



FORMATION COMMISSION

SUMMONED INTO BEAUTY

by Mary Anne Lenzi, OFS

As I walked into church this evening a medley of hymns seemed to waft through the air. I began silently humming one familiar melody until the words became clear and beckoned.

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?

Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown? Will you let my name be known?

Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Along with the notes played together as a pleasing D major chord, the repetition of the question “will you” filled me with an inexplicable sense of belonging, knowing and assurance. It was an overwhelmingly delightful moment in an otherwise routine walk to take a seat among my parish community. Harmony is one characteristic of beauty and is expressed in painting, poetry, movement and, in this instance, music. The perfect blend of tone, intensity and rhythm balanced by the gentle invitation and willing acceptance culminated in a completely satisfying experience of mind and heart. Simply stated, a God moment.

In recent *TAU* articles we have shared our transformational experiences through our observation of beauty in creation. We became *aware* through the colorful new growth in a spring garden, majestic mountains, turquoise lakes and wildflowers. We expressed its *unfolding* through sincere gratitude, understanding and love of all that speaks of the Creator. During this same time we were reminded of the fragility of our world and environment and the effect it has on all of us, especially the poor. Since beauty is a part of our everyday, how will we respond?

A deeper expression of beauty was *embraced* this August at the Franciscan Prayer Center in Independence, Missouri, as 30 regional formation directors and regional representatives gathered in fraternity. It was a beauty of the heart. Some of us had already met at other times and in other places or made acquaintances via email. It was wonderful to recognize and embrace each other. Getting together for this brief weekend of prayer, presentation, sharing and fellowship solidified our extended family bond. One participant wrote: “[the workshop] . . . provided a forum for building and forming strong relationships among the participants that will carry over beyond the workshop and help to strengthen the OFS in the United States.”

The weekend centered on the theme “Be Who We Say We Are,” with presentations highlighting some early writings of Francis, and focusing on Belonging,

Communication, Dialog, Listening, Respect and the Spirituality of the Formator. There was time for individual re-evaluation and reflection of our profession to live a gospel life. And time to share, as formators, our needs, concerns and desires for our regional fraternities. Another participant wrote: “Being with our sisters and brothers who share the challenge of the Formator’s responsibility – learning with them – hearing their concerns – realizing that we were so close in thought and what our hearts were questioning.”

It seems that when we gather there is hardly ever enough time. It was the consensus of those gathered that we should come together as fraternity, more often, annually, if possible, for a longer period of time in a central location, or, perhaps meet in geographic areas that would be more accessible to local formators. It was also suggested that we consider a “student guide” for FUN chapters. We will collaborate on sharing forms, record keeping and guidelines. Other future suggested topics were discernment and spirituality of the formator; conflict resolution; problem solving, and scope and sequence of topics for initial and ongoing formation. The commission continues to discuss and refine means of communication.

We all voiced a concern regarding the future of our Order. However, I am encouraged by the fervor and fire, passion and commitment of the Regional Formation Directors. They are true examples of gospel joy! We trust that the Holy Spirit is in charge of our Order. Our gathering was an experience of sharing in the divine beauty of creation, harmony, dignity, and the beauty and surrender of the human heart.

As the commission concludes this year of orientation in beauty and relationship, we ask you to reflect on your experiences of Beauty, in creation, with members of your family and fraternity and with our God. We join our voices once again in response to the call of our vocation and our yes to serve each other as sisters and brothers.

Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name.

Let me turn and follow you and never be the same

In Your company I'll go where Your love and footsteps show.

Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

References to Beauty taken from Mary Beth Ingham, C.S.J., Rejoicing in the Works of the Lord; Beauty in the Franciscan Tradition; The Franciscan Heritage Series, Volume Six, The Franciscan Institute, 2009