

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE OFS?

by Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS

In past articles from the Vocations Committee, there has been a focus on our joint responsibility for promoting vocations – sharing the news about the Secular Franciscan Order. Have you talked about your vocation recently?

At one time in your life, it was so special that you were drawn to learn about it, and eventually you professed to live your life according to the OFS Rule. Did you talk about it to everyone who would listen – like it was the love of your life, best new invention or prize? Take a walk down memory lane – recall how you learned about the Order.

Whatever the approach was, it worked for you. Would that approach be a good way to introduce others to the Order? Was it the way someone responded to struggles? Was it the joy in the person's attitude? Was it working for social justice in your community? Remember the saying attributed to St. Francis: "Preach the Gospel always, and if necessary, use words." Our actions can be a powerful way of attracting vocations.

At the Quinquennial Congress (Q) in St. Louis, attendees will have the opportunity to record their vocation testimony, i.e., brag about this great Order to which the Holy Spirit led us. Participants are invited to record 2-3 minute testimonials. Some examples of questions to think about:

1. How did you learn about the OFS? What drew you to the Order?
2. How do you respond when someone asks: "What's that 'T' around your neck?"
3. What does being a Secular Franciscan mean to you?

The Q is several months away, so why not practice your "elevator speech" ahead of time? Testimonials will be posted to the Secular Franciscan YouTube Channel. I trust that the sharing will be a source of inspiration about this Way of Life.

Once we have our message down, with whom do we share it? (i.e., Who would potentially have a vocation?)

Start with other Catholics. Then get to know them. Do they have Franciscan traits?

Borrowing from the *For Up to Now* (FUN) manual we should be looking for individuals who:

- Are joy filled even in the midst of struggles;
- Desire to live the Gospel;
- Participate in the life of the Church and the apostolic life;
- Are familiar with Sacred Scripture;
- Are good cooks or bakers (ok – this wasn't in the FUN Manual, but good idea?).

Of course, this isn't an exhaustive list.

Think of the people in your family, parish and at work. Does anyone demonstrate those traits? Maybe it's time to invite him or her to learn more about the Order. In addition to talking about what you know, direct the person to your Formation Director and also to the NAFRA social media sites:

NAFRA website at www.nafra-sfo.org,

NAFRA Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Secular-Franciscans-Nafra-USA-128856987168774/>

Continue to turn things over to the Holy Spirit, be open to respond to those nudges and talk about how special your vocation is to you. Lastly, pray the following at least monthly:

National Prayer for Vocations to the Secular Franciscan Order

O good and gracious God, God of mercy, compassion, generosity, and love, as we live our lives today in the model of St. Francis, choosing daily to live the Gospel life, help us to help others hear your call. Help us to help others recognize their vocation as a Secular Franciscan that You have already planted in their heart. Help us, so that together we all may work to bring the Gospel to life. Amen! (Composed by Marian R. Crosby, OFS, at the 2010 NAFRA gathering in Scottsdale, AZ)

Send your comments to:
OFSVocationsCommitte@gmail.com

