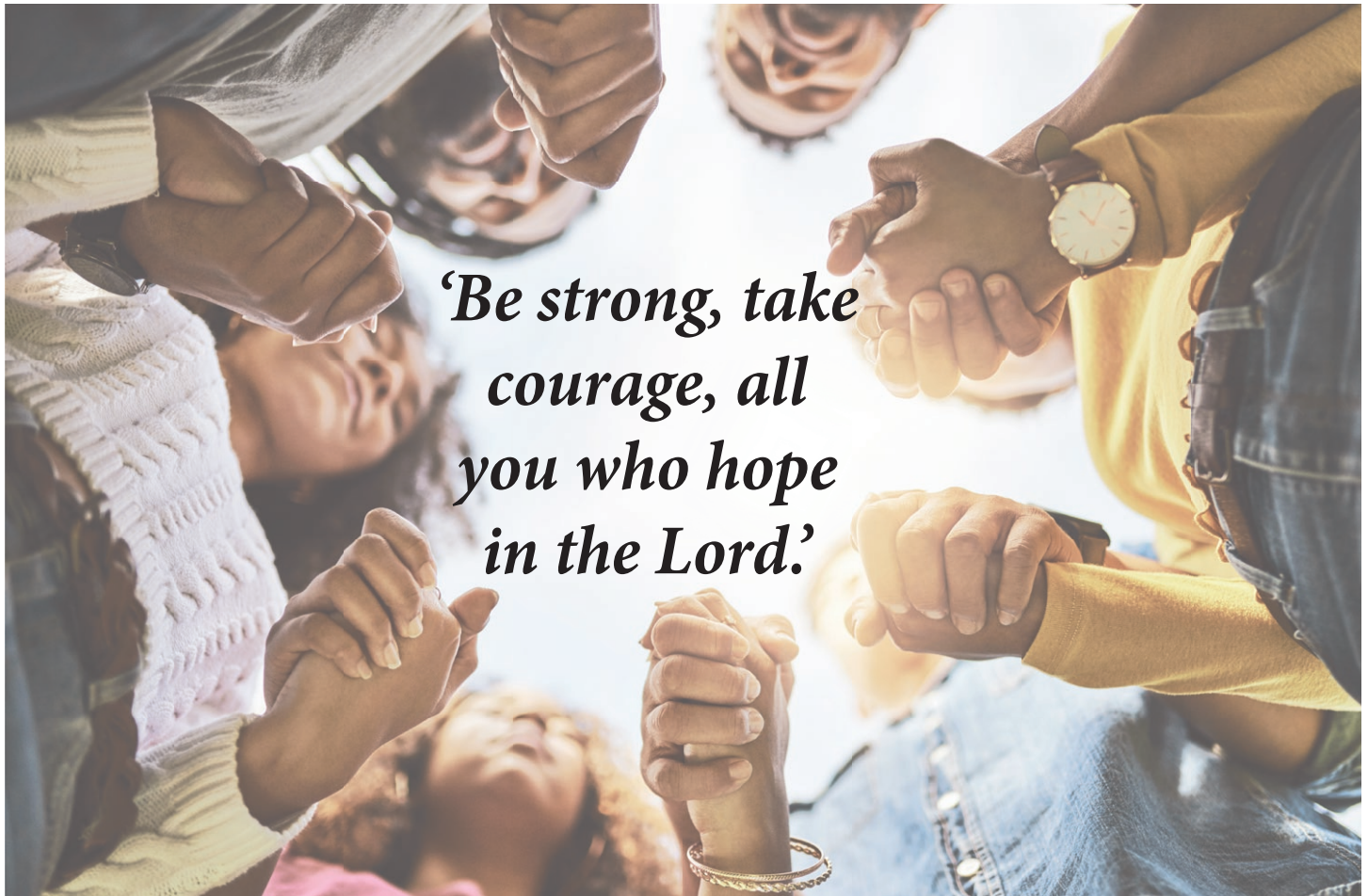


HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER



*'Be strong, take
courage, all
you who hope
in the Lord.'*

National Chapter Virtually Engaging and Inspiring

By MARY T. STRONACH, OFS

For the second year, virtual hugs and warm smiles filled the computer screens of between 80 and 100 regional ministers, national leaders, spiritual assistants and observers. From across the country, they converged on screen for the 2021 National Chapter, prepared to engage in discussions and make decisions for the good of the Order.

