

Summary of Conclusive Document from XVI General Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order

At each General Chapter of the International Fraternity Council, a final Message to the Order or “Conclusive Document” is prepared summarizing the events of gathering. The complete document for the XVI General Chapter in November 2021 (9 pages) may be viewed at: <https://ciofs.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/EN-XVI-General-Chapter-Conclusive-document.pdf>

Below is a synopsis of the Conclusive Document.

The theme for this Chapter was: “Animate and Guide with Servant Leadership.” In preparation, the Presidency issued the Instrumentum Laboris in 2020 which described various aspects and offered proper tools for successful “animation of fraternity” (GG.CC. 31.2). (<https://secularfranciscansusa.org/ongoing-formation-resources/>)

Summary statistics:

- The Secular Franciscan Order is present in 112 countries (70 constituted national fraternities, 18 emerging national fraternities and 24 countries with a special kind of Secular Franciscans presence).
- 173,719 members as of September 2021.
- YouFra has about 50,000 members in 34 constituted, 28 emerging national fraternities and 13 presences.

There are several commissions that support the Presidency: Communications, JPIC, Family, Juridical and Patrimonial, Formation, Franciscan Youth and Economic.

The General Minister’s report and Treasurer’s reports were approved with some recommendations. The capitulants requested that the financial report be made available at least several months prior to Chapter to allow for greater time for consideration and that the Presidency provide annual correlating budget figures and actual incomes and costs.

Chapter participants participated in a private audience with Pope Francis. Our General Minister, Tibor Kauser, greeted the Holy Father with a message and asked the Holy Father to bless and pray for all Secular Franciscans promising that he will be in the prayers of all brothers and sisters. The Holy Father addressed the visitors. The Holy Father encouraged those in attendance to “go out to the existential peripheries of today, and there to make the word of the Gospel resound, as did, among others, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, your Patroness. May you be men and women of hope, committed to living it and also to “organizing” 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.” Each Chapter participant personally greeted the Holy Father with a handshake.

Former Minister General, Br. Michael Perry, OFM, presented on Servant Leadership. Reflecting on the 800th anniversary of Memoriale Propositi (1221), he commented that this commemoration was an opportunity to renew our commitment “to live passionately and prophetically your Franciscan vocation.” Br. Michael suggested focusing on three aspects:

1. Being an Order with the associated rights, dignity and obligations.

2. Being a fraternity of sisters and brothers of penance called to live and cultivate our spiritual lives together.
3. Being a missionary fraternity.

Capitulants had also the opportunity to hear a presentation from the General Vice-Minister Chelito Núñez together with Fr. Fernando Ventura, OFM Cap, regarding the Special Synod 2021 - 2023, encouraging all Seculars Franciscans to participate through their parishes, in the preparatory works.

Elective Chapter. The capitulants elected the members of the Presidency for a term 2021-2026. Tibor Kausar OFS was re-elected General Minister and Mary Stronach was elected Vice-General Minister. Ana Raffo Laos (Peru) was elected Presidency Councilor for Central and North America.

Memoriale Propositi. On Friday morning, Fr. Carlos Trovarelli, OFM Conv, Minister General of the Conventuals, celebrated the Eucharist to conclude the celebratory year of the 800th anniversary of this document helping us continue to reflect on this part of our Order's history.

YouFra. The YouFra representatives used the colours of the picture of St. Francis by Cimabue as the theme of their creative presentation with cameo appearances regarding their activities over the last years. After the presentation, the capitulants discussed expectations between OFS and YouFra in both ways. Especially the step from YouFra to OFS was discussed.

Decisions made during the Chapter:

A. Geographic Areas of Responsibility for Presidency Councilors. The Presidency shared experiences with the geographic area assignments. There have been challenges due to wide distances even if there are no language barriers. The Presidency proposed a different grouping for the seven (7) geographic areas. In addition to reducing costs, the benefits for most of the areas are the similarity of cultures and language along with proximity. The Capitulants approved changing the areas as follows and Presidency councilors were elected accordingly:

1. Northern Europe
2. Southern Europe & Mediterranean
3. South America
4. Central and North America
5. French-speaking Africa and Islands
6. English-Portuguese speaking Africa
7. Asia-Oceania

B. Statutes of the International Fraternity. The Capitulants approved revisions to the Statutes of the International Fraternity (FIOFS) as a try-out version ("ad experimentum"). The Presidency asks the National Councils to report on any problem they experience when putting the Statutes into practice. Input is requested by August 31, 2023.

C. Triennial Budget. The triennial budget was approved after much discussion regarding the proposed income accounts and amounts specified. The Presidency agreed to send an annual financial report to the National Fraternities including the detailed budget requests for the new Secretariats (Formation, JPIC and Communications), together with the request for paying the annual contribution. Contributions per

nation range from zero to 33,175 Euros per year. The allocation is much higher for fraternities in wealthier countries. The Presidency stated that the majority of funding for the three new Secretariats and YouFra must be through voluntary contributions. National Fraternities are encouraged to make separate contributions for those priorities.

D. Priorities. The following priorities were adopted for the 2022-2024. Many relate to the OFS-USA priorities:

1. Implementation of New Secretariats (Formation; Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC); and Communications). Put into operation the Secretariats, according to the decisions of the General Chapter 2017.
2. Formation. Unanimous discussion on the importance of formation. Some expressed need to prepare material in easy to understand language (non academic). Many expressed the need for materials on the following topics:
 - a. Servant Leadership. Suggestions to share tools from Instrumentum Laboris and Br Michael's talk. There was a suggestion to create a grant fund to support various actions.
 - b. Vocation. Suggestions to offer tools for discernment and ways to promote vocation to the OFS.
 - c. Financial. Include information on fraternity finances in all formation materials.
 - d. Family life. Continue the work of the family commission providing materials to promote values of family life, helping us to become effective witnesses that affirm the dignity of all human life from the moment of conception to the end, as a gift from God.
3. Finances. The Presidency should convene a commission of OFS-members with experience and expertise in finances and budgets. This commission will work together with the General Treasurer and can study the financial numbers and is allowed and invited to ask all relevant questions.
4. Communications. Make an optimal use of social media to spread personal communication between brothers and sisters around the world, as a way to mutual animation.
5. YouFra. The presence of YouFra at this General Chapter is a witness of the importance the OFS attached to YouFra. When possible, youth members should be involved in the Formation, Finances and Communications groups/secretariats.
6. Spiritual Assistance. Promote that Spiritual Assistants use the tools from the 2019 formation course.
7. Statistics. Carry out a real census of the OFS.
8. Existing Projects. Carry out existing Presidency projects (e.g. Africa), evaluate the process periodically and provide feedback on each other.

Mons. José Rodríguez Carballo, Secretary for the Congregation of the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic life, presided at the closing Mass, encouraging all to follow Jesus as a leader who washed his disciples' feet, as a type of authority which entails service and love to the others.