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Minister's Message for April 2018

Barbara Elkins, OFS for
Lorna Miressi, OFS

Peace and all good to you! Like members of a strong family, brothers and sisters in fraternity reach out to those in need. Let us pray for strength, patience and healing for Lorna as she recovers from her spinal surgery. During this Easter season, let us also reach out to each other for spiritual renewal and strength within our fraternities.

I'm sure that all of you are now exhausted by the ad campaigns of the Illinois Primary Elections. Politics tend to bring out the worst of human nature. It often promotes separation instead of collaboration for the benefit of the common good. Unfortunately, this can happen within our own fraternities.

In December, we will meet for our Chapter of Elections for the Regional Executive Council. The call to servant leadership is open to every professed member of our regional fraternity. In preparation for this election, we will meet in May for our Chapter of Ministers. The topic for Chapter will be the *Care and Feeding of Fraternity Councils*.

Our fraternities are privileged places, created to provide a loving, safe and trusting environment to all. It is a place where we should enjoy each other's gifts and blessings.

Like all good created things, it needs nourishment and care.

Whether you are an elected member of your fraternity council or not, you are an integral part of the life of your fraternity. You need to ask yourself some honest questions. Do I actively participate in fraternity activities? Do I attend my fraternity gatherings regularly and communicate with others during formation discussions? Do I come prepared and open to discuss the challenges of our profession? Have I ever shared my story of God's action in me? Do I support the work of my fraternity council? Do I reach out to my brothers and sisters who may be new, ill or homebound?

Joy-filled and positive fraternity gatherings don't just happen. Fraternities need nourishment and exercise to flourish and grow. Without it, our fraternities will begin to show signs of ill health. Please honestly assess the health of your fraternity and bring your concerns to your councils.

We all need the life-giving waters of Easter to refresh and renew us as we walk through our Franciscan journey each day. Let us pray for a spirit of renewal within our fraternities and for guidance as we discern our call for servant leadership at all levels. God's Peace to all!

Barbara 

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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 2018

All events are at Mayslake Village unless otherwise noted

Saturday, January 20th Regional Executive Council Meeting ?*Per Capita/Census/Fraternity reports due*

Saturday March 10th Regional Executive Council Meeting

Sat./Sun. March 17th/18th Candidates' Retreat

Saturday May 19th Chapter of Ministers/ Election of New REC

Summer Seminar, Loretto PA (Date TBA)

Saturday July 14th Regional Executive Council Meeting

Saturday August 4th Regional Gathering - Feast of the Portiuncula

Saturday September 15 Formation Leadership Workshop

NAFRA Chapter - Date and Location TBA

Saturday October 6th Regional Executive Council Meeting

Sunday November 11th Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration - Location TBA


December Chapter of Elections (Date TBA)

**Spiritual Assistant Message
Bro. Marc Scheckells ofm**

I don't know about you, but I do not like discomfort. Furthermore, I dislike pain even more. Usually, I do all I can to properly prepare, avoid, or manage any pain or discomfort that may come my way. I suspect that this is innately a human desire. Despite my odd attempts, and some of them have been rather creative, discomfort and pain are rather inevitable. When I was a novice, I remember having a discussion with one of the older, wiser friars concerning this topic. I explained to him that I was struggling with the pain and discomfort of formation. As I went into detail and endeavored to illustrate my details with examples, the friar smiled and patiently listened. When I came to an end, he asked me to recall the pain one experiences when they are a child and their bones are growing. He also asked me to recall the pain one experiences after they work out at the gym. "Pain often means growth," he explained as he sat there smiling. "Without the pain, one cannot move into something better or stronger." At the time, I was not pleased with this response - it did not satisfy my desire to avoid pain and discomfort. As time has gone on, these words have been a great source of inspiration and comfort for me. Pain and discomfort are not always bad or something that should be avoided. As a matter of fact, my experience has been that growth and development cannot happen without the pain and discomfort.

As we enter into Holy Week, we see a human Jesus struggling with the same desire to avoid pain and discomfort. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus struggled with his upcoming torture and death, but he also knew that his agony would be emotional and spiritual as well. He cries out "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will" trying to see if there is any other way to go forward without the anguish that he knew was coming. We are aware that there was no other way; Jesus had to suffer and experience the ultimate pain: death.

