



the Franciscan Times

Lord, Make Me an Instrument of thy Peace

A quarterly newsletter, whose purpose is helping members of the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis share a common journey through news from fellowships and individuals, reviews of books and tapes, poetry, and whatever the Holy Spirit might blow our way.

EASTER, 1992

FROM THE EDITOR:

Inside this Easter issue, you will find some thought-provoking, true-life adventures of your fellow tertiaries, some very Franciscan humor, the latest information about our recently-revived lending library, some poetry and art work and book reviews, and of course, news of fellowships and convocations.

Nina Andrews, a faithful and creative tertiary now confined to a rest home in Bristol, CT, contributed a most timely prayer for the unemployed, and we received our first three letters for publication.

We hope you catch the Spirit and send us your own Franciscan experiences, thoughts, comments, or information which can be shared with others.

Co-editor Rik Fitch did not contribute a whole lot to this issue, but he does have a good excuse. By the time you read this he will be married (April 25) to the Rev. Heather Mueller, Rector of St. John's Episcopal Church

ALLELUIA!



in Kula, Maui. And in the last month, he designed and built a stained glass door for St. John's as a memorial to a couple who had been long-time and faithful parishioners. And oh yes, he maintained his "Franciscan" job as an active member of the Maui Food Bank team. He promises to write about his adventures for the next issue.

The drawing adjacent was taken from the cartoon which Rik prepared for the stained glass door. Of course, the two-dimensional, black and white rendering does not

begin to capture the real beauty of the colors and textures which make up this work of art.

May this Easter season bring you and your families the reality of new and renewed life in Christ with St. Francis as your guide.

Pax et Bonum . . . and Aloha!

Robert Durand TSSF

The Chaplain's Journal

Simplicity is part of the Franciscan life. We all know that. Worrying, however, is not. If we spend more time picking nervously at our blemishes than we do loving others, we are on the wrong road.

It's true that God cares more about how well we love God and our neighbor than how "simple" we are. But it looks to me as if we are better able to love others when a humble simplicity has become our habitual state of mind. I know that attachment to my things, my power, or my roles is what prevents me from loving others with all my heart and strength.

If that's so, we need to ask ourselves how we can make simplicity our normal state of mind. One way prescribed for us all is to make regular reports to our area chaplains (or novice counselors). Don't worry about simplicity. Just take the time periodically to evaluate, with the help of the Holy Spirit, how much you have allowed the values of a money-mad, power-mad society to distort your Franciscan Gospel values.

The regular practice of reporting after serious reflection will ultimately cure your time-consuming worry and give you instead a mind that evaluates danger signs so quickly that you will immediately recognize and abandon the wrong roads.

If you've been delinquent about reporting, why not make an Easter resolution to report during this season and regularly thereafter?

Duties performed confer gifts of grace, and 'tis a gift to be simple.



*Deacon Marie L. Webner
Chaplain, American Province*

MP Gathering at Hilfield Friary

(continued from page 3)

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. ²If you refuse to let them go, I will plague your whole country with frogs. ³The river shall swarm with frogs; they shall come up into your palace, into your bedchamber and your bed, and into your ovens and your kneading bowls. ⁴The frogs shall come up on you and on your people and on all your officials.'" ⁵

And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, the canals, and the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.'" ⁶ So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. ⁷ But the magicians did the same by their secret arts, and brought frogs up . . . and so forth.

Well, it seemed very funny at the time. There was plenty of joy at Hilfield. AW

MPs Gather at Hilfield Friary

by Alden Whitney TSSF
Minister Provincial, American Province

In early November 1991, the Ministers Provincial of the Third Order met for four days at Hilfield Friary near Dorchester, in England. The skies were cold and threatening, and during our stay, there were periods of high winds, driving rain, and hail. The Friary seemed to be far removed from any busy-ness, but there were many wayfarers who came to star for several days of good food and a warm bed — men who were “tramps” and who usually had no place to sleep except under a hedge.

