

THE PORTIUNCULA

the newsletter of

Franciscans of the Prairie

Secular Franciscan Order



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A Letter from your Regional Minister....

Brothers and Sisters:

Blessings to all of you. As summer approaches and we have beautiful days, it is so good to look forward to our Annual Meeting, May 16th and the opportunity to discuss new ideas and projects. Many exciting things are happening in our Region.

I hope that all fraternities are saying the novena prayers that have been requested by the National Council. Our Region has been asked to say the novena on the first weeks of April and October. Hopefully, many will make this a regular part of their daily prayer.

Congratulations to Fr. John Sullivan, our Regional Spiritual Assistant, as he celebrates 50 years of priesthood. We are so proud of the work he does for so many Secular Franciscans, and we wish him many more wonderful years.

I encourage you to explore the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) www.franciscanaction.org. Recently, the Region sent \$ 1,000.00 in the name of our members, to help sustain their work. Please take time to register your name and receive information from them. I have asked our Regional Vice-Minister, Shirley Caldwell Smith, to be our representative with the group.

Please plan now to attend the Annual Retreat on October 9, 10, 11, at the Chiara Center. Father Bill Burton, O.F.M. will be the Retreat Master.

Peace to all,

Sue Nelson, Regional Minister
Franciscans of the Prairie Region





Father John Sullivan, OFM

St. Louis native Father John Sullivan, OFM, was ordained June 24, 1959 at St. Francis Parish in Teutopolis. "There were 18 of us ordained there that day," Father John remembers. "We were ordained



by Bishop Ambrose Pinger, a Chinese missionary who had been imprisoned and released a year before that."

People who knew Father John in the 1950s and 1960s remember him by a much different name. "From 1952 until 1968 I was known as Liborius, which was the Franciscan name they gave me," he says. "I took back the name John. A lot of us went back to our (baptismal) names back in the 1960s."

Over the years, Father John has been a teacher, a pastor and a spiritual leader in Ohio, Missouri, Indiana and Illinois. A former physics teacher, he has fond memories of teaching at Padua Franciscan High School in Cleveland, Ohio, where he taught from 1964 to 1972 and again from 1974 to 1976. "We had a slogan there: 'At Padua physics is fun.'"

In the Springfield diocese he was director of spiritual formation at Our Lady of Angels Seminary in Quincy from 1972 to 1974, associate pastor of St. Francis Solanus Parish in Quincy from 1976 to 1979, and pastor of St. James Parish in Riverton from 1985 to 1987.

Father John's last parish assignment in Illinois was in Calhoun County from 1996 to 1999, where he was pastor of St. Mary Parish in Brussels, St. Joseph Parish in Meppen and St. Barbara in Batchtown. "Father Sylvano (Pera, OFM) and I were co-pastors in Calhoun County. I took the south parishes and he took the north parishes."

Since 1999, Father John has been residing at Our Lady of Angels Friary, where he is provincial spiritual assistant to the Secular Franciscan Order. He also fills in at area parishes as needed. "I helped out in Illiopolis (at Resurrection Parish) during Holy Week," he says.

"Our province has 92 fraternities around the Midwest. I'm on the road a lot because they invite me to give retreats and talks. It's easy to talk about St. Francis."

Looking back on his many decades as a priest, Father John says, "All my service has been interesting and fulfilling. The priesthood is a terrific way of serving people no matter what happens to you."

Father John will be celebrating his jubilee at the Friar Community Jubilarian celebration on Oct. 3 at Our Lady of the Angels Friary.

— *By Diane Schlindwein*

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 will publish these names and addresses in the Regional Newsletter. If you can take time to mail a letter of encouragement to them, it might be nice to mention that you are a Secular Franciscan and we have them in our prayers. Including a Holy Card, might just be the support someone needs. We all like to receive mail, and you do not need to know the person, but will quite possibly "Make their day!" Sue

Muscatine man named diocese's new social action director

By Barb Arland-Fye

From the Catholic Messenger, Newspaper of the Davenport Diocese

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Kent Ferris of Muscatine, a secular Franciscan with an extensive background in human services, has been named the Diocese of Davenport's new social action director.

