

Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO

Dear brothers and sisters,

Well, winter was late arriving (which was fine with me), but it's definitely moved in now. Christmas is a memory, and the enthusiasm of the New Year's fresh start is already waning. On the bright side, the days are getting noticeably longer, promising that spring WILL come.

These few wintry weeks of Ordinary Time between Christmas and Lent seem like just a pause in the liturgical year. We have a couple extra weeks to catch our breath this year before Lent begins, but it still feels more like a time to prepare for the next thing than a season in its own right. Are we short-changing this season just because it's "ordinary"? What should we be learning from this time?

How much of our lives do we spend just anticipating the next season...the next vacation...the next challenge...whatever we see ahead of us? Jesus said, "Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil." (Matthew 6:34) My mother once commented that Scripture promises us that we will be given what we need to deal with the challenges we have TODAY, *not* the challenges we're anticipating tomorrow.

In addition to unnecessary worry, though, we miss out on the GOOD things of today if we're only focused on some future hoped-for happiness. If I think, "I'll relax when I'm on vacation," and don't live a balanced life in the meantime, then it's likely that much of vacation will be spent recuperating instead of enjoying. What's the good of that?

St. Francis lived in the present moment in a way that a planner like me can hardly imagine. As with all our efforts to follow Christ in the spirit of Francis, we need to adapt to suit what God has given each of us. The bottom line question, really, is how do I live TODAY the way I want to live 'someday'? We shouldn't wait for Lent, or retirement, or anything else. Our Rule calls us to daily conversion. Maybe our conversion today is to turn and find the peace and joy of Christ in whatever God puts in our path.

Our Rule (Art. 5) says, "Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity." I would add to that list the opportunity to encounter Christ in nature as well. If we look for Christ every day, we might just find Him in unexpected places...and that makes every day incredibly precious. Let's not wait for tomorrow to seek for Christ, when we know He is just waiting for us to turn to Him!

Last month I wrote about goals; I am not suggesting that you give them up! As usual with our spiritual life, we need to have goals and NOT put life on hold until we achieve them. We'd better make the best of the journey, because ALL life is a journey.

May you be blessed in these winter weeks of Ordinary Time and always.

Vickie ☒

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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

- 14: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 15: St. Francis, Crystal Lake Fraternity (V)
- 22: St. Anthony, Oak Lawn Fraternity (E)

February

- 18: Apostolates Workshop
- 26: St. Anthony, Rockford Fraternity (V)

March

- 01: Fair Share, Census, and Annual Reports due
- 10: St. Anthony, Joliet Fraternity (V)
- 17: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 25: St. Francis, Steger Fraternity (V)
- 28: San Damiano Fraternity (V)
- 31: Candidates' Retreat, Day 1

April

- 1: Living Waters Fraternity (V)
- 15: Nuestra Sra. De Guadalupe (E)
- 17: Brother Jacoba Community (V)

May

- 05: Candidates' Retreat, Day 2
- 19: Chapter of Ministers

June

- 09: Wellspring Community (E)

July

- 3-8: Quinquennial Congress, Chicago, IL

August

- 04: Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula
- 20: Junipero Serra Fraternity (E)

September

- 10: NW Franciscan Community (E)
- 29: Leadership Workshop

October

- 06: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 16-21: NAFRA Meeting – Denver, CO
- 28: St. Thomas More Fraternity (V)

November

- 04: St. Elizabeth Hungary Fraternity (E)
- 14: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration
- 17: St. Francis, Fox Valley Fraternity (E)
- 18: St. Juliana Fraternity (E)

December

- 04: St. Clare Fraternity – Oak Brook (E)
- 08: Regional Chapter of Elections
- 16: St. Anthony East Side Fraternity (V)
- 29: St. Clare Kankakee Fraternity (V)

Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Here we are again in this time of the year where we become interior people out of necessity. I invite you to make the most out of this opportunity to develop our own interior prayer, health and well-being. Sit by the fireplace if you can and gaze upon and pray with Brother Fire so warm and bright. Observe the working of Sister Water in her snowy incarnation as you consider and contemplate the movement of our God in the lives of our dear Francis and Clare, as well as our own place within the Franciscan Spirit.

Here is a profound bit of wisdom that comes to us from the Franciscan Vocation Ministry of the Sacred Heart Province. *We welcome you to the Franciscan vision of the world, a world where love is more powerful than hate, forgiveness more powerful than revenge, hope more powerful than despair, community more powerful than isolation and God is more powerful than all that mitigates against goodness and hope.* I have this wonderful expression of the Franciscan spirit hanging on a large banner in the front office of St Peter's which helps me stay on the high road as a viable instrument of peace (hopefully) in this busy place and as a wonder testimony to those who come to visit of our mission here in the Loop as well as the general mission we all share as Franciscans.

When I gather with you for your fraternity meeting, I so often remind you of the four essential pillars of SFO gatherings which are, as I'm sure you remember, fraternity business, formation, prayer and social activities. Another familiar part of my schema is the idea of finding more and better ways to do what we are called to do. So, now let me once again offer a few words of encouragement in just that direction.

