

Divine Mercy Regional Fraternity
NEWSletter

Divine Mercy Regional Fraternity of
lower Michigan and Toledo Ohio

Messengers of peace moving forward with Francis

January 2007



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Epiphany, El Dia de los Tres Reyes, La Fiesta de Reyes, Three Kings' Day, Swieto Trzech Króli, Twelfth Day, Epiphanie – No matter by what name we know it, the Feast of the Epiphany is the Franciscans' celebration of the shining forth, the revelation of God to mankind in human form through His Son, Jesus.

Pax et bonum!

In this new year we will celebrate the eighth centenary of the birth of St. Elizabeth, Princess of Hungary. The Jubilee year began on November 17, 2006, the feast day of St. Elizabeth, and will end on the same day in 2007.

The Secular Franciscan Order honors her as our patroness, and the whole Franciscan family counts her among its glories. We would like to take this unique opportunity to present her as an exceptional example of devotion to God the Father, in the following of Christ and in the dissolving of her whole being in the God who is Love.

The Franciscan Family as a whole also is preparing to call to mind the origins of the Franciscan charism. In three years it will be 800 years since a dozen men presented themselves before the pope to ask for recognition and approval of their gospel life.

Meanwhile we continue to hold the People of Darfur in Prayer. Secular Franciscans "don't have to feel helpless in what they can do for Darfur refugees," says Clare McCluggage, MD, SFO, "because prayer is action." [see prayer on p.4]

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A Message from our Minister

Mary Bittner, SFO
Minister, Divine Mercy
Regional Fraternity

Brothers and Sisters,

New Years Day is traditionally a time of taking stock, of looking back over the past year, and resolving to do better in the new one. Last fall our previous National Minister, Carol Gentile, asked the Regional Ministers to help her take stock of the SFO in the US. I'd like to share with you my answers to some of her questions.

For those of you who like to see the bottom line delivered before you read the article, here it is. We have much that is good in our Region: many loving and dedicated people, a vital concern for the poor and a history we can be proud of. Our fraternities may indeed face a number of challenges, but we should not lose sight of what we have.

As we begin a new year, let us each resolve to work toward a fuller understanding of the Secular Franciscan vocation, an appreciation of the challenge it affords us, and a renewed enthusiasm for meeting that challenge.

And now, let's consider Carol's questions.

Regional Minister, what is your greatest concern in your Region?

If you asked them this question, most fraternity members in my Region would say: getting new members; aging and illness in members; unwillingness of members to take on leadership positions. I am personally more concerned that our members continue to deepen their understanding of what it means to be Franciscan—deepen it, and then act upon it. When I visit the local fraternities, I am always in awe of the goodness and holiness of many of the members. And yet—I think we could be so much more. So I would say I am more concerned about complacency about our goodness, about being satisfied with where we are, about being unwilling to make the

I am more concerned about complacency about our goodness, about being satisfied with where we are, about being unwilling to make the changes called for by our commitment to ongoing conversion.

This fall our previous National Minister, Carol Gentile, asked all of the Regional Ministers to answer a number of questions about their respective Regions in order to develop a comprehensive view of the current state of our Order.

I'd like to share with you my answers to a couple of those questions.



Mary Bittner, SFO

changes called for by our commitment to ongoing conversion. And I am concerned lest we make our declining numbers our focus rather than focusing on our mission in the world and our true challenge—living a Franciscan life.

In your Region about what are you least concerned?

Getting new members. God raised up Francis and the Brothers and Sisters of Penance in the first place; he can raise us up again. That statement is not meant to be flip. I think we *should* do our part to make our Order and our fraternities visible, and we should of course invite new people to join us, but we should not constantly obsess about our dwindling numbers or the way things used to be. God is not limited by our numbers, or, for that matter, our finances. If God's purpose for the SFO has not been fulfilled, then by His grace and power, we will continue. Our own part in this may require a willingness to die to ways of the past, and a willingness to be re-made as new wineskins.

Brothers and sisters, I don't mean to make light of the related problems of aging fraternities and declining membership. They're clearly real, and they affect virtually all of our local fraternities. But I do think we ought to look beyond them. The danger that I see is the possibility of getting off track by dwelling on these problems at the expense of our mission, or making them our excuse for not taking action ourselves. Let's all resolve to do our part to make our fraternities "vital communities of love...and privileged places for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of [their] members." SFO Rule Art. 22

May the Lord bless you with His holiness,

- Mary

Passings

Fr. Ulric M. Buening, OFM Cap



Fr. Ulric M. Buening, OFM Cap., Kaukauna, age 79, the son of William J. and Blanche (Shreda) Buening, entered into eternal life Thursday, November 16, 2006. The funeral mass for Father Ulric was celebrated on Monday, November 20, 2006 at St. Lawrence Seminary Chapel, Mt. Calvary WI. Interment was in the Capuchin Franciscan Cemetery.

