

Newsletter: Divine Mercy Region Secular Franciscan Order



Lower Michigan and Toledo, Ohio

February, 2016

From Our Regional Minister

In this edition:

- From Our Regional Minister
- What Does Lent Mean to You?
- We Are All Formators!
- JPIC Update
- Local Fraternity News
- Regional Calendar
- Our Website
- Contact Us!

Q

Visit the Quinquennial Website for more information.

<http://www.quinquennial.org/2015/11/revive-your-spirit-at-2016-q.html>

Sisters and Brothers,

Here is a big word for you: **Quinquennial**. It is that time once again, time for the Q. Every five years, our Order holds a Congress to further strengthen and revive our commitment to living the Gospel life. This year's Q is being held in St. Louis from June 30 until July 4.

I received a call from the NAFRA council on January 29. As of that date, there was not a single registration for the Q from the Divine Mercy Region. Hopefully the Spirit will move some of our sisters and brothers to attend this great Franciscan Week. I can vouch for the key note speaker, Fr. Dan Horan, OFM. I had the opportunity to attend a day of reflection that he offered a few years ago. He is an excellent teacher.

Sadly, I will not be able to attend the Q, as I had to make the choice between going to the Q or going to the annual NAFRA meeting in October. I do look forward to hearing all about the Q from those who will be able to attend.

Next: I want to plug the *Liturgy of the Hours (LOH)*. Article 8 of our Rule states "*Let them join in liturgical prayer in one of the forms proposed by the Church, reliving the mysteries of the life of Christ.*" I have mentioned on several occasions the need to study our *General Constitutions (GC)* along with the Rule. The GC further informs us how to live our rule. In fact, our rule tells us in article 20 "*The Secular Franciscan Order is divided into fraternities of various levels -- local, regional, national and international. Each one has its own moral personality in the Church. These various fraternities are coordinated and united according to the norm of this rule and of the constitutions.*"

Continued on page 2...

Article 14.4 of the *GC* states, “The brothers and sisters, as well as the fraternities, should adhere to the indications of the Ritual with respect to the different forms of participating in the liturgical prayer of the Church, **giving priority to the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours**¹.”

In my travels and visits to fraternities, I have witnessed a variety of community prayer practices. Some fraternities have expressed an aversion to and disdain for the *Liturgy of the Hours*. According to our Church, the *LOH* is second only to the Mass in its liturgical importance and richness. The word “Liturgy” means “the work of the people”. By praying daily the *LOH*, we participate in the great work of the Church at prayer. I would like to point you to two links that will help us all better understand the nature and beauty of the *LOH*.

First, below is a link from EWTN. It is the *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours*. I have read this each year at the beginning of the new liturgical year in late November. The first half of this document is an awesome teaching on prayer and it has over a hundred scripture citations in the footnotes. You could spend a lifetime meditating on this teaching. This would also be a great source for on-going formation.

<http://www.ewtn.com/library/curia/cdwingil.htm>

These next couple of links come from the teachings of Fr. John Hardon, SJ. Many years ago, I received a hard copy of this teaching and it opened my eyes to a whole new understanding and appreciation of the *LOH*. This three part teaching is divided as follows::

1. The Divine Office as Praise and Petition:
http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Prayer/Prayer_005.htm
2. The Divine Office as Liturgy:
http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Prayer/Prayer_006.htm
3. The Divine Office as Sacrifice:
http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Prayer/Prayer_007.htm

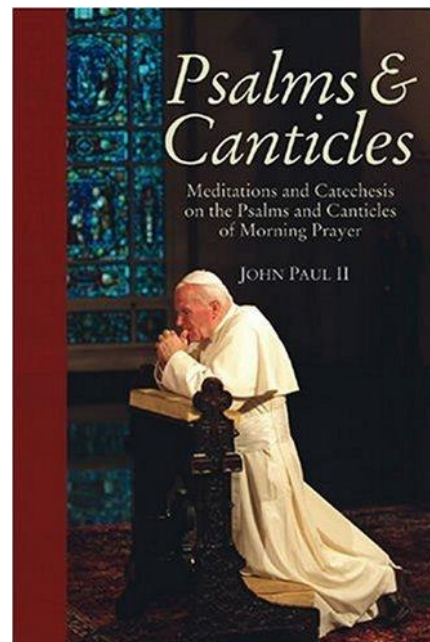
¹ *Ritual OFS*, Appendix 26, 27.

