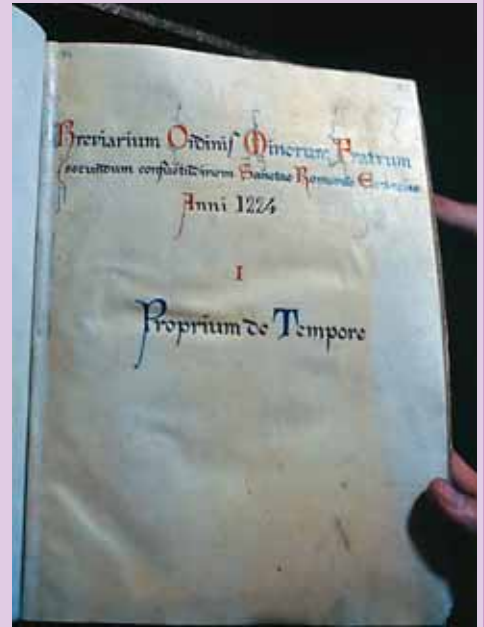


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MARCH 2009

# THE DOVERELLO

ST. BONAVENTURE SECULAR FRANCISCANS ✠ DETROIT, MICHIGAN

In the vaults of the Sacro Convento in Assisi, is a copy of a Breviary used during the lifetime of St. Francis. The coverpage notes that it is a Breviary of the Order of Friars Minor, and is dated 1224 – two years before Francis’ death, the same year during which he received the stigmata.



During Francis’ lifetime, the praying of the Divine Office underwent a change. In the Earlier Rule (Ch. 3), the [literate] friars were directed to follow the customary usage of the local clergy. In the Later Rule, Francis adopted the Psalter as used by the Roman Curia. The Breviary – as its name indicates: [breviarium – brief] – is shorter than the monastic format. Curial clergy had things to do and couldn’t be “tied up” throughout the day in public prayer. Similarly, friars spent more time in private prayer than in public prayer. Still, it is interesting to note how much singing was done in the Office.



Visit our website: <http://www.sfofbonaventure-detroit.org>

# MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear brothers and sisters,

May our Lord's peace and all good be with you!

**Seeing our Crucified Savior –  
on knees of Repentance we pray,  
Convert Our hearts, Oh Lord.  
Accept our Suffering today –  
our joy is Salvation tomorrow . . .**

Janet Bodell 8/17/2001

During Lent my spirit seems to turn naturally toward the Passion of our Lord Jesus. So many aspects of this profound event are worthy of meditation and contemplation. There are the five wounds of Christ, the seven last words of our Lord, the Sacred Head of Christ wounded by the crown of thorns, the last walk on Earth of our gentle Savior which we call the Stations of the Cross, and even the very wood of the Cross – grown and then uprooted, nipped in the bud, to serve a purpose of holding the One also given the same fate for the greater purpose of our salvation, or what about the Sign of the Cross that we often perform so haphazardly? This is really a symbol recalling the Passion of our Lord.

“Contemplation of the Passion was at the heart of [St.] Clare's life. In the suffering Christ, she discovered God's love for humanity and drew spiritual energy. The San Damiano cross that Clare contemplated depicts suffering as inseparable from the glory that Christ knew. The suffering Christ . . . the glorious Christ . . . was the source of her hope” (R. Miller and I. Peterson, *Praying with Clare of Assisi*. Companions for the Journey. Winona: St. Mary's Press, 1994, 63).

In his Second Life of St. Francis (see Habig, M. *Omnibus of Sources*. Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1991), Thomas of Celano states of our Seraphic Father Francis, “Who can express, who can understand how far Francis was from glorying in anything, *save in the cross of our Lord?*” To him alone is it given to know to whom alone it is given to experience it” (Chapter CLIV). To me, this points to using our own sufferings to our spiritual benefit in the light of meditating and contemplating Jesus' Passion. Francis gives us the example of becoming another Christ through our own human suffering.

What a gift we have in this blessed season of Lent! Bishop Morneau in *Ashes to Easter* (New York: Cross Road, 1996, 110), points out that “Our minds confess and hearts affirm that Christ is our utmost need, for without his redemptive presence our helplessness turns into despair.”

This Lent I hope to encounter that most holy *Presence* through meditation and contemplation of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ in its many aspects – private and communal; conceptual and concrete; horrifying and holy. Please join me in Spirit and in Truth.

God bless you, dear ones, on your Lenten journey!

Peace, Good, Love & Prayers,  
Janet



## I'm very sorry

My sincere apologies for the mistake which appeared on the monthly calendar of the February issue of *The Poverello*. The only time I have to move the “3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Meeting” notice is when the month begins on a Sunday. I failed to notice that February began on a Sunday, hence the mistake. To make matters worse, my proofreader was out because of a snowstorm, and so we had to go to print without the calendar being checked. As many members as possible were subsequently notified of the correction, but not everyone. Since my mistake may have negatively impacted attendance at the February gathering, I especially want to apologize to **Maryann Kummer** who goes to great lengths to prepare quality meetings for us, and to **Marie Amore**, the presenter of the day.

- Br. Pat



## Brothers and Sisters

The greatest news this month (in my humble opinion) is that Joe and I are in sunny Florida and that we will be celebrating our 25<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary on March 17<sup>th</sup>. We will be celebrating from February 22<sup>nd</sup> until March 1<sup>st</sup> on a week-long Carnival Eastern Caribbean Cruise. We will also be celebrating on March 17<sup>th</sup> by taking a short cruise from Ft. Myers Beach to Key West, staying overnight and then returning the next day. The biggest celebration, however, will take place on July 10-12 when our entire family (around 75 strong) – except for my son, Ed, who will still be serving in Afghanistan at that time – will be celebrating at the Best Western Midway Hotel in Lansing, with dinner and entertainment on Saturday, July 11.

I received my first call with information for my column since I have been writing it from one of our Secular Franciscans (besides Janet and Br. Pat): **Marge D'Hulster** called to inform me that **Fr. Silas Baumann** had surgery on his carotid artery in early December and never thought the recuperation would be so long. Since his voice is affected, he has appointments for both speech and throat therapy. In case you might like to send Fr. Silas a note or a card, he lives at St. Fidelis Friary, 1100 N. Ballard Rd., Appleton, WI 54911-5100. As a family that cares about each other and prays for each other's needs, I implore you to let me know if you or another of our brothers or sisters are in need of prayers or anything else.

Our sister, **Kay Balas**, who is still not able to drive and therefore still homebound, would love to hear from you also. Her address is 1124 Beaconsfield, Grosse Pointe Park, MI 48230, and her telephone number is (313) 823-4872.

**Charlotte Heymes** is back from her mission trip to the Philippines, recovering from jet lag, and resuming the care of her husband, **Jim**, who still is unable to walk. Charlotte was kept quite busy and is very happy to have gone because the experience demonstrated once again the poverty, lack of medical help and how people live on the other side of the world. A report from Charlotte, however, will have to wait until next month.

There's good news about our sister and brother, **Janet and John Bodell**: Janet no longer needs crutches and

John's hearing – to the great surprise of his doctors – is 40% improved. This, of course, is no surprise at all to us who attribute it to the power of prayer, for which John and Jan thank you.

Our dear brother, **Les Lafata**, is back in St. John Senior Community (where our sister **Dolores Peckham** is). Les isn't walking yet, but his eyesight is a bit better and he is still going to have cataract surgery. He hopes to be home by March 12<sup>th</sup> or sooner. In case you would like to send either Les or Dolores a note or a card, the address is 18300 East Warren, Detroit, MI 48224.

Our sister, **Sophie Martin**, would like prayers due to health issues – her own, her daughter, Doreen, her son-in-law, Billy, and her friend, **Dorothy Mataragas**; and **Ona Harris** asks for your prayers on behalf of her sister, Claudia Carter.

Our faithful brother, **Joseph Henn**, also welcomes our prayerful mediation and our sister, **Anne Fisher**, who was in a nursing home in Lansing, died on January 30<sup>th</sup> and was buried on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Anne was very involved when she was well and we all pray for her soul and all the souls of the faithful departed from our Fraternity.

I've heard that **Ray Morehead** is experiencing health issues, but have been unable to contact him. Please keep him covered in your prayers, as well.

What would we do without our brothers and sisters to help us with intercessory prayer?

The February SFO meeting was held on Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, with our sister, **Marie Amore**, who spoke about the 24 things every Secular Franciscan should know. Marie is a wonderful person, thoroughly Franciscan, who cares deeply about the Secular Franciscan Order with every fibre of her being. We were privileged to have her share her reflections with us.

That's all the news for now. I can still be reached at (586) 939-3342 in Ft. Myers Beach or by e-mail ([Boland14@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Boland14@sbcglobal.net)) with news for next month's column.

