



# Divine Mercy Region

## secular franciscan order

# NEWSletter

Fall 2005

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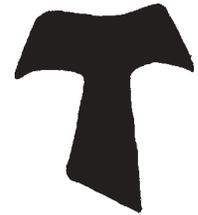
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The Divine Mercy Region was pleased to welcome our National Fraternity Minister, Carol Gentile, SFO and NAFRA Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Loren Connell, OFM to the Annual Regional Minister's Meeting.

The meeting was held August 26-28th at the St. John Center for Youth and family in Plymouth. See the back page for more pictures from the Annual Meeting.

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## A Moment With Mary: Food for Thought on Thanking God

by Mary Bittner, SFO, Divine Mercy Region Minister

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Have you ever noticed how frequently the Apostle Paul opens his letters by thanking God for the people he's writing to? Take the *First Letter to the Corinthians*. "I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge—even as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ; who will sustain you to the end..." (1 *Cor* 1: 4-8).

Or look at the *Letter to the Philippians*: "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (*Phil* 1: 3-6).

Similarly, Paul greets the Colossians: "We always thank God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love which you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven" (*Col* 1: 3-5).

This morning I was reading the first chapter of Paul's *Letter to the Romans*. Again Paul starts out with a statement of thanksgiving. "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine" (*Rom* 1: 8-12).

Brothers and sisters, these aren't just *pro forma* greetings. Paul really means what he says. Over and over, he thanks God for his brothers and sisters, for their faith, for their love, for the gifts they have received from God, and for the way they work in partnership with him. The cumulative power of his words makes me recognize that I too am grateful (and should be grateful) for the gift of you, my brothers and sisters.

And so, following Paul's lead and Francis's lead, I say: *God gave me brothers and sisters*, and I'm thankful for them. I thank God for all those who so graciously model the Franciscan vocation. I'm grateful that the SFO has so many dedicated people who are willing to share their time and talents with their brothers and sisters. I thank God for the older members, who have been faithful servants of His for many years. We can all learn from their experience and wisdom. I'm thankful for our new members, that they have heard the call of the Holy Spirit and been willing to step forward in faith. I know that God will honor their response to His call by richly supplying all that they need for every good work. I'm grateful for the care and concern of all the brothers and sisters, concern that extends from their own homes and parishes and cities to the farthest reaches of the Amazon. I cherish their enthusiasm, their eagerness to share, and their profound understanding of the goodness of God.

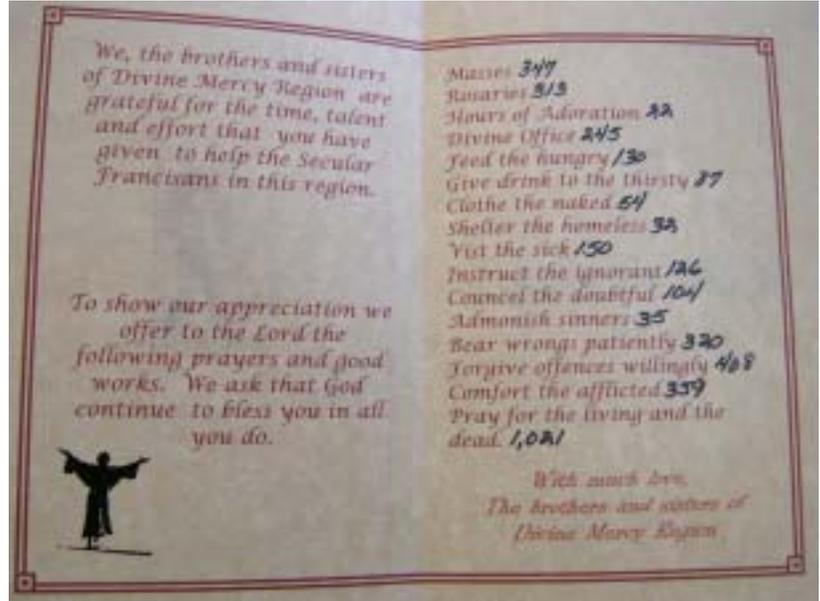
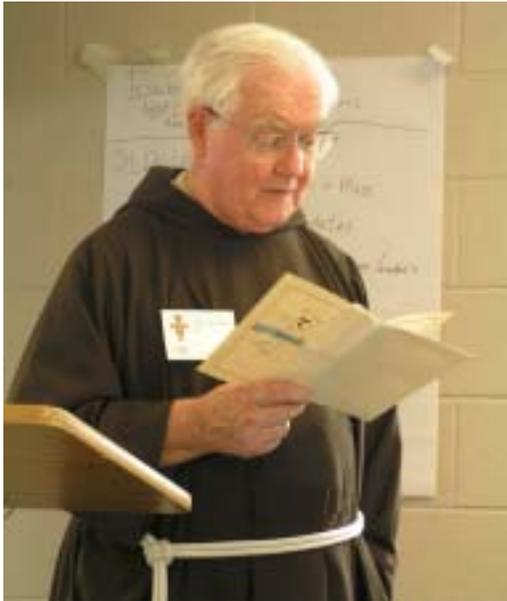


