VOX FRANCISCANA

Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis

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THE SPIRIT OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER

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Greetings of Joy

TIBOR KAUSER, Minister General

Dear Brothers and Sisters

May the good Lord give you his peace!

It is a really great gift of God that we were able to come together and celebrate a General Chapter after a year-long delay.

We can often appreciate things when we miss them. It was so natural that we celebrate a General Chapter every three years, and now we have to realize that everything, really everything is a gift of God. And by the grace of God, we were able to come together in Rome in November 2021.

This issue of *Vox Franciscana* is devoted to the General Chapter; and, as I told the chapter attendees, let us appreciate it, and experience it with joy and gratitude and prayer.

We dedicated the General Chapter to the topic of fraternal service, animation, leadership -- a natural culmination of the work begun in 2014, when we had discussed the question, "How can an international Order, like the OFS, be managed?"

My opening remarks were a declaration of love for our Order and for YouFra, anticipating a chapter of hard work, open dialogue and great joy.

COVER

Franciscan youth and former members of YouFra got together to express their Franciscan spirit at the General Chapter. *Photo by Robert Stronach, OFS.*

The General Chapter

More than 100 members of the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS) from around the globe arrived at the Seraphicum in Rome on Saturday, Nov. 13, for their nine-day General Chapter. Most brought hugs and smiles behind the protective face masks – happy to meet in person after the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the gathering by a year.

The delegates who comprise the International Council of the OFS (CIOFS) meet every three years, and every six years elect new servant leaders to serve on the Presidency (or international executive council). Because of the pandemic, the outgoing Presidency's term went from six years to seven.

There were many selfie moments as delegates and observers arrived at the General Chapter. Photos by Robert Stronach, OFS, unless otherwise noted.

General Chapter highlights

Mary Stronach, OFS

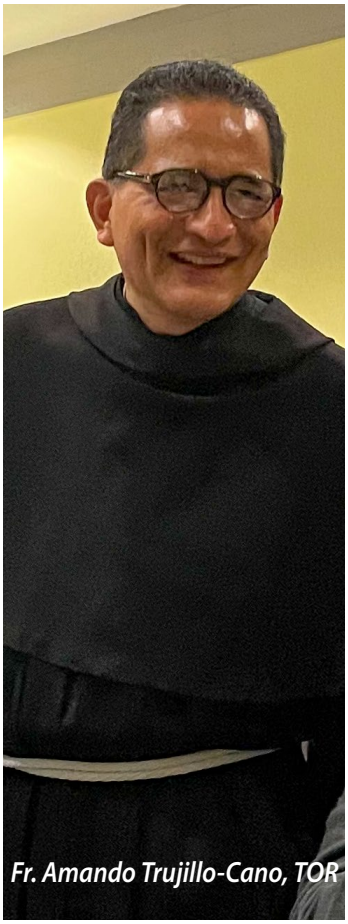
The General Chapter had several notable highlights:

• the installation of the new Presidency, with Tibor Kauser, OFS, of Hungary reelected to a second term as minister general and Mary Stronach, OFS, of the United States of America elected as the new vice minister general.

• an audience with Pope Francis, who recognized the Secular Franciscans as part of the Franciscan Family and then told them to be men and women of hope in society.

Tibor Kauser, OFS

Fr. Michael Perry, OFM


Fr. Amando Trujillo-Cano, TOR

• the presence of Franciscan friar leaders, embracing the OFS as part of the Franciscan charism. Fr. Amando Trujillo-Cano, the Third Order Regular (TOR) minister general, presided over the opening mass. Fr. Michael Perry, former OFM minister general, gave a keynote talk, insisting on the need to be "co-disciples and co-missionaries responsible for Franciscan life" and encouraging all Franciscans, religious and lay, to realize that they are the "true successors of St. Francis."

Also, Fr. Roberto Genuin, the OFMCap minister general, and Fr. Carlos Trovarelli, the OFMConv minister general, presided over masses during the week, along with friars from each order assigned to work with the OFS as General Spiritual Assistants.

In addition Fr. Massimo Fusarelli, the OFM minister general, presided over the elections and a mass of thanksgiving (held at the Basilica of Saint Sebastian in Rome).

Finally the closing mass was presided over by Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo, OFM, secretary of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life, under whose jurisdiction the Secular Franciscan Order falls.

Fr. Roberto Genuin, OFMCap.

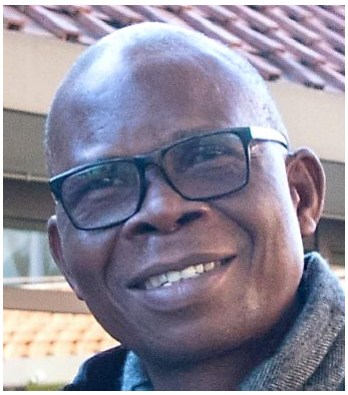
Fr. Carlos Trovarelli, OFMConv.

