

OFS News

Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the
Secular Franciscan Order

www.ilsfo.org

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Please note that the views expressed herein represent those of the individual contributors,
and may or may not reflect the collective view of the Region.

Minister's Message

By Barbara Elkins, OFS, for
Lorna Miressi, OFS

Peace and all good to you, my brothers and sisters! Lorna asked me to follow up on her Minister's Message from last month since she is busy representing our region at a workshop hosted by the National Formation Commission in St. Louis. I wish her an inspiring visit. It is always a joy being in fraternity with members of our Franciscan family from around the country.

Last month, Lorna wrote about the need for staying connected to the Regional Executive Council and other fraternities for support. To this point, she mentioned that this one of the reasons we have visitations. I have had the privilege of visiting many of the fraternities in our region for elections, visitations and as part of our Speakers Bureau during my time on the REC. I have found each visit to be welcoming and supportive.

While most Secular Franciscans think of fraternity only on the local level, our Rule calls upon us to have a broader outlook. You are a member of a regional, national and international fraternity as well.

The other day, I was reading the Spring issue of the *Tau-USA* and as usual, many of the articles touched on topics that were relevant to my current needs.

The articles addressed how to deal with the struggles fraternities and their councils sometimes face; how to become a better

communicator; and many ongoing formation resource suggestions and practical approaches to living our Gospel life. There is always something to glean from the resources provided by the members of our fraternity at every level. I am thankful for the generosity of all the writers, speakers and planners of events within our fraternities. Please take time to read and reflect upon what is offered. These publications are a source of education, consolation and inspiration.

If you have a question or concern relating to life in fraternity, here are a few suggestions:

Contact a member of your Regional Executive Council. (See Contacts listed on right). We are here to assist you.

Visit and share with other fraternities. Each fraternity has its own personality with different approaches to meet the needs of their members.

Every minister was given a directory listing the location, times and contact information of the fraternities in our region. You can also check our website.

Plan a visit or send an invitation to a nearby fraternity member. If you can't get to another fraternity meeting, then be sure to sit with new people at regional events. Get to know each other. We learn by sharing. 

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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 PerCapita/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 – Mayslake~~

Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Bro. Marc Sheckells, OFM

Generally, as I begin the process of gathering my thoughts and musings together, I look ahead and attempt to find a source of inspiration. Occasionally it is a Gospel passage. Sometimes my inspiration comes from the feast day of a particular Franciscan holy person. Most recently, my motivation centered on the Portiuncula and how I thought our gathering was so highly "Franciscan." In the last few days, as I have attempted to gather my thoughts, worldly events taking place in our world have clouded my mind. The harder I attempted to look beyond these images and deliberations, the stronger they appeared. So, rather than fight, I have decided to explore the need for Franciscan love and peace in the wake of Charlottesville. I am well aware that this topic is both sensitive and filled with various opinions. Despite this, I strongly believe that we, as Christians, are called to look beyond the negativity, blatant issues of racism and violence, and work toward being the beacons of hope, love, and peace that our vocation demands of us.

I begin with the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*. In it, Pope Saint John Paul II wrote that, "Where life is involved, the service of charity must be profoundly consistent. It cannot tolerate bias and discrimination." We, as Christians, are called to be a people of CHARITY! This word choice is intriguing to me because charity has two meanings, a double-edged sword, and BOTH help to compliment and direct our daily action. In one definition, charity can be understood to mean benevolent goodwill and love toward humanity; We are called to have a benevolent love for the people and lives of those around each of us. Additionally, charity could also mean an institution engaged in relief for the poor and needy; We are called to be a people who look beyond ourselves and help those who are in most in need. Regardless of the definition, Pope Saint John Paul II makes it clear that this charity cannot be biased or discriminatory. We cannot champion some life causes and neglect others. Life is sacred and must be preserved, protected, and championed at all stages. This protection includes at birth, but is not limited to that myopic scope. We are called to be a welcoming people that make this world peaceful, safe, and loving for all the living!

In addition to Pope Saint John Paul II, in his message to the Catholic

faithful taking part in the annual Day for Life in Britain and Ireland on July 28, 2013, Pope Francis shared that, "All life has inestimable value even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God's creation, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect." We live in a country that does value the weakest and most vulnerable. We live in a country where there are clearly "haves" and "have nots." We live in a country where terrible, violent things happen to the most vulnerable of society every day. Everyone, regardless of wealth, social status, health, skin color, religion, sexual preference, gender, and any other word of separation one chooses to use, is created in God's image and is a masterpiece of God's creation. As Christians, we must believe that all people are created both equal and we must recognize that God resides in them. As Franciscans, we are called to walk in solidarity with all on those margins and recognize the friend in every stranger we meet.

In the wake of the violence and unrest of Charlottesville, the Franciscan provincials of the seven Franciscan provinces of the United States released a statement. In this statement they wrote that, "We hold that all forms of racism, white supremacy, neo-nazism, xenophobia and hatred are wrong. Because we believe that every person is created by God in love, we also hold that disrespect or diminishment of – or violence against – anyone offends not only that person but also the One who created that person." The letter further shares that we, as Franciscans, are to be bridge-builders and people of hope. We are called to look beyond the violence and find a way to affect change that helps root out all forms of hatred – both overt and covert. I strongly believe this; it is my hope and prayer that you do as well. We must move, and help others move, beyond the name-calling, the shaming, and the pain. We must continue being people of action, love, and acceptance; Our world desperately needs the action, love, and acceptance Saint Francis obliges us to share. If we open our arms and bridge the gap of hate, we become the Christ to those who need it. My brothers and sisters, the overall division in our nation pains me greatly. Saint Theresa of Calcutta wrote in her book *Love: A Fruit Always in Season* that, "If today we have no peace it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other – that man, that woman, that child is my brother our sister." Charlottesville, as excruciating and sad as it is, is only symptomatic of a larger problem in our country.

I, like the provincials, encourage everyone to continue working for justice and equality. I also encourage us to remember that each and every person is our brother and sister. I thank each Franciscan for continuing to advocate for the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, the masterpieces of God's creation. May the Lord give us the wisdom to know his will and the courage and strength to always do it! Go in peace! ☩

IN-FORMATION

Regional Formation Commission

Our seasons here in the Chicago area certainly have provided a variety of temperatures, precipitation, and other weather related assortments. Such variety reminds me of the importance to not only 'be prepared' but to be flexible enough to 'weather the unexpected'.

Like many people I know, I have several weather related applications 'apps' on my phone that I check frequently to anticipate how to prepare for the day and plan ahead for the week. And while I may prepare for the daily or weekly weather forecast, Mother Nature does as she wishes.

My lesson learned is this: planning ahead is important and terrific if I've done it well, but being able to respond effectively to the unexpected is even more important.

I hope to approach life's events in this same way, at least as best as I can.

One of the talks during candidates retreat this past May was on 'meekness and humility'. Two of the Beatitudes introduced to us in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 5. We are blessed when we can let go of wanting (or thinking that we have the power) to control, and instead, respond to challenges (anticipated, and unexpected) with integrity, gentleness and tranquility. A humble approach is not one that would stifle movement, restrict confidence, or to cloak a response with indifference. Rather our meekness should strengthen our behaviors and activities in a way that serves God, and our purpose, with humility.

It enables us to be the calm within the storm. It seems increasingly important that we initially download the 'app' of humility, and continually upgrade our understanding of our world's ecology and that of its peoples, in order to manage our own behavior. With surety we can then respond with dignity (allowing others a similar dignity) when dealing with the anticipated, as well as the unexpected; perhaps, even, the unwarranted.

I believe our greatest hope to accomplishing such dignity is possible by preparing ourselves with knowledge and understanding of the environment (whether political, social, geographical, or ecological, etc), and praying for guidance, inspiration, and the ability to respond in a way that is truly beneficial.

So, my brothers and sisters. Let us 'download the apps' to keep us up-to-date, so we can respond with dignity to life's ever-changing state, and pray. Let us pray always that we may bless our Lord, give Him thanks, and serve Him with great humility!

Peace,

Kristi Loar, OFS 

Youth and Young Adults by Bob Burnham, OFS

Something happened in St. Louis at the end of July during the National Gathering on the Topic of Youth. Our goal was to discern what we are called to do as a national fraternity. To that end, we worked together to form possible vision, goals, and objectives for a future youth commission. This was simply the first step in the discernment process for the national fraternity. I left St. Louis excited about the future of the national fraternity, our regional fraternity, and our local fraternities. We have a lot to offer youth and young adults. As Luanna Lienhart, our JPIC councilor likes to remind me, "we have to stop hiding out light under a bushel."

Youth and young adults seem to have three questions: Who am I? Where do I fit in? What is my purpose? Secular Franciscans are well-positioned to help youth and young adults answer these questions because *we think about these questions!* These are questions that St. Francis asked himself, and they are questions we ask of ourselves. What we have to offer youth and young adults are not answers to these questions, but our own experience in wrestling with these very same questions, just as Francis did.

Perhaps you might want to discuss in fraternity ways you might be help young people discover who they are, where they belong, and what their purpose is. Consider discussing answers to these questions at your next fraternity gathering:

What can we offer youth and young adults who are struggling to find a place in the Catholic Church? How is what we offer as Franciscans unique?

What is our purpose as Secular Franciscans? How might this purpose appeal to young people?

How might you – individually and as a fraternity – reach out to youth?

Let's continue to make time for youth in our fraternities by continuing to pray for them, discerning ways to serve them, and discovering ways to invite them to experience our Franciscan way of life.

May the Lord continue to bless you all with health, harmony, happiness, and peace!

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

By Luana Leinhart, OFS

Donald Trump is racist, y'all. I'm not saying this to be mean or uncharitable; it's just true. He's not the first racist president we've had, and, sadly, I doubt he'll be the last.

I know some of you reading this voted for him, and I know the reasons you voted for him have nothing to do with racism or white supremacy. The Trump voters I know personally either really believe in his economic policies, or weren't so much voting for him as voting against Hillary Clinton. (Full disclosure: I found them both unfit for office and voted for Gary Johnson.)

Trump's remarks following the violence in Charlottesville, sadly, speak for themselves. While it's everyone's job to speak out when our leaders do wrong, it's especially incumbent on those who voted for him to call him out. If you don't, you're effectively saying that the lives of black and brown people (like me and many of our brothers and sisters) don't matter. That my Jewish nephews and niece don't matter. Silence is consent to his bigotry, and that is directly repugnant to the Gospel we claim to profess.

It's also our duty (ALL of us) to pray for him and his administration, with fraternal love and compassion. It's not Franciscan to insult him or wish him ill. Jesus died for him too, and what we do to Trump (or Klan members, neo-Nazis, or ISIS), we do to Jesus. Let that sink in. St Thomas More is the patron saint of politicians and lawyers. Having studied his life at length, I can think of no better example of virtue for these professions than my good friend and patron.

When King Henry VIII married Anne Boleyn, he also named himself Head of the Church in England. He then forced his subjects to swear an oath acknowledging both. Thomas refused to take the oath, and was arrested for treason.

He was imprisoned in the Tower of London for 18 months awaiting trial. His money and property were seized by the Crown, and his wife and children were forced into poverty. The trial transcripts state that when asked his feelings toward King Henry, he replied, "I am the king's true subject, and I pray for him and all the realm. I do none harm. I say none harm. I think none harm."

He even wrote a prayer 'for one's enemies' while in the Tower, written below:

"Almighty God, have mercy on N. and on all that bear me evil will and would me harm, and on their faults and mine together, by such easy, tender, merciful means, as thine infinite wisdom best can devise; vouchsafe to amend and redress and make us saved souls in heaven together, where we may ever live and love together with thee and thy blessed saints, O Glorious Trinity, for the bitter passion of our sweet Saviour Christ. Amen." That prayer is the definition of Franciscan joy, and Christian charity. We must love every person as Jesus loves them. Everyone. No matter what.

The things, good Lord, that we pray for, give us grace to labor for. St Thomas More, pray for us!
Amen 📖

This year, 2017, is the Centennial of Mother Cabrini's death in Chicago. On Sept. 19, there will be a Centenary Celebration Concert with the Notre Dame University Liturgical Choir at 7pm at the national shrine of Mother Cabrini.

This event is happening in conjunction with the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus International Assembly, and celebrates Mother Cabrini's passing. Missionary Sisters from around the world will be in attendance for this special event. Please come greet the Sisters and hear a wonderful concert!

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

For more information, including instructions on how to get to the National Shrine, contact Norman Mosk OFS at vocations@ilsfo.org 📖



SAVE THE DATE!

**Mother Cabrini Regional
Secular Franciscan Order
Celebration**

Sunday, November 12, 2017

Mayslake Village
1801 35th Street
Oak Brook, IL 60523

10:00 am to 3:30 pm

Speakers:

Brother Marc Sheckells, OFM, Regional Spiritual Assistant

Luana Lienhart, OFS, Regional Councilor of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

Bob Burnham, OFS, Regional Councilor for Youth and Young Adult Ministry

**Celebrate the Feast Day of Mother Cabrini,
Patroness of our Region**

Join your brothers and sisters from across the region in enriching our knowledge of what it means to be a Secular Franciscan, sharing both the bread of sustenance and the Bread of Life with each other and honoring our deceased brothers and sisters.

More details next month.