



- the Chimes -

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P.O. BOX 29506
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20017
DECEMBER 2023 Vol. LXVII, No. 12
December 9, 2023

WE WILL MEET ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 930 AM-130 PM AT THE FRANCISCAN MONASTERY IN THE ST FRANCIS ROOM. There will be no Zoom meeting in December.

Advent Day of Recollection: Saturday, December 9, 930 am-130 pm

- 930: Registration and introductions
- 1000-1130: Part I: Greccio
- 1130-1230: Part II: Bethlehem
- 1230-130: Lunch (sandwiches will be provided)
- Optional: visit Monastery Creche exhibit

Reminder: Advent Day of Reflection: Saturday, December 9, 930 am-130 pm

We will have a special event this week in place of our monthly meeting: a joint event with the St. Anthony of Nagasaki fraternity. The theme of the day will be "From Greccio to Bethlehem: An Advent Day of Reflection."

We will have a prayerful reflection on St. Francis' institution of the custom of Christmas creches and what it means to us today, followed by a presentation on current conditions in Bethlehem and Gaza, as well as an opportunity to donate to the Holy Family Hospital and American Near East Refugee Aid. Lunch will be included. There is no charge for attendance. If you have not already signed up to attend the December event, please reach out to Michele as soon as possible so we can have an accurate count.

Online Greccio event. The National Fraternity recently held a wonderful online event exploring the institution of the living nativity by St Francis 800 years ago, including a virtual tour of Greccio led by Sr Maryann Dosen. The recording is well worth watching and can be accessed here along with many other resources related to Greccio: <https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/centenary-resources-christmas-at-greccio/>

Save the date: Planning meeting on January 21. Our fraternity is facing important decisions in the first half of 2024, as the current Council ends its term in June. We have agreed to devote our January meeting to discussing the future of our fraternity. Please make every effort to attend this meeting, which will be held at our usual time and place (Sunday, January 21, 130 pm, in person at the Franciscan Monastery and on Zoom).

Prayer commitment: petitioning Servant of God Julia Greeley. Please remember the commitment our fraternity has made to support the campaign for canonization of our Secular Franciscan sister Julia Greeley, a formerly enslaved woman who died in 1918 after a life of exemplary service to the poor. Please remember to petition Julia daily to intercede for a cure for leukemia for our brother John Whipple. Find information about Julia and the cause for her canonization here: <https://juliagreeley.org/>.

Please pray for our members: Amy Bilyeau, Maria Louisa Correa and family, Sarah Faizi and friend Ron Harner, Jean Fleurival, Nancy McCleary, Helen Walls, Donna Wilkes. **Also please pray particularly for John Whipple (testing continues and he will begin treatment in January) and for our Spiritual Assistant Fr. Jim Gardiner (who is in Carroll Manor recovering from cardiac surgery).**

Contacting Council

Minister	Michele Dunne	202-412-1210	micheleddunne@gmail.com
Vice Minister	Joseph Gigliotti	202-251-7336	gigliottilaw@gmail.com
Secretary	vacant		
Treasurer	Francoise Bidiki	443-518-6367	kimbekele@gmail.com
Formation Dir	Mary Gigliotti	202-251-7660	mmamsop@aol.com
Spiritual Asst	Fr. Jim Gardiner	202-526-6800 x374	jgardiner@atonementfriars.org

St. Margaret of Cortona Regional Council

Bob Longo (Minister)	blongosfo@gmail.com
Janice Benton (DC Metro Area Councilor)	jbentonsfo@gmail.com

National Fraternity

Jane DeRose-Bamman (Minister)	ofsusaminister@gmail.com
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Our fraternity website:

<https://dcsfo.org/>

December Reflection

Michele Dunne, OFS

At our upcoming Advent Day of Reflection, we will have time to consider what St. Francis did at Greccio, what it means for us as Franciscans, and what our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land are facing this Christmas as they endure war and terror. As I write this reflection on the [first Sunday in Advent](#), hearing the reading from the prophet Isaiah is particularly poignant in light of the war in the Holy Land: “You, Lord, are our father...Why do you let us wander, o Lord, from your ways, and harden our hearts so that we fear you not?” Truly it seems that both sides in the war have forgotten that they are all God’s children and that they must “fear” God by respecting His commandments not to kill.

As followers of Jesus in the footsteps of St. Francis, we have a special gift and duty to bring light into this darkness. Perhaps Jesus’ most famous and difficult teaching was, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell

you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:43-45). Put that together with Jesus’ words in the gospel reading (Mk 13:33-37) for the first Sunday in Advent, “Be watchful! Be alert! May [the lord] not come suddenly and find you sleeping!” What this tells me is that I must love—that is, care deeply about the welfare of—people who are different from me in every way: religion, language, culture, history, political outlook. I must care about the safety of both Israelis and Palestinians, no matter how much I might disapprove of their actions. And I must not be found “sleeping,” that is, throwing up my hands and ignoring escalating violence.

St. Francis showed us well how not to be found “sleeping” in the face of violence. In 1225, Francis heard about contention between parties in Assisi, contention he knew from experience could easily explode into bloodshed. It would have been easy for Francis, who was gravely ill and unable to travel into the city, to do nothing more than shake his head. Instead he exerted great effort: he composed a new verse of his Canticle specifically calling for forgiveness and reconciliation, promising that God would “crown” those who bore tribulation and endured in peace. Francis sent two friars to sing the new verse to the warring parties in Assisi, whose hard hearts were melted by the beauty of the song and who reconciled.

Can I learn from Jesus, who told me to keep loving both sides in a conflict even—in fact, especially—when it is difficult to do so? Can I learn from Francis to keep speaking up with love, to pray and to use my creativity, even when I am physically unable to be there to help solve a problem? It is so difficult to keep praying and taking loving action when “we have all withered like leaves, and our guilt carries us away like the wind” (Isaiah 15). Yet the prophet reminds us that no problem is too large for God to resolve and that we are to be God’s instruments, because “we are the clay and you the potter; we are all the work of your hands.” I pray that we will all have a Christmas in which we experience peace and we bring peace to others.

