Mission and Heritage Week
October 2017
“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” Romans 12:18

Our theme for this year’s Mission and Heritage Week is “Honoring Our Felician-Franciscan Tradition: Speaking the Language of Peace.” Blessed Mary Angela once wrote, “Remember that everything that disturbs our inner peace comes not from God.” So what is peace? Peace is more than just the absence of war and violence. Peace is not the absence of conflict – but the ability to manage conflict constructively, as an important opportunity for change and increased understanding. Peace is a commitment to understanding, celebrating and learning from differences of all kinds. Peace is a commitment not to harm, but also to nurture all individuals regardless of race, creed or gender. With all the struggles taking place in the world today, the scripture passage speaks to breaking the cycle of pain, violence, and hatred. In the quote when Paul says, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone,” we see the conditional nature of this verse. The phrases “if possible” and “as far as it depends on you” shows that you can’t force others to do what is right, but we have to try. This is part of the Felician-Franciscan tradition.

Our mission and heritage is filled with the language of peace. We see the peacemaker in the story of St. Francis in the legend of the thieves of Borgo San Sepolcro. In this legend Brother Angelo rebuked and cast out three violent thieves because of the crimes they committed. When St. Francis heard this, he disapproved of Brother Angelo’s actions. He told him that Christ dined with sinners in order to call them to repent. So he told Brother Angelo to take his sack of bread and find the three thieves and make peace with them. He found them, begged their forgiveness for his harshness and they were shocked at what was happening. They saw peace and mercy in action. As a result, they repented and joined the order. This is similar to the words of Blessed Mary Angela where she writes, “Reflect on your words first before you utter them so that you will not say something inappropriate or something which will offend another and perhaps which you will later regret for saying.” What do we need to do in order to be peaceful people?

This Mission and Heritage week is a time when we can strive more actively to become peacemakers and speak more often the language of peace. It is part of the call to bringing about the spiritual renewal of the world. Let us allow God to surprise us, to open our eyes and hearts to what more it is we are called to do. St. Francis once wrote, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. A servant of God cannot know how much patience and humility he has within as long as he is content. When the time comes, however, when those who should make him content do the opposite, he has as much patience and humility as he has at that time and no more.” Amen!