

Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO

Dear brothers and sisters,

As I write this, we are headed into the coldest weather so far this season. Normally, I'd be contemplating the fact that Lent will be starting soon, but this year Ash Wednesday is March 9, so Lent is a subject for next month! We have an unusually long stretch of liturgical "Ordinary Time" this winter - more than just a bridge between Christmas and Lent - but it's still an "in between" time to me.

The cycle of nature and the cycle of the Church both include quiet times where not much seems to be happening, followed by bursts of activity and growth. While our culture discourages quiet and creates the expectation that we should be busy and either productive or entertained 24x7, as Franciscans we know better. We understand that to be healthy Christians, prayer and contemplation must be the soul of all we are and do (*Rule 8*). For some of us (me in particular), this understanding is knowing that I should eat healthy foods, exercise, and get enough sleep - but knowing and doing are two different things! This is one of those topics for daily conversion (and Lenten practice).

Before we get to Lent, I suggest that we all try to embrace whatever opportunities for quiet we have in this season. Whether you sit quietly with the Lord, take a nap, or bundle up and go out for a walk, it's a good time to be gentle with yourself, catch your breath, and give God a chance to get your attention. There are almost certainly changes in your life that you haven't fully absorbed yet; give them - and yourself - a chance. What new possibilities is the Holy Spirit nudging you toward? How is God calling you today? Maybe you'll get the message while doing the dishes, or the laundry, or a crossword puzzle. If we are trying to be open to God's love, we'll start becoming more and more aware of how that love comes to us every day.

This love that comes to us in the quiet, slow times makes it possible for us to grow and flourish in the times of activity and change. While we look forward to spring, let's be grateful for winter!

I hope to see many of you at the Apostolates Workshop on February 26. We have an excellent opportunity to prepare for Lent by considering ways in which we can better care for creation, and we also will get to learn more about the good work the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) is doing for our entire Franciscan family. Please see the regional calendar elsewhere in the *SFO News* and plan to attend as many of our regional events as you can this year.

Peace and good, Vickie ☒

Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Tagging on to the article I wrote in last month's *SFO News* concerning the sad and low degree of civility in our neighborhoods and the world today, as well as the profound and debilitating fear which overwhelms us all in these times. I feel compelled to mention the awful and violent event that took place in a supermarket parking lot. This devastating situation is an extremely concrete example of my concern and certainly it has had a heartbreaking effect upon us all. But as Franciscans, like the legendary Phoenix, we are potentially at our best when we rise up out of life's ashes and respond as instruments of peace and courage. I hope we are inspired to understand (cont'd page 2)

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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.**
(E=Election/V=Visitation)

January

- 15: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 17: San Jose Fraternity (E)

February

- 15: St. Junipero Serra (V)
- 26: Apostolates Workshop

March

- 01: Fair Share, Census, and Annual Reports due
- 14: NW Franciscan Community (V)
- 26: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

April

- 2: Candidates' Retreat, Day 1
- 17: St. Thomas More (E)

May

- 07: Candidates' Retreat, Day 2
- 12-15: National Formation Workshop, Belleville, IL
- 21: Chapter of Ministers - Fraternal & Pastoral Visitation

June

- 07: St. Clare Fraternity (Oak Brook) (V)
- 12: St. Juliana Fraternity (V)
- 23/ Summer Seminar - "Fraternity"
- 26: Loretto, PA
- 26: St. Anthony Padua (East Side) (E)

July

- 10: St. Elizabeth of Hungary (V)
- 10: St. Maximillian Kolbe (E)
- 16: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 23: St. Francis of Assisi Fox Valley (V)

August

- 06: Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula
- 07: St. Bernardine of Siena (V)

September

- 10-11: Regional Formation Workshop for Ministers/ Formation Directors
- 18: St. Mary of the Angels (V)

October

- 02: St. Francis/St. Louis (V)
- 15: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 25-30: NAFRA Meeting

November

- 13: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration (location TBD)

Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM (CONTINUED)

and to act as people who trust in the dream and the design of a loving Creator God, who joins us in being shocked and brokenhearted, who doesn't leave us there but rather moves with us into hope and eventual recovery. I don't know about you but I was profoundly moved by the memorial gathering held in Tucson when our President spoke such healing words and introduced us to the heroes and survivors as well as sharing stories about those whose lives were taken away. We especially heard about congresswoman Gabrielle Gifford's and her devoted husband, astronaut Mark Kelly. Amidst all the awful sorrow and pain, there was presented this great opportunity for strong hope and the potential for optimistic recovery, especially when the President with the permission of Ms. Gifford's husband, proclaimed that "Gabbie had opened her eyes" which caused me to weep for joy and the crowd in attendance to erupt with applause and a standing ovation. At the time and even now I realize that this was a truly great moment and an excellent metaphorical example for all of us left standing in the wake of another dreadful tragedy. Yes, let us allow the sorrow to wash through us, allow the stunning shock to register and numb our senses, but because of who we are as God's beloved children, following in the footsteps of Francis and Clare, let us individually and collectively open our eyes. Let us also open our Franciscan hearts to becoming a connected and healing force for goodness sake.

