Website: http://olirf-ofs.org/

December 2019

Volume 6, Issue 5

"See Christ, Be Christ, Share the Vision"

Maranatha, Immanuel! Come, Lord Jesus, God-with-us!

## Our Regional Prayer

Holy Virgin Mary, among all women born into the world, there is none like you. Daughter and Handmaid of the Most High, sovereign King, the heavenly Father, Mother of our most holy Lord Jesus Christ, Spouse of the Holy Spirit.

Pray for us with St. Michael the archangel and with all the powers of the heavens and with all the saints together with your most holy beloved Son, Lord and teacher.

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Thoughts about Christ-

mas from Ted

Regional Calendar

Maranatha, Immanuel!

May the Lord give you peace!

It's hard to believe that another calendar year is drawing to a close. On the other hand, a new liturgical year is just beginning.

One of the themes that we encounter every year is that of *Immanuel*. Personally, I don't believe that we appreciate this nearly as much as we should. This is also where Scripture and the Franciscan theological tradition really coincide.

During Advent, we read in Isaiah 7 about the Lord asking Ahaz, the king of Judah (the southern kingdom), to ask for a sign, regardless of how outlandish it might seem. Ahaz refuses, but a sign is given anyway. "The virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel" (verse 14).

The Gospel of Matthew picks up on this in the birth narrative (1:18-25). Here, however, the name Immanuel (or Emmanuel) is actually defined for us in the text: "God is with us" (verse 23).

Keeping in mind that the Gospel of Matthew was written several decades

after Jesus' death and resurrection, it is interesting to note that the definition is still in the present tense. God IS with us.

Why is this important? Allow me to digress for a moment.

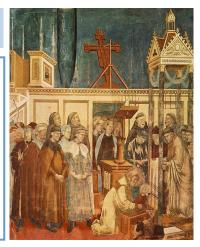
St. Thomas Aquinas, the great Dominican theologian and a contemporary of St. Bonaventure, emphasized the salvific reason for the Incarnation. God became a man in order to save us from our sins. This is, of course, true enough.

Now back to the point. The great Franciscan theologian Bl. John Duns Scotus, believed that this was too limited. In short, if God created us out of love and in His own image and likeness (see Genesis 1& 2 and John 1), there must have been a "prototype" for our likeness, that is our physical bodies. That prototype was God the Son. This

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# What We Have Promised to Live . . .

"For the man saw a little child lying lifeless in the manger and he saw the holy man of God approach the child and waken him from a deep sleep. Nor is this vision unfitting, since in the hearts of many the child Jesus has been given over to oblivion. Now he is awakened and impressed on their loving memory by His own grace through His holy servant Francis (Francis of Assisi, Volume I, The Saint, p. 256)."



Page 2 Our Lady of Indiana



REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Barb Braley, OFS: Regional Minister Cyndi Pilot OFS: Regional Vice-Minister Sharon Roberts: OFS: Regional Secretary Susan Knight, OFS: Regional Treasurer Tim Short, OFS: Regional Formation Director

Regional Councilors: Linda Grady, OFS, Richard Cain, OFS, Erin Gigli, OFS

> JPIC: Jack Hill, OFS, Regional Spiritual Assistants: Sr. Agnes Marie Regan, OSF Kathleen White, OFS

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means that the Incarnation of the Son was intended FROM THE BE-GINNING! Our sinfulness would have made the Incarnation an after-thought rather than part of the eternal plan. God actually wants to be with us!

Do you remember in Genesis 3, after the man and the woman had eaten the fruit of the forbidden tree, the writer makes mention of God coming to the garden AS USU-AL in order to be with them? That's not a mistake. It's why we were created: to be with God, and God wants it that way.

I don't know about you, but this absolutely stuns me every time I think about it. There isn't much that will bring me to tears, but this does!

As you prepare for Christmas, I invite you to spend some time with this. Gaze on it (look deeply), consider it (think deeply about it), contemplate it (offer it to God in the depth of your heart and soul), and

then imitate it. Be sacramental: be Christ in and for the world.

Maranatha, Immanuel! Come, Lord Jesus, God-with-us!

