

The National Chapter

was a reflection of a Franciscan order finding its way in the 21st century while embracing its peace and justice roots.

- Be a powerhouse for renewing the church, the local bishop urged.
- The national minister highlighted the success of the visioning project.
- A service project benefitted 1,000 people coming across the southern border.
- The Formation Team inspired.
- The JPIC Award spotlighted work with immigrants.
- The chapter closed with a commitment to counter violence and division.

Pax Christi Liturgical Retreat Center in Corpus Christi, Texas, hosted the 2019 National Chapter.

***Special section by Robert & Mary Stronach, OFS.
Contributor: Sharon Winzeler, OFS.
Photography by R. Stronach, OFS.***

National Chapter 'Seemed to Have It All'



The chapter erupted into song and dance when the YouFra team began a presentation with blaring funky music.

“They seemed to have it all,” noted one attendee as she was leaving the OFS National Chapter in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Indeed, the agenda was packed. The spirit of the meeting allowed for the gamut of experiences. An upbeat, spontaneous Conga line, thanks to YouFra’s funky music.

Deeply spiritual moments. Discussions on the business of the order. A look at where our Order has been and where it is going, including setting the national Secular Franciscan theme for 2019-2020: *“Journey Together in Love and Compassion.”* And even sharing Star Trek’s Vulcan greeting to Franciscans around the

universe during a group photo op. There were ample moments to get to know participants from around the country, and daily private and communal prayer. Small group huddles encouraged questions and sharing of ideas, enhancing fraternal life. Large group evaluations and decision-making

Continued on next page.



Daily liturgies and ongoing formation spurred truly spiritual moments.



A Star Trek/Vulcan message to the universe: *Live long and prosper...in body and spirit.*





Large group marathon sessions

Continued from previous page. ing marathons opened the door for the Order to tackle the challenges and opportunities confronting seculars now and in the future.

The Chapter took place Oct. 15-20 at Pax Christi Liturgical Retreat Center, hosted by three regional fraternities – *Los Tres Compañeros*, *St. Joan*

of Arc, and *Our Lady of Guadalupe - Empress of the Americas*. It took 80 attendees on a five-day journey through Franciscan spirituality, the future of formation, and a hands-on service project that helped 1000 immigrants at the southern border.

Where the Order has been ... and where the Order is going. Friars who

are truly our brothers (even boogeying and extending Vulcan greetings). Youth embracing the Franciscan charism. Social Justice, peace and integrity of creation. The local bishop's warm welcome. Pax Christi Retreat Center's walls heard it all, absorbed it all ... and blessed the encounter.

-- *Mary Stronach, OFS*



**2019-2020 NATIONAL SECULAR FRANCISCAN THEME:
*Journey Together in Love and Compassion***

Group photo op.

Bishop Mulvey Helps Kick Off National Gathering



Bishop Michael Mulvey



Bob Conces, OFS, provided joyful music at the chapter's opening mass.

URGES OFS TO BE SPIRITUAL POWERHOUSE FOR RENEWING THE CHURCH

By *MARY STRONACH, OFS*

CORPUS CHRISTI, TX – Under a domed ceiling depicting Christ feeding the multitude, Bishop W. Michael Mulvey shared spiritual food with Secular Franciscans as he helped them launch their National Chapter, held Oct. 15 to 20 at Pax Christi Liturgical Retreat Center. It was the first time that the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States held its national gathering in Corpus Christi, with some 80 participants from across the country and Guam.

Like St. Francis, he noted, Secular Franciscans are “called to renew the church with the living spirit of Christ.”

Bishop Mulvey began his homily by sharing an affinity with the Franciscan charism, noting that his grandmother was a Secular Franciscan who brought him to Franciscan gatherings as a child, that his great aunt became a Poor Clare nun, and that he celebrated his second mass as a priest at the tomb of St. Francis in Assisi.

So, “it’s good to be among family.” Bishop Mulvey noted that it sometimes can be hard for people “to accept reality as it is,” and, quoting Pope Francis, they can become “mummified.”

For example, when the Jews were wandering in the desert, they wished they could go back to Egypt. “We want to leave things the way they were, but the promised land is ahead of us... We need a different mentality today,” one that is not “mummifying.”

“Unless we remain in the living spirit of Christ, we dry out and wither,” and “we become mummified.”

The bishop urged Secular Franciscans to work with other groups to help the church. If we “come together – Franciscans as Franciscans, Carmelites as Carmelites, we could be a powerhouse! God has called you to be Franciscan today with the charism of Francis and Clare lived today.”

He said: “Let’s not point fingers at the church. Let’s get in there and help them

as Francis and Clare would have done. Never be a part of the difficulty; be a part of the solution.”

He added: “We are in the desert. It’s not an easy task. But with the body of Christ (Corpus Christi), many parts and one head... we can become a powerhouse of spiritual strength that will renew the Church.”

Quoting the saint of the day, St. Teresa of Avila, he closed with a reassuring message, “If Jesus dwells in a person, that person can endure all things.”

The joyful sound of guitar music was provided by Bob Conces, OFS, from St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity in San Antonio.

At the close of the opening Mass of the Chapter, National Minister Jan Parker, OFS, thanked Bishop Mulvey for his encouragement to rebuild and renew the Church. “The (Franciscan) Rule says we are united most intimately with the Church... We are one body, one Lord. We are with you. You are in our hearts and in our prayers.”

State of the Order

VISIONING TO HOLY NEWNESS

By JAN PARKER, OFS, & MARY BITTNER, OFS
in consultation with the National Executive Council



"In these last times, a new Evangelist, like one of the rivers of Paradise, has poured out the streams of the gospel in a holy flood over the whole world. He preached the way of the Son of God and the teaching of truth in his deeds. In him and through him an unexpected joy and a holy newness came into the world. A new spirit was placed in the hearts of the elect and a holy anointing has been poured out in their midst." (1 Celano 89)

Praise God for the holy flood of the gospel life poured out over all the world by St. Francis who brought an unexpected joy and holy newness to us all. Let us give thanks for our Franciscan vocation and the gift of fraternity.

