

The Lark and the Leper

A Reflection

ADELE KENNY, SFO
ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA FRATERNITY
SCOTCH PLAINS, NJ

Our Seraphic Father found God's presence and handiwork revealed everywhere, in everything, and reflected in all people. For Father Francis, God's touch was equally present in the lark and in the leper.

We know from his biographers that St. Francis loved the hooded larks of Assisi whose dark brown crests reminded him of the hoods worn by the friars. We also know the story of his 1206 encounter with the leper, and we know that St. Francis lived and worked among the lepers for a time, dressing their wounds and comforting them. (According to St. Bonaventure, Francis washed the lepers' feet, pressed the corrupt matter from their wounds, and washed, cleansed, and bandaged their sores.)

As Secular Franciscans it is important for us to find joy in the beauty of God's handiwork – in songbirds, in a wonderful sunrise, in mountain peaks, in a field of flowers, and in all creations of light. It is also important for us to avoid insulating ourselves against the darkness in our world – those who are in need, the poor and the sick, environmental conditions that threaten our planet – any aspect of creation whose light is hidden. There are also leprosies of the heart that we are called to heal. We must always find God, as Father Francis found Him, in both light and in darkness – metaphorically, in both the lark and in the leper.

We seek our God through prayer and contemplation, by deepening our awareness of the natural world and its creatures, by appreciating the masterwork of all creation, by reading Sacred Scripture, by receiving Jesus in the Eucharist, by listening to the "larks" of the world, by finding Christ in our brothers and sisters, and by "kissing the hands" of the "lepers" we meet. This is what St. Francis did, and this is what we are called to do as we follow Christ in Father Francis's footsteps.

It is only through the blunting of our hearts' perceptions, through fear, selfishness, jealousy, ego, and pride that we fail to discover God's Presence in all there is. St. Francis teaches us, through his love for the larks of Assisi and through his demonstrated love for the lepers he served that, in learning to love, we find God deep within ourselves, for God *is* love, the very essence of the word, and He has spoken His name in the center of every soul. It is part of our calling to share the love within us with those who are "without."

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INVITATION TO ALL

You are invited, dear family, to submit articles about your fraternity activities and membership; about your individual and collective expertise, your projects and achievements; wherever you see the spirit of St. Francis at work in the world, in your lives, and in your hearts— we want to hear from you. Come share with us.



Responding to Changing Times

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

May the Lord give you Peace!

It is my privilege and pleasure to greet you as your new Regional Minister.

I want to begin by expressing our thanks to Marcia Stambouljian, SFO, who completed her term of office as Regional Minister in November. Marcia has served Our Lady of the Angels Regional Fraternity as Regional Minister for more than two terms and as Vice Minister immediately preceding. She became Minister with the untimely death of Regional Minister, Kevin Corbett, and then was elected in her own right for two subsequent terms. She has served our Regional Fraternity both diligently and faithfully. She has been an outstanding Regional Minister and an example of Franciscan servant-leadership and we are all in her debt. It has been my joy to work beside her in these last six years as Regional Formation Director and to observe personally, her patience, her tenacity, her devotion and her love for the Order and for the brothers and sisters. As all in leadership positions are aware, it is a very difficult thing to lead—one must often make the tough choice of doing the right thing even when that choice is not the most popular one or the one that will please one's constituents. Marcia is to be commended for her great job not only locally, but also in representing us at the National level, where she is highly regarded. On behalf of all of the sisters and brothers of our Regional Fraternity I want to express our deep gratitude to Marcia for a job well done.

And we also wish to thank the other members of the Regional Executive Council who have completed their terms of service with this past election: John Ras, SFO, Treasurer; Carolyn Townes, SFO, Secretary; Madeline Romaine, SFO, Councilor—North Jersey; Larry Meyers, SFO, Councilor—Central Jersey. They all deserve a hearty, "Thank You!" Don't let me be the only voice to express these sentiments which I know you share. Please take the time to tell these fine servant leader brothers and sisters yourself how grateful you are for their service when you have the opportunity—I know they would appreciate it.

In a recent editorial by Fr. Joseph O'Keefe, SJ, the writer quotes from the new book, *"The Faithful"* by historian James O'Toole where he says:

History matters now more than ever, both to American Catholics themselves and the nation in which they live. For Catholics, understanding the successive ages of their church may open them to accepting change that will continue whether they want it or not. The church and its people have never stood still in changing times, and they cannot do so now.

How true and how important this insight is for us Secular Franciscans. Change will happen whether we want it or not. The Church never stands still. Her resilience is due to her ability to interpret the Gospel message in changing times and respond to new circumstances. We have just experienced a historic Presidential election in our nation. We are experiencing a serious stress in our economy unlike anything since the Great Depression. Our nation is in the midst of a terrible military conflict in more than one place and global unrest threatens other areas. Our world is suffering from global warming and the stress of disease and the scarcity of natural resources. Each one of us must ask ourselves how we have responded as Secular Franciscans to the needs and challenges of our time and place.

And what of our fraternities? Have we exhibited the kind of flexibility and adaptability which is required if the witness of Franciscans is to be effective in the light of the challenges which confront us? What is your fraternity life like? How has it changed? Are you doing the same old tired things as always, or is your fraternity meeting the "privileged place for experiencing Church" of which the Rule speaks—a heightened moment of encountering Jesus in your sisters and brothers from which you draw life and energy, and toward which you look forward with eager anticipation each month? If we are to be the "Gospel leaven" we are called to be, what is required of us in this time and in this place in order for the Church to be built and the Word of God to be heard? Only we can answer this question for ourselves and for our fraternities. All of us must own the responsibility for the life and witness of our local fraternities. It is not just a concern for our elected leadership—each of us must share in this responsibility. Let us collectively take our fraternity's "temperature" and ask as did former New York Mayor Edward Koch, "How are we doing?"

I call upon you also to be aware of your "ownership" of our Regional Fraternity. Each of us has a stake in its health and effectiveness. What have you done to support the Regional Fraternity in its activities and programs? We are only as strong as our individual members make us. How aware and how committed are you to the greater Franciscan community of which you are a part? There are about 1,100 professed Secular Franciscans who make up our Regional Fraternity, but only a small percentage ever participate in our gatherings and events. I challenge each of us to renew our interest and effort to take part in the Regional offerings throughout the year—your presence and participation make a difference!

Please also know that I am here to serve you and am anxious to hear your ideas and suggestions. My telephone number and e-mail are listed along with all of our Regional Executive Council. We want to hear from you. What changes do you perceive are needed for us to be more effective in "building up the Church?" And pray—pray for our Regional fraternity and its leadership that we may receive the necessary grace to be agents of change and to have the grace of discernment to be able to distinguish, on the one hand, what is essential and unchanging and, on the other hand, what must change and adapt in order to keep the heart of our mission vibrant. For any leader, balancing stability and momentum is a crucial skill. But as fraternity leaders we must also be able to call upon the deep well of our Franciscan tradition in the midst of our changing times.

Fr. O'Keefe, in the article to which I referred earlier, says:

"In the popular imagination, the Catholic Church is characterized by historical continuity, a reverence for tradition, reluctance to see familiar structures in a new way and a glacial pace of change. But there is something else. We are a people of Paschal Mystery, which is at the heart of our baptismal reality as the People of God. One of the great graces of that "paschal" spirituality is our ability to let things die when their time comes, so that new life will spring forth."

In the midst of all the upheaval which our Church has experienced, we know that in cooperation with God's grace, something new will be born. And so we are filled with hope for the future for our Church and for our Secular Franciscan Order.

Let us begin again...

Fraternally,

RON PIHOKKER, SFO
REGIONAL MINISTER



Check our website often for Calendar updates at <http://ourladyoftheangelsregion.org>

REGIONAL

CALENDAR

2009



APRIL 25

CONVIVENZA
St. Bonaventure
Paterson, NJ

FRIDAY-SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9-11

REGION RETREAT
TBA

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14

CHAPTER OF MINISTERS
9:30AM-3:00PM
Holy Name Church
96TH St. & Amsterdam Ave., New York City, NY

