



# Good News Report

Secular Franciscan Order  
Trillium Regional Fraternity



Number 86

December 2018

## A MOMENT WITH THE MNISTER

*Loving Father,  
Help us remember the birth of Jesus,  
that we may share in the songs of the  
angels,  
the gladness of the shepherds,  
and worship of the wise men.  
Close the door of hate  
and open the door of love all over the world.  
Let kindness come with every gift  
and good desires with every greeting.  
Deliver us from evil by the blessing  
which Christ brings,  
and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.*

*May the Christmas morning  
make us happy to be thy children,  
and Christmas evening bring us to our beds  
with grateful thoughts,  
forgiving and forgiven,  
for Jesus' sake.  
Amen.*

By: Robert Louis Stevenson

*(Continued on page 2)*



## SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT



St Francis had a special devotion to the Child Jesus, and he is credited with creating the first nativity scene on Christmas Eve in the year 1223. It is believed that St. Francis was inspired to create this scene after visiting the historical place of Christ's birth when he was in the Holy Land. Most likely his visit to the humble stable in a Bethlehem cave deepened his devotion to the Child Jesus. It certainly helps Francis to understand the poverty, humility, and simplicity of the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem.

After returning to Italy he wanted to celebrate the Birth of the Lord in a special way. He told a friend of his desire to create the first nativity scene in his town: *"I want to do something that will recall the memory of that Child who was born in Bethlehem, to see with bodily eyes the inconveniences of his infancy, how he lay in the manger, and how the ox and ass stood by."*

He set up an empty manger inside a cave, and even included a live ox and donkey. Through these visual aids he wanted everyone to clearly understand how Christ came into the world in such poverty and simplicity. This was a typical perspective of St. Francis' unique charism of simple, poverty-centered spirituality.

St. Bonaventure relates to us the events at Greccio. *It happened in the third year before his death, that in order to excite the inhabitants of Greccio to commemorate the nativity of the Infant Jesus with great devotion, [St. Francis] determined to keep it with all possible solemnity; and lest he should be accused of lightness or novelty, he asked and obtained the permission of the sovereign Pontiff.*

*Then he prepared a manger, and brought hay, and an ox and an ass to the place appointed. The brethren were summoned, the people ran together, the forest resounded with their voices, and that venerable night was made glorious by many and brilliant lights and sonorous psalms of praise.*

*The man of God [St. Francis] stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant with joy; the Holy Gospel was chanted by*

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The first virtue which Christ shows us at His birth is holy poverty. St. Francis' only possession was voluntary poverty. He practiced the strictest poverty and founded our Order on the principle of perfect evangelical poverty. St. Francis said that....

*“poverty is the queen of virtues, because she shone resplendently in Jesus Christ and in His Blessed Mother”*

Wishing all members of the Trillium Region a blessed and peaceful Christmas.

*Deus Meus et omnia.*  
Catherine Payne




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*Francis, the Levite of Christ. Then he preached to the people around the nativity of the poor King; and being unable to utter His name for the tenderness of His love, He called Him the Babe of Bethlehem.”*

Our God chose to come into the world in complete and vulnerability. Our God, whom we depend on for everything came into this world as totally dependent Himself. This is the pinnacle of poverty and humility that Francis wanted us to understand and appreciate. As you look upon a nativity scene in your home or at church please spend some time in prayer pondering the meaning of this great mystery.

May the Babe of Bethlehem bless you and your family with peace this Christmas and throughout the new year.

*Fr. Peter Knaapen O.F.M. Conv*

<p><b>TREASURER'S TWO CENTS</b></p> <p><i>“We never climb to Him, He must descend to us. This is most important in the mystery of Advent—God’s descent to our lowliness out of pure love, not for any merit of our own.” — Thomas Merton.</i></p>	
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**FROM THOMAS OF CELANO**

... Saint Francis of Assisi (1181–1226) was an enthusiastic champion of Christmas. In his account of St Francis’ life, Thomas of Celano, who knew the saint, describes an interesting interaction between the beloved saint and one of the early friars, Brother Morico.

*“Francis observed the birthday of the child Jesus with inexpressible eagerness over all other feasts, saying, ‘It is the feast of feasts, on which God, having become a tiny infant, clung to human breasts.’ When the question rose about eating meat that day, since Christmas was a Friday, he [Francis] replied to Brother Morico, ‘You sin, brother, calling the day on which the child is born to us a day of fast. It is my wish that even the walls should eat meat on such a day; and if they cannot, they should be smeared with meat on the outside.’”*

On Christmas, Francis wanted the poor and the hungry to be filled by the rich; he said that more than the usual amount of grain and hay should be given to oxen and asses. *“If I could speak to the emperor, I would ask that a general law be made that all who can should scatter corn and grain along the roads so that the birds might have an abundance of food on that day of such great solemnity, especially our sisters the larks”* (2 Celano, 199–200).