I am thankful for this gathering, and for the many wonderful gatherings that we have experienced this past year; thankful for the work of the International Council; and that of the councils at every level; and very thankful for each of you. God has brought us, brothers and sisters all, into yet another privileged place – this gathering of the National Fraternity Council. May we experience the joy of fraternity, as fraternity is not only our priority, but our true help.

This past June we concluded a year of celebration for the 40th anniversary of our Rule, a Rule that was a response to the call by Vatican II to all religious to return to their roots. We recalled that when the 1978 Rule was presented, our Minister General, Manuela Mattioli, wrote: ***"With the promulgation of the new rule, the renewal of the Secular Fraternity has reached a decisive and powerful moment..."*** The Order rejoiced and looked forward in hope that this Rule would indeed renew us and help us become what God had called us to be.

Much has happened in the intervening 40 years, beginning with writing the new Rule and Constitutions, the unification of the Order, and the establishment of structures to serve a worldwide Order. Our International Council (CIOFS) first focused on formation as the most important element of our renewal. Launching into the "management of the Order" project, the Presidency noted: "Structurally, unification has occurred, but we still experience problems on how the sense of unity and belonging are perceived. We have not fully embraced the implications of our Rule and Constitutions; have not fully understood our vocation, identity and mission; and have not yet lived up to what the Church expects of us." The fulfillment of our hope for renewal has not yet been fully realized. We still wait in longing for the holy newness that Francis himself yearned for.

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National Minister Jan Parker, OFS



Let us look to another passage from Celano to deepen our understanding of what holy newness meant to Francis.

“Francis burned with a great desire to return to his earliest steps toward humility; rejoicing in hope because of his boundless love, he planned to call his body back to its original servitude, although it had now reached its limit. He cut away completely the obstacle of all cares and silenced the noise of all concerns. When he had to relax this rigor because of illness, he used to say: “Let us begin, brothers, to serve the Lord God, for up to now we have done little or nothing.” He did not consider that he had already attained his goal, but tireless in pursuit of holy newness, he constantly hoped to begin again. (1 Celano 103)

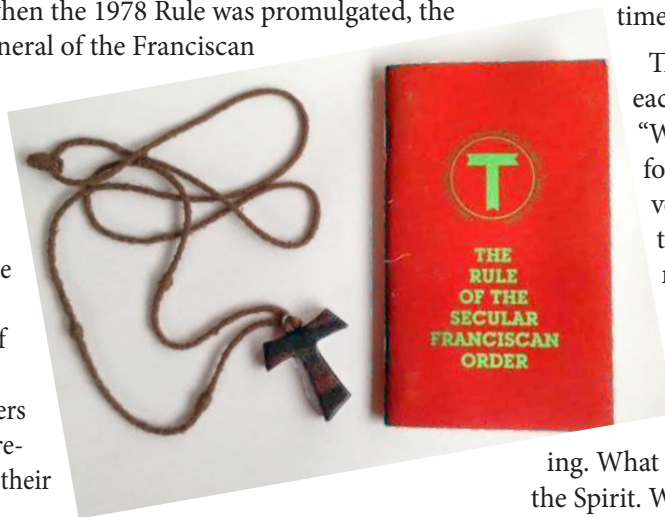
Francis burned with a great desire to return to his earliest steps. We too have a great desire to return to our first love, our roots. We too long to cut away cares and concerns. We too want to tirelessly pursue holy newness. It is time to begin again.

We recall that when the 1978 Rule was promulgated, the four Ministers General of the Franciscan Family wrote:

“The hope of renewal hinges upon returning to the origins and to the spiritual experience of Francis of Assisi and of the brothers and sisters of penance who received from him their inspiration and guidance. This renewal also depends upon openness to the Spirit in the signs of the times.”

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The *signs of the times* became a catalyst that has characterized our national efforts in the last three years. The National Executive Council (NEC) had been reflecting on the work of our Franciscan Youth and Young Adult (FYA) Commission and had come to the conclusion that we needed to find a new direction for this effort. Early in 2017 we decided to bring to-



gether a group of OFS members who were interested in working with youth for what we called a visioning gathering. Recalling what is needed for the hope of renewal, we looked to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the signs of the times. We simply asked, “What is God’s vision for our Order in the area of youth?” We found the direction we were looking for.

We were suddenly set in motion and began a season of Visioning. This was truly the work of the Holy Spirit. The Visioning on Youth gathering was followed by Formation Visioning in 2018, and JPIC Visioning in 2019.

A SEASON OF VISIONING

For each visioning we prepared in the same way. We invited Secular Franciscan leaders and members at large, Spiritual Assistants and members of the wider Franciscan family, all with various levels of experience who had an interest in the topic. We took care to have representation from different regions and cultures. We asked everyone to reflect on readings that were assigned ahead of time.

The key question at each gathering was, “What is God’s vision for our Order?” We invoked the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds. We read the signs of the times. We were ready for holy newness.

The result of each visioning has been amazing. What we saw and heard and felt was the outpouring of the Spirit. We sat in awe at what God was doing in our midst. Many of us witnessed this.

We came away with a **renewed understanding** of the place of the three commissions in our way of life – the commissions are not add-ons. Youth, Formation, and Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) are firmly anchored in our way of life, our secular way of holiness. Sacred secularity. This is the way we live the Gospel life we are called to by God for the life of the Church.

The vision is clear, and the truth of it is as undeniable as the Lord’s intervention in Francis’ life in February of 1208. While
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at Mass in the Portiuncula, Francis heard the Gospel read in a way he had never experienced. These words spoke directly to Francis's heart.



