

Divine Mercy Regional Fraternity
NEWSletter

Divine Mercy Regional Fraternity of
Lower Michigan and Toledo Ohio

September, 2008



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Messengers of peace moving forward with Francis



photo by Jim Howard, SFO

Regional Minister Mary Bittner and National Minister Patrick Mendés share a lighthearted moment following August's Annual Meeting and Visitation at St. John's Center in Plymouth.

Regional fraternity celebrates Visitation

The Region's Annual meeting was held at St. John's' Retreat Center in Plymouth on August 15 - 17. About sixty participants enjoyed a weekend of learning, working and celebrating with Visitors from the National Fraternity.

The Pastoral Visitor, Fr. Lester Bach, OFM, Cap., presented a meditation on the life of Mary. He outlined the parts of her life with which we are acquainted. He credited the Incarnation with occupying nine months of her life. Her visit with her cousin Elizabeth probably lasted for three months. The Wedding at Cana might have lasted from three days to a week. Her suffering during the Crucifixion of her Son lasted for three days.

"So what did she do with the rest of life?" he asked. "She was a Secular Franciscan before there were Secular Franciscans."

We have given Mary enormous titles, he continued. With these we have produced images of someone who never got her hands dirty, but we know that is not the whole story. In article 9 of our Rule we read: The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to His every word and call . . . The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.

"Prayerfulness has to spill over into activity," he concluded.

The Fraternal Visitor, Patrick Mendés, SFO, began his opening remarks by asking local ministers what exciting things were happening in their fraternities. Among the ideas presented were the Catholic Forum TV show that is being prepared for Public Television,

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On the Road by Fr. Tod, OFM



*Friar Tod Laverty, OFM
Regional Spiritual Assistant*

Increasingly churches in the suburbs that have been a marvelous source of support for many years are finding that their own neighbors and parishioners are out of work and in need of help.

Brothers and Sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order,

As you know my life has taken quite a swing in the recent past. I became my own successor when I was appointed full-time pastor of St. Aloysius and St. Patrick parishes. What you may not know is that in addition to these two small parishes there are three outreach centers attached to the parish clusters. Both St. Al's and St. Patrick's have outreach centers and when St. Dominic's parish was closed we were able to retain a presence in the area with the help of an outreach center there as well.

All of our outreach centers offer food baskets for people in need. St. Al's has a large facility and is able to provide a Cafe environment — in addition to food baskets — where guests are able to come in, choose a beverage and some pastry — often pastries prepared in-house by our guests — or even hot cereal or bacon, egg and cheese biscuits.

Hundreds of people a day have their food budgets supplemented by our outreach centers. Most of the food is donated, but more and more we are finding that we have to buy food from groups like Gleaners to make up for the dwindling food supply from donor churches and organizations. Increasingly churches in the suburbs that have been a marvelous source of support for many years are finding that their own neighbors and parishioners are out of work and in need of help. Thus the economic situation all over the country, but particularly here in Michigan, is further depriving the desperately poor of the basic necessities of life.

Our outreach centers provide other resources as well. We have a crib program for new mothers, a program that provides bus tickets for people getting started at new jobs and several programs that engage children and young people in activities connected to our centers. We are able to offer free internet connections for homeless people or anyone in the downtown area in need of computer access, and on and on. All of this outreach work is supplemented by various forms of fundraising, raffles, drawings, dances, dinners and even our own brand of organic, free-trade coffee, regular and decaffeinated.

One area of assistance where we regularly experience a shortage is in the area of women's clothing, particularly at St. Dominic's and men's clothing at St. Dominic's again. Maybe you have some articles of clothing that you don't need any more. Maybe a family member has passed away and you're looking for a place to give the clothing. Perhaps a college student has married or left home and no longer needs all those shirts and jeans. Maybe your fraternity is looking for a way to render service to people in need.

Gathering and delivering clothing to any of our downtown Detroit centers would be a wonderful way to support God's poor. Give it some thought.

The game was on

The Something Special promised by the Annual Meeting agenda turned out to be the Region's own version of Franciscan Jeopardy hosted by Alex Trebek's Doppelgänger, Pat Carsley.

Here the team of Marylynn Hewitt, Rosemary Hannaford, Patrick Mendés, and Margo Dean are considering their answer to one of the questions while Fr. Lester Bach looks on.



