

OFS News

Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the
Secular Franciscan Order

www.ilsfo.org

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Minister's Message

By Vickie Klick, OFS

Dear brothers and sisters,
Some regional news: First, our sister Muriel Baum is doing much better – I was able to speak to her recently, and she sounded good. She will be in Arizona at her son's for some time yet while she regains her strength. She is very grateful for our prayers, and continues to need them as she recuperates.

Second, we on the REC are sad to say goodbye to Jerry Stecker. He resigned his position as Regional Secretary at the end of 2013, after coming to the conclusion that his pastoral care work at his parish, with its uncertain schedule for Saturdays, wasn't compatible with his commitment to the REC. Jerry continues to be very involved in his fraternity and in the spiritual assistant training, and we hope that when he retires from parish work, he will again accept nomination for a regional office. In the short term, the secretary's duties are being divided between Lorna Miressi and Kristi Loar, but we will be appointing a replacement to fill out Jerry's term (through December 2015).

Moving on...we are living the Gospel, and part of living the Gospel is sharing it with other people. If being a Secular Franciscan is a significant part of my life, eventually someone will ask, "Why are you a Secular Franciscan?" Are you ready to answer that question? For me, I would have to start with the easier but related question – How did you become a Secular Franciscan? We each have our story, whether it is simple (my pastor invited me; my parents were Secular Franciscans and I naturally followed in their footsteps) or more roundabout (some come from religious life, others, like me, reached the Secular Franciscan Order after conversion). When was the last time

you told someone how you came to be a Secular Franciscan?

An easy and fun activity at a fraternity meeting is to share our stories. Some fraternities have one person tell his or her story each month; it could be a good general activity when having a renewal of profession promises. Getting used to talking about our journey to the Secular Franciscan Order is good preparation for the more important step of talking to people who aren't in the Order. For instance, when fraternities have visitors, it might be good to have one or two people (maybe recently professed) share their stories. The visitors will have a better idea what it might mean to become a Secular Franciscan, and if they can relate to what they hear, they are more likely to investigate further. The biggest challenge is sharing with people who don't even know there IS a Secular Franciscan Order (and that includes a lot of Catholics). On the one hand, it could be helpful to have an "elevator pitch" to explain the Order briefly. However, I think it's more important to be ready and willing to talk about your own faith journey and how the Secular Franciscan Order has been part of that. We are an Order that emphasizes personal relationships, so sharing the good news of our way of life in a personal way makes a lot of sense to me. My own journey to the OFS is part of my conversion story. After becoming Catholic in 1982, I knew that I needed to do more than attend church on Sundays, but wasn't sure what to do. I happened to be at St. Peter's, picked up a bulletin, and saw an ad for St. Francis-St. Louis Fraternity. A few months later, I started postulant classes, and in 1985, I was professed! Then I started *really* learning what it means to be a Secular Franciscan...and the process continues to this day. Peace and blessings,

Vickie 

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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 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)**

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 20th anniversary of establishment of the Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity – Location TBD

Spiritual Assistant’s Message

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I send you greetings from the fringes of the Land of the Living. I’m sorry that you didn’t hear from me last month during Christmas Time but I was, as many of you know, tied up in the hospital and unable to transcribe my thoughts for the holidays. These thoughts that I had developed in my mind were quite good I thought but they can wait until next year. As many of you know I had surgery in early December to remove a tumor from my colon which kept me in the hospital for 6 days and then 3 days later I was taken back in an ambulance with pain and bleeding which were the results of the interior closure popping opening which required a second surgical procedure which kept me in the hospital for another 7 days. Initially I was told to allow a month for recovery but because of the second procedure that month hasn’t been enough; recovery is a gradual process especially for us older folks. I am living with an open wound in the middle of my stomach where my belly button used to be which has to be carefully tended by a wonderful home health care nurse who visits 3 times a week to change my bandages.

I am told that things are progressing as they ideally should and the wound is closing. One dreadful element of my recovery was that I had the hiccups for almost three weeks which was not uncommon I was told and as I was told, they would stop, and they have thanks be to God. So, with that semi-sanitized report of my gruesome surgeries let me shift to what I believe will be the better and more relevant part of the story; Gratitude. I am very grateful for the many cards and letters that so many of you sent and the prayers for my recovery which were so

encouraging. Thank you. Thanks you. Thank you.

