

Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO

Dear brothers and sisters,

Last week I did something I haven't done in a long time: I joined a CLUB. I think the last time I was in something you'd call a "club" was probably high school. Why does this matter to you? Only because I would like to reflect on the differences (and there are many) between a Secular Franciscan fraternity and a club, in the hopes that we can make those differences clearer to visitors and potential fraternity members. I also think the similarities and differences, between a club meeting and a fraternity meeting, are worth some thought.

First, my husband and I looked for a club that matched our interest (in this case, bicycling). Having found a bicycling club in our neighborhood, we showed up for a meeting, listened to the program, then got a membership form and filled it out. Becoming members consisted of providing our names and addresses and paying our dues. We are now members for a year, and then we have to pay dues again to continue to be members. That's IT. There's a presumption that if you aren't interested in the activities of the club, you wouldn't join, and if you move away, get tired of it, whatever, you'll stop paying your dues and stop being a member. It's pretty much as simple as that.

How different this was from becoming a Secular Franciscan (or indeed, professing in any order)! And how fortunate it is that it IS different. No one should make a lifetime commitment based on one meeting...or even a year's worth of meetings. It is vitally important, and completely reasonable, that we ensure that those committing their lives to the Order understand what they're promising to do.

Similarly, our financial commitment to the fraternity and to the Order is not a matter of "dues," no matter how similar it may look when the "fair share" is due. Our Rule obliges us to support our fraternity financially, according to our means, and from that we support the higher levels of fraternity. We may be excused from financial contributions without changing our status as active Secular Franciscans.

The club meeting I attended consisted of social time, a program, and a business meeting. In many ways, that resembles our fraternity meetings (minus prayer, of course). The order of the meeting made it easy to encourage guests to come for social time/refreshments and the program, and then be free to leave when the business meeting starts. This wouldn't be a bad idea for our fraternity meetings, either. Whatever business must be discussed at fraternity meetings (and it should be limited) could be left to the end.

Something else that sounded familiar at the meeting was requests for (a) volunteers to help with events and (b) potential candidates for office for upcoming elections. No matter what the organization, there needs to be people to do the work! (And if you were wondering, no, I will NOT be volunteering to run for office for the foreseeable future!) The volunteer sign-up sheets that were passed around had pretty specific jobs listed for upcoming events. That's something that might help us when planning an event - if you can define what needs doing and when it should be done, it might be easier to commit to it. On the other hand, there were lots of blanks to be filled in...

So, to sum up, there are a lot of things that are common for all organizations. All need participants, leaders, funds, and structure. The challenge for us is to help people see that we are not a club where people come and go, but an Order where you contribute to the needs of your Franciscan family with your participation, leadership, and funds; where, like a family, you don't just quit or "vote with your feet" because you have a disagreement - you're in the family for life. At the same time, let's take advantage of what we can learn from clubs and other organizations to make our gatherings as inviting as possible to both our members and our guests.

Peace and good, Vickie☑

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Submission deadline is the 20th of each month.

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
- 27: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

April

- 10: Candidates' Retreat, Day 1
- 11: Elections St. Francis St. Louis
- 18: Visitation, St. Anthony of Padua, East Side

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
- 25: Visitation, St. Anthony Padua, Oak Lawn

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

October

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

November

13: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration (St. Peter's Church in the Loop)

Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

May Flowers – May Fioretti

As Franciscans we all know of the famous "Little Flowers of St Francis" also known as "The Fioretti" (1337). You may or may not know that "The Fioretti" is a translation from Latin into Italian of a collection of stories entitled "The deeds of Blessed Francis and his companions" (1328-1337). Both contain little vignettes and accounts gathered from a wide variety of sources that was orally passed around before recording them in the written form we have today. These animated stories have little historical basis; nor do they stand up well to any critical method of study and scrutiny. However, these charming episodes are some of the most loved stories from the early Franciscans legends.

Now, the other idea that I would like to include in this month's article is connected to the well known practice of bring flowers of the fairest to honor the Blessed Mother during the month of May. So here's the plan which would incorporate some experience of The Fioretti, bringing flowers of the fairest, and our own Franciscan experience. All of this we can present to Francis, to mother Mary, and to our friends, family, and community. Spend some time in prayer and contemplation formulating a slice of your own Franciscan experience. Then compose no more than a paragraph in which you could discover and express a little of your story in as beautiful a way as you can. Let it be like an arrangement of flowers taken from the garden of your heart and holy longing. If you choose, and I would even encourage you to, share it with another or leave it for someone to find later. Here's an example, from the newly composed:

Fioretti of Brother Joe

Anonymous 2010

...as most people who know him will attest,
 Brother Joe loves to be with people.
 He especially enjoys listening to their stories
 and of course sharing his.

