

Dear Brothers & Sisters



May 2016

Newsletter of the
Northwest Franciscan
Community of the
Immaculate Heart
of Mary

Palatine, Illinois

Secular Franciscan Order

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Submission deadline is the
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For privacy, all personal
addresses, phone numbers,
email, prayer intentions, and
(for non-council members) last
names are removed from this
web version.

From the Minister

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I am writing this from 35,000 feet above terra firma on April 11. I love to fly because up here I am 35,000 feet closer to the sun and feel closer to the Son. With clouds obscuring the ground and endless space above, there always seems to be a heightened sense of closeness to God.

Perhaps it is because you realize that you have absolutely no control over what will happen next when you are speeding through thin air at 500 miles an hour sitting "in a toilet paper tube covered in tinfoil" as it is described by Fr. Johnpaul. Or perhaps it is that, as the clouds part and one looks down, all that seems so huge while on the ground is no more than tiny specks from above. Is that how God sees us and all our problems that seem so huge to us down here?

For last month's gathering, many thanks to Brother Patrick, our Spiritual Assistant; Sister Sue, our Formation Director; Sister Geri, our Vice-Minister who triumphed over all obstacles to be there; and to all fraternity members who worked to make the evening joyful and welcoming for the two guests who chose to "come and see".

At this month's gathering and all subsequent ones, the Christmas stocking will be making its appearance for collections for our holiday Franciscan Outreach project. Please remember our homeless brothers and sisters, and be generous in your contributions.

■ **Summer Get-Together.** As mentioned in our December newsletter, there will be a summer party at my home at 2 p.m. on Sunday, July 31. There will be a signup sheet at this month's gathering. This is a family gathering, not only for you, my brothers and sisters, but also for your spouses, and children who may share your home with you. Please let your family members know, and when you sign up, just mark the total number of people—including you—who will attend. Let's enjoy the uplifting F words: Franciscan, Fun, Food, Fraternity.

■ **Save the Date.** Mark your calendars for Sunday, November 20, when we will gather at my home to fraternize and pack the gift bags for Franciscan Outreach. Specifics to follow at a later date. ☞

At This Month's Gathering ...

■ **Ongoing Formation.** Professed brothers and sisters, please read Chapter 06 in What it Takes. Please reflect on and write down your answers for all the questions.

Please be aware that all Professed are to attend ongoing formation and our monthly gatherings. If, for whatever reason, you're unable to attend, you must call our Minister, Sister Stephanie.

■ **Franciscan Crown & Social Time.** Everyone, please join us at 7:30 p.m. for the Franciscan Crown in honor of Our Blessed Mother, followed by a brief business meeting and social time (remember to bring your own mugs). ☞

Common Fund Report

■ **March beginning balance:** \$1,638.02; deposits: \$583; expenses: \$1,016.89; ending balance: \$1,204.13.

■ **April beginning balance:** \$1,204.13; deposits: \$290; expenses: \$39.44; ending balance: \$1,454.69. ☞

Next Monthly Gathering:

Monday, May 09, 2016

St. Joseph's Home
80 W. Northwest Hwy., Palatine

6:30 p.m.: Professed, please arrive at this time for Ongoing Formation. Candidates and Inquirers are encouraged to observe.

7:30 p.m.: Start of our Gathering with Franciscan Crown, followed by a business meeting and social time. All welcome!

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You must call Stephanie if you cannot attend.

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Our gatherings are at 7:30 p.m. on the second Monday of each month.

Our Apostolates

- **Bingo.** Meets one night per month at 6:30 p.m. in St. Joseph's activity room. Everyone, please see the sign-up sheet at our gathering and pick one month for which to volunteer. For more information, call Sisters Kay or Mary Kay.
- **Franciscan Outreach.** Each month, we collect monetary donations to fund Christmas gift bags for the guests at Franciscan Outreach's Marquard Center. Call Sister Stephanie for more information.
- **Prayer & Praise Ministry.** For our brothers and sisters unable to attend our gatherings due to poor health or transportation issues. For more information, or if you're ill or know of someone who's ill, please call our Infirmarian, Sister Jackie.
- **Prayer Shawl Ministry.** We interweave prayers along with God's love, care, and warmth into the stitches as we knit or crochet shawls for others. For more information, contact Sisters Sue or Cyndy.
- **Support (Money, Materials).** Quarterly donations from our Common Fund of any excess funds available after fraternity costs go to the following: Franciscan Missionary Union, Franciscan Outreach, Poor Clares (Palos Park, IL), Amazon Relief.
- **Youth Prayer Partners.** Coordinated by Brother Tom, this apostolate matches up fraternity members with children preparing for First Communion or Confirmation. We last prayed for a group of students on their journey to Confirmation, and will pray again for a new group of students when we have more details. For more information, call Brother Tom. ☒

Updated Member Directory

Enclosed with this month's newsletter is an updated Member Directory, which lists all Candidates, Professed, and our spiritual assistant. Please take note of the following changes that have been made in the directory:

- [PRIVATE] ☒

Please check your listing for accuracy and let us know if there are any errors or updates needed. Thank you! ☒

Mary of the Visitation

by Servant of God Catherine de Hueck Doherty, from Bogoroditza: She Who Gave Birth to God

Not Mary of the sentimental pictures. Not Mary of the many, endless, pious, pietistic stories. No. Mary, the teenaged girl, filled with the wisdom of God and of the ages. Mary, talking to an angel with dignity and directness. Mary of the immense fiat, said with a humility that surpasses all understanding.

Mary of the Visitation. Selfless. Forgetting her own precarious position and fearlessly going to assist Elizabeth. Mary the poet, the handmaid of the Lord singing her magnificent Magnificat: "My soul magnifies the Lord!" (Lk 1:46-55). Mary, the Mother of God, the poor woman of Bethlehem. Mary, the housewife in Nazareth. Mary of the hidden life. Mary under the Cross, sharing Christ's passion and Christ's love. Loving even those who crucified Him. Mary of the Pieta.

continued on page 3 ...

