

OFS News

Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the
Secular Franciscan Order

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Minister's Message

By Vickie Klick, OFS

We begin March this year well into our observance of Lent. Whatever practices we intended to observe to bring us closer to the Lord are either well on their way to becoming good habits or have already fallen by the wayside. If the latter, it's probably a good time to look at what's happened since Ash Wednesday and consider how God is drawing us closer by means other than what we had planned.

Those of you who have read my Lenten articles in previous years know that I often feel that God has given me a penance – no need to search for something to give up! Whether it is a crisis in the family or at work, or an injury or illness, it seems as though this time of year often brings something that is, at best, a “growth opportunity”. Somehow, these events also seem to make my faults and failings more obvious, so it's harder to deny my need for conversion.

Such situations are also a time for thanksgiving. We can be grateful for the experiences in the past that prepared us for challenges in the present. We can thank God for the gift of faith that helps us trust that we ARE prepared for the challenges we face today. We can appreciate the personal growth that helps us see our own faults more clearly; if we are blind to them, we'll never improve. We can be grateful for the opportunity and the ability to help someone else.

Over time, we may be able to see how a difficult situation could have been even worse, and recognize those mitigating circumstances as God's gift, too.

As we are called to go from Gospel to life and from life to the Gospel, we need to listen more carefully for God speaking to us each day. Maybe today Jesus will speak to you directly in the Gospel reading; tomorrow, perhaps His message will come to you in the words of a family member. (As I write this, I'm wondering whether it would be easier to accept something as God's “nudge” to me from a street person, from a random passerby, or from my husband.

I think listening for God is most difficult at home - even Jesus had trouble with getting his own family to listen to him!) You may hear the Spirit in the sounds of spring (it WILL get here eventually) or see God's glory in the first crocuses. Most often, we need to listen to God's call in the ordinary circumstances of our lives (what de Caussade called “the sacrament of the present moment”). In order to do that, we need eyes to see and ears to hear, as Jesus tells us. Francis' greatest gift was precisely that he was able to see and hear God everywhere!

I hope and pray that your Lenten observance, and mine, will lead us to a greater trust in God's love, open our eyes and ears to an increased awareness of God's active presence in our world, and strengthen us to follow where Christ leads us, in the spirit of Francis and Clare. May this annual time of renewal prepare us to live the Gospel more faithfully and enable us to bring Christ's love to those around us.

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,
Welcome to March which this year is practically a month of Lent. It begins with the beginnings of lent and concludes with the first few days of Holy Week. All of this is the perfect opportunity for us as individuals as well as for the Church as a whole to once again sharpen ourselves to be more effective instruments of peace and service who are authentic, reformed and redeemed. Lent into Eastertime whereby we join all of creation (at least in the northern hemisphere) to once again become newly refreshed as spring time which coincidentally begins later this month as well. To me, this is truly very good news.

But do you want some more good news? Well here it is. In the form of:

The Apostolic Letter Of His Holiness Pope Francis
To All Consecrated People
On the Occasion Of The Year Of Consecrated Life

There are so many powerful statements in this inviting twelve page letter. Here are a few little nuggets and jewels to stimulate your interest. I will share more with you at our next regional gathering. He says, *"In this letter, I wish to speak not only to consecrated persons, but also to the laity, who share with them the same ideals, spirit, and Mission."* Later he says, *"I urge you, as laity, to live this Year for Consecrated Life as a grace which can make you more aware of the gift you yourselves have received. Celebrate it with your entire "family", so that you can grow and respond together to the promptings of the spirit in society today"*.

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Then even later he adds, *"I thank the Lord that the Year of Consecrated Life coincides with the Synod on the Family. Family life and consecrated life are both vocations which bring enrichment and blessings for all. They are spaces where human growth comes about through relationships, and they are also places of evangelization."*
This brilliant letter is for me perhaps one of the most exciting and relevant pieces of Catholic Christian thought expressed by our Holy Father. I encourage all of us to spend time with this good document during this whole year. We will know better the mind of Pope Francis and we will be better for it I'm sure.

Then here's one more Old Brother Joe story for you all. I will be driving down to "my dawlin' New Orleans" later this month to attend the episcopal ordination of an old acquaintance and my Franciscan brother Fernand Cheri, ofm. He will be auxiliary Bishop for the Arch Diocese there and I'm so honored to be able to participate in this event in the hometown of my heart. That heart wishes you warmth and affection.

Your Brother Joe, ofm

St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity (Oak Lawn) celebrated the anniversaries of two of their members:

Mary Ceil McManus (70 years professed) and Shirley Broska (50 years professed).

There was a mass which included the vow renewals, followed by a reception.

The following members of St. Clare satellite fraternity in Oak Brook have passed away this month:

Helen Kolenko OFS on February 9

Carolyn Lukes OFS on February 16

In-formation – Patrick Mendés, OFS
Regional Formation Commission

LEARNING FROM ST. JOSEPH

The feast of St. Joseph occurs during Lent and since we especially focus on our on going conversion in the very specific ways of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, reflecting on the virtues of St. Joseph seems timely to me.

The humility of St. Joseph: Fr. John Hardon, SJ, defines humility as “truth”. It is the virtue that enables us to recognize and act on the recognition of our true relationship to God first, and to other persons. By this standard then, St. Joseph was a very humble man.

If we are truly humble, we don't claim to be better than we really are, and neither do we deny what we are – we acknowledge our gifts recognizing that they are God given and use them for the purpose of serving others. We could ask ourselves “am I recognizing my gifts and talents and sharing them as I should?”