Brian Hamilton, Third Order Minister General, had travelled from Tauranga, New Zealand, where he is also Minister Provincial. M.P. Stephen Williams and his wife Diane came from Waga, Waga, Australia. Gwen Jones, the M.P. for Africa, had flown from Durban, South Africa. Stephen Platten had driven up from his home base in London as Minister Provincial for Europe. I had flown in from New York. Four of us were new in the role of Minister Provincial, but we had all met one or another of us during our travels for the Order.

We had a number of formal meetings for discussion and the exchange of information about our various provinces. There were times for worship and fun with the First Order community, as well as meals together. Brother Damien, who is Minister for the First Order in Britain, came to be with us. We visited Sr. Elizabeth, Guardian of the CSF sisters at Compton, Durville. We toured Sherborne Abbey and dropped into a country tavern for a Sunday luncheon. Thus, by the end of our stay, we had become quite well acquainted with each other.

Our deliberations included considering some proposed changes to the Constitution brought forth by the Australians, who will present them in written form later in 1992. We recommended a 30-day form of the Rule of the Third Order, composed by the Australians, for daily reading. I have incorporated some revisions made by the American Province and modified by the Ministers at Hilfield. It is ready for distribution to all the Tertiaries of the Society of St.

Francis worldwide, promoting unity and more ready availability of the basics of our life and rule.

Preliminary plans were made for the Inter-provincial Third Order Chapter (IPTOC) to be held at Little Portion Friary in October of 1993. Brian Hamilton asked the various Provinces to suggest potential themes for IPTOC by the end of 1992.

There was, of course, Franciscan humor along the way. Brian told us about a story he had heard of a woman in London who had decided to become a

*"There was
plenty of joy ..."*

religious sister of one of the Franciscan groups. The prospective postulant had a friend in British Intelligence, and he secretly decided to put through a security check on the Society of St. Francis, lest his friend be joining a subversive group. The report resulting from the intelligence check was “satisfactory,” namely that members of SSF are “harmless eccentrics, grade 2.”

And one night, the Hilfield brothers served a delicious sausage and pastry dish called “toad in a hole.” At the end of the meal, the Scripture reading was one said by the Guardian to be appointed for meetings of provincial ministers, specifically Exodus 8:1 ff:

(continued on page 2)

A Tertiary Writes:
REFLECTIONS FROM PALESTINE

(Editor's Note: Terry Rogers TSSF is currently serving as a long-term volunteer with Middle East Witness on the West Bank. Sponsored by Muslims, Jews, and Christians, Middle East Witness seeks a just and peaceful solution to the suffering and fear that the Israeli occupation brings to Palestinians and Israelis alike.)

Dear Friends,

Sunday, December 8 - I've been in Nablus for three weeks now, living and working at the small (50-bed) St. Luke's hospital. . . . The hospital has a school of practical nursing, whose students are 23 young women from Nablus and surrounding towns, villages, and refugee camps, and my job is to supervise them and reinforce their technical skills as they work on the wards. Much of the experience of these weeks has been confusing and disorienting, but the students have been my lifeline, greeting me every day with smiles, showing me around the hospital, and explaining their work to me.

There's a small Anglican church near the hospital, and I've begun to meet people there, but I was not able to go to church this morning, as Nablus was placed under curfew last night, probably to prevent demonstrations tomorrow, the 4th anniversary of the intifada. This morning as I looked out of my door, it was amazing to look across to the opposite hill and see the streets of this large city completely empty except for an army jeep going by.

After a recent visit to the students' dormitory, I can give you another chapter in the story of Middle Eastern women dancing for each other. These young women, almost all Muslims, work in navy dresses with white pinafores and most wear white veils that completely cover their hair, very tidy and sweet.

In the dorm in the evening, because there are no men, they take off their veils and let down their hair and relax in brightly colored sweatpants and sweatshirts. This night, they played cassettes of Arabic music, tied scarves around their hips and danced some very beautiful Arabic dances and some contemporary Western popular dances, joyously and un-selfconsciously, laughing and clapping their hands for one another.

Needless to say, it was not long before I got up and joined them, which pleased them no end. Before I left, I told them I would be writing a report to my friends in the U.S., and what would they like me to tell them?