Prayer helped the participants to focus. New regional ministers met for the first time in their own session and were reminded to “allow the Holy Spirit to hold the reins” as He will “give you courage to do what you have to do.” National Minister Jan Parker offered the powerful insight that the “state of the order depends on the state of each one of us,” and then, provided an overview

of the U.S. Order and a vision for the future. In a brief appearance from Hungary, Minister General Tibor Kauser reminded everyone to have “a clear vision of our identity” because “without knowing who we are, we will never know what we should do.”

A full agenda assured attendees that this event, although from the comfort of their couches or kitchen tables, would require their attention, hard work and wisdom.

The national budget was presented and approved. The Peace Award for work done with refugees and undocumented immigrants at the southern border brought tears to the eyes of participants. The Formation Team brought the OFS Ritual to life. Spiritual Assistants

provided insights on Franciscan spirituality through the Liturgy of the Hours, mass and formation, emphasizing that “prayer and contemplation are the bedrock of our engagement with the divine.” As is customary, attendees also had their “day away,” a virtual trip along the trails, peak and ravines of Yosemite National Park and Ash Mountain. And, for those who needed a little more excitement, participants from Florida had to hide in a closet because of a tornado warning. They returned shortly, safe and sound in the arms of the Secular Franciscans awaiting them on the Zoom call.

The theme for 2021-2022 brought the National Chapter to focus with its mandate from Psalm 31:25: “*Be strong, take courage, all you who hope in the Lord.*”

The Call to 'Rebuild My Church'

SR. AGNES ADDRESSES 'PROPHETIC CREATIVITY'



Sister Agnes Marie Regan, OSF

By SHARON WINZELER, OFS

An echo of St. Francis's vision of God's call to "rebuild my church" resounds in the 21st century inspiration of 'prophetic creativity,' a concept that appears in recent Franciscan and church documents.

In a presentation the opening night of Chapter, **Sister Agnes Marie Regan, OSF**, encouraged Secular Franciscans to respond to God's call to study and act on prophetic creativity, especially as it is presented in Pope Francis's encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, the International OFS Council (CIOFS) document *Instrumentum Laboris* and the Ministers General Christmas letter.

Prophetic creativity is seeing as God

sees with spiritual eyes and then acting while allowing God's grace to strengthen us to do his will.

"It is innovative action taken in response to the Holy Spirit working with and within us," Sister Regan explained.

The creativity is important and mentioned no less than 44 times by Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti*, she said.

"Pope Francis spoke about the need for prophecy in the church today, saying 'prophecy is born whenever we allow ourselves to be challenged by God, not when we are concerned to keep everything quiet and under control. When the Gospel overturns certainties, prophecy arises. Only someone who is

open to God's surprises can become a prophet.'"

Prophets create action, Sister Regan said, and quoted Pope Francis again, "You want a prophetic church? Then begin to serve and stop talking. Not theory, but testimony." Prophetic creativity enables us to "not save up ourselves but to spend ourselves for others," according to Pope Francis.

Sister Regan noted that by the nature of our baptism, we are called to be prophets.

She admitted that the call can feel uncomfortable. She cited Biblical characters like Sarah, who laughed when God told her she would bear a son because she was too old; Moses, who said, send my brother, I can't talk; Jacob, who had a wrestling match with God; and Jonah, who wound up in the whale's belly.

A better model for how to respond would be Mary. We recite her answer every evening when we pray the Liturgy of the Hours.

"So, if we say we feel uncomfortable, let's think about how Mary accepted it," Sr. Regan said, referring to lines from the Magnificat:

*My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour*

Because He hath regarded the humility of his handmaid: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His name.

God is calling us to focus our prayer and our energy in His direction by falling in love again with our profession. She cites a quote from Encarnacion del Pozo, OFS, former minister general, to continue the call for action within the order that began with restructuring in 1978.

Continued on next page.



Pope Francis signs encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* at the Tomb of St. Francis in Assisi.

Vatican photo.



CIOFS Presidency at work in Rome. Photo by R. Stronach, OFS.



CURRENT MINISTERS GENERAL: (from left) **Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR; Tibor Kauser, OFS; Fr. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM; Fr. Roberto Genuin, OFMCap; Fr. Carlos Trovarelli, OFMConv, and Sr. M. Magdalena Schmitz, representing CFI-TOR.**

Continued from previous page.

“I firmly believe that, based on the experience of the first 40 years, the future of formation in the Order must be oriented toward being. Only by doing, without being, the Order will not mature and regress to a simple and tired routine,” del Pozo said.

