



K O I N Ō N I A

...together on the road

CONFERENCE OF GENERAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS TO THE SFO

2008 – 1

Year 15

n. 57

PRESENTATION OF KOINONIA 2008

I, in the name of the four members of the Conference of Assistants General to the SFO, greet you with fraternal affection in this first issue of Koinonia 2008. The four Assistants General wished to ask some members of the SFO to participate in the preparation the four issues of Koinonia 2008 by writing the respective background article. Our decision was based on the fact that this year has a special significance for the Order due to the various anniversaries and events which will take place during it. We sincerely hope that the fact of counting on this kind of collaboration on the part of the brothers and sisters of the SFO will mean that the reflections will acquire an even greater value for the Order.

It must be remembered, above all, that among the special events to which we refer, 2008 will be the second year dedicated to celebrating the VIII Centenary of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, the Patroness of the SFO and TOR.

It is also the 30th anniversary of the approval of the new Rule of the SFO by Pope Paul VI, with the Apostolic Letter Seraphicus Patriarcha of the 24th June 1978, which will be celebrated during the year.

Finally, the XII General Chapter, an event of great relevance to the Order, will be held in Hungary from the 15th to the 22nd of November this year. It will be an elective Chapter. The themes of the Chapter, Profession and Sense of Belonging, will serve as a back-drop for the first two issues of the bulletin and will be dealt with directly in the other issues

I invite you to take advantage of these issues of Koinonia and of their content in order to live our franciscan charism with greater conviction and fidelity. May St. Francis continue to accompany us in the following of Jesus in fraternity, joy and simplicity, and may St. Elizabeth continue to encourage us in our commitment to serve our brothers and sisters in the world who are suffering and are often deprived of help and understanding.

Br. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR
Assistant General to the SFO

Elizabeth of Hungary

Timeless Model for Twenty-First Century Secular Franciscans

Anne Mulqueen, SFO

Introduction

Elizabeth of Hungary was born to privilege and position, yet from an early age she refused to use her birthright for personal gain. Although few of us can claim aristocratic blood, many of us have material possessions, labor-saving conveniences, and public recognition rivaling that of medieval kings and queens.

As a young child, Elizabeth placed her crown on the altar in the castle's chapel, indicating that God was pre-eminent in her affection and her life. This spiritually precocious child chose to share in the love of the Father rather than cling to prestige, power, and possessions. On our profession day, we, too, acknowledged the supremacy of God in our lives and publicly promised to live a rule of life patterned after "... the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and center of his life with God and people."ⁱ Total commitment to God means that we receive in return "Christ, the gift of the Father's love ... and the life which he has come to give abundantly."ⁱⁱ All God asks is that we persevere in faith, hope, and love, by seeking a proper spirit of detachment and simplifying our material needs. Prayerful reading of the gospel provides all the instruction we need.

In this final year commemorating the life and witness of our Patron, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, we pray that meditating on her life will lead us to holiness.

1. Elizabeth of Hungary - Model of Commitment to the Gospel Life

"Master Conrad declared that she made her public profession on a Good Friday, March 24, 1228, in the Franciscan Chapel. Present at this solemn act were the friars, her relatives (her handmaids) and her children. In front of all of them, of her own free will, placing her hands on the bare altar, she renounced the vanities of the world. As an external sign she put on the grey habit of the penitent. This was the color of the habit that the friars and penitents wore at that time."ⁱⁱⁱ

In his history of the Franciscan Order, *Annales Minorum*,^{iv} Luke Wadding says that at the suggestion of Cardinal Hugolino, St. Francis sent his mantle to St. Elizabeth as a gift. Of course, Elizabeth received more than a mantle of cloth. She received St. Francis' spiritual mantle of poverty, penance, and love for the less fortunate, which she wore until the day she died. St. Elizabeth passes this spiritual mantle down to us. Now we have the responsibility to weave it into the fabric of our daily lives.

When the Franciscan friars came to Thuringin around 1224, St. Elizabeth befriended them. The documents supporting her canonization show that she was familiar with the ideals of St. Francis and lived a life of prayer, penance, and acts of charity, even while her husband Ludwig was still alive.

ⁱ Article 4, SFO Rule.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ "We Have Come to Believe in Love," Letter for the Eighth Centenary of the Birth of Saint Elizabeth, Princess of Hungary and Franciscan Penitent, Prot. No. 29-2006.

