

## Minister's Message

By Vickie Klick, OFS

Dear sisters and brothers,

I've just come home from a week with my brothers and sisters around the country at the annual National Fraternity Chapter in Kansas City, KS. Besides the usual "family reunion" feel of the week, there was a lot of thought-provoking material presented. I could mine this Chapter for reflections for the next six months!

For this month, I want to start with the theme chosen for 2014: "Be the merciful presence of God." This follows the 2013 theme, "Be the bridge...Accept all people as a gift from God." The 2014 theme echoes National Minister Tom Bello's introductory remarks on Tuesday evening, when he reflected on Pope Francis' extensive comments on mercy. Using the call of St. Matthew as an example (as Pope Francis did recently), Tom showed how God's mercy transforms our lives, in a very active way – God "mercys" us, and we are to "mercy" others.

What does this theme mean in our lives?

1) We are to be the presence of God to those we encounter. As St. Teresa of Avila wrote, Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
Compassion on this world...

2) We are to be merciful. In Luke 6:36, Christ tells his disciples (which, of course, includes us), "Be merciful, just as [also] your Father is merciful." [NABRE]

3) Of course, mercy is not the same as saying "anything goes."

Rather, as Pope Francis said in the now-famous interview, "I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood

sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else." We are called to be healers first!

4) We need to pray to know God's unconditional, merciful love in our hearts.

If we really knew how much God loves us, then our lives would be completely changed. Rather than our trying to be good to EARN God's love, once we know God's merciful love in our lives, we want to be good to RESPOND to God's love. That is what, in my opinion, makes saints possible.

In a related action at Chapter, the National Council also released a statement urging all people of good will to take a cue from the example of Pope Francis and embrace the world in love in their daily lives. The statement says, in part, "We wish to affirm and promote the spirit of nonviolence and reconciliation embodied by his words and witness... We support his efforts to embrace the world in love and to remind us of our call to be accepting of all people, recognizing that in mercy there is also justice."

May we accept the challenge to reach out to others in mercy during the year to come! I hope to see many of you at the Mother Cabrini Celebration on November 17.

It feels too early as I write this, but I also wish you all a blessed Thanksgiving

Peace and everything good,  
Vickie 

We are saddened to learn that one of our long-time members, Alexander Gorel, OFS passed away on October 8th. May his soul rest in eternal peace. 

## Council Members

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

Submission deadline is the  
20<sup>th</sup> 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)**

**November 2013**

- 3: Living Water Korean Fraternity (E)

- 17: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration

**December 2013**

- 14: Wellspring Community (V)

**January 2014**

- 18: Regional Executive Council Meeting

**March 2014**

- 1: Per Capita/Census/Fraternity Annual Reports Due

- 15: Regional Executive Council Meeting

**April 2014**

- 20: Easter
- 26-27: Candidates Retreat (no overnight)

**May 2014**

- 16: REC meeting w/National Visitors (late afternoon/evening)
- 17: Chapter of Ministers – Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation

**July 2014**

- 10-13: Summer Seminar – Spiritual Assistance
- 17-20: Korean OFS Meeting – St Mary of the Lake, Mundelein

- 19: Regional Executive Council Meeting

**August 2014**

- 2: Regional Gathering – Feast of the Portiuncula

**September 2014**

- 27: Study Day / Leadership Workshop

**October 2014**

- 11: Regional Executive Council Meeting
- 21-26: NAFRA Chapter, Lake Dallas, TX

**November 2014**

- 16: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration and 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishment of the Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity – Location TBD

**Spiritual Assistant’s Message**

Dear sisters and brothers,

I probably would have done better to mention this in last month’s article but as I didn’t, please allow me to mention this month’s annual Mother Cabrini celebration now. It will happen on Sunday, November 17th. It will begin with welcoming and registration at 10:00 at the Mother House of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart at 9201 W. St. Francis Road in Frankfort, Illinois.

I have had the good fortune of working with the steering committee for this special event. It is a joint venture sponsored by the fraternities of the south/western cluster; St Anthony of Padua - Joliet, St. Elizabeth of Hungary Frankfort, St. Francis of Assisi – Steger, and St. Anthony of Padua – East Side.

Together they have planned a lovely day for us all. I hope to see as many of you there as can come. Pray for fair weather on that day.

Now, having just come through the Franciscan holy-days of early October, I hope all of you were able to participate fully in this abundant season of hope and remembering. I myself have many reasons to celebrate my life at St. Peter’s but at the top of that list of reasons is the fact the celebration of the Transitus and the Feast are done beautifully.

