

## Minister's Message

Dear sisters and brothers,

This month, I'd like to share some comments on the state of the Regional Fraternity that I made at our annual Chapter of Ministers in mid-May.

First, it is noteworthy that at the end of 2014, all but one of our fraternities (and our satellite fraternity) had at least one person in some stage of formation – and that remaining fraternity professed four people in 2014!

Even those who do not ultimately make profession are instruments of new life and renewal in our fraternities; they see our way of life with fresh eyes and enthusiasm that rubs off on the rest of us!

As we cooperate with the Holy Spirit and the individuals being formed by participating in formation ourselves, we too grow in our understanding of what it means for us to be Secular Franciscans and what it means to be a fraternity.

We bring our experience of Secular Franciscan life and the history and traditions of those who came before us in fraternity to help shape our new members. The result may look quite different than our fraternity did ten or even five years ago, but the influences will still be there for those who know where to look.

Second, our fraternities are greatly blessed in our spiritual assistants. Currently, all of our fraternities have spiritual assistants, and as I have visited your fraternities, I've been pleased to see how close your relationships are with your SAs. It's clear that they are a blessing to you and you are a blessing to them! THAT is what being "family" is all about.


Some regional fraternities in other parts of the United States have many fraternities without spiritual assistants, due to lack of Franciscan religious and Secular Franciscans who have been certified through the Franciscan Family Connections program. Even regional spiritual assistants are hard to find in some areas! I encourage you to be good with your spiritual

assistants and enjoy the gifts they share with you, while making sure you are not relying on them for things you should be doing for yourselves.

Also consider whether you or someone else in your fraternity might be a good candidate to go through the Franciscan Family Connections training. Talk to your minister and spiritual assistant if you want to learn more.

Finally, the strength of a fraternity is not dependent on numbers. We have strong fraternities of all sizes, from very small to very large. A characteristic of our strong, small fraternities is that members are personally committed to each other, something that is (naturally) harder to achieve with a larger group.

Larger fraternities (naturally) are able to function even when some members cannot be present, which can be very helpful too; with more members, it can be easier to find council members and volunteers for needed tasks (though that is by no means guaranteed). The important thing is that our fraternities are ALL "privileged place[s] for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and enlivening the apostolic life of [their] members" (Rule 22).

I encourage you to continue inviting your friends and family to "come and see" what the Secular Franciscan Order is about. Personal invitation works better than any advertising! If you aren't sure how to talk about the Order, a good way to start is to share your story of coming to the Order with others in your fraternity. People also find us through the Internet – I get contacted several times a year by people who are discerning a vocation. That's always exciting!  
May you feel God's love in your life this summer and always...Vickie 

### Council Members

#### Minister

Vickie Klick, OFS  
▪ [minister@ilsfo.org](mailto:minister@ilsfo.org)

#### Vice-Minister

Lorna Miressi, OFS  
▪ [viceminister@ilsfo.org](mailto:viceminister@ilsfo.org)

#### Formation Director

Nick Noe, OFS  
▪ [formation@ilsfo.org](mailto:formation@ilsfo.org)

#### Secretary

Jerry Stecker, OFS  
[secretary@ilsfo.org](mailto:secretary@ilsfo.org)

#### Treasurer

Dale Marzano, OFS  
▪ [treasurer@ilsfo.org](mailto:treasurer@ilsfo.org)

#### Councilor At-Large

LeAnneTjelle, OFS  
▪ [atlarge@ilsfo.org](mailto:atlarge@ilsfo.org)

### Councilor for Communications/Public Relations

Marc Golab, OFS  
▪ [pr@ilsfo.org](mailto:pr@ilsfo.org)

### Councilor for Fraternal Life

Bonnie Michels, OFS  
▪ [fratlif@ilsfo.org](mailto:fratlif@ilsfo.org)

### Councilor for JPIC

Barbara Elkins, OFS  
[jpic@ilsfo.org](mailto:jpic@ilsfo.org)

### Councilor for Visitations

(Acting) LeAnne Tjelle, OFS  
▪ [visitations@ilsfo.org](mailto:visitations@ilsfo.org)

### Councilor for Vocations

Norman Mosk, OFS  
▪ [vocations@ilsfo.org](mailto:vocations@ilsfo.org)

### Councilor for Youth/Young Adults

Kristi Loar, OFS  
▪ [youth@ilsfo.org](mailto:youth@ilsfo.org)

### Spiritual Assistant

Br. Joe Middleton, OFM  
▪ [spiritualassistant@ilsfo.org](mailto:spiritualassistant@ilsfo.org)

### Newsletter Editor

Marc Golab, OFS  
▪ [ofsnews@ilsfo.org](mailto: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 20<sup>th</sup> 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”s~~

Saturday, July 18  
Regional Executive Council Meeting

Saturday, August 1  
Regional Gathering – Feast of the Portiuncula

Saturday, September 19  
Formation/Leadership Workshop

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



## Spiritual Assistant's Message

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

When it's safe to say it and to know for sure that June is here, we should celebrate. Celebrate the trees with all their finest leaves and the fresh breezes coming in through open windows. Celebrate the farmers markets and all those herbs, fruit and vegetables, and flowers available. Celebrate the beginning of so many special events of summer, the festivals and concerts, the beach and the water all call us to be outside again. And of course the Franciscan family celebrates the Feast of St. Anthony of Padua and Lisbon who I have been told, probably generates the most interest and devotion of any Saint in history; even Francis I'm afraid....Naah, surely not!

