

National Minister's Occasional Message



PLEASE JOIN US IN PRESENCE OR IN PRAYER AT THE 2012 NATIONAL SECULAR FRANCISCAN QUINQUENNIAL CONGRESS!

Beloved Brothers and Sisters of Penance,

May the Lord bring Peace to the hearts and families of all who will join us in presence or in prayer, in person or in spirit, at our 2012 National Secular Franciscan Quinquennial Congress July 3-8 at the Holiday Inn Chicago North Shore Skokie Hotel, 5300 West Touhy Avenue, Skokie, Illinois 60077. If you are reading this before our Congress begins on Tuesday, July 3rd with dinner at 5:00 pm, Opening Liturgy at 7:30 pm, and you feel that "last minute itch" to join us, please do so! Registration information and Official Prayer can be found on the National Site.

Article 65.1 of the General Constitutions reads, "The national fraternity is the organic union of the local fraternities existing within the territory of one or more states which are joined and co-ordinated among themselves through regional fraternities, wherever they exist."

Building and strengthening this national "organic union" was clearly intended by our then Holy Father, now Blessed Pope John Paul II when he addressed these words to our Xth General Chapter on November 22, 2002: "The Church expects from the Secular Franciscan Order, one and only, a great service in the cause of the Kingdom of God in the world of today. The Church desires that your Order should be a model of organic, structural and charismatic unity on all levels, so as to present itself to the world as a 'community of love' (Secular Franciscan Rule 22). The church expects from you, Secular Franciscans, a courageous and consistent testimony of Christian and Franciscan life, leaning towards the construction of a more fraternal and gospel world for the realization of the Kingdom of God."

In this spirit, and in the Holy Spirit, the National Executive Council of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States has conceived and organized this 2012 Quinquennial Congress as mandated in our National Statutes, Article 7.4: "The National Fraternity shall celebrate a National Congress at least once every five years, at a time and place determined by the National Executive Council and confirmed by the National Fraternity Council."

To this Congress, we have invited YOU.

Just as our Lord Himself spoke to Zacchaeus, "Today salvation has come to this house . . . For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:9-10 NAB Rev), so we pray that Salvation will come to YOU, to ALL OF US, as we join in our National house, our National Congress, to strengthen that "organic, structural and charismatic unity" our now Blessed Holy Father so earnestly urged. How can we do this without your participation and prayers? Please pray that this 2012 Quinquennial Congress will further the coming of the Kingdom of God in our own hearts, in our Order and in the entire world.

Please pray as did Friar Giacomo Bini OFM, when as President of the Conference of General Ministers of the First Order and the TOR, he introduced the Revised General Constitutions on January 1, 2001, that this Congress may be a similar "essential and dynamic instrument helping us to delineate our

identity and to structure progressively our life and our vocation as Franciscans."

Indeed, here are the expressed goals of our 2012 Quinquennial: One, to broaden and deepen our understanding of the Franciscan Tradition, and our identity as Secular Franciscans; and Two, to discern together God's call to our Secular Franciscan Order in the United States.

To achieve these goals, we have organized each day simply and prayerfully to, as precisely as we can, "delineate our identity and to structure progressively our life and our vocation as Franciscans."

Thus, DAY ONE, we will all ask the question, "WHO ARE YOU, O LORD?" In other words, we will explore together a view of God within the Franciscan Tradition. DAY TWO will follow with the more personal question "AND WHAT AM I?" In other words, we will consider the human person within the Franciscan Tradition. DAY THREE will ask the question "WHO ARE WE?" and stretch from the historical beginnings and development of the Franciscan Charism from St. Francis and his original writings up to our current Secular Franciscan Rule (1978). Whew! Yet we are not merely students looking back; we are all on a journey forward as Franciscans toward Salvation. Thus, DAY FOUR will ask "AND WHAT ARE WE TO BE?" In other words, together as family, can we discern God's call, God's will, for our Secular Franciscan Order now here in the United States?

Journeying with us will be some of the greatest Franciscan minds of our generation, both inside our Secular Franciscan Order and outside our Order, but still within the greater Franciscan family residing in the United States.

Our keynote speaker and major presenter will be SR. ILIA DELIO, OSF, a Franciscan Sister of Washington, DC, and a Senior Fellow at Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University, where she concentrates in the area of Science and Religion. Before going to Woodstock, Sister was Professor and Chair of Spirituality Studies at Washington Theological Union where she taught, lectured and wrote in the areas of general spirituality, Franciscan theology and Science and Religion. She has authored well-received books on St. Clare, St. Bonaventure, the Humility of God and Franciscan Prayer. Her book, *Care for Creation*, won two Catholic Press Book Awards in 2009. Please do not be afraid to be challenged by Sister nor to challenge her right back! We are called as Franciscans to dialogue and to relationship.

Sister will be joined by BROTHER BILL SHORT, OFM, noted speaker, author and Professor at the Berkeley Theological Union, I hope all of you have heard his 24 talks on *St. Francis of Assisi: A New Way of Being Christian*, which still inspire and educate me at every listening on the audio CDs.

From our Secular Franciscan Family, I recommend PATRICIA BRANDWEIN-BALL, OFS. Pat has served our Order in elected leadership for twenty years as local minister of the Seven Joys of the Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of God Fraternity, Kennebunkport, ME; St. Casimir Provincial Minister; St Elizabeth of Hungary, Vice-Minister, then Regional Minister; as well as a National Councilor. As a member of the Spirit and Life Team, Pat has traveled extensively throughout the country. Pat is, I believe, the first-ever National Secular Franciscan Chair of JPIC, (Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation). I have learned as much from Pat as from any living Franciscan about what it means to be a Secular Franciscan.

Joining Pat from our Family will be EDWARD L. SHIRLEY, OFS. Ed is a professor of Religious and Theological Studies at St. Edward's University, where he has taught for 25 years and from whom he received the University-wide Teaching Excellence Award for 2008-2009. He has a doctorate in theology from Fordham University, and specializes in Trinity, Christology, Mariology and Interreligious Dialogue. He possesses the theological *mandatum* from the Diocese of Austin. He has been a professed member of the Secular Franciscan Order since 1980, and is currently the chair of the Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee for the Secular Franciscan Order in the U.S. Ed also likes to challenge and be challenged, especially if you play a guitar or other stringed instrument, for Ed plays a very mean banjo, which I hope he will bring.

Obviously, I am very excited about the 2012 National Congress. I pray and ask you to pray that it will contribute toward the vitality of every fraternity at every level in the United States, as well as toward the salvation of every Secular Franciscan joining us in presence or in prayer, in person or in spirit.

Peace and love,

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