

From our National Minister

“Beloved National Family,

Through the plea and example (included below) of a Regional Minister who has asked to remain anonymous, working under the principle of "do good and disappear," please join together, as her local fraternities are doing in her entire Region, in a nationwide effort to put this world's recent turmoil more in the Lord's hands by our concerted prayers and penance over three days starting this Friday, August 1st. Whatever you can do to bring more of our sisters and brothers into this effort of prayers and penance, please do so.

Friday, August 1st, the first day of Prayers and Penance, is, of course, First Friday, which may always be a day devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Friday is also, even outside of Lent, a traditional day of Penance. As we all know, what is Penance for one may not work or even be medically advisable for some, but fasting and/or abstinence, going to Mass, praying the Stations of the Cross, doing extra prayers to the Sacred Heart are all recommended on this first day.

The second day, Saturday, August 2nd, is the Feast of the Portiuncula, or more fully, the Feast of Our Lady of the Angels of Portiuncula. I attach four separate explanations on this Feast and the unique Portiuncula Indulgence. These should provide extra impetus to getting to Mass and Confession on this day, perhaps even making an effort to get to a Franciscan site that celebrates this Feast. This Saturday is also First Saturday, which may be offered to Our Lady's Immaculate Heart, and in Ordinary Time, a Saturday that may always be kept in honor of the Blessed Mother. Praying the Franciscan Crown Rosary or any other devotions to Mary would be appropriate.

The third day, Sunday, August 3rd, is the Lord's Day. Let us spend this day as the Lord tells us to spend it.

If someone asks you, "Why are you doing this?" you might answer, "We are all just one airplane trip away." If someone then asks, "One airplane trip away from what?" you might answer in your own words, something like:

"We are all just one airplane trip away from being "cleansed" of our Christianity in Mosul, Iraq, and other places in the world. We are all just one airplane trip away from being subject to unbelievable violence in Syria or Honduras or Gaza or many other parts of the world. We are all just one airplane trip away from being in the path of the deadly Ebola virus in Liberia and other countries. We are all just one airplane trip away simply from being murdered as we fly like the passengers of Malaysian Flights 370 and 17. One airplane trip away."

We read and hear of children being aborted; we read and hear of children dying from hunger, preventable diseases, abuse, violence and drugs; we read and hear of homeless children at our borders and in our cities.

As our Regional Minister pleads below, let us all pray and strive to "produce worthy fruits of penance" (Prologue to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order). As she writes below, "As Secular Franciscans, can we do no less?" Let us start with these first three days of August, and then perhaps, as we also read below, continue every Friday.

Peace, Prayers and Penance,

Tom"

Tom Bello, OFS
National Minister
National Fraternity of the United States

"Peace to your heart, dear brother.

I am sure, like me, you have been following the news from Iraq, Syria, and the Middle East. ISIS has "cleansed" Mosul, Iraq of Christians who have refused to pay a tax, or convert either by allowing them to leave with only the shirts on their backs or by killing them by various means. According to Vatican Radio, a Franciscan site was bombed in Syria. Israel and Pakistan continue to lob rockets, bombs and gunfire at each other.

It occurs to me that although none of us can travel to these areas of the world, we are stronger together in prayer. I have asked the members of our Region to fast and pray each Friday for the intention of peace and reconciliation in these

persecuted regions. One region united in prayer is fine; a nation of regions united in prayer would certainly be more powerful. Would you consider asking our sisters and brothers throughout the United States form a "united front of prayer" for our persecuted sisters and brothers in these violence-riven areas?

Recognizing that fasting can take many forms, particularly since many of our members are elderly or on medication which prohibits them from fasting from food, we could encourage time spent in prayer versus time spent on the internet or in front of a television. As we know, more things are wrought through prayer than this world dreams of. As Secular Franciscans, can we do no less?

Thanks for your consideration of this request.

Blessings and every good"

A Region Minister...