Fr. Massimo** (center) **with the newly elected Presidency and general spiritual assistants.

Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo, OFM

Agnes' soprano performance during the closing mass drew accolades from Archbishop Carballo. She is the wife of outgoing Presidency councilor Augustine Young Hak Yoon of South Korea.

Francis Byung Ju Park, OFS



Adolph Assagba , OFS

Eremenciana Chinyama, OFS

Dina Shabalina , OFS

Highlights

• the Chapter body approved priority actions for the next six years and gave a mandate to the Presidency to complete work on establishing permanent offices for formation, communications and JPIC (Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation).

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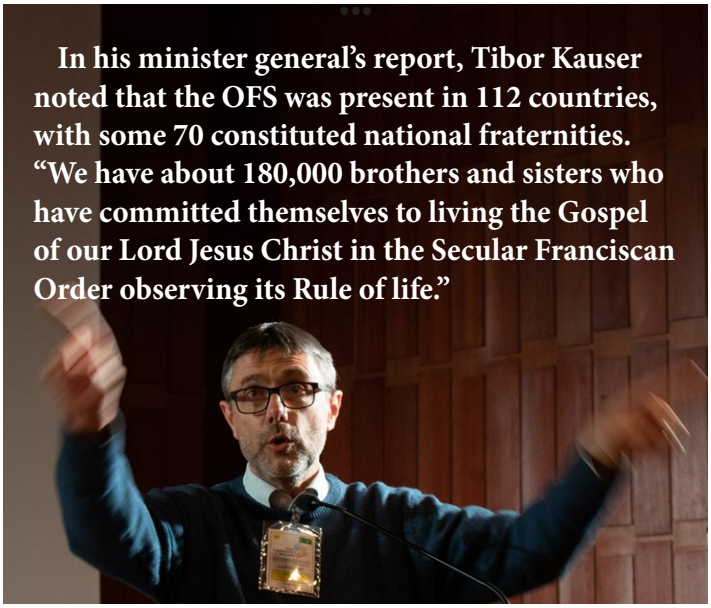
The elections also saw the installation of seven Presidency councilors serving different areas of the world, plus a Presidency councilor representing Franciscan youth (YouFra). They are:

- Francis Byung Ju Park, OFS (South Korea): Asia-Oceania.
- Adolph Assagba, OFS (Togo): Francophone Africa and islands. (Not present at the chapter.)
- Eremenciana Chinyama, OFS (Zimbabwe): English and Portuguese Speaking Africa. (Not present at the chapter.)
- Dina Shabalina, OFS (Ukraine): North Europe.
- Noemi Paola Riccardi, OFS (Italy): Southern Europe and the Mediterranean.
- Ana María Raffo, OFS (Peru): Central and North America (re-elected).
- Silvia Noemí Diana, OFS (Argentina): South America (re-elected).
- Luis Félix Chocojay Guamuch, OFS (Guatemala), YouFra.



In his minister general's report, Tibor Kauser noted that the OFS was present in 112 countries, with some 70 constituted national fraternities. "We have about 180,000 brothers and sisters who have committed themselves to living the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Secular Franciscan Order observing its Rule of life."

Noemi Paola Riccardi, OFS

Ana María Raffo, OFS

Silvia Noemí Diana, OFS

Félix Chocojay Guamuch, OFS

General Chapter Highlights

The auditorium at the Seraphicum was the main meeting room for the General Chapter. Participants donned protective masks and maintained social distance in seating due to pandemic concerns, and wielded laptops, tablets and mobile devices to conduct business as the chapter went paperless.

Over 100 Attend The XVI Chapter

A total of 57 capitulars started the work of the XVI General Chapter of the OFS on Nov. 13, with the opening mass celebrated by TOR Minister General Fr. Amando Trujillo-Cano.

The Chapter, which also involved some 40 observers and about 20 fraternal support staff, brought to a close the Presidency's six-year term (2014-2020), extended a year by the COVID-19 pandemic, and started a new six-year term (2021- 2027).

Tibor Kauser, OFS minister general, emphasized the need to deepen the Secular Franciscan identity, for which "greater spirituality and greater capacity for organization" is necessary.

He also highlighted the involvement of the CIOFS Presidency in collaborative projects around the world, especially those related to the JPIC Commission (such as Well4Africa).

Fr. Alfred Parambakathu, OFM-Conv., president of the Conference of General Spiritual Assistants (CAS), highlighted the "involvement of the First Order and the TOR in improving the assistance to the OFS", especially with the support of the four ministers general. One of the main successes was the first international formation workshop for spiritual assistants, which was attended by friars from 37 countries.

