

Let's All Attend the Quinquennial Congress

Where are you planning to be this coming July? In particular, where are you planning to be July 15-20? Why not join with us--600 to 1000 of your S.F.O. brothers and sisters--at the University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware, to attend the National Fraternity Quinquennial Congress?

Why should you attend the Quinquennial Congress? For the normal, typical and obvious reasons: the joy of reunion with good friends, the opportunity to make new friends, the opportunity to share your faith journey with others, for uplifting liturgies, inspiring speakers, great music (Marty Haugen), tours of local attractions, good food, comfortable accommodations.

Why should you attend the Quinquennial Congress? For reasons that go above and beyond the obvious! This Congress is perhaps the most important Congress the National Fraternity of the S.F.O.-USA has ever held. The whole thrust and intent of the Congress is to set the foundation for the spiritual revival/renewal of the S.F.O. in the U.S.A. as we enter the next century/millennium.

Why should you attend the Quinquennial Congress? Because we live in a critical period in human history. Actually, we are at a crisis point. As the third millennium approaches, we find that our contemporary society is not very much different from the social order of St. Francis' day. Both then and now greed and grinding poverty abound. Violence and despair cripple the hearts of our people. AIDS victims are our 20th (21st) Century lepers. Yet, we can still choose wholeness and holiness. Come to the Congress and learn (or teach) how to make the right choices.

Why should you attend the Quinquennial Congress? Because the S.F.O., the Church and the world need our collective vision and direction, our wisdom and understanding. We need to function as who we are, the Body of Christ, and to speak the truth and allow the Holy Spirit to transform us and the world. As God's prophets and lovers, God's voice and God's heart, we must "return to the excitement of our founding story[ies], [those of the early Christian and Franciscan communities] so as to be re-energized to address the issues of contemporary society at their very roots." How do we accomplish this and what is the cost? Nothing less than "...to willingly enter into the Pascal Mystery (death) so that new life can emerge. It is...about entering into the mystery of God's plan." Come to the Congress and share your gifts with those who need them.

Why should you attend the Quinquennial Congress? Because St. Francis exhorts us to remember:

That we have been called as FRATERNITY "...to go and rebuild [God's] house which is falling into ruins."

That, as followers of St. Francis, we are sent forth "...to preach the message, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand!'" Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. Freely you have received, freely give.

That "...the Lord gave [us] some brothers" and sisters to accompany us on the journey and that it is God who desires our coming together on the Feast of St. Bonaventure (July 15). St. Francis challenges us individually and collectively to do all we can to meet the needs of these critical times, and it is only by coming together as brothers and sisters that we will ever have the courage to persevere.

That we must "...begin again for up to now we have done nothing."

Finally, why should you attend the Quinquennial Congress? At the Quinquennial Congress, you will have the unprecedented opportunity to experience deep and life-changing spiritual growth. But, because "no man [or woman] is an island," we cannot grow in love and maturity by ourselves. We Secular Franciscans grow best through life in fraternity.

Teilhard de Chardin said, "The future of the earth is in our hands. How shall we decide? It is not our heads or our bodies which we must bring together, but our hearts." So let us join our hearts at the University of Delaware, July 15-20, 1997. Let us pray that the Spirit of God will move through our assembly, for the time is now, the Kingdom of God is at hand. Please join us.

Pax et bonum,

Richard Morton, S.F.O., National Minister, and the Quinquennial Congress Planning Committee

THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER--USA FAMILY COMMISSION

Carol Gentile, S.F.O., Chairperson, Family Commission, 136 Woods Ave. Monaca, PA 15061 (412) 775-4248

"There are different gifts but the same spirit, there are different ministries but the same Lord, there are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." (1 Cor. 12:4-7)

M The mission of the Family Commission of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States of America is to witness that the family is a sanctuary of acceptance, support and respect which encourages the total growth of its individual members and nurtures them in the spirit of peace and love, enabling them to be aware that they are children of God and enabling them to let this peace and love flow out to others.

A The Family Commission encourages the sisters and brothers to unite in prayer for the restoration of the family, to respect and value all life, to foster human interaction and human development and to extend this mission to their own natural families, to the Franciscan Family, to the Church family, the community family and the world family.