“As you go, make this proclamation: ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give. Do not take gold or silver or copper for your belts; no sack for the journey, or a second tunic, or sandals, or walking stick. The laborer deserves his keep. Whatever town or village you enter, look for a worthy person in it, and stay there until you leave. As you enter a house, wish it peace. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; if not, let your peace return to you.” (Matthew 10:7-13)

Francis was so struck by this passage that his life was turned upside down. The words of the Gospel -- the Gospel life -- defined his mission. He was filled with unexpected joy.

Just as hearing this message was a pivotal moment for Francis's conversion – so were the messages we received at each of our three visioning gatherings. I cannot overestimate the importance of these visioning events. We have been granted a renewed understanding of our call and mission. For each com-

mission, a vision was given. In response to each vision, we set out in a new direction. Growth and development will continue over time – bringing new life to the National Fraternity.

OUR HISTORY FORMS A TRAJECTORY

Let's look back at our history from the time of the new Rule until today. Reflecting on our history can help us understand where we're going in the light of where we've been. It reflects and shows us how God is working in this renewal – the renewal that's been happening from the time of the new Rule.

- 1968 - 1978 The development of the Pauline Rule
- 1972 - The Santa Clara Statement issued from the Lay Franciscan Congress (the Q)
- 2000 - The Constitutions
- 2002 - 2008 CIOFS “For the Formators”
- 2012 - Q – Be the bridge
- 2014 - National Retreat with Br. Bill Short: Signs of the times / Pope Francis
- 2014 - CIOFS Management of the Order, which asked: “What would it take for our Order to fully develop?”
- 2016 - Q – Revive
- 2017 - CIOFS – Management of the Order Terms of Reference / General Chapter
- 2017 - Youth Visioning
- 2018 - Formation Visioning
- 2019 - Life Giving Union Event
- 2019 - JPIC Visioning

Each of these events have had a profound impact on our Order. Seeing where we are now, we can look back, and we can understand how all of this is part of a grand trajectory.

THE HOLY SPIRIT CONTINUES TO MOVE

The Holy Spirit continues to move us on a trajectory of renewal. We see this in the initiatives, activities and achievements of this past year. These have been reported to you in detail by the various Commissions, Committees and those individuals appointed for a particular service, but they bear mentioning here. Many of the individuals responsible for this wonderful work are present at our Chapter.

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one Family. This gathering provided an unprecedented opportunity for us to build relationship and share our common concerns. We listened and learned. Doors were opened. Invitations were extended. Ideas were shared. It was a graced time of discovering new ways to go forward together. *(A full report on this gathering, including recommendations by participants, can be found on our website.)*

Our fraternal lives are also enriched by our relationships with the Franciscan Third Order Religious Sisters and Brothers, and with our brothers and sisters who follow St. Francis in the Anglican tradition (the Third Order Society of St. Francis), the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, and the Lutheran Franciscan Order. Additionally, our relationship with the Franciscan Federation continues to develop, and we are engaged with them in planning their next annual conference in June 2020. This will be an event to which the entire Franciscan family in the USA will be invited.

The priority of Fraternity extends widely, encompassing a universal kinship. We are brothers and sisters to the world, bringing hope and extending our hands and hearts in peace. This is reflected in our outreach to the poor and marginalized, to those treated unjustly, and by our care for creation. We sing and we live the Canticle of Brother Sun. Praised be you, my Lord!

NEW RULE, NEW UNITY, NEW VISION

We've been on this journey of renewal for some time now. In the last 40 years the essential structures were set in place – and now we see the progression – the trajectory. What a gift it is to recognize this trajectory as God's direction for our Order, even as we await its fulfillment.

New Rule, new unity, new vision. The new Rule gave us hope for renewal. A new unity as we formed a worldwide Order. A new vision through the visioning gatherings for Youth, Formation and JPIC. Certainly, from the beginning we have always "began again" and started "something new" – but there is a particularity about this moment. The delivery of our new Rule was a 'decisive and powerful moment,' and this 'moment' of grace has been prolonged into a 'season.' Truly a new spirit has been placed in our hearts and a holy anointing has been poured out in our midst. Let us, like Francis, be tireless as we pursue holy newness. The way is unfolding before us, and God is with us.

THE PRIORITY OF FRATERNITY

One of our major initiatives and a driving force behind all of our efforts is the National Priority of Fraternity. The day we made our profession in the Secular Franciscan Order we said these words, "may...the fraternal bonds of community always be my help." The NEC has focused on building fraternity: during our visitations to the Regional Fraternities; by way of outreach to our non-English speaking brothers and sisters; through articles in each issue of the TAU-USA; and resources on our website. It is gratifying to see the topic of fraternity being used for ongoing formation across our National Fraternity.

A major achievement is the interactive map on our website showing the location of every local fraternity in the United States. This past year we added five new local fraternities to this map, with more to come in 2020, including the establishment of St. Padre Pio Fraternity in Guam this coming January.

We cannot speak of fraternity without mentioning the bond we have with our brothers of the First Order and Third Order Regular. Spiritual Assistance is a "fundamental element of communion" (GC 89.1).

Our bonds with the friars were strengthened significantly this past August at an historic three-day gathering of national OFS leadership with Provincial Ministers, their delegates to the OFS and Regional Spiritual Assistants - a true gathering of the Franciscan Family. This event, entitled "Life Giving Union – Discussion and Discernment," was facilitated by the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA). This dream of many sunsets finally became a reality. We celebrated our "Life-Giving Union" as



