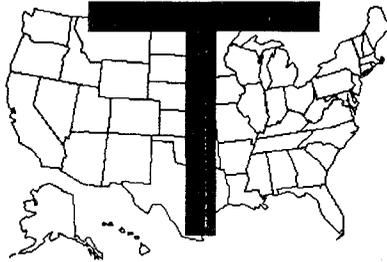


THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY
of
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER



Newsletter

Winter, 1990

LOVING MAN AND LOVING GOD

**James David Lynch, SFO
National Minister**

What did Christ see in our human hearts to make him wish for them? He alone can answer that question. He fashioned those hearts. He knows they can love - and, he wants them. The mighty God yearned from the height of heaven for our miserable hearts and he would have them at any cost, even at the tremendous cost of Christmas night.

What that night meant for God we shall never fathom. There is something bewildering in the thought of the great, almighty God, in whose sight the heavens and earth are as though they were not, shrinking, as it were, into the narrow compass of a tiny babe, just for the sake of having a heart like ours with which to love us and to be loved by us. To come amongst us as a full grown man, shorn of his glory, with the sin-stained garments of our human flesh thrown over him, would indeed have been a wonder of his love. But he would do more; he would appear amongst us as a child, stooping down to the littleness of infancy, to coax and win our love.

And yet what a cold reception, what a hard refusal the world gave him on Christmas

night! No wonder the Evangelist laments: He was in the world...and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. John 1:10

What was said by St. John, twenty centuries ago, can be repeated of whole nations today. There is room enough for other loves, but not for the love of Jesus. And so the greatest Lover, whose love alone can fill the lodging house of the heart of man, has to turn away with heaviness of heart and wander once more, knocking at other doors and hoping for a better welcome. As he then turned to Mary and Joseph and the Shepherds, he now turns to us for love, sympathy and reparation. Can we refuse him?

May you Christmas be merry and your New Year be filled with health and happiness.

We adore You, hidden in the manger, O true Lamb of God, who voluntarily assumed the penalty due for the sins of all men. Obtain for us, in Your goodness, pardon for all our sins and give us grace so to live that our life may be called a continuous sacrifice for You. Amen.

SEIZE THE DAY!

Rev. Francis A. Lonsway, OFM Conv.
National Spiritual Assistant

Omer Englebert in his biography, *St. Francis of Assisi*, has a chapter titled "Christmas at Greccio." The account is a paraphrase of Thomas of Celano's *Vita Prima* which was written shortly after the death of Saint Francis. The chapter recounts the celebration of the feast of the Nativity as Francis, his Friars, and the people in the surrounding area celebrated it in 1223.

It seems as if everyone has a Christmas crib and everyone has a special blessing for it. But, are you as Seculars and is your fraternity involved with it at home, in the parish, or in the neighborhood?

Saint Bonaventure Fraternity in Lansing, Michigan, has built a crib and purchased life-sized statues which are displayed on the grounds of the State Capitol. Our new fraternity at the Catholic Conference Center in Hickory, North Carolina, is planning a special celebration for the blessing of the crib and a re-creation of "Christmas at Greccio" on Sunday, December 9th.

A recent movie, *Dead Poets Society*, made popular again a Latin adage, "Carpe diem" - "Seize the day!" Franciscans ought to be involved in traditions that bear the mark of their founder.

Several suggestions. Be certain to bless your Christmas crib at home. Gather the family. See that the cribs of your adult children are also blessed. Ask the leadership of your local fraternity to speak to the pastor about how you might be involved in both setting up and preparing the prayers for your Church's Christmas crib. Check to see if your diocesan paper, your local newspaper, radio or television station might be interested to learn more about the custom of the Christmas crib.

The point is to get involved and raise the

consciousness of people about the meaning of Christmas and how one group of Christians, the Franciscans, put their mark on the wondrous and totally generous gift of the Incarnation.

May your involvement in the preparation for the coming of Christ be more intense and joyous. May your Christmas be blessed.

THOSE WHO SERVE US

Ronald A. Michieli, SFO, Peace & Justice Commissioner

Ronald A. Michieli of Sterling, Colorado, has been appointed to chair the Peace and Justice Commission. Currently, he is involved in renovation - he and his wife purchased a convent in Sterling from the Sisters of St. Francis. They have converted it into a retreat center and they have plans to open a Catholic book store and religious gift shop in the near future.

Ron, who has been professed for thirteen years, brings to the Commission a varied background of past experiences which should serve the fraternity well.

