Secular Franciscan Order

Five Franciscan Martyrs Region

Florida, South Georgia, Lower Alabama,

[**www.fmr-ofs.org**](http://www.fmr-ofs.org/).

# PASTORAL and FRATERNAL VISITATION REPORT

## **Our Lady of Guadalupe Fraternity, August 17th, 2024**

## Part 1 Fraternal

### Visitation

Jeane Swaynos OFS FFMR Regional Minister, Kelly Otero OFS FFMR Regional Family Councilor and Willie Guadalupe OFS FFMR Spiritual Assistant Pastoral Visitor, conducted the Fraternal and Pastoral visitation on Saturday August 17, 2024, at Good Shepherd Catholic Church, 4665 Thomasville Rd. Tallahassee. Florida.

### Statistics and Composition

This fraternity has 13 active professed members, 1 candidate (profession early 2025), Two Inquirers. In fact, during the visit there was a welcoming ceremony for one of the orientees. There were 12 members present, and 1 fraternity member participated via Zoom.

This fraternity has grown over the past 2 years, with the election of the new council. However, there are some members (2) that due to age and/or health struggles are unable to attend in person /zoom, *we discussed that a lapsed status for these members would be appropriate.*

The council was elected in September 2022, In the past both the election and the visitation were held together. *We as a region are working to rectify this. So that each event can be held separately, and we can connect more frequently and be more available to this fraternity.*

Currently Sr Guerda Julien is in Formation to become the SA the fraternity is very excited about this because they have never had a Spiritual Assistant. This will be a wonderful addition to this fraternity.

### Preparatory Information

The collaborative pre-visitation questionnaire was completed and received by the visitor in advance. Two individual questionnaires were received and reviewed. The Roster was presented.

### Records

Records were reviewed by the fraternal visitor

* The fraternity Register was available, reviewed and signed.
* The 3 binders were well organized. The minutes were available and up to date for the Council and Fraternity meetings.
* The history of this fraternity was displayed in a binder.
* The document of establishment was available.
* There were no financial records to review because the treasurer was absent due to having Covid.
* Roster of Members was given by the minister to each visitor prior to the visitation
* They are working on updating the NAFRAdatabase information, especially regarding lapsed members. They do have some aging members who are unable to attend due to health issues, those that are resistive to participate should also be placed on a lapsed status especially if they are not fulfilling their fraternal obligation.
* Formation- The formation director communicates well via email to remind those in initial formation as well as the fraternity, of the meeting times and topics. They meet the 2nd Monday of the Month in a room at the local library, the have zoom option for those that cannot attend in person. They are reading from the Franciscan Journey. By Lester Bach, OFM Cap. The fraternity is encouraged to attend, to support those in initial formation.
* Year-End Report from previous year 2023 was reviewed.
* Publications – The newsletter “Pax et Bonum” includes a message from the minister, formation and the treasurer reports. As well as a section for JPIC, prayer requests and outreach/mission for the fraternity. It is an informative and Franciscan centered. I enjoy reading it every month.

### Participation in local, regional and national activities

* The minister attended the Annual Regional Gatherings, but it is a 4+ hour drive.
* The regional family gathering in November 2023 was attended by the minister via zoon the last regional family gathering in June 2024, the Formation Director was planning to attend, but was unable due to lack of WIFI in the building. In 2025 the region is planning to have a regional family gathering in/near Tallahassee.
* There are no members serving the regional or national fraternities currently. However, I believe that the minister of this fraternity would make a wonderful regional counselor.

### **Gathering Observations**

The fraternity attends mass together before the gathering. There is a period of fellowship prior to the start of the gathering. It was during this time that informal introductions were made. The welcoming atmosphere of Our Lady of Guadalupe fraternity was evident. The members displayed a spirit of hospitality and fraternity. This was reflected not only in their interactions with each other but with the visitors as well. There is a genuine sense of community and respect for one another. This aligns very well with Franciscan values, particularly ***Rule #22****:* The local fraternity is to be established canonically. It becomes the basic unit of the whole Order and a visible sign of the Church, the community of love. The privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the Apostolic life of its members.