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Here are some recommendations for Franciscan winter reading in this hibernation season. I love novels and I read a variety of magazines but I also faithfully include the discipline of Franciscan spirituality.

This year's assortment of Franciscan reading is so rich that I thought I would share them with you. First, I am reading *Angela of Foligno - Complete Works*, from The Classics of Western Spirituality series translated by Paul Lachance, ofm who also provides an informative and meaty introduction. Next, I am reliving and deepening my recent Franciscan Study Pilgrimage with Roch Niemier, ofm's *In the Footsteps of Francis and Clare*, available from St Anthony Messenger Press in Cincinnati, Ohio. Finally, I am enjoying *Greater than a Mothers Love - The Spirituality of Francis and Clare of Assisi* by our own Fr. Gilberto Cavazos - Gonzales, ofm. This fresh and relevant perspective on Francis and Clare is available through the University of Scranton Press - Chicago Distribution Center. Or all of them can be found or arranged for through St Peter's Books and Gifts. My hope for you is that you will continue to expand and deepen your Franciscan understanding and that you will share your discoveries and insights with one another.

Beyond all this I wish you peace and all good. Your Brother Joe M, ofm

Opportunities for Franciscan Adult Education

On Sunday, Feb 27 Most Rev John Corriveau, OFM Cap, Bishop of Nelson BC, will speak on "Franciscan Spirituality: Contributions of Franciscans to the Life of the Church" The lecture is at 3:00 pm, Mass at 4:00, and a reception following that. CTU is at 5416 S Cornell, Chicago. This is part of the series called: "Sundays at CTU: An Experience of Liturgy and Learning." To RSVP, call 773-371-5411 or email rsvp@ctu.edu. Complimentary parking is available in the CTU garage.

For those of you in Western Suburbs, check out the offerings by the Wheaton Franciscans at www.taucenter.org/. They offer a robust variety of quality programs each quarter.

Also, if you work in downtown Chicago, check out the many noontime offerings at St. Peter's in the Loop if your schedule permits.

In-Formation

By Patrick Mendes, SFO
Regional Formation Director

What are you doing for on-going formation is a question I often ask when I am visiting the fraternities of our Region. The answers almost always inspire me and are a revelation to me of the many gifts our brothers and sisters bring to our fraternity gatherings.

I am delighted to see so many of our fraternities using the monthly dossier from our General Presidency. The topics are very timely and speak to the essentials of who we are as Franciscans. Several of our fraternities have some very creative ways of using these dossiers – such a small group discussion and reporting back to the larger group; using the materials for reflection and an inspiration for particular activities; relating the material to the Holy Rule and reflecting how the information contained in the dossier reflect a particular article.

Some of our fraternities are using a current book on some aspect of Franciscan spirituality for discussion and reflection. Apparently very popular with some of our fraternities is any of Sister Ilia Deleo, OSF current books. Sister Ilia will be the keynote speaker and a major presenter at the 2012 Quinquennial Congress which will take place in our Region in 2012.

As for initial formation, we are eagerly awaiting the new Guidelines and Handbook for Initial Formation.

With our Regional Minister, Regional Spiritual Assistant and a member of the Regional Formation Commission, I will be attending the National Formation Commission workshop in Belleville, IL this May where we will receive orientation and experience in using the newly developed, standardized formation process as envisioned and developed by the International Formation Commission of our Order. In turn, we will replicate the Workshop for the Ministers and Formation Directors of the local fraternities of our Region.

Lots of excitement in our year ahead! We will learn together and grow together, faithful to our charism and filled with joy and hope as we move into this new year.

I look forward to our September workshop and I hope you who will be attending will share with one another the exciting things you are doing for ongoing formation in your fraternities. Who knows, you may just be the person someone else needs to learn from and will be able to take your good ideas to their fraternities as well.

I wish you joy in the ordinary things of every day, as we move into the “Ordinary Time” of the Church. Remember that your Regional Formation Commission is here to serve you, so feel free to contact any of us, Sister Marilyn Renninger, Bro. Joe Middleton, Sandy Kisel, Nick Noe or myself if we can be of help to you.

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus surround you with His love and fill your lives with His abundant blessings! 🙏

JPIC - Apostolic Action Workshop!

