

**FRATERNAL VISITATION REPORT**

**San Damiano Fraternity,**

**Summerfield, Florida**

**April 6 and June 1, 2022**

Marcia Stamboulian, OFS, Five Franciscan Martyrs Regional Family Councilor conducted the Fraternal Visitation at San Damiano Fraternity in Summerfield, Florida. Ruth Huddle, OFS, Five Franciscan Martyrs Regional Family Councilo,r was present as Pastoral Visitor. As the original date, April 6, for this visitation found the fraternity unprepared, there was no Pastoral Visitor present on this rescheduled date of June 1, 2022.

**Preparatory Information**:

This Fraternity is large and has a number of members who are snowbirds, including their Spiritual Assistant, who is part-time. This S.A., Ms. Donna Willard, ofs, has not yet been appointed. Paperwork for this appointment has never been received. She also is part-time S.A. for 2 fraternities in the North during her 6 months away. I arrived toward the end of their regular meeting. There were 25 people present, 21 members and 4 guests. At the second visitation, there were 19 members present and 2 guests.

**Demographics**:

The fraternity consists of:

* Professed: 31
* Temporarily **inactive** excused paying members: 11
* Candidates:
* Inquirers: 2
* Aspirants: 1
* Lapsed: 1

**Documentation**:

The Fraternity Register was available, reviewed, and signed. The Fraternity and Council meetings minutes were well organized and contained bank statements for every month. These records were signed by the visitor. The certificate of establishment was presented.

**Prayer Life:** The Fraternity begins all its meeting with Mass. At the gathering, they pray the opening and closing prayers from the Ritual book, say the Liturgy of the Hours, and the Crown Rosary. Their prayer life seems to be very rich and inclusive of all members. They take weekly turns leading the Crown Rosary for the week and keep the statue of St. Francis at home for a month each. They also plan for each member to pick a name of someone in the fraternity that they will pray for during the year.

*The Secular Franciscans commit themselves to their profession to live the Gospel according to Franciscan spirituality in the secular condition Article GC8*

*The fraternity must offer to its members opportunities for coming together and collaborating through meetings to be held with as great a frequency as allowed by the situation and with the involvement of all its members” Article 53 GC*

**Apostolic Activity**:

This large fraternity has numerous apostolic activities in which they participate. They are involved in supporting the Friars of the Renewal, Amazon Relief, Clear Water Africa, and sponsor fund raisers. They also received backpacks from the Knights of Columbus which they fill with food and distribute in Ocala. The Fools for Francis Project, 15 of their members, go to the soup kitchen at St. Theresa’s Church monthly and sing and play instruments for the guests as they eat.

**Council Meeting and Monthly Fraternity Gatherings:**

The Council and Fraternity meetings are all now conducted in person. The fraternity meets on the first Wednesday of each month after the 8 AM Mass at St. Mark’s Church Social Hall, Summerfield, FL. The Council meets on the last Wednesday of the month at St. Mark’s in the choir loft. In 2020, during Covid, mo meetings were held from April through August. They came back together in September 2020.

**Formation**:

The fraternity does have a formation team consisting of 3 members, with participation by the Minister and Council members. They do have an annual calendar which specifies the Ongoing, Initial, and Council formation activities.

**Initial:** The fraternity uses the Journey, and sometimes, the Fun Manual.

**Ongoing:** members suggest ideas for books and articles they would prefer to use for formation. They have used books by Murray Bodo, ofm, “Surrounded by Love”. Everyone takes turns leading ongoing formation and members meet for discussion in small groups. Sometimes it will be readings from the life of Francis, book reports, devotion to Mary at the Grotto, whatever members request. They also have speakers and retreats.

**Observations and Recommendations:**

The Visitor has noticed that the fraternity members have a very good relationship with each other, the Council and the Minister. The Council fosters communication among the members outside of the regular meetings. The fraternity is happy with the Council and their transparency with the members. They look to the Council for spiritual direction. Unfortunately, due to health and family issues, the current Minister has not been able to participate as he would like for some time, so the Council is picking up the slack in all his duties.

Problems that the Council has noted in its members are lack of participation in discussion, apathy among some members, and the lack of member volunteering at gatherings.

The fraternity Council states that they want and need overall support from the Region. The feeling is that, except for the Tau, both the National and Regional Councils seem very distant. They would like to grow in faith and get people more active. In that vein, they would like Regional to issue a list of potential speakers that fraternities may draw from to give retreats or a time of reflection to the members. They also stated that they want Regional to be more friendly, fraternal and prayerful when they visit rather than being confrontational.

My recommendations are that the Council not only read the Tau, but the Regional newsletter, check out the Regional website for ideas, information and activities, and feel free to contact either of the Family Councilors for information or help that they need. They might also want to have a list of recommended books for ongoing formation to help them in their choices.

As far as the issues with apathetic and lack of participation among members, perhaps a talk on servant leadership would be in order.

I might also suggest that a new spiritual assistant be found for this fraternity who would be with them year round.

*Mindful that the Holy Spirit is the source of their vocation and the animator of fraternal life and mission, Secular Franciscans should seek to imitate the faithfulness of Francis and His inspiration. They should listen to the exhortation of the Saint to desire above all things “the Spirit of God at work within them.” Article 11 GC*

**Summation:**

San Damiano is a very good fraternity, a large and loving community. They have a very effective Council and a good formation program. This group is doing a wonderful job in their outreach to the community and with the growth of their fraterity. They are to be commended. Very few items need to be addressed. We were very happy to have spent time with them.

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."*

Respectfully submitted,

**Marcia Stamboulian, ofs**

Regional Councillor, Fraternal Visitor