

# "The Canticle" December 2017

Divine Mercy Fraternity  
Secular Franciscan Order, Vero Beach, Florida  
www.dmf-ofs.org



## Regular Meeting:

The next meeting is: Sunday, **December 10, 2017**, 2:00 - 4:00pm. South Room, Christian Living Ctr., St. Helen Church.

## Agenda and Schedule

2:00 Opening, Reports, etc.

2:05 New Business:

- 1) At our Council Meeting, a proposal was made to consider Jack Reddy, OFS for Treasurer. The nomination and vote needs to be made at the Regular December Meeting for an effective date of Jan. 1, 2018.
- 2) A proposal has been made to donate \$500 to Saint Helen School for financial assistance. To be enacted at our December Regular Meeting.

2:10 Blessing of Donations to the Food Pantry.

2:15 The Christmas Crib at Greccio account by Bl. Thomas of Celano. Also, How to Have a Franciscan Christmas. By Donna Haro, OFS.

2:55 Refreshments and Break

3:15 Franciscan Crown Rosary

3:40 Liturgy of the Hours

4:00 Closing Prayers and Dismissal

## Refreshment Committee:

Snacks: Gene & Helen Caldarone

Drinks: Joanne Giordano

### Fraternity Officers/Council Members (exp. Jan. 10, 2019)

Minister: Fred Schaeffer, OFS

Vice-Minister: Helen Caldarone, OFS

Secretary: Jean McGovern, OFS

Treasurer: *Vacant*

Formation Dir.: Donna Haro, OFS

Councilor-at-large: Jack Reddy, OFS

Spiritual Asst. Deacon Richard Blake, OFS  
(when available)

**Council Meeting, Sat. December 16, 2017, 9 am, St. John of the Cross. (see Fred)**



**Remember in your prayers:** Eugene Caldarone, Fred Schaeffer, Ginny Davis, Ed O'Donnell, Marie Fee, Pat Riordan, Stanley Widing, Deacon Blake, and all Franciscans unable to come to the meeting.

Anniversaries: None

## A Handshake and a Hug

by Fred Schaeffer, OFS

Franciscans, are joyful. It is our nature, but we are human, and occasionally we experience a period of spiritual dryness. That can easily happen during the holidays... when we spend time alone, time spent in previous years with friends and relatives. We all experience it.

In everyone's life there are ups and downs. The only problem is that some of us have no one to share this spiritual loneliness with, and that makes it hard. There are periods of self-sufficiency and a spiritual resiliency that carry us through our everyday problems, but when things get rough, our house of cards tumbles and then this loneliness engulfs us. Some years ago, there was loneliness in my life, but most of all, I saw real loneliness when I visited folks in the Hospital around the Holidays. There are more people who wish you to sit down and spend an hour with them than at any other time of the year. Yet, in our loneliness we are never alone. When we believe in Jesus and when we have a consistent relationship with Him, the spiritual morass once again becomes orderly, and Jesus, through His wisdom and love, leads us forward. This loneliness isn't always that we're alone, away from relatives and friends, but sometimes we're also lonely because we are away from Jesus and His Mother.

And so it was, when I felt this loneliness in past years, usually around the Holidays, that I asked someone to pray with me with the very intention of straightening out my spiritual downtime. And it helped. And something else helped: a handshake or a hug. I was chatting with a friend one day, and I told him that I was in a spiritual valley, and he said that it wouldn't last long... well, I knew that of course, but it's hard to believe when you're not feeling all that great, and I mentioned that the hardest part was that I had no one to talk to about it, who could understand, or who would even listen!

Many people claim to listen, but they don't. When there is no real compassion, and just an off-handed reply, such as: "Well, that's life!", you know that they aren't listening, and they probably don't give a hoot about your problems. But the friend I was talking to did care and he gave me a light hug, and that little pat on the shoulder did me a lot of good. That hug reminded me of a picture that hangs on the wall near my bed, of Jesus on the Cross, being comforted by our Seraphic Father, St. Francis. St. Francis knew what suffering meant to Jesus... because Jesus' wounds in Francis's hands, feet and side weren't given to him as a symbol: they were real wounds. and they hurt Francis every minute of the day and night. It is difficult to understand that Francis's carrying of Christ's wounds helped ease some of Jesus' pain, because Francis lived about 1200 years after Jesus was crucified, but, yes, Francis did ease Jesus's pain, just as His pain is eased when we fight temptation and do not give in to the occasion of sin!

Shaking hands and hugging is what makes people share something they have in common. When we hug or shake hands then we are sharing in the love of Christ between his children. One day I visited church in mid-afternoon to say the rosary or just sit quietly and meditate. Even though we could just as easily do this at home, the closeness to the Blessed Sacrament is the catalyst to launch us into spiritual thought. Jesus hugs us through His presence in the Tabernacle. He stilled my loneliness, and it felt peaceful.

When you go to Holy Mass and receive Communion by touching the Body of Jesus with your fingers and tongue, think about what you're doing. Come to the realization that you're holding the Body of Christ in your hand, that you're touching Him, and more importantly, that He's touching you. He is shaking your hand and hugging you and He is telling you that you shouldn't worry, that if you follow in His footsteps by trying to be Christ-like, by remaining free from all sins, not only the big ones, but from the little ones as well, He will take care of you for all eternity.

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I pray that you'll recognize the great gift Our Lord Jesus has given you through the sharing of the Eucharist, and that His love may change your life from one of toil and frustration, to a life of joy and understanding. That doesn't mean that your life will now be easy but with His grace and love, all obstacles will be removed and instead of channeling your total energies to yourself, you'll have time left over to minister to others through prayer, outreach, and example. And, next time someone needs a pat on the back, a handshake or a hug, share the love of Christ in that way, and both you and the person at the receiving end will feel strengthened and relieved.

Advent is a time of preparation. Advent prepares you for the Immanuel, for the one who is coming. It isn't just a time of preparation for this Christmas, the Birth of Jesus, which the world celebrated 2000 years ago, but it is a time of preparation for the second coming as well. If your spiritual level is ebbing, then this is a good time to become closer to Jesus, perhaps with the help of your Confessor or Spiritual Advisor. When the inner life of your soul is healthy, then this is a time of thankfulness, so pray for others that they may reach a plateau in prayer that's right for them.

When praying, it isn't necessary to present the Lord with a lengthy list of what you want: He knows what we need. Just praise Him, praise Him for his power, his kingship, his mercy, his compassion and his love, given so freely to all, even to the sinner (that's us, folks), and thank Him for all He has done for you in your lives.

Advent, as a time of preparation, is a perfect time to give something extra to Jesus. Sit quietly and meditate on the mysteries of the Rosary, on a simple prayer or Scripture passage, and then be still. Give Jesus time to respond to you. As you slowly quiet down interiorly and forget about your problems and your cares, when the "self" no longer matters, then you will reach an awareness of great peace and joy. When you totally concentrate on Jesus, forgetting the world around you, and your own troubles... and thus communicate with Jesus, HE HUGS US IN HIS OWN UNIQUE WAY. I ask Him that He will visit you this Christmas too.

Originally written in 1999.  
Fred Schaeffer, OFS



Old-fashioned Computer



**Wishing you a  
joyful Christmas  
and a happy new year**

