

Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO

Dear brothers and sisters,

It seems as though the summer is flying by! It's hard to remember that in terms of actual number of days, summer is actually the longest season. I hope that you have found some time to enjoy the long days and warm weather with friends and family.

As I write this, we have just passed the Sixteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time, which this year offered the Gospel story of Martha and Mary. It seems to me that as Secular Franciscans, these two holy women - and their relationship with Jesus - are particularly important.

On the one hand, Mary has "chosen the better part". On the other, Jesus doesn't tell Martha to just sit down and forget about dinner either. In fact, he doesn't tell her to stop doing ANYTHING except being anxious and upset about many things. (He doesn't even get annoyed with her for telling him what to do...and who among us can claim we have never given God advice about what would be best???)

As Secular Franciscans, our Rule embraces both Martha and Mary. Prayer and contemplation are to be the "soul of all [we] are and do" (*Rule 8*), while at the same time we are to "faithfully fulfill the duties proper to [our] various circumstances of life" (*Rule 10*). Moreover, we are to "exercise [our] responsibilities competently in the Christian spirit of service" (*Rule 13*). When we live both of these aspects of life, we imitate our father Francis, who turned to Clare and to Brother Sylvester to determine if he should continue active ministry or retire into pure contemplation. Their discernment for him was that he was to continue the active life - but it is completely clear that this did *not* mean that Francis gave up prayer and contemplation! His mission and ours are the same: to share what we have been given. We must make time somehow, every day in our busyness to listen to the Lord, to put aside the many duties and responsibilities clamoring for our attention, and remember the "one thing" that is important: the relationship with God that keeps everything else in perspective.

This is all easy to say, and we have all heard it before...practicing it is another thing entirely! I can't claim to have solved this in my own life. Part of why I need to write about it is precisely to remind myself how we are called to live. Someone at the fraternity meeting yesterday reminded me that Jesus told Martha, not Mary, that he was the resurrection and the life. Sometimes it's good to be the one who goes out rather than waiting at home!

If your life, like mine, is a bit too much like Martha's, with too many things to be anxious and upset about, let's remember that Martha DID turn to the Lord even though she was too busy! She came to ask Him to get Mary to help, but she DID come to the Lord...and he turned her request around. (That seems to happen a lot with prayer...God gives us what we need, not what we ask for. Thank God for that!) So let's not only turn to Jesus with the "It's not fair I have all this to do" prayer, but take five minutes -or even ten - to mentally sit down at Jesus' feet, to rest and listen. Maybe He will point out something on the list that we can stop doing without the world coming to an end. Maybe He'll just give us a break to remind us why we are doing all those things - for Him, right? - and then send us back to work. At least the to-do list should be a bit less burdensome after remembering Who we are doing it for.

I hope you will be able to take the opportunity for a break and fellowship with your brothers and sisters at our upcoming regional events: the Regional Gathering on August 7 at Mayslake, our professed retreat September 17-19 at the Portiuncula Center for Prayer in Frankfort, and the Mother Cabrini Celebration on November 13 at St. Peter's in the Loop. Depending on our attitude, there can be more busyness or time with the Lord. Let's embrace our opportunities to be with the Lord as fraternity!

Peace and all good,

Vickie 

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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
- 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.
- 19: Brother Jacoba Community
- 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 Brothers and Sisters,

This month I would like to share with you some notes concerning Our Lady of the Angels of the Portiuncula. All of this and a lot more will be a part of my presentation to the region on Saturday August 7th at Mayslake Village in Oak Brook.

At the time of Francis the Portiuncula was a tiny, run-down stone oratory erected in the middle of what was a mosquito infested swampy woods, down in the valley from Assisi. Francis found it to be a perfect place to peacefully build and develop all that God revealed to him to do. It was the place where St. Francis found and formed the root and foundation of the early community of the Friars Minor.

They built primitive hut structures all around the little chapel which they revived and made the center of their common prayer and community life. This holy place quickly became a base for the Franciscans as they spread out into the world of their times. And we've been there ever since, still adding layer upon layer of Franciscan Spirit.

It was there that Francis received Clare into his glorious mission. It was there that he cut her hair; a dramatic gesture renouncing her birthright in favor of becoming a strong woman engaged in the founding of a new and radical community of nuns. In so many ways the second order of St Francis, the Poor Ladies of San Damiano, sprouted from the root of the Portiuncula, too.

Let us not forget all the chapters and special events held there. These heartfelt celebrations are remembered for such extreme passion and the benevolent presence of God among them, setting their hearts afire, seeming to enflame the whole forest.

Then recall that when Francis, having spent his life within such extreme experiences of wealth to poverty, feast to famine, indulgence to extreme denial, being broken comes home to the Portiuncula and it is there that he asks to be laid on the ground. It is there that he opens his arms to welcome the chaste embrace of sweet sister death.

I encourage you to attend the celebration we have planned as well as to explore the legends and the Franciscan traditions based upon The Portiuncula.