CLUSTER MEETINGS

NORTH JERSEY MEETINGS

MARCH 7, JUNE 13,
SEPTEMBER 12, DECEMBER 5

MANHATTAN CLUSTER MEETINGS

MARCH 14-LENTEN REFLECTION
JULY 18-PICNIC IN BRYANT PARK
SEPTEMBER 12, DECEMBER 5

CENTRAL JERSEY CLUSTER MEETINGS

MARCH 21, JUNE 6, JULY 25, SEPTEMBER 19



ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY

AND

BY
LORI
PIEPER,
SFO

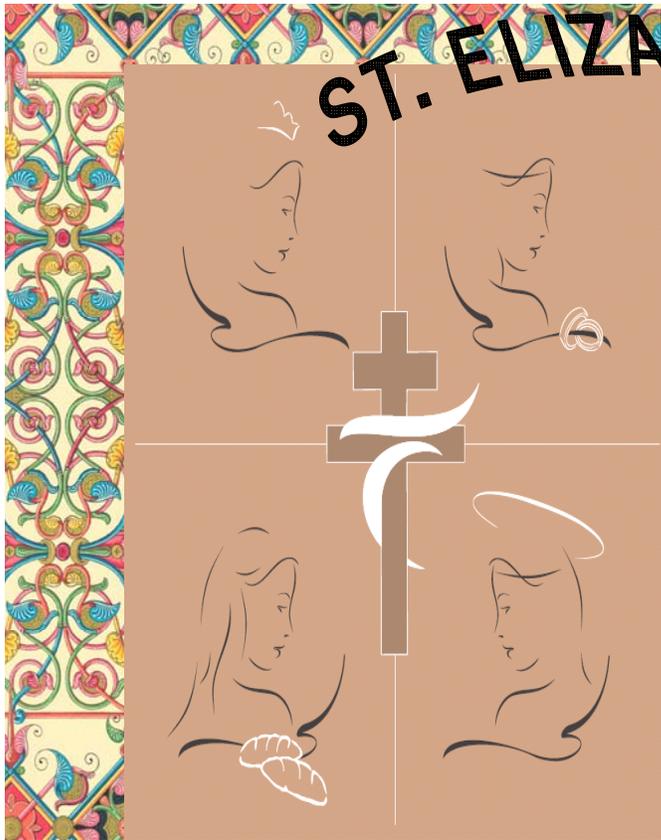
OUR SECULAR FRANCISCAN VOCA**T**ION

PART 2

CONTINUED FROM THE PREVIOUS ISSUE OF THE *TROUBADOUR*

BROTHER RUDEGER,
ONE OF THE "GOOD TEACHERS" THE
POPE MENTIONED, WAS THE FIRST FRIAR
WHO ADVISED ELIZABETH SPIRITUALLY.

He taught her many things, including, "to apply herself to works of mercy." Elizabeth followed this eagerly. In 1226, during her husband's absence in Italy, there was a terrible famine in Germany, Elizabeth fed all of the poor by distributing her husband's personal grain harvest in the four corners of his domain. She also founded a hospital for the poor at the foot of the Wartburg, and tended the sick, even the worst cases, with her own hands.



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Perhaps the first friars Elizabeth met during her marriage were acquainted with the *Memoriale Propositi*, the first Franciscan rule and St. Francis' brothers and sisters of Penance. There is no real evidence that Elizabeth followed this rule or was professed as a penitent at this time. She may have followed the rule informally. In her married life, she often wore garments of penance. She also gave up wearing ribbons and other finery and dancing, something that penitents were supposed to do according to the rule. One thing is certain; the very depths of her soul were attuned to the ideals of St. Francis.

The Pope says that Elizabeth combined her secular life as an exemplary wife and mother with the Gospel virtues taught by St. Francis. That is, she did so in the world. St. Francis is the ultimate source of our spirituality as Franciscans, but as Franciscans "living in the world," we have St. Elizabeth as our patron and an excellent model for our secular life.

Pope Benedict says that holiness is achieved, "through the joys and the trials of ordinary, everyday life." This is what Elizabeth did in her life as a wife and mother. Those of us in the laity who are married often feel that our vocation isn't valued as much, or considered as great a help to sanctity as the religious life or the priesthood. In fact, there have been some Christians who have considered love for a husband or wife one of the obstacles that keep us from complete devotion to God. But the Second Vatican Council said that this love "wells up from the fountain of divine love," that is, it has its origin in God; the Council adds that "authentic married love is caught up into divine love." (GS 48) When John Paul I was bishop of Vittorio, Veneto interpreted these words like this: "God has arranged it so that loving your own husband or wife is, in some way loving Him". We could apply the words of Jesus, "Whenever you do these things to one of the least of My brothers, you have done it to Me." (Mt. 25:40)

Elizabeth, in her day, faced some of these suspicions of marriage. And she lived long before Vatican II. But she lived her married love as a means to love of God. One of her closest friends, Isentrude, her lady-in-waiting at court, said that she and her husband, "lived in marriage in a way worthy of praise. They loved each other with a wonderful affection, gently inviting and strengthening each other in the praise and service of God." Some writers have looked on Elizabeth as someone who wanted to be a religious from the beginning; many Medieval writers almost ignored her married life. But we are very fortunate that the witnesses at her canonization process preserved such vivid memories of it. We see how Ludwig cared for and protected Elizabeth, supporting her against criticism, even when she engaged in the abstention from foods that was like a criticism of his policies.

In her everyday life, Elizabeth experienced not only joys, but trials. Her husband had planned for some time to go on crusade with the Emperor Frederick II, to free the Holy Land from Muslim control. Elizabeth had already made a vow to preserve continence, giving up any thought of remarriage should she survive him. He began his road south to embark in Italy in June 1227. Elizabeth rode to the very edge of his territories with him, because it was so hard to say goodbye. She was expecting their third child in less than three months. Ludwig was in Otranto, Italy, waiting to embark for the Holy Land when a serious epidemic spread through the Crusaders' camp. He died of it on September 11, 1227. The news was brought to Elizabeth shortly after her daughter Gertrude's birth. When she heard that her husband was dead, she cried, "He is dead, dead, and the world and everything that is sweet in the world is dead to me!" She rose and ran weeping through the castle until she collapsed against a wall.

This was the period of Elizabeth's greatest trial, when she had need of greatest faith. She was later to say, "Lord...great as was my love for him, you know that I do not begrudge the sacrifice that my beloved and I made of himself to You for the liberation of the Holy Land, If I could have him, I would give the whole world for him, and go begging with him forever. But I call upon You to witness that, I would not want to redeem his life, even if it cost but a single hair, if it were against Your will. Now I recommend myself and him to Your grace. May Your will for us be done."

Elizabeth lived her love for her family faithfully within her love for God, through the way she and her husband practiced faithfulness in marriage, their respect for each other, their sharing of the same faith and the way they lived it, their daily work, and the way Elizabeth wanted to have her children put God first in their lives. Elizabeth and Ludwig put God at the center of their married lives. They teach us how to live this love as well.

Elizabeth's actions in her day to day life show her bearing "concrete witness" to Christ, as the Pope says. Living simply by repeating words is not enough! Our witnesses must be the credible kind of those who really live their beliefs.

Pope Benedict says that Elizabeth lived her life as a wife and mother and widow "radically." Many people think that radical Gospel living is what priests and religious do when they give up everything for Christ. In fact, once after I first joined the SFO, I heard an elderly woman in our parish say that the kind of life we Secular Franciscans live is for "those who don't want to go all the way" in the Christian life. "Going all the way," in her view, is for priests and religious. I think this is profoundly mistaken. The life of priests and the life of religious have their own character, an exalted one, and they have things that we don't have.

But our lives as Christians in the world wouldn't be worth living if we were not willing to "go all the way" for Christ, to do what is asked of us with all our heart, no matter how difficult or extreme.

Not all of us will be called on to do the most difficult or extreme thing, but we should live any moment as followers of Christ and St. Francis ready to do so.

Elizabeth made some very radical choices when she put the poor of Thuringia over the country's treasury, and when she refused to cooperate in the injustice of the taxes. She made another when she was expelled from her dower castle by her husband's vassals after her death, probably at the instigation of her brothers-in-law, the new Landgraf Heinrich and Conrad. The reason for this has never been completely explained, but the persecution was very likely due to Elizabeth's previously public shunning of the food gathered from the peasants by her husband's officials -- she had been as good as accused of theft and corruption.

Another of her religious sisters, Irmingard, said that she might have returned and found shelter and sustenance with the family, but she would no longer live at court because, "she did not want to receive her nourishment by theft and by taxing the poor, as was often the custom at the courts of princes. She chose to be abject and to earn her bread by the work of her hands like a day-laborer."

This was the most radical choice perhaps, of the many Elizabeth had made; she chose to live in poverty. She renounced the world and confirmed her vow of chastity on Good Friday in 1228, and a year later, early in 1229, in Marburg in Hesse. Brother Burchard, the Franciscan guardian for Hesse, tonsured Elizabeth and clothed her in the gray habit. This seems clearly to have been a Franciscan profession.



It's often asked "was she a Third Order religious or a Secular Franciscan?" There is a lot of disagreement about this even at the level of the Commission of the SFO that I worked on for the centenary. Elizabeth always described her life as being that of the "sisters in the world" whose life and habit were at the time the most despised. This seems to indicate that they were living like Beguines, women who lived informally in groups caring for the poor and sick; but unlike Elizabeth, they usually made no formal profession. Elizabeth's life can probably be seen as most like the life of later Third Order women religious, though at that time their specific rule and constitutions did not exist. At any rate, today both the SFO and the Third Order religious claim her as their patron.

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When we live radically for God and others, and not for riches, pleasure and fame, we are not going to be like everyone else. We will risk being rejected and laughed at. Christians are profoundly counter-cultural. It wasn't easy for Elizabeth to "give all" to God. When she went against the custom at court and obeyed her conscience in not eating food that was unjustly acquired, she was "insulted to her face" by her husband's family. When she gave away her husband's grain to the poor during a famine, she was criticized for draining the treasury. When she was joyful in adversity after her husband's death, she was laughed at and even called insane. This is the type of radical commitment to the Gospel we are called to. We must make choices that go against the way of the world when called to. We must be willing to be criticized and laughed at for the sake of the Gospel.