We also know that the pain and discomfort were not the end. At the Triduum, we recall the ultimate pain and death that allowed for our salvation! Lent is a time that enables us to share in the pain of Jesus and remind us that through our baptism we die with Jesus, and prepares us for more growth with Christ. As we move toward the Triduum, it is important not to minimize the pain, but embrace it as Christ has shown us. As I have already said, without the pain and discomfort, growth cannot occur; Without the suffering and death, the resurrection could not have taken place. Saint Francis was acutely aware of the parallels between pain and growth. He was so aware of Christ's suffering and resurrection that he miraculously shared the wounds of Christ.

Easter is coming, and there will be much rejoicing! For now, let us follow the examples of Jesus and Saint Francis to remain in prayer and turn over our will to God. May your Triduum be a source of much growth, renewal, and discernment and may your Easter bring many joyful blessings!!! 

IN-FORMATION

By Sr. Marilyn Renninger, OSF
Regional Formation Commission

We have just completed the Candidates Retreat as I write this. They were spirit-filled days with great food for reflection, inspiring and practical. How could we go wrong with a theme like our **Trinitarian God in the Life of Francis**, on this holy weekend: the Feast of St. Patrick on the Saturday, and St. Joseph on Sunday's horizon. We were encouraged to develop a relationship with each of the three Persons in the Trinity, and call on them in our prayer as did St. Francis.

Soon and very soon our forty day Lenten journey will end. As true followers of St. Francis, let us enter fully into these last days and attend the Triduum Services, as we remember and commemorate the institution of the Eucharist, and the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Let's also take the time to look back on this walk with Christ. As we assess the spiritual growth that transpired during these forty days, be grateful, and determined to continue in some way, with God's grace, what we began on Ash Wednesday. To make it a life-giving part of our lives, we need to pick at least one thing from our Lenten grace-filled practices and continue it indefinitely.

Each Lent, like spring, brings new life, and, like spring, is a new beginning. We look around and are excited to see the growing season has begun. We want to keep the seed we planted during the past 40 days alive.

"If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit living in you" (Romans 8:11).

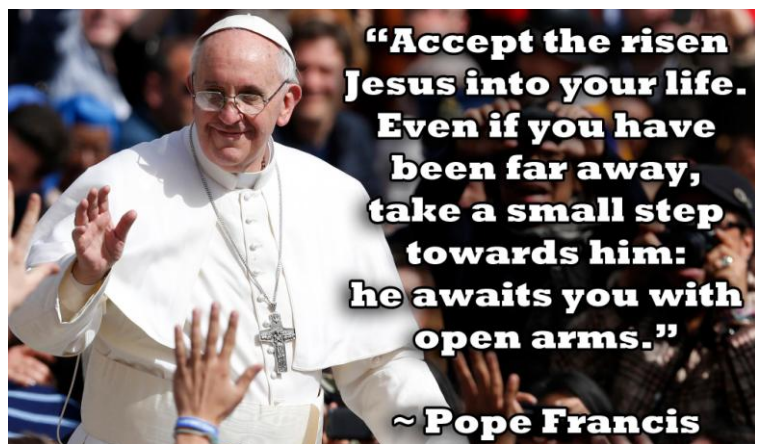
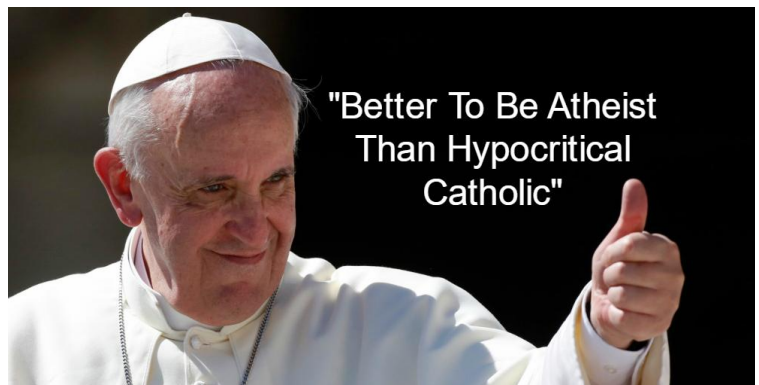
It is the Spirit living in us that enlivens us for holiness

Bishop Robert Barron, in his Gospel reflections for Easter Sunday, asks us to consider carrying on our Lenten progress by grounding our life in the Eucharist: attend Mass more frequently, (weekdays when possible) and spend time in Eucharistic adoration if there is a chapel in the area. He said,

"The Eucharist is the energy without which authentic Christianity runs down."

We know that it is only in Christ that we can get the fuel we need to persevere.

