

# OFS-USA National Chapter 2023

by Sharon Winzeler, OFS

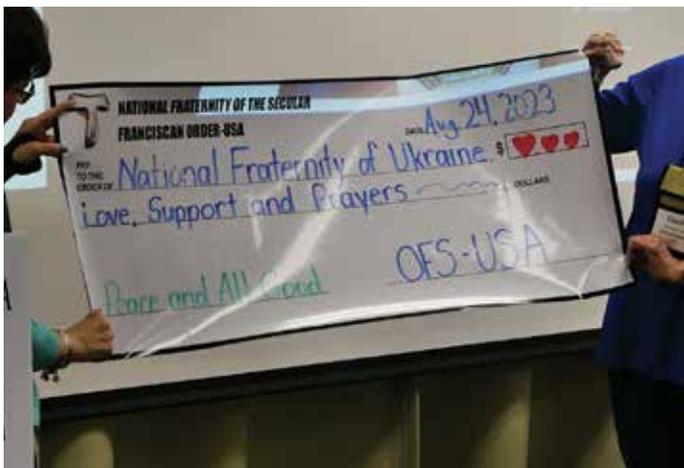


**Visitors and NEC.** Front row: \_Cherryle Fruge, OFS. \_Second row (left to right: Fr. Carlos Gines Campos Julve, TOR; Mary Frances Charsky, OFS; Kathleen Molaro, OFS; and Dina Shabalina, OFS. Third row (left to right): Susan Ronan, OFS; Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS; Diane Menditto, OFS; Claudia Kauzlarich, OFS; Layna Maher, OFS. \_Back row (left to right): Fr. John DeLaRiva, OFM Cap.; Donna Hollis, OFS; and Joshua Molidor, OFS.

Seventy Secular Franciscans, friars and visitors met at the General Chapter in St. Louis amidst a record-setting heat wave Aug. 22-27. One day the mercury soared to 104 degrees, breaking a record of 101 degrees set in 1943.

This was a visitation year, and Secular Franciscans were honored by the presence of fraternal visitor Dina Shabalina, OFS, from Ukraine, and pastoral visitor Fr. Carlos Gines

Campos Julve, TOR, of Peru. Visitations are held every six years at the national level. This year's event was at the Pallottine Renewal Center. Secular Franciscans recognized the celebration of Ukraine's Independence Day on August 24 by singing the national anthem and



On August 24, 1991, the Ukrainian Parliament declared the country's independence from the Soviet Union so each year Ukraine celebrates its Independence Day. Since their Independence Day occurred at chapter, attendees sang the Ukrainian National Anthem to honor fraternal visitor Dina Shabalina, OFS.

providing a generous check to Dina for the Secular Franciscans in Ukraine.

Dina and Fr. Carlos spent the week talking in groups and individually with members of the National Executive Council, regional ministers and spiritual assistants.

“My hometown is thousands of miles away from this place, but this week I couldn’t feel the distance. I felt like I am at home,” Dina said.

“I appreciate very much that you were honest with us. You shared not just your joys and achievements but also your challenges,” she said.

She praised the NEC and the regional ministers for their work.

“The higher you are, the more burden of service you take upon your shoulders,” Dina said.

She praised the efforts that the Secular Franciscans were making to reach out to youth.

“I appreciate that you are looking for ways to find the young people. The young people need you. Don’t be afraid to show them who you are,” she said.

Dina was fluent in English. Fr. Carlos had an interpreter, but he delivered his closing remarks in English.

“This moment is by the grace of God. I discovered the Franciscan fraternity years ago. It helped my vocation as a friar grow,” he said.

Fr. Carlos said he saw true fraternity among those gathered and encouraged them to seek God’s grace and spiritual support in guiding the Order.

