

THE PORTIUNCULA

the newsletter of

Franciscans of the Prairie

Secular Franciscan Order



Fall 2009

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Regional Franciscan Family,

How blessed we are to have our Franciscan vocation. Many occasions in the past few weeks have made me greatly aware of the grace we receive when we choose to follow in the footsteps of St. Francis and St. Clare. At a time when we see so many problems in our country, and we, as Catholics, are challenged daily to defend our principle values, how fortunate that we, as Secular Franciscans, have such strong practices to sustain us. We have our daily Liturgy, Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, the entire Franciscan Family to guide and encourage us. Our "way of life" is so precious, our faith is such an unbelievable "gift", how can we fail? I know I am just pondering the question of every fraternity that wonders how to witness to others the joy we receive when we live the Secular Franciscan way of life.

Our oldest grandson, Mike, who has lived with us since the death of our daughter, Kathy, recently graduated from High School without ever giving us a moment of concern. What a blessing he is to us.

Recently, we were privileged to attend Mass to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the priesthood for Father John Sullivan, OFM, our Regional Spiritual Assistant. It was a very inspiring experience to witness his joy, and the joy of his family as they paid him tribute.

Last weekend we traveled to Aurora, Illinois for the first Mass of newly ordained Ron Hilt, SFO, in the Byzantine Rite of the Catholic Church. Ron and his parents were members of the original fraternity that began in Edwardsville. His father is now deceased, but is no doubt cheering from his heavenly abode. Ron's mother, Martha, remains an active member of the fraternity. Because of the dedication of Fr. Benet Fonck, OFM, to unselfishly give his time to Secular Franciscans, a fraternity exists in Edwardsville, and Ron Hilt is now a priest.

The Franciscans of the Prairie Region has an outstanding group of Spiritual Assistants, may they feel our appreciation for their guidance.

Love to you and your families,
Sue



Ronald H. Hilt, Jr., SFO – member of Our Lady of Angels Fraternity in Edwardsville, Illinois, and former sacristan and social worker at St. Anthony of Padua Parish in St. Louis, Missouri -- was ordained a priest for the Romanian Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of St. George (whose cathedral is in Canton, Ohio) on June 28, 2009, by the hand of his bishop, the Most Reverend John Michael Botean, D.D.

His ordination took place at St. Basil Church in Trenton, New Jersey, during the Divine Liturgy marking the 100th anniversary of the founding of that parish and the conclusion of the eparchy's annual convocation.

It was appropriate that the ceremonies happened at St. Basil's for two reasons: the eparchy's very first vocation to the priesthood many years ago came from that parish; and, after having celebrated all the other sacraments in that parish over 100 years, it was time for an ordination to the priesthood.

Father Ron served his Divine Liturgy of Thanksgiving on Sunday, July 12, 2009, where he is assigned as the associate pastor. Present were the parishioners, his family (including his mother Martha Hilt SFO), and a representation of the total Franciscan Family (two friars, a Poor Clare, three Franciscan Third Order Religious, and five Secular Franciscans).

For about eight years before his priestly ordination Father Ron has been associated with St. George's Romanian Byzantine Catholic Church in Aurora, Illinois, first as catechist, then as reader and subdeacon, and finally as deacon for over three years.

Father Ron, 38, actively began his preparation for priesthood about 15 years ago. His theological studies were done at Aquinas Institute in St. Louis, with a special emphasis on the Byzantine Liturgy and the Eastern Fathers of the Church. Fr. Benet Fonck OFM served as his academic mentor, spiritual advisor, and liaison with the bishop for his formation while he was also spiritual assistant for Our Lady of Angels Fraternity.

Father Ron is also a theology teacher at Aurora Central Catholic High School.



Pray the Rosary and Divine Office Daily

Graces will Flow

All members of the Franciscans of the Prairie Region are encouraged to submit the names and addresses of their family and friends who are serving in the military at this time. We have a prayer book which we, as a region, would like to send them.

We all like to receive mail and this little book may possibly "Make their day!" Sue





Pray for Our Priests

Pope Benedict has called a special Year for Priests, asking the whole Church to pray with our priests for greater holiness, for an ever-more effective commitment to the gospel message.

PRAYER FOR THE YEAR FOR PRIESTS

Lord Jesus,

In Saint John Mary Vianney you have deigned to give the Church a living image of yourself and a personification of your pastoral charity.

Help us during this Year for Priests to live good lives by being close to him and his example.

Grant that we may learn from the saintly Curé of Ars how to rest contentedly before the Holy Eucharist; to know that only your Word enlightens us each day; to know how tender is the love with which you welcome repentant sinners; how consoling is the confident abandonment to the care of the Holy and Immaculate Mother; how necessary is the ever-vigilant battle against Evil.