Fraternity

State of the Order Demographic Information

<i>Local/Regional Fraternities in National Fraternity</i>	January 1, 2018	December 31, 2018
Canonically established Local Fraternities:	593	586
Emerging Local Fraternities:	43	45
Canonically established but inactive Local Fraternities:	54	54
Regional Fraternities:	30	30
<i>In the National Fraternity</i>	January 1, 2018	December 31, 2018
Number of permanently professed members:	11,807	11,604
Number of temporary professed members:	---	---
Number of members in the period of formation:	1,762	1,827
Number of Fraternities/groups of Franciscan Youth:	0	0
Number of members of Franciscan Youth:	0	0
Number of groups of Franciscan Children:	0	0
Number of Franciscan Children:	4	4
Number of OFS Fraternities of permanent deacons:	0	0
Number of OFS permanent deacons:	96	96
Number of Fraternities of OFS priests (Const. 35,2):	0	0
Number of OFS diocesan priests:	30	30
Number of OFS Bishops:	0	0
# of groups of members with private vows (36 GGCC):	0	0
Number of members with private vows:	8	8
<i>Local Spiritual Assistants in the National Fraternity</i>	January 1, 2018	December 31, 2018
OFM:	96	77
OFM Conv:	33	27
OFM Cap:	54	42
TOR:	17	14
Poor Clares:	7	6
3 rd Order Franciscan religious brothers and sisters:	64	46
Other religious brothers and sisters:	9	6
Diocesan priest/deacons:	46	49
Members of OFS:	95	75
TOTAL number of local spiritual assistants:	421	359
# of Local Fraternities without Spiritual Assistants:	151	147

HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER



Dolores Boswell, OFS, (left) helps stuff a Catholic Charities van with drawstring backpacks, with Edith Cedillo, immigration department manager at Catholic Charities in Laredo.

Service Project Aids 1,000 Immigrants

By SHARON WINZELER, OFS

Up to 18 boxes at a time were delivered for days to the home of Patsy Cueva Philipps, OFS, in Corpus Christi.

The spending spree on Amazon was fueled by a response to a call to help refugees being released from detention centers in Laredo, McAllen and San Antonio, TX.

Philipps, regional minister of the Los Tres Companeros Region, had spent more than a year dreaming of a way to help people who were crossing the border to seek asylum. She was inspired to organize a Secular Franciscan service project to aid 1,000 men and women with drawstring backpacks filled with hygiene items and other supplies. Those packs were put together by some 80 Secular Franciscan leaders attending

their annual chapter at Pax Christi Liturgical Retreat Center in Corpus Christi.

It all started when Philipps discovered that on her way to work she was passing a detention center in Corpus Christi that housed 120 teenagers. When Philipps called to find out if the Secular Franciscans could help the residents with anything, she was told the government takes care of food and daily living items. What they could use, she was told, was art supplies, books and games.

Working with a wish list that included crayons, coloring books, and prayer cards, the local Secular Franciscan fraternity worked in cooperation with the diocese. They also hosted a Christmas party.

Bishop Michael Mulvey celebrated

a Mass at the detention center and directed his homily toward the teenagers.

“He talked about the hard journey they had taken,” Philipps said. “He told them they brought a special gift to us in the same way Jesus and his parents did when they had to leave their country. He told them that they had to deal with more in their short lives than others face in their lifetime.”

After a presentation by an immigration attorney in July that highlighted the severity and urgency of the need to help the immigrants, she felt the call to action. In July, she consulted regional Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) coordinator Valerie Laubacher. Both Franciscans knew it was the right time to launch the project.

“I knew that the Holy Spirit planted
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Chapter participants put together packets to stuff in draw-string backpacks. At right is Patsy Cueva Philipps, OFS, who helped spark the project.

Continued from previous page.
 this idea in Patsy’s heart,” Laubacher said. “The Holy Spirit was blessing this.”

Together they brainstormed with members of their region on items that would be helpful for the released immigrants who were legally crossing the border, awaiting a court hearing and traveling to their U.S. destination. Laubacher consulted with her niece on how to start an “Amazon Wish List.” The women were texting each other at 11 p.m. with ideas.

They ordered such items as socks, water bottles, hair brushes, combs, lotion, tissues, toothbrushes, notebooks, pencils, notebooks and wipes.

Another vendor was required to purchase shoelaces because they were not available for bulk purchase from Amazon. Shoelaces are important to immi-

grants departing from detention centers because they are required to remove them as a safety precaution when they enter, and the items are never returned to them.

Enough health and beauty care items were entered on an Amazon Wish List to fill 1,000 drawstring bags. An appeal for donations was sent out to Secular Franciscans through regional ministers throughout the U.S. Within two days, most of the items on the initial list were purchased. Philipps added more items. Within a week, 50 fraternity and individual donors from the United States and Guam had purchased all \$20,000 worth of items.

Another \$5,000 was spent on food and household items, such as corn and flour tortilla mix, rice, beans, wipes, laundry soap and floor cleaner. These grocery items were sent to Catholic Charities to

directly distribute to immigrants.

National Minister Jan Parker, OFS, described the effort this way:

“Pope Francis says, ‘Love isn’t words, but works and service; a humble service performed in silence without seeking acclaim.’

“Our outreach here is simple, hands-on, Franciscan love in action. With God’s grace these bags of blessings will not only bless those in need, but help open hearts of others to hear the cry of the poor. Our Secular Franciscan Rule challenges us to be instruments of joy, hope and healing, but to also take courageous action in the field of public life. Our bishops explain it this way - we are to walk with both feet of love: the foot of charitable works, which we are doing here, but also the foot of social justice, addressing systemic, root causes of problems that affect many people.”

HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER



JPIC Chair Carolyn Townes, OFS.

Take a Mindful Franciscan Pause to Thwart Bias

By SHARON WINZELER, OFS

Matthew (13:54-58) recounts how, when Jesus came to his hometown and began to teach in the synagogue, people were astounded, and even took offense. They knew him as the carpenter's son; not this new Jesus.

"This image of him in the synagogue did not fit the Jesus they had in their heads," Carolyn Townes, OFS, told National Chapter attendees. They couldn't reconcile the image of the Jesus they knew with the one standing before them, said Townes, national animator for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation and a member of the International Commission for JPIC.

It reminded her of a quote by George Bernard Shaw: "The only man I know who behaves sensibly is my tailor. He takes my measurements anew each time he sees me. The rest go on with their old measurements and expect me to fit them."

