

Communio

That All May Be One

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

Fall 2011

Evangelical-Franciscan life calls us to BE

By Joanita M. Nellenbach, SFO

In her book, *Franciscan Prayer*, Sister Ilia Delio, OSF, recalls the WWJD (What would Jesus do?) movement popular a few years ago, noting that that perspective looks at Jesus as someone outside ourselves to whom we turn for moral guidance.

"The Franciscan path is different," she writes, "because it does not ask, 'what would Jesus do?' but 'how does Jesus live in me?'"

In her three presentations at our Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis

Annual Regional
Gathering, held July 22–24
at LifeWay Ridgecrest
Conference Center, near

Asheville, N.C., she spoke of how Jesus lives
within us through our embracing evangelical life.

Sister Ilia is a research fellow at Woodstock
Theological Center at Georgetown University.
Among her other books are *The Humility of God: A
Franciscan Perspective* and *Crucified Love: A
Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ*.



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Friday evening:

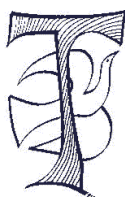
"Living Evangelical Life: The Call the BE"

"Evangelical life," Sister Ilia said, "is centered
on following Jesus Christ and making Christ alive
in the world. It's not how we pray or what we do
but how we experience the presence of God in
Jesus Christ."

In monastic life the idea was to leave the world,

The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity



Apostolate



she said, but St. Francis didn't want to be a monk. He believed that, "The Lord himself has shown me another way."

Starting young-adult life as a party boy who fancied fine clothes and good food, he began to see things differently after a year in a Perugian prison following the Battle of Collestrada in 1202. Trying to discern his life's direction, he wandered into the crumbling little church of San Damiano and saw the icon crucifix from which Christ loomed out calmly, eyes wide open.

"Francis experienced in this cross the love of God, he felt embraced by God," Sister Ilia said. "I don't believe there's any true loving of the Gospel unless one feels loved."

Feeling this love, she said, "Francis begins to experience the hidden presence of God in his life" and realizes that "God is to be found in the world. We don't have to go to God because God has come to us. Francis did not choose the apostolic life; he chose the whole Gospel, to live the Gospel in all its dimensions. Francis did not focus on mission but on the life of Jesus Christ."

Francis was a lover.

"Love is the key to Jesus Christ, especially for Francis, and is the key to God," she added. "Love transforms, unites, makes us grow. What Francis experienced was the humility of God, God bending low in humble love. What human could create such beauty? God is deeply in love with us. The question is: Are we deeply in love with God?"

In the Old Testament one could not look upon God and live.

"Jesus," Sister Ilia said, "comes to show the goodness of God in our midst. The Franciscan call today is to name the goodness that is in the world. Jesus reveals to the world its own giftedness; by his life and death he illuminates its deepest reality."

She added that the "key to Franciscan life is: How open are you to a life centered in God?"

"Christ came because of love," she said. "Christ is first in God's intention to love. The reason we are Christians is to love. Central to

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**Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis
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September 9, 2011

To the SFO National Ministers

To the SFO International Councilors

Dear brothers and sisters,

May the Lord give you peace!

The celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the *Spirit of Assisi*, on October 27, 2011, is fast approaching and we trust that you are already preparing to mark this event with the prominence that it deserves.

I am writing to inform you that a link has been placed on the CIOFS web site (www.ciofs.org) that will allow you to access materials prepared by the Interfranciscan Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (Romans 6) for this occasion. The link can be found on the home page of the CIOFS web site, by clicking on the label "XXV Anniversary of the Spirit of Assisi" located at the bottom of the picture marking the inaugural meeting in 1986. This material is available in ten different languages and aims to enable all Franciscan fraternities, particularly at the local level, to celebrate this anniversary using the same texts throughout the whole world. In addition to the texts for the liturgical celebrations, this valuable resource also includes quotes and prayers from the various religions whose leaders participated in the historical event celebrated on October 27, 1986.

In the words of our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI,

"The world needs God. It needs universal, shared ethical and spiritual values, and religion can offer a precious contribution to their pursuit, for the building of a just and peaceful social order at the national and international levels. Peace is a gift of God and at the same time a task which is never fully completed." (Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, 1 January 2011, 15)

I encourage you to take advantage of this occasion to renew our collective efforts to build a more fraternal and evangelical world. I invite you, in particular, to visit our web site and to communicate the availability of the material contained therein to all fraternities within your nation. Thank you.

Your sister,

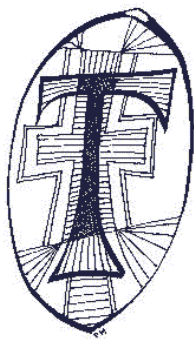
In our National Fraternity (NAFRA), we hope to celebrate together as a Fraternity at our National Chapter in California on Oct. 27.

I hope you will encourage your local and even Regional Fraternities to celebrate in an appropriate way at an appropriate time.