Barb

Third Sunday of Advent

elated expectation like feathery trails along shivery skin just tickled pink Gaudete

Sr. Felicity Dorsett, OSF





"Standing before the Christmas crèche, we are reminded of the time when we were children, eagerly waiting to set it up. These memories make us all the more conscious of the precious gift received from those who passed on the faith to us. At the same time, they remind us of our duty to share this same experience with our children and our grandchildren. It does not matter how the nativity scene is arranged: it can always be the same or it can change from year to year. What matters is that it speaks to our lives. Wherever it is, and whatever form it takes, the Christmas crèche speaks to us of the love of God, the God who became a child in order to make us know how close he is to every man, woman and child, regardless of their condition.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Christmas crèche is part of the precious yet demanding process of passing on the faith. Beginning in childhood, and at every stage of our lives, it teaches us to contemplate Jesus, to experience God's love for us, to feel and believe that God is with us and that we are with him, his children, brothers and sisters all, thanks to that Child who is the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin Mary. And to realize that in that knowledge we find true happiness. Like Saint Francis, may we open our hearts to this simple grace, so that from our wonderment a humble prayer may arise: a prayer of thanksgiving to God, who wished to share with us his all, and thus never to leave us alone (Apostolic Letter, ADMIRABLI SIGNUM of Pope Francis, December 1, 2019, given in Greccio, at the Shrine of the Nativity)."

Barb Braley, OFS, Regional Minister of Our Lady of Indiana Regional Fraternity offers these notes from the National Chapter in Corpus Christi.

**Theme.** "See Christ, Be Christ, Share the Vision". This is the essence of fraternity life. We see Christ in the Eucharist and in each other, then we go out and invite others to share in our Franciscan way of life (Franciscan Vocation Petition, Wednesday morning).

JPIC. How do we "know" Jesus? When he doesn't fit our image of him, do we take offense at him? We all have biases: they can either be for or against someone or something; they can be conscious or unconscious. However, we must be on guard against making snap judgments. Snap judgments mean that we seek assurance rather than engaging in research. How can we change? Stop and reflect. Try to see the opposite point of view. Be prudont!

**National Council of Spiritual As**sistants. The Spiritual Assistants Handbook is being revised. Spiritual Assistants are there to assist, not to direct, and to link the OFS to the First Order/TOR. The goal is to deepen our insight into Franciscan spirituality. It was suggested that maybe Regional representatives and Provincial representatives could attend each other's chapters as observers. It was also emphasized that every Secular Franciscan should be well acquainted with Lumen Gentium, especially chapters 4 and 5 (see Vatican website, archives tab).

**YouFra.** Quote: Youth and young adults are not a problem to be solved. Listen to them willingly, even though they most likely will speak "without filters." In their lives of faith, there are three realities: per-

sonal, shared (value system to make sense of life), and formal (institutional with laws, rituals, etc.). Regarding religious education, the school instructional model is a failure, as studies have shown. The *Emmaus model* is preferred as it is a model that builds relationships within education. The needs of youth and young adults are 1) to develop relationships; 2) to develop a meaning of work; and, 3) to develop a spiritual life.

**CIOFS.** There will be a Chapter of Elections in November 2020. Prayers were solicited.

**Fair Share.** There will be no increase for the National Fraternity in 2020.

**National Statutes**. They are being revised for greater clarity. The target for completion is the National Chapter in 2021, which will be a Chapter of Elections.

**Formation.** The formation program is being completely overhauled. The FUN manual will be for resource use only. The Franciscan Journey book will be gone. It will be replaced by two books: one for Orientation/Inquiry, and the other for Candidacy. These will be more user friendly with clear language. The authors of the FUN manual have been contacted to rewrite their chapters with a given set of guidelines. There will be a consistent format with 8 letter-sized pages per chapter. There will be the main text plus sidebars when needed and pictures to make the books more approachable. The purpose is to both introduce and initiate those who aspire to enter the Order. The focus areas are prayer, Scripture, the Catholic faith, Franciscan sources, the Rule, and the Constitutions. Each chapter will contain suggestions for practical applications of what was addressed in the chapter. This will be the first initial formation program written by Secular Franciscans for aspiring

Secular Franciscans. Fr. Lester Bach, who has written so many of our formation books over the years, knows of this and has given his blessing to the project. This is also targeted for completion by the National Chapter in 2021.

