

VOX FRANCISCANA

Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis



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XV GENERAL CHAPTER

Historic Vote Reflects Grassroots Feedback from Around Globe

“It was an historic vote. It was quite amazing. I felt like standing up and cheering.”

That’s how former Vice Minister General Doug Clorey, OFS, reacted to the voting on six proposals that were the result of feedback from fraternities around the globe – all under the

overarching theme of how to better manage the Order.

As an Order “we’ve been steadily growing in maturity,” noted Doug, a member of the Instrumentum Laboris commission that compiled and analyzed the grassroots input and prepared the material for

the General Chapter.

“This is a new plateau.”

He added: “It wasn’t from above. It came from the bottom, the grassroots.”

The chapter voted to establish international offices for formation, communications, and Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

(JPIC). The chapter also approved a “Life in Fraternity” proposal to review and possibly modify the structure of the Order, including the General Constitutions; a proposal to develop a financial strategy; and a multi-pronged leadership development plan.



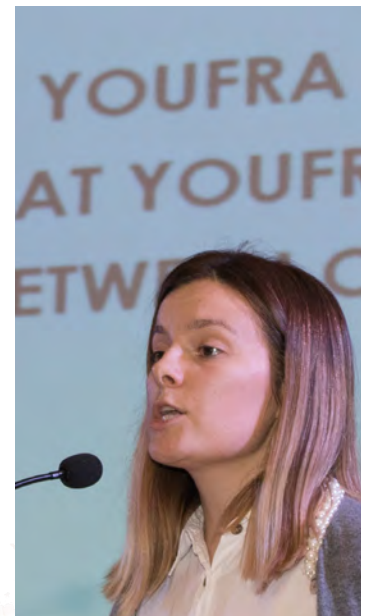
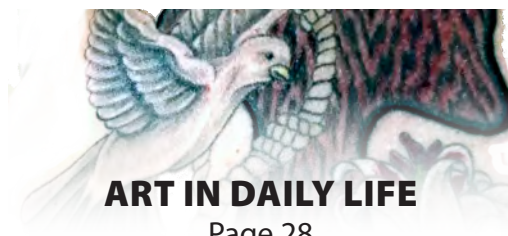
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GENERAL CHAPTER: DAY 1

Vatican Secretary of State Helps Open 15th Chapter

About 150 participants from 110 countries converged on Rome Nov. 4-12 for the 15th General Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order.

Taking place at Collegium Seraphicum, the chapter got off to an auspicious start, thanks to the Vatican's secretary of state. Cardinal Pietro Parolin presided at the opening mass and offered words of encouragement, citing the Franciscan spirit that takes to heart Jesus' words: "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." (Mt 25, 40).

He challenged Secular Franciscans to realize their vocation to announce and witness the Gospel in the charism of St. Francis.

"The deepening of the encounter with Jesus, the daily heart-to-heart conversation with Him in prayer, the precise reference to the evangelical instances in the light of the teaching of St. Francis is the most fruitful ground to make your particular project of Christian life more concrete."

Cardinal Parolin said he was "pleased to be able to celebrate with you this Holy Mass at the beginning of the work of the chapter," and prayed that the Lord would "help you walk on the paths of holiness in order to become more and more the messen-



gers of joy and hope, the instruments of peace."

Following mass, Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, and Vice Minister General Chelito Nuñez, OFS, presented the cardinal with a gift as a token of appreciation.

Cardinal Parolin remained in the chapel with everyone to listen to an additional performance by the choir and instrumentalists (Schola Cantorum Diocesana Corodia). They received a standing ovation. The cardinal lingered to chat with the singers and musicians, and pose for photos.

His graciousness didn't let up as he tried to exit the chapel and head down a long corridor to his awaiting car. Mobbed by Secular Franciscans along the entire route, Cardinal Parolin took time to chat with individuals, noting their native countries, and posed for one picture after another.



General Chapter photos and stories by R. Stronach, OFS

GENERAL CHAPTER: DAY 2

'Let Us Begin,' OFM Minister General Tells Chapter Attendees

"Let us begin."

That was how Fr. Michael Perry, minister general of the Order of Friars Minor, ended his homiletic message to the OFS General Chapter Sunday, Nov. 5.

He said the seculars and friars were tackling similar concerns and issues, "returning to the starting point of our lives," namely:

- Jesus Christ at the center of all things;
- fraternity as the sacramental means for living the Gospel;



Fr. Michael Perry, OFM

- evangelizing mission (to go out with the Gospel of compassion, love, mercy, justice, and peace in our hearts) as the driving



Tibor and Fr. Michael exchange gifts.

force for participating in the building of the Kingdom of God.

"Listening is not passive," he added. "Say 'yes' to what

Christ is calling you to do."

Following mass, the OFM and OFS ministers general traded gifts and fraternal words of solidarity.

SIDEBAR: Belgium New to General Chapter

For the first time, Belgium was represented at the General Chapter.

Maria Luisa Gaiao, OFS, of Brussels, coordinator for the newly formed Belgium National Fraternity, explained that the process began three years ago, with the national fraternity being established a year later. It is comprised of ten local fraternities, with some 250 members. The fraternities

are mostly French and Flemish speaking. Previously they were affiliated with France and the Netherlands.

Marie is no newcomer to multi-culturalism. She grew up in Mozambique, and started a family there before fleeing the outbreak of violence and resettling in Portugal. She eventually moved to Belgium to advance her career with the European Commission.



Belgium national coordinator Maria Luisa Gaiao, OFS, with General Spiritual Assistant Pedro Zitha, OFM. Maria and Fr. Pedro share a similar heritage: Both are natives of Mozambique.

Talented Chapter attendees provided stirring musical accompaniment for the daily liturgies.



GENERAL CHAPTER: DAY 3

Minister General Reviews State of the Order

Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, began his report to the General Chapter by pointing to “our Secular Franciscan identity” and the chapter’s theme, “what does it mean, that Jesus Christ has sent me into world, in a manner the heavenly Father has sent Him to the world?”

He noted: “When we talk about the Order as a structure, we always have to remember, that the Order for us is first and foremost a fraternity. A place where we live our vocation, where we can love one another, and where we build the Kingdom of God before anything else.”

