

Minister's Message

By Vickie Klick, OFS

Dear brothers and sisters,

I hope Lent is providing you many opportunities to increase your love of God and neighbor! I was pleased to hear from a few of you that you were going to join me in reading Pope Francis' *The Joy of the Gospel*. I hope you're persevering in that. I've gotten far enough to encounter some passages that put ME on the spot! I'll write more about some of those topics in a future article.

I've also been listening to a lecture series on the writings of St. Clare by Sr. Joan Mueller, OSC (from Now You Know Media). While most of us have heard at least parts of St. Clare's letters to Agnes of Prague, I have never read Clare's form of life. In listening to it, I was struck by the phrase "the integrity of the monastery". The word "integrity" in that context was something I wasn't accustomed to. In fact, there are three separate but related ways "integrity" is used to refer to the community in Clare's form of life (as translated by Sr. Joan):

- 1) the physical sense (having sufficient land to ensure the integrity and seclusion of the monastery);
- 2) the safety and stability of the community (as when the abbess is "confers with all her sisters concerning those things that need to be discussed for the benefit and integrity of the monastery");
- 3) the maintenance of the community (when the sisters "work faithfully and devotedly at tasks that pertain to the integrity and service of the community")

Since the word caught my attention, I thought about what it could mean in Secular Franciscan life, since obviously we aren't living in

monasteries.

First, the physical sense: Those of you whose fraternities have had to relocate due to a change in parish priorities or other issue know very well that a suitable gathering space is not always easy to come by. If the space is hard to find, has accessibility issues, or is otherwise uninviting, it can be difficult to attract new members, and a challenge for some existing members. It is important for our fraternities to have a place where they can meet and not (normally) be disturbed by other activities.

With respect to safety and stability, I think of the ways in which conflict and division can destroy the peace of a fraternity, and even lead to dissolution of a fraternity. Differences of opinion are inevitable; There are more subtle ways that a fraternity can be destabilized. Members who habitually make other activities a priority over attending fraternity gatherings deny the gift of their presence to their brothers and sisters and weaken the bond of fraternal life. Being present at fraternity gatherings is to be our highest priority church activity after Sunday Mass attendance.

Finally, with respect to maintenance of the community, we too need to place our talents and abilities at the service of our brothers and sisters in fraternity, whether by serving on the council, bringing refreshments, visiting the sick, providing transportation, etc. Those who are excused from attending fraternity meetings due to ill health or other reasons are still part of the life of the fraternity and need to contribute as they are able, for the good of the fraternity as a whole.

Council Members

Minister

Vickie Klick, OFS
▪ minister@ilsfo.org

Vice-Minister

Lorna Miressi, OFS
viceminister@ilsfo.org

Formation Director

Nick Noe, OFS
formation@ilsfo.org

Secretary

Jerry Stecker, OFS
secretary@ilsfo.org

Treasurer

Dale Marzano, OFS
treasurer@ilsfo.org

Councilor At-Large

LeAnneTjelle, OFS
atlarge@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Communications/Public Relations

Marc Golab, OFS
pr@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Fraternal Life

Bonnie Michels, OFS
fratlife@ilsfo.org

Councilor for JPIC

Barbara Elkins OFS,
jplic@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Visitations

Muriel Baum, OFS
visitations@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Vocations

Norman Mosk, OFS
vocations@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Youth/Young Adults

Kristi Loar, OFS
youth@ilsfo.org

Spiritual Assistant

Br. Joe Middleton, OFM
spiritualassistant@ilsfo.org

Newsletter Editor

Marc Golab, OFS
ofsnews@ilsfo.org

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

Ministers Message cont.

Our regional Ministry of Prayer and Praise is one way to enable our shut-ins to share in fraternal life through their prayers. We each must do what is ours to do in order to keep our fraternities functioning well.

As spring (finally!!!) arrives and the new life in the natural world echoes our Easter alleluias, may the Risen Christ bring life and light to your hearts and minds.

