

***"We continued to work to attain the goal for which we have banded together."***

I thought you might be wondering why you haven't received an Echo since the end of our 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter and rather than give you a long list of very good reasons I thought that the above quote from Mother Theresa would adequately answer your question. Have you ever asked yourself what the goal in that quote is referring to? We actually recite it everyday during the recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours and I wondered if you had taken any time to think about that goal. However, that is food for thought that we can come back to at a later time.

I want to share with you some thoughts that I shared in my monthly letter to the members of the Franciscan Federation this month. As you know, Holy Name Cathedral caught fire on Wednesday of this week and there was much dismay and sadness about the fact that fire and its aftermath had once again attacked this structure which stands as a symbol of the faith of the people in the Archdiocese of Chicago. As you have probably heard from local and national news, the water damage done to the building is more severe than the fire damage. However, there is hope and the structure will be able to be repaired.

The concern shown for this material structure turned my thoughts to the fact that seldom do we consider the inner structure of our own spirits. We are busy about "saying" our prayers and we "doing" our devotions and "meeting" the requirements which fulfill our obligations as Franciscan religious women. Of course all of these are good things and very important in our lives.

However our holy father, Saint Francis says: *"The brothers and sisters are to love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind and with all their strength, and to love their neighbor as themselves. Let them glorify the Lord in all they do. For he has sent them into the world so that they might give witness by word and work to his voice and to make known to all that the Lord alone is God."* (C. 9~

*The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the third Order Regular of St. Francis)*

This part of our Franciscan Rule tells us that our whole being should love the Lord, and that we are to give witness to his voice and make him known. In order to love him we must know him and to witness to his voice, we must hear, know and recognize it. How often do we give ourselves the luxury of silence and stillness? Even when we pray we often think that unless we are thinking, speaking or reading, we are not praying.

It is in the stillness and the silence that we can hear the voice of our God speaking to our hearts. Often we are afraid of what we might hear.

Lent is quickly coming. Perhaps this Lent you and I can commit to silent stillness. We might hear God's voice in a new way, learn to love Jesus on a deeper level and open ourselves to experience God in a way we never have before. Let's allow God to do with us what he will rather than drawing our own diagram.

We are graced with living in a time of change and transformation. We must live into and through this time with peaceful hearts. Listening to what Francis tells us will enable our interior structures to be renovated and strengthened.

God offers us an invitation this Lent. He calls us to silent stillness. The invitation is personal for each of us. His message will be unique for each of us. Listen for his voice, answer his invitation. Respond soon, your Lord, your Love waits for you.

HAPPY

LENT!