He was graduated from Colorado State University and did graduate work at USDA. Following service in the army, he spent several years as administrative assistant to a member of the U. S. House of Representatives. Next, he spent thirteen years as a professional Capitol Hill Lobbyist. He also has experience as a life insurance agent and as an instructor in the Dale Carnegie Institute.

He is a member of the Knights of Columbus, 4th degree, the Sons of Italy, and the Elks Club. For six years, he was Minister of St. John the Beloved Fraternity in Alexandria, Virginia.

Ron and his wife, Barbara Hall Michieli, have nine children and eleven grandchildren.

THE INTERNATIONAL CHAPTER

The International Fraternity met in Fatima, Portugal, from October 13th to 20th. Fifty nine voting members attended; a substantial number of them were new to CIOFS. Representing the National Fraternity of our country were CIOFS Councilors James David Lynch, SFO, Marie E. Amore, SFO, and Laura Haukaas, SFO.

Two major agenda items were the new general constitution and elections.

The general constitution had been approved by the Sacred Congregation on September 8th. An important change from the second draft is that, by delegation of the Minister General, a member of a national fraternity may preside at its elections. This applies only to the national level, not to provincial, regional, or local fraternities.

Election results were: Minister General, Miss Emanuela De Nunzio, OFS, a lawyer who resides in Rome; Vice-Minister, Mrs. Encarnacion Del Pozo Martinez, OFS, of Spain; Councilor to English speaking countries, Mrs. Mary Ann Powell, SFO, National Minister of Denmark.

THE NATIONAL CHAPTER

On Wednesday, October 24, the gathering began in Albuquerque, New Mexico. All of Thursday morning was devoted to individual meetings of Provincial Ministers, Friars, and Commission chairs.

Following the opening Mass, the Chapter began in the afternoon with fifty-four voting members, four Apostolic Commission chairs, the Representative to Franciscans at the UN, and six observers.

Election results were: Vice-Minister, Richard Morton, SFO (re-elected); Secretary, Christina Hassett, SFO.

For personal reasons, the Treasurer, Wil-

liam McVernon, SFO, could not attend and tendered his resignation by phone; the Executive Council appointed Terry McCook, SFO, to replace him for the year. Other Council appointments were: Dr. Marguerite B. Stein, SFO, a canonist, to be legal advisor and parliamentarian; Elizabeth M. Ryder, SFO, Editor of the Newsletter.

The Most Reverend Robert Sanchez, SFO, Archbishop of Santa Fe, was not able to celebrate the Friday Mass as planned; however, he joined the group at lunch and gave a talk on the Franciscan history of the area.

The meeting was hosted by the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe (#33), and, at this point, we will have to abandon proper reporting technique and employ the superlative. Secular Franciscans Violet Tipotsch, Fannie Trujillo, and Ernest Duran gave all of their time and energy to transport and assist us. Fr. Francis Thompson, OFM, arranged for our housing and the liturgies.

We were housed next to the Rio Grande, where, at sunset, ducks flew in for the night, and hungry coyotes made sure that some of the ducks did not leave in the morning. The coyotes also sang during the night, sometimes hymns of thanks (for a duck dinner), sometimes protests against the cacophony of emergency vehicle sirens.

The Eucharistic Liturgies were high points. At one of the Masses, the music and other ministries were provided by American Indians who sang in their native tongue or in English, but always in their particular rhythm. The only instrument was a small native drum and a single drum stick; the tonal variation was extraordinary.

Another Mass, at which the main celebrant was the Very Reverend Meldon Hickey, OFM, Minister of the Friar Province, was Spanish/Mexican. With their usual handling of guitars and other Spanish instruments, it was a most joyful celebration.

Cont. next page.

Following the closing of the meeting at noon, Saturday, we were taken by bus to Santa Fe where we had a couple of hours to stroll through the old city, buy trinkets, and act like tourists. Excellent weather permitted the natives to display their wares on the sidewalks. Most of the shops in that section of town specialize in various types of native art. One shop, claiming to have the most authentic Mexican/Indian productions, is owned by a Mr. O'Brien.

We were made to feel so welcome at the 5:15 P.M. Cathedral Mass. Marie Amore and Connie Smith were lecturers; the gifts were presented by Jim Lynch, Anne Martinous, and Joe Sortino. The main celebrant was Fr. Francis Thompson assisted by at least a dozen of our friars. After Mass, we were taken to a restaurant for a Mexican dinner; our hosts were members of the Fraternity of Saint Francis in Santa Fe, the oldest, still active fraternity in the country.

