

## Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, OFS

Dear brothers and sisters,

One of the daily challenges of living our lives as Christians and Franciscans is discerning the will of God for us at the present moment. Sometimes it's obvious – e.g. take care of a sick child. More often, it isn't so evident, whether we are just trying to decide what we should do today or what we should commit ourselves to for the next month, or year, or the rest of our lives.

Francis struggled with discernment, too. You may remember that on one occasion he sent messengers to Clare and to Sylvester, to ask both of them to pray to God on his behalf to discern whether it was better for him to continue to preach in the world or to devote his life totally to prayer. Clare and Sylvester were excellent choices as intercessors, having a deep relationship with God, and knowing Francis very well. The message came back from both of them that Francis was to continue to preach – he was called not only for his own salvation but for that of others.

Perhaps it is no wonder that Francis prayed for his brothers – and for all of us who follow him - on his deathbed, “I have done what was mine to do. May Christ show you what is yours.”


While our entire Rule speaks to our particular way of seeking to do God's will as Secular Franciscans, I see Article 10 as being key to that understanding. “Uniting themselves to the redemptive obedience of Jesus, who placed His will into the Father's hands, let them faithfully fulfill the duties proper to their various circumstances of life.” I connect the last clause of Article 14 here: “let them exercise their responsibilities competently in the Christian spirit of service.” God's will for each of us is to do the things that come with whatever responsibilities we are charged with – and to do them well with

the understanding that when we do things we are following the call to service. If Christ was not above washing the feet of the disciples, then we are following His example when performing the many mundane tasks of life but do them well because they are ‘ours to do’.

Obviously, not everything we do requires discernment, since some responsibilities are obvious. Discernment is needed when new responsibilities present themselves and a decision is needed whether or not to take them on, especially when it might mean we have to lay aside old ones. How do we know when God is calling us to a change? Some people are attuned enough to God's voice in their lives to have a sense of whether the answer is “Yes” or “No”. Many of the rest of us, though, need a little more concrete answer. That's where Francis' example with Clare and Sylvester comes in handy. It may be prudent to ask some wise friends who know us well and are well acquainted with the Lord to pray and discern on our behalf before making an important decision.

It is essential to leave open the possibility that God is calling us to something new. When we feel as though we don't have time for anything else in our lives (a pretty common situation), maybe it's time to recognize that there's something we're doing now that we no longer have to do.

As life goes on, though, I'm finding more and more times when I'm just not ready to make a decision yet. I pray for guidance and I'm comfortable that it will come in God's time. Sometimes it's okay to just wait and see. May Christ show each of us what is ours to do.

Blessings, Vickie 

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The *SFO News* is the official publication of the Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order.

Submission deadline is the  
20<sup>th</sup> of each month.

**CALENDAR**

*Unless otherwise indicated, all events are at Mayslake Village (Oak Brook).*

- **Election & Visitation dates subject to change. (E=Election/V=Visitation)**

**January**

- 14: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 15: St. Francis, Crystal Lake Fraternity (V)
- 22: St. Anthony, Oak Lawn Fraternity (E)

**February**

- 18: Apostolates Workshop
- 26: St. Anthony, Rockford Fraternity (V)

**March**

- 01: Fair Share, Census, and Annual Reports due
- 10: St. Anthony, Joliet Fraternity (V)
- 17: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 25: St. Francis, Steger Fraternity (V)
- 28: San Damiano Fraternity (V)
- 31: Candidates' Retreat, Day 1

**April**

- 1: Living Waters Fraternity (V)
- 17: Brother Jacoba Community (V)

**May**

- 05: Candidates' Retreat, Day 2
- 19: Chapter of Ministers

**June**

**July**

- 3-8: Quinquennial Congress, Chicago, IL
- 14: Council Meeting 9:30 a.m.

