

OFS News

Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the
Secular Franciscan Order

www.ilsfo.org

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Minister's Message

By Vickie Klick, OFS

Dear sisters and brothers,

As often seems to be the case in Chicago, we barely get spring-like weather before the seasons hurry on into summer! No matter the weather, spring is a very busy time – Lent and Easter, First Communions and confirmations, graduations, the candidates retreat, Chapter of Ministers, and this year, our fraternal and pastoral visitation. I think that our regional events this spring have been successful, and if you participated, I hope you agree! We'll be sharing the visitation report with all the fraternity ministers when we get it, but in the meantime I have a few reflections on these events.

First, it's hard for us to imagine, I think, how unusual it is for a regional fraternity to be able to have two regional events within a few weeks of each other. We are blessed by having a relatively central location where we can easily arrange to meet, AND we can all get there in no more than an hour and a half. Compare that with Queen of Peace Regional Fraternity, which spans Minnesota, the Dakotas, Iowa, Nebraska, and the western edge of Wisconsin. Getting together for Chapter once a year is a lot of effort and expense! Similarly, Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional Fraternity spans five Southern states. We can and do operate differently in our region, and we are fortunate to be able to do so. Not only can we meet more frequently, but we can also have far more of our members participate in regional events.

Second, we were reminded by our national visitors of the four priorities for our Secular Franciscan gatherings: prayer, formation, socializing, and only as much business as necessary. Councils, of course, have considerably

more business to take care of, and the Regional Executive Council is no exception; our meetings have some prayer and a little socializing and a LOT of business (we do our formation with the rest of the Region). This makes what happened at Chapter unusual – the REC was asked to leave the room while the visitors talked to the local ministers, so we just sat together and chatted for an hour or more - something our task-oriented group would never do otherwise! It reminded me how good it is to just be together, and that such time in our fraternity gatherings is NOT “wasted” – it may be the most important part!

Our visitors also observed that we have a good regional executive council. I gratefully agree with their assessment! There is a lot of energy and willingness to do what needs to be done on the part of everyone. It makes the necessary work a lot more enjoyable!

A good example of that willingness to serve is the way in which our Vice Minister, Lorna Miressi, and our Councilor for Franciscan Youth and Young Adults, Kristi Loar, have taken on the work of the secretary since the position became vacant. However, I would really like to appoint someone to take over this position by the time the REC meets in October (if not sooner) so that we can have a new person learn the job before regional elections in December 2015. The key components of the job are (a) taking minutes of REC meetings and Chapter, distributing them to participants (mostly by email) and keeping copies for the region's records, and (b) keeping the regional directory up-to-date and printing it at Chapter time each year (cont. below)

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

Submission deadline is the 20th of each month.

7 CALENDAR

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

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

November 2013

- 3: Living Water Korean Fraternity (E)

- 17: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration

December 2013

- 14: Wellspring Community (V)

January 2014

- 18: Regional Executive Council Meeting

March 2014

- 1: Per Capita/Census/Fraternity Annual Reports Due

- 15: Regional Executive Council Meeting

April 2014

- 20: Easter
- 26-27: Candidates Retreat (no overnight)

May 2014

- 16: REC meeting w/National Visitors (late afternoon/evening)
- 17: Chapter of Ministers – Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation

July 2014

- 10-13: Summer Seminar – Spiritual Assistance
- 17-20: Korean OFS Meeting – St Mary of the Lake, Mundelein

- 19: Regional Executive Council Meeting

August 2014

- 2: Regional Gathering – Feast of the Portiuncula

September 2014

- 27: Study Day / Leadership Workshop
- 28: St Thomas Moore – (E)

October 2014

- 11: Regional Executive Council Meeting
- 21-26: NAFRA Chapter, Lake Dallas, TX

November 2014

- 16: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration and 20th anniversary of establishment of the Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity – Location TBD

(Ministers Message cont.)

If you think you have the appropriate skills and an interest in getting more involved at the regional level, please talk to your local minister and/or contact me directly.

