

OFS News

Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the
Secular Franciscan Order

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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 Lorna Miressi, OFS

Advent Greetings to all! What a beautiful, peace-filled time of the Church Year. Advent is, I must say, the most favorite time of the year for me. I always have a feeling of peace, as well as a feeling of stirring anticipation as I await the coming of Jesus Christ into our world. Praise God!

There are a few thoughts I would like to share with you this month. First, I want to thank everyone who was able to be present at our Regional Mother Cabrini celebration on Sunday November 12th. What a joyful morning/afternoon. Good food, interesting and thought-provoking speakers, beautiful community. What more could a Franciscan ask for.

Secondly, I want to continue to share with you some interesting activities/projects which our local fraternities are participating on throughout the year; many on a regular basis. I will mention a few in this reflection and invite anyone who is interested to contact the fraternity's minister for further details.

St. Elizabeth of Hungary:

Several members of St. Elizabeth of Hungary fraternity volunteer weekly in Robbins II for Pro Labore Dei, an international organization dedicated to feeding the poor, clothing the naked, and to other works of mercy. Since 2015 this fraternity has been sponsoring an adult in a 3rd World Country through the

Unbound Program. Several members also volunteer at the Jones Center in Chicago Heights II. The Center provides after school programs for the youth and training programs for adults.

St. Anthony of Padua/Rockford:

St. Anthony of Rockford was excited to tell me about their annual Epiphany Party. They mentioned that this gathering involves families of their fraternity members. The children are invited to play instruments such as the harp and the horn. There is a distribution (extraction) of Saints by younger children. Games are also offered to the youth.

St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity-Steger:

St. Francis of Steger told me about an annual baby shower they host which benefits St. Monica House in Dyer Indiana. St. Monica House cares for pregnant teens who are awaiting the birth of their babies, by offering a "medically sound and emotionally healthy environment" during this difficult time in the teen mothers' lives. (Website for St. Monica's Home in Dyer Indiana).

These are just a few of the many outreach activities local fraternities in our region are participating in. If any of you are interested in finding out more, I'm sure the fraternities' ministers would be happy to share with you.

Finally I want to share with you a
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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

*NAFRA Chapter - Date and location
TBA*

~~Sunday November 12th Mother
Cabrini Feast Day Celebration -
Mayslake~~

REGIONAL CALENDAR 2018

All events are at Mayslake Village unless otherwise noted

Saturday, January 20th Regional Executive Council Meeting ?*Per Capita/Census/Fraternity reports due*

Saturday March 10th Regional Executive Council Meeting

Sat./Sun. March 17th/18th Candidates' Retreat

Saturday May 19th Chapter of Ministers/ Election of New REC

Summer Seminar, Loretto PA (Date TBA)

Saturday July 14th Regional Executive Council Meeting

Saturday August 4th Regional Gathering - Feast of the Portiuncula

Saturday September 15 Formation Leadership Workshop

*NAFRA Chapter - Date and Location
TBA*

Saturday October 6th Regional Executive Council Meeting

Sunday November 11th Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration - Location TBA

Saturday December Chapter of Elections (Date TBA)


**Spiritual Assistant's
Message Bro. Marc Sheckells ofm**

Franciscans are people of the incarnation! According to the author Thomas of Celano, who wrote many stories within the decades after the death of Saint Francis, Saint Francis, "Used to observe the Nativity of the Child Jesus with an immense eagerness above all other solemnities, affirming it was the Feasts of Feasts, when God was made a little child and hung on human breasts." When I stop and truly think about it, it is incredibly remarkable is that our God would lower Himself to become a human like you and me. He would humanly share the great joy and happiness that this world has to offer; He would also experience some of the extreme anger, bitterness, and vileness that this world has to offer. Yes, Francis was seized by the image of God being a baby and resting in the manger. He fully understood and embraced the great and awesome miracle of the Incarnation. As brothers and sisters of Francis, we, too, are called to embrace the child Jesus and find a special place for him in our hearts.

Interestingly, we live in a world where Christmas has been usurped by a wide variety of monsters. The primary monster in our contemporary world is the retail giant. We are bombarded by advertisements and various other images that tell us that we must spend everything we have on everyone we love. Another monster, although a little more subtle than the retail monster, is the calendar ogre. It tells us that we have so many things to do, so many places to go, and so many obligations to meet that we must plan, cram, and fill every moment of the Christmas season.

Another monster, and probably the most devious demon of them all, is that of the apathy demon. It fills our head with reason and logic to help us craft clever excuses. It also allows us to turn our head to those who do not possess very much, to fill our schedules so that we cannot make time for those we do not like, and to use our resources to only give to those whom we appreciate. I am certain if each of us took a moment to reflect, we could identify these, and possibly other monsters, that rob us of our Franciscan Christmas joy.

This season, as we begin Advent, I am happy to report that there is still time to tame some of these monsters! Maybe pacifying the fiend means thinking about someone in our life who may not get much or possibly nothing at all, for Christmas? Maybe vanquishing the dragon means setting time aside to spend with those who desperately want, but rarely get, our time? Maybe subduing the brute means preparing ourselves to fully experience the miracle of the Incarnation by spending additional time in prayer? Saint Francis was so keen on taking care to ensure that everyone, including those on the very margins, was able to celebrate Christmas. How can you make this holiday season special for someone on the margins? Christ lowered himself to be one of us, even entering this world in a humble fashion.

How are you preparing to share and celebrate this good news? 

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you a prayer given to me by one of my Spiritual Directors.

It reads as follows:

"Advent has been on my mind...

Prepare the nest of the heart.

Patch up the broken parts.

Place more softness in the center.

Sit and warm the heart-home with Prayer.

Give the Christ a dwelling place."

By Joyce Rupp 

IN-FORMATION

By Sr. Marilyn Renninger, OSF
Regional Formation Commission

Hi, and a Blessed Advent to Everyone!

We will soon enter the Advent season and will busily be preparing our hearts and homes for the big celebration of Christmas. Where is the Advent wreath and candles? How can I decorate for the Prince of Peace? What ornaments will I use for the tree this year? What will be my theme and which boxes of ornaments will I then use? So down in the storeroom I go **pulling** and **lifting** containers until I **find** what I want.

I then realize that the three words: pulling, lifting, and finding, can be Advent meditation words. **Pulling** is an act of effort; it takes concentration. If I am going to try to make this the best advent ever, I need to take time and to concentrate on what in my life needs changed so I can be more the person God has created me to be, the best Franciscan I can be. That act of effort is not only for this holy season of Advent, but every day. Pulling also means that there is an attraction, a magnetism that draws. Is it the Spirit that is drawing me, and if so, I need to pull away from the attractions that distract me and so let the Spirit free reign and thus be drawn to a deeper, more personal relationship with God.

To Lift is to raise something from a lower to a higher position. It implies an upward movement, an upward movement of my spirit. It also means to exalt, to keep raising my mind and heart to God; to unite with the angels and saints in singing and praising God. This too, implies effort and concentration.

Finding is to discover. The season of Advent renews my intention to keep **finding** the path of the road less traveled. Perhaps it is to discover the caravan going to Bethlehem and then finding Mary and Joseph, and the Infant in a manger. Or to unite myself with the shepherds and the Magi in adoring the newborn King, to see and feel the wonder of what has taken place.

So, planning Advent and Christmas can be a meditation that **pulls** and **lifts** until we **find**. May we discover and live the real meaning of God becoming one of us, and loves us so much that He stays among us body, blood, soul and divinity in the Eucharist. Let us never be too busy that we do not have room for Jesus, for He is always present wherever there is room for Him.

Have a Blessed Advent/Christmas, and may all our hearts be filled with peace and every good!
Sr. Marilyn ☒

Youth and Young Adults

Like St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, we are called to be missionaries. Our mission is to serve youth and young adults. That might seem as challenging and intimidating as going to another country whose customs and language is unknown. As I shared at the Mother Cabrini Regional celebration, we can follow the example of St. Frances by building schools, hospitals, and orphanages for young people.

We build schools for young people whenever we create a space where they can share their stories. Such “schools” are not places where we teach them; they are places where we can learn from them. We build hospitals whenever we join with young people to help heal the world. By performing the works of mercy and living a faith that does justice, we can show them how to be God’s presence in the world. We build orphanages for young people whenever we help them discern what is theirs to do and help them discover their vocation (and, in doing so, they will help us live our own).

I will be sending the questions we discussed at the Mother Cabrini regional celebration to each of the fraternities in the next few days; my hope is that we will discuss these questions at our gatherings so that we can discern how we might best serve youth and young adults in fraternity. In the months to come, I will also be sharing some conversations with young people in the hope that we can build a culture of encounter with them.

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

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

By Luana Lienhart, OFS

Brothers and sisters, I once met a girl who'd just celebrated her 13th birthday with a party at her home, surrounded by friends and family. In lieu of gifts, she asked for gift cards she could donate to her parish to distribute to those in need.

This month we've celebrated the feast days of Mother Cabrini and St Elizabeth of Hungary; Franciscan women devoted to the poor. We've seen the beatification of Fr. Solanus Casey, OFM Cap, who was devoted to the poor. Today (Sunday, November 19th), is the first ever World Day of the Poor. The Mass readings this week and next, Jesus takes us to task about how we served him by serving the poor. Providence is screaming at us, y'all. And all of this is happening as we prepare to overindulge in all things edible (I'm calling myself out here as much as anyone), and then storm the stores at 5am to buy gifts to celebrate the birth of Our Lord. To poor parents. In a barn. During a genocide.

The Kingdom of God is within us, but it won't manifest until we're more intentional about uniting ourselves to the service to the material poor. We must have a care for those who are spiritually poor, but since the material poor are always at risk for food insecurity, housing insecurity, and other basic human needs, they must be our priority. Let's consider how and where we'll spend our funds this holiday season. A few suggestions: Shop small and local businesses. They create 60% of all new jobs in the US. Shop B Corporations, like Patagonia and Etsy. Buy fair trade products, or make gifts from fair trade materials.

Donate to a charity like Catholic Relief Services (Puerto Rico and the USVI are STILL without electricity) or a local adoption agency in a loved one's name.

Buy Chicago Shares vouchers and distribute them to panhandlers instead of cash; they can redeem the vouchers for food and hygiene items at participating stores.

Buy 10 copies of Streetwise from an authorized vendor who's stood out in the cold for hours, or bring them a cup of hot chocolate.

There's even an organization called Preemptive Love Coalition, which serves refugees from Iraq and Syria. You can purchase fair trade items made by refugees, or buy a family an animal, like a sheep, or five chickens (for \$50.00), which the family can use for eggs, meat, milk (and therefore cheese), and other products.

Please, don't miss an opportunity to find Jesus in anyone, but especially the poor. Imagine ignoring him as we prepare to welcome him at Christmas, and his return in Glory. That would be true poverty.

Grace and peace to you as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior. Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus! 🙏

