



{OFS-USA}

NATIONAL FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER-USA

NATIONAL MINISTER'S MESSAGE

by Jane DeRose-Bamman OFS

Have you heard the adage: "If everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority?"¹

Of course, we don't profess to live one article of the Rule at a time. But like the liturgical seasons, or the feast days, it does help to focus on one facet to deepen our understanding of it. We focus on one aspect while still applying the other aspects of our faith and Rule each day.

At many elective chapters, the National Fraternity Council sets priorities for the new National Executive Council (NEC). In October 2022, the National Fraternity Council (NEC members, 30 Regional Ministers and Conference of National Spiritual Assistants) voted on the priorities for the next three years: **Vocations, Communications and Relationships**.

A few hours after we set the priorities, I was elected OFS-USA National Minister. Seeing that I had the pleasure of serving the OFS-USA on the Vocations Committee for several years, I found the priorities to be very fitting. This article focuses on Vocations. Future articles will address Communications and Relationships.

During my tenure on the Vocations Committee, I worked with many others to come up with tools and ideas for sharing our love for our vocation and how to get the word out about the Order. (See the national website for the Vocations Tool Kit, brochures, Vocation Prayer cards, Testimonials, Elevator Speeches.)

Many of us are lifelong Catholics. What was your reaction when you first heard about the Secular Franciscan Order? Did you respond: "I wonder why I never heard of it before?" The same thing happened to me as a young adult living in Chicago. This reaction should be the exception.

Article 45 of the *OFS General Constitutions* charges us individually and as councils to promote vocations.

Are you convinced of the validity of the Franciscan way of life? If so, your enthusiasm should be contagious. I challenge each member of OFS-USA to meditate on why we became Secular Franciscans in the first place. Then, give serious thought to why the Order is special in our lives. Once we have thought and prayed about our own commitment, we will be ready to talk about our vocation to others. We will be ready to "spread the word" and the joy of following Jesus in the footsteps of St. Francis.² Who knows how many hearts we will touch?

General Constitutions Article 45

1. The promotion of vocations to the Order is a duty of all the brothers and sisters and is a sign of the vitality of the fraternities themselves. The brothers and sisters, convinced of the validity of the Franciscan way of life, should pray that God may give the grace of the Franciscan vocation to new members.
2. Although nothing can substitute for the witness of each member and of the fraternity, the councils must adopt appropriate means to promote the Secular Franciscan vocation.

¹ I can't really find who penned that saying....but I know our sister, Mary Bittner, OFS, (former National Vice Minister), has shared it many times in the last few years during NEC meetings or OFS-USA National Fraternity Chapters.

² Article 6 of OFS Rule: "...Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words..."

