

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,
Happy New Year! It is a time when everyone thinks about a new beginning and a fresh start. As people who recognize the need for daily conversion, we should view each day as a new beginning and a fresh start, but we can certainly also embrace the special opportunities provided by the Church (Advent and Lent) and our culture (the start of a new calendar year).
As those of you who have been reading these articles over the past few years already know, I'm not one for New Year's resolutions - maybe, to be honest, because I don't expect to keep them. However, I do see this as a time for looking ahead and preparing for the changes God has in store for us. Sometimes change feels uncomfortable or even worse, but remember that without change, we die. (The very act of breathing involves change - inhaling and exhaling. One or the other won't do!)
Shortly before the start of the liturgical year, in November, our Order had a new Presidency (international council) elected to a six year term. At the General Chapter (which is held every three years), eight areas of focus were approved for Order to pursue in the next few years: Communication, Formation, Presence in the world, Vocations, Franciscan Youth, Emerging Fraternities, and the Family. We can expect to see ongoing work at the international level on specific proposals to improve our response in these areas, which in turn will be cascaded down to us locally. I encourage you to visit ciofs.org

for more information about the General Chapter and much more. This year will also see elections at the National Fraternity chapter in October, for our Regional Fraternity in December, and for roughly 1/3 of our local fraternities as well. These are opportunities for development and change that we should welcome, even as we should always be grateful for (and pray for) our current elected leaders. It is never a bad time to remember the words of Articles 31 and 32 of the General Constitutions (included here in the *OFS News*), which define the basics of service at any level of fraternity council. Keep these words from our Constitutions in prayer as we discern leaders at the local, regional, and national level in the year to come. If you are called to offer your service, please be generous with the gifts God has given you and which others have discerned, while being realistic about your ability to fulfill the responsibilities of office at this time. If you have been serving for a term or two (or more!), see Article 32.2 and discern if is time, instead, for you to step back. We all need to be served as well as to serve! Who knows what work God may have in store for you next, once you have time to say yes to something new...

I hope and pray that 2015 will be a year of blessing for you and all those you love. Vickie

31.1. *Rule 21* "On various levels, each fraternity is animated and guided by a council and minister (or president)."

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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.

REGIONAL CALENDAR 2015

All events are at Mayslake Village unless otherwise noted

Saturday, January 17
Regional Executive Council Meeting

Monday, March 2
Per Capita/Census/Fraternity Annual Reports due

Saturday, March 21
Regional Executive Council Meeting

Sunday, April 5 *Easter*

Sat./Sun., April 11-12
Candidates Retreat (*tentative*)

Saturday, May 16
Chapter of Ministers

Thursday-Sunday, July 9-12
Summer Seminar – Loretto, PA; topic “Seroant Leadership”s

Saturday, July 18
Regional Executive Council Meeting

Saturday, August 1
Regional Gathering – Feast of the Portiuncula

Saturday, September 19
Formation/Leadership Workshop

Saturday, October 3
Regional Executive Council Meeting

October 13-18
NAFRA Chapter/Chapter of Elections, Clinton, NJ

Sunday, November 15
Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration location TBA

Saturday, December 5
Regional Chapter of Elections



(cont. from page 1) These offices are conferred through elections, in accordance with the Rule, the Constitution, and their own Statutes. Only by way of exception or in the first phase of their establishment may fraternities exist without a regular council. The council of the higher level will make the arrangements necessary for this inadequate situation only for the specific amount of time it takes to get a fraternity back on sure footing or to establish a new fraternity; to give its leaders the proper formation and to carry out the elections.

31.2. The office of minister or councilor is a fraternal service, a commitment to hold oneself available and responsible in relation to each brother and sister and to the fraternity so that each one will realize his or her own vocation and each fraternity will be a true community, ecclesial and Franciscan, actively present in the Church and in society.

31.3. The leaders of the SFO at every level should be perpetually professed, convinced of the validity of the Franciscan evangelical way of life, attentive to the life of the Church and of society with a broad and encompassing vision, open to dialogue, and ready to give and receive help and collaboration.

31.4. The leaders should see to the spiritual and technical preparation and animation of the meetings, both of the fraternities and of the councils. They should seek to inspire life and soul into the fraternities by their own witness, suggesting appropriate means for the development of the life of the fraternity and of apostolic activities in the light of the fundamental Franciscan options. . They should see to it that the

decisions made are carried out and they should promote collaboration among the brothers and sisters.

