

Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO

Dear brothers and sisters,

The official season of Lent is finally approaching. I have a combination of anticipation and apprehension as I consider what God may have in store for me this time around!

God is calling each of us to grow and growth means change. Those Lents that have had the most impact in my own life are those where circumstances beyond my control have *forced* me to change. Like most of us, I get comfortable with the way my life is, and I'm happy for it to stay comfortable. No wonder this isn't always a pleasant situation.

In St. Francis' time, there were multiple "Lents" each year that were observed in preparation for various feasts. When Francis received the stigmata, he was observing a Lent leading up to the feast of St. Michael the Archangel. For us as Secular Franciscans, I believe that we should recognize "Lent" in the life events that we are called to respond to, especially those that require us to change how we view ourselves and what we are called to do. That can happen at any time during the year; Ash Wednesday and the "official" Lent help us to recognize what we're experiencing.

We base our observance of Lent on Jesus' 40 days in the desert/wilderness between his baptism and the start of his public ministry. Jesus heard the voice of the Father at his baptism. Then, "the Spirit drove him out into the desert" (Mark 1:12). As is often explained in homilies, the temptations reported in the Gospels correspond to different ways Jesus could have misused his calling as Messiah and Son. How does this apply to our living out of Lent?

We, too, are called – not with a voice from heaven at our Baptism, but we are called in many ways. A parent or spouse becomes suddenly ill, and our role in life changes instantly. The boss calls us in, and we abruptly

lose our status as "employed." A car runs a red light and suddenly "health" is a thing of the past. All of these are major life changes, but the call can be far more subtle and still demand some "desert time" to respond. Our temptation to ignore or misinterpret our call is just as real as Jesus' temptations. If we remember that whatever the particulars of the situation, we are invited to a deeper experience of God's love and to share that love with everyone we meet, it will help us to move in the right direction.

I encourage you to share your Lenten journey with your brothers and sisters in fraternity. We all have challenges in our lives, large and small. Part of being fraternity is admitting those challenges to each other, so that we can support one another with prayers, encouragement, and consolation. We also gain perspective through the experiences of others. No matter how unique we think our situation is, it will be similar to what someone else has already gone through. Your challenge and how you dealt with it, in turn, may be just what someone else needs to hear today. If we keep our struggles to ourselves, we all lose. (For some, it may be a penance to limit what is shared, for others, it is a penance to share – moderation and common sense are in order!)

May your penitential practices this Lent help you to hear God's voice more clearly, open your heart to answer God's call more fully, and experience God's love overflowing in your life.....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.**
(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. Maximillian 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
- 07: St. Bernardine of Siena (V)

September

- 10-11: 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 (location TBD)

Spiritual Assistant's Message

by Br. Joe Middleton, OFM

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Peace and all good from your Brother Joe and your brothers and sisters of the St Francis/St Louis Fraternity SFO.

You are cordially invited to join us for a series of special speakers at our monthly fraternity meetings. We gather after the Sunday 12:30 Mass downstairs in the St Clare Auditorium. We begin the meeting by praying the rosary together. After that we have a very short business meeting then we select something to eat from a light buffet. About 2:15 we present our speaker.

The first presenter will come for our March meeting which will be on the 13th of the month instead of our normal first Sunday meeting. That first Sunday Fr. Bob Hutmacher's Chiesa Nuova will present The Classic Singers in Concert which will be wonderful. But I digress; our special guest speaker on the 13th will be Dr Jim Papandrea who is a church historian and professor of philosophy who has presented his scholarship many times during the noon hour programs. He will discuss the history of Marian devotions and the movement of that spirit in our churches history.

Then we begin on the 1st of May the first in a series called "Three Franciscan Wise Men." This month we are honored to present Fr. Gilberto Cavazoz - Gonzalez, ofm who is the author of a wonderful new book "Greater than a Mothers Love - The Spirituality of Francis and Clare of Assisi." As Ingrid Peterson, osf writes in the forward, "Friar Gilberto studies how the family experiences of both Francis and Clare influenced the way they understood and expressed their relationship to God." Come and experience the benefit of professor Gilberto's work while you can.

