Franciscan Journey
Fraternity Life
Chapter 30
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Local Fraternity

- Established Canonically
- Basic Unit of Whole Order
- Visible Sign of Church
- Community of Love
- Privileged Place – develop sense of Church & Franciscan Vocation & for enlivening the life of its members (Rule 22)
RULE 22

- **Canonical Establishment**
  - Belongs to the competent religious major superior at request of brothers & sisters concerned
  - Must have consulted and collaborated council which fraternity will be related
  - Necessary to have written consent of local Ordinary for canonical establishment outside the houses or churches of the Franciscan religious of the First Order or the TOR
  - Valid establishment must have at least 5 perpetually professed members (Constitution, art. 46.1, 46.2)
Fraternity - Primary Cell

- Entrusted to pastoral care of the religious Franciscan Order that canonically established it.
- May pass to care of another religious Franciscan Order - (determined by national statutes)
  - Cessation of a fraternity - patrimonial goods, library & records are acquired by the fraternity of the immediate higher level.
  - Revival of fraternity –repossess any remaining good, its own library & records (Constitutions – art.48.1, 48.2)
- A fraternity is subject to vigilance of the local Ordinary (Bishop) insofar as to apostolic activates within the local churches (Cf. OFS Rule - #6) National Statutes (USA- art.16.3)
Local Fraternity Is Foundation

- Where the “Spirit of Francis” finds its most basic experience
- Foundation of what is done regionally, nationally or internationally
- This is the reason that the **FORMATION PROCESS is so vital at the local fraternity level**
- To process people who lack an understanding of our way of life is ridiculous
- Regional Councils through visitations help to evaluate the local fraternity’s Franciscan life
Developing a Sense of Church & Franciscan Vocation

**International Chapter**
- Held every 3 years
- Elections every 6 years
- Representatives of OFS Catholic Fraternities around the world
- Provides direction, guidance for leadership, formation, other issues to create a sense of unity for OFS
- Collaborates with CNSA

**National/Regional Chapters**
- Held every 3 years
- Elections every 3 years
- Representatives from every national region
- Or at regional level – every fraternity within the region
- Conducts business of area they represent
- Implements direction from higher level
- Essential strong initial and ongoing formation
- Ensures Franciscan Life & Values
- Community sharing, love
- Collaborates with International Presidency
- Issues related to Vatican, various congregations (Cf OFS Rule #6, National Statutes (USA) – art. 16.3)
- Elected every 3 years
- Communicates & Implements direction of higher level (constitution art. 48.1-48.2)
- Conducts business, Works to ensue Franciscan life of Region/Fraternity
- Conducts & implements business of Order
- Shares, troubleshoots
- Elected every 3 years
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Establishing a New Fraternity

Emerging Fraternity
Must have a sponsoring fraternity
- Member from emerging group is non-voting liaison on sponsoring fraternity’s council
- Contact made with Provincial of 1st Order or TOR to which emerging fraternity will be bonded –
  - Once this occurs a spiritual assistant is appointed to assist emerging group
  - Sponsoring fraternity conducts formation – if competent professed member in new group s/he can be invited to join the formation team

Final year of development, sponsoring fraternity – or the Regional Executive Council selects and works with a council from the new group

Canonical Establishment
- Requires permission on local Ordinary – Minister/Provincial or PSA of the province to which the fraternity is bonded
- Signs, dates four copies of the Document of Establishment - local Bishop then approve and sign
  - Copies go to: Bishop, Regional Council, local emerging fraternity and the Province to which the fraternity is bonded (Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the OFS, segment B8-B12)
Catholic Church
Institution which requires time, money and effort for maintenance
Sometimes takes a toll on the values of a community and relationships
Vatican II – focus must be on people, not buildings, committees, laws & rules

American Culture
Resistance to institution
History - freedom of the frontier
Though traditions such as; wagon trains, communal barn-raising, volunteer fire departments –
Even a frontier needed structure of some sort
Sense of endless freedom sometimes causes tension

Belonging to a Community of Believers
Gospel Living – Focus Upon Jesus

- Jesus - Model of Church leadership based upon Love
  - 3 affirmations of love from Peter (Cf. Jn 21:15-17)
- Simplicity of His relationships with disciples
- Intimacy of the Early Church as described in the Acts of the Apostles
- Structures that help to build up the bonds of Love
Church needs Institutional Framework

- Stability, continuity & mission for serving the cause of the Gospel
- Problems with institutions not argument for removal, but for renewal. (Upon this Rock – A community of love USCCB, pgs. 119-121)
- Structures support the desire to show trinitarian love in our world.
- Loyalty to the Church requires us to bring our Franciscan spirit to situations we confront within the Church
  - Respectful dialogue – seek creative ways to help
Beatitudes – Qualities of Believers

Forgiveness & Reconciliation

Leaders Role of Servant

Establish & Maintain Relationships

Relates to lepers, blind, Pharisees, tax collectors – as well as Lazarus, Mary, Martha Mary Magdalen

Crowds were fed by Jesus both spiritually and physically

Disciples appreciated Jesus acceptance of their slowness to understand
Vision Formation – Essential to OFS

- Initial & Ongoing Formation Program is linked to implementing the direction from higher councils
- Quality formation materials from and recommended by the National Formation Commission under NAFRA
- Workshops & materials provided by various levels of the OFS help formation directors & their teams – fraternities are encouraged to send formation directors to these trainings with financial assistance
Franciscan Values

- Franciscans create a caring community
  - Respect for individual dignity; hospitality; courtesy; kindness; friendship; openness; fostering loving relationships
  - Sharing, compassion for others – Serving; caring for the poor and oppressed; concern for social justice issues; taking responsible social action; offering unselfish service; altruism
  - Reverence of creation – Respect for all creatures; fostering a simple lifestyle; stewardship; human dignity and empowerment of people; concern for environmental issues
  - Peacemaking – Healing and reconciliation conflict resolution; conflict resolution; forgiveness; care and understanding; eliminating fears; recognizing the need for prayfulness (Cf. STRITCH magazine – Summer 1999, pg. 14)