

Minister's Message

by Lorna Miressi, OFS

I recently received the article below. It was written by Tirzah Spang, OFS, minister of St. Clare Fraternity in Oak Brook. Two years ago, I lost my husband and the holidays have been difficult for me since that happened. When I first read Tirzah's words, they touched me deeply. I have, since then, read it a few more times with much the same reaction. I pray that all of you have a blessed, peaceful and faith-filled holiday season. May God bless you!

Come Into My Arms

By Tirzah Spang OFS

Are we alone in our struggles? Is God really, truly always with us?

There are times in life when the struggles are a little too much. Maybe the crosses that we carry feel a little too heavy. Maybe we think that we are alone in our struggles and forget that we are never alone.

Or maybe this is not where we are now, but we can recall a very real time where our struggles felt a little too heavy. Maybe today we will meet someone who is feeling this way and we will have an opportunity to bring comfort to them and to share their load in friendship and fellowship because we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Often the Christmas season is very joyful. There are so many happy memories and pleasant traditions that

gather us in our individual families as well as uniting us with our larger Catholic family. Our hearts can carry so many memories. We attempt to carry the Love of God from our hearts to the hearts of those around us to make their lives a little easier. We are the hands and feet of God who love those around us.

Twelve years ago my husband's younger brother died in an accident. It devastated us. We felt as though the bottom of our lives had dropped out. It was difficult to make sense of life after that. It can even make belief in a good God difficult. Yet God is always good. Always. Sometimes as Franciscans we meet Sister Death in the agony of the cross and it doesn't make sense. We long for the embrace of our loved ones once more. It is too much. There are other times when we meet Sister Death with the joy of the Resurrection. Recently, my Grandpa Leydon died. I was so joyful for him and I was so excited for his death because it was something that he longed for. He longed for union with God.

As humans, we share with many people in the pains and joys of life. And Christ meets us in our struggles through the arms of others. He is not forgetting us. He meets us under the familiar disguise of those around us.

Jesus calls out to us, "Come into my arms."

Pause for a moment. (cont. below)

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REGIONAL CALENDAR 2017

All events are at Mayslake Village unless otherwise noted

Saturday, January 21st
Regional Executive Council Meeting

Monday, March 6th
PerCapita/Census/Fraternity reports due

Saturday, March 11th
Regional Executive Council Meeting

Sunday, April 16th Easter

Sat./Sun. March 18-19th
Candidates' Retreat

Saturday May 20th
Chapter of Ministers/Visitation from NAFRA

Saturday, July 15th
Regional Executive Council Meeting

Saturday, August 5th
Regional Gathering – Feast of the Portiuncula

Saturday, September 16th
Formation Leadership Workshop

Saturday, October 7th
Regional Executive Council Meeting

NAFRA Chapter – Date and location TBA

Sunday November 12th
Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration – location TBA

(Ministers Message cont.)

Wherever you are in life and whatever you are going through and picture Christ with His arms outstretched. He is reaching out to YOU and asking YOU to come into His arms. He wants you to rest your head on HIS chest as He fills you with His love and peace.

It is amazing to think that the King of Kings, who created all things, wants to reach out to you to take you into His arms. He loves you without any conditions. He doesn't love you because of something that you may become in the future or something amazing that you did in the past. He loves you with completeness RIGHT NOW. When we fill ourselves up with His love, we embrace those around us with a little more tenderness and sweetness because HE is in them as well.

Rest a moment in his outstretched arms, and answer his call, "Come into my arms..."
Lorna ☒

Spiritual Assistant's Message

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

As the new year begins, we tend to look back at the year just past and first of all, rejoice in all the good we were able to do and take stock of what we didn't do quite as well ... or at

all!

Did we resolve to "lose wait" and not put off until tomorrow, the good we could have done today? The good that we do doesn't have to be, and usually isn't, big and dramatic. We often don't know how often such a small kindness that we have done is so deeply appreciated. So let's together lose the wait and do those little everyday kindnesses as soon as the opportunity presents itself. Let's take a minute to chat with the lonely neighbor; admire the picture the neighbor's first grader wants to show us. Who knows? That encouraging smile and kind word could be just the boost that future artist needs. You get the idea - seize the moment and don't wait to do a small kindness. You'll be amazed and how many you can put into your busy day.

Well, we all decide we need and will get more exercise so let's start with push ups. We can push our prayers up to heaven for the many needs, both our own and those of our family and friends, fervently and frequently.

Jogging is good for us. Let us jog our memories to remember our sick and shut in friends and neighbors and take a moment to make a phone call or a quick visit.

Walking, we are told, is a healthy activity. As we walk to the corner store, from the grocery store parking lot, to your parish church if you live close enough and just walking down the block from our home, we can look around us and say silent prayers of thanks to the loving God who has given us the grace of another day and the beauty of the world around us.

(cont. on pg.4)

IN-FORMATION

Kristi Loar, OFS

Peace, Hope, and Blessings to you all throughout this Christmas season and in 2017! I write to you today about the message of his holiness Pope Francis on the celebration of the fiftieth World Day of Peace – ‘Nonviolence: a Style of Politics for Peace’.