Statutes Approved 'Ad Experimentum'

The plenary assembly of the OFS General Chapter on Nov. 18 approved the modification of the International Fraternity Statutes 'ad experimentum'. Its practical application will be evaluated before making a final decision at the next General Chapter.

The purpose of the decision is to incorporate the International Statutes in situations that occur commonly in the national, regional and local fraternities and to get feedback from the fraternities to determine if the statutes will need any modification.

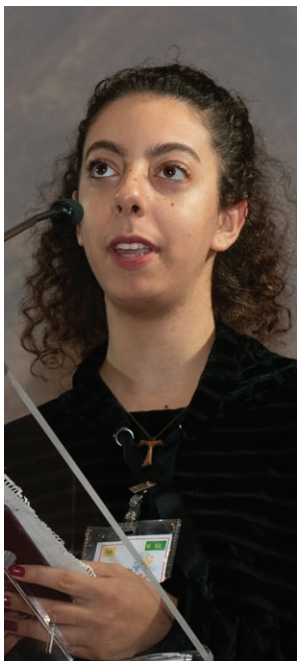
Mid-East Testimony

The Chapter experienced some of its most emotional moments Nov. 18, especially with the testimony of an OFS aspirant from Kuwait, who explained her conversion process and the reality of living in a country with no Christian tradition.

The session also included the commemoration of the 800th anniversary of Memoriale Propositi and an update on the 'Piandarca' project, highlighting the place where, according to tradition, Saint Francis preached to the birds.

Franciscan Youth

Andrea Karlović, outgoing Presidency councilor for YouFra



YOUFRA COUNCILORS: Eduardo Antonio Barrios Rodriquez, Felix Chocojay Guamuch, Juliana Kolanjian, Mario Pehar, and Elìas Joaquìn Molina *(above with guitar)*

Exuberant Youth

Franciscan Youth (YouFra councilors) brought color and excitement to the assembly as they demonstrated their skills and qualities, and shared how young people live and deepen their Christian, Franciscan and secular vocation.

Their presentation gave way to a rich debate on the ability of the OFS to transmit its charism to young people and on the incorporation of YouFra members into OFS fraternities.

Capitulars raised green cards to vote their approval.

3-Year Budget Approved

In order to carry on the work of the Order and the projects of the International Council of the OFS, the Chapter approved a budget that will increase in the next three years from 231,000 to 244,000 euros. The income comes almost entirely from fraternity contributions and donations from brothers and sisters.

The work, exchange of opinions and communication among the capitulars made it possible to provide the Presidency with a fundamental instrument to maintain the day-to-day life of the OFS and to support formation projects, promotion, development and even social justice.

Territorial Projects

The Chapter also learned the details of three territorial projects that are carried out in areas with little or scarce Christian presence, but in which the Secular Franciscan spirituality tries to shine. This is the case with the Africa Project, overseen directly by CIOFS. During the last trienniu the Presidency was able to hold the First Pan-African OFS/YouFra Congress. It continues to provide formation tools to fraternities and brothers and sisters who otherwise would have little access to them.

In the same way, the Asia-Oceania area seeks cohesion among its fraternities, despite experiencing very different realities that, however, help to enrich it.

Finally, there is the Middle East Project, in which the main challenge is to live the Christian vocation in isolated communities and in environments that are sometimes very hostile. The project includes the development of fraternities in Arab nations and in the Holy Land (Nazareth and Bethlehem, which have difficulty maintaining contact with each other due to the political situation in their area).

FROM MOSCOW TO ROME

Julia Sineva began her Franciscan journey six years ago. She was professed just a month prior to being thrust onto the international scene as the delegate-observer from the emerging National Fraternity of Russia. Being young in Moscow's only local fraternity (the Moscow Franciscan Community) put her in the national spotlight, and being the only one on the national council to have a pandemic "green pass", put her on the road to the General Chapter.

With 15 members, her fraternity is the only canonically established one. There are several small groups of three and four people that they hope will emerge as local fraternities.

She says it was thrilling to observe the work of the chapter, mingle with brothers and sisters from around the world, and visit the Vatican. Her heart "was bursting" with joy. Interestingly, when asked what inspired her the most, she pointed to the chapter's Adoration hour – in quiet contemplation in a chapel heavily sprinkled with attendees (praying for a Spirit-filled election the following day).

Order sets priorities for next 6 years

Chelito presents summary of conclusive document with Jane and Michel looking on.

The General Chapter concluded its work on Sunday, Nov. 21, with delegates approving priority actions for the next six years as well as giving a mandate to their international leaders to complete the work of establishing permanent offices for formation, communications and JPIC (Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation).

