

Welcome to our Winter Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2024

St. MARGARET OF CORTONA REGION

UP TO NOW NEWSLETTER

**Covering the District of Columbia,
all of Maryland,
Southern Pennsylvania, all of Virginia,
one fraternity in Delaware,
one fraternity in West Virginia,**

**“Let us begin again, for up to now we have
done nothing” ~ St. Francis of Assisi**

2024 ~ Issue 4

Greetings and peace be with my sisters and brothers.

As I indicated in the last edition of our newsletter, we were preparing for a couple of significant events that I will be reporting on this time around. First, is our regional Chapter of Mats and the other is the National Chapter of Ministers, both held during September of 2024.



The Chapter of Mats was held on September 6-8, 2024, in Adamstown, Maryland, at the Claggett Retreat and Conference Center. It was attended by approximately 115 of our members from across the region who provided valuable input during the small group discussions that were held during each of the three sessions conducted that weekend around the theme of *Where We've Been, Where We Are, and Where We Are Going* as an Order in the Catholic Church. The Regional Council and I can't say enough about both how grateful we are and important the member participation and information provided was during the event. It represents a bottom-up approach to the data collection and analysis for all of us as servant leaders to better understand ourselves and what we should do to prepare for the future to keep our Order healthy and growing.

A summary presentation was provided by our Regional Vice Minister, Michael Oliver, and me, to the assembled participants. This summary presentation along with the video of the session was sent out to the local fraternity ministers for distribution to our members. The links to both are located below and if you haven't already read the presentation and watched the video, I encourage you to do so.

Summary Presentation:

[Chapter of Mats Summary Discussion.pdf](#)

Video of Presentation:

[Servant-Leader Summary](#)

("Regional Minister's Message" continued on page 2)

Regional Minister:

Gary Burton, OFS

Vice Minister:

Michael Oliver, OFS

Secretary:

Maria Martinez, OFS

Treasurer:

Randy Bender, OFS

Formation Director:

Rita Colleran, OFS

Area Councilor (N. MD/S. PA):

Michael Huether, OFS

Area Councilor (MD/DE):

Tobias Harkleroad, OFS

Area Councilor (Metro-DC):

Mary Tchida Badjo, OFS

Area Councilors (VA):

Sita Chakrawarti, OFS

Area Councilors (VA):

Jamie Elia, OFS

Regional Interfaith/

Ecumenical Chair

Mike Huether, OFS

Regional Spiritual Assistants:

Fr. Russel Murray, OFM

Br. Michael Meza, OFM Cap

Anne Mulqueen, OFS

(OFM Conv. delegated)

Appointed Council Positions

Regional JPIC Chair:

Pat Boye, OFS

Regional Multi-Cultural Chair:

Sita Chakrawarti, OFS

Regional Youth and Young

Adult Commission Chair:

Carl Stacy, OFS

Appointed

Non-Council Positions

Vocations/Archivist/

Regional Newsletter Editor:

Bob Longo, OFS

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Essentially, the summary revealed that we must continue our efforts on following Francis' path in caring for creation, committing to simplicity, pursuing peace through dialogue, helping the poor and marginalized, and supporting each other as part of our founder's mission, intention, and purpose. As part of the follow-up to the Chapter of Mats, the Regional Council published an initial report to the National Council as a condition of receiving a John Duns Scotus grant to help us with the costs associated with providing multi-lingual support to our members who attended the event. The initial report can be viewed at the link below.

[Duns Scotus Grant Report final \(1\).pdf](#)

The next step is to provide the summary results to the local fraternity ministers at the Chapter of Ministers to be held November 9-10, 2024, along with the Regional Council's additional analysis and recommendations for going forward with the information provided by our members to address the issues identified during the Chapter of Mats. I will report on this follow-up analysis and reporting in the next edition of our newsletter.



The other event of importance was the National Chapter of Minister that I attended as your minister and was held in Phoenix, Arizona, September 17-21, 2024. Approximately 30 regional ministers from across the United States were in attendance, along with the National Executive Council, National Committee Coordinators, and observers from various regions. Like our own regional ministers' chapter, it is an

annual event that allows the ministers from across the country to meet, review, provide input, and vote on important national documents like the annual budget. Below is a link to the opening address made by our National Minister, Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS on the state of the Order in the United States, along with the homily given by Fr. Marek Stybor, OFM Conv. from the opening Mass of the Chapter. This link also contains other links to some important presentations that were given on Servant Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Resolution, and JPIC.

