

OFS News

Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the
Secular Franciscan Order

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Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, OFS

Dear sisters and brothers,

I hope your Lent is going well. The word "Lent" originally referred to spring. It sure doesn't feel much like spring right now, but as we move into March, we know that any cold snaps we have will be getting shorter and shorter as the days get longer and longer. As a native Floridian, I've found that I appreciate spring much more when there's an actual winter before it. In a similar way, our observance of Lent can make the fifty days of Easter all the more glorious.

Has God had any surprises for you so far? Has God given you what you needed rather than what you wanted? (Sometimes I know God does that with me, just as my parents did when I was a child. Sometimes I'm even grateful for it!) Whatever has happened so far, I hope you continue to grow closer to God in this holy time. If you are using either of the practices I suggested last month (reread the entire Rule each day, and/or take an article of the Rule each day and meditate on it), I'd appreciate hearing from you and how it's been for you. If you are still looking for something to intensify your Lenten practice as we get to the halfway point, consider one of these.

What I pray for most is that you have a personal experience of God's unconditional love. With some practice and God's grace, we can learn to see more of the signs of that love in our lives and in the lives of those around us. Living our lives in response to that love will change everything! I believe that KNOWING God's love is what energized Francis and made him so attractive to others. If we are conscious of that love, it will naturally translate into action

– service of our brothers and sisters and care for creation. Our fraternities would be bursting at the seams, and the outpouring of energy in service would be remarkable. Yes, this is an ideal – one that even Francis' original followers had trouble living up to – but it IS our ideal and we can pray to be given the grace to live it, no matter how imperfectly.

This is the last *OFS News* being edited by our very capable Councilor for Communications, Gloria Huerta. We are very grateful for the time and talent that Gloria has shared with us in producing 75 total issues of our regional newsletter over two terms, along with her faithful participation in the Regional Executive Council. As of this writing, we still do not have a replacement. We will fill the gap within the Regional Executive Council for the short term, but I'm still hoping that one of you will step forward and offer your time and talents. As an appointed member of the REC, you will help to animate and guide the regional fraternity, as well as helping ensure everyone in the Region is hearing from us regularly. If you don't feel that you have those skills but you know someone else who does, please encourage him or her to contact me.

By the time you hear from me again, Easter will be here! May the glorious presence of the Risen Christ bring you joy and hope.

Peace and blessings, Vickie 

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

Submission deadline is the
20th of each month.

CALENDAR

Unless otherwise indicated, all events are at Mayslake Village (Oak Brook).

- **Election & Visitation dates subject to change. (E=Election/V=Visitation)**

January

- 12: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m. (transition meeting)

February

- 03: St. Bernardine of Siena Fraternity (E)
- 17: St. Mary of the Angels Fraternity (E)

March

- 01: Fair Share, Census, and Annual Reports due
- 10: St. Anthony of Padua, Joliet (V)
- 16: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 17: St. Anthony of Padua, East Side (V)

April

- 7: St. Francis St. Louis Fraternity (E)

May

- 18: Chapter of Ministers, Mayslake

June

July

- 13: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 21: St. Francis Assisi Fraternity, Algonquin (E)
- 27: St. Anthony of Padua, Rockford (E)
- 28: St. Anthony of Padua, Oak Lawn (V)

August

- 03: Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula

September

- 14: St. Anthony of Padua, Joliet (E)
- 25: San Damiano Fraternity (E)
- 28: Study Day/Leadership Workshop

October

- 05: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 06: Living Water Korean Fraternity (E)
- 15: Brother Jacoba Community (E)
- 12-20: NAFRA Meeting – Denver, CO
- 27: St. Francis of Assisi, Steger (E)

November

- 17: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration

December

- 14: Wellspring Community (V)

Spiritual Assistant’s Message

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Now, once again, we are navigating the dry and arid days of the holy season of Lent. And on that subject there is a wealth of material available to aid and support our efforts and hopes of remembering our connections to our Church, our baptism, and our vocations as Franciscans. Chief among these materials is sacred scripture which takes us into the water with the apostle fishermen and with John the Baptist as we are called, formed, converted and commissioned.

Next we go throughout Galilee and Judea as we are shaped into good instruments of God’s evangelizing team. Then finally, as an important part of our preparation, we go into the desert with our Lord who searches mind and heart, there to fast and to contemplate what it is that we will do as we face the cross. Oddly enough it is here, in solitude, where we find that we are never alone, even in death; especially in death. Another important aspect of the design of our Lenten journey is the serious allowance of a gracious amount of time – 40 days.