I am certainly grateful to the doctors, nurses and care team who skillfully attended me. I am also deeply grateful to my Franciscan community who has so lovingly and tenderly cared for me during these weeks of my recovery. Their response has been natural and generous and has set before me the inspiring and best example of the Franciscan spirit I have ever experienced.

I am so grateful for the love given to me as well as the love engendered from me for my brothers and of course from my friends and family. What a healing blessing, what an occasion for gratitude. But for me the greatest and most confirming gratitude is to our loving creator God who has shone so brightly during this time for me demonstrating the miraculousness of his creation of our bodies. It has always been one of the ways I am assured that there is a God; when you cut your finger, it heals. With this event in my life I am more dramatically presented with that insight. There is a God who heals and I am allowed to bear witness and to testify.

Your Brother Joe, OFM 

The Brother Jacoba community is sad to report the passing of one of their members, Remedios Mendoza, on 17 December, 2013. May he Rest in Peace.



In-Formation—Regional Formation Council

By Nicholas Noe ofS, Regional Formation Director

The Healing Touch

“Sometimes we are tempted to be that kind of Christian who keeps the Lord’s wounds at arm’s length. Yet Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others. He hopes that we will stop looking for those personal or communal niches which shelter us from the maelstrom of human misfortune and instead enter into the reality of other people’s lives and know the power of tenderness. Whenever we do so, our lives become wonderfully complicated and experience intensely what it is to be a people, to be part of a people.”

Pope Francis, para. 270,

EVANGELII GAUDIUM

The Gospel reading for Thursday, January 16, was the story of Jesus curing a leper, a story most of us have heard many times. The leper begs to be cured, and Jesus, “moved with pity,” stretches out his hand, “touches” the leper, and the leper is made clean. Jesus then sends the cured leper to the priest in hopes the priest will reinstate the cured leper into the religious community. Because of their assumed contagious disease, lepers were exiled from family, community and church or synagogue from ancient days onward. When I hear a story or a gospel reading at Mass that I’ve heard numerous times, my brain may go into standby mode and murmur something like “you’ve heard this one before and, yes, Jesus had miraculous powers.” But this time when I heard the gospel reading, my brain and heart avoided slipping into standby and I was struck by a phrase in the reading. The phrase was not “he was made clean” but rather “he touched the leper.” I thought to myself there must be some significance to Jesus touching the leper other than physical cure, because Jesus could have done so without touching.

We know how important touching, embracing or kissing a leper was in the life-long conversion process of Francis of Assisi. He wrote in his *Testament* that after he showed mercy to the lepers, everything that had been bitter to him (lepers) “was turned into sweetness of soul and body.” So what do the leper stories of Jesus and Francis, and the quote from Pope Francis (above), tell us about the significance of “touching”

First, it lets the person being touched know they are not alone in their suffering or need, but are connected to others who care for them. They are part of a people, part of the Mystical Body of Christ. Second, and at deeper level, healing, or even conversion, can occur to either or both parties involved in the touch. It is not likely a physical healing, but an emotional or spiritual healing where the image of Christ is seen in the other, and any separation or brokenness is healed through a sense of equality and unity before God. There can be joy (Art. 13) and everything bitter can become sweetness in both soul and body. And, in the words of Julian of Norwich, both parties know that “all will be well.”

I recently returned from a mission trip to Nigeria, and Nigerians are a very “welcoming” people. After Mass or some other gathering, many will come up to you, say “welcome,” and then reach out for a hug or handshake. It is impossible for me to count the number of handshakes and hugs, but it had to be in the hundreds. But there were two instances when I failed to touch someone and those I remember most. One was when our group was part of a procession after a diocesan Mass.

The procession moved along a block-long path surrounded on both sides by crowds of people, many of whom reached out their hand wanting just a simple touch. One person, who perhaps needed an embrace more than others, I did not see until I was almost past him. The reason was that he was crippled and on his knees. I was tempted to leave the procession and go back and give him a hug, but I didn’t.

The other instance was when our group visited a crowded mental hospital in deplorable condition. I realized after walking out of the hospital that I had not touched or engaged any of the patients. Once again, I did not go back. But I’m not beating myself up over my failures, because I know God places opportunities before us almost every day to touch someone who is hurting and in need. We may not always be able to express our compassion by a physical touch, but a phone call, an email or a simple note will let them know they are not alone. **T**

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

“Prayer and Fasting”

By Barbara Elkins, OFS , JPIC Councilor

January is passing quickly as I try to resume the post holiday routines of my life. With a new job schedule and a list of follow-up reminders for activities both old and new, I vacillate between feeling a sense of accomplishment to being quite overwhelmed. This is the time of year that I sharpen my organizational skills and try to change the habits that can change my life.