God bless you all and keep you in his care,

your sister in Christ and Francis,  
Faye Kluk Boland

Send news items about our members to Faye Kluk Boland at:  
(tel) 586-939-3342 or (e-mail) [Boland14@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Boland14@sbcglobal.net)



**Deceased Members:**

Anne Fischer (former member) († Jan. 30, 2009)

**Members needing prayers:**

Wilhelmina Adkins	Maryann Kummer
Peter Aluzzo	Les and Josie Lafata
Jan Atkinson	Janice Litch
Kay Balas	Rose Longo
Fr. Silas Baumann	Joseph Marra
Gertrude Beattie	Sophie Martin
Evelyn Bishop	Dorothy Matargas
Janet & John Bodell	Maria McNally
Anthony Brodeur	Raymond Morehead
Loretta Chmielarczyk	Genevieve Ochenkowski
Laurie Drobnicki	Rosie Patin
Clara Falzone	Dolores & Bob Peckham
Wesley Faust	Theresa Pfaendtner
Marie Fontanive	Joseph Pierce
Natalie Grabowski	Mary Saber
Joseph Henn	Bridget Schultz
James Heymes	Joanne Schumacher
Caroline Hojna	Helen Wardowski
Anna May Jesak	Joseph Wisk
Donna Marie Johnston	Br. Leo Wollenweber

**Relatives needing prayers:**

Susan Arcznski, cousin of the Atkinsons  
 Avian, great nephew of the Atkinsons  
 Angel Bettin and Donna Mitchell,  
     daughters of Caroline Hojna  
 Melanie Bruss, niece of Dan and Jan Atkinson  
 Claudia Carter, sister of Ona Harris  
 Angelina and Joey Daleo,  
     daughter-in-law & son of Josie and Les Lafata  
 Starr Dehn, niece of Mary Poole  
 Raymond Donahue, husband of Julia E-Donahue  
 Rose Dreissen, wife of Joseph  
 Barbara Erzbischoff, mother of Julia E-Donahue

Beverly Falzone, mother of Clara  
 Stefan Florescu, husband of Caroline  
 Bob Fontanive, husband of Marie  
 Doreen Gerwollis, daughter of Sophie Martin  
 Billy Gerwollis, son-in-law of Sophie Martin  
 Sr. Shirley Heymes, OP, sister of James  
 Judy Hojna, Caroline's sister-in-law  
 Ted Hojna, husband of Caroline  
 Fred LaChance, brother of Donna Marie Johnston  
 Jane I. Litch, mother of Janice  
 Marilyn Nichols, daughter of Anthony Brodeur  
 Jean Nozewski, wife of Thomas  
 Lawrence and Teresa Poole, parents of Mary  
 Sean Sherman, son of Sandra  
 Dan Tyrna, grandson of Mary Hebert  
 Steve Yuhase, father of Claire Johnson

**Memorials:**

Celia Baclowski, offered by Antoinette Shukavit  
 Hank Rea, offered by Betty Lou Di Trapani

**Those serving in the Armed Forces:**

Andrew Arcznski  
 Christopher Beattie  
 Francisco Biber  
 Thomas Chmielarczyk  
 Thomas Greenia  
 Edward Kluk  
 John Kristensen  
 John Marra III  
 Joseph Marra, Jr.

**Pray for ALL**

**who have entrusted themselves to our prayer.**

Help keep our list up-to-date,  
 to remove or add names, call:

**Jo Marie Nardi at 586-978-2335**

## MARK YOUR 2009 CALENDARS

- March 13 ..... Christian Service at the Meldrum Kitchen (10:30 AM-1:00 PM)  
March 15 ..... SFO Day of Reflection (11 am) - NO Mass; bring bag lunch and finger food to pass  
March 18 ..... Council Meeting (6:30 pm)  
April 15 ..... Council Meeting (6:30 pm)  
April 19 ..... Mass for SFO Jubilarians (Formation at Noon; everyone at 1:30 pm)  
May 15 ..... Christian Service at the Meldrum Kitchen (10:30 AM-1:00 PM)  
May 17 ..... 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Meeting (Formation at Noon; everyone at 1:30 pm)  
May 20 ..... Council Meeting (6:30 pm)  
June 12 ..... Christian Service at the Meldrum Kitchen (10:30 AM-1:00 PM)  
June 14 ..... 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Meeting (Formation at Noon; everyone at 1:30 pm)  
June 17 ..... Council Meeting (6:30 pm)  
June 27 ..... SFO Mass for our Deceased (10 am)  
July 10 ..... Christian Service at the Meldrum Kitchen (10:30 AM-1:00 PM)  
July 15 ..... Council Meeting (6:30 pm)  
July 19 ..... Fraternity Annual Picnic (Formation at Noon; everyone at 1:30 pm)  
August 14 ..... Christian Service at the Meldrum Kitchen (10:30 AM-1:00 PM)  
August 16 ..... 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Meeting (Formation at Noon; everyone at 1:30 pm)  
August 19 ..... Council Meeting (6:30 pm)  
September 11 ..... Christian Service at the Meldrum Kitchen (10:30 AM-1:00 PM)  
September 16 ..... Council Meeting (6:30 pm)  
September 20 ..... SFO Day of Reflection (everyone at 11 am) - NO Mass; bring bag lunch  
October 9 ..... Christian Service at the Meldrum Kitchen (10:30 AM-1:00 PM)  
October 18 ..... CHAPTER OF ELECTIONS  
October 21 ..... Council Meeting (6:30 pm)  
October 24 ..... SFO Mass for All Deceased Franciscans (10 am)  
November 13 ..... Christian Service at the Meldrum Kitchen (10:30 AM-1:00 PM)  
November 15 ..... SFO Renewal Mass (Formation at Noon; everyone at 1:30 pm)  
November 18 ..... Council Meeting (6:30 pm)  
December 11 ..... Christian Service at the Meldrum Kitchen (10:30 AM-1:00 PM)  
December 16 ..... Council Meeting (6:30 pm)  
December 20 ..... 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Meeting - Christmas Concert (Formation at Noon; everyone at 1:30 pm)

### March Day of Reflection

In this *Poverello* you will find background material for our March Day of Reflection. Please read the materials beforehand. We've included some supplemental materials (pages 12-22). These documents are of utmost importance to all Secular Franciscans. We are publishing them in *The Poverello* so that those who cannot attend the March Day of Reflection, as well as those who can, will be able to keep up with the critical issues facing the SFO today and the directions the Order is taking. These sources will be used as springboards to discussions throughout this year. Cells might also make them the focus of their discussions. Please remember that Mass is NOT part of our Day of Reflection on March 15<sup>th</sup>. Also, please bring a bag lunch for yourself and some finger food to pass.



# Celebrating Gene Snyders



Gene was born on October 11, 1938 in his parents' house in Batchtown, Illinois (in Southern Illinois, across the Mississippi River from St. Louis, MO). He is the oldest child of Ralph Snyders and Phyllis Stumpf and the older brother of Bonita (Bonnie), Joyce, Donald, and Phillip.

Gene attended Batchtown Elementary School and graduated from Brussels Community High School in 1956. He received a B.S. Degree in Accounting from the University of Illinois in Champaign, IL, two Masters Degrees (one in Business Administration [1976] and one in Educational Administration [1975] from Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, and an "ABD" Doctoral Dissertation Degree in Education from Iowa State University in 1981.

From 1960-'63, Gene served as an officer (Captain) and helicopter pilot in the U.S. Army in Fort Hood, TX. After his military duty, he was employed as an auditor with C.J. Schlosser & Company in Alton, IL. In 1965, he was employed as an internal auditor for Missouri Pacific Railroad in St. Louis, MO. Thereafter, the president of the Lewis & Clark Community College appointed Gene to the position of Dean of Business Management in which position he served from 1965-'76. In 1976, Gene was hired at Des Moines Area Community College in Ankeny, IA where he served as Dean of Business Affairs and as Executive Vice President for Management Services with supervision for human resources, business services and accounting office operations, physical plant operations, auxiliary services, computer center, student services and records, and research planning and reporting. Gene left DMACC in 1994 to begin volunteer work with the Church.

Gene is currently involved with Fr. John Uke's Udi Water Project in Nigeria, Africa as financial officer. He

provides accounting and financial consulting to the following organizations: Corpus Christi Catholic Church, Ss. Peter and Paul Jesuit Church, St. Christopher Catholic Church in Marysville, St. Charles Borromeo Church, St. Clare of Assisi Catholic Church, St. Bonaventure Monastery, the Fr. Solanus Casey Center, and the Home Visitors of Mary. He has served for five years as the treasurer of the St. Bonaventure SFO Fraternity.

Gene learned of the Secular Franciscans from a parish (Our Lady Queen of Peace) he attended in Rosewood Heights, IL (near Lewis and Clark Community College). Since his fraternity was still an emerging fraternity, and Gene was in the first class of candidates, he was professed by the sponsoring fraternity, St. Anthony of Padua in St. Louis in 1996.

Gene is a member of St. Lucy Catholic Church in St. Clair Shores and serves as a Eucharistic Minister and sacristan at the parish. He is involved with the Soul Brothers Men's Group and Bible Study Group at Corpus Christi. Gene is the father of five children (Gina, Cathy, Terri, Jeff, and Bill) and grandfather of nine (Riley, Patrick, Mary Catherine, Evan, Ian, Ella, Sophia Rose, Luke, Yasmine Lina).

Gene's hobbies are Bible study, golf, reading and travel.

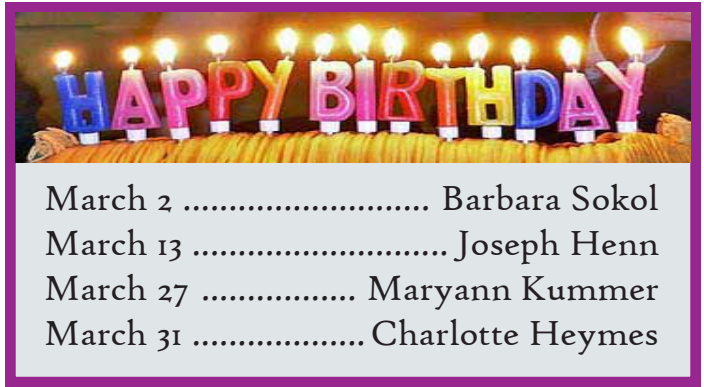
Gene's Secular Franciscan vocation is based on his understanding of the way in which St. Francis of Assisi was able to see God in all creation and through his creatures including humans, beasts of the field, fish of the sea and birds of the air and all the other created beauty of this world. Gene's conviction lies in recognizing and praising God in all that is visible to us and by doing his will as best we understand and know how, we will be able to go from Gospel to Life and from Life to Gospel. Gene believes that the Gospel – the words of Jesus –, gives us the only answer for real fulfillment in life. Gene has also found encouragement through the words of others: "Preach the Gospel, and if necessary use words;" "Do little things with great love" [Bl. Teresa of Calcutta]; and "By their actions we will know them." By our actions expressing the love of Jesus through service and forgiveness to our brothers and sisters, they will know that we, as Seculars, are members of the Franciscan Family. Our Franciscan vocation will be obvious.

