

SFO News

Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the
Secular Franciscan Order

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Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO

Dear brothers and sisters,

I wish that all of you could have been at our Regional Retreat! After spending the weekend reflecting on the meaning of our profession with Fr. Richard Trezza, I know that I have a new perspective on the lifetime promise I have made. Most of Fr. Richard's remarks were based on the presentation on profession made at the 12th General Chapter of the SFO in 2008 by Fr. Felice Cangelosi, OFM Cap.; that presentation is available from the CIOFS website (<http://www.ciofs.org/en.htm>); look toward the bottom of the page for "2008 12th General Chapter"). Moreover, this same presentation was the basis for Part I of the first six months of the CIOFS ongoing formation materials that some of you have used in fraternity and many others have seen. Having had access to these resources, it was a very different – and much more memorable – experience to hear it from Fr. Richard (who was present for the original presentation in 2008). Obviously, I can't do such a presentation justice here; I do, however, want to share a few points that made an impression on me.

The initial point that Fr. Richard emphasized is that the Secular Franciscan profession is the *equal* of the religious profession of the First, Second, and Third Order religious. It's different, of course, but it is *not* inferior to their profession. This has not been well understood in the past (especially when profession in the SFO was a stepping-stone in the life of the First Order friars).

Another point that was very significant to me is that in offering ourselves as a sacrifice to the Lord at our profession, we are in a special way uniting ourselves with the sacrifice of the Eucharist. This is why it is so fitting (even if not absolutely required) that we celebrate profession within the Mass. It is something we should remember each time we participate in the Eucharist.

Fr. Richard observed that in our profession ceremony, the fraternity minister – not the celebrant – is the one who calls down the Holy Spirit on those who are being professed, and who accepts the lifetime commitment of each candidate in the name of the church. This casts a different light on the role of minister – one that should be considered when election time comes. Fr. Richard encouraged considerable advance planning for profession (three months or more) to ensure that the fraternity members can plan to be present and to do a good job of planning (and rehearsing) the profession ceremony. He emphasized the importance of the professed members being present for profession; profession is *always* to take place in the midst of the fraternity.

One of the final points that Fr. Richard shared from Fr. Felice's presentation is that we can *only* be Secular Franciscans living in the world, doing what God calls us to do here; if we wish to be somewhere else, it's a betrayal of our profession! Our profession is *not* something that we should wish to live in a hermitage, away from the demands of our daily life; it is precisely to be lived amidst those demands (and is more difficult as a natural consequence). Our profession gives us the grace to see the deeper reality of God's presence in our everyday lives, but we do have to practice seeing it. (There's one of the reasons we go from Gospel to life, and from life to the Gospel...)

It was revolutionary in Francis' time to conceive of people living in the world as being called to holiness, yet that was what Francis gave ordinary people with the Third Order. I suggest

Council Members

Minister

Vickie Klick, SFO
minister@ilsfo.org

Vice-Minister

Lorna Miressi, SFO
viceminister@ilsfo.org

Formation Director

J. Patrick Mendés, SFO
formation@ilsfo.org

Secretary

Monica Marko, SFO
secretary@ilsfo.org

Treasurer

Stephen Lanterman, SFO
treasurer@ilsfo.org

Councilor At-Large

Elisabeth Shin, SFO
atlarge@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Communications/

Public Relations

Gloria J. Huerta, SFO
pr@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Fraternal Life

Bonnie Michels, SFO
fratlife@ilsfo.org

Councilor for JPIC

Stephanie Sormane, SFO
jpic@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Visitations

Muriel Baum, SFO
visitations@ilsfo.org

Councilor for Vocations

Norman Mosk, SFO
vocations@ilsfo.org

Spiritual Assistant

Br. Joe Middleton, OFM
spiritualassistant@ilsfo.org

Newsletter Editor

Gloria J. Huerta, SFO
sfonews@ilsfo.org

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Submission deadline is the
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CALENDAR

Unless otherwise indicated, all events are at Mayslake Village (Oak Brook).

**Election & Visitation dates subject to change.*

February

14: Elections, St. Bernardine Siena

March

- 01: Fair Share, Census, and Annual Reports due
- 07: Elections St. Mary of the Angels at the Port
- 14: Visitation, St. Maximillian Kolbe
- 27: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

April

- 10: Candidates' Retreat, Day 1
- 11: Elections St. Francis St. Louis
- 18: Visitation, St. Anthony of Padua, East Side

May

- 01: Candidates' Retreat, Day 2
- 15: Chapter of Ministers
- 16: Visitation, Nuestra Sra. de Guadalupe

June

26: Elections, St. Clare Kankakee

July

- 10: Leadership Workshop
- 17: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 18: Elections, St. Francis Assisi Crystal Lake
- 25: Elections, St. Anthony of Padua, Rockford
- 25: Visitation, St. Anthony Padua, Oak Lawn

