

Divine Mercy Regional Fraternity
NEWSletter

Divine Mercy Regional Fraternity of
lower Michigan and Toledo Ohio



Executive Council

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Marie Criste, SFO

Lois Flickinger, SFO

Formation Minister

Marie Amore, SFO,

Messengers of peace moving forward with Francis



*For, lo, the winter is past; The rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth; The time of the singing of birds is come . . .*

May, 2007

2007 Q Congress Schedule

July 3 Tuesday

*Opening Mass
(Procession of cultures: everyone is encouraged to wear his/her native costume or attire.)*

July 4 Wednesday

Fr. Eric Law; Congress Fraternities; Mass – Korean language

July 5 Thursday

Fr. Eric Law; Congress; Mass – Indian, Syro Malabar Rite; Festival of Cultures

July 6 Friday

Workshops, 5 venues; Mass – Eastern Churches Divine Liturgy; Festival of Cultures

July 7 Saturday

Fr. Eric Law; Congress Fraternities; Mass – Spanish language

July 8 Sunday

Closing remarks by National Minister; blessing and sending forth

Q Attendees to Gather in Groups to Share, Discuss

The Quinquennial Congress being held in Pittsburgh July 3-8 will feature an opportunity for attendees to gather formally in small groups of 8 to 10 people almost every afternoon to pray, share, discuss and react to the presentations.

Dubbed Congress Fraternities, the small groups “can meet as often as they wish throughout the entire Quinquennial Congress,” noted Planning Committee member Anne Mulqueen, SFO.

“Initially, the group members will need time to get to know each other. In the discussion portion, the individuals will share and compare their impressions and reactions to the presentations. Discussion questions will be provided. The group itself will determine how much time will be spent on relationship building, discussion and free time. Ideally, a comfortable balance will emerge for all.

“The hope,” she said, “is that discussions will provide multiple perspectives which, ideally, will promote growth and understanding of other cultures.”

The Congress Fraternities will also provide an opportunity to develop relationships beyond one’s geographical area.

“This is a continuing a practice started at our 1997 Quinquennial and is one of the more enjoyable aspects of our family gathering,” she said.

A more complete overview of the Quinquennial and a registration form can be found in the March, 2007 issue of the NEWSletter.

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Meet the Executive Council

Roger Ensign, SFO - Vice Minister

I was professed into the Secular Franciscan Order together with my wife Toniann in October 1997. During these past ten years there have been many changes in my life, and I've spent much time pondering the meaning of it all. I've spent much time reflecting on my Franciscan calling and purpose. It hasn't always been easy for me; on occasion my faith and my vocation has been challenged and tested. But I keep trying, moving forward with Francis even though it's sometimes a little scary, not always sure where he is taking me.

In order to keep moving forward on my Franciscan journey, I am in constant need of reminders and reinforcement. I need to be challenged, by others as well as myself. As many do, I frequently look to Francis' life for inspiration. When I look at some of the well known events in his life, whether factual or symbolic, the message is the same. When everyone was living in fear of the wolf of Gubbio, afraid to go outside, staying locked in their homes complaining about the situation, it was Francis who approached, confronted and made peace with the wolf. When everyone else was attacking and criticizing Islam from a distance, it was Francis who boldly walked into the Sultan's camp and introduced him to Jesus. When everyone else was afraid to go near the lepers, when they despised and pushed them outside the walls of the city and society, it was Francis who embraced and served them.

I believe the Franciscan vocation is a call to serve. It is a call to serve our brothers and sisters, a call to serve the poor. Our vocation is not one of isolation or indifference; it is a call to engage – to be a Christ-presence in the world, and to make a difference. It's a tough job – sometimes it bears down and overwhelms, paralyzing. It's easy to slip into obscurity, to be overcome by a feeling of uselessness and hopelessness – to say or do nothing and take the easy way out.

But this is not the Franciscan way. Francis was not a passive observer and he was not a conformist. He moved forward and he changed things around him – he made a difference by simply emptying himself and allowing Christ to be present in him. He did this by words and actions and by just being who he was. He was a messenger of peace. Is anything less to be expected of us Secular Franciscans today?

I often ask myself if am I truly engaged, if I am making a difference. Am I hiding; have I become a spectator instead of a participant? Have I been overcome by the desire to isolate myself from the pain, suffering and evil around me? Do I stand by idle and passive, just talking, complaining and criticizing? Or am I *doing* something – am I part of the *solution*?

I have been called to serve by way of the Secular Franciscan Order – am I responding to the call?



Roger Ensign, SFO

Our vocation is not one of isolation or indifference; it is a call to engage – to be a Christ-presence in the world, and to make a difference.

