

Minister's Message: The National Chapter

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Before I give you a brief summary of our really outstanding NAFRA Chapter in Nashville – and it needs to be brief because a full summary would take pages and pages! – I'd just like again to encourage you to attend the Mother Cabrini Celebration on November 16, hosted by St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity in Rockford (see page 2). You have no idea how lucky we are in the Mother Cabrini Region to be so compact in area – at the NAFRA Chapter, many regions spoke of local fraternities whose members must drive as much as 100 miles to attend their monthly gatherings, and due to the great distances involved, regional events need to be over weekends. But, they attend, regularly – and that speaks volumes about their commitment to fraternity. The Mother Cabrini Celebration is a very important gathering for our Region – let's see *everyone* there!

Now to the Chapter! We began Tuesday evening (Oct. 14), and concluded Sunday around 10:30 a.m., and in-between we simply didn't stop – except for an afternoon and evening in Nashville on Saturday, which was fun; and we needed a break!

Some highlights: We began each day with prayer and ongoing formation. The formation sessions were presented by Teresa Baker, SFO (outgoing NAFRA Formation Director); Bob Fitzsimmons, SFO (new NAFRA Formation Director); Pat Brandwein-Ball, SFO (NAFRA Councilor), who addressed the structure of our Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) activities (and yes, that was definitely ongoing formation because there is a definite spiritual component to this work); and Fr. Stephen Gross, OFM CONV., who really summarized what became the theme of this Chapter – who was

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Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Fr. Don Blaeser, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Have you ever noticed how suffering great difficulties seems to bring out the best in some people? Such a person is the one for whom our SFO Region is named, Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini. Why she even lived is amazing, having been born in 1850, two months premature, the youngest of 13 children, her mother being 52 years old. She remained frail her entire life, and yet lived 67 years.

After earning her teacher's certificate, she applied to the congregation that had taught her, but was rejected both by them and another order due to her poor health. After doing some teaching, her lifelong adviser, Fr. Serrati, sent her to work in a disorganized and badly-run orphanage in the town of Cadogno. Working there with great courage, Frances took a religious habit and made vows, but soon the orphanage closed, and so she and the seven sisters she had acquired were now homeless.

The bishop of Lodi then sent for her, asking her to found a congregation of nuns to serve in his diocese. Taking over a former Franciscan friary in Cadogno, they received orphans and foundlings and the place became a beehive of activity. After drawing up a rule and constitutions for her new congregation, the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (MSC), she went to Rome in 1887 to seek papal approval of her congregation and also to open a house there.

When she shared with Pope Leo XIII her lifelong dream of going to China, he said, "Not to the East, but to the West." With that mandate, Mother Cabrini traveled first to New York in 1889, where the convent was not ready for her and her seven sisters. Still, they found another building and soon began another orphanage. At this point she and her sisters launched into a

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To be appointed

Councilor for Communications/

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Councilor for Fraternal Life:

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Rest in Peace

- **Ed Bajorek** SFO of St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity (Libertyville) died October 20.
- **David Dalaly**, SFO of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity (Frankfort) died June 9.

Interested in an SFO Pilgrimage to the Holy Land?

Fr. Chuck Faso, OFM has led over 20 pilgrimages to the Holy Land and is considering arranging a special pilgrimage for Secular Franciscans. If enough people are interested, he will organize one. For more information, or if you would like to participate, please call Fr. Faso at 773.276.3386.

Events of Interest

November 15: The Franciscan Outreach association is celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Franciscan House of Mary & Joseph with a dinner at Magianno's Little Italy, 240 Oakbrook Center, Oak Brook, at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$100 each in advance, \$125 at the door. In addition to a silent auction, the event will feature a raffle for a deeded, 2-bedroom timeshare located 1 mile from Walt Disney World's main gate. Only 150 raffle tickets are available for \$50 each; proceeds will benefit the homeless at Franciscan Outreach. The drawing will be held at the dinner; winner need not be present. For more information or to buy tickets, call Carin at 773.278.6724 or visit franoutreach.org/dinner.htm.

November 15: The Women's Center of Chicago is holding a "Kenilworth Fall Gala", an evening of dining and dancing, at the Kenilworth Club, 410 Kenilworth Ave., Kenilworth. Cocktails are at 6 p.m., dinner is at 7, p.m.; a silent auction will be included. Cost is \$150 each, \$1,400 for a table of 10. For more information or to buy tickets, call 773.794.1313.

