



## Fraternity: *Our Way of Life*

*"The Lord Gave Me Brothers..."  
(St. Francis of Assisi)*

Diane Menditto, OFS 9/12/2020

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***"When the Lord gave me brothers, there was no one to tell me what I should do, but the Most High himself made it clear to me that I must live the life of Gospel" ( Testament 14). FA:ED, vol. 1, 125***



***In three or four words, how  
would you express what  
fraternity is to you?***

***Please type your answers  
in the chat.***



***“Fraternity is...a call to build a community of love in harmony with all of God’s children and all of God’s creation to **reflect Love back to the God of Love: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**”***

*FUN Manual “Fraternity and Francis”  
BY Tom Bello, OFS—former National Minister*



- The **entire Order is divided into fraternities**—Local, Regional, National and International
- The vocation to the OFS is a **vocation to live the Gospel in FRATERNAL COMMUNION** (GC 3.3)
- *The **HEART OF OUR VOCATION** is Jesus Christ and **around that heart** is FRATERNITY.*

- *The local fraternity is the heartbeat of the Order-Subsidiarity*

**The local fraternity is the heartbeat of the Order.**

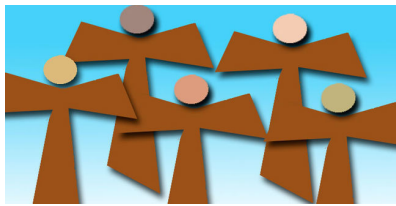
**Why do we say this? Subsidiarity— GC Art. 33.2 (The basis for subsidiarity can be found in Matthew 18:15-20 on fraternal correction—last Sunday’s Gospel.)**

The councils of higher levels should not do what can be adequately carried out either by the local fraternities or by a council of a lower level. They should respect and promote their vitality so that they fulfil their duties properly.

The local fraternities and councils concerned should commit themselves to carry out the decisions of the international council and of the other councils of higher levels, and to implement their programs, adapting them when necessary to their own situation. GC Art 33.2

## Fraternity

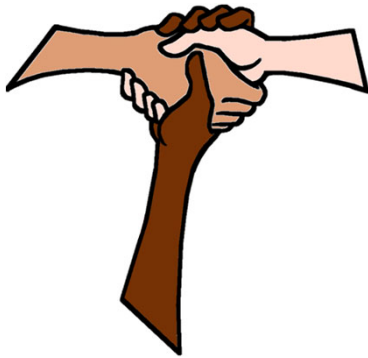
- Is the means by which, and the environment through which we are called to live the Gospel.
- Fraterntiy is the key model for OFS Gospel Life
- The vocation of the OFS is a vocation to live the Gospel in fraternal communion.



“Fraternity”, is the key model for Secular Franciscan Gospel life. The divine call to **live in perfect charity, to strive for holiness and to build the kingdom of God** culminates and takes shape in a fraternity life and the collective efforts of a group.

We know that the **Fraternity is founded on the fatherhood of God** and the fellowship in Jesus Christ witnessed within ourselves by the Holy Spirit, guided and guaranteed by the teachings of the Church. All this is lived by means of the example of St. Francis and **through his gift of Fraternity**.

Fr. Irudaysamy, OFM Cap. – former member Conference of General Spiritual Assistants to the OFS  
(In FUN Manual “Fraternity as a Fundamental Element of Francis’s Spirituality.”)



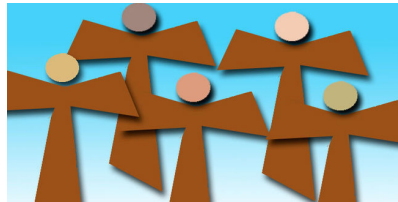
- **Fraternity** is a call to unity and harmony with all of our brothers and sisters
- Fraternity is a call to unity and harmony with all of creation
- Fraternity is a call to build a community of love that reflects love back to the Trinity

The basic mystery of the Trinity reveals a unity in community that shows us what fraternity should look like.

