

OFS News

Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the
Secular Franciscan Order

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Minister's Message

By Vickie Klick, OFS

Dear sisters and brothers,
As we approach the holy season of Lent (and yes, ALL the seasons are holy), it's a time to "wash yourselves clean" and make a fresh start. In that spirit, I'd like to share some reflections on the more literal washing of...housecleaning. As you might suspect from the facts of my life (I work full-time, try to bike 2000 miles/year, and have a few things to do as regional minister), I consider housework to be successful if we are fed and clothed. As the old saying goes, "Cleanliness is next to godliness, but around here it's next to impossible." Recently, "some" cleaning became unavoidable. As I vacuumed and even dusted a little, I couldn't help but think about the parallels between physical and spiritual housecleaning.

Start where it will make the most difference. If you can *tell* you made a change, that's going to be positive reinforcement. In our life of penance, focusing on something this Lent that will be a noticeable improvement to you AND to others is better (in my view) than giving up sweets. (I'm not good at giving up sweets...but I digress.)

Accept that you can't do it all at once (or, maybe, that you just can't do it all). Doing a little is better than doing nothing. In our daily conversion, change is incremental by its very nature.

When you don't clean, you get used to the way things are. Once one area is (a little) cleaner, the rest of the dirt is more obvious. We get resigned to our faults, too; Lent helps us start again.

What you've cleaned is cleanER, not CLEAN. Vacuum the same area again (possibly with a different attachment) and you'll get more dirt. Faults, especially the ones that are the flip side of your strengths and virtues, aren't easy to get rid of; as you eliminate their most obvious manifestations, you start realizing that there

are a lot of more subtle ways to do the same thing.

What you've cleaned today will not stay that way. Just keeping the small beginnings from backsliding can take all your available time and energy. At least in the spiritual life, we have the hope of building good habits that can help us get to a new plateau (and a new set of conversion opportunities). The metaphor has to break down somewhere!

Cleaning can make you feel better. (Really.) Walking on freshly-vacuumed carpet is a noticeable improvement; so is a freshly absolved conscience.

Cleaning can motivate you to make more changes. Maybe you decide to do some decluttering so you can clean more and/or do it more easily. What can you change in your life to make it easier to be the person God wants you to be? It may be something positive like daily Mass or weekly adoration, or removal of something negative.

Don't focus on all the dirt that's left, focus on the improvement. Whether it's the pile of dust and pet fur in the garbage, or something less tangible, pay attention to signs of accomplishment.

Make a new start with a new method /tool. Both in housecleaning and in the spiritual life, methods abound. Just give one a reasonable try before moving to something else. There's nothing wrong with Franciscans making use of the insights of other spiritualities (a good Lenten example is the Jesuit examen).

I don't want to wear this metaphor out, but I do hope and pray that this Lent will be a time of spiritual and physical renewal and revitalization for us all.

Peace and blessings, Vickie 

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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 “Servant 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



Spiritual Assistant’s Message

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Greetings from the heart of The Winter - 2015. I’ve been pondering the relevant issues of this time of the year for this issue of The OSF News.

Certainly we can’t miss **The Winter** and the generally demanding elements we are all called to attend to. Primarily to bundle up and stay warm and to watch every step we take and to earnestly try to avoid taking on the bitter side of The Winters demands.

We can accept these demands as a way of understanding perfect joy which is really a call for us to dust ourselves off and rise up. And The Winters limitations and incarceration does give us natural opportunities to possibly develop and grow in our own Franciscan contemplative spirit.

Keep your eyes open to see and your ears attuned to listen for the life and movement of the very real Nature of our Sister Mother Earth. We are invited (by God I believe) to be a living breathing part of all that wonder. This life is Thrilling isn’t it? And when the weather gets choppy and rough we can I hope take comfort in the fact that the days and the subsequent sublime light are getting longer and closer to the warmth of spring. But alas we can’t rush that can we?

Now, for us good Catholic Franciscans there is of course the very important and very relevant event beginning on February 18th which is of course Ash Wednesday.