T Goal 1: To encourage the sisters and brothers, single and married, to cultivate a spirit of prayer, peace, fidelity and respect for life at every stage of human development within their own families, fraternities and in the community at large.

E Goal 2: To help the brothers and sisters who are married to live the grace of matrimony in such a manner that they witness to the world that marriage is a sacramental commitment and a holy union blessed by God.

R Goal 3: To challenge those sisters and brothers who are parents to be especially attentive to the Christian education and vocation of each child while recognizing them as unique sons and daughters of God.

I Goal 4: To ensure that all Secular Franciscans understand that because Christ showed special love for children, they must respond to the needs of children not only within their own families, but also in their churches, communities and in the world.

A Goal 5: To challenge each fraternity to strive to become for its members a real family in every sense of the word.

L Goal 6: To encourage each fraternity to minister to the lonely, the sick and the discouraged among its own members and to reach out into the world to help poor and hurting families.

Goal 7: To provide input to the National Executive Council and Directive Boards on ways to address these issues.

Connecting Heaven and Earth

We, as Secular Franciscans are called to address these needs. Here are examples being practiced:

- Feeding the hungry by working in soup kitchens, assisting with Meals on Wheels, donating to food banks, serving lunch to street kids and giving food to poor families;
- Clothing the naked by giving clothes to poor families and knitting or quilting items to give to needy people;
- Sheltering the homeless by assisting homeless people, helping jailed women make the transition to community life;
- Comforting the sick and elderly by volunteering at a nursing home, visiting people in prisons, taking care of elderly parents, aiding the elderly and supporting Fraternity Brothers and Sisters who are hurting mentally or physically;
- Building strong families by helping unwed mothers, babysitting grandchildren to give parents a breather, babysitting small children for a family in need, hosting picnics for families of Fraternity members, distributing prayer cards against abortion, aiding the Right to Life movement, writing articles on the Family for regional newsletters, helping other Fraternity members, raising funds to cover Fraternity costs when members cannot afford it, and making cassette tapes of Franciscan meetings to take to elderly members.

O God, you are the giver of all life. You are the breath of life; you are why we exist. We ask your blessing today on the men and women who are so dedicated to your children. We know, God, that nothing begins without your help. Nothing can continue without your grace. May this day and days to come be always and forever glorified with your presence. We ask you, God, to walk with us and talk with us so that your work of love can continue through our minds, our bodies and our spirits which you have made. Help us, God, to love others as you love us. Help us on our journey of life to be whole and holy. We thank you, God, for the privilege to serve you for you, my God, are the meaning of all life. Amen.

Activities

1. Discuss your Family Commission and its activities.
2. Pick one of the above ideas and discuss it.
3. In what way do we contribute to the goals of our immediate family?

Work As A Gift Given

Ed Zablocki, S.F.O., Co-chair, Work Commission

Let them esteem work as a gift, and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community. (Art. 16)

In his Rule of 1223, St. Francis speaks of those friars “to whom God has given the grace of working.” Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines grace as “unmerited divine assistance given man for his regeneration or sanctification.” Our Constitutions reaffirm that: “For St. Francis, work is a gift and to work is a grace.” (Art. 23)

We have been given many gifts. We all have received both natural gifts (talents) and supernatural gifts (charisms). All these gifts require our effort for the to be expressed, in other words, it takes work. We utilize these gifts through work for the benefit of ourselves, our families, our Church, and our world. Even our spiritual gifts (charisms) help us to do the Church’s work in the world.

The truth is , very few of us have “church” charisms (gifts for teaching CCD, helping with RCIA, or singing in the choir). Most charisms are intended to be used in the marketplace rather than in the Church. The Church’s mission is to evangelize the *world*, to renew the *world*, and that is where most of us are called to use our gifts. Charism of administration is needed in the secular world to bring gospel values into government and business. Gifts of compassion hospitality and service are needed in our neighborhoods just as much as in our parishes. (Ron Ryan, “The Power Is On,” New Covenant, July, 1993).