## Article 42.4 (General Constitutions)

### Fraternity

- Profession does not only commit those professed to the fraternity, but also, in the same way, it commits the fraternity to be concerned with their human and religious well-being.



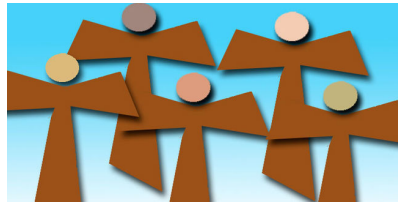
As we know, fraternity is not a club, society or any sort of social gathering.

As Secular Franciscans we have committed ourselves to accompany and take care of one another on our journey to the Father.

## Article 28.1 (General Constitutions)

### Fraternity

The fraternity of the OFS finds its origin in the inspiration of Saint Francis of Assisi to whom the Most High revealed the essential gospel quality of life in fraternal communion.



And after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel.  
Testament 14 *FA:ED*, vol. 1, 125



## Our Challenge: Show that Living the Gospel is Possible.



- Francis's great gift to the world:
  - He showed that the Gospel could be lived.
  - We are called to keep that gift alive.

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We should remember:

*André Vauchez: Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint*

“Francis believed... that the Bible is not to be confused with Christ: the one is the servant, the other is the Lord.

“...what he advocates is **not a literal imitation** but rather a creative endeavor: every Christian who wants to be seriously engaged on the path to salvation will have to accept, in a context unique for each, to endure trials similar to those which Jesus suffered during his earthly life (poverty, solitude, suffering, and rejection) **while striving to discover his fundamental attitudes, especially his spirit of prayer and love.**”

Vauchez, Andre. Francis of Assisi (pp. 267-268). Yale University Press. Kindle Edition.

Fraternity is the **perfect workshop** for experiencing this challenge:



- Attitudes—ours and those of others
- The dynamics of fraternity life
- Our lives as lay people vis à vis our commitment to fraternity

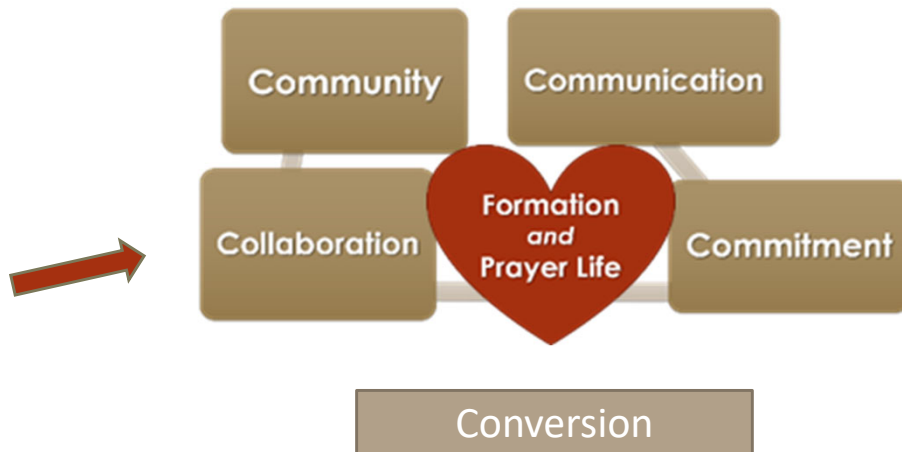
*Article 3.3 of the General Constitutions. "The vocation to the OFS is a vocation to live the Gospel in fraternal community*

Article 3.3 of the General Constitutions. **"The vocation to the SFO is a vocation to live the Gospel in fraternal communion"...**

"Brothers and sisters are there to **provide support** and **encouragement**. They are there to **teach**. They are there to **correct**. **They** are there **to help me** live the Gospel, and I am there to help them live the Gospel." (FUN Fraternity as a Fundamental Element)

Fraternity is also the perfect place to discover **just how human we are...** Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ **in their brothers and sisters**, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity. (Rule Article 5)

## ***FRATERNITY: SPECIAL INGREDIENTS***



In order to help us live together in fraternity, in a successful and life-giving fashion, there are certain elements that should be present.

