

Minister's Insights: Staying on Track!

By Carol Gentile, SFO, National Minister



On June 17-20, 2004 an All Commissions' Conference took place at Regis University in Denver, Colorado. The theme of the conference was "Turning up the Flame." And, indeed, we did just that! All the participants were set ablaze. We had three

dynamic keynote speakers: Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM, a friar of Holy Name Province, Thérèse and Deacon David Ream, SFO, who served as Co-chairs of the National Formation Commission from 1996-2002, and Mary and Anthony Mazotti, SFO, appointed the first National Co-chairs of the Franciscan Apostolic Commissions.

Moments to Share!

Fr. Richard spoke about the **passion** that martyrs have for their cause. Without entering into the cause for terrorism and the terrible phenomenon we face today, Fr. Richard made an analogy between the passion for a misunderstood cause by terrorists and the willingness to die for a cause like our saints who were made martyrs. He spoke about the passion one must have to lose one's life for a principle or cause. With determination in his voice, Fr. Richard emphatically said, "Where is the nerve that we have to risk all for the Will of God? Which is what Francis did!...Where is the courage to be driven by that unknown? You know - it is something that we know, the Will of God, and yet it's something unknown because we are constantly being told to do something, day after day, if we are serious about the process of conversion." "If we believe in the *incredible* we can do the *impossible*," said Fr. Richard. He used the example of St. Peter: when he took his eyes off of Christ, he sank into the water. His talk was about the passion we have for the culture that you and I drink in, Franciscanism in its most radical form. He continued to share with us that

we become Franciscans, not to become little Francis, but rather to come to Jesus. There are hands-on things that you and I must do about peace and justice in this world and no longer merely pray for peace and pray for justice, but to become peace and become justice. If we cannot do it with our own, then we are not going to do it out there! If peace and justice is not happening in your fraternity, then look into yourself, and find out why you can't do it and then how could we ever expect someone out there to do it for an entire nation. Fr. Richard calls this the Franciscan movement that we need to act upon.

He continues, "The message of Assisi needs to be shouted out once again and the commissions that we celebrate during this conference are doors through which this message will pass. We need the courage and the cooperation of God's grace to unlock those doors, so that the spirit of each commission will be able to live and breathe and to transform us from within. The commissions are the jumping off points to do the Gospel in our time. Christ is our passion. Christ our driving force. His agenda is our mandate. Radical Franciscan living out of the Gospel is going to really be the answer to what it is that we are being called to do." We all do the commissions on a daily basis in one form or another, however, Fr. Richard states that we can no longer rest on that feel good theory. "Whether we know it or not...NO! It is time we knew what we were doing and who we are and what we are about, living Secular Franciscan life, Franciscan life, on purpose, not by accident, by choice. We shouldn't be on automatic pilot but living fully aware of who we are and what we are doing. The potential Franciscan, Secular or Friar, will be that person who will admire the passion with which we pursue peace, justice, mercy and compassion." "Francis reminds us that it is not important to be constantly asking ourselves if we love our neighbor. What is important is to act out that love. We learn to walk by walking, to play by playing, and to love by loving. What is important is that we act out our love by loving. That is the spirit and passion to be courageous in giving Christ a home here on earth."

"If we believe in the incredible, we can do the impossible!"

Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM

The Reams focused on the mind and heart of Christ Jesus. Thérèse and David shared a story about a little girl who had a t-shirt that had these words across the front, “So much attitude, so little time.” Deacon David had this to say, “Could the same thing be said about us?” So many attitudes - do we really have attitude? Is the attitude really the mind and heart of Christ Jesus? And so little time - the urgency that is ours to preach the Gospel by the way we live in addition to the works we do. What is an **attitude**?

One understanding of an attitude is “the position of an object in relation to a given point of reference, usually on the ground level.” “In light of the title of this presentation, *Turning Up the Flame* – By Putting on the Mind and Heart of Christ Jesus, we Franciscan women and men must see ourselves as the objects called continuously to position and reposition ourselves in relation to a given point of reference, namely, the Rule of our Order, which truly can be understood as the ground and very foundation of our way of life. So are we called to have attitude? You betcha. Being Franciscan provides us with a particular frame of mind. A Gospel oriented perspective on the whole of our lives. Every aspect of our life experience must be viewed through this set of Franciscan tinted lenses.”

If every aspect of our life experience is viewed through a set of Franciscan tinted lenses, we can expect our face to reflect the peace from within. Just think, if we could put on the mind and heart of Christ Jesus, we could live on earth as we would in Heaven.

“So much attitude, so little time! Is the attitude really the mind and heart of Christ Jesus? And so little time - the urgency that is ours to preach the Gospel by the way we live in addition to the works we do.” Deacon David and Thérèse Ream, SFO

The Reams encouraged the participants to look at the Rule as an inspirational document, rather than a prescriptive one, which presents us with Gospel oriented and Gospel orienting attitudes and values. For example: (in Article 7, Formation) This radical, interior change we call conversion requires humility.

According to Mary and Anthony Mazotti, “the words “Commission or Commissioning,” are powerful words! They are **action** words signifying “Sacred Calling...to act in God’s behalf...for His special purpose: acts such as performed by angels, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, the Church...including all of us. Commissioning has holy roots in sacred history, in the Old and New Testament—and theological significance in the Gospels, Church documents and Franciscan Movement.”

Mary and Anthony Mazotti share this thought: “For Seculars who haven’t made the connection yet, the Commissions reflect God’s eternal plan of moving forward the full development and dignity of all of humanity and creation in Christ...using ‘us’ as His Co-Creators.”

James 2: 14-17

My brothers, what good is it to profess faith without practicing it? Such faith has no power to save one, has it? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and no food for the day, and you say to them, “Goodbye and good luck! Keep warm and well fed,” but do not meet their bodily needs, what good is that? So it is with the faith that does nothing in practice. It is thoroughly lifeless.

“The Commissions reflect God’s eternal plan...”

Mary and Anthony Mazotti, SFO

We will stay on track if we have the **passion** for the living Christ, the right **attitude** that reflects the mind and heart of Christ and the **action** to do His Will.