Grant, O Lord Jesus, that from the example of the holy Curé our young men may once again realize how necessary, humble and glorious is the priestly ministry which you wish to entrust to those who open themselves to your call.

Grant also to our communities - as once you did at Ars - those wonders of grace which you bring about when a priest knows to "make his parish a place of love".

Grant that our Christian families may find their home to be within the Church - where your ministers may always be found - and that they may enrich the domestic hearth with the beauty of the Church.

Grant that the Charity of our pastors may enliven and enkindle the Charity of all the faithful, so that every vocation and every charism, given by your Holy Spirit, may be welcomed and honored.

But above all, O Lord Jesus, bestow upon us the ardour and truth of the heart that we may come before your Heavenly Father, making our own the same words that St. John Mary Vianney prayed to Him:

I love You, O my God and my sole desire is to love You until the last breath of my life.

I love You, O infinitely lovable God and I prefer to die loving You than live one instant without loving You.

I love You, O my God, and I do not desire anything but heaven so as to have the joy of loving You perfectly.

I love You, O my God, and I fear hell, because there will not be the sweet consolation of loving You.

O my God, if my tongue cannot say in every moment that I love You, I want my heart to say it in every beat.

Allow me the grace to suffer loving You, to love you suffering and one day to die loving You and feeling that I love You.

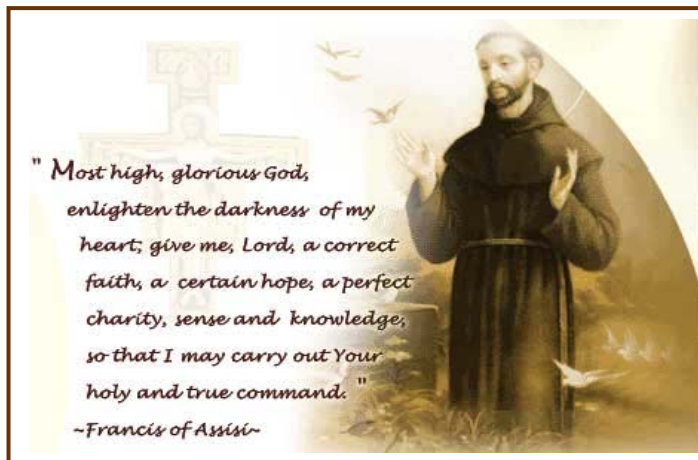
And as I approach my end, I beg you to increase and perfect my love of You.

AMEN.

'To get something you never had, you have to do something you never did.'
When God takes something from your grasp, He's not punishing you, but merely opening your hands to receive something better. Concentrate on this sentence...

'The will of God will never take you where the Grace of God will not protect you.'

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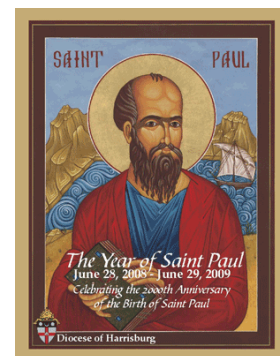


Regional Retreat
OCTOBER 9-11-2009

Retreat Director: Fr. Bill Burton

Topic: St Paul

The figure of St. Paul towers, not only over the New Testament, but over the first two centuries of church history. His mystical encounter with the risen Lord on the road to Damascus didn't change only Saul of Tarsus but changed the world. This year, dedicated by the Holy Father to St. Paul, provides the perfect opportunity for Catholics to take a serious look at this amazing follower of Christ and the letters he has left behind. Paul's letters are difficult for us to understand – they were difficult for the early church to understand! Nevertheless, they ARE accessible and promise us a deep enrichment of our understanding of our faith.



Our early sessions will focus on Paul, the Pharisee. To understand Paul's writings we must look at his own religious convictions and how he emerges *from* Pharisaic Judaism and how he reacts *to* his former religious mind-set. But Paul was also thoroughly Hellenistic. This cultural context also has an important influence on Paul and will be considered as we try to understand him within both his cultural *and* religious context.

Next we will look at the significance of the Hellenistic letter as the genre of choice, used by Paul. Twenty-one of the New Testament's twenty-seven works are letters! Among the authors of these letters, Paul towers over all others for his influence and power. We will look at the form of the Hellenistic letter and how Paul so effectively presses this form into service for the pastoral formation of his early Christian communities.

Finally, we'll look at the seven Pauline letters whose authorship no one disputes. From these we will try to glean an insight into the theology of Paul so we can better appreciate his genius and measure the tremendous influence this man has had on Christianity.