



# THE CANTICLE

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Divine Mercy Fraternity • Secular Franciscan Order • Vero Beach, Florida • February 2019

Regular monthly gathering  
Sunday, **February 10, 2019** at 2:00-4:00 pm  
**Chapter of Elections**  
Doors open 1:30 pm

## Agenda and Schedule

2.00 Opening, Reports, etc. (*briefly!*)

### 2:10 **Chapter of Elections**

The elections are coordinated by brothers and sisters of the Region. It will probably take up to 2 hours to complete.

**Refreshments:** None needed (no time)

**Council Meeting:** February 16, 2019 at St. John of the Cross. Further info see Minister

**Remember in your prayers:** All fraternity members, especially Marie, Fred, Stan and Virginia. Please pray for Nick (Joanne's husband) for healing. See fraternity's prayer request notebook for other intentions.

## God's Loving Gaze

Pope Francis is quoted: "How beautiful is the gaze with which Jesus regards us - how full of tenderness. Let us never lose trust in the patience and mercy of God." (April 7, 2013). About 5 years ago, our Fraternity attended a Franciscan Retreat at St. Lucie Church in Port St. Lucie. Fr. Vincent Rubino, OFM Conv., talked about the Admonitions of Saint Francis, and on God's loving Gaze.

I remembered he talked of God's Gaze, a term one encounters in writings about Heaven and particularly concerning the Life of St. Clare of Assisi. Excerpted from the Letter of His Holiness John Paul II for the Eighth Centenary of the Birth of Saint Clare of Assisi (Aug. 11, 1993): "The Spirit creates an image of God's Son in the Christian. Clare and her sisters are called "spouses of the Holy Spirit": an expression not common in the Church's history, in which a sister, a nun, is always described as the "spouse of Christ". However, here we have the resonance of some expressions from Luke's account of the annunciation (cf. Lk 1:26-38), which become key words for expressing Clare's experience: the "Most High", the "Holy Spirit", the "Son of God", the "handmaid of the Lord" and, lastly, that "over-shadowing" which for Clare is her investiture, when her hair was shorn and fell at the foot of our Lady's altar in the Portiuncula, "before her bridal chamber, as it were" (cf. LegCl 8).

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"The Spirit of the Lord and his holy manner of working", which is given to us in Baptism, is that of creating in a Christian the image of the Son of God. In solitude and silence, which Clare chooses as a form of life for herself and her sisters within the most poor walls of her monastery half-way between Assisi and the Portiuncula, the curtain of smoke of words and earthly things fades away, and communion with God becomes a reality: love which is born, and which gives of itself.

Clare, bowed down in contemplating the Infant of Bethlehem, exhorts us: Since this vision "is the splendor of eternal glory, the brilliance of eternal light and the mirror without blemish, gaze upon that mirror each day.... Look at... the poverty of him who was placed in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. O marvelous humility! O astonishing poverty! The King of angels, the Lord of heaven and earth, is laid in a manger" (4Leg 14, 19-21)."

This loving relationship of the contemplative nun with God is so special, so loving, so rich that there is nothing else they need or should want. All Franciscans whose interior life is strong may share in this special relationship with God, as indeed, everyone can. Through Baptism, we are all made in His Image. Ref. 1 Cor. 6:19 "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?"

God's Loving Gaze is experienced in our Soul and is a Gift of God. I pray that the Holy Spirit will give me the words to write more on this subject on other days.

*Bishop Robert Barron writes:*

"What is it about a face? When we meet someone, we study that person's face." "The face gives away the soul. We can read so much in a person's facial expression. So much of the texture of what she's thinking, feeling, and experiencing can be sensed in the face. When we want to be honest and direct, we look someone in the face. When we resolve to meet a difficult situation, we face up to it."

"In the book of Numbers, the Lord instructs Moses how he wants the priests to bless the people: "Speak to Aaron and his sons and tell them: this is how you shall bless the Israelites. Say to them: The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace" (Numbers 6:23-26)." St. Francis used this blessing and so do his followers at the end of our gatherings.

"This is all about the face of Yahweh. We often speak about man's search for God. But the thrust here is in a different direction. It is much more interested in God's quest for us. God looks upon us with love and searches us out when we run from him." *Bsp. Barron*

When we consider God and his love for us, we look up to him with the eyes of the soul. Gazing upon such good and beautiful things brings delight to the mind, an even greater delight than what we find in created things. For example, when we meditate on our crucified Lord, he becomes present to us in our thoughts. We retreat into our souls, where he promised to be present with those living in grace (John 14:23). St. Teresa of Avila remarks on this very simply, saying, "He is always looking at you; can you not turn the eyes of your soul to look at him? Think of the experience of being gazed upon by someone who loves you and whom you love. In that gaze — penetrating, knowing, benign — you find, not oppression, but joy and peace. That's how God looks upon you. (*partly from Dominicana blog*).

His Gaze is tender, loving and caring for us who love Him.

Fred Schaeffer, OFS

1/14/2019 (written for February 2019 Canticle)