God is so good, sisters and brothers, and He's blessed us all with the gift of each other. Let us never forget to thank him for that.

Pax et bonum,  
Mary

# DMR Gives “Thanks” to Fr. Joe Maloney, OFM Cap

pictures taken by Lois Flickinger, sfo, Divine Mercy Region Councilor



At the annual meeting, the Divine Mercy Region Executive Council presented Fr. Joe Maloney, OFM Cap., with a Spiritual Bouquet and gift of appreciation for his many years of dedication and service to the Region. Since this was the last time everyone would be together before the end of the year, it seemed like the perfect time to present Fr. Joe with a heartfelt retirement gift.

However, since the annual meeting, we have received some good news from Fr. Joe. Although officially retired, he has agreed to stay on as our Spiritual Assistant while the Provincial seeks a replacement. So once again, we would like to thank Fr. Joe, but this time it's for his **continued** support, friendship and dedication to the Divine Mercy Region SFO!

*thanks!* *thanks!* **THANKS!** *Thanks*  
**THANKS** *Thanks* *Thanks!* *Thanks*  
*thanks!* *Thanks* *Thanks!*  
*Thanks!* *Thanks!* *Thanks!*  
*Thanks!* *Thanks!* *Thanks!* *Thanks!*

**MANY • THANKS**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Sept. 25, 2005  
FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Bob and Mary Stronach, SFO, 315-796-9284**

MUNDELEIN, ILL., Sept. 25 — Leaders of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States concluded their national gathering here with a pledge of support for the U.S. Catholic Bishops' initiative to reach out to those hit hardest by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita — especially the poor and those who lost everything.

Some 80 regional ministers, delegates and observers conducted an annual National Chapter Sept. 21-25 at University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, IL, just outside Chicago.

In addition to hearing reports, conducting business and planning for the future of the Order, the Secular Franciscan leaders focused their daily prayer on the victims of natural disasters, whose urgency was brought home when one of the regional ministers left early to return home to Texas to participate in the hurricane evacuation. He represents the hard-hit Gulf States region.

The Secular Franciscan Order is an order of married and single people who strive to Gospel living in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

The statement of support issued by the assembly follows:

### **PLEDGE OF SUPPORT**

*Our nation has recently been exposed to two great tragedies from nature, Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita.*

*We, the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States of America, meeting in Mundelein, Illinois, stand in solidarity with, and in support of, the U.S. Catholic Bishops' initiative to reach out to those most affected by these hurricanes, especially the poor and those who have lost everything.*

*We pledge ourselves to continue to pray daily for all those impacted and to assist our sisters and brothers in need.*

— **National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States of America**  
September 24, 2005- Mundelein, Illinois

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Bob and Mary provided news releases throughout the NAFRA meeting. You can read the rest of the at the direct link to the press room section on NAFRA's website: <http://www.nafra-sfo.org/pressroom/index.html>

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## **A Simple Prayer Request...**

**by Sheri Hafeli, sfo, DMR Editor (and Lois Flickinger, sfo, DMR Councilor)**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Upon emailing our Council my request for their articles and/or pictures for this newsletter, I received one response that hit my heart greatly. It was a letter from Lois Flickinger, DMR Councilor. As many of you know, Lois and Jim have been very active members of the Divine Mercy Region for many years and a few years ago Jim won the NAFRA Peace & Justice Award for his extensive work with AMAZON RELIEF.

