

## Minister's Message

by Vickie Klick, SFO

Dear brothers and sisters,

Happy 2012! It's time to think about what we're going to do differently in the year ahead. I'm not into New Year's resolutions myself. The way they're normally worded, it's no surprise they get discarded as soon as the first unavoidable exception happens. All or nothing is unrealistic, and it doesn't match our Franciscan way of life, either. Our call to daily conversion means that we aren't claiming we can exercise every day this year, or never make another unkind remark...only that we will set out today to do our best to do what we think is God's will for us, and try again tomorrow.

Having said that, it's quite a different matter to set goals for the year (or the month, or the week - whatever time scale works for you). Goals make it possible for us to recognize the actions we must take NOW in order to make the goal possible later. If you want to run a marathon in October, you have to start training months in advance. If you are thinking of a career change, researching possibilities, going back to school, rearranging your finances, even moving to another city may be necessary steps in the process. Without thinking about what could be, and the gap between what COULD be and what IS, nothing is likely to change.

I think we should all consider having a goal for spiritual growth as part of our life plans. Unfortunately, "Become a better Secular Franciscan" isn't a goal that makes it clear what must be done to achieve it. At work, we talk about SMART goals - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely. These characteristics are helpful in setting any kind of goal. One possibility for 2012 would be, "Increase my appreciation for the SFO as a worldwide Order by getting to know at least one Secular Franciscan from somewhere other than the Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity." To achieve this, all you have to do is participate in the Quinquennial Congress, here in Chicago, and mingle with the hundreds of other Secular Franciscans who will be coming here.

There are many other goals you could set for the year that could be achieved, in part, by attending the "Q": renewed enthusiasm for the

Secular Franciscan vocation, learning more about what it means to be a Secular Franciscan in the world today, having a great vacation without leaving town, celebrating the Fourth of July with hundreds of brothers and sisters ... you get the idea. Registration is open - sign up as soon as you can and save some money in the process!

While I will be delighted to see as many of you as possible at the "Q", that isn't the only action I'd like you to consider for 2012. Please consider a goal of service to your brothers and sisters in fraternity. Nine of our 24 local fraternities AND our regional fraternity have elections this year, and even in fraternities that aren't having elections, there are always new opportunities to help out. We owe our elected leaders the opportunity to step out of those roles; we owe ourselves the opportunity to grow. It's like geese flying in formation (or cyclists riding in a pace line); the leader works the hardest, then he or she drops to the back and the next in line takes the lead for a while. If you are asked to consider serving on your fraternity council, please think of how you could say yes, not all the (perfectly valid) reasons you could say no. Service to your fraternity is another action toward better living the Gospel life (and, I assure you, provides its share of opportunities for daily conversion, along with many joys).

These are actions which require planning and preparation (saving money, a realistic assessment of our time commitments, etc.), but at the same time they require being open to the work of the Holy Spirit. Remember that the Spirit works through those we encounter and especially through our brothers and sisters in fraternity. When you are invited to step up and do something new, consider that it may well be God who is really calling you. We can't grow without taking some risks and giving God an opportunity to surprise us.

No matter what challenges confront us this year, may we face them with the peace that comes from the sure knowledge of God's unconditional love for us. May the heart-knowledge of that love transform each of us as it did our blessed father Francis!

Peace and blessings, 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**

- 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**

- 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)
- 14-16: Cluster Retreat (St. Peter's) other fraternities welcome
- 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**

- 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 Brothers and Sisters,

I wish you a Happy Christmas Time and a Very Merry New Year; to you and to all of those that you carry in your heart. And may that same heart be a place where the nativity of our Lord and the good hope that God provides us will rest and grow. I hope that your celebration of Christmas and the New Year are joy filled and life giving experiences and that there have been rich encounters with friends and relations. I will once again this year enjoy my *Traditional Home Towns Holiday Road Trip* which will include visits to Jackson Mississippi, my beautiful New Orleans, San Antonio, the Texas Hill Country, then finally up to Big D little a double l a s (Dallas). In all likelihood by the time most of you receive this newsletter the whole adventure will be over with but I just wanted to let you know where all those prayers for you have been coming from.

Now we can begin again a new year for up until now, all that we have done is over. Let us resolve to look forward into 2012 and begin to recognize all the opportunities and potential we can claim to go farther and deeper than we ever have before.

