

Minister's Message: Living the Rule!

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I'm really having such a hard time remembering that Easter is only a month away (less than that when you receive this). Today it's zero outside and there's ice everywhere! Truly a penitential season! How thankful we will all be when spring arrives!

I hope you are all planning on attending the **Apostolic Action Workshop on March 15** at Mayslake, which this year is entitled "Living the Rule." You may think that's an odd name of an Apostolic Workshop – but it's actually right on point.

First, it has everything to do with why the Apostolic Commissions are being restructured – and the decision to do that was *unanimously* approved by the National Chapter last October. That decision had everything to do with helping us live the *Rule*.

We need to remember that apostolic activities are a part of our *Rule* – specifically, Articles 15 through 19.

However, while the formation of the Apostolic Commissions was to help Secular Franciscans recognize ways to live out those articles of the *Rule*, the purpose certainly was not to ignore the rest of the *Rule* while striving to "do" the apostolates! Unfortunately, at least in some instances, that's exactly what happened, and this is what NAFRA recognized and decided must be changed.

A perfect example is the time leading up to the Quinquennial Congress last year. Due to disagreement about the main speaker for the Congress, dialog among some NAFRA members became quite ugly, surely not a

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Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Peace and everything good to you. As this March newsletter reaches you we are all looking ahead with anxious hearts to Easter – an extremely early Easter!

However, we still have a fair amount of Lent yet to celebrate. The word Lent, which means "spring", seems out of place as we are still so blanketed in snow during one of the hardest winters in recent history.

But I hope that you are celebrating a good Lent, a joyful Lent. Perhaps we don't usually use the word Lent in the same sentence with words like "celebrating," and "joyful". But the first Preface for Lent in the Roman Sacramentary refers to Lent as a "joyful season". How can that be?

Well, first of all we are preparing to celebrate the paschal mystery. We are recalling and celebrating the extraordinary works of God in our world and in our own lives. Lent becomes the occasion to grow closer to God, and that in itself can and should be a joyful thing.

As I write this I am in the process of giving Parish Missions – five of them in a row in each of the first 5 weeks of Lent. I find it an exhilarating experience to witness the faith of people all over as they come to pray and to receive the sacraments of the Church.

So many of our Catholic people have a wonderful appreciation of their faith, and it is a joy to minister to them as a priest. I can see how hungry so many are to hear the

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Professions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joan Goselin, SFO, and • Rosalie Litelt, SFO of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity (Frankfort) made their Professions on January 5. 	
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Calendar	
<p><i>Note: Unless otherwise indicated, all events are at Mayslake Village (Oak Brook).</i></p>	
March	
01:	Per Capita, Census, and Fraternity Annual Reports due
15:	Apostolic Action Workshop
29:	Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
April	
05:	Candidates' Retreat, Day 1
May	
03:	Candidates' Retreat, Day 2
17:	Chapter of Ministers and National Visitation
June	
21:	Leadership Workshop
July	
19:	Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
August	
02:	Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula
September	
12-14:	Regional Retreat, St. Francis Woods, Frankfort
October	
25:	Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
November	
16:	Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration (location TBD)

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reflection of Article 13 of our *Rule* which states, "Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courageous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ".

We are all human and therefore imperfect, and we are bound to have disagreements. But how we handle those disagreements speaks volumes about who we are. There are 26 articles to our *Rule*, all dealing with the way of life we have embraced. Frequent review of who we are called to be is important to our being authentic to our vocation.

It became obvious in the NAFRA meetings of the strong relationship between living the

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Word of God and to have their sins washed away and their faith strengthened.

During these Parish Missions, several witness speakers have shared touching experiences of God working in their lives, leading them out of darkness and into the light. It has been a grace for me to hear them witness to their faith and to the presence and action of God in their lives.

And while it takes some effort for me to travel so much, I find it tremendously uplifting to witness the faith of our people everywhere I go, and see them striving to apply it to their daily lives. It is truly a joyful experience for me, and reminds me of what we pray in the Peace Prayer of St. Francis: "For it is in giving that we receive".

Throughout Lent we look forward to Easter with joyful anticipation. The more we turn our attention, our meditation, our daily work and energy toward our loving God, the more we are making a joyful preparation for Christ's paschal mystery of dying and rising to give us new life.

St. Francis was known as a man of joy, and is a wonderful example for us to approach Lent and the paschal mystery with joyful hearts.

May our joyful celebration of Lent lead to the new life of the Risen Christ this Eastertide. ☒

Rule, and therefore formation, and apostolic action. We'll be discussing this at the Workshop on March 15, as well as bringing you up-to-date on the Franciscan Action Network (I will have just returned from meetings in Washington, D.C.) and an opportunity to watch (via DVD) the sessions of the Quinquennial Congress led by Rev. Eric Law and the wonderful tools he gave us to help us be who we're called to be!

Meanwhile, I hope your Lenten journey is going well. This is "fall back and regroup time" – when we regroup ourselves in our faith. Let's all make the time count – and when Easter arrives, may we all be reborn to new life in the Lord! ☒

Events of Interest

March 11: Fr. Laurent Gallant, OFM will speak on the "Office of the Passion" from 5:30-7:00 pm at St. Peter's in the Loop, 110 West Madison St., Chicago. Participants will pray the Office of the Passion in the form of Vespers using some of the texts translated and edited in *The Geste of the Great King: Office of the Passion of Francis of Assisi*. For more information, call 312.372.5111.

March 13: The Carmelite Spiritual Center is presenting "The Palm Sunday Journey of Jesus" from 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at 8433 Bailey Rd., Darien. Fr. Bob Colaresi, O.CARM. will discuss the messianic entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. Cost is \$45 and includes lunch. For more information or to register, call 630.969.4141.

April 5: The Franciscan Outreach Association is holding its annual "Art from the Heart" art show and auction from 7:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m. at 1645 W. LeMoyné, Chicago. Tickets are \$25 in advance; \$35 at the door. For more information or to buy tickets, call Carol Tritschler at 773.278.6724 or email carol@franoutreach.org.

April 27: The Diocese of Joliet Chapter of the Knights of Columbus is sponsoring "A Living Rosary Prayer Service to Our Lady of Charity" at 4 p.m. at the St. Charles Borromeo Pastoral Center, 402 S. Independence Blvd., Romeoville. The service is dedicated to all the victims of abortion, and the Most Reverend Bishop Roger Kaffer will preside. For more information, call 630.985.1876.

May 10: Daniel and Susan Willenborg, SFO (St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity, Joliet) invite and encourage all Secular Franciscans in our Region to join with them for this year's interfaith "Hike for Life" in Frankfort. They especially encourage members of fraternities in Ford City, Frankfort, Kankakee, Matteson, and Steger to participate. Please RSVP by **April 15**; for more information or to sign up, contact Daniel and Susan Willenborg, SFO.