August

07: Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula

September

- 11: Elections, St. Anthony Padua, Joliet
- 17-19: Regional Retreat, The Port, Frankfort
- 26: Elections, St. Francis of Assisi, Steger

October

- 3: Elections, Living Waters Korean Fraternity
- 16: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 19: Elections, Brother Jacoba Community
- 26-31: NAFRA Meeting

November

13: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration (St. Peter's Church in the Loop)

Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO
continued from page 1

that it is hardly less revolutionary today to think of being called to holiness while rushing to get the children off to school, sitting in rush hour traffic, working in an office cubicle, or doing the dishes...yet that is our life, the life we promised to live for the rest of our days! Remember, Article 10 of our Rule states,

“United themselves to the redemptive obedience of Jesus, who placed His will into the Father's hands, let them faithfully fulfill the duties proper to their various circumstances of life.” Similarly, Article 14 ends, “Mindful that anyone "who follows Christ, the perfect man, becomes more of a man himself," let them exercise their responsibilities competently in the Christian spirit of service.” Taken together, these two sentences of our Rule say to me that whenever we are doing our jobs, our household chores, or anything else that is required of us...we are living the Rule. Doing those actions well is living the Rule. The challenge is to remember that all these things, done in the Christian spirit of service, are the life we offered up to God. And that's a big part of what our ongoing formation is supposed to do...help us remember the significance of what we've promised and what we do every day.

Peace and good...Vickie ☒

Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Brother Joe is in Assisi. Pray for safe travels for him and all who are with him. His article resumes next month.

In-Formation

By Patrick Mendes, SFO
Regional Formation Director

In this month of October, when we celebrate the Transitus and the feast of Our Holy Father, Francis, I am particularly moved to reflect on the virtue of compassion. There are many stories about Francis' own compassion for others. The most well known example of his compassion and conversion was in embracing the leper. Another example is when he broke his fast so that an ill brother wouldn't feel badly about eating. From dramatic to small acts of compassion, we have been shown ways to "live the gospel life after the manner of St. Francis..."

Article 5 of our Holy Rule reads: Secular Franciscans therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters... St. Francis often said "I see nothing bodily of the Most High Son of God in this world except His holy body and blood". Article 12 reads: "Witnessing to the good yet to come and obliged to acquire purity of heart because of the vocation they have embraced, they should set themselves free to love God and their brother and sisters."

I am sure that you have all have had many experiences of how this plays out in your daily lives, but I was particularly inspired by the compassion of one of our sisters which I witnessed recently.

During our recent retreat, one of our sisters was taken ill and needed to be hospitalized. Another sister who had been assisting her through the night until morning, when it became evident that her ailing friend was not improving, followed the ambulance to the hospital and stayed with her so that she would not be alone. She remained with her the whole day from shortly after 9 a.m. until she was discharged. Then she drove the ailing sister home, arriving after 5 p.m.

In-Formation

By Patrick Mendes, SFO
Regional Formation Director
Continued from Page 2

Our caring sister indeed saw the active person of Christ in her ailing sister and cared for her as she would care for Christ. This is an example of living our Holy Rule in the very practical way we Secular Franciscans are invited to love and serve one another and those we encounter daily.

Some thoughts for reflection: How do I manifest Christ's love to others, even in small and ordinary ways? How often have I inconvenienced myself to help someone else?

How do I feel, when I do this? When I see "Christ poor and suffering" in another person, do I thank God for the opportunity to be of service? In what other ways am I free to love God and my brothers and sisters?

May our Holy Father Francis bless us and pray for us, that we, too, may be faithful followers as we journey from Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel.

I pray feast day blessings for you all, my brothers and sisters. 🙏

Let it Go - A New Understanding of Perfect Joy

By Gloria Huerta, SFO, Editor

I have been professed for just over 15 years and one of the hardest concepts I have had to struggle with as a Secular Franciscan is "perfect joy." It is one thing to read the stories of the lives of St. Francis and his first followers how they experienced it and quite another to really "get" perfect joy. Perfect joy is one of those things the world considers "foolish" and of little value because let's face it, none of us likes to be in situations where we are humiliated, embarrassed, have failed or otherwise caught in moments of weakness and human frailty and very often those are the "perfect joy" moments.

So, what happened that after 15 years I suddenly had that "aha" moment that helped me not only to understand perfect joy but to actually embrace it as a really valuable "virtue" in my life as a Secular Franciscan? It was one of the fruits from the regional retreat that Vickie Klick did such a great job recapping for us in her article.