<https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/2024-national-fraternity-chapter/>

One of the more important guidelines that were reviewed and approved was on the topic of Records Retention by fraternities. The records were identified and their corresponding retention schedule established (Please see the link below.)

[Records Retention Schedule](#)

I will share all of this and other information with your ministers at our upcoming Chapter Ministers, November 9-10, who will in turn share with you.

These next three months will have several important holidays for us, and our family and friends. While I will send out best wishes to you from the regional council as the holidays occur, I pray that God continue to bless and protect you and your loved ones each day and as you prepare for the coming holidays.

Pax,
Gary Burton, OFS
Minister
Saint Margaret of Cortona Region

Around the Region

New Inquirers

St. Mary of the Angels

Bette O'Connor and Marilyn Taylor

Congratulations to our Newest Candidates



St. Clare (Delaware)

L-R Sandy Paulen, OFS, Diane Zell, OFS,

Mary-Anna Harvie, OFS, Mary McKeon, OFS



Our Lady of the Rosary

**L-R Minister: Peg Crews, OFS
Teresa Ndunge Muli, OFS**

**St. Conrad
Annapolis**

Dianne Beaven, OFS



**St. Thomas More Arlington
Kelly Dooley, OFS**

Newly Professed



Pope St. John XXIII

**L-R Genevieve Di Ulio, OFS
Jean Schaefer, OFS**

Sonia Balbon, OFS



**Sacred Heart
Profession**

**L-R
Christopher
Haney, OFS**

**Hyeonwoo
Choi, OFS**



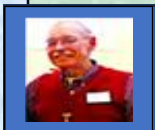
Losses in the Secular Franciscan Family



Joyce Fay, OFS, a member of St. Joseph York Fraternity passed away on June 26, 2024. Joyce professed into the Franciscan Order on August 17, 2016



Camelina Adinolfi, OFS, of St. Joseph York Fraternity passed away on May 21, 2024. Camelina professed on March 20, 2009



Joseph Harkins, OFS, of Holy Family Fraternity passed away on August 26, 2024. Joseph professed on June 17, 2000.



Richard McCarthy, OFS, a member of St. Clare (Delaware) Fraternity passed away on September 17, 2024. Richard was professed on April 15, 1984



David Littleton, OFS, a member of Pope St. John XXIII Fraternity passed away on September 18, 2024. David was professed on September 17, 2016.



Linda Ann Sciallo, OFS a member of St. Clare (Delaware) Fraternity passed away on October 3, 2024. Linda was professed on September 16, 1988.



Evenly Jones was an affiliate of St. Conrad Annapolis Fraternity passed away on October 9, 2024

Prayer for the Deceased

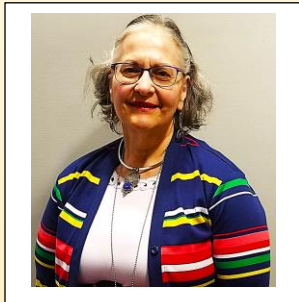
Remember, Lord,
those who have died and
have gone before us marked
with the sign of faith,
especially those for whom
we now pray. May these
and all who sleep in Christ
find in Your presence light,
happiness and peace.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

www.ShareCatholic.com

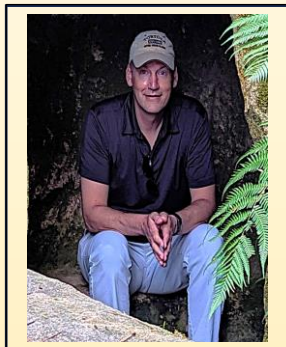


Introducing the 2024-2027 Chair Coordinators for the St. Margaret of Cortona Region

