



OFS-USA

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER-USA



NATIONAL MINISTER'S MESSAGE

by Jan Parker OFS

GREAT THINGS CAN HAPPEN

For a long time, I didn't know what a Quinquennial was. I don't think anyone in my fraternity knew what it was either. None of us had ever attended a "Q." We had heard about one, but it seemed so distant from us. Who was it for? What was it about? We didn't know, and sadly, didn't ask.

That has changed. Now with three Quinquennials behind me, I want to do my best to tell you about the Q, and invite you to be part of it.

The Quinquennial Congress (its official name, or "Q" for short) is a once-every-five-year gathering of the entire National Fraternity, mandated in our OFS-USA statutes. It's not a retreat, and it's different from any other conference or workshop. In fact, it's an experience of fraternity unlike any other.

When I think of a Q, what comes to mind is the pure joy of being part of something so much larger than I had ever imagined. I can still feel the joy, love, and excitement that fills the room – a very large room holding hundreds of Franciscans! We come together at a Q to share something very important, and when you experience fraternity on this scale, it transforms you.

Despite the numbers, there is an immediate connection with each person there, a real sense of heart-to-heart understanding. This connection is

deepened through conversations that take place at meals and at Little Fraternity gatherings (8-10 persons, randomly grouped, who meet each day.) Being a part of a Little Fraternity has been a highlight of every Quinquennial I've attended. I'd like to share with you two "Little Fraternity stories" that I'll never forget.

In 2007, a young woman in my Little Fraternity shared the story of how her mother had died when she was born. Later in her life she heard details of her birth—the joy of new life, tainted by terrible sadness. She learned, too, of the extraordinary care shown by the hospital staff. As she told her story, another member of the little fraternity started asking some very particular questions, such as, when was this, and at what hospital? It's almost unbelievable, but it turned out that this second woman was one of the nurses



who cared for the young woman's mother. She had actually held this young woman as an infant. The rest of us watched as this amazing reunion took place. Talk about a special bond!

The second story is how friendships formed at a Quinquennial can have a lasting impact. Donna Hollis and Cathy Roszhart were both members of my Little Fraternity at the 2012 Q. Donna was the facilitator of our group, and I was struck by her compassion and gentle guidance. Cathy's joy and

enthusiasm made an equal impression on me. The three of us really connected. Over the next few years, we would see each other only rarely at various Franciscan events. Now, ten years after we first met, God has brought us together in a surprising way! The three of us are members of the Quinquennial Core Committee helping to organize the 2022 Jubilee Q. We never dreamed that those seeds of friendship, planted in our Little Fraternity, would bear fruit in a wonderful collaborative service to our national OFS family.



Jan Parker, Cathy Roszhart and Donna Hollis pictured with their Little Fraternity at the 2012 Q

You never know how a Quinquennial experience may enrich your Franciscan journey. Speak to anyone who has attended a Q, and they will tell you—they returned renewed and changed. What touched their hearts? Perhaps it was hearing how a fellow Franciscan's trust in God helped them through a difficult time, or something a presenter

or homilist said that challenged them. It could be that a conversation with an OFS from halfway around the world widened their vision. Very often it is simply the joy of fraternal communion on a previously unimaginable scale, and a deeper realization of Christ's presence.

I know that not everyone reading this will be able to attend this year's Q, but for many this may well be an opportunity of a lifetime. Whether you are new to the Order, an inquirer, a Spiritual Assistant or a friend of the Order, the Q is for you. Everyone is welcome, and you do not have to be a



Franciscan to attend. Please, prayerfully ask yourself if God is calling you to the Q. I know, with all we've been through with this pandemic, there may be concerns about such a large gathering, but let's keep looking forward with faith and hope. Great things happen when God calls Franciscans together. I hope to see you there!

IMPORTANT NOTE from the Q COMMITTEE



If you plan to register for the Q, it is very important that you open your confirmation email and CLAIM YOUR ACCOUNT. (See page 29 for details on how to do this.) Claiming your account is the only way you will be able to add travel information, choose your breakout session, or change any other information. Without your travel information, we cannot provide you with the free ground transportation to and from the hotel. If you are arriving by car, please let us know the approximate time so we can plan for peak times for registrations at the hotel front desk.

Whether you can attend the Q, or not, please consider supporting your Franciscan family with a message in our Q Program Booklet. (See page 3 for details.) Thank you for your generous response!