



# The Troubadour

THE NEWSLETTER of the TROUBADOURS of PEACE REGION  
of the SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

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## The Attraction and/or Questioning of the TAU Cross

Members of the Secular Franciscans and even others display the wearing of this cross at home and also in public. It is a sign attached to history and a token of spirituality.

I have some people question: "Why are you wearing a T-bone?" Well, it is shaped somewhat like that. However, such is not the real, the main reason. When asked we must be ready for an authentic answer. Just recently, namely February 10, 2007, there was a gathering of local people at the Franciscan Formation House here in Portland. Franciscan Brother Robert and myself were vested in our Franciscan brown habits. Our postulants were neatly dressed and each wearing the TAU cross.

One of the couples in attendance asked me about that cross. I did mention a bit of history from early times and how later St. Francis of Assisi made this an instrument of his coat of arms. Even the Franciscan brown habit symbolizes this significance. The couple then asked where one might purchase such a cross. I then mentioned several stores, having overlooked the fact that I may have some in my own residence.

Upon arriving home there immediately I went to the storehouse of these articles, neatly packaged two of them and off in the mail they went. And have heard from the couple via phone telling how much they appreciated the receiving of the two gifts, along with a more lengthy explanation (attached).

Ash Wednesday, February 21, 2007

### Why is the TAU a Franciscan Cross?

The first recorded reference to the TAU is from Ezekiel 9:4 "Go through the city of Jerusalem and put a TAU on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over the detestable things that are done in it." The TAU is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet and looks very much like the letter "T".

At the Fourth Lateran Council, on November 11, 1215, Pope Innocent made reference to the TAU and quoted the above verse in reference to the profaning of the Holy Places by the Saracens. It is widely accepted that St. Francis was present at the Fourth Lateran Council and that he heard the words of Pope Innocent III when he said, "The TAU has exactly the same form as the cross of which our Lord was crucified on Calvary, and only

those will be marked with this sign and will obtain mercy who have mortified their flesh and conformed their life to that of the Crucified Savior". From then on, the TAU became Francis' own coat of arms.

Francis used the TAU in his writings, painted on the walls and doors of the places where he stayed, and used it as his only signature on his writings.

St. Bonaventure said, "This TAU symbol had all the veneration and all the devotion of the saint: he spoke of it often in order to recommend it, and he traced in on himself before beginning each of his actions."

Thomas of Celano writes, "Francis preferred the TAU above all other symbols: he used it as his only signature for his letters, and he painted the image of it on the walls of the places where he stayed."

In the famous blessing of Brother Leo, Francis wrote on parchment, "May the Lord bless you and keep you! May the Lord show his face to you and be merciful to you! May the Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you peace! God bless you Brother Leo!" Francis sketched a head (of Brother Leo) and then drew the TAU over this portrait.

Due, no doubt, in large part to Francis' own affection for and devotion to the TAU, it has been a well recognized and accepted Franciscan symbol among Franciscans of various denominations and of all orders within those denominations for centuries. It remains so today. The TAU carries with it all of the symbolization of the Cross of Christ as well as Francis' ideal life and dream for himself and his followers.

Fr. John F. dePaemelaere, OFM --- Regional Spiritual Assistant

## Regional Minister's Message

Once every five years the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States holds a Quinquennial Congress. This is the year! To encourage as broad a level of participation as possible I am sharing this QNews article from NAFRA. We won't repeat what was in the TAU-USA, but I think the information on the daily schedule serves to "whet the appetite."

Hope to see you in Pittsburg.

PetB, Elaine

**Tuesday, July 3:** Radisson Hotel Pittsburgh Green Tree in Pittsburgh, PA. - Arrival anytime during the day. Dinner at 6 p.m., introductions and announcements at 7, opening mass at 7:15 with Bishop Daniel Conlon, DD, of Steubenville, OH presiding. There will be a procession of cultures wearing their native costume or attire.

The Quinquennial's morning schedule is 9 a.m. Morning Prayer (with some songs in different languages), announcements, and a presentation by keynote speaker Fr. Eric Law at 10 (except Friday) followed by a question period. Lunch and free time. 2 p.m. Concurrent sessions: general attendees join "Congress Fraternities," while spiritual assistants gather for their session. At 4 Mass is celebrated.

**Wednesday:** Mass is celebrated in the Korean language by Fr. Francis Kim, OFM.  
At 6, a 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration dinner.