I’ll never forget the time a few years ago when I was in Assisi for these events which I had looked forward to with great anticipation. But the reality of what happens there was a great disappointment for me, what with the pushing crowds, the crass commercialism, and the religious politicking.

At that time I remember sort of mentally clicked my heals together as I realized that there’s no place like home; there’s no place that does it any better than at St. Peter’s Church in the Loop.

This year was no exception and for me once again the joining together of Franciscan folks was delightful.

So at this time, my question to myself and to you is this, don’t you just love being Franciscan? Without a moment of hesitation my response, as I hope yours is a heartfelt yes.

I love the strong infusion of God’s spirit within my own as a result of following Francis’ direction. I love the freedom that is the result of the choices we make as believers to simply trust that our God is a loving force who generously gifts us with all that we need and more. I love the comfort and peace that comes from the fraternal association with other Franciscan hearted souls in our communities who can become deeper than family. I love the vision, the Franciscan eye that reveals God and awesome beauty in all of creation which opens the way to the a joyful assurance that peace and all goodness is not outside of us but flows through us and deeply connects us where ever we are, always.

Don’t you just love being Franciscan?

Brother Joe Middleton, ofm 

On September 25, the San Damiano Fraternity held their triennial election with results shown below:

Presider: Norman Mosk, OFS

Spiritual Assistant Witness: Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Secretary of Election: Karen Jacobs, OFS

Tellers: Jim Strnal, OFS, and Madeleine Sharko, OFS

Minister: James Strnal, OFS

Vice Minister: Tom Griffith, OFS

Secretary: Mark Czyzewski, OFS

Treasurer: Tom Reed, OFS

Formation Director: Mary Ann Spiller, OFS

We thank the outgoing council members who have served their fraternity faithfully for the past three years, and the incoming council for their willingness to take their turn to serve their brothers and sisters.



## In-Formation – Regional Formation Council

### In-Formation—Contemplation and Creation

By Nicholas Noe OSF, Regional Formation Director

In April 2010, the U. S. Catholic magazine contained a special section on the environment. One of the articles, and one to which I still refer, was an interview with Br. Keith Douglas Warner OFM, one of the co-authors of *Care for Creation: a Franciscan spiritual of the earth*. Br. Keith teaches at Santa Clara University and has written extensively on care for creation, climate change and ecology. The first question asked of Br. Keith was: “What’s the single most important thing that Catholics can do to protect the environment?” His answer was: “Practice contemplative prayer.

The fundamental problem is that we are alienated from God, ourselves, and the earth, and it’s through prayer that we can come to understand where we belong. It’s our apathy, our consumerism, and our materialism that distract us from what’s most important, and it’s in that context of prayerful reflection upon our relationship to God that we can grow and accept our responsibility.”

At first, I was surprised by the answer. Given that Br. Keith is an environmentalist, I assumed he might say “calculate your carbon footprint.” But after thinking about it, I realized his answer was consistent with Article 8 of our OFS Rule, which states, “As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, so let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do.”

Prayer can be thought of as any movement of a person’s heart toward God, no matter whether the prayer be vocal, meditative or contemplative. There are different definitions of contemplation, but contemplation can be thought of as a silent and loving gaze toward God through Christ under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. According to St. Bonaventure, the gaze can be outward, inward or even upward, the latter being directly into God. Centering prayer is a type of inward gaze, while the outward gaze might be gazing at the San Damiano cross in the manner of St. Clare, or gazing at nature and creation.

Br. Keith is not excluding the inward and upward gaze, but his answers indicate he is focused more on the outward gaze and seeing creation as a manifestation of God’s love and the world as the house of God. But to gaze deeply at nature and creation and see it all as a manifestation of God’s love requires us to see not only with our physical eyes, but with the eyes of the heart or soul.

We see only what we want to see or what we have been taught to see. Recently, I was taking a lunch-break in my back yard. My dog, Jacoba, was sitting in front of me looking intently at the sandwich I held in my right hand. A beautiful grasshopper landed on a plant next to where I was sitting, and I tried to get Jacoba to look at the grasshopper. But Jacoba would not take her eyes off the sandwich. If a squirrel had been at my left shoulder instead of a grasshopper, she would have been in a quandary, because she sees and chases squirrels and she sees food, especially mine. But grasshoppers are not something towards which she is attracted.