In order to make everything work, we need to start out with members who show a spirit of collaboration. We will look for this as those in initial formation discern their vocation, and we will continue to strive for this spirit as professed members of the Order.

# Our Challenge: COLLABORATION

In the Workshop of the Fraternity we find that:

- “The identity of the Secular Franciscan is expressed in a triple dimension”
  - Personal (the inner life),
  - Fraternal (co-responsibility)
  - Universal (the mission).”



*Emanuela DeNunzio: Belonging to the SFO  
GENERAL CHAPTER November 15-22, 2008*

Diane Menditto, OFS 9/12/2020

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- **Collaboration**
  - Our willingness to **work together toward any common goal** or project taken on by the fraternity. We are especially concerned with **helping one another** on our journey to the Father and in **reaching out** to those in need.
  - **A life in fraternity is a life of service.** Service implies self-giving love or “**kenosis**” which is the **self-emptying and humility** shown to us by Christ in the **Incarnation**. Service does not require thanks or recognition. “**Service is a gift rendered as a sacrifice and gratuitously.**” (FUN Manual *Fraternity as a Fundamental Element of Francis’s Spirituality*)
  - **Ask Yourself: Do I get involved willingly? Am I present to my brothers and sisters?**

We need to be **praying together and individually** (We collaborate in all that we do)

Our fraternities need to be **cohesive groups** if we are to move the Franciscan/Gospel mission forward

The Mission itself needs to reflect not only Gospel values, but in order to work for the fraternity it needs to be **based on the gifts of the members.**

# We Are Not Alone

- **Collaboration**
- Strength in **community**



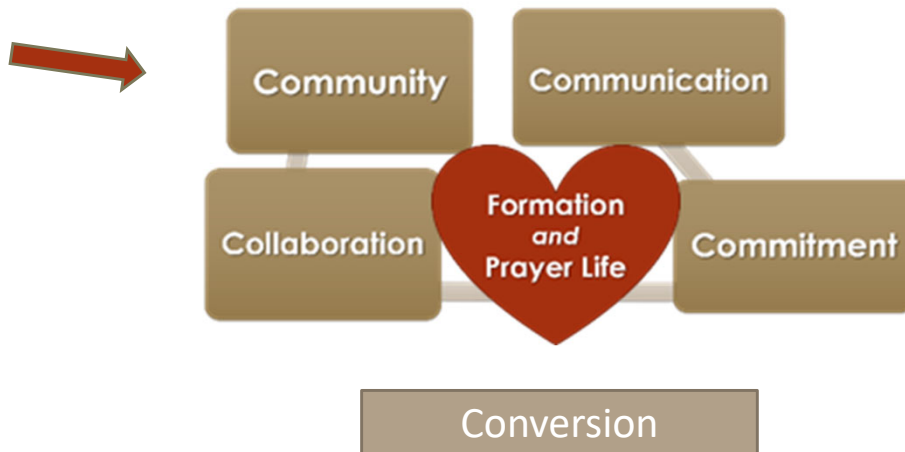
We can go out to serve others because **we know we are loved and supported**

Art. 22 of the Rule: **FRATERNITY** "the basic unit of the whole Order ... a visible sign of the Church, ... community of love..".

GC in art. 30.2 state how belonging to the Fraternity should be lived: *"The sense of co-responsibility of the members requires **personal presence, witness, prayer, and active collaboration, in accordance with each one's situation and possible obligations** for the animation of the fraternity."*

GC Article 33.1 "«1. In the guidance and co-ordination of the Fraternities and of the Order, the **PERSONALITY AND CAPACITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL BROTHERS AND SISTERS AND OF THE INDIVIDUAL FRATERNITIES** should **(must) BE PROMOTED**. The plurality of expressions of the Franciscan ideal and cultural variety must be respected."

## ***FRATERNITY: SPECIAL INGREDIENTS***



Next is the importance of community. We Franciscans call it fraternity.