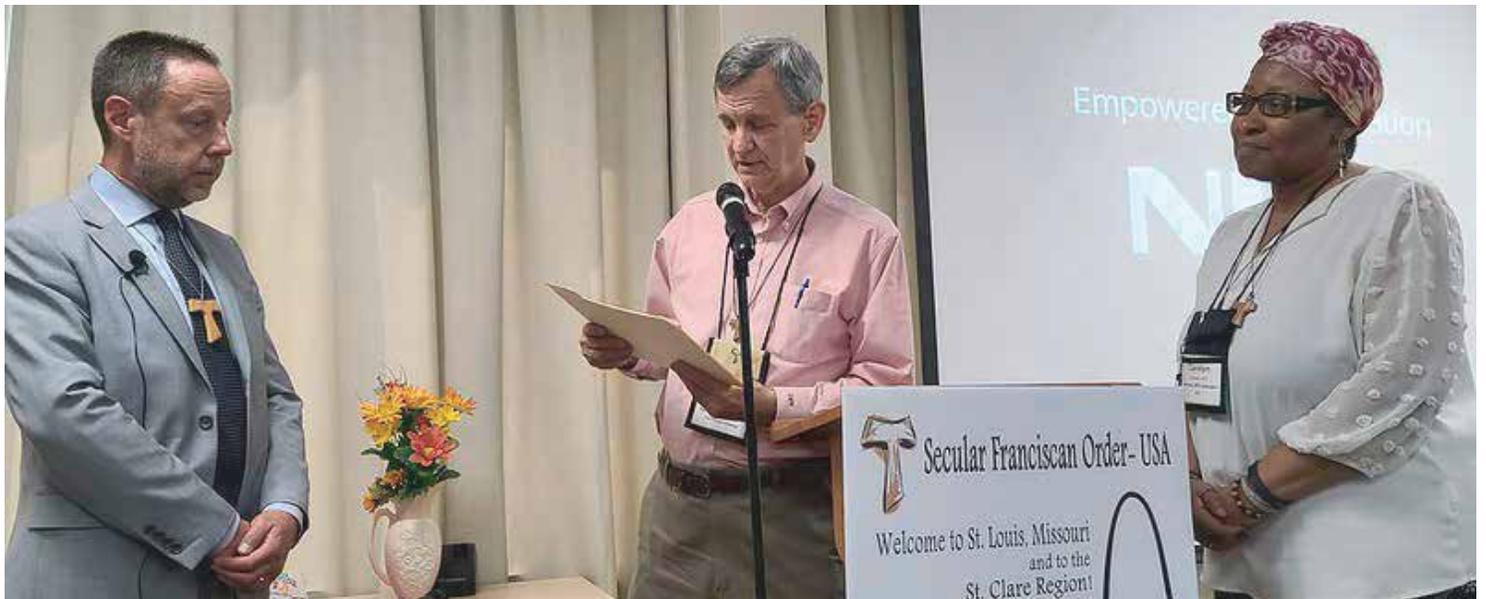
“Let’s not only use our logic and wisdom but also our faith in the grace of God because this is his work,” he said.

The chapter concluded with the recitation of the Hail Mary in many of the languages represented at the chapter English, French, Spanish, Polish, and Ukrainian.

The week also included meetings, Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis on his feast day, budget adoption, the Minister’s State of the Order Address, the JPIC award, and an activity demonstration by the Centenary Committee.



*The relic of St. Francis is present at each Chapter meeting.*



*from left to right, JPIC award recipient Steve Wasko, OFS: new JPIC animator Joe Makley, OFS: and out going animator Carolyn Townes, OFS.*

## Budget Decisions at Chapter 2023

Every fraternity council should prepare a budget. (GC 50.2e; IS10.1j; NS 5.5i, 6.4c) The National Fraternity is no exception. Each year the National Executive Council prepares a budget estimating projected income and projected expenses to accomplish the work of the National Fraternity Council (NEC, commissions, committee). As each of us are experiencing, in the last several years, the cost of transportation, food, lodging, and postage significantly increased. At the same time the income has decreased due to a decrease in membership. Something had to be changed. The NEC reviewed where costs could be trimmed and adjusted the budget estimates (example: reducing the number of in-person NEC meetings).

Based on the increase in expenses and the decrease in income, the NEC estimated that we will use up our savings within the next five years. Therefore, the NEC discussed the need to raise fair share. The last increase in Fair Share was in 2014 to \$17 per person, 9 years ago.

**At the August 2023 Chapter, the need to increase fair share was presented to the Regional Ministers. After much discussion and many suggestions, the National Fraternity Council voted to raise the fair share by \$5 per member (to \$22 per member per year to be paid by each local fraternity) starting in March 2025 (based on the number of members on December 31, 2024).**

In addition, one of the largest expenses of the National Fraternity is printing the Tau-USA newsletter. It has been a priority to send out printed copies as a formation tool, but also because many of our members do not have email or access to review the newsletters digitally. Many entities are going to digital only publications or printed based on a subscription. **To reduce expenses, the National Fraternity Council voted to print only one of the four editions planned to be published in 2024.** This will reduce expenses by an estimated \$40,000. The other three will be available in digital only format.