## VICE MINISTER

### The Coming of Our God



We are now in the season of Advent. The focus of which is the preparation for the celebration of Christmas: the commemoration of Christ birth and His second coming into the world. For us Catholics, this may include an Advent retreat to help prepare our hearts and minds for the birth, the coming of our God whom we should greet with “Holy Joy”.

Although the Christmas season does not begin until the first Mass at Christmas Eve and ends on the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord, 13 January 2019, but the activities of the media and the stores focus only on Christmas day sometimes forgetting or perhaps not knowing that Christmas is a Season. The focus being put on Christmas day is that of celebrating with family and friends, with a meal of turkey, ham, cake and a good round of drinks, and giving presents. In preparation for this there is the shopping for gifts for family and friends; for decorating the house and Christmas tree with lights. There is a lot of anxiety that goes along with this. The stores have their Christmas decorations and sales well in advance of the season, as early as Thanksgiving with even Christmas songs to beckon the shopper. There is the rush to get to the sales and always the worry that we may not have gotten the best deal or the best gift, or did we get all the gifts that we think that we would need. The amazing thing is that on Boxing Day – December 26, the day after we celebrate Christmas, the streets are lined with Christmas trees that have been thrown out. So what then is celebrated? Is it the Christmas Season, or is it just a day, December 25?

Festivities are great, for if we celebrate the birth of our children, why shouldn't we celebrate the birth of our Savior, but we should also keep in mind the reason for the season. The trend by the media is to promote the “holiday” aspect, so we may be bombarded with “happy holiday” greeting cards, which is probably their way of trying to negate “Christmas”. Christmas cards help us to reflect on the reason we celebrate. The scenes they promote usually reflect the nativity. At this season also, we tend to focus on Mary, the mother of Christ and that is as it should be, for when we go to visit the newborn of our friends, we do not negate the mother of the child. We pay great attention to the mother sometimes to the point of ignoring the father.

One Priest brought a Christmas card scene to life in my mind by describing a picture usually seen on Christmas cards: one in which the infant in the Creche with Mary his mother kneeling by His side, and St. Joseph standing over them with his staff. In looking at Jesus, Mary and Joseph, we see a bishop in the person of St. Joseph holding his crozier; we see in Mary, the Church who is the virginal spouse of Christ, whom the bishop is to protect, as symbolized by his crozier, and we see in Jesus, the divine life brought forth in the form of sacraments by Holy Mother Church (which is likened to Mary who is also a Holy Mother). This divine life is seen most pre-eminently in the Blessed Sacrament, which is substantially the very being of Jesus.

Joseph protected Mary and the Infant, guarding them from Herod during the Massacre of the innocents by taking them to safety into Egypt, and protected them through the long journey back to Nazareth after the death of Herod. Christ being the head of the Church, and Mary, His mother, Joseph is then recognized as the protector of the Universal Church. The Christmas Season with its Christmas cards and jollity should bring to our minds not only of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in the stable, but also of the three shepherds who came to adore the infant, the Angels Chorus and the three Kings who, led by a star came from a long distance to worship. January 6, the Feast celebrating these three Kings, is the day when most people consider taking down their Christmas trees.

We look forward to Christmas as a joyful and happy time of the year, but for some it may be a time of sorrow that brings back unhappy memories of the death of a loved one or absence of distant family or friends. It may be a time of loneliness for some, with no one with whom to share the joys of Christmas: the Christmas dinner or gifts. It is however, the best time of the year for those who enjoy those blessings to open their hearts and share with those who are suffering.

*Teresa Viechweg, ofs*



## ADVENT PRAYER BY ST. FRANCIS ABOUT MARY

On a website titled 'Dating God,' Friar Daniel Horan OFM, suggests St. Francis' 'A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary,' as an Advent reflection, because:

*in the first stanza of the prayer, Francis refers to Mary as the “Virgin made Church,” a title that is original to Francis. His theological insight here is that Mary is the first to “house Christ,” the first to be — in a sense, quite literally — part of the Body of Christ. Likewise, the Church — the Body of Christ, which is all the baptized — is called to house Christ today.*

*This theme is carried through the rest of the prayer, particularly in the second section in which Francis lists a number of titles that highlight this sense of housing, carrying and caring for Christ.*

and:

*For Francis, Mary is indeed the model of what it means to be a Christian, bearing the Word internally and bringing to birth Christ each and every day. As [Theresa of Avila] is remembered to have said, “Christ has no hands or feet but yours.” As the Body of Christ, as the faithful joyfully awaiting the coming of the Lord.*

This Advent, inspired by your blessed, loving and tender mother may you 'house, carry, and care for' Jesus within your self ... “joyfully awaiting the coming of the Lord.”

