

Minister's Message

by Lorna Miressi, OFS

On the weekend of April 9th-10th, candidates from our Mother Cabrini region gathered at Mayslake Village for our annual Candidates' Retreat. The retreat was appropriately titled "Being Merciful - Like the Father". I was very blessed to be a part of this retreat, both as a presenter and, in many ways, as a participant. I heard presentations by the members of our Formation Committee and was moved and inspired by what all of the presenters had to say.

The topic that I was asked to speak about was "Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) and Catholic Social Teaching". Catholic Social Teaching has, for a long time, been at the heart of my beliefs and my energies. I was, for a short time, active in Pax Christi at a local level, being a member of Living Stones Pax Christi group at my parish. I studied about social justice issues and actions upon my return to school back in 2001 at Loyola University/Chicago. So, I thought, this would be something I would really enjoy. And I did!

Throughout the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, JPIC and Catholic Social teaching are very much connected. Several of the official documents of the Catholic Church, including Pope Francis's latest encyclical *Laudato Si'*, contain many words about social justice and care for creation. Even the Catechism of the Catholic, Part Three in its entirety, explains the Church's teaching on Catholic Social Justice. It would be very much to your advantage to read and reflect on our Catechism's words and thoughts on CST. Barbara Elkins, OFS, our knowledgeable

And passionate regional councilor for JPIC, has been writing inspiring articles for our OFS News for some time now. It is my hope and prayer that all of you have been reading her words every month and have become informed as to just what our Mother Cabrini Region is doing in the area of promoting justice, peace and integrity of creation. If you have not had the time to do so, I strongly encourage you to check out what Barbara has to say every month. In addition, if anyone has suggestions or would like to contribute to the NEWS regarding JPIC, social justice, etc. please let me or Barbara know.

In our General Constitutions, Article 18.3, we read "They should work together with movements which promote the building of fraternity among peoples: they should be committed to 'create worthy conditions of life' for all and to work for the freedom of all people" (FUN Manual, JPIC 3-23-2011, Page 14 of 28). Here are five websites that you might check out that would give you ideas of how to do just that:

USCCB...US Conference of
Catholic Bishops www.usccb.org

Catholic Charities
www.catholiccharitiesusa.org

FAN...Franciscan Action
Network www.franciscanaction.org

FI... Franciscan International
www.franciscaninternational.org

Thank you for your time and your attention.

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Minister of Mother Cabrini Regional
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REGIONAL CALENDAR 2016

All events are at Mayslake Village
unless otherwise noted

Saturday, January 16
Regional Executive Council
Meeting

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

Saturday, March 19
Regional Executive Council
Meeting

Sunday, March 27 Easter

Sat./Sun., April 9-10
Candidates Retreat

Saturday, May 14
Chapter of Ministers

Thursday-Monday, June 30-July 4
Quinquennial Congress,
St. Louis, MO

Saturday, July 16
Regional Executive Council
Meeting

Saturday, August 6
Regional Gathering – Feast of the
Portiuncula

Saturday, September 17
Formation/Leadership
Workshop

Saturday, October 1
Regional Executive Council
Meeting

November 1-6 NAFRA
Chapter/National Visitation –
Winter Park, FL

Sunday, November 13
Mother Cabrini Feast Day
Celebration – location TBA

Spiritual Assistant's Message Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Ah! Once again welcome to the merry, merry month of May. Now we can begin to come out of our burrows to enjoy warm springtime I hope. For those of us who enjoy gardening, or golf, or boating it is the happiest time of the season. And the church continues the flow of Easter time as well as celebrations to honor and memorialize a good number of holy men and women to inspire us. There are of course many occasions this month to pay tribute and to honor our Mother Mary with flowers of the fairest and bejeweled crowns.

Another May event that I would like to share with you and hopefully, if you haven't been able to go to Assisi this may further entice you into putting a pilgrimage there on the top of your bucket list. The event I am referring to is the Assisi Festival known as "Calendi Maggio" which happens every year in early May [Maggio]. During this week long celebration the citizens of Assisi and their guests dress in replicated attire from the middle ages and they declare certain sections of the town completely designated for the period; no modern anything is tolerated. Violators are likely to be pelted with flour. With that in mind general visitors to Assisi are treated with grand spectacles and processions through the little cite into the main plaza. Each family dressed in their highest finery parades in to take their place. Each group is striving to out shine the others and to be the most beautiful and authentic. The young men of different groups march in drumming on varied drums, they are in courtly costumes and many of them carry and wave flags and banners as they jump over

each other throwing the flags back and forth. Things are lit with candles and torches and wine flows or should I say floods the city inspiring mirth and merriment late into the night. For me this always animates the image and the times of the young troubadour Francis. If you ever get the chance, go for the first time in the spring. You'll see such good and beautiful life in abundance. Of course you will see glorious spring time right here all around us at home, and there's no place like home is there?