## Our Challenge: Community



- Fraternity

is the perfect workshop for testing ourselves

- Poverty, humility, meekness...
  - Willingness to yield to others
  - Willingness to see that those who are different than we are have value
  - Called to be “poor enough” to be generous
  - Called to make ourselves available to bring others to God

Diane Menditto, OFS 9/12/2020

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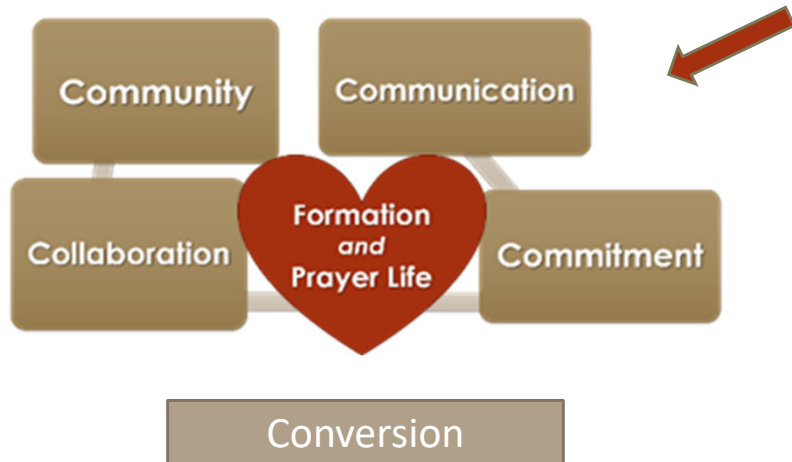
- Our **life in fraternity** with all it entails, including the **acceptance of and empathy for our brothers and sisters**. There is a **desire to be with one another to support and be supported**.
- We are **not looking for others to serve us**, but we **are looking for ways to serve one another**.

*“Fraternal communion is the communion of the Cross; it is present whenever one feels the weight of the other.”*

(We feel the burdens of our brothers and sisters and are present to them.)

(FUN Manual)

## ***FRATERNITY: SPECIAL INGREDIENTS***



Think a minute.

How good are you at communicating?

How good is your region at communicating?

When you hear the word communication, what is the first thing that comes to mind?

Well, I have a surprise for you....



## Our Challenge: COMMUNICATION

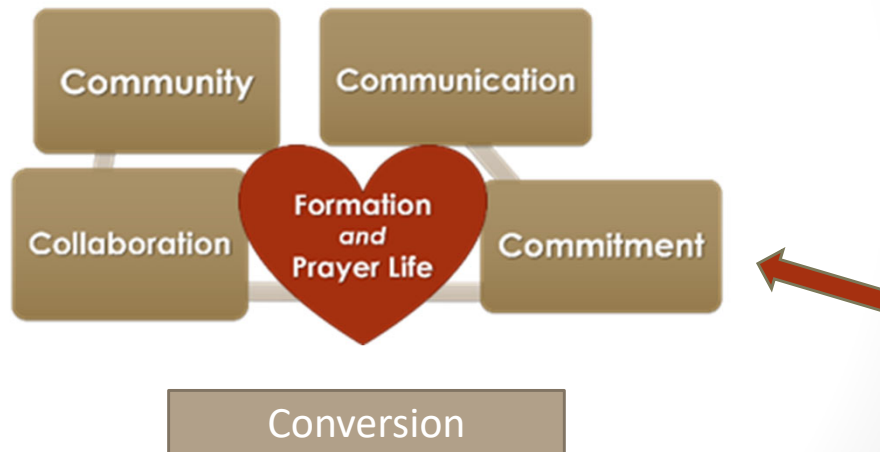


We must realize that **communication** does **not only** mean **talking or giving information**; FIRST it means **listening** to one another. It takes great patience and humility to truly listen to others, especially when we don't agree.

All the newsletters and announcements in the world will not take the place of **good listening** as an **essential in fraternity life**.

