

Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO

Dear brothers and sisters,

This month's article was going to be easy: write about the National Chapter and visitation from CIOFS (the General Presidency of the Order). There's one little problem with that: I never made it to Chapter. What started out as a two-night side trip with my mother before the meeting turned into three weeks with her in her final illness. I was greatly blessed that the National Fraternity kept us in prayer throughout Chapter and afterwards. I thank all of you for your prayers and expressions of sympathy. It is at times like this that I am particularly grateful that I am a Secular Franciscan; we ARE family!

Such an experience of the love and grace that we are capable of at our best reminds me how far I am from living that ideal. Sadly, it's not only our dealings with everyone else that fall short; we may be family, but we sometimes fight like family, too. As we prepare to celebrate the Incarnation, a brief examination of conscience may help us approach family, friends, and our Franciscan brothers and sisters with the kind of love we are called to share - the love with which Christ loves us.

1. How often do I remember to "seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in [my] brothers and sisters" [Rule 5]? Do I try to put this into practice more particularly with people with whom I disagree? With those whom I dislike?
2. How well do I "accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ" [Rule 13]?
3. Do I treat everyone "with a gentle and courteous spirit" [Rule 13]?
4. Am I "ready to place [myself] on an equal basis with all people" [Rule 13]?
5. Do I "create a spirit of welcome and an atmosphere of fraternity everywhere" [Constitutions 18.2]?
6. Am I committed to opposing "every form of exploitation, discrimination, and exclusion" and against "every attitude of indifference in relation to others" [Constitutions 18.2]?

7. If married, how well does my relationship with my spouse "bear witness in the world to the love of Christ for His Church" [Rule 17]?
8. Do I consider my "own family to be the first place in which to live their Christian commitment and Franciscan vocation" [Constitutions 24.1]?
9. Do I "seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue" [Rule 19]?
10. Do I "[trust] in the presence of the divine seed in everyone" [Rule 19]?
11. Do I believe "in the transforming power of love and pardon" [Rule 19]?
12. Do I "strive to bring joy and hope to others" [Rule 19]?
13. How do I help to make my fraternity "a visible sign of the Church, the community of love" [Rule 22]?
14. In my fraternity, do I "promote mutual understanding and ... see to it that the atmosphere of [the] meetings is welcoming and that it reflects joy" [Constitutions 26.2]?

I know I have ample opportunities for daily conversion represented in this list! No matter how far we may be from fulfilling the ideals of our way of life, it is good to remember that our Rule concludes with this blessing of St. Francis: "May whoever observes all this be filled in heaven with the blessing of the most high Father, and on earth with that of his beloved Son, together with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter." May we be blessed here and now as well as in heaven!

Peace and all good, this Christmas and always....Vickie☺

Council Members

Minister

Vickie Klick, SFO
minister@ilsfo.org

Vice-Minister

Lorna Miressi, SFO
viceminister@ilsfo.org

Formation Director

J. Patrick Mendés, SFO
formation@ilsfo.org

Secretary

Monica Marko, SFO
secretary@ilsfo.org

Treasurer

Stephen Lanterman, SFO
treasurer@ilsfo.org

Councilor At-Large

Elisabeth Shin, SFO
atlarge@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Communications/ Public Relations

Gloria J. Huerta, SFO
pr@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Fraternal Life

Bonnie Michels, SFO
fratlif@ilsfo.org

Councilor for JPIC

Stephanie Sormane, SFO
jpic@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Visitations

Muriel Baum, SFO
visitations@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Vocations

Norman Mosk, SFO
vocations@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Youth/Young Adults

Kristi Loar, SFO
youth@ilsfo.org

Spiritual Assistant

Br. Joe Middleton, OFM
spiritualassistant@ilsfo.org

Newsletter Editor

Gloria J. Huerta, SFO
sfonews@ilsfo.org

The SFO News is the official publication of the Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order.

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: Elections, 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,

Before I say anything else, I want to express my pleasure and appreciation to all of those good people who came to the Mother Cabrini regional celebration held at St Peter's Church in the Loop on the 13th of November and to especially and profoundly thank the many sisters and brothers who tirelessly labored to produce this gracious and plentiful event.

As I am still floating and fluttering from the Franciscan Study Pilgrimage from which I recently returned I wanted to tap into some of that for your reflection. So today I would like to present a little something about two women who were an essential part of the movement of the Franciscan spirit from the very beginning. I recall first my visit to an enchanting site called Le Chella known to Francis and to us as a place of solitude up in the mountains outside of Cortona in Tuscany. This place full of Franciscan history and legend, one of my favorite discoveries, is at the top of the list of places where I would like to return. That part of the country is also known for the strong presence of the lay Franciscan movement of the brothers and sisters of penance which is the foundation of today's Secular Franciscan Order. And first among them was Margaret of Cortona whose life was uniquely broken and then reformed, recovered, and reinvented. There was severe turbulence and tension in her life as well as some great examples of service. She served the poor and infirmed, built a hospital, and she was a much sought after midwife. She was engaged in pastoral relationships with the friars, challenging them and providing them with spiritual direction. She was also well known as a spiritual director and counselor among the people of the region far and wide.