Since we are all thirsty for a deeper relationship with God, we should be open to the direction in which prophetic creativity can lead us. Some of this is outlined in *Instrumentum Labororis*. Those directions include creating new fraternities and infusing life into old ones.

“Seek new ways to help the development of the spiritual life of the sisters and brothers. They’re hungry for a deeper relationship with God and a broader understanding of their Franciscan call,” Sister Regan said.

Prophetic creativity calls for personal presence, witness, prayer, active collaboration, and service that goes beyond the

day-to-day administration.

“[Service]...is not limited to ‘bureaucratic issues’ nor to the execution of the guidelines of the Council of the higher level but requires ‘prophetic creativity’ for the realization of the Secular Franciscan life, both as individuals and as Fraternity, consistent with the Gospel and the Magisterium of the Church,” she quoted from *Instrumentum Labororis*.

She emphasized that all Franciscans are called to take part in creative prophecy. It all works with the daily conversion to which we are called.

“All of us have to look at it and ask ‘What is my part in this?’” she said.

“Conversion is impossible without motivation and change. It directs us to look at Jesus and Francis for our examples,” Sister Regan said.

Never fear that you lack the ability to pursue the renewal, she added.

“God does not choose those who are qualified. He qualifies those he chooses,”

Sister Regan said.

What would happen if everyone responded to God as Francis and Clare did?

Sister Regan cited an answer from Jan Parker, OFS, national minister.

“We would grow closer to God and each other. We would engage more deeply in what we promised and there would be a rebirth of our Franciscan order. Our fraternities would become more alive with enthusiasm, hope and joy.”

The challenge is to heed the call by St. Francis as it is cited in Rule 6.

Called like Saint Francis to rebuild the Church and inspired by his example, let them devote themselves energetically to living in full communion with the pope, bishops, and priests, fostering an open and trusting dialogue of apostolic effectiveness and creativity.

“Let’s commit our lives to the message of Jesus and let it take over our hearts and minds with full excitement,” Sister Regan said.

HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER

'Recognize the Power of Loving, Serving'

By SHARON WINZELER, OFS

When your earthly journey is over and you meet our heavenly Father, which of the two greetings do you expect?

- "Well done, my good and faithful servant."
- "Where were you?"

This proposition was presented by Carolyn Townes, OFS, national JPIC animator, at the national chapter.

"I invite you to ponder that thought. Meditate on it. Let it upset you. Let it make you uncomfortable. Because I guarantee, those who have nowhere to lay their heads at night are not comfortable," Townes said.

Townes said she calls on the Holy Spirit each day for guidance on her mission in the world.

"How may I to show up for my brothers and sisters, especially those who lack hope? How am I to show up for the lost, the broken, the outcast, the marginalized, those who grieve and are in pain? How am I to show up for those who are scarred by the sin of racism, sexism, ageism, and ableism? And how am



Carolyn Townes, OFS

I to show up for those who are further scarred by those who deny the isms even exist," she asked.

Her presentation encouraged Franciscans to recognize the power of loving and serving daily in our world.

"When we encounter the stranger, the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless, the migrant—regardless of how they got that way—we are called to minister to their needs," Townes said.

"We are not called to judge, to condemn, to criticize or to blame—we are simply called to love and care for them," she said.

The intention behind that love and service extends beyond our opinions.

"Yes, we love and care for the unborn because we deem them "innocent." But then we turn our backs once they leave the womb and become the migrant, the refugee, the homeless, the broken, the sinner. God loves them all just the same—whether they are innocent or guilty of living in a fallen world.

"God loves them all. Are we not called to do likewise? If we say we are followers of Jesus and Francis, that means we live, move and have our being like Jesus and Francis," Townes said.

As followers, we are continually called to the life of service and love.

"Today...we tend to pick and choose which parts to follow and which parts we want no part of. Our Lord was a migrant and a refugee, but we don't want to look at that part of his story because it doesn't jive what I think my...savior should look like."

'She Is on the Margins'

By SHARON WINZELER, OFS

Donna Hollis, OFS, is the 2021 recipient of the National *Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Award* presented at the National Chapter. She is a member of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Fraternity in Las Cruces, NM, and serves as a councilor on the National Executive Council.

Carolyn Townes, OFS, JPIC animator, introduced Hollis as a Franciscan living out her call.

"She is on the margins, at the border, taking care of those who have nowhere

to lay their heads at night," Townes said. "She does not judge or question why – only, what can I do to help? How can I love you and care for you – one human being to another? One child of God to another child of God."

Hollis explained that her work is inspired by Leviticus 19:34, which reminds us to welcome everyone. "You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself."

