

Divine Mercy Fraternity • Secular Franciscan Order

Vero Beach, Florida
www.franciscan-sfo.org

Regular Meeting: Sunday, February 8, 2009, at 2:00 PM - North Room of St. Helen's Parish Center, followed by Council Meeting.

Agenda and Schedule for Meeting:

- 2:00 Opening Prayer, Reports, Old/New Business
- 2:20 Blessing of the donations to the Food Pantry
- 2:25 Ongoing Formation: Article 1 of the Secular Franciscan Order Rule Book.
Please read Article 1 because we will have a discussion of it – Peggy Rysdyke
- 3:10 Refreshments and break
- 3:30 Liturgy of the Hours
- 4:00 Closing Prayer and dismissal
- 4:15 Council Meeting

Refreshment Committee:

Snacks: Sarah Hardy and Donna Haro
Beverages: Adele Lamour

Remember in your prayer: Julia McHugh, Jennie Donlin, 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.

Reminder: Fair Share has been increased to \$50.00. This includes the \$2.00 for FAN.

From the Minister's Desk: February 25th is Ash Wednesday. This Lenten period is an opportunity for sacrifice and cleansing. It is a time to concentrate on Christ, to look inward and listen to His voice. He calls us to a less worldly path. He calls us to a steep, rocky path, a path that leads to Him and eternal life. As we allow Him to strip us of worldly desires, we come closer to purification. Let us open ourselves to Him who loves us with an everlasting love.

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: *vacant*

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

Other: Webmaster/Ed. Fred Schaeffer, SFO

The Canticle

Ash Wednesday 2009 - Going up the Mountain

In a second hand bookstore, I found an interesting book by Fr. Edward Hays, "The Ascent of the Mountain of God." This is a for the Journey of Lent. 1994. Forest of Peace Publishing, Leavenworth, KS. Obviously, I cannot use Fr. Hays writing as this would violate a copyright, but I do not think there is any harm in using a concept - traveling up a mountain. That makes sense to me, because I wrote about "Ascent to Interior Prayer," which is also a going up or reaching for a new plateau in the spiritual life. Fr. Hays notes that in Isaiah 2:3, we are invited to this mountain journey as the prophet writes: "Come, let us climb God's mountain."

Mountain climbers are never satisfied. They scale one peak, and the next time they want to better themselves by climbing a higher peak. For people who are into the Spiritual Life, who have invested time and effort into it, they too, desire to better their journeying experiences in time. We are speaking of the interior life, the life of the soul. Lent is an excellent time for a journey to better oneself, and at the same time to retreat to a fallback position, a position of humility, to get rid of distractions and serve Our Lord fully with strong commitment. There aren't many mountains in Florida where I live, in fact there aren't any. But in Palestine, there is Mount Tabor, where the Transfiguration took place. And, of course, in Jerusalem there is Golgotha where the Crucifixion takes place.

"Let us go to the Mountain of God" - Ash Wednesday prepares us for the journey through Lent. On this day, we pray in anticipation of leading a life with fewer distractions for 40 days. In order to go up the mountain of interior prayer which has a fuller life with God as its goal, we have to eliminate the confusion and frustrations of life so that we will become pure of heart. The ashes placed on our foreheads is a sign of going into penance. It is also a sign of leaving the world by preparing to go up the mountain. Have you done everything to make the trip? Have you received the Sacrament of Reconciliation so that you may receive Our Lord in Holy Communion more often during Lent?

It would be nice if you did not have to travel alone. Perhaps your spouse will want to make this journey with you. Or your brother or sister? On Fridays, some of us (depending on age) will have to fast. I hear people say - what difference does it make what we eat on such days, or being above the age limit, people talk as if a great weight has been lifted from them. Really, fasting, if you can, is all part of the trip up the mountain. Jesus would be so pleased if you did something you were not required to do.

We are always called to share what we have with our sisters and brothers, especially with the poor and homeless. In Lent that is even more important! While we seek a certain intimacy with God in our prayer life, this intimacy would go nowhere unless we learn how to say 'I am sorry, ' and 'I forgive you.' more easily. We also must be able to forgive ourselves. You go to confession and God forgives you. That means, you will not heal until you forgive yourselves - but some people are unable to do that.

Many parishes have Lenten homilies or special Lenten retreat programs. These are very useful for getting us on our way. Jesus invited us to "Come follow me." Let us say "Yes, Lord, your servant is listening."

We listen for instructions how to come closer to Jesus. In a world that is so much into speed, warp-speed, let's slow down just a bit and make a daily commitment each day of Lent that will lead, eventually, to a life-long commitment, to take the opportunity offered to us, to begin our trip. In olden days, the priest used to pray "Introibo ad Altare Dei." (Let us go up to the Altar of God) - it is an upward trip to become close to Jesus, every day. Becoming closer to Jesus has an immense amount of "Grace" attached to it, and it will help you along the more difficult passages up the mountain."

Fred S. Schaeffer, SFO