On my recent wonderful visit to the Holy Land with Fr. Mario I found that some of the sites where significant events took place were recognizable in the modern world some 2000 years plus since the time of Jesus. Up in Galilee I found recognizable places such as the mount of the beatitudes, the archeological sites in Nazareth and farther up in Caesera Philippi. I truly loved Galilee. But the place that was the most unchanged was the Judean desert in the south where we visited Jericho, the Mount of Temptation, Massada, and the Dead Sea. I remember being so grateful to be there especially because it allowed a true visual impression of our Lord’s going out into the desert for forty days. So now during Lent I am taken back as I had hoped to that harsh and

strikingly beautiful place to more clearly imagine that pivotal point in Jesus’s evolution. I remember thinking at the time that it was a good thing that Jesus was fasting for at first I could see no signs of life. The Judean desert looks to me like what we’ve seen of the Moon. Then, upon closer examination, I noticed lots of date palms and little bands of shepherds and their flocks grazing on the sparse vegetation, and the abundant caves where I was told some water could be found. At any rate now during this first Lent since my return, I am encouraged and I encourage you to go out into the desert to fast and pray. Go alone and go with your brothers and sisters to prepare a way through temptation to discover the strength to face even the cross.

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

**Mark Your Calendars—
Regional Candidates’ Retreat**

When: April 13-14, 2013

Where: Mayslake Village, Oak Brook

Time: 9AM-3:30PM each day

Cost: \$40 for 2 days (\$25 single day)

Theme: Franciscan Evangelical Life

The expectation is that those attending will attend *both days*, and it is hopeful that having the Retreat over a single weekend will make it easier to attend both days, and increase total attendance.

While candidates who will be professed before April, 2014 are primary focus, inquirers, formation directors and formation team members are also welcome to attend.

Deadline for registration is **April 1**. Your local minister will provide details via email and at your next fraternity meeting. 

In-Formation

By Nick Noe, OFS
Regional Formation Commission

The Franciscan Evangelical Life

“The Franciscan Family, as one among many spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church, unites all members of the people of God – laity, religious and priests – who recognize that they are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi” (Art. 1 OFS Rule)

In January of this year, I was fortunate to attend a 5-day retreat at the Franciscan Renewal Center (known as the Casa) in Scottsdale, Arizona. The title of the retreat was *The Evangelical Life*, and it was facilitated by Andre Cirino OFM and Ann Bremmer OSF. More than 35 people attended the retreat and most belonged to the Franciscan Family. Four friars and several Franciscan sisters had traveled from various parts of the eastern United States to attend the retreat. One of the friars was from southeast New Jersey and was accompanied by three members of his parish. They were at the Casa not only for the retreat but to take a break from the devastation of Hurricane Sandy. Their church building had been leveled by the hurricane and they were planning to rebuild. However, nearly half of those attending the retreat were Secular Franciscans, including a large group from Flagstaff, Arizona who exemplified what fraternity should be about. Although from different Franciscan Orders, all Franciscans at the retreat and all members of the Franciscan Family realize they share in a common way or form of life and that is “to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus.” And as Francis states in his *Testament*, this way of life that he and his brothers were to follow was revealed to him by the “Most High Himself.”

Franciscan Orders, other than the Secular Franciscan Order, observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, in poverty, and in chastity. However, because of our secular state, we “observe the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and center of his life with God and people.” We profess to live by the OFS Rule, which is essentially a promise to live the gospel or evangelical life. The evangelical life for Secular Franciscans is certainly not monastic, but it is not an apostolic life either, although we are often involved in apostolic activities.

The OFS evangelical life is one centered on stepping in the footprints of Christ with Francis as the primary example of how we should take those steps in our own unique way. So we read and study the gospel, biographies of Francis and other Franciscan writings, and our own Rule and Constitution for guidance.

Studying the gospel, the life of Francis and the Rule are important, but we need to stop occasionally and ask “how am I doing?” Am I really living the evangelical life, or am I someone who just thinks about it, and can’t seem to take the necessary steps? Richard Rohr, OFM keeps reminding us in his writings that you can’t think your way into a new way of acting, but it’s necessary to act your way into a new way of thinking. So we might ask ourselves the following questions as a first step in determining how we can live a more evangelical life.