**Canonical establishment.** The canonical establishment of a new regional fraternity in Guam is scheduled for January 4, 2020.

**Transfer forms**. There are new transfer forms available on the National website. Ministers, please make sure to use the new ones which are dated October 19 of this year. Much of the language in the instructions has been clarified.

The weather was fairly warm and humid. The food was fabulous! To add to the adventure of the trip, I flew out of Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport for home just 2-1/2 hours before the tornado hit. Most important, I met some absolutely marvelous Franciscan brothers and sisters! I look forward to National Chapter in Detroit next year.

Barb



Delegates attending the 2019 Chapter meeting in Corpus Christi fill drawstring backpacks with toiletry items for migrants in Texas

## Trudging Ninety Seven Steps to the top . . . to meet God Leaping Down in Love

As my pilgrim companions and I stand at the bottom of this stairway, there are only 97 steps separating us from the Sanctuary of Greccio the site of St. Francis' reenactment of Christmas. Everyone starts out with great enthusiasm but, sooner or later, everyone just stops to catch their breath and to begin enjoying the beautiful Rieti Valley which stretches out below into the distance encompassing also the sanctuaries of La Foresta, Fonte Columbo, and Poggio Bustone — all very significant in the life of St. Francis and the early Franciscan family. The noise, hustle, bustle, and graffiti of Rome is now receding into memory and we are now ready to begin a very special time and place of silence and prayer in readiness for Assisi.

Before visiting the sanctuary itself and re-telling the stories of Francis and his brothers as the graced events that still echo in its portals, we celebrate Christmas in a lovely chapel. Yes, Christmas! Greccio is one of the sanctuaries where permission has been granted to celebrate Mass using the prayers, readings, and texts of the Feast of the Incarnation with all pilgrims groups 365 days of the year. And surely, like the celebration of Francis and his brothers, our voices echo across the valley with the enthusiastic and joyful hymns and canticles of Christmas "O come, all you faithful . . . " It becomes one of those occasions when time stands still and pilgrims can forget heartaches, pains, noise, and all the bothersome events of life. Like December 25, for a short but graced period of time, we joyfully praise God for the gift-beyondmeasure of his Son, Jesus — God become incarnate, God become one of us, God right here before our eyes in the gift of the Eucharist in the hands of our priest!



And what about those stairs --- all 97 of them? No longer in our thoughts as we ponder the immensity of what God is doing before our very eyes. We celebrate that our God leapt down from Heaven and emptied himself out of love for us. The two distances cannot be compared, but it was this mystery of *Incarnatio* that filled and melted the heart of Francis and caused him to put before the eyes of the residents of Greccio (and others as well) that they might love the One who loved them so much! Or as Bonaventure wrote, "Francis' example, when considered by the world, is capable of arousing the hearts of those how are sluggish in the faith of Christ".

So we have ascended those ninety seven steps to meet in the Eucharist the "almighty, most holy, most high and supreme good, who alone is good" and who has descended to

meet us on that lovely mountain. Or as a Christmas antiphon so poetically says, who "leapt down from Heaven" with overwhelming love. Jesus is still doing that!

Might we 21st Century Franciscans ponder how our enthusiastic and joyful celebration of Christmas this year might be a part of our

call to "rebuild" by arousing hearts



to a deeper love and faith in Jesus? As Franciscans we believe that this celebrated moment of "the Word became flesh" is all a part of God's original plan and not just an afterthought. God wanted to be the one who "pitched His tent among us". Let us allow ourselves to help Him rebuild!

One of my favorite authors, Fr. Murray Bodo, OFM, wrote the following: "The merit of Francis has not been in inventing a Christmas setting that all can reproduce, but in having shown to all the kind of heart one must have to welcome the Child Jesus and thereby welcome God's great and tender love (*In the Footsteps of Francis and Clare, p. 152*)."

As we pray our way through Advent, perhaps our blessed mantra can only be, "Come, Lord Jesus, come".

