

Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO

Dear brothers and sisters,

As I write this, we are entering the home stretch of Lent. By the time it is in your hands (or on your computer screen), it will at least be Holy Week if not Easter. I hope and pray that your observance of the death and resurrection of Jesus this year deepens your love of the Lord and your appreciation of how much God loves you.

I often think at this time of year that it would be very hard to be in the Southern Hemisphere at this time of year. Instead of trees budding, birds singing, and new life springing up everywhere, we would be going through autumn, with the days getting shorter and colder. There's a reason that the word "Lent" is Old English for "Spring" - spring just fits a lot better with our vigil for Easter.

However, we can have personal experiences at any time of year that deepen our understanding of resurrection. For me personally, one such experience actually occurred at Easter in 2003. My mother had been very ill and was still in intensive care with a respirator helping her breathe...but when I was with her at Easter, she was finally fully in possession of her faculties again, and I had the joy of spending hours visiting with her. At that time I finally had confidence she would be all right - that she had a new lease on life. I will always remember that Easter!

I encourage you to take a few minutes to think of some event that makes resurrection more real for you in your life. Some of you have undoubtedly had your lives changed by organ transplants, whether for yourselves or for a loved one. Either someone else died and gave their organs, or someone was generous with an "extra" organ for you.

(And don't forget blood donations ...how many people are alive today because someone gave blood?)

Did you have a conversion experience that was really a rebirth for you? There are many ways to experience renewed life, and we can thank God for all of them.

Francis' followers saw multiple signs of the reality of the resurrection when Francis died. Thomas of Celano and St. Bonaventure both write of Francis' stigmata as a sign of the resurrection. Just as the risen Christ showed his followers the signs of the crucifixion in his body, so Francis had the signs of the crucifixion in his own body, pointing to the resurrection to come. Also, it was reported that Francis' skin, blackened by mortifications during his life, became white and shining after he died.

Perhaps more significantly, though, in the depths of his final illness, Francis experienced the knowledge that his illness and sufferings were a pledge that his salvation was assured. You may recall this as the time when he composed the Canticle of the Creatures. To me, that means that we should read the Canticle as a celebration of the resurrection!

So, as we give thanks for being in the Northern Hemisphere and in a climate where spring gives cause for rejoicing after the near-death of winter, let us lift up our voices with all of creation around us and say, "Alleluia! He is risen!"

Peace and good... Vickie ☒

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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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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

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

At this time of the year I would like to encourage us all to recognize and celebrate that we are survivors. We have survived the confinement of Winter (and now we celebrate the warmth and the freedom which is a great part of the gift of Spring-time). We have survived the penitential liturgical season of Lent and the recollecting of our Lord's passion (and now we celebrate the hope and new life found in God's Easter gift to us). I trust also that we have survived any number of life's disappointments and breakdowns (and hopefully we can celebrate the strength and growth potential we have gained from all this survival). Now the ways that we manage all this survival are wide and varied but for the sake of these musings I would like to focus on the value of our Franciscan Communities. That benefit it seems to me is found at the heart of most life experiences and challenges, that being the need and value of sharing. We are not alone.

As God's people and citizens of our times we are potentially connected on many levels. Each connection will have its benefits and its expectations of us. But as Franciscans I believe that we can claim additionally the great benefit and a particular connection to the God of all Creation, to a legion of holy men and women, and to each other. For me this chosen response to life, this Franciscan way of life, this covenantal agreement with God, fills me and calls me to a place of such ideal satisfaction. I hope that it is the same for you. The point of this rambling is that we need to recognize and honor the truth that

nothing really works without you; nothing really works without us. When we come together as Franciscans and surrender to the exercises and the process we are helped in so many ways to be stronger and to live better lives. And always remember that life and love as well as all things Franciscan are better when they are shared.

Blessings and best wishes,
Your Brother, Joe ☒

John Michael Talbot

Thursday, April 15th
7:00 pm
Holy Trinity Catholic Church
111 South Cass Ave
Westmont, IL 60559

Doors open at 6:00 pm

No Ticket Necessary
Free will offering

For more information click on the following link:

www.gracernote.org/JMTwestmont/

In Memoriam

Please pray for the following SFO sisters who have died during the past month.

Bernice Broska and Rita Marie Von Arb St. Anthony Padua, Oak Lawn (this fraternity has lost three members within a month).

Margaret Lewis – St. Anthony Padua, Rockford

Honora Cullinan – Brother Jacoba

In this holy season may God grant these sisters eternal peace and joy and give comfort and hope to their grieving relatives, fraternities, and friends. Amen.

In-Formation

By Patrick Mendes, SFO
Regional Formation Director

Article 24 of the Holy Rule reads “To foster communion among the members the council should organize regular and frequent meetings...” This article discusses the means to express a strong and lasting fraternity spirit. Fr. Benet Fonck, OFM, reminds us that the “regular and frequent” meeting, (usually monthly), is THE way to build fraternity with prayer, education, apostolic activity, dialogue, and leisure.

Every so often, frustrated Ministers and Formation Directors ask why some brothers and sisters fail to give priority to attendance at the monthly fraternity gathering. Such has been the case recently when several local ministers raised this question to me.

This is a difficult question. At first glance the answer seems easy, but not so. Perhaps one of the reasons is that initial formation did not emphasize the priority of importance of the monthly gathering because it is the primary place of building fraternity and the basic unit of the entire Order. Another possibility is that we have not focused on the subject matter of ongoing formation. Does it address the needs of the brothers and sisters? Have we, in leadership, asked and invited participation in the planning of our ongoing formation?