The priorities are:

• Formation, with special attention to fostering servant leadership as well as continued training of Spiritual Assistants with an additional emphasis for non-Franciscan religious who have accepted the request to serve when First Order and TOR friars are not available.

• Franciscan Youth, with the OFS embracing them on their Franciscan journey.

• Finances, with the yearly reporting of the financial status of the order.

• Communications, with more sharing of information internally as well as outreach to the public via a gamut of media outlets. This also recognizes that the promotion of vocations should take center stage in the communications department.

The conclusive document approved by the Chapter body was prepared by a special committee comprised of immediate past Vice Minister General María Consuelo de Nuñez (Chelito), OFS, of Venezuela; Michel Versteegh, OFS, of the Netherlands, and Jane Derose Bamman, OFS, of the United States of America.

A STAND AGAINST INJUSTICE ATTRACTED HIM

When Catholic leaders spoke out against injustice during military rule in South Korea in the 1980s, Francis Byung Ju Park took note of the fact that his own Protestant church was silent.

That led him to look into the Catholic Church. He and his Buddhist wife decided to convert, and at the same time they discovered the Secular Franciscan Order. Francis went on to hold leadership positions on the regional and national levels, which led him to the General Chapter as Korea's international councilor. Then he found himself being nominated and elected to the position of Presidency councilor representing Asia-Oceania.

Francis earned a medical doctor's degree, went into medical research, and now is a professor at Jeonnam National University Dental School.

FIRST-CLASS FRANCISCANS

As participants arrived at the General Chapter, animated conversations permeated the facility with groups of two and three and four delegates, observers and friars congregating throughout the large foyer. After filing into the dining hall, lunch featured the flavors of diverse conversations, too.

For example, the topic of young members and the Franciscan charism occupied the exchange at one table.

Two representatives from Eastern Europe were asked, as younger women, what attracted them to the OFS.

"Franciscans live such a simple life," replied Julia from the emerging National Fraternity of Russia.

"People need to feel love," added Virginija of Lithuania. "...Young people look for it."

Conn from Ireland piped up: "That's Gospel love."

"It's love in action," said Pepe from Puerto Rico, to which Conn added: "Charity is love in action."

"Exactly," Pepe said.

Conn continued: "Love is a supernatural gift," and it's in the "Franciscan charism, with the program given to us 800 years ago." There's no need to change it to attract youth, he said.

"Love in action," Pepe repeated.

Another person wondered: "I can feel love. How do I manifest it, how do I put it into action?"

Said Pepe: "When I live the Franciscan charism, I can more easily put love into action."

Mary, an interpreter from the USA, said she likes to say that the spirit of Francis, or Franciscanism, "is in our DNA" as Secular Franciscans.

Conn put a different spin on the OFS identity: "We're Third Order but we're not third class. We're first-class Franciscans."

Chapter participants were constantly snapping pictures inside and outside the Vatican on the day they had an audience with Pope Francis. The only place they were not allowed to take photos was during their time with the pope, where the Vatican photographer took official photos.

Visit to Vatican

Pope Francis: Be Men and Women of Hope

"Let the Gospel, that is, Jesus Himself, shape your life," Pope Francis told General Chapter participants in a private audience at the Vatican on Nov. 15. "In this way you will take on poverty, minority and simplicity as your distinguishing marks before all."

"With this Franciscan and secular identity of yours," he said, "you are part of the outbound church. Your favourite place is to be in the midst of the people, and there…to give witness to Jesus with a simple life, without pretension, always content to follow the poor and crucified Christ, as did Saint Francis and so many men and women of your Order".

"And may you be men and women of hope, committed to living it and also to 'organising' it, translating it into real everyday situations, in human relations, in social and political engagement; nurturing hope in tomorrow by alleviating the pain of today."

Photo by Fra Adriano Appollonio

A Day to Remember

by MARY STRONACH, OFS

On Monday morning, November 15, one hundred Chapter participants woke up anticipating another day of work and adventure. Their morning agenda featured a forty-minute trip on three busses though the winding streets of Rome, with an amazing view of Roman ruins and medieval sculptures.

After arriving at the Vatican, they found that they would have to go up approximately 300 winding steps and go through halls covered with Renaissance art. The journey, however, was not to provide an intense cardiac experience, nor to study the art and architecture. And, despite their huffing and puffing, nothing else mattered; they had entered the vast room where Pope Francis would meet them for a private audience. That room was Clementine Hall, also smothered with wall and ceiling art.

