

Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO

Dear brothers and sisters,

In July, I observe two anniversaries that are important to me: my 30th wedding anniversary and, a mere 9 days later, my 30th anniversary at my company. In June, I had my 25th anniversary of profession. What do all these milestones have in common, besides the fact that they remind me I've been around for a lot longer than I sometimes want to believe?

First, I think that our commitments in general are significant. Whether it is a vowed commitment to a spouse, or to the evangelical counsels in religious life, or a solemn promise like we make in our profession, or simply a personal commitment to the people one works with. To be part of the team by doing our share of the work as well as we can and contributing to making the workplace as pleasantly as possible, our commitments *matter*. When we make profession as Secular Franciscans, we freely choose to take on an additional lifetime commitment to live the Rule in the company of our brothers and sisters. In an era where long-term commitments seem to be a thing of the past, our lifetime commitment is another counter-cultural aspect of our vocation.

Second, for me all of these commitments are about relationships. This is obvious in the case of marriage and profession, maybe less so in the workplace. For me at least, my commitment in the workplace is about the people rather than the company (which, in the manner of many companies today, shows less loyalty to its workers than I would like). Relationships – often friendships – are what I take with me from assignment to assignment. No matter how important the task, it will be forgotten sooner or later (often sooner); kindnesses done to a co-worker may be remembered for a lifetime.

Third, I believe that God is responsible for my being in each of these committed relationships – yes, even my work. Without a number of “coincidences” and happy chances, I would not be working where I've been for 30 years now! To me, that is a sign of God's presence in the process.

Whatever the other commitments in our lives, we share our commitment to our brothers and sisters in fraternity. How can we make our relationships in fraternity more successful? I think a lesson can be drawn from what makes a workplace “work,” as long as we don't take the analogy too far. In a smoothly functioning workplace, everyone does his or her part, whether large or small. In the same way, each of us should expect to contribute (as we are able) to doing the many jobs required to have a fraternity that is alive with faith, hope, and love. There are many ministries, for example, hospitality at meetings, outreach to excused members, formation (both initial and ongoing), leadership, even transportation for those who can't drive – and most definitely the prayer, which we can all do and according to the Rule must do. Whatever you are able to do to serve your brothers and sisters in fraternity you are following the example of Christ's service to his disciples when he washed their feet at the Last Supper.

Beyond serving one another, we also have the responsibility to do our part to create a positive environment. Just as the early Christians were a sign to those around them because of their love for one another, we are called in the same way to be a sign of God's love in the Church and in the world today. That doesn't mean we always agree (that would be a sign that we aren't a real family!). And like all healthy families we work to deal with inevitable conflicts constructively sometimes even agreeing to disagree.

In conclusion, we can give thanks each day that God has given us the grace to make commitments in our lives – to our spouses and families, to our fraternities, and to the people we work with in various parts of our lives. Let us recommit ourselves to doing our best to make those commitments and relationships fruitful, that the kingdom of God may be manifested in our lives.

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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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,

I send you all happy Summer Greetings and hopefully some seasonal words of encouragement. As I consult my "Proper Offices of Franciscan Saints and Blesseds in The Liturgy of the Hours," I find a plentiful assembly of Franciscan celebrations to spice up our summer reading and prayer. We are invited to honor the lives and stories of a great variety of martyrs who carried the Franciscan spirit around the world. I invite you to explore these lives and stories.

June 30th - Blessed Raymond Lull, third order.

July 8th - Blessed Gregory, Bishop and companions.

July 9th - Nicholas Pick, priest and companions.

July 12th - John Jones and John Wall, priests.

Then, we also have the occasions to celebrate some of the greatest as well as the best known and most inspiring Franciscans ever.

July 14th - Francis Solano, priest, 1549 - 1610.

July 15th - Bonaventure, Bishop and Doctor, 1218 - 1274.

July 21st - Lawrence of Brindisi, Priest and Doctor, 1559 - 1619.

