

OFS News

Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the
Secular Franciscan Order

www.ilsfo.org

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Please note that the views expressed herein represent those of the individual contributors,
and may or may not reflect the collective view of the Region.

Minister's Message for May 2018 Lorna Miressi, OFS

FORGIVENESS

Since Easter Sunday we have been reading, from the books of the Acts of The Apostles, about the growth of the early Church. One of the central characters in this story has been the apostle Paul. He, together with Barnabas, traveled to many cities performing miracles and announcing the Good News of the Gospel. He even traveled to Asia Minor and to Europe, and the Church continued to grow.

Paul was, however, not always a disciple of Jesus Christ. Before his tremendous conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul's mission was one of persecution of Jesus' followers. He wanted to destroy the early church. But he changes. He encounters Christ and is blinded. He remains this way until he encounters another disciple of Jesus by the name of Ananias.

At this point in the story Ananias becomes, for me, a very important person. Not only does Saul (Paul) become a follower of Jesus and one of the most powerful disciples in the church; the encounter between these two men changes Ananias as well.

Ananias lays his hands on Paul and forgives him. We read that "things like scales fell from his (Paul's) eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized" (Acts 9:18). Ananias was willing to forgive Paul for all the wrong he committed against the early Church.


This story, for me, is one of the strongest stories of forgiveness in Scripture.

Through Ananias' willingness to forgive Paul, their relationship was healed, AND Paul was opened to the power of divine mercy. When Ananias called him "Brother", Paul realized that if he, as a persecutor, could be called by such a significant name, anyone could – even the Gentiles.

I invite all of you to look at the relationships in your lives. Perhaps there are people who need your forgiveness. There may be relationships that need reconciliation. Look at your families. Is there someone you haven't spoken to for some time because a disagreement took place years ago and neither of you has been able to say you're sorry?

Look at your Franciscan families as well. Is there someone in your fraternity who you feel has wronged you and you wish to make amends? Pray about it. Ask God to give you the strength to talk with this person and come to a place of forgiveness.

Just as Paul, through his experience on the road, was converted from a persecutor of the followers of Christ Jesus to a devout follower of the Gospel, Secular Franciscans are instructed, through our Rule, to "conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change with the gospel itself calls conversion. Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily. (Article 7).

God's peace.
Lorna 

Council Members Minister

Lorna Miressi, OFS
▪ minister@ilsfo.org

Vice-Minister

Barbara Elkins OFS,
▪ viceminister@ilsfo.org

Formation Director

Kristi Loar, OFS
▪ formation@ilsfo.org

Secretary

Liza Ann Acosta OFS,
▪ secretary@ilsfo.org

Treasurer

Connie D. Tigla, OFS
▪ treasurer@ilsfo.org

Councilor At-Large

LeAnneTjelle, OFS
▪ atlarge@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Communications/Public Relations

Marc Golab, OFS
▪ pr@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Fraternal Life

Sue Gribbon, OFS
▪ fratlfe@ilsfo.org

Councilor for JPIC

Luana Lienhart OFS,
▪ jplic@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Visitations

Cecilia Schneider OFS
▪ visitations@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Vocations

Norman Mosk, OFS
▪ vocations@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Youth/Young Adults

Bob Burnham OFS
▪ youth@ilsfo.org

Spiritual Assistant

Bro. Marc Sheckells OFM
▪ spiritualassistant@ilsfo.org

Newsletter Editor

Marc Golab, OFS
▪ ofsnews@ilsfo.org

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 2^{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

"We are an Easter People and
Alleluia is our song!" – Pope
Saint John Paul II

Several years ago, when I
was teaching high school
freshmen, the conversation of
the resurrection came up in
class. As I was explaining the
resurrection, one student looked
particularly puzzled. I stopped
to find out if everything was ok,
but he explained he didn't get
the resurrection. This was a non-
Christian student in a Catholic
school who had never had the
chance to have a few words with
another person about this
fundamental Christian belief.
What puzzled him more was
Jesus appearing after the
resurrection. After attempting to
be polite, he broke down and
asked, "Was Jesus a zombie?"
Although the class laughed, his
question definitely gave me
some definite food for thought.

As Saint Pope John Paul
II proclaimed during his visit to
Australia in 1986, we are an
Easter People. As Christians, we
cannot help but see everything
around us and experience the
gifts of life in light of the
resurrection.

For us, everything we
are flows from the joy of the
resurrection and this joy tells us
that we have an unselfish
responsibility to say yes to God's
call in our life. Most, if not all of
the people reading this brief
column, have responded to that
unselfish call to help build the
kingdom of God by following

in the footsteps of Saint Francis and
becoming a Franciscan. We have said
yes, as Mary once asserted "yes" to the
Angel Gabriel, and embraced our
responsibility to help build the
kingdom of God.