In the front rows with Minister General Tibor Kauser and his wife Agnes were members of the Presidency Council, the General Spiritual Assistants and the CIOFS volunteers, spouses and staff. After being given the protocol to be followed, the Pope's staff, dressed in dark suits and tuxedoes, ensured that all was set for the Pope's entrance. The photographer and cinematographer were in place, the OFS group was given instructions: only applaud when the Pope enters and leaves, no shouting greetings like "viva il papa." And, "You may remove your masks."

Once the Pope entered and sat at his papal chair, Tibor shared the Secular Franciscan story and charism. Seculars in the room who were able to understand the Italian experienced joy, pride, a true sense of belonging, a realization that our Order held importance in the church, and with that importance, also came responsibility – to be witnesses in the world, to bring the Gospel to life and life to the Gospel. He closed with the moving words: "We are convinced that this way of life, for which God has called on us, is a beautiful life, and our vocation is a grace and a privilege. We must be grateful for this call from God and do our best to live accordingly. For this we must always keep in mind what St. Francis said in the last days: 'Let us begin, brothers, to serve the Lord God, because so far we have made little or no profit!'" (1 Cel. 103).

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VATICAN NEWS

POPE VATICAN CHURCH WORLD

Pope Francis meets with members of the Secular Franciscan Order (Vatican Media)

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The Pope spoke to the Assembly next. His message resounded with a call for the Secular Franciscans to be witnesses in the world, to bring the message of Christ's love and then, he said, "I remind you of Francis' desire that the entire family remain united, certainly with respect for the diversity and autonomy of its various components and also of each member. But always in a lively mutual communion, to dream together a world in which we are all, and all feel, that we are brothers, and working together to build it (cf. Encyclical Letter Fratelli tutti, 8): men and women who fight for justice, and who work for an integral ecology, collaborating in missionary projects and making yourselves artisans of peace and witnesses to the Beatitudes."

To everyone's surprise, a private audience this time actually meant an individual greeting – hearts started beating harder as the anticipation grew. And we had been provided some specific instructions: The Vatican staff reminded us that the Pope is a man just like all others and didn't need any special treatment (easy for them to say; they see him every day). But, they prepared us: "When you go to meet the Pope, do not kiss his ring, do not kneel. You may say something briefly, shake the Pope's hand and then move on."

As we waited our turn to meet Pope Francis, we kept asking ourselves, "what would we say?" My husband's simple words put my thoughts to rest: "Your holiness, we're celebrating 50 years of marriage this year."

The pope's face lit up with a smile and he gave us a personal blessing. As we moved on, the papal assistant gave each of us a blessed rosary as a memento. But, more than that, each of us had our own moment. Our own special memory which we will always carry in our hearts… and, thanks to the papal photographer, even our own individual photo with the pope.

Our faith, our spiritual journey, our secular Franciscan charism were lifted to a new level of commitment on that beautiful day. We were Secular Franciscans and WE had met the Pope. He spoke with us as his brothers and sisters. He reached out, asking for our support to care for the Church, God's people, and God's creation. If we didn't know it before, we knew it then.

An historic event for the OFS

by ATTILIO GALIMBERTI, OFS

We often do not realize that we have just experienced a historic event until after the wave of emotions has washed over us. This is what it was like for the members of the General Chapter of the OFS and the Franciscan Youth in November 2021

Article 1 of our Rule states, among other things, that the Franciscan Family unites all members of the People of God -- laity, religious and priests -- who recognize that they are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi.

Following in these footsteps, 812 years after Francis and his first companions went to Rome to Pope Honorius III to be confirmed in their choice of life, the members of the OFS from throughout the world, gathered in Rome in their General Chapter, returned to the Lord Pope Francis on 15 November 2021, for a private audience which will undoubtedly be a significant event in our Order's journey.

In comparing this meeting with what the Franciscan sources tell us about that meeting more than 800 years ago, it is no surprise that we can find many similarities.

Back then Francis went to the Pope to receive confirmation of the model of evangelical life that he planned to lead, and which responded to the model preached by the Church, and therefore to receive his *beneplacit* to live it. Today, the minister general of the OFS, Tibor Kauser, in his greeting, reconfirmed the commitment of the members of the Order "to live in full communion with the Pope, the bishops and priests, in a trusting and open dialogue of apostolic creativity" (cf. OFS Rule, Art.6) being present and available where no one else is ready to serve, "in the hospitals, parishes, on the streets, in homes for the elderly, helping and serving the poor, but poor themselves, at the side of the infirm, although sometimes being infirm themselves". He also mentioned that we too, members of the OFS, "seek to respect and protect creation, nature, and every human life throughout its course"

The Holy Father's reply, following some general thoughts on the lay vocation that is born of the universal call to holiness, entered the specific nature of what it is to be a Secular Franciscan. For a Secular Franciscan

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Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, addresses Pope Francis.

