

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,

As we start 2011, it's a good time to compare the circumstances of our life today with where we were a year ago. What has changed for you? Births, deaths, marriages, divorces, employment changes, moves - these and many more events change how we see the world.

How has your Secular Franciscan vocation changed in the past year? If your answer is that it hasn't, maybe it's time to think again. Like so many other things in our lives, if we aren't developing and learning and growing in what it means to be a Secular Franciscan, then maybe that's telling us something about our priorities...and what we see as unchanged is really declining under the weight of the other obligations and activities that we put ahead of it. In light of the other changes in your life in the past year, you may find that your way of living your vocation needs to change as well. Maybe you can live that out by changing your prayer style, by accepting the call to serve your fraternity as a council member, or by a change in ministry. Note that more is not always better - you may be called to cut back in order to refocus your priorities and give yourself a chance to hear what God is saying to you now.

Last year at this time, I wrote my first letter to you as your newly elected regional minister. At that time, I introduced the new Regional Executive Council and gave a brief autobiography. More importantly, I talked about major goals of mine for this three year term. The first major item I mentioned was formation. Our National Formation Commission is completing its work to adapt the International SFO materials for initial formation to our needs here in the United States. There will be a national workshop in mid-May in Belleville, IL, to train regional formation directors, regional ministers, and regional spiritual assistants in these new materials. Then, on September 10 and 11, we will have a workshop for **all fraternity ministers and spiritual assistants** (if available) **at Mayslake Village.**

As voted on at the Chapter of Ministers last year, this will be two consecutive days but will **not** be a "live-in" event; we will all go home Saturday night and come back on Sunday.

The other goal I mentioned last year was that I would like to see all of our fraternity meetings become "privileged places" where we recharge our spiritual batteries and prepare to spend the rest of the month spreading the Good News that God loves us - everywhere we go. For this year, I encourage you to think about the way you spread the news that God loves us...first, by fully accepting that God does love you unconditionally. Show that love as best you can to everyone you meet, especially to your brothers and sisters in fraternity. Our Rule reminds us that we must trust that the "divine seed" is in everyone [Art. 19]; we need to love with God's love, especially when we disagree, and even with those we don't like. (Did I say this was easy? I don't think so.)

I know very well that our fraternities are loving and caring places; you have demonstrated it to me abundantly in your love and prayers on the loss of my mother. The challenge is the same as I mentioned earlier; we have to keep growing in love because we are to love one another as Christ loves us, and that infinite love of God is something we will never attain ourselves. Let's keep practicing in our fraternities and help each other to recognize the love God has for us by the love we show each other...and then take that love out to our daily lives and change the world around us.

Peace and all good,
Vickie ☑

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The SFO News is the official publication of the Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order.

CALENDAR

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

- **Election & Visitation dates subject to change.**

January

- 15: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

February

- 15: Visitation, Junipero Serra
- 26: Apostolates Workshop

March

- 01: Fair Share, Census, and Annual Reports due
- 14: Visitation, Northwest Franciscan Community
- 26: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

April

- 2: Candidates' Retreat, Day 1
- 17: Election, St. Thomas More Fraternity,

May

- 07: Candidates' Retreat, Day 2
- 12-15: National Formation Workshop, Belleville, IL
- 21: Chapter of Ministers – Fraternal & Pastoral Visitation

June

- 23-26: Summer Seminar – “Fraternity” – Loretto, PA

July

- 16: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

August

- 06: Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula

September

- 10-11: Regional Formation Workshop for Ministers/ Formation Directors

October

- 15: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 25-30: NAFRA Meeting

November

- 13: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration (location TBD)

Spiritual Assistant’s Message

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I am writing to you just before Christmas as I prepare for my annual Home Towns Christmas Visit. I will leave on Christmas Eve for New Orleans and stay for a few days and then travel to San Antonio and other parts Texas for another few days. But for now, I sincerely hope that your Advent season went well and that you will be blessed with a spirit filled Christmas time. There is so much that has already been said well by others on the subject of Christmas and all that it means so that for me to say more would seem redundant. As Franciscans, we have so much history and tradition centered on the Christmas Crib. We know how thrilled Francis was with the events that happened in Bethlehem, and how he popularized the crib devotions that we celebrate today. There is for us layer upon layer of reasons to celebrate this lovely gift of God as well as God’s example of humility. So much so that I am unable to think of anything more that would add piety or freshness. Rather, I feel compelled by my experiences lately of holiday cheerlessness that I am encountering here in the front office at the great Franciscan church of St Peter’s in the Loop as well as when I’m out and about. So much so that what I would like to promote this holiday season is some attention to simple courtesy and perhaps because of the season and the great need in our world I want to encourage radical and extreme thoughtfulness. Viewed as a gift we all can give as well as receive, mostly because it’s proper but especially because of the thoughtfulness and courtesy of God’s own example.

