

## Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO

*And the Word became flesh  
and made his dwelling among us,  
and we saw his glory,  
the glory as of the Father's only Son,  
full of grace and truth. (Jn 1:14)*

Dear brothers and sisters,

When I first became Catholic, I was a bit puzzled by the fact that the Mass during the day on Christmas used this Gospel instead of one of the infancy narratives from Matthew or Luke. The longer I am a Franciscan, as well as a Catholic, the more of a wonder it is that the all-powerful God came to us as a human being – moreover, as a helpless infant. When St. Francis created the crib scene at Greccio, he emphasized the King of Kings came among us as a man...not as a king. Matthew, Luke, and John each tell us about how Jesus Christ was true God and true man in different ways.

Sr. Ilia Delio, OSF writes about the humility and the poverty of God. Those both sound very strange until we think about the incarnation. Even if Jesus Christ had come among us with all the pomp and circumstance of a human king, how does that compare with the omnipotence and omnipresence of His Divine nature? And think of the humility the Son of God endured to accept the limitations of being an infant, of having ordinary human needs!

As Franciscans, the Incarnation is particularly dear to us, for which I am grateful. The manger scene was a very important part of Christmas for me when I was growing up, and yet was something I took for granted. We hear the Christmas story and we accept it without thinking too much about the implications. That's where the Gospel of John comes in; it reminds us what God really did when Mary said, "Be it done to me according to your word." (The infinite God spent nine months in Mary's womb? How can this be?)

The Church's readings for Advent help us remember the glory of Jesus Christ, as well as his humble coming among us, by continuing the emphasis on our need to prepare for the coming of the Lord. We know that we need to prepare each day for the Lord, making straight his path to our heart, by turning away from those things that are obstacles in our lives. This period of preparation is a good time to remember the way in which our General Constitutions advise us to live our daily conversion:

**Art. 13.1 Rule 7** Secular Franciscans, called in earlier times "the brothers and sisters of penance," propose to live in the spirit of continual conversion. Some means to cultivate this characteristic of the Franciscan vocation individually and in fraternity are: listening to and celebrating the Word of God; review of life; spiritual retreats; the help of a spiritual adviser, and penitential celebrations. They should approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently and participate in the communal celebration of it, whether in the fraternity, or with the whole people of God.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever your plans as we prepare for and celebrate the feast of the Incarnation, I pray that you will make some time to reflect on the mystery of God-with-us. May you grow in the knowledge that God loves you with unconditional love and that God wants you to have fullness of life in that love. May you desire ever more strongly to respond to God's love by loving God, your neighbor, and all of creation. Let us resolve to share that love most particularly with our families and with our Franciscan brothers and sisters.

Peace and good .....Vickie ☒

<sup>1</sup> *Ordo Poenitentiae. Praenotanda 22 ff.*

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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.**  
(E=Election/V=Visitation)

**January**

- 15: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 17: San Jose Fraternity (E)

**February**

- 15: St. Junipero Serra (V)
- 26: Apostolates Workshop

**March**

- 01: Fair Share, Census, and Annual Reports due
- 14: NW Franciscan Community (V)
- 19: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.

**April**

- 2: Candidates' Retreat, Day 1
- 17: St. Thomas More (E)

**May**

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

**June**

- 07: St. Clare Fraternity (Oak Brook) (V)
- 12: St. Juliana Fraternity (V)
- 23/ Summer Seminar - "Fraternity"
- 26: Loretto, PA
- 26: St. Anthony Padua (East Side) (E)

**July**

- 10: St. Elizabeth of Hungary (V)
- 10: St. Maximilian Kolbe (E)
- 16: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 23: St. Francis of Assisi Fox Valley (V)

**August**

- 06: Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula

**September**

- 17-18: Regional Formation Workshop for Ministers/ Formation Directors
- 18: St. Mary of the Angels (V)

**October**

- 02: St. Francis/St. Louis (V)
- 15: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 25-30: NAFRA Meeting

**November**

- 13: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration (Mayslake Village)

**December**

- 04: St. Bernardine of Siena (V)

**Spiritual Assistant's Message**

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We Franciscans know full well about the birth narrative found in the Gospels, because Francis brought it to the attention our church and our world that God's entry/ God's incarnation into humanity was a balance both glorious and humble; a perfect expression of the holy poverty he chose as the foundation of his order and dream. The image and idea of the birth of our Lord was particularly sweet for Francis to consider. He had seen once on one of his earliest visits to Rome, reportedly at St Mary Major, an assembly of enshrined figures depicting the Nativity. This image left quite an impression on Francis and as we can surmise, it later must have had a part in inspiring his dramatic recreation of Our Lord's nativity in Bethlehem in the mountains above the village of Greccio in the Rieti Valley. This very well known Franciscan sanctuary of Greccio is one of four holy sites in the Rieti Valley where our father, Francis, sought and found the comfort and satisfaction of solitude. The beautiful Rieti Valley is situated at the center of the Italian peninsula between the Valley of Spoleto near Assisi and Rome. This fertile valley was once an inland lake but the Romans drained the lake over 2,000 years ago to develop for cultivation.

