

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

Happy Easter! Our Lord has risen, alleluia! It is my sincerest hope that all of you experienced a wonderful, beautiful Easter; with your relatives as well as your parish communities. And always remember that Easter is not only one day, it is an entire Season. So, let us remember to praise God each day in prayer and in all that we do in our daily lives. Amen! Alleluia!

For the past several weeks I have been receiving reports from each of your fraternities, complete with demographics and highlights on what your fraternity has accomplished over the last year. And I have read and digested each one of them! I am continuing to meet and get to know more and more of my brothers and sisters in this wonderful Mother Cabrini Region. Hopefully I can meet more of you in the year to come.

I want to share with you some of the highlights from the reports that have been sent to me. I realize that you are probably aware of what is written in your own fraternity's report, however you may not be aware of what is going in in other parts of our region.

First, I want to share with you a few statistics about our region. As of 12/31/2016 we have approximately 429 members, down a bit from last year's reported 437. We also had 15 deaths which can explain that drop. We have 17 inquirers and 32 candidates. So, you can see by those numbers that our efforts at attracting new members are effective. I urge you to continue to pray for vocations.

We also have a newly forming group in our region. Fr. Bob Cook, OFM Conv., contacted me back in December of 2016 with news that he had several parishioners who were interested in the Secular Franciscan Order. One thing led to another and we now have about 15-20 brothers and sisters who are in orientation to become a professed Secular Franciscan.

Praise God. Keep them all in your prayers. One issue (you might call it) that continues to surface in the annual fraternity reports is the lack of youth involvement and youth activity. I do not think there is a solution for this issue, however a few fraternities have reported some involvement with youth that the rest of our region might build on. St. Anthony of Padua in Rockford had an Epiphany party at which youth played instruments. Also, there were youth present at the fraternity's picnic and games were available to participate in. St. Francis of Assisi fraternity in Steger supports the Youth Ministry of St. Liborius parish monetarily by helping defray the cost of sending students to the Youth Leadership Conference at Lewis University. And St. Francis of Assisi/Fox Valley fraternity participates in the Here I Am Lord Youth Vocational Conference each year at St. Patrick's parish in St. Charles.

Yes, there is a small amount of youth activity going on in our region. But of course, there is room to grow. This is where our newly appointed Councilor of Youth and Young Adults comes in. Bob Burnham, OFS, was appointed to this role mid-year in 2016. I know Bob personally, since he and I attend the same parish. He is very involved with youth at our parish. He has many ideas and wishes to share them with all of you. Please encourage your ministers to contact Bob (contact info is in the Regional Directory) and perhaps invite him to visit your fraternities sometime soon.

Finally, I urge you all to continue to pray for our Region and for the Secular Franciscan Order. And may the Lord bless you all, every one of you. God's Peace!

Lorna 

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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

Spiritual Assistant's Message

When I first moved into Saint Peter's, one of first friars to help me feel right at home was Joe Middleton. He had an uncanny, and occasionally outrageous, way of making one feel very much at ease. As we became friendly, and later very good friends, I would spend much time with Joe. One of the many topics that Joe would often speak about was his commitment to the Secular Franciscans. He would proudly speak about how much he enjoyed ministering to his brothers and sisters, but he also shared how life-giving and affirming this ministry was for him. The job did come with some challenges for Joe. One of the areas of the job that Joe found challenging was writing the monthly column for the newsletter. Anyone who knew Joe knows that he never had a loss for words, but Joe did struggle organizing those words and putting them down on paper.

As I watched Joe diligently work at getting his column together, I never imagined that I would have the opportunity to step into his big shoes. It is with that same Franciscan and Gospel-filled joy, in unison with Joe's anxiety and trepidation, upon which I write this column to introduce myself as the newly appointed regional spiritual assistant for the Mother Cabrini Region.

I am a Chicago native. I was born and raised in the Humboldt Park neighborhood of Chicago and I am the youngest of eight children.

My father, currently a retired Chicago police officer, worked hard to raise the money to send several of my siblings and me to Catholic schools. My father often stated, "education is the only gift I can give you that will last a lifetime!" interestingly, I look back and believe that faith, along with education, was a secret gift that has lasted my lifetime (but I digress). Because Capuchin Franciscans ministered at my home parish in Chicago, Maternity B.V.M. Church, I attended their high school seminary. It was there that my love and great appreciation for Saint Francis was born and nurtured.

