

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (NEC)

By Jan Parker OFS and Mary Bittner OFS

GUIDELINES ON STIPENDS

At our January meeting, the NEC, with input from the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA), discussed the issue of stipends. The following points were agreed upon, and may be incorporated into an update of our national guidelines on stipends. This update is in process, and will ultimately need the approval of the National Fraternity Council.

- (1) The cost of travel, room and board and other legitimate expenses should always be covered for those who are serving the Secular Franciscan Order in an official capacity.
- (2) Spiritual Assistants should receive reimbursement for the cost of travel, room and board and other legitimate expenses related to their ministry. Additionally, they should be offered a stipend over and above expenses (i.e., love offering) in an amount “appropriate to the journey made and the length of stay required” (NS 18.8 and 26.2). This stipend should always be offered for the regular meeting of the Fraternity, a meeting of the Fraternity Council, Pastoral Visitations, Elections or other events where their presence is requested.
- (3) Secular Franciscan Spiritual Assistants should be treated in the same manner as Friar Spiritual Assistants and other non-OFS Spiritual Assistants. Their expenses should be covered and a stipend offered, as above.
- (4) OFS Members who conduct a Fraternal Visitation or Election should be offered a stipend over and above expenses (i.e., love offering) in an amount “appropriate to the journey made and the length of stay required” (NS 18.8 and 26.2).
- (5) OFS Regions are free to suggest to their local fraternities the amount of the stipend offered over and above expenses.
- (6) OFS members who serve the Order in capacities other than Spiritual Assistance, such as presenting at a retreat or workshop, etc., should be offered a stipend over and above expenses.

It is important to note: OFS members who receive stipends, over and above expenses, may opt to donate back to the Region, or to NAFRA, or to a charity. It is recognized that all OFS members who volunteer time to serve the Order in a variety of ways, do so in a spirit of generosity and fraternal service. This expression of our charism is a gift to the Order.

Relationships with First Order and T.O.R. Provincials

During a joint meeting of the NEC and the members of the CNSA in January, we discussed ways to improve communications and OFS relationships with the Provincial Ministers of the First Order and T.O.R. The first step is to provide a way for the Provincial Ministers to easily identify the Regions to which local fraternities bonded to their Province belong, along with appropriate contact information. CNSA Secretary, Cyl Maljan-Herbelin, has produced a resource packet to distribute to each Provincial Minister, each Provincial Spiritual Assistant and the Presidents of each Friar Conference. The packet includes: (1) a cross directory listing the local fraternities bonded to each Province, grouped by Province and OFS Region; (2) a colored map to show the OFS Regions within the boundaries of each Province; (3) a copy of our National Directory. Regions and local fraternities are encouraged to also be conscious of good communication with the Provincial Ministers and Provincial Spiritual Assistants by sending

newsletters, rosters, notice of events, etc. The names and addresses of the Provincial Spiritual Assistants can be found in the National Directory.

Spiritual Assistant Formation Guidelines

The Conference of General Spiritual Assistants has outlined five vital components of formation programs specifically for the preparation of Spiritual Assistants not belonging to the First Order or T.O.R. *Franciscan Family Connections* — the text developed by the CNSA for our current formation program in the United States — covers the five elements suggested. The NEC agreed on the need to establish national guidelines for Spiritual Assistant training to be approved by both the CNSA and the National Fraternity Council. These guidelines would cover the minimum requirements; however, Regions could decide what to do above and beyond the “basics.” The NEC recommends that in addition to the guidelines, we offer 2-3 model curricula.

2016 Quinquennial (Q)

As noted in the last issue of *TAU-USA*, the 2016 Quinquennial Congress will be held in St. Louis, Missouri, June 30–July 4. See the related article in this issue of the *TAU-USA* for more information on this exciting and important event. Our Q Chair is Susan Simeone, and Q Core Committee members are Judy Haupt, Kate Kleinert, Barb Morgan and Kathy Wohnoutka. The National Formation Commission Chair serves as a consultant to the Q Committee.

Formation

Our NAFRA Formation Commission, led by Chair Mary Anne Lenzi, will host a national gathering for Regional Formation Directors, August 28–30, 2015, in Independence, Missouri. This fraternity-building event will encourage all to “be who we are called to be.” *For Up to Now: Foundational Topics for Initial Formation* (the *FUN Manual*) remains the basis and vision for OFS formation.

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

A National JPIC Peace Retreat will be held August 20–23 at Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville, Illinois. JPIC Chair Carolyn Townes reminds us all that JPIC is our “*presence in the world*” and is at the heart of our Rule: “We need to refrain from saying JPIC is something ‘out there.’ It’s not an extra thing we do — JPIC is part of *every single thing* we do.”

Youth/Promotion of OFS

Our National Youth Commission Chairs, Sue Nelson and Christy Nelson, are close to completing a SHINE tool kit/operations manual for OFS Youth Directors. In September, our NAFRA Youth Commission and St. Katherine Drexel Regional Fraternity will each sponsor a booth at the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, giving us two opportunities to promote Franciscan spirituality at this well-attended event.

Our Brothers and Sisters in Guam

Padre Pio Emerging Community in Guam is under the sponsorship of the National Fraternity Council of the United States. Their Minister, Violeta Manibusan, OFS, has been added to our National Fraternity email list. Violeta will be present for our 2015 NAFRA Chapter in Clinton, New Jersey, this October.