In closing, I ask for your prayers for my predecessor, Stephanie Sormane, who is having serious health issues. May the love of the risen Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit be with us all! Vickie 

Spiritual Assistant's Message

Brother Joe is in Scotland. We will hear from him in July. 

In Memoriam

Anne Therese Rogal OFS since September 1981, and longtime volunteer at Franciscan Outreach, member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish, passed on May 12, 2014.

Late mentions –

Marge Reinhardt OFS - July 19, 2013

Anne Kociak OFS - September 4, 2013

Lillian Etska OFS 

On Saturday, May 3, Br. Joe and Vickie visited the San Jose Fraternity as they witnessed and presided, respectively, at their election. Their newly elected council consists of:

Minister: Estela Puga

Vice Minister: Edelmira Hernandez

Secretary: Ana (Anita) Godinez

Treasurer: Alicia Villagomez

Formation Director: Maria Josefina (Paty) Villa 

An excerpt from the Franciscans of the Immaculate:

Jesus in the Eucharist is God Among Us

When St. John Marie Vianney arrived at the remote little village of Ars, someone said to him sourly, "Here there is nothing to be done."

"Then, there is everything to be done," replied the Saint.

And he began immediately to act. What did he do? He rose at two o'clock in the morning and went to pray near the altar in the dark church. He recited the Divine Office, he made his meditation, and he prepared himself for Holy Mass. After the Holy Sacrifice, he made his thanksgiving. Then he remained at prayer until noon. He would be always kneeling on the floor without any support, with a Rosary in his hand and his eyes fixed on the tabernacle.

Things continued this way for a short time. Then he had to start changing his timetable; and things reached a point requiring radical changes in his program. The Eucharistic Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary, little by little, drew souls to that poor parish, until the Church did not seem big enough to contain the crowds, and the confessional of the holy Curé became swamped with endless lines of penitents. He was obliged to hear confessions for ten, fifteen, eighteen hours in a day!

How did such a transformation ever come about? There had been a poor Church, an altar long unused, an abandoned tabernacle, an ancient confessional, and a priest with no resources and little talent. How could such a wonderful change develop in that unknown village? 

In-Formation – Regional Formation Council

By Nicholas Noe offs, Regional Formation Director

Prayer and Action

Francis of Assisi is my favorite saint and Thomas Merton my favorite spiritual writer. But I was attracted to Merton long before Francis resonated with me. Thomas Merton is regarded by some (and by me) as the most significant spiritual writer of the twentieth century. He wrote more than 70 books on contemplation, social justice, pacifism and other issues as well as numerous essays and reviews. He “left the world” in 1941 to become a Trappist monk at Gethsemane Abbey in Kentucky. But later he realized that even as a monk he was connected to others and the world, and this realization is evident in his later books and journals. Before leaving for the monastery, Merton had been a Secular Franciscan and the influence of St. Bonaventure and Bl. John Duns Scotus (and therefore, Francis) is evident in many of Merton’s writings. Kathleen Deignan, in her book on Merton’s nature writings, wrote that Merton, who died in 1968 at the age of 53, had a Franciscan soul, a Cistercian heart, a Celtic spirit, and a Zen mind.

It was early during my candidacy that one day I wondered if Merton had written anything specifically about Francis of Assisi. After some research, I found a reference to Francis in Chapter 8 of Merton’s book, *No Man is an Island*. The topic of Chapter 8 is “Vocation,” and Merton emphasizes that everyone has a vocation, not just priests and religious (not what I hear at my parish Mass). In the latter part of the chapter, he reflects on Thomas Aquinas’ views on the contemplative and active vocations. But then Merton writes:

We have spoken of the active and contemplative lives without, so far, referring to the vocation which St. Thomas rates higher than any other: the apostolic life in which the fruits of contemplation are shared with others. Instead of speaking of this vocation in theory, let us rather look at its perfect embodiment in one of its greatest saints: Francis of Assisi....Merely to know St. Francis is to understand the Gospel, and to follow him in his true, integral spirit, is to live the Gospel in all its fullness...