She works with Project Oak Tree created in 2014 by the Catholic Diocese of Las Cruces to provide hospitality to refugees, who were released from custody to El Paso and the surrounding area to transition to life in the United States. The organization is staffed by volunteers helping unite the immigrants with their families living in the U.S.

The name of the organization is inspired by a passage from Chapter 18 of Genesis, where the Lord appeared

Continued on next page.

HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER



Donna Hollis, OFS, with Central American refugee family.

Continued from previous page.

to Abraham by the Oak of Mamre; and when Abraham spotted travelers approaching, he offered them food and rest. Later he realized he had been visited by messengers or angels of God.

Within a year, the work at Project Oak Tree surged when refugees began fleeing violence and extreme poverty in Central America and other Latin American countries.

“We, At Holy Cross Retreat Center are just one of the ‘In between places,’ giving them food, clothing, medical care, covid tests, vaccines from the medical team, planning transportation to their families in the US,” Hollis said.

The need has only grown.

“The U.S. government has reported encountering an unprecedented number of migrants at the southwest border. In New Mexico alone there have been 98,409 Border Patrol encounters with people entering the U.S. illegally since October 2020. This count includes unaccompanied children, some of whom are dropped over the wall, pushed through an opening or abandoned somewhere along the international line. Although it is hard to believe, their par-

ents are just trying to save their lives,” Hollis said.

The reasons behind the migration are complex, but the fear that the people have is real.

“People from countries neighboring the U.S. are facing violence, poverty and corruption in the governments that cannot help them. In short, they and their families are not safe,” Hollis said.

Neither is their journey secure.

“From the very moment that a migrant decides to leave home and take off north, all the way until they reach their destination, the threat of death is present on the journey,” she said.

One example was a teenage boy who was found murdered and his body mutilated because he was unable to pay a Mexican gang the ‘crossing fee’ they charged to get into the U.S.

Another was a Mexican woman captured by a border patrol agent.

“She was handcuffed with three others, struggling as she was being forced through a barbed wire fence. The woman slipped her hand from the handcuff and ran. After about 50 feet, she fell from a 20-foot cliff in the dark-

ness, smashing her head and dying near the river’s edge,” Hollis said.

She cited statistics from the International Organization for Migration that said 2,191 persons have died along the U.S.-Mexico border since 2014. She added that the U.S. Border Patrol reports that 8,050 migrant deaths occurred along the Southwest border since 1998.

The journey remains incomplete once they reach the U.S. border where they may be sent back to Mexico to await their immigration hearing instead of being released to their sponsors. This is a result of the Migrant Protection Protocol. The MPP requires people who have asked for asylum to return to Mexico to prevent them from spreading Covid in the U.S. It means that the refugees are at risk of further violence and lack access to proper food, shelter and medical treatment, Hollis said.

“Others are detained and live in ‘congregate settings’ that migrants are typically held in. These settings are not set up for social distancing, nor designed to care for people in normal times, let

Continued on next page.

HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER

AWARD REPRESENTS ALL WORKING FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

By SHARON WINZELER, OFS

In true Franciscan fashion, Donna Hollis, OFS, began her JPIC award talk by recognizing others who were nominated for the award.

"This award represents and includes all of us who work tirelessly for Justice and Peace. It is not just me, but many members working together as Franciscans, and people with compassionate hearts showing the love of God through our actions for others in most need," Hollis said.

The other nominees:

Thomas Michael Fame, MD, St. Margaret of Cortona Region, began a fundraising project for the poor in Haiti.

Stacey Antine, OFS, MS, RDN is the founder of HealthBarn USA. As a registered dietitian she feeds ill children and their families and seniors in need through the Healing Meals programs.

Kelly Lynch, OFS, St. Margaret of Cortona Region – her ministry is called

"Mychal's Message," which continues the work of Fr. Mychal Judge, OFM, chaplain for NYC Fire Dept. who died while serving victims of 9-11. Mychal's Message meets the needs of the homeless and shares Fr. Judge's message of unconditional love.

Alan Ouimet, OFS, Blessed Solanus Casey Region – Alan's work is with the Franciscan Family Apostolate and the work they do in India. Through the Franciscan Family Apostolate, individuals, families, and fraternities in the U.S. are privileged with a unique level of connection to their sponsor families in India.

Fr. Emmet Murphy, OFM, Holy Name of Jesus Province – Fr. Murphy conducts outreaches to immigrants in US parishes and travels to developing countries on mission trips.