"Tell them how we get along with each other; we did not know one another before we came here, and now we live together like sisters."

"Tell them that even though we seem happy to be dancing, we have many problems. In the curfew it is bad - the father can't go to work and so he can't find food for his children. In spite of our problems we are strong. We do our dancing to help keep us strong."

Last week I went home with one of the students on her free day to spend the night with her and her family in a small village near Nablus, high up in

A Tertiary Writes (continued):

the hills. When we got out of the taxi and walked up the hills, I could hardly believe the beauty my eyes were seeing. This is really the Palestinian countryside, with small stone houses, green grass, and olive trees, other trees a soft gold color, paths winding around and up and down, the hills above and below terraced for rows of olive trees.

The sun was shining, and I drank coffee with Suzanne and her father in their little front yard, her many younger brothers and sisters shyly watching. It's hard to imagine what they think when they see me, but I think they want very much for Americans to see them and not think they are evil people.

December 11 - The curfew was lifted yesterday, and I came down to Jerusalem. It was wonderful to see the pile of mail that was waiting for me. I really do not feel far away from all the

people I care about, and hearing from you is a blessing. I'm reading the book of Zechariah for Advent and am struck by what it says about the Lord once again choosing Jerusalem, and people living with one another in peace there. An Israeli friend whom I say this morning told me what she had told her daughter about the meaning of when the Messiah will come - when people will be good to each other and live in peace.

January 21 - I've been here about three months now, and I've been trying to take stock of what I've "witnessed." Please don't imagine that the occupation and the intifada are primarily a matter of dodging bullets in the streets (though we do hear gunfire in Nablus). By and large, armed clashes are fewer than they were a couple of years ago.

What's difficult to witness is the bureaucratic and financial strangulation of the occupation - the regulation of thousands of details of everyday life: the family who is denied a building permit for a home or shop; the man whose Jordanian-born Palestinian wife is not given residency; the shopkeeper whose taxes have quadrupled; the seven offices whose approval a Palestinian must have in order to get a permit to cross the border to work in Israel.

Recently there was a luncheon at the hospital to honor the Anglican bishop, and all the staff was there. One of the speakers was Dr. Mamdouh al-Aker, a Nablus physician, member of the Palestinian advisory delegation to the peace talks, who had been arrested last March and severely mistreated in prison. Since I couldn't understand his words, I studied the faces around me -- old and young, men and women, nurses and doctors, maids and cooks. I wish I had the skill to describe what I saw as he rose to speak: critical intelligence listening, combined with intent and hopeful expectancy. Few will say that they have hopes in the peace process (which doesn't necessary mean they don't support it). But at that moment, their faces showed such longing to hear some news which would give them hope.

"We do our
dancing to help
keep us strong."

(continued on page 6)

A Tertiary Writes (continued):

Since December 1, Nablus has been under a 5 p.m. to 4 a.m. curfew, so on Christmas Eve, I went to the labor room and stood at a woman's bedside as her child was born. That was my Midnight Mass, my Bethlehem. But there was another moment that, probably because it caught me off guard, moved me even more deeply, and I'll close this letter with the poem that sort of wrote itself afterwards:

NABLUS: THE LABOR ROOM AT NIGHT

Five days before Christmas
and there's no one in the labor room
but a baby in an incubator, born that morning,
and four nurses, listening to Arabic music
on a cassette tape player.
One song, as all agree, is the most beautiful
and suddenly Nawal gets up and starts dancing,
and we clap our hands and cry,
"Yalla, Nawal, yalla, yalla!" *

That night before I fall asleep
I cannot forget the grace of that moment,
and I say to myself,
Nawal was dancing in the labor room.

* (yalla means "come on" or let's go!")



February 19 - On Mt. Gerezim, the southern slope of Nablus, is a village where about 250 Samaritans live. A popular Israeli guidebook says, "Their community resulted from the intermarriage of Jews, who were not deported after the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 BC, and the Babylonians who were settled there. Since then, they have not been recognized by official Jewry and have suffered intermittent persecution. Their Torah Scroll contains only the first five books of Moses, and since 350 BC, their shrine has been on Mt. Gerezim, where they celebrate the Passover each year. The only other Samaritans live in a small colony near Tel Aviv."

