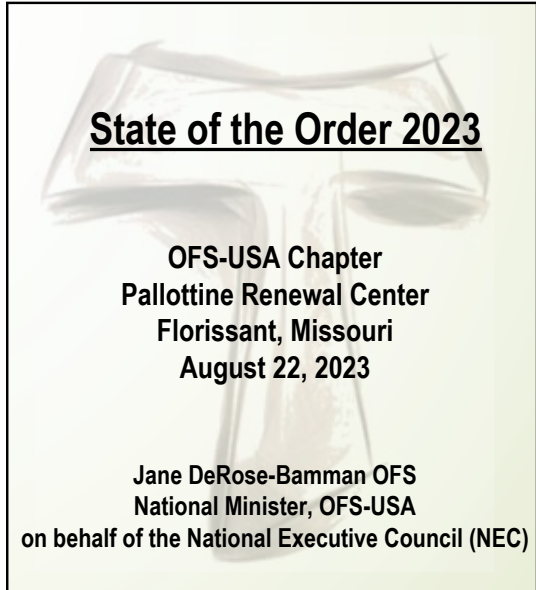


Report on the State of the Order 2023

Minister Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS, updated attendees with the 2023 State of the Order address at the OFS-USA Chapter Meeting on Aug. 22 at the Pallottine Renewal Center in Florissant, MO. From Guam to Maine, the national Secular Franciscan Order covers 8,000 miles and 11,000 active members and candidates in 30 regional fraternities, she said.



State of the Order 2023

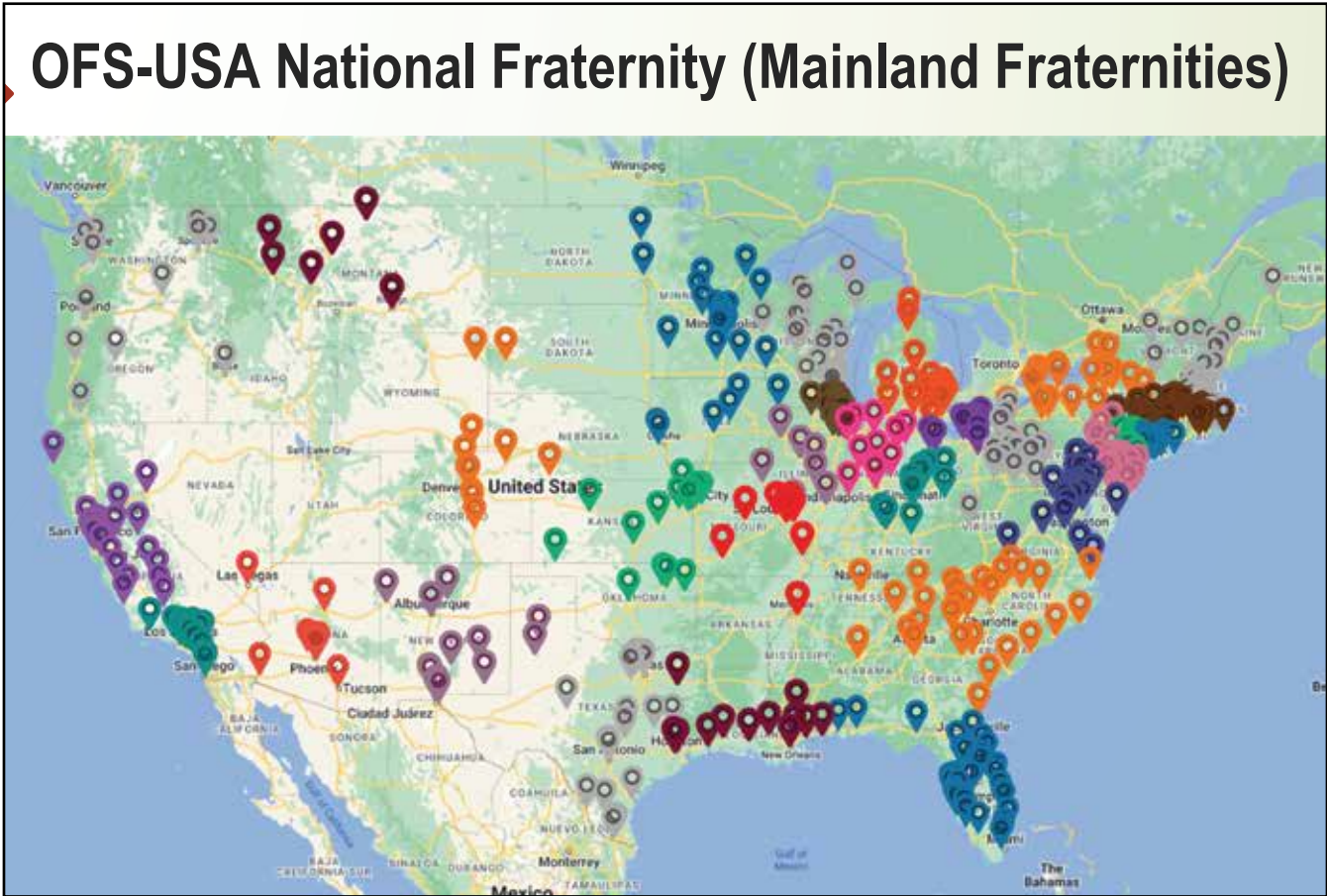
OFS-USA Chapter
Pallottine Renewal Center
Florissant, Missouri
August 22, 2023