June contains the official beginning of summer, sweet summer and locally grown sweet corn. Seemingly there are unlimited opportunities for your fraternity to gather together to celebrate something special like a picnic or a grilled corn roast or a burgers and dogs roast, or brats and ribs roast, or a whole pig roast for that matter, all in the hope and name of a community of friends and loved ones to be warm and well fed together. I'm sure they must do such things in heavens glory land.

June is also a most romantic month for wedding celebrations as well as a perfect time to take a highly anticipated vacation or road trip. I myself have plans to head out to the Denver Rockies then down to the San Juan and

South Sandia ranges in Southern Colorado and New Mexico. There I will visit old friends and some wonderful friars with plenty of time to spend in peaceful solitude in the higher elevations as well as some great opportunities to celebrate with Brother Sun and Sister Moon and Stars all amidst Bella Vistas. And there I will be, remembering all of you.

Even though Easter time ends with the second vespers for Pentecost in late May which concludes about three months of the extraordinary liturgical seasons of Lent, Holy Week, Easter, and fifty refreshing days of Easter Time. All of this preparation, passion, and process of recalling is designed in great part to restore and deepen the understanding of our faith and to inspire our lives.

Because of this I trust that we all are able to feel safe and assured that a good life and heaven await us; everything's going to be alright. So with June's arrival we all begin a nice long run of good old ordinary time when we can rest by the still waters and green pastures to enjoy the harvest and flavors of the fruit of our labor, or someone's labor.

This seems like a truly perfect time to celebrate. Wake up and celebrate, live and work hard in joyous celebration; celebrate even when you dream.

I will celebrate when I see you next.

Your brother, Joe Middleton, ofm

## In-formation –

### “Blessed be His Most Sacred Heart...”

I begin this month’s column with one of the Divine Praises for it is the month of the Sacred Heart and my favorite feast day in the whole church calendar AND bless your heart as well. Blessed are you when you mirror the unconditional love of God.

In his discourse on the Sacred Heart Fr. Rodney Kissinger, S.J. tells us “We are not creators, we are only receivers and transmitters of the love of God. And we can transmit only as much as we receive. To tell us of His love, God sent His only son.... Jesus is the greatest expression of the love of God for us and the greatest expression of the human response to that love.”

When Jesus spoke of God’s love for us, he invited us to consider the “birds of the air” and the “lilies of the field.”

Jesus said “learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart.” Jesus’ early followers knew His unconditional love for them. The fishermen left their boats, the tax collector left the money table and the learned people of the temple listened to His wisdom.

Jesus offers the comfort of His loving heart which carries us through those difficult times of our lives and the time in which we live; gives us hope and strength in a world full of despair, anxiety and fear. God loves us unconditionally just as we are not as we should or could be.

It is no coincidence that the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is the day after the feast of the Sacred Heart. Mary’s heart most closely mirrors the heart of her Divine Son. So as we celebrate these two great feast days, perhaps we can work a little harder at mirroring the love of the Sacred Heart and His Immaculate Mother by following the urging of Pope Francis to love not only in word but in deed.

Need a few suggestions? How about praying

Every day this week, for those sick persons listed in the parish bulletin this week and doing it by each person’s name. We could volunteer one day a week for the next month at the parish pantry?

Another idea – can we make an hour of adoration one day each week and offer it for the persecuted Christians in those places where they are being tortured and martyred? You get the idea! Oh, and say a prayer for me, too, ok? Hope to see you at Mass on the feasts of the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. My prayer for you as always, may the Sacred Heart of Jesus surround you with His love and fill your life with His abundant blessings.

Patrick Mendés, OFS  
Regional Formation Commission 


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Pope Francis in the News – excerpt from the NY Times  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/23/opinion/a-victory-for-pope-francis.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/23/opinion/a-victory-for-pope-francis.html?_r=0)

“...It was the arrival of Pope Francis – who promptly engineered a rapprochement between the Vatican and liberation theology – that finally brought action. Archbishop Romero’s cause, he told reporters, had been “blocked in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith “for prudence.”” But he added, “for me Romero is a man of God.”

Following that lead, the appropriate body of theologians universally declared that Archbishop Romero had not been killed for political reasons but had indeed died because of odium fidei – hatred of the faith. Francis promptly officially declared him a martyr, and the path to sainthood was opened.

