

Communio

That All May Be One

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

Summer 2011

For Up to Now . . .



By Faye Martin, SFO

May 12–15 Jerry Rousseau, SFO, minister of our Region; Madeline Rousseau, SFO, and I attended the National Formation Workshop at Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, Ill. We were there for a presentation of a new tool for our initial formation process,

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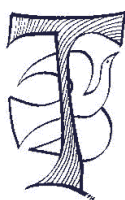
which we would learn would be entitled *For Up to Now* — *Foundational Topics for Initial Formation*, or *FUN*. Like those of us who attended the National Formation Workshop, you may be asking, “Why more material for our initial formation process? What is there left to do?” I offer the following response for the *why* and the *what*.

During the Second Vatican Council, it was the Spirit of God that revealed to the Church “new and deeper insights of redefining itself and its role . . . No longer would the Church continue to be defined solely upon the aspect of authority — a top-down understanding. Instead, the Council sought to emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit and of the Charisms which the Spirit inspires wherever it wills; of the Word and its link with the Sacraments; of human values and the capacity of each member of the community to be an apostle—a horizontal and radically equal understanding” (*FUN*).

In light of Vatican II “all the Religious Institutes had to question their institutional identity and offer adequate response of their charism to the changed conditions of times. . . . The SFO is not a Religious Institute of Consecrated Life; however, our foundational history, our laws, and our

The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate



Profession place us in a state which makes these words applicable to us" (*FUN*).

Our journey of renewal began with "an invitation from the Ministers General to the national fraternities, later to include Tertiary leaders, to participate by making suggestions as to the content of the Rule. An International Obediential Council reviewed the input" and eventually a Rule was accepted by the Council. It was approved by Pope Paul VI on June 24, 1978 (*FUN*). Our General Constitutions were approved by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life on Dec. 8, 2000 (from the "Letter of the Conference of General Ministers of the First Order and the TOR," preceding our General Constitutions).

Using the evaluation forms received from all levels, the International Council of the Secular

**Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis
Regional Executive Council Directory
Minister**

Jerry Rousseau, SFO, jrsfo2004@windstream.net

Vice Minister

Frank Massey, SFO, franksfo@triad.rr.com

Secretary

Christine Washington, SFO, clunawash@aol.com

Treasurer

Greg Savold, SFO, x160st_30yr@bellsouth.net

Formation Director

Faye Martin, SFO, fmartinsfo@bellsouth.net

Spiritual Assistant

Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv. Ldes22@mac.com

Area 1 Councilors

Willie Guadalupe, SFO, awildag@numail.org

John Knippel, SFO, jknippel@tektone.net

Area 2 Councilors

Sara Nell Boggs, SFO, snboggs162@yahoo.com

Dr. Charles A. Meyer Jr., SFO, cameyerjr@gmail.com

Area 3 Councilors

Jane Sullivan, SFO, jane_farris@yahoo.com

Paula Zanker, SFO, pazanker@aol.com

Archivist

Sara Nell Boggs, SFO, snboggs162@yahoo.com

Communio Editor

Joanita M. Nellenbach, SFO, sfowriter@att.net

Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation Coordinator

Jon Strickland, SFO, JonStrick@comcast.net

Youth/Young Adult Fraternal Animator

Position Vacant

Prayer Ministry (online prayer requests)

Harriet Sporn, SFO

Fraternity prayer coordinators

submit prayer requests

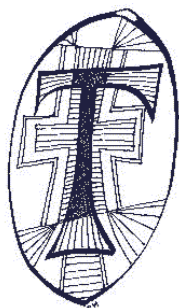
Franciscan Order (CIOFS) evaluated the needs of the SFO. It was discerned we had "lost our authentic and deep sense of belonging, which is rooted in a clear notion of identity and knowledge of the true nature of the SFO and its place in the Franciscan Family and in the Church" (*FUN*). Our National Fraternity responded to the needs outlined by CIOFS with a new resource, *For Up to Now — Foundational Topics for Initial Formation*, for us.

Those who attended the National Formation Workshop were "blown away" by the Spirit of the talks that we heard. As I listened I could not help but think how Franciscan the horizontal relationship sounded. I was jolted as I remembered it was Pope John XXIII, a professed member of the SFO, who was inspired to summon the archbishops, bishops, and heads of all the religious orders for a Diocesan Synod for Rome and an Ecumenical Council for the Universal Church. He gathered the necessary people, who needed to hear what the Spirit of God would reveal.

The National Formation Commission researched and developed a resource manual with a unified, comprehensive understanding of our foundational topics, which are already part of our *BSSF Regional Formators' Guidelines for Orientation and Initial Formation*. We are being

called to return to our Franciscan roots and make our Franciscan spirituality, charism, and identity relevant in today's secular world. We cannot wait to share some of what we learned at the National Formation Workshop.

Faye Martin, SFO, is regional formation director of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region, councilor to the Sts. Francis and Clare, Emerging Fraternity, in Knoxville, Tenn., and a member of Channel of Peace Fraternity in Chattanooga, Tenn.



Minister's Message

As this issue of *Communio* arrives in your midst, we are making final preparations for our Annual Regional Gathering (July 22–24). It promises to be a wonderful family celebration.

One of the traditions that we observe during the weekend is the Renewal of Commitment. Webster's dictionary defines commitment as a promise or pledge to do something. When we began this journey toward becoming Secular Franciscans, we were asked to make commitments along the way. During initial formation we promised to read a book on St. Francis. We explored our basic

Catholic faith and pledged to live in full communion with the Church while embracing the charisms of a Franciscan way of life.

During the Rite of Admission we pledged the following: "I, here present, ask to enter this fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, so that I may live more intensely and faithfully the grace and dedication of my Baptism by following Jesus Christ according to the teachings and example of St. Francis of Assisi. In this way I intend to be of service to all through my secular state of life for the glory of God and to fulfill his plan of love in behalf of all people" (*Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order*, page 14). The fraternity members in turn made a promise: "..... the Secular Franciscan Fraternity of _____ very gladly promises to help you in your journey ..." (*Ritual*, page 16).

Commitment is a key priority of who we are as Secular Franciscans. While we gain knowledge along the way, this way of life is not about how much we study and learn but about the promises and pledges we make. At profession we state emphatically "This is what I want" (because this is who I am)! There is the sense of belonging (to an Order that covers the globe). We profess to an Order that is both penitential and service-oriented.

The Order lives in the local fraternities and, therefore, that is our privileged place — our family (see Article 22 of the *Rule*). We should be excited to gather each month with our local fraternity and whenever we can be with our brothers and sisters. The Order's responsibility is the responsibility of every Secular Franciscan. We all become agents of formation. It is not the responsibility of the formation director alone. We are to be "joyful witnesses" to this way of life. I am convinced that this is what attracts others to our way of life.

We must be persons of our time. While we study much about St. Francis and St. Clare and numerous Franciscan saints, we do not live in 1220, 1380, 1560, 1840, or 1950. We are affected by our world — the world of the 21st century. We need to sift out the good things of God's creation in our time and be joyful witnesses to the world. This is the commitment that we have embraced as Secular Franciscans in this time and place.

