



LAVERNA VISION

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A Christmas Blessing

*"...Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come adore, on bended knee,
Christ, the Lord, the newborn King"*

LA VERNA REGION

Executive Council

Minister

Ken Beattie, SFO
Portiuncula Fraternity – Franklin
2951 W. Bridge St.
Greenfield, WI 53221
(414) 281-9856
beatiesfo@aol.com

Vice-Minister

Lee Ann Niebuhr, SFO
Queen of the Universe – Woodruff
8648 Bambi Ct
Woodruff, WI 54568
(715) 356-1009
leeannniebuhr@yahoo.com

Treasurer

Peter Bekkers, SFO
St. Joseph – Appleton
W6855 St. Mary's Dr.
Greenville, WI 54942
(920) 757-9027
taxmannatp@sbcglobal.net

Secretary

Kathy Sutliff, SFO
St. John Neumann – Rhinelander
1015 Thayer St.
Rhinelander, WI 54501
(715) 369-3367
ksut517@charter.net

Spiritual Assistant

Lester Bach, OFM Cap
4123 Monona Dr.
Madison, WI 53716
(608) 222-6238
lbofmcap@aol.com

Councilor – Fox Valley

Jim Carlson, SFO
St. Paschal Baylon – Wind Lake
236 Elizabeth St.
Whitewater, WI 53190
(262) 473-3130
james.carlson@wicourts.gov

Councilor – Southeast

Mary Fedor, SFO
St. Josaphat Fraternity - Milwaukee
2860 S. 44th St.
Milwaukee, WI 53219
(414) 545-3340
ralphmary3@tds.net

Councilor UP plus other duties

Bob Henning, SFO
St. Anthony's Fraternity - Marquette
210 Thunderchief St.
Gwinn, MI 49841
(906) 346-6727
bmjhsfo@aol.com

Councilor - Central

Lee Ann Niebuhr, SFO
Queen of the Universe – Woodruff
8648 Bambi Ct
Woodruff, WI 54568
(715) 356-1009
leeannniebuhr@yahoo.com

Formation Director

Jean Platz, SFO
4818 Apple Dr.
Rhinelander, WI 54501
(715) 362-6562
japsfo@frontiernet.net

The LaVerna Region of the Secular Franciscan Order in the USA consists of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. The area is divided into four districts: Southeast, Central, Fox Valley and Upper Michigan. *La Verna Vision* is a vehicle of communication with the LaVerna Region. It presents a forum for presenting information and insights that relate to the SFO way of life. Permission to copy materials printed in *LaVerna Vision* is freely given except where the copyright is specifically reserved to the author or artist. Please credit *LaVerna Vision* if you copy any of the articles

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LaVerna Vision editor – Ed Boss, ed-joann@execpc.com

Ministers Views:

Greetings to each of you. I pray you were able to enjoy this past summer and now the beautiful colors of fall. It's like looking at a great masterpiece: the green of summer but more so the colors of the fall change. God is good in giving us such beauty.

Having just returned from the National Fraternity Chapter, I am so excited with all that has occurred throughout the US with our fellow Franciscans. There are so many great things that have occurred but also a great many things that will be coming up next year. I would like to spend a little time telling you about them – but I feel there is something most vital to our survival as a Franciscan Family here in La Verna that first needs your attention.

As you most likely know, many of our fraternities have had elections this past year and pray for your cooperation with the new council members. It is good to hear from our council members about the activity that took place with each fraternity. There are so many things that each of us can and should do for the life of our local family of Franciscans.

As Region Fraternity, each of us is called to action by doing our part. Each of us has a responsibility to their local fraternity, Regional Fraternity, as well as the National and so on. We are called to serve each other in the way that our Lord Jesus Christ called the Apostles and the first Christians into to service to the Church.

So many times we will hear ourselves say – not me, I don't know enough, not me -- I don't have the time, not me -- I did my part, and so on and on it is said. Do we really stop and listen to the Holy Spirit calling us? What is our response to that call? How are we doing our part as members of the Family? The need is now and we are to respond in action now!

Service is our way of life – there are many ways this service can be carried out. Look around and see – how do others respond to this call? We should remember all those who have inspired us from the past – so many of them we recognize as leaders, saints, great people in our Franciscan Order as well as our Catholic Church; they all have lives of service to each other in their community.