With a renewed understanding of what I committed to when I first professed, it changed my mindset with regard to all the "negatives" in my life. I recognized that all of the challenges, struggles, failures, and responsibilities I considered burdensome...all of these is the grist that God uses to transform me into the person He wants me to become. If I have really offered myself to God as a sacrifice then I have to allow Him to use me in whatever manner He sees fit. I must be totally open to His will and my will must die. And once this really and truly happens...and I'm not saying I'm there yet...no matter what happens in my life I can embrace whatever comes in the spirit of perfect joy as I realize another way God is molding me.

This, I believe, is what it means to be a brother or sister of Penance...it's the daily conversion...the letting go of what we want...so that God can accomplish His will in us. I have found myself, particularly this past week, saying the words "Let it go" over and over in situations I found challenging, frustrating or irritating where my will or ego wanted to prevail. It's becoming a kind of "mantra" and every time I say this I feel a little more at peace and in harmony within when I let go of what I want and allow unpleasant situations to teach me their lessons.

Fr. Richard reminded us that part of our call as Brothers and Sisters of Penance is to model that willingness to allow God to have His way with us....every day. How we do this is governed by our Rule and our unique relationship with God. As we allow Him more control over our lives, it becomes clear what needs to be "put in order." But it isn't easy and it takes constant vigilance.

I urge you brothers and sisters to read the materials from Fr. Felice Cangelosi referenced in Vickie's article. Our vocation is a precious gift and must be given great care or it can be "lost". We are very blessed to have priests such as Fr. Felice, Fr. Richard, our own Spiritual Assistants and even the Holy Father who have great respect and hope for Secular Franciscans and keep encouraging us on to help them fulfill the original mission given by Jesus to Francis long ago...to go rebuild His Church. May God truly show us "what is ours to do." 🙏

Remember: Mother Cabrini Celebration at St. Peter's in the Loop, 110 W. Madison, Chicago, IL on Saturday, November 13th from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00p.m. Watch for details in the November *SFO News*.

JPIC - The DREAM Act

by Stephanie Sormane, SFO
Councilor for JPIC

As I'm sure you've noticed, the DREAM Act has been in the news a lot lately. Franciscan Action Network (FAN) offered an excellent webinar on the subject last week (those who are registered with FAN would have received several notices about this webinar). What exactly is the DREAM Act and where does our church stand on this issue?

The current version of the DREAM Act (acronym for "the Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors Act) was introduced in the U.S. Senate by Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL) on March 26, 2009. A similar bill was introduced in the House. The intent of the DREAM Act is to provide legal status and educational opportunity to those who entered the United States as minor children.

There are two major provisions. Under the first a tiered system is created granting legal status to undocumented immigrant children who meet all of the following criteria:

- Arrived in the U.S. before age 16 and have not yet reached age 35
- Been physically present in the U.S. for a continuous period of not less than 5 years immediately preceding the date of enactment
- Earned a high school diploma or its equivalent or have been admitted to college
- Been a person of good moral character
- Not committed certain crimes
- Not pose a danger to national security
- Never been under a final order of deportation.

In order to have the conditional basis of their legal permanent resident status lifted students would have to complete one of the following requirements within six years of being granted conditional status:

- Earn a 2-year degree from a U.S. institution of higher education or finish at least 2 years of a bachelor's degree program
- Serve in the U.S. Armed Forces for at least 2 years and, if discharged, receive an honorable discharge.

In addition, the DREAM Act would allow undocumented immigrants of any age to obtain legal permanent residency if they have already completed college or military service before the enactment of the DREAM Act provided they also meet the seven prerequisites above.

Additionally, the DREAM Act would allow undocumented immigrants of any age to obtain legal permanent residency if they have already completed college or military service before the enactment of the DREAM Act provided they also meet the seven prerequisites above.

The second major provision encourages states to offer public financial assistance for higher education to undocumented immigrants, which is currently prohibited unless the state also offers in-state tuition to U.S. citizens who graduated high school in-state but now reside out-of-state. In addition, the DREAM Act would allow eligible applicants to obtain student loans, to participate in work study programs and to access non-cash services such a tutoring or child care.

The DREAM Act, in various forms, has been before Congress since 2001 but has always been defeated. The U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops supports the central tenet of the DREAM Act – that undocumented minors of good character might earn legal status through education or military service. Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas of Tucson, Arizona, Vice-President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, testified before Congress on the ethical imperative for reform of the U.S. immigration system. He spoke before the House Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, and International Law. Bishop Kicanas, whose diocese runs along the whole of the Arizona-Mexico border, said he witnesses every day the human consequences of our broken immigration system, adding that this is a situation, which from a humanitarian and ethical stand point, needs to be addressed in a humane and comprehensive manner. The DREAM Act was again defeated on September 22, and the likelihood of it coming before Congress again this year is minute. However, in the meantime, you can check web sites – <http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org> and <http://www.usccb.org> – to learn more and to keep up-to-date on this important issue. ■

Congratulations to Newly Elected Council Members:

St. Anthony Padua, Joliet

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