Multi-Cultural Chair
Sita Chakrawarti, OFS



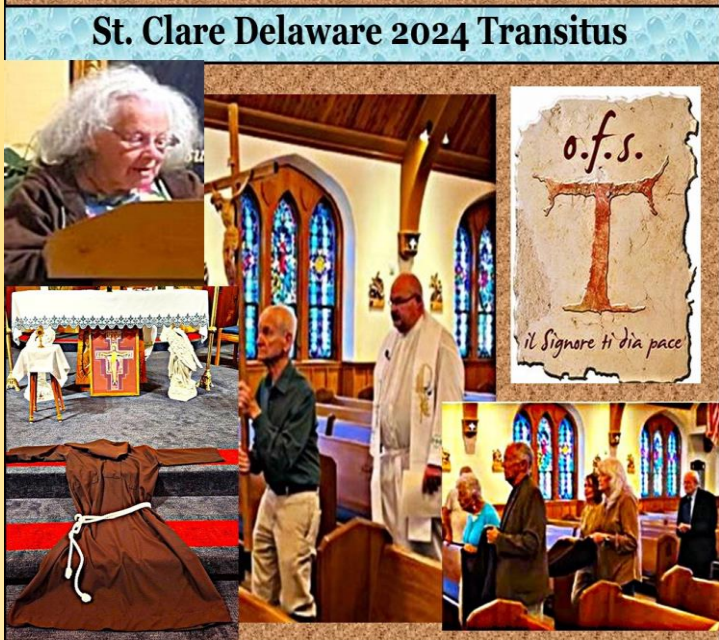
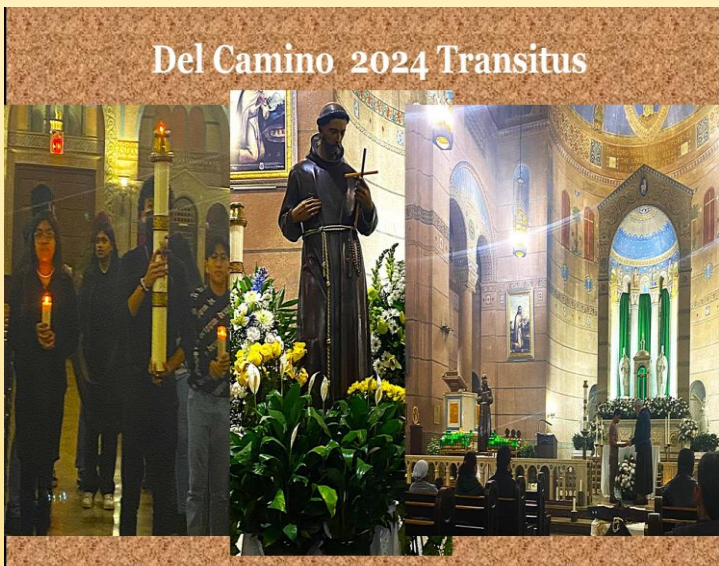
Youth and Young Adult Commission Chair
Carl Stacy, OFS



Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Chair
Patricia (Pat) Boye, OFS



Transitus 2024



Chapter of Mats 2024





Reflection

SIXTY-FOUR YEARS OF ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE

November, 2024

GOOD DAY, MY FRANCISCAN SISTERS AND BROTHERS!

I bring you this article from the Vatican News written by Francesca Merlo who addressed Father Avelino Gonzalez-Ferrer of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. In it, Father Avelino describes the importance of ecumenism and the dicastery's journey as it celebrates sixty-four years since its foundation. It is entitled, "60(64) Years of ecumenical dialogue: from conflict to communion".

On June 5, 1960, Pope Saint John XXIII established what was then called the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. The foundations of the Secretariat later, renamed the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), were intimately bound up with the history of the Second Vatican Council which began two years after the start of the PCPCU.

Father Avelino is part of the PCPCU's dialogue with the Reformed churches. He explained that one of the most significant early steps taken to promote Christian unity was to invite non-Catholic observers from around the world to take part in Vatican II.

In an interview with Sister Bernadette Reis, Father Avelino says that the PCPCU has been reaching out to other Christians from the very beginning. That hospitality has been "reciprocated" by various Christian communities according to Father Avelino.

Other initiatives of the Pontifical Council include the 1993 publication of the Ecumenical Directory. This directory, says Father, "was very important in laying out the ground rules for all of the Episcopal conferences in the world" as well as for "promulgating the Church's vision for ecumenical engagement and dialogue".

Father Avelino also recalled the celebrated the 25th anniversary of St. John Paul II's encyclical, "Ut Unum Sint", which, he said, established that ecumenism is part of the nature of the Church. "The Catholic Church is ecumenical by nature; that is to say, moving towards unity, which is what Christ prayed for, of course" said Father Avelino.