If we are not committed, it is not a vocation. God called each of us to the Franciscan way of life. Each one has unique gifts that make up the body of Christ and build strong fraternal communion. Are you ready to recommit to embracing Francis's way of following Christ? Some of what he teaches us is a love of poverty, simplicity, humility, putting others first, abandonment to God, and obedience to the Church. Francis was the most Christlike of men — in his thoughts,

in what he saw, how he loved and acted, in calling everyone and everything brother and sister. Let us begin — for up to now we have done little.

I look forward, with eager anticipation, to being with many of you at our annual homecoming. See you at the ARG, where fraternity comes alive.

Peace and All Good,
Jerry



Editor's Journal

"I have been a Franciscan for over fifty years now, and this fact makes me think once again of the vows and their significance in the life of a friar. Unfortunately, they sometimes amount to nothing more than a commitment to 'hang in there.' Surely, an impoverished idea of the vows, but perhaps sufficient to get us over the rough spots. All vows, however, including marriage vows, have to amount to a lot more than that. They should be a commitment to grow into a new person in Christ, and they should be made with this transformation into Christ as their chief motivation. I must, in making my vows, firmly believe that I am entering into the work of God, that I am entering upon a long process of purification and liberation to which God has called me by name.

"If my vows amount to nothing more than hanging around friaries and wearing the habit, or hanging around home and a marriage, then certainly they are a mockery of everyone's fundamental call to grow in God. And if after giving up my previous home, family and everything for Christ with one side of my mouth, I then gradually call it back with the other side, vows themselves can become little insurance policies guaranteeing a comfortable, mediocre life of noninvolvement with God or a spouse and fellow human beings" (p. 5).

Father Murray Bodo, OFM
Song of the Sparrow: New Poems and Meditations

Early last year, during the process of my appointment as a fraternity spiritual assistant, Father Richard Trezza, OFM, called me.

"Hi, this is Father Richard from New Jersey," he said, when I answered the phone.

Father Richard is provincial spiritual assistant to Most Holy Name of Jesus Province, to which that fraternity is bonded. "How will you maintain the connection between the First Order and the SFOs?" he asked.

Apparently, my answer was satisfactory, but I wish now that I'd had the above quote. When I read it, I thought how much this sounds like what we promise when we make Profession as Secular Franciscans.

Friars "vow." We "promise." Our Profession must mean more than "hanging in."

There's a lot in this *Communio* about commitment, about choosing "to make the SFO the center of your life" (*Come and See*, p. 25).

We don't give up home and family, as the friars do, but we may have to give up some of our former attachments. As Father Lester Bach, OFM, says in his article on page 15, "when we take the SFO Rule seriously, we won't have time to take on other commitments."

How wonderful that God has called each of us "by name," to enter into the Secular Franciscan way of life. It truly is purifying and liberating.

Pace e bene
Joanita

Joanita M. Nellenbach, SFO, is Communio editor. She is a member of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity in Hendersonville, N.C., and spiritual assistant to Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity in Blairsville, Ga.

Words of Wisdom from our Regional Spiritual Assistant

My dear Sisters & Brothers,

May the peace of Christ reign in your heart!

Oh for the days when it was simple — just simple, not multiple forms, binders, documents, manuals. We have become **sophisticated**, yes. And so what?

I can remember that soon after I was ordained the Province initiated a continuing education and formation program. I said to myself and others, “I just completed 10 years of formation and education. What do I need this for???”



Well, as time passed, and not too long after I spoke those words of frustration and incredulity, work began on the revision of the *Constitutions* of the Order. That put an end to my challenging the need for continuing education and formation.

As you know from your own experience, we need to maintain a close watch on the various pieces of our lives. This is particularly true when it comes to what is intangible — and subtle. As we progress, we see more clearly the need for fine tuning and clarifying.

It is an evolutionary process. It is not static or stationary but dynamic and spirited. We are in the crucible to be refined and purified. Your promise of poverty is the umbrella under which you submit that which would hold you back. Letting it go frees you to embrace that which graces, sanctifies, and moves you on the road to holiness. We are called to metanoia — change, repentance — in short, to the ultimate goal: perfection.

Will we get there? We will be well on our way if we continue to look to fulfill, to complete, to develop. Thus, the need for tools to assist us in achieving the goal: documents, plans, profiles, courses of action, workshops, retreats, council meetings.

And visitations.

We hope it's fading, but the perception still exists: “Visitation. **They** are coming! Time for the audit.” The “they” being the fraternal and pastoral visitors; the “audit” being that visitation is about checking the books and criticizing how we do things in the fraternity.

Yet, that's not the purpose of a visitation. We, who are Visitors, want our brothers and sisters to understand the need for vigilance, a prayerful spirit, an openness to growth and development. We know this directly in relation to our vocation. We seek to raise the consciousness of those we serve. We're not law enforcers. We're inviting them to understand, be aware, to look more deeply and with greater clarity at living their Franciscan life.

Yes, all of this takes time and energy; however, they address the roots of our lives. They are the elements which will assist us on our journey to fulfillment in Christ. And I am sure you will agree with me that there is no better place to be other than with Christ.

So, my Sisters & Brothers, while we have time, let us do good.

*Blessings of peace and all good things,
Fr. Linus*

Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv., is a member of St. Anthony of Padua Province, USA, which has its headquarters in Ellicott City, Md. He is Catholic chaplain at Syracuse University in Syracuse, N.Y.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS REGION

ANNUAL REGIONAL GATHERING

LifeWay Conference Center, Ridgecrest, North Carolina
Johnson Spring Building – 2nd Floor Azalea Room B&C

July 22–July 24

Theme of Gathering: “Living an evangelical Life: A call to BE”

FRIDAY JULY 22

- 3:00 P.M. Registration - Mountain Laurel Lobby – (St. Clare of Assisi Fraternity)
3:00 Meeting - REC (Johnson Spring Board Room)
3:00–4:00 Divine Mercy chaplet – Cenacles of Life rosaries (Mountain Laurel conf. rm. #9)
4:00 Meeting - spiritual assistants- (Mountain Laurel Board Room)
Choir practice: cantors and musicians (Johnson Spring 2nd Floor, Azalea B&C))
5:00 Liturgy of the Hours- (Johnson Spring 2nd Floor, Azalea Room B&C)
5:30 -6:30 Dinner buffet (tickets required)
6:45 Welcome, Opening Prayer, Theme Song
Introductions and Recognition of New Councils, New Attendees
Review Agenda – Jerry Rousseau, Minister
7:15 Introduction of Theme and of Keynote speaker
– Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv., Regional Spiritual Assistant
8:00 Presentation – Sister Ilia Delio, OSF
9:15 Social (Johnson Spring Building - 2nd Floor, Room 1 A-D)

SATURDAY JULY 23

- 7:15-8:15 Breakfast buffet (tickets required)
8:15 Liturgy of the Hours Morning Prayer
8:45 Presentation – Sister Ilia Delio, OSF
10:15 Break
10:30 Celebration of the Eucharist - Procession to Eucharistic Chapel
(Stigmata of St. Francis Emerging Community)
Noon- 1:00 Lunch buffet (tickets required)
1:15 Presentation – Sister Ilia Delio, OSF
2:45 Break
3:00 Discussion time – Q & A with Sr. Ilia
3:45 Answer the Call – Cricket Aull, SFO