A person in the latter case preserves an image as a way of keeping his thoughts in harmony. The harm in this selective perception is that it becomes the basis of bias; that is, a preference for or against a group or individual, Townes said.

"It can be positive or negative. Conscious or unconscious. Assumptions and stereotypes. It can be based what we identify as labels — skin color, ability, age or gender preference.

"Unconscious bias is far more prevalent than conscious prejudice and is often incompatible with one's conscious values," she noted. This makes bias in oneself harder to identify, especially when working under time pressure or in a perceived threatening situation, Townsend said. In those cases, we react automatically with what we already know. As a result, we use shortcuts based on prior knowledge to process the 11 million pieces of information coming at us at any one time.

For example, Townes used some sentence starters that members of the audience automatically answered:

"An eye for an..."

"What goes around..."

"Fight fire with..."

"Better late than..."

"An apple a day..."

"Birds of a feather..."

"Let sleeping dogs..."

Responses to these are part of the millions of bits of information that are stored in our subconscious mind.

"We have heard them so many times, we don't even need to think about the answer," Townes said.

This type of thinking can lead to snap judgments while making important decisions.

"This leads to hiring someone based on our personal preference and not on the candidate's skill. It also causes us to cross the street when we see someone as threatening."

Our minds formulate shortcuts to make it easier and faster to make decisions. If these are based on biases, preferences against groups or individuals, they need to be changed.

"Two things I want you to know about biases. Number one, everyone has them. Number two, they can be disrupted or changed," Townes said.

How do we reverse our biases?

"Ask yourself: Why am I so dead set on maligning this person? What if I took an opposite view?"

First, pause. "As Franciscans, we are called to pray for right judgment and right decision. Before you make a judgment based on that subconscious judgment in your head,

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HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER



Kent Ferris, OFS, with JPIC Chair Carolyn Townes, OFS, and National Minister Jan Parker, OFS.

JPIC Award Honors Work with Refugees

By SHARON WINZELER, OFS

Kent Ferris, OFS, is the 2019 recipient of the National Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Award presented at the National Chapter.

Ferris voiced the need to advocate on behalf of immigrants and refugees, who are among the people he serves as director of social action and Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Davenport, Iowa.

Ferris expressed gratitude to refugees, including a family who fled violence in southern Sudan only to face hate-filled, anti-Muslim notes left on their community's residences in the U.S. He felt compelled to apologize for such intolerance, he said, but the refugees themselves

were "very gracious."

He also said he was inspired by such individuals as Diego and Pedro who fled threats in their country and "expressed confusion and sadness but never bitterness at having been separated at the border for 40 days, with young Pedro being taken to the state of New York while Diego remained in custody and then finding themselves in need of family reunification services after the trauma of separation."

Ferris, a past national JPIC chair, said he was grateful for all of the people who have helped him work in the area of social justice, especially Bishop Martin Amos who hired him 10 years ago and Bishop Thomas Zinkula for whom he

currently works.

Ferris and wife Lori have been Secular Franciscans for 27 years. Their children -- Clare, 20; Miles, 17; and Lucy, 15 -- were raised in the order and "know exactly what a Transitus service is," he said. "They also would look every year to see if their birthdays fell on the first Sunday of the month so they would know whether or not birthday celebrations would occur after a local fraternity meeting."

Ferris expressed gratitude to Secular Franciscans around the country.

"I am quite convinced that had I not experienced such a deep and profound sense of fraternity at so many times and places, I could not have served the Lord to the extent that I have."

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take a Franciscan pause. We form our impression of a person in that first millisecond. Remind yourself that you are aware of your first impression."

"Second, when you know you already have an image in your mind, make yourself come up with two pieces of opposite information about that image."

"Third, define your inner focus. Once you become aware of your bias, do your counter activity until it become habitual. Do it mindfully, with prudence, caution and right judgment."

"Fourth, be curious and cultivate conversations. Conversations help us find what we have in common," Townes said.

Townes cited Article 19 of the Rule as a way of changing our bias. She calls it "taking a Franciscan pause."

"Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon..."

Our Franciscan Spirituality as Experienced in Our Prayers

St. Francis -- stained glass in the cathedral of Brussels, created in 1866.



As followers of Francis and Clare, their prayer life inspires us to a deeper relationship with God. But how did they open their hearts and souls? How did they converse with the Almighty, All powerful Lord of all?

National Formation Commission Team members -- Francine Gikow, OFS, Anne Mulqueen, OFS, Layna Maher, OFS and Mary Stronach, OFS – took National Chapter attendees on a personal journey of prayer, inspired by the prayer life of Francis and Clare.

DAY 1 FORMATION PRAYING AS FRANCIS DID

Anne began with the beloved prayer before the San Damiano Cross – the only one in which Francis prayed for his own discernment.

She explained that Franciscan prayer has some “common threads:”

- All place the Eucharistic celebration above all other forms of prayer.
- The Divine Office holds a place of prominence in daily prayer life.
- Prayer is Trinitarian in focus and centered on the life and teachings of

Christ in the gospels.

- Contemplative prayer is essential and leads to action.

As Francis grew and matured in his faith, his prayers also become more creative. As an example, she introduced the **Office of the Passion**, probably the least known of Francis’ writings. “The 15 Psalms are a composite of various verses of the Davidic psalms and other part of Scripture. Francis began his office with his original prayer inspired by the **Our Father** (Our Father Most Holy... Gloria ...) After the **Our Father**, he prayed the **Praises to be Said at All Hours**, followed by his antiphon honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary.”

The office concludes with a refrain that Franciscans often sing: “Let us bless the Lord, the living and true God; to Him let us always render praise, glory, honor, blessing and every good. So be it. So be it. Amen.”

During the Office, we hear the Hero (Jesus Christ) addressing His father and the people. Occasionally, Francis intercedes and addresses the people. He closes with a hymn of praise for the Hero’s origin and birth, reminiscent of Greccio.