Some of that can be travel to a wonderful place like the Grand Canyon or Assisi or perhaps this year would be a good time to travel over to Northwest Chicago to join together with a few hundred of your brothers and sisters at the Quinquennial Congress of the National Secular Franciscan Order.

Another facet of a good life is the discipline to strengthen our resolve to do better; to continue to grow and to action. For example, I don't know about you but my doctors are always directing me to exercise (Ugh!) and lose weight. Or perhaps we would do well and find it more natural to work toward a closer walk

with our God and His holy ones in a more advanced prayer life. Then there are unlimited options for reviving and stimulating our spirits and intellect by reading books and periodicals. Lester Bach's new book the Franciscan Journey and The TAU USA are good examples, as are the dossier's from the international presidency of the SFO. Materials from the Franciscan Action Network as well as the work of Franciscans International at the United Nations are good for private reflection and group sharing. Or, if we're feeling really courageous, we might engage ourselves in some area of life or experience this year that is difficult or challenging for us. Personally, as I am not very tech savvy, it is my intention this year to work on my communications with people via the Worldwide Web which translates into a discipline of E-mail I hope. We'll see—it's just not natural to me!

The only other thoughts about a brighter future are for our Franciscan groups—our fraternities. What can we do to enliven our communities and their response to the movement of the Franciscan spirit? I will be encouraging special events this year like days of prayer and reflection, cluster gatherings, open houses, and maybe even Franciscan Road Trips to someplace beautiful.

I pray that in the coming year we become more peaceful and good

Your Brother Joe M, ofm ☒

**Join us on Google+**

In addition to *being on Twitter* and *Facebook*, we've just added a *Google+ page*, which you can use to stay informed about news and events in our Region, and connect with other Secular Franciscans in our area and around the world. If you're on Google+, please *check us out!*

Lisa Wathen, SFO  
Regional Webmaster

## In-Formation

By Patrick Mendés, SFO  
Regional Formation Director

Happy New Year! As we come to the last few days of 2011 and move into the welcoming of 2012, our hearts are still warm with the joy of Christmas. The joy of the Lord's incarnation, for such is His love for us that he became man to be with us, walk with us, love and redeem us and He continues today.

We have a nostalgic look at 2011 with its good times and bad times, but for both we thank the Lord that He has been there with us. He has provided His strength for us in the bad times and filled our hearts with joy in the good times.

We now look ahead to the New Year and pray that it will bring peace to our very troubled world and, of course, many of us will make a few resolutions to eat a healthier diet, get more exercise and all the other usual resolutions and plans.

I would like to offer for your consideration, a few resolutions based on our Holy Rule. Articles 13 and 14 that "...with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ." "...called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world ...let them exercise their responsibilities competently in a spirit of Christian service..." I resolve, therefore, to be more aware, attentive, and responsive to all those God sends into my life each day—my family, my friends, my co-workers, the stranger and the poor beggar on the street.

Article 15 tells us to "... individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of human lives and their courageous initiatives, especially in the field of public life. I resolve, therefore, to actively support the initiatives put forth by Franciscan Action Network because they are based on our Franciscan values.


Article 17 says "In their family they should cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity and respect for life, striving to make of it a sign of a world already renewed in Christ." I resolve to be a listener and to be present to my family by my example, carefully reasoned counsel and above all, compassion.

Article 18 directs us thusly: "Moreover they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate which 'bear the imprint of the Most High."

I resolve to be more aware of the need to care for creation – ALL creation, the plants and trees as well as all people and will do my best to support efforts which reflect a careful stewardship of the earth and its resources and find concrete ways to aid the poor and the marginalized.

Please feel free to join me and share my resolutions or develop your own, with careful attention to how they reflect our Franciscan life and Rule.

The Regional Formation Commission and I wish you a new year filled with good health and many opportunities to deepen your Franciscan lives.

As always, my prayer for you is that the Sacred Heart of Jesus surround you with His love and fill your lives with His abundant blessings !

## New Canticle Campus Class Offerings for Winter 2012

Chris Hickman, SFO and Francesca Wigle, TSSF are pleased to announce that Canticle Campus will be offering two classes beginning January 15, 2012.