3:45-5:15 ***Regional Fraternity Council Meeting*** (see bottom of page 7)

5:30-6:30 Dinner buffet (tickets required)
6:45 Liturgy of the Hours Evening Prayer
7:00 Intro to “FUN” Manual – Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv.
7:45 Memorial: Deceased Members of Region- (Immaculate Conception
Fraternity)
8:15 Presentation – Cricket and Jerry Aull
9:15 Social (Johnson Spring Building - 2nd Floor, Room 1 A-D)

SUNDAY JULY 24

- 7:15-8:15 Breakfast buffet (tickets required)
(Time to check out)
- 8:45 Recognition of Newly Professed & Anniversaries
- Renewal of Commitment (Our Lady of Good Counsel Fraternity)
- 9:15 Celebration of the Eucharist, Morning Prayer
- Mass of Canonical Establishment (Stigmata of St. Francis fraternity)
- 10:45 Closing Prayer - Theme Song
Closing Comments - Adjournment

FRANCISCAN BOOKS AND ARTICLES WILL BE FOR SALE

(St. Francis Springs Prayer Center)

Johnson Spring Building – 2nd Floor, Azalea Room A

***A Chapel will be open for Eucharistic Adoration 11:30 AM Sat until
8:45 AM Sun.**

Please sign up to spend quiet time with our Lord

(Chapel: Mountain Laurel Building, lower level - conference room #9)

REGIONAL FRATERNITY COUNCIL MEETING

Saturday, July 23, 2011 *** 3:45 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.**

Johnson Spring Building - 2nd Floor, Room 3 A-D (Across from Azalea Room)

**Every elected Fraternity Minister and REC is a member of the
Regional Fraternity Council.**

Please be present or delegate this responsibility to another member.

OPENING PRAYER

Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order

ROLL CALL

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

REPORT OF TREASURER

BUSINESS

Approval of Budget for 2012

Formation Workshop – September 10, 2011

ARG – 2012: August 3-5, 2012 (Ridgecrest)

ARG – 2013:

OPEN FORUM – Please discuss items with regional minister before meeting.

ADJOURNMENT – CLOSING PRAYER

***MEMBERS OF FRATERNITIES, NEWLY FORMING GROUPS AND EMERGING
COMMUNITIES ARE INVITED TO OBSERVE THE COUNCIL MEETING.

National minister: Meeting Christ on the journey

Beloved National Family,

As all good Franciscan gatherings should begin, the National Formation Workshop, May 12–15 in Belleville, Ill., began in prayer, breaking open the Scriptures and sharing the Good News with one another.

Led by our beloved Father Richard Trezza, OFM, the Scripture passage selected was the Easter Gospel of Jesus with the two apostles on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35).

Biblical scholars tell us that most of the Easter narratives in the Gospels feature an empty tomb and/or a nonrecognition of the risen Lord. Here we have the latter, where on the road to Emmaus, these two disciples of Jesus, who have journeyed with the Lord, seen his works and wonders, yet now after his death and resurrection do not recognize him, even though he clearly recognizes them and journeys with them despite their lack of recognition or understanding.

I think that as Secular Franciscans we might journey with this Gospel for all of Easter. No human explanation can fully “exhaust” any Gospel passage, as the divine will always exceed the human; but permit me to share the following with you.

I love this story! It is a perfect story for our lay spirituality. Clearly, these

disciples are not of the Eleven. They are not the predecessors of our bishops. They are “ordinary” followers of our Lord, as I hope are all of us.

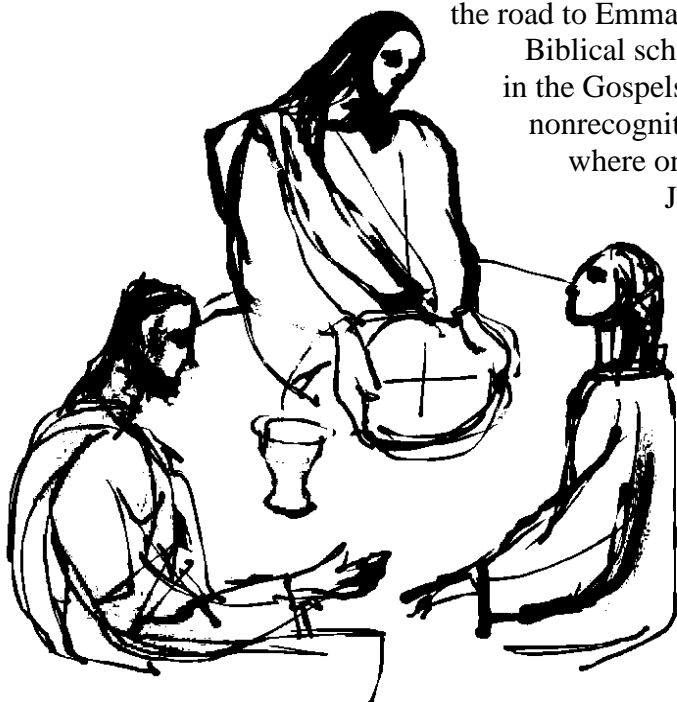
There has always been much speculation as to who was the other disciple with Cleopas. I am going to side with those biblical scholars who have argued that this other disciple was none other than Mary, the wife of Cleopas, previously mentioned in the Gospels, even seen so recently at the very foot of our Lord’s cross (John 19:25).

I would like to know about this Mary, but in the Hebrew writings and early Christian writings, women do not receive many speaking parts, nor much name recognition. On the other hand, Luke’s Gospel, where we find this story, gives women a considerable ministry of presence and consolation, a ministry of hope and service, as Mary was certainly offering at the foot of the cross with the Blessed Mother and Mary of Magdala.

To me it makes perfect sense that Mary and Cleopas would be returning to their home in Emmaus, “conversing about all the things that had occurred” (Luke 24:15) as would any husband and wife. When our Lord appears with them, Cleopas, the man, does most of the talking; but when this lonely Traveler appears to be “going on farther” (verse 28), “they urged him, ‘Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over’” (verse 29).

It sure sounds like a woman’s plea to her husband to have their fellow traveler dine in their home as a member of the family. And almost certainly, it is Mary who prepares the meal and bakes the bread that Jesus will break so that they will finally recognize him. It was her bread!

And that’s the challenge that I wish to leave with all of us: Where do we seek and meet the risen Lord? Who will help us recognize Christ in our midst when we are too busy or too blind and foolish to see Christ ourselves? After all, we should not be seeking the historical Jesus of



Nazareth seen in his day; rather, we should seek the risen Savior still healing, still consoling in his Mystical Body, Holy Mother Church today.

Do we seek this risen Savior by reading the Holy Scriptures? Do we find him waiting, even when we don't recognize or understand him, in the sacraments of confession and holy Communion? Yes, he's there — Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity — whenever the Sacred Bread is broken in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Do we run to him? Do we beg him to stay with us? Do we see him in our brothers and sisters gathered in his name?

Let us pray that we may never lose sight of our risen Lord, still journeying with us even when we don't see him, still with us in all the sacraments, still with us whenever two or three of us gather in fraternity in his name.

Christ is risen! Christ is truly risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!