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the call to holiness brings, according to the words of Pope Francis, "a conversion of heart attracted to Him who is the only Holy One, who is 'the Good, All Good, the Highest Good'. … This is what makes you penitents. In his Letter to All the Faithful, St. Francis presents doing penance as a journey of conversion, a journey of Christian life committed to doing the will and the deeds of the Heavenly Father".

In the process of conversion, the Holy Father reminds us, it is God who takes the initiative and leads the penitent to places where he or she may have never wanted to go, and if he or she let themselves be led and agree to place themselves at the service of others, doing mercy with them, the result is happiness (cf. the Testament of St. Francis where he speaks of the lepers)

"This", the Pope stated, "is what I urge you to bring about in your life and mission," without confusing "doing penance" with the "works of penance".

After having invited those present to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the heart of the Franciscan charism, to follow it *sine glossa* and making it their form of life, he concluded this passage stating that "in this way it will be the Gospel, or rather Jesus Himself, who will shape your lives in such a way that you can take on poverty, minority and simplicity as your distinctive signs before all."

The next passage of his address is what marks what I have called a historic event because in it Pope Francis actualizes the mandate that the Rule and Constitutions give to all the professed members, but which we always tend to underappreciate and esteem.

In the previous passage he had invited us to follow the Gospel and recalled what our distinctive signs should be. Now he tells us (and his words are sweet but strong if taken *sine glossa*):

"With your Franciscan and secular identity, you are part of the 'outgoing Church'. Your preferred place is among people and there, as lay men and women, celibate or married,

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priests and bishops, each according to his or her specific vocation, to bear witness to Jesus with a simple life, a life without pretense, always content to follow the poor and crucified Christ …. I encourage you, too, to go out to the margins, today's existential margins, and to help the Word of the Gospel resound there… and like the fraternities of penitents who characteristically founded hospitals, dispensaries, soup kitchens and other concrete works, …so too the spirit is sending you today to exercise the same charity with the creativity required by the new forms of poverty. … And may you be men and women of hope committed to living and organizing it, translating it into everyday concrete situations, in human relationships, in social and political involvement… living in fraternity and realizing that you are part of the great Franciscan family".

Conversion, following the Gospel *sine glossa*, bearing witness in concrete situations, men and women of hope, social commitment… how many times we spoke of these in our formation meetings, in our gatherings, but unfortunately, perhaps all too often they remained as a topic of discussion without these words and all they express becoming action or, to put it in Franciscan terminology, "becoming flesh"….

The Holy Father, certainly enlightened by the Spirit, read our hearts and, in a few words, reconfirmed what should be the life's program of all Secular Franciscans: let actions follow your words, and he specified what our role in the Church today should be, because this is what the Church needs from Secular Franciscans.

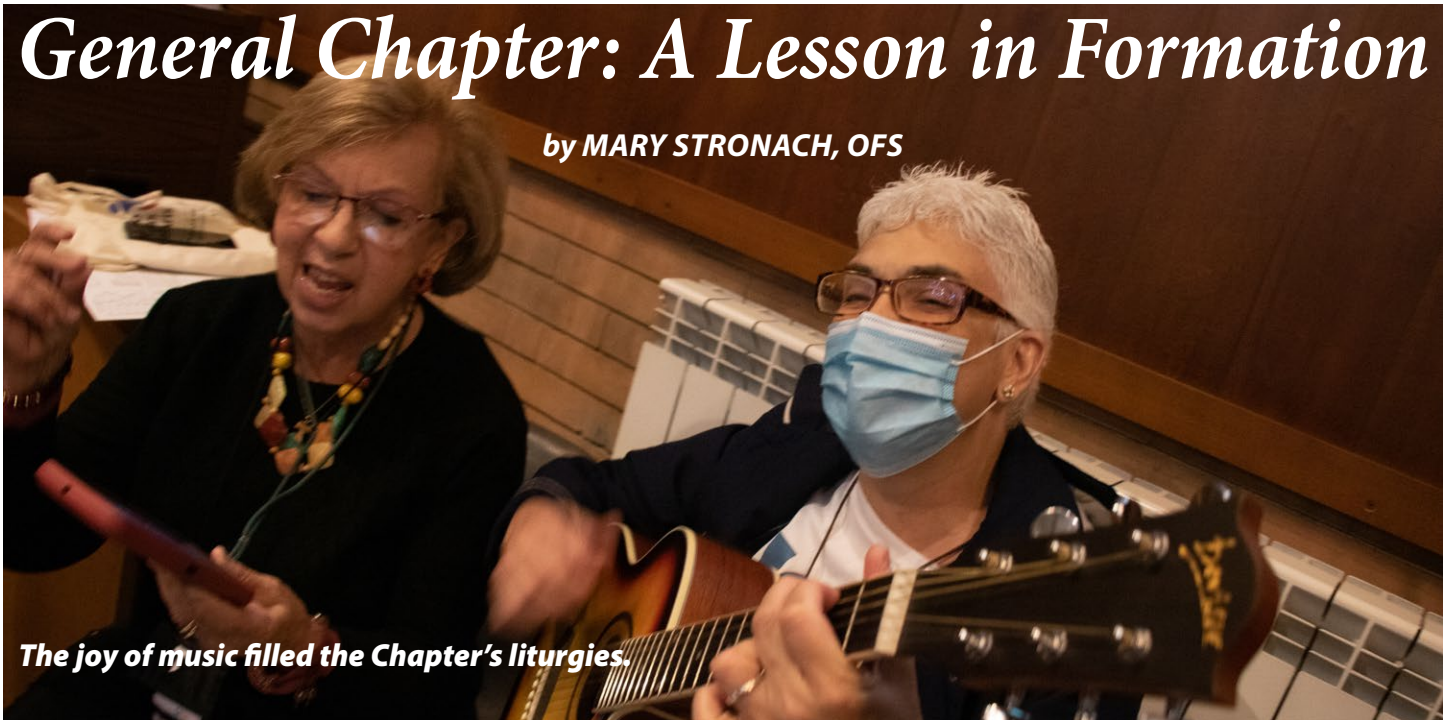
It is for these reasons that I consider this meeting "historic", which takes us beyond the joy of having experienced the emotion of a private Papal audience.

