

Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO

Dear brothers and sisters,

By the time you read this, we will be well into Lent. I hope that whatever special practices you have chosen for this season of preparation are bringing you closer to the Lord, to other people, and to all of God's creation.

I would like to invite you to a small additional Lenten practice as we count down to Easter – small in terms of time and effort, but by no means insignificant in terms of potential impact. First, when you get up in the morning, look in the mirror and say to yourself, “God loves me dearly.” Use whatever phrasing you need to in order to make this message real to you: “I am beloved by God,” “Jesus loves me forever,” etc.

Then...every time you encounter someone during the day, think, “God loves him/her as much as He loves me.” Depending on the situation, you may also have to remind yourself, “God loves me as much as He loves him/her.”

I have found that simply being mindful enough to remember this as I meet people through the day is pretty much impossible for me (unless I'm home alone, and then it's still hard). Of course, like all spiritual practices, doing this much isn't the point – it's only the starting place. We are loved first by God, and if we grasp that, we must respond in kind. The goal is to live our lives with the knowledge that God really does love each one of us, with that everlasting love we sing about. The goal is to treat each other as God's dearly beloved sons and daughters, without fearing that God's love for another means God loves me any less. The goal is to do all we do for LOVE – for love of God and for all those that God loves, in other words, for all people and for all of creation.

Isn't this the basis for Francis' joy? Isn't this the basis for all of Francis' relationships? More significantly, isn't this the basis of all our Christian faith?

There is a tradition that the Apostle John, near the end of his life, would only say, “Little children, love one another.” This echoes Christ's commandment at the Last Supper: “[L]ove one another as I love you.” [John 15:12] Let us do whatever it takes to hold fast to the knowledge of God's love this Lent, and strive to live this all-important commandment better every day as we move toward Easter. May the celebration of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection be a source of grace and joy for you and those you love.

Peace and good...Vickie ☒

Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I suppose the proper focus of this reflection ought to be about the season of Lent and the practices and disciplines our church recommends. As most of us are mature Christians we put into practice the fundamental elements of Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving. This is good, and as we make sincere efforts to improve our relationship with the Lord as we journey through this season, we look forward to Easter and the hope of Resurrection and new life.

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CALENDAR

Unless otherwise indicated, all events are at Mayslake Village (Oak Brook).

** Election & Visitation dates subject to change.*

February

14: Elections, St. Bernardine Siena

March

- 01:** Fair Share, Census, and Annual Reports due
- 07:** Elections St. Mary of the Angels at the Port
- 14:** Visitation, St. Maximillian Kolbe
- 21:** Visitation, St. Anthony of Padua, East Side
- 27:** Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

April

- 10:** Candidates' Retreat, Day 1
- 11:** Elections St. Francis St. Louis

May

- 01:** Candidates' Retreat, Day 2
- 15:** Chapter of Ministers
- 16:** Visitation, Nuestra Sra. de Guadalupe

June

- 26:** Elections, St. Clare Kankakee

July

- 10:** Leadership Workshop
- 17:** Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 18:** Elections, St. Francis Assisi Crystal Lake
- 25:** Elections, St. Anthony of Padua, Rockford

August

- 07:** Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula

September

- 11:** Elections, St. Anthony Padua, Joliet
- 17-19:** Regional Retreat, The Port, Frankfort
- 26:** Elections, St. Francis of Assisi, Steger
- 26:** Visitation, St. Anthony Padua, Oak Lawn

October

- 3:** Elections, Living Waters Korean Fraternity
- 16:** Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 26-31:** NAFRA Meeting

November

- 14:** Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration (*location TBD*)

Spiritual Assistant's Message

(continued)

This call to action (fasting, prayer and almsgiving) knocks the moss and rust off the movement of our own spiritual development so that we might glide and soar across the chasm and distance we create as we fall short in our ordinary daily lives of a grace filled union with God.

Now if you ask me, most people would add the practice of "giving something up" as primary. And I suppose that there are potential benefits of that practice but at this point of my own spiritual development, "giving up" no longer makes sense. I am called and more inclined at this time rather than giving something up, to add on something which leads me further into understanding the Sacred Mysteries of God's creation and the exciting life of the Church. This action leads to a deeper, more loving relationship with Jesus the Christ as well as with St. Francis and St. Clare whose spirit inspires our vocation. Here is a little inspiration along these lines from an unknown source.