On to another completely different subject for your consideration which is the annual Mother Cabrini Celebration. This important event is scheduled for Saturday, November 13th, beginning at 10:30 a.m. at St Peter's Church in the Loop. I am mentioning this so far in advance to encourage your fraternities to plan on coming as you are able. A visit to downtown Chicago can be considered by some to be complicated and difficult or even perhaps fairly impossible. But I'm here to tell you that I live down here and it's easy with a little practice or preparation. So my hope is that many of you will plan to come to this very special regional event hosted by *The Five Secular Franciscan Fraternities* of St Peter's Church.

The steering committee for this event is planning several activities, a festive liturgical celebration, and an extreme Franciscan world feast. And of course our regional patroness Mother Cabrini will be honored at every turn. I also mention this so far in advance because I will be in Italy from mid September till mid October which I will tell you about in future installments of this feature of the *SFO News*.

Till then, Pace y Bene
Brother, Joe ☒

Announcements:

Saturday, July 10, 2010 - Leadership Conference at Mayslake, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Who should attend: While the workshop is intended specifically for Fraternity Ministers, Vice-Ministers and Formation Directors, all professed brothers and sisters with an interest in leadership or currently serving in a leadership position are welcome. Please let Patrick Mendes "formation@ilsfo.org" know by July 5th if you are planning to attend.

In-Formation

By Patrick Mendes, SFO
Regional Formation Director

What about dialogue????!!

Article 19 of our Holy Rule says in part “Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony, through **dialogue**, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.” As Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap reminds us in his new book *The Franciscan Journey*, “Dialogue is the natural way to have conversation about common beliefs or common differences.”

I would suggest that it is the “differences” that are often the stumbling blocks to effective dialogue. So then, how do we enter into respectful, courteous dialogue? It really begins with our willingness to develop a mind set of openness free of defensiveness.

It is inevitable that we will have differences of opinion among the brothers and sisters of our fraternities and it is important that we develop a mind set of acceptance of the other person. This is not the same as agreeing with them, but offers the very basic reverence for the human person, of accepting the person where he/she is coming from and acknowledges their position.

A few approaches to successful and effective dialogue include listening with an open mind and careful attention. We recognize that we are not “always right” and we recognize the presence of the divine seed in everyone. This helps us to have a clearer understanding of the other person’s view point. We may even change our perception of the subject and the other person’s approach.

Avoid labeling (you are such a conservative) and blaming (if you hadn’t done ____ (fill in the blank) we wouldn’t have this problem).

Invite clarification such as, ‘I am not clear why you hold this view’. ‘Please explain it further’. Use active listening to let the other person know that you are hearing what they are saying. Repeat back to the person what you believe the person said. “I understood you to say____. Is that correct?” This will invite further clarification and provide a respectful way for you to introduce your viewpoint on the subject.

We won’t always reach an agreement on a particular matter but because we are respectful of one another, we avoid putting up barriers/walls and create an environment for conversations about difficult issues.

Keeping an open mind, accepting attitude, and a loving Franciscan heart will facilitate healthy, respectful, and fruitful dialogue. ■

JPIC

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO
Councilor for JPIC

As I stated in my article last month, this month I’d like to summarize the articles by Pat Brandwein-Ball, SFO, JPIC Chair for NAFRA, which appeared in *Tau-USA* over the past 2½ years, regarding the transition from Apostolic Commissions to JPIC.

In her first article, Pat said that the Commission model came from the parish model (various commissions, such as Worship, Faith Formation, Social Concerns, etc.), just as our formation structure came from the RCIA model. She summarized beautifully exactly what happened: *Over time the “structure” of commission teams overshadowed the spirituality; each article (14-19) stood on its own without the underpinning of the entirety of the Rule. Apostolic works are certainly a vital aspect of life for SFO members. However, after two All Commission Conferences, living those articles of the Rule still was not understood as flowing out of conversion, as worthy fruits of penance, or of our becoming “united more intimately with the life and missions of the Church” (Rule and Constitutions). We had difficulty integrating the meaning of those Articles into our Way of Life and, by and large, the Apostolic Commissions became a burden of structure upon the fraternities. This was not for lack of effort on the part of the commission chairs. We thank them for their many years of dedication and work.*

I need to also emphasize that Fr. Matthew Gaskin, OFM, who developed the structure for the Apostolic Commissions, and who passed away recently, never intended for the Commissions to somehow become separated from the Rule. His intent was to assist the SFO in living the Rule—all of it—not just some of it.