By Stephanie Sormane, SFO
Councilor for JPIC

Yep, it's coming up on Saturday, February 26 at Mayslake Village, and our main focus will be on a new process developed by Franciscan Action Network (FAN) called “C4C” – which stands for Care for Creation. The plan is to introduce the process to you and then share one of the sessions together. Each session also has a number of resources at the end, and we'll share some of those as well. Additionally, we'll have DVDs of several of the recent webinars and webcasts that FAN and others have offered, including the first webinar presented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) for the First Courageous Initiative in which NAFRA (and therefore we) are participating in with CRS. We also hope to share with you parts of the webinars “Creativity in Creation” and “Franciscan Values,” both of which are being presented by FAN.

So what is the C4C process? The subtitle, “A Franciscan Formation in Environmental Justice and Caring for Creation” is a good summary. Here's part of the introduction published in the facilitators handbook:

Francis did what was his to do. Now this is ours to do. C4C Franciscan Care for Creation is Franciscan Action Network's adult formation program to prepare people for putting faith into action addressing important environmental issues.

JPIC – Apostolic Action Workshop! (cont'd from page 3)

By Stephanie Sormane, SFO
Councilor for JPIC


Catholic Social Teaching calls us to respond to our ecological vocation, and St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi inspired a vision that can help to do just that. The C4C process is meant to inform, inspire, challenge and invite participants to respond.

This adult formation program is designed as a mini-series of six (6) weekly or bi-weekly sessions. Sessions are led by a facilitator who works with a small group of adult learners. Each session lasts two hours and includes prayer, stories, visuals, readings and discussion. The C4C process will provide learners with an overview of pressing environmental issues (including clean water issues, food security, pollution and climate change), an introduction to a Franciscan perspective on the God-human-Creation relationship, an overview of basic environmental science and ecology, a description of the processes of civic engagement, an explanation of the Franciscan eco-social analysis process, and a role-play scenario to practice applying Franciscan eco-social analysis and responding with action steps. C4C includes a list of resources for further learning, and suggestions and ideas for ways to put faith into action in caring for God's Creation and promoting environmental justice.

The C4C program materials include a facilitator's handbook with six session plans, participant handouts, a supplemental DVD with video clips, access to digital slide shows online, and evaluation sheets.... After the C4C program, participants are encouraged to respond with efforts that make a difference. This could include analyzing one's own household or parish ecological footprint, creating a green plan for making your home and parish more sustainable, starting a youth team for engaging in environmental service work, or forming a Caretakers of Creation ministry team to address local ecological sustainability and environmental justice issues in a community....

The Franciscan C4C program is not simply an adult education or community information program; it is a Franciscan servant leadership program in Christian discipleship. C4C is explicitly Franciscan in that it fosters ongoing conversion through active engagement in the world and prayer....

I do hope you find this description interesting and will come to the Apostolic Action Workshop to learn more. Letters have been sent to all Ministers in the

Region with full information. We'll start at 9 a.m. and be finished by 3 p.m. Cost is \$15 per person to cover cost of materials and food (continental breakfast and lunch). Hope to see you all on Saturday, February 26! 

Congratulations to Newly Elected Council Members:

San Jose Fraternity

Minister	Ana Godinez, SFO
Vice Minister	Paty Villa, SFO
Secretary	Estela Puga, SFO
Treasurer	Edelmira Hernandez, SFO
Formation Director	Alicia Posadas, SFO

Editor's Comment:

The violent act in Tucson, AZ this past month is a blow to all who work for and live in peace. So many people are victims of violence in one form or another. As I was looking for an appropriate prayer to use, I was rather saddened by the number of websites that have sprung up dealing with violence. More than ever the world needs the Franciscan spirit of peace and justice. We pray for the wisdom to know what is "ours to do" to bring peace wherever we live, work, play and pray.

God of the poor and marginalized, God of the victims of violence, God of love and hope, we cry to you for peace in our world. Through your Spirit, help us act for peace.

We pray for victims of gun violence - those we know all too well, those who stand here with us, those in Tucson, those listed in today's paper, those all around. We hold before You, O God, all those who have lost loved ones, lost limbs, lost sanity, lost hope as a result of gun violence.

Through your Spirit, help us to act for peace.

We pray for leaders, decision makers, and new policies that may address all the problems caused by gun violence. Through your Spirit, help us act for peace.

We pray for our city, our state, our world. We pray for the conversion of hearts and minds working for a better world. We pray for ourselves. Give us courage to speak. Give us strength to carry on.

Through your Spirit, help us to act for peace. Amen.

The Rev. Alex Evans (2nd Presbyterian Church)
Richmond, VA