Valerie Baronkin, OFS, Brothers and

Sisters of St. Francis Region. She is the Greenville Deanery Respect Life Coordinator. She attends the March for Life in Washington DC. Valerie's work in the Pro-Life arena exemplifies her peace efforts.

Fr. Seraphim Wirth, FBP, Franciscan Brothers of Peace in St. Paul, MN. He has provided spiritually, emotionally and materially for the "Karen Refugees" in St. Paul, and in the Region of Myanmar. Fr. Is the chaplain for the Karen community of about 200 families who are the ethnic minority from Burma.

Fr. Murray Bodo, OFM, St. John the Baptist Province – we know and acknowledge Fr. Bodo's ministry of living the Franciscan life through his writings which have formed our own Franciscan way of life. Through his courageous initiatives, he works to animate compassion and nonviolence in the world.

JPIC AWARD

continued from previous page

along emergencies. Even those who have demonstrated through a credible fear interview that they merit a U.S. immigration hearing may have to wait for their hearing in Mexico," she said.

The crisis is compounded by the Afghanistan refugees who were airlifted out of their country to the U.S. after the Taliban took over. Nearly 10,000 Afghan refugees were housed at Ft. Bliss Dona Ana County Range Complex, not far from Las Crucis.

"The relocation of Afghan families into communities across the U.S. creates an opportunity for each of us to stand up and assist people in need. The transition away from the emergency response to the more quality of life response is ongoing. The refugee site may close in the spring once resettlement operations are complete," Hollis said.

Another 4,000 Afghans resided at Holloman Air Force Base. These were vulnerable contractors and their families who worked with the U.S. during the war in Afghanistan over the past 20 years. They, too, have moved on to resettlement.

"We see the face of Christ in the faces of the refugees. The Divine seed is in everyone. We just have to recognize it. Hopefully, they see God's love through us," Hollis said.

Hollis closed her presentation with a reminder of the Gospel's call to do God's work among the vulnerable and marginalized.

"So, what do I do with Justice and Peace? I live it out with many, many others who help and support those most vulnerable. We have many Secular Franciscans living out this call to help

migrants and refugees in their area of the state. Fraternities seek ways to help and explore ways to be involved with the needs of their areas, including soup kitchens, homeless, the elderly, writing letters to our congressmen and more. We are just being present and much more. We are all living it out."

"Jesus is telling us where to find Him and where to find God: in the stranger," Hollis concluded.

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me, in prison and you came to visit me. I assure you, as often as you did it for the least among you, you did it for me."

— Matthew 25:35-40

HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER



Diane F. Menditto, OFS 10/28/21

FORMATION TEAM REVEALS RITUAL AS A TREASURE

The National Formation Team unpacked the Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order and revealed a treasure for the life of Franciscans. Written by the International Franciscan Liturgical Commission led by Benet A. Fonck, OFM, it was officially approved in English in 1985.

Formation Chair Diane Menditto, OFS, began the program with an historical overview of the Ritual. The Tertiary's Companion, for example, was used prior to 1955. "(I)n 1966, in light of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of Vatican II, the Commissaries General of the Franciscan Order urged the entire Franciscan world to engage in an overhaul of the rule, constitutions, and ritual of the Third Order."

Following that recommendation, the New Ritual for Public Functions was compiled in 1973 by Benet A. Fonck, OFM and his associates. Father Benet, also spearheaded, the most recent version of the ritual in 1985. This version provides background information, liturgical guidelines, and prayers used at important events.

In the forward to the Ritual (p. vi), Diane noted, "we are urged to enrich our local celebrations with signs, symbols, gestures, music, and whatever practices are appropriate to enhance the spirit of prayer of the worshipping community."

The Ritual: Pure Gold

Anne Mulqueen, OFS, spiritual assistant for the Formation Team, described the Ritual as "pure gold."

"Two very important 'golden threads' found in the Ritual are our Secular Franciscan identity and heritage and an understanding that fraternity is a place where we belong."

Through a quick overview of the Rite of Admission, she brought into focus the fact that the candidates are called "to live more intensely and faithfully their Baptismal promises; to follow Christ; to follow the example of St. Francis; to serve others; to live as a secular person; and all for the glory of God."

Add to that the sense of belonging: "The fraternity promises to support the

candidates on their journey. The fraternity also expects the candidates to enrich the fraternity... That's what it means to belong! Mutual love and support."

The Rite of Profession, she noted, "contains the most significant life-changing statement. They are making a permanent commitment to the gospel life... It is life altering and there will be no turning back."

