

Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Peace and all good to you and your loved ones for 2010! This New Year marks a new beginning for the Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity, as does every third year.

With the election of a new Regional Executive Council (REC) in December, we start afresh to build on the foundation laid by our previous RECs, and in particular the excellent work of Stephanie Sormane, SFO and the immediately-previous council.

New Council Members

As your new Regional Minister, I look forward to being with you both at regional events and at fraternity visitations over the next three years.

Our other newly-elected council members, who will serve through December 2012, are:

- **Vice-Minister: Lorna Miressi**, SFO of St. Bernardine of Siena Fraternity (Wayne)
- **Formation Director: J. Patrick Mendés**, SFO of Northwest Franciscan Community of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Palatine)
- **Secretary: Monica Marko**, SFO** of Br. Jacoba Community (Chicago)
- **Treasurer: Stephen Lanterman**, SFO* of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity (Frankfort)
- **Councilor At-Large: Elisabeth Shin**, SFO* of St. Thomas More Fraternity (Des Plaines)

* Re-elected to second term.

** Re-elected to third term.

The remaining council positions will be appointed when the new council meets for the first time this month, and we'll announce the appointments on our web site, www.ilsfo.org, and in the next newsletter.

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Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

For me, Christmastime is the best example of the wisdom and generosity of God, who has offered the most appropriate opportunity for all of us to begin again, and in this exceptional case, God gives himself simply born like all of us. The Lord Jesus was intended by God to be a fresh new start for us, forever.

This glorious event we celebrate with grateful hearts again and again. And as Franciscans we translate and apply Christ's coming among us as something foundational, and because of Francis' actions at Greccio, something quite animated. As Franciscans, we are particularly grateful, for we joyfully recognize this within our own lives as a thing to be celebrated. Merry Christmas!

Then of course the whole world is affected by the potential and the possibilities of beginning again with a New Year. This occasion is an opportunity to ponder all that can or will be done, as well as a fine time to clean the slate and finish whatever has been done before. This event certainly is a cause for celebration. Happy New Year!

Since I last wrote you, something else has occurred here on our regional level – the elections for the Regional Executive Council, with new appointments to come. We will meet for the first time later this month to vision together and plan for our region's future. Please pray that God's Holy Spirit will lead, guide, and direct our efforts as we prepare for all the activities, special events, and

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Council Members

Minister

Vickie Klick, SFO
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Vice-Minister

Lorna Miressi, SFO
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Formation Director

J. Patrick Mendés, SFO
formation@ilsfo.org

Secretary

Monica Marko, SFO
secretary@ilsfo.org

Treasurer

Stephen Lanterman, SFO
treasurer@ilsfo.org

Councilor At-Large

Elisabeth Shin, SFO
atlarge@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Apostolates

To be appointed
apostolates@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Communications/ Public Relations

To be appointed
pr@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Fraternal Life

To be appointed
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Councilor for Visitations

To be appointed
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Councilor for Vocations

To be appointed
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Spiritual Assistant

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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.

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20th of each month.

Rest in Peace

• **Jim Skulski**, SFO of St. Clare Fraternity (Oak Brook) died December 17.

Local Elections

Best wishes and prayers for the newly-elected officers of the following fraternities:

St. Clare (Oak Brook):

- *Minister:*
Irene DiFiglio, SFO
- *Vice-Minister:*
Jean Kearney, SFO
- *Formation Director:*
Dorothy Hennes, SFO
- *Secretary:*
Mary Seymour, SFO
- *Treasurer:*
Dawn Marie Campagna, SFO

St. Elizabeth of Hungary (Frankfort):

- *Minister:*
Valerie Doubrawa, SFO
- *Vice-Minister:*
Mary Fran Consola, SFO
- *Formation Director:*
Mary Cortes, SFO
- *Secretary:*
Arlene Casey, SFO
- *Treasurer:*
Mary Cranny, SFO

St. Francis of Assisi (Fox Valley):

- *Minister:*
Christine Bruhnke, SFO
- *Vice-Minister:*
Gloria Huerta, SFO
- *Formation Director:*
Nick Noe, SFO
- *Secretary:*
Gingie Noe, SFO
- *Treasurer:*
Anna Green, SFO
- *Councilor:*
Karen Pawl, SFO
- *Councilor:*
Alice Zoda, SFO

St. Juliana (Chicago):

- *Minister:*
Mary Hobbs, SFO
- *Vice-Minister:*
Judithy Barys, SFO
- *Formation Director:*
Charles Behrens, SFO
- *Secretary:*
Maximina Bosold, SFO
- *Treasurer:*
Florence Metler, SFO

Around the Region

■ **Northwest Franciscan Community of the IHM (Palatine).** In December, the fraternity held its annual Christmas card project for the guests at Franciscan Outreach. Members signed and stuffed 400 Christmas cards; each contained a customized prayer card with the Blessing of St. Francis on the back, and a \$1 gift certificate for a fast-food restaurant.