Next, on June 5th we will host Fr. Bill Burton, ofm who is a familiar face to us here at St. Pete's because of the many well attended lectures he has presented during the noon hour. He is a brilliant


Scripture scholar as well as a warm and engaging Franciscan force. He has produced a very informative DVD series: "Biblicist - Introduction to the Bible - The Word in Context" and he often guides groups of pilgrims to The Holy Land.

Then finally on September 4th our guest speaker will be Fr. Albert Haase, ofm who is not only wise but very entertaining. You may know of this former missionary to China's many reflective books on spirituality or perhaps from the Relevant Radio program "Spirit and Life" which he does with his Sister, Bridget, OSU who is an Ursuline sister. He a Spiritual Director and Group Leader who will help us recognize "This Sacred Moment - Becoming Holy Right Where You Are", which is the title of his latest book.

You are also invited to participate in a weekend retreat scheduled for September 9th, 10th & 11th at the Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center on Fullerton near the Red Line. The cost of this event is being developed.

We offer all of these special events to you as ongoing Franciscan formation as well as the hope of promoting vocations to the Franciscan life.

Pace y Bene,

Your Brother Joe M, ofm 

WORKSHOP: "EMBRACING THE OTHER"

The Franciscan Charism and Catholic Social Teaching: Foundations for Living Justly

Region 3 of the Franciscan Federation is sponsoring the workshop, "Embracing the Other" based on the Franciscan Charism and Catholic Social Teaching. This workshop explores St. Francis' sacramental worldview as revealed in his writings and early sources. It will be held in the Auditorium of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart, 9201 W. St. Francis Rd., Frankfort, on **Saturday, March 19, from 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM.** The cost for the day which includes lunch is \$20 (or \$15 if you are a member of Region 3). For reservations, contact Sr. Doris Recker at 708-388-0185 or email: Laurindadoris@yahoo.com.

Sister Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSF is the presenter. She is a graduate of the Franciscan Institute and has given workshops, courses, study weeks and retreats on Franciscan themes nationally and internationally.

In-Formation

By Patrick Mendes, SFO
Regional Formation Director

Another Look at the Pillars of Lent

As this issue of **SFO NEWS** reaches you, we will begin the Lenten season in just a few days. I'd like to share with you a different look at the traditional pillars of Lent: prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

As we know, our holy father, Francis, erected the first "Stations of the Cross" on his return from the Holy Land to give people who had never been or would possibly not ever be able to go there, a vivid sense of the reality of the Lord's suffering and death and the immensity of His love for us. The devotion continued on through the years.

Later on in the 18th century, the gifted preacher of parish missions, Franciscan friar St. Leonard of Port Maurice (1676-1751), wherever he went, fostered the devotion of the Stations of the Cross and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. This distinctly Franciscan prayer tradition, as we know, was embraced by the universal Church and is so much a part of our Lenten activities.

With this very brief background, let us consider the Sixth Station: *Veronica wipes the face of Jesus*. "In so far as you did it to one of the least of my brothers, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40) Veronica's instinctive act of compassion is remembered forever. Anything we do for others, Christ counts as done for Him. God will always remember the good we do for others.

Wiping the Face of Jesus as mirrored to us by those we encounter –

In prayer: As we pray our various Lenten prayers and practices, we can remember those we know who are suffering in some way – the sick, the hungry, the homeless, the poor, the sorrowing. Our Holy Rule reminds us "As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do." (Art. 8) As we reflect on how Veronica, courageously, and with a heart full of compassion, wiped the blood and sweat from the face of our suffering savior, can you hear her praying "Father, this seems so little for me to do, but it is all that I can do?" It occurs to me that even though this act


is not recorded anywhere, it seems reasonable to assume that this brave, compassionate, genuinely good woman would have done more if she could. Sometimes all we CAN do is pray. Then let us do it with the heart filled with love of God and neighbor as Veronica has modeled for us.

In almsgiving and in fasting: The alms that we give, financial or in such things as food and clothing, and I am thinking especially of the linens (towels) often donated to such Franciscan Ministries as Franciscan Outreach and the Port, in our Region, that we indeed wipe the face of Jesus as we see him in society's poor and marginalized. When we contribute our time, talent and treasure to such ministries, as well as such initiatives as Franciscan peace and justice efforts, when we do something seemingly small, such as recycling, it is care for God's creation. We wipe the tear stained face of Jesus who died for love of our love.

