

September 2, 2019

Sisters and Brothers, may the Lord grant you peace!

Fifty-five of us journeyed to St Louis in our country's heartland. In three days came the answer why we gathered: that we as, Franciscans, might serve the Church and the Church's mission, better. Franciscan leadership of the Friars and Seculars arrived to discuss and discern how to live and move and have our being in "Life-Giving Union," members all in the Franciscan Family. With passion and the flame of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, our future, more than ever, is dependent on this vital reciprocity.

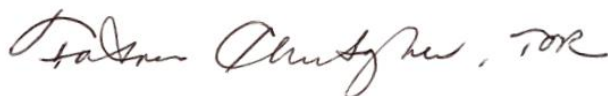
As our keynote speaker, we were privileged to have Father Michael Higgins, T.O.R., the Eighth President of the Franciscan School of Theology, University of San Diego. With the affection for the OFS as a "tertiary," Mike served in Rome for six years as Vicar General of the T.O.R. Franciscans and as General Spiritual Assistant for the Seculars. He also served for six years as Minister General of the T.O.R. Friars.

Those attending: four Provincial Ministers O.F.M., one former Provincial Minister Capuchin (via email), ten Friar delegates of the Provincial, twenty-five Regional Spiritual Assistants, ten members of the National Executive Council, two attendants and the members of the CNSA.

In this past year, you helped the CNSA to fashion this event by voicing your desires and concerns. Father Mike, together with Benedetto Lino, O.F.S., grouped these topics into categories and the CNSA developed them into focus statements that gave rise to his two keynote presentations, the *Altius Moderamen* and *Co-responsibility*, the manner in which our service to the Church is understood. His presentation is available on the web: [www.secularfranciscanusa.org](http://www.secularfranciscanusa.org). Father Mike and Ben answered all the topics that were submitted. Their response to the topics can be accessed below, together with other links from the event.

A true "family" gathering, a dream of many sunsets, now a reality. I am particularly grateful to the CNSA Friars and staff for their direction and insights, and their coordination of details. From these three days a new light has dawned. Let our prayers in the days ahead be joined to those of Mary, Mother of God, and to our holy patrons, Francis and Clare, Louis and Elizabeth. In the blessed words of St Clare, I pray:

*"What you hold may you always hold.  
What you do, may you always do and never abandon.  
But with swift pace, light step and unswerving feet,  
so that even your steps stir up no dust,  
go forward, the Spirit of our God has called you."*



Father Christopher Panagoplos, T.O.R.  
CNSA