St. Francis loved his breviary and the poetry and rhythm of sanctifying the day through liturgical prayer. If you are faithful to this daily prayer, and meditate and delve into the beauty and poetry of the Psalms, I’m 100% confident that your spiritual life will blossom and you will find such comfort and joy in the celebration of the *LOH*.

One last resource; the *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours* calls on our pastors to preach on the Psalms to illuminate their richness to the faithful. St. John Paul II wrote an excellent meditation on the Psalms of Morning Prayer in his book, “Psalms and Canticles: Meditations and Catechesis on the Psalms and Canticles of Morning Prayer.” I highly recommend this book as a guide to understanding the Psalms and deepening your prayerful reflection.

These links will also be made available on our regional website in the Library section.

May God continue to richly bless each and every one of you as we approach the Holy season of Lent.



ISBN Number: 978-1568545561
Available at online bookstores and can be ordered from local bookstores.



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

What does Lent mean to you? For our catechumens, who will celebrate the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil, it is a time of final preparation. For those of us who are already baptized, it is a unique time of penance and conversion. In that spirit, Lent strikes me as a particularly Franciscan liturgical season. Francis and his first companions called themselves penitents from Assisi. We are a penitential order.

What is penance? What does it mean? For many Catholics of my vintage penance still connotes prayers and actions in reparation for sin. That remains true, but prayers and actions are only external manifestations. Penance is first of all a way of life, of turning our values and attitudes over to God. Penance, as Article 7 of your Rule puts it, is that radical interior change which the Gospel calls conversion.

Do we want that change? Are we ready for it? Are we willing to let go of everything that separates us from God and from one another? I suspect that we really do want to let go, but we also want God to make sure that everyone else comes to see things our way. Our wills are weak, and we cannot make that radical change on our own. The good news is that God gives us the Holy Spirit, God's own breath. If we open ourselves to the Spirit, letting the Spirit breathe in us each day, then the Spirit will change our hearts day by day. Without making excuses for ourselves, we can take heart that Saint Francis' own conversion took a lifetime, not just one day or one Lent.

Peace and Every Blessing,

Loren Connell OFM
Regional Spiritual Assistant

"Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty,
Who is and who was and who is to come,
Let us praise and exalt Him above all forever!"
St. Francis of Assisi, the Praises

We Are All Formators!

As Franciscans, we are members of a community which strives to experience daily conversion (Rule Article 7). How do we do that? One way is by recognizing that *we are all Formators!* Let that sit with you for a minute. You are a part of formation. You are responsible for formation!

Our National and International Councils have told us over and over again that formation is a priority. Most often the energy behind that is directed locally on initial formation - toward those wishing to join our order. It is right that we should focus there. Good formation sets the tone for our lives as professed members of the community. But ongoing formation is also a necessary focus for a community like ours.

I would like to propose that each of us has a *threefold responsibility* for formation. First we have a role in *initial formation*, secondly we have a role in *on-going formation* in our fraternity, and thirdly we are integrally responsible for *our own formation*. What follows is a practical and brief look at these areas. I hope that it sparks conversations in fraternities and on councils.

Many times people have said to me: "Michelle, who are the formation people again?" I think there are several reasons that I hear this. Often the member asking wants to connect with those in Formation and welcome them; other times I am being asked because new people have been in formation and coming to meetings so long that they already feel like part of the fraternity. I love hearing this question because it means that our fraternity members are engaging with formation.

It's disconcerting when I hear about professed members of a fraternity who don't know those in initial formation -- or if they do know them -- have yet to make an effort to meet them, socialize

with them or just sit with them at a meeting. Welcoming, sharing with, and engaging those in initial formation is the job of all fraternity members, not just those on the Formation Team. Challenge yourself and your members to really get to know those who are seeking to join your fraternity!