Still, because we are human, it
becomes easy to take both our
vocation, our responsibility, and our
joy for granted. What I grappled with
as the student struggled to unravel
the mystery of the resurrection, and
even what Saint Francis struggled
with throughout his life, was that
complacency. When Francis told the
brothers, "Let us begin again,
brothers, for up to now we have done
little or nothing," he was not trying to
downplay what had been done, but
realizing that we must not get tired or
comfortable in our call to build the
kingdom. Even Pope Francis, in his
encyclical "Evangelii Gaudium" hits
upon this when he writes, "It is the
Risen Christ who tells us, with a
power that fills us with confidence
and unshakeable hope: 'Behold, I
[Jesus Christ] make all things new.'"

My brothers and sisters, we are
an Easter People! Like the call from
Saint Francis, we must renew,
revitalize, and refresh ourselves in
order to be the best Easter People we
are called to be. Although Christ did
not appear as a zombie, we are called
to see his resurrection as a chance to
be cleaned and new once again.
Christ's resurrection conquers death
so that we may live and live fully. Let
us, you and I, build the kingdom by
not only lifting up and embracing the
brothers and sisters around us, but by
also making efforts to find the joy in
seeing things in new and refreshing
ways. Let us, brothers and sisters,
begin again, for up to now we have
done little or nothing!



IN-FORMATION

Nicholas Noe OFS

Regional Formation Commission

Becoming Who We (You) Are

*In Louisville on the corner of Fourth and Walnut in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all these people, that they were mine and I was theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers...I have the immense joy of being human, a member of the race in which God Himself became incarnate. As if the sorrows and the stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me, now that I realize what we all are. If only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around **shining like the sun**.*

(T. Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*)

You may be familiar with these exclamatory and revelatory sentences written by Thomas Merton some fifty years ago. They are often cited, and I have a framed copy of these famous sentences hanging on the wall in front of my desk. Merton, a Trappist monk and one of the most acclaimed spiritual writers of the 20th century, had a “peak moment” one day in Louisville on his way to an appointment. He realized living in a monastery did not actually separate him from the world, and “the whole illusion of a separate holy existence was a dream.” Monks might be more conscious of their relationship with God, but in no way did it make them any better than the rest of humanity. He was overjoyed at being a member of the human race, a race which was deified and glorified by the Incarnation. Also, he sensed he was connected to all other human beings at some deep level, a level within each person where the true self and God reside.

The “Dignity of the Human Person” is one of the pillars of our Franciscan spirituality and our Catholic tradition. Merton was a 3rd Order Franciscan before he became a Trappist at the Abbey of Gethsemane in 1941. He studied the writings of St. Bonaventure and Bl. John Duns Scotus, who translated the intuitive ideas of St. Francis and St. Clare into theological and even poetic language.

Merton’s exposure to Bonaventure and Duns Scotus had a significant effect on his own writings and probably contributed to his Louisville experience. (I refer you to the excellent book by Dan Dan Horan OFM, *The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton*).

We need to occasionally pause and reflect on what a great gift it is to be loved into existence as a human being by an All-Good God. Genesis (Gen. 1-26) tells us we are made in the image and likeness of God and are special creatures. All creatures are *vestiges* of God (Bonaventure) but we humans are conscious beings who can reflect on reality, create, love God and others, and have the freedom to choose between right and wrong. We are co-creators with God in building God’s kingdom here on earth.

Francis of Assisi put the idea and belief of *Imagio Dei* in more Christian and human terms when he wrote: “Consider, O human being, in what excellence the Lord God has placed you, for He created and formed you to the image of His beloved Son according to the body and His likeness according to the Spirit” (Adm. V). If every person realized he or she and every other person reflected the sacred image of God and was “shining like the sun,” the world would be a much different place. But humans are not perfect. We often fail to follow the path of Christ Jesus and be as fully human as Jesus. Richard Rohr OFM often writes that we think our goal is to be more spiritual, but our real challenge is to become more human.

Bl. Duns Scotus had a different perspective of “God as Creator” than many other theologians and philosophers. He argued God would not just create by form but uniquely. God does not just create a human person, but a unique person who is different than any other person who lives now, lived in the past, or will live in the future. Thus, for each of us to be fully human as Christ Jesus was, means our Christ-like paths of experience and conversion in this life (in the manner of St. Francis) are likely to be different and revelatory. And how each of us lives the gospel life and follows our Franciscan Rule will be different.

This year, we celebrate the 40th anniversary of our Rule. Perhaps, we can celebrate in our fraternities by discussing our experiences of trying to live the gospel life. **✠**

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

Luana Lienhart of

Brothers and sisters, grace and peace to you in the Lord Jesus! In some ways, this is my favorite time of year. The days are longer, baseball season begins (Go Cubs!), we indulge in the Easter season, and prepare for the Holy Spirit at Pentacost.

These days can also be profoundly painful. One in ten couples are unable to conceive, or carry a child to term. Someone close to me works in a parish. After a year of trying, she became pregnant, only to experience pregnancy loss. Two of her co-workers have had babies this year, and of course she's happy for them, but it's devastating too. Imagine going to Mass and seeing babies baptized every week, or teaching baptism prep classes with all of this on your heart.