A few nights ago, a woman in labor came into the hospital accompanied by her family. She was examined and admitted and went out to walk in the corridor for a while. The midwife turned to me and said, "She is not Muslim; she is not Christian; she is Samri." When I asked what Samri was, she answered, "as Jews." I said, "Is she a Samaritan?" "Yes, Samri." I sat there for a while and digested this information: the woman and her family, in dress and bearing and language, were indistinguishable from other Palestinians I had met.

Somewhat later, the midwife, whose English is only a little better than my Arabic, said, "Muslim, Christian, Samri - democracia," smiling gently and confidently at me. After the delivery, some of the family members came into the room to see the mother and baby, and the staff here was congratulating them. One of our resident doctors said to me, quietly, "You see, we are happy with the Jews. Yet always you hear the propaganda, that we want to throw them into the sea."

It seems important to me to share this incident, though I think its meaning is not simple or obvious, and I can't claim to fully understand it. It is full of poignancy, though, on many levels, or so it seems to me: the joyful birth

A Tertiary Writes (continued):

of a new member of the tiny Samaritan community; that they are considered to be Jews by their Palestinian neighbors but not by other Jews; that this midwife and doctor wanted me to see and believe in their vision of a humane and civilized Palestinian society; that there's a world of difference between this small, indigenous, and culturally assimilated Samaritan community and the Israeli settlement on Mt. Ebal, the northern slope of Nablus, whose lights we can see from our hospital windows.

Much of this is running through my mind, as the mother's sister is kissing her, and the midwife is handing the baby to the grandmother, and the doctor is taking off his gloves and wiping his face, and other men and women from the family are peeking in the door and beaming. The air is charged, and people are high from joy and relief after a successful delivery; like all births, a special moment, but part of the ordinary routine for this small maternity department.

"no birth in the occupied territory is without political significance"

Yet no birth in the occupied territory is without political significance. Writing about this several days later, I think again of the midwife and the doctor: with due regard for all the ironies and complexities, I believe they saw themselves as having provided a safe and welcoming place for a Jewish baby to be born.

* * * * *

I feel cut off from the settlements, and in most ways, from Israel as well. It's difficult to describe the depth of the division between these two communities and how hard it is to make connections in one when you're situated in the other.

However, in December, I visited a synagogue in West Jerusalem with a Middle East Witness short-term delegation. Through that visit, I made friends with an Israeli woman whom I visit each time I come down to Jerusalem. There is no one in the region who has been a richer source of emotional and spiritual support for me. It was because of hearing her story of the painfully difficult birth of her first child that I had decided to work in the labor room at St. Luke's Hospital, giving emotional support and breathing coaching to the women in advanced labor.

Today, for the first time, I told her of this connection. And I said that every time I feel like it's the same woman, and that there's only and always one woman giving birth. Then we talked about the crossing of barriers and the healing of wounds.

Peace and Love, Terry Rogers TSSF

P.O. Box 20961, Jerusalem, Israel

PLEASE NOTE: Anyone wishing to help sponsor Terry Rogers in her volunteer work with this important mission may send contributions to:
MIDDLE EAST WITNESS, c/o Resource Center for Nonviolence,
515 Broadway, Santa Cruz, CA 95060.

F E L L O W S H I P N E W S

ATTENTION CONVENORS:

If news about your Fellowship -- be it something to share from a past or current gathering, or information about an upcoming meeting, retreat, or quiet day -- should be on these pages, please send it to: Robert Durand TSSF, 2124 Awihi Place, #215, Kihei, Maui, Hawaii 96753.
Deadline for the Summer issue is July 1.

NEW YORK FELLOWSHIP

Correspondent VIVIAN MORRELL reports that the Fellowship met at Trinity Church, Manhattan, on St. Francis Day for renewal of vows, a Eucharist celebrated by Fr. MASUD SYDULLAH, and a pot luck supper. In December, they gathered at St. Elizabeth's, Floral Park, where they planned the April retreat at Little Portion, following Eucharist and supper.

