

## Minister's Message

by Lorna Miressi, OFS

Minister's message for February 2017  
OFS News

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Brothers and Sisters,

It is my hope that all of you experienced a blessed Christmas season. I pray you could experience it in gathering with family and friends; recollecting, singing Christmas carols, sharing a meal. I, myself, spent Christmas day with my family, watching the little children open their presents and sharing an awesome Christmas dinner. It was beautiful! Back in October, I wrote that I wanted to share with you more about Servant Leadership. I will begin with helping you to locate specific and practical tools to assist you in learning about each other and to help your fraternities develop their own character. Secular Franciscans have a vocation in the world. They need to be "aware of the valuable insights about human nature that the secular world offers" (Handbook of Servant Leadership, page 69), and how Secular Franciscans differ from a strictly materialistic world.

The first of these tools I would like to speak to is that of communication. Communication, itself, has four steps or "subtopics". The first (and most essential) of these subtopics is, simply put, **communicating**. The Handbook of Servant Leadership presents certain "Ground Rules for Communicating". They are:

1. Stay in the "here and now". Express your feelings in the present, even if they are about past experiences

2. Use "I" when talking about your feelings

3. Try not to judge. Do not ask others to justify their feelings

4. Communicate directly. Talk **TO** a fraternity member, not **ABOUT**.

5. Listen!

The Handbook also speaks to Communication in a Group. This is the type of communication that takes place in fraternity gatherings. Simply put, when one is speaking in a group, one is to first "present" oneself. When talking to the fraternity speak to your feelings and, when responding to someone, express those feelings. Secondly, ask the group for feedback. Ask them to respond to how your words affect them. Third, use the feedback you receive from the group to help you choose new, more affective, ways to communicate.

In my next message, I will finish up with "communication". It is my hope that the information I am giving to you will assist and improve your life in community. Keep in mind we are all called to be servant leaders and to assist others who are in leadership in whatever way we can. (Taken from Handbook for Servant Leadership)  
God's peace

Lorna Miressi, OFS 

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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 20<sup>th</sup> of each month.**

## REGIONAL CALENDAR 2017

All events are at Mayslake Village unless otherwise noted

Saturday, January 21<sup>st</sup>  
Regional Executive Council Meeting

Monday, March  
6<sup>th</sup>PerCapita/Census/Fraternity reports due

Saturday, March 11<sup>th</sup>  
Regional Executive Council Meeting

Sunday, April 16<sup>th</sup> Easter

Sat./Sun. March 18-19<sup>th</sup>Candidates' Retreat

Saturday May 20<sup>th</sup>  
Chapter of Ministers/Visitation from NAFRA

Saturday, July 15<sup>th</sup>  
Regional Executive Council Meeting

Saturday, August 5<sup>th</sup>  
Regional Gathering – Feast of the Portiuncula

Saturday, September 16<sup>th</sup>Formation Leadership Workshop

Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>  
Regional Executive Council Meeting

NAFRA Chapter – Date and location TBA

Sunday November 12<sup>th</sup>Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration – location TBA

## Spiritual Assistant's Message

Thank You Fr. Benet

On December 23, 2016, Fr. Benet A. Fonck, OFM, was called home to the Lord whom he served so well.

My purpose in this month's column, is not to eulogize Fr. Benet but rather to express gratitude to Fr. Benet for his dedication to us, Secular Franciscans and to thank God for having given us Fr. Benet.

Fr. Benet has served as a local, regional, National, and General Spiritual Assistant. Always with a generous spirit and a vast knowledge of Franciscan spirituality.

He was the driving force behind the development of the new *Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order*, which was needed to bring us into compliance with the Post Vatican II changes in the liturgy as well as those changes needed because of our current but at that time, new Rule of 1978. With updating over the ensuing years, it is the Ritual we use to this day.

Perhaps most memorable, is Fr. Benet's formation text *Fully Mature in the Maturity of Christ*. To my knowledge, it was the first comprehensive text written for initial formation, which embodied all of the essential information needed for those in initial formation to be well formed and informed about what it means to be a Secular Franciscan.

With the publication of "*Fully Mature...*" Fr. Benet conducted a workshop for Formation Directors and Ministers of the local fraternities of our Region and I was privileged to attend. It was like a sudden burst of sunshine on a cloudy day. I came away with renewed enthusiasm – I was a formation director at the time – and certainly with greater confidence.

It was Fr. Benet who encouraged me to run for the position of Regional Formation Director and was "there" for me and to answer my questions – and I had a lot of them!

While we no longer use "Fully Mature..." as an initial formation text, many of our fraternities use portions of it for on going formation.

Fr. Benet was tireless in his continuing quest to accompany us on our Franciscan journey and indeed to show us the path. To this end he compiled several volumes of his writings into what he titled **THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN RESOURCE LIBRARY**.

Our former Regional Minister, Vickie Klick mentioned recently that she especially liked Volume 6 which connects each article of the Rule with a passage from the scriptures, the writing of Sts. Francis and Clare and varied Franciscan Resources. These volumes are still available from Amazon.com . Additionally, for many years, Fr. Benet was the Spiritual Director for the OFS Queenship of Mary Community.

Always at our service in life, now in life eternal, pray for us Fr. Benet and accept our thanks for all you have done and been for us.