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Mother Cabrini Celebration

By now, everyone should have received flyers, maps, and driving directions for our **Mother Cabrini Celebration**. Information was sent to all local ministers on October 3 to allow time for travel planning; if you haven't yet received yours, please talk with your minister.

- **Date:** November 16 (Sunday)
- **Location:** St. Stanislaus Kostka Church
201 Buckbee, Rockford
- **Time:** 1:30 p.m.
- **RSVP By:** November 9 (Sunday)

Fraternity ministers: Please email our Regional Councilor for Fraternal Life, Chris Bruhnke, SFO, at fratlife@ilsfo.org with the total number of attendees from your

fraternity no later than November 9 (Sunday).

Overview

Mass will be celebrated by our Regional Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Donald Blaeser, OFM, and concelebrated by Fr. Peter Sarnicki, OFM CONV., Pastor of St. Stanislaus and Spiritual Assistant of the host fraternity.

In addition, Fr. Sarnicki will conduct a tour through St. Stanislaus School, which features displays of Polish crafts, costumes, and various mementos, along with a Polish museum of historical artifacts. Also, as mentioned in previous issues of the *SFO News*, the 2007 Quinquennial Quilt will be available for viewing. **■**

Relationships: The Heart of Franciscan Life

by Sandra Kisel, SFO; Regional Formation Director

[Continued from last month's issue.]

During the second conference, "Elements of Life That Hinder Relationships", at our Regional Retreat, Fr. Lester Bach, OFM CAP., said, "If we want to make changes to conform to the vision of St. Francis, we need to be in touch with personal qualities that hinder faithfulness".

Father noted that people can be ornery, stubborn, not listen well, or hear what is said. There are those who get under our skin and aren't easy to live with, those who ignore instructions, ignore us, who are always busy, or who take without giving, to name a few. And this goes both ways—we need to consider how often we ourselves are guilty of these very things.

"If we decide to maintain a relationship despite what others do, it will take reflection and hard work. There is no *one* way for everything or everybody. Flexibility and creativity will be required", said Fr. Bach. The Gospel is clear: "But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." (Lk 6:27-28)

Fr. Bach continued, "The human being needs unconditional love. He needs the certainty which makes him say, 'Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything

else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' (Rom 8:38-39)". (See also *Spe Salvi*, n. 26.)

This leads us to the third conference, "The Importance of Prayer: What Does It Do?" Without an intimate relationship with Jesus, with the Holy Trinity, as I mentioned last month, there are only words. But in prayer we find/receive the God who loves us and has always loved us without limit. Jesus Christ is the Living Word who dwells in our hearts and burns within us, and we long to make Him known by means of everything we do, every contact we make, and every thought, word, or action. He must flow out from every one of us as a living fountain which feeds and nourishes everything it touches. Fr. Bach pointed out that in order to do this, we must be faithful to the Gospel and daily nourished by it.

"Prayer is dialogue between us and God". Sometimes this dialogue is contemplative; a silent union of being in the presence of the one we love, without words. Other times, it's seeking to understand the Gospel message and how we can live and carry it to others. Prayer is praising God and thanking Him for all the good He gives without limits, for His faithfulness in spite of our miseries and unfaithfulness; for the people He puts in our lives;

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and the opportunities He gives to overcome ourselves with, in, and through Him. "The consequence of prayer-fullness is growth in the spirit of love for all people. If we pray and remain selfish or self-centered or inactive, then our prayer is incomplete.", said Fr. Bach. *Prayer is seeking an encounter with our Living God, the Most Holy Trinity and asking God to be present in us and in all we do.*

"Only if I serve my neighbor can my eyes be opened to what God does for me and how much he loves me ... No longer is it a question then of a 'commandment' imposed from without and calling for the impossible, but rather of a freely bestowed experience of love from within, a love which by its very nature must be shared." (*Deus Caritas Est*, n. 18)

Questions for Review

1. Reflect on those who upset you regularly and, if you are going to deal with your feelings about them, how will you do so?