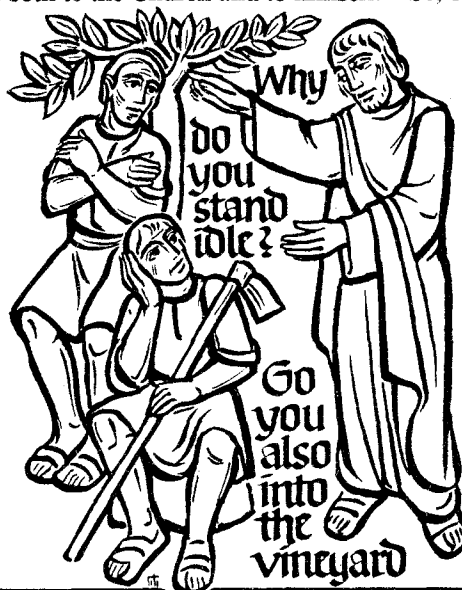
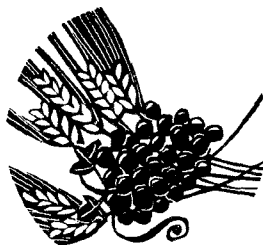
Our work is the means God has given us that allows us to exercise, develop and use our gifts. How tragic it would be if these gifts were not used! This puts the act of “working” in a different perspective. From this perspective, Sr. Joan Chittester, O.S.B., explains that “Work is not a nuisance to be avoided. Work is a gift to be given.”

Work is my gift to the world, It is my social fruitfulness. It ties me to my neighbor and binds me to the future. It lights up that spark in me that is most like the God of Genesis. I tidy the garden and plant the garden and and distribute the good of the garden and know that it is good. (Chittester, “Work: Participation in Creation,” Weavings)

The Church does not mince words about the importance of our giving the gift of ourselves through our work to create, sustain and renew the Church and the world. *The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* says that “A member who does not work at the growth of the body to the full extent of his gifts must be considered useless both to the Church and to himself.” So, be useful, give your gifts, enrich the world—do good work(s)!

Dialogue Starters

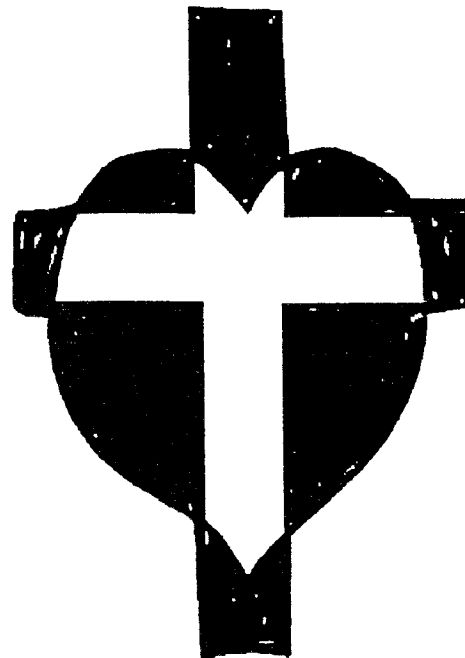
1. What is the greatest gift that you give to the Church and the world through your work?
2. How would you like to be able to give more of the gift of yourself through work?



Kingdom Building

Jim McIntosh, S.F.O., Chair, Peace & Justice Commission

"When you spread out your hands, I close my eyes to you; though you pray the more, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood! Wash yourselves clean! Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes; cease doing evil; learn to do good. Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow." (Isaiah 1:15-16)



Doing Peace and Justice is simply helping to bring about the Kingdom of God preached by Jesus Christ. The Kingdom is that "which is and which is to come."¹ The Kingdom was proclaimed by Christ and founded by his death and resurrection. We believe it will only become fully present at the end times, but we can help that Kingdom break into our time and place by doing the work of peace and justice.

The peace we seek to build is much more than the absence of hostilities. To be sure, it is a world without violence and a world freed from "the age-old slavery of war."² But it is also a world where all live together in mutual cooperation, supporting those who are in need. It is a world where there are no feelings of hostility, contempt and distrust; no racial hatred or unbending ideologies; where people are not placed in opposing camps.³ Most fundamentally, this "peace is built on the foundation of justice."⁴

The justice which is required for the peace of Christ is simply upholding the dignity of all, giving to each their due and not withholding that which belongs to another. This sounds simple and forthright, but has important implications for those of us in the first world.