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Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

By Luana Lienhart, OFS

Grace and peace to you in the Risen One! I'm adjunct faculty at DePaul University in Chicago. My favorite assignment is one where students interview someone who voted differently from them in the Presidential election. They can ask clarifying questions to further their understanding, but they are never to argue or debate. Every term, students dread this assignment, but later report positive, life-giving experiences. Students report one of two realizations, depending on how they voted. Clinton voters learned that Trump voters support at least one of his policies, but they aren't necessarily racist, Islamophobic or misogynistic. We also discuss the difficulty of being Republican Conservative on an uber liberal campus.

Trump voters learn that many Muslims, people of color, and women saw Trump's rhetoric as threatening their safety. The FBI reports that every time Trump says something Islamophobic, hate crimes against Muslims spike, etc. That's why it's harder for the Muslim woman who wears a hijab in public to focus on Trump's economic policies than for a White, Christian male. "Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are" (attributed to Benjamin Franklin).

I love this exercise because it forces them to see their dialogue partner as a person; not just a sound bite or a political label.

Frankly, I wish more of our local fraternities had open, charitable conversations like that instead of some of the vitriol I've witnessed on several occasions. Sometimes my students are better Franciscans than we are. Healthy dialogue where we listen with the ears of our hearts strikes me as being deeply Franciscan. Perhaps we've forsaken the fountain of Wisdom that yields compassion for self and neighbor; God's tender mercy and loving kindness, or *hesed*.

Many of us have a devotion to the Divine Mercy by praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet or reading St Faustina's diary, *Divine Mercy in My Soul*. If you don't know what I'm referring to, you can get more information at www.thedivinemercy.org. Part of the devotion is praying to and trusting in Jesus and his Divine Mercy, but in its fullest expression, we not only receive God's mercy; we *become* God's mercy. There are multiple ways to do this, no matter your circumstances. One is by praying the Diving Mercy Novena. It starts on Good Friday and ends on the following Saturday; the eve of Divine Mercy Sunday.

Another is to perform the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy. Celebrate Easter by doing one merciful act every day. Have charitable, constructive dialogue with someone who's hurt you. St Paul says: "As the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do." Period. No exceptions. Surrender to Jesus' infinite mercy; become his mercy in the world. May your joy in Him be complete this Easter. 🙏

The Fraternity Council

The council of the local fraternity is composed of the following offices: minister, vice-minister, secretary, treasurer, and master of formation. Other offices may be added according to the needs of each fraternity. Every three years, in an elective assembly or chapter, the fraternity elects the minister and the council in the way established by the Constitutions and statutes. (*General Constitutions of the OFS – Article 49*).

This coming November are elections for our **local fraternity council**. The newly elected council is expected to server for 3 years until our next election. While each council role really requires a mental, emotional and a personal time commitment it also offers the loving reward of serving the local fraternal community.

- The council spends time each month planning for fraternity meetings; thinking through prayer, formation and social activities.
- The council also strives to encourage true ecclesial and Franciscan community within the fraternity.
- The council continues to think through and encourage opportunities to foster a spirit of peace, love and kinship amongst all fraternity members.

The fraternity council is designed to serve the fraternity and foster its spiritual health. To do that effectively, the council must embrace ‘servant leadership’ and support the fraternity in a way that compliments its membership, personality, and character.

Each council member has roles & responsibilities, and tasks that each member performs to the best of their own ability. Each member gives their own personality to the role. Each doing what is theirs to do, in a way they can do it best. And it works!

Please prayerfully consider the role each position has in the fraternity and prayerfully consider you think could fulfill each of the offices. That name can be anyone (including yourself) who is currently an active and professed member of the fraternity. Each person named will have the option to accept or reject the nomination. Nominations may also be made on the day of our election; however, providing names in advance will give members some time to consider each nomination.

Minister The Minister has the honor of presiding over council and fraternity meetings under the guidance of the council. They listen, they lead, they encourage, they manage and they facilitate.

Vice Minister The Vice Minister supports minister in all the above, and if the Minister is unable to carry out their responsibilities the Vice Minister assumes the role of Minister. In our fraternity the Vice Minister also coordinates our ‘Prayer and Praise Ministry’.

Secretary The Secretary documents fraternity and council meeting minutes and activities. They maintain historical account of fraternity records.

Treasurer The Treasurer manages fraternity financial accounts and affairs; specifically keeping record of donations and expenditures.

Formation Director The Formation Director supports faith development of the fraternity and its individuals in initial and ongoing formation. They manage the fraternity’s formation activities by facilitating, and guiding other ‘formators’ in following the National and Regional OFS Formation syllabus.

Please consider each role prayerfully and come to the November fraternity meeting prepared to vote in our new council!