May all the Love, Peace and Joy of Easter be yours always!

Tom

Deacon Tom Bello, SFO, our national minister, is a member of St. Thomas More Fraternity in the St. Margaret of Cortona Region and is one of three spiritual assistants to that region.

"Ask God for this wonderful revelation: May he reveal yourself to you, may he make you know who you are, how much you can do, how much you know, and how much you are worth. Without this revelation, no one can become a saint.

St. Camilla Battista Varano

New Councils

Congratulations

Channel of Peace Fraternity

Chattanooga, Tenn.

March 13

Minister: Barbara Garrison, SFO

Vice Minister: Gerri Toeller, SFO

Secretary: Linda French, SFO

Treasurer: John Martin, SFO

Formation Director: Paulette Croteau, SFO

Councilor: Mechtilde Boles, SFO

Councilor: Ann Respass, SFO

Franciscan Family of Greensboro

Greensboro, N.C.

May 1

Minister: Vincent Cummo, SFO

Vice Minister: Ann Bauer, SFO

Secretary: Kandice Weglin, SFO

Treasurer: Marilyn Duray-Showers, SFO

Formation Director: Katie Baier, SFO

Councilor: Dora Garnier, SFO

Crucified Christ Fraternity

North Charleston, S.C.

June 11

Minister: Lucinda Bryan, SFO

Vice Minister: Donna Miller, SFO

Secretary: Carolyn Reuther, SFO

Treasurer: Ann McAdams, SFO

Formation Director: Diane Curran, SFO

Councilor: Elizabeth Conway, SFO

Councilor: Mark Taylor, SFO

St. Michael the Archangel Fraternity

Spartanburg, S.C.

June 25

Minister: Michaelleen Davis, SFO

Vice Minister: Beverly Wadding, SFO

Secretary: Sandra Rodriguez, SFO

Treasurer: Carol Drum, SFO

Formation Director: Sarah Beth Quinn, SFO

Councilor: Eileen Martin, SFO

Councilor: Lynn Skinner-Johnson, SFO

Self-Examination With the Four Pillars

By Diane Salkewicz, SFO



Spirituality

1. Am I faithful to my daily prayer life of the *Liturgy of the Hours* and other Franciscan and/or Marian devotions? Do I follow the words of St. Francis “to pray with devotion before God ... with your voices attuned to your thoughts and your thoughts to God.”
2. Do I give the first-fruits of my day to God in prayer? Do I end my day with a prayerful examination of conscience.
3. When I am not able to pray the *Liturgy of the Hours* at the appropriate times of morning and evening, do I make an effort to use other Franciscan devotions in place of the *Liturgy of the Hours* or to pray other offices of the day instead, such as Daytime Prayer, Midafternoon Prayer, or Night Prayer?
4. What challenges/weaknesses am I struggling with in my personal prayer life? Have I taken them to the Lord and asked for the help of the Holy Spirit?
5. Am I committed to trying to learn more about St. Francis, St. Clare, and other Franciscan saints, particularly my Franciscan patron saint. Am I faithfully trying to internalize their virtues?
6. Do I spend prayerful contemplative time (*Lectio Divina*) with Scripture every day, in order to “go from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel”? Of what priority is this time with Scripture in my everyday life?
7. Am I committed to full participation in the sacramental life of the Church, as well as to the special prayer forms and rites for the liturgical seasons of the Church year?

Formation

1. Am I fully committed to my own ongoing formation and my personal responsibility to prepare, study, and participate in fraternity ongoing formation, so that as a fraternity we can help form each other?
2. Is my ongoing formation helping me grow in my faith and relationship with Christ? If yes, how? If no, why not?
3. Is my living of the SFO Rule and *General Constitutions* a true reflection of what St. Francis envisioned for his followers?
4. Am I making a conscious effort to share my vocation with others and to invite and welcome others to “come and see”?



Apostolate

1. Am I generous with my time and resources in participating in our fraternity apostolates?
2. Does scheduling fraternity apostolates take precedence over scheduling my own personal apostolates?
3. If I am unable to participate in fraternity apostolates, do I take time to pray for the apostolate or offer to do some other service that would be helpful to the apostolate?

**Fraternity**

1. Do I see my life in fraternity as essential to living the Secular Franciscan way of life? Do I see that I have a personal responsibility to build, serve, and participate fully in fraternal gatherings and fraternal life?
2. Do my relationships in fraternity help me to grow in my faith and in my relationship with Christ? If yes, how? If no, am I willing to examine any areas of personal weakness that may be the cause, and am I willing to grow and change for the good of the fraternity?
3. Have I made a personal effort to really get to know each fraternity member outside of fraternity gatherings and apostolates? If not, who do I yet need to get to know, and how will I begin to do this?
4. Do I place the good of the whole fraternity above my own needs, wants, and interests?
5. Have I thought about how I can use my personal gifts (especially my time and resources, whatever they may be) more generously in fraternity?
6. Am I willing to see my brothers and sisters in fraternity with appreciation of their strengths and humble understanding of their weaknesses? Do I honestly assess how my own strengths and weaknesses help or hinder the whole fraternity?
7. Am I holding a grudge? Do I need to seek forgiveness or to forgive a sister or brother in fraternity or to let go of past wounds that have hurt me in fraternal life?
8. Aside from our fraternal renewal of our Profession promises at the yearly Transitus, do I ever take the time to renew my Profession promises on my Profession anniversary or other special Franciscan feasts?
9. Am I inclusive of all members of my fraternity, especially those members who are unable to come to meetings, by:
 - a. visiting them whenever possible,
 - b. sending them cards/notes or visiting by phone,
 - c. celebrating special feast days with them,

- d. praying for and with them (*Liturgy of the Hours/Scripture*),
- e. renewing Profession promises with them.

10. Do I believe that visitors to my fraternity see us as gospel-centered people? If yes, how? If no, why not?

11. "A good barometer of our relationship with God is our relationship with others. The best remedy for our failures in relationships is to bring those failures to the sacrament of reconciliation" (Father Nick Mormando, OFM Cap., pastor of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Hendersonville, N.C.).

Diane Salkewicz, SFO, is formation director of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity in Hendersonville, N.C.

Fraternity recognizes "peace bearer"

St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity in Elizabeth City, N.C., has honored Stanley Orlikowski as a "peace bearer" at his parish, Holy Family Catholic Church in Elizabeth City.

The fraternity feels that Stanley models the advice of Pope Paul VI who said, "If you want peace, work for justice."

Following are excerpts from the fraternity's letter to Stanley:

Dear Stanley,

At the suggestion of the Secular Franciscan's Commission for Justice and Peace to recognize an individual in our church or community for their service in promoting justice and peace, it is our joy to recognize you for your contributions as you work to carry out this mission.

Your faithfulness over the past two years in assisting with serving a monthly meal to the needy in our community is commendable. As you pour drinks for those who come to be fed, we hear our Lord's words, "I was thirsty and you gave me to drink." We also have noted your helpful presence at the funeral lunches served by the Martha and Mary Committees.

For many years you have worked tirelessly through the Red Cross to meet the needs of those in our area who have experienced disasters. When they are left homeless due to fire, floods, tornadoes, or hurricanes, you are there to see that they are fed and receive shelter.