Francis and the Church

excerpts from "The Church" (Part 4, Sec. 3) by Ivan Gobry, *Saint Francis of Assisi*

What is remarkable about Saint Francis is that, in what he says and in his entire approach, Christ cannot be separated from the Church, nor the Gospel from ecclesiastical authority. For him it is not a question of fulfilling a necessary condition in obtaining approval for his order and his preaching, but rather a profound faith in the Church instituted by Jesus Christ, as the interpreter and extension of him, as his Mystical Body. Thus Scripture is not the property of the preacher; it is not even the property of the Church, who guards it as a deposit in trust so as to communicate it according to that very spirit in which it was handed down. In one of his admonitions, Francis declares, "The spirit of sacred Scripture gives life to those who do not claim each text that they know in the way that one possesses a physical object; to those who, by their example, acknowledge the ownership of the Lord Most High, to whom every good belongs."

Now the Lord manifests his authority by his Church. That is why, from the very first article, the first rule states his [Francis'] intention to be subject and to subject his friars to the head of the Church: "This is the way of life that Brother Francis asked Pope Innocent to authorize and approve. And the Pope granted it to him and approved it for

2. How does the Gospel offer guidance on your journey of conversion?
3. Read the articles of the *SFO Rule*. Which are particularly helpful in moving you on the path of conversion? Why?
4. Does your personal prayer life bring you closer to God? Does it move you to greater love in your daily life? How do your answers reveal something about your living of the *Rule*?

Thank You

Previously, I regretfully overlooked thanking those who contributed their energies to our Regional Retreat: Thank you to **Steven Shebenik**, SFO for taking responsibility for the music during the liturgies and entertainment; **Mary Farrell**, SFO for keeping track of registrations and keeping me informed; and **Stephen Lanterman**, SFO, who, while unable to attend, was a tremendous help. Thanks also to all who attended, and I look forward to seeing everyone at the Mother Cabrini Celebration! 📧

him and his present and future friars."

... Here is another argument, which he makes in his "Letter to All the Faithful": "We must be Catholics. We must make frequent visits to the churches and show our respect to the clerics; not so much for their own sake, since they can be sinners, but because of their office, since they are the ministers of the most sacred Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which they sacrifice upon the altar, which they themselves receive and dispense to others. ..."

... This reverence for the Church and for her clerics, this submission to the Church and to her laws appeared to Francis' contemporaries as one of the most characteristic features of his spirit, so much so that the author of his liturgical office gave expression to it in the first of all the proper parts for his feast, the first antiphon for the office of first vespers:

Franciscus, vir catholicus, Et totus apostolicus, Ecclesiae teneri, Fidem Romane docuit, Presbyterosque monuit, Prae cunctis revereri.

Which means: "Francis, a Catholic and entirely apostolic man, taught fidelity to the faith of the Roman Church and admonished [his followers] to revere priests above all others." 📧

Living the Gospel of Life

"The destruction of a human being at the very beginning of his or her life, is the destruction of an innocent person. It is the interruption of a life which has as much value as does each one of our lives. Without respect for life, without respect for the family, society simply does not exist."

~ Monsignor Elio Sgreccia, President of the Pontifical Academy for Life

Did you know that each time you write a check, about 15 people see it by the time it's returned to you? By using pro-life checks, you're able to bring the pro-life message to others without any extra time or trouble for yourself. You can order them from Heritage House at prolifechecks.com, or call 877.472.0907.

"Imagine for a moment you are a pro-choice obstetrician-gynecologist like I once was,' [said Dr. Anthony Levatino at a] press conference. 'Your patient today is 17 years old and she is 20 weeks pregnant. At 20 weeks, she has been feeling her baby kick for the last two weeks. If you could see her baby, she would be as long as your hand from the top of her head to the bottom of her rump, not counting the legs. Your patient is now asleep on an operating room table and you are there to help her with her problem pregnancy.'

"Levatino went on to describe how he used a 13-inch instrument for 'grasping' inside the uterus to remove the baby, piece by piece.

"The toughest part of a D&E [dilation and evacuation] abortion is extracting the baby's head,' Levatino said. 'If you have a really bad day, like I often did, a little face may come out and stare back at you.' "

~ Penny Starr, "Former Abortionist: 'All I Could See Was Somebody's Son or Daughter' ", *CNSNews.com*, 24-Sep-08

Calendar

November

16: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration, Rockford

Events of Interest

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November 21: The Integritus Institute at the University of Illinois at Chicago is hosting a bioethics health symposium, “Many Minds, One Idea: An International Symposium probing the concepts underlying ‘Quality of Life’”, from 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m., at 725 W. Roosevelt, Room D, Chicago. “Quality of Life” is the key consideration in many decisions concerning both public health care policy and personal medical treatment, yet the meaning of the term itself has gone largely unexamined and undefined. At this conference, the idea, “quality of life”, will be examined from theological, medical, sociological, philosophical, psychiatric, and legal perspectives by renowned scholars and professional practitioners, such as Francis Cardinal George, Dr. Peter Kreeft, Dr. Michael Waldstein, and more. Cost is \$30, which includes breakfast and lunch. Pre-registration is required; for more information or to register, email info@iethics.org or call 312.226.1880.

Nov. 28-30: Miles Christi is holding a Spiritual Exercises silent retreat for women at Marytown, 1600 W. Park Ave., Libertyville. The retreat will start on Friday at 4 p.m. and end on Sunday at 4:30 p.m. In addition to spiritual talks and time for personal meditation in silence, there will be daily Mass, the Rosary, and opportunity for confessions. For more information or to register, email Joan Czerlanis at chicago@spiritualexercises.net or call 847.966.1369.

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Francis, who was he called to be, and who are we called to be?

You should know that SFOs and friars were not the only Franciscans present at the Chapter – Rev. Joan Verret, representing the Episcopalian Third Order Society of St. Francis (TSSF), was present, and also a representative from the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, which is made up of people of other Christian denominations who wish to follow Francis. Missing from the Chapter was Edward Shirley, SFO, NAFRA Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Chair, who was representing NAFRA by attending the TSSF Chapter, taking place at the same time. We *do* work together!

I would also like to mention that *all* regions were represented at the Chapter.

One of the first gifts (literally) of the Chapter was that all regions were given *St. Francis of Assisi: A New Way of Being Christian*, a CD series of 24 talks by Br. William Short, OFM. I’ve heard of it and understand it’s excellent. If you’d like to learn more, see nowyouknowmedia.com/products/Saint_Francis.html. We need to set up a means for all the fraternities in the Region to borrow this without it being lost. I will be writing to all ministers about this, and other matters, very soon. I will also talk more about the ongoing formation sessions we had in future articles.

Another important date for formation directors to put on their calendars is May 28–31, 2009, when NAFRA will present a National Formation

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veritable explosion of activity, ministering to immigrants, orphans, and the sick. In the course of her lifetime, Mother Cabrini founded 67 institutions in New York, Chicago, Seattle, New Orleans, Denver, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia, and in countries throughout South America and Europe.

In spite of her great fear of water, Frances Xavier Cabrini crossed the ocean 30 times, bringing bands of young Italian sisters to North and South America. In 1909 she became an American citizen, and is the first American citizen to be canonized a saint.

On December 22, 1917, while she and her sisters were preparing Christmas gifts for 500 orphans,

Workshop at Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville. We are so fortunate that the workshop is being held close to us so more of our formation directors can consider attending. Our Regional Formation Director, Sandy Kisel, SFO, and I can both attest to how truly excellent these workshops are.

There was good discussion on the CIOFS questions and Anne Mulqueen, SFO, International Councilor, shared with us her report to CIOFS, which I will be sending to all ministers. It was pointed out by many how important this process was, and how it helped us to begin to answer what became the focus of the Chapter.

Finally, the Regional Ministers of NAFRA Region 3, which is made up of eight regions, including ours, have decided that it would be beneficial for us to meet between Chapters, and we are planning a meeting for possibly early June 2009 (location to be determined; likely around Chicago). Our goal is to have about five representatives from each Region attend for a weekend, where we will come together for ongoing formation, share our triumphs and failures, and help each other to be who we are called to be. There will be more on this, too!

This is a very quick, and probably not complete, summary, but I hope it gives you an idea of the depth of our gathering. There were also important resolutions passed, one on the economic crisis and its effect on the poor, and another on Orissa and all who suffer injustice because of their faith. The resolutions have been sent to the press, and I will be forwarding copies to all the ministers.

Blessings on all of you, brothers and sisters! See you on November 16 in Rockford! **☩**

Mother Cabrini died of a sudden heart attack. Her feast day was originally set on December 22, but it is now celebrated on November 13. She was beatified in 1938, and canonized on July 7, 1946 by Pope Pius XII, and is known as the patron saint of immigrants. And I might add that my mother had a great devotion to her.

I hope you will all come to celebrate her feast on Sunday, November 16, at St. Stanislaus Kostka Church in Rockford. What an occasion for us to look at the example Mother Cabrini gives of rising above adversity in life and ministering to those in great need. Do we dare to complain about the troubles in our life? Rather, we can do what is often suggested: When life serves us lemons, make lemonade. **☩**