He went on to review some statistics about the Order: 70 national fraternities, 18 emerging national fraternities, 19 countries with a Secular Franciscan presence (where a local fraternity or fraternities are being established), and five



special national cases that have come to be under the direct care of the CIOFS Presidency. Franciscan Youth, or YouFra, is active in 75 countries. This includes 34 national YouFra fraternities, 28 emerging national fraternities, and 13 countries with a YouFra presence.

Since some constituted and emerging national fraternities have not provided demographic reports, “we can not provide definitive data,” Tibor noted. “However, we can say that the total number of secular Franciscans worldwide is more or less 300,000, and Franciscan Youth, around 50,000.”

Some parts of the world have seen a decline in numbers, and sometimes a loss of enthusiasm, he said, while other areas are growing.

“It is more topical than ever to have clear evangelical values, clear visions of the Gospel way of life, and to use the contemporary means and tools to strengthen the fraternal bonds on the various levels all over the world...”

He pointed to a “generation gap,” with fraternities struggling with aging members, such as in Europe and other areas.

“It fills us with joy that some national fraternities

have already realized this problem, and are offering formation, programs, meetings, activities for more and more families with young or teenage children.”

In Latin America, with a variety of political-social systems and economic conditions, the OFS is often “closer to the poorest and the neediest - even many of our members are in such a situation, too!” He noted: “We have heard how much the fraternities and members of the Secular Franciscan Order commit themselves to the help of the poor, of the sick, of the outcast, of the marginalized.”

The Africa Project continues with strong emphasis on formation, YouFra, organizational structure (local, regional, national), gatherings and congresses, and relations among the OFS, First Orders/TOR and the church.

Swaying to an Awesome God

Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, the Capuchin general spiritual assistant, helped launch the third day of the General Chapter by presiding at mass and calling for an affinity, a kinship with the poor.

Having the “capacity to see the love of Jesus” is transformative: It disturbs our complacency and challenges us to action. It’s not just serving the poor, but

recognizing that “the poor hold the key to joy.”

Singing the words, “You are an awesome God,” Fr. Francis had everyone singing, and lifting their arms and swaying, almost in dance. “May Jesus whom we invite into our lives this morning bring us greater joy, disturb us with his love, help us to believe in the pearl of joy hidden in the poor.”



Surgeon Shares 10 Points on Living the Secular Franciscan Vocation

Michel Versteegh, OFS, a cardiothoracic surgeon from the Netherlands and a past three-term national OFS minister, was a featured speaker Nov. 6, on the third day of the General Chapter, offering ten points on living the secular Franciscan vocation.

1. Education/formation. “Nourish interest in Franciscan spirituality.”

2. Role model. “Our example is important for newcomers in our fraternity.”

3. Make choices according to talents received. “Use the talents.” “Take inventory of competencies in your fraternity.”

4. Yes should mean yes. “Your yes should be yes, and your no, no.” “We should not compromise



ourselves... but if you make a promise, don't break it.”

5. Commitment. “Get involved... It cannot be forced, but it can be fostered. Involve members as much as possible.”

6. Dedicate your day to God. “Our first priority: to live the gospel in our everyday life... Prayer is an essential element of our lives.”

7. Gospel to life, life to gospel. “Secular Franciscans prepare themselves by careful reading of the Gospel... We don't have to be perfect all at once.”

8. All members of a team are of equal value. “We're talking about leadership... recognizing value of members to the team's success... 'I did not come to be served, but to serve,' says

the Lord.”

9. See your beginning, hold on to it. “Hold on to your initial inspiration. ... the vocation that called you to follow in footsteps of St Francis.”

10. Invitation to start all over again, every day anew. “St. Francis called on his brothers to ‘begin to serve the Lord God, for up until now we have done little or nothing.’”

Michel summed it up this way:

“Living the gospel in the world is our number one priority.”

(By the way, over the past nine years Michel traveled to Surinam 14 times to handle complex cardiac surgery cases at the University Hospital of Paramaribo.)

SIDEBAR: She Gave Up Volleyball for God

One might say that Monika Midverytė, OFS, international councilor for Lithuania, gave up volleyball for St. Francis. She was immersed in the sport, playing six days a week including Sunday. But there was a spiritual yearning,

“I came to realize I wanted to go to Holy Mass” instead of spending Sundays on the volleyball court. And then at church she encountered Franciscan youth, or YouFra, which she found to be “much more exciting than playing volleyball all the time.”

Completely at home with her Franciscan family, she said she had a vision one day where she saw her YouFra experience as being short-lived, and then would have a boring



life without her Franciscan family. That was when she decided to pursue a Secular Franciscan vocation.

Monika describes herself as a journalist and holds a master's degree in journalism. She worked for a Christian news website for five years before the OFM friars lured her away

to work for their province's office of communications. Professed only five years, she has risen up the ranks to become the new national formation director as well as international councilor. The latter brought her to her first General Chapter. “It is a wonderful gift for me to be here.”

GENERAL CHAPTER: DAY 4

We Belong to Each Other

As members of the church, as members of the Franciscan family, “we belong to and we need each other,” Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, declared at mass, setting the stage for the fourth day of the General Chapter. Capitulars would hear and discuss six priority proposals to advance the Order that were based on grassroots feedback from fraternities around the globe. Father Amando pointed to the OFS Constitutions that call for members to be co-responsible for the life of the fraternity at all levels. It boils down to an exchange of gifts and services that “is something of extraordinary beauty if we take into account the diversity that exists among all Secular Franciscans in terms of



languages, cultures, races, social condition, educational background, etc.”

Three proposals recommended creating international offices for formation, JPIC and communications. The other three involved leadership, fraternal life, and financial strategy.

The capitulars broke into various area and language groups to spend time reviewing the proposals

before deciding whether to amend, reject or approve them.

The afternoon plenary session saw reports from the Africa Project, YouFra, and the Conference of General Spiritual Assistants. Before the session adjourned for evening prayer, **Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, announced that the OFS would be celebrating a Jubilee Year, starting In July 2018, to**

mark the 40th anniversary of the Rule approved by Pope Paul VI. He asked for everyone’s help in coming up with ideas for the celebration – “a worldwide brainstorming.”

“As we heard several times today, we are co-responsible for the Order.”

