

Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, OFS

Dear sisters and brothers,

As I think about Easter this year, I am drawn to the disciples facing the empty tomb. We know how the story turns out, and as we sing our renewed 'Alleluias', we are likely to overlook the fact that the glorious truth was not at all obvious on the first day of the week. As we go from Gospel to life and from life to the Gospel, we can picture ourselves spending that Passover Sabbath in grief. We gave up everything to follow Christ and now it seems to be all for nothing.

Then, on Sunday morning, we go to the tomb to do what we can...and something inconceivable has happened. Where is Jesus' body? Did someone add to the misery by desecrating the tomb? What do we do now?

That is where I have to stop and reflect. What now? Anything I might have planned, whether before the crucifixion or in the quiet of the Sabbath hours afterward, no longer matters. In chaos, even good news that further upsets my plans can be unwelcome.

In that context, I can better understand the reactions that Mark recounts in Chapter 16. The women at the tomb are bewildered and afraid at the words of the angel. Even after Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and to two of the disciples, the Eleven do not believe, so He had to "rebuke them for their disbelief and hardness of heart" [Mk 16:14].

As is often the case when I read the Gospels, I am grateful to God that the disciples who knew Jesus while He walked the earth were so imperfect - it gives me hope in my own journey! Recognizing how Jesus' life, death, and resurrection challenged the expectations and upset the well-laid plans of those

who might have been most expected to welcome Him can encourage us to be more patient with others who still find the Gospel message too much to believe.

Perhaps even more important, we can spend some time this Easter Season gently recognizing where we are in the Resurrection story this year. Yes, we are all celebrating new life in Christ...but in your own life, you may be standing by the foot of the cross sharing another's sufferings. You may be on the cross yourself, sharing Christ's sufferings in body, mind, or spirit. You may feel as though you are in the tomb yourself, like Lazarus, bound and waiting for Christ to call you to freedom. Or, you may be with me, standing in front of an empty tomb and asking God, "Now what?"

As we heard just before Lent this year, God says to us, "See, I am doing something new!" [Isaiah 43:19]. May we all experience the Good News of Christ's resurrection afresh this year, with some of the amazement, wonder, and, yes, upheaval that the disciples felt. May we be open to whatever God has in mind for each of us this Season.

Blessed Easter, Vickie ☒

P.S. I hope you have already registered for the Quinquennial Congress (the "Q") this summer. You may be tired of hearing it, but this is THE place to be if you want to renew your Secular Franciscan vocation. We are fortunate in having the Q right here at home - no travel required! Please do whatever you can to attend - even if only for a day. See page 3 for more information about the Q and how you can register. You will not regret it!

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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

Buon Giorno Buona Gente,

Well, here we are again coming through another Lent, heading into the greatest celebration of Choosing Life that we know, Easter. I hope that you all have had a meaningful Lenten journey wherein you have been able to Gaze upon the heart of Jesus' journey and mission, to Consider all that has been handed down to us, and to Contemplate our place, purpose and our proper response within our hearts and lives; Imitate Christ. I am referring here to one of the most famous expressions of St Clare's spirituality in which she directs her sisters to Gaze, Consider, Contemplate, and Imitate Christ.

This year as you probably know the Poor Clares celebrate 800 years of the founding of their order. Let us join them in the celebration of this very special milestone event. I hope that most of you have some kind of connection to the Poor Ladies for such a friendship can be very life-giving. I am recommending that each fraternity spend some of its formation time this jubilee year discovering Lady Clare, and then plan something special around her feast day on August 11th.

One option could be a presentation from the formators' FUN Manual section on Clare of Assisi compiled and written by Francine Gikow, OFS. It is quite a succinct and meaty little article which contains much of the foundational material on the subject of this "little plant of our Father Francis" as she has been called.

Additionally, let us not lose sight of all that is at hand, namely the celebration of Holy Week, The Great Easter Vigil, as well as all of Easter Time set against the backdrop of glorious Spring. My hope is that none of you misses a thing and that you are able make the best out of everything.

This is going to be a wonderful year for us Franciscans of the Mother Cabrini Region. There are some exciting activities sponsored by the Region, the re-opening of the National Shrine of Mother Cabrini, as well as the Quinquennial Congress to be held here in the Chicago area during the week of the 4th of July celebration. As for me, I will be making my first pilgrimage to the Holy Land which I will tell you about in future installments of *The SFO News*.

Until then I send you my blessings and best wishes upon you and all that you carry in your hearts.

Your Brother Joe M, ofm ☒

PRAYER OF ST. CLARE

*I look up and I behold the Lord,
Clare says to me, "Gaze upon Him,
consider Him, contemplate Him,
I put this more simply:
behold, hold, enfold.*

*I behold the Lord
I see His outstretched hands
I see the blood from His wounds.
I see the love in the eyes of Jesus.
I see His gracious acceptance of me.*

*Jesus has come out of the tomb –
He still has the scars, but now they are glorious,
with the glory of heaven.
Still looking at the Lord, I reach out and touch Him.
I hold the Lord – and I am held in His love.*

*Love enfolds
It is no longer I that live,
but Christ that lives in me.
I am secure in the Lord.
I can look out, now, through the Lord's eyes.
I can see the world as He created it, in His mercy,
I can see my sisters and brothers with His love,
and I can worship the Father through the eyes of
the Son in the Love of the Holy Spirit.*

In Memoriam

Lorna Van Zytvel of St. Juliana Fraternity died on February 23rd. She was professed for over 50 years! May her soul and the souls of all our departed Franciscan brothers, sisters and those we hold dear behold the face of the risen Lord in eternal light, happiness and peace. Amen.

