

# INSPIRED TO SERVE

Psalm 46:10 He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."



## *From the Director's Desk*

BY DENICE FOOSE, BCC, MBA  
CCC DIRECTOR

"Give your servant a heart to understand...how to discern...." I Kings 3:9 *The New Jerusalem Bible*

This petition was Solomon's response to God's question about what the young ruler would like from God.

The dramatic dialogue occurred when God appeared to Solomon in a dream.

Reflective of his maturity and desire to rule effectively, Solomon specially asked for wisdom in governing his people wisely and the ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

More broadly, Solomon asked for a "discerning heart."

This issue of *Inspired to Serve* is devoted to the themes of listening and discernment. Wouldn't you agree listening and discernment are integrally tied? Keen discernment requires attentive listening, and careful listening requires thoughtful discernment. It's equally true that both concepts are fundamental to Christian spirituality.

God may not have appeared to you in a dream with the question of what you wanted from God. But in your calling as a Pastoral Visitor, you can draw upon Solomon's answer to God's question. You can make your own petition for a discerning heart as you listen carefully to patients and family members. In fact, that's a worthy petition for all of us – to cultivate a heart that listens well and is able to pastorally discern what we hear. We can be assured that God will answer this prayer, if we but have an understanding heart.

## *CHECK US OUT!*

**We have expanded our presence on social media. Be sure to follow us on Instagram and like us on Facebook to stay up to date on the daily happenings in the Catholic Chaplain Corps.**

**@Catholicchaplaincorps**

**Want to share something with us for social media? Email your photos and videos to [Kbond@archgh.org](mailto:Kbond@archgh.org)**

# From the Education Desk

BY REV. THEODORE M. SMITH, D.MIN  
CCC FACULTY

"I truly believe – that from the Holy Scriptures and my own experiences – that out of the many voices that speak to us, voices of blessing or otherwise, as we discern the Voice of the Great Shepherd, we find our own deepest identity..."

So writes Leighton Ford in the introduction of his memoir, entitled *A Life of Listening: Discerning God's Voice and Discovering Our Own*. This is an insightful, inspiring volume by a person of heart-felt faith. For many years Leighton Ford served an evangelist with Billy Graham and was deeply involved in international efforts to promote the Christian faith. He reflects back on his own rich experience in ministry and provides insights from other writers of the faith.

One particularly helpful quote that Mr. Ford cites comes from Gordon T. Smith (*The Voice of Jesus*, Downer Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2003, p 24.) The topic is about discernment. No one can presume to discern for another...

This is why discernment is such a vital skill in the Christian life. We can discern only for ourselves. Further, we mature in the Christian faith only when we learn to discern for ourselves and thus develop the capacity, and hopefully the courage, to listen and act in a manner congruent with the voice of Jesus.

Of course, we have the wisdom of the Catholic heritage and trust it to assist us, but Gordon Smith's thesis about the importance of capacity and courage to listen and act in accordance with Jesus' voice is wise counsel.

This illuminating excerpt is representative of Ford's entire memoir. It's a wise resource.



CCC Lay Chaplain Nannette Coons has completed her fourth unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and will begin her final submission of written reports and documents, as well as her panel interview on her way to Board Certification. Congratulations Nannette!!



Shown in the photo is the Pastoral Certificate 2018-2019 class!

The two year Certificate in Pastoral Care graduated the inaugural class in December. Twenty participants completed over 200 hours in classroom training in addition to their required clinical hours in ministry. Congratulations to a great group that is making a difference in our Diocese!

## ENRICHMENT SEMINAR SCHEDULE

### TMC

(St. Dominic's Village)  
6-8pm

February 12th

May 27

September 16th

December 2

### Kingwood

7-9 pm

February 10

March 9

September 14

October 12

November 9

### Region 1

February 6

February 19

March 28

May 6

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# Inspiring Feedback

BY ROMANI PERERA, CCC LAY CHAPLAIN

We recently received some important and encouraging feedback:

Lay Chaplains Assessed by TMC Chaplaincy Staff

The CCC office recently distributed an evaluation instrument to TMC Spiritual Care colleagues to determine the impact made by the CCC strategic plan since being installed. They were asked to assess five areas:

1. Priest response time to urgent and non-urgent referrals,
2. Communication follow-up concerning referrals for a Priest,
3. Ministry provided by Pastoral Visitors (PVs),
4. Cost effectiveness accrued with enhanced PV ministry, and
5. Patient care metrics concerning the ministry provided by PVs, and overall institutional impact of PVs.

