

Minister's Message

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

My message this month will necessarily be very short – as you know, I had surgery for lung cancer and I'm afraid I'm still not on my feet yet. I do want to thank everyone for their prayers and good wishes, which I have truly felt. Thanks to God's grace and your wonderful support, I'll be back to my old self soon. Also, the good news is, the surgery was completely successful!

Please be assured of my prayers for all of you during this blessed holiday season. I hope your Thanksgiving was meaningful, your Christmas is full of joy, and your new year full of hope. I will offer a more complete farewell message in the January *SFO News*, but I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to all of you for the honor and privilege to

serve you as Regional Minister these past three years.

■ **Regional Elections.** As mentioned in recent newsletters, our Regional elections are scheduled for December 12 and we will have several vacancies. See the November *SFO News* (page 4) for a list of all open elected and appointed positions; it's also possible that the current council members who intend to run again may run for different positions, so really, all offices are open.

See the August *SFO News* (page 3) for more background information, and if you have nominations or suggestions, you can still email our 2009 Regional Nominating Committee Chair, Monica Marko, SFO, at elections@ilsfo.org.

In this issue, see page 3 for an update on the elections and a schedule of events. ■

Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am writing to you on the Franciscan feast honoring Elizabeth of Hungary (1207–1231), who generously and radically served the poor in her day. She was a strong and devoted laywoman who, like Francis, abdicated the advantages she was born to in favor of the disadvantaged. She is for us today a holy patron of lay Franciscans everywhere.

I don't know about you, but as for me, this time of the year is in many ways my favorite. Partly, this is due to the transition of the seasons. We have come through the productivity of summertime "when the living is easy," through the paces of harvest time and falling leaves in preparation for the coming months of winter. For me perhaps the better part of

this time of year is the concentration of liturgical events and secular celebrations we are invited to be a part of. I really appreciate the opportunity to remember and memorialize who we are and where we have come from: that long line of holy men and women who have shown us such good examples of God's wondrous call to righteousness on the *Feast of All Saints*.

And to honor our own ancestors who taught us to be good, as well as the heroic people of our times who have powerfully shaped our culture by their insight and courage on the *Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed*. Add to these feasts the *Commemoration of All Souls of the Seraphic Order*; then the patroness of our SFO region, Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini,

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Council Members

Minister:

Stephanie Sormane, SFO
minister@ilsfo.org

Vice-Minister:

Javier Orozco, SFO

Formation Director:

Sandra Kisel, SFO

Secretary:

Monica Marko, SFO

Treasurer:

Stephen Lanterman, SFO

Councilor At-Large:

Elisabeth Shin, SFO

Councilor for Apostolates:

To be appointed

Councilor for Communications/

Public Relations:

Lisa Wathen, SFO

Councilor for Fraternal Life:

Chris Bruhnke, SFO

Councilor for Visitations:

Jacqueline Leo, SFO

Councilor for Vocations:

Norman Mosk, SFO

Spiritual Assistant

Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Newsletter Editor

Lisa Wathen, SFO

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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
20th of each month.**

Professions

• **Anna Green**, SFO of St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity (Fox Valley) made her Profession on October 24.

Rest in Peace

• **Raymond Kelly**, SFO of St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity (Oak Lawn) died November 13.

• **Monica Walter**, SFO of St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity (Fox Valley) died September 14.

Events of Interest

December 13: The Rockford Deanery Council of Catholic Women is sponsoring an Advent lecture, "Journey of Faith", at 1 p.m. at the Cathedral of St. Peter, 1243 N. Church St., Rockford. John McGrath, Diocesan Director of Religious Education and Formation, will be the speaker. Cost is \$5; mail checks, payable to DCCW, to Gerry Schauer, 306 Trading Post Ct., Rockford, IL 61072. For more information, call 815.624.1098.

December 20: Francis Cardinal George, OMI will host a free Christmas Concert at Holy Family Parish, 1080 W. Roosevelt Road, Chicago. Music will include both secular and religious music celebrating the Christmas season. Doors will open at 2 p.m.; seating is on a first-come, first-served basis. Capacity is limited and a free will offering will be accepted.

January 20-24: Bishop J. Peter Sartain of the Diocese of Joliet invites you to join him on the 2010 March for Life trip held on the anniversary of the Supreme Court Decision, Roe v. Wade, January 22. Participants will depart by bus the evening of Wednesday, January 20 and return early afternoon on Sunday, January 24. The trip is offered to those 15 years of age and up. For more information, visit www.dioceseofjoliet.org/life or call 630.718.2121. For more information on the annual March for Life, visit www.marchforlife.org.

Around the Region

■ **St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity (Oak Lawn).** The fraternity held a Day of Recollection in October, with Regional Spiritual Assistant, Br. Joe Middleton, OFM, as the speaker.

The day opened with prayer, then Br. Middleton gave a presentation, "Franciscan

Prayer and Spirituality". After the presentation was Mass, lunch, and social time.