The medical profession and society at large refer to us as *infertile*. The dictionary defines it as "not fertile; unproductive; sterile; barren". No human person fits that definition, much less a baptized one. We may not bear children, but there are other types of fruit. They're just not acknowledged. Ever. By anyone.

Consider what happens on Mother's Day. All the tv shows, commercials, everything is all about them to the exclusion of all else. And then we have special blessings for mothers at Mass. The one place that should be a sanctuary exacerbates our pain. And then we do it all again a month later, on Father's Day. I was raised by a wonderful mother, so of course I give thanks to her and all who are privileged to be parents. Is it not also right and just to hold compassionate space for those whose arms are empty, and whose hearts are broken?

The Church and society are, understandably, laser-focused on marriage and children. The Church, like society, doesn't do anything to

acknowledge or comfort those desperate for marriage, but unable to find a spouse, or those desperate to be parents, but cannot be. Many hesitate to 'out' themselves because they don't get support; they get unwanted and insensitive advice, or platitudes that minimize their experiences.

Pro tip: Yes, everyone's considered adoption. Adoption isn't possible for everyone, nor is it a last resort when other attempts to parent fail. A dear friend of mine was adopted, and he and his wife have one biological child and one adopted child.

To anyone reading this who longs for a child and has been denied, I see you, and I give thanks to God for you and your fertile, fruitful contributions to the Body of Christ.

To those separated from your parents by death or estrangement, I see you, and I pray for reconciliation in this life or the next.

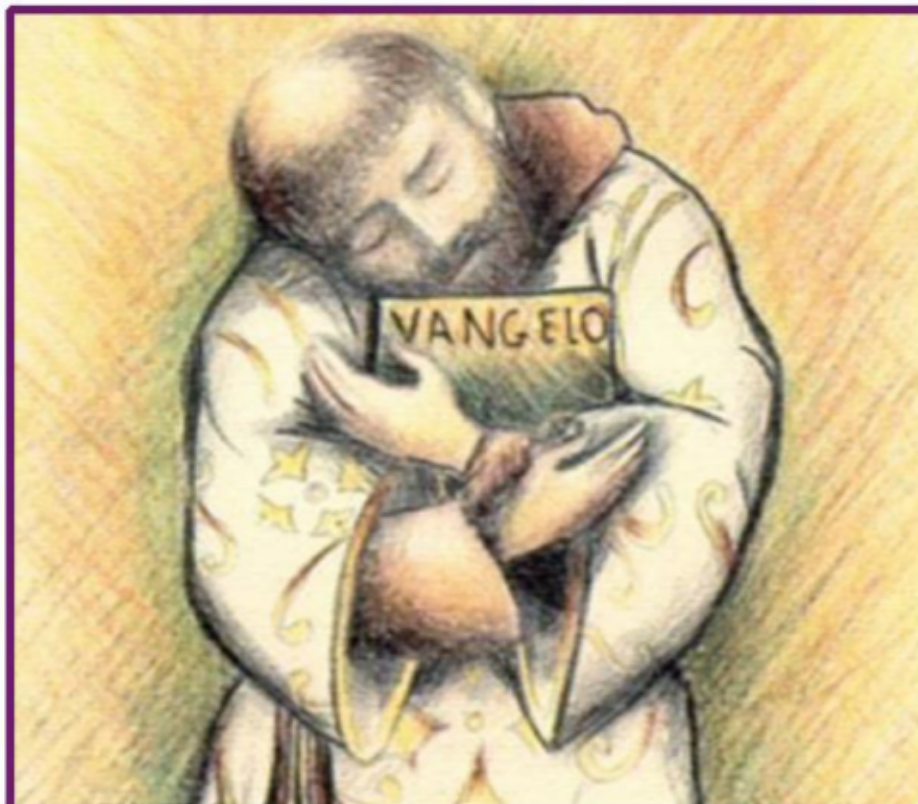
To those separated from your children by estrangement or death, especially those who've survived pregnancy loss: your experience matters, your grief is real, and I pray you will know the Good Shepherd's comfort and peace. **✠**



You pray for the hungry. Then you feed them. That's how prayer works.

— Pope Francis —

AZ QUOTES



Fidem et Sequelae

DAY OF REFLECTION

MAY 6, 2018

We kindly invite the members of St Anthony Of Padua and St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity to join us in prayer and reflection. We look forward to being together in community and fellowship.

Our day will begin with Mass at 9:00 A.M. and end at approximately 2:30 P.M.

**PLEASE RSVP WITH A
COUNT BY APRIL 25, 2018**

Annual Day of Reflection

Presenter:

**Father Bernie
Tickerhoof, TOR**

**Presenting:
Faith &
Discipleship**

**Join us at
10:00 A.M. in the
Assissi Center for
Continental
Breakfast**

**Lunch provided
Free Will Offering**

**ST. ELIZABETH OF
HUNGARY FATERNITY
9201 W. St. Francis Rd.
Frankfort, IL 60423**

Questions??? Call...

Mary Fran Consola

Rosalie Leitelt

