**FRATERNITY VISITATION REPORT**





**July 10, 2021 St. Michael the Archangel Fraternity**

Sacred Heart Church, 509 N. Florida Ave. Tampa Fl. 33602

**Introduction**

Sheila Solomon, OFS and Mark Banschbach, OFS, St. Thomas More Family Councilors attended the monthly Fraternity Gathering of St. Michael the Archangel Fraternity in Tampa, Florida. Br. Lombardo D’Auria, OFM Cap. was present for the Pastoral Visitation. The Fraternity meets at Sacred Heart Catholic Church located at 509 N. Florida Avenue. Their Gathering begins at 10:00 AM and ends at approximately 12:15 PM. St. Michael the Archangel Fraternity’s (SMAF) council meets on the third Wednesday of each month from 6:30 to 7:30 and their Gatherings are on the second Saturday of the month from 10:00 to 12:30. They do not typically attend Mass together.

**Preparatory Information**

The pre-visitation questionnaire was completed by the fraternity and received by the visitors prior to the date of the visitation. We thank everyone for the timely and thorough job you did in completing all the paperwork.

**Demographics**

There are a total of 12 Active Professed members in this fraternity. Seven members are Excused due to health, and/or family obligations. Three people were accepted into the order with the Rite of Admission in June 2021. Since the Admission, one fellow, who is in the military, was transferred to Kansas and the other moved to Tennessee for work. The fraternity council is as follows:

David Koehler, OFS – Minister

Marie Victor, OFS – Vice-minister

Marie Koehler, OFS – Formation Director

Sandi Scionti, OFS – Treasurer

Lynne Float, OFS – Secretary

Buzz Bruno, OFS and Jeanette Fulton, OFS – Councilors at Large.

Fr. Henry Fulmer, OFM is the fraternity’s spiritual assistant.

It should be noted that three members of the council Marie Victor, Lynne Float, and Buzz Bruno were absent due to family obligations. Fr. Henry was also absent due to a unforeseen responsibility.

**Documentation**

The visitors reviewed and signed, where appropriate, the Certificate of Establishment, Fraternity Register, and minister’s binder (containing agendas, formation information, the rule, and secretary’s minutes). The minister keeps a binder for each year divided by months. The visitors also reviewed and signed the treasurer’s binder which contained bank statements and a year-end report. The treasurer’s binder did not include a monthly report nor a budget for the upcoming year. The treasurer said that she would provide these reports moving forward as the councilors suggested.

In evaluating themselves for this visitation the fraternity developed a rating system by taking the average among council member reports. They rated themselves on a scale or 1 to 4 with four being the highest.

**Leadership:** Rating of 3.7 out of 4.0.

Reportedly council meetings are well attended (in person and/or remotely during Covid) and well organized following a proposed agenda. This past year has been a test of all the fraternity councils in Florida (as well as the country). St. Michael’s council was able to ensure the continued initial formation of three inquirers resulting in the Rite of Admission, the final being conducted out of doors near the church.

They consistently communicated with each other and the fraternity as a whole by phone, text, teleconference and zoom reporting that attendance was good throughout. Council members succeeded in developing an easy rapport with each other which may well be the result of making it through a difficult time.

**Prayer and Spiritual Life:** rating 3.5

St. Michael the Archangel members report that after a time using hand-outs, they’ve returned to the use of the Christian Prayer book to recite the Divine Office, making sure that each member has their own copy of this book. Their SA, Fr. Henry is presiding over a Day of Recollection in October. SMAF have found that their viewing of the Wild Goose videos has inspired their prayer lives and the prayers offered during council meetings and gatherings have guided them in identifying apostolate opportunities and decisions. Fraternity members attended two days of recollection at the nearby Franciscan Center and they also participated in a Franciscan Day of Prayer on the Lord’s Prayer and Psalms.

**Apostolate Activities:** Unable to address due to pandemic

During our visitation the fraternity engaged in an enthusiastic (spontaneous) and production brainstorming session focused on the plentiful and varied apostolate opportunities available now that they are meeting in downtown Tampa. It was shared that Fr. Henry is encouraging members to become involved in the service of those less fortunate. Specific examples include reading to pre-school and school age children and providing resources related to human trafficking. Three fraternity members have committed themselves to guiding the fraternity in these areas: Maria Nicotra – supporting the homeless, Maria Victor and Buzz Bruno – human trafficking, and Joshua Strope – Care for the Environment.

**Evangelization Activities:** rating 2.24

To promote vocations to the Secular Franciscan Order St. Michael’s has put tri-fold brochures in the 7 parishes members belong to, plus Sacred Heart Church. The fraternity plans to become a visible presence within the Sacred Heart community, especially regarding families and young people. Members also suggested that they and the REC connect with organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, Columbiettes, and St. Vincent DePaul to make them aware of the OFS.