I remember a few years ago in California there was a campaign promoting “Random Acts of Kindness.” Now I don’t know who designed that campaign or really whatever resulted but I remember suspecting at the time that there must have been a Franciscan in the woodwork, developing and planning such a generous and radical idea.

It seems to me that my neighborhood, the good old USA, and the whole world are a little sadder this year. People seem to be more worried and frightened for all kinds of very real reasons. So that more than ever as we hear in the famous blockbuster show tune which proclaims, “We need a little Christmas now.” We need to be a little Christmas now. Which I believe calls us to attentive action and grateful openhearted acceptance of a certain reality that it matters very much what we do with what we believe. Today at the beginning of Christmas time I am convinced that what I’m longing for the most is a grand measure of mirth and good cheer, courtesy, and hospitality. These are my needs, my gifts, and my hopes and alas I confess my failures. These I lift up to the Lord of Christmas for blessing alongside the hope for strength and courage to become as a Franciscan, a part of a solution. Courtesy and optimism and to be, as St. Francis has written, an agent of “true faith, certain hope, perfect charity, sense and knowledge, Lord, that I may carry out Your holy and true command.”

I send to you best wishes for the coming year and blessings upon your Franciscan journey.

Your brother Joe M, ofm 

Rest in Peace

The following SFO brothers and sister passed into eternal life in December:

Deacon Max Jinkens, SFO, of St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity, Dec. 23

Edward Beilfuss, SFO, of St. Pascal’s fraternity, December 12

Wanda Brierton, SFO, of Northwest Franciscan Community of the IHM (Palatine), December 3

We commend Deacon Max, Edward, and Wanda to you, Lord. Now that they have passed from this life, may they live on in Your presence forever. Amen 

In-Formation

By Patrick Mendes, SFO
Regional Formation Director

Happy New Year! Let's begin our reflection with the oft-repeated admonition of St. Francis, "Let us begin again for up to now we have done nothing." We all know that Francis wasn't putting down what the good the brothers and sisters had done. He was more indicating how much more there is yet to do. 800 plus years later, we still have more to do!

We often see the new year as a time of beginnings. We make the famous New Year's resolutions, which, more often than not, we don't keep as faithfully as we should. So, perhaps we should instead set some realistic goals for our Franciscan life and growth in our charism. Some ideas I believe worth considering are:

Take one article of the Holy Rule each day and review how well we are doing in living it. Reflecting on how we have lived that particular article of the Rule thus far and what realistic goal can we set for that day or week to make the article of the Rule come alive and to fruition for us? Just as an example, we might reflect on Article 14 of the Holy Rule: "Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. 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."

How did I exercise a Christian spirit of service and how will I consciously do it today? At work: Can I help a colleague who is working on an especially difficult project? If I can't do anything to physically help, can I take a minute to encourage them; tell them they are doing a great job; listen to their concerns about the project? Even listening, is a service. We don't need to have an answer. Being present to another person is often the blessing that encourages them on and lightens their burden. At home: Is your child or spouse struggling with a particular issue? Can we encourage and support them; coach the homework; clean the kitchen after dinner so that your spouse has some extra time to devote to what they are working on – or just catch a much needed breather?

These are just a few examples of the small kindnesses that contribute to building a more fraternal and evangelical world.

Each day, while not neglecting the other articles of the Holy Rule, it is good to reflect on one in particular and make plans to "live it even better." Then, follow through on the plan. Remember, it can just be something small. Heroics aren't necessary. Making our corner of the world and those with whom we share it a little better by something as small as a smile and a "nice job" affirmation is often plenty.

As we begin this new year, in our Region we have much to look forward to and much to celebrate in our Franciscan vocation. I pray that the Sacred Heart of Jesus surround you with His love and fill your lives with His abundant blessings, as together, we strive to grow in our Franciscan vocation and charism. **¶**

JPIC – Something New for the New Year!

By Stephanie Sormane, SFO
Councilor for JPIC

As we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ through the Christmas Season, and look forward to the beginning of a new calendar year when we make many resolutions to improve ourselves, let us consider some opportunities that are being presented to us through the National Fraternity and Franciscan Action Network (FAN).