If we truly want to serve one another and others in fraternity, listening to the needs of others should, **no must**, be the basis for whatever we do for one another.

## ***FRATERNITY: SPECIAL INGREDIENTS***



## Our Challenge: COMMITMENT

- Our daily remembrance of what we have **promised at profession**.
- ***“Fraternal life is built on the example of one who is ready for sacrifice; one who is willing to serve despite weariness and distress; does not allow him/herself to become disheartened. Fraternal life is the result of simple and humble witness.” (FUN Chapter on Fraternity)***



**By Profession we are committed to God, to one another and to all creation. This is called Universal Kinship.**

We are committed to one another through fraternity and the fraternity is committed to our spiritual and temporal well-being and to universal kinship with all of creation.

(GC. 31.2) The office of minister or councilor is a **fraternal service**, a **commitment to hold oneself available and responsible** in relation to **each brother and sister and to the fraternity** so that each one will realize his or her own vocation and each fraternity will be a true community, ecclesial and Franciscan, actively present in the Church and in society».

This not only applies to the council, but to all members! **What comes first in our busy lives?**

## Our Challenge: COMMITMENT

- What does our commitment entail?:

- CHARITY in our secular state
- LIVE the Gospel
- CHARISM of saint Francis
- WITNESSES AND INSTRUMENTS
- OUR LIFE AND WORDS
- RE-BUILD THE CHURCH
- PERMANENT CONVERSION
- FRATERNAL AND EVANGELICAL WORLD
- COMMIT ONESELF IN PUBLIC LIFE
- JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION

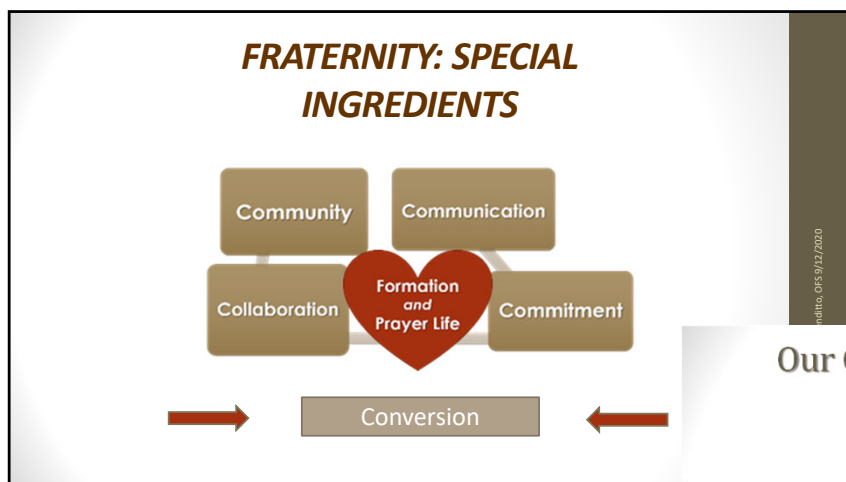


- WE
- Strive for perfect **charity** in our secular state
- Live the Gospel in the **manner of saint Francis**
- Make present the **charism** of saint Francis
- Be **witnesses** and instruments of the **mission of the Church**
- **Announce Christ** by our life and words
- **Re-build the Church**
- Have the thoughts of Christ: **permanent conversion**
- Build a more **fraternal and evangelical world**
- Commit oneself in **public life**
- Commit in Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (**JPIC**).

*Benedetto Lino, OFS, Managing the Order*

All of our different personalities and talents are important to fraternity. We must think outside the box in carrying out our mission. **We are “full time” Secular Franciscans** (Lino)—(Managing OFS)

(LINO-Managing the Order) These objectives, contrary to what people usually think, **are not private objectives**, which concern only the individual persons. **These objectives fully concern all and, most of all, LEADERS AT ALL LEVELS. We must interiorize and implement all these objectives personally, first,** and then we must incessantly and passionately work to assist all others to accomplish them. See GC 31.2 (Previous slide)



Our Challenge: Show that Living the Gospel is Possible.

