

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 sisters and brothers,

It was wonderful to see so many of you at the Mother Cabrini celebration! The frigid weather was challenging in a different way from last year's tornado, but it was warm and cozy indoors. Fr. Bob's talk on prayer was a great preparation for Advent; since all but a few of our fraternities were represented, I encourage you to do some followup at a fraternity meeting. Maybe you could use the chaplet-like prayer (the one-page handout) for entering into awareness of being God's beloved as your community prayer for a month (or several). It would be particularly appropriate during Advent, as we are challenged to find a quiet place in our hearts for the Lord in the midst of the hustle and bustle of holiday preparations. If you need a copy of Fr. Bob's prayer and no one in your fraternity has it, please let me know and I'll send it to you.

Speaking of Advent and preparing to celebrate Christ's Incarnation once again, I read a recent article by Dan Schutte on the spirituality of Advent in which he suggests, "Instead of lamenting that the secular World around us doesn't seem to recognize the holiness of the season, what if we watched and waited with hopeful expectation for all the ways God chooses to take flesh for us every day?" Now THAT sounds like a Franciscan way of looking at the world! He goes on to ask, "What if we think of Advent as that time when we work to clear away all the stones guarding the opening of our hearts, leaving us exposed to God's redeeming love?" That is our work of conversion! Let us prepare our hearts for God's love so we are ready to love others with that same love! Another message I heard this week which I thought was very appropriate to us as Secular Franciscans was Archbishop Cupich's homily at his installation Mass

On Tuesday. He started by saying, "[W]e are to join Christ in seeking out, inviting, and accompanying, by abiding with those to whom he sends us." Of course, we are to seek out, invite, and accompany in the way that Archbishop Cupich meant, sharing the faith, but I think we can also take it as the basis for our outreach to those who may be called to the Secular Franciscan Order. The "seeking out" is based on an experience of transformation that leads to our enthusiastic sharing with others. Has our experience of God's love, of Christ, of following Jesus in the footsteps of Francis led us to a place where we can't help but share the joy? If not, how do we get there?

The second step after we seek out those with whom we can share our enthusiasm and joy is inviting. I think of this as recognizing the ones who see something in us that they want, and asking them to come and see what it's all about. Archbishop Cupich, on the other hand, talked about the invitation of Jesus to take a risk, based on the day's Gospel in which Jesus invited Peter to walk on the water. So, it is both: we need to recognize and accept the invitation to be more (and Pope Francis gives us those kinds of challenges on a near-daily basis), and we need to invite others to join us. Finally, there is accompanying. We aren't going to have a strong Secular Franciscan community by just inviting people to come to a meeting and then just sitting there on the other side of the room! We need to accompany those in initial formation – for their good AND for our own – and we need to keep accompanying each other on our journey of life. THAT is fraternity! It is up to us to seek out relationships, perhaps even with those who rub us CONT. BELOW)

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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.

REGIONAL CALENDAR 2015

All events are at Mayslake Village unless otherwise noted

Saturday, January 17
Regional Executive Council Meeting

Monday, March 2
Per Capita/Census/Fraternity Annual Reports due

Saturday, March 21
Regional Executive Council Meeting

Sunday, April 5 *Easter*

Sat./Sun., April 11-12
Candidates Retreat (*tentative*)

Saturday, May 16
Chapter of Ministers

Thursday-Sunday, July 9-12
Summer Seminar – Loretto, PA; topic "Servant Leadership"

Saturday, July 18
Regional Executive Council Meeting

Saturday, August 1
Regional Gathering – Feast of the Portiuncula

Saturday, September 19
Formation/Leadership Workshop (tentative)

Saturday, October 3
Regional Executive Council Meeting

October 13-18
NAFRA Chapter/Chapter of Elections, Clinton, NJ

Sunday, November 15
Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration location TBA

Saturday, December 5
Regional Chapter of Elections



(CONT. from above) the wrong way.