Memorials in Father Ulric's name may be sent to the Capuchin Franciscans, 1820 Mt. Elliott Ave., Detroit, MI, 48207.

Fr. Ulric was one of the original Spiritual Assistants for Divine Mercy Regional Fraternity, and he was instrumental in the formation of the Region.

Emile Alhaddad, SFO

Emile Alhaddad, 81, JII Promotions advertising sales person, died Sunday November 12, 2006. Emile was professed in St. Bonaventure Fraternity in Lansing, MI on June 24, 1960.

He was a member of the original 1992 Steering Committee that began the process of Regionalization throughout lower Michigan.

Celia M. Seychel , SFO

Celia M. Seychel was a member of St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church for 36 years and a member of St. Joseph Fraternity in Ann Arbor.

She was a dance instructor, Metro Cab Owner and operator, Real estate investor and Seamstress; and she provided housing for people in substance abuse rehabilitation, in-home care for children and the elderly, problem pregnancy counsel and baby quilts for newborns She was a loyal friend and gave good counsel to all who knew her. She was survived by her four children, four grandchildren, one great-grandchild.

The Funeral Mass was held on Tuesday, October 31, 2006 at St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church.

Sylvia Anderson, SFO

Sylvia Anderson, a member of St. Anthony Fraternity at Cross in the Woods in Indian River, died on Tuesday, December 12th.

She had been ill for quite a while and suffered a stroke a couple of weeks before her death which left her speechless and unable to eat

Please keep her and her family in your prayers.

*May the Angels lead you
into paradise.
May the Martyrs come to
welcome you and take
you to the holy city,
the new and eternal
Jerusalem.*

Helen E. Thompson , SFO

Helen E. Thompson, SFO was a member of St. Philip Neri fraternity in Battle Creek. She was born on Christmas Day, 1915 and died on October 9, 2006. She had been a professed Secular Franciscan since March 1, 1950.

Mark your calendar now

March 17, 2006

The Executive Council will meet on Saturday March 17, 2007 at St. Francis Church in Ann Arbor. The meeting will be held 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., and Councilors are reminded to bring a bag lunch.

Éirinn go Brách!

April 21, 2007

The date and place for the **Spring Ministers' Meeting** has been set for April 21, 2007 at the Lansing Holiday Inn. The meeting will begin at 9 a.m. and include a buffet and a snack. You will be receiving more information later.

July 3 - 8, 2007*

***Note:** The 17th **Quinquennial** Congress will **not** be held at Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio. Plans for this gathering are in a state of flux. The Regional Fraternity will pass along the new plans as soon as they come to us from NAFRA.

August 3 - 5, 2007

The Annual meeting of the Regional Fraternity will be held at St. John's Center for Youth and Family, 44011 5 Mile Rd., Plymouth, MI.

Recent Elections

St. Philip Neri, Battle Creek

Minister: Janice Gray

Vice-minister: Vickie Lynn Jackson

Secretary: Sherrie Keese

Treasurer: OniLee

O'Meara

Formation: Joan

McWhorter

St. Maxillian Kolbe,

Alpena

Minister: Marie Kaminski

Vice-Minister: Jill Schefke

Secretary: Marge Morgan

Treasurer: Laurie Vought

News from the local fraternities

St. Pascal Fraternity, Toledo: On Sunday September 17, 2006, (Stigmatization of St. Francis) Frank Gardull, S.F.O., and Harry Reichow, S.F.O. made their final profession into the Order at a Eucharist celebrated by Fr. Alex Kratz, O.F.M. The celebration was followed by a reception in their honor.

The Transitus was celebrated in two places - with the Seculars in Monroe, MI and with the Sylvania Franciscans and members of St. Maximillian Kolbe/Toledo at the Sylvania Convent. A St. Francis Day Pizza Party and Movie was held to celebrate October 4.

The 800th Anniversary of the birth of St. Elizabeth of Hungary was celebrated at the November gathering by means of the presentation of a traveling image of the saint that will spend one month in the home of each member throughout the duration of the observance.

Divine Mercy NEWSletter is a bi-monthly publication of Divine Mercy Regional Fraternity of Lower Michigan and Toledo, Ohio.

Local fraternities are encouraged to send their news and upcoming events to the editor.

The deadline for the March issue is February 15.

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Novena Prayer for Darfur

Merciful Father, Prince of Peace, Spirit of Wisdom and Compassion, please look upon our brothers and sisters in Darfur. We humbly pray:

- For those who have been subjected to violence: women, children, young and old men, 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 this situation.

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 in Darfur. 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