



“I have done what is mine to do; may Christ teach you yours!” —Francis of Assisi

On the morning of Sunday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, Bishop Paul D. Sirba collapsed on his way to celebrate Sunday Mass at St Rose in Proctor. Efforts to revive him were unsuccessful and so his ministry among us came to an end. Bishop Paul hired me over nine years ago to assist him with the financial affairs of the diocese. In my time with him, I was able to appreciate him as a Bishop, coworker and friend. I think it would be good to reflect a little on his life and the gifts he shared. First, I learned that he was a man of very few character defects. In other words, I observed no anger, pride, jealousy, impatience etc. I always found him to be a supportive, encouraging employer, who trusted me with things that he felt I had more expertise with. Almost every meeting started with him expressing gratitude for the work I was doing. As a Bishop and pastor, he took interest in my family, interests, and faith life. He attended the adoption of our little girl at the court house last April, and was supportive of Liz in her decision to stay at home to care for her, even though it meant losing a valued director of catechesis. As a friend, I always knew that he had my back. In my work, I often must ask people to do things they don't want to do. I know that people approached him with complaints and pleas to avoid the difficult. I never felt betrayed or unsupported in the work I was doing. He had a good sense of humor even during dark times. He wasn't afraid to show emotion when his heart was heavy.



**Bishop Sirba at our establishment Mass. He was laid to rest in the peace of Christ December 6, 2019.**

While the diocese certainly has challenges ahead, Bishop Paul was able to bring it through perhaps its most challenging period in history, the development and implementation of a strategic plan, and the settlement of a bankruptcy. While I feel his absence painfully, I also feel blessed to have served the Church with him and share some of the burden he carried.

As secular Franciscans, we should pray for our Bishops who have to work in such difficult times. May we also pray to God for a new Bishop who will lay down his life for his flock.

—Franz

**This month's Fraternity Gathering**

**December 15, 2019, 12:30 p.m. – Pot luck and Christmas party.**

Kathy Schmidt's house  
(See attached map)

**Agenda:**

1. Opening prayer – Franz: Blessing of the Creche
2. Presentation of prayer partners/prayers
3. Gather up Damiano donations/picture
4. Business
  - a. Approve minutes, assign ministries
  - b. Treasurer reports, bills, receipts
  - c. Formation report
  - d. JPIC report
5. Video on Francis/discussion
6. Vocation and closing prayers

Next month's meeting: January 19, 2020.

Ongoing formation – Bob: Models of the Church, Part 1

**JPIC – (Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation)**

Last reminder for items for Damiano:

- Winter coats
- hats and gloves
- boots.
- Socks & underwear, especially men's
- Household items
- Toiletry items

— Darlene

## Gospel Reading, 3rd Sunday of Advent: Matt 11:2-11

When John the Baptist heard in prison of the works of the Christ, he sent his disciples to Jesus with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"

Jesus said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

As they were going off, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine clothing? Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces. Then why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: *Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you.* Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

## Faith Matters: Reflections from your Spiritual Assistant

**Article 24.** *To foster communion among members, the council should organize regular and frequent meetings of the community as well as meeting with other Franciscan groups, especially with youth groups. It should adopt appropriate means for growth in Franciscan and ecclesial life and encourage everyone to a life of fraternity. The communion continues with deceased brothers and sisters through prayer for them.*

Last month's reflection on Article 21 looked at the importance of the fraternity council, particularly to "animate and guide" the fraternity. Article 24, if you will, fills in the job description for the council. Allow me to break apart the elements listed here:

1. Organize regular and frequent meetings of the fraternity
2. Organize meetings with other Franciscan groups, especially youth groups
3. Adopt appropriate means for growth in Franciscan and ecclesial life
4. Encourage everyone to a life of fraternity, remembering that . . .
5. The communion continues with deceased brother and sisters through prayer for them.

How the council decides to help the fraternity live these out is part of its leadership role. These points also raise questions for all of us to consider. How often should we meet? Most fraternities meet monthly; some meet more often.

Who are the Franciscan groups with whom we should be meeting? We know about the Regional gatherings. We have started collaborating with the Hayward emerging fraternity. We also have the FSE apprentice group in Cloquet. How do we engage youth groups?

How do we best grow in our Franciscan walk? In our prayer lives? This means both individually and our efforts together to pray and serve.

How do we promote the life of the fraternity? Whatever we can do to strengthen our relationships strengthens the fraternity. And of course, those who have died are still part of us. So we remember them in our prayer.

As you see, the Rule gives the fraternity council some awesome responsibilities. Let us always support them with our presence, our efforts, and our prayers.

—Bob

## THE FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil and Jeff Keane



"We should make Mary lie down in the straw. She's 'specting a baby, you know"

from *JoyfulNoiseletter.com*  
©Bil & Jeff Keane  
Reprinted with permission