This is when we are reminded that we are mortal dust whose lives are precious but limited. Then with the imposition of ashes on our foreheads we are encouraged to bring our lives to the gospel and to complete the process by expressing the gospel in

our lives. Sounds familiar doesn’t it?

Here’s my closing idea in support of the benefits found in peripheral gathering; a gathering apart from the monthly meeting or any outreach activities. Come together for a winter lunch or a simple supper with a roaring fire. This could possibly work well as a pot-luck affair where everyone is invited to bring along their favorite soup, stew, or chili to share. Or designate certain ones to bring salad & bread, others to bring soup, stew, or chili, then others to bring desert.

The other beneficial form of gathering would be to plan maybe once a year to have a day of prayer and reflection somewhere apart from your regular meeting place. I would recommend either the Port out in Frankfort or even the national shrine of Frances Xavier Cabrini.

Then finally I recommend attending the regional gatherings which annually are held at Mays Lake Village. Simply put, let’s see more of each other.

I send warm winter blessings to you all. Your Brother Joe, ofm

In Memoriam

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Mother Cabrini Region:

After several years of declining health, Fr. Kieran Kemner, OFM, at age 87, went home to the Lord on January 12, 2015.

Fr. Kieran was the spiritual assistant to Northwest Franciscan Community of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for 14 years and to St. Clare Fraternity Oak Brook for 22 years.

He had also been a retreat director at the former Mayslake Retreat House for many years. For those of you who knew Fr. Kieran, you are invited to join us in the chapel of Mayslake Village, Saturday, January 31, 2015 at 11:00 a.m. for the Memorial Mass for Fr. Kieran.

Immediately following Mass, a light luncheon will be served.

If you will be joining us, please reply to me , Patrick Mendes, via e-mail by January 25



In-formation – Regional Formation Council

Nicholas Noe OFS

Regional Formation Director

A Radical Saint



On a recent trip to Rome, I visited once again the Basilica of St. John Lateran, the oldest of the four major basilicas, including St. Peter's. Of course, the Basilica of St. Peter is more well-known, more-visited and is regarded as the center of Western Christianity. But the Basilica of St. John Lateran, although much smaller, also has very notable architecture, paintings, and sculptures, including enormous sculptures of the twelve apostles. It is actually an Archbasilica because the Pope not only oversees the entire Roman Catholic Church, but is also the Bishop of the Diocese of Rome. The Basilica has undergone several renovations, and was a much different structure in 1209 when Francis and 11 companions went to see Pope Innocent III to ask for approval of their rule of life.

After I toured the Basilica, I walked towards a large monumental sculpture that I had never before noticed. It was 200-300 yards away and initially I could not make out the details. There was a figure standing with hands raised upwards and some other figures lying at the feet of the one standing. I assumed it was a monument of the Agony of the Garden. But as I was approaching the sculpture I soon realized the standing figure was not Jesus, but St. Francis of Assisi. And the other figures were not apostles, but four exhausted and bedraggled friars. Furthermore, if you walked behind the sculpture and looked back toward the Basilica, it looked as if

Francis was holding up the Basilica, reminiscent of the dream Pope Innocent III had the night before he gave his approval to Francis. I have no idea if the sculptor, Giuseppe Tonnini, had the dream in mind when he created the monument in 1927. But it is obvious, at least to me, it was placed across from the Basilica to show two different ways of following Christ and being Church. The Basilica represents the historical way of an institutional church that is rich and powerful with firm authority extending from the Pope down through cardinals, bishops, clergy, to the individual believer. The way of Francis does not oppose the institutional Church, but emphasizes that following Christ is more than just belonging to the institutional Church. The Franciscan way is to follow the footprints of Christ in a spirit of poverty, humility, simplicity, joy, compassion for the poor, and to do so as brothers and sisters.

