

# Reflection

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*Offered by Sr. Melanie Paradis  
March 6, 2016*

Good Morning. I'm Sr. Melanie, a member of the leadership team/Provincial Council, and I've been asked to share with you today.

Imagine yourself a member of Jesse's family. You've heard that a famous prophet, Samuel, is coming to visit. He says that he has been sent by God to choose the next king for the people. You wonder, could this be me? Who will be chosen?

Now, imagine yourself at the time of Jesus. You have been blind from birth and you've heard that a great healer will be coming by. Oh, how you wish to be able to see clearly. Is it possible? Could this Jesus be the one to take away your blindness?

Have we not sometime in our lives wanted to be able to see more clearly, through a challenge or difficulty? Or, perhaps we've wondered what is God calling us to do with our lives.

Both of these readings might speak to us personally and in particular lead us to the present moment for this community. We, the Wheaton Franciscans, the US province of the international congregation of the Franciscan Sisters, Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary are in the process of preparing for chapter. This is a gathering that happens every 4 years (yes, a bit like our national elections) of everyone in the province to set direction and elect leadership for the next 4 years.

Just as in the first reading, we too must discern who will make up the best team as elected leaders to lead us into the future. Who is being called to our Provincial Council?

Just as the blind man so wanted to see, we too are asking Jesus to open our eyes so that we can take a close look at who we are and how we are in relationship with others, how we wish to be of service.

About 9 months ago we began planning. This included looking at the big questions presented to us: how can we live more simply, what changes need to be made, who are we now that we have transferred our corporate system to other entities.

In February at our 3 day pre-chapter gathering we received the accountability, or as we call them, fidelity reports from the leaders of our departments and our leadership team, the Provincial Council (a bit like a state of the Union address, but these are state of the province addresses). We also invited each sister and covenant companion to share a personal fidelity report asking the question: how have I been faithful to the charism (energy, spirit, life) of the community? All of this was a sacred time of sharing that provided a broad and deep perspective of the Province.

Now we are in the final days of preparing for this canonical time called chapter, the gathering of the body, this United States province of Franciscans, for reflection, conversation, discernment and election.

As the second reading tells us, we will:

“Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord.”

Beginning Sunday April 17 we will enter into Chapter of Affairs, reflecting, discussing and discerning our future direction.

On Thursday April 21 we will enter the Chapter of Elections, discerning our future leadership team (provincial council).

By Saturday April 23 we will have elected a new team and imagined our future direction.

All of this is no easy task. This is a canonical responsibility as a religious community; we do not take it lightly. Yet, we proceed into this time with  
faith in each other,  
hope in our future together, and  
love for those we serve.

Just as Jesus opened the eyes of the blind man, we too pray to see clearly.

Just as God called David as the next leader, we too pray to elect wisely.

You have received these prayer cards. On one side is our logo and the theme for our Chapter:

Go Forth! Be a blessing in the heart of the world.

On the other side is a special prayer for Chapter written by Sr. Diane.

We invite you, we ask you to pray for us over the next weeks and through our Chapter time.

And maybe, you too will find a way that you can find out what is pleasing to the Lord and

"Go forth and be a blessing in the heart of the world."

Scripture: 4th Sunday of Lent Cycle A

1Samuel 16: 1b, 6-7, 10-13a

Ephesians 5: 8-14

John 9: 1-41