

## Minister's Insights



### The Vine and the Branches

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National Minister

*"I am the true vine and my Father is the vinegrower. He prunes away every barren branch, but the fruitful ones he trims clean to increase their yield. You are clean already, thanks to the word I have spoken to you. Live on in me, as I do in you. No more than a branch can bear fruit of itself apart from the vine, can you bear fruit apart from me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who lives in me and I in him, will produce abundantly, for apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:1-5*

There was a time when we were not aware of the magnitude of our Secular Franciscan Order. As National Minister, I am asked many questions about the Order. I have used this analogy of our presence in the world, and our purpose: I would like you to envision a cluster of grapes that are connected to a stem. The stem is then connected to a vine and that vine is connected to a branch.

The branch is connected to a plant. This plant, obviously, has roots that get nourished from the land and water. God made both land and water. *"Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin, so that the dry land*

*may appear." And so it happened: "The water under the sky was gathered into its basin, and the dry land appeared." Genesis 1-9*

Each grape on the vine is a local fraternity. There are seven hundred forty-one fraternities in the USA. The cluster of grapes represents a region. We have thirty-one regions. The stem (region) is connected to a vine, the Regional Fraternity Council. The vine is connected to a branch that we will call the National Fraternity Council. This branch is connected to a thicker branch that we will call the International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order, better known as CIOFS. This thick branch is rooted in a place called Assisi, Italy where Saint Francis started the Order and lived and died for the love of God. The roots of this plant are embedded in the rich land where they receive water and food.

*We are the "Fruit of the Vine."*

We are the grapes that are the precious blood of Christ. We are the Good People who are commissioned to go and rebuild His house that we see falling into ruin.

Our vision is to see the world as Christ would have it, to hear the sounds of peace, not violence, as Jesus desired it, to touch another with love and respect, as Jesus touched us, to smell the clean air, as Jesus brings the freshness and newness to us, and to speak the Good News as Jesus brought it to us. In this way, we shall bring it to all our brothers and sisters throughout the world so that we, together, will form the perfect Body and Blood of Christ through that grape on the vine. We must be His hands, His feet, His voice and we must put action to this vision to make the dream come true.

*"If you live in me, and my words stay part of you - it will be done for you. My Father has been glorified in your bearing much fruit and becoming my disciples." John 15: 7-8*

Francis did what was his to do and you - what is there for you to do?