This winter as we are by nature's design a little isolated, let's plan some extraordinary special event to warm and stimulate our hearts and spirits. Perhaps gather together in

someone's home for a day of prayer and reflection. Have everyone bring a favorite vegetable to combine and create a hearty winter soup or stew to share. It could be a good time to break out the statutes and constitutions so that we might be more familiar with these noble documents, or perhaps explore the spiritual directors' handbook for a clearer understanding of that important function. Ask yourselves what you can do to for your fraternity's life and well-being, then do it. Come together and share your personal stories and build on the connections that are already in place. Then lastly, there is a great benefit I believe when you pray or when you share your faith with others to seriously and deeply listen, always listen; take plenty of time to listen.

I leave you as always with my blessings and best wishes.

Your Brother Joe M, ofm

Conversion of St. Paul – and Ours

St. Paul's conversion came about because he had a life changing experience. He was not only physically knocked off his horse but he came face to face with the Risen Jesus.

His conversion changed the whole history of the early Christian Church. One has only to read the New Testament to see how St. Paul's life and travels spread the Gospel over most of the known world.

The idea of conversion is very important to Franciscans as St. Francis always talked about the importance of one's own personal conversion. Conversion is not only a onetime event but an ongoing daily mission. It will continually lead us along challenging roads. How do we live our life as Catholic Christians? How do we listen to the Lord? How do we witness to others how Jesus is a part our lives?

The neat thing about this feast coming at the end of January is that it allows us to take a moment and check how we are doing in our spiritual life. Did we make resolutions? If so are we keeping to them or maybe revising them? It's never too late to begin again.

The saints became saints by saying "yes" to the Lord and "no" to anything that pulled them away from the Lord. May we have the grace to do the same!

(excerpted from Spokane Poor Clares "Joy Notes" 1/25/2012)

In-Formation

By Nick Noe, SFO

Regional Formation Commission

The Evangelical Life

Recently I've been catching up on my Franciscan reading, including the 2011 monthly dossiers from the International Council for the Secular Franciscan Order (CIOFS). As you know, the International Council has been preparing monthly dossiers for the last two years to give guidance to national and local fraternities on topics to discuss in ongoing formation. The monthly theme for all of 2011, and which will continue into 2012, was "evangelization." The International Council had decided that "Evangelized to Evangelize," would be the theme for the General Chapter held in Sao Paulo, Brazil in October, 2011. The 2011 dossiers supported that theme by summarizing and highlighting the 1975 Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi" of Pope Paul VI (*Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World*). The first six dossiers of 2012 will be based on the presentation of Fr. Father Fernando Ventura, OFMCap to the General Chapter and will shape the Ongoing Formation Program for the next six months. Based on January's dossier, Fr. Ventura's reflections are definitely worth reading.

Before becoming Franciscan, the word "evangelization" always had a negative connotation for me. The word conjured up an image of a nicely dressed man or woman at my front door with several pamphlets in hand. After I open the door and introductions are made, the first, or possibly second, question I'm asked is "Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?" I typically reply "yes, but...." and then the discussion begins.

Evangelization means to preach the Gospel or Good News and proclaim Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life. But evangelization does not have to be confrontational, and in fact, 'in-your-face' evangelization may not be effective. Francis in his wisdom told us that we should preach the Gospel at all times, using words if necessary. His preference for first preaching by example or witness is also the Church's model. Pope Paul VI states in his *Exhortation* that "modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." I suggest that statement is more valid today than it was in 1975. Modern men and women have not only lost faith in words and teachers, but in institutions as well.

In Pope John Paul II's message to the SFO General Chapter in 2002, he quoted our own SFO Constitution (12.1) when he stated: *You Secular Franciscans, by vocation, live belonging to the Church and to society as inseparable realities. Therefore, you are asked, above all else, to bear personal witness before all in the environment in which you live: "in your family life; in your work; in your joys and sufferings; in your associations with all men and women, brothers and sisters of the same Father; in your presence and participation in the life of society; in your fraternal relationships with all creatures."* The SFO commitment to "outward evangelization" is certainly reflected in the articles of our Rule and Constitution, although the specific word "evangelization" is seldom used. But our commitment to evangelization is not just because it's in our Rule. As Fr. Ventura stresses in his talk, evangelization is not about power, including power exercised by the Church. It's about love for our brothers and sisters in our families, fraternities, parishes, workplaces, communities, and in all creation. It's about empathy and compassion for others.

But evangelization needs to be inward as well as outward. Pope Paul VI in his *Exhortation* makes the point that although the Church is an evangelizer, "she begins by being evangelized herself, and needs to listen unceasingly to what she must believe, to her reasons for hoping, to the new commandment of love. She has a constant need of being evangelized, if she wishes to retain freshness, vigor and strength in order to proclaim the Gospel."