I wish each and every one of you a blessed and grace-filled Christmas. May it be filled to overflowing with all the gifts with which God wishes to bless you!



Cave at Sanctuary of Greccio

# Parable from Puff and Sometimes Squeaky: Christine Popiela, OFS

Twas the week before Christmas And all through the house, All the people were stirring Could there be a mouse? Puff and Squeaky were waiting At the top of the stairs, Too see what was causing All that noise down there. At last the door opened And to their surprise, Dad brought in boxes Of every size. One, two boxes and counting There were about seven, The cats leapt upon them They were in sniff heaven! What was in the boxes? It wasn't hard to tell, Somehow these boxes

Had a familiar smell.

Out came the light And ornaments too, Some garland and a star But they were not through. Puff knew what was coming He waited with glee, At last they unpacked it A tall Christmas tree. Squeaky looked things over She had seen this before, Time for a nap This whole thing's a bore. Puff sat quietly He was a good boy, Then came his chance to Play with each hanging toy. All during the season You will find him each day, Curled up under the tree Peacefully sleeping away.



We have all heard the message of this rhyme many times before. Dickens tells us the story of Ebenezer Scrooge and his midnight visitors. The Grinch steals the Who's roast beast in order to end their celebration. Then there are the countless stories of the (fill in the blank) who tries to save Christmas. And I'm sure we all know someone with the humbug attitude. In some ways this isn't too awful. As I write this Alsip has all their Christmas stuff out already. An ad in the Times offers a delivery job to make extra money to pay those after holiday credit card bills. Then when you think you've seen it all, I saw an ad for an adult Advent calendar which features a different alcoholic beverage for each day of Advent. With houses competing for decorations that can be seen by satellites, Black Friday sales, endless Christmas music, Santa Claus and the toy every kid wants, the cleaning, cooking, shop-

ping, etc., how can you blame Squeaky for walking away from it all?

Puff takes on a different attitude. He greets the season with joy. He looks forward to playing with ornaments and a neat sleeping place. Each year is fresh to him. So it is with the Church. Advent brings in a new Church Year. Advent, remembering a time of anticipation, of waiting. After Adam and Eve break faith with God, God tells them that since they did not trust Him, that they can do it their way. Looking out at the world beyond the garden, they must have regretted their choice. God stations an angel to prevent their return, but all is not lost. God tells them that someday He will send someone to redeem them. Years pass, God renews His promise with Abraham, Jacob, and Moses. More years pass. Have you ever had the experience of wanting something really bad? A job offer? A child? Healing? You waited and waited. Sometimes you thought you would never get it. Then it happens! It all comes true! We know the

story of the Visitation, but it doesn't say what happened after the angel left. I don't know what Mary did, but I think a great big YES or a happy dance would be in order. Now it was really going to happen! For this is the true meaning of Christmas. There is more to Christmas then dropping a few dollars into a kettle, or taking a tag off the gift tree. More than being with friends and family. Christmas celebrates a God who loves us, A God who keeps His promises, a God who never, no matter what, abandons us. A God who would do anything to bring us back to His garden. Francis wanted to show the people who God is. He wanted to show that love. He brought together the first recreation of the Nativity. He wanted to show us that God is not some high, powerful, far away god. Here is a God we can see and touch and hear. Here is a God who loves so much that he becomes one of us.

So this Christmas, let's be like Puff, as we decorate and make pierogi, do it with joy, remembering: the star that points the way to Jesus, the lights, Jesus is the light in our worlds' darkness, gifts, that the real gift is Jesus. And as we with Puff, settle peacefully under this tree, we know that soon we will be standing under another tree that will complete the promise.

Merry Christmas to all And to all a good night.

Christine Popiela OFS



# News and Views from Around the Region

**ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS FRATERNITY** celebrated the Profession of six candidates on October 26, 2019, in the lovely "Old Church" in St. John, IN. Professed were Deacon Jim McFarland, OFS, Chris Bouska, OFS, Joe Suppes, OFS, Kate DeRolf, OFS, Barbara Harris, OFS, and Ron Harris, OFS.



Fraternity Minister, Ted Boczkowksii, OFs, is also pictured above to the left of those professing.



