

Minister's Message

by Lorna Miressi, OFS

When those of us, who are professed, made our profession we made a promise. We pledged to live our lives per the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the manner of St. Francis of Assisi. We were given our Rule; the second chapter of which consists of 16 "rules" which spell out our "Way of Life". Perhaps some of us have come close to memorizing these "rules". Some of us though, like me, need to frequently read over them to remind ourselves how we are to live each day of our lives.

One of the ways I really like reviewing our Rule is to put it to prayer. I am going to share with you a prayer I was given many years ago, written by Liam McCarthy, OFM. (Not sure who he is or where he came from). It reads as follows:

O Lord, our God, we intend to make present the charism of our Seraphic Father Francis in the life and mission of the Church, in various ways and forms but in life-giving union with one another. By our profession, we pledge ourselves to live the Gospel in the manner of St. Francis by means of our Rule approved by the Church. (Arts. 1-3). Help us, we pray, so that daily we may:

- Observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis, going from Gospel to life and from life to the gospel (Art. 4)
- Seek to encounter the living and active person of Jesus Christ in our brothers and sisters, in sacred, Scripture, in the Church and in the Eucharist (Art. 5).
- Go forth as witnesses and instruments of the Church's mission among people proclaiming Christ by our life and words (Art. 6).

- Conform our thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by the radical interior change which the Gospel calls "conversion", making use of the sacrament of reconciliation on the way to renewal (Art. 7)
- Let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all we are and do (Art. 8)
- Imitate the Virgin Mary's complete self-giving in her openness to your every word and call (Art. 9)
- Faithfully fulfill the duties proper to our various circumstances in life (Art. 10)
- Seek the proper spirit of detachment and purify our hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power (Art. 11)
- Acquire the purity of heart needed to set ourselves free to love God and our brothers and sisters (Art. 12)
- Accept all people as your gift, Lord, and an image of Christ (Art. 13)
- Exercise our responsibilities competently in the Christian spirit of service (Art. 14)
- Be in the forefront of promoting justice by the testimony of our human lives and by courageous initiatives (Art. 15)
- Esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption and service of the Human community (Art. 16)
- Cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity and respect for life in our families, striving to make it a sign of a world already renewed in Christ (Art. 17)

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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 2017

All events are at Mayslake Village unless otherwise noted

~~Saturday, January 21st——
Regional Executive Council Meeting~~

~~Monday, March
6th Per Capita/Census/Fraternity reports due~~

~~Saturday, March 11th——
Regional Executive Council Meeting~~

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

~~Sunday, April 16th Easter~~

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

- Respect all creatures, animate and inanimate “as bearing the imprint of the Most High” (Art. 18)
- Be bearers of peace and messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, as immersed in the Resurrection of Christ, we serenely tend towards Sister Death and our ultimate Encounter with you, our Father (Art. 19)

All this we ask through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Brother.
Amen

Lorna ☒

Spiritual Assistant's Message

Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

When the Lord called Bro. Joe home to Himself, I was asked to serve as the interim spiritual assistant, which I accepted to both help where needed and to honor the memory of Bro. Joe.

As it turns out, this was also to be a time of flux. Shortly after Bro. Joe's passing, long time OFM Provincial Spiritual Assistant, Fr. John Sullivan was called home to the Lord as well.

Fr. Provincial William Spencer, OFM, appointed Fr. Ed McKenzie, OFM, the new Provincial Spiritual Assistant, Bro. Ed Tverdek became the local Spiritual Assistant to St. Francis-St Louis Fraternity, taking on Bro. Joe's role there.

That led to the search and discernment process for a Regional Spiritual Assistant for our Region. Joyfully, Bro. Marc Sheckells, OFM, has accepted the appointment and will officially begin his duties very soon and we will celebrate, with a Rite of Installation presided over by the

Provincial Spiritual Assistant.

Our annual Regional Chapter this year is definitely a “Don't Miss” event. Our Fraternal Visitor will be National Minister, Jan Parker and the Pastoral Visitor will be Bro. Bob Brady, OFM, currently serving as President-in-turn of the CNSA.