During the bus ride back to Albuquerque, we were treated to a scholarly lecture by Fr. Adalbert Wolski, TOR, on his afternoon spent at the Chapel of Loretto.

To our wonderful hosts we pray que el Señor los bendica y les de su paz!

THE VINEYARD

Gloria N. Shriver, SFO
Chair, Family Commission

Have you ever played a game called "Generalities"? It goes like this: The practice of medicine is a highly skilled profession. Persons involved in such professions make a more-than-comfortable income. Women involved in such professions leave the care of their children totally to others. Men or women involved in such professions tend to make monetary contributions to charity, but leave the work to others. Is the answer true or false? Only one answer is permitted for the entire generality. Now, meet the Weigels

who belong to St. Louis IX Fraternity in St. Louis, Missouri.

Christian and Nancy are the parents of four small children, are medical doctors, and are the winners of the Catholic Health Association Achievement Citation. (The award is given in conjunction with a health center.)

They minister to some of the poorest of the poor in the Catherine Kasper Center, located in the poverty-stricken, drug infested city of East St. Louis. But Christian and Nancy count themselves lucky to be allowed to enter into the lives of so many people who have a faith strong enough to lift them above their surroundings; the Weigels feel that they are on the receiving end of their gift.

"These people are wonderful," says Nancy. "If we ever burn out, it won't be because of the people. It's the system that makes it hard sometimes even though we have a unique set up. In spite of the fact that it's a private operation, we have a holistic center so that, with the help of other on-staff personnel, we can take care of all the needs of our patients: physical, spiritual, and mental. We minister to the whole person."

The Weigels have a mutual call to care for people trapped in a system perforated with injustice and inequality. They are an island of understanding and concern for the problems that often accompany inner-city living. They are the only medical doctors at Kasper. Christian, who works full time, is able to see about forty patients each day, while Nancy, who takes time out for her family, averages about thirty. The center needs another doctor, but not many feel called to practice a ministry such as this.

They agree that what they do is only a drop in the bucket of what is needed in East St. Louis, but Kasper Center has been adding its drop every day since it opened in 1979.

The Center was founded by an ecumenical group which decided to fulfill the dream of Dr. Fran Gallanatti, a sister in the Poor

Handmaids of Jesus Christ. The Weigels have expressed their belief that there's a lot of Franciscan Spirit involved in the work that is being done there.

"We knew for a long time that we wanted to work with the poor, but we didn't know in what type of situation," Nancy said. "It was through the friary where our fraternity meets that I was offered the grant that made the work possible. Christian followed me to the center after a few months. I guess what made us decide to come here rather than seek a rural setting in which to answer our call to serve the poor was a talk by a Franciscan, Richard Rohr, in which he said, 'If you want to know God, look for him in the poorest of the poor.' It was an answer to our prayer. We felt this was the place for us. Here, we could find the poorest."

They are surrounded by many social problems. Christian says that, sooner or later, this country will have no choice but to work out a national health plan. "The inequalities of our present system will eventually cause it to collapse." He continued, "I think the government spends enough on Medicare and Medicaid now to take care of the problem, if they would just spend the money wisely. I feel that such items as those highly advertised lift chairs are provided for people who don't really need them. Each chair costs the system \$1000. We just aren't getting enough bang for our bucks."

Christian and Nancy were married in 1980 right in the middle of their novitiate. They started at the Center shortly after they had finished their training at St. Louis University. They believe that their Franciscan spirituality feeds their work, and their work feeds their spirituality.

When asked if they had found what they were looking for, Nancy answered, "We've never been sorry we came here. Richard Rohr was right. We've learned a lot about God."

LA CONQUISTADORA

In the Cathedral of San Francisco de Asis, Santa Fe, there is a chapel which holds a statue of the Blessed Mother. It was brought to Santa Fe by a Spanish Franciscan, Father Alonso de Benavides.

The statue was originally entitled the Lady of the Rosary, but the name was later changed to Our Lady of the Conquest, which came to symbolize her manner of gentle, conquering love.

Transporting the statue was just one chapter in Father's adventures here and in Europe.

About 1630, representatives of a tribe of Indians in the territory of New Mexico asked Fr. Alonso to send friars to teach and receive them into the Church. The friars reported that the tribe was so well catechized that nothing more was needed for baptism. The mystery, of course, was who had instructed them.

The Indians called her The Lady in Blue. After they described her dress, Father showed them a picture of a nun of the Immaculate Conception branch of the Poor Clares. They said the dress was right, but not the lady. Their lady was much younger and very beautiful. Father spent eight years looking for her.

