



THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER - USA

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

National Minister, Jan Parker, OFS

We've Been Revived!

Just before the closing Mass of our 19th Secular Franciscan Quinquennial Congress, I came forward to share a song that I believe was inspired. The nervousness I felt at that moment was overpowered by the joy of seeing the incredible blessings of the previous three days. The song flew out of my heart, and with conviction I was able to sing, *"O how our God has blessed us! We praise his name on high! It's been a great Quinquennial and we have been revived!"*

It was a great Quinquennial – one where we truly could see God at work reviving our spirit. On the last day we were asked to reflect on all that we had experienced and answer the question: "How has your Franciscan spirit been revived?" My response is, "Oh, in so many ways!" I share a few reflections here, but my hope is that every page of this issue of the *TAU* will help those who were at the Q share what we were given.

The Spirit of Fraternity: It is quite something to be in a room with 600 Franciscans! As I looked around I could not help thinking of the early Franciscans, gathered at a Chapter of Mats, sharing how their lives had been transformed by Francis of Assisi. This was our experience at the Q. We listened, shared and laughed. We reconnected with Franciscan brothers and sisters, many who had touched our lives in the past. We met many new Franciscans, all with familiar hearts. We heard inspirational stories, and we learned so much. God bless the many wonderful presenters and the gifted OFS servant leaders who gave so much and worked so diligently. The joy of fraternity was everywhere!

The Spirit of Vocation: What a gift we received from Friar Dan Horan who led us to look at the heart of our call. From the life of Francis, he pulled out those particular charisms that are the foundation of our Franciscan life – minority, mercy, universal kinship, poverty, peace, love, joy. Our world is so in need of these! How do we give these charisms expression in today's world? Considering the challenges that face us, the depth of commitment needed to live our call is sobering. Still, my response is to do my best. In Friar Lester Bach's words, "Our vocation expects us to give flesh, in daily life, to the words of our Franciscan profession." The call on my heart to go deeper was renewed.

The Spirit of Conversion: The formation at this Q also challenged us to look at ourselves and our need for

conversion. What came to my mind is a prayer written in my journal, "Lord help me to see the truth about myself that I am afraid to face." How open am I to the fact that I could be going in a wrong direction? Am I willing to take the time to listen to those who think differently? To see things in a new way? Am I open to learning? To changing? We *can* change, and we often need to. For me, mercy, minority and trust in God are so linked with conversion. This Q helped revive me as a penitent.

The Spirit of Peacemaking: How strong was the revival of our Franciscan call to be peacemakers and reconcilers! We often face difficult situations, with no easy answers. Franciscans are called to be the bridge, to stand faithfully in the gap within the tension of opposing viewpoints. Sometimes we need to step back a bit first, as our sister Carolyn Townes suggests. Pray. Breathe. Find God's peace within ourselves. We can then lean on the Holy Spirit to guide our conversations deeper, to help each side to lay down arms and seek that which all can embrace. Peacemaking is a way of loving – and love always revives.

The Spirit of Unity: We are so individual, so diverse, with so many different viewpoints and experiences, and so many gifts. In many ways we are all over the board! Yet, our experience of unity is so grand! As one sister shared with me, "I am more convinced all the time that there is only one life, and we are all part of it." Wow! We truly are in this together. We celebrate this one Life most profoundly in the Eucharist, and our liturgies at the Q were rich. A phrase from one of our Communion songs comes to mind, "For many are we and broken we come, but we shall become one" – a testament to our poverty as well as our desire for unity. The one voice of 600 Franciscans in song was uplifting. The one voice of 600 Franciscans joined in prayer was strong. One song. One prayer. One Love. We felt it in every hug! I came away with a renewed confidence in the unity of the Secular Franciscan Order. The center will hold, as we center ourselves in Christ who holds all things together.

The Spirit of Revival: As the song goes, "*We have been revived!*" But we did not revive ourselves. As our General Minister Tibor Kauser, OFS, wisely shared, "God is reviving us," He described this well, as in the practice of reviving someone by the use of chest compressions, saying, "We often need a shock. God is surprising us, shocking us, giving us mouth-to-mouth

resuscitation as he breathes on us and says, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ (Jn. 20.22).” The Q was very much like that – an infusion of the Holy Spirit to bring us alive in Christ. (Tibor’s presentation, which captures the essence of Franciscan revival in a few simple slides, is posted on our Quinquennial webpage: <http://www.quinquennial.org/p/pp-slides.html>)

The Spirit of Evangelization: When something wonderful happens, it needs to be shared. In the program the Q Committee wrote, “The purpose of this Q 2016 is to go out and share the Good News... with a deeper understanding of our role in today’s world to live the Gospel in all we say, think and do.” So true. We treasure the gift of our Franciscan vocation, but we must know this charism was not given for ourselves alone. Pope Francis says it this way, “They (charisms) are not an inheritance, safely secured and entrusted to a small group for safekeeping; rather they are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the

Church, drawn to the center which is Christ and then channeled into an evangelizing impulse.” (Ref. *Evangelii Gaudium*, para. 130-131). The blessings of the Q were given to be shared. We must be that *evangelizing impulse* going forth, in the words of St. Francis, “to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart and to bring home those who have lost their way.” We heard this call at Friday’s Mass, in the Gospel for the feast of St. Junipero Serra, “Jesus approached and said to them, ‘Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations.’” Fr. Martin Bitzer echoed this call in his homily saying, “Go! Go with joy! Share the love of Christ!” Then, with a twinkle in his eye, he added, “Run, Forrest, run!” So, let us run! And in the words of the song that, by God’s grace, I was able to sing with such conviction, “Go on now, go! Go out that door, and share the love of Jesus with more and more and more! We’ve got all our love to give, we’ve got the Gospel life to live – we’ve been revived! Praise God on high! We’ve been revived!”

We’ve Been Revived!

*Sung first to the Q Committee to the tune of “I Will Survive” by Gloria Gainer.
Music by Dino Ferkaris & Freddie Perren*

At first you were afraid, a little petrified. But you said, “yes, I’ll do it” with these women by your side. You spent oh, so many nights, working oh, so hard and long, and you grew strong, and you learned how to get along!

And now we’re here, in this great space. Yes, you brought it all together with a smile on your face! So I have called you up here, before we say goodbye, ’cause we just want to thank you, and praise God you survived!

So I thank you! And I thank you!
And I thank you, and you, and all of you
(Turning to all assembled)
For this amazing Q!
O how our God has blessed us!
We praise his name on high!
It’s been a great Quinquennial and we have been revived!

We’ve been revived! We’ve been revived!
We felt the love of Jesus, His Spirit is alive!
We’ve got all our love to give,
We’ve got the Gospel life to live,
We’ve been revived. Yes, we’re revived!

We listened to great speakers; you all did your part,
The liturgies and homilies they really touched our hearts,
And all the sweet, sweet fellowship – too soon we’ll say goodbye!
Oh I could cry! But let us raise our banner high!

We’ve turned around – so go out that door
And share the love of Jesus with more and more and more!
We’ve got all our love to give and the Gospel life to live
We’ve been revived! We’ve been revived! Hey! Hey!

Now look and see – we’ve been renewed!
We’re not chained up little persons, not knowing what to do.
The Spirit just dropped in on us, God’s calling you and me
To go rebuild his church in this Year of Mercy!
So go on now, go! Go out that door!
And share the love of Jesus with more and more and more!
We’ve got all our love to give, we’ve got the Gospel life to live
We’ve been revived! Praise God on high!
We’ve been revived!