**Thursday:** Fr. Peter Vettickanakudy, OFM Cap., will celebrate mass in the Indian, Syro Malabar Rite.  
At 7:30, Part 1 of a Festival of Cultures, with the multicultural committee and Fr. Law facilitating.

**Friday:** 10 a.m., off-theme workshops which repeat in the afternoon at 2. The workshops are:

- Patti Normile, SFO, on "Caregiving and the Elderly."
- Ed Shirley, SFO "Spirituality in Today's Secular World."
- Ron Pihokker, SFO, "Secular Franciscans and the Catechetical Ministry."
- Javier Orozco, SFO, "Francis, Divine Providence and Our Secular Life."

At the same time spiritual assistants will have their own workshop.

4 p.m., an Eastern Rite Divine Liturgy celebrated by Bishop John Kudrick of Parma, OH.

At 8, there will be a social.

**Saturday:** Morning Prayer, announcements, and presentation by Fr. Law at usual time.  
2 p.m. sessions of the Congress Fraternities and spiritual assistant workshops.  
4 p.m. Fr. Moises Villalta, OFM Cap., will celebrate Mass in Spanish.  
At 8, Part 2 of the Festival of Cultures featuring music and dancing.

**Sunday:** The Congress concludes with Morning Prayer and announcements, followed by closing remarks from national leaders and a "travel's style" bagged lunch.



## **Spirituality for the 2 halves of life.**

This phrase of idea may be new to some of you, to others quite comfortable and familiar. It is an Attempt to understand spirituality and journey in terms of ascent and descent. Some time ago I wrote that it seems we spend a lot of our time constantly re-doing our spiritual start-up work without ever seeking a more adult reality. Further, it is my belief, that our lack of understanding and living by the Gospel is based on Christianity in general being stuck in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of life spirituality, while Jesus Speaks in second half reality. So what does that mean? Let's look.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> half of life, spirituality follows closely along the lines of our own ego development. We are Setting our boundaries, looking for direction, forming our value systems and writing our definitions of self-worth & worthiness. At this stage, churches are good in helping us grow and learn the basics of belief, through rules, commandments, rituals, faithful observance and yes, performance. Here we became by practice and practices [rituals], spiritual individuals with a solid foundation. It is what we need at this stage, and it is here, with the basics in hand & mind, the spiritual masters took over to facilitate the beginning of the next step, second half of life spirituality. Note speaking of spirituality of the 2 halves of life is not based on age, but on DESIRE for the journey.

2<sup>nd</sup> Half Spirituality is characterized by our transformation from individualism, a my personal savior/ salvation person , into relational community-based people who give birth to Christ anew, in ourselves. No longer individuals concerned with ourselves, our images or supposed worth. Now we can become a truly Christo-centric people who are free enough from themselves to bring love, justice and peace into a world possessed by institutional & structural evil. Ever wonder why in a world of so many church going people striving to do what is right that so much evil exists, war, hunger, intolerance, destruction, greed, etc.? I would postulate that most religions and churches support only the individual's journey to obeying "our" rules, so we can be "right" and through a lack of cultivating spiritual masters (much like the desert fathers & mothers) have left themselves devoid of the prophetic voices needed to begin asking the better questions, the questions that aid into death/life spiritual transformations.

If you look deeply into Scripture you see over and over again stories from Jesus that all point to Mutual relationships, yet we invariably either change them into guidelines for observance, something over which our orthodox performance can be measured and judged, or we tend to ignore the teachings entirely. Jesus does not talk at any length on our faithful observance, yes he does talk about not sinning, but it is always more about setting up right relationships and avoiding those things that skew relationships. For most of my life I thought I had a pretty good track record (balance sheet for those who view God as a bookkeeper) of observance (you know Mass attendance, sacraments, prayer, etc. though that was always me centered). I surely earned by place in heaven, won my worthiness, then enter Francis of Assisi – God alone is worthy. Notice the word ALONE! I can never be worthy, but paradoxically I am worthy by gift, God's gift in bending down to me and you – Incarnation. Shame it took so long to understand how often I missed God who came down to meet me while I was so busy climbing up the spiritual ladder (ascent) that I missed Him on the way (by the way, climbing up is 1<sup>st</sup> half stuff).