Many of us have watched the news of the recent destruction from the hurricanes in almost disbelief, wondering how we could help. Many of us have already donated money, staples or time to churches, the Red Cross, Salvation Army or one of numerous other organizations providing help. Lois's letter to me and humble request for prayers and personal notes of well-wishing to lift her daughter's family spirits seemed like something anyone could do. I hope Lois doesn't mind, but I felt compelled to reprint the portion of her letter where she informs me about her family:

*“Our daughter and her family have been(staying)with us from New Orleans...Nancy and Mike and their 3 children came to Grand Rapids to stay with us after their doctor appointment for the baby in Birmingham, Alabama. (If you remember, their 17-month old is a failure to thrive baby. They were seeing a specialist in Birmingham when the hurricane hit.) They stayed with us until last Friday and then headed down to Baton Rouge, LA where Mike's office is trying to regroup.*

(Continued on page 5)

## As Franciscans We Are Called To Serve...

by Roger Ensign, sfo, Divine Mercy Region Vice Minister

On various levels, each fraternity is animated and guided by a council and minister (or president) who are elected by the professed according to the constitutions. Their service, which lasts for a definite period, is marked by a ready and willing spirit and is a duty of responsibility to each member and to the community. *SFO Rule: Article 21*

Every three years each fraternity is required to meet and elect new leaders – a council. This can often be a very difficult experience for some. It is not unusual for a fraternity to postpone elections because there aren't brothers or sisters able or willing to take over leadership responsibilities – this is a problem.

Not all fraternities have this problem, and for this we are thankful; but many others do, and the reasons vary. Sometimes it's an issue of numbers for small fraternities with little or no growth. But often there is a strong sense of "I can't do that" or simply a lack of interest on the part of some individuals.

I wonder if it's not sometimes a matter of perspective. The problem is we often look at these things with a "civil" eye. We can easily see this as an election to a position of leadership. There is a sense of promotion or elevation to office, a place of prominence and status – totally foreign and contrary to our Franciscan ideals, and maybe the source of some of our barriers.

But what does it really mean to be elected to an office in the Secular Franciscan Order? One thing I think we can all agree on is that as Franciscans we are all called to serve. So what does it mean to be chosen and elected to office? Quite simply it means that we are chosen to serve the servants. It is not an "elevation" or "promotion", but is an act of humility: a lowering of ourselves to serve others. It means placing ourselves at the feet of our brothers and sisters, not on a pedestal.

All I ask is that we look at the election process as Franciscans and try to keep it in perspective. When a brother or sister approaches you about running for office, it may be because that person sees something in you that you yourself cannot see. Don't be too quick to brush it off because "I can't do that" or "I'm not interested", it may be the Holy Spirit calling you to humility – calling you to serve.

Yours in Christ, Roger



## A Simple Prayer Request... (continued)

*While they were here they heard from a neighbor in their old neighborhood who said he had gotten into his house. The water had not yet totally subsided but I don't know how deep it was. According to the neighbor, he has lost everything in his home. We figure it will be the same for Nancy and Mike.*

*They have an apartment in Baton Rouge and they are together and safe. They are trying to get their first grader into a good school and get their life back in order. It is not an easy task. The stress is unbelievable. Starting over from nothing when you have three kids is overwhelming.*

***I am looking for ways to lift their spirits during the next few weeks. Do you think that the sfo's who are praying for them would send them a cheerful card or note letting them know that they are praying for them? Their new address is: Nancy and Michael Haskell, 13170 Dutchtown Point Avenue, Gonzales, LA 70737-0102. Their children are: Mariah (7 on Sept 25), Josh (3) and Caleb (17 months). ----Lois"***

Dear fellow Franciscans, as we all know, sometimes it's the small things that make a big difference. Please keep this family in your prayers and if you have a moment, drop them a card or note just to let them know you care. If you have children their kids age, maybe they could write a note or draw a picture for Nancy and Mike's children.

May God be with them, their family, their friends, and all those who have suffered from the hurricanes.

Peace and All Good! *Sheri*

## Divine Mercy Region Welcomes New Commission Chairpersons: Nancy Maioho, sfo, Ecology Chair and Patti Reynolds, sfo, Youth & Young Adult Chair

by Sheri Hafeli, sfo, Divine Mercy Region Newsletter Editor

The Divine Mercy Region is pleased to announce that Nancy Maioho, SFO and Patti Reynolds, SFO, have agreed to serve as Regional Commission Chairpersons for the Ecology and Youth & Young Adult Commissions. We thank you and have asked both to share a little bit about themselves in the following articles.



