



# Footsteps

December 2011

## CALENDAR

- Dec 8 Immaculate Conception
- Dec 12 Our Lady of Guadalupe
- Dec 15 Mary Frances Schervier Third Order
- Dec 25 The Nativity of Our Lord
- Jan 3 Most Holy Name of Jesus

## Francis and the Creche

In the year 1223, Francis was visiting Greccio to celebrate Christmas. Greccio was a small town built on a mountainside overlooking a beautiful valley. The people had cultivated the fertile area with vineyards. Francis realized that the chapel of the Franciscan hermitage would be too small to hold the congregation for midnight Mass. So he found a niche in the rock near the town square and set up the altar. However, this midnight Mass would be very special, unlike any other midnight Mass.

St. Bonaventure in his Life of St. Francis of Assisi tells the story the best:

*It happened in the third year before his death, that in order to excite the inhabitants of Greccio to commemorate the nativity of the Infant Jesus with great devotion, [St. Francis] determined to keep it with all possible*



*solemnity; and lest he should be accused of lightness or novelty, he asked and obtained the permission of the sovereign Pontiff. Then he prepared a manger, and brought hay, and an ox and an ass to the place appointed. The brethren were summoned, the people ran together, the forest resounded with their voices, and that venerable night was made glorious by many and brilliant lights and sonorous psalms of praise. The man of God [St. Francis] stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant with joy; the Holy Gospel was chanted by Francis, the Levite of Christ. Then he preached to the people around the nativity of the poor King; and being unable to utter His name for the tenderness of His love, He called Him the Babe of Bethlehem.*



### Fraternity Council

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Minister          | Rosemary Apodaca   |
| Vice Minister     | Carol Greenwald    |
| Secretary         | Melva Simmons      |
| Treasurer         | Anne Peloquin      |
| Formation Dir.    | Brian Simmons      |
| Counsilor         | David Lansford     |
| Spiritual Assist. | Sr. Dolores Fenzel |

continued on page 4

## Birthdays

Dec 2 Rosemary Apodaca  
Dec 8 Lupe Rubio  
Jan 14 Sheila De Luca  
Jan 24 Ann Peloquin



## Professions

Dec 20 Marian Sola  
Jan 16 Maribeth Lambert  
Jan 21 Geraldine Windt  
Jan 25 Betty Riedinger  
Jan 31 Aurora Haro

*I promise to live all the days of my  
life the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ  
in the Secular Franciscan Order  
by observing its rule of life.*

## Footsteps

is published monthly by:

The Junipero Serra of Carmel  
Secular Franciscan Fraternity

**Deadline for Submissions:  
2nd Monday**

Carol Greenwald - Editor  
(CGreenwaldSFO@gmail.com)

# MINISTER'S MESSAGE



By Rosemary Apodaca

## *The Christmas at Greccio*

The beautiful Mother is bending  
Low where her Baby lies  
Helpless and frail, for her tending;  
but she knows the glorious eyes.

The mother smiles and rejoices  
While the Baby laughs in the hay;  
She listens to heavenly voices:  
"the child shall be King, one day."

O dear little Christ in the manger,  
Let me make merry with Thee.  
O King, in my hour of danger,  
Wilt Thou be strong for me:

*--Adapted from the Latin of Jacopone da Todi. 13th Century*

As I tried to recreate that beautiful night our sweet Jesus was born, I was brought to Bethlehem, a very busy place, locked behind gates and guards, behind anger and hunger, behind misunderstandings and fear. I didn't see shepherds guarding their flock; I saw people pushing and shoving to get close to the spot where this or that had happened.



I am in Bethlehem! We are in Bethlehem because the Baby Jesus lies in my heart, and I have (with the help of Teatro Campesinos) recreated the journey and trek each year to adore the Baby Jesus who will be King. This time of year makes me grateful for the many blessings God has given me - too many to count. It makes me joyful and hopeful for a world filled with song, laughter, and most of all peace on earth, good will to all.

Thank you so much for letting me be your humble servant. Please let me know what I can do to serve you better. Teach me what I can do for those that are still searching for Bethlehem. Merry Christmas to you and your loved ones.

pax y bien  
Rosemary



# FORMATION FORUM

By Brian Simmons

When a new pope is elected, a senior cardinal goes to the balcony overlooking St. Peter's Square and says to the waiting crowd, "Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum" -- "I announce to you a great joy." The next line is "Habemus papam!" My news isn't exactly on the same level as having a new pope, but pretty joyful nonetheless: we will have a new professed member!! At our January gathering, Benny Garcia will make his permanent profession as a member of the Secular Franciscan Order. Let us keep Benny in our prayers as he prepares for that day.