Whenever you plan a visit to Franciscan Italy, be sure to allow a couple of days in the Rieti Valley if possible. There is a wonderful guest house that is walking distance from the Santuario of Greccio named Oasi Gesu Bambino. I am convinced that these places provide an insightful perspective into Francis's formation and spiritual evolvment. One can easily imagine young Francis up in the mountain forests in deep prayer, or Francis perched on a cliff being swept away by the beauty of creation (for the vistas are particularly beautiful there), or even the poor Francis huddling in an outcropping of rocks managing the

pain and fear of dreadful illness with courage and inspiration. Maybe one day we can go there together.

Before I conclude this last article of the year, I want to thank you for the golden opportunity to minister among you. My association with the good people of the Secular Franciscan Order (especially the Mother Cabrini Region) is one of the most life giving experiences in my life. I profoundly thank you for all that you do and I will continue to keep your friendship in my thoughts and prayers. May this Christmas time be downright thrilling for you and those that you love. May God gift you with goodness and peace, the laughter and company of good people, and a good heart to be warmed by our wonderful stories and traditions. God bless us Franciscans one and all.

Your Brother Joe M, ofm 

**What are the "O Antiphons"?**

The "O Antiphons" refer to the seven antiphons that are recited (or chanted) preceding the Magnificat during Vespers of the Liturgy of the Hours. They cover the special period of Advent preparation known as the Octave before Christmas, Dec. 17-23, with Dec. 24 being Christmas Eve and Vespers for that evening being for the Christmas Vigil. (They are also used as the "Alleluia" verse during the Mass on these same days).

The importance of "O Antiphons" is twofold: Each one highlights a title for the Messiah: *O Sapientia* (O Wisdom), *O Adonai* (O Lord), *O Radix Jesse* (O Root of Jesse), *O Clavis David* (O Key of David), *O Oriens* (O Rising Sun), *O Rex Gentium* (O King of the Nations), and *O Emmanuel*. Also, each one refers to the prophecy of Isaiah of the coming of the Messiah.

If interested in reading more below is a link to an article that gives a Scriptural reflection on each of the Antiphons. <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/religion/re0374.html>

Reflecting on these antiphons is a great way to transition from Advent to Christmas. On behalf of the Regional Council we wish you a blessed Christmas and New Year!

Gloria Huerta, SFO, Editor 

## In-Formation

By Patrick Mendés, SFO  
Regional Formation Director

**“A reading from the book of the prophet, Isaiah....”** We’ll hear these words many times throughout Advent as the preface to many if not most of the readings. I remember one of my theology professors referring to Isaiah as “the Christmas prophet.”

The joyful expectation which is the time spent in Advent resounds for me in Chapter 61 of Isaiah. “The spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the afflicted; has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted; to proclaim liberty to captives; opening of the prison to those who are bound....”

What a wonderful proclamation of the love God has for us. The Lord Jesus is coming to do these things for us because **God loves us so much He wants to be with us.**


We learned many years ago that we were created to “love and serve God in this world and be happy with Him in the next.” By His incarnation, that is His becoming man, God manifests His great love for us and we are invited to return that love.

We have many opportunities to bring glad tidings to the afflicted. We can visit the sick and shut-in brothers and sisters of our fraternity, our parish, our neighborhoods. For those of us who bake Christmas cookies, what a wonderful reason to visit and bring Christmas joy. This is also an opportunity to “bind up the brokenhearted” among our family and friends who are hurting because of a death of a loved one. Just being present to them, letting them talk and perhaps making them smile – the whimsical Christmas cookies again – lighten their heavy hearts.


Proclaiming liberty to the captives and the imprisoned doesn’t necessarily mean rescuing people who are captives in the strict sense of the word. There are many ways to contribute to those who are captive and imprisoned by poverty and persecution in so many places near and far. How can we help? Check out Franciscan Action Network, Franciscans International and our own local Franciscan ministries such as Outreach and the Port for ideas on how to help.

Most of all...proclaim the joy of Christmas by being that joy to all we meet, not just during Advent and Christmas, but everyday.

Oh yes, maybe reading some of the book of Isaiah throughout Advent is a good idea, too!

The members of the Regional Formation Commission and I wish you all the blessings of peace, good and joy that are Christmas. 

## Spiritual Assistance Available

SFO members who would like a spiritual director are invited to contact Brother Kevin Clausius, OFM. Brother Kevin is serving his internship in Spiritual Direction at the Claret Center, 5536 South Everett, Chicago, 60637. If you would like to schedule an appointment with Brother Kevin, please call Lupe at 773-643-6259 and request an appointment with him. There is no charge for his services. 