With my blessings and best wishes I am your Brother, Joe ofm ☒

Recent Fraternity Elections: Congratulations to newly elected councils:

	St. Clare Kankakee	St. Francis, Crystal Lake
Minister	Reisha Raymond	Joan Sanders
Vice Minister	Eugene Kieffer	Beverly Gay
Secretary	Dianne M. Kronika	Edwin Lesniak
Treasurer	Gerarda L. Seemayer	Linda Kieffer
Formation Director	Diane O'Connor	Paula Rozynek

Announcements:

Saturday, August 7, 2010 - Annual Gathering at Mayslake, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. (Registration at 8:30 a.m.). Brother Joe Middleton, ofm, Regional Spiritual Assistant will be guest speaker. \$15 for lunch or bring your own. Family and friends welcome.

The Poor Clares of the Immaculate Conception Monastery in Palos Park welcome your participation in the Novena to St. Clare (August 2-10) at 7:30 p.m. in their chapel. On Wednesday, August 11, the feast of St. Clare, Mass will be celebrated at 8:30 a.m. with Auxillary Bishop Gustavo Garcia Siller as principal celebrant. The Sister welcome you novena intentions if you can't be there in person. 12210 S. Will Cook Road, Palos Park, IL 60464.

In-Formation (will resume in September)
By Patrick Mendes, SFO
Regional Formation Director

JPIC

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO
Councilor for JPIC

As promised, here's my summary of the SFO Workshop at Loretto, PA held June 24-27, 2010 at St. Francis University.

Loretto, PA is approximately 550 miles from Chicago - about an 11 hour drive, including reasonable stops. All but the last 45 miles is interstate and very easy driving; the last 45 miles is a U.S. highway through the mountains. St. Francis University campus is delightful - it's small, friendly, beautifully maintained, and the college kids who are there taxiing us around from our dorm to the cafeteria to our meeting hall were just delightful - and interesting. There's a University book store on campus and a Franciscan book shop in town (maybe 4 blocks away) where we did lots of shopping. The food in the cafeteria was excellent, the dorms were very comfortable, and the workshop sessions excellent. The Novitiate House for the Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus of the Third Order Regular (TOR) is also at Loretto, and the novices, six wonderful young men, visited with us one night. The cost was only \$200 a person (double occupancy), which covered 3 nights stay, 9 meals and all the workshops, as well as a social gathering each night. You can't find a better buy than that - why more people don't take advantage of this wonderful opportunity is beyond me.

This was the third workshop sponsored by St. Francis University. The first one in 2008 focused on "Development of Lay Leadership in the Secular Franciscan Order" and the presenters were Fr. Bernie Tickerhoof, TOR (well known author and Novice Director for the Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus) and Anne Mulqueen, SFO (NAFRA International Councilor). They hoped for 50 participants and had 72. They were really pleased. The following year the focus was "Franciscan Spirituality for Secular Franciscans" and the presenters were Vinal Van Benthem, SFO (freelance writer, poet, spiritual director and pastoral associate in numerous ministries) and Bob Fitzsimmons, SFO, NAFRA Formation Director. They hoped the workshop attendance would grow - and it did - that year they had 114. It seemed like things were going well.

This year the focus was on "Peace and Justice for Secular Franciscans" and the presenters were Fr. Joseph Nangle, OFM, co-founder of Franciscan Mission Service, currently Secretary-Treasurer of the Board of Directors for Franciscan Action Network (FAN), and former member of the Office for International Justice and Peace for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Justice and Peace Director for the Conference of Major Superiors of Men,

an executive committee member of Pax Christi USA, board member of the U.S. Catholic Mission Association, Justice and Peace Director for the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, board member of the U.S. Catholic Mission Association, and on the staff of Sojourners Magazine, as well as author of several books. His co-presenter was Patricia Brandwein-Ball, SFO, who has served for years on the NAFRA Executive Council as JPIC Councilor. Total participants were 65. Why the drop - the economy? No, I don't think so. Peace and justice seems always to be a hard sell - people consider it political - although for us, it's anything but. So let's see what we learned, and for those who didn't go, what they missed.

Fr. Joe used Catholic Social Teaching as the practical basis for his talks; Pat used the SFO Rule and the General Constitutions. In speaking to how these sources help guide our actions, both talked at length about the spirituality of peace and justice, and I thought this was extremely important. How many of us think of peace and justice as a part of our spirituality! This is an excellent example of how apostolic activity must flow from our living our Rule as opposed to the project mentality which tended to set apostolic activity apart. (Pat spoke specifically about this issue, and those present said they understood much better why the apostolic commissions had been discontinued but that apostolic activity was not only to continue, but to improve as it became more a part of our living the Rule). There was good discussion at the end of the workshop regarding our mission in today's world. Fr. Joe said that justice is the minimum expression of love, that Jesus was both charitable and a person of justice, prophetic and had a sense of social sin. We are called to be the same presence in our time.

It was a wonderful workshop - and it was completely recorded on DVD! Try to make next year's, which will focus on "Aspects of Fraternity Life." Presenters will be Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap and Mary Bittner, SFO.

Prayer

Blessed Saint Clare, whose very name means "light," illumine the darkness of our minds and hearts so that we may see what God wishes us to do and perform it with a willing and joyful heart. Before your birth, a heavenly voice foretold that you would be a light illuminating the world. Be a light to us in the sorrows and anxieties of this earthly life, and lead us into the eternal light of our home in Heaven, Amen.