■ **St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity (Oak Lawn).** Fraternity member Marianne Braskinger, SFO celebrated her 100th birthday

in December. Professed for 35 years, Marianne currently volunteers in the gift shop of the Little Company of Mary Hospital (Evergreen Park) and knits blankets for newborns.

■ **St. Juliana Fraternity (Chicago).** As a way to raise awareness of the SFO, fraternity members participated in Resurrection High School's Arts and Crafts Fair in November, where they sold religious and secular crafts, along with holiday baked goods. ■

Signing Off

by Lisa Wathen, SFO

It's been a privilege serving you these past three years as the Regional Councilor for Communications and Public Relations, the primary duty of which is editing the *SFO News*. It's my hope that you've found the newsletter's redesigned format easy to use, and the content helpful, informative, and thought-provoking.

Thank you to the local fraternities who shared their news with me over the years so that I could share it, in turn, with you. I've greatly enjoyed learning about the

activities and accomplishments of our brothers and sisters throughout the region. I'd also like to particularly thank Sandra Kisel, SFO, our former Regional Formation Director, whose regular formation articles were packed with insights and resources that helped us better live our Franciscan vocation.

I will continue to serve the region in the non-council role of webmaster, and I look forward to assisting the new council in this capacity. I wish you a Happy and Blessed New Year! ■

Thanks and Looking Ahead

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

It has been my pleasure to serve you as Regional Minister, and in previous years as vice-minister and Councilor for Fraternal Life. I hope to continue to work in the area of apostolates; particularly with respect to the Franciscan Action Network (FAN), which I believe is one of the most important developments in the Franciscan family in a long time. It's my hope to be able to visit each fraternity in the region over the next year to talk about FAN and apostolates in general. There are many ways in which we can all make a difference in our world, and I hope to help us do just that!

I would like to thank all those who served with me over the last three years who are not returning to office: Javier Orozco, SFO, as Vice-Minister; Rosemary Zimmerman, SFO and then Sandra Kisel, SFO (who previously served as Councilor for Youth/Young Adults) as Formation Director; Nancy McKenna, SFO as

Councilor for Apostolates; Lisa Wathen, SFO as Councilor for Communications and Public Relations; Chris Bruhnke, SFO as Councilor for Fraternal Life; and Jackie Leo, SFO as Councilor for Visitations. I'm happy to say that Norman Mosk, SFO, Councilor for Vocations, has shown a willingness to continue to serve in that role.

I truly appreciate the service all of you gave to the council and Region during our terms of office together. I will especially miss Javier's quiet, calm wisdom—Br. Jacoba Community (Chicago) is very lucky! So, I am filled with hope for our region and our new council, and look forward to working with them in the future.

As this newsletter is distributed, we will still be in the midst of the Christmas season and I hope it is for all of you a very blessed time of hope and renewal. Merry Christmas and peace and everything good in 2010! ■

Gold, Incense and Myrrh

by Rosalvo G. Mota, SFO; from *CIOFS Bulletin*, February 2009 (Vol. 3, No. 1)

“And, behold, that star that they had seen in the East went before them, until it came just above where the child was. When they saw the star they were exceedingly overjoyed. And they entered the house and saw the child with his mother Mary, and they fell down, worshipped him and opened their treasures and offered him gifts: gold and myrrh and incense.”

Why did the Wise Men give these gifts to the child, Baby-Jesus? What could the baby do with these gifts or how could he use them? What use and significance did they have? Let us look “en passant” at the definition and use of each of the objects presented.

■ **GOLD.** A well known precious metal of great value. The Jews used gold for many of the most important utensils employed in their Tabernacle and Temple. A tradition that we inherited and which is still in use in our churches and in the most significant objects. It exalts the grandeur and the divinity of God.

■ **INCENSE.** Fragrant aromatic resin and spice, extracted from trees which is generally burned with other substances to produce a denser smoke and more fragrant aroma. The smoke of incense, which always rises upwards towards heaven, naturally suggests to man the direction of our prayers to God. The Apocalypse talks about an angel which offers incense to God with “the prayers of all saints upon the gold altar” (Apc 8.3).

■ **MYRRH.** Aromatic substance in a liquid or solid form, obtained from the resin of a balsamic tree from Arabia. Mixed with wine, it acts as an anesthetic to alleviate suffering, as was used with Christ on Calvary (Mc. 15, 23).

Thus, reflecting on the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, we realize that the gifts that were presented were meaningful and necessary, up to His death on Calvary.

In this sense and similarly, we receive and live these gifts also in our life of secular Franciscans.

The first gift of gold, is the “Form of Life” that binds us to Saint Francis, who is our main source of light, our gold, which is our **RULE**, approved by the Church and which defines our **CHARISM**, our **SECULARITY**.

“The secular nature characterizes the spirituality and the apostolic life of the secular Franciscans”, living the world and belonging to two realities: the Church and society. In this sense, we can use the beautiful images that Saint Francis presented in his dialogue with “Lady Poverty”, described in the “Sacrum Commercium”: “Our convent is the world and our body the cell of our soul”.