- 1) What are God and my Franciscan vocation asking of me at this time of my life? Am I as enthusiastic about my Franciscan vocation as I used to be?
- 2) Are prayer and contemplation really the foundation of all I am and do as a Franciscan?
- 3) Does my Franciscan spirituality just affect my prayer life or all aspects of my life?
- 4) How am I making Christ visible at home, in the fraternity, at work, in the wider world? Am I including justice, peace, and creation issues as part of my ministry?
- 5) Am I progressing on the path of conversion and becoming more centered on God and others?
- 6) How connected am I to my fraternity members? Is it heart-to-heart relationships with others?
- 7) How well do I bear the crosses in my life? Is Christ my model, and resurrection my hope?
- 8) Have I accepted my poverty before God, and am no longer attached to power, possession, and prestige?

Candidates, Inquirers (and Professed) will have the opportunity to reflect upon these questions and others at the Candidates Retreat on April 13-14 at Mayslake Village. Information about the Retreat has been sent to all Fraternity Ministers and Formation Directors. Attending the Retreat is a good way to experience the new life that Spring brings in nature and in our own lives. There is more information on the retreat later in this newsletter. 

Pope Benedict XVI Final Angelus Address

Pope Benedict XVI's final Angelus address delivered to pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square on Sunday, February 24, 2013

Dear brothers and sisters!

Thank you for your affection!

Today, the second Sunday of Lent, we have a particularly beautiful Gospel, that of the Lord's transfiguration. The evangelist Luke especially emphasizes the fact that Jesus is transfigured while he prays: Jesus' is a profound experience of relationship with the Father during a kind of spiritual retreat on a high mountain together with Peter, James, and John, the 3 disciples who are always present in the moments of the Master's divine manifestations (Luke 5:10, 8:51, 9:28). The Lord, who a short time ago foretold his death and resurrection (Luke 9:22), offers to his disciples an anticipation of his glory. And in the transfiguration too, as in the baptism, the voice of the heavenly Father resounds: "This is my Son, the chosen one. Listen to him!" (Luke 9:35). The presence then of Moses and Elijah, who represent the Law and the Prophets of the Old Covenant, is of great significance: the whole history of covenant is ordered to him, the Christ, who accomplishes a new "exodus" (Luke 9:31), not toward the promised land as in the time of Moses, but toward heaven. Peter's words: "Master, how good it is for us to be here" (Luke 9:33), represent the impossible attempt to freeze such a mystical experience. St. Augustine comments: "[Peter] ... on the mountain ... had Christ as the food of his soul. Why should he want to come down to return to toil and suffering while there he was full of sentiments of a holy love for God that inspired him thus to holy actions?"

Meditating on this passage of the Gospel, we can take from it a very important teaching. First of all, there is the primacy of prayer, without which all of the work of the apostolate and charity is reduced to activism. During Lent we learn to give the right amount of time to both personal and communal prayer, which gives breath to our spiritual life. Moreover, to pray is not to isolate oneself from the world and its contradictions, as Peter wished to do on Tabor. Prayer, rather, leads us back to the journey, to action. "The Christian life," I wrote in my Message for this Lent, "consists in continuously scaling the mountain to meet God and then coming back down, bearing the love and strength drawn from him, so as to serve our brothers and sisters with God's own love." Dear brothers and sisters, I hear this Word of God addressed to me in a special way during this moment of my life. Thank you!

The Lord is calling me to "scale the mountain," to dedicate myself still more to prayer and to meditation. But this does not mean abandoning the Church — on the contrary, if God asks this of me, it is to serve the Church with the same dedication and the same love with which I have tried to do so hitherto, but in a way that is more adapted to my age and my strength. Let us invoke the intercession of the Virgin Mary: may she help us always to follow the dedication and the same love with which I have tried to do so hitherto, but in a way that is more adapted to my age and my strength. Let us invoke the intercession of the Virgin Mary: may she help us always to follow the Lord Jesus in prayer and in active charity. 

Integrating Franciscan Values and Work May 31 - June 1, 2013

Offered by the Franciscan Action Networking for Justice

Hosted by the
Wheaton Franciscan
Office of Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation
and Tau Center

The program begins on Friday and concludes Saturday. You are encouraged to attend both days. If you are unable, there will be a brief review of Friday's program Saturday morning.

9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. each day
Saturday concludes with liturgy at
4 p.m. in the Community Chapel

The fee for this event is on a sliding scale:
For 2 days: \$40 to \$120
For 1 day: \$25 to \$75
The fee includes lunch, Coffee breaks, and all materials. Offer whatever is within your means.

To register,
call: 630-909-6805
email: taucenter@wheatonfranciscan.org
or download a registration form
from our website: www.taucenter.org