Tom Bello, SFO
National Minister of the SFO
in the United States



Encarnación del Pozo
SFO General Minister



Minister's Message

"Since they are immersed in the resurrection of Christ, which gives true meaning to Sister Death, let them serenely tend toward the ultimate encounter with the Father" (SFO Rule, Art. 19).

"Profession by its nature is a permanent commitment" (Rule, Art. 23). "I promise to live all the days of my life the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Secular Franciscan Order by observing its rule of life ... so that I may reach the goal of perfect Christian love" (*Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order*:

Rite of Profession or Permanent Commitment to the Gospel Life). [Goal: to journey toward Christ and eternal life with God.]

This communion (among members) continues with deceased brothers and sisters through prayer for them (Rule, Art. 24).

"Death and Vocation" — these two subjects have been very much on my mind the past several months.

As a participant in the National Formation Workshop last May, I was asked to be a presenter at the Sept. 10 BSSF Region Train-the-Trainers Workshop to introduce our spiritual assistants and members of the Regional Executive Council to the "treasures" of our national formation manual: *For Up to Now: Foundational Topics for Initial Formation*. The topic assigned to me was "Vocation: God's Call."

Meanwhile, our very dear sister, Mary Jenkins, SFO, was preparing herself (in the words of St. Francis) to welcome Sister Death. Along with Madeline and others in our fraternity, I was blessed to spend the final weeks, days, and hours with our beloved daughter Mary (very early in our relationship she adopted us as "Mom and Dad").

Mary was an inspiration and a joy to many of us during her almost three-year struggle with a rare form of glandular cancer. Madeline and I were privileged to walk this journey with her every step of the way.

Our sister Mary let go and fell into the arms of Jesus at approximately 3:45 p.m. on Sept. 2. Her daughter, Jaime, was at her side. Several of our fraternity members, including Madeline and me, had said our goodbyes about 20 minutes earlier.

In reflecting on the articles of our Rule quoted above, it is abundantly clear to me that "Death and Vocation" are intertwined. Mary lived her vocation every hour of her life. Even in her extremely frail state she ministered to those who visited.

Much as St. Francis became prayer, Mary spent her last weeks in communion with God. She received his precious body and blood almost daily. She insisted on praying the Liturgy of the Hours, reading from her *Magnificat*, and praying the rosary, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and many other devotions during any of her waking moments. When we were praying with her and she would fall asleep, we would continue until such time as she woke up. Then she would look at us and say, "OK, what prayer are we doing now?"

Mary did not like the pain she had to suffer, but she endured it over all these years while never losing faith and trust in God. She was truly a prayer warrior. She followed this way of life much like her fraternity brothers, Glenn Berns, SFO, and Deacon Bill Diehl, SFO, who preceded her to their reward as "good and faithful servants." In thinking about the heavenly reunion of these three servants from our fraternity, I am reminded of the vision of St. Francis that Brother Augustine saw when he was dying and of the words he spoke: "Wait for me, Father, wait for me! Behold I am coming with you" (Celano, *Second Life*, para. 218).