JPIC (continued from page 3)

So, the problem is well defined. How to correct it, however, is far more difficult to determine. In subsequent articles, Pat made a number of suggestions. The ones I thought were particularly helpful were:

- Uncover Francis' relationship with God; then make adaptations for our own life and circumstances.
- Read the Rule often for understanding (Patrick Mendés recently said to me his formation director told him to read and meditate on an article of the Rule each day).
- There is a need for formation in this area, which requires prayer, patience, lively discussion, and openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- For Francis, Biblical conversion and respect for the clergy were essential elements if one were to follow the Gospel authentically. [Article 4 of our Rule tells us to devote [our]selves to careful reading of the Gospel, going from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel. That is our way of life! We can hardly follow the Gospel if we don't know it!]
- The Letter to All the Faithful, the Prologue to our 1978 Rule, although written 800 years ago, remains vibrant with exhortation for today's world. Our Rule will lack vitality of our Franciscan penitential foundation unless we understand it in light of the Prologue.
- JPIC is an invitation to a mature understanding and authentic living of our Rule, with enthusiasm and gusto!
- JPIC is based on the wholeness of the Rule, is headed by a coordinator, and has a foundation of Franciscan theology and works of charity. As we become involved in issues of our times that call us to action, these actions manifest as the worthy fruits of conversion.

Some comments of my own: Please don't use the transition from Apostolic Commissions to JPIC as a reason to cease doing apostolic works. There is no reason why we shouldn't continue doing what we were doing before, but our motivation must come from our desire to live the Gospel. Thus, these activities are a part of our way of life rather than separate projects required by the Commissions.

The other important aspect, I feel, is how we conduct ourselves, particularly in contentious situations. We must always remember we are people

of peace and reconciliation. We must deal with adversaries with love – not easy to do – but that's what Jesus did and we are called to follow him – that is living the Gospel.

Next month I'll report on the SFO Workshop on Peace and Justice at St. Francis University in Loretto, PA. ☒

Transitus of St. Clare Available

The Father Solanus Casey Regional Fraternity has created and shared with us a Transitus of St. Clare of Assisi. Compiled by their Regional Formation Director, Maureen Haege, SFO, the Transitus is composed of several ceremonies and related readings. Please visit the Mother Cabrini regional website for a copy of the ceremony at: <http://www.ilsfo.org/2010/05/transitus-of-st-clare-available/>

Position Available for Program Director Franciscan Outreach Association

Franciscan Outreach Association is in search of a Program Director for our overnight shelter. Hours are from late morning to early evening with some overnight work required.

Interested candidates should send resume and cover letter by mail or fax. Resumes will NOT be accepted by email. Franciscan Outreach Association is an equal opportunity employer. Send resume and cover letter to Diana Faust, Executive Director, Franciscan Outreach Association, 1645 W. LeMoyne, Chicago, IL 60622 or fax to (773) 278-7120.

If you are interested or know someone who may be a good candidate for this position please pass along this information, please contact Diana and request a copy of the job description.

The shelter is also in need of six new cots and Franciscan Outreach is requesting donations of \$79.95 per cot. If you feel so moved you can donate online at <http://www.franoutreach.org/donate%20online.htm> or you can mail your donations to Diana as noted above. Thank you. ☒

An Excerpt from "The Canticle of the Creatures"

Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for love of You and bear infirmity and tribulation. Blessed are those who endure in peace for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned. Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death, from whom no living man can escape. ...Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will, for the second death shall do them no harm. Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility.