

# OFS News

Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the  
Secular Franciscan Order

www.ilsfo.org

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## Minister's Message

by Lorna Miressi, OFS

Brothers and Sisters,

Happy Valentine's Day! As I was preparing to attend Mass at my home parish this morning, I read a reflection about St. Valentine; who he was, what made him a saint, and just why he is so connected with love and marriage. I found it very interesting and decided to briefly share it with all of you.

Valentine was a bishop in Rome back in the third century, under the emperor Claudius II. The emperor decided to ban all marriages in Rome so that he might have more unattached men for his army. Valentine, who was all about love and marriage, decided that he would defy the emperor's words and marry couples in secret. He was caught disobeying Emperor Claudius II, arrested, beaten and beheaded. Valentine could have chosen to save himself, but he sacrificed his life for love.

Today is also the first Sunday of Lent. In Luke's Gospel, we read about Jesus' temptation by the devil in the desert. Satan tempted Jesus three different ways, all with the goal of ensnaring him away from his commitment to love us all until the end.

Just like St. Valentine, Jesus chose love over personal preservation. All the same, we are encouraged to think of our many heroes of faith and the way their decisions have spread more and more throughout our world. And then ask God to show you how you can choose love over everything else and keep it going!

On a side note, I would like to remind you all again about the Q coming up this summer from June 30<sup>th</sup> to July 4<sup>th</sup> in St. Louis Mo. I hope that, by now, you have been hearing from your fraternity ministers about many of the exciting things taking place before and during this event. If not, ask them! They know a lot about it.

I'll see you in St. Louis at the Q in June!

God's peace.

Yours in Francis,

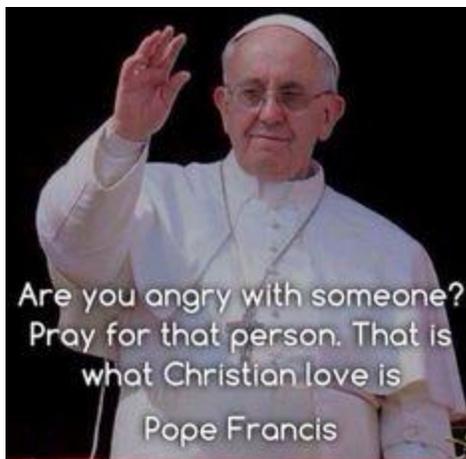
Lorna

(Parts of my message were taken from The Word Among Us, Daily Meditations for February 10-March 27, 2016) 

## In Memoriam

Florence Metler, OFS, a founding member of St. Juliana Fraternity, went home to the Lord on January 29, 2016 at the age of 94.

Please remember her and her family in your prayers. 



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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.

## REGIONAL CALENDAR 2016

All events are at Mayslake Village unless otherwise noted

Saturday, January 16  
Regional Executive Council Meeting

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

Saturday, March 19  
Regional Executive Council Meeting

Sunday, March 27 *Easter*

Sat./Sun., April 9-10  
Candidates Retreat

Saturday, May 14  
Chapter of Ministers

Thursday-Monday, June 30-July 4  
*Quinquennial Congress, St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, July 16  
Regional Executive Council Meeting

Saturday, August 6  
Regional Gathering – Feast of the Portiuncula

Saturday, September 17  
Formation/Leadership Workshop

Saturday, October 1  
Regional Executive Council Meeting

November 1-6 *NAFRA Chapter/National Visitation – Winter Park, FL*

Sunday, November 13  
Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration – location TBA

## Spiritual Assistant's Message

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Spring time doesn't happen till later this month but many spring-like activities have already occurred. We have held our first meeting of the new Regional Executive Council which went very well. Our new Regional Formation Council has also had its first meeting wherein we planned our upcoming annual Candidates Retreat which will take place on April 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. We have planned two days of presentations, prayer, and activities designed for all of those involved in initial formation and their formators. We strongly encourage all of those involved to attend. Look for the dates for all of the regional events for the year in every newsletter.

Merciful like the Father

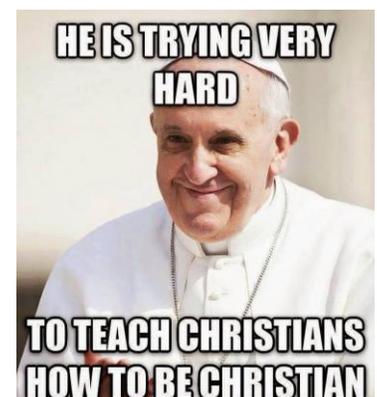
These following thoughts of Pope Francis from *Misericordiae Vultus*, the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy that we as a universal church have been called to are but a fraction of the foundation and wisdom he brings to our attention. Consider this; "14. The practice *pilgrimage* has a special place in the Holy Year, because it represents the journey each of us makes in this life. Life itself is a pilgrimage, and the human being is a viator, a pilgrim traveling along the road, making his way to the desired destination. Similarly, to reach the Holy Door in Rome or any other place in the world, everyone, each according to his or her ability, will have to make a pilgrimage. This will be a sign that mercy is also a goal to reach and requires dedication and sacrifice.

May pilgrimage be an impetus to conversion: by crossing the threshold of the Holy Door, we will find the strength to embrace God's mercy and dedicate ourselves to being merciful with others as the Father has been with us."

To me this idea of pilgrimage makes perfect sense when I consider how lent could best unfold. For it seems to me that the movement of this season which prepares us to receive the most amazing element of salvation history once again, the life, death, and the resurrection of Jesus the Lord is a journey. And not just once then repeated again and again over the years but rather an occasion to grow, expand and mature from our experience so that were never quite the same but better. So that when Lent is over we are lighter and more unburdened. We could be freer and closer to the place we are drawn to within God's design. For as Franciscans we are Easter People who can trust and surrender to this worthy process of lent while at the same time we allow ourselves to long for Easter and spring time and the warm caress of brother sun and sister balmy breezes.

Till then, I wish you peace and everything good.

Your Brother Joe , ofm



## INFORMATION

by Patrick Mendés, OFS

Regional Formation Commission

As we make our Lenten journey this year, singing the words of the Stabat Mater, I find myself reflecting on the Blessed Mother's painful and faithful walking the way to Calvary with her Divine Son. Mary, the perfect Christian, the perfect mother, mirrors the suffering of Jesus, in that special way which only mothers relate to the suffering of their children.

We reflect on article 9 of our Holy Rule: The Virgin Mary humble servant of the Lord, was open to His every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family. The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.

In the fourth station Jesus meets His sorrowing mother and the words of the Stabat Mater Call up our compassion... "Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled, she beheld her tender child..."

In this Year of Mercy, we are reminded that watching the pain and suffering of those we love is harder to bear than our own.

To carry our cross after Jesus, we, too, must watch the sufferings of those who are dear to us.

Our immediate reaction to someone who is suffering is to want to help them. So what do we do? Of course, we pray for them "earnestly and confidently," and then we give life to our prayer by action. We might do some small task, as wash dishes for someone who can't, we feed the hungry (help or donate to Franciscan Outreach?), clothe the naked; instruct the ignorant etc.; the things that our

Holy Father Pope Francis has asked of us in this special year of Mercy.

As our Blessed Mother has taught us, we walk the way of the cross which leads us to the glory of the Resurrection and we do all that we can to show our love for Jesus and His Blessed Mother by performing the works of mercy, even in the smallest way. And we do this for love of God, who loves us so much, that he sent His only begotten Son.

I wish you a Lent filled with peace and as I remember you in my prayers, please remember me in yours. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus surround you with His love and fill your lives with His abundant blessings. 🙏

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### Pope Francis' Divine Mercy Sunday Quotes...

Let us ... remember Peter: three times he denied Jesus, precisely when he should have been closest to him; and when he hits bottom he meets the gaze of Jesus who patiently, wordlessly, says to him: "Peter, don't be afraid of your weakness, trust in Me." Peter understands, he feels the loving gaze of Jesus and he weeps. How beautiful is this gaze of Jesus – how much tenderness is there! Brothers and sisters, let us never lose trust in the patience and mercy of God!  
– *Homily on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 7, 2013*

I am always struck when I reread the parable of the merciful Father. ... The Father, with patience, love, hope and mercy, had never for a second stopped thinking about [his wayward son], and as soon as he sees him still far off, he runs out to meet him and embraces him with tenderness, the tenderness of God, without a word of reproach. ... God is always waiting for us, He never grows tired. Jesus shows us this merciful patience of God so that we can regain confidence and hope – always!  
– *Homily on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 7, 2013*