Vespers, or evening prayer, turned into a special event, with every professed OFS present renewing his or her pledge to live the Gospel as Secular Franciscan. And as the chapter’s choir and musicians performed rousing hymns, Tibor and other Presidency members surprised everyone – sparking an emotional scene – as they handed out specially made posters of the Rule, rolled like a scroll and tied with red ribbons.

The minister general and vice minister general unveil the scroll of the OSF Rule. Each chapter participant received a copy as a surprise gift.



SIDEBAR: Tribute to First Minister General

Vice Minister General Chelito Núñez opened the Nov.7th plenary session (the fourth day of the chapter) with a tribute to the memory of Manuela Mattioli (1936-1992), the first minister general of the united, worldwide OFS (at that time called, the OFS International president).

Manuela was involved in the reorganization of order and adoption of the new rule, Chelito pointed out. “She was my mentor... She really devoted her life to bringing scattered fraternities into unity... I think we can express our joy over her life.”



Vice Minister General Chelito Núñez, former Minister General Encarnita del Pozo and Maria Pia Barontini pose with a portrait of Manuela Mattioli.

SIDEBAR: She Came to the Faith Kicking and Screaming

In a way, Dina Shabalina, OFS, of the Ukraine came to the Catholic Church kicking and screaming.

She had not been practicing any faith, and was surprised when her mother announced that she felt a connection with a great, great Polish grandfather and wanted to be baptized a Catholic. Dina wasn't just surprised, she was upset.

“I couldn't accept my mother's choice.”

Despite her disagreement, Dina promised she would go to church for her mother's baptism.

When the day came and they arrived at church, “the priest asked me, ‘would you want to be Catholic and would you want to be baptized?’ “



Dina Shabalina, OSF

It dawned on her that yes, that's what she wanted.

“This was a miracle in my life.”

So, “we were baptized on the same day.”

That was 12 years ago when she was 23. It wasn't long before a Capuchin friar invited her to a Franciscan

school for evangelization, where she learned about St. Francis of Assisi.

“I discerned this is what I wanted to do” – to pursue a Franciscan vocation. “I thought, ‘I want to be with this saint because he knows Jesus so well!’ “

Dina was professed eight years ago and quickly found herself involved on the national level, now serving a second term as international councilor.

She works with the District State Administration Department of Culture, and is editor of “Serafin,” a periodical promoting the cause for sainthood of Capuchin priest Serafin Kashuba (a beacon of the underground church during Communist rule).



GENERAL CHAPTER: DAY 5

The Franciscan-Benedictine Connection

The fifth day of the chapter was a break from the order's business as participants got the visit the Monastery of St. Benedict at Subiaco, south of Rome. It's where Benedict founded the Benedictine monastic order. It all began when Benedict, a young nobleman studying in Rome, became disenchanted with the life of the city and its sinfulness, so he left everything and went to Subiaco to live in a cave (called Sacro Speco). Perhaps sensing a kindred spirit, Francis of Assisi went to visit the monastery. The son of an affluent Assisi merchant himself, Francis, too, had left everything behind to pray in a cave.

"Tradition tells us that Francis had come to visit the Sacro Speco," noted Fr. Alfred Parambakathu, the OFM Conventual general spiritual assistant. "The tangible sign of his visit can be seen in the monastery's Chapel of St. Gregory in the form of a beautiful fresco.



Fresco in the monastery at Subiaco is believed to be the first portrait of Francis, created in his life time.

Historians say that this image of Francis is his first ever portrait. The painting is labeled Fr. Franciscus and the saint is shown

without the stigmata or a halo, indicating it was painted during his lifetime, before 1224."

Added Minister General



Down the mountain from the Monastery of St. Benedict is the Monastery of St. Scholastica (Benedict's sister).

Tibor Kauser: "It's touching that somehow they thought it important to paint a portrait of Francis here. He wasn't canonized yet."



African capitulars enjoy the visit to the Monastery of St. Benedict.



The Benedictine Monastery on a mountain at Subiaco.



The inside of the monastery at Subiaco is covered with frescoes.

GENERAL CHAPTER: DAY 6

'It's Good to Be Franciscan,' OFM Conventual Minister General Tells Chapter

The sixth day of the General Chapter (Nov. 9) started with another exhibition of the Franciscan Family connection – as Fr. Marco Tasca, minister general of the OFM Conventual friars, presided at mass and offered words of solidarity and joy. “God is already accompanying us,” Fr. Marco declared. “...It makes us men and women of God.”

He pointed to Francis’ “craziness” in his radical love for Christ – a craziness that is his gift to the church, a craziness that Franciscans share.

“It’s good to be together. It’s good to be Franciscan... Let us walk as Franciscans in the world.”

The chapter theme (*As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world*) continued with panel presentations.

Franco Addonizio, OFS, of Italy pointed to the importance of carrying out



Fr. Marco Tasca, OFM Conv.



Franco Addonizio, Lorena Campos, and Eugenio & Elisabetta Di Giovine

the Franciscan mission in public life. Lorena Campos, OFS, of Spain gave an example of a fraternity in the forefront of promoting justice, peace and integrity of creation. Eugenio and Elisabetta Di Giovine, OFS, of Italy shared their missionary experience and how they responded to the call to be sent into the

world as seculars.

In another panel, Anne Mulqueen, OFS, of the United States reminded the friars of their importance to the OFS even though in some areas Secular Franciscans have had to be trained to serve as spiritual assistants. Vice Minister General Chelito Nuñez, OFS, of Venezuela stressed

the need for accurate information on membership and how the Order needs support by everyone. Presidency Councillor Augustine Yoon, OFS, of Korea offered an example of how national fraternities can organize themselves to be in conformity with the Rule.

Continued on next page.



Anne Mulqueen, Chelito Nuñez and Augustine Yoon.

Continued from previous page.

In a panel the following day on Secular Franciscan saints, Maria Pia Barontini, OFS, of Italy discussed procedures for the cause for sainthood. Gérard Cécilien Ràboanary, OFS, of Madagascar spoke of Secular Franciscan Lucien Botovasoa, a martyr from his country who is to be beatified. Then Silvia Giuliani, OFS, of Austria told the story of Austrian farmer Franz Jägerstätter, a Secular Franciscan executed during World War II.