In our ongoing formation at this month's gathering, we will be considering Rule 10. The opening sentence of Rule 10 speaks of the ". . . obedience of Jesus, who placed his will into the hands of the Father." While on the road last week, I had the opportunity to listen to a set of tapes by Franciscan friar Richard Rohr on "Preparing for Christmas." He also touched on the theme of conforming our will to the Father's. As is usually the case when Fr. Rohr speaks, there were some marvelous insights. Let me share a couple of things he said.

One thing he stressed is the need for "self-surrender." This is not "giving up" as we usually think of the term "surrender." Rather, it is the letting go of the ego and the false self, that part of ourselves that needs to be in control, that needs to be right. (He is quick to say there is [obviously] nothing wrong with being right – the problem is with our attachment to the need to be right.) If we're in charge, if things have to be in accordance with the way we see life, then there is very little room for God to be in charge.

He suggests that it is appropriate, like in lent, that during advent we adopt some ascetic practice. By exercising some self-denial, by in some way emptying ourselves, we make space for God. We get ourselves and our ego out of the way. Every day, we pray "Your kingdom come." If we really want God's kingdom to come, Rohr says, our kingdom has to go.

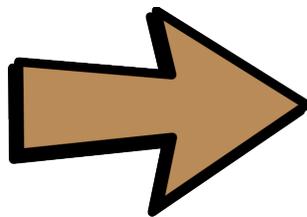
Really thought-provoking stuff. I look forward to our discussion at the gathering.

With Benny's profession and the Epiphany party at the January gathering, we won't have a formal ongoing formation session next month. Rosemary, Carol, and I will be attending the regional chapter in February which meets the same day as our February gathering. We are trying to line up a guest facilitator for the February ongoing formation segment. In March, we will return to our discussion of the SFO Rule, looking at Rule 11. Rule 11 continues the theme of detachment, focusing not on our attachment to our ego, but on the attachment to possessions and power. It's a great topic for lent. Look for some preliminary discussion questions in the February Formation Forum.

Have a blessed Christmas!

## Franciscan Living

*This Franciscan fashionista was seen at the NAFRA Chapter in October. She truly captured the Franciscan Spirit of simplicity and creativity. How do you show the world you are Franciscan?*



# SFO Affiliation

Brian Simmons

After our last gathering, I was asked several questions about affiliation. I thought others might have the same questions, so I will take this opportunity to answer them for everyone.

The notion of affiliation is not new, but it doesn't appear to be very common. Maribeth, our former minister, told me that to her knowledge, our fraternity has never had an affiliate. Perhaps that is why so many of us are not familiar with it

The General Constitutions of the SFO are the first place to look to in order to learn more about it. Article 53.5 says, "The national statutes can indicate special forms of association with the fraternity for those who, without becoming a member of the SFO, want to participate in its life and activities." Article 103.1 says, in part, that SFO fraternities "should welcome with pleasure those who, without belonging to the SFO, wish to share its experiences and activities."

With that in mind, our National Fraternity created the status of "affiliation." Our national statutes (see Section 13-A) say, "Those who, without belonging to the SFO, wish to participate in its life and activities according to Franciscan principles and teachings, may be welcomed by the local fraternity, so as to make their communion living and effective. Individuals wishing to become affiliates should make their desire known by a written request to the local fraternity council, which makes a decision regarding the request." The statutes go on to say that regional councils "have the right to establish their own guidelines for the acceptance of affiliates." I believe our region has established such guidelines.

That's really all there is to it. If we have a situation that conforms to the regional guidelines in which someone who is not (or cannot be) a member of the Order but would like to be a participating member of our community, we have a way to do that, with the Council's approval. It seemed like a good solution for one of our recent formation candidates who, as things turned out, did not meet at least one of the basic criteria for becoming a professed member of our Order. Pursuing affiliate status was suggested as an option to this former candidate. Let us all pray to remain open to the movement of the Spirit as we see what unfolds.



---

## Francis and the Creche continued from page 1

*A certain valiant and veracious soldier, Master John of Greccio, who, for the love of Christ, had left the warfare of this world, and become a dear friend of this holy man, affirmed that he beheld an Infant marvellously beautiful, sleeping in the manger, Whom the blessed Father Francis embraced with both his arms, as if he would awake Him from sleep. This vision of the devout soldier is credible, not only by reason of the sanctity of him that saw it, but by reason of the miracles which afterwards confirmed its truth. For example of Francis, if it be considered by the world, is doubtless sufficient to excite all hearts which are negligent in the faith of Christ; and the hay of that manger, being preserved by the people, miraculously cured all diseases of cattle, and many other pestilences; God thus in all things glorifying his servant, and witnessing to the great efficacy of his holy prayers by manifest prodigies and miracles.*

Although the story is long old, the message is clear for us. Our own Nativity scenes which rest under our Christmas trees are a visible reminder of that night when our Savior was born. May we never forget to see in our hearts the little Babe of Bethlehem, who came to save us from sin. We must never forget that the wood of the manger that held Him so securely would one day give way to the wood of the cross. May we too embrace Him with all of our love as did St. Francis.