One of the most frustrating reasons given by well meaning brothers and sisters is that they have to miss this month’s gathering because they want to attend another “religious activity” which is important to them for whatever reason. This can be a particular prayer service or parish lecture series, etc. and these are occurring on the same day and time as our fraternity gathering. We are frustrated because who is to say that this isn’t an important activity for that person? Is it just that they do not see the fraternity meeting as being the priority—that it should be if we truly understand that the fraternity meeting is the “privileged place” to support one another in our Franciscan journey?

It is important for we who are professed brothers and sisters to remember that we are co-responsible for the life and vibrancy of the fraternity. In that spirit, are we setting a good example of faithful attendance at the fraternity meeting for those in initial formation?

Are we making recommendations and suggestions to our fraternity council for subjects to be covered in our ongoing formation?

What can we do to foster regular attendance at our monthly gatherings? First, a good look at our reasons for asking to be excused. Is it really a compelling and serious reason? If it is because we don’t feel nourished in our vocation, are we making these concerns known to our council, not in a critical manner, but in a fraternal manner that offers suggestions? Are we keeping the lines of communication open?

In conclusion, we return to the very basic premise that the fraternity is the privileged place of support, growth and building of fraternity. Let us take seriously this article of our Holy Rule and be instruments of peace, joy, and fraternity; mirrors of God’s love for each other. 

News from Franciscan Outreach

There are a number of activities going on at Franciscan Outreach and to find out the latest news check their website at www.franoutreach.org/whatsnew.htm

If your fraternity is looking for a project to do here’s a suggestion from this website:

“We also need volunteers or a group of persons who can do small repair projects at our two sites. This is a great opportunity for groups such as Men's Clubs, Women's Clubs, prayer groups, or a workplace. Members of the group can respond on an as needed basis and pick the project they'd like to take on. Most projects are small, such as patching a few holes in the wall, changing a light fixture, or installing soap dispensers. Contact Diana Faust at (773)278-6724 for more information if you or your group might be able to help.”

Easter Prayer of Praise

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In His great mercy He has given us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. It is reserved in heaven for you, who because of your faith in God are being protected by His power until the salvation that is ready to be revealed at the end of time. *New Saint Joseph People's Prayer Book*

JPIC

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO
Councilor for JPIC

This month I will share with you my participation in Catholics at the Capitol, our meeting with Heather Metcalfe of Franciscans International, and the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) meeting in Washington; next month I'll report on Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD).

On March 3, one of candidates from my fraternity and I drove down to Springfield for Catholics at the Capitol. The day was organized by the Catholic Conference of Illinois (CCI) and began with mass at the newly renovated Immaculate Conception Cathedral, with Cardinal Francis George as Presider. Mass was followed by a briefing by a CCI member, and then we were sent off to meet with our state representatives and senators. The only problem was, the legislature (both the Assembly and the Senate) were in session, and it was also the lunch hour, so none of our legislators were available. However, we had a list of issues given us by CCI, so we delivered them to the secretaries to our legislators. My friend and I then sat in on sessions of both the Assembly and the Senate. Both were discussing funding for higher education - money for scholarships in the Senate, and money for state universities in the Assembly, and their lack of ability to do either because of the financial crisis of the State. Watching that interaction between both groups was interesting. We then enjoyed a box lunch and then drove home.

On March 6, we had a wonderful meeting with Heather Metcalfe of Franciscans International (FI) at Mayslake Village. Heather gave a power point presentation and spoke for about 45 minutes and then took questions. We learned some interesting things.

FI was formed by the Conference of the Franciscan Family and is funded by free-will offerings from Franciscan communities. It is a Non-Governmental Organization with General Consultative Status to the United Nations and, as such, is permitted, and often does, address the General Assembly on issues before them, often with respect to human rights matters.

In addition to its New York office at the UN, FI also has offices in Geneva, Switzerland and Bangkok, Thailand.

FI definitely looks to grass roots input on issues they should address. Therefore, they want to hear from us if we are aware of serious abuses taking place anywhere in our country. For example, we mentioned mountaintop coal mining, which is very detrimental to the environment, and Heather asked us to send her more information.

Finally, Heather mentioned that each and every member nation of the UN is examined every four years. It will be the United States' turn at the end of 2010. If problems are found during the examination, each nation has four years to correct it. While the UN really has no official power to force a nation to make improvements, they can and do encourage nations to comply through media exposure and public opinion. Check their web site (www.franciscansinternational.org) for more information.

The FAN meeting in Washington was excellent. The staff prepared and discussed with us position papers on all the main issues currently before Congress - health care (which was approved by the House on March 21 and signed into law March 23), care of creation, immigration, and consistent ethic of life, peacemaking, and the economy. We had excellent discussion on what Franciscan values we need to bring to these issues as they are considered by our various communities. We talked about what is "Ours to do" - Franciscan Leadership Training - and there is an excellent plan for this. We also discussed the Strategic Planning Process, which has been ongoing at FAN for several months and is an important step at this point in FAN's brief history. This meeting will be described in greater detail in *Tau-USA*, not in the issue about to be received (which is already printed) but in the one that will come out this summer. In the meantime, be sure to check the website (www.franciscanaction.org) where you can read the position papers and check out all the other excellent information the FAN staff has prepared for us! 📄