Maria Pia Barontini, Gérard Cécilien Ràboanary, and Silvia Giuliani

SIDEBAR: *Where the Rubber Hits the Road*

Jamie Hacker Hughes of London looks at the Franciscan order and sees the “local group” as its heart.

He puts it this way: “The local group is the tread on the tire. It’s where the rubber hits the road. It’s where we’re making an impact on the world.”

He is talking about the local fraternity, except with an Anglican twist.

The new provincial minister for Europe for the Third Order Society of St. Francis (TSSF), Jamie brought “greetings from the Third Order” as a special guest at the OFS General Chapter.

Whether Anglican or Catholic, “we’re all sisters and brothers following Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis.”

“We’re totally in synch with living the Franciscan vocation in the world.”

The chapter has been hugely welcoming, he noted, and “the international atmosphere is wonderful.” He said that he had found the Masses to be very special. “Apart from a word or two, it’s almost exactly the same” as the Anglican liturgy.



Jamie Hacker Hughes

“It’s a bit like putting on a comfortable pair of shoes. You feel immediately at home.”

The past hundred years have seen a renewal of the Franciscan tradition in the Anglican church, he noted, with First Order brothers, First Order sisters, Second Order Poor Clares, and, since the 1930s, Third Order tertiaries.

“And because we’re Anglican, some of our sisters, along with some of our brothers in the Order, are priests as well.”

The TSSF is “tiny, compared

to the OFS, with 3,000 members worldwide against the 300,000 members of the OFS,” Jamie said. The local group, like the one he belongs to in the London area, is comprised of ten or so members. Some five or six local groups make up an area, and 42 areas make up the province. Profession ceremonies are usually done at the area level, and then, “once a year at Francistide, professed tertiaries renew their pledge.” The interprovincial Third Order chapter (IPTOC), held every six years, takes place in conjunction with those of the religious brothers and sisters, so it is a real Franciscan family event. OFS Minister General Tibor Kauser and Great Britain OFS National Minister Paula Pearce both attended IPTOC last September.

Jamie is a clinical psychologist, specializing in trauma, and was head of psychology for the UK’s Ministry of Defense. When not working in his clinical practice, or as a professor, or handling TSSF affairs, he runs the youth ministry in one of London’s poorest parishes, where his wife, Katy, is the parish priest.

GENERAL CHAPTER: DAY 7

Franciscans Are Welcoming, Capuchin Minister General Notes

Fr. Mauro Jöhri, the Capuchin minister general, helped start the 7th day of the General Chapter by celebrating mass in memory of Emanuela de Nunzio, former OFS minister general.

“She was a person who gave so much to the Order,” he said.

“Abundance” of love, of giving is a characteristic of Franciscanism, he noted.

“We have abundance... It is at the heart of what we do.”

He gave the example of Solanus Casey, a Capuchin friar who was to be beatified on Nov. 17, 2017. As a porter at the friary in De-



Capuchin Minister General Mauro Jöhri asserts that a Franciscan is one who welcomes.

troit, Michigan, USA, “he attended to all who came.” During the Great Depression of the 1920s, “he fed

hundreds.”

“His way of welcoming people drew crowds to him ... all wanted to go to him.”

Father Mauro concluded with a simple question:

“Who is Franciscan?”
“He who welcomes.”

SIDEBAR: Hurricane Almost Kept Her from Attending Chapter

Isabel Lima, OFS, is the national minister and international councilor from Puerto Rico.

And for a while, she was not sure whether she was going to be able to attend the General Chapter.

First, Hurricane Marie devastated Puerto Rico on Sept. 20, flooding her home in San Juan and damaging the national OFS headquarters in the mountain village of Utuado.

When she left for Rome, she was still without electricity. The airlines were operating sporadically and canceled her flight to the chapter. But she was able to rebook it by flying to Santo Domingo, then Madrid and finally Rome.

It has been unsettling, she said.



“We never experienced such widespread destruction before.”

With 340 OFS members in Puerto Rico, a number of them lost their homes but were taken in by their OFS brothers and sisters, Isabel noted.

The headquarters building, which

was built by the brothers and sisters some 50 years ago after the first national minister donated the property, serves as an event center. With 34 bedrooms, classrooms and hall, the building is used for the national chapter, formation classes, and council meetings. It also generates income as a location for diocesan events and weddings. Isabel said they were looking at restoring the building in three phases, starting with a new roof since the hurricane ripped off a good portion of it.

In any case, “this is how I’m ending my first three years (as national minister)” – surviving a hurricane and participating in her first General Chapter.

Historic Vote on Proposals

This was the day of the historic vote on proposals that evolved out of surveys and feedback from national fraternities around the globe. Eight priority areas were identified, including the following six proposals.

The chapter voted to establish:

- a permanent international *office of formation* “to coordinate the work of both initial and ongoing formation at the international level so as to deepen the Secular Franciscan identity and sense of belonging to the OFS.”

- an international *Secretariate for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation* (JPIC) “to coordinate JPIC activities within the OFS and to work closely with other JPIC organizations within

the Franciscan Family.” The secretariat will monitor international issues, provide response, and act as a focal point during natural disasters (including disaster assistance with appropriate agencies).

- an international *office of communications*, “staffed with professionals possessing the required skills in communications, website/social media management, and publishing. In some cases, the office may have to retain professional staff on a contractual basis to ensure quality work.”

The chapter approved:

- a “Life in Fraternity” proposal to review “the structures of the Secular Franciscan Order as outlined in the General Constitutions, with an openness

to modifying the General Constitutions where necessary, to create a more decentralized structure that reflects the secular nature of the Secular Franciscan Order and its members.”

- a proposal to “develop a financial strategy and plan for the international fraternity which includes both revenue generation strategies and expenditure management controls.”

A six-pronged leadership development proposal was mostly approved, as follows:

1. *Members*: National fraternities will maintain a registry of members.

2. *Local fraternities*: Collect information on local fraternities in order to create an online directory.

3. *Training leaders*: Develop materials suitable for

training of fraternity leaders.

4. *Pool of expertise*: Create a pool of Secular Franciscans who have extensive experience in serving the OFS and who could work in some of the permanent offices of the order, preside at national elective chapters, conduct fraternal visits, perform various studies and projects of interest to the OFS, and provide support to national councils in resolving problems.