^{iv} 3rd ed. (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1931), II, 179.

Elizabeth knew the cost of loving God totally—heart, soul, mind, and strength. She gave all she possessed to obtain Him, the *pearl of great price*. She was expelled from her castle, stripped of her worldly possessions, and had her children taken away from her. Although she suffered dearly for the love of God, she was committed wholeheartedly to the gospel life and, as the gospel promises, produced worthy fruits of penance.

She turned from any trace of self-indulgence and toward the Lord in complete self-giving. Her life of prayer and contemplation supplied the energy she needed to sustain her long days of ministering to the sick and impoverished. Her commitment to the marginalized in her community made life bearable for many who otherwise would have had no life at all.

After Ludwig's death in 1227 and her expulsion from the castle, Elizabeth turned to the friars, placed her hands on the altar in the Franciscan chapel, and made a public profession, taking the grey habit of a penitent.

Following the example of St. Elizabeth, we pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit as we seek to live the gospel today. The Secular Franciscan Rule of 1978 is our inspirational roadmap, consistently sending us back to the gospels for instruction. When I reflect on Elizabeth's generous spirit, I feel a bit like the rich young man of the gospel. How difficult it must be to give all you have. With the grace of God, St. Elizabeth did it with joy. Now we ask for the grace to follow her example.

In the SFO Rule, especially the second chapter, I see the imprint of St. Elizabeth in each article. It is apparent that Elizabeth lived the gospel in much the same manner as St. Francis of Assisi. She submitted herself to continual conversion and penances. She considered herself a sister to all people, especially the less fortunate, and followed the poor, crucified Christ each day. There are many accounts in the canonization documents indicating that, in spite of her active life, she was a most contemplative woman. In fact, she achieved what many of us long for: a contemplative life in action.

Her spirituality was of a secular nature in that her apostolate to the needy took place in the midst of her town and its people. She lived in simplicity, humility, and minority and was open to the action of the Holy Spirit. Peaceful, joyful, humble, loving, faithful, prayerful: all describe the essence of Elizabeth of Hungary.

2. Elizabeth of Hungary and Companions - Ideal and Prototype of Fraternal Life

“She could have become a solitary penitent, but that is not what happened. Like Francis, she too had some companions with whom she shared her first plan of penitential life.

After her second public profession as a penitent on Good Friday 1228, the fraternity became a community of sisters who professed as she did, dressed as she did and who committed themselves to the same resolution to spread the compassion of God. It was a full work: service to the poor, the marginalized, the sick, pilgrims, to education and teaching ...”^v

After her husband's death, Elizabeth renounced her earthly possessions and nursed the ailing poor in a hospital she established at Marburg. At the age of twenty-four, Elizabeth died poor, just like those she nursed.

It was during this period—following her husband's death and until her own—that Elizabeth entered into “fraternity” with her handmaids Isentrude and Guda (professed with St. Elizabeth) and with two poor women of the town. This small fraternity of women dedicated themselves to penance, prayer,

^v We Have Come to Believe in Love, op cit.

and total dependence on the providence of God. Elizabeth and her sisters visited the houses of the poor, and distributed among the needy whatever food they had. This fraternity had no enclosure to keep them separated from the world. On the contrary, their cloister was the community and the suffering people they served.

St. Elizabeth's life teaches us that we learn by doing. In being wronged, she learned forgiveness. In becoming poor, she learned deprivation. In losing her family, she learned grief. In caring for the ailing and indigent, she learned compassion. In entering into fraternity, she learned fraternal affection. With each loss, she became holier, and with each joy, she praised God, the giver of all good gifts.

3. Conclusion

If St. Elizabeth could give us advice for our journey to the Father, I imagine she would say: But first, you must pack.

Carefully consider each item before you place it in your bag. Let me warn you, however, anger and resentment are heavy and take up incredible amounts of room, while loving relationships are light and easy to carry.

Make your list and lay it all out. Ultimately, you decide what is worthy of bringing with you into this new [life]. Save room for what is valuable yet be willing to discard that which is not—and be cautious not to confuse the two.

