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, Augusta, Ga., for selecting the music for the liturgies and coordinating with the others who shared their musical talent to lead us in praise to our Lord. Thanks to Norma Krajczar, SFO, minister of Fr. Solanus Casey Fraternity in Morehead City, N.C., for accompaniment and Pat Boni, SFO, for helping.

As always, we thank Pete and Maureen Smith and Rosemary and Vinny Cummo for bringing the Franciscan books and articles to sell from St. Francis Springs Prayer Center. We appreciate all the work. Sorry that Father Louis Canino, OFM, could not be with us.

While members of the regional council met to conduct required business, workshops gave other attendees a variety of activities to choose from:

- Kathy Taormina, SFO, and Matt and Bethany Hair shared ideas for Youth and Young Adults;
- Jon Strickland, SFO, gave ideas for apostolates for Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation;
- Helen Jenkins, SFO, offered a review of the “mutual invitation” process that allows everyone an opportunity to be involved in discussion;



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- Joanita Nellenbach, SFO, showed the DVD, "Clare and Francis;
- Theresa Christie, SFO, offered a workshop on rosary-making that many enjoyed.

It was a wonderful celebration of who we are, where we are going as Secular Franciscans, and how we live and learn together in fraternity.

Lastly, I ask every member of our exceptional region to please accept my humble and sincere thanks for your love and support for the past six years and the unexpected recognition and gifts.

*Your servant,
Judy*

Congratulations**Newly Professed**

**St. Michael the Archangel Fraternity
Spartanburg, S.C.,**

Aug. 28

Brenda Coggins, SFO

Jo Curcio, SFO

Jim Johnson, SFO

Lynn Skinner-Johnson, SFO

Shizuko Klatte, SFO

Beverly Wadding, SFO

Angelene Willard, SFO

New Council

**St. Clare Fraternity
Asheville, N.C.**

July 15

Minister: Jane Sorrells, SFO

Vice Minister: Gail Carroll, SFO

Secretary: Gwen Hobson, SFO

Treasurer: Bob Martin, SFO

Formation Dir.:

Barbara Freeman, SFO

Communio

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