It is easy to come to a fraternity meeting once a month, take a seat and wait for wisdom and insight about our Franciscan vocation to come to you. If your fraternity has a great Formation Team or has a great speaker for the night, you will get formation. But you will also be formed by sharing your Franciscan journey with others during discussion and during the social time. These are all good and important ways to foster on-going formation in our fraternities.

I know in many fraternities there have been struggles with how on-going formation happens. This is especially true in small fraternities. Sometimes we default to what's easiest - and it can be easy to stray away from truly Franciscan formation. Resist the temptation! We sell ourselves short when we don't do the hard work together of nourishing our Franciscan charism.

Some suggestions for your fraternity:

- *Use the FUN Manual.* Even those of us who've been professed Franciscans for years benefit from the formation in the *FUN Manual*.
- *Pick a book on Francis or the Franciscan vocation* that the fraternity can study together. The *FUN CD* has a list of possible on-going formation texts. These are also found on the NAFRA Formation web page. <http://www.nafraformation.org/>
- *Talk to each other!* Be willing to be vulnerable and talk about your spiritual journeys as Franciscans. We are a community with a strong bond - we need to be able to talk to each other and challenge each other to stay true to our vocation.

Lastly, what about your own formation? You may be thinking, "Didn't I do that already? I was professed, I'm in!" As professed members, always remember our Franciscan charisms and our call to daily conversion.

People often ask me how I manage to have a major role in formation along with everything else that life asks of me. My answer is always that formation is a gift. It keeps me honest. I've been through Catch Me a Rainbow Too three or four times, and I'm now on my third time through the *FUN Manual*. I am always formed again through the materials. The readings, the questions and the conversations with others allow God to keep developing my relationship with Him and my Franciscan vocation. I am humbled and moved by the way in which I continually see God's hand in formation, not just for the inquirers and candidates, but also for those on the formation team. We all need to find something to keep us learning and keep us honest in our vocation.

Some suggestions for your use:

- *Get involved* in your fraternity's ministry. If you don't have one, be part of helping to start one.
- *Read the Rule.* A great way to do this is to take one article a week and include it in your daily prayer and meditation. It keeps our Rule always before us and helps to internalize how we can live it out in our daily lives.
- *Read, study and pray.* Our Holy Father, Pope Francis has written very readable encyclicals, addresses and the Papal Bull for the Year of Mercy. All of these are available for free on the Vatican website. <http://www.vatican.va/> People are always writing about St. Francis and his impact on the Church and the world. There are many great books out there. Read them on your own, start a Franciscan study group or share these things in your fraternity's meetings for ongoing formation.
- *Connect* with the Franciscan Action Network online. <https://franciscanaction.org/> This group works throughout the world to mediate, support the poor and disenfranchised and bring Franciscan peace into troubled situations.

On-going, daily conversion is not easy. We have to be able to learn, share and grow and that is the gift of our Franciscan vocation. But we don't have to do this alone! We can't do this alone! We are members of a community of brothers and sisters who are our companions on the journey. We share

this call to daily conversion. We are professed into a grace-filled community where conversion can come to life with a little effort and nurturing by all of us!

Michelle Bryk OFS
Regional Formation Minister



JPIC Update

"O Most High, all-powerful, good Lord God, to you belong praise, glory, honor and all blessing. Be praised, my Lord, for all your creation... Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water, who is very useful to us, and humble and precious and pure." *St. Francis, Canticle of Creation*

We have heard more about the water crisis in Flint, Michigan during the past month. Some of you live near that area and have known about this for over a year. Kathleen Zemcik, a member of St. Bonaventure Fraternity in Lansing recently remarked, "I live in Owosso, about twenty minutes from Flint. We hear about it and have talked about it every day for the last two years. Flint was a once-beautiful city and now it looks like a war zone. To have this happen to the residents of Flint is an unspeakable injustice."