Jane DeRose-Bamman OFS
National Minister, OFS-USA
on behalf of the National Executive Council (NEC)

In the last 10 months since the The International Council (CIOFS) - primarily relating to the experimental version of the international statutes. was elected; members have responded to:

- Requests from regional ministers included help on issues with members, Regional Executive Councils (REC), Regional Spiritual Assistants (RSA), formation, and monetary issues.
- The International Council - the (CIOFS)- primarily relating to the experimental version of the international statutes.
- The call to conduct regional visitations and elections.

The NEC remains focused on its three priorities--vocations, communications, and relationships. The State of the Order address was organized by these priorities.

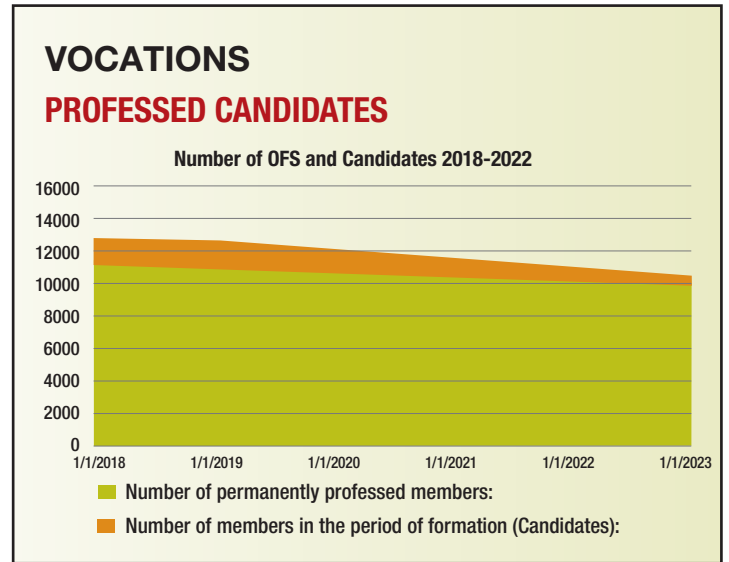
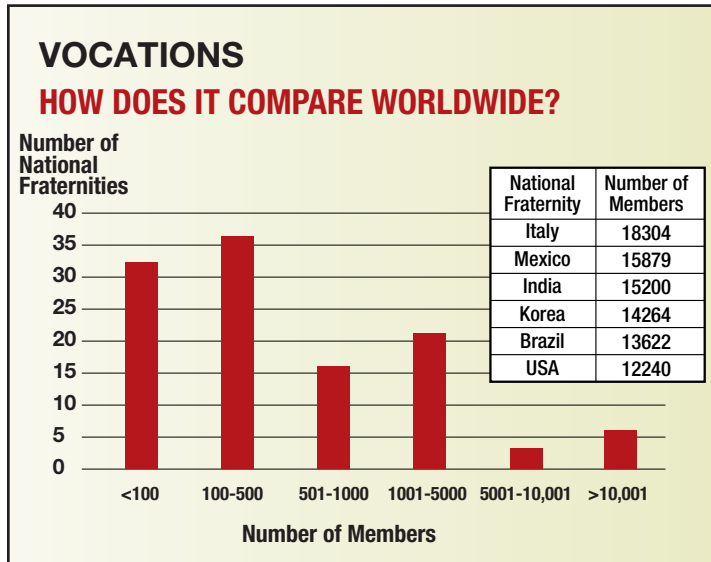


