



OFS-USA

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER-USA

NATIONAL MINISTER'S MESSAGE

by Jane DeRose-Bamman OFS

WHAT A DIFFERENCE SIX MONTHS MAKE



It's October 15, 2022, about 1:45pm Eastern time, and I have been elected National Minister of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States (OFS-USA) by a majority vote of the members of the OFS-USA Fraternity Council at our Chapter in Detroit, Michigan. I didn't vote for myself, but most of my brothers and sisters did.

Rewind six months. I had already declined nominations to serve on the National Executive Council (NEC) for the next term. I had served six years at the National Secretary. I have been integrating my first vocation (marriage to Brian Bamman – 32 years) with my second vocation (OFS – 27 years) for most of our married life. My husband is a “Fourth Order” Franciscan. Service as the National Secretary was a privilege and honor, but also took up quite a bit of time, so I was ready for a break. Brian and I prayed about it and discerned that it was ok to take my name off the nominations list. What a relief!

Then in July and August 2022, the Scripture readings for Mass on multiple days focused on being open to God's will. We talked about it more than once and thought “What if God wants me to serve?” One of Brian's favorite sayings is, “You can't outgive the Giver.” We reconsidered, concluding that we needed to be open to allow God to work. If elected, God would provide.

The day the applications were due, I submitted the nomination form. Ok, I thought: “Well at least God knows I am open to serving some more...but I hope I don't get elected.”

A week later, the list of nominees was presented to the NEC. To my delight, I wasn't the only one who had heard the daily readings. We had the longest list of nominees for all the positions that anyone could remember seeing. There were so many amazing candidates from all over the United States. I thought that *surely* someone else would be elected. It won't be my turn to serve.

Well, God had other plans, and here I am, National Minister for our nearly 12,000 brothers and sisters in the United States. I am most humbled by this awesome “responsibility to each member” and grateful that it is for “a definite period.”¹ Although I was resisting the nomination, I fully embrace the role now. But I do not serve alone...thanks be to God!

Along with me are the other elected members of the National Executive Council: Vice Minister

¹ From Article 21 of the OFS Rule: “On various levels, each fraternity is animated and guided by a council and minister (or president) who are elected by the professed according to the Constitutions. Their service, which lasts for a definite period, is marked by a ready and willing spirit and is a duty of responsibility to each member and to the community. ...”

Diane Menditto, Secretary Susan Ronan, Treasurer Claudia Kauzlarich, International Councilor Mary Frances Charsky and Councilors Cherryle Fruge, Donna Hollis, and Joshua Molidor. Plus Fr. Chris Shorrock, OFM Conv, will be walking with us as President-In-Turn for the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants. We will have a period of adjustment, but I can tell the gifts of each of these servants will complement each other so we can be of great service to the OFS-USA.

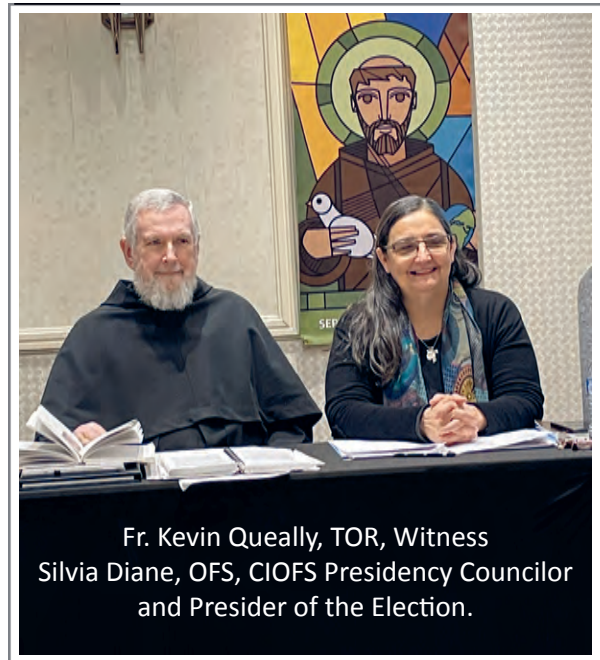
Speaking of great service, we cannot thank enough the outgoing Minister Jan Parker and outgoing Vice Minister Mary Bittner. They served the National Fraternity for 13 years each. The co-leadership style they modeled was remarkable. We are the beneficiaries of their love, care, and dedication for the Order. We also say thank you to outgoing International Councilor Awilda Guadalupe and outgoing Councilor Dennis Ross for their many years of service and care. May these servants enjoy a little rest before they begin their next roles in furthering God's plan.

At this Chapter, the National Fraternity Council adopted priorities (Vocations, Communications, Relationships) and the following theme for 2022-2025: "Listen, Discern, Go Forth." Throughout our term, but especially during this first year, we hope to listen to our members in order to discern their needs and hopes. More on the priorities and theme in future *TAU-USA* editions.

It is interesting that the Chapter of Elections was held in Detroit, Michigan. I was born some 90 miles away in Lansing. After the Chapter, I traveled to Lansing to visit with family. Reflecting on my journey, I realized that my parents planted the first seeds for my OFS vocation. They embody the Franciscan spirit without a formal profession. Also, Brian and I exchanged our wedding vows in Lansing. I found it fitting to go to the place where I received the grace to follow my first vocation and to seek additional grace for my second vocation. I entered the St. Mary Cathedral and prayed with tears in my eyes before Our Lord: "This is your Order. Lead me."

Thank you for your prayers for the new NEC and also for Brian. Without his support, I would not be able to serve the Order. Consider him a co-minister with me.

On my return flight home to Roswell, New Mexico, I heard the last line of the safety announcement from the flight attendant which I think applies to the NEC in relationship to you: "It's our honor to care for you on your journey." What a difference six months make! We look forward to journeying with you during the next three years.



Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR, Witness
Silvia Diane, OFS, CIOFS Presidency Councilor
and Presider of the Election.