National Franciscan Advocacy Office discussed

More than 130 members of the Franciscan Family, including Mary Bittner, SFO, our Regional Minister, Jim Flickinger, SFO, our Regional Peace and Justice Chair, and Lois Flickinger, SFO, a Regional Councilor, and leaders and representatives from 69 provinces, congregations, and Secular Franciscan Regions, from throughout the United States, met March 7-9 in Baltimore, Maryland to discern the possibility of having a unified Franciscan voice to effect transformation of national social policy.

The following vision statement was adopted at the meeting:

We Franciscan brothers and sisters, Religious and Secular, from throughout the United States, gathered together in Baltimore, MD to discern the possibility of a unified Franciscan Voice for justice. With great concern for dehumanizing issues in our society, we recognized trends contrary to our calling as followers of Christ. We see that we

have the power to effectively advocate for the redistribution of resources, the responsible care for creation, and the healing of relationships within the Franciscan Family, the Church and society. To these ends, we commit ourselves and call all members of the Family to speak with one Franciscan Voice to effect the transformation of national social policy. By walking with our brothers and sisters who are poor and marginalized, we intend to advocate for peace and to reaffirm the dignity of all creation.

The meeting ended with the appointment of a steering committee to investigate establishment and funding of a broad-based Franciscan Family Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, and a Center for Action based in Washington, D.C.

A number of questions still need to be answered. Among these:

- Who will be running the office and representing the Franciscans?
- How will they determine the Franciscan position on issues?
- What will the office cost, and who is expected to pay its ongoing expenses?

More details will be forthcoming as the meeting's steering committee makes recommendations over the next few months. In the meantime, we as Seculars have an opportunity to influence these decisions.

The Peace and Justice Commission and the Regional Executive Council would appreciate hearing your thoughts and/or any ideas that you would like passed along to the national advocacy group's steering committee.



*by Jim Flickinger, SFO
Regional Peace and Justice Chair*



photo by Ryan Spencer Reed/Group M35

Darfur

Hands of a Displaced Sudan: The Cost of Silence

A photo exhibit by Ryan Spencer Reed will begin Wednesday, May 2 and run through Thursday, June 14, 2007. Meet Ryan Spencer Reed, the photographer, at the Grand Opening from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Friday, May 4th. At the Ann Arbor District Library, Malletts Creek Branch, 3090 East Eisenhower Parkway, Ann Arbor, MI (734-327-4200).

The event is being cosponsored by St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Parish, St. Mary Student Parish, Beth Israel Congregation, St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Parish, Scio Community Church, St. Joseph Fraternity, Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice (ICPJ) and Temple Beth Emeth.

For more information: www.stfrancisa2.com/darfur

Mark your calendar now

May 2 - June 14, 2007

Hands of a Displaced Sudan: The Cost of Silence, a Photo Exhibit by Ryan Spencer Reed, Ann Arbor District Library - Malletts Creek Branch (734-327-4200), 3090 East Eisenhower Parkway, Ann Arbor, MI co-sponsored by St. Joseph Fraternity, Ann Arbor. www.stfrancisa2.com/darfur

May 12, 2007 [Note changed date]

The date and place for the Spring Ministers' Meeting has been set for May 12, 2007 at the Lansing Holiday Inn. The meeting will begin at 9 a.m. and include a buffet and a snack. Ministers and delegates, please send in your reservations now.

June 9, 2007

The Executive Council will meet on Saturday June 9, 2007 at the home of Lois Flickinger, SFO in Grand Rapids. The meeting will be held 10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., and Councilors are reminded to bring a bag lunch.

June 10, 2007

Day of Renewal, St. Anthony Fraternity at Cross in the Woods, Indian River, MI. Opens with 10:30 Mass. Lunch will be provided, followed by Fr. Wm Burton, OFM speaking on Scripture.

July 3 - 8, 2007

The SFO family will meet for the 17th Quinquennial Congress in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It is open to all Secular Franciscans from across the nation. A Franciscan Youth Congress will be meeting at the same time. Please pray about attending this special gathering.

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.

Since there will be no Visitation or Chapter of Elections, the Regional Fraternity is inviting members of local fraternities as well as their Ministers to attend. Come and get to know your brothers and sisters from around lower Michigan and Toledo, OH.

Novena for Darfur

As agreed at the 2006 NAFRA meeting, the SFO in the United States has instituted a perpetual novena for at least one year on behalf of the people of Darfur. Every day for the next year, members of the SFO will be praying the novena prayer. Five Regional SFO fraternities have been assigned to cover each month.

Divine Mercy Region has been assigned the **third week in June** beginning on June 17, 2007.

Individuals may start and end their novena on other days if necessary, or do a different week. If you want to continue to pray before or after your week/month you may certainly do that.

A novena allows us to hold a particular concern before God in a special way. This allows us to give more of ourselves to our prayer for the concern we are bringing before God.

For a copy of the novena prayer please see the January, 2007 issue of the NEWSletter.

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 May issue is June 15.

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