*We love you, Gene!*



## Third Order Saints of March

- 9 ..... St. Frances of Rome, SFO
- 12 ..... Bl. Angela Salawa, religious
- 12 ..... Bl. Luigi Orione, SFO priest, founder
- 23 ..... St. Catherine of Genoa, SFO
- 28 ..... Bl. Jane Mary of Maillé, SFO



Joshua has an engaging smile and he loves to give hugs. An only child, Joshua is the apple of his parents' eyes. "He makes our day, every day," said his mom. Joshua suddenly fell ill during a family trip in late August. He developed neck pain and started to vomit. An MRI revealed devastating news: their boy suffered from an inoperable brain stem glioma, a type of brain tumor. But there was hope on the horizon. Joshua's parents were familiar with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and asked his doctor for a referral. At St. Jude, Joshua underwent chemotherapy and 30 rounds of radiation. Throughout it all, St. Jude provided

### Joshua Solomon 5 years old brain stem glioma

Joshua and his family everything they needed. "The doctors are first class," Joshua's mom said. "The care and concern St. Jude gave us was amazing." Joshua's parents are astonished by the generosity of people who give to St. Jude. "Because of them, St. Jude provides care for all children," said Joshua's mom. "Whether families have insurance or not, the patients get first class care. I know Danny Thomas is looking down from Heaven and smiling." Joshua finished his treatment in November, and he returns to St. Jude every three months for checkups. He is in preschool and he loves Thomas the Train. Recently, Joshua went horseback riding for the first time. "He loved it," his mom said. "He can't wait to go back."



## From the Friars' Choir

A pessimist sees the difficulty  
in every opportunity;  
an optimist sees the  
opportunity in every difficulty.

~ Winston Churchill

# Document 1 for the March Day of Reflection

## THE STATE OF THE ORDER

by SFO General Minister, Encarnación del Pozo

### Secular Franciscans Need to Stand Up as an Order

Secular Franciscans need to take charge of their identity as an Order, and act on the conviction they are equal partners in the Franciscan Family, not just passive members, General Minister Encarnación del Pozo told some 110 attendees at the Order's 12<sup>th</sup> general chapter on Sunday, Nov. 16.

"I would dare to affirm that, in this historic moment, the SFO feels more responsible than other members of the family," and plays a unique "unifying" role because of "our Rule," she said. Noting fruitful, ongoing relationships with other branches of the family – a family ready to celebrate the 8th centenary of the birth of the Franciscan charism – General Minister del Pozo asserted:

I beg of you – the SFO must not and cannot trail behind...the other components of our family. The SFO has to re-claim...its own place in these family events. The life experiences of our Order must be known and well present to the rest of the family. I do believe that the First Order, the Second Order and the Third Order Regular at all levels need the knowledge that we can offer" as people fully immersed "in the ordinary circumstances and problems related to work, family, politics, education and science, including situations of extreme poverty and all kinds of misery.

Del Pozo offered some challenges for the future:

- deepen the formation process;
- intensify and revitalize the local Fraternity where the life of the Order exists and vocations are developed;
- increase the sense of mission in the world;
- consider different ways of living within the Secular Franciscan Order, such as family groups, young couples and groups arising from the YouFra (Franciscan youth);
- foster the call to holiness, with fraternities becoming home to individuals who, taking their baptism seriously, want to become saints.

Del Pozo gave a demographic overview of the Order, while noting some difficulty in getting an accurate census for fraternities in all 110 countries where the Secular Franciscan Order exists. The number of professed active members remains constant at some 400,000, she reported. They belong to 65 established national fraternities, 42 emerging national fraternities, and three areas working toward canonical establishment of their first local fraternities. Franciscan Youth, or YouFra, is present in 64 countries as an organization.

The Western World, particularly Europe, has seen a decline or stagnation in numbers, while so-called Third World countries, including some in Latin American, Africa, Asia and, Slavic nations as well, are seeing an astonishing growth in vocations. In one country there are young people in their 20s serving in leadership positions.

She also urged:

- continuation of the "China Project," to spread the Franciscan charism and provide support for some 7,000 Secular Franciscans and 120 fraternities who have been discovered in China despite decades of Communist repression.
- a commitment to support and collaborate with **Franciscans International**, which brings a Franciscan voice to the United Nations.

# Document 2 for the March Day of Reflection

## MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL CHAPTER

To all the brothers and sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order

Hungary, November 15-22, 2008

We, brothers and sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order and of the Franciscan Youth who have participated in the 12<sup>th</sup> General Chapter and 5<sup>th</sup> Elective Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order at Dobogoko, Hungary from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2008, and in communion with our General Assistants, send fraternal greetings and expressions of fraternal love to our brothers and sisters all over the world, and especially to those who are experiencing suffering as a result of war and violence.

The celebration of this Chapter has been a time of grace, blessing, transformation and awareness of our own identity as lived through our fraternal life. During this Chapter, the Lord has also given us new servants to guide our Order.

With your International Councillors, we send this message in an effort to convey the spirit of the Chapter.

On November 17<sup>th</sup>, the two years of celebrations marking the 8<sup>th</sup> centenary of the birth of Saint Elizabeth was brought to a close with a celebration at the Basilica in Esztergom. During the Eucharistic celebration, presided by Cardinal Laszlo Paskai and concelebrated with the Major Superiors of the First Order in Hungary, the Conference of General Assistants, and other Franciscan friars, we united ourselves with the brothers and sisters from local fraternities in Hungary, and a number of religious and Franciscans. May these two years of reflection and prayer continue to inspire us in following our Holy Patroness.

Fundamentally, the Chapter had two themes: Profession of the Secular Franciscan and Sense of Belonging to the Secular Franciscan Order. Our vocation and mission as Secular Franciscans requires a renewed life-long commitment.

Within our local fraternities, the privileged place for formation, we begin our journey towards sanctity with the loving support of one another. We are encouraged to offer our lives in service by responding to the needs of the world and by recognizing the signs of our times.

Franciscan Youth is an important gift to the entire Secular Franciscan Order – they are not only our “future” but also our “present”. Through our loving accompaniment, we help each other to realize our true Franciscan charism and ongoing conversion.

The priorities of our Order for the next six years are : Formation, Communications, Franciscan Youth, Presence in the World and Emerging Fraternities. We are all invited to pay special attention to these priorities. All in positions of responsibility within the Order, at all levels, are asked to acknowledge this message.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are all the light of God. We must continue to keep our light shining and to witness our Secular Franciscan charism in today’s world. Wherever we are, may our fraternal love for each other burn brightly in conformity to Christ.

Saint Francis, Saint Claire, Saint Elizabeth and Saint Louis were all passionate lovers of Jesus Christ. In the same way, may our witness be authentic and visible. Fear not for we are not alone. We journey together as we strive to make present the Kingdom of God in our midst, knowing that Jesus is always with us.

In the name of your loving brothers and sisters,

/s/ Encarnación del Pozo  
SFO General Minister

## Document 3 for the March Day of Reflection

# THE ORDER'S FIVE PRIORITIES

HUNGARY, 21 Nov. 2008 – On the last full day of deliberations, the Secular Franciscan Order's General Chapter decided on five priority areas to focus on for the next six years:

1. **Formation**
2. **Communications**
3. **Franciscan youth**
4. **Presence in the world, and**
5. **Emerging National Fraternities.**

## Document 4 for the March Day of Reflection

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONCERNING PROFESSION AND THE SENSE OF BELONGING

### CONCERNING PROFESSION

#### Questions for Working Groups

**1. Profession is “a commitment for life and to life.”**

Are Secular Franciscans aware of the depth and width of this commitment to God, to the Church, to their brothers and sisters, and to the world? Or do you think that there is a certain superficiality whereby members consider belonging to the SFO like any other “extracurricular” activity that gives color to their own spiritual, ecclesiastic and social life?

**2. Through Profession we promised to live every Gospel demand as deeply as we can.**

Are Secular Franciscans always aware that this means following Christ at every moment and in every situation in life – both the ordinary and extraordinary ones?

**3. Profession is a living memory [a re-calling] of Baptism; for this reason, it must reinforce the relationship between the individual Christian and the Church.**

In what concrete ways does the witness of Secular Franciscans contribute to the building up of the Church?

In this context, what is the importance and relevance of the individual Secular Franciscan's “life in the world” to the Fraternity?

#### 4. Secularity is the special mission or focus stemming from the SFO Profession.

Have Secular Franciscans understood that they have been called, precisely by virtue of their own vocation, to work in the world for its sanctification?

Do Secular Franciscans continue to resist accepting this path of “consecration” in the world?

### CONCERNING THE SFO SENSE OF BELONGING

#### Questions for working groups

1. Do you think that the “crisis of the sense of belonging” which is so widespread today in the way people think, might also be found in Secular Franciscans’ attitudes toward the Order into which they have been “incorporated” through Profession?

Based on your experience, what are the symptoms of a fragile or absent sense of belonging to the SFO?

2. How do Secular Franciscans live their “co-responsibility” toward their own local Fraternity and toward the whole Order?
3. Have the demands stressed in Article 30.2 of the General Constitutions been properly represented to the inquirers and candidates during the period of initial formation? Are these requirements an integral part of vocational discernment?
4. Among the “new intervention forms,” which ones do you think would work better with Secular Franciscans? Which are more important and/or urgent? Are there any other suggestions?
5. What do you think could be the most suitable instruments to improve or reinforce the SFO sense of belonging?

On the following pages you will find additional, more in-depth materials on these same themes.



# BELONGING TO THE SFO

A presentation to the 12<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, 2009  
by Emanuela De Nunzio, SFO

## INTRODUCTION:

### The Crisis of the sense of belonging in post modern times

#### 1. The general picture

Zygmund Bauman, one of the great sociologists of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, compares the present world to a body whose “solid state” becomes the “liquid state” as it passes through the last centuries. In the “liquid world” there exists no longer a culture of learning, of accumulation, but a culture of withdrawal and lack of continuity. In “liquid” modernity those certainties that used to provide solid structures have become more scarce: the national State, institutions, the family, work. Nothing is fixed or guaranteed; everything is modified and changes with incredible ease, beginning with consumer goods. Even interpersonal relations have become more superficial. There is no longer the willingness to committing the time to maintain stable, loving relationships and friendships since the individual often fears the future. He is no longer driven to initiating long-term projects and therefore all that he does is exclusively focused on the satisfaction of his own fleeting sense of well-being.

