

Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, OFS

Dear brothers and sisters,

This year, it seems as though we've hardly made it past New Year's resolutions and Ash Wednesday is looming. It's time for Lenten resolutions...or is it? Perhaps what we should give up this Lent is the idea that we need a separate Lenten practice, and instead humbly accept that we need the help of the Lenten season to make a dent in whatever we resolved to do to improve ourselves in 2013.

As those of you who have been reading my articles for the past three years know, I approach Lent with some apprehension that God will make my Lenten penance obvious and unavoidable. The approach of Lent brings back memories of years when my Lent was dominated by something that happened TO me or my family. On the one hand, I would strongly prefer NOT to have something like that happen...on the other, the timing helps me understand that these life events, whenever they occur, CAN really help us grow, if we recognize and accept them in that spirit. At that point, "Lent" happens whenever we have to put our own agendas and preferences on hold to deal with something more important. The spiritual traditions of Lent are exercises to help us practice putting our "wants" aside and focusing on what is really needed, so they prepare us for the times when we have no choice in the matter.

I would like to suggest that true preparation for those difficult times in life should include self-care along with self-denial. Does that sound contradictory? For all of you who have cared for children, spouse, parent, or other loved ones, you know very well the temptation to postpone even urgent self-care in the face of the immediate needs of the other. Part of the discipline we all need to learn is to humbly admit that we need loving care too, even if it means we have to ask for someone

else's help or give up our idealized selfless self-image. While there is no greater love than to lay down your life for a friend or loved one, God wants us to be able to *continue* to care for our loved ones, and that requires us to be healthy and whole. It is sad on so many levels when a caregiver dies before the one being cared for.

Our need for daily conversion means that in some sense, Lent happens every day. Fortunately, Easter happens every day, too! We are blessed to have a way of life that lets us see both of those realities.

If you are struggling with what to do this Lent, I recommend looking for inspiration in the Secular Franciscan Rule, especially (but not exclusively) in Chapter II. Our way of life has opportunities in every article for spiritual growth – no surprise there! Two simple and complementary practices that would take only a few minutes each day are 1) reread the entire Rule and 2) take a single article of the Rule and meditate on it. Use the Constitutions, a commentary, or a formation text to help "unpack" the meaning of those deceptively brief paragraphs. Ideally, each of us would know the Rule by heart...another step toward having it guide our lives more fully.

For Lent this year, I plan to let my "spiritual theme" for 2013 guide me. This "theme" is "let the peace of Christ control [my] heart" (Colossians 3:15) and "have no anxiety at all" (Philippians 4:6). I believe God gave me those two phrases from the readings proclaimed during Advent and Christmas to contemplate and take to heart, and they will be plenty for me. May God give you what is yours to do this Lent and always.

Peace and all good...Vickie 

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CALENDAR

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

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

January

- 12: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m. (transition meeting)

February

- 03: St. Bernardine of Siena Fraternity (E)
- 17: St. Mary of the Angels Fraternity (E)

March

- 01: Fair Share, Census, and Annual Reports due
- 10: St. Anthony of Padua, Joliet (V)
- 16: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 17: St. Anthony of Padua, East Side (V)

April

- 7: St. Francis St. Louis Fraternity (E)

May

- 18: Chapter of Ministers, Mayslake

June

July

- 13: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 21: St. Francis Assisi Fraternity, Algonquin (E)
- 27: St. Anthony of Padua, Rockford (E)
- 28: St. Anothony of Padua, Oak Lawn (V)

August

- 03: Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula

September

- 14: St. Anthony of Padua, Joliet (E)
- 25: San Damiano Fraternity (E)
- 28: Leadership Workshop

October

- 05: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 06: Living Water Korean Fraternity (E)
- 15: Brother Jacoba Community (E)
- 12-20: NAFRA Meeting – Denver, CO
- 27: St. Francis of Assisi, Steger (E)

November

- 10: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration

December

- 14: Wellspring Community (V)

Spiritual Assistant’s Message

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

It seems to me that there is always plenty of “Good News” in the Franciscan world. All one has to do is tune in, believe and appreciate it. At this ordinary time the good news is that your new regional executive council has met together for the first time since the elections last month with a great measure of success I believe. We have the good results of having a few steady and able members of the former council and a good number of well-prepared new members of the team. For this result I would encourage you all to offer profound thanks to the Holy Spirit, the true minister general of our order, as well as to those who have accepted election. I also want to report my belief that there is the sure potential for great things to come; expect great things.

