



By Sharon Winzeler, OFS, Public Relations Chair

Hosted by the Divine Mercy Region, the first face-to-face chapter meeting in three years included formation, fellowship, a tour of the Blessed Solanus Casey Center, and Detroit landmarks, as well as the election of a new National Executive Council to three-year terms. A one-man play based on the life of Blessed Solanus was also featured. In addition, election procedures were updated, and the theme and priorities of the coming term were decided.

On the final day of chapter, Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS, was elected national minister.

Others elected to the national council were: Vice Minister Diane F. Menditto, OFS; Secretary Susan Ronan, OFS; Treasurer Claudia Kauzlarich, OFS; International Councilor Mary Frances Charsky, OFS; and National Councilors Cherryle Fruge, OFS, Donna Hollis, OFS, and Joshua Molidor, OFS.

Fr. Christopher Shorrock, OFM Conv., became CNSA president-in-turn at Chapter. Because Fr. Chris was called back to his native Australia, Fr. John DeLa Riva, OFM Cap., became president-in-turn on Jan. 1.

Attending were eight NEC members, 30 regional ministers or vice ministers, four CNSA members, and 35 commission and committee members, nominees, and observers. CIOFS Presidency Councilor Silvia (Sissi) Diana, OFS, of Argentina, presided at the

elections on behalf of Tibor Kauser, OFS, Minister General.



Bishop Gerard W. Battersby of Detroit opened the National Chapter with a Mass that included a homily reminding listeners of the hope we have in Jesus Christ. The Christ who animated Peter and the other apostles is the same one who animates us.

“The first historical proof of the risen Lord was when the apostles encountered Him after the resurrection. Before they witnessed the resurrection, it was hard for the apostles to remember Jesus’ promise, especially after His savage death. Can you imagine how they must have savored the wonder and explosion of joy that changed everything for everyone? The disciples became transformed men and women,” Bishop Battersby said.

“The North Star guiding our lives is the fact that He is risen. That is the life-giving transformation, because we are risen with Him, and we come to know Him as the Lord of all creation. This changes everything for us as it did for the apostles and Francis,” he said.

“The Father’s plan is for us to become like Jesus. Do not be afraid. You have eternity to work it out,” he said. “We must always press into the Resurrection.”

New Regional Ministers

Ten of the regional ministers were newly elected and arrived early for an orientation session led by Bob Longo, OFS, of the St. Margaret of Cortona Region.

Regions with newly elected ministers are: Blessed Solanus Casey, Patricia Wilkin, OFS; Brothers and Sisters of St Francis, Ellen Ferrone, OFS; Franciscans of the Prairie, Kathy Adams, OFS; Juan de Padilla, Brenda Haas, OFS; Lady Poverty, Kathy Barton, OFS; Los Tres Companeros, Paul Gonzalez, OFS; Mother Cabrini, Bob Burnham, OFS; Our Lady of Indiana, Cyndi Pilot, OFS; Our Lady of the Rockies, Pamela Boespflug, OFS; and St. Joan of Arc, Elizabeth Killeen, OFS.

Kathy Barton, OFS was unable to attend. Ed Meegan, OFS, Vice-Minister, attended chapter for the Lady Poverty Region.

State of the Order

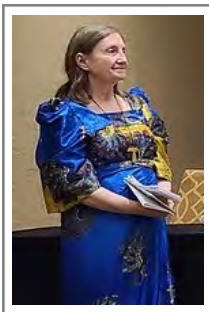


Outgoing National Minister Jan Parker, OFS, delivered her final State-of-the Order, which can be [viewed](#) or [read](#) on the Secular Franciscan website. She referenced [a](#) YouTube video by [Dr. Thomas](#)

Nairn, OFM, called [“A Franciscan Spirituality of Discernment,”](#) which calls us to “Listen, Discern, and Go Forth.”

The call to “Listen, Discern, Go Forth” was adopted as the theme for the national fraternity for the next three years.

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Award Recipient



Louise Sandberg, OFS, received the 2022 Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Award presented by Joseph Makley, OFS, co-chair for the JPIC Commission. Louise recounted the inspiration she found in Africa. On her first mission there, she said, “I felt like I was visiting God’s favorite people in the whole world.” A [video of](#)

[Louise’s talk](#) is posted on the website.

Guidelines for OFS Councils

Regional ministers were introduced to the CIOFS document [Guidelines for OFS Councils](#) which emphasizes the important role local fraternities play in the order. Local fraternities bear the responsibility of accepting, forming and admitting to profession new members as well as the continuing work of helping professed members remain active in the order.