The Catholic Church teaches that God created the world for the use of all humankind. The Church recognizes the need for private property, but only so far as that which is excess is not required by others for their "essential needs" (food, shelter, clothing, and so forth).⁵ The new catechism goes so far as to quote St. John Chrysostom in saying: "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs." And: "The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity." It also quotes St. Gregory the Great: "When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice."⁶

This is the justice demanded by God in the Scriptures, preached by Jesus in the Gospels and taught today in a most urgent way by our Church. It is true on both a personal level in how we deal with the poor and needy with whom we come in contact, and also on a global level as we, as country, deal with poor and desperate nations around the world. This can be accomplished in a number of ways. First, direct aid when needed — remembering that we are simply giving what is already owned by those who need it. Secondly, "helping entire peoples which are presently excluded or marginalized to enter into the sphere of economic and human development."⁷ Finally, reforming "international economic and financial institutions so that they will better promote equitable relationships with less advanced countries. The efforts of poor countries working for growth and liberation must be supported."⁸

¹ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Paul VI, 1975, No. 59.3.

² *Gaudium et Spes*, Documents of Vatican II, 1963, 81.3.

³ Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, Documents of Vatican II, 1963, 82.2.

⁴ *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul II, 1991, No. 5.2b.

⁵ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, Nos. 2401-2048.

⁶ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, No. 2446.

⁷ *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul II, 1991, No. 58a.

⁸ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, No. 2440.

Discussion Questions

1. Where in my neighborhood can I see the Kingdom of God making itself known? What concrete steps can I take to help it become more present?
2. Where in the world do I see opportunities for Kingdom building. What can I do today to help make this a more just world?

National Ecology Commission Secular Franciscan Order, U.S.A.

Charles Spencer, S.F.O., Chairperson 107 Jensen Circle, West Springfield, MA 01089-4451
Tel/Fax (413) 737-7600/e-mail: cspencer@mail.map.com

PURPOSE

The National Ecology Commission, along with a network of Regional Ecology Commissioners, local fraternity representatives and others, calls attention to God's glory in creation in accordance with Scripture, Church teachings, the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, and the Ecology Commission Mission Statement. The Commission is, in essence, a life commission, accepting *all* forms of creation, animate and inanimate, as the handiwork of the Lord. The Commission stresses the importance of acknowledging that God's plan goes far beyond human comprehension, value and judgement. It is to recognize that the large and splendid are no greater than the small and disfigured. The Commission seeks to ultimately create an ecology of mind.

The Commission not only points to creation's unfathomable depth, but its relativity to divine providence in everyday life. The Commission seeks to instill that by experiencing God's presence in creation we are better able to cultivate humility, poverty, purity, hope, faith and trust in our own lives. This is reflected, in part, by decisions we make, in the marketplace or otherwise, and by recognizing that God's presence is not only reflective in nature, but in everything that comes and goes by way of our hands, always asking, "What life was given up for this?" It is to be reminded that consumption without "thanks" stems from ignorance, and that by coming to know creation, we become more responsive to her defense. It is also to understand that as one's care for creation grows, love itself grows.

The Commission also researches and distributes scientific data relative to environmental problems and solutions, and the potential impacts on public health.

The Commission pursues its mission through meetings, conferences, public speaking, formation articles, personal correspondence, The Guardian of Creation, newsletter, plus the Commission's World Web Site at <http://pages.map.com/SecularFranciscanEcology>, featuring its Mission Statement, formation articles, speeches, guidelines, references to St. Francis, Scripture, Catechismal references, contributing articles, position papers, legislative updates, additional contacts, resources, etc. The Ecology Commission also pursues its mission through the media, direct action, public programs, and by collaborating with religious and secular organizations which also address ecological, environmental and public health related issues. Three major projects of the Commission include the annual National Wildflower Restoration Initiative, now in its fourth year; National Wildflower Week, celebrated during the first full week of May; and the 2nd National Ecology Apostolate Leadership Training Conference, June 20-26, 1998, at "Graymoor," Garrison, New York.

