



Issue no. 17 – December 2021

Message from our Regional Minister

Come all you Faithful. Come, let us adore Him, Jesus Christ the Lord.



- May the Joy, Peace and Love of the Christ Child fill our hearts with new Song, uplifting our voices in Rejoicing.
- May the Brightness of the Light of Jesus draw others into His Heart of Tender Love, dispelling darkness and restoring families, fraternities, friends.
- May the motherly Love of Mary rekindle unity, refreshing all Franciscan families.
- May 2022 be a year of God doing something new... Is 43:19: “for I’m going to do a brand-new thing. See, I have already begun!”

OLOTA Regional Council members share their hearts of Prayer with all of our Secular Franciscan Brothers and Sisters, asking God to bless you with His Amazing Grace and Love during Advent and throughout the Christmas Season.

Mary Christ Mass:
Linda Adams, ofs

Upcoming Events

Sat., Jan 1, 2021 at 6pm BC/7pm AB/8pm MB Vespers and Crown Rosary

Join us at ZOOM:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86486098310?pwd=R1VOZ3EvdWMraG1PTTYxb1p1WllvQT09>

Meeting ID: 864 8609 8310

Passcode: 741246

Or, call any of the following numbers from any phone and enter the meeting ID and passcode.

AB: 587 328 1099 BC: 778 907 2071

MB: 204 272 7920

When using telephone, press *6 to mute/unmute and press *9 to raise hand.

Message from our Director of Youth

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE TO ALL SECULAR FRANCISCANS FROM MANITOBA TO VANCOUVER ISLAND!

In the recent Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis - Fratelli Tutti - His Holiness reminds us "In the depths of every heart, love creates bonds and expands existence, for it draws people out of themselves and toward others."

In the spirit of our beloved Saint Francis of Assisi - may we be welcoming, loving and generous to all, especially the stranger, during the Holy Season of Advent and Christmas, 2021.

Peace, joy and many blessings to you!

Catherine McNiff

Message from our Director of JPIC

A Joyful Hope for Christmas

The feast of Christmas meant so much to St. Francis of Assisi and he wanted the whole of creation to take part of the feast. In 1223, Francis started the popular tradition of Christmas crèche when Francis invited the town people of Greccio, Italy, to come to a cave outside town and reenact the first Christmas. A description of the first Nativity scene in the mountain

of Greccio is captured by Bonaventure, in one of the biographies of Francis.

Francis took the gospels of Luke and Mark literally. He sensed that all creation, not just humans had been redeemed through the Incarnation. Did not John the Baptist proclaim in the words of Isaiah that “all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:6)? And did not Christ tell his followers “to proclaim the good news to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15)?

For Francis the meaning of Incarnation sparks his imagination. He realized that when the Word entered the world of creation and became flesh, everything profoundly changed. If God became a part of the created world in the birth of Jesus Christ, then the dignity of all creatures was raised dramatically to a new height. This event sent shock waves for Francis, through the whole network of dust and flesh. Not only was the human nature made holy by the incarnation, the whole fabric of creation was also charged with the divine presence.

Ilija Delio, a Franciscan author, provides a structured insight into the meaning of the Incarnation for Francis. First, Francis perceived that the world is good and provides authentic human needs. While the world is filled with God’s overflowing goodness, it is poverty that allows one to experience with goodness by radically dependent on God.

Second, for Francis, the meaning of creation and thus of the human person is revealed and manifests in Jesus Christ. It is in and through Christ that Francis discovers the meaning of his own life, the dignity of the human person, and the goodness of creation. Finally, Francis realized that the human person like

Christ, is fragile, limited and vulnerable. Francis himself grew in compassion to love like Christ and was willing to give his life for the sake of other. There are three aspects of Francis’ “evangelical world view”: creation, Incarnation, human person. It is the person of Jesus Christ who reveals to him the dignity of all persons and that of creation itself. The only “work “that is fundamental to his way of life is to his way of life, to imitate Christ and to make that experience of Christ available to others. Evangelical life focuses on what we are, not what we do.