## CONVERSION

CONVERSION → AUTHENTIC EXAMPLE  
 CONVERSION → AUTHENTIC FRATERNITY  
 CONVERSION → AUTHENTIC MISSION

*HOW DO WE MAKE ALL OF THIS WORK?*

The Biggest challenge of all is daily conversion.

It is the only way we will accomplish all the rest.

*Article 7: “United by their vocation as *brothers and sisters of penance*, and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of **that radical interior change which the Gospel itself calls *conversion*.**”*

If we are sincere in our following of the Rule, we set an **AUTHENTIC EXAMPLE**.

People see through those who pay lip service to admirable beliefs.

If we live authentic Franciscan lives by following the Rule, we form an

**AUTHENTIC FRATERNITY**

If we are **constantly converted**, we see what our mission should be—not by our own agenda, but by the agenda of the Gospel.

This requires **constant self-examination** to be sure that we are able to reach out to others because we are not attached to ourselves! **AUTHENTIC**

**FRATERNITY AND AUTHENTIC MISSION**

Our Challenge: Show that Living the Gospel is Possible.

## CONVERSION

CONVERSION → AUTHENTIC EXAMPLE  
CONVERSION → AUTHENTIC FRATERNITY  
CONVERSION → AUTHENTIC MISSION

Dane Menditto, OFS 9/12/2020

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**Challenge and Growth: THE LACK OF AUTHENTIC CONVERSION** is, by far, THE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM WE ARE CONFRONTED WITH IN OUR ORDER. This is an endemic problem in the Order (stems from superficial formation) **Benedetto Lino p. 10—Managing the Order**

### **LACK OF CONVERSION AND IGNORANCE. (Benedetto Lino, OFS—Managing the Order)**

We need to examine our lives and our commitment to the Rule we have professed Lino speaks of ignorance of the Rule and Constitutions and of Sacred Scripture We need to stop thinking that we can leave these important resources out of our ongoing formation We need to share what we learn-

“This is not only a matter of not knowing what the Rule and General Constitutions demand (absolutely unacceptable), but more importantly (and this is much worse) it is a total **lack of conversion, of the true conversion of heart and mind.** Though recognizing in words that our model of sequela Christi is Francis, many (too many, indeed) Secular Franciscans maintain attitudes and practices which are the **exact contrary of the humility, docility, meekness, search of poverty, obedience, profound sense of service and testimony, minority, exemplarity** etc. of Saint Francis.” (Lino – 2014)

Constitutions 15 1. Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to live the spirit of the **Beatitudes and, in a special way, the spirit of poverty.** **Evangelical poverty** demonstrates confidence in the Father, creates interior freedom, and disposes them to promote a more just distribution of wealth

2. **Secular Franciscans**, who must provide for their own families and serve society by means of their work and material goods, **have a particular manner of living evangelical poverty.**

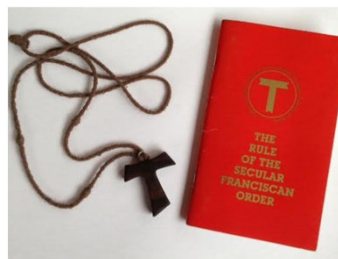
To understand and achieve it requires a **strong personal commitment and the stimulation of the fraternity in prayer and dialogue, communal review of life,** and attentiveness to the instructions of the Church, and the demands of society.

3. Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to reduce their own personal needs so as to be better able to share spiritual and material goods with their brothers and sisters, especially those most in need. They should give thanks to God for the goods they have received, using them as good stewards and not as owners. They should take a firm position against consumerism and against ideologies and practices which prefer riches over human and religious values and which permit the exploitation of the human person.

4. **They should love and practice purity of heart, the source of true fraterni**

## Our Mission: Go Forth

- Fraternity is the perfect workshop to prepare us for our Mission
- We are strengthened in our efforts
  - Through prayer
  - Through study of the Scriptures
  - Through study of our Rule
  - Through our service to the fraternity



## Our Mission: Go Forth

- *Article 6:*
  - “Go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission...”
  - Called like St. Francis to rebuild the Church and inspired by his example...”