Questions for discussion:

1. What experience have you found valuable to your growing closer to creation?
2. What do you and/or your family do to express care for creation?
3. What can the Ecology Commission do to help create a greater love for creation, and what can you suggest to help the Ecology Commission accomplish its mission?



EARTH'S CRAMMED WITH HEAVEN
AND EVERY COMMON BUSH
AFIRE WITH GOD
AND ONLY HE WHO SEES
TAKES OFF HIS SHOES
THE REST SIT ROUND IT
AND PLUCK BLACKBERRIES.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

NATIONAL FRATERNITY – SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER – U.S.A.

QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT FOR CALENDAR YEAR 1996

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Account Number	Quarter Ended:	03/31/96	06/30/96	09/30/96	12/31/96	TOTAL YEAR	BUDGET
--- INCOME ---							
6110	PER CAPITA	10,699	8,908	28,494	16,540	64,641	72,000
6120	INTEREST	202	204	168	183	756	500
6200&6206	FORMATION SALES	3,664	4,784	4,688	3,937	17,073	15,000
6210	NEWSLET SUBSCRIPTIONS	1,331	1,069	1,102	1,157	4,659	3,000
6140	MISCELLANEOUS	248		682	1,271	2,201	1,500
	TOTAL INCOME	16,144	14,965	35,134	23,088	89,330	92,000
--- EXPENSES ---							
7145	CIOFS MEETING		7,500	578		8,078	6,000
7110	CIOFS PER CAPITA		3,872			3,872	3,600
7120	NEWSLETTER	1,778	1,004	1,220	238	4,239	7,000
7130	ANNUAL MEETING		1,067	6,461	13,931	21,459	20,000
7140	COUNCIL OFFICERS	3,010	1,369	3,990	4,202	12,571	10,000
7150	COUNCIL MEETINGS	(368)	1,751	4,551		5,934	15,000
7135	QUINQUENNIAL		600	3,004	847	4,451	
COMMISSIONS:							
7181	FORMATION	1,768	48			1,815	5,000
7180	FORMATION-PRINTING	4,177	262	480	6,511	11,430	12,000
7182	PEACE & JUSTICE				221	221	1,750
7183	FAMILY	827	767	157	359	2,109	1,750
7184	WORK	89	747	914		1,750	1,750
7185	ECOLOGY		707	792	378	1,876	1,750
7186	REGIONALIZATION						1,000
MISCELLANEOUS:							
7191	LIVING BY FAITH (LUYH)	520	689	434	680	2,324	900
7189	NEWSLETTER EDITORS CONFERENCE						1,000
7195	EVANGELIZATION 2000						500
7199	CONFERENCE NAT SP ASST				1,000	1,000	1,000
7200	CNSA LOAN-PUBLICATION	3,000				3,000	3,000
7197	OTHER	100				100	1,000
RESTRICTED FUNDS:							
7300-7305	SACRED HEART FUND			5,396	693	6,089	
7306	YOUTH COMMISSION	(345)	182	189	(229)	(203)	
7307	ANONYMOUS DONOR FUND	(5,000)	2,043	135	(8,100)	(10,922)	
	TOTAL EXPENSES	9,556	22,606	28,302	20,730	81,193	94,000
	NET INCOME (EXPENSE)	6,588	(7,641)	6,832	2,358	8,137	(2,000)
BEG: CHECKING-MARINE							
	SAVINGS-MARINE	17,718	24,110	16,270	22,901		
	RESTRICTED FUNDS	16,223	11,073	13,497	19,419		
	TOTAL	9,835	15,180	12,955	7,234		
	TOTAL	43,775	50,364	42,722	49,554		
END: CHECKING-MARINE							
	SAVINGS-MARINE	24,110	16,270	22,901	25,060		
	RESTRICTED FUNDS	11,073	13,497	19,419	11,982		
	TOTAL	15,180	12,955	7,234	14,871		
	TOTAL	50,364	42,722	49,554	51,912		

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED

John K. Sanborn, sfo
National Treasurer

06-Jan-97

NATIONAL FRATERNITY – SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER – U.S.A.

BUDGET FOR 1997

AS APPROVED BY THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY COUNCIL ON 10/16/96.