God has gifted you with an amazing talent! From a small piece of wood you are able to create a treasured piece of sacred art. Our fraternity cherishes the beautiful carving of St. Francis of Assisi with the dogs and the lovely Tau cross. Thank you for inspiring us with your works of art.

We honor you through this letter for your service to God's least among us. As you go about your work in our church and community, we are inspired by your quiet and humble presence. You are an inspiration to each of us. We pray for your continued health and well-being.

With grateful and loving hearts,
St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity

St. Francis of Assisi:

"As you announce peace with your mouth, make sure that you have greater peace in your hearts, thus no one will be provoked to anger or scandal because of you. Let everyone be drawn to peace and kindness through your peace and gentleness. For we have been called to this: to cure the wounded, to bind up the broken, to recall the erring. Many who seem to us members of the devil will yet be disciples of Christ" (38)

The Anonymous of Perugia

Franciscan Spirituality — Transcendent or Immanent?

By Bret Thoman, SFO

One of the pleasant sides of organizing and accompanying pilgrimages to Italy is that I have had the opportunity to meet and work with all kinds of people. I have journeyed to Assisi and Rome with Secular Franciscans from different parts of the world who are not only unique ethnically and culturally, but may espouse quite diverse views of God. Through their different understandings of God, I have come to know God better. I've discovered that God reveals himself as both **transcendent** and **immanent**.

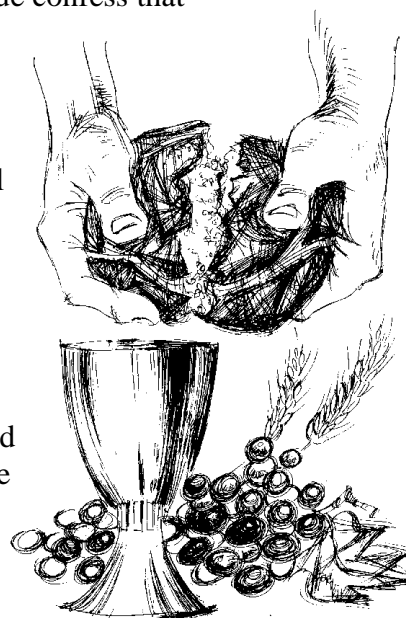
God is transcendent — other —not human but above humanity, existing above the world and before creation. God surpasses physical existence and is independent of it because he created the world *ex nihilo* — out of nothing. Transcendence focuses on God not only in his being, but also in his knowledge. Thus, God transcends the material world, indeed the universe, and is also beyond the grasp of the human mind. God is seen to be outside; i.e., to “transcend” our earthly experience. Transcendence is the spirituality of “up” and “above.”

Yet, God has also revealed himself as immanent: “down here” with us. The word “immanence” is derived from Latin “*in manere*” (to remain within). In this seemingly contrasting view of God, God reaches down, even stoops down, from heaven to be with us. While transcendence refers to God who is above, on the outside, or up in heaven somewhere, immanent spirituality focuses on him “down here” and within. It has to do with closeness, relationship, unity, and presence, in which the divine is seen to be manifested in or present in the material world.

So how can God be at the same time distinct and fully independent of the material world, yet directly interactive within it? How can God be almighty and humbly poor at the same time? Scripture gives us some clues: “Though he was in the form of God, Jesus did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross! Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Ph 2:6-11). Here we see the greatness of Christ interspersed with his humility: how our Lord lowered himself from the glories of heaven, out of humility, but was raised up again in exaltation.

What did Francis have to say about this humble, yet powerful God? In his first Admonition, he wrote, “See, daily He humbles Himself as when He came from the royal throne into the womb of the Virgin; daily He comes to us in a humble form; daily He comes down from the bosom of the Father upon the altar in the hands of the priest.” In “A Letter to the Entire Order,” Francis wrote, “O admirable heights and sublime lowliness! O sublime humility! O humble sublimity! That the Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humbles Himself that for our salvation He hides Himself under the little form of bread! ... Humble yourselves, as well, that you may be exalted by Him.” Thus, we see two references to the ongoing humility of Christ in Eucharist.

How did Francis respond to this sublime, yet humble God? We know that Francis was born into a wealthy mercantile family, and he sought to go “up” the social and economic ladder as a young man by becoming a knight. After his conversion, however, he realized that he wanted to



imitate Christ by going “down” the ladder and becoming poor. Further, he sought to be a servant to the poorest of the poor by serving lepers.

I took some license by substituting some words of the previous Scripture: “Though he was born the son of a wealthy merchant, Francis did not deem his wealthy status something to be kept to himself. Rather, he emptied himself and gave away his money, taking on the life of a beggar, dressing like a pauper; and found poor in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of serving the poorest of the poor, even lepers! Because of this, God favored him and made him a saint.”

Francis sought to imitate Christ by lowering himself. He gave away his power, money, and status, and dwelt among the lepers and marginalized. This was in response to Christ’s immanent revelation to humanity. In doing so, he was made a saint and lifted up to heaven. Francis’s objective was ultimately not to a life of servitude; it was to be with the marginalized in imitation of Christ in order to be exalted. Through his commitment to simplicity, poverty, and service to the poor, he transcended this life and entered into everlasting life where his spirit lives forever with the immanent and transcendent God.

Bret Thoman, SFO, is a member of Immaculate Conception Fraternity in Jonesboro, Ga., and director of St. Francis Pilgrimages.

Regional Executive Council/Commissions Gathering Recap

By Christine Washington, SFO

Spiritual assistants were a major focus at the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region’s Executive Council/Commissions Gathering, April 30, at the Fairfield Inn, Greenville-Spartanburg Airport in Greenville, S.C.

Among the points covered regarding spiritual assistants:

- Fraternities should watch for communication from their area councilors regarding another spiritual assistant training course that will be held. Our region is looking for members who will be willing and able to serve as spiritual assistants in fraternities other than their own. We hope that the one-year course will give spiritual assistants a thorough knowledge of our *Rule* and of their role as spiritual assistants.
- An assigned spiritual assistant is necessary for a fraternity’s canonical establishment.
- Fraternities need to provide a stipend of whatever they can afford to their assigned spiritual assistants.
- With a number of the fraternities in our region not having contact with First Order, Second Order, and Third Order Regular Franciscans, we discussed the need to stay connected with the friars and sisters of our larger Franciscan family.
- We discussed a need to define what we expect from our local spiritual assistants.

In addition, Jerry Rousseau, SFO, our regional minister, gave us the following statistics that he reported to NAFRA for our BSSF Region Annual Report. We have 480 Professed members, 63 Candidates, 46 Inquirers, and 22 Orientees. Our local fraternities are bonded to six provinces. We certainly are a growing region!

Another highlight was a discussion of the Area Formation Workshops that had occurred and were to occur. We also discussed a formation workshop that is scheduled for Sept. 10. It’s primary focus will be to learn about the new National Formation Manual.

We look forward to seeing everyone at the ARG!

Christine Washington, SFO, is the secretary of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional Executive Council and a member of St. Joseph of Cupertino Fraternity in Bessemer, Ala.