Vocations

“Numbers of the professed and candidates have decreased since 2018,” Jane said, “when at one time there were more than 13,000. The reduction may be due to improved database reporting as well as the deaths of members exceeding the number of new members.

Continuing to grow and inspire others to the Secular Franciscan call is vital.

“Wanting to share our vocation is a sign of our belief in the Franciscan way of life, but of course, the foundation is prayer and trusting that God will touch the hearts of potential new members,” she said.



The number of fraternities has also declined from 635 established and emerging fraternities in 2018 to 582 in 2023.

There are 30 regional fraternities. Each has as few as seven or as many as 30+ local fraternities. Regional memberships range between 66 and 850 brothers and sisters.

“Approximately 11 percent of our members prefer to communicate in a language other than English. Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese are the next largest language groups,” Jane said.

Based on 2021 figures, the U.S. has the sixth largest number of fraternities in the world after Italy, Mexico, India, Korea, and Brazil. Worldwide there are 114 nations with established or emerging fraternities.

“But numbers are not what we really need to focus on as a priority,” Jane said. “We want quality vocations where members know what it means to be a Secular Franciscan.”

Quoting from a recent Formation Friday, Jane said, “It’s not what we do but who we are.’ We live the Gospel by following the example of St. Francis. We make a lifelong promise to live out our Baptismal commitment.”

Communications

The goal of communications relates to our ability to attract and retain vocations, Jane said.

Some of the items relating to this priority include the rollout of Phase 1 of the new database that will help improve communication of information and ease in reporting. Use of social media such as Facebook and posting of materials on the website have made it easier to share information. Councilor groups among the regional ministers have made it easier to get to know each other, share ideas, and provide peer support.

There is also a continued focus on sharing information in emails and holding workshops and training. Other communication methods include meeting with RECs after elections, translating documents into Spanish and Korean, offering formation events in Spanish, and raising awareness of providing ease of access to materials by the Accessibility Committee.

Relationships

“Within the Order, the NEC is working to help the regions address tough issues. The beauty of the NEC is that we are a council, not just one person,” Jane said. This allows NEC members to attend visitations and elections and respond to questions.

On the international level, members from the United States have participated in JPIC and formation. Last year, Diane Menditto, national vice-minister was appointed to serve on the CIOFS—Formation Secretariat. Mary Stronach continues as vice-minister of CIOFS.

“Forming and maintaining relationships with spiritual assistants is certainly a priority. Although this has been an ongoing priority, we still have fraternities without spiritual assistants,” Jane said.

There are 50 Regional Spiritual Assistants covering 29 of the 30 regions. Twenty-one Secular Franciscans serve as Regional Spiritual Assistants in 15 regions.

Friars comprise about 40 percent of the local spiritual assistants. Secular Franciscans comprise 28 percent.

Other Franciscan organizations in which members of our Order participate:

Additionally, the order has maintained its relationship with the church by connecting with the bishops who must approve the establishment of new fraternities.

“These last 10 months has been a busy time. In addition to the items mentioned earlier, we’ve also completed a revision of the ritual and are exploring printing options,” she said. The updates to the White Rule book are being translated.

“May our hearts and minds be open to actions that further our priorities. May Jesus Christ be praised, now and forever,” Jane concluded.

A PowerPoint slideshow that illustrates the key points of the 2023 State of the Order address is available on the website.

**Local Spiritual Assistants
as of 12/31/2022**