Anne added that symbolic gifts are very important, conveying meaning that has an effect deeper than words can express. "Music, gesture, images, gifts all enhance prayer because they engage the senses as well as the intellect."

The Ritual suggests the following gifts: at the ceremony of welcoming, a biography of St. Francis and St. Clare; at the rite of admission, the Tau and a copy of the Rule; at profession, a copy of the Holy Gospels. She adds, "The Gospel is much more than a symbol. It is to be internalized because to profess the Gospel, one must know the Gospel."

Continued on next page.

HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER



iStockphoto

FORMATION ON THE RITUAL

continued from previous page

She offered some points to remember:

- Rituals should be celebrated publicly in fraternity.
- Advance preparation and focused intention are vital.
- Everyone is expected to be a participant.
- When we gather, we are in the presence of GOD.
- Include your spiritual assistant in the planning.

The Ritual as a Formation Source

Layna Maher, OFS, and Justin Carisio, OFS, formation team members, explored how the Ritual can be used as a formation source. Layna began by emphasizing that “initial formation should anticipate and illuminate the Ritual.” She added that “rites strengthen our union with God.” Each rite has specific elements, she said; they include questioning the candidate, witnesses, the wording, the acceptance by the candidate and the symbols.

“Each rite is instructive and affirming of the vocation and life of the Secular Franciscan.”

For formation directors, she reminded that “the Rite of Profession incorporates into the ritual key themes to be explored and learned during initial formation.” These include: living the gospel following St. Francis, fidelity to the Church, maintaining the spirit of service, the importance of the Rule, the renewal of Baptism and Confirmation promises,

that our mission is to rebuild the church, the centrality of life in fraternity, and the permanence of the commitment.

Justin then took the attendees through the rite of profession, acknowledging the beauty of the words and the intensity of their meaning. He emphasized that the candidates should be made aware of these words, the reality of their meaning and the commitment they are making long before they profess them as they stand publicly before the fraternity and the witnesses of the church.

Fraternal/Pastoral Visitations

Francine Gikow, OFS, and Mary Strodnach, OFS, both members of the Formation Team, discussed the prayers for the Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation.

Francine addressed the fact that Article 92 of the Constitutions states the purpose of the visitation, which is to be a booster shot for those professed; to assure fidelity to the charism and rule; to help fraternity life in assisting in “issues” within the fraternal dynamics; to reinforce the unity of the Order, reminding everyone that each one of us lives in four fraternities – local, regional, national and international; to ensure that we are part of the Franciscan family and the Church, and to ensure that we reach out to the Friars, Poor Clares, and other branches of the Franciscan family.

She explained that within the prayers of the visitations, there is a ‘flow.’ “Sometimes they are reminders of our purpose, other times they are

petitions or goals.” She added that we should “SAVOR the actual words of the prayers.” She highlighted the prayers and allowed the participants to embrace the message and tone of the words.

Mary then completed the program by reviewing the closing part of the Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation during which time the visitors have a fraternal dialogue with the fraternity members, offering observations, comments and recommendations for the fraternity, or, as the General Constitutions Article 93 say, “fraternal correction.”

She asked the participants to listen to the words of the closing prayer, during which time, “in fraternal love,” the fraternity visitor lifts the fraternity in prayer and reminds the fraternity to remain faithful to the Rule. The fraternal visitor instructs the fraternity to “be at peace, warn the idlers, give courage, care for the weak, be patient, do not take revenge, wishing the best for the brothers and sisters and for the community, be happy at all times, pray constantly, give thanks, and then, as a final reminder that we are Brother and Sisters of Penance, to prepare for the last days.”

She concluded with Francis’ blessing to Brother Leo: “May the Lord bless you and keep you. May his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May he look upon you with kindness and give you his peace. May the Lord bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”



CNSA and NEC Respond to Questions and Provide Updates

The Saturday afternoon session with the Spiritual Assistants and the National Executive Council (NEC) tackled questions that attendees submitted.

About spiritual assistants:

Discernment is recommended for those OFS interested in becoming spiritual assistants. The CNSA website offers some direction. More than one interview is necessary. We need to get more familiar with the person and learn about his/her background.

About formation and enrichment for spiritual assistants:

The quality of formation of the spiritual assistant is critical. Mentors should be provided for beginning spiritual assistants. The NAFRA website offers guidelines on how to establish a Spiritual Assistant program. There will be some enrichment at the Q. But also, when the national assistants meet, they often invite local spiritual assistants to join them.