First, the National Fraternity has agreed to join with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in its First Courageous Initiative in the campaign Catholics Confront Global Poverty. Exactly what is involved will be summarized in a webinar to be held on Thursday, January 13, at 6 p.m. CST.

What's a webinar? It's a meeting of a number of people via computer and telephone. CRS will most likely send out a link to their list of interested parties; and clicking on that link will connect the person to the webinar, which will most likely consist of a PowerPoint presentation. Audio is either through your computer's speakers (if it's not interactive), or by telephone (they give you a number to call – this is often NOT an 800 number, so it's good to use a cell phone on which long distance is either part of your package or you have points to cover the call). For those who have headsets with microphones that connect to the computer, that works, too.

JPIC – Something New for the New Year! (continued)

By Stephanie Sormane, SFO
Councilor for JPIC

NAFRA's part in this Courageous Initiative is being led by Kent Ferris, SFO, our new National Councilor for JPIC. There will be further webinars on this subject, but the one on January 13th will give us all an idea of what this project is and how we can participate. It would be wonderful if there were a member of each fraternity in our Region participating in this webinar, but if we can't do that, do you think we could have someone from each cluster participating? I will send out the link information as soon as I receive it from Kent. Please let me know if you have an interest in this and are willing to participate. Best to email me at apostolates@ilsfo.org.

As some of you know, FAN uses webinars frequently to address various issues. They are very educational and are presented by people who know the issues well. In addition, FAN usually records its webinars so, if for some reason you'd like to participate but have a conflict at the time the webinar is presented, you can watch it later. The only drawback is, of course, that you can't participate in the conversation or ask questions.

Webinars coming up with FAN in the new year are:

- Tuesday, January 11 – 1:00 p.m. CST – Franciscan Values in Our Current Political and Social Context, presenter: Fr. Tom Nairn, OFM. Fr. Tom was here in Chicago for years, and served as Spiritual Assistant of St. Anthony Fraternity (now Oak Lawn) and a professor at Catholic Theological Union. He is an expert in ethics and is currently Vice President of the Catholic Health Association in Washington, DC.
- Wednesday, January 26 – 6-8 p.m. CST – web cast on Moving Forward on Climate Change. This is an important presentation (by FAN staff) because the likelihood of any action in this area by the Federal government at this time is extremely small. Therefore, the discussion will focus on what WE can do to address this problem and bring Franciscan values to the attention of society. This web cast will be, at the very least, very interesting.

Additionally, we would like to try to establish at least one, hopefully more, Action Circles in the Region. What's an Action Circle? Simply, it's a group of people

interested in justice, peace, and integrity of creation (JPIC) who are willing to connect occasionally to learn about and discuss issues and determine if our Franciscan charism calls us to action. Action Circles were the result of brainstorming during workshops entitled "Ours to Do" held in three cities last autumn. The educational aspect is the most important for us right now because we believe SFOs will want to become more involved in JPIC matters when they are more familiar with the issues and how they can make a difference. These are just beginning so if anyone is interested in participating in one of these Action Circles, I would love to hear from you. How often we would meet, how we would meet (face-to-face, telephonically, etc.) needs to be determined, but we need to start somewhere.

I hope all of you have enjoyed a truly blessed Christmas season, and may God grant that the new year is one of real growth, in every way, for the Secular Franciscan Order! 🙏

2011 Calendar – The dates in the calendar reflected in the masthead are those that are firm for 2011. Other dates for elections and visitations that are pending will be added as they become firm. Please note our first event of the year is the Apostolates Workshop on **Saturday, February 26 at Mayslake Village**. Please save the date and watch for more information both in February *SFO News* and at fraternity meetings. 🙏

New Year's Prayer

Holy Father, God of our yesterdays, our today, and our tomorrows, thank You for the year behind us and for the year ahead. Help us in this new year, Father, to fret less and laugh more; to teach our children to laugh by laughing with them; to teach others to love by loving them; knowing, when Love came to the stable in Bethlehem, He came for us – so that Love could be with us, and we could know You. Help us, Father, to hear Your love song in every sunrise, in the chirping of sparrows in our backyards, in the stories of our old folks, and the fantasies of our children. Thank You for another new year and for new chances every day. We pray for peace, for light, and for hope, that we might spread them to others. Forgive us for falling short this past year. We leave the irreparable past in your hands, and step out into the unknown new year knowing You will go with us. We accept Your gift of a new year and we rejoice in what's ahead, depending on You to help us do exactly what You want. In Jesus' name, Amen. (Excerpted from <http://halife.com>) 🙏