Increasingly we seem to be experiencing the worse side of human behavior, in our own communities, country, and our world; in person, and across digital and social media. Even some of those who intend to express themselves as being on the ‘correct’ side of environmental and social justice issues have, on occasion, done so while stripping the dignity from those to whom their message was intended.

We know we live in a broken world, and our time is spent often in opposition with our brothers and sisters, yet there is hope – there is always hope. In Pope Francis’s message he reminds us that ‘it is in the human heart where violence and peace meet’. So in response to the challenges we will surely face going forward, Pope Francis encourages us to allow charity, mercy, and love to govern how we treat each other in response to disagreement, hurt, and injustice. In our own hearts we must evaluate our passion, our purpose, and we must ensure our actions are not taken in retaliation, rather they must be actions that are both merciful and just.

Pope Francis wrote that being true followers of Jesus means embracing Jesus’ teaching about nonviolence...which is more powerful than violence. By his own actions, Jesus demonstrates that nonviolence is not the same as surrender, lack of involvement, or passivity; it is, conversely, peace in action. We too must make ‘active nonviolence’ our way of life.

“As you announce peace with your mouth, make sure that you have greater peace in your hearts”. - Saint Francis of Assisi

Let us choose solidarity to demonstrate that unity is truly more powerful and more fruitful than conflict, for we are all inter-connected. Let us face conflict, opposition, and injustice by preserving what is valid and useful on all ‘fronts’, and addressing with peace and dignity, that which is not.

On 1 January 2017, Pope Francis puts in action a new office, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human

Development, with the purpose to promote “the inestimable goods of justice, peace, and the care of creation” along with the concern for “migrants, those in need, the sick, the excluded and marginalized, the imprisoned and the unemployed, victims of armed conflict, natural disasters, and all forms of slavery and torture”.

To learn more about this new office, and to view the entire message from his holiness Pope Francis as written from the Vatican, on 8 December 2016, visit https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20161208_messaggio-l-giornata-mondiale-pace-2017.html

We all want peace, and it is up to each of us to build and promote it every day by our own words and actions. Let 2017 truly be a year of peace, hope and love. Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with myself, yourself, and all of us.

Peace,
Kristi Loar, OFS

In Memoriam

We received a late report on the passing of Fr. John Sullivan, OFM, who has been Provincial Spiritual Assistant for Secular Franciscans since 1999. Fr. John died in Springfield IL on Nov. 6 at the Franciscan Sisters Motherhouse. He suffered from leukemia. Fr. John wrote extensively on OFS Spirituality as well as giving us practical instruction. He also facilitated the formation of many new lay spiritual assistants. He had a ready smile and word of encouragement for everyone.

Let us remember to thank God for giving us Fr. John as part of our Franciscan lives and lift him up in prayer that God will grant Fr. John eternal rest. He served the OFS Fraternity well and with a joyful heart these past seventeen years. May John be blessed with the fullness of life promised him at Baptism and at his Friar Profession. 🙏

We are sad to hear of the passing of Paul Bularzik OFS, of St. Clare Fraternity, Oak Brook. Paul was 96, and a veteran of the U.S. Army Air Corps in WWII. He was professed January 11, 1941 – that’s 75 yrs! 🙏

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

By Luana Leinhart, OFS

Grace and peace to you, sisters and brothers! One of my favorite books is *How to be Black*, by Baratunde Thurston. Thurston wrote for The Onion and The Daily Show, and wrote this book as a humorous, satirical way to discuss race and racism.

There's a chapter in Thurston's book called 'How to be the Black Friend', where he describes how Black people with white friends are diplomats or ambassadors, because they make white people comfortable enough to ask questions without fear of being called racist. I've been "The Black Friend" most of my life, so I've answered many questions about my hair and white privilege and why "I don't see color" is problematic.

To that end, I invite all of you who have questions or comments about racism, the environment, or any subject appropriate to my office, that you please submit them to me via email, and I will answer them in this column (or via private email if you prefer). I want us to have dialogue; not just talk at you every month.

On Saturday, March 4th, Fr Dan Horan, OFM (who spoke at the Q this year) will lead us in a discussion of racism from a Franciscan perspective.

There will be time for Q&A after Fr Dan's talk, and then we will break into small groups for more fruitful discussions. This is a free event, and will be held at DePaul University's Lincoln Park campus in Chicago. I hope to see you all there, but I am especially in need of sisters and brothers (of all backgrounds, but especially those of color) who are willing to lead these small group sessions in pairs (each group will be lead by two OFS).

If you're interested in attending either as a group leader or a participant, please contact me via email, at jpica@ilsfo.org.

(from pg.2)

In more clement weather, I like to walk in the nearby park and say my rosary. In miserable winters, I am walking the track and the health club and saying my rosary. Works great for me. Want to give it a try?

And finally, to continue in our quest for a healthy new year, let us remember the words of St. Paul: "Say only the good things that people need to hear. Things that will really help them."

I wish you a 2017 that is healthy, happy and grace-filled and I pray that the Sacred Heart of Jesus will surround you with His love and fill your lives with His abundant blessings!

Patrick Mendés, OFS
Interim Regional Spiritual Assistant ☒