----- INCOME -----		ACCOUNT NUMBER
PER CAPITA @ \$4 (19,000 members)	76,000	6110
INTEREST	700	6120
FORMATION BOOK SALES	15,000	6200+6206
NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTIONS	4,000	6210
MISCELLANEOUS	1,300	6140
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TOTAL INCOME	97,000	
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----- EXPENSES -----		
CIOFS PER CAPITA	4,000	7110
NEWSLETTER	8,000	7120
ANNUAL MEETING	20,000	7130
COUNCIL OFFICERS	15,000	7140
COUNCIL MEETINGS	15,000	7150
VISITATION (at Election)	3,000	7160
FORMATION – PRINTING	14,000	7180
COMMISSIONS:		
FORMATION	6,000	7181
PEACE & JUSTICE	3,000	7182
FAMILY	3,000	7183
WORK	3,000	7184
ECOLOGY	3,000	7185
YOUTH	2,000	7187
MISCELLANEOUS:		
LIVING BY FAITH	2,000	7191
EVANGELIZATION 2000	500	7195
CONFERENCE NATIONAL SP ASST	1,000	7199
OTHER	1,500	7197
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TOTAL EXPENSES	104,000	
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NET DEFICIT	(7,000)	

John K Sanborn, sfo
National Treasurer

23–Oct–96

01/06/97

REGION SUMMARY REPORT

#	REGION NAME	YEAR	FRATS	EM	# PROF	# CAND	# INQU	BAL DUE
01	ASSUMPTION PROVINCE	1996	3	0	145	0	0	0
02	IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PRO	1996	33	0	709	86	46	0
03	ST JOHN THE BAPTIST PROVI	1996	6	0	125	7	0	0
04	HOLY NAME OF JESUS PROVIN	1996	33	2	914	67	53	0
05	SACRED HEART PROVINCE	1996	3	0	28	0	0	0
11	HOLY STIGMATA PROVINCE	1995	14	0	303	14	16	1212 e
13	ST MARY PROVINCE	1996	45	2	1360	39	0	0
17	MOST SACRED HEART OF JESU	1995	0	1	11	0	0	176 e
23	ST ANTHONY OF PADUA PROVI	1996	10	0	177	0	0	0
25	ST CASIMIR PROVINCE	1996	4	0	53	8	0	0
50	OHANA O KE ANUENUE	1996	4	1	40	4	4	0
51	FIVE FRANCISCAN MARTYRS	1995	29	8	585	71	30	2340 e
52	ST FRANCIS	1996	26	3	1100	120	117	0
53	BL JUNIPERO SERRA	1996	30	2	744	62	39	0
54	TROUBADOURS OF PEACE	1996	14	0	360	54	27	0
55	QUEEN OF PEACE	1996	31	2	631	32	45	1192
56	DIVINE MERCY	1996	26	1	1038	50	37	0
57	MARGARET OF CORTONA	1996	29	4	785	55	54	0
58	ST. THOMAS MORE	1996	9	0	292	26	10	0
59	MOTHER CABRINI	1996	31	2	850	0	0	0
60	ST JOAN OF ARC	1996	17	3	339	49	33	0
61	BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF S	1996	17	0	202	14	16	0
62	EXALTATION OF HOLY CROSS	1996	3	0	98	7	4	0
63	FRANCISCANS OF PRAIRIE	1996	9	0	344	0	0	0
64	HOLY TRINITY	1996	21	1	421	45	16	0
65	LA VERNA	estab 10/95	0	0	0	0	0	0
66	OUR LADY OF INDIANA	1996	20	0	416	27	0	0
67	LOS TRES COMPANEROS	1996	22	6	330	0	0	0
68	LADY POVERTY	1996	32	2	712	67	70	0
69	BL. KATHARINE DREXEL	1996	43	0	1021	0	0	0
70	ST MAXIMILIAN KOLBE	1996	23	3	584	33	5	814
71	BL KATERI TEKAKWITHA	1996	40	4	760	88	37	0
72	SANTA MARIA DE LAS MONTAN	1996	19	0	206	0	0	0
73	OUR LADY OF THE ROCKIES	1996	7	2	108	14	2	0
74	ST CLARE	1996	13	1	369	24	7	738
75	OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE	estab 10/95	0	0	0	0	0	0
76	FR SOLANUS CASEY	estab 10/96	0	0	0	0	0	0
77	OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS	1996	56	0	937	82	84	0
78	ST ELIZ. OF HUNGARY	estab 10/96	0	0	0	0	0	0
79	THE TAU CROSS (EM)		0	0	0	0	0	0
80	JUAN DE PADILLIA	estab 10/96	0	0	0	0	0	0