LONG ISLAND FELLOWSHIP

From the "L.I.F. Line" of April, 1992, convenor ALISON TRENHOLME is moving to Buffalo and has resigned, turning over the leadership to convenor pro tem JANE ELLEN TRAUOGOTT. Jane Ellen has organized a prayer chain for the fellowship, and led members in a "thought-provoking meditation" in the March meeting at Christ Church, Port Jefferson.

EAST TENNESSEE FELLOWSHIP

From The Portiuncula Messenger of March, 1992, the program at the February meeting focused on the topic of "simplicity" using as reference the new formation letters. Members present discussed simplicity as Franciscans and how it affected their lives. The Fellowship Spring retreat will be May 29, 30, and 31 at Nazareth House and will be led by Sister Catherine, a Franciscan.

LAND OF THE SKY FELLOWSHIP (North Carolina)

The "Fruits of the Loom" newsletter reports that the Fellowship Spring retreat was April 3-5 at the Snail's Pace in Saluda. It was led by

Susan Sihler, who grew up in a Lutheran missionary family on an Indian Reservation. Her topic was "St. John of the Cross." At the March meeting, members heard about Habitat for Humanity from Bishop Folwell, retired Bishop of Central Florida. The Formation Class is organizing a pen-pal correspondence with tertiaries from other provinces.

TSSF BASICS

available from:
Jacqui Belcher, Secretary
2220 E. Victory Drive, #24
Savannah, GA 31404

suggested prices are:
Devotional Companion (\$4)
Way of St. Francis (\$2.50)
Source Book (\$2.50)
Directory (\$1)
Statutes (\$1)
Order/Admission (\$1)

F E L L O W S H I P N E W S

(continued)

NEW UMBRIAN FELLOWSHIP (San Francisco Bay Area)

The January newsletter reports that members planned a Quiet Day on March 14, shared jointly with the SACRAMENTO-DAVIS FELLOWSHIP. The leader was Brother Zeph from the Solomon Islands. On April 3-5, a Family Retreat was scheduled at St. Michael's Wagon Tree Ranch in Cazidero, and the next gathering will be at Holy Trinity in Richmond on May 9.

HAWAII FELLOWSHIP

Members were preparing to host the annual Spring Retreat on April 23-25 at St. Anthony's Retreat House on O'ahu, to be led by Br. Hal Weidner from the Spiritual Life Center. At the May 15 meeting, which will take place at the home of Deacon ROBERT MOORE, the convenor will be Deacon DOROTHY NAKATSUJI who will lead a discussion of Chapter One from the new Formation Letters.

.....

C o n v o c a t i o n N o t e s

ATTENTION CONVENORS: *The Franciscan Times* will reach interested and isolated tertiaries in your region. If you would like them to know about your gathering, please send all the details to:

Robert Durand TSSF, 2124 Awihi Place #215, Kihei, Maui, HI 96753.

Deadline for the Summer issue is July 1, 1992.

1992 SOUTH CENTRAL REGIONAL CONVOCATION

The 8th Annual Convocation for all tertiaries in the south central region of the country will take place on April 24-26 at the Bishop Mason Retreat Center in Grapevine, TX. The themes will be Maximillian Kolbe and Obedience, and the schedule will include time for silence, meditations, fellowship, study, meals, relaxation, and music. Transportation will be available to the center from Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. For information and reservations, contact convenor KAY SEVICK, 1706 Enchanted Lane, Lancaster, TX 75146.

1992 WESTERN CONVOCATION

With a theme of "Francis and Columbus: Living the Gospel in Our World," this year's convocation will travel north to the Franciscan Renewal Center just outside of Portland, OR. The dates will be August 21-23, with reservations requested by May 15. Contact convenor MARYLEE PRINCE, 1609 SW Park, #301, Portland, OR 97201. "Through reflections and through fellowship, this weekend will be centered on our struggles, both personal and communal, to live our Franciscan spirituality in a secular society without buying into inadequate cultural standards."