So much of what the Pope says reflects the secularity of our Franciscan vocation in our lives as well as Elizabeth's. We are called to live this radical Christian life, a journey with Christ as our goal and guide, a life of everyday trials and joys in the world, following the footsteps of St. Francis. Through this we can be that great "leaven in the world" to which Jesus compared His kingdom. We should be ready to empty ourselves and give all cheerfully and willingly to God and others, like Jesus, like Francis, and like Elizabeth.

**MOTHER OF GOD FRATERNITY,
NEW YORK CITY, NY**

Joyfully celebrated their 10th Anniversary of Canonical Establishment on Wednesday, October 15, 2008.

The evening Liturgy was held at Holy Innocents Church, on 37th Street, with Fr. Jim Goode, OFM, main celebrant.



Danuta Wyszynska, SFO, (RIGHT),

ST. STEPHEN'S FRATERNITY,

PERTH AMBOY, NJ, proudly presents *Troubadour* Editor, Anna Geraci, SFO, (LEFT) with a Fraternity Journal which was specially produced for their Centennial Anniversary Celebration (1908-2008).

(PHOTO CREDIT: DIANE MENDITTO, SFO)



**ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI
FRATERNITY, RINGWOOD, NJ**,
has a new website.

GIVE IT A VISIT AT:

www.stfrancisfraternityringwood.org



The *Troubadour* joins with the entire **ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA FRATERNITY FAMILY, SCOTCH PLAINS, NJ**, in wishing **FR. ALEX PINTO**, abundances of God's choicest blessings as he celebrated the 39th anniversary of his Ordination on December 20, 2008.

SAN DAMIANO FRATERNITY, SUSSEX, NJ, commemorated

twenty-five years as a Fraternity in Sussex County, NJ. The celebration was held on September 10th at the monthly gathering meeting at Sacred Heart Center in Newton. Thirty-two professed members, candidates, and guests were present. The evening began with the celebration of Holy Mass by Fr. Brian Tomlinson, Spiritual Assistant.

Two original members were present, along with several of the Salesian Sisters, who reside at Sacred Heart Center.

The music was performed by Fraternity Minister, Hugo Bader, and Formation Director, Ken Majewski. Vice Minister, Cindy Beliveau, coordinated the refreshments, which included her Tau cake.

San Damiano Fraternity is currently blessed with seven Candidates. A *Wine and Cheese Information Night* for area Catholics interested in learning about the Order was held at the October 8th gathering meeting. The Fraternity is committed to Ongoing and Initial Formation, and is active in collecting food for Sr. Thomasina's food pantry in Franklin, as well as collecting donations for the Franciscan friars in Zambia.

ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY FRATERNITY, STATEN ISLAND, NY,

celebrated their 10th Anniversary of the establishment of the St. Francis Center for Spirituality on November 1, 2008 with Mass and dinner at the Hilton Garden Inn in Staten Island under the guidance of Fr. Philip Blaine, OFM Conv., Director. The honorees included Fr. Justin Biase, OFM Conv., Minister Provincial, and Fr. Benedict Groeschele, CFR, Director of Spiritual Development for the Archdiocese of New York.

ST. JOHN VIANNEY FRATERNITY, COLONIA, NJ, celebrated a special

evening on December 11, 2008, as members renewed their commitments to the Secular Franciscan Order with a special Mass at St. Cecelia's Chapel in Iselin, NJ, and joyfully celebrated afterwards with refreshments.



L-TO-R:

Clara Kilgallin, SFO, (7 years); Rocky Manalo, SFO, (9 years); Dolores Jules, SFO, (16 years); Paul DiLena, SFO, (17 years); daughter Mary Moreno guiding Arnie Moreno, SFO, (30 years); Deacon Ed Campanella, SFO, (7 years); John Mastrobuono, SFO, (3 years); Anna Zielski, SFO, (7 years); Rocky & Mely Manalo, SFO's, (9 years); Fr. Joseph Kubiak, OFM, Cap., Celebrant.

The spirit of St. Francis was evident at **ST. BONAVENTURE PARISH, PATERSON, NJ**, this past year where parishioners celebrated the 130TH anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone.

With FR. DANIEL GRIGASSY, OFM, Pastor, taking great pride in St. Bonaventure's being one of the Province's oldest parishes, and in its Franciscan heritage, the parish began commemorating their Franciscan roots beginning with a movie series over the past summer. Fall festivities included the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on September 14, with Provincial Minister John O'Connor, OFM, presiding at the Sunday Eucharist. The celebration of the Feast of the Stigmata, September 17, was followed with a Day of Recollection on September 20, "Francis Through the Eyes of Bonaventure" presented by Teresa Baker, SFO, former chair of the National SFO Formation Commission. September 15 and 22, offered a two-part session on "The Crucifix of San Damiano." September 29, brought Holy Name Provincial Vicar Dominic Monti, OFM, who lectured on "The Coming of the Friars to Paterson, 1876." Twenty pilgrims learned more about Franciscan history through a 10-day pilgrimage to Franciscan Italy. Fr. Daniel conducted three preparatory sessions for the pilgrims and traveled with them as guide, along with Fr. Benjamin Regotti, OFM Cap., of Philadelphia, and Br. Becket Ryan, OSF of Brooklyn. The Transitus was celebrated on October 3, followed by refreshments sponsored by the St. John Vianney and St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity.

At the feast day Mass of St. Francis, Fr. Daniel awarded ten "St. Francis Medals". "I'm extraordinarily impressed with the efforts to attend to the needs of the poor by so many parishioners for so long," said Fr. Daniel. "What better day than the feast of St. Francis to acknowledge, at least some of those, who have embodied the values and ideals of St. Francis through their generosity of spirit, service, and support."

Among those honored were Secular Franciscans, **RAYMOND AND BETTE LACONTE, SFO, FROM ST. JOHN VIANNEY AND ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY FRATERNITY.**

"They've assisted with the works of the Social Concerns Ministry since its inception, participating in the clothing drive, the Giving Tree and the School Supplies Project. Early on, they were instrumental in providing the delivery of many of the collected items to sites in the city of Paterson. Ray served as Pastoral Council resident for several years and continues to sit on the council, and has been an usher and a lector for many years. Bette has served as a lector, member of the choir, and catechist for years, only recently retiring to the important role of safety monitor where the religious formation classes take place."



LET US PRAY FOR ALL OUR DEPARTED SISTERS AND BROTHERS IN CHRIST AND ST. FRANCIS. MAY ALL OF OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO SLEEP IN THE LORD SHARE ETERNAL JOY AND PEACE.

MAY
THE
SOULS
OF THE
FAITHFUL
DEPARTED,
THROUGH
THE MERCY
OF GOD, REST
IN
PEACE.
AMEN.

ST. CONRAD OF PARZHAM FRATERNITY, HOBOKEN, NJ, SADLY INFORMS US OF THE DEATH OF THEIR MUCH BELOVED FRANCISCAN SISTER OF 47 YEARS:

† PHEBE KOSZYK, SFO
passed away
July 21, 2008.

BY VALERIE MORENO, SFO
ST. JOHN VIANNEY FRATERNITY, COLONIA, NJ

Father Francis, my heart clings to yours,
you seem so near

FEAST DAY PRAYER

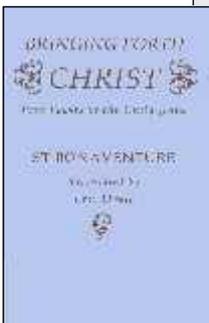
7

when I feel Autumn's wind touch my face,
when birds chorus praise to God
as night makes way for dawn.

Life isn't easy, you know how it feels
to be poor, vulnerable, afraid, sad.
All around me, people hide suffering,
screaming silently in prisons of
hate, fear, loneliness, confusion.

I scream too. I hold out a trembling hand
so you can catch me as I fall.
You are there for me, always.
Teach me to be here for people,
seeking peace, justice, hope and fairness.

Secrets diminished, truth glowing
like a warm blaze in a winter forest.
Thank you for loving me, showering joy and peace
upon my broken heart.