Anne next discussed the **Canticle of Creatures**. She emphasized the last two stanzas on reconciliation, peace and death, repeating part of the prayer: “Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation. Blessed are those who endure in peace for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned.”

The second part of the session, presented by Mary, continued Francis journey in prayer -- prayer which “changed him,” she said, quoting St. Bonaventure, “The encounter with Christ, as other, gave Francis a new openness and

Continued on next page.



Anne Mulqueen, OFS, and Mary Stronach, OFS

HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER

Continued from previous page.

freedom. Embraced by the compassionate love of God, Francis was liberated within and went out to embrace others in love.” As people of prayer, she challenged, “Does my prayer change me, liberate me? Does it make me better?”

In a prayer exercise, attendees took time to read and contemplate the words which Francis used when he would say the “**Our Father**.”

As a follow-up to this exercise, attendees became co-authors in another prayer, **The Hail Mary**. During a 10-minute session of private meditation and personal conversation with Mary, their task was to write the Hail Mary as Francis might have: to add a meaningful and personal message to each line of the prayer.

Some shared their newly written version of the Hail Mary, acknowledging that the experience had opened their hearts to a deeper relationship with Mary.

DAY 2 FORMATION PRAYING AS CLARE DID

Layna and Francine led this session on Clare, and her powerful method of prayer which she shared in her letter to St. Agnes. Layna quoted: “Most Nobel Queen, gaze, consider, contemplate, desiring to imitate Your Spouse.”

Layna reminded everyone of the components of Clare’s prayer: gaze, consider, contemplate and imitate, and invited them to share their thoughts on the hallmarks of Clare’s Prayer. Some responded: “Contemplative. Vivid. Passionate. Draws Close to Jesus. Feels His Embrace. Relational.”

They would experience it for themselves during the final session when Francine walked them through an intensely spiritual journey in prayer as they reflected on the painting of Francis

embracing Christ on the Cross.

In quiet, personal solitude, she asked them to:

- **Gaze** – “To gaze is not simply to see. Rather gaze is to be drawn into the object one sees. Open arms are a gesture of the body reaching for the other...I want the other to be a part of who I am and I want to be a part of the other... Reflect upon the surface of the mirror. Are you drawn into his suffering? Look into yourself. Can you unite yourself to Jesus’ suffering? His humility? See Jesus’ love for others amidst His own suffering. See His love for you. How do you respond?”

- **Consider** – “Consider, which means to look at something whole to see it in its entirety, in my personal context and that of the Incarnate Word.”

- **Contemplate** -- “With love which cannot be put into words. Soak in this love. You are face to face with the mystery and above all, with holiness.”

- **Imitate** – “We imitate because we share in the love of Christ and as Bonaventure describes it, as a fountain of love overflowing and never ending.”

The final prayer ended with Clare’s message to Agnes: “Totally love him who gave himself totally for your love.”



St. Clare -- painting on glass by M. Lorin of Chartres, France, created in 1878.



Layna Maher, OFS, and Francine Gikow, OFS

HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER

New Formation Initiative in the Limelight



Formation Commission Chair Diane Menditto, OFS

National Formation Commission Chair Diane Menditto, OFS, announced the launching of an “exciting, new” initiative in the USA.

She began by explaining the visioning processes that occurred with formation directors and spiritual assistants from around the country. “Our two Visioning Workshops were part of the listening process and were guided by the Holy Spirit. We are now ready to go further in sharing the outcomes of our visioning.”

“Merely editing and reformatting our formation materials, principally the FUN Manual, was not enough,” she explained. “Essential topics such as prayer, Scripture, our Catholic Faith as expressed in the Creed, Franciscan sources, and chapters dedicated exclusively to the role the Rule and Constitutions play in our daily lives were not included in our current formation texts or manuals.”

While all material used in the past, including the FUN Manual, are the inspiration, resource and background for the new initiative, the new Formation Program would offer comprehen-

sive, fresh and easy-to-read material in easily accessible and manageable bites of information, she said.

The program will consist of:

- Two student manuals, one for the Orientation and Inquiry Stage and one for the Candidacy Stage. Individual chapters will be short, engaging and appropriate for those who are new to our Franciscan family. They will be in color and downloadable by chapter. Chapters will include reflection/discussion questions, activities and ideas for practical application, frequent references to the Rule and Constitutions, and opportunities for deepening one’s spirituality.
- A Formator’s Guide, which will correspond to each chapter and will have tips and ideas for presenting the material and suggestions of other resources.
- A General Guide for Formators at all levels, which will give insights on how to present material, work with adults, and help those in formation to discern their journey and deepen their spirituality.

As the Program develops, the Commission also intends to supply audio visual material to supplement the initial

formation experience.

The material will be translated into the major languages spoken by fraternities in the United States.

Many of the chapters from the FUN Manual will be re-written (some by the original authors) to ensure conformity to the new rubrics. The material will be clear and concise.

“Since we are dealing with persons in initial formation, we want the material to INITIATE them into and INTRODUCE them to the Order,” she emphasized. “Rather than filling our candidates with information, our goal is to provide a resource that will assist them in the *transformative process* and the *discernment of their vocation*.”

She expects the project to be completed within the next three years.

“We know that good formation is the answer to many of our challenges and will bring strength and joy to the Order.”

(Note: The complete FUN Manual will continue to be available as one of our formation resources.)

-- Mary Stronach, OFS

HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER

YouFra Team Brings Youthful Exuberance



YouFra team members Br. Scott Slattum, OFM, and Ramcy Caballeros.

By MARY STRONACH, OFS

The afternoon began with an upbeat, music video portraying famous dancers from all generations – all dancing to the pop music, “Uptown Funk,” by Bruno Mars. Suddenly, the hall exploded in dance which culminated in a conga line with regional ministers, national council, spiritual assistants, observers and guests.

