**Pastoral Visitation Report – Portiuncula OFS Fraternity**

**Bradenton, FL – February 19th, 2023**

I observed that the Portiuncula Fraternity has been living the Franciscan charism without a Spiritual Assistant for many years. The O.F.S. Constitution states that “The spiritual and pastoral care of the OFS, entrusted by the Church to the Franciscan First Order and the TOR, is the *duty, first and foremost*, of their General and Provincial Ministers.” (Art. 85, 2.) I recognize that the fraternity made efforts to secure a Spiritual Assistant from the First Order. Unfortunately, we were neither able to provide one nor offer encouragement on how to find an appropriate Spiritual Assistant.

**General state of the fraternity’s growth:**

The Portiuncula Fraternity demonstrates an eagerness to spread the Franciscan charism and values. Currently, the fraternity has new inquirers, candidates, and newly professed members. The members attend nearby parishes to invite the faithful to be part of the Franciscan family. They called it “Two by Two, as St. Francis did.”

**Quality of the fraternity’s spiritual growth and incorporation of the Franciscan charism:**

The fraternity has a strong sense of bonding and incorporating Franciscan spirituality within the local communities (St. Joseph Catholic School and nearby parishes). The members agreed to have subgroups to provide service to the local school and other organizations. Their main goal is to evangelize by living the Franciscan charism with their example. They also use the traditional brochure to promote the Order. Also, they use technology with members that cannot attend the meeting in person. Therefore, the fraternity responds to the call of the 2022 Quinquennial Congress to go out to the local communities and be a caring unit to all.

*Challenges:*

* *Membership in religious groups outside the O.F.S.* – some members hold memberships in other religious organizations such as the Women’s Guild, Knights of Columbus, Confraternity of the Brown Scapular (Carmelite Spirituality), and Confraternity of the Holy Rosary (Dominican Spirituality), or Legion of Mary. Members describe it as other ministries outside the O.F.S. fraternity.

Please reflect on the O.F.S. Constitutions, “Article 2, 1. The vocation to the OFS is a specific vocation that gives form to the life and apostolic activity of its members. Therefore, those who are bound by a perpetual commitment to another religious family or institute of consecrated life cannot belong to the OFS.”

The O.F.S. Rule states, “By their profession, they pledge themselves to live the gospel in the manner of St. Francis by means of this rule approved by the Church.” (Chapter 1, 2.) The Secular Franciscan Order is a recognized religious Order within the Catholic Church. Its members make a public profession to live in accord with the Rule of Saint Francis and their Constitutions. This reality is what gives being a professed member of the Order a priority over membership or affiliation in any other religious organization.

“The O.F.S. is our primary commitment. Activities of other groups must not interfere with our Franciscan way of life, a 24/7 commitment.” Br. Lester Bach, O.F.M. Cap., *The Franciscan Journey*, pg. ii.

*Your fraternity is a pearl of great value!*

* *Non-fraternal attitudes:* During the visitation, one member expressed that “the fraternity is not able to do a group fraternity due to the passive-aggressive attitudes of some members.” It resonates with the report provided by the council that states “Find an appropriate apostolate for the Fraternity.” Based on the fraternity’s activities, the council strives to foster the Fraternity’s unity and the Franciscan charism among the members.
* *Franciscan Identity –* The fraternity cannot be listed under *Ministries* on the website of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs. The O.F.S. is not a Parish Ministry. The O.F.S. must be listed as an independent identity that serves the Catholic Church as Brothers and Sisters of Penance. Please ask the webmaster of the OLQM to list the Secular Franciscan Order information as a unique Religious Order. It is recommended to include the Contact information of the council or formation director of the Portiuncula Fraternity. Also, it is a great opportunity to provide the link to the website of the Five Franciscan Martyrs Region. <https://www.ffmr-ofs.org/>
* Today, young adults and youth communicate through social media channels. It’s recommended that the O.F.S fraternities use social media platforms to evangelize, promote the O.F.S., and provide news about their events.

**Relationship of the fraternity with the host parish or friary and with the wider Church:**

Unfortunately, the fraternity has no relationship to any Franciscan friary or Franciscan monastery. The Regional Spiritual Assistant, Br. Lombardo D’Auria, O.F.M. Cap. left three different messages to Fr. John Hoang requesting to discuss the relationship between the fraternity and the parish community. A week ago, Ms. Leslie Duff called back to reply to the voicemail messages. Ms. Duff stated that “Occasionally, the fraternity gets involved with the parish community. During this lent season, the fraternity chose to do the Station of the Cross on a Friday. There is not too much to talk about the relationship between the parish and the fraternity. I know they meet on Sunday.” Her response does not reflect the real relationship between the fraternity and the parish community. Fr. Hoang was not available to discuss further the connection between the OLQM community and the fraternity.