A Secular Franciscan needs to be persistently faithful in living the SFO Rule, so other people recognize that Franciscans see life in a special way

By Father Lester Bach, OFM Cap.

It cannot simply be a sporadic living of Franciscan life. SFO Profession does not tolerate that. Growing in Franciscan learning and experience means having our lives infiltrated more and more by our Franciscan focus — and it will show.

In today's world we need to avoid "boxing" people into categories. We often do it without thinking. Someone who thinks differently is obviously — "too far out" — "too traditional" — "too progressive" — "too fundamental" — "refusing to take responsibility for his/her life" — "wants security more than learning" — "is too liberal and leftist." Add whatever "box (label)" you wish. You may find yourself categorizing or labeling people.

The problem is not that we have different opinions on many topics, but that we get so cemented in place that we stop listening to people who think differently. Though there are times when this might be healthy, it is not something for all situations. Instead of coming together for dialogue, we often try to "convert" the other person to our way of thinking. In this regard it doesn't seem to matter which way you lean in your opinions. But opinions are just that — opinions. It is our personal way in interpreting life, religion, politics, sports, spirituality or any topic that is part of normal conversation. It isn't surprising that we differ in our opinions on how to upgrade and inspire the SFO.

The SFO Rule is one demanding document! Following some other path, for whatever reason, seems to indicate that the requirements of the SFO Rule are not demanding enough. That is amazing to me! I am of the opinion that when we take the *SFO Rule* seriously, we won't have time to take on other commitments. Secular Franciscan life is filled with an awesome array: of life changes; attitudes development; conversion points; prayer development; rebuilding a flawed Church; showing compassion; identifying with the poor; sharing the Franciscan spirit with the young people; co-operating with other groups in creating a more fraternal and evangelical world; worshiping with the local faith community; transforming our workplace; standing up for justice issues no matter where it is needed (in Church or society); learning healthy ways of prayer; developing a personal relationship with Christ, the inspiration and the center of life with God and people.

Secular Franciscans will build up local fraternity life; loving people too much to let them diminish their own lives or the lives of others; being joyful and ready to place ourselves on an equal basis with all people, especially the lowly; seeking a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying our own material needs; imitating Mary's complete self-giving; praying earnestly and confidently; going through a daily conversion in our personal lives; striving to purify our hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power; esteeming work as a blessing from God and a sharing in the creation, redemption and service of the human community; making family life and matrimony a sign to people that faithfulness is possible; cultivating the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity and respect for life; striving to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.

Perhaps you could have time for other ways of life — but not if you are living the SFO Rule



that you have been called to follow. Our energy is limited. If we spread it too thin we get tired, but not necessarily better. Use your energy to enrich your SFO life and the lives of those you touch. In this pursuit we work together, avoiding labels, except the one that says, *"Here is a faithful Franciscan."* We can and will help each other be faithful - and in doing so have an impact on a world in great need of our Franciscan ideas and ideals.

"Children, love must not be a matter of theory or talk, it must be true love which shows itself in action" (1John 3:18).

Father Lester Bach, OFM Cap., is president-in-turn of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants. This article was originally published in TAU-USA, Spring 2004

Women of SGG honor Secular Franciscan

By Nancy Kuykendall, SFO

Rebecca Staley, SFO, has been named Catholic Woman of the Year by the Women of SGG, our women's group at St. Gregory the Great Church, Bluffton, S.C.

She is a member of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity on Hilton Head Island. Rebecca's warm, giving, personality and deep love of her Catholic faith have touched the lives of many of us.

In her desire to provide spiritual growth and fellowship among the women of the church, she started the Women of Faith that later became the Women of St. Gregory the Great; she led the group for several years.

Rebecca started the parish's Vocations Committee

After a school social worker spoke at a Women of SGG meeting, telling us about the needs of many children in the local public elementary school, Rebecca had the idea to collect school supplies, and basic clothing for these children. So, the School Supply Line was started. We still carry on this project every August, although it is now a scholarship and uniform fund for our parish school.

Nancy Kuykendall, SFO, is a member of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Fraternity and a member of the Core Group of Women of St. Gregory the Great.

Newly Professed Congratulations

St. Joseph of Cupertino Fraternity

Bessemer, Ala.

April 9

Boyd Mackey, SFO

St. Pio of Pietrelcina, Emerging Community

Decatur, Ala.

April 9

Frank Toro, SFO

Ada Winters, SFO

St. Michael Reactivating/Emerging Community

Garden City, S.C.

May 28

Kathleen Barnes, SFO

Karen Poirier, SFO

Crucified Christ Fraternity

North Charleston, S.C.

June 4

Mark Taylor, SFO

Fraternity of Brother Francis

Hickory, N.C.

June 25

Nancy Chrislip, SFO

Ginnie Stewart, SFO

Roger Stewart, SFO

John Sugrue, SFO



Born Into Eternal Life:

Hal Seiber, SFO, National Peace Award Recipient

By Vincent Cummo, SFO

The Franciscan Family of Greensboro, N.C., lost a faithful member June 6.

Hal Seiber, SFO, who truly embodied the belief in the gospel values of justice and peace, had receive the National St. Francis Peace Award by the Secular Franciscan Order of the United States in 2002.

“Hal has continued to serve as an energetic and dedicated champion of nonviolent movements to end poverty, racism and violence,” said Coretta Scott King, whose husband, Martin Luther King Jr., won the award in 1963.

Other recipients included Mother Theresa of Calcutta, Robert F. Kennedy, and two popes.

Besides being a member of the Franciscan Family of Greensboro since Dec. 13, 1998, Hal was a tireless and staunch advocate for civil rights, who spent decades crusading against injustice. A noted poet and author, he was nominated for the National Book Award for poetry in 1956 for *In This the Marian Year*.

Hal, a true Franciscan before he became a Franciscan, had a varied and impassioned career. He was a speechwriter for Sen. John F. Kennedy, senior researcher for the Library of Congress, and public relations director for the Greensboro City Chamber of Commerce, where he stirred controversy with his efforts to recruit black members.

Because of his advocacy, Hal said, “he was forced out.” He taught at several North Carolina universities and was the long-term editor of the *Carolina Peacemaker*, active in the Martin Luther King Jr. Foundation, and wrote and illustrated several books on the Civil Rights Movement.

Throughout his life, he continued to challenge people to think about their prejudices in order to raise their consciousness and provide them with accurate information. Hal bravely and quietly forged new paths. He was empathetic and compassionate and saw God’s presence in all creation.

He was a gentle friend and Franciscan. As a member of our Franciscan family, Hal showed us how to live and love and courageously walk our Franciscan charism one day at a time. We will all miss him.

Vincent Cummo, SFO, is minister of the Franciscan Family of Greensboro.

Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region by Area

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.

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.

