

**Regular Meeting:** Sunday, May 18, at 2:00 PM–North Room, St. Helen’s Christian Living Center, followed by the Council Meeting.

**Agenda and Schedule for Meeting:**

- 2:00 Opening Prayer, Reports, Old/New Business
- 2:20 Blessing of our donations to the Food Pantry
- 2:25 Ongoing formation
  1. Elizabeth of Hungary – Sarah Hardy
  2. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit and their relationship to St. Francis – Ed O’Donnell
- 3:10 Refreshments and break
- 3:30 Liturgy of the Hours
- 4:00 Closing Prayer and dismissal
- 4:15 Council Meeting

**Meeting for Inquiry Candidates:** Tuesday, May 13, 11: 00 AM at Helen’s house.

**Refreshment Committee:**

- Snacks:** Susan Solloway and Kathleen Van Buskirk
- Beverages:** Gene Caldarone

**Remember in your prayers:** Julia McHugh, Jennie Donlin, Jerry Carey, Donna Haro, John Matthews, Fred Schaeffer, Marie Fee, Jack Solloway, and all professed Franciscans in our Florida region who are ill, as well as those members of our Fraternity who cannot attend our meetings regularly.

**Coming Events:** Annual Regional Fraternity Meeting, May 23-25 at the San Pedro Retreat Center in Winter Park.

Day of Recollection in honor of the Feast of St. Anthony, June 13, to be held at St. Lucie Church. Particulars will be forthcoming.

**From the Minister’s Desk:** Our Lady smiles on us today as we honor her in this her month of May. May is the perfect month to celebrate Mary. Beautiful, delicate flowers are coming into bloom. Spring brings new life just as our Blessed Mother brought new life to us in the birth of her Son. She is our intercessor. Through her we become closer to her Son.

Blessed Mother, be with us always and guide us to the throne of your Son.

**That feeling of holiness...**

About 40 years ago, I visited a beautiful chapel, in the Capuchin Franciscan friary of Mary Immaculate in Garrison, N.Y. I heard they’re selling the property or that it has been sold. But in any case, that chapel was a great place to visit with Jesus. When one entered the chapel, a feeling of holiness was felt. The Gothic Altar was beautiful, carved out of wood with a three panel (Triptych) back. The floors were wood, too, and there was a certain smell, maybe it was paste wax, but it was a smell I associated with old, and often very intimate, churches in Europe where for many generations thousands of people, often the hard-working poor, had prayed on their knees. Sometimes I hanker back to this feeling of holiness.

People talk to us here and there. Often after Holy Mass at local churches and some have remarked that this old-time reverence just doesn’t seem to be with us anymore. I know what they mean and when they talk about it, it reminds me of the friary chapel, but I’m not sure I agree that easily.

*See “Holy” page 4*

**DIVINE MERCY  
FRATERNITY  
SECULAR FRANCISCAN  
ORDER  
VERO BEACH, FLORIDA**

**Minister:** Peggy Rysdyke, SFO  
**Vice-Minister:** Donna M. Haro, SFO  
**Secretary:** Elizabeth Smith, SFO  
**Treasurer:** Sarah Hardy, SFO  
**Formation Director:** Helen Caldarone, SFO  
**Councillors-at-Large:** Ed O'Donnell, SFO,  
Fred Schaeffer, SFO, and Kathleen Van Buskirk, SFO  
**Spir. Assisitant:** Fr. Richard P. LaCorte, SFO  
**Vocation Director:** Kathleen Van Buskirk, SFO  
**Commissioners**  
Work: Donna M. Haro, SFO  
Family: Eugene Caldarone, SFO  
Peace and Justice: John Matthews, SFO  
Youth: Pauline Pavlick, SFO  
Ecology: Fred Schaeffer, SFO

**He immersed himself in God**

A few weeks ago, the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, addressing 40,000 people, recalled his predecessor, Pope John Paul II. This is what he said at the third anniversary of his death: "Among the many human and supernatural qualities" of the late Pontiff, Benedict XVI mentioned "that of an exceptional spiritual and mystical sensibility. It sufficed to watch him as he prayed: he literally immersed himself in God and, during those moments, it seemed as if everything else was foreign to him. ... The Mass - as he often said - was for him the focal point of every day and of his entire life. The 'living and holy' reality of the Eucharist gave him the spiritual energy to guide the People of God along the path of history".

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Remember what John Paul II always used to tell us... "Do not be Afraid." Yet people busy themselves with all sorts of mysteries and darkness, such as a Mayan doomsday theory in 2012. That year will start and end normally, and no harm will come to us. Do not be afraid! Do not listen to some off-the wall theory that is unproven, that is based on legend or superstition or on untruths.