So...let's prepare the way of the Lord by opening our hearts to His love on a daily basis, by seeking out opportunities to share that love and joy with others, inviting others into our circle, and accompanying one another through life's ups and downs. Then we will be ready to welcome Him, both as we celebrate the Incarnation and when He comes again! Blessed Advent and Christmas to all of you.....Vickie

Spiritual Assistant's Message

Dear Sisters and Brothers,
O.K. it's official, the holidays are fully underway. We have remembered our beloved dead, and we've lived and expressed our thanksgiving with hopefully a festal celebration and we have more or less had our first and early snow. For all of this we have cleared the way to begin and move to the next level, the deeper phase of our holiday journey. So, let's consider the place for Advent in our lives which is a joyous process of preparation and anticipation. We prepare ourselves for the coming into our lives of our redeemer Jesus the Lord. We enjoy the special liturgical events and appurtenances such as the advent wreath. We move along with appropriate and timely readings to support our deeper development and of course we share a full range of music particular to this season. All of this of course you already know I'm sure. We well hear, "be watchful! Be alert!" "Give comfort to my people, says your God". "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." "I am a voice crying out in the desert." "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord." Through this course of our history and our traditions we have the opportunity to find fresh insight and joyous experiences built on top of other past memories to become more authentic discoveries to become better experiences of the ongoing formation found during the Advent season as well as to the

potential benefit beyond. I propose that we participate actively in the season of Advent so that we have a life changing Adventure. An Adventure where we not only, as we always do, await the coming of the precious babe in the manger who is God among us but an adventure that allows us to recognize the presence of God in the lives and faces of everyone. This will not be an easy task but if we apply ourselves I trust we can I believe move in the righteous direction. For me this will require a lot of work and the movement will probably come in those practical and sometimes disappointing baby steps. Then, hang on to your hats folks, were not finished yet for hopefully in the fullness of time we reach the next and most challenging and advanced level. For, let me tell you now before it's too late, that God expects us to continue our formation so that not only do we recognize and value the lives and faces of God in each other but God's design challenges us to above all things love each other. Let me say that again, God expects us to love each other. Now this grand project I'm afraid can't be completed in just one Advent season but Advent is all about prophetic fulfillment, hope, and amazing new beginnings. Oops! I guess it's time for all of us to take our shoes off for we are standing together on Holy Ground. And from this rambling ramble is send you my Advent blessings and best wishes from your Brother Joe. , ofm

We often say that the Secular Franciscan Order is the Church's best-kept secret, but I recently learned an even better-kept one: Queen of Heaven Cemetery in Hillside has a section set aside especially for Secular Franciscans! This has been kept so secret that they haven't had many takers. Let's change that SOON, before they need to open the space to the broader community! Please contact Deacon Glenn Tylutki at 708-236-5441 for more information.

In Memoriam

I would like to inform you of the passing of Joann R. Cummings. Joanne died October 23, 2014, she was a member of the St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity of Crystal Lake, professed on October 2, 1996.

In-Formation – Regional Formation Council

By Sr. Marilyn Renninger, OSF
Regional Formation Commission

Hi, Everyone!

What plans have you made for Advent and Christmas?

The Advent Season opens with the call to “Wake up! Wake up and prepare, for an important celebration is near. These four weeks beckon us to be watchful, to be vigilant as we wait. And, “yes,” to “wake up” and prepare our hearts and our homes for Christ’s coming. We are invited to reflection, prayer, and self-discipline in order that we might truly be ready to celebrate the coming of Christ.

In ancient times when a king would be coming to a village or town, the people lived in a state of joyous anticipation. For weeks they made preparations: the hills were brought low and the paths made smooth, houses were decorated and cities illuminated, so as to show honor to their king.

In the same way the Church asks us to prepare our hearts and homes for the coming of the Redeemer-King, whom on December 25 we commemorate, not only his first coming in **history**, but also the many ways he comes into our hearts and lives daily in **mystery**, and his final coming at the end of our time in **majesty**.

A great custom I like is the Advent wreath. It is a good way to help focus on the Advent Season and make each week special as we countdown to Christmas. I read about a popular practice of naming each of the four candles. The first candle for the first week is called the *prophet's candle* and symbolizes hope.

It refers to Isaiah who foresaw the coming of the Messiah. The second week’s candle is called the *Bethlehem candle* and symbolizes faith or preparation, as people prepare for the coming of

Jesus.


The third candle is the **shepherd’s candle**, and symbolizes the joy which the angels proclaimed when Jesus was born. The fourth candle is called the **angel’s candle**, and symbolizes peace or the love for which Jesus came to earth.