The obedience of St Joseph: He was obedient entering into marriage with the Blessed Mother. He was obedient when he to Bethlehem to be registered with Mary and accepted the humiliation of having Jesus born in a stable. He was obedient when God told him to take Mary and Jesus and flee to Egypt and when to return from Egypt to Nazareth.

St. Joseph obeyed God not because he was told to do so, but because his mind was always conformed to the mind of God. Again we could ask ourselves “in my quiet prayer do I hear the will of God? You shall love the Lord your God.... And your neighbor as yourself.”

The love of St. Joseph: In caring for Mary and Jesus, St. Joseph put his love into practice. He acted out his love; lived it!

In his treatise on St. Joseph Fr. Hardon tells us that “we are truly devoted to Christ and his

Mother as we do what we know they want us to do. ... to see God's providence in everything that enters our lives.”

St. Joseph's virtues are truly worth cultivating in our journey from Gospel to life and life to Gospel. **¶**

John Krilich, OFS passed away Dec 17. John was a member of St Anthony Fraternity East Side. He was a Secular Franciscan for 52 years. Please keep him and his family in prayer. **¶**

Muldoon lived alone in the Irish countryside with only a pet dog for company. One day the dog died, and Muldoon went to the parish priest and asked, 'Father, my dog is dead. Could ya' be saying' a mass for the poor creature?'

Father Patrick replied, 'I'm afraid not; we cannot have services for an animal in the church. But there are some Baptists down the lane, and there's no tellin' what they believe. Maybe they'll do something for the creature.'

Muldoon said, 'I'll go right away Father. Do ya' think \$5,000 is enough to donate to them for the service?'

Father Patrick exclaimed, 'Sweet Mary, Mother of Jesus! Why didn't ya tell me the dog was Catholic?'

Excerpt from 'Caritas':

Pope Francis reminds us that Lent is an invitation to renewal for the Church and among the faithful. To be able to respond to this invitation, Pope Francis warns us against the 'globalisation of indifference'. He asks the Church and its hierarchy, Christian communities and each of us to hear the cries of those who live in poverty, exclusion and oppression and to use the strength of our faith, our prayers and acts of charity to go beyond his indifference. We are called to be like God and uphold 'the cause of the oppressed', watch over the stranger and sustain 'the fatherless and the widow' (Psalm 146). It's a case of acting in His name, He who made himself known to us as Jesus Christ and who identified with the poor and oppressed (Mt 25) and who came so that we 'may have life, and have it to the full' (Jn 10:10). **¶**

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

By Barbara Elkins, OFS, JPIC Councilor

As I travel through my Franciscan journey, I am learning about the joys of heightened awareness. To assist me in my role as JPIC councilor, I have made use of various media outlets to stay abreast of JPIC issues. I now receive emails, texts and timely updates from apps on my phone from a variety of sources. Recently, I had one of those joyful experiences as the Holy Spirit guided me through a series of informational blasts.

On the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis wrote his 2015 Lenten message focusing on the globalization of indifference. In it he writes, "As individuals too, we are tempted by indifference. Flooded with news reports and troubling images of human suffering, we often feel our complete inability to help. What can we do to avoid being caught up in this spiral of distress and powerlessness?"

This is a question I struggle with often. It was in mid-January when the news was flooded with reports on the terrorist attacks in France that I received an email message from the USCCB entitled *Dialogue and Encounter Combat Extremism*. The message was to remind Catholics of our commitment to engage in dialogue, not just with Muslims, but also with all people of differing religious beliefs. The bishops expressed their conviction that "encounter and dialogue with persons different than ourselves offers the best opportunity for fraternal growth, enrichment, witness, and ultimately peace." The message noted "as the world mourns violence under the guise of religious fundamentalism, it's important to remember our teaching and recommit ourselves to the transforming power of dialogue and encounter."

A few days later, a line written by John Kass in his Chicago Tribune column pertaining to the movie, *An American Sniper* struck a chord. In it he wrote, "**many people don't take the time to read conflicting histories, and without context and study, we are left with emotion.**"

(January 21, 2015) Indeed, emotion was pouring out of all the media outlets at this time. This line seemed to jump off the page to me for the simple reason that I had become indifferent to these tragedies.

The Holy Spirit was not done with me yet...I received another email message promoting the sale of a DVD entitled *In the Footprints of Francis and the Sultan: A Model for Peacemaking* with the following description: "This two-part film examines contemporary issues of interreligious understanding grounded in the timeless Franciscan tradition of tolerance, peacemaking, and social justice." Now I was beginning to see the connection!

Like me, are you looking for a way to deepen your understanding of this complex issue? How do we commit ourselves to engage in dialogue with people of differing religious beliefs in the spirit of St. Francis? This DVD may be a great place to start. By taking the time to study in order to place current events within the right historical context, I may grow in understanding and find that common ground that transforms my encounters with others.

In his Lenten message, Pope Francis states, "We share in the merits and joy of the saints, even as they share in our struggles and our longing for peace and reconciliation. Their joy in the victory of the Risen Christ gives us strength as we strive to overcome our indifference and hardness of heart." Let us use the example of St. Francis and his encounter with Sultan Malek al-Kamil to overcome our indifference and hardness of heart.

The DVD *In the Footprints of Francis and the Sultan: A Model for Peacemaking* contains 2 segments lasting 22 minutes each. What a wonderful tool for ongoing formation. It is available through Franciscan Media for \$19.99.

<http://franciscanmedia.org/francissultan/>

An impressive resource guide (50 pages) written by

Kathleen A. Warren, OSF is available as a free download as well.

<http://catalog.franciscanmedia.org/Guide/pdf/D36630ResourceMaterial.pdf> 