

National Minister's Occasional Message



I THIRST

Beloved National Family,

May the Lord bring us Peace!

As we all know from our Ash Wednesday Gospel of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18), the three great works of Lent are fasting or self-denial, accompanied by almsgiving or charity, only possible through prayer.

Therefore, with this email, I ask for your prayerful consideration of supporting either personally or with your local or Regional fraternity the NAFRA H2O Lenten Project 2012 as in the past.

Of course, there are many good charitable activities available this Lent, but I recommend this one because it offers the possibility of self-denial, leading to charity, only made possible through prayer.

The self-denial comes from trying for two (2) weeks this Lent or before May 1, 2012 to make water your only beverage. The charity comes from contributing the money you would have spent at the soda machine and coffee shop toward providing clean water for families most in need. I don't know about you, but for me to survive even one day only on water will take a good deal of prayer!

The idea here is that by actively fasting from all beverages except water, we might get a clearer idea of how important clean water is to our brothers and sisters around the world and thus gain a moment of solidarity with the poor as is called for within our Franciscan Charism: "A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ" (Secular Franciscan Rule 13).

In short, start fasting...start saving...never stop praying! And for encouragement and more information, visit the H2O website and see their video: <http://www.theh2oproject.org/>.

I ask that all contributions be sent to the NAFRA H2O Lenten Project 2012, c/o Dennis Ross, NAFRA Treasurer, 8933 Trailwood Court, Mentor Ohio 44060-2131. Make the check payable to NAFRA.

Unless I hear differently from the National Fraternity (the Regional Ministers and voting members of the NEC), the recipient of all NAFRA H2O Lenten

Project 2012 donations will be, as last year, our Global "Courageous Initiatives" Partner: Catholic Relief Services, specifically for clean drinking water in Haiti.

Again, as last year, I would like to get the NAFRA family directly contributing to this effort as well, so I will ask the NEC to vote at our meeting to contribute \$1000.00 from the NAFRA Donor Fund for the NAFRA H2O Lenten Project 2012. One reason that we can be generous with the NAFRA Donor Fund is because of recent, generous donations to the Fund. If you are reading this and have been one of these generous donors, thank you for your great generosity.

Finally, the great prophet Isaiah continues to challenge us: "Is this the manner of fasting I wish, of keeping a day of penance: That a man bow his head like a reed, and lie in sackcloth and ashes? Do you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own" (Isaiah 58:5-7).

"Not turning your back on your own" includes your family, which includes your Secular Franciscan family. As last year, I encourage myself and you, in our prayers, fasting and almsgiving this Lent, not to forget our local, Regional, National and/or International Secular Franciscan Fraternities. Do not forget our First Order, Second Order or Third Order Regular Brothers and Sisters. We are family. Please do not forget the Apostolates we have embraced at our NAFRA Gatherings: Franciscans International, Franciscan Action Network, Franciscan Mission Service, Franciscan Family Apostolate, Amazon Relief and the various "Courageous Initiatives" of Catholic Relief Services and the monthly United States Conference of Catholic Bishops programs in our Justice, Peace & the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) education series. Thank you for your prayers, self-denial and charity.

Christ's Peace and Love to all in this Holy Lenten Season,

Tom

"I was thirsty and you gave me drink" Matthew 25:35