



ANIMATING AND GUIDING THE ORDER – FOCUS GROUPS A CIOFS MANAGEMENT OF THE ORDER PROJECT

By Mary Stronach, OFS, International Councilor

Regional ministers from around the country, spiritual assistants, guests and observers gathered in teams of six or seven to discuss the Secular Franciscan Order during the National Chapter in October.

Their task was to address two questions:

1. What will it take to develop our Order fully?
2. What can be done to bring about that development?

The energetic discussions revealed a vision and understanding that, while we are talking about a world order, it is very personal and spiritual. We need “spiritually mature members, responsive to the spirit and a commitment to better formation,” they said. Put the Franciscan charism and history, the Rule, Constitution, and Statutes at the forefront of both initial and ongoing formation. We should be forming our councils at all levels, forming our formators and our spiritual assistants.

We should take formation to a new level by using the Internet – social media, webinars, accessing our websites more frequently. Let’s have “technology partners,” they said, who can assist those who need help with the new technology. We should also be using the social media and media to make the world aware of us.

Communication is important, both vertical and horizontal, they said. It is a part of relationship building – between one member and another, one fraternity and another, one level and another. Relationship building should spread to church and community, they added. Seculars should be taking servant leadership roles in their parishes.

Fraternity is a privileged place, a “community of love.” It encourages and empowers us to leave our “comfort zone.” Communicate. Collaborate. Establish fraternity apostolates. Make gatherings vibrant – full of joy, energy, and camaraderie.

The Focus Groups provided much food for thought, many ideas for us as an order to consider and reflect upon. The responses will be used to help develop questions for a survey for members of the OFS in the United States.

Once all responses have been collated, the Management of the Order Committee will be preparing a two-page report that will be sent to the Presidency at CIOFS. Reports from all the National Fraternities from around the world will be reviewed, compiled and brought to the next General Chapter to determine the priorities and the future of the Order.