So, "let us be led" where God wants us to be. And the priorities expressed a few days later by the General Chapter lead us in this direction.

And now: "Let us begin, brothers, to serve the Lord God" and do what the Pope has told us to do, "for up to now we have done little or nothing" (cf. 1. Cel 103) and whatever the Lord tells us is our part (not through some extraordinary communication but simply through the situations in which we find ourselves living, in the persons we meet, with their needs and their gifts, and the voice of our Councils at every level and aided by the altius moderamen of our Spiritual Assistants.)

General Chapter: A Lesson in Formation

by MARY STRONACH, OFS



The joy of music filled the Chapter's liturgies.

The General Chapter provided a clear outline for those of us who are planning a national or regional chapter or a chapter of elections. It is worth reviewing the steps we should take to ensure a blessed and productive gathering.

Pre-event

• Set the date, time and location. Cost and distance for all brothers and sisters, of course, will be factors which should be considered.

• Send a reminder to all ministers and guests and ask them to respond as soon as possible whether they are going to be present or if they will send a delegate. Ideally, all fraternities should have a delegate present to ensure full participation.

• If the meeting will include a fraternal/pastoral visitation or elections, we must request a representative from the higher level who will oversee the process.

Ingredients

The ingredients of most annual meetings include a theme, prayer and formation, and business.

THEME: Determine a theme for the gathering to help the brothers and sisters focus on the direction that the meeting will take – as far as priorities or a vision for the Order.

PRAYER AND FORMATION: As a religious order, we must prepare spiritually for this most important meeting. Our spiritual assistants and formation team should be able to assist with this aspect.

BUSINESS OF THE ORDER:

• The Regional or National Minister should be prepared to provide a review of state of the Order, how the Order has done in the past year, and remind attendees of the Interna-

Reporting on the state of the Order is an essential ingredient of a chapter.

tional priorities and priorities at the regional/national level. Have we been working on these priorities? Have we been providing care for our brothers and sisters, ensuring proper formation? What are the many joys that the Order has experienced at this level? Are there problems and issues that need to be addressed? In closing, the Minister should, after discussing with his/her council, begin to establish a vision for the future. Do we need to work more on formation? How about outreach for vocations or our aging members? Do we need to work more on communications? How can we address problems and issues facing the Order at this level?

- The treasurer should report on finances and prepare a budget. Have our brothers and sisters been able to provide support for the Order at this level? Are there other financial hurdles or blessings that need to be addressed? The Treasurer should present a reasonable budget for the next year, based on expected revenue from contributions and other possible income.
- A keynote presenter who will focus on the theme of the meeting.
- Time should be allotted for the brothers and sisters to discuss in small groups, if pos-

sible, the information provided in the State of the Order Address, priorities, and the Financial Report and budget. And then to present their findings and suggested action items. They may want to make formal proposals which could be discussed with the whole assembly.

• A time for the brothers and sisters to enjoy each other's company – to share, to laugh, to engage in dialogue pertinent to them.

• A celebratory closing liturgy.