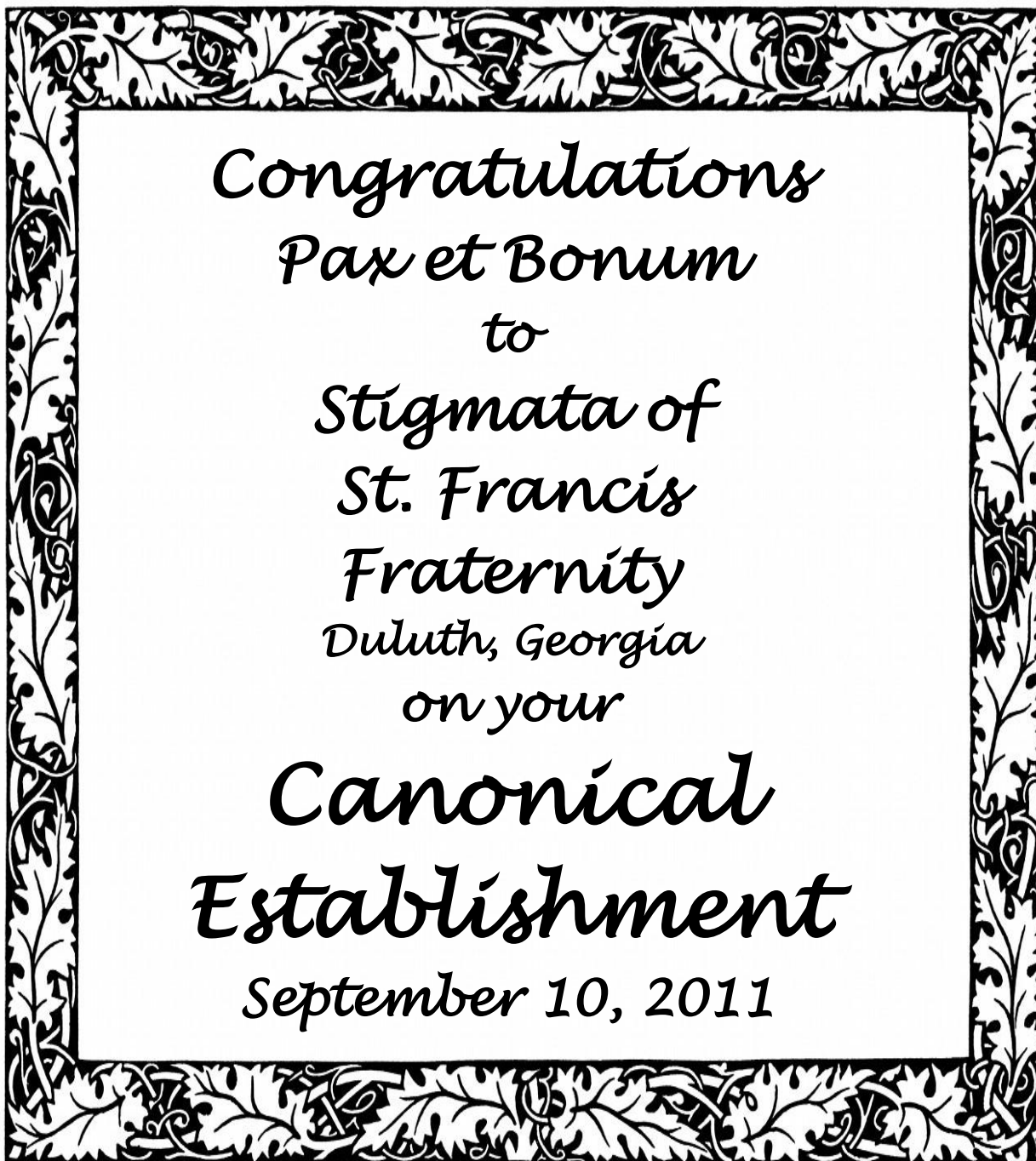
And so, dear brothers and sisters, as we prepare to celebrate the Transitus of our father Francis on Oct. 3, let us remind one another that our death is very much a part of our vocation.

The two are inseparable. Finally, let us continue to be in communion with all of our departed brothers and sisters through our prayers.

“Praise be to Thee my Lord for our Sister Bodily Death from whom no living man can flee; Woe to them who die in mortal sin, but blessed they who shall be found in Thy most holy Will; to them the second death can do no harm” (“Canticle of the Creatures” — St. Francis).

Jerry

Jerry Rousseau, SFO, minister of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region, is a member of Franciscan Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity in Blairsville, Ga.





To BE in the present as gift to the world

By Joanita M. Nellenbach, SFO

"We're called to live in the present moment," Father Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv., said in his keynote address, July 22, at the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Annual Regional Gathering.

Father Linus, spiritual assistant to the BSSF Regional, spoke on the ARG's theme: "Living an evangelical Life: A call to BE."

"God is good," Father Linus said. "The vision, the mission, have been set in place. What is the call at this moment?"

Two weeks earlier the English-speaking segment of his order, along with Conventual friars from other countries, held a Chapter of Mats.

"We fashioned a mission statement for today, for now," he said. "Our Church, our Order, is alive. We took the time to open our hearts, our minds. [We're] not done yet as a member of the Church, of the Order."

The San Damiano Crucifix telling St. Francis to "Rebuild my Church": "That's what we're called to do," Father Linus said. "I want us to look at the (ARG) theme: "Living an evangelical Life: A call to BE."

What does "to BE" mean?

"The Good News," Father Linus said. "I come to the awareness of who I am, why I am here, who created me. We make the act of faith — he created us, has faith in us — but we make an act of faith also: What can I do to make a difference? How will I address the moment?"

By living in the present, he said, "I am called to be here, to be the presence of Christ, to be a living example of what Christ sees." That includes looking at what all around me is living, opting for what is life-giving. Gossip, for example: "Does it give life? No. it kills."

We pray, Fr. Linus said: "'Lord, let nothing pass my lips which is not of you.' Speak what needs to be spoken; be judicious."

He added that we are to live an evangelical life.

"What I find most energizing about being a Franciscan is to look at the positive," he said. "We are so blessed. We can be a positive influence, be present to someone. What is the charism of a Franciscan? To live in community, to see the goodness, the beauty in each other."

"For this weekend," he added, "enjoy each other, build one another up. For the presentations: Listen carefully.

"You're here not by chance. You're here by choice. God wants you here to listen, to learn, to grow deeper in your commitment to live an evangelical life, to embrace, to be inspired, to be renewed."

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.