Ferris, 44, expects to begin his new position in mid-May, after completing projects for the Iowa Department of Human Services in Muscatine where he has been employed since 2001. He replaces John Kiley, who died of an apparent heart attack Feb. 15. The two men were acquainted through work and faith-based activities.

Ferris' involvement in social justice on both a professional and personal level impressed Bishop Martin Amos during the interview process for the diocesan post.

"He doesn't just talk the talk, he walks it," the bishop said. "His whole understanding of what social justice means is very, very evident. I think he will be a welcome addition to the chancery staff and the Social Action Department and the parishes of the diocese."

In seeking the post, Ferris spoke of his faith journey allowing him to study more in depth the Catholic Church's social action teachings. He said those teachings resonate with his experience in responding to the needs and injustices that occur, especially among people most often marginalized: those with disabilities, victims of natural disasters, children and adult victims of abuse, as well as those who have been charged with violent crimes.

Currently employed as a social worker supervisor, Ferris has conducted child abuse and dependent adult abuse assessments, served as facilitator of a batterer's education program, provided counseling and case management to adults with developmental disabilities and worked in the housing office for Carnegie Mellon University.

Outside of work he served as a disaster outreach worker team leader in response to a 2007 tornado that affected residents of Louisa, Muscatine and Jackson counties.

A native of Blair, Neb., Ferris graduated from Coe College in Cedar Rapids with a bachelor's degree in chemistry and from Mankato State University, Mankato, Minn., with a master's degree in counseling and student personnel.

As a college student he converted to Catholicism. He remembers being deeply moved the first time he went to Mass in 1985. After going through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), he entered the Catholic Church in 1986.

Both Ferris and his wife, Lori, also a convert, became secular Franciscans in 1991 as a way to grow in their faith together. Secular Franciscans are called to tell the world about salvation by God and to help make a person's faith, hope and love grow stronger and deeper.

Since moving to Muscatine, Ferris and his wife have become increasingly involved in their parish, Ss. Mary & Mathias. Ferris is a pastoral council representative and serves on the parish's social action committee along with his wife. They are parents of three young children: Clare, 9; Miles, 6; and Lucille, 5.

Ferris and his wife also are students in the diocese's Ministry Formation Program (MFP). Those classes have helped Ferris to better appreciate the two feet of social justice that the diocese's first social action director — Msgr. Marvin Mottet — developed to link charity with advocacy efforts.

Ferris said his own work and faith experiences "have enabled me to look beyond immediate charitable needs and to think and plan for system changes consistent with Catholic Social Action teaching."

"The diocese was fortunate to have some high quality people apply for the social action director position," said Char Maaske, the diocese's chief financial officer. "We are excited to have Kent continue the ministry of some excellent former directors, Msgr. Mottet, Dan Ebener and John Kiley. And Kent will have the advantage of continuing to learn from Msgr. Mottet and Dan Ebener as they both continue to be very active in social justice issues.

"Kent has a passion for working on issues of poverty, strengthening the family, nonviolence, the sanctity of life and the environment. I think Kent will find it very easy to join our team at the chancery and he will be a good fit for us."



Kent Ferris

Job Search Skills Workshops

Two workshops are being offered in the **St. Louis metro** area on May 17th and May 31st to help **job seekers**. The workshops were developed by a professional recruiter to provide helpful tools and guide **job seekers** to resources for improved job search results. Topics covered include: getting past on-line, resume screening and building additional networking channels in the challenging economy.



Private donations and company sponsorships are enabling us to offer the workshops at a minimum cost of \$20 per participant. Seating is still available. Please help get information on this valuable resource to members of our community that might benefit. Consider paying the registration for someone you know who needs professional **assistance in their job search**.

The program will be offered on May 17th and May 31st from 6:45pm to 9:30pm in **Edwardsville, Illinois**. For program details and registration form, visit website at: <http://www.helpinghandsoftheprairie.com>

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