For Francis this action was self-evident. He had said on his second full day as pope that he wanted “a poor church for the poor.” And he had written in his papal manifesto, *Evangelii Gaudium*: “We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor.”

The beatification of Oscar Romero is therefore a cause for double rejoicing. It honors a man whose love for justice and focus on the poor was a direct manifestation of his faith. But it also reveals that with the arrival of Pope Francis some of the dark forces that lurked inside the Vatican in recent decades have at last been vanquished. 

**Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)**  
*Respecting the Life and Dignity of the Human Person*

By Barbara Elkins, OFS, JPIC Councilor

On April 18<sup>th</sup>, I attended the Archdiocese of Chicago's Annual Respect Life Conference that was conveniently held at my parish. The conference was entitled *Catholic Bioethics in our Millennial Culture*. With the steady advancements in medical technology, bioethics has become a growing concern. Defined as the discipline dealing with the ethical implications of biological research and applications especially in medicine, bioethics covers a range of issues. This conference dealt with such diverse topics as the use of chemical contraceptives, in-vitro fertilization, the teaching of the Church on homosexuality, end-of-life issues and the ramifications of the legal enforcement of the H.H.S. Mandate.

My father, a retired physician, attended the conference with me. This shared experience led to a lengthy discussion over dinner about the topics. I feel fortunate that as a family, we have often discussed many of these issues, particularly those related to end-of-life decisions. Admittedly, many people do not wish to think about such things or to discuss their wishes with their families.

Unfortunately, when provisions are not made known, the task of making important medical decisions usually falls to the family during a very stressful and emotional time. In an effort to become more informed about this topic, I discovered an excellent resource in the National Catholic Bioethics Center. [www.ncbcenter.org](http://www.ncbcenter.org).

My goal in writing this column is to educate and animate others on issues related to the areas of justice, peace making and respect for all created things and people. In doing so, I hope to provide practical resources for those who wish to learn more for both personal understanding and to share with others in fraternity.

While exploring the National Catholic Bioethics Center's website, I came upon an informative and concise guide available for purchase. *A Catholic Guide to End-of-Life Decisions: An Explanation of Church Teaching on Advance Directives, Euthanasia, and Physician-Assisted Suicide* offers a brief but clear explanation of the Church's teaching on this topic. This six-page document includes a glossary of terms, an advance medical directive (sometimes called a "living will") and a health care proxy called a "durable power of attorney for health

that conform to Catholic teaching on end-of-life care. These documents can be prepared without the assistance of an attorney. An advance medical directive specifies what medical procedures a person wishes to receive or to avoid. A health care proxy specifies a particular individual to make medical decisions on your behalf when you are no longer able to do so. This guide provides a first step toward understanding the type of decisions we all will have to make for our loved ones and ourselves. Individual copies are available for \$2.50 for either the print or electronic version. Orders can be made online

[www.ncbcenter.org/page.aspx?pid=1204](http://www.ncbcenter.org/page.aspx?pid=1204) or by contacting The National Catholic Bioethics Center at 215-877-2660. E-mail: [orders@ncbcenter.org](mailto:orders@ncbcenter.org). Bulk rates are available.

The Respect Life Conference included a presentation by Thomas Brejcha, founder and president of the Thomas More Society, on the ramifications of the legal enforcement of the H.H.S. Mandate. Located in Chicago, The Thomas More Society is a not-for-profit, national public interest law firm dedicated to restoring respect in law for life, family, and religious liberty.

I encourage all of you to learn more about the threats to religious liberty. In response to these concerns, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops launched an initiative called Fortnight for Freedom. This year, the Fortnight for Freedom will take place from June 21<sup>st</sup> to July 4<sup>th</sup>, a time when our liturgical calendar celebrates a series of great martyrs who remained faithful in the face of persecution by political power – St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher, St. John the Baptist, SS. Peter and Paul, and the First Martyrs of the Church of Rome. The theme of this year's Fortnight will focus on the "freedom to bear witness" to the truth of the Gospel.

To learn more about this initiative, visit

[www.Fortnight4freedom.org](http://www.Fortnight4freedom.org).

The Office for Peace and Justice, and The Respect Life Office of the Archdiocese of Chicago are sponsoring a Fortnight for Freedom event on Monday, June 22 at St. Peter in the Loop (110 W. Madison St. Chicago). It will begin with Mass at 12:15 p.m. followed by a Eucharistic Procession to Federal Plaza. For more information about the Fortnight for Freedom event, contact Victor Vallejo at [vvallejo@archchicago.org](mailto:vvallejo@archchicago.org) or call 312-534-5355.

*"Keeping the spirit of the Gospel means that Catholic institutions are to bear witness in love to the full truth about the human person by providing social, charitable, and educational services in a manner that fully reflects the God-given dignity of the human person."*

~ Archbishop William E. Lori, Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, on the "Freedom to Bear Witness". 