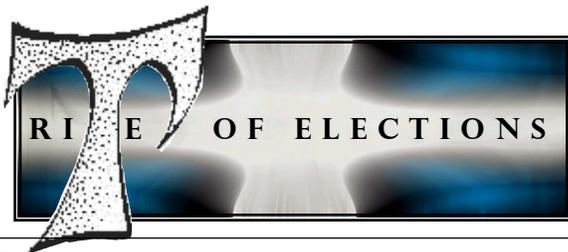
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

To purchase copies of the booklet of the precious meditation by St. Bonaventure—**FIVE FEASTS OF THE CHILD JESUS: BRINGING FORTH CHRIST** along with Eric Doyle's helpful introduction—can be obtained from:

Convent of the Incarnation, Fairacres
Oxford, England OX41TB
Tel: 01865 721301
Fax 01865 790 860

<http://www.slgpress.co.uk/mysteries.htm>





ST. CONRAD OF PARZHAM FRATERNITY 138, HOBOKEN, NJ
CHAPTER OF ELECTIONS HELD JUNE 4, 2008

THE NEW COUNCIL:

Minister: Miriam L. Gómez-Bracety, SFO
Vice Minister: Anthony F. Cieri, SFO
Secretary: Alfonso L. Zambrana, SFO
Treasurer: Martha Azaceta, SFO
Formation Director: Marie Vasta, SFO

PRESIDERS OF ELECTION:

Julia McCants, SFO and Larry L. Meyers, SFO

STS. ELIZABETH AND LOUIS FRATERNITY 152, NEW YORK CITY, NY
CHAPTER OF ELECTIONS HELD SEPTEMBER 4, 2008
Church of St. John the Baptist

THE NEW COUNCIL:

Minister: John Murawski, SFO
Vice Minister: Lilly O'Keefe, SFO
Secretary: Salvatore Moscato, SFO
Treasurer: Rosemary De Sando, SFO
Formation Director: John Albanese, SFO

PRESIDERS OF ELECTION:

Julia McCants, SFO, Peggy Ledger, SFO, Madge Cooke, SFO;
Friar Witness: Rev. Thomas Frank, OFM Cap

ELECTIVE CHAPTER OF INTERNATIONAL FRATERNITY (CIOFS) HELD NOVEMBER 19, 2008, IN HUNGARY



BACK ROW: L-TO-R:

General Assistant: Fr. Martín Pablo Bitzer, OFM Conv,
Presidency Councilor: Tibor Kauser, OFS,
Presidency Councilor: Benedetto Lino, OFS,
General Assistant: Fr. Amando Trujillo-Cano, TOR

FRONT ROW L-TO-R: Presidency Councilor: M. Consuelo de
Núñez, OFS, General Assistant: Fr. Ivan Matić, OFM,
Presidency Councilor: Maria Aparecida Crepaldi, OFS,
General Vice-Minister: Doug Clorey, OFS, General Minister:
Encarnación del Pozo, OFS, Franciscan Youth Councilor:
Ana Fruk, OFS, Presidency Councilor: Mag. Ewald Kreuzer,
OFS, Presidency Councilor: Michèle Altmeyer, OFS,
Presidency Councilor: Lucy A. Almirañez, OFS,
General Assistant: Fr. Irudaya Samy, OFM Cap



St. Elizabeth & Louis Fraternity 152
New York City, NY,
has a new Spiritual Assistant,
Fr. Thomas Franks, OFM Cap.

ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS FRATERNITY 120
NEW YORK CITY, NY

CHAPTER OF ELECTIONS HELD SEPTEMBER 10, 2008

THE NEW COUNCIL:

Minister: Madge Cooke, SFO
Vice Minister: Nancy Guadalupe, SFO
Secretary: Linda Baltzer, SFO
Treasurer: Julia McCants, SFO
Formation Director: Rufus Davis, SFO
Councilor: Peggy Ledger, SFO

PRESIDERS OF ELECTION:

Marcia Stamboulian, SFO, and Larry L. Meyers, SFO;
Friar Witness: Brother Edward Higgins, OFM



BACK ROW L-TO-R:

Kate Asselin, SFO-Secretary, Ron Pihokker, SFO-Minister,
Julia McCants, SFO-Manhattan Councilor,
Diane Menditto, SFO-Vice Minister

FRONT ROW L-TO-R:

Andy Klutkowski, SFO-North Jersey Councilor
Sheila Tuohy, SFO-Westchester Councilor, Richard Spana, SFO-Treasurer,
Virginia Chin, SFO-Director of Formation
MISSING FROM PHOTO: Alexander Kiczek, SFO, Central Jersey Councilor
Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM-Regional Spiritual Assistant,
Fr. Tom Crangle, OFM Cap-Provincial Spiritual Assistant Stigmata Province

ELECTIVE CHAPTER OF OLTAR REGIONAL ELECTIONS
HELD NOVEMBER 1, 2008

The New OLTAR Regional Council:

Regional Minister: Ronald L. Pihokker, SFO
Regional Vice Minister: Diane F. Menditto, SFO
Regional Secretary: Kate Asselin, SFO
Regional Treasurer: Richard Spana, SFO
Regional Formation Director: Virginia Chin, SFO
Regional Councilors:
Nothern Jersey: Andrew Klutkowski, SFO
Manhattan: Julia McCants, SFO
Central Jersey: Alexander Kiczek, SFO
Westchester: Sheila Tuohy, SFO



CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR NEWLY PROFESSED BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN ST. FRANCIS.

With Franciscan joy, **ST. BENEDICT THE MOOR FRATERNITY 103, NEW YORK CITY, NY**, announces the Profession of:

NICOLE REGINA HANLEY, SFO
on October 6, 2008

L-TO-R:



Virginia Chin, SFO, Minister,
Fr. Robert Gavin, OFM, Spiritual Assistant,
Nicole Hanley, SFO, Nancy Conroy, SFO, Formation Minister.

ST. THOMAS MORE FRATERNITY 115 NEW YORK CITY, NY, is pleased to announce the Profession of:

JOSEPH CATALANOTTO, SFO
which was celebrated
on October 19, 2008

ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA FRATERNITY 143, SCOTCH PLAINS, NJ, is grateful to God for the SFO Professions of:

MADGE HEENEY, SFO
ROSE MCMAHON, SFO
on June 13, 2008

and

WILLIAM PETIX, SFO
on October 3, 2008

SACRED HEART FRATERNITY 146, YONKERS, NY, is pleased to announce the Professions of:

CORA MADRAZZO, SFO
ALIEZA TATOROWIECZ, SFO
who were professed on May 18, 2008

After the Mass, a joyful reception was held in the church hall.

With Franciscan Joy, **ST. JOHN'S FRATERNITY 151, NEW YORK CITY, NY**, is pleased to announce the Professions of:

ARMANDE AUGUSTIN, SFO
JOSETTE BARBOT, SFO
which was celebrated on November 23, 2008

and

Admitted as Candidate:
ROSEMARY PERNETTI

Our Profession and Rule

SFO Zone

BY VALERIE MORENO, SFO
ST. JOHN VIANNEY FRATERNITY
COLONIA, NJ

As a young person who was professed back in 1983, I remember wondering why we had to have a new *Rule*. I had read about Francis, gone to Formation and regular fraternity meetings, and thought I was doing fine. I had no clue what the *Rule* had to do with me—after all, I received a copy on the day I was professed.

It was a booklet in very tiny print, something I, as a partially sighted person, could not read. Looking back 35 years, I have to shake my head over my naïveté.

Yes, my love for Francis was real, as well as my knowing I belonged to a true Order and not a club, group, society or organization. But, often, very often, there was a lingering sense of doing what I presumed individually.

In the 1990's, I started reading our *Rule* (and the three previous) on tape and realized how powerful our mission as Secular Franciscans is in the Church.

First, the *Rule* (1978) gives a mission as a truly united family of Franciscans.

It calls all of us as SFO's to be one with one another, and with the Church in the world. We are free to be creative and courageous in what we think, do, and say in the path of Francis, and in the Church today as she grapples with the challenges of this turbulent time.

Always walking in the faith and teaching of the Church, Francis saw the future as a coming adventure for his children and he was so right. We can only go forward with the confidence that our *Rule* opens the way for the SFO to reach each country, culture and challenge with a unifying, compact roadmap for peace, but the assuredness of our Church's awareness of what she, and we, face every day in a complex world. Our Prologue, words of Francis himself, assures us of the Church's love and understanding of him and calls us to love and understand him, and one another, as a vibrant ray of light in the 21st century.



FR. ANDRÉ R. CIRINO, OFM

SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT

**LITTLE PORTION FRATERNITY
HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON, NY**

In the first feast of the **ANNUNCIATION**, (25 March—notice, 9 months exactly to Christmas), Bonaventure remarks that Mary said her “yes” to God and became pregnant with the Child.

10 She didn’t know fully what it all would mean, but had the strength to give her consent to God. What is this conception? It is what we Franciscans call the highest good come from Heaven, the grace of God present in Mary’s womb. With this conception Mary was literally “full of grace.” So each time the Holy Spirit overshadows us, we too conceive a grace of God. And just as conception is precious and unique for any woman, so too is the conception of a grace from God a unique, mystical moment.

Bonaventure notes that Mary goes up to the hill country to be with her pregnant cousin Elizabeth perhaps to seek advice and learn from her. So too does a person who conceives a grace from God need to seek the advice of good people—spiritual obstetricians such as spiritual directors. He even cautions one to avoid those who might kill the new conception—a type of spiritual abortion.

How many times have we conceived a grace from God? When we received this grace, did we feel it stirring within us? Perhaps an example would help us here.

RIGHT BEFORE ADVENT IN THE YEAR 1259, ST. BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO HAD JUST COMPLETED AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF INTENSE PRAYER AND REFLECTION ON MOUNT LAVERNA IN TUSCANY, FROM WHICH EXPERIENCE HE COMPOSED HIS RENOWNED MASTERPIECE—*THE JOURNEY OF THE HUMAN PERSON INTO GOD*. Soon after this, he realized he had some free time to himself before Advent would begin and wanted to spend it on another meditative pursuit. So he decided through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to focus on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, choosing a most unique approach by reflecting on the liturgical feasts that highlight Jesus’ childhood—Annunciation, Nativity, Holy Name, Epiphany and Presentation. It occurred to him that like Mary, a human person can also *conceive, birth, name, search for Jesus with the Magi and present the Child Jesus back to God*.