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...as most people who know him will attest,
 Brother Joe loves to be with people.
 He especially enjoys listening to their stories
 and of course sharing his.
 But, what not everyone knows
 is that after a while Brother needs
 the contemplative space found in solitude
 within nature where the potential of God's
 presence and wonders are abundantly available
 to one who closely waits with a burning heart.

I am one who will ably testify to this
 for I was with him that night
 a few years ago when we were
 up in the cliffs overlooking Greccio when
 a Comet that he had seen coming
 fairly swooped down in salutary fashion.
 "Not to him or to me", he said, "but
 to the memory of Francis
 and what he had done there".

Blessings and best wishes,
 Your Brother, Joe ☒

The First Secular Franciscans

Luchasio and Buonadonna lived in Poggibonzi where he was a greedy merchant. Meeting Francis—probably in 1213—changed his life. He began to perform many works of charity.

At first Buonadonna was not as enthusiastic about giving so much away as Luchasio was. One day after complaining that he was giving everything to strangers, Buonadonna answered the door only to find someone else needing help. Luchasio asked her to give the poor man some bread. She frowned but went to the pantry anyway. There she discovered more bread than had been there the last time she looked. She soon became as zealous for a poor and simple life.

In the 13th century some couples, by mutual consent and with the Church's permission, separated so that the husband could join a monastery and his wife could go to a cloister. This choice existed for childless couples or for those whose children had already grown up. Luchasio and Buonadonna wanted another alternative, a way of sharing in religious life, but outside the cloister.

To meet this desire, Francis set up the Secular Franciscan Order. Francis wrote a simple Rule for the Third Order (Secular Franciscans) at first; Pope Honorius III approved a more formally worded Rule in 1221.

One day Luchasio was carrying a crippled man he had found on the road. A frivolous young man came up and asked, "What poor devil is that you are carrying there on your back?" "I am carrying my Lord Jesus Christ," responded Luchasio. The young man immediately begged Luchasio's pardon.

Luchasio and Buonadonna both died on April 28, 1260. He was beatified in 1273. Local tradition referred to Buonadonna as "blessed" though the title was not given officially. (excerpted from American Catholic.org St. of the Dau – April 28)

In-Formation

By Patrick Mendes, SFO
Regional Formation Director

**...messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance,
they should strive to bring joy and hope to others...
(Holy Rule, article 19)**

As I write this month's column I am home from the hospital, recovering from a heart procedure and complications. I am pleased to report, thanks to you, that I am well on the road to recovery. Your outpouring of prayers, cards, notes, phone calls and visits have been a comfort and joy for me.

My feeling is that of gratitude to the Lord for leading me to the Franciscan Family and gratitude for and to my Franciscan family because you care and support me.

I will take this opportunity to say thank you to all of you and a special thanks to Sandra Kisel, SFO, who at the last minute, jumped in and took over the coordination of the April Candidates Retreat as I was hospitalized. There wasn't much time to prep for presenting the topic that was to have been presented by me and to take care of all of the "behind the scenes" chores that need to be cared for. My deepest gratitude to the presenters and the Professed sisters who helped with meal service and liturgy.

While I write from the perspective of my recent, personal experience, I have seen this scenario many, many times in the past 49 years. The brothers and sisters were different, the response and fidelity to our charism which embodies peace, joy, and compassion was the same.

It is all goes back to the very basics that we learned when we were in initial formation. The local fraternity is the basic unit of the Secular Franciscan Order and the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan Vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members. In short, the fraternity is the place where we become family and foster our bonds. We need to appreciate this gift at a conscious level so that together we can rejoice and be glad for the day the Lord has made!

With a grateful heart,
Patrick Mendés, SFO
Regional Formation Director

Change of Date for Mother Cabrini Celebration

This year's Mother Cabrini Celebration is being moved to **Saturday, November 13th** and will take place at St. Peter's Church in the Loop. The St. Peter's cluster will host this event this year.

The format of the meeting will be somewhat different from previous years, but we will definitely have Mass and good food.

Please mark your calendars and look forward to something new and different as we celebrate the feast of our regional patron saint on her actual feast day! 📅

Election News

Congratulations to the following people elected to office over the past month:

St. Francis/St. Louis

Minister	Norman Mosk
Vice Minister	Richard Guzior
Formation Director	Rita Prenavo
Secretary	Susie Faigao
Treasurer	Virginia Carrera

St. Mary of the Angels

Minister	Marco Coti
Vice Minister	David Krug
Formation Director	Patricia Coti
Secretary	Deborah Gutraj
Treasurer	Margaret Kowalski

In Memoriam

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

St. Francis St. Louis Fraternity

Lottie Olszowka, on April 13, 2010
Celia Simikoski, on April 6, 2010.
Helen L. Charles, March 24, 2010,
Lorraine Greinke, February 24, 2010

May God grant these sisters eternal peace and joy and give comfort and hope to their grieving relatives, fraternities, and friends. Amen.