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.; Garden City, S.C.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS REGION
SCHEDULE OF VISITATIONS AND ELECTIONS (PROPOSED)

* confirmed

V+ follow-up visit

<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>V/E</u>	<u>FRATERNAL / PASTORAL VISITOR</u>
<u>2011</u>			
Jan. 16*	Knoxville, TN (NFG)	V	Faye Martin/Pat Cowan
Feb. 5*	Hilton Head, SC	E	Charles Meyer/Audrey Binet
Mar. 13*	Chattanooga, TN	E	John Knippel/Willie Guadalupe
Apr. 10*	St. Simons, GA	V	Jerry Rousseau/Joanita Nellenbach
Apr. 12*	Winston Salem, NC	V	Paula Zanker/Pat Wilkerson
May 1*	Aiken, SC	V	Charles Meyer/Audrey Binet
May 1*	Greensboro, NC	E	Jane Farris/Pat Cowan
June 4*	Athens, GA	V	John & Jerry/Audrey Binet
June 11*	No. Charleston, SC	E	Sara Nell Boggs/Joanita Nellenbach
June 12*	Hickory, NC	V	Jerry Rousseau/Pat Cowan
June 12*	Bessemer, AL	E	Willie Guadalupe/Barbara Smith
June 25*	Spartanburg, SC	E	Charles Meyer/Joanita Nellenbach
July 14*	Asheville, NC	V	Sara Nell Boggs/Kathy Taormina

ARG July 22-24, 2011 (Sr. Ilia Delio, featured speaker)

Oct. 16*	Wilmington, NC	E	Jane Farris/Pat Wilkerson
Oct. 16*	Nashville, TN	E	Willie Guadalupe/
Sep or Nov	Garden City, SC (EC)	V+	Judy Haupt/Joanita Nellenbach
Nov 5*	Columbia, SC (EC)	V	Charles Meyer/Audrey Binet
Dec. 3*	Blairsville, GA	V	John Knippel/Laura Haukaas
Nov. 12*	Burlington, NC	E	Jane Farris/Fr. Paul
Nov. 12*	Franklin, NC	E	Willie Guadalupe/Fr. Jim Cahill (Joanita)
Nov. 20*	Conyers, GA (EC)	V	Willie Guadalupe/Kathy Taormina

Possible Canonical Establishments in 2011:

Duluth, GA (July 24, 2011)*
 Decatur, AL
 Athens, GA
 Conyers, GA

“His glory has been made great on earth. The Lord honored shepherds, prophets, and lawgivers. He gave his love to fishermen and made them princes. God loved all of these and finally, after them, he set his love on merchants. He greatly loved Saint Francis who was a merchant. He made him a true merchant which Saint Francis became when he found the pearl of heavenly glory. He teaches us also to purchase the pearl. Let us ask the Lord to give us in this life the grace to buy that pearl so that together with Saint Francis we may obtain the reward of the heavenly kingdom” (p. 746).

St. Bonaventure: “Sermon on the Feast of the Transferral [of St. Francis’s Body],” May 1267
Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume II, The Founder

BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS REGION
SCHEDULE OF VISITATIONS AND ELECTIONS (PROPOSED)

* confirmed

V+ follow-up visit

<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>V/E</u>	<u>FRATERNAL / PASTORAL VISITOR</u>
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2012

Jan. 5	Morehead City, NC	E	
Jan. 14	Augusta, GA	E	
Feb. 4	Hilton Head, SC	V	
Feb. 8	Fayetteville, NC	E	
Feb. 18	Greenville, SC	E	
Mar. 11	Elizabeth City, NC	E	
Mar. 11	Chattanooga, TN	V	
Apr. 14	Charleston, SC	V	
May 12	Jonesboro, GA	E	
May 13	Greensboro, NC	V	
June 3	Charlotte, NC	E	
June 10	No. Charleston, SC	V	
June 10	Bessemer, AL	V	
June 23	Spartanburg, SC	V	

ARG August 3-5, 2012 (National Visitors)

Aug. 26	Raleigh, NC	V	
Oct. 21	Wilmington, NC	V	
Oct. 21	Nashville, TN	V	
Nov. 10	Burlington, NC	V	
Nov. 12	Franklin, NC	V	
Nov. 25	Hendersonville, NC	E	

2013

Jan. 12	Augusta, Ga.	V	
Feb.	Garden City, S.C. (EC)	V	
Feb. 12	Fayetteville, NC	V	
Feb. 16	Greenville, SC	V	
Mar. 7	Morehead City, NC	V	
Mar. 10	Elizabeth City, NC	V	
Apr. 14	St. Simons, GA	E	
May 5	Aiken, SC	E	
May 11	Jonesboro, GA	V	
May 14	Winston Salem, NC	E	
June 2	Charlotte, NC	V	
June 9	Hickory, NC	E	
July 11	Asheville, NC	E	

ARG August 2-4, 2013 (chapter of Elections)

Writing Franciscan

Book reveals thoughts from the heart's depth

***Song of the Sparrow: New Poems and Meditations* by Murray Bodo, OFM. St. Anthony Messenger Press (Cincinnati, Ohio, 2008). 136 pp.; paperback, \$9.95.**

By Joanita M. Nellenbach, SFO

We don't necessarily share our journals with others; our thoughts are just too private. But in *Song of the Sparrow*, we have the opportunity to read from Father Murray's notebooks.

"I write this sentence only because I promised myself I'd try to write at least one sentence every day, and because one sentence leads to another," he notes. "If only we could pray a little every day, even when it is only one word; for prayers, like sentences, lead into more prayers, and eventually the heart hears and is lifted beyond the words to God who transcends all thought and every word."

Father Murray published *Song of the Sparrow: Meditations and Poems to Pray By* in 1976. This 2008 volume, divided into seasons, is an update, with as he says, "refinements here and there." The final section, "Summer," is new.

The book is a series of seemingly random meditations, some as short as a paragraph, others a page or more. Poems are interspersed throughout. Father Murray speaks of writing, prayer, contemplation, love, love of God, finding God.

"How many things have we hidden away in our memories, afraid to look at them, to bring them to the surface and disarm them by facing them and seeing that they are not as bad as we thought?" a meditation begins. "And if we look at them with Jesus at our side, it is easier still because they are healed by his sharing the memories with us."

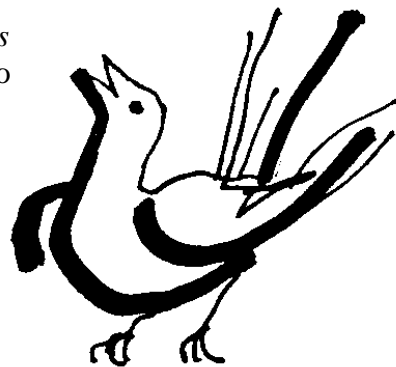
This is soon followed by: "The Franciscan charism is ultimately tied up with loving those who are seemingly unlovable or who return love with hatred and contempt. Saint Francis, in reaching out to the leper, paved the way for his followers to walk."

I love to write, but sometimes I've wished that words were more "physical" — something I could touch, like clay for sculptors or brushes and canvas for painters. For Father Murray — and now for me — words do have a physicality. He writes:

"When my mind begins to darken and my shivering heart longs for something more or something other, writing helps because in the magic of words seeking each other and rubbing their surfaces together gently, a warmth emerges until, striking each other sharply, a flame is struck from their surfaces, revealing some hidden fire within. And when it happens, though it's happened before, it is a surprise. I merely brought the words together, trying different combinations and discarding those soft words that haven't enough flint for sparking. And if I am lucky enough to strike a fire, my mind is lit up and my heart is warmed; and others who read the words, join me at the fire."