**Newly Professed
Congratulations!
Franciscan Martyrs of
Siroki Brijeg Fraternity**
Blairsville, Ga.
June 4
Pat Tomczyk, SFO
Pat Tomlinson, SFO

2012 BSSF Regional “on the road” Formation Workshop
Featuring

For Up to Now:
Foundational Topics for Initial Formation Manual

We will be introducing you to National Formation Commission’s newest tool,
FUN Manual, for initial formation.

Each fraternity represented at the workshop will be given
one complimentary FUN Manual.

You may order as many copies as you wish
for the members of your fraternity.

AREA 2

Saturday, March 10
Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church
3710 Augusta Road,
Greenville, SC 29604

AREA 1

Saturday, April 14
St. Jude Catholic Church Family Life Center
930 Ashland Terrace
Chattanooga, TN 37415

AREA 3

Saturday, June 2
St. Michael Archangel Catholic Church Trinity Center
804 High House Road
Cary, NC 27513 (near Raleigh)

Please mark your calendar NOW.

EVERYONE is invited.
However, if you are a local formation director
or assist with Initial Formation classes,
you do not want to miss this workshop.
More details will follow.

Intimacy with God: a radical, natural invitation

By Joanita M. Nellenbach, SFO
Relationship.

We desire relationships with family and friends, but there is someone who calls us even more insistently to relationship.

“God wants a relationship with us even more than we do,” Cricket Aull, SFO, told ARG attendees during her presentation on Saturday evening. “God is already orchestrating everything in my life so that I can let go. What is God asking us to let go of?”

Cricket, a member of Immaculate Conception Fraternity in Jonesboro, Ga., and who, with husband, Jerry, gives retreats nationwide, said that we’re being asked to give up control.

“When we can’t control things and things are happening that we don’t like, and we don’t let go, where is our faith?” she asked. “Even our mistakes. It’s when I make mistakes, that’s when I learn best.”

“We all know God is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, all faithful,” she said. “That is the treasure that God offers us. God wants to come into our life and be one with us. What a great gift God is offering to us.”

We are to empty ourselves so that God can fill us with himself.

“God is trying to fashion a constant dialogue with us, only desiring what is good for us,” she said, quoting something she learned years ago: “Stop telling God how big your problems are, and start telling your problems how big God is.”

Cricket spoke of the present: “Learning the way of present-moment oneness developing within my interior life” and asking God “What is your will for me.”

“Are we becoming ever more conscious of God’s presence?” she asked “It is a tremendous treasure. We have to unlearn some of our behavior to be in God’s presence.”

She offered 10 ways to be Franciscan. We are called to be:

1. Christlike,
2. examples of Gospel living,
3. pure of heart,
4. building a sense of community and a respect for all creatures,
5. poor in spirit,
6. contemplative and prayerful,
7. active and apostolic,
8. joined to the sacraments of the Church, especially the Eucharist,
9. bearers of peace,
10. messengers of joy.



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.

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Franciscans is human relationship. Each person bears the unquenchable, unstoppable love of God.”

Sister Ilia connected evangelical life and poverty.

“Nothing is owed to us,” she said. “Everything is gift — every breath, aspect, moment, is gift. That’s what it means to be poor, this recognition.”

She explained that the evangelical person receives, gives thanks, bears witness to the Word of God, respects difference and diversity, is open to the truth of the other.

Right in line with our Rule, which calls us to lessen our dependence on material goods, Sister Ilia said that “The key to poverty is not to live without possessions but to live without possessing, in order that we may live without clinging to things.”

And echoing Father Linus’s statement in his talk (see page 6) that we are to live in the present, Sister Ilia asked, “Are we present to — face to face with — one another? There is no God up there who is not here.”

**Saturday morning:****“Conversion, Contemplation, and Compassion”**

Penance, prayer, poverty, piety.

“We have grown up with the idea,” Sister Ilia said, “that penance is something we do to ourselves,” such as giving up things for Lent; but penance is conversion, a way of life.

“Conversion is a way of becoming more authentically human, through turning. It’s “allowing ourselves to be grasped by God,” which is what Francis did.

“We be,” she said, “and we let others be — to be themselves. When we do not allow ourselves to be, we do not allow others to be either. Allowing ourselves to be, allowing

others to be, opens us to God shining through us.”

“By allowing things to be,” she said, “Francis discovered the awesome mystery of God’s goodness in the simple ordinariness of life. In accepting the goodness of others and the things of creation, Francis accepted himself as part of creation.”

“Through prayer,” she added, “Francis came to know himself as a humble creature of God. Only through prayer do we recognize that the other is where we encounter God and the truth of ourselves in God.”

This is true freedom, which, she explained, is not what we usually call freedom: It “is not license to do whatever we please. Freedom is total oneness with God. The will of God is the love God has for us. When we live our vocation to the fullest, we live the will of God.”

Prayer, of course, helps our conversion.

