



MULTICULTURALISM AND DIVERSITY IN THE OFS

by Willie Guadalupe, OFS Multicultural Councilor

We need to make the Secular Franciscan Order a welcoming home for all the ethnic groups in our regions that are being called to our Franciscan vocation. We need to accept, welcome, embrace, be enriched by, and fully include our brothers and sisters from different distinct cultural or ethnic groups within a society into our regional fraternities.

Time and time again, Pope John Paul II echoed the teachings of his predecessors and of the Second Vatican Council that “it is one of the properties of the human person that he can achieve true and full humanity only by means of culture” (Gaudium et Spes, no. 53) and that to take away a person’s culture is therefore to damage human dignity grievously. Communion does not abolish differences, but brings together one family, diverse and united in the one Lord.¹

The link between justice and relationship moves us to develop personal perspectives and actions that build on relationships. We cannot tolerate actions that deny basic human dignity for anyone involved. **“Problems can become opportunities when the right people come together.”**

*We can’t see other ethnic groups as ‘they and we’ but as ‘we and we.’
It’s us, all together. People of different cultures bring with them many qualities that can be a blessing to us all, especially the gift of an incarnated and lively faith.*

As your new NAFRA Multicultural Councilor, my first plan of action is to contact each Regional Minister to ask for your support in appointing a Multicultural Chair for your regions. The second phase will be to ask the Multicultural Chairs to take the pulse of the parishes in their areas known to serve specific racial, ethnic, cultural and/or linguistic groups to reach out and invite those who have a vocation to join our Order, perhaps by presenting a bilingual “Come and See”.

My goals are not only to continue to identify formation material that would need to be translated to other languages so there are no ambiguities and all are being formed with the same material used in the U.S., but also to address challenges encountering members of other ethnic groups.

It is also my intent to encourage the development of ongoing dialogue among ourselves, our leaders, and throughout the OFS communities to deepen our experience of community and help us to be “joyful and ready to place ourselves on an equal basis with” one another as our Rule 13 guides us to do.

¹ *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity* (USCCB, 2000), p. 31.