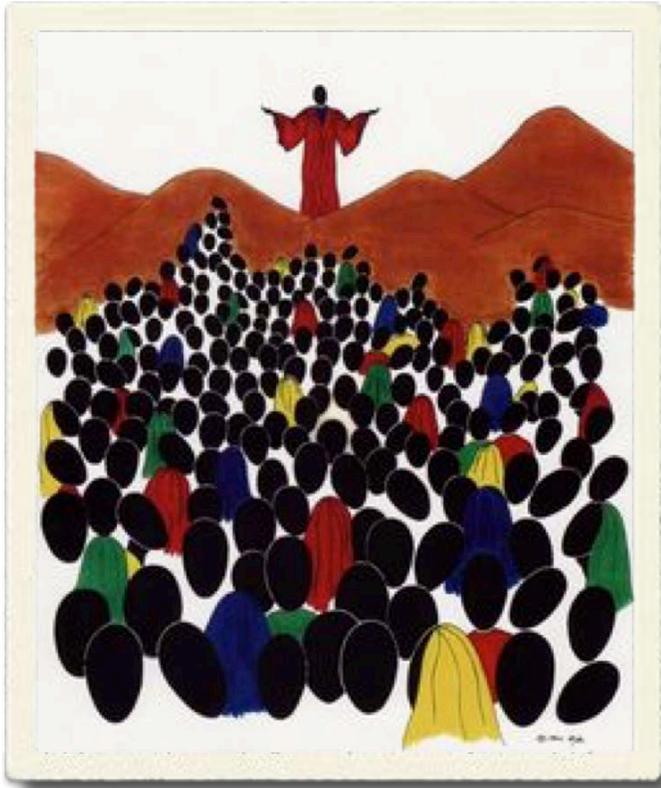




FORMATION COMMISSION

WE ARE CALLED ... to live the Gospel in Fraternity



The National Formation Commission met in September to prepare for the NAFRA Chapter. It is always a blessing to come together to pray and to be present to each other as we ponder a new project. Our discussion began with the challenges put before us at the summer Quinquennial. There, we were all asked to consider a radical change to *be who we say we are*. As our sharing continued, we centered on that “privileged place where we develop a sense of Church and our vocation.” Like Francis, we were individually called to a life of conversion, yet it is through the love, encouragement, support and the gentle correction of our sisters and brothers that we strive to live the Gospel each day. Our fraternities are the environment where we are welcomed. Through our process of prayer and sharing, support and encouragement, recognition of gifts and

relationship, the vision of our formation presentation was solidified. We share a synopsis of fraternity.

Fraternity: A Sense of Belonging and a Place of Joy

Francine Gikore, Storyteller

A sense of belonging was presented as a story that engages the brothers and sisters on a personal level and leads them into experience of “Belonging” to fraternity as family: past and present, local, regional, national and international. It is through our interpersonal relationships in fraternity, by discovery and learning about each other, that we learn to belong. Various Chapter volunteers were asked: “Who are you?” They described themselves using various “types” of personalities commonly found in fraternity at all levels of fraternity life – such as the “wise” one, the “mothering type,” the “simple brother” and the “do-er.” No matter what gift a member brings, we all belong as we build up our fraternity family. Later on, these same people revealed who they really were: the names of the early followers of St. Francis – Lady Jacoba, Brother Leo, Brother Angelo. The connection was made between our current fraternities and the early Brothers. The question was asked, “Who do *they* say that you are?”

Fraternity: Where We Learn to Love and Be Loved

Anne Mulqueen, Spiritual Wisdom

The fulfillment of fraternal love requires that we sacrifice the demands of our individual egos so we can become one body in Christ – not in a closed way, but in a way that allows us the freedom to grow into the unique persons God created us to be. On the night before he was crucified, Jesus uttered the words that best describe fraternal love; “A new command I give you: Love one another. **As I have**

loved you, so you must love one another.” (John 13:34)

The fulfillment of fraternal love has its source in Jesus Christ. Being able to love and be loved in fraternity requires that each person following St. Francis’ imitation of Christ receive and give others respect, affection and acceptance. Each must be willing to communicate on an intimate and authentic level. To love and be loved as Jesus commands requires commitment to our Secular Franciscan form of life.

No fraternity is perfect; therefore, to love and be loved in fraternity must flow from our love of God and our desire to do God’s will. Communicating on a deep and personal level and placing the needs of our sisters and brothers before our own enhance and solidify our relationships. Christ calls us to love our sisters and brothers just as they are, and not as we wish them to be. And remember, “Love never fails.” (1Cor 13:8)

**Fraternity: A Place of Challenge
and Growth;
A Place Where We Develop
a Sense of Mission**

Diane Menditto, Teacher

Life in fraternity is a fundamental element of our vocation as Secular Franciscans. We know this from our Rule and Constitutions. We *talk* about fraternity all the time. The challenge of fraternity life presents itself in how we actually *live* a fraternal life and how that life affects our mission as Catholics and as Franciscans.

Here are some of the joys and challenges we encounter as Franciscans:

Joys

- Support and encouragement from our brothers and sisters
- Collaboration in carrying out our mission of spreading the Gospel
- Shared prayer life
- Authentic example of how we are to live the Rule
- Stimulation in fraternity through dialogue and communal review of our lives
- Stimulation in fraternity through our cultural diversity

- Ongoing formation, which keeps us true to our vocation
- RELATIONSHIP

Challenges

- Willingness to LISTEN to and COLLABORATE with our brothers and sisters
- Willingness to yield to others
- Willingness to be creative in our thinking
- Willingness to seek authentic conversion and set an authentic example
- Willingness to see that those who are different (or think differently) have intrinsic value
- Willingness to be “poor enough” to be generous
- Willingness to use the gifts of every member to accomplish our mission
- Willingness to break down barriers rather than build walls

Many of the joys and challenges of our Franciscan life are intrinsically related to each other! If we are aware of our joys and seek to learn from and be strengthened by our challenges, we can move forward in our Franciscan mission to show, as St. Francis did, that it is possible to live the Gospel.

Take some time to rediscover your fraternity – local, regional, national, international. The *FUN Manual* has a chapter on “Fraternity and Francis” and Fraternity as a Fundamental Element of St. Francis Spirituality.

The NAFRA Chapter Formation PowerPoint will be available on the Formation website.

The Commission welcomes your questions, comments and experiences of fraternity. Email us at: Formationcommission14@gmail.com

Peace and Every Good,
Mary Anne, *-Facilitator -
Commission Chair*