



Franciscan Friars Third Order Regular

Province of the Immaculate Conception, USA
Province Newsletter • March 2012

**What does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God? *Micah 6:8b***

FOCUS 11 in Orlando, Florida



**Bishop John Noonan of the
Diocese of Orlando, Florida
addresses junior level high
school students at FOCUS 11.**

FOCUS 11 is a national program aimed at elementary students aged eleven years (typically in sixth grade) and also junior level high school students in their eleventh year of education. Studies show that these two age groups are at pivotal stages in their discernment towards their vocation in life. FOCUS 11 immerses the students in prayer, witness and information on the diocesan priesthood and religious life. This year was a special milestone for the program in the Orlando Diocese since the high school juniors who attended were also among the first sixth graders to attend the very first FOCUS 11 celebrations. Over the three days of this year's FOCUS 11 (February 27 – 29) more than 1800 Catholic youth attended. Many religious orders including our province sponsored exhibit booths as a way of touching base with them and helping to educate them about our ministry, way of life and heritage.





Other Vocation News

Please keep in your prayers Fr. Anthony Aarons and Ricardo Paez, both of whom are in final discernment concerning the Immaculate Conception Province. Fr. Anthony visited the friars at San Pedro March 12-15 and Ricardo's visit was March 16-18.

Fr. Anthony was born in Jamaica but emigrated to the U.S. as a young man, eventually becoming a U.S. citizen. He was educated by Franciscans in his youth but felt a calling to serve his own people. He returned to Jamaica and was ordained a priest. He serves in a number of ministries there mostly among the poor. Over the last two years he has been discerning a call to religious life as a Franciscan, which ultimately led him to our Province.

Ricardo was born in Columbia and emigrated to the U.S. along with members of his family at age 10. He has always felt that God was shaping him to be a Franciscan and his recent visit to the friars at San Pedro was very encouraging to him.

Please pray for both of these men and for all who are discerning God's path for them in life.

News from Minneapolis

Brother David Liedl recently completed a three-year term as a member of the Advisory Board of the Franciscan Life Center. The Franciscan Life Center is a ministry of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls. The Center provides opportunities for prayer, days of recollection and retreat, and programs which promote Franciscan spirituality and education.

On February 24 - 26 seven Franciscan Volunteers and staff participated in a 2 ½ day retreat led by Brother David Liedl. The retreat took place at Saint Jane House in North Minneapolis. Franciscan Volunteers is an outreach ministry of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls. Volunteers commit to one-year of service ministering in the Saint Cloud area while living in community. The retreat provided an opportunity to explore spiritual growth and, in particular, exposure to various ways to pray as well as input on the challenges and promise of intentional communal life. The young people ranged in age from 24 to 30 and came from all over the United States. The Franciscan Volunteer Program is now connected to Americorps. This link will guarantee increased recruitment possibilities and funding to assist the volunteers reduce tuition debts.

PEACE AND JUSTICE CORNER

Fr. Raphael Eagle, T.O.R.

Up Or Down, In Or Out, Black or White, Yes Or No

Options, we all have them. St. Francis had options. He opted to be a thoroughly Catholic man. He lived and breathed our holy faith after his conversion.

In his First Rule, chapter 19, he insisted that the friars be Catholic in belief and practice. In his Second Rule, chapter 2, he reiterated his insistence on their being Catholic in mind and heart. He asks the Minister to examine them on their tenets. That insistence plus his docility to Christ's pastors, the bishops, were hallmarks of his mentality.

Today, the Church faces challenges to its liberty due to the HHS mandate of the Obama Administration. Our Catholic hospitals, clinics, and charities are threatened. The USCCB makes this so clear in their declaration accusing the Obama Administration of violating the Rights of Conscience and Religious Liberty. (See www.usccb.org/conscience).

So the question before us is; are we American Catholics or Catholic Americans ?

This is not a word game or a semantic exercise in grammar. The answer we give defines us and prioritizes our stance on the values and beliefs that we hold closest to our hearts. The answer also focuses our preaching and conversations.

For the internet savvy, George Weigel's article in the National Review Online "The Catholic Betrayal of Religious Freedom" puts the answer into perspective.

Now that the Senate has voted 51 to 48 to weaken and disregard the First Amendment to the Constitution on Religious Liberty the urgency to define ourselves, align ourselves and declare ourselves Catholic Americans is doubly urgent.

In deference to Father Francis, "that thoroughly Catholic man" as one biographer called him, may we inform ourselves and listen to the voice of our pastors, the bishops. They have asked the faithful to contact their respective congressional Representatives and Senators in writing to voice their dissent regarding the demands with the HHS mandate. To find who they are just punch in www.house.gov and www.senate.gov).

This is not a partisan issue. It is not a single issue vote. It is not politics. It is a justice issue of bedrock principles both constitutionally and religiously. It is also about following Francis' desire that his friars live as thoroughly Catholic men.

ADDRESS UPDATE

Father Raphael Eagle's new cell phone number: **817-751-2821.**

FINAL WORD

"Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your works.

If you see a poor man, take pity on him. If you see a friend being honored, do not envy him. Do not let only your mouth fast, but also the eye and the ear and the feet and the hands and all the members of our bodies.

Let the hands fast, by being free of avarice. Let the feet fast, by ceasing to run after sin.

Let the eyes fast, by disciplining them not to glare at that which is sinful.

Let the ear fast, by not listening to evil talk and gossip. Let the mouth fast from foul words and unjust criticism. For what good is it if we abstain from birds and fishes, but bite and devour our brothers?

May He who came to the world to save sinners, strengthen us to complete the fast with humility! Have mercy on us and save us." *St. John Chrysostom*

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