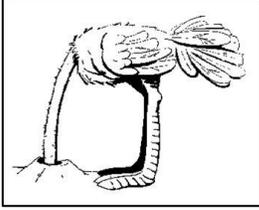
Our OFS Rule (Art. 4) states that we are to: “observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people.” And “we should devote ourselves to careful reading of the gospel,” the word of God. But as Thomas Merton points out in *New Seeds of Contemplation* (Chap.3), every expression of the will of God is in some sense “a word” of God and not just the written word.

Francis of Assisi, our example and the Patron Saint of Those Who Promote Ecology, was someone who was lead to contemplation through the written word but also through seeing and reading the Word of God in nature and creation. His *Canticle of the Creatures* reflects someone who saw so deeply that he could see as God sees, and see that all creatures are his brother and sister.

So how does one begin to take the contemplative path toward seeing God in nature and creation? There are many ways, but “mindful” prayer, gardening, nature walks, bird-watching, and even selective fasting, can lead to a deeper relationship and experience of God. And with winter approaching, don’t hibernate inside your house, but take walks in the cold. As Thomas Merton wrote in *New Seeds*, “For it is God’s love that warms me in the sun and God’s love that sends the cold rain.” **T**

## Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

By Barbara Elkins, OFS, JPIC Councilor



### *My Head in the Sand*

I like to live a quiet and ordered life. I find peace in following a daily routine with an occasional social engagement that is planned a bit ahead of time.

Since moving back to my hometown of Park Ridge from South Carolina, I have rekindled many friendships from my childhood and now spend more time with my extended family. My Franciscan family has also grown to include my new fraternity and members of our region. By adding these to the richness of my past relationships, I have become connected to many people and share in the joys and sorrows, hopes and worries of their lives.

Although I truly treasure them, sometimes the added responsibility of these relationships weighs heavily on my mind and heart. My quiet and ordered life becomes disrupted as I walk, in friendship, in someone else's shoes, particularly in times of distress. When I add to this, all the negative and troubling news in today's media-rich culture, I often want to say "Enough! I can't take this right now!" This is when I want to put my head in the sand and block out the troubles of the world. I want to return to the quiet and peaceful bubble of my life. This is my time for prayer, contemplation and a return to my routine. This is my comfort zone and I'm very content here.

Yesterday, I witnessed the beautiful Rite of Profession for two members of my fraternity. I was duly reminded of the promise I made just two years ago as I was "*called to give witness to the Kingdom of God and to build a more fraternal world based on the Gospel, together with all the people of goodwill.*" I was asked if I "*wish to bind myself more closely to the Church and to work intently to rebuild the ecclesial community and fulfill its mission among all people.*"

This is a call to live outside my comfort zone. During the Rite of Profession, we are asked, .... "**Do you wish to be faithful to this vocation and to practice the spirit of service proper to Secular Franciscans?**"

Through ongoing formation, I hope to increase my awareness of the ecclesial community that I am called to rebuild and to remain current with the issues that are tied to the Church's mission.

I'm sure that many of you practice the spirit of service within your own fraternities and parishes and for this, I am grateful. For those of you who feel called to learn and do more, I hope to share relevant resources through these monthly newsletters.

One such resource that I find helpful is the Franciscan Action Network (FAN). As their mission states, they are a collective Franciscan voice seeking to transform U.S. public policy related to peacemaking, care for creation, poverty, and human rights. They provide weekly spiritual reflections and action items through their e-news. To receive these emails, subscribe through their website: [franciscanaction.org](http://franciscanaction.org). Click on the envelope in the top right hand corner.

We hope to strengthen our collective Franciscan voice by addressing issues of interest within our region. I pray that we can create a JPIC network that will lift our heads right out of the sand. **¶**

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St. Juliana Fraternity now has two new professed members - William Conte and Joseph Cierny. They had their Rite of Profession on October 20th.

St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity in Joliet conducted their triennial election on September 14. Results appear below:

Presider: Lorna Miressi, OFS  
Spiritual Assistant Witness: Br. Tom Smith, OFM  
Secretary of Election: Le Anne Tjelle, OFS  
Tellers: Dottie Mueller, OFS, and Frank Kamradt, OFS

Minister: Dale Marzano, OFS

Vice Minister: Dottie Mueller, OFS

Secretary: Marilyn Ciaramitaro, OFS

Treasurer: Charlie King, OFS

Formation Director: Lucy Linko, OFS

Thanks to the outgoing council for their faithful service, and to the incoming council for their willingness to serve. **¶**