**FRATERNAL & PASTORAL VISITATION REPORT**

November 9, 2019

St. John of Capistrano Fraternity

Most Holy Redeemer Church

10110 North Central, Tampa, Florida

Sheila Solomon, OFS, Five Franciscan Martyrs Regional Councilor conducted the Fraternal Visitation concurrently with Margaret Horan OFS, Five Franciscan Martyrs Spiritual Assistant delegate. Patricia Wolfert, OFS, Five Franciscan Martyrs Regional Secretary, was also in attendance. St. John Capistrano Fraternity was very gracious in welcoming the visitors. We immediately felt like members of their family.

**Preparatory Information:**

The pre-visitation questionnaire was completed and received by the Visitor prior to the date of the Visitation. We thank the Fraternity Council for taking the time to complete the questionnaire in such a thoughtful manner.

**Demographics:**

There is a total of 25 active members in the St. John of Capistrano Fraternity, however due to the advanced age, family responsibilities and the illness of many there were only 11 members present; during the past three or four months, Gatherings have had 9 to 17 members participating. The Formation Director, Steve Berry and councilors Eri Legendre, Maureen Martin, and Shirley Conway were excused. Treasurer, April Flore dropped off the checkbook at the beginning of the meeting as she was very sick.

The fraternity consists of: Twenty-five active members and seven excused members

Mark Banschbach – Minister

Cathy Goldie – Vice Minister

April Flore – Treasurer

Steve Berry – Formation Director

Verna Joyce – Secretary

Eri Legendre, Catherine Huber, Maureen Martin, and Shirley Conway – Councilors

JPIC Coordinator – Carolyn Muro

Inquirers: 1

**Documentation:**

The Fraternity Establishment Document was presented to the visitors. This fraternity was canonically established in 1965 making it 54 years old. The register was available, reviewed, and signed.

The Minutes of the Council meetings were reviewed and signed. It should be noted that because the secretary doesn’t have word processing, they are hand written; therefore, the other members of the council do not have copies of the minutes and hear them read for the first time during the council meetings. The secretary does take notes during the Gatherings - minutes need only be taken during the Council Meetings; however copies of the elections and visitations must also be maintained. If the membership desires a summary of the monthly gatherings, they may be maintained separately.

Because the Treasurer was sick, she dropped of the checkbook and briefly explained that this was all she had to show the visitors. The checkbook is of the style that provides duplicates. It seemed that the treasurer was unaware that her job also entails keeping check records, bank statements, monthly reports and a binder. We recommended that the minister and/or previous treasurer help April put things in order. The visitors will also notify our regional treasurer/s to make them aware of the need for support.

The minister keeps a file with the necessary fraternity documentation. Although he doesn’t print an agenda, Mark develops one which he follows for both the Gathering and council meeting.

The Formation Director, though not present had provided the visitors with a formation status report which included Initial Formation and On-going Formation which included a syllabus.

**Prayer Life:**

The fraternity had stated, in their pre-visitation questionnaire, that they were having difficulty with the Liturgy of the Hours. This was mainly because the members were not able to agree whether to use the one volume of the four volume versions. They did make a decision to use the one volume text.

Margaret Horan opened this Gathering with prayer from the Ritual for a Visitation, we then prayed the Invitatory and Morning Prayer. Inquirer, Jim, was assigned the role of Antiphonarian and other members acted as Presider and Reader. The visitors were impressed with how supportive the fraternity was in helping their inquirer fulfill his role. Next, Mark read Rule #12: “Witnessing to the good yet to come and obligated to acquire purity of heart because of the vocation they have embraced they should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters.” Mark suggested that everyone replace “they” with “I” and we took a few moments to reflect upon how the Rule relates to each. Overall the fraternity feels that their prayer life is very good although they haven’t taken advantage of spiritual and pray opportunities offered throughout the region either by other fraternities or the region as a whole. It was explained that this was due to the cost involved and transportation limitations. Earlier this year the fraternity invited Fr. Peter, a local priest, to present to the fraternity as there is no fraternity spiritual assistant at this time.

**Apostolic Activity**:

Dr. Tony Lozzarra, a longstanding member of St. John Capistrano Fraternity, lives in Peru running an orphanage. Instead of paying the parish, Most Holy Redeemer, the fraternity sends money to the orphanage. When Dr. Lozzarra returns to Florida about two times a year he always attends the Gatherings.

Unique to this fraternity they have a reciprocal relationship with the Anglican Franciscans occasionally getting together during Gatherings, Christmas and Transitus.

**Monthly Gathering:**

The fraternity began with the traditional opening from the Ritual followed by the Invitatory, Morning Prayer, and the reading of Rule 12 along with a reflection by Minister, Mark. They next moved into the business part of the Gathering beginning with the reading of the minutes from last month. A treasurer’s report was not given as the treasurer was sick. Each member introduced themselves and shared how long they had been professed. The visitors did this as well. Mark next asked Secretary, Verna, to let him know if anybody will be celebrating their 25th or 50th anniversary of Profession in 2020 so that they could be recognized at our annual retreat in April. He shared that the December Gathering was to be the Christmas Party therefore, there would be no ongoing formation. The leader for January’s ongoing formation would be Robert. They will also be celebrating the Profession anniversary of several members. The Gathering was then turned over to the visitors who reviewed the fraternity’s pre-visitation questionnaire in order to clarify some points and give the fraternity an opportunity to expand on their answers.

