

# Newsletter: Divine Mercy Region Secular Franciscan Order



Lower Michigan and Toledo, Ohio

December, 2013

## From Our Regional Minister

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“Holy, Holy, Holy,  
Lord God Almighty,  
who is and who was  
and who is to come.  
Let us praise and  
exalt Him above all  
forever.”

(St. Francis of Assisi,  
the Praises)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

NAFRA (national fraternity) has informed the regional ministers that CIOFS (International fraternity) is requesting all Secular Franciscans to complete a demographic survey. At the national fraternity meeting in Kansas City, the regional ministers inquired of Tom Bello the National minister, as to what was the purpose of the demographic survey. The ministers were informed that CIOFS had requested the survey at the request of the Vatican. In light of the fact that the Vatican is making the request for a survey, I am joining with all of the other regional ministers in requesting all Franciscans in the Divine Mercy Region to complete the survey. Shortly, your ministers will be receiving the demographic survey. I trust that you will all cooperate by quickly completing the survey and returning it to your minister. Thank you for your anticipated cooperation and assistance.

Jim Howard OFS,  
Divine Mercy Regional Minister.



### We're on the Web!

See us at: [www.divinemercuryregion.org](http://www.divinemercuryregion.org)

Please send stories and pictures of your fraternity's events to Jan or Linda:  
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*As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the firstborn of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ. A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ. ~ Our Holy Rule, Art. 13*

*Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity. The faith of St. Francis, who often said, "I see nothing bodily of the Most High Son of God in this world except His most holy body and blood," should be the inspiration and pattern of their Eucharistic life. ~ Our Holy Rule, Art. 13*

### **Around Our Region**

The annual Divine Mercy Regional Formation opportunity was held the weekend of November 1st - 3rd and was thoroughly enjoyed by all! The Formation Ministers and Teams, as well as our Regional Executive Council and Fraternity Ministers attended the weekend. Also attending for the day on Saturday were Inquirers, Candidates, and Newly Professed from the local Fraternities in our Region. Our theme this year was from NAFRA and we considered how to "Be the Bridge - Accept All People as a Gift of God." Our keynote speakers were our beloved Poor Clares of Michigan, Sisters Dianne & Laura (who live in Saginaw). They spoke to us about how our "Rule is a Model of Transformation for Us." Also addressing the group was our Regional Minister Jim Howard, Formation Minister Patti Reynolds who spoke about "Being the Bridge," Ray Boisvenue and volunteers who offered "A Franciscan Musing about Francis and The Sultan," Formation Team Member David Seitz who spoke on "Humility," Lori Fedewa, Newly Professed, who spoke of "St. Francis and Just Faith," and finally, Loren Connell, OFM who brought to the table a talk on "Eucharistic Life Through the Lens of Being a Franciscan." We had many times of prayer, including the Liturgy of the Hours, Eucharistic Adoration and a Litany of the Saints from a YouTube video, as well as our Sunday Liturgy. Being together with our brothers and sisters from around the Region is always a time of laughter and sharing! Please plan on joining us next year on Saturday, November 1st, 2014 in Saginaw!

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## The Meaning Behind The Song

The twelve days of Christmas are the twelve days between Christmas Day, December 25th, the birth of Jesus, and the Epiphany, January 6th, the day Christians celebrate the arrival of the Magi (Wise Men) and the revelation of Christ as the light of the world. The Christmas song, "The Twelve Days of Christmas" may sound silly and contrived to many of us. But it actually had its origins in religious symbolism - and with a serious purpose. It dates from a time of religious persecution. The song, "The Twelve Days of Christmas," was written as a kind of secret catechism that could be sung in public without fear of arrest - a learning or memory aid to Christians, in fact. The song can be taken at two levels of interpretation - the surface meaning, or the hidden meaning known only to the Christians involved. Each element is a code word for a religious truth. Here are the meanings for each of the twelve days:

1. The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus.
2. The two turtledoves are the Old and New Testaments.
3. Three French hens stand for faith, hope and love.
4. The four calling birds are the four Gospels.
5. The five gold rings recall the Hebrew Torah (Law), or the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament.
6. The six geese a-laying stand for the six days of creation.
7. The seven swans a-swimming represent the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.
8. The eight maids a-milking are the eight Beatitudes.
9. Nine ladies dancing are the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit.
10. The ten lords a-leaping are the Ten Commandments.
11. Eleven pipers piping represent the eleven faithful Apostles.
12. Twelve drummers drumming symbolize the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostles Creed.

If you think Jesus being symbolized as a partridge in a pear tree sounds blasphemous, remember: "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How often would I have sheltered thee under my wings, as a hen does her chicks, but thou wouldst not have it so." (Luke 13:34 and Matthew 23:34) The "true love" in the song refers to God Himself. The "me" receiving the gifts is every Christian. So that "silly" song we sing at Christmas time has more meaning than we thought!

**A Holy and Blessed Christmas to You  
And a very Happy New Year!**

From Divine Mercy Region

