

THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER
United States of America
National Chapter - Oct. 25-30, 2011 - San Juan Bautista, California

“NAFRA” CHAPTER 2011 HIGHLIGHTS

Vision of the Order: Tom Bello SFO, National Minister - Vitality of Local Fraternity

“Perhaps no aspect of the Secular Franciscan life should be of more concern to those called to leadership than the vitality of the fraternity...”

- what a wonderful gift it is, to share life with brothers and sisters
- how the essential elements of our Secular Franciscan vocation (living the Gospel, conversion, and fraternity) fit together in fulfilling Francis’ vision for his followers
- what a responsibility we all have, to the Church and to each other, to recognize in our fraternities ‘genuine ecclesial communities,’ and the need for continued effort so they become ‘visible sign[s] of the Church, the community of love’
- how extending Francis’ notion of ‘fraternity’ into our relationships with all people is the foundation for all JPIC activities and a serious challenge for our Order.

Tom’s prayer: “God give us the grace, the Living Presence of Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit when we gather to worship, to form, to share, to witness in Christ’s name always striving to keep our fraternities and our souls alive and focused on salvation.” Priorities: Worship, Form, Share, Witness, Daily Ongoing Conversion.

Wednesday: Fraternity - The purpose of our gathering was to “rejoice and praise the Lord for the journey accomplished and repent for misgivings, promising to be more faithful to the secular Franciscan evangelical Way of Life; a privileged time of renewal and grace.”

- We were guided by the CIOFS “Guidelines for the Celebration of Chapters” (applicable to all levels)
- Each day priority was given to quiet prayer, proclaiming and responding to the Word of God and the writings of St. Francis, faith sharing and Celebration of the Eucharist in order to focus on the movement of the Spirit and building fraternal bonds.
- Franciscan “identity” – who are we and what is our charism? Fraternity, relationships, bridge building, our own conversion are key.
- “Rebuilding the Church” is different from “protecting” the Church. They will know us by our love or we are not helping the Church at all.
- What are we as leaders doing to enhance the vitality of our local fraternities?

Thursday: Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation - Focus on our “presence in the world”.

- The amazing witness of JPIC Award recipient, Father Louie Vitale, OFM.

- Recognition of JPIC efforts in regional annual reports.
- Review of Catholics Confront Global Poverty initiative, presentation by Chris West of CRS.
- Franciscan Action Network update with Patrick Carolan and Christy Elliott.
- USCCB “Spotlight Programs Project” to be considered, one each month by local fraternities. (PowerPoint available).
- Prayer Service commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the Day of Prayer for Peace.

Friday: Formation – Focus on Identity

- Updates on implementation of “For Up to Now”. New revised “FUN CD’s” for all.
- Formation critical to guarantee the vitality of our fraternities.
- Our Franciscan Charism and our unique Gift to the Church is living the Gospel in relationship with God and each other. We witness to a God who loves us.
- A charge to make our identity/charism present in our fraternities and in the world. How can we strengthen and gift the world and the Church with our Franciscan charism?
- What is our presence (identity) in the fraternity and in the world? Is there a desire to live our charism and give “OUR” gift to the Church? How are we, in our fraternities and individually bringing forth or giving witness to our charism? What identity are we “putting out there”?
- If we are not attracting vocations, is it because we are not gifting the Church and the world with our unique Franciscan gift? Are we merely just another group?

Saturday: Spiritual Assistance - CNSA panel presentation. Focus: Importance of spiritual assistance and a deepening of our understanding of “altius moderamen”.

- The great need for this vital reciprocity.
- The great need for this connection to insure the Franciscan charism.
- The importance of Spiritual Assistants in order for a fraternity to exist, particularly as applied to newly forming groups.
- Need for training of Lay Spiritual Assistants.
- NAFRA “Spiritual Assistant Committee” continues their work.

Importance of Visitation at every level of fraternity. Sufficient time must be allotted to accomplish the goals of visitation. New visitation brochure distributed.

Reports: Sixteen reports from NEC members, national commissions and committees were distributed to the Regional Ministers. These are all available to local fraternity members. “Reporting out” from NEC meetings to begin soon.

Collated Annual Report distributed with much information on regional and local fraternity life. Shows decline in membership, down 2400 in the last three years to 13,420 active members and 1262 inactive.

Computer Committee updated the NEC on improvements to the website and database and plans for the future. Computer Committee request: each local fraternity appoint a database person.

Quinquennial: National Minister Tom Bello requests that each and every local fraternity send one member to the “Q” in Chicago next July. Registration forms are now available.

Updated Forms: New Transfer, Visitation, Election and Affiliate forms distributed.

Budget Approval and “NAFRA” Fair Share: Motion passed to increase fair share by \$5.00 so that the total Fair Share per person would be \$17.00 per year starting in the year 2013 January and based on membership as of Dec. 31, 2012. There will be no increase in 2012. (Note: As always, Regions determine the amount of their regional fair share. Changes to regional fair share can be made at any time.)

National Theme for 2011-2012: “Called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world”: Building relationships and sharing the Good News by our vital presence in the fraternity and in the world.

Fraternity Registers: copies of registers in archives or “safe place”. Are detailed records of membership kept? Are standard registers available for purchase? Can one be developed?

“Training for Fraternity Councils” DVD’s produced by Blessed Junipero Serra Region, also available digitally, and soon to be posted on the NAFRA Formation Website.

Audio of Rule and Constitutions - to be posted on NAFRA Website and possible CD’s

Joint Statement for Rio 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - presented and affirmed.

Statement on Compassion for the Poor addressed to the “Super Committee” – written and approved.

Other “happenings”: Francesco’s Café (Amazon Relief, Franciscans International, Franciscan Mission Service); World Youth Day attendee Jessica Hardinger’s (she was a joy!) presentation, Day Away Fun, Geographic Group Sharing, Laughter, Love and JOY! (Chapter evaluation compilation is available.)