

# INCIDENT AT THE SACRO CONVENTO

By Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR



The Saint Bonaventure Fraternity in Loretto, Pennsylvania, celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary by arranging a pilgrimage to Assisi for its members. It had been years in the planning, but it was only a few weeks before the actual departure date (March 1) when enough people signed up to make the pilgrimage a “go.” I had agreed about two years ago

to accompany the members on the pilgrimage.

During our time in Assisi, I went with the fraternity members and their friends as they visited all the holy places in the city which is, in a way, home for us all. Our group stayed at Casa Papa Giovanni and enjoyed all the amenities of home. The meals were especially grand.

One of our stops was a tour of the Sacro Convento, the Basilica of Saint Francis. The guide was a Conventual friar from Africa. He was very affable and he related well with the entire group. He explained the various frescoes beautifully. Everyone enjoyed the time with the friar.

At the end of our tour of the Basilica, I asked the friar if it would be possible for me to have an early morning Mass at the Tomb of Saint Francis. He told me that it would be absolutely impossible. He

mentioned that with the upcoming canonizations of Saint John Paul and Saint John XXIII, many people were coming to Assisi. He said the tomb was reserved for months in advance and that I should have written ahead.



While he was speaking, he seemed to realize that there might be another alternative. He said we might be able to join another group if there were a small group scheduled. Thus we went to the office where the Masses are scheduled.

As the Conventual friar conversed with the person in the office, he looked quite shocked. He turned to me and asked, “How would tomorrow morning be?” I **immediately** agreed with the biggest smile on my face!! I was given a small *biglietto* (ticket) indicating our time for entering.

What a beautiful Mass we had at the tomb of Saint Francis! How tremendous a privilege to celebrate the Eucharist in that sacred location! A fraternity pilgrimage is an especially wonderful way to celebrate an anniversary.

## New Statements from NEC and CNSA

In their meetings in June and July, the National Executive Council (NEC) and Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) have agreed to issue the following two statements. Both are in response to situations arising within the OFS in the United States.

In the first of these two statements, the national leadership has spoken with one voice about the possibility of persons with a homosexual orientation being admitted to the Order.

In accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church as expressed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the members of the National Executive Council and the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants state the following:

*A person who has a homosexual orientation but is living a chaste life can be a member of the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS). There must be an understanding that as a Church organization, a Public Association of the Faithful, our Order obeys the Church's teaching. The Catholic Catechism itself says that “they (homosexuals) must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should*

*be avoided.” (#2358) The Catechism states that homosexual acts are not acceptable and the Catechism encourages chastity. The Catechism goes on to say that homosexuality’s “psychological genesis remains largely unexplained.” (#2357)*

Secondly, both entities agreed on the following statement concerning use of acronyms in the Secular Franciscan Order.

In the Secular Franciscan Order, the only personal acronym after professed members’ names is to be “O.F.S.” the use of additional initials regarding internal positions in the Order, such as “S.A.” for “Spiritual Assistant” or “R.S.A.” for “Regional Spiritual Assistant” is not acceptable.

“S.A. actually indicates another religious Order in the Franciscan Family, that is, the Society of the Atonement. The Conference of National Spiritual Assistants along with the National Executive Council of the OFS therefore states that such acronyms are not to be used.