There are many ways to work for justice in our world. Christian teaching on human dignity and social justice spans far and wide. In a society marred by deepening division between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (*Matt 25:31-3-46*) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

We can all agree that what has happened in Flint is an injustice, a horrible affront on human dignity. How do we respond and move toward justice?

First, we must look at where our dignity and identity is rooted. The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us, "The dignity of the human person is rooted in man's creation in the image and likeness of God." (*CCC, 1700*) In "*Living the*

Gospel of Life" published by the USCCB in 1998, we read that "We believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a 'Gospel of life.' It invites all persons and societies to a new life lived abundantly in respect for human dignity." The Center for Social Concerns at the University of Notre Dame brings these statements all together: "Central to the principle of human dignity is the understanding that, every human being is created in God's image, redeemed by Jesus Christ, destined for union with God, and therefore worthy of respect as a part of the human family." Conversely, if we do not value the life of each human person, then it's difficult to work for social justice.

Second, we need to define social justice by explaining the two aspects of social ministry: social service (often in the form of parish outreach) and social action. Social service is giving direct aid to someone in need. It usually involves performing one or more of the corporal works of mercy. That is, it involves actions such as giving alms to the poor, feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. Another name for it is charity. In the case of the Flint water crisis, it would be providing clean water to those in need.

Social action corrects the structures that perpetuate the need. Another name for social action is social justice. Social justice delves into local, national and international issues by addressing underlying structures. Through the lens of social justice, we begin to take a look at the problems and issues facing human communities (such as Flint), and we begin to ask questions such as these:

- Why was the water source for Flint changed and compromised?
- Why were the people of Flint not listened to when they objected and questioned the safety of their water?
- Why did certain people try to cover up the problem?
- Why did it take so long for a "solution"?
- How will this grave injustice affect people for years to come, especially the most vulnerable, the children?

Often, when we are performing social services, we also become involved in solving the problems

and injustices that created the need in the first place. The two are closely related and often blend together. An example: Someone comes to your food pantry and tells you they have no food because of lost employment. You consult the information about available jobs and find them an opportunity. By doing these things, you have performed social service (providing food and information) and social justice (helping them to obtain employment which corrects the structure perpetuating the need).

In the Flint case, we could donate water to people (social service) and then while handing out water carefully listen to each person's story, which involves respecting their dignity and then direct them to agencies which would help correct their long-term problem (social justice).

The goals of social ministry (social service, social justice) and church outreach are the same: to follow the command to "love one another as I have loved you" (*Jn 13:34*) and to enable everyone to enter into a relationship with Christ in such a way that everyone can come to know Christ as the Father knows the Son. Scripture tells us that we are all one body in Christ (*1 Cor 12:12*) and together we are Christ's body, each of us a different part (*1 Cor 12:27*). If we think about this for a moment, it becomes clear. If our basic human needs are met, that is to say, if we are concerned with obtaining food, clothing, shelter, and clean water for others, then we are better able to enter into a closer relationship with Christ.

We can step out to serve the people of Flint by working to give them clean water, but our vision is much broader than the water. We offer ourselves – our desires, our gifts – in God's hands and pray that He transforms our offering and transforms those who are served to seek after Him.

In saying all this, how can we truly help our brothers and sisters in Flint beyond donating water? First, we can pray and listen for God's guidance. Then, we can look to our Rule, where it says in Article 15, "Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront and promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives in courageous initiatives." And to Article 18, which

states, "Moreover they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which 'bear the imprint of the Most High,' and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship."

In addition, as a Region we can ask in prayer how to come together in dialogue and action. To act, we must educate ourselves on what's going on in Flint. This video does a good job of explaining the Flint Water Crisis. Please take time to watch and educate yourself and share with others.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TA53UEr2vaQ&index=3&list=RDV21PdoZEyzE>

Volunteers are still needed to go door-to-door to hand out bottled water, filters, replacement cartridges and water testing kits. More information is available at:

<http://www.michigan.gov/flintwater/0,6092,7-345--373895--,00.html>

This appeals to me because meeting people in their homes is a great way to encounter the other, as Pope Francis speaks about in this "*Jubilee Year of Mercy*." I would like to raise a group to travel to Flint and do this soon. Please contact me at aotleyofs@gmail.com if you are interested.

