

The Canticle
December 2008

Regular Meeting: Sunday, December 14, at 2:00 PM—North Room, St. Helen's Parish Center, followed by the Council Meeting.

Agenda and Schedule for Meeting:

- 2:00 Opening Prayer, Reports, Old/New Business
- 2:20 Blessing of our donations to the Food Pantry
- 2:25 Ongoing formation: Eucharistic Adoration with Francis and Clare- -Helen Caldarone
- 2:55 Reading of the origin of the crèche---Donna Haro
- 3:00 Exposition of crèches with sharing (please remember to bring your crèche with you to share with the Fraternity)
- 3:15 Refreshments and break
- 3:30 Liturgy of the Hours
- 4:00 Closing Prayer and dismissal
- 4:15 Council Meeting

Refreshment Committee:

- Snacks:** Peggy Rysdyke and Fred Schaeffer
- Beverages:** Elizabeth Smith

Remember in your prayers: Julia McHugh, John Matthews, Fred Schaeffer, Marie Fee, Jack Solloway, and all professed Franciscans in our Florida region who are ill, as well as Jennie Donlin and all those members of our Fraternity who have died or cannot attend our meetings regularly.

Update on Jack Solloway: Joe Brazina, our newest member, has spoken recently with Susan Solloway. Jack has been accepted for care by Hospice House. Susan will be spending as much time with him as she can but needs your prayers for Jack and for herself. Please keep in touch with her

by phone, email or regular mail and keep both Susan and Jack in your prayers.

Our sister in St. Fancis, Marie Fee: Our Fraternity Council asks that we provide help to Marie and her family by bringing food donations to our December meeting over and above the donations to St. Helen's Food Pantry. Please bring a second bag of food with you for Marie to bring

home. She and her son know that we are planning this and are very grateful for whatever you can give. In addition, we are spending about \$100

for simple Christmas gifts for the 5 children (movie tickets for the 2 older children and books for the 3 younger ones.). We would appreciate your financial assistance to defray the cost of the gifts. A "special collection" will be taken up at the December meeting for this purpose.

From the Minister's Desk: This year let us make Advent a special time of preparation for the

Birth of the Christ Child. Let our focus be on Him and the gift that He is to the world. No matter what is going on around us, we can be confident in knowing that He is in charge, and He has the plan. If we keep our eye on Him, everything else will fall into place. May the period of preparation bring renewal and a closer relationship with Him Whom we love. Merry Christmas.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, may the Lord give you peace.

I thank the Lord for giving me the grace to celebrate this Eucharist with you, may this rendering of grace bring forth all the beautiful things that work within us and around us.

I thank the Lord for the vocations to Franciscan life that He gives to us as a gift. I pray and I also ask you to pray that the Lord may continue to give us holy vocations and that He may strengthen and support the men and women who have undertaken the Franciscan way.

In Luke's gospel today, the message from last Sunday, the parable of the talents, is repeated. Instead of talents, another coin, but the idea is the same: to respond to the basic problem of the community of believers: given that we must wait for the return of the Lord, how do we prepare ourselves appropriately?

Unfortunately, in the past, the significance of this parable was usually distorted or, at least, greatly reduced. Hearing one speak of coins, we immediately think of the natural gifts of intelligence, beauty, strength, artistic ability... The use is not completely mistaken, but it is secondary.

Jesus did not intend to speak so much about the obligation to develop our own natural gifts, but to have our spiritual gifts, given by Him, bear fruit.

The coins which Christ speaks of are the word of God, faith, the sacraments that we have received, in a word, the Reign announced by Him.

The parable invites us to examine our consciences: what use are we making of these coins?

The servant who does not use his coin deprives himself of what he possesses; life was given to him, but he does not spend it and therefore he does not enjoy it; he was given faith, but it doesn't do him any good and thus, he lives in vain; he was given the opportunity to get to know love, but he does not avail himself of it throughout his life.

Behind his laziness (he blames) the bad judgment of his master as (if) the master were the cause of his fear because he is too demanding.

But, reasoning like this does nothing but proclaims that he has never believed in the generosity of his master, he has never experienced the love of the Lord and, above all, that he refuses to see in the actions of his master the love he has for his servants.

In a similar conception of God there is only room for fear and the scrupulous observation that everything is prescribed (set): nothing more and nothing less.

The parable, therefore, has the purpose of making one understand the true nature of the

relationship between God and man. It is completely opposite one of fright and the servant's fear. The disciple of Jesus must move himself into a relationship of love; only from that, can courage, generosity, liberty, even the courage to run the necessary risks, spring.

God, through His Son, puts his trust in man and finds joy in offering his gifts to each one freely; and He does this in a personalized way, based on what we are up to receive. The point is to recognize and welcome with thanksgiving the gifts received from God, without making comparisons with those of others, but committing ourselves to respond to them with our very life: no one else can do it for me!

The Lord asks us to become aware of our qualities in order to put them to the service of others, to put them at the service of the Kingdom that is coming. Let us bear fruit from our coins, let us identify them and then, let us give them to our brothers and sisters!

Jesus does not put up with a defeatist and whiny attitude on the part of our fraternities, but He invites us to be industrious and productive. The coins are the responsibilities that we are called to assume.

"To everyone who has, will be given more, ...but he who does not have, even that which he has will be taken away."

In the symbolism of the parable, the silver coins of the king are the good of the Reign of God, that is, all that makes a person grow, and that reveals the presence of God: love, service, sharing. He who hides within himself for fear of losing the little that he has, will lose even what little he has. Therefore, the person who does not think of himself, but gives himself to others, will grow and will receive, surprisingly, everything that he has given becomes even more: "one hundred times more" (Mark 10, 30). "He who wants to save his life, will lose his life, he who has the courage to lose it, will save it". (Luke 9,24; 17,33; Matthew 10,39; 16,25; Mark 8,35).

The third servant is afraid and does nothing. He does not want to lose anything and, for this reason, he doesn't earn anything. He loses even the little bit that he has. The kingdom is a risk. He who does not run the risk, loses the Kingdom!

Grant us, Lord, that the gifts that you have given us may bear fruit, to have a large and generous heart like yours, Lord, who loves life!

May our Saints intercede for us.

Fr. Marco Tasca, OFM Conv.