Pope Francis has aligned himself more with the Franciscan way than the more historical and traditional way. And in so doing, he has brought excitement at the possibilities of change, but some consternation as well. In a speech given at Catholic University of America, German Cardinal Walter Kasper, the Pope's theologian, declared: "The Pope is not a liberal. He is a *radical*." And he meant that in a positive sense. To be radical means a person bases his or actions on a root or fundamental source (Jesus), and advocates for changes that are a considerable departure from the usual or traditional. If Pope Francis is a radical, and I agree with Cardinal Kasper that he is, then it seems obvious that we must also label Jesus and Francis of Assisi as radicals. And as a follower of St. Francis, I have to ask myself whether I live the gospel life and our Rule in a radical manner, or just allow the "should (s)" in our Rule to give me an excuse for not really following the example of St. Francis.

Article 7 of our OFS Rule states that as Secular Franciscans we are to "conform our thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that *radical interior change* which the gospel calls *conversion*."

A radical interior change will lead to a radical outward change, if the interior change is deep, prayerful, and united to God through Christ. But it works the other way as well. A radical outward change can help lead to a radical interior change. **¶**

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

By Barbara Elkins, OFS, JPIC Councilor

While in the Philippines, Pope Francis praised a formerly homeless Filipino girl for asking why God allows children to suffer, saying her tearful question shows that Christians must “learn how to weep.”

The young girl burst into tears as she recounted her experience to the Pope saying, “there are many children neglected by their own parents. There are also many who became victims and many terrible things happened to them like drugs or prostitution.”

“Why is God allowing such things to happen, even if it is not the fault of the children? And why are there only very few people helping us?” she asked. “Why do children suffer so much?” Pope Francis asked in reply. “When the heart is able to ask itself and cry, then we can understand.”

‘Pope Francis pointed to the way Jesus ministered to his people. He did not meet people’s needs with a worldly compassion, only stopping for a few moments to hand out money or material things. Rather, the Pope said, Christ took the time to listen and to sympathize with his people. It is only when we learn to cry with those who are suffering that we can begin to understand them and to love them.’

www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/what-pope-francis-learned-from-homeless-girl-cry-with-the-suffering-19592

On February 8th, we are asked to observe the National Day of Prayer for Victims and Survivors of Human Trafficking. On this day, the Church celebrates the feast of St. Josephine Bakhita, who was kidnapped as a child and sold into slavery in Sudan and Italy. Once Josephine was freed, she became a Canossian nun and dedicated her life to sharing her testament of deliverance from slavery and comforting the poor and suffering.

About 21 million people are enslaved throughout the world. The Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking has crafted the following set of New Years’ Resolutions Against Human Trafficking. Make a personal commitment

this year to one or more of these resolutions.

2. Learn about trafficking
Franciscan Action Network <http://franaction.org> provides an excellent list of resources. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops also offers information on their Anti-Trafficking Programs on their website under USCCB Offices. www.usccb.org/about/offices.cfm
3. Talk about trafficking
Help to increase awareness by sharing information about the injustice of labor and sex trafficking.
4. Become a Responsible Consumer
Do you know how the products you use and consume are made? Learn about fair trade from Catholic Relief Services www.crsfairtrade.org
5. Volunteer
Volunteer at your local Catholic Charities agency to help serve victims of trafficking as they seek restoration for their lives.
6. Become a SHEPHERD
(*Stop Human Trafficking and Exploitation Protect, Help, Empower and Restore Dignity*) Become a leader on trafficking in your community by hosting a workshop with your fraternity or parish. Download The SHEPHERD Campaign toolkit. www.usccb.org/stopslavery
7. Advocate
Engage your elected officials. Ask what are they doing to combat trafficking and press them to take action against this issue. Use the USCCB’s migration policy page www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy to learn more about current legislative issues and take action.
8. Pray
Through prayer, we not only reflect on the experiences of those that have suffered through this affront to human dignity, but also comfort, strengthen, and help empower survivors. You can find prayer cards and other information on the February 8th National Day of Prayer at www.usccb.org/stopslavery
9. Report trafficking If you suspect trafficking, exploitation or suspicious activity, report it to the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-3737-8888. 