Nancy  
Maioho, SFO



Please  
Volunteer



Marie  
Amore, SFO



Jim  
Flickinger, SFO



Please  
Volunteer



Patti  
Reynolds, SFO

### Volunteers still needed...

Do you feel called to serve? The Region also needs chairpersons for the Family Commission and the Work Commission. In addition, we still need a volunteer to take over the Regional Newsletter as this is my last issue. If you can volunteer or have any questions regarding the Commissions, please contact our Regional Minister, Mary Bittner.



### “A Little Intro...” by Patti Reynolds, sfo, DMR Youth & Young Adult Commission Chair



Hello Good People of DMR SFO!

My name is Patti Reynolds. I would like to introduce myself to you, first as the newest DMRF Youth & Young Adult (Y/YA) Chair, and then as Y/YA Councilor for Our Mother of Sorrows Fraternity (Grand Rapids, Michigan). I am also blessed because my job is my ministry: the Director of Youth/Young Adult Ministry at my home parish, St. Thomas the Apostle, here in Grand Rapids! This is also the third year I am helping Marie Amore and the Regional Formation Team to plan the annual Candidate's Day of Reflection. I love to welcome new people into Fraternity, into ministry, to share my faith, and to help others on their journey.

Even though I am 45 years old, have been married for 22 years, and have four children (Katy, Patrick, Betsy & Trish) I do have a lot of youthfulness, energy, passion, and craziness in me. I wonder why?! I was Baptized and raised in the United Methodist Church, converted to Catholicism when I was 19 years old, and have a legal secretary/paralegal background. It is so amazing to me that at the Candidate's Day of Reflection I am able to talk about Canon Law 303, do the research and writing, and express how important my commitment to the Secular Franciscan Order is.

When I look back, I think: Lord only knows why I said YES to this regional opportunity. (Even though I knew I was being called.) Then I recall how I truly believe there is a lot to be said about saying YES. Just ask our Blessed Mother! I have found a lot of love, a lot of community, a lot of tradition and truth. I have asked Mary many, many times for prayers and guidance, and come to think of it, the last time I asked for the ability to say YES to our Lord always was in Denver last year at the All Commission's Conference. Prayers are ALWAYS answered!

I would have never guessed this is where the Lord and Francis would take me. What an incredible journey I am on! I was professed just 2-1/2 years ago and have been blessed to know and work with really incredible people, sharing my faith and my ministry along the way. Thank you for your prayers and your support. I look forward to being with you, learning from you and working with you. Keep in touch!

Peace and All Good, Patti Reynolds, sfo



**“A Little Intro 2...”**  
**by Nancy Maioho, SFO,**  
**DMR Ecology Commission Chair**



A member of Mary Queen of Apostles Fraternity in Sand Lake, MI, I serve as Minister. The year of my profession was 1995 and I am pleased to be among the founding members of our fraternity which was canonically established in 2000.

A love of animals, nature and a respect for all of God’s creation became my first connection with St. Francis. I look forward to bringing the members of the Divine Mercy Region information and perspective from the National Ecology chair that will help us all to promote these values in our homes and communities.

Learning the importance of conserving our natural resources, I’ve been an active promoter of recycling and environmental awareness. Having participated in drafting the county 951 Plan for solid waste/recycling regulations; monitoring water and sewer issues pertinent to water quality of our inland lakes and streams as well as watershed management and land use and planning strategies to direct development and promote land conservation, I believe that education is the key to success. We must teach our children how to respect, love and care for our earthly home and all God’s creatures.

Working together, I hope that we can all become better stewards of our environment.

Nancy

**Forgiveness...**

**by Rosemary Hannaford , SFO, Divine Mercy Region Councilor and Liturgist**

Brothers and Sisters in St. Francis.

The word “forgiveness” has only eleven letters of the alphabet and yet, this word means so much more.

In Matthew (5: 43-48) the final sentence “You must therefore set no bounds to your love, just as your heavenly Father sets none to his”.

In Matthew (6: 10-13) the prayer Our Lord taught us “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”.

How can there be peace without forgiveness? Forgiveness and Peace are closely related.