- We are the “specialists” in the ways of the world...(Lino)

**BUT...**Let’s not get sidetracked as St. Francis did at first...

It is necessary therefore, **not to remain in the restricted areas of our Franciscan environments but reaching out to the "world",**

We, the Secular Franciscans, are acutely aware that this responsibility falls on us in a very special way because **we are the "specialists" of the world in the Franciscan family**; we, the Seculars, are those who **live immersed in the ordinary conditions of everyday life. If we fail** in this task, **the action of the entire Franciscan family cannot be fully successful.** It is time to understand in its full extent, the magnitude of the task and the responsibility of that task to which we, the Secular Franciscans, are called, not only individually but also as an Order and especially as a family.

“We must not create barriers but break down walls...” Formation is key—we need to focus on **life and not only** on “culture” and intellectual commitment.

Benedetto Lino, OFS, Evangelizing Mission (2014 SGME OFM)



# Mission: Our Talents Put to Use

- Presence in society:
  - In the light of the social doctrine of the Church – Every Fraternity should question its priorities in its own missionary commitment.

*Emanuela DeNunzio: Belonging to the SFO  
GENERAL CHAPTER November 15-22, 2008*



Emanuela DeNunzio: Belonging to the SFO  
GENERAL CHAPTER November 15-22, 2008

On the local level. Every single Fraternity, at the various levels (not just local, but also regional and national), should consider seriously

**Every Fraternity  
Should Consider Becoming:**

- **A school of sanctity**
- **A school of formation**
- **A witness of ecclesial communion**
- **A participant in the apostolic purpose of the Church**
- **A presence in society**



1. **A SCHOOL OF SANCTITY** –Fraternity can promote in its members full development of the interior life: an intense liturgical life, sacramental and charitable life. (**Fraternity prayer, Mass, LOH, retreats, days of recollection.**)
2. **A SCHOOL OF FORMATION** - the spirit of belonging is nurtured in the measure of which the Rule becomes the "life" of the brothers and of the sisters. It will assure a kind of "assimilation" of the spirit of the Rule in the life and in the history of each person. Those who are assiduous readers of the writings of Francis and of Clare and of the ancient biographies will be strengthened in their Franciscan identity. Therefore, Secular Franciscans should regularly read spiritual readings from the Sources;
3. **A WITNESS OF ECCLESIAL COMMUNION** It is essential that everyone make the decision to make himself/herself present in the life of the brothers and sisters: rejoicing with those who participate, being mindful of those that do not come, trying to find the reasons for which someone has lost the motivation. In order to promote the desire to gather in fraternity, **the Council should look for and plan meetings that are pleasant, productive and enriching;**
4. A **PARTICIPANT IN THE APOSTOLIC PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH** –**Rule recommends to us to be creative in our apostolic activity—examine our ministries.** Society has changed, the Church has renewed itself and is renewing itself again. The Gospel is always the same, but new approaches and new encounters with the Gospel and history are necessary;
5. A **PRESENCE IN SOCIETY,** in the light of the social doctrine of the Church – Every Fraternity should question its priorities in its own missionary commitment.

## **ASK YOURSELF:**

- **How am I brought closer to God through my profession?**
- **What is my commitment to the fraternity/region?**
- **Why is fraternity an important part of my life?**
- **How do I participate in the mission of my fraternity, the mission of the Order, the mission of the Church?**

## Be Reminded of these Resources

- ***The Secular Franciscan Order for an Evangelizing Mission Together with all the Franciscan Family.*** (Benedetto Lino, OFS, at the First International Congress for Missions and Evangelization-OFM-2014)
- ***How Should An Order Like the OFS Be Managed at All Its Levels?*** (Benedetto Lino, OFS, XIV General Chapter—November 2014)
- ***Belonging to the SFO*** (Emmanuela DeNunzio, OFS, General Chapter 2008)