In the face of uncertainty and risk, people’s response is to search for immediate satisfaction here and now. The present consumer society breeds the desire to have more, creates artificial needs, and imparts the impression that a person can choose and buy what he wants. In the realm of personal life, a mentality is spreading that each person is considered in absolute control of his own decisions and accepts fewer and fewer traditions – sometimes even basic ethics. The search for happiness, for personal accomplishment, for the self-satisfaction of the individual (aspirations that in themselves are legitimate) taken as absolute criteria of conduct, have heavy negative consequences on social relationships. No one wants to bind himself to anything or anyone. Above all, no one “belongs” to anything in a definitive way. Interpersonal relations and relations with institutions find themselves fragile and easily cast aside.

A very complete and effective picture of the current situation was expressed by the Franciscan General

Minister, Fr. José Carballo, at the Chapter of Mats of the Young Friars Minor (30 June 2007): “Many who are ruled by emotion and live for the moment allow themselves to be dominated by the dictatorship of relativism through which all is suspect, all is always negotiable; and, in many hearts, it breeds feelings of uncertainty, insecurity and instability, with nothing existing of the sacred, of certainty and worthy of preserving. There are many victims of systematic doubt, compelled to take refuge in the day and in the world of emotion. There are many seduced by the culture of ‘part time’ and of ‘zapping’ (speed), that causes one to avoid long-lasting engagements, to pass from one experience to the next, without deepening any of them. There are many seduced by a “light” culture, that leaves no space for utopia, for sacrifice, for renunciation. Many are seduced by the culture of subjectivism, for which the individual is the measure of everything and everything is seen and appraised as a function of oneself, of its own actualization. This post-modern reality produces, especially in the young generations, an uncertain little-defined personality, that makes it more complicated to be able to understand what is already in itself difficult: the radical requirements of the ways of following Christ.”

#### 2. Belonging to the family

Let’s speak, first of all, about the identity of the family. The subject is complex. In the very definition of “marriage”, a man chooses a woman as a companion for life and as a part of his destiny. A woman chooses a specific man as spouse and companion. Between the two of them, they make a plan for life. The one belongs to the other. They want to live together for a lifetime, not temporarily, but characterized as “for always,” in joy and in sadness, in health and in sickness, respecting each other and tenderly welcoming each other at every moment. Only under these premises is it possible to organize life in a manner in which children can arrive in the stability of a house, of a home, of a family.

The family is the greatest resource for the person and for society. It provides generosity, unconditional welcome, and solidarity in different life circumstances. It sees itself besieged today by many challenges of the modern world: to precariousness (to which we referred earlier), to prevailing materialism, to the search for immediate pleasure, to the influence of the media. The family, then,

becomes weakened and is attacked by proposals that equate it to cohabitation under the same roof. The family, marriage and children often are not the accomplishment of a plan drawn up together and built little by little, but rather an accident of circumstance. People more and more are choosing cohabitation and, even in marriage, often one of the parties or both choose a state that we could define as “celibacy in marriage.” The high incidence of separations and divorces is a confirmation (a survey conducted recently in the USA pointed out that couples married at the end of the ’70s have a less than 50% chance of still being husband and wife). The number of single mothers and of children living outside of the family context is growing so much that it can almost be defined as “normal.” In this context, which Benedict XVI defined as “worrying,” it is important to show ways to strengthen the family and to educate new generations in the Catholic faith, and to acknowledge it as the greatest gift that parents can give to their children. The fact that the family may be a “buffer zone” between the individual and society makes it a natural antagonist against cultural tendencies, and so they try to destroy it.

### **3. Belonging in professional life**

The effects of precariousness are also heavily seen in the working life of the people. In the world of work one speaks precisely of precariousness, that is the cause for millions of youth not to plan for their own lives, repeatedly postponing the main rites of passage – from leaving the parents’ home to the birth of children. The employment crisis makes it so that many accept the type of work for which they do not feel drawn or they abandon their career and try to earn money in fields for which they were not prepared. For this reason they feel like strangers without roots in their profession.

### **4. Belonging to a nation**

According to a recent survey on migration by the Fides Agency, 175 million people reside in a country where they were not born, and if one takes into account the fact that 85% of the world population resides in developing countries where they must live on \$3,500 per capita per year, one understands why migration represents an irreversible phenomenon. But the sense of belonging to a specific territory is profoundly changed not only because of great cultural and professional mobility, but also because the national reality, which at one time made one

feel deeply rooted and with a personal identity (I am Italian, Spanish, English...). is being replaced with a supranational entity being imposed more and more, even to individuals, with points of reference and rules of behavior that don’t deepen their roots in a solid tradition. On the contrary, attention grows toward regional realities, to a restricted environment where one’s interests lie and where one protects those interests – they would go so far as constructing many “small homelands” independent and self-sufficient.

The general picture is that of a general precariousness, from work to interpersonal connections, to families, to solidarity. It is not difficult to understand why people do not feel more deeply bound to their homeland, to the family, to the professional world. With other social consequences:

#### **A. The fragmentation of society:**

There is a deprivation of the thought and of the culture of solidarity, that makes strangers of the people in the cities. Individuals live “near” or “opposite,” not “together;”

#### **B. The little-appreciated sense of the social:**

highly guarded privacy creates a permanent conflict between the good of the individual and the good of the community;

#### **C. The culture of suspicion:**

Suspicion and distrust, bred from the climate of violence that surrounds us, paralyzes serene and cordial relations with others and are the true worm borers that undermine the base of civil society.

### **5. Belonging to Ecclesiastical Life**

The object of discussion between the Church and the world is no longer, as at one time, a specific point of Catholic morality, as happened in the ’70s, when they used to discuss divorce, abortion or the use of the pill, but accepted Christian enforcement of life. Today the discussion centers on alternate and global visions of man and of woman, of fatherhood and of motherhood, of sexuality, and above all, on the ways of living so that men and women can fulfill themselves in life and feel satisfied and happy. How do those who, by their Baptism, are members of the Catholic Church, belong and how do they identify with it? Some belong totally and without reserve. There are those who live in the Church calmly and serenely, with the full conviction that they belong to the soul of the Church, of being a member of the Mystical Body of Christ. But there are also those (and perhaps

more in number) who are bound to the Church with a very fine thread, with a sense of belonging limited to outward appearance, quasi bureaucratic. And finally, there are those who live only some aspects of the faith, outside of any belonging to the Church (believing without belonging). In the *doctrinal note on some aspects of evangelization*, published December 15, 2007, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith denounces specifically the “crisis of belonging” to the Church as one of the subjects of which we should be vigilant because it compromises the original evangelical work of the disciples of Jesus.

The Church, even if it is always enlivened by unwavering Christian hope, does not hide its worry in the face of the phenomena that we have briefly presented. She is directed to give a prophetic reply to the challenges of our time. It maintains, in fact, that the only therapy is the recovery of authentically human and Christian values, with the return of the faithful to the very origins and to their very identity in a Christocentric perspective. Three conclusions flow from this: the strong link between faith and reality; the importance of Christ in the “everyday;” and the continuous attention to the correct relation of truth/freedom.

Through the SFO, the larger expectation is to find ways to share this effort, this huge task, but to realize it, it needs a continuous re-foundation, of a return to the most authentic roots, that make it possible to live the Gospel and to proclaim it, without betraying it and without softening it.

## **BELONGING AND IDENTITY**

### **6. The Main Connection**

Every talk on belonging, for every person, is connected closely to identity and presupposes it. What does it mean to be a man? What does it mean to be a woman? What is the role of the priest? What does it mean to be a religious in our day? What does it mean today to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? What is good and fundamental for me? Where am I going? What should I pursue in life to be able to arrive to the fullness of existence? To whom do I belong and who belongs to me?

The close connection between belonging and identity is a psychological law, but even more, it is a structure of being. Plato would say – One thing, in order to be itself, should distinguish itself from the others, because one thing that would want to be itself and at the same time to be all

the others would be both itself and the negation of itself. It is a logical principle. There is no identity without belonging and there is no belonging without identity: they are distinct and yet always substantially joined. And therefore it is obvious that to speak of belonging, it is necessary to speak of identity: to have awareness of oneself and to distinguish oneself from the other.

### **7. The Secular Franciscan Identity**

Who are the Secular Franciscans scattered all over the world? What is their identity? Some of us, lay and religious, have had occasion to know other realities of the Third Order. There were in the past very many groups. Mostly their members used to wear characteristic clothing, different for men and for women. In some places there were different fraternities for men and women and, even when they were mixed, the men sat on one side and the women on the other. In the course of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the Franciscan Family experienced deep transformations. On June 24, 1978 the tertiaries received the new Rule, approved by Pope Paul VI. First, there was the Second Vatican Council with its new focus. The Council documents strongly influenced the writers of the Pauline Rule. We entered into a period of study and of assimilation of the new Rule. It became a fundamental point of reference in the search for “identity.” In the new times it was necessary to find the road of renewal within faithfulness to tradition. For some time some Fraternities presented themselves still composed of laity with a certain nostalgia for the life of the friars and of religious, although having the persistent call to be valid tools of action of the Church in the world. But the attitude of the brothers and of the sisters was changing into a new way to be Franciscan, identical in its essentials, but different in how it manifested itself... The Franciscan Third Order had assumed the new Franciscan name of The Secular Franciscan Order, exactly because it wanted to underscore the presence of Franciscan laity in the world; it wanted to distinguish itself in its “secular” state, the most significant feature of the Third Order. Later, in the document *Christifideles Laici*, Pope John Paul II, recalling the doctrine of the Council, wrote: “The vocation of the laity to holiness carries with it that life according to the Spirit be expressed in a particular way by their insertion in temporal reality and in their participation in earthly activity” (n. 17). With such direction come more obligations for those who accept the call to the SFO. We cannot forget that the young are caught up with doubts,

questions and the cultural transformations of our times. The human being does not exist only in space. He lives in a specific existential context. In life he has a series of tasks to carry out, but every person is more than what he appears to be, more than what he does, more than what he accomplishes. Every person is a mystery.