After high school I debated a religious vocation multiple times. I looked at both the Capuchins and the Dominican friars, but never felt called to either community. Rather than enter religious life, I worked retail in downtown Chicago for many years. Although I enjoyed the job, I never found it fulfilling. One particular Christmas season left me feeling more downtrodden than normal and, through the grace and wisdom of God, I applied to the Franciscan Friars of the Sacred Heart Province. The rest, as they say, is history.

Currently, along with ministering as the regional spiritual assistant, I am also a student friar. I am a recent graduate of DePaul University and I presently am studying at Catholic Theological Union. I am working toward the requirements of priesthood ordination and hope to be ordained.

As I finish up this column, I feel the need to share how much I miss Joe. The passing of Joe was extremely traumatic and difficult for many, including me. I cling to the many

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Happy memories and use them to remind myself of my wonderful brother. I admit that I am edified to follow Joe, but I am also keenly aware that I am not Joe.

In addition, my goal is not to be Joe. I am Marc. I bring my gifts, talents, and human strengths, which are different than those that Joe possessed. I look forward to sharing those gifts, talents, and human strengths with you as we journey together to build the Kingdom of God.

May God, who has started great things in all of us, give us the strength and courage necessary to build that Kingdom. In addition, may our Brother Joe rest in the peace of Christ.

Lastly, may our Holy Father Saint Francis always intercede for those who follow him. Peace and everything good to you!

Br. Marc Sheckells, OFM
Regional Spiritual Assistant 

IN-FORMATION

Easter Blessings!

Talking about a 'Be-attitude'

What a wonderful Candidates Retreat we had this past March! It was well attended by most of our fraternities and their Franciscans in formation. The subject of the retreat was Christ's Beatitudes, a topic near and dear to my heart. It is a subject I find most challenging, and most rewarding. Each presentation by our Regional Formation Council gave life to each beatitude with testimonies of inspiring personal examples. By allowing more time for candidate interaction we had the opportunity to get to know many of our candidates and other folks in (and involved with) formation. During the retreat we also introduced Fr. Ed Mackenzie (the new Provincial Spiritual Assistant to the Sacred Heart Province - to which many of our fraternities are bound) and look forward to seeing more of him in the future.

How blessed we are to have such warm hearted and passionate people in our Franciscan community! The beatitudes themselves speak to us of the secret of happiness, and as compass while

on the path to holiness. They offer guidance on how we should approach our lives, and how to 'be':

Sister Marilyn Renninger's presentation invited us to 'leave ourselves behind and encounter the beatitudes', reminding us that Jesus raised the bar; setting the expectations of people higher than what it had been.

Patrick Mendes' presentation reminded us to 'turn the page' and quiet our inner conflict while taking every opportunity to give and receive mercy (within ourselves, and outwardly with others). Luana Leinhart shared with us witness of St. Josephine Bakhita and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati who demonstrated great hunger and thirst for justice, preference for the poor, and demonstrating great charity.

I followed Luana's presentation with the beatitude that sends us out into the world (suffer for justice) and reminds us of our accountability in being 'right with God'; a reminder that while we many not all be called to be martyrs, we are all called to be saints.

Patrick Mendes led a wonderful St. Joseph's day litany and celebration around a beautiful shrine featuring a beautiful statue of St. Joseph from the collection of Sr. Marilyn.

Nick Noe offered great encouragement on being pure of heart & poor in spirit and to 'mirror Christ' by encouraging our efforts to be less about ourselves, and more about creation. We continued with a reminder that humility and meekness are not the same as weakness, rather a demonstration of great strength. We are encouraged to be the calm within a storm where meekness is more like courage, strength, gentility and ultimately tranquility.

Lorna Miressi provided our concluding beatitude with a reminder that it is a blessing when we mourn what is unjust for it gives us cause to be part of creating what should be.

"Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks,
and serve Him with great humility!"

St. Francis of Assisi

Kristi Loar OFS
Regional Formation Team 

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

By Luana Leinhart, OFS

Grace and peace to you, sisters and brothers, and Happy Easter! May the peace of the Risen One remain with you always.

In years past, I've often treated Easter as "Not Lent" and not as a whole and entire liturgical season. This year, with God's help, I will do something different, and invite you to join me. The heart and cornerstone of JPIC is God's Divine Mercy. It gives us a compass to guide us to be Jesus' hands, feet, and love in the world. Justice, peace, and integrity of Creation cannot exist unless we begin, end and are fueled by mercy.

The USCCB lists the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy, and names specific things we can do to realize them. Some are listed below:

Counsel the Doubtful: Follow Christ with the witness of your life so that others may see God's love revealed in your actions.