The 10-week classes will be based on two books by Sr. Ilia Delio, OSF:

### Clare of Assisi, A Heart Full of Love

"Although this is a small book on the spirituality of a medieval woman from a glorious past, it is also a book about Christian life today. Clare's decisive emphasis on the person of Jesus Christ is an emphasis on the human person as well, what we are and what we are called to be."

### Franciscan Prayer

"By examining Saint Francis' doctrine of prayer through the twin lens of Saints Clare and Bonaventure, this book provides us with a long overdue spiritual and theological synthesis which will be treasured by all who love the Franciscan tradition. A significant contribution, beautifully presented." - Lawrence S. Cunningham. (Published by St. Anthony Messenger Press)

To learn more about Canticle Campus, go to <http://www.canticlecampus.org/>.

For information or to register, e-mail [hickmcm@hotmail.com](mailto:hickmcm@hotmail.com) or [fwigle@gmail.com](mailto:fwigle@gmail.com). All are invited and there is **no cost** to take the class.

*Advertised on FAN website*

## SFO Pilgrimage to the Holy Land – October 18-27, 2012 with Fr Chuck Faso, OFM

My name is Fr Chuck Faso OFM. I am the Spiritual Assistant for the St Francis Fraternity of Crystal Lake, IL. I invite the Secular Franciscans of the Mother Cabrini Region to come with me to the Holy Land for ten days in October 2012.

We will reflect on our Franciscan Spirituality as we celebrate mass in Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, Capernaum, and in the Holy Sepulcher.

We will renew our Baptismal vows in the Jordan River and our Profession on Mt Tabor.

We will carry the Cross as we pray the Stations of the Cross through the streets of Jerusalem. Our bus ride to the lowest spot on the earth will take us to Jericho, to Masada and to Qumran where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. We will meet other Franciscans – men and women, religious and lay.

We will reflect on the 1978 Rule where we read: "They are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi... By their profession they pledge themselves to live the gospel... The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ... Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel..." One way to carefully read the Gospel is to walk in the footprints of Jesus in the land where he was born, preached, died and rose for us.

Since I joined the Franciscan Order in 1960 and was ordained a priest in 1967, I have taught in our seminaries, ministered at St Peter's in the Loop for twenty years, preached retreats since 1998. In 1980 I led my first of thirty-two pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

Come to Land called Holy. Let's read, hear, and understand the Gospel in a deeper, Franciscan way!

For more information contact our Travel Agent

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## JPIC News – Dwelling Among Us

Gloria Huerta, SFO

*As we begin a New Year, the following article would be a great reflection on how we may welcome God and others into our hearts and homes over the days and months ahead.*


The readings the Fourth (and last) Sunday of Advent offered two images of a dwelling place for God. David, with good intentions, wants to do a "home improvement" for the "ark of God," building a house of cedar to replace the tent, but God sees otherwise (cf. 2 Sm 7:5). It is among the people that God will establish a house and kingdom that "shall endure forever" (2 Sm 7:13). And when the time comes, the Word made Flesh seeks and finds a dwelling in the womb of a young Jewish girl (cf. Lk 1:26-38). Over and over the scriptures remind us that God's ways are not our ways.

The human way often runs counter to God's ways: In a recent newspaper story, a picture of hundreds of people standing in line with umbrellas all through a rainy, chilly night, hoping to be placed on a waiting list for a low-rent apartment; a TV account of an increasing number of children living in cars. These are realities in the most prosperous country in the world. These are not God's ways.

God longs to make a dwelling among us and within us. For a breathless moment, God waits for Mary's "yes" before becoming one of us and finding a home in her womb. Aren't we all home-seekers? Men and women waiting all night in the rain, children sleeping in cars, undocumented immigrants, those of us who live comfortably-all yearn for a place where we are accepted, loved, wanted. Even God desires to find a home in and among us. Even God waits for our "yes".

Perhaps God is asking you to reach out to those without homes. You can say "yes"! Identify a local homeless shelter and volunteer time or give a donation. Search online to find the *60 Minutes* segment on "Living in Cars: Homeless Children in Florida." Read the Circle of Protection Statement to address poverty and the federal budget, which the USCCB, FAN and many other Christian organizations have signed. If there is an Occupy Home group in your town or city, make a visit and ask people why they spent Christmas in a tent in a public space.

*Sr. Marie Lucey, OSF*

*FAN Director of Advocacy and Member Outreach* 

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On behalf of the Regional Council we wish all of you a Happy, Healthy, and Holy New Year!