The PCPCU has also been engaging with the World Council of Churches. Father Avelino explains that although "the Catholic Church is not a member of the World Council of Churches", it is part of the Faith and Order Commission. "Those careful engagements were all worked out in a way that today there's a very fruitful and productive relationship", said Father. He then recalled Pope Francis's trip to Geneva for the anniversary of the World Council of Churches where "everybody looked at the Pope as a point of reference with regards to Christian unity". This is something he says we have seen recently with the COVID pandemic, when Pope Francis gathered virtually with leaders of other denominations to pray the Lord's Prayer. "All of that is a by-product in the fruits of these past 64 years of ecumenical dialogue" said Father Avelino.

Speaking of some of these themes of that ecumenical dialogue, Father Avelino explains that there is "a lot of pain in remembering all of the events that led to the split and the Reformation". He notes that we each go and approach that historic event "with our own

baggage and our own perspective." He said that there is a "purification of memory" in coming together to hear each other's different perspectives "and that purification of memory leads to a reconciliation and that reconciliation is the bridge to unity. That's what the Gospel teaches us" said Father. He explains that this re-reading of history becomes theological, and "hits on something contemporary. So, it isn't just kind of looking at the past, but also looking at what is a contemporary theological that's important to both of us, in a dialogue partnership, that we can then, through that historical content, kind of look and approach that and try to resolve the theological issue."

Fr. Avelino said the ecumenical movement faces different challenges at different times. He believes one of the greatest challenges of today is that the idea of unity is no longer the same vision of full visible communion, which was present in past decades. Father said there is always a desire for deeper relationships.

In the last 64 years, what Father Avelino sees is that the Christian community has gone "from conflict to communion". That was the same name given to a document that came out of the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran communion on the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. "This road map from conflict to communion through the art of dialogue is something that the world needs desperately because no one is talking to each other", whether that be in the family, in politics, or even between nations said Father Avelino.

He concludes by stressing "we are sitting on a treasure trove of information and history" and through the art of dialogue "the whole of humanity can benefit from it".

To all my Franciscan sisters and brothers: HAVE A HAPPY THANKSGIVING, A MERRY AND JOYOUS CHRISTMAS, and A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR!

**Mike Huether
Ecumenical/Interfaith Chair**



*Muslim
Jewish
Christian*

Prayer for Peace.

*O God, you are the source of life and peace.
Praised be your name forever.
We know it is you who turn
our minds to thoughts of peace.
Hear our prayer in this time of crisis.*



"What do you want Me to do for you?"

In Mark's tenth gospel narrative, we have heard the story of Bartimaeus often. Bartimaeus, the blind man, hears that Jesus is coming to his town. He has probably heard about Him - His teachings, His healings, His compassion, His kindness, His charism... He has heard, and he most likely wondered if this Jesus would help him. He calls out to Jesus, and despite efforts to stifle his calls, Jesus hears him, stops along His way, and says, "Call him." Then comes Jesus' question, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

Imagine the scene...put yourself in the shoes of Bartimaeus. Here he is, standing in front of the one who is so powerful that He could give him his sight. He believes Jesus can help him...Will He? Will he receive his sight, and see all he has never been able to see - faces of loved ones and friends, the sky, trees, all of creation, and last but not least, Jesus Himself?

He may have previously thought he would never be able to see these things, but Jesus has called HIM. He may never have this opportunity again, thereby losing the chance that the darkness of his life would be gone forever. So he spoke, "Master, I want to see."

And it happened! He received his sight...Such joy must have been his!!

We can so easily place ourselves in this story as being Bartimaeus, the one, unworthy as we are, who calls out to Jesus to be heard, to come closer, to be welcomed. It is a similar scenario as the one in which Jesus is at the door of our hearts, waiting for us to open the door for Him. He is present with us. Will we open that door to Him as Bartimaeus did, and when we do, for what will we ask?

All of us are on our own spiritual journeys, striving to find Jesus in our world, to be so close to Him that we confidently ask Him for our greatest needs. Think back on your own journey...How did that journey spark, where has it taken you, are you going where you expected, have you lost your way along your path, do you need to clear the path for future challenges?