Lent

- A Season for Fasting
- A Season for Feasting
- Fast from judging others.
- Feast on Christ Living in Them.
- Feast on Words that Build Up Others.
- Fast from discontentment.
- Feast on Gratitude.
- Fast from anger.
- Feast on patience.
- Fast from pessimism.
- Feast on Optimism.
- Fast from worry.
- Feast on God's Care.
- Fast from complaining.
- Feast on Appreciation.
- Fast from bitterness.
- Feast on Compassion for Others.
- Fast from discouragement.
- Feast on Hope.

Fast from suspicion.

Feast on Truth.

Fast from idle gossip.

Feast on Silence with a Purpose. ☒

CROSSING BORDERS

One of the most important issues in our country is immigration reform. On Saturday March 13 from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Region 3 of the Franciscan Federation is sponsoring a workshop at St. Francis Woods, 9201 W. St. Francis Road, Frankfort, called "**Crossing Borders**". The two-part presentation by Sr. Ellen Lamberjack, osf, focuses on some basics of migration and the Franciscan response to today's era of migration.

Sr. Ellen has served among the "immigrants in our midst" in Ohio and Texas for the past twenty years. In October 2006, under the sponsorship of the Sisters of St. Francis, Tiffin, Ohio and in collaboration with Zion Mennonite Church and other organizations, she opened Project Hope-Proyecto Esperanza where she serves as Director/Immigration Counselor.

For registration please contact Sr. Doris Recker, osf at Laurindadoris@yahoo.com If overnight accommodations are needed, contact Sr. Marilyn Renninger, osf at smhrosf@live.com. The fee for Region 3 members is \$15.00, non-members \$20.00. This will be a good opportunity to better understand the issue of immigration.

Rest in Peace - Richard Whooley, SFO, passed away February 22. He was a member of St. Anthony of Padua – Oak Lawn and was a Secular Franciscan for 43 years. . He was very active in service to his fraternity and had served several different terms as Minister. A model of humility and compassion, he is someone for whom we can be grateful to the Lord that He gave us as a brother. (Patrick Mendes, SFO, Spiritual Assistant)

In-Formation

By Patrick Mendes, SFO
Regional Formation Director

Blessed are they who mourn for they will be comforted. Today as I write this column, we are mourning the passing of Frances Wicks, SFO, Editor of *TAU USA* and I want to take this opportunity to express our common thanks to the God who loves us for the gift of Frances, our sister, in our lives.

Many of you who are reading this column, will remember when Frances came with her husband, Bill, our National Minister at the time, to share our Mother Cabrini Celebration with us at St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity. She was delighted to celebrate the feast day of her patron saint as well as ours in our Region. We remember her warmth and grace as she shared fraternal life with us.

Later, Frances would go on to become the editor of *TAU USA*. What a wonderful job she did in that role! She did so with great care, professionalism and the insight born from living her Secular Franciscan vocation so fully and dare I say, perfectly?

I have always seen our National Publication not only as a communication tool, but an outstanding venue for our ongoing formation. Frances always encouraged the contributors and was especially helpful to me as National Minister and the other writers who wrote a regular column for each edition. Her recommendations and suggestions to us were always well thought out and timely and always reflected our Franciscan way of life.

More than an editor, Frances was a wife, mother, registered nurse, and grace filled sister to us, her Franciscan family.

She not only served our National family with dedication, skill and professionalism, she served her local fraternity as well in various capacities.

Frances modeled for us what it means to live the Franciscan charism with vitality, love, devotion, and compassion. We give thanks to the Lord for her presence among us for she was a living, ongoing formation lesson for us. She taught us by example what it means to see Christ in everyone.

We will miss Frances and we mourn her passing and we hurt at our earthly separation from her because when we love much and have been much loved--our humanity feels the loss and hurt. So, while we mourn let us also give thanks for Frances.

