

Newsletter: Divine Mercy Region Secular Franciscan Order



Lower Michigan and Toledo, Ohio

November, 2015

From Our Regional Minister

Sisters and Brothers of Divine Mercy Region,

What an honor it was to represent our Region at the National Fraternity gathering this past October. It has been three weeks since the National Chapter and I am still digesting all of the great information that was presented and shared. We were blessed to have the Minister General of the Order, Tibor Kauser, present with us for the six days of the chapter meeting. Tibor lives in Hungary where he earns his living as an architect. I would like to share a couple of observations he shared with us regarding our Order from a global perspective. If you would like to see his presentation handouts, they are posted on the NAFRA website at this link: http://www.nafra-sfo.org/NAFRA-2015/USA_presentation_specificity.pdf

Tibor stressed the importance of understanding that the Secular Franciscan Order is a *real* order, and as such, is not just another spiritual movement. Our Order falls under the direction of the Holy See and the Congregation of the Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life; OFS is of pontifical right.

Another global issue facing our Order is the misunderstanding of the nature and permanence of profession. We are not alone in witnessing members being professed who then retreat from active participation in the local fraternity. Proper formation into the true calling, vocation and nature of the Order and profession should be
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What you hold may you always hold; what you do may you always do, and never abandon.

But with swift pace, light step, unswerving feet, so that your steps stir up no dust, may you go forward securely, joyfully and swiftly, on the path of prudent happiness.

St. Clare of Assisi

New Website! See p. 6 for more details.



From Our Vice Minister

My Fellow Franciscans,

Have you ever been at the right place at the right time? I remember thirteen years ago going to my first Secular Franciscan meeting. Boy, was I nervous! I didn't know any Franciscans. I had read books on Franciscanism and studied it. I was intrigued by the life of Solanus Casey. Now I was going to meet people who were living this Gospel life.

What a wonderful experience it was! At once, I was made to feel welcome. Everyone was so friendly, I felt I was already a member. After a few meetings, I came to know these people. They became people who inspired me and I wanted to be like them. I remember thinking to myself that I didn't care how long the formation process was. It could be ten or twenty years! I didn't care. I was in the right place with the right people, at the right time.

I have that same feeling again, today. As Vice Minister, one of my responsibilities is to preside at fraternity elections. It is something new and different for me. I'm nervous because I want to do a nice job for every fraternity.

Wow! Everywhere I have gone you made me feel welcome. Everyone is so kind. Once again I get to meet people who inspire me, people I hope to emulate. Can I also throw in that the food has been fantastic? How did you know that I'm always hungry? Somehow you always want to add me to your celebration. Thank you so much for your hospitality and thank you for being great Franciscans.

So far, five elections have been held since August. As we progress, I feel more comfortable with this position. There are still a couple left before the end of the year. Along the way, we strive to work with each fraternity's schedule, but sometimes we need a little help to work with our schedule. I think we have all worked together to reach good dates and times.

I wish to thank Theresa Brown OFS and David Seitz OFS. Theresa has been with me on many of the elections. Her experience is a great help and she keeps me on target. David has always been there when I have a question regarding elections. His experience makes me look better. I look forward to this election process over the next couple of years.

Thank you again,

Jim Graczyk OFS



Formation News

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is a privilege to introduce myself to you. My name is Michelle Bryk OFS. I am a member of Our Mother of Sorrows Fraternity in Grand Rapids. I was professed in July of 2000--on a very hot day! It has been my privilege to be involved with Formation in my fraternity for many years now, the last six years serving as Formation Minister.

I am writing to you after just having spent a wonderful Saturday at our annual Regional Day of Formation. Sixty of us joined together to enjoy a day of reflection,

learning and praying together. We explored the theme: *Be the Joyful Face of Christ to All!*

We were privileged to hear from Br. Loren Connell about joy in the Scriptures, with a special focus on Philippians 4. He showed us the clear connection between joy and the “peace that surpasses all understanding.” Jan Kaeding OFS, one of the Regional Councilors, also talked to us about Franciscan joy. Using Scripture, she spoke about finding true joy in our lives, and helped us to identify how we could be better messengers of joy.

After lunch there was time to share. Members on local formation teams met in a group to talk about what's working and to get to know each other better. Inquirers, Candidates and the Newly Professed had time to share as a group, as they began to focus on the Doors of Jubilee that will soon be opened for the Year of Mercy.

I was able to share my excitement about the Year of Mercy and the deep challenge that Pope Francis has presented to us in announcing the Jubilee. I hope to post some of these materials to our new website so that everyone can see all that is laid out for the year. If you can't wait, the URL for the website is:

www.iubilaummisericordiae.va/

I encourage everyone to get involved in the Year of Mercy. We are all in need of mercy.

I look forward to walking with all of you in the Region over the next three years. Don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions, or just want to talk about formation. All of us – professed and not yet professed – have

a responsibility to keep learning and growing in our Franciscan journey.