**August**

- 04: Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula
- 23: San Jose Fraternity (V)

**September**

- 08: Junipero Serra Fraternity (E)
- 08: Wellspring Community (E)
- 10: NW Franciscan Community (E)
- 29: Leadership Workshop

**October**

- 06: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 16-21: NAFRA Meeting - Denver, CO
- 28: St. Thomas More Fraternity (V)

**November**

- 04: St. Elizabeth Hungary Fraternity (E)
- 11: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration
- 17: St. Francis, Fox Valley Fraternity (E)
- 18: St. Juliana Fraternity (E)

**December**

- 04: St. Clare Fraternity - Oak Brook (E)
- 08: Regional Chapter of Elections

**Spiritual Assistant's Message**

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I send you my late summer greetings and some hope that you are doing well and will enjoy the closing of this season, which is if you ask me, is the best time to be in Chicago. There is so much to see and be a part of (without coats); all that's missing are some mountains. Oh well - I guess that's why God invented road-trips.

The first thing I want to do is to take advantage of this "*bully pulpit*" by including an invitation and an announcement addressed primarily to the local spiritual assistants of our region. I would request that as many of you as possible join me here at St Peter's Church in the Loop on **Tuesday October 9<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m.** We will begin with prayer, then a "check in" exercise, followed by a detailed presentation on a new secular spiritual assistant initiative for our region. We will then adjourn to a nearby restaurant for a festive lunch together. St. Peter's Church is located at **110 W. Madison St. between Clark and LaSalle** where parking is always problematic and expensive. So, I always recommend Chicago's most efficient public transportation when coming into the Loop.

Next, have a comment and some ideas to share with the group. The place and need of the Spiritual Assistant in the fraternity is mandated by all of the directives of the Secular Franciscan Order, and for good and practical reasons, that has not changed. What has changed is the availability of able and well-prepared individuals within the first, second and various third orders that are available to serve. This need is being addressed in very creative ways within the Secular Franciscan Order itself. When you next look at your copy of *TAU-USA* turn to the back inside cover where you will (usually) find under the heading of Franciscan Formation a listing of all the current publications. There are three that are of

vital interest to those designated or called to be Spiritual Assistants. The first is the frequently revived *Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the SFO*. Then, there is Fr. Lester Bach's *Franciscan Family Connection* designed to form people who serve as regional and fraternity Spiritual Assistants. And finally, there is *Life-Giving Union* which is a year-long correspondence course prepared by the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants.

These resources have been available for awhile and have been put to good use in the St. Clare Region as well as other regions around the country. I would like to encourage all of you in at least three ways. First, look around at your Franciscan brothers and sisters for some sort of imprint and temperament which might indicate an appropriate candidate for becoming a spiritual assistant. Second, listen for the voice of God and pay close attention to how He prompts us to serve Him through our beloved vocations. God could be calling you maybe to the role of spiritual assistant. Finally, be open to the movement of God in our world and throughout the history of our Order when you pray for guidance.

You'll be hearing more from me on these subjects in the future; until then I send you my good hope.

Your Brother Joe M, ofm 

**What Was Mine to Do is ...**

A modern retelling of the story of Francis and the Sultan written by newly professed member of San Damiano fraternity, Dustin Spence, OFS. Play runs from September 6 thru October 7 at the Rogers Park Side Project Theatre at 1439 W. Jarvis. The details regarding tickets and show times can be found at <http://strangelooptheatre.org/Site/Home.html>

## In-Formation – Ecological Vocation


By Nicholas Noe, OSF  
Regional Formation Commission

This summer I've been fortunate to attend two wonderful and inspiring Franciscan conferences. The first was the 18<sup>th</sup> Quinquennial Congress of the Secular Franciscan Order held in early July at the Holiday Inn in Skokie, Illinois. Many of the 600 Secular Franciscans attending the Quinquennial were from our own Mother Cabrini Region, and undoubtedly, we were attracted by the close proximity of the location. More importantly, the Quinquennial gave us the opportunity to experience our connectedness with other Seculars from outside our Region, and to hear several insightful and motivating talks, including talks by Sr. Ilio Delio OSF and Br. Bill Short OFM., two notable Franciscan theologians and spiritual writers. In hindsight, I can say that the Quinquennial was a good preparation for my second conference.