The memorial of Margaret of Cortona is celebrated according to the Franciscan calendar on May 16th. I would encourage you to read about her perhaps from her biographer the friar Giunta Bevegnati who refers to her as *la poverella*. Another good source of information is the Franciscan Institute at St Bonaventure University which publishes The Franciscan Heritage Series. Margaret of Cortona is presented in volume 7.

The other Franciscan woman that I would like to mention briefly is our Mother Clare whose life and legend is much better known to us. I recommend that each fraternity has available a copy of *The Lady - Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* from New City Press. The Lady Clare's life shines like a beacon of light upon Jesus, and her example of the contemplative Franciscan spirit and heart guides us closer to God, the source of all good. I would like to share with you one of the brightest gems of her insight. It comes toward the end of her famous second letter to St Agnes of Prague, where she directs the Noble Queen to *gaze, consider, and contemplate the poor Christ; her bridegroom, with a longing to imitate.* Let us all acknowledge these Franciscan words and put them into practice in our daily lives of prayer and action. Gaze upon Christ, consider Christ, and contemplate Christ.

Finally then let me wish you a blessed Advent journey and a Happy Christmas.

Your brother Joe M, ofm 

Rest in Peace

Gloria Cain, member of St. Anthony of Padua, Oak Lawn was born into eternal life on November 21st. On November 25th she would have celebrated 37 years as a Secular Franciscan. In true Franciscan fashion she did not want any recognition for what she did. We pray for Gloria and all the others in our fraternities who have died this year that their good examples will bear fruit in new vocations in our Region. Amen. 

In-Formation

By Patrick Mendes, SFO
Regional Formation Director

As you read this the season of Advent - a time of waiting and of hopeful anticipation - has begun. The familiar hymns of the season bring us to an air of quiet expectation. No "Gloria" is sung during Advent. Often during this season we sing "O Come Divine Messiah" which expresses our longing for the Lord, the God of unconditional love.

"God is love and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him." Advent, then, invites us to reflect on the love God has for us and for this reason God became man.


Amid all the hustle and bustle of preparation for the celebration of Christ's birth, we are easily distracted; shopping to do, Christmas cards to write, dinners to plan and attend, and parties that are so much a part of the time leading up to Christmas.

How do we focus on the coming Divine Messiah in the midst of this clamor, rush and myriad of distractions? Why not take 5 or 10 minutes each day to do some reading and reflection on the great gift of the Incarnation? This is a good time to re-read and reflect on the story of the first Nativity scene our Holy Father Francis created at Greccio. The story stirs vivid imagery and we imagine ourselves observing and participating in that momentous event.

Many of us have a Nativity scene (Creche) set up in our homes during the Advent and Christmas season. We can take a few minutes of quiet reflection, sitting before it and becoming aware of the love of God; the reason for the Incarnation.

In the 7 days from December 17th to the 23rd, before and after the Magnificat, we pray the "O antiphons." They are called this because they all begin with the word "O" and are the basis for the hymn "O Come, O Come, Emanuel." They offer an opportunity to reflect on God's attributes, affording an opportunity for us to reflect and thank God for all that God is and does for us, out of God's own divine love.

Finally, it is important for us to remember the needy and less fortunate who may not have food, shelter or anyone to visit them. Let us search our hearts for the ways we can be God's love made present to them.

In conclusion I wish you all a very blessed and holy Christmas and pray the Sacred Heart of Jesus surround you with His love and fill your hearts with His abundant blessings. 

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JPIC - News from FAN

By Stephanie Sormane, SFO
Councilor for JPIC

Following is a press release issued by Franciscan Action Network yesterday, and a note from Fr. Larry Janezic, OFM. In my humble opinion, Fr. Larry made an extremely important contribution to FAN's really incredible progress these past two years, and he will be dearly missed. I have not as yet met Patrick Carolan, but I do know Sr. Margaret Mary, and I trust her judgment and that of the FAN Board (which includes Tom Bello, SFO, our National Minister). I look forward to meeting and working with Mr. Carolan in the future.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 17, 2010 - Washington, DC

The Franciscan Action Network (FAN) (<http://www.franciscanaction.org>) is pleased to announce the hiring of Patrick Carolan as its new Executive Director. FAN is a grassroots, faith-based civic engagement organization with a growing national base of organizations and persons who are inspired by the witness and example of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi. The Franciscan Action Network is designed to bring a coordinated and effective voice to matters of Justice, Peace and Care for Creation in our world.

