

## Minister's Message: Feast Day Blessings!

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

First and foremost, you are all wished the happiest of Feast Days as we celebrate our Holy Father St. Francis! I hope all of you will be able to attend a Transitus service on October 3, and have simply a joyous day on October 4—because Francis was all about joy!

In preparing for this article, I was thumbing through the *Omnibus* trying to focus in on what, in the story of Francis' passing from life through death to eternal life, most spoke to me this year (because it changes for me, depending on what's happening in my life at the time—I'm sure it's that way for you, too). This year, it's Francis' admonition to his brothers as he was dying, set forth in *Bonaventure, Major Life*, Chapter XIV.3: "I have done what was mine to do. May Christ teach you what is yours."

Speaking for myself, I sometimes become frustrated when I just can't do everything. But Francis teaches us, we're not meant to do everything. We are simply called to do what God wants us to do. The tough part is learning what that is. Sometimes it's easy—but often, not.

I admit to not being very good at delegating—I've been let down too often, and trusting that others will do what they say they will do is difficult for me. Trusting is a challenge—but I've come to learn that I must trust, even if I'm disappointed. Then another kind of trust comes into play—trusting that God through Jesus will help me deal with the situation and we will ultimately accomplish what God wants us to accomplish.

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## Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

*"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,  
he has come to his people and set them free.*

....

*This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham:  
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,  
free to worship him without fear,  
holy and righteous in his sight  
all the days of our life."*

You may recognize these words as a portion of the *Canticle of Zechariah*, (Lk 1:68-79), which we pray every day at Morning Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours. Recently as I prayed this Canticle I was struck by the several references to freedom. The word "free" is used three times. Do we often think of freedom as a virtue, as a good thing? Or do we sometimes think—whether consciously or not—that being holy implies

being strict, or even constricted?

It seems to me that St. Francis of Assisi was very free—truly a free spirit. Think about it. He was free to pursue his practice of his faith in a totally radical way, living it literally, applying it to everything he said and did. He was free enough to give away everything he owned, including the clothes on his back (scandalous!), in order to *live* the poverty of Christ and his Blessed Mother, and not be inhibited by what others might think.

He was free enough to disinherit his own father who was standing in his way of following Christ with his whole heart. The freedom of Francis' spirit exhibited itself in his creating his own simple type of clothing, and of seeing in it the shape of Christ's

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The *SFO 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.**

**Rest in Peace**

- **Dorothy Armbruster**, SFO of St. Anne’s Fraternity (deactivated) died August 29.

**Local Appointments**

Fr. Charles Faso, OFM and Vickie Klick, SFO are the new Spiritual Assistants serving **St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity (Crystal Lake)**.

**Events of Interest**

**October 11-12:** Mayslake Village is holding its 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Bazaar from 10 a.m.–4 p.m. (11<sup>th</sup>) and 12–4 p.m. (12<sup>th</sup>) at 1801 35<sup>th</sup> St., Oak Brook. Items for sale include crafts, books, flowers, jewelry, baked goods, and more. Proceeds will benefit the services Mayslake provides for its senior residents, and for continued renovation of the village.

**October 11:** As part of 40 Days for Life, join the Marytown Community in a prayerful witness in front of the Albany Medical Surgical Center, an abortionary located at 50867 N. Elston Ave., Chicago, from 7 a.m.–7 p.m. Each day, a different church or group commits to pray in front of the abortion clinic for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for a collective 40 days. You can pray for as much time as your schedule allows. For scheduling and possible carpool arrangements, call Bonnie Quirke at 847.362.0776.

**October 11:** Marytown is hosting a Day of Reflection, “Love in the Epistles of St. Paul”, from 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. at 1600 W. Park Ave., Libertyville. To rescue love from a culture of selfishness, we would do well to turn to St. Paul, who knew and understood Love-Incarnate, Christ our God. Cost is \$35 per person and includes continental breakfast, talks, and lunch; please register by **Oct. 6**. For more information or to register, call 847.367.7800, Ext. 225, or email [retreats@marytown.com](mailto:retreats@marytown.com).

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**Mother Cabrini Celebration**

It’s time for us to gather together as a family for our annual **Mother Cabrini Celebration**.

Hosted this year by St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity (Rockford), the event is held in honor of our Region’s patron, St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, on the Sunday closest to her feast day.

- **Date:** November 16 (Sunday)
- **Location:** St. Stanislaus Kostka Church 201 Buckbee, Rockford
- **Time:** 1:30 p.m.
- **RSVP By:** November 9 (Sunday)

*Fraternity ministers:* Please email our Regional Councilor for Fraternal Life, Chris Bruhnke, SFO, at [fratlif@ilsfo.org](mailto:fratlif@ilsfo.org) with the total number of attendees from your fraternity no later than November 9 (Sunday).