32.1. The ministers and councilors should live and foster the spirit and reality of communion among the brothers and sisters, among the various fraternities, and between them and the Franciscan family. They should, above all, cherish peace and reconciliation in and around the fraternity.

32.2. *Rule 21* The ministers' and councilors' task to lead is temporary. The brothers and sisters, rejecting all ambition, should show love for the fraternity with a spirit of service, prepared both to accept and to relinquish the office.

Spiritual Assistant’s Message

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Happy New Year! May the coming year be joyous and prosperous for you and all those that you love. I hope your Christmas was merry and full of lovely surprises. Unlike last Christmas when I was slowly recovering from surgery and had no Christmas at all or my deeply longed for “Holiday Home Towns” road trip, this year I’m back to my happy holiday travel.

I want to encourage you to participate as fully as you can in the events of Christmas time for your own benefit but also the benefit beyond yourself that you can be to the community; to others. This is such a natural time of the year to gather together I believe. We gather together in prayer, around a table, in front of a fire, in a variety of assemblies or winter activities. The sky’s the limit. And I hope you remember where you’ve heard the recommendation

(cont. from page 2) to come together more. It was from my big mouth. But you know what is interesting? This time of the year is also ideal for the practice of deep contemplation and solitude with all those particular benefits. You can't go wrong.

We as Franciscans have a very real connection to Christmas time beginning with Francis's animated excitement around the "crib" which as you know he began to popularize the devotion of the nativity scene up in the mountains near Greccio. He did this following a viewing of a nativity scene at St. Mary Major Church in Rome (Santa Maria Maggiore), one of the four main churches in Rome. But of course our Francis did more and better with his arrangement using real animals and real people to reenact that holy night which apparently inspired more people than the statues in Rome. Now, this is my question to you. First as a Franciscan, how do you or how can we experience some of the thrill and excitement that Francis demonstrated at Greccio? How do we show in our lives and in our fraternities the amazing gift of God's coming among us as one of us and do we recognize God's presence in each other? And then, here's another nativity exercise. Which of the nativity scene characters do you most relate to? Are you Mary or Joseph or a shepherd or a wise man or the sheep, a cow or sheep or an ass? Or are you the baby Jesus? For myself I guess that I would claim to be parts of perhaps all of them. But mostly I relate to the shepherds who got to see the mysterious star, and angels who appeared to and spoke to them, and they saw Mary and Joseph and the new born baby Jesus, and then a gathering of three kings with lavish gifts for the baby. We day have been blessed by this glorious event but the fortunate shepherds got to see and be a part of it all.

I send my Christmas blessings and best wishes for a happy new year.

Your Brother Joe, ofm 

Regional Formation Council

IN THE DESERT PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD!

Sandra Kisel ofs/Formation Commission

During Advent our Liturgical readings have given us many instructions about how we should live in the Church and the world — Be holy without blemish and rejoice always! Pray without ceasing and in all circumstances give thanks! Test everything and retain what is good and refrain from every kind of evil and do not quench the Spirit. Be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ. These same readings also assure us of the great love of God for us, that He is with us always even in times of dryness, great trial and persecution.

Today I received an Advent/Christmas 2014 Circular letter from Opus Sanctorum Angelorum. Father Ludwig M. Oppl spoke on the topic of some Islamic factions against Christians, Jews and practically everyone else who opposes their own ideas. Specifically named was ISIS in Syria and Iraq, and Boko Haram in Nigeria as only two manifestations of a larger movement.

What is the answer Father asks? He reflects the intention of his article is not to describe what these extreme groups have done, but to consider an appropriate response to their actions. The question is: *What are we as Catholics, supposed to do in the face of what is one of the largest persecutions of Christians in Church history?* I read and re-read Father's article many times and wanted to share segments of it with you. Father's first suggestion is that we might thank God! Now this might seem a strange suggestion but Father elaborates how in life and also in religious life so much is taken for granted — for instance, that God is our Father and He loves us, he is not a God who loves violence. Father Ludwig reminds us that there are many Muslims of good will and many who have embraced the Catholic faith.

Father calls us to "consider the horrible deeds some Islamic leaders do in the name of "God." They believe firmly in their cause, that they are doing right in their actions according to the Quran and they are even willing to lay down their lives on the strength of their beliefs. This is a type of martyrdom on their part, and I wonder — (cont. on page 5)

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

Peace on Earth, Goodwill to All.

By Barbara Elkins, OFS, JPIC Councilor

I'm writing this during the third week of Advent as I prepare for the beautiful celebration of Christmas. January provides us with many opportunities to reflect on the miracle of Christmas with tangible ways to live out our faith through our prayers and actions.

