

Conference of National Spiritual Assistants

Br Louis Schmid OFM Conv.
10 Dimak Court Dingley Village
Victoria 3172 Phone: 0422 028 647
Email: gerolddamien@hotmail.com



Br John Cooper OFM Cap
96 Catherine St Leichhardt 2040
Mobile Phone: 0412 162 946
Email: johncap@ozemail.com.au

Monthly Spiritual Message DECEMBER 2018

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS THE RULE OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER (Part 9)

Christmas

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May the Divine Infant of Bethlehem bless **you** and your loved ones this Christmas. May Our Blessed Mother and St Joseph keep **you** under their protection in this coming year.

On behalf of Fr John Cooper, myself and all the Spiritual Assistants we thank you for your dedication to your Franciscan vocation, and we pray that the Secular Franciscan Order in Australia will grow in closer union with Christ and increase in vocations!

As Christmas approaches and we find ourselves in Advent, we may reflect on where the year has gone and what lies ahead! The Lord calls us to surrender our past to Him, to live the present moment in His grace and entrust the future to Him. Yes, we worry and have sleepless nights, but we have to tell ourselves that God is God!

St Francis reminds us with his all night long prayer¹ “*My God and my All*” that Our Heavenly Father loves us and will lead us on! When we feel down or troubled, let us call on the Holy Spirit. May the Holy Spirit renew our hearts with trust for our Saviour so that we can receive His Peace. Let us also remember Our Lady whom St Francis saluted as the “Spouse of the Holy Spirit.” The Mother of God given to each of us from the Cross as Our Mother invites us into relationship with Her; so She, the Immaculata, may help us to know the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives! As our Lady with St Joseph lovingly presented the Baby to the Shepherds, Mary presents to us Her Son as our Way, Truth and Life. As Franciscans, we have always know the great role of our Lady in our salvation. May we never neglect to have a loving relationship with the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The great event of Our Lord’s birth reminds each one of us, *God so loved the world that he sent His only begotten Son to save us* as we read in the Gospel of St John; 3:16. The God made flesh, the babe in the crib, surrounded by the humility of animals and shepherds should remind us of how God loves each one of us that he made himself completely vulnerable and emptied Himself for our sake. The Baby is there for you and me; the same baby who as a man would suffer and die on the Cross for our salvation and rise from the dead to show us, that He is truly Lord and victorious over death, sin and the powers of hell.

Each one of us struggles with sin; we may also be confronted with death in our families or friends. All so often we see the effects of the powers of hell in causing hate, despair, immorality, selfishness, and disregard for sanctity of human life in our world. The battle between grace and sin is in our own lives and our world. St Francis calls us not to allow these realities to overwhelm us, but to embrace the Christ

¹ *Fioretti 2.*

Child like St Anthony and to know that His victory, as Saviour, is for each of us, and no matter how tough it gets, He will never abandon us. ,

Yes, life is busy, but we have to discipline ourselves for prayer. As Franciscans, you have made promises to be a member of a public Order of the Church. You are called to share more closely in Her mission of advancing the Kingdom of Christ. The Sacraments, the Scriptures and prayer is essential for us to realise that this is an important aspect of our Franciscan vocation! Do we pray some of the Divine Office when we can, as encouraged by the constitutions? The Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer of the Church should not be a stranger to us. Yes, Secular Franciscans are under no obligation to recite it daily, but the Divine Office should not be unfamiliar to Secular Franciscans, and it is praiseworthy to pray some form of the office when we gather as fraternity. Remember the Divine Office is the official daily prayer of the Church; when we pray the Liturgy of the Hours, we are praying with the universal Church.

Christ Jesus is our Emmanuel, who is completely present for us, as He is Heaven, but only in a different appearance in the Blessed Sacrament. The same Babe of Bethlehem humbles himself to come from Heaven through the hands of the priest in the Holy Mass as the Bread of Everlasting life. In the simplest, yet profound way, Our Lord comes fully to us so that He can share with us His Divine life in the most intimate way. Dear brothers and sisters let us always, as Franciscans, treasure, love and promote the Holy Eucharist. Let us be faithful to Eucharistic adoration and promote its value. As we come to adore and spend time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, we are strengthened by Him to see him in others, especially those in need.

As Franciscans called to live the Gospel in the footsteps of St Francis, may we thank God for our beautiful vocation, for the gift of each other and remember we are called to share in the mission of the Church, by our witness of prayer and good works. True reform of the Church is when we try to grow closer to Christ. That is why we should value the importance of frequent confession. As we experience the forgiveness and mercy of Christ, we can bring more of His mercy to others. As Franciscans, we are called to show that mercy, but it is only authentic when it is of Christ. We must not be compromised by a false compassion of the world which does not know the true dignity of what we are as children of God created in his image. To accommodate the moral laxity of the world does not reflect mercy of God, but destroys the truth of who we are as human beings and leads us away from everlasting life. Yes, we are all sinners, but as Franciscans may we always be faithful to the laws of God in our mission and apostolate. Let us be authentic as Franciscans, especially regarding upholding the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death and uphold the value of Christian life and Christian Marriage.

May Our Blessed Lady and all the Saints intercede for us, to know and love more deeply Our Lord Jesus Christ now and forever. Amen

A Blessed Christmas to you and the Lord's Blessing be upon us all for 2019.

Br Louis Mary Schmid OFM Conv.

National Spiritual Assistant, Conventual Franciscans, Australia

PLEASE distribute this Monthly Spiritual Message to all MEMBERS of your FRATERNITY.
(This includes Spiritual Assistants and isolated members)