

**FRATERNAL VISITATION REPORT**

**St. Bonaventure Fraternity, Fleming Island, Jacksonville, Florida**

**September 21, 2024**

Marcia Stamboulian, OFS, Five Franciscan Martyrs Regional Secretary conducted the Fraternal Visitation, and Awilda Guadalupe, OFS conducted the Pastoral Visitation for St. Bonaventure Fraternity in Fleming Island on Saturday, September 21, 2024.

**Preparatory Information**:

This fraternity had suffered many setbacks over the last 6 years. At the last visitation in 2021, they had transformed themselves into a strong fraternity and a faith-filled community. Since then, they have attracted new members and have grown into an active group with excellent formation.

There were 16 members present at the visitation, including the Deacon who is in formation to be their Spiritual Assistant.

**Demographics**:

The Minister is James Foxwell, OFS.

The fraternity consists of:

* Professed: 13
* Excused: 1
* Candidates: 1
* Inquirers: 2
* Aspirant: 1
* Lapsed: 1
* Recently Deceased: 2

**Documentation**:

The Fraternity Register was available, reviewed, and signed. The registry, a bound book, had all information listed. The checking account and bank statements were in proper order. The Document of Establishment was available. The Fraternity has paid its fair share. The secretary and treasurer have done an excellent job in keeping all documentation complete and in proper order. The Minister’s documents were all in good order. All books were signed by both visitors. The fraternity roster was available.

**Prayer Life:**

The Fraternity meets on the third Saturday of every month at 10:00 AM at Sacred Heart Church, Fleming Island, Jacksonville. They begin their gathering with opening prayers from the Ritual, and the Liturgy of the Hours, and saint of the month. They had an excellent formation session while we were there, prior to the visitation.

**Apostolic Activity**: this is a fraternity that is very busy with their apostolates, both personal and communal. Most of the members live a great distance away and still manage to participate. They have retreats, days of recollection, and speakers presenting in person and via Zoom. They are involved in recruitment through Ministry Fairs, Come and See brochures are made available, and a website has been developed. Future outreach to other parishes is planned. They collect food for the local food pantry, serve at a weekly soup kitchen, donate financially to a Franciscan group, Servants of Servants, who serve the homeless in Jacksonville and to which several members belong, and have served at youth events. They are looking for more apostolates. They have a very good relationship with the Parish. They regularly attend the Regional family meetings and the Annual Regional meeting. They are having their own day of recollection with Fr. Nick Marmando, TOR in November. They are working on involvement with Respect Life and Stark Prison.

**Council Meeting and Monthly Gatherings:**

The council meets on the first Monday of each month at 6:30 PM via Zoom due to distance, and fraternity meetings are held on the third Saturday at 10:00 AM. They pray, have ongoing formation in which all participate, and conduct business. They have a good and inclusive agenda for each meeting. Their Spiritual Assistant leads the Council in a meditation and discussion on Franciscan spirituality.

**Formation**:

The fraternity has a large formation team with individual members dedicated either to instructing Inquirers and Aspirants or Candidates. Unfortunately, since the members live so far from the meeting place and from each other, the sessions are conducted via Zoom. Their formation director is excellent and inspiring to the members who actively participate in the formation topics presented at the gatherings.

**Initial:** The Franciscan Journey and the FUN Manual for Candidacy, and mostly the Journey book for Inquiry and Orientation.

**Ongoing:**

This fraternity uses Formation Friday topics, the Constitutions, the Catechism, as well as many good books for ongoing formation. The formation director recommended Simply Bonavenature, by Ilia Delia. OFS.

**Recommendations:**

They are aware that they need to work on getting involved in JPIC and YouFra and are in the process of picking members to be the liaisons for each project. The members have requested another Come and See, which the visitors communicated to the Council. The members would also like to have more social time included in the monthly gathering. The visitors suggested that perhaps, twice a year, they consider having more social time so members can get to know each other and also to work in some additional social time to their regular gathering leaving business to the end of the meeting. It is important that the family get to know each other better and bond as sisters and brothers in fraternity. They have enhanced their communication by developing a website. We suggested that a newsletter with current news, birthdays, articles, upcoming events, and the like be written and sent to the members monthly to keep them apprised of things going on in the fraternity, the region, and the Catholic community. We also suggested that the Council get together in person from time to time, perhaps quarterly or every six months by having their meetings following the fraternity gathering. Zoom is very convenient for those who are long distances from each other, but does not replace in-person meetings.

We also are suggesting to REC that the Regional Councilors keep in better contact contact with their fraternities. St. Bonaventure had not received the letter from our Minister General about the Stigmata of St. Francis. There are a few things that REC receives from National which would be very worthwhile to pass on to the 3 or 4 fraternities for which they are responsible.

**Summation:**

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."*

St. Bonaventure fraternity is doing a wonderful job in growing their membership and strengthening their sense of community and fraternity and their spiritual growth. They are also to be commended on all the apostolic work they are doing as individuals and as a community. Except for the few recommendations which we have made, we find this fraternity to be very strong, loving and alive in the spirit of St. Francis. In short, St. Bonaventure is doing an excellent job in their fraternal and spiritual life.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Stamboulian, OFS

Regional Secretary, Fraternal Visitor

Date of Report: October 6, 2024