

Sharing The Vision

News from the National Executive Council (NEC)

by National Secretary, Jan Parker, OFS

NAFRA Theme for 2015

Be the joyful face of Christ to all!

*“How joyful it is to have a God who loves the simple, the poor and the humble!
How joyful it is to learn from the example of St. Francis! Let us rejoice and exult!”*

Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, in his 2014 Christmas message to the Secular Franciscan Order

Our National Fraternity (NAFRA) was truly blessed as we gathered at Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House in Lake Dallas, Texas, for our October 21-26, 2014, Annual Chapter. A spirit of joy was felt in our prayer, fellowship and deliberations. During 2014, NAFRA continued to focus time, energy and funding to address the six priorities chosen in 2012. The reports on our progress were heartening, yet there are great challenges before us. Trusting God, who has not called us to failure, we made decisions and set directions for 2015.

2014 OFS National Fraternity Chapter Highlights

Note: See the NAFRA website for the National Minister’s Annual Report and State of the Order Address

2015 Goals Set by National Minister

National Minister Tom Bello reported good progress on our six national priorities but encouraged and invited us to go further in faith, placing before us some specific challenges. His hope is that each Region could meet the following goals in the coming year:

- Make every effort to build relationships with the First Order and Third Order Regular Friars, including regular communication with each Friar Province within your Region.
- Offer a Regional Spiritual Assistant Seminar or Workshop
- Develop a Spiritual Assistant Training Program for your Region
- Ensure that your Region and each local Fraternity has a Spiritual Assistant
- Invite Seculars in your Region to be trained as Spiritual Assistants
- Offer a retreat and encourage each local fraternity to do the same
- Attend to each area of Formation: (1) Information (2) Fraternity building via gatherings, retreats, Quinquennial, etc. (3) Life-long ongoing “lived” formation for personal transformation and the transformation of our families, our political and economic structures, and our world
- Reach out to OFS brothers and sisters whose language and culture are not our own
- Participate in the four OFS Fraternities to which you belong – local, regional, national and international
- Tom addressed this National Challenge to each Region: Sometime during the “Year of Consecrated Life” (November 30, 2014, to

February 2, 2016) plan an event that gathers and includes the whole Franciscan Family – 1st, 2nd and 3rd Orders – to celebrate our common call to a life of conversion.

Ongoing Formation

Ongoing formation provided for wonderful fraternal sharing. Anne Mulqueen gave an insightful presentation entitled “A Different Way of Looking at Servant Leadership,” examining the traits of leadership as found in each phrase of St. Francis’ “Prayer Before the Crucifix”. Diane Menditto and Patti Reynolds presented “*Evangelii Gaudium* and the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order.” (PowerPoints of each of these available on the NAFRA website.) Mary Anne Lenzi shared goals for the coming year: (1) building relationships via the NAFRA-Form listserv (2) an updated Formation website and (3) an opportunity for Regional Formation Directors to come together.

Spiritual Assistance

The Task Force on Spiritual Assistant Development is developing a syllabus and guidelines for Spiritual Assistant Training Programs. There is a strong possibility of the appointment of a Secular Franciscan to the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) in 2015. CNSA President-in-Turn, Fr. Kevin Queally encouraged Secular Franciscan to take Spiritual Assistants training. The support of the Friars is real and will remain, but some things about Spiritual Assistance are changing. Fr. Kevin encouraged us to “accept this as the work of the Holy Spirit... let the Spirit direct this as it unfolds.” His presentation included a call to the OFS to embrace and live our Rule and our charism of conversion.

Best Practices

Much time was devoted to discussing “Best Practices.” Dozens of great ideas addressing a wide variety of OFS fraternity issues were shared and discussed by Regional Ministers; these will be compiled and distributed.

Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Commission (JPIC)

Carolyn Townes introduced a *What is JPIC?* video. (A “must see!”) Carolyn reviewed the JPIC “BE-Attitudes Diagram” and presented copies of the “Handbook for Animators of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation” for distribution to Regional JPIC point persons. A JPIC Peace Retreat will be held in August 2015.

Youth/Young Adults Commission

Sue and Christy Nelson presented “SHINE” – a program to bring the next generation of Catholics closer to Christ through Franciscan spiritual experiences. A SHINE Fraternity Guide and SHINE “toolbox” are soon to come. Sue and Christy also gave an informative session on multi-generational fraternities.

OFS Disaster Relief

Jim Flickinger reported on “OFS Disaster Relief,” with an initial base in Florida. Jim requests monetary donations and volunteers. Application forms were distributed.

Communications: Come & See Video / TAU-USA for Candidates / Translations

Communication Committee goals include an improved NAFRA website and the appointment of a NAFRA “Facebook person.” Jerry Rousseau presented a *Come and See* video. (Another “must see!”) As of January 2015, each OFS Candidate listed in the national database will receive the *TAU-USA*. Funding for translations of formation books was approved. There was good discussion on the needs and the nurturing of our many non-English speaking and bilingual groups of Seculars.

Closing Reflection - National Minister Tom Bello

National Minister Tom Bello shared a closing reflection (paraphrased): *“Our Lord has called us at every level of fraternity to walk on the water. Yes storms are there. We are all sinners. But have faith in us as an Order and faith in God has called us to COME, to walk on the water. If we can keep our eyes fixed on the Lord we will never sink. We will never die as an Order. I feel better this year than in past years about the Order. How do we keep that life? How to stay with Christ? Be that merciful presence this week and the rest of our lives. May we not focus on the stormy waves outside or the raging fears inside - trust the Lord! Pray more and keep your eyes on Christ! Don't be afraid of suffering in service to God and neighbor - there will be suffering, but we do not fail when we suffer in doing the Lord's work. May God help us to trust more, to hope more, and to love more! May we always remember and believe that Jesus has not invited us to failure!”*

Vocations

Jeff Ramirez spoke on the importance of our witness and personal invitation to “come and see.” Ideas for promotion of vocations were shared. A list of these ideas and a “Vocation Challenge” will be presented early in 2015.

International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order - CIOFS

Mary Stronach's presentation on the International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order (CIOFS) gave all a greater awareness and appreciation of our worldwide Order, encompassing 115 countries and 360,000 members. She encouraged our support of CIOFS, including financial support. She elicited ideas from NAFRA to present at the November 2014 CIOFS Chapter in Assisi. (A copy of her PowerPoint presentation is available on the NAFRA website.)

NAFRA Statement from Chapter

NAFRA issued a statement to declare solidarity with immigrant brothers and sisters.

Nominations Committee for 2015 Elective Chapter

A new National Executive Council will be elected at our October 2015 Chapter. A Nomination Committee was formed; members are Kathleen White, Mattie Ward and Susan Simeone.

2015 Events:

- Summer Seminar, July 9-12, on Servant Leadership with Fr. Michael Higgins TOR, and Mary Frances Charsky
- JPIC Peace Retreat, with Youth Track, August 20-23, at Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville, Illinois
- World Meeting of Families, September, in Philadelphia with Pope Francis – St. Katherine Drexel Region and National Youth Commission plan to participate and promote OFS.
- NAFRA Elective Chapter, October 13-18, in Clinton, New Jersey, hosted by Our Lady of the Angels Regional Fraternity.

Good news! Candidates are now receiving the TAU USA in the mail, which is mailed out in either English or Spanish. If you want to receive it in a different language than was sent to you, please contact Bob Herbelin: rherbelin@gmail.com or 1933 Tudor Dr, San Jacinto, CA 92583-6035. He will need to know your name, address, name of your fraternity and your region, and which language you want to receive.