



FORMATION COMMISSION

WE ARE CALLED

by Mary Anne Lenzi, OFS

On June 30, I was standing in line waiting to board a Southwest Airlines flight bound for St. Louis. In airports across the country, some 500 plus sisters and brothers were also heading for the same destination. Another 100 or so had set their GPS devices to I-70, Exit 237. I was reminded of a passage from Fortini's book about St. Francis. He was telling of the early brothers getting together at the Porziuncola. He wrote, "*They walked over mountain and plain, exulting in the thought that in the same hour, from everywhere, near and far, their brothers were also walking toward their own holy celebration.*" We were all anxious to congregate in this city dedicated to the patron of our Order. What was it that made this event so important? Simply being together as family seemed enough to *revive* my spirit!

Secular Franciscans in the United States have been gathering as one family since 1921. It was at the first Congress that one national Third Order was proposed, then organized and formed. Every five years since that time, with one slight delay, we have assembled, with equal voice, to deepen our vocation and commitment to our Rule and to each other. My hope is that the brothers and sisters that attended this gathering returned to their local fraternities and shared their experiences.

Let me share my experience of the Congress with the message and challenge important to all Secular Franciscans. I hope you begin to feel the revitalizing breath of the Spirit. Fr. Lester Bach opened and ended his message with this song. It stayed with me. The song was written by David Haas and is based on Micah 6:8. For background music, Fr. Dan Horan recorded a piano piece for his friends. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Stc1INMF7I>.

We gathered at Table in prayer and in praise. We sang:

*Come! Live in the light!
Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!
We are called to be light for the kingdom, to live in
the freedom of the city of God!*

We are called to act with justice, we are called to love tenderly, we are called to serve one another; to walk humbly with God.

We were attentive to the words of our brothers as they reminded us of God's mercy and our minority. In small fraternities, we pondered our place in creation and how the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are connected in our communities. We dared to share the violence in our hearts and our need for transformation and were comforted with a kind word, an embrace, a message of peace. We asked ourselves, "*Of whom or of what am I most afraid?*" as we contemplated our personal call to live the Gospel each day. Another name for God is Beauty! We sang:

*Come! Open your heart!
Show your mercy to all those in fear!
We are called to be hope for the hopeless, so all hatred
and blindness will be no more!*

We are called to act with justice, we are called to love tenderly, we are called to serve on another; to walk humbly with God.

We packed our bags and prepared to return to our everyday 9 to 5 lives. We whispered a prayer of gratitude for our family, our fellowship, our fraternity. We hummed a hymn of praise for our joy and sadness, our laughter and tears, our excitement, our challenge, our surrender to Love. We sang:

*Sing! Sing a new song!
Sing of the great day when all will be one!
God will reign, and we'll walk with each other as
sisters and brothers united in love!*

We are called to act with justice, we are called to love tenderly, we are called to serve on another; to walk humbly with God.

I also encourage you to live the "Q" with the full presentations at www.quinquennial.org.
For DVD's go to www.Franciscanvideos.com.