Let us pray too, for God's comfort, strength, and peace for Bill and family. I am certain that the Sacred Heart of Jesus has already welcomed Frances into His kingdom.

Thank you, Frances, for your love, care, and Franciscan example. God give you peace. 🙏

Healthy Spirituality

By Gloria Huerta, SFO
Councilor for Communications

This past weekend, St. Francis Fox Valley had its annual Morning of Reflection. Fr. Jonathan Foster, OFM, Spiritual Assistant gave a presentation on his "Ten Commandments for Spiritual Discipline."

1. Grace (is everywhere in every experience we have...keep your eyes open for grace-filled moments in your life)
2. Prayer (Pray as you can, not as you can't) All forms of prayer are good.
3. Corporal Works of Mercy (We do charity not to get to heaven but to respond to God's love for us.)
4. Family - (the family is a church transmitting the faith through modeling love, generosity and acceptance)
5. Workplace - (In our work we alter things and society, develop ourselves and share in the activities of the creator. Work IS holy!)
6. Spiritual Direction (Seek out someone you admire and respect who can help you grow spiritually. Can be religious or lay person).
7. Discernment (Faith based decision making. Will the decision bring you closer to God or take you further away?)
8. Forgiveness - (Frees victims from bitterness, anger, revenge. Offender is free from retaliation, shunning and hard feelings)
9. Spiritual Reading - (Why? Reading provides information and inspiration. Many options-- Bible, books, CD/DVD books on tape, magazines, Internet)

Healthy Spirituality (continued)

By Gloria Huerta, SFO
Councilor for Communications

10. Retreat (Spending time apart from normal routine for at least two overnights once a year. Day of Reflection or Parish Missions do not count. Many kinds of retreats and retreat houses available)

As we reflect on our own spiritual life during Lent if you feel something is “missing”, check your spiritual practices against this list and something here may help you get “back on track”. Happy Lent!

JPIC

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO
Councilor for JPIC

Before going into what I’ll be doing this month, I’d like to remind you all of the meeting at Mayslake Village Senior Center on Saturday, March 6, from 10 to 11:30 a.m with Heather Metcalfe of Franciscans International. This is going to be a short but very interesting gathering and I hope we have a good crowd there! Several events are coming up in March which I will be attending and then reporting on in April. First, on March 3, I’ll be going to Springfield for Catholics at the Capitol. Basically, this day is in support of Catholic Schools, but it’s also an opportunity to speak with elected representatives about the top issues facing the legislature at this time. There are also a number of short talks given by various legislators which are informative and interesting – at least that was my experience last year.

On March 17 I’ll be going to Washington, DC for a Franciscan Action Network (FAN) meeting, and then participating in an Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) which is a workshop taking place at a Washington, DC hotel over the week end, culminating with visits with staffers of representatives and Senators on the Hill on Monday.

The EAD workshops are very good and help us to be well grounded in the important components of issues being addressed. This is really necessary: although our legislators want to hear from us (and they really do), we have to be able to speak intelligently about the issues, particularly if, as Catholics and Franciscans, we are advocating positions that may not be popular with the general public or with legislators.

If we want others to listen to us, we need to know what we’re talking about and able to articulate our positions in a convincing way. That’s an area in which I believe many of us fail. When issues are important to us, we can often replace reason with emotion, and I can think of no way to be sure we will fail than that. We need to know what we believe, why we believe it, and be ready with strong arguments to defend our positions.

Additionally, it’s important that discussions with legislators be civil and respectful. We also need to listen to them so we fully understand where they’re coming from. Then we can determine what might be the best argument to change their minds. All of this takes work on our part – but we can help each other. You’ll find excellent information and resources on the FAN web site (www.franciscanaction.org) as well as links to other resources. The FAN staff is always ready to answer questions and suggest other possible resources. Whatever time you devote at your fraternity gathering to JPIC issues, that is also a good time for the brothers and sisters to share what they’ve learned and resources they’ve found.

Francis was called to rebuild God’s house; so are we. We are called to be a presence in our world – but a presence of peace and reconciliation as we try to bring about change. Let us help each other to fulfill that mission! . ☒