Blessings, Vickie 

Spiritual Assistant’s Message

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I am writing to you beginning on the first day of spring in the middle of the season of Lent. As much as I would like to address the greening hope of springtime I’m afraid it just doesn’t seem like spring and so far the only thing I’ve seen that is green is the Chicago River. I guess it’s safe to say that spring will be late this year, but it will come I’m sure. But next week I’m going to fly down to south Texas to celebrate my birthday with some of my Texas friends and my brother who also celebrates his birthday. Mostly, I want to experience warmer weather and hopefully see bluebonnets, the beautiful state flower which grows wild all across Texas and blooms in the springtime. I don’t believe that there is a Texan anywhere that doesn’t almost weep at the sight of bluebonnets. I’ll be thinking of all of you when I’m there.

On the subject of Lenten practices and preparations, we have all heard from many good sources the place and purpose of the foundational activities of prayer, and fasting, and giving so I won’t add to that discussion.

Rather, I would choose to address what the hopeful potential benefit for ourselves and for others is of these good actions; conversion, liberation, and gratitude.

Our wonderful holy father Pope Francis I said it very well in his Ash Wednesday Homily. He states, “With its calls to conversion, Lent comes providentially to rouse us, to shake us from our laziness, from the risk of moving forward merely by inertia. The exhortation that the Lord speaks to us through the prophet Joel is Loud and clear: ‘Return to me with all your heart’ (Joel 2:12). Why must we return to God? Because something is wrong in us, in society, in the Church -- and we need to change, to turn things around, to repent! Once again Lent comes to make its prophetic appeal, to remind us that it is possible to realize something new within ourselves and around us, simply because God is faithful, continues to be full of goodness and mercy, and always ready to forgive and to start over from scratch. With this filial confidence, let us set out on our way!” These thoughts impressed me very much and even though we are well underway through our current Lenten journey I hope they are relevant and helpful for you.

I extend my blessings and very best wishes as we continue on our way toward Easter and Spring time.

And I remain, your Brother,

Joe Middleton, ofm 

In-Formation – Regional Formation Council

By Sr. Marilyn Renninger, OSF
Regional Formation Commission

April, what a beautiful month – full of showers so we can have May flowers! Well, there is more to the month of April than that. There are several very important events taking place in these thirty days.

First, April 16, 1209, is the date given for the beginning of the Franciscan Order. Therefore, all Franciscans are encouraged to renew their vows or promises. So whenever your gathering is in this month, would be a good time to communally renew your profession. If you have a Mass as part of your gathering, your renewal can take place after the Gospel, or after the readings when you pray the Office. So, together let us loudly profess a **“YES”** to Jesus to live the gospel for the rest of our life.


Second, April 26 and 27, are the dates for the Candidates Retreat. Retreats are special times of spiritual growth and spiritual nourishment. Everybody who is serious about their spiritual life knows the need to go apart for a time from their daily routine and reflect on their relationship with God. Even the Pope sets time aside for an annual retreat. I just read a comment he made after his retreat. He said he *“wants to follow Jesus more closely, without losing hope in his promises and without losing a sense of humor.”* I say, “Me too!”

And third, April 27, two very popular courageous and charismatic Popes will be canonized on Divine Mercy Sunday. We will have two new saints on our church calendar: St. John XXIII and St. John Paul II. A truly blessed event for the Church, and a great honor for Pope Francis! These two new saints are examples of heroic virtue and holiness for us to model in our lives. I can see some of the same simple traits in Pope Francis as in these two new pope saints – caring, courageous, spontaneous, pastoral,

- role models who call us to deeper holiness and faithfulness.

In Pope Francis’ address with seminarians and novices last July, he said, **“...let us...preach the Gospel with our example and then with words. However, it is in our life that others must first be able to read the Gospel.”** He is so much like our St. Francis speaking to us.