May the Most High God enlighten us with His wisdom to step out with love and justice for our brothers and sisters in Flint and beyond. May you know peace, love and joy in Jesus through Mary today and always.

Amy Oatley OFS
Regional JPIC Coordinator

Countdown to the Q

Only 4 months!



Local Fraternity News

St. Bonaventure Secular Franciscan Fraternity invites all fraternities to attend the following events which will be held at the Solanus Casey Center, 1780 Mt. Elliott, Detroit, MI 48207. If your fraternity is planning to attend any of these events, please RSVP by calling our fraternity office at 313-579-2100, ext. 136 and leave a message with the following information: the name of your fraternity, a contact phone number, and the number of persons planning to attend the event.

"Abortion: Too High A Price" -- Panel Discussion hosted by the St. Bonaventure Secular Franciscan Fraternity with Right to Life on Saturday, February 13, 2016 from 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Imam Mohammed Ali Elahi from the Islamic House of Wisdom will be the guest speaker at our fraternity gathering on Sunday, February 21, 2016 at 1:30 p.m. The purpose of the Imam's visit to our fraternity is to provide an opportunity for us to enter into a conversation on getting to know each other, gaining an understanding of the experiences of our Muslim brothers and sisters, and finding ways that we can be of service to our Muslim brothers and sisters.

Our fraternity's Day of Reflection will be held on Sunday, March 13, 2016 from 11:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Br. Patrick McSherry, OFM Cap, Spiritual Assistant for St. Bonaventure Secular Franciscan Fraternity and a Missionary of Mercy, will give a presentation on the topic of Mercy. If you plan to attend the Day of Reflection, please bring a brownbag lunch.

St. Francis Fraternity in Sterling Heights will celebrate two professions on February 24th at St. Renee Goupil Church in Sterling Heights. Mass will be at 6:30 PM. Everyone is welcome.

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Franciscan Fraternity in Gaylord will be celebrating the Rite of Profession on Sunday, March 6, 2016 at 4:30 pm. Two of our Candidates, Jeralyn Wisniewski and Jean Corpe will be professed among fraternity members, family and friends. Fr. Chet Collins OFS will be the celebrant. At the conclusion of Mass there will be a dinner celebration and social.

Our Mother of Sorrows Fraternity in Grand Rapids held their Annual Profession Renewal Mass to renew their promises to follow Christ in living the Gospel Life in the spirit of St. Francis. The celebrant was Fr. Jim Chelich of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Grand Rapids. Fr. Jim is also a Secular Franciscan. He challenged the group to be like David (not Saul) in living in the anointing of Christ and not as the one Anointed (the Christ). Francis lived the anointing of Christ and did great things as did King David. Saul lived as if he had to be Anointed of God instead of living in the anointing of God (and he went crazy). It was a wonderful celebration and time of renewal.



Our Mother of Sorrows, Grand Rapids

Regional Calendar

Spring Ministers Meeting
Annual Ministers Meeting
Formation Day 2016

April 30, 2016
August 19-21, 2016
October 29, 2016

Center for Ministry, Saginaw
St. Francis Retreat Center, Dewitt
Center for Ministry, Saginaw

Fraternity Ministers: Annual reports are due March 1st, 2016. There are extra copies of the forms and more information about annual reports on our website: <http://divinemercuryregion.com/2016/01/17/extra-annual-report-forms/>

Don't Let Finances Keep You From Attending the Quinquennial Celebration in St. Louis this Year!
Scholarship applications are available at:
<http://www.quinquennial.org/2016/01/dont-let-finances-keep-you-away.html>

Our Website

Visit the Divine Mercy Region website at: <http://www.divinemercuryregion.com>

Would you like to see news and events from your local fraternity in this newsletter or on the website? Please send items to the editor, Jan Kaeding OFS at divineprovidencefraternity@gmail.com



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Snow and Ice, Bless the Lord!