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an expanding of last year's Regional Towel Project, a Café project to serve the poor and homeless in Detroit, support for our own Poor Clare community in Saginaw, packets prepared for Catholic students graduating from high school, donations for the education of Native American children, preparing boxes for soldiers in Iraq, donations to Amazon Relief, a recycling ministry, and Perpetual Adoration and natural family planning programs.

Patrick then went on to point out that we are neither contemplative nor active, but our Way of Life contains elements of both. That is what makes us evangelical.

"Servant leadership is not a function," he explained. "It's who we are."

He went on to remind us that we are a bottom up organization. The basic unit of the Order is the local fraternity. An example of how this structure works can be seen when local ministers make their annual reports to the Region. The Regional Minister then will communicate with the National Minister. Then he, in turn, can make his report on the condition of the Order to Rome.

Patrick commended the Region for providing scholarships last spring to several members to attend the leadership conference in Loretto. He urged people to consider attending next year's workshop. <http://www.francis.edu/ICFLHome.htm>

"We don't put it on," he said. "It is a gift from St. Francis University, but it is endorsed by NAFRA. It is one of the most dynamic things happening."

Scholarship winners report on their trip to Loretto

June McRae provided a few copies of her notes for those who wanted them. Her favorite session, she said, was concerned with Servant Leadership. "Do those you serve become better persons, more likely themselves to become servants?" she asked. "Servant Leadership requires personal presence."

Pat Jurasek described the setting for the workshop. Loretto, she said was in the midst of the Allegheny Mountains. She remarked upon the kindness of the people. Their joyfulness, she reported, left her feeling content and safe. "It happens when you are walking among God's Celestial band," she concluded.

Marylynn Hewett spoke of the grottos, Pieta shrine and complete lack of mosquitoes. She concentrated on the sessions on Conflict Resolution. Seventeen of the country's 30 Regions were represented at the workshop.

Leigh Lentine rounded out the report by recounting the story of one travelers warm welcome after having transportation problems.

An in-depth presentation of material from the Leadership Workshop is planned for next spring.



Remembering Father Solanus — A Simple Man The Second Annual Concert

The second annual concert in honor of Father Solanus Casey, OFM will be held on Sunday October 5, 2008 at 4:00 pm in the St. Bonaventure Monastery Chapel at 1780 Mt. Elliott Avenue in Detroit.

The concert will feature many musicians from all around the area.

Tickets will be \$15.00 each, and the proceeds will be used to offset the expenses incurred by the elderly and infirm members of St. Bonaventure Fraternity.

For Ticket information please contact Patricia Meldrum at 586-296-7966 or the Secular Franciscan Office at 313-579-2100, ext. 136.

Seating is limited, so get your tickets early to avoid disappointment.

St. Joseph Fraternity announces . . .

St. Joseph Fraternity in Burton is pleased to announce the marriage of its last surviving founding member, 95 year-old Irving Howell, SFO to 84-year-old Mary Anne Neuville. The wedding took place on May 28, 2008 at St. Pius Church in Flint.

Congratulations to the happy couple, and may they enjoy their coming years together.

Day of Recollection is Oct. 18

St. Joseph Fraternity in Ann Arbor will host a Day of Recollection on Saturday October 18th at St Louis Center in Chelsea, Michigan from 10:00 am - 5:00 pm. Please note that this date represents a change from earlier announcements.

The day's speaker will be Fr. Leo Cachet, SJ who is one of the staff members from Manresa Retreat House. His topic will be *Franciscan Spirituality from a Jesuit Perspective*.

Participants are asked to bring their own bag lunch. Drinks will be provided. The day will end with Mass.

For more info please contact Bob Brundage at 734-434-8161.

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 November issue is October 15.

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Formation Conference will be Sept. 20

This fall's Formation Conference, also known as the Candidates' Day of Reflection, will be held on Saturday, September 20th at the Saginaw Center for Ministry. Registration begins at 8:30 and the day ends at 3:00. The cost for attending is \$15.00 to cover the cost of a continental breakfast and lunch. Please contact your local minister or formation minister for registration forms.

Just in case you've forgotten the reasons for this conference, here are some of them.

- Experience a real sense of belonging to an Order not just a local fraternity.
 - Meet others in formation.
 - Learn more about what it means to be a Secular Franciscan
 - Share experiences.
 - Ask questions.
 - Seek ways to solve problems with those who have encountered them.
 - Take a few minutes to reflect on what insights have been discovered and experienced.
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