Peace and All Good,

Michelle Bryk OFS



Spiritual Assistance

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

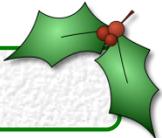
A year ago I was appointed as your Regional Spiritual Assistant. A regional assistant represents the friars who have the spiritual care of one or more local fraternities in a regional fraternity. My role is primarily to be your brother and secondarily to attend to certain canonical requirements. Technically speaking, as a Friar Minor I represent only the provinces of the Assumption, Sacred Heart, and Saint John the Baptist. Since there is no Capuchin friar representing Saint Joseph Province, and no Conventual friar representing Our Lady of Consolation or Saint Bonaventure Province, for all practical purposes, I represent all the provinces with jurisdiction in Divine Mercy Regional Fraternity.

Last year was my first year on the job and the final year of the former Regional Executive Council. I got my feet wet but didn't have a clear understanding either of my role or of the dynamics of Divine Mercy Regional Fraternity. With the election of a new executive council in August, I look forward to a more active involvement in the life of the fraternity. I have already conducted a few visitations, and a few more are scheduled. Over the next two or three years I hope to visit most of your local fraternities.

Advent is just around the corner. It is my favorite liturgical season. It's a time to get in tune with our neediness and to open ourselves to the God who alone can fill that neediness. I encourage you to observe Advent as it is intended and not get caught up in the commercial carnival of sleigh bells, Santa Claus and credit cards. Then your Christmas, the two and a half weeks from the evening of December 24 through the Feast of the Lord's Baptism, might be a more genuine experience of divine mercy and God's peace in your hearts.

Peace and Every Blessing,

Loren Connell, OFM



JPIC News

We are in the midst of "12 Weeks of Franciscan Peace," reflections from our National JPIC Coordinator, Carolyn Townes OFS. These reflections began on October 3, 2015 and conclude on December 28, 2015.

They can be found online at:

<http://www.divinemercyregion.org/JPIC/>

Each week, we are asked to reflect on one of the following themes:

- Prayer
- Empathy
- Active Listening
- Compassion
- Evangelical Love
- Mindfulness
- Humility
- Poverty-Detachment
- Kindness

- Silence
- Conversation
- Peace

Along with the theme, each week includes Scripture, a reflection question, a call to action and a daily prayer. Praise God, Carolyn has provided us with a beautiful gift to enrich our Gospel call and lead us deeper into peace, individually and with one another in community.

From our Rule: *Rule 19 – “Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon. Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others.”*

I encourage you to ponder these reflections and engage in dialogue within your fraternity. How do the reflections relate back to our Rule and Constitutions? How is the Holy Spirit leading you to bring peace, joy and hope to others? Please share your experience with each other. In our sharing, we can bring new life and inspire one another across the miles in our region. Though distance may separate us, our Catholic faith and Franciscan vocation unites and animates us to grow in our commitment to Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.

Thank You Most High God, for the uniqueness of each Franciscan sister and brother in the Divine Mercy Region. May

you know what a gift you are within your fraternity and the larger Franciscan Order!

May you have peace, love and joy in Jesus through Mary,

Amy Oatley OFS

Day of Reflection, October 10 Our Mother of Sorrows Fraternity

Our Mother of Sorrows Fraternity, St. Clare Fraternity and the former St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity met at the Franciscan Life Process Center in Lowell, Michigan, for a Day of Reflection. Cami Mann OFS and Barb Scott OFS led the morning session on *Laudato Si'*. Michelle Bryk OFS and Margo Dean OFS led a meditation on the Year of Mercy. Between presentations, members were sent out to see and hear nature in new ways. In the afternoon they went with a partner looking at ways to be merciful or ways they might need mercy. Our large group sharing was memorable. Lunch was homemade soups, salads and desserts. It was a spectacularly beautiful day and truly a blessed time was had by all.

Regional Calendar for 2016

2016 Spring Meeting
April 29-30, Saginaw

2016 Annual Ministers Meeting
August 19-21, DeWitt

2016 Formation Day
October 29, Saginaw

Remember the Quinquennial!
June 30-July 4, St. Louis, Missouri



Day of Reflection, Franciscan Life Process Center, Lowell, MI - October 10, 2015

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From Our Regional Minister, continued from p. 1

...of the highest importance. Formation should be a time for discerning if there is a call to a *permanent* commitment to the Order. He presented a document on the nature of profession that should be shared with all candidates, studied throughout the formation process and used in on-going formation to further strengthen all of us. That document is also on the NAFRA website under the 2015 Chapter Meeting and can be found at: http://www.nafra-sfo.org/NAFRA-2015/PROFESSION_IN_THE_SFO.pdf

I will continue to unpack all of the information shared at the NAFRA meeting. It was a blessing to be there and meet so many dedicated servants of the Order. I thank you all for your continued prayers for the Regional Executive Council. Please pray to the Holy Spirit to guide us. After all, the Holy Spirit is the true Minister General of our Order.

May God grant you his peace,

David Seitz OFS

Countdown to the Q

Only 7 Months to Go!

You can see general information and registration forms at: <http://the2016q.org/>
Information and registration materials can also be found on our new website.

New Website!

Our website can be accessed from three different addresses now. It has all new content. Check it out by using any one of the three addresses below:

<http://divinemercuryregion.com/>

<http://www.divinemercuryregion.org/>

<http://www.divinemercuryregional.wordpress.com>



Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year to Everyone in Divine Mercy Region

Christmas Cards and Fragrant Blessing Oils from the Poor Clares of Saginaw
To order, visit their website for more information: <http://srsclare.com/>