### A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary



*Hail, O Lady,  
Holy Queen,  
Mary, holy Mother of God,  
Who are the Virgin made Church,  
chosen by the most Holy Father in heaven  
whom he consecrated with His most holy  
beloved Son  
and with the Holy Spirit the Paraclete,  
in whom there was and is  
all fullness of grace and every good.*

*Hail His Palace!  
Hail His Tabernacle!  
Hail His Dwelling!  
Hail His Robe!  
Hail His Servant!  
Hail His Mother!*

*And hail all You holy virtues  
which are poured into the hearts of the faithful  
through the grace and enlightenment of the  
Holy Spirit,  
that from being unbelievers,  
You may make them faithful to God.*

**AMEN.**



*John Quigley, OFM, a preacher, artist, and writer, resides in Cincinnati. For over 30 years, he has also been heavily involved in social-justice work on the local, national, and international levels.*

<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/st-francis-and-the-incarnation/>

### **Motivated by Love**

All Christians agree that Jesus is divine, but we have differences of opinion as to why God became human. Many believe that God sent Jesus primarily as the repairman to correct the damage that had been caused by the original sin of humanity's first parents, Adam and Eve.

There is another tradition within Christianity going back to the Fathers of the Church and later most clearly expressed in Franciscan spirituality. It goes something like this: God became human because God is Love. God is Infinite Love; Infinite Love is free and infinitely greater than humans or our sin. Saying that our sin would force or cause God to become incarnate in order to repair our damage gives sin a power or influence over God that it does not merit.

... Christmas is about the physical birth of Love among us. It celebrates the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, whom we believe to be the God who is Love. Simply put, Christmas is a feast about Love and Love's decision to become part of the universe by becoming human. Scripture tells us that the human race has been made in the image of God, who is Love (Gn 1:27).

By understanding how we love, we can appreciate God's decision to become flesh, which is the deepest meaning of Christmas. All of us want to be united with those whom we love. We want to spend time together, to get to know one another. In deeply intimate loving, we want to become one together emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Love by its nature desires that we be one with our beloved...

### **Always Intended**

The Franciscan school of theology, particularly in the writings of Blessed John Duns Scotus (1265–1308), which are based on the mysticism of Saint Francis, the letters of Saint Paul, and the Gospel of Saint John, believes that God from all eternity freely chose to create and then to enter the universe out of love. Scotus taught that the universe was created so that God would have another way to be Love and to express love to another beloved...

...After the Christmas celebration at Greccio in 1223, the friars preached throughout Europe, using the crèche to bring home the Incarnation's impact. Their preaching led to customs that remain alive today. At Christmas-time, we find Christmas cribs or manger scenes in homes, churches, and even department store windows. We often domesticate and sanitize the impact of these religious scenes, turning them into small Disneylands with miniature buildings and cute animals. Saint Francis, on the other hand, was intent on having the people see, smell, and touch the amazing impact of God's Incarnation in our lives. Francis intended to show that God loves seriously and generously, that we are God's beloved. God stops at nothing to become one with us!



# Local Fraternity Bulletin Board



St. Joseph the Worker Fraternity, Port Elgin, ... are making a great attempt at trying to go paperless. Minister, Marzio Apolloni, puts their prayers, agenda and videos on a screen from his computer. Many of their fraternal records are now being kept in the Cloud! Every little bit helps to preserve the environment. Good job!



Sacred Heart Fraternity in Guelph held their fraternal elections on Sunday November 4, 2018. The new Council is; ( L to R) Jane Thatcher – Minister , Wendy Guilmette - Vice Minister, Mike Guilmette – Formation Director, Ann Forester – Treasurer and Mary Trent – Secretary. Congratulations to all.

Elections held at St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity in October 2018.  
 Congratulations to the new Council at St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity in Mississauga.



New Council: 2018

Minister: Danuta Juchniewicz  
 Treasurer: Anna Ivanescu  
 Vice-Minister Wojciech Szelag  
 Formation Director: Janina Kulik

Elections were held at St. Felix of Cantalice Fraternity on September 23, 2018 the Feast of Padre Pio. Front row from left: Teodora LaMadrid, Gerry Elises, Conchita Llacer, Guadalupe Lugo- Estok, Brother Alan and behind is Ricardo Ong, David Mitchell and Sergio Iturri. May God bless you.



A wonderful picture of Mount Alverno Fraternity was taken at their October 2018 meeting at the St. Francis Centre.



