

Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO

Dear brothers and sisters,

By the time you read this, you will likely be settling into your Lenten practices. (As for me, at this moment I am still waiting to see how God will work in my life this time around.) I would like to encourage you to incorporate a bit of specifically Secular Franciscan practice into your Lent. Spend a few minutes each day considering the gifts of your vocation and your profession in the SFO. For those of you in formation, consider what profession WILL mean in your life.

To use this reflection time to deepen our understanding of these gifts, we have been blessed with some wonderful formation materials on the meaning of profession. The presentation by Fr. Felice Cangelosi, OFM, at the General Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order in 2008 (available at <http://www.ciofs.org/doc/kia8/kia8en13.htm>) is the starting point. That material was incorporated into the first six months of CIOFS Dossiers (January-June 2010) and was presented to us personally by Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM, spiritual assistant to the National Formation Commission, at our Regional Retreat in 2010. As if that wasn't enough, Fr. Richard's article on the meaning of profession in the "For Up to Now" National Formation Manual is available to all of you now. You should be able to get a copy from your fraternity minister and/or formation director.

If you have read any of these materials already (which I hope you have) or were present for Fr. Richard's retreat, start by seeing what you remember - what made an impression on you. For me, it was Fr. Richard's statement that we should understand our profession as uniting us with Christ's complete self-offering - that we should understand ourselves as presented on the altar with Christ. I won't say I remember that at every Mass...but I should.

Once you've reflected on what you remember and why, it would be good to take a paragraph, or even just a sentence, each day and reflect on it (if you have time to use the techniques of lectio divina, that would be great, but whatever fits into your busy day). I've heard Fr. Richard speak on this more than once

and I assure you that it can't all be absorbed in one reading/hearing. My hope for you (and for myself) is that by sitting with this profound material daily, it will move from your head to your heart - where it needs to be.

We all have room to grow in our understanding of our profession. I sometimes feel as though I would never have dared to make profession if I had really understood what it meant! Fortunately, we take leaps of faith throughout our lives - marriage is another example for many of us. God unfolds the meaning of the events of our lives gradually, just as he led Francis to understand his call to rebuild the Church over time. I hope and pray that this Lent will be a time of spiritual growth and renewal for us all. I close this month's column with a few quotes from Fr. Felice's presentation to get you started.

Peace and blessings, Vickie☺

1. [T]he celebration [of profession] constitutes the foundational moment of the **identity of the professed**, and is simultaneously the condition for a dialogue to take place in response to God's action.
2. Not only is *the Holy Spirit the source of the vocation of secular Franciscans* (Const 11), since they are *urged on by the Spirit* to reach the perfection of charity in accordance with their own secular state (Rule 2); Profession also comes about by the working of the same Spirit.
3. *The local fraternity makes the presence and action of the Church visible primarily in the Profession. Therefore "Profession, since it is by nature a public and ecclesial fact, must be celebrated in the presence of the fraternity"* (Ritual, Preliminary Notes, n. 13).
4. **Profession entails and produces the entrusting of self to the Fraternity on the part of the candidate.** In Profession a covenant is established with the Brothers and Sisters, which can never be disregarded.

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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

- 14: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 15: St. Francis, Crystal Lake Fraternity (V)
- 22: St. Anthony, Oak Lawn Fraternity (E)

February

- 18: Apostolates Workshop
- 26: St. Anthony, Rockford Fraternity (V)

March

- 01: Fair Share, Census, and Annual Reports due
- 10: St. Anthony, Joliet Fraternity (V)
- 17: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 25: St. Francis, Steger Fraternity (V)
- 28: San Damiano Fraternity (V)
- 31: Candidates' Retreat, Day 1

April

- 1: Living Waters Fraternity (V)
- 15: Nuestra Sra. De Guadalupe (E)
- 17: Brother Jacoba Community (V)

May

- 05: Candidates' Retreat, Day 2
- 19: Chapter of Ministers

June

- 09: Wellspring Community (E)

July

- 3-8: Quinquennial Congress, Chicago, IL

August

- 04: Regional Gathering, Feast of the Portiuncula
- 20: Junipero Serra Fraternity (E)

September

- 10: NW Franciscan Community (E)
- 29: Leadership Workshop

October

- 06: Council Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
- 16-21: NAFRA Meeting – Denver, CO
- 28: St. Thomas More Fraternity (V)

November

- 04: St. Elizabeth Hungary Fraternity (E)
- 14: Mother Cabrini Feast Day Celebration
- 17: St. Francis, Fox Valley Fraternity (E)
- 18: St. Juliana Fraternity (E)

December

- 04: St. Clare Fraternity – Oak Brook (E)
- 08: Regional Chapter of Elections
- 16: St. Anthony East Side Fraternity (V)
- 29: St. Clare Kankakee Fraternity (V)

Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Dear Sisters and Brothers

By the time this happy little missive reaches you, the last of the holiday mirth will have breathed its last tired breath as we surrender ourselves to the season of Lent. Consider that in the time of Francis and Clare the *bona gente* (good people) practiced fearful extremes of fasting and penance in somber attire hoping to atone for their many private faults in quite public ways. It must have seemed at times, or so it seems to me, that this exceptional behavior was designed to disconnect from the perpetual hope in God and the saving love of Jesus which is a foundational element of the Franciscan Spirit. I will, as I'm sure most of you will too, surrender to the purposeful process of Lent but it is impossible for me to forget hope's word. As St. Paul says in the 8th chapter of the Letter to the Romans *"I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord"*.