The second conference was actually a two-week course/retreat on "Creation, Humanity and Science in the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition," which was sponsored by the Summer Institute of the Franciscan School of Theology. It was held in Santa Barbara, California at the beautiful Mission Renewal Center next to the Old Mission Church. The course was facilitated by and lectures given by Br. Keith Warner OFM, Br. Bill Short OFM, and Sr. Mary Beth Ingham CSJ, and I must say their lectures and discussions were excellent. The purpose of the course was to explore the writings of Francis, Bonaventure, and Duns Scotus (among others) to gain an understanding of the Franciscan perspective on God, creation, humanity, beauty, knowledge and love, moral reasoning, and the beauty of moral choice. By gaining a deeper understanding of this Franciscan tradition, each of us could better determine our own "ecological vocation." "Ecological vocation" was a term used by Pope John Paul II in his 1990 World Day of Peace Message, *The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility*. He wrote "humankind's 'ecological vocation' is more urgent than ever, given the grave threats to the environment." And as Keith Warner has written, this 1990 Message ended the debate about *whether* Catholics should be concerned about the environment and shifted the discussion to *how* Catholics should "care for creation."

Being Franciscan implies having an ecological vocation. We believe that creation is God's loving gift and is sacred and beautiful, that creation and the incarnation are linked, and that each created being, human and non-human, is uniquely gifted by God and is our brother or sister. Therefore, exploitation of creation for our own selfish purposes is an ethical and moral issue. Of course, the time we can devote to that vocation will depend on other commitments we have in our busy lives.

But we should take our ecological vocation seriously. and be an example to others, Catholic and non-Catholic, on how to care for God's awe-inspiring creation. Two to three years ago, I was in the process of identifying and developing my own ecological vocation. I was reading and studying about the environmental crisis, had purchased the 4-C program from Franciscan Action Network, and had given a couple of talks to my fraternity. But because of significant personal events in my life, I had to set that effort aside. The Santa Barbara course was to help me get back on track and it did that.

But you don't have to go to Santa Barbara and take a two-week course to determine your own ecological vocation. (Although if the course is offered again, I highly recommend taking it.). I suggest you begin by reading *Care for Creation (a franciscan spirituality of the earth)* by Sr. Ilio Delio OSF, Br. Keith Warner OFM and Pamela Wood (St. Anthony Messenger Press). You may have read the book once, but I found a second reading to be even more beneficial than the first. The book provides an excellent foundation on the environmental crisis the world faces, the Franciscan perspective on creation and the environmental crisis, and suggestions for prayer, contemplation and action. My second suggestion is to access the Catholic Climate Covenant website ([www.CatholicClimateCovenant.org](http://www.CatholicClimateCovenant.org)) and take the St. Francis Pledge. Print off the Pledge so you can remind yourself of what you have pledged to do. (Also, sign up for the newsletter from the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change.) You may have already taken the Pledge, but if so, you are in the minority as fewer than 7,500 individuals, families and organizations have taken the Pledge. It is important to act because just as you need to "think before you act," you must also "act to have a new way of thinking." 


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### 40 Days for Life Volunteer Opportunity

The International 40 Days for Life effort is from September 26 through November 4. Individuals participate in peaceful prayer and fasting for an end to abortion. The most visible component of 40 Days for Life is a constant prayer vigil outside a place where abortions take place.

I am looking for individuals in our Franciscan family to join in prayer and fasting on October 4, 2012 in honor of St. Francis. As we know, St. Francis believed that all of God's creation, no matter how small, is sacred.