## Professed of Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity November 2010 through October 2011

Veronica Malave, SFO - Professed 11/22/10  
St. Anthony - Joliet Fraternity

Karen Casciaro, SFO - Professed 3/26/11  
St. Francis - Fox Valley Fraternity

Patrick Shannon, SFO - Professed 3/26/11  
St. Francis - Fox Valley Fraternity

Gerald Stecker, SFO - Professed 4/30/11  
St. Bernardine of Siena Fraternity


Katie Sartino, SFO - Professed 6/25/11  
St. Anthony - Rockford Fraternity

Lawrence Kamin, SFO - Professed 10/1/11  
St. Bernardine of Siena Fraternity

Dixie Wiles, SFO - Professed 10/30/11  
St. Anthony - Joliet Fraternity

Janet Williams, SFO - Professed 10/30/11  
St. Anthony - Joliet Fraternity

Congratulations to you all! We thank God for the new life He brings to our Region through your professions!

While we pray for vocations we need to be alert to opportunities to invite others to ‘come and see’ what we do. May God grant abundant vocations – eyes to see and ears to hear when He might be inviting someone to join our fraternities. 

## In Memoriam

Please pray for Gingie Noe from St. Francis Fox Valley fraternity who died on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. May God reward Gingie for her many good works with eternal light, happiness and peace.

## JPIC News – News from National Chapter Meeting

(Continued from November SFO News)

Vickie Klick, SFO

To recap, last month's article touched on the areas of respect for life, immigration reform and an initiative called "*The Two Feet of Love in Action*" which addresses using both charitable works and social justice as a response to God's love for us. Below are other initiatives the National JPIC recommends for our support in the coming year.

### **National Committee for a Human Life Amendment, Inc.**

From the NCHLA website: "In the great civil rights struggle to secure the right to life for all, Archbishop John Roach, testifying on behalf of the Catholic Bishops, expressed the guiding vision:

*"We are committed to full legal recognition of the right to life of the unborn child, and will not rest in our efforts until society respects the inherent worth and dignity of every member of the human race."*

The National Committee for a Human Life Amendment is dedicated to pursuing this vision. The organization's objectives include educating citizens, developing pro-life legislative networks, and offering programs in support of pro-life legislation. Among its various activities, NCHLA produces educational and program resources, communicates with leaders about legislative priorities, and presents legislative seminars throughout the year. In a special way, NCHLA assists dioceses, state Catholic conferences, and Catholic lay groups. The Committee also works closely with the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops."

### **Catholic Mobilizing Network to End the Use of the**

**Death Penalty.** From the Catholic Mobilizing Network: "Catholic Mobilizing Network (CMN) proclaims the Church's unconditional pro-life teaching and its application to capital punishment and restorative justice. CMN works in close collaboration with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to prepare Catholics for informed involvement in campaigns to repeal state death penalty laws and expand or inaugurate restorative justice programs.

#### What We Do

- Educate the lay community through our programs and materials on the Church's teachings on the death penalty.
- Facilitate respectful and informed discourse within the Catholic community and the community at large.
- Encourage informed Catholic involvement in the public debate."

## Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship.

From Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States, with Introductory Note: "The Catholic Bishops of the United States are pleased to re-propose to our people *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, our teaching document on the political responsibility of Catholics. This statement, overwhelmingly adopted by the body of bishops in 2007, represents the continuing teaching of our Bishops' Conference and our guidance for Catholics in the exercise of their rights and duties as participants in our democracy. We urge our Catholic pastors and people to continue to use this important statement to help them form their consciences, to contribute to civil and respectful public dialogue, and to shape their choices in the coming election in the light of Catholic teaching."

### **Interfaith Worker Justice.**

From the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: "Working in collaboration with Interfaith Worker Justice and other faith-based groups, the Bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development is intensifying its efforts to support our unemployed brother and sisters, and their families.

The Faith Advocates for Jobs Campaign has been launched to:

1. Advocate policies that protect families and ensure access to just and decent jobs with fair wages; and
2. Empower parishes and other faith communities to minister to the spiritual, social, and employment needs of their parishioners and congregants."

### **Catholic Campaign for Human Development.**

From the CCHD page on the USCCB website: "The Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) is an instrument of the Catholic Church working to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ, "... to bring good news to the poor ... release to captives ... sight to the blind, and let the oppressed go free." (Luke 4:18)

CCHD is the domestic anti-poverty program of the U.S. Catholic Bishops and works to break the cycle of poverty by helping low-income people participate in decisions that affect their lives, families and communities. CCHD offers a hand up, not a hand out.

It has a complementary mission of educating on poverty and its causes. This dual pastoral strategy of education for justice and helping people who are poor speak and act for themselves reflects the mandate of the Scriptures and the principles of Catholic social teaching. CCHD also provides the Catholic faithful with concrete opportunities to live out the love of God and neighbor in ways that express our baptismal call and continuing Eucharistic transformation. **1**