The agenda was presented and followed. The gathering opened with opening prayer from the ritual book. The LOH was prayed. There was ongoing formation led by the Formation director. The fraternity is currently studying the **Admonitions of St Francis to the Friars Minor.** They have finished reading **St Claires letters to St. Agnes** and next month they will begin **The life of Saint Francis.** Ongoing formation was structured and well prepared. There is truly an emphasis on the Franciscan charism and spirituality and how it applies to daily life. Some members participated in an insightful group discussion, however not all members participated during ongoing formation and the regional minister noted this. The suggestion was made to break out into smaller groups to continue discussing the topic/question in order to ensure that all members have an opportunity to participate. Overall, the formation is strong. They will soon have a spiritual assistant and 3 new members; this will continue to grow and strengthen the fraternity!

I was very impressed with the apostolic activity of the fraternity. This fraternity is actively involved in various Apostolic works (Monthly collection and distribution of groceries, monthly collection of canned goods, dog and cat food, hygiene items). They also support Amazon Relief, and clean water through The Sisters of Saint Francis. They are impacting their community in a positive way by living out the rule and bringing the gospel to life! ***Rule # 14:***Secular Franciscans, together with all people of goodwill, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the Kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. Mindful that anyone “who follows Christ, the perfect man, becomes more of a man himself,” let them exercise their responsibilities completely in the Christian spirit of service.

JPIC is very solid. Related topics are discussed monthly at fraternity gatherings and in the newsletter. This month the members were asked to reflect how God communicates to us through His creation. Pertinent articles were emailed to the members for reflection*.* ***Rule #18:***Moreover, they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which “bear the imprint of the Most High,” and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.

### Council:

This fraternity’s council appears to work well together. There are some experienced members and although the minister has been Minister for 2 years, he is doing a phenomenal job. They have a deep respect for the minister and how hard he is working. He understands how a council works, and he refers to our guidelines when needed. We encouraged him to delegate more often so as not to feel overwhelmed. He genuinely cares about his fraternity and seems to know each member’s strengths and struggles. This is an asset.

The council meets after the regular fraternity gathering which makes for a long day. The regional minister suggested meeting as a council 2-4 times a year, for longer period at someone’s house the vice minister offered to host.

This fraternity will be having an election next year and we encouraged the council to think and pray about how they would like to serve the fraternity, perhaps in a different role.

Vocations to the order is emphasized. They are putting information about the fraternity gatherings in 6 parish bulletins in the area.

JPIC is very strong, and we encouraged the fraternity to think about Youth and Young Adult and perhaps appointing someone for YOUFRA. They do not need to be professed to do this. It only requires giving the name of the person and his or her e-mail address to Janic Novello OFS Regional Youth and Young Adult Formator. They can pass along the information they receive through the zoom meetings to the members of the fraternity.

### Recommendations in Italics and Summation:

Overall, Our Lady of Guadalupe Fraternity is a welcoming and committed group that embodies the Spirit of St Francis. They are doing a great job in growing their membership, they will soon have a Spiritual assistant, and have 3 in formation who are on their way to profession. The region plans on being more available to support the needs of this fraternity especially with the upcoming election next year. There are many strong individuals who could be serving on the council or for the region. I encourage them to pray about where the holy spirit may be calling them to serve. It was a pleasure spending time with them, and I look forward to seeing their continued growth.

Kelly Otero, OFS

Fraternal Visitor

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## Part 2

### **The Four Pillars**

# *“As you journey with other Secular Franciscans in the Five Franciscan Martyrs Region (FFMR), you will experience a Trinitarian approach as we embrace Him as mentor and His way as model. It is God's inspiration; it is Francis' life as model and mentor. Francis of Assisi is the conduit of God's grace for us*

### Spirituality

# *The Spirituality Pillar is the heart of The Four Pillars. It must be anchored in prayer and contemplation, which is the means to being attentive and pursuing the application of our Franciscan spirituality daily.*

# We continue to recommend that you pray the Liturgy of the Hours in your private prayers and in community; this practice will nourish your communal prayer. The Liturgy of the Hours, which is like an extension of the Eucharistic celebration, does not exclude but rather (in a complementary way) calls forth the various devotions of the People of God. It was obvious that fraternity is grateful to have Sr Guerda Julien who is currently going through the SA course to become the SA.