Father Murray reminds us of the exquisite intimacy of relationship with God:

You, O Lord, are the one
Who calls my name.



I hear you in the place
 Called prayer, where
 Names are necessary only in the beginning.

In *Coming Home to Your True Self: Leaving the Emptiness of False Attractions*, Father Albert Haase, OFM, quotes the 14th century Dominican mystic Meister Eckhart, who said, "God is at home. It is we who have gone out for a walk."

Father Murray echoes those thoughts in this poem:

Lord, I used to think
 That you hid from me.
 But lately I realize
 More and more that
 I'm the one to blame:
 I don't play games well.
 I keep missing you,
 Keep being blind and
 Bad at finding people
 And things and you.

Song of the Sparrow is a spiritual treasure house that you'll enter time and after time to refresh yourself and find words of wisdom. Father Murray says:

Writing again.
 That is important,
 More important
 Than sun and sea
 And warm beaches:
 They *are*; writing *does*.

Joanita M. Nellenbach, SFO, *Communio* editor, is a member of St. Francis of the Hills Fraternity in Hendersonville, N.C., and spiritual assistant to Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity in Blairsville, Ga.

Reviewing a book

You're invited to share a Franciscan book with other members of our Region. Books are reviewed to let our members know the book is available and to interest them to seek out the book. We look for a Franciscan focus. The authors should have Franciscan credibility.

If you'd like to write a book review:

Visit your local bookstore or a Web site such as amazon.com or barnesandnoble.com to ensure that the book is in print.

Contact *Communio* editor (sfowriter@att.net) to be sure that the book hasn't been reviewed in a previous issue or that no one is reviewing it for the next issue.

Suggested material to include in your review:

- Overview of the book.
- A sentence or two about who the author is, such as: Sister Ilia Delio, OSF, is a research fellow at the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. If the person has written other books, you could include one or two of these titles.
- Things that stood out for you in this book.
- Things our members could learn from this book.
- Quotes from the book to back up your opinion.
- What, if anything, that helped you grow as a Secular Franciscan.

Maximum length: about 600 words

At the end of the review, please include a sentence about yourself, such as: Suzie Smith, SFO, is a member of Immaculate Conception Fraternity in Jonesboro, Ga. Or, Mary Jones, SFO, is secretary of St. Clare Fraternity in Asheville, N.C.

"It is God's inspiration, it is Francis' life and energy as model and mentor ... we move from the divine to the human ... from God to Francis ... whether we be 1st, 2nd or Secular Order ... it is Francis who is the conduit of God's grace ... He, Francis, has shown that it is possible to achieve. He, by virtue of the grace given, leads to transformation" (p. 43)

"The Four Pillars of the BSSF Region"
BSSF Regional Formator's Guidelines For Orientation and Initial Formation

PRESIDENCY OF THE SFO INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL



ONGOING FORMATION PROJECT
From MONTHLY DOSSIER for March 2010

SECTION I: MONTHLY THEME

Topic I-: Profession in the SFO

Ewald Kreuzer, SFO

Profession in the SFO: Gift and Commitment,
by Fr. Felice Cangelosi, OFM Cap,
(n. 14-16) Summary and comments

n. 14. St Francis of Assisi “made **Christ** the inspiration and **the center of his life** with God and with people” (Rule, Article 4). This is an implicit exhortation to those who make Profession in the Secular Franciscan Order, so that they may do the same. For Secular Franciscans, to follow Christ is to be conformed to him; it means to carry out the commitment involved in the Profession to observe the gospel in the manner of St. Francis by living all the demands of the gospel to its very depths, to the very end, including death, and thus to open oneself to receive the promises proclaimed by the gospel itself.

For St. Francis, Jesus Christ was the centre of his life. He meditated, again and again, on his life from his birth in Bethlehem until his death on the cross in Jerusalem. The gospel of Christ is also the source for our joy, hope and peace.

n. 15. The gospel message opens with a call to conversion: “The time has come, the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe the Good News” (Mk 1:15). The penitential dimension is at the heart of the Gospel and is essential to the evangelical life. For this reason Secular Franciscans, promising to live the gospel, in virtue of their original charism, commit themselves to live **a penitential life**.

Our vocation as “brothers and sisters of penance” includes the willingness to conform our thoughts and deeds to those of Jesus Christ. Knowing our human frailty, it is “necessary that this conversion be carried out daily” (Rule, Article 7).

n. 16. The Ritual of the SFO speaks of a “consecration that is to be lived in the world,” and of “the desire to live in the world and for the world” (Preface, 3.32:a,d). **Secular state** or **Secularity** and **world** are essential for an understanding of the specific identity of Secular Franciscans and their particular mission which flows from Profession. *Secularity* indicates an existential and sociological condition: it is being in the world as human creatures and as communities of men and women, including the relationships, geographical, cultural, and social, in which one is born and lives. Secularity is given from birth, independently of an individual’s free choice. *You do not become secular, you are born so.*

There is also a theological dimension. Secularity flows from the acceptance of God’s intervention in human history and of his “becoming”, and is expressed as recognition of a world (*saeculum*) in which the Spirit is at work to “recapitulate” all things in Christ. The being and

action of the laity and of Secular Franciscans take place in this context of “the world.”

God’s plan is to transform our world through the Holy Spirit who works in us and through us. There is no such thing as a “bad” world, since God himself “has visited and redeemed his people” (Luke 1:68).

Questions for reflection and discussing in fraternity:

1. What does it mean “to observe the gospel in the manner of St. Francis”?
2. In what ways do Secular Franciscans live a true “penitential life”?
3. What are the dimensions of the state of “Secularity” for Secular Franciscans?

Father Felice Cangelosi, OFM Cap., is general vicar of the Province of Messina, Italy. Ewald Kreuzer, SFO, of Austria, was elected in 2008 as presidential (international) councilor for the German-speaking areas of the Secular Franciscan Order.

The complete monthly dossier is available at www.ciofs.or/en.htm.

For March 2010:

SECTION II: SPIRITUAL INSIGHT

Topic III: The Lenten call to conversion and the SFO Penitential Identity

Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR

SECTION III: SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Block 1: Pope Benedict XVI Message for the 2010 World Day of Peace

IF YOU WANT TO CULTIVATE PEACE, PROTECT CREATION

Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR

Part III of 3: Excerpts from n. 11–14

Father Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, who wrote these sections, is CIOFS general spiritual assistant for the Third Order Regular. He is a member of the Province of St. Mary of Guadalupe, Mexico.

Blessed Angela of Foligno:

“What a perfect example is given to us by our glorious father, blessed Francis, who possessed the ineffable light of the truest poverty! He was so filled, and more than filled, with this light that he opened up a very special way and showed it to us all. I cannot think of any saint who demonstrated to me more remarkably than he did the way found in the Book of Life, the model being the life of the God-man, Jesus Christ. I know no other saint who more remarkably set himself to follow this way. He set himself with such determination along that path that his eyes never left it, and the effects could plainly be seen in his body. And because he set himself with such total determination to follow this path, he was filled to overflowing with the highest wisdom, a wisdom which he filled and continues to fill the whole world.”

Angela of Foligno: Passionate Mystic of the Double Abyss
Paul Lachance, OFM, editor