One of the main things that was accomplished at this inaugural meeting was to set a very ambitious calendar of elections and visitations as well as the many regularly special events this Region is famous for, plus a few surprises. One of the items relative to my office is the beginning of the first formation group preparing to become secular spiritual assistants which I have mentioned a couple of times before in this newsletter. This is due to begin with a visit from Fr. John Sullivan the provincial spiritual assistant of the Sacred Heart province. He and I will meet with the candidates after the Regional Executive Council meeting on March 16th at Mays Lake Village. Please pray for the success of this noble venture and for your brothers and sisters who will participate.

Another point of interest on the schedule which excites me is a proposal for a celebration of the ethnic variety found in our region as a part of the Portiuncula Celebration in early August. This will be an opportunity for our brothers and sisters of various cultures to express and demonstrate elements of their culture to share with us. And anyone who knows me at all knows that one of the things that excites me the most is food. So I am especially happy to promote at this early stage of the year an ethnic pot luck feast on that day. Please discuss among yourselves what you and your group will contribute from your ethnic heritage and remember that in this case, more is better.

With blessings, I am your Brother Joe, ofm 

**Day of Recollection
St. Francis - St. Louis Fraternity**

The St. Francis - St. Louis Fraternity has confirmed our Day of Recollection for **Saturday, June 15, 2013** at The National Shrine of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, 2520 N. Lakeview Avenue, Chicago, IL 60614. All our brothers and sisters of Mother Cabrini Region are welcome to join us. It will begin about 10:00 AM and end about 5:00 PM after the 4:00 PM Mass. We will have information regarding the agenda and costs for attending in the coming months.

NOTE: Our reservation is posted on the Mother Cabrini National Shrine website at: <http://cabrinishrinechicago.com/calendar-of-events/>

Click on the 10am tour to see the full reservation. 

In-Formation

By Nick Noe, OFS
Regional Formation Commission

Building Enthusiasm

As the newly elected Regional Formation Director, I've been re-reading and studying formation materials from the international and national OFS fraternities. Of course, studying the new *For Up to Now (FUN) Manual* has been a priority. The Manual contains thoughtful articles and documents to help formators present and discuss with inquirers and candidates the foundational topics to be covered in initial formation. The new Manual does not replace but supplements *Guidelines for Initial Formation in the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States*, which was published in 1985 by the National Formation Commission. And the *Regional Formation Director Handbook*, published in 2008 by the National Formation Commission, is also helpful in giving guidance and planning for the future.

Although guidance provided by formation documents from the international and national fraternities are extremely helpful, it is essential to also consider suggestions and ideas of our OFS brothers and sisters in local fraternities. Fortunately, a sampling and summary of their suggestions and ideas, not only about formation but all aspects of fraternal life, is available from two sources. The first comes from the 2012 Quinquennial Congress based on the deliberations of many discussion groups who met after each of the presentations. The Quinquennial summary consisted of 21 ideas with the greatest weight being placed on the following (in priority order):

- 1) rebuilding the church within our diverse community;
- 2) public witness through apostolic works and JPIC initiatives;
- 3) attracting others by our authenticity;
- 4) being the bridge across divisiveness within the Order and society;
- 5) stronger prayer life;
- 6) improve communications, marketing and be (electronically) connected;
- 7) continue working on formation and ongoing formation.

The 21 suggestions and ideas were summarized under three concepts: 1) Rebuilding and building bridges in fraternity, Church and world (better communication); 2) Better formation at all levels; 3) Be who we are in all we do (children of the Gospel-making Christ present in the world).

The second summary of suggestions and ideas comes from the Mother Cabrini Leadership Workshop held last September. Fifteen ideas were brought forth, and although not listed in priority order, many were similar to those from the Quinquennial. Three potential goals were recommended for each fraternity based on the 15 ideas: 1) Renewal of profession with ongoing formation leading up to it each year; 2) More charisma, less structure (How do we attract new members, demonstrate passion, authenticity? How do we live out our charisma?); 3) Building bridges between members, fraternities and parishes.