Instructing the Ignorant: Volunteer with the Religious Education program or RCIA in your parish.

Admonish the Sinner: Pray for humility and insight to your ongoing conversion. We must do this for ourselves even more than pointing out the sins of others.

Comforting the Sorrowful: Cook a meal for someone who's struggling physically, financially, spiritually, or otherwise.

Forgiving Injuries: Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet for someone who's wronged you.
Bearing wrongs patiently: Pray for the most annoying, difficult person you know.

Pray for the Living and the Dead: self-explanatory.

Feed the Hungry: Donate food or funds to a food pantry.

Give Drink to the Thirsty: Organize a group to distribute water to those on the street.

Shelter the Homeless: Donate time, funds, or material goods to shelters in your area, especially domestic violence shelters for women with children.

Visit the Sick: Donate blood, especially if you're type O negative.

Visit the Prisoner: Advocate and pray for the total reform of our justice system.

Bury the Dead: Create or update your will and Power of Attorney. Design your funeral Mass so your loved ones don't have to.

Give alms to the Poor: Sacrifice eating out or other vice and donate to a worthy organization.

I got several emails from our brothers and sisters about some JPIC-y events coming up. They are listed below.

1. Chicago film screening – "The Sultan and the Saint" (April 30, 2017, College of DuPage, Joliet Franciscans are a partner)

(The films from the producers seem to be dedicated to interfaith dialogue, especially understanding our Muslim brother and sisters)

2. Diocese of Joliet Peace Day 2017: "The Poor and the Earth Are Crying" (May 6, 2017, Blanchette Center, Crest Hill)

3. Bluestem Earth Festival 2017 (May 20, 2017, University of St. Francis – several sponsors including the Joliet Franciscans and Associates and Portiuncula Center for Prayer.) Some of our fraternity members may know more about this!

Luana ☒



Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity
Chapter of Ministers
And National Visitation
Saturday, May 20th, 2017
Mayslake Village

AGENDA

- 8:30 a.m. Registration and Check-in
- 9:00 a.m. Mass in Chapel/Installation of Br. Marc Sheckells as new Regional Spiritual Assistant
- The rest of the day's events take place in and around the Senior Center
- 10:00 a.m. Continental breakfast - Senior Center
- 10:30 a.m. Roll Call
- 10:45 a.m. Introduce Visitors - initial words from our National visitors
- 11:15 a.m. Approval of minutes from Chapter of Ministers 2016
Q & A regarding reports from Regional Council members
- 11:45 a.m. Approval of budget for 2017-2018
- 12:15 p.m. Catered Lunch/Br. Bob Brady meets with Spiritual Assistants (during lunch,
Outside of Senior Center
- 1:15 p.m. Discussion/decision on host for Mother Cabrini Celebration 11/2017
Update on Ministers' Manual Revision
- 2:00 p.m. Visitors time
- 5:00 p.m. Evening prayer
- 6:30 p.m. Adjournment - those who are available are encouraged to join our visitors for dinner (location TBD)

St. Francis - St. Louis Fraternity will have a "Day of Recollection" at
The National Shrine of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini
2520 North Lakeview Avenue
Chicago, IL 60614

On Sunday, July 16, 2017 from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM

All Franciscans, family and friends of the Mother Cabrini Region are invited to join us.

AGENDA

- 10:00 AM Sunday Mass in the Chapel at the National Shrine
(Optional for those who do not attend Sunday Mass at their own Parish)
- 11:00 AM Day of Recollection begins in meeting room in the basement
Opening Prayer, remarks, welcoming and Reflection
- 11:30 AM Small group discussion
- 12:00 PM Break for lunch
- 1:00 PM Presentation "*Laudato si*: and the Care for Creation in Practice"
Including questions and discussion
- 2:30 PM Cleanup of all food items and equipment
- 3:00 PM Dismissal from the National Shrine

The National Shrine has public transportation available with a CTA Bus that stops right at the front door of the Shrine. The Shrine also has free limited underground parking for those attending the National Shrine. All the details and more information about the Shrine can be found at:

<https://www.cabrinationalshrine.org/>

Our "Day of Recollection" will have a "Pot Luck" type of lunch served. For those who are able, we ask that you bring some type of food and/or drinks for the lunch. There is a large Refrigerator available, but there is no Microwave or oven available for the food we bring. For those who want to drive to the Shrine we ask that you car pool within your Fraternity so we will have enough parking spaces available for everyone. There is no reserved parking, and all parking spaces are "first come first served" for everyone who comes to the National Shrine, not just our group.

There will also be a "Free will donation basket" for those attending.