On a trip back to Europe, he told the Minister General of the First Order of his search. The Minister said that it sounded like Mary of Agreda (Spain). He sent her a message that, under holy obedience, she was to tell Fr. Alonso if it were she. She admitted that, between 1620 and 1631, she had bilocated over five hundred times to instruct the tribe.

And of the gentle, conquering love of the Blessed Mother - Mary of Agreda wrote her biography, *The City of God*; as it exists today, the text is four volumes and some 2600 pages. Because of the sanctity of the subject, Agreda knelt while writing it.

SALT, LIGHT, AND LEAVEN

Rev. Geoffrey Bridges, O.F.M.

A surprising statement appears in the beginning of Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation on the Laity. He says there is a temptation for the laity to watch out for, "the temptation of being so strongly interested in church services and tasks that some fail to become actively engaged in their responsibilities in the professional, social, cultural, and political world." (2) He returns several times to the vocation of the laity, "to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering them according to the plan of God;"(9) "to be salt, light, and leaven;"(15) "their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society, and economics as well as the world of culture, of the sciences and arts, of international life, of the mass media." (23)

These reminders of the lay vocation should give plenty of material for discussion in fraternity meetings. To what are the Secular Franciscans called in their town, state, nation? Fraternities can become communities of discernment where the members come to grips with the need for salt and light and leaven around them. They can help each other discern what each other's gifts are for such evangelizing. They can animate and support each other for action.

Secular Franciscans are deeply involved in binding up the wounds of people in society: manning soup kitchens, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and prisoners, caring for AIDS patients. This is one half of social action. The other half is more difficult. It is to help change the situations that cause the wounded in society. We have an example in the life of St. Anthony of Padua. It was common in his day that debtors were put in prison. Visiting the prisoner and helping the man's family to eat and be clothed are acts of social service. But Anthony went further and

persuaded the authorities to abolish the law that imprisoned debtors. That is action for social change. And more of that is needed in our society. We need a more equitable tax system; we need a comprehensive health system; we need greater protection for the right to work, to home, to family, to culture, and especially to life. (cf 38) And we need the kinds of legislators who will promote the social changes that are needed.

Followers of St. Francis are blessed in many ways for this task. They have the inspiration and guidance of the spirit of St. Francis. They have a community structure where they can pray and study and strategize together. Together they can look critically at their nation and their world in the light of the Gospel and papal teachings. They can become communities of conscience and of conscientious action. Pope John Paul says, "The Lord himself renews his invitation to all the lay faithful to come closer to him every day, and with the recognition that what is his is also their own (Phil. 2:5), they ought to associate themselves with him in his saving mission."(2)

THANKS, GLORIA

Over a year ago, the Executive Council was anxious to publish the Newsletter on a regular basis. But editing is not an easy job. Themes have to be chosen and contacts made. Facts have to be checked and deadlines met. Who had the experience? Gloria Shriver did; however, the Council ran out of fingers before it counted the hats she already wore.

"If she could give it even a year," the Council said, "maybe we could find a replacement, before we kill her with over-work." And the paper got off to a good start.

A replacement has been found, but Gloria will be a hard act to follow. I did have the foresight, though, to get her promise to help.

THE FAMILY OF FRANCIS

Several months ago in St. Patrick's Church, Denver, Colorado, two brothers made their final profession to the Capuchin Province of Mid-America (St. Conrad). The ceremony and Mass were presided over by the Very Rev. Charles Polifka, OFM Cap, Minister of the Friar Province. At the conclusion and just before Father Charles' blessing, he invited two other family members to join him. Mary Ann Hillard, SFO, Minister of the Secular Province, gave the blessing of St. Francis; Mother Josefina, Provincial of the Capuchin Poor Clares, gave the blessing of St. Clare.

DIAMONDS & FRANCISCAN SPIRIT

The Interprovincial Council of the Hudson-Mohawk Valley honored Justina Di Gasparis on the seventy-fifth anniversary of profession at its annual Franciscan Day Celebration at the National Shrine of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha in Fonda, New York. Justina belongs to Immaculate Conception Province #2.

Mary Brousseure, SFO, Fraternity Minister, in presenting a gold medal to the Jubilarian, expressed congratulations, but lamented that the fraternity was unable to give the symbolic diamonds. Justina's smile indicated that each of her ninety-six years had been a God-given diamond.

Other highlights were a talk on the meaning of the Secular Order given by Marion Curry, SFO, Minister of the Immaculate Conception Province #15, the planting of a maple tree, a profession ceremony, and a concelebrated Mass at which Fr. Adam Keltos, OFM Conv. assistant to Immaculate Conception #15, was the main celebrant.

