

St. Clare Fraternity Newsletter
Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania
February 2020

Our Council: **Minister:** *Arlene Stewart*; Vice Minister: *Tom Brown*; Formation Director: *Katie Roberts*; Secretary: *Maryanne Sheofsky*; Treasurer: *Anne Pennsy*; Councilor: *Victoria Snyder*; Spiritual Assistant: *Brother Mike Tripka, TOR*

Minister's Message

With Valentine's Day around the corner, it starting me thinking about "love." Passing out Valentines is a 600-year-old tradition; a day of love. People exchange cards, candy or flowers with their special "valentine"

So, what is love? I think the apostle, St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 says it best.

Love is patient, love is kind.

It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude,

it does not seek its own interests,

it is not quick-tempered,

it does not brood over injury,

it does not rejoice over wrongdoing

but rejoices with the truth.

It bears all things, believes all things,

hopes all things, endures all things.

Since the beginning of his ministry, Saint Francis became a living example of love, peace, selflessness, and charity.

¹John 4: "*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.*"

Happy Valentine's Day!

May the Lord bless you all.

A Message from our Formation Director

During our January meeting, Meg Hough became a candidate through the Rite of Admission. She was given our Rule and the Tau cross.

For formation, we reflected on our Rule #2 with the book, "Praying the Franciscan Rule." We also discussed reflections 35 (Seeing Christ in Others" and 36 (Justice: The First Requirement of Charity from "Live Like Francis."

On Jan. 24th, Vickie, Mary Lou Brown and Katie met with Mary and Tony at Christ The King Manor to introduce them to the Secular Franciscan order. After their Profession, they will be an extension of our St. Clare Fraternity.

OFS NATIONAL AND REGIONAL NEWS

Lady Poverty Region Dates:

Lady Poverty Region Chapter Retreat May 29-31,2020

Summer Seminar July 9-11,2020 at St. Francis University, Loretto, PA

St. Clare Fraternity News

† St. Clare Fraternity met on January 13, 2020. Our Minister conducted the Rite of Admission for our candidate, Meg Hough. Meg was warmly welcomed by all fraternity member present at the meeting.

† Our Fraternity is holding in prayer our sister, Kathy Burke and Annette Lorenzo as well as those intentions which have been sent out via email. It was announced that there is an OFS prayer chain to which we may send prayer requests. It can be accessed by sending an email to: joebon2864@comcast.net.

† Members were reminded that the Fair Share was due and payable at this meeting.

† The apparel ordered from SPC should available by the next meeting. Maryanne will alert the fraternity via email when they are available for pick up.

† We were updated on the various apostolates that the fraternity is sponsoring.

St. Clare Fraternity Dates

Meeting February 10, 2020

Rosary TBA, 2020 11:00 am

Candidate Formation February 17, 2020 Graystone Apartments

Happy February Birthday to our fraternity members:

**2 TomBrown
Sheofsky**

6 Laura Jesse

12 Maryanne

Franciscan Holy Days

February 4 *St. Joseph of Leonissa*

Reflection: Saints often jar us because they challenge our ideas about what we need for “the good life.” “I’ll be happy when. . .,” People like Joseph of Leonissa challenge us to face life courageously and get to the heart of it: life with God. Joseph was a compelling preacher because his life was as convincing as his words

February 6 *St. Paul Miki and Companions*

Reflection: Today, a new era has come for the Church in Japan. Although the number of Catholics is not large, the Church is respected and has total religious freedom. The spread of Christianity in the Far East is slow and difficult. Faith such as that of the 26 martyrs is needed today as much as in 1597.

February 7 *St. Collette*

Reflection: Reflection: Colette began her reform during the time of the Great Western Schism (1378-1417) when three men claimed to be pope and thus divided Western Christianity. The 15th century in general was a very difficult one for the Western Church. Abuses long neglected cost the Church dearly in the following century. Colette’s reform indicated the entire Church’s need to follow Christ more closely

February 9 *Blessed Maria Theresia Bonzel*

Reflection: Blessed Maria Theresia Bonzel founded our congregation in Olpe, Germany, in the year 1863. From the very day the community was founded, Mother established perpetual adoration in the local convent chapel. The files of her beatification attest to the love and strength she found therein: “She had grown under the soft light of the Eucharistic sun. Again and again she went to the hidden God to find light, courage and strength.” Flowing from prayer, Blessed Maria Theresia put herself and the Sisters at the service of children, the sick, and the poor. She died on February 6, 19052

February 19 *St. Conrad of Piacenza*

Reflection: Francis of Assisi was drawn both to contemplation and to a life of preaching; periods of intense prayer nourished his preaching. Some of his early followers, however, felt called to a life of greater contemplation, and he accepted that. Though Conrad of Piacenza is not the norm in the Church, he and other contemplatives remind us of the greatness of God and of the joys of heaven

Franciscan Spirituality

Franciscan spirituality is rooted in the simple affirmation: “God is love.” We know from our human experience, love is generative; lovers want to express their love. God – Love Itself - desired from all eternity to express Divine Love in a creature (someone outside of God’s Self) that would be able to love back perfectly. And this “Perfect Lover” is Jesus of Nazareth. Great men who have immersed themselves in Franciscan spirituality to a

degree that I could never hope to achieve, for example St. Bonaventure and Bl. John Duns Scotus, have explained that God took flesh and became one of us not because of sin but because of Love. It is hard to love someone or something you can't see. And so the invisible God has given us Jesus as a visible sacrament of how we are to love. The way to perfect joy is to become the perfect lover by imitation of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. Consequently, in instructing those who would come after him, Francis could simply say: "The Rule and Life of the Lesser Brothers is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ." [In fact, this assertion is at the heart of the Rule of each of the Franciscan Orders, including the Secular Franciscan Order.] Loving always involves a certain "emptying," a certain "dying." Often at weddings, I am asked to proclaim the text "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Mark 10:7-8). There is a real "dying" in the "leaving" – but it is essential for the "loving." Francis had a deep appreciation for this "emptying" aspect of loving. He saw it expressed in a unique way in the Crib, the Cross, and the Eucharist. [Adapted from September 2012, Deacon Digest, pp. 28 – 30; by Fr. Thomas Richstatter, O.F.M., S.T.D. by Deacon Dave & Thérèse Ream, O.F.S., Revised July 2017]

A Selection from Our Rule:

The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people

Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly.

Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel. (Chapter 2 paragraph 4)

Groundhog Day and St. Francis

As you all know, our St. Clare Fraternity has the distinction of being in "the Groundhog Capital of the World," Punxsutawney, PA. As I was gathering articles for this newsletter, I began to reflect on what St. Francis would think about all the hoopla surrounding Groundhog Day. I googled "Groundhog Day" + "St. Francis of Assisi" and received a lot of sites about the connection between Groundhog Day and Candlemas Day as well as groundhog day activities in various St. Francis of Assisi schools.

I have been doing quite a bit of reading about St. Francis and I have formulated several thoughts. First, St. Francis would have considered Phil and all groundhogs as his brothers. As such he would have delighted in the special attention Phil

receives and would have made sure that Phil was treated humanely. Second, St. Francis would have used the celebration to preach the *Gospel* that Jesus is the Light of the World. He brings light to all the darkness that overshadows our lives. I can see St. Francis walking up to Gobblers Knob and preaching along the way about this incredible "Light" that created Phil and all creatures. He may have distributed blessed candles to all so that they could take the Light home and keep it as a reminder of Jesus the Light of the World. Third, St. Francis would have enjoyed being in and with God's creation. Happy Groundhog Day to all! Submitted by the Editor