Pope John Paul II was a courageous man. He suffered terribly in his final years, he even lost the power of speech. As Pope Benedict states, "As it was with Jesus, so with John Paul II, in the end words gave way to the extreme sacrifice, to the gift of self. Death was the seal of an existence entirely donated to Christ, conformed to Him even in physical terms, in his suffering and faithful abandonment in the arms of the heavenly Father".

He went on, "Servant of God John Paul II personally knew and experienced the immense tragedies of the 20th century, and for a long time he asked himself what could stem the tide of evil. The answer could not but be in the love of God. In fact, only Divine Mercy is capable of limiting evil; only God's all-powerful love can overcome the arrogance of the wicked, and the destructive power of selfishness and hatred".

"May the Church", Pope Benedict added in conclusion, "following his teaching and example, continue in her evangelizing mission faithfully and without compromise, tirelessly spreading Christ's merciful love, source of true peace for the whole world".

We all have a mission to evangelize our Faith, and Servant of God John Paul II was very good at it, because he was a "people Pope." He had a strong charisma to other people, perhaps more so than any other Pope before him. Here are some ways we can evangelize:

1. Stuff bill payment envelopes with Catholic tracts.
2. Volunteer to take charge of your parish's literature rack.
3. Play a video or audio tape for door-to-door missionaries.
4. Place tracts or booklets in the pews at your parish.\*
5. Write and answer messages on your online service. Go door to door, hanging leaflets from doorknobs.

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**Formation program for the Eighth Centenary of St. Elizabeth of Hungary****Year Two: THE SPIRITUAL ASPECT****Month 6. Conscience, Peace and Justice Issues.**

During the first year of formation we discussed Elizabeth's following of her conscience and her concern for justice. This year we should focus on the principles of conscience and acting for justice and peace in the human community we live in.

Each and every one of us has an innate knowledge of the moral law "written on our hearts" and will be judged by it, as St. Paul reminds us (Romans 2:15). The formation of a good conscience means listening to and understanding what God commands, making it our own and being able to judge our possible actions in our own lives in the light of these teachings. Elizabeth had choices to make in regard to conscience. She had to ask herself whether certain actions were in fact complicity in injustice. This is why she refused unjustly acquired foods at her husband's table, and later from her brother-in-law. To do the right thing according to our conscience is often very difficult. Elizabeth nevertheless did some very hard things to avoid the slightest wrong, even when these things were in opposition to her husband's policies.

But Elizabeth did not only have to avoid being a partner to injustice, she had to perform just acts as well. As a ruler, and as an individual, she listened to the voices of the oppressed and came to their aid. Much of the time we are content to do the minimum to avoid sinning, and leave the more difficult and positive just actions undone. Am I more concerned with merely avoiding evil or with doing good?

Elizabeth did both of these things because she wanted, as St. Francis says, to appear completely sincere before God, as someone who carries Christ within her, and also as one who gives birth to him in her actions. So too with us. Are all my actions such that people can see Christ in them? Is my own life consistent with my beliefs?

As Christians we must bear witness to our belief in the dignity of all people as children of God as brothers and sisters in Christ. We must be concerned about the issues of justice, peace, human rights and dignity, the right to work and a consistent life ethic. Do I speak up when the dignity or human rights of other people are violated in my neighborhood or my city, or do I look the other way? Do I live moderately according to my means, act responsibly with my possessions, and use the surplus to help others? Do I follow public affairs and inform myself about justice issues so I can vote on them according to my conscience? Am I concerned with human rights throughout the world? What positive things can we do as a fraternity to advance peace, justice and human rights?

**Scripture**

"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' but not do what I command?" (Luke 6:46).

"If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead." (James 2: 15-17).

"For when the Gentiles who do not have the law by nature observe the prescriptions of the law . . . they show that the demands of the law are written in their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even defend them on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge people's hidden works through Christ Jesus." (Romans 2:14-16)

**Franciscan Documents**

"We are mothers when we carry [Christ] in our heart and body through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience; we give birth to him through a holy life which must give light to others by example" (Exhortation of St. Francis to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance).

"Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith." (SFO Rule Chapter I, 15)

"Let them esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community." (SFO Rule Chapter I, 16).

"Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon." (SFO I, 19).

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6. Write to the editor when the press misrepresents the faith.
7. Place Catholic literature on windshields.
8. Give away photocopies of articles from periodicals.
9. Send a friend (or a stranger) a book or a tape.
10. Call radio talk shows.
11. Leave Catholic tracts and flyers in conspicuous places.

The other way to evangelize is to start a website, as I have done, that is open to all believers and unbelievers alike. Although the main purpose of this website is the Secular Franciscan Order, more than half of the content of this website potentially applies to all those who are seeking order in their lives. It is my deepest hope that reading about Pope John Paul II, who immersed himself in God, may lead many to Jesus Christ.