The document also explained how the role of minister in the fraternity differs from that of a leader in another club or organization. “The office of Minister cannot be compared to the office of President of any civil law association: it has the function of coordination and representation, it has specific tasks, but does not have “power” prevailing over the other members of the Council,” according to the document.

The document outlines the responsibilities of council members, citing the importance of service to the fraternity. “[A council member is] called in the first person to work for the good of the OFS and to be interested in every aspect of fraternal life, regardless of the service office covered. The style of service in the Council is that of the ‘washing of the feet’ (Jn. 13, 12-17), which is the biblical foundation of service, in the ‘minority’.”

Diane F. Menditto, OFS, Francine Gikow, OFS, and Anne Mulqueen, OFS, from the National Formation Commission delivered a [presentation on the guidelines](#) that can be found on the website.

Theme and Priorities

“Listen, Discern, Go Forth” was adopted as the three-year theme for the national fraternity. [Reflection questions based on the theme](#) were developed by the National Formation Commission and are available for ongoing formation. Each session connects the theme to the Rule and provides instruction and reflection questions.

The theme will also help direct actions on the priorities of vocations, communications and relationships.

Outgoing Minister Jan Parker noted that listening is a holy encounter in the lives of Franciscans.

“This initial step of listening does not mean a passive hearing (which implies that the action is one-sided), rather it’s very active. In essence, listening becomes an encounter, an encounter with God and with others, an encounter that is critical in directing our

discernment. He then challenges us to go forth,” Jan said.

Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) Presentations

Keeping with the theme of listening, four friars from the CNSA presented formation on how to converse with and listen to members of the order. Their talks can be viewed at the [Chapter 2022 page](#) of the Secular Franciscan website.



Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM, outgoing president-in-turn, discussed [“Why Is There A Visitation?”](#) Fr. Jerome explained that visitations “help others to experience what it is to be heard, so they also know how to listen.” He said visitations give local councils the ability to experience

discernment and the “prayer, caution and courage that go into it.” In turn, he said, they learn better how to discern and lead.



Fr. John DeLa Riva, OFM Cap. echoed the “Listen, Discern, Go Forth” message by advising regional ministers to “practice very keen listening. You go on a visitation so you can hear. Listen well.” The title of his presentation is [“Animate and Inspire.”](#)



Fr. Christopher Shorrock, OFM Conv., who lived in Milwaukee until recently returning to Australia, talked about the need for [Spiritual Assistants](#). He offered reminders to the professed who are considering the spiritual assistant training program. First, going through the program doesn't

guarantee you will be a spiritual assistant, but it has its rewards. “If you are called and not chosen, you will be a better Franciscan for it,” he said.

He also reminded the audience that serving as a spiritual assistant is not a lifelong commitment. There are term limits, giving the fraternity and spiritual assistant a good opportunity “to refresh and move on.”



Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR spoke on [“Discernment.”](#) He talked about how we have gone through dark times with the pandemic and injustices. He compared our situation to the time the Israelites spent in the desert.

“They called out for change. God sent Moses.”

We are traveling in the wilderness like the Israelites. “God has found us, is traveling with us. We should never, ever forget,” Fr. Christopher said.

The wilderness gives us a new appreciation of our dependency on God and calls us to be Christo-centric as we see, judge, and act. He encouraged the audience to share this in community with our brothers and sisters.

“Be the visible presence of the invisible ones as agents of God,” he said.

Servant Leadership



The morning of the election, Fr. Cidoune Joseph, OFM presented a talk on Franciscan servant leadership.

Calling upon Franciscan servant leaders to follow the example of John the Baptist, Fr. Cid said, “A Franciscan servant leader loses him/herself in

their ministry. Like John the Baptist – they decrease so that others may increase. Jesus and Francis, of course, are our models for this.”

“Franciscan servant leaders are always in second place to the people they serve. The ministry is not about them – but about others and their needs,” he said.

Servant leaders are extensions of Jesus and model His virtues, such as compassion, service, love, forgiveness, commitment, prayerfulness, gentleness, patience, and humility, Fr. Cid said.

The [full text of Fr. Cid's talk](#) can be found on the website.

Election Procedures

A set of procedures for elections was adopted. First, the National Fraternity Council adopted National Fraternity Election Procedures. This document addresses all aspects of the national election, including requirements for the election of persons running for a third term. Second, [Guidelines for Nominations from the Floor](#) were approved at chapter. The guidelines outline the procedure for nominating officers at the election. Regional and local fraternities may also use them but are not bound by them.

**2023 National Chapter
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