

August 11<sup>th</sup> Feast of St. Clare

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

This year we were again able to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of the Angels together at Mt. Alvernia during our Region Retreat. Since one of the members of our region is writing an article about the particulars of the weekend for this issue, I am going to confine my comments to some observations that come from my heart.

First of all, what a blessing it was to be together in fraternity with so many members of our region! We are well aware that it is a sacrifice of time and treasure for many of our members to participate in the yearly retreat. Jesus calls us to come away with Him to rest spiritually and in fraternity with our Franciscan brothers and sisters. However, our lives as lay people with family responsibilities sometimes prevent us from heeding that particular call. Thank you to all of you who were able to be present.

These are some of the things about our retreat that left me grateful, refreshed and inspired:

- ⴒ The communication and collaboration among the members of the Region Executive Council—almost every member of the Council had a hand in discussion, planning and execution of the retreat.
- ⴒ The willingness of the retreat participants to take a role in the various liturgies; morning and evening prayer; impromptu dancing and even helping the kitchen staff!
- ⴒ The beautiful weather, the peacefulness of the retreat center grounds, the hospitality of the center staff, the blue sky, the mountains, the birds and the butterflies, a pooch named Biscuit and even the “invisible” deer ticks made us want to say, **“Laudato Si!”**
- ⴒ The fact that we are blessed to have among us in our region a Secular Franciscan priest who celebrated Mass for us along with a Secular Franciscan deacon who preached and served as Deacon at Mass. Did you know that we have other members of our region who are deacons or are studying for the Diaconate?
- ⴒ Being able to get to know more of you by name and face, rather than just your email address or voice on the phone. I enjoyed our conversations!
- ⴒ The openness of Fr. Tom Hartle who shared some moving personal stories, thus encouraging others to share their own inspirational stories.
- ⴒ The blessings of knowing that members of our own fraternities and our 2,300 friends on Facebook were praying for us. We also assured them of our prayers!
- ⴒ Knowing that we all prayed for some very special people in our region and in the National Fraternity who were not with us, but were very much in our hearts.
- ⴒ Knowing that the candidates who attended this retreat had a wonderful session with our Formation Director and our Region Spiritual Assistant. We hope that they went home strengthened in their vocation.
- ⴒ The wonderful suggestions we received for making the retreat even better next year! Thank you!
- ⴒ And, last, but never least, the bounty of snacks you all brought! Oh dear! Prayer, yes! Fasting?—hmmm.

Here are some of the things that retreatants were kind enough to share about their fraternities:

**Did you know that...**

- **Sacred Heart Fraternity** in Yonkers was once an all-women's fraternity? It is now co-ed and has some wonderful programs and apostolates including work in the parish Thrift Shop and beautiful processions.
- **Most Holy Name Fraternity** in Little Falls, NJ, was founded in 1926?
- Although **St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity**, Staten Island, was homeless for a short while, they have found a new home and are thriving? They meet together in hope and joy and truly love each other as Franciscan sisters and brothers.
- **St. Mary of the Angels Fraternity**, 96<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, stands out for its diversity--ethnic groups, languages, age, gender and academic background? When this fraternity was founded, its sponsoring fraternity was **Most Holy Name**—then located in Garfield, NJ. St. Mary of the Angels now sponsors a newly forming group—**All Saints EM Fraternity** located in Harlem, NY. A very active fraternity, they adopt a family at Christmas and one of their members rescues homeless cats.
- **St. Anthony Fraternity**, Butler, NJ, “rose from the ashes” and was reborn in 1995? Fraternity members have ranged in age from 14 (pre-new Rule) to 100. The fraternity records go back to the 1890's! This fraternity sponsors a child from Guatemala.
- **Assumption Fraternity**, Wood-Ridge, NJ, is 51 years old? At the beginning they had 175 professed members! The only remaining founding member serves as the fraternity's secretary. This group has traveled to Assisi and more recently viewed the manuscripts of St. Francis on display in the USA.
- **Sts. Elizabeth and Louis Fraternity**, Manhattan, is made up of peaceful people who are like a little Franciscan Garden to this member? Another member says that they are very “close-knit.”
- **Little Portion Fraternity**, Mt. Vernon, NY, raised \$3,000 to help Secular Franciscan formation in China?
- **St. Peter Fraternity**, Somerset, NJ, makes its presence known in Metuchen Diocese through the service of its members in parishes and outreach ministries? One of their members was recently ordained a Deacon.
- Members of **Cortesia Fraternity** in Middletown, NJ, have members who have gone on Mission to El Salvador? They also work among young adults trying to promote vocations to the Order. Another apostolate is preparing “gourmet” meals for the local soup kitchen—then they sit down with the clients and share the meal and some good conversation.
- **St. Francis Fraternity**, Hackensack, NJ, which began life in 1926 as an Italian-speaking fraternity, has among its apostolates the yearly collection of school supplies to be sent to the mission schools in the Southwest of the USA? The parish Youth Ministry collaborates with them in this effort.
- **Porziuncola Fraternity**, East Hanover, NJ, is on the upswing? Their minister (the only male member) drops off vocation brochures in any churches he visits. They have three possible new members due to this effort. Good idea!

Wow! My heart is always joyful when I think of all of you. How blessed we are to have such a wonderful region. Please keep sharing your triumphs and your challenges with us. We are always here for you.

May God bless each one of you and keep you strong in your vocation.

Diane

Diane F. Menditto, OFS  
Minister, Our Lady of the Angels Region