



For the past ten years, the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) has been a Franciscan voice of advocacy and education in the field of social justice. The three words that make up its name – Franciscan, Action and Network—are a good description of what FAN is all about.

FAN is Franciscan in its history and vision. It was through the Franciscan family that the idea for FAN was conceived, and as one who witnessed FAN's beginning, I marvel at how the various branches of our family worked together to bring it about. A group of Franciscan leaders in Rome, each representing one of the six branches of the Franciscan family, in consultation with Franciscans International, dared to dream that Franciscans in the United States would unite in support of a new endeavor for Justice, Peace and Care for Creation. In 2007, with the support of Holy Name Province, an invitation went out to the entire Franciscan family in the United States to gather in Baltimore. More than 150 Franciscans answered the call.

I have vivid memories of this Franciscan chapter that marked the beginning of FAN. We prayed, listened and engaged in lively discussions. In the end the gathered community wrote and unanimously confirmed “a statement of unity that called themselves and the Franciscan family in the U.S. to establish a structure to bring the humble force of our charism to bear on social transformation.”⁸ From there, the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) was created.

FAN continues to bring the Gospel to life under the direction of its Board of Directors, who are members of the various branches of the Franciscan Order, along with the support and endorsement of numerous congregations of Franciscans. From the very beginning, our National Fraternity (OFS-USA) has been an institutional member of FAN. Individual Seculars have served on the original steering committee, on the Action Commission, and as members of the Board of Directors. FAN's website provides an extensive overview of their work.

FAN is about action, but it does not act alone. Networking is key. FAN welcomes and includes Franciscans of other Christian denominations, those of other faith traditions and all people of good will in its work. In doing so, FAN follows the directives of the Catholic Church to work with all, without exception.

“In these days when cooperation in social matters is so widespread, all men without exception are called to work together, with much greater reason all those who believe in God, but most of all, all Christians in that they bear the name of Christ.”⁹

As members of FAN, we are part of this network. We partner with FAN to bring a united Franciscan voice to the public arena. Our participation in FAN helps us express our identity, affords us the opportunity to partner with the other five branches of the one Franciscan family, and unites us in action. Our efforts in the area of justice and peace are certainly not limited to our membership in FAN, but our participation in FAN is an important way for us to bring the Gospel to Life.

New OFS Representative on the FAN Board of Directors



This past August, the National Executive Council appointed David Seitz, OFS, as our representative on the FAN Board of Directors. David previously served as Minister of Divine Mercy Region. During his tenure as Minister, the number one priority was: *Transition the OFS to become the “Visible Face of the Church” as called for in the Rite of Profession, the OFS Rule of Life and in accordance with the desire of Pope Francis that the order become more visible.* With this priority as the common theme at every regional gathering and fraternal visitation, the members of the Region united in action. Three fraternities began ministries to the homeless. Another implemented a serious effort to change the culture of the fraternity from a pious group who meet in the Church basement to a group active in seeking social justice. After attending a region-sponsored formal training on evangelization based on Bishop Vigneron's Pastoral Letter, “Unleash the Gospel,” one

⁸ FAN Steering Committee, Introduction to the 2007 Draft Strategic Plan

⁹ Unitatis Redintegratio / Decree on Ecumenism #12

fraternity began a street evangelization ministry inspired by the training. The largest fraternity in the region created several community service projects and is now incorporating “Visible Community Service” as an element of initial formation.

When David was asked about his experiences as a servant leader, he answered in part: *“I have learned how to put the individual before the task. As a hospice chaplain, I learned to see each person as a precious creature with great dignity. The humility I learned while serving those meeting Sister Death*

changed my entire outlook on the human person. This experience was a catalyst for changing me from being self-centered to other-centered. As a 16-year professed Secular Franciscan, I have had a chance to study and reflect on Franciscan Spirituality lived in the cloister of the world. This spirituality informs my relationship with God, family, community and work; it is ever evolving and has led me out of my comfort zone on many occasions. This ongoing transformation of self is being reflected in the OFS as the Holy Spirit is guiding it to rise out of the Church basement and out into the light of the every-day-world.

Moving Forward with FAN

In his own words, here are David’s goals as our representative on the FAN Board of Directors:

- Provide consistent and timely **communication** to the OFS regarding the activities and initiatives of FAN. There is much misunderstanding based on communications from sources other than FAN official communications, which has caused some division regarding the OFS support of FAN. The OFS and FAN have similar missions. I believe consistent and constant communication will be key to strengthening the support and understanding of FAN by the OFS membership at large.
- Be a **goodwill ambassador for FAN** to the OFS, local dioceses and parishes and other like-minded groups who follow Francis in other faith traditions.
- **Involvement** leads to acceptance and support. **Drive grassroots activity** in local fraternities to support FAN initiatives. I believe getting the OFS involved in being visible in the public square will lead to greater support and acceptance. FAN has the experience and communications that can be leveraged by the OFS to use as templates for activism at the local level, driving support for national issues. The OFS Rule of Life calls us to promote justice in the public square.
- Engage in the time-honored Franciscan charism of **begging for money**— generating financial support for FAN.

- **Educate** the OFS at the national, regional and local levels regarding the social justice issues being pursued by FAN and how they relate to the JPIC initiatives of the OFS
- Develop a relationship with the **regional JPIC coordinators** to promote a unified voice
- Work with the OFS national **ecumenical chair** to engage all people with Franciscan hearts to work together to promote the initiatives of FAN
- Continue my **personal formation** on the social teaching of the bishops and share with the OFS
- **Pray**, Pray and then Pray again

One of the questions David was asked by the FAN Board was, “What personal qualities and traits do you consider essential to possess?” I was struck by his “Gospel to life” answer:

I think I can best respond to this question with my favorite passage from the book of Tobit: *“Watch yourself, my son, in everything you do, and be disciplined in all your conduct. And what you hate, do not do to anyone.... Give of your bread to the hungry, and of your clothing to the naked. Give all your surplus to charity and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Seek advice from every wise man, and do not despise any useful counsel. Bless the Lord God on every occasion; ask him that your ways may be made straight and that all your paths and plans may prosper.... [T]he Lord himself gives all good things, and according to his will he humbles whomever he wishes.” (Tobit 4:14-19, RSV)*

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