God's patience has to call forth in us the courage to return to Him, however many mistakes and sins there may be in our life. ... It is there, in the wounds of Jesus, that we are truly secure; there we encounter the boundless love of His heart. Thomas understood this. Saint Bernard goes on to ask: But what can I count on? My own merits? No, "My merit is God's mercy. I am by no means lacking merits as long as He is rich in mercy. If the mercies of the Lord are manifold, I too will abound in merits." This is important: the courage to trust in Jesus' mercy, to trust in His patience, to seek refuge always in the wounds of His love.  
– *Homily on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 7, 2013*

## Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

By Barbara Elkins, OFS, JPIC Animator

*"For I was... in prison and you visited me."*

Matthew 25:36

During this Jubilee Year of Mercy, I am making a conscious effort to incorporate the corporal and spiritual works of mercy into my life. Last month, I discussed the plight of refugees and provided some resources that may assist you in finding ways to *shelter the homeless*. This month, I would like to share an experience that personalized my call to *visit the prisoner*.

For many years, I have been drawn to the idea of prison ministry but lacked the practical means to do so. In May 2014, I shared information about the MI Prison Ministry at Marytown. At the time I noted that this ministry has touched the lives of over 2000 inmates from 200 correctional facilities in 48 states by providing bibles, rosaries, spiritual reading material and most importantly, prayer and spiritual correspondence.

[www.miprisonministry.com](http://www.miprisonministry.com). My heart was willing but other commitments came first.

Then I met a gentleman at our National JPIC Retreat last August. In sharing our Franciscan stories, he relayed that his personal call came to him in prison. While serving his sentence in Louisiana, he came to know two Secular Franciscans through the Kairos Prison Ministry. Upon his release, he began his initial formation process in a fraternity near his home in California. The beauty of this story continues as another retreat participant shared that the two men who befriended him in the Louisiana prison were from her fraternity. God does work in mysterious ways!

I shared this story with St. Francis (Fox Valley) fraternity in October and was pleased to learn from Mary Lopata that she was seeking volunteers for a pen-pal program through Companions Journeying Together (CJT). In January, I met with Mary and Jana Minor, the founder of Companions to discuss this program. Jana felt a call to write to a prisoner in 1976 and this ministry is the fruit of her efforts. She has developed a model for pen pal clubs whose members correspond one-on-one with a prisoner through CJT. At present, there are only two such clubs operating but her list of prisoners seeking pen pals is growing.

In addition to the pen pal program, CJT offers programs that minister to those in the Cook, Kane, Will, DuPage, Kendall and DeKalb Counties Jails and Sheridan Correctional Center. They send birthday, Mother's Day and Christmas cards to imprisoned people and provide parenting programs. The Aunt Mary's Storybook Project was started by Companions in 1993 as a Christmas project for the children of women incarcerated at Cook County Jail. It has since become a year-round program and has served as a model for similar programs in over 20 states. CJT is in need of donations that range from postage stamps, greeting and note cards, stationery, bookmarks and children's books. To learn more about these programs, visit their website at [www.ctjinc.org](http://www.ctjinc.org). If you are interested in starting a pen-pal club within your fraternity or parish, contact Jana at (630) 481-6231 or email her at [Jana@ctjinc.org](mailto:Jana@ctjinc.org).

Jana has asked for your prayers for our prisoners, guards, police officers and their families. These are a few of her specific prayer requests.

τ The women confined at the Logan Correctional Center in Lincoln, IL and for the staff who work at that facility. There are 2000 women confined there. Everyone is really struggling.

τ All of those who were sentenced to life in prison for crimes committed when they were juveniles. A Supreme Court decision requires each person to have a new sentence hearing. However, the first person who did go for resentencing was resentenced to life without parole.

τ Our organization's efforts to bring Aunt Mary's Storybook Project to men incarcerated at the Sheridan Correctional Center. We need some more volunteers.

*Diocese of Joliet's Restorative Justice and  
Prison Ministry Committee presents*

*This is the Night  
When Christ Broke the Prison Bars of Death*

Father Christian Reuter, OFM, Prison Ministry  
Coordinator for the Diocese of Belleville

Wednesday, March 9th  
Blanchette Catholic Center,  
16555 Weber Road, Crest Hill, IL

6:30 to 8:30 pm.

