

# SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

## OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS REGIONAL FRATERNITY

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Peace and all good!

Last week, after our fraternity Christmas dinner, I was reflecting on fraternity life. This past year, two of our members transferred to other fraternities--one in California and another closer to his home here in NJ. One member has requested to be excused from the fraternity (although we hope to see him from time to time), and one long-excused member has returned. We have four Spirit-filled women in initial formation who are waiting for Admission and Profession.

I'll bet you all experience similar changes, joys and sorrows in your own fraternities. We wait for people to return to us. We wait to see those whom we love and miss. We wait to be admitted or professed in the fraternity.

It seems like we are always waiting.

Right now, during the season of Advent, we are waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. As Franciscans we have a special devotion to the Incarnation. We are in awe that God would humble Himself to become one of us. So, we wait with great anticipation.

We wait and we prepare. We buy gifts, decorate trees, bake lots of treats, and clean the house. We prepare spiritually too... a little more prayer, some meditation on Scripture, sacramental confession. We try to be nicer to those around us and, perhaps, give a little more of ourselves to others.

Did you ever consider how many Advents we have spent waiting? We rejoice on Christmas as if it were really the end of waiting. But that's not it at all. We Franciscans feel a sense of anticipation every day because, for us, Advent is every day. We are filled with the hope that we are one day closer to being with Jesus for eternity.

Christmas is also every day for us, and we are joyful, because we know that our Lord and Savior chooses to dwell among us and within us

Our "conversion" as Franciscans is "daily." We are constantly preparing because we know that Jesus is not only with us on December 25th. He is present in our joys and accompanies us in our sorrows. He is here in our fraternities and our families. He is here in the poor and the forgotten, in the immigrant and the stranger. He is here in the wonders of nature. He is here in the Eucharist.

If we just stop for a minute and appreciate what He has already given us, it becomes clear. Through the goodness of the Father, the example and sacrifice of the Son, and the love and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we have been given a taste of what is to come. Once we see and appreciate our blessings, we will desire Him even more. We will long for a fuller experience of our Lord and Savior.

And so, we continue to wait and hope...

May the remainder of your Advent be fruitful, and may the joy of Christmas be with you always.



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