Remember: This is a once in a lifetime trip - you will not visit this [life] again.^{vi}

Our times are not so different than Elizabeth's. Sin is still sin. Greed is still greed. The poor starve. The ailing poor lack access to quality care. St. Elizabeth made her journey; now it's time for ours. And this is what we need to pack:

- **Enlightened Conversion** - determining what destructive or sinful attitudes or actions need to be removed from our lives;
- **Enlightened Commitment** - taking responsibility for “packing” what is necessary for our unique journey to God; and
- **Enlightened Fraternal Life** - saving room for loving and supportive relationships and companions on the journey.

Saint Elizabeth, pray for us.

About the author

Anne Mulqueen has been a Secular Franciscan for 24 years. At the moment, she is the International Councillor of the USA-National Fraternity. Before her election as International Councillor, Anne acted as a director of formation on all levels in the fraternity. Anne was one of the speakers at the First International Workshop on Formation in Rome. She has published articles in *The Cord*, a review of Franciscan Spirituality. Anne works as a member of the Board of Directors of the Institute of Contemporary Franciscan Life and of the Duns Scotus Formation Fund. She is married and has two daughters and two grandchildren.

^{vi} Margaret A. Mulqueen, January 2008.

NOTICES - CHAPTERS - VISITS - MEETINGS

Malta – Annual Meeting of the CAS: “Tempo forte”

The members of the Conference of Spiritual Assistants General celebrated their “Tempo forte”, i.e., their annual meeting, in the OFM *La Porziuncola* Retreat House in Bahar ic-Caghaq, Malta, from the 3rd to the 9th of December 2007. Br. Samy Irudaya, OFM^{Cap}, President of the CAS, Br. Ivan Matić, OFM, Br. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, and Br. Martín Bitzer, OFM^{Conv}, Secretary of the CAS, followed a programme which provided for: 1. An evaluation of the year 2007; 2. Planning of the year 2008; 3. A meeting with the Ministers Provincial in Malta and the National Spiritual Assistants; 4. A meeting with the National Council of the SFO in Malta. Almost an entire day was dedicated to seeing the more significant places on the island, e.g., the Co-Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Valletta, the Cathedral of St. Paul in Mdena, the Grotto of St. Paul, etc. They participated in the solemn profession of six Secular Franciscan that evening.

Kenya – National Chapter of the SFO

The National Elective Chapter of the National Fraternity of the SFO in Kenya was held at the St. Bridget Centre in Nairobi from the 13th to 16th December 2007. The Delegate of the Minister General, Jenny Harrington, International Councillor of South Africa, presided over the Chapter. She was accompanied by Br. Eleuter Mrema, OFM^{Cap}, delegate of the Conference of Assistants General and presently National Assistant in Tanzania. The new National Council, with Patrick Macharia as National Minister and International Councillor of the National Fraternity of Kenya, was elected during the Chapter.

Lebanon – National Elective Chapter

The National Chapter of the SFO in the Lebanon was held in the SFO Centre of *St. Pius of Pietrelcina* in Tal El Deb on the 12th and 13th of January 2008. The Chapter was presided by Wilhelmina Visser-Pelsma, International Councillor of the Presidency of the CIOFS, with the presence of Br. Samy Irudaya, OFM^{Cap}, Spiritual Assistant General. 90 Secular Franciscans with the right to vote, with other observers present, participated. Br. Slaibi was elected National Minister, and Sammy Moujaes was elected International Councillor. Present also were: Br. Abdallah, OFM^{Cap}, new National Spiritual Assistant to the SFO, Br. Joseph, OFM, and Br. Cesar Essajan, OFM^{Conv}, who took active parts in the Chapter. Br. Charles Salhab, OFM^{Cap}, out-going National Assistant, who had helped a lot in the growth of the SFO in the Lebanon, gave a conference. The Chapter concluded with the celebration of the Eucharist presided by Br. Tanios Rizk, Vicar Provincial OFM^{Cap}, while Br. Samy gave the homily. The National Minister, Slaibi, thanked the members of the out-going National Council, the Spiritual Assistants and others.

