



Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Walking Together

by Anne Mulqueen, OFS

Dear sisters and brothers,

It is serendipitous that the subject of this article quite literally is about *walking together* with one of our sister Franciscan Orders—the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (OEF).

Ecumenical Franciscans come from all different Christian denominations. They profess a General Rule similar to our own, and in addition to this Rule, each member draws up a Personal Rule of Life based on the General Rule. Candidates are expected to be under spiritual direction throughout their formation process and after profession, Ecumenical Franciscans continue this practice.

My sister and companion in the ecumenical vineyard of the Lord is Shoshanah Kay, the co-minister of the Ecumenical Franciscans. In October 2015, Shoshanah came to our National Chapter in New Jersey and delivered a reflection that captured the essence of her Order. Inspired by her presentation, St. Clare Region adapted parts of Shoshanah's reflection for use at their regional chapter. With Shoshanah's permission I am sharing with you her unedited and enlightening reflection.

*You, Secular Franciscans,
have thousands
upon thousands
upon thousands of members.
We, Ecumenical Franciscans have tens upon tens.*

*You are pushing 800 years old.
We are barely 30 something*

*Measuring our years to your years,
we are but kid-Franciscans.*

*Measuring our size to your size,
we are barely more than a local fraternity.*

*We are an Order, not a local fraternity.
But, nevertheless, let's stay with that image:*

*Imagine a really big fraternity of the
biggest-hearted Franciscans you could ever meet.
But scattered all across the United States
and several more flung across several seas.*

*Bighearted Franciscans, committed to Christ and to
one another
as Catholic and Protestant, clergy and lay,
married, partnered, single and celibate,*

*of various ages, genders and sexual orientations,
varying in education, profession, possessions and
passions.*

*Bound together by a fascination with Francis and
Clare
in their joyful abandon and reckless surrender
into the abundant, overflowing, unlimited Love of our
Living Lord.*

*Gentle, generous love which these two — our guides
and yours — held in tenacious trust and expressed in
tender attention to the least, the little, the lost and the
leper.*

*On the surface, we may look very different from you.
But at our deepest cores, the difference fades fast.*

<><><><><><><><><><><><><><><><>

*Here and there, and now and then, we in our little
Order
get together in 2's and 3's or 10's and 12's.
And once a year, we make a really big effort
to gather all together — in one spot — for 5 days.*

*During these 5 days, our Chapter/Convocation,
we go deep; we get close.
We milk these days for all they are worth.
Because we don't live close.
And, for some of us, it's all we get — face-to-face —
— these 5 days —*

*We worship; we pray; we sing; we laugh.
We wonder together . . .
We argue sometimes. We offend. We falter.
We break bread.
We learn to forgive.
We begin again. And again. And again.*

*From this year's Chapter, I could share many things.
I choose to share this one:
We made a decision.
A decision to discern — together — in prayer —
about anything and everything
Trusting that Our God will lead us
to who-knows-where
to do who-knows-what
who knows how
and God knows why,*