If you do not yet have a copy of Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, “The Joy of the Gospel,” please get a copy as soon as possible. You will be enriched for it is full of gold nuggets. I encourage all the candidates to try to read it before the Candidates Retreat, April 26 and 27. Like St. Francis, Pope Francis is teaching and preaching by word and example. The Spirit is very much alive in the Church. We just need to step up, listen, and then do!

Peace and all good! Sr. Marilyn 

Excerpts from *Exactly What Is Lent* Originally published in ‘The Priest’, March 2008

How do we find a delicate balance between the rigorous fasting and self-denial of the past and meaningful ways to observe Lent?

Father Hart explains it is a time of self-denial and self-examination. Fasting is a well-established biblical custom. True fasting involves a struggle. Father Hart reminds us that fasting has to be done always in relationship to prayer and almsgiving...not just a donation of money, but good works such as a gift of our time or talent. And Jesus challenges us to all of this without being seen. Jesus expects His disciples to be already doing these acts. He says, “Your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you.” (MT 6:4) Father Hart wonders if that is how we should approach Lent. It is a secret shared only with God.

Richard Hart OFM Cap

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

“Catholic Social Teaching: Understanding the Basics”

By Barbara Elkins, OFS, JPIC Councilor

As noted by Carolyn Townes, OFS in the winter edition of the Tau-USA, there are three legs of JPIC:

- Education
- Advocacy
- Direct service.

I look forward to the return of the JPIC surveys so that I may share the wonderful examples of direct service projects that exist within our regional fraternities. My hope is that this information will form the foundation for a network of resources that will assist those who want to pursue a more active role in advocating JPIC concerns.

As mentioned in the survey, the seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching are the foundation of the Franciscan Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation concerns. I came upon an excellent article by Emily Stimpson in *Our Sunday Visitor Newsweekly* online (Feb 5, 2014) entitled “What Exactly is Catholic Social Teaching?” In it, she answers these key questions.

WHAT? Catholic Social Teaching “helps us understand how we’re called to live in community with one another.” One needs the right understanding of the human person as created by God in community. “This vision, as revealed in Scripture, explained by the magisterium and synthesized in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church is threefold. First, whatever Catholics do in the social order (economic, political and community life) has to serve the good of the human person, who is made in the image and likeness of God. Second, charity and justice oblige all men and women to serve the common good. Third, that service is a way of proclaiming the Gospel.”

WHY? Quite simply, the reason is Jesus. The motivation to live out the Church’s social teaching “flows from a desire to show others the love Christ has shown us. It’s a fruit of authentic conversion, the natural response of a creature transformed by God’s gratuitous love.” Work first on your relationship with Christ and the rest will follow.

HOW? We learn to live our lives in unity with the Church’s social teaching by pursuing holiness. “Peace and justice are rooted in our encounter with Christ in prayer, the sacraments and Scripture.” If there is personal holiness, it’s easier to change the social climate we live in.

WHERE? Stimpson notes, “for the Church, the family is the primary ‘where’ of Catholic Social Teaching. “It’s where you recognize your dignity and the dignity of others. It’s where you grow in temperance, prudence, fortitude, generosity, faithfulness, sacrifice and kindness.” By promoting, protecting and serving the family, society strengthens the social order.

WHO? We are all called to bring the Gospel to life. By educating ourselves on the Church’s social doctrines, we can live out our commitment to love our neighbor as ourselves. The social teachings provide a foundation for us to put our faith into action. We are called to be responsible citizens by making positive contributions to the social and economic order of our society.

TO WHAT END? “Catholic social teaching is geared toward our salvation. Certain behaviors separate us from God. Others draw us closer to Him. Catholic social teaching helps us to choose the good and avoid the bad, even in difficult situations.”

Our Sunday Visitor Newsweekly is accessible online at www.osv.com. Search for Catholic Social Teaching to locate this and other interesting articles on the subject. This article also contains a useful glossary of terms.

Please remember to return your surveys to me by April 30th through the mail or e-mail. I look forward to sharing your responses. 📧