

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we are deep in Advent, very close to Christmas. Almost every door is open on the Advent calendar. We prayed the fourth O Antiphon at Evening Prayer tonight and four candles flicker on the Advent wreath.

As always, when I was praying this morning, I thought of you and how happy and blessed I am to have you all in my life. I wondered if you have been able to stop for a few quiet moments to consider the great gift we have been given as Franciscans. St. Francis has made us aware, through his example and teachings, of just how awesome the birth of Christ is.

We possess the gift of knowing that Jesus, our Lord and Savior, humbled himself to be born in a manger. GOD emptied himself to become one of us! GOD wants to have a relationship with US. WOW!

This is why, as Franciscans, we are extra joyful at this time of year. Even though we might get busy with the "worldly" side of Christmas, deep in our hearts, those Advent candles burn brightly-especially the white one. We long for the coming of the Lord because his love and sacrifice are the biggest and best gifts we could ever receive.

Thank you, Jesus, for being born into this world. Thank you for inspiring St. Francis. Thank you for my vocation. And, thank you for giving me my brothers and sisters!

May your Christmas be blessed as you rejoice in the coming of our Savior. Please keep your Regional Executive Council in your Christmas prayers. You are in ours!

Peace to you and you families,

Diane

December 20, 2016