



Issue no. 41 – January 2024

Message from our Regional Minister

We are almost at the end of the first month of 2024. From a Catholic website, here are some prayers I use recently:

- May our eternal God, who transcends our understanding of time watch over you and continue to bless you this year and throughout all your days.
- Comforted by the promise of salvation, may you enjoy this New Year overflowing with the joy that only God can provide.
- May the Light of God guide you and may His loving arms protect you in this new year.
- The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord let His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!

I am traveling right now, as some of you may have known. Daniel and I are visiting his aging parents and relatives. While here in Hong Kong, I am glad to be in touch with you recently, whether it is a question about a mission statement, Formators course, or trying to connect to me via zoom, and one fraternity took a serious amount of time to give me and insightful material to discern regional options (thank you!). Thanks to the wifi calling and eSIM features, I can stay in touch with all of you.

No, I am not lacking stuff to do here while travelling. In fact, I have just realized that I have given the skill to find things to do: I get to know daily mass goers of St Teresa's in Hong Kong, attended Blessed Allegra Fraternity meeting, and met with Lucia Lau, the Hong Kong regional fraternity minister and Br William Ng, the regional spiritual assistant.

I visited two beautiful Buddhist monasteries: Chi Lin and Tsz Shan (pronounced chee-saan) since many Hongkongers are Buddhists. My primary purpose was to marvel at the garden and the Chinese architecture. They even have impressive websites. While looking at the buildings and surroundings, I came across some quotes similar to what we do:

- Praise the Enlightened Ones = Venerate the Saints
- Cultivate the Giving of Offerings = Cultivate Almsgiving
- Repent unwholesome Karma = Repent our sinful ways
- Rejoice in others' virtues
- Accommodate and benefit all sentient beings = respect and love all creatures
- Share merits universally = offer our prayers, talents, penances, resources, and good deeds with others for their benefits and the salvation of their souls.

I have found these similarities give me comforts and affirming my Catholic belief.

As for the regional news:

- Debbie Tessier, the interim chair of the regional discernment, will send you instructions/updates about the next steps. Please send any inquiries or questions to her at deborah Tessier57@gmail.com
- Thanks be to God that George Guimond, our National VM of Anglophone, is getting better.
- by this time, your fraternity minister should have received the request for annual report and contribution form; in case you haven't, please let me know.

Many thanks for praying for me and the regional council members. I have carried all of you in my prayers. Let me know how the regional council can serve you better.

Peace and all good,
Lanny

Message from our Director of Formation

In the *Franciscan Daily Companion* on January 11, 2024 Saint Charles of Borromeo reminds us *"Do not give yourself to others so completely that you have nothing left for yourself."*

Our Service to Ourselves and to Others

REFLECTION: We have to know when it is time to pull back a bit and take some time to rest, to reflect, and to recharge our batteries. If we continuously serve others without taking any time for ourselves, we end up so exhausted that we have nothing left to give. Thus, we could even say that our taking care of ourselves is a form of service to others. PRAYER: *Lord, grant me prudence and balance in my life.*

Are you guilty of overdoing it? I know that I am and this little prayer is already helping me in 2024.

Peace and joy,
Catherine McNiff, ofs

From our Director of Youth

Winter Young Adult Retreat 2024 – Journey with the Magi: The young adults retreat at Mount St. Francis Retreat Centre was great! Twenty-three young adults made a journey together during the weekend of January 5th to January 7th. The retreat featured Lectio Divina on Saturday and Sunday Mass Scripture readings, small group reflection, journey with the magi walk, Eucharistic Adoration, opportunity for reconciliation, Holy Mass, prayer time, quiet time, meals together, fellowship and a prayer night at the bonfire. They had the opportunity to go deeper into Scripture with Lectio Divina. One young woman who is quadriplegic with cerebral palsy joined us by Zoom for the

Lectio Divina sessions. Her presence with us was truly a blessing. We had five small group discussions where each individual shared their reflections. The young adults bonded as they met and journeyed together during the weekend.

Maritza Chouza, ofs



Winter Young Adult Retreat 2024

Save the Dates

-VESPERS and FRANCISCAN CROWN ROSARY

On first Saturday of each month. **Next session:**

February 3rd @ **7pm** PT/**8pm** MT/**9pm** CT
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86486098310?pwd=R1VQZ3EybWMraG1PTTYxb1p1WllvQT09>

Meeting ID: 864 8609 Centre 8310 Passcode: 741246

-Zoom BIBLE STUDY

The CASE for JESUS with Dr Brant Pitre

9 Tuesdays: **Nov 28-Dec 19** & **Jan 9- Feb 6**

6 pm PT/ 7 pm MT/ 8 pm CT for 1 to 1.5 hrs

Zoom link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82282367951?pwd=Z3JORWVxb0o3bkSrM2RMUINabzZqQT09>

Meeting ID: 822 8236 7951 Passcode: 276824

-Next FRANCISCAN VISION GLOBAL SUMMIT

February 24, 2024 on the **STIGMATA** of **St Francis**. Registration is free.

For Info see [BROCHURE](#)

The 8th Centenary of the STIGMATA: September 17, 1224 – 2024



In 2023 we celebrated the 8th Centenary of the Crib at Greccio, Italy when 800 years ago St Francis celebrated the birth of Jesus by recreating a live Nativity scene. We joyously ended the year with a Fine Arts Contest coordinated by Director of Youth, Marita Chouza. We received many beautifully created images of the Nativity creche by young students of all ages with some featured in the December OLOTA Messenger.

Onward into 2024 we now begin to contemplate and celebrate the 8th Centenary of the STIGMATA of St. Francis at Mount La Verna, Italy on September 17th 1224. (The Church celebrates on the 17th.)

About two years before his death, St. Francis had a second vision of Christ fastened to the cross. St. Bonaventure describes the scene in his *Life of St. Francis*: *On a certain morning about the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross [September 14], while Francis was praying on the mountainside, he saw a Seraph with six fiery and shining wings descend from the height of heaven. And when in swift flight the Seraph had reached a spot in the air near the man of God, there appeared between the wings the figure of a man crucified, with his hands and feet extended in the form of a cross and fastened to a cross. Two of the wings were lifted above his head, two were extended for flight and two covered his whole body. When Francis saw this, he was overwhelmed and his whole body was*

flooded with a mixture of joy and sorrow. He rejoiced because of the gracious way Christ looked upon him under the appearance of the Seraph, but the fact that he was fastened to a cross pierced his soul with a sword of compassionate sorrow.

Seraphs are the angels closest to God, burning with love as they bow before the Most High God, shouting “Holy, holy, holy!” (See Isaiah 6:2-3.) Their fiery wings suggest the flaming intensity of God’s love that Christ communicated to Francis which set Francis’ heart afire. The word *seraphic* is often used to describe Francis’ passion in relating to God.

As we look forward to the invitations ahead to contemplate/celebrate the Feast of the Stigmata, we pray: *Lord Jesus Christ, we praise You and adore You. Like Francis, we are amazed that You held nothing back from us in pouring Yourself out for us so totally through Your holy wounds on the cross. We ask You to breathe forth Your Holy Spirit into us and set our hearts on fire, so that, with the Spirit’s help, we might respond more fully to You. Amen.*

Prepared by Colleen Finlon, ofs

Our Lady of the Angels Messenger, Secular Franciscan Order of Western Canada Region, **January 2024**
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