The second gift is our Vocation, our “incense”, our response/offer to the calling of our Lord, who is our greatest grace, as Saint Claire wrote in her Testament: “among the other gifts that we have received and do daily receive from our benefactor, the Father of Mercies, and for which we must express the deepest thanks to the glorious Father of Christ, there is our vocation, for which, all the more by way of its being more perfect and greater, do we owe the greatest thanks to him” (Test. St. Claire 1).

This offer should be made to God through our family life, our workplace, our encounters with all individuals, our presence and participation in social life and our fraternal relationship with all beings. Through our life of prayer as well, which elevates us to God like true worshipers of the Father, we offer our lives like incense to God. Living our vocation, striving to be perfect just as our Father in Heaven is perfect, we will be transformed into an “alter Christus” for the glory of Christ.

The third gift we receive is the Fraternity, our “myrrh”. Saint Francis discovered the way of life of the first Christians and returned to the reality of Evangelic life. For us the Fraternity is, like our beloved Pope Pius XII said “a real school of holiness, of genuine Franciscan spirit”.

Our “myrrh” is like a “school” experienced in its entirety and authenticity, where like the brothers and sisters of Penitence, we learn to live in the spirit of permanent conversion, the penitential practices, such as fasting and abstinence; we learn to feel compassion for today’s “lepers”, and relieve our sufferings; and where we learn to feel solidarity one for another, where we also drink “live water” and we eat the “bread of life”, in order to go throughout the world.

Brothers and sisters, living our “epiphany” with the gifts that God granted us: our gold = Rule, our incense = vocation and our myrrh = Fraternity, we will feel encouraged and continue to live the Franciscan vocation. ■

Collect for January 3, The Epiphany of the Lord

From *Christian Prayer: Liturgy of the Hours* (One-Volume Edition, p. 211)

Father, you revealed your Son to the nations by the guidance of a star. Lead us to your glory in heaven by the light of faith.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. ■

Calendar	
<i>Unless otherwise indicated, all events are at Mayslake Village (Oak Brook).</i>	
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>)

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A Little about Myself

I'd like to tell you a little about myself: I'm originally from south Florida (I'm a third-generation native Floridian); I came to the Chicago area for college, and promptly met my future husband. We married three weeks after graduation and nine days later I started work at the place where I still work today, nearly 30 years later. I am a software engineer and tester; my husband teaches computer programming and web design at a community college. Our "children" have been our pets—a dog and four cats at one point, now down to a single cat.

I became a Catholic in 1982, two years after our marriage (I was previously a United Methodist). Then in 1985, I made my profession in St. Francis-St. Louis Fraternity (Chicago). After moving to Batavia in 1988, I transferred in 1989 to St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity (Fox Valley) which was then in Aurora. In my 20 years in the fraternity, I've served as secretary, vice-minister, and twice as minister. I have also served our regional fraternity as vice-minister, formation director, and the previously-existing role of Councilor for Spiritual Life and Liturgy.

In 2002, I was asked to serve the National Fraternity as chair of the Computer Committee and webmaster. In that capacity, I've had the great blessing of attending national chapters and meeting the regional ministers from all over the U.S., as well as the National Executive Council. For those who've been fortunate enough to attend a Quinquennial ("Q") Congress, the effect is a bit like being at a yearly Q.

Most recently, I've been appointed as a local spiritual assistant to St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity (Crystal Lake). I really enjoy

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opportunities to gather in Franciscan celebration. Peace and all good!

A Prayer for Fresh Starts and New Beginnings

Our dear Lord, to You who are the hope of our people, we present ourselves freely, all that we are; all that we have become. We

serving in that capacity, and it's great to be with another local fraternity to see the similarities and differences among fraternities.

So, that's the bare-bones account of my history in our Order. My various responsibilities have given me new perspectives on our vocation and new opportunities to form friendships. What is important to me is the relationships I've made with people: those I see monthly in my own fraternity, those I see yearly at chapter, or even those I've only met via email.

Moving Forward

Over the next few months, the new REC will be forming plans for what we'd like to accomplish in the next three years. One area that I know will be exciting is formation—there's a lot of excellent new material that will be coming to us over the next couple of years from the National Fraternity. With our immediate past National Minister and former Regional Minister, Patrick Mendés, SFO, as our new Regional Formation Director, we are assured that this material will be promptly and thoroughly communicated to us.

A major emphasis of mine is life in fraternity; I'd like to see all of our fraternity meetings become "privileged places" where we recharge our spiritual batteries and are prepared to spend the rest of the month spreading the Good News that God loves us, in all of those places where our families, our jobs, and our other activities take us—everywhere in the world. If we could each make that kind of difference in our immediate surroundings, what a difference that would make! I'd like to think that's part of what Francis wanted to have happen when he sent the brothers out two by two.

I look forward to serving you during the next three years, and to working with the rest of the REC to "animate and guide" our regional fraternity. ■

pray that You will continue to call upon us to attend to the needs of our sisters and brothers. Please continue to reveal Yourself and Your great design to us who seek You. Please continue to help us recover from the occasions when we have fallen or have missed the mark of our own good intentions. Help us to be Holy, for You are Holy, we pray with grateful hearts. Amen. ■