*Adapted from: [www.catholiceducation.org](http://www.catholiceducation.org)*

# FRANCISCANS IN ACTION

---



## JUSTICE

### Poverty Rate Soars - Bishops Act

“Our culture of life begins with a love that binds us to the hopes and joys, the struggles and the sorrows of people, especially those who are poor or any way afflicted,” said Bishop Jaime Soto of Sacramento, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) domestic anti-poverty effort, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD).

With 15 percent of all Americans, including nearly 1 in 4 children, living in poverty, the USCCB is renewing its poverty awareness campaign, Poverty USA, complete with a revamped website, a new social media presence, and a Poverty Awareness Month event in January. Learn more at [www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/povertyusa/](http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/povertyusa/)

---



## PEACE

### Fr. Louie Vitale Arrested in Oakland

When Fr. Louie Vitale learned that Occupy Oakland was about to be demolished, he headed immediately to the site and stationed himself at the Interfaith Tent.

With a semi-circle of flickering votive candles at their feet, Louie and the other religious leaders joined in prayer and song. Mostly they kept vigil as the police moved through the plaza, razing tents and rousting scores of people.

The Interfaith Tent was established to support Oakland Occupiers. Members took regular shifts and held weekly planning meetings. Now they were ministering in other ways--by maintaining a peaceful presence and by staying to the end.

A few hours later Louie and a dozen other members of the interfaith circle were arrested. They will find themselves in an Oakland courtroom on December 15, carrying on their support for this emerging movement for economic equality.

--*Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service*

---



## INTEGRITY OF CREATION

### Tips for Sustainable Gift Giving this Christmas

Give Services instead of Goods: Gifts of service require little or no use of natural resources, and are very personal and memorable. The gift of YOU - your time, energy or expertise are as *gift-worthy* as anything you can put in a box.

Give experiences to enjoy and remember: Giving the gift of an experience can bring fun, learning and memories that hold value for years. Experiences can be other than “entertainment.” For example, give the gift of a garden plot in your local community garden.

Give gifts that keep on giving: Give a goat that will go to a family in need on the other side of the world. Goats can thrive in extreme climates and on poor, dry land. The gift of a dairy goat can supply a family with up to several quarts of milk a day. Extra milk can be sold or used to make cheese, butter or yogurt. Families learn to use goat manure to fertilize gardens. Goats also can have two or three offspring each year making it easy to pass on the gift of a goat to another family in need. Other giving gifts include flocks of chicks or ducks, a camel, sheep, water buffalo, and more. See [heifer.org](http://heifer.org) for details.

---

## Pope Benedict XVI & Tolstoy on the Incarnation

Though God can't be seen with our eyes, we can see his action in the world, said Benedict XVI.

The Holy Father illustrated God's actions using a narration by the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy, about a severe ruler who asked his wise men to show him God so that he could see him.

"The wise men did not know how to do this. So a shepherd, who was just returning from the fields, offered to take the place of the priests and the wise men," the Pontiff recalled.

"The king learned that his eyes would not suffice to see God. But the shepherd offered to show the king how God acts. To do this, we must exchange clothing, said the shepherd to the king."

"Hesitantly, but urged by curiosity, the king consented, giving his regal clothing to the shepherd and dressing himself in the simple clothing of the poor man," the Pope related.

"And then came the answer: 'This is what God does, he continued. "In fact, the Son of God -- true God from true God -- left his divine splendor...took on the condition of servant and became a man."

The Holy Father added that God performed a "sacred exchange...he took on what was ours, so that we could receive what is his, becoming similar to God. This is what happens in baptism, we clothe ourselves in Christ."

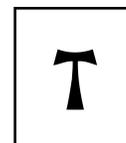
"This means that we enter into an existential communion with him," the Pope added, referring to St. Paul's explanation: "'I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.'"

The Holy Father explained that "Christ wore our clothing: the pain and joy of being a man, thirst, hunger, tiredness, the hopes and delusions, the fear of death, all our anguishes until death."

VATICAN CITY, APRIL 5, 2007 (*Zenit.org*)



Junipero Serra of Carmel Secular Franciscan Fraternity



"Christmas is a gift of love wrapped in human flesh  
and tied securely with the strong promises of God.

It is more than words can tell,  
for it is a matter for the heart to receive,  
believe and understand."

— Anonymous