When you are face to face with Jesus, what do you want Him to "do for you?" Maybe like Bartimaeus, it will be relief from one of the crosses you bear in this life. But perhaps, when you experience the loving presence of Jesus, you ask for something much greater - to follow Him more closely, to be more Christ-like in all you say and do, to see His image in all you meet, to surrender to His divine Will, to live the peace prayer of St. Francis - being the one who loves in the midst of hatred, the one who pardons injury, the one who brings faith to those who doubt, the one who shares hope with those who despair, the shining light in the darkness of the world.

Then, when we receive this gift, let us recognize it, and hear the words Jesus says to us, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." -By Joan Kane, Formation Director -Little Flower Fraternity

FORMATION

2025 A Year to Care for Each Other

It is for every member to step forward and do their part for their fraternity family, not just Ministers and Council members - by: Rita Colleran OFS, Regional Formation Director

Most fraternities will begin a new year for their formation coming in January, just as our Region also begins a new year then. Planning for the next three years, your Regional Formation Team will support all fraternities to build stronger fraternal life and relationships amongst members – as we are all family.

The theme for 2025 is *Caring for Each Other in Our Fraternity Family*. For the past three years, together we have focused on and learned more about conversion, commitment, and servant leadership. These core Franciscan values continue and (hopefully) grow in our lives every day. Because we are all about faith and service, we look to serving each other as the next step in building a strong Franciscan family in each of our fraternities and in our region.

Sadly, for some fraternities, the monthly meeting is the only time they gather and see each other. Afterwards, members leave and go on about their personal lives until the next month. This is not what our charism is about. “Fraternal Life” takes up 1/3 of our General Constitutions and a great deal of our Rule. Likewise, it needs to be a major component in what we do as Franciscans – building close family relationships among our fraternity members.

Much more will come next year about small yet significant ways to grow and strengthen our relationships with each other and, as a result, care for each other as is needed throughout life.

The article I submitted to our regional newsletter was written by a Franciscan Friar almost 9 years ago. This issue is something that has been recognized for some time and is addressed here. Please read what Fr. Norbert, OFM counsels us about the role of each Secular Franciscan (not only Fraternity council members) to embrace this important part of Fraternal Life and our charism.



Fr. Norbert Pittorino, OFM was a teacher, a missionary in Papua New Guinea for 24 years, a promoter for the Franciscan Missionary Union and a supporter of the Secular Franciscan Order. He served the OFS as a Regional Spiritual Assistant for many years. He wrote this article in 2015, but it applies still to us now. He passed away to eternal life in Australia in 2020.

Caring for Each Other –By Fr Norbert Pittorino OFM, Australia National Secular Franciscan Order, Newsletter June 2017.

This message applies to the leaders in our fraternities, but there is also a message for all the fraternity. The danger is that we can point the finger at the fraternity ministers and forget that we are also part of the fraternity with responsibilities towards each other as well.

...there must be an intimate love amongst his friars as true spiritual brothers. While this was said by St Francis to his brothers, the same may be said of Secular Franciscans.

There has always been great emphasis in the Franciscan Order upon personal relationships. Francis probably recognized this from St John's Gospel where Jesus proclaims "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you show love for one another." (Jn. 13:35) and again, "Love one another as I have loved you..." (Jn. 13:34). This was the

command that Francis insisted on in his Rules right from the beginning: *there must be an intimate love amongst his friars as true spiritual brothers. While this was said by St Francis to his brothers, the same may be said of Secular Franciscans.*

This is supported by stressing that Franciscans "are to have among themselves, to the highest degree, a family spirit and mutual friendship practicing courtesy, cheerfulness and other virtues in such a way, that united in real fraternity and encouraging one another unceasingly to hope, peace and joy, they may achieve full human, Christian and religious maturity."

True leadership in the Order is to be found in service; in imitation of Jesus, who said that he came not to be served, but to serve. This joyful, grateful attitude will drive away many temptations and overcome a lot of difficulties in our fraternities. St Francis frequently exhorted his brothers to rejoice and enjoy each other's gifts. ***A good leader always appreciates the gifts of others; a naive leader may not even recognize the talents of others.*** A good leader does not fear the gifts of others, but rather welcomes valuable input and sees his/her role as one of coordination and collaboration for the benefit of the whole fraternity. This ability to rejoice in each other was the grace that drew many men and women to the Franciscan ideal and probably one of the reasons why the Order spread so quickly in those early years.