Francis was, as all saints must try to be, simply “another Christ.”....The risen Christ lived perfectly in this saint who was completely possessed and transformed by the Spirit of divine charity.

If I had any remaining doubts about following Francis along the Franciscan path, those doubts vanished after reading Merton’s thoughts on St. Francis and the mixed vocation of prayer and action. However, the phrase “higher than any other” disturbed me. Because, to be “higher than any other” must also mean “more demanding, difficult, and challenging,” just as in climbing the highest mountain. Some spiritual writers write about the “creative tension” between prayer and action, but why the tension, and why the challenge?

One tension is that many people seem to be naturally inclined toward one or other. People, who are prayerful and contemplative, often are not activists. And people who are activists often find it difficult to quiet themselves and rest in God. Not unrelated to our natural inclinations is the matter of time, especially when prayer and action are considered as separate activities. There are times to pray and times “to do.” But Thomas Aquinas suggests there is a relationship between the two. He states the fruits of contemplation are to be shared with others in action. And I might add, that from my own experience, there are fruits from loving and compassionate action that contribute to a deeper prayer life.

Also, it would seem there must times when the flow and interaction between action and prayer/contemplation seem to be in harmony and balance and the tension is relaxed. A person is not sure whether he or she is praying or acting compassionately and lovingly, and it doesn’t seem to matter. According to Bill Short OFM (*Poverty and Joy*), Francis of Assisi spent 4-7 months a year in a secluded, contemplative way of life. And yet Francis always seemed to be on the road preaching, healing lepers and caring for the poor. Prayer and contemplation was the soul of all Francis was and did, just as it should be for us. But also let us strive to have the harmonious flow between prayer and action that Francis had. 

(Reprint) St. Pascal's satellite fraternity announces sadly that they are becoming deactivated in June 2014, after 76 years of doing a lot of apostolates. Fr. John Sullivan will make the deactivation effective June 30, 2014. 

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

A Coincidence or A Call to Service?

By Barbara Elkins, OFS, JPIC Councilor

As my awareness of JPIC issues increases, I find patterns in the little gems of insight I obtain in my daily life. Late in February, I found a small notice in the *Catholic New World* listing Lenten programs for reflection. I was drawn to the Kolbe House Email Lenten Retreat. For six weeks, individuals associated with their prison ministry shared personal reflections on The Way of the Cross.

Last month, I mentioned this resource in my column. Imagine my delight when Sandra Kisel, OFS shared her experience with the Militia of the Immaculata (MI) Prison Ministry at Marytown during the Candidate's Retreat in April. She described it beautifully in last month's *OFS News* and spoke with such passion, love and mercy at the retreat.

Don't you find it interesting how certain thoughts or ideas keep circling back into your life? Is it a coincidence that this occurs or is it simply a call from the Holy Spirit for you to discern or take action? My interest in prison ministry is simply at an inquisitive stage but my willingness to learn and pray about it is growing.

I would like to share a Holy Week reflection from the Kolbe House Lenten Retreat. A 34 year old inmate in Menard Correctional Center in downstate Illinois named Eric wrote it. Eric received a life sentence without the possibility of parole when he was just fifteen years old.

Jesus is placed in the tomb – The tomb becomes a place from which life bursts forth.

Story: His name was Tom Shaer. Tom worked in the kitchen. I saw Tom as they walked by my cell on his way to segregation. He was accused of stealing sugar from the kitchen. Tom hung himself that night with a bed sheet; he was 30 years old.

Reflection: Almost everybody fears the end. Prison is often thought of as "the end"; it's the end of your freedom, the end of your life, the end of everything. It's not.

Just as seeing Jesus in the tomb seemed like the end to the apostles, prison only seems like the end. There is still room for good works and fulfilling acts. While the option is always there for our focus to be solely on the negative: prison or death, there is also another option --using what seems to be an insurmountable final action as a new beginning, something that may turn out to be beautiful, something that might allow you to help others.