The spirit behind of some of the Christmas traditions is Jesus. We wear our best to church because we want to give our best to God. We give gifts to others because we recognize that others often have needs they cannot meet and are too ashamed to express. We decorate our homes to remind ourselves of all the seasons joy---the bounty of nature, the beauty in simple things. When we pursue these things with our focus on Jesus, we will find them peaceful, life giving and manageable. Give gifts that acknowledge the uniqueness of each person and help them become themselves.

Chose decorations that bring joy to you and your family, decorate as a group effort.

This Christmas, make sure that Jesus is the reason for your season so that when he’s in his crib on Christmas morning, he’ll look right at home!

Merry Christ-Mass to all of you!

Peace and Joy,
Lourdes von Burg, ofs

Message from Our Regional Spiritual Assistant



Emmanuel...God with us. “The incarnation does not mean that God saves us from the pains of this life. It means that God-is-with-us. For the Christian, just as for everyone else, there will be cold, lonely seasons, seasons of sickness, seasons of frustration, and a season within which we will die. Christmas does not give us a ladder to climb out of the human condition. It gives us a drill that lets us burrow into the heart of everything that is and, there, find it shimmering with divinity” (Avery Dulles).

Blessed Virgin Mary responded to God’s love by her ‘Yes’ to God’s will, by her obedience to God’s Word, thus bringing forth the Incarnate Son of God on earth. She went with haste to be with her cousin Elizabeth in times of need. She was at the service of her cousin in spite of being the

Mother of the Son of God. The visit of Mary to Elizabeth describes the true Christmas party celebrated by two women. They shared their holy excitement of the favors received by God. The Holy Spirit led Mary to put into practice, right from the start to the finish, what would become the core message of the Gospel her Son would preach one day: Love for neighbor.

Let Jesus be the center of our celebration of Christmas. St. Francis of Assisi was in love with the Incarnate Son of God and created the nativity scene at Greccio. "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" (St. Francis of Assisi). The Incarnate Son of God, who came to live with us, reshaped and redirected St. Francis's life. As we celebrate Christmas, let us not just wonder and admire Baby Jesus but follow the message of the Adult Jesus to guide and shape our life. We may find it hard and challenging but again remember His name is Emmanuel -"God with us." St. Francis saw the infant Jesus in everyone and everything and that unique relationship made him the servant of God. Let us not leave Baby Jesus in the manger but take Him out of there to where we live and wherever we go.

The kind and thoughtful deeds of giving gifts, sending cards and visits, should strengthen our ties of family and friends. Being aware of the less fortunate around us, sharing our Christmas joy and hope through some charitable deeds would make a difference in the less fortunate. Not only Covid-19 pandemic but many other crises have shaken our common home. In all this, God is with us, He has not abandoned us. It's a call for us to return to our loving God, take care of each other, share the blessings and favors received, and give hope to all those who have lost their hope in God. So, our program for Christmas is now clear: concern and care for our neighbor is the best way to welcome our Savior and experience the Peace and Joy He brings along.

May the JOY of Christmas be our path forward...*Merry Christmas & Happy New Year.*

Fr. Manoj Xalxo, OFM

Social Corner



Message from St. Clare of Assisi Fraternity, Coquitlam, BC.

Our Advent gathering was on November 27, 2021. Father Jarek, our spiritual assistant, gave us in an Advent reflection. Following his presentation, we had our annual gift to the child. The Nativity Crèche was set up and each of us was invited to present something to the baby Jesus. Then we lighted a little candle to remind us of the Christ Child, the light of the world.

Lynda Black, ofs

Message from St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Saskatoon, SK

As I sit here and think where I should set up my crib and tree, I am reminded that it was Francis who brought together the live stable of Bethlehem that would become the first Christmas Crib in 1223. Francis was a practical man. He understood that people often need to see and hear in order to understand. His Live Crib really help people of his time to understand the meaning of the Birth of Jesus. I wish you joy and peace as you gather around the crib at Christmas time.

Yvonne Armstrong, ofs

OLOTA Advent Reflection by Fr. Santosh Ekka, OFM