Anniversaries This Month

08: Ernest, Sue, and Lisa, Professed in 2006.

13: Geri and Kay, Professed in 2013.

God's blessings for your years of
Franciscan living!

Calendar

May

09: Monthly Gathering

23: Council Meeting, 7 p.m., Stephanie's home

June

13: Monthly Gathering

Remember in Your Daily Prayers

- [PRIVATE]
- All infirm, shut-in, and deceased fraternity members.
- All those in initial formation and their formation instructors.
- Our entire Franciscan Family, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd (Secular & Regular) Orders: For strength in commitments, increase in vocations, and the work we do, especially for Franciscan Outreach, Franciscan Missionary Union, the Poor Clares in Palos Park, and Amazon Relief.
- The guests of Franciscan Outreach's shelter and soup kitchen: That they know God's loving care and overcome the difficulties that keep them homeless.
- Little Sisters of the Poor and the residents of St. Joseph's Home.
- Our families and loved ones.

Please pray that our fraternity
and all Franciscans:

- Live the Holy Rule we've professed,
- Bring the Gospel to Life, and Life to the Gospel in the spirit of Francis,
- Live simply so that others may simply live, and
- Are active and participate in the Franciscan apostolates.

Nowhere is there anything sentimental about Mary. From the moment she entered the pages of history, she became our model. Truly, we go to Jesus through Mary. First, because he came through her to us. Then because she teaches by example all that we need so desperately to learn. We who walk in fears, whose days are filled with neurotic anxieties, who won't believe unless we "see and touch." How desperately we need you, Mary of the Annunciation.

We who worship self so constantly that each has become a lonely island unable to communicate with another, let alone love another, how desperately we need you, Mary of the Visitation!

We who are afraid of the slightest discomfort, whose lives revolve around more cars, more bathrooms, more TVs, more gadgets, more material wealth and goods, how desperately we need you, Mary of Bethlehem and Nazareth!

We, the lonely ones always seeking a crowd, always on the go—to this meeting, that cocktail party, this dance, that date—how desperately we need you, Mary of the Hidden life!

We who are so fearful of pain, so afraid of the Cross, so eager to be cross-less Catholics, how desperately we need you, Mary of Golgotha, Mary of the Pieta!

We who are afraid to love our own, even our friends, who have forgotten oh, so often, the very meaning of love, how desperately we need you, Mary, loving Mother of Humankind!

Mary of a thousand titles, Mary my mother, teach me, teach us, faith, trust, selflessness, poverty, detachment, obedience, and caritas, love of your Son! Amen. ☩

Excerpt from Homily on the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God

by Pope Francis, 01-Jan-2015

Today we are reminded of the words of blessing which Elizabeth spoke to the Virgin Mary: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?" (Lk 1:42-43).

This blessing is in continuity with the priestly blessing which God had given to Moses to be passed on to Aaron and to all the people: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace" (Num 6:24-26). In celebrating the Solemnity of Mary the Most Holy Mother of God, the Church reminds us that Mary, more than anyone else, received this blessing. In her the blessing finds fulfilment, for no other creature has ever seen God's face shine upon it as did Mary. She gave a human face to the eternal Word, so that all of us can contemplate him.

In addition to contemplating God's face, we can also praise him and glorify him, like the shepherds who came away from Bethlehem with a song of thanksgiving after seeing the Child and his young mother (cf. Lk 2:16). The two were together, just as they were together at Calvary, because Christ and his mother are inseparable: there is a very close relationship between them, as there is between every child and his or her mother. The flesh (caro) of Christ—which, as Tertullian says, is the hinge (cardo) of our salvation—was knit together in the womb of Mary (cf. Ps 139:13). This inseparability is also clear from the fact that Mary, chosen beforehand to be the Mother of the Redeemer, shared intimately in his entire mission, remaining at her Son's side to the end on Calvary.

Mary is so closely united to Jesus because she received from him the knowledge of the heart, the knowledge of faith, nourished by her experience as a mother and by her close relationship with her Son. The Blessed Virgin is the woman of faith who made room for God in her heart and in her plans; she is the believer capable of perceiving in the gift of her Son the coming of that "fullness of time" (Gal 4:4) in which God, by choosing the humble path of human existence, entered personally into the history of salvation. That is why Jesus cannot be understood without his Mother.

Likewise inseparable are Christ and the Church; the salvation accomplished by Jesus cannot be understood without appreciating the motherhood of the Church. To separate Jesus from the Church would introduce an "absurd dichotomy", as Blessed Paul VI wrote (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 16). It is not possible "to love Christ but without the Church, to listen to Christ but not the Church, to belong to Christ but outside the Church" (ibid.). For the Church is herself God's great family, which brings Christ to us. Our faith is not an abstract doctrine or philosophy, but a vital and full relationship with a person: Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God who became man, was put to death, rose from the dead to save us, and is now living in our midst. Where can we encounter him? We encounter him in the Church. It is the Church which says today: "Behold the Lamb of God"; it is the Church, which proclaims him; it is in the Church that Jesus continues to accomplish his acts of grace which are the sacraments.

This, the Church's activity and mission, is an expression of her motherhood. For she is like a mother who tenderly holds Jesus and gives him to everyone with joy and generosity. No manifestation of Christ, even the most mystical, can ever be detached from the flesh and blood of the Church, from the historical concreteness of the Body of Christ. Without the Church, Jesus Christ ends up as an idea, a moral teaching, a feeling. Without the Church, our relationship with Christ would be at the mercy of our imagination, our interpretations, our moods. ☩