

Regular Meeting: Sun., April 15*, 2:00 PM—in the building at the North side of the parking lot.

Council Meeting: Sat., April 21, 9:30 AM—Arby's on west side of Rt 1, at 16th Place, Vero Beach.

Agenda and Schedule for Meeting:

- 2:00 Meeting called to order. Opening Prayer, Reports, Old/New Business
- 2:20 Blessing of our donations to the Food Pantry
- 2:25 Ongoing Formation: Helen will speak to us about the simplicity of St. Francis. How have we simplified our lives following his example?
- 3:00 Refreshments and break
- 3:20 Liturgy of the Hours for the Second Sunday of Easter - Divine Mercy Sunday
- 4:00 Closing Prayer and dismissal

Refreshment Committee:

- Snacks:** Pauline Pavlick and Pat Riordan
- Beverages:** Peggy Rysdyke

Minister: Peggy Rysdyke, SFO
Vice-Minister: Donna M. Haro, SFO
Secretary: Elizabeth Smith, SFO
Treasurer: Sarah Hardy, SFO
Formation Director: Helen Caldarone, SFO
Councillors-at-Large
Ed O'Donnell, SFO
Fred Schaeffer, SFO
Kathleen Van Buskirk, SFO
Spiritual Assisitant
Fr. Richard P. LaCorte, SFO
Vocation Director: Kathleen Van Buskirk, SFO
Commissioners
Work: (vacant)
Family: Eugene Caldarone, SFO
Peace and Justice: (vacant)
Youth: Pauline Pavlick, SFO
Ecology: Fred Schaeffer, SFO
Formation Team: Eugene Caldarone, SFO
Webmaster/Editor: Fred Schaeffer, SFO

Remember in your prayers: Julia McHugh, Jennie Donlin, George Thomas, Jerry Carey, Donna Haro, John Matthews, Fred Schaeffer, and all professed Franciscans in our Florida region who are ill, as well as those members of our Fraternity who cannot attend our meetings regularly.

Fair Share: May is the month when our fair share must be turned into the Regional Council. Please remember to make your contribution to Sarah. All members, whether active or inactive, are responsible for their share. If this presents a hardship, please inform us. The Fraternity must pay whether its members pay or not.

New Officers: Kathleen Van Buskirk has agreed to assume the position of Vocation Director. This position helps the new members by answering their questions about the Franciscan Order, and helps the Fraternity to have a basic knowledge of them.

Please do not forget the vacant positions for Commissioners. The Lord does not allow retirement. If you're not growing you're going backwards. Allow us to benefit from your experience.

Upcoming Events: The Annual Regional Fraternity meeting is on Memorial Day Weekend, May 25-27 at the San Pedro Retreat Center in Winter Park. All are invited. If you're interested we will give you the particulars.

From the Minister's Desk: As I write this newsletter I think of Good Friday and He who was crucified for us, and the gift of the stigmata that He gave to Francis. How appropriate that a man, so like Christ, should be given this gift. We join our heart with Francis to be consumed by the fire of love emanating from the Crucified Christ. Have a Blessed Easter.

(*) Our April and May Fraternity Meeting has been moved to the 3rd Sunday of the month, this year.

Formation program for the Eighth Centenary of St. Elizabeth of Hungary (1207-2007)
Year One: The life of St. Elizabeth

4 (April) Motherhood

Elizabeth and her husband had three children: Hermann, heir to the rulership of Thuringia, who died, however, shortly after beginning his rule, at the age of eighteen. Their second child, Sophia married Henry the Duke of Brabant, had children and continued the family line. The youngest, Gertrude, was born shortly after her father's death. Her parents had determined before her birth to have her raised as an oblate in a monastery so that she might be completely devoted to God. She later became abbess of the Praemonstratensian monastery of Altenberg, and is herself venerated as a saint.

Elizabeth knew and believed that "Children too are a gift from the Lord, the fruit of the womb, a reward" (Ps. 127:3); At that time, the Catholic custom was to go to church forty days after a child's birth for the rite of purification and blessing, recalling the trip that Mary, Joseph and Jesus took to Jerusalem after the birth of Jesus and the Purification in the temple. Elizabeth would go for this rite to the church in Eisenach, barefoot, dressed in simple wool garments and carrying her child in her arms, to offer the fruit of her womb to God in imitation of Mary. There she would also have recalled the words spoken by Simeon in the Temple: "You yourself will be pierced by a sword." (Luke 2:35), foretelling the sorrow she would experience in her Son's crucifixion. She knew that children are a source of joy, but also require sacrifice.

Elizabeth would experience much sorrow and anxiety in regard to her children; after her expulsion from her dower castle, she suffered from anxiety when she did not know where to lay her children's heads or put food in their mouths, and finally was forced to send them away so they could get enough to eat. She also had to give up her youngest daughter Gertrude to the monastery. Her children were one of the sacrifices she made to God.

Elizabeth wanted to have her children put God first in their lives. She once said that she would have her son Hermann a poor Friar Minor than have him become emperor. Even her pride in her children or what they might become was not as important to her as their souls.

Word of God: You shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are busy or at rest. (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

5 (May) Meeting the Friars Minor

Elizabeth's desire for a more devout life continued to increase. She received a gift that corresponded to her desire when in 1223 or 1224, the first Franciscan missionaries to Germany arrived in Eisenach. Elizabeth was then about eighteen years old. She granted a church in Eisenach to the friars, and became so devoted to them that she spun the wool for their habits herself.

What she learned then about the life of St. Francis and the work of the friars who went barefoot and begging throughout the world must have had an enormous impact on her, for when she was with her ladies-in-waiting, she used to wrap a shabby cloak around herself and an old piece of cloth around her head, saying, 'This is how I will walk when I go begging and bear misery for the love of God.' This was little more than a desire; fulfilling it at this point would have been impossible for a woman with a family. One of the Franciscans in particular, Brother Rodeger, became Elizabeth's spiritual teacher. He urged her to "to preserve chastity, humility and patience and to keep watch in prayer and to apply herself to works of mercy."

Perhaps these friars knew about the penitential fraternities in Italy and were acquainted with the Memoriale Propositi, the first Franciscan rule and St. Francis' Letter to the brothers and sisters of Penance. We don't know whether Elizabeth followed this rule; it was almost certainly only later that she was professed as a penitent. She may have followed the rule informally. One thing is certain: the very depths of her soul were attuned to St. Francis' love of poverty and humility.

Spiritual reflection:

Discerning our own vocation and the path we are to follow is an ongoing process. Often encounters with people who are living a vocation help us. It was from the Franciscan friars that Elizabeth learned of the life and teachings of St. Francis which helped her discern her own path in life. From this time on, she did everything she could to follow those teachings.

Elizabeth did not only learn from the Franciscans; she gave them help in their ministry as well as personally. This type of mutual help can be an example for to us in our relationship with the friars.

Gospel: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:3).