We have become very good at worshipping Jesus, something He never asked of us. What He did ask Was to follow Him, be like him, treat people as he did, basically to become Him and do what He did

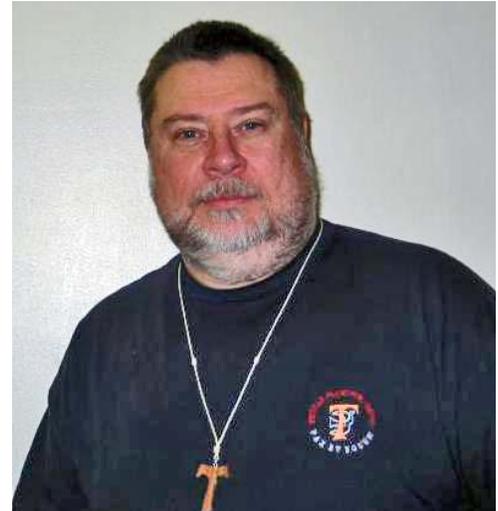
and walk the path of descent, a path of love, justice and peace. This is Spirituality for the Second half of Life, the stuff the Gospels really talk about.

Pace, Bob

## **Troubadours of Peace Regional Council Profiles**

### **Regional Formation Director**

Local Fraternity: Holy Trinity, Pasco WA  
 Name: Robert L. Fitzsimmons "Fitz"  
 Professed: 23 November 1996  
 Residence: Kennewick, WA  
 Married: Married to Patty (we also professed together - SFO)  
 Children: none  
 Education: BS (Environmental Sci) MPA (Public Admin) MA (Religious ED/Scripture)



SFO Activity: local Fraternity Formation Director 11 years (8yrs emerging)  
 Region FD – elected June 2005  
 Retreat Facilitator – Franciscan Spiritual Tradition  
 SFO Spiritual Assistants course (Life Giving Union)

Parish Activities: Former DRE & Youth Minister, Adult Scripture classes, taught catechist development Yakima Diocese, RCIA (Germany & US), retreat facilitator, Spiritual director, Parish council, parish spirituality commission, parish youth council

Community: launched the H2O project (support of YOUFRA) in the Tri-cities  
 Employment: former USAF Officer, Parish DRE & Youth Minister, now semi-retired  
 Hobbies: computers, reading, whale watching in Depoe Bay, camping & antiquing with Patty  
 Vacation Spot: Depoe Bay &/or Leavenworth WA  
 Relaxation: Scripture Study & research, Franciscan Spiritual Tradition, & watching or reading Brother Cadfael mysteries or just enjoying a fire, glass of wine & the presence of my dearest friend, Patty



Ecology has been in the media spotlight as of late, with a focus on global warming. Former VICE-President Al Gore's documentary "An Inconvenient Truth" sparked discussion as to whether it should be shown to children in school.

The U.N. backed "Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change" issued a sobering report in Paris this month (Feb.) which concluded they are more ninety percent certain that humans are the leading cause of the world's temperature rise in the last fifty years. More importantly, the panel concluded the world's governments must dramatically cut emissions of heat trapping gases, or learn to live more droughts, heat waves, powerful rainstorms, an rising sea levels.

These so-called greenhouse gases are comprised of carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. In the past, plant respirations and decomposition of organic matter released more than ten times the carbon dioxide released by human activities. However, these releases had generally been in balance during the centuries leading up to the industrial revolution, with carbon dioxide being absorbed by terrestrial vegetation and the oceans. What has changed in the last few hundred years is the additional release of carbon dioxide by human activities.

The United States emits about one-fifth of the total greenhouse gases. Fossil fuels burned to run cars and trucks, heat homes and businesses, and power factories are responsible for about 98% of the U.S. carbon dioxide emissions and 18% of nitrous emissions. Increased agriculture, deforestation, and industrial production, and mining also contribute a significant share of emissions according to "carbonfund.org". Did you know that burning a gallon of gasoline produces 200 pounds of carbon dioxide?

As Franciscans, we should especially be aware of how all our actions affect the whole of creation. Francis in his "Canticle of the Creatures" of 1226, gave praise to God for the beauty of the earth and all that it contained. "Francis had a vivid sense of sacramentality of creation. All things whether living or inanimate reflected the Creator's love and were due reverence and wonder". Man he said was to be a steward of these gifts for they were merely on loan from God and were to be passed on to future generations.

What are you going to do to help preserve our earth for those who come after us?