Eric Doyle, OFM, in the introduction to his translation of this little meditative work, noted that the entire reflection deals with what is called “spiritual motherhood,” whereby every Christian—male and female—would be able to do what Mary herself did as his Mother. After using this writing for many retreats over the last several years, I have come to realize that St. Bonaventure is attempting to help us deal with the reality of grace in our lives. Let me explain by taking a look at the five liturgical feasts and the meaning they each convey.

As a religious myself, I remember almost precisely to the moment in my life when God called me to consider becoming a member of the Franciscan family. I conceived a grace and was pregnant with this call. I’ll continue with this example as we go through the rest of the liturgical feasts.

In the second feast of the

NATIVITY, (25 December)
—we all know the story so well—Mary birthed her child in Bethlehem.

Bonaventure comments here that after a person has conceived a grace, one brings this grace to birth by doing that for which the grace was intended. He adds two synonyms for the word grace—gift and good.

St. Francis in his *Letter to the Faithful* writes that all of us are mothers of Jesus Christ, and that we birth him *by doing good*. Perhaps Bonaventure’s use of the word “good” is an allusion to Francis’ letter.

A physical pregnancy is usually brought to birth when the fetus has matured or by Cesarean surgery. While the analogy of physical to spiritual pregnancy/birth may seem to limp a bit here, nevertheless a grace is brought to birth when we feel it is ripe/mature, or like a woman who schedules and goes through with Cesarean surgery.

So to continue with the example of my call to religious life, this grace was birthed in my life when I did what the grace intended, namely, rang the doorbell of St. Francis Seraphic Seminary and entered the Franciscan formation program. **WHAT GRACES HAVE YOU PUT INTO PRACTICE OR BIRTHED IN YOUR LIFE?**

In the third feast of the **HOLY NAME**, (3 January), St. Bonaventure notes that his parents gave the Child the name Jesus meaning “one who saves.”

So too when we conceive and birth a grace, then we must also name the grace for ourselves. And just like a mother may birth more than one child giving each of them their own name, so too do we conceive many graces and possibly birth them. But do we come to the point of naming these graces, these “children” if you will?

My call to the Franciscan way of life was a grace conceived and birthed that has the name “vocation.” My “child—vocation” was an “infant” when I entered the formation program of the Franciscans.

As I met with different challenges and obstacles in the various stages of formation, I realized that I conceived and birthed another grace—a “sister” to the grace “vocation” whom I was able to name “perseverance.”

A PRAYER FOR LIFE

BY DOLORES JULES, SFO
ST. JOHN VIANNEY FRATERNITY, COLONIA, NJ



Gentle St. Francis,
you were so devoted
to the humanity of Christ.
Your heart burst with
appreciation toward God
for taking on human life.

You saw beauty and goodness
in all living things—
in birds that sing,
the fish that fill our waters,
and all that lives in nature.
Help us to imitate
your reverence for life
wherever it may be.

Especially,
humble Francis of Assisi,
help us to help others
to see the
worth of each living,
unborn baby
sheltered in its mother's womb.

May all mankind have the grace
to understand
that these tiny,
budding lives
have the right to life,
liberty, and
the pursuit of happiness.

In the fourth feast of the

EPIPHANY,

(traditionally 6 January)

Matthew's gospel (2:1-12) recounts the story of the Magi or Kings who seek out the Child, adore him and bring him gifts as well.

St. Bonaventure sees the three faculties of the human person—*memory, intellect, and will* as the three “Magi/Kings” within us who go in search of our children. Perhaps this is better illustrated by continuing with my example.

Whenever I encountered problems or obstacles on my Franciscan journey, I needed the grace of perseverance to operate within me to strengthen me to face the problems or overcome the obstacles that threatened my child “vocation.”

My King—*memory* helped me recall that I had a “child” called “perseverance”;

my King—*intellect* helped me understand why I needed this “child’s” assistance;

and my King—*will* helped me make the decision to go and search for this “child—perseverance.”

Once the problem or obstacle had been resolutely dealt with, I was in adoration of these “children/graces” functioning in my life and offered God gifts of thanks, praise, glory.

In the fifth feast of the

PRESENTATION OF THE CHILD

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE,

(2 February), Jesus was brought to the Temple to be offered up to God, returning to God this highest good of all creation.

St. Bonaventure describes our Trinitarian God as “overflowing goodness,” a goodness that is constantly being exchanged among the Three Persons as well as with creation, for God remarked at the end of each of the six days of creation in Genesis [1: 3, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25] that it is good, the creation of humanity being very good [1:31].

And we know from Matthew 19:17 that “*only* God is good.” If “*only* God is good,” then each time we experience goodness—simply as Matthew 10:42 notes, sharing a cup of cold water or our table, or caring for the sick—we experience God.

And within the Trinity, goodness is constantly being exchanged, overflowing from one Person to the Other.

Then in imitation of the Trinity, we must let this goodness overflow to others from us.

Gerald Manley Hopkins, aware of St. Bonaventure's description of God, wrote in poem 155:

THEE, GOD, I COME FROM, TO THEE GO,
ALL DAY LONG I LIKE FOUNTAIN FLOW.

To hold on to any good would short-circuit the Trinitarian process. To let goodness flow from us in our daily lives makes God present. Moreover, Mat. 10:23 tells us that if we plant one seed, we'll receive a hundredfold. And whenever we let some good overflow from us, goodness gets replenished and stronger in our lives!

11

My “child—vocation” is more than fifty years old, a mature adult. At each quarter century mark, a celebration was had with family, friars and friends. They were moments to enter God's temple gratefully to present this “child—vocation” to God. And God has blessed me abundantly with graces—many “children” to continue living my Franciscan life.

St. Bonaventure's meditation on these five feasts from Mary's perspective as mother can become the tool that helps us realize how blessed we are, how many graces we've conceived, birthed, named, sought out and returned to God. Whenever we are gentle, kind, peaceful, generous, believing, hoping, loving, we are birthing the child Jesus because we make goodness present and this goodness is God!

TO PURCHASE COPIES
OF THIS MEDITATION,
PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 7.

MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER Hungary, November 15-22, 2008

To all the brothers and sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order

We, brothers and sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order and of the Franciscan Youth who have participated in the 12th General Chapter and 5th Elective Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order at Dobogoko, Hungary from the 15th to the 22nd 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 Councilors, we send this message in an effort to convey the spirit of the Chapter.

On November 17th, the two years of celebrations marking the 8th 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.

12

Fundamentally, the Chapter had two themes: Profession of the Secular Franciscan and the 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.

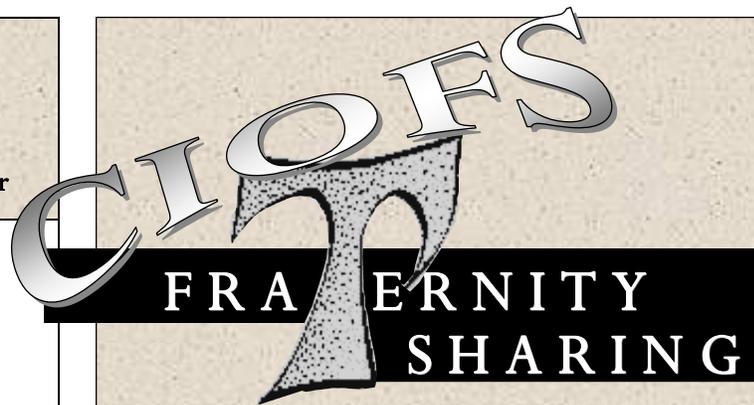
The priorities of our Order for the next six years are: Formation, Communications, Franciscan Youth, Presence in the World and Emerging Fraternities. We are all invited to pay special attention to these priorities. All in positions of responsibility within the Order, at all levels, are asked to acknowledge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

Encarnación del Pozo
Ministre Générale OFS



FROM NOVEMBER 15 TO 22, 2008, the International branch of the Secular Franciscan Order (CIOFS) celebrated its Twelfth General Chapter and 5TH Elective Chapter in Hungary. The Chapter was presided by Fr. Mark Tasca, the Minister General, of the OFM Conv., on behalf of the Ministers General of the First Order and TOR. It also concluded a two-year celebration of the 8TH Centenary of the birth of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. This dynamic multi-cultural Chapter totaled approximately 111 attendees; with representation from 69 different fraternities throughout the world in attendance, plus observers, and special guests.

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS—The approval of several documents; the *Incorporation of the members of the YouFra into the SFO*, and the *Practical Interpretation of the Art. 89.4, letter b of the General Constitutions of the SFO*.