True leadership in the Order is to be found in service; in imitation of Jesus, who said that he came not to be served, but to serve.

As one Secular Franciscan lady recently said, "I think the secret of being a Franciscan is how happy we are when we meet and recognize each other, the easy smile, the joyful sparkle in our eyes, a hug, a kiss, the happiness of being together." St Francis' spirit, so full of joy, was contagious. This was a comment made about Franciscans right from the very beginning of the Order. Friendship is the first rung on the ladder to a deeper understanding of our vision of universal fraternity.

Francis himself had many natural gifts and he shared them unselfishly with his brothers and all who came into contact with him, he treated them like family. ***So we need to understand that our gifts are not just for ourselves; they are to be shared with others too, if they will allow us to do so.*** Franciscans must always extend a welcoming smile to everyone and be aware of the difficulties of others, particularly in our own spiritual brothers and sisters.

Loving concern and compassion for each other, is the sign of a true Christian which was noted earlier cf. Jn 13:35. It is the essence of Franciscan fraternity.

Francis' reading of Scripture would have taught him the rules of hospitality that we find expressed in the Old Testament. So too would his sense of chivalry, the art of social exchange in his time. It was characteristic of Franciscans to show every kindness firstly within their fraternities and then to all members of the Franciscan family. ***Loving concern and compassion for each other, is the sign of a true Christian which was noted earlier cf. Jn 13:35. It is the essence of Franciscan fraternity.***

In a particular way Franciscans have always been mindful of the sick, the elderly and the poor. Most parishes have times when there is a community "Anointing of the Sick" where the elderly and infirm come to the parish church. In many places the Secular Franciscans take this

opportunity to make these people struggling with old age and infirmity welcome and even provide a cup of tea afterwards, if there are the facilities for this. The poor and the sick were of great concern for St Francis.

However, visiting the sick and caring for them often makes demands on our time and energy. It can also be frustrating when a person is so sick he/she shows no apparent appreciation of what is being done for him/her. All of us would probably know of cases where relatives or friends have developed dementia and we may feel our visit is a waste of time. **But it is particularly at these times that Franciscans should try to encourage and cheer the sick, helping them to accept their illness, and come to realize what St Paul tells us about “making up in our bodies what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ.”** (Col 1:24f) This too is the grace of perfect joy. Sometimes a simple phone call to support a person or their family in caring for a sick person, especially if that person is/was part of our fraternity is much appreciated. Send them a card for their birthday; include them in what is going on in the fraternity. We must try to remember those who belong to our fraternity and remember that if the person is so sick that they cannot respond, at least their family will appreciate your kindness.

where there is genuine love, one does not count the cost, all is offered to God.

The work of counselling also applies to our brothers and sisters besides others who may come to us for help. But we should also remember that **where there is genuine love, one does not count the cost, all is offered to God.** It is a privilege and a pleasure for a genuine Christian to serve the sick and helpless. Just think of the example of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who gained strength from her care of the weak and marginalized members of society.

Another area that is often regarded as the work of a local Minister is that of **fraternal correction.** However, I see this as part of the pastoral care of the fraternity as well as the task that **must be carried out by every brother or sister when it is necessary. If we truly care for our brothers and sisters, we will do all in our power to preserve peace and tranquility in our fraternities. At times, this may demand our acting, when the occasion arises, on our own initiative with due regard to the norms laid down in our Constitutions.** Often times it could be our actions which will be of greater help to a brother or sister than acting otherwise. Some people have a natural gift of caring concern for others and this is something all of us must cultivate. Learn to be inclusive. It may not come easily at first, but it is a gift that can grow in us. The more we give to others through our loving concern, the more we receive in return in one way or another from God.

Just as Francis used the Word of God to learn how to behave, so we can use the Word of God to comfort the needy. Daily reading of Scripture can help us to become more familiar with those passages that have helped ourselves and could be applied to other situations that our brothers and sisters could find themselves in. This could be a fruitful exercise we can do by ourselves or in our meetings to follow a theme of “caring for each other” especially in this year of mercy.



Announcement

Day of Reflection for Inquirers and Candidates. It will be Saturday, March 29 from 9:30 to 4:00 pm at the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in America. The cost is \$50 per person and is also open to all. Br. Michael Meza OFM Cap. will be the presenter.