May God's blessings be with you all day long.

Fred Schaeffer, SFO  
4/3/2008

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### **Continued from page 1 (Holy)**

In the old days, that is, before Vatican II, there was much reverence in our Churches. And it was beautiful. During Holy Mass people hardly looked up. They were praying. What, very often, they prayed was the Rosary. Now I love the Rosary but the Rosary really shouldn't be prayed during Holy Mass. It should be prayed after Holy Mass as is done many churches these days, or it should be prayed at home, as a family prayer, but not during Holy Mass. The Second Vatican Council brought much light into the Church. By changing the Latin Mass into local language, we now pray with the priest, the celebrant, sometimes alternating with him. And what's more, more people now understand what they're saying! I think that's beautiful! After all, at the Last Supper, Jesus broke bread with the Apostles and everyone understood what Jesus said. We also understand what Jesus said... "This is My Body... This is My Blood."

Unfortunately, some Liturgists have gotten the idea that the Catholic people who come to Mass ought to greet one another before Mass begins. That in itself isn't a bad idea provided the greeting doesn't take 15 minutes. Some parishes beautifully cover this on Sundays by singing a Gathering Hymn. Other parishes have their Cantor or Worship Leader ask the people in the pews to greet one another by shaking hands. But there are many parishes where people come in talking to their friends and often do not even stop when Mass begins. That's not so good!

Many people have lost the sense of holiness in our churches because the Tabernacle was not readily visible... but that matter has been addressed by the Bishops and I think the solution, to place the Tabernacle in a more prominent place in the sanctuary, is perhaps what the Vatican Council originally intended.

That sense of holiness is not the smell of paste wax, nor is it what goes on around us before or during Mass. If people are faithful, if they pray a lot, go to Holy Mass and receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist frequently or daily, then the holiness is in their heart and soul, the holiness comes from within. Today, the new churches that have been built within the last 15 years are truly beautiful. Let us bring the love of Jesus in with us as we come to worship with others Sundays or everyday!

Fred Schaeffer, SFO  
2008

## Thoughts from the Formation Director

By Helen F. Caldarone, SFO

I know and you know that our own personal “ongoing formation” is, and has always been, in our own hands. The Church, our Mother and our Teacher, tells us from our youth that we have an obligation to conform our conscience to truth. We may seek to conform our free will to the Will of God in many different ways: we read Scripture, examine our conscience at the end of each day, seek advice from confessors and spiritual directors, study the lives of the saints, attend to the teachings in papal documents, seek divine guidance in prayer. These, and others, are all effective means to ensure some degree of progress in our lifelong quest to “seek and find” the truth,

But, perhaps the most difficult level of truth to get to know is the truth about ourselves. As much as one may try, being one’s own source of spiritual guidance doesn’t work. It reminds me of the old saying, “He who acts as his own lawyer, has a fool for a client”. One either is too hard on oneself or too easy. Knowing yourself is a lot harder than it sounds. It takes a great deal of humility and prayer. Our Seraphic Father, St. Francis, was better at it than most and, as Franciscans, he must be our primary model. Like St. Paul, we seek our redemption in fear and trembling knowing that we can never have certainty about the state of our own soul.

Nevertheless, in order to begin to make progress in our personal spiritual formation; we need to evaluate our progress so far and set goals. It’s like an exercise program - spiritual exercises, of course. An excellent place to start would be to read St. Francis de Sales’ “Introduction to the Devout Life” and, after that, to look for a Spiritual Director. Good signs that you are on the right track are seeking prayer time, loving time spent before the Blessed Sacrament, finding satisfaction in religious reading and discussion, wearing your Tau cross and surrounding yourself with reminders of your faith life - books, relics, pictures, statues, EWTN programs on TV and radio, and faith-filled music.

This takes us back to an idea that was briefly mentioned at a recent fraternity meeting - i.e., the domestic church. Simply stated, it concerns the importance of having your home reflect your faith. Looking at your bookshelves, would a visitor know that you are a Catholic or even a Christian? Walking through the house, not only the bedrooms (which, by the way, should all have a crucifix displayed), have you placed pictures and statues of saints? Do you turn to EWTN on television? Have you set up a home altar for prayer? This may be in a private or public spot. A family I know has set up a beautiful altar inside what appears to be an entertainment center - just open up the doors and there it is!! I have heard that the grandchildren love it - what a great opportunity to evangelize the youngest generation.

Such additions to your home not only help you personally, but they also promote what I like to call “teachable moments”, questions and answers whether from family, friends or foes. . Remember, religion and worship is, essentially, a public matter. Believe it or not, surrounding yourself with physical reminders of your faith will help you to “convert your heart every day” as St. Francis tells us we must do. God bless you all.

*Addition to May 2008 Newsletter*