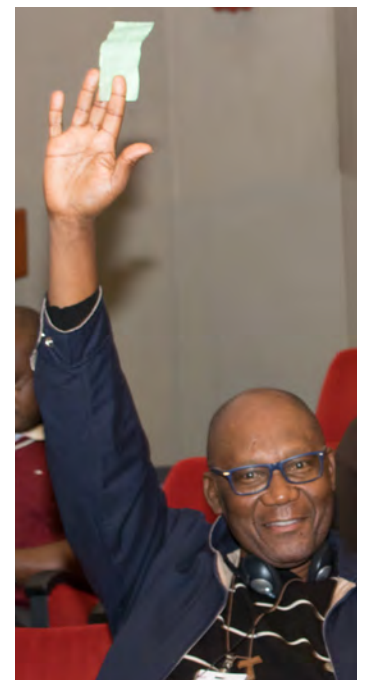
5. *Collaboration*: Strengthen regular communication with the Franciscan Family.

A leadership item regarding administration and promotion was rejected.

The 7th & 8th priority areas involve Spiritual Assistance and Franciscan Youth (*see next page*).



Capitulars, or delegates, voted “yes” with green ballots, and “no” with red ones



GENERAL CHAPTER: DAY 8

Official Languages Unchanged; 3-Year Budget Approved

The 8th day of the chapter featured a vote on the Portuguese language. The body accepted a recommendation from the Presidency to forego adding it as a 5th official language. (English, French, Italian and Spanish remain as the official languages.)

•••

Presidency Treasurer Lucio Monti, OFS, announced that there are some national fraternities that would be willing to help other national fraternities experiencing financial difficulties, and that CIOFS has a fund to collect such donations. Regarding annual contributions from national fraternities, “there’s still €51,000-



Treasurer Lucio Monti, OFS

plus missing for 2017.”

He presented a budget for the next three years:

- 207,774 euros for 2018
- 213,767 euros for 2019
- 219,854 euros for 2020.

“For the coming triennium there are no changes in the per-head contribution.”

The chapter overwhelmingly approved the budget.

YouFra

The chapter overwhelmingly approved a Franciscan Youth motion that reads:

“Secular Franciscan fraternities, at all levels, are to seek the most suitable means to foster the vitality and growth of Franciscan Youth within their particular realities, accompanying

and animating YouFra with all that is necessary to ensure young people are supported along their human and spiritual journey.”

Spiritual Assistance

Then the body overwhelmingly approved a Spiritual Assistance motion that reads:

“All national fraternities are encouraged to reflect and discuss the role of spiritual and pastoral assistance within their specific realities, including the development of effective relationships with the Major Superiors, conducting appropriate training of spiritual assistants and ensuring ongoing communications between spiritual assistants at all levels.”

SIDEBAR: A Love Story with Jewish Roots

Chantal Healy, OFS, international councillor from New Zealand, is a Jew who grew up in Paris. As a child, she felt drawn to God, and a daydream came to her that her future husband would be someone who spoke English with a British-like accent.

At age 23, in 1976, Chantal decided to visit her brother in Israel, who was a soldier at a kibbutz. That’s where she met Gregory Healy, a visitor from British Common-



wealth member New Zealand.

Memories of her childhood daydream came flooding back.

“I knew he was the one,” she laughed. “He didn’t have a chance.”

Her family had been

delighted about her visit to Israel, hoping she would meet a Jewish boy. “They didn’t know I would bring back a Catholic.”

Gregory proposed to her in Paris a few months later, and they moved to New Zealand where he had the

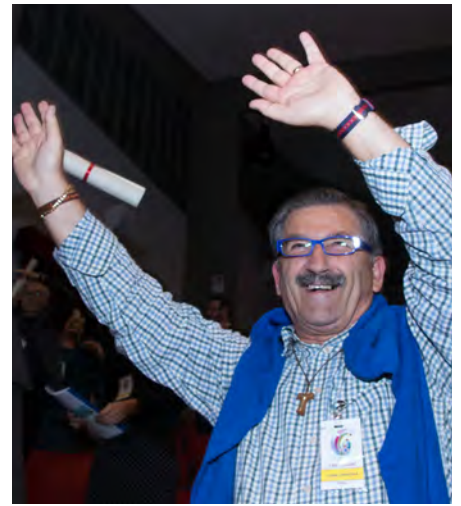
opportunity for a teaching position. They were married there, and that’s where a Capuchin friar started introducing her to books on the Jewish-Catholic heritage as well as to the Franciscan charism. It took a while, but, as she put it, “I became a Catholic and a Franciscan at the same time.”

The epilogue of the story is that, following the General Chapter, they planned to celebrate 40 years of marriage by returning to Israel where they met.

GENERAL CHAPTER CANDIDS



GENERAL CHAPTER CANDIDS



SIDEBAR: Her pilgrimages have a real bonus

Pilgrimages.

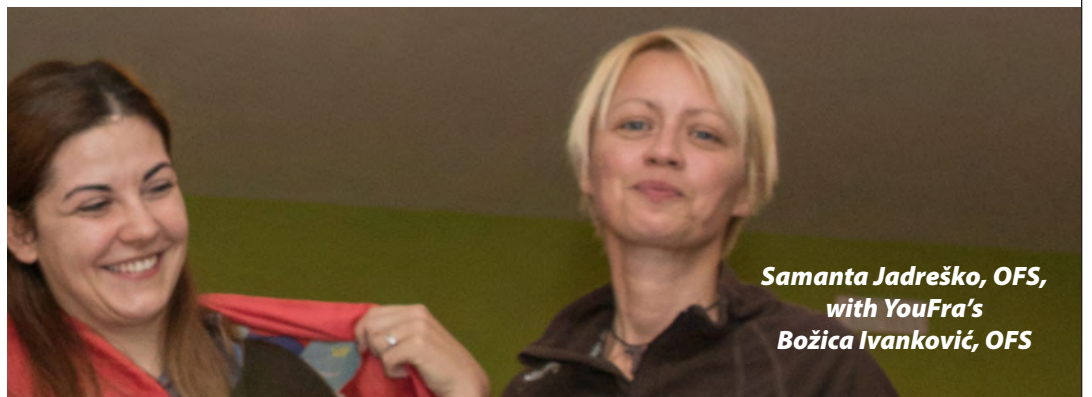
For most, they are a prayerful journey to shrines and other religious sites.