The same can be said for the Secular Franciscan Order and for its fraternities at all levels. Certainly the new ongoing and initial formation programs being initiated by the international and national fraternities are major steps forward. NAFRA-USA joining with the Catholic Relief Services in its *Catholics Confront Global Poverty* initiative is also a significant step, as was the creation of Franciscan Action Network. But local fraternities also need to pursue evangelization at a deeper and more active level to rebuild the Church and to build the Kingdom. As individuals and within fraternities, we do evangelize, but outward evangelization in "fraternal communion" is also necessary. It may provide just the critical mass needed to make the Church not only a Church of worship and doctrine, but a living presence of Jesus Christ. **¶**

JPIC News – JPIC RALLY!

By Stephanie Sormane, SFO, JPIC Councilor

In early December, Kent Ferris, the JPIC Councilor to the National Fraternity, sent out an announcement of a JPIC Rally, to be held at Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, IL on April 12-15, 2012. Your Ministers have already received an email from our Regional Minister, Vickie Klick that our Apostolic Workshop on February 18 is cancelled in favor of encouraging members of the Region, particularly those involved in JPIC, to attend to the Rally.

Here's what Kent says in his cover letter regarding the reasons for the Rally and why it's so important.

Since our move from the Apostolic Commission Model to our present JPIC Model, we have not had such a gathering. The Rally focus is bringing together people to sustain and enliven our JPIC efforts. We Rally to build fraternity, give guidance, direction and formation to JPIC Point People, to build new Commission leadership and to prepare for the Quinquennial.

One of the major purposes/outcomes from the "Q" is to discern "What IS our gift, what is God asking of us NOW in the 21st Century?" as an Order. Because the "Q" will ask this question, and because the answer will come from those attending the "Q", we really, really need people at the "Q" who can speak knowledgeably and persuasively about JPIC as part of this discernment process. We need a substantial number of people who have the heart and vision for JPIC issues to attend both the "Q" and this April 2012 JPIC Rally.

The Rally will have prayer and faith sharing, sessions on Catholic Social Teaching and our Rule, strategies from going from work to action, celebration of JPIC efforts undertaken and planning for the future (the "Q", the Commission, a national JPIC gathering).

This is a week end, and of course the cost is more than our one-day workshop would have been. However, this is a Rally for the entire country, and we have a tremendous advantage because, first, we can DRIVE to our Lady of the Snows, whereas most of the rest of the Seculars in the country will need to fly. We have that same advantage for the "Q" this year since it's here in the Chicago area. The cost of the Rally is \$275 for a double room if you register by February 15, or \$305 if you register after February 15. If you want a single room, it's \$100 more for the week end. The prices also include all meals (dinner Thursday evening, all 3 meals Friday and Saturday and breakfast and box lunch to go on Sunday).

Most people who have visited Our Lady of the Snows know that it is a very nice place; this should be for all a spiritually fulfilling week end. I am more than happy to help organize carpools for this event. My hope is that we have at least one person from each cluster in our Region attend the Rally, who then shares with the cluster afterwards in whatever way each cluster decides, but before the "Q", what was covered at the Rally and the role we need to place at the "Q."

You can get registration forms from your Ministers, or I will be happy to supply them to you. Please bear in mind the February 15th deadline to save \$100. Only \$50 need be sent with the registration.

We are so blessed to have both this first JPIC Rally and the "Q" in our Region this year – let's take advantage of this gift! I truly believe the change from the Apostolic Commissions to JPIC (which helps to encourage our collaboration with the rest of the Franciscan Family), the creation of FAN, this Rally and the discussion which will take place at the "Q" are the work of the Holy Spirit to help us all take the next steps to serve our God and our brothers and sisters in need. The likelihood of an opportunity like this occurring again anytime in the near future is not very great – so let us recognize this gift and take advantage of it. ☩

**SFO Pilgrimage to St. Francis and Italy
Florence* La Verna* Assisi* Loretto* Rome,
October 16 to 26, 2012 with
Friars Johnpaul Cafiero OFM and David Rodriguez OFM**

Dear Friends,

Peace and all good! This was Francis's greeting to all God's creation. As you consider joining us for this unique and wonderful experience to walk, reflect, pray and play in the various places so special to the heart of Francis and Clare of Assisi, we greet and welcome you into this graced time. Our experience is open to all who love Francis and Clare. We would like to make a special appeal to our sisters and brothers in the Secular Franciscan Order. You will walk through the streets where Francis and Clare danced: you will pray on Mt LaVerna where Francis was blessed with the sacred marks of Jesus passion: you will kneel at the site of the first Christmas Creche in Greccio and at the tomb of Francis and his first companions. As we pray at the foot of the cross of San Damiano, we too will hear again Francis admonition to "rebuild a crumbling church". We hope and pray that the time will be as deeply rewarding, spiritually moving and grace-filled as it has been for so many for over 800 years.

May the Lord bless and keep you!
Pace e bene,

Friars Johnpaul Cafiero and David Rodriguez

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