Responsibilities of secular spiritual assistants:

Secular spiritual assistants should not be assigned to serve in their own fraternities. When a Friar Province considers this, we should discourage them. If secular spiritual assistants are assigned to their own fraternity, they must know in advance that they give up their vote when they become a spiritual assistant. The role of the spiritual assistant is to “bridge the divide between the friars and OFS.”

Communication with friars:

Sometimes, the friars do not answer e-mails. If they don't respond one way, try another way. Don't presume that e-mails are read and remembered. Be persistent and creative. If you know someone in the province, ask for help or ask the national spiritual assistant of the same obedience.

Canonical establishment document:

Information is available in the revised *Spiritual Assistant Handbook* which is available digitally on the website.

Establishment of other Third Order Groups:

Encourage members to inform the regional ministers of when other groups are reaching out in their region. Some groups appear to selectively defend Catholic teaching, refuse to dialogue, and may be cult-like in how they engage with the world. However, any friar province may establish other Third Order groups. It is important that we stand firm in what we believe. Recent breakaway groups profess the Leonine Rule. We abrogated that rule. Our profession was made under the Pauline Rule. Let us remember what we professed to and allow ourselves to be challenged by it. Be aware. Educate. Communicate. Be prepared.

Same-sex legal unions::

We follow church teaching even when it is difficult or inconvenient. Therefore, unions outside of those blessed by the church are not compat-

ible with membership in the OFS (for example, same-sex unions). Harmony with the Church is important. The CNSA and NEC can help guide the process of dialogue for the fraternity's leadership to shepherd the member in such a situation to discern which commitment they will choose to follow; a printed guide is being developed.

Revision of Ritual:

The Council has finally been able to negotiate the purchase of the copyright of the Ritual. This will allow the National Fraternity to begin both the updating of the English version and then the translation into Spanish and other languages. Work has just begun, spearheaded by the CNSA, and we are asking members for anything they may want considered for inclusion.

Duns Scotus:

Modifications were made to the wording of some of the amendments in the Duns Scotus Formation Fund Principles and Procedures document. Nominations should be submitted to the NEC for new members of the board. Any fraternity or fraternity member seeking funding for special formation programs can go on-line to secularfranciscansusa.org under the tab, “Resources: Guidelines, Forms, and Other Resources.”

National Statutes:

A revision of the National Statutes is being considered. The ministers were asked to send suggestions and give direction to the Executive Council.

Friars Challenge, Help Bring Prayer Alive at Chapter



The Conference of National Spiritual Assistants enlivened the National Chapter by focusing on being part of an order, on prayer and contemplation, and on the Liturgy of the Hours.

As an Order, Respect Different Opinions

“It’s important that we recognize that we are committed to an order, and we should try to be in harmony with the church... and with each other,” **Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM**, said. But, sometimes, he said, it’s difficult. Sometimes, even across the church, there may be disagreement.

He suggested that sometimes we take something that is true and blow it out of proportion, out of context and reinterpret it, moving people away from the truth. Sometimes, we may not hear the scholarly reply. It’s “important to be grounded to know where the church is – in scripture and to understand it in the light of Christ, to pay attention to church and its magisterium.” Respect it.

As an order, we should “be respectful of other people with a different point of view.” For him, he said he likes to “keep things open and on the table – It’s a dimension of being part of an order.” He recommended having a “broad collection of people and hear a lot of opinions. It’s helpful to sort things out that way.”

“There are a lot of things that we have to keep in our hearts and we can’t say



anything,” but, “we can take them to our spiritual directors. I hope that anyone who is in a position of authority, has a spiritual director.”

Being a part of an order can be difficult, especially if you are in the role of leadership, he said. We must not abandon but rather be “vigilant and persistent about coming ever closer to being coordinated with the rest of the church and among ourselves as an order.”

He added, “To be willing to be directed and to give up something you love out of the sense of harmony of the church is a dimension of leadership...” It’s challenging to keep some things in our hearts, but “we must face this challenge because we are part of an order.”

Prayer & Contemplation: the Bedrock

“Prayer and contemplation are the bedrock of our engagement with the divine,” began **Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR**. Prayer is about giving thanks, asking for intercessions, making petitions and adoring God. These are the four types of prayer, he said.

“The Liturgy is the summit with all forms of prayer included,” he noted. Quoting Sister Delio, he said “prayer is where we speak what we know and what we don’t know.” He added Bonaventure’s thoughts: “If we want to ascend to God, we must descend into our own humanity... In prayer, God bends down to embrace us.”