Now please don't interpret these thoughts and ideas to mean that I don't support the practices of Prayer, Fasting, and Penance for Lent – I do. I encourage you to seriously invest yourselves in activities of conversion and preparation for a spiritual spring in your life; in your world, in your fraternity and family, in your step. My hope for Lent, for myself and for you, is that it becomes a life-giving and directed movement toward fresh new growth, with a clearer understanding of the fruit of Holy Faith, as well as a graceful and beautiful dance with the Church's liturgical formula (disciplines). I love Lent and the potential it affords, don't you? I usually feel great satisfaction upon its completion. And the preparation which begins on Ash Wednesday is one of my favorite days of the liturgical year. This is especially true here at St. Peter's in the Loop

where 15 to 20 thousand or more good people come through these holy brass doors each year.

But with all of this said, in conclusion, I want to boldly and unashamedly proclaim what I've said before...and that is, that for me Lent has nothing to do with giving up chocolate, or gum, or lobster. I ain't givin' up nothin' for Lent. Instead, I will take on more. More prayer time in more and varied ways...More organizing activities in my work and living space, as well as thoughtfully organizing what I eat and don't eat...More generous giving of myself to others and to other productive pursuits...And ultimately, more attentive openness and availability to God's Voice, God's Dream, and God's People.

May your Lenten Journey be particularly blessed.

Your Brother Joe M, ofm

"CLARE: A SACRED FLAME"

This is the 800th anniversary year of the Poor Clares, the Second Order of St. Francis. On Saturday, March 31, from 10:00 – 3:00, Sr. Ingrid Peterson OSF, a Rochester Franciscan, will be giving a day of reflection entitled *Clare: A Sacred Flame*, in the Motherhouse Auditorium of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart, 9201 W. St. Francis Rd., Frankfort. The cost is \$20 for the day which includes lunch, or \$15 if you are a member of Region 3 of the Franciscan Federation. If you would like to attend, call Sr. Marilyn Renninger at 815.464.3886 by March 25.

SAVE THE DATE

The Poor Clares of Lemont cordially invite you to join them on Laetare Sunday, March 18th, for Mass with Cardinal Francis George, O.M.I at 10:00 a.m. in honor of the 800th anniversary of the beginning of the Poor Clare Order. It is also the ninth anniversary of the Dedication of the Poor Clare Monastery and Chapel.

The Monastery is located at:
12210 South Will Cook Road,
Palos Park, IL 60464

In-Formation

By Sandy Kisel, SFO

Regional Formation Commission

All who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with all their strength (cf. Mk12:30), and love their neighbors as themselves (cf. Mt 22:39), and hate their bodies with their vices and sins, and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and produce worthy fruits of penance: (*Letter to the Faithful*)

The Lenten Season is upon us; a time when the Church strives with renewed vigor to focus on our Lord's Passion, and with love strives to bring inordinate passions into control. Wondering what I could write I laid upon a book I had read many years ago called **The Way of Divine Love**, by Sr. Josefa Menéndez. The book came alive to me and while I read it I picked-up also our Rule.

Of many passages that spoke to me, this one... Josefa, after promising our Lord submissiveness in whatever He should ask of Her, she recounts an occasion seeing our Lord coming toward her, and she begged His forgiveness, she just couldn't stop to talk, she had so many chores to do! Jesus left.

I thought about how many times I've done just the same thing with evening prayer, or times when our Lord makes His presence known. At Profession I promised I no longer wanted to live after the way of the old man, subject to the passions, sin and death; rather I professed, I belonged to God and to a new way of being. I wanted to let go of my past way of doing things and embrace the life God wanted to give me. How often though I've responded just as Sr. Josefa. I wondered what would have pleased our Lord more, seeking out a quiet place and uniting with Him; simply recognizing Jesus' presence and thanking Him; or making an act of love thereby returning the love He was giving me.

Jesus is our happiness! He invites us; Come! Rest in His Heart; totally leave ourselves in His hands. He wants us to recognize His great love for us and the fountains of grace He wants to pour out upon us. He asks only that we be like soft wax, pliable in His hands so that He can mold us/make of us what ever pleases Him.

I thought about how we are so like Martha in the Gospels busying ourselves everywhere, trying to fulfill our duties which sometimes seem endless. Yet, when I began thinking about this passage I thought about how everything we do in our lives is to be ordered toward God, for His glory and pleasure.