*** Total ***

722 50 17097 1145 752

*** Total Balance Due ***
(e = estimated: 1995 x \$4)

6472



RECYCLED PAPER

SOYA INK

Work Commission of the Secular Franciscan Order, U.S.A.

Ed and Mary Zablocki, S.F.O., Co-Chairs, Work Commission

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I recently read a comic in the paper that featured a man looking for a job. He says to the other character in the comic that he wants to serve the "greatest king the world has ever know." The other guy looks at him for a minute and tells him to go to the monastery one block away.

My first inclination was to chuckle with satisfaction that someone in the media appreciates the truth about the world's greatest King, but after a moment's reflection, I thought, "Wait a minute!" Are we not working hard to dispel the notion that service of the Great King is found only in a monastery? Should the man in the comic not have simply handed the job hunter his tools and said, "Okay, start now"?

It's interesting to me that we have such a notion about monasteries. We have created this split between the work of God's kingdom (i.e. the sweat of the brow, the nitty gritty, tedious, high risk or just plain exhausting) and the work of the world. But what do we think goes on in monasteries? Monks do not just sit and pray. They do any and all of work that gets done! In the fields, the kitchen, the sickroom, the chapel, the machine shop--whatever needs to be done, they do it. The nuns who share life in the cloister are the same. By necessity, monasteries are microcosms of the world outside their walls. If the fellow in the comic showed up at the monastery door, I imagine the doorkeeper might hand him a broom to sweep the foyer!

Monastery life has sort of gotten a bad rap in the Church lately. Lay people are finally beginning to really emerge as valuable members of the "team." We hold this new awareness very dear. It is easy for us to say, "No more monastery mentality," There is great need for us to claim our identity as men and women of the world. We are also called to appreciate the relationship between ourselves and members of the clergy and vowed religious life.

For the last three decades we have struggled with our changing identity, nowhere more confusing than in the area of work. Prior to Vatican II we functioned sort of as worker bees outside the inner sanctum, buzzing about doing our duty, entering the sacred dwelling only for purposes of being blessed by those whose place it was to dispense blessings. Then, after the communion rails were down and altars turned around and service to the Church within the physical structure of the Church was open to us, we turned our focus toward the clergy again. This time we looked for guidance in our new right to be in the sanctuary, the sacristy (a big change for women) and the rectory.

Now as we approach the third millennium, we must get down to business. Labor and management, government and public works, health care and our legal system--all are in chaos. We as a nation are in crisis as unemployment rots out the underpinnings of our economy, as greed and power surface as gods no less than and probably more than at any other point in our history.

The monks and nuns, maintaining their own lives, subsisting on the fruits of their own labors are in no position to aid us materially. While being more than ever the place where we need to gather to gain spiritual nourishment, the Church cannot and should not be the place we find our role as vineyard workers. Our vineyard is the world!

The National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States designated the Apostolic Commissions to address areas in which our Rule calls us as Franciscans. The Work Commission was established to help you focus on your work as the place where you live out your vocation as a Franciscan. Some things we have done to help you include writing a manual due out in the next year. We have developed a presentation we believe is informative and sometimes surprising about the many and myriad ways our work fulfills our vocation to live the Gospel and build the kingdom of God. We have published a newsletter now featured in TAU-USA.

