

Newsletter of the Secular Franciscans of Lower Michigan and Toledo, Ohio

Ministers Reflections

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"Only God can correct my imperfections and failures to love. God wants me to be oriented to accepting God's will in my life even when others may hurt me or reject me."

Some Reflections Following Prayer

As Franciscans we believe in Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel.

"If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother or sister, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen." 1 John 4:20

Do I hate my brother or sister? This is a surprisingly good question. "Hate" is an extremely strong word. I hope I do not hate anyone. However, one might ask, how many times do I get angry at another? Have I been sarcastic or testy with another? What is my tone of voice when speaking to someone? Do I insist on being right at the expense of kindness to another? How many times have I hurt someone by the choice of words I used to convey my message? How many times have I held onto a resentment when I have been hurt by another? Do I start my day with a commitment to love others? Do I try to assist those in need, be it physical, emotional or spiritual? Do I even see the other person in front to me, the waitress, teller or clerk? How do I treat my family members or my brothers and sisters in fraternity? Do I say I am a "Franciscan" and yet not love one of my fellow Franciscans? Have I corrected a brother or sister in a way likely to cause them public shame?

There are many more questions I could

ask myself. Indeed, when I examine my actions, I must confess to daily falling short of loving my neighbor. Who is my neighbor? We are all familiar with the answer Jesus gave when he told the story of the good Samaritan. The fact that the Jews despised the Samaritans makes the parable all the more powerful since Jesus chose a Samaritan over the priest as the example of one who loved. How many times do I have to forgive, "seven times?" asks Peter. The answer Jesus gives Peter, "seventy times seven". It is clear Jesus is calling me to an exceptionally high standard. Jesus was telling Peter there is no limit to forgiving others.

So am I a "liar" if I have failed to love?

The answer to that question is "yes" if I am not committed to constantly trying to love my brother and sister in all situations. I recognize it is often difficult for me to love God because I do not see God physically. Only through faith and prayer am I able to love God. The above Biblical quote tells me that St. John recognized how challenging it is for us to love our invisible God.

So what does God want of me, "perfection"? I do not think so because God knows I am incapable of perfection. God does not want me to dwell on my sinfulness or imperfections. He wants me to know that I am much more than my actions. He wants me to know that I am unconditionally cherished in spite of all my imperfections.

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Ministers Reflections (continued)



So I come back to the original question, what does God want of me? I think God wants my best efforts to love my neighbor. I am convinced God wants my commitment each day to try as best I can to love everyone who comes into my presence whether or not they are lovable. He wants me to surrender this challenge of loving others to Him because only God can change me. Only God can correct my imperfections and failures to love. God wants me to be oriented to accepting God's will in my life even when others may hurt me or reject me. To be rejected, what is that to me? Did not Jesus experience rejection at the hands of the Jewish leaders not to mention his family and disciples? Should not I be willing to suffer rejection without complaint as Jesus did? Did not Jesus say take up your cross and follow me? Sometimes in my imagination I see Jesus turning to me and asking me, "are you coming?"

In conclusion, I have learned through prayer that love is not an issue of perfection, rather it is an issue of orientation. Hopefully, I will not intentionally hurt others, but when I hurt others unintentionally, I must promptly ask for their forgiveness. I must strive always to love beginning with my family and fraternity. I must daily take Jesus' love out into my community and my world. Most of all, I must learn to accept God's unconditional forgiveness when I fail to love. In this way I hope to daily live my vocation as a Franciscan.

Jesus came to show me how to live. Jesus loves so I must love. I am called a Christian and a Franciscan, I pray that I will have the courage to be what I am called.

May God give you all peace.

James Howard OFS,
Minister of Divine Mercy Region

To submit information or articles for the newsletter please send your submissions to yukon_bob2000@yahoo.com

Divine Mercy Regional Fraternity Calendar of Events 2013

- August 9-11.....Annual Minister Meeting, DeWitt, MI
- August 11.....Regional Executive Council Meeting, DeWitt, MI
- October 5.....Regional Executive Council Meeting, Grand Rapids, MI
- November 1-3.....Forming the Formator, Saginaw, MI
- November 2.....Candidates Formation Day, Saginaw, MI

E-Mail: divinemercy.region@gmail.com
We're on the Web!
See us at: www.divinemercyregion.org

Deceased Franciscans of the Divine Mercy Region

We are now and always will be members of the Secular Franciscan Order. Therefore we are committed to supporting one another and praying for those who have gone before us. During the last year we have learned that some of our members have passed away and are now enjoying the presence of our good God in the company of St. Francis. The Regional Executive Council has committed to periodically publish in the regional newsletter the names of all members of the region who pass away during the year so that all the members of the region can pray for the repose of their souls. We request all ministers of the region to notify the regional minister, James Howard OFS at 616.459.7940 or by email at jblakehoward@gmail.com or the regional secretary, Linda Solis OFS at 313.506.9868 or divinemercury.region@gmail.com whenever one of your members has died. Please give the member's name, date of reception, date of profession, date of birth and date of death. Your cooperation is appreciated. Please remember throughout the year to pray for the repose of the souls of the following members of our region. I trust that they are praying for us.

<u>Member:</u>	<u>Date of Death</u>	<u>Member:</u>	<u>Date of Death</u>
Peter Aluzzo	November 29, 2012	Ruth Hayes	sometime in 2012
Claire Johnson	June 29, 2012	Patricia Thayer	July 26, 2012
Beverly Joseph	July 7, 2012	Delores Puhly	February 12, 2012
Mary LaBudie	February 10, 2012	Hedwig Fraczek	May 31, 2012
Clara O'Keefe	June 12, 2012	Jane Sobieck	January 21, 2012
Evelyn Olden	December 27, 2012	Helen Kleinbrook	June 15, 2012
Terry Pfaendtner	February 22, 2012	Margaret Covert	October 24, 2012
Mary Schalm	sometime in 2004	Gerald Kozlowski	July 18, 2012
Helen Wardowski	March 15, 2012	Ruth Gregor	March 18, 2012
Stephen Yuhase	April 2, 2012	Anne McIntyre	March 16, 2012
Susan Nitos	November 27, 2012	Patrick Larch	February 15, 2011
		Claire Schaefer	September 2, 2012

If you are interested in being the editor of this quarterly newsletter for the region, please contact Linda Solis at divinemercury.region@gmail.com for more information.

“While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart.”

— St. Francis of Assisi