Then of super importance is setting up a **Crib** in a predominant place, or in my case here at our Motherhouse, many cribs. This custom of depicting the first Christmas with statues owes its origin to our great founder, St. Francis of Assisi, who made the first Christmas crèche or manger scene in 1223. The fact that Jesus became human, and came to earth like one of us, was such a tremendous event in Francis’ spirituality. So much so, that he wanted everyone to fathom that mystery so he got the people together in Greccio, Italy to act out the first Christmas. Ever since, people have made nativity scenes from wood, plastic, ceramics, and all sorts of materials. As Franciscans, the crib should be the highlight of our Christmas decorations.

Again I ask, what plans have you made for Advent and Christmas? In the midst of music playing, people singing and tree lights shimmering about us, let us vigilantly wait and actively prepare for the Christ by spending extra quiet time in prayer with the Lord and with Mary in her pregnancy. Occasionally, perhaps at the end of each week, look at your plans you made at the beginning of Advent and make adjustments as needed.

As we enter this holy season of Emmanuel, may our homes proclaim to EVERYONE the heart of Christmas, that God loves us so much that he would leave heaven to spend time showing us how to live and love. Thank you, Jesus, for pitching your tent among us!

Christmas peace, joy, love, and everything good!
Sr. Marilyn

P. S. This year the Christmas season does not end until Sunday, January 11. Let’s be counter-cultural and keep some Christmas decorations up until this holy season ends liturgically. 

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

JPIC: What Have You Been Up To?

By Barbara Elkins, OFS, JPIC Councilor

With the holiday season upon us, I am reminded of a delightful image described by our national vice-minister Elaine Hedtke, OFS. At the Chapter of Ministers meeting in May, she shared with us a description of fraternity that has remained with me. Elaine asked us to consider every fraternity gathering as a Thanksgiving dinner. What a beautiful image! As Franciscan brothers and sisters, we gather in fraternity much like a family.

Thanksgiving is a time to gather for a meal and fellowship. Often it is a time to catch up with members of our family, the aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews, grandchildren and family friends. After the initial greetings of *how are you?* and *please pass the potatoes*, the conversation turns to inquiries of *what have you been up to?* This question provides an opportunity to share in the current activities of our loved ones.

In reference to our fraternity "Thanksgiving dinner," I view our apostolate JPIC as the "*What have you been up to?*" part of our monthly gatherings. It is a time to share the ways in which each of us live our Rule and the Gospel message. It is a time to support the efforts of our brothers and sisters and to question then learn about issues that concern us. It is how we put our Rule into actions.

I recently explored the origin of the JPIC model used by the Secular Franciscan Order. Since I was professed just a few short years ago, this term has always been a part of my formation. I had learned that this model replaced the Apostolic Commissions but my formation did not include any details of how the Commissions were implemented.

My research began with my notes from the first JPIC Rally in 2012. The Winter 2007 issue of the *TAU-USA* was referenced. In that article was the following:

"The structure of the Apostolic Commissions will cease in its current form. In its place will be a Justice,

Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) team (up to 4 persons) with a keen awareness of Articles 14-19 of the Rule and of the social issues before the USCCB." In October of 2008, the Ad Hoc Committee on the Commissions proposed, "while remaining autonomous, this change in title and structure will give the Secular Franciscan Order a closer partnering with other entities in the Franciscan family and the Church." Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation encompasses the commissions of family, work, ecology and peace and justice and renews the vision of who we are called to be.

Friar Francisco O'Conaire, OFM, Executive Secretary of the Interreligious JPIC Commission says: The focus of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation is to support the restoration of "right relationships"; with God, in oneself, between people and with creation. JPIC is about building a more just and harmonious world by making a preferential option for the most vulnerable in our societies, including the integrity and care for creation. JPIC is not just something we do, it is who we are. It is an attitude, a vision that influences what we do and how we minister.

The members of the JPIC Transition Committee met to work out a structure for JPIC back in 2008. The intentions then are much the same as today:

- ✓ Continue apostolic works in which you are currently engaged.
- ✓ Appoint a JPIC coordinator to disseminate information.
- ✓ Collaborate with your respective formation commission in reviewing ways to stimulate theological reflection and discussion of materials from CIOFS.
- ✓ Explore local parish and diocesan websites for information on issues pertinent to your area; develop a personal Franciscan response.

What a wonderful phrase! How are you going to develop a personal Franciscan response to today's issues of justice, peace and integrity of creation? How will you share your response with your Franciscan brothers and sisters in fraternity? How will you build right relationships based on our Rule and the Gospel message? You may want to begin by asking, "**What have you been up to?**" 