And so, to update the discussion, we have to ask ourselves: What does it mean today to be a Secular Franciscan? What are people seeking who are making their Profession in the Order today? These questions do not annoy us and do not worry us more than any other time because it seems to us that our reply is already given in the everyday. All seems resolved: in the every day, each person is what he does, and each Fraternity is what it accomplishes. Nevertheless, with a spirit less accommodating, we should not satisfy ourselves with this first response. Anyone can fulfill the functions that we practice in the world, and any association or movement can fulfill the apostolates that we do, without the need to belong to the SFO. When we realize that, an abyss is opened in front of us. We worry, and our conscience accuses us of inconsistency and of scarcity of radicalness in “following the poor and crucified Christ” in the manner of Saint Francis. To appease ourselves we seek to give a Franciscan color to what we do (or what the Fraternity does): we promote devotion to Saint Francis, we organize Franciscan exhibitions of articles, we put on stage the *Transitus* of St. Francis, we talk about St. Francis on radio programs. Can this Franciscan color be perhaps superficial? Could it not be that the Franciscanism that we promote is an incidental reality, secondary, accessory? In other words: it will not be that we are professionals, students, businesses, directors, ministers of the Eucharist, habitual goers of parish groups, and in addition also Franciscan? Or perhaps, to be Franciscan belongs to the most intimate part of our personal identity, to the marrow of our being, to the most authentic essence of what each of us is?

At the beginning of the Rule are found, in concise form, the fundamental elements of the Secular Franciscan life. In Article 2, Secular Franciscans are men and women who, “led by the Spirit, strive for perfect charity in their own secular state. By their profession they pledge themselves to live the gospel in the manner of Saint Francis by means of this rule approved by the Church.” The updated legislation of the SFO (Rule and General Constitutions) state that the identity of the Secular Franciscan is expressed in a triple dimension: personal

(the inner life), fraternal (co-responsibility) and universal (the mission).

## 8. Inner Life

At a time of instability and fluctuations, it is fundamental to arrive at the heart of spirituality to give consistency to commitments and to personal faithfulness. Without the basis of spirituality, all our life lacks consistency and without foundation, suspended as in space. We run the risk of forgetting how extraordinary the adventure is in which Jesus involved us. This is the theme for which our Rule (n. 7) reminds us that conversion “should be carried out every day.” And the General Constitutions (art. 8.2) affirm that our life must substantiate itself “in a journey continually renewed by conversion.” There are other tools for this re-foundation of the person that take us to the rediscovery of our identity and of the sense of belonging: first of all, an ongoing formation which should awaken the consciousness that being Franciscan is fulfilled by always becoming like a new Franciscan: it is never a completed story behind us, but a journey in which awaits ever new exercises. The re-foundation of the person is done with small undertakings that should flow in this greatest of undertakings that we call “form or plan of life.”

Our contribution in overcoming the problems that clutch the world and the Church is not realized by transforming us into “activists,” but into disciples of prayer. It is certain that for Secular Franciscans, like other citizens, we are called to political commitment, professional competence, promotion of solidarity and of liberty, of rights and of justice. Nevertheless what is specifically ours is prayer to the living God. The contemplative dimension allows us to go through the world with eyes enlightened by hope and compassion. There is no true Christian commitment in the world without prayer. Naturally, prayer should be accompanied by a living experience that transforms, enables the capacity to love and lets one discern the way to inner happiness. On various occasions, Benedict XVI insists on the fact that, before any plan of activity, there must be adoration, which frees us in the truth and illuminates our actions. This is why it is very important that Fraternities be eloquent schools of prayer, places of harmony, mirrors of charity and sources of hope, so that their members feel the joy of being loved by their brothers and sisters, and at the same time to communicate to those around them the fullness of joy of being disciples of Christ.

## 9. The spirituality of the TAU

The external sign of belonging/identity of the Secular Franciscan is the TAU (see Const., art. 43). St. Francis highly regarded and honored this sign, the symbol of conversion. He used to write it on the letters that he sent, he carved it in the cells that he occupied and he repeated it in the commendations “as if – says Bonaventure – all his zeal was to make the sign, according to the words of the prophet, a TAU on the foreheads of men groaning and suffering, truly converted to Jesus Christ.” In wearing it, we can also be witnesses and invite others to an authentic and passionate about their conversion to the love of Christ and to follow Him.

Our vocation and our profession aim for this. The exterior sign of the TAU gives testimony which by grace we connect ourselves to the “spirituality of the cross.” We re-read our Rule, n. 10: “...Let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to Him even in difficulties and persecutions.” Let us re-read also Art. 10 of the Constitutions: the Cross is “the ‘book’ in which the brothers and sisters, in imitation of Francis, learn the purpose and the way of living, loving, and suffering.” When we were working on updating the Constitutions, the request came in from a national Fraternity to abolish or to change this article because it was too pessimistic. What is more optimistic than to give to our suffering an eternal and universal value?

He who does not accept the mystery of the cross will never find peace, nor will he find any answer to the eternal questions of man about the meaning of suffering, of illness, of death, of the uncertainty of existence. He will never understand the great love that is hidden in the wounds of the Cross. He will never know how to put himself in the wounds of His sacred side, of the hands and feet of Christ with the confession of Thomas: “my Lord and my God;” or with the discovery of Paul: “(Christ) loved me first and he gave himself for me;” or with the invocation of Francis: “that I may die for the love of your love, like you have deigned to die for the love of my love.” There is no other explanation for suffering and pain if not on the horizon of love.

In his homily for the canonization of St. Pio of Pietralcina (June 16, 2002), John Paul II affirmed that our times have a need to “rediscover the spirituality of the cross in order to re-open the heart of hope.” Hope in a world in which “every tear will be dried,” but also the hope of improving the human condition in this world, making it more just and evangelical through the practice

of Christian virtue and through the works of mercy.

## 10. The “sense of gift”

These brief examples of the characteristics of identity and of the spirituality of the Secular Franciscan bring us to the necessity of rediscovering the sense of gift, of building the culture of gift, based on the watermark of the Encyclical *Deus caritas est* (God is Love) of Benedict XVI. The challenge to which *Deus caritas est* invites us is to strip ourselves in order to reaffirm the primacy of the relationship on the good that is given, of personal identity over the utilitarian, primacy that should find room for expression everywhere, in all domains of human activity. Definitively, the central message that the first encyclical of Benedict XVI sends us is that of thinking of giving freely, that is to say, fraternity, as an essential point of reference of the human condition. In a society where we are brought up with the idea of having rights, worn down by the expectation of “what is due” (to us), of what we expect from life, from the world, from others, it is perhaps time to introduce the “sense of gift” that, among others, today represents an essential point for interpreting and renewing social dynamics.

For the Christian (and, to a greater degree, for the Franciscan) the relationship based only on justice is never enough because fraternity calls for more. Fraternity is not consumed within the narrow arch of I-you, but it pervades the we, until it enters into the space of the planetary tent (the world) (Canticle of Creatures). One should never reject this catch-all dimension of fraternity because, if it is true that the loss of individuality is feared by a Christian as a serious loss, so also is privatization of those aspects of Christianity that are considered supporting columns of the whole Christian structure feared.

In a recent speech, the Pope affirmed: “In the knowledge that love is a lifestyle that sets the believer apart, don’t tire of being witnesses of charity everywhere” (see *l’Osservatore Romano* of Feb. 21, 2008).

## BELONGING AS CO-RESPONSIBILITY

### 11. Belonging to the Order

Our belonging to the Secular Franciscan Order is based on Profession, that is, the act with which we are solemnly committed to “live the Gospel in the way of St. Francis and through this authentic Rule of the Church” (Rule, n. 2). In his presentation, Br. Felice spoke to us

wonderfully about Profession which Article 42.2 of the Constitutions describes as being *incorporated* into the Order. He told us among other things that the *incorporation (profession)* “means the insertion into a living body and the merger with the same organism, in which a new reality is constituted. Incorporation involves the transformation of many realities into only one, through a process of absorption and assimilation.”

The “plan of Gospel life” outlined in our Rule is a plan to fulfill and to live “in fraternal community.” Perhaps we should reflect more often and more carefully on the definition contained in Article 3.3 of the Constitutions. “The vocation to the SFO is **a vocation to live the Gospel in fraternal community.** To this purpose, the members of the SFO reunite in ecclesial community that they call Fraternities” and these Fraternities are cells grouped in organic union, that is to say, the large, spiritual family of the SFO, scattered all over the world.

Speaking of belonging, it is necessary to protect oneself from the risk of “absolutizing” this identity with something of an attitude of pride, superiority, and exclusivity. “Clinging excessively and exclusively to one’s identity can become pathological. In fact, it can breed in individuals narrow mindedness, in populations nationalism, in religions and in cultures fundamentalism,” writes Bp. Ravasi, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture. So with reference to identity/belonging, we should emphasize the sense of communion and corresponsibility. The General Constitutions affirm emphatically in Art. 30.1: “The brothers are corresponsable for the life of the Fraternity to which they belong and for the SFO as the organic union of all the Fraternities scattered around the world.” Here it is not about responsibility in the legal sense, like that entrusted to the major superior of the First Order and TOR (holders of the *altius moderamen*) and not even of what is expected of the Ministers, the Councils and, in general the “spirituals assistants and leaders,” legitimately elected for the governing of the Fraternity at varied levels. Instead, it is about responsibility of a theological nature: a fraternal communion, of faith and love, that needs to be nurtured by mutual prayer, by reciprocal knowledge/awareness, by assiduous attendance.

At the level of the whole Order in the world, corresponsibility means, above all, attention and availability to what is called for and proposed by various Councils at the higher levels: regional, national and international. It requires then an effort to seek to know and to understand

the reality of the Order in other geographic and cultural contexts, because one cannot love what one does not know. It requires, finally, “to contribute to the expenses of the Councils of the Fraternity of the higher levels” (Rule, 25). Permit me to dwell a moment on this delicate subject to emphasize the importance. We must consider the size and the complexity of the commitments that now weigh down on the regional and national Councils. They must be able to fulfill completely their responsibility of coordination and relationship to the local Fraternity. Furthermore, the Presidency of CIOFS, on the international level, should coordinate, animate and guide the SFO, improve collaborative relations with the other components of the Franciscan Family, and promote the life and the apostolate of the Order, etc. (see Const., Art 73).

## 12. Belonging to the local Fraternity

We know by memory the definition of the local Fraternity contained in Art. 22 of the Rule: “the basic unit of the whole Order ... a visible sign of the Church, ... community of love...”