We too can and should do our part in service to each other. This coming year is our year for elections to Regional Council. Are you being called to serve? Do we see members in our local fraternities who can serve on the Regional Council? Do we take the step and ask them to serve? Do we give them the support needed to serve? Do we respond to the call to serve by saying yes?

Place ourselves in the Grace of the Holy Spirit and He will guide us. Do we each take the time to pray and respond to this call from the Holy Spirit? Do we place our trust that He will come to our aid whenever we need it?

Mary Jane Henning is serving as the chairperson for the LaVerna region nominations committees. When a call comes from Mary Jane requesting your service on the next regional council, how will you respond? Yes, I would be honored to serve!

As we pray for you, please remember in your daily prayers those who are able and willing to serve our Region at our Chapter of Elections in June 2008.

Peace and All Good,

Ken Beattie T



REFLECTIONS
Regional Spiritual Assistant
Lester Bach OFM Cap

REPEAT

If secular Franciscans put their Franciscan lives in second or third or fourth place in their lives, our Franciscan Order is in jeopardy. We cannot continue with half-hearted commitments. Profession in the SFO requires that the SFO is the primary choice in the lives of Secular Franciscans. Though there may be times when this does not apply - it remains a primary commitment.

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COMMENT: Franciscans choose SFO commitments in preference to other commitments. We are NOT just another parish organization nor a once-a-month commitment. Profession calls us to service of the SFO, the Church and the world for each day of our lives. The SFO Rule points out ways in which we serve the Church and the world.

Total commitment is what we are about. Indifference, ignorance of the Rule and Constitutions, laziness, or easy excuses are NOT acceptable reasons for a lack of faithfulness to the SFO way of life embraced at profession.

Of course there are times when attending gatherings will be difficult or impossible. Absence then makes sense. No one expects the impossible. But Franciscans are to bring Francis' spirit to the Church and the world. We continually deepen our commitment. We bring our gifts, ideas, time, financial resources, and prayerfulness to contribute to fraternity life. Recognizing the call to conversion (Rule #7) makes it obvious that we readily offer one another the help, support and sharing that will keep us faithful to our profession.

Every secular Franciscan, even those who are legitimately excused from gatherings, contribute what they can to fraternity life. Shut-ins, those with chronic illness, those living in nursing homes and others may be unable to attend gatherings. *As they are able*, the SFO depends on their prayer, their interest, their readiness to respond and their contributions both personal and financial.

Local councils take special care of excused members. Local councils take special care of newly professed members. *The fraternity has the*

duty to give special attention to the formation of the newly professed ... to help them become fully mature in their vocation and develop a true sense of belonging. (Constitutions - Article 44.2) Local councils make special efforts to create informative, helpful and prayerful regular gatherings.

All SFO members are expected to become familiar with the SFO Constitutions and our National statutes. Frequently one or the other has answers to problems that may arise. Service to the fraternity is helped by knowing these basic Franciscan documents.

IN ADDITION!

To be a Secular Franciscan in the spirit of the Rule of 1978 requires us to delete some of the things we followed and practiced before 1978. We are human and tend to stick with what we know. New directions, fresh ideas, different practices are not easily embraced. All of us need to recognize the personal ideas, practices and perceptions that fit the Rule of 1978 and those that do not.

Each of us has a personal responsibility to change whatever hinders living the 1978 Rule. We don't keep things *because we always did it this way!* We delete hindrances in order to create room for what the Holy Spirit gives us in the Rule of 1978. It doesn't take a genius to know that change is not something sudden and wonderful. It takes time, work, prayer, study, experience, dialogue and a good dose of humility to embrace the newness being given us by the Holy Spirit.

I rejoice that you continue to enrich your ways of Franciscan living. I rely on your prayerfulness and offer you mine in return. Together we are called to bring a Franciscan flavor to the Church and the world. To do so we help one another to understand what we have professed and find practical ways to show it. Our integrity and faithfulness are God-given. We are never alone but challenged by the Spirit to deeper faithfulness.

With this in mind we pray for you always, that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and that his power may bring to fulfillment every good purpose and every act inspired by faith, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

WE ARE CALLED TO BE WITNESSES, NOT LAWYERS OR JUDGES.