“Prayer is deep dialogue with God,” Sister Ilia said. “Prayer is letting go and entering into a dialogue and listening. Letting go into God is inner freedom. Franciscan Secular life offers that slowing down. If prayer does not make us free, we have to ask ourselves what are we doing in prayer.”

That slowing down is found in contemplation, which is, she said, “not a method of prayer. It’s a style of life. Slow down. Let go. Allow God to be in your life.”

She advised “attentiveness to things happening in the world, to people’s lives as they unfold. Focus is out of self and toward the other — a being with, in compassion. Engagement with others is, at the same time, an encounter with God.”

“Contemplation,” Sister Ilia said, “expands being. It is the basis of prophetic action because one acts out of a center of inner light, a consciousness of relationality. Francis’s integrated self

was a light-filled self, conscious of belonging to a web of life, a relational life. Are we ready to give ourselves for the fullness of life?"

No life is free of suffering, which can "shrink us or expand us."

"Christ is with us in the midst of suffering," she said. "Compassion is being with people in their pain and their joy. Compassion is to share the pain of another, to be there even when we have nothing to offer but our presence and even when being there is painful to ourselves."

We are the presence of Christ to others.

"God needs selfless vessels to pour out his selfless compassionate love," Sister Ilia said. "Compassion requires us to let go, and let fragile life radiate its own goodness. Do we believe that each person and the earth itself is worthy of our love?"

Saturday afternoon:

"Gospel Living in the Web of Life"

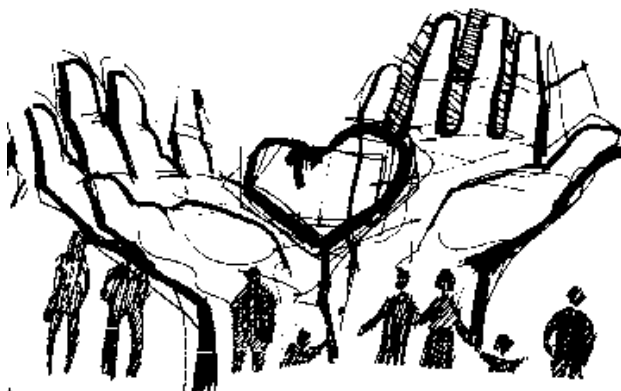
"Franciscan spirituality is one of the most vibrant spiritualities and has much to offer the world today," Sister Ilia said. "We live in an interconnected universe — not just a local web of life but a global web of life."

Where does poverty fit into this?

"The key to Francis's life was poverty, which is deeply tied to prayer," she said.

"Francis almost never speaks of material poverty; he speaks of *sine proprio*: not to live without things but to live without possessing things."

"Francis," she said, "understood that possessive power makes true communication between persons and with creation impossible. The more we grasp for ourselves, the more we take from others. Poverty is the language of being dependent on each other."



New Council
Congratulations!
St. Joseph of Cupertino
Fraternity

Bessemer, Ala.

June 12

Minister: Karen Thorne, SFO

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Earnestine Braxton, SFO

Treasurer: Boyd Mackey, SFO

Formation Director:

Janet Waters, SFO

Councilors;

Lannie Newman, SFO

Jane Cusick, SFO

Rosaura D'Amico, SFO

Yet poverty isn't always a lack of possessions.

"The *things* not to possess are not necessarily material things," she said. "God may ask us to let go of things and we refuse to let go. Poverty is the sister of humility and helps us to realize that *all* we have is *gift*."

"We are called to be poor," Sister Ilia said, in ways that allow us to ask ourselves, "How will I be poor today? How will I let go and let my brother or sister speak? Poverty is related to piety. Francis's piety is a deep relatedness."

"Francis began to see that all creation is imbued with the goodness of God. He realized that all creatures were related to him because all have the same source. Everything in creation spoke to Francis of God. He came to see God's goodness in every aspect of creation, so that everything ultimately led him to Christ. Everything became a place of holiness."

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.

Chew on these: Almond sweet adds to feast day

St. Francis was fond of an almond sweet. It may have been marzipan or some other almond-flavored goody.

In honor of the feast of St. Francis, Greg Savold, SFO, offers a recipe for pignoli cookies that he received from a friend years ago.

Greg is the BSSF Region treasurer. Members of his fraternity, St. Francis of the Hills in Hendersonville, N.C., can all tell you how good these are.

Pignoli (pine nut) Cookies

1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
1/4 cup flour
1/8 tsp. salt
8 ozs. almond paste (canned)
2 egg whites
12 ozs. pignoli

1. Sift together all dry ingredients.
2. Put almond paste in mixer.
3. Add egg whites (I just cut almond paste into small pieces and blend with hand beater.)
4. Mix until smooth.
5. Blend in sifted dry ingredients.
6. Roll into 1-inch balls. Very sticky. Suggest that you use two (2) demitasse spoons to form balls.
7. Roll balls in pignoli to cover.
8. Press lightly onto cookie sheet. Cookies should be about 1-inch diameter and 2 inches apart.
9. Bake at 300 for 15–20 minutes. **Do not let them get too brown.**

Should make about 3 dozen cookies.



