



Ordo Franciscanus Sæcularis



CIOFS Presidency Meeting Spring 2017

THE FRATERNITY COUNCIL – ON A GLOBAL LEVEL

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International Councilor

Editor's Note: As interpreter for CIOFS, Mary has had the opportunity to observe CIOFS in action during the semi-annual meetings. Below are some of her observations.

When fraternity officers meet as an executive council, they enter a privileged place – where they pray, experience ongoing formation, plan gatherings and events, and tackle the business of the Order, including the needs of members.

Imagine that council on a global scale. Add the element of different cultures and languages. Add the element of travel across the oceans and continents. You have before you the International Executive Council, called the CIOFS Presidency, which meets twice a year in Rome.

No discussion or problem is small or simple at this level. Documents are translated into the four official languages. Ideas and conversations need language interpreters to ensure accuracy. Travel is gauged in thousands of miles. Congresses and workshops include OFS members from numerous countries.

Travel to national chapters means getting through customs... and, if the paperwork does not comply with the latest guidelines (which is not always clearly documented by the country) then it might mean you don't get into the country and you return to the country of origin. If you do get in, it might mean an unexpected additional 10 hours of travel by bus to your destination and staying an extra two or three days because flights out of the country are limited. The norm is: expect delays and setbacks.

As a representative of the presidency, you just never know exactly what you will experience when traveling to a national chapter of elections or a visitation... stark poverty, a language barrier, a cultural issue (hierarchy which is not consistent with the Franciscan charism), lack of internet access, no phone access, no electricity, no written language, unusual food cooked over an outdoor fire, regional dialects and tongues that limit communication. Stories around the CIOFS table cross the gamut of experiences, from personal hardships for the members to political challenges that limit their freedom to practice their faith.

You'll recognize some problems ... Lack of spiritual assistants. Lack of formation. Not having a sense of belonging. Or maybe a group that wants to wear Franciscan habits like the friars.

Whatever the issue, whatever the challenge, whatever the celebration, it is viewed and must be resolved through the multicultural lens of over 116 countries – national fraternities, emerging fraternities and some countries with a Secular Franciscan presence but no national fraternities.

With political issues, the Order may need to take small, cautious steps – to protect the brothers and sisters and to ensure safe access.

The Juridical Commission reviews changes in national statutes from countries across the globe. It, along with the Presidency, reviews membership or fraternity issues that have traveled up the chain of command.

Other topics bring excitement and new possibilities. Are there new OFS candidates for beatification? What are the possibilities for on-line formation classes? Are there new, emerging fraternities around the world? Have we discovered OFS and brothers and sisters who embrace the Franciscan charism in unexpected areas of the world? How do we reach them? How do we support their journey?

Addressing the needs of a world order is very challenging and multifaceted, but it comes down to one important common element... as members of the OFS, we love our brothers and sisters and we continue to find ways to reach out to each other to establish a fraternal bond and to journey together.



General Minister Tibor Kauser, OFS makes a point as Secretary Isabella DiPaoli listens to the interpreter in headphones and takes minutes of the meeting, as General Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap, Andrea Odak, OFS Franciscan Youth Councilor, and Ana Fruk, OFS Presidency Councilor listen to comments.