

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

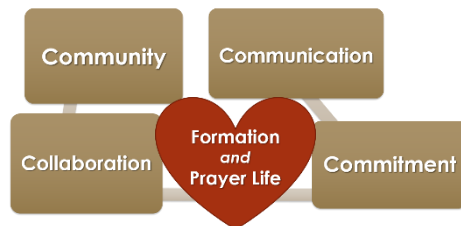
Here we are again, entering a brand-new year. I'm sure many of us have made a few resolutions regarding health and time management. I certainly have! At this time of year, we, along with everyone else, want to do better. We resolve to change and be transformed into better versions of ourselves.

Of course, we Franciscans should be very good at this. We see every day as an opportunity to start fresh in our journey to the Father. Metanoia, daily conversion, is a big part of our lives.

I'd like to suggest that this might be a good time to think about and understand more about fraternity and the vital role it plays in our lives as Franciscans.

To be successful and life-giving, **Fraternity** at all levels needs some special ingredients:

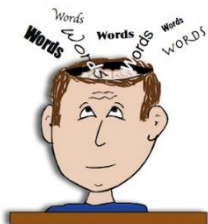
- **Community**
 - Our **life in fraternity** with all it entails, including the acceptance of and empathy for our brothers and sisters. **Does it feel like family?**
- **Collaboration**
 - Our willingness to **work together toward any common goal** or project taken on by the fraternity. We are especially concerned with helping one another on our journey to the Father and in **reaching out** to those in need. **Do we get involved?**



- **Communication**
 - Our realization that communication does not only mean talking; it also means **listening** to one another. It takes great patience and humility to truly listen to others, especially when we don't agree. **Do we listen?**
- **Commitment**
 - Our daily recollection of what we have **promised at profession**. **Do we make our Franciscan life a priority?**

These ingredients are nurtured by **Formation and prayer**.

We have many sources of initial and ongoing **formation materials** available to us, but we should choose wisely. It can be easy to forget that formation **must be more than information**. No matter how much we learn, how much we read, how many talks and retreats we attend, even how much we pray, **if formation does not transform us, we need to reexamine our goals**.



The same is true of prayer. Our **prayer** is not just words. It should **change us** and make us better. By striving to **pray in community**, relying on the **Holy Spirit** and remembering the **humility shown by God** in becoming one of us, we move forward in our journey.

I will leave you to start 2018 with the questions I will be asking myself throughout the year:

- How am I transformed through my life as a Secular Franciscan?
- What is my commitment according to the Rule and Constitutions?
- How am I brought closer to God through my profession?
- Why is fraternity an important part of my life?
- Through my words and actions, do others know that I am a Franciscan? Do they even realize that I am a Christian?

Please keep your new Regional Executive Council in your prayers. You will certainly be in ours.

Peace and blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Diane".

Diane