As far as formation is concerned, there are three themes that permeate the two lists of suggestions and ideas. The first is the need for better initial and ongoing formation. The 2002 General Chapter voted formation as the highest priority for the entire Order, and the new FUN Manual reflects the work of many dedicated members of the National Formation Commission to improve and standardize initial formation programs in the United States. Therefore, it is important that FUN be a foundational component of initial formation for all fraternities and the Region help fraternities in that implementation. The second theme might be labeled "outreach." Many of the suggestions and ideas use one of the following phrases: "reaching out," "building bridges," "evangelize," or "public witness." The need to connect with others in their fraternity, other fraternities, inactive members, parishes, society, and the world in a fraternal spirit of service and apostolic works needs to be emphasized in both initial and ongoing formation. The final theme is implicit in many of the suggestions, but directly stated in one: "be passionate and enthusiastic about our vocation." Being enthusiastic means to be inspired, and if OFS candidates and members are not enthusiastic about their vocation, it will be impossible for OFS members and fraternities to reach out to others. Therefore, it is imperative that those involved in initial and ongoing formation have a contagious enthusiasm for their own vocation and the Franciscan charisma 

Focus on Social Justice: Solidarity

By Stephen Lanterman, OFS, JPIC Councilor

Solidarity is one of the key values of Catholic social justice. It is also an essential characteristic of the Secular Franciscan charism; of our ongoing conversion; of our communal experience with God, with one another, and with all of Creation. This awareness has been difficult to come by given the polarized nature of our political, theological, and social discourse these days. Re-awakening our sense of solidarity will be essential to solving problems we all agree must be solved and not deferred such as: problems related to violence; to cold indifference of human need and nurturing; to increasing fear and anxiety; to depression; to human detachment and the seeming inability to commit to human relationships and society.

Without minimizing our cultural or religious differences and what we pride ourselves on as being truth, our fundamental humanity cries out for a spirituality that recognizes that our survival calls for civility, problem-solving, creative compromise, and solutions to meeting our basic and profound common needs.

Funerals, emergency room dramas, or disaster situations happen to people across all socio-economic, political, religious and cultural backgrounds, and no matter who is affected, meeting human need is inclusive. The Kingdom of God is well served when we employ solidarity as a path to meeting basic human needs, despite whatever differences of opinion may exist of how those needs may be met.

As the new Councilor for Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation I invite all Secular Franciscans, both the Pro-Life and the Social Justice camps, to gather together in solidarity to renew the face of the earth.

By putting on the table what are our genuine concerns, and through patient listening and dialogue, we come to consensus and common ground. Let us not be derailed by the scandal of that which divides us. Listening requires ongoing conversion! Let us renew our charism of solidarity, ongoing conversion, community and ultimately, our humanity. Not only is this reasonable...it is truly Franciscan. 

Opportunity to Help Franciscan Outreach (FOA)

For those of you not on the FOA email list, an appeal has gone out for donations to replace broken cots used at their various shelters. Each cot costs about \$70 to replace and while you may not be able to fund a full cot, you can designate your donation for that purpose. Currently, they need to replace about 10 cots which will cost about \$700.

Since almsgiving is one of our traditional Lenten practices, this would be a wonderful way to get a jump start on Lent. Contact Diana Faust at Diana@franoutreach.org or at (773) 278-6724. Thank you! 

A New American Franciscan Saint

On January 23rd we celebrate a new American saint, St. Marianne Cope. She is one of our Saints of the Year of Faith and the 11th American to be declared a saint.

St. Marianne Cope born in Germany in 1838, arrived at the age of two in New York and in August 1862, entered the Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis in Syracuse, New York. (Note: Today the community is called Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann communities.) The work of her community was teaching and running hospitals and her early religious life included teaching, serving as novice mistress, superior of their hospital in Syracuse and later being elected as provincial in 1877.

She is best known today for her ministry that took her to Hawaii in 1883. This came about in 1883 when the Hawaiian government sent a request to over 50 religious communities in the United States and Canada asking for help to run Kakaako receiving station, on Maui. The receiving station was for people suspected of having leprosy, which in those days was an incurable, very contagious disease. St. Marianne was one of seven sisters who volunteered to staff this institution. In 1888 St. Marianne and two of her sisters then went to the island of Molokai where she took charge of the home that St. Damien de Veuster (who died in 1889) had established for men and boys. Her ministry on Molokai lasted until her death on August 9, 1918.

She is well loved and especially remembered in Hawaii. Today many sisters of her congregation still serve on Molokai and continue to attract vocations there. She can certainly be a role model for all of us to serve God in the manner he has called us to. In this Year of Faith she can be a role model for us to be true to Him even in the face of obstacles. (*Poor Clares of Spokane "Joy Notes" Newsletter, Jan. 23, 2012* 