According to FAN Board of Directors President Margaret Mary Kimmins OSF: "After conducting an extensive national search the Board is pleased to bring Mr. Carolan, who has a wealth of experience in administration, public policy, leadership and fund raising combined with a strong Catholic faith tradition and a Franciscan heart on board as Executive Director. We are looking forward to working with Patrick."

Mr. Carolan currently resides in Stratford, CT with his wife and children. He currently works for the Diocese of Bridgeport as Manager of Advancement/Development for the Stamford Catholic Schools and at St James Parish in Stratford where he is involved in developing Faith Formation and Social Justice Programs. Previously he has served as president of a Connecticut State Employee Union, has held senior/executive level positions in Medicaid Managed Care companies and has served on numerous boards and commissions both in Connecticut and nationally, dealing with public policy issues.

Margaret Mary also offered thanks and gratitude on behalf of the Board to Father Larry Janezic, OFM, who is concluding his term as Interim Executive Director and is preparing to return to pastoral work in a parish in Indianapolis, IN.

JPIC – News from Fan (continued)

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO
Councilor for JPIC

According to Sr. Margaret Mary: “Father Larry helped FAN grow to a nationally recognized action network. We are sorry to see him leave and wish him God’s peace.”

A Note from Fr. Larry Janezic, OFM

Dear Friends in the Franciscan Spirit,

It has been a joy to assist in the development of FAN for the past two years and for the last year as the Interim Executive Director. It is an awesome dream to image the Franciscan family coming together to have an impact on public policy in the Franciscan spirit. I have been inspired by the insight and determination of the members of the Franciscan Action Network in the demonstration of the spirit of Francis and Clare to public policy and transformation.

On my completion of my term as Interim Executive Director I will be moving on to parish work in Indianapolis, Indiana. I left parish work twelve years ago to direct Franciscan Outreach in Chicago for 9 years. The combination of directing homeless services in Chicago and directing an effort to develop a network for advocacy at FAN has been a rich experience in the ministry of social outreach within the Church in the Franciscan style, with all of its joys and challenges.

I am grateful to the Board, the Action Center Staff, and the Franciscan Family for their collaboration in making the Franciscan Gospel spirit alive in our demonstration of God's love to the poor and the vulnerable. To the extent that the Franciscan family does this, FAN will have an exciting future.

If you are ever in Indianapolis, look me up.

Sacred Heart Church
1530 Union Street
Indianapolis, IN 46225

Sincerely,
Fr. Larry Janezic, OFM 

On behalf of all of the Regional Executive Council we wish everyone a blessed Advent and joyous Christmas filled with love, joy, and peace in the company of family and friends. For those traveling we wish you safe journeys and look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

Advent Prayer


Come, long-expected Jesus.
Excite in us a wonder at the wisdom
and power of Your Father and ours.
Receive our prayer as part of our service to you Lord
who enlists us in God's own work for justice.

Come, long-expected Jesus.
Excite in us a hunger for peace: peace in the world,
peace in our homes, peace in ourselves.

Come, long-expected Jesus.
Excite in us a joy responsive to the Father's joy.
We seek His will so we can serve with gladness,
singing, and love.

Come, long-expected Jesus.
Excite in us the joy and love and peace
it is right to bring to the manger of our Lord.
Raise in us, too, reverence for the God who acted there,
hearty gratitude for the life begun there,
and spirited resolution to serve the Father and Son.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ,
whose advent we hail. Amen.

Source: <http://Catholiconline.org> 

Christmas Reflection

Let us prepare for Christmas, therefore, with humility and simplicity, readying ourselves to receive the gift of light, joy and peace that irradiates from this mystery. Let us welcome the nativity of Christ as an event capable of today renewing our existence. May the encounter with the Child Jesus make us people who do not think only of ourselves, but rather open to the expectations and necessities of our brothers. In this way we too become testimonies of the light that Christmas radiates over the humanity of the third millennium. Let us ask most holy Mary, the tabernacle of the incarnate Word, and St. Joseph, silent witness of the events of salvation, to communicate to us the sentiments they had while they awaited the birth of Jesus, so that we can prepare ourselves to celebrate in a holy way the coming Christmas, in the joy of faith and enlivened by the determination of a sincere conversion. (Excerpted from Pope Benedict XVI address 1st Sunday of Advent 2008.)

Link to full text:
<http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/religion/re0914.htm>.
(You will need to copy and paste into web browser.) 