1992 SOUTHEASTERN AREA CONVOCATION

According to the newsletter from Land of the Sky Fellowship, this area convocation will take place at Ignatius House in Atlanta on September 18-20. The meditation leader will be Sr. Pamela Clare CSF from San Francisco.

Third Order Library News

by Rosie McFerran TSSF

Now that everyone has received the list of the "Books of Continuing Interest" in our Third Order Library, the first supplemental list of new books acquired since then is herewith published on the following pages.

As in the first list, books by and about St. Francis and the Franciscans are marked with an asterisk.

These two lists do not represent all of the books in the Library. The master list is now complete and is very long — 600 to 700 titles on 32 single-sided pages in computer print-out form. Most of the titles not on the "Books of Continuing Interest" and the first supplement are much older titles, although there are some additional writings by C. S. Lewis and Thomas Merton which just seemed too numerous to list.

If anyone requests the master list, I'll double-side copy it to send it. But if too many people request it, we'll have to devise an alternate method.

HOW TO USE THE LIBRARY

Books in the Third Order Library may be borrowed by writing to: Rosemond McFerran, 1518 Tulane Drive, Davis, CA 95616.

Books are charged out for a period of two months and sent to you by fourth-class mail. When you have finished with the book, please return it to Rosie, also by fourth-class mail. A book may be renewed for another two-month period if no one is waiting on it, by notifying Rosie.

If you have no particular title in mind, but need a book on a particular subject, let Rosie know for what you are looking. If it is in the library, she will find it for you!

Book Reviews

SERMONS SELDOM HEARD, edited by Annie Lally Milhaven. 1991, from Crossroad Press. 264 pages.

This book, recently purchased for the Third Order Library, is subtitled, "Women Proclaim Their Lives." It is about women's problems, which are in reality everyone's problems. A list of the chapter headings will illustrate this at once: Wife Battering, Incest, Rape, Justice, Throw-away Children, Living in a "Project," Prison, Depression, Alcoholism, Retirement, Volunteerism, Abortion, Fear of Love, Singleness, Divorce, AIDS, Sanctuary, Racism, Self-Affirmation, and Anti-Semitism.

Each chapter contains a sermon, written by a woman who has lived through the experience under consideration, an autobiographical statement about the sermon writer, background information about the problem, a bibliography, and sometimes a list of "Resources" and organizations who work with that problem.

The sermons are well-written and very moving, many of them by Roman Catholic women who grieve that they are not allowed to preach the sermon. Because the

book was published in 1991, the statistics in the background information, the bibliographies, and the the Resources are still very much up to date.

This book is an excellent consciousness-raiser and resource book. I recommend it to anyone who is either a helper or a sufferer, or who just wants to understand what these experiences do to the human heart and soul.

— Rosie McFerran TSSF

...

KABETHECHINO: A CORRESPONDENCE ON ARAWAK, by John P. Bennett and Richard Hart. 1991, from Anglican Bookstore, 100 Skyline Drive, Eureka Springs, AR 72632-9705. Paperback, 271 pages.

John is a tertiary priest, native of Guyana and working there. This book publishes the letters between Richard and him, about the Arawak people, their language and lore. Also included is a brief biography of John.

I find it to be a fascinating glimpse of circumstances very different from mine. He's quite a guy!

— Helen Webb TSSF

SOWING THE SEEDS OF THE KINGDOM (for the Decade of Evangelism)

by Dixie Anne Mosier-Greene TSSF

Remember the parable of the seeds
That fell on the path or rocky land,
On good soil or among the thorns?
Where the seeds fell determined,
To a large extent, the fruitfulness.
The seeds are the word of God.



But, as evangelists, we are also the sower.
Sometimes we toss our seeds of the Kingdom
Along the paths of life wherever we happen to be.
We throw out words of faith, but
The soil is beaten down by busy feet.
The seeds blow away in Oklahoma wind.

Sometimes the seed falls on rocky ground:
The soil may be good, but stones interfere,
Hindering growth and rootstock. The remedy
Is a lot of work by the sower to save
The seedlings: pre-sowing to remove
The big rocks that would destroy and
A lot of hoeing before the harvest.

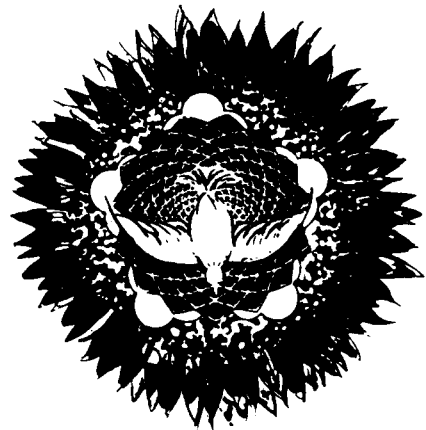
Sometimes we scatter a handful
Of seed amidst the thorns — a kind word
About Christ at a cocktail party
Which everyone politely ignores —
Here even more weeding needs be done
If there is to be any hope of fruit.

Finally, it happens occasionally
We sow our seed in good soil.
It is the sign of a good farmer
To recognize really fertile ground
Where the seed can develop and blossom,
Where the word of God can bear fruit.

If we would be sowers of the seeds
Of the Kingdom, we need to seek out
The good soil, to be willing to prepare
The ground, to hoe out the weeds,
To bring renewing water when needed,
To help our seeds on to the harvest.

If we always throw our seeds on poor soil,
What are we really wanting? Not fruit.
If we can't see fertile ground,
Then where are we looking?
If our witness is to bear fruit,
We must be good sowers of the seeds
of the Kingdom of God.

(Dixie Anne Mosier-Greene is a
novice living in Stillwater, OK)



This Christian mandala was offered
to this publication by Vermont
artist BARBARA BATTELLE,
"a friend of St. Francis."

The Star of Bethlehem

by John Brockmann TSSF

On Monday morning, March 9, I made another one of my short visits to my chaplain intern group at the hospital in Vermont. We had all bonded so tightly during this pastoral formation program Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) that I couldn't bear the idea of not seeing them again after my university sabbatical had ended and I had returned to teaching in another state.

But almost as soon as I had arrived, I and the other six chaplain interns were ushered into the Pathology Lab to witness our first autopsy. Our CPE director thought this experience integral to pastoral formation because chaplains had to learn how to deal with death, dying, and grief, and it would be good to know, exactly and physically, what death looked like. And this wise director also hoped to bring into the forefront of our consciences what the resurrection of the body and the after life really mean.

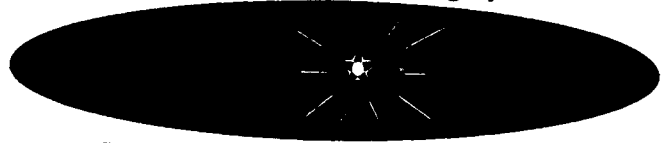
What surprised me most was my lack of horror or recoil at the sight of a dead body having its organs removed to determine the cause of death. Gloved and suitably cautioned, I was allowed to touch the lungs and backbone of this man. I observed that his ringer still had a wedding ring on it; so at one time, this person loved, hugged, and prayed. But now, he lay clumsily sprawled on the pathology table as if someone had cut the strings of a life-size marionette. Everything was there; all the organs seemed like they were just waiting to be jump-started, reconnected, or have the electricity switched on again.

I was struck by the question as to what was missing . . . what had changed. But that day, in that room, with those pathologists and my fellow interns, I received no deeply satisfying answer.

At the end of that same week, I participated as a member of a Kairos team which put on a three-day short course in Christianity — much like Cursillo — for the inmates of a maximum security prison. For us on the team, it was much more like a three-day modeling of what a Christian community could be like for those who had never really experienced it.

"Listen, listen, love, love" was the foundation of our work. My role on the team was that of

"cha-cho" (table waiter) for the Table of St. John, a group made up of both team members and inmates. Such a cha-cho role seemed to fit my developing Franciscan self-image just fine.