**Overview**

Mass will be celebrated by our Regional Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Donald Blaeser, OFM, and concelebrated by Fr. Peter Sarnicki, OFM CONV.,

Pastor of St. Stanislaus and Spiritual Assistant of the host fraternity.

In addition, Fr. Sarnicki will conduct a tour through St. Stanislaus School, which features displays of Polish crafts, costumes, and various mementos, along with a Polish museum of historical artifacts. Also, as mentioned in previous issues of the *SFO News*, the 2007 Quinquennial Quilt will be available for viewing.

**Travel and Parking**

The drive to Rockford for most fraternities will take about 1 hour and 40 minutes to 2 hours, depending on your starting point. Letters of invitation, which include driving instructions and maps, will be mailed to all fraternity ministers. Now is the time to plan your carpools to ensure we have a large turnout in support of our gracious host fraternity.

Ample parking is available in the lot behind the church and school. ☑

**Relationships: The Heart of Franciscan Life**

by Sandra Kisel, SFO; Regional Formation Director

*“In life-giving union with each other ...” (Rule, #1)*

*“If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal.” (1 Cor. 13:1-3)*

Where do we find this love relationship? It is the fruit of God first loving us; His penetrating our hearts with His own love, divine fire, and presence. Listening to God speaking and moving in our hearts, we learn and grow in love; we wait for love and search for it, long for it, pray for it. A relationship develops; becomes strong, vibrant, glowing. Without this relationship, without love, what would we be? The words of God would remain words, but *we* have Spirit and Life—life that God Himself has given us as a gift pouring forth from the oneness of God in Trinity, He Himself making Himself known to us, His little ones.

For those unable to join us at last month’s Regional Retreat with Fr. Lester Bach, OFM CAP., I would like to share here some reflections from the retreat on love and relationship.

During his opening remarks, Fr. Bach said, “Francis of Assisi learned that relating to one

another in love is the foundation of the Gospel. Without this source of love we are prone to create separation. Such separateness springs from violence, anger, hatred, discrimination, animosity, broken friendships, family separations, bigotry, frustrations, selfishness, greed, lies, and a host of other negative sources. Franciscans are called to deal with these negative feelings in ways that do not separate us from one another.”

During the first conference, “Where Does it All Begin?”, Fr. Bach referred to Genesis (3:8), where God is indicated as a friend to Adam and Eve, and His relating to us is an intimate element of who God is. “The foundation for the Franciscan requirement to love one another is based on God’s love which touches everything God does,” said Fr. Bach. To quote Pope Benedict XVI, “One does not make the world more human by refusing to act humanely here and now. We contribute to a better world only by personally doing good now, with full commitment and wherever we have the opportunity,

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# The Crusades and St. Francis

Excerpts from multiple articles; see footnotes.

## The Crusades<sup>1</sup>

“The Crusades are generally portrayed as a series of holy wars against Islam led by power-mad popes and fought by religious fanatics. They are supposed to have been the epitome of self-righteousness and intolerance, a black stain on the history of the Catholic Church in particular and Western civilization in general. A breed of proto-imperialists, the Crusaders introduced Western aggression to the peaceful Middle East and then deformed the enlightened Muslim culture, leaving it in ruins.

“...So what is the truth about the Crusades? ... [M]uch can already be said with certainty. For starters, the Crusades to the East were in every way defensive wars. They were a direct response to Muslim aggression—an attempt to turn back or defend against Muslim conquests of Christian lands.

“Christians in the eleventh century were not paranoid fanatics. Muslims really were gunning for them. While Muslims can be peaceful, Islam was born in war and grew the same way. From the time of Mohammed, the means of Muslim expansion was always the sword.

“... With enormous energy, the warriors of Islam struck out against the Christians shortly after Mohammed’s death. They were extremely successful. Palestine, Syria, and Egypt—once the most heavily

Christian areas in the world—quickly succumbed. By the eighth century, Muslim armies had conquered all of Christian North Africa and Spain. In the eleventh century, the Seljuk Turks conquered Asia Minor (modern Turkey), which had been Christian since the time of St. Paul. The old Roman Empire, known to modern historians as the Byzantine Empire, was reduced to little more than Greece. In desperation, the emperor in Constantinople sent word to the Christians of western Europe asking them to aid their brothers and sisters in the East.

“That is what gave birth to the Crusades. They were not the brainchild of an ambitious pope or rapacious knights but a response to more than four centuries of conquests in which Muslims had already captured two-thirds of the old Christian world. At some point, Christianity as a faith and a culture had to defend itself or be subsumed by Islam. The Crusades were that defense.”

## Francis and the Crusades<sup>2</sup>

“It was during a period of truce during the battle over Damietta in September 1219 that Francis preached to the Muslims, crossing over to the Muslim camp with Brother Illuminato, who was probably the interpreter.