ELECTION RESULTS— the new Presidency of CIOFS is composed of the following members: Encarnación del Pozo is Minister General; Doug Clorey, Vice-Minister General; Maria Consuelo de Núñez, Councilor for the Spanish language; Tibor Kauser, Councilor for the English language area 1; Lucy A. Almirañez, Councilor for the English language area 2; Maria Aparecida Crepaldi, Councilor for the Portuguese language; Michèle Altmeyer, Councilor for the French language; Ewald Kreuzer, Councilor for the German language; Benedict Lino, Councilor for the Italian language; and Ana Fruk, Councilor for YouFra.

GENERAL CHAPTER THEME—Members of the Secular Franciscan Order from around the world reflected on the central themes of the Chapter: “Profession of the Secular Franciscan” and “The Sense of Belonging to the SFO” as presented by key note speakers, Fr. Felice Cangelosi, Vicar General of the OFM Cap, and Emanuela De Nunzio, former Minister General of the SFO.

CLOSURE OF THE VIII CENTENARY CELEBRATION

A High Holy Mass, presided by the Cardinal Emeritus, László Paskai, in the Cathedral of Esztergom, concluded the Order's celebration of the 8TH Centenary of the birth of the Saint Elizabeth of Hungary.

Complete presentations of the Chapter themes, photos, and events are available online at:

<http://www.ciofs.org/>



REBUILD MY CHURCH

ANNA GERACI, SFO
TROUBADOUR NEWSLETTER

WHILE IN PRAYER,

Francis of Assisi heard the Lord say, “Francis, go rebuild my house, which as you see, is falling completely to ruin.” Rebuild His Church— that was the command that our Lord entrusted to our Seraphic father, Francis. That is also the mission that one Secular Franciscan feels that he has been bestowed to begin anew alongside our Secular Franciscan Order.

This important mission must be fulfilled with faithful dedication to Christ and His Church, and though the foundation of this movement may have started with one person, it is to progress as a re-ignited torch which is to be passed on in flaming brilliance to all the faithful sons and daughters of St. Francis throughout the nation.

Back in August of 2008, John Nacco, SFO, contacted me one evening seeking statistics for a special talk that he was planning to give at his fraternity meeting in the near future. His fraternity, St. Francis of Assisi in Hackensack, New Jersey, is quite active and innovative in their apostolate ministries. While we chatted, John’s zeal was evident as he shared his fervor for the Church. As he substantiated his mission, its objective was discerning and afterwards gave me pause to reflect upon ways in which I could help fan the sparks of this smoldering ember.

Therefore, it was a pleasant surprise when John phoned several weeks later and invited me to attend his fraternity meeting. It is of his special presentation which I now share.

Before starting, John shared that the subject of his talk was one very close to his heart, and one of great importance. He also acknowledged that he has spent a considerable amount of time in prayer pondering over this matter, and repeatedly emphasized to his fraternal brothers and sisters that it would be entirely up to them to agree whether they wished to collectively accept the following of this mission he proposed as a fraternity endeavor.

John began by asking a question,

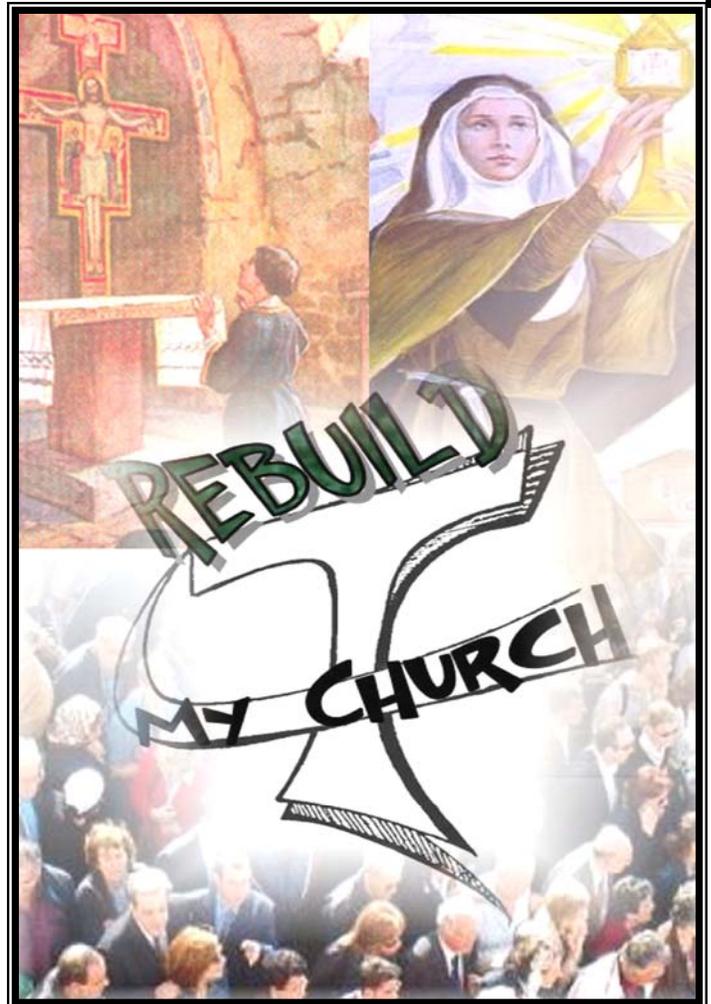
“How can we, Secular Franciscans, help rebuild the church?
Our church, which is in very serious trouble.”

“As Saint Francis choose the Tau symbol and it accorded them a special recognition, we have a tendency to wear items that display our beliefs and our Secular Franciscan vocation; wearing outward visible signs of our faith such as jewelry, shirts, and jackets with the Tau cross. However, John points out— we all know we are Secular Franciscans. It is the people outside of our fraternity who do not know who we are, or what we do.”

A Franciscan Prayer

13

TRIM THIS PRAYER CARD OUT THE PAGE AND JOIN US IN PRAYING
REBUILD MY CHURCH—A FRANCISCAN PRAYER.



“Yes, our mission may give Seculars recognition, but more importantly, it will also put us in the position of helping the church. This is a huge undertaking, and we will need to begin by doing something very basic and by starting from the bottom up.

Starting with some ugly statistics, in 2006, the *Catholic Monitor* reported that in the United States only an estimated 20% of people registered in a Catholic parish were attending their local Church at least three times per month.”

At his church, the numbers of people in attendance at Mass are counted, but John notes, “nobody counts the number of people who are not there. When you go to church, the majority of attendees are the elderly, those who have remained steadfast and loyal; and those who have returned to the church in their autumn years. The other majority is the youth; young people who attend, but do so up until they complete receiving their sacraments, and then tend to disappear.”

“...The youth are of special importance, because they are the key in establishing the future generations of the church. We already know there is a vocation shortage in the church with less and less people embracing a vocation and becoming priests, nuns, or Secular Franciscans.”

Not too long ago, when the archbishop decided to close three of his neighboring churches, everyone had a different opinion of the reasons for the closings.

“Truth of the matter is that the churches were being closed because they didn’t have enough people attending, not enough families. There were just not enough contributions to keep them running. If we, active church members, can help boost that 20 percentage to a more acceptable level, our community would benefit not just financially, but also collectively, by having more of our fellow parishioners helping to build a larger and more diverse Catholic community with more priests, nuns, deacons, as well as all the other Christian ministries.”

So the question remains—where are the other 80%? Pew after pew of the missing generation, as John calls them.

Why do an increasing number of Catholics make a conscious choice not to attend church?

Why are they missing, and is there anything we can do about it?

John feels strongly that there is.

In trying to get to the root core of the matter, John began by going out and asking the people who “identified” or called themselves “Catholics” for the reasons they had in not coming to Church.

Why did they come only for Christmas, Easter, Palm Sunday, Weddings, and Funerals?

He asked the man/woman-on-the-street.

He asked young people.

He went to bars and asked patrons and bartenders.

Some of their answers follow on page 15.

While talking to so many varying people, he was reminded of the gospel passage on judging others in Matthew 7, ...why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Still, John was quite troubled and discouraged with the verbal assaults upon the church, and went to confession about this. His confessor advised him not to listen further, but to answer them, “peace be with you”, and walk away. At times, he even feared for his safety when he did walk away. “If whatever else priests do, or not do”, John states, “they are the ones that hand us the body and blood of Jesus Christ. No one else can do that. They are important to us. We have no reason to listen to this.”

Yet as this brief survey illustrates, we do have a serious problem. Not only are people not attending the church, but their reasons for doing so are so vast that there is no one single answer. What can mend this tear in our evangelical fabric?

What can we who are dedicated to the Church do to encourage their return as active participants in a worshipping community?

John’s solution seems too simple, yet it is in it’s simplicity that which makes it so powerful.

The solution is Prayer!

We HAVE HEARD THE MESSAGE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JUST AS ST. FRANCIS DID WHILE PRAYING IN FRONT OF THE SAN DAMIANO CROSS. AND SO, WE PRAY:

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, OUR CREATOR THE SON, OUR SAVIOR THE HOLY SPIRIT, OUR SANCTIFIER



ABBA, FATHER!
Thank You for the gift of our life, and the wonders of Your creation. We ask You to inflame the hearts of our brothers and sisters, especially the young, to "Seek Your Face."