In-Formation

By Sister Marilyn Renninger, OSF
Regional Formation Commission

April is a great month of new life. All kinds of thoughts are running through my mind, like going for walks through the woods, looking through garden catalogs to see what is new in flowers and plants, planning gardens, but above all Francis and Clare.

It was on Palm Sunday 1212, when Clare secretly left her home and joined Francis in a strict following of the poor Christ. This 800th anniversary year of the beginning of the Poor Clare Order is a year of special blessings, so if you have not visited a Poor Clare Monastery lately I encourage you to do so before August 12 when this special year which began April 16, 2011, comes to a close. Pope Benedict XVI has granted a plenary indulgence during this Clare jubilee year under the usual conditions.

Thomas of Celano wrote that after Francis had followers he wanted the Church to confirm their way of life. So he took to Rome words of the Holy Gospel, inserting a few other things that he thought were necessary for a holy way of life. He asked for and received the approval of the Church at a time when no new religious orders were being approved.

April 16, 1209/10, is the traditional date of approval of the rule of Francis and his early friars which Pope Innocent III confirmed endorsing Francis' order. So April 16 is considered the official founding of the Franciscan Order.

Every April 16 it is customary for all Franciscans to renew the promises made at profession, to live the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in their state of life. Since our fraternity gatherings are at different times of the month, it is advisable that at our gathering closest to April 16, you renew your profession. It can take place during Mass or a prayer service or in the Liturgy of the Hours. Even though ordinarily we renew our promises daily, once a year we do it together with our brothers and sisters.

The stories that surround the life journey of Francis and Clare deal with love; love of God, love of people, and love of all God's creation. As we journey with Francis and Clare may we follow their example of love in walking in the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ, and their stance of awe and wonderment for all creation. Oh yes, and take time to enjoy the gift of each day, keep a spring in your step, and stop now and then to pick some flowers.

Peace and every good!
Sr. Marilyn 



Your Franciscan Gift? Kick it up a notch Come to the Q!

- Discover the passion. Capture the spirit.
- Meet brothers and sisters who'll help you take your Secular Franciscan vocation beyond what you imagined.
- Help take the Order to the next level.

Don't miss this opportunity.
REGISTER TODAY.

And prepare yourself for the
experience of the decade.

It's spiritual. It's social.

It's for the mind, for the soul,

for the person you are yet to be!

QUINQUENNIAL CONGRESS

Why Francis? Claim the Gift!

July 3-8, 2012

Holiday Inn North Shore
Skokie, IL (near Chicago)

Registration info:

<http://www.nafra-sfo.org/>

Speakers include nationally renowned authors
and theologians,

Sr. Ilia Delio, OSF, and **Br. Bill Short**, OFM,
plus our own Ed Shirley, OFS,
and Pat Brandwein-Ball, OFS

JPIC NEWS – Rally/Economic Justice for All

By Stephanie Sormane, OFS, JPIC Councilor

I'm happy to report that the JPIC Rally will have at least 30 participants on April 12-15 at Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, IL. For a first time, that's a very good showing. Those attending come from 17 Regions, and there are a number who are not professed Secular Franciscans but "Friends of JPIC." It's too late to register for the Rally this time, but I think there's great hope for more rallies down the road. There are three of us from the Mother Cabrini Region attending, and I'll be reporting on the Rally next month.

Meanwhile, Kent Ferris, OFS, The NAFRA JPIC Chair, sent to JPIC Councilors throughout the nation the 10th Anniversary statement of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on "Economic Justice for All; a Catholic Framework for Economic Life." Here it is:

As followers of Jesus Christ and participants in a powerful economy, Catholics in the United States are called to work for greater economic justice in the face of persistent poverty, growing income gaps, and increasing discussion of economic issues in the United States and around the world. We urge Catholics to use the following ethical framework for economic life as principles for reflection, criteria for judgment, and directions for action. These principles are drawn directly from Catholic teaching on economic life:

1. *The economy exists for the person, not the person for the economy.*
2. *All economic life should be shaped by moral principles. Economic choices and institutions must be judged by how they protect or undermine the life and dignity of the human person, support the family, and serve the common good.*
3. *A fundamental moral measure of any economy is how the poor and vulnerable are faring.*
4. *All people have a right to life and to secure the basic necessities of life (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, safe environment, economic security).*

5. *All people have the right to economic initiative, to productive work, to just wages and benefits, to decent working conditions, as well as to organize and join unions or other associations.*
6. *All people, to the extent they are able, have a corresponding duty to work, a responsibility to provide for the needs of their families, and an obligation to contribute to the broader society.*
7. *In economic life, free markets have both clear advantages and limitations; government has essential responsibilities and limitations; voluntary groups have irreplaceable roles, but cannot substitute for the proper working of the market and the justice policies of the state.*
8. *Society has a moral obligation, including governmental action where necessary, to assure opportunity, meet basic human needs, and pursue justice in economic life.*
9. *Workers, owners, managers, stockholders, and consumers are moral agents in economic life. By our choices, initiative, creativity, and investment, we enhance or diminish economic opportunity, community life, and social justice.*
10. *The global economy has moral dimensions and human consequences. Decisions on investment, trade, aid, and development should protect human life and promote human rights, especially for those most in need wherever they might live on this globe.*

According to Pope John Paul II, the Catholic tradition calls for a "society of work, enterprise and participation" which "is not directed against the market, but demands that the market be appropriately controlled by the forces of society and by the state to assure that the basic needs of the whole society are satisfied" (**Centesimus Annus, 35**) All of economic life should recognize the fact that we are all God's children and members of one human family, called to exercise a clear priority for "the least among us."

This is not a Franciscan document, but it is a Catholic document. As those called to "rebuild God's house," we are surely called to embrace these principles.