“... Francis understood that the Fifth Crusade was part of an ongoing just war in response to Muslim invasions of Christian lands, which included many

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## Relationships *continued from p. 2 ...*

independently of partisan strategies and programs. The Christian’s program—the program of the Good Samaritan, the program of Jesus—is ‘a heart which sees’. This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly.” (*Deus Caritas Est*, 31b)

Some questions for growth in our conversions:

1. When you reflect on your own life, what areas are in need of that radical interior change the gospel itself calls “conversion?” (*Rule*, #7)
2. How have you determined to make those changes? How long do you think it will take?
3. Why is it part of being faithful to your profession for you to bring your attitudes and perspectives in conformity to gospel love?

At the conclusion of our retreat—on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross—we celebrated our professions again. What does looking at the cross say to us? For me, when I look at the cross and Jesus, I see and hear, “*Never enough!*” God gives Himself to us without limits. Think about this and

celebrate it. God loves us without limits; can we hope to love Him thus as well? Do we place barriers to God and to Him fulfilling Himself in us, giving Himself through us for all, making His home and dwelling place within us so that we might truly be spouses, mothers, brothers, and sisters to Christ?

On Oct. 4 as we celebrate the feast of our Founder, St. Francis of Assisi, let’s make a point of thanking God for our professions and for all God gives us every day of our lives. Let us always begin to live our professions again, new, each day, moved by the gospel, so that we will be conformed to Christ, and with Him be given over to our Father in Heaven and to our brothers and sisters. In our journey, let us recognize that perseverance is a gift from God. Let us pray that as we make progress in loving one another we will remain faithful to the end. Many times, I recall that Jesus has appeared to souls as a beggar, poor and needy or as a child. For Francis, it was in embracing the leper he rejoiced greatly in finding God. ■

## Living the Gospel of Life

*In August, Archbishop Charles Chaput, OFM CAP. was interviewed by National Review Online editor Kathryn Lopez. Following are excerpts from the interview.*

*Lopez: “What should it mean when I’m ‘voting Catholic’?”*

*Archbishop Chaput: “We should see ourselves as Catholic first—not white or black, or young or old, or Democrat or Republican, or labor militant or business owner, but Catholic first as the main way we identify ourselves. Our faith should shape our lives, including our political choices. Of course, that demands that we actually study and deepen our Catholic faith. The Catholic faith isn’t a set of clothes that we can tailor to a personal fit. We don’t ‘invent’ our faith, and we don’t ‘own’ it. If we really want to be Catholic, then we’ll live by Catholic teaching. Otherwise we’re just fooling ourselves and abusing the belief of other Catholics who really do try to practice what the Church teaches.”*

*Lopez: “Whenever I write about Catholics and abortion, I am immediately asked, ‘What about war? What about the death penalty? What about them? Can a Catholic vote for Senator ‘Surge’? We have killed people in Iraq, after all.’”*

*Archbishop Chaput: “I’ve written and spoken against the death penalty for more than 30 years. And along with most other American bishops, I opposed our intervention in Iraq. But these issues are different in kind, not merely degree, from the violence rooted in Scripture and Catholic tradition will understand the distinction if he or she reasons honestly. Genocide, euthanasia, abortion, and deliberately targeting civilians in war—these things are always grievously wrong. But in Catholic thought, war and capital punishment can be morally legitimate under certain carefully defined circumstances. Abortion is never morally justified.”*

*~ “Don’t Lie: A shepherd on Catholic citizenship”, National Review Online, August 20, 2008*

**Calendar**

**October**

**25:** Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.,  
Mayslake Village

**November**

**16:** Mother Cabrini Feast Day  
Celebration, Rockford

**Events of Interest**

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**October 11:** Working in collaboration with the UN Earth Charter Committee, the Wheaton Franciscans are hosting an “Earth Summit” from 8 a.m.–6:30 p.m. at 26 W. 171 Roosevelt Rd., Wheaton. The summit will promote awareness of global climate change and cover legislative advocacy, Internet communications, media coverage, public forums, and personal commitment. Events for all ages will be included, along with a pet blessing at 1 p.m. Admission is \$5 per person, with a maximum cost capped at \$20 per family. For more information, call 630.909.6635 or visit [www.wheatonfranciscan.org](http://www.wheatonfranciscan.org).

**October 25:** Sr. Anne Flanagan, FSP is presenting a free lecture, “Introduction to the Liturgy of the Hours”, from 10:30–11:30 a.m. at 172 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Learn how to find your page, when to pray what, and how to use all those ribbons. For more information, call 312.346.4228.