LORD JESUS, YOU ARE OUR SHEPHERD.
We thank You for showing us the way, for taking up the cross and conquering death. May we have the grace necessary to take up Your cross in order to bring back the members of our Catholic family who have strayed from the church.

O HOLY SPIRIT,
may we be strengthened by the knowledge that You will always be with us.

We pray for Our Holy Father, the clergy, religious and lay people. Inspire and strengthen all of us so that through our prayers, love and sacrifices we may be able to reach out to our brothers and sisters and bring them back to the fold.

Only with Your help can we Rebuild Your Church so that, united, we may praise You forever. We ask all this through the Intercession of our Blessed Mother, St. Francis, St. Clare and all Your Saints. Amen.

- The Catholic Church is out of touch, and old fashioned.
- The Church is too strict, people do not like rules.
- Mass is different since Vatican II, too liberal.
- They only like the Tridentine Mass.
- Do not like to follow religion blindly.
- The Mass is boring.
- Timing, too busy to attend.
- Sunday is their only day off to rest.
- Need to advertise more so to know when to attend.
- Have many questions and do not know where they can be answered.
- They prefer to pray directly to God, no need for anyone else.
- No need for the church as long as you are a good person and don't kill anyone...

- The church gives too much guilt.
- The church should get rid of the cross.
- Seeing a bloody Jesus on the cross makes them feel bad.
- Too many Scandals.
- The Collections pay off lawsuits.
- The Catholic Church is all about money.
- There were those who identified themselves as being religious, but did not believe in any organized religion.
- There were blatant misconceptions about the church.
- There were complaints that the tabernacle on the side should be in the center.
- Some used the Crusades as an excuse for not attending.
- Some used the Inquisition, and one even used Hitler.

- One woman stated that she'd never go back to the church until they allowed female priests.
- There were misrepresentations about the New Testament, as well as teachings of the church including those of abortion, divorce, pre-marital sex, & homosexuality.
- There were disparaging remarks made about Mary Magdalene.
- Others made disparaging remarks about people who attended Mass regularly, as being hypocrites, "be careful of this one or that one," they'd say.
- There were those who held personal and negative feeling for the church hierarchies, and made disparaging remarks in particular about priests, bishops, and even the pope.

Moreover, John began to pray a particular San Damiano prayer. "I think the Holy Spirit spoke to me about prayer and its importance. We must begin by praying in our homes, and in our fraternities. We must ask Jesus to illuminate our minds with His solutions to this crisis. He is the one in charge, He is the one who guides the Christian community as its Leader and Lord. From Him will come the strength to follow His superior leading, and to welcome all of the vital forces that come from Him to help us. As we remain united to Christ, we should fear no enemy and no adversity; like St. Francis, we must remain closely united to Him! The Holy Mass and the Eucharist is the key. As people experience the presence of the Holy Spirit, they will return to the Church, where Christ will be waiting for them."

"Prayer will lead us to teach others by example, and become more considerate of one another's feelings." For example, in his youth, when John went to Mass, if you were not in the state of grace, you had to remain in your seat during Communion. People would sit there embarrassed because everyone could see they were not receiving the Eucharist; and most likely didn't return to Church again until they went to Confession. As a positive solution to this problem, his parish priest allowed everyone to come up to the altar rail, but instead of receiving, they should just cross their arms and the priest would bless you. That is what he did, and you couldn't tell; during Communion most seats were empty and people felt good about coming to Mass. Sometimes it only takes one small gesture of kindness to deeply affect someone's perception, perhaps ignite the need for dialogue, and begin the process of return. Blessed Duns Scotus reminds us "every person is unique, in every time and in eternity, thus; no man can be subordinated, or eliminated for questions of "national security."

"We must pray to Jesus to influence our Pope, and pray for him to 'bring it down from the top, as we pray to bring it up from the bottom.' We must pray to Mary for her powerful intercession. She will show us how to reach Jesus. We must pray to St. Francis, St. Clare and all the Saints for their intercession. We must pray fervently, for we are in crisis. We must pray for this movement to be accepted individually, and embraced collectively, by our entire SFO. We cannot do this alone; we have to get all Franciscans in the country to do it. The Secular Franciscan Order is an especially well-kept secret, but the time has come where we need to become more obvious to other people.

Prayer is the answer. The Spirit is upon us."

Afterwards, during the continuation of the meeting, the fraternity wholeheartedly embraced this mission, and since then, has collectively written and produced the special Franciscan prayer card found on pages 13-14.

The Fraternity now passes the torch to each and every one of us within the Region by means of this newsletter. Please cut the prayer card out and join us in prayer. Remember, this mission is not to be the work of a sole person, but of an entire Order. Embrace this special mission—join the movement and pray the *Rebuild My Church* prayer.

May God be praised.

REGIONAL FRATERNITY SHARING

The November 1, 2008, **REGIONAL CHAPTER OF MINISTERS** held our National Visitation as well as the Elective Chapter of the OLTAR Region with Tom Bello, SFO, National Vice Minister, presiding.

After attendance and greetings, the following presentations and motions were discussed.

ELECTION AMENDMENT to our Local Fraternity Election Guidelines was motioned and approved by vote.

The motion states:

Those running for council offices in the local fraternities of Our Lady of the Angels Region, in the Secular Franciscan Order, must be professed for at least three (3) years.

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Additionally, those who are already professed and transfer into a new fraternity must be involved in the life of that new fraternity for at least three (3) years before running for office. If a situation exists in a fraternity that causes a hardship at the time of elections due to this amendment, that fraternity may appeal to the Regional Executive Council for this guideline to be set aside.

This amendment was created to insure the health, well-being, and life of all fraternities. Too many problems arise when positions of leadership are taken by those who are inexperienced or unfamiliar with the life of a fraternity and with their new brothers and sisters.

FAIR SHARE CONTRIBUTION—

Increase of our Per Capita to \$30.00 per professed fraternity member was motioned and approved by vote; the increase due to increasing expenses. Our Per Capita per member remains one of the lowest of the region.

BUDGET—REVIEW OF 2009 PROPOSED BUDGET.

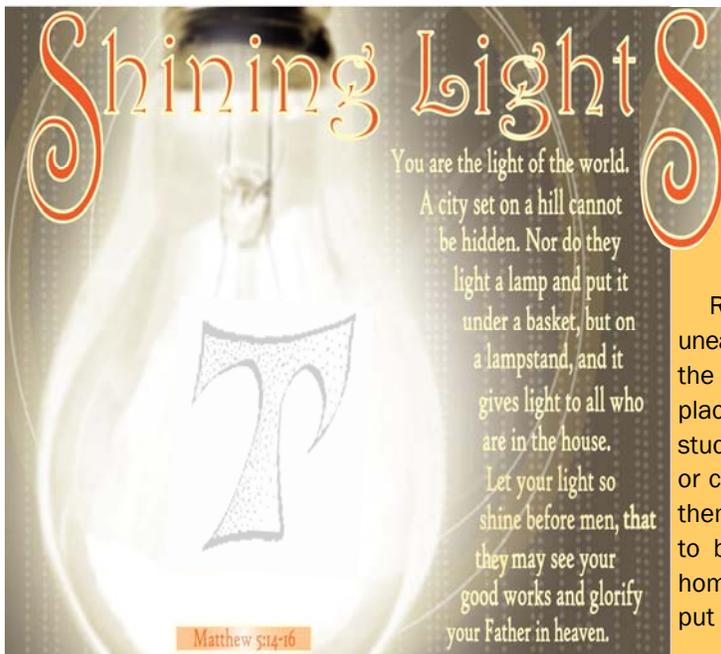
The expected OLTAR region income has not been meeting the budgeted amount (“due to several fraternities non-payment of their Per Capita, therefore putting us in arrears”). We are all responsible for the fair share and must make it a communal responsibility held by the entire fraternity. After much discussion, the budget was approved by vote.

COMMUNICATION—Production of our regional newsletter, *The Troubadour*, must be reviewed. Several suggestions were discussed; one is of utilizing e-mail delivery to our members who have email. This would help reduce our printing and postage costs. For those who do not have computer access, a suggestion was offered that each fraternity could print out copies for their fraternity members. For those who wish to continue receiving a printed newsletter by mail, a suggestion was made that we offer the *Troubadour* as a paid subscription per year. The question was then raised as to whether the local fraternity should pay for it, or the individual subscriber. Further discussion and recommendations will be following in the near future.

ELECTIONS—See page 8 in this issue for complete listing of the elected regional council officers.

A big pat on the back for Election Counter, Madge Cooke, SFO, and Election Tellers, John Kim, SFO, and Kate Asselin, SFO; whose assistance helped the election process run smoothly.

As our elected officers have accepted the call to serve, so, now, must we also do our part by visibly supporting them. Let us pray that each may be led by the Holy Spirit in their leadership roles.



APPALLED AT THE wastefulness of students, two elementary school teachers in Santa Cruz, CA, planted a young sapling on the school's campus and named it the Free-Food Tree.

Rather than discard their uneaten-or-unwanted sandwiches, the children were encouraged to place them under the tree so that students who had lost their lunch or could not afford one could help themselves. Some children began to bring an extra sandwich from home so that they'd have one to put under the Free-Food Tree.