■ **St. Juliana Fraternity (Chicago).** In October, the fraternity observed its 50th anniversary with Mass, celebrated by Fr. Larry Dreffein, OFM, after which members enjoyed a potluck dinner. ■

"Francis, Build Up My Church ..."

by Sandra Kisel, SFO; Regional Formation Director

"How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given! So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heav'n." Phillips Brooks, "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

By the time you read this newsletter, elections will be upon us and I know many will be focusing thoughts on Christmas. It is especially at this time I would encourage all to pursue, with great strength and passion, the invitation God extends to us each moment of our lives, for eternity, to become His people, holy and pure.

As my term of office comes to a close, the power and strength of Fr. Benet Fonck's words at this year's Regional Retreat come back to me, and so this is what I want to leave you, with my love. I hope each of us will make time to renew our profession promises and in some way refocus our attention on that initial fervor we had when we first came into the Order. If we are on fire with burning love for God, our Order will grow, many will want to share the love we have for one another, and we will be instruments of peace in our world and for the Church!

Please continue to keep our outgoing Regional Minister, Stephanie Sormane, SFO, in your prayers, and also the upcoming Regional elections, that God will provide us with a Regional council open to the Holy Spirit and able to meet the needs of our Region.

May the blessing of the Christ Child be yours this Christmas and throughout the coming year!

Excerpt from the 2009 Regional Retreat, "Fire Burning in My Heart"

by Father Benet A. Fonck, OFM. Reprinted with permission.

[Note: CDs of our 2009 Regional Retreat, "Fire Burning in My Heart", are now available from Marytown Press. For more information, call 847.367.7800 and ask for Susan Tourtelot.]

St. Augustine said in his Confessions, "Our hearts are restless unless they rest in you, O God." We pray in one of the psalms, "As the deer longs for running streams, so my soul longs for you my God" (Ps 42:2).

There is within each one of us a hunger, a thirst; in fact it is a fire – a fire that shapes our living and shapes our dying. It is a fire that is captured in a very special way through the prophet Jeremiah ... "Whenever I speak I must cry out, Violence! Outrage is the message! It becomes like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones, I grow weary holding it in; I cannot endure it" (Jer 20:0).

So often in our Franciscan vocation, whether as a Franciscan religious or as a Secular Franciscan, we know that there needs to be this kind of fire, but too often our life becomes ho-hum, smoldering coals which have become cooled.

Think though of our Holy Father Francis, "My God and my all!" he prayed; "My God and my all!" Again, echoing the psalms; "O God, you are my God, for You I long" (Ps 63:2). This is the passion of our life, especially the passion of our life as a Franciscan. In your rule; in my rule; in the rule of the Third Order Regular, the same thing: "The Rule

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Regional Elections: Update

Our **Regional Elections** will be this month, and we have confirmed the date with our National Fraternity:

- **Date:** December 12 (Saturday)
- **Location:** Mayslake Village
1801 35th St., Oak Brook
- **Time:** 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

The day will begin in the Senior Center and conclude in the Chapel. The presider for our elections will be our newly-elected National Minister, Deacon Tom Bello, SFO, and our ecclesial witness will be Fr. Larry Dreffein, OFM.

Also visiting will be our newly-elected National Secretary, Jan Parker, SFO, who is a member of the National Formation Team. Jan will give an update on the formation guidelines that our National Fraternity is

preparing from the International Fraternity. Deacon Tom will offer some formation in preparation for our elections, which will also benefit local elections. Anyone interested in attending these presentations is encouraged to attend; those not directly involved with the elections can leave afterward.

Only local ministers (or their delegates) plus elected members of the Regional Executive Council (REC) may vote. Elected REC members who are also local ministers need to delegate someone to vote on their behalf as local minister – no individual may cast more than one vote.

Breakfast will be available for all; however, lunch will only be for those staying for the elections. If this presents a problem because of people traveling together, let our

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Francis *continued from p. 2 ...*

and Life is this, to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ."

That's not a text of a book! That's not a list of rules and regulations! That's not an observance of various kinds of piety and discipline! That's a love affair with a person, with Jesus Christ; to be on fire with Jesus, and to have that fire pervade your whole life; to make a difference in the way that you live; in the way that you eat; to make a difference in the way that you treat others; in the way we sleep; in the way we work; a fire BURNING in your heart!

This is what it means to observe the Holy Gospel! You look closely at the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, you come to see that this observing of the Gospel means first of all, coming to know the Lord, particularly through Holy Scripture. It also means continuing to encounter this Lord Jesus through the Eucharist and the sacraments. Yes, through the Liturgy of the Hours; Yes, but throughout all of creation. This observing of the Gospel means then, not only knowing Jesus and encountering Jesus, but becoming one with Jesus; imitating Jesus; taking on his life, his values; his example, his preaching, and making it our own. And finally then, there's what we call the conformity of the heart, *the heart that is BLAZING!*

How many times have you read novels or seen stories on television, even soap operas, and you see these two people falling in love ... *Ahhhh! Ahhhh!* And there's the running toward each other. That's what we're talking about, that kind of a passion for Jesus Christ! That has to be the foundation of our lives; because it is only in this kind of passion, in this kind of flame, in this kind of fire that we can accomplish the living of the Gospel.

"My God and my all!" Jesus Christ leads us to the Kingdom; Jesus Christ leads us to eternal life; Jesus Christ leads us to Heaven. But, that's not future, that's present! Heaven is not a place we go to; the Kingdom of God is not something beyond us! Eternal life doesn't happen just after death.

When we were baptized we were given the life of God the Father; the mission of Jesus Christ; the power of the Holy Spirit. In living that out we live eternal life, we live in the Kingdom; we live in Heaven, now, because it is relationship! The Kingdom is RELATIONSHIP! Heaven is relationship, and Eternal Life is eternal precisely because it is relational.

So, when we know the Lord Jesus; encounter the Lord Jesus; imitate the Lord Jesus; conform to the Lord Jesus; we are on our way to being one with the Heavenly Father; to being centered with Jesus Christ, to being empowered with the Holy Spirit. Moreover, when we center our lives this way on Jesus Christ we demonstrate our dedication to the Church because, the Church is the Body of Christ. If we are centered on Christ, we are centered on the Church. In addition, then, since our Franciscan vocation is a special fulfillment of our Baptism; when we center our lives on Jesus, when we observe the Holy Gospel, we truly are fulfilling our Franciscan charism. You know that word *charism* – a gift given to a person; passed on to a group, for the good of the Church.

This is what we're all about; being able to say; to show; to live; to proclaim, "My God and my All!!!" This is the expression of the FIRE, the FIRE BURNING in my heart; the fire which will never be quenched; the fire that makes us who we are, now and forever. ■

Calendar	
<i>Unless otherwise indicated, all events are at Mayslake Village (Oak Brook).</i>	
December	
12:	Regional Elections
January	
16:	Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
March	
01:	Fair Share, Census, and Annual Reports due
13:	Apostolic Action Workshop
27:	Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
April	
10:	Candidates' Retreat, Day 1
May	
01:	Candidates' Retreat, Day 2
15:	Chapter of Ministers
June	
12:	Leadership Workshop
July	
17:	Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
August	
07:	Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula
September	
17-19:	Regional Retreat, The Port, Frankfort
October	
16:	Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
November	
14:	Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration (<i>location TBD</i>)

Elections *continued from p. 3 ...*

Regional Minister, Stephanie Sormane, SFO, know so that something can be worked out by emailing minister@ilsfo.org.

- 10:45 a.m.: Jan Parker, SFO
- 11:30 a.m.: Lunch
- 12:15 p.m.: Elections

Schedule Overview

- 9:00 a.m.: Registration & Breakfast
- 9:30 a.m.: Deacon Tom Bello, SFO
- 10:30 a.m.: Break

At the conclusion of the elections, there will be a 15-minute break, followed by the Mass of Commitment for the newly-elected officers; the day should end no later than 3 p.m. ☒

Collect for December 25, Solemnity of Christmas

From the One-Volume Edition, *Christian Prayer: Liturgy of the Hours* (p. 146)

Almighty God and Father of light, a child is born for us and a son is given to us. Your eternal Word leaped down from heaven in the silent watches of the night, and now your Church is filled with wonder at the nearness of her God. Open our hearts to receive his life and increase our vision with the rising of dawn, that our lives may be filled with his glory and his peace, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. ☒

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and all that she did toward the formation of our part of the world; and as already mentioned we remember Elizabeth of Hungary, and even Clare's sister, Agnes of Assisi, finds a place in the Franciscan lectionary. I don't know about you, but I find great value in these good disciplines and exercises as we wind down the liturgical year by remembering.

Then of course in this country we celebrate the national/secular event of Thanksgiving, which brings friends and families together to feast and be thankful for our blessings and opportunities. Isn't this a wonderful thing to do? I'm sure that Francis would love this tradition, especially the parades and the feasts.

Now, by the time you read these words we will have moved into another important direction: into the activities of Advent, that carefully-planned season of longing and waiting. So this is where we find ourselves now, hopefully revitalizing our faith through the telling of familiar ancient stories and the practice of traditions whereby we tune in again to the wisdom and the loving humility of God, who comes and dwells among us in pure simplicity; God, who brings hope, potential, balance, comfort, and joy.

Now, none of this is to be confused with the earlier-than-ever commercial activities of red- and green-decorated gifts, or elves, or jolly old Santa Clauses everywhere. Don't even try to make sense of all that or interfere, but as Franciscans, don't lose sight of the real reason for the season so that you will respond well to the direction of the Church for Advent, and how it leads us from where we are today to where we are going. Let's talk about that in our next newsletter, when in the fullness of time it is proper.

But before I finish, I would like to mention another relevant issue of our future—the elections of leadership for the Mother Cabrini Region. I hope that by now all of you in your local fraternities have prayed, discussed, and planned for the elections.

Common sense and the documents of the SFO call us to carefully select *prepared, able, and willing* individuals for leadership in our local fraternities and in the region. I might add that most times the best-prepared and able leaders need to be encouraged or even drafted by their peers who recognize their abilities. Please pray on that day that the Holy Spirit, who is the true minister of our order, will help us and guide us into the future where God Almighty directs us. ☒