

▫ **Regular Meeting: Sunday, December 11, 2016, at 2:00pm, in the South Room of the Christian Living Center, St. Helen Church.**

▫ **Agenda and Schedule - Regular Meeting**

2:00 Opening Prayer, Reports, Old & New Business

2:15 Blessing of Donations to the Food Pantry.

Fred will give a brief talk on Advent/  
and time to sing carols...

2:30 Donna Haro will talk on Greccio and the  
Christmas crib St. Francis began in 1223.

2:50 Refreshments and Break

3:10 Franciscan Crown Rosary

3:35 Liturgy of the Hours

4:00 Closing Prayers and Dismissal

▫ **Council Meeting, Sat. January 14, 2017, at 9am,**  
St. John of the Cross. There will be NO Council Meeting in De-  
cember due to lack of meeting space. See Fred for details.

▫ **Refreshment Committee:**

*Snacks. Etc.: Ed O'Donnell, Jack Reddy, and John Matthews*

▫ **Remember in your prayers:** Fred Schaeffer, Marie Fee, Pat Riordan, Stanley Widing, Deacon Blake, and all Franciscans who cannot come to the meeting.

▫ **Anniversaries:** None

## A Blessed Christmas to all Sisters and Brothers

### The Week Before Advent

Today was the feast of Christ the King, and all this week, it is the week before the beginning of Advent. In itself, there is nothing special about this week, except that we celebrate Thanksgiving. Although not a holiday of obligation (Thanksgiving is a secular celebration), many Catholics go to Church on that day. We want to thank God for all He has provided for us.

Advent is a time of preparation for the coming of Jesus. That is significant because He came to earth, born as a human being, to save the world. Also, he came to make it possible for us to gain eternal salvation. In Art. 1129 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation. "Sacramental grace" is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament. The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive him by conforming them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacramental life is that the Spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior."

#### Fraternity Officers/Council Members (exp. 3 years from Jan. 10, 2016)

Minister: Fred Schaeffer, OFS  
Vice-Minister: Helen Caldarone, OFS  
Secretary: Jean McGovern, OFS  
Treasurer: Gene Caldarone, OFS  
Formation Director: Donna Haro, OFS  
Councilors-at-large:  
1. Edward O'Donnell, OFS  
2. Jack Reddy, OFS  
3. Vacant



## *The Week Before Advent (continued)*

Article 1129 says so much and is so rich in meaning. It tells of the Holy Spirit bringing us "Sacramental grace" needed to understand and carry out our preparation for understanding Salvation. Without the Holy Spirit, it is doubtful we'd even understand the divine nature that unites us in a living union with Jesus our Savior. This "living union" tells us that we must abandon everything that comes in the way of this relationship with Jesus. With the help of the Holy Spirit, let's try. Get to know the Lord so well, that we push occasions of sin away from us so that we may reach this intimate union with Jesus.

Many people, particular those who have a tendency to be weak, tell us that such a relationship isn't possible and they give reasons that really do not make sense. They claim that they are too weak. They just can't do it. Fr. Benedict Groeschel, CFR (died 2014) always said - when they say they can't, it means they won't even try. If you love Jesus as you say you do, let's put some backbone into our actions. Of course you want to be Jesus' intimate friend! You know if you aren't, you might not go to Heaven. So be pro-active and give it your all!

A dear Carmelite nun who was my aunt, once sent me a little bit of writing in German. It was penned in script on a piece of vellum attached to a magazine image of a squirrel. I suppose that's not too relevant but what she wrote was most relevant: "Christ wants people who excel!" In other words, Jesus doesn't look for 'second-best.' That does not mean that He won't give us the *Grace* to make us better. He has infinite compassion and mercy, but He knows we can improve. We also know that we can improve, make no mistake about that!

So during this week before Advent starts, let's get a 'running start.' - A brand-new Liturgical year will begin next week (on the first Sunday of Advent); let us get ready to run the race again, and as you give thanks on Thanksgiving, ask for His continuing blessings for the year to come.



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## Solemnity of Christmas 2016

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Only Mary and Joseph knew exactly how long it took them to find shelter on that first Christmas Eve in Bethlehem. They probably prayed very hard that they would find a suitable place for little Jesus to be born. Mary knew, from the message of the Angel Gabriel, that her Son would be the Son of God, the King of Kings, our Savior—and here He was to be born in a stable used by animals, oxen and donkeys and perhaps goats. What humble beginnings.

We too have humble beginnings but it may not be apparent to you. We are born usually, in a hospital, surrounded by professional health-caregivers who know what to do if something goes wrong during the birth, but many of our grandfathers and mothers who came from Europe didn't experience these luxuries. I was born in The Netherlands, in a sooty coal-cellar during World War II.

For Mary and Joseph the stable was all they had. Knowing who her Son was, she wanted much better for Him. But Mary settled for what was available. During her whole life she was a strong example of humility. How many times have we been satisfied with a little portion? Jesus asks us to be happy with what we have and not to want what we cannot or, perhaps, should not have. Jesus asks us to deny ourselves and be happy with little. Be happy with the "stable" if that is all you have. When you count your blessings rather than complain, He will bless you richly. His blessings are not the material things we sometimes crave but they are of much greater value: they are blessings of eternal life, with Him!

Mary and Joseph suffered on that first night. Jesus suffered throughout His life until His death. Yes, my brothers and sisters, Jesus died for us so that we might live. His love is greater than any love in existence. Many people, especially during this time in the history of mankind, suffer from hunger, great illness (cancer, Aids, etc.) lack of work, and lack of Faith, and when things go wrong some people blame God. But God does not bring pain and suffering. Suffering we all experience is because of Original Sin; it just hits some harder than others. There seems no rhyme or reason to it.

I pray, during this Christmas Season for many things, but two in particular. First, I pray that your Christmas will be richly blessed. I pray that you will remember what Christmas is all about, namely, the Birth of Christ. Secondly, I pray that, in faith, you will reach out to a sick person. People are sick in several ways: physically, mentally or spiritually. Please reach out and touch someone with your prayer. Bring a little cheer into the lives of others. We wish you a very special Christmas, filled with moments of Grace and much joy as you celebrate Jesus in your midst.

Fred Schaeffer, OFS