Patricia A. Sovich, SFO --- Regional Ecology Chair



Article 16 of our Rule enjoins us to “esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community.” I think some occupations make it easier to share in the redemptive aspect of work than others. As an electronic engineer I have great difficulty seeing my work as redemptive. This is especially true if I constrain the definition of “work” to just my occupation. Luckily, Article 8 of the Rule comes to the rescue. Article 8 in part, mandates that as Secular Franciscans we “join in liturgical prayer” in addition to celebrating the Eucharist. This usually takes the form of the Liturgy of the Hours. In the past, the Liturgy of the Hours was known as the “Divine Office.” The word “Office” in this case comes from the Latin for work. So, praying the Liturgy of the Hours is a type of redemptive work.

The preface to the Shorter Christian Prayer says it better than I can: “In the Holy Spirit Christ carries out through the Church “the work of human redemption and God’s personal glorification,” not only when the Liturgy of the Hours is celebrated .....The sanctification of human beings is accomplished ..... The Liturgy of the Hours, distributed over various periods of each day, is intended to sanctify time and work.”

Right from the beginning of the Divine Office, the Invitatory, as the name implies, invites all creation to join in a single voice in praising the One Supreme Being Who is above all else because He existed before all else. The human community, both living and dead, is an important part of this creation that has been redeemed by Jesus, the Son of God.

The importance of Morning and Evening Prayer is emphasized in Vatican II’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, number 89a (referenced on p. 41 of Volume I of the four Volume Set of the Liturgy of the Hours): “In keeping with the ancient tradition of the Church, Morning and Evening Prayer form a double hinge of the daily Office and are therefore to be considered the principal Hours and celebrated as such.” A deceased Secular Franciscan I knew always use to say that the function of these two special Hours was to “bookend the day.” Both Hours appear to focus on light. Morning Prayer consists of praise and thanksgiving for the return of physical light at the beginning of a new day. It also petitions God for a spiritual light to “dawn upon us” and our living and deceased brothers and sisters throughout the day. Similarly, Evening Prayer asks God for protection for ourselves and our loved ones during both the physical and spiritual night when there appears to be no light.

I’ve also read somewhere and on unhurried occasions I’ve experienced that both Morning and Evening Prayer appear to be structured in such a way that when praying the Intercessions or the Our Father one gets the distinct impression of being present at the Communion part of the Mass. It seems that all along these two Offices have been building up to an invitation from the Lord for greater spiritual intimacy in the form of a Spiritual Communion. I really like the beautiful irony of inviting others to join us at the Invitatory at the beginning of Morning Prayer, only to receive an invite from the Redeemer Himself for greater intimacy at the end of this special Hour. So, when doing the “work” of praying the Liturgy of the Hours daily, especially in an unrushed manner, one has the potential to truly share in the redemption of the human community irrespective of one’s occupation.

## ECOLOGY AND WORK COMMISSION

*By Susan Renner, SFO  
Regional All Commissions Chair*

As Gospel people, we serve the Lord and each other through our work and taking care of mother earth. This winter we have had plenty of opportunities to be servant people. The unstable weather patterns caused many of us to clean up yard debris, fix our roofs and welcome others to our warm homes. Many of us will be planting trees to replace the fallen ones and as we do consider praying the Blessing Prayer For The Planting Of A Tree. It reminds us of St. Francis' reverence for God's creation and invites us to welcome the tree with love and a song as a blessing from Him.

*Lord and Holy Creator of Trees and Forests,  
come and place Your blessing of life  
upon this (\_\_\_\_\_) tree  
that we are planting today.*

*In the Garden of Eden,  
You planted both the tree of knowledge  
and the tree of life.  
May this (\_\_\_\_\_) tree  
be a tree of life to all the earth.  
May its leaves breathe forth  
the life-breath of oxygen.  
May its branches be living space  
for those who climb among them  
and for birds of the air that shall nest there.  
May those in need of shelter from the summer heat  
find in its shade a refreshing refuge.  
May it give to all who look upon it  
the gift of life-renewing beauty.*

*Lord, this our new tree  
is a stranger to us and we to it.  
Remind us whenever we may pass by  
to make it feel at home  
by speaking to it with love,  
by greeting it with a song and a blessing.  
May this tree's cousins in creation-  
other trees, grasses and wild flowers-  
welcome it and help it to recover  
from the shock of being moved.  
As blessings, peace and life were the fruits  
of the tree of the Cross of Your Son, Jesus,  
may those same fruits flow from this (\_\_\_\_\_) tree  
which we plant in Your holy name,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen+*