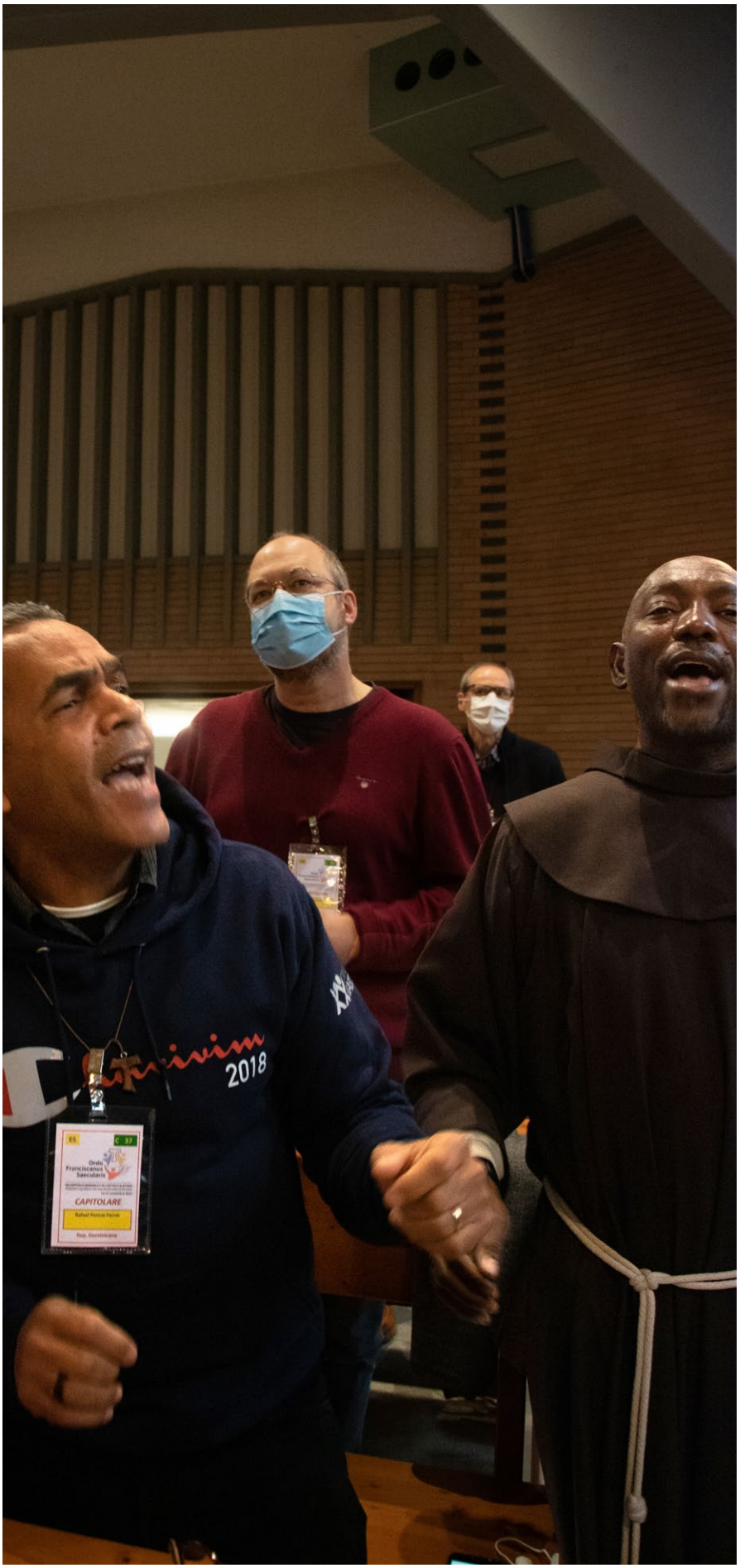
Elections

For chapters of elections, it is essential that the council inform all fraternity members that nominations are open and that members are invited to nominate an individual for an office. Please review your statutes and the General Constitutions for guidelines on who is eligible. Once someone has accepted a nomination, he/she should also provide a brief biography. Once the list is compiled of all nominees thus far, it should be sent to all the delegates for review. There will also be an opportunity for nominations from the floor during the chapter of elections.

The presider and spiritual assistant who come from the higher level council will direct the activities during the elections. Just be prepared with the ballots, board/computer screen, ritual, statutes and constitutions for review if there are any questions.

Essence of the Order

While all this may seem very dry, the essence is to ensure an Order which is based on respect and consideration of all the members, an Order which is based on an organization which ensures transparency on how the Order functions, establishes trust and, most importantly, provides an opportunity for dialogue which brings as its center a possibility for spiritual growth, following Jesus in the footsteps of St. Francis.



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