During this Lent, challenge yourself to sacrifice something we really enjoy (e.g., favorite coffee beverage or television program or a special dessert). In turning away from food we have more clarity of mind to pray and time we don't spend watching TV frees up time to read the scriptures and reflect on the whatever current book on Lenten meditations we are using. The money we save on not having those special treats can then be given as alms.

And in all things, even the adversity of life, remember to "give thanks to the Lord for He is good and His love endures forever."

Sisters and Brothers, I wish you a Lent of peace as together we join Veronica in "wiping the face of Jesus."

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus surround you with His love and fill your lives with His abundant blessings. 

Please pray for...

Earleen Soprych, who was the first Regional Minister, and is battling breast cancer in an advanced state and has metastasized to her liver.

Rest in Peace

Gerarda Seemayer, SFO, member of St. Clare Kankakee Fraternity, February 15th

Bill Doerres, SFO, member of St. Juliana's Fraternity, January 27th

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace, Amen.

JPIC – Franciscan Values

By Stephanie Sormane, SFO
Councilor for JPIC

Fr. Tom Nairn, OFM, who is currently Senior Director of Ethics for the Catholic Health Association of the United States, gave an excellent webinar on Franciscan Values, especially with respect to how we engage our world today. The webinar was originally scheduled for January, but was postponed to February 8 (but it was well worth the wait!). You can watch it by going to the Franciscan Action Network web site (www.franciscanaction.org). You'll see the webinar on the home page of the web site; just follow the directions to connect to it.

I hope you all remember Fr. Tom – before going to CHA, he was a Professor of Ethics at Catholic Theological Union and was also the Spiritual Assistant to St. Anthony of Padua Fraternity, now in Oak Lawn.

Fr. Tom spoke to two areas: (1) What does it mean to be an Agent of Change as a Franciscan and (2) Values for Franciscan Engagement Today. On the first subject he talked about how we engage others to consider our way of life. He gave three examples of how the way in which we engage others has evolved: (1) the story of Berard and Companions, who endeavored to preach the Gospel to non-Christians, and lost their lives in the effort; (2) St. Francis and the Sultan, who had a dialog – they listened to each other – which fostered mutual respect and the beginning of understanding; and (3) the Early Rule, which was formational and encouraged the Friars to change themselves first. Berard and his Companions preached the faith fearlessly; they were very challenging, but also totally inflexible. The engagement between Francis and the Sultan was different – there was no confrontation and the dialog engendered mutual respect. As the Friars became more formed by the Early Rule, they understood better who they were called to be, that the Gospel was not just some nice ideal but how they were to live, and having begun that journey, they could preach much better about the life they were living.

Fr. Tom described the Values for Franciscan Engagement for Today as follows:

- All creation is from God – all creatures are brothers and sisters. Creation shows us the love of God.
- Francis emphasized the dignity of the human person; that dignity achieves fulfillment in relation to God and in community.

- We must be dedicated to a consistent ethic of life. All life is sacred. In addition, life is always social; we flourish only in community.
- We are called to respect the poor and the vulnerable. Only as poor can we open ourselves to the will of God and to each other.
- Franciscans are heralds of peace and reconciliation. This must be the basis of all we do.
- There must be a right relationship of justice with love.
- The Franciscan vision is transformational, demanding ongoing change and conversion of us all.
- Franciscans are called not only to change themselves but also to be agents of change in the larger community.

We must always endeavor to live the Gospel first, and then be agents of change for others. Francis said, “I have done what is mine to do, may Christ teach you what is yours.”

In the Q&A section, some important points made were:

- We will never be 100% perfectly changed, but we can't use that as an excuse for not being agents of change.
- Many resist change, but if they see what we are doing, they will see that what we encourage is possible. Perhaps what people need is more support than challenge! Persevere!
- We need to allow God to do His part. We need to learn to let go when it's time.
- If you're at an impasse, move back to where you had common ground and then try again to move forward to find consensus.
- There are many different people with a variety of values, and we won't always get our way. Be realistic: determine what we want, what we can live with, and what's non-negotiable. What makes sense to us as Catholics and Franciscans may not make sense to those with whom we are dialoging. We need to translate our values into a language others can understand.
- In dealing with the poor, it's not just money they need, but acknowledging their dignity – calling them by name. A smile and a kind word may mean more than a dollar. 