In prison, as in everyone's life, you have to make a choice about who you want to be and about how you are going to live your life. Giving up on yourself like Tom did should never be an option.

The ministry reminds us that there are 99 men and one woman in Illinois who were given life sentences as juveniles – 2,500 across the country. They also offer these few suggestions for further action:

- Walk into your bathroom and imagine living your entire day in a 6x9 foot cell of one in segregation. Pray for them.
- Pray for the families of someone who committed suicide.
- Give thanks to God for your life.
- Send someone who needs to experience life a note or flowers.

For more information, see the attached flyer and visit the following sites:

The Militia of the Immaculata (MI) Prison Ministry
Marytown: www.marytown.com

Kolbe House: www.kolbehouseministry.org

The Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation
www.pbmr.org

"I was in prison, and you came to Me."
(Mt. 25:36)

"Heaven is not a location within the cosmos, but a place within God' (Benedict XVI) 

MI PRISON MINISTRY



"... I was in prison, and you came to Me." (Mt. 25:36)

St. Maximilian Kolbe, the patron Saint of prisoners and Martyr of Charity gave his life in Auschwitz so another man might live. The Militia of the Immaculata (MI) carries on St. Maximilian's witness by serving those who are incarcerated and their families through the MI Prison Ministry - a dynamic, life affirming Catholic outreach to the least of our brethren.

"Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body." (Heb. 13:3)

Since 2001, the MI Prison Ministry has been the hands and feet of Christ, ministering to men and women incarcerated throughout the United States. We believe every life is worth saving, every life worthy of redemption.

The MI Prison Ministry provides Holy Bibles in English and Spanish, Rosaries, Spiritual reading materials, Holy cards - and most importantly - prayer and spiritual correspondence with prisoners at more than **200 correctional facilities** in **48 states**. Last year alone, more than **one thousand Bibles**, **1200 Rosaries**, 6500 "Pray the Rosary" pamphlets, **6000 "Divine Mercy Chaplets,"** and **5000 St. Maximilian Kolbe and Blessed Virgin Mary Holy cards** were sent to prisoners. And these are just a few of the materials shipped to prison Chaplains for distribution to prisoners desperately in need of spiritual help.

The staff and volunteers of the MI Prison ministry corresponded with nearly **2000 inmates** last year, providing hope, spiritual encouragement and pathways for conversion to Jesus Christ. And more than 900 prisoners have been consecrated to the Blessed Virgin Mary as way to closer union with Jesus.

Does it matter? Yes! The MI Prison Ministry helps prisoners on the path toward salvation, redemption and a renewal of faith, helping them begin the process of healing for themselves, their families, and their communities. Does it work? Yes! According to the Pew Religion in Prisons Survey, nearly three quarters of prison chaplains consider access to programs like the MI Prison ministry "absolutely critical" to successful rehabilitation of inmates and seventy-eight percent consider support from religious ministries like the MI "absolutely necessary" to inmates' successful re-entry into society.

Will you join with the MI Prison Ministry and help bring hope and renewal to prisoners?

- \$5 donated to MI Prison Ministry will enable us to provide 1 Holy Bible to a prisoner.
- \$10 donated will enable us to provide 2 Bibles, 5 Holy Cards, and a Rosary to prisoners.
- \$20 will help us ship and provide 3 Bibles, 10 Holy Cards, 5 Rosaries, and 2 pamphlets and other spiritual reading materials!

As the hands and feet of Christ, just \$20 can bring the message of hope, repentance and renewal to those incarcerated.

Please join us in prayer and by offering a financial gift for the redemption and salvation of troubled souls in our prisons. Thank you and May God Bless your generosity,

Deacon Pat Maher,
National Director of Prison Outreach
MI Prison Ministry

Father Patrick Greenough, OFM Conv
National President
MI USA & Canada

To support the MI Prison Ministry donate on-line at www.marytown.com or by mailing your check to MI Prison Ministry/Marytown, 1600 W. Park Ave., Libertyville, IL 60048