Two directors and four staff chaplains have participated thus far in the survey. We are delighted to share their assessment. Simply put, directors and staff chaplains expressed high praise for the administrative ministry performed by our current Lay Chaplains: Dawn Malone and Romani Perera. They used superlative language in their assessments. It was particularly striking they described the dramatic improvement in each of the five areas. They extolled the effectiveness of Dawn and Romani and, by implication, the strategic value of these administrative / ministry positions, along with the quality ministry provided by CCC Priests and Pastoral Visitors.

**Priest Response Time:** In this important area, the assessment offered by TMC directors and staff chaplains spoke of improved response by our Priests to urgent and non-urgent referrals. Admittedly, providing prompt response on a 24-7 basis to TMC hospitals and related institutions is challenging. While the evaluations have a wealth of positive comments, including a couple of vignettes, the bottom line is that implementing our strategic plan has advanced the response time of CCC Priest to TMC hospitals.

**Communion Follow-up:** In responding to the question if follow-up communication concerning Priest referrals had improved, one director said, “absolutely” and commented that “closing the loop” was “critical” to their context. Another director described the difference as “great improvement.”

**Pastoral Visitors (PVs):** This was a three-part question, asking about improved coverage by PVs and better coordination between PVs and staff chaplains; deeper integration and more initiative by PVs with chaplaincy personnel; and enhanced impact of PVs to departments and hospitals. Once again, the assessments were quite positive in all three areas. Better coverage and more coordination? One hospital commented, “more consistent and reliable coverage,” and “yes” better coordination, describing its current level as “seamless.” Another hospital replied, “most assuredly “yes” concerning improved coverage, with “much better” coverage and care. Deeper integration and more initiative? All hospitals affirmed significant advancement in PVs taking initiative in patient care, using a description as “great initiative.” One director was less concerned about integration of PVs with hospital and chaplaincy staffs given the patient acuteness and the institution’s rapid pace. In contrast, another director cited “great improvement” concerning involvement between PVs and chaplaincy staffs. The ministry contribution of Spanish speaking PVs was specifically cited.

**Cost Effectiveness:** The CCC was interested in learning could chaplaincy directors meaningfully estimate personnel savings in light of the enhanced PV ministry led by the Lay Chaplains. One director was abundantly clear: “approximately 2.0 FTEs representing a cost savings of roughly \$160,000.00.

**PV Patient Care Metrics & Overall Impact:** Every month, the CCC office submits statistical data concerning the ministry provided by PVs. Chaplaincy personnel were asked for their assessment of these reports and to assess the overall impact of PVs. Both hospitals were quite affirming in these areas. They find the monthly PV statistical reports “very helpful.” One director is very intentional about sharing this data with the staff chaplains to keep them apprised about the PV’s increased presence. The overall impact of PVs was described as “significant,” closing a huge gap in ministry coverage.

**Conclusion:** This is an excellent report from our colleagues in the TMC. These high compliments represent a well-integrated team effort, something about which we can all be proud. Clearly, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The CCC expresses heart-felt appreciation to the CCC Priests, each Pastoral Visitor, and certainly our esteemed Lay Chaplain colleagues, Dawn and Romani. We are grateful to God and God’s movement among us. As we continue to discern God’s presence in our ministry, our inspiration to serve will be deepened and solidified. In our next edition we will look at Region 1 Woodlands/Conroe and our sister area Kingwood and the many accomplishments and growth there.