**Oct. 31–Nov. 2:** Miles Christi is holding a Spiritual Exercises silent retreat for men at Marytown, 1600 W. Park Ave., Libertyville; a women’s retreat will be held **Nov. 28–30**. The retreats will start on Friday at 4 p.m. and end on Sunday at 4:30 p.m. In addition to spiritual talks and time for personal meditation in silence, there will be daily Mass, the Rosary, and opportunity for confessions. For more information or to register, email Joan Czerlanis at [chicago@spiritualexercises.net](mailto:chicago@spiritualexercises.net) or call 847.966.1369.

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I think this is how Christ teaches us what is ours to do. It becomes clear as we live our lives, doing what we *think* is God’s will. That’s what happened with Francis – when Jesus said, “Go, rebuild my house, which, as you can see, is falling into ruin,” Francis started by rebuilding with bricks, stones, and mortar. In the process, he realized Jesus was calling him to something more, and the Franciscan Order was born, an event we will be celebrating in a big way next year, as we commemorate that birth!

Francis’ mission is now ours, and we need to do our part, whatever that is. May God grant us the vision for each of us to see clearly what we are called to do to rebuild His house!

**Crusades** *continued from p. 3 ...*

attacks against Italian city-states all along the peninsula over the course of centuries.

“Further, the crusade was called for by the Holy Father, and it is well-known that Francis had perfect loyalty to the Catholic Church, and showed devout respect for priests and all the hierarchy. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, he felt the crusade was justified on spiritual grounds. ... Francis told the Sultan ‘It is just that Christians invade the land you inhabit, for you blaspheme the name of Christ and alienate everyone you can from His worship.’

“... It is important here to recognize the bravery of Francis. He preached to armed Muslims who a few days before had won a major skirmish at Damietta, killing about five thousand Christians. The Sultan, al-Malik al-Kamil was also the general of the Muslim army, and ruler of Egypt, Syria and Palestine. Francis first obtained permission from the Papal Legate to cross over the lines during a period of temporary truce. When he reached Muslim territory he and Brother Illuminato were taken prisoner,

**Assistant** *continued from p. 1 ...*

cross. And though he did not set out to found a religious Order, he freely accepted others who were attracted to his way of life, and called them “brothers.”

Imagine the freedom it took to act contrary to the Catholic Church in choosing a different path from the Crusades, which the Church considered to be a virtuous endeavor, and instead to champion peacemaking. And then imagine the audacious freedom to cross both the Crusaders’ lines of battle and the enemy lines as well and go to meet Sultan Malik al-Kamil – and to have respect for him and his faith!

And the list goes on. You can add your own examples of the freedom you see in St. Francis that speak to you.

It was good seeing many of you at the retreat in September. Wasn’t Fr. Lester Bach, OFM CAP. awesome? Many thanks to our Regional Formation Director, Sandra Kisel, SFO, and her team for all their preparations and hard work which allowed the retreat to be such a peaceful and growing experience.

**Upcoming Events:** Make plans now to attend the Mother Cabrini Celebration on Sunday, November 16, in Rockford. (See page 2 for more information.)

Finally, I will be attending the SFO National Chapter in Nashville in October. I look forward to telling you all about it in the November issue of *SFO News*.

Again, Feast Day Blessings! Let us all renew ourselves as we remember what a gift St. Francis is to all of us! **☩**

beaten and put in chains by the sentries.

“Here we have an image of St. Francis that is utterly opposed to the statues of a docile friar surrounded by birds and other animals – St. Francis beaten and in chains! He was fully prepared for martyrdom. Upon meeting the saint, al-Malik asked him if he was a messenger from the crusaders. Francis replied that he was indeed a messenger, but a messenger from God. He then proceeded to give witness to his love for Jesus, and said that he wished to save the souls of the Sultan and his men.

“... Francis and his companion remained in the Muslim camp for many days, and parted on excellent terms with the Sultan. There is a story in the early Franciscan literature ... that al-Malik converted to the True Faith on his deathbed.” **☩**

<sup>1</sup> “The Real History of the Crusades” by Thomas F. Madden, *InsideCatholic.com*, April 1, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> “An Interview with Frank Rega, Author of *St. Francis and the Conversion of the Muslims*”, by Michael Baggot, *LifeSiteNews.com*, April 3, 2008.

As we celebrate the Feast of our glorious founder this month, let us be inspired by his freedom. Let’s be free enough to take a step back from our typical ways of thinking and acting and realize that we need to question the status quo, to recognize how often we do things a certain way simply because that’s the way they’ve always been done. We can be free enough to practice our faith by breathing new life into old and outmoded behaviors, and dare to take a step or two outside of our comfort zone. Let’s do as St. Francis did and live the freedom that is a wonderful gift of God.

To do so is to let our God “come to his people and set them free,” to be “free to worship him without fear.” A Happy and Blessed Feast of St. Francis to you all! **☩**