I am hoping that you will feel called to pray for an hour outside Family Planning Associates late-term abortion clinic at 5086 N. Elston Avenue in Chicago. It would be wonderful to have a strong Franciscan presence.

To sign up, please contact Kathleen Michalak, OFS, [hmfog333@sbcglobal.net](mailto:hmfog333@sbcglobal.net) 

## JPIC NEWS — The Santa Clara Statement, Part 2

By Stephanie Sormane, OFS, JPIC Councilor

Last month I finished summarizing the JPIC Rally held in April and the Quinquennial Congress which just concluded in July. I then began to share with you “The Santa Clara Statement,” written at the Lay Franciscan Congress in Santa Clara, CA, in 1972. The parts last month were “We Acknowledge Where We Are” and “Our Basic Thrust.” To continue . .


**.THE ROOTS OF OUR RESPONSE.** In the tradition of St. Francis, our response to the world and the time in which we live:

- Acknowledging that the Holy Spirit is the Source of all our creativity, both personal and communal;
- It gives joyful glory and praise to God through a continuous and growing prayer life;
- It constantly assumes a posture of metanoia, i.e., personal repentance which corrects our direction;
- It fosters Christ-centered, personal, frequent communal experiences to rediscover and translate the Gospel into everyday living;
- It seeks to be sensitive to the needs of others, both within and without the Franciscan community.
- It is our fraternal goal to cooperate with the Spirit in coming to a closer relationship with God through prayer, and with people through presence. Our prayer and presence will be more open, joyful, personal, sensitive, frequent, Gospel-centered and repentant.

**STEWARDSHIP, SERVANTHOOD.** Our life and possessions are not our own, but God’s gift. Ours is a stewardship, not an ownership. Hence:

- We must be ready to give of ourselves in truly personal service to our brothers and sisters – not as lords, but as servants;
- We are united in our determination to resist the exploitations and greed of consumerism, while some of us differ as to whether this servanthood is incompatible with the stands and consequences of Capitalism itself;
- We must be prophetic witnesses against the materialism of our society and light the lamp of Evangelical Poverty in order to project the spirit of Christian servanthood;
- Finally, we affirm the need of intimate prayer based on Scripture and of intimate closeness to Christ if, instead of becoming slaves to the economic system, we are to participate in the servanthood of God and his Christ.

**PEACE – RECONCILIATION.** We lay Franciscan brothers and sisters acknowledge that peace, reconciliation, poverty, obedience to the Church and service to others (especially to the poor and oppressed) are essential values of the Franciscan family. As we live the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they are essential both personally and corporately. Therefore:

- We commit ourselves to that continuing change of heart which will allow us to hear the cry of the poor, the oppressed, and the afflicted;
- We acknowledge our need to probe the causes of the social injustices of our day. We have a need to bring genuine awareness to the actual situation of our oppressed brothers and sisters. We need to come to know our relationship to these causes;
- We propose to act in order to find creative solutions on behalf of our deprived and oppressed brothers and sisters; for example, by our participating in government by voting; by writing to our legislators and the editors of papers; by participating in meetings and rallies expressing public opinion; by supporting honest and capable candidates in various practical ways. (More next month!) 

## Upcoming Events

### The Port Ministries Inaugural Golf Outing

Monday, September 10, 2012 -8:00 a.m.  
Silver Lake Country Club – South Course  
14700 West 82nd Avenue, Orland Park, IL 60462  
Details can be found at  
<http://www.theportministries.org/news.html>

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### Franciscan Outreach

**Save the Date:** Open House Events on Thursday, September 27<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, October 6<sup>th</sup>. 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at Franciscan Outreach, 1645 W. LeMoyne. Come for an evening of food, drinks, music and a chance to learn about FOA’s continued service to Chicago’s homeless population. It’s a happy hour with a ‘feel good’ twist.

Also, mark your calendars for Fall Dinner on Wednesday, November 7 at Maggiano’s in OakBrook. Details can be found at  
<http://www.franoutreach.org/> 