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**National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order**

**USA**

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR/GUEST EDITORIAL**

 **For immediate publication**

 **(Insert name)**

 **(Insert address)**

 **(Insert phone number)**

 **(Insert e-mail)**

**Note to media:** My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I am the regional minister of (insert name of region) of the Secular Franciscan Order which covers (list areas). I recently attended the Annual Chapter for The Secular Franciscan Order for the United States in Corpus Christi, TX. In response to the divisions in our country, the body developed a position statement. I ask you to consider using it as a **Letter to the Editor or Guest Editorial**. ***(****The Secular Franciscan Order is a community of Catholic men and women in the world who seek to pattern their lives after Jesus in the spirit of Francis of Assisi who founded the Order 800 years ago.)*

**OFS-USA NATIONAL CHAPTER 2019 STATEMENT**

We, the members of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, gathered for our Annual Chapter at the Pax Christi Liturgical Retreat Center in Corpus Christi, Texas, October 15-20, 2019. Approximately 80 leaders and observers were present, representing over 12,000 members throughout the United States, including Guam.

The human family today is beset with violence and division. Good people fear and distrust one another. Many of us struggle to see the bright spots amid so much suffering. It is easy to fall into a sense that things aren’t getting better, but we live by a story that shows they can.

In medieval Italy, there were once two idealistic young people named Francis and Clare. Their world was filled with violence, turmoil and upheaval. The city-states were at war, the nobles and the merchant class at odds, and civil and church authorities were also in conflict. Francis and Clare of Assisi were in the midst of this fire but were not burned. They chose to lead a Christ-centered life and practiced it with fidelity, providing a visible counterpoint to the values of their age, an alternative-lived experience of love and peace. People were drawn to their simple Gospel life, and society changed for the better.

As Secular Franciscans, we are committed to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saint Francis. The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order calls us to be “bearers of peace…, and to seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.” We are called to be “messengers of perfect joy and hope to others.” (Art. 19)

It has been said there is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about. With those who care about justice and compassion, we commit ourselves to provide that counterpoint to the violence and division of this age. We gain momentum with the collective power of prayer, courageous initiatives for justice, and the lived experience of our community of love. Together, let us shine a new light of peace, one bright enough to be seen from the furthest and darkest corners.

--(Your name)

-- (Fraternity, Region)

-- (Diocese)