To clarify these fundamental assertions, the General Constitutions in Art. 30.2 state how belonging to the Fraternity should be lived: “**The sense of corresponsibility of the members requires personal presence, witness, prayer, and active collaboration, in accordance with each one’s situation and possible obligations for the animation of the fraternity.**” In the hope of not providing just a theoretical discourse I think we must dedicate a minimum of time to these essential “requirements” of corresponsibility. We see, therefore:

**A. *personal presence***, namely regular participation (not optional!) at the meetings of the Fraternity, that cannot be called any more the well-known “monthly meetings,” but “frequent encounters (gatherings)”, organized by the Council to stimulate everyone to the life of fraternity and for growth of Franciscan and ecclesial life (Rule, n. 24);

**B. *witness***, of Gospel life and of fraternal life also as a means of promoting vocations (Const., Art. 45,2) and as assistance in the formation of new members (Rule, n. 23 and Const., Art.37.3);

**C. *prayer***, it is the soul of this “community of love” (Rule, n. 8).

**D. active collaboration**, of each and everyone, for the good of the Fraternity, for dynamic meetings and with good participation, for completing its charitable and apostolic initiatives (Const., Art.53.3);

**E. possible commitments to bring life to the Fraternity**, particularly, when it comes to candidates taking on office/service (Const., Art. 31.4).

**F. Economic contribution**, based on the ability of the individual members (Const., Art. 30.3), to provide for the financial means required for the life of the Fraternity and its religious, apostolic and charitable work.

But it's still not enough: corresponsibility requires all of its members to take care of the human and spiritual "well-being" of each of the brothers and sisters (Const., Art. 42.4): no one should be left alone in the face of problems and difficulties, but in the Fraternity one should find help (even material), sustenance and comfort.

In essence, to live and work today in the Fraternity means to be conscientious of some firm points, such as: meeting with others in their real situations, accompanying them on their growth as a human beings, experiencing prayer in its different forms, educating themselves on the commitment to the building of the Kingdom and a degree of ecclesial belonging that makes us perceive the sense of the global goal; the growth and actualization of the new person in Christ (Rule, n. 14).

### 13. Multi-belonging

One of the major obstacles to corresponsibility and that which we conventionally call "multi-belonging," is the tendency of some Secular Franciscans to join multiple groups and ecclesiastical associations. One must not forget that "The vocation to the SFO is a specific vocation that gives form to the life and apostolic activity of its members" (Const., Art. 2). When the Secular Franciscan is also involved in other associations, the Franciscan inspiration that should permeate his life totally, in every expression and manifestation, "gets watered down" when mixed with other spiritualities. Besides, when commitments increase and cross, they hinder the punctual observance of obligations of Fraternity life.

These considerations should be held in mind by those responsible for formation and by the Fraternity Councils when they appraise the suitability of the candidate for SFO profession.

## BELONGING AND MISSION

### 14. Being open to the world

In the era of globalization, in a multicultural and multireligious situation, but also characterized by individualism and skepticism, the Church finds itself again, as in the first centuries of Christianity, facing the task of proposing to humanity the message of Jesus. The message of the Gospel is a free gift that the Church gives to the world, and to Secular Franciscans, "to be more strongly bound because of Profession," are called to announce Christ "by their lives and words" (Rule, n. 6). Word and witness illuminate each other reciprocally: if the word is denied by the conduct, it remains ineffective; but the same is true of witness, when it is not supported by a clear and unequivocal message. The love of Christ, in fact, is communicated to the brothers and sisters with examples and words, with one's whole life.

The field of mission today is immense: the sectors most marginalized in society, aboriginal communities, the poor in urban areas, migrant, refugees, the excluded... The objective should be to promote the Christian message through presence (the sense of witness and dialogue with life), the message and prayer. But evangelizing is not only the prerogative of a few of the People of God, who were *entirely* consecrated and called to proclaim salvation: "The universal vocation to holiness is firmly tied to the universal vocation to mission; each of the faithful are called to holiness and mission" (Redemptoris missio, 90).

How true it is that a Church that is not missionary betrays its fundamental task; it is also true that the SFO and each local Fraternity and every single Franciscan, as "live members of the Church," must become "witnesses and instruments of its mission among men." It is necessary, in the first place, to bring the Gospel to people in a **credible way**. For this, we need courage and availability to travel new roads, conquering the temptation to remain among people who think like us and to satisfy ourselves by cultivating our own garden.

The mission of Secular Franciscans is rooted in **being**, in life configured to the evangelical counsels (see Rule, nn. 10, 11 and 12), in the spirit of the Beatitudes of the Kingdom. Their style and their form of service are adapted to their talents and their personal family situation, and also to the demands of the environment in which they work. Their apostolic commitment is related in a particular way to the practice of charity, to transforming into reality the plan of reuniting all things in Christ, to the

commitment of work and to the responsible exercise of their own profession, but we must not neglect true and actual political activity. Speaking of St. Catherine of Siena, her biographer wrote: “Compromising with circumstances is part of holiness.”

Even in the face of new and insidious challenges presented by globalization, Christians do not resign themselves to an economy or vision of society oriented only on efficiency, that pushes aside the weakest, or on a nationalism that suffocates liberty and humiliates the person. In every country, therefore, it is necessary to go forth with “courageous initiatives” that affirm that we may be truly lay, that we must go forth in the service of social life according to the Thomistic concept of “the common good,” taken up vigorously again by the great and forgotten teacher Leo XIII. Even in countries where Christians are in the minority, where they cannot exercise any political weight, Christian virtues can decisively motivate and help their compatriots to accept democracy as a way of life. That must include the most fragile, those who today are marginalized and excluded, and must include even future generations, to which we must turn over a liveable world.

The city and region are the places in which to build authentic relationships, where Christian charity can impregnate the function of civil structure. Secular Franciscans are asked in a personal and communal way to pay attention to the weakest and to do works of mercy: approaching the sick, teaching the illiterate, caring for children, helping the elderly, comforting the afflicted... These are the duties that we always have, practiced by the Brothers and Sisters of Penance from their beginnings, but today these duties present themselves often in new ways and they require new ways of intervention.

But be careful: one must not confuse the end with the means. The means are the life and the word but the end is evangelization (“Go and proclaim the Gospel to all people. ...”). “...There exists in some the idea that social projects are meant to be acted upon with the greatest urgency, while the things that pertain to God or the Catholic faith are things more or less details and have less priority. Nevertheless...wisdom dictates that evangelization should take precedence, that the God of Jesus Christ should be known, believed and loved, so that even social things can progress, for the advent of reconciliation... Social action and the Gospel are simply inseparable” (from the Pope’s speech at Ratisbon).

## 15. New forms of intervention

Forty years have passed since the Second Vatican Council, but the reference to the conciliar magisterium (teaching) is always current and promising with its intrinsic dynamism. We are called to project it, to apply it to new frontiers in these years according to a precise conception of the person and of the values connected to him: values that, as such, appear “non negotiable,” that is, they are not related to the process of secularization and relativism that goes through our history.

- New forms of intervention require **socio-political formation**, through the understanding and development of the social doctrine of the Church. The “compendium” from which all the faithful must draw, will serve as a guide, but in a particular manner for those who intend to get involved in social commitments and in the political sphere with more honesty, a sense of justice and of the common good, that should mark the work of the Christian with respect to a practice sometimes separated from human values and the Gospel. It will be necessary also to read again the fundamental document of Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, and to revisit it in light of the most recent teaching, above all the second part of the encyclical of Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*.

- The most congenial form of presence in the social scene is, for Secular Franciscans, voluntary service. Voluntary service is not only a “to do,” it is above all a “way to be” that comes from the heart, from an attitude of gratitude toward life, and asks us “to give back” and to share with the other the gifts received... The action of the volunteer is not seen as an interventional “stop-gap” towards the State and public institutions, but rather like a complementary presence, always necessarily attentive to the last and promoting personal styles in interventions. There is no one who cannot be a volunteer: even the most destitute and disadvantaged surely have a lot to share with others, offering their own contribution to build the civilization of love (Benedict XVI in Vienna, Sept. 2007).

- Another form of appropriate intervention is **attention to the young** who, not having more solid values on which they can rely, are especially exposed to the dangers of instability, aggravated by the fact that even the world of adults gives greater importance to the power that an individual can exercise or to what he possesses in economic terms, rather than to the values of honesty and morality that should belong to us. We should continue to reflect on these in order for us to be truly free and capable of choosing. The youth of today are shaken by old and

new weaknesses; but they also demonstrate a large capacity; they express passion, a desire to serve and a will to discover. They are ready to realize “courage to live and to serve” is enlightened by love. To succeed, nevertheless, they need those who accompany them in the search for the Face of Christ.

When we talk about attention to youth we do not mean to refer solely to the constitution and the animation of Franciscan youth groups, an activity for which special attitudes and predispositions are necessary, but rather to the duty of every SFO Fraternity to reflect, to discern and to pray on the subject of the “transmission of the faith,” to bring to life an adult Church, capable of witnessing the Gospel in today’s world. Above all, by example, we should bring the youth back to the faith and to the ecclesial community, to help them acquire a human and spiritual maturity, to help them discover that it is through the gift of themselves to others that they will become freer and more mature. The strategy consists in creating ways that enable an encounter with Jesus, recognized as the Lord who saves and gives a full meaning to the life of every person. From this encounter with the Lord Jesus, the desire to follow Christ and his call to radicalness, faithfulness, patience and discipline.

• **Ecology.** Motivated by the worrisome conditions of our planet, a new sensibility is developing toward ecological problems: based on the perspective provided by the Creator, the need to fight to deliver a truly habitable planet to future generations is imposed upon us. There arise new values, new dreams, new behaviors taken on by an ever larger number of persons and of communities. The basic principal is that of safeguarding creation. It is a principal that binds each and every one of us. It is evident that, with every planetary effort, each country and even each person, should contribute to the best of their ability.

As Franciscans, besides strengthening our own personal commitment for a simple lifestyle (Rule, n. 11 and Const., Art. 15.3), we are also called to build, together with the many who work in the harvest of the Kingdom, a world globalized within which all can enter, where there is a respect of creation, love among all and just relationships that allow an honest life to all. And then, taking care of creation means pledging oneself in different fields of action, each one connected to the others: from the elimination of nuclear weapons to a change of lifestyle, from a regeneration of political/economic/military power to the adoption of nonviolence as a way of living the connectedness with things created and with all creatures.