The month begins with the World Day of Peace on January 1st. Pope Francis calls us to reflect on the theme, "Slaves no more, but brothers and sisters." Did you know that 20.9 million of our brothers and sisters are victims of human trafficking? Pray for the liberation and restoration of victims and survivors of modern day slavery.

The USCCB also recognizes January as Poverty Awareness Month. Did you know that 46 million people live in poverty in the United States? Try to make a commitment this month to help address poverty in your community. For information and tips on getting involved, visit www.PovertyUSA.org.

January 18th begins the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This year's theme is "Jesus said to her: 'Give me to drink' (John 4:7)" Reflect on these words from the Vatican website: "The encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman invites us to try water from a different well and also to offer a little of our own. In diversity, we enrich each other. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is a privileged moment for prayer, encounter and dialogue. It is an opportunity to recognize the richness and value that are present in the other, the different, and to ask God for the gift of unity." http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/weeks-prayer-doc/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20140611_week-prayer-2015_en.html

National Migration Week 2015 will take place January 4-10 with the theme, "We are One Family Under God," which brings to mind the importance of family in our daily lives. This reminder is particularly important when dealing with the migration phenomenon, as family members are too often separated from one another. Let us use the vision statement of the USCCB's Migration and Refugee Services in our prayers. Lord, let us

"create a world where immigrants, refugees, migrants, and people on the move are treated with dignity, respect, welcome and belonging." Let us support our friends at Franciscan Action Network with their work on immigration. For information: <https://franciscanaction.org/issues/immigration>

The nativity scene we celebrate gives witness to Mary and Joseph's complete trust in God's providence. As we reflect on the Christmas story, let us remember Mary's "Yes" to God's call and the loving support she received from Joseph and her family on January 22 as we recognize the March for Life and the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. For inspiration, watch the video from last year's March for Life in Chicago. The joy and commitment of the 2000 participants and the testimonies of the speakers will fill your heart with hope. <http://illinoisrighttolife.org/march-for-life-chicago>

This month, let us remember the Christmas story as it extends to our modern life. Let us journey with the Holy Family as they travel from Mary's unexpected pregnancy, their migration to a new land, the poverty of the stable and the welcoming visit of the Magi.

The belief that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society is the foundation of all the principles of our Catholic social teaching. Let us begin the year with a goal to put this belief into practice.

LOVING FATHER, remembering that the Holy Family fled violence and lived for a time as refugees, we ask that you protect all refugee families fleeing persecution, and provide them a place of safety and comfort.

For children who are making perilous journeys, often alone and without the protection of loved ones, we ask that you reunite them with their families and protect them from violence on the journey.

For all migrants, that they not feel compelled to migrate but have opportunities in their homeland where they can thrive and live fully human lives.

Open our hearts so that we may provide hospitality for those who come in search of refuge. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

(cont. from page 3) *how strong is the strength of my faith for a cause?* I know I have much to grow as I have never been really challenged!

Father continues by speaking of the gratitude we should have, that the God who has been revealed to us is a God of love, not a God who loves violence. And he refers to Pope Benedict's Regensburg lectures stating that God is Logos, "*reason.*" He rejects unreasonable violence performed in the name of religion.

He said, "we should give thanks to God for being such a great Father to us and ask that the holy angels who can do what we cannot, protect the Christians who are being persecuted and give them strength not to despair and inspire them with hope."

God gives us a command to love one another as He has loved us. Christ came to us while we were in sin, took our mortal flesh to show us the Father's love for us, to make us new, to show us the way to make crooked ways straight in our lives and the lives of so many others by His example. St. Francis sought permission from the Holy Father to bring the faith and love of God to Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil of Egypt, even if it meant martyrdom. It's not for us to judge our neighbor but to do everything that is within our power to obtain grace for them.

Let us give thanks for all the wonderful blessings and relationships we've had throughout this past year! Let us begin a New Year with our sights on Christ, with the Holy Name of Jesus in our hearts and on our lips. Let us ask our Heavenly Mother, Mediatrix of all Grace, to obtain for us all the help we need for our journey...HAVE A HAPPY & BLESSED NEW YEAR!

Star of Ocean, Star of the Sea, pray for the wayward, pray for us! 🇮🇪

In Memoriam

Crispina Unabia OFS, St. Francis/St. Louis Fraternity, was called by the Lord on 8 December 2014. Please remember her, her family, and her husband Angelo in your prayers. 🇮🇪

