



## Secular Franciscan Order Our Lady of the Angels Regional Fraternity

December 20, 2012

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

It is my great pleasure and joy to greet you in the name of the Regional Executive Council with our best wishes and heartfelt prayers for you, for your fraternities and for your families as we celebrate the great gift to us of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ this Christmas. We recall his birth at Bethlehem 2000 years ago and we prepare our hearts for his coming in glory. We also take this time as Franciscans to recall the words of our Holy Father, St. Francis as he reminds us in the Letter to the Faithful, (the first Rule of the Order of Penitents and which forms the prologue of our current Rule), where he reminds us that we are to carry him within us and make him present in the world by our living:

We are mothers, when we carry him in our heart and body (cf. 1 Cor 6:20) through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience; we give birth to him through a holy life which must give life to others by example (cf. Mt 5:16).

May this Christmas be an opportunity for you to reflect on your profession promise to live the Rule by carrying out St. Francis' wish that we indeed give birth to Christ by the manner of our living. Let us recall as well, especially during this Year of Faith that we are not only called to personal sanctity but to be zealous evangelizers proclaiming the Gospel with power and enthusiasm especially by the witness of our lives, by the decisions and the choices we make each day on behalf of the poor and the marginalized, by our care for creation and by our efforts to promote justice and peace in our world and in our families and fraternities.

We have just witnessed, sadly once again, a horrific tragedy in our society in the events which transpired in the mass murder of innocents in Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT. We join in prayer for the repose of the souls of these children and their teachers who lost their lives in this senseless event and for their families and the survivors as well as they try to cope with the aftermath. The world cries out for healing and for peace. It is up to each of us as bearers of the Franciscan charism to be instruments of peace and healing for our world. As we recall the coming of the Prince of Peace and especially as we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Innocents on December 28<sup>th</sup>, let us pray for peace and healing for the people of Newtown and for our nation as well.

God bless and keep you.

Fraternally,

Ronald L. Pihokker, OFS  
Regional Minister