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.

Sept. 17: St. Francis receives gift of the stigmata

By Bret Thoman, SFO



*I have been crucified with Christ;
yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me.*

(Galatians 2: 19–20)

The year was 1224. Francis was tired and sad, his youthful vigor now gone. A lot had happened since the early days at Rivotorto when they were young, few, and free. He felt nostalgia for those first few years when they were free to be poor and to simply love the Lord.

But now things were different. The movement had grown into more than 5,000 men. The friars were splitting into two camps — one zealously dedicated to poverty, the other committed to relaxing the Rule. This had caused Francis great distress. Additionally, the many women following

Clare and the countless thousands of laity in the penitential Third Order were all seeking guidance from him. The difficulties had proved too much for Francis, whose gifts were charismatic, not administrative. Thus, he had recently relinquished leadership of his Order.

Years earlier, in 1213, while on a mission through the Marches of Ancona, Francis had been invited to preach at a banquet hosted by a count named Orlando of Chiusi. Francis's words had so moved the nobleman that he offered Francis the mountain towering over his castle in Chiusi as a place of prayer and contemplation. It was called La Verna. Francis had found its harsh nature, biting cold, whipping winds, and twisted, craggy peaks perfect for penance and secluded prayer. Now, in what would be his last visit to La Verna, he set out with his closest companions to the hermitage as the ideal place to pray and fast during the feasts of the Exaltation of the Cross (Sept. 14) and St. Michael the Archangel (Sept. 29).

Once there, Francis prayed alone. He was feeling deeply connected to Jesus on the cross. Francis had always felt close to the crucifix, since his conversion many years earlier in the church of San Damiano. He had spent so much of his life with his gaze fixed on his Beloved, who hung on the cross. Like Peter, Francis had once felt tempted to take Jesus's place on the cross — to somehow take away his Lord's pain. But he understood, as Peter eventually did, that Jesus had to suffer. Christ had embraced his Passion for the salvation of humanity, but he did so out of love. Francis desired in his heart to stay with Jesus on the cross in suffering but also to remain connected to the great love that Jesus had for all humanity. Since San Damiano, Francis had offered himself to God to use him as an instrument through a life of penance and suffering. Now he desired to fully connect with Jesus on the cross.

The details of the San Damiano Crucifix had always remained etched in his consciousness. On that cross, Francis recalled, was a man who had suffered just as he was suffering now. Christ's wounds in his hands, feet, and side were marked very clearly with large black holes, from which blood was flowing. Francis felt as if he, too, were attached to a cross that had bloodied his own hands, feet, and side. Yet, Francis knew that the cross did not have the final say. His life dedicated to penance and corporal asceticism, intense prayer in the hermitages, service to the lowly lepers, his commitment to poverty and lesserness, had transformed his soul. Though his flesh felt sadness for worldly things, now his faith was mature.

Now, in his last fast on La Verna, Francis's focus was on God's total love for humanity

through Jesus's death, resurrection, ascension, and glory. Francis knew that the crucified Lord was still alive and burning in his heart. He had never been abandoned. In fact, he rejoiced that he

could share in his Lord's suffering. Only the saints ever understood that connection. And so Francis understood that he must become like Christ in the distress and agony of his passion before he left the world.

Francis knew what his prayer was to be. He asked the Lord for two gifts: to feel in his body the pain which Jesus felt during his Passion and to know in his heart the love which Jesus felt for all humanity. As he made this prayer, a six-winged seraph appeared. Then Francis felt the excruciating pain in his hands, feet, and side as his members were pierced with the wounds of Christ. At the same time, his soul was rapt with all the ecstasy of love, charity, and sacrifice that could be contained in the heart of a created being. The marks in his hands and feet consisted of flesh forming on the palms of his hands and tops of his feet as black heads of nails. On the opposite sides, flesh formed as the twisted ends of nails. His side carried a mark like a lance wound, and it bled for the rest of his life. Francis now contained in his heart, soul, and body the connection between true charity and true sacrifice. "Love and truth will meet; justice and peace will kiss" (Psalm 85:11).

Francis never spoke of what he experienced on the mountain; in fact, he commanded those brothers who noticed the marks not to tell anyone as long as he remained alive. Despite the sadness Francis had felt earlier, he now had great peace. While praying in San Damiano some 20 years earlier, the crucifix that had been imprinted internally on his soul and remained in his heart all these years, was now manifested externally on Francis's body. The stigmata had become the visible seal stamped into his flesh by God himself. It was God's approval of his life.