In an attempt to balance my physical and spiritual life, I turned to a book that was given to me entitled **Rediscover Catholicism: A Spiritual Guide to Living with Passion & Purpose** by Matthew Kelly. In it, he shares his insights on the seven pillars of Catholic Spirituality. I was particularly interested in the chapter on fasting for I feel this spiritual discipline has always been lacking in my life. Kelly writes, “We practice fasting as a form of penance not because we want to punish ourselves or destroy ourselves, but rather to express sorrow for our moral failings and to be restored to wholeness. The Church invites us to the spiritual practice not because she wants us to feel guilty or have a poor self-image, but rather so we can be liberated. In the process we are given grace to strive with ever more determination to become the best-version-of-ourselves.” Isn’t this what we all strive for – to be the best version of ourselves through God’s grace.

We are asked to pray for peace and to build a more just and caring society. In January alone, National Migration Week addressed the need for just and compassionate immigration reform. We prayed for Christian Unity and for those worldwide that are persecuted for their Christian faith. We mourn the loss of millions of infants with the 41st anniversary of Roe vs. Wade. The USCCB has designated February 8 as a day of prayer for the victims of human trafficking. These issues need plenty of prayers but I ask myself, what more can I do?

Matthew Kelly reminds us that “fasting is to the body what prayer is to the soul. Indeed, fasting is the prayer of the body and bodily fasting leads to spiritual feasting.” He continues with “authentic fasting draws us nearer to God and opens our hearts to receive His many gifts.”

As I contemplate ways to walk the path of justice and peace, I’m encouraged by Kelly’s reference to a passage in Mark’s Gospel in which Jesus replies to his disciples, “this kind of spirit can only be cast out through prayer and fasting.” (Mark 9:29).

With Lent soon approaching, I hope to expand my practice of fasting beyond the Ash Wednesdays and Good Fridays of my past. I wish to make fasting part of my everyday spirituality through a conscious effort to turn toward God and away from self. As noted in the book, fasting need not always involve food. I can fast from judging others or complaining. I can fast from noise and movement in order to seek silence and stillness in God’s presence.

I can pray and fast so that I don’t become indifferent and immobile in the face of violence and injustice. In doing so, I can be open to do whatever God calls me to do.

“Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.” 

Rest in Eternal Peace – Northwest Franciscans of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is sad to announce the passing of Our Sister L. Jane Gresey, OFS, one of our shut-ins, who transitioned to eternal life on January 20. Her family would like us to hold a Secular Franciscan Wake service, which we will do during the visitation on February 1:

Visitation: 1-5 p.m., Feb. 1 (Saturday)
Lauterburg-Oehler Funeral Home, 2000 E. Northwest Hwy., Arlington Heights

Franciscan wake: 3 p.m. (during the visitation at Lauterburg-Oehler)

Funeral Mass: Time TBD, Feb. 3 (Monday),
St. James, 820 N. Arlington Heights Rd., Arlington Heights

Obituary: To be published in the Jan. 28 *Arlington Herald*.



Here I Am Lord

We have the wonderful opportunity to participate in the 2014 'Here I Am Lord' Youth Vocational Conference at St. Patrick's Crane Road Church in St. Charles IL; running March 6th – 9th. The HAIL conference (in its 12th year!) invites various religious communities to share information about themselves with youth and young adults from grade school through high school.

The conference runs from a Thursday evening through noon on Sunday and hosts thousands of visitors (students, parents, teachers, parishioners) who participate in the many activities, listen to engaging speakers and performers, and interact with the various religious communities.

Booths are positioned throughout the church facility and include pictures of religious life, ministry; most importantly with the purpose of encouraging dialogue between representatives who tend their booths and conference participants. We often are partnered with members of another community to present during various workshops; each of us having heard a different call to vocation. Eager to discern what it means to them, students seem most interested in what it 'sounds like' to be called' to their own vocation.

We have been blessed to participate in the conference for the past 5 years; our booth has earned a reputation for providing 'God Rocks', just a little piece of creation to carry about in one's pocket! Participation in the conference is a rewarding experience. It is time well spent with all sharing their stories and offering inspiration to each other. Please keep attend the our youth and young adults in your prayers as they conference and listen to 'hear' God's voice.



spent with
all sharing
Please keep
attend the

Peace!
Kristi Loar, OFS