ANIMA CHRISTI

Jesus, may all that is you flow into me.
May your Body and Blood be my food and drink.
May your passion and death be my strength and life.
Jesus, with you by my side enough has been given.
May the shelter I seek be the shadow of your cross.
Let me not run from the love which you offer,
but hold me safe from the forces of evil.
On each of my dyings shed your light and your love.
Keep calling to me until that day comes,
when, with your saints, I may praise you forever. Amen

(Year of Eucharist Prayer)

JPIC

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO
Councilor for JPIC

First, I sent out to all Ministers last week information on the SFO Workshop at St. Francis University in Loretto, PA on June 24-27. This year the focus is “Peace and Justice for Secular Franciscans” and featured speakers are Fr. Joseph Nagle, OFM, a long-time peace and justice advocate and currently a member of the Board of Directors of Franciscan Action Network, and Pat Brandwein-Ball, SFO, JPIC Councilor to the National Fraternity. I encourage all of you to consider attending this workshop; I am going and we will try to arrange car pools for those who would like to go. Be sure to ask your Ministers for information about the Workshop.

This month I said I would report on Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington, DC. This was the third time I attended. Ecumenical Advocacy Days was started in 2003 and has grown to nearly 1,000 participants. The schedule is a week end of workshops on a given issue, concluding with visits with Representatives and Senators on the Hill on the Monday. This year’s focus was “A Place to Call Home: Immigrants, Refugees and Displaced Peoples.” One of the events for the week end was participation in an immigration rally on the Mall on Sunday, and we were there. I was amazed at the press coverage – I doubt there was 30 seconds of coverage and they simply said “thousands” had gathered on the Mall to support immigration reform. “Thousands” – one might think 5,000 or 10,000 – well, brothers and sisters, there were over 200,000 people on the Mall – it was HUGE. This is a very big issue in our country and one which needs to be – and I promise you will be – addressed, one way or the other.

The week end workshop ran in various tracks, and I chose the Domestic Track. I could easily fill up 20 *SFO News* issues on what I learned – I can only give you snippets here. Included in this track was “Immigration Reform: Why We Need It and How to Get It” (showing clearly that what we’re doing now, aside from being cruel and inhumane, also isn’t working); “Growing Injustice: Immigration and Public Education” (children who have lived in the U.S. almost their entire lives are unable to continue education after high school or work); “Welcoming Refugees into the U.S. in Difficult Economic Times” (explaining the huge migration which constantly takes place, and what part the U.S. plays in this ongoing drama); and “The New Sanctuary Movement” (not only helping those who are suffering (over 1 million U.S.-born children have

lost at least one parent due to enforced deportations) but also addressing governmental decisions which exasperate the blight of immigrants and their families.

Plenary talks were excellent (there were 4). Highlights for me were Sr. Mary McCauley, BVM, who told of the ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) Raid in Postville, Iowa. There are many of these raids, and they sound like what the Nazis did to the Jews in World War II. Is that what you want your government to do in your name? Frank Sharry of America’s Voice gave concrete information on why the current immigration system fails and what needs to happen to fix it, and Sr. Helen Prejean, who gave a great personal witness, comparing her conversion and transformation in dealing with prisoners on death row with her conversion and transformation in learning about immigration problems in the U.S. and the need to change our strategy. I hope to share at least part of her talk at either the Chapter of Ministers or the Leadership Workshop this year.

Going to the Hill on Monday was quite different from previous years. For instance, last year I don’t think we even went to Senator Burriss’ office; this year there were 26 of us. In the last two years that I’ve gone to EAD, I was the only one who went to Rep. Melissa Bean’s office – this year there were 7 of us. There were 2 groups going to Senator Durbin’s office, there were so many. I was very impressed at how well people expressed their concerns, and particularly the staffer with Senator Burriss’ office showed he understood the issue well and where we were coming from. It was a very positive experience.

My friends, we are called to help our less fortunate brothers and sisters. If you have a tendency to condemn immigrants, particularly undocumented immigrants, be sure you know the facts first. Does something need to be done about immigration – absolutely! Is what we’re doing now the way to go – absolutely not! Check out Franciscan Action Network’s web site for more information on this issue and how you can help – www.franciscanaction.org. For those of you who have become individual members, they just sent out an action alert on this issue; for those who are not individual members, now would be a good time to join – it costs nothing and you’ll learn a lot! 📧

Something to think about...

True love causes pain.

Jesus, in order to give us the proof of his love, died on the cross.

A mother, in order to give birth to her baby, has to suffer.

If you really love one another, you will not be able to avoid making sacrifices.

– BLESSED TERESA OF CALCUTTA