"The holy man of God comes finding all things prepared he saw them and was glad. Indeed, the manger is prepared, the hay is carried in, and the ox and the ass are led to the spot. There simplicity is given a place of honor, poverty is exalted, humility is commended, and out of Greccio is made a new Bethlehem (Francis of Assisi: The Saint, Volume 1, p. 255)."

## SHARON MARMALEJO,

**OFS** from Our Lady of Lourdes offered us these beautiful reflective words from St. Paul of the Cross: "Let all creation help you to praise God. Give yourself the rest you need. When you are walking alone, listen to the sermon preached to you by the flowers, the trees, the shrubs, the sky, the sun and the whole world. Notice how they preach to you a sermon full of love, of praise of God, and how they invite you to proclaim the greatness of the one who has given them being."

LITTLE PORTION FRA-TERNITY: Congratulations to the newly elected Council: Minisster: Diane Watson, OFS; Vice-Minister: Alan Sutliffe, OFS; Treasurer: Dan Lawson, OFS; Formation: Lisa Cook, OFS; Councilors: Laura Ahlborn, OFS, and Bill Jannausch, OFS. May the Holy Spirit guide your ministry and give you many blessings!

**ST. ROSE OF VITERBO** held election of a new Council on Sunday November 17, 2029.

Pictured are: Back row: Minister, Carolos Montanez, OFS; Treasurer, Linda Gorrell, OFS, Regional Councilor, Rich Cain, OFS. Front row: Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Cyprian Uline, OFM Conv; Secretary, Mary Jane Coker, OFS; Vice-Minister, Antonietta Antonio, OFS; First Councilor, Carmen Montanez, OFS; Second Councilor, Martha Dowell, OFS.





# Sister Death has called home . . .

May our Brothers and Sisters who have passed to our Heavenly Father's hands rest in peace, namely:

All deceased Franciscans from Our Lady of Indiana Regional Fraternity and all Franciscans, OFM, OFM Conv., OFM Cap, Poor Clares, and TORs and SFOs.

Miriam Martin, daughter of Tim and Diane Martin, OFS, of Immaculate Conception Fraternity



#### SACRED HEART FRATERNTIY: will

be sponsoring their annual Christmas caroling at the Meridian Street Nursing and Convalescent Center on December 15. Afterward, the fraternity will enjoy some fellowship at the Madison Grill.

## ST. ANTHONY FRATERNITY On

Sunday, December 15, 2019, St. Antho-

ny Fraternity celebrated the permanent profession of Jo Aaron and Mathew Fisher during the Gaudete Sunday Mass at St. Mary Catholic Church, Muncie. The Mass was concelebrated by Fr.



Matthew Kalu, who delivered the homily, and Fr. Andrew Dudzinski, who performed the Rite and served as Ecclesial Witness. Minister Bill Fink, OFS, received their professions. Both Jo and Matt are joyfully committed and eager to live their Franciscan vocations.

# Francis Preaching the WORD in the Incarnation Reflection by Ted Boczkowski, OFS

My home phone has voice caller ID which allows me to screen phone calls without looking at the phone. Due to a programming quirk, a phone number may be announced as invalid, meaning physically incapacitated, rather than inVALid, not valid or genuine. The same word has different definitions depending upon its usage in context.

The same is true of THE WORD. Prior to St. Francis, the general view was in the context of the Resurrection, focusing primarily on the afterlife. The view was that THE WORD, Jesus, was sacrificed on the cross in atonement for our sins and as a result we would be eligible for eternal life. Of course, all of this was true and thus the Easter season was foremost in the mind of the Church. The mindset was such that Christians lived their lives solely focusing on eternal salvatión.

Then along came St. Francis, who, while not minimizing the Resurrection, preached THE WORD in the context of the Incarnation. Giving thanks for creation in the womb and the world and all its inhabitants, he celebrated the Incarnation each mo-

ment of his life. He taught those that he and his followers were in contact with should show gratitude for what they have through creation. They should enjoy and care for their environment, their fellow human beings and their Creator. As a result, the Franciscan Spirituality was born with its basis founded in creation and love.