Patrick Mendés, OFS   
Interim Regional Spiritual Assistant

## **IN-FORMATION**

**Nicholas Noe OFS**

### **A New Mind-Set for Living the Rule**

*"The gospel life is not a social agency of good works, but a life of mindful presence or oneness in God. To live the gospel life is to live on a new level of consciousness, like Jesus, a deep awareness of oneness with God and neighbor, a consciousness of belonging to a whole. One must desire to put on the mind of Christ, one must 'choose' to follow the way of the gospel with the guidance of a teacher or master, and then must practice the gospel in community. Gospel life is receptivity to the gift of divine energy and a conscious 'yes' to accept God's energy as the transformative energy of self and world. Thus, Christian life requires a conscious decision to shift the mind (metanoia) by training the mind to focus on the central values of the gospel and to dispense with all other things." Sr. Ilia Delia OSF ( Making All Things New: Catholicity, Cosmology, Consciousness, pp. 155,157-58).*

I am writing this article from the western highlands of Guatemala in the town of San Lucas Toliman. San Lucas is located on the southeast corner of Lake Atitlan at the foot of the Toliman and Atitlan volcanoes. Most mornings, after I'm awakened by the music of roosters and barking dogs, I sit near the water's edge, drink coffee, and soak in the beauty of the lake, the steep surrounding hills, and the herons, egrets and coots. As I mindfully gaze at the lake, I realize it hasn't always existed and has evolved over time in beauty, location and size.

Lake Atitlan, was created as a result of a huge volcanic eruption about 84,000 years ago. But its evolutionary history goes back through the creation of Central America, the separation of South America from Africa, the breakup of the Gondwana Continent, the formation of our solar system and planet earth (4.5 billion years ago), and of course, it all began with the Big Bang. Scientists tell us that 13.8 billion years ago all the matter and energy contained in the universe began as an incredibly tiny point. An extremely hot explosion occurred and the universe started to expand, and it continues to expand today as galaxies move away from each other at a rapid rate of speed.

The human species "emerged" from this evolutionary process a few million years ago, and scientists say "modern humans" evolved about 150-200,000 years ago. We should not think only physical matter and the physical characteristics of human beings are evolving. Human consciousness and spirit also have been evolving as an integral part of the entire evolutionary process. A tribal mindset was eventually replaced by a mindset focusing on the individual. Now we are in the beginning of a new evolving mindset because of globalization, technology, quantum physics, spirituality and theology. We are starting to realize we are not defined by our individuality, but are relational beings and connected to each other and to all creation in a variety of ways. What we think and do not only affects us individually and our own personal salvation (union with God). But our thoughts and actions affect others and all creation, both those near us and those far away.

At this point you may be asking a question I've been asking myself for some time. "How does knowing I live in an evolutionary and relational universe affect my professed commitment to live the gospel life and the OFS Rule?" I found my answer with the help of Sr. Ilia Delio OSF, a Franciscan theologian who writes on the topics of spirituality, science and religion. Chapter 8 of the book cited above has the title *Putting on the Mind of Christ* and the opening sentences of this article are taken from that Chapter.

According to Sr. Ilia, knowing and accepting we live in an evolutionary and relational universe requires us to live the gospel life on a new level of consciousness, a level lived by Jesus, and I would add, Francis of Assisi. We are to live life and our Rule with mindfulness and intention, a deep awareness of oneness with God, and a consciousness of everyone and ever creature as being our brother or sister. We must be open and receptive to the love-energy coming to us from God through the Holy Spirit, allow it to transform ourselves, and then pass it on to others to form a more Christic world, both now and in the future. We must live in a state of continual conversion, by training our minds to focus on the central values of the gospel and not allow ourselves to be overcome by worldly distractions. Is this all possible? Only with God's help and with some form of mindful meditation.

Nick 

## Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

By Luana Leinhart, OFS

Grace and peace to you, sisters and brothers!

Q: Why is it wrong to say "I don't see color"?

That's a great question and thank you so much for asking! This phrase is often said to express that the speaker isn't racist, but here are some reasons why it's hurtful to people of color.

1. It's literally not true. Of course you see color. When you look at me, you know I'm not white.

Have you ever looked at an obviously pregnant woman and said 'I don't see your belly'?

2. That phrase is often used to discredit, minimize or ignore the very real systemic racism in our nation. If you don't see color, then you're not racist, and can ignore systemic racism. This phrase often accompanies "I don't think \_\_\_\_\_ is racist." People of color experience systemic racism, so please trust that we know when something's racist or not. It's okay to ask for clarification if you truly want to understand.

3. At worst, this means you want to erase my identity. If you don't see my color, then you can't see me. I'm made in God's image and likeness, and my color is beautiful. See it; just don't mistreat me because of it.

Please keep the questions coming! On Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, Father Dan Horan, OFM, will be our keynote speaker for Racism: A Franciscan Perspective. Registration is at 9:30, and Fr Dan will speak at 10am. The exact address is:

DePaul University, Lincoln Park Campus  
Schmitt Academic Center (SAC), Rm 154  
2320 N Kenmore Ave  
Chicago, IL 60614

January marks the tragic anniversary of the Roe v Wade decision. The USCCB has asked us all to pray for an end to abortion, and the country's conversion to honoring life from conception to natural death. Please join us in praying the Novena 9 Days for Life. Visit [9daysforlife.com](http://9daysforlife.com) for more details, or download the 9DaysForLife app for Android or iPhone.



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



**"I beg the Lord to grant us  
more politicians who are  
genuinely disturbed by the  
state of society, the  
people, the lives of the  
poor!"**  
*Evangelii Gaudium*

**I may not be meeting with Pope Francis  
today, but I can also answer his call to  
work for justice.**



**JUSTICE  
& MERCY  
MUST GO TOGETHER**

POPE FRANCIS