• **Ecumenism and interfaith dialogue.** In the ecumenical field it is essential to convince oneself that ecumenism is not a matter just for the upper echelon, but rather a way to live the faith and a relationship with Jesus, being together with Him in prayer where we are all one. For this we cannot help but feel responsible for communion among all. As far as interfaith is concerned, understanding is essential, respect, reciprocal welcoming, the overcoming of the reciprocal prejudices of order, psychology and history. We should be convinced that diversity, far from leading necessarily to divisions and to rivalry, carries in itself the promise of a reciprocal enrichment and of joy. Equality, as an indispensable premise of dialogue, concerns the personal dignity of the speakers equally and not the content. The Christian in dialogue cannot hide nor be silent about the truth of his/her faith based on the mystery of Jesus Christ. Be it in relations with the members of other Christian sects, be it in relations of believers of other faiths, it is necessary, in essence, to embrace the occasions to pray together (wherever it is possible) and to find common areas of involvement such as the struggle with poverty, peace, safeguarding creation through questions tied to ethics and the environment. As far as social justice issues, we can walk together immediately: it is not necessary to wait to untie complex doctrinal knots!

• **Mission to the people.** The Church today is paying careful attention to the development of peoples, particularly those who are fighting to free themselves from the yoke of hunger, from misery and from endemic diseases, from ignorance; who seek wider participation in the fruits of civilization, a more active validation of their human qualities; who are directing themselves with the purpose to fuller development (see *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, *Centesimus annus*, *Deus Caritas est...*). It is accomplished by strongly reaffirming the need to begin with recognition of the moral natural law, in clear opposition to the logical relativism that dominates national legislatures and international politics. If problems are not lacking, such as the scarcity of religious vocations, then neither are the “signs of hope” in all parts of the world that give testimony of an encouraging missionary vitality of Christian people with the consciousness “of all being missionaries, all involved, be it in diverse ways, in proclaiming and in witnessing to the Gospel.” Even the missionary commitment of Secular Franciscans and of Fraternities cannot and must never be limited to World Missionary Day or to a Franciscan Missionary Day. Nor

is economic support to the Missions of the friars enough. A wider perspective is necessary. It includes supportive participation with the peoples of the earth by denouncing and fighting against every violation of the dignity of the person and against grave inequalities that were and, unfortunately continue to be in the contemporary world.

## CONCLUSION: SOME OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

How, in practice, do we nurture the sense of belonging to a Secular Fraternity and to the whole Order? Let us never forget that our Constitutions, in Art. 30.1 already cited, strongly affirm that Secular Franciscans are members of a local Fraternity, but that they belong to everyone, in life and in mission.

**16. On the local level.** Every single Fraternity, at the various levels (not just local, but also regional and national), should consider seriously the objective of becoming:

**a. a school of sanctity** – These are instruments that the Fraternity can use to promote in its members full development of the interior life: an intense liturgical life, sacramental and charitable life, and also taking care in organizing Franciscan retreats in the spirit of rest and renewal of life;

**b. a school of formation** – the spirit of belonging is nurtured in the measure of which the Rule becomes the “life” of the brothers and of the sisters. It will assure a kind of “assimilation” of the spirit of the Rule in the life and in the history of each person. Those who are assiduous readers of the writings of Francis and of Clare and of the ancient biographies will be strengthened in their Franciscan identity. Therefore, Secular Franciscans should regularly read spiritual readings from the Sources;

**c. a witness of ecclesial communion** – It is necessary that Franciscans intensely live their meetings (please, let’s not speak any more of “monthly meetings”!) as a sacrament of the Fraternity. It is essential that everyone make the decision to make himself/herself present in the life of the brothers and sisters: rejoicing with those who participate, being mindful of those that do not come, trying to find the reasons for which someone has lost the motivation. The Council should look for and plan meetings that are pleasant, productive and enriching;

**d. participation in the apostolic purpose of the Church** – Too often Secular Franciscans tend to stop at traditional ways in fulfilling their apostolic commitment,

forgetting that the Rule recommends to us to be creative. Society has changed, the Church has renewed itself and is renewing itself again. The Gospel is always the same, but new approaches and new encounters with the Gospel and history are necessary;

**e. presence in society, in the light of the social doctrine of the Church** – Every Fraternity should question its priorities in its own missionary commitment.

- In what direction do we develop it?
- On what, for what should we concentrate our available strengths?
- How should we support concretely the proposed initiatives of the higher levels?

**15. On the International Fraternity Level.** One should:

- intensify horizontal and vertical communication inside the Order;
- increase reciprocal knowledge and esteem in the sphere of the Franciscan Family;
- insist that social themes enter in the ordinary formative courses of our Fraternity;
- contribute actively to the work of Franciscans International who are engaged in competent organizations at the international level, so that all countries can undertake appropriate measures that guarantee that the human rights of the most vulnerable people be protected adequately and that their human dignity be respected;
- To tear down barriers and to build bridges in order to collaborate with movements and institutions that pursue the same end (Const., Art.18.3 and 23.1).



# Conclusions of the XII General Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order

November 15-22, 2008

The XII General Chapter took place in Hungary in order to conclude most appropriately the biennial celebration of the 8<sup>th</sup> centenary of the birth of the beloved Patroness of the OFS, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary. The closing celebration in the impressive setting of the primatial Basilica of Esztergom was a strong call to verify our lives as Secular Franciscans, on the backdrop of Saint Elisabeth's sanctity, under whose intercession the works of the Chapter took place.

The Chapter put itself in harmonious continuity with the two preceding General Chapters in the fundamental process of gaining an ever increasing awareness of the identity of Secular Franciscans and of their mission in the Church and in the world.

The key themes of the Chapter, the **Profession of Secular Franciscans** and their **Sense of Belonging**, masterly developed by the lecturers, **Br. Felice Cangelosi OFM Cap.** and **Emanuela De Nunzio OFS**, offered full and expectant stimuli and precious indications to continue in the direction already undertaken.

The rich and vibrant report of the **General Minister, Encarnación del Pozo**, bore a strong witness to the commitment of the Presidency and to the great quantity of work accomplished in the past six years. The report provided a cue for the following reflections, which resolutely aimed at a continued commitment to formation and on a full assumption of the secular dimension of our lives with all the consequences that ensue from it. The OFS is the part of the Family that lives this dimension in all its fullness and it cannot fail in contributing this essential element to the mission of the entire Franciscan Family.

The Chapter was blessed by abundant gifts of spiritual and concrete reflections and suggestions: the report of the General Minister, **Encarnación del Pozo**, the report of the President of the Elective Chapter, **Fr. Marco Tasca, OFM Conv.** General Minister, on the "Beginning of the Charism", the report of the Conference of the General Spiritual Assistants presented by its President in turn, **Br. Irudaya Samy OFM Cap.**, the reports on the Emerging National Fraternities, on Formation, on the Presence in the World, and on the Franciscan Youth.

The Chapter acknowledged with joy that the Order is still in existence or is starting up in many countries, including in those areas where religious persecution, atheism and secularization have reduced the presence of the Church to a bare minimum or even wiped it out completely.

The Order has also made a strong reflection on itself. The exponential increase of activities, the service to be offered to the Emerging Fraternities and the increasing needs of the Order, also from the economic point of view, demand a firm commitment by each and everyone and a more effective and incisive communication.

It was also acknowledged with joy that Franciscan Youth is growing and strengthening in several countries but that the Order must also commit itself more actively and with more determination at all levels to responsibly fulfill its essential role in animating Franciscan Youth in their Christian and Franciscan vocational journey.

The Chapter was a great experience of sharing and fraternity. The fraternal joy, the happiness of being together with brothers and sisters from all over the world, especially from the poorest and persecuted countries, was for all a privileged moment of grace.

The sincerity and depth of the feelings shared by all during the Chapter is a concrete wealth that each capitular will have to share with all the brothers and sisters of their own countries.

The presence of several observers, including Franciscan religious from a number of countries, bore witness to the interest for the Order and for its development.

At the conclusion of its works, the Chapter indicated the fields of action and the priorities to be implemented by the whole Order during the next six-year period.

The priorities of the General Chapter are as follows:

1. **Formation**
2. **Communication**
3. **Franciscan Youth**
4. **Presence in the World**
5. **Emerging Fraternities**

## FORMATION

Formation remains the top priority of the Chapter for the entire Order. The Chapter recognized the importance of the Formation Project, which has already been initiated, and has decided to continue in the same direction so as to fully implement the initial formation course in every part of the world. Great importance is attached to the formation of formators, and to the necessity of making sure that local Fraternities are reached by the Formation Project.

In addition to the topics already proposed, it is requested that the Formation Project include the following topics:

1. Social doctrine of the Church;
2. Better understanding of the significant social and political problems of the day;
3. Social and political commitment of Secular Franciscans in the world;
4. Development of aids for a more focused and deeper study of the SFO's own legislation — Rule, General Constitutions and Ritual; and
5. Most important documents of the Church and of the Magisterium.

The Chapter further recommends that the Presidency promote permanent Formation by proposing, to all the fraternities in the world, a central theme of annual formation and provide the necessary indications and aids to develop and study this theme.

Moreover, it is recommended that formation be implemented, not only at an intellectual level, but also on the practical level of concrete charity.

The Chapter recognizes that the **sense of belonging, vocation to fraternity**, and the **importance and nature of the commitment of Profession** are all fundamental elements in the life of Secular Franciscans that must be undertaken, underlined and re-proposed with strength in initial and permanent formation.

It is recognized that strong and qualified projects to **promote vocations** to the Secular Franciscan Order are urgently needed at all levels.

It is also recommended that joint formation meetings be organized between Secular Franciscans and Franciscan religious.

The Chapter also requests that the Presidency prepare adequate instruments for the formation of lay spiritual assistants and assistants who are not members of the First Order or the Third Order Regular.

## COMMUNICATIONS

It is recognized that the Order “communicates” too little, both within and outside the Order. **Inside the Order**, every effort has to be made to increase communications for the purpose of better knowing and understanding each other, and to implement initiatives both inside and outside of the Order.