I began to think of our coming from God (in the beginning, and at Baptism, at Profession, in conversion) and (journeying toward God) everyday of our lives; I thought about the dismissal at holy Mass: Go forth... it spoke to me of our coming and going from Christ in the liturgy, sacraments and prayer, into Christ in the world. I thought about mornings leaving home and Morning Prayer filled with peace; then, apprehensive of what my work day might involve. I found solace and strength thinking that whatever happens, remaining in Jesus presence, remembering He was with me and that I wasn't alone, not only removed my tension and anxiety, but also offered me an opportunity to offer an act of trust and love.

Wherever we are, whatever we are doing we are in His Heart, all Jesus asks is that we love and console Him...Spend time adoring Him, serve Him with humility and love. He pours out from His Heart full of mercy His love for all of us, just as we are..."the most despicable/ the greatest sinners/the most miserable and sinful." He wants everything, even our worst miseries and sins, which He says, far from being an obstacle, our faults are an encouragement to draw us ever near to Him...He asks only true repentance and a readiness to turn away from our sinful ways out of love for Him."

Jesus told Josefa, "It is not sin that most grievously wounds His Heart," but what rends and lacerates It is that after sin men do not take refuge in It once more." What He wants and ardently desires is "trust in His infinite goodness and mercy." Jesus asks that we love our neighbor with "a spirit of self-sacrifice in love." He says: "The tiniest offerings united with Him can affect the salvation of many souls."

St. Francis was so identified with the Passion of Jesus he was imprinted with the marks of the Cross of Christ's crucifixion upon his body becoming a living imprint of Christ among us...United as he was with our Lord's Passion, what would God refuse him when he cries out to our Heavenly Father for souls! Let us ask our Sorrowful Mother and St. Joseph to help us draw ever so much more into the Heart of Jesus this Lenten Season. May the peace and love of Christ be with you! 🙏

JPIC News – Create a Ripple Lenten Program

By Gloria Huerta, SFO, Editor

Although Lent has already started, some of us may be thinking of ways we could observe the season in a more meaningful fashion.

The Joliet Diocese of Social Justice has offered a program called "Create a Ripple" that provides reflections and activities for each week of the Lenten Season. Below is some information regarding the program .

CREATE A RIPPLE - Program Components

The program provides awareness and educational information from our world related to one aspect of Catholic social teaching. It identifies a personal action each of us can take to create a ripple ... one small change that can change many other lives, the "ripple effect". (It also coordinates with the weekly social justice focus of the Operation Rice Bowl Calendar, but may be used with or without the calendar.) The focus for each week follows:

Week One Care for God's Creation (Actions)

1. Bring reusable cloth bags when shopping instead of disposable plastic bags.
2. Keep your tires properly inflated. Every pound of under-inflation uses 6% more gas.
3. Unplug your cell phone as soon as it is charged.
4. Take the St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor: <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org>

Week Two Dignity of the Human Person (Actions)

1. Check out websites like www.slaveryfootprint.org which explain how our purchases contribute to modern slavery, but also offer practical suggestions for what we can do to make it end.
2. Practice seeing and respecting all people, the clerk at the store, the homeless man on the street corner, or anyone taken for granted or ignored. Recognize their inherent dignity, no matter their circumstances.
3. Notice and show appreciation for all the people in our lives.

Week Three Rights and Responsibility (Actions)

1. If you do laundry more than once a week, cut back, or do bigger loads in cold water.
2. Pay attention to the water you use this week and how easily you obtain it.
3. Pray for those for whom water is scarce.

Week Four The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers (Actions)

1. Change your coffee to Fair Trade Coffee
2. This week look for the fair trade label on the coffee you purchase or go to the Catholic Relief Services web site at: <http://www.crsfairtrade.org/products/coffee-overview/buy-coffee/> to purchase coffee.

Week Five Option for the Poor (Actions)

1. Buy locally grown produce from area farmers this spring. Support those struggling to create local jobs with wages above the poverty level.
2. Support urban farm initiatives that empower community residents to increase economic opportunities through access to organic produce, nutritional education, work force training, or micro-enterprise development.

Week Six Call to Family, Community, and Participation (Actions)

As we go through Holy Week, let us reflect.

1. Palm Sunday

Whom do we welcome to our communities? Whom do we exclude?

2. Holy Thursday

Who sits down to meals and who goes hungry?

3. Holy Saturday

Who is waiting to be reunited with a loved one? Pray for these people.

To access full program visit:

http://www.paxjoliet.org/coalition/Create_a_Ripple_Program 

Congratulations to Newly Professed

Diane Kocsis, Arlene Smialek, Jeane Trudeau, and Ruth Trudeau of St. Elizabeth Hungary Fraternity were professed on January 6, 2012. Congratulations to all these new sisters and to the fraternity!

In Memoriam

Steve Kordek, OFS, founding member of St. Juliana fraternity, died on February 19, at the age of 100 years old. All who knew him knew of his deep commitment to the Secular Franciscan Order.

Sister Evangeline Mendés, Poor Clare, twin sister of our brother Patrick Mendés, who died on February 4th

May God grant our brother and sister eternal light, happiness and peace.