**Appraisal of the fraternity’s spiritual assistance:**

No Spiritual Assistance is presently assigned to the fraternity.

**General Comments:**

I suggest the following activities to the members so they can participate deeply in the penitential process of the renewal of their fraternal life.

*Apostolic Ministry:*

The Rule of the OFS calls the fraternities and their members to be “signs of the Father’s mercy and the source of grace.” The Secular Franciscans “follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to him even in difficulties and persecutions.” (Rule of the OFS Chp II, 7 & 10). Please continue putting your energies to be united and building the Kingdom of God through your life of service to the poor and the vulnerable.

*Fraternal Meetings:*

I suggest that the fraternity tries to have more non-business meetings. It is always beneficial to fraternities to spend more time in social celebrations.

*Formation - Recommended:*

Your Initial and Ongoing Formation programs include all the tools that the FUN manual required. I suggest the format of your Initial/Ongoing Formation programs to other OFS fraternities.

It’s highly recommended that Formation Director and his/her team continue to receive ongoing Franciscan formation.

Please visit the following Franciscan Institutions. Some of these Franciscan Institutions offer non-credit classes online.

https://www.fst.edu/degrees-programs/non-degree-and-certificates/

https://www.sbu.edu/academics/academic-resources/franciscan-institute

https://spt.franciscan.edu/programs/franciscan-studies-minor/

Free Sources from the Franciscan School of Theology:

https://www.youtube.com/c/FSTEDU1

*Suggested: Reading for Initial Formation and Ongoing Formation:*

https://www.franciscantradition.org/early-sources - (Updated writings of St. Francis and St. Clare – Free access and available for downloading and printing.)

*St. Francis of Assisi: Passion, Poverty & the Man Who Transformed the Catholic Church*

By Bret Thoman, OFS, Publisher: TAN Books (Excellent book to use during the Candidacy or as an ongoing formation tool).

It is highly recommended to put more emphasis on the study of *God is Love* by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. Pope Benedict XVI describes the identity of the brothers and sisters of Penance, how to live it, and how to apply it through the social teaching of the Catholic Church.

*JPIC*

The DNA of the Secular Franciscan consists of promoting JPIC through the Catholic Social Teaching of the Church. Our Lady of the Angels Region created these mini videos regarding the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church on YouTube:

Video 1: https://youtu.be/Blq0MNk5dzk?list=PLj4XpVsbb1rymCtMQ\_Fx76xufL\_z\_3aRe

Video 2:https://youtu.be/nZXoYLoLNfg?list=PLj4XpVsbb1rymCtMQ\_Fx76xufL\_z\_3aRe

Video 3: https://youtu.be/tShbbvZu0tQ?list=PLj4XpVsbb1rymCtMQ\_Fx76xufL\_z\_3aRe

Video 4:https://youtu.be/YEbG3uyYUp0?list=PLj4XpVsbb1rymCtMQ\_Fx76xufL\_z\_3aRe

Video 5: https://youtu.be/RTM9C\_Sb\_Bg?list=PLj4XpVsbb1rymCtMQ\_Fx76xufL\_z\_3aR

Video 6: https://youtu.be/\_\_FBIZHq9js?list=PLj4XpVsbb1rymCtMQ\_Fx76xufL\_z\_3aRe

It is recommended that the Council promotes the USCCB web pages among the members. Every OFS member can provide his or her contact information, so the USCCB will inform them regarding all their JPIC needs. The USCCB website provides resources on how to assist the Catholic Church so that all the members can participate, promote, and live the social teachings. (Please check the OFS Rule – Chapter II, Art. 6)

Below are the links to the JPIC of the USCCB. Take Action!

https://www.usccb.org/offices/justice-peace-human-development

https://www.usccb.org/take-action

As a fraternity, each member can participate in the activities of <https://laudatosimovement.org/>

*The Franciscan family is a JPIC family!*

If you have any questions regarding the pastoral report, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am grateful for your patience during the visitation. It took a little time of prayer and reflection to overcome my initial responses to the fraternity while I was with you. You impressed me with your perseverance. For this reason, I do not want you to suffer more pain. It takes COURAGE to be at your level of living the Franciscan charism without having a Spiritual Assistant.

Be assured of my continuing prayers for all of you. Please keep me in your prayers as well.

May the Lord bless you and keep you!

Fraternally yours in Christ,

Br. Lombardo D’Auria, OFM Cap.

Regional Spiritual Assistant – FFMR

St. Padre Pio Friary

2411 NW 3rd Street

Miami, FL 33125

Email: brolombardocap@yahoo.com

Phone: 201-281-7841