There is also another special event as you probably know and that is the Chapter of Ministers to be held at the Franciscan Village in Oak Brook on Saturday the 14th. This is an important meeting for regional business and fraternal relations. Here's hoping that all fraternity ministers, the council, and the spiritual assistants will attend.

One last thing is for me to let you know that I will be away during the month of June. I will be on vacation, retreat, and a interprovincial friars meeting. Please pray for my safety and well-being as I will for you.

Pax et Bonum Your Brother Joe ☒

A short note from the Councilor for Fraternal Life, Sue Gribbon OFS

Professed Franciscans are always welcome to help myself, and other volunteers, to help serve, arrange, set up, take down, cleanup, etc. the food and associated goodies at Regional sponsored events throughout the year. It takes many hands to feed the multitudes. There is no need to 'volunteer in advance', and be on a formal pre-arranged duty roster. Just show up and say "...hey Sue, I can help..." or words to that effect. It's really that easy, to help serve (key word here 'serve') your fellow Brothers and Sisters.

If you have any questions at all related to this article, please email at fratlif@ilsfo.org Thanks to all, in advance. Sue. ☒

INFORMATION

Discernment and the Franciscan Charism – Kristi Loar, OFS

What a wonderful weekend we had at the 2016 Candidates Retreat at Mayslake Village. Thank you to everyone, for your contribution and participation!

Because my presentation did not have ‘handouts’ folks were asking if they could have a copy of my talk points. I thought the monthly region formation article might be a good opportunity to share my talk for those in formation and professed alike.

My piece was in the form of a guided meditation using an ‘open door’ as a metaphor for God’s call to the Franciscan vocation and the opportunity to discern the Franciscan charism. It began with an open doorway...

“When they arrived, they called the church together and related all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith...”

Acts 14:27

Throughout our lives we come upon many doors. Some of us see the doors and go through them; while others do not. Some doors are already opened, and maybe we can peer through while deciding whether or not to cross the threshold, or maybe we can’t really see what is beyond the doorway but we are drawn to it anyway.

- To discern is to make a judgement about something that is not clear. It is the ‘process’ of coming to understand whether or not the Lord is inviting us to a Franciscan life style.

We ask God to give us direction, and shed light on His purpose for our lives, so that we may respond to Him in a way that He desires, and in a way He deserves. And if we want to experience more of the Spirit of God in our lives, we must always look for and respond to moments of divine opportunity. We must continually explore our relationship with God and allow His spirit to guide us.

We must find the humble God, the simple God, the servant God, the God who has emptied Himself... and by finding Him also make Him the foundation of our life and practice (as Francis did) – This is the Franciscan vocation and the Franciscan Charism.

The talk continued by inviting participants to the threshold of their open door, and were reminded by St. Paul’s letter about the importance of responding to God’s invitation:

“I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” John 10:9

St. Francis demonstrated a unique ‘way of being’ and dedicated himself to a Gospel life full of joy, simplicity, humility, poverty and peace. He reminds us of Christ, and leads us to Christ.

People are attracted to St. Francis and his reputation is very likeable. His image is peaceful and comforting.

But being ‘inspired’ by Francis is different than being committed to the Franciscan way of life. It is necessary to understand and be called to follow Christ in the way that Francis did; by embracing:

- Poverty; a love of Gospel poverty giving us freedom to trust completely in God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit
- Simplicity; a genuine spirituality, one without pretense
- Humility; coming to see what and who we really are – in the eyes of God, freedom from pride and arrogance
- Genuine Understanding; gladly accepting that we are servants, not superior to anyone
- Intense Eucharistic spirituality; seeing Christ present in the Eucharist and the ideal of self-giving like Jesus did
- Strong Fraternal Communion; united as brothers and sisters to each other in our local, regional, national and international fraternities, and in the world.
- Complete and Active Abandonment to God; knowing God’s unconditional love
- Conversion; the daily process of changing internally to be more like Jesus
- Transformation; allowing God to change us, when we are open and willing, to become as He made us to be
- Peacemaking; messengers of peace as Francis was

By taking on the Franciscan Charism and way of life we also accept its mission and challenge to ‘go from gospel to life, and life to gospel’. It begins with self-renewal:

- Do you have some knowledge of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi? If not, that’s ok, you will learn much as you continue through formation ☺
- Are you a good, practical Catholic?
- Do you have the desire to follow Jesus and his Gospel, the heart of our life?
- Do you have a personal faith relationship with Jesus, not just simply an intellectual knowledge about Jesus?
- Are you filled with hope, are you willing and able to deal with life’s issues?
- Do you really accept that we are all sinful, and in need of conversion?
- Do you trust God and value the importance of God in your life?
- Do you have a reverence for all creation and sense of duty to respect, and care for it?
- Are you ready to embrace a counter-cultural way of life?
- We concluded with participants passing beyond their doorway, imagining as they stepped beyond the threshold and on to the remainder of their initial and ongoing formation.

The vocation to the Secular Franciscan Order is truly a gift. Through this gift God offers us the opportunity to transform ourselves.

“A gift opens doors; it gives access to the great” Proverbs 18:16

Peace and all good.

Kristi

(Resources: ‘All the Places to Go’, John Ortberg; The FUN Manual - Franciscan Vocation & Called to a Franciscan Life Style, Marie Amore

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

By Barbara Elkins, OFS

After learning that two of my young co-workers had attended the same Catholic, all-girls high school as I had, we shared a common sense of gratitude for the educational experience that provided us with so many opportunities. My strong sense of “girl power” already strengthened by being one of my parents’ four daughters was further realized when I attended a women’s college in Milwaukee. After many years of working in the fields of dietetics, education and library science, I have been blessed with a keen appreciation for the contributions of women in our society.

It is with this foundation that I pondered Pope Francis’ universal prayer intention for May: that in every country of the world, women may be honored and respected and that their essential contribution to society may be highly esteemed.

When you look at the list of social issues that conflict with the values of justice, peace and the dignity of the human person, women around the world are disproportionately affected.

Economic Justice: On average, women in the U.S. make 78¢ for every dollar that a man earns. In 2014, nearly 18.4 million (1 in 7) women and more than 15.5 million (1 in 5) children lived in poverty. More than half of all poor children lived in families headed by women. Among people 65 and older, over 3 million women lived in poverty as compared to over 1.5 million men. Poverty rates were particularly high for black, Hispanic, Native American, and foreign-born women aged 65 and older. (nwlc.org). Similar statistics are noted for women worldwide. In most countries in Africa and about half the countries in Asia, existing statutory and customary laws still restrict women’s access to land and other types of property. (The World’s Women 2010 www.un.org)

Violence: Based on a report from the World Health Organization, about 1 in 3 (35%) of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. Women aged 15-44 are more at risk from rape and domestic violence than from cancer, car accidents, war and malaria. (UN.org) Four out of five victims of human trafficking are girls. (Malala Fund)

Freedom of Marriage: An estimated 15 million girls under the age of 18 are married worldwide, with little or no say in the matter.

Education: Women make up more than 2/3 of the world’s illiterate adults. According to the UN Foundation, 62 million girls around the world are denied an education.

These issues have no easy answers and progress is slowly being made to rectify many of these problems. At times I wonder, what can I do, as a faithful Catholic that will make a difference. Again, I return to the Pray-Learn- Act approach. I can pray that all women may be honored, respected and valued. I can increase my awareness of the issues that negatively affect the lives of women and support those that speak to my heart. I can reflect on the Church’s teachings on the importance of family for this is where change of hearts begins.

I have just begun reading Pope Francis’ recent Apostolic Exhortation on the family *Amoris Laetitia: The Joy of Love*. This post-synodal document affirms the Church’s teaching that stable families are the building blocks of a healthy society. This beautifully written document touches on all aspects of family life. This month, as we celebrate the gift that mothers bring to this world, let us turn to our Blessed Mother Mary with our prayers and petitions for families around the world. Here are a few passages from Pope Francis for reflection.

Like Mary, they are asked to face their family’s challenges with courage and serenity, in good times and bad, and to keep in their heart the great things which God has done (cf. Lk 2:19, 51). The treasury of Mary’s heart also contains the experiences of every family, which she cherishes. For this reason, she can help us understand the meaning of these experiences and to hear the message God wishes to communicate through the life of our families. (AL, 30)

“Mothers are the strongest antidote to the spread of self-centered individualism... It is they who testify to the beauty of life”. (AL, 174)

Thank you to my mother, grandmothers, godmother and all those who have “mothered” me. 📖

**NONE OF US CAN THINK
WE ARE EXEMPT
FROM CONCERNS FOR THE
POOR AND FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE.
POPE FRANCIS**