It is essential that the **International Councillors** enter fully into their roles with respect to their own national fraternities and the Presidency, and that they communicate regularly in both directions.

It is also recommended that particular care be taken in the formation of International Councillors in this respect by developing specific materials that can be provided to all newly elected International Councillors by the Presidency Councillor for the area.

It is necessary that fraternities at all levels open themselves to one another, most of all by way of accompaniment and “twinning” projects, especially towards “new” fraternities and fraternities in need. It is necessary that the Presidency undertake an active role in promoting and constantly urging support for this objective.

For the purpose of favoring a greater understanding and knowledge of the Order, inside and outside, the excellent work done on the website is recognized by the Chapter who formulates the wish to improve it by assuming all the necessary initiatives, including those of soliciting funds for this purpose.

Improvements are also requested to the database containing postal addresses and email addresses that can be accessible by all, including YouFra, to facilitate communication at all levels.

**Outside the Order**, it is necessary to establish effective and permanent contacts **with the Church** in all of its expression. Particular attention should be given to the local Churches so as to realize an active presence in the Church where people actually live their lives.

It is deemed important to identify contacts and ways to establish a fruitful collaboration with Catholic Third Orders, with non-Catholic Franciscan Third Orders and with all ecclesial movements and other movements of good-will that share the objectives of the SFO.

The moment has come to be courageous and visible for the service to and the witnessing of the Franciscan charism. For this reason, at all levels, the Order must take up its own responsibilities to be actively present in all the qualified social events and in the promotion of human

rights, as well as Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. The privileged instrument to achieve this end, which must be supported in every possible way, is Franciscans International.

## **FRANCISCAN YOUTH (YouFra)**

The Chapter has recognized the excellent work performed during the past six years within Franciscan Youth and requests the Presidency to pursue this essential commitment in favor of Franciscan Youth by underlining the responsibility of the SFO towards YouFra so as to enhance its awareness and so that it may actively assume its responsibility.

It is recommended that a thorough distribution of fundamental YouFra materials, produced by the Presidency during the past six years, be undertaken.

It is requested that adequate tools be prepared concerning the selection and adequate preparation of fraternal animators at all levels.

Particular care and attention should be dedicated to emerging YouFra fraternities and that due care be taken in the formation of YouFra members as well as members of YouFra who have made their profession in the SFO.

It is essential that all members of YouFra be invited to all the significant events of the SFO and that a true communion and sharing of common projects be undertaken.

It is also requested that the necessary information to understand where the YouFra exist and the number of its members in different parts of the world be compiled.

## **PRESENCE IN THE WORLD**

In this Chapter, the necessity for Secular Franciscans to fully assume their secularity has emerged with strength: to be present in the world with their “being” and their “doing” – in the political debate and in the courageous forming of just laws, in the promotion of the rights to life at all its stages, from conception to natural death – and to ensure that all those who suffer, those who are poor and those who are marginalized may enjoy conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ (Rule 13 and Gen. Const. 18 and 19).

For too long the Order has not fully entered into its active mission in the world. The moment has come, and it can no longer be deferred, to “*enter the city*,” to exercise with determination and full visibility its own

responsibilities to witness, and to promote justice, peace, human rights and the integrity of creation.

It is essential that the entire Order be present as such, and not only through the worthy initiatives of its individual members. It is important to re-discover the importance of recognizing oneself and of being one single body for the service of the Kingdom and the world so that it may be redeemed in Christ. The Order has begun to become fully aware of its world dimension and of the potential socio-political pressure that it can exert. It is its duty to use this presence in every corner of the world to effectively operate everywhere, and to become visible by promoting strong and courageous initiatives, including those in national and international government organizations.

## **EMERGING NATIONAL FRATERNITIES**

Emerging Fraternities are the richness of the Order, which grows and expands for the evangelization of the world. They are the sign and the qualified contribution of the vitality of the Franciscan charism and of the Secular Franciscan charism in particular. They constitute a Christian and Franciscan witness, at times the only one in a number of countries in the world. It is often a fruitful presence, though persecuted and hindered, even to the point of risking its life, which maintains and nourishes the heart of faith in all corners of the world.

The emerging national fraternities must be followed with very particular care and attention. The Presidency is requested to designate a Presidency Councillor for the purpose of concretely assuming this responsibility for the emerging national Fraternities.

It is necessary to ensure that each emerging national Fraternity be accompanied by another established national Fraternity. Unfortunately, up until now, established national fraternities have not always been sensitive to this need for accompaniment. It is strongly recommended that each established national fraternity respond, with generosity, promptness and a sense of responsibility, to meet this essential need.

It is also requested that the possibility of raising specific funds to support the journey of poorer emerging national Fraternities be studied.

The themes on which capitulars concentrated in this Chapter are not new. Actually, it would suffice to re-examine the Conclusions of the two preceding General Chapters to realize this. For this reason, it seems important that each Secular Franciscan and all Councils at all levels

go back to the Conclusions of the two previous Chapters to compare them with the present ones.

The Chapter has insisted on the very same themes and with the same arguments because evidently it was felt that the previous Conclusions were not satisfactorily implemented in the whole Order, and because there is the awareness that it is not at all possible to change priorities until the desired changes and actions have been implemented and consolidated.

The Conclusions demonstrated that the Order, at its highest level, wants to abandon the stage of generic and academic declarations of intent to proceed with determination to a concrete and courageous phase of implementation and witness. It is not sufficient to enunciate high, noble and necessary objectives which, after all, are already the foundation of our own *Form of Life*, the Rule and the General Constitutions. Once the objectives are set, it is necessary to continuously bring them back to memory and challenge ourselves with them so as to verify their faithful and complete implementation.

#### **The Presidency,**

- shares, makes its own and receives with attention all the requests and recommendations of the Chapter and commits, for whatever falls within its responsibilities, to implement them to the best of its ability;

- formulates the following observations and recommendations for all the Fraternities of the whole world:

1. The Conclusions of all Chapters are binding for the Presidency but also, and perhaps even more, for all the Fraternities of the whole world at all levels and for each and every Secular Franciscan. Therefore, they must be the object of a continuous and attentive consideration by all. The entire Order, as a single body, has to strive in every possible way to implement them. It is, therefore, requested to do everything possible at all levels to make known, implement and verify the objectives set by the Chapters.

2. The effort to deepen and assume the proper identity of Secular Franciscans must continue more intensely than ever according to what has been indicated by the Chapter and by the Formation project.

3. The commitment to work in order to achieve a true communion of “being” and “doing” as Franciscan Family must grow and the OFS must be a qualified actor in this process.

4. It is fundamental that the International Councillors, in the process of gaining awareness of their essential role, realize that their responsibility goes beyond their own National Fraternities and towards the Presidency to include the whole Order in its entirety.



**Happy St.Patrick's Day !**

# MARCH 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p><b>1</b></p> <p>LENT WEEK 1 Pss: Wk 1</p>	<p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>First Thursday Meeting: 1 PM</p>	<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>7</b></p>
<p><b>8</b></p> <p>LENT WEEK 2 Pss: Wk 2 * Daylight Savings Time begins * Spring forward</p>	<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>10</b></p> <p>St. Joan of Arc: 1 PM</p>	<p><b>11</b></p>	<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>13</b></p> <p>Fr. Solanus Cell: 7:30 PM CHRISTIAN SERVICE: Meldrum Kitchen 10:30am - 1pm</p>	<p><b>14</b></p>
<p><b>15</b></p> <p>LENT WEEK 3 Pss: Wk 3 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Day of Reflection 11 AM - Everyone</p>	<p><b>16</b></p>	<p><b>17</b></p> 	<p><b>18</b></p> <p>SFO COUNCIL: 6:30 PM</p>	<p><b>19</b></p> <p>ST. JOSEPH EMB Board: 10 AM</p>	<p><b>20</b></p> <p>SPRING BEGINS AT 6:46 AM (EST)</p>	<p><b>21</b></p>
<p><b>22</b></p> <p>LENT WEEK 4 Pss: Wk 4</p>	<p><b>23</b></p>	<p><b>24</b></p>	<p><b>25</b></p> <p>ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD</p>	<p><b>26</b></p>	<p><b>27</b></p> <p>Bl. Luchesio: 7:30 PM Interfaith: 7 PM - 9 PM</p>	<p><b>28</b></p>
<p><b>29</b></p> <p>LENT WEEK 5 Pss: Wk 1</p>	<p><b>30</b></p>	<p><b>31</b></p>				

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Janet Bodell

**Vice Minister**

Ona Harris

**Treasurer**

Eugene Snyders

**Secretary**

Patricia Meldrum

**Formation**

John Bodell

**Councillors:**

Clara Falzone  
Caroline Florescu  
Gary Johnson  
Frank B. Kraimer  
Maryann Kummer

**Spiritual Assistant:**

Br. Patrick McSherry ..... (313) 579-2100, x. 141

**APPOINTMENTS**

**Infirmarians:**

Jo Marie Nardi  
Sylvia Stanik

**Continuing Formation:**

Maryann Kummer

**Christian Service:**

Frank B. Kraimer

**Ecology:**

Clara Falzone

**Work:**

Gary Johnson

**Family:**

**Peace and Justice:**

Jo Marie Nardi

**Eucharistic Mission Band (EMB):**

Caroline Florescu

**MEETING CONTACTS**

(for Locations and Times of Meetings)

**Fr. Solanus Cell (2<sup>nd</sup> Friday, 7:30 pm):**

Faye Boland

**St. Joan of Arc Satellite (2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday, 1 pm):**

Frank Liccardello

**First Thursday Meeting (1 pm):**

Raymond Morehead

**Third Sunday Gathering of the Entire Fraternity:**

Maryann Kummer

**Bl. Luchesio Cell (4<sup>th</sup> Friday, 7:30 pm):**

Connie Musial

**FRATERNITY MINISTRY OUTREACH:**

Meldrum Soup Kitchen

See Fraternity Calendar (page 5)

Frank B. Kraimer

**OTHER SFO-AFFILIATED GROUPS:**

**Interfaith Justice & Peace Group (4<sup>th</sup> Friday, 7-9 PM):**

Jo Marie Nardi

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# *Keeping a Holy Lent*

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