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

**BSSF REGION
VISITATIONS & ELECTIONS
(PROPOSED)**

* confirmed V+ follow-up visit

DATE **LOCATION** **V/E**

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 Aug. 2-4, 2013 (Chapter of Elections)

BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS REGION (61)2012 BUDGET Final Approved (7/23/2011)EXPENSES

\$ 6,000	NATIONAL FRATERNITY FAIR SHARE (500 professed x \$12)
\$ 600	ANNUAL NATIONAL GATHERING (NAFRA in California)
\$ 1,600	NATIONAL VISIT TO REGION – “VISITATION” (travel, lodging, stipend for 2 visitors)
\$ 5,720	ANNUAL REGIONAL GATHERING \$ 2,200 socials \$ 1,870 room, meals - REC \$ 440 audio visual etc. - equipment rental \$ 550 materials, handouts \$ 660 scholarship funds, if needed
\$ 4,296	EXECUTIVE COUNCIL GATHERINGS \$ 3,240 lodging 1 night for 3 meetings (12 members @ \$90) \$ 1,056 transportation costs for 3 gatherings
\$ 2,310	FRATERNAL – PASTORAL VISITATIONS/ELECTIONS (travel and materials, if needed)
\$ 900	JPIC and FYYA \$ 500 scholarship support \$ 150 materials \$ 250 travel
\$ 4,036	FORMATION (including workshops) / including Duns Scotus Grant of \$ 2056
\$ 660	OFFICE SUPPLIES, POSTAGE, COPIES
\$ 1,980	SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS (stipend, travel costs)
\$ 700	SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT COURSE (travel, lodging)
\$ 500	INTERNATIONAL FRATERNITY (CIOFS donation)
\$ 700	CHARITY (incl. FAN donation)
<u>\$30002</u>	<u>TOTAL EXPENSE</u>

INCOME

\$ 20,000	REGIONAL FRATERNITY FAIR SHARE	(500 professed x \$40)
	\$ 10,002	OTHER / DUNS SCOTUS GRANT
<u>\$30002</u>	<u>TOTAL INCOME</u>	

Writing Franciscan

Gathering around the crèche — Franciscan style

A Franciscan Christmas by Kathleen M. Carroll. Forward by Jack Wintz, OFM. St. Anthony Messenger Press (Cincinnati, Ohio, 2010). 120 pp.; paper, \$12.99. Kindle edition, \$9.99



By Joanita M. Nellenbach, SFO

Each year we do it. We pull out the Nativity set, carefully unwrap the pieces, and place them in their special spot. This book offers us the opportunity to add meditation to our Nativity experience.

Kathleen M. Carroll, managing editor of books for St. Anthony Messenger Press, gives us much to think about. Each chapter is devoted to one crèche figure. Some we're familiar with: Jesus, Mary, Joseph, shepherds, Magi, angels, animals, the star. But villagers and musicians are here, too.

The Incarnation was central to St. Francis's spirituality. Father Jack Wintz, OFM, notes in the book's introduction:

Francis sensed that all creation (not just humans) has been redeemed through the Incarnation. Did not John the Baptist proclaim the words of Isaiah that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6). And did not Christ tell his followers to "proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15)? Why shouldn't Francis take this literally? Why shouldn't he preach to birds and fishes and wolves? These are all part of the flesh, part of the brotherhood and sisterhood of creation. Francis refused to be a human chauvinist, pretending that he was saved apart from the rest of creation.

In the first chapter, about Jesus, Kathleen advises us to take time to get back to the source by reading the Nativity story in Luke's Gospel: "Before you get caught up in the madness that is Christmas in America, or even if you're already caught up in it, take a break. Take a few minutes to remember who Jesus was, and what he was about. This is something that Francis never forgot."

And, as Kathleen points out, "Because Francis took the Gospels so seriously, he did not have an idealized vision of what life might have been like for the Holy Family. His own fascination with poverty was a result of that gospel poverty he witnessed in the lives of Jesus and Mary."

Mary and Joseph focused on God.

We see Francis as a faithful imitator of Jesus, but Kathleen also sees a similarity between Francis and Joseph. Francis rejected his earthly father so that he could follow his heavenly father. Joseph rejected what his family probably thought he should do:

In taking Mary as his wife, Joseph was rejecting a vital part of his culture: carrying on the bloodline, raising children — as many as possible, especially if they were sons. Even if his family came to terms with Joseph's decision to marry under such difficult circumstances, they can't have been pleased with the actions that necessarily followed: the flight to Egypt, the lack of children biologically related to Joseph.

Along with the others we usually find in the crèche, Kathleen devotes chapters to the villagers and the musicians. Incarnation was so important to Francis that he wanted the villagers of Greccio to experience Christ's Nativity in Bethlehem. It's not hard to imagine that there were also some musicians at the stable in Bethlehem, and at Greccio, too.