Neither decision is ideal, however, the National Fraternity Council is doing our best to keep expenses as low as possible so we will be able to ride the wave of increased expenses for several years in a row.

### Rite of Remembrance

Some 390 fraternity brothers and sisters who died in the past year were honored during the Rite of Remembrance at Chapter. Donna Hollis, OFS, and Joshua Molidor, OFS, NEC councilors, led the observance. Each regional minister placed a rose in a vase on the altar in honor of the deceased members. The flowers also sat on the altar at the Mass at the cathedral basilica of St. Louis.

### The Ritual Update

Final revisions are underway on the new Ritual book, according to national minister Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS. Publication is expected in 2024. Since the current version is out of print, fraternity members can use the online version until the new one is published. The Ritual update is available at two websites:

[secularfranciscansusa.org](https://secularfranciscansusa.org)  
[ciofs.org](https://ciofs.org)

### Provinces update

Fr. Larry Hayes, OFM, is the provincial of the unified OFM province at the headquarters in Atlanta, according to Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM. Fr. Mark Soehner, OFM, is the provincial vicar. The friars will continue to seek ways to serve the Secular Franciscans, Fr. Jerome said. The merged province is called Our Lady of Guadalupe and officially began on Oct. 17. It is the merger of six American provinces: Holy Name, Sacred Heart, Assumption, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and Saint John the Baptist. Santa Barbara Province is expected to join the new province soon.

For more information, go to <https://ofm.org/en/appointed-definitory-for-the-future-our-lady-of-guadalupe-province.html>

**New CNSA Member** - New CNSA Member - Fr. Marek Stybor, OFM Conv., from Our Lady of the Angels Province, was introduced as a new member of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA). The CNSA is comprised of the four spiritual assistants, one from each friar obedience (Order of Friars Minor, OFM Capuchin, OFM Conventual, and Third Order Regular). The CNSA is responsible for guiding all the spiritual assistants of the OFS in the United States and the NEC.



**Entertainment-** St. Clare Regional Minister Christine Blood, OFS, and members of her region presented attendees with “A Taste of St. Louis” on Aug. 25, featuring local favorite foods. Afterward, former national minister Jan Parker, OFS, narrated a skit taken from chapter 34 of “The Little Flowers of St. Francis.” The story involves a pilgrimage that the French king St. Louis made to visit the holy Brother Giles. Performed with humor, reverence, and colorful costumes, the skit delighted the audience.



# Chapter Day Away

by Vickie Klick, OFS

## Celebrating the Feast Day at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis

National Chapter attendees celebrated the feast of our patron, St. Louis IX, King of France, at a Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis at its 2023 Chapter on the feast day of St. Louis, Aug. 25.

Fr. Tom Nairn, OFM, provincial of Sacred Heart province, was the celebrant.

Fr. Nairn is author of "A Franciscan Spirituality of Discernment", the source of the National Fraternity's theme "Listen, Discern, Go Forth." He is provincial minister of the Franciscan Province of the Sacred Heart located in St. Louis.

St. Louis was king of France from 1226 to 1270. He is known for his kindness and service to the poor, which included making sure that those in his community were fed on a daily basis. He would often help serve the meals.

Fr. Tom's homily reflected on how odd it seemed to have a king and a crusader as a patron of our order. He connected the readings from Wisdom, 2 Timothy, and the parable of the talents from Luke to show St. Louis as a king who was a servant leader, who cared for the poor personally, who worked for peace, and who was a true evangelist. Using Francis' Letter to All the Faithful, Fr. Tom presented St. Louis as a model of what it means to be a member of the Franciscan family.

The cathedral is a stupendous experience in itself and a representation of Byzantine and Romanesque design. The interior is covered with 83,000 square feet of mosaics, depicting scenes from the Old and New Testaments, the religious history of the city of St. Louis, and, in the narthex, the life of St. Louis. One of the scenes shows St. Louis receiving the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis, our Secular Franciscan Order. It was very special to celebrate the feast there.

Originally designated a cathedral, it was given the distinction of a cathedral basilica in 1997 by Pope John Paul II who visited it in 1999. A basilica is the highest designation that can be given to a church building and is only bestowed by the Pope. The three signs that a church has been named a basilica are the presence of the Ombrellino (umbrella), Tintinnabulum (Bells), and the Papal Cross Keys. A cathedral is the home church for the bishop or archbishop of the diocese.



**Off on a Day Away** - Chapter attendees traveled to downtown St. Louis for Mass and a tour of the St. Louis Basilica-Cathedral on a record-breaking 104° day.