For Samanta Jadreško, OFS, of Croatia, they provide a real bonus.

“I’ve discovered this is a good way to raise money for the friars.”

She is talking about friars that staff a sanctuary where her fraternity meets.

“The friars are very generous,” working with people in need, even feeding the hungry. Because it’s not a regular parish, “they don’t get much money.”



**Samanta Jadreško, OFS,
with YouFra’s
Božica Ivanković, OFS**

“I like to organize things,” so putting together trips to places like Medjugorje was natural for her. And she donates the proceeds.

Perhaps it is not surprising that she studied economics and commerce in college. Even so, she dis-

covered another bonus. “It causes people to smile when they go on these trips.”

As substitute international councilor, Samanta got to represent the Croatian National Fraternity at the General Chapter. And she liked to spend time

with YouFra councilors.

Back home, when not attending to OFS affairs from local to national, Samanta sells insurance, and, again perhaps not surprisingly, is taking additional courses in tourism and culture.

GENERAL CHAPTER CANDIDS





YouFra

Franciscan Youth Councilor Andrea Odak, OFS, takes a "selfie" after welcoming the first international YouFra councilors to arrive in Rome for the General Chapter in November. At right is Božica Ivanković (Bosnia and Herzegovina), international YouFra councilor for Central and Eastern Europe. Next to her is Gilbert Muhumuza (Uganda), international YouFra councilor for Africa. Between Andrea and Gilbert is Uganda National Minister Christopher Ojambo, OFS. Photo by R. Stronach, OFS.

"I couldn't believe it!"
That was how Gilbert Muhumuza reacted to the news that he was elected international YouFra councilor for Africa.

"I thought they were joking."

He serves a three-year term, 2017-2020, along with other new international councilors, reports Franciscan Youth Councilor Andrea Odak, OFS.

Gilbert hails from Uganda and was first attracted to YouFra some nine years ago. As he got more involved on the local, regional and national levels, he decided to pursue a Secular Franciscan vocation and was temporarily professed in March 2017.

But his election as YouFra councilor for Africa has thrust him into a new adventure, leaving him a little dazed. He said he still didn't believe it until he was boarding the airplane to head to Rome for the General Chapter. It was his first time flying, and his first journey out of his country.

On the other hand, Božica Ivanković, international YouFra councilor for Central and Eastern Europe, is used to traveling, visiting Italy and other countries in her job as a purchaser of marble and granite. She is from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and has been active in both YouFra and the OFS. She made her profession

in 2013, is vice minister of her local fraternity, and is substitute international councilor for her national fraternity.

Other newly elected international YouFra councilors are:

- Judith del Rocio Vidales Vinajera of Mexico, representing Central America, Mexico and Caribbean. She got involved in YouFra over eight years ago, serving on the local, regional and national levels. She made her profession in the OSF in 2011. Judith is a psychologist, and for the past three years was substitute international YouFra councilor. Substitute YouFra councilor for that area is Francisco

Antonio Loaiza Mena of Costa Rica.

- Emanuelson Matias de Lima of Brazil, representing South America. He is member of the National Secretariat of the Franciscan Youth of Brazil and is active in human rights, justice, peace and integrity of creation. He was professed as an OFS in 2016 and holds a bachelor's degree in history.

Substitute YouFra Councilor for South America is Rebecca Nascimento de Oliveira of Brazil.

No candidates came forth from Asia Oceania, nor from the Western Europe/Northern America region, so those councilor positions are vacant.



The exuberance of Franciscan Youth was on display at the General Chapter.

Living My Franciscan Vocation

Sometimes we need to re-visit our Franciscan vocation and ask whether we are truly living as Franciscans. Of course, a daily review of our rule would be helpful and support us on our journey. We could also ask ourselves the following questions to help stay on track:

Do I have an intense love of the Eucharist and a desire to stay close to our Lord Jesus Christ through the reception of the Eucharist on a regular basis?

Do I make an effort to spend time with my Franciscan brothers and sisters – at the local fraternity and through prayer and outreach to our brothers and sisters around the world?

Have I chosen to live a simple life, allowing me to have a genuine spirituality which has no pretense?

Have I chosen to live a life of Gospel poverty. My belongings are there for my use. I am not attached to them. Thus, I am free to truly live the pov-

erty of the Gospel.

Am I working on my humility, helping me to be free from pride and arrogance?

Do I have a true sense of minority? Am I the servant and not superior to others?

Am I allowing God to work in my life, trusting in his unconditional love?

As part of daily conversion, am I looking at things in my life that I should change so that I can become more like Jesus?

Do I see a transformation in myself because I am open and willing?

Am I the messenger of peace in the world as Francis was – in my family, in my fraternity, in my community?

-- by the Formation Commission

Project Africa



Participants at the French-speaking Formation Workshop held in June in the Ivory Coast

The Secular Franciscan Order's Africa Project continued its effort to bring formation training to brothers and sisters in African countries by conducting two francophone workshops – one in the Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire) June 14-17 and the second

in Chad August 2-5.

These followed English-speaking workshops held in 2016.

General Spiritual Assistant Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap, was lead instructor for both workshops, with Presidency Councilor Michel Janian,

OFS, and Togo International Councilor Adolph Atsu Assagba, OFS, helping in Ivory Coast, and Adolph helping in Chad.

The June workshop took place at the Padre Pio Spirituality Center in Abidjan, attracting 49 participants from Benin, Burkina Faso,

Ivory Coast and Togo.

The August workshop attracted 43 participants to the Center Sainte Elisabeth in Moundou. They mostly came from Chad.

Participants discussed the OFS Rule, the OFS Constitutions, and the Catechism of the church, and were “invited to be witnesses of the Franciscan charism” by “their way of living,” noted Presidency Councilor Jenny Harrington of South Africa.



Participants huddle in a small group break-out session at the French-speaking Formation Workshop in Chad.

PAN AFRICAN CONGRESS

IMPORTANT EVENT FOR OFS IDENTITY AND MISSION

The Secular Franciscan Order is organizing the first-ever Pan African Congress to address issues facing the Order, the Church and the continent.