I guess I've given you a quick overview of the past few months so now, as I write my final column as spiritual assistant, I want to say thank you to all of you who have given me yet another opportunity to grow and serve.

Of course, Visitations and Elections were always special from a very selfish standpoint! It was a great opportunity for me to catch up with the brothers and sisters that I hadn't seen for such a long time.

Helping Fr. Ed and the new spiritual assistants where I could was an honor. I thank God that I had something worth sharing.

Very exciting, was to be invited to the exploratory meetings for the establishment of a newly forming group – a sign of growth in our Region.

It has been a time of growth and delight for me and it is all because of all of you, my brothers and sisters, who have made my tenure a joy.

While Bro. Marc will be writing the May column and introducing himself, I'll be moving back to my role on the Regional Formation Commission so you will be hearing from me in the **IN FORMATION** column from time to time.

You are in my prayers and I ask that the Sacred Heart of Jesus surround you with His love and fill your lives with his abundant blessings.

Patrick Mendés, OFS
Interim Regional Spiritual Assistant. ☒

IN-FORMATION

Nicholas Noe OFS

Certain Hope

"What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him." 1 Corinthians 2:9

We are now two-thirds of the way into Lent and fast approaching Holy Week, the week in which we remember and celebrate the passion, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Lent is a time for prayer, fasting and alms-giving, but it also is a time for reflection and loving action. One hard saying of Jesus that comes to mind as I reflect on the Passion is, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross (daily) and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it."

The saying of "denying yourself, taking up your cross and following Jesus" is not a saying to be ignored. Each of the synoptic gospels have the saying, and it always follows Jesus referring to the suffering he will undergo, his death, and his resurrection on the third day. It is clear Jesus is not only describing his own "way of the cross" on the road to Calvary. He is also telling us that to follow in his footsteps requires us to carry our own cross as we journey through life. Although there is resurrection at the end of the journey, denying yourself and carrying a cross might sound rather ominous and depressing. But it depends on your view of the incarnation and the passion and death of Jesus. Is it about "sin and suffering, or more about "love?"

The traditional Christian view argues that God became human in the person of Jesus so Jesus could eventually suffer and die on a cross as an atonement to God for human sin. If Adam and the rest of us had not sinned, the incarnation would not have happened. (O happy fault!) This traditional view focuses on "sin and suffering," and does not give a very positive impression of either God or humanity. But we know, the great Franciscan theologian, John Duns Scotus, (as well as a few others) had a different view of the incarnation. Scotus argued that God, who is Love,

Youth and Young Adults: Fraternities and Youth

At the end of 2016, I sent out a survey to the ministers of each fraternity in the region to help me get a sense of what fraternities can do with regard to youth/young adult (YYA) outreach, what challenges our fraternities face in reaching out to YYA, and what they would like me to do as regional councilor for YYA. I was encouraged by the responses I received, and I am hopeful that I can help fraternities discern how they can best serve youth and young adults.

While I will be coordinating YYA outreach at the regional level (for example, connecting with college campuses, teaming up with Luana Leinhart, our JPIC councilor, to host events such as the recent JPIC event, "Racism and Fear of the Other: A Franciscan Perspective"), I want to help fraternities explore ways they might be able to best serve youth and young adults. Our fraternities have different capacities when it comes to YYA outreach; fraternities know what kind of outreach will be best for them. Some fraternities might be more active in serving youth and young adults, encouraging its members to pursue personal initiatives of service such as volunteering with youth ministry or serving as catechists. Other fraternities might find that they can best serve youth and young adults by offering prayers.

To help in fraternities discern their own initiatives in YYA outreach, I will be sharing observations, ideas, and news about YYA. I will also be willing to come and visit your fraternities to talk about issues affecting YYA and how we as Franciscans can respond to those issues and challenges. I am at your service; please contact me at youth@ilsfo.org if you think I can be of any help.