Italy – Meeting of the New Ministers Provincial OFM

A meeting of the newly elected Ministers Provincial with the Minister and Definitory General was held in the General Curia of the Friars Minor from the 14th to the 22nd of January 2008. As is customary, two days during the meeting were dedicated to meeting

those responsible for the various offices of the Curia. On Wednesday the 16th of January, all the Ministers visited the Offices of the Curia, the office of the General Assistant to the SFO-YouFra among them. On the second day, the 17th January, was given over to presentations by those responsible for the offices who underlined the responsibilities and functions of the Minister Provincial in the various areas of his service. The role of the Minister Provincial with regard to the spiritual and pastoral assistance to the SFO and YouFra was also presented. The meeting continued with work in groups and, later, in assembly with all those in charge of the offices who responded to the questions of the Ministers Provincial.

Italy – Formation Course for Spiritual Assistants to SFO-YouFra

A formation course, with the main topic of “Spiritual Assistance to the SFO-YouFra encourages communion with the Church and the Franciscan Family” was held in St. Mary of the Angels from the 21st to 25th January 2008. About eighty Spiritual Assistants from the whole of Italy participated. The course was organised by the National Conference of Assistants: Br. Fabrizio Ciampicali, OFM, Br. Giorgio Morosinotto, OFMConv, Br. Daniele Guerra, OFMCap and Br. Fernando Scocca, TOR. The four Assistants General were invited to the course and gave different conferences, as follows: Br. Samy Irudaya, OFMCap, “The contribution of the Assistant in the vocational discernment and accompaniment of the SFO”; Br. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, “The insertion of the SFO into the ecclesial community and into civil society”; Br. Ivan Matic, OFM, Young Franciscans and spiritual assistance”; and Br. Martín Bitzer, OFMConv, “Collegiality and assistance to the one Secular Franciscan Order”. The afternoon of the 24th of January was dedicated to the topic “St. Elizabeth of Hungary, spouse, mother and consecrated person”, presented by Br. Fernando Scocca, TOR. The presence and interventions during the course by Br. Marino Porcelli, OFM, President of COMPI, Giuseppe Failla, National Minister of the SFO and Maura Murgia, National President of YouFra, were noteworthy.

Italy – Meeting of the new Ministers Provincial OFMCap

The meeting with the new Ministers Provincial of the OFMCap was held in the International College, Rome, from the 21st to 26th January 2008. The new Ministers, as is customary, met the Minister General and his Definitors. One day was dedicated to a meeting with the various offices of the General Curia. Br. Samy Irudaya, on the 25th, gave a conference on the role the Ministers Provincial have in the appointment of well prepared spiritual Assistants to the fraternities of the SFO and on their commitment to spiritual and pastoral assistance to the SFO. The new Ministers asked many questions about the SFO and Samy Irudaya responded, clarifying doubts and problems. 45 new Ministers Provincial, with the Minister and Definitory General, were present. All took an active part in the session.

Bosnia and Herzegovina – Formation Course for Spiritual Assistants to SFO-YouFra

The second course of formation for the Spiritual Assistants to the SFO and YouFra of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia was held in the ancient royal city of Jajce in Bosnia-Herzegovina, from the 19th to 21st of February 2008. The course was organised by the Conference of the National Assistants to the SFO-YouFra of Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia with the help of the Conference of Assistants General. About 80 Spiritual Assistants to the SFO and YouFra were present at the course and there was a very active and animated

participation. Also present was Br. Fabrizio Ciampicali, OFM, National Assistant to the SFO in Italy, who arrived with the SFO General Assistants.

The aim of this second course of formation was that of presenting the book “Manual for Spiritual Assistance to the SFO and YouFra”, recently published in Croatian. This is the first edition of the book in another language since it was published in Italian by the Conference of General Assistants to the SFO. Many thanks to all those who collaborated in the translation and publication of the manual in Croatian. The manual will be a great help to the Spiritual Assistants, Secular Franciscans and to the Young Franciscans in their initial and ongoing formation.

The presentation of the Manual was made by the four Assistants General of the SFO, who presented it in different conferences. The first conference was “The General Presentation of the Manual” (Br. Ivan Matić, OFM); the second: “the ancient and recent history of the SFO” (Br. Martín Bitzer, OFMConv); the third: “The active presence of the SFO in the Church and society” (Br. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR); the fourth: “Spiritual and pastoral assistance to the SFO” (Br. Samy Irudaya, OFMCap) and the fifth: “Young Franciscans and spiritual assistance” (Br. Ivan Matić, OFM).

During the course, the participants could visit and enjoy the beauty of the ancient royal city of Jajce, learn the extraordinary history which characterises it, and celebrate Mass in the franciscan parish of St. Luke. The formation course ended with the solemn celebration of the Eucharist in the famous sanctuary of St. John the Baptist in Podmilačje.