The congress will take place July 20 to 25, 2018 at Padre Pio Spirituality Centre in Rietvallei, Pretoria, South Africa and will address such topics as:

- OFS vocation, profession and mission.
- being in the forefront of reconciliation, peace and social justice.
- role of fraternity councils and spiritual assistants.
- protection of life, respect for creation and good governance.
- the future for youth.
- “embracing the lepers;” that is, caring for the weakest of the weak.
- family as a school for reconciliation, peace and justice.

Pan African Congress is an outgrowth of CIOFS’ Project Africa, which has conducted formation workshops in English and in French over the past two years, attracting Secular Franciscans, Franciscan youth and spiritual assistants from a number of countries there.

“Being the first Pan African Congress makes this a very important event for the identity and mission of the Secular Franciscans and of YouFra in Africa,” noted Presidency Councilor Jenny Harrington, OFS.



LITTLE DISCOVERIES

TRAVELS INSPIRE PRESIDENCY COUNCILOR

Attilio Galimberti, OFS, enjoys making little discoveries in the places he visits as a CIOFS Presidency councilor.

In Indonesia, for example, he was overcome with emotion when he got to visit the grave of Br. Benitius Brevoort, OFM Cap. Affectionately known as Brother Ben, the former general spiritual assistant (1990-2002) and scholar of languages and Islamic studies had died in January, 2017 at age 78. Brother Ben was laid to rest in Sinaksak on Sumatra Island.

In Egypt, Attilio was struck by the tribute to family life represented in a 3,500-year-old sculpture (which portray husband and wife in equal size with two children close to



Brother Ben

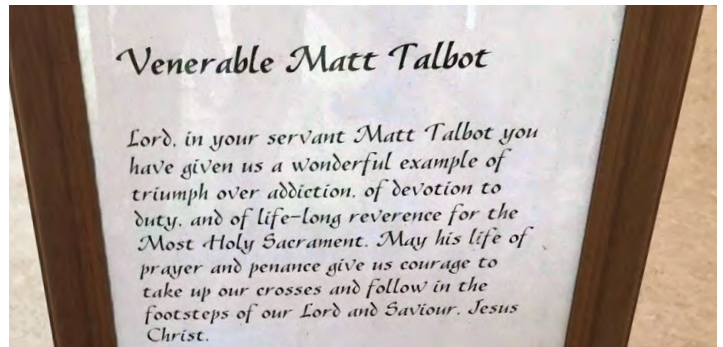
them).

And in his visit to Ireland, he happily discovered Matt Talbot, a Secular Franciscan who has been declared a venerable.

A former Dublin dock worker, Talbot overcame alcoholism to go on to live a simple holy life as a then-Third Order Franciscan in the early 20th century.



3,500-year-old Egyptian sculpture pays tribute to family life.



Sign at Matt Talbot shrine in Dublin.



Cemetery on Sumatra Island where Brother Ben was laid to rest.

OFS AROUND THE GLOBE

NEWS, MEETINGS AND CHAPTERS

81 Participants At Asia Oceania Congress in Bali

The 5th OFS and YouFra Asia Oceania Congress was held in Bali from 20 to 27 April 2017. Then-international YouFra councilor for this area, Jenifer John, and representatives from YouFra Vietnam, Philippines, and India were present.

“Since there are only few recognized fraternities in this area, this Congress was a great opportunity for Jenifer to speak about Franciscan youth among all participants,” noted CIOFS Franciscan Youth Councilor Andrea Odak, OFS.

General Minister Tibor Kauser, OFS, gave the opening address on the order’s priorities after Hendro Setiawan, OFS, welcomed everyone with an overview of the congress agenda. Denpasar Bishop Silvester San presided at the opening mass. The congress was jointly hosted by Indonesia and



During an evening of fraternal and cultural sharing at the Asia Oceania Congress, participants from India swirl in dance with a friar spiritual assistant. Photo by Augustine Yoon, OFS.

Malaysia.

“As the deer panteth for the water. . . so my soul longeth after thee.” These words of a song express one’s yearning for his creator. “And just as a deer panteth for the water,” noted the congress’ final report, “81 brothers and sisters from Asia and Oceania gathered in a congress to express their pining for the grace of God to look down on their order and bless it with guidance, as

they continue to seek ways and means of improving, enlightening and cultivating their vocation as Secular Franciscans.”

“The Congress was meant to be a venue for dialogue on the most important subjects for the life of OFS such as formation, communications, family, financing, membership administration, YouFra, and JPIC,” noted Presidency Councilor Augustine Yoon, OFS.

The 81 participants were from: Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Thailand, India, Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Vietnam and CIOFS.

Included in these numbers were YouFra representatives from India, Vietnam, Philippines, and China as well as spiritual assistants from the different First Order, TOR, and Franciscan Religious.



Presidency Councilor Augustine Yoon, OFS, poses with the multi-national choir that performed at the Congress’ mass.

Pakistan Re-elects National Minister

Albert Nazir, OFS, was re-elected national minister of the National Emerging Fraternity of Pakistan, reports Presidency Councilor Augustine Yoon.

The pastoral witness was National Spiritual Assistant Fr. Eric Rassani, OFM (delegate of the General Spiritual Assistants).

The chapter took place July 21-23, 2017 at the OFM House in Lahore, Pakistan.

“The chapter was well organized and celebrated with a good spirit of collaboration,” Augustine noted.



Presidency Councilor Augustine Yoon, OFS, with a YouFra delegation in Pakistan.

As an Emerging National Fraternity, there are five local fraternities and no regional fraternity as yet, he said, and noted: “You-Fra is very active and well animated and guided with

total number of members almost the same as that of OFS members.”

Also elected were: Pervez Jamal, OFS, vice minister; Inderyas Sardar, OFS, formator; Anosh Mehaq, OFS,

secretary; Rosey Samuel, OFS, treasurer; Javed Sadiq, OFS, international councilor, Yasir Javed, You-Fra; Maria Goretti, OFS, vocation development.

Thailand Elects New National Council

The national chapter of Thailand, held Sept. 29 to Oct. 1, elected a new provisional national council for a three-year term, reports Presidency Councilor Augustine Yoon.