Franciscan leaders must pursue whatever creates peace and mutual understanding. “The quality of fraternal leadership will not be found in examining the individual leaders - - but in reading the signs among the followers”. (Setting Hearts on Fire- - A Spirituality for Leaders by Timothy Brown and Patricia Sullivan).

“God of peace, may I become an instrument of your peace, in my thoughts, in my words, and in my actions. I ask this through Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Amen.” (*Praying with Francis of Assisi* by Joseph M. Stoutzenberger and John D. Bohrer.

May the Lord give you Peace.



**Three Franciscan Parishes Need Hurricane Relief**

**by Sheri Hafeli , SFO, Divine Mercy Region Newsletter Editor**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Although I do not know all the details at this printing, I am aware through the collections being taken at St. Michael Church in Southfield that there are 3 Franciscan Churches that are in great need after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans and surrounding areas. The three churches are: Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary—Houma, LA; St. Paul the Apostle—Lafayette, LA and St. Mary of the Angels—New Orleans, LA.

Fraternities or individuals who would like to help out can send donations entitled “Franciscan Relief” to St. Michael Church, 25225 Code Road, Southfield, MI 48034. St. Michael will forward to the Provincial for distribution to the needy Franciscan parishes.



## Regional Formation Minister Report: August, 2005

Marie Amore, sfo, Divine Mercy Region Formation Minister

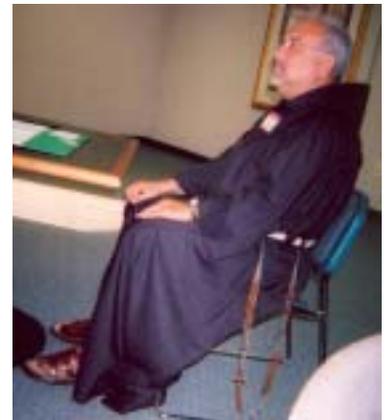
The service of the regional formation minister has been blessed with a hard working team that includes, Marie Criste, Margo Dean, Rosemary Hannaford, and Patti Reynolds. As always the Friar Spiritual Assistants are a part of the team.

Our local fraternities use resources that have been encouraged by NAFRA formation chairs: Come and See, Catch Me a Rainbow, To live as Francis Lived, The Richness of the Secular Franciscan Rule, Fully Mature with the Fullness of Christ.

During 2005 in keeping with the regional fraternity's goals to focus on formation, all of the gatherings of both the regional executive council and the total regional council included time for on-going formation. In December the focus was on advent and Christmas. In February the subject was "What does the term Divine Mercy mean to us?" In June Fr. Tod gave a prayerful presentation of the San Damiano Cross.

The Regional fraternity invited NAFRA's formation team to present the "ON THE ROAD" workshop the weekend of August 5-7. Presenters were Teresa Baker, Claire Breen, Anne Mulqueen and Fr. Richard Trezza. Evaluations showed that participants were pleased with the workshop. 33 people and 6 of the executive council were present. 18 different fraternities were represented.

Divine Mercy's annual Candidate's day of reflection will be held at the Saginaw Ministry Center, in Saginaw. October 8, from 9:00 to 3:30. The place was selected to accommodate the fraternities in the central upper part of the lower peninsula. This year the team is inviting all inquirers, formation ministers and newly professed. Simultaneous tracts will be going on to accommodate those groups. Our guest speaker will be Mike Carsten, NAFRA councilor and former Regional Minister.





September, 2005

# Living By Faith

Published by the National Family Commission, Secular Franciscan Order, USA

*A letter for the ill,  
the aged, the shut-in  
and the handicapped*

Ken and Kim Flanagan, SFO 1123 S. Ridge St. Crown Point, IN 46307 219-661-2815

## FRANCIS AND EUCHARIST

Next month will close the Year of the Eucharist that was begun in October 2004 by our late Holy Father, John Paul II. In light of this, we thought we would focus on the Eucharist in the life of Francis and its meaning for us today.

For Francis, the Eucharist was truly the source and summit of his life and was the center of spiritual life. The quote below reveals the depth of his devotion to the Eucharist:

*"I conjure you brothers, kissing your feet and with the charity of which I am capable, to show all reverence and all honor possible to the Most Holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, in Whom the things that are in heaven and on earth are pacified and reconciled to the Almighty God." (St. Francis of Assisi)*

From the beginning of his conversion, Francis had a personal devotion to the Eucharist and the real presence of Jesus in this sacrament. In the Eucharist, Francis found what he needed to carry out his mission. It was food for the mission. He encouraged his early followers to share in this devotion to the Eucharist.