**Formation:** rating 3.4

SMAF members feel that their initial formation using the Franciscan Journey and their ongoing formation using Fr. Dave Privonka, TOR’s Wild Goose Program are both very current, enlightening, instructive, and thought provoking. They had previously found the FUN manual difficult to work with. That being said, the visitors suggested that they still use the FUN manual as a resource as it includes some valuable writings by/on saints Francis and Clare along with teachings from the Catechism etc.

**Monthly Gathering**

On the day of our visitation the meeting was opened in Prayer from the Ritual and lead by Minister David Koehler, OFS. Prayers from the Ritual, a reading from Hebrews 12:28 and 13:1-2) and the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel were also included. Various reports were presented and then minister, David, introduced the visitors.

Sheila led the meeting with the Prayer for the Pastoral and Fraternal Visit from the Ritual along with the Salutation to Blessed Virgin Mary read by Brother Lombardo and readings from the Constitution to support the Fraternal Visitation (Article 26) and Pastoral Visitation (Article 5).

The Delegation letter from regional minister, Jeane Swaynos naming Sheila Solomon as her representative was read and David Koehler, OFS confirmed receipt of the letter as well.

Each member of the fraternity was invited to reflect and share on who they are in the fraternity. This discussion lead into a conversation of the history of the fraternity as several members were involved with its reactivation.

There was a good discussion on Apostolates, and how the community needs to have an active apostolate, i.e., something they can physically do; where prayer is the root. It was stated that, “with a good root, springs forth the shoot of action”.

David shared a story on how St. Francis told a brother to plant a cabbage with the roots facing up. The brother refused as the idea was absurd. Francis told the brother he would never enter the Kingdom of Heaven because he was not obedient. That the root points towards Heaven, and reaches into Earth. Be the cabbage!

After the meeting portion adjourned, the visitors reviewed the checkbook, the register and the binders. As stated above, a suggestion was made that the treasurer, moving forward, present a short monthly statement of deposits, spending, and balances.

The gatherings for this fraternity normally observe the following agenda: Opening prayer, Divine Office, business (including the minutes and treasurer’s report), fellowship, ongoing formation, closing prayer and blessing.

**Summation**

In spite of some initial concerns, we found this community to be administratively well run, and extremely efficient. They should be commended for the solidarity they demonstrated during the past year when challenged with the Covid-19 virus. They work hard to keep in touch with members who have special health concerns or may need extra support for a variety of reasons. For example, members provide transportation to those who are unable to drive and check on those unable to attend monthly Gatherings.

We had some concerns about the somewhat exclusive use of the Gray Goose Video series and suggested that they explore more varied formation materials (see recommendations). The fraternity recognized the need to focus on vocations and evangelization, both of which have suffered during the Covid experience. The SMAF council gave themselves a lower score because they felt that it was not possible to address these areas; scoring themselves by what they accomplished and not by what they felt they were able to do under “normal” circumstances.

Now that fraternity has Fr. Henry Fulmer, OFM as their spiritual assistant and have moved to Sacred Heart Church in downtown Tampa they are excited about enriching and expanding their social justice opportunities, their community outreach, their vocational opportunities and their prayer and spiritual life.

**Recommendations**

The visitors would like to recommend these possible resources for ongoing formation.

1. Lives of the Secular Franciscan Saints and different Biographies etc.

2. Build with Living Stones by Daria Mitchell

3. Any number of texts by Fr. Murray Bodo, Fr. Regis Armstrong, Fr. Lester Bach (the number of authors is unlimited)

Suggested resources that may be worth purchasing for the whole fraternity to share.

4. A History of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States, four volumes by William Wicks, SFO

5. Early Documents – The Saint, The Founder, The Prophet (three volumes by Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap, J.A. Wayne Hellmann, OFM Conv, and William Short, OFM.

During an informal discussion you mentioned that the fraternity usually doesn’t meet for gathering during July and August because people their vacations or travel north. We would like to remind you that all fraternities are required to meet each month. This is the case even if only a few of the members are present. Now that we are more comfortable with technology, even those traveling can join meetings.

Lastly, you might want to consider attending Mass together. Sharing the Liturgy of the Word and the Holy Eucharist will most certainly add to your already rich spiritual life.

We sincerely hope we helped fulfill Article 92.1 of the General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order which states: “The purpose of both the pastoral and fraternal visits is to revive the evangelical Franciscan spirit, to assure fidelity to the charism and to the Rule, to offer help to fraternity life, to reinforce the bond of the unity of the Order, and to promote its most effective insertion into the Franciscan family and the Church.” We are very excited to witness where this fraternity will “travel” in the next three years.

May God bless you all and give you his peace.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Banschbach, OFS and Sheila Solomon, OFS

St. Thomas More Family Councilors

8/1/21