The session, appropriately focusing on youth, maintained the upbeat tone. Br. Scott Slattum, OFM, director of Faith Formation at St. Mary’s Basilica in Phoenix, AZ and spiritual assistant for the recently formed YouFra fraternity at St. Mary’s, announced emphatically, “Youth and Young Adults are not a

problem to be solved, but rather an opportunity to be exposed to the gifts they bring us.”

He addressed obstacles on the “path to faith-sharing” – a neighborhood community of faith-sharing which no longer exists, a “fragmented and mobile” family structure with little or “no religious ethos,” social life that is no longer centered in the church, religious media that has gone out of business as a popular form of entertainment. And “now, CCD is left alone to do everything in at most two hours a week.”

The reality is that “the school instructional model does not work,” he said. But, “the good news is that the church has given us a renewed path,” which, “integrated into a comprehensive of

pastoral care,” will address the needs, developmental needs, life transitions and questions being asked.

He described it as the “Emmaus Model,” which is based on building a trusting relationship.

1. To be effective, first, join the people in their daily concerns and walk side-by-side ... and listen as we walk.
2. Ask questions and listen as we walk.
3. Share the living word of God.
4. Trust the capacity of prayer and the sacraments.
5. Invite them to live and share the Good News.

Ramcy Caballeros, a YouFra member from the newly formed YouFra Group in Phoenix, emphasized the importance of listening to our youth. We need to learn who are our young adults and what are their needs.

She summarized: Our youth range in age from 12 to 18 and Young Adults from their late teens to 39. At this stage, they are focused on “developing their personal identity,” she said. They want to “develop relationships, how to acculturate to other cultures” around them, to “develop a meaning of work ... and a spiritual life.”

Brother Scott reminded the ministers and guests that YouFra “has to be done in partnership – the animator, the church, the friars and youth – walking side-by-side.”



The presenters pose with National Youth/Young Adult Commission member Kathy Taormina, OFS (left) and Commission Chair Kathleen Molaro, OFS.

HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER

National Spiritual Assistants Offer Insights



Role of the Spiritual Assistant and Importance of Visitations

“The role of the spiritual assistant is important,” noted Br. Alexander Escalera, OFM Cap. “He/she is the link between the OFS, First Order and Third Order ... and this relationship is required by the Church.”

“Our principal task is to foster a deeper insight in the Franciscan spirituality... providing assistance in living the Rule... to collaborate to help the OFS

fills its role in the Church.”

Brother Alexander reminded attendees that spiritual assistants are NOT directors. “They should not dominate a fraternity.”

At all levels, Brother Alexander emphasized, pastoral and fraternal visits are meant “to revive, intensify, encourage and animate.” The pastoral visitor may make suggestion on helping to

make formation more effective, enhancing prayer life and how to deal with today’s world.

He added that the fraternity should remember to provide a stipend to the pastoral and fraternal visitors. The fraternity determines the amount.

He closed by noting, “We don’t run the visitation. God runs the visitation.”

Need to Better Connect Elements of the Franciscan Family

The “Life-Giving Union” Workshop for spiritual assistants last August was refreshing and energizing, reported Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM.

Spiritual assistants went home to ponder several recommendations:

- Continue to build communications within the Franciscan Family and find ways to connect with each other;
- Consider ways to provide on-going

formation for members who have little contact with spiritual assistants;

- Provincials should invite representatives from the regions to their chapters and regional fraternities should be inviting the friars to their regional events.

Fr. Jerome asked the National Fraternity to consider establishing a Franciscan Family Council. He then provided a vision of an idea which the spiritual

assistants discussed at the workshop:

Imagine, he said, “two mission bands of Friars going to places where Franciscans are isolated...” to provide “formation and a family connection.” He said it would be a special outreach, called “the Franciscan OmniBUS.” (He drew a picture of a bus.)

“We should be trying to live out our common life together.”

‘Signs of the Times Are Directing Us Where We Need to Be Going’

“Catholic Social Teaching is in our Rule,” said Fr Christopher Panagoplos, TOR. It “has to go far beyond -- from tables to tables of the world.”

“The body of Christ is still wounded, divided, hurting. That is on us... It’s in the gutters, the homeless, families... The signs of the times are directing us to where we need to be going.”

“The popes have said it is our responsibility. It’s what the church expects of us. We must be obedient to the Church.”

He quoted **Pope St. John Paul II:**

“The church expects the OFS to be of great service to the Church and the world. The Church wants your order to be a model...to present itself as a community of life... Commit yourself to the promotion of the encounter.”

He added: “We should see the world not as our enemy, but as our child. The child may be belligerent, but the child is not our enemy. You don’t protect yourself against your child. You give yourself totally, reach out pastorally with tenderness rather than juridically.”



Fr. Christopher

HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER

Small Group Discussions



During geographic and small group discussions, the ministers and observers offered some points and concerns:

- there is a problem getting people to step up to serve.
- we need more training in candidacy on the role of the council.
- to address the issue of vocations, they recommended: have “Come & See” meetings, bring a friend, send friends to check out the website.
- there is a concern for outreach for the home-bound. Suggestions: Remind fraternities that it is their responsibility to keep them in the loop. Offer a healing mass and bring them to church, anointing the sick and giving them a meal with the fraternity serving.
- Funerals – final wishes need to be made clear to families. Plan your own

funeral.

- Newly forming groups need more direction. They need a sponsoring fraternity. An emerging fraternity is like a child... it takes time.
- Youth – they are different from the experiences we had growing up. We have to change the way we think about youth. We should be listening to them. Youth should be courted. If you sponsor a program for youth, be sure you follow diocesan requirements.
- Communication – to share common concerns, offer ZOOM calls that also allow for visual contact.
- Reciprocity – we need to make certain that we touch base with our friars.
- Formation – relational formation needs to happen. OFS leaders are still very eager for the nuts and bolts.

Quinquennial 2021

Susan Simeone, OFS, chairperson for the 2021 Quinquennial Congress, reported that this 100th Anniversary of the Quinquennial (1921-2021) will be an opportunity to “celebrate and renew our Franciscan calling in the spirit of conversion.”