## FALL CLASS SCHEDULE

### TMC/Medical Center

St. Dominic's Village

Thursdays

Sept. 10 - Nov. 5

6:30 - 9:00 pm

### Kingwood

Tuesdays

Sept. 8 - Nov. 3

1:00 - 4:00 pm

### Woodlands/Conroe

Tuesdays

Sept. 8 - Nov. 3

6:30 - 9:30 pm

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## SPIRITUAL FORMATION

### Ruah 2020 Silent Retreat

March 6-7

July 31 - August 1

October 30-31

If interested, contact  
Marie Noack at  
[newbeginningsprayer  
@yahoo.com](mailto:newbeginningsprayer@yahoo.com)  
713-927-7534

# *A Journey to Bethlehem*

BY FR. IAN BALISNOMO, CCC PRIEST CHAPLAIN

A week after Thanksgiving, I started posting on Facebook, sending Christmas greetings to everyone. I also started to greet my friends and family and especially the patients and their families at Texas Medical Center. To be honest, I was surprised by the responses of the people, especially the patients themselves. I saw the joy painted in their faces that Christmas brings, in spite of being hospitalized. It seems to me that sickness and health failure are not issues or hindrances for many of us to celebrate the joy of Christmas. Yes! Not all are happy for the coming Christmas, because of their current health situation. But many of them realized the value and the true spirit of Christmas is not about material things, but their relationship to the Son of God born in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago.

As part of my ministry, I love to listen to the different stories of the people in Texas Medical Center. Hearing about their struggle and trials, pain and sadness, joys and happiness as well as their story of victory and triumph. A few days ago, I found myself with a good conversation with the patient who was baptized Catholic but left the Church during his youthful age because of some reason. He shared with me the important meaning of life. He also added that the reason we celebrate Christmas is not because of having or gaining riches of the world but establishing good relationships with our families, neighbors, and God. For him, it is not too late, at the age of 60, to reconcile himself again with his family, who really loved and took care of him.

It's never too late for one who longs to experience the compassionate love of God through the goodness of others. And, how beautiful to come home to the Catholic faith and live in God's purpose. As St. Augustine says "In the first place, if the Word had not human generation, we would not have acquired divine regeneration; He was born so that we might be born again. Christ was born; let no one hesitate to be reborn. (St. Augustine Sermon for the feast of nativity, sermon 189).

Remembering our humble tradition in celebrating Christmas is a great honor and privilege for all of us. We should not only be proud of our own culture and heritage, but let our hearts be grateful and joyful, like Mary, in living our faith in God: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit finds joy in God my savior" (Luke 1:46). Also, we share the joy of Mary and Elizabeth and experience the real presence of God-man in our lives and culture. Mary offers herself in helping her cousin, without expecting any return, as Elizabeth expresses her generosity to Mary, recognizing her being a mother of God.

Our journey is like the journey of Joseph and Mary going to Judea. "In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. [...] And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child" (Luke 2:1-5).

Can we imagine the sacrifice of Joseph and Mary, traveling 90 miles or 160 kilometers, going to Judea in order to fulfill their obligation to register and pay their taxes to the government? The couple experienced a lot of inconvenience in their travel; they had nowhere to stay and had no assurance for their safety. But we never heard them complaining. Instead, they entrust themselves in the hands of God. For Mary, bearing a child for nine months, and willing to travel in this state was one way she gave herself totally to God's plan and purpose. Her heart unceasingly professed until the end of time, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38)

After the birth, the Holy family faced another challenge. when an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: "Rise up, and take the boy and his mother, and flee into Egypt. And remain there until I tell you. For it will happen that Herod will seek the boy to destroy him." And getting up, he took the boy and his mother by night and withdrew into Egypt. (Matthew 2:13-14). The Holy family fled to Egypt for their safety and security. It shows that even the first disciples of Jesus, like Joseph and Mary, experienced difficulties in obeying God's will. But they convinced themselves that their role was to obey and cooperate in God's mysterious plan, even when it gives them discomfort.

In his homily during the "Simbang Gabi" ( Misa de Gallo) in Rome, may the words of our Holy Father Francis inspire and encourage us in living our faith, "I encourage you to increase opportunities for meeting to share your cultural and spiritual wealth, while at the same time allowing yourselves to be enriched by the experiences of others," and "We are all called to practice charity together with those who live in the existential peripheries, using our different gifts to renew the signs of the presence of the Kingdom. Together, we are all called to proclaim the Gospel, the Good News of salvation, in all languages, so as to reach as many people as possible,"