My hope is that over the next few years, our fraternities will discover how they can best share our Franciscan way of life with youth and young adults.

Peace and all good!
Bob Burnham, OFS
Councilor for Youth/Young Adults 

(In Formation- cont. from above)

and is to be loved in return, always planned to become one with humanity in the person of Christ Jesus. God did not become human because of sin, but out of love. Jesus emptied himself by becoming poor and dying on a cross, proclaimed the good news of the gospel, showed the Father to be a loving "Abba," and gave us a perfect example of how to carry our daily cross as we go through the stations of life. Living with compassion and and love for others will result in times of failure and suffering, but relief and resurrection follow. Yes, Jesus died for our sins, but to show us that in loving God and others, sacrificing our own lives may be required of us.

In his *Prayer Before the Crucifix*, Francis of Assisi prayed for "certain hope." God gave us, through Jesus, the certain hope of resurrection, a passing to a new state of being. If we die a natural death or are called to give up our life for our faith or friends, as Jesus did, we know it is not the end but a new beginning. As St. Paul wrote, the human mind cannot imagine what God has prepared for us.

Recently, I watched one of my favorite movies, *Of Gods and Men*. The movie is loosely based on the true story of seven Trappists monks who lived in the monastery of Tibhirine in northern Algeria during the 1990s, a time of civil war. The monks lived a life of prayer in the monastery, but they also were an integral part of the local Muslim community. Their peaceful existence fell apart as they attempted to remain neutral in the ongoing civil war. Knowing their lives were in danger, each monk had to decide to flee or stay. Finally, all realized they could not flee from their faith, their vocation and the Muslim people. The scene I most remember was a joyful dinner the monks were sharing, perhaps their last supper before being taken prisoner by the rebels, held for ransom and eventually executed. During the dinner, each monk had a broad smile knowing that all would be well, and if death came, there was the certain hope of resurrection. So on this coming Easter Sunday, carry a broad smile and celebrate. We all share the same certain hope. Nick 

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

By Luana Leinhart, OFS

Grace and peace to you, sisters and brothers! First, thanks so much to those who came out to hear Fr Dan Horan talk about racism and xenophobia. We hope to do it again soon. Stay tuned!

This month, I'd like to discuss the book *Gay and Catholic* by Eve Tushnet. Eve is a lesbian and convert to the Catholic Church. In her book, Eve describes the alienation she and many gay, celibate, Catholics experience in the Church.

Heterosexuals are privileged in the same way white people and men are privileged in our society. No one overtly acknowledges heterosexuals because we're the norm. Our sisters and brothers in the LGBT community are often ignored or derided and we must overtly acknowledge and celebrate them as members of the Body of Christ. We must welcome Christ in all we meet. The following are tips Eve gives to make our brothers and sisters feel more loved and welcomed in the Church.

1. Talk about gay issues with a spirit of welcome. Include prayers or blessings for the LGBT community in your parish liturgies. For example, that all people, irrespective of their sexual orientation, will find their vocation as they learn to give and receive love.
2. Add books like *Washed and Waiting* by Wesley Hill (or Eve's book), and similar titles to your home, parish, or school libraries. We can't minister to those we don't know or understand.
3. Ask the school-aged children in your life how kids who are gay (or perceived to be gay) are treated in school. Does their school have a policy around the use of homophobic slurs?
4. Come out (if applicable), or support someone who isn't 'out'. Secular Franciscans live a counter cultural life by nature of our Profession; if you also happen to be a chaste homosexual, you are an even more authentic witness to the Gospel life.
5. Start a Courage ministry in your parish. It's a great ministry approved by the Church to support our sisters and brothers with same sex attraction.
6. Offer genuine spiritual friendship. Marriage isn't an option for gay Catholics, but they have the same needs for companionship and friendship that we all crave. We must be there for them and meet them where they are.

I've just learned that the blood banks in Illinois are low on all blood types, but especially type O Negative, which is the universal donor. Please consider donating if you're able. 