And you? What are you supposed to do with us? What we need from you is to read what we have to say, to communicate with us concerns you see about your own work that you want to act on, take heart from our encouragement and offer us any encouraging articles or stories you wish to share about your work. We are here to help you find ways to better your work life. We also need you to join the ranks of NAFRA as local leaders on the commission in your regions and in local fraternities. Four of us serve on the National Work Commission with the intention of coordinating and communicating to the entire Secular Franciscan Order in the U.S.A. the wonderful things we discover about work. We believe we can be frank about the great need we have for help on the grass roots level. Educate yourselves. We are glad to help you. You might as well avail yourselves of what we have to share. You deserve to be spiritually enriched by your labor; after all, it is you who is doing the work.



Family Matters

National Family Commission, Carol Gentile, S.F.O., Chairwoman
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"Never again shall they know hunger or thirst, nor shall the sun or its heat beat down on them, for the lamb on the throne will shepherd them. He will lead them to springs of life giving water, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes." (Revelation 7:16-17)

World Food Summit

The World Food Summit, November 13-17, 1996, brought together heads of state and government and other world leaders at the Rome headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The objective of the Summit is to renew high-level commitment around the world to the eradication of hunger and malnutrition, and for the achievement of lasting food security for all people. In developing countries alone, more than 800 million people face chronic under nutrition, and 200 million children under the age of five suffer from chronic calorie and protein deficiencies.

Franciscans International Team—Participants at the World Food Summit and NGO Forum

The Franciscans International team included: Carol Gentile, S.F.O. (USA); Calvin Bugho, O.F.M. (Brazil); Rose Fernando, F.M.M. (Sri Lanka). The non-governmental forum took place at the Ostiense Air Terminal. Representatives of more than 1200 organizations from eighty some countries came from all regions of the world. After a week of intense meetings, workshops, through regional and global consultations, solidarity was discovered and affirmed.

Prior to the final statement many suggestions were made on the draft statement by the delegates. The Family Commission Chair (USA), spoke of the need for the inclusion of the ethical aspects involved in food production and consumption. She insisted on Franciscan themes of concern for the poor, peace and non-violence and care for creation.

Franciscans Involvement in All Religious Caucus to the WFS

For all practical purposes it was a statement presented by the Franciscan group with the values of ethics, commitment to the poor, involvement in the socio-political aspects, with special reference to trade policies. The drafting committee consisted of five members, including Rose Fernando, F.F.M. (Sri Lanka), and the Family Commission Chair (USA). The Family Commission Chair (USA) also attended a workshop dealing with population growth and food security. Carol spoke on the ethics of population control, stating that the basic problem to be tackled with regard to this is greed. She was interviewed by the Arlington Catholic Herald from Global news on abortion, birth control and population issues.

World Leaders Conclude Historic World Food Summit

The Plan of Action contains seven commitments on the part of governments covering areas such as: conditions for economic and social progress leading to food security; poverty eradication and access to adequate food; sustainable increases in food production. Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) will monitor especially those actions in the Plan referring to land reform and rural development, labor-intensive technologies, and community-based self-reliance.

Franciscan Responsibility: "Food Security for All"—An Ethic of Sufficiency versus Over-Consumption

OUR PREMISE: The collaborative partnership of the NGO Forum's participants recalled the solidarity of the Franciscan family. As we seek to ensure food security for all people, we are emboldened by the historical witness of Francis and Clare on behalf of the poorest of the poor. This history recalls our Franciscan call to serve as the "voice of the voiceless."

THE CRISIS: Over-consumption by the rich must be controlled to ensure food security for all. Relying on the "free market system" to guarantee equitable food production and distribution is not a solution. New initiatives are necessary. We must encourage all people to move from self-centeredness to an ethic of sufficiency and sustainability. We proclaim as Franciscans: YES to sufficiency, NO to over-consumption!

OUR FRANCISCAN STAND

We are challenged and heartened by what we have learned and accomplished during this week together. Concretely, we need to work for the implementation of efforts toward food security at the following levels:

PERSONAL—Awareness of our over-consumption, that of families/communities, leads to action for food security for all.

LOCAL—We must raise the consciousness of our families, faith-communities, and those with who we collaborate by working actively for food security and linking with partner organizations on the local level.

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL —It is time to take our connections at the local level to a "higher plane" by aligning ourselves with like-minded national and international bodies. In particular, we shall advocate and involve ourselves in partnership with the marginally poor in their struggle to safeguard their rights in the face of economic and political systems which deny them food security.