“God speaks to us,” he added, and we should be “listening and engaging with him... Where God is, he gives us the strength and speaks to us in the goodness of creation... We’re the ones who put the veil in front of our faces.”

Through prayer and contemplation we can understand who we are. “It brings all into perspective,” he said, adding that St. Clare’s method of “contemplation begins with the mirror of the Crucified Christ; seeing oneself in daily prayer before the Cross; to accept God in the Crucified is to accept God in our own lives, to accept who we are; the more we contemplate Christ, the more we come to resemble Christ.”

He advised: “Find God in the midst of all that is humanity. Listen to him in creation and in fraternity. Keep your mouths shut and ears open to see how God wants the world to be.”

He closed by saying that Contemplation makes us “aware of God who is always here.”

Liturgy of the Hours: Church’s Gift

Fr. Chris Shorrock, OFM Conv. asked the questions: Can Liturgy of the Hours become a prayer for every person? Can it bring new energy? Can we learn from it?

Using the Timothy M. Gallagher,
Continued on next page.

HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL CHAPTER

National Budget Unanimously Approved

After an explanation of the financial state of the order, the National Chapter unanimously approved a \$221,400 budget for 2022.

National Treasurer Claudia Kauzlarich, OFS, explained that, while expenses for 2022 are anticipated to be \$371,880, the deficit of \$150,480 will be covered by funds in savings.

National Fraternity Sends Support to Various Ministries

Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children.

– Article 11, OFS Rule

Consistent with the guidelines from the OFS Rule, the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order approved supporting a number of programs which will “benefit God’s children.”

Nominations were solicited for charitable giving by the 2021 task force which consisted of one person from each of the four GEO groups plus the treasurer: Pat Serotkin, Northeast; Jeane Swaynos, South/Central; Terry Barber, West; Joe Edwards, Great Lakes; and Claudia Kauzlarich, national treasurer.

The following Franciscan organizations were selected to receive a \$500 contribution each.

- Dorothy Day Outreach, Loretto, PA.
- Holy Cross Retreat Center, Mesilla, NM.
- Our Lady of Guadalupe Free Clinic, Worthington, MN.
- St. Francis Breadline, New York, NY.
- Tek4Kids, New Albany, IN.

Those receiving a \$250 contribution each were:

- Dream Catcher Youth Servant-Leadership Program, Fulda, MN.
- Francis Center, Portland, OR.
- Tau Ministries, David Seitz, OFS, Waterford, MI.
- Franciscan Brothers of Peace, St. Paul, MN.

Rite of Remembrance Spurs Our Faith

Secular Franciscans who have died in the previous year were honored in the Rite of Remembrance at the National Chapter on Oct. 3, led by Donna Hollis, OFS, national councilor. The ceremony included a reading from the Gospel of John in which Jesus assures his disciples: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Father Jerome Wolbert, OFM, noted that in this Gospel Jesus was preparing his apostles for the future just as he prepares us. He was getting his followers ready for the crucifixion, an event they had not envisioned.

“All of their expectations are going to be shattered... They

didn’t understand until the Holy Spirit came and gave them confidence,” he said.

“Jesus Christ planted the seed. As we come together in this Rite of Remembrance, we fertilize the seed that is planted in our hearts. We learn not to be troubled but that our faith grows in remembrance of our brothers and sisters as we place our trust in Jesus Christ that he is the Way, the Truth and the Life.”

Ministers and delegates from each of the National Fraternity’s 30 regions lit candles and read the names of the deceased. National Councilor Josh Molitor, OFS, sang and played the guitar in accompaniment to the ceremony.

Friars...

Continued from previous page.

OMV, book, *Praying the Liturgy of the Hours - A Personal Journey*, as his reference, he said that “spiritual life consists of ordinary experience with its daily joys and struggles, daily efforts to pray, and daily striving to love God and others.”

“When ordinary spiritual experience is expressed in words, new paths open in our lives of faith.”

Liturgy of the Hours, he said, is a “rich source of (that) spiritual growth.” The Psalms in the Hours “cry to God in times of affliction,” and “express hope and a deep longing for God.”

Quoting St. Ambrose, he said:

“A psalm is ‘a cry of happiness.’ A psalm soothes the temper, distracts from care, lightens the burden of sorrow. It is a source of security at night, a lesson of wisdom by day. It is a shield when we are afraid, a celebration of holiness, a vision of serenity, a promise of peace and harmony.”

The Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Divine Office, is, he concluded, “the Church’s greatest gift for all members of the church.”