Czech Republic – Formation Course for the Spiritual Assistants to SFO-YouFra

A formation course for Spiritual Assistants to the SFO and YouFra of the Czech Republic and Slovakia was held at the sanctuary of Svaty Hostyn, Czech Republic, from the 28th February to 1st March 2008. The course was organised by the Conference of Assistants General in collaboration with the Conferences of Spiritual Assistants of the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Some Secular Franciscans from both countries also participated in the course. Approximately 70 people in all, between Spiritual Assistants and Secular Franciscans, were present. It was very nice to see the participation of the Ministers Provincial of the various First Orders present in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The topics of the course were presented by the Assistants General as follows: “The importance of the knowledge of the SFO documents” (Br. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR); “Collegial Assistance to the SFO” (Br. Martin Bitzer, OFMConv); “The presentation of the Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO” (Br. Ivan Matić, OFM); “The role of the Spiritual Assistant in the local fraternity” (Br. Samy Irudaya, OFMCap); “Franciscan Youth and its spiritual assistance” (Br. Ivan Matić, OFM).

Italy – San Giovanni Rotondo – JP II Jammin’ Festival

The JP II Jammin’ Festival is a musical festival dedicated to the Servant of God, Pope John Paul II (JP II), organised by the local YouFra fraternity of San Giovanni Rotondo. It is

celebrated each year to commemorate the anniversary of his death. This year it was celebrated in the Cinema-theatre of the city of San Giovanni Rotondo on the 28th and 29th March, in the context of the third anniversary of the death of Pope Wojtyła. There were two beautiful evenings of communion, songs and joy, transmitted live by the television station 'Tele Radio Padre Pio'. Ten young singers and groups were presented. A tremendous young singer, Bianca May, was adjudged the winner of this, the third, edition.

Many guests were present at the festival and they took turns to share personal memories of Pope John Paul II. The presence and testimony of H. E. Msgr. Piero Marini, ex-Master of Ceremonies of the Pontifical Liturgical Celebrations of John Paul and Benedict XVI from 1987 to the 1st November 2007, presently the President of the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses; of Sean Patrick Lovett, responsible for *105 Live*, the out-side channel of Vatican Radio; of Don Francesco Pierpaoli, director of the John Paul II Centre in Loreto; of Prof. Alessandro Meluzzi, Psychiatrist-Psychotherapist, Founder of the Ágape Community 'Mother of Welcome' and of Br. Ivan Matić, OFM, Assistant General of the SFO-YouFra, who recalled the 60th anniversary of the birth of the YouFra on this occasion, were particularly gratifying.

Among the guests there were many personages of the Italian world of show business: Gegè Telesforo, Gerardina Trovato, Povia, Luca Carboni, Matthew Lee, and many many more. You can find further information about the festival on the web page: www.jp2jamminfestival.it.

Italy – Retreat of the Novitiate of Castelverde in Assisi

The retreat in preparation for the profession of the group SFO of novices of the Roman Parish of Our Lady of Loreto in Castleverde was held in Assisi from the 28th to the 30th of April 2008.

Housed in the Domus Laetitiae of the Capuchin Friars, they were directed by their animators Francesco and Antonella Mattiocco, and Gabriele and Paola Buccarella, of the SFO fraternity of Mary Immaculate in Rome, who, together with Giancarlo and Adriana Felicetti, of the same fraternity, and in communion with the SFO Regional Council of Lazio, guided their progress in the novitiate each week for three years. Br. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, Assistant General, appointed assistant to the same fraternity six months previously, also attended.

This experience was born of the explicit request of the Pastor, Don Patricio Milano, to establish an SFO Fraternity in his parish. He himself, as an assiduous novice, followed the preparation together with the group of sixteen parishioners, who are spread over all age-brackets. The specific spiritual dimensions of the Franciscan tertiary were studied during the course of a pilgrimage to the places linked to events in the life of St. Francis of Assisi: Rivotorto, San Damiano, the Crucifix in Saint Clare's, the Porziuncola, and the Sacred Convent.

The profession of these brothers and sisters, who form a new SFO fraternity, is scheduled for the 8th of June next. We offer our fraternal assistance to them in prayer.