We, as Franciscans, continue to follow this spirituality in our everyday lives, some days better than others. Our success is not measured by ourselves but by who we encounter, our Seraphic Father and, of course, our Creator. And, For the record, THE WORD and St. Francis ministered to the invalids and inVALIDs, and so should we.



"The night is lit up like day, delighting both man and beat. The people arrive, ecstatic at

this new mystery of new joy. The forest amplifies the cries and the boulders echo back the joyful crow. The brothers sing, giving God due praise, and the whole night abound with jubilation. The holy man of God stands before the manger, filled with heartfelt sighs, contrite in his piety, and overcome with wondrous joy (Francis of Assisi: The Saint, Volume 1, P. 255–256)."



"Francis used to recall with regular meditation the words of Christ and recollect His deeds with most attentive perception. Indeed, so thoroughly did the humility of the Incarnation and the charity of the Passion occupy his memory that he scarcely wanted to think of anything else (Francis of Assisi: The Saint, Volume One, p254)."



Assisi Pilgrimage 2020

May 18-28, 2020

Number Pilgrims Registered (12.9.19): 32

Maximum Number: 35

God is good — what a wonderful pilgrim family He has called together!

## Our Lady of Indiana Secular Franciscan Regional Fraternity



National Website: www.secularfranciscansusa.org

International Website: www.ciofs.org

To join OUR LADY OF INDIANA list-serve send a blank email to:

OLI-Region-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
Also check us out on Facebook

"We, the Secular Franciscans of Our Lady of Indiana Regional Fraternity, are called by virtue of Baptism and Confirmation to holiness. We are committed by our Profession to living the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in our time according to the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi for the rebuilding of the Church.

With the help of Mary our Advocate, Protectress, and Patroness, we will foster prayer, vital fraternities, and communication. We will provide direction, support and resources to local fraternities for understanding and implementing the Rule, the General Constitutions, and the National Statutes of the Secular Franciscan Order, and our Regional Fraternity Guidelines."

## Dates to Remember

February 8, 2020: Regional Executive Council, Huntington

March 14, 2020: Workshop for Formation Directors and Teams: Kokomo

April 4, 2020: Chapter of Mats (moved up due to Easter weekend)

April 28: Bl. Luchesius and Buanadonna, First Members of 3rd Order

June 13, 2020: Regional Executive Council, Huntington

June 13: St. Anthony of Padua July 15: St. Bonaventure

August 8, 2020: UNITY DAY for Our Lady of Indiana

August 2: Our Lady of the Angels, Portiuncula August 11:St. Clare of Assisi

September 17, 2020: Feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis

October 10, 2020: Regional Executive Council, Huntington

October 3: Transitus of Our Holy Father St. Francis October 4: Feast of Our Holy Father St. Francis

November 14, 2020: Fall Chapter of Mats, Kokomo

November 17, 2020: Feast of Str. Elizabeth of Hungary



August 18—22, 2021: Sheraton Grand Hotel, Phoenix AZ. Start saving your pennies . . . and red letter your calendars!

100th Anniversary of First "Q" in 1920 800th Anniversary of Rule of 1221



Suggested Franciscan Reading Materials for Your Advent and Christmas reflection:

#### READING MATERIAL

"The Manger Made in Celebration of the Lord's Birthday" (Francis of Assisi: The Saint, pp. 254—257).

"The Feast of Feasts", (In the Footsteps of Francis and Clare, Roch Niemier, OFM, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2006, pp. 147—153).

"How Francis wanted a Special Law Promulgated by the Emperor Regarding Christmas" (Francis of Assisi: The Prophet, Volume 3, p. 363).'

#### **ONLINE SOURCES:**

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

http://www.slr-ofs.org/ uploads/9/5/5/8/95584600/ incarnation\_in\_franciscan\_spirituality\_ -\_scotus.pdf https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-francis-and-the-crib/

https:// www.catholiceducation.org/en/ culture/catholic-contributions/st -francis-and-the-christmascreche.html

https://blog.franciscanmedia.org/ franciscan-spirit/the-joys-ofsilence

For other ideas: check "Franciscan Media" and "TAU Publications"