The “Q” will be held in Phoenix, AZ Aug. 18 to 22, 2021. With its “Jubilee” theme, it will offer something for everyone. There will be opportunities for prayer and consideration will be made for those speaking

Korean and Spanish. Early registration will begin in November 2020. The Early Bird registration fee will be \$350 which pays for meals, packet and conference expenses (speakers, etc.). Reservations for the hotel should be made individually at a cost of \$105 per room per night. As details become available, they will be on the website, www.quinquennialcongress.org.

Kathy Taormina, OFS, also asked that t-shirts with Franciscan messages be sent to her for a special Quinquennial project.



Computer Committee



Bill Mussato, OFS, reported on the status of the new database, noting:

- we’re converting to a new login system,
- e-mail issues have been resolved,
- issues with the list of fraternities have been resolved,
- a new listserv for regional treasurers has been established: NAFRA-RT

He reminded ministers that if they did not know their login information, they can request a new temporary password. He also made a plea for more volunteers.

Vice Minister Mary Bittner, OFS, reminded ministers that they have until December 2020 to clear up their database.

Ecumenical & Interfaith Committee

Mike Carsten, OFS, committee chair, announced that there was an Ecumenical & Interfaith website which is connected to the OFS website.

In January, there will be a week of prayer for Christian unity. In May, an Ecumenical/Interfaith effort to discuss

the things that unite us will be held at The CASA in Scottsdale, AZ.

Mike challenged, “how can we get more local seculars to get involved with Ecumenical efforts – to participate, to be present, to wear the TAU, to engage with communities? ... Just show up!”



HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER



FRANCISCANS INTERNATIONAL

During his presentation on Franciscans International which has celebrated 30 years as a voice at the United Nations, Fr. Joe Rozansky, OFM, said we need to concentrate on human rights and translate it into "UN-speak." "Franciscans should be persistent, polite and practical." Franciscans need to follow through on who they are and what they are going to do. (He is shown above with JPIC Chair Carolyn Townes, OFS, and National Minister Jan Parker, OFS)

Business of the Order
 The national budget of \$333,470 was approved unanimously.
 Often, members support certain charities as a National Fraternity. This year, \$35,000 was sent to the national treasurer for the California fire relief and \$9,900 for Bahamas hurricane relief. These funds were sent to Catholic Relief Services in the name of the US Secular Franciscan Order.



Addressing Multicultural Issues

International Councilor Willie Guadalupe, OFS, announced that the next General Elective Chapter will be held in November 2020. She asked that the members pray for the success of the chapter. She reported that a Span-

ish speaking ZOOM call has been established, with members from nine regions participating. Diane Menditto, OFS, Formation Commission chair, also joins the call. It is an opportunity to greet and meet other Spanish-speaking

servant leaders. She said that participants were "excited that the National Fraternity has taken this first step to connect, especially since some have felt isolated." She asked, "how can we do the same" for Korean and Vietnamese brothers and sisters?

Franciscan Action Network (FAN)

FAN was established "to work to bring about a more just society," said David Seitz, OFS, member of the FAN board. "We have FAN so that we can live in a culture of religious freedom... It is taking the Gospel message to leaders in the public square." He reminded attendees that Article 15 of the Rule says that we are called to be active in the public square... to promote conditions of human life... that we should "accept all people as a gift – immigrant, Republican and Democrat, atheist, saint and sinner."



A Few Words from...



Fr. Joe Rozansky, OFM
 "When Francis told his followers to use the greeting of peace, he was talking about a way of life..."



Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM
 "We have to make choices in what is right. We have to persevere."



Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR
 "Remember the words of St. Francis: 'Up until now we've done little or nothing.'"

HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER



OFS As Counterpoint to Violence, Division

Noting that the human family is “beset with violence and division,” and that even “good people fear and distrust one another,” the members of the National Fraternity Council committed themselves to providing a “counterpoint” to today’s troubles – as Assisi saints Francis and Clare did in medieval Italy 800 years ago.

In a statement issued at the National Chapter, they said they were joining with “those who care about justice and compassion,” offering “the collective power of prayer, courageous initiatives for justice, and the lived experience of our community of love.”

Hoping to “shine a new light of

peace,” they cited the powerful potential for change in “a community discovering what it cares about.”

See full statement online at: secularfranciscansusa.org (under Resources go to Meeting Documents and Proceedings, then 2019 National Chapter).

A New Era for the Duns Scotus Formation Fund

Twenty-two years ago, in 1997, the Friars Minor of St. John the Baptist Province sold their seminary, Duns Scotus College. Part of the proceeds of the sale were granted to the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order USA (OFS-USA) for formation.

The Province’s grant of \$500,000 was used to begin the Duns Scotus Secular Franciscan Formation Trust Fund, with the stipulation that there would be a review of the agreement after a period of twenty years. That review has now taken place, and full use of the fund has been turned over to the OFS-USA.

With the arrival of this milestone,

the National Executive Council and the members of the Duns Scotus Formation Trust Fund Board drafted a new document to outline the use of the fund going forward. This document, “Duns Scotus Formation Fund Principles and Procedures,” was unanimously approved by the National Fraternity Council during the National Chapter.

Over the past 22 years the OFS-USA has been a good steward of this generous gift. The principal in the fund has grown to close to \$1,000,000 and numerous formation projects have been funded, including two National Formation Visioning Workshops, the JPIC and Youth Visioning

Workshops and the Spiritual Assistants’ Life Giving Union gathering. The Fund also supported requests to fund special formation projects at the Regional level.

During these years a total of \$253,000 has been awarded.

Any region, local fraternity or individual Secular Franciscan needing financial assistance to improve formation may apply to the Duns Scotus Formation Fund (DSFF).

For a list of projects that can be funded, or information on the grant application process, please contact the DSFF Administrative Board at dunscotustrustfund@gmail.com.

NATIONAL CHAPTER CANDIDS