### Formation

*Formation is the vehicle whereby we learn to internalize and integrate the Spirituality, Fraternity, and Apostolate Pillars into every aspect of our lives – into our Franciscan way of life. Formation is a lifelong process. The GOAL of formation in the Secular Franciscan Order is a personal union with the Lord Jesus in the tradition and spirituality of the Franciscan family.*

Formation is the privilege and responsibility of the entire fraternity. I was not able to review your formation plan but do suggest that the council/formation team plan a three-year program of formation so that the wealth of formation approaches and resources can be realized. Promote variety rather than sameness, i.e., guess speakers and videos. I was glad to see that you are using The Franciscan Journey and the FUN Manual materials during the Candidacy Phase and glad to see good dialogue with all members to include those in the inquiry phase. I was also glad that you are using Zoom to connect with those members that can’t make the monthly gatherings.

You are to be commended for the exceptional way that you are implementing your Formation Program and serving this region as a model on how it should be done. Great Job!

### Fraternity

*Fraternity is community life. As Franciscans, we pray together, we learn together, we serve together, and we grow together within a Franciscan spirituality and lifestyle. We promote the “good of the fraternity” rather than promote one’s individual agenda.*

Your fraternity is well grounded in the Four Pillars. It is an active, caring, loving community that is evident by your interaction and willingness to participate. It is also evident that you enjoy spending time together and show deep love and respect for each other. I applaud you for your commitment and dedication.

### Apostolate

*The fraternity apostolate is our privilege and responsibility to go forth as witnesses and instruments of the Holy Spirit and the Church. A cooperative spirit attentive to those involved and the objective of the task are the basis to pursue the apostolate. This pursuit is to communicate individuals working as a unit in peace and harmony – to feed, to clothe, to comfort – to make Christ present in the name of Francis.*

Many members of the fraternity are very involved in several apostolates such canned goods for Good News Outreach at least quarterly; industrial-sized cans for Kearney Center (shelter for unhoused) at least twice a year; other charities such as clothes and hygiene items for Grace Mission Episcopal (see below under Ecumenical Outreach), dog and cat food for St. Francis Wildlife, and hygiene items and bug spray for unhoused (via regional meeting). About 10 participants each month, so up to 2/3 of our professed members. Occasional monetary offerings: more than $500 given to Aid to the Church in Need for persecuted Christians in Pakistan. Up to 2/3 of our professed members.

Monthly contributions from general fund to relief in an Amazon diocese ($25) and clean water

through Sisters of St. Francis ($25), year-round. As a fraternity you are commended for a job well done with your apostolate and you are definitely working as a unit in peace and harmony to feed, clothe and comfort to make Christ present in all you do.

### Other Observations

As our Franciscan Order continues to age, I encourage you to be open to the Holy Spirit’s vision, creativity, and sensitivity in order for us to touch the hearts of young and multicultural people, and invite them into the Franciscan Family. We need to make the Secular Franciscan Order a welcoming home for all in our region so they will be open to the call of our vocation. We need to educate ourselves and our fellow Secular Franciscans towards the realization of a Gospel vision of cultural diversity by drawing guidance and inspiration from the Sacred Scriptures, the Church’s teachings and our Rule. On the NAFRA website there is information and a committee which is available and ready to assist you with the Youth.

### **Commendations and Recommendations**

As Pastoral Visitor, I commend you for starting with Mass and Communion as a fraternity prior to your gathering.

Prior to our visit I provided Frank with copies of two documents, Council Duties Review and Nuts and Bolts of Being a Council. It is recommended that all member of the council have a copy of such and refer to it on occasion as a reminder of their duties and obligations related to their acceptance of their office on council and discuss as necessary.

Please review this Visitation report periodically. Highlight the recommendations made and in six to nine months, as a council, prepare a response to the Regional Minister of actions taken.

Please do not hesitate to contact any member of the Regional Council for assistance or advice. We are here to serve you.

Again, thank you for your time and hospitality and the lunch provided during our visit.

You truly made us feel like family.

A very special “thank you” to Frank Pate, OFS, Minister, for coordinating the schedule and providing all pre visitation documents required for this visitation. Also, the fraternity as whole for their participation and willingness to serve.

Please give each member of the fraternity a copy of this Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation Report and, as a community, dialogue about the contents. Be patient and persistent in your journey.

Paz y bien!

Awilda Guadalupe, OFS (Willie)

Pastoral Visitor

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