About three hundred Seculars from several provinces gathered for the event which emphasized that our Order, although made up of many provinces, is indeed one.

INTERPROVINCIALS AND REGIONALIZATION

Many of us have memories, whether fond or not, of the old isolated fraternity. We looked forward to an occasional visit from a super friar. Then, some years after Vatican II, we began to have visitations from seculars; we did not always consider them very super; in fact, some of us preferred to be left alone in what was considered comfortable isolation.

Eventually, the super level began to introduce the concept of activity between fraternities within a province and, more daring, interprovincial activity. (Remember being invited to the birthday party of a kid you didn't know, the child of your mother's friend?) Sometimes that inter-activity hurt.

But, thanks be, there are more and more shared events. This is mirrored at the National level. Less than ten years ago, friars outnumbered seculars at the annual meeting. That has changed; the enthusiasm and spirit say that we are one order, one part of the family of Francis. Regionalization will follow easily.

OUR ROLES DEFINED

Father Michael Higgins, TOR, Spiritual Assistant to Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Province, gave the following definitions:

The primary role of the spiritual assistant is to animate the fraternity members through a positive witness of his life and by challenging the seculars to live their rule more fully. He does not assume the role of sole formator, but assists the formation team in instructing both candidates and professed.

The locus of Secular Franciscans' spirituality is the home, family, and work place. They should not try to make themselves into religious.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 8 - 10, 1991

The Secular Franciscan Rule: A Shared Exploration. Speakers: Fathers Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap, Wayne Hellmann, OFM Conv., and Robert Stewart, OFM.
*Contact Franciscan Renewal Center,
P.O. Box 220, Scottsdale, AZ 85252.
(602)948-7460.*

June 2 - 7, 1991

Workshop on the Secular Franciscan Rule with emphasis on the Apostolic Commissions.
*Contact Rev. Martin Wolter, OFM
Little Portion Retreat
Rt. 4, P.O. Box 430
Eureka Springs, AR 72632
(501)253-7379*

June 20 - 23, 1991

Triennial Convention, Sacred Heart Province San Antonio, Texas. More info later.

Sept. 5 - 12, 1991

Fiesta! Albuquerque - Santa Fe tour emphasizing Franciscan history. Fiesta celebration includes Cathedral Masses and the burning of Zozobra. Trip and Mass at the Pecos ruins.

*Contact Welcome Aboard Travel
To the attention of Linda Prince
1806 Jaybee Road
Wilmington, DE 19803
(302)478-8400*

Last week of Sept. - first week of Oct., 1991
Pilgrimage to Rome, Florence, and Assisi. Cost \$2400 includes fare, two meals daily, hotels, buses and guides.
*Contact Fr. Brendan Farnell, OFM Conv.
Queen of Angels Friary, 4824 Jones Ave.
Riverside, CA 92505
(714)689-3674*

DEADLINE NEXT ISSUE

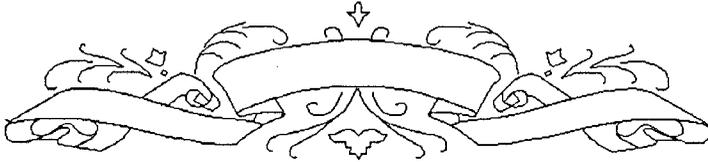
January 15, 1991

Please send items and Provincial bulletins to
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Brandon, VT 05733

Attention: Local Ministers

Again you are requested to inform your fraternities of the National Newsletter. The cost of a private subscription is \$2.00 per year. Checks should be made payable to NAFRA and sent to the above address.

BLESSING OF THE CRÈCHE

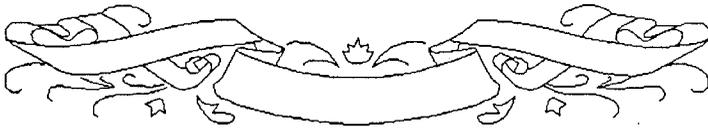


Bless us, Lord, as we come to Bethlehem, where animals and angels, shepherds, and seekers together behold Your face.

Here snow becomes straw, and frost becomes flowers as winter melts into everlasting spring.

In our holy Christmas, in this festival of Christ, give us the riches of poverty and the power of weakness as we join the angels in proclaiming your praise:

Glory in heaven and peace on earth, now and forever.
Amen.



The Blessing of the Creche is taken from *WELCOME YULE*,
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