But at one point, the team rector, a close friend, asked me to read a short meditation during the evening service. The meditation was called "Star of Bethlehem." The story I related to the entire Kairos community began at the place with which we are all familiar: everyone knows how a bright beam of light led the three wise men to discover where Jesus was born. But no one much ever talks about what happened then to that light.

Evidently the angels in Heaven go together to discuss what should be done with the light, and they first decided that it needed a name, so they called it the Star of Bethlehem. But then they could not decide what to do with it now that it had served its purpose. So they talked and talked until they came to the unanimous decision that the star should be broken up into billions and billions of small stars, and these small stars should be put into the eyes of each newborn child.

"Your job and my job," I concluded my meditation that evening, "is to look for that star in the eyes of all those you meet."

And that's what was missing from that man's eyes in the cold Pathology Lab. The star which had been planted so many years earlier in that man's eyes had probably shone for many friends and family. But now it had blossomed and returned to the brightness of Jesus; it no longer needed to signal a path or a direction, because the man was now joined together with Jesus.

That's what was missing, and that's what I found, during that evening meditation, when I looked up and into the eyes of my brothers there in the prison.

(John Brockmann is a novice living in Vermont, a member of the Brother Juniper Fellowship, and a faculty member at the University of Delaware.)

 r e a d e r ' s f o r u m

CORRECTION

My Dear Friends,

The last page of the Summer '91 issue of The Franciscan Times had a piece headlined "Be At Peace" which was submitted by Betty Swinehart TSSF. It was attributed to St. Francis. Full identification of the author is St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622).

I have had this quotation posted in my kitchen since the '60s, and it has given me courage through some very dark times.

Pax et Bonum,

Deanna Gursky TSSF

+ + +

OPPORTUNITY OFFERED

Greetings,

I am a member of the British Third Order of the Society of St. Francis, and for the past seven years I have been touring America, once a year in the Fall, with my one-man show. I tour to a lot of Third Order groups in Britain, but I would like to extend this ministry to North America, and to have the opportunity to meet you.

My productions, which each last about 90 minutes and are simply staged, include John's Gospel, The Psalms, God's Grandeur, and Parables and Miracles. I also lead "Creativity in Worship" Workshops.

My tour this year is from mid-September to the end of October, 1992. For more information and booking, please contact Mrs. Virginia Gilmer, 6514 Beverly Ave., McLean, VA 22101, telephone (703) 356-7254.

Pax et Bonum,

Paul Alexander TOSSF

+ + +

INVITATION

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We would like to announce to the members of this and other provinces to note in their diaries the celebration of the first Chapter meeting of the Franciscan Ecumenical Fraternity at Pentecost this year. It will take place on 5, 6, and 7 June in Seville. We have reserved rooms in the House of Spirituality of the MM Reparatrice Sisters for these days for those who will come from other parts of Spain and from abroad.

Pax et Bonum,

The Anglican Franciscan Brothers

Calle de Santa Clara, No 5

41002 Seville (Spain)

+ + +

The Franciscan Times
is a quarterly publication of
The Third Order of St. Francis,
American Province.

MINISTER PROVINCIAL
The Rev. Alden C. Whitney

SECRETARY
Jacqui Belcher

EDITORS
Robert Durand
Rik Fitch

Editorial contributions and all
correspondence should be sent to:
2124 Awihi Place, #215
Kihei, Maui, HI 96753.

All name and address changes
should be sent to the secretary at:
2220 East Victory Drive, #24
Savannah, GA 31401.

PRAYER FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

O GOD, I pray for all who have no regular work. Give them Grace to hope again.

Put into the hearts of employers the will and the ability to provide honest and decent work; and provide them with the will and the ability to pay a just wage for the work.

Please put into the hearts of employees the will and the ability to do honest and decent work; provide them with the humility to accept thankfully a just wage for honest and decent work.

Finally, I pray that the bitterness of idleness, injustice, exploitation, and greed may be taken away for ever. AMEN.

—submitted by Nina L. Andrews TSSF