As food and water is to the body, the Eucharist is what sustains our relationship with Jesus and gives us the nourishment to enter more deeply into that relationship. This bread from heaven, however, is not meant to be just a personal encounter with Jesus, but rather, moves us out of our comfort zone to share this bread with others. Thus, in the Eucharist we have a blending of the personal and social aspects of our faith experience. As Blessed Sacrament Fr. Paul Berneir once wrote in his book, *Bread Broken and Shared: Broadening Our Vision of the Eucharist*, "A true Eucharist is never a passive, comforting moment alone with God, something which allows us to escape the cares and concerns of our everyday life. Eucharist is where all the cares and concerns come into focus and where we are asked to measure them against the standard lived by Jesus when he proclaimed for all to hear that the bread that he would give would provide life for the entire world."

During these closing weeks of the Year of the Eucharist, you may consider the following activities as ways to enter into the Eucharistic experience of our Franciscan vocation more deeply.

- Observe the Lord's Day by prayerfully meditating upon the gift of the Eucharist and its meaning in your life.
- Invite others to "share a meal" with you to promote the Eucharistic values of giving and receiving.
- Look for an opportunity to provide service to others in need. Some examples are: make a donation to the victims of the hurricane, offer up any suffering or pain you may be experiencing for those in need, give away unused items to those less fortunate.
- Pray the prayer listed below as we close this Year of the Eucharist.

*Lord Jesus Christ, you promised to remain forever with your Church. In the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, you fulfilled that promise.*

*We give you thanks for this most precious gift as we adore your Real Presence and welcome you into our lives in Holy Communion.*

*May our communion with you in the Eucharist inspire us to give generously of ourselves in love to our brothers and sisters. May the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of love, be for us a sign of unity and a bond of charity.*

*Keep us always grateful for the good we accomplish with your help and aid us to grow each day in holiness and virtue by uniting ourselves more closely to you in the Blessed Sacrament.*

*May we find in the Holy Eucharist the strength and grace to overcome our sins and to imitate your dying and rising, so that we may enter at last into the eternal banquet of the Lamb in the Kingdom where you live and reign, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.*

*Amen*

*(The Catholic Diocese of Arlington)*



Blessings,  
Ken and Kim



## Labor Day Message from the National Peace & Justice and Work Commissions



by the Members of the National Fraternity (NAFRA) SFO Peace & Justice and Work Commissions

Here it is again, Labor Day. The last summer picnic for family and friends. In Catholic circles editorials and reflections are written about the great labor priests of the past. We honor their memory, although most of us don't remember, or never knew, their names. It was a long time ago when parish priests spoke from the pulpit of the rights of workers and support for organized labor. We are concerned with different issues now. Today many Catholics respond to the idea of a living wage law that would require *all* workers to be paid a salary sufficient to sustain a life of dignity for themselves and their families *before* profits are tallied up as "socialism" or "state redistribution of wealth", something the Catholic Church is against.

It is certainly true that the Catholic Church is against socialism, but socialist economic theory is far more complicated than most of us realize and something we don't need to worry about. Respecting the dignity of workers is not socialism, and it will not destroy capitalism. It might even strengthen it. Workers who are treated with dignity are more productive. The truth is that the social teaching of the Catholic Church about the rights of workers, especially their right to a living wage and to organize into unions to protect their interests, has not changed in the last hundred years. (*Rerum Novarum* 1891)

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church in # 2434: "A *just wage* is the legitimate fruit of work. To refuse or withhold it can be a grave injustice." According to # 2423-4: "Any system in which social relationships are determined entirely by economic factors is contrary to the nature of the human person and his acts. A theory that makes profits the exclusive norm and ultimate end of economic activity is morally unacceptable. The disordered desire for money cannot but produce perverse effects. It is one of the causes of the many conflicts that disturb the social order. . . Every practice that reduces persons to nothing more than a means of profit enslaves man, leads to idolizing money, and contributes to the spread of atheism. 'You cannot serve God and mammon.' (Lk 16:13)" In other words, employees are entitled to a just wage, one sufficient to provide the necessities of life, *before* the profit is distributed to owners and shareholders.