**Council Meeting**

St. John Capistrano fraternity holds their council meetings after the Gatherings on Saturday in the (early) afternoon. Mark opened the council meeting using the opening prayers from the Ritual. We then used this time to ask and answer questions, review the minister’s files, and discuss recruitment of new members. Normally fraternity business would be discussed and upcoming plans made.

**Formation:**

**Initial Formation** – According to the Formation Director, in a written report, the last Profession was in 2017. There is currently one person in Inquiry. This inquirer completed the three Orientation sessions and the Faith Inventory. He was approved for continuation and brought into Inquiry with the Welcome Ceremony. Unfortunately, three members of the Formation team have recently become inactive and the formation director may soon be in a similar situation as both he and his wife are beginning to have health problems. ForUpToNow is used for this initial formation program as it is felt that it is the most thorough and complete method.

**Ongoing Formation**- Last spring the fraternity completed the book, “Francis of Assisi and the Future of Faith” by Daniel P. Horan, OFM. This was followed by the Wild Goose series’ “God’s Love Poured Out”. They are currently reading “Live Like Francis” by J. Weigel, OFM and L. Foley, FM.

The formation director has created a syllabus which includes a chapter breakdown, response questions, and facilitation assignments for fraternity members. He also instructs the fraternity at large in best practices for leading a discussion.

**Summation:**

The visitors, Margaret, Pat and Sheila, found their time with the St. John Capistrano Fraternity to be affirmative and informative. The love and care that the members showed toward one another was clearly apparent. They were forthcoming in candidly explaining the challenges the fraternity is facing and they recognize the need to strive to live out their Profession promise. In this summary I would like to voice some concerns and extent compliments.

*Concerns*

1. There are some inconsistencies regarding monthly attendance of late. Margaret noted when she visited the fraternity in August there were at least 25 people there, but at this Gathering there were 11. As was stated earlier minister, Mark, felt there are a number of factors that contributed to this.

2. Refreshments were not served at the Gathering and as a result the fraternity had a limited amount of social time. The fraternity had made the decision not to have refreshments because one person usually provided the refreshments and this same person also cleaned up (even after requests for help). This situation was aggravated because the parish was specific about how they wanted the meeting room left after refreshments were served.

3. The fraternity does not pay the parish of Most Holy Redeemer for the use of the facility. Because of this they are free to contribute to their longstanding support of an orphanage in Peru. The downside is that they have very little storage space for Fraternity supplies, no permanent meeting room and are often asked to move their meeting at the last minute.

4. The fraternity is having some difficulty attracting new members and their current excellent formation program is about to be disrupted because their formators are experiencing health and family problems.

*Compliments*

1. During the prayer time Mark suggested that individuals recite Rule 12 replacing the word “they” with “I”. Margaret, Pat and I were impressed with this exercise and will suggest it to other fraternities.

2. St. John Capistrano doesn’t have a newsletter but they do maintain a Facebook page and a fraternity website;  [https://OFSTampa.wordpress.com](https://ofstampa.wordpress.com/). Mark has also offered to help other fraternities develop their own websites.

3. The fraternity hosted an Ecuadorian parishioner who is in RCIA at one of their Gathering. This is a great way to attract new members.

4. When Mark became the minister the fraternity’s roster had 200 members. Many of these people were not active. Make has worked hard to reach out to these members and refine and update the roster.

5. The fraternity is developing a vocations video to post on their website as well as the regional website.

6. The books and videos this fraternity has chosen for their ongoing formation are dynamic, appropriate, exciting, and current!

**Recommendations:**

It would be helpful to provide your treasurer with assistance in organizing her records and keeping a binder. Consider providing her with a sample of a treasurer’s report for monthly reporting during council meetings and Gatherings.

The best practice for council meetings is to meet on a different day than the Gathering. In saying this we recognize the difficulty for some fraternities. We just ask you to try.

You should try to plan a social time together as a fraternity. We stress that a major and necessary component of our Franciscan way of life is the comradery of preparing, sharing, and cleaning up after a meal/snack.

Consider asking a fraternity member to write a piece in the regional newsletter about one the ongoing formation books you’ve read. These recommendations will help other fraternities who are looking for engaging materials. Also, consider writing a piece about your Peru ministry with Dr. Lozzarra as well as your relationship with the Anglican Franciscans. These are unique and may inspire others.

We truly appreciated and enjoyed being a part of your Fraternity Gathering on that day! You made us feel very welcomed because each of you is such a delight! A special ‘Thank You’ to each and every one of you and let us continue to pray for one other.

Respectfully submitted,

**Sheila Solomon, OFS Margaret Horan, OFS**

Sheila Solomon, OFS Margaret Horan, OFS

St. Thomas More Family Councilor, Fraternal Visitor Spiritual Assistant, Pastoral

Date of Report: November 17, 2019