Eventually, the supply of donated food was sufficient to nourish all the school's hungry youngsters with enough left over to offer to the homeless who lived in the city park near the school.

In addition to learning not to waste their share of this world's goods, the students had their first encounter with hunger and began to understand what they could do to alleviate it. A valuable lesson indeed, considering the fact that every hour 1,500 of this world's children die of hunger or hunger-related causes. But there are other hungers that also cry out for nourishment.

BY VICTOR M. PARACHIN



BORED OF THE SAME GAMES?



They have no option!

ARE YOU STILL COMPLAINING?

ELIZABETH ALLEN, SFO

Observe around you and be thankful for all that you have in this transitory lifetime...

We are fortunate, we have much more than we need to be content.

Let's try not to feed this endless cycle of consumerism and immorality in which this "modern and advanced" society forgets and ignores the other two thirds of our brothers and sisters.

LET US COMPLAIN LESS AND GIVE MORE!

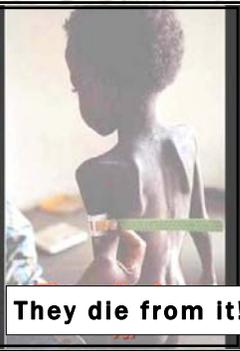


DOES STUDYING ANNOY YOU?

Not them!



ON A DIET?



They die from it!



AREN'T THANKFUL FOR A BED TO SLEEP IN!

They'd wish not to wake up!



HATE VEGGIES?

They starve from hunger!



SOMEONE GOT YOU ADIDAS INSTEAD OF NIKE?



They only have one brand!



DOES YOUR PARENTS CARE TIRE YOU!



They don't have any!

O Lord,
Open my eyes that I may see the needs of others,

Open my ears that I may hear their cries,

Open my heart so that they may find relief.

Let me not be afraid to defend the weak because of the anger of the strong,

Nor afraid to defend the poor because of the anger of the rich.

Show me where love and hope and faith are needed, and use me to bring them to those places.

Open my eyes and ears that I may, this coming day, be able to do some work of peace for you.

AMEN

NOVENA for ORISSA

Novena of Intercession

AS AGREED AT THE RECENT NAFRA MEETING, THE SFO IN THE UNITED STATES WOULD LIKE TO INSTITUTE A “PERPETUAL” NOVENA FOR AT LEAST ONE YEAR ON BEHALF OF THE SUFFERING PEOPLE BOTH HOME AND ABROAD ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE IN ORISSA, INDIA, AS WE DID IN 2007 FOR DARFUR.

Every day for the next year, members of the SFO will be praying the novena prayer. For this to happen, five (5) Regional fraternities are assigned to cover each month. To make sure we cover the entire month, there will be four to five “waves” of the novena, each starting on **Sunday**. People are assigned to these waves by Region, as noted below. For example, the first Sunday of December, members of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Region will begin praying the novena; the second Sunday of the month Lady Poverty will begin the novena. In this way the people of Darfur will be held in prayer by the SFO for the entire year.

In the event there are only 4 Sundays in the month, the fifth Region can pray week 1, or choose another week. Individuals may start and end their novena on other days if necessary, or do a different week. If you want to continue to pray before or after your week/month you can certainly do that! You are also encouraged to share the novena with people in your parish, youth groups, or other organizations to which you belong.



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A novena allows us to hold a particular concern before God in a special way. The name “novena” comes from the Latin for “nine”. Traditionally we pray a novena every day for nine days, and the prayer is usually a bit longer than a brief intercession. This allows us to give more of ourselves to our prayer for the concern we are bringing before God.

	DEC/JUNE	JAN/JULY	FEB/AUG	MAR/SEPT	APR/OCT	MAY/NOV
WEEK 1	St. Elizabeth of Hungary	Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha	Fr. Solanus	The Tau Cross	OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS	St. Katharine Drexel
WEEK 2	Lady Poverty	St. Margaret of Cortona	Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis	Five Franciscan Martyrs	St. Maximilian Kolbe	Holy Trinity
WEEK 3	Divine Mercy	Our Lady of Indiana	La Verna	Mother Cabrini	Franciscans of the Prairie	St. Clare
WEEK 4	St. Joan of Arc	Queen of Peace	Juan de Padilla	Los Tres Companeros/ Three Companions	Our Lady of the Rockies	Santa Maria de las Montanas
WEEK 5 OR WEEK	Our Lady of Guadalupe	Troubadours of Peace	Bl. Junipero Serra	St. Francis	St. Thomas More	Ohana O Ke Aneunue

NOVENA NOVENA PRAYER of Intercession

Merciful Father, Prince of Peace, Spirit of Wisdom and Compassion, please look with mercy upon our suffering brothers and sisters here at home and around the world, particularly in Orissa.

WE HUMBLY PRAY:

— For those who have been subjected to violence, and their families, we ask for healing, consolation, and relief of further suffering.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.

— For those who have done violence, we ask for healing, forgiveness, and the grace of conversion.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.

— For those in authority throughout the world, we ask wisdom, creativity, compassion and courage in addressing these situations.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.

Lord Jesus, Your Sacred Heart burns for love of all Your people. Please place in our hearts that same love and inspire us to have the courage, wisdom and ingenuity to take what measures we can personally to relieve the suffering of our brothers and sisters.

We pray this in the Name of Jesus, our Lord, through the intercession of the sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary.

MEMORARE

Remember oh most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known that
anyone who fled to thy protection,
implored thy help, or sought thy intercession
was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence I fly unto thee,
Oh Virgin of Virgins, my mother.

To thee do I come, before thee I stand,
sinful and sorrowful.

Oh mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Attention SFO's!

Tau

Franciscans living in the world wear this reminder of their commitment to a Gospel life. If you are married or single and you feel the call from God to embrace a Franciscan lifestyle, call us today to learn more.

- Live in the world.
- Work in the world.
- Celebrate your family life in the world.

Become a Secular Franciscan where you'll find fraternity and support while living in the world.

God is waiting for your call.

vocations@nafra-sfo.org

1-800-FRANCIS

www.nafra-sfo.org

YOU ARE INVITED to download this ad and circulate it in your parishes, retreat houses, or other places where Catholics gather.

This very informative 39-page manual titled **SFO-PR GUIDE** is for all SFO local, regional and national levels and is available at the NAFRA website:

http://www.nafra-sfo.org/pressroom/nafra_pr_manual-1-1.pdf



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BY ERASMO GUTIERREZ, SFO

You Are My All

Immaculate Heart of Mary Fraternity
New York City, NY

Jesus, my Lord, You were born to LOVE me,
You have given me my life, everything that I need.

You were born to HELP me,
All the burdens I carry, I can't do them without you.

You were born to SAVE me,
From my sins and my faults, from temptations and falls.
Jesus, my Lord,

I thank you with all my heart,
I thank you with all my soul,
I give everything of me to you,

I trust everything of me to you,
Because you are my love,

You are my all.

GENERAL INFORMATION • The Troubadour is published quarterly by Our Lady of the Angels Region of the Secular Franciscan Order.

If you wish to receive a printed copy of *The Troubadour* newsletter, please send your name, complete address, and e-mail to:
Regional Database Administrator, Anna Geraci, SFO, 15 Diane Drive, Morganville, NJ 07751, or

go to our website at: <http://olangels.tripod.com/troubadour.html>

Don't forget to notify me when you've had a change in address, phone, e-mail address, or membership status.

- The right to copy all material printed in The Troubadour is granted provided you credit The Troubadour and author.
- With the number of submissions increasing, not every article received may be published in the upcoming issue.

When this occurs every consideration is given for publication in the following issue.

- When submitting articles for publication consideration, don't forget to state fraternity name and location, as well as your name and address.
- All photos, disks and original art will be returned upon publication completion.

—APG, Editor

THE TROUBADOUR

OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS REGIONAL NEWSLETTER
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THE TROUBADOUR



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2008-2011
REGIONAL COUNCIL OFFICERS:

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Fr. Thomas A. Crangle, OFM Cap.
Hoboken, NJ
Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM
East Rutherford, NJ

OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS REGION
COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

REGIONAL NEWSLETTER EDITOR
Anna P. Geraci, SFO
15 Diane Drive
Morganville, NJ 07751
E-mail: acpg@aol.com

REGIONAL WEBSITE
www.ourladyoftheangelsregion.org
REGION WEBSITE ADMINISTRATOR
Diane F. Menditto, SFO

REGIONAL YAHOO GROUP
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OLARegion>

REGIONAL YAHOO LIST ADMINISTRATOR
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CALL FOR ARTICLES

2009 - 10

YEARLY SCHEDULE
FOR FUTURE ISSUES OF
THE TROUBADOUR

Articles for future newsletters
must be received by:

MAY 15	SPRING 2009
JULY 15	SUMMER 2009
SEPTEMBER 15	FALL 2009
JANUARY 15	WINTER 2010

SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS:

E-MAIL: acpg@aol.com



MAIL: Anna P. Geraci, SFO
Editor—*The Troubadour*
15 Diane Drive
Morganville, NJ 07751