We might like to think that we would be at the Nativity — Bethlehem or Greccio — but a lot of our neighbors, including those “you might like to distance yourself from,” would also be there, Kathleen says. “They're in our Nativity scene because they're important. They're the reason Christ came. Not for the smart, the beautiful, or the saintly. Christ came to save the littlest, the least, the villagers. He'd like your help. This Christmas, stand out as a Christian by finding some way to help those who don't stand out.”

You might use this book a wonderful way to help you focus on the real meaning of the Christmas season, and its small size ((5¼ x 6¼ inches) could make it a great stocking stuffer.

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.

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.

“[T]he spirituality of reconciliation, so evident in Francis' peaceful dialogue with Malek el-Kamil during the Fifth Crusade, reminds us of what has been called the ‘Spirit of Assisi,’ a spirit of respectful and attentive dialogue among members of different religious traditions. Wars and threats of war among nations, invoking God as their justification, contradict that Franciscan understanding of ‘the Most High’ God who is ‘good, all good, the highest good.’ In the figure of the Poverello those who continue to struggle for reconciliation among nations may find a sign of hope. Whenever he spoke to people, or birds, or wolves, he always began with these words, ... ‘May the Lord give you peace’” (130).

William J. Short, OFM, *Poverty and Joy: The Franciscan Tradition*



PRESIDENCY OF THE SFO INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL
ONGOING FORMATION PROJECT
MONTHLY DOSSIER
APRIL 2010 – YEAR 1 – No. 4

SECTION I: MONTHLY THEME

Topic I-4:
Profession in the SFO

Profession in the SFO: Gift and Commitment

by Fr. Felice Cangelosi, OFM Cap.

Summary and comments

Ewald Kreuzer, SFO

The formula of Profession in the Secular Franciscan Order reads: “I, N.N., by the grace of God, renew my baptismal promises and consecrate myself to the service of his kingdom” (*SFO Ritual*, page 23). Profession is the act by which a person places him/herself into the hands of God, enabling God to take hold of him/her, with the result that from the precise moment of Profession, the person no longer belongs to him/herself, but is considered as totally “expropriated” and at God’s entire disposal.

By virtue of Profession, the person becomes God’s property, and therefore “sacred.” The persons offer themselves to God with full freedom and awareness. Consecration properly indicates the act by which God takes possession of the person (who is enabled to give him/herself totally by the gift of the Spirit who draws him/her) and transforms him/her inwardly so that he/she is able to live the demands of a superior world.

Have we actually realized what happened to us when we made our Profession? It was the beginning of a “transformation process” which God has started with us and which is still going on. Do we feel how God more and more has taken possession of us? Do we really feel to be “consecrated” as God’s property?

In the course of the centuries, the Secular Franciscan Order has not only kept the terminology (*promissio, promittere*) of the primitive legislation, but progressively preferred the use of Profession to indicate the commitment to live a gospel life according to the approved Rule. We can deduce from this that the strong conviction of earliest times, namely that the promise of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance constitutes a true and proper Profession, was a constant part of the awareness of the Secular Franciscan Order.

The same clear awareness not only remains unchanged but is brought out even more strongly and clearly in the Rule of Paul VI and in the Constitutions subsequently approved by the Congregation for Consecrated Life, as well as in the Ritual, itself approved by the Congregation for Divine Worship.

The Profession of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance involves: a) an obligation contracted before God; b) the commitment to observe a form of life or Rule; c) definitive incorporation into the Order. The same elements are also constitutive of religious profession, and this leads us to maintain that the propositum vitae or promise of the Secular Franciscan Penitents are

equivalent to a religious profession.

It would be very useful to study — alone and in group — the nature and history of the Secular Franciscan Order (refer to lesson 6 and 7 of the SFO International Initial Formation Manual).

Questions for reflection and discussion in fraternity

1. What does “consecration” mean and indicate?
2. Can you explain why the SFO is a “true Order” with a “true Profession”?

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 April 2010:

SECTION II: SPIRITUAL INSIGHT

Topic IV: *Participating in Christ's Paschal Mystery. SFO Profession and commitment to live the Gospel life.*

by Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR

SECTION III: SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Block II: *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*

Part 1 of 9: *Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching*

Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR

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.

“Saint Francis wanted to die naked and without anything he could call his own. He wanted to die like Christ on the cross. Always it was Christ, always it was doing what Christ did or what Christ would do. And like Christ, he often had to relinquish his own will in obedience, as Christ was obedient even to death on a cross.

“Even on the occasion of this, his last request, he was obedient not to what he wanted, but to Brother Elias, who was then the minister of the whole Franciscan community. Brother Elias insisted under obedience that Francis be loaned a habit so that he could be clothed in something that did not belong to him instead of being naked. And Francis rejoiced because even at the end obedience was more perfect than doing one's own will, and obedience preserved his poverty, for the habit was not his own but only loaned to him by his brothers” (62).



Father Murray Bodo, OFM

The Simple way: Meditations on the Words of Saint Francis.