In the United States today, one worker in four earns poverty wages. Poverty wages are those that pay \$18,400 a year or less for a family of four. Families earning this wage or less must turn to food pantries and clothing charities for help. In most communities housing with any comfort or privacy is unaffordable. The working poor have become a larger and larger percentage of the population. Half of all new jobs pay only the minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour. Of course, the situation for immigrants without documents is even worse. They can be paid less than the minimum wage. The only bright spot is that some states and municipalities have raised the minimum wage that must be paid by companies doing business in their communities to an amount that reflects the cost of living in their communities.

The connection between the decrease in the number of workers represented by labor unions and the plight of the working poor is not always understood. Today only 13 percent of workers are represented by labor unions, and the recent split within the AFL-CIO will not help the situation. Large corporations are hostile to unions because they consider union activity to be an interference with the right of owners and managers to remain competitive. In a globalized economy, they say, American workers must compete with workers all over the world, just as businesses must compete with similar businesses worldwide. As businesses must continually improve their methods to meet the competition, workers must continue to upgrade their skills to remain in the labor force. In this economic understanding each worker is alone, offering his services to prospective employers. If a worker can't meet the requirements for a job that pays a living wage, it is up to the worker to do something about it. That sounds fair enough, but the reality is that in this country we have workers who lack the education and social skills to advance in any industry or service. Some workers will always be at the bottom of the pay scale. That bottom should be sufficient to sustain a life "worthy of people redeemed by Christ." (Rule 13)



## Message...National Peace & Justice and Work Commissions, (*continued*)



by the Members of the National Fraternity (NAFRA) SFO Peace & Justice and Work Commissions

Labor unions can improve the lives of workers. Labor unions have their detractors, and it is true that some of them are or have been corrupt, just as some corporations are or have been corrupt. The facts are that workers represented by unions have higher wages, better benefits, and an ongoing voice in what happens at work. Union jobs pay roughly 20 percent more than non-union jobs. The difference between union and non-union wages is even higher for African American, Latino and women workers. Collective bargaining makes a huge difference in worker access to decent pensions and health insurance coverage. Union workers are 53 percent more likely than non-union workers to get health insurance benefits through their jobs and are nearly five times more likely to have a guaranteed defined-benefit pension plan. (National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, <http://www.nicwj.org>)

As Catholics and Secular Franciscans, we uphold the dignity of persons by asserting the dignity of labor. There are specific things that we can do:

- ◆ Speak out for an increase in the minimum wage. Write members of Congress and urge them to support the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2005 (HR 2429 and S 1062) that would raise workers' wages from \$5.15 to \$7.25 an hour in three increments of 70 cents each over a two year period. While not a living wage, it would be an improvement. Support efforts in your state or city to raise the minimum wage to a living wage.
- ◆ Insist that companies take some responsibility for the effect their global decisions have on the lives of workers. Both private industry and the government, working together, must help workers laid off when individual jobs or entire industries are moved overseas.
- ◆ Support workers who choose to join or organize a union. According to John Paul II, workers have a right to be represented by a union. (*Laborem Exercens* #20) Workers belonging to a union should be able to engage in collective bargaining without threats of job loss.
- ◆ Employers can do much more to make work less destructive of family life. Find out about family leave policies for parents and how work hours could be better adjusted to family life. Then purchase from those companies with the better policies, just as you purchase from companies that have policies friendly to the environment.
- ◆ When workers accept lower salaries and work longer hours to help an employer compete, they must also share in any increased profit by having their wages raised. Do business with companies that share their gains with workers as well as with shareholders.

### Prayer:

God of labor and of rest, You worked six days before resting, and you feel the pain of workers who suffer in so many ways. Ever present God, help us to not turn a blind eye to the injustices in our own country that prevent individuals and families from living in dignity and from having their basic needs fulfilled. Help us to work for just pay, safe conditions, adequate health care and benefits, and work environments that promote human dignity for all workers and their families. Amen  
Source: Center of Concern Education for Justice Project  
[www.coc.org](http://www.coc.org)

### National Peace and Justice Commission

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## Fraternity Life...Pictures from the Semi-Annual Meeting

taken by Sheri Hafeli, SFO, Divine Mercy Region Newsletter Editor



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