

A LOOK BACK, A LOOK FORWARD

Wednesday, October 17, 2012
Deacon Tom Bello
The National Fraternity of the
Secular Franciscan Order in the
United States of America

On October 11, 2012, Holy Mother Church began a Year of Faith exactly on the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. In declaring this Year of Faith, Pope Benedict XVI wrote, "The renewal of the Church is ... achieved through the witness offered by the lives of believers: by their very existence in the world, Christians are called to radiate the word of truth that the Lord Jesus has left us....The Year of Faith, from this perspective, is a summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Saviour of the world. In the mystery of his death and resurrection, God has revealed in its fullness the Love that saves and calls us to conversion of life through the forgiveness of sins" (Porta Fidei 6).

By the numbers, NAFRA, the Secular Franciscan Fraternity of the United States, has around 13,328 active, permanently professed members nationwide, with 1165 inactive. Thus, by the numbers, our active membership continues to drop. I reported around 13,420 members in my 2011 Annual Report, and around 14,000 in my 2010 Annual Report (14,399 in one tally and 14,079 in another). In 2009 we reported 14,722 active, permanently professed members, which itself was a decline of 1,089 from the 2008 number of 15,811. Thus, I make a guesstimate of around 2,500 (2,483) fewer active, permanently professed members in the last four years.

To fill those missing seats at the Secular Franciscan table, we currently have 1156 Candidates, down from 1206 Candidates last year and 1224 Candidates in 2010; and 688 Inquirers, down from 865 Inquirers last year and 927 Inquirers in 2010. Let us all pray for their successful formation and discernment, as well as pray for more Inquirers and Candidates into our great Order.

We report 613 canonically established fraternities, a drop of 40 from our 2011 number of 653 fraternities, which was a decrease of 35 from our 2010 number of 688 fraternities, and a total drop of 105 canonically established fraternities from the 2008 reported number of 718.

What is the Holy Spirit calling us to do?

Can we stop people dying?

SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER IN THE UNITED STATES IN OUR 2010 REPORT TO CIOFS BY AGE

UNDER 35 YEARS OLD

% <1

35 TO 50 YEARS OLD

% 8

50 TO 65 YEARS OLD

% 35

66 AND OVER

% 56

Do we offer a Spiritual reality
sufficiently attractive
to bring us new life?

When asked what attracted her to the Franciscan youth group at Siena College, Gladys Veloz replied:

1. A faith-based community
2. with good people
3. trying to improve the world

The Q

- 1. The Q evidenced to me a true revival of the evangelical Franciscan spirit through our wonderful speakers and stimulating Q Congress Fraternities, our daily Masses and prayers.**
- 2. Perhaps especially through our four major speakers, Sister Ilia Delio OSF, Brother Bill Short OFM, Pat Brandwein-Ball OSF and our dearly departed Ed Shirley OSF, but also through the active and total participation of our beloved Conference of National Spiritual Assistants, we assured fidelity to the charism and to the Rule, offered help to fraternity life, reinforced the bond of the unity of the Order, and promoted its most effective insertion into the Franciscan family and the Church.**
- 3. 617, at last count, Franciscans attended from all over the United States, including, I believe, 25 of our 30 Regional Ministers, and all of our National Executive Council with the exception of Elaine who was recovering from pneumonia and under strict doctor's orders not to travel. We also enjoyed international representation from both our Minister and Vice Minister General of our entire Order, Encarnita del Pozo from Spain and Doug Clorey from Canada.**

JPIC Rally

- 1. I loved the one on one sharing the Rally modeled, which could be used to build fraternity at every level, and I was impressed by the energy and ideas of the 37 people who attended from 21 Regions.**
- 2. I would encourage the new National Executive Council to consider seriously a second JPIC Rally in the near future to continue to build energy for, and focus attention on, Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, "the DNA of our Franciscan life, of our Franciscan spirituality," said the Rally's Keynote Speaker, Friar Pio Jackson, OFM, Spiritual Assistant to St. Clare Regional Fraternity.**

Formation and the FUN Manual

1. I was most impressed that the Five Franciscan Martyrs Region reported that 400 of its 600 members had attended Formation Workshops on the new Formation materials.

2. I know that many other Regions had Formation Workshops attended by representatives of every, or nearly every, Local Fraternity in their Region. For just three examples, the La Verna, the St. Katharine Drexel and Troubadours of Peace Regions reported Formation Workshops on the new Formation materials, which were attended by representatives of every Local Fraternity in the Region.

Youth

Coming soon...

1. Our discussion this afternoon
2. A Youth Chair
3. A Youth: Pamela Townsend
4. A possible JPIC/Youth Rally in 2013

Future Directions: The Q

1. REBUILDING AND BUILDING BRIDGES IN FRATERNITY, CHURCH, WORLD. BETTER COMMUNICATION WITH ALL.
2. BETTER FORMATION AT ALL LEVELS OF EVERYONE: INQUIRERS, CANDIDATES, PROFESSED, SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS, THE CHURCH, THE WORLD.
3. BE WHO WE ARE IN ALL WE DO: CHILDREN OF THE GOSPEL, MAKING CHRIST EVER-PRESENT IN THE WORLD.

Future Directions: The Year of Faith

1. Evangelize the Evangelizers (Us). We cannot share what we do not have. Prayer. Devotion. Charity. Almsgiving.
2. Evangelize the Evangelized (The People in our Fraternities). Vital Franciscan Fraternities. Faith-based, Joyful, Loving and Serving.
3. Evangelize the People not in our Fraternities. Bringing the Joy and the Witness of the Good News by our lives.