The national minister is Lucia Supanee Khamwan. The other newly elected are:

Vice-minister Teresa Aphiradee Samerphithak, Formator Alphonso Samniang, Secretary Anna Wanida Punthong, Treasurer and International Councilor Mary Magdeline Pairin Buapun.

The OFS presence in Thailand dates back 20 years, Augustine noted,



Presidency Councilor Augustine Yoon, OFS, (left) poses with Thailand OFS leaders and spiritual assistants.

and today includes six local fraternities with some 80 members.

The chapter took place at Portiuncola House of Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

of the Holy Mother of God (SFIC) in Ubonratchathani.

National Spiritual Assistant Fr. Francis Xavier Sutarja, OFM, was the delegate for the General

Spiritual Assistants.

The chapter, Augustine added, “was filled with grace of God, and love and warmth of our Franciscan family.”

Cape Verde Holds Elective Chapter

The OFS National Fraternity of Cape Verde celebrated its National Elective Chapter from 30 June to 2 July 2017.

The new national minister is Orlando Burgo and the international councillor is Adilson José de Pina.



Hong Kong Holds Elective Chapter

The OFS Regional Fraternity of Hong Kong - Macau celebrated its Elective Chapter on 2 July 2017.

The new regional minister is Teresa Wong.

Minister General Tibor Kausar, OFS, presided over the elections. Pastoral witness was General Spiritual Assistant Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR.



Malaysia Elects First Council

The new emerging OFS National Fraternity of Malaysia elected its first National Council on June 11, 2017.

Marina Anjuman was elected as national minister.



Singapore Elects First Council

The new emerging OFS National Fraternity of Singapore elected its first National Council on June 3, 2017.

Janet Lim was elected as national minister.



Netherlands Elects New Minister

The OFS National Fraternity of Netherlands celebrated its National Elective Chapter on 9-11 June 2017.

The new national minister is Theo Reuling and the international councillor is Mariette Fleur.



Italy Elects New Minister

The OFS National Fraternity of Italy has celebrated its National Elective Chapter on 1-4 June 2017 at La Verna.

The new national minister and international councillor is Paola Braggion.



Romania Elects New Minister

The OFS National Fraternity of Romania has celebrated its National Elective Chapter on May 19, 2017.

The new national minister is Tibor Penu and the international councillor is Celina Francu.



Philippines Elects National Council

The five-day national elective chapter of the Philippines focused on a theme of the OFS being agents of a “communion of communities,” reports Presidency Councilor Augustine Yoon.

Held April 29 to May 3 in Lahug, Cebu City, “the chapter was celebrated with a good spirit of collaboration,” with “strong support from the church and First Order and TOR,” Augustine said. Cebu Archbishop Jose Palm presided at the opening mass, and Auxiliary Bishop Oscar Florencio, OFS, presided at another mass. The chapter featured sessions on the OFS Rule, stewardship, and priorities of the Order.



Augustine presided over the election, with pastoral witness Fr. Elson M. Singzon, OFM (delegate of the General Spiritual Assistants).

Belinda B. Inao, OFS, (*above with Augustine*) was elected national minister and international councilor.

Lithuania Elects National Council

National elective Chapter of Lithuania was held in Kaunas Sept. 15-17.

Virginija Mickutė, OFS, was elected national minister, and Monika Midverytė, OFS, as international councilor.

“During the chapter, You-Fra representatives were present all the time,” noted CIOFS Franciscan Youth Councilor Andrea Odak, OFS, who presided over the elections. She said the capitulars asked YouFra members for their input.

“It was a nice way of showing the important role YouFra has, and how close they are.”



85TH ANNIVERSARY

Christchurch Holy Spirit Fraternity in New Zealand celebrated its 85th anniversary on Aug. 26 at Sacred Heart Church, Addington, Christchurch, reports International Councillor Chantal Healy, OFS. She and National Minister Lloyd De Melo, OFS, joined local Minister Marcus van Gerwen, OFS, and fraternity members for the landmark event.

BLESSINGS OF ART IN DAILY LIFE

By ROBERT STRONACH, OFS

A WALKING CANE FOR A FRATERNITY MINISTER

The blessings of Franciscan artisans can appear in everyday life.

Such as a crooked cane being used by a local fraternity minister who had suffered a couple of strokes. It was attracting appreciative stares and comments during the Divine Mercy Regional Chapter held Aug. 4-6, 2017 in Dewitt, Michigan, USA.

The cane was handcrafted by Francesco Rosario LaRosa, OFS, a carpenter by trade. He saw the perfect cane in a crooked tree

growing in his yard. He cut it, carved it, and revealed a story of Francis and Clare and their kinship with the Creator and all of creation.

Francesco surprised Roger Raupp, OFS, minister of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Fraternity in Allen Park, Michigan, with the gift, telling him:

“A good minister should not be without a good cane.”

It features images of Francis, Clare, Christ, the Holy Spirit (static and swooping doves), a cross, the Tau, a wolf and a donkey.



Roger Raupp with his crooked cane sporting Francis, Clare, a Tau and a dove.

A TATTOO TO COMMEMORATE HER PROFESSION

“I made sure I had a permanent mark of my profession.”

That’s how Heather Cherniack, OFS, explained the tattoo on her shoulder blade while participating in a 2017 Youth/Young Adult vision conference in St. Louis, Missouri, USA.

She designed it with the help of the tattoo artist. It features a Tau cross, lilies representing the Father and Son, a dove for the Holy Spirit, and a three-knot cord for poverty, chastity and obedience.

Professed two years ago (2015) at Greccio

Fraternity in Derry, New Hampshire, USA, Heather is a convert to Catholicism. Her conversion journey began while serving as a U.S. Army medic in Iraq. During her months in a war zone, she felt a spiritual tug, and ended up seeking out a chaplain, who happened to be a Catholic priest. Even though she was non-Catholic, the spiritual discussion turned into her first confession, with the chaplain guiding and blessing her. Her faith journey continued when she returned to the U.S.

Perhaps it is not surpris-



Heather Cherniack's tattoo features a dove, cord, tau and lillies.

ing that she chose another warrior, Joan of Arc, as her patron saint, and that she

feels an affinity with what she calls another “feminist saint,” Clare of Assisi.